

THE MIMOSA REVIEW



VOLUME I EDITION I



CREATE

an exhibit by artist Kala Rose
ArtWorks Gallery in State College, PA
MAY 26, 2009



The Mimosa Review

Volume 1 Edition 1

Spring 2009

Editor

Kristin E. Miller

Cover art: Self Portrait by Kala Rose Burke, ©2007

The Mimosa Review is published in January, May, and September in Dillsburg, Pennsylvania. U.S. subscriptions are \$30 per year, \$50 for two years. Single copies of this issue: \$10 each. Defective copies or issues not received will be replaced without charge only if notice is given by U.S. subscribers within three months. All rights revert to the writer upon publication. The views expressed in *The Mimosa Review* do not necessarily reflect the views of its editors.

Subscription orders, submissions (with SASE), and all other correspondence should be sent using the following address:

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Table of Contents



FICTION

Traci O'Connor <i>The Flying Codona</i>	27
Matthew Batt <i>The Power Ballad of West Allis</i>	37
Mark Brazaitis <i>The Incurables</i>	55
Aurelie Sheehan <i>Spin</i>	76
Jessie Marshall <i>Dogs</i>	91
Alex Rose <i>Ostrakon</i>	106



POETRY

Andrew Grace <i>Almost Here: Poems from Sancta</i>	51
Carrie Oeding <i>Apology to Meditation</i>	54
Dick Allen <i>God's Beatnik</i>	89
Michael Heffernan <i>The Origin of the World</i>	103
Paul Long <i>Held in Each Hand</i>	105
Audri Sousa <i>Preservatives</i>	130



ESSAYS

Judith Kitchen <i>The Speed of Light</i>	7
Neil Mathison <i>Memory and Helix: What Comes to Us From the Past</i>	116



INTERVIEW

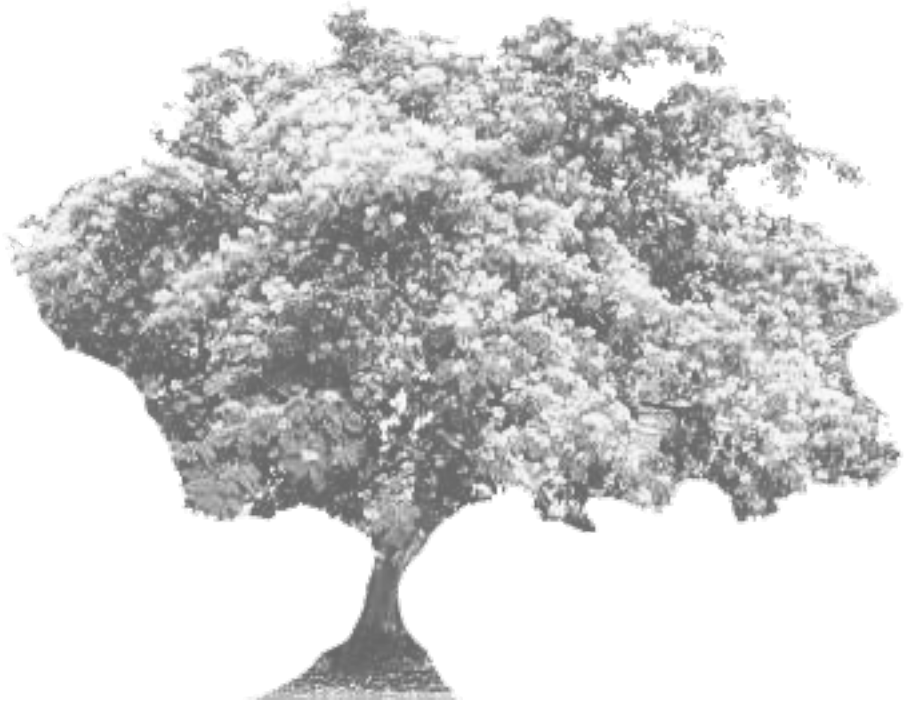
“After Shadeland” with Andy Grace **131**



BOOK REVIEW

“Holding Pattern” by Jeffrey Allen **136**



CONTRIBUTORS’ NOTES **138**

Letter from the Editor

As the first issue of *The Mimosa Review* is published, I sit in front of my own glorious mimosa tree for which the magazine is named. This mimosa tree has been in my backyard for my entire existence. Its roots are long and deep. Its branches are strong and full of leaves, which produce the strangest looking, most beautiful pink blossoms in the summer. It was a long time coming, and I'm sure it will remain a long time after I am gone. I rely on it to change each season, just as I do. I wonder if it has enjoyed sleds running into its base, or goldfish being buried in its ground. I wonder if it frowns at new development, or welcomes it. I wonder if it remembers the snow storm of 1996; if it can still feel the ice that grew on its branches. It withstood.

