THE INNISFREE POETRY JOURNAL

An Online Journal of Contemporary Poetry

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

—William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

Welcome to *Innisfree 8*. We continue our series of Closer Looks at the work of a leading contemporary poet, this time the poems of Dan Masterson. For this special issue honoring him and his work, Dan has shared with us a set of authentically gritty poems that arise from his lifelong interests in boxing, drumming, and Catholicism, as well as an autobiographical essay titled *Sticks & Fists & Rosaries*, which illuminates the origins of these poems.

As previously, in addition to this online presentation of *Innisfree 8*, we provide an option for readers to obtain this issue in two other formats: as a PDF download or as a handsome trade paperback, at cost from Lulu.com, an online publisher. For the latter,

just click on the "Print Version" link at the top of the Current Issue page. That link will take you to Lulu.com, where you can order a copy of the issue from them. Using print-on-demand technology, Lulu will ship you one or more perfect bound copies of *Innisfree 8*. Note that this second option will be activated in the coming weeks.

Another innovation makes its debut in two forms with this issue, a search box that enables the reader to search for poets in *Innisfree*, as well as an alphabetical, searchable list of all *Innisfree* Contributors the reader can browse.

NOTE: To join the *Innisfree* mailing list, to update your address, or to remove your address, please send an email to editor@innisfreepoetry.org.

The Editor
editor@innisfreepoetry.org

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Masthead

Editor, Greg McBride

The founding editor of *Innisfree*, Greg McBride won the 2008 *Boulevard* Emerging Poet prize. His chapbook, *Back of the Envelope*, is just out from Copperdome Press:

http://www6.semo.edu/universitypress/Copperdome/C-BE.htm

His work appears in *Bellevue Literary Review, Boulevard, Connecticut Review, Gettysburg Review, Hollins Critic, Salmagundi, Southeast Review, Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. His website is at http://homepage.mac.com/gregmcbride/.

Publisher, Cook Communication

Cook Communication provides support for new writers who seek publication of their work and publishes the work of emerging and established poets in the pages of *Innisfree*. Its website is at www.cookcom.net.

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Submission Guidelines

The Innisfree Poetry Journal welcomes submissions of original, previously unpublished poems year round. We accept poems for consideration only via email from both established writers and new writers whose work is excellent. We publish well-crafted poems, whether in free verse or in traditional forms, poems grounded in the specific, which speak in fresh language and telling images. And we admire musicality: we welcome those who, like the late Lorenzo Thomas, "write poems because I can't sing."

Please observe these guidelines closely:

Deadlines

February 1 for the spring issue, August 1 for the fall issue. Submissions received after these dates will be considered for the next issue.

Details

1. Include your name, as you would like it to appear in *Innisfree*, in the subject line of your submission, e.g., "Wallace Stevens" or "W.B. Yeats."

2. In ONE Word document, submit a bio (in third person) and up to five poems attached to an email addressed to editor@innisfreepoetry.org. (If you do not have Word, please use rich text format.) Format all poems flush with the left margin—no indents other than any within the poem itself.

3. Simultaneous submissions are welcome. If a poem is accepted elsewhere, however, please be sure to notify us immediately at editor@innisfreepoetry.org.

4. Send only one submission per issue.

Assurances

In making your submission, you are assuring *The Innisfree Poetry Journal* that the work is your own original creation; that it has not been published, electronically or in print; that it has not been accepted for publication elsewhere; and that you are 18 years of age or older.

Rights

By accepting a poem, *Innisfree* acquires first publication rights, including the right to publish it online and maintain it there as part of the issue in which it appears, to make it available in a printer-friendly format, to make the issue of *Innisfree* in which it appears downloadable as a PDF document and available as a printed volume. All other rights revert to the poet after online publication of the poem in *The Innisfree Poetry Journal.*

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Innisfree 8, March 2009

A Closer Look:
Dan Masterson

THE INNISFREE POETRY JOURNAL
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A CLOSER LOOK: Dan Masterson

photo by Janet Masterson

Dan Masterson's first book, *On Earth As It Is*, was published in 1978 by The University of Illinois Press, and was one of six finalists in The AWP Award Series in Poetry. Publishers Weekly called it "A relentlessly provocative book of visions." The Library Journal wrote that "In Masterson's vision, suffering always provides some measure of knowledge and nobility." Anne Sexton said that Masterson's poem "'Legacy by Water' surpasses what most of us have done by many a lap." James Dickey wrote that "We believe him: everything in human life and everything in poetry depends on that response, and Masterson gives it to us, rewardingly and essentially." And James Wright commented that "The book is genuinely disturbing because its technical mastery illuminates, from beginning to end, so many complex and living themes. I have read it over and over again, and I've carried it about with me as I've done with precious few books in recent years. I think the book carries absolute artistic conviction. It is a wonderful achievement."

A recipient of The SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, Dan Masterson has directed the Poetry program at Rockland Community College for 45 years. During eighteen of those years, he also served as an adjunct full professor at Westchester County's Manhattanville College, directing the poetry and screenwriting programs, and continues his affiliation with that institution through a graduate poetry writing course he offers online. Upon his retirement from Manhattanville, the College's Board of Trustees established The Dan Masterson Prize in Screenwriting. He has just been named the first Poet Laureate of Rockland County, New York, for the years 2009 and 2010.

Dan's fourth collection, his *New and Selected, All Things, Seen and Unseen*, was released by The University of Arkansas Press in 1997. His work has appeared in *Poetry, Hotel Amerika, Esquire, Shenandoah, The New Yorker, Ploughshares, Poetry Northwest, Prairie Schooner, Artful Dodge,*

Ekphrasis, Poems Niederngasse, Chautauqua Literary Journal, London Magazine, OnEarth, Innisfree, New York Quarterly, Eratio, Mudlark, Poetry Kite, as well as *The Ontario, Sewanee, Paris, Southern, Hudson, Yale, Gettysburg, Massachusetts, New Orleans,* and *Georgia Reviews*. Additional information about Dan and his writing is provided in the bio space at the end of this feature.

This Closer Look at Dan Masterson consists of two parts: first, a collection of six poems entitled "Sticks & Fists & Rosaries," three of which are ekphrastic poems based on the paintings shown, and second, an autobiographical piece, also entitled "Sticks & Fists & Rosaries," in which Dan reflects on the origins of these wonderfully evocative poems from deep in his childhood years.

I. STICKS & FISTS & ROSARIES

FIST FIGHTER

"Stag at Sharkey's" by George Bellows

Saloon-keeper Tom Sharkey, retired heavyweight contender, is doing some fancy footwork in avoiding the current NYC ban on boxing by awarding 'membership' to every fighter he books for his Athletic Club brawls in his Lincoln Square cellar.

—The New York Times, 1909

The kid comes down Sharkey's stairs slapping
Snow off his great-coat, the threadbare elbows
Sporting ragtag patches cut from the hem.
He's got a fresh shiner from one of the 3 other
Smokers he's already worked tonight & a few
Random welts starting to fade. He weaves his way

Through the crowd, nods to Sharkey, unlocks
The Stay Out door, & flicks the wall switch

Before closing the door behind him. He hangs
His coat on a hook near the speed bag, & turns
It into a blur with a flurry of lefts & rights. He
Steps out of his trousers, reties his trunks & slips

A fold of 1's into an envelope: 15 of them,
5 bucks a win. He sticks it under the mattress
He falls down on & closes his eyes for no more
Than a 10-count. Up on his feet, peeling off
His tee shirt sopped in sweat & spattered with
Someone else's blood, he rubs his arms & yanks

A clean tee shirt on as he leaves the only room
Sharkey rents: half the kid's take per week.
A dime for each piece of skinny-wood he burns
In the potbelly. 2 dimes for a hot bath upstairs.
Free beer if Sharkey goes out on the town. Sneaked
Meals from the cook, Bernie, who calls the kid

Champ and takes his break at 10 o'clock, in time
To see the kid do his stuff. The main room’s filthy:
6 rows of metal chairs tight against a 9' x 9' ring
Strung with braided clothesline covered in black
Tape. 10 100-watt clear bulbs hang limp on their
Bare wires, sawdust wet on the concrete floor,

The potbelly's stovepipe jammed through the broken
Glass of an overhead window nailed shut & painted
Brown, an open drain in a far corner: Sharkey's "Please
Flush" sign a ten-year-old bad joke, stale beer sticky
Underfoot, cigar smoke & old men with nowhere
To go. The kid's heading for the ring, lifting 2 rolls

Of waxed-gauze from their pegs & 2 hollow stubs
Of hose to support his closed fists. He wraps his hands
As though they are already bleeding, round and round,
Flexing his fingers as the knuckles grow padded and tight:
The only gloves Sharkey allows. Just 18, the kid's in his
4th season, & his pale Irish grin, riding above thick shoulders,

Is clean except for some hack doctor's stitch marks
Under the left cheekbone. He climbs through the ropes &
Sits on the stool, fondling his mouthpiece, & studies
The empty stool across the ring, wondering who it will be,
& now there's Harris stepping through the ropes, his
Bare knuckles showing through the gauze: a leftover

Wrap-job from his earlier fight down the block
Somewhere. Getting too old for this stuff, 37, 38,
Starting to lose his edge. It'll be okay, thinks
The kid. He decked Harris in minute 6 last night
At Ramsey's & he's got no defense left, just a pecking
Jab & a giveaway right that opens him up for rib shots

That put him down & a jelly belly to keep him down.
Sharkey's playing ref again, calling them to the center
Of the ring: No gouging, kneeing, biting, wrestling, butting,
Hitting low, no clock. You want out, you stay down for 10.
Go.

from *Ontario Review*

GOING THE DISTANCE

The late June sun had come in the window
over his mother's bed, and he used it
to make shadows on the wall, but they came out
looking like ropes, tight twisted things,
wrapped around themselves. He flicked
all ten fingers and closed them
into fists, pressing knuckles to knuckles
until they hurt, as they did
when he'd fight in the schoolyard.

They were big hands, like Grandfather Fitz's
he'd been told, the man long dead, whose sepia eyes
never closed as they stared him down
from the opposite corner, the oval portrait
leaning too close on its wire.

He knew he shouldn't look below the frame
at his sleeping mother, but he did,
sometimes, and saw things. He did not
enjoy seeing her nightgown hiked up
to her hips when the sheet slipped away
in the night. He wished he could yank it
down, tuck it in, pin it tight
to the binding running around the mattress.

What he liked best was lying at first light,
her long braid brown and inviting,
almost touching the floor. But he grew
afraid when once she half-roused
and turned, a shoulder strap slack enough
to reveal a breast, the only one
he'd ever seen. He tried to remember
nursing at it, wondering if he'd fondled
the braid as he fed, if she caressed
him in his nakedness.

But then he'd shut his eyes and turn
to the wall, getting his face
as close to it as he could, his left hand
strained and flat against the cool blue plaster.
Often, near morning, she would say things
in dream, and he would cover his ears and hum
until he heard nothing at all.

And now, on this the last day
he'd ever have to spend in grammar school,
he lay awake in the room he'd always shared
with her, and thought about

His father far down the hall
in his chamber, his bothersome snoring
muffled from Mother's delicate sleep;
his sister close on the other side
of the wall, in the room he wanted
for himself. He shut off the alarm

Before it clanged and was relieved to find
his mother wrapped, tangled,
only a big toe jutting out for air
in the narrow space between them.

Downstairs, he smeared a piece of bread
with apple butter and sat on the porch,
remembering the summer morning his sister
forced him to stay on the bottom step
while she repeated the lie of a woman
in a long black car who would soon be at the curb;
she would wear a black dress and gloves
and laced boots. She would take him away.
He licked the last of the apple butter
from his thumb and went off the back way,

over the fence and down the path;
he was late and stopped to get
a scolding note from Sister Helena.

When the last of all bells rang for the day,
he opened his locker and stuck
his copy of *Ring* magazine in his back pocket
and took the leftover bottle
of ink to smash against the brick wall
rising high over the rectory window, someone
yelling, promising there'd be hell to pay,
calling him by name but in a voice that knew
it was best to leave him alone.

At the end of the block,
he settled under a tree, the largest maple
on the Town Hall lawn; he thought
of it as his own and came to it
on such days. He pulled
his magazine out and uncurled it, Billy Conn
on the cover, his cut-man taking the stool
out of the corner, the ropes tight behind him,
thick and twisted, wrapped in tape.

The idea hit him like a quick jab:
he could have a ring! The hardware store
had clothesline. He slipped one inside his jacket
and paid for the other two. And then home.

No one was there, and he went to the cellar.
He undid the clotheslines and looped
the three ends around the first steel pole
that supported the main beams of the house.

And then the braiding: crossing the strands,
as he'd seen his mother do a thousand times
at her vanity, stopping
to straighten the snarls, to tighten
the loops; inch by inch it grew
from pole to pole: the top rope
of his own ring, his own place,
the rope burns on his hands
reminding him of the shadows on their wall
this morning, Grandfather's eyes,
his mother's long plaited hair
half undone by sleep.

He wouldn't use tape; he wanted the strands
as they were. The last knot tied, he slapped
the rope and it almost sang back.
He went to a neutral corner and saw Billy Conn
coming at him. He circled to his left
and kept away till the round was over.

He stepped out of the ring and did
some shadowboxing near the washtubs,
banging away at the air, talking himself
into a frenzy, taking a few shots to the head,
the gut, moving away, jabbing, sticking,
until he was soaking wet.

The faucet squeaked when he turned it
on full force, cold water drowning out
everything, hands splashing it everywhere,
his shirt and slacks and undershorts
peeled off, a bath towel stiff but dry
hanging from its nail near the stairs.

Barefoot and naked,
he stepped back under the rope
to dry off in the ring, wrapping the towel
tight at the waist, tucking it in,
arms held overhead in victory.

And then the army cot, folded
within reach, to be snapped open
and snugged up against the pole
closest to the furnace, two full floors
beneath Mother's bed.

He stretched out on the taut canvas,
his left arm across his face,
the right finding the braided rope,
curling his fingers around it,
tightening his grip, running it slowly
out and back as far as he could, his mouth
going dry as he felt the strands rise
and disappear in the palm of his hand.

from *Those Who Trespass*

TUNNEL OF CLOISTERED REFUGE

"Sulamith" by Anselm Kiefer

Once again, reports have surfaced of a holy woman sequestered in the city's subterranean world of storm drains and tunnels. The location of her heavily guarded sanctum, a haven for hundreds of homeless, is unknown to authorities who debunk her existence.

