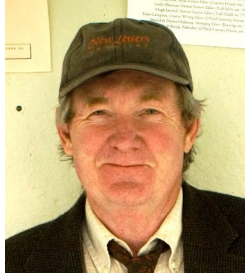


ROBERT PAUL DAY (1940 -)



Robert Day is best known as a masterful prose writer. His novel *Last Cattle Drive* is a classic of contemporary American frontier literature. Less well known is the fact that Day received his M.F.A. from the University of Arkansas in poetry writing. The grace of his style indicates serious study of language. Whether he writes essays, articles, novellas, or poetry, he understands aesthetics of style—balance, invention, and timing. In “Teal Hunting with Two Old Uncles,” season and place are clear. The poem’s speaker has an easy assurance, inviting readers into his low-key drama. The young narrator contrasts with older uncles, as he performs the heavy work of sodding the duck blind. The early autumn day reflects the uncles’ mellow old age concerns of storytelling and casual drinking. For them, their weapon of choice is a “rolled up” magazine. They create their own oral history compendium, a parallel to the magazine, as the young hunter goes about business. Years later, like the uncles, the narrator remembers exactly what he shot on that trip, the “Blue wings” and “Cinnamon.” With his uncles, he becomes like “old hunting dogs loaded with dreams,” not so concerned with the hunt for meat as for the distillation of memories into fine narratives.

TEAL HUNTING WITH TWO OLD UNCLES

**September’s never cold enough for ducks and whiskey.
I shoot in Tee-shirt and moccasins
as green wings hustle from pond to pond
in the yellow morning.**

**My uncles miss chances, drinking
on the bench deep in the blind
swapping stories about Cheyenne Bottoms
and Snow Geese bigger than the moon.**

**In the afternoon I work shirtless, laying
strips of sod on the blind’s roof,
careful as my mother tiling her kitchen counter.
My uncles sit on campstools whacking at wasps
with rolled up *Ducks Unlimited*.**

**That evening I shot two limits: Blue wings
came in low over the decoys. I dropped
a lone Cinnamon at sundown. My uncles
napped on their bench, twitching.**

Like old hunting dogs loaded with dreams.

Education: Robert Day received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in English (University of Kansas 1964, 1966) and M.F.A (University of Arkansas-Fayetteville 1970). **Career:** Day has published *We Should Have Come by Water* (Mammoth 2009), *The Committee to Save the World* (Western Books 2009), *Speaking French in Kansas* (Cottonwood Press 1989), and *The Last Cattle Drive* (Putnam 1977). He taught at Fort Hays State University, Washington College in Chestertown, Iowa Writers Workshop, University of Kansas, and Montaigne College, The University of Bordeaux.