Many things have been and can be comparable to trees in life. Humans themselves grow, spread their roots, bloom at times, and withstand life. For me, trees are a strong type of nostalgia. My grandparents' cherry tree I used to climb until I realized I was too big and their peach and apple trees that I helped my grandpa harvest. There was also their own mimosa, where I hung on the strong branch overlooking a hill and dreamed little girl dreams. They moved away, and things in life changed, but those trees are still there. No one takes them along or says 'good-bye' to them, but they are remembered from parts of our lives, and they are recognized as life itself.

Perhaps my fondness for trees comes from this way that they grow with me, and remain there, down in the earth, until I leave them. Perhaps because they seem like memories to me. All of my memories tied down into the ground, always there, even when I am gone. Memory has been associated with leaves and flowers for ages.



“The leaves of memory seemed to make a mournful rustling in the dark,” as Longfellow wrote, or “God gave us memories so we might have roses in December,” wrote J. M. Barrie in his 1922 speech “Courage”. That is also the feeling these selected stories and poems give me, as I hope they do you. A sense of down to earth openness, many times blooming from real memories. These writers get to the root of things; the root of emotion, memories, human nature. The things that people try to leave behind, but can’t. The things that stay in the ground and remain. All of these individual truths, wonderings, and realizations, rooted deep in these writers who are gracious enough to leave for others to see. As Aldous Huxley said, “Every man’s memory is his private literature,” so these writers chose to give insight into their memories.

That is what I hope will become of my mimosa tree. As my family finally sells the house I grew up in and leaves all of the trees we’ve planted there, I only hope that the next family may appreciate my mimosa. I hope they will find it fascinating and wonder at its history just as I do.



Best Wishes,


Kristin Miller
Editor-in-Chief
Mimosa Review

Judith Kitchen

The Speed of Light

*The inner life of a human being
is a vast and varied realm, and
does not concern itself alone
with stimulating arrangements
of color, form, and design.*

-Edward Hopper



I seem to be stuck in their wake, halting behind each of them as they stop, pose, smile, then move apart, while I wait patiently, then not so patiently, for them to finish. In twenty-seven languages they speak the universal tongue--the telltale click that says you're trapped in someone else's frame. The place does not matter, though this time it is the Butchart Gardens just outside Victoria, British Columbia. It's crowded, and I can barely see the flowers for the people who stream past them. In the distance, wild geese lift from the field where they have been feeding, circle once, then settle in the further distance on a pond. The tractor that disturbed them drones on, turning the earth for what looks to be yet another bed.

These are no ordinary flowers--or rather, they are ordinary flowers set in extraordinary circumstance. Each individual garden tucks itself into the hillside, or wanders down to the water--all but the regimental Italian garden that now occupies what was once the tennis courts. The gardens swell with color: one all white, from the tiniest rock creepers to the tallest hollyhocks; another yellow and muted orange; and, of course, the subdued greenery of the Japanese garden with its stylized miniature trees and drab stone Buddhas, punctuated by one bright red bridge over a studiously placid stream. By now the flowering trees have gone to green, and the rhododendrons are clearly past their

The Flying Codona

Tuesdays, Zha Zha's tits are made of cantaloupe and she eats them with a spoon. *Mother's milk Mother's milk*, she chants, juice and pulp spilling from her lips onto her neck, and it is impossible not to think of bloody sex, the erotica of violence. Her ribs quiver like strokes of ink on a roll of rice paper, the fragile edge of lotus, the tremor of green on a hummingbird's wing

Steve is a bar singer in a downtown bar with exactly three regulars: Tony the Tuba, Old man Death, and Walt. Sometimes Steve thinks about doing card tricks or pulling very large and heavy things (pianos, trains, '67 Mustang convertibles) with his teeth, but he knows it's too late; his life is already a foregone conclusion.

In between sets, Steve swirls his beer around in the glass and dreams about a backyard circus. In his dream, he is eight years old and not yet fat--a fesity kid in Toughskins conspiring for fame and cpaital-letter GREATNESS with a three-legged, but still nimble, cat.

Walt mumbles something about tittties, drools onto his chin, and smacks the bar with his forehead.

Tibe says, "Jesus Christ, Walt."

Wednesdays, Zha Zha, in full kabuki, lifts her skirt, pulls an egg from her vagina and cracks it sizzling into a pan. When it comes to some things she's a purist, but for at, well, for *Art*, she'll do just about anything--including baring her ass in a seedy gallery on Fort Street. (Coincidentally, Zha-Zha once dated a gynecologist named Art. For him, she didn't do shit.)

Steve is no artist.




Matthew Batt

The Power Ballad of West Allis

I could tell you my whole life story by only telling you about my hair and its various stylists, barbers, tamers, praisers, and blamers. Suffice it to say I have complicated hair. It's fine, thick, curly brown hair by which you could measure barometric pressure, political affiliation, and one might think, sexual preference.

