



Dragon Poet Review

Winter 2016/17

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Winter

By Ken Hada

Days are shorter
than I want.

My cousin Bear
told me to prepare

but I was fooled
by crows at dawn

who come and go
as they please.

I am a building
a nest in the dark.

Abiding

By Ken Hada

Thelonius Monk, “Abide
with Me” – a cigar,
a winter storm, my brother
in surgery in Houston after driving
all night, after weeks of failed
remedies, after sleepless anxiety,
the unspoken, interior fight
of faith and reason – the shock
of shock – but now the sax
is climbing, soaring in jubilation,
the melancholy piano
underscores it all – helpless
but for prayer we wait alone
a long way away, snowed-in,
taking comfort as best we can,
like songbirds flapping in icy wind
seeking berries to sustain us,
contour feathers surviving –
“Abide with Me” – “Abide
with Me” – cigar smoke wafting
towards eternity.

Winter Solstice

By Yvonne Carpenter

From the bottom
now we climb.
The diving descent
a matter of form;
the ascent,
a matter of muscle—
sweaty aching muscle.
Through days bereft of light,
we push;
between trees naked,
we march;
under banks of snow,
we burrow,
until we glimpse
the oak leaf.

When it grows
as big as
my little finger's nail,
we plant corn.

Winter Stealthily Approaches

By Yvonne Carpenter

One red rose blushes above the ice at her feet.
A shiny black bird balances on a dry sunflower
so still his iridescent green necklace gradually appears,
a raccoon silently claws his way up an oak,
and a hawk swoops to chase a squirrel around a tree.

Life
creeps
toward winter's lair.

Pioneer Woman

By Yvonne Carpenter

She lives on a frontier,
a place sparsely settled,
that land of the superannuated.
Like the pioneers who rolled out
across the prairies,
some come well prepared by
family lore of proven techniques
in budget, diet, good genetics.
Others stumble forth relying on
gossip gleaned at the local market.
Some hire guides for details like
which trail to follow,
how many supplies to pack,
where to find game.

The vast domain of old age
had opened for settlement.
When she was a child,
few folk lived there,
a hard place
of bent and wrinkled citizens
who scattered snuff,
whittled,
and soiled their bibs.
She hopes she brought the right equipment.

Frozen Canopy
By Marsha Ferrier



Icy Reflections
By Marsha Ferrier



Moon sleep

By Madhu Kailas

Sleep eases in
with sated surrender
of smooth roll of glass beads
down the gentle slope
of your nape
and tracing the groove of your back
delicate in cotton rest.
In embrace of cellophane night
your chiffon form spread
catches a glint of stealth moon
loving you in silvery shades
and glazing clavicles.
Husky shadows play
in cusp of your undulating breath,
wasted in fragrance.
Washed by a pink sky
the moon fades in a slow dance.
Away.

Here we leave no prints

By Madhu Kailas

A game we found
in our trust of rhythm, and
in our wee innocence.
On the shoreline
hold the breath, till that next wave
comes in.

Once, the sea forgot to return.
We ran breathless
over the sand
with foaming waves
at corners of our mouth.
And printed tiny feet in flight.

Years later, that is now -
at lunch in stiff leather shoes
I walk around the block
counting one, two.
On hardened pavement
till the corns squeak.

Here we leave no prints
that climb the stairs
and cram the elevators.
Here in this giant exchange
it's all interchangeable.

At nine, the escalators ferry
continuous flux of people
spewed by the Tube
on conveyor belts. Infinite flow
upward and into nine hours.
We all have glass eyes
fixed nowhere.

Somewhere I read
if we could live backwards.
It spooked me to remember
everything that is to come.

The sea returned
after we had left. The sand has been
wet and heavy,

and dry and gritty
many times thence.

Pygmalion's Statues

By Brian Walter

Walking through London's Charing Cross district many years ago, I noticed several dozen people gathered on the south side of a narrow cobble-stone lane that runs directly downhill to the Embankment Underground stop. The people were all facing north, where a couple of steps led up from the street to a sidewalk; the sidewalk itself (which I was at that moment using) was lined by a fence of tall, spiked iron rails about a foot apart, separating a garden from the public area surrounding it. On the steps sat a couple of weather-beaten statues of human figures, one on either side of a large concrete potting vase – pleasant sculptuary, certainly, but hardly striking enough at first glance to draw a crowd when the impressive stonework of Trafalgar Square was just a few minutes' walk away. But just as I was turning my gaze back to the pretty green leafage inside the fence, I noticed that the onlookers – their expressions arranged in hopeful, even excited anticipation – were all focused intently on the statues. And then, just as I passed the focus of their attention, I noticed the little collection bowl set between the feet of the statues themselves, and it finally dawned on me how marvelously my *oeil* had been *trompé*.

The make-up must have taken them a long time, lending their skin the look of deeply begrimed pennies or pieces of Bronze Age pottery recovered after a long immersion. Blues and blacks dominated, flecked with streaks of dull gold, the paint jobs covering their whole bodies, from the toes to their shorn crowns. Brief garlands clung to their waists and their temples, with one statue playfully sporting Beelzebub's horns in his forehead to boot. Perched and perfectly motionless on the short steps, they looked like gigantic gargoyles, eyes fixed, no sign of respiration visible even from my vantage point just five or six feet away. The crowd of spectators had no chance in this stare-down, restless and murmuring with the unmistakable desire to see these superbly-disciplined performers break character.

Which, of course, they did – whenever someone stepped within their circle. One pedestrian even more heedless than I strode purposefully up the hill between the crowd and the living statues and understandably jumped in surprise when Beelzebub darted a hand out as if to seize a leg as it passed just a couple feet in front of his nose. A few moments later, one of the onlookers, a boy urged on by his buddy, crept forward with coin in hand but then scurried back to the safety of the crowd when the statues simultaneously reached out for him, the hastily-dropped coin just barely landing in the bowl.

The healthy berth separating us from the statues remained unbraved then for some time, until one little girl, three or four years old perhaps, headed over to make a friend (her two older brothers much too timid to go and deposit the coins they were excitedly brandishing). Little sister did not take a direct route, but rather went up onto the sidewalk first and then walked fearlessly toward the nearest figure, as visibly happy as if she were pursuing a furry little kitten in need of a good petting. It took only a few seconds for her to reach her quarry, but it seemed much longer, as we all held our breath, wondering how this encounter would play out.

The end came abruptly. When she was within a foot or so of the statue's left ear, just reaching out to touch its shoulder and say hi, the statue whirled its head around and stuck its tongue out at her. So much for making friends. The terrified little girl moved a lot faster on her way back to the safety of Daddy's arms, where her sobs drew a collective and endearingly sincere "Aaawwww" from the crowd. In the meantime, resettled comfortably

into Venus Flytrap-position, the statues did not join in the chorus of sympathy. Art takes no prisoners.

Skalded

By *Ann Howells*

A mockingbird on the chimney
sang madly all night
which would have been okay,
but his tap routine caused insomnia.

I offered a digit of sign language.

I hear time *tsking* away,
feel slow unwinding days
unweaving invisible tapestries
stitched with myriad exotic threads.

I nurture neuroses,

ponder difference
between graphology and lexicography—
question whether a manuscript
is truly a manuscript if not hand-written.

Should someone ask . . .

English is my native speech,
flinty vernacular, grating as emery.
Here, hold my tongue to the light;
try to decipher my words.

Found in Secondhand Books

By Ann Howells

Two tickets to the Shakespeare Festival
Stratford-upon-Avon
August 10, 1997

Postcard from Pompeii—Nan to Pamela
collage of arches, Corinthian columns
mosaic of a large black dog

Seven two dollar bills

Another postcard— Eleanor to Suz
Audubon print of a Purple Gallinule
semi-snide comments, smiley faces

Photograph—crew cut young man
in plaid skirt and white blouse
poses with hula hoop

Clark Bar wrapper (crunchy
peanut butter taste of childhood)
folded lengthwise into eighths

Receipt for Margo's cremains—
Trenton, New Jersey
unsigned in original envelope

Mose

By Richard Dixon

Five-seven and wiry
ebony skin a-shine
after 28 eternal years in prison
a free man with a 40 hr. job
at Wendy's

champing at the bit
wanting to go wild in the jungle
but he has to walk
the taut tightrope of the straight
and narrow

A new trial in the future
due to the pro bono attorney who
saw the injustice, did the work
got him freed and gave him
a bedroom in his home

Mose needs a steady stream
of people to talk with who
will inspire and reinforce
sensible behavior

Lord knows he has a whirlwind
of temptation blowing gale-force
his direction, a vastly different world
from when he was a mere 34

his work cut out for him
one insurmountable task after another
lures and diversions in the back room
taking bets

Here, Back to Denver, Here

By Richard Dixon

Hot, still and humid
chain lightning dances
across the sky, snaky

thunder rumbles along
like a rock and roll drummer
endless and deep, and at length
in for the long haul
doesn't want to stop, or
give it up

You're a sticky wicket
humidity of self-doubt
again rears a crash course
in lessons learned, near-fatal
so many missed opportunities

you need some serious
and severe solace, of forgiveness
did I mention how dry it is
out here?

Magnificent light show
lasts long minutes
lingering wetness like a shroud
somber, constant and serious

hours later, chain lightning
still snakes across sky
thunder unabated, sonorous tone
now, deep, Mr. Bassman

going to go all night now
sixty-minute man

A Review: *What I Learned at the War*

By Richard Dixon

The new book of poems by Jeanetta Calhoun Mish, *What I Learned at the War*, is many things: devastating, appalling, tender, autobiographical, graphic, familial, loving, stark, confronting and brilliant.

Growing up in Wewoka, Oklahoma, the near-eastern part of the state; poor, a virtual rural hood, no guidance from anyone older, mid-to-late 70's and beyond, Mish makes it all seem immediate, happening now, although she doesn't use that tense. She has done many things, jobs-and-experience-wise, and it all shows, if only at times in pinks and winks, still—the slow reveal.

Rides home from early-teen babysitting with a child's father, driver of the car, in control in those scary, intense years, Mish doesn't mince words; “zippers wheezing,” untoward and cruel, monstrous behavior.

Growing up and coming-of-age like this informed a code of Survival— all the way, every day, no desperation, got it under control.

Of special interest are the multiple-parters, starting first with the immaculate (in the aggregate) titled “Occupational Hazards” (#1-3) and continuing to the devastatingly accurate “Literary Biography” (#1-7), with that series ending with the glorious “What I Learned At The War.” And lastly, the transformative “The Quah Effect,” which details many things about Tahlequah, Oklahoma, a special, metaphysical and much-loved location in the author's heart. That particular multi-poem ends with a prose, spoken word coda, which wraps a nice ribbon to this set of poems, and the book as well.

