

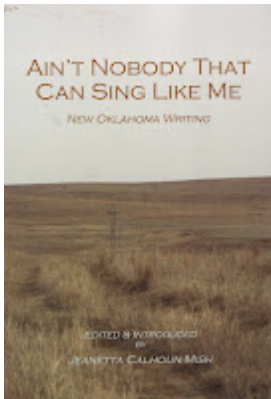
Oklahoma pages of December

3-4 minutes

rivers are
shining snakes
trying to hide
in bottomland woods.

--Aerial View, Phillip Carroll Morgan

"Been there, seen that," I said, reading this poem in "Ain't Nobody That Can Sing Like Me," a new anthology of new Oklahoma writing, edited and published by Jeanetta Calhoun Mish of Mongrel Empire Press.



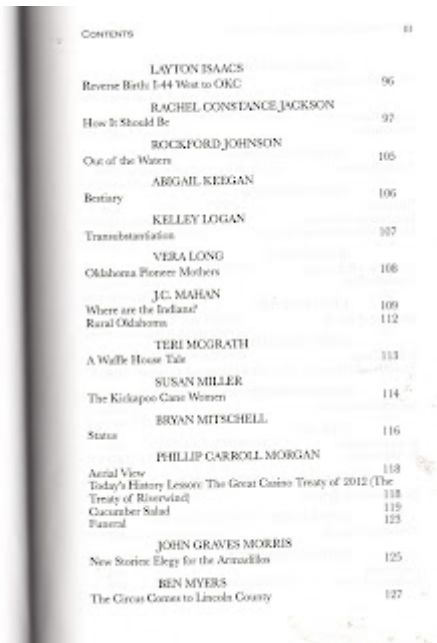
She's the poet who won the Wrangler Award for poetry last year at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, with "Work is Love Made Visible" (See my Aug. 18 post). She helped organize the Labor Day "Labor Fest" poetry reading gig in the Plaza District of OKC. <http://www.facebook.com/OklahomaLaborfest> Since then, I've reviewed several of her published poetry books.

Then this 393-page book full of poetry, fiction and non-fiction arrives in my mailbox, for review. I started thumbing through it, thinking, "This is my kind of book. I can scan through it, pick and chose from almost any page, and not get bogged down." Put it down, pick it up again, and discover something new, every time.

The first place I stopped was the shortest entry, the poem by Morgan. (Journalistic habit--I look for writers who can get to the point, quickly.) The more pieces I read about various places and subjects in Oklahoma, the more I thought, "I've been

there." This is what will make the book great reading for any Okie. The fresh images and original thoughts help you explore and discover taken-for-granted Oklahoma.

Mish writes in her introduction that Oklahoma is unexplored land in the minds of most outsiders, and hopes the book will expand horizons by going beyond the state stereotypes. She divides the selections into writings that explore the outer and inner landscapes--Who/What and Why/How (I admit, using journalistic structure sold me the minute I saw it). I'll do the same for Okies.



CONTENTS		ii
LAYTON ISAACS		
Reverse Birds I-44 West to OKC		96
RACHEL CONSTANCE JACKSON		
How It Should Be		97
ROCKFORD JOHNSON		
Out of the Waters		105
ABIGAIL KEEGAN		
Bentley		106
KELLEY LOGAN		
Transubstantiation		107
VERA LONG		
Oklahoma Pioneer Mothers		108
J.C. MAHAN		
Where are the Indians?		109
Rural Oklahoma		112
TERI MCGRATH		
A Waffle House Tale		113
SUSAN MILLER		
The Kithapoo Cane Women		114
ERWAN MITSCHELL		
Status		116
PHILLIP CARROLL MORGAN		
Aerial View		118
Today's History Lesson: The Great Casino Treaty of 2012 (The Treaty of Riverwind)		118
Cucumber Salad		119
Flaxseed		123
JOHN GRAVES MORRIS		
New Stories: Elegy for the Armadillos		125
BEN MYERS		
The Circus Comes to Lincoln County		127

A page from the table of contents

So don't assume the writing shows only the rural state. There is urban here too. Consider some of the subjects--Waffle House, Runway Cafe, Kmart, Fort Sill, I-44, Food 4 Less and the bombing memorial, for instance. The writers are all over the map.

I'll admit, my favorites portray the rural, but the writing that explores Oklahoma's inner landscape, where --as Mish writes in the introduction--it is difficult to be a writer or different, is intriguing as well. Her introduction gives perspective to the work--but I doubt you'll read it first. Flip through the pages and you'll be surprised. Go back and read her comments for a new view of the state. Turn to the end of the book for brief bios on all the writers. You'll discover another landscape of Oklahoma--the rich terrain of talented writers.

I want to highlight some of the selections, and that'll be in the next post. You can order the book and view other publications at

<http://www.mongrelempirepress.com/>