

# THE HOUSE OF POETRY

*Poetry Reading Session*

*Volume XXVII*

2015

## **“Devotion”**

The heart can think of no devotion  
Greater than being shore to ocean -  
Holding the curve of one position,  
Counting an endless repetition.

-Robert Frost

## *House of Poetry Program*

**Wednesday, March 25, 2015**

**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 XXVII**

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

**11:00-12:00 Guest Presenter: Alan Birkelbach, "The Monks of Tuva"**

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

**SESSION TWO: [*Cox Lecture Hall*]**

**1:00-2:00 Guest Presenter: Alan Berecka, "Revising for Resonance"**

**2:00-3:00 Open Floor Readings, Closing Remarks**

\***Alan Berecka** earns his keep as a reference librarian at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi. His poetry has appeared in such periodicals as the *American Literary Review*, *The Christian Century* and *The Texas Review* and anthologies such as *St Peter's B-List* (Ava Maria Press). Three collections of his poetry have been published, the latest of which is *With Our Baggage* by Lamar University Press, 2013. His second book, *Remembering the Body*, was a finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. Known for an irreverent wit, he is a frequent presenter of his work at festivals and events and has read in such far flung places as Vilnius, Lithuania, and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

\***Alan Birkelbach**, a native Texan, was the 2005 Poet Laureate of Texas. His work has appeared in such journals and anthologies as *Grasslands Review*, *Borderlands*, *The Langdon Review*, and *Concho River Review*. He has received a Fellowship Grant from the Writer's League of Texas, was nominated for Wrangler, Spur, and Pushcart Prizes, and is a member of both the Texas Institute of Letters and The Academy of American Poets. He has been a featured reader at the Texas Book Festival twice. His tenth book, *Meridienne Verte*, is scheduled for summer 2015.

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Linda Banks

**Bringing In the Sheets**

I understand the symbolism now, of course,  
but I sang the song long before I ever saw  
a field of wheat, and even longer before  
I watched Amish farmers gather armloads  
of the pale stalks and stack them in sheaves,  
as others did before the age of automation.  
Still, when I sing the song I land feet first  
in the backyard of my childhood, wrangling  
bucking white rectangles from the clothesline.  
When they were tamed and harnessed  
to scratchy striped-ticking mattresses  
their wind-dried, sun-pressed fragrance  
would nuzzle us to sleep.

I know the right words of that old hymn,  
but I prefer singing it the way I did then.  
Not only does it take me back in time,  
but it centers me as I count my blessings:  
fresh air, clean sheets, daily bread...

Windhover, January 2007, Volume 11

Linda Banks

**From a Distance**

Down a country road  
somewhere between  
two small towns  
a field  
gleaned and turned  
waited  
for another season.

Day after day,  
nothing much happened.

Until  
early one morning  
a new crop sprouted  
spreading white blooms  
across tilled expanse.

Even on a still day  
it seemed a breeze  
tossed flowers  
this way and that  
from one spot  
to another.

When  
the entire bunch  
lifted up  
like a bride's bouquet  
it scattered  
across the sky  
blossoms  
winging  
out of sight.



Cassy Burleson

**Because I Saw a Couple Dancing (Revised 3/15/15)**

I'm back to my beginner's mind again, reaching out to touch you with these thoughts. But I'm not perfect yet. I hope that doesn't disappoint you, my perfectly solid You. In fact, today I kept a rosary of all my faults, and I'm not even Catholic, Focused on my bumps and warts, no priest to protect me from my mis-thoughts. No confession to keep away the cold of truth. Baptists blame no one but themselves. But just last night, we were heart to heart in one smooth wrapper, foiled in a Chocolate kiss of touch and tongue. Faith somewhere in a rear view mirror offering grace once and twice again.

And I so trusted you at first touch ... Outlandishly Witty, Charming, Enjoyable You. Even though I told myself I would not ... could not ... should not ... I did, anyway, Because my fear of abandonment occasionally overtakes my enchantment with Constant isolation ... You might say my fear makes me covertly brave, occasionally. And that's the yin and yang of it. I should have been much stronger 20 years ago. (More brave, back then. Maybe I should have been Chinese or some wiser, Older Soul, Somewhere in the soup mix of my past ... I'm such a pop philosopher these days.)

I might have been Chinese in one time or another, but never strong enough Before, and it's this life we're discussing now. Besides, tonight a full moon blazes, That moon a rising sweet gardenia against an azure sky of urgent hope. Dreams rising past Leo. On such a night, I'm always back to my Beginner's Mind again. Back to being the Novice, None the smarter yet, perhaps, and in some ways, hiding in my habits, Safe and comfortable in all my expectations, nevertheless, my resolution is simple: Never trapped again or limited for long inside that bell jar of insulation or deception of belief.

Yet I was content with smothering for some time in my pasts and still don't fully understand that. Disbelief kept tapping at the glass, waiting for me to lift the edge for Air. But now the wind is on My neck. And although I'm old enough, and scared and scarred enough to have lost all hope in St. Nicholas, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy, I still believe in us. I confess that and the fact You were and have been my only Muse. I still believe in you ... although I miss my safety net of Doubt. Risking's risky, Even though I sometimes smile my cynic's smile -- and swear I don't Believe in risk or St. Nicholas, the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy. I still believe in Leprechauns.

And I'm also still stuck in wouldn't, won't, couldn't, shouldn't, mustn't, mightn't ... ought not to. And sometimes, I've been either wrong or right or rowing single long enough to wonder if only a Fool believes again. But then I catch your glance and know I'm right when I believe in you and us.

So let's be two old fools with faith, two old fools who sail like projected Mustard seeds, striking out against the current and the tide. amorists always, Braving tornados and floods just to get to the other side ... Just because it's ... still there. That pot of the gold at the end of hard times, disbelief and failure

...

Even though we set out across our blank deserts with blistered feet and cracked lips, Canteens full Of brown water and wilted flowers, with only garbage sacks for covers, Vowing to be brave just Once more ... tallying the odds, betting against pain one more time – bankrupt gamblers – Lucky streaks aside and Going West—defying time and Laughing like lightening while folding on full houses ... but still intensely casual about it all. Saying, “Don't bet against us, honey .... Don't get too cocky-- unless you feel like losing.” You may think it's false bravado. It is not. We are better together and brave beyond ourselves.”

Because we're back to our beginner's minds again, baptized by emerald green lagoons, purified by Summer suns, imbued with a dandelion's quiet white and fragile strength, sailing out across fields And through forests like Rip Van Winkle – Born Again and waking up like Christmas morning, Shrugging off sleep and bursting forth on Higher Power through streams of tears and tinsel, sand catching our skin and buffing off the Calluses as we roll smooth as newborn lambs into bright blue eyes again and Settling ever so gently earth-wise on fresh-plowed ground.

We are renewed, skipping out to meet our destiny. So we will dig down deeply and rejoice – Risking winter, flood, faded dreams and famine, we will burrow gladly down Into deep dark cover in each other once again ... just to see what pleasures wait beneath the sod – Two long-lost lovers, loving till the last and all the better for it – Back again and laughing as we toy, and rightly so, with our beginners' minds again. Whatever is, Was, and should be, and is again. For I am home with you and you in me.

