

Dragon Poet



Review

Winter 2014

Cover Art by Rachael Jkins © 2014

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Winter Issue 2014

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Cover Art of Gabrielle the Messenger Dragon Copyright © 2014 by Rachael Z. Ikins

This graphite drawing is a rendering of Gabrielle the Messenger Dragon, one of the main dragon characters from *The Complete Tales from the Edge of the Woods*, by Rachael Z. Ikins. Gabrielle is elderly and myopic, yet comes out of a lonely retirement chosen to do an act of great heroism. Ikins is artist, author and owner of Ask the Girl Arts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rachael Z. Ikins	The Man Who Could Fly; Dragon.....	4
.....	.....Latest Winter Night: Moonrise with Dragons....	5
.....	.....Hurricane.....	6
Sylvester Alley	The Winter Hunt.....	7
Sheri L. Wright	Blush.....	8
8Ron Wallace	August Ending.....	9
.....	.....Old Roads	10
Dorothy Alexander	Lawyering	11
.....	.....Elegy for a Poet	12
Brent Newsom	Mathematics	13
.....	.....At the Clinic.....	14
Ken Hada.....	Young Mother on a Train	15
.....	.....Between Us.....	16
.....	.....Waffle House: Saturday Night.....	17
James Coburn	Framed in Silver.....	18
Jeanetta Calhoun Mish.....	Room for Aunt Pearl.....	19
.....	.....Memory with Ruby Beads.....	20
Hardy Jones.....	Mormon Catholic Altar Boy	21
Clarence Wolfshohl.....	Chicory Blues	22
.....	.....We Are All Scattered Now	23
Robert H. Broyles	Dreamland	24
.....	.....Immortality.....	25
Richard Dixon	Savannah, 1914.....	26
Hank Jones	If You Put the Words Together Just Right.....	27
Sheri L. Wright	Underwood.....	28
Jenna Klein.....	The Declaration of Independence.....	29
Sharon Edge Martin	Apocalypse Farm: Tomatoes.....	30
.....	.....Apocalypse Farm: Spuds.....	31
Carol Hamilton	November Camping on the Plains	32
.....	.....A Mystery	33

Kathryn Trattner	Father and the Sea	34
Julie Chappell.....	B-mail	35
.....	Cicadian Rhythm	36
Madhu Kailas	Poetry for Tomorrow.....	37
.....	Copper Mine.....	38
.....	Blue Earth.....	39
Jim Wilson.....	Puxa Vida.....	40
Sharon Edge Martin	That Old Woman	42
.....	Another Old Woman	42
.....	The Atheist Prayers	43
Megan Goff.....	The Only Escape Is to Die	44
J.C. <i>Johnie Catfish</i> Mahan	I'm Waiting.....	46
.....	Imperfect Explanation.....	47
Lauren Dow	One. Two. Three.....	48
.....	Come Home Sam.....	49
Jennifer E. Hudgens	Sometimes I Miss His Teeth	50
Yasser Yehia El-Sayed.....	Picture Perfect.....	51
Christopher Mulrooney.....	money houses.....	53
Jeff Provine.....	The Piggy Bank	54
Jonathan Humble.....	Beware of Spoons	56
.....	Glad to be a Dalek.....	57
.....	Question from a Supernumerary.....	58
Jenn Long	Devil's Root.....	59
.....	Our Children	60
Richard Dixon	Horizon.....	61
Hank Jones	The Great Jim Spurr Is Dead	62
Robert Milby	First Snow	63
.....	Upon Winter's Return	64
.....	Winter Wight.....	65
Sheri L. Wright	Reflection	66

THE MAN WHO COULD FLY; DRAGON

Rachael Z. Ikins

Lead male dancer,
ballet company, home
to work the family farm.
He wrestles sheep for the shearer.
Hustles belted Galloway cattle onto the trailer.
Butchers turkeys, collects eggs, sells fleeces.
On hands and knees resuscitates a blue-born lamb.

Spring. Lambing.

Twins and triplets bounce pasture hills,
stiff toy legs, color of snow. Nights you hear coy-dogs'
yodel, over peeper stridency. Days, lambs call
“Maaamaaa!”, flock drifts, shifts,
giant school, curly-haired fish, or
flock of birds with ringlet feathers.

He is married, teaches dance,
almost 40 years old.
A decade since he flew. His towhead
toddler staggers, propped laughter
between two Newfoundland shepherds.
Slobber and joy.

You don't realize
a lead male dancer's strength.
Your prejudices might clip his wings.
Years ago he could sail a 90 lb. woman above the sky
again and again, he is that strong.

He wears softened colorless denim today. His truck rumbles red.
Exhaust smokes driveway. He delivers meat, pauses
to catch up on neighborhood news.
Earth has grounded him.

He yawns, scrubs stained sleeve across his face, but
his gold-green eyes gleam. Hidden fire. Joy and...
the magical ability of dragons
to fly.

LATEST WINTER NIGHT: MOONRISE WITH DRAGONS

Rachael Z. Ikins

Invisible fingertips patter
my face, riffle my hair, smooth my cheeks.
My eyes meet the moon's. Geese tattoo
scrawled messages across her face.

No more broken glass splinters
when I breathe in, no more knife
to the throat, all skin bundled away
Safe to bare my hair to the wind.
Some naked white curl of me shriveling
through Winter-night waits.

Invisible fingertips patter
my face. Above me crabapple branches
pour winter-stored wine, budding
tips, new stars flash, captured fire.

Naked white curl of me stretches
lifts wings, my heart, flies over silver with dragons.
Distant thunder of their voices fills my ears.
All of us remember.
We are the message:
suddenly, spring.

HURRICANE

in memory of Arthur Ramer

Rachael Z. Ikins

This summer the earliest hurricane
on record huffs and gathers
breath to blast his way north.
So far, rip tides, high winds, tornadoes
and ruined vacation plans.
They name the storm "Arthur."

A possibly related, anonymous storm,
perhaps a cousin ripped through
CNY yesterday around 3:30 in the afternoon.
State of emergency remains, several
counties, road crews cutting up 100s of trees,
ancient trunks picked up and snapped like toys
left by a nasty child. My friend Arthur's widow lives
in the house that was theirs. He is buried on the hill,
family plot above their garden. He always wished
to have a hurricane named after him.

When wind's voice screams highest, sheeting
rain and cracks of agony as trees die, night sky
opens over her house. To the east and to the west.
Folds back like a winter blanket. Dragon gazes down
on woman in the window with a clear half-moon eye.
No single twig nor shingle damaged in her yard,
she thinks she hears these whispered words,
"Honey, I'm coming home." Arthur.

THE WINTER HUNT

Sylvester Alley

The grey sky hung low. The clouds touched the horizon in all four directions. The Otoe boy sat alone on the hill. He freed his bare hand from the glove and reached down into his pocket pulling out the biscuits wrapped in a white cotton handkerchief. The .410 shotgun rested on a sandstone rock a few inches away. He took one of the biscuits and placed it on his thigh while he wrapped the remaining morsels and carefully wrestled them back into his pocket. The morning had been unfruitful. As he sat on the hill eating his midday snack, he thought about what his elderly grandpa had said a few nights ago. Grandpa had fought in the first World War and now the young boy's daddy was fighting in the second Great War.

"When you're hungry anything tastes good," Grandpa had said.

The little boy hadn't known hunger yet. There was always something to eat at home. The winter time had been the hardest though. He remembered how last winter he ran out of shotgun shells. He had gotten bored and wasted them shooting at horse apples. He spent that winter pulling rabbits out of their holes by sticking a sharp stick into their hide and twisting it. Then he'd have to kill them by hitting them over the head with a bigger stick or a rock. It was a lot of work and messy. He'd learned his lesson.

He finished his meal, put his gloves back on, picked up the shotgun, and started down the hill towards the hay meadow. He saw the white farmer that his dad had worked for every summer until the war started driving his pickup truck down the long drive to his hay barn. He remembered what that farmer had told him and his daddy before he went off to fight.

"Sometimes people have a hard time. Sometimes the country has a hard time."

Then the farmer looked right at the boy and started to speak as he held back his tears.

"Should you ever get to that stage, come see me. You know where I live."

Things hadn't gotten that bad yet. The hay meadow was still there and there was always game to be found. Even if the boy went home empty handed today, tomorrow still had possibilities. Tomorrow still held hope.

BLUSH

Sheri L. Wright



8x8 photograph / subject was found during the joy of spring

AUGUST ENDING

Ron Wallace

The last days of August hum
a September song
 through the leaves
 an elegy
whispered on wings above the grass
 still green,
above the last cicadas
 still singing,
but with the dying light of summer,
I feel the earth
begin its slow turn
 beneath my feet
 toward winter.
The days, still, are catching fire;
the cold is distant yet
 but I sense
the shortness of days moving toward me
with each setting sun
falling on the quiet feathers
 of a great horned owl
that flies through my November nights.

OLD ROADS

Ron Wallace

This time of year
 the ghosts of November
slip through shadows that steal the trees.
Here the first fog of my breath
 hangs on the night air,
and I wear my scars like memories
beneath the faded folds of a cotton shirt.

This time of year
 the sun sets early,
 the night cools quickly
and the inside light calls me
to leave the ice white stars hanging
on the night.

This time of year I play old songs
that I never want to end
 take well-worn books
from oaken shelves,
thumb through titles I know by heart,
seeking resurrection
 until Jeffers' voice lifts up
from off the page,
shreds the darkness into ink stained lines
 with talons,
sharp as broken glass.

And this time of year
I begin to travel down old roads
 that twist and bend
looking for answers
lost in the stillness of a new black moon
 where silence sings a song
that only I can hear.

LAWYERING

Dorothy Alexander

I began practicing law in rural Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle over forty years ago, the first woman lawyer to enter some of the old courthouses scattered along the edge of the Great Plains. I was elated to be where I was, to set foot into this world of men where “important business” was being conducted and dramatic events were happening. Everyone did not share my elation. One judge shook his shaggy white arrogant head when I came before him, and then deliberately mispronounced my name. When I won my first jury trial in his courtroom, he said loudly enough for all present to hear, including the jury, “Well, I guess even an old blind sow finds an acorn now and then.” I smiled sweetly, nodded ever so slightly toward him . . . as if he had uttered a compliment, instead of trying to humiliate me. I would not let his cruel words dampen the pleasure of my victory. Almost every interaction I had with the old bastard for almost thirty years carried the same tone. Thorny, annoying, unnecessarily rude. I retired from practicing law a few years ago and I now have a lot of fun trying to become a poet. Sometimes I miss the lawyering, but not often. I certainly don’t miss the misogyny.

Yesterday, I was reminded of all that when I walked into a cafe in the town where the old judge lives since his own retirement, and heard someone call my name. I turned and saw a withered, crippled old man hobbling along on a walker, helped by three other old men. Had he not called out in his familiar voice, I would not have recognized the wrecked person who stood before me. He looked more like a cadaver than the arrogant judge of former days. As I approached him, he said, “Well, what are you doing these days?” He even pronounced my name correctly. Our long history flashed like lightning through my mind and I thought of the perfect reply. But, I caught myself and consciously refrained from saying, “Oh, just scooping up acorns, Your Honor, just scooping up bushels and bushels of acorns.”

