



## THE TIL NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019 Edition

### GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings, TIL-eros!

Hope yall are having a fruitful summer, or at least a comfortable one. I was GOING to complain about our three 100+ days in a row here in San Antonio 'til the monsoons and the rolling thunder hit, like it has every week for the last month, just as soon as we think to ourselves, "Ah, okay. Summer is finally REALLY HERE!" Most of my neighbors are beginning to inflate their life rafts and strap the life vests on their family members, but I, like any good writer, am just making sure my laptop is high above floodwater level, and my bookshelves are high and dry.

We have a great newsletter with all kinds of fascinating creative projects and publications going on. Scroll down through it and find out what your fellow TIL members are up to. So many good books, awards, and literary activities to inspire us all! And the best news of all—almost all of them kept their entries to 150 words or less! If it passed that mark, it was always something worthy of a Nobel or a Pulitzer, so enjoy the fine writing.

It was so good seeing everyone at the Annual Awards Weekend in McAllen, and the power of the readings, the interaction with the community, and the magic of the 900-year-old Montezuma Cypress Tree under which we read, south of the border wall, in a moment beyond time and beyond borders will be with us for a very long time. For those who didn't get to join us in McAllen, I'm including some photos and some comments from members old and new, in a few pages of memories of the TIL Awards Weekend 2019.

Make sure to **reserve next year's dates** in your calendar right now! Your TIL Council Members (ever-vigilant, at least while they're not concocting humorous TIL Creation Myths) vetted these dates to make sure they DON'T conflict with AWP, TLA, the San Antonio Book Festival, Fiesta, Easter, or Bob Flynn's birthday. And in their infinite wisdom, they have selected the weekend of **March 27-28 for our 2020 Annual Awards Weekend in Georgetown.**

We have some exciting literary-historical-cultural events lined up for you in this charming and centrally located township. So reserve it in your calendars now.

Hasta MARZO, TIL-eros, y que Viva la Revolución Literaria!  
con cariño,  
Carmen Tafolla  
President, TIL

### **THE 2019 TIL AWARDS WEEKEND, McALLEN**





*"I was kind of scared to come here. To this organization. I thought they would be a bunch of snobs, very competitive and stuffy. But the minute I got the TIL Maverick's Guide on How to Dress for the RGV Weekend, I showed it to my husband and he said, 'This looks like it's DEFINITELY gonna be different from those stuffy affairs.' AND IT WAS!!! SO much fun!" - R. Davidson*





*"The weekend was outstanding! From the lovely hotel to the fun programs. I enjoyed every part of it!"—E. Harris*



*"...by far, the best attended TIL meeting I have ever attended." -J. Thompson*





*I'm just coming down from the incredible high of being with you and my fellow writers at the Border...My heart is full but breaking too. It was sad, moving, inspiring, hopeful...*

*-Bill Broyles*









*"...so many special moments—visits with old friends and making new ones—the gardens at Quinta Mazatlan with chachalacas in the trees, the white olive trees in bloom, the grove of the rare Texas Ebony, and Black Bellied Whistling Ducks on the pond—Tish Hinojosa's songs Saturday night—fellow inductees beautiful readings—capped off with the poetry readings under the ancient Montezuma Cypress tree where the breeze blew the words right through the wall. It was truly a magical weekend for me." -E. T. Clarke*



*"...thanks to all who had a hand in it -- for making me feel so welcome and appreciated in McAllen this weekend. I had one satisfying conversation after another, and I could not have asked for a more receptive crowd to read my Barbara Jordan book to. ..My time with the Texas Institute of Letters was a joy, and I appreciate all the planning and effort that made it possible." – C. Barton*

**There are many more photos of the 2019 TIL Awards Weekend in McAllen, and we will be posting some of them on the website this summer.**

## NEWS NOTES FROM TIL MEMBERS:



**Robert Flynn**, TIL's favorite Saint Emeritus, received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award for career excellence and longevity.

**Gregg Barrios** headed the National Book Critics Circle committee for the Leonard Prize for best new book in any genre by a first-time author. This year the Prize went to Tommy Orange (who later was runner-up for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction) for *There, There*. Last month, Gregg wrote a commentary for the Rivard Report on Lin-Manuel Miranda's hit musical *Hamilton*. <https://therivardreport.com/hamilton-the-hip-hop-shot-heard-round-the-world-lands-at-the-majestic/> Gregg has received his third National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and will be completing research at the University of Tampa / Key West on two plays including his final play in his Tennessee Williams Trilogy, commissioned by the Williams Provincetown Theater Festival for a 2020-2021 production.

