

# *ASSISI*



*AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS*

*VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1 • SPRING 2010*

# *ASSISI*

*AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS*

A PUBLICATION OF ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE, BROOKLYN, NY

EDITOR

Wendy Galgan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Vanessa O. De Almeida

EDITORIAL BOARD

Stephen Bogart

Athena Devlin

Suzanne Forsberg

Gerald J. Galgan

Timothy J. Houlihan

Mitch Levenberg

A. Edward Wesley

Jennifer Wingate

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Vanessa O. De Almeida

MEDIA RELATIONS

Richard Relkin

WEBMASTER

Edwin Mathieu

MANAGING STUDENT EDITOR

Laura R. Mulcahey

STUDENT SUBMISSIONS COORDINATOR

Sascha Sandra Ealey

STUDENT EDITORIAL BOARD

Christopher J. Ferrari

Xavier Merchan

Christopher J. O'Mara

Lukasc Stefanowicz

Jamie Squeri

Maya Vezenkova

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	COVER ART
SACRAMENTO LIGHT RAIL BRIDGE Sharmon Goff	
STUNNING WITH SAINT FRANCIS IN THE GARDEN Linda Simone	1
ONE DECEMBER EVENING Julie L. Moore	2
ALICE AND THE RABBIT HOLE Virginia Franklin	2
HEAVEN ALONE Marissa C. Pelot	3
LOVE POEM TO OCTOBER Carol Berg	6
ROOF TREE SKY Christopher Woods	6
GIVING UP HIS BOAT Amber Jensen	7
FILL 'ER UP Carol Carpenter	8
SUNDAY AFTERNOON: THE COUNTRY CLUB AT SANTA CRUZ Arthur Powers	10
STROLL Joseph Somoza	11
UNTITLED Virginia Franklin	12
SCENES FROM A NEW YORK ODYSSEY: IN THE END IS THE BEGINNING Mitch Levenberg	13
GUARDIAN DEVIL Kate Bernadette Benedict	19

RADIO INFINITUM Srinjay Chakravarti	20
CORNER LIQUOR STORE Christopher Woods	22
A FOSTER MOTHER'S CHILD Jonterri Gadson	23
MADONNA AND CHILD <i>AT THE ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM</i> Elizabeth Oakes	24
PEACOCK IN ASSISI Diana Woodcock	25
SOMETIMES, WHEN THE PEACOCK CRIED OUT Diana Woodcock	26
SUMMER IN ASSISI Diana Woodcock	27
TRAVELING TO HANKINSON Kristina Roth	28
ROLE MODELS <i>FOR MARLENA DIETRICH</i> Helen Ruggieri	32
PARIS ARTISTS Virginia Franklin	33
LUTHER'S THEORY OF RAIN LB Sedlacek	34
SOME AFTERNOONS WHEN NOBODY WAS FIGHTING Lyn Lifshin	35
THE PITCHER Barbara H. Edington	36
CLOTHESLINE IN SUMMER Mary MacGowan	37
AN INCH A YEAR Andrea O'Brien	38
UPRIGHT Francis Raven	40

ADJECTIVES Cherri Randall	41
MINING Tatiana Forero Puerta	44
SHE Obododimma Oha	45
LES ENFANTS MORTS Louis E. Bourgeois	46
THREE CANDLES Christopher Woods	46
SOTERIOLOGY Kevin Brown	47
GENESIS Anna Catone	48
THE PLEASURES OF THE BOOK	49
INFORMATION ON CONTRIBUTORS	50

**STUNNING WITH SAINT FRANCIS IN THE GARDEN**  
**Linda Simone**

At sunrise, in dappled light,  
houses, like birds, perch  
on Sycamore, Chestnut, Oak.  
A stucco'd one,  
cream with white markings, is stunning  
with St. Francis in the garden –  
his tunic, cast gray stone,  
stiff at the ankles, single palm to heaven.

On this June morn, warm  
already, I breathe in  
childhood, when this was a saint I loved –  
no chewed-off fingers,  
skin-piercing arrows  
gouged-out eyes. Just simplicity  
a shift toward poverty  
toward Bevagna and his brethren the birds.

I envy their knowing  
when to fly away and to.  
Like Assisi, I seek my own stigmata—  
witness to such miracles as these.

**ONE DECEMBER EVENING**

Julie L. Moore

Violin strings in their long, deep river of song . . .

Deer, seven of them: their white breath  
mingling with the snow adrift in darkness  
till it melts on their blood-warm backs  
anointing their baritone bodies . . .

Here is Handel's chorus of hallelujahs.  
Rise.

**ALICE AND THE RABBIT HOLE**  
Virginia Franklin



**HEAVEN ALONE**  
Marissa C. Pelot

It's not a god thing. Heaven is mathematical as music, and it looks like this:

$$I = I_0 \frac{1 + \cos^2 \theta}{2R^2} \left( \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} \right)^4 \left( \frac{n^2 - 1}{n^2 + 2} \right)^2 \left( \frac{d}{2} \right)^6$$

This is what makes the sky blue, or red, and all of the twilight colors too mixed-up and beautiful for names. It's called Rayleigh scattering; what happens when light dashes itself to pieces on bits of matter in the atmosphere. We don't see the black of outer space. The "I" is for intensity and the "λ" is for love; no actually it's for the wavelength of the light. "R" is the distance to the particle, ETA for light fresh from out in the forever, off to its breaking point.

Everyone has his own sky. Everyone knows what shapes the clouds make. A lot of people will tell you depression is a thing of grey, of winter and ceaseless rain. Or a black, yawning pit inverted over you, where there is no air. As long as I can get a glimpse of blue every now and then, I'm okay. Sometimes my vision blurs and I move like stultified air out and up, away from myself, just close enough to see my hands on the steering wheel, too far away to keep them from slipping. Some days, my body turns to glass, and I can scabble around inside it trying to get a hold, but I slide right off the cold, smooth surface. I want out, and I can't move. If I can just make it to a window, I'll be okay. Glass lets light in.

I = clear, limpid, lucid, lucent, pellucid, clarion, crystalline, radiant; words for truth and sanity. See also: robin's egg, lapis, baby, cobalt, cornflower, steel.

I'm nineteen, feverish in a coffee shop, and in an hour or two, I write the story I'll be telling for the rest of my life (a fantasy):

*She had left her windows cracked open, even though thick grey clouds hung low on the horizon, and the bitter wind promised more snow for the afternoon. She welcomed it, the wind, with deep, slow breaths that stung. If only she could roll the windows all the way down, she thought, and really enjoy her last minute—*

*Within her mind, she already saw the bridge and the bleak plain of the lake beneath it. She cracked the thick scum of ice around the waterline on one concrete support with unseen hands, and pulled little rivulets of murky water up the pylon and onto the bridge. Drop by drop, the water roiled swiftly and silently across the road, pooling at a spot about halfway between the beginning of the bridge and the observation point. She made a pocket of cold around the thin sheet of water, stripping the warmth from air, ground and liquid until it froze solid, crackling black and deadly over the asphalt. She let out the breath she'd been holding. Forty-five seconds left.*

*The car crested the last hill, and then the long darkness of the bridge stretched out in front of her. The black road, the straight road, the longest. She spared a quick hand to roll the windows all the way up, and fastened her seat belt. The car rolled smoothly over the bridge. She watched the starlings outside flapping away. Her eyes stung. She stared at the closed windows, the clouds of her own breath, the piles of old gum wrappers in all the ashtrays. Her knuckles*

*tightened, white on the steering wheel. She wouldn't look at the ice. She was just an ordinary woman out for a drive and she'd be home soon. Finally, she reached up to the cold sky, to the heavy clouds and pulled, bringing down swift flurries of snow. The wind made a low sigh, and soft whiteness swirled around the car, obscuring her vision completely. Which was just as well, because now she was crying.*

All of my protagonists do this. They all die, and they all leave their windows open. It's a love story, but remember, the genre is *fantasy*. Their winter skies aren't mine, all of these silent girls and women, not mine, not me, at least not yet.

This is an old affair, the oldest. There's an indelible place in me filled with partly-cloudy where an eighth-grade boy belongs, grass-stained and sweaty, or some dark-eyed non-threatening singer, or forbidden older fruit, maybe a friend of my father's: This Space Reserved for First Love Only. I looked up at just the right moment.

The first love always goes unsatisfied, that's the rule. When the French invented love in the thirteenth century, they made up all kinds of rules, like how you always had to be yearning, longing, never quite touching the object of desire.

*Desire*: Middle English, from Anglo-French *desirer*, from Latin *desiderare*, from *de+* *sider*, *sidus*, heavenly body.

love me tender, love me true...

I work in a rectangular fishbowl, and at the end of summer, the blue starts creeping in at the corners of my eyes, a madness of love. The first hints of the rarefied ether, that sudden suckerpunch of perfect sky that comes with fall, as dear Mr. Dent, my senior-year English teacher would say. Only, he didn't say it like that. He just told us we'd be starting our unit on poetry, and that this time of year was good for that, because, well— here he stopped himself and shyly gestured at the window. What else could he have said?

*I* = seventeen, waking up in the middle of the night, alone in the house. I have a mother, I have a sister twenty feet away from me, breathing deeply in their sleep, why am I alone? I can't move; my chest is heavy with the snot and fluids I've been sucking down for more than a month now. I haven't seen a doctor because no one has told me to. The shitty Venetian blinds drape down from the window onto my bed, and I hate that, but I don't do anything. Through the slats, I see that the window is open, but the screen is still up, and little breaths of oncoming spring move in and out like a tide, teasing.

I'd be crying if I could but all my tears are congealed in my throat, or that's what it feels like, this huge black claw lodged back there. No one knows. No amount of swallowing will make it go away. I would do anything, give anything to dissolve it, to not feel it sticking in me anymore. There's something outside the window. I see a shimmer, iridescent like a heat wave, only it's a circle about the size of my head. I see it just sort of floating there, perfectly round against the night, and the stars look very far away. It pulls a long black thread from my throat that unravels out through the window and loops up and up and around into the gossamer circle, and disappears.

It was a dream. I made it up. I went to sleep right after and I don't want to remember *asking* for help, for anything.

Kansas skies are the best. Here in the Land of the Flat, without all the buildings and mountains, you stand naked to the horizon. Crest a hill, and you can lean mortality against something huge and inhuman leading on the infinite. There's so much air, a wealth of weightless, effortless being. The object of desire should always be above one's station. We send our best thoughts upward, wishes and prayers even, if it's a god thing— it isn't for me but I can see why it might be. The sky could be lonely like god; nothing touches it but light.

*dyeu*: proto-indo-european root word (Zeus, Tuesday, Diva, Adieu). To shine.

My winter sky has heavy clouds like sheets of granite, but there at the horizon, a long ragged strip of glowing blue, like someone *couldn't wait* to see what was under the wrappings and ripped his way through. A desperate gleam, the duty of a candle in the dark (and all light is light in the darkness) — I see it and it makes me live when I don't want to anymore. I think the word for that is hope.

