

# WEST TEXAS

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# Poetry



## Aussie Ants

JAN BALL

It must have been lunch before children  
and winter because we didn't swim  
in the backyard pool; we lingered over  
the silky oak table instead, almost as  
relaxed as swagmen *camped by a billabong*.

Probably it was Henry who swiveled  
to notice the huge bottle of Benedictine  
mounted on a metal wine cradle that Ken  
had bought me for my birthday months  
ago and slurred, pointing at the sideboard,  
"How about that to end a perfect afternoon?"

Ken lifted the whole contraption and carried  
it into the kitchen setting it on the orange  
formica counter-top he had renovated, beside  
the wood-burning stove where we had cooked  
*cocida madrilenio* in an old iron cauldron: chick  
peas, a whole chicken, a piece of brisket, chorizo  
links and vegetables.

We selected six liquor glasses from the kitchen  
cabinet and pressed the neck of the bottle down  
to pour the amber liquid into the first glass, but  
as we poured, dead ants tumbled out with the flow  
of the liquor. After a nod from me, Ken quickly  
rifled through the implements drawer to find  
a small strainer to sieve the insects, then we carried  
the glasses back to the dining room and handed  
them to our friends with a smile, while they  
sniffed, sipped and smacked their lips.

## Quakertown Trolley, est. 1898

REBECCA BEARDSALL

My dad—a boy at seven—rode the Quakertown Trolley  
to Norristown with his father to visit Grandpop  
who was locked away at the Norristown State Hospital.  
When they couldn't tell the difference between dementia  
and insanity. A boy, a father, moving to madness.

Green, one-inch-mown lawns and white sidewalks  
marked my street in Quakertown.  
A block long 12<sup>th</sup> Street hidden between Juniper and Broad.  
Mixed among single homes a mysterious  
dismantled trolley barn rebuilt into a fourplex.

1966 my parents bought their quarter of the trolley barn.  
Walkway, where the two trolley barns met, was cool, dark,  
spider web draped. It led to our basement's wooden door.  
It smelled like a cave—wet stone... The single  
lightbulb never vanquished the loneliness.  
My claustrophobia blossomed—stuck, sequestered.

*Number two, Pop-pop said to his second born,  
if this house ever blows away, I want to see it. Look at this beam.*  
A painted Coca-Cola girl, white bikini and sunglasses  
laughed on a large beam running under my bed.  
Our house remained, but I left one summer day in a dash  
through a thunderstorm. I wasn't coming back this time.  
Engagement ring enclosed in my carry-on and  
my boxes of books were on a boat to New Zealand.

Farewell, little blue house with a pink dogwood.  
Good-bye windows propped open with wooden  
rulers. See ya, basement of ribbons of rivers  
each time it rained. You, my little trolley house,  
taught me what it means to be rooted, but not stuck.

## **Airplanes**

ANNIE BLAKE

airplanes can look as predictable as activists marching like altruistic soldiers  
who are really there to kill.

airplanes can also look original and fleshy and stream

along like water within the bush

which reminds me of my childhood saturdays—i'm thinking  
of those simple planes that ploughed the sky.

i prefer grey planes as they are about to hit  
a storm. i love the way they open out.  
and make me look up

rather than down at the road when i'm driving my car.  
the clouds untangle and start to run. their porousness  
is a release. the sky unseals to let the airplane glide through

but it becomes barely visible.

i don't see its shine then, i see a shadow  
and gunmetal hands kneading the dough.

## **Recipe for Oatmeal**

KATHERINE BODRIE

Take an uninterrupted  
morning, your favorite  
newspaper. Add dry  
oatmeal to boiling water  
and stir. Keep stirring.  
Turn down the radio  
to hear the sound  
of something else  
roiling, fattened flakes  
turning in the current,  
the way they don't complain.

## Open as a Blackberry

CHARLES CANTRELL

*for Wendell Berry*

At 82 do you still chuck those heavy bales  
to the loft? When you swing an ax, do you still feel  
the shock up your arms as the blade  
thunks the trunk of a dying black ash?  
If the earth is a gift, right down to grass blades,  
burrs, horse shit, warts on a hog's hip,  
what would you say to a woman visiting your farm  
who is leery of nature? I'm thinking you might not  
say much, but lead her to a field where early morning sun  
is burning off the dew on a blackberry bush,  
lush with berries—each shining in sunlight.  
Pick one, then another, watch out for briars.  
I think I know what you mean by, *We cannot see  
where we are and are lost in our own error.*  
The flesh is married to the soil.  
Those berries inhabit a world of their own,  
and we're invited, who would turn away?  
And how far down does a blackberry bush's roots go  
before the darkness becomes their clarity and silence?

## **With His Hat Pulled Low**

DAMON FALKE

Fact is we buried the dog beneath the house.  
Pitch black and covered with so many maggots  
Anything left of her seemed to move. Naturally  
She didn't move and wouldn't move again.  
We approached her with our shovels gripped  
Against our chest, slithering away like snakes  
Slipping-up on prey. Of course we weren't snakes,  
Though there were plenty we could have seen  
Beneath the hold of that yellow house. At least,  
That's what the old farmer who hired us said.  
Said his wife had died shortly before the dog,  
Only the dog couldn't stand the world with her gone.  
I remember looking over my shoulder at where  
The house stopped and the yard began, seeing  
The farmer there between pier beams and sunlight,  
Not uttering a word, just nodding the way he did.  
And I don't know about you friend, but I still  
Wonder what any of us was thinking.

## Bratislava

JACK FREEMAN

Toward the beheaded cathedral spire  
do all orient. Nurses in blue

hoopskirts pulling a cart to  
the market two streets down. The tiles

that slid off the hostel roof early  
this morning. An emergency

vehicle so far away. Finally, the clouds  
arrive in line. A government minister

preaches over the radio. At last  
the rain arrives, its face unfamiliar

to the brothers playing football on the bridge  
over the overflowing creek. It was then

the old pianist placed his fingers  
on the keys and accompanied the rain,

his song drowned out by the traffic  
on the boulevard two stories below.

