

# 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)

With *Innisfree 13*, we continue our series of Closer Looks at the poetry of an exceptional contemporary poet, this time with a generous selection of poems from the books of Jean Nordhaus.

The reader can enjoy this issue in three formats: (1) online, here at [www.innisfreepoetry.org](http://www.innisfreepoetry.org), (2) as a PDF download, and/or (3) as a paperback book, at cost from Lulu.com, an online publisher. Just navigate to the Current Issue page, where you can begin reading the issue online or click on the “PDF Version” link to download the PDF of the entire issue for reading when not online on your computer, iPod, iPad, or other e-reader or for printing, or click on the “Print Version” link to go to Lulu.com, where you can order one or more copies of this issue. Using print-on-demand technology, Lulu will ship you one or more perfect bound copies of *Innisfree 13*.

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The Editor  
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## Masthead

Editor, Greg McBride

Greg McBride is the author of *Dead Man's Word*, winner of the 2012 Liam Rector First Book Prize in Poetry (Briery Creek Press, forthcoming in spring 2012) and *Back of the Envelope*, a chapbook from Southeast Missouri State University Press (2009). His awards include the *Boulevard* Emerging Poet prize and an Individual Artist Grant in Poetry from the Maryland State Arts Council. His work appears in *Boulevard*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Harvard Review Online*, *River Styx*, *Salmagundi*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. He is a Vietnam veteran and retired lawyer. [www.gregmcbridepoet.com](http://www.gregmcbridepoet.com).

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](http://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.”

### **Deadlines:**

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

### **Details:**

1. In ONE Word document, submit a brief bio and up to five poems attached to an email addressed to [editor@innisfreepoetry.org](mailto:editor@innisfreepoetry.org). (If you do not have Word, please use Google Docs or rich text format.)

2. Include your name, as you would like it to appear in *Innisfree*, in the subject line of your submission.
3. Simultaneous submissions are welcome, and encouraged. If a poem is accepted elsewhere, however, please notify us immediately at [editor@innisfreepoetry.org](mailto:editor@innisfreepoetry.org).
4. Please submit only once per issue.

Note for the diligent submitter: In this age of digital publishing, it is also helpful if you (a) state in the email the number of poems being submitted, (b) cast your bio in 3<sup>rd</sup> person, (c) format poems flush left (except for indentations intrinsic to the form of the poem), and once more for emphasis, (d) attach one document that includes the bio and all submitted poems.

**Assurances:**

By making your submission, you assure *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*.

# THE INNISFREE POETRY JOURNAL

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## A Closer Look: Jean Nordhaus

Peggy Aylsworth  
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Will Cordeiro  
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# THE INNISFREE POETRY JOURNAL

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## *Innisfree 13*, fall 2011

### A Closer Look: **Jean Nordhaus**

*Sometimes I think of these poems  
as handprints on the cave wall,  
my way of saying, "Hey, it's me.  
I was here."*

Jean Nordhaus was born in Baltimore, Maryland, studied philosophy at Barnard College, and received her doctorate in modern German literature from Yale University. Her most recent book of poems, *Innocence*, won the Charles B. Wheeler prize from The Ohio State University Press and was published in November 2006. Milkweed Editions published her previous book, *The Porcelain Apes of Moses Mendelssohn* in November 2002. Other books include *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991), *A Bracelet of Lies* (Washington Writers' Publishing House, 1987) and two chapbooks, *A Purchase of Porcelain* and *A Language of Hands*.



Her poems have appeared in many journals, including *American Poetry Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The New Republic*, *Ploughshares*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry*, and *Prairie Schooner*, and were chosen for *Best American Poetry 2000* and the 2007 *Pushcart Prize*.



*Anthology*. In addition, she has published numerous articles, essays, and dance reviews in the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Review*, *Poet Lore*, and the *PSA Bulletin*.

From 1980 to 1983, and again in 1991-1992, she administered the poetry programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. While at the Folger in 1982-83, she also administered the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. From 1988 through the spring of 1994, she served as President of Washington Writers' Publishing House, a cooperative poetry press. A selection of her Moses Mendelssohn poems won the 1997 Edward Stanley Award from *Prairie Schooner*. She is currently Prose Editor for *Poet Lore*.

Nordhaus' listing on the Poetry Foundation's website:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/jean-nordhaus>

Commentary and selections from reviews:

Michael Collier:

Jean Nordhaus' poems are characterized by a quiet humility of attention, a dedication to the truthfulness of memory which allows the details of experience to rise . . . . Her poems seem to have ridden the wake of a great silence or calm before they're begun.

Grace Cavalieri review of *Innocence* in *The Montserrat Review*:

Jean Nordhaus writes poems in an arrangement of stillness. She finds favor with serenity. Maybe this is because Nordhaus knows what to leave out of a poem. Only the seasoned writer trusts the reader, believes in invisible bridges, and knows the reader of poetry is as smart as the writer. Jean Nordhaus is a deeply intuitive poet. She moves to the center of the hearth without clutter or clumsiness. And it is hearth, the Latin root word for "focus," that is in her poems. Jean writes from matrimony, monogamy, daughterhood, and those cultural experiences so many of us share. What remains on the page, however, makes Jean her own poet, and so the poem remains uninfluenced by outside conditions. She may write about the world, but the work remains private and untouched by the forces pulling on her. Perhaps what we have here is an independent woman. Complexity is made simple in a speech aloof from the ordinary. Whatever the outer life is or was—we have dignity, detachment and the necessary strength to be autonomous.

Mark Jarman, *The Hudson Review*:

With *The Porcelain Apes of Moses Mendelssohn*, Jean Nordhaus has made a valuable contribution to the poetic sequence as spiritual biography.



Milne Holton, *Prairie Schooner*:

Nordhaus' . . . knowledge of German poetry (her doctoral dissertation at Yale was on Brecht)—of poets like Kleist and Trakl—has brought to her own writing something of their capability in the ordering of symbolic image . . . in the fineness of her ear, in her graceful and appropriate rhythms, and in the perfection of her lining there is every evidence of an acute awareness of . . . the musical dimension in poetry.

Jean Nordhaus introduces her selection of poems from her books:

*Graffiti*

There is a certain "poem feeling" I've come to recognize, not unlike the physical sensations by which Emily Dickinson knew poetry or those symptoms which A.E. Housman complained kept him from shaving. It can sometimes feel like a rush of malevolent glee—the madness of Max in the night kitchen—or the jolt you get at a school reunion when you recognize a face you hadn't seen in years, as if you'd been carrying it around unknowingly inside your brain all this time and only been waiting for the stimulus that would fire off that particular set of neurons. In many cases there is a congruence of something outside—a word or a smell or a taste—with something internal and long hidden. The sensation is not always the same, and not necessarily the same now as when I started to write, but always there is a physical excitement—a sense of being "charged."

I think it is this sense of congruence, of recognition, that charges the poem, and I think that recognition occurs, in the best cases, at both ends of the process: in the writer at the outset of the poem and, if the poem is successful, in the reader as well. I don't know exactly what this process has to do with "making it new" in the grander sense, but I do know that if I follow the thread of this feeling—and follow it truly—through the verbal maze which it constructs as I go along, it will lead me to a place that is both new and strangely familiar.

Many of the poems chosen below (most of them from earlier books) reflect a mood of profound astonishment, a mood I recall from earliest childhood and retain to this day, puzzlement at how strange, to borrow a word from Elizabeth Bishop, "how 'unlikely'" this life seems: the trajectory of the body through time, the volatility and unreliability of emotion, the fragility of human happiness. Many, I notice, are about art: theater, music, literature as tools of the spirit, ways of responding to the mystery of our life in time.

I've just seen *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, Werner Herzog's documentary film about the 32,000-year-old Chauvet cave paintings, a brilliant meditation on time and art. In the final frame, the camera lingers movingly on an image of the imprint of a human hand. Sometimes I think of these poems as handprints on the cave wall, my way of saying, "Hey, it's me. I was here."

Selections from Jean Nordhaus' books of poetry:

*I Am Talking to You about Love*

The butcher has gone mad and begun to write.  
He has taped a yellow envelope of poems  
to his meat-case window with a sign  
saying, *Take one*. And if you obey,  
you will find yourself collared  
by a man with rumpled hair, a cleaver of light  
in his pale blue eyes. *See?* He will say.  
*Do you see?* His poems are pencilled  
in a rough hand, signed like gospel:  
*Mark*, and this is Mark,  
who stops you, breathing like a bull  
from two soft nostrils, who perspires, who  
is talking to you about Love, who is happy,  
whose happiness feels like hunger and if you do not  
accede on the spot, he might  
love you too hard, he might stuff you  
back down in the sausage. *Yes*.  
In the shadowy meat-case his ham hocks  
and knuckles lie bloodless, pale. Voices  
have entered this man and fill him  
beyond skin's endurance. And now,  
you too hear voices: *Back away! Away!*  
As you ride home, an irate traffic sign  
shouts *STOP*. A bright red canister  
of chemicals abandoned on your doorstep  
reads: *IN CASE OF FIRE. For the butcher,*  
you think. And then, *Have mercy*.

from *Innocence* (Ohio State University Press, 2006)

*Happiness*

Last night happiness  
got loose, a clumsy  
spaniel skittering  
through the house, upending  
baskets, toppling lamps.

My son brought home  
a good report. A package  
came. My sensitive tooth  
stopped throbbing  
and accepted hunger

welcoming warm and cold.  
Abandoning their ancient  
feud, the children turned  
and kissed each other  
bumping tooth and gum.

Happiness! Keep the lid on,  
I hollered.  
The pots replied  
with a flourish of cymbals  
and all the good times gone

came flooding back.  
The dead rose lively as a wind  
scoured the house  
and entered the garden  
ravaging the cabbages in rows.

The carrots spread their tendrils in the dirt  
and burrowed deeper. And the radishes,  
the ruby radishes  
shut their red eyes in the dark  
and began to weep.

from *A Bracelet of Lies* (WWPH, 1987)

*Notes from the Cave*

I

Crouched at the top,  
I can see only the bottoms of things  
cut in half by a turn of the stair—  
a rank of olive carpet treads,  
half a doorway and the skirts  
of chairs, my mother's shoes and ankles  
as she passes deviled eggs, the crystal  
chandelier dispensing trapezoids  
of amethyst and amber light.

I hear my parents and their friends  
conversing in a strange, new tongue, voices  
rising to a fierce crescendo.  
Bernie Goldbloom barks like a seal.  
A low growl blossoms into gibbon-shrieks.  
They are telling dirty jokes.

I am clean, maidenly  
in my flannel gown, avid  
to know. My perfect feet  
encased in slippers. Soft down  
covering my arms and legs.  
*Wolf Ears*, they will call me  
when they find me here. My father  
has black hair all over his body.  
I love him hopelessly, without reason  
or measure. Sometimes when my mother passes close,  
I catch the pungent scent of bear.

## II

Now I take my turn in the lit room  
at the oval table, reciting  
my name. I have breasts.  
I break bread with my hands.  
I pass the platter of chicken or lamb.  
At the punch-line, I laugh  
with the others. What little  
I know, I know

indirectly. Outside are shadows  
and sirens. Cars and searchbeams  
cast the only light. Eyes wild  
with fear, the stunned doe  
sinks to her knees, offers a throat  
to the rain.

from *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991)

*Peter Above the Mines*

i

This time you live  
in a mining camp  
a child among men  
consigned to darkness--Czechs,  
Bulgarians, Swedes, Norwegians  
hard lives pressed  
under leagues of shale, rock  
matrix, mother-lode  
the common tongue. Dakota  
Mining and Mineral plucked them  
from the hills of Europe, from lichen  
villages curling like smoke  
along rock ledges, snatched them  
from carved wood houses, from  
ladders of kinship and custom  
and set them like checkers  
on squared lots. Day.  
Night. Half a life underground,  
half a life sleeping. Buffalo  
wind in the hinges. Dreams rising  
in a dozen languages.

ii

You are the one who knows English, the fingerling  
born to it, fish in a stream  
that lowers itself over rocks on clear ropes  
to the lake below, bearing crayfish and bottlecaps  
orange pebbles veined with silver. Reaching  
your hand, large under water,

you lead these immigrants, groping  
into your language, breaking a path  
of raft, rope, shuttle, and flight  
with your small breath. With your small breath  
you are luck's canary, alive to the tiniest whispers,  
ramps of light.

In gratitude they bring you raisins  
and sour candies, perfect arrowheads  
of flint or chert. They bring thumbtricks  
and whistles, a turtle closed

tight as a fist, loose loops of a snake  
sliding over your wrist, green  
bracelets for Peter, translator  
to miners with sledgehammer hands.

iii

On Sundays  
they take you along  
past gray slag  
heaps to where the scaffolding  
begins—a line of banks and windows, doors  
on hinges, balustrades,  
smear of color on rain-washed billboards,  
rhinestone stars.

She waits in her cubby, a sweet-  
shop Hecuba circled  
with trinkets and news  
wearing stripes that follow  
the curve of her body in waves.  
She is puffed like a pigeon.  
They want to lie down and sleep  
but they are afraid  
of her soft, white arms  
the pouter-folds of skin around her elbows.

Coming over on the ship  
they watched green water swelling  
mile on mile of jagged glass  
first small and sharp, then looming  
heaving them up  
and letting them fall; her body  
is like that.

Because of the waves  
and their heavy tongues  
because their hands are shovels  
you must speak for them.  
Dispatched with a coin and a wink,  
you are careful when you pay  
to touch her hand.

iv

To the east, the Bear  
is rising, and the air  
deepens from quartz  
to cobalt as you start back  
past balusters and fading lights  
to where the scaffold ends—  
sudden as a well.

You become a frog and sink, deeper,  
deeper until, halfway home, the sky  
is black as the inside of a mine  
and from your shaft  
you watch the Virgin and the Huntsman  
speechless rivals, wheeling  
over the valley.

Eyes large as soup bowls  
bones light as prayer  
how do you leap, boy  
weighed with stones  
so many souls, the armies  
in your care?

v

Over a charred field  
through scurvy grasses, water-  
and-light-starved you go  
following music. Accordion  
days.

Music sits on the back porch  
bald among lilies  
an old man with hair on his face  
a carnival between his hands.

He sucks in the hot  
yellow air and lets it out again  
cool and blue as evening. Inland  
he draws an ocean sound.

And you at his knees in the ebb and swirl  
are part of everything that moves,  
a membrane vibrating and expanding.



Wind catches in your mouth  
and swells your lungs  
until you breathe with it:  
in- out- in- out-

Some years from now your one-reed voice  
will open like a fan.  
Your chest, a bellows  
will make sounds like these.

vi

On days when Music's  
whiskey breath  
was full of curses, sounds  
rushed back into the box  
like wind and rain.

While Music slept, his notes  
lay scattered in darkness,  
small white bones.  
Curious, you fingered the keys.  
No boats. No water.

Another day  
in his delirium, the old man  
tears his music box apart. He swears  
there is a tiny woman  
deep inside he wants  
to touch.

Now he hurls the box  
against the rail, and now  
he stomps it, stomps.

Rough dark groans  
push up from the bellows.  
Your own man-voice  
pushing out.

vii

Though you are half a child  
and leaving soon, you know  
what you must do. It is like swimming down  
through warm currents and cold

to find a coin, the same dream every night  
as if our lives depended on it.

Pushing through vines  
you find the narrow entrance  
to the shaft and struggle down  
from chamber to chamber—

She waits suspended  
wreathed in white  
a figure of perfect repose  
weaving a net or spinning  
or simply rehearsing  
a tune in her mind.  
You know if you can touch her hand  
the music will begin again

so you push on, deeper,  
through dark tunnels  
toward the lighted room

the nickel clutched tight in your palm.

from *A Bracelet of Lies* (WWPH, 1987)

### *The Sound: Seventeen Year Cicadas*

The sound was sultry, loud, a steady  
sexual hum, swelling, receding, swelling again,  
the whole world throbbing like a single animal,  
the clumsy creatures, everywhere emerging—winged  
beings, monstrous, but gentle, their bodiless shells,  
translucent and perfect, littering the walk. Where  
was my own sloughed carapace? I stood in my confused  
flesh, new breasts budding against my will. The sound  
was outside and inside at once—like plunging  
into a warm sea not knowing skin from water.

All the next year, I could not get enough  
of sleeping, rising briefly, sinking back down—  
less depression than a larval lethargy. I lay on the beach,  
my new curves nested in sand, heat baking my limbs.  
My young brothers buried me. I let them.  
They made a long corpse of me, a mummy case.  
I barely stirred. I wanted to tunnel down

into the earth, a blind grub burrowing  
without sense or thought or music  
toward the day when I'd awaken to my winged life.

from *Innocence* (Ohio State University Press, 2006)

*The Aunts*

When they came  
breathing jasmine and raspberry,  
tinkling the charms on their bracelets,  
money and sweets  
in the folds of their skirts,  
heads haloed in lamps,  
voices high and sweet as rosewater,  
shedding powder and perfumed fur,  
the wild smells gone

When bathed and barefoot  
I curled in their caverns of fur  
drowning in sweet,  
foxes bit themselves  
into chains around their shoulders,  
jade eyes tracing the circle of years:  
emphysema, insomnia, bad faith  
powdered faces puckered, eyes  
hot, perjured.

