

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Lauren Camp: Three Poems

Lauren Camp · Wednesday, June 29th, 2016

Lauren Camp is the author of three collections, most recently *One Hundred Hungers* (Tupelo Press, 2016), which won the Dorset Prize. Her poems appear in *New England Review*, *Poetry International*, *Slice*, *The Seattle Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Beloit Poetry Journal* and elsewhere. Other literary honors include an Anna Davidson Rosenberg Award, residencies with the Gaea Foundation and the Mabel Dodge Luhan House, and a Black Earth Institute Fellowship. She produces and hosts “Audio Saucepan”—a global music program interwoven with contemporary poetry—on Santa Fe Public Radio. [www.laurencamp.com](http://www.laurencamp.com).

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## Incomplete Wish

In the midst of cold, I begin  
at the back door and wander out  
to learn dunes. To keep myself warm,  
I recite prayers, linking susurrations together  
as I walk down the center of each street  
with everything I am wearing. I walk through  
extensions and conclusion, then back again.  
Catalpa trees script a sky pale as cheap tin.  
I spill idle chatter onto a few people, explaining time  
before it happens. From a glass jar on the tall  
counter of a small store, I buy three sesame  
cookies — pleasure in the handed over, change  
taken back. Down the logic of roads toward  
the dark eyes of ocean, waiting for distance.  
Small ships slip away. I am content with such  
retreating. I incant my breath as the sand  
shifts to lyrics. In later versions, I am left  
with a derivative of the ocean pouring out.  
I am sitting on a bench, on bristle  
and desire, turning blank pages.

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## The Most Beautiful Waiting

Many things are better in retrospect  
 (the craving, the tempest) but it's good being compressed  
 into the sweeter now  
 with your beautiful hair in half-marks  
 of gray, while outside, crows grope at the ground  
 in their dark garments.  
 We can see what is pure in what is  
 collapsing, relish the new noise  
 of our secondary selves. Already our bodies seem close  
 to grimace, we who awaken with wrinkles  
 and dots. You show me a hunger hemmed  
 but unfinished,  
 the same way you dance,  
 loose and unafraid of the earth.  
 The geometry of our lives has pushed in,  
 so we're in bed before 10, but we're still  
 wisdom and tabernacle, still morning smear.  
 Even if I sleep sloped too deep into night, you murmur  
*love*, and my tattered flight back  
 carries the lick and purr of your voice.

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## Cream Puff

What must have been her play-  
 act, the money  
 wadded up and slid across the span  
 of table, the aim of cash  
 and show of leaving  
 past the tortes and strudel, the meat-  
 filled empanadas, past all the beaten  
 egg whites; those sweetnesss baked and topped  
 with butter. (But this is not  
 about the court of sugar  
 and the spongy pastries so let's get back  
 to leaving where we had entered  
 more than two  
 hours prior. Or to the table  
 where I leaned across, reading  
 backwards her manic  
 text to help her  
 winnow the quotidian  
 apocalypse of life—the dates  
 and losses). We talked of two pieces  
 of a mind and how circular  
 her thinking, how the exterior flaked

into the soft inside  
you never want to show  
and how, in writing, you shudder  
and then show it. As the room  
got louder, my chest and throat went pasty  
from shouting  
guidance. I may have aided her. Maybe  
pulled her through enough  
raw syllables  
on writing. But the money—this was  
the miracle. She gave me  
a little hump, a palm  
of bills I didn't open; I pushed it  
in my purse, and followed her to the glass  
door already smothered with the sun's  
sharp cutting. And when I pulled away and spread  
the money out, I realized why  
it felt so slight, as if the center  
wasn't deep enough. I didn't need  
to know what didn't  
matter. I was ashamed for her, for how  
she rolled the good into what  
was ruined, and how I would  
always wipe my hands  
and count the truth  
of every other thought I'd keep on giving.

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