**By the Starlight Café**

MICHAEL GALKO

I sit for an hour  
as the stars brighten

I try to count  
all the constellations

formed only  
from triangles

then I go to sleep  
with my problems

tucked safely  
in the night sky

## Morning Song

B.N. GRAVES

Listening to the birds' morning song  
the breeze sways the trees  
the cat looks out the window  
the kettle steams on the stove  
and I feel something like longing

There's an hour when even the cars are quiet  
cicadas signal spring  
play their sad song all night  
we listen through the open window  
sheer white curtains blow in the breeze

The cat likes to sit and look out the window  
at the birds in the trees  
and the squirrels shuffling through the leaves

I like to sit and look at the cat  
while sipping on coffee  
and thinking about smoke and gin

I like to sway in the morning  
when I write to the sound of birdsong  
and the gleam of the morning through a washed gray sky

I like to laugh  
in the evening when he comes home  
and we pretend like we have some semblance  
of normalcy

I think about it  
I could be drunk before noon  
could sit down at the table and roll one,  
smoke and get inspired that way

sometimes your chosen way  
isn't the best way

and tomorrow when we're still unsure  
we will wake up and do the thing  
like we do,

not every day is destined for greatness

## Ward

MAXIMILIAN HEINEGG

Your mother is elsewhere. This is a dragonfly,  
but we want him around because he devours  
the mosquito. Dearness, each sliver of the world  
is a nicking for blood, and we've got enough  
for it, but notice itches. I'll remember this  
morning better than you will season's pleasures,  
ones abandoned for a sinecure. Years cancel,  
drink's a whirlpool, a wealth of lovers tapped  
at a widening bar. When you wake, you'll know ghosts  
flitted about your every misstep, or aging, past this  
one day wonder, ask how afternoon storms passed  
while you dozed beneath cracked, sodden branches.  
If we don't speak again, you'll never know all  
that never happened. I brought you inside.

## **What the Ravens Know**

ANDREW MARSHALL

here is what the ravens know  
in the great parch, when the sun in sudden mercy  
vanishes behind the mountains—

—that the wide earth is a map unfolding  
and each path that switchbacks  
through the junipers and piñons  
is a line to follow on to different skies

## Long After Harvest

STACY BOE MILLER

garbanzos forgotten by combines  
dance themselves to dry  
rattles. And among them you

searching for bits of blood that reveal  
themselves on a sugar dusting  
of snow. Three shots and you didn't know

you had hit until you saw the map  
of red on white. All day you hiked  
to find him and bring him

home. You imagined bone  
broth in my pot and a winter of full.  
You also imagined that buck

stumbling the Palouse,  
bedding down in weeds  
still warm and bent

by his body, but nothing,  
and you coming to the edge  
of the field where the snow ends, the drops

blend in. You wandered  
long anyway, came to me empty  
handed and wrecked. I loved you

in that moment wanting to do  
your *due diligence*, do right by this other  
residing within miles of the room

where we sit by a fire with our kids and try  
to nourish some kind of life, speak  
of what it is to steal our sustenance, move on,

but that buck won't let me be. I feel his sharp  
pressing under my skull  
a need to flower himself into antlers,

his twitch in my thighs and desire  
to know the loess of these hills crumbling  
beneath my legs as we outrun,

as we hold in the blood  
we have been letting slip, wanting  
so desperately not to be found.

## **Cave Dwelling**

RICH MURPHY

Daily, any tears not used  
to scrub the floors well in eyes  
to instruct footing for tomorrow.

The buckets lent for consolation leak,  
weeping: dew better, dew better.

The choreography between trauma  
and a smile twists and shouts,  
so that a vision unrocked and unshamed  
by back drop never arrives in dreams.

Too many forks in the road determined  
after the starting point and muddle  
for imagining a hard right or left.

Now, good intentions carry for the dead end.

Here, invisible to citizens not banished  
by Plato, long divergent paths craft  
while machines mine with information  
for the philosopher kink:  
Exhausted will consumes.

## **Snow**

MATTHEW MURREY

Almost, but not quite.  
Quiet as a moth  
against a lampshade, a sheet  
being folded, the breath  
of one you love. Still  
breathing? Yes.  
In my dream of the end  
I walk such a hush,  
every flake a minute  
that has fallen away.  
She says, "Winter is silence."  
I reply, "Are you sure?"  
Consider the second hand  
going nowhere all the time,  
a needle pulling thread,  
scissors snipping at the edge,  
lips parting, my hand patting  
the lid three times, minutes  
before the hired men  
lower it in, cover it for good.  
Finger to the lips: *shhhh*.

## February, Glenn County

GEORGE PERREAULT

now and then you'll find them crashed on a roadside, hives  
broke open, honey all spilt, bees blinking out into sunlight,  
confusing the morning air in dark spirals, maybe someone  
stung into shock, even to death but mostly it's by the numbers,  
the write-off, who's the new driver, where's the next orchard,  
business, you know, thirty-one billion for the central valley, and  
almonds alone—ninety million trees and each in a good year  
carries seven thousand nuts—

do the math—

afterwards trucking  
north to cherry and apple, maybe east for alfalfa, anything  
that grows, citrus or plum, all kinds of berries, pumpkin and  
squash—your table's filled by worker bees rented each spring,  
and sure, sometimes they're crushed in a bar ditch, pollination  
it ain't always easy or cheap, high wind and flood, but mostly  
the bees get it done, and harvest, well, that's another deal too

## **The Chickens**

KIMBERLY PRIEST

In the yard, the chickens peck mindlessly at broken shells  
thrown out the back door  
forgetting that these once held their own unfertilized seed.

I watch them nibble at the calcite and think about  
my womb—how hollow it feels—  
as a hen rejects her tiniest offspring. If God

is Mother gathering her chicks beneath her wings  
why does the hen deny this little one refuge? Everything  
in creation soft and violent:

this morning, after sunrise, harvested eggs  
dashed to pieces against my kitchen countertop because  
my children are hungry.

With pangs I remember that I too must eat.

## Swan Upping on the Thames

NED RANDLE

The pretty young women gather  
in their eyrar around the bar  
drinking their dry reds and sweet whites,  
encircling their territory,  
noisy, the antithesis of  
mute, they attract the attention  
of he who drifts by to take his  
place at the helm of his table,  
and he watches them with deft  
imaginings, the smooth wine  
flowing down their great silky  
throats, and longs to see them in flight,  
their majestic wedge, the spread of  
their wings, their naked feet tucked up  
tightly against their downy  
bellies, each leg a bearer of  
an ornate ring evincing title  
held in trust by a housebound king.

