

A COMMON WEALTH OF POETRY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE POETRY SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

MARCH 2014



A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hopefully, by the time you read this, the weather forecast will predict some sunny, warmer weather headed your way. For those who live outside Virginia, I hope you get rain if you are in need of it. Either way, spring is on the way. To round out the winter quarter, we have lots of items of interest to you.

First of all, in this newsletter, you will get the opportunity to vote for Poet Laureate candidates that the Poetry Society of Virginia has the privilege of submitting to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia to select our next Poet Laureate. The nominating committee worked very hard to select the best candidates, all worthy to serve in that role, from a truly abundant number of fine poets who live in Virginia.

Next please note that Poetry Society of Virginia is helping to support the Norfolk State University Carroll Festival to be held March 25–27 at the university.

On March 27, poet Gregory Orr is the featured reader for the Ellen Anderson Reading that will take place at George Mason University in Fairfax. The University is promoting this reading for us, and I will report on how it goes.

Additionally, your Executive Committee that handles the governance of the Poetry Society of Virginia is beginning to review how all of our activities, both current and future, will fit together to move the Society forward. It's *only* nine years until the 100th Anniversary of the Poetry Society of Virginia. Tentatively we will call it the **PSV 2023 Vision Committee**. That said, there will be many opportunities for you to participate in new and current initiatives. We're in the very early stages of a website redesign, and we're thinking about how we can better serve students who wish to write poetry. We will post more and more poetry on the website for you to read there. But it will take time.

Lastly, if you responded to the survey, I'm reviewing those results, and we'll hand those suggestions over to the Vision Committee.

Guy Terrell

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Literary Review of Ann Shalaski's *Without Pretense*

by Tom Morris, former PSV President

I recently received a request from a fine poet and friend to comment on her latest book of poetry. I confess to feeling a bit overwhelmed in the face of many current obligations and have taken all too long to get it done. However, now that I have repeatedly read the collection, "Without Pretense" I can give it the consideration that such a powerful endeavor deserves. I appreciate now that Ann has indeed given me (and you) a great gift that I will enjoy reading and sharing many times over.

In this collection, on a very personal journey, Ann carries us along a clearly rendered, carefully observed path with warmth and humor, memory and regret, joy and sadness, bits of irony and "sock you in the eye" reality. This book is just good fun, and so much has you nodding to yourself, "Yeah, I know exactly what you mean!" In fact, much of Ann's poetry has you wishing that when you once caught that very same thought, that you had carved it into a poem with such simple elegance and such vivid passion.

This work is thoughtfully separated into three sections. Starting with "The Way It Begins," Ann takes us on a Grand Tour, a suite of memories carried forward from her youth overlaid with her soft, firm hold on family and emotion. Ann opens with concise, brightly drawn settings that seem to effortlessly find the beauty of truth and the truth of memory. She delivers verbal vignettes infused with focus, not missing a step as we enter into her private life, her family secrets, the passing of time and the moments of realization that drew her out of childhood. We spin the bottle and skinny dip in the pond, work with her brother, pass on with her father, and age with her mother. We watch as time carries along out front calling on her to keep step. We see how the inevitable closes in on her innocence. We get to know some of where Ann has been.

Moving into a maturity of approach and the "wham" of adult reflection, Ann leads us into "Just a Phase," the second section of her work. She has us finding out with her the joys and jollies, the juice and jerks, the jostles and the journey that life really has for us. She shares her regrets and realizations and what follows anticipation as time intrudes on wishes. Here, Ann gives us imagery that is sometimes sweet but distinctly sober. These intimately self-reflective images are no longer distracted by youth. Ann now grabs these bits of remembered reality and lays them out to dry on the overheated hood of Barbie's near perfect blue Buick. It just doesn't matter what Ken thinks anymore.

Where we really meet Ann, our tour guide, is in section three where she has us join her to "Reset The Compass." Here Ann shares a fullness of time, of life, of figure, and of her soul. Here, we encounter her wonderful realization of what we are all becoming if we are ready to grasp the actual when we are done with the self-deception. Eventually we all will fall from our horse; what Ann has done is show us that she got right back on. Ann finishes insisting that she now has every intent to let life's pony really run. My bet is that she'll spur it on to create a cloud of "catch me if you can" dust in the home stretch. This is a wonderful read and a hell of a ride. Hop on!

Honors & Publication News

Claudia Gary is a 2014 finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award; her sonnet will be published in *Measure* later this year.

