

# Summer 2013

WILD GOOSE POETRY REVIEW  
SUMMER 2013

I am very excited to bring you the twenty-sixth issue of *Wild Goose Poetry Review*.

29 poems from 17 poets and 9 reviews from 6 reviewers.

This issue begins with selections from wonderful new manuscripts (yes, I got to read them all the way through and you all have something to look forward to) by Phebe Davidson and Tim Peeler. Then it continues with multiple selections from familiar poets Al Ortolani and Larry Schug and Wild Goose first-timer, Jim Zola. The other poets are a mix of familiar — Glenda Beall, Helen Losse, Karen Douglass, among others — and new — Staci Bell and Larry Thomas. All of it is high quality poetry that I am very proud to feature here.

I am also very proud of the reviews and thankful to the reviewers. Each of the books reviewed are significant contributions to the poetry community, and I hope that the reviews here will help readers find and appreciate them.

Please help others find Wild Goose Poetry Review by posting links on your social media or in personal emails to those you know will or think should read and enjoy or grow from it. And, as always, I hope you will take the time to leave a few comments on the poem. I know the poets enjoy those, and we all enjoy listening in on the dialogue about poetry.

I will be reading for the fall issue until the first of November.

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Phebe Davidson

WHAT THE ARCHANGEL GAINS FROM HIS EMPLOY

He is much moved  
by impermanence, by the sheer  
ephemerality of what he sees. There is,  
in his continuance, a want he can't define. Yet here,  
on this small inelegant world where nothing  
stands still, where whole lifetimes come and go in  
the merest instant, where things in all their  
infinite variation wallow and burgeon and multiply  
endlessly, where his hand is in the fall of  
every sparrow, where his hand is in the end of  
every creature that draws breath,  
he feels complete.

Phebe Davidson

AZRAEL AT HIS EASE

The view from where he sits is limited but clear.  
Sun shines in this third sky. He has chosen his blind  
with care. He is, from an earthly point of view,  
easy to overlook. He does not mind. There is nothing  
pressing, right now, to be done. He sees a woman  
and he sees a man. Their faces are faces he might see  
anywhere, on a bus or an airplane, or in a park  
where people sit on a bench and toss crumbs to the birds  
that are everywhere these days. He sees no child,  
not with them nor waiting their return. He is relaxed.  
He will watch them for most of a day, as they eat,  
as they converse, as they walk about their city. Even  
as they ready themselves for sleep, he will be watching.  
As always, he keeps to himself, so there will be no  
complications as he studies these new subjects, this  
woman and this man who is at ease with her. They are  
both in their middle years, both comfortable in their  
comings and goings. He notes that her eyes are hazel, that  
her husband's hair has gone gray. He wonders, as he  
does from time to time, what has made these two as they  
are, what force binds each to other, other to one, how  
either will fare when the other is gone, as one, though they  
do not know it, will certainly be by dawn.

Phebe Davidson  
ARTICLES OF FAITH

The Archangel has no childhood, and so may watch the children of men a long time without understanding what is not in him to know.

The Archangel has no memory and no need of memory. Knowledge rises in him as it is required, then it disappears.

Without memory humanity is nothing.

Humanity asks the wrong questions. It need not know the name of God nor the speed of light. It wastes its time in physics and metaphysics.

The Archangel asks and answers:  
*What is forty days and forty nights?*  
*It is the duration.*

Humanity cannot accommodate essential knowledge and is thus untroubled by its absence.

Phebe Davidson

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

His body is bigger than the night sky.  
It is covered with tongues and with eyes

to the number of all who live on the earth.  
He renders unto Caesar but foremost unto God,

to whom he surrenders each harvested soul.  
The spread of his wings sweeps the universe of stars.

He has dominion over everything as long as he lasts.  
When the last on this earth is dead, when the last soul has

been delivered and darkness has returned to the face of the deep,  
he will balance his ledgers, each birth and each death. When that has

been accomplished, he will close the two eyes in the front of his  
head and the two eyes in the back. He will sip the dregs of his own gall

and become the last to die.

Tim Peeler

LARRY'S COSMIC EPIPHANY

During that stretch at the high rise,  
I started to read, first the Bible,  
Thinking there was something there,  
Then books about the universe  
And I was startled to discover  
Just how insignificant we are,  
Barely a speck in the great swirl  
Of light and darkness  
And when I thought about  
All those other planets where  
Life was possible, I didn't feel  
The same loneliness I'd always felt,  
And I knew I could find a path out  
Of the place I'd put myself.  
Nights I'd read the poems  
That our teacher had left me  
And I'd think about the heavens  
And how they went on and on  
Far beyond the barred windows  
Of my little dreams.

Tim Peeler

LARRY'S ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE 89

*I stood on that busted mill house porch  
Watching the full moon inch through a walnut tree,  
Listening to the river re-finding rocks  
Over and over below the concrete dam.  
Finally, I pushed the door open slowly,  
Knowing he might be sitting the dark  
In his overalls, a shotgun across his lap,  
But there was naught and I walked  
The front room through,  
Kicking an overturned cat bowl,  
My boot crunching something gravelly.  
In the back room I saw two pairs of eyes,  
A diapered walking baby and a young girl  
In a burlap dress with matted blond hair,  
Both of them pale, weasel faced.  
Where's your pappy, I said, but she just  
Looked at me like she didn't know words  
While I searched for something that might  
Be worth taking and found nothing.  
Back on the porch, I saw her haunted face  
Watching me through the one window,  
And the moon had climbed to the top  
Of the walnut tree where it nested  
Like a whole 'nother world of spun gold.*

Tim Peeler  
LARRY'S POEMS OF PLACE

This porch is where I spit;  
That yard is where I piss  
Under a moon like tonight's  
Watching the neighbor's  
White reindeer lights.  
Even from here  
By the grape vines  
Where I stand uneasily,  
I sense the contours of darkness  
Hovering over the terraced field.  
No evil moves me.  
I spark a joint  
Or I don't.  
The black slow dance.  
Maybe this is  
Some kind of love.

Author's Comment: These poems are part of a manuscript called Rough Beast that uses a narrative arc to follow the life of Larry Ledbetter, a country gangster turned-writer.

Al Ortolani  
ALTAR BELLS

A woman begs bus fare—  
her cardboard placard creased  
and stained. The penniless Juniper

asks her to wait while he ducks  
into the church. He returns  
with bells in a paper bag.

Silver is better pawned, he tells her.  
The police usher Juniper  
into the station where he

confesses eventually, seeming  
to enjoy the good cop,  
bad cop. The sergeant shouts

until his voice cracks. Later  
that night, Juniper wakes the cop

at his home, flashlight in hand,  
soup steaming in a plastic bowl.  
Your voice box is injured

from yelling, he says.  
This soup, my mother's  
recipe, will calm

the wolf in your throat.  
The sergeant is furious.  
Do you know what time it is?

To which Juniper replies—  
if you're not interested,  
then at least hold my light

so I can eat. The sergeant  
rubs his hand through his hair,  
letting the door swing open—



Al Ortolani  
STIGMATA

Each morning you will rise  
before the sun. It will fling  
its rays over the horizon like ropes

and you will be expected  
to climb them. Each day  
you will be understood less.

How can it be otherwise—  
touched as you are. In preparation  
you will not sleep. Black bread

holds you like a stone. Soup itself  
is a sandbag. Each night

you will wait through the hours  
for the first movement of the sun  
as it grinds upwards. Even those

who tell your story will be  
suspect—each revision an attempt  
to get the story. You will be

watched like a magician  
with a deck of cards—show us  
how you pulled the ace—local

television will have a chopper  
ready to broadcast  
whatever happens next. Let us

give this up, Leo says. The woods  
are complete with miracles.  
Sparrows soar.

