

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES AND COMMENTARIES

DAVID BAKER is author of ten books of poetry, recently *Never-Ending Birds* (Norton, 2009), winner of the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize, and four books of critical prose. He holds the Thomas B. Fordham Chair at Denison University, in Granville, Ohio, and is poetry editor of the *Kenyon Review*.

“My three poems, written over a span of many years, take place in southern and central Ohio from Granville to Gallipolis to the area south of Buckeye Lake. Each is a portrait of a person, a community, the wildlife, or landscape here where I’ve lived now for nearly thirty years.”

IVARS BALKITS received an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Ohio Arts Council in 1999. His works have been published in various literary magazines and anthologies, including *I Have My Own Song for It: Modern Poems of Ohio* (University of Akron Press, 2002).

“‘Box’ is a record of my impressions of the tiny structures abandoned in fields and woods in my part of southern Ohio. Fascinated with the decay and manner of falling apart of these many outbuildings, I thought also of those who might have once inhabited or used them.”

ROY BENTLEY has won awards from the NEA, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, and the Ohio Arts Council. *The Trouble with a Short Horse in Montana* won the White Pine Poetry Prize in 2005. *Starlight Taxi* won the 2012 Blue Lynx Prize for Poetry.

“I was born at Good Samaritan Hospital in Dayton. The people in these poems—my grandmother Bentley, Granny Potter, and my uncle Bill Potter—saw Montgomery County as a destination of both promise and possibility. Nonetheless, they carried home with them and seemed always to have one foot firmly planted, so to speak, across the Ohio River in their native Kentucky.”

DON BOGEN is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *An Algebra* (University of Chicago Press, 2009). Nathaniel Ropes Professor of English

and Comparative Literature at the University of Cincinnati, he serves as poetry editor of the *Cincinnati Review*. His website is www.donbogen.com.

"I suppose 'A Ride' is dated by the reference to videotape and the fact that our children are now adults, but its focus on the seemingly unchanging cycles along the Ohio River is still relevant. In 'Cardinals,' it seemed appropriate to capture the state bird's own daily cycles in haiku."

TANYA BOMSTA is currently a graduate student at Marshall University in West Virginia, where she studies English and teaches composition. She enjoys writing creative nonfiction and plans to pursue a doctoral degree in English.

"Portsmouth, Ohio, is small city located on the banks of the Ohio River. Portsmouth has its share of troubles, but it is a unique and memorable place that reflects the buoyant spirit of Appalachian Ohio. About that place, I offer this nonfiction work."

JEANNE BRYNER was born in Appalachia, and much of her writing deals with straddling two landscapes. She has received awards and fellowships for her fiction and poetry. A practicing registered nurse and author of seven books, she and her husband live near a dairy farm.

"Appalachian Ohio reminds me of home: speech patterns of folks, rolling hills and winding roads, sheets drying on clotheslines and small towns peeking through spaces between weathered barns. The people who live in my poems and stories also live here mindful of rainfall and harvest. They still wave at strangers."

MICHELLE Y. BURKE is the author of the poetry chapbook *Horse Loquela*. Her poems have appeared in *Lake Effect*, *New Orleans Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Fiddleback*, *Waccamaw*, and elsewhere. She lives in Cincinnati.

"I've done two stints of graduate school in Ohio. In order to stay sane while studying, I took horseback riding lessons and worked at a local farm. These poems come from those experiences."

A native Ohioan, CHRISTOPHER CITRO has a BA from Ohio University and an MFA from Indiana University. His poems have appeared in *Salamander*, *Cream City Review*, *Southeast Review*, *Poetry East*, the *Cincinnati*

Review, Verse Daily, and elsewhere. In 2006, he won the Langston Hughes Creative Writing Award for Poetry.

"I first encountered the rolling hills of southeastern Ohio while a student in Athens. I return to the area often, visiting my brother's farm near the village of Scio (pop. 800) with its derelict pottery factory, and living and writing in an apartment above Main Street there in 2011."

ED DAVIS is the author of the novels *I Was So Much Older Than* (Disc-Us Books, 2001) and *The Measure of Everything* (Plain View Press, 2005), as well as many published stories and poems. He lives in the village of Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he bikes, hikes, blogs and meditates.

