



# DEAD FLOWERS

*A Poetry Rag*

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**Dead Flowers**  
*A Poetry Rag*

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**GUEST EDITOR**

***Candace Loyd***

**Candace Loyd lives in Northeastern Ohio with her husband and son. She is a former Research Scientist who after being laid off due to funding chose to be a stay at home mom. She has many scientific publications but has not ventured into poetry. She is currently exploring various writing and editing opportunities to perhaps pursue a career in writing exclusively.**

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## Indifference to Poetry Statement

Indifference to poetry, by the literal meaning, would be lacking interest or apathy toward poetry, but in order to edit poetry one should enjoy it, while being somewhat removed from it. Since I have published articles in scientific journals such as the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* and *Journal of Immunology*, I will provide a very objective view to the poetry world. Critiquing works of art rather than science will be a refreshing change for me.

~Candace Loyd

## A Change in the Wildflowers (in Me)

That day I trod along the hiking trail  
amongst the decomposing chestnut leaves,  
I tasted morning mist on each inhale  
yet what I observed I did not perceive  
as anything but painted tapestry  
of bright thalassic blues and textured greens.  
Just passing by, it pleases me,  
a lovely portrait I have often seen.  
I unearthed, years since, a key to the land:  
There exists a power in the splendor  
of the sun; a wildflower meadow spanned  
with thyme and reason; only nature cures.  
Some become one with the earth when they die,  
others will join long before they will lie.

~*Samantha Spoll*

Samantha Hope Spoll is currently an undergraduate student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, studying Theatre, Political Science, and Creative Writing. She is unsure of where these interests will take her but knows that she will always be writing. She has not yet been published.

## Solicitation of a Tree

Are you the kind of tree a boy can climb  
or build a fort of twigs? Do you know  
I have a fondness for shade in the summer  
but only when the sun is robed in full  
regalia, hotter than hot, the wind losing  
itself to a stifling hand that holds back  
the wild and rambling delta breeze.

Are you the kind of tree a girl might  
engrave initials? Do you have the trunk  
for lettering inscribed ? Some trees  
are soft and forgiving, too malleable  
for the edge of a knife, they slough  
off their skin and peel like an onion.  
I need a tree with a jagged exterior,  
one whose stalk is hearty and firm.  
A name gets roots in a tree like that.

Are you the kind of tree that teases  
a swing. Will you carry long ropes  
of twine all the way to heaven?  
I need a tree to reach eternity  
raising me up then bringing me  
home again. I need a tree that cuts  
through clouds, a dependable kind  
of tree for being suspended midway  
and enabling the fluctuation of motion  
forgiving as legs the pump sky.

Are you the kind of tree that shelters  
a grave? Do you have a pillowed  
place beneath your leaves for a body  
to lie down and nestle without  
the worry of bending or swaying  
from all upheavals left undone? I need  
a tree for the afterlife, one that  
promises a branch of fruit or acorns  
ever ripened and brown. I need a tree

that lives after it dies, that never leans  
one way or the other, that stands  
erect, even when the world appears  
upside-down.

Are you the kind of tree that reads  
a poem? Will you recite the words  
of the moonlight, the images of rivers  
beneath you and the feeling of wings  
fingering through your limbs? Are you  
the kind of tree that knows you're more  
than a tree, the hum of everything,  
a symbiosis, a dwelling to hide when  
the world isn't working and all you can  
rely on is the earth's synergy  
and the splendor of a tree.

~ *Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas*

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas is a six-time Pushcart nominee and Best of the Net nominee. She has authored eight chapbooks along with her latest full-length collection of poems, *Epistemology of an Odd Girl*, newly released from March Street Press. She is a recent winner of the Red Ochre Press Chapbook competition for her manuscript *Before I Go to Sleep* and according to family lore she is a direct descendent of Robert Louis Stevenson. <http://www.clgrellaspoetry.com/>.

## The Farm...

Rust sprouts painlessly on the surface of the busted farm machines that hide in green camouflage grasses, where the damp mountain fog swallows cows and old cars.

Inhaling my loneliness like the last sheep to slaughter, my worn gloves endure the restless work as the wind sweeps the passing of time, and gentle dewdrops begin to dissolve in my mindless pond. Nature sneezes out her winds through the field; trees happily open in the rhythmic motion, the bladed grass dances to her music like large cobras swaying back and forth, hypnotizing my thoughts, jamming them into first gear.

The overnight rains have mildewed and softened my daydream, pulling me down deeper, like ants returning to their ant hill. I disappear into the farm's belly of solitude, clinging to a spark of gratefulness, looking for my rainbow, my tomorrow's sunrise.

