



friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD

A Journal & Newsletter For Poets & Poetry
Volume 22, Issue 2 Spring-Winter 2018-19

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHAIR: DENNIS SCHMIDLING

TIM BARNES

PATRICIA CARVER

MARTHA GATCHELL

JOAN MAIERS

SUSAN MCKEE REESE

JIM SCHEPPKE

HELEN SCHMIDLING

ARMIN TOLENTINO

NATIONAL ADVISORS

Marvin Bell

Robert Bly

Li-Young Lee

Fred Marchant*

Paul Merchant

Paulann Petersen

Chris Merrill

W. S. Merwin

Naomi Shihab Nye

Gary Snyder

Leslie Ullman*

*New National Advisors

The Eco-poetics of Home: William Stafford and Kansas

By Ben Rawlins

The most prominent cultural artifact dealing with Kansas, *The Wizard of Oz*, envisions the state as a dusty, black and white wasteland, contrasting starkly with the bright, beguiling land of Oz. As this cinematic depiction reveals, the American cultural imagination thinks little of the Kansas landscape. The narrative surrounding Kansas imagines it as a “remote” place—flat, plain, and treeless. Many describe it as a fly-over state or complain about the long stretch Kansas of highway on the way to the Rocky Mountains. Its features are not ones we normally associate with the beauty of the natural world. Instead of mountains, hills, or tall trees, Kansas boasts miles of farmland that goes underappreciated.

Compare this common attitude toward Kansas to William Stafford’s witness as he recalls an experience from childhood. Rather than a wasteland, Stafford pictures the Kansas landscape as startlingly alive:

Before dawn we drove west to the Arkansas River—“The Big River,” my father called it. Everything excited me, the dark, the cool air, the steady car. And the words that came: north of us was Great Bend, and around there Cheyenne Bottoms. One west was the salt marsh. Teal would be coming in, canvasbacks, buffleheads. In the early dark we crept through tall weeds, past mysterious trees. At first light long scarfs of ducks came in talking to each other as they dropped. The seething cattails and grasses whispered and gushed in the shadows. And the river was there, going on westward, past islands, along groves, into the wilderness, an endless world for exploring. I stop now and worship those times. (*You Must Revise Your Life* 5)

In this passage, Stafford weaves together memory, place, and language in an effort to capture a childhood encounter with the landscape of Kansas.

As Stafford recalls it, the experience near the Arkansas River is an aesthetic, sensory, and physical episode perhaps counterintuitive to the popular imagination but sustained by the credibility of his vivid language celebrating the emotive resonances of Kansas. Stafford employs poetic devices like personification to describe the episode—the ducks chatter, cattails and grasses whisper. Not only do the natural surroundings create an effect on him, the names he hears during the drive impress themselves on his memory. For Stafford,



these linguistic and aesthetic impressions do not lessen the meaningful encounter with the Kansas landscape. Rather, this poetic perspective

deepens Stafford’s appreciation for the natural world, specifically the land of his birthplace.

I begin with Stafford’s prose passage because this striking blend of memory, natural landscape, and evocative language reflects much of Stafford’s poetic output. Because his poetry combines these elements, Stafford’s work could be described as ecopoetry, poetry concerned with the relationship between humans and the natural world. Ecopoetry also contains an ethical dimension, revealing concern for how humans can relate meaningfully to the nonhuman realm. As John Shoptaw writes in *Poetry* magazine, an ecopoem “needs to be environmental and it needs to be environmentalist” (395). While Stafford’s work concerns itself with the natural world as a whole, his poetry pays special attention to specific locales. The Pacific Northwest is one landscape that informs his ecopoetry, but Kansas, Stafford’s childhood homeland, also appears as a setting and subject in much of his poetry about the natural world. I will focus on Stafford’s Kansas poems, particularly poems that attend to its natural setting and landscape. Through his use of poetic devices and figurative language, Stafford calls attention to the vitality and vibrancy of the state of Kansas, which moves the reader to see this place as worthy of notice. Stafford also brings his speakers and readers to Kansas by employing direct address. In placing the reader in Kansas through language, Stafford offers an encounter with the land and his

(cont. on p. 2)

(cont. from p. 1)

experiences there. This dual pursuit in his Kansas poems shows how Stafford's poetics are not only earthbound but also homebound as Stafford consciously creates an abiding connection to his birthplace.

Early in the development of ecocriticism, scholars repudiated the overemphasis on language in other literary theories such as



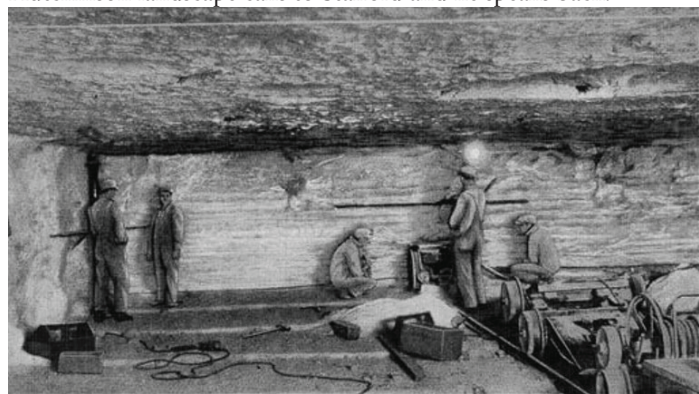
THE CONARD-HARMON COLLECTION

poststructuralism. As fair as these critiques were, this move away from a poststructuralist attention to textuality to an awareness of physical reality in ecocriticism created a divide between language and nature. By privileging ecological concerns and moving their critical lens beyond human-centric textuality, ecocritics also established a divide between ethics and aesthetics. However, ecocritics have begun a rapprochement of ethics and aesthetics in the last decade. In *Ecopoetics*, Scott Knickerbocker argues that while ecocriticism's motive to direct our attention to the phenomenal world is compelling, this pursuit does not have to ignore aesthetics. Rather, Knickerbocker contends that artifice, especially poetic language, can actually bring humans to a more meaningful, deeper relationship to the natural world. Knickerbocker employs the term "sensuous poesis" to describe the techniques poets use to offer readers an encounter with nature on a sensory level. Poetic devices such as personification, apostrophe, and onomatopoeia do not "merely project the human onto the nonhuman" (5). Rather, this kind of figurative language helps us "experience the world as more than inert, unresponsive matter" (6). Consequently, as Knickerbocker claims, "figurative language and thinking in general constitute our species' way of experiencing [...] the invisible layer of reality linking the perceiver and the perceived, the sentient and the sensible" (6). Through this aesthetic and sensory experience, poets influence readers' posture toward the natural world. Aesthetics leads to an ethical ecological stance.

Although Stafford's poetry employs a plainspoken, direct approach, his use of figurative language in his Kansas ecopoetry illuminates the movement and energy of the nonhuman domain. Specifically, these poetic devices allow Stafford to show how Kansas—though unadorned and undervalued—remains as alive as any other part of the natural world. Personification is one of Stafford's most employed poetic devices. "At the Breaks Near the River" pictures the "gesture of the flattened grass, wild / on the Cimarron hills" after a storm from New Mexico raids a campsite (27). Stafford attributes human movements to different parts of the natural world—the grass gestures, the storm raids. This personification is not mere poetic whimsy but expresses

more fully the sensory experience of standing in the Cimarron hills during an autumn storm. Moreover, the personification reveals the vitality of the landscape. The storm functions as an animating presence in the western Kansas locale, making the grasses gesture with wildness. This leads the speaker's father to say, "Look—the whole world is alive, / waving together toward history" (27). In a similar way, Stafford employs personification in "Inland Murmur" to show the energy inherent in the Kansas landscape. While the opening stanza of the poem stays in a merely descriptive register, each successive stanza gains a linguistic energy. "Inland Murmur" culminates in the speaker's recognition that he knows the "pigeon feel / and the rain touch as the wind blew" across that Kansas swath of land (16). The direct description of the early stanzas build up to the personification in the third stanza. This movement toward a more energized linguistic mode shows how the earth becomes more animated the longer one looks at it. As the language grows more figurative, the vitality of the land becomes more present in the speaker's vision.

Beyond his use of personification, the poetic device of apostrophe also appears in Stafford's Kansas ecopoetry. In "Prairie Town," Stafford visualizes his hometown, Hutchinson, Kansas by evoking specific physical attributes of the small city. There is a "river under First and Main," "salt mines" that honeycomb below the city's surface. The speaker recalls "sandhills" and "prairie dogs" with little folded paws (62). These images provide a sense of the characteristics of this town, yet this description perhaps pictures the place as inert. However, Stafford addresses this town as "you." This use of apostrophe shows that Stafford does not just see this Kansas town as a list of physical attributes. Rather, the "north prairie" functions as an interlocutor for Stafford, a place that remains alive in his mind's eye. By making this prairie a conversation partner, Stafford draws out the dynamic quality in the landscape of home. Even though the natural world holds an inherent energy, the memories that saturate a home town makes the place even more alive. In "Prairie Town," the Hutchinson landscape calls to Stafford and he speaks back.



Carey Salt Mine, Hutchinson, Kansas

Though I have only highlighted a few examples of Stafford's use of figurative language, these poems reveal how Stafford's poetic perspective toward the natural world reveals the Kansas landscape as vibrant and alive. Nature is not something that humans act upon in his ecopoetry. Rather, the nonhuman world moves with an active vitality that humans can witness and perhaps participate in. The particular setting of these poems is also important for Stafford's poetic project, for Kansas remained an essential location for his poetry. By

THE CONARD-HARMON COLLECTION

employing personification and apostrophe in these Kansas poems, Stafford reveals the energy of a landscape that is usually thought of as inactive and plain. These poems show the Kansas landscape as worthy of poetic attention, which can lead readers to revise their previous understanding of the state's physical characteristics.

Stafford's poetry helps to show the vitality inherent in the Kansas landscape, but his belief in language extends beyond the potential for poetry to reveal the vibrancy of place. In his essay "Some Arguments Against Good Diction," Stafford claims that "language offers a continuous encounter with our own laminated, enriched experiences; and sometimes these encounters lead to further satisfactions derived from the cumulative influences in language as it spins out. That kind

of language experience we grope for and identity with various tags. One of them is just a word—poetry" (60). Stafford holds that language does not separate individuals

from actual experience but can offer "a continuous encounter." This understanding of language, I contend, has implications for Stafford's ecopoetry and his Kansas poems. As a native Kansan, Stafford retains memories in the land of his birth saturated with experiences and recollections. Through his poetry, Stafford reveals the vitality of his home state, and he also gains a "continuous encounter" with his "laminated, enriched experiences" in Kansas. More than his own individual encounter with language, Stafford also offers his readers an experience with his memories and his homeland. His poetic language "spins out" to bring his readers to Kansas, which furnishes "further satisfactions" for himself and for his readers.

Stafford places his readers in his memory and in the Kansas landscape through the use of the second person direct address, a common feature in Stafford's poetry. For instance, in "North of Liberal," Stafford brings readers to a specific location in Kansas, and in the poem, employs the direct address to carry us into his memory. First, the title names a particular place, placing the reader's imagination in this southwestern Kansas town. Then, Stafford opens the poem with a "You," making the reader a participant in the poem's events. It is our mouth that opens to yell, "wait!" then falters. It is we standing north of Liberal. After establishing the direct address, Stafford evokes the sensory experience of the memory: "far away, / the open, the winter, and / the four of you crunching snow / along the Cimarron" (17). We are now there in the snow. Stafford's description allows us to witness the white expanse, and the onomatopoeic word "crunch" captures the sound of snow boots to our ears. The speaker guides the reader's eye to a path, one that leads "miles and miles into brown country / so far that to go there again / makes a new turn" (17). Returning to this place through Stafford's memory, we discern the path—it is at once old and new. As the poem tells us, this return "almost makes your life another person's" (17). We have entered into the realm of Stafford's memory, and he has become us, we him. The final stanza collapses time and space even further:

You glance around. The world
has turned into now:
at a bluff on the north bank
forty years ago someone
did not come to meet you. (17)

Stafford's use of the direct address makes us the subject of the poem, places us in the snowy Kansas landscape, and now brings time together—it is simultaneously "now" and "forty years ago." Through language—which Stafford believes can offer a continuous encounter with enriched experiences—Stafford allows readers to experience his memory, which brings us to a specific place in Kansas. In this use of direct address, something that can feel artificial in the work of a less skilled poet, Stafford offers an encounter with memory and place. This poetic work renews his memory, but also makes the reader bound to the Kansas landscape of his home.

Poetry is language at its most intense, and this poem as well as Stafford's other Kansas ecopoetry feels like more than just an imaginative encounter with place. Stafford's use of figurative language as well as the direct address shows how Stafford employs language to

place readers into the landscape of Kansas in a sensory, physical manner. Stafford's Kansas poems function as an intermediate space between the actual land of Kansas and the imaginative space of the reader. The poems become a kind of place, a space that a reader enters to experience the natural world of Kansas. Through these poems, Stafford weaves word to world, binding his language and poetics to the earth. In this way, Stafford's poetics are not only earthbound, but tied to the landscape of his home state. His poetics are homebound. Although Stafford left Kansas as a young man, his Kansas poems reveal that he stayed bound to the place through language.

Like Stafford, I was born in Hutchinson, Kansas—and both of us left that land of wind and sky, of prairie grass and flowing creeks. But in Stafford's poems, I still encounter my birthplace. I continue to gain a physical experience of the Kansas landscape. Although language can be fleeting and unreliable, as Stafford recognizes, the intense encounter of language through poetry can allow those of us who have left Kansas to continually encounter our homeland. It can also reinvigorate the love for home, especially after familiarity produces tired eyes. Just as Stafford's Kansas ecopoetry becomes earthbound and homebound, we too can bind ourselves to home through language, even if we are far away, even if we have left.

