



Dragon Poet Review

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Table of Contents

Oklahoma Sunset, <i>Robert Ferrier</i>	1
The Wind Tastes like Roadkill, <i>Psycho Kanev</i>	2
Bittersweet Citrus, <i>Sterling Farrance</i>	3
Watching My Son Play Guitar, <i>Ken Hada</i>	6
Prosperity, <i>Vivian Finley Nida</i>	7
Grandfather, <i>Terri Cummings</i>	8
the impudent children of bits and bytes, <i>Gayle Christopher</i>	9
Leaf Litter, <i>Gayle Christopher</i>	10
Empire, <i>Gary Reddin</i>	11
No Fat Chicks, <i>Diana Conces</i>	12
In the Last Days of Pompeii (a Climate Change Parable), <i>Richard Dixon</i>	13
Lunch with Leonardo, <i>Robert Herman Broyles</i>	14
Editorial: Review of Lifted to the Wind & Interview with the Poet: Susan Gardner.....	15
Deep Water, <i>Susan Gardner</i>	15
Interview with the Poet: Susan Gardner, <i>Jessica Isaacs</i>	18
Nude, <i>Johnie Catfish Mahan</i>	22
Existence, <i>Jules Gates</i>	23
Sestina Mining the Light, <i>Cherie Rankin</i>	24
Sunflower, photograph, <i>Robert Ferrier</i>	25
Sunflower, poem, <i>Robert Ferrier</i>	26
Night prayer, <i>Madhu Kailas</i>	27
Glad in Laughter, <i>John Robinson</i>	28
Nature's Solace, <i>Suzanne Cottrell</i>	29
Disturbed, <i>Suzanne Cottrell</i>	30
Late Summer, Minnesota, <i>Steve Klepetar</i>	32
A Market Café, <i>Brady Peterson</i>	33
After the Rain, <i>Michelle Skinner</i>	34
The Losing of Things, <i>Joey Brown</i>	35
Farewell, <i>Yolany Martínez</i>	36
Destination, <i>Tina Baker</i>	37
Expatriate Ghosts, <i>Andrew S. Engwall</i>	38
August, Cleveland County, <i>Jennifer Kidney</i>	39
Useful Moon, <i>Carol Hamilton</i>	40

Gratitude, <i>Anca Vlasopolos</i>	41
Spring, <i>James Croal Jackson</i>	42
Tapputi, <i>Aaron Glover</i>	43
Travelogue I, <i>WL Winter</i>	44
I Heard You Died Today Which Has Me Thinking, <i>Christopher Brooks</i>	46
Forbidden Fruit, <i>JN Shimko</i>	47
Contributors.....	50
About the Editors	55
Call for Submissions	56

Oklahoma Sunset
By Robert Ferrier



The Wind Tastes like Roadkill

By Psycho Kanev

A minute ago I was watering the plant
at the windowsill but now it has withered—

it is the same with life.

Look what a night without mirrors does
to the features of a person. Look at his veins,
at him, looking in vain at the grandfather's
razor in the bathroom.

Imagine that war is over, that there will be no more
"Si vis pacem, para bellum."

A new life...
White stuccoed walls bloodied by
the sunset and you—

smoking by the window in delight.

Bittersweet Citrus

By Sterling Farrance

As the last-minute reminders were barked at the no-longer-listening ears, the mad dash for the door began. Shoes shuffled, and desks creaked, the plastic backs flexing in their frames, while papers, binders, and books were shoved quickly in bags. “Very interesting stuff today, professor,” I said as I neared the front of the room.

“Yes, it was. Great discussion.” She replied, “Do you like the book so far?”

“Yeah, I do, a lot. There’s something about the tone that’s sorta’ film noir, it almost feels familiar.”

“I know what you mean, it kind of reminds me of *Blade Runner*,” she replied as we left the classroom, “have you seen it?” I smiled largely.

“Yes I have, and you’re right—it totally reminds me of *Blade Runner*! As a matter of fact, that’s my favorite movie—well, the director’s cut anyway. I hate the optimistic Disney it’ll-all-work-out ending of the theatrical cut, that and that god-awful voice-over narration”

“I kind of like the narration, but it’s been years, I oughta re-watch it.”

“You teach Sci-Fi—of course you should! I never get sick of that one. Funny though, I didn’t even wanna watch it at first, but it was one of Dad’s favorites so I didn’t *really* have a choice.”

“Good thing then,” she said, chuckling softly.

“Totally, my dad was basically always right about those kinds of things, movies, music, books. He *loved* sci-fi. When I was little he read sci-fi novels to me before bed, and when I got older, we took turns.”

“Your dad sounds great, he live around here still?”

Lights.

On stage again and somehow still surprised. Opening up meant mentioning my past, upbringing, childhood, family, then eventually, my dad.

“Actually,” I began cautiously before pausing. I didn’t know, as I never do, the right words. “He’s not alive anymore.”

Camera.

As the film ticked through the rollers, my heart thudded, her gaze the hot, bright lights. My anticipation built as I waited endless seconds for her reply.

“I’m so sorry. Can I ask how he passed? He must have been young.” There’s that question again. It isn’t ever easy to say it out loud.

“Actually,” I began again, as if to preempt any incredulity—or maybe, for a second to breathe, “he was murdered.”

Action.

I knew the part, lines were all memorized, but my discomfort mounted, electric force radiating between two poles. She stopped in her tracks and gently squeezed my arm. “How awful. What about your mom? Were your parent’s together still?”

“Yeah. Actually,” *there’s that word again*, “she was in the room when it happened. He was shot right in front of her.” she watched me say.

“I can’t imagine what that must have been like for your family.” She said, and her eyes said that she was trying. “Thank you for sharing with me,” she said, looking earnestly in my eyes. “I want you to know, I’m really glad to know you.”

“I’m glad to know you too.” I replied honestly, but despite her tender and genuinely kind reaction to my massive bombshell, all I could muster was a stiff smile.

Cut.

Scene over.

I watched her walk away and as the post-dad-talk numbness set in, I wondered why I didn’t feel screwed up or depressed. Seven years since my father was shot and I still felt broken, but never when I was supposed to.

I walked to my car then, an emotional void attached to arms and feet. Daydreaming, I imagined myself shook up, heavily saddened, hiding a tear as I walked away from the heart-to-heart with my professor. In that fantasy, I got to my car, then sat and cried. I pictured myself going home eventually and channeling the depression into something creative, something *brilliant!*

In reality however, I felt pretty okay. In fact, I was touched that a person I barely knew so genuinely gave a shit. And I knew there was no way I was about to have some cathartic moment of emotional swings that led to some profound creative expression; instead, I was going to drive home, drink, and struggle to get something productive done.

I thought fondly then of my dad clacking away at his keyboard, well past midnight, sipping bourbon with a bead of sweat perched upon his wrinkled brow, rushing to meet an editor’s deadline. Thanks to a promise not to tell mom, I was a boy up well past his bedtime, sitting on the couch next to him watching *The Terminator*, the better of the two films my dad always pointed out—there *were* only two in those days.

Like any good procrastinating college student, it would be in those same well-past-midnight hours that I eventually found a calm focus. I was the man at the keyboard rushing to meet deadlines now. I had a bit of liquor in my glass, I typed feverishly. I sat alone, though I did have a movie on in the background—something sci-fi of course, you know, just to compliment the class I was writing for.

Eventually my thoughts became dull, I crawled into bed, and I succumbed to sleep.

Is this my life? I asked myself the next morning. 30 is around the corner; 9 years at community college; no semblance of normal emotional response or control; not to mention the fact that you fuck up just about everything.

My thoughts are often *very* apocalyptic before coffee.

In my car I sipped black sludge with cream and listened to an AM radio discussion of the Giants’ playoff hopes, “You’re listening to KNBR 680. We’ll throw it to the audience—eight, oh, eight, K-N-B-R—can the Giants win a wild-card playoff game without home-field advantage?” I thought about mornings in the car with dad on the way to school—I got my coffee and my KNBR habit from him; I even sipped from his old, dented travel cup. 12 years had passed since those high-school rides in his grapefruit stained Buick, but I smell the bitter citrus in any car with AM 680 on the dial. I looked toward an invisible arm rest, half expecting to see the fist-sized mark where years of citric acid ate away at the Buick’s plush fabric.

‘Want a piece son?’ he asked.

‘Look, the Pirates’ pitching *has* been lights out at PNC Park, but the Giants just need to get in the tournament. They’ve been down this road before and this team is not afraid of having their backs against the wall.’