"Food, religion, extended family, insiders and outsiders, and a surprising offer from a desperate widower: I tried to create a boiling Appalachian stew in this chapter from a novel in progress."

CATHRYN ESSINGER is the author of three volumes of poetry—*A Desk in the Elephant House*, *My Dog Does Not Read Plato*, and *What I Know about Innocence*. She is a member of the Greenville Poets and a retired professor of English. She is currently teaching poetry workshops at the Antioch Writers Workshop and at Wright State University.

"I've always loved the natural landscape of Appalachian Ohio, especially those intersections where towns and farmland lead into woods and creek beds—those 'just around the corner' places that are mostly hidden even from the country roads. In these poems, I talk to nature, and sometimes, if I'm lucky, she talks back in a magical sort of way."

The poems of DAVID LEE GARRISON have appeared in *Connecticut Review*, *Poem*, and *Rattle*; they have also been read on *The Writer's Almanac* by Garrison Keillor and featured by Ted Kooser on *American Life in Poetry*. His new book is *Playing Bach in the DC Metro*.

"My grandmother grew up in the Baptist tradition of southern Ohio, and 'Folding Tables and Five-Card Stud' stems from memories of her and stories she told me. In 'Every River on Earth,' the Amish tradition provides the starting point for some reflections on time. 'Route 4' resulted from a trip I took from Dayton to Sandusky on that two-lane highway. If Ohio is 'the heart of it all,' Route 4 is the aorta."

RON GILES was raised in New Boston, Ohio. During his career in television, he was awarded seven regional Emmys and was part of the original QVC management team. With three books under his belt, he is working on a fourth. Ron is a baritone soloist, a Kentucky Colonel, and has a Star on the Portsmouth Floodwall.

“It is 1955, in New Boston, Ohio. The Detroit Steel mill is pumping prosperity into the region. Teenagers from all around drive polished cars with lancer hub-caps and curb feelers to the Steelworker’s Hall on Gallia Street to bop and stroll at the Friday night dance. An inexperienced thirteen-year-old boy, who can’t bop, is there as well in this nonfiction piece.”

BENJAMIN S. GROSSBERG’s books are *Space Traveler* (University of Tampa Press, 2014); *Sweet Core Orchard* (University of Tampa Press, 2009), winner of the 2008 Tampa Review Prize and a Lambda Literary Award; and *Underwater Lengths in a Single Breath* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2007).

“These poems follow my move from a Yellow Springs apartment to a small farm, where I planted an orchard. Taken together, they suggest why Ohio displaced New Jersey—where I was born—as the place where I say I’m from: the fellowship I found there with the people and landscape.”

RICHARD HAGUE has lived in Ohio all his life. Of his fourteen books, the most recent of which is *Learning How: Stories, Yarns & Tales* (Bottom Dog Press, 2011), many are set in eastern and southern Ohio. *Alive in Hard Country* was the 2003 Poetry Book of the Year of the Appalachian Writers Association.

“Along the waterways of southern Ohio, the sycamore is the most striking tree, often leaning far out over the water, its thick roots gripping the bank. The following nonfiction was prompted by sycamores, which may be the largest living things in Ohio. Wherever, they are a wonder. Even in the city.”

MICHAEL HENSON’s collection of stories *The Way the World Is: The Maggie Boylan Stories* recently won the Brighthorse Prize in short fiction. This collection, which includes “Coming Home,” is to be published by Brighthorse Books. Henson is author of three previous books of fiction and four collections of poetry. He lives in Cincinnati.

“Appalachian Ohio has been hit hard with an epidemic of opiate addiction. OxyContin, methadone, heroin, and other chemicals have wrecked lives in both

urban and rural parts of the region. This fictional story tells of one woman's start at a rocky recovery."

A recent Wright State University graduate, HAYLEY HUGHES has participated in numerous professional creative nonfiction workshops and conferences across the country. She's been published in the *Fogdog Review*, *Cobalt*, the *Eunoia Review*, and *Proteus*. Hayley's essay "Filling the Void" was recently nominated for the 2012 *Best of the Net Anthology*.

"This nonfiction, 'The Fair,' explores how annual trips to the Ohio State Fair shaped how I perceive summer, but on a deeper level, attempts to explain my feelings about the Midwest itself as someone who deeply loves the place she comes from while also feeling compelled to leave."

