

Fall 2016

Pats on the back are great. And in a field like poetry, where there are so few other extrinsic rewards for one's work, they are appreciated even more than in other fields. However, they are not exactly what I had in mind years ago when I decided to go with a blog-style publishing format so that readers could leave comments about the poems in *Wild Goose Poetry Review*. Rather, what I was hoping to see was a running dialogue about poetry or about the content or style of the individual poems or about the possible meanings created by the contrast and juxtaposition of poems within an issue. A discussion about the topic introduced by a poem. Or about the effect of a particular poem. What it reminds the reader of or makes him or her feel or think about. Or about the use of imagery or soundplay or synecdoche or any other poetic technique in the poem.

To that end I'm inviting you all to comment not just on the individual poems in this issue, which include a wide range of styles, techniques, and subjects, and are written by poets both familiar and new to Wild Goose readers, but also to comment here on poetry in general. I am teaching a small class in the spring entitled Contemporary Poetic Theory, and I intend to deal with the essential questions about poetry: What is poetry? What does it do? What can it do? What should it do? How does it or should it do these things? Why read/write poetry? Please offer me (and our readers) your answers to these questions. And if you're not sure what to write, then at least send along one of your favorite statements about poetry.

To get us started I will remind everyone of a statement from William Carlos Williams that may prove apt in our current political climate: "*It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.*"

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Barbara Conrad

URBAN BOOK CLUB GATHERS TO DISCUSS THE GRAND DESIGN BY STEPHEN HAWKING
ON THE VERY WEEK HIGGS BOSON IS DISCOVERED

By God, everyone will meet at Sandy's,
though apparently the group will manifest *only if only if only if*
each can prescribe to the same
history in the same universe at the same time.
Luckily most members are politically and age compatible.
However – string theory may unravel
when it comes to sex and religion.
Sex? You know some will bring it up, they always do, still pining for the 60s' lawless
laws-of-nature days. I guess we could call it a top-down model of cosmology,
an early big bang revolution.

As for religion, some prefer science to mysticism – that familiar
apple of Adam's liking, or
as our author so wickedly dangles
in our faces as fable:

Viking wolves baying at the sun and moon.
Meddling Greek gods.
Even some obscure African deity named Bumba
who, when faced with an ache in his (or her) gut,
simply regurgitated us all into existence.

Barbara Conrad

KILLING THE BUDDHA

The house is empty except for an elderly cat and a woman.
The woman is listing four noble truths in a spiral notebook.
The notebook has been labeled "World Religions,"
a fresh page open for Buddhism.
She is familiar with suffering.

Sometimes holding the pen causes a joint in her thumb
to numb. The cat has arthritis in the arch of his back.
Outside, winter birds search for seed, perch
on a fence, still as memory.
It's been quiet in the house for too long.

A muffled thump means the cat
has jumped from the bed. Such intention, the woman
thinks, to lumber toward his litter box, the water bowl.
With a single in-breath,
she invites peace to settle.

But the cat has rustled something.
At the far edge of the ottoman
climbing near her left foot — a large black roach.
They all consider the consequences.
The roach twitches.
The old cat slinks back to his place on the bed.
The woman, well-versed in the concept of reincarnation,

decides against it, releases her breath into the room,
her notebook onto the roach.

Barbara Conrad

THIS IS THE LETTER I'M NOT WRITING YOU

the one about regrets no not that one
the one about love not that one this time
This is the letter I'm not writing you
with its weary list of could-have-beens
should and would-have-beens if-onlys

but this is not that letter either
This is the letter I'm not writing you
the one that says how much I nevermind
the one that wishes we had forget it
This is not that letter

the one I'm not writing you the one
that simply says our last snow was wet
and at the feeders the season's first bluebird
a pair of Baltimore orioles
a yellow-rumped warbler

Barbara Conrad

AFTER ATTENDING A COMMEMORATION
OF THE 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, I COME HOME
TO FIND A BAT IN MY BEDROOM

Top of the stairs, feeling for the light switch
in a dark room — this instead — darting

swooping past my hair, my left ear, my right.
Not the chimney swift I would have favored

or a gentle house wren, something easily
gathered in a soft cloth or coaxed out

the back door. This one's wing span was
too wide, too fluid. A dark shadow

I couldn't navigate, nor my thoughts —
a shrunken head with teeth, the dreaded

bite, how would I sleep. I backed out
of the room, considered then my toothbrush

and bed sheets fresh from the dryer,
re-entered with an old towel and broom.

I don't know if fear can justify
such a tiny thing he'd become, no bigger

than a man's thumb on the floor. Lurking
no more on my door frame, blind

gaze ablaze in his own angst. We were
two strangers backed into corners

one poised for preservation, the other caught
in someone else's status quo.

So there I was, here he was, limp tatter
of rag, wings tucked into submission

folded small and neat and proper
as if making one last effort to please.

