

From the Poetry Editor

One morning I walked downstairs to find a small flood occupying my kitchen. There was a ripple in the water's surface, only an inch or so deep, and I noticed a tiny, dark green frog flopping along in the wet and mess. Two things occurred in that moment of recognition: I was in awe of those miniature legs propelling that perfect little amphibian body around a domestic pond that should not exist, and I let out a rather satisfying long sigh. The realization was easy—some little disasters are miraculous. There was no reason for the water, or for the frog, but here they both were, as natural and quiet as if they had belonged in that space from the beginning.

Poems happen to me in much the same way. I will read a few lines, maybe sit with a title for several moments, and suddenly I am ankle-deep in a spilt well, unexpected, but necessary all the same. Good poems announce faith in their reader. They speak to us from their weird pools on the page, telling us to wait, to be still, to look closer at what bodies might be leaving spells or salve. Poems refuse our walking away, our potential frustrations. By some magic left on the page, swishing about, the poet is saving us from drowning by insisting that we learn, now and always, to rest surface-to-bottom in stanzas, in these carefully worded waterways. Great poems demand that their readers pull open the strings tightly pulled around this or that bag of intention, and spill the contents to the ground, flood or none.

In selecting poems for this issue I noticed a theme quickly emerging. In their own unique fashion, each poem offers a sense of fluidity akin to both actual water and to that wonderful subconscious flow of dreams and longing. Even in humor (spiders and awkward dinner conversation), and in grief (death and unrequited love), the poems ask us to travel a river of sorts, stopping carefully and quickly to admire changing shores and banks. Dick Bentley's "In the Rain: Lake Superior" gives us water as movement, as dance performed for and by

the swimmer, and for everything waiting beneath the waves. In “Learning to Paddle a Canoe,” Karen Hildebrand shows us that communion happens in the simplest actions, and often in the quietest spaces. Robert Kendrick explains in “Looking at Six Mile Creek” how water serves as conduit for memory. Each poet in this issue asks us to have faith that the journey down, and up, these figurative water-paths will grant us needed change.

Poetry always requires a leap unlike any suggested by prose or essay. Poems demand that we see miniscule frogs, caught in their own dance, sharing our private spaces, as living metaphors. The poems in this issue are salty fish. They are sleek fins and scales reflecting the best light on the calmest days. They populate that deep space where we know curious creatures are waiting for us to see them, brave, and as they are.

—Kelli Allen