

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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melissa.gish@glenville.edu

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ments/language-literature

LITTLE KANAWHA READING SERIES WELCOMES CHAPBOOK WINNER

WHEN & WHERE: **Tuesday, October 20, at 4:00 p.m. in the Robert F. Kidd Library**



The Reading Series is proud to welcome the winner of its second annual chapbook contest, David B. Prather, for a reading from his winning poetry collection, *Somewhere the Nightjar*. He'll also read other work and be available for Q & A.

His other books are *A Heart that Stretches the Length of the Body*, *We Were Birds*, *Shouting at an Empty House*, and *Bending Light with Bare Hands*.

Prather received a BA in English from West Virginia University and an MFA in creative writing from Warren Wilson College. He was born in Parkersburg and still lives there.

Regarding his poetry, David once shared, "When I try to craft a poem, I am often aware of social influences, the tragedies of how we destroy each other, and sometimes the tragedy of how memory affects us personally and/or culturally. I've always felt it important to memorialize those who have lost their voices in one way or another, including the many ways it affects the self."

Prather is widely published, with work in a variety of literary journals, many of which can be read online. Here are some places to check out his work:

<https://www.riverheronreview.com/david-prather>

<https://thewildword.com/david-b-prather/>

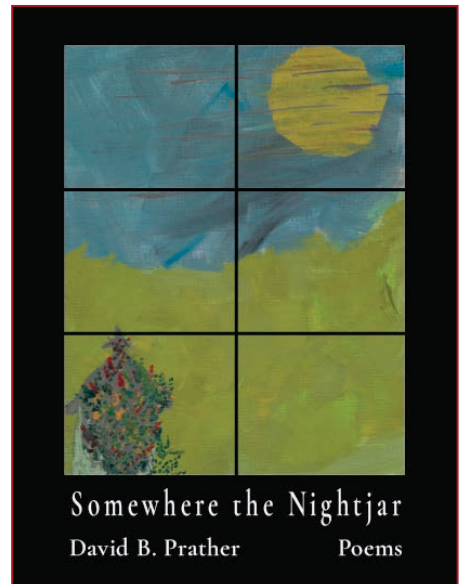
<https://allium.colum.edu/summer-2025-poetry/david-b-prather>

<https://oneartpoetry.com/2024/11/09/two-poems-by-david-b-prather/>

Follow Prather on Instagram: @davidbprather
and on Facebook: facebook.com/DavidBPrather/

You can purchase *Somewhere the Nightjar* here:
<https://www.lulu.com/shop/david-prather/somewhere-the-nightjar/paperback/product-rmk54vp.html>

or at the reading, where Prather can sign your copy!



Somewhere the Nightjar

David B. Prather

Poems

CENSORSHIP MUCH? *THE MERCURY* NOBODY SAW

Contributed by Lisa Hayes-Minney, alumna/adjunct instructor

It's been many years since I served as Managing Editor of *The Mercury*, Glenville State University's campus newspaper. Many years since I received my Bachelor's Degree.

I was what they call a "non-traditional" student—in more ways than one. I was not right out of high school, did not live on campus, or even in town. I was one of the first to complete a specialized English Degree NOT tied to teaching at THE state college known for training teachers. My degree actually includes a writing component, not a teaching component. (I also have a minor in journalism.)

In fact, my degree isn't offered at the college anymore... And well, *The Mercury* doesn't exist anymore either.

The Mercury was born in 1929—and died in 2001, long after my departure. So, it wasn't my fault. (Glenville State bore a new campus paper, *The Phoenix*, in 2005.)

My senior year, I was a full-time student with a 3.35 GPA, working part-time at *The Mercury* and part-time at a bar in town. Not the college bar either, a townie bar. Much of my homework that year was completed right next to a tapped keg. With the exception of Geography and (ironically) Computer 101, I was acing all my courses, keeping a newspaper staff coordinated, penned at least three articles a week (plus homework and term papers for class), and closed the bar at 2:30 a.m. at least four nights a week.