Originally from Zanesville, Ohio, MARK ALLEN JENKINS completed an MFA at Bowling Green State University and is currently a PhD student at the University of Texas at Dallas, where he serves as assistant editor for *Reunion: The Dallas Review*. His poetry has appeared in *Memorious*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Muse & Stone*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

"Living away from Zanesville for nearly ten years makes me appreciate its varied history more than when I lived there, and like James Wright, I've started to write about it from afar with a mixture of empathy and nostalgia."

CHRISTINA JONES is an MA candidate at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, studying English/creative fiction writing. She received her BA in English at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, Ohio. She has been previously published in journals such as *Rubbertop Review*, *Quarter After*, and Shawnee State University's *Silhouette* and *Tapestries*.

"Inspired by the beauty of the natural surroundings and the harsh oppression of a failing economy, this fictional story, 'The Last Shot,' tells of a southern Ohio man who encapsulates a culture of people struggling between life-altering moral choices and survival on a daily basis."

JENNIFER SCHOMBURG KANKE is a PhD candidate in English at Florida State University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Pleiades*, the *Laurel Review*, and *Fugue*. Formerly an editor of *Quarter after Eight*, she currently serves as poetry editor for the *Southeast Review*.

“Even though I grew up in Columbus, the hills always seemed like home. When I moved to Athens County in 1993, I thought it was a temporary thing. Seventeen years and thirteen acres later, this poem was born.”

DIANE KENDIG’s latest chapbook is *The Places We Find Ourselves*. Previous poetry chapbooks include *A Tunnel of Flute Song* and *Greatest Hits 1978–2000*. Recently her poems have appeared in anthologies by New York University, Mayapple, Red Hen, and Bottom Dog Presses. You can find out more about her work at dianekendig.com.

“I am indebted for this poem to Jim Gorman, who, leading a workshop at the 1999 James Wright Festival, pointed us to Wright’s ‘Written on a Big Cheap Postcard from Verona’ and handed us . . . a big cheap postcard space to write in.”

BECCA J. R. LACHMAN teaches and tutors writing at Ohio University. She is a grateful graduate of the Bennington Writing Seminars (MFA) and the Ohio University Creative Writing Department (MA). Her first book of poems, *The Apple Speaks*, is available from Cascadia Publishing House.

“I only discovered the unadulterated version of Athens, Ohio, after marrying an ‘Athenian’ after graduate school. Having lived here for nearly a decade, I am constantly amazed by the area’s identity, historical clout, and overall hutzpah. ‘Tourist Brochure for Athens, Ohio’ personifies the Appalachian foothills/party school/ghost-hunting hotspot/locavore city as speaker.”

When JANET LADRACH retired from teaching, she focused on poetry. She won 1st–3rd places in Ohio Poetry Day Contests and was published in *We’Moon*, a datebook of women’s art and writing. A featured reader at Tim Horton’s in Coshocton, she is also the new secretary for the Ohio Poetry Association.

“Farming has long been a part of Appalachian Ohio culture. For those chosen by it, there is no other life. It affects relationships and molds people into a distinct lifestyle. The remoteness can cause feelings of isolation and people look for some kind of relief.”

CATHY CULTICE LENTES is a poet, essayist, and children’s writer. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Now & Then*, *Riverwind*, and *Blueline*, as

well as in anthologies such as *I Have My Own Song for It: Modern Poems of Ohio* (University of Akron Press, 2002).

“The poem was written for my son who was going to college and working in Cleveland, so far away from the green hills of home. He kept a copy of the poem on his refrigerator as a reminder that he was (and is) always connected to the things he loves.”

SUE LONNEY writes to understand what she thinks. Coming from the Northwest to southern Ohio, where everyone is a poet and every object a poem, she joined a poetry group and learned from its members. She’s old, not so wise, but still writes now and then.

“In southern Ohio the hills pulse with a low beat. On foggy mornings, if you stand still with just a cup of coffee in your hand, you can see them move. Mountains are too big and flat areas just lie there. But Ohio hills have a way of shifting . . .”

HERBERT WOODWARD MARTIN has published eight volumes of poems. He has devoted over three decades to reading, editing, and performing the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar. He has received four honorary degrees for his scholarship on the poet. He is Professor Emeritus of English from the University of Dayton.

