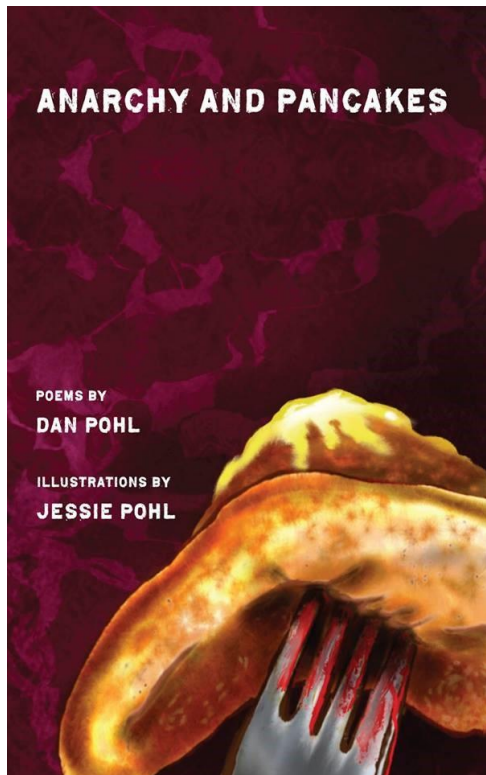


Anarchy and Pancakes
by Dan Pohl
Review by Roy J. Beckemeyer



Dan Pohl is a native Kansan whose keen eye and honed wit have taken in and carefully observed the true and centered heart of the heartland of America. We are fortunate that he presents it to us, here on the pages of *Anarchy and Pancakes*. Listen as he addresses William Stafford in celebration of Stafford's 100th birthday:

"I prefer we meet where the river whispers

To toss our stones across the life of it, and
As we do, count the skips each makes over
The surface, before our stories sink into it,
To collect there from the time we shared"

These stories and images from Pohl's times vividly capture life on the prairie in all its expansiveness. He shows us

"Cows as islands, unmoved, watching
Golden waves of grass break upon
Their content yet cautious shores"

In his poem, "Unpaved Roads," Pohl proffers the Kansas mindset:

"The GPS has its own mind
Focused so much on cities
A certain perspective of
the programmer...

Female voice, seductive
Trills of vowels, consonants
Each time I press her buttons

With the question asked of me
*Your destination is on an
Unpaved road; are you
Certain you want to go there?*

Yes."

Pohl almost sings his remembrance of pushing a classmate on a playground swing:

“The sway she carried
Through the arc, hands
To hips on friendly terms,
To push the fresh smell
Of her, a new scent to
Ponder at the swings.

The chains, the seat,
The breeze from her travel,
Her smile, the soft sand
Below, the deep blue sky
Above...”

In the book’s eponymous poem, Pohl philosophizes about the importance of a single word, comparing that word with a drop of water on a hot griddle, hinging his whole book on this unique and lovely metaphor:

“One water drop
 Skitters across
 Sizzles to death
 Its hum and ping
 Glides above
A microscopic
 Field of steam
 Kissing untouched
 Metal, the grill
 Hot enough
 For pancakes

The word, one
 Word slides
 Onto a page
 To trap itself
 Face up to wait
 Patiently for
 Its discovery
 ...
Until the world’s
 Anarchy calms
 Enough to notice”

Dan Pohl’s poems are oil on anarchic waters, balm for troubled souls. Please take notice!

Anarchy and Pancakes, poems by Dan Pohl with illustrations by Jessie Pohl, Spartan Press, Kansas City, MO, 2018, viii+68 pp., is available from [Amazon](#), as is his previous, Nelson Poetry Book Award winning volume, [*Autochthonous: Found in Place*](#) (Woodley Memorial Press, 2013, also illustrated by Jessie Pohl).

Several of Dan's poems can be found online at the [View from Smoky Hill](#) web page; a review of his earlier book, *Autochthonous: Found in Place* is [Here](#).