

# 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 11*, 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 Eleanor Wilner.

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 ereader 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 11*.

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## Masthead

Editor, Greg McBride

Greg McBride's chapbook of poems, *Back of the Envelope*, appeared from Copperdome Press in 2009. He won the 2008 *Boulevard* Emerging Poet prize. His work appears in *Boulevard*, *Cimarron Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Harvard Review Online*, *Hollins Critic*, *River Styx*, *Salmagundi*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. A retired lawyer and Vietnam veteran, his website is at [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 rich text format.) Format all poems flush with the left margin—no indents other than any within the poem itself.
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. If a poem is accepted elsewhere, however, please be sure to notify us immediately at [editor@innisfreepoetry.org](mailto:editor@innisfreepoetry.org).
4. Please submit only once per issue.

**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*.

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## Innisfree 11, fall 2010

### A Closer Look: Eleanor Wilner

Liz Abrams-Morley	33	Helen Losse	81
Gabor Barabas	35	David McAleavey	82
Alice Baumgartner	39	Kathleen M. McCann	84
Bruce Bennett	40	Louis McKee	86
Kristin Berkey-Abbott	42	George Moore	89
Christie Bingham	43	Megan Muthupandiyan	93
Judith Bowles	47	Scott Owens	95
Laura M. Dixon	48	Beth Paulson	97
Michael Fogarty	50	Patric Pepper	98
Martin Galvin	52	Roger Pfingston	100
Rod Jellema	55	Oliver Rice	102
Ann Knox	57	Lisa Rosinsky	108
Judy Kronenfeld	60	Laura Sobott Ross	110
Heller Landecker	62	David Salner	111
W.F. Lantry	68	J.D. Smith	112
Michael Lauchlan	70	Barry Spacks	114
Merrill Leffler	72	George Stratigakis	116
Miriam Levine	76	Anne Woodworth	118
Lyn Lifshin	78	Andrea Wyatt	119

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## Innisfree 11, fall 2010

### A CLOSER LOOK: Eleanor Wilner

*I have no personal memory when I'm writing. It gets assimilated into the dreamtime of our culture—the air we breathe, the images we all share.*

Eleanor Wilner lives, writes, and teaches from her post among the first rank of American poets, from which she continues, as in her youth, to engage the public issues of our time in her poetry. As indicated by the quote above, she eschews the confessional in her work, preferring to pursue her lifelong devotion to progressive causes, mythology, and the larger community we all share. Among her honors are fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Juniper Prize, and two Pushcart Prizes. In addition to her seven collections of poems, including her most recent, *Tourist in Hell* (U. of Chicago, fall 2010), she has published a verse translation of Euripides's *Medea* (Penn Greek Series, 1998) and a book on visionary imagination, *Gathering the Winds* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1975). Her work has appeared in over forty anthologies, including *Best American Poetry 1990* and *The Norton*



*Anthology of Poetry* (Fourth Edition). She has taught at many colleges and universities, including the University of Chicago, Smith College, and Northwestern University, and currently teaches in the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. She lives in Philadelphia.

In this issue of *Innisfree*, Eleanor shares nineteen poems from her seven collections; moreover, she gives us an introduction in which she discusses her reasons for making these selections. First, a few links:

Eleanor's essay on the persona poem, which appeared in the spring 2010 issue of *The Cortland Review*, and introduced four of her poems:

<http://www.cortlandreview.com/features/10/spring/index.html?ref=home>

From that same issue, a penetrating review of Eleanor's new book, *Tourist in Hell*, by David Rigsbee:

[http://www.cortlandreview.com/features/10/spring/rigsbee\\_r.html](http://www.cortlandreview.com/features/10/spring/rigsbee_r.html)

Christine Casson's illuminating article on Eleanor, which appeared in the spring 2009 issue of *Ploughshares*:

<http://www.pshares.org/read/article-detail.cfm?intArticleID=9064>

The Academy of American Poets' page on Eleanor:

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/274>

Eleanor Wilner introduces her poems in this issue of *Innisfree*:

We write the poems we need to read, somehow create what we had been trying to see—through a kind of otherness, a self-forgetfulness that imagination enables. So when Greg McBride kindly invited me to do a little retrospective collection for *Innisfree*, I was in a quandary, as the urgency that brought the poem into being was gone, and (peace to you, brother William) I have never been one to find "emotion recollected in tranquility" very potent stuff. Given that the poem had cooled the need that fueled it, how to relate to it years later? So I decided to simply choose the poems that surprised me the most at the time of writing them. This is a sorting technique that dramatizes the fact that not knowing what a poem will become is a requirement for writing one. And this isn't surprise for its own sake, but for the emergence into view of something: at first a distant sail, but when it nears—something utterly unexpected, and eloquent with meaning in what it becomes. Not knowing what's coming, what the poem would unveil, starting only with an image, and then watching to see what happens, as if the page were a space—somehow attention and expression become simultaneous, in a way I can describe but not explain. So here are some poems that particularly caught me off guard by where they went; they are in the order of the seven books in which they appear, from the 1970s to the present.



*Maya* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1979): "Landing," "Epitaph"

*Shekhinah* (The University of Chicago Press, 1984): "Without Regret,"  
"Labyrinth"

*Sarah's Choice* (The University of Chicago Press, 1989): "Sarah's Choice,"  
"Classical Proportions of the Heart"

*Otherwise* (The University of Chicago Press, 1993): "Being as I was," "Bat  
Cave," "The Bird in the Laurel's Song"

*Reversing the Spell; New & Selected Poems* (Copper Canyon Press, 1998):  
"Dinner Party," "On Ethnic Definitions," "Of A Sun She Can Remember"

*The Girl with Bees in Her Hair* (Copper Canyon Press, 2004): "Moon  
Gathering," "The Apple Was a Northern Invention," "The Girl with Bees in Her  
Hair," "Be Careful What You Remember"

*Tourist in Hell* (The University of Chicago Press, 2010): "Magnificat," "The  
Show Must Go On," "Like I Really Like That"

## LANDING

It was a pure white cloud that hung there  
in the blue, or a jellyfish on a waveless  
sea, suspended high above us.

It seemed so effortless in its suspense,  
perfectly out of time and out of place  
like the ghost of moon in the sky  
of a brilliant afternoon.

After a while it seemed to grow, and we  
inferred that it was moving, drifting down—  
though it seemed weightless, motionless,  
one of those things that defy  
the usual forces—gravity, and wind  
and the almost imperceptible  
pressure of the years. But it was coming  
down.

The blur of its outline slowly cleared:  
it was scalloped at the lower edge, like a shell  
or a child's drawing of a flower, detached  
and floating, beauty simplified. That's when  
we saw it had a man attached, suspended  
from the center of the flower, a kind of human  
stamen or a stem. We thought it was

a god, or heavenly seed, sent  
to germinate the earth  
with a gentler, nobler breed. It might be  
someone with sunlit eyes and a mind of dawn.  
We thought of falling to our knees.

So you can guess  
the way we might have felt  
when it landed in our field  
with the hard thud of solid flesh  
and the terrible flutter of the collapsing  
lung of silk. He smelled of old sweat,  
his uniform was torn, and he was tangled  
in the ropes, hopelessly harnessed  
to the white mirage that brought him down.  
He had a wound in his chest, a red  
flower that took its color from his heart.

We buried him that very day, just as he came  
to us, in a uniform of soft brown  
with an eagle embroidered on the sleeve,  
its body made of careful gray stitches,  
its eye a knot of gold. The motto  
underneath had almost worn away.  
Afterwards, for days, we saw  
the huge white shape of silk shifting  
in the weeds, like a pale moon  
when the wind filled it, stranded,  
searching in the aimless way  
of unmoored things  
for whatever human ballast gave  
direction to their endless drift.

### ***EPITAPH***

*Though only a girl,  
the first born of the Pharoah,  
I was the first to die.*

Young then,  
we were bored already,  
rouged pink as oleanders  
on the palace grounds, petted  
by the eunuchs, overfed  
from gem-encrusted bowls, barren

with wealth, until the hours of the afternoon  
seemed to outlast even  
my grandmother's mummy, a perfect  
little dried apricot  
in a golden skin. We would paint  
to pass the time, with delicate  
brushes dipped in char  
on clay, or on our own blank lids.  
So it was that day we found him  
wailing in the reeds, he seemed  
a miracle to us, plucked  
from the lotus by the ibis' beak,  
the squalling seed of the sacred  
Nile. He was permitted  
as a toy; while I pretended play  
I honed him like a sword.  
For him, I was as polished and as perfect  
as a pebble in a stutterer's mouth.  
While the slaves' fans beat  
incessantly as insect wings,  
I taught him how to hate  
this painted Pharoah's tomb  
this palace built of brick  
and dung, and gilded like a poet's  
tongue; these painted eyes.

## **WITHOUT REGRET**

Nights, by the light of whatever would burn:  
tallow, tinder and the silken rope  
of wick that burns slow, slow  
we wove the baskets from the long gold strands  
of wheat that were another silk: worm soul  
spun the one, yellow seed in the dark soil, the other.

The fields lay fallow, swollen with frost,  
expectant winter. Mud clung to the edges  
of our gowns; we had hung back like shadows  
on the walls of trees and watched. In the little circles  
that our tapers threw, murdered men rose red  
in their clanging armor, muttered  
words that bled through the bars  
of iron masks: *the lord*  
*who sold us to the glory fields, lied.*

Trumpets without tongues, we wove lilies  
into the baskets. When they asked us  
what we meant by these, we'd say "mary, mary"  
and be still. We lined the baskets on the sill  
in the barn, where it is always dusk  
and the cows smell sweet. Now the snow

sifts through the trees, dismembered  
lace, the white dust of angels, angels.  
And the ringing of keys that hang  
in bunches at our waists, and the sound of silk  
whispering, whispering.  
There is nothing in the high windows  
but swirling snow,  
the glittering milk of winter.  
The halls grow chill. The candles flicker.  
Let them wait who will and think what they want.  
The lord has gone with the hunt, and the snow,  
the snow grows thicker. Well he will keep  
till spring thaw comes. Head, hand, and heart—  
baskets of wicker, baskets of straw.

## **LABYRINTH**

*sila ersinarsinivdluge*

You've lost the clue—somewhere  
in the maze, the golden thread's  
run out . . . and the air  
is getting thick and grainy as old film,  
filling with something foul and dank  
as steam rising in the heat  
from a heap of compost: the animal's lair  
is just ahead, the thread's out,  
you'll have to go it alone and chance  
what's there. The walls have narrowed  
to a channel, damp to the hands  
that grope your way; the rank air  
hangs against the stone, as if  
the stone had hooks and held it.  
You can't stay where you stand; in the dark  
ahead you hear the snorting  
and the dull report of hoofs  
moved restlessly in place, and then  
the corner's rounded. You feel it first

before you see it, and know you've found  
the chamber. It is a widening in the stone  
lit by a feeble light  
that's lost its force from filtering  
down the deep rock chimney  
from the sky, a sky that's so remote  
it's dwindled to this sickly glimmer.  
The floor that opens out around you  
is spread with straw, in places worn almost  
to dust that rises from the ground  
where something stamps and stumbles  
in its place; the cloud obscures  
its shape, postpones  
the moment when you'll have to face it.

As a beast will suddenly stiffen at the scent  
of someone unexpectedly about, there is  
the silence of held breath, a slow settle  
of the dust. Just so it appears, as if  
a mist had risen and the moon come out.  
You both stand frozen for a moment—  
two pairs of eyes take hold  
and widen, each to take the other in.

The beast is the color of turning cream,  
slender with a fawn's grace, fragile  
as gentleness grown old, its large eyes  
soft with sorrow, its horns  
are ivory candelabra, its worn flanks  
scarred with roads like countryside  
seen from the air. It neither shrinks back  
nor approaches, but waits, as snow just fallen  
waits for the wind to shape it to the land.  
So, slowly you approach, extend your hand and  
let the soft nose sniff it, then touch the velvet  
muzzle as you touch a rose, wanting to know  
its silk but not to bruise it. And then  
you know, and turn to go, and hear the light foot-  
falls that follow yours and never falter,  
only pausing where you pause  
as branching way leads on to way. Somewhere near  
you hear the sound of dripping water, slow  
and even over stone. You feel a nuzzle  
at your shoulder, as if to say  
this way, go on. So, sometimes led  
and sometimes leading, you go until you feel

the air grow fresher, and there's a filament  
of light, a slow unravel of gold  
like a ray of sun as it passes through the water.  
A moment later, the two of you step  
blinking into the shining day.

We stood high above the tree line  
where the glacier's edge, touched by sun,  
becomes a maze of running streams,  
a million veins of silver opened into summer.  
We stood a long time there amazed  
before we felt the bite of hunger and,  
together with the sun, began  
the long climb down.

### **SARAH'S CHOICE**

A little late rain  
the desert in the beauty of its winter  
bloom, the cactus ablaze  
with yellow flowers that glow  
even at night in the reflected light  
of moon and the shattered crystal of sand  
when time was so new  
that God still walked  
among the tents, leaving no prints  
in the sand, but a brand burned into  
the heart—on such a night  
it must have been, although  
it is not written in the Book  
how God spoke to Sarah  
what he demanded of her  
how many questions came of it  
how a certain faith was  
fractured, as a stone is split  
by its own fault, a climate of extremes  
and one last drastic change  
in the temperature.

*The testing  
of Sarah*

"Go!" said the Voice. "Take your son,  
your only son, whom you love,  
take him to the mountain, bind him  
and make of him a burnt offering."  
Now Isaac was the son of Sarah's age,  
a gift, so she thought, from God. And how

could he ask her even to imagine such a thing—  
to take the knife  
of the butcher and thrust it  
into such a trusting heart, then  
light the pyre on which tomorrow burns.  
What fear could be more holy  
than the fear of *that*?

"Go!" said the Voice, Authority's own.  
And Sarah rose to her feet, stepped out  
of the tent of Abraham to stand between  
the desert and the distant sky, holding its stars  
like tears it was too cold to shed.  
Perhaps she was afraid the firmament  
would shudder and give way, crushing her  
like a line of ants who, watching  
the ants ahead marching safe under the arch,  
are suddenly smashed by the heel  
they never suspected. For Sarah,  
with her desert-dwelling mind, could  
see the grander scale in which the heel  
might simply be the underside of some Divine  
intention. On such a scale, what is  
a human son? So there she stood, absurd  
in the cosmic scene, an old woman bent  
as a question mark, a mote in the eye  
of God. And then it was that Sarah spoke  
in a soft voice, a speech  
the canon does not record.

"No," said Sarah to the Voice.  
"I will not be chosen. Nor shall my son—  
if I can help it. You have promised Abraham,  
through this boy, a great nation. So either  
this sacrifice is sham, or else it is a sin.  
Shame," she said, for such is the presumption  
of mothers, "for thinking me a fool,  
for asking such a thing. You must have known  
I would choose Isaac. What use have I  
for History—an arrow already bent  
when it is fired from the bow?"

*The  
teachings  
of Sarah*

Saying that, Sarah went into the tent  
and found her restless son awake, as if he had  
grown aware of the narrow bed in which he lay.  
And Sarah spoke out of the silence

she had herself created, or that had been there  
all along. "Tomorrow you will be  
a man. Tonight, then, I must tell you  
the little that I know. You can be chosen  
or you can choose. Not both.

The voice of the prophet grows shrill.  
He will read even defeat as a sign  
of distinction, until pain itself  
becomes holy. In that day, how shall we tell  
the victims from the saints,  
the torturers from the agents of God?"  
"But mother," said Isaac, "if we were not God's  
chosen people, what then should we be? I am afraid  
of being nothing." And Sarah laughed.

Then she reached out her hand. "Isaac,  
I am going now, before Abraham awakes, before  
the sun, to find Hagar the Egyptian and her son  
whom I cast out, drunk on pride,  
God's promises, the seed of Abraham  
in my own late-blooming loins."

*The  
unbinding  
of Isaac*

"But Ishmael," said Isaac, "how should I greet him?"  
"As you greet yourself," she said, "when you bend  
over the well to draw water and see your image,  
not knowing it reversed. You must know your brother  
now, or you will see your own face looking back  
the day you're at each others' throats."

She wrapped herself in a thick dark cloak  
against the desert's enmity, and tying up  
her stylus, bowl, some dates, a gourd  
for water—she swung her bundle on her back,  
reached out once more toward Isaac.

"It's time," she said. "Choose now."

"But what will happen if we go?" the boy  
Isaac asked. "I don't know," Sarah said

"But it is written    what will happen    if you stay."



