

Spring 2012

Wild Goose Poetry Review
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One of the joys of editing a journal of poetry is arranging the poems in each issue. I like narratives, and I like contrasts, so I often juxtapose poems that are related in one fashion or another. Not that they were written with another poem in mind, but reading two or more related poems unintentionally creates a community of discourse, allowing the reader to dwell even longer on the particular topic or impressions of the the poems.

So, in this issue, I encourage you to read the first 8 poems in one sitting, as if they were a sequence. I also encourage you to read the 3 poems each by Karla Merrifield, Ronald Moran, and Tim Peeler in one sitting such that you can contrast three very different yet very accomplished contemporary voices in poetry. There are also other connections among these poems, such as the subtle narrative possibilities created by sequencing the poems of Jay Sizemore, Rana Williams, and Natasha Wall.

Of course, whether you see the connections I do or not, I hope you enjoy all of the poems gathered here. And don't worry about the absence of reviews. They'll be back. I simply didn't have as much time for reading new poetry this quarter as I usually do. As always, I (and the poets) hope you'll take the time to leave a comment and post links to help others find Wild Goose Poetry Review. Your comment won't show up right away, as I preview comments to assure appropriateness, but it shouldn't take more than a day or so.

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Glenda Beall
ONE FLAW

Her mother heard it from the kitchen.
Her brother heard it above the radio
playing in his room.

She dressed in pale blue blouse
and navy skirt, silver charms around her
wrist, for her seven-thirty date with Tom.

The night before she skated at the roller rink,
blond hair flying 'round her shoulders,
tanned legs clad in short white shorts.

Image of the perfect sixteen year old —
Cheerleader, straight A student.
Boys wanted her. Girls wanted to be her.

At precisely seven-fifteen, she changed all that.

Her mother found her daughter's white bedspread,
pristine walls, carefully chosen outfit —
and Ann destroyed by a single shotgun blast.

Author's Comment: I live in the southern Appalachian Mountains, but grew up in southern Georgia where I made memories that burst forth in my poetry almost unbidden. I find that poetry is my vehicle for bringing the past forward, for using synchronicity to connect now and then. We are our past and our present. Writing poetry helps me fit pieces of both together. Through writing, I continue to learn who I am.

Bio: Glenda Beall lives in Hayesville, North Carolina where she teaches and directs Writers Circle, a learning center for writers of all genres. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook, *Now Might as Well Be Then* in 2009. Beall's poems have appeared in numerous print and online journals including *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Main Street Rag*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review* and others.

Pris Campbell
DESKTOP LOVER

He lives on my desktop, flirts
between emails and deleted spam.

The perfect lover, he never complains
or eyes other women, remains as dashing
today as yesterday and the mounting
days before that one.

The dead follow their own path,
leave half-used tubes of toothpaste
or shirts fresh with their scent
for us to cling to in unwanted vigil.

Memories piggyback his grin
and I touch my computer screen
nightly as he fades, hope he might
yet grasp my hand, allow me
to pull him back from that
runaway train of time.

Author's Comment: I recently put a photo I liked of an old love, now long dead, on my desktop. When I shut the computer down the icons disappeared, leaving him briefly alone on the screen until he dropped off, too. It soon began to feel as if I was watching him die all over again every night. I took the image off.

Bio: Pris Campbell's poetry and haiga have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She has been nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize. Her most recent published collection of poetry out of six collections in print is *Postscripts to the Dead* by MiPOesias Press. Visit her About Me page on her website at <http://www.poeticinspire.com> for a complete listing of these collections, links to reviews, and purchasing information if interested. Formerly a Clinical Psychologist she has lived in the mid-west, Hawaii, and New England before settling in the West Palm Beach, FL area following a meandering six month trip down the east coast in a 22 foot sailboat. Her book, *Sea Trails*, is a belated product of that trip.

Russell Rowland

A LOOK OUT THE WINDOW

Puddles boil under pelting rain all day.
Not one of New England's "if you don't
like the weather, wait a minute" days—
not sprinkle or deluge, but a well-paced,
cancel-the-cookout-rent-a-movie rain.
We need it, after garden-wilting drought.

Ted says Eloise asked the hospice nurse
for a pill, any pill: she mourns her poverty
of life; wants death, and wants it now.

I stretch for compassion. Eloise lacked
nothing. In her heaven, there will be
no Welfare fraud, no illegal immigrants.

And no death on demand, apparently.
Strange, how often the oblivious young
meet ends they weren't looking for at all.

This wet weather must incite Eloise
to dissatisfaction with her dying days.
She'd prefer a sunset and a nightingale.

I judge neither her humor, nor the rain
that bejewels a web at my windowpane:
the spider gets a beverage with its meal.

Author's Comment: The author may not be the best (or only) person to say what a poem is about, assuming the question is worth asking. As I look back on the writing of A Look Out the Window, the spider at the end reminds me of "consider the birds of the air...consider the lilies of the field." So maybe the poem suggests, "don't be anxious about your life."

