

Coming next Spring
SCOTLAND

ATLANTA



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

REVIEW

Poetry 2015

Grand Prize Winner

Danusha Laméris

Interview with

Tracy K. Smith

VOL. XXII, No. 1

Fall / Winter 2015

\$ 10.00



ATLANTA REVIEW

In memory of Capers Limehouse

co-founder of

Poetry Atlanta

and

Atlanta Review

Volume XXII, Issue Number 1

ATLANTA REVIEW

www.atlantareview.com

Editor & Publisher Dan Veach

Senior Editors Memye Curtis Tucker
Lee Passarella
A. E. Stallings

Visit our Home Pond: www.atlantareview.com

Atlanta Review appears in April and October. Subscriptions are \$15.

Available in full text in Ebsco, ProQuest and Cengage databases

Atlanta Review is available from Ebsco, Blackwell and Swets.

Submission guidelines: Up to five poems, with your name and address on each. Submissions & inquiries must include a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Issue deadlines are June 1st (Fall issue) and December 1st (Spring issue).

Please send submissions and subscriptions to:

ATLANTA REVIEW
P.O. Box 8248
Atlanta GA 31106

© Copyright 2015 by Poetry Atlanta, Inc.

ISSN 1073-9696

Poetry Atlanta, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation in the state of Georgia.
Contributions are tax-deductible.

Atlanta Review is printed on acid-free paper by the Rose Printing Company.

Welcome

As soon as you meet the “Horny Toad” in the first poem, you know that Memye Curtis Tucker’s feature section is going to take you to some unexpected places. You won’t be disappointed, as some of America’s leading poets riff on everything from frat guys to French cafés to fingernail polish. And at a time when diversity in the poetry community is being hotly debated, Esther Lee talks about identity and social activism with Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy K. Smith.

Atlanta Review’s International Poetry Competition starts off with Holy Week in South Sudan, then gives the globe a spin: Algiers, Iran, Ireland, Greece, Jamaica, England, Afghanistan.... We wind up in Beirut with our Poetry 2015 Grand Prize winner: “The Bedouin Dress” by Danusha Laméris.

The final section begins with one of my favorite historical figures, the Tang dynasty emperor Li Yu, who literally died for poetry. As AR fans know, the back of the book is where things get a little crazy. Testing the “Observer Effect” with a big “Barracuda” is something you may want to kick off your “Bucket List.”

But fans of Mr. Ed will get a kick out of “Horse Whisperer” and the rest of our very wild West. Over on the food aisle, Mark Twain muses on Walmart, and G. K. Chesterton jumps for joy: at last, we have broken the poets’ mysterious silence on the subject of cheese.

We end with a benediction for the coming season: may your workshop be as peaceful and fragrant as our closing poem. See you in SCOTLAND in the spring!

Dan Veach
Editor & Publisher

Special Feature Section	1	<i>Memye Curtis Tucker</i>
Horny Toad as Muse	3	<i>Peggy Shumaker</i>
Hot Spring as Muse	4	
Fraternity	6	<i>Tony Hoagland</i>
Easter	7	
Mother's Happiness	8	<i>Mark Jarman</i>
Mother's Bedsore	9	
Transit	10	<i>Tracy K. Smith</i>
Interview with Tracy K. Smith	11	<i>Esther Lee</i>
The Day the Orchestra Died	18	<i>Esther Lee</i>
Lens-Flare Painting	19	
Accent	20	<i>Ron Rash</i>
Moody Spring	21	
Salt and Ashes	22	<i>Judith Ortiz Cofer</i>
Let's Imagine I'm Trying	23	<i>Dannye Romine Powell</i>
The Bridge Aches for the Water	24	
Hospice as Muse	25	<i>Peggy Shumaker</i>
Benediction	27	<i>Anya Silver</i>
Autumn	28	
Red Never Lasts	29	
Contributors	30	
 POETRY 2015	32	<i>International Competition</i>
Holy Week, South Sudan	34	<i>Raphael Kosek</i>
Water	36	<i>Judith Terzi</i>
Passing Odysseus on the Way	38	<i>Marjorie Mir</i>
Afterimage	40	<i>Andrea Potos</i>
Though It Be but Bread	41	<i>Rosalind Pace</i>
Bullfrog in Spring	42	<i>Lynn Tudor Deming</i>
Of Limpet Larvae	43	<i>Mary Rozmus-West</i>
Harboring the Ducks	44	<i>Deborah H. Doolittle</i>
Vespers	45	<i>Tina Johnson</i>
Vanishing Point at the Inlet	46	<i>Susan Berlin</i>
Imagination's Steed	47	<i>Mary Makofske</i>
I Am What I've Eaten	48	<i>Sherman Pearl</i>
Request	49	<i>Joan Ryan</i>
Don't Let the Fluffy Fool You	50	<i>Tanya Shirley</i>

Unchanging Guards	51	<i>Robert Lundy</i>
Rocket Science	52	<i>Eve Forti</i>
Government in a Box	53	<i>Tom Boswell</i>
Thoughts on a Suicide Bomber	55	<i>Rob Jacques</i>
Milltown Cemetery	56	<i>Paul McMahon</i>
Oblivion	58	<i>Justin Hunt</i>
Wisteria and ashes	59	<i>Joyce Meyers</i>
Still, the rose	60	<i>Carol Was</i>
I watch him, my husband	61	<i>Jay Kidd</i>
Shifting	62	<i>Joan I. Siegel</i>
Married Love	63	<i>Meryl Natchez</i>
The Bedouin Dress	64	<i>Danusha Laméris</i>
Poetry 2015 Contributors	66	
 The Song of the Tang's Li Yu	71	<i>Kevin Boyle</i>
The Executioner	72	<i>Peter Serchuk</i>
Debt	74	<i>Louis Phillips</i>
Instead of Prayer	75	<i>Melissa Crowe</i>
Stewards of the Dead	76	<i>Susan E. Gunter</i>
The World Wants Us Well	77	<i>Lynn Hoggard</i>
Orange Juice	78	<i>Michael Fulop</i>
In Play	79	<i>Greg Moglia</i>
Kilmalkedar	80	<i>Mark D. Hart</i>
Where Swift Fire Moved	82	<i>Michael S. Moos</i>
Wong Lee Talks Idaho History	83	<i>Peter Ludwin</i>
The Horse Whisperer	84	<i>Mark Smith</i>
From the Horse's Mouth	85	<i>Barbara J. Mayer</i>
Chestnut Mare	86	<i>Dion O'Reilly</i>
Observer Effect	87	<i>Lew Forester</i>
Barracuda	88	<i>Ron De Maris</i>
Kicking the Bucket List	89	<i>Barbara Lydecker Crane</i>
Ballerina	90	<i>Matthew J. Spireng</i>
Bedtime Story	91	<i>Steve Kupferschmid</i>
Musée National d'Art Moderne	92	<i>Brian C. Felder</i>
At the Word Party	93	<i>Mary Soon Lee</i>