## LOVE POEM TO OCTOBER

Carol Berg

I caress you, sweep orange pine needles  
off your curling hair. I speak to no one  
but your graying shadow as you saunter  
in the leafy paths behind my house. As I lay  
wood in my fireplace I smell your river  
water scent. It lingers on my sweater.  
You are a set of keys not meant for me.  
You are dark as my mother's headstone.  
You are an empty porch I pace on.  
You are the curling smoke from my neighbor's  
chimney. Your voice is the hushed sound  
of rain on leaves. Your kisses like small  
birch leaves dangling in the spiderless webs.  
Your frost-tinged fingertips tight on my bereft skin.

**ROOF TREE SKY**  
Christopher Woods



## GIVING UP HIS BOAT

Amber Jensen

The wide lake of his forehead ripples  
with shallow waves, his narrow chin  
melts into the wrinkles of his neck.  
With sunken-eyes, he stares past  
his son-in-law and pushes his empty  
dinner plate. Both men have learned  
to make time for baiting hooks, casting  
lines, drifting towards sunset, but the old  
man knows no more time can be made.

He avoids talk of prescriptions, doctor's visits,  
the danger of driving at his age: *I gave  
my boat to Rodney, but he doesn't fish much,  
so it should be available to you.* His voice  
trembles, beet juice drips from his mouth.  
*I'll fish with my brother, Glen,* he says,  
his cheeks hanging like empty nets.

*We've had real good luck, caught  
nice perch, when whitecaps roll in  
and we're casting from shore.* His eyes  
are stones dulled by rolling currents  
and bottom-bouncing lures, laying  
dry along the shore, beyond the reach  
of waves, where a child might pluck  
one out, leaving a wet cave of sand.

**FILL 'ER UP**  
Carol Carpenter

I left behind my blue sweater.  
and unmade bed when I went away.  
These familiars spoke of me and this place  
I was born into without having a say.  
Here I grew and learned from you, my father,  
how to:  
grow crops in the foothills  
irrigate this rocky land below mountaintops  
bale hay for the winter months.

The chill of snow shivered my body.  
My vision blurred. I could not  
see where sky reached out  
and touched the land.

I left a note,  
told you how mountains blocked me in  
when I needed open space. I hovered  
on empty.

I fueled myself and my red pickup  
with regular at Lou's. No high octane needed.  
Just a full tank of gas could carry my mutt  
and me past these dusty roads  
I navigated on the darkest nights  
without stars.

My tires rolled.  
I crossed borders,  
arrived in other states unknown.  
People asked my destination,  
that point on the map I headed toward.  
Sometimes my mutt chose the route  
as simple as a paw on a squiggly line  
and we followed.

We saw what we saw,  
went where we went, my mutt and me.  
We lost ourselves in open space,  
on crowded streets, under Red Rock Lake.

If I had been born  
here  
or there  
would the snow still drop to ground?  
Could I have been content with rain?

Hard to tell if we were  
coming  
or going  
when the calendar read spring.  
From what we've seen of city faces  
and roadmap places, we were  
headed back to what we left.

I would sew the button on my blue sweater,  
tuck the blankets under and fold them tight

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON:  
THE COUNTRY CLUB AT SANTA CRUZ**  
Arthur Powers

The line of cattle at the top of the hill  
moves solemnly to the samba beat.  
The music is fast, the cattle are slow;  
their massive shoulders, heaving, fill

the rhythm with a power more still  
than men and women by the radio  
dancing their fingers and hips and feet  
to electric drums, while their lips spill

laughter as little and brittle and shrill  
as clinking glasses where sugary sweet  
liquor flows, tinkling treat, until  
their eyes rise wide, look up and know  
the hilltop and the things that go  
slowly onward, forever, complete.

## **STROLL**

**Joseph Somoza**

The sun is warm on the left  
side of my face, so warm  
I want to stay sitting  
here in the chaise  
in the far back  
of the yard, away from  
houses, street, a car  
that might pass, or a neighbor  
strolling—  
if neighbors still  
“stroll,” as my parents,  
in the 50’s, took evening  
strolls to their favorite bar  
off the highway  
near the Bayway traffic circle.  
Funny, I should recall that  
now, my father  
dead 15 years,  
my brother and I then  
probably doing our  
homework, listening  
to evening radio, not having  
formed, yet, concepts such as  
“neighborhood bar,”  
fully satisfied  
at home, a rented 2<sup>nd</sup> story  
place on Clarkson, center  
of all things,  
while U.S. highway 1, busiest  
in the country, ran  
all night  
behind our bedroom windows.

**UNTITLED**  
**Virginia Franklin**



## SCENES FROM A NEW YORK ODYSSEY: IN THE END IS THE BEGINNING

Mitch Levenberg

New York Odyssey: Bridge to a New World is a Summer Enrichment program sponsored by St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights. Open to high school juniors and seniors. It is a program designed to introduce students to the culture and history of New York City.

It all begins with a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. The bridge literally connects two places, Brooklyn and Manhattan, but symbolically it connects the past with the present, the physical with the spiritual. And as we approach the bridge, something happens. There's a kind of shuffling silence; we can hear our sneakers only. The bridge looms before us in its altar-like splendor. Everything, including our sneakers, seems to take on a special significance. This is sacred ground; no matter how technologically advanced we have become, we can't help but be awed by this bridge. "Oh harp and altar, of a fury fused," Hart Crane extols in his poem, "The Bridge." It is the great Godhead, pathway for body and soul. This is not just a technological achievement of the past, but an eternal achievement of the imagination. It has inspired artists and philosophers, clergymen and ironworkers.

Yet, as we approach, people seem to take it for granted, rushing towards other places in the physical world, using the Bridge only for its stone and steel practicality. Perhaps that's good. Imagine cars stopping in the middle, people suddenly connecting with some indefinable spiritual urge, with some unconscious need to reach towards eternity, to get out of their cars to take pictures or to just gaze in wonder at the amazing views or have a picnic beneath the behemoth columns. The city would be in chaos. Traffic would be backed up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

This bridge can't be explained. It has to be felt. At first our students resist. It's the hottest day of the year. I tell them that about halfway across, we'll stop and rest. I don't tell them yet we'll be writing poetry. This bridge **is** Poetry and once they feel that, once they feel that in their aching muscles and bones, I know they will want nothing better than to express those feelings, those unconscious urgings in verse. However, it's a bit more of a struggle than I imagine. Things happen too quickly. You can't rush inspiration. The sights and sounds around us are magnified, intensified; there is little room whether in the imagination or on the bridge itself for contemplation. If you stand in the wrong place you could get run over by a bicycle. Tourists, not very contemplative, are snapping pictures everywhere. The students become self-conscious. There's a whirlwind of activity and the very wind itself threatens to blow away the paper on which they are to write their poems. Some giggle, others gossip; some haven't even brought a pen and wait for others to finish so they can borrow one. Others, however, begin writing immediately. They write of the river and the buildings, of the sound of cars and trucks and tugs and seagulls. They seem to love the seagulls. Escape? Freedom? I think of Crane again and his Bridge; I gather the students around me and then shout out beyond their heads, beyond the river and the skyscrapers,

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest  
The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,  
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high  
Over the chained bay waters Liberty—

"What did you hear?" I ask them.

"Not much," someone says.

“Something about seagulls,” says another.

“Yes, okay,” I say.

“Liberty!” says another.

“Buildings!” still another shouts out.

“Exactly!” I cry. “Now you try!” So they go back to their poems and when they finish, they read their work aloud; they shout above the din not only because they have to but because they want to; they are feeling it now; their hearts and souls have opened wider than they ever expected. They even surprise themselves. When I tell them they have just paid their respects to the great Godhead, to the great bridge, to all those generations who have come before them, they say, “We have? No way!” “Way!” I tell them as we continue our walk across the bridge, a necessary beginning to the New York Odyssey.

### Greenwood Cemetery

We visit Greenwood cemetery in Brooklyn which, along with being a cemetery, was also one of the first great city parks, with its green rolling hills, its four beautiful lakes. At the entrance there is a frieze depicting Christ raising Lazarus from the dead. If he had been buried here, chances are he'd want to stay. Above Lazarus rising are nests of Monk parrots adding to the already idyllic, non-cemetery like surroundings. As our guide Frank Mescall points out, “There is nothing morbid, nothing melancholy here. It's like walking through a beautiful park.” In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Greenwood was the biggest tourist attraction after Niagara Falls. Now there are 650,000 buried here, spread out among 478 acres.

Frank Mescall, our guide, who teaches English at St. Francis College, meets us at the main gate. On this blazing hot day in July, Frank, 77 years old, wears a white sun hat, and holds his tattered portfolio containing photos of and articles about some of the cemetery's more interesting inhabitants. He would rather melt into oblivion than ever relinquish the pleasure of showing people around this “living cemetery,” always alive with history.

An important goal of the New York Odyssey program is to give NYC high school kids the sense that we are who we are, we know what we know and we have what we have because of the generations that have come before us. As Whitman says in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” “It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not. I am with you, you men and women of a generation or ever so many generations hence.” Indeed, we remain one collective soul with our past; time closes no doors but extends itself like a bridge. It is the dead of former generations who invite us, who have a story to tell. We are their guests. We tread softly above their chambers.

First we visit the graves of two brothers who fought for opposite sides during the Civil War. Both were wounded at the battle of Petersburg, both stayed at the same hospital but in different wings, both were visited by Walt Whitman, both died before ever seeing each other again and were buried side by side here at Greenwood. Frank enjoys pointing out ironies; history is full of ironies; war is full of ironies, especially the civil war. The cemetery is irony itself—full of contrast. There's certainly an eclectic, if not eccentric democracy that prevails here.

William Poole, “The Butcher” of *Gangs of New York* fame is buried here as is Boss Tweed. You have the Brooks brothers who may have dealt in tweed but were anything but butchers. You have the doctor who kept the dying and impoverished Ulysses S. Grant alive so the ex-president and civil war general (there are 38 union and two confederate generals buried here) could finish his memoirs and provide for his family. There's the wealthy bachelor who sought out quiet assignations upstate only to be chopped to pieces by a jealous mistress. There's the young boy who survived the Titanic (even his Teddy Bear was saved—Frank shows us a

picture of it) only to become, a short time later, the first person in America to be run over by an automobile.

The social ironies abound. Frank points out the rather oversized and ostentatious mausoleum of the Havermayers, a wealthy 19<sup>th</sup> Century family of art collectors, inconspicuously adjacent to a very non-descript gravestone upon which the initials **GWB** are engraved. This is the grave of George Bellows, an actual artist, famous for his painting of Jack Dempsey being knocked out of the boxing ring. Frank seems to relish this “knot of contrarities.” He shows us one mausoleum with Tiffany glass windows, the tomb of the founder of the Dow Jones upon which is carved a slumbering marble bear, or the family drowned in a shipwreck upon whose tombstone is a beautifully carved depiction of the ship on its way down.

Then he takes us to the gravesite of 103 unidentified persons who on a cold night in 1876, perished along with 193 others in a fire at the downtown Brooklyn theater. Frank informs us that the leading actress, realizing a fire had broken out, calmly asks the audience to file out slowly, but instead many panic, run for the exit doors and are killed because at that time exit doors opened in instead of out. These 103 persons remain unidentified and now a single obelisk marks their communal grave.