ELEGY FOR A POET
for Jim Chastain, 1963-2009

Dorothy Alexander

Like Auden, *he disappeared in the dead of winter*. How fitting that the day of his death was dark and cold, snow deep upon the ground. At dawn, too.

Now, we rise again, in his absence, to read poetry aloud. What are we to make of such absence? Are words equal to the truth of his silence?

He balanced his life, balanced his death. Now that he lies deep and far away should we say that the center is no nearer to holding than it was when he left?

There is no meaning but what we make of it, no other world but this one. He'd be the first to say it's true. How are we to grieve for you, Jim

when you took so much grief with you? What can we say to mourn you or to praise you, but to read poems to those who would listen? Words are wonderful, but truth is silent.

It does not require words. They can only satisfy the need for pleasure. Fascinated by the beauty and splendor of words, the living need to write their existence.

The impulse to make poetry is always directed toward being. By means of language we come nearer to living. Metaphor and simile owe everything to chance.

MATHEMATICS

Brent Newsom

Between white sheets we solve for x.
We add, subtract, again and again,
our figures cleaving and being cleft.
The body's mystery arithmetic:
one plus one is one.

But tonight our parts add up to more than their sum,
the calculus now yields a new derivative.
No formula for this, no theorem. Unsolvable equation:
some hidden, unknown term, some independent variable, remains.
1 cell begins its long division—2, then 4, then 8—our multiplication.

AT THE CLINIC

five weeks

Brent Newsom

Peanut-shaped, in the nurse's words.
I picture the appetizers
that come before the appetizers
at my hometown's only steakhouse,
how we flick the brittle husks
to the hardwood planks beneath our feet,
pop the nuts in our mouths
between lemony sips of tea.

Leaving the sterile exam room's glare,
we munch on the bite-sized facts
fed us with practiced zest
by a heavysset nurse with tattooed wrists:
already you have a spinal cord,
arms and legs beginning to bud,
a heart that started gently pulsing
ten days back. Already you are male
or female.

For weeks to come, stories
of stillbirth or miscarriage—futile
distinction we'll learn nonetheless—
will flock in on the wind, an unkindness
of black-winged birds drawn to feed
on every seed of hope or dream
that drops to the ground. Hard-eyed
and hook-beaked, they'll perch heavily
on a line, settle in while we pretend
not to hear their ravenous caws.

Acorns crunch underfoot in the parking lot.
The first crisp break from arid heat, a charge
in the early autumn air. I voice a pledge
to always love, protect, allow no hungry claw
to harm you. Listen. Are the two
proto-lobes of your brain
celled enough for you to hear
my shaky tenor, muffled
by the wall of your mother's body?
Inch-long offspring—peanut-shaped thing—
do you catch the crack in my voice?
Promises no man could keep,
no god would deign to make.

YOUNG MOTHER ON A TRAIN

Ken Hada

Lemon-green top, black stretch
pants tight around her waist
and legs, stars tattooed on her flesh
bare feet sandaled in braided tan

finally she is allowed to fall asleep
though one ear listens for any missteps
of her two restless boys riding
in the seat in front of her. For now

her arms are folded on her lap
stylish sunglasses hang at her bra-line
a denim jacket draped around her
holds her like she had always dreamed.

BETWEEN US

Ken Hada

Looking up
I wonder about you –
I wonder about you and me.

The stars seem so close together
as if we could just skip
from one brightness to the next

and never worry about falling
into that dark eternity
between us.

WAFFLE HOUSE: SATURDAY NIGHT

Ken Hada

These are the people that god forgot
so they make their way in the world
together behind a counter
taking orders and bussing tables.

The cliental is just as rugged
but they smile bravely like they
remember something the rest of us
have forgotten –

 a truck driver
wearing a sleeveless white tee shirt
and stained hat sips his coffee
in the corner booth by the window.

A nappy-headed toddler bounces
on his daddy's lap while sister
fills out her first job application.

Everybody in this place is tired.
They have had a long hot day
on their black-souled feet in a blue smock,
but a smile remains and basic
respect, gratitude for honest work.

We make quite a congregation
gathered here without pretense
where skin color and fashion fade
in short order – at face value.

FRAMED IN SILVER

James Coburn

The bag lady pushed her grocery cart
down a hot Coney Island boardwalk,
her body imprinted on the dull side
of Kodak tri-x 400 film, the way
silver reflects in sunlight.

A low-cut cotton dress bleached by sun,
impaled by a large bobby-pin
the size of my palm. Gray hair straight
down her bare neck and striped waste
with pastel zebra lines moving
up and down a body full
of wishes to deliver.

“Can I photograph you for my
collection of character studies?”

“Sure,” she said, her voice rising
in pitch like a New York taxi cab.

“I’ll do anything you want me to do.
Anything.”

Her shiny plastic shoes pressed
heels against maroon bricks
under a glass window.

Fingers spread from her palms,
pressing against glass storefront
advertisement of tobacco.

A white band above her hair line
crowned her leathery eyes with
deep burrows, their edges reflecting
sunlight.

She could have tapped those heels
three times to return home,

“What is that pin on your dress?”

“Oh, it’s for those boys when they
swish by my cart, reaching for
whatever they can.”

Her heels clicked the boardwalk
toward a star-studded home
beneath it.

Faces of the moon mingled with
cave monsters on rides carrying
no one. Empty seats swirled
in heat.

ROOM FOR AUNT PEARL

Jeanetta Calhoun Mish

I thought about the organ booming in the chapel and of the shut doors of the library; and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in.

—Virginia Woolf
A Room of One's Own

the sun, moon and morning star in cobalt glass, poems spilling out of shelves onto the window sill, the desk, the floor, 5 marble eggs and Groucho Marx . . .

Above my desk
my great-Aunt Pearl's painting
of wisteria branches in periwinkle
bloom, rising from a brass pot

*crystal teardrops, small smooth stones,
exquisitely thin envelopes—palest blue,
amber sealing wax, postcards from Germany and Italy and Spain . . .*

My Aunt Pearl who was
like me, certified and medicated,
intriguing dangerous opal fire

an untamable woman
an unnameable desire

*overflowing rolodex, mementos of old lovers, playbills,
concert stubs—Bob Dylan and Brahms, KebMo on CD . . .*

Having spent her friends and family
Aunt Pearl died alone, drunk and drugged
and demented, destitute there—
in a claustrophobic shack-trailer, west Odessa
flies buzzing against the screen, bumping
for a turn at the five-day-old corpse . . .

a filigree pearl centered cross, a medicine wheel necklace, earrings for Dio de los Muertes, tarot cards, incense, and candles thick . . .

come home, Aunt Pearl,
bring your aspect here to my room
of mystery and magic, splintered
by the tiniest mote of gold

an open hand, your genes expressed and embraced, a vision to match your own.

MEMORY WITH RUBY BEADS

Jeanetta Calhoun Mish

A toddler in a pink dress peers
through a long strand of ruby
beads at her father, fractured
and red, soon to be gone forever

and hears her mother, laughing.

An old woman with gray hair
and support hose offers sweating
tumblers of iced tea in the
shrinking late afternoon light.

Sunbeams whirl like dervishes
spun by the child's hand—
spreading shadows hide secrets
in the middle of the room.

MORMON CATHOLIC ALTAR BOY

Hardy Jones

I believe I was the only Mormon Catholic altar boy in Florida. Perhaps the only one in the world, but I do not want to seem too conceited about a condition that I had no control in creating.

Becoming Mormon: Dad's idea. And we weren't Mormon until my third year (eighth grade) of school at Saint Theresa's Little Flower of Christ. The first two years technically I was Baptist—that was the denomination Dad and Mom had been raised in—but we didn't go to church, so in all practicality I didn't have a religion for the first two years of Catholic School.

Altar boy: Sister Renée, our diminutive principal, made me become one half-way through my seventh grade year. Thus, for a time, I was a non-denominational Catholic altar boy (Wonder if I was the first? Again, can't take credit; it was Dad's rejection of the Baptist Church). I was called to Sister Renée's office where she told me, "You will carry the cross."

"But, Sister Renée, I'm not Catholic."

"I know. But you are the tallest student, and I want the cross to be in a position of prominence."

"I don't know what an altar boy does."

"The other boys will show you. Now return to class."

The absurdity: chosen for my height. Perhaps if I had one ancestor who was a little shorter, I would not have had genes that made me so tall, and I would not have been chosen to take part in this sacrament. More irony: Grandmother Jones, she of the Southern Baptist orphanage, devoutly hard-shell ways, and anti-Papist views was a six-foot redhead, while irreligious Grandfather Jones was closer to five-seven; for chuckles, I like to think that it was my Baptist Grandmother's height that allowed me to be the only Mormon Catholic altar boy.

CHICORY BLUES

Clarence Wolfshohl

The chicory sings the blues
along the roadway, but it's no
low-down blues, no head-sunk,
tear-dropping blues. It's pick-me-up
blues like a morning cup of joe,
a tonic for what ails you,
a hard-thumping boogie
infusion of your feet, a soul-
piercing, cosmos-joining
dance of the blue flower.

The chicory sings today
a midsummer day's song
of imagination ripe,
upper and lower worlds
mingled, lovers drugged
on kisses, on petal dewdrops
in the eyes, on flowers
that drain the sky's blue
into their veins and seep
it out along the roadway
from azure petals.

WE ALL ARE SCATTERED NOW

for Edna

Clarence Wolfshohl

We all are scattered now; some are underground
and some given to the wind, others placed
in institutions or the Midwest. The most
of us, what we seem, make faint footprints
the scouts read on the soil. Thus we are tracked.
The rest of us, what we leave to float like spore,
eludes the sight of the keen-eyed shadow.

We all are scattered now. Like in twilight games
of hide-and-peek in the sweet hills of the Ozarks,
our voice echoes syllables we cannot recall
singing, small clue for It to find us. That rest
of us hangs in the mist rising, hammered thin
as invisibility. From here even with our gaze
below we may see it, the keen-eyed shadow.

We all are scattered now. Each night that one
of us is caught, traced by our faint tracks
while our eyes were thrilled by mist, we play
the old music. The notes around us rush
like the scent of honey locust, the incense
of hashish in a nomad's tent, the coolness
of evening's first shadow in July.

The most of us cannot escape, our dust
surely being gathered by the keen-eyed
shadow; but the rest of us feeds the whirlwinds.
We all are scattered now.

