



Glurk! A Hellbender Odyssey

Mark Spitzer

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The first book-length, epic poem about *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*, aka North America's largest salamander. Through an investigative poetic lens of folklore, history, science and ecology, grotesque-advocate Mark Spitzer paints a four-part profile of an amazing phenomenon. This semi-monstrous mosaic of a living, breathing barometer of water quality and biodiversity is accomplished through a visionary voice that incorporates research, data, primary sources, and images that twist and torque like an actual bender (as the mythology goes) wending its way back to hell. "Glurk! is a book in which the poet's eye (and ear) focuses on the paradox of this little-known salamander's prehistoric strangeness and its more familiar, human properties: 'because basically/ when you stare a bender in its tiny eye/ you end up focusing/ on its toes/ which, in essence/ is our connection/ with this aspect of the Wild.' The poems range from scientific narratives to neologism-filled lyrics, connecting us to our own wildness, playing on our own youthful enthusiasms, humor and curiosity. Most importantly, the poet suggests that imagination begins the solution to even the most serious problem, even the threat of extinction." -Lea Graham, author of *This End of the World: Notes to Robert Kroetsch* (Apt. 9 Press, 2016) "Mark Spitzer really captured the hellbender story here in an informative and entertaining manner. The presentation is digestible (not technical) and creative... This is a great way to reach a broad audience and convey the plight of this amphibian." -Dr. Donald Shepard, Amphibian Biologist, University of Louisiana, Monroe

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