—The Underground Weekly, 1999

Mother Shulamite, her ashen hair
In shroud, dismisses the threats,
But those she tends make sure
She's never alone. They are
The throwaways found in alleys,
Bent against crack-vents & curled
Atop gratings: the Croakers, the

Grunts, the Crattles, Geezers &
Floppers, dozens of Loogans,
Bawdies & Scavengers tucked in
With Tipplers & Hooligans, Snarlers
& Bumpers, a flail of a Rager here,
A Defrockee there, a Prophet who
Once straddled the curbs for bands

Of minstrels stomping their muddy
Time for the only Elegante tapping
His wooden way on a dog-headed
Cane. All finding themselves here
Thanks to her main runners led by
Yves & Catherine & Fournet who
Brought them to this baggage tunnel

Long dead beneath Park & 72nd.
Brought here for their greatest
Comfort, bundled up for safekeeping
Far below blizzards overhead,
Together in awe of the woman who
Raises her hands in a hint of blessing,
Enthroned in a lanterned perch of

Steel fencing strung flush with sponge
Rubber slabs, the high-back Cathedra,
Its armrest removed to make way for
Bench slats & struts & hinged relies
Cut into blocks & screwed to stump
Wood to receive & support her
Sprawling weight beneath layers of

Burlap robes gathered & draped & sewn to
Enhance the dignity she wears as lithely as
A princess at a garden party, but the only
Gardens here grow limestone rosettes
Arranged by seepage bubbling up along
The jagged curves of decaying walls
Enclosing the shallow platform where

She sits over damp ground kept warm by
The steam pipes that do their hissing only
Inches away, while she intones her prayers
Of her waking hours for those in her care,
Fondling the rubbed & knobby beads she
Reveres, carved from knuckles of nuns long
Dead in the convent of Lost Emilia. This

Evening she has the company of those most
In need, who watch as she watches over
Them, her lips forming the prayers they
Feel healing their sores, bringing them
Back from the frigid gutters of their
Dreams. Thirty in all, laid out before her,
The canvas slings of their pallets propped

Above the wet floor, layered with plastic
Sheets wrapped with newspaper batting: a
Warmth unknown on the streets overhead.
She rises & descends the ramp to the
Suffering, allowing the beads of her rosary

To drift across each body, her own hands
Emitting light as soft & blue as that seen in
A child's eye, leaving a halo hovering

In place above the brow of those touched,
A sound like muted litany flowing from their
Throats in praise of the woman moving
About them, her fingers magnified to
Splendor, knuckles inexplicably flayed
Sculpting themselves into rosary beads left
Unstrung, the gasp of prayers as quiet &
Holy as bone.

from *Georgia Review*

THOSE WHO TRESPASS

He'd find them among fallen limbs and brush
in the pitiful stretch of trees
they call their woods: stones the size
of grapefruits, lugged out to the driveway
to be washed off with the garden hose
and left to bake on the blacktop
in the high sun before being tucked away
in the trunk of the car, along the sides,
some down in the well, snug against the spare
held fast by the stretch-strap doubling
as the tire-iron brace, a four-pronged plus sign
looking more like a silver cross the way
it is propped, as though its Christ had fallen
off, perhaps still there laid out
among the stones.

Headed for Buffalo, the outskirts,
the homestead where there were no rocks
to line the rose garden, houses no more
than a car's width away from the next,
the narrow concrete tilting
toward Bannigan's front porch.

And his parents would be there, pacing
the sunporch, waiting for the visit to begin:
five days of clutter and talk, sleeping bags
and diapers, suitcases, books,

hanging clothes, shopping bags; space enough
in the guest room.

And then the stones, last, always
last: a few at a time; each placed
ceremoniously along the rim of the rose garden
that curled against the side of the garage
to the back picket fence, turning left
at the Broderson's shed and back
toward the house.

Father is dead; Mother is gone, and soon
strangers will be moving in. But the stones
are still there, years of stones. Last night
he went off alone to do something about that.
He took only the three-inch paintbrush saved
from his father's workbench, one
of a dozen washed after every use, never
to be thrown away, clean in its plastic pouch,
the snap still intact.

Seven hours by train, a short walk
to the Delaware bus, twenty minutes to the city
line. He gets off a stop early and crosses
the street to the hardware store; the name
has changed, common as a tenpenny nail.

He chooses a gallon of black enamel
and feels the plank floor shudder
beneath him as the vibrator-stand
shakes the can to a blur on the counter.

His mother's hands are shaking in her room, some
400 miles downstate; if she had lids on the cups
she would spill less tea on her sweaters and robe.
He may suggest it to the home.

Now, at 10:30 in the morning, she is saying
her first rosary of the day, the floor nurse leading
her on, bead by bead, as the paint slaps against its lid
only a block away from the altar rail
where she knelt for half a lifetime.

She doesn't know
what she is doing; she is seventeen again:
Springville, her brothers bringing her candies, Papa

home on weekends from the railroad gang,
her mother, rosary in hand at bedtime, and Kathleen
sleeping with her own beads under her pillow,
the same rosary she holds in her grape-veined hands
this morning, a day's journey from where he stands
waiting for his twenty-dollar bill to be broken.

She is alone for the first time in weeks:
the nurse has left to check on a noise in the hall,
and Mother goes on inventing melodies and words
to replace the orthodox prayers once her own.
In her wheelchair, the canvas waistband tight
as a saint's hairshirt, she feels
the beads loose in her hand. She fingers them,
their roundness, small as pebbles, smaller
than the stones her son has gone to see again.

She is drawn to the beads, sensing nourishment.
Her lips are moving in prayers
never heard before; her tongue is extended, her eyes
closed. She bends closer to the beads, accepting
them now like the host safe in her mouth, sliding
slowly as forgiveness on the same saliva
the aides dab away with tissues.

But now, it serves her well: for the beads
have slipped fully beyond the lips; they could
be green peas all in a row tumbling from a spoon,
beginning their descent. No pain. No outcry;
she is deep in a tangled meditation; only
the crucifix is left dangling against her chin,
its small silver link holding fast to the first
of its fifty-nine beads.

Christ is in His diaper and the thorns are intact;
He is swaying slightly swaying, His features
rubbed away by Mother's mothering. They retrieve
the rosary and dry it well enough
for her to go on to the next decade, the connected beads
back where they belong: in the tiny palm
that waited like a cradle or a font
or a crypt dark behind a large washed stone.

The paint can is freed from its shaking. He takes
the gallon as it is, swinging on its wire handle,
and drops the change in his side pocket.

The town seems almost the same: the village hall,
the playground at the corner, Kay's Drugstore
bought out and revamped from counter
to name. The sun is hot as he turns down Lincoln
Boulevard. The house is vacant; he decides
not to use the spare key for any last look.

The backyard is his grotto and he goes to it.
The stones are still in their looped line
skirting the edge of the rose garden. He stands
frozen in place. He wants all of the stones;
he wants to take them back to the ground he walks
every evening, the frail run of trees
that flanks his house.

He feels for his rosary and finds it
in his suitcoat pocket, kept there for good luck.
He takes out the beads on barstools sometimes,
to fondle them in the dim light, saying
their prayers half in a trance, and in churches
he needs to find when he is alone on the road,
cities he doesn't want to see ever again.

The stones must stay. And so he begins:
within minutes they are laid out
in a wide circle. Some of them tipping, a few
already out of ranks, but each assigned a plot
of ground: the paternosters, the aves,
the tenth aves each doubling as a Gloria Patri.

The shrubbery encircling the yard is thick
enough to hide him from the neighbors. He stands
at the back of the lawn, at the strand of beadstones
which must stray from the others so that he
might affix the crucifix-stone to its tip.
He knew back home which stone it must be:
the one with the purple vein running around
its middle, and it is there.

He loosens the lid of the gallon
with the half dollar he brought from his dresser
drawer, the chifforobe which once stood
in his father's room and now holds his own socks
and shirts and bonds and bills. The paint
is rich, the brush still soft; he can smell

the turpentine on the bristles, dry and stained
deep with many colors far down in the base,
each a different Saturday morning project done
with his father on this property, before the stones,
before almost anything.

He kneels at the first stone and grabs too quickly,
anxious to see the purple run of color, and jams
his thumb, blood forming already beneath the nail.
He replaces the stone and paints a rough cross
on it, trying to leave the vein purple
as a cinch for the stipe. He takes a giant step
to where the next stone lies: the paint
goes on with hardly a trace of dirt; another
step and he is past The Lord's Prayer, onto the first
trio of aves: the Hail Marys, one like the next.
The black is as lush as the counterman
said it would be.

Another single bead, and he finds himself
praying aloud, loud enough only for a stone
to hear. Another space and then on to the flat slab
of sandstone he knew he would use
to connect the circle of decades. He gives it
two brush strokes, unbroken,
a child's attempt at the ancient fish, good enough
for anyone who knows.

Three spaces beyond the fish lies a speckled stone;
it goes black, flush to the grass. Nine more
go quickly, slopping the paint in a blob
on top, all at once, scampering back
and forth to smooth out the drippage, ripping away
the blades of grass
that are stained, stuffing them in his back pockets.
He says the prayers as he paints his way
through the next ten; one has a bit of moss
from the shaded area along the spilloff spout
on the garage roof, the others bare
as the edge of grave markers.

It takes three Hail Marys to paint
a hail mary, the phrase "blessed art thou among women"
the line that slows him down: he finds himself
repeating it, remembering the pitchers
of lemonade Mother would leave in the shade

with chipped ice and a tall glass when he
would use the handmower on a hot day.

He is rubbing the grass now, the way
he did when he was a boy, after cutting it twice,
once fence to drive and, again, from garden
to house. He would sit and sip from the sweating glass;
the grass, the smell, the silent creatures
he'd disturbed, all
holier and cleaner than the wood trimming
the stations of the cross in the church a block away
over the back fence. He runs his hand
across the grass until it hits his leg
and wakes him to his task.

Decade two. The stones are dusty and pitted.
It all takes too long and he wonders
if the weather will hold. He crawls on
to The Lord's Prayer, three spaces away; he smiles
as he comes to the words, "Those who trespass,"
and looks over his shoulder toward a space
in the hedge, but knows that
what he is doing is his to do.

The third and fourth are almost too much.
The paint needs stirring, the brush is filled
with dirt; his time is running out. If
he were to show anyone a decade, it would not be
either of these. The paint is too thick, the grass
too black, the stone-face showing through too often.

He must finish and get away; he feels it
in his wrists and ankles. He wonders if he should
have come at all. His thumb,
with its nail blood dried black, is numbing.
He needs to be home, close to his own
ring of stones at the far end of the property
where he can sit and poke at the mild fires
he builds there, feeding the flames
with twigs and branches fallen on their own,
the rocks large enough not to split from the heat,
high enough to contain the blaze.

But it is time for his best work.
The paint goes on like cream, as thick
as the cream that came

in the bulb-topped bottles of the forties
that the milkman would leave in the back hall
during the war if they'd remember to prop
the shirtcard cow in the window alongside
the sign for the iceman and breadman,

Smooth as the blade of grass he holds still
between his lips, thin and slick, not a blade
to crush between thumbs
to make an unseemly noise, not one that would grow
in a back lot, but one like all the others
in this yard, planted by Father, tended
by Father, watered by Father at dusk while other lawns
went to seed and crabgrass and weed no one
could name. It tastes good and clean and cool.

And now it is done. The last bedrock black
as the pieces of coal he was allowed to pitch
into the yawning furnace,
when Father would bank the fire,
at nine-thirty every night, so that they could awaken
in Lake Erie winters to heat rising from the floor grids.

He looks back at the house, up
at the window where the afternoon light
is spreading its daily shadow across the corner
of the small blue room he'd shared with his mother.

He goes to his knees and puts the lid back
on the empty can. He wipes the brush across the label,
the brand name, the directions, the cautions,
cleaning the bristles as best he can. He will
finish the job as his father would have him do,
but not here; back home, at his own bench
in his own garage, where he belongs.

He slips the brush into its plastic sleeve
and drops it carefully into his inside suitcoat
pocket and walks to the corner of the house
where the same garbage cans wait hidden
behind the spruce trees. He lowers the container
far down inside the first and heads for the street;
he does not look back.

He has his wallet, his ticket home,
his father's brush. He is listening to the angelus

tolling from the parish belfry: six o'clock.
But there is something else, quieter than the bells
calling the villagers to prayer, something
closer. It is his mother's voice, restored,
the same voice that used to call to him
from the kitchen window; she is obeying the ringing
of the bells; she is intoning the beads
he has left in her name beneath the Niagara sky:
the threat of rain diminished, a healing breeze
from the distant river
drying the rocks where they lie.

from *Those Who Trespass*

FENDER DRUMMING

The unused lot behind the mall is lit
Like noon by a circle of idling cars,
Their high-beams isolating two Dusters,
Dead center, parked grille to grille against
Their owners' shadows tilted up to watch
A coin disappear in a late August sky then
Reappear, inside a broad band of light, flip
Flopping to the gravelly dust that swirls
Between their boots. Heads it is,

And the one billed as Downtown spits
On the dime for not being tails, rakes
His fingers through his grey thick hair
And takes his place at the right front fender
Of the teenager's car, a fender left unwashed:
A thud of curved steel waiting tight and thick
And dull. He antes up

His 50 bucks: blood money he rolls
And sticks into the ridge crack, while
Across the hood, the other they all call
Kansas City kicks in his roll and peels away
A chamois to reveal a hand-tooled fender,
Its powder blue spilling over the edge
Where his fingers are busy fondling it,
Rubbing and stroking it, preparing it
For all the things he has in mind.

The others know the rules and leave
Their cars, hushed, pressing the doors shut,
To sit on their bumpers, leaning back, allowing
Their engine blocks to shudder through them,
Headlights free to do their job no more
Than ten strides away from the drummers
Already testing the metal: tapping and banging,
Riffmg away, a run of triplets here, a ruffing
There, half-drags, flams and paradiddles,
Feeling each other out with low caliber shots
Delivered at point-blank range.

They stop and hold their hands up open
For inspection, proving they have no boot
Wax no epoxy no nu-skin no clear polish no
Thread-tape no polyethylene, nothing
But scars to keep their flesh from popping
On impact. And then the once-only passing
Of fingers behind the ears, across the brow,
Picking up any oil they can find, forcing
It deep into the finger pads they rub-up
Aside their ears, hearing the friction
Lessen as each skinprint starts to slicken.