Bio: Russell Rowland, from New Hampshire's Lakes Region, has received five Pushcart Prize nominations. He is a past winner of Old Red Kimono's Paris Lake Poetry Contest and twice winner of Descant's Baskerville Publishers Poetry Prize. His chapbook, "Train of All Caboose," is available from Finishing Line Press.

Mimi Herman

WARNER BROTHERS PHYSICS

It is the fear of death that quickens us
To call and say, I was just thinking of you.
But it isn't you we were thinking of exactly.
It is the moment when the not-you, ever again,
Will open its gigantic hole beneath us
That we've suddenly recognized.

As if gravity were dependent on
The acknowledgement of gravity,
As if the Warner Brothers cartoons give us
A truer portrait of our psyches than Freud,
A truer physics than Isaac Newton,
Wile E. Coyote about to Doppler toward the center of the earth,
Uh-oh,
We hang suspended.

We see that hole. We don't want to fall.
So when you are surprised to hear me call,
Out of breath, to say, I thought of you,
Know that I am reinventing the physics of your existence.
Know that I mean, I want you to live.

Author's Comment: I've always been fascinated by the inventions of the Acme Corporation, which feel like shortcuts to our deepest fears and needs. Death seems to me to be something Wile E. Coyote might choose to whip out at any moment, a practical joke that is neither practical nor a joke. This poem is my gift to anyone I love, who might—I refuse to say “will”—die. It's my advance warning, so they can at least get in that “uh-oh,” before that long, dark drop.

Bio: Mimi Herman is the author of *The Art of Learning*, and has published fiction and poetry in *Shenandoah*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Hollins Critic* and other journals. Mimi holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College and has been a writer-in-residence at the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Vermont Studio Center. She does her own carpentry and plumbing, and can milk a cow and a goat, though not at the same time. You can find her at <http://www.mimiherman.com>.

David Radavich

**AGAPE; OR, SIPPING COFFEE AT STARBUCKS
ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

It is not easy
watching and feeling
the body waste
away

almost
without notice

the young
come strolling by
in their gaiety

touching
something deep
and eternal

something lost

cells aching
in the furnace

whose fire
rages

now at a distance

dancers
stepping lightly

in the mind

Author's Comment: Our neighborhood Starbuck's, like coffee-shops elsewhere, is a locus of youth and vitality for people of all ages. This poem announces its ironic tone with a blatantly eighteenth-century title. "Agape" represents a kind of generalized love that the poem contrasts later with waning sexual powers. The speaker is acutely aware of his aging body, brought into sharp contrast by youthful passers-by in their high spirits and casual élan. The speaker feels a bemused sense of loss and distance from the romantic chase, much as audiences feel charmed and heavy watching lithe ballet dancers leaping and pirouetting their bodies in ways the viewers can only dream.

Bio: David Radavich's recent poetry collections include *America Bound: An Epic for Our Time* (2007), *Canonicals: Love's Hours* (2009), and *Middle-East Mezze* (2011). His plays have been produced across the U.S. , including six Off-Off-Broadway, and in Europe . He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Terri McCord

THE MOUSE ON THE BRICK STEP

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

Keats' Ode to a Grecian Urn

is almost a 3D x-ray now.

I use the rot to measure time

and weather in these last

four weeks in December.

This was the year of the rat.

The mouse seems to be running still—

a hyphen of life to life,

curled legs suspended in a run.

The body is my natural

décor at the foot of our porch,

a pediment for the display.

I yearn to turn it over,

to see the rodent in the round,

to see it never catching up

but never being caught, except

by my stare, not the outreached paw

hung in air. From inside the house,

the cat watches with a permanent smile.

Author's Comment: The genesis of "The Mouse on the Brick Step" was another of my cat's kills. Torn between anxiety over his lack of compassion for life and, realizing of course, that this was the cat's nature and predatory being, I imagined a suspension of time. In a space without time, like Keats' grecian urn, anything and nothing is possible because all potentiality is frozen. Nothing dies, but nothing really lives either. All is frozen. I begin the poem with the idea of linking time to rot and decay, then freeze it because this is what the speaker in the poem "yearns" for. This is a preservation, but at a huge price.

Bio: Terri McCord won the South Carolina Arts Commission's 2002 Literary Fellowship, the 2007 Don Russ Poetry Prize, the 2011 William Gilmore Simms Prize from the South Carolina Poetry Society, and a first place in the 2009 SC Poetry Initiative/The State Single Poem contest. Finishing Line Press published a chapbook *The Art and the Wait* in 2008. The South Carolina Poetry Initiative chose her second chapbook *In the Company of Animals* for publication in fall, 2008. She has poems forthcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Nassau Review*, and *Grey Sparrow*.

Diane Webster
MEMORIAM

The funeral was well attended
for the 93-year-old man
who was a fixture of the town
and whom everyone had seen
just yesterday
before he died.

So weird to see the casket
carried in and out the church,
in and out the hearse,
into the ground,
into such a small space
for the man who touched
the universe that lived
or visited this small town.
How fitting he become one
with the town's earth
sprouting grass and tendrils
of morning glory like memories
remembered throughout the town.