The first time I met my mother-in-law, a resident of rural Nebraska, she told me, "I'd just kill you for your hair." She comes from a line of women who can, with one bare hand, decapitate a live chicken.

"I wish you wouldn't," I told her. "Think of your daughter."



I grew up in suburban Wisconsin, and I went to grade and middle school in West Allis, where the factories stain the terrain like a ten-mile oil spill. Every man walking the street looks like a shop teacher or a retired cop. Thick, Lucite safety glasses. Buzz-cut hair. Untucked plaid flannel shirt, a beer belly flopped over the belt buckle. These are men who talked about three things:

1. Whose ass they were gonna kick, personal-like;
2. whose broad they were gonna nail;
3. and whose ass da Pack was gonna kick this Sunday come next.

All three usually involved talk of some Illinois native, commonly referred to as an FIB. Faggot Illinois Bastards. I was not from Illinois, praise God, but as far as the bratwurst mafia was concerned, I sure as hell was a faggot-ass sbastard for no other reason than my hair.

Until I was in college, I tried everything to plaster it against my scalp and straighten out the curls. I used gel,

Andrew Grace

Almost Here: Poems from Sancta

Some Notes on "Almost Here"

All of the poems in "Almost Here," which is a grouping of poems from a full-length manuscript entitled *Sancta*, are exactly seventy words long. Working within such strict parameters has presented its own challenges and pleasures. What I wanted to investigate in this project was how to write poems that were at once very brief, but also felt complete. In other words, I hoped to write seventy-word chunks of language that were more than fragments, lists of images, or asides, but rather poems that have a satisfying weight and movement. The book is about a man who has come to a cabin in the woods as a sort of self-imposed exile in order to reckon with his past and there discovers in loneliness both transcendence and humiliation. By inches, he is drawn out of himself and into the landscape.

-Andrew Grace





At the mercy of a broken sleep. Computer screen in a dark room. The cabin is barely scotched to the night's side. Now I even miss how you retreated from me. The living room is a deep well. This is not a nocturne. This is not even a mood. This is black water at the back of the mind, rocking. This is a letter from the torn country of fact.

I am careful not to justify myself. I am vacant as rain. I discover an ancient wreck under the porch and cover it with leaves. I occupy an outpost, call myself a samurai, don't speak for three days and become so full of death I can't taste anything. Then I speak. A proverb tastes like metallic water. A confession tastes like burnt sage. Prayer is endless syrup: ipecac and simple.



Carrie Oeding

Apology to Meditation

The meditation teacher said he wants to leave you alone with me. There should be no third party between me and “existence.”

The meditation teacher said I would soon understand the nature Of the mind rather than fight with it. He winked at me, then, a bit creepy. I'll be honest, he really didn't, but it's my nature to say quick things to try and make it interesting. Winking is totally predictable.

My friend Jen would like to get to know you because she wants to stay in the moment.

I don't want to get into it with her, but there could be a moment of a bright autumn tree, or a bright autumn tree that leads me to notice crows, cats, dents in my car, cars on my cat, leaves shaped like cats, the world is cruel. And then it's not--bright autumn trees that come alive and wink. Or tree which then, suddenly, suddenly suddenly I notice then what happens next? Looking looking where's the moment that I'm in? Bright autumn trees that don't notice me.

I'm not going back to class to find out how to look at a leaf or who really winked.

I got to know someone once and it led to third parties.

Dear bright autumn trees, surprise me.

Dear meditation, I'm sorry, I know I am getting you all wrong--but now you know how a person can feel and why they wouldn't want to let that go

The Incurables

When Adam “Drew” Drewshevsky, a.k.a. Dickie DeLong, returned to his hometown of Sherman, Ohio, his old friend Barry Borkowski took him out for a beer at Don’s Underworld and raised a glass to the Prince of Porn. There was truth to the title: In the past decade, Drew had made more than three hundred erotic films of varying length and quality. But his career, he told Barry, was over.

“I need a new life,” Drew said.

“Can I have your current one?” Barry asked.


Drew didn’t tell Barry he had herpes, which no medicine he’d taken and no diet he’d tried had prevented from erupting every couple of weeks like chicken pox of the penis. And he didn’t confess to Barry his more troubling problem. Even after near-overdoses of Viagra and every one of its pharmaceutical competitors, even after sucking back blenders full of supposed cock-hardening concoctions—green bananas, the woman in the Oriental scarf and red eye-patch had told him; sperm whale eyes, said the man with three gold rings on his lower lip—even after six trips to a specialist in erectile dysfunction (which one of his former co-stars and former girlfriends, Misty Moans, called erectile dishonor), even after praying to all the gods and all the false gods he knew, his penis remained paralyzed.