It seems now like it all was a lifetime ago—and at the same time, almost yesterday. The above may sound like I had it together—which, I certainly did not. I try not to dwell on the memories, but there is something I WILL tell you that very few people know. Something about *The Mercury*... Something that happened that summer in 1994.

It's about an issue of *The Mercury* that nobody saw.

Nobody but me, that is.

Well—me, the college's PR Director, and the college president.

The biggest controversy that year was the dismissal of a long-time administrator in the Admissions Department, adored by students and community members alike. The dismissal spawned an underground campus paper called "The Real Mercury" (which I was no part of), and students had t-shirts made in protest. *The Mercury* itself didn't cover it, of course—as we were under the control and advisement of THE COLLEGE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT at the time, not the English Department.

As the end of the academic year came, I had, for some reason or another, the opportunity to interview the college president. We discussed whatever the topic at hand was, and casually discussed, off the record, the dismissal of the administrator. Then there was graduation, and a week-long break before summer classes began.

And so I had almost a week alone on campus to work on that issue. I called the dismissed administrator and interviewed him

as well. Without including anything said "off the record," I was still able to pull together an in-depth piece about what led up to the firing of one of the most-loved personalities on campus.

Now, mind you, my immediate advisor (whose boss was the PR Director) is gone for the summer. The PR Director is—I don't know, playing golf or something—for a week. I have my degree, I have my final paycheck for my time as a student worker, and everyone has left me alone to put out an issue of the paper.

I placed my story from the two interviews above the fold on the front page, let another reporter cover something he had wanted to but hadn't been allowed, and I also wrote an editorial about the medicinal benefits of marijuana. And about four hours before I was headed out the door to take the paste-up sheets to the printer, the PR Director came to check the issue.

He immediately forbade me to run the piece about the dismissed administrator.

This order, as any student journalist can tell you, is illegal.

Which, as any realist can tell you, made no difference in the discussion.

I was ordered to run something else on the front page, and was then left alone to do it.

And....

Well, I didn't.

I took the unchanged layout pages to the printer, and the next day delivered copies all over campus, the eve before summer classes began. I slipped my keys to the newspaper office under the locked director's door, and I thereby completed my days as a college student.

But, by the time the first morning class began, the copies were just... gone.

I doubt if there's even a copy in the campus library's archives. Sometimes I wish I had a copy just to prove my tale, and I know, for many years, my mother had one. She had them all. But when she moved to her condo, we disposed of such excess things.

There may not be a single copy in existence today.

But I know—there was an issue of *The Mercury* in the summer of 1994—an issue that nobody saw.

Editor's Note: We're pleased to report that GSU's Robert F. Kidd Library Mercury Archives has managed to hang on to Lisa's censored issue of *The Mercury* (vol. 65, no. 28, 28 July 1994). You can find it here:

https://www.glenville.edu/sites/default/files/assets/mercury_19940728.pdf

STEREOTYPES IN CLASSIC PETER PAN

Contributed by Laura McCallister, English Education Major

In *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie, there are multiple accounts of stereotypical wording towards the Native Americans that, today, would not be allowed in children's literature. Michelle Isenhoff's and Madison Harris's reviews both mention the issue of racism in Barrie's writing. Isenhoff states, "I'm usually the last person to complain over racial stereotypes, but the treatment of the 'redskins' in this one even made me cringe a time or two. At one point the entire Piccaninny tribe 'groveled' at Peter's feet calling him 'Great White Father,'" which makes Peter seem like a god among not only the Native Americans, but to the children as well since they watch the Native Americans bow down to him. Throughout the book, the children continuously reach for him and rely on him when they are in trouble. Harris agrees with Isenhoff by stating, "Barrie's work contains derogatory language and slurs, and the way the characters speak in a mock language, and there are elements of Peter's superiority," which supports that Peter has this authoritative, god-like characteristic about him that makes him appear to be arrogant and unable to fully connect with those around him. Although Barrie's writing is racist for how Native Americans are depicted, the bigger issue is Peter being essentially a white god among them that can do whatever he wants and the way he interacts with the beautiful exoticism that Tiger Lily represents.