On Cheese	94	<i>Susan Elizabeth Howe</i>
I'll Never Read <i>Dr. Zhivago</i> Again	96	<i>Caleb Brooks</i>
Odes to Effects Pedals	97	<i>Simon Mermelstein</i>
Moment of Omen	98	<i>Tom Chandler</i>
Going Away	99	<i>Cathy Carlisi</i>
Stroller Tot Violently Upset	100	<i>Clifford Paul Fetters</i>
Santa Monica Sunrise	101	<i>Mike Faran</i>
Live Scan	102	<i>Charles Harper Webb</i>
Coracle of Prayer	104	<i>Kristin Berkey-Abbott</i>
Anti Carpe Diem	105	<i>Richard Cecil</i>
Mark Twain Visits Walmart	106	<i>William Jolliff</i>
Outsourcing My Grief	107	<i>Peter Krass</i>
Rustbeltasana	109	<i>Lynn Pattison</i>
Profession of Flora	110	<i>Jane Varley</i>
The Situation	112	<i>Juan Gelman</i>
Sunday Morning in His Workshop	113	<i>Duane K. Caylor</i>
Contributors	114	
 Friends of Atlanta Review	118	
Poetry 2016	120	
Subscribe!	121	

Introduction to the Special Feature Section

Memye Curtis Tucker

"Make me / fluent in not-knowing," writes Peggy Shumaker in "Horny Toad as Muse"; "Let me vanish / into language." The poems in this feature section remind us of the certainties and uncertainties of our lives. And while a writer may disappear into words as into Yeats' eternal artifice, it is, nevertheless, words that reveal.

Through language, Shumaker, recent Alaska Writer Laureate, brings us Russian Orthodox Old Believers in "Hot Spring as Muse" and a Choctaw speaker in "Hospice as Muse," and Ron Rash, whose ancestors have lived for 350 years in Appalachia, finds in "Accent" the relationship of their speech to their mountains. The daughter of Korean immigrants, Esther Lee, in "The Day the Orchestra Died" evokes the tension of contemporary North Korea, where orchestra members have been summarily executed, leaving the score suspended and certainties questioned. In "Lens-Flare Painting," her concern is the process of conceptual photographer Uta Barth, who focuses on that which seemed to be nothing.

Tracy K. Smith, interviewed by Esther Lee, remembers the profound gifts of her poetry teachers and asserts the value and possibilities for all of us in poetry itself. And "Transit," her moving pantoum, takes us on an archetypal life journey. Here, as throughout this feature section, we are reminded that we are mortal: ours is, as Ron Rash's Appalachian speakers recognize in "Moody Creek," a "fallen world." The path that leads to the cemetery in Tony Hoagland's "Fraternity" may begin with a "great writer's" vivid characters who will live in the memory of his readers, but it ends with a stone and mossy letters. Along the way, though eased by the mercy of others, as in Hoagland's "Easter," there can be loneliness and soul-deep pain, as Mark Jarman, in "Mother's Happiness" and "Mother's Bedsore," reveals in heartbreaking lines.

Judith Ortiz Cofer, in "Salt and Ashes," shares the fire of chemotherapy. Dannye Romine Powell cannot provide what she yearns to in "Let's Imagine I'm Trying to Deliver Something to You," and acknowledges in "The Bridge Aches for the Water" that what is longed for can be an illu-

sion. Peggy Shumaker, in "Hospice as Muse," grieves for her Choctaw friend's former strength when she and her mate bared their secret fangs like wolverines. Anya Silver, in "Benediction," follows the tangled threads of her own friend's final reminiscences, and summarizes a life span by the colors of fingernail polish in "Red Never Lasts."

"Loss, the poet's / mother-lode," wrote the late Josephine Jacobsen in her final poem, a poem about Keats, which I was deeply grateful to include in my first editorial excursion, *Atlanta Review*, Fall, 1995. But thanks, too, for Tracy K. Smith's "Transit" in this section, which ends: "Someone, believe me, someone is waiting for us."

We invite you to disappear for a while into these words.

Horny Toad as Muse

The oval of his belly fit
perfectly my cupped palm,
his breath a delicate lick
flesh against flesh.

When he closed his eyes
his countenance shone,
spikes of his crown
raking dry light.

Untested fingers traced
his dips and spines, the scaly
rhythm of his back,
arroyos, ridgelines,

mystery's watershed.
I had no idea what to feed him
nor how to quench
his need to vanish.

So I knelt, set him gently down.
The searing span of hard pan
we both knew as home.
Lead me, please, beyond

caliche, beyond creosote, beyond
the barrel's fishhooks. Lead me
beyond the visible. O roots
of ocotillo. Ocotillo, point the ways,

the many many ways. Make me
fluent in not-knowing.
Let me vanish
into language.

Peggy Shumaker

Hot Spring as Muse

Almost too hot, wading
thigh-deep, earth-heat

steaming
over our skin—

As two young believers
in long skirts and caps

dip softly under the spray,
Russian lilt of laughter

carries. Their men take turns
under the arc

of the fire hose
aimed to hit hard

between the shoulder blades
of one my height,

or maybe the small
of that Russian's back.

They're still dressed, the men,
in farmers' tans

and fish-belly torsos.
Toes in sand, we traipse

past the intakes, scald-worthy
if you stay near, float

toward the middle, soak in
minerals and the sense

that water this hot smooths us
whatever our differences

whatever our sameness.
We take all we can.

Then return to our belongings
among women at ease

in their nakedness,
other women willing

to drag pant legs
over the shower floor

so they can savor
ruddy privacy,

still other women
tucking wet hair

under fresh prayer caps,
teaching their daughters

no matter where
they are

they must remember
who they are.

Peggy Shumaker

Fraternity

This is the place where the great writer lived.
This was his town, his college, his church,
with its sharp steeple he made into a metaphor.

This was his liquor store, where they still
run him a tab. They say his liver at the end
was a squeegee full of rum. Does anyone remember

The Great Beer Fire of Seventy-Five?
Even now upon the hill, the ghosts of old fraternity boys
haunt the charred foundation of Phi Epsilon.

Steve the Beeve, Demento George,
Alphonse the Canadian: where are they now?
Alligator Luke, and The Bosnian?

When we remember the writer, we remember
all his crazy characters,
and we are part of that fraternity.

The cemetery is a beautiful place.
Why don't you go today, and take the kids,
and teach them letters from that mossy alphabet?