Mish writes in the first couple of lines of “Occupational Hazards # 1, Child Labor,” “No such thing as an allowance at our house, if you wanted / pocket money, you earned it. No payment for daily chores,” and she closes the segment with these lines: “Graduated to jeans at fifty cents a load at age eleven and developed a fetish for perfectly-ironed- / and starched creases. Later fell for a series of cowboys based on / the perfection of their starched-and-creased pearl-button shirts / and Levis. Gave up starch-and-crease when I gave up cowboys. / Never ironed again.”

In one short set, Mish establishes not only the tone but the standard of writing which will follow; no hollow promise, it makes good on that and much more, all the way through this book of harsh honesty, yet redemption as a companion on almost every page: the magical, delightful “Ode to Psilolybe”; the tender, wrenching “My Mother's Hands”; the tinker's visits to her grandparents' farm where he would sharpen anything that looked like it might have an edge and need honing; every poem a payoff.

This volume of poems reveals someone who, against multiple odds, not only came through to the other side of a literal hell and survived, but flourished and, as this book ultimately shows, triumphed. Brava.

Walking with a Newly-Pregnant Police Detective

By Robert Buswell

The sky hangs in tatters. Down here the sand's much flatter, as you speak of dried semen splatters and shattered glass. I listen to your patter on our mad hatter world of work as we pass a crumbling sand-sculpted satyr.

These raindrops grow steadily fatter. They spatter the dry sand like bloody fingerprints on china platters, like imperfections in shoeprint plaster batter (admittedly the smattering's more like the former than the latter).

At some point during your idle chatter you seem to have forgotten how much I dislike hearing you natter on about the bustle and clatter of law enforcement, at least when you do so to avoid more important matters.

Morality in the American South

By Robert Buswell

“I got no respect for a man
who hits a female.”
The Southerner declares
this to you solemnly, with force.

“But it’s okay to hit a female
if she’s under eighteen
and you call it spanking?”
you ask. You know his daughter.

The Southerner considers the question.
“Spanking isn’t hitting,”
he finally says. You just shake
your head. It’s a strange place.

The Tittering Polyglot Plucks a Dying Jonquil

By Robert Buswell

We are the tide of languages,
the ebb of the forgotten
more than modern slang.

Like narcissi we bloom
and we wilt, hopefully
with some modicum of grace.

Pivovar

By Daryl Halencak

In the Czech Republic,
at a bar for workers' glassblower *bourgeois*
two blocks from the business,
I sat down at a broken table in a communist bar
near the glass factory in the mountains of Bohemia
I had wandered off from the other tourists
because I needed a drink

The nearest *pivovar* was dingy and dirty, but it was a place where I was thirsty
The tavern was full of workers after the day
Over the tables were pictures of Lenin, Stalin, and a naked woman
Men and boys were full of conversation, until I entered
Silence

In my rusty Czech language, I ordered a pint of *Czechvar*, my favorite beverage:
warm,
tall,
stout
I smiled and, with the beer in my hand, I raised the glass and lifted it up
toward the other table
they responded
they were confused

After my beer, I ordered a cup of Turkish coffee
strong,
black
and full of ground coffee beans

The Communists were looking at me
I smiled again
They responded— again
I was not dangerous
because I am a Czech

A Game of Catch

By Ron Wallace

We are
playing catch
in the not too cold of January.
Between the throw and the catch
and the catch and the throw,
ribbons of light ride from ball to glove
binding us.

It is in these moments
I feel the blood
in my veins,
being carried in that spinning sphere,
humming toward you,
racing, father to son on winter light,
connecting life in flicker and flash
sun on leather.

I know
spring will find Colorado
a further throw
than my aging arm could ever make,
so today I am content
to step outside and toss a baseball
back and forth
across our thirty feet of fallen leaves
here in Oklahoma
keeping us who we are,
stitching Red River to the Rocky Mountains.

Equinox

By Ron Wallace

September is ending in the west
a low roll of thunder
a broken promise of rain.

The fireflies have all faded,
not a cicada is singing
there's just the twist of a lid
that echoes in the night
out beyond the backporch light
where the last moon of summer drops
just over the centerfield fence
above my extended glove.

One last walk-off home run by Yogi tonight
brings the season to a close
breaks my heart
finds me already missing April
moving into May,
June, July and August
as they spiral into the coming of cooler nights.

Soon the dark will deepen
into shades of the first autumn night,
and somewhere out there
in the pitch of distance
unlit and unwanted,
I sense October, hovering,
haunting me like a goddamned ghost
rattling chains and old broken baseball bats
in summer's aftermath.

The Unknown

By Ron Wallace

In the photograph
I am posing beneath the dying sign
for an undertaker
ghost lettering,
still visible on ancient red bricks
that now contain a modern shop
where tourists browse among tee shirts
and shot glasses.

Looking at the snapshot,
a few weeks after the fact
I smile
and can feel the ache in my calves
from walking up and down those steep inclines,
can feel your hand in mine
sitting in the shaded park
as October moves to us in turning leaves,
and I wonder if some unborn great grandchild
will find this print,
buried in some box of old, arcane photos.

Will he, or she, wonder
why some white-haired cowboy,
his eyes narrowed beneath a Stetson brim
stood smiling beneath a fading sign
for Blocksom & Co. Undertakers and Embalmers,
an ominous disembodied hand, painted,
pointing down the stairs between the buildings,
past him
into the unknown
from which the holder of the photograph will,
one day, be born.

Coming Over the Hill

By Jack Hays

When us kids were all still home, my mother, in one of her frequent pensive moods, would relate the story of her mother-in-law and how during World War II Grandma Hays would spend hours every day on the front porch or at the window looking out to the north and west, hoping to see her boys walking in across the countryside — coming over the hill.

Because of some health issues, and to being a working farmer, my dad did not serve in the military, but he had three brothers who did. My mother spent a lot of time with my grandma. After all, they were neighbors and she felt compelled to help her all she could.

They lived in the country southeast of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, and, when I say “in the country,” I don’t mean the gentrified country of today but a clapboard house with no running water, electricity or telephone, poor roads, and only a team of horses and wagon for transportation.

Grandma tried to keep up with the war news as best she could. When she did go in to town on the occasional Saturday, she would ask around and try to find out what was going on, and when her boys might be “coming over the hill.” Finally, she gave up asking when she realized that no one really knew any more than she did. She would hear things from “the war is almost over” to “victory is just not in sight.” So, she just decided to stop inquiring, trust God, and wait –

Of course, she and my mother would have a daily prayer session and fervently pray for their safe return, but always ending it with “not my will Lord, but Thine be done.” I guess it was her way of preparing herself for an unspeakable heartbreak. She would say to my mother: “I think the boys might be home this week,” but the weeks turned to months and then to years. She would receive mail from each one on occasion, but they never said, or perhaps couldn’t say, exactly where they were, only they were “overseas.” They did not talk much about the war and their own fears and struggles, mainly asking about the farm and the crops and the animals and the weather and other mundane, but yearning, things young homesick boys want to know about. She treasured each of these letters and would keep them with her, tucked safely in her apron as she went about her daily chores singing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

And then, one afternoon in 1945, her prayers were answered as the youngest boy came walking over the hill, and although he was over a half mile away, just like the mother penguin who can distinguish the sound and pinpoint the location of HER chick amidst the cries of thousands, she knew it was him! But, she did not run to meet him – she walked, erect, dignified, proud, singing “What a Friend—” as if she was totally expecting him at that exact time, on that exact day. And they hugged for a long time, and walked — home — arm in arm – but her worries and her waiting on the porch were not over. Yet within the next few weeks, one at a time, her other two boys came walking, then running — home — Coming Over the Hill.

An Old Cowboy's Legacy

By Jack Hays

Have you ridden before, old man? The youngster asked him, not really caring or listening for an answer as he led the rental mount in.

Well, yeah, I used ta, he said simply as he handed his cane to his caretaker, and for some reason gave her a brief hug which he had never done.

Well, it was easy to tell he HAD ridden – a LOT by the effortless way he climbed into the saddle, the way he grabbed the mane with his left hand to pull himself up, instead of the pommel, which is an obvious way to spot a greenhorn. For it is by that initial touch of hand to mane that man and horse are emotionally connected – or disconnected, for the horse senses more about the man in that brief encounter than the normal man senses all day.

He swung his right leg over the rear of the saddle with a slow and easy-like grace and no wasted motion, with only a hair's width clearance.

The years seemed to shed off him as he settled himself into the saddle and stuck his institutional-house-slipper-clad foot into the other stirrup. He breathed deeply and his backbone seemed to straighten on its own accord. His once dull blue eyes had a glint and gleam that mirrored the unbroken skies. His gnarled and calloused hand grasped the reins loosely – just so and just right. As he leaned over and whispered into the steed's ear the horse pricked his ears and gave a powerful shudder from nose to tail as if to say: *"Yeah, yeah, I understand, old compadre, it HAS been a long time– let's Go."*

The young stable buckaroo was mounting up to lead him out, but the old man turned to him and said in the commanding voice of a man much younger: NO, I am going alone!

But, but, you can't, sir— it's against regulations, and our insurance won't—, but, the old man was already galloping out of the corral – Hum, I didn't think that old nag could even trot, the buckaroo thought, and, his cell phone was ringing – and, ahh, screw it, let him go, he can't get far.

Cicely, the old man's aide from the nursing home, yelled at him to stop – there would be hell for her to pay if something happened to him. But his wispy strands of gray hair waving in the wind was his only reply. *Damn it damn it damn it, I KNEW I should not have let Mr. Jenkins talk me into doing this. Taking a resident out for an ice cream is one thing, but riding horses? But he had begged and pleaded and was just so pitiful. But I just can't lose this job, I can't - not with the three little ones to care for and jobs in this little town so scarce. Well, what could it hurt? He is dying anyway, and the doctor said only about another month at the most – and, the poor old fellow did not have any family, or, if so, they never came to visit. The nursing home did not know much about him, HE SAID he used to be a cowboy, and I believe it now after seeing the way he mounted that horse and rode out of here,* she thought as unwelcome tears filled her eyes.

They found him five hours later at the edge of a bluff; from a distance they thought he had been thrown. But, when the rescue people got closer, they saw no sign of trauma, and indeed he was just stretched out facing west, a big rock for his pillow, the horse placidly grazing nearby.

That is funny, the young buckaroo thought, those horses always come home on their own, even with a rider, they have been dumbed down enough to know where their feedbag is.

The old man's eyes were closed in peace and a grin was stuck on his face, his arms folded across his chest, and clutched in his death-gripped hand they found a note:

“To Whom It May Concern:.

I, an old cowboy, Walter Jenkins being now of VERY sound mind, if not body, decree that I lie here peacefully on my own volition. Do not place any blame on Cicely for she has given me a great and immeasurable gift: To die in my own way, in my own time and in this special place. Honor her, for she deserves it. My wife has been gone a long time, and we lost our only young’un in that Viet Nam war. I do not leave much, just a little grubstake I had, and a worthless mine claim. All the information is stuck in my bible back in that there room at the home. But, such as it is, it is all for her. I bequeath it all to Cicely.