And this little Southern Belle has a steel shell and beautiful markings, and tiny eyes that see Everything gladly. Even though my itchy, strong little feet keep saying I can walk away any time I want to. Which makes me want to stay. But these little feet go both ways, honey. So although I'm Back to my beginner's mind again, my heart is wise and gray and wrinkled but is connected by a Silver thread to you. So although my little ladybug legs work just fine, and although I have the Glorious exit down to an art form ... achievable in nanoseconds of thought ... I plan to stay Entwined in us forever and ever, amen.

Even though in my car, I can get away fast. In a plane, stand back and watch my dust 'Cause I Know all about the geographic cure. So give me your best shot. Yes, I'm just beginner at this Unconditional love stuff, but I'll try to keep up. See? I even brought my own sparklers. So let's get Out your prime-time firecrackers 'cause I could be a Roman candle right now. I could be God's Own angel parked right here on top of your tree. So just sit there and watch me shine, 'cause I'm Planning on having happy new years for the rest our lives. You are my Zen from A to Z-Z-Zs.

And I am back to my beginner's mind again because I am home in you and you in me ...

And all because I saw couple dancing, and it was us becoming us again.

*Cassy Burlison*

*The Wedding (Revised 3/13/15)*

Let this be a warning to you, poet and painter of automobiles,  
This family is a crazy quilt of colors generations have worn:  
Administrator, accountant, or adjuster,  
Airplane pilot, architect, artist or attorney,  
Blueprint reader, cattleman or cattle woman,  
Carpenter, college president, computer nerd, or  
Episcopalian priest, estimator, farmer, financial analyst or homemaker,  
Indian and Indian fighter, insurance salesmen, or jailhouse birds – it doesn't matter.

Whether journalist, lettuce-shed workers, librarian, lobbyist, manager, or military men,  
Ministers, musicians, paupers – or prosperous prophets,  
Race-car drivers, researchers, respiratory therapists, roustabouts or secretaries ... give us our  
Illiterate soothsayers, teachers, waitresses, world-travelers or wayward homebound souls –  
Some pretentious, some proud, and some “Married Well-Off” – we've all found our haven here.  
And this messy medium is your legacy. Your medley, your melange,  
Until death do us part, for better or worse –  
(At least for those of us who still believe in better times, death and politics).

But let this be a warning to you: In this magical melting pot – this event we call a wedding –  
(An American kaleidoscope of immense costs and capitalistic inspiration)  
Hope rests eternal. Hope is the melody we sing – sometimes in unison –  
And in that, we are all born again, for better or worse, all believing better times,  
Not worse. So send the Word to every street corner and every field –  
To every church, big-city alley and every country-cousin country lane,  
Sing the tunes our grandparents sang with all those gone before –  
Whether our notes were nine months or nine lifetimes in the making.

We're here for you. For richer. For poorer.  
'Til death do us part. For better – or worse. You can count on that.  
And so each June, July, or August, December, September or January,  
We find our way through the noise of Life, despite the labyrinth of day-to-day woes.  
And every once in a while – to the surprise of us all –  
A painted bunting is born, that iridescent bird of turquoise and lime green joyful noise.  
And in that sweet moment, there is more love in this crazy quilt called “family”  
Than any heart that's still alone could count.

Paul Chaplo

### **This Spring**

This Spring is claw-hammer ripping  
The moldy plywood shutters off  
The dirty windows of my soul  
Tearing the drywall screws

Right out of the dry-rot 2x4's  
Of my termite-scurrying  
Funk

Sunshower downpour thunderstorm  
Rainwater  
Washing the burning grey ash  
Out of my cry-swollen eyes

Yes, this Spring is almost too much!  
Never saw the surfer-green leaves  
Explode from oxidized grey aluminum tree limbs  
Explode! in green-world wonder

This awesome green spring overload  
Alleluia!

Mockingbird jamming with nest-building robin  
Play hard at daybreak  
I cannot sleep  
Like the two of you just finished  
A bottle of Jack after jamming all night  
And now first ray sunshine groove

The stuff is coming together  
Solstice / equinox groove  
Blowing trumpet-hard Coltrane  
And smiling sunrise eyes sparkle!

All of Spring, a hymn – and nature  
And Life – a doxology  
Of irrepressible, un-surpress-able praise  
Of universe creation shouting!

Those rocks DO cry out as  
You enter Dallas,  
Sandal-feet  
Dance  
And song  
With hands held high  
And eye Heaven-bound!  
Dallas Philharmonic and  
Hendrix lead  
Splashed with Monet  
And crazy Pollack paint spill all over me, and bright!

All green living amazement  
And a new song in my heart  
It is joy!  
Playing a lead through  
Glowing Fender (amp) tubes!

Thermo nuclear flower popping  
Out of black cones of death  
Crashing color, like a load of  
Bluebonnet cymbals fell off  
God's gig truck  
And hit the Dallas roadside  
Spilled paint onto your oil-stained,  
Concrete arteries and damn  
Construction sites that always make me late;

I do not care  
I have green blue sunshine air  
And windows open Bossa Nova  
Brazilian music in my / eyes and nose  
Say Amen!

Your city blues cannot find me today

Oh, God and Springtime have smiled upon me  
Showing me her beautiful teeth,  
Water eyes full-lake sparkling sincere  
Like blue mercury  
In the sun

Spring, this year  
I'm kissing you  
With wild honey lips  
In the pungent rainy woods

I cannot contain you, or take you all in  
But I'm giving you my all  
I'm showing up with my dancing shoes on  
Making the altar call  
In my  
Heart  
This water-balloon Spring is bursting on my head  
Baptizing me at the altar  
and all I can say is  
Alleluia and damn!

With tears mixing streaming  
With sunshine raindrops  
You have overflowed the river bank  
With your grace and mercy

You have emptied my living-room  
Of river water and mud  
And filled it with pungent white Bartlett pear blossoms  
And breakfast cooking

And the smell of coffee in her hair

I'm a purple crocus pushing up through the snow  
Saying adios to winter,  
And hello to  
Springtime in Dallas!

C. W. Christian

### **The Minstrels**

Where have all the minstrels gone  
Who sang when I was young,  
So young I believed that rainbows were real,  
Like the rocks and trees around us?  
Where have all the minstrels gone?  
We welcomed them as they came over the hill  
In their colorful tights and their piebald jackets  
And their lutes inlaid with rosewood and ivory.  
They had bells on their caps and their sandals  
And their songs were warm and full of laughter.  
They weren't afraid to be foolish  
And they weren't afraid to be tender  
And to sing of honest lovers  
Who did not change when the west wind turned  
And the north wind blew through the valleys.  
Where have all the minstrels gone?  
There are singers of songs  
But their eyes are hard  
And their songs are hard  
And the children who follow are wrinkled and old,  
And the children know, O, they know  
That lovers love only 'til daybreak  
And that rainbows are mere refractions.

C. W. Christian

**Weltschmerz**

Let the sky sheep come and swath the moon in shadows  
And we will huddle in its coolness  
As if we were not heavy with spent hours,  
As if the blood of youth still flamed our hopes,  
And the passion of our days had not been squandered  
On going and coming and being there  
And nurturing and rising and sleeping,  
And laughing aloud and sobbing.  
Your cheek was smooth as polished stones,  
Warm like apricot-fruit at dewbreak.  
I remember.  
Arcturus long since has left the sky  
And Vega blinks in gray morning mists.  
Venus shimmers dimly in the eastern dawn  
And weary we are of waking  
And caring and loving, and long to sleep.