Bio: My challenge as a poet is to remain open to idea opportunities whether that's by witnessing a scuffle on the sidewalk or noticing the sunrise's reflection on my white pants. My work has appeared in "Illya's Honey," "The Hurricane Review," "Philadelphia Poets" and other literary magazines.

Author's Comment: This poem is about a man who was our town's unofficial historian -- one of those old people who liked to tell stories about the people and places he knew. Never at a loss for words he reminded me of my grandfather. When I'd visit Grandpa, he'd tell such amazing stories of his life and times, and I'd listen with wonderful excitement. Whether these stories were entirely true or not, didn't matter to me. This is the feel I got from Gordon. When he died, a piece of Grandpa died again.

Paul Hostovsky

MY MOTHER'S WHITMAN

which is my Whitman now
sits on my shelf
reclines actually
horizontally
displaying its spine
above the spines
of ten or twenty
younger slenderer poets
and it's almost
sexual the way
he's in them
unquestionably
his influence
all over them

the way my mother
who never remarried
after my father died
never dated never
kissed another man or
woman on the mouth
for twenty long years
then died herself
still beautiful in
her early sixties
is in my voice
and in my hunger
and in my reticence
which is her reticence.

Author's Comment: A lot of the books on my shelf were my mother's before they became mine after she died almost twenty years ago. Many of them are brittle, fragile, brownish around the edges, falling apart. I don't read them much anymore. But I love the smell of them.

Paul Hostovsky
HOMOPHOBIA

I have a friend who is hydrophobic–
he wants to learn how to swim
but he is too afraid
of the water
to give himself over to it
and just float.

And I have another friend who
is agoraphobic–he wants
to see the world,
and to see the country,
and to see the big city,
but he's too afraid
to come out
of his tiny apartment
which is a closet really.

And my claustrophobic friend would love
to take the elevator,
my geophyrophobic friend wishes
she could drive over bridges
instead of having to go all the way around
each morning to get to work
and each night to get home again
before finally lying down
next to the one she loves.

Author's Comment: It's the only phobia among all the phobias that we don't think of as a limitation, or a disability. So it doesn't really seem to fit; it seems a sort of misnomer. Because it's more about hatred than fear, isn't it? Or is it? I've always thought the opposite of love was hate. But maybe the opposite of love is fear. Maybe hate IS fear. And fear is only lack of love.

Bio: Paul Hostovsky is a frequent contributor to Wild Goose. He has written 4 books of poetry and been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes and received multiple Best of the Net Awards.

Marissa McNamara

QUENCHED

We waited in the garage's hot summer dampness
for the storm's end, stood beneath eaves
palms stretched to catch the drops,
watched goose flesh shiver-rise

on our thighs until she took my hand.
We ran to the crack in the drive and back.

Then to the mailbox, the sidewalk and soon,
breathless, we stripped off our white socks
ran through the rain, each trip farther,
thin summer blouses pressed translucent
to our chests, hair stuck to our cheeks

and all of this before we knew
enough to cross our legs at the knee,
touch our lipstick after a meal,
before we knew that damp musty heat
smelled like afternoon sex.

That day our bare feet carried us
to our last un-umbrellaed touch of rain.

Author's Comment: I grew up in the suburbs and am often critical of that life. Maybe I'm trying not to be a cookie-cutter person who lived in a house with shag carpet and dark paneling like everyone else, but maybe we are always part of the landscape from which we come. This poem comes from that life, about how growing up happened there.

Bio: Marissa McNamara frequently utters faux pas and bad puns. She writes poetry because she wants to make art with words. Marissa lives in Atlanta with three geriatric dogs and one boyfriend, and she tries to teach English. Her work has appeared in various publications including RATTLE, StorySouth, and Future Cycle.

Beth Paulson

HARD WIND

What woke me was the moaning of the wind,
trees bending their green branches in the wind.

A screen door of the old house banged in wind–
rags, papers flung to corners with the wind.

Dreams of the former dwellers fled in wind.
Clouds are their dead faces borne by wind.

A young girl once danced circles in the wind
that turned white sheets to ships' sails in the wind.

Remember how sand stung our legs in wind
and how our sea-wet bodies shivered in wind?

Chinook or Borrás you can name this wind.
When red dust blows, there's desert on the wind.

Sometimes war in your land is like hot wind
too strong to stop: call it an angry wind.

See how the wild grasses lie down in wind?
It's false to feel safe here in a hard wind.

Author's Comment: The ghazal form offers the challenge and delight of writing couplets that are unconnected to any obvious narrative or theme. So it seemed a good fit with my thoughts about wind. In the high valley where I live in Colorado strong winds are common in spring as the snow melts away from the mesa tops and peaks. While writing it I let the wind carry my mind away to memories, both real and imagined, to present fears, and to future uncertainties. Touch and sound imagery were important to the poem and the five-beat line came when I wrote the first line.

