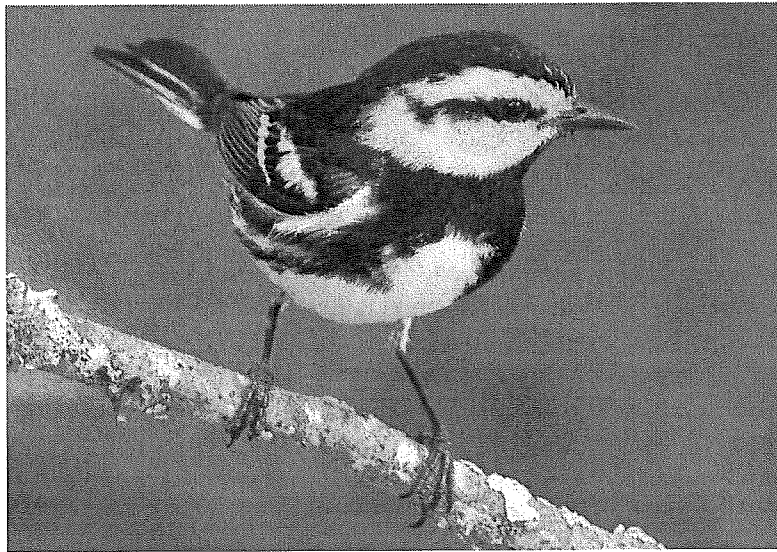


# The House of Poetry

Poetry Reading Session  
Volume XXX  
2018



A Golden-Cheeked Warbler by Gil Eckrich, "The ONLY bird that ONLY breeds in Texas"

*House of Poetry Program*

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

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 XXX**

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

**11:00-12:00 Guest Presenter: Carol Coffee Reposa, "From Airy Nothings to Names: Crafting a Poem"**

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

**SESSION TWO: Cox Lecture Hall**

**1:00-2:00 Guest Presenter: Bryce Milligan, "Arabesques for Travelers: Landscape and Poetic Imagination"**

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

**Bryce Milligan** was raised in Dallas, but has lived in San Antonio since 1977. Milligan's work includes children's books, YA novels, plays, criticism and eight collections of poetry. He's edited several anthologies, including *Daughters of the Fifth Sun* (Riverhead) and *Floricante Si* (Penguin), award-winning collections of contemporary Latina fiction and poetry. He has been the publisher/editor/designer of Wings Press since 1995. His latest book is *Take to the Highway: Arabesques for Travelers* (West End Press, 2016), which received the Notable Writers Book Award and was finalist for other prizes. Forthcoming is *Literary San Antonio* (TCU Press, 2018), a collection of 300 years of writing in San Antonio. Milligan is the recipient of the TLA Lone Star Book Award, the Gemini Ink "Award for Literary Excellence," St. Mary's University's "Art of Peace Award," and a dozen Pushcart Prize nominations.

The poems, reviews, and essays of **Carol Coffee Reposa** have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Atlanta Review*, *The Evansville Review*, *The Texas Observer*, *Southwestern American Literature*, *The Valparaiso Review*, and other journals and anthologies. Author of four books of poetry—*At the Border: Winter Lights*, *The Green Room*, *Facts of Life*, and *Underground Musicians*—Reposa was a finalist in *The Malahat Review* Long Poem Contest (1988), winner of the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center Poetry Contest (1992), and winner of the San Antonio Public Library Arts & Letters Award (2015). She has received three Pushcart Prize nominations in addition to three Fulbright-Hays Fellowships for study in Russia, Peru, Ecuador, and Mexico. A member of the Texas Institute of Letters and of the editorial staff at *Voices de la Luna*, she has been named 2018 Texas State Poet Laureate.

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### Saying Goodbye to Mama

Saying goodbye to Mama was exciting when I was little.  
It meant I was going to play with my neighbor or  
Staying with Grandmama for an extended visit.

When I was in first grade, saying goodbye to Mama  
Was proof I was growing up. Even better,  
I was “big enough” to walk to school by myself.

In junior high, saying goodbye to Mama  
was always a relief.  
We seemed to be constantly at odds.

After I married, saying goodbye to Mama  
Ended a phone conversation.  
We lived three states and hundreds of miles apart.  
I had learned to value Mama’s advice.  
I admired her, thankful for her role in my life.

When Daddy died, I saw a new side of Mama.  
Suddenly, Mama seemed fragile.  
Leaving her alone—in the big house Daddy built for her,  
Was the hardest time saying goodbye to Mama.

I knew everything had changed,  
But I also knew something was wrong.  
Mama was not herself anymore.  
I felt guilty, uneasy, powerless.  
Saying goodbye to Mama became awkward.

The diagnosis brought clarity  
And a thousand questions.  
When she moved into our house,  
I found myself saying goodbye to Mama  
Piece by piece, one memory at a time.

The years of life were crumbling away.  
The changes in Mama came in heaps.  
Her decline had a certain resolution—  
Saying goodbye to Mama became a mindset.

Mama’s mouth still smiled,  
But the sparkle was gone from her eyes.  
Her energy, grit and grace showed up on occasion.  
Grief visited daily—taunting us all.  
Saying goodbye to Mama became more painful.

**(Contin.)**

In time, her smile became a grimace.  
Morphine drops brought liquid sanctuary.  
All the world was confined to Mama's room.  
Her sunset lingered, darkness dropped over us.

I said goodbye to Mama to run a short errand.  
And then the call came.

A few minutes later, I entered her room.  
The hospice nurse and a friend waited at her bedside.  
There was my Mama—at peace.