Colin Dodds

YOU EFF OH

Hell filled
Heaven unbuilt

A scientist came to school and told us
loneliness doesn't exist,
but money does

Sentenced to a pursuit of happiness
in a world without end
Our questions answered
with mass-produced luxury items—
the cul de sacs said amen

Lutheran, Methodist, Latter-Day Saints
churches wherever state highways crossed
The ghost of God haunted the hills
so heavily
But the orange gas station signs said it best—
there is a Gulf, a Gulf indeed

I borrowed my mother's car
And flew past the schools and strip malls,
flew past the churches and gas stations

I was a flying object
who aspired to be unidentified

Colin Dodds

A DECLARATION OF WAR ON A LOTTERY TICKET

And fortune is a whore
say the men
working the convenience store

But the names of the scratch tickets
make it clear that, though wicked,
fortune's why we're here

The rules change as if they were tidal
And all I want's a star to steer by
But that false idol is nowhere nearby

Above the retail floor, above me and you,
the screens preach a new impotence,
proclaiming World War Two
and the heat death of the universe
a pair of unlucky coincidences

Give me a pope, give me a druid
The situation here is just too fluid
The screens say we can shove it, picket,
or write our woes on a lottery ticket

I get lucky, and find a war to start
Beneath the screens, I approach my fortress of a heart
Unsure whether I'm coming, as a soldier clown,
to fortify its walls or to tear them down

Colin Dodds

NEW MUSIC

To be righteously, physically
exhausted, in a car,
with the radio playing
something new.

I count on the world
to open up like that.

If you must, call the music
the predictable, procedural
intended
required to keep us
humping the grindstone.

But it still counts.
It all counts.
It has to.

Bio: Colin Dodds is the author of *Another Broken Wizard*, *WINDFALL* and *The Last Bad Job*, which Norman Mailer touted as showing “something that very few writers have; a species of inner talent that owes very little to other people.” His writing has appeared in more than two hundred publications, and been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology. Poet and songwriter David Berman (*Silver Jews*, *Actual Air*) said of Dodds’ work: “These are very good poems. For moments I could even feel the old feelings when I read them.” Colin’s book-length poem *That Happy Captive* was a finalist for the Trio House Press Louise Bogan Award as well as the 42 Miles Press Poetry Award in 2015. And his screenplay, *Refreshment*, was named a semi-finalist in the 2010 American Zoetrope Contest. Colin lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife and daughter. See more of his work at thecolindodds.com.

Michael Beadle

SISYPHUS IN THE PARKING LOT

Welcome to Hell—
a superstore with enough shopping carts

to serve a third-world country,
where the customers keep coming,

ready to buy
what the jingly ads have promised—

everlasting youth
at discount prices,

instant euphoria
in a range of colors.

Customized comfort,
satisfaction guaranteed.

Modern convenience
brought to you by

the makers of frozen
pizza, plastic furniture,

laxatives, hair gel,
ice cream, handguns.

Charge it all to the cards
that keep you in debt

for eternity—
and once you've stuffed

your SUVs and minivans
full of groceries and accessories,

there's a guy
who will gladly take your carts.

You've seen him a million times—
lanky teen in khakis

and a button-up shirt,
bright orange safety vest.

Too shy to speak,
too tired for words,

he toils weekends and school nights,
saving up for a car he can't afford,

but he takes pride in being the one
chosen to track down all those stray carts

ditched along curbs,
stranded like cars in a snowstorm.

He is their shepherd, their conductor,
gathering the clattering rattle

into a long train
pushed back to the station,

back to the store,
only to watch them escape again

and again, hour after hour,
night after night,

because the customers
keep coming

and this store
never closes.

Author's Comment: I like to re-imagine stories from the Bible, mythological tales and other fantastical stories so they are told in a new perspective. It could be re-imagining a story in a different time period or telling the story from a different character's point of view. So, with the story of Sisyphus (a man cursed for eternity in Hades to roll a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll back down again), I thought, "What might be a modern version of this tale?" Perhaps it's that kid we've all seen in the parking lot, rolling those trains of shopping carts back into the shopping store, only to see them come right back out again, as if for eternity. No, Hades and Hell are not technically the same place, but for the modern reference I was looking for, Hell sounded better here. I wanted to observe the seemingly unending consumerism that you find at a superstore these days. And after the customers drive away, there's something noble in the effort of this teenager working at minimum wage working out a debt that seems insurmountable.

Michael Beadle

TRACE

If we are taught to parse time
into nanoseconds, spot blips of ships
on radar, mark the start of the cosmos
with quarks, then surely dominions
of minutiae deserve a monument
worthy of veneration. Bring forth
marble to carve their names—
Iota Trivia Miniscule.
For they are the microns and milligrams
that nudge us toward victory or catastrophe.
Let beggar and general pay tribute
to these smidgeoneers or suffer
the blinding flash of their alchemy.
Mere mites they are, borne on the whims
of the wind, until they take hold, congregate,
slip through a cell wall, dance too close
to an electron and va-whoosh!
A chain reaction, an avalanche.
One bit more, one speck less
turns crack to chasm, pox to pandemic,
star to smithereens.