Bio: Beth Paulson lives in Ouray County, Colorado, where she teaches writing classes and leads Poetica, a bi-monthly workshop for area poets. Her poems have appeared nationally in over a hundred literary magazines and anthologies. Her third book, *Wild Raspberries*, was published by Plain View Press in 2009. Beth has had poems nominated for 2007, 2009, and 2011 Pushcart Prizes, and she received a Best of the Net nomination for 2012. Her website is <http://www.wordcatcher.org>.

Katie Snyder

WAITING

I. My feet hurt

I am tired

I don't want to be here

Bags under my eyes

My hands dry and cracked

My back aches

Don't want to be here

Yet here I am

Practiced smile blooms on my lips

Makeup like a doll

Eyes wide, falsely shine

Happiness radiates off me

Shirt buttoned, apron tied

In full character

II. I get home and I want to drop. My eyes are dull and my makeup has faded and worn off. The bags are visible again. Angry curses stream from the lips that bore a smile only an hour ago. All the lights are off, everyone is fast asleep. I am the only thing that stirs the silence of their sleeping breaths. I work my way down the hall to my room. Shirt already un-tucked and unbuttoned, belt off ready to toss on the floor, my hair down. I make quick work of my jeans, socks, and undershirt. Finally free of the stifling uniform I run my hands over my face and through my hair.

I grab my PJ's and head off to shower. Letting the warm water run over my bare shoulders where all the stress and frustration from the night has landed. I twist my back side to side and hear the pops and sigh. Now that some of that tension is gone I slowly spin to let the warm comfort of the shower wash over my face.

Turning the knobs off I step out of the steam into a once fluffy towel. Slip into my cotton night shirt and pink plaid bottoms and head to my sanctuary. My bed in sight I sigh with relief, rest within my grasp.

A soft moan distracts me and I turn to see my sleeping children. A bittersweet twinge hits my heart. I love them so much and I am so happy to see them. Yet as I go and kiss them goodnight I can't help but realize they won't remember this. They will wake up with the memory of going to bed while I was gone. I wasn't there for bath time or to hear how daycare went. I wasn't there to make sure they ate all their super, and I wasn't there to tuck them in. They will wake knowing I wasn't there before.

As I lay down and turn out the light the last thing I see is a neatly pressed white button up shirt. Ready for tomorrow when again, I'll be in full character.

Author's Comment: Katie Snyder lives in Maiden, NC and previous work has appeared in 234 online journal. She is a fairly new author and is still trying to find her niche, but hopes you enjoy the read.

Karla Merrifield
UNTARNISHED

She knows full-well about the forty-
three seconds of separation
between hero and the he's-only-

human fireman who stopped
to phone home honey and child,
to the wife on route to the Twin

Towers. She's measured the forty-
three seconds of distance
between fact and fiction, the over-

loaded length of his last cellular
call with the sirens of the hook and ladder
silenced one mile due north of Ground

Zero. She's still carrying the forty-fuckin'-
three-second weight of omission
or suppression or deletion. Pick one.

No dereliction-of-duty business, girly?
The guy paid the big price, right? Change
the clock compassionately for NYFD's sake. It's 9/
11, Legends cannot afford the detail.

Author's Comment: "Untarnished" is based on a true story of a reporter who covered 9/11, during which she uncovered the fact that one responding fire truck stopped on route to the Twin Towers — they willfully delayed their arrival against protocol and the urgent situation to selfishly, some would say, call their loved ones. The reporter decided not to blow their cover in her stories of the tragic event she witnessed firsthand. Today, she's still agonizing about that judgment call, one that went against journalism ethics but arose out of compassion. Thus she helped preserve intact those firefighters' reputation as stainless heroes.

Karla Merrifield

WOMAN ON LOVE

She appropriated the edges of love.

Later, she annotated volumes of it.

In her love stories? Poets.

She was always taking new names.

I was moose; I was armadillo.

Time— and love!— made her giddy.

She wore totem turtles.

She conversed with green tree spirits.

Cosmically, she found home: the Universe.

She embodied the metaphor of love.

She placed lichen in the foreground.

She came so close.

with a line from Michael G. Smith

Author's Comment: "Women on Love" is from a growing collection of poems that honor poet and friend Michael G. Smith, whom I think of as the next Arthur Sze. In each "Micheal poem," I tweeze a line from his first book, *Almanac*, and leap from his words into a new realm, a new poem. Such appropriation has proven successful for me. *The Etowah River Psalms*, (FootHills Publishing, 2009) is comprised of poems similarly inspired; line after line I extracted from Georgia poet Beau Cutts's master poem, "The Etowah," spawned an entire book of poems! Thus I give gushing thanks to my muses.

Karla Merrifield

LAST APPLAUSE AT THE SPORTSMAN'S LODGE

Moses Merrifield had some serious equipment
for a singer at fisherman's dives.

He played the country juke in hick joints

all around Cape Vincent's boondocks,
hundred bucks a gig, if he was lucky,
plus free, unlimited Arbor Mist 'til two a.m.

Today I move the heavy-duty pieces around
like so many audio buddies of his,
geezers he once hung with at the bars.