Weather forecasts studied. Arrangements made and changed.  
Highways traveled. Long flights made.  
Winter pummeled us with snow, ice and freezing gales.

Huddled behind blue tarp shelters,  
On a numbing January day,  
I said goodbye to Mama one last time.

### **Perspective**

Winter is long,  
dreary,  
and gray.

One thought brightens:

Spring is on the way!



Christine H. Boldt

### Reading Bilhah's Book

*Jacob became very angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of your womb?" Then she said, "Here is my handmaiden, Bilhah, go in to her, that she may bear upon my knees, and even I may have children through her." Genesis 30:2-3.*

Whenever I sit down to read,  
I hold Bilhah for a while.  
Though my knees are knotted, thighs are clenched,  
through her pangs I birth a child.

Then I, exhausted, drenched, regard  
*her* issue glistening, furled:  
another creature brought to term,  
if not to terms with my world.

I puzzle at the twisted life,  
so rubbery, dark, and slick,  
that puling, wailing, turns to me  
to give succor, and to suck.

As it pleads for my acceptance,  
I face the *partum* abyss.  
I think to stop the babe's demands,  
have it exposed on the cliffs.

Or might I hide behind the rites,  
and assign it Bilhah's name,  
then cleanse myself, and turn aside  
--a bystander with no claim?

Contending with its blood-birther cries,  
I read past doubt, confess my dearth,  
clasp Bilhah's words to swelling breasts,  
and bear down for the afterbirth.

Previously published in "Windhover," 2010.

Christine H. Boldt

### A Mark for Distinction

*"In the mid-18th century thousands of poor women ... deposited their newborn babies at the hospital. A sign instructed them to leave some kind of identifying token pinned to the child's clothes in the event they were, one day, in a position to take it home. Neither the name of the mother nor the baby would be recorded, so this token needed to be memorable and distinctive."* Kathryn Hughes, *The Guardian*, October 8, 2010"

"The bit of red cloth enclosed was pinned to the child's cap."  
Foundling 10563. London "Foundling Hospital, 1758.  
Recorded in *Threads of Feeling*, by John Styles

I bind my breasts and feel their ache begin,  
And now your wan, accusing howls start.  
My resolve is battered by your puny din.  
Child, I must give you over, play my part.

Even as wan howls at your sweet lips start,  
I cannot keep you, for I am lost to sin.  
Child, I must give you over, play my part.  
Deserted by my lover, without kin,

I cannot keep you. Aye, I'm lost to sin,  
A no one, with needle work my only art,  
Deserted by my lover, shunned by kin.  
A piece of red clout sewn into a heart

(Since needle work's my only gift, my art),  
I'll fix upon your tulle cap, with brass pins,  
Rough linsey-woolsey that's sewn into a heart,  
A token I will come for you, again.

I'll fix it to your biggin with brass pins,  
As my shackled tears begin to smart,  
And vow that I will come for you again,  
Though my travails may take us far apart.

As the pent up tears begin to smart,  
As I am battered by your mewling din  
Knowing my travails will take us far apart,  
Beneath bound breasts some deeper ache begins.

I vow that I will come for you again.

Previously published in National Federation of State Poetry Societies,  
"Encore," 2015.

Christine H. Boldt

### **The Feast of St. Francis**

It is October Fourth,  
and this is what comes to mind:  
an old friend, Katie, whose servant heart  
chose to follow Francis  
and who found so many ways to *caritas*;

the Blessing of the Animals, today at two,  
downtown in a saint-named church,  
that makes the Calvinist in me rise up  
and mutter, "Heathen!" even as I lavish  
my spaniel with an all-out belly-rub;

The Zefferelli movie with its goofy-joyous music  
that absolutely captures what it means  
to be a fool for Christ; and the fields in the film,  
where poppy faces and heads of grain  
bow as the Wind passes through them;

the real Assisi where we often saw  
those golden, red, and nodding fields,  
wandered paths, and naves, and crypts,  
conned, stone by stone, Francesco's story  
back-lit by a sky of Giotto blue:

silk bolts flying out of windows,  
the smudge of an army on the plain below,  
the rude shed of a Nativity  
built to help the people see their God  
as babe, and wolf, and whispered wind.

The Porziuncola, Francis's tiny church,  
still standing inside today's cathedral,  
in sacred conversation of humility with power;  
the tourist reproductions of the icon-cross  
that he himself adored with ravaged palms;

our four-figured family, climbing  
a hill above the town at eventide,  
guided by a priest who told the story as his own;  
how, that one time, in that thin place,  
for a moment, a skeptic child believed.

Previously published in "True Words" (2009).

Cassy Burleson

**And an Eagle Soared**

He took his last  
Breath holding  
My hand in a  
Stiff embrace.

But he left us long  
Before that, my sister's chat  
With the hospital chaplain  
Ringing in his ears.

By then his hunger  
And his last call  
For a Dr Pepper had  
Turned him to fairy dust ...

Like a still, silent foggy morning,  
He was holy and sacred by then,  
Like a hand-scratched etching on a wall,  
A scrawled hieroglyphic on a limestone rock.

Just a wisp of a military man, no medals were given  
For knowing how to die like a good soldier. And before the nurses  
Wheeled his shell into hospice care, I looked out and released him  
To the clouds ... and an American eagle soared.

An eagle soared, by damn and by Jesus,  
Just showing off right outside that  
Hillcrest Hospital third-floor window.  
(My Daddy always said he was a pilot.)

That eagle swooped again like hot summer lightning,  
Then ... waiting and pausing, weaving a bobbing,  
Then ... that white-headed eagle soared ... wide-winged ...  
Catching an updraft and way past ready to go home.