Turning into tigers  
yellow as tallow  
they chased each other  
around the tree, tooth to tail  
running faster, faster  
blur of heat and wind until they—  
butter, oh butter would, butter would  
melt in the sweet, sweet caverns  
of their mouths.

from *A Bracelet of Lies* (WWPH, 1987)

*Bluegrass*

We drive to water  
Sunday afternoons  
through second growth,  
rivers of bluegrass  
tumbling from the speaker.  
Trees thwang past  
like banjo strings, the crickets  
frail. Climbing with a camera,  
as when carrying a child or trying out  
a new, vulnerable limb,  
we relearn the perils of walking,  
cautious over rock. The trail  
threads downstream,  
gropes for water,  
runs ahead down blind  
alleys of rock toward a promise  
of green, climbs to reach  
another outcrop, clear  
at last. Along the bank, the rocks  
lean out and point upstream  
like cannon, single-sighted  
while imagination  
edging toward the rim  
creeps forward hand by hand  
then falters where the heart  
drops away like a cliff  
to a rope of silt-green river  
twisting in the gorge.

Hiking home through spangled woods,  
we pass young couples  
starting out with ropes.  
They will lower themselves  
like grasshoppers just for sport  
over the sheerest cliffs,  
the ones we couldn't contemplate,  
run lightly up and down the strings.

from *Innocence* (Ohio State University Press, 2006)

*Curtain Call*

If this is the afterlife, they must be angels  
wading knee-deep in golden dust  
their hair and garments slightly mussed  
from so much struggle.

Juliet's face still streaked with tears  
Romeo, pale and bemused, they do not seem,  
now that they've broken from the dream,  
much more than casual acquaintances, as if  
they'd stripped away their old identities  
and not yet taken on the new.

Acrobats of love and hate, how readily  
they threw themselves away. And yet  
they rise, as we do not. Paris,  
Mercutio, placid as paper dolls,  
join hands across the stage  
and bow—as if this bending down,  
this holding on, might ask and grant  
a mutual absolution. And what of us

expelled from wedding night and tomb  
into this after-life of everyday, the cold  
walk home, our stumbling words, the body  
with its fear of pain, its dread of annihilation.  
How often have we failed in love  
as they did not.

from *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991)

*Under the Sign of Isadora,*

my lonely mother taught me dancing.  
It was afternoon, her cleaning done.  
We climbed to the carpeted room  
under the roof. Sunlight had entered  
before us, warm prayer rugs unrolled  
on the carpet. We took off our shoes  
and closed the door.

Whatever she did, I repeated.  
When she raised her arms  
to touch the sky, I lifted mine.

If she bent low, sweeping the grass  
with her arms, I did the same.  
I would be water. In me  
she would watch herself move between past

and future, my infant steps  
continuing the figures hers began.  
Now the waves commenced whose origins  
pulsed before music, a rocking  
like the motion of a wing, the gesture  
swelling through her body  
into mine, out through my fingertips  
into the world.

from *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991)

*String Quartet*

Under the music tables and the sprung  
black chairs, their shoes quiver and flap  
like blackbirds' wings and the bowties  
underneath their high wing collars  
tremble like messages or things  
that want to fly away.  
The measure doubles, trebles,  
thickens to a braid.  
They pass it back and forth  
across the table, weaving single strands  
until the four dark men are bound fast  
in wraps they have wound themselves  
and struggle against thick ropes of sound.

They sway like rabbis, pull surprises  
bending sharp as time heats up  
and sixes rush to twenty-fours.  
They count like misers. Blending  
up and down the scale,  
they pass through every shade  
of innuendo, race from key to key,  
try window, lock, and door until  
it breaks—

Heads, fiddles, bows fling up  
in one sharp, spasmodic throw.

Like a mad pie, the parlor piece explodes  
and blackbirds—collars—wings—

from *A Bracelet of Lies* (WWPH, 1987)

*In Nagasaki*

All the boats are bobbing in Nagasaki harbor.  
Butterfly is waiting on her hill  
for the Americans to come. Her obi

flutters in a breeze that gently stills as if  
all breathing in the world had stopped.  
And yet the boats bounce gaily in the chop,

waving their colored flags. The tall Americans  
will bring appalling news. Butterfly  
will bend in grief to meet her knife.

All the boats are gone from Nagasaki harbor.  
All the boats and all the water, all the faces  
with their names. The Yanks have landed

with their sturdy "can-do," their capacity for harm.  
The people of Nagasaki have seen a great light  
surrounded by a greater darkness. Here we might pause

to speak of irony, the difference between art  
and history, between one woman's harrowing  
and holocaust. Such niceties are neither here nor there

to Butterfly. For her, the heart is absolute,  
and knowledge means obliteration.  
All she needs to know of irony, she knows.

from *Innocence* (Ohio State University Press, 2006.)

*A Widow Reads Robinson Crusoe*

Islanded, he must have been surprised  
as she to find herself alone  
in a season when even the winged  
seeds of the maple come paired.



She admires his ingenuity  
and how, bereft, he never lacks for comfort  
how from the wreckage of hope, he framed  
a habitation, fortified it  
with a palisade of still-green sticks  
that rooted in a self-renewing wall.

How slowly, taking pains, he taught himself  
to fire cooking pots of clay, grind flour  
for bread. Inventing agriculture,  
rediscovering animal husbandry  
and tailoring, he built a life  
not so unlike the life he'd left. Once

from a felled tree, he carved a boat  
so big he couldn't drag it to the water.  
Starting over, he dug a smaller  
vessel he could launch—for time  
was what he had—twenty-eight  
years, long enough to marry  
and to raise a child . . .

It's night. The telephone lies still.  
Beside her looms the empty bed  
unmapped and dangerous  
as sleep. And so she pulls the afghan close  
settles her glasses on her nose and reads.

from *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991)

### *Richard Casting a Melon*

First, the melon itself, a huge brain,  
interior network of nerve and vein  
externalized. Then, Richard's hands,  
blunt, square, capable, mixing the powder,  
slapping and smoothing the paste as if gently  
spanking a baby's butt, hurrying  
before the plaster sets. Now we wait  
while the great, lobed fruit in its bandages  
heats and cools, as if that primitive mind  
were giving birth to a new idea—say, the Genius  
of Fire, or the Notion of the Soul. Next  
Baptism, total immersion in water,  
the mummy raised in its coffin,

a cautious tapping along the seams, our delicate  
intake of breath as the shell falls open  
in three segments and the melon  
is lifted out, lovelier than ever,  
leaving its own memorial behind, a hollow faithful  
to this perfect, one-time-only melonness,  
which can be filled and cast and filled  
and so on down successive galleries  
of absence and remembrance. Meanwhile the melon itself  
is sliced and eaten. We do this  
in the summer of our mother's death,  
in the sweetness of flesh and the sharpness  
of memory, here in the kitchen  
where making begins.

from *My Life in Hiding* (Quarterly Review of Literature, 1991)

*Jerusalem*

*Ladder and well*

I know that I will never  
reach that land  
where word and world  
are one, where a man  
can lean out  
like a ladle over water  
and see clear to the bottom.

*Stars and grains of sand*  
were promised, countless  
generations. But I tell you

to be chosen is to live forever  
in a state of longing.

And if I build the road  
cobble by cobble,  
I will never arrive. It is here  
I must live, among chipped stones  
and flints, weapons of need,  
the mind's make-shift inventions.

*Jewel in the eye,*

*Ruby of*

**Salem**

**L**adder stretching from  
the floor of loneliness,

**M**ilk of memory  
and mercy's tide.

I have set my lookout here  
upon the mountain  
where I watch a fox-cloud  
crossing over, blue

as smoke. With all my gaze  
I follow it—

*Jerusalem*

from *The Porcelain Apes of Moses Mendelssohn* (Milkweed Editions,  
2002)

## **Peggy Aylsworth**

### *Workers*

The sound of pounded nails rattles cups  
on tables at the outdoor cafe. Men work,  
hung with the apron of their trade,  
its tools, lifting themselves  
onto the lattice of wooden bones  
toward what they build in the sight  
of breakfast eaters after 9 a.m.  
I'm one, too hot even in the early sun  
of late October, watching two men,  
no longer young, balance a board in place  
between them, easy as habit, nails hit like homers.  
This making with the hands: as though my pen,  
swung in an arc, travels toward an honest thing.  
Often, women have been said to make what perishes.  
If I'd been the mother of Euripides,  
would I have written tragedies  
instead of selling vegetables to pay the rent?  
What comes from what? I'd chorus with the Trojan women.  
Who preserves? Fire into fire. A hard day's hammering  
this board, this thought, this possibility.

---

Peggy Aylsworth's poetry has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Ars Interpres* (Sweden), *Laurel Review*, *Zone*, and numerous other journals throughout the U.S. and abroad.

## Brad Bisio

### *In Front of this Stone*

I don't know  
what the hell I'm doing  
here. I don't know why  
I keep coming back.  
What do I think you're going to do,  
rise like some god-son Jesus?  
It's like both of you are gone.

Mom barely leaves her room,  
goes on the back steps to smoke  
in her night gown and slippers,  
and that's about it. They almost shut the electricity off  
last month. Don't freak, but I'm writing  
the checks and signing Mom's name. Still can't

balance very well. Looking at the sun  
behind that elm, it's got to be  
at least an hour now . . . maybe more.  
Remember how you used to tell me,  
*Would you get yourself  
a goddamn watch for chrissake.*  
I don't have much use

for time. When the afternoon bell rings,  
I go home. When it's dark,  
I sleep. When there's light,  
I wake. I eat when I'm hungry.  
*What are you doing eating cereal  
at 5 o'clock? That's not dinner food.*

Tonight I'll make rice and bean burritos  
and steam some broccoli for us, if I can get  
her to eat. That's a decent dinner, right?  
There's plenty of room for your beer now  
in the fridge. What does it matter anyway?  
We're all going to die.  
I don't mean to imply

that I told you so. It doesn't make me feel  
any better. You were right; math is important.  
That doesn't help either.  
I hear your headstone words when I'm not here:

*If There's Nothing New Under the Sun,  
Go Above the Sun*

---

Brad Bisio studied Aerospace Engineering at Syracuse University for three years and graduated with a BA in English Literature from Humboldt State University. He was a performing musician while living in San Francisco and Colorado. Currently, he lives in Tennessee where he teaches Adult Education at Nashville State Community College. He received a certificate of achievement from the Nashville Adult Literacy Council in 2010.

## Bruce Bennett

### *Life after School*

The kid has AIDS, and I'm supposed to teach him?  
He never gets assignments in on time.  
He often misses class. I know he's ill,  
but not from him. I'm not supposed to know it.  
He sometimes looks befuddled, but he's smart.  
And when he talks, he talks. The whole class listens.  
And he is very sweet, and very gentle.  
But sometimes, god, he looks and sounds just awful.  
Last week we had a writer in to class.  
He went around the room, asking them questions.  
"So, Mack, what is it you are going to do  
after you're finished here?" And Mack just smiled.  
He has this kind of beatific smile.  
He said, "I'm going to be an engineer."

---

Bruce Bennett is the author of nine books of poetry and more than twenty poetry chapbooks. His poems have appeared recently, or are forthcoming, in *Ploughshares*, *5 AM*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, and *The Healing Muse*. His most recent chapbook, a sonnet sequence entitled *A Girl Like You*, has just been published by Finishing Line Press. Bruce Bennett teaches literature and creative writing at Wells College, where he is Professor and Chair of English and Director of Creative Writing.



## **Judith Bowles**

### *The Fisherman*

Uncle Charlie talked about water  
as if it were a book he was reading.  
He told us what he saw, no,  
what he found, there either  
floating by his motorboat  
or actually on his fishing line.  
A horse's leg, two dead dogs,  
a pocketbook full of money,  
a sack of kittens, and then  
I ran from the room.  
The Scioto River became  
a story full of riddles.  
He tipped his glass and the neck  
of the beer bottle together  
as if they were talking,  
he said they were necking,  
and the creamy top rose  
and rose to his tongue  
waiting against the glass  
for the overflow. Too much  
time with his dogs Jack and Ebby  
taught him to lap up the head  
while he smiled his wide smile.  
He didn't keep secrets, did not  
even try, the way we did.  
After my horse show he wanted  
to know why I slumped  
the minute the judges appeared  
and at swim meets why I dove  
deep off the side of the pool.  
He said that I swallowed up  
luck. He'd learned from watching  
I didn't want to win. No other grownup  
talked to me like that.

---

Judith Bowles is Ohio-born, Duke-educated, New York-leavened, and Washingtonian by nature. She earned her MFA from American University in short fiction where she has taught creative writing. She writes after having taken a sabbatical from writing during eight years in Philadelphia where she studied horticulture.

## **Terri Brown-Davidson**

### *The Woman Who Makes Things Up*

"They're different," she said.  
"Unlike others you've taught."  
My boss wired with horn rims  
That made her look stern, like some grand  
Chattering elder  
Bearing witness for the tribe  
Though her teeth flashed white  
When she smiled. Her assistant—  
While my new boss intoned—  
Studied her lap as if some fascinating  
Rent in her skirt trapped her gaze  
And I was nowhere except newly hired,  
My poetic dreams defunct.  
I trembled at the opportunity to confront—  
To be forced to stroke—  
Another Student Body.  
How could I write poetry  
When, each morning, the students,  
Eyeing with snarl-toothed scorn  
Poor grades,  
Strolled yammering into my classroom,  
That stupid beige room harboring  
Dead poetry dreams  
And lint-soft illusions  
Dissipating before their faces?  
Pinch me, I'm dreaming,  
The first boy said, his face freckled bland  
And white  
As the virgin screen I stared at  
After class, still shivering from my mass encounter  
With students who proclaimed  
Wallace Stevens a freak.

But Jazz Girl dwells in me still,  
The alter ego whispering "To hell with all that comp"  
When images cluster mothsoftening  
On my cheek  
And winged phrases feather my skin  
And I remember who I am: that woman  
Who makes things up.

Some nights I go home  
And grade papers,  
Dream about orangutans  
Wrapping me in hirsute, auburn arms  
That warm me before I sleep. In class  
We discuss "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"  
Until the poem crumbles  
And the images go limp  
As a fish pulled three weeks ago from the freezer.  
"That Emperor guy's a freak," the freckled boy announces.

And the class, dismissed,  
Darts away toward quotidian dreams.

*On Seeing Heather McHugh Read*

A poetic neophyte,  
Clumsy in tracking both vehicle and tenor,  
I watched a woman sit cross-legged  
On a bare, stark stage,  
Lit by a rush of fluorescence so floodlike  
It drowned then cleansed her.  
Her broad, pale face,  
The forehead molded and spotlight, swollen,  
Her rounded cheeks sunken into twinned shadowed triangles,  
Gazed forward as if into a black hole imploding.  
Examining us—her bittersweet, breathing darkness—  
She swiped sinewy hair strands behind both ears,  
Her raw, metal glass frames  
Touched with a refractive bronze.  
Her voice, then, wafted above me,  
A mystical monotone,  
A blunted-off version of the boys' down the block,  
Harrowingly dry,  
Snake rasps slicing through sudden melting butter,

Her voice—mellifluous—slithering toward rapture.  
Oh, to be a poet like that,  
Tender, tart, rhapsodic, asp-witted  
And aphoristic,  
A Brit in New Englander's clothing,  
Deliciously understated,  
Succulently sullen,  
But with a bite.

After hearing her read,  
For hours  
I can't write a word.

---

Terri Brown-Davidson's work has appeared in *LA Review*, *Triquarterly*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Literary Review*, and other journals. Recently, she was the guest editor in fiction for *The Pedestal Magazine*. She has received the New Mexico Writer's Scholarship, the AWP Intro Award for poetry, a Yaddo residency fellowship, and thirteen Pushcart nominations, as well as a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry for her first book, *The Carrington Monologues*.

## **Wendy Taylor Carlisle**

### *Buck Mountain*

Before the rain, I couldn't imagine the rain.  
It is that way with me. Yesterday  
I filled with brilliant sunlight, with air faintly green,  
  
reflecting the everything that rises in spring.  
Yesterday was dry and so forever  
is dry. Around here, the Kings River runs clean as it can.

Eagles rise against the bluffs, a canoe snakes,  
loops, slides sweet up to Clifty. In this weather,  
I am a forecast atheist.