They nod and KC hits the slap-clock perched
On the hood-drain, stepping back as Downtown
Whirls his fist high overhead, slamming it
Back down into the fender as though burying
A knife up to its hilt, leaving a crater
Round as a saucer and thrashes out his
Opening burst against its rim: a signature
Ostinato built to last: a flat-handed
Ratamacue, its 4-stroke ruffs chasing
The diddy-raks of lefts and rights, their
Accents all in line, letting it flick
Off into what sounds like a wrong turn
But brings him to a dark side street where
He plays mean, trashy shots slashing a foot
High without blood, laying down blisters
That ring true, smudging the crosstown
Rumors that he was easy: nothing more
Than a down and out ham-and-egger broken
By endless weeks on the summer circuit.

The alarm clangs and Kansas thumbs it back
To Start, using the top arc in offbeat

Only to sweep it aside with a triple
Chop and the 12-count pause the crowd knows
By name and chants across the gravel: Let
The cat out, Let the cat out, Let the cat out,
Now; and he's off, the fender swelling
On its struts as he knocks its brains out,
Whip-cracking licks coming from somewhere deep
Inside; doubled over, his cheek touching
The fender, he muffles some ruffstuff, his
Thighs easing in tight, the tingle surging up
Through his groin, his hands no more than blur
As he lays down an intimate rumble, a morendo
Delicate yet soaring from steel to paint to air,
As the slap-clock takes his time away.

Downtown sets the dial to 5 and takes
A deeper breath than he should need, turning
Toward his own car, tapping on the window
For the door to be unlocked. He gets inside
For who knows what behind all that tinted glass
Rolled up tight against the local wannabes
Who are running loose at halftime, banging
Each other's fenders to beat the band,

While Kansas City greets a curve of blackshirts
That keeps the fans at bay, except for a sleek
Young blonde who parts the crowd to drape a towel
Loose over his shoulders before sliding her hands
Down his arms in ritual: a kiss applied to the tip
Of each finger as he slides them splayed open
Across her lips, parted to allow her searching
Tongue to apply its healing balm;

KC stays put and shakes his hands, as if he's
Just washed them in a stream, before enclosing
Her face in them, drawing her close, spreading
The towel over their heads to disappear
Into a long hidden moment that is ruptured
By crackling thunder clearing the air
For three jagged strings of wet lightning
That send her away with all the others
Scrambling for their jalopies, the rat-a-tat,
Rat-a-tat, tat-tat-tat of the first plips
Of drizzle augmented by wiper blades slapping
Away in broken unison around the rim.

Time. And Downtown steps out bare-chested,
Wrapping his tee shirt in knots around his head,
The rack of his ribcage showing through
As he faces off in the growing storm for The
Give-and-Take. No clock. Set Ready Go,
And Downtown batters off his Blind Pig stutter
Step. KC hammers back a hand-butt pounding
Version of The Stumble Bomb answered in kind
By Downtown's own knuckle-knocking riff of Let
Me In echoed by a flathand read of KC's
Small-arms Fire: a frantic run of punishing
Half-drags, flams and rolls that Downtown
Duplicates as the skies pour it on, drawing

KC's healer back to his side, shaking
In a chill she can't define, as Downtown's
Car door opens and a woman, too old for such
Weather, steps out and joins him without taking
Her eyes from his hands that are running
Rudiments with KC, beat for beat: ruffs, rolls,
Paras and flams, ratams and trips and drags,
Ignoring the rivulets streaming candy apple red
With every slash they lay down: the women
Edging closer but trained to know their place
As split pads widen on each side of the hood:
Trigger fingers tearing wide open, stroke
After stroke after stroke flapping with less
Force against fenders dancing with thick
Needle-rain that scrims their hands and enshrouds
Their women who sense a final thunder.

from *Georgia Review*

STICKS

"Jazz Icarus" by Henri Matisse

Back-street bars such as those located on West Genesee, Mohawk, and Michigan, have given rise to a resurgence of interest in cool jazz. The trend has afforded the area a much-needed economic boost.
—The Buffalo Courier Express, 1951

His folks buy the lie: he'll hit the books
Over at his buddy's house, & grab supper
There, catch the Friday night double-feature
At the Royale, stop off at the malt shop, &

Be home around midnight. He slides his sticks
Up his sleeve & heads off past manicured lawns,
Alongside the library, & hops on the Delaware
Bus heading south through the projects.

Where Division cuts cross town, he transfers
To the rush-hour local & rides it to the end
Of the line, reading chunks of a crushed copy
Of King Lear that travels in his back pocket,

& still has time to work his sticks through
A few rudiments before the bus does its
U-turn in the train yards. Just two blocks
Beyond the freight house, he takes the alley

They warned him about, & comes out on Perry,
Smack in front of The Kitty Kat, its transom
Sign rimmed with rust but still pulsing cool
Blue neon through the eyes of a snarling cat.

Inside, wishing he were black, he sees what
He hoped to see: Big-Gate Clossen setting his
Traps, his ride cymbal blazing in the klieg
Light's glare. The place is filling up, still

An hour or more before the opening set of five,
& the kid asks if he can drum for mike checks,
& gets a Yes instead of the door! He rattles
Off his own double-8: smooth triplets sliding

Into a roll that blurs out atop the closed high
Hat. The sound man wants it again, & BG stops
To listen, & tells the kid to hang around, that
He can sit-in for him on an early set or two.

The kid nods, & slides his sticks into his belt,
Somehow making it to a booth without his heart
Banging through his chest. He orders a beer, but
Settles for the ginger ale they bring him in a mug.

The trio starts early, whacking the room awake
With Frenzy, & eases into Bird's version of Easy
To Love, BG's shading so delicate, his brushes
Must be tipped by strands of velvet, not wire.

The kid figures if BG waves him up, he'll go easy
On the bass pedal, chatter some with both hands
On snare & tom. Just like back home, behind the
Closed French doors: Max Roach on the turntable,

Perdido set at 78, & geared down to 33 for study,
& back up to 45, before going flat-out at 78,
Beat-for-beat with the master, ending with his
Signature tinka-tink on the crash cymbal's crest.

The trio's back from break, & BG's calling to the
Kid. He's on his feet, hearing what seems to be
Applause mixing with the pounding in his head, &
Someone yelling for him to blow the roof off!

from *Mudlark*

II. STICKS & FISTS & ROSARIES

by Dan Masterson

Dan's boyhood home

One of my earliest memories is finally going to my father to ask for help. A bully had been beating me up at recess and I was getting sick of it. He told me "a brick would help." My first exposure to metaphor. I went back the next day and smashed the kid in the nose, with his fist. Amen. A few days later, my dad chained a speed bag to a beam in our basement, stood me on a milk crate, and taught me to use my fists. It was 1941 and I was seven, and the Buffalo snow was clicking against the windows. I beat the bejabbers out of that bag every day all winter. By the time spring came, it had become a habit. I still have it.

Dan's father, Steven V. Masterson

That summer, I was coming back from our nearby library and I took a short cut behind the grocery store. I saw the teenager who lived across the street from us, a hero of mine, and he called me over to the garbage shed where he was sneaking a smoke with a buddy. They pulled me inside and pulled my shorts down. I started to scream and hit and kick and got away, running like a hobbled horse with my shorts still halfway down my legs. My dad was working in the yard, and he picked me up and I told him what I was crying about. He looked me in the eyes and said it would be okay. He handed me to my mother and went off somewhere. After a while, I went to the cellar and punished the bag, and a long time later, my dad came home, ruffled my hair, and said it was "taken care of." That was a Saturday. Monday morning, a moving van arrived across the street and that family left town. My dad never told me what he'd done—even when I was grown up. But I knew nobody should mess with him.

It was about that time I started writing poetry and stashing it out of sight in an orangewood box under my bed. My days began with a different wake-up call from my dad, always in rhyme, and at noon, I'd jump the back fence from the schoolyard for lunch with my mother, and talk about the new word she'd chosen from the open dictionary lying on the kitchen table. Toward the end of the school year, I stayed after class and asked Sister Helena if she'd read one of my poems. She frowned, grumbled, and yanked it out of my hand. She said, "There's an error in the first stanza. Do you know what a stanza is?" I did. "Well, if you find it and correct it, I may read the next stanza." "No you won't," I said, "because I won't show it to you." I was stuck with her for the next two grades, and she hit kids, but not me. My dad wouldn't allow any touching of me or my sisters. It drove the nuns nuts. It was eleven years before I showed anyone another poem: Professor Whitney at Syracuse University. He told me I had a good chance of being a poet.

Dan's mother, Kathleen Fitzpatrick Masterson

I started drumming, back in high school—first on car fenders with a buddy, and then on a beat-up set of drums I bought in downtown Buffalo. I taught myself to drum by listening to 78 RPMs on 33 and then 45 and then back up to 78. One night, I took three buses down to the Kitty Kat Klub, a black jazz bar in Buffalo, with my sticks, and talked my way into sitting in for the drummer.

Pretty soon, word spread that I was okay, and I was playing in four or five bars weekends. My folks never found out; they thought I was hanging out with my buddies. When we'd have high school dances, the bands would let me sit-in and do a solo at intermission.

When I went away to college, I played at the Cadillac Lounge on weekends after I'd drop my future wife, Janet, off seconds before curfew. I'd join Kenny Sparks who'd be in his 3rd or 4th set, playing piano and singing, working his way through college. I'd play brushes on a baby conga I'd made from a nailkeg—and bongos for Latin stuff. After college, it was back home to a dj job at "WBNY The Friendly Voice of Buffalo"—until I left for the Army.

Well, that's where the "Sticks" & "Fists" poems came from. The "Rosary" poems started during the 2nd world war when my sisters and I would join my Mom and Dad, kneeling on the living room floor, where my dad would lead the rosary. One Friday night, I must have been in 5th grade maybe, my father turned to me and said: "Why don't you lead us in prayer this evening, Dan." It was like being punched in the chest. I didn't have his thunder in my voice, but I got through it. I've carried a drum key in my righthand jacket pocket and a rosary in my left, all these years. The rosary beads used to get tangled in a roll of dimes wrapped in electrical tape (brass knuckles that don't show), just in case. Our household was strict Catholic: Confession, Mass, Communion, Novenas, the whole works. And it stuck for a long time. The rosary still feels good in my fingers, and the prayers to my head. But much of the orthodoxy has vanished, the church-going, the rules, and the holier-than-thous. Monkhood is good. But what stuck, really stuck. I'm part priest. Would have been if I could have married Janet, but I would have lasted about two Sundays before I decked Father Bingo who would have wanted to run/ruin my life. But a lot of good stuff rubbed off. And the poems are fueled by it, in an oblique way—but it's there.

Dan holding a print of George Bellows' "Stag at Sharkey's" during a reading at Syracuse University

The titles of Dan Masterson's books come from his early days: *On Earth As It Is, Those Who Trespass, World Without End, All Things, Seen and Unseen*. And so do the poems, if you scratch your way inside. The complete texts of his first two books, *On Earth as It Is* and *Those Who Trespass* (now out of print), are online in the permanent collection of The Contemporary American Poetry Archives (http://capa.conncoll.edu/). His third collection, *World Without End*, is still available. His next collection, ten years in the making, is entitled *That Which Is Seen*, a gathering of 35 poems based exclusively on artwork.

Anthologies containing his work include *The Random House Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry; Holt Language Arts; Poets Against the War; Caught in the Net; A New Geography of Poetry; Heart to Heart; Inkwell; Analecta*; and *Perfect in Their Art*.

Roots run deep for Masterson, and he credits the boxing bag for much of the acceptance his work has received, explaining how he pummels the bag with the sounds of the 26 poetic meters he has posted on the cellar wall, allowing his body and mind to absorb the scrambling rhythms that find their way into his writing during the rest of the day.

He was elected to membership in Pen International in 1986, and is the recipient of two Pushcart Prizes, the Bullis, Borestone, and The CCLM Fels awards, and is an AWP Award Series honoree, as well as the founding editor of the internet's Enskyment Poetry Anthology.

Professor Masterson remains grateful to fellow poets who have been good to him from the beginning, including two legendary poets who jump-started his career back in the late sixties: Rockland County's internationally revered late, great poets, Marya Zaturenska and her husband, Horace Gregory. Others include Richard Eberhart, Anne Sexton, James Dickey, Miller Williams, Donald Hall, and John Allman, who also has poems in this issue of *Innisfree*.

In 2006, Syracuse University's Bird Library assumed stewardship of "The Dan Masterson Papers" for its Special Collections Research Center, an honor the poet never expected, convinced as he was that his "scribblings" would eventually make their way to the curb to be hauled away to a recycling plant where they would be transformed into Bounty kitchen wipes.

He and his wife, Janet, a psychotherapist, divide their time between their home in Pearl River and their getaway cabin, where they welcome their daughter and her family, from nearby Harrington Park, and their son and his family, from far off Los Angeles, to the high-peaks region of the Adirondacks.

Brienne Katherine Adams

ART

Floating above myself,
I watch you love me:
Languid and slow,
Savoring each stroke
Like an artist with his brush,
Painting the canvas of my body
With layer upon layer of pleasure,
Until nothing exists
But brilliant color,
And the exhilaration
Of becoming lost with you
In the art of our making.

Brienne Katherine Adams' poetry has appeared, or will soon appear, in *Westward Quarterly, The Storyteller, Beyond Centauri, Love's Chance Magazine, Rocky Mountain Rider*, and *The Shepherd Magazine***.**

John Allman

AESTHETICS

But there's the enigma of facts. A black and white
        '57 Chevy with a playpen stuffed in the back
where our daughter grips the mesh. This could have been
        a Dodge. Or a Rambler. A Lark. We might

have lived in Utica, in constant rain, near the brewery.
        The old cemetery down the hill with those headstones
of young children, who knows what other names
        we bring with us, crossing Oak Street, turning down

James, past the stone churches, the old railroad station,
        the ghostly arrivals that even now twist their way
into numbers: 1940, 1953, 1959. In all this, the shock of
        recognition—like studying Hiroshige's print of a cat

in a window from 150 years ago, and seeing ourselves there,
        a shirt draped over the window ledge, a mat on the floor,
the white cat curled up with the stub of a black tail,
        Mt. Fuji in the distance, the sky layered blue

and white, the sun's rising red low on the horizon.
        How can we be there, and here on the back porch,
someone’s radio blaring in the car passing by,
        some war or other, some hurricane, someone

crossing the double yellow line into oncoming
        news.

