

# Spring 2013

WILD GOOSE POETRY REVIEW  
SPRING 2013

You will want to spend a lot of time with this issue of Wild Goose Poetry Review. It is rich, diverse, and has more “links” between poems and even between reviews and poems that can possibly be appreciated in a single reading.

I usually like to begin each issue with the poem that is my personal favorite in the issue. This time I had no fewer than 9 poems I wanted to start with. So that didn’t work.

Then, I usually like to arrange the poems that follow so that they are thematically linked from one to the next, creating a sort of over-arching narrative or at least some sense of progression. That was impossible this time. Yes, I have arranged several “connected” poems so that they are contiguous, but the range of topics addressed by poets whose work was too strong for me not to include multiple poems, made any coherent beginning-to-end arrangement impossible.

So, the best way to approach this issue is slowly and repeatedly, letting the poems wash over you and letting the links between them arise subtly and organically.

This is one of the largest issues we have had, with 32 poems by 23 poets, and 7 reviews by 5 different reviewers. Many of the poets are familiar to Wild Goose readers (Ronald Moran, Helen Losse, and others). Many are new (Phebe Davidson, Julia Nunnally Duncan, and others). Some are being published for the first time anywhere (Akacia Robinson, Donna Engel). Some of the reviewers are also new to the task (Mel Hager, Betty O’Hearn). Some of the reviewer also have poems included (Davidson and O’Hearn). And one of the poets reviewed also has poems in the issue (Dacey).

All of it makes for an interesting opportunity to compare and contrast forms, styles, what different poets have to say about similar topics, and what poets and critics believe make up good poetry today. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have, and I hope that you will join the conversation by leaving your comments for the poets, reviewers, and other readers to consider.

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Louise McKinney  
TELL IT LONG-STORY-SHORT

Long-story-short:  
that winter  
met the ex-chop-shop-man/poet  
(same thing),  
got real drunk on possibility,  
passion (same thing)—  
DID drink too much  
(Beam)  
smoked too much  
(weed)  
scattered seed enough to plant the land  
in rows from Canada  
to Mexico—  
and danced, danced!

Danced the whole Christmas season  
through  
'til it got cold outside it snowed;  
found ol' Smokin' Joe in his cups  
(avec wheels),  
and begged him:  
“Good times Joe, don't you know?  
Don't wanna miss 'em!  
Come on, let's split this scene,  
let's burn these leaves.”

Deadhead South  
three-on-a-party in a car for the border  
so many beer cans rolling, empties (floor chimes)  
and lightning! Lightning!  
Joe's thundr'ing (in his sleep)  
“F-ya” from the dark backseat,  
but then all us greeting  
Great Mississippi's Waa-a-rm Brow-w-w-n Roll-l-l—  
riverside, hands plunging deep-down to the bone  
down at the shore, on the very edge,  
down to the rind, and always on the very edge  
of doing yes.  
(“Life ain't no straight line.”)

So, god, then, let-it-be-forever-more:  
brown hands in Natchez,  
serving barbecue, clashing plates

quaffs and riffs from the Queen of Soul,  
with a toast to greet great writers,  
bit of bourbon lifted, but never too late  
for ol' Count No-Count  
(Faulkner, asleep in his grave).

Finally to our destination: New Orleans  
doing what-it-takes  
doing our own "thang,"  
slaving for the lawyer/crook (same thing)  
changing my name.  
And going incognito, become a poet without fame  
(same thing)  
Bilking the system, falling into the swamp  
wading wetlands in drinking, in indolence, in ennui  
until I'm . . .  
"Saved"?

Marry the Born-Again Man  
bear him three sons,  
(Café du Monde shade, café au lait).  
In short, we all settle down,  
long after the miles and miles, and Miles  
we're buried to the hilt in silt,  
anchored to a big easy bend of the river  
'til floodwaters wash us all  
far, far away, far away from there. . .  
But it's never all the way, and it's never back—  
(home)  
because, it's true,  
you never can,  
and you never (never ever-ever?) do.

Author's Comment: When I decided to make New Orleans my home, after a whole year of adventuring (we called it a literary wanderjahr), many people asked why I'd traded the eternal winter of Canada for eternal summer in the Big Easy. I always told them: "Do you want the 'official' story, or the REAL one?" This poem tells the real story.

Bio: Louise McKinney is a Canadian expat-author originally from Toronto and now nonfiction editor of The Chattahoochee Review. Her book of creative nonfiction, *New Orleans: A Cultural History* documents the time she spent living in New Orleans, LA, pre-Katrina.

Sharyl Collin  
BREAK

I didn't see it coming  
going through my day at work,  
softball practice later  
with friends who lived  
in that other world  
where I'd spent too little time.

Driving home, the longing to explore  
expanded like a helium balloon,  
hot molecules seeking space,  
straining against worn walls.

I was setting the brake on the pickup,  
the vehicle he insisted we needed  
to carry equipment for the band  
he still hadn't formed, in our driveway  
beside the lawn he still hadn't mowed,

when he peered out the window  
newly risen from the bed he, of course,  
had not made, probably wondering  
when dinner would be served.

I wasn't sure  
if it was the sound of the brake,  
or a tearing from within,  
the moment I realized  
I would never cook for him again.

Author's Comment: It's interesting to me the way those moments that lead up to a major change in our lives can hover for the longest time, like a vapor that slowly creeps in until it fills the room, and a door has to open before something explodes.

Bio: Sharyl Collin has had poems published in Mason's Road and Rubber Lemon, and has completed her first chapbook, Tales of Trailers, Tamales and a Few Sour Grapes. She lives in Torrance, California, with her family and black lab, Sadie, and works part time in an emergency room.

Julia Nunnally Duncan  
POLITICS

I lost interest in politics  
when my father died.  
A Yellow Dog Democrat,  
he trained me from babyhood  
to revere Roosevelt,  
stand up for the working class,  
and never high-hat anyone  
as he had been high-hatted on Main Street  
decades before  
when he walked from the hosiery mill in work clothes  
and was snubbed by one who dressed better  
and seemed ashamed to speak to him  
though they were friends.  
He never forgot that slight.

So his fight became mine.  
As a girl, in '69,  
I defended Ted Kennedy,  
though I was too infatuated to see  
what his actions implied.  
My father didn't say much  
while Clinton was in,  
kept tight-lipped then,  
but cast a straight Democratic ticket  
when I drove him into town to vote  
that final time in 2000.  
He sported his I Voted sticker  
on the drive home,  
but from then on  
I sensed all was not right.  
Four years later,  
when voting time came around again,  
he didn't ask me to drive him  
to the polls.  
I knew something in his mind had gone away,  
and the rest of him would follow bit by bit,  
day by day.

And since his death,  
much of my Democratic spirit rests  
with him at Memorial Park.  
So when I hear one politician  
bark at the other

over the economy or the other's inadequacy,  
I shake my head and think  
Will any of this matter anyhow  
when we die?  
Then I seem to hear my father's voice say,  
Maybe not,  
but it matters now.

Author's Comment: When I was a child at family gatherings, I remember men sitting around smoking cigarettes and talking politics. I stayed with my father during these discussions, rather than with my mother and women relatives who congregated in another room. I understood that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was someone who had stood up for the working man. My father spoke of him often. In my father's last years, when I drove him to the polls, I saw how important voting was to him. I'm glad I shared this experience with him and wanted to capture it in a poem.

Bio: Julia Nunnally Duncan is an award-winning poet and fiction writer whose publication credits include seven books of fiction and poetry. She lives in Marion, NC, with her husband Steve and their daughter Annie. She teaches English and Southern Culture at McDowell Technical Community College and continues to write poetry, fiction, and essays.

Phebe Davidson  
RAIN CROWS

Some nights, when the house  
was tidied, the dishes washed, and the bed  
turned down, waiting, she would

sit awhile in the dark, quiet kitchen  
holding a cup of tea, feeling the air moving  
through the open window.

