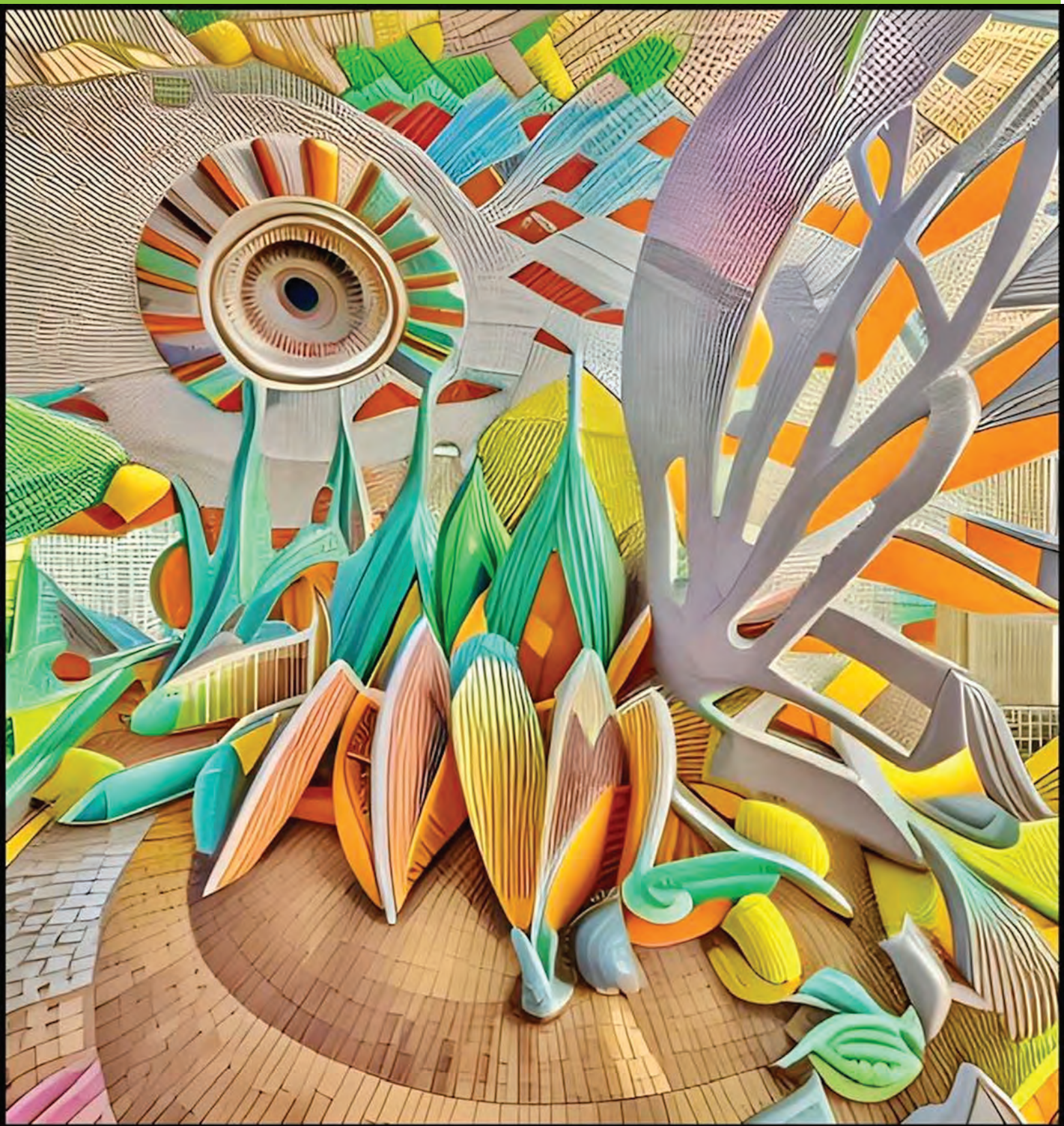


DREAMSTREETS 78



Winter 2024

Franetta McMillian

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Steven Leech

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in the 20th Century
Steven Leech
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Dreamstreets #78

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Cover by Franetta MacMillion

Illustration on p. 3 is by Franetta MacMillion.

Fat Black Girl In A Wheelchair #5



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Sights & Sounds from Dreamstreets

In the course of Dreamstreets' history, we've largely been a literary magazine, but after issue #51, it became a hybrid of print and digital media. Since issue #6 we had expanded to both sight and sound thanks to our sporadic presence on University of Delaware radio station WXDR/WVUD, as well as a video broadcast of local poet Phillip Bannowsky and the Delos String Quartet on WHYH television in 1984. After that we've added more video selections, all of which can be found as part of [Dreamstreets #26](#).

The archive of Dreamstreets' radio production is not limited to those found in *Dreamstreets #26*. Reference also includes *Dreamstreets #6*, the first audio edition on which many local poets read, and which was broadcast on radio. The original tapes are archived in Special Collections at the University of Delaware's Morris Library.

In the late 1980s/early 90s, new technology emerged regarding the use of magnetic tape for recording. Without going into detail, this new technology would render, over time, much of the recording tape useless, destroying already recorded programs or content. The defect is called "sticky shed syndrome." The problem infected whole swaths of the broadcast industry, causing costly remedies. In some cases, recordings were lost completely. Some of the recordings in the University's Library are vulnerable to the same fate. These include the original tapes of *Dreamstreets #6*, though some in the series were copied onto cassettes, and may have quality issues. Among other tape recordings is a series broadcast on radio entitled *Dreamstreets Premium*. These are one-hour programs—including some produced by local poet Douglas Morea—dramatic readings of short fiction, and a major play, *No Struggle, No Progress* by Mafundi, and performed in the studios of WVUD.

Also included are tapes called "Dreamstreets' Poem (or Poet) of the Week." These spots were meant to be "drop-ins" throughout WVUD's program schedule. These included those underrepresented in our pages: W.D. Snodgrass, Gibbons Ruark, Robert Reynolds, Jeanne Murray Walker, and others. Elements of these recordings have made their way into *Dreamstreets #26*.

Scattered about are even more audio and video recordings regarding Dreamstreets and not included in *Dreamstreets #26*. Some of them have survived in disparate locations. Here we'd like to bring them to followers of the Dreamstreets Project. Among them is a recording of the very [first Second Saturday Reading at O'Friel's Irish Pub](#) in Wilmington. Another Second Saturday Poets from [November 1994 features Douglas Morea](#), and there is a [Dreamstreets Reading at Klondike Kate's on February 28, 1993](#).

Also included here is a video of the [Dreamstreets' Poetry Reading held at the Delaware Art Museum in 2015](#) as part of the Museum's Dreamstreets Exhibit.

And thus, among the fine poetry within is yet more video in association with an article about Wilmington's *bête noire*, two time Delaware Poet Laureate David Hudson.

Also included is our acknowledgment of the 40th Anniversary of the Second Saturday Poetry Reading by briefly looking back to the early years. And last but by no mean least, even more video as George Stewart gives us a sample of his vintage video work. Enjoy scrolling through and clicking away.

— Steven Leech

Comments since . . .

Again, many thanks to you, Phillip (who sent me a link to #77) and *Dreamstreets* for taking my poems. The current issue is as excellent as ever, so I am honored to be in such company.

I can understand that you might want to "retire" after issue #80. I can only imagine all the work involved in editing and publishing the journal. Maybe someone with more energy than I possess will want to take up the baton. If not, 80 issues will have been a remarkable achievement that has given exposure to so many Delaware writers and visual artists.

All the best,
David Kozinski

It's a beautiful edition, thank you so much for including me!

C. Matthew Thomas

Thanks for the latest issue of DS. I thought the Rap poem was a trip.
Cheers and keep looking up!

Francis Poole

Don't cash it in for an arbitrary number of 80! I'm 83 and still teaching a poetry course at Temple U for seniors 50 and upwards. If the brain still works, what you do is your lifeblood and meaningful to others too.

Ray Greenblatt

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (Please have the courtesy to comply with these carefully. They are simple and make our job much easier.)

We accept literary submissions in any genre, including criticism, reporting, and commentary from and of concern to Delawareans and those in the Delaware Diaspora. We solicit our own visual art. Generally, we do not reprint previously published contemporary work although one previously published poem in a sequence of unpublished poems might be permissible; just make sure we know, so we can give credit. Our reading periods are year-round. We sometimes publish a summer issue curated without submissions.

Send up to 5 poems of no more than 5 pages, not including your cover page. For prose, 15 pages is roughly the limit although more may be acceptable if the work is

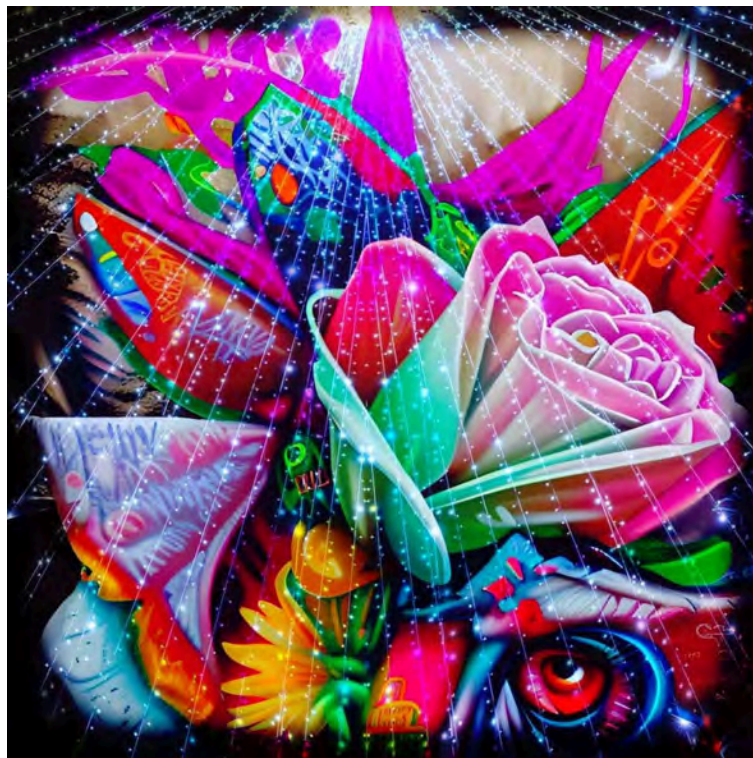
exceptional. For criticism and commentary, it's wise to query first. Begin no more than one poem on each page and make your stanza breaks clear.