The **Williamsburg Poetry Guild** has published an anthology of member's works entitled *Gilded Hours*. It is offered for sale at major booksellers - ISBN 978-0-7414-9604-1 or directly from the publisher at www.buybooksontheweb.com.

Eric Forsbergh's first book of poems, *Imagine Morning: Poems of Companionship & Solitude* is now available at www.RicherResourcesPublications.com.

Vote on Virginia Poet Laureate Nominees

Every two years, the Poetry Society of Virginia has the privilege of submitting three Poet Laureate nominees to the Governor from which he will select one to serve as Poet Laureate. Current Virginia Poet Laureate Sofia Starnes presented the nominees for Virginia's new Poet Laureate to the PSV Executive Committee on February 15. Please vote for ONLY three and you may write in nominees, if you wish. Please return your ballot by March 31 to virginiapoets@cox.net or by postal mail by March 25 to: The Poetry Society of Virginia, PO Box 6706, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0706. Here is the list of nominees:

Henry Hart, a recipient of Virginia's Carole Weinstein Poetry Prize, is Mildred and J.B. Hickman Professor of Humanities at William and Mary. He has published four poetry books, as well as scholarly books on Robert Lowell, Seamus Heaney, and Geoffrey Hill. His biography of James Dickey was runner-up for a Southern Book Critics' Circle Award. He is editor of an anthology of American Literature (OUP, 2015) and is working on two biographies *The Life of Robert Frost* and *Seamus Heaney: A Gifted Life*. You may learn more about Henry Hart on the following websites:

http://www.wm.edu/as/english/facultystaff/hart_h.php

<http://www.weinsteinpoetryprize.com/recipients.html#hart>

http://www.blackbird.vcu.edu/v1n2/poetry/hart_h/

Jim Peterson has lived in Lynchburg for the past sixteen years with his equestrian/musician wife Harriet and has been Coordinator of Creative Writing and Writer in Residence at Randolph College. Peterson's poems are collected in four full-length books and three chapbooks and have appeared in eighty journals and anthologies around the country. They have won an Academy of American Poets Award, the Benjamin Saltman Award, and a Poetry Fellowship from the Virginia Arts Commission. You may learn more about Jim Peterson on the following websites:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse/152/6#!/20601751>

http://www.cavewallpress.com/poem9_1.htm

http://www.pw.org/content/jim_peterson_2

Tim Seibles is professor of English at Old Dominion University and also teaches at the Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing. His poems have been published widely in literary journals and anthologies, and he is the author of five poetry collections, including *Fast Animal* (Etruscan Press, 2012), which was nominated for a National Book Award. Among his other recognitions are an Open Voice Award and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. You may learn more about Tim Seibles on the following websites:

<http://www.odu.edu/directory/people/t/tseibles>

http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2012_p_seibles.html#.Uweqh_IdXjY

http://www.odu.edu/news/2012/10/odu_s_tim_seibles_no

Ron Smith, a Virginian since 1967 and Writer-in-Residence at St. Christopher's School, is the author of three books of poetry, including *Its Ghostly Workshop* (LSU Press). His work appears widely in international journals and anthologies. He received the Guy Owen Award, Theodore Roethke Prize, and Virginia's Carole Weinstein Prize, among other recognitions. He has served as vice president for The Edgar Allan Poe Museum Board of Trustees, a past president of the Poetry Society of Virginia, and is a board member for James River Writers. You may learn more about Ron Smith on the following websites:

<http://www.stchristophers.com/arts/writerinresidence>

http://www.blackbird.vcu.edu/v11n2/poetry/smith_r/tomb_page.shtml

<http://poems.com/poem.php?date=15792>

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Poetry by Davi Walders

Things

by Davi Walders

*"If you look for me in this street
you'll find me with my violin
prepared to break into song,
prepared to die."*

—from "For Everyone," Pablo Neruda

You forget the dusty beach towns—Algarrobo and El Quisco, their graffiti and crowds when you turn off toward Isla Negra,

Neruda's house, and the Pacific. Cypress and monkey pines cling to the cliffs. Black volcanic rock juts from the sea below

where seaweed whirls in wild blue water. February summer. A giant blue-eyed fish keeps watch on the roof. An ancient

red train engine guards the walk's pink profusion of flowers. A caretaker's house bought in 1939 with earnings from books

published since his teens, he added room after room to hold his collections. Ignoring his terror of water, he designed

the house to look like a ship. 'I traveled building joy,' he carved on the lintel of the weathered wood under the red tin-roof.

