

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 9*, 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 Alice Friman, a worthy successor to our previous Closer Looks:

<i>Innisfree 5</i> , fall 2007:	Terence Winch
<i>Innisfree 6</i> , spring 2008:	Eric Pankey
<i>Innisfree 7</i> , fall 2008	Marianne Boruch
<i>Innisfree 8</i> , spring 2009	Dan Masterson

As usual, you can enjoy this issue in three formats: (1) online, here at www.innisfreepoetry.org, (2) as a PDF download, and/or (3) as a handsome trade paperback, at cost from Lulu.com, an online publisher. Just navigate to the Current Issue page, where you can begin reading the issue or click on the “PDF Version” link to download the PDF of the entire issue for reading or printing, or click on the “Print Version” link to go to Lulu.com, where you can order a copy of the issue from them. Using print-on-demand technology, Lulu will ship you one or more perfect bound copies of *Innisfree 9*.

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

The Editor
editor@innisfreepoetry.org

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Masthead

Editor, Greg McBride

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 *Arts and Letters*, *Boulevard*, *Cimarron Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Hollins Critic*, *New York Quarterly*, *River Styx*, *Salmagundi*, *Southeast Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. A retired lawyer and Vietnam veteran, his website is at 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.

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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.”

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Deadlines:

February 1 for the spring issue, August 1 for the fall 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. (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.
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 9, September 2009

A Closer Look: Alice Friman

Elvira Bennet	24	Ann Knox	55
Kristin Berkey-Abbott	26	Judy Kronenfeld	57
Cliff Bernier	28	Lyn Lifshin	60
Nancy Naomi Carlson	30	Diane Lockward	62
Michael C. Davis	36	Donal Mahoney	64
Brent Fisk	38	Laura Manuelidis	67
Martin Galvin	39	Nancy Fitz-Hugh Meneely	69
Taylor Graham	43	Julie L. Moore	74
John Grey	44	Judith S. Offer	76
Clarinda Harriss	45	Roger Pfingston	78
Nellie Hill	47	Oliver Rice	80
David Hornibrook	49	Lynda Self	82
Jacqueline Jules	50	Ellen Steinbaum	84
Rose Kelleher	51	Karen J. Weyant	85
Robert S. King	53	Edwin Zimmerman	86

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A CLOSER LOOK: Alice Friman



Alice Friman's new book of poems, *Vinculum*, is forthcoming from LSU Press in 2011. She is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently *The Book of the Rotten Daughter* from BkMk Press released in April 2006, and *Zoo* (Arkansas, 1999), winner of the Ezra Pound Poetry Award from Truman State University and the Sheila Margaret Motton Prize from the New England Poetry Club. Her poems appear in *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *Boulevard*, *The Southern Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *Shenandoah*, which awarded Friman the 2001 James Boatwright III Prize for Poetry. She's received fellowships from the Indiana Arts Commission and the Arts Council of Indianapolis and has been awarded residencies at many colonies, including MacDowell and Yaddo. She was named Writer in Residence at Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest in 2003-04. Friman is the winner of three prizes from Poetry Society of America and in 2001-02 was named to the Georgia Poetry Circuit. Professor Emerita

at the University of Indianapolis, she now lives in Milledgeville, Georgia, where she is Poet-in-Residence at Georgia College & State University.

Alice Friman on writing:

To me writing poetry is the great permission. I started writing seriously in my forties, and except for the Iowa workshop, I had never heard of such a thing as an MFA program. If I had, what would I have done with such information—what with the husband, the three kids, the ironing. You know that picture. So I was never introduced to all the things you shouldn't do. Since it's been quite a few years since I was in my forties, I've seen no end of no-nos come and go, so many you can't do that turn into of course you can, I figured I was right all along, and there are some things you shouldn't pay attention to. The important thing is to write.

I write for the muse. Does that sound old fashioned? As I tell my classes, there are no muses for basketball, but, by heaven, there are four, count them, four muses for poetry—Euterpe, Polyhymnia, Calliope, and Erato. Five if you count Thalia, who doubled in comedy and pastoral poetry. And whichever one is called up when I first touch pen to paper, I tell you, she is one tough cookie. Fifty drafts? Four months for eight lines? The muse grants permission all right: say whatever, write whatever, just make sure when it's done you've hammered out something original and honest.

Alice Friman has entrusted this issue of Innisfree with a generous selection of her poems:

MRS. BEASLEY'S SUPPER

"Woman Sees Jesus in Microwave Oven"

—supermarket tabloid

She never considered herself
worthy. But there He was—
no bigger than a dashboard doll
riding the revolving plate.
Redeemer. Pin of the pinwheel.
The groaning axis of this world
lit up and acquiescent
as the potato He sat on—
all eyes shooting out His love.

Fixed to His purpose
under last week's gravy-
spattering of stars, He spun
in slow motion, weeping out
her guilt, unknotting then knotting
the long thread of her shame
into the hair shirt of His Passion.

She crumpled at the knee.
What did she care of wattage
or rebate from Sears?
She pressed both hands to the glass.
He pressed His to His heart
the way He must have in the womb,
lighting the dark squeeze
of infinite space. Homunculus.
Bullion. Fishhook of God
zapped in the humming electrons
of the two million years it took
to make Him. And the eighty years
of pink rollers and patience
it took to bring Him home.

Born blind and spun dizzy,
we stumble into empty space,
clutching the paper tail of the donkey,
groping for connection, then hoot

at where the others end up—
dangled from a lampshade
or out the door. Another headline
for laughs at the checkout.
Another ballerina twirling
on a jewel box, one more joke,
one more rubber chicken from God.

That night—lipsticked
and all fluttery—Mrs. Beasley
put on her best blue dress,
popped a paper daisy in a vase,
then fished out the bottle of Muscatel
to savor a sip with her chop
and baked potato. Who's not blessed?

published in *Boulevard*

GETTING SERIOUS

Today I started looking for my soul.
Yesterday it was my keys. Last week,
my brain which I couldn't find, it being out
looking for me, now that I'm getting so old.

First I thought my soul would have gone
back to Greece where she grew so tall and straight,
she thought she was a column. Or back to camp,
being forever twelve and underdeveloped.
Perhaps, being careless, I left her during the 70s
in bed with God knows whom. Or could be
I buried her with my mother—my head not being right—
but that was my heart.

So I went to where I know
I saw her last. Radio City Music Hall.
I'm six, my feet barely brushing the floor,
and the Rockettes start shuffling out, long-
legged and perfect as paper-dolls kicking up
down in a wave. One body with seventy-two knees
chugging like pistons going back in a forever mirror,
same as in Coney Island's Fun House or on Mama's can
of Dutch Cleanser. And my heart flexed in me, a sail,
and I swear I saw it flying out of my chest
spiriting away my giddy soul, ears plugged and tied
to the mast: *I can't hear you I can't hear you.*

published in *Ploughshares*
and appears in *Best American Poetry 2009*

DEPRESSION GLASS

It must have been October, right after
the annual hanging of the winter drapes
and the ceremonial unrolling of the rug
from its summer sleep behind the sofa.
Gone were the slipcovers, leaving
the upholstery stripped down to warm
arms again, and the little living room
transformed into a mother hug of all
she labored for—the luxury of bastion
and snug, the thick stability of thick
pile, purchased with how many
on-her-knees hours of scour and rag.
The whir of the sewing machine at night,
and all those stretched nickels.

*My sister would say this never happened,
or if it did, it wasn't this way, or if it was,
I never cried, or if I did, how could I—
so young—know what was to cry about.*

A room like that, in the Snow White
haven of the dwarves' house, and I
no more than four, rowing a cardboard
box across the rug, its flowered sea
lapping at my hands that were my oars.
When suddenly, there was my father
dancing to the radio or some crazy song
of his own making, flapping his arms
and yawping like a great enchanted
gull of happiness having nothing to do
with me. Or her. And I saw as through
the glass layers of the sea what he'd
been before I came in my little boat
riding its vast engines of responsibility,
dragging him under, changing him into
someone other than the drowned beloved
I'd be trying to make it up to all my life.

published in *Prairie Schooner*

VISITING THE TERRITORIES

Come, brush the clay
from what's left of your good suit
and lie down here with me.

In the splinters

of what you are, in the marrow's residue,
surely there are traces of your bride.
Don't be afraid. Make believe I'm asking
you to dance. You always loved to dance.
Show 'em how it's done in Brooklyn, you'd say,
whirling me out to the ends of your fingers,
pulling me back.

Now I'm pulling you

back, not to redraw the lines or rummage
in the ragbag of our *forever after*,
but because I need you. Come.
Our first apartment, a high-rise called
The Dakota, remember? A big joke
for two New York City big shots like us
who couldn't find the Dakotas on a map
if we had to. Birdland, that we knew, Basie,
Embers East, Oscar Peterson, and Dinah un-
dressing the blues in pink. Dizzy, healing
the world with his horn, holding the whole

damn ball in his cheeks. Who'd not reconvene
his dust to remember that?

Come. Apt. 4-C.

Five-and-ten store dishes and all we own—
a mattress, Scrabble, and a window fan
rattling its dark inklings. Maybe if you lay
down next to me the artless bones, I could find
the true history of the Dakotas before the broken
treaties, the Badlands, and what happened next.

published in *The Gettysburg Review*

VINCULUM

for Richard

Do not look at me again like that: between us
is too stripped down to the bare wire of what we were.

The look, umbilical—that cord I thought discarded
in some hospital bin fifty years ago come November.

How strange to find it once more between us,
still beating and so palpable we could

cross over and enter into each other again,
seeing our old selves through new, first eyes.

Plucked from a drumroll of autumns, that one
was ours—autumn of my twenty-third year, autumn

of your final fattening, taking up all the room,
worrying the thinning walls. The rope that seethed

from me to you and back again—our two-
way street—and you, little fish, hanging on

past your lease in a time of narrowing dark,
which you can't possibly remember, but do.

And it comes to me: that look must be what *love* is,
which is why we'll not speak of it nor hunt it down

in each other's eyes again, for you're too worldly
to admit, without wincing, what happened happened.

And I, too conscious of my failed attempts

to fire into language what's beyond words, could not
bear it. Which leaves me holding the bag once more
of foolish thoughts. I know, I know, the universe
has neither edge nor center nor crown, but I want
to think that past Andromeda and out beyond
a million swirling disks of unnamed stars, that cord
we knew, that ghost of an eye-beam floating between us,
arcs in space, lit up like the George Washington Bridge
pulsing with traffic, even after both stanchions are gone.

published in *The Georgia Review*

SEEING IT THROUGH

Presto the magician
drops his handkerchief
and amazingly I'm looking down
seventy years. Down
as from the top of a winding stair
vertigoing to the bottom
where the child struggles to mount
crawling on her knees that first step.
And I want to say Wait
I'll come down
carry you up
for I need you here
now that the banister is nearing
its finial and I can see
the rituals of the sky
speeding up through the almost
reachable skylight.

