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PINESONG: AWARDS 2019

NORTH CAROLINA POETRY SOCIETY

# Pinesong

VOLUME 55

*Awards 2019*

North Carolina Poetry Society

Founded 1932

# Pinesong

*Awards 2019*

Volume 55

North Carolina  
**POETRY**  
SOCIETY

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North Carolina Poetry Society President: Sam Barbee

2019 Pinesong Staff:

Eric Helms, editor

Sam Barbee, proofing

John Stanley Absher, proofing

Malaika King Albrecht, proofing

2019 NCPS Contests Personnel:

John Stanley Absher, Director of Adult Contests

Arianna Del Palazzo, Director of Student Contests

For detailed information about NCPS membership fees and benefits, annual contest guidelines, current Board of Directors officers and committees, meetings, sponsored events, and the mission, bylaws and history of this non-profit literary arts organization, please visit us online: [www.ncpoetrysociety.org](http://www.ncpoetrysociety.org)

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



As Ludwig Wittgenstein writes, we tread (as writers) in the language of 'position,' 'motion,' and 'size,' making function of those vehicles of expression to best realize an object's (or set of objects) absolute position, motion, size, according to the collective experience (or semblance thereof) we come to know as reality, itself. Roughly speaking, this is what Ezra Pound hammered on about, quite concretely, quite religiously, ushering in Imagism, nearly a century ago.

And yet what is it that compels us to derive, to conjure, to spell out these formulas of language? We turn to poetry for its stewardship to the flow of our experience(s) & thoughts, it is (naturally enough) because of how poetry operates, how it functions as the sole form (e.g. system) of language. In other words, its flow and depth and sonic drive has throughout civilization happily served as the Guardian of our thought(s), disseminating the visual tapestries that, day upon day, month after month, year beyond year, are woven in the mind's eye.

This is not to dim, to diminish, to limit, to punish other forms of writing (the short story, the novel, the more portable flash fictive piece; they all are quite capable of producing language of the highest order). However, it is the practice of poetry which throughout the disturbing circus of history has carried and (though some might disagree) nurtured and sustained humanity's holy grail (tragic or not) of experience.

By returning to my home of Southern Pines, North Carolina—after 7 years in the Big Apple of NYC, it has been a gift to serve, happily enough, as the North Carolina Poetry Society's editor for this—THE 2019 PINESONG, which, I'm grateful to announce, is filled with a diverse breadth and range of voices, sonicalities, musical tapes and tapestries; tempos & pure speed(s).

In closing, we are thankful to the many brave judges (those fine readers) who have chosen the winning poems for this collective for the state more formidably known as the first in flight; may you enjoy the following scroll of pages, which (for better or worse) I've curated like a literary exhibit.

editor, eric helms

## 2019 PINESONG DEDICATEE RUTH MOOSE

*Excited to the Point of Multiple Exclamation Points!!!!*

There is nothing more rewarding to the *Pinesong* Dedication Committee than to choose a dedicatee with so much unbridled and overwhelming enthusiasm for writing, for teaching, and for the North Carolina Poetry Society. This is the way long-time Poetry Society member Ruth Moose responded to my email announcing her as the 2019 winner:

“OH my.....what a wonderful way to start my day!!!!!! Never thought I'd make such an honor.....Have never been an officer, etc. .... Just a cheerer on and supporter. .... Am breathless .... Thank everybody. Ruth”

Bill Blackley, member of the *Pinesong* Dedication Committee, expressed these thoughts: “How cool that Ruth is so excited . . . . to the point of multiple exclamation points!!!!”

Although never an officer, Ruth has been, as she said, a cheerer on and a supporter of NCPS for years. Member of the *Pinesong* Dedication Committee David Manning said, “I think Ruth was at every Writers Conference I attended. She had a quiet intensity about her, always drawing clusters of people into conversations. I'll never forget, at a banquet, the uproar of laughter when she read, with such a straight face, from ‘The Librarian.’”

As Chair of the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series, Bill Blackley said, “I knew Ruth mostly when she served as Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet. Ruth always looked for ways to improve the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poetry Series and made sound and useful recommendations to serve that end. As GCDP she enriched everyone involved, from the chairpersons to the student poets.” Ruth speaks glowingly of the students she helped as part of the series, and mentioned that she had a poem manuscript from a participant in the GCDP series on her bedside table.

Bill Griffin, NCPS Treasurer stated, “Since 2013 Ruth has generously sponsored and then endowed the annual Sestina Contest. She is an indefatigable booster of this poetic form and we can safely say that in the past six years her enthusiasm has impelled our members

to write many dozens of sestinas that would otherwise have languished in the void.” For her book *Doing It at the Dixie Dew*, Ruth won the 2013 Minotaur Books/Malice Domestic Best First Traditional Mystery Novel Award, and she used part of the prize money to fund the Sestina Contest. As a self-proclaimed “workshop junkie,” Ruth also used some of the money to set up workshop scholarships.



I personally think about a workshop Ruth taught several years ago at North Carolina State in Raleigh. I was impressed with her innovative approach to teaching, and learned a technique that I often used later when instructing my creative writing students. But I shall always remember the note—still in my poetry notebook—that she sent me on May 30, 2001 when Guy and I were Membership Chairs. *“I still remember your cathedral garden poem. Did you publish it yet? Lovely, lovely. That was a fun workshop (at NCSU) for me at least. Here’s dues! Happy writing! R. Moose”*

About her writing Ruth said, “I am always writing short stories and poetry which I much prefer to novels. Novels are demanding and can take over your life, your mind, your imagination. Short stories are shooting stars, bursts of light that you hope to make linger.”

I think that former NCPS President Sharon Sharp was best able to sum up the essence of Ruth Moose and what she means and has meant to the organization by writing: “That is wonderful about you, David, and Bill having selected Ruth Moose—indeed one of North Carolina’s and the North Carolina Poetry Society’s treasures.”

*Pinesong* Dedication Committee 2019

C. Pleasants York

Bill Blackley

David Manning

## SHOOTING STAR STORIES OF RUTH MOOSE

Ruth Moose was only three years old when she first tried her hand at writing. “My grandfather was a Baptist preacher—tall, very charismatic. He baptized a lot of people, traveled across North Carolina and preached at various churches and revivals,” she said. “He left a sermon—in progress—on his writing table. Little Ruth came upon it and took her first baby steps toward what became her calling. Grabbing his pen (which contained real ink) she wrote all over his sermon. Needless to say, her literary debut was met with mixed reviews.”

“I had three younger brothers who were always doing sports. We had a big yard and all the boys in the neighborhood played there. There were no other girls close by. I had books, though I did help build and paint a club house which I made into a saloon with myself as Miss Kitty from Gunsmoke or the lady sheriff, using the playhouse as a jail. Mostly I read. My brothers remember me often sitting high in an apple tree ... reading.”

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# *Adult Contests*





## **A Short History of Mystery**

Inside a knot-hole in a tree,  
inside a hive of honeybee,  
inside a pod of garden pea  
are wonders to pursue.

A flash of shiny metal gleams,  
a golden drop of honeyed dreams,  
a row of growing green peas  
seems to beckon, "Look!" to you.

But seeing won't the secret tell  
of random miracles that swell  
imagination. Nature's spell  
is what we must review,

For in the garden, on the wing,  
along the paths, in everything  
are joys well worth discovering  
and wonders to renew.

## **Wood Nymph**

On her wedding day  
in spangled wood, she  
wore a turnip skirt,  
a shimmery chemise  
with pomegranate sleeves,  
and under things of onion skin.

She danced so coy before her boy.  
Barefoot, and joyful  
she rose  
on eucalyptus toes  
and sashayed across glossed river rocks.

She fanned a fern—  
and promised to be there,  
And here, and beside.  
Always beside,  
like wind and rain,  
bucket and spade,  
strawberries and cream,  
a lavender dream.

Beguiling, and smiling,  
weaving in and out of light,  
and shadows—and night.  
She pledged her soul,  
her rosy heart,  
chicory lips,  
and larkspur laugh,  
as she lifted her milkweed veil.

**OCTOPUS**

*Watching you is so confusing,  
everywhere something's moving!*

*eight arms wandering separate ways  
to comb the ocean for your prey*

*suckers swishing on each limb  
to grab your lunch and pull it in.*

*squirting ink at lurking eyes,  
shifting shapes to disguise*

*your bulky body with no frame:  
three hearts, no bones, enormous brain*

*Is switching colors lots of fun  
since you can fool most anyone*

*who saw you green, then in a blink  
you've camouflaged to coral pink?*

*How does it feel as you unfurl  
your changing self across your world?*



**Moon Poem #3 Full Leo Moon**

inside the moon  
a waiting room of whispers  
poets sip  
clinking china cups  
while bridges of fireflies  
arch across her chest

inside the moon  
mountains hold news  
of friends, family, pets  
gone from site

at dusk  
soot-winged bats direct traffic  
to a star-shine path  
inside the moon

cool stones for hot toes  
one door for clouds to enter and rest

inside the moon pacts are made  
silvery secrets of Gods and Goddesses

tiaras and marshmallows are  
inside the moon

polar bears and icebergs  
warmed by her air

magic carpet rides  
arrive at the moon  
carry steaming teapots  
from our ship of dreams.