DREAMLAND

Robert H. Broyles

...was the name of a place
where we used to go
when I was a six years old
a huge swimming pool
near Huntington, W.Va.
remembered only from old photographs
which, like the pool, no longer exist

What evidence have I
that I or the pool existed then?
Lost photos with a date on the back?
... maybe they were of a different
time-space continuum that
trans-migrated, a cosmic accident...
Everybody in those photos is dead, but me

I think of all the scars
imperfect repairs on my body
each associated with a different
time and place, a life episode
the oldest a small piece of cinder
beneath the skin of my left knee
from falling off a bicycle onto asphalt

when I was 6 (or was it 7?), on that street
by the river in South Charleston, W.Va.
during the Dreamland period ...
evidence that this body existed then
that I had a childhood, and maybe,
that there was a place called ...
Dreamland

IMMORTALITY

Robert H. Broyles

"I am a part of all that I have met"

Tennyson

"And they... a part of me"

Thelma Ryan Conley

Staring out the window
at planes on the tarmac
from the Bloody Mary Bar
at Lindbergh Field
he contemplated his mortality

Not depressed or ill
it was just something
that he felt like thinking about
fed up to his gonads
with talk of stem cells

Yes, he had "heard the sound
of distant thunder at a picnic"
as Auden put it, speaking of
one's realization of mortality
while still among the living

Hearing the Spanish exchanged
among three Hispanic bar maids
as he ordered a Sam Adams Boston lager
he smiled at a memory of a Latino waitress in Santa Fe
who said they had Adam Smith or "one of those other white guys"
on draft

He wondered what their lives were like
these three Hispanic women, working hard
trying to please a demanding crowd
before going home to who-knows-what
not young or pretty, yet smiling and joking

Thinking about his own life, its limitations
he knew that he would accept their lot
be one of them, if that was all there was
other than death, other than non-being
he would be her, just to have the chance ...

to live ... have a chance, another chance ...
to love

SAVANNAH, 1914

Richard Dixon

All the young men off to war; we saw them away
with a big shivaree down at the waterfront,
now mostly seedy, bars and warehouses

Even though I grew up here, I still revel
in the park squares every other block,
the pines, overhanging live-oaks,
moss dripping from trees,
the mansions, stately grace

Kraft mills going strong, the heat in summer
something to behold, sweat-soaked before ten
in the morning, humid enough
to choke a horse, and that's on the good days

All gentry and deep South charm, the ladies
with their teas, afternoon card games,
mint-juleps before heading home
on brick-paved streets to ambitious
but indifferent husbands

When Sherman came through we traveled
thirty miles out to see him, said
"Sir, you are welcome in our humble town
Our doors are open, we will provide whatever
you need, we only ask spare us fire and destruction"
And he did
We knew what we had then; we know it now

IF YOU PUT THE WORDS TOGETHER JUST RIGHT

Hank Jones

Because if you put the words together just right, I'll weep,
Tears coming down my face in uncontrollable steams,
Or laugh harder than I've ever laughed before,
With a different kind of tears running down my face.

If you put the words together right, you can make someone believe in God,
Or you can make them turn on God forever,
Or make a convincing case that whether there is or isn't a god,
It hardly matters.

If you can put the words together right
All worlds are possible,
Those real, those fantasy,
Those before time and those after time's been moved beyond.

If you can put the words together right
Magic becomes real in the only place magic has ever existed:
In the imagination and the words necessary to make thought live,
Breathe, take on flesh and blood,

If you put the words together right
Then you understand why the Word was first,
And how the Word became flesh and lived amongst us.

Nothing to do with divinity or miracles,
Everything to do with the power of words,
Put in the right place,
And then all things become possible,
Even resurrection,
Even life after death.

UNDERWOOD

Sheri L. Wright



8x8 photograph / subject was found in the underbelly of an antique mall

A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Jenna Klein

Kallen answered his cousin's call. "Package secure," Bree said, her quick breaths mirroring his pulse. It was code for The box is in the railway car.

Grandpa's e-tablet tales of a long-lost way of life started it all, whispering secret ideas to the cousins until a plan formed. "People shared crispy fried chicken and juicy watermelon at gatherings called picnics," he'd said, eyes glossy with memory. "Children hopped in burlap sacks or dipped their toes in ice-cold rivers. It was a time for fireflies in fists and wishes on stars." Instead of fabled fireworks, parades, and patriotic music, modern Independence Day consisted of a silent laser show concluding with a presidential stunt.

Craving interactions unhindered by screens, Bree encouraged Kallen to devise a website that no adult would suspect: a lost gadgets page. Reaching 300,000 views the first day, it contained a phone number which, when texted, confirmed the user's age through eye scan and provided approved persons with details. All tweens would collect artifacts from old relatives to experience a time forgotten—one of complete independence from technology. The overwhelmingly positive feedback gave Kallen the one thing that put his mind at ease: public affirmation for his vision. The question of how this independence would occur, though, remained unanswered.

The recent completion of the worldwide electric power grid in Colorado Springs was the final puzzle piece. Kallen knew his plan was possible because adults lacked foresight.

Now it was time. Sucking in a breath, Kallen cracked his knuckles, emulating his dad before a virtual trial. "See you on the other side, Bree." From his perch in the Garden of the Gods, he looked toward Colorado Springs. House lights speckled the night as humid air amplified the noise of machines. He grabbed the silver remote, pressing 32-24-15. Fingers tingling, he hit Enter. He concentrated on cricket chirps, holding his breath until mechanized society fell silent. The sky cleared as lights blinked out.

In town, Bree witnessed cheering kids pouring into yards, two fingers to the sky in a show of peace. The moon lit their faces and she knew the celebration of unity was happening in each hemisphere, courtesy of electromagnetic pulse magic.

This was their chance. They'd play board games, discuss their day over a family meal, share sentences with strangers while looking into their actual eyes.

They'd prove they were still human.

APOCALYPSE FARM: TOMATOES

Sharon Edge Martin

The creek behind my house dried up this past year, the first time I ever saw it dry to the bed. But on a cold January Monday it rained. An inch and a half of moisture didn't fill my creek, but it was a blessing, as was the friend who came to my house.

"Spring rains are here!" Debra said, wiping her feet on the towel just inside the front door. "Time to plant turnips and beets."

It may be January, but she is right. This isn't the old Northern Oklahoma, USDA Zone 6b. We are living in new ecological times.

Last year, I planted tomatoes early. March came in like a lion but the day I drove into town turned warm. On a whim, I told the girl at the farm supply store to add two tomato plants to my ticket. I knew just where I'd plant them, at the end of the two rows I had set aside for the tomato seedlings growing in my office window.

Well, the two plants I paid for turned out to be six, two three-plant packs. I made room for them in the rows, grouching about the lack of space. I shouldn't have groused.

"Don't plant your tomatoes until after the middle of April," I was always told. Good advice...until now. In 2012, there was no Easter snap.

Those early farm-store tomatoes I planted, a variety called Rutgers, were the only ones that fruited in enough quantity to be called a crop. Starting in late June, there was a long stretch of triple-digit days. Before they could turn to fruit, tomato blossoms would dry up and fall off. I kept plants alive by watering and shading, and the seedlings I set out in April bloomed and fruited in the fall. I brought in a handful of green tomatoes just before an early frost in October, another new wrinkle in the weather patterns. Tomatoes ripened on the window sill and we ate them for Thanksgiving.

Things have changed. Gardeners in Oklahoma will have to change with the climate. That means me. This year will be an experimental year. I have the Oklahoma Farm Coop on which to rely, so I won't starve.

My bones tell me that spring will come early, that it is already here. The flexible folks are the ones who survive. If the rains return, maybe we'll even thrive.

APOCALYPSE FARM: SPUDS

Sharon Edge Martin

Grandma always planted potatoes on St. Patrick's Day and harvested them on July 4th. The last couple of years I planted my spuds the first week in March. In 2012, even that wasn't early enough.

I built a brand new bed, my third in three years, for rotation. Seed potatoes sprouted on the kitchen cabinet—Pontiac Reds, my favorite early steamer, and Prairie Blush, a yellow-fleshed beauty from Wood Prairie Farm. I picked up a few new varieties, too, because diversity is good for the garden.

Once the potatoes were in their new raised rows, the season turned too warm too soon, the warmest March on record. And it didn't rain. Despite (or because of) soaker hoses, potato plants were dead by June without bothering to bloom. They gave up their scant and stunted offering that didn't even last through the calendar spring.

Time to get creative. I thought through the summer then ordered two-and-a-half pounds of King Harry seed potatoes from Wood Prairie as the warm season wound down. I planted a fall patch of spuds where I'd grown peas and carrots in the spring. (Note: peas didn't make but the carrots were wonderful.)

There was an early frost, so I had to pick the King Harrys too soon. They were awfully small, but I got a full basket.

King Harry is a round white Irish potato produced by Cornell University. It isn't genetically modified; they were produced the old fashioned way, by selective breeding. Their hairy vines resist Colorado Potato Beetles, Potato Leafhoppers, and Flea Beetles. They have a place in my garden.

Maybe we can we grow potatoes through the winter in a hoop house during these new ecological times. Hoop houses are those plastic-covered Quonset-shaped gardens you see popping up from here to Maine. Elliot Coleman uses them to grow his winter vegetables in the far north. Why not here? They are already being used to get an early start on the growing season and to grow greens through the winter. Why not potatoes?

Northern Oklahoma no longer has a long growing season. Instead, it has three or four short seasons, all unpredictable except for the blistering summer stint. It's January and I've already ordered my King Harry and Prairie Blush seed stock. And I'm looking at the leftover unknowns from the fall farmers' market resolutely sprouting in a basket in my kitchen. It feels like spring, despite the calendar. Time to plant.

We can look for new varieties, new methods, and new planting dates. Experiment enough and we will have abundant new potatoes again. New potatoes! That's luxury.

NOVEMBER CAMPING ON THE PLAINS

Carol Hamilton

It was a state park,
brand new bath house, forlorn
but bright white,
and across the manmade lake,
if you want to call it a lake,
wind swept down from Nebraska.

Somebody was fishing,
but otherwise, our little tent
looked lonely. We did not
feel it, though, two girls and I.

We cooked on the camp stove
with a thumbs up for the camera,
had our bonfire.

Dawn awoke the desperate desolation
of that land even in days before the lake.

We climbed up and out of sleep
into the world's first chill
and an unpeopled dawn.

A MYSTERY

Carol Hamilton

*"In due time the stars themselves must fall."
Strindberg*

Once a pride each day in a bit taller,
mostly imperceptible
until skirts were suddenly too short;
now wonder in a bit smaller
each day, mostly imperceptible
until skirts drag around ankles.

That I, too, am held firm
in the grip of time and gravity
is a comfort, really, forces
none of our frantic efforts can stop.
It is just poetry, of course:
stars expand, collapse, explode.

Fragments fly through space
and so do I, pulled by the same force,
all in ebb and flow. So much
unknown of black matter
and dimensions. But dreaming
dreams is enough to make a poem.

This is another physics,
another mathematics,
another breath expanded
amidst the rhythm
of some great breathing, in and out,
in and out, or so I think.

FATHER AND THE SEA

Kathryn Trattner

My father stared at the sea – away from us, hands in pockets and facing the ocean, listening to a whispering voice. He'd wander a few steps farther and pause, catching more than a murmur – hearing a song, a call, an urging to pay attention.

All my life the sea has called my father, taken him away and held on until dry land and family became memory, a distant wail.

We were locked, feet stuck in red clay, heavy footed. With states on all sides, the wide open plains a rolling ocean of grass mimicking the true thing. Those green gray plains overhung by a pale blue sky skipping far ahead could almost trick you into believing it was the sea. No. This land locked ocean is not second best or even fifth. Not when the deep blue fathomless beckons you, smelling of seaweed and salt, washing your hair back. A pull of nature, of responsibility, the call weighs on a man who ventures forth to support a wife, two small children. Out of duty, yes, but there is relief there. Release. And the embrace of total surrender.