For example, the story has Peter save Tiger Lily from certain peril due to the pirates leaving her to drown on a rock, which seems to be a reverse of John Smith and Pocahontas, where Pocahontas supposedly saved John Smith. According to an account of John Smith's writing that cannot be verified, Pocahontas saved Smith from being killed by Native Americans by throwing herself over him to protect him. While Peter is the hero, John Smith made Pocahontas his own hero, which could be compared to Tiger Lily's bravery and ferocity when the pirates attack Peter's home. Both Tiger Lily and Pocahontas are also considered exotic due to their Native American heritage, which causes those around them to see them as beautiful, strong, fierce, and someone to own or desire. By Peter saving Tiger Lily, she and her braves feel indebted to him, allowing Peter to have control over them even though they are depicted as being wild, savage, and uncontrollable.

Overall, Peter's god complex is something that stands out more when paired with the obvious racism that this book projects. Peter having so much power in the story is what makes him as cocky as he is since he is still and forever to be a teenage boy. He doesn't realize or remember how his actions affect those around him physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Read the articles here:

<https://michelleisenhoff.com/2012/09/26/peter-and-wendy-by-j-m-barrie-1911-book-review/>

<https://www.tropnews.com/post/peter-pan-and-wendy-by-j-m-barrie-it-is-actually-that-deep>

LKRS READING REACTION

Contributed by Chyna Nguyen, English Major

On October 8, the Little Kanawha Reading Series hosted non-fiction author Doc McLemore.

Doc McLemore, a passionate and amiable writer, arrived at Glenville State University's Robert F. Kid library to read and comment on their memoir, *Someday We Won't Remember This*. Doc Lemore holds everything Appalachian very close to their heart as someone born and raised in West Virginia, New Orleans, and Oregon. In fact, their professional career as a writer, advocate, and activist was kickstarted from their Appalachian studies in West Virginia. They are a friend and fellow scholar of Glenville's Bob Hutton, an associate professor of history and Appalachian studies. Doc McLemore's memoir and their reading were rich in Appalachian inspiration, shown through the culture and language. Doc McLemore's memoir reflects on their experience and their collected shreds of information around their life (childhood to present) and relationships. Doc McLemore's memoir is written in fragments collected and formed in a way that is meant to reflect like memory.



Chinese Silvergrass
contributed by Dean Ryan, Dual Enrollment



To The Dead in the Graveyard Underneath My Window

Written in A Moment of Exasperation

How can you lie so still? All day I watch
And never a blade of all the green sod moves
To show where restlessly you toss and turn,
And fling a desperate arm or draw up knees
Stiffened and aching from their long disuse;
I watch all night and not one ghost comes forth
To take its freedom of the midnight hour.
Oh, have you no rebellion in your bones?
The very worms must scorn you where you lie,
A pallid mouldering acquiescent folk,
Meek habitants of unresented graves.
Why are you there in your straight row on row
Where I must ever see you from my bed
That in your mere dumb presence iterate
The text so weary in my ears: "Lie still
And rest; be patient and lie still and rest."
I'll not be patient! I will not lie still!
There is a brown road runs between the pines,
And further on the purple woodlands lie,
And still beyond blue mountains lift and loom;
And I would walk the road and I would be
Deep in the wooded shade and I would reach
The windy mountain tops that touch the clouds.
My eyes may follow but my feet are held.
Recumbent as you others must I too
Submit? Be mimic of your movelessness
With pillow and counterpane for stone and sod?
And if the many sayings of the wise
Teach of submission I will not submit
But with a spirit all unreconciled
Flash an unquenched defiance to the stars.
Better it is to walk, to run, to dance,
Better it is to laugh and leap and sing,
To know the open skies of dawn and night,
To move untrammelled down the flaming noon,
And I will clamour it through weary days
Keeping the edge of deprivation sharp,
Nor with the pliant speaking on my lips
Of resignation, sister to defeat.
I'll not be patient. I will not lie still.