Torrents come as a surprise, boil the creek with runoff,  
pulse the flannel hillside light with crows, riding the breeze  
like oil on water. I float in vitreous air,

contained by ignorance and caws. Warnings are nothing  
to me. A momentary drought, the creek  
clear again, how can I believe the glass will ever break?

---

Wendy Taylor Carlisle lives in Texas. She is the author of two books and two chapbooks.  
Read more about her at [www.wendytaylorcarlisle.com](http://www.wendytaylorcarlisle.com).

## **Gayle Reed Carroll**

### *The Moon Speaks in Darkness*

You rake into darkness, I watch  
the canopy of leaves becoming a canopy of twigs, and you  
with your bamboo rake, one stick of it dangling

from a coil that held, once, the fanned tines,  
a broken stick unable to stay where it should, in spite  
of your fixes. Look how that claw

catches on knots of grass,  
how it scrapes at the earth, and you, still worrying  
leaves to the curb, night after night, year after year,

the few moments for raking found  
between the night class you teach and your falling  
to bed, as if you believe you've finished.

That a rake might end the falling I've watched  
thousands of years, knowing what must crumble, blow away,  
dissolve into soil. Your tree will make more leaves.

You or one like you will rake again, then again,  
more leaves more falling more cold nights more broken rakes more  
trucks sucking leaves from the curb.

More nights I watch from beyond the stratosphere.  
You're a favorite movie, a story with sighs. You could never  
be like the tree, letting go the work

before the hour of abandonment. What do you think  
you can do against seasons, haven't you seen how they end?  
This is not about fixing, not solving.

It's about keeping on, about  
the illusions of solving, something that vanishes, breath by breath  
dispersing. A cough of wind

dies down fast, dies at your feet  
in the leaves in the names of seasons: then, now, forever,  
what ends begins : again : again : again



*Dark Room*

Expose in yellow light. Gently stir the bath, see the man appear.  
Slip into stop bath. Rinse. Clip to the line.

Show his face, square on the page: focus—

Not the hospital face, metal bed, scrambled sheets, thrashing kick.  
Not the man damp and fuming, roar like thunder, not  
his fight to rise.

Dim inside the developing dark, a father—

ease his image into the corrugated roll to dry. Save  
how he works his darkroom magic show, how magic works  
into a daughter's nerve.

Photographs could save the brief biographies—

Not the man strapped, strap out of reach. Who comes to feed,  
to stroke his hair, his arm, his fire? Even the papery skin,  
taut on cropped bone.

Story soaked and rising fast—

One sheet a chapter, a stack adds up the life,  
one savage tone at a time.

No solution slows what's developing fast—

not the nurse, chair on wheels he steers with swollen feet,  
hand over hand clutching the rail. The half smile, the muscle.  
The man.

Over and over it works, as long as paper lasts—

Done, you think. Crop or enlarge. Lift him now, lift  
from below the water's worried surface. Lift,  
clip to the line.

*Love is a Sinewy Acrobat*

His glitz shines in transient light: in a hospital lost, needles and funk,

not one nurse knows how to tie the cord on his heart. They shuff  
statement to question, each hour I dust my palms / cinch my belt.

The heart, once so beset, spills onto the arm I stroke: diminished, limp.

I want to forgive someone. A show of nerve, his skin his shifting stature  
his few rags fade in the closet: sartorial statement, slug.

No wonder patients slither in vague light: *Who am I?* he thrashes,

fogey : fool : coot : has-been : shadow : or is it  
shot star? dogged rogue? taste of phlegm? or else

a shorted circuit, a word game, a woofer, a nothing

this falsehood this farce this forgetting this failing this fog.  
Somewhere a trio of spotlights shouts his name;

somewhere a tightrope screams, *not yet not yet not yet*

—after D.A. Powell

*To My First Grade Teacher, Miss Smitha*

I was lost in a breathtaking curl—  
wood

as it rose from my desk like a worm,  
as I rocked

the yellow pencil's eraser band,  
crimped and empty,

sharp metal glide  
into a yield of grain and shellac.

The thrill, the standing curl—  
pine scent, amber sheen,

the wonder—  
that I stopped with a single cut.

I'm sorry I damaged my desk,  
sorry I lied.

I did it  
because I could.

And because I couldn't stop.  
I don't know what scared me more:

what I couldn't take back,  
or how the carving aroused me.

*A Marked World Deeply*

When were the carefree days, walking the slithering lips of tide,  
searching for shells? Clam, conch, blue-black mussel,  
hinged valves intact. Oysters, blanched  
by furious waves.

Salt of the earth, did I even imagine creatures in those shells, facing  
octopus, sea star, those clever suction cups  
attaching to bivalves, to slowly, willfully, pry the halves apart—  
Eat or be eaten, whispers a world  
making its tedious way to extinction.

Achieve, invent, compete! argue the heroes of progress. Stars  
patiently cheering the faint sky,  
night driving a path binding the globe.

Somewhere in ruin, shards of Treblinka, Buchenwald, Auschwitz,  
where gathered once, the flawed, the broken, the hated,  
trusting, or not, God in the Torah.  
And angels who helped, or meant to help  
the marked, seeking escape.  
Time weaving its silk gloom beyond the threads of light.

Any soldier might stop a woman on the night street,  
a pall of war-crumbled houses,  
coo to the infant asleep on her wool shoulder, offer a crust of bread  
from a sack packed by his wife. Wave his cool goodbye.  
As the two pass into darkness, shoot  
mother and child in the cupped bone of each skull.  
Smile to a friend.

One woman living  
answers a cry in fierce wind, attunes her mind to rescue  
twenty-five hundred children from gas or flame, firearm or poison.  
Embracing each child, she deeply inhales, exhausts.  
Blankets each unnerved cry  
in basket, ambulance, tram, or package.  
After, searches for living parents, delivers their children home.[1]

[1] Wikipedia: Irena Sendler, social worker and member of Zagota, the council to aid Jews, led an effort to save as many children as possible, placing them with Polish families or priests or in orphanages. She buried records of names and placements in jars in order to be able to return them to their families after the war. Recipient of numerous awards, she was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007; however, the award went to Al Gore. She died in 2008.

---

Gayle Reed Carroll has taught Art at various grade levels in public schools, and calligraphy at Carnegie Mellon University and in the Mt. Lebanon Adult Education program. She earned an AB at Hood College and an MFA in Graphic Design at CMU. Writing since the early nineties, she has studied with Stephen Dunn, Kenneth Rosen, Jan Beatty, and Ellen McGrath Smith. Her poems have appeared in several small magazines and anthologies, including *Poet Lore*, *The Comstock Review*, *City Paper*, *Black River Review*, and *Voices from the Attic*. She lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Grace Cavalieri

### *Cancelling the Future*

Today is a kind of palace, light  
cascades like a rainstorm.  
Thankfully, the afternoon refuses to be evening,  
and how wonderful that all living things are suddenly  
livelier versions of the dead,  
nothing better, nothing worse,  
an equality of sorts in this.

I understand fully  
that birth and death give us a sense of love and grief.  
That's what they're for: That's the provenance,  
coarsened by all the years in between.

There are two quotes about this I cannot  
ascribe and I apologize in advance;  
never mind, I just found who said this:  
"to have a happy ending one  
must stop short of the end . . . ."  
It was John Banville who wrote it.

The one I cannot place is this: "Prose  
is most hopeful. It assumes the writer will  
live more than a day to finish it."

Then someone said poetry  
was for depressed people. Well,  
I think writing is all a kind of Love

and why should Love care about our ending.  
Please don't think I don't care about dying.  
I do. I'm not being cynical,  
I am heartsore actually and even the worse for wear,  
because I see more than I bargain for, and always have.

---

Grace Cavalieri is the author of 16 books and chapbooks of poems, as well as 23 produced full-length and short-form plays. Her newest publication is *Millie's Sunshine Tiki Villas*

(2010, Casa Menendez). Grace has founded and still produces "The Poet and the Poem" on public radio celebrating 34 years on-air. It is recorded at the Library of Congress. She holds the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award, the Bordighera Poetry Prize, The Paterson Award for Excellence in Poetry, the CPB Silver Medal, Pen Center's Best Books List, plus others. Her play "Anna Nicole: Blonde Glory" opened in NYC in 2011.

## **Will Cordeiro**

### *Window*

Merrill House, Stonington

Across the day-drunk bottleglass,  
Sheer gradients of changing light  
Portray each mood that passes,  
Some ghostwork of the sun so slight

It slants upon an open page  
To let it voice another shade  
Of meaning: lavender, mock orange,  
The very pink that mediates

A glare of white, which might be read . . .  
These panes now color other weather  
Through water, window (gold and lead)  
To souvenir a wave, and letters

Gloss stoic relics that don't move;  
This room's transposed from dusk to mauve.

### *Half Sister*

She went to intern at the vet's,  
Surrounded by the empty cages,  
Did a little homework, depending  
If she fixed a meal or if her pets  
Needed feeding. Turned some pages,  
Drew a picture, half-pretending.

No one seemed to know my sister.  
Eventually, she went away  
To college, but then transferred back  
And lived at home to finish her  
Pre-req's. Soon buried in the day-  
To-day of her new job, it's black

And white, measuring control  
Groups, nervous rabbits, red-eyed mice,  
Recording their slow side-effects.  
She fast adjusted to her role,  
Sterile lab coat and the precise  
Split-dosage schedule to inject;

The rows of vials, double-blind,  
Exposure levels, routines for detox,  
Discarding all the biohazards.  
Go in early, work overtime,  
Weekends on call, and beat the clock.  
With time each detail can be mastered.

No surprises, no room for error;  
A spacious townhouse, lives near the beach.  
Of any evils, choose the lesser,  
Save up whatever can be spared. More  
Walk-in closets, doodads for the niche.  
I know nothing of my sister.

---

Will Cordeiro is currently a Ph.D. candidate studying 18<sup>th</sup> century British literature at Cornell. Co-founder of Brooklyn Playwrights Collective, he has had several plays produced in regional and off-off-Broadway venues, including a libretto performed at the Johnson Museum of Art. His work appears in numerous literary journals.



## Barbara Crooker

### *The Bossy Letter R*

(phrase from my son, David, who has autism)

The bossy letter R will turn you crooked,  
just when you were sure your goose  
was merely cooked. Rouse you  
from sleep, ramp up the music, rev  
the engine. Sentence you  
to hard labor. Dice your zucchini  
into ratatouille. Reductive.  
Not afraid to be ridiculous.  
It can turn picks to pricks, pigs  
to prigs, bees to beers. Don't look  
for recompense. Recreational  
drugs optional. Add rum.  
Relax and roll with it. But  
beware; on some dark night, it'll  
hot wire your cat, tuning its motor,  
start it turning: rrrrrrrrrrr.

### *Live or Evil, Rats or Star*

What happened when you *renamed meander*?  
Did the sauce fail to *thicken* in the *kitchen*?  
I thought if I refused to *abridge* my grievance,  
the *brigade* would come for me. You may think  
there are no *taxes* in *Texas*, but you're wrong.

I'd trade all my *atlases* for one small sack  
of *sea salt*. Who *rates* our *tears*?  
The more I *grieved*, the more my life *diverged*.  
Hush. *Slow owls* are sleeping in trees.  
Who doesn't have a *hatred* of *dearth*?

I use a *slate* to write my *tales*, this *prose*,  
while *spores* of mildew scatter widely. Do  
you *know Rye, New York*? If you juggle

*sacred*, you'll get *scared*. *Deal*  
can *lead* to *lade* or *dale*. Or end up

dead as *lead*. It's all in the toss,  
the tumble: *straw* or *warts*, *pins*  
or *snip*, *peek* or *keep*. The *tide* can turn  
to *edit*, in the blink of an eye. Which  
will you choose: *heart* or *earth*?

### *The Paper Clip*

Two u's, standing at attention.  
A couple of mouths  
with a jones for paper.  
A thin slip of twisted  
wire. A bend in the silver,  
brass, or candy striped creek.  
Not hard-wired  
for permanence  
like the staple,  
the brisk click  
wedding  
one sheet to another,  
the paper clip's more  
for dating, casual  
one night stands.  
Although afterwards,  
sometimes a mark  
remains, a faint scar,  
a thumb nail indentation,  
of what once was,  
and now is, no more.

### *The Last Painting*

Arshile Gorky Retrospective, Philadelphia Museum of Art

I'd always seen his name wrong, Ashile, not Arshile,  
missed the "r" completely, didn't see the demarcation  
of its black arc breaking up the greasy softness of "ah" and "sh."  
I didn't know about the studio fire that destroyed ten years' work,  
the cancer that smoldered in his gut, the marriage that went up  
in flames. So he did a painting called "Agony," reds flickering

into browns, then a series of smudged grisailles: "Charred Beloved."  
About art, he said, "I don't like the word "finish," painted "The Limit"  
just before he reached it, took the rope, its oval mouth like one  
of his biomorphic shapes, placed it around his neck, stepped off the chair.

---

Barbara Crooker's books are *Radiance*, winner of the 2005 Word Press First Book Award and finalist for the 2006 Paterson Poetry Prize; *Line Dance* (Word Press, 2008), winner of the 2009 Paterson Award for Excellence in Literature; and *More* (C&R Press, 2010). Her poems appear in a variety of literary journals and many anthologies, including *Good Poems for Hard Times* (Garrison Keillor, editor)(Viking Penguin) and the *Bedford Introduction to Literature*.

## Philip Dacey

### *Toora Loora*

—for Fay

Pregnant, she practices singing lullabies.  
The baby will be doubly held, by arms and tone  
of voice, its rise and fall, as childhood flies.

A first-time mother determined to memorize  
dozens of lyrics, she waits till she's alone  
in the house before she practices lullabies,

the house a womb to sing in, where she lies  
back as if afloat and tries out, "Day Is Done,"  
her voice softening, for childhood too quickly flies.

She imagines looking down and into eyes  
new to the world—so new they sing their own  
song of hello—as she practices lullabies.

Can there be a better musical enterprise?  
Are hers not the sounds all music's built on,  
the mother lode? She thinks how childhood flies,

then readies her voice to quiet a baby's cries.  
Ever since she first dreamed of her child she's known  
she'd make a practice of singing lullabies  
to slow the passage of their days. Childhood flies.

---

Philip Dacey's latest of eleven books is *Mosquito Operas: New and Selected Short Poems* (Rain Mountain Press, 2010). The winner of three Pushcart Prizes, two NEA grants, and a Fulbright to Yugoslavia, he has written entire collections of poems about Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Eakins, and New York City. More information about him appears at [www.philipdacey.com](http://www.philipdacey.com)

## **Dante Di Stefano**

### *Come Lark*

I want days a-wing with you, prodigies  
feathered below the strong sun, and arrows  
of light that dart the hide of miseries;  
all of which flamingo love and sparrow  
despair. I want to eagle you away  
from exile, to falcon you in bowers  
of permanent June, to linnet your days  
in oceans of autumn and leaf showers.

When April begins to egret our eyes  
and May time weariness swallows our hearts,  
honor the chance that owls and swifts surprise,  
that archers grief, cardinals end to start.  
There's no demise here, only a sunrise.  
Come kitten with me; Come lark, butterfly.

### *Allegro Passionato*

*of those rag-garments named the universe*

—George Eliot

Though in your place I can't well imagine  
this sequestered sphere buffeted, and blue,  
by the whiplash tail of galaxies, tinned,  
and tuned, by cadenzas of stars that coo  
at baffled moon and stanchion tented earth,  
I picture waif of words that lifts the hem  
of yellow dress and pizzicato mirth  
of fingers quivered in your diadem.

Swooning lubricities and laziness  
of days cuddled and cudgeled in the ark  
of brown blanketed escape from duress,  
we court the horizon and woo the dark.

Of those rag-garments, I say pluck the thread.  
Revel unraveled in this brumal bed.

*Dear Leaf*

I loved you, littlest one, most of all. Poor  
misshapen thing, hanging on a stem's string,

dawdling in the wind, recalling last spring.

When we first met, you were so immature,  
all bud and blossom, no cares in the world,  
coming on bright green, so lush and heart-shaped;

How could I resist the way your edge scraped  
my bark and the breeze broke you into twirls?  
Look at you as you're about to walk out

of autumn's door, wearing your yellow dress.  
You're so fine, I'm bound to be depressed,  
to wail down winter, redress frost with shouts.

Now, I'm a brittle rack of sticks who waits  
for the flowers bequeathed by May's estate.

---

Dante Di Stefano's work has appeared most recently in *Poetry*, *Quarter After Eight*, and *The Hollins Critic*.