“If I had never gotten married, never had a family, I would never have left the sea.”

B-MAIL

Julie Chappell

The word is out:

The sage is good at our house.

Every day we add a bumblebee.

Up to four now...

Shaking and coaxing the pollen out of every purple petal.

Like tiny black and orange hovercraft
they float and glide from branch to branch
promising eternity.

CICADIAN RHYTHM

Julie Chappell

The trill of one cicada rises
and falls, waits for that seeming echo
from the next branch or even the next tree
to rise and fall, to wait.

But as I wander between the trees
I disrupt the rhythm, stifle the echo
yet the caller tries again, patient,
knowing.

I understand now; it's not *circadian* rhythms
that drive all organisms into light and darkness and back again
but cicadian rhythms
the call and response of communion
of perpetuation of the species
of sex for life or for the moment.

I stand between the trees, quiet now
marveling at the patience,
at the persistence of the caller
hoping in tune with him
to hear an echo rise and fall again.

POETRY FOR TOMORROW

Madhu Kailas

Yesterday is reduced to a midget box
in the calendar (on the wall).

Tastes like ashtray and
hemmed by sand salt lines of dried summer sweat.

Yesterday now belongs to the dead or
the dead parts of the living; but look:

How greedily tomorrow feeds off it,
because tomorrow is growing.

Growing through the night, and
there is still time to choose to feed it right.

The most beautiful pair of eyes belong to –
Daybreak.

Wide, warm, and tender. They never lie.

Tomorrow I want to look into those eyes
and find new poetry.

Free from ashes and midget boxes.

COPPER MINE

Madhu Kailas

Hollowed earth –
a large reservoir of emptiness.
Deep down where only
the moon can touch
dregs of an empty cup,
static turquoise fluid
of residual copper blood.

Cyclopean machines
crawl like dwarf ants
along grooves etched by mortal hands.
Gnaw at rocks
startled out of deep sleep
to be stripped.

An ancient cave painting
tumbles out of extinction
delineated by squished insect blood
on ochre flats.

Dead insects scabble out of rocks
on the landscape of our civilization.

BLUE EARTH

Madhu Kailas

Blue ambient earth converges
at the tip of blue ribbons.

A square glass frame cradles
live mountains and firm pine cones
behind us.

Inside Log Haven, I see
blue worlds reside in your eyes.
Outside, Millcreek Canyon climbs the sky.

Of pigtails and careless rhythm –
I am wordless.

Craning nape extends into snow-lines.
With blue ribbons I gently pack
shards of poetry.

PUXA VIDA

Jim Wilson

On the campus of Iowa State University in late March, 1980, I mostly stare at my desktop during Latin American History class.

Professor Wayne Osborn senses my apathy. When I begin to shuffle away at the end of his lecture, he asks, “Jim. Are you *okay*?”

Normally I would light up at his expression of interest, but I still feel raw.

“I’m...I’ll see you Thursday,” I manage, as dissimulation turns to a stammer. I lower my head and exit quickly, hurrying across campus to my Portuguese class.

I lack conviction in Portuguese too, but Professor Joanna Courteau holds forth with signature passion, which puts us on a collision course. Just five minutes into class she stands directly in front of me, bends over and looks me in the eye, “*Jaiminho! Por que é você comprimido hoje?*”

“Why *am* I ‘depressed’ today?” I think to myself. I briefly wonder why a word that sounds like “compromised” means “depressed” in Portuguese. Then I realize that it actually captures my vulnerability at the betrayal that I feel.

Professor Courteau continues to stare at me, so I break with class etiquette and reply in English, “Professor Joanna, I got my letter of appointment from the Foreign Mission Board yesterday. They want to send me to Lebanon, *not Brasil...*” I stop as my voice chokes.

Professor Courteau and my classmates wince at the news, and I feel shame again like yesterday afternoon when I first read the Foreign Mission Board’s letter of appointment to the Near East Baptist Mission in Beirut, Lebanon.

There are several seconds of silence after my hurried, but unfinished explanation. Professor Courteau does not support my desire for Evangelical missions, and, as best I can tell, neither do my classmates. Yet over the course of our year together, they’ve all come support my desire to go to *Brasil*. Like the expansiveness of Portuguese itself, they’ve just assumed that such a large, dynamic country would be good for me too.

“*Puxa vida, Jaiminho,*” Professor Courteau finally says, giving voice to everyone’s surprise. “You won’t be speaking much Portuguese in Lebanon. Are you sure the letter didn’t say *Lisbon?*”

As idiomatic as any phrase I know, “*Puxa vida*” translates, “It pulls life.” Everything about the expression surprises me, whether the sibilant pronunciation of “*poosha*” or the sense of astonishment it conveys. It works like the English expressions “wow,” “my God,” or “I can’t believe it;” but it’s also metaphorically untranslatable like “far out,” or “ain’t that a kick.” And it fits now as fate casts me far from *Brasil* like a fly at the end of an angler’s long, bending line.

“I’ll write back and ask the Foreign Mission Board to reconsider,” I say, wanting all to know that I could challenge it. “But right now I don’t even know *why* they assigned me to Lebanon,” I finish, my tone returning to despair.

“And what about other countries in South America?” asks Kim, a Spanish major who hopes to do diplomatic work in Latin America. Kim and the others know that all my alternate-country requests are for South America, not the Middle East.

“Well *Jaime*, there *is* a big Lebanese Diaspora in *Brasil*,” Arne chimes in. “Maybe if you go to Lebanon, you’ll find someone who hires you to work in *Brasil*.”

Arne and I are the only class members who aren’t Spanish Majors. A mechanical engineering major and a son of Iowa’s Norwegian Diaspora, Arne is pragmatic. He always calls me “*Jaime*,” the standard form of “Jim” in Portuguese; while Professor Courteau and the others

use the more playful “*Jaiminho*,” or “Little Jim.” Were I the architect of our Portuguese class Arne is the kind of stone I would too easily reject. But he is our linguistic wunderkind—even better than the foreign language majors, who frequently default to Spanish grammar. Day after day Arne comes with vocabulary memorized and grammar mastered. Occasionally Professor Courteau doctors his flat Midwestern pronunciation, but he otherwise owns the lessons as if solving mechanical design problems. Arne’s pragmatism gives us all pause, and no one—not even our Lady Joanna—says anything for the moment.

My stare returns to my motionless feet, though, with my running shoes pointed at cross-purposes.

“I really don’t know *what* to do,” I say, shaking my head.

“*Eu não sei ao certo*,” Professor Courteau begins, trying to put us at ease by sharing in my doubts, and Arne, Kim and the others begin to nod their heads. “You try to do what you can,” she continues, switching back to English. “But it will only work, *Jaiminho*, where people want you to come in the first place.”

And not for the first time while learning from her, Professor Courteau sounds like an oracle to me.

THAT OLD WOMAN

Sharon Edge Martin

Yesterday's clothes
Uncombed hair
Well-traveled shoes

Not crazy, senile,

just afraid
of running out of time.

ANOTHER OLD WOMAN

Sharon Edge Martin

In the Sears parking lot
short scowly woman walks
purposefully
at an angle,
the longest route
across the road,
daring drivers
to bring it on.

She has the right of way
and she's going to take it,
payback for all those years
of short and ugly.

THE ATHEIST PRAYERS

Sharon Edge Martin

Don't fault me
because I pray, and
Don't fault me
if I don't know to whom
or to what I pray.

It's enough for me
to believe in the science
of prayer, to know
that the brain changes as true believers
send their prayers adrift.

I believe
in the power of will
and in my human need
for something bigger.

THE ONLY ESCAPE IS TO DIE

Megan Goff

I sat on the curb, fists under my chin, hands on my knees, waiting patiently for Aunt Lena. It had been nearly two hours since school let out and she was supposed to be here to pick me up. Two ladies had already been by to offer me a sandwich and give me the address of the homeless shelter. Although I was kind of getting tired of waiting, I had to admit I was glad Aunt Lena hadn't shown up on time. I really didn't want her lime green El Camino, front window shrouded in smoke, to jump the curb and maim one of my classmates. Or worse her get out and come looking for me, her extra-large, ratty fur coat slapping against her calves – no telling what she'd be wearing underneath, if anything at all. My Aunt Lena was the type of woman life pissed on and pissed off. She lived in a constant haze of drama and grass. Drama because her life was rough and grass to smooth the edges. In her life, Aunt Lena had gotten a couple DUIs, lost her license, and even taken a trip “up river” for showing up at her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend's apartment wearing nothing but her fur coat and setting fire to their welcome mat.

By the age of 40, my Aunt Lena had been married three times. The first time to some shit-for-brains loser who liked to get drunk and pick fights, but didn't like it when she started smacking him around. He threw her out on her ass, and she slept on our couch for three months until she disappeared one night to go on an extended walk-about around Mexico's cartel country to “find herself.” She came back from Mexico with a new ring and a husband with a face tattoo. His only name was Muerto and his only job was smuggling illegal drugs into the Lone Star state in his beer gut. When one of his baggies burst, he dropped dead on a patch of sand south of the border. She buried him in a box under the ground of a town named for some saint. She didn't know his family or his real name, so the rock above his head reads Muerto. The third guy was her parole officer and not to get too cliché or nothing, but he was too good for her. He thought he could change her, fix her, make her better. Eventually, the haze of drama and grass got to be too much for him. He didn't understand. Life pissed on and pissed off Aunt Lena. People like that are hard to stomach – even harder to be. One day, he packed up his things and went away – leaving only a note. My aunt, being the sensible woman she is, used the paper to roll a joint and smoked the words he wrote.

My Aunt Lena has no kids, none living that is. She buried the first one, the only one, in the only plot a high school drop-out could afford. Now she was living in a run-down rent house with her new boyfriend. I'm pretty sure it's a meth house and he's a master chef. I'm not too worried though. In all these years, Aunt Lena never did the hard stuff. She lost her last job sometime last year for forgetting to show up on time and sometimes not remembering to come in at all. She decided to get on the government's payroll. She faked a fall in a Walgreens bathroom – wet floor, no sign. She gets disability now, plus ample hush money from some antsy higher ups.

A loud pop sounds off in the distance, and I turn to investigate. I can see the El Camino now – sputtering and backfiring down the block, its green paint job glowing in the afternoon light. I sprang up from my sitting position and moved back to stand on the sidewalk. Aunt Lena stopped the car alongside the curb, brakes squealing. Fear leaped into my heart and horror jumped on my brain as I heard the driver's door creak and saw Aunt Lena move to get out. She stumbled as she walked around the front of the car, leaning on the hood for support. She jolted forward, but I caught her before she fell.

“Aunt Lena, are you high right now?” I asked.

“No,” she replied, “I'm never high. I'm low. I'm depressed.” She started giggling softly.

“You don’t seem depressed.”

“That’s because I took my sunshine pills,” she said, waving her hand dismissively.

“Okay, but the bottle says you’re only supposed to take one sunshine pill. How many did you take today?”

She thought it over for a minute, her eyes sliding shut. She opened them again. “Twenty-six.”

