

This month's poem by Nicole Tallman taps into the notion of duende—the supernatural force that inspires literary inspiration and passion. Writers can be a superstitious lot, and each writer's totem is as individual as a fingerprint, but nearly as ubiquitous. Duende is all around, so let's hear it for our muses, our literary influences, the ghosts that sit beside us as we set word to page, grappling with all we are compelled to write. (Caridad Moro-Gronlier)

This poem was written in The Writer's Room at The Betsy Hotel, at Hyam Plutzik's desk. As I sat there, I thought of the greatness of the space, of everyone who had sat there before me, likely with the same goal: to write something great. I also thought about what makes a poem great, how subjective that can be, and how so many poets are striving for this elusive greatness. Someone had recently asked me if I had published a poem in *The New Yorker* yet, as if this were the only defining factor for a great poem. I am grateful for every opportunity I get. My thanks to *New Tropic* for publishing this poem, and my thanks to you for reading it. (Nicole Tallman)

THE WRITER'S ROOM*

For Hyam Plutzik, Jonathan Plutzik, and Deborah Plutzik Briggs, and for all the writers who have shared and will share space at the magical desk in the Writer's Room at The Betsy-South Beach

I'm sitting at Hyam Plutzik's desk,
in the same chair that 1,000 famous(ish)
writers have sat in over the past 10
years, and I wonder if the wood could
serve as a board that summons the living
and the dead. Maybe then I could write
a truly great poem. One that gets published
in *The New Yorker*, which is all anyone seems
to care about anyway. I ask those who have sat
at this desk, in this exact same chair, to help me
out—just like I have asked Sylvia Plath. But she
simply told me to stop asking her for help and to start
writing. Her voice all clipped vowels and the confidence
of the dead. She'd grown tired of my excuses. Hyam,
hearing me now for the first time, is also telling me
to just pick up the pen. *Does anyone write by hand
anymore?* I ask him. He tells me to stop being
flippant. Look, I tell him, I'm typing this poem
on the phone in my hand. (A pencil and pad might make
a better planchette, but this phone is what I have.) Isn't it
sad that we always have our phones in our hands? I sort
of think so. I don't think we really know what to do anymore
unless there's a phone in our hands. I suppose I should
leave this room—put down my phone, go to the beach
or the pool. Maybe interact with other guests. But why
would I leave when all that I need to write is here
in this room—right in the palm of my hand?

* This poem was first published in *Poems for the People* (The Southern Collective Experience Press, 2023), under the title "Poem for the People with a Phone in Their Hand." The original title was "The Writer's Room," and I am reverting back to that title for this publication opportunity.

Nicole Tallman is a poet, ghostwriter, and editor. Born and raised in Michigan, she lives in Miami, serves as the [Poetry Ambassador for Miami-Dade County](#), Special Projects Editor for [Redacted Books](#), Poetry and Interviews Editor for *The Blue Mountain Review*, and an Associate Editor for *South Florida Poetry Journal*. She is the author of *Something Kindred* and *Poems for the People* (The Southern Collective Experience (SCE) Press). Her next book, *FERSACE*, is forthcoming in November 2023 from [ELJ Editions](#). She is also the editor of *STAY GOLDEN*, a Golden Girls-inspired special zine published by *The Daily Drunk*, and co-editor with Maureen Seaton of *We Who Rise from Saltwater, Let's Sing!* and *There's a wave coming. One can hear it in the sky.*, two collaborative Heroic Sonnet Crowns for the Mayor and residents of Miami-Dade County. She is also the creator and host of ELJ Editions/Redacted Books' Be Well Reading Series and the Lunchtime Poetry & Jazz Series at Miami-Dade County's Main Library.