## Margot Farrington

### *Scanning for Tigers*

The problem, said the optometrist,  
lies with print. Eyes were never meant to read  
but to scan for tigers. To scan for tigers at a

distance, shift to a close-up of one arm,  
where a fallen insect uncurls, walks  
among hairs. Back again to distance, alert

for stripes among the foliage. Mindful  
of shadow among the shadows,  
conspiracies of light. The eyes,

he said, were meant for roaming. The eyes  
were meant for wildness. Print, in its ant parade,  
tyrannizes. You can never look at a book

the way you look at a woman. The woman  
and the tiger share a sinuous flow that lets  
the eyes slip by, even as they behold.

No grasping, ever, with the woman or  
the tiger, though each may imprint upon the  
retina a memory that devours.

So which is more dangerous? Books, too,  
excite and inflame. Banned and burned (and  
come to think of it) some women burned too.

Blake's tyger ignited him. Every hunter burns.  
We're on fire, he said lastly, from all we see.  
Books and men and women turn to ashes in the end.

But the tiger remains an ember.

---

Margot Farrington is the author of two full-length collections, most recently *Flares And Fathoms* (Bright Hill Press). She is the recipient of poetry fellowships at Norton Island and at the I-Park Foundation in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Forthcoming poems will appear in *The Broome Review* and *Cimarron Review*. A reading and interview are available via Art On Air International Radio archives of 2010.

## **Roger Fogelman**

### *Triantophyllo*

The explosion of roses continues through the centuries,  
Bears witness  
To the incomprehensibility of beauty,  
And all the roses that ever were  
Are one gigantic rose, the bloom of time  
And times yet to be.

And what the Greeks call the thirty leafer  
Puts forth a faith in testimonial to itself,  
But if beauty is its own excuse for being,  
I would not wish to be there  
When the Gardener comes,  
To water, mulch or cut a few  
To decorate the rooms of Eternity.

### *Hunting Again*

Between the East Bronx and the infinite  
Under the rolling sun  
I intersected the eternal why  
With a net in my hand  
And gave myself up  
To those fragments of meaning called butterflies  
Who flickered into my consciousness  
Along the beds of Bouncing Bet  
And gave me hope for the years to be  
Butterflies, so mean I, you and I are not the same  
And that you entered my soul means nothing to you  
And though I am now old you are always the same  
I too am the same  
And so is the East Bronx  
Always the same, always the same.

---

Roger Fogelman was born in New York City in 1940. From an early age, he wrote poetry and for the next 45 odd years, he has continued to produce poems on various subjects,



such as nature and the human condition. He won the Morrison Poetry Prize at Cornell University and the American Academy of Poets Award at the University of Virginia. His work has been published in the American Academy of Poets' Commemorative Volume, 1965; the *Cornell Writer*; and the *Nassau Review*. Dr. Fogelman graduated from Cornell University in 1960 and received an MA and PhD in English from the University of Virginia. He also holds an MS in TESL from Queens College. He currently resides in New York City.

## Taylor Graham

### *To the Man at the Feed & Seed*

I love how you sunny the depths of barn  
as I back my little car in. I love the way  
your arms are brown as buckeye on the tree.  
Those arms could handle anything.  
I love hearing you murmur to your partner  
in your language—I can't catch the words  
but it sounds like wind in orchard grass.  
I love how you lift the bale of hay  
with twin hooks, like an offering,  
and place it gently in the bed of my car  
so the springs sigh. I love the way you  
manage the trick latch of the hatchback,  
softly as putting a cranky child to sleep.  
I love how you make no promises beyond  
"have a nice day, ma'am," and how you  
ask nothing of me in return.

---

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared in *American Literary Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere. She's included in the anthology *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor* was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize, and she's a finalist in Poets & Writers' California Writers Exchange. Her latest book, *Walking with Elihu: poems on Elihu Burritt, the Learned Blacksmith*, is available on Amazon.

## **Will Greenway**

### *Skyeline*

We had to share a table  
in the packed pub on Simmer Dim,  
the longest day of the year.  
They were German,  
but not fat and pushy like we thought,  
but slim, young, attractive.  
The locals said we must drink  
till dark, listening to the band  
play Scottish songs.  
We parted as the sun, which never set  
but stayed a gash of red  
above the hills all night,  
began to rise again,  
said, see you soon,  
and laughed at the unlikeliness.

On Loch Ness I wondered  
at the windsurfer skimming  
out on the black water,  
if he worried something might rise  
to suck him down, thup,  
like a trout taking a mayfly on "the hatch"  
when they only live a day.  
We drank the real Budweiser  
and fifty-year-old Glenlivet  
from a row of bottles on a shelf,  
a pound for every decade since  
it bubbled from the ground at Josie's Well.

I forget what "accident" brought us  
together again on the Firth of Forth,  
but remember running into them  
the final time  
outside a show in London.  
We stood on the sidewalk and swore  
to write, to visit,  
that fate intended us  
to be friends forevermore.

We've lost touch, of course,  
these thirty years,  
which seems like an eternity  
of disease, deaths, divorces,  
and yet no time at all,  
all of us still skimming along  
on the only day we'll ever have.

---

Will Greenway's tenth collection of poems, *Everywhere at Once*, won the Poetry Book of the Year Award from the Ohio Library Association, as did his eighth collection, *Ascending Order*. Both are from the University of Akron Press Poetry Series. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Southern Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Shenandoah*. His awards include the Helen and Laura Krout Memorial Poetry Award, the Larry Levis Editors' Prize from Missouri Review, the Open Voice Poetry Award from The Writer's Voice, the State Street Press Chapbook Competition, an Ohio Arts Council Grant, an Academy of American Poets Prize, and he has been named Georgia Author of the Year. He is Distinguished Professor of English at Youngstown State University.

## Maryanne Hannan on Diane Lockward

*Temptation by Water* by Diane Lockward. Wind Publications, 2010.

The temptation to read Diane Lockward's latest book, *Temptation by Water*, as the final volume of a trilogy, building on her two previous full-length collections, *Eve's Red Dress* (Wind Publications, 2003) and *What Feeds Us* (Wind Publications, 2006)—proves as irresistible as her luscious homage to peach, "Prunis Persica." The books, with striking cover art by Brian Rumpolo, complement each other physically and share the same gutsy, intelligent voice, forthright exploration of a deeply particular human life, and lavishly precise language.

Post-Edenic temptation and hunger thread their way through all three volumes. In the first book, Eve declares: "I didn't fall to temptation—I rose to it" (ERD, 2). In the second, "Eve walked out of the Garden . . . / didn't know where she was going, / but knew she'd need something to eat" (WFU, 4). By this book, the worst temptation might be no temptation at all, the absence of desire, or a wish for merging, "like Alice free-falling down the hole," from the title poem (TBW, 1). Eve, more Everywoman than the Biblical persona in Lockward's mythology, does not appear directly in *Temptation by Water*, but "that sexy red dress you couldn't afford now on sale" does in the off-sonnet, "Pleasure" (TBW, 7).

Readers of Lockward's poetry know better than to expect autobiographical fidelity. She exercises imagination like the Wife of Bath, for whom "al is fals" and the truer for being so. Still, we know from earlier work that gardens are not necessarily idyllic places. This makes all the more poignant "Hunger in the Garden," her garden ravaged by "hunger's / chomp and winter's bite," leaving her "the wreckage of absence." Still, she hopes for spring, the return of a raccoon family: "I want to believe in regeneration, that what's gone / can return." She wants "buds back on the branches / you here in spring, your hunger and mine appeased." (TBW, 19-20).

"Touch me and burn," tempted Eve's red dress (ERD, 49). "The heart wants what it wants, / and what it wants is fire," proclaimed the narrator in "Pyromania," (WFU, 81). Fire is less benign now. In "St. Elmo's Fire," "Other things go up in smoke—hope, dreams, love," except for the regenerative salamander: "lucky creature / endures fire and smoke yet suffers no harm" (TBW, 50) This is far removed from the gauntlet thrown by the earlier narrator:

I'd like breasts just that white-hot  
as once they were under the touch  
of my lover, so recently departed.  
I'd like to burn the crematorium down. ["Pyromania," WFU, 82]

Sizzle's lure is revisited in "Flash," only to conjure up the narrator's more mature experience of heat: "An obscene action, it brought out the bad girl in me. / Foreshadower of how, years later, I would be mugged / by waves of heat, cascades of sweat / under my blouse, rivulets into my bra" (TBW, 51). "You think it's easy," complains the "Ecdysiast" about the challenges of her job (TBW, 52); it sure seemed easy to the tattooed, belly-dancer-clad "Honey, you're on your way to Paradise" waitress in "Eve's Diner and Road Stop" (ERD, 26).

In this new work, Paradise seems lost, more likely to be found in the past than in the come-hither future, or electric present. "The Jesus Potato" explores this poignantly in the superstitiously pious protagonist who "wants to believe in miracles." Remembering

. . . their salad

days, so raw and green it seemed a miracle,

....

and then the undressing, the miracle  
of their uncanonized bodies, the piety  
of two pairs of lips sealed. [TBW, 48]

Now she is reduced to wishing her husband "less stolid," beseeching signs not of an afterlife, but a renewed life here: "and she prays for vegetables maculate and soiled." (TBW, 49)

Despite its title, I found the temptations of earth as compelling as those of water. In "Weather Report," the narrator thinks

about a man who does push-ups  
not to lift himself off the ground  
but to hold down the earth  
and how the earth cracks  
and it has nothing to do with weather. (TBW, 5)

...

That night she thinks  
. . . about metaphors,  
how one thing is always like some other thing,

...

. . . how desire and water  
can sweep us away, and how we are all  
looking for someone to push back  
the waves, to grab hold of us, and keep us  
here, pressed to this earth [TBW, 6]

Similar imagery, with a different twist, occurs in the final stanzas of "My Mother Turns her Back":

. . . I watch my mother  
grow down, as if she carries  
a burden of basket, as if  
already greeting the earth. [TBW, 18]

"Cover me in filth," cries the Prodigal Daughter narrator in "My Dark Lord," "for I have lain down with pigs" (TBW, 38). "Lay me among the potatoes." "Let me be the final supper."

. . . Christen me your own dirty girl.  
Immerse my body in weeds and worms.

Break me with your shovel, backhoe, and tractor,  
for I have abandoned the garden and cursed the earth. (TBW, 38)

This marvelously oracular poem gains complexity as it hovers between the garden Eve so bravely evacuated and the narrator's of "My Father's Garden" experience: "It will look / like Paradise. It will feel like Hell." (ERD, 28)

The next poem, "'Spying on My New Neighbors,'" presents another instance of vicarious love, the garden once again positive. Here, the neighbors are "tilling the soil, building their garden" (TBW, 39). They "walk off the job," tempting the narrator to

Imagine the bulbs of their bodies planted in bed,  
clothes peeled and strew like petals, the furrowing [TBW, 39]

Lockward is off and running, her considerable ability to ground physical love in provocative metaphor and language to the fore. It's also worth mentioning the careful structure of *Temptation by Water*; poems follow upon each other, always for a reason. Often a word or image, the same or nearly so, here *earth* to *soil*, provides a bridge from one poem to the next, adding considerably to the thrill of reading.

"Supplication to Water," a poem of direct address in couplets similar to "My Dark Lord," dives directly into the water themes of the book. It arises from a simple moment of clarity, in which the narrator extrapolates cosmic guilt from a routine watering of a suburban lawn:

Afflict me, for I have squandered you on grass  
green as money, then cursed you during the draught. [TBW, 61]

Once again, the language riffs with Biblical and classical cadence. "I have lain with dogs and consorted with pigs . . . . prayed for your conversion / to wine." "Let me enter the same river twice, for I am grungy." "Convert my frozen heart to cold hard cash."

More compelling than baptism by either fire or water is "the illusion of water" in the "The Temptation of Mirage," one of the book's high points. Also a direct address in couplets, this time to the universe, the speaker knows her own heart.

Save your water and green vegetation.  
What I want is desert. [TBW, 79]

She accepts "eternity of sand, an open-air coffin," in exchange

for one night only, quench of beauty  
  
more real than I can bear,  
closed forever by morning sun. [TBW, 79-80]

In "Desolation of Wood," Lockward entertains a fifth element from the Chinese system, wood:

. . . I want to forget  
fire, air, water, and earth, want to believe  
the trees are a sign I can be wood. [TBW, 73]

Even though the trees of her imaginings project the hunger she's wrestled with through all three books:

The trees stand apart from each other.  
They look lonely, as if abandoned,  
hungry, as if they want or need something. [TBW, 73]

Not all is serious in this book. Many poems offer Lockward's playful wit, her uncanny ability to go beneath language in "Without Words for It," her amazingly celebratory, erotic "Stripping the Lemon" and "Why I Won't Have a Full-Body Massage," and the ultra-sensual food poems, "Woman with Fruit" and "If Only Humpty Dumpty Had Been a Cookie."

Lockward prizes honesty, the truth of the human heart. If a poem goes some place, she goes with it, so the framework of trilogy that I'm suggesting does not sufficiently honor the individuality of the three books. *Temptation by Water* stands firmly on its own, replete with the poet's signature takes, a romp in her imaginative world. Still, the possibility of reading the three works in the context of each other was too tantalizing for this reader to pass up. With the publication of a third solid book of poetry, Lockward should be taken seriously. I, for one, am anxious to see where she goes next.



Maryanne Hannan's poems have been published in *Magma*, *The Mom Egg*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Umbrella*, *upstreet*, and numerous anthologies. She is a Contributing Editor at *Cerise Press: A Journal of Literature, Arts and Culture*.

## **Audrey Henderson**

### *Mr. Peterson's Field Guide*

I've had my share  
of the orange plaid settees,  
the mildewed cigarette air,  
the nylon sheets. Nights,  
as I drew pistils and spathes  
in the Rob Roy Motorcourt,  
the Matterhorn Lodge, I could  
hear car chases through the walls.  
Then there were raunchy  
giggles and fumbled keys,  
but these were minor distractions.  
Worse were the tired salesmen  
hungry for talk. I perfected excuses,  
escapes—there'd be too many  
questions for an old man  
with a suitcase full of flowers  
and I could never convey  
the urgency, the need for  
freshness, or the terrible way  
the petals collapse.

### *St. Kilda Sunday*

The Reverend  
tells us of kind Jesus  
with the sweet gaze  
and a medicine  
that cures the itch.  
It is true that he seems kind  
although he forbids us  
to tend our animals  
on Sunday and I wonder  
whether I can love him  
more than I love  
the wild thyme  
where I lay my head  
before I knew his name.

Audrey Henderson was a finalist in the 2008 *Indiana Review* 1/2 K Award and won second place in the 2008 *River Styx* International Poetry Contest. She was chosen as a Special Merit Poet in *The Comstock Review*'s 2009 Muriel Craft Bailey Memorial Award Contest and was a finalist for the 2009 Philbrick Poetry Award. Her work has appeared in numerous other journals, including the *Roanoke Review* and *The Sow's Ear Review*. Originally from Scotland, she was a frequent contributor to BBC Radio Scotland and graduated from the University of Edinburgh.

## **Laura Eleanor Holloway**

### *Emissary*

In 1977, two space craft were launched from Kennedy Space Center,  
each carrying a gilded recording of some of Earth's finest offerings.

Beyond the termination shock, the heliosheath,  
a slow glide towards Alpha Centauri . . .

Cryptic lines and circles,  
a language manufactured for decipherment:  
a singular asterisk of 14 pulsars and a central us,  
cityscape wave forms, time in terms of hydrogen,

how to play a record in binary, stylus included—  
and then—  
a reverse engineered codex of fifty-five hellos,  
Brandenberg Concerto #2, crickets,  
wild dogs, thunder, an F-111 fly-by,  
Johnny B. Goode, footsteps, heartbeat, laughter.

Who will wonder who we were?  
Who will hear your darkling groove?

### *High Lonesome*

Music is the pleasure the human soul experiences from counting without  
being aware that it is counting.

—Gottfried Leibniz

In this mute tongue,  
sound should be ineffable,  
harmony confounding  
foreign syntax  
with such extrinsic artistry;  
yet hertz and ratios  
in precise oscillations  
spread across the page,

graphite and arcane  
formulae translating  
lead to tenor  
in silent symbols,  
never knowing  
the instinctive  
soft dactyl heartbeat tone  
we hear in the sum of sines.

Elegant, yes, but awkward,  
clumsy when I have done this  
a million times a billion times  
by heart with no integrand,  
no derivatives  
with respect to anything  
but the frequencies that beat  
against my chest.

An integral multiple I could pluck  
from the air as soon as breath,  
that feral vine twines  
around melody,  
close tenor,  
perfect fifth,  
audible now,  
transcendent.

---

Laura Eleanor Holloway is a graduate of Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Although her degree is in English Literature and Ancient Civilizations, she is currently taking classes in hopes of becoming certified to teach middle school mathematics. She has been a runner up in the Bucks County Poet Laureate program on several occasions and has been published in *The Oklahoma Review*, *Mad Poets Review*, *Lehigh Valley Literary Review*, and the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*.