As I parked and got out of my car, I thought of the night the Giants won the 2012 World Series and how I had drunkenly snuck out of *The Old Hangout* to find a lonely place outside. On the side of the raucous bar, I had dialed my father’s old cell phone number—already five years obsolete. As it rang, I prayed that nobody would answer and that there would be no personally recorded voicemail greeting to destroy my illusion. ‘‘You have reached the Sprint-PCS voice mailbox for, 5-1-0,’’ I stopped listening when I realized I had no idea what I was going to say.

BEEP!

‘‘Dad? Uh, hey, it’s me. Great game huh? I mean what a series, what a playoff! Backs against the wall, *six times*, and they *still* pulled it off. Sorry you never got to see them win one, only the ‘89 and ‘02 heartbreaks. I wish we could have shared this. Fuck, Dad. I miss you, so damn much. When I watch a game...I’m thinking about you, I want you to know that. I’m sorry I haven’t talked to you in so long. It’s not your fault, I get it, it’s just so fucking hard sometimes. Mom’s a total shipwreck, and my sisters...’’ I sighed, ‘‘Alice is doing okay. Kevin and the kids too—they keep each other in pretty good shape. Amanda’s doing alright, but distant as ever and Karen’s a total fucking dope fiend now.’’ A knot rose in my throat, ‘‘I bet you’re kinda pissed to see how things turned out...but that’s not why I called. This is a happy night, I thought I’d share it with you. Go Giants huh?’’ The rolling heat of a tear gliding down my cheek was sobering. ‘‘World Champs! Twice in three years, can you believe it? I miss you pop, so, so much. I love you. Bye.’’

As I approached my classroom, I thought about the person who must have found that message on their voicemail. As I had every time I imagined their confused reaction, I laughed heartily. Still shaking off the chuckles, I entered my class. ‘‘Hey,’’ a class mate said, ‘‘what’s so funny?’’

Watching My Son Play Guitar

By Ken Hada

There is a sadness in his eyes
he must have inherited
along with an ear
from ancestors, some whom
he hardly knows.

There is a grace that I envy,
a violence sublimated
by attentive skill
I can only admire.

Sure, I'm one of those dads
that I never always wanted to be,
one that I can't resist being.

Eyes contorted in reverent silence,
head bent close to hear his god

I cannot look away.

Prosperity

By Vivian Finley Nida

In the sculpture garden
stretch to measure
bronze poinsettias
identical delights
back to back
petals joined
in pinwheels
framed in steel
Empowered by Zephyrus
they spin, pivot
frolic in tandem
stir feathers, pollen
mosquitos, sheaves of paper
chimes, Ferris wheels
merry-go-rounds, twirling tops
somersaults, cartwheels
You in Father's hands
swinging 'round and 'round
Perfectly balanced
Rich, free

Grandfather

By Terri Cummings

spreads his limbs
in the branch of Mother's tree
Wind cries like a child
whose brother slipped away

He does not recognize
the uniform of sinking skin
or the room's perilous sea
where someone calls his name

Memories wash over sheets
like foaming waves
Any sound dismays
He clings to the past's warm hand

a young man kisses his wife goodbye
a baby laughs
as he tickles her toes
before war becomes a tyrant

Lured by summer
in the family's shade
each breath surrenders
to death's cold heart

Grandfather's soul sings
from the highest branch
like a boy whose malady
fell like a sigh

the impudent children of bits and bytes

By Gayle Christopher

in shining
on morning's first breath
does not the sun
proclaim herself queen
in rising
on twilight's veiled wings
does not the moon
reveal her own ego
is not
the glory of nature
in her myriad forms
boastful with each fertile breath
the flower
she grows
the insect
she crawls
the wind
she blows
the river
she flows
the mother
she births
indeed
do not these feats of wonder
deserve our high praise
verily, no
not today
we punish her
we say, nay, woman
rest thee not!
take what little is given
bones and ashes
a plasticine palace
nourish us
and gravity provide
but take not from us
for we are
the impudent children
of bits and of bytes

Leaf Litter
By Gayle Christopher



Empire

By Gary Reddin

I.

When you name a town Empire, don't be surprised if it develops a god-complex. A church, a school, a cemetery, a dozen meth labs. Pastures full of cow shit and, according to the crazies, devil-worshippers. My father's, father's, father. That's how I ended up there. It was in my blood. My persecution-tinted, Irish-gypsy blood.

II.

Not that I'm complaining, but our spot behind the cafeteria left grass stains on my mind. Skinned the flesh of my brain until a scar formed. Broke my bones into fragments for a 12th grade art project.

III.

When you were 8 you fell on the playground, split your head open like a damn watermelon. Some industrial worker from the 70s must have been proud of that rusty nail that pierced your skull. You came shambling across the basketball courts like a zombie, bloodied hands and all. I knew we were going to be friends.

IV.

Every night in 10th grade I had anxiety dreams about forgetting my locker number. I never used my locker. Had never even opened it. It may have still held mementoes from its previous owner. Gum wrappers, A hair-band, a half-chewed pencil.

V.

When you learned to drive you took me to the Valentines dance. We didn't have dates. Well, maybe you did. You always seemed to. Cafeteria dances aren't the norm for larger schools, larger towns, vaster empires. I danced with a girl whose name I can never remember.

VI.

Empire kids always said that Hijacker's Hollow was haunted. That the old church was haunted. The cemetery. The burnt-out convenience store. The whole damn town was haunted. Removed of self. Google says: "having or showing signs of mental anguish or torment."

VII.

When you race time. When you skip school. When you sit by each other on the bus home. When you feel infinite. When you feel finite. When you wait for the bell to ring. When it finally does.

VIII.

Falls, that's what every empire does eventually. My sister just graduated. The last in my father's, father's, father's line. We were the last, but we could have never been the first.

No Fat Chicks

By Diana L. Conces

See his shallow manifesto manifesting,
a bumper sticker slapped,
tall and thin-ways
(he thinks he's a rebel)
on the passenger window
of his red Honda beater.
A warning label, caution tape,
jerk proud and full of hate:
Don't touch that handle
with your marshmallow hands,
Don't spread that booty crack
on the cracked black vinyl,
Don't sink my low ride lower,
my suspension can't suspend you.
What woman would open that door,
measure yourself up against
that peeling red sticker,
dare strangers to size her up?
His other bumper sticker says,
"4 Doors, Mo Ho's" and I laugh,
because you just know no chicks
(of any size) would climb inside,
it's just this guy and his friends,
blinded by their own fake cool,
music they'll never understand
rattling the peeling tinted windows,
and their pizza delivery gig
wouldn't cover a single ho,
even if they knew what to do
if she climbed in the door.

In the Last Days of Pompeii (a Climate Change Parable)

By Richard Dixon

America is an oil company with an army. –George Carlin

In the last days of Pompeii he sidestepped
the thrust of a spear, told the soldier
he got the point The rumblings of Vesuvius
had everyone on edge and the first eruption, roar
and smoke, changed the confusion to delirium

His wife one of the mental victims, her sense turned
to frenzy – up at night, sweat-wet with worry
said be sure to de-contaminate after contact
with the ash and the *rapilli*, preaching the evils
stored up inside that mountain The first day
the mountain spoke she had stopped him in front
of Apollo's Temple

He had tried to calm her –
*hadn't they kept in good employ as servants
of this resort that served the rich and fashionable
in this garden by the Gulf of Naples?
Wouldn't they again recover from whatever
mischief this mountain had in mind?*

There was no soothing her – this time
he didn't even try During the explosions
that blew the top off Vesuvius, they had joined
the crazed throng making the mad dash
away from the horror, already too late
their human speed quickly overtaken
by the rivers of molten rock
and rolling clouds of pumice and ash
Many managed to endure for thirty-six,
forty-eight hours – writhing in agony and pain
unable to free themselves
buried but still able to breathe
in one of the few pockets of air
in the last days of Pompeii

Lunch with Leonardo

By Robert Herman Broyles

The restaurant overlooked Ponte Vecchio
Leonardo da Vinci was late
But energetic with a twinkle in his eyes.
As he watched the boats on the Arno,
He turned to me and said...