Works Cited

- Knickerbocker, Scott. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst & Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.
- Low, Denise, ed. *Kansas Poems of William Stafford: Poems, Essays & Interviews*. 2nd ed. Topeka, KA: Woodley Memorial Press, 2010.
- Shoptaw, John. "Why Ecopoetry?" *Poetry* 207.4 (2016): 395-408.
- Stafford, William. *Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014.
- . "Some Arguments Against Good Diction." *Writing the Australian Crawl: Views on the Writer's Vocation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1978.
- . *You Must Revise Your Life*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1986.

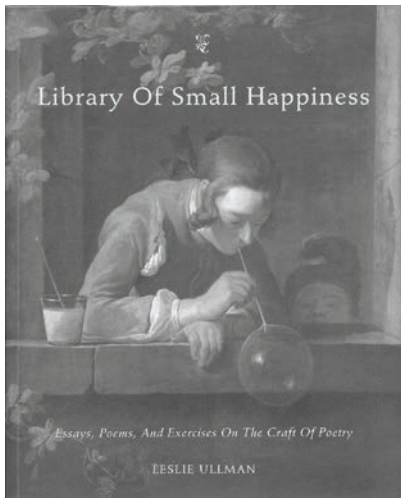
Sightings I: Positionings

By Tim Barnes

Library of Small Happiness: Essays, Poems, and Exercises on the Craft of Poetry. By Leslie Ullman. Denver, CO: Three: A Taos Press, 2017.
A History of American Poetry. By Richard Gray. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

The question of William Stafford's position in American literature is an interesting one, open to various answers, none of them wrong, though some certainly dismissive, incomplete, often promulgated by scholars with a lack of understanding of the literature of the West and of the depth and complexity of Stafford's work. *Library of Small Happiness* does not suffer from these maladies. Written by poet, scholar, and teacher, Leslie Ullman (see p.20), this is a book about poetry and about generating poetry, divided into two parts, essays and exercises. *A History of American Poetry* surveys the course of poetry in this country from colonial times, Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*, to the current century and Nikki Moustaki's "How to Write a Poem After September 11th," and all in less than five hundred pages. The bookend poems make it seem as if nothing happened but indeed it did and Stafford has a place.

Consideration of Stafford's work and thought appear only in the first and longer section of *Library of Small Happiness*, the essays, many of which first appeared in *The Writer's Chronicle*. Two of them, "A Spiral Walk Through the Golden Mean" and "Press Send:



Risk, Intuition, and the Transparent Poem," have been discussed in previous issues of this publication, 46.2 and 48.4, respectively. The first essay brings a Stafford poem into an exploration of the relationship of the sonnet to the golden mean and the Nautilus shell. The second links Stafford and the New York School poets, the Black Mountain school, and the abstract impressionist painters. Connecting Stafford to

streams of thought, literature, and culture continues in the other essays in *Library of Small Happiness*, which is, as well, a handsomely designed book, valuing its contents and its substance.

Of the seven essays in the first section, six use Stafford's work in one way or another. The most substantial discussion occurs in "The 'Personal' Poem as Sacred Space." Here she groups Stafford with an array of wonderful poets, Linda Pastan, Jack Gilbert, and Jane Kenyon, to redefine and elevate what one might have called the confessional poem. Of the confessional poets (think Berryman, Sexton, Plath, Ginsburg, Olds, and Robert Lowell of *Life Studies*), she writes, "the landscape of self [they] illuminated with liberating candor is no longer a frontier at all in a culture that since has come to embrace psychotherapy, recovery groups, talk shows, and its

literature, the memoir as a literary genre."

"To anyone with a taste for the 'personal' in poems," Ullman tells us, Pastan, Gilbert, Kenyon, and Stafford provide models who offer along with glimpses into their lives and inner landscapes, productive restraint and selectivity in their handling of detail and also a less definable quality, insight distilled... to such a degree that it defies labels and the waxing and waning of controversy.

"Their poems," she continues, "soar beyond the singular life but remain connected to it, like kites in a good wind." Ullman follows this lovely analogy with another that I think readers and friends of Stafford's work will find particularly apt,

Their poems seem to arise from the self as sanctuary so purely that they replicate the experience of being in sanctuary; in this respect their poems bind poet, poem, and reader in a moment as intimate and transcendental as the act of prayer.

These poets rise above, Ullman observes, the autobiographical transcription of the wounded, embattled self to render "intensely personal insight" through "an unspoken, redeeming humility, a willingness to simply bear witness...." Shrugging the "need to clarify or conclude...the self reverberates...as a conduit rather than a locale." Humility, witness, wavering, these are distinctive features of Stafford's poetry, as is, as Ullman suggests, continuing to describe qualities these four poets share, "a sense of stillness from which emerges heightened powers of insight and observation, a grounding in the rhythms and laws of nature." These poets share a calm that is centered in a deep identification with naturalness and the interweaving of selves of all sorts.

Pastan, Gilbert, Kenyon, and Stafford do not make a school of poetry, maybe more like a persuasion, a group sharing a similar sense of things. Ullman compares Pastan's poetry to Emily Dickinson's, one of Stafford's favorite poets, calling her another "visionary recluse." She describes Pastan's poetry as "elegiac, stoic" and "oddly consoling in its perception of the ambushes and ambivalences of family life, the losses that accrue as generations pass and, most interestingly, the holographic nature of the most commonplace moment." Interestingly enough, there is a quotation from Stafford on the inside flap of Pastan's *Carnival Evening: New and Selected Poems 1968-1998*. "She is a cultural philanthropist," he says, affirming Ullman's description of Pastan's holographic vision of the commonplace, particularly those things encompassing domestic life.

Of Gilbert, Ullman writes, "Like Pastan, [he] values isolation, having chosen to live for long periods of time in remote parts of Greece or New England without running water or electricity in a manner which scarcely seems touched by the twentieth century." His asceticism, Ullman notes, has led him to confront "on many levels the tensions between desire and limitation, the sacred and the profane," finding "a still point for himself by dwelling within them." "Gilbert," Ullman says, "views the outside world as an impediment to authentic living."

"Of all these poets," Ullman thinks, "the one whose work most calls to mind the classical grace, the range of perception, and the unassuming spirituality of Wordsworth is Jane Kenyon." Once again one of Stafford's favorite poets is mentioned, and I am reminded that after his son Brett's suicide, he holed up in his study, shut the door, and read Wordsworth (see p. 198 in *Early Morning*). Ullman

describes Kenyon's poems as starting "with an immediate moment and locale" and then traveling "great distances without seeming to, partly because they never leave the immediate world behind but instead deftly add layers to it."

Ullman contemplates five Stafford poems in this essay, "Lit Instructor," "Thinking About Being Called Simple by a Critic," "A Little Gift," "At the Bomb Testing Site," and "When I Met My Muse." Her discussion positions Stafford in ways that outline his distinctive qualities but also contextualize him in a tradition, a persuasion, a way with poetry, perhaps a school in the sense of a group of artists whose work looks in the same direction, follows a common current.

She begins with a distinction: "William Stafford's work, in contrast, is propelled by agendas—benevolent agendas—as he seeks again and again to instruct himself as well as his readers in the importance of keeping consciousness, memory, and conscience honed in a world that might blunt them." Stafford's writing process was geared toward articulating discovery as an essential aspect of his poetic. The word agenda derives from Latin *agere*, to do, and Stafford thought one of the elemental acts was to be awake and do the things that enabled that. Here's a piece of his list from "A Ritual to Read to Each Other":

it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give—yes or no, or maybe—
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

I think that qualifies as a "benevolent agenda" and so Ullman makes an important point and does Stafford a real service by confronting two recurring criticisms of his poetry. The first is his intermittent use of "outright statements," his agendas, and the second is his "strategic guilelessness" that has been seen by critics as "simplicity." Ullman points out, though, that these statements mostly "arise as revelations from the very act of writing." His "weaving of images and statements," Ullman offers, do not often "founder in didacticism" even though they "seek to gather us into their fold."

I found myself looking back in my notebooks for a lecture Jack Gilbert gave at the Mountain Writers' House in 1997 called "The Craft of the Invisible." In it, Gilbert speaks of his discontent with the idea of the poetry workshop so often based on the poetics of William Carlos Williams of which the imagist mantras, "Show, don't tell," or "No ideas but in things," so easy to teach, were often an element. "Stafford's poems," Ullman explains, "tell us as well as show us how to preserve the life within ourselves by way of preserving the life around us." "This was," she says, his "ongoing sacrament," his "daily meditation."

Stafford's so-called didacticism resonates from something very old in American literature, the Puritan's colloquy with god, the establishment of right relationship with the world, a tradition carried on by Emily Dickinson, mostly in private, until those fascicles were found in those little boxes. The conception of god in the poet's mind, of course, is the question, and might be one that speaks of the persuasion, the school, the position of these poets in the arc of American literature. "Again and again his poems," Ullman tells us, "enact a deeply instructive reciprocity between self and other, and the

self emerges from the interchange enlarged, blessed, as possessors of a 'gift.'" To illustrate, Ullman uses the poem "A Little Gift," in which the cats in a zoo give Stafford the gift of their nature, "the sponge of their feet / swelled into the ground." This is god to Stafford, the soul of otherness embodied in animals close to the earth.

It seems so simple, and it is and is not. Simplicity, as Ullman develops, part of his strategic guilelessness, has become a way to dismiss Stafford, to move him beneath critical study. Ullman summons an interesting comparison, Columbo, the Peter Falk TV detective, to counter this misapprehension. His "cagey naiveté... meandering and shuffling his way to the heart of things" catches the crook because, as Ullman says in another essay, his "head scratching and frowning of the brow... would nail the truth." Simplicity, as all of us should know, is not always simple. Those who think Stafford simple might read his essay, "Some Arguments Against Good Diction," or Lao-Tzu or Jonathan Holden's astute essay, "Genius in Camouflage," which can be found in his book, *The Old Formalism: Character in Contemporary Poetry* (1999), or just spend a little more time with the work, maybe starting with "Ultimate Problems."

The wellspring of Stafford's particular blend of statement and image, his agendas woven with the world, is grounded in, as Ullman perceptively observes, his sense that "the imagination... is inextricably linked with conscience." Conscience involves a consciousness of otherness, of other selves, of nature and other natures and agencies. "Like the three other poets," Ullman writes,

Stafford locates himself and his values in nature. But his landscapes—the endless plains of Kansas and the immense forests of the Pacific Northwest—are more vast, less domesticated than theirs, letting the self be absorbed into what is rustic and enduring and ungovernable.

This is the Stafford who hears the wilderness listen, who represents far places, who sees fish "leap arcs of realization" and wrote a book called *Things That Happen Where There Aren't Any People*. "Ultimately," Ullman tells us toward the end of this essay, Stafford "offers us an egoless, or transcended self, suggesting again and again that he is a humble messenger representing rather than processing greater powers."

Writing of Whitman and Transcendentalism in *A History of American Poetry*, Richard Gray says that the essential imaginative act was the "discovery of the self in the other." This is what these poet's share, placing them in the Transcendental-Romantic tradition of Wordsworth and Dickenson.

In "A 'Dark Star' Passes Through It," Ullman entertains the notion that "Every poem has a 'center,' a line or group of lines, which reveal the heart of the poem... not to be confused with theme or content... lines with a particular sort of energy, almost always a heightened energy." The title of the essay is drawn from the first poem she discusses, James Tate's "Consumed." Tate, according to Dorothy Stafford in *Feeling at Home* was, along with Linda Pastan and Myra Sklarew, one of the young poets Bill corresponded with and supported. Other poems considered are Mary Oliver's "Beside the Waterfall" and James Wright's "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm on Pine Island, Minnesota." Those of you familiar

(cont. on p. 6)

**William Stafford's
work, in contrast,
is propelled by
agendas—benevolent
agendas—**

(cont. from p. 5)

with the latter poem will not be surprised to hear Ullman claim, “A surprising, well-contexted epiphany is almost always the center of any poem that contains one.” She also looks at a rather wonderful poem by Adrienne Rich, “The Loser,” longer than the others, in which she can’t find a center.

The Stafford poem she tackles is “Traveling through the Dark,” where she finds the center to be the last line of the fourth stanza, “Around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.” “The whole poem,” she asserts, “is about striking a balance between two kinds of compassion, one tender and one dutiful,” and Ullman observes rather insightfully that these lines hold all the poem’s

values in suspension, as in the moment before a judge renders a verdict mark[ing] what would be identified in fiction as the crises or turning point, after which the speaker’s final gesture, dramatic as it is, nevertheless is a part of that moment’s outcome, or resolution.

Taking Ullman’s instructive inability to find a center in Rich’s poem, I thought one might consider the fourth line of the third stanza the center of the poem, “Beside that mountain road I hesitated,” because of the importance of wavering in Stafford’s thought, or maybe the penultimate lines: “I thought hard for us all—my only swerving,” because thinking for us all is what literature does, at its best, and swerving is like wavering; it saves lives.

The last two essays in *Library of Small Happiness* to consider do not discuss his poetry but rather employ

his ideas. “Towards a Poetry of Pull-and-Release: Some Thoughts on Silence in Poems” draws on Stafford’s thoughts on judging, or rather not judging, poetry. “All the Softness Truth Requires: Speculation As Invitation and Persuasion” uses a line from “Lit Instructor” to speculate about speculation, supposing, asking questions, in poems.