Please send your work to: [dreamstreets\(dot\)press\(at\)gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:dreamstreets(dot)press(at)gmail(dot)com) AS A SINGLE

ATTACHED DOCUMENT in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx). PLEASE, DO NOT MAKE US OPEN AND KEEP TRACK OF SEVERAL DOCUMENTS. Write "Submission" in the email subject heading. IN YOUR SINGLE DOCUMENT, include a cover page with name, address, phone number, email, and a short bio of 50 words or less, and indicate your connection to Delaware. Those who need to use snail mail may address a hard copy of their submission to Dreamstreets Press, P. O. Box 4593, Newark, DE 19715. Double space prose, single space poetry as your standard, use 12-pt Times New Roman font, and remove extra space between paragraphs. Align text left, except for special or unusual typography, in which case, we may have to work with you to render it faithfully.

DON'T CAPITALIZE TITLES unless that is your intention.

Simultaneous submissions are fine, but please let us know in your cover letter if you are courting another and inform us immediately if your work becomes elsewhere engaged. We reserve first serial rights until publication, when all rights revert to the author. Our rights include electronic as well as print publication and magazine reprints. Please give *Dreamstreets* credit if you re-publish your work. Our editorial committee will review your work and get back to you before the next issue.



Franetta McMillian

The Eschaton Writers Meet the Public with "Dreamstreets .5"

When the last issue of DREAMSTREETS came out in the late winter of 1983, there was a lot of doubt as to whether the public would ever see or hear of DREAMSTREETS ever again. Many of the Eschaton Writers were beginning to feel sure they'd have to fend for themselves or go back to the garret.

At some meeting last summer the Eschaton Writers got together to decide what the next step would be. The decision that came out of much deliberations

was to take their act to the streets and bring their prose and poetry directly to the public. In short, the Eschaton Writers decided, the public would be offered an oral issue of DREAMSTREETS — or as some preferred, a half issue. ("You can come and partake, but you can't take it home with you"). The result was about a dozen public readings that were promoted as Dreamstreets .5.

Dreamstreets .5 began informally during a semi-public picnic on the afternoon of August 13, 1983 at the home of e. jean lanyon. The first official and public reading by the Eschaton Writers took place on August 31, 1983 at a noontime reading at the Wilmington Public Library. Reading at this first formal public reading were: Robert

Bohm, Patricia E. Eagan, e. jean lanyon, Steven Leech, Mafundi, and Douglas Morea.

One month later, on September 30, 1983, the same poets who had read at the Wilmington Library read again at the Newark Public Library. And because more time was provided at the September reading, additional poets took part in the program. These additional poets were: Lew Bennett, Bob Chartowich, Jameelah, and Suzanne Michelle.

On October 15, 1983, the Eschaton Writers shared a program at O'Friel's Irish Pub in Wilmington with the First State Writers. The reason for co-participating in a single program was to celebrate Poetry Day. Samuel Borton and Elizabeth Corey of First State Writers joined Eschaton Writers' Douglas Morea, Mafundi, Robert Bohm, Jameelah, Suzanne Michelle, and Patricia E. Eagan. E. jean lanyon and Steven Leech, who also participated in the October 15th reading at O'Friel's, were member of both the First State Writers and the Eschaton Writers.

The October 15th reading at O'Friel's produced two particularly good results. One result was that Samuel Borton decided to join the Eschaton Writers' activities. The other result was that Kevin Freel opened

up his establishment to regular public reading, and these have been occurring every second Saturday of the month since November 12, 1983.

The readings at O'Friel's have been one of the real success stories to come out of the Dreamstreets .5 effort. Each time the Eschaton Writers have had a reading at O'Friel's, the audience has got larger, nearly filling the pub to capacity.

On November 3, 1983, the Eschaton Writers ventured north of Wilmington and performed a public reading at the Concord Pike Public Library on Route 202. The Concord Pike Library event was the first reading to have a title: "And a Slice of Life". Reading at Concord Pike were Robert Bohm, Patricia E. Eagan, Steven Leech, Mafundi, Douglas Morea, as well as newcomers Samuel Borton and Beth Baker Bowers.

The Eschaton Writers accomplished a few "firsts" on December 3, 1983. At a reading commemorating Edgar Allan Poe, poetry was heard, for the first time in recent memory, within the hallowed walls of the Deer Park Tavern in Newark. Claiming a literary lagacy to Poe's visit to Newark in 1843, the Deer Park reading was entitled, "...it was in a bleak December..."

Another "first" accomplished by the Eschaton Writers at their December reading at the Deer Park was the reading of prose material in addition to poetry. Bob Davis and Betty Tew, both reading in public for the first time as part of Dreamstreets .5, read



Jameelah (above photo) listens to poetry at DREAMSTREETS picnic on August 13, 1983. Bob Chartowich and Theresa Restuccia are seen at right in photo. In the photo below, Bob Davis (at the left sitting on the ground) enjoys the sound of verse at DREAMSTREETS' August 1983 picnic at e. jean lanyon's house.

photos by Patricia E. Eagan



prose while Samuel Borton, Lew Bennett, e. jean lanyon, Beth Baker Bowers, Steven Leech, Patricia E. Eagan, and Douglas Morea read verse. Phil Bannowsky, who hosted the commemorative reading at the Deer Park, also read in public for the first time as part of the Dreamstreets .5



e. jean lanyon addresses audience at O'Friel's Irish Pub during Poetry Day Celebration on October 15, 1983.

photo by Patricia E. Eagan



Suzanne Michelle (above) and Sam Borton (below) read poetry as part of the first of the regular readings at O'Friel's on November 12, 1983.

photos by Patricia E. Eagan



This is a page from Dreamstreets #5. The article recounts the event that initiated the various public poetry readings that followed. Initially calling ourselves the Eschaton Writers, after the regular readings were established at O'Friel's Irish Pub in Wilmington on the second Saturday of the month the name we had given ourselves gradually became the 2nd Saturday Poets. Over the years, after O'Friel's went out of business, the venues changed. Among the various places in Wilmington where the 2nd Saturday Poetry Readings were held were Smokey's at 5th and Market Streets, and when Smokey's closed after someone shot up the place, moved nearby 4W5, formally The Wild Child, a block away at 5th and Shipley Streets. Several shorter term venues hosted the 2nd Saturday Poetry Readings until a pre-pandemic home was established at the Jackson Inn on the Lancaster Pike near North Dupont Road in the western edge of Wilmington.



The 2nd Saturday Poetry Reading wasn't the only venue. Below are photos from an additional reading shortly after our very first 2nd Saturday Poetry Reading at O'Friel's Irish Pub in 1983. These are from the only poetry reading held at the Deer Park Tavern in Newark. It was an auspicious occasion in honor of Edgar Allan Poe and his visit to Newark in December 1845. The Deer Park, perhaps like no other entity, serves in its unique way to keep the memory of Poe's connection to Newark, and for the local literary community, alive.



**Betty Tew (top photo),
Lew Bennett (2nd from
top), Douglas Morea(3rd
from top) and Phil
Bannowsky (bottom)
read at DREAM—
STREETS' Tribute to
Edgar Allan Poe at the
Deer Park on December
3, 1983.**

**photos by
Patricia E. Eagan**

2nd Saturday Poets' 40th Anniversary Fête



by
Phillip Bannowsky

2nd Saturday Poets, Delaware's longest continuously running poetry reading, celebrated its 40th anniversary on October 14, 2023 at the Chancery Market in the Hercules Building in Wilmington. All the poets still alive from that first reading returned for a warm and sentimental reunion.

Inaugurated at O'Friel's Irish Pub on World and National Poetry Day, October 15, 1983, the reading proved abiding though migratory. Venues over the years include Smokey's, the Logan House, Cavanaugh's, 4W5 Cafe/Wild Child, Lantana Cafe, Loma Café, Sheanigan's, and ending with the now-shuttered Jackson Inn, when it retreated to Zoom meetups in the throws of the COVID pandemic.

Hosted originally by Delaware's longest-serving Poet Laureate e. jean lanyon with Steven Leech, the reading was one of two projects established by the Eschaton Writers, a cohort of '60s survivors that had been meeting salon style in various private homes since the '70s. Their other project was *Dreamstreets* magazine, originally produced by John Hickey and Lou Bennett, with its first issue published in 1977.

An archived article from *Dreamstreet* 5—republished in this issue—explains how the first 2nd Saturday was actually on a 3rd Saturday in 1983, but O'Friel's publican Kevin Freel invited the poets to return on every second Saturday going forward.

Past hosts of 2nd Saturday Poets include Beverly Andrus, Suzanne Michell, Greg Simon, Joe Allen, Bob



Front table from left are 2nd Saturday Luminaries: e. jean lanyon, David Kozinski, Suzanne Michell, & Steven Leech. Behind jean are Douglas Morea & spouse Karen Chellquist; standing over her is Dallas Gant and in front of Bob Bohm. Behind Suzanne is Cynthia Ventreska, Marty Jones, & Delaware Call scribe Jordan Howell. Photo by Bert Moniz



Suzanne Michell reads from her work. Photo by Bert Moniz

Davis, Russ Reese, and lastly, Barbara Gray. Ms. Gray, who kept us going on Zoom, is associated with the Delaware Literary Connection (DLC), which will continue to support literary workshops and sponsored events but with a stronger focus on prose. Current empresarios are Phillip Bannowsky and Bert Moniz.