## **Siham Karami**

### *Labor Day*

A foghorn sobs its ghostly passing through  
The sun's descending carnival of skies,  
While mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

Our yard dips steeply to the street below  
Where playing children's distant squealings rise.  
A foghorn sobs its ghostly passing-through.

Smoking coals char slabs of barbecue:  
The year's last pungent cloud, last crazy flies—  
While mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

My stomach clenches for the touch of you  
that's almost here. If I could exorcise  
The foghorn-sobs, their ghostly passing-through,

Mocking every heartbeat. Is it true  
The presence lingers though the bond unties?  
Do mountains float, untouchable, in blue?

And what good will it do me if they do?  
Inscrutable, insatiable goodbyes  
Whose foghorn sobs their ghostly passing-through,  
Whose mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

---

Siham Karami lives in Northwest Florida, is a mother of five, and owns a technology recycling company. Her works have been published or will be published in *14 by 14*, *4 and 20*, *Sonnetto Poesie*, and *The Whirlwind Review*.

## **Peter Kline**

### *Song*

I like the creases of you, the lobes and flaps and folds, the unctuous junctions,  
the overlaps and sticky ripples, the woozy crevasses.  
I like the knobs of you, the grips and nibs and baubles and fleshy bubbles, the  
squishy tips and buttony bits and the hard stops.  
I like the bones of you, the wrist rubble, the basso rumble, the swanned  
bassoon, the tin-can sturdiness of your hips and the ridge-line shins.  
I like the stink of you, the armpits' vinegar pink before a bath, the sourdough  
pith, the fever-water, the heady morning-after mash.  
I like the thought of you, the dorsal-fin suggestion of your name, your deep  
seclusions, even in the next room,  
Even in my lap as a rock-chunk gut-shot can't-talk-back-jack fact.

### *Poem with a Five O'clock Shadow*

I hang up my good clothes, redeploy my books.  
I Windex ants in the stickiness,  
brandish a broom halfheartedly  
at two pigeons cozying above the breezeway.

For the fruit flies I make no excuses.  
Red-goggled copulating  
opportunists crotch-sniffing beer bottles  
and kiwi rinds, any stinking thing.

Then the hours come rabbling in  
with their cigarette burns and their cups outstretched.  
I do what I can. I please the first with cream,  
but these five smirk at anything but gin.

Call me the bedwrecker, the ruthless  
rainwatcher. Call me fat-lipped joy.  
I put my lover on a plane this morning.  
Separate. Still practicing.

---

Peter Kline's poetry has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Tin House*, *Poetry*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *ZYZZYVA*, and elsewhere. He is the recipient of a 2008 Wallace Stegner Fellowship in Poetry Writing, as well as the 2010 Morton Marr Prize from *Southwest Review*.



## **Judy Kronenfeld**

### *The little towns*

contained enough to hold  
in the eye  
of one hand

towns overseen  
by an abbey's rose window  
filled with sky,  
or the drowsing  
ruins of a chateau

deeply stone  
stone steeped  
in the quiet  
of centuries falling  
and melting  
like snow . . .

towns sealed  
behind grey shutters  
into the dilating afternoon

but for one spruce  
stroller in black, who  
stops, and our foreign car  
speeding through

### *Music for One*

(Andante, Piano Concerto #21 in C, Mozart)

enters  
the room

in chords  
as deep as eyes

the piano, coruscating  
like fountain jets,

answers from inside  
my chest which lifts

and lifts  
and falls  
and falls and lifts

my breaths are oars  
sluiced in liquid pearl

Now, again,  
the whole orchestra—

full wordlessness

overflowing  
from one hollow  
into another

pouring from river  
mouths in glassy  
cascades

sheeting down sheer  
drops

---

Judy Kronenfeld is the author of four poetry collections including *Ghost Nurseries*, a Finishing Line chapbook (2005) and *Light Lowering in Diminished Sevenths*, winner of the Litchfield Review Poetry Book Prize (2008). Her poems, as well as the occasional short story and personal essay have appeared in many print and online journals including *Adanna*, *Calyx*, *Cimarron Review*, *American Poetry Journal*, *Fox Chase Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Natural Bridge*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Passager*, *Poetry International*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Stirring*, *Women's Review of Books* and *Pedestal*, as well as in a dozen and a half anthologies or text books, including *Bear Flag Republic: Prose Poems and Poetics from California* (Greenhouse Review Press/Alcatraz Editions, 2008), *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose about Alzheimer's Disease* (Kent State University Press, 2009), and *Love over 60: An Anthology of Women's Poems* (Mayapple Press, 2010). She is Lecturer Emerita—after twenty-five years of teaching in the Creative Writing Department at UC Riverside. Her new poetry collection, *Shimmer*, will be published by WordTech Editions in 2012.

## **Michael Lauchlan**

### *Maple*

Burnt hickory smell flavors  
the grackle song, the whine  
of engines climbing a road.  
I turn from a river trail to face  
a maple with a long memory.

Below the march of iamb, one  
bell rings and has always rung,  
one stream slides by, where a monk  
dips water, where a song jumps,  
bleeding, and a clock calls.

Two of us might get our arms  
around it, pressing into its bark  
to link hands around so much  
time spent on a bit of earth,  
girded, crosshatched by roots

and layered with story. We climbed  
this trail in rain once, sliding back  
with each step. I pointed out trip-  
hazards until you yelled at me  
and, muddy fools, we laughed,

fell, and fell again. Reach,  
darling, around the maple.  
I can almost feel your touch.

### *Late On Her Birthday*

The light that left the sun just over eight  
minutes ago flares now in your hair, rings  
your face and floats above my scotch.

Years ago, on a hillside where the river is  
whiskey, a man dreaming liquid smoke  
sealed an unblended cask. Some decades

back, your grandfather outlived strikes  
in Colorado mines to marry, run a store,  
and read the papers while he rocked you quiet.  
Dead at fifty-nine, he was your first loss.

You speak of him as you drift off  
holding my hand. While the light turns  
and turns again, I hold your words, watch  
the sky's last splash, and drain the glass.

---

Michael Lauchlan's most recent chapbook is *Sudden Parade*, from Riverside Press. He has had poems in publications including *New England Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Victory Park*, *North American Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Apple Valley Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *Collagist*, *Boxcar*, *Tampa Review*, *Cider Press*, *The Cortland Review*, and *Poetry Quarterly*. He has been included in *Abandon Automobile*, from Wayne State University Press and in *A Mind Apart*, from Oxford University Press.

## **Lyn Lifshin**

### *Why I Probably Won't Write about Blue Spirit Lake, Costa Rica*

the similarity of days,  
how monkeys at lavender daybreak  
before hot light  
glazes the fronds.  
Ruby globes I may never know  
the name of clumped in,  
is it, the pecan tree?  
On some other night,  
pelicans, teal sea. I should look  
up the names for birds  
I've never before  
heard singing.  
This year, no astrologer.  
Electricity goes off  
for a few hours and you sweat.  
Somewhere else, an  
enormous northeaster is  
brewing. Today there's no water,  
no toilets. The stink  
reminds me to  
not bitch: think Haiti.  
Soon I will paint fronds that  
will never look perfect  
as the real thing

### *That Damn Bolero*

it was that  
damn bolero,  
not that the bolero  
doesn't have the  
sense, that  
feeling of someone  
moving over you,  
the electricity of  
thighs touching

thighs, but it  
could have been Latin  
where hips move  
but don't so  
often touch or  
cling. It could have  
been a minuet.  
It wasn't their bodies  
but how she  
flaunted and giggled,  
pushed her bulbous  
breast and her  
pimpley face  
into him and I  
was supposed to just  
watch, think it  
was cute,  
that flunking out  
of school big ass, that  
too young to worry  
slut who you  
can tell by thirty  
will be obese  
and haggard. If, as  
Cézanne said, all  
art starts with strong  
emotion, this  
shaking, jiggly bitch  
must surely  
be my muse.

---

Lyn Lifshin has published more than 120 books of poetry, including, most recently, *Ballroom* (March Street Press), *Katrina* (Poetic Matrix Press), *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness* (Texas Review Press), *Desire* (World Parade Books), *Persephone* (Red Hen Press), *Another Woman Who Looks Like Me*, *Following Cold Comfort* and *Before It's Light* (Black Sparrow Press at David Godine), *The Licorice Daughter: My Year with Ruffian* (Texas Review Press), and *All the Poets (Mostly) Who Have Touched Me, Living and Dead. All True, Especially the Lies* (World Parade Books).

## **Laura Manuelidis**

### *Ground*

(2011, watching the last veterans visit Normandy)

Always a residue of time: sand  
Drifts incorrigibly along the beach  
of Atlantic tides we lived. Attempted to resist

No matter how tough the heel's scaled skin, an accidental  
Crystal of sharp time  
Lodges beneath our defenses, still enters with its impossible insomnia

of our moments together, you, and I,  
Joined by veteran grass  
After spring rains, when the hardy mint invades

Overwhelmingly  
Crushed in blood's Bourbon.

Irreverent, the pyramids of evergreens survive.  
This bush I planted last year studs my hands  
in a semicircular garden of unanticipated thorns.

I bought it knowing nothing of nature's barricades  
or the barricades of memory in the residence of monuments:  
Yards of loyalty, these white stones.

It doesn't make any difference  
If it is, or was, a cross  
Or a lonely star,

or a now abstract design.

Laura Manuelidis is a physician/scientist who has investigated the shape of chromosomes and the causes of dementia. She has published poetry in various journals, including *The Nation*, *Connecticut Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, *Innisfree Poetry*, and *Reflections* (Yale journal), has been nominated twice for a Pushcart prize, and has read in European and American universities and other venues. Her book of poems, *Out of Order*, is available online; additional links (and readings with music by P. Jordan) are at: [http://info.med.yale.edu/neurosci/faculty/manuelidis\\_poetry.html](http://info.med.yale.edu/neurosci/faculty/manuelidis_poetry.html).



## **Judith McCombs**

### *Ballad of M'Comie Mor, 7<sup>th</sup> Chief of Clan MacThomas*

Glenshee & Glen Isla,  
Central Highlands, Scotland, 1600s

O M'Comie was a swordsman good  
As ever drew a blade.  
Disguised, he fought his dearest son  
To prove the next Chief brave.

When Athol's men took the widow's flock,  
She ran to M'Comie Mor.  
He chased that mob, and with his sword  
Soon felled the bravest four.

Lord Athol begged M'Comie to fight  
The traveling champion.  
"Save my honor, and I'll let pass  
what else your sword has done."

"I will not fight where there's been no wrong  
to my people or to me."  
The Italian lifts M'Comie's kilt  
And whacks his bare body!

The champion's sword was swift as flight  
But M'Comie's swifter flew —  
It flashed too quick for mortal sight  
As he ran the Italian through.

\*\*\*

Scotland, Charles I versus  
Cromwell & Covenanters, 1644-58

O M'Comie raised his sword and clan,  
With Montrose he would dare.  
Seven times they smashed the Covenanters —  
Then made all Glasgow theirs.

M'Comie captured Sheriff Forbes,  
Outfought him sword and shield—  
Then left King's cause when Montrose lost,  
And the clans were forced to yield.

Chief Airlie raised his sword and clan,  
Fought where Montrose led—  
But Airlie stayed with the Royalists  
When Charles lost crown and head.

Three times Lord Airlie was a captured man.  
Doomed after Philiphaugh,  
He escaped to see fair Scotland thrive  
Under Cromwell's law.

Then M'Comie bested Airlie sore,  
Bought his title and sweet green lands.  
That can occur in civil war—  
The losers lose their lands.

\*\*\*

Scotland, Charles II,  
1660-74

O Airlie bested M'Comie sore  
When fevered Cromwell died.  
Lord Airlie got the sweet green woods  
Where M'Comie's cattle thrived.

Airlie leased the woods to Farquharson,  
But M'Comie's cows still grazed.  
He was seized for ransom, his herd was thinned:  
"I'll have a warrant," he raged.

M'Comie's sons and the Sheriff's man  
Chased down the Farquharsons.  
Two of M'Comie's brave sons fell,  
Two of the Farquharsons.

It wasn't swords that broke the clan  
But fines and guns and laws.  
The M'Comie's were found innocent  
But fees devoured all.

O Airlie bested M'Comie sore,  
He took his heirs and lands.  
That can occur in feuds and war—  
The losers lose their clans.

---

Judith McCombs' poems appear in *Calyx*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Poet Lore*, *Potomac Review* (Poetry Prize), *Prairie Schooner*, *Red Cedar Review*, *Sisters of the Earth*, and *Sow's Ear*; *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*; *Feminist Studies*, *Nimrod* (Neruda Award), *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *River Styx*, and her fifth book, *The Habit of Fire: Poems Selected & New*. She received the Maryland State Arts Council's highest 2009 award in Poetry. She teaches writing workshops at the Writer's Center in Bethesda, MD, and arranges a poetry series at Kensington Row Bookshop.

## **Nancy Fitz-Hugh Meneely**

### *Reading Signs*

Shadows of the dunes  
have not yet crept  
across the upper beach  
but no one's here.

A neon pail, tiny crabs  
still scrabbling in its well,  
leans inside a furrow  
in the sand.

I see the way it went:  
At noon the parents walked  
and laughed too far,  
their fingers greedy  
in the children's hair.  
The sky flared  
and the breeze, salt-  
pungent, blew onshore,  
pushing mounds of spume  
against their feet.  
Moaning the cold,  
they bullied out  
to ride the waves  
that excited the skin  
on their bellies and thighs.  
The children rolled  
in the undertow's  
pleasurable pull.

By two, the tide's retreat  
had left a glimmering  
of jellyfish. Tomato sandwiches  
had barely served,  
the drinks were warm,  
the chocolate compromised  
by grit. The parents' need  
to touch their children's skin,  
to hold them small  
inside their colored towels,  
was satisfied.

By three the sky had widened  
until blue was agony,  
the wind's insistence  
a slender knife.  
Something wild hung coiled  
inside the children's shouts.  
The parents had begun  
to stalk the end  
of afternoon.

At four the parents  
closed their faces up  
and left. The children  
understood they wouldn't  
find them anymore,  
condensed themselves,  
forgot what shapes they'd been  
and disappeared  
inside the afternoon.

---

The wife of a Vietnam War veteran, Nancy Fitz-Hugh 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.

## **Joe Mills**

### *Transmission*

We ignore the emails from the Nigerian banker,  
the manager for the British National Lottery,  
the Chinese immigrant offering millions to help  
launder his fortune, but we'll click on the file  
from our spouse or sibling. It's those we love  
who infect us as anyone with children knows.  
Hamlet could have walked away from Elsinore,  
if it hadn't been his father, his mother, his uncle,  
and they insisted on keeping him close enough  
to bring everyone down. Guard the battlements  
and put in firewalls, install alarms and cameras,  
stockpile weapons; these will help you feel  
as if you're doing something, but what will come  
will come from family and friends. Love pulls  
you into blood; love is how we all are breeched.

### *Monsters*

As I leave, my son yells, "Daddy, watch out  
for other cars and monsters." It's good advice.  
I tell him I will, and I'll pay special attention  
to monsters in cars. I've seen quite a few:  
tailgaters, speeders, drunks, teenagers  
weaving and mooning, an old woman  
flipping the bird and screaming so hard  
saliva strands whipped from her mouth.  
And there were those nights years ago  
when we couldn't go to anyone's house  
so we would park near the woods to explore,  
snuffling and grappling each other's pelts  
aware of the dangers, scared, but unable  
to resist our beautiful monstrous selves.

Joe Mills has published three volumes of poetry—*Somewhere During the Spin Cycle*; *Angels, Thieves, and Winemakers*; and *Love and Other Collisions*—as well as numerous works of fiction, non-fiction, and criticism. He teaches at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and is the poet-in-residence at Salem College.

## **Yvette Neisser Moreno and Patricia Bejarano Fisher**

Two poems by María Teresa Ogliastri translated by Yvette Neisser Moreno and Patricia Bejarano Fisher, from *South Pole/Polo Sur*, forthcoming from Settlement House in fall 2011.

### *Water That Burns*

It was then that my innocence  
began to crumble  
and cold settled into the fire

I shared meals with boatmen  
who only drank water that burns

I was always lagging behind  
distracted in the distance  
by the sadness of the flute

### *De la ardiente*

Eran tiempos en que mi inocencia  
comenzó a quebrarse  
y el frío hizo su acomodo en el fuego

compartí el alimento con los bogas  
quienes sólo bebían agua de la ardiente

yo siempre estaba rezagado  
distráido en la distancia  
con la tristeza de la flauta

### *Gargoyle on a Branch*

The fever rises  
the cold drains me  
and a celebration of birds  
awakens me

ominous forces discover the camp

I must hide my head



gargoyle on a branch

I blend in and awake unharmed  
betrayal turned me into leaf and liana

keeping still I learn from fear

*Gárgola en rama*

La fiebre sube  
y el frío me desagua  
mientras una celebración de pájaros  
me despierta

lo salvaje ubica el campamento

debo guardar mi cabeza  
gárgola en rama

me mimetizo y despierto ileso  
la traición me hizo hoja y liana

en el acecho aprendo del miedo

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Yvette Neisser Moreno is a poet and translator of Luis Alberto Ambroggio's *Difficult Beauty: Selected Poems* (Cross-Cultural Communications, 2009). A nominee for a Pushcart Prize and for the ALTA National Translation Award, she teaches at The George Washington University and The Writer's Center, in Bethesda, MD.