“Aunt Lena!” I yelled. Her knees buckled, and she fell to the concrete, losing one of her scuffed pink pumps in the process. “You can’t just take that many. We have to get you to the hospital!” I tried to heave her up off the sidewalk, simultaneously worrying about how I was going to get her piece of shit car down own. Her hand latched onto my arm, and I looked over at her face.

Slow tears slid from peaceful eyes. She whispered, “The only escape is to die.”

I'M WAITING

J. C. Johnie Catfish Mahan

I'm waiting for something special, I hope.
Waiting for some new thing to rock me
Waiting for something to get me going
To rock my boat clean out of the water.
For a long time I didn't realize
I was just waiting, holding space,
Reserving myself unconsciously dormant
But then one day, it hit me, bam
I'm waiting for, waiting for, I don't know what.
So I thought about it every day, kind of
A mental mathematic game of chance
Waiting for a chance encounter for greatness;
I'm waiting for my poetry to be published
I'm waiting for my book to come out
I'm waiting for the world to seek me out.
No, I haven't submitted any poems
No, I haven't finished my book either
But, I'm waiting, does that count?

I'm waiting for my life to have
Deeper meaning, higher power, greater depth.
I'm waiting for my body to lose 20 lbs.
I'm waiting for my hair to be beautiful
I'm waiting to be the perfect age
I'm waiting to feel secure and confident
I'm waiting to be fully developed
I'm waiting to be wise and acknowledged
I'm waiting to be loved completely
I'm waiting for every broken thing
To be miraculously put back together
I'm waiting to be a super hero person.

So I'm waiting for you to save me
Or give up on me like everyone else.
I'm waiting for you to decide this isn't working
I'm waiting for you to finally leave me.
Then, I will be convinced to quit waiting.

IMPERFECT EXPLANATION

J. C. Johnie Catfish Mahan

I'm not perfect, never have been.
I can't make it perfect for you
The way you want it, see it,
The way you remember it once was.
Once, it was close, good and almost
With times that seemed perfect.
The passing of time sometimes makes other times
More perfect than they were, looking back.
But I have no power to change things.
I can only change myself, if I wish
And if I could make myself be better.
And while you wish I could
Establish more order, as you deem it
On others and the situation
You really wouldn't want me
To try and change you.
So we must cherish those memories
That seem so perfect to us now
And hope for more in the future
While we hold on to what we have
And strive for some perfection
To come our way in the future.
But those can only happen
If we hold on to each other.

ONE. TWO. THREE.

inspired by “Don’t Make a Sound” by Azure Ray

Lauren Dow

Jameson made it difficult to feel the tip of her fingers freezing off as they barely held onto her cigarette. She took a drag and could feel the smoke rushing through her blood. She wondered what the next step was; where she was supposed to go from here?

Sarah had a plan once. Never skipping a beat. Finish college, move into the city, find a fabulous job, meet the man of her dreams, marry and have a family. She planned out every meticulous moment of her life. There was just one thing she couldn’t have planned for.

His name was Jason.

The pavement was chilling her thighs as Sarah sat on the edge of the sidewalk hoping for her circulation to rush back. Ever since Jason, she couldn’t feel anything. Numb was the only emotion she could distinguish herself with. What happened to the girl she used to know? Jason was the one person who ever really knew. He knew who she really was, and that’s what tore her down. He crept into every weakness she allowed him to see. The gates had been broken down. Jason took blades of metaphorical glass to her entire being and took away all of Sarah’s plans and dreams. He belittled her as a way of controlling her. Making her feel insignificant to the world and especially to him.

She didn’t even have the courage to tell him he was too drunk to drive that night.

They say New York City never sleeps. That is where she feels most at home. She stood up and walked down towards her familiar alley where she would hide to rest her eyes for a few hours. The monster was calling at her again to light another cigarette. Chain smoking was the only hunger she ever felt the urge to feed. One drunken foot in front of the other, stumbling along in the city she was once supposed to conquer. Then it happened.

Amongst the crowd of drunken night crawlers and street acts, things began to darken. The world seemed to spin as her heart began to race. What was happening? Everyone was dancing as the walls seemed to close in on her faster and faster. She thrust her hands to her head in hopes it would stop; that she would wake up from this dream she had somehow found herself in. Had life finally taken its toll? Was her self-destruction coming to its denouement? One. Two. Three.

The spinning stopped as she felt two warm hands on her shoulders. Sarah opened her eyes and looked to her left to see delicate fingers holding onto her. Fair skin with red fingernails.

“Are you okay?”

Her name was Leila.

COME HOME SAM

inspired by “Sea of Love” by Cat Power

Lauren Dow

Who is that man? He looks familiar, like my son. He is such a good boy, that son of mine. I'm sure he'll be back from Lionel's house soon. He needs to shave his face, he looks homeless. I wonder who that man is. My head hurts. I'm hungry. Who is that man? He looks familiar, like my son. What did she say? Why don't people speak louder? It's like they are trying to whisper a secret that they don't want me to hear. What don't they want me to hear? Who is that man? He looks familiar, like my son. My son is such a good boy. I hope Myriam comes by soon to read to me. I like when she reads to me. Her voice is comforting. Not to mention I can actually hear her. Not like everyone else who whispers like they are trying to keep a secret from me. Who is that man? He looks familiar. Is that Sam? What is he saying? Sam is acting strange. There must be something wrong with him. Maybe he got into a fight with Lionel. I don't like when Sam is upset, it makes me so sad. My head hurts. I'm hungry. Who is that man? He looks familiar. There is Myriam! I wonder if she knows when Sam will be home. He's been out so long, it's almost dark out. Oh, this is one of my favorite stories. I'm getting tired. I'm hungry and my head hurts.

Who is that man? He looks familiar, like my son. He is such a good boy, that son of mine.

SOMETIMES I MISS HIS TEETH

Jennifer E. Hudgens

I think of the afterlife, after
loving him, his thick
skull, thin veins, the way
he sledge-hammered pot
holes into his sidewalks,
punched prison into forearms.

Sometimes, I miss his chipped
fingernails,
his rough and ruddy skin, the
red behind his iris', I found
home in them, warmth
boiled me like too hot bath
water.

He drank me down, bent
my knuckles until I begged for
mercy, he's still waiting
for my crumble and rust,
I don't sound how he'd hoped,
he still prays for the gristle
of my moan, moan and
swoon.

If the trigger gets too wet,
the hands cripple around the chamber,
if the girl gets too wet, she
backslides, she shatters on
kitchen floors,
he never saw me shatter into
snowflakes.

I was a curse he slept under,
his questioning smile, wavering
trust, pegged me villain before
I could prove him wrong, he
expected a volcano, a punch
in the jaw, shattered dishes.

When someone expects you to
crack, it is inevitable.

Sometimes I miss his teeth, lies
he buried inside of me, how
he always needed me to prove him
right.

PICTURE PERFECT

Yasser Yehia El-Sayed

I heard her screams from down the hall, but by the time I got to her room she'd already delivered. Her name was Sally Moseley. She was 15 years old, and a patient at one of our Free Clinics.

Dr. Kathy Mitchell, the OB resident, had Sally's legs up in the stirrups, and was trying to deliver the placenta. The baby was in the bassinet being cleaned off by the nurse. It was a huge baby boy. Rolls of fat everywhere. For sure over 9 pounds and vocal cords to match. Every time the nurse rubbed him down with a towel, he swung at her with his fist.

"Hello, Ms. Moseley," I said. "I'm Dr. Malik, the attending doctor."

She barely gave me a glance. Her eyes were fixed on the baby. An elderly woman, probably Sally's grandmother, sat in a chair next to the bed watching Dr. Mitchell tug on the severed, dangling end of umbilical cord. There was someone else in the room, although I didn't notice her at first. She was standing quietly in the corner, her face glued to a camcorder. Other than the baby, she was the only person to whom Sally paid any attention.

"Sonia, get closer!" Sally insisted. "Get a better shot of the baby!"

I stepped over a messy trail of blood and amniotic fluid, and leaned over Dr. Mitchell's shoulder. "You've got to call me in earlier," I whispered in her ear. "This is a big kid. What if you had trouble delivering the shoulders? What if the shoulders got stuck and I wasn't there?"

"Got it," mumbled Kathy Mitchell whose flippant attitude made her one of my least favorite residents. "It all happened so fast. Before I knew it, she'd pushed the kid out."

"She's a child," I hissed. "The kid's the size of a shark. It didn't just fall out."

Kathy Mitchell shrugged, and I could have sworn I saw her roll her eyes. I started to say more, but then I remembered Sonia and her camcorder. "Anyway, good job Dr. Mitchell," I said out loud, and smiled pleasantly in Sonia's direction.

There was a gush of blood and the placenta plopped out. I heard a startled "Oh!" from the grandmother who was staring at the placenta slopping around in the bucket.

"What was that?" said Sally.

"That was your placenta," I said. "You're doing just beautifully. And that's a big, handsome boy."

This time Sally fixed her eyes on me. She was a pale, pudgy girl with bad acne, and a dark trace of fuzz over her upper lip. "Like his daddy," she said. "Ain't that right Sonia?"

There was no daddy anywhere that I could see. Then I noticed the poster hanging off the intravenous fluid stand. It had a beer logo, and below that a picture of a basketball player caught in mid-air with the ball. I knew nothing about basketball so I asked, "Who's that?"

"That's his daddy," said Sally.

"He plays professionally," added the knowledgeable Dr. Mitchell as she examined Sally for lacerations.

The nurse handed Sally the baby.

"Your daddy's going to be so happy to hear about you," Sally said stroking the baby. "He'll be so excited. He'll be on the first plane over."

Dr. Mitchell looked at me and shrugged.

"What time is it?" said Sally.

"Just about three in the morning," I replied.

"I'm really hungry," said Sally.

The grandmother hooted, shook her head, then just as abruptly, fell silent.

“You’ve been working hard,” I said. “You can eat anything you want.”

Sally gave me a dismissive glance. “Sonia come over here,” she said, “I want you to get the three of us together. Mom, Dad and Baby.”

The grandmother didn’t say a word. Sonia didn’t move either. She stayed in the corner swinging the camcorder in a big arc. Recording everything.

MONEY HOUSES

Christopher Mulrooney

outside the spider weaves
in copious abundance
the value of lucre obtains
as in a cash box buried there
within the cellar maybe
nothing else anywhere

THE PIGGY BANK

Jeff Provine

Once upon a time, a piggy bank was bought by a boy just old enough to have a few coins to his name. The problem with buying a piggy bank with only a few coins was, of course, that he had to lose the coins to gain the Pig.

So, the Pig was brought home and placed in the toy box. The other toys looked on the newcomer with curious eyes. The Pig was empty, and he had nothing to say.

Soon after, the boy brought home a coin earned by stacking his grandmother's firewood. He put it into the Pig, and now the Pig had a voice. He could shake his curly porcelain tail and give a proud, "Tink, tink, tink!" The other toys were amused.

The boy brought home another coin from selling wildflowers. With two coins, the Pig could say, "Tink-dink. Tink-dink-dink."

The other toys were impressed.

The boy gave the Pig a third coin he made shining his father's shoes. Now the Pig could say, "Jingle, jingle, jingle!"