“I’ve been working on a painting
A portrait of a woman...”
He told me about this exceptional woman
How he painted over his canvas three times
Trying to capture her mystery, her ambiguity

Leonardo explained how he used azure
For the background mountains and sky
And contrasting pink and white for her face
How he located the horizon at the level of her eyes
To draw the viewer’s attention to her enigmatic gaze

A gaze that brought him back to this painting
For over a decade, probing, seeking to know
The thoughts behind those eyes
What was in her heart, her soul
To know how she differed from man

I waited, respectfully, for the answer
That never came... so I asked
And Leonardo said, “There is this scientist,
Pascal Cotte, who has probed my painting
With different kinds of light... revealing all my secrets

But not hers...
Which is why... I keep painting her”

Editorial

Review of *Lifted to the Wind* & Interview with the Poet: Susan Gardner

Deep Water

by Susan Gardner, from *Lifted to the Wind* (reprinted by permission, originally published in *To Inhabit the Felt World*, Red Mountain Press, 2013)

sun-stunned dark water
touches curved blue atmosphere
ultramarine horizon invisible

skin darkens in fevered summer air
sweat a salty sheen
black curls halo over reddening ears
legs stiff at water's boundary

plunge in, drown in brilliant delight
weightless, jubilant
float besotted

I learn to swim



Susan Gardner is a Santa Fe poet, painter and photographer and the founding editor of Red Mountain Press. She has authored six books including *Lifted to the Wind*, *To Inhabit the Felt World*, the bi-lingual *Box of Light~Caja de Luz*, *Stone Music*, *Intimate Landscapes* and a memoir, *Drawing the Line*. She has lived and worked in Asia, Mexico and Europe as well as the United States and Canada, with numerous exhibitions in museums and galleries and extensive lectures and readings. She gave the Cam Memorial Lecture at the New York Public Library, where she was also honored to be granted a year in the Allen Room. She has presented programs at the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the Folger Library, among many others. She has been a house builder, scholarly researcher, teacher, and

landscape designer. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

www.susangardner.org

Susan Gardner's Poetic Brush Strokes: A Review of "Deep Water" from *Lifted to the Wind* (Red Mountain Press, 2015)

By Jessica Isaacs

Susan Gardner's *Lifted to the Wind* is a collection of poems that she published between the years 1974-2015. In this collection, Gardner pairs many of the poems with a Spanish version and intersperses her original Sumi brush paintings. Both are representative of her life's passions as an artist, photographer, and poet. Each of her art forms works to inform the others in a reciprocal fashion, as Gardner is creator, observer and responder alike. Her keen eye for contrast and composition as an editor and photographer finds its way into the crisp imagery and focus of her poems. In this way, Gardner's poetry is like her Sumi art, with a minimalist quality. Her poem "Deep Water" exemplifies this quality poignantly. In "Deep Water," Gardner employs techniques of imagism to create focused images and poetry with clean, crisp lines, like that of her art interspersed in the book.

The poem is much like Sumi art. Sumi, or traditional East Asian Brush Painting, requires that the artist "learn to use ink freely with a controlled brush stroke," and "to capture the essence or spirit of the subject in their paintings" (Jaranson). Like the Sumi art form, Gardner captures the essence of the subject, learning to swim, in the precise descriptions and concrete details that bring life to the subject, as well as the medium of poetry's lines, diction, syntax and structure, as an "idealization of the form [experience / image] itself" (Jaranson). Similarly, "Imagism," as explained by the *Poetry Foundation*, is a "poetic movement that relied on the resonance of concrete images drawn in precise, colloquial language rather than traditional poetic diction and meter." Each line of Gardner's poem is a detailed image of the experience of submerging oneself into water and learning to swim, though she delays naming the experience until the last line. She chooses instead to draw the reader in through layering the elements of the experience, the detailed imagery, before connecting it to the overall, more general experience. To this end, she carefully chooses every word to contribute to the precise details of the clear, crisp images.

The poem begins as a snapshot, with details that lie far outside of the speaker on the horizon, like a lover's flirt from a distance: "sun-stunned dark water / touches curved blue atmosphere / ultramarine horizon invisible" (Gardner 1-3). The details in this first stanza are far away from the center, or the speaker, of the poem; they are external to the body (with the "body" representing the "self" or essence / soul of the poem).

The second stanza moves in closer to the body: "skin darkens in fevered summer air / sweat a salty sheen / black curls halo over reddening ears / legs stiff at water's boundary" (Gardner 4-7). The images in this stanza are much more personal than the "distant horizon" of the first stanza. Now, the images are touching the body / self, becoming physical.

The third stanza moves to an intimate layer of the experience: "plunge in, drown in brilliant delight / weightless, jubilant / float besotted" (Gardner 8-10). The details are intimately surrounding and infiltrating the speaker. The water is inside the body / self, as exemplified by Gardner's choice of the word "drown"; the liquid experience has penetrated the body. This penetration leads to the sacred, changed self that is made apparent in the last line: "I learn to swim" (Gardner 11). The sharp focus of this single line does more than just close the poem; it reflects the altered spirit or essence of the speaker because of the experience.

The white space on the page also contributes to the focus of the image. Gardner delays naming the experience until the last line, and sets it off on the page to focus its intensity. All of the detailed images have been leading up to this moment of revealing the experience of

learning to swim, which is a metaphor for navigating changed terrain, perhaps relationships, with others or the self. It is the spirit of the changed self that is emphasized, what has been learned, what the speaker has become, through the layering of the poem's images.

Gardner captures the spirit of the images / experience of learning to swim in "Deep Water," rather than just the photographic likeness of the event. Like the Sumi art in the book, that is often described as "writing a painting" and "painting a poem," Gardner's book does both, with the lines of the poems functioning as the "individual stroke[s] of the brush" in Sumi (Jaranson). Experience in life, and of art, is more than just visual; it is the soul that is felt, the emotional resonance, and Gardner delivers the emotional depth as well as the artistry.

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Interview with the Poet: Susan Gardner

JJ: What inspires your writing?

SG: Part of the artist's task is to cast what light we can on the human condition. It has been fashionable to say that beauty and harmony have no meaning, that all we need is some adrenaline-pumping, eye-popping hugeness to be satisfied. I believe that humans are hard-wired to desire and recognize beauty in all its forms. It is the human mind that transforms facts into truth, stone into sculpture, empty sounds into poetry and music. Each of us is alone, an anonymous, separate being. Art lets us see who we are; it is the bridge from one mind to another. It lets us hold a transforming mirror to our human qualities and remember who we can be. It is the ultimate freedom.

JJ: What is the connection among art, nature, and imagery in your poems, and how does this connection inform your writing process?

SG: I have been a painter and photographer for a long time, and I see the world through that field of reference. Many descriptions in the poems are influenced by the wonderful names of colors and the vocabulary of the art studio. My practice as a visual artist encourages, even forces, scrupulous attention to fine detail, the particularity that reveals the essence of the whole. It is just the same with poetry. In my work, as in my life generally, I try to realize the idea of direct pointing, to look carefully, with attention. I try to put aside expectations, fear, preconceptions and acknowledge what I am seeing right here, right now. I hope the readers will recognize what they may have overlooked or forgotten or will re-examine it with renewed attention. Most of all, I hope the work has lasting value and will bring pleasure to readers many years from now.

JJ: What do you hope the reader gains from reading this book?

SG: Art-making in all its forms is a universal human need and characteristic. We are related by our human-ness and our place in nature. My job as an artist is to look carefully, point directly, try to shape experience so that we, poet and reader, can apprehend its meaning. We make use of this particular moment, here and now. I hope that through my work the reader will recognize the value of our shared experience.

JJ: If you were to select only one or two poems from the book that you feel really capture the essence of it, what would they be?

SG: I would choose *Cézanne's apples*. Its language and form are characteristic of my work, it refers to many of my life-long interests and concerns, and points toward the future. (Permission is granted to publish one time.)

Cézanne's apples

by Susan Gardner, from *Lifted to the Wind* (one-time reprint by permission)

Eye-shape bowl

ringed dark around the iris
periphery between color and air

Suspended within the apparent ivory-black
flat black bands concentrate roundness
border between light and no light

viridian, carmine, cochineal
cinnabar, miraculous red becomes green
citrine, golden light of powdered gems
cobalt, cerulean, indigo

Prussian blue, wanting red, Diesbach made sky

Hooker's green, for his perfect green leaves

Payne's gray, less black than black,
precise tints seep through leaking light

Vermeer blue, precious pure lapis lazuli from Badakshan,
blooming with lead

umber, the smell of Italy's hillsides
sienna, Tuscany's earth, moved to galleries
lead, life to colors, death to artists
paint linen geometry

Cézanne's eyes open to the shape of the world as it may be

Pure Wind, 24x60 inches, 1983

By Susan Gardner, from *Lifted to the Wind* (reprinted by permission)



JJ: Why did you choose to include Sumi art with your poetry?

SG: After graduate school at Johns Hopkins, I went to Korea and fell in love with calligraphy. I studied Chinese southern school landscape painting with a traditional painter. The form requires some writing on the work to identify the artist and the time and place and I learned some calligraphy and gradually began to incorporate short poems that make a whole with the visual elements. Calligraphy is itself a graphic art. The style of the writing and the arrangement on the surface (paper, boards, silk, etc.) amplify the meaning and suggest a range of associations that are more than the words alone. It influenced my work and continues to be an element in my poetry as well as my photography today. In this retrospective book, I reflect on that aspect of my life as an artist.

JJ: Is there anything else you'd like people to know about the book or your art?