Not far from here is the gravesite of the rather eccentric Louis Bonard, the miser who chose to live in squalor yet donated \$200,000 (in the 1890's!) to save the ASPCA, and the tomb of Walter Hunt, inventor of both the safety pin and the fountain pen whose beloved dog lies nearby and upon whose tomb Hunt had the following inscribed:

Only a dog do you say, sir critic  
Only a dog but as truth I prize  
The truest love I have known in living  
Lays in the depths of her limpid eyes  
Frosts of winter nor heat of summer  
Could make her fail if my footsteps led  
And memory holds in its treasure casket  
The name of my darling who  
laith dead.

Students snap pictures of each other posing at the doors of the more imposing mausoleums like the one with the Tiffany windows. A few ask if they can go look inside, and I tell them if they do they might not come out again. Frank says, “don’t laugh,” that back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a common fear among people that they might be buried before they were actually dead and when they woke up would not be able to get out of their coffins. One young man buried here had seemed dead, really wasn’t, had papers in his pockets explaining his rare condition which no one ever saw, and ended up dying during his “autopsy.” Frank informs us that even George Washington (who is not buried here) was so afraid of being buried alive, he wanted a rod with a bell and string attached to it extending out of his casket that he could ring it if he woke up. Some students pose in front of a mausoleum with their ears against the doors to check if anyone is knocking.

Later, we pass a small, modern building which turns out be the crematorium. No one wants to go in there. Frank turns his nose up at it. It’s an aberration, an eyesore; it works against history, against art, against our imagination. The contrasts, the ostentations, the simplicities, the vulgarities and eloquence of the graves, tombstones and mausoleums create a world that is not just dead and gone but always teeming with life in our imagination. Frank usually begins his stories by saying, “Listen to this,” and ends them with, “Can you imagine that?”

At one point, Frank, so excited about moving on to the next gravesite, takes a shortcut and slips on the grass. Afraid, perhaps, the soft ground might pull him under, several students rush to his aid, lift him off the ground and stand him back on his legs. I notice his pants are mud-stained; his elbow is bleeding. I think of the original marble tombstones and statues Frank pointed out that had partially collapsed or even disintegrated, but Frank, like the granite ones that eventually replaced them, will not succumb to the elements of time or nature, nor miss a stride as he trail blazes to the next gravesite. Once there, Frank points out the un-ostentatious tombstone of Leonard Bernstein and then, at last, rests beneath the statue of Minerva.

Ah, Minerva, the comfort of Wisdom. Standing with her on a hill, we see beyond the rooftops to New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty. Minerva salutes Liberty with her left arm while Liberty salutes Minerva with her right. However, a Condominium, still under construction, rises in the foreground and threatens to obscure their view of each other. Frank tells us that people were, for a while, so to speak, up in arms. Eventually, a compromise was reached with the builder and now, at least for now, the building will not rise high enough to block Minerva's view of Lady Liberty and vice versa. For now the future breathes a sigh of relief and history holds its sacred ground.

At this point, everyone is tired and hot and seems ready to go, although I'm not sure Frank is. "What time do you have to leave?" he asks me, "because I'd like to show them a few more things," so I start to get the feeling now, that if Frank Mescall really wanted to, he could probably go on for, I would hope, eternity.

### **Ellis Island**

We take the ferry to Ellis Island. There was once a man named Ellis who owned the island and the government bought it from him for all those immigrants, for that relentless wave of immigrants. "How much of our population came from immigrants?" our guide asks. No one says a word. It's got to be a trick question. "No? No one? 10%? 50%?" she asks. No one says a word. "99%!" she exclaims. She looks like a throwback to one of those immigration officials who could size you up in six seconds or less and determine you were unfit to enter the country. Either an eye problem or you looked like a psychopath or you gave the wrong answer to a bad question like, "Do you have a job waiting for you?" Definitely a trick question. You feel like saying yes, so they won't think you're a parasite. The correct answer, however, is no, because they don't want some unwashed immigrant taking jobs away from the natives. I feel glad I'm already here.

The morning we left for the island, it was pouring. Some kids insisted on staying on top of the ferry, wind blowing, rain whipping in their faces, no raincoats, no umbrellas, just those three adventurous (watch them! I tell our instructors) high school kids against the elements. There they were singing and shouting, looking out over the choppy seas like they were coming into America for the first time.

The Great Hall is one of those great ghost places, filled now with tourists instead of the thousands of immigrants who passed through it from 1892-1954. On one day alone, the ranger tells us, there were over 11,000 standing in that hall. It's the kind of place that causes a bit of retrospective anxiety, those anxious moments of history that could have changed our lives completely. What if my grandfather had trachoma? What if my grandmother looked crazy? To me she did. I can't help feeling to this day that somehow she got away with something. You look at the benches and when you sit down you think of your behind meeting the behinds of past generations—in this Whitmanesque meeting of flesh and spirit, past and present in the collective, timeless soul of humanity. When we hear the stories of acceptance or exclusion all determined in

a matter of six seconds, six prejudicial seconds, we feel relieved we are here, that we appreciate the past and the same time put it all behind us.

As I sit on the benches waiting for the others to return, I imagine being my grandfather in his black baggy unwashed pants, frightened, yet excited, anxious; as I wait for the students to meet me here, I begin to feel a little anxious, as if I have been here long enough and it is time to go. Literally, a ferry leaves in ten minutes back to the city and I think we are all anxious to get on it. Once you are on Ellis Island for a certain period of time, when it seems you have seen and heard enough, there is no reason to be there anymore. Even now it seems like a temporary stop, a transition. Transitions, especially here, on the borderline of past and present, are moments to move forward or fall back for good. Perhaps there is also the unconscious fear of staying so long we would all be sent back, back to wherever we came from. This seems especially true as we continue to hear the park ranger again, this time in the background, shouting to the ghosts of our ancestors, “You look too crazy? Your hair’s a bit tussled? You got your buttons on wrong? Your eye looks funny? You got a job waiting? Back where you came from!”

### **The Tenement Museum**

The day after Ellis Island, the last day of our Odyssey, we take the students to the Lower East Side tenement museum on Orchard Street. When you walk around the Lower East Side now, you see how much it’s trying to be like the Upper East Side with its designer shops and gourmet delis. The tenement itself, however, with its dark, foreboding hallway and creaky stairwells, still struggles, somewhat successfully, to maintain its historically oppressive quality. This, of course, depends mostly on sight, a hazy murky dimness that asks us to imagine a time of extreme poverty and overpopulation, a basic universal misery and uncertainty that defined the immigrant experience. And just like a hundred plus years ago, there is no air-conditioning in the summer, heat in the winter; the ventilation is poor. Even now, one of our students, affected by the heat, the closeness, begins to feel faint and has to be helped out of the building and back into the present century.

Our guide seems too contrived; yes, he is knowledgeable and enthusiastic but only in a programmed sort of way. In some ways we’d be better off just being here, absorbing the atmosphere, channeling the ghosts who still linger.

The guide tells us about the Gumpertz, a Jewish-German family living there in the 1870’s. He tells us that one morning Mr. Gumpertz left his wife and baby and never came back. His wife waited. A day, a week, a month, but he never returned. Where did he go? What could have happened to him? Did he vanish into thin air? Was he murdered for the few coins he might have had in his pocket and then dumped into the river? Who would know? People did not carry identification in those days as they do today. And what about Mrs. Gumpertz? The guide asks us. What do you think she did? How would she survive? What else could poor immigrant women do in those days except become prostitutes? Our guide repeats a script he has repeated many times before. He is outside of history by now, mired in the present, but as for us, at that moment, in that tiny dark crowded room, how could we be anywhere else but inside Mrs. Gumpertz’s head? We stare at the front door. We listen for footsteps on the staircase. We imagine the front door opening and Mr. Gumpertz yelling out, “I’m back! I’m back! Any soup left?”

But he never does come back. This is the agony of Mrs. Gumpertz. Even if just for a moment, we need to feel her agony. What better way to learn about the past than to feel it in the present? But we need to move on; the heat becomes more and more oppressive and our 21<sup>st</sup> century minds know that we must move on, jump forward to the end of the story, learn that poor

Mrs. Gumpertz, able to wait no longer, decides to become a seamstress, another option open to poor immigrant women. She brings in work from people in the neighborhood. After all, she has a baby and another small child to support. Later on, we are relieved to hear she inherits \$600 when Mr. Gumpertz' parents die. Six hundred dollars can keep one alive for a long time in those days.

Mrs. Gumpertz doesn't concern us anymore; we move on to another apartment, an Italian family from the 1920's. We hear the recorded voice of the woman, now an old woman, who lived there as a child. But somehow we're not done with Mrs. Gumpertz. Somehow it's at the beginnings of stories where we want to be—the young child growing up in that tiny stultifying apartment, not an old woman telling us her story from somewhere out on Long Island. And Mrs. Gumpertz too. We're glad it worked out for her as it would eventually for all of our immigrant ancestors, but I only want this tenement building to be about the beginning of things, the struggles themselves frozen in time.

So as we head back out of the building, into a blazing hot sun, yet knowing, as Mrs. Gumpertz never knew, that air-conditioning waits just around the corner, and I'm thinking how much better it might have been not to know whether Mr. Gumpertz came back or not, but to think of Mrs. Gumpertz always standing there before the door listening to the footsteps on the stairs, for all eternity.

When I ask the students if they feel the same way, they just stare at me. But I know they feel the same way. I saw how indifferent they became when they learned Mr. Gumpertz never came back, when they learned his wife stopped waiting for him. I know the future came much too quickly for them, that history became a thing no longer felt, experienced in our minds and bodies, but only an abstraction outside ourselves, something told to us from some great, unknowable distance.

### **Katz Deli**

It is the final stop of our Odyssey. Behind the counter we see the hot dogs and French fries and Knishes and pickles, but most of the kids just order burgers and fries. Knishes! I cry out. Sour Pickles! The Corn beef and Pastrami! Please, it's on me; order the corn beef! The pastrami! The salami! Two with! One without! Anything but hamburgers! The walls are covered with the photos of all the famous people who have eaten here and I tell them (whether it's true or not) that not one has ever eaten a hamburger here. They're not impressed, but when the kids follow me out I notice they are not behind me but have surrounded a table where the rapper Cassidy, Cassidy! Not Woody Allen, not Henny Youngman, not Alan King, Cassidy! sits eating what looks like, not a hamburger, but a corn beef sandwich. "Vindication!" I cry out as I walk out into the still blazing afternoon sun of the Lower East Side. "Vindication!" I cry out towards the unseen gulls who pivot and dip their wings above lady liberty, above the great bridge, above the goddess Minerva. "Vindication!" I cry out, heading down the subway steps as our New York Odyssey comes to a perfect ending.

## **GUARDIAN DEVIL**

**Kate Bernadette Benedict**

He is no red sprite, perching on the shoulder,  
no fiend with leather wings and forked tail.  
He is not male,

not female, not a person at all but a Presence,  
an undertow.

That encumbrance you know,  
that sinker around the neck,  
that shackle around the ankle,  
that pull

at the tulle of your being, your light being,  
diaphanous and fine?—

*not* fine, *not* light, a weight, a burden.  
The Presence tricks you so,  
foils

hope, soils everything and everything  
is spoiled,

poisoned. No wonder we scowl  
behind a smiling mask, no wonder we do  
terrible things

when this terrible thing plagues us.  
I'm told

the Presence is so bold,  
instead of merely vexing, it infests.  
The human host shows

nothing but a righteous glow, a charism,  
a rousing air of enterprise and fun.

