

PATHOS · HUMOR · HISTORY · CREATIVE NON-FICTION

CALLAHAN COUNTY STAR SPOTLIGHT

WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

American Life In Poetry

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

It's been sixty-odd years since I was in the elementary grades, but I clearly remember those first school days in early autumn, when summer was suddenly over and we were all perched in our little desks facing into the future. Here Ron Koertge of California gives us a glimpse of a day like that.

First Grade

Until then, every forest
had wolves in it, we thought
it would be fun to wear snowshoes
all the time, and we could talk to water.

So why is this woman with the gray
breath calling out names and pointing
to the little desks we will occupy
for the rest of our lives?

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Words To Use Well:

Bilharziasis: Disease of the tropics brought on by blood flukes or worms.

Confelicity: A state of being happy, because someone else is happy.

Evulgate: This verb describes the action of making something known to a large group of people. It is the act of making something famous or infamous.

Kunacube: Here is a descriptive word for things that have to do with slugs.



The pen is mightier than the sword

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

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.

Rhyming Words To Know

Schematize

Assize

Immunize

Shastise

Fractionize

Incise

Pluralize

Immortalize

Anathematize

Mozart

I hear you clarions note from curtained past
Who broke from shackled crib of yore
To be met as primitive face, madly shouting to gain thy place
Though mocking and lewd the projected forecast
Those private hurts ye bravely bore.

Your skillful inventions surmounted the blame
Though none would tamper nor erase
Or none to quiet troubled breast, though moans dull ear
would soon attest
To the existence of such absorbing strains
Which mirrored fame yet left no trace.

Such anthems did surely call such bawdy head
To being by your shameful birth
Wearing thy souls sullen breath, with anticipation of death
Denying thirst with apologies instead
Of nudging the blindness of earth.

Graceful swan who from ugly duckling did spring
Ascended from such wounds compiled
Your battered horn sang sweetest note, whose lines
appeared though Angels wrote
The rustic notes which surge forth for King and Queen
'Til firma dubs thee reconciled.

-Weldon L. Smith
Eastland, Texas

Beauty Clear and Fair

Beauty clear and fair,
Where the air
Rather like a perfume dwells;
Where the violet and the rose
Their blue veins and blush disclose,
And come to honour nothing else:

Where to live near
And planted there
Is to live, and still live new;
Where to gain a favour is
More than light, perpetual bliss--
Make me live by serving you!

Dear, again back recall
To this light,
A stranger to himself and all!
Both the wonder and the story
Shall be, the glory;
I am your servant, and your thrall.

-John Fletcher
1579-1625 Beauty Clear and Fair

DEADPAN DISASTERS

William Logan reviews Arda Collins's debut poetry collection *It Is Daylight*, winner of the 2008 Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize.

By William Logan
Poetry Media Service

It Is Daylight, by Arda Collins. Yale University Press, \$16.00. Arda Collins comes to her first book fully formed, and it's a little scary. The title may be *It Is Daylight*, but the cover is black, and the title page is black—the Goths have at last taken over Yale University Press. Louise

Glück, who chose the book for the Yale Series of Younger Poets, provides an intimate, bemused introduction that finds a blood-tie from Collins to Berryman and Dickinson, those poets of airless self-dramatization. It might be more accurate to say that she's a grown-up version of Wednesday Addams, the sort of girl happiest raising spiders or trying to electrocute her younger brother.

These poems take place in the happy, happy suburbs, so of course the unnamed speaker is miserable—if the Welcome Wagon were a hearse, she'd be overjoyed.

At last, terror has arrived.

Next door, the house has gone up in flames.

A woman runs from the burning wreck, her face smeared with blood and ashes. She screams that her children are kidnapped.

It's truly exciting, and what more would anyone ask?

The blood and ashes, those manifest signs of mourning and penitence, suggest an attention almost religious. In these affectless monologues, even the disasters are deadpan. (Collins has perhaps learned something from Anne Carson, our master of Keatonesque delivery.) The paranoia and numbness that infuse the poems create a world where the speaker doesn't know how to respond to the terrible things that happen. Normality looks odd to her—"Nearby, a gathering of // wives are seated at a bamboo // table. They wear suits and dainty shoes // and little anguish veils across their faces. // They have expensive, sharp silverware." Such portrayals of the lifelessness of the living (the dead, to her, are not dead—they're just tanning) are delicious. When Collins goes too far, it's a devastatingly funny too far—the ladies above "have handmade White House // and Pentagon salt-and-pepper shakers."

Collins is a Nietzschean fatalist, yet the world is a mystery to her, a cipher that can never quite be decoded. It's peculiar when a book's tone and manner are riveting, but its content banal, though even banalities can have irresistible fascination.

I thought how god loves this place;
the grass was coming in, and the crocuses.

What if someone died, or got fired,
or vomited alone in the middle of the night?

The apartments were wood on the outside,
stained red like the color of a picnic table.

I was so ugly, I wasn't sure I'd even be able to drive.

At first I thought she'd written, "It was so ugly," but her wording is more telling. This flat deposition (for a lawsuit never to be concluded) shows Marianne Moore's love for the minutiae of being. If Collins has none of Moore's élan or her enchanted gift for description, the younger poet sees the world through strange eyes, and in them the old world is made new again. Our younger poets were born a hundred years after the moderns; no wonder the lessons of Pound and Eliot and Moore and Stevens seem antediluvian, they've been so often absorbed and re-absorbed. (When you teach "In a Station of the Metro" now, you have to explain a lot about the Métro of 1914.) Collins, whatever her debts, has learned how to make the ordinary bear the sorrows of hell.

This poet is only dimly aware of her virtues. The book is far too long (though most first books would be stronger at half the length), and the poems become too comfortable with their stark monotone, their theatrical double-spacing, their fiercely prosaic line (Collins has a wicked sense of the demotic—"You go to your piano lesson. You // stink"). More is the enemy of better here. The occasional touch of run-of-the-mill surrealism makes some poems seem to lie on a spur line from the Ashbery factory. Sometimes the poems leave me baffled. (I don't get the point of a long poem about a serial killer or a dreary prose poem about God and microwave ovens.) After ninety pages, even lack of affect becomes affectation.

Still, this creepy, irresistible book is a masterful debut. It's impossible to know what Collins will do next, but more of the same would be tedious rather than unbearable. Louise Glück, comparing her to other poets, has apparently forgotten that the abrupt manner, the goggle-eyed guilelessness, and the bloodless tone (like that of a high-functioning victim of Asperger's syndrome) were long ago patented by Glück herself. If the vampires of *Twilight* wrote poetry, it would be this sort of poetry—they long to fit in, too.

William Logan's most recent book of criticism is *Our Savage Art: Poetry and the Civil Tongue*. His new poetry collection, *Strange Flesh*, appeared last fall. This review first appeared in *The New Criterion*. Distributed by the Poetry Foundation at www.poetryfoundation.org.

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