C. W. Christian

### **Cardinal on the Snow**

My boots broke through,  
Then sank unto their boot-tops in the snow  
On that bright Christmas morning.  
The storm had passed us by  
And left to us an incandescence,  
Crisp, frigid and breathless  
With not a leaf astir.  
A cardinal, in his brisk ecclesial red  
Dropped down upon the snow  
To harvest some small tidbit he had spied,  
Then back into the naked maple tree,  
And then—*mirabile dictu*—began to sing.  
Ten degrees of Fahrenheit around  
And he began to sing!  
As if he thought the sun-flecks on the ground  
That danced and wavered with a passing breeze  
Were jonquils pushing through the crusted snow.  
Disdainful of the distant equinox,  
His April message echoed through the trees  
On Christmas morning: “Cheer, cheer, cheer!”  
I found the carol spinning in my head:  
“. . . and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.”

Marie Dixon

### Clutches of Winter

The icy tentacled octopi reach to cover all they touch.

Tenaciously they cling, until  
the approaching ball of fire overhead wins.  
All the covered is again revealed.

Glistening droplets in rainbow hues fall.  
baring what lies hidden

For a time white wins over all other colors  
Objects below are held in unified  
Obeisance.

Glittering particles, no two alike,  
cling  
by the millions  
to create a soft and rounded blanket  
over  
seasonal scenes around the world.

The previous sharpened edge  
between day and night  
becomes  
a blur of hazy twilight. Eire colors mark the  
scene,  
until the snow retreats.

It is hard to believe that both looks are  
in essence-  
the very same place. Nature takes hold of the  
paintbrush.

The canvas is easily redone. Equally hard to believe-  
she has no deliberate plan for each  
creation.

Such distinctive beauty abounds and surrounds.  
Then ... is  
Gone.



Marie Dixon

## **New Day**

Kaleidoscopic thoughts filter  
through the hourglass as we ride the box cars.  
You  
On the singing rails of life's adventure.  
never  
    able to see just what is waiting around the next  
curve.

Hold onto your stamina  
    intuition  
        courage  
and sense of adventure.  
Sway with delight as each curve exhibits  
    new winds of pressure.  
Tighten your hold onto life as it tries to slip  
away.  
The newness of today is old tomorrow.



Marie Dixon

### **Twilight Reflection**

Unannounced  
Those private episodes  
one cannot quite recall  
when recovering from the dream world.

Vivid sensations always so real-  
people, objects, feelings  
Floating past,  
but always out of reach.

You know you are  
and were there.  
Exactly where  
You cannot tell.

Who took you there  
or made you stay?  
Reality closes the bridge  
to that other world.

Awake and aware seeps into your veins.  
You must face the new day.  
Dreamers beware-  
you can never return!

Lee Elsesser

### Reflections in a Pool

Once as a boy,  
    I saw my face in the sky  
on the water  
    of the pool  
    on the floor  
        of the canyon.

I wondered then,  
    how many others  
in all of time,  
    found their reflections  
    in that water hole  
        cut by nature in the solid rock.

I imagined a girl  
    with stringy black hair  
and dark, slightly Asian eyes  
    who carried a yucca mat  
    like I found one summer  
        in a shallow cave nearby.

She checked left and right  
    quickly as if for danger  
as she bent into the image,  
    then stopped at the glimpse of her face  
    to touch her cheek and smile,  
        just as I had done.

Lee Elsesser

### **One Texas Summer Moon**

On a long ago frontier,  
when moon and sun and fire  
gave this land its only light,  
from where the Colorado River springs  
to far below the Rio Bravo,  
brightest nights brought darkest hours.  
For when the Texas moons rose full,  
hoof beats pounded dirt to dust  
and terror rode the moonlight.  
All along the timeworn trace  
women wept and children cried,  
cowards fled and heroes died  
when in whatever tongue they spoke  
they called the moon Comanche.

Brenda Ethridge Ferguson

### **Reunion**

Air conditioners cool the hall  
where they assemble. They who  
wear the accumulation of years  
as a heavy mantle no longer  
favor park pavilions  
and July heat  
and fighting flies off black-eyed peas  
and okra.

Histories meet again. Bored children  
endure long hours of hugs and sugar-coated interest  
in cousins' offspring's offspring.

But he, the remnant of another time,  
sits smiling. His manner  
laced with respectful reserve,  
he turns his crinkled face and  
half-closed eye toward his slightly less  
ancient, more talkative kin.

"Yes," he chuckles and nods as  
his distant cousin regales him with  
stories of days gone by--  
family stories about long lines  
of Bills and Aggies turning light bulbs.  
The old man sits upright, fully suited  
in dark, summer-weight wool,  
speaking so softly his cousin  
leans forward to hear.

Young men pass by. Feebly he reaches out  
to them, hand extended, courtly.  
"Thanks for inviting me," he says.

They pause briefly. A handshake, a nod, a hurried  
grin.

Patricia Ferguson

### **The Phoenix**

A dying ember, broken briquette  
are all that's left, are what remain  
of what was once a lovely fire.

The flame is gone in ashes gray  
and there is not a warm, red coal  
to mark the place where once it burned.

Such passion should be banked inside  
and not so lightly easily thrown  
to that uncaring wind and rain.

For, God, how mighty is this fire  
to leave the hills and valleys black  
charred toothpick trees and emptiness.

To brand the soul with hot memory and pain,  
a few lines upon a once white page  
writ in ash-black like tracks of smoke.

But pain and searing flesh are not  
too much to pay for such an hour  
of blazing glory like this fire.

It burns like sunset on the sky;  
it fills the clouds; it scars the hand  
of anyone who dares create.

It crashes, tumbles, falls, and breaks;  
it burns; it pains; it smashes, wakes;  
it sings; it showers; it sears; it lives.

Such power should not be so cheap,  
so carelessly, so lightly thrown,  
so little held, so loosely kept.

Such beauty should not be so free,  
so quickly given, lightly spent  
to vanish in the wind and rain.



Patricia Ferguson

### **Mathematics**

The numbers find the sense to this  
untidy, sense-free universe—  
obscuring in their clarity.

We have not found the reasons for  
the gospels that ourselves create,  
the sense, the rhythm that we find

In Mathematics, reason's lord.  
Man's most nearly perfect art,  
queen of science, slave divine,

The siren's call that beckons us,  
that stimulates our overwhelming urge  
to trespass in the forest of infinity.

We couldn't know what ogres here  
awaited us, what ogres and delights  
among the terrible knowledge trees.

Exploring is Man's chosen task;  
none ordered it save him. We seek  
compulsively to know and understand.

And all our creations spring from this:  
the urge to count, form, measure, separate;  
the need to name the rhythms of eternity.

The galaxy journeys on through space,  
and when its final judgment's spake  
what can we say but man did this:

Created mathematics pure,  
perfected rhythm, Eros freed,  
with grace fulfilled, with beauty twined;

Created Mathematics clear  
to subdivide the universe  
and measured out and ordered time.