The melting sounds of emptiness are now reflected in the far-away fields. A splotch of green here and pink freshness there, call out from the salmon berry bushes.... giant daffodil and rash weeds play under the old shading oaks, bees rest on orange butterfly weeds and the purple blackberries ripen on the vines; growing thick bones, they anchor themselves like mountain climbers tethered to the hills. I pause to listen to her one long, windy song and I reminisce..... softly as the cows ignore my presence.

~ *Harlan Wheeler*

Harlan James Wheeler Jr.: Author, Poet and Inspirational Troublemaker. Books include: *The Art and Science of Success volume 3*, and *The Gratitude Journey: from Jellyfish to Bigfoot*.

### **The thorns in your chest**

When I kissed you  
I tasted the shadows and the ghosts.  
They hid in the secret places,  
Like your shoulder blades  
And the crook of your elbow  
Where no one ever thinks to look.  
They told a different story  
Than your laugh and your smile,  
They showed the splinters  
That make up a life.  
I always thought that your eyes were crinkled  
With laughter  
But maybe it was sadness  
Maybe all along the truth was soaking  
through your skin  
like candlewax  
melting and moulding you a new face  
cracking your careful mask  
and exposing your splintered self.

~ *Rachel Brownlow*

"I am a nineteen year old creative writing student. I have just finished my first year in Galway of a four year course in creative writing. I mainly write poetry and fiction and I also have a blog which I regularly update." ~ Rachel Brownlow

## Grief's Cheshire Smile

I don't remember the first time you arrived at my bed side in the middle of the night, I recall seeing you in murky haze, lacking distinct lines that led me to believe you were never quite a being fixed to this plane. Sleep deprived, disbelieving, I went back to sleep. After that first encounter I began to feel your presence in more places than just the black corners of the house at the witching hour. I felt you steal into the depths of my head, looked for you out the corner of my eye, even with the lights on. I once felt you slither past my side, move through the air, a sigh. I should have be scared, you were drawn to me before I knew it myself. You now rest heavy on my shoulders, and watch the world with an unblinking eye.

~ *Elizabeth Bange*

Elizabeth Bange is a graduate student in the English program at Southeast Missouri State University. Her work has been previously published at *Milk Sugar Literary Journal* in October 2012.

## The Twenty First Century

The Twenty First Century lay slouched  
across the table her eyes glistening  
like the southern hemisphere lost in her  
own thoughts or perhaps trying to remember  
where she was, a tattoo of a burning monk  
twisted across her chest bone that stood  
out against a backdrop of anemia. I've had  
time between slow languid movements  
of coffee cups and cigarettes to admire her  
features, almost as real as the world  
I used to know, the broad intelligent  
forehead, long sleek nose pointing out  
towards the lesser half of infinity, lips  
a shade of red that doesn't exist yet  
and a chin line that will never fade as  
age advances. She sits up suddenly  
recites Latin America poetry by memory  
touches the scar across her forehead  
as if feeling for who was there, her eyes  
a collage of images, places I used to know  
closed down bookstores, a particular stretch  
of train track where I first felt alive  
her sister hasn't been seen for years, dead  
or forgotten, but I still have old mix tapes  
she made but nothing to play them on, and  
I think any day now she will walk back

through that door holding an old Super 8  
film camera and come straight for me

like I was the only thing left and take me  
and kiss me until I forget who I am.

~ *Stephen Moore*

Steve Moore formally studied theoretical physics and abstract mathematics, but now has no time for such nonsense. Since college, he has wandered restlessly about North America and Europe, and has lived in such disreputable places as Liverpool, England; Carrboro, North Carolina and most recently Carrollton, Georgia, where he currently resides with his family. He is a now full-time student of urban planning and father of two precocious kids.

## Just About Now

The tribe that had no  
Future tense lived without plans,  
Took crops where they grew,  
Slew whatever chanced their way,  
And saw nothing in shadow.

What was named one day  
Disappeared the next, but they  
Never knew, for each  
Day was always the same, and  
No one thought to keep records.

Each birth was new, and  
Each death was without wonder;  
Fortune meant nothing.  
“Same old, same old,” they would say –  
They who thought just about now.

~ *Michael Ritchie*

Michael Karl (Ritchie) is a Professor of English at Arkansas Tech University, where he serves as advisor to the undergraduate literary magazine, *Nebo*. He has had three small press chapbook publications and work published in various small press magazines, including *Gihon River Review*, *Margie*, and *The Arkansas Literary Forum*.

