

**Earl S. Braggs** was born in Hampstead, North Carolina. He is a UC Foundation and Herman H. Battle Professor of English at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. His latest collection of poems, *Younger Than Neil* (2009) follows *In Which Language Do I Keep Silent: New and Selected Poems* (Anhinga Press, 2006), *Crossing Tecumseh Street*, *House On Fontanka*, *Walking Back From Woodstock* and the 1992 Anhinga Prize winner, *Hat Dancer Blue*. He also published a chapbook of poetry titled *Hats*. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Colorado Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *Word and Witness: 100 Years of North Carolina Poetry* and others. His novel-in-progress, *Looking for Jack Kerouac*, won the Jack Kerouac Prize in fiction and was a finalist in the James Jones First Novel Contest.

## Stage

(*My Own Jimi Hendrix*)

Technically he was my third cousin  
 removed beyond  
 his brother's tobacco Field,  
 but to me  
 he was the first of all my first cousins  
 in light of the fact that we worshipped  
 the same guitar god, Jimi  
 Hendrix. Cousin Junior had no stage  
 name when he played with his teeth,  
 "Paradox in Paradise" beneath  
 the shed of his brother's tobacco barn.  
 The long hot tobacco chewing summer days  
 would dance around and around  
 like paper boy bicycle wheels,  
 rocking and rolling to the melodic movement  
 of Cousin Junior's fast and easy left hand fingers,  
 sliding  
 up and down Johnny Lee Hooker left hand strings,  
 plucking  
 blue black jazz rock 'n rolling  
 notes as effortlessly as the no effort sunshine  
 giving way to an afternoon of Carolina thunder cloud  
 raining  
 so hard we could not see the meaning of anything.  
 Blue as Louis Armstrong, New Orleans, Dixieland  
 Jazz and Sam Cooke soulful corn silk rock 'n roll,  
 rhythms and riffs  
 rolled from his hands, electric as any "Electric  
 Ladyland, "hard and fast as if Jimi Hendrix,