**Roberto Bonazzi**, who has been the executor of the estate of John Howard Griffin (author of *BLACK LIKE ME*, 1959) since 2000, has written several books about Griffin, the latest of which is *Reluctant Activist* from TCU Press (2019).

**Jerry Bradley** has poetry in *Poets Reading the News* and a number of recent anthologies: *By the Light of a Neon Moon*, *Words in Concert*, *Magnum Opus*, and Houston Public Poetry's collection *Power*.

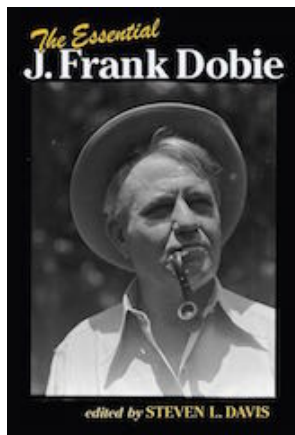
**Jay Brandon** has completed his next novel, which will be his twentieth published novel. No publication date yet, but the publisher seems in a hurry, completing editing and creating a cover within a month after submission of the manuscript.

**Bobby Byrd**- Cinco Puntos is proud to be publishing TIL Member Lisa Sandlin's *Bird-Boys*, the second in her Delpha Wade and Tom Phelan series set in Beaumont during the 1970s.



**Paul Carlson** recently published with co-author Clint Chambers the book *Comanche Jack Stilwell: Army Scout and Plainsman* (2019) University of Oklahoma Press. The book received the Rupert N. Richardson Award (for best book dealing with West Texas) from the West Texas Historical Association.

**Pat Carr** gave a spring workshop in Fayetteville, AR, on Hemingway's theory that the most powerful tragedy is the character's hidden tragedy which is suggested but never articulated. Also, the International Women's Writing Guild has announced a short story prize in her honor, The Pat Carr Fiction Award, to be given annually.



**Steve Davis** is alive and well but insists that "as part of my therapy after completing my sentence as TIL president, I began compiling and editing a collection of Dobie's best writings. This was great fun, because Dobie could actually be a really fine writer – once you prune away some of the brushy undergrowth. He had matchless personal adventures and he was decades ahead of his time in championing civil rights and protecting the environment." The result is his new book which aims to bring Dobie's writing back to life and make him relevant to today's readers. "Dobie's writing matters, because, above all, he was a keen observer of the tension between nature and technology, and his writing connects us to deeper, sometimes forgotten, human qualities." *The Essential J. Frank Dobie* (due October 2019) is the first book in the Wittliff Collection's new book series with Texas A&M University Press.

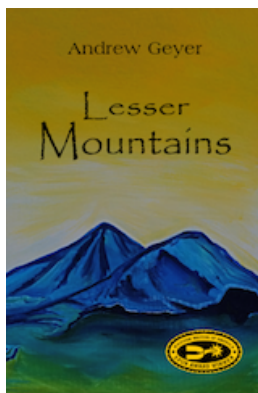
Past president, **William Virgil (Bill) Davis** has new poems in Agni, Evansville Review, Hiram Poetry Review, The Hudson Review, Image, The Laurel Review, Scintilla (UK), Slant, South Carolina Review, Southern Poetry Review, Stand (UK), and The Yale Review, among others. His translation of Georg Trakl's *Die Nacht* appeared in a special issue of the San Pedro River Review. His long essay, "Each of Us Beholds Himself in You': Reading Wallace Stevens and George Santayana" is in the book *Ideas Crossing the Atlantic: Theories, Normative Conceptions and Cultural Images*. In addition, three poems from his award-winning *One Way to Reconstruct the Scene* will be reprinted in the *Yale Series of Younger Poets Anthology, 1919-2019*, celebrating the first 100 years

of the Yale prizes. In celebration of the anthology and to honor the history of the Prize, Yale is sponsoring readings October 22<sup>nd</sup> in six US cities—including one in Houston (at Mongoose versus Cobra), where Bill will read. All are invited.