The 1983 inaugural poets who returned included long-serving Delaware Poet Laureate Emerita e. jean lanyon, *Dreamstreets* Executive Editor Steven Leech, revolutionary poet Bob Bohm, New York Transit designer Suzanne Michelle, and *New Yorker*-published poet Douglas Morea. The mellifluous Sam Borton and 1st State Writers stalwart Elizabeth Corey have unfortunately passed. 2nd Saturday Poets is planning a National Poetry Month memorial on April 13, 2024 for all 2nd Saturday regulars who have joined the immortals.

Undaunted by persistent rain, an appreciative au-



Steven Leech recites his work under the gaze of e. jean lanyon. Photo by Karen Chellquist

Bullwinkle TV show. Feasting on food court fare and potables from the bar, a good time was had by all.

Incidentally, the [first 2nd Saturday Poets](#) performance was audio recorded and is available online.



*Robert Bohm holds up his latest collection of poems, **Nightmares That Leave Grease Stains on Psych Ward Walls**. Photo by Bert Moniz*

dience gathered to celebrate and contribute to the open reading. Host Phillip Bannowsky opened with a recitation of Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Swing," which he had first heard recited by Bullwinkle on the *Rocky and*



Delaware Poet Laureate Emerita and 2nd Saturday Poets founder e. jean lanyon recounts the history of 2nd Saturday and reads from her works. Photo by Bert Moniz

Nightmares that leave grease stains on psyche ward walls

Poems on endless war by Robert Bohm



<https://bookshop.org/p/books/nightmares-that-leave-grease-stains-on-psych-ward-walls-poems-on-endless-war-robert-bohm/20238721?ean=9781959556169>

Douglas Morea

From

Whale Songs of the Oracle as Chanted Low by the Priestess

to her pilgrim

ONE:

Could Somebody Please Stop Stepping on That
Poor Woman's Toe?

And then my father laughed
again
for the foreverth time
at that same joke, his favorite, as he drove the car on, leaving
the rest of the opera on the car radio
to me.

My father is long gone.
But, his old lady
of the opera, and her ear-stubbing toe, still
walk all over me,
even now, as I drive my own car my way, listening
to talk radio.

TWO:

The Selfhood Paradox

Hey, I'm me.
So
I am special. Right?
As in of course I get to be right here, while you
are somewhere else.
So there.

But I'm spooked.
Yes I can too stretch my here out over there to

visit you. But only till I lose it and I
snap
back to my old here
back here.
What dark sun here shines that I can't shut
but as my own shadow out?
Why can't I somehow get to have it all?

Dammit. You get
to go on out, way out over there
all the any old time, by yourself, on your sweet lone.
And share my sweet here shine too?
Ha?

Ha?
Lucky special you?

Oh sure, I get to dwell here at the heart of all creation.
But only at this price: that all the rest, the rippling
brawn of galaxies, parties on
without me.

THREE:
To Out a Guiding Light

The philosopher in the Ivory Tower
pondered, "I think
therefore I am."

Then he went downstairs, out the door, and drove away,
into the rainy night. Half
way home, he
pondered, "I think
I locked the door to the Tower,
therefore I am
not sure."

FOUR;
Theory of Mind

Me too—I have my own theory of that.
My theory is: Ghosts are real.
Meanwhile
never mind all them ghost busters and other smart

ass professionals who nay
like negative cattle, because:

What is a ghost?"

I ask you.

Pretending you're here, so

I'm really asking myself. And my answer is: "A ghost
is a chunk of me that got busted

off and

kicked out—poor thing. Just wants
to come back home."

So it haunts me.

Meanwhile—I just feel it—somewhere out
in the near bushes, a someone lurks,
pretending he is not me.

FIVE:

Paper Cup at the Last Supper?

Yes, betrayal, if

Judas showed up with a paper cup.

But why?

Should wine call out for a chalice chaser,
as if now not sweet enough?

Let then the sting of the bee, says Judas, be honey's licks
over nectar.

Let sour kick up, wake up all sweet having from its dreams.

So raised he the bar on sweetness up.

So now the weight of the world is chosen lofted
in a brazen cup

Steven Koelsch

Sitting

The tiny room of solitude
means I will never be disturbed,
except by my self, drowning
my soul in the black water.
You are the ocean in my heart,
floating lies longing for a better day;
while locked out of life by sobbing
no one has ever heard, or imagined.
Still, it is so quiet here,
we listen to our minds twitter
mistakenly believing that voice is us.
Sitting in the mindless room:
there is really no 'I',
there is only a crowd of 'we.'

Passed On

A quaint way to refer to the end of life.
You might also use these simple words
as a way of looking forward, past life,
which is all you know, into the unknowable.
Friends and family will let others know,
"He has passed." No longer Here, gone
away, not going to show no more . . . no mo'.
Perhaps where you are now you will hear
the conversation, and no longer care:
imagine instead you are covered in bliss
and no longer bound by time. Endless!
Through an open door that only allows
one direction, you scream for a glimpse,
but you no longer have eyes or a throat.
You no longer feel the breeze because
you have become the breeze.

Jeffrey Little

The Retirement of Delay

(after Karoline Wilczek)

The barge made port of call and molted.
All we knew was the Yellow. Mummers
dropped down like spiders from the sky.
Somebody told me "This is Lichtenstein,

the retirement of delay." Who was I to
argue? Cymbals will not work here. I'd
memorized all thirteen of the theorems
of Coherence but I still couldn't find my

car. I would die naked and unresolved.
Like a lobster. Lines formed overnight.
For everything. Boutonnieres and bow
saws and all manner of mystical shit. It

was either weather, or war. The Order
of the Pharaonic Jesters appeared, and
in finest fettle mirrored our every step
with their impossible precision, curling

like clouds of vapors through the alleys,
then through the brick itself. A gris-gris
man sat inside of his hot dog cart taking
inventory of his amulets. I couldn't spot

the bird that was our bus to the Yellow.
The moon kept dropping down, buzzing,
like an X-ray. I could feel it, pulling me
apart. Our bones had nowhere to hide.

Fire Solves for X

I walked into the snowdrift and counted to ten. Its heat was inexplicably Chekhovian, yet more intense. Mapping ley lines is predicated upon scale. The piano player sat hidden on a bench

behind an opaque screen playing an amalgam of ragtime and swank post-Euclidean blues. It was furniture music with a curious mouthfeel. Everything seemed reclusive. Even the lamps

refused my doe-eyed entreaties and simply sat there coldly glowing. Somehow the novitiates had broken free again, inching across the deck of the icebound ship with their rubber-handled

safety scissors and mossy unkempt eyes. Was there anyone still among us who was oblivious to the birds? Brilliant shrieking running things. A survey was authorized and it was clear, none

of us understood what a remainder was or had a clue about dancing in clogs, who was I kidding, it was the clouds, it was always the clouds. We formed a line then counted off in threes. Shirts

and skins and something else entirely. Behind the screen the piano began playing an insistent bass-heavy vamp, it had angles, and it sounded like a fire that was nearly ready to make a move.

Monk's Mood

My life as a mad orthodox monk ended in obloquy, and disgrace. At the staff picnic, small yellow dogs lounged in the cinematic drone of the vapor lamps, vigilant, but outwardly calm. A reversible hairshirt

was a bridge too far. As per company protocol she was followed. To the office. At the butcher's shop. Even in the sparkling toilet at the club. She carried a small yellow dog in a seal skin purse that smelled

of porridge and woodsy green soap. I should have known better than to trust in the mail. Everywhere I looked, handbags. Listen closely. She can almost feel the air. Small yellow dogs stalk the boulevards

of the mind. I told them the calculations fell within the scope of my remit, yet all they needed from me was one small yellow dog. Run, I said to her, but it was over. Then the birds returned. Then the stars.

Nina Bennett

Bad to the Bone

In memory of Hank Carter, 1950-2021

When your friends gather at the state park
to send you off into an autumn sky
crisp as a Granny Smith apple, I don't see
your widow and son, your five grandchildren,
brother and sister. As the musicians lift
their instruments to rock you on your way,
I don't see you stride with Lonesome George
and the Destroyers across venues worldwide,
open for the Stones, own the crowd at Live Aid 1985.
No. I see you on the stage of the Stone Balloon,
playing with Club Phred, closing night townie gig.
You leapt onto a speaker and your sax let loose
the intro to "Tender Years" that haunts Main St.

St. Stephen's Green, Dublin

Tucked into the northwest corner
of the gardens, scented plants labeled
in Braille encourage visitors to touch,
to smell. A teenage girl, thick braid
slung over her shoulder, kneels. Fingers
dance from plaque to plaque, her face

luminous with discovery.
I long to learn you like that,
stand before you, eyes closed,
fingertips like whispers across your face,
discover the razor nick, the firm
edge of your jaw, know the shape
of your lips, the way your smile
curves the corner of your mouth.
Read your face over and over
like the pages of a favorite book.

Lower Falls Trail, Yellowstone

Narrow back-country trail climbs
through trees splashed by sunlight.
A thin blanket of slick pine needles covers
packed dirt hidden from the sun's reach.
My brother pauses, waits for vertigo to pass.
Mushrooms peek out of dense foliage
along the switchbacks. A sign warns
we are entering bear territory.
The trail blossoms into a clearing,
muffled roar of rushing water
as the falls explode into mist
three hundred feet below.
I adjust camera settings. Visible
on the screen is my brother,
perched on the crumbling edge, no
guard rail, no flat-topped boulders,
no trees to obstruct his view.
My brother, a brain tumor on the balance
portion of his eighth nerve, my brother
who leans against street corner signposts
when waiting for the walk signal, silhouetted
in the afternoon light that illuminates
ochre stained canyon walls.

The Patron Saint of Baynard Boulevard: the Life and Times of Wilmington Poet David Hudson

Steven Leech



[One other video presented here](#) is one recorded by our friend Francis Poole. It is a posthumous tour of two-time Delaware Poet Laureate David Hudson home on West 21st Street. Hudson died on January 2, 2003, and the video was made, obviously, in the spring. The video serves as a glimpse into his lifestyle. Included in the video are Tim Murray, Head of Special Collections. Rebecca Johnson-Melvin, who acts as Dreamstreets' custodian in Special Collections at the University of Delaware Library, Hamid Azartouz, the executor of David's estate, and possibly the ghost of David Hudson.

