POETRY
When we deal with permanent things the minute present enlarges sufficiently to give us standing-room. We are something more than American citizens and creatures of the twentieth century; a race doesn't change so rapidly as all that. Our bodies and souls are equally capable of adaptation to life in the middle ages—in the interglacial ages. Our cells remember the sea-salt of their origin, and the turns of the sea-tides. It is of the function of poetry to express the whole human organism; and the human organism finds only a pin-prick of outlet in the exclusive present, it is fitted also to the past, and framed for the future. It is a permanent thing, at home with permanent things.

Robinson Jeffers  PREFACE, Continent’s End (?), 1922 [Hunt, IV, 374-5]

The 2018 Robinson Jeffers Tor House Prize for Poetry, an honorarium of $1,000, is awarded to:

**Deborah Pope**  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
for her poem  
“Take Nothing”

Honorable Mentions, each with an honorarium of $200, are awarded to:

**Susan Cohen**  
Berkeley, California  
for her poem “Letter Home”

**Steve McDonald**  
Murrieta, California  
for his poem “Prayer”

**Deborah Pope**  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
for her poem “Waiting for the Perseid Meteor Shower”

**Tori Sharpe**  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
for her poem “Buenos Aires”

Finalist judge for the 2018 Prize was poet Richard Blanco.

The annual Robinson Jeffers Tor House Prize for Poetry is established as a living memorial in honor of American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962). The Prize is underwritten by Tor House Foundation Board Member John Varady with additional support from Honorary Board Member Allen Mears and Board Member Lacy Buck. This year we received some 1,050 poems from 40 states, the District of Columbia and six foreign countries.
SAVE THE DATES – Friday, October 5 thru Sunday, October 7, 2018.
Don’t miss the Robinson Jeffers Fall Festival 2018
Friday join the Sunset Celebration at Tor House
*****
Saturday, at the Carmel Woman’s Club
“Robinson Jeffers and the Sacredness of Place”
The first track of the programs will address the importance of place, both land and sea, in Jeffers’
poetry and his tight bonding with, in the words of Jeffers’ scholar, James Karman “the terroir, the spirit
and inner life of the region- as revealed in its topography, its flora, fauna and people.”
The second track will address how Jeffers’ poems and his philosophy of inhumanism inspire today’s
writers and artists in their own works that reflect their individual Spirit of Place.
We will welcome, as presenters, six writers, artists and scholars of the humanities
*****
Sunday joined the poetry walk along Carmel River State Beach
*****
Sign-up forms will be available in the next Newsletter.
For additional information, or to get your order in early, consult the website at www.torhouse.org.

The Tor House Spring Garden Party on May 6, 2018, A Day of Music, Crafts and Fellowship

Young Musicians from the Sea Otter Quartet

Una Jeffers Honscheid inspects her grandmother’s spinning wheel
2018 Prize for Poetry Award Winner

Take Nothing
by Deborah Pope

Not the great blue skimmers warming their wings
in the May sun before flight,
the red-eyed vireos’ here I am, where are you,
or the radiating catenaries of the weaving spider,
lingering, dew-strung,
not the intricate machinery of the wondrous foot
with one-quarter of the bones in the body,
or the fascicles of nerves firing in the lightest touch,
not the easy assumption of motion
in neck, limbs, torso,
not the syrupy evening light of summer,
somewhere bees gravid with pollen
and the promise of rain, not August’s crickets
whirring their incessant clockwork,
not the white-bearded waves following in furrows,
the boom and bravura of surf,
or its lace and small applause,
not the guttural rubato in the throat
at the end of the barn owl’s call,
or the orange Chinese lanterns of persimmons,
not the way the light bends in autumn’s russet afternoons,
or the fraying draperies of fog in the hollows,
not the faithful bellows of the lungs,
the free-flowing tributaries of the heart,
or the black, rickety branches of trees against
a full winter moon, like the raised hands
of Giotto’s saints in prayer,
not the tellers of night tales,
or the light from extinguished stars,
not the friable fabric of memory,
nor any love’s precarious survival,
not even the soul at night---
take nothing,
nothing for granted.
Not in this world.

