
Teaching Poetry in Georgia Schools

My house is like a pond, she says. Is so pretty.

I ask her to say it again.

Can you say that again?

Did you say “pond”?

Round body of water behind a house in Vermont
where a white girl skinny dips and geese
make merry with picnics:
How can a house be like a pond?

She tells me Grandmom bakes custard pies.

She has a green carpet in the kitchen.

Her daddy likes candy. There’s a waterfall by the door.

I ask her to say it again.

Can you say that again?

Did you say “waterfall by the door”?

I don’t know if there is water by her house,
a splashing image in a cheap frame from the flea market,
or the sound of a neighbor’s pipes
flushing through the wall.

She writes about rainbows and spells rain *rian* and *bow*
as a separate word and *door* with two r’s and one o
and she sits next to a boy who writes that he is from *Mixeco*.

Her skin is the color of pine bark; eyes framed in small
gold globes like two ponds filled with a life made visible
through close looking. I know how to live in this school trailer,
but I’m from a house like a jewel box.

She asks me to say it again.

Can you say it again?

Did you say “jewel box”? Tha’s nice.

—Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

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Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, associate professor of language and literacy education at the University of Georgia, holds an MFA in poetry from New England College and a PhD in educational linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of two books and has published numerous poems and scholarly articles, which can be accessed at www.coe.uga.edu/lle/faculty/cahnmann, where one can also access “Misha’s Poetry Podcast” featuring recordings of student poets as well as prominent American writers.