**Gerald Duff** was inducted into the Texas Literary Hall of Fame in March, along with another TIL member, Jan Reid.

**Wes Ferguson** has moved over to Texas Monthly as a writer at large.

**Laura Furman** served as O. Henry series editor and her *The O. Henry Prize Stories 2019* will be published in September 2019. She says it will be her “last O. Henry as series editor. I’ve been very lucky to work with the writers and editors I have since 2002, and I’m grateful to each one” and adds that the O. Henry is changing its submission practice. Instead of sending in the whole magazine, please send PDFs of the fiction you publish to: [ohenryprize@prh.com](mailto:ohenryprize@prh.com). This change begins immediately.



**Andrew Geyer's** new short story cycle, *Lesser Mountains*, was published in April by Lamar University Literary Press. These nineteen interwoven narratives delve into the lives of the fictional people living in and around the small town of Jordan, Texas. The protagonists for the major plotlines are introduced in the opening story, and the subsequent stories link the trajectories of their lives in a novelistic effect that makes the whole much more than just the sum of its parts. Awards and honors already accumulated for the individual stories in *Lesser Mountains* include the 2015 Spur Award for Best Short Fiction from the Western Writers of America and the 2011 Gary Wilson Award from descant.

**James L. Haley**, best known for his Texas history (*Sam Houston*, 2002; *Passionate Nation*, 2006; *The Texas Supreme Court*, 2013), is continuing his “scenic detour into historical fiction as a way to reach a larger audience in our ever more historically illiterate society.” The third installment of his American tall-ship naval adventure series, *The Devil in Paradise: Captain Putnam in Hawaii*, goes on sale October 22. The manuscript of the fourth volume, *Captain Putnam for the Republic of Texas*, is due at G. P. Putnam’s Sons on August 15 (so Texas is not quite out of his system yet...) Wall



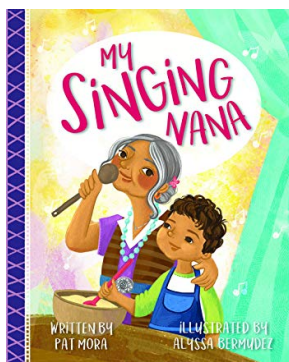
Street Journal compared the first volume, *The Shores of Tripoli*, to "an American Patrick O'Brian ... it is that good." The second book, *A Darker Sea*, was a finalist for TIL's Jesse H. Jones Award.

**Kathryn Jones'** essay "Revelation in the Desert: Making History Personal" will appear in *A Uniquely American Epic: Intimacy and Action, Tenderness and Violence in Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch*, edited by Michael Bliss. The University Press of Kentucky is publisher and the collection of essays is set for release in December. At last fall's national Society of Professional Journalists convention, Jones was elected regional coordinator for all professional and campus SPJ chapters in Texas and Oklahoma. She coordinated the annual spring Region 8 conference held at Tarleton State University and judging for the SPJ Mark of Excellence Awards. She also is editor of the region's blog, the Red River Report.

**James C. Kearney** will have the lead article in the July issue of the Southwestern Historical Quarterly. The article is entitled: "The murder of Conrad Caspar Rordorf; art, violence, and intrigue on the Texas Frontier."

**C.M. Mayo's** short story "What Happened to the Dog?" appears in *Escapements: Typewritten Tales from Digital Worlds* (Loose Dog Press, 2019). Her paper "John Bigelow Jr: Lieutenant of the Tenth US Cavalry, Military Intellectual, and Nexus Between West and East" is forthcoming in the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*, as is her translation of Mexican writer Rose Mary Salum's short story "The Aunt" in *Catamaran Literary Reader*. Agustín Cadena, another noted Mexican writer whom she translates, and who has translated three of her books into Spanish, recently presented his paper, "The Work of C.M. Mayo: Building Bridges, Not Walls" for the Conference of the Hungarian Association for American Studies at the University of Debrecen.

**Ann McCutchan**, the biographer of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, is featured in a new 40-minute documentary on Rawlings. *Here is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek* was recently given its television premiere on Colorado Public Television. Anyone can watch it here: <https://vimeo.com/297967055> Ann's Rawlings biography is set for a fall 2020 release by W.W. Norton.



**Pat Mora's** new children's book, *MY SINGING NANA*, just arrived. A loving family begins the journey millions of families are making, memory loss in a grandparent.