## CLASSICAL PROPORTIONS OF THE HEART

Everyone here knows how it ends,  
in the stone amphitheatre of the world, everyone  
knows the story—how Jocasta  
in her chamber hung herself for shame  
how Oedipus tore out his eyes and stalked  
his darkened halls crying  
*aaiee aaiee* woe woe is me woe

These things everyone expects, shifting  
on the cold stone seats, the discomfort  
of our small, hard place in things  
relieved by this public show of agony  
how we love this last bit best, the wait  
always worth it: the mask with its empty  
eyes the sweet sticky horror of it all  
the luxurious wailing, the release  
the polis almost licking its lips,  
craning our necks to make out the wreck—  
the tyrant brought low, howling,  
needing at last to lean  
on a mere daughter, Antigone, who  
in the sequel will inherit  
her father's flair for the dramatic  
her mother's acquaintance with death;  
her hatred of falsehood, her own.

We feel a little superior, our seats  
raised above the circle where the blinded  
lion paces out his grief, self-condemned,  
who could not keep his mastery to the end  
(so Creon taunts him). What a flush  
of pleasure stains our faces then  
at the slow humiliation of an uncommon man  
a Classical Golgotha without God, only  
an eyeless wisdom, Apollo useless  
against age, guilt, bad temper  
and, most of all, against Laius  
whose fear twisted the oracle's tongue,  
child-hater, the father who started it all.

The same night, as the howls rose  
from the palace of Oedipus, the crowd  
rising, drawing on their cloaks to go home,  
far from the stage, that dramatic circle

that fixed our gaze, out there  
on the stony hills gone silver under the moon  
in the dry Greek air, the shepherd sits  
he who saved the baby from the death  
plotted by Laius, he who disobeyed a king  
for pity's sake. Sitting there alone  
under the appalling light of the stars  
what does he think of how the gods  
have used him, used his kind heart  
to bait the trap of tragedy?  
What brief can he make for mercy  
in a world that Laius rules?

Sitting there, the moon his only audience,  
perhaps he weeps, perhaps he feels  
the planetary chill alone out there  
on what had been familiar hills.  
Perhaps he senses still the presence  
of the Sphinx. And maybe  
that is when he feels the damp  
nudge against his hand.  
By reflex, we could guess, he reaches out  
to touch the coat of wool, begins  
to stroke the lamb. "It's late," he says  
at last, and lifts the small beast  
to his chest, carrying it down  
the treacherous stony path toward home, holding  
its warmth against him. There is little drama  
in this scene, but still its pathos has  
a symmetry, because the lamb's small heat  
up close exactly balances  
the distant icy stars,  
and when it senses home, and bleats,  
its small cry weighs against  
the wail of fallen kings.  
There is, as well, the perfect closure  
as the shepherd's gate swings shut  
and a classical composure  
in the way he bears  
the burden of his heavy heart  
with ease.

**BEING AS I WAS, HOW COULD I HELP . . .**

It was the noise that drew me first,  
even before the scent. The long water  
had brought something to my den, spilling  
its banks, leaving the hollow pod  
of reeds in the cool mud. Whatever it was,  
it cried inside, and an odor rose  
from it—man-smell but sweeter.  
Two small hairless cubs were in it, pink  
as summer oleander, waving  
the little worm-like things they had  
instead of paws. Naked like that, they  
made my blood go slow, my dugs  
begin to drip. I tipped the pod, they slid  
into the ferns, I nuzzled the howling  
pair, they found my side, they suckled  
there and drank their fill. That night  
the red star in the sky was bright,  
a vulture's eye that waits  
with a patience that I hardly understand.  
The twin cubs slept in their shining  
skin, warm at my side. I dreamed:

The trees were falling, one by one,  
the sound deafening, the dust that rose  
from one a mist to hide the felling  
of the next. The mountains were  
cut in two; great stones were rolled  
and piled like hills until the sky  
was shut; where the trees  
had grown, pillars of stone rose  
high, the birds circled, but  
their skulls struck the sky.  
Teeth chewed the earth; our den fell in  
like a rotted log when weight is  
added to decay; nothing to eat, the cubs  
howled, the flesh fell from our bones,  
we ran under a strange sky whose light  
was wrong: it rose from the city walls,  
bounced off the leaden heaven—flat  
as the sound of a stone striking mud.  
One of the brothers killed the other.  
Blood poured where the streams had run.

Nowhere to drink, we slink from one rock  
to the next, hunger drives us to the walls  
where, sharp as the eyes of men, death  
waits with its thousand iron thorns.

But the warm sun woke me. I forgot.  
The twins were all I saw, for days  
we lay together by the den, the river  
ran beside us like a friend; they drank  
and laughed at the morning light  
that played in the shelter  
of the leaves. Forgive me,  
I was wolf, and could not help  
the love that flowed from me to them,  
the thin sweet river of milk.  
Even now, though the world has come  
to match the dream, I think  
I would give it again.

## **BAT CAVE**

The cave looked much like any other  
from a little distance but  
as we approached, came almost  
to its mouth, we saw its walls within  
that slanted up into a dome  
were beating like a wild black lung—  
it was plastered and hung with  
the pulsing bodies of bats, the organ  
music of the body's deep  
interior, alive, the sacred cave  
with its ten thousand gleaming eyes  
near the clustered rocks  
where the sea beat with the leather  
wings of its own dark waves.

Below the bat-hung, throbbing walls,  
an altar stood, glittering with guano,  
a stucco sculpture like a Gaudi  
church, berserk  
Baroque, stone translated into  
flux—murk and mud and the floral  
extravagance of wet sand dripped  
from a giant hand, giving back

blessing, excrement—return  
for the first fruits offered to the gods.

We stayed outside, superior  
with fear, like tourists  
peering through a door, whose hanging  
beads rattle in the air from  
one who disappeared into the dim  
interior; we thought of the caves  
of Marabar, of a man who entered  
and never quite emerged—  
the caves' echoing black  
emptiness a tunnel in the English  
soul where he is wandering still. So  
the bat cave on the Bali coast, not far  
from Denpasar, holds us off, and beckons . . . .

Standing there now, at the mouth  
of the cave—this time we enter, feel  
inside the flutter of those  
many hearts, the radiant heat of pumping  
veins, the stretch of wing on bone  
like a benediction, and the familiar  
faces of this many-headed god,  
benevolent as night is  
to the weary—the way at dark  
the cave releases them all,  
how they must lift like the foam  
on a wave breaking, how many  
they are as they enter  
the starlit air, and scatter  
in wild wide arcs  
in search of fruit, the sweet bites  
of mosquito . . .

while the great domes of our  
own kind slide open, the eye  
that watches, tracks the skies,  
and the huge doors roll slowly back  
on the hangars, the planes  
push out their noses of steel,  
their wings a bright alloy  
of aluminum and death, they roar  
down the runways, tear into  
the night, their heavy bodies fueled  
from sucking at the hidden

veins of earth; they leave a trail of fire  
behind them as they scar  
the air, filling the dreams  
of children, sleeping—anywhere,  
Chicago, Baghdad—with blood,  
as the bombs drop, as the world  
splits open, as the mothers  
reach for their own  
in the night of the falling  
sky, madness in  
method, nature gone  
into reverse . . .

here, nearly unperturbed,  
the bats from the sacred cave  
fill the night with their calls,  
high-pitched, tuned to the solid world  
as eyes to the spectrum of light, gnats  
to the glow of a lamp—the bats  
circle, the clouds wheel,  
the earth turns  
pulling the dome of stars  
among the spinning trees, blurring  
the sweet globes of fruit, shaped  
exactly to desire—dizzy, we swing  
back to the cave on our stiff dark  
wings, the sweet juice of papaya  
drying on our jaws, home  
to the cave, to attach ourselves  
back to the pulsing dome, until,  
hanging there, sated and sleepy,  
we can see what was once our world  
upside down as it is  
and wonder whose altars  
those are, white,  
encrusted with shit.

### **THE BIRD IN THE LAUREL'S SONG**

How long have I been here? I can't recall  
how many suns have risen and withdrawn  
since I came down to this branch to rest.

How strange it felt at first, warm  
under my feet, and when I landed here

and clamped my claws around its bark  
I could have sworn I heard a moan. Is this  
the work of men, I wondered then,  
who like to decoy us with images of wood  
we take for friend, then lay in wait for us, armed,  
their arrows tipped with our own feathers.  
Yet this was opposite of that—a tree that feels  
like wood, an ordinary laurel, leaves a polished  
green, but with a pulse inside, I swear,  
the engine of a heart like mine; and something  
not quite planted in its stance—the way it swayed  
and seemed to reach out toward me as I passed.  
And so I stopped, and sat.

But I'm uneasy  
now, the forest ways are broken here,  
some sadness haunts this tree  
that I fear, mortally, to sound. Nor can I sing  
when these leaves rustle in the air  
around my perch, and breathe and whisper  
in my ear, and speak of what I cannot  
bear, nor compass with my airborne  
mind—some deep attachment to the ground  
whose price is to be rooted there; it makes  
my wings ache with the thought, and  
I must fly away from here—but yet am held  
in dappled light like a net of lace  
that will not let me go. O gods,  
if you can break the spell that holds us  
both together in this glade, then I will  
stay with what it is within that suffers here.

*The river stirred in a passing wind, and the sun,  
stretched out on its back, moved  
in a shiver of gold, and the woman who stood  
by the river's bank, looked around  
as if awakened from a dream, a little dazed.  
She reached down to pick the book up  
that had fallen at her side, and some flowers  
she had gathered in a nearby field. Then,  
following the river bank, she wandered off,  
singing to herself.*

But it was I who sang,  
though I look out through her eyes;  
it is I whom the gods hear, I who laid down  
my wings, and nested here out of love.

## **DINNER PARTY**

The fire is lit in the hearth, and flickers.  
It is this minute exactly. Helen steps  
from the shadows of the room. The room  
is stone, and the woman—all he had heard.  
Paris, the aesthete, connoisseur of sculpted  
flesh, arbiter of marble,  
looks at her with a gaze so intense that she,  
though aware of her effect on others, is  
newly glazed in his eyes, an urn just pulled  
from the fire, with its armor of pearl. She wears  
pale gray robes; her jewels are the frozen honey  
of amber that the hearth fire catches and  
swirls into a molten gold. Paris turns  
the exquisite ring on his finger, toys with it,  
envies her grace a little, her icy detachment,  
and turns away in a weariness it took centuries  
to ripen, an idleness no occupation can touch,  
perfection itself cloys—and his eye falls  
on the oiled body of the boy who is  
pouring the wine for Helen, the boy who is  
watching Helen, watching her breath stir  
the hovering dust, watching and breaking  
his heart over her. Now they are being called  
to the table and to whatever desultory  
conversation they can devise. While she  
watches Paris, and Paris the boy, and the boy  
Helen, Menelaus is thinking of his messenger,  
running toward Mycenae, perhaps, even now,  
entering the Lion Gate, carrying a letter  
to his brother, Agamemnon, proposing  
that they join forces in conquest, together  
take Troy, rich fortress corrupted by treasures—  
a ripe fruit, half-rotted and ready to fall.  
And, his eyes lit by the flames, he turns  
to his honored guest Paris, whose gaze  
he has followed, and smiling, the host  
lifts his cup, and calls for more wine.



## **ON ETHNIC DEFINITIONS**

In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague,  
the ghetto was so small, so little  
space for the living, and less (by rights)  
for the dead—they buried the bodies  
standing up: the underground  
train to Sheol, packed  
for the rush-hour of ghosts, when  
the train arrives, when the final trump  
sounds and the Saved dead rise,  
with a sigh, they'll at last lie down.

## **OF A SUN SHE CAN REMEMBER**

After they had been in the woods,  
after the living tongue woke Helen's  
hand, afterwards they went back  
to the little house of exile, Annie and  
Helen, who had lived in the silent  
dark, like a bat without radar in  
the back of a cave, and she picked up  
the broken doll she had dismembered  
that morning in her rage, and limb  
by limb, her agile fingers moving  
with their fine intelligence over each  
part, she re-membered the little figure  
of the human, and, though she  
was inside now, and it was still dark,  
she remembered the missing sun  
with a slow wash of warmth  
on her shoulders, on her back—  
as when you step shivering out of  
a dank shade into the sun's sudden  
balm—and as the warmth spread,  
it felt like the other side of water,  
and that is when she knew how  
light on water looks, and she put  
her outspread hands into the idea  
of it, and she lifted the lines of light,  
cross-hatched like a web, out of  
the water, and, dripping, stretched  
the golden net of meaning in the light.

## **MOON GATHERING**

And they will gather by the well,  
its dark water a mirror to catch whatever  
stars slide by in the slow precession of  
the skies, the tilting dome of time,  
over all, a light mist like a scrim,  
and here and there some clouds  
that will open at the last and let  
the moon shine through; it will be  
at the wheel's turning, when  
three zeros stand like paw-prints  
in the snow; it will be a crescent  
moon, and it will shine up from  
the dark water like a silver hook  
without a fish—until, leaning closer,  
swimming up from the well, something  
dark but glowing, animate, like live coals—  
it is our own eyes staring up at us,  
as the moon sets its hook,  
as Artemis once drew her bow;  
and they, whose dim shapes are no more  
than what we will become, take up  
their long handled dippers  
of brass, and one by one, they catch  
the moon in the cup-shaped bowls,  
and they raise its floating light  
to their lips, and with it, they drink back  
our eyes, burning with desire to see  
into the gullet of night: each one  
dips and drinks, and dips, and drinks,  
until there is only dark water,  
until there is only the dark.

## **THE APPLE WAS A NORTHERN INVENTION**

When she ate the pomegranate,  
it was as if every seed  
with its wet red shining coat  
of sweet flesh clinging to the dark core  
was one of nature's eyes. Afterwards,  
it was nature that was blind,  
and she who was wild  
with vision, condemned  
to see what was before her, and behind.

## **THE GIRL WITH BEES IN HER HAIR**

came in an envelope with no return address;  
she was small, wore a wrinkled dress of figured  
cotton, full from neck to ankles, with a button  
of bone at the throat, a collar of torn lace.  
She was standing before a monumental house—  
on the scale you see in certain English films:  
urns, curved drives, stone lions, and an entrance far  
too vast for any home. She was not of that place,  
for she had a foreign look, and tangled black hair,  
and an ikon, heavy and strange, dangling from  
an oversized chain around her neck, that looked  
as if some tall adult had taken it from his,  
and hung it there as a charm to keep her safe  
from a world of infinite harm that soon  
would take him far from her, and leave her  
standing, as she stood now—barefoot, gazing  
without expression into distance, away  
from the grandeur of that house, its gravel  
walks and sculpted gardens. She carried a basket  
full of flames, but whether fire or flowers  
with crimson petals shading toward a central gold,  
was hard to say—though certainly, it burned,  
and the light within it had nowhere else  
to go, and so fed on itself, intensified its red  
and burning glow, the only color in the scene.  
The rest was done in grays, light and shadow  
as they played along her dress, across her face,  
and through her midnight hair, lively with bees.  
At first they seemed just errant bits of shade,  
until the humming grew too loud to be denied  
as the bees flew in and out, as if choreographed  
in a country dance between the fields of sun  
and the black tangle of her hair.

Without warning  
a window on one of the upper floors flew open—  
wind had caught the casement, a silken length  
of curtain filled like a billowing sail—the bees  
began to stream out from her hair, straight  
to the single opening in the high façade. Inside,  
a moment later—the sound of screams.

The girl—who had through all of this seemed  
unconcerned and blank—all at once looked up.  
She shook her head, her mane of hair freed  
of its burden of bees, and walked away,  
out of the picture frame, far beyond  
the confines of the envelope that brought her  
image here—here, where the days grow longer  
now, the air begins to warm, dread grows to  
fear among us, and the bees swarm.

### **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU REMEMBER**

Can you see them now—the statues?  
Can you see them, stirring on their pedestals,  
trying out their stiff arms, stepping gingerly  
down, breaking the glass walls that encase them?

At the Vatican, forcing the door of the locked  
room, tearing off the plaster-of-Paris fig leaves,  
rummaging about in the heaps of broken-off  
genitals, so that, when they leave God's palace of art,  
like the eunuchs of China's final dynasty, who left  
the palace for the last time, carrying in small jars  
the parts of themselves taken by empire—  
so too, the statues would be whole now, heading home.

They tear themselves from the fountains, leaving  
behind the public play of the waters; climb down  
from their candlelit niches, deserting  
their place in the great composition. They enter  
the long loneliness of roads, their exodus making  
a path from the cities, a gleaming white stream  
like refugees returning to their distant, burned villages,  
their memories a desolation of marble.

