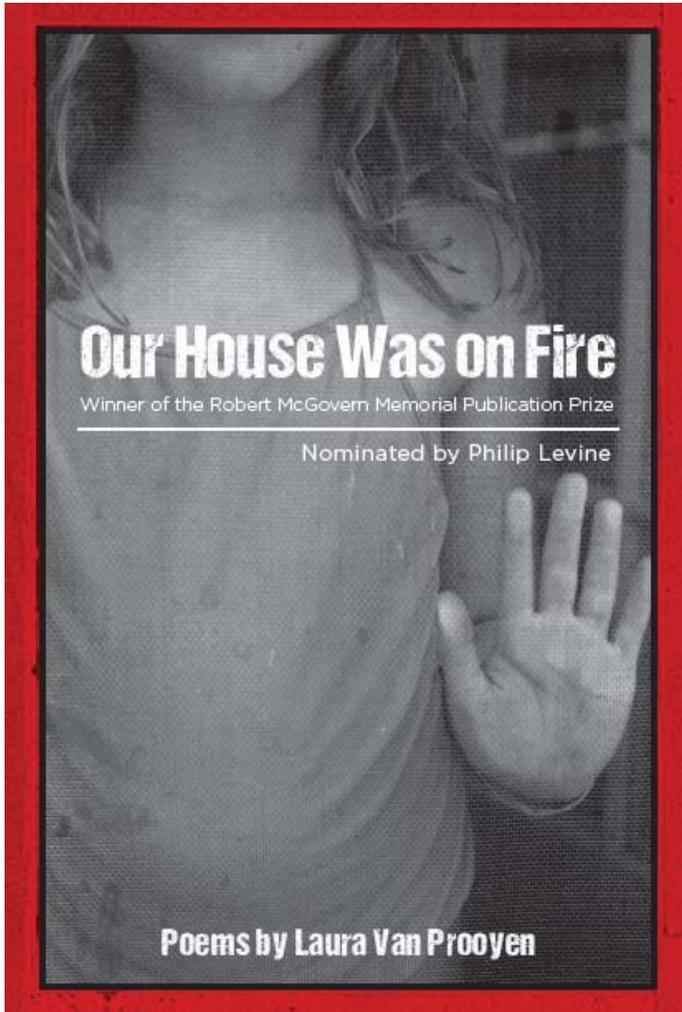




THE ASHLAND POETRY PRESS

Our House Was on Fire by Laura Van Prooyen

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Praise for *Our House Was on Fire*

Our House Was on Fire is an arresting, beautiful, and deeply satisfying book of longing, yet longing for what can never be known. And that gives this collection its powerful complexity: what is wanted or contemplated is tempting, but impossible. True desire recognizes what one might lose and also what one must give. Much is given in this book, much of the poet's mind and honest heart.

—Maurice Manning

"I think yes. I say no," Laura Van Prooyen declares in this book of assertions and questions where danger lives at every turn—a child threatened by disease, a love passing through uncertainty, all the *what ifs* and *keep at it* of our days on the planet. Like music, these meticulously paced poems play over and over unto dark trance their observation and grief, again and again the natural world furious and spare until all seems to stand still. "Understand, the plot doesn't matter," this highly lyric poet insists because her staring stops time. "I felt bad for looking," she tells us. "Still, I looked."

—Marianne Boruch

Yes, these are poems of mothering and daughtering and nesting and cuddling up. Hair is braided, groceries are gathered, leaves are raked and at least one breakfast is conspicuously perfect. But domestic? Domesticated? *Not on your life*. These poems are exclusively foreign, strange as physical form in the realm of the spirit, indigenous in a she-beast way. "We've seen the falcon / ravage a bare hand, and from nowhere, the wolf / lunge to join." For in this book, this house, in this house on fire, everyone knows where the knives are kept. Careful. These poems cut.

—Jill Alexander Essbaum

A poem from *Our House Was on Fire*

Revision

Understand, this is a story. You are gone
and I am home. The viburnum is in bloom.

A convertible speeds past with the top down.
Wait. Back up. The neighbor invites me
for a ride on his bike. I think yes. I say no.
Our daughters hear me and laugh. In this story,
we have no daughters. You are a stranger
and I am the girl. This is the beginning.

You refill, again and again, my drink. We walk
for hours past row houses. We don't know
where we are. This is the part where I should be scared.
I'm not. This is the part where you tell me
I'm beautiful, and I believe you. Where you press
my thigh to your hip. I wipe the rain
from your lenses like a mother, then
you resist me. You didn't count on the rain.

Or the girl who falls, so quickly, for the stranger
every time. Understand, the plot
doesn't matter. Only the peak. In this story, you
are gone a long time. I get a kitten.

It grows. I don't know viburnum from a child's
pale palm. I refill, again and again, my drink.

This is the beginning. I take off your glasses and lift
my skirt. I don't know you, but tell you: *resist*.



Laura Van Prooyen is a graduate of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. She is the author of an earlier collection of poems, *Inkblot and Altar*, and her poetry has appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere. She is a recipient of grants from The American Association of University Women and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund. She lives in San Antonio, TX.

Publicity and Events

Saturday, April 4, 2015: Laura will be the featured speaker and give a poetry reading at the AAUW Scholarship Luncheon. More information at: <http://sanantonio-tx.aauw.net/>

Wednesday-Saturday, April 8 - 11, 2015: Book signing at Ashland Poetry Press booth. AWP Conference & Bookfair, Minneapolis Convention Center & Hilton Hotel. Details TBD

Friday- Sunday, April 17-19, 2015: Featured poet in workshops, panels, and readings at Poetry at Round Top, Poetry Festival, Round Top, TX. More information at: <http://poetryatroundtop.org/>