

**FHR**

*Flint Hills Review*

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2015

Emporia State University

# Issue Twenty, 2015

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# Elizabeth Dodd

## Whirlwind

Throughout calescent afternoons  
the inter-montane basin shimmers  
with the flat-toned pulse  
of dust. Earth's crust encircles us  
with uplift—Sangre de Cristo,  
San Juan—while sand's saltation,  
under ever-changing light, belies  
the high peaks' hushed arrest.  
Today I'm halfway back  
from thirteen thousand feet,  
descending with the creek until I see  
the Ponderosa pines begin  
to cede the slope to aspens,  
leaves waving, stiff-wristed,  
in the lifting heat. Look down.  
Dust devils pace the baking plains.  
They are opaque, dry fountains.  
They do the wordless work  
of dreams. Dust in the air, dust  
in your eyes, they are among the bodies  
that desire takes, dust reaching  
for exchange with sky.

# Laura Lee Washburn

## Personal Responsibility

Next door the neighborhood fox  
curls against the clapboard, leans  
its red and white body into the wall.  
Black tipped snout and ears and paws.  
We watch from an upstairs window.

On the other side, they're new  
and he tells her she hasn't seen a fox.  
She's pregnant. He says, probably  
a cat. The foxes are said to be a pair  
who groom each other. Scavengers,  
they won't eat your little dog.

The redtailed hawk seems drawn  
by the birds who congregate over snow  
by our just-filled feeders, juncos,  
chickadee. I saw a hawk low once  
in a cedar, startled it, so it flew  
and the half squirrel it had gnawed

dropped to the bloody ground in front  
of me. The fox lifts its leg, scratches  
for fleas as I have seen our dog sometimes  
do. The fox hears something we can't hear  
from inside. The fox's head is big.  
The fox lopes, unafraid, away. We  
don't know where the neighborhood

fox lives or if the hawk will eat the chirping  
bird that we've drawn in with birdseed  
like bait if you think of it that way. I  
sometimes wonder what deaths I might  
have prevented which is another way  
of not saying, what have I killed even  
and especially without intention. Reckoning

would be a just end. So if the hawk comes  
or the fox startles or the dog convulses,  
don't worry. We invented justice  
on the strawy backs of world religions.  
The fox is strong and smart and not alone.

## **Dennis Etzel Jr.**

### **About Your Future: Asmund**

You love arriving in consonant  
jungles flashing out of your mouth.  
I wish I could have unclogged  
my parcels at your age  
but this is about my trying  
to be as real as a street  
moving on through Kansas  
into Ohio and beyond.  
Every father should walk  
the parenthetical way  
of wanting more for his son.  
Here is your sidewalk  
to stay out of the world for now  
in hiatus. I make it this way  
as I get hysterical  
somewhere deeper  
in the neon nightsticks  
that come like fired neurons.  
How can I instead show you my dance  
flames? Murmurate to you how warnings  
are the encores my fear gives, continually  
coming back?

## Julene Bair

### Do You Have Any Magic?

In my dream, a little girl stands in a dim room beside a row of women. The women, dressed demurely in cardigans over dark shifts, sit erect in straight-backed chairs, their hands folded in their laps. The girl moves from woman to woman, asking, “Do you have any magic?” Each in turn smiles indulgently at the girl. “Oh my! Why no, dear.”

The little girl, of course, was me. And the women were the distilled, reticent essence of every woman I’d known growing up. Take for example the members of the Sunny Circle Home Demonstration Unit, the farm-based ladies club my mother once belonged to. True, most of those women lived up to the club’s name. They were sunny, not dour, and wore bright dresses, not dark shifts. They laughed often and seemed relaxed, even as they held fancy saucers shaped like lily pads—with raised rings on them that kept their delicate cups from skidding or splashing coffee onto the hostess’s homemade cookies.

But they never confided a personal concern or expressed an opinion that might differ from anyone else’s. This left them little to talk about other than the weather and what they’d cooked for supper the night before and how their gardens were growing. Lord forbid they complain about a thoughtless husband or probe a religious question or share a political insight. They had to live among these same few neighbor women for the rest of their lives and were therefore careful not to say anything they couldn’t live down.

