Marcescence

Poems from Gahneesah

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by Christopher Martin & David King

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From the Preface

Gahneesah is the Anglicized form of the Cherokee name for Kennesaw Mountain, from which the word Kennesaw derives. It means “burial ground” or “place of the dead.”

Kennesaw Mountain is located in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, between the towns of Kennesaw and Marietta in northern Cobb County. It was the scene of the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain of the Atlanta Campaign of the Civil War, June 27, 1864. It is essentially an isolated ridge—or monadnock, from the Algonquin for “lonely mountain”—consisting of three summits: Big Kennesaw, Little Kennesaw, and Pigeon Hill.

Marcescence is a botanical term describing the retention of dead plant organs that normally are shed, as with the leaves of deciduous trees. In displaying marcescence, the leaves of a given tree, such as the beech, will wither during the winter yet remain attached to the tree until replaced by new growth.

All poems in this book are connected to the topography, real or imagined, of Gahneesah, their true country.
PRAISE FOR MARCESCENCE: POEMS FROM GAHNEESAH

“These remarkable poems by two fine Southern writers bring the past into sharp focus. They show us vividly how the wounds of history can touch us, and if they cannot make us completely whole, they can make us more completely human. This is a thoughtful, moving, and compelling book.”

—David Bottoms, former Poet Laureate of Georgia, author of We Almost Disappear and Armored Hearts: Selected and New Poems

“Martin and King have put together a collection haunted by history, in the midst of which, an unforgettable image: the vanishing heron as witness, standing stock still in the trash pile we’ve made of a sacred place. In these poems, Kennesaw Mountain and the battle that was fought here come alive again, for surely nature remembers—even a wren ‘trills the memory / of shell-shattered trees.’”

—Alice Friman, author of Vinculum, a 2012 Pushcart Prize recipient, and winner of the 2012 Georgia Author of the Year Award in Poetry

“In poems celebrating the way the natural world and we humans are composted and recycled to create the future of our enduring legacy and the posterity of our planet, Christopher Martin and David King have truly captured not only the concept of reconstitution in this collection, but, further, how important place is to who we are and who we might become—no matter where we may herald from or come to live.”

—Thomas Rain Crowe, author of Zoro’s Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods, winner of the 2006 Phillip D. Reed Memorial Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment
ABOUT THE AUTHORS


David King is Associate Professor of English and Film Studies at Kennesaw State University where he has taught for over twenty years. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals, and he has won first prize awards from the Academy of American Poets, the Poetry Society of America, Concepts Magazine, and Snake Nation Review. Most recently his poetry was featured in The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume V: Georgia. He is also the arts and culture columnist for The Georgia Bulletin, the newspaper of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, and his work has been awarded by the Catholic Press Association. A fourth generation Georgia native, he lives in historic Marietta with his wife and two young sons.

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The ghosts know better, stirring in the ground…
—“Gahneesah Rising”

To a gray-green blade, a grasshopper clings;
I catch it, kneel down, open cupped palms
before my son, and the dead
fly from flesh on blood red wings.
—“Resurrection in a Battlefield below Kennesaw Mountain”
Find the best poem by searching over 1 million poems by type, form, word, and more. Find, read, and share poetry written by over 40,000 famous and modern poets from all around the world. The word poetry comes from ancient Greece. Poieo translated means I create. Poetry, when it is well written, goes much deeper than the words on a page.