

# Cleveland State University

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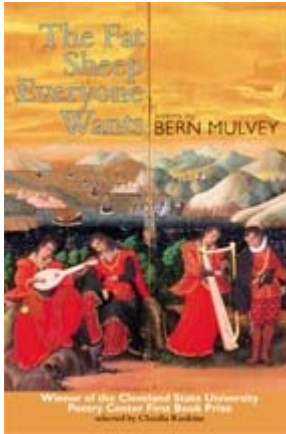
## NEWS RELEASE

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### Now Available

#### *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants*

poems by **Bern Mulvey**

Winner of the 2007 Cleveland State University

Poetry Center First Book Prize selected by Claudia Rankine

9 x 6 x 0.186, 76 pp., \$15.95 paper

ISBN 978-1-880834-79-4, LCCN 2008010767

Tamura-cho (a small village in Fukui Prefecture) is the setting for *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants*, poems that touch on identity, assimilation, conflict, death, forgiveness and redemption. The title refers to the original ideographs (*fat* and *sheep*) that make up the modern Japanese character for *beauty*.

This is not a tourist travelogue—the author writes from the perspective of someone both fluent in the language and conversant in the modern literature. Indeed, these poems can be seen as a challenge to the traditional representations of Japan in Western creative literature, participating instead in the flux of Japan's modern literary styles and themes (e.g., the work of Ibaraki Noriko, Itou Hiromi, Takamura Koutarou, Asada Saho, Tawara Machi, etc.), the evolving and often critical dialectic between them.

“Bern Mulvey’s *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants* is a study in intimacy—an intimacy conspiring across cultures, languages, families and landscapes despite histories of wars, racism and difference. In our time of global connections, Mulvey has created a poetry of negotiation, tender but insistent communication. This is a poetry of witness without the distance of the spectator. Complicated because implicated, the voice in these poems speaks with profound precision because where it stands just happens to be where we are standing.”

—**Claudia Rankine, author of *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely***

“In *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants*, Bern Mulvey not only describes Japanese society but inscribes it unsentimentally on the reader’s heart. He is a poet living in and between two cultures as he poignantly observes the misperceptions that lead to misconceptions that end sadly in misunderstandings that are then spoken as truths, leaving us to wrestle them into something more humane. Mulvey knows how quickly we slide into cultural darkness but he hears deeply the advice given him in the Eiheiji Temple: ‘Decorate the end with beauty.’ His poems resonate as guiding lights for all of us to follow.”

—**Walter Bargaen, author of *Remedies for Vertigo***

“These elegantly crafted poems evoke a deep sense of landscapes, both interior and exterior. Mulvey expertly moves us into a foreign culture that is richly created and sustained. Every word is a brush stroke, and out of them poems emerge like origami birds. Each line is like a fold in

paper that merges with the desire to make perfection. These poems open up and illumine places we didn't know we needed to experience and yet we do, and are amply rewarded."

—**Elizabeth Kirschner**

"Bern Mulvey, an American living in Japan for many years, has absorbed much of that great culture, particularly its literature. *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants* is a beautiful and powerful book that is at the same time restrained and yawping over the rooftops of the world, that is both as compressed as diamonds and full of life as a vast ocean. Godspeed this wonderful book!"

—**Thomas Lux, author of *God Particles: Poems***

**Bern Mulvey** has written poems, articles and essays in English and in Japanese, with recent work in *Poetry*, *Agni*, *Hokuriku Shijin Shishuu*, the *London Times*, *Poetry East*, *Runes*, *Fine Madness*, *River City* and the *American Language Review*. He is the former poetry editor of *The Missouri Review* and served as faculty advisor/editor of *Black Rock & Sage* (Idaho State University's literary journal) for several years. Currently, he is Dean of Faculty at Miyazaki International College in Japan, the youngest dean in Japan and one of just three non-Japanese to hold this rank at a Japanese university.

**ORDERING INFORMATION:** *The Fat Sheep Everyone Wants* is available through many corporate and independent bookstores, as well as Amazon.com. Media review copies and requests for printed catalogs should be directed to Poetry Center Manager, Rita Grabowski at 216-687-3986, toll-free 888-278-6473.

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