Patricia Bejarano Fisher has worked as a Spanish instructor, translator and language-learning materials developer. She taught college-level English in her native Colombia and Spanish at the University of Maryland, and has a Master's Degree in Linguistics.

María Teresa Ogliastri, a Venezuelan writer residing in Caracas, has authored five books of poetry. She has been featured at poetry festivals throughout Central and South America, and her work has appeared in several anthologies of Venezuelan poetry.

## David Derbin Nolta

### *Fifty*

Time's the old illusion of a road  
Until you kiss the asphalt: then it's real.  
You must have seen it coming, heard the squeal  
Of your bewildered tires, when you toed

The brake as if discovering it, and flew  
Forward and back simultaneously,  
Experiencing for once the quality  
Of stillness, which is violent when it's true.

Now, crouching in a ditch between two fields,  
The past and future—both and neither present—  
You wait. An ambulance expands, insistent  
(The siren sings your very name), and yields.

Next thing you know, you're on your way again,  
Or someone's way. You thank the anesthetics,  
Your friends, who, it turns out, are paramedics,  
And God, who lets you keep your life. That's when

You notice—but it could be the contusion—  
The fields, both past and future, disappear,  
The yellow house, the drifting sky, the deer,  
And the road, of which Time is the old illusion.

---

David Derbin Nolta holds degrees from The University of Michigan, The University of Chicago, and Yale University. His first novel, an academic mystery entitled *Grave Circle*, was published in 2003, and his second, *Lostlindens*, appeared in 2005. Recent poems have appeared in *Christianity and Literature*, *Subtropics*, *Assisi*, and *Rattle*. He teaches Art History at Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

## **Andrew H. Oerke**

### *Tree Huggers of the World Unite*

Cross my heart and hope to die I graft my spine into the bark.  
I'm a tree hugger who gets a kick out of rubbing the wood.  
I pledge allegiance to the most natural world  
I can think of and still call it natural  
so I worship everything besides my urban self:  
rock and baobab, beast and bumblebee,  
to make my virtual self as real as possible.

Suddenly I'm slurp-sucked upward by a capillary  
attraction that could be just contraction though.  
What's the difference if my thoughts are shooting up  
xylem and phloem and then out a cluster of leaves  
into the wide-open air called wind and sky  
where I would pledge allegiance to the natural world again  
if I could soar so high though I almost do at the tree's tip-top.  
Pantheist, all-around alchemist and whatever,  
I salute the extraneous, the peripheral,  
the superfluous, and the totally insignificant.  
I see the extraordinary in just ordinary things  
that whisper to me. Saint Francis is my governor,  
and Walt smuggled me into the Secret Society  
of Dead Poets when my spine was grafted into the pine even  
though just for a hare-brained fraction of a second.  
Now I'm redwood here, live oak there. These upwardly-tunnel-  
tough straws suck my breath up and breathe O<sub>2</sub> back in.

I stand here with my back jammed into the bark  
not into the wall where we all may be shot sooner or  
later with pain-killing needles instead of bullets.  
So let the Noble Savage scream for all he's worth  
and sing for his supper as long as he's able to.  
When they shoot me I'll turn and drop my pants to moon 'em;  
they'll have a rosy red bulls-eye to aim at, right here.

---

Andrew H. Oerke recently returned to poetry after many years in development work with the Peace Corps and other volunteer organizations. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. In 2006, his two new collections, *African Stilt dancer* and *San Miguel de Allende*, were published jointly by Swan Books and the UN Society for Writers and Artists and subsequently received the United Nations Literature Award. His most recent book, *Never Seek to Tell Thy Love*, was published in 2010.

## **Dean Olson**

### *Coming and Going*

I pass the winter-going of bracken,  
the outer layer browning  
bedding themselves down for their own good  
and the good of the living;  
lapping as they wane  
encircling time in the pooled rain of winter.  
Not at odds with anything,  
simply finished  
but for the pillowed seeding lying in wait  
among disembodied fronds.

Faith is placed in me like the bracken,  
daisies in grazed fields,  
asters in hoof-trampled puddles.  
I mix my withering bouquet with carnal spit,  
and in the name of seasoned roundness,  
gift the coming spring,  
granting myself the last word.

### *Filling the Stillness*

If you are not here when I get home,  
sometimes I sit at the kitchen table  
listening to the stillness.

After a while I bring in some wood,  
start a fire, the crack of kindling sounding  
like the door latch;

open a bottle of wine, watch it breathe  
until the porch light senses its time  
to push winter into the yard.

I will sit like this a while longer, the fire  
a wall flicker, the porch light  
a steady floor patch

until you fill the stillness, turn on the lights,  
and I busy myself unloading groceries.  
It's not something a man likes to talk about.

---

Dean Olson has published six limited-edition poetry collections. He is emeritus faculty of the Evergreen State College, where he taught economics, cultural studies, and maritime history. He lives in Olympia, Washington, with his children and grandchildren. His poems have been accepted for publication by *Prairie Schooner*, *Cascade #2*, and elsewhere.

## Laura Orem on Linda Pastan

*Traveling Light* by Linda Pastan. W.W. Norton, 2011.

In her new collection, *Traveling Light*, poet Linda Pastan investigates a life journey as it nears its end. The poems here are quietly reflective. There is curiosity about when this journey will be completed, but little fear. The speaker is as calm as a hidden pool discovered in a forest, and by lingering a moment, the reader sees the underwater landscape at the bottom, the collected jetsam of the speaker's memory.

The natural world is significant to these poems, but it is not nature as adventure or adversary. Rather, the speaker observes the flight of birds, the changing of the seasons, and the life cycle of the world right outside her window:

The Maypole

*for Wallace Stevens*

One must have a mind of spring  
to regard the cherry tree burdened  
with blossoms;

and have been warm for days  
to behold the boughs of the redbud  
prickly with color in the glint

of the April sun; and not to think  
of any cruelty in the difficult birthing  
of so many leaves, to feel only pure

elation at the sound of the undulant breeze  
which is the sound of every garden  
with a breeze blowing among its flowers,

the sound the listener hears, watching the buds  
which were not quite here a week ago  
pushing up from oblivion now.

Like Emily Dickinson, the speaker extrapolates this framed and bounded view into a larger meaning, but unlike Dickinson's subterranean avidity, this poem, and many of the other, are accepting in their observation. Rather than thrumming, they chime like clear, exquisite bells.

In poems like "Counting Backward," Pastan's speaker is contemplative but detached: "How did I get so old, / I wonder." In an odd way, the speaker seems to still be looking through a pane of glass at her own death: "It's the physics / of acceleration I mind, the way time speeds up / as if it hasn't guessed // the destination—" There is no fear, no raging, just a quiet and sometimes almost clinical curiosity as she considers the end of her own life: "I see my mother / and father / bearing a cake, / waiting for me / at the starting line." This sometimes is a bit discomfiting to the reader; a little more fire and a little less distance would energize the motion of the book as a whole.

Pastan's poems are elegant and well-crafted, never more so than when she writes in form. In particular, the pantoum "Years After the Garden" is a graceful exploration of loss and the passage of time that flows seamlessly and intertwines as tightly as a silken rope. It begins,

Years after the garden closed on Adam  
a thousand thousand gardens take its place  
(hold my hand, I hear the water rising)  
Roses, lemons, lilac, hemlock, grape

A thousand thousand gardens take its place.  
Is each an Eden waiting to be lost?  
Roses, lemons, lilac, hemlock, grape.  
What was God thinking when he made the apple?

Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise are the subject of several poems. The old story is treated with tenderness, but again, these poems would benefit from being a bit less legato and a bit more daring, in particular because their subject has already been so thoroughly explored.

*Traveling Light* as a collection showcases the skill of a poet who knows her craft; Pastan has been writing for many years and knows how to shape and present a poem. However, it would have been interesting if the poet had taken a few more chances, honed her edges a bit sharper, so that the reader felt that more was at stake here. Perhaps sometimes what the poet does best is not what is best for the poem. But regardless, these poems are certainly worth reading for their supple grace and elegant music. Pastan knows her stuff, and a poet with this kind of skill always brings something to the page that the reader will be glad to have.

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Laura Orem is a poet, essayist, and artists living in Red Lion PA. She holds an MFA from Bennington and teaches writing at Goucher College. She is a featured writer for *The Best American Poetry Blog* and is a senior editor for Toad Hall Press. Her poetry can be found in many journals, including recently in *The Dos Passos Review* and *OCHO*.



## Laura Orem on Terence Winch

*Falling Out of Bed In a Room With No Floor* by Terence Winch. Hanging Loose Press, 2011.

*We will gather around the ceramic heater  
and see if we can pick up  
something from the ancestors. They are always  
reminding me of our many obligations to keep the old ways going.  
I play along. I don't want them consigning me to limbo for eternity.*

from "Listening to the Ancestors"

Terence Winch's latest collection, *Falling Out of Bed In a Room With No Floor*, investigates the impact of the past on the speaker's present. Taking as their topics lost love, aging, death, loss, and unrealized dreams, these poems could be dark, depressing, and grim. But they are not. Winch views everything with wry humor and deep tenderness, and his skilled craftsmanship, attention to significant detail, and linguistic agility show us a deeply humane and gifted poet at the top of his game.

Winch is, of course, identified foremost as an Irish-American poet with what we like to think of as a distinctly Irish sense of language. He is also a musician. So it is not surprising that his poems are saturated with sound and music, but their tonal qualities are never mere gymnastics. In other words, the sense of the poem is never obscured by the sound. Take, for example, "Snow Days":

Cigarette ash, dandruff, cocaine,  
white blankets whitening the stain  
of color, suppressing the noises  
of our cold voices in the woodsy  
hamlets and cities of our sleeping pain.

I am nodding off now in tv's afterglow  
suffusing white bedroom in pink light.  
When I dream I promise I'll envision  
snoring steamboat captains sailing in celestial  
circles round rings of the tree of life,  
cheerily chiding, "Regardez le neige!"  
while begging for English and breakfast in bed.

The sonic effects do not overshadow the grittiness provided by the physical details. We bounce along with the cadence, but what is being said within that rhythm does not lose its

edge. Winch is particularly adept at this kind of balance, using all the tools in his poetry bag to unpack his poems' visions.

One of the most appealing things about Winch's work, and about this collection in particular, is its sense of being in cahoots with the reader. Winch's speakers are conspiratorial: they say what they know the reader is thinking, and they know the reader knows they know before they say it. In "House Guests," the speaker targets our desire for emotional boundaries and our concomitant and contradictory sense of isolation when we establish them:

I take our guests aside and tell them that they have to accept  
that they are not in charge here, we are. They have to behave  
in ways that are acceptable to us. For instance, they can't  
just help themselves to anything in the refrigerator.  
They can't visit pornographic websites on our computer.  
We ask them to settle down. This is our home, we explain.  
We have to have things exactly the way we like them.  
The guests are barbarians. I notice food stains on their shirts.  
They are overweight and obnoxious. They're all in the spare  
bedroom now, door shut tight. I hear them laughing.  
Isn't laughter the saddest sound in the world?

It is, especially when we are not part of the magic circle.

Winch has an almost unerring eye for the significant detail. His poems are packed with physical imagery—names, places, things—that bring the circumstances described to life, almost painfully. Some examples of this can be found in "I Am Dressed as a Gondolier," which bounces throughout the 1950s and '60s describing the kind of details that were important at the time (buses, cars, "letters from Africa," "soda boys at bingo") but seem almost silly now, except for the fact that they are remembered; "Proclamation for My Father 1955," where the actual details of a broken boiler, a shovel, oysters, booze, an angry boss ("fat Father Hammer"), bump against the details of a dream—cats, a bed, "the clean, sweet air / of paradise"—to elucidate the aching heart of the poem: "The thing you most fear in life boils down/to your own invisibility, there for all to see"; and the very funny "The Garbage Sacrifices," which gleefully describes the garbage cans of a 1950s neighborhood alley—"Bits / of glistening fat, bread crusts, / bones, stumps of asparagus, / greasy napkins"—to warn what happens to non-conformists who don't take out the trash.

Winch's penchant for listing details has in places an echo of Frank O'Hara. In "The Elementals," he writes, "Pants tend to mean that civilization will not / back down, no matter how hot it gets . . . I will not discuss underwear / except to note that moral values in a free / society tend to keep it out of sight." "The Invisible Center of Evolution" tells a revised version of Copernicus, who "picked up a big stick / and struck an angel with it," much to the displeasure of

many men with long mustaches  
[who] raised their hands, as though hailing a cab, and asked him  
what he thought he was trying to prove. Copernicus, who was  
from Denmark, replied, "Beauty is a bundle of sensations!"

The incongruity and humor are definitely O'Haraesque, but Winch never slides into O'Hara's self-reflective camp.

Underneath all of this is Winch's ironic but always humane sensibility. Indeed, sometimes that sensibility is heartbreakingly tender, but Winch's poetic chops keep it from sentimentality. His skill with language, sound, rhythm, and clarity of voice are at their strongest in "Innocent," a two-page narrative that describes "a friend I had once who spent seven years on death row." The speaker quickly assures the reader that, while he is "usually nervous around predatory people," this man "was not that kind of guy. He seemed happy. I'd look / into his eyes and not see someone to fear . . . . He told me that after all those years on death / row, he treated every day like a celebration."

The poem goes on to tell the man's story, and we see him as a human being with a life history worth hearing. The last stanza of the poem is devastating. I won't quote it here. Instead, read it for yourself. Read all of *Falling Out of Bed In a Room With No Floor*. Its poems will stay with you long after you close the book.

---

Laura Orem is a poet, essayist, and artists living in Red Lion PA. She holds an MFA from Bennington and teaches writing at Goucher College. She is a featured writer for *The Best American Poetry Blog* and is a senior editor for Toad Hall Press. Her poetry can be found in many journals, including recently in *The Dos Passos Review* and *OCHO*.

## Scott Owens

### *Acts of Defiance*

Just a boy,  
not yet eight,  
and knowing nothing  
of the world,  
I simply did as I was told  
and reached my hands,  
my forearms, long and thin,  
even up to the elbows,  
into the bloody back end  
of a moaning cow  
to grasp what I felt there  
and pull,  
and pull harder  
when it wouldn't come  
until something appeared,  
and pull harder still  
until something became  
a wet mess of calf  
spilling into my lap  
and my uncles laughing  
and my grandfather,  
his hand on my shoulder,  
looking at me hard,  
eyes full of seriousness  
saying, *Good job.*  
*Good job.*

---

Author of six collections of poetry and over 600 poems published in journals and anthologies, Scott Owens is editor of *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, Vice President of the Poetry Council of North Carolina, and recipient of awards from the Pushcart Prize Anthology, the Academy of American Poets, the NC Writers' Network, the NC Poetry Society, and the Poetry Society of SC. He holds an MFA from UNC Greensboro and currently teaches at Catawba Valley Community College.

## **William Page**

### *Quantum Physics*

A squirrel is furiously twitching its tail  
for some reason, or so it seems, as the moon  
draws up and lowers the oceans as if  
they were its inexhaustible lovers.  
Such precision and regularity must amaze  
the clouds wrapped in their inconstancy.  
We accept that the rose's bloom with its beauty  
can draw blood with its thorns and that the sun's  
life-giving glow can be a cancerous murderer.  
We communicate with speed and distance  
beyond the imagination of profoundest thinkers  
of ancient Greece and Rome or wisest seers of the Orient,  
but what message can we receive that a handshake  
or a kiss has not already revealed? And yet the intellect  
thinking itself ever nimble searches for something  
more, always something more, because the twitching  
never ceases for some unknown reason  
or for some unknown unreason.

### *Cadillacs*

To me Cadillacs used to look different  
from other cars, heftier, with solid  
sounding doors when they clicked shut.  
Their tires looked and smelled larger  
with wide banded white walls.  
Even the eye of the cigarette lighter had flair.  
The sky and stars above wore a tuxedo  
and evening gown sewn with diamonds.  
Riding in a Cadillac with all that chrome  
dazzled me looking through a thick windshield  
where daffodils waved by the roadside  
and irises the color of sky welcomed me home.  
Father would shift into neutral  
while I opened the garage doors.  
And the car would glide in silent as a dream.  
The world was aglow,  
shining so bright it almost hurt my eyes.  
The pink tongue of the cat

lapped at milk pure as snow,  
back when snow was not irradiated  
and clouds were white as clouds.