Followers gather.  
The devil's work gets done.

## RADIO INFINITUM

Srinjay Chakravarti

His sudden voice on the radio startles my senses, and I turn with a half-gasp at the sleek black hi-fi music system my son recently bought from Fancy Bazaar.

I am five years old again, naïve and ingenuous, the youngest daughter of our sprawling household. My teenaged cousins, whose father had died of meningitis just a few months ago, tease me crazy: “Look, your Papa is locked up inside that big black box, you can hear his voice, can’t you? But he won’t be able to ever, ever get out! You’ll never see his face again!” Iced water trickles down my spine, a cold clammy hand clutches at my solar plexus. I cry myself silly, and they cluster around me, laughing and jeering: “Reena is a little goose! Reena is a little fool! Reena is a silly cow!” Tuhin and Tushar, Raima and Rimi - they are all there, clapping their hands and dancing gleefully around me.

When they have finally dispersed, I desperately fiddle with the radio’s knobs, trying to bring him back to life. His voice hisses and fizzes, silence and static forming a grainy aural gestalt in my eardrums.

That vague fear always lurks within me that like my uncle, who was carried away one fine morning in a hearse and never returned, my Papa, too, has abandoned us and gone far, far away. He is lost somewhere deep inside the radio, and nobody will be able to bring him back.

That was Calcutta in 1950, an era that is unimaginable to my three-year-old grandson - there was no TV, no satellite channels, no tape recorders or CD players, not even transistors. Those were the days of All India Radio: where a massive misshapen black hulk with knobs and dials gave us news reports, weather bulletins, Hindi film hits, Bengali classical music . . . And my father.

A professor of astrophysics at the Metropolitan College of Science, he was quite well known as a writer of science fiction for teenagers. The Jules Verne of Bengal, they used to call him. As radio then was the only way to reach out in real time to millions of people, he was often invited to give lectures or compere live programs at Akashvani Bhavan. His clear, modulated voice would describe the moons of Jupiter, chronicle the trajectory of Halley’s Comet, explain an arcane conundrum of Leibniz’s calculus, or even recite Jibanananda’s delicate strophes from *Banalata Sen*.

Most of these programs were live, and he went directly on air for the broadcasts. Those weekends when he disappeared into those studios at Eden Gardens were a terrifying time for me. I would wait with bated breath, too little to understand the marvels of what was then ultra-modern technology - after all, kids those days were not at all tech-savvy, like they are today. It was agonizing for me.

He did come back every time, but my fears never really went away till I was much older. It was then that I realized that he *would* come back home, come what may.

Daddy would always be there to comfort me, hold me in his arms, hug me with odors of tenderness and Cuticura talc.

Over the years the radio became an indispensable part of our lives, slowly seeping into the pores of our quotidian selves. Raima, as she grew older, developed a lovely singing voice and soon got a chance to sing on All India Radio. I remember how I would sit entranced before our Philips set on Wednesday evenings, when Raima’s mellifluous *thumris* and *khayals* filled our drawing room with plangent melody, as if the fragrant *shiulis* and *champaks* from the front garden had suddenly blossomed in the airwaves.

Now it was her turn to disappear into the black box where silence and sound melded, but I was older - and wiser. She herself tried to tease me half-heartedly with her earlier pranks: "See, Reena, I am going to be locked up in the radio tonight. How will you get me out from there now?" But I knew that trick, and would no longer fall for it.

All of us children lived together under the commanding presence of my father: his nephews and nieces, along with my sister, my brother and me. I realize now what a burden it was for him to look after such a large household, with his brother dead and my grandfather, too, gone long back. Yet he never complained, and his face, ever-smiling, still shines as a beacon in the sfumato mist of my years.

I remember him telling me softly when I bought my first sari: "Reena, you're a grown-up girl now, you will have to understand some of our problems. This blue georgette sari is gorgeous, I can see that very well, but could you do with something less expensive next time?"

The strain of looking after our extended family was telling on him. He had the responsibility of marrying off his brother's two daughters, not just his own. There were problems confronting us that I had not realized at that age: social status, marital compatibility, demands for dowry from prospective in-laws.

Raima's wedding, at the age of nineteen, was a low-key affair. It was the best he could manage. But the insurance agent with whom she tied the knot did not remain faithful to her. One evening I came back from college to find that she had leapt from the roof of our three-storied house - and her body had to be taken away before I could have a chance to see it. Both Raima's brothers left Calcutta soon after; Tushar to become a surgeon in Edinburgh, Tuhin as an engineer in Berlin. It was as if the house itself held dark, foreboding memories for them, where death stalked the corridors and their father's and sister's shadows lingered in the pallor of the late winter sun.

The huge house, with its marble columns and Kota tiled floors, slowly wrapped itself up in mildew and dust, a shawl of its ageing, as my sister and I left our home to get married. The years took their toll on my father. He suffered an internal hemorrhage, bore frequent bouts of gastric pain stoically and even survived a heart attack.

He retired from college, spending his time writing stories and novellas for different magazines. He still went to the microphone at the state-run radio broadcaster's studios to talk about Captain Nemo and Doctor Moreau, but with every passing year fewer and fewer listeners tuned in.

Time was creeping forward, bringing with it color cinema, transistors, and finally television and VCRs. The reign of radio was truly over.

I still remember that day, seventeen summers ago, when the flames engulfed his thin wasted eighty-three-year-old body, wracked by cancer and suffering, in the electric furnace on Crematorium Road. I can't remember who wept more: my mother or we two sisters. Those images of my father's last illness - the doctor probing in his limb for a vein to push the injection needle into, blood and phlegm coming up in spurts from his mouth and filling the tin bowl held before his mouth by my son - those have burned themselves into my memory, acid etching nightmares in the metal of my mind.

They still play his old recordings on Vividh Bharati - the Variety India show - itself a dinosaur in an age of laser discs and fuzzy logic machines. At sudden moments, unexpectedly, his distinctive voice comes on air, reciting the journey of the Golden Boat from Tagore's *Sonar Tari*; and my heart gives a lurch.

I still fiddle with the knobs and dials to reel in the airwaves, block the static, hear his voice crisp and resonant after half a century. Even now I feel he'll come back soon, he hasn't

gone too far from me. Is he really locked up in the infinite spaces within the big black box, which stretch away to an unknown horizon from where nobody ever returns?

**CORNER LIQUOR STORE**  
Christopher Woods



## **A FOSTER MOTHER'S CHILD**

**Jonterri Gadson**

Smearred coffee-rings stained the outside of the manila folders that arrived an hour or two before the State of Idaho placed its freckled unfortunate in my mother's house. They'd come with one half-empty box of the broken things they were allowed to remember—a hand-painted porcelain piggy bank with the coin slot chipped into a belly gorge, a naked blonde Barbie with no arms and a buzz-cut, a pasted four-leaf clover. The kind of luck they needed couldn't be crafted with a glue stick. Still, those little white kids wore their bruises like plastic-gold dollar store sheriff's badges that gave them authority over any anguish in my mother's house. It was hard to complain when my temporary siblings had court documents falling out of a folder in the living room; documents that proved that catching C.J. staring at me in Earth Science was insignificant in comparison—even if C.J. had sparked the off-topic class conversation that ended with his proclamation that his family would never approve of him bringing home a black girl. The cold ivory iron hearts of my daybed chilled my scalp where my auburn-streaked curls parted as I laid mum, more giddy than I was ashamed, replaying the moment in fifth period when I came the closest I had ever been to being liked by a boy.

## **MADONNA AND CHILD**

*AT THE ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM*

**Elizabeth Oakes**

Dough- faced, with muddy skin, this Mary holds an ordinary looking Jesus, one not prescient like the others. She has forgotten the angel. This is a woman who knows pain.

In the others, the Botticelli, for instance, Mary is blond and beautiful. They're everywhere in this medieval sanctuary, being as omnipresent in the Middle ages as Barbie today, I suppose.

There's no nimbus, no light around this Mary. She is made of clay like us. What is that light, anyway, but heaven seeping in? And she has had quite enough of that for now.

## PEACOCK IN ASSISI

Diana Woodcock

In Assisi, cry of the neighbor's peacock—  
like Chiyo-ni's cuckoo—  
kept me awake, alert. Like her,  
I waited, paper and brush in hand.  
Sometimes I would stand by the window,  
gazing out at Umbrian fields, dying sunflowers—  
trying to let go. And I would feel as if  
my placenta must be buried in one of them,  
tug of the cord pulling me back  
to a medieval town far from Rome  
and the economics of big city life.  
In Assisi, repercussions of the law  
of love applied still evident on basilica walls,  
along tiered streets, on faces of pilgrims—  
peace and delight in the mysteries  
of nature, miracles, and love.

In Assisi, cry of the peacock:  
an abrupt stop of all regretting,  
all fretting over spilt milk.  
Hidden by its garden one tier  
below, yet one could know beyond  
all doubt its feathers were spread out  
in the most provocative display  
of beauty and dominion.  
I stood invisible, vulnerable,  
serene as I waited for its next high-  
pitched scream capable of shattering  
blown glass, confirming at last  
the soul's existence.

July morning, halfway up Subasio's  
flank, soul clamoring over garden wall,  
noting every interchange between stone  
and leaf, every movement of grain  
of earth, feasting its one eye on the town  
cryer, hoping the peacock will never tire  
of keeping Assisians and their daily lot  
of pilgrims awake.

**SOMETIMES, WHEN THE PEACOCK CRIED OUT**  
Diana Woodcock

Sometimes, when the peacock cried out  
at dusk from the garden on the next  
tier down, I almost replied—something  
deep inside remembering when a thousand  
years ago, we were lovers—or at least  
brothers. My soul became a peacock  
summer evening Assisi, joy in solitude.

Sometimes, when the peacock cried out  
during the night, and I awakened,  
listening in the stillness, it was all I could do  
to remain in bed—a voice in my head urging  
*Rush to his side.*

Short summer night, dawn would arrive;  
again, his cry. Song birds beginning  
to sing, I would have done anything  
to have had just a one-night fling with him—  
would have practiced all the right moves,  
learned how to entice and woo.

Sunrise, he cries again, and the oleander  
blossoms on the verandah quiver  
under the waning crescent moon.  
In a desert country now, I turn  
to haiku—yearn for Chiyo-ni's stream,  
sense my heart flowing pure water.

I leave it to the wind—  
crying peacock in his cloistered  
Umbrian garden. But we two  
are one in our blue orb,  
thin ephemeral layer of biosphere—  
Creator having put us here together once  
to share Assisi's summer-scented air.

**SUMMER IN ASSISI**  
**Diana Woodcock**

Far from scalawags, carpet  
baggers, robber barons  
and political tricksters,

I get high on the night sky  
and the peacock's elixirs.  
First gleam of morning light

penetrates the gloom.  
Peacock, my white knight,  
rescues me from my soul's

dark night. As if I were  
the mist—shayla-draped  
provocatively over Mt.

Subasio—I hazard the wind.  
Adagio. In the neighbor's  
hibiscus, one cabbage white

who bedded down for the short  
summer night flexes his wings.  
I follow his lead.