I position them as if for head shots
in a fading performer's portfolio,
or grizzled mug shots in a wino's line up.

I make a dozen documentary photographs
of cables and stands, mufflers and extenders,
six microphones (four brands). I trip over tri-pods.

I drop the names of his late-night pals:
Bose and Nady, Rogue and Carvin,
Starstruck and Starpower, one called

Musician's friend, I kid you not.
I count the pre-amp direct boxes, one, two.
I count speaker ports, one, two.

This was his sound system,
these his sing-along companions.
He'd drink to that, Moses would drink.

Soon his stage gear – all thirty-five components –
goes onto Craigslist lickety-split
with four low-rez .jpeg still lifes attached.

Start your own band now! Or upgrade
with this complete set! I add disclaimers:
No shipping available; not sold separately.

His guitar, voice and talent not included.

Author's Comment: For several years, I've explored the parameters of grief, first through my book, *The Urn* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), where I examined my husband's inevitable death

by cancer. (Miraculously, he's still standing!) Then, lately, I've looked at grief through the lens of my brother's death-by-slow-suicide. "Last Applause" is from my in-memoriam collection, *Virus in the Song*, dedicated to my only and very troubled sibling. I mourn the loss of his considerable musical talent while I rage against the man who wasted it in cheap wine. I've learned – so far – that grief is multi-faceted; it can even make you laugh.

Bio: Karla Merrifield is Review Editor at *The Centrifugal Eye* and a previous contributor to *Wild Goose Poetry Review*.

Ronald Moran

DECLARATIONS

So, if I want to declare something, a new trick
for me,
should I use Facebook or Twitter or should I try
to write
yet another poem, this time with more insistent
rhythms
than I am used to, and with end-stopped lines,
punctuated,

here and there, with different characters, as in
a dash,
question mark, exclamation point, period, and,
rarely,
a question mark, since almost all of the texts
on how
to write a poem discourage use of questions,
as if,

well, how can readers give a proper feedback?

And

what is sacred about a line being end-stopped,
as in

I hear the honking of a flock of Canadian geese.

Why?

Must they be lost because they honk? O, Yes.

I must stop

declaring, and why do I say, if I wanted to declare,
since

that is the province of those more confident, like
the young,

and why should I declare anyway, being neither
seer

nor prophet, nor talk show host, nor Cable TV
analyst?

Ronald Moran

WHEN NIGHT BECOMES DAY

It is 6:45 in the morning, and the temperature
should be
in the mid-to-upper 60s, a great relief from
our
afternoon burnings in upstate South Carolina,
where

I am living out my days alone in a small house
built
wrong from the street, like a row house, put up
only
if the backs of properties face the uninhabitable,
like mine;

but all I am really thinking about is how to get
back
to sleep, now being like the middle of night
for me,
even though my dreams are taking on too much
of the bizarre,

as in a pair of lions chasing my car, and me having
to shove
one of them out the window, while my mother
grows
more insane by the moment, and I have to yell
at her,

when, alive, she was just shy and self-conscious;
and,
uh oh, I am on a golf course I thought I knew well,
and, whoa,
there's a green with two holes, as if for beanbags
while

I am wearing a light brown suit, as out of place here
as I feel
on this course that I thought I knew, and there's
Mother,
sane as ever, leaning far over and making a putt,
looking

at me as if I were insane (What are you doing here?)
but now
I am thinking, why do I want to go back to sleep,
when, Jane,
I have mostly nightmares since you died, and why,
when

I awaken, am I often talking out loud as much as
two sentences
to my dreammates, before I realize it, and I think
of the time,
in your last months, when I was dreaming of trying
to punch

some guy threatening both of us, while, in fact, I was
punching
your small back in slow motion until you woke up,
saying,
Ron, what're you doing? Stop it! And I did, my fist
in mid-air.

Ronald Moran

LANDING PATTERN IN MID-AFTERNOONS

At the same time every school day afternoon
while I am
in my den, as usual trying to decipher the secret
of my
small, singular universe, shrinking every day,
I wonder

if the big one is also shrinking, as some say,
or expanding,
as most astrophysicists maintain — my not being
practiced
in their arts, so I believe — and given findings,
it is fast

becoming an art, since each piece, however small,
is needed
to sustain life in the universe; and I am impressed,
not uneasy,
but if I were younger, I would take physics more
seriously,

so while I am reflecting, with far fewer synapses
than before,
about creation, endings without biblical prompts,
I hear
a sound like a 737 in a landing pattern overhead,
and I rise

to look out the four pane, palladium window over
my expanse
of blinds, for a Southwest Airliner, a new carrier
flying 737s
to our airport, big jets for us, but the sound comes
from a school bus

downshifting on a gentle decline, below the only
landing pattern
over my subdivision, carrying five or six children
from Oakview,
while someone waits for each one, as if the bus stop
were a gate.

Bio: Ronald Moran is Professor Emeritus at Clemson University. He is the award-winning author of 11 collections of poetry and literary criticism.