Honey hair and the sunsuit
Mother made from a scrap. Come.
If I hold you high, you can touch
the glass. Let the last contact
be a baby's hand. Why not?
All things come around
replete with rage and rattle.

published in *Poetry*

TYBEE ISLAND

In January, she drove
to the end point of the earth, rented
a room with no television, no phone.
She wanted only to walk by the sea,
to find in that old shine and display
the key chain back on its familiar hook.

She hadn't counted on a storm
wanting her naked, tugging at her clothes.
She hadn't counted on the tides, fresh
from tsunami, still in an iron frenzy
sicked on by the winds. She pushed on.
Gulls lined up, intent as paparazzi
waiting for news, then rose in one
great hoop and cry reporting to the sea.
What was to fear, having sifted through
the lost beaches of childhood so long,
each shell, each *bawk bawk* matching
a twin in the red pail of her memory?

The sky sneered in contempt,
rammed a fist of wind into her back.

Never mind beaches of the past—swells
off Montauk, the racing waters south of Piraeus
where foam is ermine and all the world of wet
royal and electric. Here was stagger, wind-
bloat and fury driving the sands before it
like ghosts of beasts fleeing on their bellies,
a howling anger pushing them down.

Gray bone in a gray soup.
Who could find her? No light
shafted these clouds, no Bernini burst
of promise and dove. The horizon's fog
cementing up its one red eye.

A woman stands facing the sea, holding on
to all she has, and the sea, struggling
to heave itself up, teeters on its watery legs,
and with a roar and a suck
tries to take it all back. Gulls
blink their yellow eyes. They know

what they know: Here, where each cry
slaps a wet mockery back in her face,
where the winds' mounting displeasure
sledgehammers down to crack open the sea,
here is the interior of a stone: a boulder
split inside out and alive: her old dead mother
thrashing in anger, spitting in her chains.

published in *Subtropics*

DUST

The lawn rolled back like a rug
in thick jellyrolls of sod
to be rolled back, flat again
as if nothing had happened.
What happened was dust, sealing
off one more job. I tell you,
there's no getting rid of it.
Beat your carpet back to thread.
Mop a floor, wash rocks. It waits—
pale and timid lullabyes

of fluff collecting themselves
in the dark, under your bed,
along baseboards. Bits of you,
yes, your skin, your hair, making
wee dollies with your name stored
in the sweeper bag, starting
another each time you throw
one out. Behind you, listen—
lainty breath. There's no escape.
Fly to Rio, book a cruise.

Dust follows. *No no*, you say.
Tonight belongs to thunder,
to rain sloshing in, blinding
as car wash. Tomorrow's sun
promising a clean green world
bright as varnished lettuce. Oh?
Will it pass the white-glove test?
There's reason for the shiver
down the horse's rump. Slap it.
Watch the dust rise. See him run.

published in *The Southern Review*

LEONARDO'S ROSES

from *Lady with an Ermine*

Czartoryski Museum, Krakow

Leonardo was convinced
sperm came down from the brain
through a channel in the spine.
So much for genius. I say
sperm, like any seed, travels up,
makes an explosion in the brain
leaving a scent of crushed flowers
in the memory. On such a trellis
true love might climb. On such
a shaky stair, many a bad apple
rotten to the core is persuaded
to polish himself up before rising,
sleek and feverish as a column
of mercury in a tube.

Mona Lisa

whose smile is older than the rocks,
she knew. And Cecilia Gallerani,
seventeen and paramour to Sforza
the lecher, usurper, Duke of Milan.
See how she catches the light
full in the face then beams it back
like truth itself. And look
how she holds the ermine—
Sforza's emblem—how she lets it
tread her arm, claws unleashed,
and she not flinching. This is
no inert female sitting pretty
for her picture.

She's present,
expectant, listening to someone
over Leonardo's hunched shoulder,
maybe Sforza himself who follows
her scent up and down corridors
in case he needs her, yes,
to check his arithmetic, polish up
his correspondence. Later when
he's pricked to marry someone else,
he'll set her up for life: estate,
gardens, the works. *Cecilia Magnificat*.
But she doesn't know that yet, does she—

stroking his little white weasel,
patting its head?

published in *Ekphrasis*

MEDEA, INTENT

1. *Jason*

Ogle, grin, kiss me blue
then finish up. Tomorrow
the door closes and locks. Never
mind the shadow beneath my pillow,
never mind the taste of salt
you complain of left in the mouth.
Without you I am sponged clean.
The basin water splashes clear.
Despite what you murmur,
you've not doomed the tight poppy
that is my life. Orange is the true color
of the storm. A wind is coming
high-pitched and terrible. Be afraid.

2. *The Children*

Little snail, and you, mama's plump bone
asleep in the terrible shadows.
Poppies of my love. To cut, to taste
the salty spurt, oh, what blizzard burns
in the doomed glass? You stir.
Hush, don't be afraid. I am clear
as the water splashed on the washing stone.
Kiss me. Kiss me in your sleep.
(Lock shut my heart) Listen,
my wine glass is on the table.
When you wake stir the rim to singing.
I've left a song for you about heroes.
Dragon's teeth and orange fire.

3. *Hecate*

Come. The poppy burns
in the glass. I am not afraid.
Do not murmur like the broom
on the stones or threaten high-pitched
from the shadows of my sleep. The snail
winds in the terrible lock. My wine
tastes of salt. The hero storms in, splashes
in the basin water next to my bed,

sits on the edge, grins, spurts his filthiness.
Come, finish me. I have had enough.
My pillow smells of oranges.
The mop in the corner, tight and clean
as a burnt bone. I am ready.

4. *Æetes*

Father, what was I
but the moody poppy of your house,
a mop or bony broom singing
in the corner? I sent you back
your true treasure, cut up, piece by
splashing piece to burn in the pyre for
the murmuring crowd. Kiss him for me.
The filth, the terrible treasure, I keep
beneath the washing stone where the snail's
slime has turned the gold to orange.
Now there is too much to clean.
My heart plumps with shadows.
I'll not speak with you again.

5. *Jason*

The storm has come. The finish
terrible as your truth. I have cleaned up
my table, my wine glass, the splashed
stones. I have twisted the mop.
There is no grin in me. I am done.

I have taken my cut treasures
wrapped tight in their pillowcases.
See how I'm kissed by their blood.
I leave you *your* treasures: The burnt bone
of your new life and the locked-up secret
you tricked me for. I left my shadow
murmuring in the orange tree. My wash water
in the basin for you to drink.

published in *Subtropics*

WATERMELON

Small as a bocci ball, dark
green and striped, the latest
in Kroger's arsenal of seven
a day and rich in lycopene,
but thirty years ago you were it—

karpúzi—and I'm tap tapping
my head, pantomiming your
new name, *Karpúzi*, for stupid,
for melonhead, for how could you
when by witness of moon-melt
and star, we crossed hearts in
sign language/love language,
the inky sea pounding out my
deposition: *I'll return in a year,
steal the money if I have to.*
What kind of sieve lets go of that?
Not the blushing bougainvillea
eavesdropping by the bus station
when I left, or the shrieks
of pipers and black-backed gulls
egging on the tides, or the wet
silver slapping of a morning
catch, and the cracked split-
nailed hands struggling the hook
out of the mouth, Greek
filling the air like falling flakes
of Scrabble, happiness tiles
to make the words that would
have kept you waiting. Even now,
given a morning's clean and
breaking hour, it all comes back
as I did. And you, gone on
with your life, opening your big
dumb arms, wading right into it.

published in *New Letters*

COMING DOWN

At high altitudes the heart rises
to throat level, clanging for service.
The body—#1 customer—needs oxygen,
the red blood cells scurrying like beaten
serfs not delivering fast enough: supply
and demand, that old saw.

Remember
struggling to make love under six blankets,
my heart banging so hard it threatened
to knock me out of bed, and you
in socks, ski hat, and four sweaters, fighting
for breath? When relating our story, paring

it down for parties,
 let's leave those parts
out. Say we went to South America
for pre-columbian art and Machu Picchu.
Mention the giant condors, yes, but not how
they floated up from Colca Canyon
like human souls circling in great flakes
of praise
 nor how I cried, reaching to bridge
the unbridgeable gap. Say that one shivering
night we visited a thermal pool, but not
how slippery as twins tumbling in the womb,
we sloshed together under Andean stars.
Or how nose-bleeding or heart-pounding
and laboring for breath,
 always always
we reached for each other. Practice the lesson
of the body in distress: The heart knows
how much leeway it has before demanding
its due. Waiting in line for the xerox calls for
giveaways of more supple truths: cartilage, Love,
not bone.

published in *Shenandoah*

ON DECK

April in Georgia and the dogwood
droops peevish. Ten in the morning,
95 in the shade, and the pond—
where a friend swears he once saw
a beaver slap his tail—gags on mud.

But weather or not, new shoots
of kudzu inching across the ground
look for a sapling to mount, while
birds, as if demented, keep up
their eggy songs of love. Funny
how wooing goes on no matter what.
Or where. Just yesterday, never
mind the UV rays taking advantage
of peepholes in the ozone, we walked
our flesh outside—me with my droop
and advancing state of crepiness, and he,
formerly known as *sweet young thing*,
bifocaled now and balding. Think old—

Adam and his girl come home
lugging their baggage and their deaths
but still hand-in-hand courageous
despite their once-upon-a-time bitter
dish of apple crumble, only to face
on their return to nakedness
the white oak's shudder and groan,
the April poplar turning away its leaves.
Damn sun suckers! Little Puritans!

Maybe in November, when light's
absence squeezes the day from both ends
and all last-ditch efforts of October's
in-your-face glitterings are flattened underfoot,
those leaves will look back, not on their spring
but on their final frippery, and what smug
joy it was. That defiance. That withering *HA!*

published in *The Georgia Review*

FAR TAR

And who was I
with my New York *cawfee*,
sticking in r's where they're not
or erasing them, as in *Hedder Gablah*
or *Emmer*—guess who—Bovary? So I kept
my face still, not wanting to be impolite
in case I hadn't heard correctly, but then
he said it again—*Far Tar*.

He was talking about its steps
being so slicked with ladybugs,
the rangers had to post Keep Off,
so dangerous they were, and what
a shame, because this *Far Tar* was
the forest's most popular attraction.
But by then, not grasping what mystery
he was going on about, I was gone,
slipped down the slide of *Far Tar*
and into the pitch of it. A tar baby
"pitched past pitch of grief," as Hopkins said,
and beyond sense.

How far is *Far Tar*?