## TRAVELING TO HANKINSON

Kristina Roth

*Blessed is the way wherein You walk today, for there is prepared for You a place of rest.  
- Orthodox Christian Funeral Liturgy Prokeimenon*

It had been almost two years since I last stood in this northern spot, and it wasn't any easier now than it had been the first time. Grass had reclaimed the ruptured earth, split open to receive Grandma Helen's coffin, but the prairie farmland nearby stretched on as quietly as ever, unchanged in its witness. A chilly spring wind blew around me, whipping my hair onto my cheeks and into the tears I knew would come. I wished I had brought something with me to leave behind, perhaps a wind sock or piece of yard art. I hated having her here, so far away from the town where she spent most of her life. If she had been buried in Rapid City, my sister, cousins, and I could have visited her grave and made sure it was maintained and decorated after her own funky style. Instead, she was buried nine hours away, next to our grandpa, who had passed away over three decades earlier. Leaving her behind after her burial was one of the hardest things I have ever done.

When we were children, our parents took my sister Teri and me on annual journeys to Hankinson, the hamlet in North Dakota near Grandma Helen's childhood home where several of her grown siblings still lived. After visiting them, we'd continue on to Minnesota to see my mom's side. Back then, these trips were a fun diversion, a chance to see family and cousins, to swim in the clear lakes and eat corn straight out of the garden, to bicker with my sister and torment our parents in the car. "Stop pulling my hair! Mom, she's scratching me!" we would alternately complain. What long drives to children then, miles and miles over the high prairie, fields of grass so foreign to our forest-focused eyes, the smell of our parents' coffee in the Thermos nauseating to us at that age.

Those trips are long gone, though, and this time my husband, David, and I alone made the quiet, spring-green drive, a detour northeast on our way back to Texas from the Black Hills. Our purpose was to visit one of Grandma's brothers, an old bachelor named Louis Schmitz. We hadn't seen him since her funeral. He had aged noticeably, his body frailer and thinner, his eyesight and hearing worse. But he still had the same spunky attitude as always, delighting in showing us the few houseplants that he was nurturing in plastic ice cream pails. One vine was especially thriving, climbing up a chain and draping down around his kitchen window, its green grip on life as tenacious as that of the prairie grass. "Do you like plants, Kristi? Do you want to take home one?" he asked, setting aside a potted clipping. It still grows on top of my fridge, many times the length it was two years ago. We took him out to dinner at the Indian casino; after eating, he wanted to pull a few slots, gambling away three rolls of quarters. As much as I loved seeing Louis, now that Grandma was gone, the way in which he reminded me of her was sometimes startlingly painful. His eyes were the hardest part for me to witness, their expressions, shape, and color so similar to hers. The intonations of his speech, his sense of humor, and his eccentricities reminded me of her as well.

Not uncommon in my family tree of Catholic ancestors, Louis and Grandma were from a group of ten children – five boys and five girls – born to German immigrants on the North Dakota prairie. How I envy these large families, being able to see each other's blood and stories reflected in the many faces around them, even though I know that blood is no guarantee of authentic relationship. I marvel at their parents' embrace of life and their courage in raising such

a large brood. Watching our great aunts and uncles, whether they were alone or playing cards together, was marvelous entertainment to my sister and me. Grandma, of course, is who we knew best, especially since she lived only a mile down the street from us in Rapid City. As a child, I remember her sometimes sitting down with a beer while she chain-smoked, uttering the occasional swear word in her slow, incredulous manner. She enjoyed pulling our legs and scandalizing us in a gentle manner. “I picked up some donuts at Sooper Dooper. I’ve got some chips, too,” she offered before eagerly sharing the latest outrageous stories from the *Weekly World News*. Those tales of Cabbage Patch dolls coming to life did a number on me and caused me to banish mine to the basement. All these years later, they’re still a little creepy to me. Not ironically, she also kept several images of the Virgin Mary and Jesus in her house and was devoted to watching sermons on the TV.

Grandma’s little eccentricities showed in other ways, too. She always dressed in her own funky style, refashioning second-hand clothes into pieces that were more practical for her. “Look at these pockets I added to this blouse front – just the right size for a pack of cigarettes and a lighter!” she explained on more than one occasion. She’d begun wearing frizzy gray wigs early on for reasons unknown to any of us; I never saw her natural hair with my own eyes. The gates on her chain-link fence were always padlocked shut against the unruly neighbor kids, but she slept with the doors of her 1950s ranch-style house unlocked. She never learned to drive, a fact which gave her family and friends good reasons to drop by often in case she needed to go to the store or wanted to join us on an outing.

Grandma’s brothers would sometimes come down from North Dakota for extended visits at the holidays. Merry Widow and Gin Rummy were played at all hours of day or night. Cigarettes in hand, Uncle Louis downed at least a six-pack every day in the process but didn’t seem to show its effects. When he drew a card he needed, he’d smack a kiss onto it and proclaim, “Well hello, Dolly!” Underneath their unassuming, slightly goofy demeanors, they shrewdly calculated each other’s next moves, keeping a mental tally of the cards that had already been played and goading each other with well-placed comments. Although a straight-A student, I never learned to play as deftly and sharply as they did. I sometimes saw their gentle eyes tighten ever so slightly as they assessed my poor card skills. “Pay attention to what’s been drawn and who’s collecting what,” they would remind me.

On this most recent visit with Uncle Louis in Hankinson, though, playing cards was out of the question because of his advanced macular degeneration, rendering a black hole in the middle of his eyesight. He also tired out more quickly than just a few years before. He was still chasing a wild hare about a uranium lead that he wanted David to pursue for him. “It’s those poltergeists again, moving my papers around on me,” he murmured as he tried to locate the charts. In his mid-eighties, I knew we may not have another chance to visit with him. Bidding goodbye after our casino dinner was difficult.

After our visit to Grandma’s grave the next morning, David and I drove a few miles north to Mantador, where she and her siblings were born and raised. I remembered stories of their freezing-cold nights in the attic bedroom, waking to dustings of frost on their blankets. Their hardworking blacksmith father was often pounding out dough for strudel on the table below, preparing to assemble the pastries with apples from his own trees. “Can you tell us how to find the cemetery?” I hollered to a coverall-clad man from our car, the only person we saw out in the three-blocks square town. “It’s behind you, back by the railroad tracks and the bend in the road.” Although Mantador was so near the town of Hankinson, I don’t remember having visited it or the Schmitz graves during any of our previous trips. After we located it, the ground soggy and damp from recent rains, I was full of questions as I somberly gazed at the headstones of the family

gathered together underground. The silence reminded me of the corn field that stretched beyond our hotel window the weekend of Grandma's funeral. Its emptiness reflected so much the great grief inside of me as I wept upon the bed, as I imagine my other family members were doing as well in their own hotel rooms. I was grateful for the silence then and was grateful for it at this point as well, peaceful and consoling in a way.

I recognized all the names of people I had known and some I hadn't on the headstones: my great-grandparents, John and Marguerite Schmitz, and many of their ten children buried around them. I wondered at their stories, all but lost to me other than a few words passed along by my father. One son had been quite traumatized at Pearl Harbor and was never the same again after spending too much time under water during the attack. He moved home to live with his parents again and raised Pekingese dogs. A daughter died in Chicago in the 1940s when her housecoat caught fire and engulfed her in flames before she could be saved. Another daughter never did realize the vocation of monasticism which her father held out for her, although she did spend her life as a housekeeper for the priest. Other grown children were buried with them as well. I yearned to have known more about them.

Sadly, Uncle Louis himself died this past September, fifteen months after our visit with him. Fortunately, we were able to make sure that he was buried with his parents and siblings, as he told us were his wishes during that last visit. A good friend of his who'd won a million at the casino is rumored to have paid for his funeral. Only two of the siblings remain now, both storytellers and rather temper-prone, locked in a standoff of many years, Marion refusing to talk to Phil over some insult from decades ago. I suspect they will be buried elsewhere.

\*\*\*

Perhaps ironically, my first memories of Hankinson are of attending the funeral of another great uncle. We walked to the funeral down a dark, leaf-strewn sidewalk, my dad grasping my hand, seemingly now a prelude to what would come years later. Only a pre-schooler, I asked my mom of the deceased, "Why is he sleeping up there in front of all of these people?" For a time after that first memory, Hankinson was a place to go to celebrate and revisit family connections, but by the time I was in high school, it mostly became a place to go to for funerals, to say goodbye to family. And now most of my elderly loved ones, particularly Grandma Helen, are resting there, their time on the earth as much a mystery as when they walked among us. Just as I contemplated the stories and lives of those Schmitz relatives I'd not met when visiting their gravesites in Mantador, wondering what they were like and who they loved, my sister, cousins, and I had equally as many questions about those we did know, especially our grandma. "I wonder who Steve's father was and where Grandma met him," we often asked each other, referring to the son she had out of wedlock in the 1940s who died early of cancer. "What was her marriage to Stiff like? And why didn't she ever learn how to drive?" No matter what her answers to such questions would have been, however, the mysteries of her journey were likely as confused as I have found mine to be, but also sprinkled with moments of luminous grace and love.

\*\*\*

Leaving North Dakota behind after our last visit with Uncle Louis, we drove south on I-29 down the green stretch that would return us to Texas. The CD player continued on the same album we'd had in the day before: the Orthodox Christian funeral service, hauntingly and

sweetly chanted in clear Byzantine melodies. Playing it was not intentional, but I was moved by its relevance to my morning's visits to my family's graves. The chanter proclaimed ancient words and psalms about the human condition in calm, measured tones; joyfully sang ancient prayers of hope even in the somber face of death. At that intersection of personal remembrance and theology, these funeral hymns provided a grounding framework for the way in which I perceive my deceased family. Through these hymns, I can pray that their memory will be eternal, not only on the earth, but more importantly to the Creator. I can openly acknowledge that "Terror truly beyond compare is by the mystery of death inspired," but I can also pray, "Give rest O God to the souls of Your servants, and appoint for them a place in Paradise; where the just will shine forth like stars; to Your servants that are sleeping now give rest, overlooking all their offenses." I am reminded of the astounding mystery of existence, encompassing both the joy of loving our families as well as our sorrow at their deaths, and the hope we hold out for an eternal future. For as the Orthodox shout at Pascha (Easter), "Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs, He has granted life." This is what I hope for. This is what I pray for.

**ROLE MODELS**  
**FOR MARLENA DIETRICH**  
**Helen Ruggieri**

you had to have one  
so I looked around

teachers underpaid  
blind with repetition

starchy nurses barking  
don't you faint

hanging suction hooks  
over your lip rigid with pain

serving coffee, tea  
possible me on high

Nancy Drew Dale Evans  
roadsters horses

she sidled up to the bar  
asking what the boys in the back room wanted

some cow town  
with a low exotic accent

not serving up  
anything

her hair blonde and  
just a touch of evil

**PARIS ARTISTS**  
Virginia Franklin



## **LUTHER'S THEORY OF RAIN**

**LB Sedlacek**

Lightning always strikes where it's not wanted; that's what my Grandpa used to say. He used to buy me cheese 'stead of candy 'cause I've never had a sweet tooth not even for those free chocolates they put on your pillows in fancy hotels. My cousin Luther brings the rain gauge from outside. He wears a helmet on his head. He is nine years old. He says, "The gauge shows between 1 and 1.3 inches" and "It's enough rain to help out with the deficit." He learned this from TV. He empties the rain in the sink. I watch it pouring down the drain. It makes a gurgling noise. Luther takes the gauge -- yellow and plastic -- and hangs it back on the trellis outside.