## **I Promise Not to Eat You**

ALYSE RICHMOND

The sun is expanding  
beyond the bounds  
of the Wall Street Mill  
as I clasp my hands  
together at the sight  
of a very small rabbit.  
It's raising its whiskers,  
its ears, then flicks  
its cotton ball, disappears  
beneath a bundle  
of brush that gleams  
with fiber optic needles.  
I am in physical pain over this.  
I wanted to scoop it  
into my palm, mash it  
against my cheek, feel  
its jellybean heart beat  
inside my bones—more  
like a vibration than a rhythm.  
I miss folding animals into  
my body. I need that  
nervous heat. Please.  
I promise not to eat  
you.

## Greens

JORDAN SANDERSON

Church was everywhere when I was  
Growing up, and I lived inside the fear  
Of ruining my life, as if life were a fruit  
That couldn't be rid of rot, a toy  
That would never be the same after being  
Dropped, a tree that once burned could not be  
Unburned. People liked to say one sin  
Is no more than another, so we all felt  
Like seconds at a salvage store. No wonder  
I couldn't tell the difference between mischief  
And trouble and always went straight  
For the worst thing imaginable, my conscience  
As blistered from stealing a cigarette lighter  
From my friend's mom as from torching woods  
Along the creek. The only way to soothe it  
Was to become someone even the ex-con  
Who lived in a house on stilts by the river  
Wouldn't let in his house, to exhibit oneself  
Like a Bosch painting, to become a true believer.  
Like my grandmother, I sat for a long time  
In the dark, the TV's light a spell against its stories  
About the most depraved parts of human nature.  
Eventually, somehow, nihilism inspired compassion,  
And seeing someone as a person meant knowing  
They, too, would die, and I fell in love. It's best  
To stay outside, my grandmother's mother said,  
When I helped her tie tomato plants to a fence,  
Collect eggs from the four or five haggard hens  
She kept, rip weeds from rows of field peas.  
Like her, I learned to stand beside a stream and hold  
A fishing pole for hours, half-blind from the glare  
On the water, to drink from that same stream,  
To keep something growing year-round, to meld  
My mind with my body with sweat. Late this morning,  
I harvested mustard greens sprouted from seeds  
That washed down the hill into the swamp  
During a deluge right after I planted them.  
The thought of the cottonmouth I hacked  
To death last year didn't frighten me. The heat  
Of raw mustard sketched my body from the inside,  
And my shadow fell around my feet like roots.

**The Happy Baker, 520 King Street, Fredericton,  
December 2016**

MARC SWAN

“It’s not a patisserie.  
It’s a bakery,” she says.  
Her thick black hair pulled back,  
low-cut green top sets off a glimpse  
of cleavage below a blood-red tinted  
stone encased in gold, and a smile  
that reaches over the counter to me,  
to the woman beside me, to the delivery  
man pushing a two-wheeler in the aisle.  
I point to a tray of cookies. “That one,”  
I say. “An orphan,” she says, “created  
by the union of cranberries and oatmeal.”  
Her deadpan humor intrigues me. I order  
one and ask her favorite. She doesn’t  
blink. “Why all of them,” she says.  
Her hips are slim, eyes bright, full  
of mischief. It’s been a long time  
this feeling coming home.

# Short Fiction



## **Getting Through the Day**

ROBERT EARLE

Bored stiff, she pulled cartons of yogurt out of a shipping box and put them in the cooler while repeatedly pushing the cooler's door off her bum when it swung closed on her. Frequently, she had to scooch out of shoppers' way, one pair a young man followed by his gaunt, gray-haired father who apparently needed schooling. Had to be father and son given their jaws and ears, ears her erotic obsession. And this was the son in charge, the limping father silently taking note of everything the son said and chose—Vermont sharp cheddar, scones, and then, one cooler over, a small white jar of Devon cream.

So now she was doing what she was doing while glancing over her shoulder at them, the father perhaps not Alzheimer's, instead a recent widower. That would be it, the ring on his finger notwithstanding. Couldn't bear to take it off. Holding himself together. Intent upon his son telling him why Devon cream was called clotted, even though she saw he didn't care. He just forced himself to listen as he shifted his weight from one leg to another, easing his aching knee. Then her eyes and his eyes nicked each other like two bits of gravel tossed up by a car on a country road, and she had to look away and find someone else to help her get through the day.

## Full Arrest Narrative

ANN STEWART MCBEE

Patient found supine, CPR in progress via Fire Department. Fire Department on scene states guardian of patient initiated 911 response after following him rapidly on foot from CSL diner (Meaning Country Squire Lakes, IN. Not cardiopilin synthetic lecithin. Not can't stop laughing.) toward local manmade "lake." Suspected downtime approximately 25-30 minutes.

Star-shaped fluctuant abscess on thenar eminence of right hand. Unknown history, unknown meds, unknown allergies, unknown why this boy was running from his guardian, unknown how he came to be bitten by a rattlesnake on the hand, unknown how we will afford new shoes again, unknown how anyone finds himself here, in this graveyard of double-wides, unknown what else may creep forth from that mudhole, unknown how she is eight years old already. ID on scene recovered by Police Department.

Fire Department reports Automatic External Defibrillators attached, no shock advised, even the shock of finding out this is not because of meth—not this time. Like the shock from sleeplessness. Like the shock of realizing that the odor of muskrat carcass is the same as the human kind. Like the shock of a teardrop that finds its way out. No shock there. No shock at all.

CPR in progress for 10 minutes with minimal interruption. Prayers of the white-haired guardian said loudly with no interruption at all. *Lord guide thy servant that I may preserve your mission.* Defibrillation pads attached to monitor, CPR halted. Prayers not. *Direct this boy out of the darkness Lord.* Pulseless, asystole. *Shed your grace upon this child Lord that he may live.* CPR resumed, intubation attempted with success by paramedic, despite prayers directed elsewhere.

Intraosseous access obtained, Epinephrine via IO, patient immobilized with minimal interruption. Rhythm and pulse reassessed. Return of spontaneous circulation, pulse verified. Will this be enough detail? Will it stand up in court? Let the record show the bracelet made of buttons my daughter made for me broke and fell off—no time to retrieve it. Let the record show she deserves more. Let the record show I have not slept in six days.

Moved to ambulance C-3 St. Vincent. St. Vincent who served the poor in France. The saints have marched over and past Indiana. Enroute: ventilation and O2 maintained. Corn tassels look like fleur-de-lis. EKG shows possible sinus tachycardia

elevation in leads II, III AVF, 12-lead not obtained due to transport time and available resources. Sleep is a resource. Parental love is a resource. Morning kisses are in short supply. Cornflakes are abundant. If I can just stay awake to the end of *Where the Wild Things Are*. If I can just.