*Epigram: Give yourself 10% of your life to be who you are. You'll never have this holy moment again.*

Cassy Burleson

### **Just a Short Drive on a Long Journey**

My Dad nervous beside me on a  
Dirt road tableau near LaSalle Cemetery ...  
Summer dust looming before hazy horizons.  
Me, straining and peering through the top  
Of the white-hot wheel and the steering column,  
Glasses falling from my nose as I tried to navigate the  
Ruts ahead. Windows down. No air conditioning.

Feet straining to reach the clutch, sweating,  
Maneuvering brake and gas in a standard shuffle  
To peel out, racing toward “Braveheart’s” freedom  
In a black and white ’57 Chevy V8,  
My litany of memories now falling  
Like octopi from  
An orange eclipse.

If “nothing says love like a Subaru,”  
We’re all stranded here without a GPS.

Cassy Burleson

### **Strands of a Sunday Sermon**

You are my fine white pearl,  
My greatest treasure, hidden  
In a field of \*marigolds\* that  
Bloom through sun and shadow.

You have stood with me  
On mountain tops and taken the  
Wheel during long drives through  
Verdant forests of dreams realized.

Through twilight and into darkness,  
Your eyes are a wellspring of love  
That takes the best of the old  
And reckons with our new vistas.

My name is Tillman Rodabough,  
And Carolyn, you are no cut flower.

*\*Marigolds are known as the “companion” plant. In the '60s, David Burpee launched a campaign to have marigolds named the national flower of the U.S., but roses won.*

## Origins

When the author gives birth to her character,  
he arrives with enough purpose and details  
to begin work, unlike infants drooling and sleeping.  
She maneuvers him and morphs him  
as the novel evolves, and they write it  
together. At times, he may refuse a specific task  
—too onerous or counter-intuitive, too kind or  
too cruel, something too much somehow that grates  
against his logic. Theirs is a collaboration requiring  
amnesia about his Maker on his part and trust  
on hers. Strange that a particular detail  
will have been his conception: a movie image  
or a whiny snippet overheard in Wal-Mart. She  
won't know him all that well and can be surprised  
at some of his choices. And he rants  
about the dead ends of his life or  
about the absolutely taut line to his destiny  
(or maybe he's oblivious to the meta meaning  
of his existence). At night when they lie down,  
he's still whispering until the sheets are twisted  
and damp. He advises her, cajoles her moodiness  
when in truth she wants only a lover  
obedient to her whims, careful about her pleasures,  
one who will not leave her bed but continue  
holding and kissing and listening. But at dawn,  
she can tell him to go, and he will.

Susan Maxwell Campbell

**Poetry, Etc., as Consolation**

Upon hearing a well dressed stranger  
in the under-ten-items grocery line  
misquote Emerson

Given all these vagaries, detours, stumblings,  
hangings, and self-shot feet, consolation is the  
universal goal of any mind that claims to think  
whether in cocoa cups or wine cups. We live as  
if those loving pats (*Ah, there there, dry your  
tears*) are guaranteed somewhere in the fine  
print of an Amendment. Look at our citizens'  
cunning will to happiness—more square  
footage, more slender and sparklier bloneness,  
the spankiest of vehicles, a backyard mountain  
with a private guru, investments of steady  
heartbeats pumping great hurrahs into each  
citizen's ruddy cheeks. Our fellows call by a  
million names the one true consolation when  
fortune gives raspberries (how often does it  
not?) and withholds what should be our folding  
green. Can you disagree that poetry gets  
dressed up as fate or those piteous mindsets of  
misunderstanding and misunderstood? Poetry  
supplies those cool words, those sharp words,  
that we install as personal porcupine quills  
against insults—those slings and arrows of  
outraged fortune (mutter those stolen lines  
three times a day, and call someone in the  
morning). Poetry, ah yes, it gets recycled as  
stingers and one-liners, codes for our hurts, not



**(Contin.)**

so wide as church doors but bleeding, bleeding  
and blotting inside all American red. We recite  
every good and handy thing to console  
ourselves. Even the dark, swimming around us,  
is a matter for speculation: how touching, how  
wringing of so many tears can we make that  
bitter end? that sad derailment? that lonely  
corner where we claim to keep our hearts? We  
struggle for the words, right or close enough  
that wear the poet's special handy ring so that  
we may shield ourselves with a motto: goal or  
consolation or the gamer's handy offense.  
Burns, Frost, the great Will himself, the prolific  
Anon, What's-his-name who's French or was it  
Thoreau with all that sturdy di di DAH di di  
DAH di di DAH singing us sweetly and  
soundly into the dreamless sleep of unopened  
anthologies or so-and-so's collected poems.

Susan Maxwell Campbell

**That Red Wheelbarrow**

solitary as if solitude  
consoles, offers a redness  
like cheer  
in rain  
thundering far over there.

2 So much depends  
on your willingness  
to rise over and over  
in dawn's cool  
to squash, peas, corn—  
each day into the Garden.

3 Now his barrow trundles seedlings  
to the slope where red blazes  
have eaten a century's pines.

4 A one-time pretend chariot  
with papa the Roman steed,  
it battles legions—*Again!* she cries—  
since heroes find  
magic, strength, resolve  
in ordinary tools.

5 Kitchen sounds, dinner smells.  
A late shudder of rain  
glazes the wheelbarrow,  
overturned with spade, the weeding  
blade, mud-clogged gloves  
under, left a moment  
for their own night's rest.

6 Not that wheelbarrow  
nor those white hens—  
after all, it rains  
in season. It is the idea  
of wheelbarrow  
that proposes,  
that saves.