When I went to college, I was at first aghast at the topics that some of my new friends considered suitable for conversation. Nothing, not even their sex lives or their parents’ marital problems, seemed off limits. When sad, they shed open tears. Witnessing such “blabbing and blubbing,” as I thought of it then, embarrassed me. But over time I grew less inhibited and came to cherish my intimate friendships with women.

I had no interest whatsoever in moving back to remote western Kansas, where I was raised—until, that is, three decades after my escape, when I met someone who caused me to consider doing exactly that. My father had died a few years before, and on a routine visit home to see my mother, I decided to take a drive into the surrounding countryside in search of water. My father had been a dry-land wheat farmer in my childhood, but, like many others in the region, had since

converted the farm to irrigation. Each year, farmers were pumping billions of gallons out of the Ogallala Aquifer, the vast groundwater reserves underlying the High Plains all the way from South Dakota to Texas. This concerned me, as I'd read that the aquifer was being depleted and many of the spring-fed creeks and rivers had dried up.

I did find water that day. Reassured that irrigation had not—at least not yet—robbed the surface of every last drop, I was sitting in the shade of a cottonwood tree beside the creek when a pickup came into the pasture pulling a stock trailer. At first I was afraid the driver would accuse me of trespassing, but far from it. His name was Ward. After we'd chatted for a while, he said, "I know who you are!" It turned out Ward had read my first book and liked it so much he'd considered writing to me through my publisher. This astounded me. As far as I knew, the only people back home who'd read that book were my mother and my high school English teacher.

The story that unfolded between this man and me—together with a crisis that was unfolding in my family around the future of our farm and the crisis facing the aquifer—became the subject of my second book, *The Ogallala Road*.

Now, years later, on the verge of publishing that book, I was terrified. The publisher planned to send me on tour. Soon, I would be standing before audiences in Kansas and other plains states, arguing that to use water the way we were doing was a collective crime against nature and future generations. The claim seemed beyond denial to me. In many places, the aquifer was already drained of the water that had made plains life possible for the last ten thousand years. In most other places, it would be used up before the end of this century. But irrigation played a huge role in the economy of the region. Those whose livelihood depended on the Ogallala were not likely to take the criticism well. Knowing I'd written the best, most passionate story I could didn't change my impending fate.

Not only that. I'd centered much of the story on meeting and falling in love with Ward. Loving a man so thoroughly Kansan—in his bearing, assumptions, and way of life—had shown me that, however liberated or worldly I thought I'd become, my ties, like his—to the prairie, sky, air, water, soil, plants, animals, and people of home—ran deeper than my ties to anything, anyone, or anywhere else. "We don't talk about private matters in public," my parents had always warned me—for good reason it seemed to me now. Shortly, I would be embarrassing myself in public and inciting ire everywhere I traveled. Instead of tapping keys on my computer, "telling tales out of school"—another of my parents' favorite sayings—I wished I'd just kept my hands folded and my lips sealed, like those women in my dream. Who was I to challenge the status quo back home? It would have been easier to look the other way and say nothing.

Except it wouldn't have been easier. Not really. In inheriting part of the farm, I'd also inherited a share in the profits that came from irrigating. As a writer, it came naturally to me to explore the problems that troubled me most, and I wouldn't have been able to live with myself if I hadn't spoken up. But now that "speaking up" was going to entail not just typing, but actual blabbing back home, yet another Kansas-ism took on new meaning. You could take the girl off the farm, but apparently you couldn't take the farm culture out of the girl. I'd learned much the same thing loving Ward. To be from a place is to be of it.

Those women, in their dark dresses and denial, couldn't have shown up in my dreams at a more critical moment. I knew I didn't want to be like them. They had been so uptight and contained, unable and unwilling to share all that life had taught them, when even the little-girl me knew that life had taught them a lot. Take their hands, which they kept folded in their laps. Those hands had planted thousands of seeds and nursed them to fruition. They had diapered babies and bottle-fed piglets, calves, and lambs. The women had been witness, midwife, and nurse to life's miracle ever since they were little girls. They had even borne life forth from their own wombs. They might as well have been magicians, yet they denied any knowledge of the magic they wielded.