Pull-and-release is a technique of horsemanship that Ullman applies as a principle for approaching and appraising poetry. She explains,

When a horse begins to break his concentration and accelerate his stride, the rider’s tugging at the reins will only make the horse tug against the rider.... But if he rider pulls briefly on the reins and releases them, pulls again and releases, she’s engaging the horse in a different dynamic.

This works if the horse is not distracted and if “the rider stays patient and quiet and waits the moment out.” The pull-and-release practice, Ullman maintains, becomes “more of a dance than a contest,” giving “both parties a role” and “the horse, who is not at the initiating end of intention, a chance to make some decisions of its own.” I think the reader can anticipate how Stafford’s poetic practice might come into play—patience, quiet, listening.

Ullman is responding in this essay to a certain joy she felt discovering her writing at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop in the 70s, when, as she phrases it, “the dynamics of experiential reading were explored with real passion.” Since then, Ullman laments, the pendulum of taste with its oscillations of “proscribed clarities” and the sometimes “querulous” critical constrictions of workshops seem to have taken the excitement and originality out of the reading/

writing adventure. She notes, in a sentence that Stafford would have certainly endorsed, “We judge, and the judgment eventually works against our own freedom.”

The poetics of appraisal Ullman proposes here connect this freedom with the release of the reins and with something else Stafford felt important—respectful listening: “Silence, either within a poem itself or within the consciousness of a reader as she navigates a poem, is analogous to the invitation of a ‘release’ as it facilitates a give-and-take relationship between reader and text.” This give-and-take is a learning experience, an exchange that grows relationships, develops a bond. I was delighted to discover mention of a horse training book that Stafford loved, *Think Harmony with Horses* by Ray Hunt, in Kim Stafford’s memoir of his father, *Early Morning*. I wasn’t able to find a copy of the book but the internet quotes this line from the book, “When you ask your horse to do something it should be his idea.” Release, listening, silence, seem to be the tools of discovery.

Ullman reads three poems for their silences, Jack Gilbert’s “In Praise of Poetry,” Mary Ruefle’s “From Memory,” and Sandra McPherson’s “On a Picture of My Parents Together in Second Grade,” concluding, “Our interaction with the silences in a well-made poem engage us in a preliminary intuitive connection with the impulses of the text

and thus supply a crucial foundation for subsequent layers of response.” First we have the centers of poems and now their silences. Listening from the center has a nice ring to it.

Please understand that I think you are truly the best of us all, Bill. You have got what the old high school football coaches used to call the real natural lick. You are in a right relationship to the earthly life. And what was ever wrong with that?

--James Dickey, letter, October 28, 1970

At this moment in the essay, Ullman returns to the issue of statement in poetry. To the silence in a poem that follows images that leap, a la Robert Bly’s idea of leaping poetry, she adds a qualification, “Lately, I’ve come to see that skillfully contexted statements can carve out space for themselves too, in the form of a reflective leap the mind makes....” To support this claim, she names several poets in whose poems statements have this quality: Louise Gluck, Jack Gilbert, Linda Gregg (Gilbert’s partner for a time), and, you guessed it, Stafford.

Reading with patience for silence is nothing new, Ullman notes, and perhaps we all do it when enveloped in the spell of a poem or poet. However, she says, basing her observation on a long career,

I continue to be amazed at how easy it is to breathe bad faith into poems...in accordance with some outside agenda. A reasonable amount of good faith may well be the opposite of control—good faith is an acquiescence and willingness to wait, even work, for gratification.

This may be because there is “little critical vocabulary...for describing specific poems in terms of how the reader might acquiesce to them.” At this point Stafford returns as someone who “explored this area in the 1960s and 70s.” Unfortunately, Ullman says, his voice has “faded from the classroom and the lecture hall.” This is the Stafford of *Writing the Australian Crawl* (out of print): “Poetry seems like a conversation that has a lot of luck in it,” and, of course, his workshop mantra, “No praise, no blame.”

Ullman ends this essay by talking about intention, the “unarticulated but felt sense of direction which can ease us writers into acquiring a measure for the calmness and grace under pressure that makes athletes perform well.” Perhaps we get some

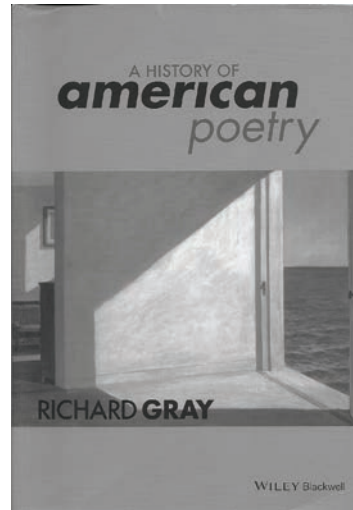
understanding of why James Dickey said that Stafford had “the real natural lick.” (See p. 6). I think he meant that Stafford wrote the way natural athletes perform in the field they practice. One could see his “natural lick” as his composure, the allowing of language to coordinate with poetry, or as Ullman concludes, “It has to do with the visceral sense we bring to a poem, our intuitive link to its fledgling impulse, and our faith in the trajectory we feel in its potential even as we negotiate the demands of craft.” It has to do with a life practice, the right muscles for the right moves.

Stafford finds his way into “All the Softness Truth Requires” through the idea the quotation suggests, the “softness” of speculation, which, as Ullman says, “in any genre but especially in poetry, can position the speaker to approach the inexplicable, the ineffable, sometimes unspeakable without sounding reductive or overbearing.” She lists some of the words that Stafford liked, *perhaps*, *suppose*, and, of course, *maybe* “that allow a writer to ‘make’ points via suggestion, and to enjoy the powers of the imagination unfettered by the obligation to ground itself in prior authority.” Speculative words like these support the question, “Is it possible that...?” which is a question a pacifist might well ask, someone interested in alternative ways, as Stafford was. “The imagination loves this,” Ullman declares. “It swells to fill the greater space.” Speculation is a kind of freedom, allowing room for thought, discovery. One of Stafford’s favorite conversation gambits was to say, “Let’s talk recklessly,” in hopes of happening into some new territory, some deeper connection. “The rhetoric of speculation,” Ullman offers, “allows a writer to walk around a subject or idea, to mull over small, incremental observations and to invite the reader directly into the search and its ultimate revelations.”

Ullman tests her thesis with a number of poems, including Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room,” Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays,” and Robert Creeley’s “I Know a Man,” among several others. All the poems have questions in them and work well with the softness, the openness of uncertainty. She then returns to Stafford and summarizes his work in a way that affirms and articulates why it remains vital and relevant. He understood his poems and essays, his work “as a ‘dance’ towards ‘knowing.’” He understood “‘stray error’ as its gift, a reclamation of something ‘lost’ which he can ‘coax’ home with his own wing-flutterings.” We see again the gentleness, the patience, the foundationally democratic respect Stafford had for other beings and the elements of experience. The poem “Islands,” printed in the “Whispered to the Ground” section of *Stories That Could be True*, ends, “but one should never neglect / anything, anything.” For Stafford, a key question in a discussion was, “What have we missed?” As Ullman emphasizes, “For Stafford, exploration is the central act.” Not affirmation, not reputation, but exploration because “It yields knowledge in such a way that the quest for truth and the truth itself become inextricable from one another, fusing softness of quest with the sharp edge of certainty.” In this way the ends and the means issue may be resolved in poetics.

I placed *Library of Small Happiness* and *A History of American Poetry* in this Sightings because of the question of Stafford’s position in American poetry. Ullman positions Stafford in good company, among meditative poets in the tradition of the English Romantics (Wordsworth) and the American Transcendentalists (Dickinson).

In an essay that appeared in *A Profile in Twentieth Century Poetry* (1991), “American Poetry in the 1960s,” though I found it on the internet with the title “Deep Imagism: The Subconscious as Medium,” Ullman connects Stafford to the Deep Image movement associated with Robert Bly and his *Sixties* magazine and with poets such as James Wright, W.S. Merwin, Louis Simpson, and Galway Kinnell. She mentions *Four Poets and the Emotive Imagination* (1976), by George Lensing and Ronald Moran, which discusses the work of Simpson,



Bly, Wright, and Stafford. Lensing and Moran also connect the Deep Image Movement with Romanticism, calling it a “reemergence of romanticism, but a refreshing kind, different from the nineteenth century.” That’s a position and a tradition. The deep image for Lensing and Moran is a product of the emotive imagination, the basic ingredient of which are “timing, leaps, and muted shock.” We have some positioning here: the Romantics, the Transcendentalists, the Deep Imagists, the emotive imagination.

One finds no mention of the Deep Image school in *A History of American Poetry*, though Bly and Wright are discussed in a section titled, “Varieties of the Personal: The Self as Dream, Landscape, or Confession.” In the following section, “From Formalism to Freedom: A Progress of American Poetic Techniques Since the War,” part of his sixth chapter, “Formalists and Confessionals: American Poetry Since World War II,” we find Stafford as one of the poets who “gravitated” after the war “towards more flexible verse forms... in pursuit of a more idiomatic vocabulary.” Gray follows this characterization of the prosodic and language leanings of a number of poets (David Ignatow, Alan Dugan, John Ciardi, Philip Levine, A.R. Ammons) with an early prose statement by Stafford, “A Poet’s Voice: An Approach Through Prose,” taken from *The Distinctive Voice: Twentieth Century American Poets* (1966), never reprinted. Students of Stafford will recognize some ideas:

When you make a poem, you merely speak or write the language of everyday... Rather than give poets the undeserved honor of telling us how... special poetry is everyone should realize his own fair share of the joint risk and opportunity present in language: Through the social process of language all of us should help each other to become more aware of what being alive means.

“The ideal” of this poetic, Gray observes, “seems to be a virtual transparency of idiom.” Signatory ways of writing, those that call attention to their stylistics, are to be discarded for language that seems to be “called into being by the aesthetic experience itself.” Gray, positioning this poetics, tells us that it is “another version of the commitment to authenticity—the precise application of word to event without superfluous gesture or ornament—that characterizes so many earlier poets from Whitman to Oppen to Williams.” It is, Gray says, “the radicality of the colloquial, the voice of the plain-speaking, rough-and-tumble man who tolerates no nonsense, verbal

(cont. on p. 8)

(cont. from p. 7)

or otherwise.” Here we see Stafford connected to Whitman and to democracy, which is a great position to be placed in. We also see the connection with awareness, which, of course, makes him prescient, given the popularity of mindfulness these days, and, as well, an understanding of how the bonuses in everyday diction can further self discovery.

Before he leaves Stafford and the implications of the idiomatic, Gray reminds us of the tendency of Stafford’s poems to “open quietly” and display “clarity of language” and “verbal modesty” offering “a stay against oblivion, something to illuminate or at least hold back the surrounding dark.” Clear, modest, and colloquial language creates a subtle radicality because they practice and elicit a democratic tenor. Poetry is everybody’s and anybody’s. It is, as Stafford has written, and Gray quotes, one of the “sleeping resources in language.” Part of the subtlety, and Stafford knew this well, is the nature of simplicity, the shibboleth in Stafford studies; as Gray notes when talking, just down the page, about Philip Levine, another poet of the common man, “Simplicity of speech is not always synonymous with simplification of attitude.” Have we come to the proverb, “Still waters run deep”?

We find Stafford positioned again in the subsequent section of *A History of American Poetry*, “The Imagination of Commitment: A Progress of American Poetic Themes since the War.” Gray reminds readers that Theodor Adorno said that after Auschwitz no poem could be written. They have, of course, because “the imagination of disaster” is compelling, obliging writers to write to forestall, even solve, the worst. Stafford, as readers know, was haunted by the incredible cruelty of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan and the specter of nuclear annihilation. He and a colleague from Lewis & Clark would take turns spray painting white outlines of their bodies on the sidewalk to mark Hiroshima Day. Gray discusses “At the Bomb Testing Site” as an attempt to “give verbal shape” to the “imagination of disaster” by allowing “the obscene phenomena to speak for itself.” “The sense of doom,” he observes, “occurs in the spaces between the words.” Such are the latent well springs of language of which Stafford was so aware.

Ullman’s wise, cogent, and often brilliantly connective essays help us see Stafford in the fine old tradition of the Romantics—in love with nature, intuition, democracy, childhood, the individual vision—particularly that of Wordsworth and the American Transcendentalists, Dickenson foremost. She positions him in a more recent movement by linking him to the Deep Image movement. The association with Pastan, Gilbert, and Kenyon associates him with a meditative, lyrically resonant, deeply personal persuasion of those traditions. Gray’s encyclopedic categorizations position him with the plain-speaking style in the American grain of Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams. Gray’s placing of him as a political poet is astute, reminding me of something Stafford says in *Writing the Australian Crawl*, “every poem I have written is a quiet protest poem.” Based on these books, we might call Stafford an emotively vernacular, meditatively political, Romantic in the tradition of Wordsworth, Dickenson, and Bly.

To Another Visionary: John Clare

Close to us here, but hidden, many beings
live, or don’t live but hover between
two ways—a rock, say, and what the rock was
before it was. Close to us.

And under the water—and in rivers of air—
listen: stories. You know they coil forward
the way time goes, or possibly they turn,
hook into what was, and fall through zero.

I think of you: spring, through spring, the round
sun, a falling that is upward, no center
for anything—headlong. Heaven, that doesn’t
exist, makes everything happen.

Today has come. I put down these words.
World and sun tug at their tether.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

Editor’s Note: This poem has never been published. I found it in amongst Stafford’s correspondence at the Archives.