Author's Comment: My poems in this issue of The Wild Goose Poetry Review are part of a larger work and are "after" The Little Flowers of St. Francis. They were written, misinterpretations included, after a humble digestion of the Saint's life. Little relevance

is given to time or place. Francis, Clare, Leo, Juniper and the early Brothers are in a sense timeless. The poems mix the images of the 13th century with that of the 21st.

Bio: Al Ortolani is beginning his fortieth year as a secondary English teacher. He has written four books of poetry and has published widely in periodicals such as *Prairie Schooner*, *New Letters*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and *The New York Quarterly*. He is currently editor with the Little Balkans Press and is on the Board of Directors of the Kansas City Writers Place.

Larry Schug

this young guy,  
workin' dude, I'd guess,  
cap on backward,  
sleeves ripped off his t-shirt at the shoulders,  
just being respectful,  
true to good upbringing,  
holds open the door of the Holiday store  
for an old guy I see reflected in the glass—  
it's me. Holy crap, it's me.  
I'm an old guy.  
When did it happen that people open doors  
for me?  
I can open my own god damn door.  
I'm the one who holds doors open for old folks.  
I think, I'm gonna tell that young pup  
what's up and I do;  
I walk past him;  
right next to the Nut Goodies  
I nod once,  
whisper like a truck on gravel  
Thanks, Dude

Larry Schug

THE LIGHTS GO OUT DURING THE SUPER BOWL

The announcers prattle on and on  
about the lights dimming during the Super Bowl.  
I think, why am I watching this crap?  
and finding no reason but that the tv is on,  
I pull a book from the bookcase,  
open it randomly to a poem by Gary Snyder,  
a poem about girls finding bear scat on a mountain trail,  
not metaphorical scat, real bear shit on a real trail  
and all that implies in the real world of women and men,  
bears and berries, birth and death.  
If you know Gary Snyder's poetry,  
you know a poem about bear shit is not bullshit.  
If Gary Snyder was here,  
I would tell him, this is good shit!  
Thanks, Gary.  
I don't give a shit if the lights ever come back on.

Larry Schug  
IN LIGHT OF

The same day  
I saw a photo  
of an old grandma  
pushing an old grandpa  
out of Sarajevo  
in a wheelbarrow  
my boss  
bought a Lincoln Continental  
about a block long  
to transport  
his over-the-belt belly  
the twelve blocks  
between his home and office.  
I really didn't feel like riding  
my bike twelve miles  
to work and back today.  
I could've driven;  
but I felt a need  
for self-righteousness,  
misplaced, though it was,  
in light of an old grandma  
pushing an old grandpa  
out of Sarajevo  
in a wheelbarrow.

Larry Schug  
A PLACE CALLED GHOST RANCH

Georgia O'Keefe, inscrutable, enigmatic  
as some long-neglected goddess,  
stares at me, unblinking, from a book shelf,  
perched there like a hunting owl.  
Were I a mouse, scurrying  
across the desert floor in moonlight,  
I'd let her kill me if she had to  
for the sake of art,  
but only on the condition  
she lay a cactus flower  
beside my still-warm body,  
before she begins painting  
the skeleton she see inside me.  
There is no questioning the motives  
of gods, owls or artists, yet  
I entreat the goddess,  
as a last request,  
to allow the artist to paint the sky  
amethyst and indigo,  
allow the owl to relentlessly ask its question,  
though the answer has become irrelevant  
to all but some curious poet,  
not as alone as he presumed, in a library,  
populated, at midnight, only by sleeping authors  
on retreat at a place called Ghost Ranch.

Bio.: I woke up breathing again this morning. I intend to keep breathing all day. Check out my new website at <http://www.larryschugpoet.com>

Jim Zola  
BLUES

It's not 1963. Still, heaven  
is a Falcon, sky blue with rusted chrome.  
It's not how, but where  
and why. The town beach after a day  
butterflying jumbos at the Fish Market.  
A girl with tan shoulders, a fisherman's  
daughter. Cheap beer, but what does it matter  
after the first, the second. Who's counting?  
Not the fisherman who dreams of Tautog  
for chowder, walking the flats. His daughter  
dreams of a wedding without sand. You ignore  
dreams and drive to get gas, to watch a man,  
maybe 5 years older than you, rub a rag  
across your windshield as if the salt and grime  
might actually disappear. His name  
is on his shirt. Soon he disappears. But you  
aren't interested in the schedules of grief.  
Good grief the cartoon shouts. Yes, it's good.  
She becomes your wife. In a few years,  
her blood talks back to her, resists, the way  
a three year old does after a day  
at the beach, exhausted, refusing  
to acknowledge sleep. Says no. Big Blues  
eat the little Blues. Deep below,  
something joyful swims out of it all.

Author's Comment: I spent many childhood summers camping with my family along the beaches of Cape Cod. In my early twenties, I returned one summer to work at the Bass River Fish Market.

Jim Zola

REVOLT OF THE LANDSCAPE CREW

The council rules against noise,  
looks towards us as they fine-tune  
phrases; aware of the shadows  
we cast on their manicured lawns.

They want to take away  
our blowers. The bosses barely blink.  
There are more able bodies  
to fill the pick-up trucks.

These days the talk above the din  
of mowers is less jingo,  
more muted sputtering.  
I invite the clouds, watch drops

wet asphalt, concrete. We sit  
in the Texaco shop, sip  
scalded coffee and flirt  
with Alyce whose two-inch nails

provide a focal point  
between the muffins and the swell  
of her uniform.  
We never talk of rebellion.

It's in the dark moon under  
our fingernails, the whispers  
outsiders don't trust, the way  
we hold a hoe and barely bounce

in the back of the truck, stare  
into mini-vans. It's strange —  
there are no children  
in the neighborhoods we work.

Just dogs we never see that bark.  
And the parting of curtains.

Author's Comment: this poem grew out of a story I read about a community, perhaps someplace in California, that was banning the use of leaf blowers because of the noise. As I pumped gas one morning before going to work, I watched all the trucks with landscape crews pull into the gas station to fill their cans with gas. For that brief time I saw myself on the back of one of those trucks.

Bio: Jim Zola lives in Greensboro, North Carolina and is a children's librarian. His poems have appeared in various journals and anthologies. His chapbook titled *The One Hundred Poems of Weather* was published by Blue Pitcher Press. His manuscript of poems, *Sabotage at the Subliminal Tape Factory*, is looking for a publisher.

Maren O. Mitchell  
TO CARE OR NOT

I care less and less  
how others see me,  
more how I see myself.  
I don't care for the nasty  
arrow thoughts that zing  
out of me erratically, pulled  
from the quiver of a mind  
in limbo: They boomerang back,  
deflating pride in my goodness.  
With nothing but the illusion  
of control, I care more and more  
about small birds, wild turkey,  
tentative deer—who tremble  
when lightning is loose.  
That foraging chipmunks  
do not emerge into the puncturing  
jaws of cats. That whales are  
not decimated by a lesser species.  
Care that the 17-year cicadas finally  
laid their eggs, and birds who  
couldn't endure their clamor  
are returning to mark  
hours with song.  
I care less about the speed of days,  
length of nights, my deliberate walk.  
I care that my mind is calmer,  
I laugh more, and cry  
almost not at all.  
That no life is long  
enough to learn how to  
love—care I have only begun,  
with a shaky idea of the process.

Author's Comment: It could be that winding down a life does this to all of us eventually. Anyway, it is happening to me—changing of priorities—and I don't care at all. It is a relief.

Bio: Maren O. Mitchell's poems have appeared in Southern Humanities Review, The Classical Outlook, The Journal of Kentucky Studies, Pirene's Fountain, Appalachian Journal, Wild Goose Poetry Review, Skive (Australia), the anthologies The Southern Poetry Anthology, V: Georgia, Sunrise from Blue Thunder, and elsewhere. Work is forthcoming in Hotel Amerika this fall. Her nonfiction book is Beat Chronic Pain, An Insider's Guide (Line of Sight Press, 2012). For twenty years, across five states, she has taught the Japanese art of origami. She lives with her husband in Young Harris, GA.