Pulseless electrical activity. CPR resumed, Epinephrine 1:10000 1mg, Atropine 1mg. Atropine occurs naturally in plants like deadly nightshade, Jimson weed, and mandrake. The mandrake root resembles a human body. Consuming the juice in large quantities is said to induce madness. Can't. Stop. Laughing.

Rhythm reassessed, pulseless, PEA sinus tach, CPR resumed, 3rd Epi given. Another round of prayers. And then open eyes, pupils constricting. And then a smile. And then *hallelujahs* and *praise Jesuses*. No dreams tonight of being buried from the neck down like a mandrake root. Let the record show I will practice multiplication tables with her as soon as I can. Let the record show something.

Arrived to St. Vincent prior to transfer from stretcher to bed, reassessed with return of spontaneous circulation. Patient moved, report given, care transferred to ER staff, prayer spoken by patient (*heavenly father, give your power of healing to those who ministered my needs that she may be strengthened*) brow of paramedic touched by patient's bloody hand, paramedic commanded to heal.

## A Morbid Sort of Anecdote

C.A. MURRAY

“I got a proper story,” said Derrick around the campfire.

“Alright. Let’s hear it,” said Josh.

Derrick hit some rum out of a water bottle and began, “So my mom gets a phone call early one morning. It’s the police and they say they found her sister’s body. She goes in to confirm the body. When she gets home that day her face is a mess. I ask her what happened and all, and she won’t tell me for a couple of days. I did overhear her on the phone the first morning talking to different people, all I had made out was that her sister had been found in a river burnt and scarred. I became obsessed with curiosity. *How could you get burnt by a river?* So there I was a little youngster, sick with torment.

“I did not sleep for two nights while obsessing over the river. I had vivid nightmares of a burning river devouring anyone near it. It looked like any other river until you tried to take a sip of the cool water or cool off your tired feet, then it would spread like an angry inferno.” He paused and tried to perceive the reaction of his story, “My parents were so caught up in the death that they thought I was just in shock.

“My prayers were finally answered when my mother explained to me what had happened. I will always remember that moment. My mom tells me that her sister was hit by lightning as she was kayaking in the river. I was relieved in a way because I was no longer curious. It left me very fascinated but scared nonetheless.

“It was the first funeral I ever attended. I remember a man of the church giving a speech. Something he said jarred me, he said, ‘God took her away.’ I asked my mother, you know that week or whatever, I ask, ‘Did God take your sister?’ She tells me of course that God took her sister. So I ask something like, ‘did your sister do something wrong, against God?’ My mother gets agitated by my question and slightly offended. She tells me that her sister was a great woman and was kinder than anyone she’d known. Now mind you I was not introduced to death up until then. I knew what God was but did not understand death, and the only person I knew who’d died was struck out the sky by lightning.

“I get it in my head then that that it is the only way to die. I imagined God spending every day looking down at the world randomly striking people down with huge bolts of lightning because of how someone was dressed or because they were not exciting enough to watch. There was a storm one night and I was distraught with

terror and fear. Everyone thought I had lost my mind, they found me shaking and sweating. I was hiding from God.”

Everyone was quiet and coyotes howled above them in the canyon walls. Everyone’s gaze went from being on the fire to being on Derrick’s face. He knew he had told everyone too much about himself.

## Winchester Mystery House: A Monologue

PHYLLIS ZIMMERMAN

I was born so many years before you were, you wouldn't understand me, but you are here, walking through my corridors, my little doors, my inch-high steps five at a time, that I built not because I was capricious or rich, but because the joints of my bones burned with arthritis—when you are old you will know—you are here. You have paid your \$1.45 to walk through my soul. I will address you.

These tall pier glass panels standing there, standing nowhere, unplaced, I had a place for them. Ah, you thought it was a mirror. And you wondered how the ruby glass design appeared in it. You look up and down for that piercing image. Where did it come from? Is it someone's jewelry? But it isn't a reflection. It is behind the glass. Understand that a window needn't be thin as you know it; it can be thick as a mirror and beveled, if you are willing to pay for your heart's beat worth of beauty. I was.

I lost a husband and a child, six months old. All I ever had. And kept twenty million dollars with which to while away the time. The time. The time. Fifty years of it. Time.

You say my house doesn't look fifty years' worth or five million dollars' worth. Well, I was a small woman, only four feet tall. And I did not build for the likes of you. Indeed, it is infuriating that so many of you trample me at a time. Every room of me is stuffed with your bodies, gutted with your laughter, rattled by your restless children, handed and footed. What a fate!

What an incomprehensible fate. I was such a private woman, more so than most. No one came to my house while I lived, except those I hired to build me. I have seventy-five bedrooms and no one ever slept in them but myself, and the spirits I wooed, I fled from, I walled up treacherously. The spirits—they took their revenge in earthquake, cracking plaster and tearing walls, shattering what they could not destroy.

Now, hundreds at a time, oh, it is cruel. I did not invite you. I cannot expel you. All my millions, my will—I speak and you do not lift your eyes. I, who terrified forty servants at a time, and spied upon them through skylights above the kitchen. I speak.

You listen to the guide. He tells you that the walls are pressed cork, every bathroom has thirteen windows (naturally), the tile of those fireplaces was brought specially from Sweden. It has not been polished for thirty-six years, but it shines. What can he tell you? Can he tell you how many kinds of tile I looked at, how long it

took me to decide, how many times I chose and unchose and chose again? How frantic the salesman grew? Beauty is not easy or sure. Was this house built in a day—to decay forever? It took time to plan, to construct. Time and care and choosing.

He tells you, oh, covertly—he is only a college boy earning his keep with that suave, well-trained voice—and some things aren't nice to say, he tells you I am mad. See that window. It cost \$1500. It faces north so that it never gets the sun, and that other one, walled up within me, lightless. It sings, its rosy bells and delicately descending wires. Does it need the sun? It sings.

He tells you I was mad to build and build and build, but he makes his living on what I built, my broken bones, my scraped paper, my worn floors. Even after earthquake there is enough for all of you to stand on.

Listen, was it mad to come here, west, to the new, mountain-shielded land with nothing but trees to stare at me, no one to see what I had built for fifty years? To have it all my own way?

The medium was wise. She told me I would never die. If I built and never finished building, life would never finish with me. So I built a ballroom no foot ever danced in. I built stairways that went up only to come down again, to trap the spirits. Rooms too small, rooms too many. Doors never to open, window upon window upon window, seldom looking out. I closed off kitchens, and planned new kitchens with clever built-in washboards, the latest thing.