—after William Carlos Williams

Michael Elkins

**Sonnet for the Birds**

Sounds of the morning break in day  
When bravely birds will chirp a little.  
Entrance your mate, composing tweets!  
Entice them through this courting way  
That seems to thrive in worlds so brittle.

Awoken at their aural feats,  
Ventured unto my ears, now captured.  
I'm left inspired, such precious songs,  
Amazed at beauties they repeat;  
No sound by me has so enraptured.

Stirring my soul, I'll sing along  
On pages in my hostile home.  
Next time you dwell upon the wrong,  
Go sing, oh self, you're not alone.

Previously published under Vincent Corbeau in "Civilized Beasts II" by Weasel Press (2017)

Michael Elkins

**Sonnet**

Is there some beauty still within my soul  
Engaging with the bitterness of life?  
Those grand ideals exhausted to defeat;  
They've all but faced the mournful final toll  
From bells that signal sorrow dread and strife.

The specter haunts with melancholic beat  
The music of my words upon the page.  
Infectious are these lyrics once engraved -  
Within my mind the loss is made complete  
As it has only worsened while I age.

But no! This song shall not find me enslaved,  
So I must learn to fight for self-control.  
Now I will sing the lyrics of the saved,  
For there is beauty still within my soul!

K. Lorraine Ellis

**The Cast Iron Oak**

the cast iron oak

stands in the field unmoving

and his branches bend

with strength

never out of weakness

he seems so pleased

with the years uncounted

and the field and the sun and the wind

K. Lorraine Ellis

**How**

I don't know how

I failed to see

the beauty

when

the green is so deep

against the dark red-brown of the plow

rows

and

the sky is light blue and

the fields have scattered trees

that stand

sometimes on a straight

line

their bare branches

flat against

the blue pink purple orange red yellow sun horizon

how many years of life did it take

how many twisted fallen fence lines

to look at you

throwing planks overhead wings branches

clouds sticks feathers

of dark shadow

upon the ground

K. Lorraine Ellis

### **Third Time**

what if I never walked  
with your bare feet and  
never stepped into  
the abandoned halls  
of your poem  
with sunlit streams  
cascading in as traces  
of your spirit fall  
along the walls  
and high ceilings  
i imagine myself empty and  
trapped outside  
like a hollow clay figure  
cast aside in a heap  
of useless things  
in a long forgotten courtyard  
to the left of an  
ancient door  
that never opens  
that heavily sleeps  
closed in silence  
but you found me here  
and took me inside  
where I could not tell  
if I was weeping your tears  
or you were weeping mine  
and now  
there is a road under my feet  
where there was  
once nothing  
and I walk with bare feet  
and I feel the stones  
and the stickers  
and I go on  
unfinished undone

**Ansel's Moon and Mine**

Ansel Adams' moon rose  
high in the autumn afternoon sky  
east of the Sangre De Christos  
in the face of a sun that lit  
Hernandez, New Mexico,  
and set white crosses gleaming  
in the graveyard of the village.

My moon settled full and  
low above a summer horizon  
west of the same mountains  
as the first soft rays of dawn  
burnished the browning grass  
to golden velvet on swells  
of eastern Colorado plain.

Ansel's moon and mine are one,  
seen two hundred fifty miles  
and five decades apart.  
Ansel leaned above his camera  
and with a touch stopped his moon.  
I leaned against the fender of my car,  
powerless to even slow the flight of mine.

Ansel's moon hangs still  
on walls of noted galleries,  
pages of impressive books,  
in rooms of fine and storied homes.  
Mine still moves in single memory  
in the long fall of morning moonset  
into the mountains' waiting maw.

Now, anyone with money  
may purchase Ansel's moon.  
My moon, like yours I'd guess,  
will always bear a price  
no one could ever pay.



Lee Elsesser

**Late Arrival**

Doves were calling from the post oaks  
when summer came that morning,  
a score and four days late.  
Cool air hung unmoving in feathers  
of bamboo along the gray wood fence.  
Soft light of early day glowed golden  
thought leaves of mulberry  
worm-eaten to isinglass.  
Remnants of the final shower  
of a long and sodden spring  
puddled the walkway reflecting  
scattered snapshots of sky and cloud.  
Summer arrived as a surprise  
on a sultry Texas breeze,  
like the warm breath  
of a lover on my throat.

Patricia Ferguson

**On Being Thirty-five  
Life Lived Backwards**

On Being Thirty-Five  
Life Lived Backwards

When I was young, I hungered and I thirsted  
After ends, I yearned for life to happen  
And to finish right. But I have learned  
To seek the process not the goal.

A youth seeks answers, endings, problem solved.  
My age has only learned the questions.  
The journey is better than the end, I find.  
Problems more int'resting than solutions.

I do not know what the future brings--Beginnings  
Probably. But until then, I watch  
The actors, not the play, and leave the book  
Half-finished, skip the denouement; the end unread.

Patricia Ferguson

**The End Is Implied in the Beginning**  
**On Being Fifty**

John 12:24 King James Version (KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The end of everything is told in its beginning.  
A dying flower becomes a fruit, a seed.  
A nut becomes a tree, a seed no more.  
The tree ends, too, foretold, ordained,  
A log 'neath canopies of light and dark and shade.  
All this is written in the seed, in the flower.

When I was eighteen, I wrote of ends.  
At thirty-five, of journeys and of burning.  
At fifty, now, afraid and unafraid  
I see each end as one within the seed  
Which always contained the road between  
From the end back to life's beginning.

The end of everything begins within the flower  
Dying. And all of this is written in the seed.