SG: Heightened, intensified language and observation are the poet's principal resources for creating art, in just the same way that a composer uses sounds and time in particular relationships or a painter ruptures the perfect white field with lines, shapes and colors to delineate the space. The artist's job is to strip away preconceptions and all that interferes with clear-sighted scrutiny. We push past the extraneous to glimpse something true. Without limitations of distance and time, the solitary process creates the circumstance for one mind to join another.

JJ: What do you believe should be the role of poetry in the world?

SG: Art – regardless of form or genre – has the potential to awaken us to our own humanity and to our place in the world. More than joy and beauty, more than sensory pleasure and satisfaction, the practice and presence of art can offer redemption in the face of almost irredeemable sorrow.

JJ: Please tell us a little about your other books.

SG: My other books are *Stone Music*, *Box of Light ~ Caja de luz*, *To Inhabit the Felt World*, *Drawing the Line – A Passionate Life* (a memoir) and *Intimate Landscapes* (a chapbook).

When I began *Drawing the Line ~ A Passionate Life*, I intended to write about the nature of making art. 'Artist' and 'poet' are not a label or description; being an artist is the context of my whole life. It is not a job but as much my identity as woman, mother, wife, house-builder, garden-planter, teacher. My initial essay speculating about the nature of art inevitably became a memoir.

Box of Light ~ Caja de Luz is Spanish and English poems, about half originally in each language. Moving between languages is moving between cultures. It was interesting to try and capture both sense and music of the original language in the second. The poems are cousins rather than twins. It was a joy to explore these possibilities and I learned so much about language and making poetry.

My first book, *Intimate Landscapes*, was a chapbook published by St. Johns College. I had a photography exhibition at the St. Johns College Gallery, and instead of standard wall text (that almost no one reads), I wrote poems for the walls. The gallery director immediately asked to publish them as a chapbook and made the edition in time for the opening reception. Almost all 300 copies left with the visitors to the gallery, and I was left with the pleasure of having my poems in print.

Jl: Where may people purchase *Lifted to the Wind* and your other books?

SG: All my books are available at www.redmountainpress.org and www.spdbooks.org as well as through independent bookstores and online booksellers.

Nude

By JC Johnie Catfish Mahan

Lunching in Cadaques along the seashore
gazing at the beautiful bay and brightly painted boats
bobbing in the waves sweeping in from the Mediterranean
we watched the tourists leisurely browsing
steadily among the merchants' stalls along the seawall.
It looked the perfect porcelain Catalonian village
except for the drunken girl, passed out,
sleeping half in and half out of the slosh
of the light waves washing the tiny sand beach.
Back and forth the waves foamed gently
rising over her faded blue jeans
leaving glittering sand lines
drawn diagonally across her tattered shirt.
Apparently the locals chose to ignore her
just one more burned out art groupie
come too soak up some lasting Dali vibe
or catch sight of his spirit chasing Gala's over the hill
down to their home at Port Lligat.
But I was thrilled at the exotic scene
wishing I could have interviewed her
finding out what was going on in her mind
or at least take her photograph.
But, polite American manners didn't allow for such nonsense
especially in the company of conservative ladies.
I hope instead that my staring wasn't too obvious
to my proper travelling companions.

Now, in my dreams I imagine
her nude, lying there in the wake
and me crazy enough or man enough
to drag out my acrylics and paint her.

Existence

By Jules Gates

I started counting the bones in my feet
And stopped at 45
There are many more jutting out in my legs and hands and arms
But the counting points out
The way things pull back, decompose, and go back to dirt.

I walked the scorching yellow sand that ground black tar into my toenails
And shaved the pink skin off my feet
And turned their crackling corn husks to burnt hide
I heard nothing
Except the crunch of two solitary feet, methodical, determined, ongoing.

I am blue, milky, sapped, dripping, drooling, distant, clear, and clairvoyant
I am indigo, burnt sienna, umber, and coal gray granite, crested with titanium silver
Chiseled, hacked with divots, cracked frozen solid amber, as impossible to possess
as platinum

Burrowed inside a furious mountain volcano, dribbling orange blurry blood
At the ass end of the Pacific Ocean, where only sighs, gas, and lazy silent gray clouds of dust
flurry.

Sestina Mining the Light

By Cherie Rankin

Living alone for the first time in years
there is time to contemplate how light
filters through the first house wholly mine,
the way the kitchen window frames the ancient tree,
the way that silence sounds, interrupted,
solely by noise of my own making.

Leaves falling, bare freedom in the making,
releasing dried withered years,
self-imposed solitude decidedly interrupted.
Shedding, letting go, becoming light—
dropping fiery leaves like an autumnal tree.
The bare branches reaching skyward are mine.

Which mistakes and memories to mine,
which new roots and pathways worth making,
fingers coursing the dirt like the roots of a tree.
Synapses branching after years
stunted in dusk and looking for light,
easy joy now refusing to be interrupted.

Growth is the refusal to be interrupted—
choice that the voice being heard is mine.
I'm a late-autumn bloom leaning toward light,
observant of the shadow I'm now making,
which casts itself back over years,
protectively shading my life like an ancient tree.

A solitary glowing old tree,
fiery leaves creating light interrupted,
conjures memories of all the years
self-satisfaction and worth weren't mine.
But in this new life of my making,
possibility shimmers in the leafy light.

My deliberate choice to stand in this light,
in this window, looking upon this tree,
this is the life I'm making.
Misguided original now interrupted,
the new one is thoroughly, fully mine,
mine to make over remaining years.

I stand in the light interrupted,
the old tree through the window is mine,
is me, in the making of my years.

Sunflower
By Robert Ferrier



Sunflower

By Robert Ferrier

Flash of yellow off Penn,
silent shout from parking
lot skirt, hard by a telephone
tower.

Choice. Drive south toward
home, ignore irrepressible
tug? Live with images denied,
crop failure, imagined art unshared.

I apologize for the quick U turn.
Park in the lot and grab my
camera while sizing up the
row of sunflowers, tall chorus
line for hungry eyes.

Kneel and tilt my Canon's
view, the foot-wide yellow
orb on a plate of cobalt blue.
Click and move. Click and move.
Bare knees scraping asphalt.

Blood small price for peace.

Night prayer

By Madhu Kailas

Like feathers splaying from a rachis
in a firm intertwine resolved to fly,

a stream of letters flow from the spread
of pages stitched to a leathered spine,

pierce my eyes and invade my senses
with determination to speak

a language devised to confiscate me.
O' soul, speak your language and set me free -

the joy intrinsic in our eyes, deep in our hearts,
the silence that can never separate us,

and your symbols of no limits, no binds
restore me from my fragmented and futile plight

as I walk into a sleeping night
and find you O' so alive, as it was always meant to be.

Glad in Laughter

By John Robinson

On a steep hillside behind my house,
I sit a while after a walk,
watch the wind move over everything.
Tired for no reason;
feel left behind,
as if people had a secret kept only from me.

Tent caterpillars have spun their webs already
in only two weeks of April.
On the climb down from the ridge one day
I looked back at my heel
and found initials carved into the edge of rocks,
covered in lung lichen, moss.
Lost in words, no question at all.

I sit like this a while with no thoughts,
watch changes of light in the early evening.
I want to get half drunk and build a fire.
I want "Progress" to stop.
Can I breathe now? Will my arm go numb?
Every woman I call forgets my name.
I want to walk inside this rock,
to know and see and bring something back,
back through that unknown nothing,
a living, feeling thought.

I reach toward the light without lifting a hand.
I make my leap of fisher's water the grandest yet,
an imperial blue pillow for my head,
glad in laughter of myself.

Nature's Solace

By Suzanne Cottrell

Sitting on a slab of red sandstone
warmed by the blazing sun.
The gentle breeze brushing back my hair,
massaging my temples,
striving to clear my cluttered mind.

Submerging my legs in the cool water,
resting my weary feet on the stream bed,
sandy clay oozing between my toes.
Hoping the rushing water
will wash away any worries.

Contemplating my distorted
reflection in the rapids.
My meditative efforts struggling
like water merging into an eddy.
A black-throated gray warbler's aria
signaling me to focus on the present.

Breathing deeply and deliberately.
Spanish lavender's scent helping me relax,
attempting to liberate my body and mind.
Nature's therapeutics—
In need of more sessions.

Disturbed

by Suzanne Cottrell

We still have visitors at the Inwood (Hindle) Cemetery, but not the visitors we want. As a resident since 1863, I, James Spencer, have seen and heard a lot. As a former journalist with the *Plymouth Banner* for three years, I became the cemetery's spokesperson.