WALTER R JENKINS”

And, now, years later, Cicely will occasionally see a resident while touring one of the eleven nursing homes she owns, thanks to that “worthless” mine claim that turned out to be worth millions, and that resident will somehow remind her of Dear Mr. Jenkins, and she will ask if they would like to come out to her ranch sometime and ride horses with her and her kids.

Down at the Roller Rink

By Michael Snyder

*Being a Missive from the Token Male Member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union
(WCTU) of North-Central Oklahoma City*

See Dr. Stink as
He's takin' a drink
At the local dive
And he feels so alive!

Poor Mr. Pink
He's on the brink!
So he meets Dr. Stink,
Guv'nor Fink
(what a simp)
and his chimp
For mixed drinks
Down at our local roller rink

TV's Colonel Klink
On his way down to the rink
Is just freakin' seig-heilin'
With armband swastikas stylin'
As he takes a boozy drive
And he too feels so alive!

"Buddy," says Guv'nor Fink,
"It's down to the Bar or the roller rink
Let us all down a drink!
We can scarf some free shrimp
And I'll even bring my chimp
Yes, let's toss back some drinks
And begin to sink
Into sweet oblivion!"
Further states silky Fink:
"I'm Cock o' the Walk, boys
Ladies love my talk. Boys,
I gots to have my fun!"
And coins on the bar continue to clink

Meanwhile, splendid Mr. Pink
perches resplendent in mink
Down at the roller rink
Or the local Hi-Lo dive bar
Dazzling on his usual barstool
Now, don't play him for no fool
He's kind of a Bar Star

And he just don't care what you think
Yet, poor Mr. Pink
Went to see his shrink
To see what Doc Stink thinks
About his obsession with mink

That dubious Dr. Stink
Is a foul and hideous fink
He just sets there and drinks
And drinks and thinks . . . and stinks
At seedy dives, saloons, taverns, bars, and pubs
NDN Casinos, inns, Singles, Strip, and Swingers Clubs
And lest I forget, our fine, recently-renovated, local roller rink

Thus, my esteem of Doc Stink surely shrinks
As he just rots there at the Bar getting blotto
Wolfing down *platos* of nachos *con* avocado
Most nights, this lot just relish getting stinko
And mixing with local Okie riff-raff
Gee, but this is a swell joint for big-ass laffs!

With barflies, playas, cougars, neurotics
Douchebags, dealers, fratbrats, and whores
Philanderers, phonies, philistines, alcoholics
Sleazeoids, lowlifes, losers, and bores
You can find someone or something, whatever your kink,
At the Bar, the Club, or our local roller rink!

Guv'nor Fink and Mr. Pink and
Colonel Klink and Dr. Stink
Do absolutely nothing but sit and kvetch and drink
Hunkered down at the local dive or the roller rink
And they just don't give a damn what you (or anyone else) thinks!

But if you ask me, I don't like it one bit!
Personally, I think it's . . . shit!
Yes, if you ask me what I think
I'd say, I THINK IT STINKS!
They're just a rabble of randos and hosers
A shallow scrum of bums and poseurs
and what's more, they drive me to drink!

Yes, if you ask me,
(and nobody did)
The whole lot of them
(and even the chimp)
Can just go to hell in a handbasket
'Cos they all just leave me limp!

Eip Nacirema

By Michael Snyder

\ American Pie \

Wind blow
Lonely men
Who's the vegetable?
Smile, arson
Sing hallelujah
Make it sweet
Hollow tears
Need cash, mama
Sea of carnivores
You're a vegetable
And they hate you
But I adore you
Ah, me cherish
Sing it sweet,
Sending us!

God, they're dead—the Beatles
Ah, God, they're dead—the Beatles

Sing it sweetly
God's Hallelujah
Saint Paul's Dead
and I call you
The headline read
Vegetable, snared
But I adore you
Scum, but that's ok!
Head swimmer headline
Makes obsession
Sensation minx
Argon, the end
Sing it sweet!
Sending us now
God, they're dead—the Beatles
Ah, God, they're dead—the Beatles

Didn't want to admit it
Death makes obsession
Nickels snared
Need cash, mama
God's the Moon
Now we worship

Lucy's Rainbow
Sing it sweet
Satan is kind (no)
Ah, the loon
Beast 666
Who's the vegetable?
Mistab Kurtz—He Dead
We sing hallelujah!

Sing it sweeter!

Happiness is a Warm Beetle

By Michael Snyder

BANG!

James Bond MI6
Thunderball:
Where is Paul?
Paul is Dead
Defaced replaced
9-11-66
He blew his mind
Out in a car
Under Paul
William Shepherd
i.e. Billy Shears
i.e. Billy's here
Here's another clue for you all
The Walrus was Paul
Abbey Road beetle
LMW
28 IF
Like More Wizards
28 if he lived
4 or 5 Wizards
Were beetles
Golden Scarab Beetles
Send me back

\ Spin the record backward \

BANG!

John:
\ No no
I see . . .
Ah, like, more wizards
Whoosh whoosh
Send me back!
(Misshim misshim misshim)

Send me back
I . . .
Send me back
Say it is
Say "more wizards"
And Send me back

Like Moses

Say "like more wizards"
Send me back
Ma ma, ma ma
I'd like more wizards
Send me back
O I hold you
I want Paul
I love you
Oh you know
We found
We found that
I Love You

Like More Wizards!
Send me back
Ma ma
I like more wizards
Send me back
Whoosh whoosh
Ah, Like More Wizards
(Yeah, we'll all be Magick Supermen)
Send me back

Not . . . McGarshney, nay wizard him
Not . . . McGarshney, nay wizard him
Not . . . McGarshney, nay wizard him
Not . . . McGarshney, nay wizard him

(She's not a girl who misses much)

Send me back:
I love you.

Might not last
Phony man
Perfect ladder . . .
>>>>
Phony man

Social channel . . .
New fields . . .
The One sacrificial
The room we sleep
Acid . . . done acid . . .
In the hall
We bouncing off the room

The Lucky Son
When others fall . . .
I, Will . . .

Will Shepherd
He is Risen!
My Good Shepherd
I Found Out!
I've seen religion
From Jesus to Paul
Mother Mary,
My Lady Madonna
When others fall,
I, Will
I am Paul
O do do do do do

Shhh, comes the singer:
Ahh . . . comes ich . . .

In the Next Universe

By Robert Ferrier

In Honor of Poet Ruth Stone

Everything will change.
Wars will not exist.
Conflict will be settled by backgammon.
Kidney stones dissolve in tea.
Eye sight and hearing improve on birthdays.
Mountain mist drifts down into town,
then brightens like diamonds in sunlight.
Heaven-bound souls circle as comets.
Patients awaken to the fur of puppies.
Chocolate gives more buzz than booze.
Belly laughs cure arthritis.
In the next universe, new planets
will be named for peace prize winners
and bullets will be used to sink lures.

On Surrendering Season Tickets after 50 Years

By Robert Ferrier

Walk Campus Corner to Owen Field
for one last look, then yield
the right to witness future plays.
Ticket manager's bored appeal
seems lame against the loss of days,
present and future, of games
missed in person, TV lame
substitute for stadium smells
and sound of student section yells.

First fall game an empty ruse,
television's weak excuse
against live thunder of pads,
shotgun firing, ponies pounding loose,
pulling hard, as if gone mad.
While I recline in boring leather,
strangely missing August weather,
touchdown shouts of the nearby guy,
missing me, asks "Where and why?"

There's no escape from decades bled,
no escape from Reaper's tread.
Thus, I relax in conditioned air,
dream I'm back in time instead
of bound by images cold and spare,
age-bound to my leather chair.

After a Late-Night Writing Session

By Jennifer Luckenbill

Midnight wheels on empty pavement
only cops and drug deals lurk in corners,
the occasional nurse getting off a shift,
or a man walking home from a late-night
tryst with a lukewarm beer,
but mostly streets are quiet,
and I should be home, asleep,
cats curled nearby,

but the shushing of this time of night,
keeps me driving, when no one knows
where I am, no one knows
to call my name, when
driving through dark neighborhoods,
feels like some kind of sanctuary,
feels like some kind of solution
to late-night doldrums and
my empty bank account,
when things familiar
are made grotesque by dark skies
and the eerie glow of neon lights.

Preparing

By Jennifer Luckenbill

The temperature has only dipped
slightly, but the light has already
turned to fall. Its caramel strands
wrap the late-blooming iris,
halo the black cat slouched
on a tree stump.

The rays slope upwards
from the dark grey of the street
to the tips of tall weeds,
to the tops of cars,
until only the highest leaves
are painted in golden light.

It's preparing the man
walking his dog in front
of the chrysanthemum-yellow house
and the woman in khaki pants,
heading off for an evening shift.
It's strengthening
the demure man walking
to the grocery store
and the kid in a pink helmet
riding by on a bike.
It's holding us all,
gentle as a cook
separating the yolk from the white,
cupped in broken eggshell,
glistening and whole.

Mississippi

By Meaghan Andrews

Red seeds from rebirthing Magnolias—topping for mud pies patted together with compact hands, spoilt petals for icing—litter ground impregnated by rain that hasn't stopped in three days.

Ants advance nearby, pulling turtle flesh from a shell brought back from the coast, fatty acids and triglycerides to sustain an ever growing army. The girl watches, follows the line of ants home, tries to jab her fingers like knives into the porous pile.

On the Precipice

By Meaghan Andrews

There is a curve to your mouth I find odious, the upper lip
a tor, too steep for me to climb. Jagged edges
secreting a grotto of kalamata
olives and discarded
citrus peels. Its minty exhalation a lure, fallacious
whispers of a simple goodbye, carried
on an aromatic breeze.

After Midnight

By Rachael Ikins

6/25/16 to Katie

I find relief in the darkness.
I fear it and pound alert.
My eyes won't close.
A few hours later sun pries
them open.

I take the dogs out, feed them,
feed the fish, corals and last, swallow my own medicine. Shocked at the lack of
yours, your chicken, my memory of relief
when you ate. You'd swallowed all your meds.

We used to go back to bed, the four of us,
Dogs touching me head to thigh, you on my chest, my hands cupped around your body
as your weight lulled my heart. We would sleep.

I clean and wash your box. I throw out pill bottles. Scrub your 3 dishes. I sweep and mop
and do a laundry, all the traces of sickness sluicing away. I put your box
on the balcony in the sun.

I must've eaten because I see a bowl on the floor, must have given it to the dogs to lick.
I have no hunger.
I throw out all the food in the fridge weighted with memory of the day you died.
I try to make a list, go to the store.
I have no hunger.

I wander through produce, pick up two kalanchoes for you,
one pink, one yellow because, I decide, those were your favorite colors.
I bog down passing through the pet aisle for a dog toy. Struck by cat litter. Heft this bag and
that box. I wake up.
I wear dark glasses, see
a pack of those furry little mice you loved. Images from the last night of your life play in my
head like a silent movie.
I walk on.