How many miles of asphalt does it take
to get there? Imagine a road
of good intentions, stretching farther,
further than Dorothy's yellow brick
and tar black to boot. A road of no
return and less traveled by, but not
paved with grief or the sludge of sin
from Dante's fifth *bolgia*, but just
going on and on, zigzagging mountains,
canyons, and herds of wild horses,
then up and down and across the frozen
steppes slippery with history thundering
across the Russias.

And what's too
Far Tar? Hawthorne's Major Molineux
tarred and feathered beyond recognition.
That's *Far Tar*. Or what about
the British sailor lost to the opium dens
of Shanghai then dumped in the Whangpoo
whose venerable carp still haunt
the spot of his sinking—his last breath,
bubbles clinging to the weeds? So far
from afternoon tea, from Mother
and the playing fields, the mushy peas
of home, and brussel sprouts. I call that
a far Tar. A cold Tar.

Coal tar, obtained
from a distillation of bituminous coal,
used for the "heartbreak of psoriasis"
or explosives. Get that stuff over you
and that's *Far Tar*. Or go to North Carolina,
where the Tar River rising in the north
flows a fair and far 215 miles south.
But that's wrong, a misnaming
if there ever was one, for Graves says
tar means *west*, Ægean for the dying sun
grateful for a west to crawl into each night
on bloody knees. If so, Far Tar
is a synonym for *tar* doubled—*Tartar*.
Not a sauce for fish, but for a west
beyond the West, beyond the beyond
and over the edge, where the grinding gates

of Tartarus open for us all.
Who'd have thought
this man manning the desk at the visitor's center
was a historian of such magnitude?
To speak of *Far Tar* and know it
for what it is—Argus-eyed and
foreboding, as if it rose in the midst
of the forest, tall as a fire tower,
to remind us of the long climb
and the steps made slick with ladybugs
who seem more and more like us, forgetting
the fiery house and the smell of children burning.

published in *The Gettysburg Review*

Additional information, poems, and essays by Alice Friman, can be read on her website
at www.alicefriman.com.

Elvira Bennet

PREGNANT FRIENDS

Imparting the huge news in superstitious whispers,
smiling, serenely self-satisfied yet somehow sad,
fingers involuntarily feeling for quickening wombs,
declaring themselves officially ecstatic to be enceinte,
anything but ambivalent, husbands tumid with conceit,
yet underneath the paeans a hushed note of defeat.

They swell, consuming space and food, their gravity
growing ever more gravid like planetary giants
freezing in orbit devoted Ganymedes waiting on
their hankerings, mammoth goddesses of nonce-cults
processing through trimesters like stately fraught
argosies, doing everything the books say they ought.

Some sail into harbor, plus-size panoplies like
topgallants unfurled, of admiration sure, vaunting
and mansion-stolid, immune to all mischance;
others, like cats, seem driven to occult themselves
until the deed's done, turned inward as if seeing
some pristine way to love some pristine being.

Indulgence, sympathy, supportively mewing
over vanished ankles and multiplying chins,
never asking about the deep, the endodermic fear:
my duties are contradictory yet clear,
to admire without resentment, envy without disgust,
to feign sorority while they bear what they must.

MRS. PODOLSKI'S CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT

Certainty's the clothesline on which we pin
the wash of our unmentionable doubt;
the dubious laundry we take in to make
believe we're sure of what we're sure about.

Men love football and absolutes; they relish
games with the absurdest rules, disputes
furnishing their chief fun; what one gaily
asserts another merrily refutes

until they come convivially to blows
and end the evening bloody, arm-in-arm,
still wrangling over whether he was in
or out of bounds, fair or foul, right or wrong.

Men boast they need just the facts and the law
to transfix the truth and fill the jails,
to know who's responsible and what for—
but we women always need more details.

Men guillotine the past and future, shoot
snapshots; for us events are not discrete
like eggs lined up or artillery shells
but spill into a story; life's not neat.

Was it to lunch or dinner he asked her
out? Was it for Friday or Saturday?
Did she aim to wound him by choosing that
dress, not phoning before she went away?

How did he feel about the man he shot
in the stomach, and did his mother love
him less than cigarettes, truck drivers, beer?
Did he mean it? What can laws and facts prove?

You shouldn't be too quick to judge, my dear,
especially when you're sure you've all the facts.
Bear in mind that cut flowers must be arranged
and how the bird's tale differs from the cat's.

Elvira Bennet is an archivist living north of Boston. She has published fiction and poems in a variety of journals as well as an essay called "Kafka and Girls."

Kristin Berkey-Abbott

LECTIO

Some monk once said that we should return
to our cells, that our cells
would teach us everything we need to know.

She thinks of that monk
every time a cell phone interrupts
her class, that jarring, reproduction
of a ring tone, the student's rush
to return to the hall to take a call,
leaving the class behind to try to gather
the fragments of their scattered attention
to return to the task at hand.

She thinks of that monk
as she tries to declutter.
She chooses a different closet
each month. She tries to be ruthless
as she sorts, but she lapses
into sentimentality and maudlin tears.

She thinks of that monk
each month as she returns
to the doctor to do battle
against her own traitorous cells.

The doctor shows her scans of her invisible
insides. She sees the clumps that will kill
her. She thinks of terrorists plotting
their dark revenge, of a coven practicing
dark arts, of all the ways a cell
can go bad and destroy all it touches.

She returns to the church lit by candles.
The smell of wax and chant
of Psalms sends her back to childhood,
that original cell, still so much to learn.

Kristin Berkey-Abbott has published widely in literary journals, but her happiest publication moment came in 2004, when Pudding House Press published her chapbook, *Whistling Past the Graveyard*. She teaches English and Creative Writing at the Art Institute of Ft. Lauderdale, where she also serves as Assistant Chair of General Education. Additional information can be found at her website at www.kristinberkey-abbott.com.

Cliff Bernier

IT WAS SO COLD I HAD TO BURN MY POETRY TO SURVIVE

I had no other fuel—
snow fell in sheets.

I lit my Title Page,
incinerating my theme.

Twigs wouldn't take;
I ignited Acknowledgements,
searing assurance.

Copyright, Table of Contents—
identity and structure—
up in smoke.

To fan the blaze
I fed my notes, diffusing history.

I was cold. Desperately,
I torched my poems, one by one,
oxidizing substance.

When I had fried my last poem
night fell, I was freezing.

Frantically, I wrote,
on leaves, on bark, on my clothes.

Long poems, short poems,
metaphysical couplets—quickly consumed—
sonnets that burned hot and slow.

I was naked. Day broke.

Cliff Bernier's chapbook *Earth Suite* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. A second chapbook, *Dark Berries*, is forthcoming from Pudding House Publications. He has appeared in *Potomac Review*, *Baltimore Review*, the online journals *Notjustair* and *Innisfree*, and elsewhere, and is featured on a CD of poetry duets, *Poetry in Black and White*, as well as on two Jazzpoetry CDs, *Live at IOTA Club and Cafe* and *Live at Bistro Europa*. In addition, Mr. Bernier has been featured in readings and jazz poetry performances in San Francisco, Seattle, Buffalo,

Philadelphia, Baltimore, and around the Washington, DC area, including the Library of Congress, the Arts Club of Washington, The George Washington University (where he is a member of the Washington Writer's Collection), and The Writer's Center. He has been a reader for the Washington Prize and a judge for the National Endowment for the Arts' Poetry Out Loud recitation contest. Founder and former host of the POESIS reading series, Mr. Bernier has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Best of the Net Award.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Five poems by René Char translated by Nancy Naomi Carlson:

TO ***

My love for so many years,
And still I wait and reel with desire
That nothing can cool or age—
Not even what waits for our death
Nor slowly learned how to fight us;
Not even what cannot be named,
Nor my eclipses and my returns.

Closed like a boxwood shutter,
Compact and extreme,
Chance is our mountain range,
Our compressing splendor.

I say *chance*, my finely wrought love;
Without spilling mystery,
Each of us can receive
The other's share,
And sorrow that comes from somewhere else
Dissolves at last
In our union's flesh,
Finds, at last, its solar path
To the core of our darkest cloud
Which it rends and renews.

As I feel it, I say *chance*.
You have raised
The highest crest my desire must clear
When tomorrow turns to mist.

A ***

Tu es mon amour depuis tant d'années,
Mon vertige devant tant d'attente
Que rien ne peut vieillir, froidir,
Même ce qui attendait notre mort,
Ou lentement sut nous combattre,
Même ce qui nous est étranger,
Et mes éclipses et mes retours.

Fermée comme un volet de buis
Une extrême chance compacte
Est notre chaîne de montagnes,
Notre comprimante splendeur.

Je dis chance, ô ma martelée;
Chacun de nous peut recevoir
La part de mystère de l'autre
Sans en répandre le secret;
Et la douleur qui vient d'ailleurs
Trouve enfin sa séparation
Dans la chair de notre unité,
Trouve enfin sa route solaire
Au centre de notre nuée
Qu'elle déchire et recommence.

Je dis chance comme je le sens.
Tu as élevé le sommet
Que devra franchir mon attente
Quand demain disparaîtra.

ALLEGIANCE

My love infuses the streets of the town. Small matter where she moves in divided time. No longer my love, and all are free to pursue her perfume. She no longer remembers—who exactly loved her?

She seeks her match in eyes steeped in desire. She traverses the space of my faithfulness—hope traced, then dismissed. She prevails without taking part.

I live in her depths—blissful sunken wreck—my aloneness her unknown treasure. My freedom burrows deep in the great meridian joined to her flight.

My love infuses the streets of the town. Small matter where she moves in divided time. No longer my love, and all are free to pursue her perfume. She no longer remembers—who exactly loved her and lights her way from afar to prevent a fall?

ALLEGANCE

Dans les rues de la ville il y a mon amour. Peu importe où il va dans le temps divisé. Il n'est plus mon amour, chacun peut lui parler. Il ne se souvient plus; qui au juste l'aima?

Il cherche son pareil dans le voeu des regards. L'espace qu'il parcourt est ma fidélité. Il dessine l'espoir et léger l'éconduit. Il est prépondérant sans qu'il y prenne part.

Je vis au fond de lui comme une épave heureuse. A son insu, ma solitude est son trésor.

Dans le grand méridien où s'inscrit son essor, ma liberté le creuse.

Dans les rues de la ville il y a mon amour. Peu importe où il va dans le temps divisé. Il n'est plus mon amour, chacun peut lui parler. Il ne se souvient plus; qui au juste l'aima et l'éclaire de loin pour qu'il ne tombe pas?

THE SORGUE

Song for Yvonne

River gone too soon, in a surge, without friend,
Give your passion's face to the youth of my native land.

River where lightning ends and my home begins,
That rolls my reason's loose stones to oblivion's brink.