## The Grammar of Kissing

Within our (parenthetical)  
you underscore my **bold face**.

A colon: we define each other,  
*Comma here*, you say,

and I dash—closer,  
an ellipsis...of ecstasy...

we surface periodically  
Oh! in amorous apostrophe'.

You undo my font size  
*italicizing romantically*.

**Half Full**

I've lost my hair;  
I've lost my waist—  
I cannot find them  
any place.  
I've lost ambition,  
purpose, hope;  
I'm not sure I know  
how to cope.  
I've lost my nerve;  
I've lost my sight.  
I've lost two inches  
from my height.  
I've lost some teeth;  
I cannot hear.  
I'm losing time  
with every year.  
But I found my Sal  
who's good and kind.  
She stays because  
she's lost her mind.

**Pareidolia**

revelations come to us  
 from bleach spots on our clothes  
 I found the Virgin once  
 on a piece of burnt toast

it's hard to meditate  
 with your eyes open  
 shape-line-color go into action  
 until you're Rorschached to death

stare at trees  
 faces pop out from scars  
 stare at clouds  
 the cirrus strands  
 become grandmother's hair

mantra of the right hemisphere:  
 make sense make sense make sense  
 foreground background  
 texture tone  
 rock or bone

Van Gogh the Great Impasto  
 knew dimensional tricks  
 my hands prickled  
 when I saw his sunflowers

sitting on the toilet  
 I make use of my time  
 deciphering plaster landscapes  
 and worlds contained in linoleum scuffs  
 I'm king, by god, of creativity  
 who'll forgive you  
 for wine spills on my rug

slave museum—  
the entrance fountain  
an ebbing shore

---

BLOODROOT HAIKU

*Craig Kittner*

rain tapering off  
a roadside field gives the sky  
back its light

SECOND PLACE

**Haiku (25 April 2018)**

raindrops caught  
on branches of the quince,  
and my umbrella

---

BLOODROOT HAIKU

*Chen-ou Liu*

father's prognosis  
not a word and yet  
this sunset glow



## **Stampede**

A cloud of black horses approaches.  
I wake at the sound of their bellows breath,  
mine. Windows shut and locked. Asthma  
and dreams. We've pulled my mother back  
from every crisis: pressure wounds, flu, pneumonia,  
broken hip, the blood clot that followed surgery.  
With each illness, two hours to spoon a meal  
into her mouth. Always, she ate her way  
to recovery, though each time  
a slice of memory went missing.

Now she won't eat, craves only sweetness  
sucked through a straw. Hospice says  
she's "transitioning," leaving food behind.  
One-to-three months, they say.  
So much of her already erased,  
some days she's blank as a desert,  
dusty traces of a woman named Lillian.

Mama, the herd approaches. I want  
to run but won't, even when I feel  
the horses' breath hot upon you,  
the day you taste the straw at your lips,  
turn your head away.

*Emily Wilmer***Prayer**

*O God, come to my assistance  
O Lord, make haste to help me*

Opossums litter the side of the road,  
the occasional squirrel, too. Yesterday  
a black and white cat, today a smashed  
mat of chestnut fur.

My brother, home from the hospital,  
lung cancer spreading like kudzu,  
has fallen quiet, furls in on himself,  
digs deep, sifts his options.

My love seeks warmth:  
his hand, rasp of his voice.  
The ache lingers, then  
plunges into a bright abyss.

I want  
to drown in the radiance yet feel  
clay of earth under my feet,  
hear rain drip in gutters,

smell rotting leaves,  
catch a sliver of moon.  
I want to live in this body.

## The Church of Unmaking

*"As a Christian, I believe that there is a creator in God who is much bigger than us. And I'm confident that, if there's a real problem, He can take care of it."* –Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) on climate change

Praise this absence. Praise  
 the sky's birdless blue—the dead  
  
 blue of Spix's macaw, the cryptic  
 treehunter's silenced cry,  
  
 the passenger pigeon's passing: sing  
 a psalm for the final birdsong.  
  
 Praise the rhinos' hornless bones, stones  
 among stone—western black  
  
 and northern white. Praise  
 the must of hollow shells cleansed  
  
 of strange flesh: Pinta Island tortoise,  
 Hawaiian tree snail. Let us crawl  
  
 into this emptiness we have made  
 and name it the Church of Unmaking—  
  
 where we will worship what was  
 and call it martyr,  
  
 where we will lick the walls to taste  
 what was body and what was  
  
 blood, where we can hear  
 the echo of our own voices  
  
 and call it God: *Take. Eat.*  
*This do in remembrance of me.*

## **Stopping By a Southern Town**

Consider the ways the day is circular.

You buy a silk infinity scarf  
at the consignment store.

We spin on stools at the soda fountain,  
dip silver spoons into frosted bowls of ice cream.

The rotary in the center of town  
yields a steady stream of traffic.

On it, a statue to Confederate heroes  
rises into the afternoon like a granite fist.

Even the soldier's mouth is rounded,  
as if he was woken from a long slumber.

A town has a way of turning  
in on itself, of clinging to anonymity.

Behind the monument is the county courthouse  
and a pole with a crisp American flag.

The cars orbit around these too.  
Their wheels spin without making a sound.

## Starry Messenger

With a couple of drops a doctor  
 dilates my pupils    and I picture the eye's  
 inner chamber as a dwarfed whole  
 of the immense "Last Judgment"  
 Vasari painted high inside  
 Brunelleschi's dome —  
     the vitreous body a bloody red —  
 the crystalline lens, nerves, and retina  
     precisely    form the turbulent rush  
 of angels and devils — a government  
 of saints enrobed, well-fed  
     lean forward to survey  
 the damned and the saved  
 An archangel in battle armor  
     pauses    midflight  
 gazing below — the details so clear  
 I see the artist was pressed — in one place a bear  
 has been hurriedly turned into a donkey  
 and supplicant figures of the doomed  
 are left as mere outlines  
 I drive home in dark glasses —  
 in my darkened living room  
 a television    flashes pinhole images  
 of what remains of a city  
     powder the color of cinderblock  
 covers the soft undulation of bodies  
     at rest where they died in a choking  
 snow — no fiery messenger  
     descending  
         through crimson night  
 no trumpeting herald  
 for the lost — those who were half-drawn  
 quartered    within a bull's eye  
 at a heartless distance

## Time Lines

I used to wonder what made a clock tick. That was before the digital age, of course. When I took one apart, I found gears, sprockets, and springs, all rhythmically ratcheting backwards and forward, counting out time.

After I reassembled it, time whirligigged out of control. The clock lost syncopation, turned backwards—spun me momentarily into an age when I still knew how to do hand springs, before youth and maturity split me apart.

Yet, child and adult are not so far apart. I don't want to sleepwalk through time but bound like a child on springs, always leaping ahead of the clock. Moving at the speed of light slows down age, but it's impossible to move years backwards.

Still, I don't want to look backwards. What's the point? I am no longer a part of those days and not who I was then. Age and experience are the gold watch of time. I have continuously wound that clock until I have almost worn out the springs.

I have seen many winters and springs, skated on thin ice, fallen backwards into the deep end, tried to stop the clock when things were falling apart— but nothing is more relentless than time, its steady cadence ticking out *age age age*.

There is nothing graceful about old age.  
Like the rusty, sagging, worn-out springs  
of a mattress, the wear and tear of time  
will eventually spiral me backwards,  
depressing body and mind, while pulling apart  
connections like a broken rotor in a clock.

I won't be alarmed when my clock comes apart,  
for the price of diving into time's eternal springs  
is age—moving always forward, never backwards.

## Correspondence—A Metered Sestina

*I fear this is my final envelope*

I write along the paper's shortest edge  
to keep the words from spreading in the rain  
(if I remember right, it's spring up there).  
I light my little lamp, I melt more wax,  
a bit of soot is marbling the C

(a detail only you or I would see).  
I know you'll know I licked the envelope  
in case the nice but unrequired wax  
should crack before it meets your finger's edge  
or pointed opener (just slice it here)  
inside your study listening to the rain.

You always write your letters on the train:  
its jostling bumps your hand and I can see  
the tallers are taller—see this T right here?  
You never fail to sign the envelope,  
your name and nothing more. I made you pledge  
to send on Sundays and to kiss the wax.

When one arrives I also kiss the wax  
to thank the postal gods for all their strain;  
the mailman, too, for coming past the hedge  
(it's new, and grown up pretty high, you see)  
and rubber banding every envelope  
so I can count the days I wasn't here.

