

# The House of Poetry

## Poetry Reading Session Volume XXVIII 2016

### **“If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking”**

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.

- Emily Dickinson

## *House of Poetry Program*

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

On the campus of Baylor University, Waco, Texas

All events are in the Armstrong-Browning Library

(Follow the link for directions; enter at the portico of the Cox Entrance Foyer off James Street)

**8:45 a.m. Registration and Coffee Reception—*Cox Reception Hall***

**SESSION ONE: Cox Lecture Hall**

**9:15 a.m. Welcome:**

Department of English, Baylor University

**9:30-10:30 Readings from "The House of Poetry" Volume XXVIII**

**10:30-11:00 Break—*Cox Reception Hall***

**11:00-12:00 Guest Presenter: Ashley Mace Havird, "Mining Memory"**

**Noon-1:00 p.m.: Annual Luncheon—*Cox Reception Hall***

**SESSION TWO: Cox Lecture Hall**

**1:00-2:00 Guest Presenter: David Havird, "Telling Stories in Verse"**

**2:00-3:00 More Readings from "The House of Poetry" Volume XXVIII, Closing Remarks**

\* **Ashley Mace Havird** is a poet and novelist who grew up on a tobacco farm in South Carolina. She has published three books of poems: *The Garden of the Fugitives* (Texas Review Press, 2014), which won the 2013 X. J. Kennedy Prize, *Sleeping with Animals* (Yellow Flag Press, 2014) and *Dirt Eaters* (Stepping Stones Press, 2009), which won the 2008 South Carolina Poetry Initiative Prize. Her poems and short stories have appeared in many journals including *Shenandoah*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Southern Review*, *The Texas Review*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. [ashleymacehavird.com](http://ashleymacehavird.com)

A native South Carolinian, **David Havird** has had poems appear in *Agni*, *Poetry*, *Seneca Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Southwest Review*, *Texas Review*, and *Yale Review*, online at *Poetry Daily*, and in *The Southern Poetry Anthology, IV: Louisiana* and *Hard Lines: Rough South Poetry*. His collection of fourteen poems, *Penelope's Design* (2010), won the 2009 Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize. The full-length collection *Map Home* was published by Texas Review Press in 2013. [sites.google.com/site/davidhavirdpoet](http://sites.google.com/site/davidhavirdpoet).

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**Linda Banks**

**A Dove Tale**

For days the dove comes, like Goldilocks,  
trying out the flower baskets.  
She lands on an edge, lowers her head  
to inspect the center, causing her tail  
to stick up above the foliage. The basket  
is transformed into a lady's flowered hat  
trimmed with feathers. Her mate  
watches from first one tree, then another.  
She wriggles until her head, her body,  
and most of her tail feathers sink  
into the pink petunias.  
This basket is just right.

She calls to him, now perched  
on the roof. She calls once, twice,  
again and again, until he flies  
to her side, snuggles against her,  
deeper and deeper into the leafy  
love nest until out of sight. Later,  
they leave the rumpled bed,  
flowers flattened, tendrils  
drooping along the pot's rim.

She comes and goes, sits briefly,  
coos to her mate, on a ladder nearby.  
He hops to one step, then another.  
They do this again and again.  
At last, she returns to lay her eggs,  
to sit the nest, day after day.

I know how this tale ends.  
The babies will grow and hatch  
under my watchful eye,  
then they will fly away,  
leaving behind fragments  
of small white eggs  
and my shattered attachment.

Previously published in A Book of the Year, Poetry Society of Texas, 2005

## Linda Banks

### On the Cusp of Change

*The cardinal's song has been described  
as "a prelude—to nothing"; but I think  
it is a dull ear that does not find  
that gorgeous whistle its own excuse.*

--Karle Wilson Baker, "The Birds of Tanglewood"

Air is still and heavy with left-over summer.  
Trees refuse to remove drab and dusty leaves.

Sparrows dine on seeds in high-rises of sunflowers,  
rustling of brown, dry stalks mapping their search.

Zinnias fade and flop as Monarchs stop by  
for sips of sustenance before continuing south.

Everything seems to move in slow motion as if  
waiting for a surprise, when one suddenly happens.

A flame flares from fence to empty wooden feeder,  
then extinguishes itself in tall hedgerow's foliage.

From dense shade comes a whistling "prelude  
to nothing" that is a splendid something in itself.

Previously published in A Garden of Verse, Poetry Society of Texas, 2013

**Sonya Barron**

**Gilded Edges**

Gilt pages, shiny, new—  
Slick, smooth – flashy too.  
Beautiful gold reflecting light.  
Soft leather, bonded tight.

Worn pages, marked, bent—  
Softened by hours spent  
Seeking to know from Heaven above  
The Holy Father of Love.

Yellow pages, scarred too—  
Holding words just for you.  
The king has spoken – did you hear?  
“My child, listen! Draw near.”

Frayed edges, creases, cracks—  
Ribbons gone, broken back,  
Flecks of gold in the light.  
Truth flashes clear and bright.

God moved the gilding,  
To the heart most yielding.  
My Bible is worn – I am too,  
But God only quits when He is through.

**Barbara Lewie Berry**

**The Fifth Day**

On Creation morning  
I can only imagine that  
the birds sang an anthem  
much like they did today  
outside my kitchen window  
while the golden jonquils –  
awakening from hibernation  
stood at attention to salute  
the royal pink phlox densely  
assembled in fertile soil.  
Nearby, the graceful willow  
trees pirouetted and bowed  
in adoration beneath  
the virgin blue sky.

As I look out upon God's  
rich canvas, I contemplate  
the peace He must have  
savored when the Earth  
was fresh and unadulterated  
hearing only those songbirds  
amid the sanctifying silence.  
Now, on this new spring day  
my soul is filled with praise  
for the majesty of Creation  
the radiance of Nature  
blessed and made holy  
by God as He smiled  
and said, *It is good!*

Barbara Lewie Berry

### The World's Hostess

*"Share with God's people who are in need.  
Practice hospitality." Rom. 12:13*

Hers was an open table.

When we arrived every Sunday afternoon, we jumped  
from the Pontiac station wagon, bound for the open arms  
of the woman who married our Grandpa when he was fifty-five.  
We called her Franma, and she taught us about love and life.

We never knew who would be there and today was no different.  
The aroma of baked chicken permeated the lake house,  
green beans simmering with garlic, butter-drizzled biscuits,  
squash casserole and warm blackberry cobbler awaited us.

The table was draped in blue linen with cloth napkins  
and Fiesta dishware in all colors – just like her guests.  
Red and yellow, black and white assembled there;  
she introduced each one while Grandpa lit the candles.

The lonely lady from the cosmetic counter  
The new professor from Ecuador  
The porter who cleaned the church on Saturdays  
The bakery clerk who lost his wife last week

We encircled the table holding hands joining our differences.  
After the meal, we sat out on the dock sharing our stories;  
while the stereo played *"I want to teach the world to sing  
in perfect harmony"* we learned lessons in hospitality.

This rotund woman with silver hair taught us the responsibility  
of welcoming those whom the world considers strangers.  
Week after week, we dined at her home and met new friends.  
Franma died that winter. Rose Chapel's pews overflowed.

Hers was an open service.

Published in PST *A Book of the Year, 2011*

**Barbara Lewie Berry****Wasted Effort**

You can go anywhere in my house  
except that one closet in the back room  
where papers and pictures from my past  
rest in boxes upon boxes upon boxes  
awaiting that certain day – the one  
when all chores are done, all poems  
written, all books read, all volunteer  
work completed – I will then resurrect  
them one by one by one from their tomb,  
separate the sheep from the goats,  
the memories from the necessities,  
alphabetize and categorize the remains  
into new boxes upon boxes upon boxes  
clearly labeled and identified by year,  
awaiting that certain day – the one  
every adult child dreads – when houses  
must be turned over to the wild-haired  
lady with reading glasses and clipboard  
to advertise and monitor an Estate Sale.

Christine H. Boldt

**The Other Way**

*If they give you lined paper, write the other way.*

--William Carlos Williams

With the fretsaw of her fixed attention,  
she had cut careful scrollwork poetry  
from her intensive life experience  
and, then, fastened it to prim white pages:

intricate meanders, invariant  
as the embroidery on a chiton,  
lines that offered not surprise, but polish,  
words that, though lustrous, were never more than safe.

But, as time passed, she learned to slosh her words  
from overflowing buckets of pure fervor,  
to attend the drips and dribbles that splashed  
on old copybooks, envelopes, and bills.

She found in prodigality's muddle  
more charms than her cautiously metered phrases  
had once provided. Heedless, in excess,  
she enjoyed every blemish, smirch, and smudge

that dared the once-tidy heart in her  
to a recklessness which had its own precision.