J. Paul Holcomb

### **The Tolerance of Trees**

In the woods behind our house I learn by observing. At first only one cedar flaunted year-long greenness to taunt deciduous oaks, but the cedar found a way to procreate, now counts a dozen off-spring. Ten sprang up in the backwoods, one beside the house, and one show-off whose beauty rivals the front-yard fountain, provides green glory near water. At woods edge, we buried iris rhizomes; the delicate wonders encourage the cedars, inspire the oaks. In quiet times I consider disparate species, question how native oak (post and black jack,) cedar, coral berry and elm find indulgence to welcome not only foreign rhizomes but nandina, pyracantha and yaupon that landscaping cedar wax wings and cultivating cardinals introduced to the mix. Maybe, in the chain of evolution, plants are at a stage beyond humans, mastering the most difficult task of tolerance. They use even themselves to teach us as they provide sacrifice for shelter, environment, even our bonfires. In our backwoods the lessons abound while inside our home the clock of our learning continues to tick.

Published in *A Galaxy of Verse, Spring/Summer 2014.*

J. Paul Holcomb

### **Vigo Park, 1937**

In 1937, Vigo Park's parsonage did not have running water. Edna carried water from the outside well to the stove, heated it for baths, but Charlie wanted a shower. He rigged a crudely constructed stall, ran a hose from the well pump, then waited for darkness where no passerby could see pastoral nakedness through partial walls. His anticipation of well-water cleanness marked his mind with happy thoughts as he primed the pump, then raced to his stall. At night, Panhandle sounds are numerous, varied like rainbow colors, but the loudest blue in the bow erupted that night in Vigo Park when unwarmed well water splashed Charlie's body with a flood of near ice. He howled, grabbed his towel, hurried to Edna for welcome warmth to make it through what had become a nippy Panhandle night.

Published in *Texas Poetry Calendar, 2014*.

J. Paul Holcomb

**Edgar Watkins, Cheese Head**  
(A Spoon River Poem in Rhyme)

My name was Edgar; I read cheese;  
friends and I were seers of leaves,  
then moved to Wisconsin and found  
the cheese to watch, both square and round.  
Tyromancy is what it's called,  
I thought it strange, became enthralled.  
The art is ancient, old and couth;  
the cheese predicts tomorrow's truth.  
You look for color, is it deep?  
With golden cheese you smile asleep  
because it means good years for you:  
your clan will feed on honeydew.  
Coagulation speed gives signs;  
slow jells are good; quick shivers spines.  
I loved the modern world most times  
but I still liked old paradigms,  
and seeing futures rang my bell.  
It helped us all when I could tell  
how our days would be tomorrow,  
full of joy or maybe sorrow.  
I thought that I would write a letter,  
explaining Gouda, Brie and Cheddar,  
but when I sliced them up for study  
my dagger slipped and made me bloody.  
Buried with sixteen pounds of Brie,  
I met my death quite cheesefully.

Published in *A Book of the Year, 2013, Poetry Society of Texas.*

Sandi Horton

### **Weeping**

'Weeping before coffee' read the poet  
this powerful verb caught my attention -  
weeping is not the same as crying  
Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died

The poet continues reading his poem  
taking out the morning trash  
eyeing the pit bull next door  
not communicating with his neighbor

The poem ends, I am confused  
I ask the poet why he was weeping  
he states simply that his daughter had died  
the one year anniversary was approaching

Every morning he awakes with weeping  
my soul is instantly touched by  
love and grief shared by a fellow poet  
this is why we write - to communicate

### **One Legged Sandpiper**

The tiny sandpiper hops on one leg  
her friends fly away as she hops alone

I don't see a health clinic for sea birds  
who need relief from a busted leg

The next day the one legged sandpiper  
is in the same place on the beach

She's hopping on the sand, all alone  
*I don't know how to help her*

A few days later I spy a washed up  
bird carcass with no feathers

Sandi Horton

## **Dharma Dogs**

Tibetan bowl ringing  
time for meditation  
the dogs assemble  
on their human's lap

breathe in....breathe out.....  
time to relax  
to contemplate life  
forgiveness and enlightenment

calmness reigns  
transformation begins  
dharma dogs start to snore  
deep peace feels the air

insight, compassion,  
cherishing each other  
are gifts given by  
dharma dogs

Catherine L'Herisson

**A Softer Shade**

Like the red soil  
that stains my white socks,  
refuses to wash out  
no matter how many times  
I wash them,  
your memory remains.  
Oh, not as bright a hue  
as at the beginning--  
over time, little by little,  
it fades, until it becomes  
a softer shade  
I can live with.

Published in *A Galaxy of Verse*  
Vol. 34 No.1 Spring/Summer 2014

Catherine L'Herisson

### **Mother's Day Gift**

Like a not-too-hungry little caterpillar,  
she munches dark green leaves,  
picking up each raw spinach leaf  
by the stem, methodically chewing  
one side at a time, stripping the middle vein  
before moving on to the next leaf.  
She is not filled with desire for spinach,  
but for dessert, which can only come  
after her mother's command  
to eat something healthy.  
How healthy the honey mustard dressing  
that she dips each leaf in,  
and that drips like nectar  
from the corners of her mouth is,  
I can't say.  
Her mother, my first-born,  
says it leans heavy on the honey side.  
She does not have to clean her plate,  
as I did as a child,  
or, as my second-born points out,  
I made them do.  
She still gets her ice cream.  
In fact, we buy two fancy flavors  
on the way back to my daughter's home  
to open my gifts.  
But I have received gift enough,  
watching her eat,  
remembering when the nurses  
offered jello, pudding, cake, cookies-  
anything she wanted, including ice cream,  
and she could eat nothing after chemo.

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Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. 2006  
First place Missouri State Poetry Society Award

Reprinted in *A Galaxy of Verse* Vol. 31, No. 2



Catherine L'Herisson

**Photo on the Internet**

It is not their faces, but rather  
their backs that face the camera lens.  
The man is standing, shoulders slumped,  
head tilted forward as if he is looking down.  
The woman is bent down, squatting,  
arm outstretched, reaching for something.  
There are flattened buildings,  
crumpled cars, rubble, destruction  
all around them in this photo.

I wonder what the woman has found,  
if it is maybe a family photograph  
or prized possession from her home.  
I pause, stop to read the caption.  
It says she is not reaching for something,  
but for someone, is stroking the hair  
of their daughter they have just found,  
found dead after the tsunami.

I can not see their faces,  
the emotions registered on them,  
the tears that must be flowing,  
the pain and grief they must feel.  
I can only express the compassion  
I experience after seeing this photo,  
identifying with this couple,  
parents, who, after searching,  
have found that they have lost a daughter.  
Does it matter that I do not know them,  
that I am American, and they are Japanese?

First place, published in *A Book of the Year 2012*  
by the Poetry Society of Texas

Patrick Lee Marshall

### **Cibola – The Seven Cities of Gold**

- Conquistador Francisco Vazquez de Coronado arrived at Cibola in 1540, discovering that stories told to him by a friar were lies. The cities of gold were only adobe pueblos.

It is understandable.

A traveler in those lands,  
looking east, a low sun  
reflecting off the surfaces  
similar to Mesa Verde  
might think they saw a city of gold.

Now

sun floods the courtyards in the afternoon,  
broken buildings soak up the warmth to  
fight the frigid air that creeps in at night.  
History is buried here, in dark corners,  
along with the bones of ancestors.

