
O:JA&L 2024 PAMPHLET SERIES
AMERICANA: A Writer's Portfolio

GARDEN: *Poems*

An Ekphrastic Homage to Photographs by Eudora Welty



JIANQING ZHENG

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Publishing since 2017 as OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L) and its imprints Buttonhook Press,
HOT BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Issues*, and HIGH BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Art*,
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Set in Garamond and GARAMOND ALLCAPS and formatted in CreateSpace.

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This project was made possible, in part, with support from **Grayling & Wraith**,
a growth marketing company.



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DANCING THE HEARTS OUT
— Eudora Welty's *Front Yard*

Five barefoot girls
ring dance in the front yard,

jumping and singing
like a merry-go-round

revolving heartily
for an unforgettable time

to pour out joy
and shake loose the blue sky.

MUSING

— Eudora Welty's *Picking Cotton*

The young woman wearing a straw hat
is busily picking cotton under the sun,

her hands moving like butterflies
dancing over white flowers.

Suddenly, she stops, holding a boll
in her hand to see. Is she wondering

about the fluffy cotton pushing
out of cracked bolls to become fabric

used for making clothes or dresses
or checking on her fingers pricked

painfully by the sharp burs?
She stands there alone, absorbed

in thought. The vast cotton fields
reach the horizon. She trudges

with a heavy cotton sack, braving
the elements of life in the Delta.

EUDORA'S DREAM

— Eudora Welty's *Courthouse Town* / *Grenada*

I revisited Grenada where I saw the signs of Jitney Jungle, Dyre-Kent Drug Co., and Jas Cuff Grocery still above the storefronts, Dry Cleaners ads still painted on the back of wooden benches under an old oak tree and farmhands still leaning on the benches, giggling heartily and chatting about land, wives or girlfriends. My faded memory parked on the square like a classic car. You know, history always has its fresh takes, even in my dream.

*another year
a road trip
still a mindscape*

G ARDEN

— Eudora Welty's *Chestina Andrews Welty*

Surrounded by daffodils and irises that delight her eyes, mom chuckles as cheerfully as a robin improvising on the fence post. Sunshine over her silver hair hovers like florets flying off a dandelion blowball.

*footpath
an alone moment
with the self*

Mom is empathetic. One day in World War II, she cried when listening to radio news about Chinese librarians, who feared their library would be destroyed, trudging the long mountain trails with rare books on their backs to a safe place.

*memories
always new
when looked back*

Taking a break on the garden bench, mom picks up a fallen flower to twirl in her hand. As I am about to click the shutter, she turns to look at me, and her charming smile twirls through the lens.

*quiet yard
sunshine
among blossoms*

EYES

— Eudora Welty's *Fiddler at Fair Gate with Jigging Dolls*

Fascinated by the dancing jig dolls
on the limberjack foot-tapped
by the old fiddler cheerfully playing
the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel
at the gate of the fair, the boys
squat watching with wide eyes and
ignore their parents' urge to go to the show.

When I was a little boy going to a fair,
I always liked to watch goldfish
swimming in a large glass bowl.
Fascinated by their colors and shapes,
especially ones with bubble eyes and
black telescopic eyes, I forgot the show.

A

BOUT THE WRITER:

JIANQING ZHENG is the author of *A Way of Looking* (Silverfish Review Press, 2021), *Enforced Rustication in the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Texas Review Press, 2019), *Delta Sun* (Red Moon Press 2018), and *The Landscape of Mind* (Slapering Hol Press, 2002). His edited books include *Conversations with Dana Gioia*, *African American Haiku*, *The Other World of Richard Wright*, and *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit through Haiku*. He is a professor of English at Mississippi Valley State University where he edits *Valley Voices: A Literary Review*.

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Night Train

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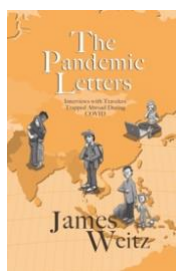
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