Behind every magic trick is a secret, and behind life there is a not-so-secret yet very magical substance. Loren Eiseley, one of my favorite writers, put it this way in *The Immense Journey*: "If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in water." Substitute the word "life" for "magic" in that sentence. There could be no life without water. It is what makes the earth habitable. Like me, Eiseley grew up on the plains, where water could not be taken for granted and where every man, woman, and child knew this. Every woman of my childhood certainly knew it, yet I never heard one of them express concern for the water that was being drained from under her land.

Like the dream women, I've been witness, midwife, and nurse to life for as long as I can remember. My father used to raise sheep, and when lambing season rolled around in January, it fell to my brothers and me to fill quart-sized Coke bottles with warm formula, affix big nipples onto them, and hold them, one in each hand, for the orphans. I will never forget the way their dangly tails danced as they suckled or how eagerly they butted the bottles, sometimes knocking them right out of my hands. I remember everything about those lambs—their pungent smell; their many voices, each one distinct and insistent; their tiny hooves against my thighs as they tried to climb me to get at the bottle sooner; their bony foreheads and warm but still

nearly naked backs under my palm as I pushed them back down.

I felt their need in my own body, where I knew what a hunger pang was and what thirst felt like and where I'd registered the lambs' heat and life on my own skin. The body is where all feeling resides. When I first heard the phrase, "feel your feelings," it struck me as ridiculous. Isn't that what a feeling is—something you feel? But being aware of a feeling depends on there being an open pathway between your body and your mind.

In repressing their fears and concerns and keeping mum, in having no outlet for their tears and their voices, the women of my childhood, like so many women of that generation, were prevented from feeling their feelings. When doctors and magazines told them that formula was better for babies than their own breast milk, they must have known, in flesh, blood, and bone, this was not true. But to breastfeed was to risk social stigma, so they denied their own bodily wisdom.

I'm sure I would have obeyed the cultural messages too. If I had been a woman of my mother's generation, I would have walled my body off from my head, and paid, as my mother did, with chronic stomachaches, which she chalked up to "just nerves"—or resorted to calming drugs. But I was luckier than my mother. I had the benefit of friendships with women who created, among themselves, their own culture.

Thanks to the many friends who listened to me with open minds when I spoke and who offered me uniquely feminine nurturance and support when I cried, I don't need the dream women to explain magic to me anymore. There is an open channel between my body, where I feel the thirst of life to come, and my mind, where I can shape the words to argue on behalf of that life. I know what magic is here on this earth and can speak for it myself.

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*\*This piece originally ran on the Women's Review of Books "Women = Books" blog.*

## **William H. Clamurro**

### **Birthday**

My older brother gently wheels our aunt  
into the sun-washed room, an afternoon,  
late August, to her birthday party, soon  
into her second century. I can't  
fully believe the wonder of it all.  
She frowns at first, lost in the mists of age,  
confused, but then the birthday cake awakes  
a pleased smile, past memory, enthralled  
by simple joys of sugared icing. She picks  
carefully, eating at her own slow pace.  
I sense it as a secret miracle, this place  
in time. Rose is here and yet is slipping on,  
and in the question of her startled look,  
she tugs me with a gentle thread along.

## Contributors

**Julene Bair** is the author of *The Ogallala Road* and *One Degree West*. She is a graduate of the Iowa Nonfiction Writing Program and the Iowa Writers' Workshop and recipient of an NEA fellowship among other prizes. Her essays have appeared in venues ranging from *The New York Times* to *High Country News*. Today, she splits her time between Longmont, Colorado and Santa Rosa, California. For links to her essays and reviews of her books visit [www.julenebair.com](http://www.julenebair.com).

