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(formerly Kansas Quarterly)

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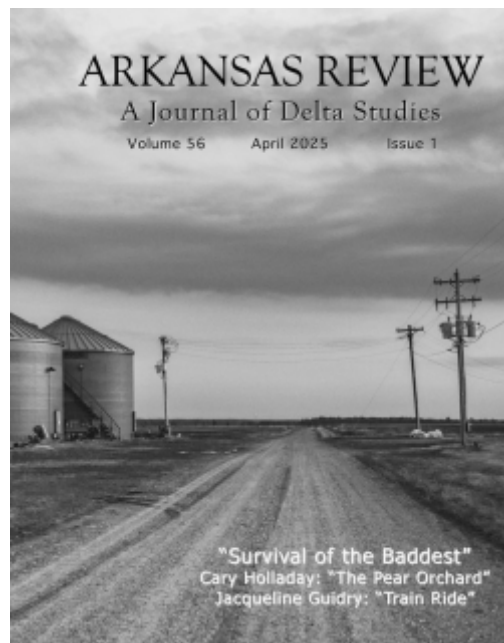
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Correction: This year, the Spring/April 2025 issue (Arkansas Review Volume 56, Issue 1) was mailed with an incorrect issue number misprinted on the front cover (incorrectly printed as Issue 3). Although the correct issue number is listed on the table of contents page, we sincerely regret the error! The correct version of the front cover appears below and has been updated on our website at arkreview.org.



Contributors

Michael A. Antonucci is Professor Emeritus at Keene State College, where he taught courses on Black literature and culture. His monograph *Understanding Michael S. Harper* is available from U of South Carolina P. He is coeditor of the collection of interviews with Michael Harper forthcoming from UP of Mississippi.

Kerri L. Bennett, PhD, is an Instructor of English at Arkansas State University, where she teaches Freshman Composition, World Literature, and Heritage Studies Research Seminar. She has co-edited the last four editions of A-State's first-year writing textbook, the newest of which is *First-Year Composition@Arkansas State University: Writing with the Pack*. She holds an MA in English from Arkansas State, an MAT from the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and a PhD from Arkansas State. Her research interests are in Nineteenth-Century British Literature, Women Writers, First-Year Writing, and Multimodal Composition.

CL Bledsoe is the author of more than thirty books, including *Riceland* and *Having a Baby to Save a Marriage*. Raised on a rice and catfish farm in eastern Arkansas, Bledsoe lives in northern Virginia with his daughter.

Michael Copperman's work has appeared in *The Oxford-American*, *Guernica*, *The Sun*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Boston Review*, *Salon*, *Gulf Coast*, *Triquarterly*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Copper Nickel*, among others, and has won awards and garnered fellowships from the Munster Literature Center, Breadloaf Writers Conference, Oregon Literary Arts, and the Oregon Arts Commission. His memoir *Teacher: Two Years in the Mississippi Delta* (UP of Mississippi, 2017), about the rural black public schools of the Mississippi Delta, was a finalist for the 2018 Oregon Book Award in CNF. His next book, *Seeking Eden*, about the extremes of the American subculture of wrestling as seen through the story of five-time national champion Kenny Cox's pilgrimage into the Na Pali jungle, is forthcoming in the Fall of 2026 from U of Iowa P.

William Van (Bill) Davidson holds degrees from Rhodes College (BA Political Science 1962), the University of Memphis (MA Geography 1967), and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (PhD Geography 1972). Since 1965 he has conducted field research as a historical-cultural geographer among the minority cultures of Yucatán and Central America, especially in Honduras. He has served as geography editor of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* at the Library of Congress and is the author of numerous works on the ethnogeography and ethnohistory of Central America and the Caribbean. Retired from the faculty of the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, he and wife Sharon Solomito live in Memphis, Tennessee.