Enough of me. How goes the weather there?  
Your last week's letter came without its wax  
and I admit the colored envelope  
was worrisome. You really should refrain  
from changing things; leave changes to the sea.  
You mentioned planting flowers on your ledge:



have any of them bloomed? Would you allege  
they're softer than the native roses there?  
So listen, I don't know when you will see  
them turning into reds that match this wax,  
but if your expectations crack from strain,  
please pour the pieces in this envelope.

And if that rain should push it to an edge  
this envelope will float away from there  
and pass the waxing moon and cross the sea.

## Speak of Rivers

*"How do you meet women on the sea?"*

*—a Greek fisherman, from Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*

I am far from Greece, know nothing  
of the sea, and can only speak of rivers.

Let me speak of rivers: my heart  
had begun to think of itself

as a fisherman—wading waist-deep into current  
where the chest-waders threatened

to overflow—casting line into protected waters.  
I would tell this heart to be still;

there is a storm at the headwaters and the river  
is rising. But the rapids are loud

and my voice too much like water-  
sound. Understand: we are

not here for the fish—only to escape  
the earth. All this wading heart really wants

is to feel the cool lap of love  
against its neck, streams running down

chest, belly, hips, and thighs—bright  
cold and new—until the pour

pulls us under to a soundless panic  
and becomes our first and only wet breath.

## Turning

*~for Patrick*

It was the elegant way his hair swelled from his temples,  
fell to frame the broad rock of his forehead, the way

his teeth clamped on a cigar, there at the lathe while curls  
of rosewood dropped to the floor, helpless and fragrant,

black cinders of ebony flew up and speckled his beard, and  
those goggles he wore, the imprints they left above his ears.

Strangeness I could sink into like a long bath.

It was the click of his old house's black iron latches,  
twist of the narrow stairs that disclosed the upstairs

as a country apart from the rooms below. And it  
was the dark third floor landing under the eaves,

with its dank, sprung love seat, the busy desperation  
of squirrels trapped between the floorboards. It was

when he asked me to stay for breakfast—overdone  
scrambles, toast, on a chipped plate. I sipped black

coffee while, from the roof, a whippoorwill turned  
its mad song like a wheel, circling, almost shouting.

**Wait for This**

I wake up dreaming I am in your arms,  
But you are seas away across the bed,  
Still deep asleep. Your long-familiar charms,  
Enacted fresh last night, leap in my head.

Rob Herrick's love's three million kisses strong,  
And randy Marlowe says that he can prove  
That nothing on this Earth can last as long  
As love, so in our pre-dawn room I move

Across the sheet and through our wedded years  
To lodge my chest once more against your back  
And drape one arm around your waist. Now here's  
The day's first glimmer on its summer track;

I close my eyes and, patient, wait for this:  
You'll shift your face to mine for morning's kiss.

*don't let numbers tell you what to do*

I am the blood and earth sister, my bones  
sway as I walk the wet earth and  
the rhythm of the world turns beneath my feet.  
You set the motion into patterns, the random whirl  
of my step and step into deliberation.

I am something that is rooted  
in ground-down stones and the lives and deaths  
of a million small and larger creatures,  
something that grows in the world and the wind,  
and you, you tighten the loose, crumbling bounds  
of my shapeless enormity. I am the weight of your dream,  
the purpose of its theory. Apart, we blow out in a breath.

**Shelter**

When I moved in  
unpacking shoes, books  
trousers shabby as  
this shuttered beach house  
you appeared  
a mirage in a black swimsuit  
caressing the doorframe  
teasing the tableau.

All summer my pile  
of driftwood grew taller.  
I angled for a name until  
dropping the mail  
into the empty fishbowl  
you moved a slow toe through  
the sand and confessed.  
Lydia.

That day, I bought your bracelet  
at the souvenir stand.  
Apache tears  
polished smoke.  
That night we bathed  
in phosphorous,  
slept laced  
in Coronado's gold.

**Virtual Villanelle**

Email is the conscience of the race.  
I love you more with every update.  
Delete, delete. Delete, delete, delete.

Now that we've never met, I think of you  
Every time my laptop goes to sleep.  
Email is the conscience of the race.

Thank you for the puppies and the .gif.  
I hope it's okay I found another site.  
Delete, delete. Option-Shift-Left Arrow.

Thank you for the pictures at the zoo:  
You are so real. You are so true.  
Email is the conscience of the race.

Maybe I could make a meme of us;  
Maybe we could monetize our lust.  
Delete, delete. Ctrl-Alt-Delete.

I posted my selfie on the internet:  
I love you more with every hit.  
Email is the conscience of the race.  
Delete, delete, delete, delete, delete.

**The Suicide's Father***Ukraine, 1943*

Escaped from the stalag, he walked home,  
weeks of night travel, days sleeping in trees  
above prowling wolves, rain tipped from leaves  
and foraged berries. Arrived, he hid  
in the woods beyond the hamlet's silent houses,  
complicit cabbage patches and onion dome,  
steps away from his mother who feared  
he was dead, close enough to smell her chimney's  
cooking smoke. He tarried as long as he dared,  
then left with nowhere to go. Later,  
he faced—two times—a firing squad,  
twice defied the odds. Just a reprieve.  
Patient for a generation,  
the bullet waited for his son.



## **Minimum Wage**

Like Pokey ambling alongside Gumby,  
Har-de-har-har laughing at Lippy's hijinks,  
Chumley kowtowing to tuxedoed Tennessee,  
our ambitions don't soar beyond sidekick.  
Cartoon cronies of the theme song's highborn,  
we hear the big band's lusty trumpets presage  
the entrance of our hero tooting his horn  
while we're shadowed by spotlight offstage,  
gofers, deputies, lickspittles, caddies  
waiting for our cue to help solve the clues.  
We're kicked in the side sometimes but we're happy  
being good soldiers shouldering bad news,  
robins who rise early to do our work  
in silence, even if it's just for worms.

## Graduate School Experiment in Group Living

We ride in silence. What else is there to say?—  
 For more than seven months, she's lived with us,  
 washing his clothes, cooking all his meals,  
 and he gets me to drive her to the train.

For more than seven months, she's lived with us.  
 Lovestruck, she catered to his every need.  
 And he gets me to drive her to the train,  
 the coward. He couldn't bring himself to face her.

Lovestruck, she catered to his every need,  
 and yet she calls herself a feminist—  
 The coward, he couldn't bring himself to face her;  
 some feminist she is, I think to myself.

And yet she calls herself a feminist.  
 I see her there, that book lying on their bed—  
 some feminist she is, I think to myself—  
 the book torn up, the front cover missing.

I see her there, that book lying on their bed.  
*The Feminine Mystique*, very much in vogue.  
 The book torn up, the front cover missing,  
 chewed by the dog—now there's a metaphor!

*The Feminine Mystique*, very much in vogue.  
 Washing his clothes, cooking all his meals,  
 chewed by the dog—now there's a metaphor!  
 We ride in silence. What else is there to say?

**Country Music**

His truck broke down three miles outside of town.  
Two miles to go, he walks in driving rain,  
his ears filled with a symphony of sound,  
his footsteps beating out a sad refrain.  
He's going nowhere, but his joy is found  
within a tune that forms inside his brain.  
Sometimes words rise from weakness, true and strong.  
Sometimes a happenstance becomes a song.

## **I Am From Black Earth**

I am from black earth humus and perished rock,  
from millions of years of withering decay  
to rich fertile valley soil, potatoes,  
beans, tomatoes and flesh of decapitated chicken.

I am from a four-room white clapboard house  
built by dead hands in a broad valley split  
by the clear, bold water of the North Fork  
at the edge of bloodline harvested land.

I am from hard-grain corn pressed into earth,  
tender curled green shoots surviving crow, weed-  
tall rain-thirsty stalks with tasseled ears feeding  
on bright sunlight, hardening on dying stalks.

I am from green and red Christmas, family gathering  
around fireplace warmth, dining room table filled  
with homemade jam, tall hot biscuits, country ham,  
boiled custard and molded butter dressed with holly.

I am from Aunt Bea, void of self, sacrificial  
as celibate Jesus, from father's envious eye  
turned in to look at the world that escaped him,  
that he left to live and die within his world of whiskey.

I am from bringing our mottled cow  
home, from across the high broom straw  
pasture to gray barn where cats wait to lap milk  
from swollen teats squeezed by Father's gentle hand.

I am from creek-stone Methodist Church  
and firebrand preachers, from chastening altar calls  
from baptism in muddy water beneath a steel bridge,  
and a womb scarred with a mother's Baptist ardor.

**Tektite**

From my necklace chain dangles a shiny,  
pocked, black-glass exclamation point,  
minus the dot, full of chemical clues  
about celestial origins and a likely  
ancient collision: a comet or an  
asteroid smashing into Earth.  
Upon impact, melted shards  
catapulted back into the  
outer atmosphere, then  
descended, cooling.  
The hard rain that  
pelted hundreds  
of miles still  
mesmerizes  
dreamers.

