

PATHOS · HUMOR · HISTORY · CREATIVE NON-FICTION

CALLAHAN COUNTY STAR SPOTLIGHT

WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

Double Vision

by Ruth York

"Patsy," I had said over the phone, "You've got to come to Roswell! We'll go camping in the mountains above Ruidoso. I'm off work next week. . . Oh, yes, you can! My neighbor has a cute little trailer we can use, and you can relax under the pines in camp, and paint to your heart's content. Anywhere you look there's a picture just waiting to be painted. You'll see! And the air's so fresh! You'll love the mountains."

Maybe I'd oversold Patsy. Patricia, really. Pat, I usually called her. She'd seemed a little reluctant. But we were twins. Shouldn't I know what was good for her?

She just didn't like sudden change. Pat, the careful, the neat, the organized. I'd always been the tomboy. She was the intuitive one, with her wide brown eyes and sensitive mouth.

But with Pat off work to recover from corrective eye surgery, I wanted to try the mountain remedy on her. They had certainly been good for me. I'd left Texas six months ago with what I'd thought was a broken heart. I wasn't so sure of that anymore.

"I'll do the cooking and camp stuff, Pat. OK, OK, you can wash the coffee cups and such, but ? No. You won't ruin my vacation. I won't let you! I promise to hike every day. You'll be perfectly safe in camp by yourself for a few hours."

I didn't mention the challenge I'd set myself. I wanted revenge on John Edgar, the smarty-pants who'd edged me out in the last Roswell Art Federation competition. He was good, no doubt about it. Just sometimes seemed to me he might be a little smug about being that good.

Now, across a small campfire, Pat sighed with contentment. Behind her the small trailer gleamed in the firelight.

"Smell those pines. I can see why you love it here, Nat."

Mother's matching name for her second twin was Natasha, but "Nat" seemed to fit me better.

Patsy hugged her knees and sipped steaming cocoa. Compared to Texas hill country, mountain air is chilly.

We talked about painting, of course. Her job at the University of Texas Fine Arts Department. My job as staff artist for a printer in Roswell. She was by far the better painter, but she disliked the hurly-burly of commercial art. In her quiet, tenacious way, she would succeed. Me? I'd always get by.

Next morning I woke early, brewed coffee, and left Pat yawning over scrambled eggs and toast. I had my watercolors and planned to catch the early morning mists in the valleys.

To be continued in next edition ...

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

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

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--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.

As If Nature Talked Back To Me

A Notebook.

By Ange Mlinko
Poetry Media Service

"In the light of the moon, a little egg lay on a leaf." The Very Hungry Caterpillar is a great favorite at the moment; my two-year-old son, Gray, seems to have it memorized. He gets very concerned when he reaches the end of the long list of foods the caterpillar has eaten, for there he is, the little creature, sad-faced in the illustration. "That night he had a stomachache!" "Oh no!" Gray exclaims, bending over very close, wearing a pained look. "He's sad! The caterpillar is sad!"

"Since that first morning when I crawled / into the world, a naked grubby thing, / and found the world unkind." A few months ago, I happened on Stanley Kunitz's "Hornworm: Autumn Lamentation." By coincidence, I had seen my first hornworm around the same time—it was my first foray into growing tomatoes—and the thing, thick as a man's finger and green as goo, almost turned me to stone then and there. It was covered with white—what looked like eggs. I looked it up on the Internet and learned that they were parasitic wasp pupae eating their host alive. The caterpillar was en route to being a splendid sphinx moth when its future was usurped by the hymenoptera, but I wasn't supposed to pity it; gardeners hate these tomatovores. Gardeners rejoice at the wasps. The distinction of Kunitz's poem, of course, lies in its taking the hornworm's side, telling the story of creation's injustice in the hornworm's own voice.