Tim DeJong currently lives in central Texas but is originally from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He has poems published or forthcoming in *Waxwing*, *Image*, *Rattle*, *The Penn Review*, *Modern Language Studies*, and other journals. His poetry has been nominated for two Pushcart Prizes. His website is timothydejong.com

Katherine Kallas is a writer and artist based in Kansas City, Missouri. Her work investigates how memories are constructed and reimagined, exploring themes of nostalgia and home-coming. Her writing has recently been published in *Spires Journal* and *Contemporary Verse 2*. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

Murali Kamma is the author of *Not Native: Short Stories of Immigrant Life in an In-Between World* (Wising Up P), which won an Independent Publisher Book Award. A graduate of the University at Buffalo and Loyola College, India, he's the managing editor of *Khabar*, an Atlanta-based magazine in English. His fiction has appeared in *Havik*, *Evening Street Review*, *Rosebud*, *BigCityLit*, *Apple Valley Review*, and other journals. He has interviewed, among others, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, William Dalrymple, Amitav Ghosh, and Pico Iyer. His fiction has also been published in anthologies like *The Best Asian Short Stories*.

R.M. Kinder is the author of three collections of short fiction and two novels: *A Common Person and Other Stories* (Richard Sullivan Award U of Notre Dame 2021); *A Near Perfect Gift* (U of Michigan Literary Fiction Award 2005); *Sweet Angel Band* (Helicon Nine Willa Cather Award 1991); *An Absolute Gentleman* (Counterpoint 2007); and *The Universe Playing Strings* (U of N Mexico P 2016). Her stories and poems have appeared in numerous literary magazines, including *Descant*, *Southern Humanity Review*, *Arts and Letters*, most recently in *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, and is forthcoming in *Main Street Rag*.

Taylor Orgeron is a native of Louisiana who resides in Oklahoma as Associate Professor of English in the Department of Language & Literature at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Her research and teaching interests include first-year composition, digital/multimedia writing, and game studies. Her other work can be found in *The Ethics of Playing, Researching, and Teaching Games in the Writing Classroom* and *Emerging Genres: New Formations of Games*.

Glenda S. Pliler is a poet, essayist, and author whose work has appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Wittenberg Door*, and elsewhere. Her poetry collection *The Agony of Intimacy* explores the evolution of love and human connection. Originally from Missouri, she now lives and writes in Florida.

Joseph Thomas is a graduate student studying creative writing at the University of Louisville. His work has appeared in the *Equinox Literary Magazine*, *The Laurel Review*, *Necessary Fiction*, and *Nebo: A Literary Journal*. He holds a BA in English—Creative Writing from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and he is currently working on a short story collection taking place in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Marcus Charles Tribbett is General Editor of *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies* and Associate Professor of English at Arkansas State University, where he also teaches for the interdisciplinary Heritage Studies doctoral program. He has published scholarly work on classic and contemporary blues performers, on a nineteenth-century slave narrative, and on contemporary novels by Jessmyn Ward and Tupelo Hassman. His most recent work, an essay on New Orleans bluesman Mem Shannon, appeared in *Voices and Visions: Essays on New Orleans's Literary History*, edited by Nancy Dixon and Leslie Petty (UP of Mississippi, 2025).

Arkansas Review 56.2 (August 2025)

Four Poems

By Katherine Kallas

Off 8th Street

Memory is a place shattered by wind
Its pieces swept up into god's dustpan
and dumped in the Mississippi River

The water is murky here, on the tilted shore off 8th street

Frogs with full lungs, as bulbous as onions
Cicadas scream in high-pitched static
Dragonflies hitch on the water's surface
wisps of neon blue thread stitch a map
of someone with hair as long as tallgrass
With eyes that hang low
as the branches of a live oak

My boots sink in the mud bruising earth
I pack purple into the collarbones of the bank
Cast my line into the mouth of my reflection
and fish for something fat and familiar

Nest

Memory: something orange, like the glass beads in Jenna's kitchen windows that separate me from a cloud-coated sky. My therapist tells me: settle into your body, try to find it again. How to find home in something lanky and unending? Burrow in a stomach made of silk and a head stuffed with steel wool.

I wish I could build myself a nest like the sandhill cranes on the shores of the Missouri River. With hearths full of blooming milkweed, burgundy flickering through the sedges. Beds cushioned with ferns and cattails, a muscular roof – a mother's copper wingspan.