“In the fall of 2001, I was visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Shawnee State University. I asked my students to write about a personage or an event from the town. I chose Kathleen Battle. The poem questions the origins of her talent. Is talent inherited, taught, in the water, air, streets and woods?”

PRESTON MARTIN received a Bachelor of General Studies from Ohio University and an MAT from the College of Charleston, SC. He is a retired teacher who still teaches, and writes.

“Both sides of my family were born and raised in Appalachian Ohio. All childhood summers and most holidays were spent in and around Adams County, where the hills and fields and farms, and endless family stories, offered a wonderful education of the ways of the world.”

JULIE L. MOORE is the author of *Slipping Out of Bloom* (WordTech Editions) and *Election Day* (Finishing Line Press). She lives in Cedarville, Ohio,

with her family and is the writing center director at Cedarville University. You can learn more about her poetry at www.juliemoore.com.

“Having grown up in south Jersey, I am sometimes considered an outsider in southern Ohio, yet I feel right at home. ‘A Clear Path’ and ‘The Poet Performs in the Theatre of Cows’ use humor to explore how this rural landscape, where I’ve lived since 1987, intrigues and sustains me.”

JEAN MUSSER is a poet and playwright whose first book of poetry, *The Crimson Hat*, was published in 2011. Originally from Akron, she graduated from Case Western Reserve, and later became art critic for the *Seattle Times*. Her poems appear in *Brilliant Corners*, *Interdisciplinary Studies*, *Raven Chronicles*, and *PoetsWest Literary Journal*.

“Both poems portray occasions for emotional bonding. ‘Ohio Lightning’ recounts a physical and emotional storm that brought me closer to my parents, while in ‘Visiting Ohio’ a college reunion brings a confluence of loss and camaraderie ending with a ghostly piano playing. These poetic images help in our healing.”

JOEL PECKHAM is the author of three poetry collections, *Movers and Shakers*, *The Heat of What Comes*, and *Nightwalking*. Recently Academy Chicago Publishers released his memoir, *Resisting Elegy*. Poems have appeared in *Black Warrior Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, the *Southern Review*, and elsewhere. He lives with his family in Huntington, West Virginia.

“I work at a branch campus of UC that sits twenty minutes north of Kentucky. When the economy went south a few years ago, it hit our district as hard as any in the country. ‘Everything Must Go’ is a response to the foreclosure crisis. ‘Psalm 96’ is really a celebratory ode to my students—the single moms, the unemployed factory workers, the vets coming home from Afghanistan. I love them dearly.”

DONALD RAY POLLOCK grew up in Knockemstiff, Ohio, and worked at a paper mill in nearby Chillicothe for over thirty-two years. His first book, a collection of short stories called *Knockemstiff*, won the PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship; and his second book, a novel called *The Devil All the Time*, was voted one of the ten best books of 2011 by *Publishers Weekly*.

“Originally, this story was going to be about being outside the Lucasville Prison the night Wendell Berry was executed in February 1999, which shows how

much an idea can morph over time. On the way home that night, I saw a nativity scene still on display in someone's yard, hence the title."

BROOKS REXROAT teaches writing in Cincinnati. He holds an MFA in creative writing from Southern Illinois University, and his work has appeared in the *Cleveland Review*, *Weave Magazine*, *Revolution House*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and the *Montreal Review*. Visit him online at <http://brooksrexroat.com>.

"Born and raised in Appalachian Ohio, I've spent a great deal of time in and near river towns, several of which were also single-industry cities. New Boston, Ohio, exemplifies both. This story is set in a fictionalized version of that town, where an incident involving the remains of a shuttered steel mill reshapes the narrator's relationship with his hometown."

BRIAN RICHARDS lives in a small cabin, sans electricity or phone, on a ridge overlooking the Ohio River Valley. He is the author of a number of books of poetry, most recently *Enridged*, from the University of New Orleans Press.

"These pieces are concerned with making sense of what I see. Only experience is sensitive."

ADAM SOL is the author of three books of poetry, including *Jeremiah, Ohio*, a novel in poems, which was shortlisted for Ontario's Trillium Award for Poetry; and *Crowd of Sounds*, which won the award in 2004. He teaches at Laurentian University's campus in Barrie, Ontario, and lives in Toronto.

