

Poet Laura Read, Tuesday Mar. 26, 7:30pm, UP Bookstore



Laura Read's chapbook *The Chewbacca on Hollywood Boulevard Reminds Me of You* won the Floating Bridge Chapbook Award in 2010, and her first full-length collection *Instructions for My Mother's Funeral* (2012) was chosen as the winner of AWP's Donald Hall Prize for Poetry by Dorianne Laux. Her second collection, *Dresses from the Old Country*, was published by BOA in 2018. Her individual poems have received awards from *The Florida Review*, *Dogwood*, and *Crab Creek Review* and have been published in many different journals, including most recently, *Radar*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Blood Orange Review*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. She teaches English Composition, Literature, and Creative Writing at Spokane Falls Community College and helps advise SFCC's creative arts magazine *The Wire Harp*. She is also the Poetry Editor for *Crab Creek Review*. Laura served as the second poet laureate of Spokane, Washington from 2015-2017, and presents regularly at literary festivals and conferences throughout the Northwest, such as GetLit!, Write on the Sound, Litfuse, and the Port Townsend Writers Conference. She has a strong connection to Spokane because she's lived there most of her life, but Portland comes in second as one of her two sons and two of her brothers' families live here.

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When You Have Lived a Long Time in One Place

things start to vanish. Like the old Newberry's where I used to buy earrings that looked like tacks, six pairs for a dollar, and then go sit at the lunch counter with the old people eating patty melts and drinking black coffee. They stared in front of them like the women on the bus with their plastic rain scarves that they took from their purses when the bus lurched towards their stop. They wore dresses from the old country. Now I wonder if they have nowhere to go. The building stands empty like a mind that can't remember the words that stick things to their places, *pants, chair, toast*. How can we remember if they keep taking things down, like the house where I lived when I was young and waiting for love? I lay there in the yard in my bathing suit pink as a poppy and I could feel his shadow when it touched my body. Now there is only a clean slate of grass where that house stood, the same grass that covers the spot in Lincoln Park where there used to be a wading pool. where I took Ben until the day I turned away to get a toy for him and then he was face down in the water, and I pulled him out and we looked at each other and I could see in his eyes that he couldn't believe the water was heartless, that it didn't know who he was.

Ghost Clothes

Every day I drive past the dead and listen for their sighing the way you could hear people talking in a diner and spoons hitting coffee cups in a song I used to love. One of those stones is my father, never getting old, never falling asleep in his chair or leaving fruit out on the counter. He should take off his ghost clothes so we can watch reruns and talk about the weather. And if a storm comes up, we'll close the windows and sit inside the dark house or maybe go out into it. Like the day I graduated from high school and my brother and I ran through the lightning and rain to the playground where we swung on the metal swings that always kept swinging and creaking when the bell rang and the kids jumped off so I had to stay back and hold onto the chains until they stopped. My brother and I stayed out too long, so I threw on my cap and gown and ran into line and some kids were high and one girl was pregnant and I had this storm inside.

Pentecost

The week after your father died,
I see you walking home after school
in your Wimpy Kid t-shirt,
and I don't even know you but I want
to call you over like a kidnapper
and tell you it's only beginning.
Your head will always be a lit match
like the apostles in the stained glass window
when Jesus came back. But he will never
come back. I say this because you know
but still you will dream of it.
You will love books and TV shows
about time travel. Like the blue
police box you can get inside and go
back to the week before last.
Or maybe he will find you
like he does in these first mornings
before you remember.
He'll always be wearing the same shirt
when he comes in to wake you,
like my dad in his olive stripes,
as if he never wore anything else.

Cathedral

My summer quarter students loved that story's
ending when the blind man puts his hands
on the narrator's as he draws a cathedral
to show him what it's like.
When I see Cory at the elevator, this is what
I think of. Here we are in coats and boots
after only seeing each other when
it was 100 degrees and we couldn't believe
we had class. Blindness kept coming up,
not as something real, but as a symbol.
Like in *Oedipus*, which Cory liked
but didn't believe. How could Oedipus not
have seen? I don't think I believed it either,
but then I dated a man addicted to drugs
and checked out books with titles like *Cocaine*,
thinking I could fix him. One night,
I had money in my purse, and when he left,
I didn't, and still I had to lie down
and stare at the light fixture until I saw spots
before I could admit it.
Cory has PTSD and can't sit close to other
students. I know the kind of thing

that sets him off, like when Steve comes in
late and tries to participate even though
he hasn't done the reading and halfway through
takes some pills and walks around the room.
Cory wants to kill him. I liked that class.
Linda brought Michael rhubarb, John's shirt
kept coming open. It was the hottest July
we've had, and the sky was full of smoke
from all the fires. I almost told them.

100-Year-Old Box of Negatives Discovered by Conservators in Antarctica

The mold on the picture makes a lattice design
around the door of the Aurora
where scientist Alexander Stevens
stands, amazed that after all these years
adhered to the other negatives,
someone has separated and restored him
so even the mold on his picture
fascinates like the intricate shadows
of leaves around a house, the kind of house
he once lived in, he remembers,
reaching far back before the one hundred years
of ice, before the Aurora blew off in the storm,
before they even left on the expedition
to stock the depots for Shackleton.
He has dark hair and a beard,
he's wearing one of those pea coats,
and he looks like a man I could love,
his hands on his hips as if daring me to,
as if it were even possible
because what is a century or a continent?
Didn't he travel from Glasgow
to Antarctica to walk across an Ice Shelf
my feet will never touch?
Couldn't I at least do something,
like look out at the sun setting here
in North America in the late afternoon
on the first day of February, 2015,
a thin pink streak above the snow,
and think of him for a moment
standing there in history,
feeling his way towards the pole?