

William Stafford

MY FATHER SAW HALLEY'S COMET

It helps when birds come. Often a stormcloud
softened through pines delivers oceans
of rain, or a wolfpack shifting
their silhouettes braids past northward in the evening.

Time helps, the stars pulling apart
their constellations and forming new
meanings, the shapes of leaves imitating
feathers at first, then paws, then wind prayers.

All this is preliminary. A hand on the earth
takes hold slowly; centuries lie down;
wolves and birds do what they can.
It helps when a comet comes by—it is counting:

Slow reasons for faith, back and
forth on a pendulum through the sky.

Mary Belle Campbell

JUNE IN NORTH CAROLINA

For William Stafford

Magnolia leaves—gold, crisp—
drift down along the campus walks,
crunch like sugar cookies,
like potato chips, sun-fried.

Pristine blossoms unfold
from white wax tapers.
Petals burnish to sueded leather,
wither to cones.

September's gilded cones
will burst with red lacquer seeds,
with dreams. "Trash trees,"
my neighbor calls them.