Day and night they travel—some leading the horses  
on which they've been mounted for years in piazzas,  
their postures heroic. All were on foot, even  
the gods, unaccustomed to walking; and angels  
from tombstones—their wings hanging useless,  
scholars and poets, tall women in togas, a boxer  
with a broken nose, a hooded woman stumbling  
under her son's dead weight, an armless Venus,  
a headless Victory led by Justice—the blindfold

torn from her eyes. Their streams converging  
on the road to the mountains, they climb higher  
and higher, like salmon returning to the ponds  
that had spawned them, the statues,  
relentless, make their way to the quarries  
from which they were hewn—the opened veins  
in the heart of the mountain.

•

An avalanche heard from a distance, rumbling  
and thundering, or an earthquake, a war begun,  
or a world ending—we could only guess  
what we had heard. Then word spread that the statues  
were missing: the fountains, the squares, the galleries  
stood empty; the gardens were vacant,  
the pedestals naked, the tombstones abstract.  
And, it is true, where the quarries had been  
(you can travel there and see for yourself)  
the mountain is whole again, the great rift closed,  
and young trees grow thick again on the slopes.

## **MAGNIFICAT**

When he had suckled there, he began  
to grow: first, he was an infant in her arms,  
but soon, drinking and drinking at the sweet  
milk she could not keep from filling her,  
from pouring into his ravenous mouth,  
and filling again, miraculous pitcher, mercy  
feeding its own extinction... soon he was  
huge, towering above her, the landscape,  
his shadow stealing the color from the fields,  
even the flowers going gray. And they came  
like ants, one behind the next, to worship  
him—huge as he was, and hungry; it was  
his hunger they admired most of all.  
So they brought him slaughtered beasts:  
goats, oxen, bulls, and finally, their own  
kin whose hunger was a kind of shame  
to them, a shrinkage; even as his was  
beautiful to them, magnified, magnificent.

The day came when they had nothing left  
to offer him, having denuded themselves  
of all in order to enlarge him, in whose  
shadow they dreamed of light: and that  
is when the thought began to move, small  
at first, a whisper, then a buzz, and finally,  
it broke out into words, so loud they thought  
it must be prophecy: they would kill him,  
and all they had lost in his name would return,  
renewed and fresh with the dew of morning.  
Hope fed their rage, sharpened their weapons.

And who is she, hooded figure, mourner now  
at the fate of what she fed? And the slow rain,  
which never ends, who is the father of that?  
And who are we who speak, as if the world  
were our diorama—its little figures moved  
by hidden gears, precious in miniature, tin soldiers,  
spears the size of pins, perfect replicas, history  
under glass, dusty, old fashioned, a curiosity  
that no one any longer wants to see,  
excited as they are by the new giant, who feeds  
on air, grows daily on radio waves, in cyberspace,  
who sows darkness like a desert storm,  
who blows like a wind through the Boardrooms,  
*who touches the hills, and they smoke.*

## **THE SHOW MUST GO ON**

*I just want to remember  
the dead piled high behind the curtain.*  
—Mahmoud Darwish

The play had been staged as long as we could remember,  
a sordid drama in which truth kept changing sides,  
the name of the enemy was never the same;

sometimes the players poured over the edge  
of the proscenium, spilling into the audience,  
who ran terrified from the house

that had become a scene of massacre; sometimes  
the drama played at a distance relaxingly remote,  
caught and burnished in the bright little

dollhouse screen, so far away it was no more  
than fireflies in a bottle, mere hiccups of light—  
the carpet bombing, the village, torched.

So that—unless the street were yours,  
and the terrible crying of the wounded  
your own—it was impossible

to tell what was real, so much was not  
what it seemed, was simply *not*:  
not at all, not anymore, not this, not that—

yet the music was upbeat, the messenger  
smiling, the voiceover a reassuring pour  
of syrup in the artificial light. Meanwhile,

though the labels changed, and the set  
was rearranged for every act—the plot  
remained unvarying, never veering off

from the foretold end. So, when the curtain falls,  
we know for certain what is going to be  
piled high behind it. Yet we wait, we go on  
waiting, as if the bodies might still move,  
the actors untwine themselves from the pile,  
step through the opening in the folded-back curtain

into the brightly lit house, the resounding applause,  
the audience pulling on coats to go home,  
the silent streets filling again with laughter and talk;

while deep within the darkened hall, the actors  
by their lit mirrors, lift from their sweat-soaked  
faces, the eyeless masks.

### **LIKE, I REALLY LIKE THAT**

Beverley said, though you could barely hear her  
from where we sat, high on the slopes  
of the local mountain, the snow beginning  
to give way to spring, absorbing the sound  
in its softening drifts. An odd place for  
the premiere of a play, but Bev believed in  
the mountain, knows it's in for some fancy  
erosion, and fancies that—and she wants

a vista as part of the plot. Just then, Jon says:  
*I don't know anything about it, but  
I know what I like.* I think that's what  
Beverley meant when she said *I really like  
that*, because they were talking about what  
a Japanese cosmetic company calls  
Beautiful Human Life, which is what  
Beverley's play is about—moving, as it does,  
between pine trees and palmettos, cutting a wide  
swath across the little planet where we bunk  
and play musical instruments and torch  
villages. And this is where I say: *consider  
the heart* (though they are attending  
to the play and pay me no mind) *the heart*,  
I return to my subject, *is a treadmill  
in a drawing by Escher, as it moves  
up and down, in and out, taking us  
with it—the rooms change, but it is  
uncertain whether you are going  
on, or returning where you once  
began—a problem of perspective and  
memory.* But now Beverley's play is moving  
toward its denouement; the chorus is  
singing like mad, wearing costumes made  
of rabbit hair and silk, they are praising  
the great goat of spring, so loud  
their praise, and with so much heat,  
that the snow beneath us begins to move,  
and we are sliding (no way to slow this down)  
at ever accelerating speeds, along with the tons  
of snow, it's all going now, and we're riding it,  
all's a blur, the trees a green fur, a fuzz,  
the wind a cold blast in your face—  
but that Beverley! She knows a bad ending  
when she sees it—and she calls it off:  
*to hell with the trope, the slope, the whole  
blessed thing:* she is almost shouting now,  
and hitting her tambourine, and the badgers  
and marmots that line the path, holding  
their glowing lanterns against the night,  
have picked up the beat, and one by one,  
as we all sing the chorus, they swing  
their little lights, and the whole hill rocks.



## Liz Abrams-Morley reviews

**More** by Barbara Crooker. C&R Press, 2010. 68 pp.

Ordinary granite stones, Barbara Crooker tells her readers in the poem "We are Living in Magritte Weather," "neither yearn / for more nor envy their neighbors . . . . If you lie on the ground in moonlight, /" she promises, "they will whisper what you need to save your life." A fan of Crooker's earlier work, I read through *More*, her third collection, pen in hand, knowing I would encounter images and phrases I would want to underline, to grab and retain. I found myself highlighting line after sumptuous line of praise, of longing, of simple noticing and celebrating the colors, textures, tastes, moments of this world. When I closed the book, I knew these poems, too, whispered, crooned, and sometimes sang rollicking ditties to what we all need to save our own lives.

Human beings, Crooker reminds us in poem after poem, are creatures who *want*. And what we want, "is not found / at K-Mart naked in the blue light." ("What You Want"). These are poems walk with humble awareness and deeply spiritual awe through the natural world finding "a small flash of happiness in . . . a scrabble of bayberry, goldenrod, pearly everlasting and milkweed. . . . Anchor me to this world, God of sand," ("The Winter Sea") Crooker pleads.

She opens the heart-wrenching, lovely but far from sentimental "Mother Suite," a series of five intimately lyric poems which focus on the failing health and eventual death of her mother, with a burning bush which has "slipped out of its scarlet dress, stripped down / to twig and limb/ bare bones, the architecture of itself." We, as readers, see this bush, and see, too, the mother who is becoming her own pure architecture. Offered this simple image, we are led to feel the longing of the daughter who brings a lemon tart and "remembers life is bitter / remembers life is sweet."

The poems in *More* give voice, over and over, to the need to hold the bitter with the sweet, to know this paradox. They know that impermanence is a fact of our world, loss inevitable, and they ache still to praise, celebrate, sometimes even laugh over or lust for sensual pleasures, for more of whatever fills and pleases. In "Demeter," a mother sits in vigil by her comatose daughter's bedside believing she "would never see her again" and knows that the child's awakening is a "slippery rebirth." The companion poem, "Snapshot," describes the parents in the aftermath of the awakening, "drinking coffee and smiling" but knowing "nothing / was ever the same. The ground / had shifted. They knew / that loss was waiting, only / around the corner." What to do with the awareness of impermanence but bring one's dying mother a *tarte au citron*? It is "the sun / in a crinkled crust. / Each of us," failing mother and daughter who will grieve her, Crooker tells us "will have a wedge, / bitter and sweet at the same time, that melts on the tongue, / snow on the lawn ("The Mother Suite").

Like Pablo Neruda before her, Crooker pays homage to even the simplest pleasures of the eye and the palette, singing an "Ode to Chocolate," noting her luck while walking along a beach in Maine where "Every dog within fifty miles is off leash, running / for the sheer dopey joy of it" ("Strewn").

Crooker is a poet who faces the darkness and opts for affirmation. When I closed my already well-worn copy of *More*, I knew that I would, like Barbara Crooker, choose to say "yes to everything, yes to the green hills / rolling out ahead / . . . yes to the clouds blooming like peonies in the sky's / blue meadow . . . yes" ("Yes") even to the wisdom with which she leaves us in "Strewn," the penultimate poem in the collection, when she reminds us that we are, "All of us, broken, some way / or other. All of us dazzling in the brilliant, slanting light."

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Liz Abrams-Morley's second full-length collection of poetry, *Necessary Turns*, was published in 2010 by Word Press/Word Tech Communications and was a winner of a Hoffer Prize in Poetry the same year. She is the author as well of *Learning to Calculate the Half Life* (Zinka Press, 2001) and two chapbooks. Her individual poems and short stories have appeared in a wide variety of nationally distributed anthologies and journals (including *Innisfree*) and have been read on NPR. Co-founder/director of Around the Block Writers' Collaborative ([www.writearoundtheblock.org](http://www.writearoundtheblock.org)), she teaches on the MFA in Writing faculty of Rosemont College.

## **Gabor Barabas**

Poems by Radnoti Miklos translated by Gabor Barabas:

### **WELCOME THE DAY!**

I kiss your hand, — like this,  
like a shuffling peasant basking  
in the sun, while in fields pregnant with passion  
the raucous unhinged stalks of wheat burst into blossom!

And look! Where we just lay the stalks are bent,  
a stern reminder of our love—and how  
the world bows! And the distant tower bows  
and grovels at your feet in the dust!

A sleepy afternoon has come: let us welcome it in silence!  
I plant a kiss that blooms upon your fingers,  
the palm of your hand gives birth to shade!  
And let us be thankful! with palms open like a suppliant's

and let us thank the sunlight where we stand,  
twirling and disheveled, in fields animated  
and gleaming with passion where  
the raucous unhinged stalks of wheat burst into blossom!

*October 8, 1929*

### **KÖSZÖNTSD A NAPOT!**

Most már a kezedet csókolom, — így  
paraszt bánattal oly szép megállni  
a napban, lelkes földeken csörren  
ütődő szárba szökkenve a búza!

Nézd! ahol hevertünk eldőlt a szár,  
szigorú táblán szerelmi címer,— hogy  
bókol a tájék! bókolva előtted  
csúszik a porban a messze torony!

Álmos délután jön: csöndben köszöntsd!  
csók virágzik ujjaid csúcsán és  
tenyeredben megszületik az árnyék!  
Te csak köszöntsd! szétnyitott tenyérrel

köszöntsd a napot, mert most még  
feléfordúlva állunk és lelkes  
földeken, csillanó földeken csörren  
ütődő szárba szökkenve a búza!

*From Psalms Of Devotion*

You are a plowed field, and your panting  
is like that of the hired hand as you carry  
the brute weight of the earth upon your back.  
And sometimes your desire is a deafening bell  
that calls to me from beneath the dark cathedrals  
of the panting night.  
And then you shower me with love,  
like a wild chestnut shedding its leaves. And even now,  
in the grief of our parting cleansed by the diaphanous dawn,  
you are still the earth, and the flesh, and the blood  
and everything and all, is but like child's play beside you.

*July 12, 1928*

Földszagú rét vagy, a lihegésed egyszerű  
mint a szeretkező béresparaszté és a  
földanya átkos erejét hordozza tested.  
Néha csak vágyad harangja kongat  
és misére hív a lélekző csöndben  
ziháló sötétnek tornya alatt.  
Szerelmed rámhúll kerengve, mint hulló  
nagy vadgesztenyelevél. Most is.  
A bának áttetsző tiszta hajnalán  
te vagy a föld, a test, a vér  
és terajta kívül minden csak játék.

*from Cartes Postales:*

## **PARIS TO CARTRES**

On the lurching train the lamp dies out  
and the moon sticks to the trembling window;  
a soldier sits, a blonde girl leaning on his chest,  
she flickers, smiles, and then is lost in dreams.

## **CHARTES-BÓL PÁRIS FELÉ**

A vonaton a lámpa haldokolt,  
a lengő ablakokra néha rátapadt a hold,  
szemközt katona ült, szívéen egy szőke lány  
világított. A lány mosolygott, könnyű álma volt.

## **VERSAILLES**

The pond boils and its surface cracks  
as roe gushes from the fattened fish;  
slender girls watch motionless  
as golden droplets swirl and fall about their feet.

## **VERSAILLES**

Felforr a tó és tükre pattan,  
kövér halakból dől az ikra,  
karcsu lányok nézik mozdulatlan  
arany csöppek hullnak lábaikra.

## **QUAI DE MONTEBELLO**

A young girl just ran by  
with an apple in her hand.  
It was a plump, red apple  
and she bent over it.  
The moon is so dim tonight  
that it is but a faint breath in the sky.

*August 7-September 7, 1937*

## **QUAI DE MONTEBELLO**

Kislány futott el éppen,  
almát tartott kezében.  
Piros, nagy alma volt,  
a kislány ráhajolt.  
Lehellet még az égen,  
Olyan halvány a hold.

---

Gabor Barabas' poems have recently appeared in *California Quarterly*, *Iodine*, *Red Owl*, *Plainsongs*, and *This Broken Shore*. His animated poem, "The Spider," has won awards in film festivals in Berlin, Delhi, Chicago, and New Orleans.

The Hungarian poet Radnoti Miklos, executed during World War II, was one of Hungary's great Twentieth Century poets. He introduced modernism into what had been primarily a pastoral and folkloric poetic tradition. Almost two years after his death, his body was exhumed from a mass grave; in the pocket of his trench coat, his wife and friends discovered the final ten poems he had written. Mr. Barabas has received permission from his widow, now 98, to translate his collected poems. From that larger project, Mr. Barabas has selected two poems from his earliest period in which the pastoral influence is still present. After the publication of his second book, "Song of Modern Shepherds" (1931), he was persecuted by the censors and only the intervention of his teacher and friend, Sandor Sik, a Catholic priest, saved him from imprisonment and expulsion from his university. Three shorter poems, from a trip to Paris during his transitional middle period, reflect his exposure there to the modern currents of Western poetry. None of these translated poems has been previously published.

## Alice Baumgartner

### LANSING, MICHIGAN

The water falls from shore  
like a dress falls from the shoulders  
of a woman, leaving behind  
a long-handled rake, a pewter spoon.

I move through the rooms  
where my parents lived,  
stripping the furniture from the house  
like meat from the bone.

I sweep the floors, remembering  
when I first heard the mattress  
against the springs,  
the sound of their bodies,  
perfect as fish in the net.

Now the mattress is gone,  
the cabinets are empty.  
Now the tuna, left in the tin  
for the cat, goes bad.

The shore is a woman,  
legs wide as a wishbone,  
and not even the spoon  
has been taken.

---

Alice Baumgartner is the Gordon Grand Fellow in History at Yale University. Her work has been published in the Scholastic anthology *We are Quiet, We are Loud* and is forthcoming in the *Kenyon Review*. She has received awards from the *Atlantic Monthly* and the Norman Mailer Writers' Colony.

## Bruce Bennett

### THE AFTERMATH

*"All women are virtual."*

I said it as a joke. There was that couple  
in England, you know, how she caught him cheating  
in Second Life, and told him that was it.  
They'd met online, and married there, so sex  
online (though he denied it) still is sex  
if that is how one lives. It does make sense.  
It's funny, sure, but if you think about it—  
the thing at least with me that struck a chord—  
is, how is that so different from the way  
we view each other as erotic subjects?  
Our sexual fantasies—aren't they virtual?  
So, what I said was meant to be ironic—  
I knew it might offend—but also true  
in some deep way, as good jokes often are.  
It's complicated. But it was a joke.