OFF AVENUE C

1

Gone. The entire building. The fifth-floor
rooms, the desk, a gas heater blowing, an
old Remington once again out of the pawn
shop, and you arriving with cold cuts, baguettes,
tomatoes, bringing the sun up all those flights.
The Chinese laundry below steaming out of

itself, the Jewish cleaners pressing my one
and only suit, the newspaper kiosk, the Kosher
deli, Gable's Pharmacy, these, too, fallen
through a hole into the great wind that blows

time through the vacuum, the colorless void,
the rich silence, because time is a substance,
a fabric that twists and gnarls even as it folds
like a force and opens suddenly wide, sailing
and embedded with the caught gravity of stars.
This tall space between buildings just a gap
in the thinking. A narrow encumbrance
one sees through. A forgetfulness. A song
of the vast in-between where we held hands
and watched a moon rise over the tenements.

2

But if time is just the distance between A and B
that never occurs unless we are moving toward
or away, and if that building were never razed
that we never lived in more than a summer,
and you were the bus driver you always wanted
to be, and I joined my father's teamster's union,
both of us coming home to each other's diesel fumes,
a man and woman moving just slow enough so that
light took the entire day to move from one end
of our bed to another, leaving a semi-darkness that
clung to our bodies, even as you steered so many

people to a curb or I dumped a load of bricks,
the poverty of arrival never less than the wealth
of departure, because coming or going was a fable
of journeying, where there was no port or station
in our blood but the motion of time's biology, yes,
time's body, time's desolate genitals, time's red-rimmed
eyes that followed us in sleep like an envious lover
cast off, and what mounted the stairs to our floor,
what seemed out of breath, what clutched the worn
banister, what turned the knob of our unnumbered door
was distance itself befuddled by our standing still.

SPECIFICS

The faces of our newly dead flash on the screen
in silence. The faces of the other dead recently
buried in rubble or blown to shreds in a bazaar

or at a funeral, not seen but numbered for our
convenience—a sale price crossed out and something
lower written in red. Our vocabulary lags, but the

poor are singing their song lovely with need, bright
with longing, resonant and sharp at the edges. Here,
father, I can show you where the woodchuck is eating

the leaves of our cucumber plants. The deer nibble
down our pink impatiens. Skunks squabble at night
in a fury of black and white at the leftover cat food.

We must close our windows to keep out the spray
of their anger. Soon, it will be a century since you
were born and I have little to show you that is not

the negative image of the souls who drift through
space, through the mist, through our open hands. There
is no counting of the names. Here, father, is the broken

rain gutter that spills sudden storm down our window,
that blurs the out-there, that would be streaming down
your face if you still had a face. There is always a war

dragging on. Blueberries crushed at the bottom of the
grocery bag, a blue stain that works its way onto my shirt.
Not exactly blood. Not quite the spill of a stomach. Not

really time working its way through the fabric and paper
of our resistance to the specifics of being here. See
how soap washes it away. See how lye, under the right

conditions, without burning cleanses the touch of strenuous
life.

The poems included in *Innisfree 8* will be collected in Allman's eighth book of poems, *Older Than Our Fathers*. A selection of 25 poems from that collection has been arranged as an electronic chapbook published by the online journal *Mudlark*, #37 http://www.unf.edu/mudlark/ Other poems from *Older Than Our Fathers* have appeared in *Hotel Amerika, New York Quarterly* and *The Asheville Poetry Review*. Allman's previous books of poetry include *Loew's Triboro* (2004) and *Lowcountry* (2007), published by New Directions, which has done most of his books, including the short–story collection, *Descending Fire & Other Stories*. Allman is a two-time recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Pushcart Prize winner in Poetry. His first book, *Walking Four Ways in the Wind*, appeared in the Princeton Contemporary Poets Series. His work has appeared in many journals, from the *American Poetry Review* to *The Yale Review*. His *Inhabited World: New & Selected Poems 1970-1995* was published by The Wallace Stevens Society Press. Retired from teaching, John Allman lives in Katonah, NY and Hilton Head Island, SC.

Bruce Bennett

LOCOMOTION

A snail that makes its sure slow way
persists. It does not need to say:
"My locomotion is okay

For what I do and where I go."
It goes, and does. It isn't "slow."
It has the pace of those who know

Their time's their own, and what they do
is vital, and they'll make it through.
What difference if their tasks are few,

Their track is humble and unseen?
Their fervor for their life is keen!
They have a bead on what they mean.

AGAINST PROVIDENCE

If accident denotes an act
that did not have to happen, fact
is accidental, only set
by chance that has not happened yet.

FICTIONS

The part of anyone you know
is just a part, and even though
your knowledge of that part may grow,

Or, even possibly, extend
to other parts, still, at the end,
it's partial knowledge you depend

Upon to parse into a whole,
a fiction you assign a role,
imagining you can control

That self-created self, which plays
along—or doesn't—knowing ways
to mask the mystery it stays.

FALSE CONSTRUCTS

False constructs lead to false conclusions
that lead to greater, worse confusions,
which throw all meaning into doubt
until false constructs sort it out.

SOMETHING LIKE KARMA

Something like Karma makes the only sense.
You live; you die. Yet there is recompense
for how you did it. Something's keeping track.
And, if you're good enough, you don't come back.

These poems will appear in a new collection, entitled *Something Like Karma*, to be published by Clandestine Press in late Spring. Bruce Bennett is the author of seven books of poetry and numerous poetry chapbooks. He teaches English and Creative Writing and directs the Visiting Writers Series at Wells College in Aurora, New York.

P.D. Bresnahan

WATER WITCH

I envy her certainty.
The way she jumps
from the Dodge Ram pick-up,
sets down a pail filled with branches
and picks a stick,
her arms a tanned extension
of the forked wood.
She walks
until the stick flips,
yanks her wrist down
then flags the spot,
steps again.
She knows the water is waiting.
Like an answer,
the stick bends
to where it first drank.

Peg Bresnahan has one book of poetry, *Chasing Light*, and her work is published in journals, such as *Wisconsin Review, Kansas Quarterly, Kakalak, Cream City Review*, and *Nebraska Review*. She lives in Cedar Mountain, NC.

Norma Chapman

IT'S OVER

As I was moving out, Jack said,
"We can still be friends, can't we?"
I said, "yes," but I lied. I drank more.

I drank and—
worked full time;
took a night class in drawing
    where I practiced sheer:
    the chair through the shirt,
    the object through water
looked for sexual partners
joined Single Booklovers and wrote only
to men who lived at least 1,000 miles away.

I gave myself a 50th birthday party and invited
all my friends except Jack. It started at 3 pm
on a Saturday afternoon and lasted until
3 am Sunday with an argument between my son
and my craziest woman friend. I was exhausted.

I was 50 but far too tired to notice.
My boss wrote me a poem. It's lost.
I wish I could find it.
He's dead now, and I'm sober.

Norma Chapman lives in Brunswick, a small town in Western Maryland. She started writing poetry after turning sixty. Her poems have appeared in *Passager, Innisfree Poetry Journal, Iris, The Sow's Ear*, and *River Styx*. She received a 2003 Maryland State Arts Council Grant.

Joanne Rocky Delaplaine

A FLIGHTINESS OF GRACKLES

Grackles are flying in parabolas. On the grass, foraging. Now fence, now goal post,
tree, goal post, fence, now back to grass. Four and twenty, times three, give or take.
Plumly says This world, says Look, says Count the blackbirds. Unlike geese, grackles

flock in a circularity, a pie, opened. Instead of one, they all seem to lead. Yoga master B.K.S
Iyengar—Each cell in our body, an intelligence. Grackles, me, a democracy. We live by
magnetism. Females, these, nutmeg brown, not iridescent blue-black.

Fort Reno Park, eating lunch after teaching class. It's Thursday, mid-June, the sky, clear. Clouds,
like grackles, unraveling fringe. Behind me a tennis match. Two men
speaking Russian. Thwack . . . thwack . . . another parabola, yellow-green.

My father's unreturnable serve. Dad, mom, three or more kids on the tennis
court. C'mon dad, ease up. Fenced behind the birds, a stone water tower as medieval castle turret.
The prince to Rapunzel, Let down your golden hair. A man practices golf.

I ask him about the park. He says, Highest elevation in the city, largest of the
Civil War ring forts . . . The trip uptown, Whitman and his friend . . . Doyle . . . Peter. If
you were in love with a trolley conductor wouldn't you bring him here, or come for the breeze?

The grackles graze by four sloping locust trees. My fickle heart wants to lift,
head straight for blue, between those clouds, or, like grackles, fly up, then return
to earth. Birds, clouds make the air visible. There they go again. . . a gust . . . .

WHAT HAVE WE LOST?

after Elizabeth Bishop

The planet's getting hotter, melting faster.
Al Gore implores, *Beware of greenhouse gases,*
relinquish fossil fuels or court disaster.

The dinosaurs died out, Velociraptor,
then Mastodon and Woolly Mammoth. Alas,
poor fossils fuel a planet's melting faster.

No one thought the dodo's end of vast or
weighty note. Flightless, happy, plump-ass:
They didn't call its passing a disaster.

Oil spills pollute our seas and rivers.
Habitats are shrinking for gorillas.
The planet's getting hotter, melting faster.

Extinct: the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker,
Though briefly seen in Arkansas and Texas.
Could fossil fuels be causing this disaster?

Some say the loss of species doesn't matter.
So what: no frogs, no newts, no cranes, no pandas?
The planet's getting hotter, melting faster.
When we're extinct, no beast will cry, *Disaster.*

Joanne Rocky Delaplaine lives and writes in Bethesda, Maryland. Her poems have appeared in *Poet Lore; Beltway: A Poetry Quarterly, (Walt Whitman & Wartime Issues); Cabin Fever: Poets at Joaquin Miller's Cabin, 1984-2001; WordWrights; Other Testaments, Volume 1; The Old Testament; Friends Journal*; and elsewhere. She teaches a workshop called Expressing The Sacred: Yoga, Poetry and Prayer. A short story of hers won first prize in the Bethesda Literary Festival.

Carol Frith

METRICAL REFLECTIONS

Once upon a time, you say, too many springs ago . . .
You tell the old story of Narcissus, his round,
dark pool as cold as any mirror.

I'm counting syllables in Hardy, obsessed
with ballad meter. Echo, you repeat, and jonquils.
Once upon a time, too many springs ago

to count, there was a naked boy, his fragile face
like glass, a metrical reflection, dark, you tell me,
as a reedy pool, and cold as any mirror.

I ignore Narcissus for a scansion study,
focus on my nervous diacriticals.
Once upon a time, you say again. Come spring,

you'll want to plant narcissus, put in
a pond, perhaps. I hear hendecasyllables,
envision a dark pool cold as any mirror.

Stressed, unstressed, I analyze my Hardy, chilled
and broken lyrics of iambic verse. Once
upon a time, you say. Cold, purple-throated
jonquils bend above my Hardy, dark as any mirror.

CHINESE SILK PAINTING WITH LILIES AND BUTTERFLIES

Trigrams and Hexagrams—a trinity of lilies
and six leaves. This represents good order,
with two butterflies. Each lily is a cycle of light,

the afternoon, a soft breath. Standard ink, jade
inkstone, and a silken brush. Silk papers for
Trigrams and Hexagrams—a trinity of lilies.

No dragon is pictured here: no phoenix and no bamboo.
In the upper right-hand corner of the silk are
two butterflies. Each lily is a cycle of light.

Much of this is misunderstood: misuse of arsenic
and inkstones, the gradual silence of the exposed silk:
Trigram and Hexagram, a trinity of lilies

in careful inks. The old masters used single-
shuttle silk. No pears are pictured here, no willows.
There are two butterflies, and cycles of lilies

in outline: vitality of stems. This is not fixed work.
The pale blooms are painted fully open, in
Trigram and Hexagram. In this trinity of lilies
with two butterflies, each lily is a cycle of light.

Carol Frith is co-editor of *Ekphrasis*, a poetry journal. She has been published in *Seattle Review, Cutbank, MacGuffin, Switched-on Gutenberg, Asheville Poetry Review* and others. Her chapbooks are from Medicinal Purposes, Palanquin, Bacchae Press, and Finishing Line. Her full-length collection is due out in 2010 from David Robert Books.

Bridget Gage-Dixon

FIRST COMMUNION

This is my body which will be given up for you.

I went to the altar in eyelet and organza,
stood with my mouth slack and stared
at the coarse white hairs that rose from the priest's
weathered hands as he lay bland flesh on my tongue.

This is the cup of my blood.
The blood of the new and everlasting covenant.

I couldn't hold the chalice or taste the wine,
only the flow of spittle as it slipped over the sides of my tongue
dissolving that unleavened disc.

It will be shed for you and for all
So that sins may be forgiven.

But when I walked back down the aisle
to where my father stood
in his resurrected Easter suit,
he lifted my veil, kissed my cheek,

Do this in memory of me

and I drew in his breath, savoring the traces
of cigarettes and Tellamore Dew.

Bridget Gage-Dixon's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poet Lore, Inkwell, U.S. 1 Worksheets*, and *Gargoyle* as well as several others. She received her MFA from Stonecoast/USM. She lives and teaches in central New Jersey.

Sarah Estes Graham

SUBURBAN VIEW

A couple stand aimlessly
over the foot of their bed,
watching themselves tangle
in the bare sheets.

Chaos a sexual luxury
afforded early in a relationship,
no children.
Entrapment, a favored anger,
arousing, solid.

God shoulders a burden
in the foreground,
hungry for attention—
for anything, really.

Peers, sighs,
desperate to save His reputation.
The parents and house
turn mightily on their foundations
as if staged, hinges glistening with sweat.

So warm here.
The latest in theater soft-ware.
No lovers no children no god
no raccoons with rabies,
whispered hairs of spring bleeding

into summer, into the worn fall.
Choices spin like roasting hens.
An eternal display of spitfire,
grocery lanes, shrieks and fast cars.

The enraged lovers
would like to own one another,
something anyhow.
God in the helpless corner—

They turn on him,
as to a woman, a child
and move.

BLACKFEET

All my want and indecision,
days wandering the far fields of faith,
the hungry winters of infant hands

going after the mobile, day and night,
then thought, then nothing—
a lover rolled over the guilty hours.

Now a pudding, sweet and thick.
Now a dandelion, mint-leaved and dark.

Long swallowed the sensual forms
of poetry and desire,
that game you staked your life on.

Nothing to do but offer yourself
palms brimming with pemmican and berries,
wild winter fruits to eat.