Maybe you will find a name you recognize
carved into the stone,
as the spring breeze continues writing

its memoirs in the grass,
on this provincial margin of a page
in the dog-eared anthology of time.

Tony Hoagland

Easter

The kindest person in Minneapolis tonight
might be Estelle, the late-shift nurse at Trinity,
who wears a nameplate so you won't have to ask,

and a tired, calm face, which is another kind of badge.
Making her rounds with the cart and medication tray,
the little paper cups of Percocet and Ambien.

She has a clipboard, with a list
of questions to check off, and she looks
into each face in its turn

with the patient, inquiring regard
of a St. Bernard, though prettier than that.
And to her lips she has applied
the faintest touch of pink, or peach, or rose—

not to flaunt the russet bloom of youth,
but to carry pinkness like a lamp
among the dying and the ill—

that they might see
and distantly recall
the crocus by the post office in spring,

the tough pink flowers thrusting from the dirt,
and say, inside themselves,
Oh yes, — Jesus Christ, — I remember

lips; I remember kisses.

Tony Hoagland

Mother's Happiness

Easy to recall her voice
Chirping contentment on the phone.
Not so easy believing her
In the solitude of her apartment.

Easy, really, to picture her,
Smoking, drinking, reading a book,
Waiting for no one to come home,
Then watching TV till safely asleep.

Not so easy to think of her
Lost in her last 30 years,
More than a third of her life.
Easy to have done something?

Yes, easy to have done something—
Taken her life and shaken it,
Expelled its companion, loneliness—
instead of being grateful.

Mark Jarman

Mother's Bedsore

Under the years, layers of fire
Under the wedlock, eaten tendons
Under sex, the burned muscle memory
Under bone, the soul's inflammation
Under the paper-thin rending
The opening and unclosing
Mouth of goodbye

Mark Jarman

Transit

Someone is waiting for us,
Down through that grove of ferns
Growing low to the ground and dappled with rust.
Will we reach him before the season turns

Its back? Someone is waiting for us,
With his heart in his fist for warmth,
Down through that grove of trampled ferns.
I cannot say whether it is death,

With his heart in his fist for warmth
And eyes that blink back a simple love.
I cannot say for sure whether death
Is whom I see. It is so far from here, the grove.

The leaves glisten with a simple love
Of the season, which shifts now, slowly, to the east.
Who is it I see so far from here? The grove
Is but a speck, a tick on the back of a beast.

And the season shifts now slowly to the east
Where whatever must begin begins.
We wait like ticks on some beast
Not yet born, not yet risen on its limbs,

Though whatever must begin already begins.
Will we make it? Will we arrive and speak
To those many not yet risen to their limbs—
The cradled, the grief-bent, the meek?

Some will make it. Some will live to speak,
Will stand upon the ground, shirts weeping rust
Like birds some wicked boys have reached.
Someone, believe me, someone is waiting for us.

Tracy K. Smith

Interview with Tracy K. Smith

by Esther Lee

Tracy K. Smith is the author of the memoir *Ordinary Light* and three books of poetry: *Life on Mars*, which received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize; *Duende*, recipient of the 2006 James Laughlin Award; and *The Body's Question*, which won the 2002 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Among Smith's other honors is the 2014 Academy of American Poets Fellowship. She directs the Creative Writing Program at Princeton University.

This interview was conducted by email in late June of 2015.

Esther Lee: Would you mind sharing about the ways in which a particular mentor (or mentor poem) influenced your writing process or teaching of poetry?

Tracy K. Smith: Mentoring has played different roles throughout my life as a writer. Like lots of people, I took heart in the encouragement of my teachers all the way back in grade school. Those were the voices that affirmed my belief in the solace of words. My very first poetry workshop in college, with Lucie Brock-Broido, created a sense of wonder and magic—a kind of thrall to the voices I was encountering on the page. Seamus Heaney was a kind and generous teacher, and I devoted most of my time at Harvard to trying to steep myself in his poems, and to imitating his ways of seeing and thinking in poems. I don't think I ever came close, but that kind of devotion certainly shaped my perspective on what I am seeking to do in my work.

Henri Cole, who was also a teacher of mine in college, was the first teacher to say point blank that he found something important in my poems. I studied with him during my senior year at Harvard, and I nurtured myself on that little glimmer of belief during the strange, aimless first year after college. It was at that time that I realized it was poetry that gave purpose and clarity to my life and that I wanted to devote my life to writing poems. I might have felt that way regardless of what my teachers said, but his affirmation bolstered my determination to go to graduate school.

I think a lot of the mentors in my life have been teachers. Mark Doty was incredibly inspiring and instructive in a workshop I took with him at Columbia during my second semester in grad school. And his work on the page, and his encouragement throughout the years, long after I left his classroom, have meant the world to me as a writer and now as a teacher. I think all the time still of the incredible attention he offered each of his students, his ability to speak so clearly and so generously about student work, and his knack for guiding his students to the features that would be both instructive and inspiring in published poems. Surely my goal as a teacher is to offer some of that to my own students now.

Just a few years ago, I had the opportunity to work in a more official capacity with the German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger through the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. We spent about a year and a half in correspondence, visiting one another, talking about work and life. It was powerfully transformative, I believe, to take in the model he offers: of a writer and public intellectual working across genres and media to interrogate and speak back to the world as he sees it. He emboldened me to commit to a book-length project in prose, which, after about five years, became my memoir, *Ordinary Light*.

My work as a professor of creative writing continues to be shaped by these experiences. At first, I was only conscious of seeking to emulate some of the broad techniques I'd benefitted from as a student of others. As I get older, I think I am beginning to understand how worthwhile it can be to also offer my students a vocabulary for considering what they might be seeking to get out of the work of writing not just as artists but also as people, how it might help them to deepen their understanding of things both within and outside of themselves. That strikes me as valuable for all people—whether they are serious apprentice writers or students for whom a poetry workshop is a one-time elective.

EL: Your poems often provoke larger questions about the significance of empathy—in our communities and in art. How do you envision the role of empathy in poetry?

TKS: I think that every poem invites the reader to depart from the fixed conditions of his or her life and follow along beside the speaker for a while. I think this is fundamentally what appeals to us about literature in general, though we don't always think about what we are doing as an exercise in empathy. Mostly, we like the things that books alert us to, the things they teach us to recognize, the value they add to the feelings we too have felt and the thoughts we too have thought.