The families of our fifty-six residents no longer visit. Our last resident was interred in 1953. Perhaps the family members are now dead, or perhaps they just moved away. I don't blame my children for moving away to acquire better jobs. The economy of Marshall County was depressed. No one adorns our once pristine, white marble headstones with silk flower wreaths. We don't know what happened to our diligent caretaker. The last one was careless and nicked the corners of our monuments when he cut the grass. He had to have noticed, but he probably just didn't care. We are unable to register our complaints; no one listens to the dead. The yellow foxtail weed is now close to three feet high and has overtaken our plots. The bristly seed heads nod obnoxiously in the breeze. At least the foxtail is not as tall as the spire monuments of the wealthy Arnold family that look out across the flat, corn fields.

Gone are the days when we enjoyed the smell of fresh, cut grass or the sight of colorful, floral arrangements gracing our headstones. We don't feel the dampness of falling tears as loved ones kneel at our grave sites, nor do we feel the warm, gentle touch of their hands on our tombstones.

No longer can we hear anecdotal stories about our residents. Like when Charles McNeil, after sowing corn seeds with his new drill, came home for his noon meal, and then ended up dead on the parlor floor later that afternoon. The coroner declared the cause of death heart disease, more likely a massive heart attack. Charles was a hard-working farmer, so we were glad that he enjoyed his last supper with his family. New Year's Eve, 1878, we could see the bright lights of the dance hall in the distance and hear the lively music. It wasn't until Jonathan Schmidt joined us that we learned about an embarrassing disturbance. Apparently, Thomas Stockholm became irritated because he couldn't get a gal to dance with him at the Inwood Ball. Thomas probably had too much to drink and was annoying the ladies. We don't blame the women for declining his offers. Well, William Meyer grabbed Thomas's arm and pulled him out the door. They wrestled to the ground and kicked up dust. Four men pried them apart. Thomas staggered over to a tree. A Marshall County Deputy arrested him. We were relieved that no one was seriously injured. We don't encourage early arrivals to our cemetery. Most Inwood residents, including us, felt that Charles deserved his six months in jail for disturbing the peace and tarnishing the Inwood Ball. A few thought his sentence was too lenient.

Back when timbering Ironwood was prosperous and the railroad transported goods straight through the middle of town, our numbers increased steadily. Unfortunately, heart disease and tuberculosis were prevalent and took their toll. We were particularly distraught when Mary Elizabeth Warner died in childbirth, the baby died too. Her headstone has a lovely engraving of clasped hands. Other monuments bear beautiful engravings of lilies and the cross, yet others just have names and dates. In the back row of the cemetery are some large rocks indicating the graves of less prosperous individuals or those of questionable reputation. Now the hardwoods are all but gone, chopped down for wooden tools and construction materials. We miss the trees' shade and protection. Occasionally birds perch and sing melodious songs. We welcome them. We can tolerate their occasional droppings

that glaze our stones. The rain eventually washes their excrement away although stains often remain. Some of our stones are also marred by splotches of moss.

We were annoyed when some graves had to be moved to accommodate the Lincoln Highway construction in 1916, but only the McLoyd members were permanently moved to Mount Pleasant. We were sorry to see them leave. Most caskets were just relocated within the cemetery. We continue to be saddened by fallen monuments, eroding stones, and illegible engravings as neglect and time demonstrate their impact.

Why do we no longer have earnest visitors? The cemetery shouldn't be difficult to find. Just drive East of Plymouth on the Lincoln Highway, US Hwy. 30. The section of highway through Marshall County is only about twenty-three miles. Our cemetery is located on the north side of the highway just outside of Inwood. Just look for rusted, wire fencing; overgrown weeds; and hidden, worn, marble monuments.

We used to look forward to the weekends when families would have picnics in the adjacent field and then would walk among us reminiscing. We were honored when genealogists visited to gather families' histories. When a few folks took rubbings of our engravings, we were intrigued and encouraged. Did someone care about our past lives?

Now we dread the weekends. The adjacent, rural, straight Lincoln Highway has become a drag strip. Some newly licensed drivers from Plymouth and Elkhart seek freedom and speed. We hear the disquieting roar of the engines, smell the stench of the fuel and burned rubber, as well as endure painful screams and screeches of the spectators. We fear that fatalities may result in crowded conditions in our small, once peaceful cemetery. We're weary of disrespectful trespassers. Sun Drop soda cans, as well as Pabst Blue Ribbon beer cans, scar our stones and litter our grounds. We abhor accidental, intoxicated visitors stumbling or hanging over us. Even worse, is the splatter of their urination or their spewing a coating of repugnant vomit on our headstones. The foul odor permeates our porous stones and takes months to dissipate.

Our first resident arrived in 1849 and has forgotten most of the happier times. Some of us can still remember, but our memories are fading. I would like to make a final request on their behalf. We've worked hard and feel we've earned it. Let us rest in peace as time gradually erases our presence.

Late Summer, Minnesota

By Steve Klepetar

I stare at the trees on the day they begin to walk,
not on their buried roots,
or the base of their trunks,
but through the ghostly murmur
of their gently rustling leaves, those green clouds
just beginning to turn, as the world tips back to darkness.

Across the street, the deserted school parking lot
turns itself back into meadow,
shedding black top in chunks,
opening wider and wider spaces
of prairie grass. Afternoon spreads itself across
a gray sky, but something is changing, a new
sharpness to the light, a bit of angst in the singing
birds. The river tosses, an old woman dying in her bed.

A Market Cafe

By Brady Peterson

That God may answer prayer seems irrelevant
now, he says to Bob as they sit at a small table
in Central Market, after a noon crowd has thinned.
Still, I pray, he says, his hands open, turned up—

for earth and people, animals,
plants, water, air—lungs and toes,
fingers and hope that somehow—black
coffee and talk with a like-minded friend.

I look for your car in a parking lot,
as if seeing it there would be proof somehow.
Sample the slice of a blood orange in produce—
García Lorca is here somewhere.

After the Rain
By Michelle Skinner



The Losing of Things

By Joey Brown

Keys,
The wallet,
then the money in it,
the bag someone gave her for bringing here to work.
Only when you watch her
rummage among the piles on her desk,
lift up files folders to view the empty spaces beneath,
feel for the contents of pockets that aren't there
do you realize that is not her dress.
At least it wasn't until this week when she came to be
wearing the lines of the storm
and hand-me-down clothes.

After the house
it came every little thing went missing,
though whether by natural motion
or its own accord she could never tell.
Even time, she says, looking around her office,
as if glancing over bookshelves can give dimension
to her sense she's supposed to be somewhere just now.
Where, though, it an answer carried up with the draft,
with bits and whits she's once had a lot of,
lost or mixed into strange context so that even as she looks
right at them she does not see them.

It's all in the hubble,
she tells you, somewhere,
the gesture she makes with her arm
not meant to point your attention at any specific pile
so much as it is meant to sweep the image of her own
hubbled home off her mind.
You don't know if you should laugh,
even though she does,
at her sudden onset of absentmindedness,
the abrupt fluidity of time,
at the way the losing of things takes more than a day.

Farewell

By Yolany Martínez

My legs fall. They succumb.
The weapons of the body are in distress
but the will blinds weakness and demands the strength
to overthrow impotence.

Tears drop. A river murmurs down my face.
A farewell breaks away, not from my lips
but from the mute image of your back
that is barely a sunken ship on the horizon.

Destination

By Tina Baker

I perched alone on the
heavy black electrical line;
watched you zoom in,
to my winged silhouette;
and the bright of Oklahoma summer.
Then I flew to the very far end
of the nearest delicate pecan tree limb;
trembled and pivoted there as I landed.
I didn't care.
I'm a natural; secure and confident;
an accomplished high wire act,
and you paused silently,
no doubt,
holding that idea and the others;
like you do,
before placing them in writing.
So, when I flew away,
I bet you went directly inside to
find your journal and
make a quick arrangement;
gathering words like Cranberry Crepe Myrtle,
Pink Champagne,
Peaches'n Dreams Hollyhock;
using me as a summer poetry prompt.
So now I'm gone, leaving you in charge
of imagining
my probable poetic destination.

Expatriate Ghosts

By Andrew S. Engwall

I fall salt rogues & put spars aside;
Tempered I wake & contract 'gainst
Ate both fixed and elastic.
I sound matters for, against &
In quiet distress; kiss marsa,
Dust-yellow cliff, and priest equal.

I defy the narrow. I close
Wind & day. The dead and living
Map the same line out. I kiss a silent
Break-wall and clasp a widow's
Candle and a poet's rapture
& General's betrayer the same.

I am means black in black spaces
Uniform. I fall Tripoli,
Syracuse, Nicosia
& Troy: Alexandria, and
Malta I aport. Old stars and
Green orphans I pattern the same.

I break on red sand & corpus,
Habit phrases, sound requiems –
Non-linear the same. And
I am the ghosts I pledge to hold
Sacrosanct, let fall, tremolo,
demagnetize & expatriate.

