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A note from the editor

Journal Editors

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A note from the editors

Congratulations! You're now holding, and hopefully in full possession of, Volume XII of *The Yalobusha Review*, annual literary journal of University of Mississippi, published in collaboration with the MFA programs of our English and Art departments. Our 2007 issue has turned out to be a surprising one for us in many respects, so allow us to mention a few here.

For over a decade now, we've been doing our best to deliver the freshest and most startling poetry and fiction possible. With very few exceptions, each issue relies on unsolicited submissions to determine what we print. In other words, both the quality and, to some degree, the style of our journal is determined by writers whose names we've never heard of, the unity and collective beauty of the stories, poems, and artworks resulting from months of incalculable lucky accidents. When you think of it this way, it's a marvel that we can pull off a collection each year that is at once entertaining, inspired, and artfully cohesive. This issue is by no means any different.

The good fortune began last fall, when we eagerly welcomed LeAnne Howe to our MFA program as this year's John and Renée Grisham writer-in-residence. LeAnne is the author of an American Book Award-winning novel, *Shell Shaker*, and another award-winning collection of poetry and prose, *Evidence of Red*. We thank LeAnne not only for taking a year off from her duties at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she is associate professor in both the American Indian Studies and MFA programs, but also for contributing to our journal an excerpt from her forthcoming *Miko Kings*, a novel about Indian baseball at the turn of the century in Ada, Indian Territory (now Ada, Oklahoma). Of the novel, LeAnne says that the "facts" in the story are true. "A Choctaw man in Ada did mortgage some of his allotment land to start an Indian baseball team and park in 1903. His 91- and 89-year-old daughters are friends of mine. My home in Ada, Oklahoma, was built on this land shortly after the ball park closed down in 1909. The land title and abstract for my home has a paragraph about their father and the baseball park and team he created." The excerpt, "The Vulgarians," concerns Henri Day, the creator of this baseball team, and a mishap that, according to LeAnne, "plagues him throughout the rest of the novel: his naiveté."

In addition to supplying this excerpt, LeAnne also served as the final judge for our 2007 Barry Hannah Prize for Fiction. The response to this year's

contest was far and away the biggest ever—greater than the last two years combined. Many of the submissions were printworthy, some downright amazing. From a handful of finalists, LeAnne picked Bob Thurber’s “If You’d Like to Make a Call” for, as she puts it, the story’s “intensity, constant image patterning, and unforgettable main character.” Since our first read of the story, we’ve been so excited about it that we wanted to publish it even if it didn’t win the prize. Thanks, Bob, for entering such a knockout.

We’re also pleased to have Cary Holladay’s very fine “Ice Hands,” a story that is as complex and dangerous as it is gorgeously written. Anyone who’s read her collections—*The People Down South*, *The Palace of Wasted Footsteps*, the newly released *The Quick-Change Artist*—or any of her stories featured in a number of journals, knows that her stories are like parades celebrating language, humanity, frustration, desire, and the bizarre. It’s an honor and privilege for us to present an offering from this O. Henry Prize-winning writer, who, when asked in passing for a story after finishing our brief interview, surprised us by actually giving us one.

The Yalobusha Review is equally joyed to bring you an interview with Chris Offutt. Our fiction editor and resident Kentuckian Alex Taylor spoke with Mr. Offutt about a variety of subjects (violence, superstition, possums, both living and stuffed), and we’re thankful to Mr. Offutt for serving up such candid and engaging responses.

With this issue we also continue our tradition of Brief Interviews, whereby we approach literary talent with short and peculiar questions which, we hope, they aren’t often asked on the record. Only here will you find out Sonny Brewer’s theme song, Ace Atkins’s two biggest distractions, and what makes Aimee Nezhukumatathil laugh every time....

As we mentioned earlier, though, it is through the industry of strangers who send us their work that most of the magic happens. Here you’ll find surprising fiction by Julia Whicker, Edmond deRubeis, Andrew Plattner, and Tatjana Soli, and poetry by a host of very talented people, among them Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Ryan G. Van Cleave, Diane Shipley DeCillis, Tim Kahl, Dan Pinkerton, and Gary L. McDowell. But also you’ll find here a variety of common, unplanned fixations, lurking like pale snakes throughout the verdure and shade of this issue, giving one the impression that our contributors—fiction, poetry, and art alike—had conspired to discuss “themes.” We are pretty sure, however, that they did not. We’re glad for this. The temptation is to point these animals out, but why spoil it?

Once again our many thanks to art editor Christopher Brady both for assembling the collection of art panels contained in this issue, most of which are creations of his colleagues in our art MFA program, and also for designing the spruce cover that binds these pages. Here’s to you, Chris, for giving us another issue we can’t quit looking at.

We here at The Yalobusha Review would like to bid a heartfelt adieu to Joe Urgo, our English Department Chair since 2000, who finally accepted one of

Yalobusha Review

the many prestigious offers from other schools trying to lure him away over the years. Our department has seen many prosperous changes under his leadership, and we wish him all the best in his new role as Dean of Faculty at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. Likewise, we'd like to extend a warm welcome to Patrick Quinn, our new Department Chair as of 2006. Dr. Quinn arrives to us from Worcester, Massachusetts, where he served four years as Chairman of the Department of Humanities & Arts at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We're very glad to have him.

Finally, we want to thank John and Renée Grisham, David Galef, Kara Hobson, and Jamie Dakin, as well as our contributors and all the writers who submitted to The Yalobusha Review for this issue. Most of all we'd like to thank you, reader, for your interest and time.

This is for you.

The YR