Drew hoped to find something in his hometown that would return him to the man—the boy, really—he’d once been. But three minutes into their conversation, Barry reminded him about how, when they were twelve years old,

Spin

The BLM auction took place at the county fair. In the corner of the world stood five sorry-ass enclosures with about twenty or thirty animals inside—mostly horses, but then a few burros, too, carted over from Yuma. It would be my horse, technically. I was just going to keep it at the Arizona School for Girls as part of an “enrichment program.” They could call it anything they wanted for all I cared.



The website had featured two kinds of animals: sad little hopeful ones, waiting to be adopted, and robust thriving productive picture-book horses—the before and after of it all. I knew it had to be more complicated, but even so I wasn’t prepared for what I saw. Behind those green bars the yearlings and the two-year-olds, mostly bays, were like wind, captured. They moved together. One heard a pin drop somewhere in Idaho, and they all skated to the other side of the enclosure, a whoosh and a rumble and then there they stood, in the new location. Side by side, facing the world as one, ready to go.

Still fenced in, however.

Let’s just say it was hard to choose. They wanted blind bids, anything over a hundred and twenty-five dollars. I stared into each pen, mares on one side of the lot, geldings on the other, half ignoring and half catcalling to each other. I could be reasonable about this. I could check their legs, eyes, conformation. But I didn’t want to be reasonable. I saw one who’d been in some kind of accident and had a scar running the length of her nose, I wanted her. I saw a beautiful dun who looked like he’d come from a herd far from the others, I wanted him. I saw two chestnut yearlings huddled nearly on top of one another, and I wanted them, too. I wanted every

Dick Allen

God's Beatnik--3

San Francisco, 2007

Barely hanging on, but not naked,
he watched the night begin to go into morning skyline
and shouts from the gutters. Is all time stolen,
he wondered as he walked the cable-car tracks,
and if so, from whom? That whom pleased him,
loving distinctions as he did: skyline from horizon,
car from automobile. "Day, he say day, he say day-ay-ay-o"
Harry Belafonte used to sing.
"Daylight come and he wan' go home."
And now you enter the last phrase,
which may have some tulips.

Doing long division,
he hated having to round off numbers, preferring
to watch them oddly marching out beyond their little platforms:

.333333333333



_____/

into eternity. He liked the difference between
not only shall and will but house and home,
pudding and custard, man and gentleman,
art and fine art. He liked when things went haywire
and then came bouncing back, like dogs from dark tunnels
or those inexplicably cured hospital patients
swearing they had seen "the light, the light,"
always reminding him of tha tittle man on Fantasy Island
calling "The plane! The plane!"

The best conversations
keep veering toward nonsense, the thought,
even dipping in and out of it sometimes,
like adults allowing themselves gibberish
but ending on high plateaus, vast agreements
"nearer my God to Thee."

Jessie Marshall

Dogs

Robert opens a bottle of Riesling, sits next to me on the sofa, and says that he is leaving.

“You remember the Alsatian? The one with the broken leg?”

I nod. “The woman came in crying. It was her father’s dog.”

“That’s right.” He seems relieved, as if relaying this information was the hard part. “She lives in Saint Paul. I’m leaving with her.”

“Saint Paul,” I say. “In Minnesota.”

His eyes are grossly wide, startled, blue.

“Saint Paul,” I say again. “That’s a long way from the ocean. From any ocean.”

He taps a cushion with his finger. “True.” The tapping slows until it reminds me of the leaky faucet in the bathroom: drip, drip, drip. I shift my gaze to his mouth. I watch it pucker and wait for it to speak.

“Well.” I break up the silence. “What happened to the dog?”

“Oh,” Robert says, nearly smiling. “It’s fine. It’s going to be fine. A fractured medial malleolus, nothing too serious. I’m more worried about you.” He crosses his legs and leans forward in that way he has, like a girl, like an old college professor who remembers every line of Yeats but has no idea where he parked his car.

“Don’t worry,” I say, reaching for the bottle. “My malleolus is doing great.”

Before we started dating, Robert invited me to Atlantic City.

Michael Heffernan

The Origin of the World

The morning was a ramshackle pastiche
of buff-colored bits and pieces, thrown around

in a clutter behind every door,
and, once I had one opened to the outside,

it was a nightmare streetscape of peeling beige
on siding--always siding, or cinderblock--

or in the vista, where the people live,
a wash of gesso strewn on tattered burlap--

Oh the big dreams I had of making art--
but there I was instead in the subdivision

trying to mop the floors of several rooms
drenched in a flood of an ill-fitting shower curtain,

and out back somebody had set up camp
with a pack of yard apes in a double wide,

and beyond them a scant array of houses
permanently staining the ambiance.

I stepped around a corner into a room
that hadn't been there before, in any life.

You were watching me from our bed by the shut blinds
with a steely autumn sky behind them



Paul Long

Held in Each Hand

Her strength
traces
a sudden loss
of feeling.