Deborah Pope is the author of three poetry collections---Fanatic Heart, Mortal World and Falling Out of the Sky. She has been nominated for the National Book Award, the Walt Whitman Award and the Pushcart Prize. Her work has appeared in Poetry, Threepenny Review, Michigan Quarterly, Southern Review, TriQuarterly, The Georgia Review, Poetry Northwest, Southwest Quarterly, Prairie Schooner, The Birmingham Review, Poetry Northwest, among others.
Letter Home
by Susan Cohen

I’m staying among strangers. On the shelf, A History of Finland.
I spent three days in Helsinki once. When I left, a man saw me off
on the train, made me promise to write, but I couldn’t spell his name.

I know nothing about the history of Finland, the way I know nothing
about the strangers I’m living with here, each a country with allegiances
and anthems and alibis. A History of Finland makes me think

it is one of many Finnish histories, and possibly not definitive.
My history of Finland has a chapter titled: “Autonomy Lost
and Independence Gained.” Could that be us, love?

The Finnish man was a stranger, a blind date the night before.
He took the morning off from work to say goodbye and pressed
his folded future in my palm. To this day I have no idea why.

Maybe he thought I was a country he could live in.
I don’t understand what makes people seek each other out.
So many possible histories, so many impossible endings.

I could be speaking Finnish now, farming fish and naming
each of my babies with three k’s and too many vowels.
But I’m joined with you, sharing the citizenship of a long marriage,

both of us tending our borders. I’ve never asked if I turned out
to be the person you thought I was, since I’m not the person
I thought I was. I could say you and I will always be

on a blind date—but I don’t want to scare you.
When I return home this week, you’ll welcome me,
I know, my native land. Love.

Susan Cohen’s second full-length book of poems, A Different Wakeful Animal, won the
2015 David Martinson-Meadowhawk Prize from Red Dragonfly Press and was a runner-up for
the Philip Levine Prize. She was a newspaper reporter, contributing writer for the Washington
Post Magazine, and faculty member of the University of California Graduate School of
Journalism before studying poetry while on a Knight Fellowship at Stanford University and
then earning an MFA from Pacific University. Her poems appear in many journals and
anthologies, including most recently: Greensboro Review, Nimrod, Poetry Flash, Spillway, Tar
River Poetry, and Know Me Here: An Anthology of Poetry by Women. She's received the Rita
Dove Poetry Award and the Milton Kessler Memorial Poetry Prize among other honors. She
lives in Berkeley.
**HONORABLE MENTION**

**Prayer**

*Golden Shovel after Galway Kinnell*

by Steve McDonald

Vivian is almost two she wanders the backyard whatever
she sees she points at wherever she points the world happens
she crosses the lawn climbs into my arms whatever
happens now is enough it is dusk I do not know what
will become of her the carrotwood tree is
thick with low-hanging deep-green leaves Vivian is
reaching for them she says *leaf* the tree’s growth is
vigorous threatens to crack the concrete of our patio what
does one do with such robust life this evening I
hold Vivian her hair carrot red she points up *Want that*
she says *Want that* in the evening sky only
the full moon is visible no clouds no stars that
I guess is what she wants the carrotwood tree darkens but
the moon is a bright light Vivian points up says *Want that*

Steve McDonald’s second full-length book, *Credo*, was a finalist in the 2016 Brick Road Poetry Press competition. His chapbook *Golden Fish / Dark Pond* was the winner of the 2014 Comstock Review Chapbook contest. He has also published the full-length collection *House of Mirrors* (Tebot Bach), and the chapbook *Where There Was No Pattern* (Finishing Line Press). His individual poems have won awards from *Tiferet, Nimrod, Beyond Baroque, Passager, Sow’s Ear*, and others, including *Best New Poets 2010*. McDonald’s poetry has appeared in *Boulevard, Nimrod, The Atlanta Review, RATTLE, The Crab Creek Review, The Paterson Literary Review, Spillway*, and elsewhere. Professor Emeritus of English and retired Dean of Languages and Literature at Palomar College in San Marcos, California, he lives with his wife, Marlyle, in Murrieta and can be contacted through his website at stevemcdonaldpoetry.com.

**Waiting for the Perseid Meteor Shower** by Deborah Pope

A dogtooth moon, horned and dim,
hangs over the suck of midnight tide,
the skirt of beach, where wet gusts spin
the windsocks, flog the docks of cottages.

We are silent except for the ice
in our glasses, the creak of rockers,
eyes raised to the ruined
theater of stars.