## Blue Ridge Discipline

Through a watery April curtain  
dogwood blossoms scatter, white as Sunday handkerchiefs.  
Reckless brooks stream across rocks, twist and toss up  
splintered light, hurry fallen leaves and sticks  
into sudden vortices, spinning eddies.  
The Seven Mile Ridge rises early, hump-backed and brown.  
New greenings mushroom from its slopes in nimbus puffs.

Against these hard granite cliffs I've pressed my forehead in prayer,  
while cold gallons poured down pounding, striking dumb all folly,  
sheering dross. Prayed in winter, when the body's made nothing by  
shrill cold and ghost-cloud, scream of bobcat from the wood,  
coyotes' gleeful murder-song, shrieks of hapless, fallen creatures.

Now Spring has pushed me to my knees, beauty-stunned, knocked  
me flat on a patch of emerald moss, a miniature forest, scent of loam  
and mica in my nostrils, frog song in the branch chanting  
*only this is true only this is true only this is true.*

## **Deciduous Trees Behaving Deciduously**

Every year they come together as if  
for a wedding anniversary or  
a class reunion, drop their crinkly leaves  
like knickers or hankies or last New Year's  
Eve confetti. Their favorite birds take  
flight, abandon them to their stark branches  
that rise up like arthritic fingers to snatch  
what is left of the good weather. Poplars  
remain ever popular. The moon is  
a China rose that they wish they could pluck.

## **Mistakes**

A brown wren made a hidden home  
under the curbside mailbox,  
in the cylinder meant to hold  
the daily sheaf of human news delivered  
by a shadowy figure in an old Ford Falcon.

Out the bird would fly, alarmed, each time  
the metal door clanged down  
against her makeshift hideaway.  
“Let us not disturb her any longer.”  
Reaching in, a gloved hand removes

the intricate nest, a marvelous  
swirl of pine needles, twigs, moss,  
evidence of instinctive artful industry.  
Oh! how perfectly it had concealed,  
even from a flashlight’s probing beam,

five pale eggs the size of marbles,  
noticed too late to be restored to  
the ersatz shelter. Discarded, how perfectly  
it floats, that nest, upon the river’s skin,  
perhaps delivering supper to a snake.



## **Bathing and Grabbling on a Hot Summer Day**

We trudge down the gravel driveway,  
cross the sparsely traveled highway  
follow the foot-worn path through  
summer's golding wheat field  
past Grandmother's rambling farm  
house. Dad is carrying an enamel pail  
full of clean clothes. Steve and I follow  
through close-cropped pasture  
past head-bent cows, wallowing horse.  
He spreads wide strands of shirt-grabbing  
barbed wire fence for us to crawl through.

Blackberry briars and alder bend aside  
as we push on in cooling dampness,  
stopping to savor ripe raspberries  
riding down their silvery canes.  
Ripples of North Fork Creek flash  
bright like starlight through the copse  
before we reach the mossy bank  
where we shed our soiled clothes,  
step naked into the mirror-clear water,  
soap ourselves and bathe free  
of cold weather's galvanized tub.

We lie among the rounded stones,  
clear water swirling, caressing sweat  
and chore-soil from our tan skin.  
Dad wades from the creek, cuts  
a forked, thin alder stick  
bringing it back just upstream.  
He calls us to watch as he reaches  
beneath bedded rocks, drawing  
back a silver-flashing rainbow

trout, slides it gill to mouth on his  
makeshift stringer. "You try,"

he calls. With child-fear of snake,  
of catfish barb, of failing Father,  
we grow a bit as the stringer fills.  
We laugh, shout, "I have one,"  
with each flailing fish we pull  
from its shaded rock-shelter.  
We put on fresh pressed clothes.  
Go home with fish and pail of berries  
to mother snapping beans on porch  
Our father gives thanks at supper.

**Mrs. Sidberry, Carolina Beach, 1967**

We thought she must live at the drugstore,  
a soft bunk tucked beneath the soda fountain counter  
where she stood in her starched white uniform,  
dispensing cherry Cokes, egg salad on toast,  
vanilla cones, fresh-squeezed lemonade.  
We couldn't imagine her walking home  
on sore feet to a husband stripped  
to his undershirt, couldn't picture them  
at the kitchen table, box fan rattling  
the window frame as they peeled shrimp  
onto newspaper laid over the checkered cloth,  
as he fanned himself with the leftover sports page  
while she stood at the stove frying the shrimp  
for supper. We couldn't hear her complaints  
about tourists turned irritable from sunburn,  
from waking at five to drive the kids  
down for the day. To us, night conjured  
a different closing time:

lights out

except for the ones above  
her counter, the pharmacist having bid  
a gruff good night. A crackly radio  
plays back-to-back Elvis as she settles  
onto a swivel stool with a hot fudge sundae,  
savors the warm-cold sweetness on her tongue,  
as she runs her finger around the glass rim,  
licking up the last streaks of chocolate  
and whipped cream before she pops  
the maraschino cherry into her mouth.  
She rinses her sticky bowl,  
does a slow sway to "Love Me Tender,"

then plumps her pillow  
and slips between flowered sheets,  
a smear of chocolate drying on her cheek.

**Cool to the Touch**

*~ for our father Roger, age 90*

A few shakes of salt in the pan,  
a measuring cup of water, slotted  
spoon resting by the stove.  
Rye toast still in the toaster,  
browned, now cool to the touch.  
Eggs, carton-cold, never made it  
out of the fridge.

What drew you away  
from the stove to your recliner, was it  
*The Price is Right* or the local news?  
Weathermen forecasted snow. Maybe  
you thought about the snowblower, whether  
it had enough fuel. Maybe you had enough  
to eat, enough Chicago winters, enough cold.

In the middle of making breakfast, you left.  
Tucked under a blanket, in your recliner,  
where the housekeeper found you.

## **Heliosheath**

All afternoon the storm intrudes.  
I read the news and watch soccer  
without sound, but thunder cannons  
around the trees, and the rain insists  
until finally lightning pounds a transformer.

I mull over the darkness.

Opening the blinds,  
I find light enough to read.  
I think about Mandela dying in Soweto,  
his children already quarreling.  
I think about the boundary  
between life and smoke.

Walking in the rain this morning,  
I saw my thread of a creek lift  
into a brown rope of announcement,  
and I thought about being flooded out.

Eighteen billion miles from the sun,  
Voyager 1 pokes into the Heliosheath—  
the solar system's edge—beyond  
the Termination Shock, into Interstellar Space:  
its journey not over or even begun.

My lights snap on and then go out again.

**Instead of Roses**

Don't you set some easy flowers at my headstone,  
inscribed, "Here lies a man of God  
who shouldn't have been dancing in the street."  
No, don't you go to some boutique or worse,  
the front of Walmart, grab some petty pink roses  
whipped in to domesticity centuries ago by some monk  
who, god damn it, would like a splash of color in his life  
at the very least if sex wasn't an option.  
If the offering you place at my tomb did not require  
an adventure I'll not have it, and I swear  
I'll haunt your every ordinary day for not living.  
Give me a seashell from some distant isle,  
place down a tooth from the shark or grizzly that bit you,  
leave the lonely sandwort flower that grows as high  
as it could dare on the craggy spires around Everest.  
And if you fail at last, if the offering proves too much  
in its acquisition and your body falls to pieces in the trying,  
well, I've reserved the ten grave plots around me for a reason.  
"Come," I'll say, "rest a while, I prepared some dinner for us,  
but tomorrow be ready to move. The afterlife's filled with wonders,  
we've more adventures left to do."

**Gretel**

You can no longer follow  
the crumbs back home,  
the crows and black birds  
grew starved over the years.

Can you blame hunger  
for wiping clean the past?  
Home is never the place  
you remember anyway.

The bi-level house has been  
shrunk. Those rose bushes  
planted with your drunk father  
were ripped out. The neighbors

relocated to nursing homes  
or rest now in boxes  
set deep inside the earth.  
New children play catch

in the street. A different dog  
barks at night. Around the curve,  
another father is punching holes  
into walls with his angry fist.

\*

It is long past curfew.  
Do not ask how  
to arrive back home  
without notice.



Do not ask where  
the siblings went  
in the spent hours  
beyond dusk.

You have forgotten  
to return after years  
away. There were dances  
and games, meandering travels.

Here, the dog no longer  
barks in the yard  
and the song bird  
on the sill has gone silent.

Now you set older fists  
against the familiar red door  
but only ghosts wait upstairs  
inside your parent's bed.

# *Student Contests*





*Sophia Tabacca, 5th Grade  
Winston-Salem, NC  
Teacher: Sarah Patten*

## Clouds

As gray clouds cover,  
    Sky so blue,  
The clouds are tinged,  
    With aqua light too,

And on the corners,  
Where the clouds close,  
Sunset peaks through,  
With orange and rose,

And where the rose,  
Meets with the blue sky,  
    Emerges then,  
    A lavender sigh,

And then in blue,  
A puff of white down,  
A pure white diamond,  
In heaven's crown,

And the light,  
Will give way,  
    To the dark,  
At the end of the day,

Darkness to light,  
The ancient rite.