Her nymphs help
her to dream more

the metaphors in her mind
leap over intermediary thoughts
too rapidly

lions who roam
in their splendor
oblivious
to any weakness.

Her familiarity
lies through touching
especially with an arrow.



Ostracon

Katya is searching for her glasses. They were just here. One minute ago, on the counter, the big brown glasses. Without them, everything is waxy. She lays her hand on the cool Formica and makes a brushing motion. Keys, coffee mug, phone book. Two different pens. Why are there so many pens? She has never bought even a single pen.

Katya squints to see the table, pats various spots. The sisal placemats are crusty with stale crumbs. The Shabbos candles are dribbly stumps. Another pen.

She's had these glasses for so long. Decades probably. They are chestnut brown and shiny like a stone you pluck from the shore. They fit her face just right.

Now Katya is in the den. She is overturning newspapers and envelopes. She would like to throw them out, but what if they are new? Without her glasses, the headlines are smudgy glyphs.



When Joe comes home from work he finds his wife crouched on the floor, her sweater frosted with lint. She looks up and smiles.

Workmen have cut a hole in the living room ceiling. Apparently there was a leak in the roof which Joe said was causing some kind of damage. The men are short and brown and smell like the inside of a taxi. They smile at Katya, but she is suspicious. She is protectful of her space, this home she

Neil Mathison

*Memory and Helix:
What Comes to Us from the Past*

My father lost his childhood. He lost it in Nevada tumbleweed towns, in Union Pacific rail yards, in Oakland flyspeck boardinghouses, on San Francisco's Embarcadero and Powell Street and Fisherman's Wharf. My father lost his childhood because his father, my grandfather, took my father with him when he abandoned the rest of his family. In Detroit. The year was 1919. A black-and-white snapshot taken before they left shows my father with fair hair, pale skin, and an air of guarded watchfulness, as if he were used to being the smallest pup in the pack. He was five years old.

During our family vacations throughout the American West, my father looked for his childhood, much as Ahab looked for his whale. (I do not say this lightly.)



What clues my father found often depressed him--and on occasion enraged him. I doubt that my father ever found what he'd lost.

Oliver Sacks writes that the human brain is more like a river than a recording machine. In his essay "Neurology and the Soul" (New York Review of Books, 22 November 1990) Sacks suggests that in the human mind "nothing is ever precisely repeated or reproduced" and that there is a "continual revision and reorganization of perfection and memory, so that no two experiences (or their neural bases) are ever precisely the same."

"It's a poor sort of memory," the Queen of Hearts tells Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*, "that only works backwards."

This is my memory: We are parked in a Nevada rail yard in 1958, my family on its way home from Mexico.

Audri Sousa

Preservatives

rather than answer the telephone, we will arrange dom-
noes into stonehenge and we will be the druids. rather than
answer the telephone, we will go to the MOMA and point
at the exhibit that is a tarpaulin with an electric fan blowing
underneath it. rather than answer the telephone, you will
skillfully propel a dixon ticonderoga around your finger and
i will curl my wrists and wave my elbows in awkward inter-
pretive tribal dance. that way we will fly up away from the
city and its rococo people. we will land knee-deep in poppy
fields and snort ginger and ice. at the end of the fields we
will be sleepy and there will be a lake of honey that is full of
stalagmites. we will paddle across the lake in a stolen din-
ghy, or maybe a canoe. cupped wooden hands gliding over
jelly skin, knuckles braiding a hull. for a second you will
look anxiously down at the stalagmites and the hundreds of
fish suspended, unmoving, wide-eyed in the dense amber. i
will say don't worry, we will find something to be young in.



“After Shadeland”
an interview with Andrew Grace



Poet Andrew Grace writes in the first lines of his recent poetry manuscript, “the wind pushes another load of used light over the horizon.” Surely the light has been over the horizon for this amazing poet for some time now.

As a 2006-08 Stegner Fellow at Stanford, Andrew recently won the Ohio State University/The Journal prize for poetry with his second book, *Shadeland*. His manuscript, *Sancta*, is in the running for another poetry prize. *Sancta* has been published in *Washington Square*, *LIT*, *Gulf Stream*, *Mid-American Review*, and *H_NGM_N*, among others.



The word “sancta” means “sacred” or “holy places,” implying a private place or retreat. This is symbolic of Grace’s poetry in *Sancta*, shown vibrantly in his recent publication in *The Mid-American Review* of the chapbook “Almost Here,” which was taken from *Sancta*. In this grouping of of poems, each one is exactly seventy words long.

Grace’s accomplishments as a younger poet are intriguing, especially since he found poetry “on accident.” He did his undergraduate work at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio and holds an MFA from Washington University in St. Louis. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Triquarterly*, *Boston Review*, *Poetry Daily*, and *The Iowa Review*, among others. He was the winner of the *Southern Poetry Review’s* Guy Owen Prize in 2003 and an *Academy of American Poets* Prize as well.