Sarah Estes Graham is a freelance writer and the GAGE program coordinator at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. Her poems and reviews have appeared in *Agni, A&S Magazine, Facets, Meridian, New Orleans Review, Virginia Quarterly Review* and others. Sarah has received grants from the Bread Loaf Conference, the James River Conference, and the U.Va. English Department, and won a $10,000 prize for her essay on Iraq. Her poetry manuscript was short-listed for the Dorset Prize from Tupelo Press. She got her MFA from the University of Virginia studying under Rita Dove, Greg Orr, and Charles Wright, and has a master's in theology from Harvard, where she also worked with Jorie Graham, Kyoko Mori, and D.A. Powell. Raised in rural Illinois and suburban St. Louis, Sarah has lived in Belgium and Japan and traveled across Mongolia, Siberia, and Europe. Her work blends the geographic and spiritual resonances of her native Midwest with cultural practices encountered abroad. Sarah is of Blackfoot descent.

John Grey

I VISIT MY AUNT AND UNCLE

I was swinging down the sidewalk, carrying
my turtle in a pin-pricked box. I lost count
of the people who ignored me. Old men outside
the feed-store playing checkers. Women bent down
in their flower-beds. A priest, neck stiff as
his collar. Even kids on swings or on bicycles.
Even wild dogs. Not one sniff. Not even a curious
whiff of the turtle as it scraped back and forth in its blindness.

At least, my aunt and uncle would pretend to
know me. They came to the door together. Her
eyes were red. It didn't seem to matter that
I knew she had been crying. She sat me at the
table, fed me milk and cookies, while he
disappeared down into the basement. She just
stared at me like I was a rose in a vase. He
banged and clanged away like an old boiler.

That was when I had no clue what to say to
older people. I opened the box. I was as
dumb, as still and silent as the turtle.
It didn't even crane its neck to look up at me.
It must have felt about me as I did about her.
It just sat there inside its shell waiting
for me to make the next move in its life.
I sipped the milk slowly. One nibble from the
cookie and the rest of it crumbled in my hand.

"How's your mother," she said. She was talking
through more tears. Her voice was muffled like
a fish mouthing against the side of its bowl.
"Okay," I mumbled in reply. I made a point to sometime
ask the turtle how its mother was. She turned her face
so the window light could reach down into her cheek and
push the purple of her bruise up to the surface. He was
louder and louder in the basement.

She suddenly ran into the bedroom, wailing,
leaving me there with my half-drunk glass of milk,

my cookie crumbs, my helpless pet. He came upstairs
later, sat at the other end of the table, read the newspaper.
At one point, he interrupted his reading to admire my turtle,
muttered, "I had one of those when I was your age."
It wasn't much of a confession but we made do.

John Grey has been published recently in *Agni, Worcester Review, South Carolina Review* and *The Pedestal*, with work upcoming in *Poetry East* and *REAL*.

Gabe Heilig

GRAZING WITH YOU

for Walt Whitman

I sit here, perched on your shoulders,
reading and reeling, page after page,
watching the multitudinous you tossing words like seeds,
growing and mowing the fields of my mind with the broad swing of your lines.
Sometimes I sit in the shade of your beard as you romp and stomp across a continent,
doing my best to keep up, but trailing behind,
picking up rhythms and lines, trying to come to the place you have reached.

Here, at the edge of this road, I walk through the open gate onto yours—
I do not stop or look for safety; instead, following your tracks,
I notice that so much is empty and silent, and nothing collapses—
the fields you show us, silent as the space between worlds,
and the world's endless arguments, most about nothing—
the nothing of the mind, and the nothing it holds out
to us, whether we are right or wrong.
Those who argue and chatter know nothing of the silence
you show us, walking the road few dare to travel,
thumb outstretched to the sun.

And then on the road, to relax in the shade,
loafing with you, never far from the road, vortex
after vortex of you, flowing into rivers and streams of good cheer.
You are the one we have wanted to be, the one we thought we
ourselves could be if we knew ourselves well enough to leave
the skin of our names behind.

In those luckier moments after death, you have passed here,
leaving these cuttings for us, the shoots and leaves we are left
to cultivate in our own pages,
the chapters of lives we have not written fully, nor listened in
to their silences deeply enough.

Your soul grows its bridges of bearded words—
this is the road I move toward, for I know it also moves toward me.

I will travel this way for as long as I can step, one foot above
and then under the other. You lead us like children, harking
and barking every sound of the morning—whispering, shouting,
praying, carousing across miles of sunrise and season—
you stride forth as we follow, learning
even as we learn to leave learning behind.
We travel the fields you have opened, under the stars,
on to where nothing is known or unknown, on to where
nothing is lost, because nothing is kept, on to the place
where skins and gods mingle their names like roots in the earth.

The road of emptiness, on and onward—
nothing of the silence you have shown us collapses,
on we follow, more than a century later,
loafing awhile, munching your leavings, working the road of the page—
page upon page, bridge beyond bridge, the emptiness pouring
the type to capture letters of fire,
on toward the light that brought us here and takes us home—
finally to sit, facing you, dew on the grass growing around us
like the earth's tears, or yours, and growing downward also,
toward the deep graves and the good fortune they hold for us,
if only we can bring our selves onto the road curling beneath your smile,
if only we learn to relax, forgetting who we thought we had to be,
remembering who we are.

So I sit here, loafing, grazing, resting awhile,
but not long, for I have work to do, holding my end
of the rope of silence that binds us to you,
maestro of the music of dawn, camerado of all
that does not collapse, answerer of questions
asked first and last, and not even asked, turning the page
of the soul with you.

There is work to do, the work of growing down as well as up,
coming to you sitting here, nodding in final agreement with you—
page after page we walk like this, page after page after page
teaching nothing, except how nothing is final,
page upon page teaching silence,
the space within words and always between them—
and beneath them always, the silence.

Like iron cords raising the bridges of language,
we crowd near you to view the new land,

beyond the Babels we keep treading and climbing
in endlessly repeating and endlessly shouting circles,
wide and wider, on and onward,
on toward the silence that calls us to sing
what cannot be spoken, our words like arrows, pointing beyond where they land.

Like this, we grab our canes,
hoisting again the vowels of courage
that carry us on, on and onward—
onto small roads and broad roads we travel like this,
shouting, singing, aiming our songs at the silence—
camerados of far American horizons, singing the purity of
all it will be, yet who cannot tell us exactly what it is—
camerados hoisting songs like beer, songs
that celebrate the color of air, the breath of the heart, the taste of the soul—
camerados of nothing, nothing at all.

Gabe Heilig has twice been a featured poet on Grace Cavalieri's "The Poet and The Poem." He was "script doctor" for A Step Away From War, narrated by Paul Newman, and has had essays published by St. Martin's Press and Tarcher/Putnam. He founded the only resume service ever given a lease to do business in the Pentagon and lives in Takoma Park, MD.

Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa

CONNEMARA

for Joan McBreen

Whatever ink I use to write
Tullycross
whatever lens I choose
to capture Connemara
whatever spot I lay down my grief
or pick up joy

whatever Audigier
in her backyard garden paints
with hurricanes

from hair driers
whatever river coils among these hills
over crumpled land

of silence and distance
here fills me, like a glass
with the honey of untouched time

Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa was born in Warri, Nigeria, and currently lives in Ireland. His poetry has been published in a number of online and print journals and an Irish-Canadian anthology. He is a Yeats's Pierce Loughran Scholar.

Rod Jelema

THE RUNAWAY

As I wait for the computer screen
to come on, a single light comes in
from far behind it, a pinpoint growing

larger, larger, until it snaps into place
as an old train engine filling the screen.
Now steam and station lights swirl to suggest
a school-days photo, faded to yellowish brown,
of Herky—runt in rags and got-no-pa Herky,
who died back then and none of us cared.

He is crouched and staring as always
at the big black straining engine
that twice each day pulled the cars
with shiny windows through our town
to Chicago. The engine shakes
and huffs, catching its breath,

but Herky has vanished into the steam
so I run and run for the train's departure,
catch the handrail and swing myself
aboard, riding the clicks alone through
the night, leaving town, leaving town
to live out Herky's life and my own.

INCIDENT AT
THE SAVANNAH RIVER MOUTH

Hillybilly streams
come harping on and on
toward the sea, but
here slow down
their twang,

hold deep in the mouth
their stiller flow,
waiting in this hush
of salt hay and marsh

to slip away
whenever the moon
says now.
Dusk and rising tide.
Guitar chords
from a far-off radio.
Through hanging mist
I can just make out
in rental boat 8
a tall figure alone.

Oars resting, crossed,
he leans with the drift
and I squint to watch
with tightening fists,
nails biting my palms,
I strain into the loosening dark
that takes him out.

WHERE

The boy I try to keep
awake and on watch inside me
used to wonder,
as I walked home some evenings,
where my shadow went
when it went.
Now I know. Night
herds my shadow into
the dark stalls of my body,
darkness pushed into
the whole sleeping shape of me,
my trillion locked cells.
Often I can feel it stir and
steal away. When I jolt myself
awake, refilling the absence
of shadow with black coffee, I know
it's in the morning streets, quietly
waiting for me up ahead.

ABOUT LOSS

What we lose that's gone—a photo,
the year we missed spending in Spain,

just a minute for goodbyes with a son
who died, the many chances to prove
the love that survives its own failures—
we can get on without them.
Their absence is never the point.
Loss itself is not an absence,
its very presence is what stirs us:
the son remembered, the daughters
who couldn't make it home to their births,
the opening phrase of a poem or of music
meant to say love that can't resolve Its theme.
Sometimes I catch, against green leaves
in our ancient silver maple, three seconds
of bunting flashing his indigo shape
of early morning praise that's still
almost lost and trying to break through.

READING A MILK CARTON IN A SUPERMARKET IN MY OLD HOMETOWN

Distributed by TruVal Dairy Products, Inc.
486 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 40237
(milk carton, Holland, Michigan)

When I grew up in Holland in the thirties
the names of dairies conjured up
black-and-white cows under cool green shade
with freshets of water nearby: names like Elm Valley,
Lakeside, Maple Grove, Cold Spring, Beaver Dam.
At our house, Cloverleaf sang of tasty greens
in the cud they chewed, drowsy, swelling with milk.

A few dairy names were local I. D. cards, assuring us
that no worldly cows from elsewhere were horning in:
Holland Creamery, Tulip City. We even knew
which of our covenant heifers were calmed by peaceful views
while grazing: Hillcrest, Riverview, Golden Vista. Such words
when herded together, neatly lettered on trucks and bottles,
buttered the way through what parents called the Depression.

Of the fifteen dairies for our town of fifteen thousand,
only two resisted romance and took workaday names—
Consumers. Square Deal. Plain as crates and adding machines.
I like to think that they were the first to go.
One dairy—stuck on the very edge of town, being pressed

on all sides by new houses, street lights, cement—
flagged itself anyway rural as the mysterious Rivulet Hurst.

Our cows must have been scrubbed with Dutch cleanser.
They all had names and papers, and smiled, we imagined,
while yielding milk to their godlike farmers—our milkmen.
And all winter long, with little stand-up trucks and wire baskets,
the farmers stole in before daylight to the town's back doors or stoops
with glass pints and quarts of snow white milk, each bottle
wearing under its printed cap a rich collar of light gold cream.

In spring, we kids knew the very day the cows were sprung
from their stale winter barns and sour fodder, set free at last
to munch in the meadows. How? By the tang of new onion grass
In our glasses of milk. We talked of it at school. I liked to imagine
hundreds of cows stampeding from winter barns
and onto the singing meadows, dancing, udders flying, snorting,
snuffling up the sweet-smoke joy of born-again grass,

while—springy as hop-scotch and baseball mitts—the dawn sunlight
lit up again the proud little trucks with their painted names, so nice to say—
Cloverleaf, Maple Grove. . . . ah, the fifteenth: Meadowbrook. . . .

Rod Jellema's last book of poems, *A Slender Grace*, won the Towson University Prize for Literature in 2006. Some recent work is published or forthcoming in *Poet Lore, Image*, and *Potomac Review*. *His Incarnality: The Collected Poems* is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2009.

Jennifer Juneau

I HAVE ALWAYS DEPENDED ON THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS
—Tennessee Williams

Sister from a vague past,
I've come back from farther than that.
Let me in and I'll sing to you the funeral blues.
Why does your skin sweat so?
Is this life at its best? Do you think
Your penury gets a rise out of me?
Let me cross your threshold
Chauffeuring mantles of summer fur, a history.

My voice rises above the screech
Of a locomotive: I am a revolver
Loaded with rhinestones, poems a dead boy wrote.
I wear his tight-lipped melody around my conscience
And it's my choice if I sing it to you in the dark
Till darkness finds my voice. It was one trick
After another until they kicked me out of town.
Don't frown—I'm here now
To smother the bruise on your face with a frozen steak.
Your old man's torment hangs in the air about to shriek
And when he finds me here the scene won't be pretty.
So fetch me a drink and kill the lights.
Take a load off sister, this may be a long night.

Jennifer Juneau's work has appeared in many journals including *American Poetry Journal, Cimarron Review, Cincinnati Review, New Zoo Poetry Review, Passages North, Seattle Review*, and elsewhere, and has been featured on *Verse Daily* as poem of the day. A recipient of two prizes from the California Poetry Society, her collection, *More Than Moon*, was a National Poetry Series finalist.

Claire Keyes

ATALANTA OR THE AUDACITY OF SPEED

after Ovid

Consider Atalanta: she runs so fast
her own shadow gets lost in the dust.
No man can resist her beauty, her flashing feet.
When her suitors fall panting to the ground,
Atalanta races to the close. They die: the fate
they must foresee. Alone at the finish line, she wonders,
silly girl, if she will marry. But the oracle has decreed:
take a husband and say goodbye to the rush of wind
through your hair, the audacity of speed.

Venus, watching from her cushy bower, takes pity
on a fine young man, the great grand-son of Neptune.
It pleases the goddess to succor the love-lorn
Hippomenes. With three golden apples from her tree
and the goddess's plan, he will win his Atalanta.

Clueless, the maiden has no gods on her side
only the power of her strong legs and supple feet.
But the apple he tosses in front of her gleams
and rolls more perfectly than other apples.
With a swoop of her arm, she retrieves it,
her suitor several paces behind. Does she suspect
no trick? Not even with the second apple?

She spurts further ahead, an apple in each hand,
the harsh pulse of his breath behind her. And he, devious
with love-tricks, throws the third a little further.
And she, having two, wants three, but so clumsy,
she doesn't have hands enough. He races ahead
and turns to claim his beloved, his bride.