I think about how you hunted while I walked
dogs before bed. How you left a corpse for me when we came upstairs, you, half-hidden
beneath the branches of a potted pine. How you and the dog slept in the chair by the door,
waiting for me the last few weeks.
As if we needed immediate reunion, crossing the length of the kitchen and living room
a waste of minutes.

You were not a carry-cat, nor a lapper.
You stood on my shoulders, you liked a loose hand to steady your feet. You loved my bath,
became an island survivor on my skin, tail
in the water, trailing, a mermaid's or exotic seaweed. You always ended our day on my chest,
until you crawled beneath the covers to wash, to sleep against my hip.

How many nights I woke and reached for you?

I push my face into your blanket.
I look at photos and drawings of you.
It is only 10:00 a.m.
Condolences, letters noting how
there was no love like ours.

We traveled together, lived in seven cities.
Stayed with friends, lunatics and my mother.
You were with me when she died,
when my husband died,
through a second marriage and divorce.

In poverty and plenty, and all the evenings
I typed poetry on my laptop one-handed
because my other arm curved around
you purring under my chin.
I walk on, hungry.

Identity Theft

By Rachael Ikins

It was one of those days where you stand nose-to-glass of a regular door in a store, waiting for the automatic switch to open it for you.

Gray, cool and windy, a somnolent day following the sun and heat of the holiday weekend.

It was a day when you laid in bed stroking the cat as you listened to the dog snore, light dancing off the ceiling. You wondered how it affected your development as a young child that none of your relatives ever spelled your name correctly. You scratch under the dog's ear thinking about how you legally changed your name in the '90s, a declaration of self and identity and the living relatives, most people you meet, and autocorrect all spell your name wrong. Still.

Out of Orbit

By Rachael Ikins

A week since you died.
I take out garbage,
wash laundry.
I buy food someone else
cooked and eat it.

Run the dishwasher,
shower.
I watch shows
read old books,
crawl into our bed
each night wondering how
to curve my body so that
I don't disappear into the crater
you left.

All I want to do is sleep.
I can't sleep. You visit me at odd
times; I see you rounding the doorway
of my study, hear you digging in the plants.

The first Friday one-week anniversary night,
both dogs in plain sight,
I felt you jump on the pillow
behind my head
while I read.

My hands fluttered,
birds of joy,
toward you.

Sun blushes every morning's sky.
I show your picture, tell your stories, but
I am a moon with no planet.

Shocked out of orbit,
I spin through firefly-lit darkness.
I cannot find you.

The Neighborhood

By Carol Hamilton

We moved there in 1940.
I was five and youngest of the gang.

That same year Arroyo Seco Parkway opened,
just eight miles, the first freeway in the West.

In '56, Hillary made it to the Top of the World.
We spent the evening with his son three years later.

The son hated Americans, us included, I suppose.
Heights and Depths and Distances shrank with alacrity

as I grew, as I went higher, lower, farther.
But we, The Gang, stood up among leaves,

no hands, dug foxholes and tunnels with tablespoons
and dreamed of Hollywood stars, read comic books

and movie magazines, never doubted
that the universe was expanding.

We were the pennies glued to the balloon.
I tried that dangerous experiment once,

dodged pennies as the whole universe exploded,
collapsed to a tag of rubber and scattered copper.

Limits are life lessons, and right there on West Pine Street
we practiced high, low, here, there,

all we needed to know.

WWII, Ernie Pyle, Death and the Mules

By Carol Hamilton

In the moonlight, war and night,
Pyle wrote within his shadows,
wrote of their bodies lashed
to the mules' pack saddles,
silvered in moonlight,
men brought down the mountain.
The bodies stood, momentarily stiff
at the dismount, lined up stiff
on the ground in the moonlight,
a silent row of men,
just more inanimate cargo.
I rode a mule (he was named Seemore)
down the Grand Canyon in daylight.
He was chosen to carry animate cargo
because of his success
with unresponsive packs.
When were mules first called
beasts of burden?
They are not always surefooted.
I saw two fall in the Rockies,
one lashed to the other and
his pack shifted. They died
down the side of the canyon.
Mute caravans pass under face
of sun and moon down the ages
while we mount, dismount,
pack and unpack whatever we wish
to move about on steep and dangerous trails.
Pyle wrote of war and night,
those mute passengers, then
forever lived within his own shadows,
heavy and silver in moonlight.

Crafting Coffee

By Roxann Perkins Yates

After three days of measuring, grinding, tamping, brewing and slurping, my mind was full of coffee possibilities. That's what happens after attending a three-day training at Texas Coffee School in Arlington.

Sisters Kelly, Shaun, and I recently plunged into the world of coffee culture. We learned about the coffee house business and the crafting of hot and cold coffees and teas. We did this in preparation for the fall opening of Kelly and her husband Mark's Wonder City Coffee shop.

On day one, we were schooled in the proper creation of espresso and frothy milk. Tom Vincent, the master coffee instructor and owner of the school, educated us in all that is espresso.

Tom's type A+ personality was a bit intimidating, but he was very thorough.

He told us that we should be "disrupters" in the coffee business by emphasizing quality over quantity. If we tried to be all things to all customers, our beverages and establishment would be mediocre. We would become forgettable.

Tom was no mediocre instructor. He pointed his teacher finger at each of us when asking what we had learned. Once I answered a question he was asking another classmate.

"I didn't ask you!" Tom said.

"And I had the right answer!" I didn't say.

The answer to making quality drinks is in the preparation and even in the body movements. Tom demonstrated how to whip the milk for espresso by putting his forearms in front of him, closely together, to cup the small pitcher of milk and to properly spin it to a pleasing hum.

The sister baristas-in-training couldn't mimic this stance . . . for a couple of reasons. Anyway, we tried. Shaun and Kelly put their pitchers under the espresso machine wand and steamed the milk to the sound of a low whirring.

Tom almost smiled.

My turn. No whirring. Just a morning-mouthwash gurgling noise.

"There's one in every crowd," Tom said.

"I'm just trying to be a 'disrupter,'" I said . . . in my head.

Everyone Needs a Blue Box

By Roxann Perkins Yates

When I was ten, my mother, who was fulfilling her dream of getting a teaching degree after we four kids were school age, brought home a cardboard egg box covered in azure blue contact paper. It contained projects for her college art class. Most of the paper-filled file folders were of no interest to me, but in the spaces between rested creations— a shimmering crepe-paper butterfly, a story of creating beauty with words and images, and a grown-up finger painting mini-mural. I wanted to hang the art above my bed.

Mom became a teacher, principal, bus driver, cheerleading sponsor, and an inspiration.

In 1990, I got a job at a little high school. I was already 30 years old and not nearly as tough as I thought I was.

For the first year I couldn't eat or sleep. I cried a lot and threw student papers into the air when the final product wasn't satisfactory. Expecting quality work and improvement is not a bad thing. A teacher should expect the best in everyone, including herself.

In the beginning, I had the mind-set that I had to know everything and was in control of every circumstance. I finally learned that that's not what teaching is about. Empowering others means giving responsibility to others. Many believe that 90 percent of educating is the duty of the teacher, and 10 percent is the obligation of the students. Not so.

If young minds are going to function as mature productive members of society, they have to take the wheel and drive. There are no heroes' journeys unless they do. The same is true for adults in the classroom, boardroom, living room.

We are all teachers. And many of those with an occupation titled as such know this. But many people don't actually consider themselves as teachers. If we all did, there may be less dissatisfaction from those at the teachers' desks and those at the students' desks, waiting to be inspired or just waiting for the bell to ring.

Teaching eats you up. Most educators care enough to give their best emotionally, physically, and intellectually every day.

The same drain happens to anyone who gives all to a profession. But families suffer the costs. I raised three boys— productive, loving young men now. They experienced what was left of my life force.

However, teaching in a small school had many benefits. My sons were involved in everything, in and out of the classroom, that I was. Decorating a dilapidated gym into a gossamer paradise for prom night, cooking hotdogs and popping popcorn in the concession stand to raise money, busing students to the capitol and zoo and museums for learning outside the school walls, were all intricate parts of their lives too because they helped and they went and they participated in efforts to keep a small public school alive.

I taught all three and expected as much productivity and creativity from them as of the rest of the class. I'm glad I did.

What happened in my third year didn't change that commitment to the honor of teaching.

A student walked into my classroom, his friends' classroom, pumped a loaded shotgun and put it between my eyes. I tried to get him outside the room, but he wanted to be in charge. Forced to leave the students, I felt guilt for years. He was eventually tackled by a teacher and two principals and later put in a psychiatric facility. Fortunately, no one was hurt. This happened on a Friday. I made sure I was back in the classroom on Monday and didn't miss a day of work for weeks.

My six-year-old at the time wanted to know if the guy knew where we lived. I assured him that he didn't.

Years later, going-with-the-gut practices that showcased students' talents and revealed their communication skills were overpowered with testing experts' influence in public education. Multiple-choice testing became more important than reading, writing, creating, speaking, and presenting. The students and I knew that the real world didn't care how they scored on an *abcd* test. They cared, and still do, about critical thinking, problem-solving, project-minded adults. So we kept right on working that way. We didn't do practice tests or teach-to-the-test activities.

We made Civil War mini-museums and Renaissance theme parks. Students wrote their memoirs. They gave speeches and put on plays. I once convinced my students to use vocabulary words to create songs and rap, dance, and sing them out to the entire high school. I was fearful that it wouldn't work, but it resulted in a serendipitous event. Everyone joined in, including a teacher that did some break dancing. The meekest to the most gregarious students did their parts— pieced the puzzle together— together.

Even though I was afraid of what would happen in a big production, it turned out to be an academic highlight. It would not have happened if I had not invested confidence and interest in the students. None of my success would have happened without my supporters— family, students, colleagues, and the example and support of Mom.

Everyone needs a blue box. Draw from it often. Add to it. Put what works back into it. Share its contents, even when it scares you or exhausts you.

Great-Grandparents

By Roxann Perkins Yates



***Parnassus on Wheels* Book Review**

By Roxann Perkins Yates

My mom, sisters, and I once imagined taking a mobile book store around the state. We owned Ruby's Hilltop Readery and decided Ruby's Roadtop Readery would be a fun and quirky adventure and a means of advertising our stationary bookstore. It didn't happen.

In Christopher Morley's 1917 novel, *Parnassus on Wheels*, Helen McGill does take to the rural roads with her caravan of reading.

It's a book about books—the smelly ones, the touchy ones, the treasured ones, books with real pages to turn by hand. Helen purchases the bookmobile from Roger Mifflin who says: "Lord! When you sell a man a book you don't sell him just twelve ounces of paper and ink and glue – you sell him a whole new life. Love and friendship and humour and ships at sea by night – there's all heaven and earth in a book, a real book, I mean. Jiminy!"