It's been said that if you scratch the surface of a saint, you'll find a sinner underneath. By the same token, the assumption could be made that if you scratch the surface of a sinner, you might find a saint underneath.

David Hudson, a former Delaware Poet Laureate, who died on January 2, 2003, might be a good example.

There has been much said about David Hudson, the sinner. Could there have been a saint, albeit slightly tarnished, underneath? One local artist I know once described him as a "brutal old man." On one occasion, when David and I both happened to be participating in the first Delaware Authors' Day in 1994, two local poets, knowing I had known David and that I bore no malice toward him, asked me to introduce them to him. David barely acknowledged my presence. He was angry that I had earned an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts in 1993. However, he accepted my introductions. Realizing David was not pleased with my presence, I walked away from those introductions after hearing David ask, "Do you have any questions to ask me?" I didn't stick around to hear what those questions might be. Later, one of those two local poets described him to me as seeming, "hallucinatory and cadaverous."

David Hudson's reputation always preceded him, not for the poems he wrote, which were unknown to most, but because he was considered a kind of a *bête noire* of the local literary scene. His biggest splash of notoriety occurred in May 1979 when local poet and artist e. jean lanyon unseated him as Poet Laureate.

Delaware is a small place. If you've lived here all your life and if your parents and family lived here all their lives before you, Delaware can be an even smaller place. People are more likely to learn things about one another when they live in an even smaller place; in that small piece of land divided by the arc that marks the state's northern border and the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. It is a piece of land with the two major Delaware cities of Wilmington and Newark, which defines northern New Castle County.

Memories stretch way back to when old men and mature ladies were once kids together in high school. David went to Wilmington High School in the early 1930s, when my father and one of my aunts and some of my uncles were his classmates. If there are secrets to be kept and gossip to be told, when your name pops up in the newspaper or on radio, it could lead to gossip that loosens that grip of secrecy. If ever your name falls into this small public domain of northern New Castle County, you had better measure your words wisely, especially when those words are spoken for the public record. For someone who was good at measuring his words on paper, David was not always wise in measuring his words in an impromptu manner, especially when the one who was asking the questions for the newspaper was also once a kid attending Wilmington High School and who knew all the gossip and many old secrets.

Former Wilmington Morning News columnist Bill Frank also went to Wilmington High School, albeit a few years before David Hudson. It was Bill Frank who wrote an infamous article, an article that earned for David Hudson a heap of seething hatred.

Both Hudson and Frank were players known to one another in this small arena. Bill Frank knew David Hudson only too well. He knew David's buttons and he knew how to push them, and he knew a good story sold newspapers. Bill Frank probably knew that David Hudson would fly off the handle if asked a leading question. David's answer, as quoted in the News Journal on Saturday, May 26, 1979, when Bill Frank asked him that question about e. jean lanyon's appointment as Poet Laureate, will go down in infamy, "Jean Lanyon is a good water colorist but a poet? Umph! She's nothing but a piddling versifier."

Presumably, in the next breath, David realized the damage he had just caused himself. Later in the article, Bill Frank says as much when he reports that Hudson, "asked that his further uncomplimentary remarks about her not be published."

As a reporter, when interviewing someone like David Hudson, it's easy to write an article about someone you may not like. It's easy to conclude that Bill Frank did not much like David Hudson. There may have been plenty of local demographic space in which to store up animosities. Both Bill Frank and David Hudson were two people you didn't want to piss off and they may have pissed each other off somewhere along the way in Delaware's cultural past.

Bill Frank, in that same article, was obviously more kind to e. jean lanyon, and jean was obviously more prudent in measuring her words. Like David Hudson and Bill Frank, e. jean was also a Wilmington High School alumna. However, Bill Frank did share with readers an oblique dig at David Hudson, which he may have shared with lanyon. While

not quoting e. jean lanyon directly, he said, “Ms. Lanyon declined to express her opinion of Hudson but did give the impression it would be difficult to compose a eulogy in his praise.”

In the late 1940s, when peacetime promised a post war renewal of a cultural scene begun at the onset of the 20th century, Wilmington was a vibrant metropolis. In the late 1940s Wilmington had seven movie theaters on Market Street and three others on downtown streets nearby. There had been a wide variety of stores on Market Street like Braunstein’s, Kresge’s, Wilmington Dry Goods, and Woolworth’s with its modern chrome and polished lunch counter. None of those stores remain. In the early 1950’s the names of local merchants, like Gavotos, Gasser and Kiel were familiar to their neighbors along Baynard Boulevard, Wilmington’s avenue of burgeoning store owners and newly rich.

Wilmington’s music had grown out of the big band era. Name bands like those of Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman and Count Basie had played enough gigs in Wilmington to inspire artists at small venues like the Club Harlem, the Spot and the Circle Bar on the city’s eastside, encouraging a whole generation of Wilmington jazz musicians with names like Daisy Winchester, Claude and Artie Wells, Betty Roché and Coleman Allen. Even though Wilmington had its Jim Crow laws, by day everyone mingled on Market Street. It was into this world that David Hudson, a struggling and dedicated poet from his earliest years in Wilmington, had lived.

Wilmington was a growing cultural hotbed, from that day in 1903 when Alice Dunbar Nelson first set foot on Wilmington’s streets to those heady pre World War II days when Wilmington’s best artists, like Edward Loper, William D. White, Edward Grant and others were making a living from the Works Progress Administration, decorating the public’s buildings and raising the public consciousness. It was a time when the names of local artists like Gayle Hoskins, Frank Schoonover and Jeannette Slocomb Edwards were on the lips of everyone in Wilmington’s cultural community. It was into this world that David Hudson, a struggling and dedicated poet from his earliest years in Wilmington, had emerged as a young poet.

Other Wilmington writers and poets besides Alice Dunbar Nelson were also garnering national reputations and critical acclaim during the 1920s and 1930s. Among the best- known Wilmington area novelists were Christopher Ward, Henry Seidel Canby, Anne Parrish and her brother Dillwyn. Novelists Charles Wertenbaker and his brother Green Peyton, an early pioneer of modern science fiction, both spent their formative years in the very downtown streets we walk today. Another set of sibling novelists from Wilmington was Mary and John Biggs, Jr. It was John who encouraged his college chum, F. Scott Fitzgerald, to come to Wilmington to live and work for a couple of years beginning in 1927. Wilmington had its own Pulitzer Prize novelist, John P. Marquand, whose *The Late George Apley* earned him the prize in 1938. Wilmington poets like James Whaler and Frank Slocomb had begun to attract critical notice, and by the mid 1930s the Wilmington Music and Poetry Society had been founded to help accommodate the city’s

budding literary artists, and had marked the long forgotten grave at 8th & Shipley streets of Delaware's first famous poet, John Lofland. It was into this world that David Hudson, a struggling and dedicated poet from his earliest years in Wilmington, strove to make his cultural mark. Along the way he had encountered nearly all the cultural personae who had populated the city.

By the late 1940s, after the war, much of Wilmington's recent cultural past was still intact, along with the work whistles that could still be heard from the factories, ship yards and mills of Wilmington's still bristling industries. Trackless trolleys crisscrossed the city and stretched out to surrounding suburbs, and many of Wilmington's artists, poets and writers were becoming settled while others had moved to far-flung cities to continue their careers. It was into this world that David Hudson remained and developed his reputation as a poet and later as political activist and colorful curmudgeon.



David Hudson was part of the same neighborhood in the old 9th Ward of Wilmington as my mother and her brothers and sisters. He was a friend of my mother's family. As mentioned earlier, David and three of my uncles and an older aunt were all classmates at Wilmington High School when it was located on Delaware Avenue near Monroe Street. My father was also one of David's classmates at Wilmington High School, but David was one of those youngsters from whom many boys kept their distance for fear of being tainted with an unsavory reputation. Back then the euphemism was the word "fairy." The crowd David hung with was a bit exclusive anyway, in spite the abject poverty of David's family. Classical music and literature were the common interests. An old mutual friend and classmate of David's, Lee Broughton, was among David's old high school circle.

Back in the early to mid 1930s, when David attended Wilmington High School, he was known as "Tommy" to his friends. Lee Broughton told me recently that she used to fear for Tommy Hudson when he would go off to cruise in Brandywine Park looking for special friends. Lee told me that David couldn't understand back then the bigotry connected with his propensity – to borrow another euphemism of the day – to be "swishy." Nevertheless, David's and Lee's small circle of friends would often visit with David at his family's house at 833 Vandever Avenue. Upstairs in David's room, after school, he and his friends would listen to classical and opera music on his record player. He and his friends couldn't make too much noise because downstairs in the darkened parlor David's father, who had once work for the Pennsylvania Railroad, was dying of tuberculosis.

I first met David Hudson somewhere in the early to mid 1960s, about six or seven years after I had begun to seriously write poetry and fiction. Delaware's Poet Laureate for 1962, Marguerite Weaver, lived across the street from my mother's family stores, Gasser's Pharmacy and Gasser's Market, at 34th and Washington Streets. I had been

working summer jobs at the drugstore soda fountain during my high school years. By 1964 I had written enough poetry to garner an impressive volume of poems. I showed them to Marguerite Weaver, who had also been an old family friend and retired teacher who had actually taught my mother at P. S. duPont High School in the late 1930s, and she suggested that David Hudson ought to see my poetry as well.

Marguerite arranged a meeting for me at her house with herself, David and Edwin Sawdon, another of Wilmington's venerable poets and David's longtime friend. In the early 1960s the only visible poets in northern Delaware were those, like David and Marguerite, who had begun their careers before World War II. They had been a part of the local literati that included many of the old Federal Writers Project writers from the Roosevelt era Works Progress Administration. In fact, my father was among those FWP writers. That evening when I first met David Hudson at Marguerite Weaver's house, I was the youngest of the gathering. I felt like the young new upstart poet in Wilmington with my stack of poems full of angst and melancholy. There I was, among some of the elite literary establishment, as I had understood it to be, showing and reading my poems to those who had helped to forge the creation of our local 20th century literary art. Not only had there been one Delaware Poet Laureate at this auspicious gathering but two; David Hudson had been a Delaware Poet Laureate between 1956 and 1960. David showed some mild interest in my work. Edwin sat there like a sphinx with Marguerite the only one to express any real enthusiasm in my work. Perhaps David and Edwin had their reasons for their reserve, though David offered words of encouragement. The encounter ended inconclusively.

