

# The Ghosts of History

by Gita M. Smith

In this lab, where I work 40 hours a week,  
live the ghosts of questions asked.

They hover over the outdated map of Asia on which the USSR  
is still plump with member countries, even the coldly-named  
Estonia.

The ghostly questions cluster urgently around the globes  
on which the peeling edge of Africa curls upward  
like a thicket where birds cry, "slavery, slaver-eee."

I answer new questions every day, like "What is a despot?" and  
"How does geography determine history?"

I vow to answer every question generously.  
I am afraid that if I don't, a student will later fail a test,  
and that will send another hungry ghost to haunt this lab.