She could hear the tree frogs scream  
and the long shrieks of cicadas had become  
a sort of song, something she loved

without reason, like the moving air,  
the dark quiet of her kitchen, her anomalous  
place in everything. When she turned her head

she could see moonflowers on the trellis  
by her garage, overtaken by a joy so absolute  
she would forget for a moment to breathe,

thinking  
Let me die now.  
Please, just let me go.

Author's comment: This poem was written before my husband's death, but with a sense of how close that event had become. It was something I could imagine myself feeling at some point in the future.

Phebe Davidson  
PRAIRIE WIFE  
on a line by Mark Swanson

Breeze bent broom straw.  
Wind became a second skin.  
The afternoon turned raw as raw.  
She swept out what wind blew in.

Wind became a second skin,  
Later the sky went black with rain.  
She swept out what wind blew in.  
Day after day the same, the same.

After the sky went black with rain  
she shuttered the windows fast and true  
Day after day the same, the same.  
She did as much as she had to do.

She shuttered the windows fast and true  
and clutched her broom with all her might.  
She did as much as she had to do.  
And locked the door against the night.

Author's Comment: For good or for ill, I've never really lost my early infatuation with rhyme and rhythm.

Bio: Phebe Davidson is the author of several published collections, most recently *Waking to Light* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co, 2012). She is a staff writer for *The Asheville Poetry Review* & contributing editor for *Tar River Poetry*.

Phillip Dacey  
NEW YORK REQUIEM

My idea of a good death  
is to fall under the wheels of  
not the crosstown 79th Street bus  
but the motorized wheelchair  
of Itzhak Perlman,

who lives in my neighborhood,  
whom I have seen countless times,  
and who yesterday almost  
ran into me as I made notes for a poem  
while walking on Columbus Avenue,

where I would be happy to die  
if I could do so under the weight and impact  
of the violinist's bulky vehicle,  
my final encounter thus a musical one,  
appropriate after so much of my time spent

attending recitals at Juilliard, which someday  
he'll be exiting, having just seen  
a student of his perform, at the very  
moment I trip—to all appearances  
accidentally—in front of him as

he's speeding up on the sidewalk,  
so that I can be a martyr (O, Catholic  
childhood's dream of sainthood!)  
to music, its ability to transport  
the listener to a new place.

Author's Comment: From 2004 to 2012, I lived out a post-retirement adventure by residing on Manhattan's Upper West Side. It was a glorious experience, especially when I discovered I was a short walk away from Juilliard, where for eight years I turned myself into a Juilliard junkie by attending student recitals often daily, sometimes more than once a day. Itzhak Perlman taught there, and some of the recitals I saw were performed by his students. The death I imagine is of course a comic one, but one I would seriously prefer to other kinds of deaths

Phillip Dacey  
THE COUPLE

He likes to write in the margins  
and between the lines  
of poems in the books he owns;  
she prefers to leave the pages of hers  
pristine, the voice of the writer  
uninterrupted by any noise  
from the sidelines.

He speaks of engagement with the text,  
intimacy, a give and take  
between reader and poet.  
She says his way's a violation;  
he says what good's a virginal page?  
You're no better, she tells him,  
than the disrespectful person in the auditorium  
who rattles a program during the violinist's  
whispery solo.

They read in bed together, his hand starring  
and underlining and checkmarking  
what he loves or leaving a spoor  
of commentaries beside passages, her hand moving  
only to turn the page.

They are the yin and yang of poetry readers,  
complementary halves of a complete circle.  
She can't read his books because of the static  
in their white space; he can't read hers  
lest he reach for a pen. Their libraries  
watch each other warily across the room.

Author's Comment: Robert Bly says that whatever is true is worth exaggerating; accordingly this poem takes a personal situation and, for the sake of the story, exaggerates it. The wariness at the end, the absoluteness of the divide between the two readers, and their give-and-take are all inventions, but inventions based upon my partner and me. The liberties I take reflect my belief in "caveat emptor" for readers: never assume that a poem—even if a seemingly heartfelt lyric—reflects the writer's personal life. You might be fooled, and it won't be the writer's fault.

Bio: Philip Dacey's latest of twelve books of poetry is Gimme Five, which won the Blue Light Press 2012 Book Award. He is the author of entire collections about Gerard Manley Hopkins and Thomas Eakins as well as two books of sonnets, one of them what he calls "New York postcard sonnets." His work has appeared in such leading periodicals as The Nation, Hudson Review,

Poetry, *The Southern Review*, *The Paris Review*, and *Partisan Review*, and with David Jauss he co-edited *Strong Measures: Contemporary American Poetry in Traditional*.

Holly Day  
ALL THE DAYS AFTER

we fight like suicide bombers, intent  
on destroying everything just  
to make a point. hand-painted dishes from Hong Kong  
figurines of children in lederhosen from Holland  
a collection of German drinking steins  
cascade into an unsalvageable puzzle-piece pile of  
ankles, bonnets, houses with pointed archways  
and heavy silver handles. We wreck

everything within reach  
grind cat food into the Persian rug under  
the weight of our twisting bodies, collect  
skin beneath our fingernails, rip out  
fistfuls of hair  
crunch teeth against bone.

When you're dead, I will forget you.  
I will roll the hand-knotted Persian rug up around your body  
drag you out to the construction site across the street  
hurl you into the dumpster full of broken  
cinder blocks. If you win

I don't give a shit what you do with me.

Kelly DeMaegd  
ENTERING DEATH WITH OPEN EYES

It wasn't like a gunslinger  
striding forward, shooting, shooting  
kill or be killed, eyes open,

boots on. It was nothing  
like that. She needed to  
drive with open eyes

her big ass Cadillac downtown  
searching for bennies, blackbirds,  
sparkle plenties. Eyes open

to see pills, scotch, pity.  
Seeking, stumbling forward,  
she entered death with open eyes.

Author's Comment: This poem was inspired by my mother who was caught between the domestic myth of the 1950s and the cultural revolution of the 1960s. She was unable to navigate her aspirations with courage, and instead, fell into a dark hole of addiction that eventually killed her.

Kelly DeMaegd  
YOU WOULDN'T KNOW

To look at him  
you wouldn't know  
that he is able  
to tease a fat bead  
of solder into a line  
the width of a spider's leg.

You wouldn't know  
that he meticulously trims  
ten foot topiaries  
with embroidery scissors.  
Inspects each stem,  
clips each leaf.

You wouldn't know  
that when his wife  
became seriously ill  
he stayed awake nights  
to gently hold the sheet  
away from her aching body.

You wouldn't know  
that he believes  
in the old-fashioned notion of rotation,  
socks, mattresses, garden crops,  
thoroughly documented  
on the calendar.

When asked why there are no children,  
he ponders the properties of glass,  
lead, spruce, cotton,  
of any living organism  
altered, molded,  
crushed, smoothed, severed.

He thinks long and hard,  
finally replies  
that he may not have the patience  
to be a good father.  
To look at him,  
you wouldn't know.

Author's Comment:

This poem is an homage to my loving, easy-going husband. On a deeper level it explores choices that each of us may make when we're not fully cognizant of our motives or character.

Bio: Kelly DeMaegd currently lives in Sherrills Ford, North Carolina with her husband. Her first published poem was in the previous issue of Wild Goose. She has subsequently been published by Vox Poetica as well. She spends her time creating mixed media collage, gardening and writing poetry.

