



News from

Red Hen Press

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Suck on the Marrow

Poetry by

Camille Dungy

Suck on the Marrow, winner of the American Book Award and the Northern California Book Award, is a historical narrative, revolving around six main characters and set in mid-19th century Virginia and Philadelphia. The book traces the experiences of fugitive slaves, kidnapped Northern-born blacks, and free people of color, exploring the interdependence between plantation life and life in Northern and Southern American towns and illuminating the connections between the successes and difficulties of a wide range of Americans, free and slave, black and white, Northern and Southern. This neo-slave narrative treats the truths of lives touched by slavery with reverence but is not afraid to question the ways the old stories have too often been told. In addition to creating new stories, *Suck on the Marrow* develops new ways of telling those tales.

Suck on the Marrow

Poetry by Camille Dungy

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7 x 9; tradepaper

88 pages

Price: US \$18.95

Biographical note:

Camille T. Dungy is author of *What to Eat, What to Drink, What to Leave for Poison* (Red Hen Press, 2006), *Suck on the Marrow* (Red Hen Press, 2010), and *Smith Blue* (Southern Illinois University Press, June 2011), winner of the 2010 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition. Dungy is editor of *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (UGA, 2009), co-editor of *From the Fishhouse: An Anthology of Poems that Sing, Rhyme, Resound, Syncopate, Alliterate, and Just Plain Sound Great* (Persea, 2009), and assistant editor of *Gathering Ground: A Reader Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade* (University of Michigan Press, 2006). A two-time Northern California Book Award recipient, she has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, Cave Canem, the Dana Award, and Bread Loaf. Dungy is a two time NAACP Image Award nominee, has been shortlisted for the Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award, and was a finalist for the PEN Center USA Literary Award and the Library of Virginia Literary Award. She is a professor in the Creative Writing Department at San Francisco State University. Her poems and essays have been published widely in anthologies and print and online journals.

Praise for *Suck on the Marrow*:

“Camille Dungy's *Suck on the Marrow* exhumes a troublesome history through imagery and focuses us in the modern psyche. The metaphors are so apt and concrete that we not only witness and experience slavery within an artful frame, but also with all the nerve endings exposed. This collection embraces the act of imagining acutely, whereby imagination becomes almost an action. In fact, *Suck on the Marrow* plots a path back to the Southern soil, to common people, back to a double-binding pathos of pain and beauty through language.”

— Yusef Komunyakaa



More Praise for *Suck on the Marrow*



“Camille Dungy’s important new collection, *Suck on the Marrow*, explores the lives of African Americans in the 19th century, illuminating parts of slave and free black experience that are often overlooked. Plainspoken and unflinching, these poems enter the interior landscapes of the characters’ psyches to examine the nature of desire and longing and loss. With restraint and wry wit, Dungy shows us these things underscored by ownership and commodity. Foregrounding the stories of people for whom fewer records have been left, *Suck on the Marrow* offers us a fuller view of our collective American experience.”

—Natasha Trethewey

“Dungy offers us a haunting song cycle—a drama no less well-plotted than a play’s, but one that emerges in snippets of imagined letters.”

—Tess Taylor, *The Barnes and Noble Review*

“Dungy captures the human heart and soul in her characters while illustrating the rawness of their suffering with gracefully blatant and rebellious passion.”

— *Phati’tude Literary Magazine*

“Each of these poems explores a different facet of black womanhood during this era of American history. This book could easily sit on the shelf beside *Women of Plums* by Dolores Kendrick and Linda Brent’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.”

—Tara Betts, *For Harriet*

“Dungy has moved beyond the strictly subjective world-view to give voice to individuals--even her own ancestors--who had no access or opportunity to share their worlds with a larger American audience.”

— *Examiner*

“Survival!”

The body winnows. The body tills. The body knows
sow’s feet, sow gut, night harvested kale. The body knows
to sleep through welted dreams, to wake
before the night succumbs to morning.

Wheat, wheat, tobacco, corn: the body knows.

No stopping. No sinking down. Like a branch
floats on water, the body does not go under.
Like a tree seeded among dark rocks, the body
leans where it must. Or fails.