River, earth shudders, sun frets in your depths.
Let each poor man in his night make, of your harvest, his bread.

River often chastised, river disowned.

River of rags and suspicion, of hollowed souls,
Of elm trees, compassion, of old despair that unfolds.

River of those apprenticed to calloused states,
No wind stands up to the crests of your wake.

River of knackers, the fevered, and fools,
The sun dropping its plow to sink to the level of lies.

River of those who best us, river of fogs newly hatched,
Of the lamp quenching dread around its hat.

River that rusts iron, river revering dreams,
Where stars hold that umber they refuse to the sea.

River of transferred powers, of mouthed watery cries,
Of hurricanes tearing through vineyards, proclaiming new wines.

River with heart never wrecked in these prison-crazed days,
Keep us raging and friends to the stormed horizon's bees.

Translator's note: The Sorgue River springs up in Vaucluse,
France—birthplace of René Char.

LA SORGUE

Chanson pour Yvonne

Rivière trop tôt partie, d'une traite, sans compagnon,
Donne aux enfants de mon pays le visage de ta passion.

Rivière où l'éclair finit et où commence ma maison,
Qui roule aux marches d'oubli la rocaille de ma raison.

Rivière, en toi terre est frisson, soleil anxiété.
Que chaque pauvre dans sa nuit fasse son pain de ta moisson.

Rivière souvent punie, rivière à l'abandon.
Rivière des apprentis à la calleuse condition,

Il n'est vent qui ne fléchisse à la crête de tes sillons.

Rivière de l'âme vide, de la guenille et du soupçon,
Du vieux malheur qui se dévide, de l'ormeau, de la compassion.

Rivière des farfelus, des fiévres, des équarisseurs,
Du soleil lâchant sa charrue pour s'acoquiner au menteur.

Rivière des meilleurs que soi, rivière des brouillards éclos,
De la lampe qui désaltère l'angoisse autour de son chapeau.

Rivière des égards au songe, rivière qui rouille le fer,
Où les étoiles ont cette ombre qu'elles refusent à la mer.

Rivière des pouvoirs transmis et du cri embouquant les eaux,
De l'ouragan qui mord la vigne et annonce le vin nouveau.

Rivière au coeur jamais détruit dans ce monde fou de prison,
Garde-nous violent et ami des abeilles de l'horizon.

THE SHARK AND THE SEA GULL

At last I discover the sea in its triple accord: sea whose crescent beheads absurd grief's dynasty; sea as naïve as bindweed; great preserve of birds in the wild.

When I say: *I've revoked the law, overcome morality, armored my heart*, it's not to refute this scale of the void, whose rumbling, beyond my persuasion, extends its palm. But nothing of all that has seen me live and act bears witness now. My youth is free to come running, my shoulder to sleep. From that alone, effective and instant wealth must be drawn. Thus comes one pure day

in the year, a day that mines its arcade of marvels in sea foam, a day that rises in eyes to crown noon. Yesterday, branch and buds stood apart and nobility withered. Shark and sea gull could not communicate.

O You, rainbow from this polishing shore, bring hope close to the ship. Make every assumed ending a new innocence—feverish push ahead—for those who stumble under morning's weight.

LE REQUIN ET LA MOUETTE

Je vois enfin la mer dans sa triple harmonie, la mer qui tranche de son croissant la dynastie des douleurs absurdes, la grande volière sauvage, la mer crédule comme un liseron.

Quand je dis: *j'ai levé la loi, j'ai franchi la morale, j'ai maillé le coeur*, ce n'est pas pour me donner raison devant ce pèse-néant dont la rumeur étend sa palme au delà de ma persuasion. Mais rien de ce qui m'a vu vivre et agir jusqu'ici n'est témoin alentour. Mon épaule peut bien sommeiller, ma jeunesse accourir. C'est de cela seul qu'il faut tirer richesse immédiate et opérante. Ainsi, il y a un jour de pur dans l'année, un jour qui creuse sa galerie merveilleuse dans l'écume de la mer, un jour qui monte aux yeux pour couronner midi. Hier la noblesse était déserte, le rameau était distant de ses bourgeons. Le requin et la mouette ne communiquaient pas.

O Vous, arc-en-ciel de ce ravage polisseur, approchez le navire de son espérance. Faites que toute fin supposée soit une neuve innocence, un fiévreux en-avant pour ceux qui trébuchent dans la matinale lourdeur.

FONTIS

For native land, grapes can claim
The hands of the girl who culls
What grows, but who is waiting for her
Past the heartless vine's narrow path?

Rosary made by each cluster;
Topmost fruit, setting, bleeds
One final spark at dusk.

FONTIS

Le raisin a pour patrie
Les doigts de la vendangeuse.
Mais elle, qui a-t-elle,
Passé l'étroit sentier de la vigne cruelle?

Le rosaire de la grappe;
Au soir le très haut fruit couchant qui saigne
La dernière étincelle.

[Translator's note: Wine bearing the Château Fontis label comes from one of the highest points in Médoc, France.]

Nancy Naomi Carlson's work has appeared in *Innisfree*, as well as such journals as *Chelsea*, *Colorado Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Southern Review*. She is an associate editor for Tupelo Press and an instructor at The Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Nominated five times for a Pushcart prize, she was the winner of the 2005 Tennessee Chapbook Prize, as well as the Texas Review Press' Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize (2002). Her full-length collection of poetry, *Kings Highway*, won the 1996 Washington Writers' Publishing House competition. *Stone Lyre*, a collection of translations of the French poet René Char, is forthcoming from Tupelo Press in January 2010.

René Char (1907–1988), French poet, was influenced by the surrealists, his love of his native Provence, and his social activism. He was an active participant in the French Resistance movement, as well as an outspoken critic of nuclear missile silos in France. He is known for his economy of style, including his aphorisms and his short bursts of prose.

Michael C. Davis

SERENATA

—*All nature is a commune of offering and taking, compassion and sacrifice.*
Gary Snyder, 11/9/95

Play
for me
as if youth was long, this night
forever, death distant,
and the guttering flame
beyond fluttering to nothing,
a moth's wing.

Cradle
the guitar
and touch its neck, belly,
for a note robust and pure
to face darkness without flinching.
Play as if the small
bones that make your hands
were spirited away
and only the tune
remained to speak
of what fine things they once were.

One day
cataclysm will come.
The angels will open their phials
and crack the graves
and there I will lie stripped—
skull askew, the bones
of my spine, girdle, and legs
resounding in the eye
like a fork to tune the air.

Until then,
each note departs
the wood's polished curve
and makes its way against
the darkness for at least
a while before it dies.
The blood loops through the fingers
for another turn. The earth
listens, still.

Michael C. Davis is the author of *Upon Waking*, a chapbook published in 1999 by Mica Press. His work has appeared in *Innisfree*, *Lip Service*, *Poet Lore*, and the anthologies *Open Door*, *Cabin Fever*, and *Winners*. He has read his work extensively in the Washington, D.C., area and participates in the Arlington County Pick-a-Poet program, teaching poetry in county schools.

Brent Fisk

PASSING AN OUTDOOR CAFE

Walking home from work with a list in my head,
the looping buzz of things to do,
I pass the book bags and tight black purses
of coeds drinking away an afternoon.

A gray-coated dog hangs its tail low
and snuffles up what's dropped to the ground.
Those gathered here are years away
from mortgages and student loans coming due.
They don't even dream of giving up
smoking. Their bodies don't whisper,
cell to cell, hints of what they lose. They're full
of hard laughter and beer.

I dip beneath the limbed-up holly,
a crepe myrtle still winter-boned
and think of the garden shed trashed with leaves,
snake skins, a pan flute of dauber nests.
Last spring behind a stack of terra cotta pots
I found a mouse skull, a bird wing, a goose egg
toothed open and cleaned of yolk.

As I wait to cross the street, the gray dog
trots up behind me. Collarless and lost,
he's ribbed with an easy hunger. Nameless,
we walk together, our feet moving in tandem
is a soft song that eases the heat from the light.
Already I dream of my wife plying us with food,
soothing us in from our shaggy chores
with a care that's almost feral.

Brent Fisk is a writer from Bowling Green, Kentucky who has had work in recent issues of *Rattle*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Cincinnati Review* among other journals. He is currently working on his MA in creative writing at Western Kentucky University.

Martin Galvin

RISIBILITY, HAH

A laugh is a knife, a club, a breeze
From April's Riviera, a stet gun
Stuttering its fear that it shall leave
Anyone here to laugh.

A laugh is a cough, a trill, a shriek,
A bark, surely a bark.
A laugh is a punch in the ear,
A jab in the kidneys, hard.

There's a town in America hates
A laugh as bad as a drought.
Generations of boys there dream
That a clown's laughing face

Means to eat them alive.
In houses there, a laugh's a razor
That skims freckles from the face.
Another town, another place

That's fed for years on fatback,
A laugh's a Papal blessing gone bad.
A needle and thread for an emptying heart,
A guggle of good in a dry well.

I've seen a girl torn in half
By other girls giggling up their sleeves
At what she wore, at what she said
And didn't. She's a laugh, that girl.

The laugh's on you, I've heard,
The laugh's on me. You think
It's accidental people have trouble
Remembering jokes? That's a laugh.

There's not an echo of that word
I'd give as gift: snicker, cackle,
Heehaw, guffaw, snigger, snort.
When you hear a laugh, run for it.

CITY RAIN

The rain has many tongues with which to say
Hello Take that Welcome home You can use this

Like a bulldog drill sergeant, the demanding drops
Get us beyond the dawdle of our days.

When the world is saying Shake a Booty, Buddy,
When the dry mouthed world says do and do,

The rain talks back in soft syllables,
Makes music in thunderous afternoons,

Says, when you are overdone with summer glum
Here's a space to live and open up.

The rain has many fingers, beckons night
To too-bright day, teases and soothes

High offices, the shirts strung across alleys to dry,
Shoos people into subways, slakes uplifted throats,

Provides alternatives, excuses, purpose.
Take off your clothes, the rain says.

Take off your business suit, your fancy shoes.
Walk on water, make faces with the sky.

CRANES IN FLIGHT OVER WARSAW

She looked up, expecting enemy shells with nails
As decoration, close enough that she could count
The points, close enough she could imagine the hurt,
Thinking about her father's dying, her mother's,
How they welcomed what they could not want,
How slow the dying was, how filled with grace.

She looked again and saw the birds, elegant in flight
As wisps of air, as needed as air in a breathless room.
They were flying south, a V of harmony,
Sky-scullers, sewing the world together as they went,
Going home, going away, being the same place.

She looked up, expecting birds, and saw the shells
Disappear, and then again the birds, cranes they were,
Carrying tomorrow in their beaks. One scratched
An itch in flight, the strangest thing she saw all year,
then took the wind in her face for the other cranes.