When a poem urges you to follow a stranger into another person's account of what something felt like, and why it mattered (no matter whether what you're reading is fact or fiction), what it is really doing is urging you to listen, to believe, to accept another person's view of the world as valid and instructive. I think that the more we do this, the better we become at listening to actual people talking about their actual lives. The more we do this, the more fundamentally interested we become in stories other than our own. This has to be good for society, to have citizens who are watching and listening and, yes, empathizing with others who look and sound nothing like themselves, and whose lives have been shaped by different conditions, choices, and their ramifications.

The other thing that I genuinely believe literature—and perhaps poetry in particular—offers us, is a kind of mental rigor. Good literature is never content with pat, easy perspectives. And it rarely offers definitive answers. Instead, what characterizes it are questions, conflicts, dilemmas, possibilities. The work of unraveling them, of allowing them to temper our habitual sense of logic and order and possibility, enhances our capacity for grappling with the world. It urges us to distrust the simplistic and often facetious language of marketing, lowest-common-denominator politics, even the truncations which eliminate the potential for nuance in our text messages and our tweets. Literature enlarges us, and when we let that happen, we begin to interact with the world more mindfully.

EL: In thinking about poetry's capability of deepening our compassion towards one another, I'm curious about how you may perceive identity-based communities for writers. On the one hand, these communities—such as Cave Canem, Kundiman, and Lambda Literary, to name a few—can offer incredible alliance-building and mentorship for writers who are historically and socially marginalized. On the other hand, I have heard some writers express concerns about joining such communities for fear of being pigeon-holed as a particular kind of writer or they worry that participating might risk re-inscribing or exacerbating the very dichotomies they are trying to resist.

Do you mind sharing about your experiences while being a part of communities such as Cave Canem and the Dark Room Collective? What are potentially some of the gifts and/or challenges that you feel writers in these communities may experience? How might these communities continue to build on their strengths and avoid the pat, easy perspectives you mentioned earlier? What advice might you give to an apprentice writer who is seeking community?

TKS: I don't think that membership in one community should necessitate that a writer must swear off all others. That's just not the way that our lives tend to work. We all belong to a host of groups that offer certain things but not others. Family feeds a side of us that friendships don't. Work validates a side of us that our romantic relationships aren't concerned with. And so on. And then there are the groups that offer what we want or need at some sort of a cost.

A young writer might leave her home base of friends, colleagues and family for an MFA, and find herself in a community of readers and writers whose social experiences and aesthetic values might be radically alien. It's a new membership that adds enormous value, but at a cost. This is not to say that MFA programs don't offer enormous rewards. They obviously do. But sometimes those rewards force a person to let go of other fulfilling features of their normal lives. I've heard so many stories from writers of color who found themselves feeling alone in spaces where their peers just weren't willing or able to accept the notion that concerns of race, culture, identity, and geography were valid components of poems.

That's why organizations like Cave Canem and Kundiman were founded. And the beautiful thing is, they work. They don't replace the MFA, but they offer what some programs don't, which is community that values and validates a writer's particular experience as rooted in cultural identity. I think that the ways in which alumni of these organizations have, through the publication of really stellar books of poems and through their own lives as teachers, had an impact on MFA programs and the canon in general is remarkable. I think it's really saved American poetry from ossifying.

But let's be honest here. The poets I'm talking about—poets like Terrance Hayes, Joseph Legaspi, Jericho Brown, Tina Chang, Rigoberto Gonzalez, Sayeed Jones, and on and on—are not merely drawing from a single set of themes or even a single kind of literary history. On the contrary, their work is built upon a broad and varied set of literary histories. Such writers' sense of ancestry defies the very categories that Cave Canem and Kundiman and other such necessary and healing organizations set out to serve. That's a beautiful contradiction, to my mind.

Even the Dark Room Collective, where I first began writing poetry, was based on the idea that we wanted to know and celebrate our literary heroes while also committing to a mastery of craft that strode boldly

across boundaries of identity, geography, school and even time period. The Dark Room, like these other, newer, organizations, was in service first to the almighty power of language to make any themes, ideas, beliefs, and questions mean more. We were never a group that was fixated on ethnic identity, even as we sought to nurture or feed this sense of ourselves as black writers striving to belong to the continuum of black voices who had paved the way.

My advice to a young writer would be to look at yourself and decide what matters to you, and then find the people and organizations that will help you honor all those things. No one group is going to nail every facet of you—not if you're being honest with yourself. So don't limit your allegiances. And the most important thing, in my mind, is not gravitating only to the people and places that will serve you, but to really endeavor to serve the people you care about, to help them and their work in ways that might matter. That's not just good karma; I think it actually makes you a better writer—certainly one who is more equipped to overcome the inevitable setbacks, failures, missed chances, and temptations to revert to a greedy narcissism that are par for the writer's course.

In terms of resisting the trap of easy ideology, I think there's a built-in safety valve in place in these organizations: the emphasis these groups have on language is the very thing that can help them avoid the pitfalls of pat perspectives. The other thing to keep in mind is that communities are living things that grow and change, and their values and goals grow and change with them.

EL: For writers to "interrogate and speak back to the world," do you feel our roles as writers should necessitate work beyond the page—that is, in terms of activism or other forms of civic engagement? Do you feel poetry can serve as a direct encounter with the world that allows for meaningful change? In particular, I'm thinking of the most recent tragedy in Charleston, for instance, or controversies within writing communities, and wondering how poetry (and other forms of writing) may help influence an effective means of response, perhaps even allowing a way to move beyond a reactionary stance and making space for uncomfortable yet crucial dialogues.

TKS: I am realistic in recognizing that most writers are drawn to the form because it is solitary, it is not spontaneous, and it requires a great deal of time, quiet, and isolation. That's pretty different from what might draw someone into activism, and I don't think that every writer should

or even could get up from the desk and take the lead as an organizer, even for the causes he or she might believe in. What I do think, though, is that writers—because of our ability to wring so much meaning out of language, to highlight complexity and contradiction, and to think with such resourcefulness and agility—are very well equipped to put language to work in sorting through tragedy, injustice, social unrest and political stagnation. I think that writers who are already thinking about these things (which is by no means every writer) ought to be willing to think actively about switching genres, forums, and audiences from time to time in order to speak to urgent events in such a way as to offer a counter-narrative to the Official Story, whatever that may be.

I've been thinking about this a lot lately in respect to my own work. I've written and continue to write poems that contemplate social themes like war, hate crimes, race, political power, and gender. I think writing about such topics helps me to wrestle privately with my own assumptions and beliefs, and I hope it invites the reader to wrestle with these things too.

But I am beginning to think that a poem is most likely to reach someone who is already engaged in this kind of thinking, someone who is already driven by a kind of dissatisfaction with the Official Story. What about people who might not agree with me? What about people who might not even agree that poetry matters? Lately, I've become more open to writing essays and op-eds on contentious topics—topics touching upon race and racial violence. Because those are topics that touch all of us as citizens, no matter what we believe, I want to take part in a conversation that does (or strives to do) the same. I think a lot of writers feel this way, and luckily, being a writer means you can dedicate your energies to many things at once.