The other toys were amazed.

More coins followed, and soon the Pig could sing. "Tink-dink, da-tink, ka-jink! Jingle, jangle, bojangle!"

The other toys were overwhelmed.

The Pig danced, and his coins would sing all manner of things. The other toys joined in with his dancing. The whole toy box shook with their music.

As the boy gave him more and more coins, the Pig thought more and more of himself. He could make all kinds of sounds, more than any other toy.

The toys called to him, "Piggy Bank! Jingle and jangle for us! We want to dance!"

The Pig would tease them. "Oh, I don't know about today."

"Please!" the toys would beg.

Eventually, after much cajoling and pleading and offers of favors, the Pig would lead them in dancing. Each time, though, he would wait a little longer, making the toys beg him a little more and offer more favors. He made them call him "Mr. Pig" or "Your Hogness."

The boy continued putting coins into the Pig, and he began to grow heavy. His little porcelain piggy feet began to hurt. He could barely move.

Still the toys wanted him to dance.

The Pig wanted to admit that he was too full of coins to dance, but he couldn't bear the humiliation. Instead, he said, "I shall not dance. If you want me to make music for you, you must pick me up and dance for me!"

The other toys did not like this idea. But, they wanted to hear the music, so they hoisted him onto their little toy shoulders and shook him. "Jing-ka, jing-ka, chooka-chooka-choo!"

The Pig laughed at them. "Here I am, above you all! You're doing all the shaking and all the dancing, and I'm making all the music. Could anyone doubt that I am the best toy?"

The other toys did doubt. They stopped their shaking and grumbled. Finally, one said, "You're no toy at all! You're just a bank!"

So, they threw him out of the toy box. The Pig waggled in the air until he finally hit the floor. His little porcelain piggy tail broke off, and all his coins scattered onto the floor.

The Pig lay there with his broken tail until the boy came home.

"What got you down there?" the boy asked.

The Pig had no voice to answer.

The boy picked up the Pig and taped his tail back on. He put a few coins back inside, but too many made the tape come loose, and the coins would spill out again. Just a few was all right. He put the Pig back in the toy box and left to spend the rest of his coins on candy and storybooks.

Back in the toy box, the other toys looked on the Pig with suspicious eyes.

The Pig stayed quiet until he finally shook his taped-on tail. "Dink-ta-tink."

The other toys liked the sound. It was not too much, and it was not too little. The Pig made a few apologies and a little music, and the toys found they liked him more than ever.

Never again would the Pig brag about his coins or his music, because too much bragging would mean he'd lose them all over again.

The End

BEWARE OF SPOONS

Jonathan Humble

As Jim sat in the kitchen,
One Tuesday afternoon,
He let his mind drift aimlessly,
While gazing at a spoon.
The strange distorted features,
That stared back at his face,
Grew angry and affronted
By Jim's lack of social grace.
And grabbing our poor hero
Quite roughly by the ear,
The image pulled Jim off his chair,
Beyond our mortal sphere.
And left upon the table,
That Tuesday afternoon,
No clue to Jim's new whereabouts,
Except a bloody spoon!

GLAD TO BE A DALEK

Jonathan Humble

I'm not your average Dalek,
You know the sort I mean,
All bent on domination;
Giving vent to all that spleen.
I like to think I'm different
From other Dalek crew,
Who keep emotions hidden
While exterminating you.
I don't agree with killing,
With plans to subjugate.
The Universe is lovely
And I find it hard to hate.
In fact, I've got my own plan;
I'm working from within!
I'm teaching other Daleks
How to knit and sew and spin.
I run a secret workshop
Where Daleks can relax
And find their inner Dalek;
Get the monkey off their backs.
We try to be creative;
To make things, not destroy.
I run a Dalek choir
Learning Ludwig's "Ode To Joy."
So if you see a Dalek
In homeknit wool poncho,
Don't run off in a panic,
Come across and say "Hello!"

QUESTION FROM A SUPERNUMERARY

Jonathan Humble

I feel a little in the way, a nuisance I suppose;
I'm like a green carbuncle on a supermodel's nose.
A fly found in the ointment, a worm upon a plate,
A banker's contribution to a probity debate.
A vegan at a hog roast, a snake inside a boot,
The water lapping at the feet of mighty King Canute.
A politician's promise, a long forgotten vow,
As useful as a set of wheels and jet pack on a cow.
I feel somewhat superfluous, important I am not,
As vital to the circumstance as camels on a yacht;
And so I have a question, asked with due humility,
Within an endless universe, what is the point of me?

DEVIL'S ROOT

Jenn Long

And so they went ahead
And put down roots
In a place our Grandma always hated.

“Waggis, Jabone,” she would say
“Stop it, Honey.”
As we teased and sparred along the trail.

But, “No waggis! No waggis!”
“Don't stop here in this devil's place,”
She used to say
When we crossed that barren stretch of land.

“But Grandmother,” the tired ones cry,
“They have brought the waterline!
And see the tall electric poles
They planted here to bring us power?”

But the prairie wind still whispers,
“Don't stop, Honey. Don't stop here.
Get your water from the sky!
Get your power within!”
So I pack my tent up lightly
And continue on along the trail.

OUR CHILDREN

Jenn Long

We want our children to be like us,
But they aren't.
They are alive in other ways
That we could never invent.
They crawl.
They toddle.
They run,
And eventually find their own ways of walking.
Then we see
The things about ourselves that we don't like.
And then we pray
That our children won't be anything like us,
But they are.

HORIZON

for Spurr

Richard Dixon

Grand late-summer day
waning temperatures
two hour drive through
bucolic countryside

small town university,
reading at 6:30
dinner a burger and smoothie
on an outside bench

promise of breeze
thwack of tennis balls
sun dapples on courts
play hide-and-seek
with the shade of an elm tree

from these surroundings
to inside the hall
where the elder poet
being feted for a late-70s birthday
reads from his collected works

he and the students
two ships on the same sea
one having just left port
the other close to making landfall

THE GREAT JIM SPURR IS DEAD

Hank Jones

It was Labor Day when we got the news:
The great Jim Spurr is dead.
Lived a full life right up to the moment it stopped.

I'm sitting here stunned. It's morning still, but I've opened a beer.
Sitting here looking at the flag the Mormon Boy Scout troop puts in front of our house for a mere
\$30 a year.

Not big on flag waving normally, but I think Jim, the ex-paratrooper, would approve.

Thinking back on this past May,

Sleeping on Jim and Aline's couch,
Eating donuts she picked up that morning,
Later out on the back deck in that crazy beautiful backyard,
Beer hidden in coolers all over the place,
So we're having one, then two...

Trip to Vann's for barbecue, Vann a childhood friend.
Another trip to the casino to watch Jim coax money from a machine.
(The only machine talking to me is labeled ATM.)
Jim passes me a ten or twenty every now and again to keep me going,
But I just feed his earnings back into the machines.
But he keeps winning, and we like watching him do it.

But there's nothing quite like watching Jim reading poetry in front of a crowd,
Natural, relaxed, swaying with Parkinson's, but mostly with cool,
He'll saunter up to that mic and make love.
Swearing a little, joking a little, reading his words from the heart,
He enthralled us all.

Jim: good friend, great poet, beer drinker, gambler, veteran, Notre Dame fan.
Doesn't even scratch the surface.
A mensch. A human being. A man who knew the right way to live and showed us the way.

Live loud, he said. We will.
Live Long, he said. We'll try.

And we'll see you sometime, dear Jim,

In that sweet bye-and-bye,
Where you'll already have the mic in place, audience aching for more,
In that Open Mike Night in the sky.

FIRST SNOW

Robert Milby

Feral dark—walk through frost bruised park,
Gnarled trees and brazen brambles... no candles
Or trophy torch to paint goblins as merely sneering boulders.

To wait until sunrise would wound us in ice coats;
capas of wind scattering rational thought,
but cold throats barking boreal crusts of packing snow
to pacify wild survival mind, for eternity until Spring
Sings up through mottled corpse,
with grey mushroom sprouts,
grass quills quivering green erotic verses,
Or couches of soft moss, brier, pine, wiry vines
Like brown concord snakes dangling from oak arms—
watching our manic attack!
Wracked by sovereign snow shrill—we tithe our isolated prayers
in a stark cathedral for December redemption.

UPON WINTER'S RETURN

Robert Milby

Winter creeps, sneaks, and blows in on omen breezes,
wanders down the valley and knits shrouds and algid gowns
while creaking limbs, filigree frost old, unclaimed bones;
shaking snow from brown November rags; polishing pond glass,
and calling Crows and Vultures to monitor weird birds who stay
only til meadows vibrate and promise mud.

The monastic months of snow outside a library...

Wind, like a string quartet, through dark, bare, and silent trees.

Winds, mad farmers of the North, sewing white seeds for crops of Winter desolation.

Only moonlight conquers night, but does not warm the shivering arms of
forgotten Maples and Oaks—who held resplendent court in Autumn's glowing woodlands.

Now...they are alone. Counting ghosts in snow—worry;
turning blue and grey leaves of solar calendars, page after diurnal page,
from emaciated meadow to the River's winter consternation,
collapsing walls on Bannerman's Island.

Ghosts of the island remain, after Hawks and Eagles move closer to the shelter of sharp cliffs:
Breakneck and Storm King...Snow quiets poltergeist reunions, carry ice floes
from realms north of Constitution Island.

The Hudson is hungry, even in Winter!

Yet, Winter is greedy; insists on diamonds from the intrepid, contemplative monarch.

Snow and ice block the great serpent of 218 from completing his track—
West Point to Cornwall.

The Hudson is a stern sovereign, carrying graveyard memory in His slow, eerie currents.

A reliquary of cold water. Lord of the New York Highlands.

Delaware gazes East over snow-hobbled Orange to the craggy hide and bones
of an enigmatic estuary, humbled only in monastic months of snow.

Inside Winter's library: endless, rare collections; grand icicle tomes!

Frosted leaves stolen by Tempest claws of Nor'Easter!

Syllabus of sunken tree limbs held in great floating tombstones.

Snowdrift priories; desolate monasteries rise along Oak grey and blanched banks of the North
River; open before December's Solstice, to accept bleak hermits; Vulture and Crow novices.

WINTER WIGHT

Robert Milby

Ice spiders spin webs of frost upon old limbs of a battered Oak.
Wight in Yuletide.
Winter Wight about his chore of stacking frosted firewood,
Wind like cold iron across a December sky—
a bower of snow in a quiet grey kettle.
He walks on a frozen pond at dawn to spite messiahs.
He heaped leaf husks on a snow meadow, near an apple dump—
Autumnal cider fumes frozen for Spring rot.
He seasons feasts with powdered rain, blanched ice, lichen fragments,
and bark croutons from limbs split by glacial axe and snow maul.

