

PATHOS · HUMOR · HISTORY · CREATIVE NON-FICTION



CALLAHAN COUNTY

STAR SPOTLIGHT
WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

Submissions sought to:
Star
P.O. Box 29
Eastland, TX
76448
email: thebairdspotlight@att.net
S.A.S.E. for returns

--WANTED--
20 lines,
double spaced or less
Poetry
Fiction or Non

Each entry with brief biography notes. All must be family oriented; no smut, slander or liable material.

Literary Calendar

November 28, 1876: Joel Chandler Harris used the name "Uncle Remus," for the first time, in an article for the Atlanta Constitution.

November 29, 1883: Dard Hunter, printer and publisher was born at Steubenville, Ohio. He became an expert on papermaking, and titled his autobiography "My Life with Paper."

December 1, 1886: Rex Stout, the creator of the detective Nero Wolfe, was born at Noblesville, Indiana.

December 2, 1793: Samuel Taylor Colridge, who would write "The Rhymer of the Ancient Mariner," enlisted in the Light Dragoons.

December 3, 1916: W. Somerset Maugham, sailed for Pago Pago. On board were passengers of ill repute that were to inspire his story "Miss Thompson."



Six Flags Over Eastland at Texas Memorial Park-
Photo by Patrick Ready



Happy Thanksgiving

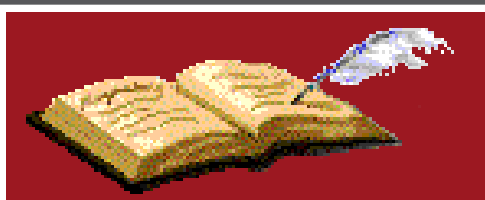
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76448

Wanted: Writers & Poets

Any and all ages



E-mail address:
thebairdspotlight@att.net



The pen is mightier than the sword.

American Life In Poetry

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Most of us love to find things, and to discover a quarter on the sidewalk can make a whole day seem brighter. In this poem, Robert Wrigley, who lives in Idaho, finds what's left of a Bible, and describes it so well that we can almost feel it in our hands.

Finding a Bible in an Abandoned Cabin

Under dust plush as a moth's wing,
the book's leather cover still darkly shown,
and everywhere else but this spot was sodden
beneath the roof's unraveling shingles.

There was that back-of-the-neck lick of chill
and then, from my index finger, the book
opened like a blasted bird.
In its box
of familiar and miraculous inks,
a construction of filaments and dust,

throughfares of worms, and a silage of silverfish husks: in the autumn light,
eight hundred pages of perfect wordless lace.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright (c) 2007 by Robert Wrigley, whose most recent book of poetry is "Earthly Meditations: New and Selected Poems," Penguin, 2006. Poem reprinted from "The Hudson Review," Vol. LIX, no. 4, Winter, 2007, by permission of Robert Wrigley. Introduction copyright (c) 2008 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Words To Use

Abaptical: This is an adjective for something that has reached its lowest value, like stocks in a market.

Babuina: A noun, here is, for the female baboon.

Cachaemia: The condition of a person with poisoned blood.

Dabchick: The small grebe has this name, as it is a swimmer and diver, much like loons, only having lobate toes.

Eirenic: This is an adjective describing a person who promotes peace and unity.

Writers And Poets!

The Eastland/Callahan County Newspapers announce that the Baird Star will be publishing submitted poetry and short stories. We will also be publishing a literary journal in the near future.

1. We ask for first-time publishing rights. All other rights will remain with the author.
2. There will be no payment, but you will get your works before the general public. We will be sending sample copies to other organizations, the literary world and libraries for their archives and your notoriety.
3. Short stories should be brief. Poetry should be no longer than 24 lines.
4. Each submission should be typewritten, single spaced, with author's name and contact information in the top right hand corner. You must include a SASE for the return of the submission.
5. Please address all submissions to:

Literary Editor
Eastland/Callahan County Newspapers
P. O. Box 29
Eastland, TX 76448
email: thebairdspotlight@att.net
Fax: 254-629-2092

WANTED: Poetry and/or short stories for this page each week.

Mail to: Star P.O. Box 29 Eastland, TX 76448 or e-mail to thebairdspotlight@att.net

A Conversation With Keats

Poet Stanley Plumly's book on the legendary John Keats transcends biography.