*Chance Biehn, 5th Grade  
Durham, NC  
Teacher: Joan Barasovska*

## **Winter in Ireland**

Snow blankets the ground,  
telling the grass to slumber.  
Hills of clouds prophecy heaven.  
Child, you can be the angel.

*Kiran Singh, 4th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Hillary May*

## **I Will Stand Tall**

I was just beginning  
A brand new school Didn't have any friends Didn't know a single  
rule

I wanted to hide And maybe run away  
But something about the class Made me stay

I knew one girl  
And tried to play But she always told me  
To keep away

She shut me out Closed every door  
She didn't even crack it What for?

I let her tease me Call me mean things  
I was like her little puppet  
She was controlling me with strings

Eventually she got to me I could stand it no more I was  
determined to win Determined to score

My words came out strong  
I stood up for me Then she backed down  
I was finally free

I did struggle I did fall  
But yet here I am Still standing tall

*Kenna Zhang, 5th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Rebecca Pochon*

## **School**

I need my School supplies Don't you see,  
The year is coming Terribly near!

I need some markers as Thin as thread,  
I need some pens Erasable, making my  
Paper nice and clear, I need some pencils,  
What do I have to write? Just one or two  
Or a whole pack will do,  
Just if the pencils will  
Make a line as dark as  
The night sky,  
I need seven note books,  
As colorful as the rainbow,  
One half-inch binder,  
Not very thick  
A two-inch binder as thick as a pig,  
Some sticky notes,  
As sticky as glue,  
I remembered I need some glue!

My cart is full  
I better get one more  
My old one where did it go?  
I need to go over the list again?

I need some markers as Thin as thread.

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**TRAVIS TUCK JORDAN AWARD**

*Sofia Vega-Quiros, 4th Grade  
Raleigh, NC  
Teacher: Tanya Grosnick*

**Dinosaurs**

Chomp, Stomp, Roar!  
Dinosaurs are ready to explore.  
They come in different  
Shapes and sizes,  
It's like they are wearing disguises.

Argentinosaurus are big,  
Microraptors are small,  
Dimorphodons are winged,  
And Brachiosaurus are tall.

Chomp, Stomp, Roar!  
Dinosaurs existed before.  
T. rexes eat meat Hadrosaurus eat plants,  
Some of them compete To get what they want.

Ankylosaurus are armored,  
Titanosaurus have long necks.  
My favorite is the Velociraptor  
Who can stand on two legs.



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TRAVIS TUCK JORDAN AWARD

*Amilia Edwards, 4th Grade  
Raleigh, NC  
Teacher: Katelyn Whisnant*

**Are You OK?**

Are you OK?  
My friend asked.  
Well there's  
Something in My Body  
Feelin lody Doddy!  
Sometimes I feel  
Like a lemon being  
Squeezed that's just me.  
Is it just me I just want to see!

---

THE JOAN SCOTT MEMORIAL AWARD

*Saja Suliman, 5th Grade  
Raleigh, NC  
Teacher: Jami Sandowski*

## **Mother Nature**

I do not ask for your sweet favor, but you bless me with your bright  
earthy green trees

that cure my sadness.

Oh Mother Nature,

I love it when I see you dewdrops on the beautiful colored leaves.

When I feel your sunshine I feel a warm blanket of love.

Oh! Mother Nature I will always embrace you.

Mother Nature, loving each other is the true rule of Nature.

*Katie Faircloth, 6th Grade  
Sanford, NC  
Teacher: R. Holt*

## **A Sunrise Moment**

As I stepped out of my house's warmth,  
I could feel the salty breeze.  
It was a cool, refreshing tease.  
And so was the sand which almost made me sneeze.

It was still dark, but I knew what was coming.  
But for the moment the breeze stopped.  
Everything still and calm, except for the ocean.  
It seemed as if all the oceans waves were running.

And then there it was,  
The big ball of light I see every morning.  
The light that puts joy and laughter into my heart.  
I see it every day and it never gets boring.

Soon it was all in the sky.  
I knew it was only for a moment,  
But to me it is the most important moment of the day.  
It is the moment of joy and hope that will never say good-by.

---

THE JOAN SCOTT MEMORIAL AWARD

*Fariha Neikar, 8th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **The deep unknown**

outside is  
"The deep unknown"  
ignored for comfort of a house  
But take one small step out into  
"The deep unknown"  
and everything changes

a cool breeze brings color to your face  
seeing a different light  
golden sunbeams against pinewood trees  
humming of robins  
quietly chirping  
you look up  
free from the blank,  
closed in ceiling  
is the sky  
gleaming azurely

feelings undescribed come  
Fulfillment  
Warmth  
Contentment  
"The deep unknown"  
Our Home

*Grant Laurey, 4th Grade*

*Cary, NC*

*Teacher: Hillary May*

## **Nice Tree**

Somedays I am  
lonely but there's  
this Tree I get  
my book and I sit  
there and read and the  
temperature is perfect  
the breeze pushes the  
pages for me the  
grass is like a giant  
cushion the Tree  
has apples It keeps  
me full and once I  
leave the next day  
I'll be there for the Tree.

---

THE JOAN SCOTT MEMORIAL AWARD

*Vamsi Moduga, 8th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **Unawake**

Tonight, the world is dark  
When lights fade creatures begin to drift  
The birds of the sky return to the nest  
The turtles for the sea curl up in their shells  
And the humans of the land lie in bed

As the wind whispers goodnight to those who sleep  
Others awaken to this empty world  
The owl of the sky prowls for its prey  
The jellyfish of the sea drift through the endless expanse  
And the mice of the land scurry around collecting scraps

So in a world where we only see the waking  
We are only seeing half the picture  
So stay up late and see the unawake world

---

THE JOAN SCOTT MEMORIAL AWARD

*Krishna Patel, 8th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **True Peace**

Today in my life the world is blue  
Blue skies progress like periwinkles on my farm  
In the depths of the forest, I sit  
    With my navy blue chair and my fresh blueberry juice  
Tranquility  
Serenity

Wedgwood trees surround me.  
I see the sliver of light shining  
Shining so brightly on the few lucky  
Beautiful cornflowers  
    Giving it hopes to grow  
As we all must at some point  
Grow up  
When we grow up why can't we relax and slow down  
Just like those cornflowers  
    And appreciate what has been given to us  
Not the new technology that is soon to devour our world  
Or the money that com1pts the inside of our soul  
    But, the silence like the valleys in the Grand Canyon  
Blue vastness of the ocean  
Let our mind be free from daily struggles  
One thing no amount can get you  
True Peace

---

**THE MARY CHILTON AWARD**

*Melanie Kershaw, 8th Grade  
Deep Gap, NC  
Teacher: Victoria Kershaw*

**Reflection**

On the lagoon, floating  
is the peace that I seek.  
To stare into the mirror and fondly  
push aside the disdain  
of the screeching gulls inside.  
To dive into the flower floating  
on the lake.  
To white wash the world with beautiful  
silence, as you  
stand alone  
in the clear, and gaze into a stranger's self  
that you know so very well.  
To erase all the tables, chairs,  
and screens,  
and look into the starry pool  
of the untouched staring face.  
To keep it all within  
then let it trickle out and rest.  
To bask in the glow of the nothing shining through.  
To ask, fearing words, and be  
content with no reply.  
As the world crumbles round,  
I will build it up again.  
To look into the eyes of the  
ever-present angel  
of myself.  
To think yes, this is peace,  
as I fall  
into her  
eternal here.



*Rowan Crites, 10th Grade  
Pittsboro, NC  
Teacher: Deborah Lloyd*

## **Black Lives**

How many lives will you take,  
Until we live up to your race?  
They say black lives matter, is it true?  
Is it really worth believing in you?

Isn't the bloodshed already enough?  
Can't you just see it, it's been so rough?  
Some of us have been clearly mistaken.  
These lives at stake weren't for the takin'.

When will you realize the mess you have made?  
How long will we suffer, under our pain?  
Our power, our forces have been eliminated.  
Our wealth and bodies confiscated.

When will you stand up for the hurt?  
I see these people, strugglin', burnt.  
Killin' our people you know we can't take it.  
But there is a light at the end, and we know that we'll make it.

Don't worry about the dollar bill.  
It's gonna happen, so just chill.  
I'll be waitin'.  
We'll all be waitin'.  
For this community to start changin'.

How many lives will you take, before we live up to your race?

*Dashiell Wohlford, 7th Grade  
Wilmington, NC  
Teacher: Victoria Kershaw*

## **The World of the Small**

I walk, and see  
The beauty of nature true.  
The world of the small.  
Life, in abundance.

On a tree, on a rock,  
Moss creeps.  
A soft bed, for life.

Across the ground,  
They crawl.  
The one-hundred legged,  
The recyclers.

And out of a dark,  
Deep hole, comes the ant.  
A show of teamwork,  
And life.

And between the branches,  
Hangs the hunter.  
Eight-legged, he waits,  
For the careless.

And together, with many more,  
They for a world.  
A beautiful world.  
The world of the small.