And in ironic quietude who is
The despot of our days and lord of dust
Needs but, scarce heeding, wait to drop
Grim casual comment on rebellion's end;
"Yes, yes . . . Wilful and petulant but now
As dead and quiet as the others are."
And this each body and ghost of you hath heard
That in your graves do therefore lie so still.

— Adelaide Crapsey
from *Verse*, 1915

A SPOOKY (TRUE!) STORY

Contributed by Aimee Huddleston, Graduate Student

The House on Otter Lane

When my daughter was three years old, we lived in a house on Otter Lane. It was an ordinary but old house, at least that was what I thought when we first moved in. There was nothing particularly frightening about it. It was simply our new home.

Then my daughter started talking about Maggie. At first, I did not think much of it. Three-year-olds have imaginary friends all the time. She would talk about Maggie as casually as she talked about anything else.

"Maggie is a little girl," she told me one day.

"Oh really?" I asked, playing along with her. "What does Maggie look like?"

"She has brown curly hair," she said. "And she wears an old white dress."

Now that caught my attention. I remember looking at her for a moment, wondering where a three-year-old had gotten such a specific image. Still, children have incredible imaginations, so I brushed it off.

For a while, Maggie was simply part of our household. My daughter would mention her occasionally, and I would listen without thinking too much about it.

Then little things started happening around the house. Every now and then, something I was certain I had left in one place would turn up somewhere else. At first, I blamed myself. I was busy and probably just forgetting where I put things.

One day after searching for something I knew I had just had, I jokingly said out loud, "Okay, Maggie. This isn't funny anymore. I need it back."

I felt it was ridiculous talking to my three-year-old's imaginary friend. But not long afterward, the missing item turned up where I knew I had already looked.

After that, whenever something strange happened, Maggie became our joking explanation. Except after a while, it did not feel entirely like a jok— especially when things happened while my daughter wasn't home.

The strangest incident happened while I was repainting my living room. The walls were about 10 feet high, and near the very top of one wall, a small handprint appeared in the fresh paint. What's more, it reappeared after painting over it! It was obviously a handprint of a young child, but it was far too high for a three-year-old to reach.

Then it occurred to me: my daughter was not home. I stood there staring at the handprint near the top of the wall, trying to figure out how it could have possibly gotten there. Suddenly, the age of Maggie that was described to me by my daughter occurred to me.

I cannot say that Maggie ever made us feel we were in danger. The house could feel creepy, especially after something unexplained happened, but whatever was there never felt threatening or mean. Mischievous was a better word, almost as if Maggie wanted to play.

We have since moved into another home, but my daughter still remembers Maggie and speaks of her fondly as a memory.



The mysterious
handprint

WHERE ARE ALL OF WEST VIRGINIA'S BIRDS?

Contributed by Brooklyn Morton, Dual Enrollment

Have you ever stopped to wonder what you might be missing in your own backyard? I spent some time outside watching the bird feeder in my backyard. I have watched this same bird feeder on and off throughout the summer from my bedroom window. Sitting in the grass, surrounded by trees in the distance, I assumed that several birds would come by the feeder. However, my experience was different from what I expected.

During my observation, I noticed only one robin flew around the bird feeder, but it flew several times. The bird approached the feeder but never actually landed on it. Instead, it stayed at a distance. But I could hear it chirping, like it was singing to me. I found it interesting that the bird seemed curious and happy but would not come any closer.

The singing bird reminded me of Katie Olsen's essay, "The Bear and the Bird Feeders." Olsen describes her experiences with squirrels and a bear that repeatedly visited her bird feeders. She explains, "The birds, bless them, are grateful. They sing. They flutter" (144). Unlike Olsen, I did not have animals eating from my feeder. Yet, I did hear singing and saw a robin fly by.