This is partly the story of Helen and her brother Andrew McGill. Andrew had become a best-selling author while Helen tends to a large portion of the farm chores. She is ready for change, and the book road is her out . . . "books broke up our placid life," and set her free from cooking, farming and taking care of sickly Andrew.

Parnassus, name of the Greek mountain home of the muses, is a traveling, amusing horse-drawn, covered wagon, stocked with pans, a stove, a chair, a table, a bed, storage space, a lonely geranium, and a little terrier (Bock or Boccaccio). Walled with a reading rainbow of books, it's a quaint and inviting reader's way around the world inside and out.

Accustomed to Andrew's frequent travels in search of writing fodder, Helen views the purchase of Parnassus as a chance for independence. "It's what the magazines call the revolt of womanhood," she says.

"You're the skipper; you'd better drive," Roger says as the two head down the road of book turning. Roger, who is better known as the Professor, has agreed to go along for a while (turns into a long while) to show Helen the ropes.

Helen learns there is more to life than baking biscuits.

Peg, short for Pegasus, trots down the road with Helen at the reins. The Professor has been peddling books for seven years and is anxious to get back to Brooklyn to write and peddle his own. Along the way, Andrew pursues them, Parnassus is stolen, and the Professor does some jail time.

Destination— Love.

Professed by the Professor: "Helen, will you marry me? [. . .] We'll travel around with Peg, and preach the love of books and the love of human beings. Will you come with me and make me the happiest bookseller in the world?"

Final destination— Brooklyn and a bookshop to share.

The story continues in the sequel *The Haunted Bookshop*. It's a feel-good, short read and so bookish.

The Fall

By Teri McGrath

In the fall, we will celebrate
the dying of the leaves—
their brilliant farewell
to limb and to sky.

There is gold in this place
and white, pale green,
and crimson,
making its wind-swallowed cry.
And if you will lie down with me
upon this mossy floor,
the breeze will steal away our sighs
and these bright falling flutters
will alight on our flesh
like parting kisses.

They will jewel us,
so that when we rise,
we will be golden too.

There is Not a Lot of Depth in this Poem

By Teri McGrath

In fact, it is a mere
handful of water
in a shallow silver basin,
which may yet reflect the stars
or your own plain face.

It is as common as a quilt,
and made of similar stuff—
patches of ripped up clothes
and bed sheets, curtains torn down
from the windows.
squares of Sunday dress
and diamonds of blue bandana.

This poem is a trifle; it means little.
It is as vacant as a rainbow,
which is made of nothing at all, really,
but particles of rain,
an angle of light,
and your peculiar vision.

Hungry

By Teri McGrath

Homeless Joe says paper,
rolled into gray pea-sized pellets,
helps to make the pain in your gut subside.
He ate the prayer book a priest gave him,
when what he wanted was the blood of Christ—
a little bread, man, and a taste of wine.

Homeless Joe put the stain
in the glass of that man's church.
He put the hole in holy.
He ate the whole thing, every page,
bit by tiny wadded bit,
even when the ink began to make him sick,
and his fingerprints were blackened with it.
He washed it down with a bottle of thunderbird wine
bought with a fiver a punk-ass kid handed him
walking by with chains on his jacket
and his skinny tattooed arm around the pale waste
of a skinny tattooed girl.

He ate the sack it came in, too,
and the goddamned receipt.

The Belt

By Chris Brooks

bought a silver belt buckle in Taos
a long time ago
the size of a playing card
Zia sun cold hammered
to the four directions
and turquoise the color of the desert sky
it sat in a drawer for many years
without the right belt
to complement its essence
until one day there it was
at the Goodwill store
time worn and lissome
from years of defying gravity
holding up Myron's pants
his name imprinted on the back
expanding a little each year
to the last notch
a friend said she'd once had a name
imprinted on her back
from her dad's tooled leather belt
STEVEN
but it would only last a week or so
changing color with time
red-blue-black-green-yellow
until it was gone
unlike the permanent fear she had of men

Dear Jim Harrison

By Chris Brooks

I'll never get used to looking up there on my
bookshelf knowing that's all there is or ever will be.

It has taken some time but you've finally left
the hard earth of time on crow's wings flying
north from Patagonia to Antelope Butte.

It has taken some time but you're finally on
a journey to meet your Daddy and Sister nesting
up there on the moon as ancient birds.

Hero worship is banal but this doesn't change
the fact that if it weren't for your billion word
prayers, your spirit particles windblown across
the prairie to my doorstep, I would have
ended up drunk dead or even worse a banker.

Thanks for realizing long ago that your daughter's
existence was enough to keep you alive. I have a
daughter too. And I plan to keep on trucking until
in old age I fall from the chair behind my desk.

Letting Go

By Karen Ginther Graham

Newly arrived in Oklahoma, my husband Mark and I pulled up to the edge of a property for sale near the town of Mustang. The house was just a simple ranch-style, but we were used to the stucco finishes of dwellings in California and found the orange-hued brick to be rich and beautiful.

Yet it was the grounds that won us over. Huge Red Ash trees surrounded the house, providing summer shade. The spruce bushes were sentinels of privacy and barriers from the strong winds. I counted six varieties of pines, including Ponderosa, Austrian, and Japanese Black. Mottled light on the beds of their fallen needles transported me to hushed forests. The flickering rhythm of fireflies appeared at night in the yard's darkened recesses.

In spring, yellow blooms appeared on the Golden Rain trees and stayed throughout the summer. The seeds inside their dry brown pods shook like an infant's rattle. Tall white-barked Sycamores thrived in both sun and shade. On the lawn, mushrooms grew in circles, called fairy rings. Mythological folklore warned that stepping into the center of one of these rings would transport the unwary to strange lands. Wood fencing was hidden behind a thick hedge of Photinia that gave off a red sheen when doused with sunshine. Like old money to new was this quietly elegant home to the massive houses being built on the newly exposed red earth.

Many summers passed and the leaves gossiped of impending trouble between Mark and me. Practicality stifled spontaneity, lackadaisical ways disrupted responsibility, and love languished.

One day in late spring I spied a large snowy white owl perched on the limb of a pine tree. This rare arctic fowl belonged in a forested habitat far to the north but had alighted in my small grove. So intent was I on my own internal contemplations that I missed the message the bird carried. "Change is on the wing," it said with its silent presence, "it's time for you to fly."

The house was the only thing holding up the divorce. We both wanted it. Possibly due to my strength of will, I remained.

Maintaining the riding mower proved beyond my capabilities when it refused to start. I had to haul gas cans to the filling station in the old Chevy truck. Transporting these cans, then refueling the mower was awkward and smelly. My teenaged son should have been helping but he was always elsewhere.

Trying to maintain the swimming pool was useless. Turtles and toads got trapped in the skimmers. I was squeamish about reaching in to retrieve them, even wearing industrial-grade vinyl gloves. Shovels didn't fit into the skimmers and propping tree limbs into them with hopes of the stranded critters climbing out was to no avail. The pool's vinyl liner was torn and needed replacement. There was a pine tree blight causing several of the sixty-foot treasures to die. A neighbor told me they had to be removed so as to not infect the others. The mower had a flat tire and the garage door wouldn't close. I would have to give up my beloved sanctuary.

Mark was more than capable of handling all of the house's current maladies. At least, I thought, it would be in the family and always there for our son's homecomings from college. I could still live in Mustang where I enjoyed running into acquaintances. Seven years as a band booster mom gained me lots of friends. Scouting with Troop 386 sealed my ties to the community.

But what about the Yew bushes I planted in the shade along the back of the house? I'd been the one who coaxed them to full maturity. And our son's height history carefully recorded on the wall in the study. What if someone paints over it? I would be losing a son to college soon; did I have to lose a home, too? The divorce had not been easy; I wouldn't be back.

I relinquished the property and found a cute house for sale nearby. It would be fun to renovate, wouldn't it? This was but a small concession; I feared forever regretting my decision to vacate my home.

The second house was purchased and moving day came to an end. Soon to leave behind the beloved family home, I strolled down the driveway and along the road to the barn's gravel drive. The trees! Never again would I live amongst such majesty. I slowly made my way back to the house. Wandering through each room, I remembered the good times there. I stepped over the threshold and locked the front door behind me, then slipped into my car. As I drove down the driveway, I tipped the rearview mirror and it filled with the house's warm brick façade. I allowed myself a heavy tear as I turned into the road and drove away.

My new house was tucked into the end of a cul-de-sac with dense woods behind it. These woods displayed dazzling fall colors matching the fire I would build in the hearth come winter. The yard was woefully overgrown, but I spied the bright red berries of holly bushes peeking through mounds of twisted honeysuckle. Like a gift-wrapped house warming present was my discovery of half-buried bulbs beneath a detritus of sticks and soggy leaves. Only in spring would they reveal their plumage.

I was certain that someday love would come along again, but I was in no hurry. The pervasive loneliness I had felt during my marriage became, in divorce, rewarding self-sufficiency and contentment.

Along the Washita

By Jennifer Kidney

These arid hills above the Washita
are drenched in sorrow.
What began at Sand Creek
had a deadlier sequel here—
Custer's first stand,
arbitrary and vicious.
Black Kettle, rumored to have perished
in that earlier misnamed skirmish,
did not survive the second one.
But the ancient Washita
still meanders from sand
to red clay, etching the land
to remind us forever
of that dreadful November day.

Reaping the Whirlwind

By Jennifer Kidney

It makes perfect sense
to harvest the wind here
where it surges constantly
across these bare rolling hills
where little grows but sagebrush.
Three-armed white behemoths
tower above the undulating horizon,
stately whirling or stilled.
At night their gleaming red eyes
dim the starry dark. Their rotating blades
disturb the air and migrating birds.
These are not the quaint windmills
of picturesque Holland
cheerily waving in fields of tulips.
These are sinister giants that loom
menacingly, suggesting invisible
machinery that cuts us down to size
and keeps us mesmerized
with their hypnotically churning,
turning, deadly scythes.

hour of lead

By Mark Fisher

the dead don't speak
their voices do not rise up
from graves
to whisper stories
they forgot to tell
no words come to answer
now unanswerable questions
of genealogy
where did we come from
and even if they could see
what our future brings
they lay silent
and wait
patient through all the world's
change
spilling themselves
into the newness
until the stars
become old
and dream of an end
to all things

snowy view from the bed versus the floor

By Jill Hawkins

bed—

chasing each other in a hurry
while their miniscule lives last,
girly snowflakes all bedazzled
line up like at a Sadie Hawkins
dance, only to be blown away

floor—

it isn't boxed, shipped, traded,
or grown in America or overseas
it's one of the original Natives
a type of dander like feathers
you don't get to decide where
or when it falls, prayers and
dances might influence the Gods
like Destruction offsets her balance
but if you are not wind or a cousin
to something higher than a Plantagenet
the snow will land on a well planned
wedding, or on an already shaking herd
of cattle, sometimes hiding Easter eggs
better than humans in April, falling freely
with no need to sing, "Mother May I?"