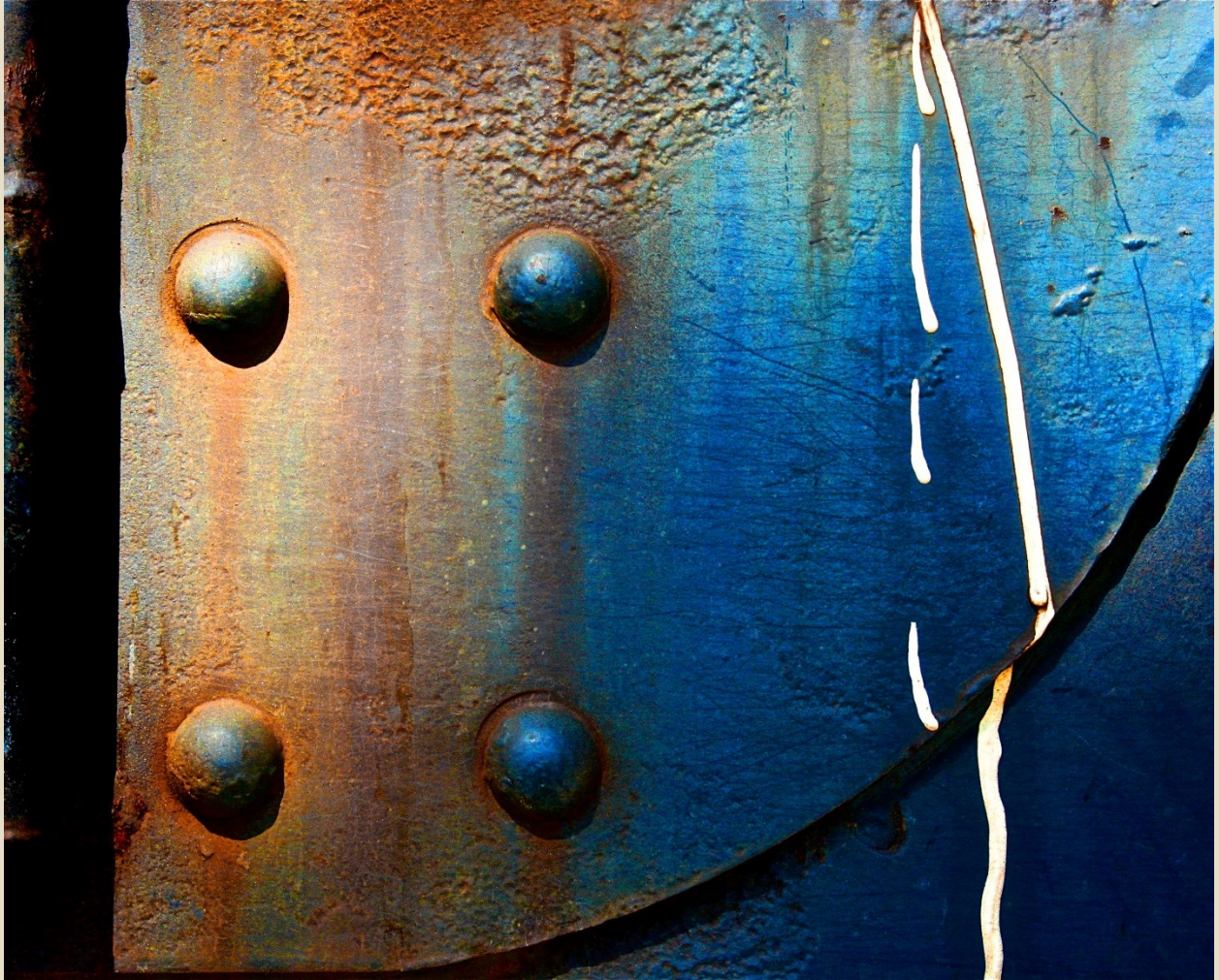
Bless us Hoar Frost and these Ice gifts for witches we are about to receive
from ice bounty through crises of frost heaven.
Rheumatic wind on sleeping branches singed in omen.

Winter Wight has no need for speaking hearths and table talk,
in kith crowded halls, or rooms of marital warmth.
He conjures bonfires beneath storm Moons in February,
he plays baroque fugues upon iced ferns, near frost-shriveled ivy.
Winter Wight in wind-burned business, casting spells at snow-fogged creekside.
His name in pond-breath, beneath an opaque window,
counterpoint to Candlemas wind arias.

Frost Father whose art is heaven, hallowed trees, by name,
ice kingdom come, ice mill begun, wan Earth, visit heaven, ice fen.
Silver ice-play bowers of snow bread, and shiver in wind lashes, as we freeze those who
trespass the fenced lots, glacier firths are our temptation. Deliver Ice Lord, from human
evils, and grant us sleet in our day.

Winter Wight shall hide in caves this spring.
In tumultuous clouds of grey. Beneath boulders, hemmed in henges of glacial till.
Calling Manitou squalls as prayers in preparation, for boreal yawns and megalith
grimoires, no haste for shifting sun, but by diligent, frozen research grants for Winter's
stark return.

REFLECTIVE
Sheri L. Wright



8x12 photograph / detailed abstract of train

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

DOROTHY ALEXANDER is a poet, storyteller and editor/publisher of a small independent poetry press. She is the author of four poetry collections, including *Lessons from an Oklahoma Girlhood*. Much of her work is inspired by the agrarian literary tradition and the populist political movements of the early 20th century in the United States. She embraces primarily the narrative form, what she calls “narcissistic” narrative, and she often indulges in “selfie” poetry. Her work appears in *Malpais Review*, *Blood & Thunder*, *Cooweescoowee Journal* and other media, and is anthologized in *Times They Were A’Changing: Women Remember the 60s & 70s* (SheWrites Press), *Raising Lilly Ledbetter* (Lost Horse Press), *Women Writing Nature* (Sugar Mule Press) and others. The Oklahoma Center for the Book selected Dorothy as recipient of the Carlile Distinguished Service Award for her services to the Oklahoma literary community in 2013.

SYLVESTER ALLEY writes flash fiction, poetry, and anything else he feels like on his Royal Companion typewriter from his small, heavily fortified shack in Tecumseh, Oklahoma. He is currently working on a collection of flash fiction stories focusing on American Indian life in the middle of the 20th century and set in rural north central Oklahoma.

ROBERT HERMAN BROYLES is a veteran of the academic wars (Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, OU College of Medicine). 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. His interest in Billy Collins’ poetry he can only blame on himself. Robert’s poems have appeared in *Blood and Thunder*, a journal of art and literature published annually by the OU College of Medicine, 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 – are likely to turn up in various places in Oklahoma, such as The Paramount, the Benedict Street Market, the Full Circle, and, occasionally, at other venues where Oklahoma poets gather.

JULIE CHAPPELL’s creative writing has appeared in several anthologies or journals including *Revival: Spoken Word from Lollapalooza 94*; *For Jayhawk Fans Only*; *Agave: A Celebration of Tequila in Story, Song, Poetry, Essay, and Graphic Art*; *Elegant Rage: A Poetic Tribute to Woody Guthrie*; *Cybersoleil: A Literary Journal*; *Malpais Review*; and *Voices de la Luna*. Her first poetry collection, *Faultlines: One Woman’s Shifting Boundaries*, was published by Village Books Press in October 2013. She also co-edited an anthology of creative works, entitled *Writing Texas*, published in March 2014 by Lamar University Press. She is currently working on a second volume of poetry, *Mad Habits of a Life*, and a memoir of her years as the sheriff’s daughter, *The Jail/House Rocked*.

JAMES COBURN, an Oklahoma poet, draws from life experience or imagination in his work. Coburn recently published his first book of poetry *Words of Rain* as an audio book and e-book. In August, Coburn was preparing for the printed version of his book with BlaqRayn Publishing.

Coburn has been a selected poetry reader at the Woody Guthrie Festival in Okemah, OK as well as Oklahoma City. His poetry has been published in poetryvlog.com and has appeared in anthologies published by the Poetry Society of Oklahoma. His poem "Framed in Silver" is based on his experiences as a photographer, living in New York City during the early 1980s. In 2013, Coburn was awarded membership in the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame. He lives in Guthrie, OK.

RICHARD DIXON is a long-time transplant from the coal mines of southwestern Pennsylvania who lives in Oklahoma City. A retired high-school special education teacher and tennis coach, he works part-time at a municipal tennis center, where he is known to string a mean racquet. He has had poems and essays published in *Crosstimbers*, *Westview*, *Uncle Walt's Corner of The Long Islander*, the *2012 Texas Poetry Calendar*, as well as numerous anthologies, including two Woody Guthrie compilations: *Travelin' Music* (2011) and *Elegant Rage* (2012). He has been a featured reader at Full Circle Bookstore in OKC, the Benedict Street Marketplace in Shawnee, OK and the Norman Performance Center at the Depot. He came to writing by way of a dairy farm.

LAUREN DOW is a fiction writer based out of New Hampshire, primarily with a focus on flash fiction, short stories and essays. She graduated from the University of South Florida in 2012 with her bachelors in Public Relations. She continues to pursue her true passion of writing. Her micro-stories are based upon various individuals that she has met throughout her life and the stories they have told her. Every story is not only inspired by a person, but by a song as well, which is why she has called her micro-story collection *Beyond Words*.

YASSER YEHIA EL-SAYED is a physician at Stanford University. His specialty is high risk obstetrics. He has previously published his short stories in the following literary magazines: *The New Orphic Review* (All the Ruins at Leptis Magna; in press), *Natural Bridge* (Casket; June 2014), *Red Truck Review* (Vegetable Patch; April 2014), *Red Truck Review* (Child in Flames; April 2014. Nominated by editor Amy Wilson for The Pushcart Prize), *The New Orphic Review* (Dismembered; Volume 11; No 2, Fall, 2008. Nominated by the editor Ernest Hekkanen for Best American Short Stories and The Pushcart Prize), *The Marlboro Review* (Pharaoh; Issue 20, 2005), *The New Orphic Review* (The Landscape of Our Concealment; Volume 8, Number 2, Fall 2005), *Beginnings* (The Problem is the Ending; Volume 6, Issue 1, Spring 2004), *The Threshold Magazine* (Magdalena By Evening; Volume 3, Issue 2, Fall 1999).

MEGAN GOFF is a proud graduate of both Mason High School and Seminole State College in Oklahoma. She is currently working on obtaining her Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing at the University of Central Oklahoma. She is an aspiring screenwriter and novelist. She has been published in *The Muse* and other publications. It is her sincerest desire to change the world through the words she uses and the stories she tells.

KEN HADA is the author of four books of poetry including *Margaritas & Redfish* (Lamar UP, 2013). His work has been featured on *The Writer's Almanac*, and his book *Spare Parts* received the National Western Heritage Award for poetry in 2010.

CAROL HAMILTON has upcoming and recent publications in *Louisiana Review*, *Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Boston Literary Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Atlanta Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Aureorean*, *U.S.1 Worksheet*, *Colere*, *A Narrow Fellow*, *Lilliput*, *Bluestem*, *Flint Hills Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Sow's Ear Poetry*, *Gray Sparrow Review* and others. She has published 16 books, children's novels, legends and poetry. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma and has been nominated five times for a Pushcart Prize.