**karla k. morton** is having the time of her life in her "Words of Preservation: A Poets Laureate National Parks Tour" with fellow Texas State Poet Laureate Alan Birkelbach. They are currently 47 Parks into their historic Tour (out of 61 National Parks) and plan to November, 2019. On tap this Summer: Isle Royale, Voyageurs NP in June, Theodore Roosevelt NP in July, and their five remaining Alaska National Parks in August: Kobuk Valley, Gates of the Arctic, Katmai, Lake Clark, Kenai Fjords! TCU Press will be publishing this book Fall, 2020.



## TEXIAN

Colonel Juan Almonte, Santa Anna's aide, was the first  
To call his attention to the heralding of two golden stars  
Floating in the familiar field of green, white and red  
Over that unlikely mission fort Alamo, small stars  
That foreshadowed the larger single searing symbol  
Emblazoning our ultimate flag of Texas independence  
We fly so proudly today. And each of the banners  
That flew over those many battles, all spoke  
With the same unwavering intonation, Not  
No, we will not become minions! Imagine with me  
The cacophony of these many varied accents,  
Of Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama,  
And Tejano, lifting together in the casting throng,  
A composition of the most unlikely of battlefield  
Symphonies, a timpani for independence.

Walt Whitman wrote in his *Leaves*,  
*They score the glory*  
*Of the race of rangers, matchless*  
*With a horse, a rifle, a song, a supper,*  
*Or a courtship, large, turbulent, brave,*  
*Handsome, generous, proud, affectionate,*  
*Bearded, sunburnt, dressed in the free*  
*Costume of hunters, not a single one*  
*Over thirty years of age.*

These were the men and boys  
Of whom Walt called the *jetblack*  
Sunrise at the last battle Goliad,  
The same ebony tinted sun that fell on  
The hardened rough hewn clay arch  
Of the hallowed battlefield Alamo, where  
Within the brawny breastworks of both  
That simple chapel complex  
And the ragtag men staged within  
Was mirrored these same  
Uniquely Texian traits.

Texian, Texian, Texian, the word  
That soon returned a *jetblack* siesta  
To the soldiers of Santa Anna

In the far flung fields of beach brush,  
Mesquite, live oak, and pines  
Of the San Jacinto battleground,  
Texian, a word immortalized  
Now the world over  
By the actions of those gallant few.

Yet, these were seemingly ordinary men  
With common everyday problems, desires, prejudices,  
Fraught with human frailties, not ideal or perfected.  
It is said that even General Sam Houston  
Years before these momentous days,  
Standing deeply depressed perched  
Top deck on the river boat *Rod Rover*,  
Was saved from a suicidal fall by the sudden  
Flash of auburn plumage as an eagle, a Cherokee  
Omen foretelling a greatness to come, swooped  
Auguring down toward him —

Today we stand with one of Houston's resurrected warriors  
So perfectly formed by Campobella's sword, ennobled  
Amongst these thirteen flags, not an hour's drive north  
Of where his grand triumphant destiny brought us ours,  
Where the wafting fragrances of salty gulf coast breezes  
And the pungent smoke of gun powder sweated the air  
That breathed life into the fledgling hopeful beast  
Of a stately body to come, making legend these hallowed  
Winged emblems now fully realized, as our omens,  
Their bright feathers forever woven with the blood  
Of these many iron-willed, uniquely, soulful  
Menagerie of men: these Texians.

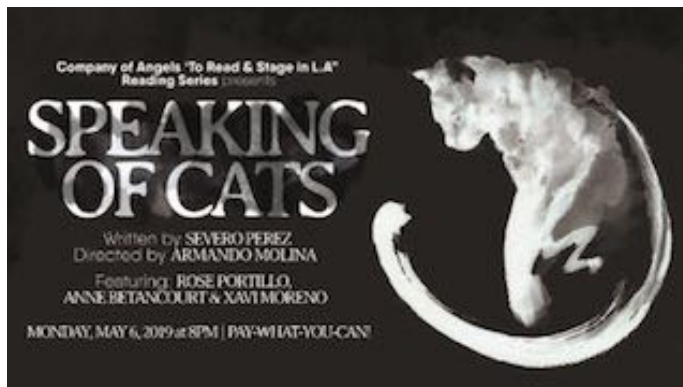
DAVID MERCIER PARSONS  
2011 Texas State Poet Laureate

TEXIAN was composed for and read at the opening, unveiling ceremonies  
for The Lone Star Monument & Historical Flag Park on the 175th anniversary  
of the Battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 2011.