Tim Peeler

AFTER GOD 7

They sat in his dorm room, a
Greasy stinking biker, and
The girl he'd been seeing,
Smoking his dope, drinking the
Last of his beer, and he kept
Wondering, why did she bring
Him here, what motivation,
Till finally, with the dope
Gone, frig emptied, the biker
Leaned toward him, and muttered,
Don't fuck with my whores, you hear,
And he answered, of course not,
And watched the cute little red
Headed girl, to see if
There was some indication
That she liked being this guy's
Whore, and she had a possum
Grin, behind her cigarette.

Thirty-three years later, he
Tries to recall either of
Their names, wishing the moment
Back, that he could have stopped it,
Thrown the first surprise punch, then
Taken the knifing, beating,
The gun shot, saved himself from
A whole world of bullshit.

Tim Peeler

AFTER GOD 8

There is a bad God, he thought;
His hair had gotten too long, and
He flipped it from his eyes
Like a younger man
On a Saturday, busy trying
To advance love in a turquoise
Jacket and white puffy shirt sleeves,
Albert King on the other television stool.
Stevie Ray, I want to say,
Don't get on that bird.
Starting my third year of grad school,
I heard it from the piss and moan
Curly headed punk who would
Break into Monty Python snickerings
During a Mark Twain lecture,
And it was as if skynyrd had crashed
In a delta field again.
There is a bad God
If there is any,
And we are slicked down
And blued up in the grease paint
And the stage light that leads us away.

Tim Peeler

AFTER GOD 10

He planted apple trees,
Cleaned out the barn loft,
Ran a pine splinter into a thumb
Shelving useless old textbooks.
He cleared the dangerous asbestos ceiling,
Triple-bagged it and hauled it to the
Construction dump where he got
The pickup stuck and had to be
Pushed out by the old blues guitar
Player who operates the
Air conditioned bulldozer.
He drove home and spent a half hour
Misremembering his past;
Then he slept for the first time
Since he planted the apple trees,
And he dreamed that Andie MacDowell,
Having sold her Asheville mansion,
Had moved into the trailer next door
So she could be near his apple trees.

Bio: Tim Peeler is the author of 5 collections of poetry and 5 books on baseball history. He lives in Hickory, NC.

Eric A. Weil

ON BEING OFFERED MY DAUGHTER'S PLACENTA

Holding my half-hour-old, healthy baby,
I don't understand the midwife's question
at first. She points at the filmy glob;
a dead jellyfish, beached. Anthropology

lesson: the Navajo and the Maori bury
the placenta in sacred, ancient soil.
Some Chinese and Vietnamese families
eat it, mash a paté or brew a broth

to share genes, strengthen mother's milk.
But we are vegetarian suburbanites
planning another move, so we decline.
A placenta is no more than a bio-fuel filter;

the midwife drops it like unused egg whites
into a stainless steel bowl for incineration.
Placental protection finished, my daughter starts
a new round of wailing as we turn toward her future.

Author's Comment: "Do you want the placenta?" The question surprised me because no one asked it three years earlier when our son was born. Our daughter will be 27 a few days before this poem appears, which is an indication of how long it takes me to grind experience into poetry. In one of life's grand coincidences, I am happy to report that she has just learned that she is pregnant. I suspect that if asked, she too will decline the offer.

Eric A. Weil

PLEASE PHONE, DONT TXT

If you want to talk to me, please speak, for while
I hear your voice, I believe in you. When I read
your texts, spy-code abbreviations disguise your accents.
In a voice there is life, in your intonations I hear an echo
of everything you've said to me, but I cannot hold a book
or hang my shirts in the closet and text you back.
I would stop anything while we're together, and I smile
to hear you across hundreds of miles of air, but when
you text me, it feels sneaky. I see congressmen
tweeting during the State of the Union and blue screens
strung through a theatre audience, I am afraid
you are driving or stealing time from your job
or from a friend at lunch. Do not misunderstand — I can tap
a Lilliputian keyboard — but words that would flow
from my mouth jam behind my thumbs like clots
in a sclerotic artery. Thumbs were made for grasping,
and if I cannot grasp you I will hold your voice to my ear
like the sea in a conch, hearing the heartbeat
of your cadences, listening and listening still.

Author's Comment: This is a tribute to, and an update of, "Please Write, Don't Phone," a wonderful poem by Robert Watson, my professor and friend who died in February 2012. I was grateful to share a draft of my poem with him (and to learn that he enjoyed it) a few months before his death. Bob's Collected Poems came out in 2011; read it.

Bio: Eric A. Weil is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *A Horse at the Hirshhorn* and *Returning from Mars*. Poems are forthcoming in *The Hurricane Review* and *Main Street Rag*. He teaches English at Elizabeth City State University, in North Carolina.

Jonathan K. Rice
JOHNNY HODGES

His pencil-moustached embouchure
wrapped around the mouthpiece.

The reed vibrated just right
at his effortless breath

that gave life to Things
Ain't What They Used To Be.

I can smell the cork grease,
pads and spit:

that sweet jazz saliva
lubricating arpeggios

as his fingers dance
vertically across the brass.