SUSANNAH IN VENICE AND AUSTRIA

At the Kunsthistoriche, Vienna

In Tintoretti's fix on things,
Susannah's there, big and bold,
No shy and halting flower, she,
A woman who takes up the best part
Of a painting, as beauty often does.

This is no hidden arbor
But an open corridor
The city and the gardens
Calling the woman. The men

Are there, as they often are,
Lurking in their low corner.
Poor men, poor contorted things
Nothing but eyes and twisted limbs.

Beside this scene, the curator's wit
Places a fully armored knight,
His codpiece vulnerable as sin,
His metal heart safe from attack

Clever folks these keepers of art,
Seeing how the painters have saved those
Who hang there, sinners and saints,
And how we need such famous memory

Who otherwise have only history's lies
To let us know the lives we have lived
And how a woman can undress a man
Of all his vanities with a little smile.

Martin Galvin's 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. Recent work has appeared in *The New Republic*, *Sub-Tropics*, *argestes*, *The New Republic*, *Vulgata*, the *Delmarva Review*, as well as in *Innisfree*. 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).

Taylor Graham

LUPINE IN HER HAIR

The mother bites her lip, six straight-pins
held between. She takes another pinch
of fabric between her fingers, pins the hem.
So many colors swirling in a bridal white
held fast in satin. Her elder daughter inches
clockwise to the light. The younger fidgets
for her turn. Last night the girl dreamed
of lupine hanging by their stems, drying,
waiting to be catalogued. So many colors
of lupine, so many names she doesn't
know. In a spring-green meadow once
she ran through mountain lupine purple-
blue as queens, or bruises. "Hold still,"
the mother lisps between straight-pins.
White lupine with just a blush of lilac
drying in her bridal daughter's hair.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared in *American Literary Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere, and she's included in the anthology *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her chapbook, *The Downstairs Dance Floor* (Texas Review Press, 2006) was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

John Grey

PRODIGAL

The trees are rattling, waving,
like they're welcoming me home.
Even the azaleas rub against
the shingles like they're me.
Window-panes, shutters applaud.
Squirrels dig deeper, more relentless,
in the soil, like they're burying
this moment of my return for later.

The dog is leaping up into my face,
trying to lick me. I'm all the
tennis balls he's ever fetched,
the rags he's chewed. Even the
cat forgoes its predator instincts,
rubs against my ankle.

And that's not even mentioning
the sun and the wind and the air itself,
all in greeting mode.

My father's in the back yard,
bending down into his garden.
He's admiring a rose the color of
blood. He's grown the one that's
beautiful. Next step is to grow
the one that stays.

John Grey, an Australian-born poet and U.S. resident since the late seventies, works as a financial systems analyst. His poems have appeared recently in *Connecticut Review*, *Georgetown Review* and *REAL* with work upcoming in *Poetry East*, *Cape Rock*, and *Pinch*.

Clarinda Harriss

STARING DOWN THE CROWS

As a rule it's just a raucous chat of crows.
Today, no:
it's appropriate to call it "murder," so

loud the noise—like irons hinges, rusty
rasp with iron's bloody
taste—this slate-gray late-fall Sunday.

I ran outside in the rain. Mouth agape,
I stared up
the way they say a turkey drowns. Abruptly

the cawing stopped. Sober crows surrounded
the house. Brown
trees grew new black leaves, it seemed.

We watched each other, silent, crows and I,
a little while.
It was cold. I turned away to go inside.

In a burst of brutal swoop and squawk
the birds took off.
I turned again to face their awful

show. Again they settled meekly
in the naked trees.
I said to myself (or hardly breathed)

under the discord of their pitch-black pitch
I'm still a witch—
mother crow, crow-meat, crow-bitch.

VICTIM STATEMENT

If the bike thief Christmas morning
If the burglar who took only a shower
If the tomato-gobbling garden vandals
If the match.com guy who dropped
face-down in vomited wine

had knocked at my door and told me
I'm hungry I'm dirty I'm bored
I've been ignored by Santa
Claus for forty years I'm dying
of cancer and my aorta's blown

I'd have said *Welcome take eat*
this is my house your wishes
are about to come shiny true
I'll make like I love you
for as long as it takes you

Wait. This is perjury. I'm a person
like her, like him, I'm a human
whose third word was *No*
whose fourth word was *Bad*
whose fifth word was *Mine*.

Clarinda Harriss teaches poetry and editing at Towson University (near Baltimore, Maryland), where she chaired the English Department for a decade. Her most recent poetry collections are *Mortmain*, *Dirty Blue Voice*, and *Air Travel*, all from Half Moon Editions, Atlanta, GA. Her collection entitled *The Night Parrot* was published by Salmon Publishing, Galway, Ireland, and a number of her poems are anthologized in the recently published volume *Salmon: A Journey in Poetry*. Her poems and short fiction have won numerous awards. Professor Harriss is the longtime editor/director of BrickHouse Books, Inc., Maryland's oldest literary press. She has worked with prison writers for many years.

Nellie Hill

THE NEWS

for Dolores Borgir

Grasses, once again the color of burnt sugar,
wave in the wind like arms of the dead,
slender and voiceless, dreamy
with premonitions of music.

Among the oaks brown birds
with one-note cheeps hop
into the manzanita, coyote bush,
hot shrubs

while along the roadside thistles
and mint nod to the new season.
Rattlesnake grass grows quietly,
daisies bow to the changed air.

I walk the roads remembering
layers of feeling, those sounds
she brought forth
from the music.

FIELD

I take the word lavender
and smell the color and put it
into my pocket.

Purple fields
extend for miles
like thin-skinned upturned palms.
Someone opens a hand to me
full of sky.

I follow the expanse
back to my own vision
and almost see the word
I'd imagined for this sight.
Yet I return to the field
to ask where, just to be certain.

A dog follows,
nose at my heels.
When I stop and say sit,
the dog sits.
The dog takes my word
and waits, the dog
takes the word for granted.

Nellie Hill's work has appeared in various journals including *Poetry East*, *American Writing*, *American Poetry Review*, with an introduction of her by Denise Levertov, *Harvard Magazine*, *Commonweal*, *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Snowy Egret*, *The Naugatuk River Review*, and in three chapbooks, the most recent of which is *My Daily Walk* (Pudding House). Poems online have appeared in *Innisfree* and *New Millenium*.

David Hornibrook

THE CHINESE FARMER SELLS HIS ROBOTS

Later, I began to call them my sons

Made by man in man's image a second hand
image of God like the sun
glancing off polished sheet metal.
"I didn't sleep for days after selling the child"

Born of gears inside
a daydream of that "marvelous human motion"
sweetly green curvatures of wire.

Freshly oiled cogs turning
day to twilight delicately
the way a hair bends.
He could bend and bow

Harvest moon,
a little Autumn rain.
Oh beautiful Wu, a simple mind unfolded
in lovely form

David Hornibrook lives and works in the Detroit area where he has been writing for the past eight years.

Jacqueline Jules

ALBINO MORNING

Beneath a marshmallow sky
chewing last night's rain
in its fluffy cheeks,
we walk in Central Park,
wearing only light jackets,
on a soft chocolate path
beside a gated reservoir
with geese dining at its table.

We talk of nothing special —
party plans for New Year's Eve,
a return to work on Monday —
I tell you stories
you've heard before
of your dead father
when he was young
and newly married like you.
Our words wander with our feet
strolling in cozy sneakers, side by side,
across stone bridges, past joggers,
tipsy gray rocks, and naked trees,
all looping back to my gushing praise
for this luscious warm weather,
odd, at this time of year,
as an albino bear,
raising a white face and pink eyes,
for the camera I pull from my pocket
in hopes of preserving
the luminous absence of cold
on this albino morning
in this season of our lives.

Jacqueline Jules is an elementary school librarian who writes for children and adults. Her children's books include *No English, Unite or Die*, and *Sarah Laughs*. She won the Arlington Arts Moving Words Contest in 2007, Best Original Poetry from the Catholic Press Association in 2008, and the SCBWI Magazine Merit Award for Poetry in 2009. Her work has appeared in more than sixty publications including *Verse Daily*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *America*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Sunstone*, and *Potomac Review*.

Rose Kelleher

EROTICA

Spare me the cool blue, the sultry silk.
Forget what women tell you women like.

I know, their lips were longing and all that.
But if you want to please me, hunker down

and dig deep. Write me a raw red onion,
tugged up from its dirty hiding place.

Meet me under the past's fluorescent light,
at the scarred kitchen table. Here's the knife

you sharpen in your dreams, and here's the root
of everything. Be fearless, plunge right in,

towards pungency. There's Daddy with his frown,
big brother with his shirt off. Look for the cigar

behind the smoke, look for the antique lamp
that set the house on fire. When you find Jesus

suffering sweetly in the convent garden,
you're getting warmer. Here the air gets close,

onion musks your fingers, and your eyes
begin to sting. You feel the juice kick in,

and deep in your genes old species reappear
in shapes you don't have names for. Here

the dark-eyed villain rubs his hands together,
cackling over his evil-genius plot,

here at the nasty heart, the knifepoint at
the center of the onion, where it's hard and hot.

Rose Kelleher's poems have appeared in *Anon*, *The Shit Creek Review*, *Snakeskin*, and other venues. Her first book, *Bundle o'Tinder*, was published by Waywiser Press in 2008.

Robert S. King

FADING PICTURES

A leaf on the ground turns
to powder in the wind
as your sister spirit leaves.
Still you hear her everywhere,
in the door hinge that cries
or squeals her joy
a little less loudly each day.

They'll never fully fade,
these pictures where you find her again.
And you touch her again
in hair tangled in the brush,
in small depressions on the cushions,
in the dark when you brush
against her scented pillow
or hear the tap-walk of her feet
a little less loudly each night.

Her absence is a presence,
a breath you can never quite exhale.

DUALITY

No sun this Sunday.
Just fog along the walkway near the church
where Sunday suits and silk dresses
line up to go to Heaven.

I limp by in last week's jeans
stained as my face,
carrying my paid-for house on my back.

Their doors are open
but close quickly behind.
Question marks in the pews straighten
like bulbs stretching to the stained glass light.

But I follow the fog between light and dark,
look for a street sign, a detour
around another dead end.

Neither fire nor hymns for me.
I curse suffering no matter
which authority causes it.

Here before these fine people,
I dare not pass around
my collection plate.
That would be robbing God
who may need it more than I.

Nor can Devil afford my soul,
too heavy to carry, too thick to burn.
He'd resell it to God for a profit.
I'd be left outside the gates again.

In true mirrors Devil sees half a halo,
God a single head horn.
I cling to the fence between them,
their curious, outcast son.