Previously published in the *Enigmatist* (2014)

**Christine H. Boldt**

**Regnier's *St. Matthew***

Regnier called me out of darkness  
into his canvas, just as Christ had done.  
He set a book on the green velvet cloth  
before me, an artifact that fixed us

in his world rather than in mine. "Write," he said;  
and placed an angel at my side to give me  
inspiration. We two were caught, flood-lit:  
each feather of the angel's wing athrob

with holy light against the black. I bent  
my ragged locks, furrowed brow, gnarled hand,  
reluctant to begin, again, the red work  
of giving life to story. "Write," he said.

The angel rested one hand on my shoulder,  
a finger on the page to show me where.  
I turned to pluck a pinion from its wing.  
Then, once again, I did as I was bade.



**Cassy Burleson**

**Legacy In Black And White (for Great Grand Mama Brooks)**

(Written in the 1980s; revised in March 2016)

Born out of my father's discontent and my mother's mixed emotions,  
I see you standing there as a wall against defeat. My oven of living,  
I baked up golden, hot with curiosity, and sometimes Southern biscuit flakey  
Under your patient gourmet tutorage – Pillsbury Doughboy not invented yet.

This photograph of us has gone crumbly with wear-wrinkle-ings of viewing.  
This Kodachrome in black and white, bearing testament to another time  
When grapevines meant excitement, and a cottonwood tree on a path  
Between two houses was the half-way mark for my best friendship.

Those days are gone now, and so are you – except I see you standing there  
Behind me in this photograph, and I can hear you whispering in winter, when  
Each frost flake reminds me of the firelight I could see in the mirror while you told  
Tales as you unfurled your tight and tiny bun into a long stream of dark and graying hair.

Your shawl of love and love of stories surround me,  
Even now.

## Cassy Burleson

### So Much Light ... Too Soon Gone Before ...

(Written Jan. 24, 2012; revised March 2016)

Some things strike you cold and hard like gun metal on your temple of beliefs.

This was the death of Callie Tullos, who was blind-sided on a central Texas road with unexpected curves. Callie went pell-mell into a tree before she or her best friend could half-blink – or put down roots.

Way too fast, but soon enough for some kind of blessing in that little quirk of quick mercy, at least.

It was a heaven-versus-hell birthday celebration. And the hell of it was, Hell won for those left behind. But Heaven's better off with you there. Still, we're sad. We'll miss what you could have been immensely. For you, Callie Tullos, were a jewel, pristine as an artesian spring – and in your prime and on the cusp of Even more accomplishments. You had only half a chance to tip the pitcher of life's nectar to your lips.

Just a sip of life at only 24 ... success waiting just around the next corner. Yet one's next corner can be a Long-off thing, sometimes. Like the line at Wilkerson-Hatch tonight, four hours full of warm tears and Long hugs. And those cowards who cut in line or left early because they couldn't stand the sadness, Once they saw the line, or got inside and saw those photographs of you so full of light and life-so-gone.

Count me in the latter group after three hours of feet freezing, thinking "be-of-courage" thoughts Talking to two of your friends "from kindergarten through senior year of high school" and then, The quiet pharmacy worker who, like me, had only met you recently and yet, couldn't believe she would Never hear you say, "Hey, girl!" again. That "Hey, girl" was your trademark, your signature salutation.

The funeral guys never heard you say that. One thought you were beautiful but never met you, and The older fellow let me out the door gently ... with the understanding eyes of "too much loss too soon."

Callie Tullos, you were "that kind of girl," a woman wise beyond your years, a woman full of small-town Values, long-term friends and swells of love. Waves of friends ... most of whom you hadn't met yet.

Speaking frankly, it's damned hard to understand a death like this – or a cold God like that. So I didn't take down the Christmas tree on my front porch tonight. I turned ON all the lights again.

You were so full of this kind of light. So much kindness ... so much promise ... now gone ... way too soon.

And if you're looking down to say goodbye, I hope the Christmas scenes left ON make you smile again ...

Because our darling Callie Tullos, you always were a sparkler ...  
Looking for a celebration.

**Cassy Burleson**

**Missing Summer Camp in Maine**

(Written in 2008; revised March 2016)

For Darryl J. Strickler, who “went out for a row and passed into eternity” Oct. 12, 2016

That which has always been,  
Has found everlasting newness,  
All white and delicate, like Queen Anne’s Lace –  
Forsaking other substances to grasp the shadows  
As our futures continue to peek out from behind the next rainbows,  
You laid down in dandelion dreams, perhaps  
Making last wishes for the happiness of others.

You found the nirvana you predicted as you  
Eavesdropped on the water’s whispered tides,  
Coming in and out, then out and in again,  
As you rested along the grassweed shores,  
Pushing out from rocks along the banks  
And rowing past the curves like a push broom  
Through overhanging trees and into everlasting sunlight.

Something there is now that is like that which has never been,  
Nor ever would, or could be but always was, for now you finally see ... the joy of is.

**Susan Maxwell Campbell**

**By the backdoor**

you've grouped  
 an uneven collection of geraniums, some new  
 cuttings, some thinning toward the compost pile,  
 and here, please pay attention to their odor,  
 not unpleasant but deliberate as if they're half  
 way to spontaneous combustion—  
 and of course, always a look-at-me strength  
 though the terra cotta pots are mineral encrusted  
 and some a little chipped on the rims. Maybe  
 others would say the leaves recall hearts with ruffles,  
 but you don't really believe all that. The plants  
 safely ignore the stilling air—for the dawn cool,  
 you had propped open the door, but now  
 sun and shadow mount toward noon and  
 begin to wash out details shy of your brush.  
 How many shades of green on those thickened  
 stems! Not dying really, but drying,  
 those modest petals that crowd  
 into blooms like fresh sea foam on sand,  
 and now they're looking away as if they tire  
 of your paints and your words.

The flowers of the wall paper, flat and pale  
 and jealous ....

Paul Cézanne, *The Flower Pots*, 1883.  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 7 x 11 inches.  
 Musée d'Orsay, Paris

**Susan Maxwell Campbell**

**Fossil Hunter Meditation**

The long-ago river's permanent stories  
 of insect crisscross, mindless small mammals  
 pat-pat-paw-pause, greenless leaf, broken leaf,  
 skeleton leaf—all this in sand bars, mud plains  
 —sunrise footprints carelessly writing  
 their little lives—Cambrian, Permian—  
 eons and ages forgotten, hardening, hardened  
 crescents, puddles, dimples: sandstone, lime stone  
 and heavier, heaviest memories of the long-ago river ....

*summer, autumn, winter, then winter softening  
 and today he's alone, today he's at work ....*

Memory licked up the land,  
 now let it slide out dry—the gravel bank, splintered  
 boulders, pebbles piled by water's pressure,  
 seasonal flooding drawing ribs, rippling the ribbed waves,  
 preserving the planet's spring time .... the odd snail,  
 the snail-like thing, and here perhaps a fish—and there  
 surely a bone, a bone, a bone .... *Find one .... soon, perhaps.*

Now soundless

noon-heat's shadow swallows the digger  
 as empty cumulus head somewhere  
 for tomorrow's humid refill. Early afternoon,  
 and there's no breeze on the sloping hill.  
 His shovel following fissures  
 unwraps that silent layer  
 of sun-made leaf from the darkness.  
 They tell no secrets either—

Susan Maxwell Campbell

### The Keeper of the Purity of the American English Language

Oh yes, I'll be its Defender, its Saint George.  
 First I'll rule out cute spellings for businesses and products  
     *Kwik Kopy* and *Duz* and *Biz*  
 for the very good reason that the confusion  
 of grade-school children would forever perpetuate  
 such second-rate language. As Tsar of Our Good Language,  
 I will institute seminars for those public speakers  
 who confuse *between* and *among* and for those  
 whose inability to count leads them to switch  
*each other* and *one another*. There will be conferences  
 to stamp out *between you and I* and *such that* and  
 the weird interplay of *further* and *farther*.  
 Certain expressions will require public service reminders:  
 "Say *You're welcome*, and banish *No problem*"  
 with the long version on TV explaining yet again  
 how job descriptions include politeness, not cavalier nonchalance.  
 The Office of Unadulterated Language will require  
 seven-year plans to address misspellings:  
 "Thank you". [sic] And as Supreme Leader,  
 I will place at the top of my agenda the unsplitting  
 of infinitives even as I insist boldly on no apologies  
 to fans of *Star Trek*. I'll introduce programs to raise  
 cliché awareness since freedom thrives on thinking  
 outside everyone else's box (Ah ha! a decent example  
 of minimally varying others' chains).  
 I haven't mentioned other problems (*nu-cu-lear* for *nu-cle-ar*  
 and *drouth* for *drought*). And here's a major target:  
 mass misagreements: "Everyone has their books."  
 The Department of Pure Language will establish  
 a critical sub-department responsible for inculcating  
 respect for differences within the true code of American English.  
*Ah, such a chaffing and a polishing there!*  
 What about *yeah* and how to distinguish that level  
 from the cultural horror of 'Sup? Will regional  
 and ethnic variations be able from time to time  
 to put on tuxedos instead of cutoffs?  
 Always the motto shall be Biblical:  
 What comes out of a man's mouth makes him impure,  
 not what goes in. And also for women.