John Clare (1793-1865) was an English peasant poet from Northhamshire, one of the “Ploughman Poets” of the Romantic period. Published by the same house as Keats, he achieved early success with his *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820), but though he kept writing, fashions changed and rustic bards fell from favor. His poems are about the woods and fields, animals, birds, trees, streams, and country life during the Enclosure Movement. He spent the last years of his life in an insane asylum, devastated by having to leave his place of birth and the loss of his first love, Mary Joyce.



Stafford and the Anthropocene: ALA 2018

By Tim Barnes

For the second year in a row, the Friends of William Stafford participated in a panel at the 29th Annual American Literature Association Conference, which took place between May 24th and 27th of last year at the Embarcadero Center Hyatt Regency in San Francisco, a few blocks from Fisherman's Wharf. As readers who read this publication, in which I reported on the FWS's experience at the ALA in Boston in 2017, know, the ALA is a coalition of literary societies devoted to the study of American authors from Poe and Thoreau through Dickinson and Whitman, Eliot and Pound, to David Foster Wallace, Raymond Carver, and Toni Morrison, to list just a fraction of the authors on whom panels were convened.

The Embarcadero Center Hyatt Regency is rather grand, boasting the largest atrium in the United States, able to host multiple conferences and the ALA is a large one. There were twenty two sessions, each one lasting an hour and twenty minutes, Thursday through to Sunday morning, two hundred and twenty four panels, and over a thousand attendees. In terms of literary interest, there's something for almost everyone; in terms of enthusiasm, it's high. People like to talk about the writers they love, and, of course, that's why FWS was there, sponsoring a panel, as people know who read the "News, Notes, and Opportunities" section of the last issue, called "William Stafford and the Anthropocene: Toward a Poetics of the 'Earthbound.'" The idea of the panel, issued as a call for papers, a cfp, was essentially to explore Stafford's poetry in light of its ecological implications



PHOTO BY LIKA KUZNIK

for inhabiting the modern world sustainably as articulated by the French philosopher Bruno Latour in his book *Facing Gaia* (2017), in which he writes that the existential crises of the anthropocene age is the necessity of recognizing human limitation, that humankind is earthbound and needs to learn to re-inhabit the planet with that understanding. Stafford's poetry questions Modernism's dream of continual expansion by valuing the world we have, as exemplified in his poem "Earth Dweller": "the clods are / vaulted mansions... // The world is our only friend." The modern age, modernity, calls for a title beyond the Holocene: the Anthropocene, defined in the *New Oxford Dictionary* as "the current geological age, viewed as having begun about 200 years ago with the significant impact of humanity on the ecosphere." Two key markers are the fact that there is no place in the archives of the earth where evidence of humankind cannot be found and, of course, human driven climate change. Stafford's poetry resists the temptations of transcendence through technological solutions and seeks earthbound and bonded relationships, the complexity of the commons.

The "William Stafford and the Anthropocene" panel was made up

of Ben Rawlins, a second-year PhD student from Baylor University in Texas; James Armstrong, a professor at Winona State University teaching poetry, experimental literature, film, and a biennial graduate seminar on William Stafford; and the editor of this publication. It was chaired by Laura Armstrong, a teacher of AP language and composition and AP American literature at Winona Senior High School.

You can find Rawlin's presentation, "Ecopoetics of Home: William Stafford and Kansas," on the first page of this publication. Rawlins, who was raised in Hutchinson, Kansas, examines the "sensuous poesis" Stafford uses to evoke his Kansas and salves his own longing for home as well. I hope readers enjoy it; I know the ALA audience certainly did.

"The Speaking World: William Stafford's Relational Poetics and Bruno Latour's Concept of Agency," presented by Armstrong, reads Stafford's most famous poem, "Traveling through the Dark," in light of the concept of agency, developed by Latour, a sociologist and anthropologist of science. Yes, Latour is part of the famous Burgundian wine-making family. Armstrong's reading gives the poem a depth and glow it may not have had before. The concept of agency is important here because it places Stafford's poetics, his sense of the animacy of things, the natural world, and the makings of those animals called humans, in a revealing perspective. Agency is the capacity of an actor, preceding humanity and personhood—plants, animals, geographic elements, weather, rivers, mountains, machines, and entities (nations, NCOs, corporations)—to act and have an effect in a given environment. It's a very democratic concept and cuts through hierarchies like the chain of being, the ladder of God's created order—God, man | animals, birds, fish, insects, microbiology. It also shreds and discards the Modernist division between culture and nature, which has led to the deanimation of nature into an entity that follows natural laws and therefore can be controlled by more rational super agents, human beings. Nature and the hybrids humans have created with it, the combustion engine, for example, are denied agency, creating a worldview that is arrogant and dismissive and destructive. It privileges epistemology, how we know and order and have the right to the beliefs we have, and therefore control, over ontology, being and the nature of it and by implication the recognition of it in the nonhuman.

Armstrong establishes this recognition, the ontological operation of agency in the world through looking at Friday's problems with Crusoe's assumptions, a hierarchical graph from a weekly Trump cabinet Bible study session, and an attack, launched by Bob Perlman, on the use of the pathetic fallacy in "Traveling through the Dark," which you can read more about in *On William Stafford: The Worth of Local Things*. Attacks on personification are, as Armstrong points out, attacks on agency and those crazy notions of animacy and relationship that unscientific poets get into their heads.

Contemplating the poem, Armstrong finds a number of actors and agents, the road, the driver, the dead deer, the unborn fawn, even the aphorism, "It is usually best to roll them into the canyon," but finally the "purring" car, its "exhaust turning red." In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's magnificent novel, the first casualty after the Joads get out on the road is the dog, killed by a car. This is the American story, the animal dead in the road. Who killed it? Armstrong calls the car the "predator in this scenario." And who made the car? To

(cont. on p. 10)

(cont. from p. 9)

answer this question is to understand agency, and responsibility, and perhaps the Anthropocene.

My presentation was called “William Stafford and the Eco-poetic Metaphor.” I’m fascinated by the way Stafford uses metaphor to connect with the nonhuman world. He has a way of applying words associated with humans to animals, plants, rivers, mountains, the



The Panel: Tim Barnes, Ben Rawlins, Jim Armstrong, Laura Armstrong.

natural world. The lines from “Traveling through the Dark” may be the most familiar to readers, “I could hear the wilderness listen.” In three lines in “Found in a Storm,” we find “a gale” “reasoning,” “persuading,” and “guessing.” Stafford is not shy to personify: “What the river says, that is what I say.” There is a distinct friendliness to this, a reaching out and an assumption of intelligence that I find ecological, ecology being the study of relations between organisms and their environment. That study necessitates learning what nonhumans know, how they think and communicate, how they speak.

Stafford’s metaphorical friendliness set in an ecological, environmental context led me to biosemiotics, the study of the production and interpretation of signs and codes in the biological realm. It seems to me that Stafford had an ear and eye for those signs and signals. I used Stafford’s poems “Listening” and “Choosing a Dog” as examples. A German ethnologist named Jacob Von Uexküll developed the idea of the *umwelt*, the perceptual sphere surrounding organisms that is an inherent part of their participation in the world. Stafford’s poems are sensitive to this in a way that makes him a profoundly ecological poet, open to the intricacies of knowing beyond the human and the rational. There’s a kind of reverence to it that is holistic and in an earthly way redemptive, and in terms of living in the Anthropocene, instructive—“We are all gestures the world makes.” That was the essence of my presentation at the ALA.

I also attended a number of other sessions and in several I heard echoes of Stafford’s sensibility, his interests. I sat in on two sessions devoted to the correspondence of Charles Olson, the poet, literary theorist, father of the Black Mountain School, whose ideas and notion of “Projective Verse” influenced a number of important American poets: Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, and Robert Duncan, among them. As I listened to the various presentations, I felt an energy that seemed connected to Stafford’s. They were born four years apart, Olson in 1910, and came of age as poets in the late forties and fifties. I made some notes and in looking back, some of the phrases from those notes resonate with Stafford.

I went leafing through *Writing the Australian Crawl* (WAC) for echoes: CO (Charles Olson): “Poetry is the wisdom we seek”; WAC,

p.14: “It’s like any discovery job...You find out what life is trying to be.” CO: “To have a hearing, a sounding”; This reminds me of something I discovered looking at WS’s early writing; he sent every poem out once, maybe just once, but once. CO: “The poem as appetite”; WAC, p.4: “Poems don’t just happen. They’re luckily or stealthily related to a readiness within ourselves.” CO: “Composition by field”; WAC, p.67: “Writing is a reckless encounter with whatever comes along.” CO: “A poem is a made thing”; WAC, p.61: “A poem is anything said in such a way or put down paper in such a way as to invite from the hearer or reader a certain kind of attention.” CO: “Self is only an object among others”; WAC, p.43: “The role of a writer or reader is one of following, not imposing.” CO: “Poem as product and process”; WAC, p.112: “I’ve experienced that the activity of writing does make things happen.” CO: “Participatory aesthetics”; WAC, p.3: “Anyone who breathes is in the rhythm business; anyone who is alive is caught up in the imminences, the doubts mixed with triumphant certainty, of poetry.”

Now I know that these are not perfect correspondences, but there are some strong congruencies. I found this sentence in Richard Gray’s chapter, “Beat, Prophets, and Aesthetes: American Poetry since World War II,” in *A History of American Poetry*, used to describe Olson’s poetics, “The poet remains committed to the activities of attention and discovery.” You could put that in a description of Stafford and it would be right at home. Leslie Ullman says something very insightful in a chapter in *Library of Small Happiness* on the crossovers and deep correspondences between the “poetry schools” of the 50s and 60s. Her essay, “Press Send: Risk, Intuition, and the Transparent Poem” suggests that the Deep Image poets (Stafford, Bly, Wright) used the subconscious and surrealism, the Black Mountain poets breath, body, and the choreography of perception, and the New York poets experience, often undigested, as mediums and means for “locating the self” in a world devastated by war, threatened by nuclear annihilation and a post war condition of unprecedented consumption, mechanization, and change. Stafford and the zeitgeist.

Early in the conference, I went, as well, to a speculative ecologies session and found myself writing down phrases like “sympathy with intelligence,” “emergent ecological virtues,” “becoming is co-becoming,” and “grow new attentive capacities,” during a presentation by Suzanne McCullagh of Miami University of Ohio, “Sympathy with the Earth: Becoming World in Area X of the *Southern Reach* trilogy.” Now I haven’t read it but I understand the *Southern Reach* trilogy by Jeff VanderMeer is about a wilderness area taking back its hegemony and territory from the environmental disaster of humanity. In it, writing grows on a wall; plants learn to write. Suddenly, I was back in the presentation I was going to give about Stafford and biosemiotics, the codes of communication given by plants and animals that attentiveness, perceptual engagement, empathetic imagination, can discover.

In closing this account of FWS’s adventure at the 2018 ALA, I would like to report that we gave Maxine Hong Kingston, who is featured in Haydn Reiss’s film *Every War Has Two Losers: A Poet’s Meditation on Peace*, a copy of this publication. She was the subject of a session and a performer in a dramatization of George Saunders’ *Lincoln in the Bardo*. We had a short but very warm conversation, and she seemed delighted to receive news of her old friend.

Kim Stafford: Oregon's New Poet Laureate



Kim Stafford and Governor Kate Brown at inaugural celebration at Rockwood Boys & Girls Club on July 17th, 2018.

PHOTOS BY IUKA KUZNIK



Outgoing laureate Elizabeth Woody, Governor Brown, and Kim Stafford.

Another One for William Stafford

When I asked my students,
"What would be a good metaphor
for a guardian angel?"

they answered:

"A bald eagle."

"A killer robot. With wings."

"A Black Hawk helicopter."

"A stealth bomber."

And Michael, a troubled young man
in the back corner, said:

"A sunflower."

And the classroom became silent
as we thought long and hard
and gentle about that.

DAVID ATHEY

Reprinted from *The Iowa Review* 37.2 (2007)

About the Future

"What the river says, that is what I say."

-- William Stafford

There is something to learn from nearby forests
felled by fire or saws, their vacant peacefulness
an echo of comings and goings from somewhere
we almost recognize, like flowers in some forgotten
prairie that prevail against the wind for a time.

One day we all will end, perhaps a cosmic boulder
a solar storm or other grand apocalypse, maybe
just a slow entropic freeze of universal inattention.
Though, if all the struggles of the well intentioned
can predict, I humbly think a slow and certain suicide.

Until then, harrow your garden and feel the deep
rich earth in your gloveless hands. Better yet,
take a walk on a moonless night through black locust
thickets past forgotten homesteads as the bright green
eyes of patient foxes wait for you to pass.

JERRY WILLIAMS

Reprinted from *ISLE* 24.3 (Summer 2017)

Armstrong in the Archives

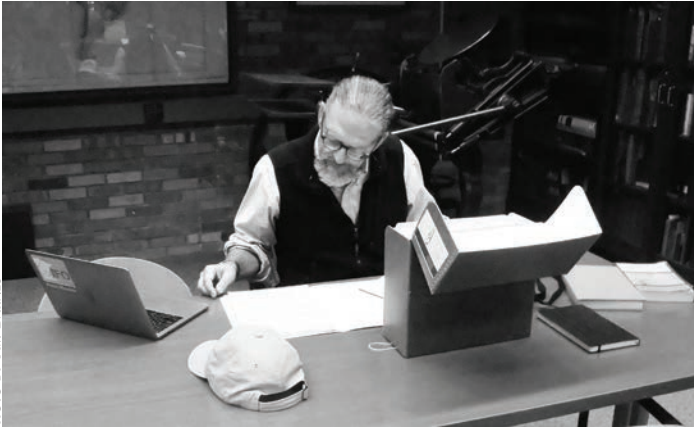


PHOTO BY TIM BARNES

James Armstrong, a professor of English at Winona State University in Minnesota, spent the month of September in Portland doing research at the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark. Armstrong is at work on a critical study of Stafford, a prospectus of which you will find below. He will also be part of a panel on Stafford at this year's Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment's (ASLE) biennial conference (see News, Notes, and Opportunities). Also, he will present a paper at the American Literature Association (ALA) conference in Boston in May, "Willa Cather as Mentor: The Case of William Stafford," for the Willa Cather Roundtable session. I spent a few days with Armstrong in the Archives in September and the excitement about Stafford and his work was a joy to share.