Q: “Almost Here,” published in *The Mid-American Review*, Volume XXVII, Number 2 made me interested in your writing style. Do you normally put a lot of planning or limitations, such as word-length, into your writing?

A: Not to the extent that I do in the group of poems that “Almost Here” was taken from. When I’m stuck sometimes I pick someone else’s poem at random and match it syllabically (if their first line has 13 syllables, so will mine, etc.). I find that placing some kind of false restrictions on my language helps to keep things tighter than they would have been otherwise. Again, I normally don’t write under such extreme limitations as the poems you read, but for that project it seemed to be the right thing to do.

Q: Have you been working on another book since your latest, *Shadeland*?




A: Actually, the poems from “Almost Here” are part of a longer manuscript titled “Sancta” which is currently a finalist for a prize (I don’t want to say much about it to keep from jinxing it!). I wrote over 100 of the 70 word poems over the course of 4 or 5 months. The book is what I thought were the strongest 80 poems. After that I haven’t been working on a concentrated project, just pecking away at things.

Q: How long and involved is the process of writing an entire book of poetry such as *Shadeland*?

Shadeland was a long time in the making. The poems come from about six years of writing, from my MFA years through my Stegner Fellowship. As far as how involved it

is, it really depended on what else was going on in my life. When I was at school and at Stanford, I had more time to write and therefore was very involved in shaping the poems and the book as a whole. In the years in between, I was working quite a lot so I went through some long dry spells. Writing a book has been a process of catch-as-catch-can for me.

Q: You had been published before going through Washington University's M.F.A. program. How do you feel that program improved your writing and may have led to your Academy of American Poets prize and your involvement at Stanford University?



A: I published my first book (*A Belonging Field*, Salt Publishing 2002) the year before I started my MFA. That program helped me tremendously, mainly because of the quality of my teachers and what I learned from my fellow students. Carl Phillips and Mary Jo Bang have very different viewpoints, and having such a diversity of opinions gave me a wider knowledge about poetry as a whole. It also gave me a lot of time to write, which is the best gift of all for a poet.

Q: Is writing your only occupation and sole form of income?

A: That would be a resounding no. Teaching is my sole form of income, and I mostly teach creative writing. I think there are probably less than ten poets writing in English that make a living off of their writing alone. Most of us teach or work in publishing or do some other work. Luckily, the process of teaching winds up teaching me a lot about

the material I choose, so I've really grown to like being a teacher.

Q: What inspired you as an accomplished poet in the publishing world?

A: What inspires me are the other poets working right now that are doing what I consider to be great work. Charles Wright, Forrest Gander, Brigit Kelly (to name a very few)-these are the people that inspire me to write and publish. To be in the same conversation with them is what makes me want to have my work in the public eye, so that I have some chance of moving someone the way these poets move me.

Q: What are some of your 'ultimate' goals in terms of the future of your writing?



A: Basically to have a long and vital career. And to be honest, I'd like to write a book that found a wider audience. I'm very proud of my first 2 books, but they haven't garnered much attention in the poetry reading world (although any attention is great with me). This may sound corny, but I want to write a book that really matters in this moment in poetry.

Q: Do you have any particular motivations or experiences that made you interested in writing poetry?

A: I really have no idea why I starting writing poems. I studied 2 poems in high school and my parents didn't read poetry at all. When I took my first workshop, I got some early positive feedback, and things snowballed from there.

There was nothing else in my life at that time that I was especially good at, so I figured I should just do what I seemed to be good at. Things have worked out pretty well so far.

Q: As a younger writer, what is your opinion concerning publications such as literary magazines moving exclusively to the Internet?

A: You know, at first I was really hesitant to submit to them because in the early days I wasn't sure that the websites would be around for long. Now I realize that nothing really disappears on the internet, and the internet is really a poet's biggest promotional tool, even more than reading. What do you do when you discover a new poet? You google him or her. So having prominent online publications makes a big difference. There are also a good number of online journals that have stood the test of time that are run by good editors that are just as good as most print journals. So I think we're only going to see more online publishing, which I think is a good thing.



***The Mimosa Review* would like to give warm thanks to Andy Grace for his interest in the magazine and for answering our questions.**

Book Review


“Holding Pattern”

Stories by Jeffery Renard Allen.
St. Paul ,Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2008. 229 pages. \$15.