**Walter Bargaen** has published eighteen books of poetry. His most recent books are *Days Like This Are Necessary: New & Selected Poems* (2009), *Endearing Ruins* (2012), *Trouble Behind Glass Doors* (2013), *Quixotic* (2014), and *Gone West* (2014). He was appointed the first poet laureate of Missouri (2008-2009). Visit his website at [www.walterbargaen.com](http://www.walterbargaen.com).

**Boyd Bauman** has taught English in Hiroshima, Japan and Saigon, Vietnam. He currently teaches and writes in the Kansas City area. Boyd lives with his lovely wife Lisa and their little poets Haven and Milly.

**Candace Bergstrom** is a poet, writer, and teacher living in New Hampshire. She recently earned an MFA in creative writing-poetry from Goddard College in Vermont and holds a B. A. and M. A. in English from the University of Houston. She taught college composition, literature, and humanities courses for twenty years in Houston and currently co-edits Monadnock Writers' Group literary webzine, *Smoky Quartz* at [www.smokyquartz.org](http://www.smokyquartz.org).

**John F. Buckley & Martin Ott** began their ongoing games of poetic volleyball in the spring of 2009. Since then, their collaborations have been accepted into more than seventy journals and anthologies, including *Barrow Street*, *Drawn to Marvel*, *Map Literary*, *Rabbit Ears: TV Poems*, *Redivider*, and *ZYZZYVA*, and gathered into two full-length collections on Brooklyn Arts Press, *Poets' Guide to America* (2012) and *Yankee Broadcast Network* (2014). They are now writing poems for a third manuscript, *American Wonder*, about superheroes and supervillains.

**Maura Gage Cavell** is Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at Louisiana State University Eunice. She resides in Crowley with her family. She has recently published poetry in *California Quarterly*, *Poem*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Boulevard*, and *The Louisiana Review*. She has recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in Poetry as well as for Louisiana Poet Laureate.

**William H. Clamurro** is Professor of Spanish at Emporia State University. He specializes in Spanish Golden Age literature and is the author of two books, *Beneath the Fiction: The Contrary Worlds of Cervantes's Novelas Ejemplares* (1997) and *Language and Ideology in the Prose of Quevedo* (1991), as well as articles on 16th- and 17th-century Spanish literature and an edition of Cervantes's four last Novelas ejemplares. Prof. Clamurro is a charter member of the Cervantes Society of America and serves as the book review editor of their journal. His poetry has been published in several journals.

**Joan Colby** has published widely in journals such as *Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, *South Dakota Review*, and has received many awards including an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship. She has 14 books, including the forthcoming *Ribcage* from Glass Lyre Press which received the 2015 Kithara Book Prize.

**Kent Cooper** was born in North Carolina, but mostly raised in North Dakota when his mother left his father and took her kids to her family home. His short stories have appeared in a number of literary magazines, his plays have appeared Off-Broadway and many other places, and he has published several novels.

**Orman Day's** prose and poetry have been published by such journals as *Creative Nonfiction*, *Third Coast*, *Zyzyva*, *Colere*, *Portland Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, and *Quiddity*. He's currently working on a book about his adventures traveling the world with a pack on his back.

**Jude Deason** left Chicago and her profession as a licensed clinical social worker for life on a remote ranch in northern New Mexico. It was then poetry entered her life in earnest. In her living room she has a large piano that she loves, but she doesn't play it anymore, not after discovering poetry. Deason now lives and writes in Santa Fe.

**Elizabeth Dodd** teaches creative writing and literature at Kansas State University. Her published works have appeared in a number of literary journals and include a nonfiction book, *Horizon's Lens*, released in 2012.

**Roberta Eichenberg**'s artworks are exhibited locally and nationally in juried and invitational exhibitions. Recent awards include "Best in Show" at the 3rd Clay and Glass Biennial Exhibition at the City of Brea art gallery in California. During her recent sabbatical Roberta was awarded a six-week artist residency at the Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where she initiated new projects and consulted with the graduate and undergraduate students in glass on their progress. The pieces she creates are mixed media based and deal with personal politics, the struggle for power, and the desire for empathy.