Poet of the Full World: William Stafford in the Anthropocene

I hope to introduce Stafford to a new generation of readers and scholars by taking him seriously as a thinker. Stafford is known as a poet, of course, and as a pacifist and a teacher, but he is not often considered as an intellectual. Yet, as Jonathan Holden early pointed out in *The Mark to Turn* (1976), one of the few critical studies ever written of Stafford's work, "Stafford's poetry bears perhaps a closer affinity to the poetry of Wallace Stevens than to that of any other recent American poet. It exhibits a steady consciousness of Romantic tradition, particularly Wordsworth and Thoreau." What would it mean to read Stafford with this in mind? What would it mean to consider him not as he sometimes liked to be seen—a person who disdained the influence of the literary canon, claiming his main poetic influence was his mother's voice—but as a man who read widely in the canon, who had a Ph.D. in English, who taught classes in everything from Voltaire to Greek Drama to 18th Century prose and who wrote reviews for *Poetry* magazine of a wide variety of writers, including Wallace Stevens, Robert Lowell and Robert Graves? A man who also claimed that his main influences were Pascal, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein? Such a consideration would connect Stafford up with the great debates about nature and culture which shaped modern poetry in the twentieth century—debates which Stafford was well aware of. It would mean seeing Stafford's language skepticism and his resultant radical empiricism—his belief that the power of immediate sensual contact with the world around

him was superior to experience coded in language—allied him, for example, with the Imagists, who preached "no ideas but in things," with Rilke's "thing poems," and with Neruda's "impure poetry." It would also connect Stafford to thinkers such as John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead, who helped him think his way out of the contradictions of Modernity. French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour, in his seminal work *We Have Never Been Modern*, pointed out that Modernity is an unstable category, defined by a nature/culture divide which is an unsustainable purification of two categories that are always, in reality, completely interpenetrating each other. If Modernity is built on a contradiction, rather than a certainty, it can never have achieved the "radical break" in history which it claims to have made. Stafford's work, I will argue, rejects that break in favor of a kind of pre-modern, flattened ontology, one which grants agency to the world in a way that is a continuation of the Romantic project. Stafford's work rejects the dead materiality of the Moderns and embraces the full world recently redescribed in Latour's work, as well as in the Object-Oriented Ontology of Graham Harman and the Posthumanism of theorists like Cary Wolfe. This a-modern stance, which once earned him the pejorative dismissal of being regional and naive, now might be framed as visionary: an a-modern poetics suited for a time when the Modern worldview is collapsing under its own parochial and incomplete limitations.

The Concealment: Ishi, the Last Wild Indian

A rock, a leaf, mud, even the grass
Ishi the shadow man had to put back where it was.
In order to live he had to hide that he did.
His deep canyon he kept unmarked for the world,
and only his face became lined, because no one saw it
and it therefore didn't make any difference.

If he appeared, he died; and he was the last. Erased
footprints, berries that purify the breath, rituals
before dawn with water—even the dogs roamed a land
unspoiled by Ishi who used to own it, with his aunt
and uncle, whose old limbs bound in willow bark finally
stopped and were hidden under the rocks, in sweet leaves.

We ought to help change that kind of premature suicide,
the existence gradually mottled away till the heartbeat
blends and the messages all go one way from the world
and disappear inward: Ishi lived. It was all right
for him to make a track. In California now where his opposites
unmistakably dwell we wander their streets

And sometimes whisper his name—
"Ishi."

WILLIAM STAFFORD

Ursula K. Le Guin 1929-2018

Donald Hall 1928-2018



The Friends of William Stafford lost two of its National Advisors this year, Ursula K. Le Guin and Donald Hall. Once can find encomiums to both in other places, but I might say a word or two for the Friends.

Le Guin and Stafford were not close friends but as Stafford's photographs show, they intersected amiably. Clearly they shared values. I heard them both speak at a peace conference in 1982 called "Facing It: The Human Condition in the Nuclear Age." The essay Le Guin wrote for that occasion, "Facing It," appears in *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, and Places*. Stafford wrote a poem for the occasion that became "Globoscope." I know this because I was a freelance writer then, hoping to do a piece on the conference, and asked him for a copy of what he said. He sent an early version of that poem to me entitled, "For a Meeting of Concerned Citizens, 7 August 1982," which was printed in *Alchemy*, the student literary magazine at PCC Sylvania, of which I was the advisor, in 1997.

Stafford and Le Guin shared something else, a fascination with Native-Americans connected to Ishi, the California Indian survivor. Le Guin's mother, Theodora Kroeber wrote *Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America*. Bill loved that book, for reasons in which "Sightings II: Ecological Ethics" might shed some light, and so you will find Bill's wonderful poem about Ishi (see previous page) as a tribute to Bill and Ursula's relationship.

Donald Hall and Bill were friends, read together, and carried on a warm correspondence, mostly short notes. Hall wrote a lot about other writers, but little about Bill, though for his short essay included in *On William Stafford: The Worth of Local Things*, "William Stafford: Eight Notions," shows him to be an astute reader of Bill's work: "Anyone whose preconceptions exclude Stafford on account of his accessibility loses too much."

Apparently they enjoyed reading together, as the card to the right suggests, written upon receiving the photograph, taken by Bill, of Hall and James Dickey. For some, Dickey's ego was trying. Hall, as people may know, was married to Jane Kenyon, of whom Leslie Ullman speaks so highly in *Library of Small Happiness*. I don't believe I have to footnote Laurel and Hardy, but people may not remember that Grossinger's was a noted resort hotel in the Catskills, part of the "Borscht Belt."

The Friends of William Stafford thank these wonderful writers for giving their names to our masthead and for realizing the writing life with such care and grace.



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM STAFFORD



Dear Bill,
Great pic! I love that one of me looking at Jim so suspiciously. Rudely appropriate, that. Yes, I like doing a soft-shoe with you, too. Do you think we could play Grossinger's. I've always admired you, Stan, & since I've put on weight I think we're a team.
Oliver Hardy

Dear Bill,

Great pic! I love that one of me looking at Jim so suspiciously. Rudely appropriate, that. Yes, I like doing a soft-shoe with you, too. Do you think we could play Grossinger's. I've always admired you, Stan, & since I've put on weight I think we're a team.

Oliver Hardy

Sightings II: Ecological Ethics

By Tim Barnes

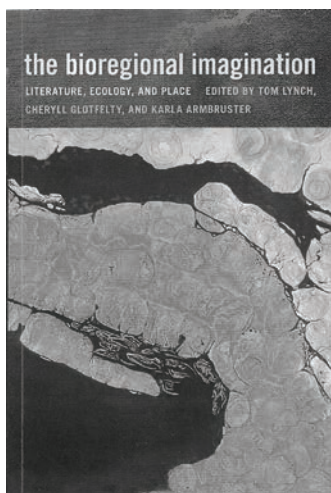
The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place. Edited by Tom Lynch, Cherly Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster. Athens, GA & London, UK: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Reimagining Environmental History: Ecological Memory in the Wake of Landscape Change. By Christian Knoeller. Reno and Las Vegas, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2017.

Ecocritical Aesthetics: Language, Beauty, and the Environment. Edited by Peter Quigley and Scott Slovic. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017.

It seems fitting that Stafford would be included in these books that in distinct but interwoven ways explore aspects of environmental ecology. Stafford had a vital and intuitive sense of the power, complexity, and agency of the more-than-human world—animals, plants, rivers, trees, mountains. In his most famous poem, “Traveling through the Dark,” he hears “the wilderness listen.” In that simple personification, the wilderness as listener, we find an assumption that helps to explain why the writers of the essays discussed below find Stafford’s poetry, his ecological awareness, so vital for their purposes. For Stafford, humans were not the only beings that mattered, something one discovers by listening and connecting. Stafford’s poems present the fraternal essentiality of non human beings in a web of relations, achieving this by describing those beings in human terms and so presuming their intelligence and identity. This recognition entails an ethical stance and Stafford assumes it. We can see this in the three chapters in these three books that deal from different perspectives with Stafford’s poetry and the ecological ethics it manifests.

“The Poetics of Water: Currents of Reclamation in the Columbia River Basin,” Chad Wriglesworth’s essay in *The Bioregional Imagination*



explores how poetry has called attention to environmental damage in the Columbia River system and also furthered ecological awareness of how it might be mitigated. Among the examples Wriglesworth utilizes are “The Fish Counter at Bonneville” and *The Methow River Poems*. An important element of this essay is the role of public art in helping people understand the interdependence between humans and the natural world. Christian Knoeller’s chapter in *Reimagining Environmental History*, “Landscapes of the Past,” focuses on Stafford’s

poems that connect to the American Indian and the buffalo with the purpose of revealing how they convey ethical relations in the natural world. Scott Slovic’s essay in *Ecocritical Aesthetics*, “Toward Sustainable Aesthetics: The Poetry of Food, Sex, Water, Architecture, and Bicycle Riding,” uses Stafford’s poem “Maybe Alone on My Bike” (as well as poems by other poets) to align with the enchanting thesis of the book, restoring beauty to the quest for environmental equity.

In Stafford’s awareness of, his awe in, the natural energies around him as he rides his bike, Slovic finds an exemplary and sustainable response to being in the world.

In their introduction to *The Bioregional Imagination*, the editors define a bioregion as

literally and etymologically a “life place”—a unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries with a geographic, climactic, hydrological, and ecological character capable of supporting unique human communities.

Bioregions, they say, can be characterized by various features: the geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related identifiable lands forms (e.g., mountain ranges, prairies, or coastal zones) and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of the region.

This definition brings to mind the opening lines of “Lake Chelan”: “They call it regional, this relevance— / the deepest place we have.”

That thought is confirmed by the final sentence of the definition, borrowed from Robert L. Thayer, one of the contributors, “Most importantly, the bioregion is emerging as the most logical locus and scale for a sustainable, regenerative community to take root and to *take place*.” *The Bioregional Imagination* collects twenty-five essays, all of them with the mission of responding in some way to “the challenge of reconnecting socially-just human cultures in a sustainable manner to the region-scale ecosystems in which they are irrevocably embedded.” The editors articulate two goals for bioregionalism: The first: “that human identity may be constituted by our residence in a larger community of natural beings...rather than, or at least supplementary to, national, state, ethnic, or other more common bases of identity.” I think of those coyotes “circling around our truth” in “Outside” or how the Sandhill Cranes “extend our life” in “Watching Sandhill Cranes.” The second goal, which the editors link with literature, is to help people “imagine the places where they live and their relation to those places.” The editors write of bioregions as being “phenomenologically real” rather than “politically constructed.”

Wriglesworth’s essay traces the resistance to the damming of the Columbia River system through the work of a number of poets, Ed Edmo, Elizabeth Woody, and Sherman Alexie. He begins, though, with Stafford, who visited Bonneville Dam in 1951 and wrote “The Fish Counter at Bonneville” soon after. Wriglesworth sees this poem as being one of the first “signs of unrest that were emerging at the close of World War II.” Interestingly enough, he connects that unrest to people learning that the plutonium in the atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki was produced at the Hanford Engineer Works with power and water enabled by the Grand Coulee and Bonneville Dams. There is no evidence of this connection in the poem, but as Wriglesworth, an associate professor of English at St. Jerome University in Waterloo, Ontario, who received his MA at Portland State University, points out in his marvelous PhD thesis, *Geographies of Reclamation: Writing and Water in the Columbia River Basin, 1855-2009*¹, from which his essay was dramatically condensed, Stafford was aware of the connection. His poem “At the Bomb Testing Site,” written during the same period, had an early title of “Frenchman’s Flat,” “where plutonium produced at Hanford Nuclear Reserve was used to test 119 atomic bombs from 1951-58.”

This connection deepens the power of the poem but more clearly, as Wriglesworth writes, the poem “articulates social and ecological anxieties that were beginning to circulate throughout the Columbia River Basin,” adding, as well, that “the poem is a sharp critique of nationalist propaganda that was distributed by the Bonneville Power Administration during the 1940s.” That propaganda includes the songs Woody Guthrie composed for the BPA in 1941, including “Roll, Columbia, Roll On.”

It might be worth remembering, as I think Stafford knew, that Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal supported the projects that built nineteen hydroelectric dams on the main stems of the Columbia and the Snake, including Grand Coulee Dam, which cut off the salmon from over half of their spawning grounds and the Dalles Dam, which inundated Celillo Falls, a fishing ground that had been continually inhabited for twelve thousand years. From Stafford’s perspective, as Wriglesworth reads it, the Bonneville Dam

was a dragonlike machine created to “spit its flame” of “power” across nation as... As Stafford surmised, the fish counter at Bonneville dam, the salmon, and tourists shuttled through the visitors’ center were all participants in a federally managed “game” that “killed a river” and now herded “dumb shapes” and voiceless “Chinook souls” through man-made chambers of power.

