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## **Conference on Poetry Faculty Patrick Phillips**

**Patrick Phillips** was born in Atlanta and raised in the Appalachian foothills of North Georgia. His third collection, *Elegy for a Broken Machine*, is forthcoming in 2015 from Alfred A. Knopf. A recent Guggenheim and NEA fellow in poetry, he is also the author of



*Boy* (2008) and *Chattahoochee* (2004), which won the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. His poems have appeared in many magazines, including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and the *American Poetry Review*, and received honors including the Lyric Poetry Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Emily Clark Balch Prize from *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and a “Discovery”/ *The Nation* Award from the 92nd Street Y. Phillips’ writing about the English Renaissance has been featured in *The Ben Jonson Journal*, and his collection of translations, *When We Leave Each Other: Selected Poems of Henrik Nordbrandt*, received the Translation Prize of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. He lives in Brooklyn and teaches at Drew University.

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### **Patrick Phillips on the Poetry Workshop**

"I love the mischievous fun of writing workshops. And I like a workshop best when, like a good poem, no one knows exactly where it's headed. So I don't think my job is to tell poets what or how to write. Instead, I like to help them see possibilities: how many different ways our great predecessors in the art have written well, and just how high they've set the bar. I myself work best when my conscious mind is distracted from all its uptight good intentions, so I also encourage writers to experiment with constraints—to buckle themselves into the straight-jacket of some received or invented form, and then marvel at how, Houdini-like, they manage the escape. I believe the best work is mysterious that way, and comes only after patient, daily practice. So the best workshops give us company and hope: with everyone wide-awake, quick to laugh and be delighted, yet also profoundly committed to one another, and to the art."

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## Variations on a Text by Donald Justice

by Patrick Phillips

I will die in Brooklyn, in January,  
as snowflakes swarm the streetlamps  
and whiten the cornices  
of the sleeping brownstones.

It will be a Sunday like today  
because, just now,  
when I looked up, it seemed  
that no one had ever  
remembered or imagined  
a thing so beautiful and lonely  
as the pale blue city.

No one will stare up  
at a light in the window  
where I write this,  
as taxis drag their chains  
over the pavement,  
as hulking garbage trucks  
sling salt into the gutters.

Patrick Phillips is dead.  
In January, in Brooklyn,  
crowds of people stood

on subway platforms  
watching snow  
fall through the earth.

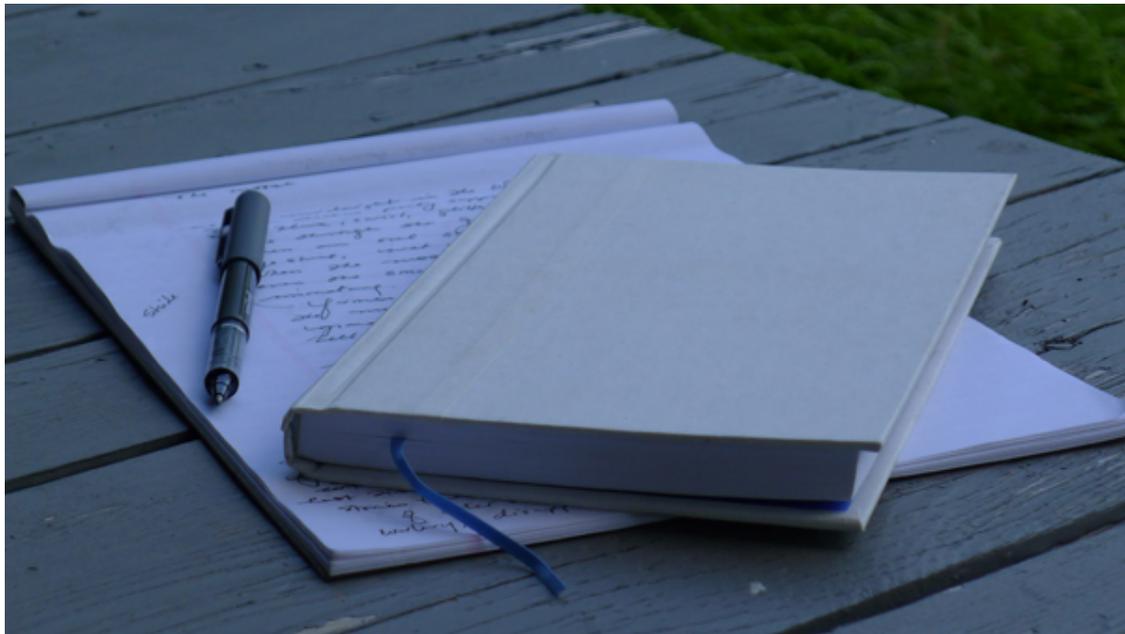
Yellow traffic lights  
blinked on and off,

and only the old man

pushing a grocery cart  
piled high with empty cans  
stopped long enough  
to raise his paper bag,

then took a swig, out of respect,  
as a Cadillac turned slowly  
in the slush, and slowly  
made its way down Fulton.

“Variations on a Text by Donald Justice” first appeared in *New England Review* 31:2,  
2010, forthcoming in *Elegy for a Broken Machine* (Knopf, 2015)



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- **The Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching - June 21 - 25, 2015**
- **The Frost Place Conference on Poetry - July 12 - 18, 2015**
- **The Frost Place Poetry Seminar - August 2 - 8, 2015**

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