JENNIFER E. HUDGENS from Oklahoma City, has previously published in *Kill Poet*, *Decomp*, *Pedestal*, *Requiem*, *Divine Carcass*, *Artistica Magazines*, and *Swimming with Elephants Publications* anthology, *Light as a Feather* (2014). Jennifer will have poems featured in an upcoming anthology, *Not Dead Yet*, from Penhall Publishing (Fall 2014). She has released poetry chapbooks including: *1729 in 2012*, *For the Ghosts We Were* and *The Secret Lives of Harriet Turbine* in 2014. She has also been featured on Indiefeed Performance Poetry. Jennifer is Co-editor of Wicked Banshee Press. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing at the University of Central Oklahoma. Jennifer watches the sky the way most people watch television. She has an unmatched passion for poetry and life. She is obsessed with unicorns, and is terrified of clowns and horses. She also hates talking about herself in third person.

JONATHAN HUMBLE is a deputy head teacher in a rural school in northern England. He's worked as a painter, lettuce picker and engineer in the power industry. Other than writing poetry and short stories, his hobbies include beard growing, pointing at poppies whilst saying "Oooo, they look nice!" and keeping the international coffee industry afloat with his patronage. His poetry has appeared in *The Big Issue In The North*, *Poems For Freedom* and *The Caterpillar Magazine*, as well as on *The Gordon Swindlehurst Show* on BBC Radio Cumbria. He has recently been awarded the post of Poet Laureate by the Tripe Marketing Board and regularly appears at Verbalise in The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal as well as other performance poetry venues in the North West of England.

RACHEL Z. IKINS is *Dragon Poet Review's* cover artist, and she has been publishing prize winning poetry since she was a teen. Amazon.com lists her five chapbooks plus her YA novel *The Complete Tales from the Edge of the Woods*. This latter was inspired by the imagined sight of a large dragon perched on the roof of the barn peering down at the poet one summer day. There is a YouTube video of a musician friend of Rachael's, Joseph Pagano, who put her poem "Dragon Song" to music, available for listening pleasure. Rachael is also a prize winning visual artist. She designed all of her book covers. She lives in a treehouse apartment with her animal familiars. Her balcony garden is filled with plants, hummingbirds and an occasional fairy or two. A sign hangs there "Caution, Dragon Crossing" because you never know. Ikens won Critics Choice *Absolute* 2014 for her elephant piece "Shelter" and two second place ribbons in August

2014 in fine arts in the NYS Fair. Her artwork has been on a few magazine covers and accepted in publications as illustrations. She has been drawing and painting as long as she's been writing poetry.

HANK JONES has taught English composition and literature at Tarleton State University in Texas for the past fourteen years, as well as serving a four-year stint as Assistant Director in the International Office, and has found none of this conducive to writing poetry. However, he has started writing again anyway. He has read his poetry and creative non-fiction at various venues including Woody Guthrie Festival stages in Oklahoma City and Okemah, Oklahoma; The Langdon Review Weekend in Granbury, Texas; The Winter Gathering Festival in Stephenville, Texas; South Central MLA in Fort Worth; PCA/ACA in San Antonio; and Southwest PCA/ACA in Albuquerque (for three consecutive years). His poetry and creative non-fiction have also appeared in *Cybersoleil: A Literary Journal* (2013, 2014) and *Voices de la Luna* (2014). This past April, he reached a pinnacle when he was accepted to read at the Scissortail Creative Writing Festival in Ada, Oklahoma.

HARDY JONES is author of the novel *Every Bitter Thing* (Black Lawrence Press, 2010) and the forthcoming memoir *People of the Good God* (Mongrel Empire Press). His essay "Dry Gumbo" is nominated for a 2014 Pushcart Prize and he has been awarded two grants. His short stories were anthologized in the 2009 *Dogzplot Flash Fiction Anthology*, *The Best of Clapboard House Literary Journal*, *Southern Gothic: New Tales of the South*, and *Summer Shorts II*. He is the co-founder and Executive Editor of the online journal *Cybersoleil* (www.cybersoleiljournal.com), and he is the Flash Fiction Editor for *Sugar Mule* (<http://www.sugarmule.com/index2.htm>). Hardy Jones is an Associate Professor of English and the Director of Creative Writing at Cameron University (hjones@cameron.edu). His website is www.hardyjoneswriting.com, and he is on Twitter @HardyJonesWrite. Hardy splits his time between Lawton, Oklahoma and Si Sa Ket Province, Thailand.

MADHU KAILAS is the pen name of the poet. 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.

JENNA KLEIN writes nineteen floors up in the Puerto Rican heat. Her blazing passion for teaching is on par with her book obsession. She's had flash fiction pieces published in *Minotaur Lit* and *Boston Literary Magazine*.

JENN LONG is a singer/songwriter/poet and salad maker extraordinaire. She loves reading ancient poetry such as Ovid and Catullus, and other ancient literature and mythology. She comes from an agricultural background, and is influenced in her writing by the many cultures of her heritage, such as Scotch and Cherokee. Jennifer has a BA in English Literature and an MA in Classics from Texas Tech University, plays banjo and guitar and enjoys hiking and gardening.

Find her on Facebook (Jennifer Long3152), or check out her blog at www.socramama.blogspot.com

J.C. "JOHNNIE CATFISH" MAHAHN is a street poet in the OKC area. He lives in Edmond, OK and operates the Funky Hair Ranch Salon. J. C. believes life is about art, being a part of, and appreciating, art in as many ways as you can. Catfish thinks poetry is about how you feel and how your emotions lead you. For him, poetry is a way to understand and communicate the world and life around you.

SHARON EDGE MARTIN has published stories and articles in such venues as *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, *Outside*, and *Oklahoma Today*. Her poetry is included in *The Art and Craft of Poetry* by Michael Bugeja, as well as in *Byline*, *Amelia*, and other literary and small press magazines and collections. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and her chapbook, *No Sanctuary*, won the Cicada Award and was published by Amelia Press in 1997. She writes a regular column for *Oklahoma Observer*, teaches school, and is at work on her second novel in verse for young adults while the first one makes the rounds. She lives on a small farm near Oilton, OK with her husband, artist Dale Martin.

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).

JEANETTA CALHOUN MISH is an essayist, poet, literary scholar, publisher and occasional perpetrator of fictions. She is a poetry mentor for, and director of, The Red Earth MFA, a low-residency creative writing program at Oklahoma City University. www.tonguetiedwoman.com

CHRISTOPHER MULROONEY is the author of *symphony* (The Moon Publishing & Printing), *flotilla* (Ood Press), and *viceroys*.

BRENT NEWSOM's debut poetry collection, *Love's Labors*, is forthcoming from CavanKerry Press. He has published poems in *The Southern Review*, *Subtropics*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Cave Wall*, and other journals and anthologies. Currently he is Assistant Professor of English at Oklahoma Baptist University.

JEFF PROVINE is a farm kid turned Composition professor. His online works include *The Academy* webcomic and *This Day in Alternate History* blog. In the past year, he has published a YA sci-fi novel: *Dawn on the Infinity*, steampunk: *Celestial Voyages*, and two collections of ghost stories: *Campus Ghosts of Norman, OK*, and *Haunted Norman*. Recently married, Jeff and his wife live with a zany dog and two plotting cats.

KATHRYN TRATTNER lives and writes from the middle of the country, supported by three cats, two kids, and one husband. Her short fiction has appeared in *Wyvern Lit Magazine* and *Minotaur Lit Magazine*.

RON WALLACE, native Oklahoman of Choctaw, Cherokee and Osage ancestry, is the author of six volumes of critically acclaimed poetry published by TJMF Publishing of Clarksville, Indiana. He is currently an adjunct Professor at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and a three time finalist in the Oklahoma Book Awards. His work has been featured in *The Long Islander*, *Sugar Mule*, *Traveling Music: a Poetic Tribute to Woody Guthrie*, *Cybersoleil*, *Oklahoma Poems and Their Poets*, *di-verse city-Austin International Poetry*, *Cross-timbers*, *Concho River Review*, *Cobalt*, *Red Earth Review*, *Oklahoma Today*, *Cowboys and Indians-online*, and a number of other magazines and anthologies.

JIM WILSON gets to teach about creative writing and writers as an assistant professor of English at Seminole State College in Seminole, Oklahoma. He has an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Spalding University, and has published personal essays in: *The Muse*; *Platte Valley Review*; *Seeing Red*, *Hollywood's Pixeled Skins*; and *World of Indigenous North America*. He also holds an MA in Near Eastern Archaeology from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. His memoir-in-progress is titled *Love in the Time of Civil War*, and is set during Lebanon's Civil War in the 1980s. "Puxa Vida" is an excerpt from the early portion of his memoir while Jim is still a student at Iowa State University, when he learns that he has been appointed to work in Lebanon—not Brazil—where he had hoped to go. As a note on translation and transliteration, Brasil is the Portuguese spelling and pronunciation of Brazil.

CLARENCE WOLFSHOHL is professor emeritus of English at William Woods University. He operated Timberline Press for thirty-five years until the end of 2010. His poetry and creative non-fiction have appeared in *Concho River Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Colere*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Cenizo Journal*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Cape Rock and Melic Review*, *Houston Literary Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Agave*, *Cybersoleil*, and *Red River Review online*. A chapbook of poems about Brazil, *Season of Mangos*, was published by Adastra Press (2009), and *The First Three* (2010) and *Down Highway 281* (2011) were published by El Grito del Lobo Press. *In Harm's Way: Poems of Childhood* in collaboration with Mark Vinz was published by El Grito del Lobo Press in early 2013. A native Texan, Wolfshohl now lives with his writing, two dogs and one cat in a nine-acre woods outside of Fulton, Missouri.

SHERI WRIGHT, two-time Pushcart Prize and Kentucky Poet Laureate nominee, is the author of six books of poetry, including the most recent, *The Feast of Erasure*. Wright's visual work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Blood Orange Review*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Blood Lotus Journal* and *Subliminal Interiors*. In 2012, Ms. Wright was a contributor to the Sister Cities Project *Lvlds: Creatively Linking Leeds and Louisville*. Her photography has been shown across the Ohio Valley region and abroad. Currently, she is working on her first documentary film, *Tracking Fire*.

Dragon Poet Review's

EDITORS



RAYSHELL E. CLAPPER is a prose writer and Associate Professor of English at Seminole State College in Oklahoma where she teaches Creative Writing, Literature, and Composition classes. She has presented her original fiction and non-fiction 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. She knows that Dragon Poet Review will be yet another 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 stays in Oklahoma with her passions and words, but ever does the world call to her for travel and experience and life.

JESSICA B. ISAACS is a poet and an English Professor at Seminole State College in Oklahoma where she serves as the director of their annual Howlers and Yawpers Creativity Symposium, and as Assistant Division Chair of Language Arts and Humanities. She has presented her writing at several regional and national conferences. Her poems are published in various journals and anthologies, including *Short Order Poems* (September 2014 Issue – forthcoming November 2014), *Cybersoleil Literary Journal*, *All Roads Lead Home Poetry Blog*, *Sugar Mule's Women Writing Nature*, *The Muse*, and *Elegant Rage*. In addition, she has published a chapbook, *smoldering embers*, and has two forthcoming projects: her first full book of poems, *Deep August* (Village Books Press, 2014) and an audio book, *Spare Ashes* (KevyD Records, 2014). She is a member of the coordinating committee for the Woody Guthrie Poets. 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, dog, and cats.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: SUMMER 2015 ISSUE

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