The last line of the poem, “So many Chinook souls, so many Silverside,” encapsulates Stafford’s ecological ethics. An equation is made between the salmon, the silvers or silverside, as Stafford calls them (silver is another name for coho), and the Chinook people. The Chinook and other tribes, the Spokane, the Yakama, lived on the salmon; their cultures were based on it and bound up in the salmon runs. The dams severely damaged that relationship in the Columbia River system. Wriglesworth elaborates,

the rapid and uneven development of the watershed also came with high social and environmental price tags, particularly for Native Americans, who depended on key salmon-fishing sites for biological sustenance, economic stability, and religious practices.

Discussions of ethics traditionally do not include nonhumans or the more than human. Immanuel Kant thought ethics strictly a matter between rational beings. Ecological ethics, a relatively new field in western moral philosophy, involves imaginative empathy. A gently radical empathy gave Stafford the belief that the lost fishing and spawning grounds killed the river even though the impounded water still flowed. Stafford’s poem balances an ethical and ecological relationship, the Chinook and the salmon, the health of one enabling the health of the other. This sense of the essentiality of animals and non-rational beings to a fully realized life and culture is something Stafford understood. I am reminded of the lines, “What disregards people does people good” from “An Address to the Vacationers at Cape Lookout.” Something vital, ethical, ecological, and richly interdependent was disregarded in the damming of the Columbia River system and Stafford saw it, as Wriglesworth clarifies in his chapter, “William Stafford’s Labor of Words,”² in *Geographies of Reclamation*:

Stafford’s reference to “Chinook souls” and “ghosts of the game” illustrate his disgust toward the social economic injustices dealt out to Mid-Columbia River Indian tribes with the construction of New Deal dams.

The political thrust of the poem combines with the ecological aspect to emphasize a key insight that threads through his work. As he says in “Outside,”: “All we have taken into our keeping / ... belongs to a truth / greater than ours, in the animals’ keeping.”

Wriglesworth’s essay has two parts. The first explores through the “turnings of verse” of Edmo, Woody, and Stafford the questionable changes that have come to the Columbia River. The second part considers the role of poetry and



PHOTO BY IKA KUZNIK
The editor at Pateros in 2009.

public art through site-specific installations involving Stafford’s *The Methow River Poems* and Alexie’s “That Place Where the Ghosts of Salmon Jump,” a poem about the loss of salmon above Spokane Falls that is installed on the grounds of the Spokane Public Library.

Readers of this publication know about the seven Stafford poems installed along the Methow River, a tributary of the Columbia, in northern Washington. Wriglesworth considers only one of the poems in “The Poetics of Water,” “Time for Serenity, Anyone?” One can find a more lengthy discussion of the Methow River installations in “William Stafford and the U.S. Forest Service: Rewriting Place with *The Methow River Poems* as New Genre Public Art,” published in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 17.2 (March 2010). What makes the poems along the Methow River “new genre public art” is their socially transformative quality. They invite visitors, Wriglesworth maintains, “to consider the interplay between words, watersheds, and human bodies.” Wriglesworth thinks about these lines from “Time for Serenity, Anyone?” located at Pateros, a few miles from where the Methow meets the Columbia:

a sharp

reminder hits me: this world still is alive;
it stretches out there, shivering toward its own
creation, and I’m part of it.

Here Stafford personifies in a very characteristic and ecologically ethical way. Wriglesworth explains, “By describing the water as ‘shivering’ over a more predictable ‘shimmering,’ Stafford steers away from encountering an inanimate reflection. Instead, the river is alive, commingling with the reader’s body as it ‘stretches’ and is ‘shivering’ along the bank.” This is equivalent to the equation of the salmon and Chinook souls, an interplay that speaks to a wholeness, a unity. The paradoxical phrases in the poem like “tranquil/chaos” and “motionless turmoil,” Wriglesworth continues, “are not reconciled but left to stand as an ‘everything dance,’ a holistic and manifold presence that resists measurement and human possession.” This final observation is crucial, given that the damming of the Columbia, the impounding of the water, was an act of possession—and destruction.

I have stood at Pateros and read “Time for Serenity, Anyone?” which like all the signs stand next to an interpretive one telling about the ecology of the place. This one, “A Traveler’s Haven,” tells of the birds, fish, bugs, and protozoa that meet and interact where the

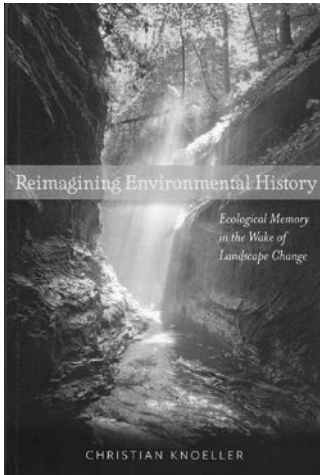
(cont. on p. 16)

(cont. from p. 15)

Methow slows to enter the Columbia above the Wells Dam. In fact, in the summer of 2009 my wife and I visited all of them and so I can concur with Wriglesworth's assessment in "'What the River Says': Reading William Stafford's *The Methow River Poems* as New Genre Public Art" that

When read as site-specific poetry, Stafford's voice stands along the Methow River as a message of sacred depth, a confluence of poetry and place that invites readers into an expansive current which bears witness to the interdependent relationship that humans share with the natural world.

At the bottom of his daily writing from September 7th, 1951, in which Stafford has scrawled the first draft of "The Fish Counter at Bonneville," one can make out among the scratch outs and corrections, these lines: "He thought I meant that power plant, and said / 'We light our city by that flame.' / I asked by what power the salmon came." The power by which the salmon came is that "sacred depth" and Wriglesworth, bless his heart, thinks, "there are good reasons to believe that bioregional poetry and public art will contribute to the ongoing re-creation" of that "sacred depth" and "the long contested watershed" of the Columbia River as well.



Christian Knoeller's very thoughtful book, *Reimagining Environmental History*, shares the concern of the *The Bioregional*

Imagination for ecological health and holistic ethics. And so it is not surprising to find him devoting a chapter, "Landscapes of the Past," in a section of his book called "Poets Expressing Ecological Sensibilities" to Stafford. The other poet in this section is Theodore Roethke. Knoeller, an associate professor of English at Purdue University, also has chapters on naturalists, ecological essayists, and Native-American novelists, John James Audubon, Scott Russell Sanders, Louis Erdrich, and Paul Gruchow among them.

Preventing species extinction and perpetuating diversity, indigenous plants, the erasure of wild landscape, landscape succession and restoration, and technological excess and its consequences are all of great matter to Knoeller. Like Wriglesworth, he believes restoration is possible and that recognition of the damage is vital. Knoeller's particular angle, his thesis, is that ecological memory, articulating the losses that change has wrought, is intrinsic to a solution. This is from his preface:

In the parlance of modern landscape restoration, *ecological memory* refers to the dynamic bioregional capacity of ecosystems to recover from disruption. Yet the concept of ecological memory can also be extended and reconstructed in cultural terms: our collective recognition of the environmental consequences and cumulative extent of landscape change.

Knoeller's purpose is to examine the writers in terms of their documentation, their witness, of "natural landscapes disrupted or altered entirely, places that inspired them aesthetically, scientifically,

and spiritually." The result of their skillful, empathetic, engaged attendance to environmental change, their "envisioning [of] environmental history," are conceptualizations of stewardship, of, essentially, how to care. How it was tells us how it could be. *Reimagining Environmental History* is about what isn't there, or barely there, traces. In his introduction Knoeller speaks about the abundance that once lived in the American landscape, the herds and flocks, the forests and grasses, referencing John Bakeless's heart breaking book, *America As Seen by Its First Explorers*, a catalogue of what Knoeller describes as "the remarkable abundance of verdant forests teeming with wildlife to watersheds incredibly rich in anadromous as well as freshwater fish." It's an investigation into "deep time" through tracing the layerings of transformations the landscape and its beings have endured.

As he begins his chapter discussing Stafford, Knoeller notices several edifying things about *The Way It Is*. The first is its "impressive geographical range," from the Plains to the West Coast, a great sweep of landscapes, including Alaska. He also notices that it

reads like a field guide: encompassing animals such as antelope, badger, cougar, coyote, deer, horse, muskrat, and wildcat, as well as birds such as cranes, killdeer, hawks, herons, and quail, and finally even fish, above all salmon.

Later, as the essay develops, we find another list:

Dozens of poems in *The Way It Is* refer to a variety of Indian peoples, including Apache, Blackfoot, Commanche, Cree, Klickitat, Modoc, Navajo, Nez Perce, Osage, Souix, Snake, Umpqua, and Yakima....

I hear in the juxtaposition of these enumerations of animals and tribes the ethical equations Stafford has already made between the salmon and the Chinook in "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" and the shiver and the river in "Time for Serenity, Anyone?" Speaking of the poem "Lake Wendoka," which ends, "*Arapaho, Kansa, Cheyenne, Cheyenne, Cheyenne*," Knoeller says, "Naming the various tribes... reads like an incantation, as if spoken by the earth itself." Knoeller wants to work with these kinds of ethical ecological relationships in Stafford's vision and he does so through considering Stafford's poems that engage Native-American ways.

In his preface, Knoeller tells us one of his themes, "essential to reading environmental history" is "the legacy of indigenous history and culture." This is how Stafford got into this book, Indians:

Stafford's many references to the indigenous peoples of North America—both their presence and absence—reflect an overall historical sensibility as well as philosophical stance, embracing an ethical relationship to the natural world.

Given these references, there has been some speculation as to whether Stafford was part Native American—the Crowfoot tribe and all that.³ Knoeller sets this speculation to rest, where it should be. But in doing so, the reader can see why it might have arisen:

Those who misconstrue Stafford's work as "Indian" writing perpetuate the assumption that sensibilities stereotypically associate with cultural identity can be attributed automatically to an author's personal ancestry. In truth, it is the poems, rather than the poet himself, that reflect indigenous values... such as reverence for the natural world and adherence to ethical relationships with every living thing.

This sense of ethical relationships that Stafford's engagement with Native Americans manifests comes from an egalitarian and historical

imagination. He had an innate, it would seem, respect for other cultures, other ways, other beings, human and more than human.

Stafford was certainly attracted to the “conventional images,” the “socially constructed symbol,” of Native Americans, the one that suggests “an often idealized degree of pre-contact abundance.” He says in an interview with Lars Nordström, the Swedish environmentalist, poet, literary historian, and former Clackamas County vintner, that Knoeller uses part of in this chapter, “They stand for difference, they stand for when the continent was unspoiled.” Stafford goes on to say, recognizing the tendency to idealize Indians, “the mystique of it has a shaky foundation...but the metaphorical significance of it is very important.” The rest of Nordström’s interview, not used by Knoeller, then flows into Stafford talking about the books he read as a young person, many of them about Indians. A bit later in this interview⁴ Nordström quotes

to Stafford something he said in another interview done with Kip Stratton for the *Greenfield Review* 7.3&4 in 1979: “the Indian element...stands for when the continent was cleaner and purer and better, more interesting.” Nordström comments that this sounds like something Gary Snyder would say and Stafford interjects, “Yes!” Nordström continues “when he [Snyder] argues that the life of pre-historic man, or before man was organized into cities, was actually superior to that of modern civilization.” “Yes,” Stafford says again and begins to talk about “unspoiled countryside.” In *Early Morning*, Kim Stafford, talking of his father’s affection for Kierkegaard, presents a passage from a letter his father sent him about Kierkegaard: “I take my stand on a primitiveness which I have no intention of changing to meet with the approval of the world.” This sense of a primitive, elemental, purer, cleaner world connects to why Stafford draws on the metaphor of indigenous peoples.

In that *Greenfield Review* interview, when asked about his interest in “Native American religion, culture, and writing” even before it was “in vogue,” Stafford says,

my father used to tell us: Remember, we are part Indian, he would say. And we tried to trace this back all the way to the Crowfoot in upstate New York and so on. It was partly that kind of interest...a feeling of interest and sympathy for the country and for natural things—birds, animals—and we always, partly because of the kind of literature we read, relate that to Indians in our country. So I always felt a special interest and involvement, along with all kids.

His father telling him, “we are part Indian” is like someone saying, “All men are brothers,” or speaking of the “human family.” It’s metaphorically true. When Stafford says his interest in Indians was something all kids have, he’s right. I can testify to the same fascination as a child. It reminds me of his thought in *Writing the Australian Crawl* that poetry “is something that everyone is caught up in, early, and a few just keep on doing.” Stafford just retained a poetic sensibility and his fascination with Indian ways. We’re all poets because it’s one of the destinies of language; we’re all part Indian because of American history and our ecological imaginations.

In this same interview, he says of “the Indian element” in his work, “when you are writing, you are ready to reach out for any of those extremes that help. And that was just one of those extremes that helped.” Stafford is speaking here of finding the metaphor of

a more connected and ethical way of life. In *Writing the World: Understanding William Stafford*, Judith Kitchen says, “He seems to be looking to those original inhabitants for some way to live in peace with the natural world, especially the American experience of it.” Kitchen’s observation links Stafford’s pacificism and his ecological ethics, which leads us to the buffalo. Knoeller tells us Stafford,

intuitively grasped the relationship between the integrity of ecosystems that support such keystone species and the cultural legacy of peoples who had so long relied on them for material sustenance, as well as indigenous identity.