Author's Comment: While on my way to church one day, I thought of another mythological poem. What if there were gods devoted to the tiniest of deeds? Shouldn't we salute these micro-forces that work in and around us? They should have names, and we should honor their work to keep us safe from calamity. Scaling down to the essence of life, perhaps we appreciate the infinitesimal miracles taking place around us.

Michael Beadle

AISLE OF TEA

In stacked balconies they rest:
boxes of crushed leaves
bearing names

poets bestow
upon an autumn moon,
a rising sun—

wild orange, saffron rose,
cinnamon plum, tangerine bloom.

Voluptuous flowers
that scent our jungled dreams,
await us in the next world—

jade mist, scarlet citrus,
blueberry hibiscus.

Drink of kings,
sip of socialites,
café's currency.

O jasmine oolong,
O white peach of the Orient,
teach us sweet silence

as we pour
your worth
into our cup.

Author's Comment: Shopping at a health foods store, I was amazed at all the wonderful names that tea companies give their flavors and brands. They are truly poetic words that reflect the kind of exotic, blissfully serene experience we hope to have with a good cup of tea. Sometimes it's fun to create within that luxury of lovely words.

Bio: Michael Beadle is a poet, writer-in-residence, and author living in Raleigh, N.C. He is the author of three poetry chapbooks, a poetry CD, and three books on historic photographs of Haywood County. His latest chapbook, *Primer*, was a finalist in the 2016 Cathy Smith Bowers Chapbook Contest and is set for publication in spring 2017. Since 1998, Michael has been performing original, contemporary and classical poetry for audiences of all ages in schools, festivals, libraries, churches, restaurants and a variety of public venues. As a touring writer-in-residence, he teaches creative writing workshops for students and teachers throughout North Carolina. In 2012, he served as a poet-in-residence at the NC Zoo in Asheboro. He also serves as the student poetry contest manager for the NC Poetry Society and is an emcee for the NC Poetry Out Loud high school recitation finals.

Larry Schug

WHERE IS ED ABBEY'S GRAVE?

First off,
I ain't about to die in a hospital bed.
Help me get these needles out of my arms
and get me the hell outa here;
no damn gravestone for me, either,
no name, no meaningless dates.
Drink some beer, put me in the ground
up on top of some mesa with a view
where my bones'll never be found.
If you must look for me,
look in a slinking coyote's eyes
or a cactus spine stuck on your boot,
the proverbial bur in your saddle.
I'll be the grit in your eyes and nose
when the wind blows sand,
the ripples in a stream
that's bone dry most of the year.
You might remember me with a curse
and a story,
remember when that god damn Ed...
That said, I wouldn't care
if you sang a song of me,
as long as you only sang it once,
then let it fade into the ether
or buried it with my bones.
Just leave me the hell alone.

Author's Comment: I find it very interesting, though not surprising, that Ed Abbey would choose an isolated mesa top as his final resting place with no marker or indication of any kind. Perhaps he knew (though I doubt if he cared) that he would live on in his words.

Bio: Larry Schug is retired from a life of various kinds of physical labor and currently volunteers as a writing tutor at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University writing centers and as a volunteer Naturalist at Outdoor U. on the campus of St. John's. His eighth book of poems A Blanket of Raven Feathers is currently in the hands of its publisher, North Star Press, and hopefully will be out in May 2017.

Ronald Moran

JOURNEYING WITH A POEM

It is not that hard to figure out why
the first
and all subsequent readings seem
as if
that one poem came from a distant
way
of life, and that we are supposed
to read
it in a context unfamiliar to anyone
here,

perhaps, in whatever galactic cluster
it left
and then had settled into the fertile
mind
of a new poet, studying how to write
poetry
in the Deep South, a sensuous poem
by one
overcome and embarrassed by his
seminar

leader and eight other bewildered
students,
and had to take their sneers, jokes
and
whatever young writers must endure
for making
a poem far from the norm, when it
could be
a product of the splintered and maybe
even

symptomatic aura of a culture trying
to give
traumatic birth to a poem, or whatever
name
fits, as if both the poet and the poem
are waiting
for a sign to keep going, just as long as
they are
willing to embrace what they hold as
dear.

Roseanna Boswell

SUDDENLY, WOMEN

I didn't know I loved women till I found them in my poems and they were all body and soul and left no room for my insecurity the way boys always seem to when we hold hands and I think that they're thinking about somebody else who does this better than me, and longer than me, and fits impossibly smaller spaces than me, where they like me and I don't. I didn't know I loved women till one day she was there behind my eyelids and I thought here we are, here we go, she's come home, this body could fit my body like hillsides love snow. I didn't know I was allowed to say both, or neither, or all. I didn't know about space with walls that weren't straight until I opened this door and here she was: hillside snow, open eyes, poem's close.