From the Presidential Pocket?

By Jill Hawkins

In the Bucksnot bar
a credit card under
my chair, was not mine.

I play the sax but have
never gone by the name
William Jefferson Clinton.

The Boob Tube

By Jill Hawkins

Dressing for church
early Sunday morning
we slid out of
grandpa's old t-shirts
and dug out our
patent leather shoes
from backpacks
in the living room
as we edged the shallow
mattress of the sleeper sofa
we took turns catwalking
blowing kisses and
shaking our tiny chests
in front of the television
after all, grandma did
say the Russians were watching

The Call of the Running Tide

By Carol Lavelle Snow

I can't remember the first time I walked
alone on a beach or was thrilled as we drove
west and caught the scent of the sea.
I only know being close to the ocean
lifts my spirits and awakens a longing,
some long-forgotten memory.

I've grown up in Oklahoma, far from
the shore. My grandparents mingled
with outlaws and Indians, fought droughts
and floods, worked in the oil fields,
coaxed food from the soil. Preachers,
yes, but no sailors among them.

My mother was a dreamer though
and passed a love of romance on to me.
Neither of us can grow a garden, properly
tend a house, or lead a practical life.
If she were beside me now, gazing out to sea,
I know what she'd say. "Let's go."

Shut Out

By Carol Lavelle Snow

All week caught like
a moth in a jar
watching but unable
to do anything.

Unable to stop the boy
on a bike delivering
the telegram,
or Grandma saying,
Better he die overseas
than come back an invalid,
or my mother's voice:
I don't care how
he comes back.
Just so he comes

back. I can't keep two men
in suits from knocking
on the door, looking hot,
uncomfortable, or my mother
from crying for days in the bed
upstairs or her whisper,
Don't let Aunt Vivian
come up. But I am slow
and Vivian makes her cry
even harder.

All I can do
is watch
like the moth

and beat
and beat

against the glass.

Winter View

By Tina Baker



Lost in November

By Tina Baker



Deer Sighting
By Tina Baker



Questions for Grandmother:

By Tina Baker

How did you keep your house so clean
while sitting in your kitchen's recliner,
never neglecting the phone's ring,
never missing the news, Art Linkletter
and Billy Graham?
What is your recipe for the
pink ribbon taffy,
slapped on and pulled from the hook in the closet;
the silky taste I've given up ever finding?
How many of those thin cotton wrap-a-round
house dresses did you have—
leading me to notice the sag of your arms?
When did you iron?
Where did you fold the clothes?
I never saw.
and how many clothespins
could you fit
in the handy bag you hung on the clothesline;
those unbreakable pins, not our new flimsy and weak ones?
And the clean air back then, perfumed a cotton sheet
like the air back then could.
How many leftovers were
thrown out from those tiny colored and
clear glass bowls we randomly placed
on the refrigerator shelves?
Where did you hang your aprons?
What was the count of bobby pins
for your twisted strands
of soft blue and gray
permed hair.
And that moist, dripping with Rum
cake
you made for the Holidays?
I've thoughts about,
Now;
decided, I would like a slice.

Ornaments

By Tina Baker

It was once as light
as a shoe box.
Now, it's three large
size tubs

to lug inside
from the garage space
above the freezer.

Tree Adornments about loves,
children, grandchildren
parties, coworkers
firsts and lasts;
placed over select branches

and the added one; a painted, home grown
Santa gourd;
symbol of
massive vines to the back chain fence
crawling
over and into the alley
to hide or dangle all summer.

I sit.
Gaze, as each has its spotlight.
I would do this even as a little girl and now,
still wanting to sip a Santa cup of hot dark chocolate,
engage in the tree as if it were
my scrapbook, photo album, or
a festival tour.

There is enough collected
to compile a novel
beginning somewhere around,
through the branches
and skimming down to our tree's
gold trimmed red skirt.

It's standing six feet tall
dressed in the latest collection;
telling me a little longer story each year.

A Stale Sweet Roll

By Tina Baker

It's the Saturday before a
Tuesday
Christmas Eve.
The front yard elm is
bare and
cold as a jail cell

where everyone waits
for a source of mercy:
hygiene items, denture cleaner,
a paperback, some pencils,
mail, a postage stamp;
even a stale sweet roll.

It's mom's, dad's, brother's, sister's decisions;
A holiday list of incarceration reasons
and until spring, charity checks
in plain envelopes
to a too familiar address.

A daughter waits
while a mom stands by a
festive tree, struggling to
see glistening. Outside,
encased in ice,

a pile of snarled limbs are
stacked like unsolved
problems scrawled across
a classroom board.

But it's a time
for festive parties,
rejoicing, even with
the deep freeze

to drink of what we have.
Make the most of one postage stamp.
Share, even a stale sweet roll and coffee.
Give the winter wind control,
beginning this
Saturday,
before a Tuesday
Christmas Eve.

Just Because I Write

By Sharon Edge Martin

the world doesn't stop for me.
The kids call.
My husband gets hungry.
The chickens need clean water and hay.
I come home from work worn thin.

All day and into the night
I write lines in my head,
leave notebooks lying around everywhere.

Distracted, they say.
Yes, by the world.
Not by the words
and ideas.

Mary Oliver said,
and I believe her,
that for a writer,
it is the writing that matters.
So I'll keep thinking,
composing poems,
creating characters and plots,
scribbling ideas and snippets in those notebooks,

even as the world comes streaming
through my door.

Iowa

By Sharon Edge Martin

Drove out of the parking lot,
opened the door of my yellow Camaro, threw up,
and drove on. Not sure I was the one
who should have been driving. Three women

out for a boozy lunch. This must have been before Mom said,
I'm not watching the kids if you're going out drinking.

Someone brought up Iowa, that Freddie and Marjean,
were visiting her parent's farm there.
On a whim, we picked up babies, packed extra diapers,
and took off.

At night, left your brother and Marjean's little girl
with Freddie. Four women and a baby in a stroller.
We took you to town, to places you didn't belong.
Marjean's mom told me what a good mother I was.

In daylight, you sat in a box under a tree, giggled
and grabbed leaves by the handful. Your brother ran.
You guys loved that farm, the farm Marjean escaped from.
Poor Marjean. Her mother doted on tiny, graceful you,

not the big-boned grandbaby all the way from New Jersey.
I didn't understand then about family politics,
about Freddie the nurturer who dealt cocaine,
about disappointment,

or about the changes I had to make in myself
to be a proper mother.

The Freedom of Nothing

By Sharon Edge Martin

"Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." —Kris Kristofferson

Preacher's kid.
No freedom at all.
Every minute accounted for.
Every action observed and judged.

You don't think about it much
when you're ten
and a boy. But somewhere along the way
to adulthood,
everything changes.

You resent the prying eyes,
the sinners who expect you to be a saint.
It was worse for my sisters,
but girls have been trained
to bend.
One married a preacher
(out of the frying pan into the fire).
One finds solace in wine.
One broke the shackles of organized religion
and found god in her garden.

Me, I still believe,
but prayer is an open road.
I can sleep in an alley
as easily as I can a bed. Find a willing lover
when it gets too hot or too cold.
Leave when spring warms the ground,
when fall cools the air.

Work when I can.
Find free stuff when I can't.
Nothing to lose but my freedom,
and when the turn comes, I'll consider heaven
if the rules aren't too tight.

On Solitude

By Kyle Coblina

The ache came early today – tea on silenced teeth, intertwined in tongue and cheek,
but I don't know how to say no
to you when you reap my heart for all it's worth.

I don't know how else to live but to lie in these bludgeoned sheets, blue ocean seas sip me
back and forth until froth foams at the mouth, and I am silenced into solitude.

I don't know how to make my own, but tiny lips of love-locked land
and whispers of wheat hurt my ears, eyes blinded by the moon that murdered my speech.

Take me back to a time when I could naively rest without the earnest thought of tanning
under squalid skies

or be OK with not saying anything. When peony pills lap me up in languished laughter,
please know that my quiet is not an option.

Panhandle Funeral

By Kyle Coblina

Dust – catches wind,
sweeping tumbleweeds
over red dirt roads and rusty railroad tracks.
Red dirt runs thick, and in winter, snow softens even the
densest skeleton bones.

Dust towns marked by silent stone—
stone cold stone, and plastic petals preach
to the sun untouched by wind screaming *Welcome,*
screaming *Here I am,*
here I am Lord!

The crunch of dead thick skin, little swords
and snake homes make room for vast silences—
for broken shadows, broken beer bottles, illuminated
gusts of wind whip for miles through boney barbed wire fences.

Sky looms a heavy blanket blue,
and trees grasp their bare twisted arms up,
up toward the heavens crying out *Hallelujah, the Lord has risen!*
(*He has risen indeed, hallelujah.*) Muffled white walls, organ chords and prairie wind;
babies and bare-chested mothers stare at red skin in disgust,
and dogs beg their masters for bones.
Windmills creak to cricket songs and window panes, and thunderstorms
electrify the night like a shotgun. And we stare,
and we sing *I am the Lord of the dance.*
I am the Lord of the dance, said He.

And up from the heat rises dust.

On Top of the World

By Michelle Skinner



The Man Whose Soul Rode Away on a Bicycle

By Sarah Webb

His soul rode away on a bicycle
when he was twelve, he said.
Perhaps he believed that,
but he was no soulless man.
The murders he committed
were real murders. The lovers
he garlanded with necklaces, counted and caressed,
were real lovers.
He looked after that disappearing speck,
but I saw a bicycle in the weeds by our garden.

He mourned me, he said
because the girl he married was dead
and I the murderess.
And, yes, I did murder her, that bright-eyed fool
who gave her heart for poetry and moonlight in a car
and only kept her soul because it was wadded in her pocket.
She deserved to be murdered. Such innocence is criminal
and if I had not done it, he would have.
That I could never have forgiven him.

Leaving

By Sarah Webb

For there is no one anyplace who isn't secretly departing, even as he stays. —Rainer Maria Rilke

She was leaving all those years,
rehearsing the smash
through the window with the chair,
the flight down the front steps.

Or, alternately, packing up one day
while he was at work,
taking the hidden cash,
the photocopy of her manuscript,
her movements increasingly frantic as
five o'clock neared.

But there was always some reason for delay,
one more frank conversation,
a plan to sell everything and move to Spain.
Stalemated, their talk
moved through the same sequences:
he says and then I say.
He hadn't hit her in three years,
that was progress, wasn't it?

One day he slapped her in the car.
Do that again, and I'll leave! she shouted.
He laughed.

Only a Layer So Thin

By Amy McCullough

Virtue

Your lilac flower,
rests upon unforgiving
beads of moist petal.

Aroused

A blend of newness
forms in the plum of orchards.
Hues mingle with rays,
radiating shrub and sky.
The sweetest savor evoked.

