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***Hardscrabble* by Kevin McFadden, University of Georgia Press,
2008**

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Recommended Readings



Hardscrabble

by Kevin McFadden, University of Georgia Press, 2008

Reviewed by Chris Bungard

Kevin McFadden's latest collection of poems, *Hardscrabble*, draws connections between simple American life and the language of the people between Ohio, the home of his youth and undergraduate days, and Virginia, where he is the associate program director for the Virginia Festival of the Book. The younger brother of two PhDs (a Classicist and a Medievalist), McFadden embraces the quirky shifts that language takes in our every day experience.

In a poem entitled 'Famed Cities', McFadden explores his own experiences with language from his youth in Cleveland to his studies in Scotland. Contemplating his time in Scotland, he remembers that his Ohio accent worked just fine in Dublin, Edinburg, or London, but when he came to Glasgow, he learned to speak anew.

Want a wild time? In Glasgow time was tame.

See the town? You had to hear the tune. New loans,
including my name; I began saying Cave-in
if I wanted the right introduction in a pub.

Each poem is a linguistic dance, as McFadden alters and twists the words that form our world. With a slight twist, as he notes in 'Another Untied Shoe', friend becomes a fiend, champ a chump, glory is gory, and danger twists into anger.

For the word enthusiast like myself, this collection of poem offers many unexpected delights and surprises, as words shift and even a borrowed line can generate a whole new poem of anagrams. The poetry drives endlessly forward, bouncing wherever the slip of a letter enables a new direction.

- Chris Bungard is an assistant professor of classics at Butler University.