"I lived in Cincinnati for a number of years, taught a bit in Batavia, and wandered a lot in my car. When you're driving and have hundreds of fleeting impressions and images, it's hard to organize them with any coherence. This poem was one small way that I tried to do that."

LIANNE SPIDEL grew up in Detroit, graduated from Wittenberg University and the University of Michigan, taught high school for thirty-one years, and is a member of the Greenville Poets, Greenville, Ohio. Chapbooks: *Chrome* (Finishing Line Press, 2006); *What to Tell Joseme* (Main Street Rag, 2011); *Pairings*, poetry and art by Ann Loveland (Dos Madres Press, 2012).

"Moving to Appalachian Ohio with my family was a shock. Some of my students had never been out of Adams County, but its people could do anything—the

most creative, unspoiled people I ever knew. My boys grew up there. We left, but in many ways it still contains us.”

MYRNA STONE is the author of three books of poems, *The Casanova Chronicles*, *How Else to Love the World*, and *The Art of Loss*. Her poems have appeared in such journals as *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and *TriQuarterly*, and in seven anthologies. She is a founding member of the Greenville Poets.

“These poems are based on memories of growing up in small-town Versailles, in the heart of farm country in southern Ohio. Did we really burn down barns? Or did we only want to? And where did innocence go that day my little friend and I played dress-up?”

SCOTT URBAN's prose, poetry, and reviews have appeared in numerous print and electronic publications. Recent poems have appeared in *Word Salad*, *Cairn*, and *Cyclamens and Swords*. His poetry collections include *Night's Voice*, *Skull-Job*, and *Alight*. He teaches at Nelsonville's Hocking College in Athens County.

“In the summer of 2011, my family relocated to southern Ohio after living for more than twenty years on North Carolina's Cape Fear Coast. As I explored my new home, I was entranced by the area's deep primeval forests, its serpentine county roads, and its secluded glens harboring mist into the afternoon. Poems drenched in an Ohio atmosphere began to spill out of my pen, some of them colored by autumn and tinged with melancholy, including this one.”

MICHAEL WATERSON was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and lives in Napa, California. Mike received a BA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and an MFA from Mills College. He was Napa Valley Poet Laureate 2010–11. He works as an editor for Napa Valley Publishing.

“Born a little way upriver from him, I have always loved James Wright's poetry. Li Po, who appears in Wright's work, was a famous poet of the Tang dynasty. Legend says he was a great drunkard and drowned trying to embrace a reflection of the moon in the river.”

LAURA MADELINE WISEMAN has a doctorate from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she teaches English. She is the author of six

collections of poetry, including *Sprung* (San Francisco Bay Press, 2012), *Farm Hands* (Gold Quoin Press, 2012), and *She Who Loves Her Father* (Dancing Girl Press, 2012). www.lauramadelinewiseman.com

“These poems were written from my experiences of growing up in the Midwest. I was born in Iowa; my adolescence was in Iowa and my childhood in southern Ohio. I have family all over the Buckeye State. These poems were written with that Ohio childhood and family in mind.”

DALLAS WOODBURN’s work has appeared in *Arcadia Journal*, *Monkeybicycle*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Recent awards include the Ninth Glass Woman Prize, the Brian Mexicott Playwriting Award, and a nomination for the Pushcart Prize. She teaches undergraduate writing courses at Purdue University and is fiction editor of *Sycamore Review*. www.writeonbooks.org

“Though I grew up in California, my family originally hails from small-town Appalachian Ohio, and I spent many childhood summers there. It is a place I find myself returning to again and again, as here, in my fiction.”

BEVERLY ZEIMER, whose poems celebrate life in southern rural Ohio, is the daughter of tenant farmers. The winner of a Pudding House chapbook competition, she was nominated by publisher Jennifer Bosveld for the Pushcart Prize. She shares her work as a featured reader at coffeehouses, poetry events, and festivals throughout Ohio.

“During hunting season, when Daddy went to the backfields to feed the cattle, he took his guns—a 12-gauge shotgun and his trusty twenty-two—to a wooded area near Deer Creek, where Mommy, one day, determined to break Grandma of smoking, threw her precious tobacco pipe into the rushing water.”