Featured Poet: X. J. Kennedy

X. J. Kennedy adopted his pen-name to be different from better known Joe Kennedys. Ten books of verse include *In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus: New & Selected Poems* (an ALA notable book) and forthcoming in April, *That Swing*. He is the author of two dozen books for children and the textbook *An Introduction to Poetry*, thirteenth edition, now coauthored with Dana Gioia. A comic novel *A Hoarse Half-human Cheer* has been widely ignored. Kennedy has received the Poets' Prize, the Poetry Society’s Robert Frost medal, the Aiken-Taylor Award, and in 2015 the Jackson Poetry Prize from Poets & Writers. He and his wife Dorothy live in Lexington, Mass.

Kennedy is the conference Poet Emeritus. He has served the conference as keynote speaker and has been the subject of several panels.

Below is one of Kennedy’s poems:

**Lonesome George**

*Giant tortoise kept penned
at the Darwin Research Station,*
*Puerto Ayora, Galapagos*

No mate for him exists.

Last one of his sub-species,
he solemnly persists
in turning into feces
eelgrass brown and dry,
spine-sprinkled cactus leaves.
Straining to gulp a fly
dejectedly retrieves
blunt head. Dead-ending male,
lone emblem of despair,
he slumps on his kneecaps, tail
antennaing the air.
For a long moment we bind
sympathetic looks,
we holdouts of our kind,
like rhymed lines, printed books.