We can see that his upbringing, his family, his reading, nurtured that intuition, which often manifested itself in poems that “connect environmental history and cultural memory explicitly by associating indigenous traditions with images of iconic animals.” Discussing salmon, the Chinook, and “The Fish Counter at Bonneville,” Knoeller reaches many of the same conclusions as Wriglesworth—the undermining of “age-old subsistence relationships” and the disruption of “migrations extending deep into geologic time.” Knoeller recognizes Stafford’s understanding of totemic animals, their metaphoric qualities “embodying virtues human hunters aspired to, such as stealth, endurance, strength, vision” (wolf, bear, cougar, eagle). “Yet for Stafford,” he declares, “the buffalo was a quintessential emblem of environmental history on the continent.”

Knoeller makes the mildly hyperbolic claim that Stafford’s poems “repeatedly invoke the legendary herds and their once seemingly unimaginable abundance, hunted to the very brink of extinction, only to be revived as livestock in our time.” He quotes these lines from “*Paso Por Aqui*”: “Comanches tell how the buffalo / wore down their own pass through these hills, / herds pouring over for years,” and spends two paragraphs on buffalo traces, telling us that the trails they made are “sometimes still traced by today’s highways.” That’s rather fascinating information and underscores the kind of knowledge the traces of deep time offer, a time when perhaps things were “purer, better, more interesting.”

Knoeller discusses the poems “By a River in Osage Country,” the wonderful “Report to Crazy Horse,” and we can see that Stafford was “an uneasy heir to the imperial project of westward expansion, settlement and development, with its corresponding destruction of the environment and displacement of Native American nations.” The decimation of the herds, of course, led to white settlement and the plowing up of the plains, which Stafford evokes in “Before It Burned Over: A Sioux Grass Chant,” a poem that speaks of the buffalo grass: “World carpet, robe, every leaf / to look at, brought forth by / buffalo, green place maker.” The loss of the buffalo grass, industrial farming, drought, led to the Dust Bowl and the exodusters, some of whom come to the Northwest during the New Deal. In *Geographies of Reclamation*, Wriglesworth writes,

Construction and excavation on the Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams began in 1933 and U.S. citizens were encouraged to view these monuments of concrete and steel as a source for jobs that could help ameliorate the Great Depression.

One could argue, and I believe Stafford softly would that the devastation of the buffalo herds is connected to that of the salmon

(cont. on p. 18)

(cont. from p. 17)

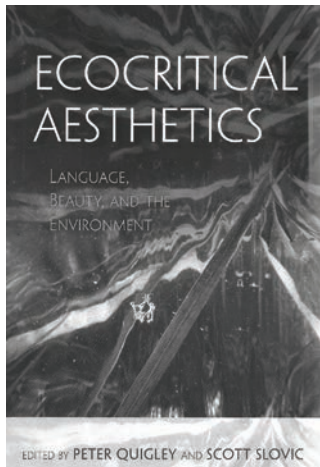
runs and the fate of the Chinook intertwined with that of the Sioux. The deeper problem, as Knoeller sees it, engaging Stafford to validate the claim, is a failure of ethics to extend beyond the human, to the more than human, to the ecological, the rivers, the grasses, the plants and animals. Knoeller shows that Stafford's "deep-seated affinity for indigenous peoples was predicated on shared concerns for ethical relations with the natural world" and those relations are guided by "our perceptions of the living earth around us...." At the end, Knoeller returns to Nordström, who sees Stafford's use of Indian material serving as "an emblem of an attitude toward wilderness... Stafford's poems attempt to articulate how we are to live correctly and responsibly within the natural order."

Ecocritical Aesthetics does something very important. It tries to retrieve beauty from critical disgrace and return it to a position of relevance in ecological thought. In doing so, beauty becomes an element in ecological ethics. "Something important has been lost," Peter Quigley tells us in his introduction, "in the inevitable jostling

and elbowing [in the field of critical theory] that has taken place during the past two decades: a concern for beauty."

The Marxists, the deconstructionists, the feminists, and other literary theorists question the consideration of beauty in cutting edge criticism. The Marxists dismiss beauty because of its "capitulation to capitalism." Deconstruction reads concepts of beauty as a "linguistic manifestation of power." Feminists question its "complicity with patriarchy." One of the results has been the disappearance of beauty

from critical theory except in its abstract and distancing form as aesthetics. Questioning the relationship of beauty to power is valid, but Quigley makes the equally valid point that "living, thinking, and working in a postmodern relativist vacuum isn't ultimately fulfilling, nor does it apparently reflect or connect to what is essential about the human constitution." In essence, humans respond to beauty, its sensory power, and it is the living body of aesthetics. We need it and in terms of ecology and ethics, "Beauty... may serve interests such as enlarging and sustaining our sense of wonder, establishing a heartfelt dedication to other species and more-than-human world, advancing and drawing attention to sociopolitical issues, and revealing and appreciating diverse human and multiple cultural perspectives and experiences." This is quite a claim but that is what this book argues in thirteen essays that discuss Robinson Jeffers, Henry David Thoreau, ecofeminist aesthetics, dystopias and utopias, teaching beauty and justice, the Tamil poet-saints, and Stafford in Scott Slovic's essay in which he features the poem "Maybe Alone on My Bike," "Toward Sustainable Aesthetics: The Poetry of Food, Sex, Water, Architecture, and Bicycle Riding." However, if you want to explore that claim further and the notion that, as Quigley phrases it, "beauty is the catalyst for caring which is the fundamental basis for ethics and justice," pick up Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*, a small and revelatory book. The relationship between justice, fairness, and



beauty seems to Quigley, Slovic, Scarry, and the other essayists, of fundamental ethical and ecological import. It was, I think, to Stafford as well, though none of those words appear much in his work, beauty especially ("Justice will takes us millions of intricate moves" from "Thinking for Berky" being perhaps the exception that proves the rule). I did come across, though, the passage on page 19 in one of his early daily writings.

Slovic, an editor of *ISLE*, uses poems by Gary Snyder, Ofelia Zepeda, Nanao Sakaki, and Stafford to explore the sustainable poem. In a "truly sustainable poem," Slovic believes, "the world exists for its own sake." Human concerns shed their dominion and the limits of knowledge nudge awareness toward awe. It is vital to Slovic's argument, though, that the awe be connected to "quotidian lifestyle themes," to uniting the aesthetic and the authentic and so Snyder's poem "Song of the Taste" allows him to discuss the delights of eating and sexuality: "Eating each other's seed / eating / ah, each other // Kissing the lover in the mouth of bread: / lip to lip." Zepeda's poem, "It Is Going to Rain," translated from the Tohono O'odham language of southern Arizona, closes: "Because I have not yet inhaled the sweet, wet dirt the winds bring. / ...there is no truth that it will rain." The speaker has heard it will rain but not felt it, connected bodily, viscerally to the beauty of the fact of water falling through the air. The earth is the architect of the microcosm where the poet stands in Sakaki's poem, "Specifications for Mr. Nanao Sakaki's House."

Slovic devotes the last section of his essay to Stafford's poem, which for him combines a sense of beauty, sustainability, and a "friendly bond with technology," providing what he calls, "an especially powerful example of energy poetry." The poem begins:

I listen, and the mountain lakes
hear snowflakes come on those winter wings
only owls are awake to see,
their radar gaze and furred ears
alert. In that stillness a meaning shakes;

Slovic sees in these lines something that marks ecological awareness, ethics, and Stafford's sensibility, "the essential perceptibility of the world—and the world's *own* alertness" (my italics). Stafford sees the world exist for its own sake—the salmon, the buffalo—and what has been forsaken is an ethical bond based on an imaginative empathy that sees connections and honors nonhuman beings as part of the greater self. The second stanza closes: "Think!— / the splendor of our life, the current unknown / as those mountains, the scene no one sees." Here is the awe founded on an awareness of the limits of knowledge, ecological humility allowing one to see.

Slovic, clearly an activist, a promoter of sustainable change, thinks "Maybe Alone on My Bike" "vividly illustrates the kind of language that makes it possible for the general public to take heart the message of sustainability." For Slovic this would include alternative ways and counter cultural lifestyles, less consumption, reimagining how we eat, use water, transport ourselves—thinking about the seventh generation, thinking about "participating in a world of mutual interactions."

Wriglesworth shows how Stafford saw an ethical failure, an inability to see the full circle and cycle of an ecological relationship. Knoeller reveals how Stafford's metaphorical tracings of ethical ecological relations indicate ways healthy environments happen. Slovic sees sustainable and beautiful solutions in Stafford's acts of metaphorical awareness in action. These three essays in these three fascinating and

important books allow me to infer that Stafford's ecological ethics are founded in a recognition of the world's own alertness, its own animated—animal, vegetable, mineral, microbe—intelligence and the intrinsic and sustaining value of living through that knowledge, furthered by the metaphor of so-called primitive cultures. Finally, these thoughtful writers and editors verify something important about William Stafford's poetry and thought—it is profoundly ecological, manifesting an ethical sensibility that gives life and light to this complex world, and we really need it.

End Notes

¹ Other writers whose work is used to explore the resistance to the treatment of the Columbia River and the Native American cultures connected to it are Theodore Winthrop, Raymond Carver, William Witherup, Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey, and Gloria Bird.

² "William Stafford's Labor of Words" discusses, in order to show his awareness of the big picture, the larger context, a number of Stafford's political poems: "They Suffer for Us," "Explaining the Big One," "Entering History," "At the Bomb Testing Site," and the biting and beautiful, "In the Oregon Country," the latter two written around the same time as "The Fish Counter at Bonneville."

³ See the "Bows and Arrows" chapter in *Early Morning* and Ralph Salisbury's "Bill Stafford and the Mutton Chop" in the second edition of *Kansas Poems*.

⁴ "Willingly Local: A Conversation with William Stafford about Regionalism and Northwest Poetry." Lake Oswego, December 20th, 1985.



Daily Writing 23 January 1951

Before winter sunrise there was a moonday
on the snow, like some far, weak day
when I am old and cannot see or hear.
There was no sound; still tracks, black
in the snow, came to our door. The walnut tree
stood crazy toward its part of the dim sky.
Dead asters in the blank garden
struggled upward where the frantic birds had
clung. At the end of the tracks was the garbage can.
Something was present everywhere. I guess it was
the cold. And something else, to which the eyes
while they could see
said beautiful.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

William Stafford's Ego

Responded to people in the park,
doing tai chi, opening their qi.
He was with them in that trance.

Early mornings he was the jay
hopping across macadam to eye
the carefully placed nut:
Cracked? No? Leave it
for the next set of wheels.
Yes—it worked again! Pick up
that kernel, fly into the trees.

In letters he spoke of little things:
children, wife, the trip he was
about to take. But the poems
are full of memories, way back.
Nothing small about those, growing
larger with the years. You can turn
them over for the lessons underneath.

Entering that door again and again,
you gather what's left after sleep,
and take it with you into the day.

JOHN FIEDLER

We come! New National FWS Advisors

PHOTO FROM VIDEO BY PHAEDRA GREENWOOD



Leslie Ullman, author of *Library of Small Happiness*, which is reviewed in these pages, and professor emerita at the University of Texas at El Paso, has graciously agreed to be one of The Friends of William Stafford's national advisors. Since 1981, Ullman has taught in the low residency MFA Program in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts. In 1978, Richard Hugo, Stafford's good friend, selected Ullman's poetry manuscript *Natural Histories* for the Yale Younger Poet's Prize, saying, "Her freedom is the ideal freedom of the poet...."

She is the author of three subsequent collections of poetry, *Slow Work Through Sand* (1998), co-winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize; *Dreams by No One's Daughter* (2008); and *Progress on the Subject of Immensity* (2013). Of the last book David Wojahn wrote, "For over thirty years now, Leslie Ullman has steadily refined a poetry of the most acute and lyrically precise mindfulness, of what one of her poems calls the 'greater alertness.'" Ullman was introduced to Stafford's work at the Iowa Writer's Workshop by Northwest poets Tess Gallagher and Laura Jensen and has taught his work over many years. In an email to this editor, she wrote, "He restores my faith that the mid-century writers who did so much to re-shape the direction of American poetry still are relevant, still should be made available to younger writers."

Ullman will be signing *Library of Small Happiness*, of which David Jauss wrote, "Not since William Stafford's quartet of meditations on the writing life has there been a book about the craft of poetry that is as ego-less, open-minded, intuitive, generous, encouraging, and just plain smart," at the Friends of William Stafford table at the AWP in Portland in March.



PHOTO BY ILKA KUZNIK

Fred Marchant, an emeritus professor of English at Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts and first director of the Suffolk Poetry Center, has also graciously agreed to accept the role of one of the Friends of William Stafford's national advisors. Marchant is the editor of *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford, 1937-1947* and was involved in the selection process for the poems in *The Way It Is*, Stafford's new and selected. In 1970 Marchant became one of the first officers ever to be honorably discharged as a conscientious objector from the U.S. Marine Corp and has been affiliated for many years with The William Joiner Institute for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

Marchant is the author of several books of poetry, *Tipping Point*, winner of the 1993 Washington Prize and recently reissued in a 20th anniversary edition; *Full Moon Boat* (Graywolf, 2000); *House on Water*, *House on Air* (Dedalus, 2002); *The Looking House* (Graywolf, 2009); and *Said Not Said* (Graywolf, 2017). He is also the co-translator (with Nguyen Ba Chung) of *From a Corner of My Yard* by Tran Dang Khoa, and *Con Dau Prison Songs* by Vo Que, both published in Hanoi.

Of *Looking House*, Janette Currie wrote in *Pleiades* that Marchant had created "a new anti-war poetics." Of *Said Not Said*, Mary Szybist, Lewis & Clark English professor and winner of the National Book Award for poetry fifty years after Stafford, said, "I love the unflagging generosity of these poems, a generosity that carries us through every heartbreak." Marchant will be at the AWP in Portland in March and signing *Another World Instead* at the Friends of William Stafford table.