## Paul Chaplo

### Animal Lab

As I lay my wet face on  
The still breast of my passed collie  
I remember some austere place

Lit with mustard light  
And walls all the same and washable  
The tables concrete monolithic  
Like an Aztec altar

This austere place  
Before habitation  
Like Auschwitz after construction  
Move-in ready

But here primates and dogs  
Will be scrutinized  
Raised so carefully  
And deformed in a controlled way  
Bonsai trees of flesh  
Sacrificed and parts harvested

Trusting eyes  
Look the last time  
At those who fed you for this  
moment  
To harvest an eye or part or heart

As in all such places  
Numbers for names  
To somehow hide the hand  
Like a cheat with a foul roll

I wonder what these now virgin  
walls  
Will witness on this concrete tables  
Where life will take its last breath  
For some fashionable convenience

I wonder if that  
Was the Mighty intent, that for  
beauty  
The beautiful of Creation  
Should fall

And so I remember my dog's trusting  
eye  
As I had him put to sleep  
Try to draw line between evil  
And miracle  
And wonder where the shadow  
Fall across me this time of day

And wonder if my life  
Is waiting to be caged  
And plucked for a coin  
By some trusted selfish hand

**Paul Chaplo****Ice Fishing**

When I write  
I am too small to make the walk  
Onto the lake  
And must be pulled on a sled by my grandfather  
With metal runners that fishtail  
With every one of my grandfather's strong steps  
Walk on water over a land  
Where my logic fails me

To me there is only surface and ice  
To him there is terrain  
Shallows and depths below us  
And he knows the deep holes  
Where the pike lurk in winter

In my grandfather dreams he is there  
Helping me chop a hole through thick ice  
And scoop the ice chips out with a ladle  
Hook a minnow mute through its lips  
And send it sinkered into the abyss  
Then sit with patient hope on a plastic bucket  
In this impossible setting  
Of a frozen lake with no shelter

Until something stirs  
Grabs my line and tries to pull me  
Into that dark hole  
And I wrestle awkwardly  
Like Jacob with an angel  
Until she blesses me  
With a little poem

And I heave it through the hole  
And throw it onto the ice  
A walleye pike alive and prickly  
In the upstate sunshine



## Paul Chaplo

### Summer

The cicadas continue their endless  
worship  
Of the heat  
Like committed monks  
Singing a raspy Tibetan hymn  
Clinging to the tarry creosote  
Carcasses of utility poles

Their endless insect drone  
A soundtrack to my overheated  
impatience

This black garbage bag  
Breathless asphalt parking lot  
Suffocation  
Screaming me-me sun sizzle  
Is stealing my last breath  
Narrowing my vision into darkness  
Putting lightning bugs streamers  
Into my fading peripheral vision

Gasping catfish searing on a john  
boat  
Bottom, praying for  
River water salvation

I need your blue syrup shaved ice  
eyes

To cool me  
I need your creamsicle kisses  
To bring me back to life

Swirling my past and inconsolable  
present  
My memories half-mixed, half-  
halted  
In the frozen tumble of night  
As I squirm sweaty languid sleepless  
in dreams  
In the cedar incense of Possum  
Kingdom burning

Outside the expressway traffic  
Hovercraft on heatwaves  
Join the insects in their single chord  
harmony  
As they loop the city  
Robbed of logic by the heat

While I suffer  
Under-rock reptile  
Scaley shadeless torment  
A panting lizard dog man

And write your name  
In the bubbling asphalt  
Of my desire

## Cherry Day

### Whisper Soft

Our sleek black lab lies serenely on the deck,  
    meditating, perfect in her stillness.  
She senses whisper soft sounds too muted,  
    too highly pitched for human ears to hear.

When anoles slide their belly scales on lily blades,  
    or wrens feed hours-old hatchlings in the oak,  
or pocket gophers scoop out sand beneath the sod,  
    she knows this without ever lifting her head.

She alerts to coyotes stalking game in far pastures,  
    tree frogs repositioning their feet on pliant stems,  
    the nighttime cries of bats echoing for location  
or any hint of squirrel chatter in the neighborhood.

How rich is her world with its clever voice,  
    its intimate sounds of furtive flights,  
its secret urgings, its muffled rustlings impossible  
    for humans to discern or understand,

but she does.

As the earth breathes its whispers around her,  
    she looks at us with knowing golden eyes  
rich with a knowledge she can never convey  
    and we could never appreciate.

So, I wonder, when she lifts her paw  
and presents us with her silky chest,  
    whether it's her gesture  
    of consolation.

Previously published in "Rusk County Poetry Society Yearbook 2016"

**Marie Dixon****Vincent's Night**

Genius eked from his essence and dribbled off the tip  
of his brush  
                    as he fought the universe---  
for his sanity.

The constant images in his mind  
                    fought with each other and with him,

for their place one day  
                    upon...

                                his canvas!  
They held their positions of renowned acclaim.

Seemingly, immortal adulation was theirs  
                                for centuries--- after  
he was done with them.

But...  
                    on this one special night  
all the stars in the heavens--  
                                called his name.

                    A Starry, Starry Night  
was born.

## Marie Dixon

### Night

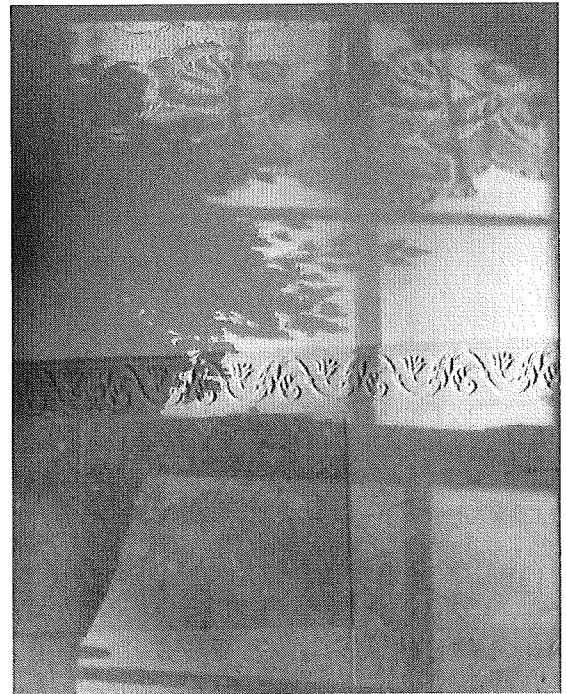
Night veils the light to paint that shadow in the hall then creeps across the  
 sky to fill the scene from sunset's  
 hues to twilight's blues  
     before pulling the shade of darkness ...quiet. Nightfall beacons  
 souls  
     and seduces minds to play the game of slumber.

Sweeping the last dust of day beneath her  
 carpet covering all sunlight  
     corners with her blanket .  
 Minds find rest beneath her  
 sheets. Nightfall  
 takes her hands to comfort the weary traveler--  
     sometimes covers deeds of the lost and lonely.

Dreams are the treasure that she  
 brings. Slumber is the restful tune she sings  
     she touches eyes with darkened skies to offer  
 those at peace - rest.

She hides memories of...  
     nightfalls past under her thick  
     black cloak. Nightfall ends the  
 day, yet paves the way for something new.

Where does she go running towards  
 morning  
     tired bodies heal and  
     beg her to stay. She appears to be  
 chased by a sunrise and  
     never greets one ray of sunshine. She is not  
 mine to keep; yet she puts to rest the meek...  
     make lover's seek ...  
                     each other  
     always count on her to come. She is not  
 mine alone ---- I am grateful for her gifts and unwrap  
 them slowly.  
     She mends broken pieces - whole  
 then fills the gaping hole torn between yesterday  
     and tomorrow filled with dreams of days  
 to come... golden rings...love and things...pillows  
     and children and castles and rainbows and horses  
     and...and...



Marie Dixon

Solitude

Lone tree stands near water's edge tilting unsteadily---  
as her embankment becomes a precarious  
ledge silhouetted and bathed in moonbeams  
of iridescent light. This tree  
once stood with pride and might now dances  
with the  
moon playing games with the night  
She does not hide when the water  
tickles her feet.

Intrigued by glowing water and  
clouds she remembers time ago  
when she was watched embraced adored.

Then he was forced  
to let her go  
as time erodes the firmness  
of their footing  
but cannot take her memories love  
and courage...

This tree will never stand---  
alone.

**Michael Elkins****The War Goes On**

I stroll along old battlefields,  
Recall the time I was the winner.  
Back then I sowed ambitious plans  
To hopeful seeds, tomorrow's yield;  
But stronger weeds have killed this sinner.