August, Cleveland County

By Jennifer Kidney

August in Oklahoma is loud
with the chirring of cicadas
while the birds grow quiet
or else are drowned out
by the insect chorus.
A dragonfly caught
in a spider's web creates
a glittering jewel on a bare branch
jutting from the woods.
The trumpet vine climbing
a utility pole is a clarion call
to hummingbirds,
and tiger swallowtails
brighten the button bush.
Despite these fragile visions
the hayed fields steam
beneath the summer sun
and the creek bed is dry.
The green shade along the side
of the road looks cool
but that pool shimmering
in the distance is a mere mirage
that vanishes as I draw near.

Useful Moon

By Carol Hamilton

Some ancient people thought
the sun a bit superfluous
since day is already light.
The moon on the other hand
worked hard to stave off dark.
The Egyptians rowed crescent boats,
stopped on the way to eternity
on that white face, awaited purification.
That sere and wrinkled surface
has long drawn our eyes and thoughts.
Witches were sucked right up their chimneys
and lovers imagined its light touch
on skin too far away to touch.
Such lucent wafers on the tongue
swallowed all full of portent,
drag us again and again
across our troubled dreams,
tell us stories to fill the night
and lead us again to rest,
sleep and dream, again take the gift,
 take the gift,
 quietly,
 softly,
 sleep.

Gratitude

By Anca Vlasopolos

third week in august a day rare as black pearls
my eyes leak
not with salt spray

i'm twenty-four years older than you father
when you stopped drawing breath

yet every motion of these aging limbs
through gently heaving waters
is what you taught me
and the spur
go go farther till at large

this coast
like wings of damselflies
varied astonishing in strength
though living for a day
this black-pearl day

you my mother who left me much too soon
handed me the inner ticking clock
make your life now now now where body and soul may
despite the thousand shocks
breathe
on such rare days
together

Spring

By James Croal Jackson

everything springs to life
again your last
relationship your new
relationship these are strings
on never-ending
balloons with brains inside
of them and hearts
at the center of the brains
beating thinking
if we fly a little higher
there's no going back

Tapputi

By Aaron Glover

to smell of sedges,
papyrus clean, crisp as sunrise rushes
serene as sky, life dawns

glowing amber embers
for eyes, blaze within the body, honey thick
redolent of melting sunset

skin delicate, a caress
enveloped by gardens unseen, jasmine blooms
intimate as blind, embracing night

she, who bottled the world
she, brushing memories upon flesh
she, the original alchemist
every breath turns to gold

Travelogue I

By WL Winter

First time I stepped out on the road the sky
parted like the Red Sea and as I recall,
the omens were scattered on the
fence posts like a string of fifty hawks,
each one a portent of a future ride

It was easy to hitch-hike in that golden age,
the big fear had yet to spread like a stain
on roads that were yet brand new, our tribe
was still intact, and the air crackled
with the energy of gentler moons

The big clock ground slow and stopped,
no need to track time, and when I got
dropped off at four corners I sat on a rock
and sang the distance while night climbed
up purple into the clouds

When the kid from Kentucky drove me
through the valley of the kings I told him
the stories I made up there as a boy traveling
alone on a Greyhound bus, and he shared
with me the best small batch whiskey
I ever tasted in my life in a fair trade

Once it took me a whole week to get from
San Francisco to LA down Highway One,
good thing I wasn't in a hurry. I met some
old bhikkhu outside of Twentynine Palms,
he was under some vow of silence but he
showed me a great vista with a wave of his arm
and his steel blue eyes were strung with a
thousand street lights that arced over the horizon

Under that dome of exhilaration I navigated
by the path of the high cold winds, whatever
season it was you could always catch the drift
by the ripples in the stars, come sundown Venus
brought comfort, but if Orion was straight up
at midnight that meant the cold would
pinch your dreams in two

Back then maps were made out of flat paper
and sometimes the roads would bleed off the
page into the night. Then I would gather a

mound of pine needles and strike a flame to
stave off the dark wash of nobody givin' a ride

Once a shaman in a station wagon dropped me
off in Gallup where a Navajo brave shared
half his taco without a word for there was no lack
of kindness out there in those days, and I rode the
golden road in Tehachapi one snowy night while
the top of the mountain vibrated in a comely groove

I generally aimed for a certain eucalyptus tree
when I crashed at the Presidio, and the tourists
on the wharf would toss enough coins for soup
when the sun was shining right and my fingers
weren't too cold to scratch out a few tunes
on my trusty old 12-string

I tapped into the sure-enough beat one day on
Stinson Beach when the white foam tiger paw waves
rolled in under the fog, and that night I got led around
by the Great Hand and then I woke up right underneath
the mushroom house I had dreamed about years before.

On that same leg I hit the Zone when I drove past the
Zen camp right south of Muir Beach, and rode the wake
burned into the atmosphere like an electric tube by none
other than Cassidy Himself, lo, those thirteen years before.
You can't tell me there is no magic out there on the road.
I saw it with my own eyes.

I Heard You Died Today Which Has Me Thinking

By Christopher Brooks

How you taught me to tolerate the pain of the church pew, although all those pretty girls in skirts minimized it somewhat. And to love the pain of wooden floors that is until one day my ass fell asleep, paralyzing from the waist down. How two bald, pint-sized nuns dragged my arched limbs to the car in the pouring rain. I was so embarrassed I never went back, choosing instead the decluttering of prolonged walks in the tallgrass.

How your poems and songs will sink in a pine box six feet under cold grass. Many thousands fell in love with the sweet pornography of your whispering breath, learning it's OK to blush at the very best parts of life. I can't stand that there will be no more! So, I'm replacing my prairie walks with one across town to a statue of your beloved Saint Kateri Tekakwitha in the monastery park, where I'll sing "Hallelujah" in the hopes she returns the favor.

How everyone has a favorite story. Mine is the one about Janis Joplin coming to the Chelsea Hotel to meet Kris Kristofferson for the first time. When she ran into you in the elevator and asked if you knew him, you replied *I am he*. Then you both retired to your decrepit room for what I assume was a taste of eternity in heaven.

How you once wrote that you rise on everything that rises. How I do too but fall on everything that falls, which is a problem.

How by some great curse you lived to hear the results of the election.

Forbidden Fruit

By JN Shimko

His hands trembled as he reached out to touch the fabric. They shook as he lifted the item from the pile of clothes on the floor. He wasn't allowed in his mother's bedroom, but since no one was home he granted himself permission. Inside the forbidden chamber, the boy found a massive bed, covered with a heavy quilt adorned with swirly lines of black against a pale blue backdrop. A black leather chair nestled across from the bed, with a lamp jutting up to illuminate the chair. Two closets on opposite ends of the wall displayed a mixed system of arrangement. His father's, long gone, was neatly lined with suits.

His mother's closet was much larger and less monochrome. The walk-in had a lamp still on, the dull light shining on the vanity her mother would use to put on her makeup and fix her hair. The boy would stand in the doorway while she sat at this vanity, fixing a pin in her hair or adjusting her stockings. He stared, transfixed at how she would prepare for a night out or even getting ready for the day. He would watch as she walked around in a slip before letting the dress fall from her shoulders to the calf of her legs.

He nimbled into his mother's closet to find out what lay behind his normal line of sight. Inside, dresses hung throughout while skirts dotted a lower clothing rod and blouses hung above. Shoes were strewn everywhere, representing all colors and types: heeled, flat, casual, dress, red, white, black, pink, blue, and polka dots, more than even the boy could notice.

As he ventured further in, he let his hand brush against the dresses and skirts much like he did when walking by a neighbor's fence, only this time he rubbed his fingers along the silkier dresses. He noticed the slippers hanging at the far end of the closet holding court above a pile of clothes. This is where he picked up the piece of fabric lying on top of the pile.

The garment was pink, pale and soft. It had a bow on one side and covered with a mixture of floral and lace. He could see his thin fingers through the translucent fabric as he held. It took only a moment to realize he was holding her underwear. The bow, he noticed, signified the front of the panties. The leg openings had a bunching, just like the waste line, and they would stretch out when he pulled on the fabric of the silky briefs. He wondered why the fabric was so much softer than anything he had worn.

The boy dropped the garment. Breathing heavily, he grabbed his blue-and-white striped pajama pants and his own briefs and pulled them down in one smooth motion. Standing naked from the waist down, the child picked up the feminine garment occupying his mind. He stepped into the panties, left foot first. Then right. He pulled the underwear – *my mother's underwear, he kept repeating in his head* – up to his waist. As it settled onto his frame, the briefs released a strange feeling through the boy's body. Part of that feeling was guilt that he was doing something he shouldn't. Guilt that he is betraying his male friends. The other part, however, was much different.