Patricia Ferguson

### **Reflections on Love**

I wonder when I look into your eyes:  
Do you see me? Or do you see  
The reflection of yourself in mine?  
If that is true, do I see you?  
Or do I see the reflection of my eyes in yours,  
Yourself in me? I wonder. Do I love you?  
Or like you, do I love myself in you?  
Or can I separate the two?

Oh, God! I wish I could return  
To the first wild days of our love's passion,  
Before I learned to doubt our love,  
Before I saw my eyes reflected in yours  
And you reflected in them,  
Before when we were one.

Leila Fincher

### **Green Martians**

“I've got a black thumb” was my theme  
Living plants in my house was a dream  
but when I brought them home  
it would strike the death toll  
only brown now where once there was green  
I met someone who saw plants as friends  
she explained how correctly to tend  
how to hear the plants' voice  
not to keep them too moist  
with new knowledge and tools I was sent  
Plants are Martians-- I used to believe  
now new beauty and value I see  
though still not quite friends  
it's a start on amends  
and the air in my house has grown  
sweet

Leila Fincher

### **Call of the Deep**

I walk along sandy swells of diamonds  
I dance in the foam of the waves  
The depths of the ocean call "Dive deep,  
search out the treasures I hold."  
The ebb and flow of the tide draws me on  
I venture out up to my knees  
The water is stronger here-- pummeling  
sand shifts underfoot and I sway  
waves rise and foam above me like mountains  
and my feet run away from the shore  
But the depths call me back as I'm running  
of course there is danger and power here...  
I am just a speck of sand  
in the vast immensity of the sea...  
and yet I long to plumb its depths  
I ache to mine its riches  
vibrant hues with names to match  
vermillion, fuchsia, tangerine,  
saffron, chartreuse, cerulean, amaranthine  
creatures as manifold as the sand  
sing the song of their Creator...  
He holds my hand and draws me on  
I join their song  
Great is the Lord.

Leila Fincher

### **Dawn Breaks: A Passion Poem**

#### Part 1:

Night falls for the darkest Sabbath we've  
ever known  
the echo of "Crucify" rings in our ears  
for so long we looked for the King...  
waiting... waiting  
lame walk, blind see, dead live  
we felt sure Messiah had finally come...  
then the cross...  
He's gone.

His teaching rang with power like we'd  
never heard  
He dared to call himself the Son  
He called us sons too... amazing...  
unbelievable  
and yet we saw his compassion  
mercy and truth all woven through  
He wanted our hearts...  
but now he's gone.  
His words had been too good to be true  
promises of dignity, peace, and life  
And yet we walked with him... knew him...  
believed...  
we caught a glimpse of a better kingdom  
Light, Love, Living Water  
we dared to hope...  
but now he's gone.

#### Part 2:

The darkness is a fitting cloak for our souls  
as we walk toward the garden  
The wind is still... waiting... waiting...  
we whisper in the stillness  
as we try to gather the shards of hope...  
try to understand...  
He's gone.

We feel the weight of the stone in our hearts  
as we wonder how we will enter the tomb  
we've heard there are guards... waiting...  
waiting...  
Will they turn us away?  
The spices waft up to burn our noses...  
one last dignity...  
He's gone.  
We reach the garden where the tomb waits  
The sun peeks over the horizon  
Where are the guards? Who moved the  
stone?  
We've never seen angels before  
"Why do you seek the living among the  
dead?"  
hope swells... dawn breaks  
He's alive!

Sandi Horton

### Three Spirits

Outside looking in  
Through stained glass  
The metal and glass of the window  
Are well defined in the bright sunlight

Broken glass fits like a puzzle  
Confined between brick borders  
The glass is cold, dark, devoid of color  
*This is the spirit of the times*

Going inside looking out  
Through the stained glass  
Red, blue, green, orange and gold  
Are reflecting the outside sunlight

Endless possibilities are seen  
Gazing into the great mysteries  
Of the warm, colorful glass  
*This is the spirit of the depths*

I return to the present  
And look at the stained glass  
A few pieces are cracked  
I see different size fingerprints

I see colors of red wine and green olives  
I see the grass and the sky  
Here I am – on my path – integrating  
*The spirit of the times with the spirit of the depths*



Sandi Horton

**See of Possibilities**

*"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes."*

*--Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

When I look into the sea, I see  
A 'see' of possibilities  
Sparkling like Indra's net

I take off my shoes  
To walk the hollowed sand  
To baptize my feet with salt water

I'm living my vision  
One epiphany at a time  
In my travel body

Sandi Horton

### **Mind Full**

When a balloon gets too full, it pops  
What happens when a mind gets too full?  
How do we let the air out?  
So the balloon can float in the clouds

Race cars go faster and faster  
Around and around a track  
Trying to win  
Sometimes they crash

A mind full of speeding thoughts  
A body running in circles  
Leaves no room for daydreams  
No time to be mindful

Jean Kubala

### **Hanging On**

I sometimes feel as if I'm hanging  
Frantically by my fingernails  
Looking down with fear  
At a future of forgetfulness,  
fuzzy vision and faltering speech,  
fumbling hands and failing strength.

But I will not let go  
and make the dizzy drop.  
The coffee perks – another day unfolds  
And sunsets are still splendid

**Memory**

Memories are the odds and ends  
Crowding the catch-all drawer in the hall  
    To useful to be discarded  
    But lacking an organized space

Some almost worn out of shape  
Pulled out and shared too often  
Some with sharp edges that cut  
Shoved in the back of the drawer.

Some you search for frantically  
Knowing they're in there somewhere  
But they seem to have vanished,  
And it's all jumbled together.