My turntable spins the Duke
across my living room.

Bio: Jonathan K. Rice is editor and publisher of Iodine Poetry Journal. He is the author of a chapbook, *Shooting Pool With A Cellist* (Main Street Rag, 2003) and a full-length collection, *Ukulele and Other Poems* (Main Street Rag, 2006). He has been a longtime host of poetry readings in Charlotte, NC, where he lives. He is a recipient of the 2012 Irene Blair Honeycutt Legacy Award. Jonathan is also a visual artist represented by MoNA (Museum of Neighborhood Art) formerly known as Plaza Muse in Charlotte, NC.

Alarie Tennille
KEEPING COOL

The used car was a steal
Daddy said. Air conditioning.
So we piled in and headed
for Richmond. Broad Street,
downtown—scalding pavement.
What did we care that traffic
crawled? We enjoyed
the novelty of not sweating.

The woman in the next car
seemed cool, too, as she
asked Mama, “Did you know
you’re on fire?”

Flames shot up from the chassis.
My brother saved himself,
watched from the corner as Mama
turned into Wonder Woman,
yanking me up and over
the front seat.

Now the three of us stood
on the curb yelling at Daddy.
The fireman with a bull horn
yelled, too, “Sir, get out of the car
NOW!” But Daddy just stayed
cool.

Author’s Comment: Obviously this family car trip was a dramatic and frightening event for a child of about eight. But what struck me as I began to tell it was how it highlighted the differences in my parents’ personalities. Mama was at her best in a crisis—knew what she needed to do and jumped to action. Daddy was famous for taking his time, which was why his army buddies nicknamed him “Flash.” Keeping cool must have come in handy for a paratrooper (82nd Airborne, WWII), but it sure could annoy the rest of us.

Bio: Alarie Tennille is a Pushcart Prize nominee and serves on the Board of Directors of The Writers Place in Kansas City, Missouri. Her chapbook, *Spiraling into Control*, is available on Amazon.com. Alarie’s poems have appeared in numerous journals including *Margie*, *Poetry East*, *ByLine Magazine*, *Untitled Country Review*, *I-70 Review*, and *The Little Balkans Review*.

Mary Ricketson

BUILDING THE HOUSE ON HANGING DOG CREEK

We were hippies then,
disillusioned by the American dream,
credit cards and debt, folks who sold out.
Moving back to the land attracted us.

We ignored the best jobs,
chose Appalachia for beauty,
farm land, hiking and canoeing.
We set out to build a home
with our own hands,
grow food, create a self sufficient life.

Saving for years, finally it was time
to frame, roof, wire and plumb.
Every detail is still embedded in my mind:
Mark the space with batter boards.
Level with plastic tubes and water.
Dig deep for foundation piers.
Mix concrete in a wheelbarrow.
Set the joists, then the floor and stud walls.
Become expert with hammer and nail.

An old house provided salvage oak,
glass, and doors. We tore it down.
Days and days of pulling nails, sorting wood
taught me patience I had not planned to learn.
We built our doors and windows in a class,
learned the tools, sanded for hours.

I remember dancing through the house,
both stories standing tall and straight.

Author's Comment: This poem relates the true story of a project started in 1978, building my house. I still live in the house. It has never been entirely finished, though it doubled in size with the addition of a very small newborn person in 1986. Life has changed many times since the days of building this house. Still, it is one of my most memorable and character building accomplishments. I wrote this poem to help my son know about my life before he was born.

Bio: Mary Ricketson's poetry has been published in her chapbook, *I Hear the River Call My Name*, *Lights in the Mountains*, *Echoes Across the Blue Ridge*, *Freeing Jonah IV*, *Freeing Johah V*, and *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, Future Cycle Press. She won the gold medal for

poetry in the 2011 Cherokee County Senior Games/Silver Arts. She is a member of the North Carolina Writers Network, a mental health counselor, and a farmer.

Jay Sizemore

ADULT FILM ACTRESS

She's a sultry swan, with paper feathers,
torn from the pages of bibles.

The small of her back is a river bed

stoney and smooth as credit fraud.

She's a souvenir bottle opener,

her lips mated apostrophes,

putting her words in quotes,

her blowjobs in guillotines.

She's a flotation device.

Author's Comment: "Adult Film Actress" is an expression of the duality that exists between fantasy and reality, and the inherent danger of being unable to separate the two. It is also a commentary on the difference between what is perceived and what is actual, while trying to achieve satire without judgement. I hope it succeeds.

Bio: Jay Sizemore has never lived by the sea. He writes poems to separate his voice from the blurred wings of the moth, fading into the silence of the night. His poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in: the anthology Prompted, oncur.ren.cy, Red River Review, and was featured on Toad the Journal's blog forum. He lives in Nashville, TN, with his wife Elizabeth. They have three cats.