Don't expect a happy ending: the lovers mate
where they should not, flaunting their love-making
for the gods to see. A heart's beat, a shocked gasp
and the hair on their arms grows long and lustrous,
their teeth sharpen and they swish their tails, bulking up

into lions, flexed claws where fingers used to be.
They growl, not grasping the strange, vindictive powers
the gods possess. But relax. It's just a story.
Consider Atalanta, how fast she could run.

FIGURE EIGHTS

What a fool to be fond of winter.
February needs no friends, cold, contained,
yet providing this frozen pond, an offer

I can't resist. Feeling bold as the child
I was, I pull on socks and skates, take
some wobbly steps, then settle into a glide

across sleek winter ice, liking the stark
surround of winter trees, pine and birch sheathed
in snow and ice. Looking back,

I see boys in hot pursuit of a puck, their raised
sticks, their gambits unable to touch
me as I kick, glide, and head

for the pond's outer reaches
where I can spin or trace figure eights.
No one to witness the precise yet antic stitch

made by my legs and skates, my cuts
on the ice weaving over and around
marrying present to past

with a silver, sizzling sound.

Claire Keyes is the author of a book of poems, *The Question of Rapture*, published in 2008 by Mayapple Press in Michigan. Professor Emerita at Salem State College, where she taught English for thirty years, she has also written *The Aesthetics of Power: The Poetry of Adrienne Rich*, newly published in paperback in 2009 by the University of Georgia Press. Her poems and reviews have appeared in *Calyx, The Valparaiso Review*, and *The Women's Review of Books*, among others. Her chapbook, *Rising and Falling*, won the Foothills Poetry Competition. She is a resident of Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Jacqueline Lapidus

LOWER EAST SIDE

Nobody saw us tiptoe in
except shoes on the second-floor
landing, a dozen pairs
reproachful but mute as we climbed the stairs
—panting a little, no longer young enough
to run, though you carried my bag
lightly—whispering under the hum
of a dozen Buddhists chanting.
In the comfort you created
from this vast industrial space
and with a brief prayer for its lawful
mistress, I hesitated
before I took off my clothes, but
only for a moment.

Jacqueline Lapidus grew up in New York City and lived abroad for more than 20 years, first in Greece, then in France where she was active in international feminist groups. A lifelong editor, teacher, and translator now based in Boston, she was a consulting editor for *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and currently edits a French-language Web site for Oxfam America. She holds degrees from Swarthmore College and Harvard Divinity School. Her poems have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies and in three collections: *Ready to Survive, Starting Over*, and *Ultimate Conspiracy*.

Hiram Larew

IT'S GETTING LATE

Where is your home
Where do you go when the rain tells you to
Or if the night's wing is full open
What does it mean when
A hill sings back clear
Or the soup tries to whistle
How can a voice be just like pulled onions—
Oh the edge of smoke and your questions

Too often it seems shoulders are cold
And time barely hellos
Roots stop at rocks
And there is much more to this place than the people—
So who is made of who
Where is your never not knowing
Your birds looking down
Your sky on the land
Your surrounding
Is there somewhere as far as you're going

There's a comfort in things
That don’t circle back
And words that search for forever
Half of your place is knowing
What to ask last
Like embers at night
While the other is out guessing before
At what love is.

Larew's work has appeared in many poetry journals and won several awards. His second collection, *More than Anything*, was published in 2007 by Vrzhu Press. He lives in Upper Marlboro, MD. His email address is hlarew@juno.com.

Barbara F. Lefcowitz

THE ICE MIRROR

Probably I saw it only once,
that block of ice
a man released from black straps,
lifted with tongs, slipped
onto a rack inside a wooden box,
the block's blue sheen
so translucent I could study its inner life,
the rivulets and winding paths,
until ordered to shut the door
before summer heat ruined our dinner.
I barely had time to catch my face
on its surface, but the block remains intact,
long beyond the ice box, the gleaming
black pump, the kerosene stove shared
by Sadie and Jenny and Annie; the house itself
with its daguerreotype of Lincoln,
Civil War sword, the house three families shared,
fled from the City to escape
the latest epidemic, flu, typhus, polio, pox . . . .
Far beyond its latticed front porch
a war was going on, or so the grown-ups said
when a loud whistle from a nearby arsenal,
whatever that was, slashed the day
precisely at noon. O what did I know
about wars, epidemics, the women's labor
in the hot fanless kitchen, Sadie and
Jenny and Annie died long ago,
though their uncreased faces
sometimes flash, then fade
in that block of ice,
that yellowing mirror I still carry.

Barbara F. Lefcowitz has published nine poetry collections. Her most recent, *The Blue Train to America*, appeared in 2007. Her fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in over 500 journals. She has won writing fellowships and prizes from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Rockefeller Foundation, among others. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland, and is also a visual artist. Recently she has begun to write one-act plays.

Donal Mahoney

FATHER, AGAIN, PEERING

The final years dear Mother she
was never, well, what actors call "on location."
Physically, of course, we found her

everywhere: the parlor reading,
kitchen ironing, basement sweeping,
unlike Father whom we never found

though he was always there.
On Sundays when he went to Mass,
he stayed behind, peering.

Like Queeg, he stared forever
from under or behind whatever
he wasn't hiding in front of.

SONG FOR BALLYHEIGUE

County Kerry, Ireland

Twig fire limn
eight fairy
in a lour cave mouth

Four of whom
a tabor thrum

Four of whom
breathe zephyr
through wee fife

All of whom
leap star,
the joy of life

All of whom
sing lark,
the yet to come.

Donal Mahoney has had poems published in or accepted by *The Wisconsin Review, The Kansas Quarterly, Revival (Ireland), The South Carolina Review, Commonweal, The Christian Science Monitor, The Beloit Poetry Journal, The Mid-America Poetry Review, The Davidson Miscellany, The Goddard Journal, The Pembroke Magazine, The Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine, Sou'wester, Salt Lick, The Mustang Review, Obscurity and a Penny, The Road Apple Review*, and elsewhere.

Laura Manuelidis

EVENING WITH CLOUDS

They land in flocks, the wild geese
When water calms
And the blue-gray drift has settled its margin
Over the earth's mirror.
In contrast, a man only stands
Alone, in his own shadow.

Sit next to me now, as you once did
Out of your shadow.
Reach from the pale keys of your tapering fingers
The white felts struck secretly behind attending strings:
Flocks without shepherd.

ANON

She wants nothing as she walks
The wood is deep in rubble
It makes no difference now

For howls wind down her hoar
And through her heart stiff nettle
She wants nothing as she walks

Past music, the shape of voices
Spent—how the vast dream wanders—
It makes no difference now

If curtain lifts, stage naked
Or playbills left drowning in gutters
She wants nothing as she walks

Just to enter light's final pavilion—
Her paucity—a silence explicit
It makes no difference. Now

Our muse is moss and bonny!
Old man, why do you sit there weeping?
She wants nothing where she walks.
It makes no difference now.

TO REST

Give me a purple finch upon my pine
A mockingbird loud in my chimney
Determined moth fighting against nightfall
—Beyond my pane—
All salt relieved of grief:

The smell of one wild rose opening tufts
Of the wizened bumble bee
On this morning's brush of light sweeping my patio
Where estranged weeds grow
The permit of my disbelief:

This field of chance to lose my head
In tapestries of innocence
Chasing one devious, slender breeze
That idles clouds, then writes your page.

Laura Manuelidis is a physician and scientist who has delved into the shape of chromosomes and their repeated DNAs as well as the causes of dementia. She has begun to publish some of her poems, written over many years, in various journals including *The Nation* and *The Connecticut Review*, was nominated for a Pushcart prize, and has read in European and American university and other venues. Her book of poems, *Out of Order*, is available online from popular book sites, and samples of her written poetry and spoken poetry (accompanied with music by Paul Jordan) can be accessed (in addition to other linked published work at: http://info.med.yale.edu/neurosci/faculty/manuelidis_poetry.html.

Nancy Meneely
reviews Anne Harding Wordworth

Spare Parts, by Anne Harding Wordworth. Turning Point, 2008. 79 pp.

To read the poems in Anne Harding Woodworth's earlier volumes is to join her in stopovers along the blue highways of awareness, visits with ideas and phenomena too often overlooked. Titles of previous collections, The Mushroom Papers and Up from the Root Cellar, for example, attest to Woodworth's penchant for finding, exploring, and celebrating the far side—and underside—of things both quotidian and bizarre.

But if these earlier works deposit us in the odd off-turnpike places, Spare Parts, a novella in verse, permits us to go along for the ride. Here, in this more expansive format, we travel with her as her imagination unrolls, charmed by the itinerary and increasingly smitten with the characters for which her own affection is clear. Along the way, we make acquaintance with oddities of human behavior, myth, place, and culture only a writer of Woodworth's skill, knowledge, and whimsy could collect in one place.

The number of principal parts in this drama is spare indeed. The three major players, Gaddis, Paul, and Lacey, disclose individual slants on each other and their shared history in alternating poetic monologues. Gaddis and Paul, born and raised in Bristol, Tennessee, are childhood friends with a bond cemented by mutual passion for the nearby speedway. Their lives begin to diverge when Gaddis matriculates at UT and Paul goes "North" to college. Gaddis, a riddle of a person disguised by plain-speaking and his simple, enduring loyalty, studies the science of the land that will provide his livelihood and comes home married to Sybil, the love of his life. Paul returns from Amherst versed in foreign language, literature, and loss, accompanied by Lacey, his second wife, and, somewhat later, his daughter.

A more wrenching separation of the two friends follows Paul's horrified discovery of the secret expedient by which Gaddis endures his wife's death. This schism informs the remainder of the tale, in which the poet interweaves St. Francis of Assisi, Dale Earnhardt, a mythological Greek hermaphrodite, parachuting, vintage American automobiles, and an automotive hallucination with the reconstitution and expansion of the drama's seminal relationships.

It's a wonderful story, basic at its heart, almost cartwheeling at its perimeter, rich in allusion, pathos and humor. Lucky for us, Woodworth's craft is equal to the ambition of her ideas: we are propelled through this story by an engine as carefully constructed, intricate and powerful as that of the 1960 Ford Galaxie that revs the story's opening and foreshadows its denouement. The poetic discipline is syllabic. Gaddis, misleadingly presented as the simplest of the characters, speaks in quatrains with lines of eight syllables; Paul is given tercets of ten-syllable lines; and Lacey, the academic, offers her broader observations in longer sets of twelve-syllable lines.

Enjambment is used to great effect, a real accomplishment in a syllabic format. Rhyme occurs, frequently mid-line and in places as unlikely as Lacey's "research notes," which begin like this:

> Short-stemmed cotton grows many months in Copais
> Valley, once lake, then plain. To drain, Mycenaean
> engineers figured how—but filled again. Water
> can't be tamed—marshes grow back like bamboo & cane.

Mirrors and mirroring are a central motif heralded by the Earnhardt quote serving as the novella's epigraph ("There's no one who scares me when I see them in my mirror."). Rhyme anchors Gaddis' surprisingly abstract first entry, a musing on images:

> Paul . . .
> . . . knew terms like liabilities
> indemnities, and acts of God,
>
> which always seemed to me to be
> arbitrary, temporary,
> imaginary. Yet isn't
> everything imaginary?
>
> I imagine me in mirrors,
> glass that reflects vision less than
> truthful, passing right for left, left
> right. Opposites bespeak only
>
> those appearances and seemings,
> never in those verbs of being.

As its actors speak in their turns, the drama powers along: Spare Parts is a well-told, one-sitting story that keeps us reading until the end. But Woodworth is a poet of highly original and startling observations, with language to match. Sometimes that poet emerges from the narrative, tellingly, as in Paul's lovely exposure of Lacey's ambitions—and soul:

> She was going to write novels using myth,
> which runs deep in all seasons and which casts
>
> reason to the breezes. Myth makes sense and
> explains, she'd say, why day makes love to rain
> and stars paint skies with plots that end in pain.

And as if all this weren't enough, there are nuggets of fun to be discovered everywhere, including (but not limited to) many important near-anagrams (look for those around "Gaddis" and "NASCAR"); other kinds of linguistic jokes, as in the title of Gaddis' first offering ("In which Gaddis reflects on mirror images"); and the unifying role of Robert Service's poem, "The Cremation of Sam McGee."

No review can capture all the reasons for which this book has to be read. There is too much in Spare Parts of sweetness and the salt of the earth, of beauty and the beasts, of the arcane and the

complicated commonplace, of idea turning back on itself and into itself and breeding yet more idea. There's much to love here, much to learn—the novella is really more prism than mirror. But you'd do yourself a big favor to look into it.

Nancy Meneely says she's getting the hang of retirement after twenty gratifying/distressing years with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and happy adventures along earlier career paths. Among other wonderfully small-town volunteer activities, she chairs the Guilford Poets Guild and serves as its representative to the Connecticut Poetry Society.

Lisa Mullenneaux

SUCCESS

It's easier. No injuries. A softness
like the orchids on my breakfast tray
beside the Earl Grey, a morning ritual,

the silkiness of Aubusson or Zegna,
the heft of invitations embossed
on heavy stock, good causes run

by people who know my name, reach
for my hand. My wife serves on their boards
with women named Nikki and Solange.

My children telephone from remote islands.
Guests break chairs and never leave.
My shoes are full of sand.

Father died in a shack down the road
from the house my mother threw him out of.
Some hitchhikers found his remains.

When sleep won't come, I watch deer
grazing our moonlit lawn, chewing the topiary.
I watch them with an anger I do not understand.

Lisa Mullenneaux's poetry has been published in *Global City Review* and *Folly*. She works as a book editor in Manhattan.

Sherry O'Keefe

THE YEAR OF THE TREE

You wondered how long it would last, this fresh
Ponderosa, cut from the forest where the two of you
hiked the morning side of Moose Creek.

Your boot print fit inside the hollow of his,
your alto countered to his tenor.
You both knew the three verses of Joy

to the World. We'll call this the season of The Tree,
he said, catching you in the moment. You with your
mama-in-her-kerchief ways and he with his bit

of Dickens. At first, you thought to savor more,
so you developed the pictures from his camera.
Photos of warm bread rising, a midnight

kitchen lit with flash, a candid moment of you
rolling out pie crust, edges spreading further
with each press. You thumbed through shots

of the creek and the saw, the slope and the snow.
A bundle of strewn clothing. Skin against skin
in a drift. But that wasn't your leg around him.

And so. When and why and then you learn how
it feels to leave the tree up until March, until the last
needle drops. You learn there's four verses to the song.