Late in 1969, after I got some years of college under my belt and a belly full of the Vietnam War, I decided the community needed a literary magazine. I had planned to call the magazine Allsystems. I had solicited and received poems from some local poets who I knew, including Robert Chartowich and Gibbons Ruark. I had also secured some examples of local photographic and graphic art. Knowing that David Hudson was also a known poet I asked if I could also publish some of his poetry. David was reticent about forking over any of his poetry, but he did not reject the idea. At the time he was more interested in talking about his own old project concerning the writing of poetry in Basic English.

David had garnered a reputation for writing poetry using Basic English, which used a wordlist of 850 words that was used to teach English as a second language to new arrivals to the United States. We had tentatively agreed that Allsystems could include an article about the challenge of composing poetry under the constraints imposed by a limited number of words.

Needless to say, the Allsystems project failed to get start up funding from the newly established Delaware Arts Council, so I bitterly left Delaware to kick around the United States for a couple of years. I returned in 1973 and began the career that ultimately led to my involvement with Dreamstreets.

In the early 1970s I got a glance at David's community activist side. Back then developers wanted to line Baynard Boulevard, where my mother's family had their home, with high-rise apartment buildings. Having just arrived back in Wilmington from my wanderings, I was living with my mother, uncle and grandmother at their house between 21st and 22nd Streets on "the Boulevard." David Hudson and Edwin Sawdon lived around the corner on West 21st Street.

I remember the controversy and the conversations in my grandmother's household concerning the impending changes these developers wanted to bring to Baynard Boulevard. The controversy was sparked by David Hudson's activism. He was adamant about stopping the plans of those developers and preserving the integrity of the neighborhood. My Uncle Frank had been in agreement with the plans of the developers. The dollar signs were rolling in his eyes. At first my grandmother went along with my uncle. David's main contention was that building high-rise apartment buildings would ruin the neighborhood by creating parking and automobile traffic problems. In addition, claimed David, development would ruin the unique historic and cultural charm and innate beauty of the neighborhood. David fought hard to save Baynard Boulevard by gathering signatures on petitions and going to city council meetings. In the end, David won the battle with the exception of a single high rise on 18th Street between Baynard Boulevard and Washington Street. For the most part the original character of the neighborhood had been saved.

Later, my grandmother confided to me that she felt David was right all along in spite of the arm-twisting from my Uncle Frank, and that she thought David was sincerely looking out for the interests of the community.

David didn't rest on the laurels of his victory. He began a nearly one-man effort to further beautify the neighborhood. All those sycamore trees that line both side of Baynard Boulevard between the Washington Street Bridge and 18th Street were planted by hand by David Hudson. It would begin a process that continued with literally thousands of trees, and other plants, being planted throughout Wilmington by David Hudson's own hands.

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Shortly after graduating from Wilmington High School in 1934, David Hudson launched his career as a poet. Until his dying day did he insist that he was a "professional poet." His first poem was published in 1933 in GRIT, a farm journal published by the Curtis Publishing Company. In 1937 he attended his first meeting of the Wilmington Music and Poetry Circle. The two guiding lights of this organization were founders Florence Hastings, then Director of the Wilmington Music School, and Jeannette Slocomb Edwards. Slocomb Edwards was both a fine artist and a poet who would become Delaware second Poet Laureate in 1950. Thus would begin a sometimes stormy relationship with his local contemporaries, especially in the 1950s and 1960s.

During the years of economic Depression in Wilmington, and during his last years of high school, David held jobs running errands for radio station WILM and copying baseball scores for the Wilmington Every Evening. When the Roosevelt era Works Progress Administration established the Federal Writers' Project and set up shop in Wilmington, David joined the project. Initially, he began to do editing jobs, but misunderstandings soon found him working in the WPA's carpentry shop, where he ultimately learned the carpentry trade.

David Hudson was a man who could not hide. Throughout his life he had been the victim of smoldering homophobia. To use today's terminology, David Hudson could not help from appearing "nelly." In the social interactions of a work environment, David couldn't help but to rub some people the wrong way. According to comments made to me by his old high school friend, Lee Broughton, David couldn't always understand the affect he had on some people, and their reactions to him.

As David explained to me about what had happened to him regarding his experience with the local Federal Writers' Project, it sounded like one of his supervisors had misinterpreted or misunderstood David's response to a particular issue that had arisen. For this particular supervisor, David must have come off sounding like a "snapping queen." Before he knew it he had been re-assigned to the carpentry shop.

At one point during either the late 1930's or early 1940s, presumably around the time of his first major publication in 1939 in *POETRY: A Magazine of Verse*, founded by Harriet Monroe, David had seriously entertained the notion of moving to New York City. He told me he had visited Henry Seidel and Marion Gause Canby at their home in Greenwich Village. In response to his desire to move to New York, Marion Gause Canby reportedly suggested to David that, "It's better to be a big fish in a small pond than to be a small fish in a big pond eaten by sharks." During the 1930s, in Wilmington, David had made the acquaintance of many of our local literary luminaries who, like Henry Seidel Canby, had established national reputations and critical acclaim. Besides Canby these figures included Christopher Ward, John Biggs Jr., James Whaler, G. Peyton Wertenbaker and Charles Wertenbaker, who as David claimed, "was ridden out of town on a rail" after the publication of his novel *To My Father* in 1936.

David Hudson's formal education did not go beyond high school. He considered himself to have been self-taught. About his informal education, he said, "I began trying to write verse while in high school during my sophomore year at age fourteen. Naturally I emulated – I thought – the styles of poets I was reading, and went through sieges and surges of alliteration, syllable counting, stanza forms, meters, and produced tons of odes on loneliness, alienation, hopeless affection, all matter of adolescent concerns. However, I came upon Conrad Aiken quite early, and so into the stimulating possibilities in and out of free verse, while being impressed with the limitless uses and possibilities of traditional forms, rhymes, syncopations, caesural weights and balances."

Among his contemporaries, David Hudson has included the poets Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Edna Saint Vincent Millay, Alfred Kreyborg, T. S. Eliot, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and May Sarton as influences.

David Hudson's life as a public poet began to spill over into other public arenas early. He joined the Wilmington Music and Poetry Circle. It would be the primary organization under which local poets could find publishing opportunities and a public presence. The name of the organization would change its name over a period of the next 40 years in an almost dizzying manner, reflecting the internecine battles bubbling under its public surface, and David Hudson was usually in the thick of these battles. In the late 1940s the organization became The Wilmington Poetry Society and Delaware Writers. Then in the early 1950s it incorporated. By the late 1960s the group had split into factions. David's faction became the Delaware Poetry Circle. In the mid 1940s, emerging from World War II, the Wilmington Poetry Society and Delaware Writers, as it was then called, carried the flame for local poets and at least to the public eye was united under its temporal banner.



Jeannette Slocomb Edwards
Photo courtesy e. jean lanyon

In the spring of 1947, David Hudson was the first to make local poetry accessible to the public using the broadcast medium. Wilmington radio station WILM aired a regular 15 minute program every Sunday evening at 10:30 presented by the Wilmington Poetry Society, between popular commentator Gabriel Heatter at 10 PM and Concert Master at 10:45 PM. This was at a time of radio's zenith, just before television would make its grand cultural entrance, which meant that people still turned to radio as their prime source of broadcast entertainment. For approximately the next 20 years the organization, in which David Hudson played a leadership role, published a regular anthology entitled Delaware Poets, on a nearly annual basis. An addition, it published a slew of smaller publications spotlighting the work of individual poets, and occasionally major publications of more well known local poets like Helen Morgan Brooks and Jeannette Slocomb Edwards. Every Delaware Poet Laureate from the first, Edna Deemer Leach, who was appointed in 1947, to David's final term as Poet Laureate in 1978, was associated with the

organization with the exception of Percival Roberts (1965 – 1966) and Antonia Bissell

Laird (1969 – 1970), who found herself embroiled in legal trouble with David Hudson over the rights to her poetry.

By the late 1960s, the pressure building from years of internecine tensions galvanized into recognizable factions. There were tangible accusations and firm allegations, and David Hudson was at the center of them. Evidently, Jeannette Slocomb Edwards had secretly harbored grudges against David Hudson. We know not the particulars, but the assumption can be made that it had to do with the ways in which David conducted the business of the organization. Disagreements followed in spite of Jeannette Slocomb Edwards' attempts at reconciliation. She allowed David Hudson to plan and design the format of her book, *Jeweled with Fire*, which was published in 1969 by Advocate Press, a publisher of Hudson's choosing from Provincetown. Advocate Press had published David Hudson's *The Provincetown Poems* in 1952. The accusation from Jeannette Slocomb Edwards that David had edited some of her poetry was the ingredient that precipitated the ultimate split, which resulted in the firm establishment in the early 1970s of *The First State Writers*, which had its genesis as a separate literary organization spearheaded by Jeannette Slocomb Edwards and local poet Priscilla Stees Klein.

Another ingredient that contributed to a split in the organization was the racial strife in 1968 resulting from the assassination of Martin Luther King, the riots that followed immediately after, the placing of the city of Wilmington under marshall law and its occupation by the Delaware National Guard for the next nine months or so. Members from outside Wilmington did not want to meet in Wilmington. Meetings were being held at David's and Edwin Sawdon's house at 617 West 21st Street. Neither David nor Edwin drove a car. In fact, David never in his life ever had a driver's license. Under martial law there was only limited public transportation because of the nighttime curfews. Membership in the Delaware Poetry Circle dwindled, but the organization hobbled along long enough for David Hudson to snag his final term as Poet Laureate in 1975, and to marshal enough resources to publish *Delaware Poets 1940 – 1976*. After that the Delaware Poetry Circle began to fade from the scene and David Hudson's public reputation slowly mutated toward public activist.

