Featured Poet: Melissa Balmain

Melissa Balmain is the Editor of Light, America's premier journal of light verse (www.lightpoetrymagazine.com). She teaches humor writing, poetry writing, and journalism at the University of Rochester. Though she has received the Able Muse Book Award and twice been a finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, some of her favorite prizes are Abe Lincoln bobbleheads, salt and pepper shakers that look like outhouses, and other classy items she has won in the Style Invitational, The Washington Post’s weekly humor contest. Her poems have appeared in American Arts Quarterly, American Life in Poetry, Lighten Up Online, Measure, Mezzo Cammin, Poetry Daily, The New Verse News, The Spectator (UK), and many anthologies; her prose in The New Yorker, The New York Times, McSweeney's, and Success. Her poetry collection Walking In on People (Able Muse Press), is often assumed by online shoppers to be some kind of porn.

Balmain and Frank Osen will lead a workshop on Light Verse and Parody.

Description: What makes some poems and parodies funnier than others? Are the standards of craftsmanship different for light verse? Can contests help you get better at writing it? What the heck is “light verse,” anyway? We’ll seek answers to these questions and more, with help from poets living, dead, and (in the case of parodies) sometimes both. Topics to be explored include humor-friendly forms, rhyme and meter, subject matter, line and syntax, and types of poems that light-verse editors don’t care if they ever see again.

Below is one of Balmain’s poems:

**Fluffy Weighs in on the Baby**

It’s hairless as an egg—
why bother petting that?
It doesn’t purr or groom your leg,
and yet you feed the brat.

Instead of catching mice,
it grapples with its socks.
It’s never taken my advice
to use the litter box.
It can’t climb up a tree,
it can’t chase balls of string,
it leaves you zero time for me—
just eat the wretched thing.