I sheathed my sword, took plough to hand;  
Too soon I've claimed it glorious,  
The war not done within my heart;  
And still I till this poisoned land  
With ghosts of foes notorious.

Their will informs my work and art;  
They threat to shred my mind apart.

Michael Elkins

### **The Age Of Regret**

I know the time-bomb of old age;  
Nature's curse upon the unwise,  
Causing a hell in life for the regretful,  
The fearful and . . . "If onlys" would  
Fill the head with self torment.

"Your youth will leave, and what a shame.  
From there it is a losing game."

And I don't know yet what to do  
When even the wind gives advice.  
Still parallel truths run, nearly  
Clashing, within my weary mind.  
My body, now idle. My soul, still hungers.

"Your youth will leave, and what a shame.  
From there it is a losing game."

Again I pause to think, and think . . .  
And think!! I plan to act, but often fail.  
Then I stumble over that repitition  
Of thought, from cycles before it,  
As a record reset to the music before:

"Your youth will leave, and what a shame.  
From there it is a losing game."

...  
"Your youth has left, and that's a shame.  
So long old man, you've lost the game."

**Michael Elkins****A Natural Love**

Although the woods will suffer snow,  
And trees may die from freezing cold,  
Will natural love throughout still show?

In Spring and Summer, trees would grow  
And Autumn leaves would turn to gold,  
But now the woods will suffer snow.

The weary bear in peace will go  
Where many nature's beasts are told,  
Yet will a natural love still show?

Within are nature's hunting pros,  
The packs of wolves in chase; behold  
While all the woods still suffer snow.

Their prey, a deer that proved too slow,  
Was swiftly felled by strikes so bold.  
And where's the natural love to show?

For though the winter's wind still blows,  
These wolves will feed the pups they hold;  
As all these woods will suffer snow,  
And still a natural love will show.



**Patricia Ferguson****For a Little While**

Do you know where I am going?  
Are you going that way, too?  
If we should find each other  
On a road that's not forever,  
May we ramble together  
For a little while?

Have you heard the song I'm singing?  
Can you sing a little, too?  
If we can sing in harmony,  
A short, sweet, timely melody,  
May we sing together  
For a little while?

Do you know where I am now?  
Do you? Are you out here--cold, wet, too?  
If we are here without another  
On two roads that run together,  
Can we hold each other  
For a little while?

**Patricia Ferguson****I Merely Play**

I am the breeze that, sniffing, ambles by. I stroll,  
window shopping. I lift a new leaf to peer beneath;  
I cavort; I skip; I drop things as I caper.  
Smiling branches nod at me. Crisp, white curtains  
let me peek. I run my hand across the meadow,  
caress the warmth of white and pink and yellow flow'rs:  
primrose, daises, dandelions. They spring back  
behind my touch. I do no harm. A little good.

I am not the power which blows away dead leaves  
and dead thoughts, shaking out the moldy dust  
before the cleansing rain, driving yesterday away.  
I am the breeze; little sister of the wind. I lift the leaves,  
and whirling them around, I drop them back  
on to the hungry earth. I am the breeze.

**Leila Fincher****Why I Write**

Why do I write?  
I write for joy.  
bursting July fireworks  
bouncing baby squeals  
bright yellow daisies  
jiggly bubbles

Why do I write?  
I write for sorrow  
crushed pulpy bleeding heart  
salty torrent tears  
flat charcoal rain-skies  
broken spirit

Why do I write?  
I write for fear  
inky corner shadows  
yellow slanted eyes  
spindly groping arms  
ghouls and phantoms

Why do I write?  
I write for pleasure  
sticky-rich chocolate cake  
warm fuzzies in winter  
giggled conversations  
family and friends

Why do I write?  
I write for anger  
searing white-hot flashes  
glowing orange coals  
Mama bear roaring  
ice blue knife blade

Why do I write?  
I write for life  
“Let there be...” “And there was...”  
vibrant green growing  
toddler energy ball  
words on a page

**Leila Fincher****Tribute**

come and go or stay awhile  
but we can't be the same  
you may not feel your consequence  
or see the lives you've changed  
actions have eternal sway  
words outlive the voice  
this world, my life, a better place  
because you made a choice  
the choice to live, the choice to work  
and love and cry and play  
though now we've had to say farewell  
your memory remains  
so we will laugh and we will love  
we'll carry on the flame  
that through our lives and through our hope  
the world won't be the same

Pat Hauldren

**When Morty Comes A Callin'**

When Morty comes a callin'  
Who shall I say is in?

A brave adventurous soul  
With new paths to unfold?  
Or a child full of fright  
Trapped in a husk skin tight?

When Morty comes a callin'  
How will he appear?

Surely not a female with ample rear.  
Probably a cowed head,  
Shadowed face, a crusty beard,  
Not like Mick Jagger.  
More refined...Cary Grant?  
Not like Atom Ant!

When Morty comes a callin'  
Will I be old?

Will I ever have  
All my stories told?  
And the books I've never read.  
After fifty-one years  
Facing hardship and fears  
Will I burst from this life  
Free from time, free from strife?

Or will I scurry and slither  
As to out distance bad weather?

When Morty comes a callin'  
Where will I hide?

Where can I tuck my soul inside?  
Will it suck me dry?  
Like the great Vacuum Cleaner of  
Life.  
Will I go feet first  
While the hands of my soul  
Cling to known dimensions?  
Just what is Hoover Heaven's  
extension?

When Morty comes a callin'  
Would you think less of me?

If I walked out mid-sentence  
As if to flee?  
Or will I bother to remember  
The thirst and the wonder  
While I'm gasping for breath  
My heart beating like thunder  
To keep me alive just one second  
more?

When Morty comes a callin'  
Who shall I say is in?

**Sandi Horton**

**Sonnet of the Carnival Barker**

Carnival Barker on alert  
Frozen on a warm day  
Exercising keen awareness  
Decoding silent messages

Suddenly he dashes away  
A blurred streak  
Moving horizontally  
Then up and down vertically

The ever tenacious Chihuahua  
Spicy mustard eyes  
A ginger nose  
Ears like twin steeples

A squirrel looks down  
On the tiny Carnival Barker

**Sandi Horton**

**Jim's Funeral**

Death, life  
inside, outside  
Lent, Easter  
the union of opposites

Inside the church  
the organ plays  
tears roll out many eyes  
then chuckles are muffled

Outside at the columbarium  
the organ is faintly heard  
as the priest pours out ashes  
the birds begin to sing

A fine man has died  
we celebrate his life  
the season is Lent, yet  
we all say ALLELUIA!

(written on Saturday, February 27, 2016 after the funeral of Baylor University Professor, Dr. James Barcus, who served as head of the English Dept. and later as Graduate Program Director; his special interests were Romantic and Victorian Poetry)

**Sandi Horton**

**The Poems of Charlotte**

I chew and chew the rich, textured meat  
I love its flavor, but it's hard to swallow  
I try to digest the complex words until  
There's a lump in my throat

My eyes begin to tear  
No onions are near  
I desire to eat more  
although my eyes are sore

My poet alarm sounds at 2 am  
The world is dark and silent  
Charlotte's book is closed  
But her words will not be silent

Her kindred spirit disrupts my slumber  
My eyes are heavy and want to sleep  
But there is more to chew  
Where is the tenderest petal?

(This poem was written after reading the book of poetry, 'The Tenderest Petal Hears' by Charlotte Renk.)



## Christine Irving

### Red Wagon in the Rain

Stopping at a light, peripheral vision  
catches a bright red wagon  
standing amid weeds on the unkempt  
lawn of the Methodist church, verdant  
grass unmowed since the latest cloudburst  
saturated every garden, turning earth  
to mud more liquid and viscous  
then Texas dust has any right to be.

The scarlet wain, briefly glimpsed,

framed by crooked trees, resembles  
the symbolic bridges traditional  
Chinese landscape artists paint  
into seasonal landscapes.

A wagon seems a kind of bridge,  
spanning difficult ground, daunting to traverse by foot.  
Pioneer travelers floated Conestoga wagons  
across unbridged waterways and flooded fords.  
I picture them floating in line across the Ohio River  
linked by common purpose, a determination to cross  
echoing the intent of Roman engineers  
whose clever pontoons spanned  
Rhone, Seine, Danube and Tiber.

It's raining again, sky full up,  
heavy with cloud that dims the light to gray.  
The crimson color of that wagon  
glows like a lantern in my mind  
connecting the gaps between  
pioneers and Romans, Methodists  
and Oriental art. Past, present,  
future melt and meld, moving  
in slow currents beneath my day.  
Gazing into them I see,  
I am that red wagon,  
I am the bridge.