In *Holding Pattern* Jeffery Allen writes tough, beautiful stories, giving important insight into the communities and true culture of the urban south. The characters are no-nonsense African Americans who at times possess powers and become drawn into fantastic occurrences which serve as metaphors with deeper meanings. Allen draws upon his upbringing and background to create “reality” fairytales where it seems that anything possible, yet the protagonist is generally pushed down. Personal resolve is broken with determination while characters’ dwell in the past and the future looks dim. The stories seem to end hauntingly unfinished, yet another story then begins in the same chord. Human reality is illuminated on the deepest level, while being humorous and visionary. The lines are written almost poetically, filled with concentrated meaning while utilizing a realistic dialect, forming hardened, true personalities from a criminal converted to help the police to an established young woman defending her younger brother. These are characters one may not come across in their everyday lives, but who exist in full force in certain communities. Allen’s use of their own unique languages brings them to life as nothing can. Each sentence spares no realism as words become abrupt and intense. The characters explicitly cater to no one as all thoughts are spoken out loud, “Old-ass granny,” “White trash”. All of the characters demand attention with a distinct urgency.



Allen's use of imagery is the strongest aspect of these stories. While creating characters whose lives and personalities may be a mystery at times, the images are raw and enticing to the point of absurdity unseen in many writers. A man is described as "...real relaxed against the wall, blowin' fat white rings and cannonballs". A witness feels, "vision hurrying like venom through her body". Dinner rolls are described as "bare baby butts," and high heels as "sharp, long tools jack hammering the concrete floor". In this way, the reader has a complete sense of what is seen, but, at the same time, hears, smells, and feels it.



While seemingly on the surface, one is delved deep into another human being's world for twenty some pages, then left reeling. While at times disturbing, dream-like imagery streams in and out giving the feeling of a realistic fantasy city where ghosts are visible and pennies fall from the sky to be eaten by a boy who in turn reappears, grown up from the first story. In this way, some characters are revealed only to disappear while others revisit intermittently throughout the collection. This type of structure dazzles more than confuses, in more ways than one. Although deep and intelligent, these stories entertain with shock and awe, creating suspense which leads to appreciation and wonderment. Subjects like sex, money, greed, poverty, and crime weave throughout, revealing misery and struggle as the stories move along mystery, truth, and myth. Allen's writing lacks nothing, encompassing vision, brutal honesty, and fearlessness.

-Kristin Miller, Lebanon Valley College

Contributors' Notes

Dick Allen hitchhiked from upper New York state to San Francisco one summer after reading *On the Road* and “Howl,” searching for the Beats, but most of them had moved on: Ferlinghetti wasn’t in his bookshop, and the Co-Existence Coffee Shop had closed. They might have been at Big Sur, digging Robinson Jeffers’s castle. Still, Allen says, “I almost stayed in San Francisco forever. The por wonderful soul who is God’s Beatnik and who speaks this poem, might be my brother.” Allen’s newest poetry collection is the American Zen Buddhist-oriented *Present Vanishing*, published by Sarabande Books. His previous collections, also from Sarabande, are *The Day Before: New Poems* and *Ode to the Cold War: Poems New and Selected*. He has received a Pushcart Prize as well as poetry writing fellowships from the NEA and the Ingram-Merrill Foundation. He lives near the shores of Thrushwood Lake, in Trumbull, Connecticut, with his wife and many statues of the Buddha.



Matthew Batt’s work has recently appeared in *Western Humanities Review*, *Tin House*, and the anthology *Food and Booze: A Tin House Literary Feast*. He is an assistant professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mark Brazaitis’s latest book is *An American Affair: Stories*, which won the 2004 George Garrett Fiction Prize from Texas Review Press. A former Peace Corps Volunteer, he is an associate professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program at West Virginia University.

Andrew Grace was born and raised in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. His first book of poetry, *A Belonging Field*, was published by Salt Publishing. He is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize and the Southern Poetry Review's 2003 Guy Owen Prize.

Michael Heffernan has new poems in 2008 in *Aroostook Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Margie*, *Third Coast*, and *Unsplendid*. His latest book, *The Odor of Sanctity*, will be out this fall from Salmon Poetry in Ireland. He has finished another book, *At the Bureau of Divine Music*, which includes his two poems in this issue. He lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Judith Kitchen's essays on photographs have appeared in *Colorado Review*, *Great River Review*, *Brevity*, and *Organica*, and are forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*. An anthology coedited with Ted Kooser, *The Poet's Guide to the Birds*, is forthcoming from Anhinga Press.



Paul Long is a poet and teacher whose work has appeared in *Bird Dog*, *Fence*, and other journals. He teaches English at Baltimore City Community College and received an M.F.A. in poetry from Brown University.

Jessie Marshall lives in New York City and is pursuing an M.F.A. in fiction at NYU. She has studied theater at Oberlin College and modern literature at the University of York, England. Someday, when she's all grown up, she'd like to have a dog.

Neil Mathison's essays and short stories have appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *divide*, *Ontario Review*, *Northwest Review*, and *AGNI*, among other publications. He has been a vice president for computer, electronics, and software

companies; an expatriate businessman based in Hong Kong; and a naval officer and nuclear propulsion plant engineer. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Mathison was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and raised in Seattle, Washington, where he now lives with his wife Susan and their son John.

