



Smoke (American Poets Continuum: 62)

Dorianne Laux

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Dorianne Laux's long-awaited third book of poetry follows her collection, *What We Carry*, a finalist for the 1994 National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry. In *Smoke*, Laux revisits familiar themes of family, working class lives and the pleasures of the body in poetry that is vital and artfully crafted—poetry that "gets hard in the face of aloofness," in the words of one reviewer. In *Smoke*, as in her previous work, Laux weaves the warp and woof of ordinary lives into extraordinary and complex tapestries. In "The Shipfitter's Wife," a woman recalls her husband's homecoming at the end of his work day:

*Then I'd open his clothes and take
the whole day inside me—the ship's
gray sides, the miles of copper pipe,
the voice of the foreman clanging
off the hull's silver ribs. Spark of lead
kissing metal. The clamp, the winch,
the white fire of the torch, the whistle,
and the long drive home.*

And in the title poem, Laux muses on her own guilty pleasures:

*Who would want to give it up, the coal
a cat's eye in the dark room, no one there
but you and your smoke, the window
cracked to street sounds, the distant cries
of living things. Alone, you are almost
safe . . .*

With her keen ear and attentive eye, Dorianne Laux offers us a universe with which we are familiar, but gives it to us fresh.

Dorianne Laux is the author of two previous collections of poetry from BOA Editions, Ltd., and is co-author, with Kim Addonizio, of *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Joys of Writing Poetry* (W.W. Norton, 1997), chosen as an alternate selection by several bookclubs. Laux was the judge for the 2012 A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Contest, and is a tenured professor in the creative writing program at the University of Oregon. Laux lives in Eugene, Oregon.

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Dwight Ivers:

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