Until, toward the end, you dump out the drawer  
And find that they all can be woven  
    Into a warm fuzzy blanket,  
Protection from the coming freeze.

### Poetry Workshop

“Now write,” he says.

Pencils scratch on paper,  
Words flowing from them  
Tumbling over one another  
To fall in rhythmic order'  
Spilling light into hidden emotions.

But my pencil scratches slowly,  
And the words emerge in jerks.  
They fight for position  
Refusing to settle for any order,  
Spilling out only frustration.

What am I doing here?  
What falls on my page is a tangle.  
I am no warrior of words.  
Why should I even try?

Well, one line might turn out right.

**Conk-a-reeee, Conk-a-reeee**

There was no need for her to look around,  
glance into the bushes, trees, or reeds  
to identify the sound she had heard.  
Long stored in her memory bank,  
she knew exactly what kind of bird  
was somewhere close at hand,  
recognized its call, its “song”  
as surely as she knew the voice  
of a member of her family.  
Had she not heard it around ponds,  
lakes, marshy spots, wet ditches  
all the years she was growing up?

She tried to remember when she first  
identified the sound with the sight,  
the knowledge, the name of the bird.  
Perhaps it had been when she  
and her older brother had gone fishing  
in the pond at the Strange Place,  
the land their father leased to raise cattle.  
There, on a tiny island, close to the bank,

(Contin.)

the birds nested in small willow trees.  
She remembered seeing them, hearing them,  
especially when they were close to that side  
of the pond or near cattails that grew there.  
Maybe he was the one who had told her  
what they were called; she didn't know.  
He was no longer here to ask.

*Do you hear the sound that bird makes?*  
she asked her young grandchildren.  
They nodded in agreement, then turned  
as she did, saw the red-winged blackbird  
perched on a cattail, red patches  
edged with yellow, adorning glossy black.  
Hearing the bird, she had felt a sudden need  
to pass on her knowledge to city-hatched fledglings,  
before darkness, like a blackbird, spread its wings.

Published in *A Book of the Year 2015*, by the Poetry Society of Texas

Catherine L'Herisson

**Gardener**

She is a gardener—  
preparing the soil,  
sowing the seeds,  
providing the right elements,  
then waiting,  
watching for any sign  
of new growth in fertile soil.  
Yes, she is a gardener,  
a cultivator of minds,  
a teacher.



**Wind Turbines**

Like giant futuristic  
wildflowers, they spring  
from the prairie  
near Amarillo,  
their three blades similar  
to thin white trillium petals  
humming in the breeze.

Or they could be  
pale pinwheels,  
their blades reminiscent  
of the Mercedes symbol,  
even seen as plane propellers  
slicing the sky,  
casting shadow flicker  
to the ground,  
perpetually pulsating.

But seen by moonlight,  
they are like some strange  
species of aliens,  
ghosts, eerily moving,  
waving their arms,  
moaning, all night long.

**Ode to Crows**

A nest of cottonwoods  
ornamented with black crows  
glitters in first frost.  
They caw welcome to the sun  
that gems the Eden they occupy,  
unaware of bands of humans  
rifled to annihilate.  
This is the innocent way of the pure  
who strut iridescence,  
wings beating a steady flap  
against the face of morning.  
Who are the fearful who arm  
themselves against this joy of flight,  
who cower in the shadow  
of birds whose very name  
is a verb of pride?  
In the gaze of black pearls  
there is holiness, a wholeness  
that accepts the fire and frost  
of Texas weather, the hard scour  
for the fruit of its land.  
They lift soft throats  
at a lawn's puddled runoff  
like velvet vicars  
chins jutted to the  
cloud-clotted sky  
in a pantomime of prayer.

Budd Mahan

### **The Sister Poems**

And in that last moment,  
moving toward her stillness,  
it all released.

I was broken,  
unable to contain  
what burst and spilled,  
great sobbing loss  
buckling progress.

That is all  
there is of that day.

I wish I could remember  
letting her go,  
wish she knew how  
poems summon her  
to eyes' edge,  
her lips shaping words  
I am never  
able to hear.

Previously published in Autumn/Winter issue of A Galaxy of Verse 2015

Budd Mahan

### **The Swimmer**

After reading Pablo Neruda's Sonnet XXXIV  
Shakespearean Sonnet

A swimmer leaves the white Havana shore,  
his body purer than the dust of Mars,  
embraces water with his muscled core  
and plots his journey from the face of stars.  
The Key West goal, just 90 miles away,  
becomes the focus of his steady breath.  
As clouds eclipse the sun and sea turns gray,  
his every stroke becomes a little death,  
a gasp that mimics porpoise, whale, and seal,  
the song of naiads swelling in the wake.  
As sinew cries, he cuts the endless teal  
imagines sand where foamy billows break.  
  
He cuts the turquoise, scissors ocean's roar,  
becomes the salt, the foam, the thundered shore.

Previously published in Encore 2016

Drue Porter Parker

### **Nocturnal: My Bush Soul**

*Karl Jung found that in some primitive cultures people experience their souls as residing in bushes, trees, animals, etc. Carl Jung explores this idea in concepts of archetypes and dream analysis.*

As young mulberry leaves  
frolicked in the wind,  
she danced around her bush soul.

Childlike trusting, caring and careless,  
she watched mushrooms  
grow in the dark of the shadows,  
hid between shaded crevices,  
and again frolicked in the wind.

The fresh young mulberry bush grew--  
even continued to grow--  
when that boy next door  
separated her virgin wood  
with his antique knife.

Returning years later,  
she clearly sees the scars,  
"Even a gnarled tree continues to grow,"  
But when her husband touches her,  
she shivers.