## Christine Irving

### “World Enough and Time...”

Some say, one day a celestial Dipper  
tilted to spill out star people  
who drifted through space  
like cosmic dandelions  
seeding planets with consciousness.  
Some say sisterly Pleiades  
danced down to Earth in spinning  
pirouettes  
trailing blazing streamers of stardust  
to mother humanity.

I find Gaia miracle enough-  
our own humble rotating rock  
humming quietly to herself,  
generating life  
like any earthly mother from  
resources  
close at hand, fanning the first spark,  
weaving ninety-eight elemental  
threads  
into myriad elegant patterns, every  
design  
complex and beautiful as the last,  
dovetailing  
one intricate prototype into another,  
plaiting  
each creation into the unified living  
whole  
we call home.

“Home” contains “om”  
the primal sound of making ,  
the origin of everything -  
first vibration  
and the anti-matter  
that is no-thing.  
This tiny fractal  
holds all the information of its  
mother.  
Perhaps, ll matter contains in its  
being  
a blueprint of the universe.

If this be so, then surely  
Newtonian and quantum facts  
embedded in our matrix manifest  
in individual dreams  
and cultural myths  
as art and allegory  
driving humankind heavenward  
to search among stars  
for the beginning place.

No wonder we yearn towards  
Polaris,  
Sirius and the lovely Pleiades.  
I do not find it strange the w(W)ord  
Goddess, God and Spirit  
in many tongues is also,  
the very word for home.

**Christine Irving**

**“Oh Lord, Ain’t It Hard To Be Humble?”**

**or**

**How I Stopped Hating Country Music and Learned to Love Merle Haggard**

So here we are in 1971

living the ex-pat life in Ecuador,  
hanging with the hippies,  
hobnobbing with the local gentry.

I am a Gringo Goddess.

They love fertile mamas here and I have a little boy  
whose hair glows copper in the equatorial noon,  
a baby daughter so beautiful I am tempted  
to shave her head to ward off jealous angels..  
When I walk downtown, bouncing my full breasts,  
tossing my naturally curly hair, men hiss at me,  
whisper, “Reina, Reina” *Queen, Queen* under their breath.

Do I miss  
suburban labyrinths,  
political double speak,  
shopping malls,  
traffic jams,  
country music?

No. Particularly not *country* music.  
I hate country music.  
It makes me think of trailer parks, bad rhymes  
Gomer Pyle, Stuckey’s pecan shoppes  
moon pies, and Confederate flags.

It reminds me why I left...  
Gay men beat to death in city parks,  
little black girls burned in southern Sunday Schools,  
back street abortions, all the KIA’s and MIA’s  
who never came home again.

*Homesick* is not a word in my vocabulary.

Though I admit, it can get a bit *too* quiet  
from time to time, south of the Equator.  
When the Silver Slipper Saloon opens  
in downtown Quito, of course we check it out.

It's quite a sight- red velvet drapes, scarlet carpet,  
ivory painted booths and bar stools.  
I turn my nose up at the kitsch  
but we order drinks; early yet- eight pm,  
practically noon by local standards,  
still as a morgue till the jukebox starts.

"Okie from Muskogee"  
blasts right through my heart like a hurricane.

Next thing, I'm sobbing in my beer  
big salty tears of lonesome, missing  
abraded red rock canyons, cornfields  
high enough to hide an elephant, Arizona sunsets  
and sunrise on the Outer Banks; missing  
English everywhere and the sweet anonymity  
of looking, walking, talking like everyone else  
the incomparable comfort of belonging.

I miss HOME.

That night I get it- like it or not  
I'm not just me- unique Christine  
I'm conglomerate, a melting pot  
of race, gender, class and country.

Now I sing along with Merle, Tammy, Johnny,  
Hank, Willi, and Loretta.

It's roots, Baby-  
maybe a little twisted, a little strange  
but all mine.

**Catherine L'Herisson****Fall Planting**

Even though her time was short,  
the advent of cool weather  
beckoned her outdoors,  
wooed her to wander in nature.  
If she were lucky, she might have  
a couple more months to live.

As days grew cooler still,  
her thoughts turned to winter,  
then forward to spring, urged her  
to leave a legacy of beauty,  
buy bulbs that deer or squirrels  
would not find tempting.

She planted slowly, painfully,  
buried snowdrop, daffodil,  
hyacinth, and allium bulbs,  
dead, lifeless-looking things,  
hoping for resurrection  
come next spring.

Published in *A Book of the Year* 2014  
by the Poetry Society of Texas

Catherine L'Herisson

**Like a Fisherman**

*Cast all your anxiety on Him because  
He cares for you. I Peter 5:7 NIV*

Lord, like a fisherman,  
I cast my cares out to You,  
then reel them back in,  
over and over again,  
sometimes not even  
giving You time to take  
my troubles off the hook  
before I yank them back.  
Give me faith, patience,  
to leave them alone,  
let them sink down,  
way down deep  
into Your heart of love.  
Let me lay down my rod,  
rest, wait in peace.

Published in *Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature*  
April 2011 Volume 15

Reprinted in *A Galaxy of Verse* Fall/Winter 2011  
Volume 31, No. 3

Catherine L'Herisson

**Secrets I Should Know**

He wouldn't talk about it  
when I was growing up.  
I married young, moved away,  
raised a family, had grandchildren  
before Ken Burns' film, *The War*,  
brought up buried questions.  
Next trip home, I wanted answers.  
He said I was too full of questions,  
was reluctant to answer until pressed.  
First, I wanted to know the date  
his plane was shot down by the Japanese.  
His eyes teared up; November 10, 1943,  
my mother's twenty-first birthday!  
What a terrible "gift" she received--  
her husband shot down, missing-in-action,  
and she expecting their first child!  
He would survive twenty-two months  
of captivity before the war ended.

Staring at our reflections in the mirror,  
I noticed his top lip, how one side  
was a little higher than the other,  
made a remark about never noticing it,  
was surprised how emotional he became,  
how he said he had always been  
so self-conscious about that,  
how he reckoned scar tissue was heavier,  
made his lip hang lower on one side.  
"What scar tissue?" I asked.  
"From the cuts, the beatings..."  
His voiced trailed off; he could not go on.  
I did not have the heart to pain him more,  
ask about other things I needed to know,  
like the scars I had seen on his back.  
My father is growing old, frail.  
I am afraid he may go to the grave  
carrying secrets I should know.

Published in *A Book Of The Year 2014*  
by the Poetry Society of Texas

**Patrick Lee Marshall****Bright Gold**

I moved many times growing up.  
New places found me missing stuff.  
I never accumulated a lot,  
knowing I would soon move again.  
Packing was not a favorite pastime.  
Lost, misplaced, and items given to  
friends and charities were a constant.  
Along the way I lost a dear item,  
precious words of love from school days.  
Memories fade but words are not forgotten.  
We traded poems one day in the ninth grade.  
The year was 1960—

On a spring day in 2011, moving into a new house,  
A slip of paper fell from a book I was placing on a shelf.  
And there, in her handwriting, were these words

“Bright Gold”

Possessions can crumble, and coins can tarnish  
All worldly raiment be stained and rent  
But the bright gold of love will  
Wrap you in splendor  
And grow in firm volume the more it is spent.



**Patrick Lee Marshall****Messengers**

I saw one today  
sitting on my bird feeder  
signaling the change  
butterflies are heading south  
autumn approaches full bloom  
days will grow shorter  
Red-wing blackbirds will return,  
beckoning winter.

First published in "A Galaxy of Verse" (2015)

**Patrick Lee Marshall**

**Hibiscus Twilight**

Almost sunset, evening light anxious  
as it approaches the horizon.  
Against the shaded fence a single hibiscus  
stretches her glorious burgundy face and petals,  
hoping to catch the last dying rays of the sun—  
one more spoonful of warmth.

As dusk settles she wraps her petals around her  
like a blanket to embrace the memory of this day.  
Perhaps she realizes—  
morning will not bloom for her.

**Budd Powell Mahan****The House at Red Cloud  
At Willa Cather's Childhood home**

A garden, orange with cosmos,  
simmers beneath the window  
of her attic room.  
Reedy stems resist the summer wind,  
rage and flail against brute nature.  
They are tender and plaint  
as a young girl's arms,  
desperate as the struggle of the teen  
who met her reflection in these same panes.  
A century of gardens have  
lit the slant of this ceiling,  
where she must have lain in the  
wrestle to sort her story to a happy ending.  
Womanhood came as surely as weeds  
to the flowers, and she fought to hold  
the truth of it all, her arms raised  
like ferny leaves that try to herd a gust.  
She rose from this earth,  
grew to a greatness that was  
unimaginable in the cold fallow of winters  
when snow crackled the view.  
Now gawkers fall silent,  
stand in the awe of a bedroom,  
gazing out to the promise  
of the cosmos.

Published in A Galaxy of Verse Spring 2013

**Budd Powell Mahan****By the Virgin River  
Zion National Park**

Perhaps, these sounds that the river  
babbles are the first language.