Instead, I hoard loose fibers and margarita straws, trying to construct safety in this body. To pack it full of lace and optimism, and fly to a lighter place.

Audrey's House

Cicadas are Audrey's birthday month bug
and sometimes if I close my eyes and believe too much
I can hear them way down in December

I watch girls drive dirt bikes through wiry grass
Churning up dust – all the dead things are alive again
resurrecting the dusty parts of me that July sun dried out

I fear the world spins too fast for me and that I'll be left
floating on my back in an above-ground pool
somewhere Arkansas

So tonight,
I toast to imperfections
and with grapefruit on my tongue
I raise a glass to late August bitterness

American Flag Chest Piece

Points of contact at the ankle and nose, hook onto each other for stability.
It's Tornado Alley outside.
I am patriotic when it comes to him.
Light roman candles, we watch the birth of several large stars.
I crawl under his skin, like an American flag chest piece.

Anita says I need to – Grow and learn to yell.
Louder than the static which hovers above fields of tall grass.
Balls of anxiety, mosquitos dart through the air looking for someone sweeter.
"Never settle."

Red freckled shoulders, houses he constructs in the air, "when we . . ."
Talk of mountains, and toddlers, and porch swings, and balding.
Anita calls me for dinner. Her voice pierces the air, like the sharp salutes from paper bombs
exploding on the driveway.
I march in blue boots all the way home

Delta Sources and Resources

The University of Arkansas
Virtual Museum
Online Resource
<http://sdc.cast.uark.edu>
by Marcus Charles Tribbett

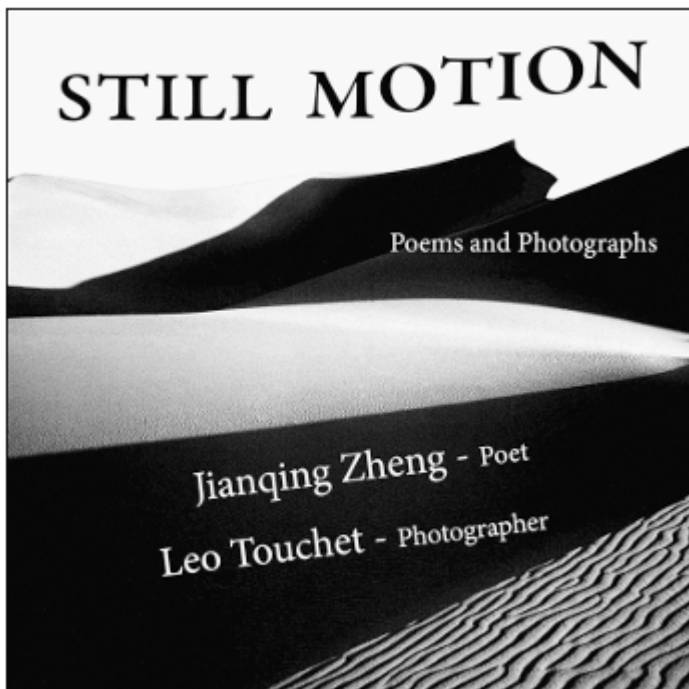
The University of Arkansas Virtual Museum is an online project jointly created and maintained by the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies (CAST) that features a number of 3D models of artifacts from the collections of the Arkansas Archaeological Survey (ARAS) and the University of Arkansas Museum. Some 210 artifacts, cataloged by year of acquisition and number (Accession Number), have been digitized and are viewable and manipulable in the Gallery section of the website. The virtual museum is of interest mainly to archaeology researchers, teachers, and aficionados who wish to virtually examine clay pots, tools, and artwork of the indigenous cultures of the region, particularly the Mississippian (with representative samples of Carden Bottoms Phase pottery and other Caddoan finds, for example). However, there are also some artifacts that represent paleo-historical cultures as well as some much more recent material culture. The object viewer allows users to adjust lighting, fully rotate the object to observe from all angles, zoom in and out, and find measurements. The surface layer of the digital scan can also be removed so that details emerge that may be obscured by the original coloration and decoration or the discoloration and degradation caused by time and damage: incised and carved marks on some objects are thus more easily seen. One drawback to the site is the minimal description of the artifacts. However, multiple searchable fields from a pulldown menu for each entry do provide some historical and cultural context. Following a brief descriptive name, each entry has a field for "Cultural Affiliation," "Geographical Region," "Time Range," and "Repository." For instance, item number 1927-5-37 is a "Bottle, teapot, Ceramic" from the Carden Bottoms Phase in the Arkansas River Valley circa AD 1500-1700 and held by the UA museum. The collection can be filtered by these fields as well. One caveat: not all fields are complete for every artifact. Still, there is enough summary information for most entries for the feature to be useful. An advantage of the virtual museum is that many of the indigenous artifacts included have been repatriated to descendant communities and are displayed on the website by permission of these descendant groups. By making them available virtually, professional and amateur researchers may centrally view objects of initial interest that otherwise could be difficult to examine without travel and permission to see them. In times of shrinking research and travel budgets, this benefit is especially important. While the project is in its early stages, the website briefly discusses planned expansions to the virtual museum, such as adding additional pages with more contextual information and linking newly scanned objects to specific projects and educational initiatives. While by no means a