Drue Porter Parker

### Initiation

He tried to tell my deaf ears  
Plugged with memories of  
    childhood games of hide and seek  
    chasing down gullies to round up cows in green pastures  
    sworn secret clubs  
    and watching sunsets over lonely fields.  
And now I sat beside his friend Jan  
in the sleazy downtown Hotel Raleigh bar  
as *Flame*, a myth in a gold lame gown,  
    swarthy arms rippling downward,  
    strutted in and sat at our table.  
False lashes were pasted above bulging expanses of white  
    around deep Latin pupils;  
Fat *too coral* lips  
lisped, "Hello there youse guys."  
*Flame* got pinched by Karen,  
    who was teased with "Never looked better to you, huh."  
While Tommy held hands with Frank, the  
    six-foot-four ex-Air Force pilot  
    -- we'd heard his talk of belly dancers in North Africa, --  
    and exchanged knowing glances.  
I sipped my Coke in the smoke-filled bar.  
Then gulped black coffee at an all-night cafe  
before he returned me home  
    with apologetic eyes,  
    and promises to pick me up for church  
    in the morning.  
The invitation crawled at me, but  
he didn't come.

Jessica Ray

### **Only Visiting**

The dark shades of night in the Saigon jungle  
Close in on Sam.  
As the tightness in his stomach begs for food and water,  
Anything but leaves and insects; an occasional stream flowed to the ocean.

Starving, Sam made his way toward light and conversation, sensing the enemy was near.  
Wearing a green uniform like the American soldiers and speaking perfect English, he said to himself:

"I can do it. They won't suspect I'm not one of them."

Sam slipped unnoticed into the chow line. An intelligence officer noticed something different--  
Sam's uniform. It was a shade darker green than the others, and he stood out taller than the others.

Before Sam reached the food, two MPs tapped him on the shoulder.  
"Who are you and what are you doing in this camp?"

"I'm a business student from UCLA--I came to visit with my grandparents in Tokyo during this Christmas holidays.  
A few hours after I got there, the MPs were knocking on the door, arrested me, and put me in the uniform of the Japanese army--so here I am.  
I don't care about the war, and I don't care about the emperor,  
and all I really want is a baloney sandwich and a banana."

"Feed this man!"

Fascinated with the Japanese prisoner's story,  
the intelligence officer said, "Give this man two baloney sandwiches and two bananas."  
Sam turned to the intelligence officer, saying, "Thanks. All I really wanted to do was just to go home."

Betty Roberts

**Her Walker, Her Friend**

Greeny, she calls her constant companion.

He wheels her through her days,

Provides freedom from falling,

A seat when she grows weary.

Rarely does she thank the friend she leans on,

Instead she scolds him like he's a misobedient mutt

When he doesn't fold right, rolls away unnoticed,

Or when caregivers bump toes walking into him.

Oh, the places they've gone together.

Down long halls at a family member's retirement center,

Up various elevators in holiday hotels,

In and out of vans taking her to her daily adult care.

I'd love for her to change the constant to part-time,

Have Greeny be a good friend, not like a needy spouse.

But I'm grateful he has protected her for two years.

It has been a good marriage.

Previously published in *Reflections: Voices of Northwest* (May 2017)



Betty Roberts

### **To an Elderly Uncle**

Not retiring from the ministry until you pass 90,  
you led a busy, full life,  
taking over as patriarch when your younger brother left us,  
handling funerals, keeping us updated through your engrossing letters,  
checking on nieces, nephews, cousins.

But now, 10 years later, you have forgotten the brother you replaced.  
You repeat questions four or five times.  
“So, where do you live these days?”  
I tell you Denton, just up the road from your Fort Worth home.  
Another time I tell you you visited me with your wife when she was alive.  
No recognition.

The great-grandson twins you were so proud of when you baptized them  
three years ago are foreigners in your small townhouse.  
“These boys just run around. Where are their parents?” you ask me.  
I tell you they are your caregiver daughter’s grandsons.  
You smile at me and don’t argue, but you don’t agree either.

I tell you I’ve retired from teaching.  
“So, how do you occupy your time?” you ask.  
It’s easier to vary the answer each time on this one.  
I say I write, read, take my sister places, clean the house.

We take a photo together.  
You reach out and touch my hand and smile,  
Sitting relaxed in a Navy blue recliner, contrasting with your pale blue shirt.  
You look at the photo and say apologetically that you’ve been lazy lately.  
“Nowadays, I take a nap to occupy my time,” you say.

Betty Roberts

### **When Losing is Winning**

I want to be a winner, but lately I've been such a loser.  
I've lost unwanted pounds that were making me lazy.  
I've lost anger and hostility that made me bitter.  
I've lost negativity that pulled me down each day.  
I've lost inhibitions that kept me from trying anything new.

One day, years ago, I lost an engagement.  
My world became a dark, gloomy night.  
Until the morning came with a move to an exciting city  
And I realized the loss was a major gain.

Another day, I lost a job.  
My world took on days of uncertainty.  
Applications were my life.  
Where they fell, I never knew.

Then, just when I thought the world "loser" was coined for me,  
A school hired me, and I was back at work.

But, personally, I thought I would live alone forever.  
The man I loved seemed out of reach;  
arguments ruled our spare moments together.

Then my biggest all-time loss hit me.  
The smart, fun man stole my single life.  
I lost my loneliness.

Previously published in *WordFest Anthology 2017*

Carolyn Tarter

**Farmhouse on a Snowy Day**

Beautiful bright yellow two-story house  
Surrounded by bare trees on a snowy hill;  
Watching the snowflakes  
When all was quiet and still.