## SOME AFTERNOONS WHEN NOBODY WAS FIGHTING

Lyn Lifshin

my mother took out  
walnuts and chocolate  
chips. My sister and  
I plunged our fingers  
in flour and butter  
smoother than clay.  
Pale dough oozing  
between our fingers  
while the house filled  
with blond bars rising.  
Mother in her pink dress  
with black ballerinas  
circling its bottom  
turned on the Victrola,  
tucked her dress up into  
pink nylon bloomer pants,  
kicked her legs up in the  
air and my sister and I  
pranced thru the living  
room, a bracelet around  
her. She was our Pied  
Piper and we were  
the children of Hamlin,  
circling her as close as the  
dancers on her hem

## **THE PITCHER**

**Barbara H. Edington**

Elisa carried her tired muscles and heavy conscience to the old porcelain sink. In her hand a half-full pitcher wobbled with the unevenness of her gait, splashing water on the creaking floorboards.

The past few hours had brought Elisa's spirit to a new low; her expectations had once again left her disappointed in herself and in others. All the planning and preparing had been useless she thought as she mindlessly reached for the faucet. Her mother's words about setting goals and striving to accomplish them were volleying between her brain and her heart: You must give thought to your objective and focus intently upon it if you are to attain what you wish for. Such was Elisa's childhood, filled with goal setting and striving, ultimately resulting in good academic credentials and a fulfilling career.

The noise from the apartment above jolted her for only a moment. Her ability to focus her thoughts was so attuned from years of practice that nothing short of a force majeure could dissuade her from her melancholy reverie.

Her mind ached from admonishing herself and her heart was dulled with doubt. The pitcher seemed to grow heavier despite the water slopping over the lip with each of her steps. Elisa's nightly ritual included filling the pitcher and placing it at her bedside to prevent the need to go downstairs should she wish for a glass of water. Always anticipating, always prepared, that was Elisa's forte. She never wanted to be caught off-guard so she filled her pitcher with anticipation and preparation.

The clattering from upstairs fell into a muffled cadence and eventually was indistinguishable from the other night noises. In tandem with the quieting, Eliza emptied the pitcher and set it, unfilled, on the clean white countertop. In the sudden stillness, Eliza felt the quiet all the way to her heart.

**CLOTHESLINE IN SUMMER**  
**Mary MacGowan**

The line wobbled  
in brisk morning air  
rushing up the path.

Something about women, laundry  
and the passing of time. Cut-offs,  
boxer shorts, white tee.

Wind hurried them all, filled them  
with invisible horses  
galloping toward the wild water.

**AN INCH A YEAR**  
Andrea O'Brien

One week later, as the nation kept  
its vigil, lighting pillars for the missing,  
we turned off the news and accepted

the change of plans that delivered us  
to highway 178, synchronized  
with the Chippewa River.

Half-mast flags, uncountable  
and threadbare, labored  
in the wind. Still we drove.

I wanted to wrap myself around you  
like a cloak, like fired alluvial clay,  
like a pericardium to protect you

on your next flight to Dulles.  
Instead I would carry the wick of you  
like a prayer card in my pocket.

As best we could, we sang  
along to the Chordettes' *Lollipop*,  
but I couldn't get the pop right.

We reached a T:  
The consequences would be the same;  
it was only a matter of distance.

You navigated by road signs  
and the passage from lumber country  
to the moraines and drumlins

where the last glacier  
dropped its sweeping jewels  
and kettle lakes like a trail of crumbs.

Simply by being there, we brushed away  
the finest layers of sandstone  
and quartzite as if that could

excavate our grief.  
I raised my index finger  
to the hollow my lips formed.

We were both surprised  
by the sound. You motioned  
left with your hand.

I turned east to our home, watched  
the untraveled road disappear in the mirror.  
All the while the continent shifted west.

**UPRIGHT**  
Francis Raven



## ADJECTIVES

Cherri Randall

(Today) I think about mustangs because of the charm on the necklace I am carrying into my office the first Saturday of March, the first official day of spring break, come earlier to Pennsylvania than my native Midwest. The charm is silver, probably not sterling, although it cost over \$20.00 from a Lia Sophia jewelry party we went to in September right after we moved here. The charm is appropriately suspended on a slim leather strap, maybe 18 inches long, harnessed to more shiny silver for a section of chain and clasp. The tag is looped next to the charm suggesting the mustang has been in my daughter's jewelry box the whole time, no frolicking in the red velvet lined pasture sectioned off with fences. No tangled chains or leather straps for her, thank you. She was 20 in February, last month, and I wondered why she ordered the necklace in September, but I have been a mother as long as she has been alive, and I have learned at least as much in those 20 years as she did. I do not choose this battle although a few months later, \$20.00 will be a much bigger deal than it was at the Lia Sophia party, but it was her money.

Last night, she came out of her room holding the necklace. I was on the couch, reading a memoir by Nick Flynn about his alcoholic & sometimes homeless father. I was wearing my cantaloupe glasses because I am 46 and glasses are now necessary to read. I got them at Target on the clearance rack for free. There was a package of three pairs with John Lennon shaped lenses, although my other daughter, Kimberly, eighteen and a half, tells me the first time I wear the black framed ones that I have Harry Potter glasses. It makes me sigh that both adjectives are men's names. I want to say they are from the cover of the book *Delores* by Jacqueline Susann, a book I read in the 1970's, but I am a professor of English and that is hardly a literary book I should admit to reading, although in the 1970's I hardly saw literature as my calling.

In addition to the black pair there was a tortoise-shell brown pair but the third slot in the package was empty. Probably why they were marked 75% down, but I think I am entitled to three pair. I find the cantaloupe glasses packaged singly, also on clearance. They are shaped like cat's eyes, remind me of my grandmother's 1970's glasses but the plastic frames are peach-colored. I like them because the lenses are so narrow that I will be able to watch TV and read during commercials without having to slide anything up and down my face. Carly says the color is cantaloupe which is ridiculous. Kimberly says the frames are pink, equally asinine. I like the adjective asinine, but as it means like an ass/donkey, I do not know why it is not spelled assinine. I could look it up, because I like words and literature is my calling now, but Miller Williams, the poet, told us in grad school that all literature is about one or a combination of three factors: sex, death, & religion.

I write about sex. I had sex twice that can be proven, as I am the mother of two daughters. My glasses are a very pale peach color, the free ones, my favorite pair, and sometimes it occurs to me that I owe Target \$3.00 plus tax for this pair, but I never lose sleep over this or much of anything except caffeine on rare occasion. It's not like the minimum-wage cashier looked at the three-pack and wondered why one pair didn't fit the transparent packaging, was slanted instead of round. Carly still insists they are the color of cantaloupe and Kimberly argues for pink. I sometimes think of them as apricot, the way Beth Ann Fennelly writes in her poem titled "Because People Ask What My Daughter Will Think of My Poems When She's 16", *Daughter, the light of / the future is apricot*. If my daughters think anything of my writing, of being the superstars in my creative universe, I imagine they find this insignificant. The people who have read about them are other professors who subscribe to literary magazines, the kind

with press runs of 1500 whopping copies, and of those 1500 copies, how many readers went cover to cover and how many glossed over Cherri wtf Randall? Or, as Kimberly once pointed out in an angry “the student loan check is late” argument: “You’re not exactly keeping me in Louis Vuitton.”

The brown glasses are on the kitchen window sill. I can no longer cook without glasses if I want to read any labels, the ones on the backs of packages, or recipes, all published in the smallest encyclopedia/Bible font. Another pair on my desk, in my bathroom where I need to read cosmetic packages, the black pair in my car (reading 1800 numbers on the backs of credit cards, maps, the mail at red lights), two in my office, one in my purse, and one by the couch – the cantaloupe pair. Kimberly asks me why there is a pair on the windowsill and I reply immediately, obviously, automatically, that I have to be able to read whenever I want to. She guffaws at my answer and I remember my mother, seeing me with glasses for the first time, telling me she made it to 50 without glasses when I clearly remember her getting them at 40 because I was so smug about making it to 44 and I wanted to tell her it wasn’t just about age anyway. I am using my light up faster by reading more books.

Carly dangles the necklace in the middle of page 227 and asks me if I know any girls who might like it. Back home, I could have rattled off a catalogue of girl names, but after seven months the first girl I can think of here is my office mate’s daughter Rosa. Carly asks me if I think she would like the necklace, and I say yes, so I have brought it to the office and put it on Ann’s desk, sent her an email telling her where it came from because it’s spring break and she commutes. I will forget all about it by the time she finds it but Carly will want a little glory for the gift, an item she bought merely so she could fulfill the discount requirements and get four items at half price for buying one at regular price. The mustang had been the cheapest item in the catalog.

The battle I wanted to pick with her was wondering why she didn’t go another \$5.00 for some earrings that she would wear instead of a young girl’s mustang necklace. She wanted to make the least investment to get the biggest discount on the four big-ticket items she selected. But for just a little more she could have gotten earrings to keep rather than a necklace to give away. In my equation, she would have ended up with \$26.00 earrings for only \$5.00. Most of the time we see eye to eye, but sometimes she is a Republican and I am a Democrat when it comes to economics.

Still, she is more me than not me. Last week, I asked my boss a question, and I did not get a straight answer and why I even still expect a straight answer is a testament to my bulldoggishness, but while in her office I noticed that she has a small rabbit collection. Carly loves rabbits, as a toddler mispronounced bunnies as boonies, and has called them boonies ever since. When I comment to my boss that Carly also loves bunnies, my boss hesitates, then says that she only likes certain kinds of bunnies.

Up for a challenge, I glance around and say, “Well, there are no cartoon bunnies.”

She nods. “I also don’t like bunnies in clothes, although I have some.”

“Gifts?”

“Mother-in-law,” she replies. I nod.

“Carly doesn’t like anthropomorphic bunnies either,” I say. She looks at me like I’m crazy and I think well I’m sorry you’re childless, but am I supposed to not mention my kids or something?

I tell Carly the story later, and she laughs and says my boss does not know what the word anthropomorphic means. *Anthropomorphic* [an-thruh-puh-mawr-fik] adjective: resembling or made to resemble a human form. I don’t know how she could get to be my boss without knowing.

The word is anthropology-human and morph/transforming all rolled into one. Probably, she was in shock that I knew the word and could rattle it off in my Midwestern drawl so effortlessly. Plenty of people here equate accent with brains which makes me wonder how I got hired in the first place, but all things take place by committee, and I assume she was outvoted.

When Carly leaves my office to go to class the following day, she tells me she put a new desktop on my computer screen. I sit down and close her windows and laugh though I can't decide what delights me more, the actual picture or the idea that this is my kid.

There is a row of ten girl bunnies modeling ten lovely outfits. It's a row of paper dolls with tall ears and little x-marks-the-spot noses. Two of them are wearing glasses. One pair of cat's eyes and one pair of Delores-style frames. It is so funny I want to write another essay about it, something for 1500 professors to read, and because of my advancing age, I do not have time to look up why asinine is spelled with one "s" and also pursue a literary career, grade papers, find time to read and be a mom.