vast database at this point, the Virtual Museum shows great promise for future growth. Even at its current modest size, researchers and teachers will find value in the resource. Let us hope it continues to expand.

Reviews

Still Motion: Poems and Photo-graphs. By Jianqing Zheng & Leo Touchet. Photo Circle Press, 2025. Pp. 62, \$15, paperback)

John Berger opens *Ways of Seeing* by asserting that “Seeing comes before words.” Explaining his claim, he writes, “The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.” Continuing his influential collection of exploratory essays on sight, reception, and visual art, Berger identifies “another sense in which seeing comes before words,” stating that “it is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.” Written with clarity, strength, and direction, throughout its fifty-plus years in print, *Ways of Seeing* has remained relevant for changing audiences, over time. For example, Berger cites René Magritte’s painting *The Key of Dreams* to illustrate what he describes as the “always-present gap between words and seeing.” To establish the foundations of his volume’s argument at the end of chapter one, he declares, “our vision is continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are” (www.ways-of-seeing.com/ch1). In *Still Motion* Jianqing Zheng and Leo Touchet assemble ekphrastic poetry and photographic images that speak back to the dialogue that emerges from *Ways of Seeing*. With the interplay between Zheng’s poems and Touchet’s photographs bridging the “gap between words and



seeing,” this collaborative, interdisciplinary volume arrives as a contemporary conversational partner for Berger’s celebrated study, delivering a collection of stark images and stunning imagery. At the outset of *Still Motion*, Zheng provides a description of the poetic project his contributions to the collection pursue by writing, “I was fascinated with Leo’s black-and-white dune photographs when I received *Duet*, a collection of photos and poems by Leo and his wife Liz.” Continuing, the poet praises Touchet’s work with sand dunes in *Chasing Shadows*. He explains that the images in this collection have not only shaped *Still Motion* but informed his own sense of how ekphrasis works. Zheng writes “ekphratic writing is not a retelling of what we see in artwork,” before suggesting that, instead, “it concerns an interaction of the senses,” and arrives as “a creation from the original art.” Outlining these perspectives, Zheng explores the writing process he pursues in the twenty-five poems that he’s prepared for the volume.