Enjoying the warmth from the fire  
Wrapped in the comfort of home,  
Thinking of winters past,  
Inviting us to mentally roam.

The aroma from the hickory logs,  
Wafting throughout the room,  
Gave us the feeling of reverie  
From the curl of the smoke's plume.

Nary a bird can be seen or heard;  
Most have migrated past;  
It might be a bleak winter's day  
But we remember winter's chill won't last.

Carolyn Tarter

**Seat by the Window**

How long has the table been there,  
Standing guard by the window?  
Perhaps waiting for someone special  
To take a seat in the chair.

A book and a vase of flowers  
Keep watch, waiting for so long  
For someone to come and bide  
But no one has come for hours.

The table and chair paint peeling;  
Chipping so slowly away;  
Revealing what used to be  
Baring walls from floor to ceiling.

Time has past, reducing hope  
That anyone will care to come;  
No one to read the book  
Lending belief they could not cope.

So heed a lesson from the past  
And appreciate what is given;  
Be thankful for promises fulfilled,  
For not all wishes will last.

Carol P. Thompson

### **If You Live Long Enough**

The cold hurts badly this year  
for the first time.  
Legs and feet are fighting,  
fingers chilled and cranky.  
I fight it,  
taking lots of off-brand white tablets.  
The decades stack up  
behind me, pushing me forward.  
Now it's clear  
the years are rabbits.

Not like the '60s  
when High School Larry  
cut off the ignition  
of his Daddy's blue Chevy  
sending it backfiring,  
lurching us down the laughing streets.  
Back then the years  
were turtles  
crossing the road  
with no fear.

Marlene Tucker

**Boot Scootin'**

The cowboy loosened up his step,  
As he saw the women smile.  
He thought it was his fancy dance,  
And the ladies liked his style.

He changed his partner with each song,  
So each gal would have a chance,  
To be led around the ball room,  
With his showy western prance.

The cowboy nearly lost his mind,  
When ladies reached to grab his butt,  
The reason was a forgotten tag,  
That read: Performance Jeans, Boot Cut.

Marlene Tucker

**Drifting Off to Dream**

I slip off quietly in the night,  
To see what sleep belies.  
Silently I float away,  
Just after I close my eyes.

In all places I feel at ease,  
To open any door,  
And see the faintly familiar,  
That I have never seen before.

Scenes and purpose made of vapor,  
Suspended and surreal,  
Changing without logic,  
Not open for appeal.

Moving from thought to place to thought,  
In a restful sort of sway.  
There is no marking of the time,  
The year, the month, the day.

I'll be ushered on too soon,  
The journey is completed.  
Morning starts a new day,  
And night's memory is deleted.

Marlene Tucker

**Merely Mortal**

How much more mortal can we be,  
Than, when death strikes, we make our plea,  
To carry us or loved one home -  
A place where mortals do not roam.

How helpless we, in faith express,  
Our prayers from depths of hopelessness,  
With human tears upon our face,  
We beg for mercy and for grace.

For all man thinks himself to be,  
He can't control eternity.  
For all the things that man does well,  
He cannot save his soul from hell.



Thom Woodruff

**Battalions of Beauty  
Monarch Migration**

Royalty as refugees

Crossing borders with wings

Dazzling all with their brokenness

Monsanto stealing their plants

More than metaphor-a moving experience

To alight for a short mortality

To astonish anyone with eyes and heart

That such bright blues could live among us!

Thom Woodruff

**This Leaf on the World Tree**

This leaf on the world tree

It does not have your name nor number.

It does not have your ID, nor telephone, your banking route

nor any of your tattered seasons. It will lay with other crinkled reminders  
that will bloom, rise and Fall, as tiny Empires of your Temporary Attention.

Distracted easily are we. Accidents, shut-downs, Brexit, Borders-  
all have nothing to do with the Fall. Even Winter fails to impress ..

Each leaf a life story. Connected to the Tree of Life.

Releasing when time leaves. Parachuting Infinities...

REPEAT THE MIRACLE!

Thom Woodruff

**Why Mary Oliver Can Never Die**

WHY MARY OLIVER CAN NEVER DIE  
AS LONG AS BEARS LEAVE SHADOWS  
As long as birds have wings  
As long as trees connect in root systems  
Mary Oliver lives!

AS LONG AS STARS BECOME STARFISH  
As long as Buddha "makes of himself a Light"  
As long as morning becomes a water snake  
Mary Oliver delights!

AS LONG AS WOLF MOON GROWLS  
As long as herons motion freeze  
As long as hummingbird pauses at the trumpet vine  
We need Mary Oliver!

AS LONG AS WHITE GANNETS PLUNGE  
As long as peonies have power  
As long as ghosts return  
So will tides-and Mary Oliver... and Life... ever on...





### **The 24th Annual Festival**

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.

#### **Featuring:**

Kwame Dawes, Dana Gioia, Mark Jarman, Lisa Russ Spaar,  
and a Poetry Panel

#### **About the Event:**

Baylor University's 24th 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.

#### **Event Details:**

All afternoon events at 3:30 in Carroll Science Building, Room 101

- Afternoon of March 21: Student Literary Contest
- Afternoon of March 22: Lisa Russ Spaar, The Virginia Beall Ball Lecture in Contemporary Poetry: "Unshaming the Lyric Poem"
- Afternoon of March 23: Poetry Panel, moderated by Chloe Honum

All evening events at 7:00 in Kayser Auditorium, Hankamer Academic Center

- Evening of March 21: Kwame Dawes poetry reading
- Evening of March 22: Mark Jarman poetry reading
- Evening of March 23: Dana Gioia poetry reading

#### **Contact Us:**

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