### STRIPPER

One way to look at it: it's just a job.  
The pay is great. For seven hours a week,  
I get to buy my books, and lots of extras.  
And no one knows. I get a double life,  
not that I really want that. Still, it works.  
And also, I admit, I've learned a lot!  
None of it good, I have to say. The way  
guys act. I sometimes want to shout, Come off it!  
You poor pathetic losers, get a life!  
Of course, I can't. I wouldn't have my job.  
So I just do the thing they pay me well for.  
Besides, it isn't me. I wear a wig.  
I'm someone else. I'm barely even there.  
In fact, a lot of times I'm doing homework.

---



Bruce Bennett is the author of nine books of poetry and more than twenty poetry chapbooks. His most recent books are *Something Like Karma* (Clandestine Press, 2009) and *Subway Figure* (Orchises Press, 2009), and his most recent chapbook is *The Holding Stone* (Finishing Line Press, 2010). His *New and Selected Poems, Navigating The Distances* (Orchises Press), was chosen by Booklist as "One Of The Top Ten Poetry Books Of 1999." Bennett co-founded and served as an editor of two poetry magazines, *Field: Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, and *Ploughshares*, and, during the 1980's and 90's, served as an Associate Editor for State Street Press. He has reviewed contemporary poetry books in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Nation*, *Harvard Review*, and elsewhere. He teaches literature and creative writing at Wells College, where he is Professor and Chair of English and Director of Creative Writing.

## Kristin Berkey-Abbott

### SLEEPLESS BEAUTIES

She watches her teenage daughter pitch  
a fit, complete with hysterical  
sobbing, door slamming, and screaming.  
Some part of her turns to stone  
as her daughter hurls nasty  
accusations about lack of love and ugliness.

She thinks of the ancient fairy tales  
with their adolescent girls left to slumber  
for a hundred years. She wonders  
where she could find a witch  
to cast this spell.

She would settle for a tower,  
her daughter locked up safe,  
maybe with a spinning wheel or loom  
to keep her fingers busy.

She thinks of boarding schools and pharmaceuticals,  
the modern answer to the ancient spell.  
She thinks of how quickly a blessing turns  
into a curse. She pours the last  
of her bottle of wine and waits.

---

Kristin Berkey-Abbott's chapbook, *Whistling Past the Graveyard*, was published by Pudding House Press in 2014. Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals. She teaches English and Creative Writing at the Art Institute of Ft. Lauderdale, where she also serves as Chair of the Department of General Education. Her website is at [www.kristinberkey-abbott.com](http://www.kristinberkey-abbott.com).

## **Christie Bingham**

### **CONSTELLATIONS**

For the first time I recognize Orion.  
His bow drawn and poised over  
Pleiades, a cowering cluster, the Bear,  
awkwardly watching.

The boy beside me stirs,  
Disturbing the puddle of beads  
Pooled where our skin meets.  
He begins to dress

And then we're at my home.  
The porch light illuminates my  
Father in the placid glass.

Arms folded, lips pursed, eyes  
Open, close—buttoned up,  
Like the blouse I fastened with  
Unsteady fingers.

Were it not for the boy, whose  
Hands explored tenderly,  
Whose awkward mouth pursued  
Me like a hungry bear,

I would run to my father,  
Into his widening arms  
That have grown slender and yellow.

Instead, I kiss the boy's cheek  
And linger long enough that my  
My father dissolves.  
I make my way to my bedroom.

Through an open window, where  
I see the boy's tail-lights fade,  
Out beyond the tattooed sky,  
I can barely make out the star-lines.

## **THE EYE**

Clouds settled in, thick and quiet,  
the way sleep overcomes a child.

Towed to shore by warm currents,  
they split the horizon's dark shelf.

We shut them out, boarded up the windows.  
But they sat. Widening over houses,

over days, until the smell of our bodies  
took on form and the distance between us

registered, as one hand slipping  
from the palm of another.

I've forgotten how the clouds withdrew—  
how silence is white space between

two lives living, like dead air,  
in the eye of a storm.

## **THREE POETS**

Behind my unquiet eyes  
three women are writing poems  
about my father.

The first one kills him, drowns him  
in poems that have the rhythm of the ocean  
washing his body out to sea.

She delights in his head lying in the sand;  
a pebble lit by the moon. And like a child,  
closes her eyes before she skips the shiny face  
across the waves.

Her metaphors confuse the second poet,  
who thinks she saw him, gutted like a fish,  
blue-lipped body on ice, one day at the market.

She writes about my father's ghost:  
a leering lamp shade, a dark spot in a photo,  
a door that opens too slowly.

*It's only the shadow of the day,*  
but she swears he's there, unable  
to frame him. She resigns to measure  
his realness in degrees of memory.

*He called yesterday, I argue.*  
But then, was it yesterday, or ten years ago?  
*It was January. It was September.*

She claims my memories are under revision.

## **THE ART OF SUMO**

*Love is stronger than Death*

— roadside church bulletin

I imagine two wrestlers,  
Bulky in their loin clothes,  
Sole purpose to push the other off his feet;  
Big D with his slicked-back hair  
L's pouty lips and topknot.  
And this is their dance:  
To one-up the other around the ring  
Around & around—  
Until I've lost my car  
Because I lost my job  
Because I was sleeping with my boss  
Who was married to a woman who was dying,  
Or so he said.  
He was going to divorce her  
As soon as her cancer went into remission.  
And I find myself selfishly  
Rooting for Big D to knock L flat on his ass.  
Because I've got a dog in this fight.  
Because I'm tired of losing out on Love.  
It's tricky, this tradition of living.  
I've been rushing the sorority my whole life  
And for once I can imagine life after Death  
Lops off L's big wobbly head:  
The woman who gets the guy  
The promotion and, yes, the one left standing  
When Love gets back on his feet.

Christie Bingham is a Creative Writing student at the University of North Texas. Her poems have appeared in the *Denton Writers Anthology* and the *North Texas Review*.

## **Judith Bowles**

### **A JOYFUL NOISE**

The comfrey is alive this morning  
its bell-shaped flowers are wobbling  
with bees in busy birth-like clusters.  
Life after life nuzzles in and out of dainty snouts  
that seem an endless source of sustenance  
for the yellow-dusted carriers.

Last fall they swooned in shock, lay down  
their dark lance leaves and all but said farewell  
after the transplanting. Cadaverous they lay  
and I took them at their desiccated word  
as goners. Now they're running April riot  
like an army at the border

who've summoned a fleet of buzzing  
allies to spread the loot once ravaged.

---

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.

## **Laura M. Dixon**

### **YES NO YES**

This dust  
must have been something  
once. A man,  
a cactus, a horse.

Ground  
shadowed by clouds.  
What's hidden  
stays hidden.

It will be a cold rain.  
Manifest, certain, soaking.  
Thunder.  
Dust into mud.

### **FIRST VERSES**

The earliest written documents  
were lists. Dean says we can't know  
if they're bills of sale or poems,  
which begs the question.  
My grocery list reads like verse:  
eggs, spinach, juice. But so does the sign  
at the end of your street: BLIND  
CHILD AT PLAY. Beautiful and useful.  
I always feared we would have  
to choose. Sunrise and sunset  
tell lovely lies, which is why  
their flat-Earth logic still shines  
across poetry's sky. But don't we write  
lines to seek new light, to clear the air?  
To find soft, fertile dirt and plant  
there. To order the chaos  
in rows. To blink. To think or stop



thinking. To cope with how thoughts run:  
When the body's tired, the mind decides  
to rearrange the furniture and hum.

---

Laura M. Dixon is a Michener Fellow in poetry at The University of Texas at Austin, where she also serves as Associate Editor of *Bat City Review*. She has received residencies from the Hambidge Center and the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild. Her work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *Wicked Alice*, *Front Porch*, *Apparatus Magazine*, *Exact Change Only*, and *Georgetown Review*.

## **Michael Fogarty**

### **ALL IN THE MONTH DECEMBER**

In an ale-house on the Quays,  
I met an Angel soft and tender  
A' sipping Christmas wine.

She looked at me perchance to smile  
And so I thought to pass the time  
I'd take a drink  
And sit awhile.

There we sat midst Christmas cheer  
And drunken reverie  
When her face grew wan and  
She laughing said to me.

"It was Christmas day now long ago  
I lost my bonny boy  
And so I drink my wine the  
Long year round to keep him in the air."

"Fool," said I, "it is not wise  
To dote yourself away  
We—all of us must one day live  
To see lovers turn to clay."

"To clay? Not he" (her temper in a flare)  
"More likely to the innocent  
Or to the judge's snare.

Alas the trees now ever-bare  
Alas regret too late.  
I lost it all that winter's day  
With Christmas in the air."

Now I perplexed and she in tears  
Sat silent in the place. Minutes  
Passed and drinks were downed.  
I smiling took my leave.

So I took it as a lesson learned and  
Went my merry way with dreams  
Of loved ones (and of wine)  
Awaiting Christmas Day.

And though frequent I have been  
To that ale-house on the Quays  
And though frequent I have seen  
Faces pretty as can be

The one that still escapes me  
Is the one that captivates me  
—the one I left behind.

So I spend my time berating  
Whatever fate awaits me  
By the window of an ale-house  
A' sipping Christmas wine.

---

Michael Fogarty was born in Dublin where he now lives in modest circumstances and sees Joyce's Tower every morning from the train.

## **Martin Galvin**

### **GRANDFATHER CLOCKS**

Sour milk's one, and rusty odors dropping out  
of leaking cans of tuna fish. Calendars are clocks,  
so are clouds, clowns, whatever makes you know a time  
has passed. A swelled head, a swollen belly,  
they're clocks, tick toward certain changes.

Easy things are clocks and hard ones too. A rock's a clock,  
and seeds that circle dirt and sky. A tick without a tock, now  
that's no clock, but arms without heads, they are,  
and water in a shaft, and hurry-canes, them too, they know  
how to use the quadrants, swing themselves a wedge of space.

Wrinkles, did I mention wrinkles? The way they crunch time  
in a vise and let him out a little at a time? Time's the gnome  
that's locked in clocks. You won't find wrinkles on a dead man's lip.  
You look, you have a chance, next time. Nor knee cap either, though  
you might not want to check that out. You take my word,

I know a clock when it's moving and when it has stopped.  
Words are clocks. They tell a time that's caught between the tick  
and tock where we all live. They're always waiting, same as time,  
between what is and isn't, letting everything that will be become,  
same as grandfathers, who couldn't stop what they started anyway.

### **TAKING IN THE WAIST**

May merriment and the sensing world forgive him  
Who has forgotten how to sew with dragonflies,  
who has been persuaded by his stylist  
to find the bald heads of vultures lack taste,

May the air be merciful to him who disdains  
The wonder of the lesser finch its feathering,  
the swoop and turn, the laughing gulls,  
the lazy ascent of the hawk, the sharp fall.

May he who runs his tires over the killed squirrel  
for the sound, who makes a festival,  
of slapping tiny bugs to smithereens,  
be forgiven his abated brain

for such a being as he is is yet a humanoid.  
His swelling waist, his groaning brain  
mark him down as a creature cursed to hear,  
and what the mirror whispers is just enough.

### **TEACHER'S PET**

*My Johnny ain't no rose.  
Learn him. Don't smell him.*

— Parent to teacher at PTA, 1898

These mountain women. Come in here, I swear,  
Like wild goats and tell us how to teach their kids.

The men are just as bad, grunting and belching  
Straight through my preparation. The pigs.

I'd like to see that mother try to show a strapping boy  
How to find the hypotenuse of a triangle,

Lean down to him and guide his hand  
When he stinks like a stuck toilet, nothing less.

I'd just like to see her. And the father too  
Though what I heard, he has gone to the city

These two months past, taking his own smell  
With him and good riddance. Maybe I can do

What's right by holding Roddy back. Teach him how  
To speak himself right clear and practice pen-

Manship. It's more than that mother will do,  
For sure. And besides, he's big enough

To shoe a horse. It's about time he learned  
There's other ways a woman can be

Than her ill-favored ways. I swear to cheese  
Her Roddy is a boy worth keeping on

Through harvest time. At least by then he's grown  
and ready for those wagons coming down the road.

## YACHTSMAN AT THE BAY OF NAPLES, FLORIDA

There are pirates here, dressed in mufti,  
men who pretend they'd slit a gizzard to slake  
a vagrant thirst. They wear deck shoes  
of modern manufacture so they won't slip  
on the blood from skin they shave to prove  
they still can and sport blazers with emblems  
of the hunt for par. There's one, though,  
who admits it all, flies skull and crossbones  
at the mast of a boat that's tethered  
with the others like tender goats.  
He has both his legs yet, no gout, and a patch  
in contempt of the IRS and callow youth  
Who could never afford his pirate ship.  
He keeps two women he uses to hide his age  
From himself and the members of the club.

Just before twilight, he casts off and lets  
the boat drift beyond the shadows of the high rises,  
pats his belly, counts his pocket money,  
Sighs for empire lost but not for long  
Then hoists the sail as if he's free.  
No trophy ship in sight, he heads  
Toward the setting sun to conquer it.  
He always does. The sun bows down,  
Submissive to his will, and that's enough,  
Each time to turn him toward the shore  
Where midnight waits, and wine, and chunks  
Of boiled lobster he will pull apart for sport.

---

Martin Galvin's new collection of poems, *Sounding the Atlantic*, is just out from Broadkill River Press (June 2010). Recent work has appeared in *The New Republic*, *Sub-Tropics*, *argestes*, *Vulgata*, the *Delmarva Review*, as well as in *Innisfree*. His work has won numerous awards, including First Prize for "Hilda and Me and Hazel" in *Poet Lore's* narrative poetry contest in 1992, First Prize in *Potomac Review's* Best Poem Competition in 1999 for "Freight Yard at Night," and First Prize from *Sow's Ear Poetry Journal* for "Cream" in a 2007 national competition. He was awarded a writer's residency at Yaddo for August of 2007. In addition to his 2007 chapbook *Circling Out* and his book *Wild Card*, he has two other chapbooks: *Making Beds* (Sedwick Books) and *Appetites* (Bogg Publications).

## **Rod Jellema**

### **WINTER LIGHTNING**

Washington streets these winter nights are cats,  
dozing, one eye half open, watching for storms  
while we citizens, deep in the certainty that lightning  
never strikes until spring, are asleep.  
But it strikes. It ripped into my dream one night  
not as a jagged white spear but as sound,  
a shriek as through homespun worsted,  
shearing through a candle-lit room at the rear  
of some foreign tailor shop, hunchbacked,  
that I was peering into in my sleep.  
That was a good year for making poems.

This stranger that wakes me as winter lightning  
has other guises. It first came as the tall  
and terrible angel who said to the child I was,  
fear not. Twice in the decades after that, it threatened  
chaos and death to what I tried to hold onto.  
But now, an old man startled by late-in-life love,  
I close my eyes to find it lighting up the soft dark  
of this new millennium's dance of galaxies,  
each one new, each a spark in a cat's eye nebula,  
each spark tight with millions of spinning worlds.  
This is a good year to rest, to be still.

### **THE HINGE**

Down the pre-dawn road that drops west from his house  
to his writing shack, we'd have seen very little,  
so only imagine this poet squared off at his desk,  
nudging his pencil to catch the curves of the earth's lines  
darkly falling away while we were hanging onto  
the arcs of our own little sleeps. As one by one  
the lights of barns flicked on all along the valley,  
the yellow circle of his lamplight, near the old pump,  
must have spread, faded to white, and then snapped off,

and it's seven now and we are up. We watch  
from the kitchen window. His thermos,  
a blue-flame flash, swings as he unbends

lightly toward eastern light, growing back his size.  
He swaggers a little like a smithy who's forged  
and polished the perfect hinge, who wears sparks  
newly dead that his clothes now remember as smoke.  
Full height now, he vaguely returns our waves,

but mostly he slows his step to note how the plants  
that Sue had set out in April are beginning  
to ignite tomatoes, green turning pink, and that Sheba  
barked once and is running to meet him halfway.

### **THICK LENSES**

Dimming down, their wicks sputtering low,  
how eager the eyes of the octogenarians  
to crack open the layer of tissue  
thickening over a printed page or over  
a painted landscape, how they wish  
to brush aside slight snows  
out the frosted window,  
to dab color into fading faces,  
and like Milton to stare  
with clean recognition  
into worlds they may never yet have seen.