WILL

She drew on end pages torn
from her father's books. Charcoal shading,
thick-penciled lines of a tired horse,
someone's roper boots. Rugs on a clothesline,
bloody feathers on a block. She pressed
these papers between chapters
of Mathew, Mark and Luke, learning
to ride bareback instead of attending school.

Sixty years later, Will was born,
her ninth great-grandson and I named him
from my heart. At his baptism, she placed
her Bible in my hands, told me about her
sketches, about a brother I never knew she had:

I was twelve when he rode out,
looking for a stray. Found his body
in a coulee between Salt Creek and Battle Bay,
a boot caught in a stirrup. We beat the rugs,
dug up beets, killed chickens for his wake.
Life must go on my father said, so I rode
my brother's horse, did his work, and learned
to carry on. Not until you named your son,
have I said my brother's name.

WRITING A POEM WHILE MY BOYFRIEND WATCHES

I tell him he should write a book
for how to cook creatively in a studio apartment
with a kitchen so small he washes his dishes
on the stoop of his back door. (Strike that,
he says: the front and the back are the same.)
He makes good use of free mangoes
in the courtyard basket and groomed rosemary
waiting to be pinched as he walks to the corner
store. His oven allows him to roast a turkey
wing. This is just as well—if he had a roasting pan
he'd have to store it in the back seat of his car.

And there are days he can't find it at first,
what with parking being premium, one block
away from Chuck's Diner, one block
from the Pacific shore. When I fly
down to visit him, he asks
what day is it, today? If it's Friday
that means it's parked on the Thursday side
of Sabado Street, two alleys and a block
from the lemons he picks to bake the fish
he catches from Belmont Pier.

He heads out to find his car, whistling
as if Connie the Corsica is a horse from home
that comes running when he calls. (Tell them, I miss
Montana. Tell them you named my car.) He keeps

his guitar in the car trunk so he has space
for a toaster and the bread machine
he's re-geared for small loaves of sourdough.
He wants me to hear the chords
he made up without looking at the music
book I sent him months ago. He likes
to think he invented D minor.
(Strike that: he did.)

Sherry O'Keefe credits her Irish-Montanan Pioneer heritage for much of the influence in her poetry. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *The Tipton Poetry Journal, Main Street Rag, Two Review, Fifth Wednesday Journal, The Sow's Ear Review* and *Soundzine*.

Scott Owens

SKY OF ENDLESS STARS

At two you already love a party.
I watch you running around in the dark,
in a field near Jacob's Fork, playing
a game whose name you can barely pronounce.

Just this morning, rising early,
we went walking and you were amazed again
at October's sky, the three stars
still seeming new to you each time

we came from under a tree, shouting
there are some more stars, worlds
enough unfolding to keep you
in a constant state of wonder.

CREATING SMALL OCCASIONS

Today would be called Cleaning Up,
yesterday, Setting Up, the occasion
as simple as the annual cooling
of weather, reclamation of the backyard.

The day I trimmed the eucalyptus.
The day we drank red wine, packing boxes,
and I made a pass beginning with
"What would you do." Frost's couple
at the brook deciding the meaning of the day.

They populate our lives, providing
focus, definition, memory.
Days are easily forgotten without them,
each one only a number,
a continuation of the one before,
a routine completion of duties.

Where they don't occur we busy ourselves
with making them up, counting hawks,
sleeping on the beach, sitting up late
to watch meteors, putting up the new bed,
picking flowers along the parkway.

I mark my daughter's life with them,
first steps, words, teeth, the day
the baby gate came down, the day
she moved to the big girl bed,
her first unprompted, "I love you, Daddy"
A life made up of small occasions
would not be so bad.

CANNING

Not a true red, components of pink,
orange, yellow, even green.
You can't compare it to blood though that's
what you want to do, to talk of stains
left on fingers, hands, clothes,
splattered across the sink and counter.
Out, damned tomato! Out of this skin
that scalds as if the splash of boiling water
weren't enough. Oh, the drama of it,
squeezing seeds from bloody heads
of tomatoes, the burn and sting
redeemed months later when the taste
of ripe tomatoes is gone from the garden
but kept fresh in iconic jars.

DAYS LIKE THESE

On a morning when even getting dressed
takes forever, when anxieties bend
like knuckles beneath your skin, you know
you'll never change the world, become
the great poet, teach anyone
anything, your best success is simply
not hitting your three-year-old daughter,
not becoming your father or his.

Days like these, nothing satisfies,
everything annoys and hurts from the inside
like knees after standing too long,
and then, out of nowhere she says,
"Daddy, you're the best," and you know
for a moment it will always be enough.

LEAP OF FAITH

You know it can be terrible
here, what with bombs
and Norman and children dying,
and just the idea of
cockroaches outliving us all.

You've lost your faith in goodness,
and the leap, you say, could be
exhilarating,
but
that leap is also a leap of faith
that things will be better
somewhere else, life
without pain or loss,
rest, sleep.

But in sleep there are dreams,
and in dreams there are nightmares,
and no one can really know.
There may be nothing. There may
be Dante with his black book
and implacable rings.
There may be less.

Here at least there is ice cream
and poetry, there are flowers
and the ever-opening sky,
there are faces and the occasional laugh,
there is gravity and the still
certain orbit of moons.

Graduate of the UNCG MFA program, co-editor of *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, and author of "Musings," a weekly poetry column in Outlook, Scott Owens is the 2008 Visiting Writer at Catawba Valley Community College. His first full-length collection of poetry, *The Fractured World* was published in August by Main Street Rag. He is also author of three chapbooks *The Persistence of Faith* (Sandstone Press, 1993), *Deceptively Like a Sound* (Dead Mule, 2008), and *The Book of Days* (Dead Mule, 2009). He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Best of the Net Prize this year. His poem, "On the Days I Am Not My Father," was recently featured on Garrison Keillor's NPR show The Writer's Almanac. Born in Greenwood, SC, he now lives in Hickory, NC, where he teaches and coordinates the Poetry Hickory reading series.

Patric Pepper

A TRIP TO THE FARMERS' MARKET

Ah, love, I looked at the sex-pot peppers
    and could not but conclude that all is God's
Dream. O, civilized church bells peeling
    and reeling up and down 16th Street NW,
Forgive me this day for this little bit of blasphemy,
    as I am deserving, yea verily,
For I have loved God and I have hated God,
    and I have praised God and I have
Cursed God, and I have been God's fool
    and God's sage with all my heart and all
My mind consistently and inconsistently
    in unity and in apparent duality, yea verily.

Hey you, my partner with the desultory vivid chard
    poking up through the unzipped
Opening of your knapsack, put the groceries
    in the sleeping fridge, that mysterious
Inanimate and somehow animate machine
    with all its pipes and gears and dreams and
Its dark dreamy white coldness our civilization is
    so grateful for, and its little motor
Forever humming the hymn of creation I
    mostly forget to hear, so hungry I have been,
But, after all, and then again, of course,
    who knows and who can say / Whence . . . .

Dear wife, may I unbutton your blouse? Unzip
    your jeans? The chard sleeps in the fridge.
For you, especially, are the dream of God,
    yea verily, let us be a good dream for God.

TRAVELING ALONE

Doodling down the tatternated map of Pennsylvania,
down U.S. 220 and Bald Eagle Mountain, past Tyrone,
Through Altoona, on to Bedford, over the dashed line to
Cumberland and into West Virginia,
The Dodge Neon and I drifted like a memory of
Grandma Moses, while the Cubist

Brain and I ran it all over again and again because
our quaintelicious 21st century visions were like

The spectacle of roadkill, albeit maybe not so bloody:
First, while the actual Appalachians waited
Like a North American Gaia Mama for the Night Sky to
descend in intercourse,
We noticed how pointlessly Pointillistic appeared
the accidents of Cumberland architecture, even
As the yards of discombobulated ramshackletude were
the essence of Concrete Expressionism; and how

Shaker-pure shone the Neo-Classic steeples in the valleys,
sometimes like Mother,
Sometimes like Jehovah; and here the brain would have me
mention how Bentonesque were the manly farms
Plowing and flowing and growing our girls—casting our buteefull
babes—into young women, and our young
Women into soldiers to defend our just causes.
Like a memory of an old home place, we three scribbled

Past a renaissance of surely Colorist yard sales and a whitewash
sign, "Bewhere the Dawg ☺"—I peered on and
The Neon rolled and the brain imagined our return to the cottage
by the pond, near the sea, off the map, to you.

P STREET BRIDGE IN THE 70's

I saw them hug once, beneath the bridge,
In August, two men kiss in their embrace,
Each hold the charm of love against the law,
In would-be secrecy, maybe in shame,

Maybe never having told a parent,
And though it's romantic, though I'm naive,
It buoys me to believe that love saved them.
And though love didn't at the end of ends,

Certainly salvation rose around them
Then; think of a crucible and furnace,
Where all that is is fire, metal, slag—
Slag ladled off leaving purities.

I watched them, secretly, two men embrace
In eternity, underneath that bridge.

Patric Pepper lives in Washington, D.C. He published a chapbook in 2000, Zoned Industrial, and a full length collection in 2005, Temporary Apprehensions, which was a 2004 co-winner of the Washington Writers' Publishing House Poetry Prize. His work is forthcoming, or has appeared recently, in *Confrontation Magazine, Plainsongs,* and *Asbestos*. He is currently President and Managing Editor of Washington Writers' Publishing House.

Allan Peterson

POETRY DISORDER

They took my pulse then punctuation
I still wrote as before
Then my caesuras went and they listened
with wires to my chest
to a kind of singing they said
that looked like dangerous mountains
on a screen like star radio
the crumpling of cellophane from space
They said I seemed to be drying out
The stanzas left the capitals
My lines grew spare and hairless
more space between them
My exaggerations faded My similes snapped
metaphors weakened
They said it was possible but not desirable
to make less of something than there was
and that I had left out
all of the Thallophytes Colembola the weight of suns
just to mention a few examples
They said it was not uncommon
this widespread sickness of simplifying things

FOLDING MOONS

The moon is folding in curves I cannot make in paper,
and not once upon a time, but thousands.
In one pale dream I remembered another. I discovered
through a leak
someone must have been living in our attic. I told you
outside so he wouldn't hear.
And there were sharp-winged birds across the moon,
songbirds I wanted
to feed and keep warm like the buffalo in South Dakota,
the moon-white one
sacred to the Sioux that appeared last spring,
black lamb among the white.
I had folded a house, a buffalo, actually an ox from crescents
and cut shapes,
folded corners, into polished hooves, a thrush within a moon.

I made a score in oaktag
and lo, Luna in August, tan and ocher as winter grass,
keen as razor through silk.
The secret tenant above us disappeared and I remembered
the waking life
where from apples I could carve out planets with a knife.

Allan Peterson's latest book is *All the Lavish in Common* (2005 Juniper Prize). Recent print and online appearances include *Gulf Coast, Boston Review, Northwest Review, Perigee, Press 1*, and Ted Kooser's American Life in Poetry. He has received fellowships from the NEA, the State of Florida, and the 2008 American Poet Prize from the *American Poetry Journal*.

Oliver Rice

BLACKBIRDS NESTING IN THE REEDS

Here, before the age of anthropology had begun
across the rolling expanse
formed by millennial geology and climate,
the flora and fauna knew exactly what to do,
exactly where to go,

the grasslands blue with flax in bloom,

locusts buzzing in the cottonwoods.

These are ruts, still visible,
left by wagon trains across the wilds,

buzzards tearing the cadaver of a gopher,

shadows of clouds drifting across the hills.

OH, YES, THE HIMALAYAS, SHE SAYS

They were incomprehensible,
says the former companion of the trader Doran.
Never out of sight or mind.
Cold, gray, remote.

That was her exotic episode.
Her unravelled era.
Confronted, reclaimed in Nepal,
in Katmandu, at the Yak and Yeti Hotel.

Doran had worked those ranges before,
Islamabad to Thimbu to Kunming.
Or so he said.
Doran. A big man. A busy man.
With only one recreation.
No, two.

The iciness, she remembered.
Altitude sickness.
The questionable sanitation.
The litter in the markets,
wares spread on ground sheets,
the chatter that utterly excluded her.
Rickshaws, bicycles, oxcarts, limousines.
Temples, pagodas, shrines along every street,
Hindu or Buddhist,
beneath tiers of overhanging roofs,
guarded by statues of lions,
dragons, elephants, peacocks, demons,
facades elaborately carved
with religious and erotic images,
lotus flowers, swastikas,

treasures secured by chains against theft,
holy beggars squatting about the approaches,
grotesquely clad, faces painted like savages.

—

She cannot explain her empathy for the women.
Quaint,
elusive
perhaps nearly unaware of her,
vivid in their traditional dress,
their nose jewelry,
or beguiling in Western clothes,

toiling on a street-sweeping crew,
hanging laundry from a balcony railing,
bearing firewood, cabbages, infants
in baskets slung on their backs
by straps around their foreheads.

Yet, isolated by language,
by obscure cultural barriers,
she had a sense of sorority,
of inevitable commonality with them—
arts and disinclinations,
fantasies and wounded mornings,
rituals and obligations—

and thus became her own therapeutic study.

Saying wait, but wait, likeness is not sameness.

Saying nothing is stranger than a human.

—

Doran away for days in Lhasa or Calcutta.

Tin slums around the airport.

Tourists roaming the souvenir stalls,
exclaiming about Annapurna and Everest,
the base camps, the Sherpa porters.

The constant threat of attacks by Maoists,
every other male in the streets carrying a gun,

every second youth with a transistor
blaring American music.

Prayer flags hanging from their poles,
monkeys scuttling through the trees.

A patina of decay shrouding everything.

Oliver Rice has received the Theodore Roethke Prize and twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies in the United States, as well as in Canada, England, Austria, Turkey, and India. His book of poems, *On Consenting to Be a Man*, has been introduced by Cyberwit, a diversified publishing house in the cultural capital Allahabad, India, and is available on Amazon.

Craig van Rooyen

FIREFLIES

When we squashed them in our fingers,
we didn't know their language—
the dialogue of luminescent organs,
flashing pick-up slang.
When we smeared them on our faces,
we didn't probe the mystery:
How they survived the loving season,
without burning up, victims of the heat
produced by their own light.
But really, knowledge didn't matter.
We were boys, instinct just as bright in us,
trying on faces in the dark.