Glenda Beall

#### THEREIN LIES THE DIFFERENCE

The Hiawassee River bubbles  
and gurgles, slaps the rocks  
sending sprays of diamonds  
into the air. In your red canoe  
you slide down mini-falls,  
slip between boulders, using  
your paddle to guide you.  
I glide along in my john boat  
with silent trolling motor over  
a dark pond that mirrors clouds,  
past willow oaks that line its banks.  
You seek out challenge, dare  
danger, test yourself  
— and win.  
I seek out the quiet coves.

Bio: Glenda Beall is a poet and writer, teacher and mentor, who enjoys expressing her feelings and thoughts by writing. Her chapbook, Now Might as Well be Then, published by Finishing Line Press in 2009, is still available on Amazon.com. She and her husband were different in many ways, but like two puzzle pieces, fit together to form a perfect picture. Without him her poems hold a more somber note, and life has not yet regained its ebullience.

Staci Lynn Bell  
ESCAPE

Taking in moist salt air,  
Blue Mountain Jamaican coffee steaming in my mug,  
I sit in my braided hammock swing,  
a German Shepherd on either side.

Just about the time the tropical sun  
burns off morning mist, I hear  
the swinging door that leads from kitchen to porch,  
my husband, a tray of pineapple and yogurt.

No shoes, tank top, colorful Hawaiian shorts,  
I stroll with the dogs down to the water.  
Mini rivers of the gulf find their way  
to meet me, tease me with their warmth.

The dogs are already frolicking with dolphins.  
I join them and become part of the scenery.  
From inside the picture, I never look out,  
and never want to go back.

Author's comment: I have always had an attraction to water, especially the Gulf of Mexico. It's life force and the dolphins that call the Gulf home mesmerize me and offer the seductiveness of serenity and peace. A place where, with my dogs, I could leave the consciousness of this world and enter a different level or dimension wishing I could truly become immersed with nature's conscious.

Bio—Staci Lynn Bell describes herself as “Yankee born, Southern in my soul.” Born in Chicago and raised in suburbia, Staci followed her heart after college. She headed south and currently calls Western North Carolina home. After a 20 year career in radio and television, she is now retired and free to pursue her passions; writing and animals, especially dogs. Staci is also a vocal advocate for wildlife and preservation of their natural habitat. Her love of animals resonates throughout her poems, short stories and essays. Staci shares her mountain cabin with 3 dogs and 1 husband.

Melissa Hager

WHO SAYS YOU'RE A LADY?

After three days dead on the kitchen  
table, we hope thousands of her brothers  
and sisters get the death notice.  
And our warning, "You are not  
welcome here." We sit at dinner,  
staring between green beans and apple  
pie, daring each other to remove it.  
Still, we are satisfied. One is deceased,  
incapable of foul odors, obnoxious  
orange trails, or bites when least  
expected. We hold vigil,  
take our chances on luck.

Author's Comment: Living on top of a mountain is great until hordes of ladybugs invade. This poem is a celebration of every dead ladybug found in the author's home.

Bio: Melissa "Mel" Hager is a resident of Taylorsville, NC. She has been published in Wild Goose Poetry Review, 234, The Lyricist, Bloodshot Journal of Contemporary Culture, and in various newspaper articles. She is a contributor to Art of Poetry at the Hickory Museum of Art and won 3rd place in the Spring 2013 Poetry Council of NC's Poetry Slam competition. As the children's librarian for Alexander County Library, her mission is to encourage youth to explore written and artistic expression.

Patricia Deaton

CONSIDERING HIGH PLACES

Neither weak moments, pitch-black  
thoughts nor a desire to live no more  
keeps me from the balcony.

It's not the unknown–drum-beat  
of dreams–rising up and out  
to signal all existence.

It's not wondering how flying feels  
soaring effort-free, boundless  
heartsick urge to land

or hearing only echoes when I  
shout down my loneliness.

It's not fear of finding nothing

when the deed is tried and done.

It's the push and pull of elements;  
the amalgamated entity that shrinks back

from the rail, paying homage  
to the mystery in me,  
and all that it must be.

Author's Comment: Living fours floor up for fifteen years, sometimes I wouldn't allow myself out on the balcony—always because of a quietly-overwhelming feeling to stay away from the edge.

Patricia Deaton  
DONATION

Van crammed full  
I pull into Goodwill,  
jerk the door open  
to unload things  
I don't need. Church  
dresses she packed away new,  
checkered quilt-tops she started,  
those old nursing shoes,  
yellowed scrapbooks with dates  
no longer important,  
a box full of faces no one recalls.  
80's brass seagulls, ugly mauve tray,  
and among the belongings  
from my mom's emptied place,  
a wooden paper towel holder,  
heavy heart for a base.

Author's Comment: The memory of cleaning out my mom's house while she was still alive was my inspiration for this poem.

Bio: Patricia Killian Deaton is a native of the foothills of North Carolina whose poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have been published in a variety of magazines and anthologies. A new and very young, but very thrilled great-grandmother, she lives near a lake with her huge orange cat, Sweet Boy.

Akacia Robinson  
HOW TO DEAL

She says she would  
rather he get  
cancer and die,  
he suffers that much

hemophiliac,  
free bleeder,  
autistic,  
8 years old

wishes he was the  
Hulk or anyone  
with powers  
exchanging his

life for another  
without weakness  
or pain, he's  
only 8 years old

Kelly DeMaegd

FROM ANYTHING LOST, SOMETHING REMAINS

During a nocturnal, cosmic, cupboardian shift,  
cereal bowls, carefully organized in columns of four,  
stir, roll, tumble to the floor,  
released from their servitude of vessel-dom.

The lowly pottery bowl can now be measured,  
cut into tesserae, constructed to resemble  
the Prussian Blue horizon line  
found in ancient villa mosaic floors.

Better yet, the pieces swept up, lobbed  
to the bottom of a brother pot, drainage aid  
for hollyhock, cosmos, foxglove. After first frost,  
shards are discarded in the farthest corner of the yard.

Over time, rain-buffeted, wind-scrubbed; pieces are reduced  
to dust, silica, alumina, sedimentary clay.  
Waiting to be found, ground, glazed,  
burned in the cycle's inevitable return.

Helen Losse  
GREATER THAN ANY RING

1.

As the older daughter,  
her mother told her —  
many, many times —

that she would receive  
her mother's ring  
upon her mother's passing.

She imagined that ring —  
properly sized —  
on the finger of her right

hand and how she would  
sneak a glance it —  
cherish it on the sly —

remembering stories  
of how rations during WWII  
affected even the social traditions

of engagement and marriage,  
how her father had promised  
more appropriate rings,

how her mother got those rings  
at a later date. But the truth is,  
ring-stories are oral history.

2.

On the day she didn't  
get the ring, purple-black  
flames rose hot from her belly.

Tears—deep as her soul—  
engulfed, made her an over-  
wrought child, but she could not

ignore her mother's voice:  
*Greater than any ring  
with a tiny emerald chip*

*-serving as center  
in a 3×3 grid  
of 8 diamond chips*

*is your born-again,  
God-given birthright  
I prayed to raise you up to.*

So the daughter  
offered the ring as a sacrifice  
against family breach,

& as a backward example  
to Esau, who should also  
forgive his brother Jacob.

Author's Comment: The story as I remember is, the older daughter gets the engagement ring, the younger the wedding ring. My sister remembers it differently, and she, by request of our mother, had possession of the ring. I think my sister thought I'd fight harder, I know my brother did, but I promised Mummy I would not fight about "things," so I did not. I had to wear it while we divided other items; otherwise, I couldn't describe it accurately. Central to my own healing, this poem has become my ring.