There is always a road,
The sea, dark hair, *dolor*.

Always a question
Bigger than itself—

—from “Duende,” by Tracy K. Smith
(*Duende*, Graywolf Press, 2007)

The Day the Orchestra Died

Unlike Mary who barely
touches her plot yet accuses
everyone of stealing from it

(what does one lift from a garden
missing its garden?), this song
in G without G chords

seems more about suspension
& you overcome with
happiness, children reduced

to tears, troops rushing to catch
a glimpse, even goats appear to be
smiling at breeding station no. 621.

What never arrives, however,
is the song's destination.
The insistence on the melody

keeps your ears fixed, making you
unsure whether or not
colors do, indeed, exist.

Therefore, you memorize
& hold the note: the sky is blue,
the grass green, lemons yellow

Esther Lee

Lens-Flare Painting

for Uta Barth

Dare you
try letting go—

world as subject
as background

seagull traffic,
sausage of
someone's lips—

in the dark
reach for faucet,
for many years
walk downstairs

at first glance nothing
happens with this
very big problem

till foreground blurs
so you might see it

Esther Lee

Accent

Theirs was not the coastal plain's
privileged plantation cadence,
more red-dirt piedmont slur—
each syllable lengthened, spread
on tongue like honey, or plucked
from ends of words, middles like
feathers from Sunday's chicken,
yet different as well, strident
as if mountain air distilled
all but necessity from
their words, or was it winter
knocking chinks from cabin walls,
years breaking skin-flint dirt-rock,
isolate lives passed in cove
and hollow, always under
looming mountains, shadow-gloom
engulfing land like a lake,
hidden away until war
when they fought confederate
often as federal, sometimes
whichever side showed up first,
their allegiances parlanced
by union of place and blood.

Ron Rash

Moody Spring

No family name but a flow
not counted on when a drought
lapped up what water might fill
a dipper or pail, given
a human nature, as though
the bestower believed such
vagary was another
sign of lost Eden, so now
too fallen to certain rise.

Ron Rash

Salt and Ashes

*It seems the wound might exist to uncover
the salt, the anger, the petulance we hoard
cell by cell, treasure the body can bury.*

—William Matthews, “Wrong”

I want to scream *Cancer* in a crowded theater. I want to see
the cancer cops. I’ll yell *Cancer*, and someone will call
the emergency number, and they’ll come for me. I’ll be given
a sedative. The oncology nurse moonlighting as arresting officer
will take me by the arm, lead me to the ambulance—
pink lights flashing, Indian elephant bells mediating traffic—
and then the cell, the sentence: six more months of chemo
and a restraining order on my mouth.

I am petulant and angry.
I should have been redeemed by my suffering,
grown mellow, wiser, saintly. I hear that can happen.
I’m working on my attitude. I know it’s wrong
to eat too much salt, even if the chemical stream—
that Borgia cocktail which may also save me—
has stripped my tongue of taste buds, all but the ones
for salt and ashes. I taste ashes. I crave salt. Salty ashes.

My body is a California wild fire, contained.
I have been promised the fertile soil and regeneration
that follow flames. Someday, if they’re right, I will burst
into a blooming field of daffodils.

Judith Ortiz Cofer

Let’s Imagine I’m Trying to Deliver Something to You

Something in a manila envelope,
several sheets of benign-looking papers,
no surprises, no incriminations.

To reach you, I sometimes take the elevator,
sometimes the back stairs. Always,
I am waylaid or the weather

interferes, wind whipping my legs,
making a nuisance of my skirt. Occasionally,
I mistake your door for another

or at the right door, the wrong person
answers. Yesterday, a plump woman
in a patterned apron. Once, as I approached,

your brass mail slot vanished. Maybe
you don’t need these details. Maybe you don’t
even need the manila envelope

with its benign-looking papers. What matters
is this ridiculous, lunging flame
of my intent. Let that be enough.

Dannye Romine Powell

The Bridge Aches for the Water

Suspended, out of reach,
its reflection carries
so little weight. Shimmer
without depth. Color
without paint.
As a child, I longed
for a piano. My fingers ached
for the black and white keys
as I tapped out soundless melodies
on table tops, dashboards,
anywhere, everywhere.
Think of the flutter
of French conversation
outside a Paris café,
where you drink coffee
and dream that soon
the language will fly off
your own stubborn tongue,
easy and free. Illusion,
mirage. The bridge, high
over the water, suspended.

Dannye Romine Powell

Hospice as Muse

In the summer of rain
every day and no wildfires
the river rises

so high beavers swim
only when pink light
rinses their water-slicked heads,

heads at the point
of each trailing vee
pointed

as any intention.
What is her intention
today, friend

whose lacy
bones collapse, friend
trusting what's left to her

to people who will not test her,
people who honor
what we can never know.

I think today of hours
we squandered (committees,
budgets, justifying

what we'd built)
and hope that most
of those days she rebelled

alive in her private thoughts,
pondering nuances of a phrase
in Choctaw, savoring flavors

of sun-warmed peach,
breathing the aroma
of her beloved

folding her long bones
toward his torso.
Or those nights they fought

like wolverines
black gums framing
fangs they'd kept haloed

in silver fur around their faces,
fangs so private
only those we love

get to feel them,
fangs invisible
when into willow

and alder
crowding the riverbank
we disappear.

Peggy Shumaker

Benediction

And so, in the final days,
the substrate falling in her face,
she reached into dream pockets,
fists of oxygen in her lungs.
I am not afraid, she said.
I was trying to tie magic knots
in the threads we'd wrapped
around our fingers, as children will do,
criss-crossing yarn into webs.
The knots weren't holding.
I was trying to identify a bird
that had come to rest in the tree
outside my window—a migrator,
blue-headed vireo or yellow-
rumped warbler—what names!
Something amiss in the structure.
All my knots couldn't stop it.
My thirst for life gets deeper
and deeper the less of it remains.
It was a yellow-rumped warbler.
Color is not a great field marker.
Variations in light and shadow
can play tricks on one's sight.
Water brimmed under the bridge
where I used to stand and watch,
after rains, the fallen sticks gather,
moveable dams, temporary.
What was in her pockets?
She kept turning them over.
I was knotting and unknotting.
The dirt is magic, is sacred,
she said. I am not afraid.
Color is not a great field marker.
Water pushed away the twigs.

