

VERSE IN PLACE

CAMILLE T. DUNGY

Trophic Cascade

After the reintroduction of gray wolves
to Yellowstone and, as anticipated, their culling
of deer, trees grew beyond the deer stunt
of the mid century. In their up reach
songbirds nested, who scattered
seed for underbrush, and in that cover
warrenred snowshoe hare. Weasel and water shrew
returned, also vole, and came soon hawk
and falcon, bald eagle, kestrel, and with them
hawk shadow, falcon shadow. Eagle shade
and kestrel shade haunted newly-berried
runnels where mule deer no longer rummaged, cautious
as they were, now, of being surprised by wolves. Berries
brought bear, while undergrowth and willows, growing
now right down to the river, brought beavers,
who dam. Muskrats came to the dams, and tadpoles.
Came, too, the night song of the fathers
of tadpoles. With water striders, the dark
gray American dipper bobbed in fresh pools
of the river, and fish stayed, and the bear, who
fished, also culled deer fawns and to their kill scraps
came vulture and coyote, long gone in the region
until now, and their scat scattered seed, and more
trees, brush, and berries grew up along the river
that had run straight and so flooded but thus dammed,
compelled to meander, is less prone to overrun. Don't
you tell me this is not the same as my story. All this
life born from one hungry animal, this whole,
new landscape, the course of the river changed,
I know this. I reintroduced myself to myself, this time
a mother. After which, nothing was ever the same.

This poem is reprinted from *Trophic Cascade* (Wesleyan University Press: 2017) with permission.

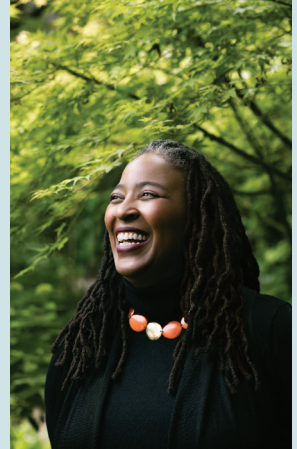
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CAMILLE T. DUNGY is the author of the essay collection *Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys into Race, Motherhood, and History* (W.W. Norton, 2017), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and four collections of poetry, most recently *Trophic Cascade* (Wesleyan UP, 2017; <https://www.wesleyan.edu/wespress/readerscompanions/DUN-TRO-RC.pdf>). She edited *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (UGA, 2009; <https://ugapress.org/book/9780820334318/black-nature/>), co-edited the *From the Fishhouse* poetry anthology (Persea, 2009), and served as assistant editor on *Gathering Ground: Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade* (University of Michigan Press, 2006). She is the poetry editor for *Orion* magazine. Dungy's work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *100 Best African American Poems*, *Best American Essays*, *Best American Travel Essays*, the *Pushcart Anthology* and more than 30 other anthologies, plus dozens of print and online venues including *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *VQR*, *Literary Hub*, *The Paris Review*, and [Poets.org](https://poets.org). Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Book Award, a Colorado Book Award, two Northern California Book Awards, two NAACP Image Award Nominations, and fellowships from the NEA in both prose and poetry. Dungy is currently a University Distinguished Professor in the English Department at Colorado State University. www.camilledungy.com

More work of the poet is available at:

- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/camille-t-dungy>
- <https://poets.org/poet/camille-t-dungy>
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