Robin Richstone  
THE BATH

First I will fill the tub,  
and while that's happening,  
I will untie your shoes,  
unbutton your buttons,  
lift away the leathers and fabrics  
with their scent of airplanes,  
foreign smoke, and being  
confined too long in one small space.  
In your delicious skin you will  
half sink, half float  
into water scented with bergamot,  
I will tip your chin and  
anoint your head, I will  
lather shampoo through  
your fine grey hair  
and rinse it away, your eyes closed,  
as with some other pleasures.  
Then I will take my hands and the soap  
and rub every inch, every half-inch  
of your perfect body  
that I never tire of,  
the years it carries, the places  
it has taken you, the trouble  
it's gotten you into, including this:  
me, my hands, this hotel room,  
the thick towels waiting  
for the final act.

Robin Richstone

THE ACCIDENTAL METAPHOR

I am taking apart this necktie  
your ex-wife never liked, putting the pieces  
into my collection of bits of silk  
you've sloughed off. This one,  
from when you and she kept parrots,  
is scarlet, blazoned with those birds,  
irrepressible, cheerful, but provoking scorn  
from the woman who already thought of leaving you,  
a knot around your tropical, yearning heart,  
as she looked past you with Antarctic eyes.  
But back to the necktie. I unpin the birds' wings,  
remove the cautionary tags.  
Now it can be something else.  
Now it can be anything. I cut all the threads.

Bio: Robin Shectman Richstone has been published in Poetry, Beloit Poetry Journal, Briar Cliff Review, New England Review, North American Review, Sycamore Review, and other magazines.

Akacia Robinson  
DEFINING MOMENTS

I was nine years old  
when I discovered death,  
my brother broken  
in our backyard,  
suicide gun shots  
echoing through air  
as if they were at a distance.

I was nine years old  
when I discovered  
that mothers cry,  
that sometimes parents  
bury their children,  
family become strangers,  
and shameless fathers lie.

I was nine years old  
when I discovered pain,  
that you need not  
step on a flame  
to set yourself on fire,  
that if you talk of dying  
they send you to a shrink.

I was nine years old  
when I discovered depression  
take a pill they said  
to cure the darkness in the brain  
take a pill they said  
to turn that frown  
upside down.

I was nine years old  
when I discovered funerals  
and false sympathies,  
that bullets fly and cut the brain  
when pointed at the head,  
I was nine years old and  
living among the dead.

Bio: Akacia Robinson is Hickory, NC, poet and artist who runs her own handmade greeting card business. This is her first publication.

Kathrin H. Rudland  
REPOSITORY

Cold silence  
envelopes this street of steel,  
row upon row  
of storage sheds stand,  
rented spaces  
filled with possessions  
no longer needed  
or wanted,  
metal walls that keep secure  
things that whisper  
of what we once were  
and no longer want to be,  
the lares and penates of our lives,  
pushed and locked into containers  
where no one can see them,  
hidden in isolation  
so black and stifled  
that through metal membranes  
we think we hear  
the muffled cries of memories  
begging to be let out.

Kathrin H. Rudland  
ILULIAQ

Iluliaq,  
calved from the womb  
of a glacial mother,  
behemoth of ice  
sunk within a dark sea,  
misshapen body, blue-veined head.  
Pockets of air trapped  
from sleet, snowstorms, gales,  
buried layer upon layer  
hiss, crack,  
explode around us,  
breath of a world  
15,000 years ago.  
Moved in silence  
by unseen tides  
of the Davis Strait,  
prodded and herded like an animal  
to be carved away  
by wind, sun,  
warm Atlantic water.

Author's Comment: It was the release of trapped air that caused me to think of the iceberg as an animal on its way to a watery Chicago stockyard. It seemed alive and I wanted to breathe in its 15,000 year old air!

Kathrin H. Rudland  
MURMURATIONS

In late fall,  
just before dusk,  
as though on some hidden cue,  
a flight of starlings  
erupts from a tree,  
swirling black ribbon  
threading land to sky.  
They arc and sweep above us,  
flinging themselves up  
into air, then down,  
the sound of their wings  
intermingled with chatter,  
a synchronous, feathered troupe.

It's all in their skulls,  
you tell me,  
fluid in tiny canals fine-tunes them  
to pressure and vibrations in air,  
keeps them from winging wildly  
into one another,  
thrashing, tumbling, somersaulting,  
falling from the sky.

Maybe so,  
I say,  
looking up into vastness  
of uncertain air.  
But I know it's more than that:  
they move to an unbroken memory,  
inexplicable understanding  
carried deep inside,  
just as we do,  
obeying the instinct to stay together,  
depend on one another,  
soar with or without wings  
through this one unknowable life.

Bio: Kathrin Rudland enjoys traveling and much of her writing has found inspiration from the Arctic, Africa, Europe, and the Far East. She received the Award for Poetry at the 2009 Harriette Austin conference in Athens, Georgia. Her recently published historical novel, *Tragedy and Triumph, Elmira, New York, 1835-65*, explores the crucible years before and during the Civil War. She lives in Greensboro, Georgia with her husband, William.

Alarie Tennille  
DALI'S CLOCKS

Scientists have cut time  
into tiny, equal ticks,  
but we all know it is fluid,

dripping ever so slowly—  
an I. V. refusing to kill pain  
or worry,

sweeping us away—  
a tidal wave any time we're  
on the beach of contentment,  
reluctant to gather our things,  
head back to the car.

Yet we persist in counting it  
as though that's a skill required  
for our final exam—  
the one we keep dreaming  
we didn't prepare for.

Author's Comment: The contrast between times we wish would speed up and those we want to keep is the central theme of my new book (looking for a publisher). I don't recall what incident inspired "Dali's Clocks," but my life is full of examples. How I hate waiting for medical results! Since my retirement last summer, time has become more slippery, and poetry seems the best way to hold onto it.

Bio: Alarie Tennille was born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, and graduated from the University of Virginia in the first class admitting women. She serves on the Emeritus Board 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*, *Coal City Review*, *English Journal*, *I-70 Review*, and *Southern Women's Review*.

Joseph Trombatore  
11:33 A.M. POEM

Claudia says about a  
beer buzz I just don't  
get it & margaritas give  
me heartburn bad heart  
burn a field of radishes  
heartburn I say a good  
beer buzz makes for a  
smooth poetry reading  
a great poker face when  
your hand is anything  
but 4 aces & standing  
you hold a cigarette with  
more confidence can  
slap the little lady on the  
cheek with a kiss like  
Bogart behind the camera  
look real slick in a black  
London Fog can hold up  
a lamppost with greater  
ease balance on a tight  
rope above snapping croc  
odiles & not sweat a drop  
more prone to take less  
showers shave less brush  
your teeth less certainly  
don't need no stinking  
deodorant in fact you be  
come one good looking  
hunk of man in front of  
the mirror when you're  
all alone with a cold one

Bio: Joseph R. Trombatore is an artist and poet whose work has appeared in: *Travois: An Anthology of Texas Poetry*, *Right Hand Pointing* (online), *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas*, and elsewhere. His poetry collection, *Screaming at Adam*, was awarded the Wings Press Chapbook Prize in 2007, and one of his poems received the 2011 Larry D. Thomas Poetry Prize (REAL, Regarding Arts & Letters). Other honors include two Pushcart Prize nominations and a Best of the Net Anthology nomination. Former Poetry Editor of: *The Houston Literary Review* (online) and Founder/Publisher of the defunct online journal, *Radiant Turnstile*, he now resides in San Antonio.

Douglas McHargue  
ON THE LAST DAY OF THE WORLD

I want to hang  
over that abyss  
my feet not touching  
earth's raw edges  
just drift through thinnest air  
on that hammock of tulle  
stretched between two stars,  
swinging me  
over mountains,  
drunk on purple

Douglas McHargue  
SATURDAY'S APRIL

everybody moving,  
pick-ups like yard sales  
on wheels. In fast food lot  
trailed truck with scarred table  
weeps junk. Inside Wendy's,  
wife with cane rests,  
says to husband,  
my gloves fell off the truck,  
his face ruddy from the sun  
of years, telling tomatoes  
turn red.

Mockingbird on Wendy's sign  
mocks Quality Matters  
turns it to toilet.