Anya Silver

Autumn

Shake the wild apple tree.
Remove the bread from the oven before it burns,
then cross yourself as you cut the loaf.
The dead have bloodied the maple's branch.
Ruin is more beautiful than drooping July.
Sleeplessness purples my eyes, crows cast shadows.
The mockingbird continues its monologue,
as though summer weren't already stalking
like a cat around the corner, swishing its tail.

Anya Silver

Red Never Lasts

There's no doubt it's the most glamorous,
the one you reach for first—its luscious gloss.
Russian Roulette, First Dance, Aperitif, Cherry Pop.
For three days, your nails are a ferris wheel,
a field of roses, a flashing neon Open sign.
Whatever you're wearing feels like a tight dress
and your hair tousles like Marilyn's on the beach.
But soon, after dishwashing, typing, bottle caps,
the chips begin, first at the very tips and edges
where you hardly notice, then whole shards.
Eventually, the fuss is too much to maintain.
Time to settle in to the neutral tones.
Baby's Breath, Curtain Call, Bone.

Anya Silver

Feature Section Contributors

Judith Ortiz Cofer's memoir, *The Cruel Country*, was published by the University of Georgia Press in March, 2015. She is the author of *The Poet Upstairs* (2012), *The Line of the Sun*, a novel; *Silent Dancing*, a collection of essays and poetry; *A Love Story Beginning in Spanish*, *Terms of Survival*, and *Reaching for the Mainland*, poetry; and *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry*. In 2010 she was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame. Judith Ortiz Cofer is the Regents' and Franklin Professor of English and Creative Writing Emerita at the University of Georgia.

Tony Hoagland's newest book of poems, *Application for Release from the Dream*, was just published by Graywolf Press in September. His most recent prose collection is *Twenty Poems That Could Save America and Other Essays*, also from Graywolf. He teaches at the University of Houston.

Mark Jarman's latest collection of poetry is *Bone Fires: New and Selected Poems* (Sarabande Books, 2011). He is Centennial Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. Sarabande Books will publish his next collection, *The Heronry*.

Esther Lee is a poet, essayist, and letterpress fanatic. She is the author of *Spit*, winner of the Elixir Press Poetry Prize, and a chapbook, *Blank Missives* (Trafficker Press). Her writing, visual art, collaborations, and book-arts projects have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Verse Daily*, *Hyphen*, and elsewhere. Her honors and awards include the Elinor Benedict Poetry Prize, Snowcroft Prose Prize, and Utah Writer's Contest Award for Poetry selected by Brenda Shaughnessy, as well as three Pushcart Prize nominations. Her second manuscript, *Chromogenic*, was recently selected as a finalist for the National Poetry Series.

Dannye Romine Powell is the author of three collections of poetry from the University of Arkansas Press, and a fourth, *Nobody Calls Me Darling Anymore*, is due from Press 53 in late 2015. She's won fellowships from the NEA, the North Carolina Arts Council, and Yaddo. Her poems have appeared recently in *32 Poems*, *Blackbird*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Harvard Review Online*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. She writes about books and authors for the *Charlotte Observer* newspaper.

Ron Rash is the author of the 2009 PEN/Faulkner Finalist and New York Times bestselling novel *Serena*, in addition to four other prize-

winning novels, including *One Foot in Eden*, *Saints at the River*, *The World Made Straight*, and *The Cove*; four collections of poems; and six collections of stories, among them *Burning Bright*, which won the 2010 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award; *Chemistry and Other Stories*, which was a finalist for the 2007 PEN/Faulkner Award; and most recently, *Something Rich and Strange*. Twice the recipient of the O. Henry Prize, he teaches at Western Carolina University.

Tracy K. Smith (see p. 11)

Peggy Shumaker is the author of several books of poems, most recently *Toucan Nest: Poems of Costa Rica*. Her lyrical memoir is *Just Breathe Normally*. She was the Rasmuson Foundation's Distinguished Artist for 2014 and served as Alaska State Writer Laureate, 2010-2012. For more information, you're welcome to visit her website at www.peggyshumaker.com.

Anya Silver is the author of two books of poetry, *The Ninety-Third Name of God* and *I Watched You Disappear*, both published by the Louisiana State University Press. Her third book, *From Nothing*, is forthcoming from LSU in 2016. She was named Georgia Author of the Year for Poetry in 2015. She teaches at Mercer University and lives in Macon with her husband and son.



POETRY 2015



International Poetry Competition

GRAND PRIZE \$1,000

DANUSHA LAMÉRIS



International Publication Prizes

Susan Berlin • Tom Boswell
 Lynn Tudor Deming • Deborah H. Doolittle
 Eve Forti • Justin Hunt
 Rob Jacques • Tina Johnson
 Jay Kidd • Raphael Kosek
 Robert Lundy • Mary Makofske
 Joyce Meyers • Marjorie Mir
 Paul McMahon • Meryl Natchez
 Rosalind Pace • Sherman Pearl
 Andrea Potos • Mary Rozmus-West
 Joan Ryan • Tanya Shirley
 Joan I. Siegel • Judith Terzi
 Carol Was



International Merit Awards

Charles Brice • Joan Colby
 Anaïs Duran • Teresa Lockhart Eisenlohr
 Gustavo Pérez Firmat • Linda M. Fischer
 Jane Galin • Patricia L. Goodman
 Wendy Holborow • Luisa A. Igloria
 Paul Jeffcut • Laura Kaminski
 Joan Kunsch • Lily Iona MacKenzie
 Isabella David McCaffrey • Donna Marie Merritt
 Anne Johnson Mullin • Erin Murphy
 Kathleen O'Toole • Teresa Peipins
 Wanda S. Praisner • Laura Rand
 Jane B. Rawlings • Gloria Richardson
 Ed Ruzicka • Rachel M. Simon
 Caroline Sposto • Margaret Stawowy
 Nancy Takacs • Mark Wagenaar



Holy Week, Twilight, South Sudan

The women return
from market swaying,
lilting, cloths bright swirled
upon their heads,
their dusty feet beautiful
on the willing ground
grown faintly cool.
Bats dive and arabesque
as if working to pull down
a thickening heaven,
the hieroglyphs
of their bodies in flight,
unreadable.

Someone is tootling a horn
too faraway to follow
and the dome of sky
is fast collapsing into
the quiet economy
of night.

Workers return from digging
a well for the ordinary
miracle of deep,
drinkable water
while inside their hut
above the door
Christ is still dying
on his cross.
Outside, clouds
shroud the moon
then release it
made new again

with a glow that
fills the baskets, drenches
the whitened soles
of feet, quivers
just at the unseen
edge of where we will go.