*Paarth Patel, 8th Grade  
Cary, NC*

*Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **Red, Ron's Color**

Ron, you've gone red

Angry like a crab snapping its claws  
Lost all love and you just lost all life  
Raging, like the autumn winds  
Have a rough life and a rowdy wife  
Ron, you're the red man

Ron, calm down  
You're like the coals in a train  
Burning hot, your fire so big  
Eat those cherries, so juicy and sweet  
Drink some apple juice, enjoy the cool breeze

Your soul should be filled  
With abundant amounts of joy  
Now all your actions  
Just show us the fire inside

Extinguish that fire  
Drink some cherry wine  
You can't remain red  
Unless it shows you who's inside

---

THE MARY CHILTON AWARD

*Fariha Neikar, 8th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **Wonderlous blues**

What are the blues?

is it the sadness you feel  
when snow doesn't fall on evergreen trees  
in the beginning of winter  
or is it  
when the slightest hint of periwinkle  
doesn't glimmer  
throughout carefully stained window panes  
on an unceasing rainy day

Could it be

when the skies and oceans  
are the exact shade of cerulean  
you can't help but wonder  
why you can't fly  
with the bluejays above why you can't swim  
freely  
in azure waves  
with the dolphins

But why shouldn't the blues be when  
you begin to appreciate  
the beautiful delphiniums in your backyard  
or how magnificent the sapphire earrings  
dangling from your mother's ears are  
when they twinkle  
like eyes of a seal pointed cat

What if the blues aren't sadness but  
*happiness*  
in what wonders surround you

HONORABLE MENTION

---

**THE MARY CHILTON AWARD**

*Nihal Abbu, 8th Grade*

*Cary, NC*

*Teacher: Kristin Thompson*

## **The Mary Chilton Award**

Pure

As creamy coconut milk

Gushing out of a flask

Like flowing pitch black ink

Onto rough ivory parchment

Like the matched eyes of an Albino Alligator

To the sprouting bud of the

Lone magnolia

In spring

To the falling frost of Winter weather

Swirling around like the strokes of nature's brush

Swept across bright white porcelain

Nature's cycle repeating again

*Connor Marshall, Undergraduate  
Burlington, NC*

*Teacher: Maureen Sherbody*

## **Rusty Tree**

I carry a rusted knife in its time-worn sheath,  
It reminds me of stories told about people I should know,  
I also carry a single root from a fractured family tree,  
From the sheen of the dulled blade I can see inheritance,  
A man I know little about has left this behind,  
Apathetic hands have passed it to me,  
It was me or the trash,  
A family tree,  
A single root,  
A knife.

*Charles Canady, Undergraduate  
Fayetteville, NC  
Teacher: Robin Greene*

## **Lillie**

Aunt Lillie was blind.  
A single bare light bulb  
hung from the ceiling,  
and always stayed on.

On winter nights  
she heard mice  
in her mattress—  
seeking harbor under her bulb  
after the 'bacca was harvested.

On summer nights  
Lillie's bulb hummed  
to the song of cicadas,  
who sipped on sap  
and whose wings drummed.

Her daddy's eyes were  
the clearest blue  
and all her sisters' too.  
I imagined her eyes  
caged behind lids of skin  
like baby birds never born,  
waiting to live.

I imagined the bulb warmed her eyes  
as when father held an egg to the light  
to see what was inside  
hoping her eyes would hatch.

Lillie owned a general store  
learned to feel money in her hands.  
Thin tissue knew each shape,

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THE SHERRY PRUITT AWARD*Charles Canady*

rubbed the coins, counted each one,  
trusted strangers to tell the truth  
about the paper notes.

Lillie wore a soft cotton gown,  
a dingy angel floating around  
a paint-peeling shanty, and loved her rocking chair  
when visitors called.

Her voice was soft  
like butter in her skillet,  
and it creaked from age—  
like her chair.

Lillie cooked eggs every day  
on top a wood stove  
and never cleaned her skillet,  
making my father retch  
at the sight.

This boy went with dad on a visit,  
watched him run a comb through  
Lillie's hair,  
and kneel before her  
a benevolent knight  
to cut thick toenails,  
grown twisted like a tree.

Her thick padded soles  
cracked like paint,  
cradled in dad's hands  
like Cinderella—  
left a footprint on my memories  
while I wondered why  
the bulb hanging from the ceiling  
always stayed on.



*Katie Kegley, 9th Grade  
Smithfield, NC  
Teacher: N.A.*

## **The Mysterious Shadow**

The deep, dark treacherous shadow  
Waits ever so carefully, subtle almost fragile  
Ponders waiting for the next victim  
Searching, seeking, lurking in the distance

I buried myself in the faint darkness  
As a brisk taste of salty air chilled my back  
The air smelled crisp, pleasant, refreshing even

I can hear footsteps behind me crunching leaves as I leave a mellow trail  
A distant, tall, figure lurking in the shadows  
Observing me, and drifting slowly behind

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THE SHERRY PRUITT AWARD

*Ava Jeffs, 9th Grade  
Cary, NC  
Teacher: Joan Barasovska*

**December, 1974**

She sits waiting for stillness,  
a lightness in her heart darkened  
by the cancer lying in her breast.  
Two children run up and down the stairs  
shouting, Mommy! Mommy!  
The third child, eleven years old,  
pulls them to the kitchen.  
From her chair she looks out,  
tears slipping,  
at white-dusted branches.  
My grandmother closes her eyes.

*Lillian Duncan, 10th Grade  
New Bern, NC  
Teacher: Amanda Smith*

## **Hush**

The feeling,  
Bubbling up from my chest  
Into my throat  
Collapsing my windpipe, Swelling my lungs  
Words aching to cry out, hush  
These syllables my tongue can't form,  
Seemingly swollen in my mouth  
I feel choked up,  
I may only whisper such slight things  
To ears that my pale lips trust,  
Yet even those who can be trusted  
Inflict the deepest terror  
Upon my heart,  
Making it bleed, and beat out of rhythm  
Each vesicle, chamber and tendon  
Ready to give in,  
I can't escape this aching feeling  
God, do I wish I could  
My lips  
Sewn by fear,  
Sworn by secrecy to myself  
I crave to see the seamstress,  
Unstitch my mouth  
Letting go of the truth,  
Only then, will I be free  
Unfettered by the facade I've always had

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 THE SHERRY PRUITT AWARD

*Conner Culpepper, 12th Grade  
Manteo, NC  
Teacher: Anna Thomas*

## Society

I awake from my slumber, as the pale sun of morn begins to rise.  
To greet the forest, to feel the blissful cold of the dew on my bare feet,  
As I make my way towards the umber pines.  
I reach the clearing, atop a hill to feel, the divinity of the sublime.  
Oh how the scintillating songs of the birds,  
Bring me such peace of mind  
I can feel the power of the morning air,  
Breathing life into everything that surrounds me.  
For it is only here, that I am truly free.  
Free from the binding chains, of the encompassing being that we humans  
    call society!  
In the clearing, atop a hill.  
It is there I realize,  
All is still.

Yet, the years continue to go by.  
I simply exist, under the reins of time.  
For better, or for worse,  
My life has succumbed to change.  
Dearest friends have been lost.  
And new ones, rarely made.  
Only the forest remains.  
Alas, I see only what I despise when I look ahead!  
Creeping closer each day.  
In its wake, lies the destruction of the life it takes  
For the sake of modern amenities, it will all be gone soon.  
The intimidating pines and the delicate birds.  
I hear their shrill calls, and then nothing more.  
All of the forest will meet a foreseeable doom.  
It will even take the clearing, atop a hill.  
So I sit and feel, one last time.  
All is still.

HONORABLE MENTION



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**BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS**

**Chris Abbate's** poetry has appeared in many journals, including *Pinesong 2018* and *Kakalak 2018*. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net award. Chris' first book of poetry, *Talk About God*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2017.

**Laura White Alderson** of Raleigh, NC, grew up in Pensacola, FL, and Chatham, VA, earning her BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her poems have been published by the Geryon Press (through an NEA grant), and in *Pinesong*. A journalist for a decade, her articles have appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, *National Wildlife*, and *Redbook*.

**Pam Baggett**, author of *Wild Horses* (Main Street Rag, 2018), co-hosts the poetry series at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill, and teaches free writing workshops at the Orange County Library in Hillsborough, NC.

**Don Ball**, originally from Durham, NC now lives in Raleigh. He attended The College of William and Mary. Ball is a former high school English teacher, tennis coach, lecturer at NC State, and English Professor from Wake Technical Community College. He is most recently published in *Pinesong*, *Kakalak*, and *Tar River Poetry*.

**Barbara Blanks** is the author of four books, and co-author of a young adult novel.

**Les Brown** is Professor Emeritus of Biology, a graduate of Appalachian State University and the University of Southern Mississippi. Les' poetry and prose has appeared in such journals as *Pinesong*, *Kakalak* and *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*. He is also a visual artist, focusing in photography, which has appeared in regional journals, including *Moonshine Review* and *Broad River Review*.

