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Chinese spiritualism inspires second part of poet's trilogy

PITTSBURGH—*The Government of Nature* by Afaa Michael Weaver is the second volume of an extraordinary trilogy in which Weaver analyzes his life, striving to become his ideal poet. Weaver's twelfth collection, it has just been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

In *The Government of Nature* the Massachusetts author explores the trauma of his childhood—including sexual abuse—using a “cartography and thematic structure drawn from Chinese spiritualism.” Weaver is a practitioner of Daoism, and this collection deals directly with the abuse in the context of Daoist renderings of nature as metaphor for the human body.

“The book had its genesis in poems I wrote while living in He Nan Temple and Monastery in Hualien, Taiwan, in the spring of 2005,” Weaver said. “It examines the interface of my Christian upbringing with my Daoist studies, as I examine the abuse with an eye to recovery and forgiveness in a very eclectic spiritual life.”

The first book in the trilogy, *The Plum Flower Dance*, was also published by UPP, in 2007. Part three, a manuscript in progress, is titled *City of Eternal Spring*.

“Afaa Michael Weaver is one of the most significant poets writing today,” stated Henry Louis Gates in *Baltimore Magazine*. “With its blend of Chinese spiritualism and American groundedness, his poetry presents the reader (and the listener, for his body of work is meant to be read aloud) with challenging questions about identity, about how physicality and spirit act together or counteract each other to shape who we are in the world. His attention to the way language works is rare, and the effects of that attention on his poetry are distinctive and expansive.”

Weaver is the author of 11 previous poetry collections, including *Timber and Prayer: The Indian Pond Poems*; *My Father's Geography*; *Multitudes*; *The Ten Lights of God*; *Water Song*; and *Stations in a Dream*. His full-length play *Rosa* was produced in 1993 at Venture Theater in Philadelphia under a small-Equity contract. Weaver's short fiction appears in Gloria Naylor's *Children of the Night* and in Maria Gillan's *Identity Lessons*.

A resident of Somerville, Massachusetts, Weaver is alumnae professor of English at Simmons College in Boston. He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He has been awarded a Pushcart Prize and a Fulbright scholar appointment, among other honors.

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