*for Tom Harper*

---

Rod Jellema, long associated with the University of Maryland and with the Writer's Center (Bethesda, MD), won the Towson University Prize for Literature with his last book of poems, *A Slender Grace*. His *Incarnality: The Collected Poems*, with a CD of his readings of many of them, is scheduled for publication on October 1, 2010.



## **Ann Knox**

### **FOSSIL**

The domed biscuit incised with a star sits  
on my window sill, I found it behind dunes  
within sound of breakers rolling in from the Arabian Sea.

We'd meet by an abandoned radio tower where the track  
ran out, our two cars a shock of hard-edged  
color in the dun desert landscape. I'd wait

in the shade of a sandstone outcrop by a porcupine's sett  
the air tainted with the animal's rank smell. One day,  
my belly taut, I listened for the hum of his Rover;

blown sand pricked my skin, my fingers  
sifting the loose talus, curved around  
this stone echnoid and for a moment

delight erased the torque of waiting as I traced  
the starfish etched on the weathered surface.  
But the sun dimmed, the tower's shadow

grew and he never came. To counter pain and shame,  
I held the fossil tight, a small recompense  
for a loss I thought would last forever.

Now, decades later, the ache is forgotten but the fossil's  
weight still satisfies and the history it carries  
is one I gave it. When I'm gone

the story will be lost, but perhaps a grandchild  
will heft the stone's compact roundness and be pleased  
and treasure it for her own reasons.

### **FUGUE**

Like a horizon of far mountains,  
a theme flows comely but irregular, one  
range overlapping the next, each rank  
fainter, bluing to a distant edge.

Another strand draws out, thin  
as a Dutch landscape seen across  
water, but for three windmills, the town  
barely swells the brown ink line.

Then a motif, akin but not quite congruent,  
braids like a river crossing and re-  
crossing a wide valley, the current  
combing eel-grass in slow green waves.

It's not a round exactly, nothing as precise  
or orderly, but dim and barely heard,  
an echo plaits with strands of wind-hush  
bird song, and the heart beat's thrum.

### **LITTLE ARCHITECTURE**

*Consider also the little architecture of the mouse's skull.*

— Aaron Anstett

An ant enters the south portal,  
steps into solemn cool where  
the nave vaults to a coffered ceiling

and light slants through the socket  
of a missing rose window.  
Under the chancel's half-dome  
the ant rears, feelers out

but probably only I imagine  
this place is holy. The ant  
turns, darts past the sinus,  
under the fornix and out

to sun and live arched grasses.

### **IN LATE MARCH**

We walked along the towpath arguing,  
the woods bare, almost transparent,  
and across the river a diesel throbbed

pulling a half mile of gondolas; the roar filled  
the valley erased sound and held until the last car  
drew a thinning trail round the bend

and we were left empty. Then close by,  
    a sparrow's cheep, peeper-calls from the berm.  
        We had nothing to say, but we needed  
  
to talk, wasn't that why we'd come? If we'd waited  
    if we'd leaned into stillness and listened, not  
        to words but to what existed between us,  
  
formless, edgeless as air, if we'd been alert to twigs  
    fattening on the cottonwoods, our feet crackling  
        the towpath gravel, we might have noticed our hands  
            almost touched and today we'd be elsewhere.

## RITUALS

An Inuit hunter bows to the harpooned seal  
and offers it water from a bone spoon.

Over greensward and rows of stone markers,  
trumpet notes rise, a woman accepts a folded flag.

A man hands his young son the rifle as a buck  
breaks from the underbrush, later in the cabin  
he pours the boy his first shot of Jack Daniels.

A woman picks the dried cord from her daughter's  
navel, ties a tuft of the newborn's hair with red  
thread and sews them in a pouch for the child to wear.

I spill salt and toss a pinch over my shoulder then pause  
to note the rough grains, sun and geraniums in the window.

I don't bow exactly, but that small act  
quickens the moment as if I'd touched a live thing.

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Ann Knox's two new chapbooks, *Reading the Tao at Eighty* and *The Dark Edge*, were recently published by Finishing Line Press and Pudding House Press, respectively. She also has two full-length collections: *Stonecrop*, winner of Washington Writers' Publishing House Prize and *Staying Is Nowhere*, winner of the SCOP/Writer's Center Prize. Her poems have appeared in many literary journals, among them *Poetry*, *Blue Line*, *The Green Mountains Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and *Alaska Quarterly*. A collection of short stories, *Late Summer Break*, was published by Papier Mache Press. She received an MFA from Goddard-Warren Wilson and has taught workshops and writing seminars in many venues. For eighteen years she served as editor of the *Antietam Review*.

## Judy Kronenfeld

### EPOCH

The bent-backed *zeide*,  
newly moved in after  
grandma died, enters his grandson's  
toy-filled room after school—the parents  
not yet home—where the boy's arranging  
action figures on a shelf.  
Wrapping spindly fingers around the boy's  
thin upper arm, he pulls it to him  
and kisses the warm flesh—smelling like  
sun-baked grass—as he kissed the edge  
when he donned his prayer shawl  
for his morning prayers. But with more fervor—age  
to youth, old country to  
the new. His hazel eyes  
crinkle and melt.

His beard and moustache are white,  
with discolored yellow whiskers—  
from his food?—and his lips are a little  
wet; the boy thinks of the bristles  
on a walrus snout. He is embarrassed  
to be made a sort of god,  
and flattered as if it were deserved,  
and not sure what  
the qualifications are.

But what to do with his anointed  
and immobilized right arm, still  
clutching a soldier in khaki uniform?  
His grandfather's zeal is unreadable  
as the characters in his prayer  
books, his worship is so private  
and complete that the boy cannot  
pull his arm away, but waits,  
squeezing shut his eyes to resist  
tugging down his sleeve  
to rub the wetness off.

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Judy Kronenfeld is the author of two books and two chapbooks of poetry, the most recent being *Light Lowering in Diminished Sevenths*, winner of the 2007 Litchfield Review Poetry Book Prize (Litchfield Review Press, 2008). Her poems, as well as the occasional short story and personal essay have appeared in numerous print and online journals including *Calyx*, *Cimarron Review*, *The American Poetry Journal*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Natural Bridge*, *The Hiram Poetry Review*, *Passager*, *Poetry International*, *Stirring*, *The Women's Review of Books* and *The Pedestal*, as well as in a dozen 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 currently has poems forthcoming in *Cimarron Review*, *Fox Chase Review*, and *Jewish Women's Literary Annual*, among others, and an essay forthcoming in the 2011 edition of *Under the Sun*.

## **Heller Landecker**

### **IN WHICH YOU DO YOUR PARENTS' GROCERY SHOPPING AT THAT DISCOUNT PLACE ON ORISKANY BOULEVARD**

You put a quarter in the slot  
and it frees your cart;  
then you get your quarter back when  
you return the cart. Sometimes  
you give your cart to the  
next person who comes along,  
the person who's looking at you like  
that quarter is hard to come by.  
You walk through the aisles,  
among the piles of canned tomatoes,  
the crates of grapefruit, strawberries,  
the granola bars, jelly, more jelly,  
the toilet paper, shower seats.  
There is a peculiar smell, like  
cardboard and the walk-in  
cooler at the Rayburn Diner  
that terrible summer before college.  
A child wails. There is a teenage  
girl translating the labels  
into Polish for her mother.  
They're laughing. Their fingernails  
are like stars.  
Out in the parking lot the sun  
honeys the scattered dandelions,  
the plastic bag that dips and twirls  
and scudders, the Hyundais and the  
Chevys and the beat up Mercedes,  
the child, howling now into his mother's  
shoulder as she whispers, "Mijo, querido,"  
you, as you wheel the  
groceries to your car.  
Someone's strawberries  
have fallen from a cart  
and they're strewn like  
rubies on the hot  
blacktop; such crimson beauty,  
such romance, such unexpected wealth.  
You can't help it.  
You kneel down.  
You pick one up.

## **THE FINE ART OF STANDING**

It must have seemed like a sea of linoleum,  
wave after orange wave of it knocking me over,

at ten and a half months, not having yet mastered  
the fine art of standing, thrown by a fury of black and white speckles.

The creased, yellowed photograph captured me  
clutching the ancient grey pillar that rose from the center

of the kitchen like a pier; I'm bobbing against it  
in uncertain weather, risking a splinter or two

for the steady, if treacherous comfort it offered.  
The wood was worn smooth and as silky as mouse fur

in various places, if you were able to find them.  
I know, to this day, how it felt on my fingers.

And there in the background I see that my mother  
is already turning to straighten a painting or maybe

she's stretching to turn up the radio. Lana Turner's  
legs in a dairy farmer's kitchen. My father,

attempting to capture a moment: she's turning and leaving,  
I'm hovering, weaving, knowing it isn't okay to let go.

## **WHEN THE MEXICAN MEN COME IN**

You start to put on your favorite gloves,  
the leopard print with the finger loop,  
and you notice as you ease first the left  
and then the right one up to your elbows that  
a seam is beginning to unravel. But  
you admire, still, the way they accentuate  
the gracefulness of your arms, the poise that  
you know is underpinned with rock-hard  
muscles that take you through your moves  
every night, and for a moment those gloves  
remind you of mud up to your elbows when you  
and Genevieve Gray dug up rocks from the banks

of Alder Creek and piled them one by one  
—you must have been eight or nine that summer  
before fourth grade, when everything changed—  
and built, the two of you, a dam to block  
the waters flowing lazily behind her house.  
Then you're back in your dressing room, steady  
rumble of the already-packed house riding in  
on the draft that slides through the gap beneath the door  
and you wonder if maybe you should go for the latex set;  
gloves, g-string, bikini top, since the leopard print  
didn't hold up so well, but then you remember  
your mother's allergic reaction to the latex bandages  
after that first operation, when the rash around the incision  
spread like wildfire across her stippled skin,  
and you wonder if maybe that's yet another  
Helpful Trait she passed down to you;  
that and a taste for top-shelf vodka  
and a spectacularly supple spine  
and a predilection for men like Harry, who owns the club  
you dance in, whose gray-green eyes used to  
remind you of your father's. That last time he hit you,  
you were off the floor for a week, waiting for  
the bruises to heal, and there was a  
certain satisfaction, you had to admit it, in  
the amount of money he lost because his  
best dancer wasn't sliding up and down  
that pole every night. You wonder,  
as you cut the dangling thread from the glove,  
if that's enough to keep him from swinging at you  
again, and you doubt it—he always gets that  
look in his eye just before all hell breaks  
loose and you know for a fact that he's not  
in there any more; there's no reasoning with  
a husk of a man intent on breaking something,  
and the something is you. You worked so hard  
on that dam, you and Genevieve—wandering  
farther and farther into the woods, gathering sticks  
and more rocks and filling in the gaps with mud and  
leaves and whatever else you could find. And it held.  
You built something strong.  
You knew, somehow, to poke little holes in the most  
solid places, so the water could flow through  
in rivulets—just enough to keep everything  
from falling apart. You reach for your glass  
and toss back the dregs as someone opens the door  
to the dressing room and the smell you were waiting for,



the sweet/sharp scent of industrial dish soap wafts in,  
and you know the restaurant next door has closed,  
and Jorge and Miguel and, with any luck, Eduardo  
have gotten off work and  
are waiting to watch you dance.

**GENEVIEVE GRAY**

I don't even know if we knew that the Beatles  
had just broken up or if we would have much  
cared, but there we were, swinging our  
legs from the ledge that looked out over the  
sea of your basement, singing "Eight Days a Week"  
as loud as we could in our quavering nine-year-old  
sopranos, having spent the morning racing across the  
cold concrete floors in those beat up pedal cars  
which, now that I think about it, had  
probably once belonged to your brother  
who died before you were born, the one  
we weren't supposed to mention in front  
of your parents, and I was totally okay with  
that, they terrified me, your father with his  
frequent cigars and my mother's suspicion that  
he drank quite a lot, and your mother with those  
eyebrows that jack-knifed violently across her  
forehead beneath oddly red hair. No. We

would whisper about it while glancing up  
often to make sure no one was approaching, and  
you told me how he'd been hit by a car on his bike  
right in front of the house and they'd found his  
body in pieces all over the four-lane, a story that  
obviously made an impression, though I have no  
idea if any of it, even the brother himself ever happened,  
we both knew you lied about practically everything but oh,  
it was luscious, sharing our secrets  
and memorizing songs and eating those tuna fish  
sandwiches your mother made on Wonder bread—  
at my house we ate the hard-crust kind from Napoli's bakery,  
so I couldn't believe how flat a sandwich  
could actually get—and Kool-Aid, also not from the  
Whole Earth Cook Book my mother was totally into  
back then, so imagine my surprise,

when shrieks of laughter turned into snorts and  
Kool-Aid flew right out of my nose and landed  
in puddles on white paper plates and soaked into the  
Wonder bread like blood on a sponge, and that was it for the  
sandwiches, and also for your mother's patience, and  
thus we ended up back in the basement, belting out the Beatles  
with the door to the upstairs closed tight behind us. It must  
have been October, or maybe November; we were  
stuck inside because of the weather, and by the end of  
December your mother had already shut the garage door  
and turned on the car  
the night before our fourth grade Christmas party.  
I waited for you that morning, Gen.

I waited for you;  
but around ten o'clock Miss Miller announced to the class  
(I felt like she was looking right through me)  
that you wouldn't be coming to school that day,  
after all.

## **DESK JOB**

Highway maps from 1960,  
a Thin Mint cookie, dusty,  
crumbling,  
the heavy iron hole-punch  
I remember using when the perfect  
paper circles were  
enough to make me happy.  
Plastic case for holding  
rolls of stamps,  
now sitting empty.  
Was it Washington or  
Jefferson on the stamps  
that cost a nickel  
and could get a letter anywhere  
that we would want to send it?

Letter opener, ivory.  
Letter opener, silver plated.  
Letter opener, hammered copper  
with a bright enameled handle  
that my mother made  
before she got  
too scared to drive to Utica,

before the final firing  
of the kiln she bought in Philly,  
and before she only painted  
what she noticed out the windows.

Pale green account books  
dating back to 1946.  
The cost of your first tractor,  
your first heifer,  
and the combine  
that you bought in 1970,  
never failing to mention  
that it cost you more than  
all the land, the house,  
the barn, the chicken coop.  
"Save them," you tell me  
when I look up from their pages.  
"It's the kind of thing  
the Holocaust Museum wants to archive."

Canceled checks,  
more canceled checks, and look!  
A box of canceled checks.  
I start to make a joke  
but then I see you  
leaning forward,  
elbows resting on the surface  
of the desk we're excavating,  
holding up your head  
as though your life is in my hands.

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Heller Landecker is a mother and psychotherapist in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This appearance in *Innisfree* and another in the fall 2010 issue of *The Louisville Review* are her first publications of poetry.

## **W.F. Lantry**

### **RENEWAL**

My love becomes another when I take  
her in my arms, or rather she renews  
what she has always been: her reckless song  
seems like the consciousness that birds prolong  
each morning from the forest's rustic pews,  
the colored splendor of a skillful voice

inflected by the wind, and I rejoice  
in listening a moment, as she turns  
to me, and changes: all her mysteries  
are opened through enchanted expertise  
and as each long remembered form returns  
I bear her up, in harmony, her form

mirrored in images that, unwrapped, warm  
even the frozen sinews I had thought  
grown weak from lethargy, and I rejoice  
within the confines of her gentle voice  
and celebrate the figures she has wrought  
within my mind, remembering the dawn

and transformations she has undergone  
as flames become a moment silhouettes  
that we may read as patterns of our will  
or of imaginings, and yet they still  
reshape themselves from wings into rosettes  
refigured in my mind for her love's sake.

### **AUTUMN**

*we come by love, and not by sail . . .*  
~Augustine

Whether the evening stopped what little wind  
had driven me, or if a sudden change  
in pressure slowed the bow, as, smooth, it made  
its way around the Cap d'Ail, towards  
the Esterel, with its red peaks suffused  
beneath the red dust of siroccos, I

will not attempt to say, but I do know  
progress was slowly ended, and the drift  
of that small boat became the same as waves'  
slow movement toward the shore, where I could see  
her skirt, at least, grown luminescent in  
final reflections, blue, the slender words,

inaudible, I voiced then, seemed to fill  
slack canvas, only seemed, since the land breeze  
recirculates in autumn, still, the bow  
was moving, and I heard before my own  
her voice, and knew that song from memory  
but changed now, as I drifted to the shore.