Raphael Kosek

Water

When it came to water in Algiers,
I could never reason. Perpetual flow
of the Mediterranean, turquoise

silk bathing the port, view from my
terrace. But turn on the tap, fickle
conduit, torrent tiring to stream,

stream to drizzle, to tear evaporating.
A relationship shifting? Deserting
perhaps: passion of the love traveler

no longer a thriving oasis of herders,
cloth, clay vessels. And what about
goat hair carpets, basketry? And those

bright yellow, orange, ochre jewels—
spices cradled in burlap like the place
itself nestled inside the desert hollow

of the M'Zab Valley. Oh Saharan sun
of Ghardafa, city over a thousand years
old. Not one other woman in the main

square that Sunday. Not one *haik* flowing
over clothing, covering for all but one
eye of woman. Here, only the elegance

of men in turbans, their *chèches*: dusty
orange, white, cobalt blue. Marketplace
of men. My photo taken in the shadows

of a slender passageway before ramparts
begin to rise toward Allah. Before
the tourist must halt at the sign picturing

that shorts, short sleeves, uncovered heads,
cameras are forbidden. And farther up,
pink and white houses of clay and sand

surround the ancient mosque like moats.
Tenth century mosque—sturdy shield,
sentry of the fortress. And in the lower

town, the newer mosque, the muezzin
calling at 4AM: rush of shoes echoing
on flat ground, sweeping through

alleyways like the palm frond sweeper
of dreams, the *andante* of his broom
lengthening measures of unrestrained

pleasure. Like water gushing from a tap,
the contours of jerricans flooding. And bath
beads of lavender longing to be swished.

Judith Terzi

Passing Odysseus on the Way

you must...

*carry your well-planed oar until you come
to a race of people who know nothing of the sea...*

—The Odyssey of Homer, Book 11, tr. Robert Fagles

I often thought,
having heard the songs and tales,
or rewoven threads of them,
was I the one foretold
to meet him, the nameless one
Tiresias in his blindness saw?

A young boy,
harnessed to the seasons,
ignorant as our newest calf,
island-born, I had never known
but one small plot of land.
The sea, what I heard of it,
hardly believed;
a white bird, a taste of salt
on the wind. Foreign. Far off.

Each year, a restlessness
in my blood beat stronger,
urging against caution, habit, sense.
That day, I dropped the hay rake
where I stood and walked away
toward the edge of the world
for all I knew.

The sun was high when I saw him,
my opposite in every way,
slow, heavy with years, head bent,
uneasy on uneven ground.

Closer, I stopped to stare
at the tool against his shoulder,
a pole, flat and widened at its end.
He saw the question in my eyes,
raised it a little in greeting,
nodded and went on.

As for myself,
I found my blood's calling,
found the sea.
Once on shipboard, I was home,
better with sails and cables
than ever with rake and plough.
The good days give us sea birds' wings;
others, perverse or sleeping winds
remind us we are aliens there,
castoffs, dispossessed.

And the old man I met so long ago?
I would have forgotten
were it not for the stories they tell.
If he and I cross paths again,
it may be where an oar
thrust deep in soil says
here it ends—the sea,
tumultuous enchantments,
all voyaging—
and here begins the rocky soil
of birthplace, seed and rest.

Marjorie Mir

Afterimage

visiting my grandfather's village in central Greece

The calendar informs me it was
three weeks ago, though I'm certain decades
or centuries have intervened
since that time we were led
up the twisting roads alongside cypress
and pine, groves of olives
and the tinkling bells of mountain goats
blocking our path before we arrived
in the *plateia*, beside the ancient
platanos tree whose enormous limbs reached
across the wobbly table
where I leaned my head
against the taverna wall, where I sat
sipping the thick, bitter coffee made
by my grandfather's sister's granddaughter,
where I imagined the uneven quartz-
veined stones still hold
the memory of his step.

Andrea Potos

"Though It Be but Bread and Onion, Let It Be Given Graciously"

Nan o piaz, pesh an ee waz.

The Persian proverb spoken by the host
apologized for the platters of pilau,
the dishes of lamb stew, yoghurt,
and slices of pale green melon so
sweet and juicy I thought I'd died
and gone to paradise, where
perfection is uninterrupted joy
and every appetite satisfied,

and that
is the idea, to give and give
and call it nothing even though
the feast took three days to prepare
with all six women of the household
working from morning to night,
and the severed head of the sheep
still resting outside the garden wall
where it was thrown.

Rosalind Pace

Bullfrog in Spring

Sogged brass & bassoon
of the swamp—

his watery lowings of love, or
only a wartled brow

struck by moonlight,
this gong through the trees?

Moths settle in moist surreptions
around the lantern; contagion,

faint toxin of longing, sparges
the flickering air.

If tonight I send you a riddle
wrapped in waters and leaves

iced grapes of the moon, unripened

will you reach out your hand
to catch the chill full cluster?

Lynn Tudor Deming

Of Limpet Larvae and Home Scars

Not that even for a moment I aspire
to sessibility, but for some reason I keep
returning to the image of limpets settling
into their home scars, those shallow havens
in stone whose perimeters perfectly match
each shell's unique pattern of scallops.

I wonder how they know the time the tide
turns, how long they have to finish algae-grazing,
when to start their ponderous ways back
the short distance to their own sweet homes.

And then one dark winter morning,
warm in my bed, I awake from a succession
of nightmares and a vivid vision of limpet
larvae, slightly larger than grains of sand,
free-floating in the vast pelagic column,
furiously pedalling their cilia but unable
to control direction, predators surrounding
them, sucking them up left and right,
above, below, and I understand my terror

and why survivors grow shells, find
age-old rocks to snuggle into and grip on
with teeth now known to be made of goethite,
the strongest tested biological material, surpassing
even the tensile strength of spider silk.

Then I start to wonder why the homes
are called scars, but that's another dream.

Mary Rozmus-West

Harboring the Ducks

Do not shoot them
from this broad arc of sky.
Let them descend
into this eerie twilight
world divided
by shafts of flushed light
and shanks of tall trees.

Let them rotate
slowly about the inlet's
edge, spread their flight
feathers like fingers, extend
their necks and feet.
Let them hang in the air,
briefly, as if eternity

waited. Then let
the water rise up to greet
them as they splash
in, folding their
wind-beaten wings
over their silent bills
and back-turned heads.

Let them feel safe,
as if under lock and key,
with no raccoon,
fox, or mongrel dog allowed in.
Let them nuzzle
and bob in the gathering dark
while the moon splits itself
in two on the distant horizon.