Bio: Roseanna Boswell is a poetry MFA candidate at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She has had both prose and poetry published in North Country Literary Magazine. Her writing focuses primarily on the voices of girls and women and seeks to explore and interrogate traditional notions of femininity as related to gender, sexuality, and body image.

Pris Campbell

DON'T SIT UNDER THE APPLE TREE

I look for my love-fix
in glazed over eyes, men
who woo with words writ
for pennies tossed in a cup.

I've lain in too many beds
that sag like a fat man's coffin,
reek of other women's perfume.

Like the Times Square clock,
I've seen them all come and go.

Tonight's lover turns in his sleep,
calls out another woman's name.
His words fade into the damp city heat,
then fall as a flash shower
around midnight,
startling two hookers,
high-heeling their way home.

Pris Campbell

BED OF NAILS

No gypsy's tea leaves,
no crystal balls,
no voices in the night
warned me that you would lie
first on that bed of nails,
wings shorn,
pennies at the ready
for this day coming up faster
than a runaway train
towards that dark day
which is to be your last.

You were my Anthony
but you hid behind your shield.

I eventually left you
and the thread between us
stretched, yet never quite broke.

I remember shining armor,
gardenias in the breeze,
my bouquet pressed between
pages of a love story.

Now, with each breath a countdown,
I wonder if fire can once more
be swallowed into a man's belly.

Author's Comment: I enjoy writing about the oddities of life, loss, old loves, quirky people, dead people. Stand on the corner wearing a twenties aviator's hat and you may end up in one of my poems. Cross me in love and you'll certainly appear. More of my poems can be found at <http://www.poeticinspire.com>.

Bio: The poems of Pris Campbell have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including PoetsArtists, Rusty Truck, Wild Goose Review, Bicycle Review, Chiron Review, and Outlaw Poetry Network. The Small Press has published six collections of her poetry and Clemson University Press a seventh one, a collaboration with Scott Owens. A former Clinical Psychologist, sailor and bicyclist until sidelined by ME/CFS in 1990, she makes her home in the Greater West Palm Beach, Florida.

Cordelia Hanemann

ELEGY TO A BALD CYPRESS

i

Going home is not what it used to be.
Acadiana: home, heat, hum of hungry mosquitoes.

Lake Martin, where love began:
sultry Louisiana summer,
huge bald cypress, green and lush,
its night shadow enticing in moonlight.
Catfish, dangling on trotlines,
fastened to mangles of muddy vines,
lured, seized, stripped, filleted
and fried over an open fire.
Tangles of legs
on Grandma's frayed
cotton quilt.

ii

Pilgrimage is a empty ritual:
23 years wed; now the divorce is final.
The old bald cypress is dead,
which we'd thought would live forever,
now a large woody arm rising out
of the mist, fracturing the lead sky.

iii

No egrets circle our once bold
cypress monument;
no trotlines hang
from moonlit vines;
hyacinths choke the lake
to quagmire.

Scuds of clouds scavenge light;
sultry heat sucks out air;
lust of mosquitoes
pierces unsuspecting skin,
each kiss, a tithe to love's demise.

Author's Comment: What I tried to capture in the poem is the feel for place—and the loneliness of no longer belonging to that place, where life and love began. As we move through time, we change, things change. The poem is part autobiography and part meditation and all muse-driven. I am from Louisiana in an oblique way and always, when I go back there, want to connect and to belong. The lake itself is a life-force where love begins: love of life, of adventure, of place, of a boy and a girl/ man and woman, of time and memory, of story...Going back is always filled with expectations but disappoints because we can't go back and what we remember is perhaps a fiction worth preserving, or is too painful.

Bio: A native of Southwest Louisiana, but the daughter of an army officer and diplomat, Cordelia Hanemann has lived in Japan and London as well as in the US. She earned a PhD from LSU with a dissertation on the language of contemporary poetry and developed a career as a university professor. Her work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Southwest Review* and *Third Wednesday Magazine*; anthologies, most recently *The Sound of Poets Cooking* and up-coming, *The Well-Versed Reader*; and in her chapbook, *Through a Glass Darkly*. She is currently the featured poet for Negative Capability Press, and The Strand Project recently presented a monologue she wrote for performance. Hanemann is currently a practicing artist and writer in Raleigh, North Carolina and is working on a first novel about her roots in Cajun Louisiana.

Kelly DeMaegd

DEVOTION

she left the church

declares she floats
closest to God
in her own kitchen
home of fire, salt, cinnamon

there she chills diced butter
cuts fat into flour
slowly adds ice water
mixes with a light hand

splits apples, marvels
at the five-point star
that shelters pips
holds a slice to her ear

listens for prophesy
her knife clicks against wood
each piece moved aside
like beads on a rosary

she simmers fruit with sugar, thickener
adjusts spices, lifts spoon to taste,
recites O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth will proclaim your praise

Author's Comment: This poem was inspired by a quote from Thomas More: The ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.