Before human conceiving  
water spoke the vocabulary  
of its journey,

hailed the leaves that  
kissed its rippled skin.

An idiom of breathless gurgle  
whispered to stones,  
bellowed cascades,  
roared the waterfall,  
assured with purl against the  
fragile root.

All these were the words,  
a sacred text known to  
fern and stir,  
man's first cells singing  
the lyric of thunder and murmur,  
a blessed song  
caught in our genes,  
heard when we are  
all alone --  
and still.

## Budd Powell Mahan

### *Hitler's Colored House*

*Art has increasingly become the concern of the artist  
and the bafflement of the public.*

*Paul Gauguin*

He saw himself as master,  
painted in the strict definition of what  
he considered creation,  
but his critics called him copier,  
uninspiring, unoriginal.  
Twice the portfolio failed him,  
his work judged too mundane  
to gain entrance  
to the Vienna Art Academy.

I am intrigued by the strokes of the  
19-year-old who would move from art  
to genocide, wonder what his creation  
lacked – what nebulous standard  
he failed to meet.  
A museum puzzles me with proclamation,  
calling the seemingly ordinary,  
*genius*.

In the Yad Vashem the walls hold horror,  
a kind of anti-art,  
the darkness born from  
the same hand that painted pale paper.  
*Colored House*,  
holds no scar of unworthiness,  
no glimpse of the depravity  
behind the stroke.  
It masks the murderer,  
who surrendered his palette,  
left his easel to scrawl the epithet  
of his name  
across eternity.

**Masood Parvaze****I wait for the night**

When eyes . . . slowly . . . start seeing in the dark

The poet sheds his cocoon . . . flexes his wings and prepares to fly

Sifting through darkness . . . I find myself . . . in the company of many

My characters . . . some imaginary . . . some real

Moving curtains of mist and clouds, come out of darkness, wearing rags and crowns of twisted flowers . . . paint cans and brushes in their hands

The night . . . with no colors . . . no lines . . . no words

. . . A clean slate, now becomes a canvas

Brushstrokes in frenzy . . . climbing ladders to fog and rainbows

Colors emerge . . . the colors in my mind . . . which do not exist on the pallet

Dark becomes darker; meteors with bursting flames pass by

Shadows of my characters move closer . . . we talk . . . we write . . . we color

Sometimes, we disagree . . . and they just get up and leave

And . . . when rain beats up on the shingled roof

We call it a song

**Masood Parvaze****A bath in the Pond**

I was sixteen then

In and out of a perfect hormone storm

Sitting by a shallow pond . . . where clouds bathed in its dull green mirror

That's when she appeared from the oleander wall

Shedding all her coverings aside

Light and shades from willow trees, dancing on curves

Her only costume for the masquerade

Swaying hips in a syrupy motion

She tip toed then stopped . . . deciding; which cloud to step on

Birds held their song . . . my eyes forgot . . . how to blink

Blood rushing inside, unbound . . . from cell to cell

She tip toed, into the murky pond

Oh no . . . no . . . no . . . no

Don't lower yourself in . . . gray clouds

I will hold my breath

Till you emerge

Like a flame tongue

From a deep draw on a smoking pipe

**Masood Parvaze****Another Dream**

I shall build me a house  
On a street called "Cockeyed Cat"  
In the village of Gumushluk  
A few hundred yards from hotel with white walls . . . and blue windows  
Umbrellas and chairs for rent  
Where brick street ends  
Dogs and cats... just lurk around  
Knowing . . . that dead fish do wash up on shore  
I shall make it  
With leftover stones  
Find me drift wood...for windows  
Fishing nets, boat oars  
Sea shells, beer bottles  
And large earthy caldrons  
Get mud from the cave . . . where Cleopatra bathed; on her journey to Rome  
Oleander fence, stone chairs  
Some grape vines for home brew  
Some olive trees  
... a lantern for light  
Maybe; a paper and pencil  
To write a poem



## Jessica Ray

### The Fountain

Hold on - don't look down!  
A bold, high jump that could have ended in disaster  
instead led to a life-long journey of love.

Why the desperation - the risk?

The scene: Moscow, mid 1980's, Vladimir Horowitz,  
world famous concert pianist is performing to a full audience.  
The sign read "sold out."  
So, making their way through the abandoned building next to the concert hall,  
a young couple climb the steep stairs to the upper gallery -  
then to stairs leading to the chandelier deck sixty feet above the stage  
where they witness the performance of a life time through  
prisms of glimmering crystals.

A few years later Alexei , now himself a famous musician,  
the once daring young man on the chandelier deck -  
enjoyed recalling that evening of great music with high proportions and hilarity.

The hands who saved the love of his life, Dace  
were the brilliant hands of Alexei Sutanov,  
winner of the International Van Cliburn Piano Competition,(1989),  
performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto #2.  
His performances were so brilliant that one critic said it sent his audiences  
into the uncharted territory of celestial rapture.

"America the Beautiful" was Alexei's last performance,  
his final tribute of inspiration to the land he loved.  
Dace played the left keys, Alexei played the right keys  
of their piano.

So now,

it is Dace who plays - not the piano - but the cello- Alexei Sultanov Tribute Concerts  
Holding her instrument close to her heart it seems to become one with her as the mellow, healing  
tones of beauty emanate from it ,  
remembering Alexei's words,  
"Hold on, never, never give up."  
words that will flow like waters from an inspirational fountain  
which Dace envisions some day will come to pass.

**Jessica Ray****Getting to Know an Artist**

As you step into her space,  
sea shells greet you at every turn . . .  
reminders of home by the shore of Matagorda Bay.

Even though she now lives  
Where the West Begins  
her heart remains by the sea.

Her name is Henrietta.  
Her smile is beyond describing . . .  
she has a special gift and she knows it.

"I'd rather be shelling,"  
reads the sign as you enter her apartment.  
At ninety-five Henrietta finds making shell art sheer joy.  
Even friends passing by outside her living room can hear a tapping on the window,  
welcoming then into her magical space where  
angels stand atop mountains of carefully chosen exquisite shells;  
while a flying anenome is captured in time, forever in motion,  
or a circular mirror surrounded by art formed only by the sea itself  
for millinea of ages.

A French philosopher said it best -  
there is nothing more beautiful than  
cheerfulness in an old face.  
Henrietta is cheerfulness and more!

## Robert Schinzel

### The Long Walk Home

My squaw dress couldn't stop the  
cold  
that shook me to the bone  
as mother lay beneath mesquite,  
her body cold as stone.  
Her eyes like black obsidian  
were staring through a veil  
of frozen dew as I left death  
and tears beside the trail.

In memories I relive the time  
one violent winter day  
when Colonel Carson came with war  
to capture all Diné,  
a name we call our people by,  
though Kit says "Navajo."  
Some called this man a paladin,  
but knights don't bring such woe.

My warrior brothers fought him at  
a Canyon named De Chelly.  
So many died within the caves  
while more were marched away.  
The days of hunger, horses dead,  
of sheep destroyed, all starts  
with Carson's raids on sacred land  
and bluecoats' with no hearts.

They made us take the Long Walk  
east  
to barren prison yards  
in lands far off from Dinetah  
to face the hateful guards.  
Some tortured young and sick and  
old  
and called our faith a cult.  
I missed Kinaalda's holy chants  
that help girls turn adult.

Five frigid winters passed along  
the Pecos River shore  
until they sent us back on paths  
of pain like those before.  
We each endure the long walk home  
while hearts forever bleed  
for thousands lost and hogans gone,  
for white man's power and greed.

I walk the trail as woman now,  
no longer child that's lost  
and join the spirit giving strength  
to end this holocaust.  
Should Kit return to Dinetah  
to steal again our land,  
I'll fight those biligáanas who  
attack our ancient band.

**Robert Schinzel****Decisions in Mid-Flight**

A ruby-throated hummer at lightning speed  
with flutter of feathers like filigree  
soars in a blur of translucent color.  
Suddenly, a pause in flight,  
decision time – hover or fly.  
It makes me ask why I streaked to this very spot  
only to stop and question my choices.  
I'm in good company with uncertainty.  
Like the ruby-throat, I'm drawn  
to the brightest flowers, to the sweetest nectar.  
The hummingbird is pretty sure what it wants;  
it just has a hard time prioritizing.

**Jeannette L. Strother**

### **Notification**

#### **December 1979**

A large black bird flew down my chimney and skirted my bedroom. I was startled, yet unafraid of this ordinary occurrence; birds are always entering someone's home at one time or another. I chased the errant black creature out the window. Two days later, my brother showed up at my door. I was glad to see him unannounced. He stated, "Mommy is dead."

#### **September 1981**

I heard a rustling sound in my dining room. Standing on my table was a large black bird. I was afraid, I could not think clearly at the time but for some reason I did not like finding a wild bird in my home. Two days later my brother-in-law and my brother stood again at my front door. They stated, "Daddy is dead."