Bio: Helen Losse is the author of two full length poetry books, *Seriously Dangerous* (Main Street Rag, 2011) and *Better With Friends* (Rank Stranger Press, 2009) and three chapbooks. Her poems have been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and three times for a Best of the Net award, one of which was a finalist. She is currently working on her next book *Facing a Lonely West: Poems About Loss*.

Barbara Gabriel

MESSAGE TO A WAITRESS'S DAUGHTER

It's the way your leather-belted, straight from the hip body  
skitters down the row of counter stools, past  
boys' hands hovering and old men longing  
separated from other girls by skin and perception

that urges my lips, puckered at the point  
of your mouth, to slide breathless up that unruffled  
cheek to find your ear and cry

*Run.*

Overthrow those boys by zipless coup.  
Shed the girls who hang from your hunter's belt  
like trophies. Dodge the traplines  
old ones set into this land and nail their songs to the wall.

You are the shape-shifter  
a myth buster, the break-my-heart-in-a-million-ways  
grifter. Bring a flamethrower to the last supper  
you eat at this diner.

Then just when the sky blackens beyond stars  
turn your pockets inside out and shake the dust free. Don't pause  
to pack even one stone. Drop that compass  
in the deepest well along the way.

You are my moon landing  
my code-breaker, the Universe-is-expanding  
*oh Mama, can I ride a Star-raker.*

A put 'em in a vise and squeeze  
till they ache-er, so *Go*

write poetry instead of letters home.  
Master the traveler's arts  
and feed your own fire. Make love  
from strong opinion.

Cast your precise shadow in this gloom  
and tell time to pass on by- you will not carry it.

Author's Comment: "Message to a Waitress's Daughter" came out of the continuing conversation I have with myself about women's lives and the choices made that get them to where they are. I find that as I get older, many of my heroes are women younger than I. None of them have asked for my advice. "Message..." is about recognizing a sister-traveler along the women's road and urging her to journey on in pursuit of herself.

Bio: Barbara Gabriel is a poet, writer and salvage artist who has been gathering writing material for fifty years while impersonating a chef, cruise director, ice cream scooper, sailor, child advocate, landscaper, package designer, dive master, log cabin builder, and a really bad waitress. She grew up in Minnesota along Highway 61 and then ran away to sea to travel, live and eat her way through the Americas, Turkey, North Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean. She has been published in the online journal of topical poetry "Poetry24", in the "American Society: What Poets See" anthology (FutureCycle Press) and in Wild Goose Poetry Review. She currently calls Portland, Oregon home.

Karen Douglass

THE GREAT POET COMES TO OUR TOWN

*Padre Ernesto Cardenal*

*Innisfree Books, Boulder CO*

Given his stature, I sit, stunned  
by the absence of crowds chanting  
his fame from the sidewalk.

He has come to us. I hear his voice,  
see that black beret, wonder  
why passersby pass him by,

this revolutionary, whose Spanish  
I trust even in translation.  
I hand him *Flights of Victory* to sign.

He scrawls in silence, an automaton  
whose poems are all I can have of him.  
They suffice. He does not need me

to worship him. I would come  
to see him as another graybeard  
out of time and place, not

a god-sponge come to clean us, not  
a man to make of clumsy America  
a new Nicaragua of the mind.

Larry Thomas  
ANOTHER BLASÉ MONDAY

Well-to-do and retired,  
they rise with the sun  
to execute their morning ritual  
of black coffee.  
Each privately wonders  
who'll be the first to die.

Their past infidelities  
drop to the shoulders  
of their consciousness  
like the first discernible flakes  
of dandruff. From the sea  
which lured them there, they keep

a comfortable distance.  
Their investments are secure,  
their health quite good for their age.  
Three gourmet meals,  
a matinee movie, a nap  
and perhaps a poem or two by Plath

will see them through the day  
to their dusk-bathed balcony,  
just beyond whose railing  
another blasé Monday  
will snuff discreetly out the wingless  
little glowworm of its life.

Larry Thomas  
FAULKNER  
His sentences  
are tendrils of kudzu  
much too muscular  
for the period's ax.

Bio: Larry Thomas is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, and served as the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate. He has published twenty collections of poems, most recently *Uncle Ernest* (Virtual Artists Collective, Chicago, 2013). His *New and Selected Poems* (TCU Press, 2008) was short-listed for the National Book Award.

Lucy Cole Gratton  
BLACK HOLE

Tall weeds grow where once was lawn,  
decayed fencing still fights for space,  
a skeleton of what once had been a chimney  
rises from a clump of young pines.  
Weather beaten sheds hang aslant  
propped up by tangled vines;  
the house, burned to the ground,  
no longer a black blight since overgrown.  
Still – few strangled flowers bloom.

A passing traveler, earnest clothes  
askew from the business of his day  
will not notice, even neighbors  
caught up in the now will not remember  
what once was a family's home  
so completely vanished in the jungle  
of just a few years' growth.  
Laughter was there, now gone;  
no echoes float on enduring wind.

Will my words decay as well,  
smother in the tangle of others,  
leaving no trace of me  
or what I think?  
Will there exist instead  
an empty place, void of meaning,  
where people pass routinely,  
not remember who I am  
but for an abandoned scrap of words?

Author's Comment: I pass this derelict house, burned to the ground and overgrown with weeds, each time I leave home. It is a poignant reminder of the ambiguity of life.

Bio: Lucy Cole Gratton is a retired CPA living in Murphy, NC, and a native of Decatur, GA. . She has written poetry and prose for many years – only lately seeking to publish with some success, both nationally and internationally. A member of the North Carolina Writers Network, she regularly attends critiques and readings of that

organization. She has read at John Campbell Folk School many times and has taken many poetry classes there.

Review  
by Scott Owens

LIFE OUTSIDE THE SET

by Michael Diebert

Sweatshoppe Publications, 2013

ISBN: 9780615795676

These days, when most of what we see on our high-definition, 72-inch, plasma screens are called “reality shows,” we need poets like Michael Diebert to remind us of our true reality, of what life is like for the rest of us, of life “outside the set,” where the drama is perhaps less frequent, certainly less staged, and tragically longer, deeper, and farther reaching.

The cover image of Diebert’s debut collection of poetry, *Life Outside the Set*, is more reminiscent of sets from my childhood than of anything to be seen in the massive superstores today: maybe 13 inches, two knobs – one for uhf, one for vhf – and strange appendages called rabbit ears. What younger, contemporary viewers and readers might not realize is that as strange as such a contraption might seem to today’s digital, pixelated “set,” it was nevertheless the new norm, the brave new world for those of us growing up in the 60’s and 70’s, and we knew so much less about how to integrate that world into ours, or ourselves into it, than we were ever willing to let on.

The imagistic riprap — Huntley, Brinkley, Cronkite, Chancellor, Watergate, Big Bird and Bob, the Ty-d-bol Man, the Fig Newton guy, Mr. Whipple, and Charlie’s Angels (“Nostalgia”) — of that time period, of the All in the Family generation in which families began to spend more time watching than doing, forms the foundation of these poems and creates the sense of “unknowing at-riskness” that informs them and that, looking back, we can see clearly defined the period. In “Ashtray, 1974,” for example, “Mom’s Parliament” burning down on the lip of an ashtray becomes a metaphor for the inhalation and habitualization of complacency, disconnectedness, impotence, and disenchantment:

. . . Dad  
in his recliner, sawing logs.  
Curtains drawn. In the news,  
Nixon pardoned, war abandoned,  
sluggishness, malaise. We breathe it,  
inescapable, in – three awake,  
one asleep. Mom takes

a long drag. Bad habit to begin,  
she says, impossible to end.

But the poems don't stay in the 70's. They move forward, showing the reader how the psychology born of that experience has carried over to everything else. We see its consequences in "The Shops at Caesar's Palace" with its emphasis on the artificiality of things:

Faux canal, faux gondola rowed by a faux gondolier,  
faux wedding, faux vows vowed in a faux gazebo,  
sugar rush of the insoluble placebo,  
faux atoms floating in a faux atmosphere.