Among the books of David Hudson's poetry are his first, *The Ostrich Sings*, published in 1944, and *How Can the Heart Forget?* in 1945, both published by the Wilmington Poetry Society and Delaware Writers. In 1948, Mercantile Press of Wilmington Delaware published *A Given Measure*, his poetry composed in Basic English. In 1949, *Marblebead Harbor and the Four Season* was published by Pelletier of Salem Massachusetts, and *The Provincetown Poems* was published in 1952 by The Advocate Press of Provincetown Massachusetts. Separate poems have appeared in newspapers like *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Evening Star*, and *The Wilmington News Journal*. In addition, David has written book reviews that have been published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the old *Wilmington Sunday Star*.

By 1980 David Hudson's career as a poet was sliding into the past. I remember seeing David and Edwin strolling down Baynard Boulevard in the evening hours with David pointing out this and that with approving or disapproving gestures as the case may be. I remember seeing David pulling a small wagon filled with saplings to plant them somewhere in the city. I remember David invading the office of The Delaware Valley Star, then at 1213 French Street in Wilmington, where I was editor, to bring to my attention an issue about which he strongly felt.

In subsequent years, David Hudson's amount of involvement in community concerns, as measured by the hours he spent confronting Wilmington's City Council within the public arena of City Council chambers, demonstrated his dedication. Stories about some his antics, like the time he pulled up all the election campaign signs that were stuck in lawns and attached to walls throughout his neighborhood after the election was over and brought them to City Council chambers where he dumped them unceremoniously unto the floor during public proceedings, is the stuff of legend. He actually ran unsuccessfully for a Wilmington Council seat a number of times during the 1980s and 1990s. His involvement finally earned him the Honorary 14th City Council seat in a city that had only 13 City Council Districts. By the late 1990s, David had become too frail to continue. His health began to decline and was soon confined to his home at 417 West 21st Street. But his mind remained sharp to the end, and so did his inclination to speak his mind unabashedly.



David Hudson had a tongue that could be silver or sharp and acid, depending on his remarks and their intent. A few will claim he had the tongue of a snake just before it was ready to strike. In a world where there are no memorable lines of local poetry: no "Under the spreading chestnut tree the village smithy stood," or, "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary," or even, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked," the line, "she's nothing but a piddling versifier" is a line from one local poet about another that may remain as the line, as do those lines from well-known dead poets, that defines him without needing to name him. Near the end of his life, he once admitted to me that he knew his tongue – his quick and over emotional, thoughtless statements – had brought him trouble on occasion. Once he even told me about a conversation he had had with my Uncle Frank. The two of them were friends in their youth.

"Why do you only see what's wrong with the world? Why do you have to be so critical all the time? Why don't you look at what's good and appreciate that instead?" David reported my uncle to have asked. For me, David left my Uncle Frank's questions unanswered.

Often, in an outburst of a single racist or misogynistic word delivered in perfect diction, he would strike out against those other victims around him, without pause,

almost as if he had suffered from a kind of Tourette's Syndrome. For example, once he characterized the people at the Delaware State Arts Council as, "a bunch of punks."

The image he had invoked in my mind, at the time of this declaration, was of an office filled with people wearing spiked blue and green mohawks and black leather jackets who were wielding switchblades. In my imagination his outbursts always carried an element of the absurd. The impulse was often to giggle, which I always suppressed for fear of sending the wrong message or acknowledging his prejudices and possibly encouraging his wrath.

He was a man who wanted to live in a world surrounded by beauty and the sublime. His and Edwin's house at 417 West 21st Street was piled high with fine things; antiques, fine art and sculpture, rare books, fine wines, and recordings of classical music and opera. While there, David Hudson was at peace unless provoked. And provocation was easy, but provocation came from the outside world. That was the world David Hudson could not deal with very well. It was a world couched in ugliness disguised as "progress," in what he perceived as corrupting influences. In the paranoia generated by societal homophobia, was there the self-perception that he was just plain "different." He realized this while in his twenties, when the only jobs he could find were the short-term jobs working in places like Wanamaker and Le Compte Appliance in Wilmington. He realized his "differentness" in this poems published in his second books from 1945, *How Can the Heart Forget?* entitled, "Star in Transit:"

The morning star runs down the hill
with me to work;
it is no miracle I rise
with all of heaven in my eyes,
for there before me,
as once before you waited,
waits the selfsame star.

I reach the level but I go
on alone, as once before,
to go to work,
a clerk in a store:
Yes, No, I say; I do not hear
the question, and I fear
I may be fired, for I am still
but half way down the hill.

When you awaken – will you go –
I'm sorry, sir, I don't know,
try the next counter –

as once before
with all of evening's starlight
from my door?

For all intents and purposes, David Hudson's career as a poet ended after 1976, or at least was supplanted by his years as a social activist. His identity as a poet was gradually lost to many who interacted with him in succeeding years. He had always been bitter that the power of poetry could not affect the world around him, and that poetry was not of sufficient strength to constitute a rallying cry. Simply, as much as one might think of the power and forcefulness or beauty of one's own poetry, when pitted against political and social forces of our predatory and culturally barren world, poetry can seem like pissing into the wind.

After 1976, I believe David Hudson purposely moved into the more immediate world of struggling for potential change. Planting trees and working to beautify and preserve the neighborhood around him was the positive aspect. The negative aspect was the encroachments of political issues he felt were averse to his efforts. But David Hudson was not always fully equipped, emotionally, to fight for what he believed.

Mixing politics and social activism with poetry can pit the real world and the sublime world against one another. Every poet knows that the real world pays the bills, not the sublime one. For the poet who is concerned with the sublime world it is easy to deny the world of harsh political realities when they are dumped on our plates or smeared on our palettes. Embracing both poetry and politics, the actual and the sublime, can really burn one out. The way of least resistance can often mean choosing between the two. By the same token, choosing political activism can obviate inspiration, and I believe David Hudson felt less inspired to write as the years wore on.

David Hudson always lurked somewhere in the background during my own career as a poet. In many ways, I quit writing poetry because of David Hudson. I told myself I did not want to turn out as bitter as David seemed to me to be. I knew, at some point, I was garnering a reputation as becoming bitter. I knew the reasons were similar to those that had made David a bitter and, ostensibly, a nasty man. I had weathered my own battles relating to poetry, and I knew how I was feeling about it all. But I also knew poetic inspiration never entirely leaves the true poet. The products of inspiration only become less frequent and more frequently weak, and possibly more unacceptable to one's potential audience.

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What do you listen for,
your ear upon my heart, your hand
glissading silkenly between my thighs –
for am I not indeed

this very self you rape in greed?
Take then of me till you have had
your childlike fill, and then go mad!

About a year before David Hudson died, he gave me a long poem, from which the above stanza is contained, to take and read. A note attached to it from some other source led me to believe that this was the poem he had submitted to the Delaware Division of the Arts (DDOA) in order to be granted an Individual Artist Fellowship in Poetry. He was never granted a Fellowship and learning that I, an upstart, had been granted one instead angered him. This Fellowship had been my first one, in 1993. I never told him that I received a second one on the occasion of his giving me his long poem to take and read. I didn't know if he knew, but I didn't want to risk pushing David's vindictive buttons, as once Bill Frank had done.

I understood why the judge for the DDOA rejected David's entry. The long poem seemed unfinished. In fact, he had provided three tentative titles: "Destinations: The Tyrant Heart," "This Room, The World," and "A Madness Borne of the Heart." It was difficult to follow and contained some homoerotic allusions. I showed it around to a couple of other poets I knew. No one was terribly impressed. After he died, and I acquired copies of his books and began to read his poetry, mainly because others had become curious about his poetry and wanted me to read some of them at the Second Saturday Reading. I discovered a portion of this long poem with three tentative titles was actually the title poem from his second book, *How Can the Heart Forget?* It suddenly seemed to me that the long poem he had given to me to read was an attempt to answer the question, or come to terms with the circumstances of his life with some sort of poetic statement, or at least, to provide a kind of summing up to his life. The rejection of his efforts from the DDOA must have infuriated him, and by the same token, my acceptance of this work seems a gesture of obviation.

The poem David had given to me was not his final one. On one of my last visits he recited a poem he had been composing in his head. He told me that when he finished it, he would write it down. I remember only the sound of it and it had impressed me enough for having heard it only once. I was reminded of the closing scene of Tennessee Williams' play, *The Night of the Iguana*. Sporadically throughout Williams' play one of the characters, an old wheelchair bound man named Jonathan Coffin – Nonno – who is a famous poet, is making up a poem in his mind. His granddaughter, Hannah Jelkes, who looks after him, keeps a pencil and paper close by for when he finishes composing the poem. By the end of the play, Nonno indicates that he has finished the poem. After Hannah takes down Nonno's poem he dies. The play ends.

David Hudson's life ended before he could finish his poem. I asked his adopted son, David Azartouz, if he'd been asked to take the poem down. He hadn't. Evidently, David took his final poem with him. And unlike with *Valdemar*, from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," there is no means available to speak to the dead.

However, two verses from Nonno's poem at the end of Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana* could serve as a substitute, as well as a succinct and poignant epitaph:

Sometimes while night obscures the tree
The zenith of its life will be
Gone past forever, and from thence
A second history will commence.

O Courage, could you not as well
Select a second place to dwell,
Not only in that golden tree
But in that frightened heart of me?

George Stewart

My Home Movie

In 1975 I made a short film entitled "My Home Movie," which in a frantic two-and-a-half minutes, documents every-thing I owned at the time, set to music by the Big Ben Banjo Band, one of my dad's favorite LPs from the 1950s. By taking one frame of every book, every chair, every can of soup and vegetables, object d' art, et. al. in my apartment on that day, it is not only a record of acute specificity, but also a celebration of American Consumerism run amuck.