#### **June 2000**

I walked down the hall to find my dog had laid a large dead blue jay on the carpet. I shuttered while clearing the mess. A dark foreboding filled my days. Two weeks later, I cried, "My husband was dead."

#### **December 2002**

I found blue feathers on my bedroom floor. The rest of the bird laid inert on the living room floor. I chastised my dog. I shook and feared to answer the phone. Ten days later, my sister called, "Our brother was dead."

**Jeannette L. Strother**

**Satin Slippers and Pink Ribbons**

Première

With her heels and knees together,  
toes pointed out, forming a V-shape.  
She stands straight, her head, back  
and pelvis aligned. Her arms softly  
curved in front of her torso.  
Her pale face sets in determination.

Second Position

She turns her legs out from the hips.  
Her feet shoulder length apart, in a V-shape  
She rounds her arms and put them out to her sides.  
She hears the diagnoses...leukemia.

Third Position

Her legs turn out from the hips,  
she crosses a front heel halfway in front  
of the other foot. Her heels touch one  
to the other at the middle of the feet.  
She raises her right arm overhead  
in a semicircle and extends her left arm.  
Her bone marrow transplants begin.  
Her hair thins in response to chemotherapy.

Fourth Position

Her movements are stilted. She is exhausted  
by treatment, reactions and countermands.  
She develops a new language; infection,  
anemia and depression.

Fifth Position

We cross her legs one in front of the  
other to turn her side to side.  
We lift her arms to raise her up in bed.  
Échappé, she has no escape, no return.

**Jeannette L. Strother**

**The Early Fall**

As the universe turns  
the climatic seasons evolve  
a long winter effaces spring and morphs into summer.  
Not a normal warm-hot summer  
but one straight from Hades,  
torrid and searing,  
burning all grasses brown, vanquishing sweet green  
from trees and bushes with no mercy for delicate  
floral displays.  
Leaves flutter en masse, rain down  
to cover the ground  
in an early fall.

Mother lived in rapture,  
leaping from teen to womanhood  
by-passing knowledge to survive  
the complexities of life.  
Torrid and searing,  
she burst into flame, beautiful and vibrant,  
rushing through her environment  
singeing the gentle lives she touched.  
Snuffed out way before her time,  
ashes rose and rained down  
soot to cover us  
in her early fall.

**Carolyn Tarter****Faithful Friend**

Faithful friend  
To the end,  
Always by our side.

Roaming the pasture,  
Checking for sure  
We were still in his sight.

Jumping on his bed,  
He came to dread,  
So, Cooter lay on the floor.

At times he'd give a yelp,  
Possibly calling for help  
For meds, more and more.

Finally, his pain was so bad  
We took him wrapped in a pad,  
Hoping the vet could aid.

She said he was worse  
A Retriever's curse  
His health continued to fade.

With a degenerative spine,  
He didn't even whine,  
Just lay there quietly.

Maybe she could see  
The answer to our plea,  
Was to put him out of his misery.

It was time for good-bye  
Although we never knew why;  
Our pet needed peace and rest.

Through tears and words, we bid him adieu.  
There was nothing more they could do  
For our friend Cooter, the best.



**Carolyn Tarter****Mysterious Geodes**

Round, lumpy rocks,  
Some large, some small;  
Not revealing  
Their treasures at all.

What could it be,  
Hiding inside,  
A slice of agate  
Six inches wide?

Or maybe crystals  
Shimmering white  
Or different colors;  
Oh, what a sight!

Children, like geodes,  
Come in all shapes and sizes;  
Mysteries inside,  
With amazing surprises.

**Carolyn Tarter****The Old Barn**

Old barn, withered and worn,  
Tattered planks, peeling and torn,  
Remind us of times before we were born.

Of years stacking bales of hay,  
Row after row before they could play,  
Until work was done for the day.

Awaiting the birth from a favorite cow,  
Anxiously, patiently wondering how  
Long it will take--the time is now!

Maybe a home for a horse in a stall;  
Maybe a donkey or no animals at all.  
Through it all, the barn stands.

The old barn squeaks, creaks and moans,  
For years of use, it still groans,  
Reminding us of its antiquated tones.

So celebrate the sight you see;  
The musty smell left for you and me,  
Reflecting the need, the need to be.

**Sharon Taylor****Silvery Dust**

He loves me,  
he loves me not,  
she whispered as she pulled  
each petal from a field daisy.  
A peculiar way to prove love,  
but Oh! How wonderful  
if the remaining petal  
confirms her dreams.

Still, not leaving  
anything to chance,  
she picks a fuzzy dandelion  
and Inhales deeply to blow  
its silvery dust  
into the wind.

If every feathery strand  
flies into the air,  
that's proof  
enough to her  
that he really, really  
does love her!

Sharon Taylor

**The Culinary Poet**

Admire the culinary art  
of a tasty slice of coconut pie.  
Sense the nutty chunks  
as they roll around your mouth,  
integrating with fluffy *bright* meringue  
toasted to perfection. Savor a hint of  
salt from the fancy *braid* of crusty rim.  
Have another bite, and another  
until you've pleased your palate  
with the luscious confection.

Write a poem in the same flavor.  
Relish every word  
as it pours from your soul.  
Combine words to form savory lines.  
Mix them together in your thoughts  
to create scrumptious stanzas.  
Carefully, space them sweetly  
into a delicious poem that will *bring*  
uniqueness to your taste, your love,  
your passion for creating.

**Carol P. Thompson**

**Lustrous**

A necklace  
of porcelain pelicans  
undulated in winged choreography  
above the East Texas highway.  
Bright morning sunshine burnished  
each pinkish pearl  
with the golden iridescence  
of an oyster shell  
turned inside out.  
The jewels nestled  
against blue velvet,  
a string of shimmering light  
floating gracefully beyond reach.  
A gift to anyone looking up.

**Marlene Tucker**

**A 1933 Story**  
(With Two Endings)

The cocky young man was aimless,  
His folks were done; he was nameless,  
With conscience gone he was shameless,  
In the small town he lingered on.  
(It was a dusty little place in Missouri.)

His swagger she took for lameness,  
He teased in spite of her plainness,  
She couldn't stomach his vainness,  
And told others she wished him gone.  
(He was 20, she was 17.)

He took a bride yet was wifeless,  
His hands were bloody but knifeless,  
Her cold, young body was lifeless.  
They hung him on the court house lawn.  
(He went loudly cursing.)

**Marlene Tucker**

**Christmas Passed**

No more cookies left on the plate,  
A scrap of ribbon blown against the gate,  
Empty boxes telling money spent,  
Discarded wreaths that have lost their scent,  
It leaves me sad and I just can't shake it,  
Christmas came and I didn't make it.

No "Merry Christmas" on the 26<sup>th</sup>,  
No carol singing, no Santa flicks,  
No need for tinsel or mistletoe,  
Friends and family are packed to go.  
I never got the holiday spirit,  
Christmas came but I never got near it.

The lights are off and the tree is down,  
No sleigh bells ringing, no reindeer found,  
Gone is the rush of seasonal cheer,  
It's all put away, at least for this year.  
I wasn't ready; I don't know why,  
Seems I let Christmas pass me by.

**Marlene Tucker**

**A Good Morning Cup of Coffee**

Good morning coffee,  
Full of sunshine,  
No one's up yet,  
And, well, that's fine,  
While I sip,  
And make my plans,  
For the day.

Trees full of green,  
Quiet sidewalks,  
A steamy cup,  
While no one talks,  
Makes me smile.  
I like my morning coffee  
This way.



**Thom Woodruff****Compound/Accelerate**

These hairs turn white ,then leave  
These eyes strain, then demand glasses  
These ears rattle with tinnitus.  
Before you praise the NATURAL, ask  
what will we do with our ghosts?  
Shells and husks -hollow, thin  
wait like waifs for our attention.  
All your ancestors were once in skin  
now just stories told to children.  
You may not be forgotten  
Those lines on gravestone or furrowed forehead  
are time's inevitable entropy./we  
  
will be /differently dealt with /in time  
forgotten/lines..

Thom Woodruff

TIME, GENTLEMEN!

BICYCLE YOUTH  
Pedestrian future.

YOUTH IS LEARNING  
Give them time.

LONG WORDS  
Short life.

WE RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER  
as strangers

COMPANION ANIMALS  
Rescue us.

AFTERNOON  
Siesta sleeps in (again..

EARLY EVENING  
Tintoretto Rubens skies paint clouds  
Reflections

SURVIVAL A SONG?  
(Just have to learn the words

LOVE LINKS US  
To what loves us most.

