

## CALLAHAN COUNTY

## STAR SPOTLIGHT

## WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

## American Life In Poetry

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

I've gotten to the age at which I am starting to strain

to hear things, but I am glad to have gotten to that age,

all the same. Here's a fine poem by Miller Williams of

Arkansas that gets inside a person who is losing her hearing.

## Going Deaf

No matter how she tilts her head to hear she sees the irritation in their eyes.

She knows how they can read a small rejection, a little judgment, in every What did you say?

So now she doesn't say What? or Come again?

She lets the syllables settle, hoping they form some sort of shape that she might recognize.

When they don't, she smiles with everyone else, and then whoever was talking turns to her

and says, "Break wooden coffee, don't you know?"

She pulls all she can focus into the face

to know if she ought to nod or shake her head.

In that long space her brain talks to itself.

The person may turn away as an act of mercy,

leaving her there in a room full of understanding with nothing to cover her, neither sound nor silence.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://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)1995 by Miller Williams, whose most recent book of poems is "Time and the Tilting Earth," Louisiana State University Press, 2008. Poem reprinted from "Points of Departure: Poems by Miller Williams," by Miller Williams, University of Illinois Press, 1995, and reprinted by permission of the author and publisher. Introduction copyright (c) 2009 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 Rhyme By:  
Whistle-stop

Chop  
Tiptop  
Mop  
Swap  
Sop  
Slop

## 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](mailto:thebairdspotlight@att.net)**

Submissions sought to:

Star  
P.O. Box 29  
Eastland, TX  
76448

email: [thebairdspotlight@att.net](mailto: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.**

## Retrospect

I often pause to think upon the passing of time, things gone by.

As time may be a fickle friend and as things begin so they must end.

I think about those lean and early years, the gleeful chatter and tiny feet

scampering across the floor.

Those busy years took early flight

and those sounds were heard no more.

And all God's gifts along the way,

Sometimes dismissed in lieu of less important deeds.

The Sabbath morn, the sound of song, and natures grand parade are prime among man's special needs.

From earth's clay we all are born

and soon we shall return.

We must take the time for life's gifts, born of God, no way to earn.

Leo Williams  
Ranger, Texas

Roses Writing  
A Novel

Sometimes one can't think of what to write about, even though the world is out there. One may say there is nothing new to enthuse the short story, novel or poem. Everything has been done. The writer certainly doesn't want to copy the work of others, or even to work the same theme in the same way. Think of how many poems, for instance, have been written about love, about a rose. This is where the artist must analyze the object for a different take on the thing. It is hard to do, but there are aspects of roses still to be written.

There are the thorns, there are the odd colors, there is the green limbs, there are the leaves and the nuisance growth, and of trimming. Perhaps these are not all, a "beauty" to chant, but they are rarely written about. Look at a climbing rose that has been hung and grown

Words You  
Can Use

**Diffluent:** This describes something that flows away or melts without effort, like modern money and value.

**Epizeuxis:** This is the effort to repeat something to emphasize it, to emphasize it, to emphasize it, to emphasize it.....

**Holosteric:** If something is solid through and through, it is described by this adjective.

**Larithmics:** This is the study of the statistics of populations. Probably it could refer to a study of flies in a cow pasture, but there are other large groups to study.

**Ozostomia:** Dentists know this as the condition of a person having breath, but dogs have it too. Unknown to Hawaii because of the ocean breezes.

INTELLIGENCE  
OPERATION

A review of Irish poet Ciaran Carson's captivating and witty new collection.

By Carmine Starnino  
Poetry Media Service

For All We Know, by Ciaran Carson. Wake Forest University Press. \$20.95 cloth; \$12.95 paper.

Without the Troubles, it's hard to say what kind of poems Ciaran Carson would have written. The New Estate (1976) introduced him as talented if typical. But the Troubles did happen. And nine years after his first book, a very different poet emerged: daring, high-spirited, and, above all, mouthy. Written during Belfast's British occupation, The Irish for No (1987) was the acoustic equivalent of an adrenalin rush. Carson's ability to make grittily rich music out of local speech ("Horse Boyle was called Horse Boyle because of his brother Mule:/ Though why Mule was called Mule is anybody's guess") revealed a powerhouse ear paired with a down-at-heel sensibility. Literally so, in fact, since the poems cast him as a flaneur taking in the sights and sounds of his now-militarized childhood haunt ("A no-go area, a ghetto, a demolition zone"). But behind the unceasing patter and punch lines was a spooked mind. The poems were simply trying to calm themselves down.