Bio: Kelly DeMaegd is a Pushcart-nominated poet living in Sherrills Ford, NC. She has been published in Wild Goose Poetry Review, Vox Poetica, Your Daily Poem and Bloodshot Journal of Contemporary Culture. She regularly contributes to and facilitates Art of Poetry at the Hickory Museum of Art and is a contributor to Winston-Salem's Poetry In Plain Sight.

Lynn Ciesielski

LIFE SUPPORT

Two deer, one groundhog and what may have been
a snake on the unending road to and from
a funeral hours from home in the town
where his last marriage died
and through this oddity we work
to resuscitate our common heartbeats
that have slowed further each day
for at least months now.

So next to a roadside toilet I pick him some daisies,
the small, weedy kind that no one will miss
but those he'll remember long after they wilt
which doesn't take long considering

and later I glance at their remains
as they sit in the cup holder
with some quarters and a few odd pennies
although it was me
who had said time and again,
Cup holders are for cups,
in my classic way of stating
the obvious, one reason, I guess

for this slow death we experience daily
but somehow in such times find a way
to breathe life back into each other.

Author's Comment: In her seven year marriage, Lynn has come to realize that relationships are a lot like journeys, beset with detours, surprises, disappointments, and stretches where it seems that nothing good is on the horizon. She wrote "Life Support" during one of those periods, when her husband was dealing with a series of deaths that occurred very close together. When she realized that the mortality of her marriage was the only thing she could prolong, it became clear that she needed to reach out to her husband when he needed her most.

Bio: Lynn Ciesielski worked for decades as a teacher for adults and children with various types of disabilities. When she left her career about ten years ago, she turned her attention to family interests and a fervent pursuit of poetry, as writer, student and event host. Her work has been published over one hundred times in journals including this one, in Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine, Iodine Poetry Journal, Helix Magazine, Buffalo News, and numerous others. She has a chapbook, I Speak in Tongues, published by Foothills and a collection, Two Legs Toward Liverpool, with Main Street Rag.

Al Rocheleau

GALE FARM

When you are gone
my hurt comes back
as if in season, a replayed reel
that amplifies to howl,
a horse whinny, wild,
hogs in the slop, milling
without elbow room and wondering
in the black and white dust.

I run with it, gate to tree
calling out
and kick the slant-door
of the root cellar
like a girl.

No one to help me.

The worst of it twists
like special-effects, muslin
on a lazy-Susan that passes
for sinuous pipe of tornado,
that pretends to rip the door
from the little house and do it through
and through, and me inside
(and do me, too) in my
lonely disorient without
the semblance of healing, without you
on my trip of missed paradise,
no emerald, poppy-red or blue,
wiped off another Kansas map

at half-past three
in the afternoon.

Author's Comment: "Gale Farm" places that feeling of missing in a context we all know. It is disorienting in its way. Others are elsewhere; the one you need may indeed be thinking of you but just then you can't connect; maybe you can never connect again. The feeling is the same for a man or a woman. So Dorothy in this case can be me or you or another. Missing can be erased by a new challenge or fantasy, at least for awhile, but unabated, it comes back. We never get to Oz in this case; we just hope to wait out the storm, hope to find each other, or another, again.

Bio: Al Rocheleau's work has appeared in more than sixty publications in the U.S. and abroad, including Confrontation, Illuminations, Van Gogh's Ear, Evansville Review, Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Nedge, Pig Iron, Outerbridge, Pennsylvania English, Nebo, Slant, Sahara, Revelry, Iodine Poetry Journal, and Poetry Salzburg Review. In 2004, he received the Thomas Burnett Swann Poetry Prize, offered by the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Association. His manual, On Writing Poetry:

For Poets Made as Well as Born, was published by Shantih Press in 2010. He has lectured at various colleges and universities and for writers groups, including the Florida Writers Association and the Florida State Poets Association. In 2012, he launched the Twelve Chairs Advanced Poetry Seminars, a 180-hour, 30-seminar program available to private students of all ages. The program also offers scholarships to high school students, and is accredited by the Florida State Poets Association. Al lives in Orlando, Florida.

Sam Barbee

CATCH OF THE DAY

Benched on a cedar stump
a rumpled angler listens
to the secluded brook coax:
hours of spinning whisper
from huckleberries and banks
of white flowers
warming the path back.
Wisteria gnarls curl
behind bunched lavender.
Colorful
lures and crank bait glisten
on his khaki vest. Fatigue and fly pole
clutter the Sportsman's shadow
where his enthusiasm
dims.
From wicker creel,
he removes a single trout.
It refuses to wrangle across his knee:
less than trophy-size, gill-dry,
fixed onyx eyes. The captor's
fingers weave it on his thigh.
He senses the vigor-less fish petrify,
and tosses it into the garden's thatch.
Each pastel scale fades
in shards of afternoon.
Dusk breezes evade him,
submerged in the arbor shade.