When I heard that all literature was about sex, death, & religion, I was 39 and ever going to write about religion or death, which left me with very little material except sex, and I despaired being the next big name in letters. I wanted to be Hemingway or Carver mixed up with one of the Tonies – Toni Cade Bambara or Toni Morrison, (if you can't star in your own dreams, why dream them another professor told me) with a little Evan Boland or maybe Zora Neale Hurston thrown in to add texture/flavor/spice. But now I am 46 and writing about glasses is the equivalent of writing about death. *It has been realized for many years that the absorption characteristics of the human crystalline lens change with age. In 1967 Wyzsecki and Stiles summarized several studies which estimated the spectral transmittance of the human lens, all showing selectively decreased transmission of short wavelengths as a function of age.* Age has its spiny finger on my dimmer switch, is twirling it inexorably in the wrong direction. Scene fades to black.

## MINING

Tatiana Forero Puerta

The silence after  
*I want you* and  
*Would you like some tea*  
is not equivalent.

Gaps may be  
closer to breath,  
our native tongue,  
than words we fill in  
holes called understanding,

a precipice in the sand,  
shovel in hand working  
loudly and mad,  
each small grain falling away  
to come back.

The opening  
keeps opening.

What if *yes*  
was not an answer  
but a prayer.  
    Stillness its reply.

## **SHE**

### **Obododimma Oha**

Her body a map whose veins run wild  
Her mind a Kalahari thirsty beside an ocean  
Her breath a protest against

As she grinds the millet as poverty grinds her  
Her little children watching, she wonders  
How many grains of opportunity  
Can grow a family into a holidaying rand

The geography of her troubles  
Are made of highlands of low incomes  
Are made of rivers of bitter tears

You cannot read this map because it is too distorted  
By the callous hands that drew her:  
Those legends of features formed from the want of needs  
Those narratives of shrinking chances within the rainbow

This map  
This mind  
This faltering breath

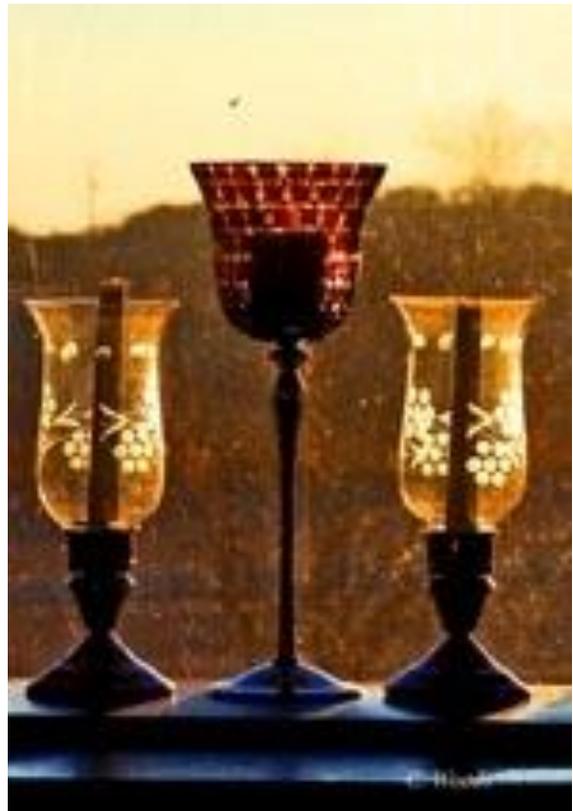
She is  
A land of suffering  
Purchased at the lowest cost.

**LES ENFANTS MORTS**

Louis E. Bourgeois

With your rifle in hand,  
you follow a grey buck  
to the edge of the woods  
and stumble upon  
the remains  
of a children's cemetery.  
On a barren limb of an ash tree,  
a white cormorant  
waits for you to leave.

**THREE CANDLES**  
Christopher Woods



## **SOTERIOLOGY**

**Kevin Brown**

Somewhere, somehow we  
were duped into trading in  
our gods for mere mortals,  
men and women who

resemble our reflections  
in an eternal mirror.

They no longer walk  
on water, throw thunder-

bolts, or help the hope-  
less, so neither do we.  
But I have seen salvation  
through the eyes of a

child, a little child who  
shall lead us back to  
our great gods, back to  
our heavens and our hells,

back to our hearts where  
salvation has been waiting  
patiently for our arrival.

## **GENESIS**

**Anna Catone**

The loss of darkness,  
the unconscious, unsaid.  
After the first utterance, a loss.

Sunlight. The sweet grass.  
Rock thick with moss.  
The dove flies over a field in heavy rain.

Swarm of memory, the unpatterned  
given over to clay and dust.  
First words in a notebook covered with Trumpet Vine.

God's grief that sent Adam and Eve  
out of the garden.

## THE PLEASURES OF THE BOOK

Wendy Galgan

One of the joys of being an academic is I get paid to read, teach and write about books I love, and one of the joys of being an editor is I have the opportunity to share these books with our readers.

In this column, I hope to introduce (or perhaps re-introduce) you to books that will please you, entertain you, maybe even annoy you at times. Some of these works will be new releases, others old favorites. My aim is to help you see these books with fresh eyes, and perhaps find a new appreciation for the pleasures to be found in each.

For my inaugural column, I chose three wonderful books that fall within my academic discipline, poetry. One is a collection by a single author, one an anthology, and one a book of prose essays by one of the finest American poets writing today. Each one is a gem, and each offers numerable pleasures.

*The Mind-Body Problem* by Katha Pollitt (Random House)

This is Katha Pollitt's second collection of poetry (her first, *Antarctic Traveller*, was published nearly 30 years ago), and it is an engaging and vibrant work. Pollitt's poems ask the reader to examine what it means to be human in the world today; they ask each of us to think about the things around us, the things that make up our lives, the everyday things that are at the same time homely (in both senses of the word) and transcendent. In "Near Union Square," the poet moves our attention from the clichéd dogs-playing-cards rug being sold at a flea market to the glory of how "suddenly out of nowhere the roof of every / flaking office building flares gold as though / it was not going to be demolished tomorrow," then just as suddenly back to New York's "rotting wharves" that, "from a distance, smell like flowers," and it is through this up-and-down movement that the poet helps show her reader just what there is to love about the city in which she lives. There is a witty intelligence at work in Pollitt's poetry, which makes the work a pleasure to read, and gives each poem an immediacy that helps her reader come to understand that life, and the choices we make as we live it, are what define us all, are what help us solve the mind-body problem.

*Strange Attractors: Poems of Love and Mathematics* edited by Sarah Glaz & JoAnne Growney (A. K. Peters, Ltd.)

What a delightful collection! The first time I picked up this book, it fell open to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways" and I laughed out loud. Clever, yet so very appropriate to the topic, for what is mathematics at heart but counting? I have always loved the beauty of mathematics, the pure grace of a well-ordered proof (although I am rather math-challenged myself), and this collection combines the best aspects of mathematical theories and love poetry. In David Brooks's "Yes," the speaker uses Zeno's paradox to ask whether, "despite / all the effort, all the / pain" of the life he has lived, would he do it again, and comes to the conclusion expressed in the poem's title. The reader of this collection does not have to know who Mandelbrot was, or how Venn diagrams work, or even the

value of pi. She just has to understand that there is, at heart, a strong connection between math and poetry, and allow herself the pleasure of discovering how the two come together in these works.

*First Loves and Other Adventures* by Grace Schulman (The University of Michigan Press)

Every poet (aspiring or established) should read Schulman's *First Loves and Other Adventures*. Published as part of the "Poets on Poetry" series, this collection of essays is a marvel, examining as it does both how Schulman came to be a writer, and some of the works she loves (her word) in prose that is both lyrical and accessible. The collection opens with an essay about Schulman's aunt, Helen, who died in the Warsaw ghetto during World War II, and how coming to terms with Helen's bravery, which "established the importance of the freedom to act," helped a young woman find her own voice, a voice which would lead her to become a poet. In "First Loves," Schulman recalls hearing her father recite a Polish poem and parallels that with hearing a recording of Auden reading "The Quarry," the work she calls her "real first love." (She would later write the lovely poem "Notes from Underground: W. H. Auden on the Lexington Avenue IRT" about seeing the famous poet riding the subway.) Schulman intertwines these reflections upon her own journey toward becoming a poet with essays that examine her reactions to/interactions with both literary works (by Marianne Moore, Octavio Paz, and others) and the "non-literary" disciplines of art and science. Read this book: for the pleasure of the prose, for the thoughtful and intelligent discussion of literary works and, perhaps most of all, for the beauty of the story of a poet finding her own voice.

## INFORMATION ON CONTRIBUTORS

Kate Bernadette Benedict, of New York City, is the author of the full-length poetry collection *Here from Away* and the editor of *Umbrella: A Journal of Poetry and Kindred Prose*. Visit her on the web: [www.katebenedict.com](http://www.katebenedict.com).

Carol Berg has poems in *Pebble Lake Review*, *Rhino*, *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, *Tattoo Highway*, and elsewhere. She has her MFA from Stonecoast and an MA in English Literature. Carol also works part-time as a Writing Tutor at Pine Manor College and lives in Massachusetts.

Louis E. Bourgeois teaches writing and philosophy at The University of Mississippi in Oxford. His latest collection of prose, *The Gar Diaries*, was nominated for The National Book Award in 2008. Bourgeois is also founder and editor of VOX PRESS.

Kevin Brown currently resides in Cleveland, TN, where he teaches English and writes. His poems have appeared in *The New York Quarterly*, *REAL: Regarding Arts and Letters*, *Connecticut Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *h2so4*, *Jeopardy*, and *The Pacific Review*, among other journals. He has also published essays in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Academe*, *InsideHigherEd.com*, *The Teaching Professor*, and *Eclectica*. His book of poetry, *Exit Lines*, will be published later this year, as will a book of scholarship: *They Love to Tell the Stories: Five Contemporary Novelists Take on the Gospels*.

Carol Carpenter's poems and stories have appeared in numerous online and print publications, including: *Margie*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Neon*, *Georgetown Review*, *Caveat Lector*, *Orbis*, and various anthologies, the most recent are *Not What I Expected* (Paycock Press, 2007) and *Wild Things* (Outrider Press, 2008). Her work has been exhibited by art galleries and produced as podcasts (Connecticut Review and Bound Off). She received the Hart Crane Memorial Award, Richard Eberhart Prize for Poetry, the Jean Siegel Pearson Poetry Award, Artists Among Us Award and others. She lives in Livonia, MI.

Anna Catone's poems have appeared in the *Boston Review*, *Caketrain*, *Commonweal*, the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Post Road* and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College, an MA from the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College and an undergraduate degree from Princeton University. She is poetry editor at *The Cortland Review* and lives in Boston.

Srinjay Chakravarti is a 36-year-old journalist, economist, poet and translator based in Salt Lake City, Calcutta, India. He works as an economist-editor with an international online financial news service. He was educated at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta and at universities based in Calcutta and New Delhi. University degrees: BSc (Economics honors), MA (English). His poetry, prose and translations have been published in numerous publications worldwide. His first book of poems *Occam's Razor* (Writers Workshop, Calcutta: 1994) received the Salt Literary Award in 1995. He has won one of the top prizes in the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Memorial Poetry Competition 2007-08.