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W.F. Lantry received his *Licence* and *Maîtrise* from the *Université de Nice*, M.A. in English from Boston University, and Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Houston. The recipient of the *Paris/Atlantic* Young Writers Award, and the *CutBank* Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry, his work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Ellipsis*, *Unsplendid*, *Sixty-Six: The Journal of Sonnet Studies* and *The Wallace Stevens Journal*. He currently works in Washington, DC.

## **Michael Lauchlan**

### **SHE LIVES NOW**

Having lost blood and ripped out the IV,  
she will not wake. Gaping, she snores, slow  
as the rasp of waves heard above the shore  
in a late-night house. She's not the sound,  
not the gape, not the restive ear still awake  
in the kitchen of the house. She lives now  
in the turning force that rolls water toward sand  
where it will spend itself and slide back below.  
For years, she has pushed breath from her throat  
as though shaping the phrases of a book  
from laugh lines and grief, with terse words  
for the work that lay between. She will close,  
breathing an almost endless passage—a surf  
in storm and in breezy chop or driven rain,  
then, under eggshell skies, the softest swells.

### **RAIN**

Pummeling the deck, rain soaks into cedar grain,  
piles into puddles, and blasts the puddles back  
into light. I have wondered what old men think  
staring into rain like this as though it refracts  
the dull day and thickens the air so that bits  
of the past coalesce and shine like a film  
shown through mist on some old brick facade.  
Maybe old women and men are looking out of doors  
for all the gray miles of this storm, each  
exhaling a puff of one cloud—the one roof  
we all share. This rain, insistent and slow,  
falls for hours to save our plants, to chase  
kids home from a ballgame, to give  
lovers a beat to match the pulse, and to house  
for a day, all those who have really left us.

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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*, *Collagist*, and *Natural Bridge*. He was nominated for a 2009 Pushcart prize and has been included in *Abandon Automobile*, from Wayne State University Press, and *A Mind Apart*, from Oxford University Press.

## **Merrill Leffler**

### **UNDER A FULL MOON AT MIDNIGHT, ROSH HASHONEH**

This is a paean to relief and ecstasy  
A man's poem of course—the electric ah!  
in the long stream arcing a high rainbow  
under the spotlight moon, a covenant between  
my body and the earth's.

I think of Li Po smiling  
silently on Green Mountain and can hear Rumi  
drunk on rapture—drink my brother he calls to me,  
think of the elephant loosening a great ebullient  
stream that floats a river past your house and drops  
turds so immense you could build a hut from them  
along the shore to shelter your children.

What release!

Think of your child pedaling under your hand  
and of a sudden—it just happens—you let go  
and he's off on his own, free for that first time—  
the achieve of, the mastery of the child.  
(Hopkins of course.) See the stalwart trees in their silence  
the stones resting in the driveway, the cat curled asleep  
on the front porch, the smear of blood  
on the lion's mouth sitting over his fresh gazelle  
the morning paper and its stories shouting  
for attention. The plenitude of it all.

And perhaps  
somewhere a friend is dreaming of me, or someone  
a stranger is peeing ecstatic under the same moon.  
A covenant then between us.

True or not. It is no matter.

### **THE PAST**

wasn't always so. It was a white hot  
'69 Corvette once or in 1954 a new  
T-Bird sleek and ebony passing you  
with wild contempt, or even a Kaiser  
convertible in 1952, rose-colored  
knight of peculiar countenance striding  
on Sunrise highway east towards Montauk  
and the sea. Heads did turn in strange surmise.



But beauty ages, pal,  
and even the best lines go soft, the sweetest body  
(let's face it) cannot hold up. Service it  
though you will, garage it against life's storms,  
follow every precaution — you can never  
do enough. Either fatigue finally sets in —  
or boredom. Salute their former dignity  
or stash them in a museum, or write  
encomia remembering them fondly  
or sing of glories (like the ancient poets)  
that inevitably go to ruin.

You know the course:  
the child becomes a man, survives  
to three score ten, more or less, and then  
becomes a child again, or worse.  
Soon he's merely memory and then a blank.  
Listen up. The day is calling, and the night.  
Damn the clichés. Full speed ahead.  
Pull out all the stops. Just drive the poet wrote  
"into something rich and strange" — and keep  
the damn thing straight and on the road.

### **THE REPUBLIC OF IMPERISHABLE LINES**

To see the world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower  
The world is charged with the grandeur of God  
Trailing clouds of glory do we come.  
For in his morning's orisons he loves the sun and the sun loves him  
Exuberance is beauty. Energy is eternal delight.  
Surely some revelation is at hand  
And I am dumb to tell  
For he on honeydew hath fed and drunk the milk of paradise.  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!  
Who shall say I am not the happy genius of my household?  
Nature never did betray the heart that loved her  
Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
My heart in hiding stirred for a bird—  
the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!  
That thou light wing'd Dryad of the trees singest of summer in full-throated ease  
But at my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.  
April is the cruelest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land  
A robin redbreast in a cage puts all heaven in a rage  
Never again would birds song be the same  
They bring the eternal note of sadness in

Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang  
About suffering they were never wrong, the Old Masters  
Your ma and pa they fuck you up, they don't mean to but they do.  
I smiled at him but he stuck out his tongue and called me nigger.  
Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk we drink it at noon  
They cannot look out far, they cannot look in deep  
I shot him dead because, because he was my foe, just so.  
I learn by going where I have to go.  
Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy  
Because I could not stop for Death He kindly stopped for Me  
How do you like your blue-eyed boy, Mr. Death?  
Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons  
When I consider how my life is spent  
I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than kill a hawk  
I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained  
What did I know, what did I know of love's dark and lonely offices?  
I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
No memory of having starred atones for later disregard  
Send not to know for whom the bell tolls  
I have wasted my life  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea  
Arg, we were all beautiful once, she said.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master  
Women have no wilderness in them  
Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee.  
The feelings I don't have, I won't say I have  
You see what I am: change me, change me  
For christ's sake, look out where yr going  
For you as yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend  
We will make our meek adjustments  
A man's a man for a' that  
Whatever lives lives because of the life put into it  
The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses  
Each new attempt is a raid on the inarticulate  
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul  
When I have fears that I may cease to be—  
The nothing that is not there and the nothing that is  
The Truth must dazzle gradually—  
We set up mast and sail on that swart ship.  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star.  
Now I am grateful to my small poem for teaching me this again  
Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame  
As imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown  
Shine on, shine on, Perishing Republic.

Merrill Leffler's third collection of poetry, *Mark the Music*, will be published in the spring of 2011. His first two collections were *Partly Pandemonium* and *Take Hold*. With Moshe Dor, he recently guest-edited an issue of *Shirim* with their translations of poems by the late Israeli poet Eytan Eytan. Leffler is the publisher of Dryad Press ([www.dryadpress.com](http://www.dryadpress.com)).

## **Miriam Levine**

### **BEAUTY SECRETS OF THE DEAD**

In life Jen's hair had never been so thick.  
Never would she have bought a kimono  
on which fire-cracker mums explode

through skies of silk. "Tell me," I begin,  
but she presses her finger against her lips  
made up with pink and yawns like a cat.

When I ask again, she pushes away air  
with the flat of her palm and refuses a beer  
though she once loved to sip through rafts

of foam to taste dark brew. Like one  
pestered by flies, she tosses her head,  
but, noticing my tears, speaks at last:

"You will have to see 'the moist lotus open  
along the banks of the Acheron.'" Had Jen  
met Sappho whose words she quoted?

Jen who never read anything  
but bills and Sunday papers  
comes back from the dead educated.

"Honey, the weight of new hair will make your scalp  
ache. Deliciously. You'll drink Chateau Lafite  
with all those you have loved and choose your clothes

from an eternal wardrobe. The scent  
of jasmine will never fade, but not one  
of these things is worth it." How well

she knows me—heaven of wine, love,  
clothes fragrant with jasmine, hair dense  
as a chow's, and Sappho. I could have it all now

except for hair too thick to comb. Kicking her hem  
as if she were dancing flamenco, she dismisses me with a kiss  
blown from immaculate fingers that once tied my ribbons.

Miriam Levine's most recent collection of poems is *The Dark Opens* (2008) , chosen by Mark Doty for the Autumn House Poetry Prize. Her books include three other collections of poetry; *Devotion*, a memoir; and *In Paterson*, a novel. She lives near Boston and in South Beach.

## Lyn Lifshin

### I THINK OF MY GRANDFATHER

on a cramped ship  
headed toward Ellis Island.  
Fog, fog horns for a  
lullaby. The black  
pines, a frozen pear.  
Straw roofs on fire.  
If there were postcards  
from the sea there might  
have been a Dear  
Hannah or Mama, hand  
colored with salt.  
*I will come and get you.*  
*If the branches are*  
*green, pick the apples.*  
*When I write next, I will*  
*have a pack on my*  
*back, string and tin.*  
*I dream about the snow*  
*in the mountains. I never*  
*liked it but I dream of*  
*you tying a scarf*  
*around my hair, your*  
*words that white dust*

### IF MY GRANDMOTHER COULD HAVE WRITTEN A POSTCARD TO THE SISTER LEFT BEHIND

It would be written  
on sand, or on a  
hand colored photo  
graph of a country  
with nobody waiting  
with guns, no thatched  
roofs on fire, no  
hiding in trees after  
a knock on the  
door: *Sister, it is*  
*nothing like we had*  
*or what we imagined.*  
*There are no Jews*

*in the small rural  
towns hardly. They  
don't spit or say  
we are thieves but  
it is as icy in Vermont  
as days in Russia.  
Lake Champlain is  
not like our sea. We  
are safe, we are  
lonely*

**IF MY GRANDMOTHER WOULD HAVE WRITTEN  
A POST CARD TO ODESSA**

*she would write her  
name in salt, salt  
and mist, an SOS  
from the ship sea  
wind slaps with night  
water. Somehow I'm  
dreaming of Russian  
pines. I don't dream  
of the houses on fire,  
babies pressed into  
a shivering woman's  
chest to keep them  
still. Someone had  
something to eat the  
color of sun going  
down behind the  
hill late summer,  
rose, with its own  
sweet skin. They  
are everywhere in  
America. If the lilies  
bloom in our  
town of darkness,  
just one petal in an  
envelope would be  
enough*

**FROM THE FIRST WEEKS IN NEW YORK,  
IF MY GRANDFATHER COULD HAVE WRITTEN A POSTCARD**

if he had the words, the  
language. If he could  
spell. If he wasn't  
selling pencils but knew  
how to use them, make  
the shapes for words  
he doesn't know. If he  
was not weighed down  
with a pack that made  
red marks on his shoulder,  
rubbed the skin that  
grew pale under layers  
of wet wool, he might have  
taken the brown wrapping  
paper and tried to write  
three lines in Russian  
to a mother or aunt he  
might never see again.  
But instead, too tired to  
wash hair smelling of  
burning leaves he walked  
thru, maybe he curled  
in a blue quilt, all he had  
of the cottage he left  
that night running past  
straw roofs on fire,  
dreamt of those tall black  
pines, but not how, not  
yet 17, he will live in  
a house he will own,  
more grand than any he  
saw in his old country

---

Lyn Lifshin has published more than 120 books of poetry, including, most recently, *Katrina* (Poetic Matrix Press), *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness* (Texas Review Press), *Desire* (World Parade Books), *Persephone* (Red Hen Press), *Another Woman Who Looks like Me* (Black Sparrow Press at David Godine), *The Licorice Daughter: My Year with Ruffian* (Texas Review Press), and *Before It's Light* (Black Sparrow Press).



## Helen Losse

### APART & TOGETHER

A man fished in the sea, while a woman built a fire  
to cook the fish the man would catch from the barnacled pier.  
Together they picked blackberries, stashed their bucket in sea oats  
by the edge of the road, chased a hound dog down the beach.  
That afternoon, they rested.

The man plucked an old guitar, hummed, played harmonica,  
while the woman danced in the sand, gathered shells. After dark,  
she retrieved the berries for tomorrow's lunch, carried them up  
under the pier, where it's cool. They argued about sex before  
going to sleep, having none.

---

Helen Losse's first book, *Better With Friends*, was published by Rank Stranger Press (Mt. Olive, NC) in 2009. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Gathering the Broken Pieces* and *Paper Snowflakes*. Her recent poetry publications and acceptances include *The Wild Goose Poetry Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Iodine Poetry Review*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Heavy Bear*, *Referential Magazine*, *Hobble Creek Review* and *Literary Trails of the North Carolina Piedmont*. She is the Poetry Editor for *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*.

## **David McAleavey**

### **"The hour-glass whispers to the lion's paw"**

Pawing around the yard, chopping stump-roots, raising stone terraces.  
Nighttime closes in, opens out, making me part of a huge lung.  
Fortunately, morning will re-energize me with wild projects,  
righting the sagging gates I made last year, writing poems which leech  
deep into other people's poems, like this one, training the hedge.

Flows and turns like water, my mood, scratching back at the spinning earth.  
Leaping around my to-do list squelches, or is, self-destruction.  
Rows and columns, my grid of duties, teasing me with importance;  
success might lie in following through; contrarily, I wander.

Sounds familiar?—or possibly sloppy, even despicable.  
Awkwardness of this confession: I want to speak what you will hear.  
Popularity promises lots to the one Rose of the Year.

Roundness and completeness are what I seek, not sloth and chubbiness—  
are not what I end up with, soft and pudgy, over-ripening.

### **NOT MEAT NOR DRINK**

Drinking too heavily? Things out of control? Skies always gray,  
rainy yesterday, today, day after day? Have dizziness,  
sinking and fainting spells, petit mal, maybe? Anorexia?  
Gaining, even though you're exercising? Frequently alone?  
Breaths sound like panting? Confused what to wear? Am I getting close?  
Bone-tired, bone-heavy, locking joints, it's like you're really lazy?  
Death starting to sound pleasant? How often do you have these thoughts?  
Alone for breakfast, and for supper? Can you name the news anchors?  
Hours seeming longer than they did? Days blurring? Ringing in your ears?  
Release Me From This Vale of Tears the prayer you're muttering? No  
power to change, no will power, nothing you need? I'm too loud?  
Peace, real true inner peace, not even a memory? Really?  
Food too greasy, sunlight too hot, clothes itchy, you just can't stand it?  
Would you go with me to the park? Is there someone you can call?

---

David McAleavey is a Professor of English at George Washington University. His most recent book, his fifth, is *Huge Haiku* (Chax Press, 2005). He has recent work in *Full Moon on K Street* (Plan B Press, 2010), as well as in *The Broadkill Review*, *The Portable Boog Reader*, and *Divine Dirt Quarterly*. He has work forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Hubbub*, *Poet Lore*, and *Connecticut Review*, among other places.

## Kathleen M. McCann

### WILD ROSES, ELSBERRY CEMETERY

Your petals drop in excess onto stone.  
Each spring this royal crimson down the rows,  
Through rain or sun toward elemental bone.

This morning in the air a fuss of crows  
Takes umbrage at the way you let all go;  
Rebukes as well the one who comes and mows,

Caring no less for crows than petals' show.

### THE YEAR WE RANG IN

Maybe five years a stay-at-home by then,  
a young woman with enough pills  
for two in the pocket, a sadness  
that could check the sea.

Nana wants to watch Lawrence Welk,  
the usual for her Saturday night, why not,  
so it's New Years?  
There will be others.

But tonight, it is just the two of us,  
flesh and blood, cold comfort shared,  
something we do and remembered  
long after she is gone.

It was she who said, *get a pan and a spoon*,  
when the ball descended in New York.  
She, who opened the front door to the coal sky,  
banging the spuds pan through the burly cold.

And then I, banging and banging and banging,  
forgetting how inextricably bound  
by the "Irish mood" we were,  
murdering our cold drum.

Kathleen McCann teaches poetry and literature at Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA. Her first full-length collection of poems, *A Roof Gone To Sky*, came out last November. She is currently working on a collection entitled *Other Winters, Old Suns*. New poems are forthcoming in *The Texas Review* and *Karamu*.

## Louis McKee

### THE GOOD STUFF

My friend, to prove a point, serves Black Bush,  
top of the line Irish, to anyone who calls.  
To be polite, of course, I have a taste.

If truth be known, I taught her all she knows;  
a picture's worth a thousand words, but a drink —  
the right one — can strip them all away.

"You can't take it with you," she laughs, "unless  
you keep your assets liquid," and so I do,  
taking beauty, pleasure and the warmth of my visit

with me, although by the time I get home  
whiskey is merely another memory, like a woman  
you can only recall watching walk away.

### ANECDOTE OF A DOOR

I left a door ajar in Tennessee.  
Bonnie, it was, blond and sweet, but  
lost, too, you could see it in her eyes.  
We only had the one afternoon.