Deborah H. Doolittle

Vespers

November evening
and trumpeter swans pass high above the harbor,
flowing as if current-filled
across a sky slowly numbing to black.
Their necks are stretched like white cord,
their feet tucked tight
beneath wings that open and close like a pulse.
The harbor must appear as flickers to them,
sparks beset by yawning spans of darkness
with myself below, aimless and cold, invisible,

whispering a prayer for swans
and rusty blackbirds, for winter wrens and pipits,
who leave the dismantled nest of summer
to chalk a line across the rising slate of winter.
Their only map a particular vista
that tings the lightness in their bones.
Let mercy fall
on those who trust in destinations
for earth's arc is parceled into endless miles,
so many of them traveled in the dark.

Tina Johnson

Vanishing Point at the Inlet

I park beneath the only tree, a scarred sycamore
with knuckled limbs stretching toward
the water where inlet opens to ocean.

This is my summer office. Here, no traffic
but grackles and crows. A decent breeze.
An old boat that bobbles beyond the sea grass.

Every so often, another curious tourist
noses his car into this half-hidden cove,
pops out, takes a picture and departs.

And every afternoon I sit, windows down,
reading a book and, between chapters, contemplate
the blank shingle fixed with one rusty nail
to the tree's trunk. I feel an affinity, both
the sign and me weathered to anonymity.

Who came to this unnamed spit of land, hammer
in hand, to nail the shingle there (or did they use a rock)?
What message to convey? *No trespassing? Will you marry me?*
How many storms before the words washed away?

And who am I—years without a tongue—to be the one
to now give it voice? Each day of summer I've wondered: why
me, why did I happen to find this particular tree with its
blank sign begging for something to profess?

I grab my permanent marker, get out of the car
and, in firm strokes, print the word:

Yes.

Susan Berlin

Imagination's Steed

*For Flicka, Black Beauty, Misty,
and all the other horses of my imagination*

They leaped from the page, bearing me
into alien landscapes and fresh language—
from arroyo to barrier island, vicarage
to inlet, past mesquite and cottonwood
to run my fingers over fetlock, pommel,
withers, curry comb, bit, girth, blaze.
They opened my eyes to new colors—
roan, pinto, sorrel, palomino, dapple gray—
and hoofs pounding on turf, cobblestones, beach.

Without staring into horses' knowing eyes
or hoisting myself to their rounded backs,
I could ride Western or English,
heels down, head up, letting the reins
go slack or pulling them taut
without actual touch.

Fifteen hands high puts a rider
far from the ground, I would find
when I finally stood by a living horse,
gingerly touching its soft nose
and gloved by its moist, warm breath.

For years a white stallion galloped beside our car
on every family trip. He kept up, no matter
how fast we traveled, leaped not only streams
but rivers and chasms. Though I studied
the books to learn how to ride,
how to post at a canter, or nudge to a trot,
he kept his distance, wild as a mustang,
needing no mistress awed by his power.
I don't know where he went when he wasn't
beside us. I don't remember
when he disappeared.

Mary Makofske

I Am What I've Eaten

I am my mother's sweet milk
and the soup she made of chicken
and the wings that circled the pot till they
flew to my mouth. I am her
tired voice urging "*Eat! Eat!*"
I am bread that was so plastic I could
mold it into tiny sculptures.
I am the sun I swallowed during an epiphany
and the pastrami with pickle and slaw
I once had at the deli with my dad.
I am the crow I ate when my job was at stake
and I kissed up to my boss.
I am the dust I ate when it was kicked back
by loved ones who'd left me behind.
I'm the worm I swallowed by accident
and I'm the juice of the peach it lived in.
I am the moon I consumed at our wedding
and the cake you fed me while I fed you.
I'm the flesh I ravaged on our honeymoon
and the bacon that sizzled at breakfast.
I am the mush that's consuming me
from inside and the bones the insects
will feed on. I'm the hunger for everything
I will never get to eat
but for dinner tonight, let's have one another.

Sherman Pearl

Request

And when your friend the silver-scaled
flounder next rises to your call,
say you want only our slate-roofed cottage
and time to consider subtleties of Sung prosody,
the rectification of names, campaigns of dead
emperors, formation of fractals,
evolution of rare lepidoptera.

But tell him your wife demands
more. She needs to indulge her taste
for baby eels braised in garlic, Muscovy
duck breast with pomegranate and pine nuts,
gamey elk steak and earthy morels
served on salvers of filigreed china
along with etched crystal flutes of Veuve Cliquot
on a lakeside pavillion of cinnabar
and quattrocento-carved ebony. Then she wishes
to sleep on piles of silk Sarouks,
topped with eiderdown coverlets of saffron
charmeuse embroidered with poppies and scented
with attar of Damascene rose. And there she will dream
of the fisherman's hut where, barely nineteen,
she first lay with you.

Joan Ryan

Don't Let the Fluffy Fool You

Where I come from
fat women are called *fluffy*,
a word conjuring cotton candy
and clouds you can sail on to see Jesus.
We the fluffy women of this island
famous for wood, weed, and water
do not hide under rocks or play timid
like the Shame Mi Lady.
We are a chorus of puffed-up sparrows
whose hips chirp as we swish and swish
our fluffed-up feathers in every parish.
Local songs pit us against our slimmer
counterparts; stage shows have dance contests
between Mampi and Mawga Gyal and always
we hold our own.
The fat you find here is flexible: we are supple
wood and undulating water.
We *wine down* to the ground and split,
our legs stretch like spliffs. We *ben over*,
ben over front ways and back ways.
This body is not a prison. This mouth
knows food was meant to be eaten.
Where I come from fat women
are called *fluffy*, a word less loaded,
more buoyant, not stern like *corpulent*
or sinister like *obese*. *Fluffy* conjures
pillows cradling lottery dreams.
Fluffy says come rest here in the billows
of flesh. *Fluffy* says you better know
how to ride these waves or you shall sink
alone. We fluffy women do not drown
in the world's disdain of fat.

Tanya Shirley

Unchanging Guards at Buckingham Palace

I went to Buckingham Palace to see the changing of the Guard.
They work really hard
At keeping all expression off of their faces
As if they were playing poker, and didn't want anyone to guess
if they were holding a duet of Deuces or a quartet of Aces.
Each guard must spend his entire shift in a monumental
exercise of will
By holding still.
Each day they must gird their loins
To resist the temptation to wince at the flashbulbs flashed
in their faces by elderly tourists from Des Moines.
In spite of the best efforts of beautiful girls winking
They stand unsmiling and unblinking.
To the small children who against their knees make an impact
and then throw a fit,
They never, ever, react. Not even a little bit.
In the training room, behind doors secured by high bars and
low locks,
Where athletes would abuse steroids, they must abuse Botox.
Each guard is a living, breathing ode
To the artistry of Madame Tussaud.
This thing I find the most strange:
At the end of the watch, when they are replaced by new guards,
it is called a change.

Robert Lundy