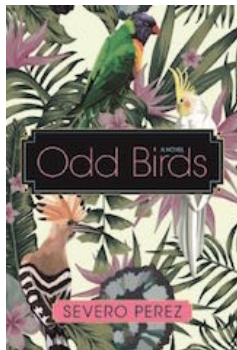
**David Parsons** has poems appearing or accepted for publishing in *By the Light of a Neon Moon*, 2019, and *Level Land: Poems for and about the I-35 Corridor*, University of Oklahoma, 2020. "I am truly honored and humbled as my poem *Texian* will be installed at the Lone Star Monument & Historic Flag Park this month next to the Central Library. Attached is a copy of the poem artwork for the brass plaque, which will be 52" x 18"... almost big enough for me to be buried in it." This project, begun by the Montgomery County Literary Arts Council over a year ago has finally been realized.



**Deborah Paredez** was honored at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CantoMundo National Latinx Poetry Writers' Workshop at Columbia University in New York this month. Deborah, along with the other Co-Founders of CantoMundo (Celeste Mendoza, Carmen Tafolla, Norma Cantú, and Pablo Miguel Martínez) created CantoMundo at Norma's kitchen table in 2009, and helped develop, fundraise, and solidify the organization, which has now graduated 140 fellows from its three-year retreat-writing program. Deborah and Celeste stepped down after 10 years serving as Co-Directors. (TIL Members Norma Cantú and Carmen Tafolla served 5 years as Co-Directors.) Deborah will continue her work as Professor of Creative Writing & Ethnic Studies at Columbia.



**Severo Perez's** play *Speaking of Cats* had a reading at Company of Angels on May 6, with Rose Portillo, Anne Betancourt, and Xavi Moreno, directed by Armando Molina. TIL member and writer/raconteur Joe Holley wrote a profile of Severo for the Houston Chronicle. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/columnists/native-texan/article/For-Severo-Perez-the-Majestic-Theater-was-more-13818185.php> and TCU Press will launch Severo's novel *Odd Birds*, in September 2019.



**Jan Reid** is nearing completion of a new novel tentatively titled *THE SONG LEADER*, which deals with faith and its loss and is set in the worlds of rock and roll and heavyweight boxers of the 1970s. After that he hopes his fiction will take him back to Spain and a sequel of *SINS OF THE YOUNGER SONS*. A major publisher of audiobooks plans to bring out his biography of Ann Richards, *LET THE PEOPLE IN*.

**Clay Reynolds'** "Railroad Man," which won this year's Bud Shrake award for Short Nonfiction, was also named finalist for the Spur Award for the same category by the Western Writers' Association. He adds, "I will be traveling to Tucson to be part of an awards luncheon for finalists. It would have been nice to win there, as well, but you can't have everything." Reynolds has been named to the Board of Directors for Madville Press, a new publishing venture being launched by Kim Davis, formerly editor at the Texas Review Press, who has relocated to Lake Cities, Texas to begin this new small press venture.

**Jose Rodriguez's** collection, *This American Autopsy: Poems* is forthcoming in August from University of Oklahoma Press.

**Lisa Sandlin's** sequel to *The Do-Right* (2015, Cinco Puntos Press; winner of Hammett Prize) will be out July 16. Its title is *The Bird Boys*, and it's the second of the Delpha Wade and Tom Phelan books, set in Beaumont in 1973. *The Bird Boys* has 3 starred reviews, pre-publication.

**Steven Schneider's** poetry is featured in an exhibit entitled "Taos Landscape Qi" at the April Price Projects Gallery at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The exhibit features watercolor landscape paintings by the artist Reefka and Steven's ekphrastic poems. He also published his article on the American poet A.R. Ammons in *American National Biography* (Oxford University Press). In December Steven's poem "Chanukah Lights Tonight" will be featured in *Highlights Magazine*.