As critics have pointed out, living under occupation encouraged Carson to change linguistic identities. Carson's next book, Belfast Confetti (1989)--slang for the fistfuls of screws, bolts, and nails hurled by rioters--was a mishmash of genres. First Language (1994) moved more aggressively into polyphonic wordplay and the upside down. Could that be a strangulation weapon in an Agatha Christie type murder mystery?

- Patrick Ready



A good cup of coffee

Photo by Patrick Ready

"general boggledybotch" of ludic storytelling. When the carbonated whimsy of Opera Et Cetera (1996) turned up, it became clear Carson was writing some of the most remarkable political poems around. Outwardly irreverent but shot through with concerns of tribal authenticity ("His 'Belfast' accent wasn't West enough. Is the H/in H-block aitch or haich?") and a constant look-over-your-shoulder unease ("Be paranoid," one poem ends). Carson has today learned to throw his voice in any direction he pleases. And after the careful, one-word-or-two steps of Breaking News (2003)--"red alert/car parked//in a red/zone//about to//disintegrate"--he takes a running leap into one of the best books of his career.

For All We Know begins with a couple at a dinner table celebrating an anniversary ("whether first or last"). But they seem more like spies trying hard not to give themselves away: "For one word never came across just as itself, but you/would put it over as insinuating something else." Right from the jump, courtship marries itself to the theme of dissembling. Each with something to hide, the lovers spend the next seventy poems teasing hidden patterns out of the texts of each other's lives. Conversations become sites of puzzle solving. Putting two and two together, they see clues in every word. Spy craft has, of course, had many devotees among contemporary poets (W.H. Auden, John Hollander). But I can't think of anything quite this smart and subtle. While Carson doesn't lean on the conventions, he's clearly a junkie of pulp atmospherics. The romance plays out against the backdrop of European cities. Twists occur and the story turns out to be more complicated than first assumed. Ends and means become confused. Anonymous men close in.

Carson makes effective sport of these elements in couplets of (mostly) end-stopped lines. The form fits: it aerates the language, lifts it into greater transparency. More voiceover than inner voice, Carson's virtuosity is a potentially simpler version of his earlier pell-mell energies. Content is generalized: lots of details, but free of context. What strikes us, instead, is tone. Odd angles on familiar bits of diction colored with menace ("Then I would try to separate the grain from the chaff of/helicopter noise as it hovered above my house"). The mood--itself unaccountable, like a thought

process without address--fills in for real information, forcing us into a kind of implication manhunt:

Again you are trapped in the smouldering streets. Knots of men

armed with axes, files and chisels guard the intersections.

For all that you avert your gaze you know you know your kind.

The city wards have all been sealed, and there is no escape.

For all that you assumed a sevenfold identity

the mark of your people's people blazes on your forehead.

You will be questioned by the black stream of the shibboleth,

your story picked like a cheap lock until it comes unstuck.

This, from "Birthright," shows that Carson's couplets are also handy for visually suggesting the loose ends that will forever go untied. We get news--more like strobe glimpses--of a war: bombblasts, gunfire. But unabsorbed into any larger political storyline, the sequence becomes a self-contained world that keeps shrinking. Circling back to the same events, poems swim in a kind of narrative stasis, a Beckett-like sense of anti-adventure. And yet anxiety mounts. The book, structurally speaking, is two-faced: divided sections, with matching set of noirish titles ("Treaty," "The Assigination," "Collaboration," etc.) reinforce the theme of double lives. Images not only repeat (helicopters, quilts, fountain pens, watches, foreign perfumes) but, like a fugue, new emotional information seems folded into each new repetition. The book, you might even say, is its own nonce form: the abba of a mysterious, and mysteriously moving, chiasmic experiment. What happens, happens again, and the mesmerizing roteness pushes the poems halfway to allegory, and, at times, all the way to brilliant. For All We Know is an intelligence operation in the truest sense.

Carmine Starnino's newest book of poems is *This Way Out*, from Gaspereau Press. This article originally appeared in *Poetry* magazine. Distributed by the Poetry Foundation at [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

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