---

William Page's poetry has appeared widely in such journals as *The Southern Review*, *The North American Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Nimrod*, *Wisconsin Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *The Literary Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Chariton Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *The Pedestal*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, and in a number of anthologies. His third collection of poems, *Bodies Not Our Own*, received a Walter R. Smith Distinguished Book Award. His collection, *William Page Greatest Hits 1970-2000* published by Pudding House Publications, is now available from Kattywompus Press. He is Founding Editor of *The Pinch* and a retired professor of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Memphis.

## **R.D. Parker**

### *The Face in the Mirror*

In the inconsistent wind,  
a cloudy sky and a cotton dress  
have a dull color. The dress fills,  
then suddenly it shrinks.  
A child puffs her cheeks,  
then suddenly she sucks them in,  
studying herself before a mirror,  
supposing that her little brother  
is not watching. When she leaves,  
he tries it too. Her faces  
frightened him. But when he  
stares at his own reflection,  
now a plump melon, now a hungry skull,  
he forgets about his sister.  
He cannot wear a dress,  
but he is a boy.  
He can do anything.  
He will never die.  
He is sure of it.

### *Invisible, Treacherous*

February. Suddenly, the sun.  
In the stinging glare everything  
looks haloed and whiter than white.  
The snow and ice, pocked and dirty,  
drip and freeze again.

---

Long a reader of poetry, R.D. Parker has recently turned to writing poems himself. His work has appeared in *Caketrain*, *decomP*, *PANK*, and *Salamander*.  
<https://sites.google.com/site/rdparker97/>

## Beth Paulson

### *Carousel*

With his small hands the eager child  
grins and grips the fat brass pole  
astride a sleek cream-colored pony  
with painted wreath and legs a-gallop.

He reaches out for its carved mane  
as around in a parade he rides  
and leans his head back to look  
up high in a red canopy  
where a hundred or more white lights shine  
on mirrors and pictures in golden frames  
where an organ hid somewhere inside  
plays circus music. His eyes roam

as he holds still and the world revolves—  
sky and park and trees and people—  
while his parents move slowly past him  
who smile and wave one more time  
and then he remembers their faces.

---

Beth Paulson's poems have appeared most recently in *Blueline*, *the Aurorean*, *Plain Spoke* and *Wild Goose Review* and will appear soon in a new anthology by Native West Press. Her work was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2007, 2009, and 2011. Her new collection of poems, *Wild Raspberries*, was published by Plain View Press (Austin, 2009).



## **Eleanor Paynter**

### *Dusk*

After pressing her fingers  
below his ribs once more, after exhaling

again in his mouth, she slipped  
her right arm behind him, lifted

his chest to hers. The days were growing enough  
that even at that hour, oak leaves

hung distinct from their branches.  
As his torso heavied in new weight,

they rocked slightly on the planks  
of the deck, and as lights spun

up the drive, the dog barking, the men  
calling out to her; as they strapped him

to the gurney she was thinking, maybe, about his old  
yellow Fiat, the dog again, or remembering

the groceries in the car, his voice  
earlier, on the phone, how his face

cooled to her neck. What really surfaced in her mind,  
no one else can recall. When they were younger,

they two-stepped barefoot between living room chairs.  
As they wheeled him through the grass

she spoke softly to him,  
or in prayer, then with perfect

precision found her keys, started the car,  
followed the taillights to the hospital.

Everything she did looked methodical, but maybe  
she wasn't sure she'd left the deck or where

the dog had run off to. Maybe she still  
folds her arms and feels the sinking.

It might happen only once, to hold someone so close  
there's only one heart beating.

---

Eleanor Paynter has roots in Texas, Rome, and New York, where she completed an MFA at Sarah Lawrence College. Recent work has appeared in *Washington Square*, *Weave*, *Salamander*, and *Willow Springs*. She lives in the Netherlands.

## **Joanna Pearson**

### *Ministrations*

Sometimes the gentlest patient  
in the Emergency Room  
is from the city prison.  
This one too—soft-voiced,  
lifting his large dark eyes.  
He whispers "yes, ma'am,"  
shy as a deer,  
young and brown-skinned  
with loosely muscled limbs  
gangling off the bed.  
His clean, uncoiled anatomy  
is almost embarrassing against  
pus & pannus, abscess & scarred vein—  
everyone bearing his body  
like some separate, stricken animal,  
its disappointments inevitable.  
It seems impolite for us to notice  
the fact we are the same age,  
his silver handcuffs, track marks,  
the inefficiency of my exam,  
a rising smell of hot dung  
from the old lady in the next bed.  
Once, when realms were not distinct—  
celestial and earthly—  
angels visited, god-wed  
women ministered, bathed the feet of sinners,  
doe muzzled the saints' hands,  
and this would be the moment  
of cloud-break revelation.  
There are no figs or honey here,  
just betadine and isopropyl pads.

### *Heart*

My mother, thinking that her heart would burst,  
sank softly, pale, between the grocery aisles,  
still clawing at a half-filled shopping cart.  
Cool drifts of wordless jazz continued faintly  
through bright ravines of jelly, tea, and soda.

It happened several times again, years later,  
before they diagnosed the flimsy valve.  
She'd wake all sticky, dizzied by a hammering  
beneath her breast, as if some desperate thing  
were trapped inside of her and wanted out.

I've held a human heart and cut apart  
its muscled walls and felt the rubbery strands  
that fasten lengthwise to each ventricle.  
Its cold potato-heft, wet, veined, and gnarled—  
this chunk of love, of passion—seemed petite  
and unimpressive, like weird butcher's meat,  
or bleak foodstuff for starving pioneers.  
I laid it gently back into the hull  
of opened ribs, into the gray cadaver  
whose face I kept concealed with dampened cloth.

Nowadays, my mother never mentions  
her shadow-thoughts—except for once this Christmas:  
"Remember how I talked, how sad I was?"  
I nodded, glad myself that she no more  
sees hints of death graffitied everywhere,  
can once more play dismissive symbiote  
to that dumb pump, forget how intimate  
it sits between us while I lean to hug her  
and feel it beating, measuring what's fleeting.

---

Joanna Pearson's poems have appeared recently or are forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2010*, *Blackbird*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Linebreak*, *The New Criterion*, *Subtropics*, *River Styx*, and elsewhere.

## **Simon Perchik**

\*

It must be new here  
still damp, its moss  
bristling—the nurse

says wear a gown  
and from the cold  
a stone pulls loose

not yet accused, its heart  
already soaked, smells  
from some sea

not named yet  
—just born  
who never again in my arms

a breathing  
so filled with tears  
—I could have named my arms

Benjamin—I fake a name  
call these clouds Clouds  
name this new stone Benjamin

and I am never without a child  
holding my hand  
surrounded by darkness and ice.

\*

While the sun spreading out  
in the light from your shirt  
wrung dry, its cuffs rolled back

—shores are born this way  
reaching around, even here  
its sleeves are still visible

and in your eyes  
that first emptiness  
in all directions at once :light

takes forever now  
looks for you as if it  
was once the only color

and nothing to end the silence  
the way each night the galaxies  
gather up the darkness

begin the world again  
and each morning  
rests at the edge, half listening

in the open  
pulling it nearer, loose  
and in your arms at last.

---

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. For more information, including his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" and a complete bibliography, please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com).

# Oliver Rice

## Auras of Wittgenstein

Nonetheless, Marie, Gerard,  
the subjunctive, the pluperfect, the gerunds  
confirm the distances of snow,  
berries ripening in the night,  
fields of sunflowers taller than a man.  
Notwithstanding, as Nietzsche said,  
the interrogatives sustain the breathing afternoon,  
the listening ardors,  
the schools of old wisdom.  
And our hereness,  
who cannot save ourselves.

Nonetheless, Hernando, Annette,  
the comparative, the particles, the colon  
acclaim the catalogue of caresses,  
auras of Darwin and Freud,  
streets that interrogate themselves.  
Notwithstanding, as Nietzsche said,  
the rushing psyche,  
a conscience for everything.  
And our hereness,  
who cannot save ourselves.

*Herself on a Boat for Oslo*

Henry David Thoreau, Cancer,  
William de Kooning, Taurus,  
Carl Jung, Leo,  
she recites to her rear view mirror,  
to the graces along Lake Shore Drive,  
to her manicure,

to her earnest, her examined life,  
Sara, practicing adult single,

who gropes along the confines of the culture,  
among images of intellect and bravura,  
undeceived by her education  
nor her biorhythms.

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev, Scorpio,  
she announces to the stimuli on Michigan Avenue,  
said he was unable to simplify himself.

She is a Gemini, like Robert Schumann,  
like Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
she muses, waking in her flannel pajamas,

whose psyche reads the headlines from America  
in a café by the Volga,  
a flat near the Piazza San Marco,  
a strange corner of India.

Sagittarius, Winston Churchill, Mark Twain,  
she announces to the Tribune Tower,  
Aries, Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Haydn.

Oh, she is no auxiliary person,  
gaping at existence,  
consenting to the ironies,  
to the mores,

hostage to love's promises,  
to her glands,  
to unremitting conjugality.

She can feel the private motions of her genes  
forming in her sleep.  
Is prepared for ferocious decisions.

The human mind, said E. M. Forster, Capricorn,  
is not a dignified organ.

The freedom is utterly hers,  
she declares to the zones of the city,  
to choose among the sperm bearers,  
Libras, Pisceans,  
bikers, technocrats, timpanists,  
Virgos, Aquarians,

to strategize a liaison,  
her impregnation,  
and an enlightened single parenthood.



To whom a sense comes,  
in Lincoln Park, in Beverly,  
ironing, listening to Otello,  
of disquietude,

of rain on the roofs of Pointe-a-Pitre,

of herself street smart in Istanbul,

herself in a flesh-colored bikini.

*Indeed*

Om,  
said Jung,

is the sound the universe makes  
when it is pleased with its being.

Intimating, one presumes,  
its oblivious interiority,

its perfect empathy for the idea of itself,  
for the utter consummation of its intent.

Indeed,  
the cry of the vulture, they say,

circling above the ridgeline,  
the sloping meadow,

the arching maples,  
imitates the moans of the dying.

*The Senator's Aide has Retired*

And although precautiously,  
has removed himself to other rooms,  
unfamiliar faucets, night noises,  
slant of light for the news,

has grown studious of his rituals,  
the arrangement of his socks,

the protocol for his crossword.  
Perceives himself quickened by discontents,  
  
by a dissidence in his fantasies.

Idles, even so, through an afternoon,  
skimming the Sunday travel and arts  
to strains of the classics.  
Thinks of the Kentucky Derby,  
the chapel of Matisse,  
the scent of mountain mahogany,  
his grandfather's griddle cakes.

Still,  
the old engagement insists.

---

The morning wakes to restless agendas.  
It is his birthday or he is going to the bank  
or the miners are on strike.

Cambodians arrive in Milwaukee.  
Frost threatens the peaches.

Trivial machines litter the culture.  
Cartels are seizing the world.

---

The day roams the avenues of the states,  
Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut,

Foggy Bottom, Lafayette Square,  
vicinities, doorways where the national fables,  
where the restless probabilities loiter,  
where the vivid dead have left their signs.

He goes, faculties poised,  
anonymous and free,  
a superfluous, an outmoded,  
an implicated man attired for self-realization  
on the Metro, about the Mall,

seeking rumors of causalities, of ironies shaping,  
of eras breaking out,

aspiring so late to be authentic,  
to be temperate and venerable  
and at risk,

to think in a Norwegian way about America,  
a Swahili, an Etruscan,  
an Alaskan, a Mississippian,  
to confront the land as it lies,  
the Alleghanies, the Platte, the Mojave,

eelgrass flats,  
pine barrens,  
a creek in the high pasture,

a pink bungalow,  
a shack with a cot and a broken chair.

—

Who, even so, at the hearings, at the Corcoran,  
finds childhood angers in his head.  
Meadowlarks.  
Queer fragments of anthropology.

Who rises early some mornings  
to have breakfast in a diner with workmen.  
Goes occasionally to Lincoln Center.

Shares the right of the streets  
with shrewd vulgarians.

Sends gifts to his nephews.

---

Oliver Rice's poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies in the United States and abroad. An interview with *Creekwalker* was released by that zine in January 2010. His book of poems, *On Consenting To Be a Man*, is offered by Cyberwit, in Allahabad, India, and is available on Amazon. His online chapbook, *Afterthoughts*, *Siestas*, and his recording of his *Institute for Higher Study* appeared in *Mudlark* in December 2010.

## **W.M. Rivera**

### *A Gift*

Fathers come and go; mine just went it seems  
long ago; blood and little else between us:

the watch unfastened from his wrist in Coyoacán  
he gave to me when we first met that once . . .

stopped working years ago. I must have tossed it. Things  
pop up from time to time, not always evident  
the way some things are always there. Verhaerhen's poem  
tells how the living clock runs up  
then quickly down a stairwell built of hours . . . days.

### The Sun goes off

behind accumulating clouds this morning;  
reappears; it seems seduction, then the going

under Earth again as if the word 'indefinite'  
describes reality, as if life's rhythm  
is a romance without end. Yet rivers are not  
stepped in twice. Time and I will not begin again

even if my father floated in a kiss good night, which he won't,  
or poet Verhaerhen fall down counting hours,  
which he did.

Images of loss, rough  
drafts with more than half left out, what went before  
the make-up hours at the drawing board. The ambiguity  
come down to this: life's unambiguous

pain's a gift that brings back mini-odysseys,  
events endured, and yet the non-stop minutes hesitate  
most surely at what isn't, always there.

*Encomium*

Naked on her knees scrubbing, screaming  
at the world, at me, the kitchen floor,  
hate-pitched. I saw it coming: hell unhitched.

Was it my fault I tired of 'no,' 'not this,' 'not that,'  
Cold-hot, on-off. Yes, it was time to go,  
I who hoped for bells not thunderbolts, fed up  
with backbites, street fights, stepping away tight  
lipped I didn't even slam the door,

yet never made it down the stairs that night.  
I think about that evening what would've been  
lost, not gritting teeth against fight's flight.

What's love? No one event for sure. A shift  
in self's center?—the romantic rush or logic's  
doubting drift, a sudden turn, that last step.

*Rebooting*

I didn't expect the beginning when I was clearly  
In the middle of things and close  
To the ending. But there I was, asking why  
Had I stayed away so long? Everything different  
From before, despite the broken hobby horse I kept  
And the urge to ride right off into the race.

I look for analogies: the maple tree outside  
I cut and cut again, demanding that it die,  
But there it is dropping resin on the roof  
As if nothing happened or the ivy I smashed  
flat and ground into the ground, meaning to  
Finish it off for good, but there it is as if nothing  
Made a difference, defiant as it seems, new  
overnight. But these green parallels imply  
a ploy with little to do with perennials

More like propped-up orchids, blooms on a stick,  
Detour-decades, corners cut short.

W.M. Rivera has a new book titled *Buried in the Mind's Backyard* (Brickhouse Books—also available at Itascabooks.com and Amazon.com). Born in New Orleans, he began publishing poetry in the 1950s. His early poetry appeared under the names William Rivera and William McLeod Rivera in *The Nation*, *Prairie Schooner*, *the Kenyon Review*, and *the New Laurel Review* among other publications. Recent poems have appeared in the *California Quarterly*, *Gargoyle*, *Ghazal*, and *Broome Review*. A first book of his poetry was published in 1960 titled, *The End of Legend's String*, illustrated by Mexican artist, José Luis Cuevas. His new book, *Buried in the Mind's Backyard*, was published by Brickhouse Books in 2011, with a cover print by Miguel Condé one of Spain's prominent artists. Rivera's professional activities in agricultural development have taken him to more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Retired from the University of Maryland, he is putting together his next collection of poetry under the title *The You that's Left*.

## Michael Salcman

### *Paper Cuts*

Today a friend called who'd just read  
my poems about you and said  
she didn't know how sexy I was.  
She talked about their *frank accessibility*  
and how direct I was in *morphing*  
your body into bluebells and buck thorn.

It stabbed me to hear such praise  
just days after you've gone  
without a proper good-bye or caress.  
Apropos of something I forget,  
Braque said *one can't live in a state*  
*of paroxysm forever*.

But we soldiered on:  
there we stand in an old photographic print  
caught in the sun, faded and foxed  
like two tourists in a cardboard poster  
our faces posed in the holes  
cut out for our heads  
still dreaming of transport.

Soon enough we were debating  
what it meant to be wed  
in voices and words that came  
from outside ourselves  
like psychotic emanations.