While the panties did not fit properly the soft fabric caressed his skin, inviting him into a world he never knew. As he twisted his body in front of the mirror his mouth broke into a queer smile, emotions of guilt and pleasure fighting to win. The pink color against his pale skin enthralled him. He loved how it felt. How he felt.

The fabric hid things on his body, the mirror reflecting a girl more than a boy, evoking a new emotion. Was it excitement? Fear? Both? It didn't matter, he enjoyed the feeling of his mother's undergarment.

Before long, though, the fun ended and a new fear crept in. The fear that his parents might come home early and he'd be caught by his mother or –worse – his father. Quickly, he threw off his panties – *his panties* – and tossed them onto the top of the clothing pile. He

tried to mask his crime and make it look like nothing had been touched. He put his own underwear and pajama pants back on. As the boy turned to leave the closet, however, he noticed the dresses again. This time, though, the thought wasn't on how soft they felt but how it would feel to wear them. He didn't think about how they fell on his mother's body, but instead how they would fall on his own.

He didn't breathe as he snuck out of the closet, out of the room and back into the hallway. His embarrassment over enjoying the adventure mixed with his desire to have more adventures in the future. The guilt built on top of those thoughts as he returned to his own room. Baseballs resting on their stands, proudly displaying the signatures of the big names dominating the game from his father's era. His own little closet had his pants hung up. The dresser held his clothes and his table had a desk lamp.

As he returned to bed and pulled up the blanket decorated with little blue rockets, the boy no longer thought of the excitement but of the guilt. Why did he even think of trying on his mother's underwear? Why did he enjoy it? What was wrong with him? Does this mean he is some freak? Or even gay? He tried to bury those feelings and fears, but it wasn't until he thought about how the fabric felt on his body that the shame died. The sensual fabric of the panties made him turn to the dresses hanging in the closet, the slips behind the pile of clothes, and the stockings he had seen his mother straighten on her own legs. The thoughts of pleasure lulled him into sleep, curious about when he'd return to the newly discovered world.

An hour later, the front door unlocked. The boy's mother tossed the keys onto a small table beside the door. She took her black heels off at the door frame and held onto them as she proceeded to the hallway. They were still in her hands when she checked in on her son. He was lying on his stomach, his arm draped over his back. She smiled at the sight of her boy, safe after a night alone and fast asleep. She left and entered her own room, turning on the light in the closet. She placed her shoes on the rack beside her other heels. The woman reached for the clasp of her dress and fumbled with the zipper for the first few inches. She repositioned and smoothly unzipped the rest of her dress, letting the fabric then fall past her arms and down to the ground. As she bent down to grab the dress and hang it up, she noticed something was off. She noticed the pile of clothes and wondered why her underwear from the day before was on top of the blouse she wore that afternoon. Briefly, the mother hung her dress up, took off her ivory slip, and set it on the clothes as she picked up the pink panties. Upon closer examination, these panties were not only on top of clothes she wore afterwards but also not inside out. She returned them to the pile, unclasped her bra, discarding it next to the underwear and selected her nightgown and negligée. The woman sat at her vanity and began to remove her makeup, not letting the curiosity of the underwear escape her mind.

Makeup off, the mother sat in the leather chair near the bed. She knew who had rifled through her closet, who played with her underwear, who betrayed her trust. Curiosity is natural in boys as they get older. They learn the differences between men and women early and clothing is one of the most obvious differences.

That was probably it, she thought, curiosity. A morning conversation with her son about why it is wrong to go into mommy's closet and touch her things will resolve the matter. The boy will likely deny doing it in the first place, and her stern warning will make sure it never happens again.

The woman left the closet and turned off the light over the leather chair. She draped the negligée over the chair's armrest, pulled the bedspread from under the pillow and settled herself in bed. And, as she shut her eyes to sleep, she hoped she was right and that there was

nothing more to the problem than a young boy who played with his mother's things. But her dreams would tantalize her, as she envisioned the same thing over and over – her son walking into the house wearing a dress with a smile on his face.

Contributors

Tina Baker grew up in Oklahoma and is a retired public school educator in the area of Speech Language Pathology. Family, poetry, piano, gardening, nature, and camping fill her days. Tina and her husband, Dale, live in Ninnekah, Oklahoma. The last two summers she was honored to be included with the Woody Guthrie Poets.

Christopher Brooks lives in Shawnee, Oklahoma with his wife Jennifer, daughter Tansy, dog Georgia and Harley-Davidson Lucinda. He is a 2017 Woody Guthrie Poet. His poetry has appeared in *Flint Hills Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Blue Collar Review*, *The Furious Gazelle* and *SLANT: A Journal of Poetry*. His chapbook *With Them I Move* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. Christopher's poetry and photography also appears on the website *Jaspersatellite.blogspot.com*.

Joey Brown's poetry and prose have appeared in a number of literary journals including *The Mid-America Poetry Review*, *The Louisiana Review*, *The Oklahoma Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *The Florida Review*. A collection of her poems entitled *Oklahomaography* was published by Mongrel Empire Press. She is currently working on a collection of poetry and nonfiction titled *Crosscuts*. She teaches at Missouri Southern State University.

Robert Herman Broyles is a biomedical scientist by day and poet by night. He owes his interest in writing to Thelma Ryan Conley, his senior high school English teacher who introduced him to Chaucer, John Donne, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Will Shakespeare. Robert's poems have appeared in *Dragon Poet Review*, *Blood & Thunder*, *Wicked Banshee Press' 'Death and Rebirth' Issue*, *Absolute*, *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine, and in a poetry anthology titled *A Capella*, edited by Carol Koss and Deborah Shinn, published by the Poetry Group of the First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City. Robert and his alter-ego **Tumbleweed** - a female blue healer dog whose pedigree is part coyote - have been invited to read at Howlers & Yawpers, Scissortail, the Woody Guthrie Festival, the Benedict Street Market in Shawnee, Full Circle Bookstore and The Paramount in OKC, and other venues.

Editor by trade, artist by design, **Lola Gayle Christopher** unapologetically describes herself as a crass, vulgar-mouthed citizen of Planet Earth. Despite her social shortcomings, her poetry and prose provide an avenue through which the reader can visualize and perhaps superimpose their own thoughts and dreams. And sometimes she leaves you hanging at the end of a piece, without an ending as she does in her poem "black coffee." This is designed to force the reader into creating their own ending. As with art, Lola Gayle believes that poetry is subjective. And with the new digital era firmly upon us, sometimes she forces you to be a bit more interactive in your thinking.

Diana L. Conces writes poetry and fiction from her home in Round Rock, Texas. Her work has appeared in numerous anthologies and journals, in a major newspaper, and on a city bus. She has won numerous prizes for her poetry.

Suzanne Cottrell lives in rural, Piedmont North Carolina. An outdoor enthusiast and retired teacher, she now has time to pursue other interests and projects. She has transitioned from a fledgling to a juvenile writer, spreading her wings and riding the thermals. She particularly enjoys writing poetry, flash fiction, and creative non-fiction. Her writing has

been published in *The Weekly Avocet*; *The Fall Avocet*; *The Spring Avocet*; *The Skinny Poetry Journal*, *The Plum Tree Tavern*, *Haiku Journal*, *Three Line Poetry*, *Tanka Journal*, *The Pop Machine* (Inwood Indiana Press) and *Nailpolish Stories*, *A Tiny and Colorful Literary Journal*.

Village Books Press published **Terri Lynn Cummings'** first poetry book, *Tales to the Wind*, in the spring of 2016. Her poetry appears in *Oklahoma Humanities Magazine online*, *Contemporary Rural Social Work*, *Red River Review*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Illya's Honey*, *Songs of Eretz*, *Poetry Review*, *Melancholy Hyperbole*, *Eclectica*, and elsewhere, in addition to anthologies: *Blood and Thunder*, *Absolute*, and soon, *Oklahoma Poets/Malpais Review*. She is a 2015 and 2016 Woody Guthrie Poet, as well as a 2016-17 Mark Allen Everett Poet, hosts *Oklahoma Voices: First Sunday Poetry* readings/open mic in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and presents her work at symposia and workshops. She has studied poetry, fiction, and non-fiction at Creative Writing Institute and holds a B.S. Sociology/Anthropology from Oklahoma State University. Terri continues to explore cultural humanity, while she and her husband travel the world.

Richard Dixon is a retired high-school Special Education teacher and tennis coach living in Oklahoma City. He has had poems and essays published in *Crosstimbers*, *Westview*, *Walt's Corner of the Long Islander*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Cybersoleil*, and *Dragon Poet Review* as well as a number of 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*. He has been a featured reader at Full Circle Bookstore in Oklahoma City, Benedict Street Marketplace in Shawnee, Norman Depot as well as the Scissortail Creative Writing Festival in Ada and the Woody Guthrie poetry readings in Okemah.