Robert S. King has been writing and publishing since the 1970s. His work has appeared in hundreds of magazines, including *The Kenyon Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *Chariton Review*, *Main Street Rag*, and others. He is currently Director of FutureCycle Poetry, www.futurecycle.org.

Ann Knox

BREATHING

Sun filters through the beech grove spackling
mossed ground, the woods are still. Listen.

Nothing, then a scritch as a squirrel hummocks
along a branch, from the draw, a woodpecker's thrum,

beneath my foot a twig clicks, a swish
as I brush a strand of hair from my face.

A dove exhales her quiet Coo.
and under the duff a mole whiffles the dark.

Snake, snail, grasshopper, we all take
and give, even sphagnum moss looses

green damp and the pale undersides of leaves
release vapor to air. Above this breathing

canopy, past cloud and contrail, past the edge
of hearing—the spinning planet's soundless roar.

FISH IN WATER

I add another link to my paper-clip chain,
doodle a fish, a boat, a line of waves

and think of a flounder skimming the ocean floor
unaware of the edge of its world, the tide mounding,

or the shrimp boat foundering on the swells above.
I wonder if the fish notes a shift in the water's density,

or like me, pays no heed to air pressing my skin
as I wait in this back-wash for something to change.

Enough. I push aside papers and stand in the doorway
looking out — nothing but slate dark clouds.

Then a siren splits the lull, a quick in-breath,
a startle shudders my body. Hey, wake up.

This is where you live, things are happening out there,
wind rolls an empty cup across the road,

a yellow dog leans against its leash tugging
an old woman. All this matters, pay attention.

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, including The Writer's Center in Washington, DC, Antioch Writing Workshop, Aspen Summer Conference, Johns Hopkins Writing Program, and Hagerstown Community College. For eighteen years she served as editor of the *Antietam Review*.

Judy Kronenfeld

EXILES FROM HEAVEN

My hairdresser, lathering my grey head,
giggles over the "wild man"
he used to be in the days of *Shampoo*.
He wants to embrace
Jesus' thinly clad waist. It *can't* be
he won't see the people he loves again.

I picture that attainable
eternity, a chute from the present
to the infinite, like an airplane's
emergency slide. Death's vindictive
storm rattles the plane, and it crash-
lands, yet the travelers glide from the burning
wreckage on naked feet, leaving all
behind—purse, heels, souvenir snow globes,
collection spoons—and are clasped to the cushiony
bosom of Abraham.

Vince presses the towel gently
against my damp ears,
and I sail back over years
to the all-"girls" alma mater
I flew into, on a scholarship carpet
from my Bronx shtetl-street—
with her pastoral Anglican
sobriety, her Latin-school
traditions (*Gaudeamus igitur,*
Iuvenes dum sumus!) . . .

where, in a monastic carrel, reading Herbert
and Vaughan, I became like God—a circle centered
everywhere, bounded nowhere—and where
I floated downstream on the raft of belief
in the future, the power
and the glory, to unrestricted literary
heaven, with Moon River, my huckleberry
friend.

**

Vince muses about opening
a retirement home as he combs
and clips. He likes old people.
"Imagine growing old and helpless,
thinking you've had your last shampoo and set!"
He'd do hair on Mondays, and on Tuesday
evenings his wife would play the piano
and sing those comforting old hymns.

Yesterday, a choir on video in the stroke ward
cycled through "O come, O come,
Emmanuel," "O come, all ye faithful."
My mother chanted her agitated litany,
"I am so *farblondzhet!* I am so
fardreit!," and paused—as if the distant
past flickered, like a broken film
the projectionist is trying to run
in a dark theater—chanted
and paused.

I tried to hum an ancient
tune, chestnut of childhood weddings
and bar mitzvahs. The third time
through, she swayed a little
in her chair, then quavered
Beltz, mayn shtetele Beltz,
mayn heymele

for those few notes—
dreamy about the dream
of childhood in the little, lost
ur-town,
to which no one, ever,
really would return—

called back from exile
into the exiles' community.

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, which was published in summer 2008. Her poems, as well as the occasional short story and personal essay, have appeared in numerous print and online journals. Recent poem credits include *Cimarron Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *The American Poetry Journal*, *Calyx*, *The Hiram*

Poetry Review, *The Pedestal*, as well as a number of anthologies, including *Bear Flag Republic: Prose Poems and Poetics from California*, edited by Christopher Buckley and Gary Young (Greenhouse Review Press/Alcatraz Editions, 2008) and *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose about Alzheimer's Disease*, edited by Holly Hughes (Kent State University Press, 2009). She is also the author of a critical study: *KING LEAR and the Naked Truth* (Duke U.P., 1998).

Lyn Lifshin

BEING JEWISH IN A SMALL TOWN

Someone writes kike on
the blackboard and the
"k's" pull thru the
chalk, stick in my

plump pale thighs.
Even after the high
school burns down the
word is written in

the ashes. My under
pants' elastic snaps
on Main St. because
I can't go to

Pilgrim Fellowship.
I'm the one Jewish girl
in town but the 4
Cohen brothers

want blond hair
blowing from their
car. They don't know
my black braids

smell of almond.
I wear my clothes
loose so no one
dreams who I am,

will never know
Hebrew, keep a
Christmas tree in
my drawer. In

the dark, my fingers
could be the menorah
that pulls you toward
honey in the snow.

Lyn Lifshin has published more than 120 books of poetry, including, most recently, *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).

Diane Lockward

FOR ONE WHO CRUMBLES IN SPRING

Do not rail against the daffodils for their insistence
on yellow, or the iris for being purple and persistent.

Do not curse the bees as they wriggle
their bottoms from honeycombs, nor begrudge them
pollination and flirtation with flowers.

Do not blame the cherry blossoms
for blossoming abundantly and pinkly,
or the grass for growing green, though you have stomped
your foot and beaten it with clenched fists.

Though you long for the desert, parched hills,
burnt weeds, though you will miss the lushness of spring
this year, it will come again.

It will search for you among the beach plums
that year after year emerge from grains of sand
that once were rocks and stones, yet smother themselves
with clusters of white flowers and blue-black fruit.

PLEASURE

No golden fleece, apple, parachute, or purse,
but that sexy red dress you couldn't afford now on sale,
Cape Cod light captured on the artist's easel,
a bowl of mushroom barley soup to slurp,
and under the sofa the pearl
you thought you'd lost, a rule
broken without penalty, no need to reap
the wild oats you sowed. Each night you ease
into dreams, and while you sleep,
the skin cream you bought really does erase
lines and wrinkles. Outside, goldfinches bright as lemon peels.

SPYING ON MY NEW NEIGHBORS

They're tilling the soil, building a garden.
While their son's in school, they've squared

a patch of hard ground, pulled out grass and weeds,
lined up nasturtiums, snapdragons, sweet peas.

Through the scrim of evergreens, I watch them,
so close and still at first I think it's just him—
then a tangle of arms and kissing,
bodies so entwined they're almost one person or
two persons growing into each other,
twin trunks of a single tree.

Soft, smooth skin's what I'm thinking about,
how young they are, how nothing bad has happened
yet. Minutes later, they walk off the job,
his hoe dropped on top of her rake,
one whole hour before the school bell rings, before
their boy comes home, wanting Twinkies and juice.

Imagine the bulbs of their bodies planted in bed,
clothes peeled and strewn like petals, the furrowing,
the tender raking of tillable flesh, flowers blooming
from ears and eyes, the red peonies of their mouths.
Shafts of sunlight warm the garden bed.
Long tender roots shoot down, strong enough for any storm.

Diane Lockward's second collection, *What Feeds Us* (Wind Publications), received the 2006 Quentin R. Howard Poetry Prize. Her poems appear in Garrison Keillor's *Good Poems for Hard Times* and in such journals as *Harvard Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her poems have also been featured on *Poetry Daily*, *Verse Daily*, and *The Writer's Almanac*. A former high school English teacher, Diane now works as a poet-in-the-schools.

Donal Mahoney

CASEWORKER TAKES NOTES

I was there the day
there trickled down the wall
of an old man's room one roach

that stopped across
a canyon in the plaster till
the old man's elevated slipper fell.

The roach absorbed the blow
and as though perforated for that purpose
dissolved into an archipelago.

The old man looked at me
and patiently explained, "Despite my
constant smacking of its brethren

one roach each day will trickle down that wall
and pause and pose as if to say,
'Go ahead and smack me, that's okay.'"

To take advantage of the archipelago at hand
the old man pointed toward the last palpitating island
and once again explained,

"Each roach I smack, you see,
offers me that same good-bye —
one last flicker of antennae."

HUSK OF A HORSEFLY

The last day of September
I carefully toe the husk
of a horsefly
out of my office
onto bright tiles
Stella will buff
to a sheen
while I am at home
surveying my supper.

Till it's time for my train
I'll sit at my desk
and listen to the day
drone near the ceiling,
helicopter down
like the horsefly,
touch ground,
then taxi awhile
before braking.

CUSTOMER OF VENDORS

How many times have I said
I'm through teasing myself,
through pretending
I don't enjoy
the wreath of a woman
warm around me.
How many times have I said
I'll go out on the streets,
as I have in the past,
in cummerbund and sash,
top hat and cane,
a one-man parade
with bugle and drum,
seeking the sweetbreads
served there all day,
fresh off the brazier,
medium rare.

GRIGGS'S BAR AND GRILL

In two more hours I'll have to shower,
shave and coffee-prop my lids
and otherwise prepare for day. It's 4 a.m.
and now the barkeep, Griggs,

is rushing me, the first
to come, the last to leave,
the lad who just an hour before
was coaxed to quaff one more.

At work I'll cummerbund a smile,
hold my head and sit all day,
play another endless game
of solitaire or tic-tac-toe.

Griggs' apron's off. The neon's out
and now he'll set the locks in back.
The spittle, butts and half-slain beers
he'll leave for Willie who'll soon be here

to dance his broom between
the tables and the scattered chairs
as smoothly as Kelly or Astaire.
At 6 a.m., he'll climb the ladder

near the door and aim his broom
through the transom toward the sky.
Every morning Willie puts a
bullet through the eye of sunrise.

Donal Mahoney has worked as an editor for *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Loyola University Press, and Washington University in St. Louis. He has had poems published in or accepted by *The Wisconsin Review*, *The Kansas Quarterly*, *The South Carolina Review*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Orbis* (England), *Commonweal*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Revival* (Ireland), *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Istanbul Literary Review* (Turkey), *The National Catholic Reporter*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *Public Republic* (Bulgaria), and other publications.