We see other consequences, alienation and uncertainty, in "Brandon in Accounting," when the speaker reflects

The book would have us believe  
we barrel through childhood with helmets on,  
graduate, grow up, get hitched,  
get burned in the south of France,  
grill streaked meats on boat docks,  
join clubs, commence nesting, drop off the radar.  
And this, friends, is why leisure is a bitch.  
Too much time to think about the knots  
on my head. Too much time to allow  
how alien I must seem . . . .

And we see the absence of conviction and substance in "Fixer-Upper" as the root of a failing relationship:

. . . She'd rather sing,  
  
convert the porch to a veranda,  
find other bright ways to pander  
  
to would-be buyer-uppers, doubtless  
dream of birth, children, faultless  
  
to a fault – she, outgrowing you,  
and the fault you've fallen into.

The inability to integrate what changed about our lives and families and country with Vietnam and Nixon and television has, of course, led to a crisis of meaning that seems almost interminable now. These poems beautifully capture that malaise in forms and shadow forms – quatrains, sonnets, pantoums – that suggest, even while they seem to deny, the possibility of meaning, of understanding, and of truth. And ultimately they conclude on notes of hope, as we are “reclaimed by joyous // sons and husbands” (“Patient Poem”), we strive, seeing life as “a proving ground for our souls’ motors” (“Seniors”), and we survive with a stubborn faith in ourselves and each other – “We believe in everything” (“Epithalamion”).

Review  
by Helen Losse

RENDER  
by Collin Kelley  
Sibling Rivalry Press  
ISBN: 9781937420345

Collin Kelley's first full-length poetry collection *Render* is a near-perfect book—a book most poets would die for, a high mark to hit. The subject matter—growing up as a gay boy (then youth and man) in America—is handled openly and honestly, but the book's structure is its biggest strength. Kelley, a prize-winning novelist as well as poet, has taken keen care in developing all the elements of story writing. This is no mere collection of poems; it is an organized book, one of the most well-planned I have seen. Unity and coherence are evident throughout.

*Render* has theme, character development, setting, plot development, and, of course, a strong voice in a clever frame story in which the plot develops. *Render* is both the subject and the process. The theme is growing up gay; *render* is the process of doing so.

There is no question that the poems are auto-biographical. Using terms that represent stages of development in photography—reticulation, aperture, blowup, and resolution—Kelley weaves a fascinating tale not only of what it is like to grow up gay but of what it was like for him growing up gay in a particular time and place with his particular family. And as they say, "You can't judge a book by its cover," but in this case, the cover itself, a photograph of the author working with a time-release device on an old camera, adds dimension to the story.

Each poem in this 70-page volume is a photograph, a well-crafted image.

The first section "reticulation" contains only one poem "A Broken Frame." In it, we see a photograph of Kelley's ancestors before they left England, and a foreshadowing of the theme. In the picture, one family member "has been blacked out...." But why?

Did he die in transit...  
...the ruin of the family?  
The one who kissed other boys....  
("A Broken Frame")

The actual story begins in "aperture" with a family of three: Collin and his parents at Collin's September, 1969 birth. Readers see Kelley's childhood through poems about

family vacations, accidents, childhood toys, and Kelley's childhood memories. We see his parents drift apart, his mother's adultery, their reconciliation, his mother's stroke, and Kelley's early sexual encounters. At six, he knew.

I only wanted to see one thing: the ruby red slippers  
Dorothy wore in The Wizard of Oz.

...I needed  
those shoes to click my way out of the coming storm,  
the dread I already felt at the age of six.  
("Freedom Train")

So that's how it feels to know you are gay. One wonders, as the story progresses, how (or if) Kelley's life would have differed if he had had siblings. But he did not. Collin was more than enough for his parents.

In the third section "blowup" Kelley is older, experiments with various homosexual partners and sexual techniques, and has a brief crush on a woman. Yet his parents could no longer deny what they had always known. The poems in this section are more sexually graphic, but never burdened by language that I consider vulgar.

Lee first gave me head  
behind an abandoned restaurant....  
("Detour")

And then we see what the poet imagines his mother saw:

...the image of her son  
impaled on the floor...  
...  
The truth...no longer at  
the edge of their thoughts, but overtaking them like a baby  
blue shag tidal wave.  
("Sex In My Parents' House")

Concerning a later encounter, Kelley writes,

...we haven't met,  
but you [Michael] will appear  
...a bag inscribed "sexual confusion" ....  
then I'll never see you again.  
("Night 65")

Later Kelley becomes a confirmed bachelor and reaffirms his love for his “broken” parents.

Now that I’ve given up on a ring

...

scrape my knuckles as I  
surrender to the no name night.  
 (“Confirmed Bachelor”)

Time brought Kelley to the point where his parents are older. When the Kelleys gather for the holidays, Collin’s father is blind, his mother subdued with memory loss.

Small talk will turn to accusation,  
to nitpicking...  
Grandmother will retreat to the kitchen...

...

We are suspended here,...  
waiting for the world to spin again on its axis.  
 (“Christmas Day”)

The final section “resolution” contains the single poem “Render.” Written with a voice-over, rendering an actual photograph, that ends with “Note that a blue sky and clouds are impossible to render/ Expect imperfections and subtle debris,” the poem, written for Sally Mann, does not conclude on one high, positive note.

Your darlings are poison  
... son waist deep in rising water

...the moon turns silver to blood

And the children again, older  
...the boy’s eyes fixed and dilated  
three perfect funeral masks  
 (“Render”)

No one here is living a fairy tale.

An autobiography in verse, *Render* by Collin Kelley is a book to be admired, its quality sought after. It is one of the best, if not the best, poetry book I have read this year. But Kelley’s memory is, of course, a human one, embellished and distorted by purpose and

time. He, like everyone, remembers and records what he needs to go on. Yet the poems in *Render* give readers a good idea of what it is like to grow up gay in America.

Review  
by Brenda Smith

SKY UNDER THE ROOF

Hilda Downer

Bottom Dog Press

ISBN 978-1-933964-70-6

I have to admit that one reason I wanted to read Hilda Downer's *Sky Under the Roof* was that the title intrigued me. Just how does the sky end up beneath the roof? I can't say truthfully that I answered my own question, but I enjoyed every minute of the journey. Her poetry above all else is a masterful weaving of connections: connections through time, family, friends, the earth, history, culture, objects, and nature; connections between people and times, people and places, hearts and bones, love and loss. She creates a reality of her own with her words and images. If you have ever pondered whether we use creativity to withdraw from the world or to re-enter it, this book answers for the author's view — we create to re-enter and connect.

Downer divides her book into three parts: I. The sky bears its own weight in watchfulness, II. Bottles and jars are the skeletons of light that hold up the sky, and III. The sky listens but offers no advice.

It is impossible to say of Downer's work, "This section is about..." because, for her, all things are connected and a poem that begins with a childhood memory, may pass into a eulogy for earth, and continue on into a reassurance to the reader that we are all one, and that makes everything all right in the end. She begins with "Picking Cherries up Howell Hollow" which concludes with the lines, "deeper still in childhood/attempting to see into/who I have and have not become." And so she leads us along on this quest of hers where we find that her journey is our own.

One sturdy thread of her travels reveals her love of the natural world as she illuminates many truths of Appalachia's environmental struggles. She does not shove environmentalism down our throats, but her images and insights make us realize that what we have done to the earth had better be put right. One favorite in this section is a longer poem, "Flashlights and Fire" whose lines do not preach, but insightfully describe: "You showed me clear-cutting/where trees of whole mountains/won't work anymore./Stray logs lay useless as dead flashlights/where too much daylight/needles where deer and bear,/and whole species of what could heal us,/have had a fire in their house."

