Featured Poet: Rebecca Foust

Rebecca Foust’s book of sonnets, *Paradise Drive*, won the Press 53 Poetry Award and was widely reviewed, in venues including the *Georgia Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*. Recognitions include the *American Literary Review* Fiction Award judged by Garth Greenwall, the James Hearst Poetry Prize judged by Jane Hirshfield, and fellowships from the Frost Place, MacDowell, and Sewanee.

Foust will lead a workshop on *The Contemporary Sonnet*.

Description: Fourteen lines do not a sonnet make. What are the necessary and sufficient qualities that “earn” the title? In the words of Molly Peacock, Is there a 21st century sonnet? Is there an American Sonnet? The form has persisted, ebullient and powerful for seven centuries. How has it renewed itself? More importantly, how can it renew poetry and those writing it? This class will examine the contemporary sonnet in its myriad and exciting interactions with traditional forms. Each day will offer a short lecture with handouts, workshop of student poems, and a prompt.

Below is one of Foust’s poems:

**Requiem Mass for the Yuma Fourteen**

*Your lungs, now, are leaking moisture to the vampire air.*

*Your tears leak into the sky.*—*The Devil’s Highway*, by Luis Alberto Urrea

Beyond the border they could smell the rain.
It smelled like freedom. Freedom and home.
The desert composes its requiem.
The oldest was nearly sixty, his son thirteen.
One wore new jeans, one carried a comb.
Beyond the border they could smell the rain.

They got lost; then, they lost their water. The sun
was a furnace blast. Dust. Thirst. Delirium,
the desert composing its requiem.

Vampire air. Heat that bakes flesh off bone.
Hands fretworked with spines, mouths crammed
with bits of quartz, they smelled the rain.

The boy dreamt saguaro was bread and the stones
were stars. He heard tall, cool-winged seraphim,
rehearsing a Requiem Aeternam.

He made a neat stack of his clothes, and at dawn
he lay down. He burst like a ripe sunset, a plum.
Beyond the border, you can smell the rain.
The desert composes its requiem.

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