Rana Williams

DUST IN THE SHOWER

Topless
raining in a lovely lavender
spotted mini
Clouds of white puff cotton invade my space

I see the consequences,
a blur of imagination
a spuddle

Quiet episodes of "Cougar Town" play softly in my mind
I could be her
this could be you
"single"

The cascading relevance at a Sunday's bar
brings me back just to look again at you
I heard the music
but did you?

Drowning to be loved
Not wanting to be alone again
Agony
heartache
dripping tender swelts of painted swirls
all lined with my black beaded guilt

Hide me
Keep me kept away
in this room
just like this

The covered toilet reminding me I could be here for years
looking
searching
hoping to fix all that is not perfect in that mirror
I can do nothing else
But stand here
Stand here
while the world continues to live.

Author's Comment: The poem "Dust in the Shower" is about a single woman in her mid-thirties. She is lonely, trapped in a world of obsessive thoughts. This character keeps looking

at the bathroom mirror so to fix her physical appearance, unable to realize her anxieties have taken over, leading her further into a depression.

Bio: Rana Williams graduated with a B.A. degree in History and double minors in English and Professional and Technical Writing from Morehead State University in 2007. The poem "Dust in the Shower" is her first published poem.

Natasha Wall

THE TRUE ART OF SEEING

Unnoticed once again, jumping high constantly, consistently, on this trampoline of life.

C me! Can U C Me?

U can't possibly miss me—300 lbs of unwanted flesh, springs dragging low to the ground.

Arms outstretched wide to the sky—aspirations high—clinging to Zen, to Ken, to Tolle, to Bach,

Saying whatever you want me to say.

Talking however you want me to talk.

Losing me and finding me all at the same time.

Revealing much—confessing little—desperately seeking your approval.

C Me! Dammit, C Me!

I C U.

Only U.

Majestic and regal. Hair, sharp and silver that I long to caress.

Tongue laced with life-saving jargon. Ooh, it woos me every time—

Resurrects me after it burns me up.

In your garden, on your couch, in your room, I teleported to 1994

When my pounds were 143 and your silver was wooden.

I dreamt that I was the one who embraced you, enlightened whilst overlooking an NYC skyline with

Anna Moffo serenading and enveloping us

and then I imagine being filled with that sly package that winks at the world when you sit a certain way.

It's then that I C, I C,

I... C... U,

But I know deep down

U C Another.

Author's Comment: "The True Art of Seeing" was all about my venture into Zen and attending satsangs with the most beautiful Renaissance man I had ever seen. He and I shared emails for a year and a half on the finer arts of "being" and "dropping all of our attachments." The irony? I had the hugest attachment on this painter, musician, carpenter, engineer, singer, and actor! The ultimate irony? By the time this is published, he'll be married to a mutual friend who is blonde, blue-eyed, is the epitome of the woman he described when speaking of Anna Moffo.

Bio: Natasha Tyson (Wall) is a 15 year English teacher who recently won three awards (one of them a Metrolina Theater Award) for portraying the role of 'Sylvia' in the Uwharrie Players' production of "All Shook Up." She is a Drama advisor and teaches Theater Arts to the youth at Music on Main in Stanly County, NC. She has had pieces published in "The BlueStone Review", "The Wild Goose Poetry Review", "The Nomad", "The Western Carolinian", and

"The Dead Mule School of Literature." She is the mother of a 5'7", 12 year old who is the highlight of her life.

Lorri Barrier

SPRING AFTERNOON

In a rare moment of quiet
I watch my children descend,
traverse tall grass
toward the creek
mason jars in hand.
It's been too long since
I've walked there myself-
They return an hour later
with grubby plunder-
tiny black tadpoles and stories of
the crawdad they dared not catch.

Inwardly I vow as I
smile vaguely at their jars-
next time I will go.
Torn as I am between the duties I keep,
washing dishes, sweeping floors
and the hungry ache for silent space-
Like them, I still feel the pull
of lush green, buzz of spring heat,
promise of spongy earth
beneath my dirty feet.

Author's Comment: I wrote the poem "Spring Afternoon" because I had the general feeling that I was passing up an opportunity with my children (walking to the creek to catch tadpoles). Even though I could have gone with them, I felt more like I wanted a little time alone. I think it is a feeling most parents know well.

Bio: I live in Mt. Pleasant (NC) and teach English at Stanly Community College in Albemarle. I've been married 13 years, and I have three children. I have always enjoyed writing, and I am most inspired by simple things—just the regular activities of life.

William Cullen, Jr.

SOMETHING TO EXPIATE

Digging for bait
I envy a small robin
just twelve feet away
pulling up worm after worm
I'd hire him if I could.

Instead I wait
until it starts struggling
to yank up one more
then I charge the bird quickly
and grab the old night crawler

But I'd like to think
that she showed me some pity
and it wasn't just
haste alone that made her leave
her children's meal behind.

Bio: William Cullen, Jr., is a veteran and works at a non-profit in Brooklyn, NY. He's married and has two college-age sons. His writing has appeared in *Asahi/International Herald Tribune*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Farming Magazine*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Home Planet News*, *Willows Wept Review*, *Written River* (Hiareth Press), among others. He was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2010.