Author's Comment: This poem depicts demise as one ages, and the attempt to replace one passion with another, sometimes by necessity, sometimes ineffectively. The trappings of any pursuit may still seem shiny and bright, even the yields of that enthusiasm or commitment, but time has a way to dull so many things.

Bio: Sam Barbee's second collection, *That Rain We Needed* (Press 53), was published in April of 2016. He was awarded an "Emerging Artist's Grant" from the Winston-Salem Arts Council to publish his first collection *Changes of Venue* (Mount Olive Press); has been a featured poet on the North Carolina Public Radio Station WFDD; received the 59th Poet Laureate Award from the North Carolina Poetry Society for his poem "The Blood Watch."

Laurie Wilcox-Meyer

THRESHOLD

I have a poisoned tumor. I am losing my hair.
Still, my hairdresser asks me,
“What do I say to my daughter at the wake?
The body present, will be so absent.”

At nine years old, I stood by his open casket. The stern conductor in black—
the tux he'd worn directing Mahler's 9th—
spin of the baton on the final note of the last measure
of the First Movement. Dead maestro on stage.

I may decide to fling and toss my arms
when the next round of chemo drips in three-four time.
For now I'll stay a cobra longing for my India,
its sitars and tanpuras. Lively saris.

Stacey Portillo

HONDURAN SUNRISE

During October's rainy season,
the chill seeps into
the concrete floor.
I sip my coffee, strong,
with heaps of
coarse, unrefined sugar.
Sitting by the front window
of the bungalow,
I wrap my sweater tight,
watch the women
pick through the fog
to the mill,
balancing bowls of corn
on their heads
and babies on their hips.
They will pat tortillas
from fresh masa,
cook them over the fire,
and feed their families
in the weak
light of morning.

Author's Comment: "Honduran Sunrise" was inspired by her time teaching English in Central America and the rich culture she experienced while living in the tiny village of El Socorro.

Bio: Stacey Portillo has been a writer since elementary school, but her love of poetry came from a creative writing class in high school. She currently works as an English Language Learner teacher at an elementary school, but she has taught overseas, in private schools, and in public schools.

Herbert Woodward Martin

AFTER THE SHOOTING

I am not sure where the conversation began, but I do know that a reporter for a national news organization thoughtfully wrote: *The grandfather began the evening prayers with: We should remember the pain the killer's family must now live with. We all have absorbed some portion of their pain into our presence. It was not a portion of the harvest we expected to gather today. But it is a part nevertheless. Still we must hold steady to forgive because it what our Heavenly Father commanded and what He would have us do. We must be innocent in our accepting of the pain others perpetuate upon us. We must be cognizant of our own guilt, in this matter just as the Second thief was in realizing his own failure.* His words rolled steadily from his heart and he uttered them from his mouth like the turning of the wheels on their buggy as it was often to take them into town. He further said: *We will not allow this particular pain to deprive us of our dignity as we grieve this erasure. We will meet this horror face to face and it will serve us as an honorable people.* He said all of this to the rapt attention of the children while his oldest daughter made careful preparation with her tears. Her duty had brought her to this burial point of saying farewell to her first and third daughters. She would wrap them in white winding cloth as the community required. She would take a memento of hair from each offspring. There would be no photographs left to testify that they were ever alive. She would keep the hair in a locket around her neck. This would be her only private remembrance. She would kiss each sterile face goodbye. Her husband would make two graves as duty required even though the earth resisted each stroke of his shovel. So grandfather, daughter, mother, father, husband and wife each turned according to the wheels of duty. After the preparations were all accomplished, the minutes, hours, days and months would turn themselves into years of snow. Nothing of this day would be left the reporter wrote. An eradicating whiteness would infect even the memory.

Bio: Herbert Woodward Martin's newest collection is titled *On The Flyleaf* published by Bottom Dog Press in Huron Ohio. He has taught for three decades at The University of Dayton and was that institution's Poet-In-Residence. He is retired now and spends his time writing, revising and giving readings of his work and that of Paul Laurence Dunbar. His selected poems is titled *Inscribing My Name*.

Andrew Hubbard

CONFIRMED

I lie in long grass
With the spotter behind me.
He smells. Probably I do too.
“Don’t be a judger,” my wife would say.

We are watching the doorway
Of a pretty, bamboo cottage
Eight hundred yards dead ahead.
I’ve adjusted the rifle on its tiny tripod for the
distance
And a fitful breeze from the east.

The light couldn’t be better.

Mosquitoes and firebugs bore in
There’s nothing to do but take it.
It’s 100 degrees. I hydrate
From a backpack and pee
Into the special pants they give us.

The worst thing is the time.
We know that going in, but it is very difficult.
Eight hours, then ten, then twelve,
Fourteen. At about eighteen
He appears in the doorway
I know him by his medals.
Why are they so stupid to wear their medals?

The spotter with his sixty power scope
Says, “target confirmed, take him.”

I squeeze the trigger as though I were touching my wife.