Girl with dad, watches  
tedious fingers polish phone  
like it's marble from Italy  
where he'd gladly go  
mine marble fields  
if he knew the words.

Two guys turn corner,  
pick-up loaded, basket holding  
topiary, its round ball  
like the head of a baby  
nomadic and lost.

Bio: From Statesville, NC, Douglas McHargue is a frequent contributor to Wild Goose Poetry Review and has been published in The Best of Poetry Hickory.

Lois Marie Harrod  
THE SHOP TEACHER

He wanted a student or two  
who would make a table or a chair  
fit for a queen, or there not being many queens,  
a president, even a president of a small college  
would do, a chair that would serve some years  
and eventually slip into the Smithsonian,  
an exhibit that would invite everyone  
to come and sit, a sturdy wooden chair  
that would not wear or wobble  
no matter how often hands braced its arms  
to stand or large bottoms squeezed into it,  
and sometimes he had a student,  
with more patience than the others,  
careful with the band saw and the drill,  
who liked the quiet contemplation of sandpaper  
and varnish, who knew that art was long,  
and more often a student who was wildly inventive,  
designing wooden hat racks for his truck  
or strange foot stools for his grandfather,  
but rarely both in the same person,  
the artsy ones spoiling the finish  
before it was dry, the patient ones  
with no invention, so most of the time  
when his wife asked, how was school today,  
he was happy to say, no one got hurt.

Author's Comment: North Carolina painter Anthony Ulinksy told me that before leaving teaching, he had given up most of his goals for students; he felt relieved if he could go home and say, "No one got hurt in shop class today." That's where the poem began because that aspect of teaching made me sad—we artist/teachers do want to pass on our art, we want students to carry on what we began. However, in 22 years of secondary teaching, I have also seen many student accidents, overdoses and deaths. I hope the poem provides a double-edged sensibility.

Bio: Lois Marie Harrod's 13th Collection, *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis*, has just been published by Word Tech (Cherry Grove). *The Only Is* won the 2012 Tennessee Chapbook Contest (Poems & Plays), and *Brief Term*, a collection of poems about teachers and teaching was published by Black Buzzard Press, 2011. *Cosmogony* won the 2010 Hazel Lipa Chapbook (Iowa State). She is widely published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. She teaches Creative Writing at The College of New Jersey

Ronald Moran  
LEGACY OF A COACH

In my high school, the football coach taught  
gym,  
and my senior year he made us stand, side  
by side,  
the toes of our Keds on the out-of bounds  
line,  
most wearing mismatched shorts and t-shirts,  
all misfits

he called us, because we did not play football  
and  
thus had to take gym in the fall/winter term.  
He stood  
at the vertex of his isosceles triangle, maybe  
some  
thirty feet in front of us, caressing a softball  
like a lover,

while explaining his version of dodge ball:  
throwing it  
hard as he could, at randomly chosen targets.  
Once hit,  
if not already floored, we had to sit, nursing  
wounds  
in silence, while the last of us standing, neither  
bruised

nor bloodied, to be rewarded by exempting  
gym  
for the rest of the school year, with the grade  
of A.  
As the coach wound up, as if he were pitching  
hardball,  
we sat down, later calling it passive resistance,  
much later.

Ronald Moran

AFTER READING A NOVEL WHERE THE WOMEN FANTASIZE  
ABOUT A HUNK ON TV

So I ask myself, Why is it that women don't fantasize  
about me?

(as if they ever did) but, well, hope springs eternal,  
even

though the bedsprings don't anymore, and I suppose  
I need

not look any further than the purpuras, like flags  
waving

on my upper arms, or my huge bald spot flanked  
by hair

the color of catacombs, or the loss of height leaving  
me

without a neck, or, whoa, that's enough to deter  
any

woman of whatever age from giving me a second  
look,

if, after a brief glance, she was kind enough to give  
a first look.

And so I say, What about me as a person on the inside?  
to which,

I suspect the answer might very well be, Well what  
about it?

Ronald Moran  
THE FINAL READING

At the final reading of my poems in this life,  
I will confess,  
all the wrongs I have done, omitting none  
including  
even the time I changed a math answer in  
third grade

because I felt embarrassed for adding up  
poorly,  
and I could never tell my parents my mistake.  
Soon after,  
I began a guilt that found a warm home inside  
my head

all my life, like a bear in a geological fault,  
living out  
its winters in a form of death, but not death,  
rather  
a life-giving sleep, and that is what guilt must  
have been

for me then, until now, when I have to say,  
I confess,  
and, of course, nobody cares what I had ever  
done or said,  
believing none of it, knowing all along what  
liars

poets are, that they built lies like seawalls,  
bunkers,  
storm cellars, but not to keep anything out,  
only to shelter  
lies, to fabricate, to make up, to nurture them  
into poems.

Bio: Ronald Moran lives in Simpsonville SC. His poems appear in current or recent issues of a number of journals, including Asheville Poetry Review, Evening Street Review, Louisiana Review, Orange Room Review, South Carolina Review, Tar River Poetry, Thomas Wolfe Review, and Wallace Stevens Journal. His latest book is *The Jane Poems* (2011), and he is now working on putting a new collection together

Donna Engel  
CANDY

My preference for sweets  
has changed – no more hard round  
voracious lollipops, or rude red cinnamon  
bombs, no sweet secret smarties  
tucked back into the mouth's rucked  
corners, or creamy gooey chewing  
gum, wandering around the streets  
of my teeth. When the store

opens, I'll part licorice waters,  
snap my fingers to bring the chocolates  
to order, and doff my hat  
at the gum-drop counter, paying  
my respects to the crystal sugared  
rainbow, and keep walking. I'll pass  
right by the commingled cacophony  
of candied smell, ignoring  
the flirtatious temptation of oral orgy –  
there is only one thing I really want  
inside my greedy open mouth,  
and that is to eat my fill  
and depth of the world's words.

Bio: Donna Engel has a BA in English from the University of Minnesota and is a musician/piano teacher by profession. She lives in Jordan, Minnesota with her husband and two teenage children. "Candy" is her first publication.

Sam Silva

A DIFFERENT KIND OF NATURE

In plain idiot despair  
television breeds its own shallow comedy  
...someone pained  
by depression and arthritis  
lies on an air cooled cot trying to undo  
the direction  
where the dopey planet goes

...while the TV is still on  
and such days begin to darken  
until summer turns to snows.

Bio: Sam Silva is the author of numerous ebooks and chapbooks and a few full-length collections of poetry. He is widely published in print and online journals and has been nominated several times for Pushcart Prizes and other awards.

Helen Losse  
WHO IS THE MAN

who appears  
alone,

stretched out on an air mattress,  
pictured near the water's edge?

He's wearing red swim trunks  
and unisex shoes.

Perhaps the black circle beside him  
is all that's left

of his snorkeling mask. Perhaps  
he dived deep in the sea.

Or was he merely sent away  
from a private fishing dock—

just a few yards away  
on the rain-swollen Missouri—

by those who rebuked him for  
demonstrating his over-the-top splash?

Perhaps he is a lonely man, too pale,  
too hairy for proper ladies.

Or is he the life of the party (perhaps  
in spite of himself)

and just catching a brief breather  
before his inevitable fun continues?

Who is the man who chose the sun  
when shade is nearby,

whose skin indicates,  
he doesn't sunbathe often?

Author's Comment: "Who is the man" is an ekphrastic poem describing a photo of one of the Dead Mule editor's "ex-relatives" that she posted for a while on the Mule's FB page. I pretty much described what I saw and have probably said more than enough already.

Bio: Helen Losse is the author of two full length poetry books and three chapbooks. Her poems have been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and three times for a Best of the Net award.

Joan M. Howard  
TODAY

This October twenty-seventh, one day  
in years without you, seated on lake's dock,  
I watch late afternoon's white haloed sun,  
lights shading gray-blue, gold, then blinding white.