Another poem in this section, "What is Under my Dress" crosses time from ancient days and back again, ending in a revelation of who she has become. At first, it seems two topics, thrown together perhaps by a poet whose mind cannot find focus, but when seen as a whole, the connection becomes clear and the transitions seamless:

"Scops sing in an unwritten language;  
arched stones and Celtic bones...  
faith and prayer sent out in the direction of birds,  
where the infinity of the small  
reaches the infinity of the large,  
and between any man and woman,  
there is that something more.  
An editor once summed up  
my poetry as merely listing,  
told me to put that under my belt,  
and would I drive with him to Vermont.  
Here's another list;  
I don't wear a belt;  
I wear a vintage prom dress;  
I refuse to face life like a man;  
and I'll make up my own mind,  
if there's any room left,  
about what to put under my dress next."

"The Source of Confessional Poetry Along the Toe" juxtaposes time and place between the contemplation of Frankie Silver's murder of her husband in 1833, to confessions of her children, to childhood memories of crossing the Toe River, ending with a satisfying conclusion to the odyssey:

"We are not strangers  
when time moves forward  
to meet time moving backwards...  
When I return to the other side,  
I do not return fully,  
But I do return whole."

In the final section of the book, "The sky listens but offers no advice," Downer returns again to Bandana, her Appalachian home. Her scattered musings are united by her memories, expressed in such poignant words that they could be our memories, too. Those places and people and thoughts that we held dear in our youth are seldom forgotten, and she shares hers with such clarity that we are enveloped with her. We

remember and ache with our own pasts as we travel her road built of words and images.

We begin to get an inkling of the book's title in "Not Even the Bone of White Bedroom Furniture," a poem dealing with memories of her sons:

"They prefer to play with their father.  
Sometimes loneliness is not just a back turned,  
But something lost, unnamed,  
In the sky that sees but offers no answers,  
A fear I won't know what to say to sons.  
They fashion guns from the bones and elbows of laurel."

Downer ends with a final tender plea for the environment with her poem, "Watauga Lake is Manmade," an ode to the land beneath the water, to the town of Butler, that no longer exists. It is a perfect ending to a book that travels back and forth between time and memory to make the connections.

Why is the sky under the roof? I don't know. I could make something up, but I think I prefer to simply bask in the emotions that Hilda Downer's words and images evoke. She says: "In the writing of this,/I pull you closer to me./In reading, you pull back./We click together like hickory nutshells./For whatever purpose,/it is in this pull that I dance alive." I want to dance with her. If you read poetry for how it can reach out and grab you, then you will want to read this book too, and dance along.

Review

by Nancy Posey

## WHAT THE TRAPEZE ARTIST TRUSTS

Malaika King Albrecht

Press 53

In her new full-length poetry collection *What the Trapeze Artist Trusts*, Malaika King Albrecht sets the stage for the poems that follow with “Dear Stranger, This Is My Intimate,” a letter that establishes the elusive presence of a persona set “mid-dream.” Throughout these artfully arranged poems, she establishes what she calls in “Sound Knows Its Place in the Air” a “study / of loss in slow motion.” In the first section, “The Secret Keeper,” while some poems approach more implicit themes of separation, others deal directly with childbirth and parenting.

In many ways, the poems in this book convey a dreamlike state, and though “How to Walk Right Through a Woman” clearly indicates the breakup of a marriage as “he [steps] around [her] / packing his books, clothes, toothbrush,” the speaker experiences a loss of self, becoming invisible, immaterial. In fact, it is her self she seeks throughout the poems collected here, seeing “The rocks [writing her] name / on the beach” in “Leaving the Island.” When “lost in the waves / that sift the silt along the banks” of “Troublesome Creek,” she finds herself in the birds’ songs.

Anyone familiar with Albrecht’s other recent book *Spill* will notice the recurring watery images through the collection from the “push, gush / rush – the sounds of water” and the “wet cry” of “On Your Birthday” to “My Recurring Pool Dream” in which the speaker stands waiting to catch a leaping child.” The speaker seems to move between thirst and near drowning. In the second section she calls “Keeping Silence,” she shows the departure not of the husband packing his things and walking right through her, but of “The Drowned Husband” who leaves and simply “doesn’t wade back” but reappears later as a sea bass, a jar of water, the rain, the humid air, “so full of himself.”

In Part III “The Present,” she begins to come to terms with what is lost and what is found, noting in “When I Left My Country” that “there were 53 words for lost / and only 1 for found.” Despite all the loss, she finally declares in “How I Came to Me”: “I am in possession / of myself.”

Albrecht’s poems address what does and does not last. She notes in “What Grief and a Fever Bring” that horses “know / the beauty of impermanence” In poem after poem, she returns to the ripples of a stone dropped into the water, but in “Beautiful! Beautiful!

Magnificent Desolation," a title attributed to astronaut Buzz Aldrin," she recalls those "footprints" left by the astronaut on his moon walk "that will last / longer than his life." In "The Earth Is My New Pair of Shoes" the speaker finds herself standing silent unable to do anything " but fit perfectly where I stood, my feet in the dear dusty earth," as if at last aware of the rightness of place.

At last, in Part IV "The Broken and the Lost," she declares "To the Man With His Back to the Chapel," that she is "the footprint of a miracle, / the smoke of the just extinguished flame," appearing indistinguishable from dust when captured in a photograph. In her closing poems, Albrecht does not promise anything less broken or lost, but concludes with hopefulness, encouraging the reader in "The Sunken Narrative" to "Imagine. . . survivors" whose "story can be told," the pieces of the narrative, like "pieces of a broken mirror. . . collected and carefully / glued together to make a circle."

As Malaika King Albrecht pieces together these lines, these poems, she creates a narrative, that while marked by brokenness and loss, forms something complete and new. Upon finishing the last poem, readers are likely to find themselves turning back to the beginning to reenter the dream.

Book Review  
by Patricia Deaton

## THE HUSH BEFORE THE ANIMALS ATTACK

Carol Matos

Main Street Rag

ISBN: 978-1-59948-400-6

To be sure, Carol Matos's book of poems *The Hush Before the Animals Attack* is not an uplifting book, nor is it meant to be. The "animals" in these poems take many forms, from abusive fathers and lovers to inescapable aging, death and tragedy, all in a poisonous universe with dragons.

The first poem "8MM" sets the tone for the entire book and reading it, one is struck by just how much at the mercy of adults, children are, and how easily for some, distrust of the gods we call parents, is to come by.

Dragons reside in the basement of this speaker's psyche, but so do a few good memories of the family maid who is a childhood confidante and keeper of secrets. "Saved" shows just how much this woman meant to her. In "Dear Elizabeth," the trusted friend meets a tragic end at the hands of a jealous husband.

Throughout the book, run the threads of disappointment and edgy despair. The poem "Salt and Ice" (the last line of which forms the title of this book), for example, seems to be about incest. Lines such as "She lets him gather her, luxuriates in his hands...she's her own accomplice. Adept at his deceptions, she edits herself. Join his delusions...It's not a dream she glimpses," convey the obsessive psychology of sexual abuse and manipulation.

Also throughout, there are flashes of faces flat to the floor, bruised by carpet, suggestive of resentment or of hiding from abusive treatment or the world, in general. "Paper Wasps (P. Fuscatus)" is one example... "the muses of rapture are all mute now...Certain wasps recognize other wasps by facial features while some humans have face blindness...my head upon the fractured floor...I draw my name in the gathering dust."

Even in romantic love relationships, there is no relief from doubt, fear of abandonment or a desire to make someone pay. Some of the most resonant parts for me dealt with the relationship of author and mother, and her mother's aging and death. "Amethyst" reminds us how life-stopping the final days of a loved one can be.

The elegies in Part IV (written for the author's niece from the perspective of the niece's mother) are filled with the gut-wrenching grief of a mother who has lost her daughter—from the onslaught of disease to the scattering of ashes. If you are a parent, you will understand how these poems could be written. If you have lost a child, you may not be able to bear "Stay Near" because of its sadness.