The rifle whispers, “phut.”
There is an agonizing, eternal, two-second pause
And then the man’s arms fly out sideways
And he hurls back into the cottage darkness.

“Confirmed,” says the spotter
And we shimmy a mile back
To the river. I have R and R in Bangkok
Where the most beautiful girls in the world
Cost fifty dollars a week,
Introduce you shyly to their family,
And cry when you leave them.

By then the nightmares have stopped
And I'm ready to do it
One more time.

Clint Bowman

AT A STOPLIGHT ON NORTH MAIN

Car of four
baby on board
loved by lord

Three not sure
teen in back
finds her knack

Mother of mom
behind the wheel
done with ordeal

Sits beside driver
aching with age
unlike dying daughter

Driving with disease
head without hair
sitting in sweat

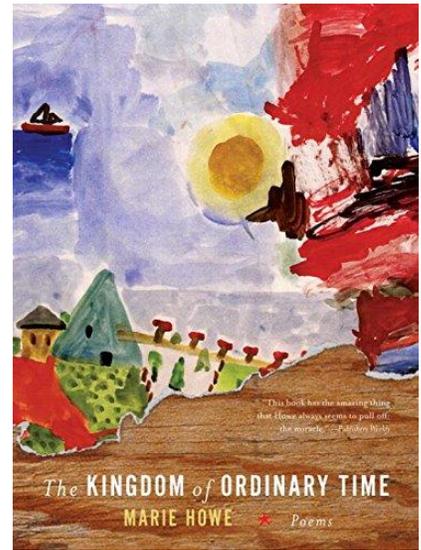
Four clocks ticking
at different times
baby's slowly stopping

Author's Comment: "At a Stoplight on North Main" is a true account of an experience I had while, as you might imagine it, at a stoplight on North Main Street in High Point. Each passenger seemed to be at such a different stage in their life, I couldn't help but remember the basic fact that any given day can be the last day for any particular person.

Bio: Growing up in the rural outskirts of High Point in the Piedmont of North Carolina, Clint Bowman spent much of his time in the outdoors finding inspiration in the wilderness that surrounded his childhood home. A 2015 graduate of North Carolina State University, Clint learned nearly everything he knows about poetry through a single class he attended at NC State and further self teachings through critical analysis of poems and peer reviews of his own works by other writers. Clint Bowman currently leads the Pullman Poet Society based out of High Point, NC through the High Point Arts Council.

Review
by Katelyn Vause

THE KINGDOM OF ORDINARY TIME
Marie Howe
W.W. Norton & Company, 2008
ISBN: 0393337340



If I had to pick one word to encapsulate the chief emotion behind the poems of Marie Howe's *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time*, I would choose "yearning". Yearning for the time when we still believed in miracles, for things to slow down, for us to truly see and understand each other. Howe's "Ordinary Time" is simply that of the everyday things we find ourselves doing, seemingly mundane, yet capable of inspiring wonder. Her poetic voice is one of a writer enamored by the world who desires to know its secrets, and who discovers them by looking at little moments. That yearning and philosophical depth Howe explores throughout the book can be summed up with her poem, "Limbo".

*Each of them can't decide if there is a god
or if there is a self.
Do I have an I? one says
to another who seems distracted, looking out what might have been a window.
What is the difference between a self and the soul?
Is it true that one god is in relationship to each of us?
Or is the each of us an illusion, and we are the god we are looking for?
That's what the distracted one is thinking and what
she wants to know,
and she wishes that the other person would stop bothering her,
and she wishes she had more time to think about these things,
although she has all the time in the world.*

While some of her pieces get a little too esoteric, this is beautiful in its clarity. Howe blurs the line between the spiritual and the corporeal, and makes you ask yourself about the last time you carved out time to think about more than just the dishes in the sink and what you need to do tomorrow. Each poem asks a question of the self and holds both faith and doubt in a neat tension. Howe is usually skillful at crafting thought-provoking lines without getting too obscure or impersonal (we have all been the speaker at some point). However, sometimes she pushes the line and meaning is lost; nice imagery will be tied to lofty thought, but unless it is somewhat anchored to reality, those thoughts float away like balloons into the sky.

My favorite poem in the entire book is "Easter".