Observing that the “beautiful shapes” in Touchet’s photographs are “made effective by light and shadow,” the poet states that they “in- spire” his verse in the collection. Zheng explains that the connection between his “ekphrastic po- etry” and Touchet’s images in the volume repre- sent “experiments with imagination, language and synesthesia.” Touchet extends the scope of these claims in the introduction/project state- ment that he contributes to *Still Motion*. Aware of the appreciation that the poet has for his im- ages, the photographer writes, “Jianqing was fas- cinated with my photos of sand dunes and later reviewed my book *Chasing Shadows*. He later trav- eled West to see the dunes himself.” Touchet rec- ognizes that by going to the dunes, Zheng gained insight about their ceaseless reconfiguration and never-ending engagement with light and shadow. The photographer remarks that, in this way, the poet came to discover, just as he had, that “the only time that you can photograph the dunes is during the first and last half hours of the day when the sun is low and causing shadows.” The sensibility arising from this dialogue in- forms the distinct interplay between the poetry and photographs in *Still Motion*. Connecting both artists’ work, sky and wind shape their words and images, as the volume delivers its ad- dress to light and land. Offering their observa- tions of the delicate, incremental study in structure and process that are the dunes, Zheng and Touchet establish the terms of their conver- sation about space, time, and motion. With their work conveying this rarified, nearly precious qual- ity, speaking to sand whispers and shadow si- lence, poet and photographer capture both emergence and closure, as the raw and the re- fined converge in sifting images. The poems and photographs in *Still Motion* turn and shift, undu- late and interface, moving along and across the page, capturing possibilities for exchange be- tween line and word, black and white, presence and absence. In this way, *Still Motion* explores intersections where sight constructs meaning and appearance assembles perception in the two artists’ work. The titles of Zheng’s poems—“A Way of Seeing,” “Questions from Seeing,” “Juxtaposition,” “See- ing Shadows,” and “Sight to Sight,” among others—respond to Touchet’s images of the Mes- quite Flats Sand Dunes and Eureka Valley Dunes of the Death Valley National Park in California as well as the Monahas Sand Hills State Park of Texas. For example, in “The Visual Chord,” Zheng bends line and sound into a multi-dimen- sional, ekphrastic reflection. Observing, collect- ing, and re-assembling elements of a Touchet Mesquite Flats Dunes photograph, the poem renders a complex, layered, mirror of the photo- grapher’s sun-and-shadow emulsion. These impulses become fully evident in the opening stanza of “The Visual Chord.”

Situating himself in relation to an evocative photo of sand, shadow, and light taken by Touchet in Death Val- ley National Park, the poet proclaims, The beguiling light and shade form variant images out of dunes to allure you to grab pic- tures and exclaim delightful surprises. When light slides away and you are on your way to the tent, shade expands inch by inch into an oblong image unexpected and awesome again to the eye. (p. 17) Zheng, thereby, brings his poet and his readers into the photograph, conducting an image-driven translation project through his verse in *Still Mo- tion*. Transposing the “perception of an image” into “poetic imagery,” the poet brings his readers into the extended conversation he conducts with Basho over the course of the volume. Zheng en- gages the Japanese master’s hybrid, haibun form in “The Visual Chord,” moving the poem to its conclusion with a traditional, three-line haiku

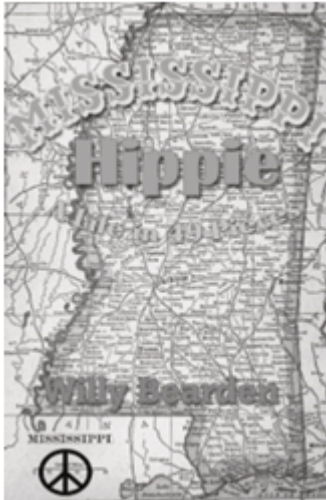
that reads, stranded on a beach a humpback whale in desperate silence. (p. 17) In this way, throughout *Still Motion*, the poet speaks both to and from Touchet's photographic imagery. Zheng's variations on haiku, renga, and haibun progressions serve as the medium for sight and sound, along with word and image, to mirror each other. Within their volume, Zheng and Touchet excavate and enter the lived moment. Their collaborative exchange brings audiences into a deep, full, and immediate contact with the possibility and promise that arrive in their imagistic encounters with place and perception. As the poems and photographs in the volume span these spaces, they bridge what Berger describes in *Ways of Seeing* as the "always present gap between words and seeing." Throughout *Still Motion*, Zheng and Touchet open eyes, effectively illustrating Berger's contention that "our vision is continually moving," changing and illustrating its capacities, "constituting what is present to us as we are."