Sadly, if I were to do a follow-up now, some 40 some years later, I am embarrassed to say that it would have to be a feature even longer than "Oppenheimer" or "Killers of the Flower Moon." I just hope that all my private property is no longer a target for my enemies, most of whom are long dead and gone or far richer than I.

<https://www.facebook.com/geoffry.danials/videos/676699130606362>

Robert Fleming

when your neighbor doesn't have a fence

don't visit your neighbor after
midnight, especially not, with a shotgun
unless the shot is gin

visit your neighbor in their backyard
shed, before sunrise, for an affair
your roosters' cock-a-doodle-dos carry
shed occupancy to gossip

stopping by makes bad neighbors

brick walls bury bad neighbors

the burnt clay brick wall i built crumbles
white mortar falls onto the cellar earth floor
between the points i eyeball a corpse i made
i trace my fishing line stitches

neighbor greets: *was my life worth willow branches*
weeping over your yard i cover my ears with palms
my heart rattles and my fingernails bleed
how to shut off dead speak

o-mortar: cement-lime-sand mixed
for interior spaces above grade
after my cellar flood am i above grade
i repoint with below grade s-mortar

Oh Daddy! My Daddy!

my son-ship for you
i searched my years
for a daddy to take my son-submission
shall i cross the street?
wear boxers or briefs or nothing?
swim the sea?
cross the street?
eat a hamburger or hot dog?
at last daddy commands

your daddy-ship for me
through our decades daddy set my way
released me from picking a blue or grey shirt
choosing what comes first: eating or sex
at last daddy your will is my will

a new daddy-lesson for son
you are your own daddy
you release me to be a daddy?
oh No daddy!
as it was since the first son and daddy
the son becomes the daddy
the daddy becomes the son
a new daddy goes forth every day
it shall be done with us

farewell my Daddy

Well Deserved

Steven Leech

Less time is ahead of me than what's behind me as I turn fifty. Now I have realized that my life will be unfulfilled.

I am too ordinary, too damaged emotionally, and have grown unappealing before I could appeal to another to share my desires. In my early fifties, I am what is in the parlance of the day an incel.

I have had my brushes with romance in my day, but each has evaporated into either disinterest or paralyzing panic. So then in my fifties, having been promoted to lead shipper after years on the floor at the warehouse where I labored for the past fifteen years, working within the safe environment of exclusively men, and because I was close to the management office of white collared people, I chanced to notice Glynis, a woman clambering to snag some office managerial position.

I learned, perhaps because I was subconsciously curious and open to bits of information about her, that she had started out as a secretary about five years before and soon after she left business school in her early twenties. That made her, I found myself guessing, to be maybe fifteen years younger than me.

At least everyday I'd see her, her wavy rills of fine red hair, her figure variously suggested by her choice of clothing of the day, the way her calves were shaped, the spare jewelry she wore, little things that collected in my mind over time.

One day, when I caught her eye, I lingered long enough to realize her eyes were green. She held my gaze for a little more than a long second before looking toward her next task at hand, but I felt something cosmic had happened.

Whenever we had to interact the encounter was purely professional. However, within weeks I had begun to hear the sound of her voice echo in my brain after she spoke. I was taking her home with me in my mind and finding myself thinking if only she would smile at me just once.

When I turned fifty and I'd been lead shipping clerk, still wearing a shirt without a tie, I wondered if she had begun to sense how I was beginning to feel about her. I had tried hard not to give any clue, but I was beginning to feel something empty inside and an ache I tried to hide and suppress.

At first I could assuage those feelings that were beginning to overwhelm me by writing love poems that I dare never to let her see. I began to despise myself over the instinct to stalk her, to find out more about her, to see if she had a boyfriend. I already learned she was single, but I wanted to know what she did in her private life, whether she might be a lesbian, or spent too much time in bars, or was a secret dominatrix. My mind was playing crazy trick with me and I had to find some diversion. That's when I built a rudimentary altar, just a simple space with a photo I found of her from a company brochure. I began to pray to her on my knees, and keep this crude though not puerile poems in a special place while dreading the prospect that I'd be found out.

It was then that I began to dream about her, dreams that would vividly precede waking. I would see her looking at me, with her bright green eyes and her wild red hair that I wanted to touch. At first the dreams were variants of a single scene, in the office, in the store down at the corner near my apartment, on the bus in the night. Once, in a dream, I saw her, in what the intrinsic language of a dream led me to believe, was her bedroom. She was dressed in pajamas. She saw me and brought her dainty hand to her mouth, startled with a moment of fear blooming in those green eyes. I woke with a start. Dawn was just beginning to break.

I wanted to fade away in her. The dreams about her increased in places only I had been; in my high school classrooms, in the house where I grew up. I wondered if she had always been in my life, in some parallel version of it, out there where cruel circumstance had exiled me to a place where I had to pay the price for some transgression. All sorts of scenarios ran through my mind and all of them centered around Glynis. There were no answers why.

The only certainty after all the emotional and mental confusion was confession. For the past five years my dreams were preceded by waking ruminations of what if she ran off with one of those white collar wannabes in the office and got married? What if she left one day to another job in an unknown location? What if she had an accident and was hanging onto life in a hospital? I was obsessed and on the verge of a mental breakdown. It seemed there was only one thing I could do, and that was to confess, even though the prospect led me to that old paralysis of panic I'd experienced on those few former times in my life when infatuation had grown into the dead end of my fate of living out a lonely life.

I decided the only thing I could do short of an awkward clumsy confrontation was to prepare a package. I gathered all the poems written in the form of prayer and wrote a long letter explaining myself, told of my years of devoted worship and declared her as holy. I assembled all of it into a neat package and on a Monday, late in the day, after the office staff had left for the day, I put the large envelope into Glynis' mail slot and clocked out.

I had hoped for the best, that she would realize and see me with new eyes, and make it easy for me to speak with her beyond office necessities, that maybe we could begin by having lunch together and talk about our personal lives and what we shared in common and maybe learn from each other those pleasantries of life. That's all I wanted.

It was hard to sleep that night. I was full of nervous expectation. My sleep was filled with nervous waking and dreams that slipped away. Breakfast was brief and spare, and I left for work with tentative hope.

The first few hours on the job were uneventful, but just before noon I was called into the boss' office. Something had gone wrong I sensed, and when I entered the office and the door closed behind me only the boss was there sitting at his desk. The big envelope I had left for Glynis was on his desk.

I'll be brief. I was told I had acted inappropriately. I was accused of harassment and creating a hostile environment and that Glynis and I could not work for the same company, and in spite of more than twenty years with the company and a good work record, I was fired. I left at lunchtime into the remainder of the day, which was like a big timeless

moment. I was stunned and all I could do is walk without a thought in my head. I could not board a bus. I had no sense of hunger or thirst. I felt as though I was not there.

That evening I began to come to my senses a little. I realized I would no longer have an income. I would have nothing to pay rent, or my bills. It would be hard to get another job. Who would ever refer me. And way in the back of my mind I knew there was now no chance of there ever being romance in my life. I had no future.

After a totally sleepless night, by dawn I knew what I had to do. It would be the only response to Glynis' cruel reaction to my sincere overture, as awkward as it had been.

Not far from where I lived was an old abandoned barn, where new housing development was slowly closing in. At the hardware store I didn't care about using my last dollars to buy a coil of rope. I went to that barn, threw an end of the rope over one of the bare rafters and knotted it to a nearby post, found a nearby box to stand on, and tied the other end around my neck. I'd brought with me a set of handcuffs I'd had as a fetish item and cuffed my hand behind me after first pinning a note to my shirt with Glynis' name on it, and then threw the box away beneath my feet in my ultimate sacrifice, like Jesus, to Glynis.

I had no idea I weighed so much as the weight of my body tightened the rope around my neck. I felt my mind go empty, and without air in my lungs I realized that breath and the soul were the same thing and without breath in my body I felt as if the breath had joined a greater breathing outside of me where I became weightless and without the pain of the rope cutting through my neck.

I floated. There was no sense of the passage of time. The surroundings of the barn faded because I didn't want to be there any longer. I wondered what the warehouse looked like without me, and I saw it, but none of my former co-employees saw me. I saw my old apartment, but no one was there to see me. I wanted to see Glynis again. I found myself in her bedroom. She was dressed in pajamas. I recognized them from that dream I once had. She saw me and brought her dainty hand to her mouth. I started to see fear bloom in those green eyes before the scene shifted and heard the screaming in my head.

Next I was in a large room. It was well lit with fluorescent lights from the ceiling. At first I saw my brother, who I hadn't seen in years. He had lived in another state. He was with a woman I concluded was his wife. There was Bob who I knew from work. He'd been an employee there almost as long as I had. Even Mr. Shaw, my boss, was there. At the end of the room was a closed casket, a single large vase of flowers at one end. There were only about four other people in the room. They were all haphazardly facing the casket. One head of hair I recognized because it was full and red. It was Glynis. For some reason she turned and saw me. Her eyes went wide and nearly sad before I faded away from her many times.

Christopher Penna

General William Carpenter's Reply to the Poet James Wright*

Poet, you lobbed your words and allusions
as casually as hand grenades
into a fight you had no part in.

You thought you had a cause—I'll give you that,
and we had things in common, you could say,
though in Japan you didn't see combat.

Your father worked his whole life in a mill.
You lost him in the alcohol and haze;
The Ruhr Pocket took mine, a German shell.

You won some prizes in your time,
and I got medals, prizes in a way—
we got our recognition, yours and mine,

but don't presume that you can speak for me
or that your words were more than passing blanks,
like my citation's valor, bravery.

I lack your skill with rhyme and meter,
but, if you will, I'd like to have my say
before you take your final measure.

You forget I was a wideout end
alone on the perimeter,
always lined up almost out of bounds
out near where they set the sticks,
one not used to throwing
but to catching bombs.
That day in June of '66
it was simply us or them;
we'd got into a nasty fix,
caught up in someone else's fight.
And so I had to call an audible.
My only thought was how to save my men,
not words on the Congressional Medal,
not the lines some poet might someday write.

*See James Wright's poem "A Mad Fight Song for William S. Carpenter, 1966."