And you see, she was right. I never finished building, and here I am. And here you are. If you feel compressed in my small space, room upon room upon room, and you haven't seen them all, if your neck aches to bend into my modest door, if you cannot squeeze yourself through my hallways, or make your steps mince enough to slide upon my stairs, that it because it is myself, not yourself. My self. You trample me. It is a terrible fate, but I am here still, year upon year. You will not be. I am.



# Essays

## An Opening Through Time

JANE KATIMS

Six months before my wedding, my therapist recommended that Mr. Rizzo, the tailor, do the alterations on my dress. I was thirty years old; it was 1979. Forty years earlier, my mother had worn the dress for *her* wedding. She died when I was seventeen.

It was a cold December day when I brought the old silk gown to Mr. Rizzo's tailor shop on the second floor of a venerable brick building in Harvard Square. Mr. Rizzo handled the dress with exceptional care. He seemed pained that my mother wasn't here to advise me about wedding plans or dress alterations. I slipped the gown over my head and stood before him at the full-length mirror. Mr. Rizzo was pleased that the dress fit so well.

I had no sister, no close friends or family nearby, to help with wedding preparations.

Since my senior year in high school, when cancer attacked my mother, I had become accustomed to doing things alone. My father then was busy at work and distracted tending to my sick mother. I completed my college applications by myself. I bought clothes for college by myself and packed a steamer trunk bound for an unfamiliar city—Madison, Wisconsin. I don't think I considered myself an unfortunate, motherless girl. I soldiered through. But now, almost forty years after I slipped that dress over my head, I wonder, What was the feeling I was *not* feeling? If I could feel it now, how might it liberate me?

The great length of white silk material that was the train on my mother's wedding gown hung for years draped over a hanger in the upstairs hall closet where my out-of-season coats are stored. I only open the closet to search for a heavy coat in Fall or a light one in Spring. At each change of season, when I opened the door and caught a glimpse of the shiny, slightly yellowing material, I would tell myself, I should *make* something from that train. A shawl, perhaps. A skirt. A decorative runner for the base of my bed. But over the years, I never made the move. It pains me to say that I eventually tossed out the long silk train. I just threw it out—into the garbage.

One of the strangest things about telling this story is that, as I write it, and truly believe I am telling the truth, I learn how my mind revised history. *Into the garbage*. I thought that statement was true. But yesterday, I opened the hall closet to

take out a lightweight jacket, and—low and behold—draped over a hanger, were yards and yards of yellowing silk material, the train to the wedding dress. I *hadn't* thrown it out. Do I have an inclination, now that I know the material is in my possession, to make something from it, to transform it? No. I want to keep it as it is. But it's curious—why had I imagined I'd thrown it out? A wish? A fear? Perhaps I wished to believe I threw it out, because I want to believe I am through with grief, that I have tossed away grief. As if I, or anyone, could do that.

When my mother died, I inherited, along with other items of jewelry, a ring my father gave her on the occasion of their fifth wedding anniversary. It has a white-gold band studded with five tiny diamonds lined up in a row. Over the years, one by one, each diamond fell out of its setting, lost, never found, leaving a little hole and tiny prongs outstretched like curled fingers. Each time a diamond fell out, I had a jeweler replace it with a fake stone—zirconia. The last time I took the anniversary band into the jeweler's, he applied special glue to the back of the stones to secure them in place. I wear this ring often, bringing my mother with me, holding her hand with this ring, keeping her close. My fingers are the same size as hers.

Yesterday, in spite of the glue, one of the zirconia stones fell out. I couldn't find it. It was surprising, but not alarming. A replacement is not expensive—twenty dollars or so. But I've decided this time *not* to fill the little hole where the stone was. To replace it is a fool's occupation, a Sisyphean task. I've thought about plugging the hole with a bit of colored clay, or fabric, or sequins. But I won't do that. I'd rather contemplate the emptiness of the small opening. This represents a shift in my thinking. I no longer feel urgency to change what is there—or more, precisely, to change what is *not* there.

Rizzo's shop still stands in Harvard Square. Two doors down is the Swiss Watchmaker's shop. I remember years ago buying my older son Josh his first watch there. I want that day back—the day I wandered in and gazed at the watches in a long glass case. I was full of pride and energy, thinking of my first-born, *He's old enough to wear a watch!* How old *was* he then—Seven? Ten? Fifteen? Fifteen seems too old for a first watch; seven seems too young. I have no idea what the right answer is. My only answer today is a kind of sorrow. I'm a little ashamed of the sorrow, yet can't deny it. So much time has passed! Josh is now thirty-three; he will be getting married soon. He has seen thousands of seconds, minutes, hours, and days pass on that watch.

For awhile last week, and in spite of my efforts to think otherwise, I felt old. A tiredness overtook me. A truck was lodged in my chest, its wheels spinning and the bulk of it getting nowhere, a continual pressing on my lungs and heart. *Everyone is receding*, I thought grimly. *Floating away*. I could not distract myself from these morbid thoughts.

But life goes on, and here I am in Harvard Square, looking at *my* watch. Soon, it will be time to teach my class. I look forward to listening to my writing students, offering them my observations. I'm wearing a scarf that I love, as well as my flower-print, knitted top, and my dangling pearl earrings. There's time before class to visit my favorite coffee shop, Burdicks, where I'll order a cappuccino and a Linzer torte. But before that, I'll stop at the Swiss Watchmaker's. I'm bringing him an old watch from my Uncle Isie. The watch hasn't worked for decades. If anyone can fix it, the Swiss Watchmaker can.

The watch from Uncle Isie has a delicate expanding band of 14 K gold segments and a small, square face that shows the numbers 12, 3, 6, and 9. The name of the manufacturer, *Gruen*, is printed on the face. On the back engraved in gold are my initials in stylized, elegant swirls: *JIK*. Uncle Isie gave me the watch when I was too young to wear it—maybe at age five or six. I can't remember precisely. But I know this—by the time I was old enough to wear a watch, I much preferred a different style. I chose a watch with a forest-green, leather band, a face of pale green framed by emerald-tinted stones shaped like flower petals. Uncle Isie's gold watch was relegated to the lowest tier in my velvet-lined jewelry box.

The Swiss Watchmaker's shop is large—it expands sideways, not deeply back off the street. It's valuable real estate in Harvard Square. This is surprising for a watchmaker, since these days, most young people use their phones to tell the time.