She wasn't thrilled about having to live  
in Knoxville, but said she figured she would  
be there all her life. She's the only one  
I've ever known who said *figured*.

I can still hear the kudzu in her voice.  
I wasn't particularly sold on Knoxville myself,  
but I was young then, and a bus would be  
leaving soon. It seems ironic now: I left

Bonnie in Tennessee, simple, pretty,  
and full of wild, and I like to think of her,  
her sweet syrupy tongue rolling curious  
words, having dominion over that hard moment —

beauty, like nothing else in Tennessee.

## **GOING INTO THE CITY**

It's been a while,  
and I never thought  
I'd be the one  
who got caught up

in the web of suburb  
silk, green lawns  
and mini-malls  
with drive-thru windows

for if not everything  
at least with enough  
to keep me off  
the train and out

of the city, but the city  
was there always  
a thought away  
behind closed eyes

in dreams but what  
do I do now  
on the platform waiting  
the train coming

but when I can't  
be sure not anymore  
and the young and perfect  
girls are somehow

not right anymore  
and for a moment  
I worry that the city  
isn't there where

the tracks go  
and I'm set on going  
myself after all  
it's been a while.

Louis McKee has poems recently in *APR*, *Free Lunch*, *Paterson Poetry Review*, *5 A.M.*, *Chiron Review*, *Poet Lore*, and *Nerve Cowboy*, among others. *River Architecture*, a selected poems, was published in 1999, and a collection of his newer work, *Near Occasions of Sin*, appeared in 2006. More recently, Adastra Press has published *Marginalia*, a volume of his translations from Old Irish monastic poems. *Still Life*, a chapbook of poems, has just been issued from FootHills, and *Jamming*, is a prize winner and forthcoming from TLOLP.



## George Moore

In addition to his fine poetry, including the three poems below, George Moore takes lovely photos. Thanks to him for sharing his shot of the Lake Isle of Innisfree with the readers of *Innisfree*:



### REBURIAL

Out of the corner of my eye  
I see the protests, the wind sings  
the numbers of the planes, streets  
are filled with subatomic bodies.  
Thirteen remain in New York City  
Bureau's custody, artifacts now  
stripped of their sin. Objects

of a strange new sympathy.  
The dead who caused the deaths  
of two thousand nine hundred odd,  
are themselves forgotten by-  
products of the act. The names  
are no longer attached to these  
faces, decayed into their rubber  
sacks. Perfectly preserved as history,  
nothing physical survives. Their  
memorial is the empty cavern of the sky.

### **INCIDENT IN A RESTAURANT**

Not violently, but as in an ancient  
Egyptian glyph, eyes awry, the man

at the corner table twists his head  
just so, full view to shoulders and then

information lost in his torso. He turns  
in incidental directions, while his friend

holds his face firmly in his hands,  
speaking in undertones so the murmur

of the restaurant consumes them.  
We try to place our heads inside his,

gear to staccato fits and starts, see nothing  
in the social haze, the body a cradle or cave,

a place where a remote neighbor lives.  
Fraternities condemn the clonic dancer

for his intimate vexation, confuse their plight  
with his, or with the moon waning in stages,

give advice, a pale placebo in the blood,  
a belladonna, digitalis, ergot or strychnine.

Think the universe has marked him with  
its iron, tapped his spine to watch the insects

battle for the diocese of his skull. But  
there in the first darkness before science

they bow down. In the corner of my eye  
(that lately has begun to twitch), his hand

smashes a plate and that's it. Time to leave  
his friend says. Rising to his feet,

loose thighs in baggy pants intimate  
traumas of a botched birth, fertility drugs

of hope, flailing deep in primal seas that  
spring us all up unshelled, gilless creatures.

He whips himself as if at flies in his corner  
of the universe, and we blunt our bodies

against the godhead, and fumble with  
our glasses as the messenger pays the bill.

## **THE PIG FARM**

### *On the Alentejo, Portugal*

From across the meadow I hear  
the low, angry retort to some crude  
act some other pig has done.

The screams are like the songs  
of going to slaughter, but I know  
they are simply the spoken words

pigs use in their daily dealings.  
And tomorrow all will be dirt again,  
and back to biting hind legs and ears.

I'm grateful for the choir, days  
when the pigs hear the metal clang  
of bucket against trough, and

thankful for their quarreling too, as if  
this were the last city in the world,  
and I'd stopped to hear what the people say.

George Moore has held artist residencies in Canada, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Iceland, and collaborated on works with artists from Austria, Iceland, and Canada. His poetry has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Antigonish Review*, *Dublin Quarterly*, *North American Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Orion*, and *Blast*. In 2009, he was nominated for two Pushcart Prizes and two "Best of the Web" awards, and in 2010 for *The Rhysling Poetry Award*. His recent collections include *Headhunting* (Mellen, 2002) and the e-Book, *All Night Card Game in the Back Room of Time* (Pulpbit.com, 2007). Moore teaches writing and literature at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

## **Megan M. Muthupandiyan**

### **WHO WE ARE (NOT)**

I am the sister  
with whom  
he never shared a womb,  
he is the lover  
I never touched.

It is strange  
how singularly  
negation defines us  
in a world of representation;

for though  
it is a mean thing  
to be overwhelmed  
by longing,  
it is more terrible to deny  
the *what* of what isn't.

### **ON A SANDBAR IN THE SUSQUEHANA, IN YOU**

*for John L. Jaskolski (1928-1994)*

One faulty valve —  
that's all it takes for the failure  
of this core or that.

You had your own  
Three Mile, your heart lapsing  
into mere acquaintance,

a tourist at the temple.  
And though I wonder first what  
happened to the heart tissue

made by your mother,  
cut and overhauled for a sleeker  
model, I wonder too if

it ever sounded quite  
the same when you listened  
to the sea in a conch-shell,

or if your wife had to  
adjust her two-step to follow you  
in the years after surgery

reset your heart-beat.  
Death besets quickening;  
in the wake of failure —

your valve, that reactor —  
all things sensual may have  
indeed become so,

as never before sodden  
spring air lingered, each breath  
a start, as if a sighted lover.

---

Megan M. Muthupandiyan is the author of a children's book titled *How Kwaku Ananse, Master Hairstylist, Saved the Animal Kingdom* (Songbird Books, October 2010). Her poems have been published in several journals including *Graphos* and *The Marquette Literary Review*. Currently working on a chapbook titled *The Wisdom of Storni*, she teaches literature and writing for community development at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin.

## **Scott Owens**

### **RESISTANCE**

When the hand comes to rest  
on my shoulder, I won't turn around,  
or smile, or open my arms to it.  
I won't willingly rise,  
death's easy trick of levitation,  
from the table laid out before me,  
some meat I've prepared, some  
prepared by others, the drink  
poured by all who came before.

I'll finish the meal, savor the last  
drop of wine and ask for more.  
I'll argue the time is not right,  
a mistake has been made. I'll call  
names, scream embarrassing insults,  
then dig fingers into the underside  
of the chair, clamp teeth on anything  
that comes near, slam my head  
against their chin, the bridge of their nose.

Strong-armed angels, four at least,  
will grip beneath each arm  
and leg, pry at fingers  
untwist feet from legs of chair,  
and I'll use my words again to beg,  
cajole, sing them into submission  
for just one more second,  
as if I had something  
worth fighting to the death.

### **FOURTH AUTUMN**

This November Sawyer stands  
in a shower of leaves, first  
the ones falling, then those  
the blower sprays her with. Defiant,  
joyful, unafraid of noise  
or getting lost in any storm,  
she lies down, begs to be buried  
beneath the trappings of decay,

oblivious to suggestion or symbol.  
It's so far she has come from three  
autumns ago, sitting in a backpack  
while I raked leaves into piles,  
or two years ago riding in the wheelbarrow  
between dumping and filling up,  
or even last year's first jumping  
into massive piles of oak and maple.  
And now, while she is unconcerned  
with irony, I can't escape it myself,  
such joy, such flouting in the face of death.

---

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.



## Beth Paulson

### AUBADE

Wind blows stalks of hollyhocks  
against the back wall  
like someone knocking on a door  
a hunter's truck whines  
along the highway  
far off a dog barks  
stifling the owl's last call

out a window the silly sunflowers  
cry open their late mouths—

why is the sun so slow so far away

sky gun-metal over the hills  
where winter will soon empty the trees  
snow fill them up again  
the earth behaving as if nothing were wrong?

I am trying to love what lives  
a little longer—  
all the yellow leaves that whirl  
and fall to the ground with no regret  
bright berries of mountain ash  
each one a little sun.

---

Beth Paulson has three published collections of poems, *The Truth About Thunder* (2001), *The Company of Trees* (2004), and *Wild Raspberries* (Plain View Press, 2009), as well as a CD of nature poetry, *By Stone By Water*. Her work was nominated for 2007 and 2009 Pushcart Prizes. She has taught college writing for over twenty years at California State University Los Angeles and now lives near Ouray, Colorado, where she teaches writing and creativity workshops. Her poems have been published in many literary magazines, and her work is included in anthologies published by Houghton Mifflin Press and University of Texas Press.

## Patric Pepper

### FATHER NATURE

Here's a little blow to sober you up I do this for you out  
of universal compassion but nonetheless for you So  
here we go I come to you like an angel in the form  
you dig the most in the form of snow

I breathe over the planet with a bit of weather 20  
inches in 20 hours and as I breeze by you and your  
poems rhapsodizing in the kitchen over a pot of tea I  
give your house a little bop on the nose as if to holler  
*Haiti! Indonesia! New Orleans!*

You  
hear the roof beam crack! then a smaller pop!  
then the big one CRACK! and watch a great maw in  
your ceiling open wide as if to swallow "Me"  
you inwardly shriek

You call the fire department  
who arrives for your emergency in their coats smelling  
of smoke and boots leaving the snow all over the Bukhara  
rug and their classical helmets with little drifts of snow on  
the brims dripping onto their shoulders

The firemen who check it out  
in a hurry to get to the next act of compassion who tell  
you *You have to get out of your house*

In a blizzard ? you wonder aloud

*The roof could go at any moment*  
the Captain states *You can't stay in the house and we  
have to leave and we can't leave until you leave the house*

The house you are fond of calling the symbol of your soul

You pack up a change of underwear you stuff a partially  
eaten ham sandwich into your cardigan pocket you help  
your wife as she helps you to the sidewalk

where the snow still  
rushes down where you both watch the fire truck get  
stuck in the 20 inches of snow then dig itself out

miraculously to wheel off throwing snow wildly up under  
its fenders with you and your wife chilling there in  
the drifts before

your soul with its broken nose

although soon you head over to Mabel's house which you  
have heard that they have heard  
their roof crack!  
just once but it didn't come down

And I in the form of storm keep  
moving on to the next act of universal compassion  
compassion this time though next time I may swallow  
you whole

And I never and I  
didn't and I wouldn't and I couldn't put a thought in  
your head that the God who answers your prayer is

Mabel, who took you in  
out of the storm, and Nate and Jasmine and Jason who  
drove you around in Jas's SUV, and Jane and James who  
fed you and put you up, and Jean and Bob who opened  
their house to you, and Heddy who most importantly  
pointed out how things might go either way, and Rosario  
and Eber who shoveled and drove you home, and Stanislas  
the contractor and Mr. Whitescarver the building inspector,  
and so on and so on and so on for all the sixty years of your  
lucky life

And I in the form of weather pass over the  
Chesapeake and Delaware Bays as you call them out  
over the Atlantic Ocean as you call it and "I" in a  
swirl of radar images

I disappear

---

Patric Pepper lives in Washington, D.C. He published a chapbook in 2000, *Zoned Industrial*, which has been published in an expanded second edition by Banty in 2010, and a full length collection in 2005, *Temporary Apprehensions*, which was a 2004 winner of the Washington Writers' Publishing House Poetry Prize. His work has most recently appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Poems Against War*, *Asbestos*, and *Confrontation Magazine*. He is co-editor and publisher with his wife Mary Ann Larkin of Pond Road Press, which in 2006 published *Tough Heaven: Poems of Pittsburgh*, by Jack Gilbert. He currently serves as President and Managing Editor of Washington Writers' Publishing House.

## **Roger Pfingston**

### **FIVE SISTERS**

*a photograph, 2004*

In that moment of point and shoot  
(the ritual of photos after the noon meal,  
later framed 4x6 or album bound)  
the families gather by name,  
bunch up tight to smile and frown,  
the few who always close their eyes.  
Someone says, "Mom, let's get one  
of you and your sisters together."

And so they form again in the soft light  
of maple shade, alive and well,  
though two will pass in as many years,  
but now the elder sits composed  
in a lawn chair while the others  
stand behind, chattering like schoolgirls.

How engaged they are, the plain  
beauty of their print dresses,  
picnic tables covered still with cloth  
and plastic, bowls and pans empty  
or half-filled, a potluck of 35  
or 40, the new generations greeting  
the old like friendly strangers.

Four hundred years their collective age,  
these sisters born at the close or just  
after the Great War, Depression teens  
and brides, small-town Indiana mothers  
whose husbands hurried ahead,  
the weight of the world reduced  
to a bearable measure of clay and stone:  
Lorene's David, Esther's Walter, Stella's  
James, Mary's Russell, Tillie's Jim.

## WHAT'S GIVEN

Two weeks ago our neighbor died  
when her mind, altered by dementia,  
betrayed her body and she OD'd  
on Coumadin. The day before,  
as we walked by, her husband  
had put his rake aside to talk  
about their upcoming 50<sup>th</sup>,  
his face beaming at such a feat.  
*Five more years for us*, you'd said,  
beaming back as you spread  
the five fingers of your raised hand.

Today, mid-afternoon, we ignore  
our own rule (*You'll spoil your supper!*),  
the two of us like a couple of kids  
standing at the kitchen counter,  
milk and plate in hand,  
banana bread cooling in its pan,  
your stepmother's recipe  
a yellowed clipping from a small  
town paper, sweet Anne, 94,  
a state away in that other home.

When our daughter calls, sobbing  
her friend's news—six months—  
we push our plates away to sit  
and talk a while, the day  
as random as any with its  
vinegar and honey, before we  
find our way back to milk and bread.

---

Roger Pfingston has work in recent issues of *Sin Fronteras* and *Lumina* and a poem in the fall issue of *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. He also has photographs coming out in *Limestone* and *New Letters*.

## **Oliver Rice**

### **UTTER MIDMORNING IN THE SUBURBAN VILLAGE**

It is the sum of their moments,  
the selves,  
their lighter, darker vocations,  
their maps of the markers and boundaries,

their dialects of the communal rote,

the selves,  
eyewitnesses to the money,  
the greys, greens, browns,  
the populations of the trees,  
the messages left by the dead,

the speculations drifting from their alleys,  
from their ironies,  
the languages of their garments,

the selves,  
captives of chance and impetuous time,

their eras contending,

the selves,  
felony lurking in their laughter.

### **WINONA INTREPID**

On Saturday afternoon, late, after the game,

their caregivers at home, keeping the normalities,

she and Wayne sit alone at the top of the bleachers  
investigating.

What is the difference, they ask,

their mentors pondering the time being,

between an era and an age?  
Is this a question for history or anthropology?

Or sociology?

It is too obvious, of course, they say,

their peer groups yearning, maturing,

to propose that we are in an age of technology.  
And it is inaccurate to refer to an age of Freud  
or of Christianity, for instance,  
since they have currency only in the western sphere  
and may be dwindling in acceptance.  
We might appropriately term them merely eras.

Classicism, they declare, is an age,

their kinfolk puttering, lolling, dithering,

romanticism was an era,  
cubism a fad.  
Tasting rutabaga would be a whim.

An era starts with a Mendel,  
a Gutenberg, a Philosophe,  
an Alexander Graham Bell.

Imagine Capitol Square at this moment, they exclaim,

their milieu grudgingly administering to itself,  
their mores uncertain of its motives,

with all these ages, eras, fads, whims  
in process at once,  
some in absurd conflict.

## **THE BUCOLIC, THE PERILOUS**

We are reasonably confident that Shakespeare  
was born in Henley Street.  
That occasionally comforting shadows, odors,  
auras recurred in his earliest awareness.  
That various Freudian phenomena were at work.  
That other infants in the neighborhood  
suggestively resembled a newborn Sophocles  
or a puling George Bernard Shaw.