Laura Manuelidis

SUBJECT

I like all muddy mucused things
 that crawl in silence on my plate
I like secretions of the glands
 the stench of sea: its gills opaque.
I like the tears that dim the eye
To look beyond eternity
Detritus thrown by planets past
 that crook the balanced universe
These skins we shed upon our love
 To make one metamorphosis:

 This wine that jinxes each white cloth
 The oozed volcano, chaliced ash,
 The scramble up the rotting slope
 The ugly child, the bitch in blood
Man's severed wings caressing earth:
Old splintered scabs, our sweat cast off—

For all these line God's birth canal

Abstract, coherent—And in the flesh.

LOVELY AS DUST

I awoke from death
And read your poems
And they were great.
But they were not me.
Your testicles contracted
To release the sea
As your fingers spread out
The ecstasy of mountains forming and groaning
While your eyes, half closed
Transfused the sky with raining.
Oh there was thunder and lightning too,
A revenge upon yourself—the sun
Peeking out from always
Thrusting its sword
To stalk the vintage;
And your issue was a man

Walking to find you, unknowing,
With a cane that was sometimes a cross
And forever more wanting.

But nothing was left for me
:the dark matter:

Except for the singing.

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

Nancy Fitz-Hugh Meneely

Pointing at the Moon, by Bill Wunder. WordTech Editions, 2008. 86 pp.

In *Pointing at the Moon*, his first full-length book of poetry, Bill Wunder provides a wonderfully clear-eyed picture of the Vietnam War, one that avoids both the sensational and the sentimental with which its recording has been burdened. He uses simple, straightforward language and form to underscore, without redundant drama, the rhythms and hardships of life in-country. Though every successive reading reveals something new to admire, some subtlety of allusion, interconnection or image, it is the power of Wunder's linguistic and emotional restraint which most moves me and which I want to focus on here. In *Pointing at the Moon*, the weight of what Wunder leaves unwritten is equal to that of what he writes.

The details Wunder does choose to share convey the war clearly: Vietnam itself, its mama-sans, the sharp-knived barbers who will join the VC at dusk, and its imperturbable self-immolating monks; the fraught tedium and cataclysm of the war; and the superstitious, philosophical, hardening boys who were our warriors. But these pictures are offered in the linguistic equivalent of Oriental brushstrokes. Here, for example, in a poem entitled "Fireworks," is Wunder's version of an entire book or movie's presentation of war's assault on sensibility:

Some nights it's incoming
followed by tracers and flares.

Last week we were overrun,
took casualties, barely hung on.

We sleep till noon, wake up
to powdered eggs and coffee,

drink warm beer in afternoon sun,
nap till dusk, eat meat out of cans,

then get ready for more war.
Two nights back

Owens went out to piss, didn't
come back. Found him next morning

tied to a tree, staring straight ahead
at sunrise slicing through leaves,

bubbled red, and purple
where they cut his throat.

I heard today was July fourth.

While Owens's death is shocking, the greater shock is delivered by this poem's tonelessness, from which we infer the more devastating death of feeling in these victims of daily battle.

Though it is plain that he cares for them and knows them well, Wunder is equally economical in describing his comrades-in-arms. He will not analyze their psychology nor spin their stories; we will be given only snapshots of them, vignettes from which we will have to surmise motivation, emotion and fate. In the book's second section, Wunder introduces us to his companions, of whom he permits us glimpses at odd intervals. Ignacio is someone to whom Wunder pays particular attention.

We meet him in "Dac Tho Village," where, under orders to "burn it all . . .," Ignacio sets fire to the village with his Zippo lighter. In the ensuing confusion of smoke and sound, he fires blindly and then "moves in / to inspect his kill. As if in prayer / over the body, and its growing pool of blood, / his fingers lift matted hair from the face / of a girl, young as his little sister back home. . . ." It is the mark of Wunder's art that he captures the torment of a gentle soul at war in the simple proximity of the words "kill" and "prayer."

The next poem, "A Telling Silence," shows Ignacio's Maria writing to "close the latch on their relationship, / hear it click." She, too, sets a fire, burning "that last letter" before mailing it. In "Ignacio Knew," some pages further, Ignacio hears "the metallic finality / that click" But this sound is that of a booby trap, now armed, that will shatter him if he so much as coughs. The rest of the poem exemplifies Wunder's ability to reduce complexity and drama to its simplest elements:

. . . Ignacio knew
 that look on Mad Dog's face
 meant it was the end
 of crotch rot
 and warm, long-neck
 Budweisers after
 patrol, humid days enduring
 the lieutenant's mindless orders,
 starless nights worrying why
 Maria stopped writing,
 images of that burning village,
 smoke obscuring
 the little girl's splayed
 body, blood pooling
 right where he shot her.
 Ignacio knew
 there was only one remedy.
 He closed his eyes,
 slowly exhaled,
 and stepped away.

Here, in a very few short lines, is the whole situation and, in three words, "only one remedy . . . ," all of Ignacio we need to know to mourn his loss.

Perhaps his ability to maintain this restraint grows out of Wunder's uncommonly balanced perspective. He never renders judgment on those around him and only rarely on the situation itself. He gives us the war and the warriors without slant, stereotype, embellishment or pressure, and so we accept his version as truth.

And this poet who refuses to assess blame or assign benediction can't be found rehearsing his own wounds, either. The counterpoise of his perspective on himself and his war is perhaps best represented in "Trying to Explain War to My Children." Presented in italics, the poem carries more than Wunder's usual quota of personal feeling: it is full of sadness, painful irony and hints of what Wunder has not yet come to terms with. Even so the drama is muted. And even so the grievous revolves around a startling revelation at the poem's center:

*I was just an aircraft mechanic.
I kept F-4 Phantoms in night skies
with their lethal loads. But I wasn't the one
who misread a map, pulled the bomb release
and firebombed a sleeping village.*

*Just because I wasn't blown up
doesn't mean I'm unscathed.*

*I was bored most of the time, homesick
on holidays, but I wouldn't trade that year.*

*Yes, we carried lumps of raw opium
the size of baseballs to melt down, paint
our Marlboros, and snickered when told
"smoke 'em if you got 'em."*

*I never told you that every time I eat Oreos
I see Jim's mom serving us
a tray of them with ice cold milk, that Jim
died in that war and I still can't visit his grave.*

What else do you want to know?

In celebrating Wunder's restraint and balance, I don't mean to say that he can't pull out the poetic stops. I find two actual love poems in this book, their objects *airplanes*. Here's a particularly amorous segment of one, "C 7-A Caribou":

Camouflaged wings rest
In the cool murk of 4 am.
Green and brown flaps hang

like stiff trailing feathers.
Propellers tilt in the pre-dawn, eager
to slice Indochina humidity.

The crew arrives for preflight
inspection, that act of love.
They stroke rivets nipping

through mottled skin, finger
black engine oil that seeps
from the reciprocating heart, wipe

away hydraulic fluid as it drips
down erect struts glistening
in the glare of portable lights.

These stanzas describe a beloved bird with highly imagistic, specific—and, of course, sexual—language. Though the poem moves on to describe the horrible cargoes that will "fill its belly," it doesn't suggest the emotional numbing that pervades many others.

And I'll close with another piece, placed at nearly the center of the book as a kind of respite from the harrowing starkness of poems that precede and follow it. In *Sanctuary*, Wunder lets us sit with him in a moment of quiet and safety, in a place he is willing to experience with his senses full open:

Daylight, dimmed through triple-layered
canopy, settles around me, lightens
the shadows. Closing my eyes, I inhale
moistness, slow my breathing, float
in solitude. No more smell
of napalm singeing my nose.
Instead, a flame-red flower blazes
in the dark crotch
of a moonberry tree, its bright
burning elegance. Gray
arthritic roots knuckle
the jungle floor, fingers
of old men reaching
for cover in a decomposing froth
of dead leaves and soft earth.
To the army, this jungle
trail to Can Tho is just a red line

snaking across a field map. To me,
it's a leafy safe-house
where I sit in my own sweat
and dissolve in shades of green.

Though there is certainly the shadow of death in these lines, what I take away with me is the pleasure of the clean humid air, the vivid pictures of a flower that "blazes in the dark crotch of a moonberry tree" and the "gray arthritic roots" that "knuckle the jungle floor," and, most satisfying, a little time in close company with a poet who knows how to hide himself when that is what the undertaking demands.

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

Julie L. Moore

SLEEPY HOLLOW CEMETERY, CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

We walk past gravestones of the unknown,
Up the path, up the hill, to find
Thoreau, Alcott, Hawthorne, and Emerson.

Pinecones and pebbles, even a letter,
Adorn Thoreau's grave like flowers.
My daughter snaps pictures of me,

My warm hand resting on his cold stone,
Repercussions of his reflections
Reverberating beneath my ribs.

Behind us, on a bench,
Out of the blue like a thrush's tune,
A man reads aloud my t-shirt

Declaring, "I cabin Thoreau,"
Asks like a congenial host,
Where we live, where I teach, why we visit.

Then we stumble, together, upon discovery:
He knows our small Ohio town,
My obscure, religious school, his ex-wife a graduate,

And lo and behold, *he* is Thoreau—
Re-enactor for the Concord Museum—
Pronouncing the name

"Thorough" like everyone else in Concord
(The rest of America says it wrong),
Revealing that Emerson noted his friend's name

Fit his character like a calling,
Like a voice in sync with the rhythm of life,
For he was a "thorough fellow."

EMMA

With all dear Emma's little faults, she is an excellent creature . . . [S]he has qualities which may be trusted; she will never lead anyone really wrong . . .

— Jane Austen, *Emma*

If Aristotle is right and *we are*
what we repeatedly do, or Annie Dillard,
and *how we spend our days*

is how we spend our lives, then let me
spend each moment like Emma,
my neighbor's yellow Lab,

who greets me, every time I walk along the road
in front of her yard, with hospitality,
running up to the invisible fence between her

and me, holding in her teeth her blue bowl
as if to announce, *Look what I've got!*
tail wagging, body expressing

the same exuberance of a child
welcoming her birthday,
as if she's a balloon about ready to pop.

That's what I'm talking about: Verve.
Combined with time to stick one's nose
into all the business

of the earth. Smell those roses.

Julie L. Moore is the author of *Slipping Out of Bloom*, forthcoming from WordTech Editions, and the chapbook, *Election Day* (Finishing Line Press). Nominated in 2008 for a Pushcart Prize, Moore has contributed poetry to *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Briar Cliff Review*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Cimarron Review*, *Dogwood*, *Free Lunch*, *The MacGuffin*, *Sou'wester*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and many others. Moore directs the Writing Center at Cedarville University in Ohio. Her website is <http://www.juliemoore.com>.

Judith S. Offer

JAPANNED

I am Skyped into your day,
Me talking in yesterday, you talking in tomorrow;
Or Yahoo'd, the words shifting and drifting
On the prevailing winds of the Pacific Rim, then
Dropping electronically from email ether
Onto pages of flickering pixels.