Abandoned now, for many suns and moons,  
a place where tourists walk, crawl, and climb  
through time slipped away.

While mysteries still linger to be unveiled.

Previously published in *Merging Visions, "Collections IV"* (2014)

Patrick Lee Marshall

### **Disagreement**

I told her the worm was a butterfly.  
She cocked her head, closed one blue eye.  
In disbelief she voiced concern to me;  
my five year old daughter . . . did not agree.

I had spoken words she refused to buy.  
Looking certain she spoke with a sigh,  
“Dad that thing wriggles and I saw it squirm,  
that gooey green, slimy thing . . . it’s a worm!”

I told her soon it would take to the sky  
on black and gold wings to flutter and fly.  
After another sincere look and pause;  
“Sure Dad . . . And I believe in Santa Claus!”

Once a swan started as an ugly duck  
the same could happen to the worm with luck.  
She listened, and then offered me these things,  
“The duck started out . . . with feathers and wings.”

We checked the worm each afternoon;  
watched it wrap itself in a spun cocoon.  
I smiled in wonder, as young eyes grew bright  
when beauty emerged, spread wings, and took flight.

Patrick Lee Marshall

### **Picture Show Saturday**

I remember Saturdays when we would go downtown to the picture show, the matinee our destination. We would fill young minds and excite imagination. A fun filled afternoon watching news reels and cartoons, Roy and Gene and Lash Larue, or an uplifting war movie like, “To Hell and Back,” with a real Texas hero. The grimace and shudder as the first taste of a sour pickle hit taste buds, a big box of gooey milk duds and all of this for not much more than a dime. The pleasures found in a simpler time.

First published in *Merging Visions, “Collections IV”* (2014)

Anne McCrady

**New Man**

*For Terrance Hayes*

Bitten by your kisses,  
ever a fickle lover  
with a thing for new men,  
I have added *Muscular Music*  
to my collection of seductive  
poets whose breathing sends me  
into swoon and sweat.

Reading, then wanting you  
close, I slip you in between  
other darlings, alphabetized  
collections I dip into at night,  
just after Donald Hall's *Bed*  
and before young Seamus Heaney,  
musty, just in from the bog.

The three of you, talking about what?  
Southern women walking alone  
on the road in the rain?  
Donald's wife, Jane, luminescent  
in death as in her lettered life?  
Heaney's hearty memories  
of Irish peat farmers?

Eyes heavy, as I dim the lamp,  
your muscular voices whispering  
me into the first strophes of sleep,  
I keep a jealous ear cocked  
toward the bedroom bookshelf,  
my heart awake, hoping one of you  
might mention my name.

Anne McCrady

### Drizzle

A cold rain wilts  
fallen slips of leaf and stem  
laid down by a recent north blow,  
the preview to this slow Saturday.  
Standing at the window, bone-chilled  
from the draft flowing down the glass,  
I tremble like the empty limbs of our maples  
whose roots know to take sweetness from Earth  
to make what we all want most: warmth.  
Overhead in an old water oak,  
a pileated woodpecker jack-hammers,  
hollows out her chosen hole,  
already imagines the nestling inside.  
Two horses doze inside their shed.  
Coons have scrambled into attic entries.

Hugging myself for comfort,  
my skin and soul feel damp  
with the insistent drip and drizzle  
of missing the crisp days of spring.  
I consider my stale list of unfinished business,  
shiver toward the temptation of complaint—  
then stop, picture the dry-eyed farm woman  
who went for water every winter day  
of her work-splintered childhood,  
an adopted grandmother who,  
as I now recall and reclaim,  
taught me that cold is nothing  
more than the absence  
of my own warmth.

Masood Parvaze

**Because**

Because deaf ears don't listen  
Eyes with blindfolds  
When asked to open  
Look up in the sky  
Closed minds  
Have rusty locks  
And the dead  
Don't change  
Is no reason  
To put down the trumpet  
Or  
Look the other way

Previously Published in "Second Shadow on the Wall" 2014

Masood Parvaze

**Post Cards**

Cobble stone streets

Grapevines...

Woven into; stone walls

Rocky shores

Smell of coffee

And

Old men...

Drinking wine

From short...dull...glasses, playing chess in the street

Makes me

...buy

Post cards

Which

I will never send



Masood Parvaze

### **Tribal Phenomenon**

Under my skin . . . are buried . . . many tribes  
Clan . . . religion . . . language . . . nationality  
Earliest human instincts for security  
Still entrenched in caveman's psyche  
Some wrapped in silk  
Placed on high pedestals  
Some suspended upside down  
Other . . . just dormant volcanoes seeping steam  
Plumes of smoke . . . their flags of existence  
. . .  
These ancient tribes  
Have shadows with unending echoes  
They should have screamed  
Not to follow them for ever  
Or beg me  
Look for fresh dirt . . . everyday  
To bury them deeper

Jessica Ray

### **That Moment**

It's the unexpected in life that is so fascinating . . .  
A late Autumn week end retreat in the hill country near Austin  
lives among my moments to remember

We rolled out of our bunk beds for morning coffee and sweet rolls  
a good mix for getting acquainted  
in a rugged pristine part of the planet new to us

Then above fun food and conversation this directive came  
"Take five . . . in silence . . . and write a haiku"

Embarrassed to admit my ignorance  
especially since teaching English was my first career  
I whisper to a friend  
"What's a haiku?"

An image of a seventeen syllable Japanese nature poem then  
leads to a perfect path winding among ten thousand shades of yellow  
endlessly cascading from giant Spanish oak trees  
speaking their own mystical magical language of nature

"Leaves of gold  
where is your path taking me  
Dare I even guess? No . . .  
Only see its heaven-ness"

Then Spring arrives and with it plans for an exhibit a solo exhibit  
It seems to say "Something more - something more is needed  
Who knows - and one never knows -  
this may be your last hurrah"

Remembering past shows visitors asked  
"What is this piece - this painting or sculpture - what does it mean?"  
So now instead of explaining why not write  
something that reflects my feeling about it

That haiku moment  
becomes a point of no return  
as a poem finds its place  
with each visual piece shown

Simple thoughts simple words a simple place in time  
meet to make a simple haiku . . .  
becoming an aha! moment  
perhaps an epiphany . . .

A moment appearing so unexpectedly  
on a solitary path . . .  
leading to a fascinating never ending  
journey of grace

### **Alchemy**

A dozen golden roses  
Pure distilled sunlight  
reflecting their source

Jessica Ray

### **Contradictions**

In the early morning hours of a mid-winter day  
A small but muscular figure darts past  
a grove of live oaks  
To the edge of the deep cobalt blue water  
of Eagle Mountain Lake

Taking off his orange socks and sneakers  
tossing his well-worn cap t-shirt  
and shorts to the wind  
The rippling of waves is the only sound  
that December moment  
as Randy takes his glorious daily swim

“Wow! What a morning for a swim!”  
His words echo across the waves as  
they herald an exercise of pure joy  
in his dream

In the past early morning hours were spent  
planning his day at the Bank  
half an hour into town

More than once he startled his staff  
by leading them to the trunk of his car  
Gleefully showing off two possum passengers  
visiting his patio now caged  
later in the day to find a new home on  
remote Eagle Mountain

Small of stature  
but larger than life  
this lover of life  
still touches us with his passion for living

The fountain that bubbled within him  
has grown dry  
to echo across the waves of our hearts

Naomi Stroud Simmons

**Love Sonnets of Pablo Neruda**

I spent the closing of day with Neruda,  
swam headfirst into his whirl of words,  
a profusion of dips into the springs  
of sonnets, deeper still into pools  
where underwater swirled in lyrical magic.