The watchmaker is what you'd imagine. He is short, stout, monocled, and gray-haired.

"Let's see," he says and holds out his hand.

I reach into the depths of my pocketbook and pull out the watch which is wrapped in layers of white tissue paper. I gingerly remove it from the paper and hold it in the palm of my hand. The watchmaker takes it carefully from me, holds it a few seconds, then places it back in my palm. "Not a chance," he says.

"Really?"

"Too small, too old. No one works on watches that small and that old anymore."

I am dumbfounded. I look at the face of the watch; it looks back at me. So. That's it. I have to shift from believing I can get time moving again to being resigned that time has stopped at 11:15. In my confusion and dismay—for though I put on a brave face, I am devastated—I think, *Stopped at 11:15—but is that AM or PM?* This odd thought stands out, obscuring all other thoughts. I don't know why. Stopping time is something you'd think a person like me would applaud—after all, I've admitted that I've recently felt old. I surely don't want to get older faster. I don't want time to fly. But this experience—the stopped-watch experience—has an effect that is not reassuring; rather, it exacerbates my sadness.

The dress I wore for my wedding had a high neck, tapered sleeves that extended to my wrists, thirty-six silk-covered buttons up the back, and a long, A-line skirt. From neck to ankles, no skin showed.

In contrast, the dress I'll wear to Josh's wedding is a form-fitting, navy blue sheath with a dramatic slit up one side. The cut of the bodice exposes my arms, shoulders and much of my back. Two silver, sequined-studded stripes accent the front of the gown. The back is also studded with sequins. It's a daring outfit; and as I've said, it exposes a lot. And here's the thing—the cut of the new dress coincides with a more profound exposure—a raw grief that until now I had not fully acknowledged, or accessed. I wish my mother were here now, that she had not missed so much. Recently I had this dream: *I am visiting my mother. She is very old—ninety-seven. She has lived nearly fifty years longer than she did in real life. We are saying good-bye to each other.* From this dream, I startle awake. A note of elation mixes with my sadness as I think, How wonderful—to have the chance to talk to her.

## His Armchair

W.P. WILLIAMS

My parents bought the forest green recliner and matching carpet at a St. Patty's Day Sale at O'Malley's Furniture Shop. A week later, Dad fell asleep in the chair smoking a favorite cigar. The stogie slipped from his fingers and burned a shiny, black crescent into the carpet. *I can never have anything nice*, Mom cried, laying a brown and gold braided rug over the assault.

I remember the orange glow of his stogie and the smoke—the smoke! As a kid, my eyes stung and teared. He puffed on short, dark, nubby Italian stogies and long, smooth, thick White Owls. He pulled on the stems of wooden pipes. Next to his chair, a circular rack of eight sat on the table, some smooth-bowled and others carved with designs. Every week, I dusted each pipe, along with the cool, white, metal canister of cherry tobacco that opened by slipping a metal lever under the lid. Then I emptied the fragile pale ashes, like ghostly Tootsie Rolls, from the red, yellow, and gold ashtray, shaped like a giant paisley.

The living room swirled in swaths of blue smoke, streaking the air like fat ribbons, where our family watched TV night after night. Is it a wonder that by age eleven, I was addicted to nicotine? That's when my older brother, Wayne, and I tried to smoke a cigar for the first time—a White Owl. He ripped open the cellophane wrapping, and I slid off the colorful band. Biting off the tip like Dad seemed gross, so we cut it with a scissor; the tightly packed tobacco unraveled and spilled. We managed to light the cigar, but the tobacco was dry, coarse, and bitter on our tongues. Wayne threw the cigar out, but I kept the shiny, paper ring.

Summers, Dad, wearing his pizza cap of alternating lime green and yellow slices, leaned back in the recliner, cupping the back of his head in his hands. The fan whirred next to him in the window. He made the most of the heat, lounging in his white, short-sleeved, V-necked undershirt and blue and white print boxer shorts. In the rack under the fan was his reading material—*Field and Stream*, calligraphy books with hard navy blue covers, and the funny papers.

Weekday evenings after nine o'clock, Dad perched in his armchair, except for Tuesday Union nights, where he served as treasurer. Every night after dinner at 6 pm, he went *down the cellar*, where he made colorful thread-wrapped canes and fishing poles, tied feathery fishing lures, and melted lead for sinkers. He table sawed planks of wood, fashioned chair legs on the lathe, and jigsawed puzzles; designed and engraved stationery for my mother; or sewed leather with his black, wrought iron

treadle machine. Never a dull moment. At 8:55 pm, he emerged from below and settled into his armchair for shows like *Gunsmoke* weeknights, *Bonanza* Saturday night, and *The Ed Sullivan Show* Sunday evenings. The recliner was his seat of relaxation, reign, and refuge.

For my mother, the recliner was a thing to conquer. She laid a cloth over its headrest to keep hair grease at bay and tucked a terry cloth towel over the seat. She'd given up on the arms of the chair, its sleeves forever falling off in soft folds onto the green carpet. And every morning, she straightened the braided rug at the foot of the chair that hid the burn, lamenting *I can never have anything nice*.

For me, the armchair was a thing to explore. Each week before I vacuumed, I dug my hands down behind the cushion and along its sides, clawing for change—nickels, dimes, and quarters. Most times my fingers came up empty or with a penny or two, Wayne already having scoured the area. But once, bonanza beneath the chair—a silver dollar! And always peanut, pistachio, and walnut shells scattered about underneath. Dad a nut for nuts.

Many years later, when my new beaded earrings, a graduation gift, broke, tears welled up as I scrambled to gather the tiny, yellow beads in my palm. *I can never have anything nice*, my mother's voice played in my head, along with the image of the shiny, black, charred crescent as fresh in me as the first time that I saw it.

By that time in my life, we were arranging new living conditions for my mother. Dementia had taken over. She feared the arrival each night of a top-hatted gentleman who walked through the living room. Wayne, now paunching out, went back to clean up and prepare the house for the real estate agent. When it was the chair's time to go, he and Ray, my Mom's neighbor, both buoyed by beer, joked about how *the ole man was turning in his grave* as they lifted the chair by its arms, carried it down the front steps, and dropped in onto the curb.

Dad's spirit appeared then. He lay back, hands behind his head, wearing his navy blue work shirt and pants and sucking on a pipe, blue smoke billowing up, bright TV screen squares reflected in his eyeglass lenses. His white-socked feet poked up from the footrest, and he wiggled his toes.