**John Estes** directs the creative writing program at Malone University in Canton, Ohio and is on the faculty of Ashland University's Low-Residency MFA. He is author of *Kingdom Come* (C&R Press, 2011) and two chapbooks: *Breakfast with Blake at the Laocoön* (Finishing Line Press, 2007) and *Swerve*, which won a National Chapbook Fellowship from the Poetry Society of America.

**Dennis Etzel Jr.** lives with Carrie and the boys in Topeka, Kansas where he teaches English at Washburn University. His chapbook *The Sum of Two Mothers* was released by ELJ Publications in 2013, and his work has appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Indiana Review*, *BlazeVOX*, *Fact-Simile*, *1913: a journal of poetic forms*, *3:AM*, *DIAGRAM*, and others. He is a TALK Scholar for the Kansas Humanities Council, and volunteers with poetry workshops in various writing communities.

**Amanda Frost** completed her Ph.D. in English and Creative Writing at the University of Kansas where she now teaches English. She received her M.F.A. from the University of Texas at Austin where she was a Michener Fellow. She was nonfiction editor of *Beecher's Magazine* and associate editor of *Bat City Review*. Her work has appeared in *New Delta Review*, *Blue Island Review*, *Coal City Review*, *Able Muse*, and *Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal*.

**John Glass** is a teacher and writer living in southern California. His poems and stories have appeared in *Cooweescoowee*, *Binnacle*, *Structo*, *Macguffin* and other journals. John is also a playwright and recently began a youth play business, *Student Plays*. You can read more at [www.johnglass.org](http://www.johnglass.org)

**Jonathan Greenhouse** has been longlisted for this year's National Poetry Competition (UK) by The Poetry Society, and was also a finalist or honorable mention in 2014's poetry contests from *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Millennium Writings*, *Peregrine*, Red Hen Press, and *River Styx*. His website is [www.jonathangreenhouse.com](http://www.jonathangreenhouse.com).

**Jamie Lynn Heller** has two young girls, the perfect spouse, a high school counseling career she loves, and she gets to write. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee and the author of *Domesticated*, *Poetry from Around the House*. Jamie has poetry published in *Prairie Schooner*, *Tule Review*, *Noctua Review*, *Little Balkans Review*, and others. For a list of publications see [jamielynnheller.blogspot.com](http://jamielynnheller.blogspot.com)

**Richard Holinger's** prose and poetry have received three Pushcart Prize nominations and have appeared in literary journals such as *The Southern Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Boulevard*, and *Witness*. His short fiction collection, *Not Everybody's Nice*, won the 2012 Split Oak Press Flash Prose Chapbook Contest, and Kattywompus Press published a chapbook of innovative flash fiction, *Hybrid Seeds: Little Fictions*. He writes a column for the Kane County Chronicle, facilitates two writing workshops, and teaches high school English. He lives in Geneva, Illinois.

**Solomon David Jacobs** is currently a senior English major at Emporia State University. Jacobs placed second in the Allen Community College's spring 2014 open forum writing contest with his short story "Link and the Lorax" which was then published in the *Allen Flame*. Jacobs writes creative nonfiction about his decade of travels throughout North America.

**Lowell Jaeger** teaches creative writing at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, Montana. He is author of six collections of poems, founding editor of Many Voices Press, graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop, winner of the Grolier Poetry Peace Prize, and recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Montana Arts Council. Most recently, Lowell was awarded the Montana Governor's Humanities Award for his work in promoting civil civic discourse.

**David Lawrence** has published three books – *Lane Changes*, *The King of White Collar Boxing* and *Obama in the Sky with Democrats*. He has one thousand published poems which appear in places such as *Nimrod*, *North American Review*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, and a Ph.D. in literature.

**Patricia Lawson's** stories and poems have appeared in *The Chariton Review*, *Rosebud*, *Pleides*, *New Letters*, *I-70 Review*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Big Muddy*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Nimrod*, *BigCityLit.com*, and elsewhere. She serves on the Riverfront Readings Committee and is an associate editor of *The Same*.