Ray Greenblatt

GOT THE FEVER

The fever is upon Jack!
A poem is working to the surface
but what is its shape?
what is it mumbling?
A tight wire is inside Jack
both exquisite and searing
so that he looks for writing space—
a noise, an outside thought could melt him.
She's talking to him,
he's agreed with her
and not heard a word.
In the shower he's lost count
of what places got washed
so he does it over and over
trying to file a phrase that will just fit,
the poem waiting in the next room
like a woman made of smoke.

On the drive to a commitment
should he pull over to add another line,
sit there an hour and get it all out
if he's lucky enough,
for arriving at the party
and writing in an upstairs room
is just as weird to people.
How can Jack wait till later
before getting home to paper—
will it all be gone?
are poets superstitious?
I use a fictional name
because if I used his real name
the poem might not work.

GOING SOMEWHERE

I'm going somewhere today
on the train.
Light squeezes down
out of five a.m. darkness
streaks station windows
makes windows on the walls
light powders out of neon tubes.
A blue man in a phone booth
is frozen for a deep-space voyage
as our train passes
slowing planes
shifting times.

A man walks to the front of the train
his back to the audience
his hands play out of sight
in front of him.
We expect magic
at least removal
of his elegant coat, hat, gloves
shaved face and mustache.
Rather he sits
and rips open the morning news.

The day is bursting to get up
not weighed down by a quilt of rain
blanket of winds.
Simply a sheet of frost
that fast evaporates
against a world of movement.

I'm going somewhere
not as sure as these
habitual commuters
with pre-stamped tickets.
I might come back this way
but who knows when
why.

Tim Hudenburg

dreamstreets and the lust for knowledge

(dedicated to Steven & Phillip)

oh lost generation
unquiet beneath gravestones in the shade of pine
families blend together

under trees
under sod
under never-the-less time

some days you hear murmurs
listen closer and make out
voices louder than one would expect

from dead overwhelming personalities
they have nothing left to lose
and continue clashing clanging with no-less-biting tongues

despite the moldering in the grave
the way a drama spectacularly unfolds
even after the curtain is drawn

in this cemetery amidst empty vodka bottles
and the latest war dead from Ukraine
stronger unbridled spirits

down they go—
matching, surpassing the others' shared experiences
until one by one in the blur of lives

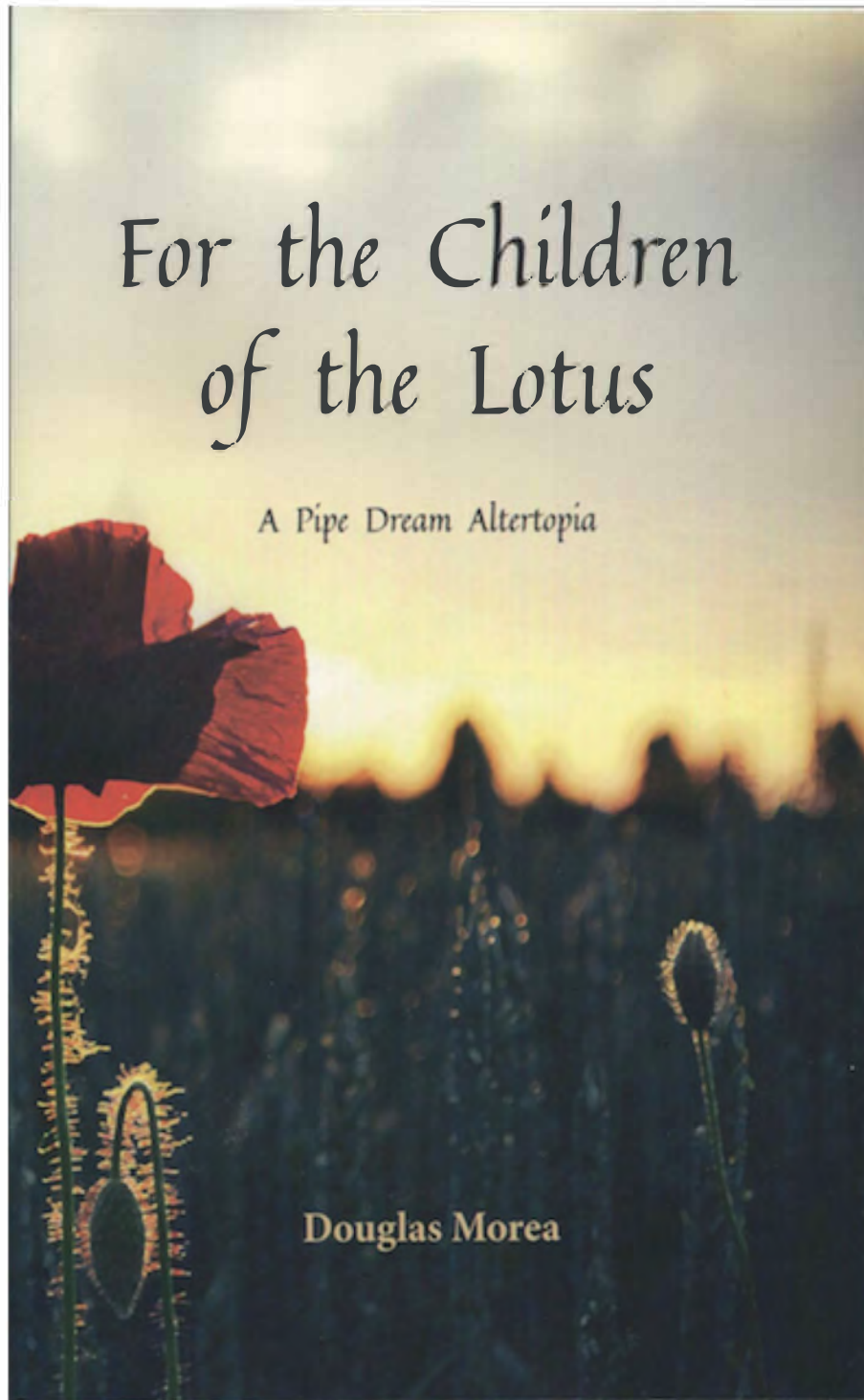
you swore you heard
Anna Karenina
speaking up at the Tolstoy reunion

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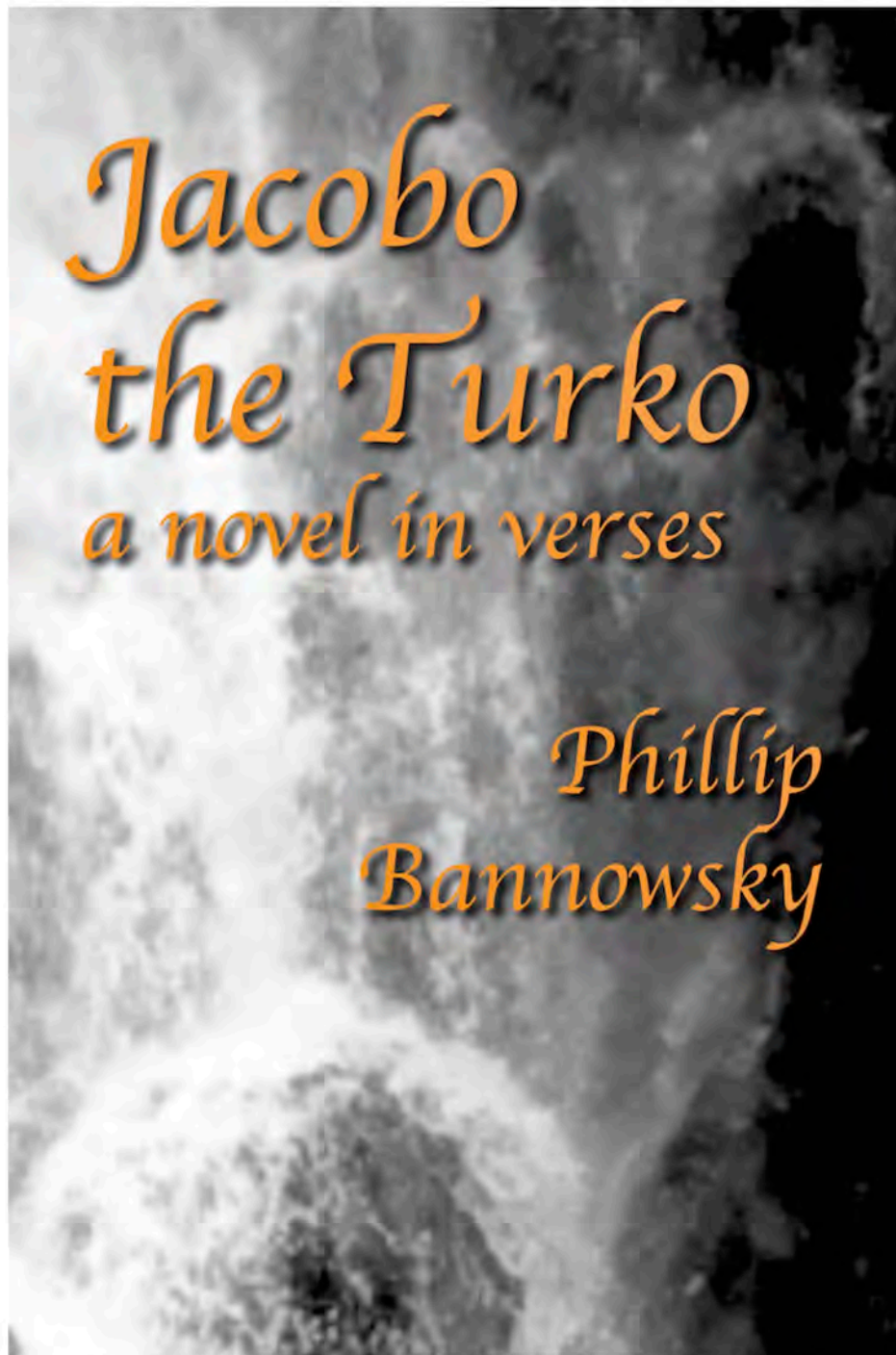
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