Wayne called me that night, smeary, sugary drunken voice telling me that the armchair was out front with a ton of stuff—the couch, the kitchen chairs, the TV table. I felt angry. Couldn't he have found homes for them? I softened quickly though aware of the sheer number of items and the time crunch he was under.

Decades before, just after Dad had died, Wayne perched in the armchair—now *his* throne when he visited home. I took his photo: Wayne trim in his expensive, tailored, three-piece suit. Wayne the professional with the six-figure income. What would Dad, a proud World War II veteran with an eighth grade education, think? Had his son earned his throne? Yes: He was a professional. No: He was arrogant.

And how would Dad feel about the fate of his armchair? Triumphant. Before sun-up, he knew, a junk picker would haul it off to grace his own home, a prospect that made him smirk. He himself had once cruised the streets before dawn for choice items. Even after all those years, the recliner was a prize. The garbage truck would never get its jaws on his armchair. Dad would have the last laugh.

My father's recliner out there under the stars in the muggy, New Jersey summer heat, under the branches of the oak and the swamp maple, midst the crickets' resounding cheers, lightning bugs blinking off and on—a fitting end to Dad's reign. His armchair front and center on Arthur Street for all the neighbors to see, set on the strip of grass he'd cut for over fifty years. The burned rug pulled up and the oak floorboards polished. Pipes and old tobacco canisters tossed into the dumpster, the old window fan, teetering on top.

Rest in peace, Edward Henry Williams. Your armchair lives on.

# Author Profiles



**Jan Ball's** poems appear in journals such as: *Calyx*, *Connecticut Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Nimrod*, and *Phoebe*, in Great Britain, Canada, India and the U.S. Jan's two chapbooks: *accompanying spouse* (2011) and *Chapter of Faults* (2014) were published with Finishing Line Press. Jan's first book, *I Wanted to Dance with My Father*, is forthcoming in September from Finishing Line Press. When not working out, gardening at their farm or traveling, Jan and her husband like to cook for friends.

**Rebecca Beardsall** is the Senior Director of Marketing, Publishing, and Conferences for Extended Education at Western Washington University. She also teaches part-time for the English Department at DeSales University. She graduated with a BA in English from DeSales University and received her MA in English from Lehigh University. Rebecca is an MFA candidate at Western Washington University. She has more than twenty years' experience in freelance writing in the United States and abroad. Her poetry and essays have appeared in *Origyns*, *Amaranth*, *Common Ground Review*, *Poetry NZ*, and *Rag Queen Periodical*. She wrote and co-edited three books, including *Philadelphia Reflections: Stories from the Delaware to the Schuylkill*.

**Annie Blake's** work has been published or is forthcoming in *The Hunger*, *The Slag Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Trampset*, *Anomaly Literary Journal*, *North of Oxford*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Mascara Literary Review*, *Red Savina Review*, *Antipodes*, *Uneven Floor*, *The Voices Project*, *Into the Void*, *Southerly*, *Hello Horror*, and elsewhere. Her poem "These Grey Streets" was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize by *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*. A complete list of her published writing can be found at [annieblakethegatherer.blogspot.com](http://annieblakethegatherer.blogspot.com).

**Kat Bodrie's** prose and poetry have appeared in *Slim Volume*, *Baby Lawn Literature*, *Pilcrow & Dagger*, and *Coraddi*. She writes for *Triad City Beat* and *Winston-Salem Monthly*. Visit her website, [katbodrie.com](http://katbodrie.com).

**Bredt Bredthauer** found himself, in June 2013, running through Taksim Square, trying to avoid tear gas canisters and water cannons while taking pictures with an iPhone 3s. He had spent the last two years haphazardly bicycling around the world without a camera. Since that moment, he has continued to travel internationally, using photography as a tool to tell stories and transcend the traditional barriers of language, nationality and religion. Photography has allowed him to interpret and understand adverse situations that he has witnessed, ranging from human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia to economic hardships in post-earthquake Nepal.

**Charles Cantrell** has poems in recent issues of *Mudfish*, *Confrontation*, *UCity Review*, *Free State Review*, *District Lit*, *Exit 7*, *Citron Review*, and *Seven Circle Press*. A full-length manuscript, *Wild Wreckage*, was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Brittingham and Pollak Awards from the University of Wisconsin Press. He's been twice nominated for Pushcart Prize in poetry.

**Robert Earle** is one of the more widely published contemporary short fiction writers in America, with more than 100 stories in print and online literary journals. Vine Leaves Press published his story collection, *She Receives the Night*, in May, 2017. He also has published three novels and two books of nonfiction. He lives in North Carolina after a diplomatic career that took him to Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East.

**Damon Falke** has been fortunate to have work appear or forthcoming in several journals, including *Cloudbank*, *Plainsongs*, *Canyon Country Zephyr*, *riverSedge*, and in productions of *Reflections West*. Additionally, his poem “Laura or Scenes from a Common World” was produced as a film that won “Best Experimental Short” at the Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival in Lafayette, Louisiana, earlier this year.

**Dom Fonce** is an undergraduate English major at Youngstown State University. His work can be found in *The Tishman Review*, *3Elements Review*, *West Texas Literary Review*, *Obra/Artifact*, *Great Lakes Review*, *The Magnolia Review*, and others.

**Jack Freeman’s** work has recently appeared in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Bop Dead City*, *HOUSEGUEST*, and elsewhere. He lives in Dallas.

**Michael Galko** is an Associate Professor of Genetics at MD Anderson Cancer Center. His laboratory studies wound healing and pain. He has lived about a third of his life each in New England, California, and Texas. He also writes poetry. About fifteen years ago, Michael had a handful of poems published in *Nimrod* and *The Distillery*. He reads regularly in Houston. Most recently, he was chosen as one of the juried poets at the 2016 Houston Poetry Fest and had poems published in *Dark Matter*, *The Red River Review*, and *The World Haiku Review*. He has poems forthcoming at *Dos Gatos Press* and *bottle rockets*.

**B.N Graves** is hobby writer from Houston, Texas with a strong passion for plants and lazy adventure. Major influences include Charles Bukowski, John Steinbeck, and Jack Kerouac.

**Maximilian Heinegg’s** poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *December Magazine*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, among others. Additionally, he is a singer-songwriter and recording artist, and the co-founder and brewmaster of Medford Brewing Company. He lives and teaches English in the public schools of Medford, MA.