**Stephen Locke** is a photographer, film maker, professional storm chaser, book author, and public speaker. He produces motion and still photography for business and private collectors worldwide. Clients include Andrews McMeel Publishing, CBS, Mayo Clinic, The Weather Channel, and Discovery. Stephen provides supercell time lapse cinematography to production houses across the globe including Japan, Europe, Canada, and Australia. He is an author of the book *Chasing Weather*. Stephen is also a keynote speaker who talks about supercell thunderstorms, storm chase adventures and supercell time-lapse cinematography to corporate audiences, universities, and organizations.

**Michael Marino** is an emerging writer who hails from Santa Barbara. He has holes in his socks, but recently received an MFA in fiction from the creative writing program at Antioch University, Los Angeles, where he contributed as a fiction editor to *Lunch Ticket*, AULA's new literary journal.

**Daniel Moore's** work has been published in *Western Humanities Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Rattle*, *River Styx* and others. He is currently working on his first book, entitled *Waxing The Dents*, which will be seeking a publisher in Spring 2016. He lives on Whidbey Island, Washington with his wife, the poet Laura Moore.

**Marlene Olin** was born in Brooklyn, raised in Miami, and educated at the University of Michigan. She recently completed her first novel. Her short stories have been featured or are forthcoming in publications such as *Emrys Journal*, *Upstreet Magazine*, *Steam Ticket*, *Vine Leaves*, *Crack the Spine*, *Poetica*, *Edge*, *Meat for Tea*, *The Broken Plate*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* online. She is a contributing editor at *Arcadia* magazine.

**Donna Pucciani**, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry in the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Asia in such diverse journals as *Poetry Salzburg*, *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *America*, *Gradiva* and *The Christian Century*. Her work has been translated into Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and German. In addition to five Pushcart nominations, she has won awards from the Illinois Arts Council, The National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and Poetry on the Lake. Her sixth and most recent collection of poems is *A Light Dusting of Breath*.

**Anne Randolph** works as a volunteer for two non-profits whose mission is to save land from development in Ohio. Her poetry has been published in *The Comstock Review*, *The Avocet*, *Willow Review*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Mock Turtle Zine*, and in the 2015 *Antioch Writer's Workshop Anthology*."

**Matthew J. Spireng's** book *Out of Body* won the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award and was published by Bluestem Press. His book *What Focus Is* was published by Word Press in 2011. His chapbooks are *Clear Cut*, *Young Farmer*; *Encounters*; *Inspiration Point*, winner of the 2000 Bright Hill Press Poetry Chapbook Competition; and *Just This*.

**Laura Lee Washburn** is the Director of Creative Writing at Pittsburg State University, and is an editorial board member of Woodley Memorial Press. Her books include *This Good Warm Place* (March Street) and *Watching the Contortionists*, winner of the Palanquin Chapbook Prize. Her poetry has appeared in such journals as *Carolina Quarterly*, *November 3 Club*, *The Sun*, *The Journal*, and *Valparaiso Review*. She has also lived and worked in Arizona and Missouri.

**Daniel Webre** has an MFA in fiction from McNeese State University and is currently completing a PhD in English with a creative writing concentration at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. His short fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *Fiction Weekly*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *The Louisiana Review*, and *Xavier Review*.

**Kari Wergeland** has received recent acceptances from *Kansas City Voices*, *New Millennium Writings*, and *Wisconsin Review*. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing with an emphasis in poetry from Pacific University. She also wrote a children's book review column for *The Seattle Times*, which ran monthly for 11 years. She currently works as a librarian for Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, California, and lives part-time on the Oregon Coast.

**Jeffrey Zable** is a teacher and percussionist who plays Afro-Cuban folkloric music for dance classes and Rumbas around the San Francisco Bay Area. He's published five chapbooks including *Zable's Fables* with an introduction by the late, great Beat poet Harold Norse. His recent writing appears in *Coe Review*, *Kentucky Review*, *Tule Review*, *Indigo Rising*, *Pound Of Flash*, *Serving House Journal*, *Chaos Poetry Review* (featured poet), *Rhysling 21015 Science Fiction Award Anthology*, and many others