Sky south, then east, two arrows slowly stream,  
heads rainbow prisms, cirrus shafts down arced.  
These prisms enter widening halo's target rim,  
and when they do, transform to white.

Blue heron also watches, beak lifted  
immobile, high, as if in ecstatic rest,  
wings slightly unfurled, underwing linings  
white as that sun, and holds and holds as if  
in salute. I hold and hold too,  
in daily extraordinary, this – you.

Author's Comment: I was seated on the dock when this extraordinary sky transpired. The heron incident happened while paddling by in a kayak – the sun too perfect and warm for both of us to resist reverence!

Bio: Joan Howard's poetry has appeared in *The Road Not Taken: The Journal of Formal Poetry*, *Lucid Rhythms*, *Victorian Violet*, *the Deronda Review*, *Our Pipe Dreams*, *The Reach of Song* and others.

Glenda Beall

A BALMY DAY IN JANUARY

like none I've seen in years. In the park,  
sunshine heals like days I waited urgently  
to be free of walls, to tear across the pasture  
on my mare, rushing toward fulfilling childhood dreams.

I stroll with Rocky this winter day, warm enough  
to over-heat his black fur, his weakened bones.  
His unconditional love fills a tiny part of that left empty now.

Women in tennis attire stride toward the courts,  
new bags on their shoulders, swinging rackets,  
tossing hair, wearing trendy shoes. Love – one.  
Love-two, their happy voices sing on brisk air.

Tennis was once our game, long ago,  
when a simple quarrel over a match seemed  
the end of our world; a gentle world we did not  
properly nurture, because we didn't know  
what we didn't know.

Bio: Glenda Beall's poetry has been published in Wild Goose, Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, Journal of Kentucky Studies, Main Street Rag, Appalachian Heritage, and numerous other journals and anthologies. My poetry chapbook, Now Might as Well be Then, was published in 2009 by Finishing Line Press.

Patricia Cole  
UNDER EAVES

4 a.m.: moonlight, luminous.

I have stepped onto the front porch  
to smoke.

I don't see any shadows except for what gathers  
under the eaves of our house.

Nothing stirs except the neighbor's St. Bernard  
who walks right by, not even five feet away.

I would call to her, but nothing stirs.

4 o'clock: moonlight, luminous, no shadows

Author's Comment: I came to poetry by reading such poets as Mary Oliver, Betty Adcock, Rita Dove, Anne Sexton, and Bill Collins. What a line up, what diversity. I also came to poetry with a strong desire to write about the world around and inside me. I'm thrilled to be a part of the writing culture here in North Carolina and a member of the North Carolina Poetry Society where I am well nourished. This poem, "Under Eaves," was inspired from a Tomas Tranströmer poem titled "Track." Tranströmer is the 2011 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Bio: Patty Cole studies writing in the creative writing program at Central Carolina Community College in Pittsboro, NC. She is working on her first chapbook and is looking forward to starting graduate school this fall. She lives in Chatham County, NC, with her husband, Hoyt, on their 17-acre farm.

Jean Rodenbough  
KATIE SINGS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

When morning sunlight  
weaves its rays through  
branches bare of leafy beauty  
Katie finds her beagle voice.

Her platform overlooks  
our lower yard ample and wild,  
where weeds tight with ivy  
and the scent of possum,  
or curious cat, or mouse  
inhabit her other world.

She offers her staccato song  
to squirrels whose tails  
flick warnings she ignores,  
and instead sings syllables  
for dogs behind fences.

Her steady barking breaks  
the air apart with shrill  
tones pitched to a scale  
above our human reach  
until today's coda offers  
hymns to birdsong and coon,  
cicada and call of crow.

She is cantor for mysteries  
that segue into a bid  
for her Jack Russell genes  
to close with arpeggios  
of praise to air and sun.

Author's Comment: Our beagle-jack russell spends much of her outside time barking to the neighborhood, which sets all the neighbors' teeth on edge. She barks while indoors as well, causing us to put her out back to share her comments with the neighbors and any wildlife willing to hang around. She actually is a great little dog, and voices her opinions freely when necessary (which is most of the time).

Bio: Jean Rodenbough lives in Greensboro and is a member of the Writers Group of the Triad. She is the author of collections of poetry, fiction, and commentary.

Betty O'Hearn  
VISITS FROM WANDA

I live in a house rented from Wanda's daughter.  
Perfect for Mom and me, and no immediate neighbors.  
Wanda cut her own grass and sewed for Thomasville  
till she turned 82. She lived with her daughter  
only when she had no choice. Then died  
the night my cat stood on his hind legs  
and followed something around the room with his copper colored eyes.

Months later weeding out by the fig tree  
a hand touched my shoulder. I turned  
but no one was there. Three days later, the cat  
stood again on his hind legs looking into the bedroom.  
Last Christmas the mailbox opened and closed by itself.  
One of the grandchildren said she saw a light.  
On a cold afternoon a coaster levitated a little.

I had the house blessed this spring  
and things were quiet for a while.  
Then Ari stood up on his hind legs again  
looking at the bedroom, a pink shadow on the wall.  
One afternoon when I was hemming pants,  
the pincushion slid off the table on its own.  
I've decided I'll let Wanda come and go when she wants.  
I'm not sure there's anything else I can do.

Bio: Betty O'Hearn is new to the poetry scene but has been studying and writing for two years. In her spare time she ghosts writes for blogs and content vendors. Her professional life has been focused in the information warfare terrorism genre as well as working with a team to train military, government and security professionals who deploy to the Middle East and North Africa. After living on the water in FL for 23 years, she followed her son and family to Hickory, NC. She is a great supporter of thermal underwear which are deployed at 50 degrees. Betty has been published in the Dead Mule of Southern Literature and this is her second appearance in the Wild Goose Review.

Review  
by Phebe Davidson

I Speak in Tongues  
Lynn Ciesielski  
Foot Hills Publishing  
ISBN: 978-0-93153-99-3

Lynn Ciesielski's chapbook offers poems that give readers a fine sense of the poet's experience and observation of life, and through that a keen sense of the poet's sensibility. To be sure, prose can do much the same thing, but its operation is generally different. Where prose tends to complete sentences arranged in paragraphs according to a particular narrative strategy, poetry tends to rely (today at least) on shorter forms, on language that is heightened (by use of metaphor, word choice, and syntactic liberty, to name a few of its techniques), and on line-length and stanza breaks. What makes all this possible is poetic sensibility, which might be defined by the poet's sensitivity to the world as a trigger to poems rendered with such precision that they seem to lift directly into the reader's emotional experience.

Not every poem will reach every reader with the same intensity. And while this is partly a matter of taste (or reader sensibility, if you will), it also marks Ciesielski's continuing effort to find the poetic techniques which best serve her. Thus, we find the opening poem titled "Binge," in which the longest line contains four words, serving as a balance for the closing poem, "The Muse at Midnight." In effect, the poet extends her range from the stark, imagistic effect of

The room where  
the poet  
sits all night  
is strewn  
with  
empty bottles  
colored pens, . . .

to an arrangement that is both more lyrical and more formal:

The muse calls nightly and bids me to write.  
I train my pen while tea and images steep.  
Secrets hide like butterflies in moonlight.

The "midnight candy" outside is a sight.  
It fills me with such joy I want to weep.  
The muse calls nightly. She bids me to write.

Certainly, the decision to frame the collection with these two poems, both of which center on the work of poetry, is neither accidental nor unimportant, and makes it clear that the poet's engagement with her task is central both to what she does and to how she sees herself.

Equally central, in this collection, is the poet's love of people who are, by most measures, ordinary. Consider "Gatekeeper Mel," who

. . . watches when you turn your lights out,  
knows how many boys courted your teenage girl,  
and which explored her geography in front of your house  
from their cars.

