

Otherworld, Underworld, Prayer Porch

David Bottoms

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That there's such a stratospherically high level of difficulty in writing great poetry doesn't get discussed much, probably out of superstition and a belief among poets that, after Homer's singular brilliance, the gods disabled the poetry lobe in the human brain. But they missed a couple people, obviously. David Bottoms, what's divine guidance feel like? The Poet Laureate of Georgia for twelve years, winner of the Walt Whitman Award of the Academy of American Poets, author of ten poetry collections and a couple novels, Bottoms teaches at Georgia State University in Atlanta.

Baptists

*At Canton First Baptist no one ever spoke of mythologies or metaphor.
No one in the pulpit, huffing and red-faced,*

ever asked why the prophets had long drifted into dust and silence.

*Desert was simply a wilderness of sand. Blood was blood
water was wine,*

And wine (grape juice) was sometimes blood.

*Most Sundays my mind was someplace else entirely, racing
the engine of my father's Impala, or breaking*

a curveball over home plate, or casting

*a lure over choir loft and organ, over stained-glass disciples
and net-draped fishing boats, struggling*

to hook a thought, to reel it to the surface, clean, untangled,

*without snagging the pulpit
or the back of a pew.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (Religion 2018)

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