Revelation

With tender vision
the honest path delivers.
Painted leaves give way
leaving a trail of sunlight
bathing in expectation.

An Objective Correlative of *Impactful*, a Term Used Often by City Officials to Describe Their Economic Policies

By John Graves Morris

A woman stepped out of a car
she had parallel-parked not
far in front of mine on a dark
side street, stood a minute,
took off and tossed a jacket inside,
pulled up her tube top,
and adjusted her belted jeans
before, a bit the worse for
drink, teetering on spike heels
toward a beige night club
called *Boyz and Babez*
that was also my destination
or rather that of some friends.
It was Friday night about 10,
a local band blaring rock,
but the semester was over
and college men and women
were there to celebrate
with many cups of discounted beer
and look each other up
and down, up and down,
with the weekend already there
and a short vacation opening up
its landscape of freedom and sex.
Fifteen years later, this bar
and many other older buildings
have been razed to make way
for an upscale shopping center
in a neighborhood still filled
with low-income housing, crime,
and seedy, overgrown lawns,
the city's latest attempt
to reinvigorate commercial tax base.
I had never seen the woman before,
have never seen her since
or known what her name was,
know only that she was short
except for the high heels,
that it was a December evening
after a relatively warm day
but that the temperature,
falling steadily after sunset,
was not much north of freezing,

and that a woman once informed
me that women learn while young
that many men can see much
better than they can think.
Staying only for a few minutes
to tell my friends good night,
I lost track of the woman inside
the sardine-close, beer-loud bar,
but imagine she achieved the success
for which she had dressed that night.
After years of eminent domain
maneuvers, sweetheart tax deals,
work delays, and repair details,
the jury on the mall is still out.

One of the Things You Wouldn't Think a Man Would Remember

By John Graves Morris

“A fellow will remember a lot of things you wouldn't think he'd remember . . . I only saw her for a second. She didn't see me at all, but I bet a month hasn't gone by since, that I haven't thought of that girl.”—Mr. Bernstein (Everett Sloan) to Mr. Thompson (William Alland) in Citizen Kane

Spilled soda muddied one tray
and, an unanswered prayer, a bag
on another awaited a sandwich.
A third was empty. Cap askew
and tunic half untucked, the girl
spun round and around, ended nowhere,
all of sixteen and in the middle
of the Friday night rush on what
might have been a nightmarishly
neon-lit first night on her first
job. Or so you have remembered it
for over twenty-five years after
she finally, hurriedly, assembled
your sandwich, fries, and drink cup
into a sloppy formation, receipt
at half staff, and nearly dropped
the tray before delivering it to you.
At first you had thought her high
after observing one false eyelash
dangling loose over her cheek
and her too-thick mascara smudged,
but her pupils remained undilated,
and, though panicky, unседated.
At first hesitant, you ended eyeing
her to ask, gently, if it had been
a tough day, for once choosing
exactly the right words and tone:
the thundercloud of her face
broke open, gratitude rushing
wordlessly out of sunnier eyes
before she resumed her ordeal.

Me Here at Last on the Ground; You in Midair

By John Graves Morris

I thought I heard you smile,
but when I turned around,
your absence tasted of snow
piling into drifts with months

of waiting until Spring.
I thought I heard you frown,
but whirled into the sunniest
of weather and leaves unfurling

their bright green textures.
How often we enter rooms
we are not big enough for
and that our leaving diminishes,

thinking of the many things
to say when we sit in silence.
What furtive mice our thoughts
scurrying through shining holes.

We crave a stiff tumbler, but
only drink ourselves sober.
Sometimes, I desire solitude
but miss every second of you.

It has taken many years
of letting the other go
into an errant direction
to true us into imbalance:

turn down the lights to retire,
and I will begin staring
into the darkness to smell
by the light you left me.

November Snow

By Robert Milby

The ancient Winter returns with talons, beaks and fangs.
November's quiet preparation for Winter has turned vicious merely days after a late Hurricane.
Those homeless and shivering sit in heatless domiciles awaiting electric and comforts afforded
only by the modernity of this nervous age, quickly removed by gale winds, hammering rains,
and a snowstorm hunting for humans.

The family has left; ghosts signed a lease.
Who will direct tired and cold refugees to grange, church, or town hall?
Athena is no goddess, neither was Sandy; nor were they formal debutantes or warriors,
but weather intent on predatory rites.

We clean and rebuild; dig through dead remnants; pray to the Divine.
There is no insurance for lost life; there is no insurance for lost time.
Survivors are consumed in reclaiming the balance of domestic illusion.

Winter's talons and teeth find fingers and feet each day and those without structure; spend hours
foraging for feasts; wrapping torsos on windy streets. November snow is not the dry desert dust
of ice burned January, where none but the foolish venture from manors.
November's snow has wet memory of late Summer's soft evenings, when heat absconded with
insomniac nights and fog returned to town, to court the Virgo's harvest.

November's debutante has wet hair, thin coat, and a gown only partially blanched;
bestrewn with brown leaves in a halo of yellow and red. The Winter crone has prepared her
daughter, and she sits upon a crag observing fools and farmers gathering grains and coins, as
gusts walk from Novembers past, and in Her vast, heatless gallery, the faceless curator shows
nobles and beggars new canvases of deep meadow Snow.

On a Bleak, December Morning

By Robert Milby

December prepared its stage for snow.
Built the ice, the winds; the days of grey.
Geese floated across a smoky sky.
One scholar Crow stood atop a chimney soapbox.
His proselytizing heard by wary Sparrows and Mourning Doves,
at a swaying, backyard birdfeeder.

The dun automobiles continued—
a line of bellowing hearses; exoskeletons—pulsing humans seated within.
They are unaware of farm ghosts;
Chipmunks darting across the cold street;
endless waves of angry; brown Maple leaves
breaking on the sidewalk shoreline.

Flakes tumble and float; whispering the memory of ancient mornings,
when Wolves wandered the village Tundra;
when the solitary Crow dreamt of a village in December,
but did not figure cars; humans with electronic appendages—
carried wherever they travelled, refusing to look at the scant Sunrise,
or a bleak, December morning.

Contributors

Meaghan Andrews is a writer situated in the Middle Georgia area. She has been previously published in *The Fall Line Review* and *Forage Poetry Journal*, with upcoming poems in *Belle Rêve Literary Journal* and *The Bitchin' Kitsch*.

Tina Baker is retired from Speech/Language Pathology instruction, having worked in Kansas, Hawaii and Oklahoma public schools. Her published poems can be found online through *Crosstimbers*, *Sugar Mule Oklahoma Anthology* and *Dragon Poet Review*. She enjoys putting together her own poetry collections in chapbook form. Her first collection is called *While You Were Gone, I Took Notes* and another soon to be— *Fringe on a Bird Bath Rim*. She's delighted to have been selected as a Woody Guthrie Poet for 2015 and 2016.

Chris Brooks explores life on the Great Plains via poetry and photography. He lives with his wife and daughter in Shawnee, Oklahoma. His poetry has been published in *The Furious Gazelle* and *Flint Hills Review*.

Robert Buswell is a part-time firefighter and writer living and working in Michigan. He is married with two young children and enjoys breeding dogs. His hobbies include sailing boats, playing chess, and attending sporting events. His fonder memories include meeting Babe Ruth and travelling to Kiribati. He has several years of experience in writing insipid and partially-true (meaning completely false) third-person biographies about himself.

Yvonne Carpenter's poetry delivers the essence of life lived on an Oklahoma farm, blended with wide reading, brewed in meditation. She has published in *Grain* (a Canadian literary journal), *Concho River Review*, *Red Dirt Review*, and *Westviev*, *Mid America Review* and *Smoky Blue Journal* as well as anthologies and e-zines. She has published three books: *Red Dirt Roads* (with the Custer County Truck Stop Poets, Haystack Publishing) which won the Oklahoma Book of the Year for Poetry in 2014, *Barbed Wire and Paper Dolls* (Village Press) and *To Capture Fine Spirits* (Haystack Publishing).

Kyle Cohlmia has her BA in Art History from the University of Kansas and MA in Secondary English Education from the University of Colorado, Boulder. In 2015, Kyle completed the Oklahoma Art Writing and Curatorial Fellowship with Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition and has published essays on local art exhibits in *Art Focus Magazine* and *Oklahoma: Magazine of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame*. In addition, she has recently published her first travel-writing piece for *Roots Rated*.

Richard Dixon is a retired high-school Special Education teacher and tennis coach living in Oklahoma City. His poems and essays are published in *Crosstimbers*, *Westviev*, *Walt's Corner of the Long Islander*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Cybersoleil*, and *Dragon Poet Review* as well as numerous anthologies including the Woody Guthrie compilations in 2011 and 2012, and *Clash by Night*, an anthology of poems related to the 1979 breakthrough album by the Clash, London Calling.

Marsha Ferrier, a long-time resident of Norman, Oklahoma, is an avid amateur photographer. She has won several awards including first place in amateur color in the

Norman Tree Photo Contest. Her works have appeared in *Blood and Thunder*, *Norman Living Magazine*, in a church advent book, and on a poster depicting interesting doors in Norman. Her work is in several private collections including First Christian Church and the University of Oklahoma Medical School.

Robert Ferrier is a retired university research administrator living in Norman. He received a BA in Journalism and an MBA from the University of Oklahoma. He has published two novels as e-books and has won the Norman Tree Photo contest twice. His photo, "Magnolia Morning," was the cover of the Summer 2016 *Dragon Poet Review*. His photo, "Diagnosis in Stasis," was the cover of the Fall 2012, *Blood & Thunder*, OU College of Medicine. His poems have appeared in *Oklahoma Today*, *Blood & Thunder*, *Crosstimbers*, *Westview*, *Mid-America Poetry Review*, *The Exhibitionist*, *Walt's Corner of the Long Islander*, and *Red River Review*. In 2007 the Norman Galaxy of Writers nominated him for Poet Laureate of Oklahoma.

Mark A. Fisher is a writer, poet, and playwright living in Tehachapi, California. His column "Lost in the Stars" has appeared in Tehachapi's *The Loop* newspaper for several years. His poetry has appeared in past editions of *A Sharp Piece of Awesome*, *The Altadena Poetry Review*, *Avocet*, and a Woody Guthrie centennial anthology. His plays have appeared on stages in Pine Mountain Club, Bakersfield, Tehachapi, and Hayward. He has won cooking ribbons at the Kern County Fair.

Karen Ginther Graham is the author of an autumnal romance called *Finding Rose Rocks*, which won first place in the 2014 Oklahoma City Writer's contest and second place with Chesapeake Romance Writers. Karen is a long-time Okie but hails from Southern California. Her writing often reflects these two places. Her livelihood includes management and renovation of apartments in a reemerging part of Oklahoma City's inner city. She studied literature at the University of Central Oklahoma.