**Jane Craven** lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, having graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill; since, she has worked in systems development and as the director of a contemporary art museum. Some of her work has appeared in *The Columbia Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *The Texas Review*, and *The Atlanta Review*. She was the recipient of a 2018 Academy of American Poets Prize, judged by Diane Seuss.

**Benjamin Cutler** is an English and Creative-writing teacher at Swain County High School in the mountains of Western NC. His poems have appeared in numerous publications; his debut collection of poetry, *The Geese Who Might be Gods*, is forthcoming from Main Street Rag (May 2019).

**Deborah H. Doolittle** now calls North Carolina home. She teaches at Coastal Carolina Community College and is the author of *No Crazy Notions*, *That Echo*, and *Floribunda*.

**Joanne Durham** is an adjunct professor at Trinity University in Washington, DC. She won the 2018 National Society for Children's Books Writers and Illustrators Works-in-Progress Award. She lives in Kure Beach, NC. Some of Durham's poems have appeared in *Flying South*.

**Michael Gaspeny** is the author of 2 chapbooks, *Re-Write Men* and *Vocation*. He is the recipient of the Randall Jarrell Poetry Prize and the O. Henry Festival Short Story Competition. A hospice volunteer for seventeen years, he lives in Greensboro, NC.

**Kristen Ryberg Hall** lives in Boone, NC, and San Miguel de Allendé, MX. She was briefly in the military, has worked as a park ranger, boutique owner, and a sustainable clothing representative. A few of her pleasures are 'hands in the dirt,' 'feet on the trails,' when not reading and writing.

**Janis Harrington's** book of poems, *Waiting for the Hurricane*, won the 2017 Lena M. Shull Book Contest, and was published by St. Andrews University Press. Her poems have appeared in journals and anthologies in the USA and Europe, including: *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose about Alzheimer's Disease* (Kent State University Press); *New Southerner Anthology*; *Flying South*; *Kakalak*; and *The Homestead Review*. She earned her MA from North Carolina State University, and lives in Chapel Hill, NC.

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**BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS**

**Sharon Louise Howard** holds BA and MA degrees from the University of Central Florida. Her short fiction and poetry have appeared in *Cricket*, *The Formalist*, *Stonecutters*, *Revelry*, *Branches*, *Pinesong*, *Streetlight Magazine*, *Florida English Journal*, and *Literally Stories*.

**Earl Carlton Huband** won Longleaf Press' 2018 chapbook competition for *The Innocence of Education*, a collection based on experience as a young Peace Corps Volunteer in the Sultanate of Oman, where he taught English in a remote fishing village in a restricted military zone near the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

**Jeanne Julian's** two chapbooks are *Blossom and Loss* and *Relic and Myth*. Her full-length collection, *Light Source*, is forthcoming from The Poetry Box Select.

**Craig Kittner** currently is guest editor of the *Haiku Dialogue* blog for The Haiku Foundation. After years of restless moving, he has put his roots down in the sandy soil of Wilmington, NC, where the sunlight is strong and the birds abound in the ocean air.

**Chen-ou Liu** is the author of five books, including *Following the Moon to the Maple Land* (First Prize, 2011 Haiku Pix Chapbook Contest) and *A Life in Transition and Translation* (Honorable Mention, 2014 Turtle Light Press Biennial Haiku Chapbook Competition). His tanka and haiku have been honored with many awards.

**David Treadway Manning** is author of ten chapbooks and two full-length collections, *The Flower Sermon* (2007) and *Soledad* (2014), both published by Main Street Rag. His chapbook, *Singularities*, was released by Finishing Line Press in 2019. Raised in southern California, Dave lived in West Virginia for twenty-seven years before coming to North Carolina.

**Ashley Memory** lives in the Uwharrie Mountains of the Piedmont and happily counts numerous red oaks as her neighbors. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Turnpike*, *Red Clay Review* and *The Phoenix*.



**Calvin Olsen** holds an MFA from Boston University and an MA from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His poetry and translations have most recently appeared in *AGNI*, *Tampa Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The London Magazine*, and *The Chattahoochee Review*, among others. A former Robert Pinsky Global Fellow and Pushcart Prize nominee, Calvin now lives in Chapel Hill, NC, where he is poetry editor for *The Carolina Quarterly*.

**Alan Michael Parker** is the author of nine collections of poems, including *The Age of Discovery* (forthcoming from Tupelo Press in 2020), and four novels. His honors include three Pushcart Prizes, two inclusions in *Best American Poetry*, the North Carolina Book Award, the Brockman-Campbell Book Award, two Randall Jarrell poetry prizes, and the Lucille Medwick Award from the Poetry Society of America. Houchens Professor of English at Davidson College, he also teaches in the University of Tampa's low-residency M.F.A. program.

**Barry Peters** lives in Durham and teaches in Raleigh. Publications/forthcoming include *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Best New Poets 2018*, *I-70 Review*, *Poetry East*, *Presence*, *Rattle*, and *South Florida Poetry Journal*.

**Hannah Ringler** is a high school English teacher and world traveler who loves the natural world, the written word, and the mythic resonance behind the intersection between them. She lives in Cary, North Carolina.

**Martin Settle** is both a poet and an assemblage artist living in Charlotte, NC. As a poet, he has published four books: *The Teleology of Dunes* (Main Street Rag, 2015), *Coming to Attention: developing the habit of haiku* (Main Street Rag, 2016), *The Backbone Alphabet* (Xlibris, 2017), and *Maple Samaras* (Wild Leek Press, 2018). Mr. Settle has won The Poetry of Courage Award (North Carolina Poetry Society), the Nazim Hikmet Poetry Award, and the Griffin-Farlow Haiku Award.

**Sharon A. Sharp** creates artist's books and writes poetry in Winston-Salem, NC. A past NCPS president, she often incorporates poetry in her handmade books. Sharon has served as an artist-in-residence for two National Parks, and her books have been widely exhibited.

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 BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS

**Garrett Sharpe** is a UNC graduate student studying marine microbiology. When he is not in the lab or on a research vessel, he spends his time hiking, improving his nature photography, and writing poetry. Garrett's inspirations for his poetry include nature, his faith, and his relationships with others, along with any prompt his fellow poets choose to give him.

**Maureen Sherbondy** lives in Durham, NC. She teaches English at Alamance Community College. Her forthcoming book is *Dancing with Dali* (FutureCycle Press, 2020). Her work has been published in *Prelude, Calyx, Feminist Studies, Southeast Review*, and other places.

**Jane Shlensky**, a teacher and musician, has recent poetry and fiction in *Writer's Digest, Pinesong, Kakalak, moonShine review, and Nostos*. NC Poetry Society has twice nominated her poems for a Pushcart, and her short fiction and nonfiction were finalists in Press 53, James Applewhite, Doris Betts, Rose Post, and Thomas Wolfe contests. Jane's chapbook is *Barefoot on Gravel* (2016).

**Cathy Larson Sky** is author of *Blue egg, my heart*, a chapbook with Finishing Line Press (2014). Her poems appear in *The Great Smokies Review, Kakalak, Pinesong, Witness*, and *A Gathering of Poets, 2016*. In 2017 she worked with mentor poet Pat Riviere-Seel under the Gilbert Chappell Distinguished Poet series of the North Carolina Poetry Society. This year Cathy was one of three North Carolina women poets, chosen by the Asheville music ensemble *Panharmonia*, whose poems will be set to music in an original new work for voice, flute, bassoon, and guitar by composer Dosithea McKay.

**Crystal Simone Smith** is the author of *Wildflowers: Haiku, Senryu, and Haibun* (2016). Her work has appeared in numerous journals including: *Modern Haiku, Frogpond, Haibun Today*, and *Wishbone Moon Anthology*. Her co-authored book, *One Window's Light: A Collection of Haiku* with Lenard D. Moore, L. Teresa Church, Gideon Young, and Sheila Smith McKoy, was the winner of the 2018 Haiku Society of America's Merit Book Award for best haiku anthology.

**Celisa Steele's** poetry has appeared in *Raleigh Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Comstock Review*, *Cave Wall*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Pinesong* and others. Her poetry chapbook *How Language Is Lost* was published in 2011. She lives in Carrboro, NC, where she served as the town's poet laureate from 2013 to 2016.

**Lucinda Trew** lives and writes in Charlotte, N.C. She studied journalism and English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is an award-winning speechwriter. Her poetry and nonfiction work have been published or upcoming in *The Fredricksburg Literary and Art Review*, *Mulberry Fork Review*, *Medium*, *The Mighty*, *Charlotte Viewpoint*, *BluntMoms*, *Boomer Café* and *Vital Speeches of the Day*.

**Donna Love Wallace** of Lewisville, North Carolina directs *Poetry in Plain Sight*, a Winston Salem Writers' state-wide initiative placing poetry in public spaces. Her poetry appears in *Flying South*, *Kakalak*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, among others. Her first chapbook, *Between Stones*, will be published by Hermit Feathers Press later this year.