Traci O. Connor's first book, *Recipes for Endangered Species*, is forthcoming from Tarpaulin Sky Press. She lives in Athens, Ohio.

Carrie Oeding is a post-doctoral fellow at Ohio University, where she received her Ph.D. in creative writing in 2007. Her poetry has appeared in *Third Coast*, *The Greensboro Review*, and *Colorado Review*, as well as Best New Poets 2005.

Alex Rose is a founding editor of Hotel St. George Press in Brooklyn. He has written for *The New York Times*, *Fantasy Magazine*, *The Reading Room*, *North American Review*, *The Forward*, and *DIAGRAM*. His debut story collection, *The Musical Illusionist*, was published in October of 2007 to critical acclaim.



Aurelie Sheehan is the author of two novels, *History Lessons for Girls* and *The Anxiety of Everyday Objects*, as well as a short story collection, *Jack Kerouac Is Pregnant*. She teaches fiction and directs the M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing at the University of Arizona in Tuscon.

Audri Sousa gets excited by jeopardy contestants who answer 'avery island,' regardless of whether they are right. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Corduroy Mtn.*, *Dogzplot*, *Word Riot*, *Decomp*, *Abjective* and *Juked*.

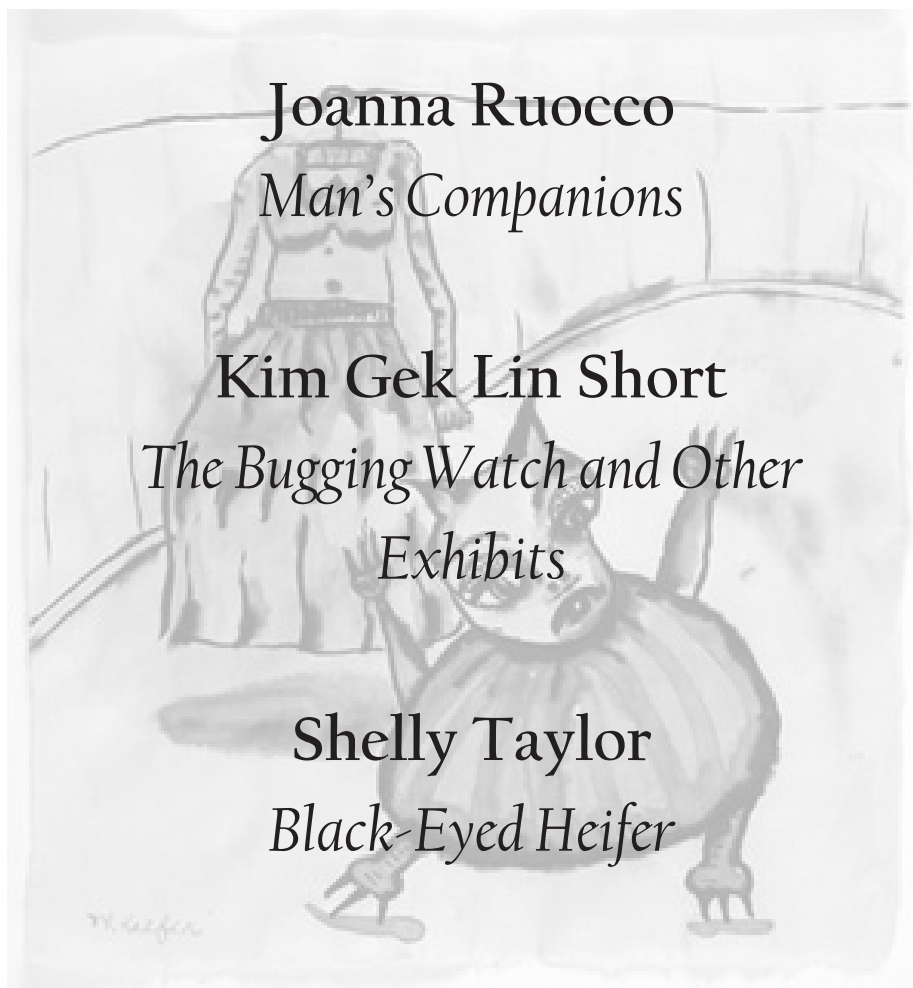
Coming Soon...

TARPAULIN ' SKY

Joanna Ruocco
Man's Companions

Kim Gek Lin Short
The Bugging Watch and Other Exhibits

Shelly Taylor
Black-Eyed Heifer



Volume I, Edition I



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Mark Brazaitis
Aurelie Sheehan
Jessie Marshall
Andrew Grace
Carrie Oeding
Dick Allen
Michael Heffernan
Paul Long
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Judith Kitchen
Neil Mathison



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