--Michael A. Antonucci

Mississippi Hippie, A Life in 49 Pieces. By Willy Bearden. (Deep Delta Publishing, 2024. Pp. 286, \$34.95, hardcover)

In the rural South, boys named "William" at birth are normally called "Billy" shortly thereafter. A few of them, later on, become labeled "Willie/Willy." By high school, almost all of these people have outgrown "Billy/Willy" and have become "just plain Bill." Not many adults remain "Willy." Of course, there is the obvious exception of the famous Willie Nelson . . . and our author here. This memoir is by a well-known Memphis personality who has proven himself quite successful in his chosen enterprises. He has focused mostly on historical Memphis, in his publications and photographs, in several heavily-viewed documentary films, in organizing the University of Memphis symposia on the Delta, and general public relations. His accomplishments might be surprising given the life he describes in 49 non-chronological vignettes. He grew up in Rolling Fork, a village in the lower part of the so-called "Mississippi Delta." The portrait he paints of the place, and his life there, is not pretty, but perhaps insightful of small town life in the American South, and especially the Mississippi Delta, during the last half of the twentieth century. His father participated in the local "society of alcoholism," ("a beautiful pack of alcoholics"), his mother toiled hours daily "on her feet" in a beauty shop, he was a poor student who learned to read late and who, embarrassingly, had to repeat the seventh grade. At a young age, around the pool hall, roadhouses, and juke joints he learned all of the raw, crude clichés of Southern dialect. Growing up, his victories were few, but he did manage to tackle Archie Manning in a high school football game. Bearden especially likes storytelling and *Mississippi Hippie* is his story, "his truth," that he hopes might enlighten and inspire others. His prose shines when he talks about some of the "characters" in Rolling Fork. These include his uncle "Doc," Sheriff Tarleton, and the longtime jailer. Following his mother's guidance to become

literate, the author's life took on new meaning. He became an avid reader and eventually, he becomes a devotee of "Mr. Billy" Faulkner. That didn't mean his life was always smooth thereafter. His early love of music led to time in local bands, to a Hippie sub-culture of "sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll," then on to serious long-distance hitchhiking, and just "hanging out" with a few friends.



Along the way, Willy found that he could not accept the stereotypical attitudes of his town folk. On race: Probably because of his early friendships with black kids, he wasn't racist. On war: The anti-Vietnam protester of the 1970s finds that "I am more anti-war now than I was in my 20s." On religion: By his fourteenth year, Willy had shed his Episcopal/Baptist upbringing and found that he "had little use for church." His philosophical summation is simple: "be nice, or leave." Like many from the Delta, after high school he made his way to Memphis. He saw in Rolling Fork, as in other Delta towns, "the slow and painful death that has lasted more than fifty years" and realized that he had to leave. At the end of his senior year in high school he drove to the mental institution outside of Jackson to see his father and left Rolling Fork. He tried a junior college and Ole Miss for less than a semester, before returning to Memphis and a few odd jobs: wholesale liquor deliveries, sold old tires (at least tried to), became an ordained "minister," and eventually got a job with Motion Picture Laboratory where he, after years, learned the film-making trade. One clear intent of this collection of recollections is to thank all the people who played a role in his life. In his first chapter, "The Book of the Dead," he writes that since his eleventh birthday he "kept a list of everyone I knew who had died." In his last chapter ("Memorial Day"), he explains that "a person doesn't die, for the second and final time, until their name is last said." Then follows a radically-innovative ending to a book: he writes the names of 370 deceased people who he remembers. He wants dearly to credit others for his successes. But while I do not know the author, I see it differently. I am more inclined to believe that he is one of those few who succeed on their own, from their own inner strength. Bearden reeks of "tha Delta," and loves the notion of that "place." Fifty years after high school, he returned to buy a house in Rolling Fork where he penned this memoir. Perhaps he still wants to be called "Willy" because it keeps him attached to his Delta deep roots. For those interested in "Delta studies" this book is a valuable contribution—to understand life at both personal and community scales.

--William V. (Bill) Davidson