You can't judge a work's value by whether it moves you to tears. When Gray bursts into tears at renditions of Brahms's Lullaby and tells me, "The song is so sad," I know that weak vehicles can stand for a tenor so vague and tremulous it is unknowable. My tears spring unbidden at the third verse of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" as well, the vision of a holistic, animate, feeling world: "All thy works with joy surround thee." I realize that the very word "creation" moves me deeply. It touches the feeling I've always had that making things was what I was for (the root of poetry is simply making), and the vision of the world as made, and continually being made, and en-

dowed with consciousness of its making—all this was an early glimpse into the power that unifies the subterranean ground between making poems and making new human beings.

The flip side is a sort of naked terror I never felt before I had sons to feel terrified for. There's something marvelously true to experience in Laura Kasischke's work—I'm thinking of her book *Lilies Without*—which locates this terror beneath the surface of suburban motherhood: poems such as "May," where a cherry tree planted outside a school in memory of a dead kindergartener "shrieked into blossom." In "New Dress (3)," a suburban mother and a mall security guard eerily end up in the same nightmare, "screaming" during a friendly exchange over a trapped pigeon. While gothic suburbia was captured—practically trademarked!—by David Lynch a couple of decades ago, Kasischke gives it a fuller treatment from the point of view of the mother who stands between her child's innocence and death, negotiating the narrow space between them. It is a tonic to the notorious visions of suburbia as wasteland or graveyard of sexuality, as in the famous Larkin poem "Afternoons," where "Young mothers assemble / At swing and sandpit" and "Their beauty has thickened."

Something is pushing them To the side of their own lives.

While suburbia is—to put it mildly—unlibidinal, there's something trite at this point in Larkin's poem, something that feels too much like a man playing to others' prejudices. There's an appearance of sympathy toward the women, but the melancholia is misplaced. Women with young children still have a lifetime ahead of them.

Ange Mlinko is the author of two books, *Matinees* (Zoland Books, 1999) and *Starred Wire* (Coffee House Press, 2005). The latter was a National Poetry Series winner in 2004 and a finalist for the James Laughlin Award. Excerpted from "As if Nature Talked Back to Me," originally published in the September 2009 issue of Poetry magazine and available at www.poetryfoundation.org. Distributed by the Poetry Foundation.

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American Life in Poetry: Column 247

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

Family photographs, how much they do capture in all their elbow-to-elbow awkwardness. In this poem, Ben Vogt of Nebraska describes a color snapshot of a Christmas dinner, the family, impatient to tuck in, arrayed along the laden table. I especially like the description of the turkey.

Grandpa Vogt's—1959

The food is on the table. Turkey tanned to a cowboy boot luster, potatoes mashed and mounded in a bowl whose lip is lined with blue flowers linked by grey vines faded from washing. Everyone's heads have turned to elongate the table's view—a last supper twisted toward a horizon where the Christmas tree, crowned by a window, sets into itself half inclined. Each belly cries. Each pair of eyes admonished by Aunt Photographer. Look up. You're winned and dined for the older folks who've pined to see your faces, your lives, lightly framed in this moment's flash. Parents are moved, press their children's heads up from the table, hide their hunger by rubbing lightly wrinkled hands atop their laps. They'll hold the image as long as need be, seconds away from grace.

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My Prayer

Hello Lord, This is me again, giving You a call

Just to talk awhile if You have the time I know You are always there

and I know You already know my every care.

You sure are good to me

and I would like to thank You for it.

I don't know what would happen without the love You so freely share.

You know this time of year

well it gets me to thinking

about being so thankful

for Your wonderful and perfect blessings.

I just can't imagine not having You guiding me daily in all that I do and say.

Lord please help me take care of my family they all love You too that's why we pray every night the way we always do.

I love them all Lord You know I do Give me the strength and the wisdom to teach them all about You.

Well Lord this talk was short but You know every word comes straight from my heart So thank You for listening And always being there.

by Joe Herring

Wanted: Writers & Poets

The pen is mightier than the sword