By Eric Ormsby
Poetry Media Service
Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography, by Stanley Plumly. Norton, \$27.95.
Poets who die young often have surprisingly lively posthumous careers. John Keats (1795-1821) provides the most celebrated example: Almost immediately after his death in Rome, at the age of 25, he entered the realm of legend. Though his poetry wasn't much read at the time, he himself was quickly transformed into a figure of myth. For Shelley—who drowned with a copy of Keats's last book in his pocket—he was "like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished," as he put it in "Adonais," his elegy for the poet. At the opposite extreme, Shelley's good friend Lord Byron detested Keats and snubbed him, referring to him in one letter as "a dirty little blackguard." For the aristocratic Byron, Keats was a "Cockney" upstart—more a rank weed than a pale lily. But for Keats's admirers, his humble origins only enhanced the pathos of his fate. For William Butler Yeats, Keats was both the "coarse-bred son of a livery-stable keeper" and a woebegone schoolboy "with face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window," the very epitome of sensuousness unsatisfied.

In Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography, the poet Stanley Plumly draws on these multiple, and often conflicting, images to create a subtle portrait of an elusive figure. Keats has been well-served by his biographers—most particularly, in the last century alone, by Walter Jackson Bate and Aileen Ward, both of whom wrote superb and compelling accounts of his short but rich life. Though Mr. Plumly uses these, and other sources, in his own account—and seems to have read virtually everything written about Keats from the early 19th century onward—his book is less a biography in the usual sense than an extended meditation.

Each of his chapters deals with a significant event in Keats's life, and yet the effect is anything but episodic. Whether he is describing Keats's grim medical training as a "dresser" (a surgical nurse who tended the survivors of operations) or exploring his passionate love affair with the enigmatic and flirtatious Fanny Brawne or recounting his terrible lingering final illness and death, Mr. Plumly knows how to piece the fragmentary evidence—from letters, memoirs, official documents, and, of course, the poetry itself—so seamlessly together as to bring each scene before the reader's eyes with great dramatic force. At the same time, by rejecting what he calls "linearity," he is able to proceed in a circular fashion, swerving and doubling back to give fresh emphasis or new

nuance to a point made earlier. The effect is curiously musical, with each of his chosen themes followed by ever more intricate variations.

In this respect, Mr. Plumly's unusual method, which does take some getting used to, succeeds brilliantly. In part it works so well because it is perfectly suited to the "personal biography" of his subtitle. For while the book is a scrupulously factual account both of Keats's life and of his literary afterlife, it is also a sort of secret conversation carried on between two poets over a distance of almost 200 years. And this sense—not only of love for Keats's poetry, but of profound engagement with it—informs Mr. Plumly's discussion throughout. Unlike previous biographers, he has a subtle ear for the verbal harmonies which make the great odes in particular so memorable. When he quotes the opening lines of the ode "To Autumn," "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, / Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun," and compares them to these lines from the "Ode to a Nightingale," "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, / Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs," he notes that the interlacing patterns of sound in these two quite different poems both create "a hearing just beautifully ahead of knowing." This is part of what Mr. Plumly elsewhere describes, quite aptly, as Keats's "plush playfulness." The poems play upon our ears before they engage our minds; their sounds are the very music of the imagination.

In a way, Keats anticipated his own afterlife. His most fervent wish was one day to "be counted among the English poets." During his lifetime that wish seemed improbable.

Though he was admired early in America, it wasn't until the 1850s—some 30 years after his death—that English readers began to appreciate his distinctive genius. Byron scoffed at Keats's phrase "music unheard" but it was Byron, along with many of his contemporaries, who couldn't catch the tune. As Keats lay dying miserably of tuberculosis, tended only by his friend, the painter Joseph Severn, he asked his physician how much longer "this posthumous life of mine" would last. It has lasted now for almost two centuries, and it seems likely to continue forever.

Eric Ormsby's work regularly appears in The Wall Street Journal, the New Republic, The Paris Review, and other publications. This article first appeared in The New York Sun, where he writes the weekly "Readings" column. Distributed by the Poetry Foundation. Read more about John Keats, and his poetry, at www.poetryfoundation.org.

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