



Association of Writers
& Writing Programs

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Natasha Trethewey Gives Inaugural Reading as Poet Laureate

AWP Board Member Kicks Off Library of Congress 2012-13 Literary Season

Fairfax, VA, September 7, 2012 —Natasha Trethewey, a member of AWP's board of directors since 2010, will give her inaugural reading as Poet Laureate next Thursday, September 13 at 7:00 p.m. in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building, 101 Independence Avenue SE. Trethewey's term will coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Library's Poetry and Literature Center and the 1937 establishment of the Consultant-in-Poetry position, which was changed by a federal law in 1986 to Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry.

"Natasha Trethewey is an outstanding poet/historian in the mold of Robert Penn Warren, our first Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "Her poems dig beneath the surface of history—personal or communal, from childhood or from a century ago—to explore the human struggles that we all face."

Trethewey succeeds Philip Levine as Poet Laureate and joins a long line of distinguished poets who have served in the position, including W. S. Merwin, Kay Ryan, Charles Simic, Donald Hall, Ted Kooser, Louise Glück, Billy Collins, Stanley Kunitz, Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass, and Rita Dove. She is the first sitting AWP board member to hold the post. Dove was president of AWP's board prior to her own appointment.

Trethewey is the author of three poetry collections, including *Native Guard*, (2006), winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry; *Bellocq's Ophelia* (2002); and *Domestic Work* (2000). Her newest collection of poems, *Thrall*, is forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2012. Trethewey is the author of a nonfiction book, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (2010).

A professor at Emory University and director of the university's program in creative writing, Trethewey will reside in the Washington, D.C., area from January through May of 2013 and work in the Poets Room of the Poetry and Literature Center, the first time the Poet Laureate has done so since the inception of the position in 1986.

Robert Casper, head of the Library's Poetry and Literature Center, said, "I am thrilled our next Poet Laureate will spend the second half of her term in the Library's 'Catbird Seat.' There she will impact the capital and the country even more powerfully, as one of our great poets of reclamation and reckoning."

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The mission of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs is to foster literary achievement, to advance the art of writing as essential to a good education, and to serve the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing. Founded in 1967, AWP supports nearly 50,000 writers, over 500 college and university creative writing programs, and 125 writers' conferences and centers.