We have come here
to the continent’s edge,
like plunderers, to see what
can be salvaged from the wreckage
we have made. Here is a spar
of pain, is that some rigging
of hope? I don’t even know
what we are looking for—

stars flashing from black curtains,
some fire-fall of legend,
red snakes in the sky,
a revelation so obvious
they say the casual eye
can’t mistake it. Wordless,
we wait for signs, earthy
or celestial, something more
than the remote Morse of a plane,
a whittled moon and the wheel
of Orion into the sea.

The August night steams on,
yields nothing to the watch
we keep. What’s become
of all the storied gold
our nights once showered down?
Is there nothing left within us
to pick the lock of dark?
Buenos Aires

January 2010

by Tori Sharpe

I told myself the place
would make a difference:
busy, humid, distant, utterly

foreign. For a month, we walked
or trotted, trying to catch a subway car
or train to take us to whatever site

we had settled on that day: cemeterio,
museo, jardín botánico. The heat
was piercing, solid as the ice.

Most nights we ate late, midnight
or one, leaning our elbows against
the table to hear the other clearly, to watch

the stream of people outside, oblivious
to the hour. The home we made was small—
two rooms, a balcony—but there,

so many miles beneath the everyday
that had defeated us, I thought
I felt the change I wanted, a release

like the pop of breaking ice early spring,
the water below still moving as it has
all through the frozen months,

the whole long year.

Tori Sharpe holds a master’s degree in Creative Writing from The University of Texas and a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from The University of North Texas. Her poetry has appeared in Poetry Daily, The Hopkins Review, Blackbird, The Southwest Review, Tar River Poetry, Stand Magazine and other journals. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Arkansas Tech University.
Please note: Reader input is always welcome. For publication consideration, please address Jeffers-related submissions of poetry, criticism, and commentary to the “Newsletter Editor.” Because of space limitations in this issue, contributor and membership acknowledgements will appear in the Fall 2018 issue of the Newsletter (available in late August 2018).

The Tor House Newsletter is available on our website as well as in hard copy. If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter only in electronic form, please e-mail your preference to the Newsletter editor at fdv528@comcast.net. We will then notify you as soon as any future issue is available on the web.

News and Notes:
The Foundation notes with great sadness the passing of Jackie Koenig in January of this year. Jackie served as a Board Member in the 1980s and a very strong supporter of the Tor House mission. Though she had been living in Scotsdale Arizona, she is remembered and mourned by many in Carmel.

Two publications and an award from the Tor House and Jeffers world.
Simon Hunt, Tor House Tour Docent and Board Member, announces his first book of poems: Lesser Magi, published by Hummingbird Press in Santa Cruz, CA.
Marina Romani, Tor House Tour Docent and poet, announces the publication of Chiaroscuro Eye, a collection of her recent work. FreeReadPress is the publisher. Available on Amazon.
And the award:
David J. Rothman, Tor House member, Jeffers scholar, former president of the Robinson Jeffers Association, and director of the Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Western State Colorado University has been awarded a Pushcart Prize for his poem, “Kernels” which appeared in the October 2017 issue of New Criterion. Read the poem at https://www.newcriterion.com/issues/2017/10/kernels.

Don’t miss the 2018 Fall Festival, October 5-7. Some details on page 2 of this Newsletter. More information will appear, when available, on the website at www.torhouse.org.

The Last Word from Jeffers

THE BLOODY SIRE

It is not bad. Let them play.
Let the guns bark and the bombing-plane
Speak his prodigious blasphemies.
It is not bad, it is high time,
Stark violence is still the sire of all the world's values.

What but the wolf's tooth whittled so fine
The fleet limbs of the antelope?
What but fear winged the birds, and hunger
Jewelled with such eyes the great goshawk's head?
Violence has been the sire of all the world's values.

Who would remember Helen's face
Lacking the terrible halo of spears?
Who formed Christ but Herod and Caesar,
The cruel and bloody victories of Caesar?
Violence, the bloody sire of all the world's values.

Never weep, let them play,
Old violence is not too old to beget new values.

From Be Angry at the Sun (1941) [Hunt III, 25]
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Your contribution assists in the preservation of the unique home of the poet, Robinson Jeffers, and in community outreach programs.

Membership benefits include:
♦ Free tours of Tor House
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♦ Quarterly newsletter

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