You try to take it all in. Seashell floor in foyer, tree trunks sunk into concrete in dining room, shelves on every wall holding

rainbows of colored glass: three hundred old bottles from France; hundreds of green, blue, and red glass piano leg protectors;

dishes from Turkey, Russia, Sweden. Ships in bottles, masks from everywhere, closets of colorful hats for costume parties.

The heavy wood dining table still set for nine waits for Neruda to take the biggest chair. 'I am the captain of dry land,'

he often said, looking out from the telescope in his bedroom, collecting hundreds of painted wood ships' frontispieces.

Six thousand shells he gave to a museum, yet another spiky, spiny, pearly thousand reside here. In his study, where he wrote only

in green ink ('the color of hope') always washing his hands before and after writing, are cases of butterflies and big, ugly

Chilean beetles, longer than a finger, his favorite collectable. He wrote surrounded by photographs: Baudelaire to the right

on his carved desk; Whitman, 'his poetic father;' on the left; Lorca, whom he loved and grieved in Spain on the wall above.

And meerschaum pipes, hundreds of their carved white heads resting in cases. Murals of stone and rock on the way to

the horse room, his 'happiest horse' sculpture, larger than life, acquired after forty-five years of negotiation, inviting his friends

to his horse party, asking them to bring gifts for the horse when the horse's parlor and men's bathroom with pasted with

dirty postcards were finished. And the Kovache room ('cozy' in the native Mapuche language) filled with wooden animals.

'A house of toys,' he said, 'to play with from morning to night.' Gifts from people he helped: embroidery he bought, then sold

on his travels to aid local townswomen, letters from thousands of Spanish Civil War refugees he paid for and helped re-settle

in Chile. You catch your breath outside sitting on *Tiburón*, the red and white wood fishing boat he built for cocktail parties

overlooking the Pacific. Things, so many things, but his passions are clearer now—odes to his socks, an ear of corn, a chestnut

on the ground, a lemon, salt, a tuna on ice. So many common things still singing above the sea to a very uncommon man.



Photo by Joan Mazza

Poet Laureate Nominees continued from page 3

David Wojahn teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University and is the author of eight collections of poetry. *Interrogation Palace*, his new and selected poems, was a named finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. *World Tree*, his most recent volume, won the 2012 Academy of American Poets' Lenore Marshall Prize, as well as the Library of Virginia Award in Poetry. Among his numerous other awards and honors are fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. You may learn more about David Wojahn on the following websites:

www.davidwojahn.net

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wojahn

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/872>

Poetry Society Elections Will Be Held in May

Poetry Society of Virginia will hold its Annual Meeting and Election in May. At that time, we will elect President, Treasurer, and five Regional Vice-Presidents for one-year terms. These are the only elected offices, all others are appointed. Eric Forsbergh is chairing the PSV Nominating Committee. If you would like to be considered for any of these offices, please submit your name to Eric with a short statement or bio for him to share with his committee. Please send that to forsber@verizon.net by March 31. If you wish to mail it instead, contact your Regional Vice President who can provide Eric's mailing address. Nominations can also be made from the floor.

Poetry by Eric Forsbergh & R. L. O'Kelly

A Widower

by Eric Forsbergh

It is the clean heat, the powdery sand,
the hooked spine of a white shell.

This is absolute.

There is the stone blue sky
and the blade of a wave.

There is no flesh on this arrangement.

He walks every day.

In the distance,

He is a thin whip
of bent beach grass.

There is no more coming to bed.

Only going to bed.

There is no more terse reply

or its counterpart:

a rain of goodbye kisses

before walking from the station

out to the wet car.

Four Samurai

By R.L. O'Kelly

Let reason go out
before the mouth
the hands and the feet

A cat hates a squirrel
not because he is made differently
but because of his ideas

Opposites attract
like dogs to cats
but two spaniels
will have understanding

A hero's life is lived
as a gift
from the one to the many

Twelfth Annual Celebration of Poetry

The Twelfth Annual Celebration of Poetry will be held on Saturday, April 12, 2014 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Salem Church Library in Meeting Room A, 2601 Salem Church Road, Fredericksburg VA 22407. Sponsored by Riverside Writers, the Celebration of Poetry originated as the March (Northern Virginia) Meeting of the Poetry Society of Virginia. Over the years, it has been attended by PSV members from across the state. The scheduled events include:

- 9:30-10:00 Registration (Riverside Writers Members may sell their books.)
- 10:00-10:30 Open Mic Poetry Reading
- 10:30-10:45 Discussion of Poetry Slams and Instructions for the Slam
- 10:45-12:00 Poetry Slam (Bring two poems.)
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch Break
- 1:00-1:20 Riverside Writers, Jim Gaines, President
- 1:20-2:30 Open Mic Poetry Reading
- 2:30-4:00 Featured Poet Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, The Dramatic Monologue and Persona Poem**

In this workshop, participants will let go of the "I"-centeredness of much of today's poetry scene and explore the highly imaginative dramatic monologue and the persona poem to capture the voices of literary, historical, or imagined figures. Writing exercises will center on perfecting images, diction, dialect, and typographical arrangements to produce memorable poems that bring to life an array of speakers. This interactive session is tailor-made for anyone with a willingness to explore the unique qualities of written language that help define another person's voice. Follow-up exercises and an annotated bibliography will be provided.

Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda served as Poet Laureate of Virginia from 2006 to 2008. She holds a B.A. from the University of Mary Washington and a M.Ed., M.A. and a Ph.D. from George Mason University. In 2007 both universities gave her the Alumna of the Year Award. She has published six books of poetry and co-edited two anthologies, most recently *Four Virginia Poets Laureate* (The Poetry Society of Virginia, 2006). Her poems have been nominated for six Pushcart Prizes and have appeared in numerous magazines. Her awards include five grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. An accomplished visual artist, she teaches art-inspired poetry workshops for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

For more information, contact Larry Turner, 4208 Stonehaven Way, Fredericksburg, VA 22408, 540-710-2518, Thanz3000@aol.com

Driving Directions: The library is about a five-minute drive from Exit 130B on I-95. Go West on Plank Road (Virginia Route 3) about 1.7 miles, and turn left on Salem Church Road. Drive South about 0.8 miles and arrive at the library on your left. The library is a two-story building that looks like a one-story building.

Parking is available in the library parking lot.

Northern Region News

On Saturday, March 15, at 10:30 a.m., the Potomac Poetry Series will continue at the Martha Washington Library in Alexandria. This time we are lucky to have two exciting poets as our featured readers:

CLAUDIA GARY, a 2014 finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award and a 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize, writes, edits, sings, and composes (tonally) near Washington, D.C. She is author of *Humor Me* (David Robert Books, 2006), along with several chapbooks including *Bikini Buyer's Remorse* (2013) and *Schadenfreud(e)* (2004). Her poems appear in the anthologies *Forgetting Home* (Barefoot Muse Press, 2013) and *Villanelles* (Everyman Press, 2012), as well as journals published in the USA, UK, Europe, and Canada.

MILES DAVID MOORE, a Washington reporter for Crain Communications, Inc. He is founder and host of the IOTA Poetry Reading Series in Arlington, Va., and film critic for the online arts magazine *Scene4*. From 2002 to 2009, he was a member of the Board of Directors of The Word Works, and he also served as administrator of its Washington Prize from 1995 to 2008. His books are *The Bears of Paris* (Word Works, 1995); *Buddha Isn't Laughing*

(Argonne House Press, 1999); and *Rollercoaster* (Word Works, 2004).

Of course the usual open mic will be a feature of this reading, so bring your stuff.

The Bards of Loudoun County, a group of PSV members, will be doing several readings at various Loudoun County libraries in April:

Tuesday, April 1 at 7 p.m. at the Rust Library in Leesburg

Tuesday, April 15 at 7 p.m. at the Cascades Library in Sterling

Thursday, April 24 at 7 p.m. at the Ashburn Library in Ashburn

Members of the Loudoun Bards are Laura Bobrow, Claudia Gary, Ruth Holzer, May Kipps, and Conrad Geller.

Conrad Geller

Vice President, Northern Region

Ellen Anderson Reading Slated for March 27 in Fairfax

The annual Ellen Anderson Reading will take place on Thursday, March 27 at 7:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of Mason Hall on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University. The featured poet is nationally known **Gregory Orr**, who teaches at the University of Virginia. The PSV is working closely with the university to assure a wider audience for such an exceptional poet. Please mark your calendars and let other poet friends in Northern Virginia know about it. We are planning to tape Orr's reading and will put excerpts on the PSV website this summer. If you need additional information or directions, please contact Conrad Geller, cgeller@post.harvard.edu.

A Call for Submissions

The Piedmont Virginian quarterly magazine seeks submissions of poems that reflect the region's landscape, people, or other special qualities. Poems should be accessible to a general readership. Seasonal themes of spring or summer are strongly encouraged. Please send 1-3 poems by March 1 (for Spring issue) or May 1 (for Summer) pasted into an email or as a Word attachment to Robert Brickhouse at rbrickhouse@gmail.com



Photo by Joan Mazza

T H E P O E T R Y S O C I E T Y O F V I R G I N I A

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