**Thom Woodruff****You Do Not Have To Be Young**

Nor in altered states-to move away  
from all you knew before. To walk out your door  
walk, cycle, motorbike, car, van, hike your way  
across any continent in which you take your stay.  
This urge to GET UP AND GLOW! is eternal  
or as long as you have a skin to move within  
You can leave whenever you want to  
Borders demand visas and passports  
but there are forests and rivers as yet unseen by you  
They will wait until you feel the urge  
to rise, to open your door-to close it behind you  
as you voyage-into the New.

June Zaner

**After hurricane Ike, reburying the dead...**

Aunt Tilda lay just there, right under that overturned oak tree  
Before the surge struck...it's like before...her casket is out again.

She rode the waves all the way to Cameron in the last storm  
And ended up in a floating bed of seaweed and bait buckets  
She had yellow rope twisted through her casket handles and  
Something orange was leaking out.  
They drained her for a week and every day we'd come and sit  
Beside her casket and sometimes sing to her... "Abide with me,  
Fast falls the evening tide"...it seemed just right somehow.  
When she was all emptied out, we asked if we could open the casket,  
Have a look. Aunt Tilda wouldn't mind, she liked children with a  
Curious mind and by now she would be dry and maybe even salty looking,  
Like a pickled egg left in the brine too long.  
Of course they told us no, for we were still children that year.

When Aunt Tilda took her leave of the cemetery this time we didn't  
Rush down to check on her, to see which way she'd headed.  
We knew that she had always loved Cameron where a boy she'd dated  
Once lived, before he broke her heart and moved away.  
We figured that when the sky became a rolling solid wall of wind and  
Sea that she would high-tail it past the cement angel sitting at her head  
And hitch a ride to Cameron on a mat of shingles and vinyl siding.....  
Maybe her ride would be easier this time and we wouldn't have to drain  
Her for so long. We'll look for her next week...we'll put on our tall  
Rubber boots and head out for the flat boats that take folks into the  
Shallow waters where everything piles up when the storm has past.

I won't ask permission this time to open her casket, but leave her dreaming  
Of her beau from Louisiana and all the dances that they yet might do...  
A liquid, watery doe-see-doe, carried into secret corners and hiding places  
Where the music repeats itself over and over and over, fusing silence into sound.

**June Zaner****At the Edge...**

On my 78th birthday...

Bridges over canyons began to interest me

From the casual rolled log crossing to the

Lacy steelwork of suspension bridges tight and

strung with such precision that a bird landing was

cause for rioting somewhere down the lines.

Winter bridges, glistening with danger and the unknown

Slip, the loss of grip, the birds crying from the wire

Cages down below where all those stacks of dreams

Had fallen and lie now in death's unrelenting embrace.

Crossings look so easy before you start them

But evolve with each moonrise into something

With many thin arms and eyes that cannot open,

Cannot see. I think that age must be a dying into some

Beginning where we slide and fall forever.

I've never been afraid of heights and flying in silver planes

And love to cross a beautiful bridge in Houston, held

There in a net of tight yellow wires, like a trapeze net

Strung to catch the clouds and hold the sun...it's only

The approach, the edges, the awesome edges ...

**June Zaner****Learning the soul of a mountain...**

In memory of Bill Zaner, an artist

A reporter stood at the edge of the canyon  
Interviewing an old artist at his easel, squinting  
And intent upon his work... "Why do you keep coming  
Back to paint this same mountain over and over again?"  
Without taking his brush from the canvas, the artist  
Responded to the young man.  
"An artist can paint the same mountain for all his life  
The sun gives it a different stroke every minute, every hour,  
Even as we study it, and in every season of the year. The trees  
And grasses change, flowers bud green, bloom red, turn brown.  
The moon is ever the unfaithful lover to the mountain,  
Caressing it in one spot and hiding in its shadows later until it  
Moves quickly on - finding a new attraction elsewhere...  
Rain and snow remove all the brush strokes and wash  
Clean the mountainside, the beauty running away in  
Little streams that glow or sparkle or freeze into jewels.  
The artist pauses with his brush upon the canvas and  
Smiles. It is no easier to be a mountain than it is  
To be an artist...painting that mountain would take a  
Lifetime..."

R. M. Zaner

### Repetitions

I once upon a river etched in dust  
Came and stood in silence there  
Before the dry, once-rhythmed ribs of sand  
Proceeding each by each in solemn grace  
Like old ones holding, hand in hand,  
The final moment when a flute of wind,  
Sweeping down the breathing river,  
Breaks between the buried weed  
And the further reach of the sea.

Unbound from time, the usual move of things,  
The sun beat hard on the unmoving river;  
Spilled it with busy shadows  
From a hawk's slow-circling wing,  
The river then seemed as if remembering  
The angry rains which like a hurried hell  
Would rip across this place from which my hand  
Now gathers dust and vagrant seed.  
I then watched my hand move out and trace  
Those unused currents, held mutely now,  
Poignant memory of how a troubled word  
Murmured in the night is forever said but once.  
Suspended and alone, my hand held the river  
In a palm of sand and knew its touch,  
Its birth, and threading sand, moved on and knew  
The dry, inevitable death of dust:

And in the quiet of the moment grew in my hand  
The sudden green of a living reed.

R. M. Zaner

**The Death of God**

The days run ruin, unleashing raw  
Resentful, sweeping hate, and men  
Lips thin with broken grins  
Rob meaning of its peculiar flaw  
With words that all fall deadly on  
Minds bewildered by Leviathan.

With each cool dawn the swords of ink  
Announce with knowing gear and wink  
The holy causes of the tribe, seed  
Riots, surging from itchy feet,  
Hiding beneath mere shibboleths  
Of honor, and send children to untimely deaths.

The times are fig-ripe for the spoiling sting,  
People busy singing adoration  
To billion-footed gods in trivial oration:  
While they curse a dead God for dying.

(forthcoming in *Red River Review*, 2016)



R.M. Zaner

### The Rhythms of Reaping

I suppose there might have been a time  
— a time of apples and children  
of women and glances,  
of rain, snow and wild winds —

When things now usual and plain  
Were just themselves, shining, when we  
In innocence could let them be  
(as be they might  
Driven in our eyes like eagles  
— or in silence shared a while  
with no need of words —  
Only a holding-fast, keeping by letting them  
be, unashamed, what they (and oh, yes, we) are:

I suppose there might have been a time  
— of saying like the rhythmed reaping  
of grain, plucking of firm fruit,  
hands like land, deep and gnarled —  
An understanding of the flesh, of earth,  
— a doing unfamiliar with the feel  
of straight steel or fingers inched  
around a hard butt of gun, rifled and  
triggered for death

— Beneath a sheath of trees,  
There is a time of talking, whispering together  
like faintly shifting leaves (or singing)  
slipping through the quiet air (like birds' wings)  
our minds like picnics  
spread softly around a mound of quiet grass —

If such times of knowing (being  
are what it's all about  
then what is time? Quick paradox of inwardness  
(yearning on the further edge of living) for what was  
and ought to be (or have been)  
and bear the burden of repetition.

But are we free to give ourselves  
(like Plato) to such supposings?  
as much sweet myth remembered, these,  
as any madrigal that was and is no more.

This yearning in time for time  
 my self's deepest, faintest  
 longing for a truth my very own —  
 put into figured stories (sly indirections)  
 felt silences (faintly mocking)  
 the diffident episodes of youth —

To whom offer such celebrations,  
 these prefaces for remembrance?  
 On whom depend for understanding:  
 where we stand under, beneath the bows  
 of trees, lying, on our backs,  
 thinking of home and apples,  
 children and glances from women,  
 listening for the moving voices  
 (like birds sleeping in the leaves)  
 to tell us (now)  
 in this needful time,  
 the time we are,  
 and who, or why?

**The Beall Poetry Festival**  
**The 22nd Annual Festival**  
*April 6-8, 2016*

A three-day celebration of some of the finest contemporary poets, with readings, a panel discussion and the Virginia Beall Ball Lecture on Contemporary Poetry.

**About the Event**

Baylor University's 22nd annual Beall Poetry Festival is supported by the John A. and DeLouise McClelland Beall Endowed Fund, established in 1994 by Mrs. Virginia B. Ball of Muncie, Ind., to honor her parents and to encourage the writing and appreciation of poetry.

**This Year's Event**

**Evening Poetry Readings (all at 7 p.m.)**

- Amaranth Borsuk (Wednesday, April 6)
- Nicole Cooley (Thursday, April 7)
- Kevin Young (Friday, April 8)
- All evening poetry readings will take place in Bennett Auditorium

**Afternoon Events (all at 3:30 p.m.)**

- Wednesday, April 6 -- Annual Student Literary Awards
- Thursday, April 7 -- Ernest Suarez will deliver the Virginia Beall Ball Lecture on Contemporary Poetry
- Friday, April 8 -- Panel discussion with Amaranth Borsuk, Nicole Cooley, Kevin Young and Ernest Suarez
- All afternoon events will take place in Carroll Science Building, Room 101

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