**Eric Weil's** poems have appeared in journals ranging from *American Scholar* to *Poetry*, *The Main Street Rag* to *Silk Road*, and *Dead Mule* to *Sow's Ear*. This spring, he will retire after 40+ years of teaching, from special ed to higher ed.

**Emily Wilmer** (Alexander, NC) is spiritual director, retreat leader, poet in Asheville, NC. Her poems have appeared in *Kakalak*, *Sufi Journal* (UK), Thomas Merton *Poetry of the Sacred* finalist, *Inkwell*, *Great Smokies Review*, and various other journals.

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 BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST JUDGES

## ALICE OSBORN AWARD

**Rene Bufo Miles** established the Creative Writing Program at Charleston County School of the Arts and over her twenty-year tenure built it into a nationally award-winning program. She received Scholastic Publishing's Gold Apple Teacher Award on three occasions and a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to attend the Bread Loaf School of English. Her poetry has appeared in a variety of literary journals, and her article, "When You Shine, I Shine," focused on the teaching of poetry, was published in *Visions and Revisions*. Always writing, challenging and mentoring, Mrs. Miles inspired countless students to find their voices, tell their stories and chase their dreams.

## BLOODROOT HAIKU AWARD

**Lenard D. Moore** teaches Advanced Poetry Writing at the University of Mount Olive. His literary works have appeared in *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, *North American Review*, *Obsidian*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Valley Voices*. He is author of *The Geography Of Jazz* (Mountains and Rivers Press, 2018), and editor of *One Window's Light: A Collection Of Haiku* (Unicorn Press, 2017). He is founder and executive director of Carolina African American Writers' Collective. Lenard is a Cave Canem Graduate Fellow and a Soul Mountain Retreat Fellow. He is a U.S. Army Veteran, and recipient of the 2014 North Carolina Award for Literature.

## CAROL BESSENT HAYMAN POETRY OF LOVE AWARD

**Jodi Barnes** is a writer, consultant, and founder of 14 Words for Love, a social enterprise that invites 14-word poems or aphorisms that create more inclusive community connections. Jodi served as NCPS co-vice president of membership for several years. Her first chapbook, *unsettled*, was runner-up for the 2010 Oscar Arnold Young Award. Her published work spans poetry, short fiction, non-fiction (*Medium*), and academic journals. Jodi has a PhD in human resources and loves helping small businesses and non-profits build inclusive cultures.

## JOANNA CATHERINE SCOTT AWARD

## RUTH MORRIS MOOSE SESTINA AWARD

**Marjory Wentworth** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Out of Wonder*, *Poems Celebrating Poets* (with Kwame Alexander and Chris Colderley). She is the co-writer of *We Are Charleston*, *Tragedy and*

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 BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST JUDGES
 

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*Triumph at Mother Emanuel* and *Taking a Stand, The Evolution of Human Rights*. She is co-editor of *Seeking, Poetry and Prose Inspired by the Art of Jonathan Green*, and the author of the prizewinning children's story "Shackles." Her books of poetry include *Noticing Eden, Despite Gravity, The Endless Repetition of an Ordinary Miracle* and *New and Selected Poems*. Wentworth teaches at The College of Charleston and The Citadel. She is the Poet Laureate of South Carolina.

## KATHERINE KENNEDY MCINTYRE LIGHT VERSE AWARD

**Ray McManus** is the author of three books of poetry: *Punch* (Hub City Press, 2014), *Red Dirt Jesus* (Marick Press, 2011), and *Driving through the Country before You Are Born* (USC Press, 2007), and the co-editor of the anthology *Found Anew* (USC Press, 2015). Ray is a Professor of English at the University of South Carolina Sumter, where he directs the SC Center for Oral Narrative. Ray also serves as the Writer in Residence at the Columbia Museum of Art and is Chair of the Board of Governors for the South Carolina Academy of Authors.

## MARY POOLE RUFFIN AMERICAN HERITAGE AWARD

**Dan Albergotti** is the author of *The Boatloads* (BOA Editions, 2008) and *Millennial Teeth* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), as well as a limited-edition chapbook, *The Use of the World* (Unicorn Press, 2013). His poems have appeared in *32 Poems, Five Points, The Southern Review, The Virginia Quarterly Review, The Best American Poetry 2017*, and two editions of the Pushcart Prize, as well as other journals and anthologies. He is a professor of English at Coastal Carolina University.

## POET LAUREATE AWARD (preliminary judge)

**Sandra Beasley** is the author of three poetry collections—*Count the Waves, I Was the Jukebox*, and *Theories of Falling*—as well as *Don't Kill the Birthday Girl: Tales from an Allergic Life*, a disability memoir and cultural history of food allergies. She served as editor for *Vinegar and Char: Verse from the Southern Foodways Alliance*. Honors for her work include the 2019 Munster Literature Centre's John Montague International Poetry Fellowship, a 2015 NEA fellowship, and four DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities fellowships. She lives in Washington, D.C., and teaches with the University of Tampa low-residency MFA program.

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 BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST JUDGES

## POET LAUREATE AWARD (final judge)

**Jaki Shelton Green**, North Carolina Poet Laureate, teaches Documentary Poetry at Duke University Center for Documentary Studies. Publications include: *Dead on Arrival*, *Masks*, *Dead on Arrival and New Poems*, *Conjure Blues*, *singing a tree into dance*, *breath of the song* (Carolina Wren Press), *Feeding the Light* (Jacar Press), *i want to undie you* (Jacar Press). Awards: 2018 E. Parker Hunt Award, 2018 Phi Beta Kappa Award, 2018 Indy Award, 2018 NC Tar Heel of the Year Finalist, 2014 NC Literary Hall of Fame inductee, 2009 NC Piedmont Laureate, 2007 Sam Ragan Award in Fine Arts, 2003 NC Award in Literature.

## POETRY OF COURAGE AWARD

**Kathryn Leland** is a poet from Austin, Texas. She is currently an MFA candidate at The University of Mississippi and holds a B.A. in English—Creative Writing from Hendrix College. She serves as an associate editor with Sibling Rivalry Press and reader for *Yalobusha Review*. Her work has appeared in *The Hunger and Rust + Moth*, and her debut chapbook *I Wore The Only Garden I've Ever Grown* was published in January 2017 with Headmistress Press. She lives in Mississippi with one cat.

## POETRY OF WITNESS AWARD

**Danielle DeTiberus** teaches creative writing at the Charleston School of the Arts. Her work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Arts & Letters*, *The Missouri Review*, *Rattle*, *River Styx*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and elsewhere. Her manuscript, *Better the Girl Know Now*, was a finalist for Black Lawrence Press' 2018 Hudson Prize. She received a poetry fellowship from the South Carolina Academy of Authors, and currently serves as the Program Chair for the Poetry Society of South Carolina, bringing nationally renowned poets to Charleston for readings and seminars.

## THOMAS H. MCDILL AWARD

**Dan Szczyzny** is a long-time journalist and author. His books include travelogues and memoirs on Nepal, Alaska, The White Mountains and Mount Washington. He's a Hemingway Foundation finalist for short fiction and has written short story and poetry collections, including

*Invincible One: Poems* about a trip to India and Turkey with his then ten-month-old daughter. He's traveled widely, speaking about adventure writing and the importance of getting kids into nature. He also teaches classes on travel writing, marketing and using poetry to inform non-fiction. He currently calls Manchester, New Hampshire his Base Camp where he lives with his wife and daughter.

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## BIOGRAPHIES: STUDENT CONTEST JUDGES

### JOAN SCOTT MEMORIAL

**Marie Martin** is a local Sanford artist with an eclectic portfolio of painting, pottery, window design and gardening. She has been mentoring young writers for the last ten years. Through a program in the Lee County School System, Marie has helped many young writers within her community strengthen and develop their poetry skills. Her own writing has always given her a sense of freedom and pleasure.

### MARY CHILTON AWARD

**Christine Lloyd** graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill with a Bachelor's in English Literature and a minor in Creative Writing. She has won several writing awards through UNC, including the Chancellor's Award for best senior creative writing. She has worked previously at Algonquin publishing house as well as Stories Bookstore in Brooklyn, NY, and now works as a graduate assistant in the UNCG Library Science program.

### TRAVIS TUCK JORDAN AWARD

**Lucile Zane** is a writer, artist and poet in Moncure, NC. She has been an academic educator for over 20 years. With a bachelors in Education from Rowan University and a concentration in Special Ed she has helped a wide variety of young students learn the art and passion of poetry.

### SHERRY PRUITT AWARD

**Tara Lynne Groth** writes short fiction and poetry. Her work has appeared in multiple journals and one of her poems was selected to inspire two community art sculptures in 2014. She received honorable mention in fiction in the 2015 Carolina Woman Writing Contest and was a semifinalist for the 2015 and 2016 James Applewhite Poetry Prize. She is an alumna of the Southampton Writers Conference.