## NOT QUITE RIGHT

No pills no sleep  
No socks to warm my feet  
A garden hose down the drain  
It doesn't matter, feels all the same  
Numbing shaking freezing shaking breaking  
Is pain a feeling or lack of yearning – unknowing  
Wasted days and wasted years, remorseful yet no tears  
In my mind my brain is working never sleeping always churning  
Spilling over filling void, quashing all perceived as golden  
Friends want answers none is given – shop is closing up  
Detrimental deleterious deteriorating, darkness near  
Feeling no gratitude as tears of sand abandons me  
Burn all my bridges with a hellish fire scorn  
Darkened paths I see, my back is turned  
The twisted roads that led me here  
Fires of old are luring ahead  
The verdict is forthcoming  
Oh go gently please  
On brittle knees  
I wait

~ *Patrick Stahlman*

I am not a poet, nor a writer. Although I have been writing poetry for many years, this was my first submission. I didn't even know they existed until I read about this one on Tumblr (thank you jayarrarr). I'm currently experiencing a jumping-up-and-down-from-excitement-kind-of-moment! More of me and my poetry at [poetry.pstahlman.com](http://poetry.pstahlman.com).

## THEY SAY STARING IS RUDE

I'm studying the shape of your mouth  
I'm wondering if your lips  
are as soft as they look  
and I wonder if I could  
figure out why your jaw line is wired  
shut and your stare is hard  
and almost cold but not quite  
and why you looked past  
me and did not return my stare  
but studied the air around me instead  
and I wonder why you frowned  
at the landscape behind me  
maybe because a stranger noticed  
all those things about you in a  
stare that was not even returned  
how a stranger took a peek at  
what made you you and figured  
out all those things in one glance  
and now knows more about you  
than anyone you think you know  
They say staring is rude  
you could at least give me the  
satisfaction of unyielding perception  
by returning my gaze instead  
of feeling invaded and defensive  
at least accept the judgement as  
honest and real and how a stranger  
could know all this and more  
and accept it too in one  
unreciprocated  
gander.

~ *Carmen Ghdaye*

Carmen Ghdaye thinks in unstrung lyrics to misplaced melodies. Enjoys staring at strangers on the public transit, not answering her phone, and brooding over various cumbersome predicaments.

## Remembering

“Remember me” – past whispers in my ear  
Echoes from the blackness of sleep

From a time when I was down  
And out and reeling face

Flush with niacin warmth  
And youth, once blossoming –withering now

older with each step with each mile  
Traveled in the desert

Four months, four thousand miles  
thorny steps and restless sleep

seeded restless days  
In which I yearned for

A drop  
Of water.

Time falls  
petals in the sand

obelisk rising out in the desert air  
Greenery and water

new spring  
a new body

different source of heat  
bristling with thorns, I rose

to find her, to touch her,  
and draw nourishment

from moisture of sweat  
nectar of passion

petals bloomed  
Rosy lovers embraced here

~ *Hugo Rodriguez*

Hugo Esteban Rodriguez is Mexican born, but raised in the two sides of the Rio Grande river. He currently resides in Houston, Texas, where he's working for his MFA in Creative Writing through the University of Texas - El Paso.

## Behind the Choices

The selections I have picked for this issue of the publication have been chosen for a variety of reasons. All of the poems chosen were well written, complete works. The poems tell a story and are relatively easy for the reader to understand without having to over think. I have taken a more literal approach in interpretation of the works presented, not to say there isn't more than a few ways a poem can be felt or interpreted. "A Change in the Wildflowers (in me)" evokes a warm familiar feeling that we may have all thought or felt at one time perhaps contemplating our own existence. "Solicitation of a Tree" is a fairly obvious poem, with the duality of the tree being seen with characteristics that are not unlike human qualities. "The Farm": I felt this author really grabbed the essence of what being on a farm is like from a distant memory perspective; I am sure a poem written from an everyday-working-on-the-farm perspective would vary drastically. "Grief's Cheshire Smile" addresses the stages of grief in quite a literal, non-emotional sense, which is interesting. "The Twenty First Century" makes you think about history today, and how we feel about ourselves in society and the world, and how it all relates. "Just About Now": I have the impression this poem is talking about society today, our role as humans and our desensitization to the world around us. "They Say Staring is Rude": I like the way this poem plays between being two people and someone looking in the mirror at their own reflection and contemplating it. "The Thorns in Your Chest" addresses the different facets to a person, and perhaps you do not know people as well as you thought. "Not Quite Right," to me, deals with depression and regret and that feeling of despair. "Remembering" alludes to a person once in love, getting lost, hurt and again finding new love. ... Since I am not an expert in poetry this is my interpretation of these works and what has led me to choose them for publication.

~Candace Loyd