I tell you your car had its smog checked, and
I went with the Nellises to the Kings' New Year.
You tell me about the Plum Blossom Festival
At Yushima Shrine, with its long lines. I tell you
I read poetry at the Library of Congress,
And the other poet's husband made a video.

Millions of people have done this, you stipulate,
Citing wars, tsunamis, epidemics,
Spouses Rising to the Occasion,
Winding bandages, plumbing kitchen sinks.
We talk as much as we do at home, you say,
Avoiding any mention of pillow talk.

You remind me: only two more months.
You say you are paid in spades for the
Fifteen hours of distance between Oakland and Tokyo.
You give me the impression of someone
Avoiding negotiation, but don't mention
What deal we're discussing.

You put forward your final offer:
Our love is not threatened by this.
We have two-score anniversaries to prove it!
But my stomach wonders: is this a rehearsal?
Am I practicing turning over in the bed
Alone? Or are you?

Judith Offer has two daughters, four books of poetry, and dozens of plays. (Sixteen of the latter, including five musicals, have been produced.) Her writing reflects her childhood in a large Catholic family—with some Jewish roots—her experience as teacher, community organizer, musician, historian, gardener, as well as her special fascination with her roles of wife and mother. She is a member of a poetics seminar, a local band, the Institute for Historical Study, and a garden club; she studies Yiddish, Spanish, and yoga; plants vegetables; walks a lot; and tries to avoid second-hand book stores. More information is available at www.JudithOffer.com.

Roger Pfingston

DISTRACTION

They took a sidewalk table
on the other side of the glass
where she sat in profile,
one exquisite leg crossed over
the other, summer heel
dangling, dancing as she
gently rocked her bare foot,
the up beat flashing red nails,
and then someone said my name
at our table of six and my wife,
eyebrows raised, pointed
to the waiter: *Stella Artois*
in a chilled glass, please.

And so it went for most
of an hour of salad and gumbo,
crème brûlée and coffee,
my rapt eyes thieving under
the table where her skin glowed
against the blur of passers-by.
When the waiter asked if that
would be all, I hardly knew what
to say, thinking, as I nodded yes,
I'm not sure . . . let's wait and see.

WHY RICHARD AND I STOPPED PLAYING TOGETHER

1945. Eileen, Richard's mother, arrives home in a cab on a Sunday morning, gets out drunk, can't get her key in the door, or maybe Richard's grandma won't let her in again, so she goes back to the rock driveway between our houses, squats with her dress hiked up and pees as my parents watch from the window. Me too in between the two of them as they try to push me back. A gush of urine like I've never seen before. She has trouble getting her pants up. My mother, gasping at the sight of it, cries out my dad's name with a question mark and closes the curtains. I try to peek through the opening but my mother drags me away and tells me to go to my room until I'm told I can come out. In the excitement she has forgotten that my room is on the driveway side of the house, so with the door closed I sit on the edge of my bed and watch through the blinds as Eileen struggles to get her pants up. She finally leans against the house and steps out of them, then

weaves her way back to the front door holding the key out in front of her, aimed and ready. That night at the dinner table my mother tells me again how sorry we are about Richard's dad and how lucky I am, then she says I can't play with Richard anymore but I can have a second helping of bread pudding.

Roger Pfingston's poems have appeared recently in *Dos Passos Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Chiron Review*, *Sylvan Echo*, *Poetry Midwest*, *DMQ Review*, and *Mannequin Envy*. As a photographer, he has photographs in recent issues of *The Sun* and *Tattoo Highway*.

Oliver Rice

HELLO, BIG SCIENCE

Now, as to the persistence of matter,
its elements — adamantly discrete,
as displayed on the periodic table —
and their properties,
look.

Here are indicative drawings of Leonardo da Vinci.
They are replete, as you may perceive,
with implicit exclamations.

—

You may concur with Leonardo's insinuations
that the particles of materiality,
profoundly detached,
are yet indiscriminately inclined to merge,
as happenstance and affinities occur,
which Leo devoutly represents
in charcoal, chalk, and ink —
cathedral domes,
the tendrils of flowers,
the inner and outer anatomy of man,
scissors, a machine gun,
clouds, rocks, forests.

As all substance apparently bonded,
a superb,
before hurtling apart in the Big Bang,

—

the ultimate instance of the fatal flaw **
innate in every compounding of elements —
a compulsion to disintegrate,
decay, erode, dissolve,

latent in Leo's every stroke,
the wilting and rotting of lilies,
the decline and demise of swans,
the wasting of pigments.

—

Cycles vastly suggestive of perpetuity.
Eh, Big Science?

*** The Japanese, you may know,
say a thing to be beautiful
must contain a small imperfection.*

*** The Hindus, you may know,
say without a spot of filth
the soul cannot cohere.*

*** And remember Shiva.*

**YOUR ORGANS PULSING
IN RHYTHMS AS LONG AS YEARS,
AS BRIEF AS MILLISECONDS**

Here in midmind, Justice, Your Honor,

ruminating on the politics of mating,
on the appreciation of our equities,

we sense, Justice, Your Honor,
that we are incessantly monitored,
randomly prompted, ambiguously rebuked
by overmind, by undermind,

gliding down over the tin roofs of Freetown,
exploring a cave at Altamira,

telling stories of spite and yearning
in the partners' dining room,
in the homeless shelter,

walking the evening streets.

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

Lynda Self

BUCKEYE LUCK

Mid-September, long before the leaves turn,
the buckeyes start to fall. They skitter across the ground,
their green husks splitting open, spilling out nuggets
sleek as polished wood.

Down the mountain beside the mailboxes, hapless buckeyes,
lie squashed in the road. Others fall, as luck would have it,
on the roadside or tumble down the bank toward the creek.
Each day, I scuff through leaf litter
looking for ones whose shells are still intact.
Convinced that luck belongs to finders, I disregard
the mud slick beneath my shoes, rocks slippery with moss.
On good days, I arrive home, pockets teeming with luck.

I keep them in a basket by the window,
their blank eyes gazing nowhere as the luck
seeps elusively through the finely woven willow.

COLD INDIFFERENCE

After I have swept the porch, I walk from shrub to shrub
knocking snow from their leaves with the broom.
My nose has started to run, and bits of ice have fallen
into my unlaced boots. I make my way down the driveway
to the rhododendrons there whose leaves are curled like thin green cigars.

I think of earlier snows, when I lay on the lawn making
angel wings with a tingling of champagne in my nose, when I
sat with my lover on a park bench kissing in the afternoon sun.
These are the acts of my past, when indifference flooded
my veins like the cold dye of a myelogram.

Now I would be cautious, upright, fearful of unsought eyes leering
at my indiscretions. Knotting my scarf around my neck, I use
the broom handle to slewfoot my way up the drive. I shed my boots
at the door, eager to be rid of socks soggy from the melted ice,
of memories of earlier snows undiminished by the cold.

THE FEEL OF ASHES

Since your father's death, you've turned squeamish,
refusing even to pick a site for the dogs' ashes.
So the sprinkling fell to me.
Malone, coarse, grainy, like pulverized gravel.
The others, paler, powdery, more like flour.
Afterwards, the feel of ashes lingering on my fingers.

Now, weeks later, the ashes around the cinnamon rose
have settled, leaving specks of graying white
coloring the soil. As I kneel amidst them, auguring holes
for tulip bulbs, I feel once more the texture of ashes on my hands.

You always keep your deaths remote, too distant
for the fondness of recall. Like your grandfather's pick
leaning idly against the garage wall. You'll lift its worn handle
and heave its point into the soil, what remains of his life
long subsumed into the texture of your own.

I set aside the drill with its spiraling bit and insert the bulbs,
careful to nestle the stubby roots into the dirt. Come spring,
their shoots will plow upwards through the dirt
with waxen blooms that hold against the wind.
So too I distance myself, the lingering feel of ashes
slipping from my hands like shards of grief.

Lynda Self's poems have appeared (some under the name "Lynda Yates") in *Threepenny Review*, *Southern Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *New England Review*, *Georgia Review*, and *Confrontation* and in the Yearbook of American Poetry (1981, 1984, 1985). A number of poems also appeared in a regional anthology entitled *The Poet's Domain* (volumes two, seven, and nine).

Ellen Steinbaum

THIS IS THE POEM I WILL NOT SHOW HIM

though he is an eager reader,
wants to love my words and is
quick with knowing comments, but

this is the poem about how
when we are cooking side by side
and rain is beating loud on the windows,
we turn the music up, or

how he laughs and pulls me to him,
talks to me in couple code, or turns the heat
up higher than he wants because
he knows I'm always cold, and how,

on one St. John morning, I saw him up early
in his robe, sprinkling sugar on the window ledge
so I could wake to see a row of bright bananaquits
feast in front of me before they flew away.

Ellen Steinbaum is the author of two poetry collections, *Afterwords* and *Container Gardening*, and a former literary columnist for The Boston Globe. She writes a blog, Reading and Writing and the Occasional Recipe, which can be found at her web site, www.ellensteinbaum.com.

Karen J. Weyant

DRY SPELL

For weeks, we were thirsty.
Back roads sulked, shuffled,
coughed up dust that lingered
on our bare knees, our elbows,
the thin straps of our sandals.

Farmers nailed crows to the doors
of their barns. Parents worried,
smiling with creases cut in their lips
and memories of nightmares,
chalk outlines on faded wood.

It's a shrike, my brother said,
sure of the culprit, flicking
the victims: a sparrow
with barbed wire poking
through stiff feathers, goldfinches

draped over speed limit signs,
a field mouse I pried loose
from a purple thistle, paws limp
in prayer, fur still soft
next to my cheek when I strained,
listening for a single heart beat.

Karen J. Weyant's first chapbook, *Stealing Dust*, was recently published by Finishing Line Press. Recent work is in *5 AM*, *Anti-*, *Barn Owl Review*, *Coal Hill Review*, *Slipstream*, and *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. In 2007, she was awarded a poetry fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Jamestown Community College in Western New York.

Edwin Zimmerman

THE MOVIE AVIATORS OF WORLD WAR I

There were savants then in box kite planes
who held mute disquisitions in the clouds
over the crumpling-tin-pot engine roar,
examining distant imperfections in the skies,
veering, rolling, diving, climbing, swooping,
pressing the triggers of cunning, savage guns
whose murdering bullets were synchronized to speed
between the propeller's blazing whirl of blades.
The camera captures every learned gesture—
how they, through splay-eyed goggles
that made them wise as Chinamen,
peered down in sober contemplation
at some poor Fokker underneath
slowly sinking to earth in smoking eddies,
and how they gravely carved the air with somersaults
as they saluted the flaming mess below.

Edwin Zimmerman is a member of the Folger Poetry Board. His poems have been published in *Partisan Review* and elsewhere.