

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## **Blue Yodel.**

Elkins, Ansel (Author)

Apr 2015. 88 p. Yale, paperback, \$18. (9780300210026). 811.

Elkins' first book, winner of the 2014 Yale Series of Younger Poets prize, is rich with nuance and poignant discovery. Writing about the South, about being black, and about losing people (a daughter torn from her mother in a natural disaster, a wife killed), Elkins also explores the theme of the lost normalcy, considering the taboo desire for more than one lover and imagining magical reshapings of the female body. In one jaw-dropping poem, "Mississippi Pastoral," she recounts the infamous murder of a black boy: "A seventy-five pound / cotton gin fan / strung with barbed wire / leashed to the child's neck. Swollen / August sun, white blaze. Today / the cotton fields set themselves on fire." While this breathtaking poeticism is revealing and provocative, Elkins also hits her stride in fun, tell-all, sexy poems, such as "Tennessee Williams on Art and Sex" and "Real Housewives." Elkins shocks you, makes you cry out loud and sit riveted, disturbed, amused, and intrigued while contemplating human complexity.

— *Mark Eleveld*