**Jesse Sublett III** has been writing for *Texas Highways Magazine* and is "honored to be included in a magazine that presents so much great writing about things in Texas." The January issue featured his personal essay, "A Cancer Survivor on the Healing Nature of Birds," about his relationship with birds, nature and art: <https://texashighways.com/culture/people/a-cancer-survivor-on-the-healing-nature-of-birds/>. He wrote a plug for the career retrospective of the great Swedish sculptor Kent Ullberg, a long-time Corpus Christi resident whose retrospective is at the Art Museum of South Texas. <https://texashighways.com/culture/art-music/new-exhibit-at-corpus-christi-museum-features-ullbergs-oversized-wildlife-sculptures/> And he calls his profiles of a handful of Texas' great bass players appearing in October "one of the easiest and funnest assignments I've ever had the privilege of writing."



**Doug Swanson's** 2014 biography of gambling racketeer Benny Binion, *Blood Aces*, has been optioned by Dallas oilman and film producer Tim Headington, who produced *Argo*. Headington's company, Ley Line Entertainment, plans to turn Binion's story into a TV series. Swanson's history of the Texas Rangers--not the baseball team--is scheduled to be published by Viking in Summer 2020.



**Carmen Tafolla** was just named Professor Emerita of Bicultural Bilingual Studies at University of Texas San Antonio. This spring she had poems accepted in *Healing the Divide: Poems of Kindness and Connection*, *Women Poets of the Américas*, and *Authentic Texas* magazine, which also featured her as their cover story. Excerpts of her poetry are being woven into the artwork of a new solar mural on San Antonio's West Side, following two other art pieces with her poetry, one of which graces the pediment inside the Briscoe Museum of Western Art. Carmen is co-editor (along with Luis Alberto Urrea, Octavio Quintanilla, Denise Chavez & Pam Uschuk) of a new anthology, *Contemporary Chicana Literature*, from CutThroat Magazine (forthcoming 2020).

**Larry D. Thomas'** new poetry collection, *In a Field of Cotton: Mississippi River Delta Poems*, was published by Blue Horse Press (Redondo Beach, CA) in April 2019 ([https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0578466201/ref=dbs\\_a\\_def\\_rwt\\_bibl\\_vppi\\_i0](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0578466201/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i0)) Thomas's "Delta poetry" was also the subject of an extensive critical essay by J. Todd Hawkins, "Despair and Hope through Delta Labor in the Poetry of Larry D. Thomas," published in the *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies* in a special issue (Volume 50, Issue 1.)

**Jerry Thompson's** long-awaited *Wrecked Lives and Lost Souls: Joe Davis and the Last of the Oklahoma Outlaws* will be out from the University of Oklahoma Press in November 2019. Thompson was the recent recipient of the Kate Broocks Bates award for his *Tejano Tiger: Jose de Los Santos Benavides and the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, 1823-1891* from the Texas State Historical Association.



**Sergio Troncoso** has a new book of linked short stories, *A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son*, forthcoming from Cinco Puntos Press in October 2019. The stories explore Mexican-American diaspora, link together to explore perspectivism and time, and end with an 'experience' for the reader. The venerable W.K. (Kip) Stratton says: "I love Sergio's new collection. It traces epic journeys, both of body and soul, from places like Ysleta in Far West Texas to sophisticated avenues in Boston and Manhattan. But the best part of *A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son* is the magic of Troncoso's language, which sings from each page. This book is a triumph, the work of a master writer at the peak of his game."

**Donley Watt's** essay, "Chasing the Cantaloupe Man," was chosen by The Los Angeles Review for inclusion in their recent, annual "very best-of" print journal, and Cutthroat Journal included his essay, "A Tragedy on the Texas Border," in their Spring 2019 issue.

**Laura Wilson**, this fall, will have two solo exhibitions of her photographs on view. The first will open in October at the National Cowgirl Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. The second exhibition opens in December at the Tyler Museum of Art in Tyler, Texas.



**Steve Wilson's** newest poetry collection, *The Reaches*, will be out this fall from Finishing Line Press.

**Marion Winik's** *The Baltimore Book of the Dead* won the 2019 Towson Prize for Literature. <https://www.towson.edu/news/2019/towson-prize-for-literature.html>

**Tom Zigal** will be speaking about his new novel, *Outcry Witness* (TCU Press), at the Oklahoma Book Festival in Oklahoma City on September 21. All TIL members living in exile in Oklahoma are required to join him.