LACTATION CLASS

They say prolactin can produce a mothering
behavior in roosters and in virgin mice.
So why, I wonder, are we sitting in an evening
class of couples learning how to nurse?
Compulsive to a fault, we sit in rows with dolls
to practice feeding holds. Real babies, we are told,
prefer a breast presented from the right side.
Wait for bird mouth, ram the little sucker on.
Be sure to break the suction prior to removal.
Lamisil will heal most wounds.
We are allowed to fondle the equipment—bras
absorbent pads, a support cushion named "My Breast Friend."
The teacher, a certified lactation specialist, handles
her own breasts like she's a farmer—tells us we have spent
our money well. Instinct, apparently is over-rated.
Consider, for example, the case of the mother gorilla,
born in captivity, whose first baby starved—
we're told—because the mother never learned to nurse.
When, not yet recovered from her grief, she gave
birth again, zookeepers conceived a simple plan:
Pay human mothers to sit across the bars and
nurse their infants, demonstrate the football hold,
the finer points of latching on, attachment gazing.
As if this alone could end the dread that must have

quickened when she felt that second stirring in her womb—
realized, too late, the pattern of the world is loss. Understood,
at last, just how strong her cage.

Craig van Rooyen has work forthcoming in *The Fourth River*.

Maggie Schwed

MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT

The skirt of light
drags heavily toward the trees
and slowly. So slowly
I can almost
tread its clovered hem, almost
hold back birdless night,
the black cup
that covers this house, and almost
restrain the woods that
(whispering and taller now)
approach like elders.

Even the snake
that blunders
into the laundry basket
and circles and circles
tapping the weave with his snout
until I tip him
out among the darkened grass
cannot sustain me.

Nothing sings
(but locust), nothing
shines (but a wayward moon
sliding on the wall),
and the wind
nosing at the window
works in silence.

What dreams then
as the shade drags on the sill?

Of course I dream of you
and when you ask for my hand
to kiss
in my gladness
I fling it toward you
and awake, face creased
from the sheet and longing.
A spider cringes

in the enamel basin,
a moth sputters at the drain.
I drink. Three o'clock—
the longest hour
till dawn.

PREPARATIONS FOR A FRIEND

First a round loaf
for the chipped plate,
its paint dimmed; room there too
for a cheese to slide from its warty skin,
another and another; and give
the ruins of a tart sliced neat
—half moon, oozing plum.
Lettuces that rustle in their dressing
add something, and a hot sun—the house so tight
we almost sweat.
The visible wind's not heard;
just your square hand
that built the house
and saws the bread
while branches lift
in the winter yard.

Inside these rooms
the hot sun is part of it, but not so hot
it can strip the glaze of ice
from the marsh grass
or unsheathe the trees
raised on the bitter hill.

And this—
how the far field descends
and twists between woods
like a frozen river;
and that hawk
possessing the tallest pine
is part of it.

The importance of these things
is not so great, yet
once the table's roughly set is
all. We walk into the day
and plod the salted road,

a kind of eagerness shared
both to do this thing and
be done with it
before the having
of our known feast.
We talk as friends,
as woman and man
of the story of our lives
as if narrative were the point,
as if we lived gorgeous themes,
as if our fathers weren't dying
or the laundry weren't tossing itself
in the dryer, as if money
weren't an issue
and we didn't have to pick up our children
by three.

Words snap off in the brilliant air;
pale forms escape our chests,
our breaths quick and mixed
between us; between us,
the talk whole somehow
as a perfect pear. Then
beads of lentil rest
in a thin soup, in a thin bowl;
slivers of garlic appear
for savor then slip
to the bottom; the pitcher of water
empties; then
before we are called
we go.

TROUT FISHING, WYOMING

It was a long way from the car to the stream
you poached. Not that I'm complaining, Dad.
That slog across the open pasture, dreamed

a hundred times since then, seems a bliss
I had. Single file, we'd take the narrow path
the cows had beaten, a mile of dust that traipsed

below a moving sky, through bitten grass.
I lagged behind, wrestling creel and rod,
while up ahead you whistled how you loved

to go a-wandering. Piles of cow flop,
browning in the sun, were not allowed
to change your course. Your mind was trout

—speckled green-and-copper flanks, sipping mouths
some god has made a joy to fishermen.
I tramped along without an equal hope,

ankles thistle-whipped, bushwhacked by sage,
and scared that from a shaking stand of willow
out would burst a cow, too crazed by flies to stop

for me. Some days rage was all my sense
could hold: I was too small, the creek too far
and cold. But once we passed the barbed-wire fence,

you'd gauge the stream for shadowed overhangs
hospitable to trout—There! binoculars
would bring a dim torpedo shape or gleam

to light. Inspired then, we'd sit to read
the water, licking our half-melted chocolate bars.
Hours passed, years of summers cast

from grassy banks. The current sliding past
my knees is dizzying. I stare. The rod's bent
almost double. I lift my head to catch

your eye. Rising clouds. Beneath them,
the old illusion—only a mountain sways.

POND SWIMMER

The swimmer has struck out for the far shore.
Without sighting her wake
or flashing arms, I know—

she arrives
before the rabbits and
I am late and have to be content

to have seen her dive those other hours,
body bluegill-bright—
(I wait. Lightening sky

signals day;
a fisherman's reel creaks—I catch
the bright gleam of muskrat, his shy

abrupt plunge
like a blunder, quick
nose leading past water lily, past frog

gulping his name; silver lines
of water break
from his snout and

anxious huffing till he's out
and in
among willow.

Noon. The warm ground gives.
A veil of insects lifts
the heron.)

She may not return until sundown
to rest then
on the gray boards of the dock

one with the gosling
who alone survives of six this spring
and now leads the flock.

I'll hope to see her white splash
soon, the sound
before the sight—

if not, I'll stay
and watch the night.

THE GIFT

Perhaps because
like her he sings
the wind admires him.

She speaks her longing to the moon
who only brightly gleams, then glides
from ash to pine to morning sky
unmoved by wind.

She shakes the willow with distress
moaning, sighing
jealous of the lake's caress—
and settles on a gift:
blown wild rose.

Her message drops
like a wish
flaming pink
against the silk
of mud (his bed).

A petal
settles
on the bullfrog's head.

Maggie Schwed's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Raritan, Nimrod, Western Humanities Review, Commonweal, Pleiades, Barrow Street*, and other magazines, on-line publications, and anthologies, including Phil Miller's *Chance of a Ghost*, and *Letters to the World: Poems from the Wompo Listserv*. She was a finalist for the 2006 Morton Marr Poetry Prize and this year's Erskine J. Prize (*Smartish Pace*). Finishing Line Press published her first chapbook, *Out of Season*, in 2008. She reviews poetry for *Pleiades* and *Smartish Pace*.

Janice D. Soderling

COMPACT LIVING AND OTHER HABITS

I slide from dreams to morning,
from the past to a smaller room.
My children are still sleeping
as they slept years ago.

Small puffs of breath push softly
onto white pillow slips. Bright
sunlight skews on early disarray:
toys, schoolbooks,
a broken red crayon.

The kitchen, like me, expectant
of yawns, jostling, laughter.
The scrape of chairs. Same old jabbering.

Familiar smells of coffee, bacon, toast.
Milk splashing into tall glasses.
Such busyness, such bustling.

One suspended moment
just before I wake,
I am needed, necessary,
my mind caught in the grasp
of memory's small hands.

Janice D. Soderling is a past contributor to *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*. Her fiction, poetry, translations and essays appear regularly in online and print journals in several countries. Recent and forthcoming work at *Anon, Blue Unicorn, Centrifugal Eye, Hobble Creek Review, Literary Bohemian, Lucid Rhythms, Mannequin Envy, NewVerseNews, Orbis, Stirring, Prick of the Spindle*, and *Umbrella Journal*.

Jeanine Stevens

ONE ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE IN FONDULAC

for my Mother

Uncle Jon warms bricks for our feet.
The horse snorts white clouds in icy air.
We cross the river in frozen dark.
We pull blankets over our shoulders.

In the schoolroom, I fill a large pan
with water, place it on the iron woodstove
heat lunches in glass jars—
leftovers: soup, stew, bacon chunks and bread.

Older students work on their own,
today—geography. Chile is a red slash
on the map (we are told "pronounce it She-lay")
a bright spot lighting up homespun and denim.

By afternoon, windows steam.
Younger children practice cursives:
up, down, down, down—thick pencils
scratch, boots tap and scrape the raspy floor.

Uncle Jon warms bricks for the ride home.
On our laps, quilt squares hold pale sun.
In the dusk, the river is gray and bleak
and the horse must be fed before dark.

Jeanine Stevens has four poetry collections, the most recent, *Eclipse*, from Rattlesnake Press. She received awards from the Stockton Arts Commission, The Mendocino Coast Writer's Conference, and the Ina Coolbrith Competition. Her poem, "Trade Goods," in *Ekphrasis*, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her work has also appeared in *Poet Lore, The South Dakota Review, Alehouse*, and *Poetry Depth Quarterly*, among others. She earned her Master's Degree from California State University, and has completed postgraduate work at University of California, Davis, and Berkeley, including the Oxford-Berkeley Program. She attended workshops and classes led by Dorianne Laux, Lola Haskins, Brenda Hillman, Robert Hass, and Susan Kelley Dewitt. Jeanine divides her time between the Sacramento Valley and Lake Tahoe.

Paul Stevens

STONEHENGE

The wind flowed cold as a glacier across Salisbury Plain
As we circled the circling circles of stone upon stone,
Where the antic lines of earth channeled and gathered
To relay energy free down the sacred avenue—
But sliced now, disconnected by fence and motorway,
Dispersed by the pulse of helicopter rotors beating,
Bruising our sky, tin insects supervising,
Bristling, twitching over the land of fear.
This patterned placement once engaged the bare plain
With heaven, and looped power to the cosmos beyond,
Grafting us whole to the numinous constellations.
Now the wind washes across us, relentlessly cold,
    Pushing icy tears from my eyes; from my mind
    Behind, some kind of anachronistic grief.

Paul Stevens was born in Yorkshire, England but lives in Australia. He has an Honours degree in English from the University of Sydney and teaches Literature. He has published poems and prose in print and pixel, most recently in *The Literary Bohemian, Soundzine, Mannequin Envy, CounterPunch, qarrtsiluni, The Barefoot Muse, London Poetry Review, Abyss and Apex, Autumn Sky Poetry, Lucid Rhythms, The HyperTexts, Ourobouros, Shakespeare's Monkey Revue, The Centrifugal Eye, Shattercolors, Poemeleon, New Verse News* and *Umbrella*. He edits *The Chimaera*.

Garland Strother

TRUMPET PLAYER IN YUCATAN

The sound came from blocks ahead of us,
a votive theme played in peace for a living,
the notes crafted with care cresting the noise

of bad brakes and out-of-tune horns.
Mourning the past, the rhythm recalled
a hymn from someone else's childhood,

the unsung words echoing off stone
the Mayans carved for temples, tokens
now laid tight in a row of city sidewalks.

Looking at no one, he played for pesos,
bending his voice with the right hand,
his eyes locked in privacy on the music,

a red tin can catching small coins in the air,
random counts of faith merging in brass
with his own—in thanks or praise or prayer.

Garland Strother is a retired public librarian currently living in River Ridge, LA, near New Orleans with his wife, Liz, also a librarian. His poems have appeared *in South Dakota Review, Arkansas Review, Louisiana Review, Texas Review, Plainsongs, Big Muddy, Loch Raven Review, Christian Science Monitor, Orange Room Review, Sunstone, New Verse News* and others.

Naomi Thiers

RIGGING THE WHEEL

What mothers pray, mothers who believe
in serial killers, rapists and subway pushers
Is a phrase in the languageless dark:
Not her, me. Not him, me.
It's not a bargain we've thought out.
It's Protestant bargaining.
Catholics have saints to rub, and Jews
have no illusion of any say in the matter
of who is chosen
But at Hope Lutheran, they talked of the cross
not as love or guilt, more
like losing the lottery big:
Someone lives, and someone
has to give up both kidneys:
Not enough life to go around.
Which is why I left the church and why
I can't stop trading organ donor cards
in the dark with a black-market hospital orderly
who might be God or one hell of a con man
but who just might agree to rig the wheel.

Naomi Thiers' award-winning first collection of poetry *Only the Raw Hands Are Heaven* was published by Washington Writers' Publishing House in 1992. Her poetry, fiction, and essays have been published in many magazines, including *Virginia Quarterly Review, Colorado Review, Poet Lore, Antietam Review*, and *Pacific Review*. She works as a magazine editor and the mother of a teenager, in Washington, DC.

Ernie Wormwood

SEEING THE THREE LEGGED DEER AFTER ELECTION DAY

The cars creep in the dark
headlights on at 5:15 a.m. three
days after we humans have changed
how we count the time, not saving
now but standard, and the first
day after we have written
Barack Hussein Obama
on the sky of stars,
so
the cars are tippy toeing down the
street, bright eyed, inching.
My hair quivers and this is it
my first alert that the deer are
here and she is back, on three legs,
a beautiful doe now, to see me and lo,
she is smiling, there is joy on her
face this sympatico girl who
dances on three legs, who when
you least expect it, stands for
survival, for what it is to be whole
and for what one kind
of living thing can do for
another kind of living thing.
There is only one way
to live and that is
together, in the one world.

Ernie Wormwood lives in Leonardtown, Maryland, where she is reading, writing, and recovering.

Bill Wunder

EASTER SNOW, VERMONT

Squalls of powder swirl,
cloud out the rising Spring sun.
Soon ascendant,
Sol is a seasoned fighter
and can take a punch.
My calendar says daffodils
and I should be working
the soil in the warmth of bird-song
looking for fiddleheads,
my hands turning the earth.
But everything is covered in white
and the breeze sneaks through
austere woods like a ninja
to strike me in the face.
Then just as suddenly, stills.
The flakes bloom in size,
muffle all sound save the crack
of an old maple's limb,
that so near renewal
could not shoulder
one more day of winter.

Bill Wunder is the author of *Pointing at the Moon* (WordTech Editions, 2008) and a chapbook, *A Season of Storms* (Via Dolorosa Press, 2002). His poems have twice been nominated for The Pushcart Prize, and in 2004 he was named Poet Laureate of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Bill has been a finalist in The Robert Fraser Poetry Competition, The T.S. Eliot Prize, The Walt Whitman Award, and The Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. Recently, his work has appeared in *The Manhattan Review, Lips, The Paterson Literary Review, Mad Poet's Review, Drexel University On-Line Journal, Wild River Review*, and others. Bill serves as Poetry Editor of *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*, and lives with his two black labs in Bucks County.