After observing the robin, I researched American robins to learn more about their behavior. In the article, "Do American Robins Acquire Songs by Both Imitating and Inventing?" author Steven L. Johnson describes the familiar robin song as "cheerily, cheer up, cheer up, cheerily, cheer up" (342). I thought this was interesting because I had never really considered how birds learn to communicate with one another. Perhaps the robin was trying to tell his friends that the bird feeder was full or that I was present.

Overall, this observation taught me that sometimes we overlook the little things in nature. Even though I only saw one bird, and it never came to the feeder, I still found the experience interesting. I see my yard every day, but I rarely take the time to sit quietly and notice what is happening around me.



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Johnson, Steven L. "Do American Robins Acquire Songs by Both Imitating and Inventing?" *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, vol. 118, no. 3, Sept. 2006, pp. 341-52. EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1676/05-048.1>.

Olsen, Katie. "The Bear and the Bird Feeders." *Between Earth and Sky: Writings on Wonder and Wilderness*, edited by Melissa Gish, Sabre Lake Publishing, 2026, p. 144-148.

Contributed by Daniel T. Oliveira, Chemistry Major

The world is full of wonders and yet we have no time to look and see, but when we sit down and take the time to see. We are shown the beauties of the world. Whether that may be the breathing of trees or the chirping of birds, life gifts us everything.

I went outside to my back yard to see what wildlife I could observe. Unfortunately, despite the good weather, I did not observe any wildlife at all during my time outside, not even any birds within the trees. I felt somewhat disappointed by this, and decided to take some time to look at why it may be the case.



During my research, I came across an article by Pulver detailing how the bird population in West Virginia has been rapidly declining, with bird sightings being rarer than in years past. As Pulver explains regarding the declining population, "In the Midwest, the single biggest factor is habitat loss", such as converting land used previously for animal grazing, which still allowed for the natural habitats of birds to be preserved, to vast cornfields. While there were other possible reasons given and explained on top of habitat loss, it stuck out to me particularly as a reason, especially with the context of two essays I read.

In "Critters and Us," in regards to a snake being relocated from a parking lot, likely to return later, Bromka states, "He was a resident. We were interlopers" (142). Olsen, in "The Bear and the Bird Feeders" shares a similar sentiment regarding the bear she had chased away from her birdfeeders, and later called the DNR to take away, saying "And then it hit me, with the weight of a truth I really didn't want to acknowledge: This was his home first" (148). Both authors came to a similar realization: that this was the animals' home before it was ours.

This made me reconsider the spot I had chosen for observation, the wooden stairs of my porch right beside the trees, and the erosion of the path where my shoes had travelled time and time again, slowly eroding away the grass which may have grown there before. This home I live in, the backyard I observed from, may be my home, but it was their home first. Construction and farming is slowly displacing the habitats that animals previously lived in, chasing them away from where they once called home.

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Pulver, Dinah. "W.Va. Among States Rapidly Losing Bird Population." *WV News*, Mineral News and Tribune, 2 Jan. 2020, www.wvnews.com/mineral-news/news/w-va-among-states-rapidly-losing-bird-population/article_d3d184f8-f778-5860-b0ff-75a86c665bb2.html. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

Bromka, Michael. "Critters and us." *Between Earth and Sky Writings on Wonder and Wilderness*, edited by Melissa Gish, Sabre Lake Publishing, 2026, pp. 140-143.

Olsen, Katie. "The bear and the bird feeders." *Between Earth and Sky Writings on Wonder and Wilderness*, edited by Melissa Gish, Sabre Lake Publishing, 2026, p. 144-148.

WEIRD QUESTION *of the* WEEK

Halloween is one of those times of the year when we can all be kids again, and when we it's fun to reminisce. This week we asked folks to tell us about their favorite Halloween costumes from childhood.