This magic, swept by a leaping stream,  
poured me where white waters of his river  
emptied to his ocean of fleeing waves,  
deserted moss covered stones.

I followed his trail past the aroma  
of deepened woods with muted  
bird calls from untranslatable shadows  
leading to his Edenic garden,

a place to be drunk on towering pines  
and long kisses. There, with his pen,  
he opened the center of the universe,  
pushed aside the mysteries of emeralds,  
recounted creation of day, of night  
with the moon anchored between  
his mountains on the shore of evening.

Published in Galaxy of Verse 2014

Naomi Stroud Simmons

**By a blue moon's light I danced**

with you past the door, down to the beach  
to search the dunes for Captain Bly or forty  
pirates with eye patches, bandanas

rolled and tied with salty knots,  
their scabbards thrust in shore to stake  
claim to the cache of night.

In proper time, we watched as sodden sea  
horses arrived, galloping through wind-bent oats,  
whinnying the stars awake.

*en Pointe* we crossed a clue  
of turtle tracks trailing to their nest, disappearing.  
The moon soon joined our hunt spotlighting

incoming waves rehearsing a grand entrance,  
bringing their own audience, crabs  
sidling from the teasing crest,

starfish gazing at their nakedness.  
Tiring of our steps to outrun the tide  
we climbed a dune, settled in the loge

as the proscenium offered its ancient chant,  
drum rolls, zithers of spray,  
wind-winnowed instruments tuned

to the nocturnal chorus.  
Under its spell  
we joined the pulse of night,

the beat of waves  
in ancient dance  
until the cast bowed out,

dropped the curtain of night,  
abandoned the stage.  
We applauded, begged,

Encore! Encore!  
just as we heard Sirius bay.

Susan Beall Summers

**As Waves Crash**

as waves crash against the rocky shore

I throw myself against you

to soften your rough edges

fit myself in your craggy spaces,

wrap my life with yours

at times gently caressing you.

other times, in full fury, with all the powers

I can summon from King Triton, Poseidon,

all the sea dragons of lore,

I crash, flooding your shore,

beating my fists

against you to break you

to make you be with me

never understanding

you are stone

and I am sea

Susan Beall Summers

### **Quiet Paradise**

South Florida friends  
post pictures  
in bathing suits  
for Winter Holidays.  
I did the same when we lived there,  
yet, there is comfort  
donning a warm coat,  
seeing my breath  
as I say, "Happy New Year."  
Kisses seem warmer;  
wine more soothing.  
Camaraderie of friends  
with poetry and music  
more endearing.  
Rich foods  
eaten with enthusiasm  
against the chill.  
The dark of winter,  
a sincere time for reflecting  
where I've been,  
where I'm going  
and how I got here.  
They have yuletide suntans,  
I have quiet paradise.



Susan Beall Summers

**W.G. Beall**

My father built our house upon a faith foundation.  
He was not famous but well-known in certain circles  
and respected.  
With hard work, determination and dedication,  
he went to college,  
proud of the black and scarlet colors of his University.  
He knew education was no ivory tower, but a path  
to help others, earn a living, be a better person.  
From a time when men were too proud to admit the  
burden of poverty,  
he went hungry  
while sending money home so his sister  
could have piano lessons.  
He hitchhiked with strangers to come home  
when he could.  
He would neither give nor accept sympathy,  
and with a personality akin to barbed wire  
once he had set his feet,  
he had no gift of persuasion.  
He just did what ever he needed to do -  
no permission asked -  
and scoffed at consequences.  
He was slow to anger and quick to make decisions.  
He kept far from flattery, and could not be conned.  
Plus, he frankly didn't care about other's opinions.  
Always wary of flowery language,  
even his casket held no flowers -  
only the pinecones from his land,  
pine boughs and gold ribbon.

Carolyn Tarter

**And The Beat Goes On**

Exercise-why do I have to exercise?

Surely I've done enough for my size;

I walk from room to room and I surmise

I'm doing plenty to be healthy and wise.

And the beat goes on.

But tests reveal another surprise

That I need more help under the guise

Of walking, pushing, lifting-and my prize.

Knowing I'll be around to enjoy all my ties.

And the beat goes on.

When I get discouraged and want to say my good-byes,

I think of the importance of the how and the whys.

So when I grow weary, I'll reach for the skies;

Then you can say, "Well, at least she tries."

And the beat goes on.

And the beat goes on.

Carolyn Tarter

### **Were You There?**

We all sat waiting, rows and rows,  
To listen to stories, poems and prose  
About the reasons for honoring those  
Who had endured so many woes.  
A young girl sang about all, in repose  
Who gave their lives because they chose  
To serve their country against our foes.  
Why the small table, for the soldier I suppose;  
Table draped with white tablecloth, bud vase with red rose;  
Salt for the tears, sliced lemon for the blows,  
An empty chair for POWs-MIAs; their fate, nobody knows  
The upturned glass, lighted candle, bible with holy prose;  
Then we stood for a song for all the fellows,  
Who fought and died for all our tomorrows.  
It was then the soldier slowly arose,  
To show his love for country still shows.  
He stood on one leg of flesh and bone, the other a steel rod that glowed  
In the morning sun, a reminder of his many sorrows.  
I tried to speak to him, but hated to impose,  
Only silence and tears transcended at the close.  
His face was still bold, proud, strong, not morose;  
The colors were retired, then the trumpeter blows  
The sound of Taps; remember how it goes?  
I was honored to stand next to the veteran; we were so close.  
Only one question I need to pose,  
Were you there to honor our beloved heroes?

Sharon Taylor

**Ouachita Country**

We took it from them  
beautiful Ouachita country  
of inky mountains  
and crimson sky.

We trampled on spirits  
in sacred places  
and laid pavement  
over holy ground.

We disgraced their  
great chief  
and all his people  
by forcing them to  
live in foreign lands.

We built a lodge,  
named it Queen Wilhelmina,  
a playground for royalty  
who never came.

We sip hot cider  
in hard oak rockers,  
porched in rows  
along the view.

We used their language  
to name the mountains,  
but that is all to speak of  
Native Americans.  
Only English is spoken now.

Sharon Taylor

### **The Moment**

A shattered piece of an old fruit jar  
half buried itself into the earth  
and I, taking a late afternoon walk  
through the woods,  
stumbled upon it.  
In this particular area,  
the trees are not giving.  
In their race to catch the sun  
they umbrella the forest.  
But on this afternoon  
A persistent stray of light  
penetrated their woven limbs,  
and at that very moment  
struck the fractured glass  
with a brilliance.  
I stopped.  
I pondered.  
In the midst of the muted wood  
I found a gem, a fleeting gem.  
Recognizing wealth in the moment,  
I penned it to memory for others  
To see.  
To feel.