Barbara H. Edington is an Assistant Professor at St. Francis College where she teaches information technology courses. Her area of research and corporate expertise is in project &

product management. Prior to moving into the academic realm, Barbara spent 20 years in the investment industry where she focused on financial product development. Barbara worked with Goldman Sachs as a Vice President in New York and an Executive Director in London. She holds an MBA in Finance from Temple University, Philadelphia and a doctorate from Pace University where her research focused on the contextual factors that impact project management success rates. She holds a PMP certification and is a frequent speaker on the topic of technical and business skill integration.

Virginia Franklin teaches in the English Dept. at St. Francis College and is an avid photographer. Her work has been exhibited in New York and New Zealand. Dr. Franklin has taught digital photography and serves as co-moderator of the St. Francis College Photography Club. In 2010 her work will be part of a multi-artist exhibit at the Weil Cornell Medical Library, and she is working on a photographic book project for Centre for the Arts, a children's performing and visual arts program in New Roads, Louisiana

Jonterri Gadson's work has previously been published in *Conte*, *North Central Review*, and is forthcoming in *Diverse Voices Quarterly*. She will be an MFA student at the University of Virginia starting in Fall 2009.

Sharmon Goff is Chair of the Department of Design at California State University, Sacramento. The image, Sacramento Light Rail Bridge, is part of a series of urban color landscapes. This series concentrates on found architectural abstractions in California cities. Sharmon Goff's work has been presented in numerous publications and galleries including: Camerawork, San Francisco; The Chautauqua Galleries, New York; The Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento; Nelson Gallery University of California, Davis; The Ledel Gallery, New York; Viewpoint Photographic Art Center, Sacramento; Portsmouth Museums, Portsmouth, Virginia; The Chinese Photographic Association Gallery, Beijing; Solomon Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento; and Zoller Gallery, Pennsylvania State University.

Tade Ipadeola is a poet and essayist. He has also published short stories and is working on his first novel tentatively titled *The Suzerain of Totem Country*. His poems "Facing Kilimanjaro" and "Barbican Songs" won prizes in 1999 and 2002 at Nigeria's Muson Poetry Festival.

Amber Jensen teaches composition at South Dakota State University where she earned a B.A. in English and Spanish and an M.A. in English, Studies in Language and Rhetoric. She is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing through the University of New Orleans low-residency program. Her first creative nonfiction essay, *Breathing through the Night*, is forthcoming in *North Dakota Quarterly*, and this is her first poetry publication.

Mitch Levenberg has published essays and short fiction in such journals as *The Common Review*, *Fiction*, *The New Delta Review*, *The Saint Ann's Review*, *Confluence*, and others. His collection of stories, *Principles of Uncertainty and Other Constants*, was published in March 2006. He teaches writing at St. Francis College and New York University and lives in Brooklyn with his wife, daughter and four dogs.

Lyn Lifshin has published over 120 books including three books from Black Sparrow: *Cold Comfort*, *Before it's Light*, and *Another Woman who Looks like Me*. Recent books include *The*

*Licorice Daughter, Mirrors, Desire, 92 Rapple, Lost in the Fog, Persephone, Nutley Pond, Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness, and Light at the End.* She has edited 4 anthologies and is the subject of a documentary film, LYN LFSHIN: NOT MADE OF GLASS. Her web site is [www.lynlifshin.com](http://www.lynlifshin.com).

Mary MacGowan lives on a lake in northern Michigan where many of her poems can be found floating at various times of the year. She thinks of herself as Poet of the Frozen Lake, where she can be seen tromping about from island to island in the winter, where the snow falls every day. She's pleased to announce that this summer she's found so much warm sun, and love, that she might have to change her sobriquet to something less dismal. A partial list of Mary's publication credits include: *The South Carolina Review, The Literary Review, POEM, Poesia, The Acorn, Lullwater Review, Cimarron Review, The Orange Willow Review, Westview, ELM, Writing for our Lives, Seems, Array Magazine, Fugue, Green Hill Literary Lantern, Palo Alto Review, Blood Orange, Apple Valley Review, Westview, Review Americana, Art Times, Black Buzzard Review, Licking River Review, California Quarterly, Half Tones to Jubilee.* You can read more of her poems here: [marymacgowan.blogspot.com](http://marymacgowan.blogspot.com).

Julie L. Moore is the author of *Slipping Out of Bloom*, forthcoming from WordTech Editions in 2010, and the chapbook, *Election Day* (Finishing Line Press). A Pushcart Prize nominee and recipient of the Rosine Offen Memorial Award from the Free Lunch Arts Alliance in Illinois, Moore has also won the Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize from *Ruminant: Faith in Literature and Art*. She has contributed poetry to *Alaska Quarterly Review, Atlanta Review, Chautauqua Literary Journal, Cimarron Review, Dogwood, Free Lunch, The MacGuffin, Sou'Wester, and Valparaiso Poetry Review.* She directs the Writing Center at Cedarville University. Her website is [www.juliemoore.com](http://www.juliemoore.com).

Elizabeth Oakes has two books of poems, *The Luminescence of All Things Emily*, a series about Dickinson and her family and friends, and *The Farmgirl Poems*, which won the 2004 Pearl Poetry Prize. She holds the Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University and just retired from teaching Shakespeare and Women's Poetry at Western Kentucky University in order to concentrate on writing poetry and creative nonfiction. She lives in Bowling Green, Kentucky, with her husband John, an artist.

Andrea O'Brien's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in various publications, including *The Hopkins Review, Connecticut Review, North American Review, and The New York Quarterly.* In 2007, the Kentucky Foundation for Women awarded Andrea an Artist Enrichment grant to begin writing her second collection of poems. She lives in central Kentucky with her husband and works as a writer and editor.

Obododimma Oha teaches Semiotics, Stylistics, and Creative Writing in the Department of English at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His poems have appeared in *Envoi, Otoliths, Shadowtrain, Fiera Lingue, Postcolonial Text, Portal, Fogged Clarity,* and many other literary journals and anthologies. With Anny Ballardini, he co-edited *While the He/Art Pants*, an online anthology of poetry on the 2008 American elections. His blogs are: <http://x-pensiverrors.blogspot.com/>, <http://obododimma.livejournal.com/>, <http://www.obododimma-oha.blogspot.com/>, <http://www.eduditra.blogspot.com/>.

Marissa C. Pelot is currently pursuing a B.S. in Molecular Biosciences at Kansas University. She has been a Kansan for most of her life, and has accordingly developed a taste for the sparse and the surprising. Her previous published work includes a poem on *Kaw! Kaw! Kaw! As the Poets Fly from Lawrence, KS*, a poetry anthology CD.

Arthur Powers has lived most his adult life in Brazil. He accompanied his wife's work as a community organizer in the Rio de Janeiro slums; the Powers subsequently served as Franciscan lay missionaries in the Amazon, organizing rural workers' unions and community groups in an area of violent land conflict. He received a Fellowship in Fiction from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation, three annual prizes for short fiction from the Catholic Press Association, and 2nd Place in the 2008 Tom Howard fiction contest. His poetry has appeared in many anthologies & magazines, including *The Roanoke Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*.

Tatiana Forero Puerta is originally from Bogotá, Colombia. She obtained her B.A from Stanford University and M.A from New York University in Philosophy and Creative Writing. She is a writer and philosophy instructor in New York City. Her pieces have been featured in *Anamesa Journal*, *Boxcar Poetry Review* and *New York Spirit Magazine*. Tatiana resides in Brooklyn and is currently working on her first full manuscript.

Cherri Randall is currently Assistant Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown. She has a PhD in Gender Studies from the University of Arkansas where she also holds an MFA in Creative Writing. Her work has appeared in *Mid-America Poetry Review*, *the rectangle*, *Lake Effects*, *Hogtown Creek Review*, *Paper Street Press*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Permafrost Review*, *Paddlefish*, *The Potomac Review*, *Literary Chaos*, *Main Channel Voices*, *storySouth* and *Sojourn*. She has green eyes, fiery red hair, and arms spattered with freckles. She lives with two teenaged daughters, a panda bear hamster named Rocco Jafar, and high hopes for the future.

Francis Raven is a graduate student in philosophy at Temple University. His books include *5-Haifun: Of Being Divisible* (Blue Lion Books, 2008), *Shifting the Question More Complicated* (Otoliths, 2007), *Taste: Gastronomic Poems* (Blazevox 2005) and the novel, *Inverted Curvatures* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2005). Francis lives in Washington DC; you can check out more of his work at his website: <http://www.ravensaesthetica.com/>.

Kristina Roth currently resides near Houston with her husband and loveable dachshund, but they hope to return to South Dakota some day. She oversees the e-zine of OrthodoXCircle, a social networking site. When not writing, Kristina enjoys numerous crafty pursuits, cooking, and watching PBS.

Helen Ruggieri has had work recently in anthologies *Beloved on the Earth: Poems of Grief and Gratitude*; *Poems of Francis and Clare*; *From the Other World: Poems in Memory of James Wright*; and in *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Poetry Midwest*, *Minnesota Review*, and *Del Sol Review* (online).

LB Sedlacek's poems have appeared in such publications as *Audience Magazine*, *Red River Review*, *Tertulia Magazine*, *ditch poetry*, *Bear Creek Haiku*, *I-70 Review*, *Bent Pin Quarterly*,

*Down in the Cellar, Adaigo Verse Quarterly, Heritage Writer, The Recusant, The Sigurd Journal, and Gloom Cupboard.* LB's latest chapbook is *Red Headed Eskimos*.

Linda Simone's poetry and essays have appeared in numerous print and online journals and anthologies. Her 15-poem sequence, "Stations of the Cross," which was anthologized in *Alternatives to Surrender*, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her chapbook, *Cowtippers*, was awarded the 2006 Shadow Poetry Chapbook prize. She lives with her husband in New York City where she enjoys exploring the diversity and cultural richness for poetic inspiration.

Joseph Somoza, formerly an English professor and poetry editor at New Mexico State University, now sits in his back yard in Las Cruces trying to seduce poems his way. He has published several books of poetry, most recently *Shock of White Hair* (Sin Fronteras Press, 2007). He lives with wife Jill, a painter.

Diana Woodcock's chapbook, *Mandala*, is forthcoming in 2009 from Foothills Publishing as part of their *Poets on Peace* series. *Travels of a Gwai Lo*, also a chapbook, will be published in 2009 by Toadlily Press as the fifth in their Quartet Chapbook series. In 2008 she received first and second prizes from Artists Embassy International (Dancing Poetry Festival), an International Publication Prize from *Atlanta Review*, and *Flyway's* 'Notes from the Field' Award (Finalist). In 2007 she won the Creekwalker Poetry Prize. She's been awarded residencies at MICA/Rochefort-en-Terre, Vermont Studio Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Everglades National Park. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2008*, *Nimrod*, *Atlanta Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Portland Review*, and other journals and anthologies.

Christopher Woods has published a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a prose collection, *Under a Riverbed Sky*, and a book of monologues for actors, *Heart Speak*. New to photography, his work has appeared, or shall appear, in *Anderbo*, *Public Republic*, *BAP Quarterly* and *Narrative Magazine*. He lives in Houston and Chappell Hill, Texas. He shares an online gallery with his wife Linda at *The Texana Review*: <http://www.texanareviewgallery.com/>.