When Mel's belly swells with beer, he opens up wider,  
floods you with stories that drown even him,  
female neighbors he would like to cheat with,  
odd things he's eaten, gator in his bayou days.  
Here in the city, he just chews the fat.

Then consider Joan, who tries her best to manage for and with her wheel-chair bound husband. . .

. . . brings her husband Neil coffee with cream  
in this modern church where they offer  
refreshments with salvation.  
She finds his place in the Bible  
for the pastor's passages.  
She positions him oh so perfectly for the Word.

This portrait of the dutiful wife undoes itself when the poem's speaker and her husband arrive late, and Neil shifts his wheelchair to make more room at the table:

Joan tenses her jaw and yanks him back.  
He slaps her hand hard, as if  
she was a feeding mosquito.

Joan's lip quivers like a ripple in a pond.  
Tears swarm in her eyes as she listens  
to the minister finish his bid  
for prayers to help victims  
of violence.  
(*"The Buzz at Church"*)

The multiple ironies, so adroitly contained by the poem's matter-of-fact tone, bear strong witness to the strength of this developing poet, as does the adroit use of line to create a visual diminuendo at the poem's close.

Ciesielski, at her best, I think, in the longer-lined poems, uses the shorter-lined work to good effect, underscoring her stance with intelligently chosen formal variation. The result is a book that coheres, that engages with a variety of subjects and concerns. Lynn Ciesielski is a poet of genuine promise, to read with attention and to watch for in the future.

Review  
by Phebe Davidson

How Love Conquers the World  
Harry Calhoun  
Flutter Press, 2012

Maintenance and Death  
Harry Calhoun  
Pig Ear Press, 2012

Harry Calhoun's two chapbooks published in 2012 invite readers to re-enter poetry with open ears and eyes, to rediscover the freshness a good poem can deliver.

How Love Conquers the World is exactly what the title promises, a collection of love poems. This is not an easy thing to deliver, and Calhoun sets up his project in the first poem, "After the Poetry Reading."

I had just had one of those rock star readings,  
everything went right, and she came up to my table  
after and bought four of my books.

There are, at this point, some cloying narrative possibilities built into the text. A callow poet high on success, a romance at the signing table perhaps, . . . . As it turns out, though, this "she" is not the poet's love, not the reader of his dreams, not even his reading tour diversion. She is simply a random young woman, buying poems she likes so that she can read them to her boyfriend, something she tells the poet, thus allowing the poet a joyous didactic burst:

This is what poetry is all about, folks. It's not the rock star readings  
or selling books or making a name. It's talking to someone across a table,  
or across the ocean, on the internet or on AT&T. The air in Idaho  
is clear and cool tonight, the phones are wide open, and this is how love  
conquers the world: One poem, one heart, one line at a time.

The poems that follow live up to that pronouncement, and we are fortunate to stand witness to the loves that inspire the book. In "Unabashed Love Poem" the lover swells to invincibility:

The armies of earth  
The demons of hell  
The intruder in the night  
Cannot pass the bar

of my arm around you

A few pages later, the poet tells his wife "you age well, drink perfectly // as I taste your charm and brilliance / and I know the finish // will last forever" ("My Wife as Wine").

Calhoun's greatest strength in these poems lies in the unaffected clarity with which he shares the lucky burden of loving. "Insomnia, with Love" yields a profound and simple understanding as the poet, unable to sleep, writes of himself

you get and leave  
the grave of a bed to write  
this down, groping for your glasses

on nightstand, and even  
in the dark things spring  
into focus. The bed is no grave.

Once again, she reaches out  
and her fingers cling to yours  
pulling you gently, softly

finally into sleep.

Clearly, this is the voice of someone who loves both his wife and his craft as a poet. As "The Bookmark" makes clear, these loves are made wonderful, at least in part, by their attainability, by their sheer, accessible presence in his life.

. . . . Pay attention.  
Start simply by marking the place,  
the places, wherever she is  
before you fall asleep.

Maintenance and Death, published in the same year, brings the same unaffected clarity to somewhat more somber aspects of life—the indignities of passing time, the inevitable loss of much that is loved. The poems, perhaps because they are freighted with such inevitability, amplify Calhoun's considerable skill with image and metaphor, his acute awareness of need, desire, and the heart's determination.

"Walking Something," which establishes the position from which the poet speaks, lists things that people walk. These range from "90 black pounds of Labrador" to "40 pounds of excess weight" carried by a lady who passes his house, to

. . . my lovemaking, emphasis after all these years  
on the love, to my beautiful wife. We're always walking  
something, evidence that as Pascal said, all of our misfortune  
comes from our inability to simply

sit quietly in a room.

If this seems a curious claim from someone who apparently spends a good deal of time sitting quietly in a room writing poems, it is nonetheless persuasive. After all, as "The Poet on

Vacation” makes clear, this is a man who knows he repeats himself, who sits on his deck to write, the poems always

about a dog on the deck at the seashore,

looking at the sunlit ocean and dying  
to get to the water. The water bowl  
is full, but the dog neglects it,  
treating the beach, the ocean,

his desire. The poet understands,  
a little tipsy saluting the ocean  
with one swig left in his emptying  
bottle of beer. It’s not the drinkable quality

or absolute quantity that matter,  
in water or in life. It’s the gap  
between what we need and what  
we want, the galloping free space between

the water bowl and the sea.

And there we all are, in that gap between, full of longing, mostly unable to settle for what lies close to hand. We find sleeplessness, along with a directive to “Put this in the mirror / that you consult late at night / staring at your unwilling reflection” (“Insomnia Poem #116 This Year) and a kind of desperate nostalgia, an admission that there “was no place to go / but home, the best place // to sit in the driveway crying” (“Emotional Wreck”). These are not the love poems of How Love Conquers the World, but their astringent and necessary ballast, clear-eyed glimpses into the quotidian agony of growing up and growing older. Most crucially, they allow moments that are the antithesis of despair. On a chill July 4th, at 6 a.m., the poet tells us “It’s beautiful, // and I think maybe it’s never too late, / and I write that thought slyly smiling,/ even knowing that I’m wrong” (6 a.m., 66 Degrees, July 4th). A personal favorite, for me, is the poem titled “Vacuum,” which speaks to what is, for many, the first great loss in adulthood.

My parents are buried in the mountains.  
You neither make this up, nor can you ignore it.  
Not my mom, not my dad, freezing  
in the snowcapped cold, evaporating

in the summer heat. I miss them  
and this was not the easy distance  
I envisioned, or what I wanted either.  
But the options have been sucked dry.

It’s hard to sleep, thinking,  
and I finally decide

to open up a hole and see  
what pulls through.

After roughly 50 years of reading poems, I'm a mildly jaded reader. Even the best poems, at times, seem to flatten into each other. A danger, I suppose, for anyone who reads prolifically. That hazard is more than balanced, though, when reading something for the first time I am seized by resonance, vibrancy—by a voice that heightens language and clarifies experience. Deft and adroit, conversational and profound, Harry Calhoun does both.

Review  
by Phebe Davidson

Cattails  
Kathy Nelson  
Mainstreet Rag Publishing Co.  
ISBN: 978-1-59948-428-0

Kathy Nelson's chapbook, slated for May, 2013 publication, has much to offer a reader. Because Nelson is a realist about life as she has lived and observed it, she writes of life and death, of continuity and discontinuity, as conjoined experience. She is not intimidated by the themes that absorb her. The poems are by turns brash and didactic, poignant and powerful, rich in poignant detail. The book's first poem, "Incoming Tide, Outer Banks, North Carolina" begins:

I confess I've squandered my attention on mere trifles—  
life, death, mostly death—

This is a portentous assertion, the sort of announcement that is sufficient to create some uneasiness in the reader, some sense of being slightly estranged, oddly distanced from the poem and its speaker. The poet insists, three lines later

Impotent vigilance saves no one, least of all me.