**Jane Katims** has authored numerous radio series for Wisconsin Public Radio, one earning a George Foster Peabody Award. She has also received the John Woods Scholarship in Fiction Writing. A collection of her poetry, *Dancing on a Slippery Floor*, was published in 2007. Her work has appeared in *Pearl Magazine*, and more recently in *Proximity Magazine* and *The Coachella Review*. She is currently working on a collection of personal essays. She has three children, Joshua, Ben and Rachel, and lives with her husband, Dan Perlman in Massachusetts where she teaches contemporary literature and creative writing at The Cambridge Center for Adult Education and at Tufts Institute for Lifelong Learning at Tufts University.

**Andrew Marshall** is a multi-disciplined artist living and working in the American Southwest. His work has appeared in *Trampset* and *Gravel*.

**Ann Stewart McBee** has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where she taught literature and creative writing and served as Editor-in-Chief for UWM’s literary journal *cream city review*. Her work has been published in *Citron Review*, *Blue Earth Review*, *Ellipsis*, *At Length*, *Palaver* and *So to Speak*. Ann now teaches writing at Des Moines Area

Community College, and she lives outside Des Moines, Iowa with her husband and a smelly little terrier. Her novel, *Veiled Men*, is looking for a home.

**Stacy Boe Miller** is a mother, artist, and second year poetry candidate in the MFA Creative Writing program at the University of Idaho. She has been published in *Mothers Always Write*, *The Pacific Northwest Inlander*, and *Mary Jane's Farm Magazine*.

**Rich Murphy's** poetry collections have won two national book awards: Gival Press Poetry Prize 2008 for "Voyeur" and in 2013 the Press Americana Poetry Prize for "Americana." These poems are from *Asylum Seeker*, the third in a trilogy focusing on globalizing Western / American culture due from Press Americana January 2018. The first collection in the trilogy is *Americana and Body Politic*, the second, is published by Prolific Press in January 2017. Murphy's first book *The Apple in the Monkey Tree* was published in 2007 by Codhill Press. Chapbooks include *Great Grandfather* (Pudding House Press), *Family Secret* (Finishing Line Press), *Hunting and Pecking* (Ahadada Books), *Phoems for Mobile Vices* (BlazeVox) and *Paideia* (Aldrich Press).

**C.A. Murray** is getting his MFA at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. His poetry has been featured in *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*.

**Matthew Murrey's** work has appeared in various journals such as *Tar River Poetry*, *Poetry East*, and *Rattle*. He received an NEA Fellowship in Poetry a number of years ago, and his first book manuscript is seeking a publisher. He is a high school librarian in Urbana, Illinois where he lives with his partner. Their two sons live in the Pacific Northwest. Matthew's website is <http://matthewmurrey.weebly.com>.

**George Perreault** has received awards from the Nevada Arts Council, the Washington Poets Association, the International Dancing Poetry Festival, the McCabe Poetry Prize, and the Fischer Prize in Poetry. He has served as a visiting writer in New Mexico, Montana, and Utah, and his work has been nominated both for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Recent work appears in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Timberline Review*, *High Desert Journal*, and *Weber – The Contemporary West*.

**Kimberly Ann Priest** is an MFA graduate in Creative Writing from New England College, already holding an MA in English Language & Literature from Central Michigan University. A proud Michigan native, she has taught composition and creative writing courses for Central Michigan University and Alma College, and participated in local initiatives to increase awareness concerning sexual assault and domestic violence issues. Her academic and creative writing carefully observes the intersections between motherhood, domesticity, abuse, religion, sexual identity, and sexual trauma; and her poetry has appeared in several literary journals including *The 3288 Review*, *ArLiJo*, *Borderlands: The Texas Poetry Review*, *Critical Pass*, *Storm Cellar*, *Temenos*, *Ruminant Magazine* and *The Berkeley Poetry Review*. In 2018 her first chapbook *White Goat Black Sheep* will be forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. Kimberly currently teaches in Oklahoma.

**Ned Randle's** poems have appeared in a number of literary publications such as *The American Poetry Journal*, *The Spoon River Quarterly*, *Poydras Review*, *Emergent Literary Journal*, *Barnwood International Poetry Magazine*, *The New Poet*, *Hamilton Stone Review* and *Four Ties Literary*

*Review.* *Running at Night-Collected Poems* was released April 1, 2013 by Coffeetown Press. His chapbook, *Prairie Shoutings and Other Poems*, was published by The Spoon River Poetry Press, Bradley University.

**Alyse Richmond** lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is a recent MFA in Creative Writing graduate from Chatham University with concentrations in poetry, publishing and travel writing. Her work has been printed in publications such as: *Lines + Stars*, *Helix Magazine*, *El Portal* and *Off the Coast*, among others. In 2014, she released her first chapbook through Akinoga Press entitled *Blue Mornings*.

**Jordan Sanderson's** work has appeared in several journals, including *Phantom Drift*, *Better Magazine*, *Georgetown Review*, *Caketrain*, and *Redactions*, and Jordan has published a couple chapbooks, *Abattoir* (Slash Pine Press) and *The Formulas* (ELJ Publications). Jordan has PhD from the Center for Writers at the University of Southern Mississippi, and teaches at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

**Marc Swan** is a retired vocational rehabilitation counselor. His poems have recently been published or forthcoming in *The Broadkill Review*, *Ropes*, *Gargoyle*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Nuclear Impact Anthology*, among others. His third collection, *Simple Distraction*, was published by Tall-Lighthouse, London, England. He lives with his wife Dd in Portland, Maine.

**Wendy Patrice Williams** is the author of *In Chaparral: Life on the Georgetown Divide, California* (Cold River Press), a collection of poems. Her website ReStoryYourLife.com features a blog and original artwork on the subject of early trauma. She seeks a publisher for her memoir manuscript, *Autobiography of a Sea Creature – Coming Home to My Body after Infant Surgery*. Her short story “The Advantage” appears in the 2017 spring edition of *CALYX Journal*. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College and teaches writing at Folsom Lake College.

**Phyllis Zimmerman** grew up in Brooklyn and attended Erasmus Hall High School where she was poetry editor of the school magazine, *The Erasmian*, in her senior year. She received a B.A. at the University of Wisconsin and an M.A. at Radcliffe. A term paper on Faulkner's *Light in August* was published in *Perspective*. Later on, poems appeared in *Accent* and *Discourse* and short stories in *Discourse* and *The Laurel Review*.