This book is worth reading for the reality of the lines that describe how women feel in youth, in their prime and the invisibility of aging. "That Summer" is a poem about reaching puberty..."Watching the blood run down my leg, I worried the whole world could smell me".

Being an older woman, this, from "39 Fifth Avenue" spoke to me. "The young women take no notice of me, see only themselves...the doorman smiles, with them in mind. I unbutton his uniform."

Review  
by Betty O'Hearn

One Man's Profit  
Robert S. King  
Sweatshoppe Publications  
ISBN: 978-0-9887820-1-3

Reading Robert S. King's *One Man's Profit* was my first exposure to his work, and I was drawn to it from the moment I sat down and opened the book. King's portfolio of work began in the early 1970's and it suggests a writer who has looked not only into the world, but also into his own soul.

This book written at the end of a career in the private sector, while stepping down an active career as editor of FutureCycle Press can be viewed to some degree as a poetic autobiography. Many of these poems were pulled from King's past work and make a statement of his life. King is a brilliant man with a very eclectic palate of work that comes alive to reach the soul of another writer. I connected in many lines and my life seems to mirror his views in several poems.

*One Man's Profit* is divided into "Empires," "From the Heights," "Long Roots," "Social Security," "Migrating Shadows," and "Profits."

In the "Empire" section, King touches on former world orders, which contributed to so many sciences and technologies in our own present history and have touched him on a personal level as well. These poems pay a sort of homage to these great past civilizations. A sentence from each stanza of the poem "Empire" illustrates:

The pyramids are still falling..  
Mayan temple stones sewn together with weeds  
Greece taught Rome how to fall forever  
The blood of the cracks of great stones never dries, never seals the wounds

Imagery and flow are so well demonstrated in this poem. I was drawn to my own experiences studying these pasts. Noted in the Pharaoh's Night Light:

In the heart of the boy king's tomb and in the hearts of intruders is a light burning 3000 years.

Written about King Tutankhamen, the words propel the reader into ancient Egypt and all this country brought to the table as it played into early Bible days as the

imprisonment of thousands of Jews for hundreds of years, to the romance of Anthony and Cleopatra, a love story that never dies. King tells in 20 well-stated lines, a rich history that has coherence and relevance.

The “Heights” segment features poems that attend to ideas from the highest ground, as in “The Language of Trees,” a strong piece that talks about communication among this species of life that waves to us or perhaps have their own sign language.

Only felling shows us the history of trees.  
Their long lives grow in widening circles,  
in seasons telling their stories in a tongue  
we partly understand.

King’s connection to nature and what is directly in front of or behind him is astounding as his poems remind readers of questions they have thought about, such as the relation of one tree to the next: “does one cry to another as it falls?” His articulation is astounding.

“Long Roots” covers some of King’s personal history. He has had a full life and with recent stepping down it appears he is soaring to his later chapters like we all think about.

Our family is part of who we are, and in “Grandmother”, King illustrates his troubled relationship with the matriarch as he was the bookworm and did not appear to have the same love of the land as his cousins.

We grew from the same soil if not the same spirit.  
Your seed is firmly planted here, but mine is in the wind.

The writer does not apologize for his difference, but recognizes he is different and his thoughts and love go beyond the family farm. There is strength in these words showing that he did not back down during life.

The “Social Security” section combines poems from King’s personal life with a few that touch on his career. “Worker’s Compensation” was one I particularly enjoyed as it took the reader from the beginning of a work day through the issues we have all experienced in trying to fit into an office culture.

In my office suite, all the phones winked on hold. The water cooler  
Had a cork and a long line. White collars loosened their Windsor nooses,  
and lipstick wrote happy faces everywhere.

King's well-crafted prosody takes readers into the office and the imagery put them into a large room of cubbies and all the mundane boring characteristics of working a 9-5 job. Personally, it was crystal clear to me and I could even hear phones ringing.

Winding down to "Migrating Shadows," King is preparing himself to leave a career and start a new session of life. There is a line I fell in love with that kind of mirrored my own life. A road never leaves the past but already touches tomorrow.

King writes about life and brings the pain, sorrow and challenges into electrified pages that you will want to read and re-read as you will identify segments in the life of this speaker experienced by someone you don't know that you can so easily relate to.

One Man's Profit is a volume of breathing poems you will want to have in your collection. Robert S. King shares his life with us in a way that makes it possible to better understand and stay in touch with your own past.

Review

by Scott Owens

Beat Chronic Pain: An Insider's Guide

Maren Mitchell

Line of Sight Press

ISBN: 9780985311902

This is a poetry journal, so why would I include, much less write, a review of a nonfiction, self-help book called Beat Chronic Pain: An Insider's Guide? Because it is written by a poet, because it contains poetry (15 of them, to be precise, more than many chapbooks of poetry I've seen), because I found it remarkably helpful in my ability to understand those who suffer chronic pain and in thinking about my own relatively pain-free life, and because my favorite part of the book is a poem, specifically, the poem reprinted below, which exemplifies the quality of the work in this book, and which I hope will convince would-be readers to say Yes to this book.

The First Word I Said and Where It Led Me

by Maren Mitchell

Maybe I should have said: Maybe.

To hedge against all decisions,  
weighing them for years.

Or: No. Insulation against everything out there.

I said: Yes.

Yes to sound: My breath in.

Yes to hearing the breath of others

pant of terror and exhaustion

sigh of relief

intake of surprise

tap dance of laughter

expectancy of touch.

Yes to the tiny grit grasp of birds who stay through winter,

to their warm-weather overlapping conversations

of hunger, fighting, passion, pairing: music.

Yes to my mate's voice, calling, naming, telling: my music.

Yes to sight: Claiming all I see as mine.

Yes to the body light of fireflies, the glow of ocean's lanterns.

Yes to the immeasurable, inevitable increase of light after night,

each day recreated, hints edging into definitions,

teasing shades springing into watercolors.

Yes to the growth and contours of my planet

that house more creatures than we will ever know.

Yes to looks, actions, thoughts, being of my Heart: my sun.

Yes to the coming night, window through the Milky Way, to out.

Yes to smell: Flesh of family and friends,

oscillating aromas of plants as they grow,

the blatant strength of their true natures released

as we harvest to eat, burn, cook, decorate.

Yes to touch: Air that almost acknowledges us

as it oozes, blusters, idles

around our clothed, hairy forms.

Yes to the protection of plants,

woven into caressing tee-shirts, quilt caves.

Yes to the silk of animals who musk us as their own,

the forever and daily holding of loves, their hold of me.

Yes to the essential slide of liquid down throats,

crunchy carrots talking the language of rocks,

the subtle slice of bread with butter comfort.

Yes to taste: Just-picked tart blueberries under sun,  
taut neutral skins enclosing nips of sweet freedom.  
Sour of the tropics, come-hither lull of key lime,  
sparking the soul to believe in eternal youth.  
Salt of sweat, anchor to earth.  
The bitter of knowing we all leave, we leave all,  
at the mercy of time,  
time, the only mercy.

Review of *Cameo Roles* by Jo Barbara Taylor  
by Nancy Posey

## CAMEO ROLES

by Jo Barbara Taylor

Big Table

ISBN: 9780983066675

As an underlying theme of her chapbook *Cameo Roles*, Jo Barbara Taylor explores the different roles women play throughout our lives.

While most of her poems are written free verse, Taylor experiments with form as well as she gives voices to these different women. In "Lost and Found," she uses embedded repetition of words and images from the familiar nursery rhyme about the cow jumping over the moon to examine that time in childhood when one becomes aware of the difference between the literal and the figurative, "hyperbole, personification," opting instead to believe the magic. The sing-song rhymes—moon/spoon, diddle/fiddle, infuse the poem but rarely as end rhyme. Instead, she picks up and repeats key words, circling back in the end line as she "return[s] to that time of magic" to the poem's opening line about "a magical time."