John Graves Morris, Professor of English at Cameron University, is the author of *Noise and Stories*. He has put the finishing touches on a second collection, to be entitled *Unwritten Histories*, which he is presently circulating. His poems have appeared recently in *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*, *Jazz Cigarette*, and *The 580 Mixtapes*. He lives in Lawton, Oklahoma.

Ken Hada's two latest collections of poetry are *Persimmon Sunday* (Purple Flag, 2015) and *Margaritas & Redfish* (Lamar UP, 2013). His poem "Homecoming" was a finalist for the 2015 Spur Award from the Western Writers of America.

Daryl Halencak is the Crowell, TX, author of *Staring Blue Eyes*, *Landing on the Other Side and poetry.passion.life*. He was a 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 Woody Guthrie Poet, Oklahoma. He was recognized by the 17th Annual Artists Embassy International Dancing Poetry Festival, where he was invited to give a reading of his work in San Francisco, California. Daryl has won awards from the Abilene Writers' Guild. He has published a non-fiction article in the *Czech Dialogue*, an English/Czech publication, and he has volunteered in editing articles for such publication in Prague, Czech Republic. He has also been published in *The Cesky Stopy*, *Elegant Rage*, and *Illya's Honey*.

Carol Hamilton has recent and upcoming publications in *Pontiac Review*, *Sanskrit Literary-Arts Magazine*, *Poet Lore*, *Limestone*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Off the Coast*, *Palaver*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Hubbub*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Abbey*, *Main Street Rag*, *Two Cities Review*, *Poem*, *Tipton Poetry Review*, *November Bees*, *All Roads Lead You Home*, *The Aureorean*, *The 3228 Review* and others. She has published 17 books, most recently, *Such Deaths* from the Visual Arts Cooperative Press in Chicago. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma and has been nominated six times for a Pushcart Prize.

Jill Hawkins is a recent graduate student of the Red Earth MFA program at Oklahoma City University. She was born and raised in Oklahoma. She has worked in various fields of Specialized Education for almost twenty years as a Speech and Language Pathologist/Deaf Educator, and is currently the State of Oklahoma's Outreach Coordinator on Deafness. Jill has publications of poems in the following journals: *The Endeavor* (Summer 2016), *The Poeming Pigeon*, *Southwestern American Literature* (Spring 2016), *Mizna*, Vol. 16 Issue 2, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA, Winter 2015), and *Blacktop Passages* (Summer 2015).

Jack Hays took an early retirement from the Oklahoma State Department of Mental Health to pursue his first love of acting full time, but he also includes writing as an almost equal passion. He has appeared in dozens of theatrical performances, full length and short films and commercials both on camera and voice-over and narrations.

Ann Howells' poetry appears in *Borderlands*, *Concho River Review*, *di-vêrsé-city*, *Spillway*, *THEMA*, among others, and a variety of anthologies including: *Goodbye, Mexico* and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume VIII: Texas* (Texas Review Press), *Pushing the Envelope*, *Texas Weather Anthology*, and *Great American Wise-Ass Poetry Anthology* (Lamar University Press). She has edited *Illya's Honey* since 1999, recently going digital and taking on a co-editor. Her chapbook, *Black Crow in Flight*, is from Main Street Rag Publishing, 2007. *Under a Lone Star*, her first full-length, is from Village Books Press, 2016; a chapbook, *Letters for My Daughter*, is from Flutter Press, 2016; and *Cattlemen and Cadillacs*, an anthology of Dallas/Ft. Worth poets she edited is from Dallas Poets Community Press, 2016. Ann has been nominated four times for a Pushcart.

Rachael Ikins is a 2016 Pushcart nominee, 2013 CNY Book Award nominee, award winning poet/artist. Her artwork has appeared in one-woman and group exhibits in Syracuse galleries and from Hamilton to Albany and the NYS Fair. She has published six chapbooks and a novel, covers by Rachael. The novel *Totems* is her first illustrated book. Rachael is a member of NLAPW, credentialed in letters and arts. She belongs to Associated Artists of CNY and is a member of Cooperstown, Schweinfurth and Rome Art Associations.

Madhu Kailas is the pen name of Kingshuk Basu. He is a native of Kolkata, India and has lived, worked and studied in various places in India and USA. He enjoys poetry, and writes regularly. He is the author of *The Birds Fly in Silence and Other Poems*, a collection of 57 poems on various themes like identity, death, love, nature, memories and devotion. He has been published in journals including *Indian Literature*, *Dragon Poet Review*, and *The Literary Review*.

Jennifer Kidney is a free-lance scholar and poet who has twice been nominated for Oklahoma Poet Laureate. She is the author of six books of poetry. Her most recent book, *Road Work Ahead*, was published by Village Books in 2012. She does author presentations

and writing workshops for libraries, schools, and other organizations, and is also an adjunct assistant professor for the College of Liberal Studies at the University of Oklahoma. She is secretary of the Cleveland County Audubon Society for which she writes an e-mail newsletter, *Bird Notes*.

Jennifer Luckenbill is a freelance writer, editor, and artist who currently lives in Oklahoma City. She has two master's degrees, in women's literature and library sciences. She has been published in journals such as *Red River Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Words Dance*, *GlassFire Magazine*, *Black Heart Magazine*, *Industry Night*, *The Long Islander*, and *Short, Fast, and Deadly*. Her story "Roar: A Trio of Shorts" was a finalist for *Sundress Best of the Net Anthology* for 2013.

Sharon Edge Martin has published short fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in commercial and small press magazines. Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and is included in *The Art and Craft of Poetry* by Michael Bugeja. She writes for the *Oklahoma Observer* and teaches.

Amy McCullough is a poet/writer with a degree in Language Arts. Her favored writing includes the styles of Haiku, Tanka, Terza Rima, Ode and Sonnet. Her works have appeared in *SSC Literary and Arts Journal*, *The Muse*, 2014 issue.

Teri McGrath earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arkansas in 2005. She taught English composition at the University of Arkansas and at Cameron University, and she now works as a technical writer/editor in Lawton, Oklahoma.

Robert Milby of Florida, NY, has been reading his poems from the gutter to the garret, throughout the Hudson Valley, NY, and northeast, since March, 1995. He has hosted 27 poetry series since September, 1995, and currently hosts three readings and co-hosts a fourth. His poems are published in *Home Planet News*, *Sensations Magazine*, *Hunger Magazine*, *The Fox Chase Review*, *The Cliffhanger* (Sarah Lawrence College) other magazines, websites, and 13 anthologies. His first book of poems is *Ophelia's Offspring* (Foothills Publishing, Kanona, NY, 2007).

Michelle Skinner is a library assistant, piano teacher, artist, and flutist. She graduated from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and loves all things creative and intellectual.

Carol Lavelle Snow is a former college English instructor who has written for the Narrative Television Network and Spotlight Theater. She played Aunt Eller in Discoveryland's production of *Oklahoma!* for 11 summers. She has published fiction as well as poetry, most recently in *Harp-Strings Poetry Journal*, *Step Away Magazine*, *The Lyric*, and *Songs of Eretz Poetry Review*.

Michael Snyder's biography *John Joseph Mathews: Life of an Osage Writer* will be published by the University of Oklahoma Press in spring 2017. His poetry has appeared in several literary magazines and the book *Ain't Nobody That Can Sing Like Me: New Oklahoma Writing* (Mongrel Empire Press). He has published a dozen articles of literary and cultural criticism in peer-reviewed academic journals and three book collections.

Ron Wallace is an adjunct professor of English at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and an Oklahoma Native of Choctaw, Cherokee and Osage ancestry. He is the author of seven volumes of poetry published by TJMF Publishing of Clarksville, Indiana and he is a three-time finalist in the Oklahoma Book Awards. He is also a three-time winner of The Oklahoma Writer's Federation Best Book of Poetry Award. His work has been recently featured in *Oklahoma Today*, *The Long Islander*, *Concho River Review*, *Cybersoleil*, *Cobalt*, *Red Earth Review*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Songs of Eretz Review*, *Gris-Gris*, *Oklahoma Poems and Their Poets* and a number of other magazines and anthologies.

Brian Walter's work has appeared in (among others) *Boulevard*, *Southern Quarterly*, and *CineAction*. His two feature documentaries on Arkansawyer novelist Donald Harington are distributed by the University of Arkansas Press, and he appears as an "old coot" interviewer with a magical camera and tricky questions in the last chapter of Harington's last novel, *Enduring*.

Sarah Webb edited poetry for twelve years for *Crosstimbers* (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma). She co-edits the Zen arts magazine *Just This* and serves on the editorial committee of *All Roads Will Lead You Home*. Her collection *Black* (Virtual Artists Collective, 2013) was selected as a finalist for the Oklahoma Book Award.

Roxann Perkins Yates is advertising director of the Locust Grove Arts Alliance newsletter, is on the Board of Directors of the Locust Grove Area Chamber of Commerce and the Territory Tellers organization and is a member of LG Creative Communities. As a member of the Centennial Committee, she works with members who plan to publish a sequel to this historical book about her home town. She is a lover of F-words: food, family, fun, fiction, free verse, features, and folk and fairy tales. She has written a collection of poetry, *Devil's Cut*, and has compiled a sampling of 100 years of autograph poetry, *True Friends Are Like Diamonds*.

About the Editors

Rayshell E. Clapper is a prose writer and an Assistant Professor of English at Diablo Valley College in the Pleasant Hill, California, where she teaches Creative Writing, Literature, and Composition classes. She has presented her original fiction and nonfiction at several conferences and events and published her works in myriad journals and magazines. The written word is her passion, and all she experiences inspires that passion. *Dragon Poet Review* continues to be a way to promote creativity and inspire all writers. She lives her life through three passions: family (including her beloved pets), writing, and teaching. As a Metal Monkey and Virgo, she balances her worlds of creativity and independence with organization and humanity. She lives in California with her passions and words but ever does the world call to her for travel and experience and life.

Jessica B. Isaacs received the 2015 Oklahoma Book Award for Poetry for her first full-length book of poems, *Deep August* (Village Books Press, 2014). She has presented her writing at several regional and national conferences, and her poems may be found in journals and anthologies including *Oklahoma Today*, *Poetry Bay*, *One-Sentence Poems*, *My Life with a Funeral Director*, *Short Order Poems* (September 2014 Issue), *Cybersoleil Literary Journal*, *All Roads Lead Home Poetry Blog*, *Sugar Mule's Women Writing Nature*, *The Muse*, and *Elegant Rage*. She is a member of the coordinating committee for the Woody Guthrie Poets, and is an English Professor at Seminole State College in Oklahoma where she serves as the director of their annual Howlers & Yawpers Creativity Symposium. According to her zodiac signs, she is both a Taurus and a Fire Dragon, which makes for interesting dinner conversations. She feathers her nest and keeps her home fires burning in Oklahoma with her husband, kids, dogs, and cats.

Call for Submissions:

Dragon Poet Review

is currently accepting submissions
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