

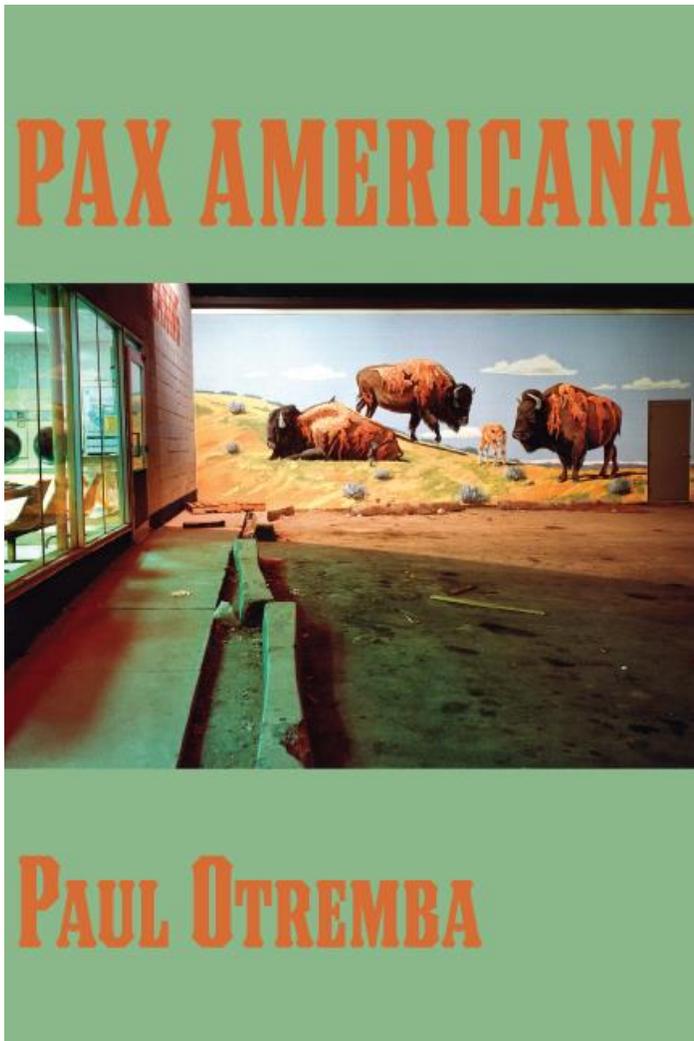
## *Pax Americana* / Paul Otremba

April 2015

**PRESS RELEASE:** Four Way Books announces the publication of *Pax Americana* by Paul Otremba. Publicity measures include readings, conference & festival appearances, and radio appearances. For information, e-mail [publicity@fourwaybooks.com](mailto:publicity@fourwaybooks.com)

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The poems in *Pax Americana* are born out of the violent, fractious, and disillusioning opening to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The decade of protracted wars and economic collapse—coupled with the polarizing of wealth and ideologies in this country—create the catalysts for this book. These are social poems that want to talk, and through talking hopefully make a space where people can meet and find meaning in each other.



### **In the House of Aphrah**

It came as a film, a light texture felt  
like what a word might make spoken against  
your skin, so a slight pressure you could take  
away moving your hand away, or how

withdrawing my fingers from the keyboard  
where—refreshed—I was given the instant  
feeds, I found the word *dust*. Then someone else  
saw it as grit in the eye, so not dust

itself but a watery lens that sprang  
from the irritant—dunes and eclipses,  
redactions and detentions we would now  
meet through, and the dust accumulated.

Some discovered the dust between their teeth  
like raspberry seeds, something to work with  
the tongue, to jaw when speaking, and in speaking,  
knew dust. But everyone was embarrassed,

unsure it wasn't only on their breath,  
clotting their speech. Then a first hand caught dust  
pressed on the palm it coupled, the throat it set  
upon, the body brought close in the dark.

**Publication Date:** April 2015 • 978-1-935536-56-7 • Poetry • \$15.95 • Paper, 92 pages • 6 x 9

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### Advance Praise for *Pax Americana*

“Paul Otremba’s *Pax Americana*, a book-length sequence of poems, has tremendous reach. From the tiniest evidence of civilization (‘a whole way of life expressed by the way / you hold a fork’) to the largest imaginable manifestation of the perceived world (‘sometimes there’s not even / the train or people at all / there, or even the city, the planet, / the whole swirling / mess of gasses and ice / and cosmic blind spots, gone’), Otremba presents an anti-hero’s take on a fallen world that seems to be hurtling farther downward still with a Dantean insistence. The language struggles with the man until an entirely unanticipated surge of romantic feeling engenders the belief that ‘we’ (the lovers? all of us?) can found a ‘new city.’ Much is owed to the power of Otremba’s writing, the physicality of which intensifies as the poems begin to turn away from the more abstract, ironic language (‘so the end of history was beginning to look / a lot like history’; ‘I survived because I remained totally dead’), making this unlikely shift toward hope credible, transforming even. And that this new feeling is so hard-won—it comes very late!—that gives the key turn force, distinguishing the book.”

—Elizabeth Arnold

“In the disquieting America brought to life in Paul Otremba’s poems, everyone is guilty. Public malaise and private conduct blur into each other, making both the empire and its citizens complicit in ‘the continuous fattening / of the bubble.’ But more than just sounding the alarm, Otremba upholds the poet’s task of identifying meaning out of the glut and spectacle that would otherwise merely define our times. In a strange lyrical frequency that is all his own, full of irony and beauty, Otremba has written a book that we deserve and need.”

—Rick Barot



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Otremba is the author of the poetry collection, *The Currency* (Four Way Books 2009). He earned his MFA from the University of Maryland and a PhD in creative writing and literature from the University of Houston. Otremba is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Rice University in Houston, TX. Otremba has published widely in journals including *The Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *Literary Imagination*, and *Witness*. He has received scholarships and a fellowship from the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, a Barthelme Memorial Fellowship, a Krakow Poetry Seminar Fellowship, and a prize from the Academy of American Poets. Additional information available at [paulotremba.com](http://paulotremba.com).

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