Trout

a dream in the William Stafford Archives

I am in the cellar where everything is kept, the spikey, hand-written drafts, and “put-togethers”--manila folders stapled into booklets, the photos of poets in flat, gray, archival boxes, and your letters climbing out of their files everywhere, when I find-- I have been looking for it--the first letter I wrote to you, decades ago, and your gracious note in return, a carbon copy that as I read it again makes me feel as if your hand is on my arm, and I hear you speak softly, though I know what I hear is as much or only a better part of myself:

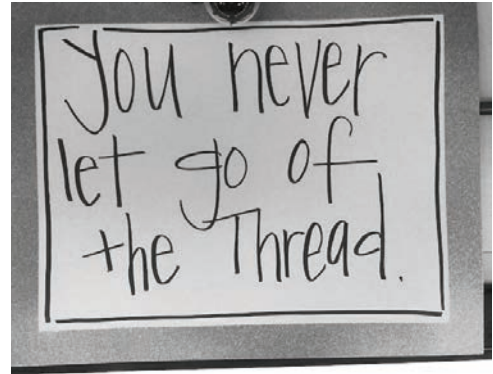
*we could be like trout holding
steady in the onrushing stream,
and as this is where we have chosen
to live, we will have to open*

*our eyes and face what the words
bring us, be grateful for the stones
beneath and what little we can see
of the sky and forests above;*

*now that we know who we are,
and what we hope to do, there is
no reason anymore to hurry,
the poem says in order to survive*

*in this place we will need to learn
first how to breathe underwater*

FRED MARCHANT
Reprinted From *Muddy River Review* 19 (Fall 2018)



Never Let Go of the Thread and Pass the Ball

By Tim Barnes

Last spring I received a short email from Kim Stafford telling me about a girl's basketball team from Oakland High School in Douglas County, coached by Don Witten, that was heading up the gorge to Pendleton for a showdown game. Kim included a photo of their cheer on the side of their bus, “You never let go of the thread.” I've been slow getting this issue of the FWSJ&NL together but I finally emailed Witten to ask him what happened, did they win?

The answer is yes and no but it's more interesting than that. Witten was in the habit of giving the team quotations after each practice, from John Wooden to Bob Dylan to William Stafford. Early in their season, after a series of hard-fought losses, the assistant coach, noticing their bruises and scrapes, their band-aids and braces, hoping to animate them, pointed out their hurts as evidence of their toughness and hard work. Being a poet as well as a coach, Witten stepped in with Stafford's metaphor, “It's like the thread, don't ever let it go.” The team went on to win the next fourteen of their sixteen games.

They went up the gorge to Pendleton to the 2A state championship but lost two out of three games. They did, however, Witten tells me, win the sportsmanship award at the tournament and have the second highest GPA for a 2A school. Bill was not the athletic type but he would have liked that story.

Contributors' Notes:

Originally from Hutchinson, KS, **Ben Rawlins** is a second-year PhD student at Baylor University. Concentrating on modern American poetry, Ben is interested in American poets of the early and mid-twentieth century. He has taught writing and literature at Belmont University, Lipscomb University, and Baylor University.

Jerry Williams is a Professor of Sociology living in Nacogdoches, Texas. His research and writing focus on phenomenological philosophy and the human relationship to the environment. His publications include sociological articles, philosophical essays, and poetry. A forthcoming collection of poetry examines his experiences growing up as the son of a gold miner in rural Eastern Oregon. “About the Future” reprinted from *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 24.3 (Summer 2017).

David Athey teaches creative writing at Palm Beach Atlantic University. Among his publications are a novel, *Danny Gospel*, and a book of poems, *Hunting and Gathering in Heaven*. “Another One for William Stafford” was reprinted from *The Iowa Review* 37.2 (2007).

John Fiedler: Stafford became important to me in the early 2000s and is the major influence on why I now write poetry—beginning with journal writing in the early mornings, of course! I'm fortunate to have been a “William Stafford Teaching Fellow,” in 2009. I think, working with Kim for a week at Lewis & Clark while a teacher at Neskowin Valley School. I'm still an elementary-school teacher, but have since moved to St. James Santiago School in Lincoln City, where the students (and sometimes the teachers) recite memorized poetry every Friday at lunch.

“Accretion”

Think practice without immediate result. The way water imperceptibly shapes shoreline, carves canyon from fissure, splits landmass into zones linked by blue swells. Or the way layer upon layer of camber builds over tree trunk, or calcium over living bone while some brain cells, honed to instinct by a history of mishaps, may increase. “Launch many expendable efforts,” said William Stafford, loved mentor and maker of poems. He meant opt for frequency of attempt. And trust that something unassailable will evolve the way run-off and tectonic shifts made eons of microscopic inroads on/below earth's surface before a single mountain made itself known.

LESLIE ULLMAN
Reprinted from *Poet Lore*

News, Notes, and Opportunities

Warrior Poet Prose: Eco-poets Top Twelve Books: This website is connected to *Earth First! Journal*. These books were selected by Dennis Fritzinger, the editor of the journal's poetry page, Armed with Visions. *Earth First!* is an ecocentric, biocentric publication now located in Grants Pass, Oregon. Of the twelve books Fritzinger lists and discusses, five include work by Stafford and three are by writers close to Stafford. Robert Bly's *News of the Universe: Poems of Two-Fold Consciousness* includes two Stafford poems; *Poems for a Small Planet: Contemporary American Nature Poetry*, edited by Robert Pack, has four; *Poetry Comes Up Where It Can*, edited by Brian Swann, has one; *Can Poetry Save the Earth* by John Felstiner (reviewed in this publication, issue 15.1) devotes a whole chapter to Stafford; and *Ecopoetry Anthology*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura Gray Street, has two and also finds Stafford discussed rather interestingly in Robert Hass's introductory essay, "American Ecopoetry." The books by writers important to Stafford as models, peers, and friends are *Robinson Jeffers: Selected Poems*; *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations*, and *Wild Song* by John Daniel. Google: Warrior Poet Prose.

ASLE: In the Animals' Keeping: Fighting Fires with William Stafford: This is the title of a panel presentation that will occur at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment's Biennial Conference in Davis, California, June 26-30th, 2019. The conference title, chosen before last summer, is Paradise on Fire. Panelists and their presentations are "Thinking Hard for Us All: Applying 'Veer Ecology' to William Stafford's 'Swerve,'" Loretta Johnson; "The Anima in Animals: William Stafford and the Poetics of Ensoulment," Zachary Bivins; "Stafford and Fire: The Tillamook Burn," James W. Armstrong; "Beaver's Fire: William Stafford's Ecological Ethics," Tim Barnes.

First Lines—A Poetry Column: Audrey Hackett says some very thoughtful things about Stafford and quotes from "Ask Me" in her column announcing *The Yellow Spring News* of Ohio's call for poems. Google: First Lines—A Poetry Column.

American Buddhist Poet Does Residency at Monastery in Nepal: Portland poet Willa Schneberg, a frequent participant in William Stafford events, spent a week in February of last year at the Dharmakirti Vihar Monastery in Kathmandu. She spoke to students, writers, and critics at various institutions during the week, culminating with a talk at the monastery, "The American Buddhist Poem," in which she read poems by Gary Snyder, Mary Oliver, Jane Hirshfield, and ended her talk with Stafford's "You Reading This, Be Ready." For more, google: dharma news willa schneberg.

Becca Lachman Reads from *A Ritual to Read Together*: The editor of *A Ritual to Read Together: Poems in Conversation with William Stafford* (reviewed in issue 19.1) has gone on the road with an Ohio performance poetry trio called Three Winks. Lachman joins Rikki Santer, Chuck Salmons, and Sandra Feen, to read selections from the anthology as part of the performance. Google: athens news concrete wink.

Stafford on His Bike: For his advisory editor profile for *Environmental Humanities*, an international, open access, online

journal that publishes interdisciplinary research on the environment, Scott Slovic, a professor of literature and the Environment at the University of Idaho and editor of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, chose to write about a photograph of Stafford on his bike (see p. 19). His profile connects with Slovic's essay reviewed in "Sightings II: Ecological Ethics." Google: editorial profile scott slovic.

An Evening of Poetry in Honor of William Stafford: Kim Stafford, the second Stafford to serve as Oregon's poet laureate will read and recite and raconteur at the Oswego Heritage House on June 15th at 7:30. He will be introduced by FWS board member Tim Barnes. The Oswego Heritage House is at 398 Tenth St. This event is sponsored by the Lake Oswego Library and the Friends of William Stafford.

FWS at AWP: The Friends of William Stafford will have a table (exhibit space T6077) at the Associated Writing Programs annual conference, which will be held in Portland at the Convention Center on March 27th-30th, 2019. Available for purchase to benefit FWS will be Paper Crane broadsides, gift cards by Ilka Kuznik, and books (see below). There will also be book signings: Thursday, March 28th, 11:00-12:00—Kim Stafford, *The Osage Orange Tree, Down in My Heart*, and possibly others; 1:30-2:30—Tim Barnes, *Everyone Out Here Knows: A Big Foot Tale* (a children's book based on a poem by Stafford); 3:00-4:00—Leslie Ullman, *Library of Small Happiness: Essays, Poems, and Exercises on the Craft of Poetry*; Friday, March 29th, 10:30-12:00 Vincent Wixon, *Sound of the Ax: Aphorisms and Poems by William Stafford* and Stafford videos and recordings; 1:30-3:00—Fred Marchant, *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford, 1937-1947*.

I want to send you my love, my greetings to your poetry. I have your books, and they never fail. I don't know what that means. But they never fail.

--James Wright, letter, October 5, 1967

PERMISSIONS

"To Another Visionary, John Clare" "Daily Writing 23 January 1951" are printed and "The Concealment: Ishi, the Last Wild Indian" is reprinted with permission of the Estate of William Stafford.

The essays by Ben Rawlins and Tim Barnes are used with the permission of the authors.

The drawing by Barbara Stafford of William Stafford on the first page is from the cover of *You and Some Other Characters*, Honey Brook Press, 1987.

The leaping salmon on p. 19 is from the title page of *West of Your City*, Talisman Press, 1960.

The poems "Trout," "Accretions," "William Stafford's Ego," "Another One for William Stafford," "About the Future," are used by permission of the authors.

The feather on pp. 13 & 20 was done by Donnell Hunter for *Fin, Feather, Fur*, Honeybrook Press, 1985.

The woodcut on p. 8 is by Elizabeth Coberly and part of *The Design of the Oriole*, Night Heron Press, 1977.

Linocut on p. 1 is by Robert Stow from the Paper Crane broadside of the poem, "The Way It Is."

This editor would like to thank Zach Selley and the staff at the William Stafford Archives for all their help.



BECOME A Friend of William Stafford

MISSION OF FWS

Our mission is to share William Stafford's work and further the spirit of his teaching.

WHY JOIN?

By joining the Friends of William Stafford, you become part of an international community of poetry lovers and writers with broad access to other poetry organizations and events. As a Friend, you'll receive a subscription to our biannual newsletter, filled with poetry and poetry news. In addition, your contribution supports the annual William Stafford Birthday Celebration Readings, the annual September poetry and potluck picnic, maintains our web site, www.williamstafford.org, and helps initiate new projects. We always welcome your volunteer services.

To join the Friends of William Stafford, renew your friendship, or make a donation, please fill out this form and mail to: FWS, P.O. Box 1925, Sisters, OR 97759. Checks payable to "Friends of William Stafford." Or WWW you can renew or join online at the FWS website.

JOIN OR RENEW:

(Please check ALL appropriate boxes)

- New Renewal Gift
- Patron \$100/yr Individual \$35/yr
- Family \$50/yr Student \$20/yr
- Lifetime \$500 Institutions \$50/yr

Please add \$5.00/year outside the U.S.

Name* _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country** _____

Email _____ Phone () _____

May we list this information (or any part of it) in a "friends-only" directory of which you will receive a copy? _____

*If this *friendship* is a gift, please add your name and address on the line below so that we may send an acknowledgement to the recipient and to you. **If you reside outside the United States, please add any additional postal codes we may need to ensure that you receive your mail.

Giver's Name & Address: _____

How did you hear of FWS?

Volunteer opportunities Organize poetry readings in your community; Event help; Distribute posters/flyers; Publicize events; Other (describe): _____

Welcome New Friends

January 2018–January 2019

- Sam Calhoun
- Ginger Hintz
- Robert Howard
- Bruce Silverman
- Armin Tolentino
- Sherry Zippy

If you have any questions about your membership status, please contact Helen Schmidling, helen@dsagroup.net

See
our redesigned
website
at
williamstafford.org

FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD
JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER©
is published two times a year.

EDITOR: Tim Barnes
tim.barnes63@gmail.com
Note: Anything in this newsletter that does not have a byline was written by the editor.

WEBMASTER: Dennis Schmidling

Special thanks to Ilka Kuznik

Please email comments, letters, news, and information on poetry events, awards, etc. to tim.barnes63@gmail.com or mail to Tim Barnes 3733 SE Alder St. Portland, OR 97214

friends of **WILLIAM STAFFORD**

P.O. Box 1925 Sisters, OR 97759

www.williamstafford.org | friends@williamstafford.org

The Eco-poetics of Home:
William Stafford and Kansas

By Ben Rawlins



Sightings:

I. Positionings

II. Ecological Ethics

By Tim Barnes



Stafford and the Anthropocene:
The 2018 ALA

Please notify sender of change of address



Water will talk if stirred.
--William Stafford

PHOTO BY LIKA KUZNIK