Many of the poems return the reader to childhood. In "Up the Mountain," Taylor delves into a make-believe world of princesses, knights, and castles, using a pattern of six-line stanzas with end rhyme in the fourth and sixth lines. "Private Room" also explores child's play, but in free verse, evoking strong images as the speaker finds a secret place beneath "an arched bower." This poem appeals strongly to all the senses, evoking the strong scent of "purple blossoms. . . jade leaves/ and amethyst petals" as well as "peanuts/ and grape jam."

Many of the poems take their beginnings in other classic works. In "The Long Sonnet," which begins with the line from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "The night is long that never finds the day," she plays with multiple meanings of the word "long" from the concrete—oolong and furlongs to the abstraction of her "reverie of longing" and "welcom[ing] the long dark night."

Taylor also casts a reply to Robert Browning's Duke in "The Duchess." In this poem, she uses the same ten-syllable lines in rhyming couplets, although she doesn't maintain the strict iambic meter used by Browning. In a surprise twist, however, the speaker reveals that rather than becoming a victim of the Duke's misplaced jealousy, she actually had eloped with Fra Pandolf, the monk who painted her portrait.

The characters, primarily female, in these poems live varied lives in different times. In "Workday Dreams," Carmen's life alternates between the monotony of her day shift, working the "belching machine, holding her only "conversation / with belts and oily gears. . . ." and the escape of her night life, dancing salsa in a "harlequin skirt" to "the clatter of flamenco heels."

Rachey in "The Wardrobe" wears the tattered remains of once-fine clothes, now "wrinkled and dun/ with age and mildew" as she lives on the street. Taylor's diction makes readers aware of the sharp contrast between the woman's reality—"dirty, gnarled. . . faded, / a bit out of shape, ripped. . ." and her fantasy as she lives in memory, and "curtsies a tilting fourth position ballet pose," wearing her "once elegant fabrics and lace.

Readers will find humor in these Cameo Roles. "My Yoga Me" is a two-part poem revealing the reality and fantasy of a middle-aged woman practicing yoga. Each parallel stanza examines similar poses, in one her plow "awkward. . . in untilled soil," while in the other she is "Asian lithe, a long limbed / plow." While in reality her tree pose "wobbles," she imagines in the second half that she merely "sway[s] in the breeze. The contrast between the speaker's collapse and floating, distortion and stretch, groaning and flowing takes each section to the final "Namaste."

Taylor also draws some of her humor from recent headlines with the images of a young girl's Halloween costume: Nadya Suleman, the "Octomom" and from other popular culture, as "Murder One" responds to a story by Janet Malcolm in New Yorker of a woman on trial.

Some of the darker poems leave unanswered questions. "Likeness," a conversation after a fiftieth class reunion alludes to a child's likeness to a mother who abandoned her, ending with the speaker's assertion: "I am nothing like her." In one of the later poems, presumably autobiographical, the poet discusses her unusual double first name:

Barbara is a song of a name  
for a favorite aunt, Jo a staccato  
note after a mother I never saw  
who would have chosen  
no child instead of me.

Throughout the chapbook, readers will discover a variety of voices, many familiar, but many surprising, sometimes jarring. In the final poem, "God Wrote," the speaker, when asked by God for a new, less "antiquated" name, suggests, among others, "poetry."



Review  
by Scott Owens

Enough  
by Carole Richard Thompson  
FutureCycle Press  
ISBN: 9781938853289

Enough, the title of Carole Richard Thompson's new collection of poems, is defined as "a quantity or degree that satisfies a need or desire." It's a nice, comforting sounding word, suggesting contentment, fullness, above all perhaps, satisfaction. It is a theme visited repeatedly in the poems, obviously in the title poem, but also in others such as "The Voyeur," where the speaker imaginatively speaks to a morning robin she sees: "Here we are together, Bird. / You do not ponder religious philosophy / this Sunday morning, yet, you appear content." Ultimately, satisfaction is both subject and effect of these poems, as they relate the satisfactions that come from a life well-lived and reflect those that come from poems well-crafted.

Among those satisfactions are such things as memory, tradition, insight, perseverance, and love. In poems like "Miss Edna," about the speaker's 3rd and 4th grade teacher, the reader encounters fond memories recalled through wonderfully specific, evocative imagery:

A small, locked drawer held a cache  
of Smith Brothers licorice cough drops.  
Craving anything sweet,  
we coughed our heads off to get one.

Similarly strong imagery helps the reader appreciate the recalled beauty in "36 Hours":

Our bedroom frames her regal pose, tawny  
rippling muscles, eyes wary.  
She quietly moves forward, turns  
her proud head back – a signal.  
We crouch behind the curtain  
just as the first fawn  
wobbles into view, followed quickly  
by another baby, somewhat smaller.

Without the appreciation created in these lines, the tragic conclusion of the poem would fail to enlist the reader's empathy and risk seeming simply maudlin.

Another of the satisfactions presented here is that of tradition, a theme treated in several of the poems but perhaps treated best in "Whisperers." In this poem the speaker recognizes in her own culinary habits things she learned from her grandmother, her mother, and her aunts. As an idea, this is simple enough to say, perhaps, but Thompson manages to describe each of these habits in such a way that the reader must admit the presence of the speaker's spiritual progenitors as something more meaningful than mere memory.

The satisfaction that arrives with insight is also presented in several poems but in none more clearly than "Crossing Lines," where the speaker recalls father and daughter arriving at the "1947 Louisiana State Fair" only to discover that it was "Colored People's Day." Despite their incongruity, they are invited in by other attendees, leading to the father's resonant conclusion that "Those people didn't mind us being there at all."

Perhaps the most memorable poem in the collection presents an unforgettable image of the satisfaction achieved through perseverance, hope, positivity. "Miz Lucille" presents the charming story of the speaker's visit with the 83-year-old titular character who "plowed / the whole mountain all her life because / her old man was sorry." True to the idea that good things come to those who wait, after Miz Lucille's "old man" passed away, she is joined by Amos, about whom she says, repeatedly, "Amos is a dandy," partially due to the fact that he is only 43. And to demonstrate Miz Lucille's unwavering sense of hope, the speaker tells us that "she believed / in the power of prayer and was praying hard / to grow a third set of teeth."

Of course no life would seem complete without knowing the satisfaction of love. Not expectedly, then, that too is major theme of the poems, and is most beautifully captured in "Feeding the Soul." Here, the speaker's husband muses:

If I died first, and could still remember today,  
the way your body temperature matches  
mine exactly, remember  
your scent and taste, remember,

but, unable to reach out and hold you –  
I'd prefer the nothingness before my life began.

And the speaker reflects:

Your words floated above us  
until I drew them in,  
opened my heart and received  
nourishment,

enough for this life –  
until you find me in the next.

To some degree, *Enough* is a powerful illustration of how to age, how to live to the end, graciously, contentedly, with patient acceptance. The first poem, “The House of Cards,” announces that purpose for the collection:

Inside, a very old woman waits, rocking  
to a song with no words or music, remembering.  
Neither joyful nor sad, she numbly endures  
the repetition of years and seasons.

If she lives until spring, she will emerge  
much like her tulips urged by the warmth.  
Her gnarled hands and rusty coffee cans  
will water every living thing, tear away dry vines,  
expose new shoots to sun and rain.

And the later poem, “The Party’s Over,” expands the natural imagery that illustrates the attitude that in the larger context, our lives, whatever we’ve managed to create of them, must be enough:

The hills grow weary of the gaudy  
season’s riot and wait for Winter’s  
housekeeping to blow rattling  
crumbs of faded leaves  
down to valley below . . .

.....

the mountains year to pull up  
snowy blankets and sleep  
a dreamless Winter