Andrew S. Engwall is an English language and literature teacher and poet living on the island of Malta. He says he has two strange but great sons and a lovely wife, and he tries to write poetry as much as he can. He has a BA with departmental honors from Oakland University (in Rochester, MI) and a Summa (MA in English: Modern and Contemporary Theory in Literature) from the University of Malta.

Sterling Farrance is a UC Berkeley English major by day, Diablo Valley College Supplemental Instructor by night, and Concord apartment frantic procrastination damage control specialist by weekend. Once done as a hardworking Cal undergrad, he plans to somehow, someday make it into a grad program somewhere—not too far he hopes—where among other things he'll continue writing about drinking, drugs, and ill-advised decisions, penning these things—of course—so he needn't experience them in real life. While not yet totally comfortable with adulting and all that comes with it, he gets a little better at it every day. He aspires to eventually become an educator, where he hopes to help others navigate their various difficult journeys; and of course, in the summer he hopes to write, and write, and write...

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 at amazon.com. He 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.

Jules Gates is an Associate Professor of English in the Department of English and Modern Languages at Angelo State University, where she is the director of the English Education program, and has worked with colleagues since 2002 on the annual ASU Writers Conference in Honor of Elmer Kelton, conducting the conference interview with Terrance Hayes in 2009, and chairing the conference for two years when Mary Karr (2010) and Art Spiegelman (2011) were the featured writers. Dr. Gates has published poetry in *Amarillo Bay*, *Blue Bonnet Review*, *Carcinogenic Poetry*, *Concho River Review*, *Voices de la Luna*, *Visions with Voices*, *Crack the Spine Literary Magazine*, and *Red River Review*.

Aaron Glover's first chapbook, *Bio Logic*, will be released via INF Press this winter. His works appear in the current or upcoming issues of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and the *Red River Review*; others have previously been presented by *Chicon Street Poets* and *Illya's Honey*. He holds an MFA in acting from the University of Houston, and was on faculty in the Department of Performance Studies at Texas A&M University. Aaron lives in Dallas, Texas.

Ken Hada is a professor at East Central University where he directs the annual Scissortail Creative Writing Festival. In addition to his scholarly writing, and being honored for Teaching Excellence, Dr. Hada has published six books of poetry, including his latest, *Bring an Extry Mule* (VAC: Purple Flag, 2017). His work has been featured four times on the NPR syndicated program, *The Writer's Almanac*, and honored by the Western Heritage Museum, the Western Writers of America and the Oklahoma Center for the Book. More information is available at www.kenhada.org.

Carol Hamilton has recent and upcoming publications in *Cold Mountain Review*, *Common Ground*, *Gingerbread House*, *Main Street Rag*, *Sacred Cow*, *U.S.1 Worksheet*, *Pontiac Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Abbey*, *805*, *Poem*, *Third Wednesday*, *One Trick Pony*, *Plainsongs*, 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 seven times for a Pushcart Prize.

James Croal Jackson's poetry has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Rust + Moth*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, and elsewhere. His first chapbook, *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017) is forthcoming. He is the 2016 William Redding Memorial Poetry Contest winner in his current city of Columbus, Ohio. Visit him at jimjakk.com.

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 published by Writers Workshop Kolkata. He has been published in journals like *Indian Literature*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *The Literary Review*, and *New Mexico Review*.

Peycho Kanev is the author of four poetry collections and two chapbooks, published in USA and Europe. He has won several European awards for his poetry and his poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Front Porch*

Review, Hawaii Review, Barrow Street, Sheepshead Review, Off the Coast, The Adirondack Review, Sierra Nevada Review, The Cleveland Review and many others.

Jennifer Kidney is an adjunct assistant professor for the College of Liberal Studies at the University of Oklahoma and author of six poetry collections; her latest, *Road Work Ahead*, was published by Village Books in 2012. She has won awards for her poetry, technical writing, teaching, and brownie baking. An avid birder, she is secretary of the Cleveland County Audubon Society.

Steve Klepetar lives in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His work has appeared worldwide in such journals as *Boston Literary Magazine, Chiron, Deep Water, Expound, Phenomenal Literature, Red River Review, Snakeskin, Voices Israel, Ygdrasil*, and many others. Several of his poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize (including four in 2016). Recent collections include *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* and *The Li Bo Poems*, both from Flutter Press. Two new collections appeared in January 2017: *A Landscape in Hell* (Flutter Press), and *Family Reunion* (Big Table Publishing).

Johnie Catfish Mahan is the Funky Ranch Street Poet of Edmond, Oklahoma. He has been on the Oklahoma Poetry scene for over 15 years being a feature poet at many of the local poetry readings. The owner and Head Stylist at JC's Funky Hair Ranch in Edmond, he has hosted many poetry readings, art shows, concerts and damn fine times at his Edmond location, 22 East Third Street. A farmer, artist, and business man, JC has raised six kids, and many a chicken, duck, goose, and peafowl. As he says, "If it isn't fun, don't do it."

Yolany Martínez (Honduras) has published three poetry collections: *Fermentado en mi piel / Fermented in My Skin* (2006), *Este sol que respiro / The Sun that I Breath* (2011), and *Espejos de arena/ Mirrors of Sand* (2013). Some of her poems are part of *Garage 69* (2010) and *Poesía molotov* (2011), both anthologies edited by Mónica Gameros in Mexico. In 2002, she won the first place in the Arturo Martínez Galindo short story student contest, organized by the National University of Honduras. She also won the first place at the First Annual Poetry Night organized by Kappa Gamma Epsilon honor society from the Modern Languages Department at the University of Oklahoma. This spring she finished her PhD in Hispanic Literature and Culture at OU.

Vivian Finley Nida has been published in the *Oklahoma Writing Project Centennial Anthology, Oklahoma English Journal, Westview: Journal of Western Oklahoma*, and *Songs of Eretz Poetry Review*. She is a Teacher/Consultant with the Oklahoma Writing Project, affiliated with the University of Oklahoma and holds a B.A. in English and an M.S. in Secondary Education from Oklahoma State University. A retired teacher of English, Creative Writing, and Advanced Composition, Mrs. Nida lives with her husband in Oklahoma City.

Brady Peterson lives near Belton, Texas where for twenty-nine years he worked building homes and teaching rhetoric. His poems have appeared in *Windhover, Nerve Cowboy, Boston Literary Magazine, The Journal of Military Experience, all roads will lead you home, Blue Hole, Red River Review, Ilya's Honey*, and the *San Antonio Express-News*. He is the author of *Glued to the Earth, Between Stations, Dust*, and *From an Upstairs Window*.

Cherie Rankin is a professor of English at Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois. Her poem included here is the product of a Corporeal Writing workshop with Brigid Yuknavitch taken last fall, as well as with ideas raised through her attendance at guest workshops during the summer 2016 residency of the Red Earth MFA program at Oklahoma City University.

Gary Reddin is a writer from southern Oklahoma. His work has appeared in *The Iconoclast*, *The 580 Mixtapes*, *The Gold Mine*, and *The Oklahoma Reivew*. He was the winner of Cameron University's 2016 John G. Morris prize for poetry and the Matt P. Haag award for fiction. He was Cameron University's 2016 nominee in Fiction for the AWP Intro Journals Project and the 2017 nominee for Non-Fiction. He was also the winner of the 2017 Leigh Holmes creative non-fiction award from Cameron University.

John Timothy Robinson is a graduate of the Marshall University Creative Writing program in Huntington, West Virginia. He has published in 30 journals since August 2016. John teaches for Mason County Schools in West Virginia. His most recent work may be found in *Miller's Pond Poetry Magazine*, *Connections Magazine* and *Fine Lines Creative Writing Journal*.

JN Shimko, a writer living in Chicago, could be described as a past accomplished reporter turned political writer, a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, or a native Illinoisan who claims Oklahoma as home. A student at the Red Earth MFA program at Oklahoma City University is preferable, however. An avid Chicago Cubs fan would also work.

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.

Anca Vlasopolos' publications include *The New Bedford Samurai*; *No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement*; *Cartographies of Scale (and Wing)*; *Walking Toward Solstice*; *Penguins in a Warming World*; and *Missing Members*, as well as over two hundred poems and short stories. Vlasopolos has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Award in poetry and fiction. She writes, photographs wildlife, and creates pots on Cape Cod.

WL Winter has studied political science at Sierra College in northern California and creative writing in Tulsa. His poetry skills were honed on the streets of San Francisco and on various roadsides between Oklahoma and California. He is an occasional host and reads regularly at Full Circle Last Sunday Poetry Reading in Oklahoma City.

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.

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