Jason Barr, Associate Professor of Music

Picture it: Huntington, WV....1985. Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Union. An aspiring Joe Piscopo left Saturday Night Live to conquer Hollywood. And the Muppets were EVERYWHERE! I was addicted to the Muppet Show and was Kermit the Frog that Halloween. Usually green with my red hair makes me look like a leprechaun....but for that evening in 1985, I WAS Kermit!

Lloyd Bone, Associate Professor of Music, Marching Band Director

I honestly can't remember any of my costumes as a child. I am completely drawing a blank. How sad is that? For a little while my parents went through an "anti-Halloween" phase, so that could be part of the reason I'm having trouble remembering anything. I can remember one thing: not enjoying the struggle to breathe through tight, constrictive masks. I hated the feeling of the plastic being crushed onto my nose!

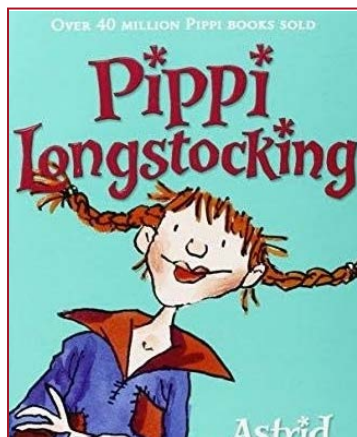
Amanda Chapman, Associate Professor of English

I was five or six, and the costume was Barbie Bride. The plastic mask (which you can see in the photos for the linked Ebay listing) was hideously uncomfortable, especially because it was a very warm Halloween, even for Alabama. The veil kept falling off and got increasingly grimy over the course of the evening. But I was extremely proud to have a store-bought costume, and I wore it proudly.



Schuyler Chapman, Associate Professor of English

I was Radar from M*A*S*H* when I was a child (could NOT tell you any other costumes I had).



Arista Eberly, Admissions Counselor

My favorite Halloween costume I wore as a child was probably Pippi Longstockings! My mom had put it together last second. We used a metal clothes hanger to keep my braids up (which was my favorite part)! I had no idea who she was, but my mom was really happy with the outcome and still mentions it around Halloween every year.

Jason Gum, Library Director/Assistant Professor

My favorite Halloween costume as a child was an old man. This may sound unusual, but when complemented with the right attire, this mask turns a child into a 100+ year old man that gets people literally confused and concerned. I believe that mask ended up winning the costume contest five times at my elementary school for five different children in my family.

Brian Johnston, Associate Professor of Communication

A robot, made out of repurposed boxes and tin foil and with box knife precision.

Scott O'Neil, Assistant Professor of English

My "last" Halloween costume as a kid was in 8th grade. I went as a dirty old man (spray painted my hair gray, wore a bathrobe, had slippers that made fart noises, and I had a walking cane with a mirror attached to the bottom). The elements of the costume all came from Spencer's Gifts in the mall. I think I had JUST turned 13. It took a lot of time and effort to make myself look like an old man back then. It's much easier now, haha.

Casey Smola, Title IX Coordinator

Favorite and the most memorable! One statement. Ballerinas do not wear sweatpants with an authentic TUTU! Even when it's cold, should a Ballerina wear sweatpants? Ever! Thanks, Mom, I love you! No need in catching a cold over wanting to be a Ballerina.

Mike Vozniak, Assistant Professor of English

Jim Carrey's "The Mask." I had an unhealthy obsession with that movie.

Alyssa Yeager, General Studies Program

Circa 2016, a black widow spider. I won "Most Creative Costume" that year! Made from a beach ball covered in a cut up, black velvet-material dress, and pipe insulators.



DELICIOUS FALL DESSERTS FROM THE KONG KITCHEN

Baking is a great way to celebrate the fall season. Here are some favorite recipes for you to try. These have been kitchen-tested and photographed by Assistant Professor of English, Catherine Kong, who says, "I love taking pictures and making food." Click the images to go to the recipes online.



Pumpkin Nama
Chocolate
Basque Cheesecake



Pumpkin Rolls



Apple Pie



Apple Roll Cake