Marlene Tucker

### **The Parting Smirk**

It's not the words you didn't say;  
It's how you smiled and walked away  
That changed the love grown in my soul,  
From what I gave to what you stole.

### **The Widow and the Widower** (A Saturday Morning in Spring)

“What on earth were you thinking?”  
He did his best to look sheepish.

“We're supposed to be dusting the song books!”  
His lips curled into a smile, but it was his eyes that laughed.

She shook, but not from anger,  
Though his silence was infuriating.

Silence.  
Silence.

“YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW BETTER!” She tried to scold.  
It didn't work.

“*And*, (she paused for emphasis) we're in the Church!”  
His eyebrows rose as if to say, “So?”

“And I'm old enough to have stopped you.” she confessed, but quietly.

Then,  
He stepped forward and kissed her again.

Marlene Tucker

**Unprotected Life**  
(Uneducated and first pregnant at fourteen)

She was belly deep in babies,  
With another one on the way.  
She knew how to make water gravy,  
But wished she had learned to pray,  
For times like these were hard ones,  
There was no money, just things to buy,  
And she was hard pressed for any answers,  
When her children began to cry.  
And when her man got liquored up  
And talked love with his whiskey breath,  
She endured and silently wondered,  
If freedom only came with death.



Thom Woodruff

**Breaths**

winter breath  
solid air

exhausts follow cars  
like gray dogs

rain drums  
fill

naked tree  
clothes the grass

on my fence (red cardinal)  
today is a bird

pain reminds me-  
this Bodhi!

Buddha reminds me-  
Homeless!

just one Fall  
Eden

waiting for tomatoes to ripen  
i turned green

the sound of water  
fills your emptied glass

raining world  
sweeps the wind outdoors

empty moon  
drunk on a blue sky.

Rock drops into silence  
SPLASH!

Thom Woodruff

**I Knew a Man Who Gave Away All He Had--**

his arms, his legs, his ears, his head  
he said that Nothingness was his true nature  
which left him with precisely that

i knew a woman who slept near mountains  
she said solidity gave her strength  
i asked her if a mining company stripped those mountains  
would she sleep next to their machinery?

another wanted to live by the sea-  
Fine!-until wind and waves blew away real estate  
eroded beaches and drowned hopes afloat

still more live with their doors open  
to welcome strangers into their homes  
which were soon stripped to simplicity  
(Burglars are Buddhists, too!)

more want to get away to a Mythical Country  
Shangri-La beyond all City Limits  
until houses become suburbs become villages  
become towns become cities. Leave again..

where you are is not who you are/though Feng Shui  
aligns with powers greater than all of us. We are part mountain,  
sea, river, village, cave, hotel, community. A moving experience...

Thom Woodruff

### **Memorable Speech of Ghosts**

Now aflame with hot tongue and art  
with a paddle for a brain and a star for a chart  
i decipher a different morning to my ancients' eyes  
Break cobwebs and anchors on concrete lays  
Tin tunes in thin times, drunk days in bars passed  
Sifting smoke to find that fire red and hot  
for politics divides, while love will rut  
Coffee company, dream boat solitary  
fishing for white whales and black swans  
Missed sheets of myths fill my stone soup  
Tales rattle like the wind police @ my door  
I am in love with all there is. And i want more.

Patrick Allen Wright

### **Milking**

In only my underwear  
I get out of bed  
slowly for my brother  
and shuffle to the kitchen  
rubbing my eyes  
to watch my father  
begin the day for us.  
I take seventy-two  
giant steps to the barn  
to see if Ella is ready.  
She is, and looks to be  
almost bursting  
when Dad turns on the light  
to bathe her teats.  
I fill her trough with  
a coffee-can-full of grain.  
I stroke her hornless head,  
watching the muscles  
in her jaw,  
touching them  
to feel her strength.  
I touch her lashes  
and make her wink.  
Her milk rings  
into the stainless pail.  
Then, I fill her crib  
with three squares of hay  
and run back out  
to watch the white foam rise  
to the top of the pail  
with each squeeze  
of Dad's hands.  
Dad milks a muffled stream  
until her bag hangs flaccid.  
I follow Dad to the house,  
wondering that he never  
spills a drop.  
In the kitchen he sets  
the filter  
and pours the milk  
into a wide-mouthed jug  
that we use  
so we can skim the cream.

Patrick Allen Wright

### **Passing Acquaintance**

On a late summer afternoon  
a fifty-one year old man  
dies an unexpected death.  
His friends gather  
at his home the next day  
to console each other,  
and tears come  
from the least expected  
of mourners.  
The stillness of aftershock  
silences others.  
Hinges sing  
on the angry backdoor,  
and a hole in the screen  
allows flies to enter  
that abode.  
The circle is broken  
yet complete.  
A new reality replaces  
what yesterday was a dream  
of work and works.  
The project planned  
will never start.  
The started project  
never finished  
never will be.  
A wife clenches her jaws  
and fills her kerchief  
with sorrow and heart.  
A young man regrets  
the neglect he dropped  
his father's way  
the day before.  
A daughter holds tight  
her son with  
her father's same  
middle name.

Patrick Allen Wright

### **Slice of Life**

Lightning strikes a tall pine  
at the southeast corner  
of our property.  
Sam sits at the backdoor, whining.  
The horses have their heads down  
and their butts into the rain.  
Later, I go back into the pasture  
to look for crawfish.  
A hawk flies there before me  
diving and going over  
to a fence post to eat his prey.  
I go over the stile  
to see the scar on that big pine.  
Amber oozes out a spiral  
from the limbs to the roots.  
I touch the wound and smell  
the sticky sap on my finger.  
I wipe it on my pants.  
Sam hits the trail of a squirrel;  
I head for Fountain Road.  
As I reach the pipeline  
I hear Sam bark like he does  
when chasing hogs.  
I run out in his direction, and  
a piglet breaks out of the pack.  
Sam takes after it.  
The old sow follows; I follow her.  
The piglet quits squealing  
as Sam lets that sow catch him  
from hind to shoulder.  
I touch his wound.  
It smells like blood.  
Back in the pasture  
two hawks work the puddles now.

**...coming back to collect the grasses.....**

This summer I gathered soft pink prairie grass in an envelope which read "last statement" in the corner, in red ink....

I had been walking down Temple Hall Highway, where my father had his last home, surrounded by a big garden and peach orchard.

The new owner had put in rental storage sheds and torn out the irises that edged the driveway, beside the tall chain-link fence and gate.

But, the peach trees went first and then the two pecan trees.

They bent and split beneath a bull-dozer. The Brazos berry vines

crept into the neighbor's lot for safety....the wild grapes hung

limp from the back tree line, where our young daughter had

taken her first kiss from her first beau and they had come,

flushed with purple lips from the trees, when called for supper.

A neighbor lady had saved the pink climbing rose by the screened porch

...the one which had filled each entrance with sweet fragrance,

just as my stepmother's rose perfume fills my memory now

of her, and of her soft white hands which rolled out crust after crust

for pies my father would not eat...he was a fussy man.

Tall and strong and silver-haired until the end when he became bent and thin

and the blue leaked from his eyes as he started to lose his toes to

infections, but the light in his eyes remained ancient pools of water,

captured in some stone, like you'd find in serious out-cropping of cedar trees.