Whatever they said to his childhood,  
there to the south were the farmlands,  
where some of his kin remained,  
to the north was the Forest of Arden,  
where more relatives lived in the villages.  
The Avon flowed forever by.  
Every day his father went with the ruling elite,  
the spiders made their webs in the hedges,  
a clamor came from the smithy,  
the slaughterhouse, the market stalls.  
He was an eyewitness to wrath, spite, gluttony,  
overheard rumors about the queen,  
went to grammar school,  
received impressions of the elms,  
the fine stones of Clopton Bridge,  
the privacies of the houses—  
absorbing the available spectacle,  
not unlike, perhaps, a youngling Plautus  
or an incipient James Barrie.

---

Now he began, at the age of fourteen,  
his shadowy, probably wayward,  
possibly delinquent, possibly canny years —  
fourteen more, to be precise.  
The evidence is sparse and conflicting.  
His father's financial and political fortunes,  
seldom stable, went into severe decline.  
William left school, never to return,  
took up various menial occupations,  
as the legendry goes.  
Married at eighteen,  
soon christened three children.  
Then virtually disappeared  
until we find him, aged twenty eight,  
appearing on a London stage,  
having been in the city for a time  
and/or touring with troupes of players.  
The rest the world knows.

---



This might be an episode, we reflect,  
out of Molière or Tom Stoppard.

But who would leave it at that?

Who would not go up to bucolic Stratford,  
put on his Warwickshire dialect,  
and stroll with him all over an adolescent night  
to hear what was obscurely stirred  
by his memories of Ovid, the mystery plays,  
the balladeers at the September fair?  
Of swallows whirling about the chimneys?  
Of winter, a mulberry tree, government spies?

Who would not contrive a visit  
with his mother, with Anne Hathaway?

Would not pursue him to perilous London,  
to lowlife Shoreditch and a theater where,  
multitudinous, his sensors alert to the business,  
to the fellows Marlowe and Kyd,  
to his alteregos and all human intent,  
he is acquiring credentials?

Not buy him a meal,  
roister with him and the stagehands,  
to learn somewhat more of why  
he would not write a *Blithe Spirit*,  
a *Look Back in Anger*,  
a *Waiting for Godot*?

## FATE

his alterego

is intemperate  
hubristic

—

his occupation

legal scholarship  
is to him insufficient  
repressive

---

his musicality

is visceral  
rhapsodic

importunate

---

his piano

a baby grand  
is black

elegantly rigid  
on its three legs

complacently reminiscent  
of the dulcimer  
Bartolomeo Cristofori  
Johann Sebastian Bach  
Franz Liszt

utterly impassive  
day or night

until palpated  
caressed  
incited

---

his digital dexterity

is unexceptional  
an impediment

his two leftmost fingers  
adamantly inept

## FACES, BEARINGS, NAMES

Here are some of their houses,  
representative folks,  
wearing the faces they use behind doors,

expendable, auxiliary persons  
with deft hands, nonetheless,  
and genes for public spiritedness.

Some of the unfit parents,  
some of the pilferers,  
the misanthropes, the pornographers

have been to college,  
been to Viet Nam,  
on jury duty, on the realty board.

Individuals with personality disorders  
cross lives  
with people of charismatic instability.

One of the habitual polluters,  
with one of the commonest names,  
has a bearing from a golden age.

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Oliver Rice's poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies in the United States, as well as Canada, Argentina, England, The Netherlands, Austria, Turkey, and India. 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*, will appear in *Mudlark* late this fall.

## Lisa Rosinsky

### RECKONING

The sun's a penny and the moon's a dime  
to my grandma, who counts the passing years  
in small change. There's always too much time,

she says, when you're alone. And so she finds  
small things to arrange, charts a course and steers  
by the sun's penny, the moon's dime,

and the nickel stars, slowly onward: climbs  
a ladder built from stacks of tight-packed years  
like rolls of change. There's always too much time

to cram into the jukebox, but on it whines,  
the tired bluegrass jangle of the spheres:  
*The sun's a penny and the moon's a dime.*

Grandma only likes my poems when they rhyme.  
Too old for new coin tricks, eyes and ears  
don't want to change. There's always too much time

for small change, even when you're eighty-nine.  
The jukebox case reflects the sunset smears  
of the sun, a molten penny, the moon a meager dime.  
Excuse me—who has change for too much time?

### QUILTING

When I am old, I will be an old woman who quilts.  
I will be too stiff to chase down butterflies and shadows  
and other things that, flutteringly, escape collision.  
I will be calmer when I face the unruled page:  
I will let it have, sometimes, its vastness.

And when I find myself bewildered by the scraps I have collected—  
Chintz, brocade, flannel, satin, taffeta, and tweed—  
I will arrange them into rows and sew them firmly down.  
Knowing what I know, I will make of them a thing that keeps a body warm.  
(I will also sometimes think of you, and think of how we knew—  
so well, so sweetly—how to make a thing that keeps a body warm.)

## MY FATHER IS A SCULPTOR

The smell of beer on Linda's breath, the fact  
that I could recognize that smell. The way  
they peered at me and said, "You look just like  
your mom." These women knew my mom and dad

as Ned and Fay, as separate people, long  
before before before. The way Dad said  
*he didn't know what New York meant until  
he left.* (The way I knew this was a poem.)

The way that Barbara showed me how a shell  
is really just the absence of what lived  
inside it, once upon a time. She said,  
"What really matters here is what we can't—"

and then was going to say *see* but dropped  
the shell. A piece broke off, and Linda said,  
"You know—the shell can keep on growing, when  
the critter's dead." They gave the piece to me

and showed me how to use it as a tool  
to mark the edges of the clay, to meld  
one surface to another, seamlessly.  
The way we passed by Lucketts, Lovettsville,

and Leesburg on the way—the places where  
my parents lived when I was growing toes,  
as curled and salty as a conch's snail,  
folded, molded, welded, clay-like, warm.

The way we finally, squinting, found the car  
by flashlight, hugged and said goodbyes, and drove  
into the night. The sculpted shell I made,  
already melted into something else

before (before, before) we made it home.

---

A recent graduate of the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University, Lisa Rosinsky works as an intern for *Smartish Pace* in Baltimore. Her poetry has appeared in *Iron Horse Literary Review* and *32 Poems*.

## Laura Sobbott Ross

### VIOLETS

My grandmother showed us  
how to tear the petals off violets,  
peel back the flocked purples,  
revealing a core no bigger  
than a child's eyelash. We had no name  
for pistil or stigma, only  
that they formed a head and torso  
in a tunic of orange and white—  
an elfin fairy, green tendril legs  
soaking in a tub of petal-spur.  
We were used to my grandmother's hands  
at the rim of a cast iron pot,  
threading bean pods, shucking  
corn husks and crayfish tails, scraping  
hen feathers from a scalded carcass.  
Now they unfurled pixies between heart  
shaped leaves— *all those*  
*fairies* with pollen in their hair,  
soaking their green, night-frolicked soles  
while our giddy fingers plucked  
away the thin walls of their rooms.  
My grandmother's calico skirts catching  
the dusk of our raucously minted purples,  
every weary fairy's interrupted rest.

---

Laura Sobbott Ross' poetry appears or is forthcoming in *The Florida Review*, *Calyx*, *The Cold Mountain Review*, *The Columbia Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *The Caribbean Writer*, among others. Nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize, she has also been a finalist for the *Creekwalker* Poetry Prize and a semi-finalist in the Black Lawrence Press chapbook competition.

## David Salner

### AN UNCLE IN OHIO

I'm browsing a bookcase in the attic in Ohio  
where, for sixty years, my uncle slept.

Micky Spillane, year after year of Ellery Queen,  
and a catalog of the outdoor life. On the cover—  
a fisherman, his rod bent double,  
stands thigh-deep in a mountain stream.

About half the books are personal enrichment—  
Will Durant, Dewey on education, and Fromm,  
*The Art of Love*. On the table by the bed—the photo  
of a dark-eyed, angular woman—my Aunt Jean.

She lived with him in this remodeled attic,  
hot as blazes, then left.  
They were lovers, on and off, until his death.

The painting on the wall is of a woman  
in a bikini, smiling from a fishing dock.  
In the background, vague shapes, possibly yachts.  
Did it remind him of a scene from his vacations  
to the Florida Keys? If so, he would have put on  
a flowered shirt—there are several in the dresser—  
and met her for drinks?

After vacations, he returned to Aunt Jean, his books,  
and this painting. I don't know if it was a fantasy,  
but it was always there—a shapely woman  
on a fishing dock, forever inviting  
an obscure but enlightened man.

---

David Salner worked as an iron ore miner, steelworker, and machinist for 25 years. His fifth collection of poetry is *Working Here* (Rooster Hill Press, 2010). His work appears in recent or forthcoming issues of *The Iowa Review*, *Isotope*, and *Poetry Northwest*. His first published short fiction was nominated for this year's Pushcart Prize. He has been awarded grants from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Puffin Foundation and is currently working on a novel about the lives of hard-rock miners in the Old West.

## **J.D. Smith**

### **NOCTURNE**

It is too dark to tell  
a white thread from a black,  
a man's silhouette from a woman's.

A finger and what it meets—  
wall or air—  
are a continuum.

The line between near and far  
is subsumed in this dark,

unbroken by thunder, undone  
by gunshot no more  
than a fist disperses fog.

It admits no answer  
but a low voice  
full and round as itself,  
fitting like a hand  
over another's hand,

a model of forgiveness  
or its simulacrum.

### **ELEGY**

Two economies revolve  
at a distance from each other.  
The standard round of goods and services,  
accounted for in money, measures  
the ability to make money.  
A second is priced  
in a softer currency of words  
and smiles, fond looks, and bodies  
offered up to other bodies.

Distinct as a digit,  
each market meshes, takes its course  
and bears its half of being.



Inclining toward each other, though,  
they go awry, as witnessed  
in resorts of graying men hard by  
their underannuated second wives.

The first are not discussed—  
long-past transactions;  
the third are not projected  
for the current fiscal year,  
but opportunities arise  
and must be seized.

As well, demand exists  
for kissing booths at fairs,  
and corollary services,  
euphemized as escort and massage.  
If the seller sells by choice,  
she, or he, may hold  
no other stock in trade.

To take a different coin was,  
in some accounts, what Christ asked of Magdalene.  
Choosing—not again, but for the first time—  
she found passage on a chariot  
whose wheels took separate paths.

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J.D. Smith has published two collections of poetry, including *Settling for Beauty* (Cherry Grove Collections, [www.cherry-grove.com](http://www.cherry-grove.com)), and the children's book *The Best Mariachi in the World*. His one-act play "Dig" was produced at London's Old Red Lion Theatre in June 2010 and has been optioned for film. His essay collection *Dowsing and Science* is forthcoming from Texas Review Press. Updates are available at <http://jdsmithwriter.blogspot.com>. His first collection was *The Hypothetical Landscape*. He also edited the anthology *Northern Music: Poems about and Inspired by Glenn Gould*. His work has received three Pushcart nominations, and his prose has appeared in *Chelsea*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Grist* and *Pleiades*.

## **Barry Spacks**

### **THE SECOND ARROW**

Say you have an enemy,  
could be just some notion full of woe,  
maybe no more than a passing thought  
thwacks an arrow toward your heart.

Okay. You'll suffer from this arrow;  
it meant you harm, now fallen at your feet.  
So what do you do? Confess:  
here's what most of us mostly do,

we stoop, take up the spent arrow,  
and plunge it again into the wound,  
improving, extending a hurt  
become a cherished possession.

This is known as "the second arrow."  
The first we might see as life itself  
with all its joys and miseries;  
the second . . . a chosen affliction.

So much has been kind to me . . .  
so many . . . I couldn't see it once  
but see it now. This is called  
"refusing the second arrow."

### **A PRAISING**

Socrates, Aristotle taught us to cherish  
in days before all "data sets"—  
the "sapiens" in our species-name,  
the best of us, the smartest.

Praise to those who know and know,  
in their labs, in the fields, at their lectures striving  
to pass it on, move it along:  
Devotion's their word, passionate labor's

meticulous exactitude.  
O Wisdom-Ones, good on you!  
As my singer-hero Tom Waits rasps it:  
"Everybody row!"

Barry Spacks has published several novels and stories, three poetry CDs, and ten poetry collections while teaching literature and writing for years at M.I.T. & U.C. Santa Barbara. His most recent book of poems, *Food for the Journey*, appeared from Cherry Grove in August 2008.

## **George Stratigakis**

### **GRASS FOR SHEEP**

She asks me to cut the grass  
and has distant and dark glassy eyes.  
She is from Venus, now I know. All I  
can think of is Frost and his wall  
and why must it be cut  
—it's not yet overgrown but an inch—  
so with a Keatsian wild surmise  
I declare: "Let nature grow."

What I mean is, let it have a go;  
it is not yet a bother  
and I for one am dying to know  
how the dandelions will loom  
over the lawn's meek mass  
watchtower-stalks of radiant yellow.

### **A CONVERSATION WITH HISTORY**

Maybe you found History  
comfortably napping on your couch  
and a delicate frown nudged a chord within.

But me, I see him turbaned  
charging the walls at Istanbul  
his yataghan held high; and

a child, eyes bulging  
seeing nothing  
save a soldier-father  
blankly in convoy driven by.

Have your chat with the Queen  
or go to the convenience store for milk and cookies;

I smell the farmer's plow-furled soil  
damply sheen and earthen tangy  
while in the boundary ditch unseen  
— like Icarus in Breughel's vision —  
a wife locks jaws and whimper-grunts  
bloodily birthing her tenth.

Then with deliberate and tremulous moves  
she tears her faded charcoal dress  
and bundles the newborn for our walk to town.

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George Stratigakis was born in Sparti, Greece. He has translated Hemingway into Greek, written song lyrics and is currently working on a novel. He teaches English in Connecticut.

## Anne Harding Woodworth

### SINGLE-POEM POET

*... true is the love bestowed upon the choicest  
songs of our "single-poem poets."*  
—Charles F. Richardson (1851-1913)

I'm in my nineties and would'ya believe it?—  
    This is the only poem I ever wrote.  
Done just about everything a guy can do in all these years:  
    put cherry bombs in mailboxes  
and spent a night in jail, seen twenty-three countries,  
    learned ancient Greek, Italian, and German,  
walked in rice paddies, flown solo, married Rosey, had a little boy.  
    Why, I even watched the U.S. soccer boys beat England  
    in the '50 World Cup. I've skied Alta,  
laid me down in front of the White House, spent another night in jail,  
    buried my Rosey, had a bypass,  
    dated a cousin of Marilyn Monroe.  
I've had thirteen jobs, been fired once, been in a hurricane,  
and dug at Vindolanda, where I unearthed a strigil  
    that's in the British Museum.  
Still, I never wrote it down till now.  
    And you're my witness, stranger, the others being gone  
    who could've vouched for my poem,  
even sung it, set it to a tune.  
    Maybe you will love it—truly—  
my "Star-Spangled Banner,"  
    my "Old Oaken Bucket."  
I'm a single-poem poet,  
    getting my song in just under the wire.

---

Anne Harding Woodworth's poetry is published or forthcoming online and in U.S. and Canadian journals, such as *TriQuarterly*, *Cimarron Review*, *Antigonish Review*, and *Painted Bride Quarterly*. She is the author of three books of poetry and lives in Washington, D.C., where she is a member of the Poetry Board at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Her homepage can be found at [www.annehardingwoodworth.com](http://www.annehardingwoodworth.com). Her most recent book is *Spare Parts: A Novella in Verse* (Turning Point). *The Artemis Sonnets, Etc.* will appear in 2011.

## Andrea Wyatt

### THE BETHESDA POOL

The intimacy of a day of rain  
in August, the end of summer,  
whose astonishing presence  
moved from cell to bone, retina to heart.

This is the best summer we kept saying  
to each other, to everyone we knew,  
moving from sink to garden to telephone  
laughing about our husbands and daughters.

Our daughters calling out  
through the lengthening shadows,  
the dark water, the aquamarine pool:  
Mom! Watch me dive! Watch me! Watch me!

Our husbands lying beside us in soft yellow pools  
of light, yours writing in his diary,  
mine, updating his baseball charts,  
and we think, god, don't let this summer end.

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Andrea Wyatt was born in Brooklyn and now lives in Silver Spring, MD, with her husband, writer and critic Lansing Sexton. Her books of poems include *Three Rooms* (Oyez Press), *Poems of the Morning*, *Poems of the Storm* (Oyez Press), *Founding Fathers: Book One* (Llanfair Press), *The Movies* (Jawbone Press), *Jurassic Night* (White Dot Press), and *Baseball Nights* (Renaissance Press). She is coeditor of *Selected Poems by Larry Eigner* (Oyez Press), *Collected Poems by Max Douglas* (White Dot Press), and *The Brooklyn Reader* (Random House/Harmony).