These are old tropes for an ancient subject  
my friend and I often debate—  
the death of painting, even of love.  
It's all video now, forty years without  
a masterpiece, and bits off the street  
scattered about in lofts and museums  
and white walled rooms.

Love's a lot like art, nothing to worry about  
until beauty rears its ugly head  
and tears your theories from your heart.

*The Vicar*

—in memory of Updike

It was much too cold to snow the day we got the news:  
the old vicar had died; not a sound  
rose skywards from the trees, their barren pews  
half-shorn, the rabbits gone to ground.

A tall attentive bird,  
with ruddy face and shock of parson white,  
he kept unblinking eyes upon the world  
and bookish sermons flowing day and night.

And I was the sort of tender boy he said he built them for,  
my happy hours spent, a hand upon the spines:  
all those small-town woes, with covers blown and torn,  
and pages thumbed from use, the record of our times.

Though unappointed at the end, the vicar might have chosen  
an icy day like this to leave, silent, sunlit, frozen.

---

Michael Salcman (b.1946) was born in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia and came to the United States in 1949. He attended a combined program in liberal arts and medical education at Boston University, was a Fellow in neurophysiology at the National Institutes of Health and trained in neurosurgery at Columbia University's Neurological Institute. He served as Chairman of neurosurgery at the University of Maryland and president of the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore. Author of almost 200 scientific and medical papers, his six medical and scientific textbooks have been translated into Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Chinese. Special Lecturer in the Osher Institute at Towson University, he lectures widely on art and the brain. His course on How The Brain Works is available on the Knowledge Network of *The New York Times*. Poems appear in such journals as *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Hopkins Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Ontario Review*, and *Raritan*; they have received five nominations for a Pushcart Prize. His work has been heard on NPR's *All Things Considered* and in *Euphoria* (2008), a documentary film on the brain and creativity. He has given readings at the Library of Congress, the Pratt Library of Baltimore, the Writer's Center in Bethesda, the Bowery Poetry Club, and the Cornelia Street Cafe in New York. He is the author of four poetry chapbooks and two collections, *The Clock Made of Confetti* (Orchises Press, 2007), nominated for The Poet's Prize and a Finalist for the Towson University Prize in Literature, and *The Enemy of Good Is Better* (Orchises, 2011).



## Mike Smetzer

### *Floating Opals*

Little flames play against the old lady's neck,  
turning before the darkness of her dress,  
as she waits in line for his viewing.

She fingers the white ghosts,  
which rise in a slow timeless tumbling,  
swirling past each other in their crystal sphere.  
They fade into translucence, to turn  
and reappear in fire or dead white stone.

Iridescent bursts of pinks and greens and blues.  
A universe sealed in her miniature globe,  
an eternity at the base of her withered neck.

### *Sibyl*

Look down from your mountain air.  
Come home again  
on these eastward blowing winds.

Winter's high thin cold  
has only paled your skin,  
not flushed your blood as I would.

Sibyl, you could be a swan and I  
a hot spring in winter's air,  
my mouth around your thighs,

my love, a steam against the cold.

---

Mike Smetzer's work has been published in *New Letters*, *West Branch*, *Cottonwood*, *Hanging Loose*, and he has two chapbooks: *A Quiet Man* and *Teaching the Clergy to Dance*. Some of his published work appears at <http://mikesmetzer.wordpress.com/>

## Matthew Buckley Smith

### *Juglans Nigra*

We had no words for what we found  
Taking the air behind your house that night:  
Speckled with idle window light,  
Something pale green and round.

Smooth to the touch and cold as stone,  
It gave no scent. We passed it hand to hand,  
Laughing, and could not understand  
What little we'd been shown.

Years later and too late I learned  
How a black walnut looks and how it holds  
Its heavy fruit within its folds  
And how it must be earned.

---

Matthew Buckley Smith was born in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned his MFA in poetry at the Johns Hopkins University. His poems have appeared (or will soon appear) in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Think Journal*, *Linebreak*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Commonweal*, and *Measure*, as well as in Best American Poetry 2011. He lives in Baltimore with his wife, Joanna.

## **Stephen Spencer**

### *Beautiful Regret*

Outside the bar in Sorrento,  
We could hear the two-man band singing American pop in Italian  
To the chords of an electric piano and the beat of a drum machine.

"Let's find the beach," she said.

She heard the lapping waves at the end of the footpaths,  
Where wood boats, blue, yellow, and red,  
Resting on pebbles, waited for the high tide  
To set them tugging at the lines Until fishermen released them  
Into the liquid azure of the Mediterranean.

"It's dark," I said, "and these cliffs are high."

Just two days before, in Florence,  
With the sky draping il Duomo,  
We peered from beneath a red umbrella on  
Hercules, David, and Neptune,  
White stones chipped to art by the passion of sculptors.  
We watched the revelers in the Piazza della Repubblica,  
around the corner from the Gates of Paradise,  
Into the small hours of the first day of the millennium.

"It's late. We should go back to the hotel with the others," I said.

Dante had his Beatrice, Boticelli his Venus.  
Giotto must have taken his to the top of the tower  
To view the red tile blanket over Florentine life  
In the dusky light before the morning  
When the first Medici climbed the four hundred steps to  
Gaze down on the Palazzo Vecchio.

I should have followed her to the sea.

*Sunday Night in the Mountains*

Anna Laura sang her favorite song every Sunday.  
"I'm gonna take a trip in the good ole gospel ship,  
I'm goin' far beyond the sky."  
Crowded to the walls in the church between the mountain and creek,  
Folks in Sunday overalls sang down the almighty power of God.

"If you're ashamed of me, you have no cause to be,  
For with Him I am an heir."  
Women danced in the aisles,  
Heads jerked back and forth,  
Hairpins and shoes flew,  
Children hid beneath pews on the sawdust floor  
To escape flailing arms.

"If too much fault you find, you'll surely be left behind,  
While I go sailing through the air."  
A wayward teen ran to the altar to be saved  
From eternal damnation in Hell.  
The week before he had let in a pig  
During Sunday night testimony service.

"I'm gonna shout and sing, until all the heavens ring,  
While I'm bidding this world goodbye."  
The music drifted up the holler to the tops of the ridges  
Proclaiming the word to raccoons and rattlesnakes.

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Stephen Spencer has served as Chair of the English Department at the University of Southern Indiana since 2008. Before that, he taught English at Wilmington College for eighteen years. He has taught and published in the areas of American studies, ethnic literature, and global studies. His creative work has been published in *the Aurorean*, *Estuary*, *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, and *Coal: A Poetry Anthology*. His work recently has centered on travel.

## Rob Spiegel

### *Reach for Your Nose*

You're going to miss it here, how the blue breaks  
through gray clouds, how babies reach for  
your nose, how they laugh and scare, how

many steps it takes to cross everything that's  
gone. At night the blues awake—a saw of  
sinking enterprise, a hole of comfort and sleep.

Animals stir in the corners, but you are done  
with corners. The rich cool earth beneath your  
feet, the girls who suck hickeys on your neck.

You can taste it as it leaves, the hay loft, the  
hands that know to touch, everything to touch, the  
warm waves when Lake Huron goes summer rough.

Ice cream is the way to locate Earth, sideways  
from the moon—a vacuum that takes and takes.

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Rob Spiegel is a writer living in New Mexico. His poetry, fiction, and journalism have appeared in publications ranging from *Halfway Down the Stairs* and *Psychotic Meatloaf* to *Rolling Stone* and *True Confessions*.

## Jack Stewart

### *Wandering into the Math Classroom*

for Neil

An equation's still on the board,  
square roots, division in so many rows  
it looks like blueprints for cliff dwellings,  
something the Anasazi built and left  
without explanation, water spirals,  
sun daggers and zigzags.  
I cannot read these lines, but marvel  
at their mystery, pleased that someone knows  
and writes them down, repeats the scribal  
calligraphy so they will not die.  
A friend once told me a proof was beautiful,  
and I had to take on faith the rhythm  
was graceful, the narrative gathered  
to a finish packed with drama  
and desire. And though I've never had  
the interest or energy to learn that language,

it thrills me to imagine another inflection  
courting inflection, the romance justified.  
How another man also believes  
that at some point, in some way, we will  
find the words to invoke salvation.

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Jack Stewart was educated at the University of Alabama and Emory University. From 1992-95 he was a Brittain Fellow at The Georgia Institute of Technology. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The American Literary Review*, *The Southern Humanities Review*, and other journals and anthologies, most recently in *The South Carolina Review*.

## Mark Thalman

### *The Long Walk Home*

for Richard Hugo

Tonight, in the Milltown Union Bar,  
the customers are raising glasses  
with your name on their lips.

Dick, we knew you were sick.  
At the symposium you took a handful of pills  
when you thought no one was looking.

After giving up cigarettes, you traded your addiction  
for ice cream. A mixing bowl full  
was the right size to kill the craving.

Then you appeared in *Life Magazine*  
wearing a hospital gown and boxer shorts!  
(Elegies are always so damn bad except for Roethke's.)

The day before you died, you dialed the Stafford's.  
Bill wasn't there, so you told Dorothy you were working  
on your sandals for the long walk home.

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Mark Thalman is the author of *Catching the Limit*, Fairweather Books (2009). His poetry has been widely published for almost four decades. His work has appeared in *Carolina Quarterly*, *CutBank*, *Pedestal Magazine*, and *Verse Daily* among others. He received his MFA from the University of Oregon, and has been teaching English in the public schools for 28 years. Thalman is the editor of [poetry.us.com](http://poetry.us.com) featuring regional and national poets. For more information please visit [www.markthalman.com](http://www.markthalman.com).

## **Kathi Wolfe**

### *Atonement*

Yom Kippur, 1950

Stan never wanted God, especially during the High Holy Days.  
He craved unholy day pleasures, swapping racing tips  
with two-bit hookers at the track, eating traif hot dogs  
at the ballpark, schmoozing with ladies of the evening  
when their night's work was done, not lusting after  
their forbidden fruits, but thirsting for their juicy tales.

Why would he, American as Bogart or Einstein, need God,  
Stan wondered, listening to the lecture on rabies  
at veterinary school on the Day of Atonement. Growing up,  
he'd listened to Orphan Annie, drunk his Ovaltine, given  
to the March of Dimes, and run the farm while his brothers  
fought the Nazis. What did he have to atone for?

Hitler was gone, Harry was giving them hell, Israel  
was now a country and Rita, his bride-to-be was so  
beautiful, everyone said her last name should be Hayworth.

Why miss this chance to learn how to stop dogs  
from going mad, to visit the house of a washed-up,  
Old-Country God, Stan thought, until Professor X strolled  
from the podium toward him, clamped the meat hooks  
down, hard on to his shoulders and hissed "Jewboy!"

### *Song*

Open the door  
watch your step  
bang the drum  
blow your horn  
dance with me  
catch your breath  
make the tea  
get the radio  
turn it up  
hear Ella scat  
lick the spoon



feed the cat  
fly the kite  
let it go  
say your prayers  
before I forget  
I love you.

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Kathi Wolfe is a poet and writer. Her poetry has appeared in *Gargoyle*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Potomac Review*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Wordgathering*, and other publications. She was a finalist in the 2007 Pudding House Chapbook competition. Her chapbook "Helen Takes the Stage: The Helen Keller Poems" was published by Pudding House in 2008. Wolfe's poem "Blind Ambition" won honorable mention in the 2008 *Passager* magazine contest. Wolfe has appeared on the public radio show "The Poet and the Poem." She is a contributor to the forthcoming anthology "Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability" (Cincú Puntos Press), which "Publishers Weekly" has named a Top 10 Fall Poetry Book. Wolfe is a columnist and senior writer for Scene4 ([www.scene4.com](http://www.scene4.com)), an international arts and media magazine.

## Katherine E. Young

### *Driving the M8*

for John

There are bandits on this road, the kind  
who years ago would've lurked on horseback here  
at forest's eave where the highway narrows  
obligingly at the edge of Vladimir *oblast'*:  
good spot for an ambush. I'm the one driving  
in this dream, although in life you usually drive  
the second-hand car with empty holes in the hood  
and trunk where someone filched the BMW  
emblems from right under the nose of the *dvornik*  
who loiters all day in the parking lot, keeping  
an eye on us foreigners (Whose eye? Why?).  
Our car's muscular, smooth, but not like what  
the bandits drive: tint-windowed Mercedes  
purring along the road, stiff-arming Soviet  
models that run on rubber bands and spit.  
Every Russian fixes cars. Sometimes  
the BMW breaks down: I pop the hood,  
make a show of feminine helplessness  
for ten, fifteen seconds, till the screech  
of tires, sometimes two or three sets, as the drivers  
of Ladas or Zhigulis or—once—a Chaika  
spring from their seats, screwdrivers in hand, itching  
to take a look beneath that foreign hood.  
They always manage to get it going again.

Now bandits broker the trade in beach towels—  
a thousand miles from any ocean, Mickey  
waves his mitts from every clothesline an hour's  
drive on either side of Sergeyev Posad –  
we ask ourselves what the profit is in that  
but can't come up with a satisfactory answer.  
Oh, you're here—funny, I left alone.  
Look! There's a bandit pulling off the road.  
Cigarette dangling, Ray Bans cocked, he's young,  
smooth-shaven, with something slightly vulpine about  
his cheek and nascent jowl. The kind of man  
who rarely looks at me, which is best  
because one glance in those ferocious, needy

eyes and I'm a goner, I'm mom and whore  
and Little Red Riding Hood all rolled into one.  
The bandit bends to flick mud from his shoe  
as he shakes down the owners of beat-up cars  
parked by the roadside, impromptu market  
in enamel pans, patterned curtains, crystal  
chandeliers: opportunity knocking.

I take it back: you're not in this dream, after all.  
You're never in my dreams anymore. Twenty-  
five years of tuna melts, nylon sheers,  
utility bills, and suddenly you've vanished,  
poof! As if you'd never been. As if  
you hadn't dragged the mattress across the room  
on our wedding night, although it was one hundred  
and ten in the dark and the tiny window a/c  
might as well have been broken. As if  
you hadn't cried next morning when you posed  
among bouquets and empty champagne bottles  
for the photograph still propped beside my bed:  
proof that joy exists, in spite of all  
our dreary evidence to the contrary.  
No matter: I'm following the wolf pack now,  
I'm on the scent of danger. I know full well  
there's a dumpster in my future, only,  
god, not today, oh, not today. Today  
I'm driving on what passes for a highway  
in Russia and, instead of you, maybe  
my passenger's a modern highwayman:  
yes. Maybe I'm driving him along his rounds.  
*You're beautiful*, he says in his soulful Russian,  
stroking my cheek and blowing smoke out the window.  
Or maybe I'm the one who's saying it,  
because it's true, he's beautiful as wild,  
beautiful as feral, beautiful  
as fear. Soon we're stopping at a hamlet  
composed of a dozen knock-kneed cottages.  
My bandit's all business counting out  
his cut from jars of fresh pickles, pails  
of potatoes, buckets of cut daisies clustered  
at the feet of an empty stool that leans  
against a half-hinged gate. I'm tasting one  
of those pickles, feather-frond of dill  
still clinging to its rind, swallowing  
the brine and gall of being ornamental.  
Serviceable. I've decided there's no

such thing as essential: we're—all of us—  
intimate strangers who'll disappear some morning:  
tomorrow, or next month, or maybe twenty-  
five years along the line, joy becoming  
theoretical as it vanishes, unbelief  
chafing fingers where rings once held sway.

With bandits, at least, I know what I'm getting.  
My passenger's eyes stray to the gate, where  
a blonde, lipsticked siren accidentally  
hooks her miniskirt as she hastens to meet us.  
Underwear flashes pink: pattern of hearts.  
This village lies at the end of the universe.  
I know what's coming next: my tongue is  
torn out. I change myself to a nightingale.  
Now, too late, you come looking for me.  
You recognize the place: storks nesting in chimneys,  
scrollwork edging the windows, scent of onions  
and mushrooms infusing the air. All  
the cottages sag in unison toward a church  
whose star-speckled dome has split in two.

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Katherine E. Young's poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Poetry Daily*, and many others and have been featured in *Spreading the Word: Editors on Poetry* and *Don't Leave Hungry: Fifty Years of Southern Poetry Review*. She is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, *Van Gogh in Moscow* (Pudding House Press, 2008) and *Gentling the Bones* (Finishing Line Press, 2007).

Editor's Note: This poem first appeared in an earlier form in *Innisfree 3*: [http://www.authormark.com/article\\_767.shtml](http://www.authormark.com/article_767.shtml). It reappears here in *Innisfree 13* because of the substantial way the poem has since evolved and to show readers one way a relatively small poem, in skilled hands, can become a substantially larger poem in both length and scope. Also because it demonstrates, once again, the truth of Paul Valery's observation that "a poem is never finished, only abandoned." And, in fact, that a single poem may experience more than one abandonment.