His hands that had tossed our babies in the air now fumbled and fell on a quilt,

the one I'd made for him with wools cut from his tailored dress suits he'd worn...

back when everyone knew Charlie, knew the wares he sold, and loved to hear

his tall tales and hear him singing in the piano bars, when he was traveling on with his

job.

He did not know it then but life was changing and his sales pad was beginning

to demand computer skills, to do his work quicker, better, without the expense account

and the hotel bills and the songs he sang for strangers, in all the towns,

when he was traveling through in his light green post-war Chevy.

Progress does that to a guy and there was no walking backward through time.

He was too old and too stubborn then to adjust his hunt 'n peck one finger typing

to fit the keyboard of a computer. And he could not amuse a cold screen

with his stories, as he sold his paper wares...it was all too much.

So, my stepmother packed his tailored suits away in plastic garment bags, filling

the hall closet with them. He fingered them often but finally gave me a few, too

out of date to ever wear again, even if a job would open for his salesman's skills.

Those were the suits I cut to make his final quilt.

They bled in soft threads as the scraps fell from my scissors in squares.

It's strange how little is left in the end, and of how a person is remembered....

by his job....

**Chrysalis emerging....**

as in each thing, in *almost* every bit that breathes  
or flies or walks or dances on a pond,  
life begins as an egg, glistening, wet, held by a thread  
to some mother-like something, swinging in the wind,  
or laced onto a leaf, or floating in a jelly jar...all promise.

a kind mother leaves them close to something wonderful to  
eat as they emerge in a larvae stage, crawling blindly,  
helpless, full of soft warm stuff ... they might have many  
legs, or none....left to wiggle in a skin that doesn't fit them long.

it splits and they form a shell and hang from another thread  
spinning cocoons and sealing away to find the time needed,  
in privacy, to reform every bit of their bodies into something else,  
something beautiful, something bold, a thing with wings.....

it is said by some old men and old women that butterflies  
are really kisses blown by pleasant-mannered gods, who have grown  
bored and who, just for the fun of it, blow multi-colored, dancing  
kisses toward the summer wind, which picks them up and spins  
them round until they grow thirsty and begin to drink from flowers.

now and then, but not so often as you'd think, a very special creature flies  
from the hands of these gods, its wings glittering black, the sign of a poet,  
sent to tell the story of this beautifully crafted metamorphosis.



June Zaner

**witness to a death**

My mother had asked the nurse for her make-up  
And had drawn scarlet lips in Avon glory up to her nostrils  
And near her hairline, her eyebrows were impossibly black  
She had fixed herself up for a visit from her Charlie,  
A man she'd left forty years ago, when the bed grew cold,  
And he began to sweep the highway by their home.

It seemed so long ago to us, but hadn't happened yet to her.  
She who only hummed and never sang, now did.....  
At the top of her lungs, her oxygen prongs in her nostrils  
"South of the border, down Mexico way,  
That's where I fell in love when stars above came out to play  
And the mission bells told me, that we'd never part  
South of the border, down Mexico way"...

Her sister was embarrassed but her nurse just smiled as I joined her loudly  
In her final song. At her service later, under the stand of crape myrtle trees,  
And beside a father she did not remember, we gathered, and sang  
Every verse to *Amazing Grace* and *Shall We Gather at the River*.  
When time came, I gathered the cards from the floral displays for my aged mother  
And was surprised to see that the largest one, out-shining all the rest by far,  
Was a wreath of white roses and lilies with a note from Charlie that said simply  
"rest in peace now".

### Clarity

Unused to depth, patience seems only  
reasonable, a resolve to cautious alert, perked to  
listen: know that placid surfaces do not so much  
deceive as recommend, invite, soliciting notice:

meaning, always ulterior, initiates a seethe of  
metaphor, swift yet unsure beckoning—even  
kindness seems untimely here, and unexpected:  
crafty innocence, a smile rippling across the face  
unasked for, yet dense with promise: a white  
slivered moon in an otherwise blue and empty  
sky, itself cool pledge, heralds unexpected and  
unrehearsed nostalgia, recondite reminder of  
other afternoons unhurried by such clarity.

### **How Shall I Love You?**

You may (did) ask, how shall I love you  
Now that you've been done in,  
Below the soul, sick as sorrow, plunged deep as dark  
Into that pit so casually talked about as cancer?

Breast and pancreas, lung and ovary, maybe even blood,  
Caught close, clutched like a rag doll some fussy puppy  
Snaps between its teeth, jaws ripping, witless as wayward.

How shall I love you, you may (did) ask,  
When snared by some errant hormone  
Obstinate as prayer, unwilled and wanton?

How, and I say: why, just like always, but all the more,  
Now, now that you've been bowed, yet unbent,  
At just this time, in just this way, plagued by whispers of  
More, more of that wicked presence, even though  
All that you are and ever have been is still so intact,  
All essential things untouched, and all that's important  
Still unentangled by it, as harsh as it was accidental,  
Perverse as only chance can be.

### **In the Moment**

For June and "Skiing in Alaska"

As she is inclined so often,  
She wonders what in the world  
I could be doing, sitting in that soft  
Chair and watching, on the television,  
Wally the cat on my lap, iced tea beside me,  
As people, mostly men but some women too,  
Ski wildly down impossible slopes and precipices,  
Going off into the empty air, doing equally impossible  
Somersaults and flips and twists, skis tumbling and over,  
Each one also plummeting out into hollow air as they, eyes open  
And fixed like solemn eagles on it's never clear what,  
Just open and gazing as they spill out into that great empty  
A mere moment away from an easy flip into sobering injury, or death.

What, more than that, *why* was I watching,  
Intent on these acrobats on skis slip-sliding  
Into the void, out, out, over and then falling with  
Astonishing grace into banks of snow below as if placed  
And waiting for precisely those poised, nimble, elegant plunges,  
Then off and out, an also beautiful flow of skis reaching down, down  
Until, finally, coming to a stop, finesse and dignity in a moment unlike  
Any other: done and gone, down now onto the snow-cushion of solid earth.

Clearly, I could only be said to have been mesmerized,  
Stunned into the silent and grateful recognition I  
Had also been aiming for, not the fall nor  
The leap, dazzling as these always are  
But for that moment when it all  
Just stops, lapsing into its own  
Lovely acknowledgment.

# **The Beall Poetry Festival**

**The 2st Annual Beall Poetry Festival  
March 25-27, 2015**

**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.**

**Susan Wheeler, Simon Armitage, Terrance Hayes, Neil Corcoran**

**Wednesday, March 25, 3:30 PM (Carroll Science 101): Student Literary Awards**

**Wednesday, March 25, 7:00 PM: Terrance Hayes Poetry Reading**

**Thursday, March 26, 3:30 PM: Neil Corcoran, "Robert Graves and Contemporary Poetry"**

**Thursday, March 26, 7:00 PM: Susan Wheeler Poetry Reading**

**Friday, March 27, 3:30 PM: Panel Discussion (Carroll Science 101)**

**Friday, March 27, 7:00 PM: Simon Armitage Poetry Reading**

**All events in Bennett Auditorium unless otherwise signified.**

Baylor University's 21st 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. For more information, write to the Baylor University Department of English at One Bear Place #97404, Waco, TX 76798-7404 or call (254) 710-1768.