This might seem, in light of the title, to risk being too easy a setup for the image of a tide washing out footprints. Yet just a little later, almost (but not quite) too late to link us to the moment, Nelson's imagery almost leaps off the page, enlarging perspective and understanding.

Pelicans ride the stiff breeze, just out of reach,  
a ragged line, one creature.

In "What my Grandmother Taught Me," many readers will recognize the grandmother in question by the scents her memory yields up, the tang of

. . . cedar from her chifferobe, White Shoulders,  
and the pink Coty lotion she wrung into her hands.

This is a woman, incidentally, who can still disrupt our expectations, one who faces her world with "gumption, like bitter greens and vinegar," who teaches her granddaughter that

. . . a woman lives quite well without  
a man as long she has money and a dog; that Jesus  
doesn't mind if you check up on the tenants, you just  
have to wait, take your key when they're not home.

The specificity of "take your key when they're not home" is irresistible. And the wonderful spill of sensory experience goes on, from "the banshee Panhandle wind [that] thwacks the plastic

hung against the back porch screen” (“Aunt Winnie’s Table, Ambrose, Texas, 1958) to the mother who “searched the dial for NPR among the Bible-thumpers” (“My Firstborn Hikes the Appalachian Trail”) to “a pot left overnight / to soak in greasy water” (“Sometimes I Feel Like”).

The themes Nelson takes on in this collection are big ones: life and death, continuity and its opposing shadow, the connections that fuel our lives. Such themes often seem to demand a kind of abstraction, a willingness to say, for instance, “Now I am growing older; her lessons linger” (“What my Grandmother Taught Me”), or to write of real and imagined daughters,

May they grind away at your  
hard edges, sand you simple,  
smooth as stone.  
“Prayer for Daughters”

Kathy Nelson’s willingness to engage her themes leads her to powerful subjects, and her skilled use throughout of imagery that ties the living to the sensual world does a great deal to make readers believe her when she compares herself to an oak, “clinging / to its crinkled leaves / singing to itself / about its own tenacity” (“Sometimes I Feel Like”), and to make those readers eager to see what this poet might do next.

Review  
by Melissa Hager

LITHIC SCATTER AND OTHER POEMS

Karla Linn Merrifield  
Mercury Heartlink  
ISBN: 9780988227996

Get ready to take a spiritual journey in Karla Linn Merrifield's *Lithic Scatter and Other Poems*. The poet creates a soulful spin on nature, time, and place as she hops from one Western wonder to another.

Launching her tour in the Badlands of the Dakotas, the poet urges the reader to have a conversation with the gray clay. Clay has millennia of stories to tell, and poems like "Badlands Beauty" and "Badlands Sutra" impart spiritual knowledge. We are dust, and unto dust we will return:

...I draw closer,  
listen to Her story told in dust  
and learn that someday  
I am to become  
as beautiful as She.  
I will slowly, slowly,  
ever so slowly follow  
her path toward fossils.

Visits to the Northwest and its green hued landscape flow south to Yosemite and the Mojave Desert. A lovely narrative poem transports the reader to the location within Yosemite where the view of El Capitan and Half Dome takes one's breath away. Merrifield describes all that can be found in "Half Dome's sharp shadow" including daredevil men rock climbing, hang gliding, and a monarch. She compares their journeys, reminds the reader the butterfly will continue to fly for 2,000 more miles before she is finished — an amazing feat for a tiny creature.

Then, Merrifield moves east to explore the Texas landscape. In this chapter she writes "Copters" and has the reader ask why she would want to disrupt peaceful nature with helicopters.

Merrifield shakes the reader, asks us to notice what we are doing to our Earth, how man, animals, companies, greed – so many things — have disrupted nature. Why not throw in a poem in Galveston about helicopters? The last stanza of "Copters" makes me shudder.

Only homo sapiens of the tourist variety,  
myself included, lying on the sand are terrorized,  
knowing those hovering creatures,  
like practiced predators, take their prey alive.

Back in Colorado and the Rocky Mountains, Merrifield celebrates the Colorado River, ancient peoples, and aspens. In "Mile 166: Canyon Colors," she begins,

Color terror white  
and cast it on the river-  
am I meant to float?

She wonders what the rocks might say to her if only she could hear. She cannot speak their language, but she does experience their hard lessons in “Mile 75.5: SOS.”

I feel their psalms in my broken skin,  
seep of blood, deepening bruises,  
when Little Colorado River current sweeps  
me away to green water pastures.

The high desert of Nevada is highlighted in “The Void.” Merrifield writes “Welcome, no road sign reads/in this region where you lose all time.” Her description of this landscape is palpable whether from the perspective of the ground, a map, or an airplane — “to navigate this terrain of faultlines,/How it shrinks humanity, how it favors lizards.”

Merrifield did not expound on many personal relationships within *Lithic Scatter*. She did, however, add a touching poem, “Mesa Verde Vision,” as an ode to her deceased mother. Merrifield imagines her mother with her on the excursion, supporting her as always, even in death.

The poet mentions the ancient Anasazi, or Pueblo People, in several poems centered in Utah and the San Juan River basin. The ancient people’s mysterious disappearance is playfully discussed in the poem, “Amazons of the Anasazi Follow The Chimney Rock Tour Guide.” With a wink to women, Merrifield leads the reader through a two part conversation between the “experts” and the Anasazi women. Present day meets the past as they discuss drought, winds, and the impending invasion of white people. In the end, the experts remain clueless as to what made the Pueblo people leave, but the women...

Only the women knew  
It was time to go.  
Only we saw you coming  
and coming and coming  
long ago.

When reading the poem “Cody Museum I — Taxidermy,” the perceived memories of a buffalo’s glass eye make goose bumps rise —

Or does he only see hunters  
who took his tongue, leaving few tongues today  
to speak buffalo and chant the vast meadow  
of America into renewed green being.

What ancient buffalo have experienced is nothing compared to the geographical, ecological, and sociological shifts on earth. In *Lithic Scatter and Other Poems*, Merrifield imagines ancient

conversations – some from people, some from animals. Many thoughts come from the very rocks one stands upon. All place in perspective the world and our part within it.

Review  
by Patricia Deaton

## COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER

Keith Flynn  
Wings Press  
ISBN 9781609402945

Keith Flynn's latest published chapbook, *Colony Collapse Disorder*, an ambitious collection of poems in all types of forms and textures, gets its title from the phenomenon that happened a few years ago when honeybees (known as a whole to be stressed-out and immune-deficient, according to researchers) started dying off. According to Flynn's preface, each poem attempts to capture the sense of what a worker bee might see through human eyes.

Compiled alphabetically according to the names of places in the world, two poems (each inspired by a place, its geographic characteristics, history, etc) are assigned for each letter of the alphabet and correspond with fifty-two weeks of the year. With the Mayan calendar's circular structure thrown in for good measure and each poem connected to the one before and after by a word, image or theme, this explanation of the book's arrangement seems complicated and off-putting before one even gets started.

The KISS formula of 'keep it simple, sweetie' does not apply anywhere in this collection of poems. To be fully appreciated, these poems should be sat with and read more than once.

At first pass, some wonderful lines in different poems stand out such as 'Success has many fathers, they say, but failure is an orphan' from "European Political Discourse and the Paranoid Style".

In "The Agnostic", 'the loss of faith is a slow process...trembling with extinction...a free-swimming creature finds itself glued by the head to a rock' is a fantastic portrayal, suggestive of the futility humans sometimes feel when they dig deep into their beliefs.

"The Silver Surfer" is heartbreakingly beautiful in its hopeless helplessness while "Nanking 1937" glows with courage.

An interesting and unique take on the experience of the social media instrument known as Facebook, Flynn's poem by the same name reveals how unfulfilling, frustrating and erroneous trying to connect in cyberspace can be.

