

John Haines

Selected texts from: *For the Century's End: Poems, 1990-1999*

"I have always sought a poetry that . . . can include the public events of our time and do so in a way that makes them at once contemporary and unavoidably linked with humanity's long and troubled history."--John Haines, Preface

John Haines was a renowned, American poet who lived the majority of his adult life in Alaska. Most of his works were inspired by the environment, and many of his works are full of descriptive imagery of the natural and undisturbed environment of his Alaskan home. He was an experienced painter before he turned to writing, and stated that he preferred his work as a poet, as his paintings were unable to express the full range of his thoughts and emotions.

In his last volume of published works, "For the Century's End: Poems, 1990-1999", Haines turned his attention to matters of more social and political importance. Critic, Helen Frost states in her review of these poems that: "Haines' unflinching vision is not comforting; an initial reading of the poems reveals little warmth—yet the poems feel necessary, essential to our understanding of the world we're shaping for ourselves and our children."

Haines uses metaphors that make comparisons between the natural and the machine world, and spends a great deal of time on reflecting on the past, as a comparative to the present, and the future that is being created as a result of past decisions. He uses poetic devices sparsely, so as not to distract from his messages of anti-government and anti-war. This lack of devices initially makes his poems appear basic, however they are a deep analysis of the modern world, and humanity's part in it.