*Two of the fingers on his right hand
had been broken
so when he poured back into the hand it surprised
him – it hurt him at first.
And the whole body was too small. Imagine
the sky trying to fit into a tunnel carved into a hill.
He came into it two ways:
From the outside, as we step into a pair of pants.*

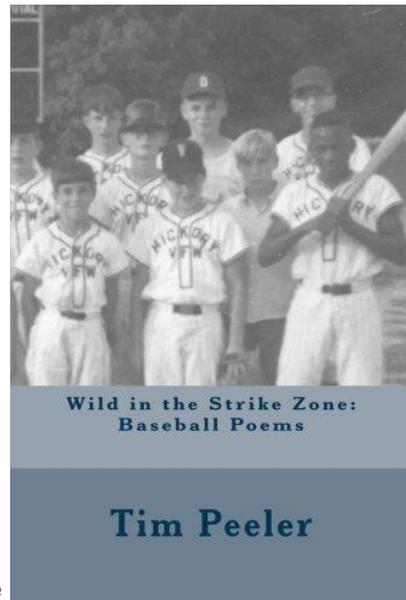
*And from the center – suddenly all at once.
Then he felt himself awake in the dark alone.*

We tend not to ask ourselves what it must've felt like for Jesus to return to his human body after being away for three days. To go from being interconnected with everything to essentially shrinking to a tiny pinprick within the whole expanse of the universe. Howe thinks about this, and captures the feeling with the striking line, "Imagine the sky trying to fit into a tunnel carved into a hill." But I think this line resonates so much because it goes beyond biblical imagery. After all, there is so much more to us than our bodies, and we are each our own skies being fit into tunnels. Other poems, including "The Star Market", "Why the Novel Is Necessary but Sometimes Hard to Read", and "The Spell" emphasize this. And if for no other reason (though there are many), that realization is why I would recommend this collection.

Review
by Jordan Makant

WILD IN THE STRIKE ZONE: Baseball Poems
Tim Peeler
Rank Stranger Press, 2016
ISBN: 978-0692719701

Wild in the Strike Zone: Baseball Poems is not about baseball, and yet simultaneously this collection of reflective letters to a younger version of a now grown-up boy is about baseball. Using such an easily understood and accessible theme, Peeler's ninth full-length collection explores both the self and the feelings of those that came before, treading the line of nostalgia without quite crossing over into the realm of the ahistoric.



In the very first poem in the book, for example, Peeler describes the life of a man, presumably the speaker's father, who drove a 'Nash four door because it made sense / When you were picking up kids from church / And picking up kids for games and taking / Kids home from school', elucidating the man's reasoning for driving that specific car by noting it was because it was dependable and it was what a teacher's salary and a preacher's salary could afford back in those days. It is here the philosophical ideal of those days becomes so immediately obvious and potentially problematic: "Wild in the Strike Zone, 1965" sets the tone for the entirety of the collection, and Peeler could have easily allowed for a tone of demented nostalgia, a feeling summarized by the phrase back in those days and usually followed by the implicit or even explicit suggestion that those days were better days. Instead, the poem's focus on cheap cars and poor salaries grounds the poem in the reality of those days, refusing to allow the reader (or, perhaps more importantly, the poet himself) to get away with thinking that we ought to make a return journey.

But that is not to say there is no desire to make such a philosophical return. Even in some of the darker poems in the collection, there is a trace of longing for times gone by, a hint of the regret we all sometimes feel for having grown up so fast. In "The Moon Wrestles the Sky Away", Peeler epitomizes this feeling by creating two parallel images for the reader. First, there is the image of 'you' in the poem, sitting in front of the computer, as stunned as the day your father sliced the throat of the rabbit you held in your arms. Second, there is the image of 'you' standing at the pitcher's mound, hearing the faint noises of the tiny crowd, the fainter noises of the surrounding nature, going into your pitch 'As the moon wrestled the sky away.' Peeler allows us to see the nuances of life in crystal clarity, and other poems, especially "1945", "1961", "Old Man Poems 1", "The Natural", and "Baseball Apostate" further this understanding of reality. Throughout the collection, Peeler makes clear that while life was not perfect, it was good. And, the poems seem to say, there is a certain unexplainable sadness to the fact that that part of life is over now.

While for the most part an excellent example of accessible and relatable poetry, there are a few issues with *Wild in the Strike Zone* that should be mentioned. The twelve poems contained in the "Hickory Rebels" chapter, while good poems, add little that is not found throughout the rest of the collection. A notable exception to this is "Rebels 5", yet that poem has issues of its own: while historical accuracy is appreciated and noteworthy, I am not convinced of the legitimacy of Peeler's usage of 'negroes.' "Rebels 5" is an incredibly powerful poem, yet I would suggest that the use of 'negroes' in the first line does more to detract from the poem by bringing to mind current-day discussions of race and political correctness than it does ground the poem in the gruesome reality of

the twentieth century that Peeler is trying to discuss. Additionally, Peeler's usage of enjambment throughout could create problems for some, as the line breaks often seem to serve no real purpose aside from the act of breaking the line, and they create a rather stilted reading experience in some places. However, if the reader is willing to follow Peeler along through his enjambment experiment, I think one will find, like I did, that the particularity with which Peeler breaks his lines create an almost dreamlike experience, further invoking the nostalgia so crucial to the collection's success.

While *Wild in the Strike Zone* opens the reader to the idea of the collection being about baseball, it also makes clear that Peeler is using baseball to reach for something even more universal. As the final lines of the final poem says, "If it all must end, let the old curses / soar through the night forever." Like this collection, life is not perfect. Not now, not then. But it was good. It is good. It is good.