"The Resurrection of Haute Couture" is quirky and fun in its list of past fashion designers and divas, and their attributes.

"Alabama Chrome" and "The Future of an Illusion" are two illustrations of the dark and fragile nature of humanity in which the author gets down and dirty with what seemingly holds us together.

“Night Train to Omega” rides along the Eastern Seaboard, images of students at a writers’ conference and of regular bus travelers mixed in with thoughts on lightning strikes, heartbeats, foreign facts to ponder, and a Christ-like Ronald McDonald. Here is an example from the sixth stanza:

From Belleville to DC on the Night Train  
A chocolate mother nurses her black baby  
with Kool-aid from an aluminum bottle.  
Little angel’s wings dropped off in Richmond  
And the singing infant’s full throat flung open  
Every noise is not joyful, my friend.

And from the last stanza:

There are no famous writers...only famous re-writers eliminating waste.  
Listen, I repeat, listen with your whole being...

Keith Flynn’s multi-faceted intellect, spirit and listening ability are more than evident in these poems. Lots of images, ideas and phrases will hit you where it hurts. But you’ll get over it, and be better for it.

Review  
by Jessie Carty

## UNEXPLAINED FEVERS

Jeannine Hall Gailey  
New Binary Press  
ISBN: 978-0957466128

I recently heard the poet Li-Young Lee read from his work. After he read he lead a Q & A session. In response to one question he noted that a word is an organizing principle. With that thought in mind, I noted how often I find myself pulling apart individual words, seeking their myriad connotations. I love to do so when I'm considering book reviews and interviews with poets as well. This review, therefore, will start by thinking about definitions.

Jeannine Hall Gailey's third book of poems is titled *Unexplained Fevers*. Something that is unexplained is not made plain, is not comprehensible. There is a weight to that word, and before I even start reading Gailey's book I wonder how the word will function because isn't the act of writing a way of explanation?

The second word in the title, *fevers*, can mean an abnormally high body temperature and/or the disease that is associated with that condition. A fever can also be a heightened level of activity or excitement, one that could be contagious, but is often short-lived.

How will Gailey work this pairing of words to her advantage? How do they encompass what will take place in the book as a whole?

About a third of the way into the book, once prevailing themes and imagery are well established, the reader is greeted with the amazing poem "Reflections On Glass Boxes, Mirrors, And Other Enchantments." This is a two page poem in four sections. The language of this poem is clear, but simplicity is often deceptive.

The first section of this poem has a princess in a glass box. I almost say yet another princess because this poetry collection is full of the princesses we know from myth and fairy tale, but these women are presented in a new way. The princess in this case is one, at least temporarily, who can't physically speak. Instead, we have this poem as her voice.

In the second section, there is a call to literary tradition with a twist (which is what, I think, often what makes good writing "good") as Gailey writes, "Ultimately the hero must go on a journey. In her case, / someone dragged her glass box behind him on a horse, / through the woods and a field and even more woods." We've seen princesses' before in glass boxes, or in towers. The princess is usually only on the move after being rescued. This is not the situation for this poem's princess. This woman is stuck in a box, and is in the midst a sort-of escape; one that she didn't script for herself.

It is easy to visualize this different take on a fairy tale trope. It is, if you utilize a more traditional reading of the word, explained, but Gailey turns the idea of the unexplained around. She refuses

to just explain away the underlying darkness of the fairy tale as she moves into section three of the poem: "One thing you've got to understand about magic mirrors: / they always betray you." I hear fire in the voice of this poem, and in the writer who created those lines. This strength, this fever, continues into the fourth and final section of the poem: "Heretic, harlot, the names for me here are all wrong, / lack imagination. My fists grow into briars, / all ready for your embrace." This is a speaker who refuses to be a cliché, to allow her words to just mean one thing which, again, works masterfully well with the overall title of the book.

I've been a fan of Gailey's work for some time, and she is a writer who wants to examine, as I wrote in a review of her last book, the female from all sides. In that collection (*She Returns to the Floating World*) I noted there was a focus on woman as sister, wife, mother, body. *Unexpected Fevers* is still concerned with many of those archetypes regarding womanhood, but I particularly note this collection's investigation of the body, the hero, and the mother.

The body is viewed with a play on disease. There is clearly the paleness of literal illness/fevers/disease (also noting that paleness is often seen as a signal for beauty), but what of the dis-ease, the discomfort, that can come with navigating the expected roles for women as well as for their bodies as exemplified by the poem I mentioned already and its questioning of who the hero of the story is as well as other poems in the collection that seek empathy from a world that strongly questions women who are not in traditional roles, especially those who do not bear children.

Norse literature has a special word for a hyphenated compilation of two words that figuratively makes a stronger meaning than the two words alone: the kenning. I think of this with *Beowulf* and terms such as the whale-road which represents the sea. Perhaps unexplained fevers, although not hyphenated, is the only concrete and compound way to express to the reader the world that Gailey sees (and wants the reader to see), and is trying to understand (and yes, dear reader, she wants to move you towards understanding as well).

This short review just touches the surface of what Gailey is accomplishing and asking in this collection. I highly recommend this one, and I look forward to seeing where Gailey's careful and crafty eye takes her next.

Review  
by Betty O'Hearn

GIMME FIVE  
Philip Dacey  
Blue Light Press  
ISBN: 978-1-4218-8661-9

Philip Dacey's stunningly written Gimme Five was read three times because I could not get enough of Philip Dacey! This was the first time I read his work and it was engaging from beginning to end. Dacey's words are crisp and clear, and the imagery makes Gimme Five a book you should want in your collection of contemporary American Poetry. The life of the speaker of these poems entwined in five-lines/five stanzas makes each page breathe on its own. Poets often visit their history via their writing and Dacey articulates an understanding of life from, one might assume, his own pain, joy and sorrow in fifty-five pages that compels the reader to want to know him better.

A favorite stanza from "Request" resonates in my mind:

A big dictionary,  
At least the size of the  
American Heritage 4th edition.  
A paginated coffin,  
solid and squared off.

Dacey's work in Gimme Five is solid and squared off possessing our souls with his verse. The five by five poems get into and under your skin. This poem format calls to mind the art of sculpting where one begins with seeming formlessness then diversifies to infinite possibilities of order. Dacey is pragmatic and realistic in his approach to initial perception, but his linguistic interpretation of those perceptions imbue them with something much more, with an appreciation of the largeness of moments.

From "The Haircut"~

We wake in the chair  
to discover the gods  
are cutting our hair again  
with their silver shears,  
shaping our heads

to their liking. The bright tool  
darts around us like lightning,  
flashes to show for a second  
one loss, then another,  
which collect at the center

...

The barber-gods love  
their work, you can tell...

Dacey's poems frequently dive into the surreal as perception and dreams merge to portray a universe that admits imagination as a necessity of understanding, of relating, and of making meaning. His adroit handling of the real and the surreal demonstrate an enviable innocence, one lost by most of us to the hubbub of time, painting strong pictures that propel readers into his writing, calling to mind their own past experiences often mirrored in his, and redeeming all that we have lost along the way to becoming who we are.

If you miss the beginning,  
you miss the end.  
The end  
is in the beginning  
There are signs

at the very start  
as to what was the final  
Scene will mean.  
The deathbed that rides  
off into the sunset

(From "Arriving Late For A Movie")

Such humor is present throughout this work, not just to be silly but to make serious comment on the lives we live, the choices we make, and the consequences of those choices.

An email from Mr. Dacey sums up this review.

"Don Marquis said that publishing a book of poems is like dropping a feather into the Grand Canyon and waiting for an echo. Well, I appreciate the echo from your direction."

Philip Dacey will echo as you read Gimme Five. The words will dance in your head, go out like a tide, only to return and inch you further along. These are words that will keep you reading contemporary poetry and will never leave your soul.

