

Fox Chase Review



Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

2011 Winter/Spring Contents

[cover](#) / [contents](#) /

Poets & Writers

Adrian Manning	After the ash, the rain, then I ; Somewhere in hell ; Until then
Alan King	The Narcoleptic ; Trespasser
Amy Burns	True Flies
Antonia Clark	A House Climbs a Hill ; Dear Tendril ; Amends
Bill Wunder	Hurricane Season ; Moons
Catherine Chandler	Ballad of the Vernal Equinox ; Boots
Dawn Sperber	Astro Mother and Girl Odysseus
Dilruba Ahmed	Solstice ; At the Stove-Side ; Advice ; Lightning ; City of Bridges
Eileen Tabios	Snap-Shot
Elizabeth Pallitto	The Cooked and the Raw ; After the Iliad ; Sea, Land
Father Luke	A lifetime of commitment ; Wet Roads
Gary Sloboda	Succession Song ; Pastoral II
Jen Michalski	Monkey Mountain
Jessie Carty	Without a Will
Jonel Abellanosa	Rehearsal
Justin Hyde	"i'll do it myself daddy." ; insufficient funds ; an old song
Kristina Moriconi	Weather Report: Summer-Fall

Lisa Lewis	April Storm ; Eavesdropping ; Diurnal
Marie-Elizabeth Mali	The Length of You Narrow ; Rebecca
Mary Madec	Calliope ; Without a Word ; Dire Consequences ; In Other Words
Philip Dacey	Not My Angels ; Spending the Day Reading Seamus Heaney and Juan Ramon Jiminez ; On a Photo of His Daughter
Stephen Page	The Old Man ; The Horseback Vet
Susan Gibb	Elizabeth on a Good Day

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Adrian Manning

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [adrian manning](#) /

Previous | [Next](#)

After the ash, the rain, then I

the building had stood patiently
for over a hundred years.
it had survived war and turmoil,
bombs had bounced off it,
life and death had passed through
its doors, continuous.
then we came along
with our own wars
and it remained without allegiance,
not standing in judgement
against you or I.
we couldn't work that way
and the fights wore us down
until we split in
different directions
and left the building behind.
I have passed there many times
since then and memories seeped into
my mind like the damp through the walls,
though today I find
the house burnt down,
maybe a careless cigarette,
a neglected oven or heater.
all that is left is rubble,
ashes of burnt wood
grey powder spread out like a sheet.
memories come quickly
I dwell on what has gone.
rain starts to fall
making pock marks
in the ash, washing the dust

On this Page

[After the ash,
the rain, then I](#)

[Somewhere in hell](#)

[Until then](#)

[About the Writer](#)

and the memories away
any sadness subsides like the rain
relief breaks through like a yellow sun.
I turn to walk away, never to return,
gaining greater strength
with every new step I take.

Somewhere in hell

death drops from above
in the east
heavy clumps of fatal rain
here, the birds hum Stockhausen
and the grass dries stick brown
to a dying of its own
ants run madly scattering
in disturbed agitation
as I dig at the roots of the trees
with my rusty fingernails
the cat eyes me suspiciously
and mutters sunshine
as insanely I sweat to create
a 15' by 10' Eden
somewhere in hell

Until then

the mailbox is empty
it only chatters
occasionally
with credit card applications
and offers to join a gymnasium
both of which I can ill afford

my computer splutters
when I log on to e-mail
laughing a great gut wrenching
belly laugh as it proclaims
zero new messages

the telephone hardly ever rings
and when it does there is either
no one at the other end
or a tape recorded message from
some foreign country—
I always put it down

nobody calls at my door
apart from the seller of religious tracts
who I don't want to talk to

or an old lady who really needs
the folks in the next house
and refuses to stay when I ask

its so good to talk and communicate
in the modern age
they say

as for me
I'll let you know when it happens
until then I will sit quietly
and wait.

Adrian Manning lives and writes in Leicester, England. His poems, articles and reviews have appeared online and in magazines around the world. He is the author of a number of chapbooks, his latest being *All This I See Before Me*, *All This I Cannot Resist* published by [Propaganda Press](#) in the USA. He is also the editor of [Concrete Meat Press](#).



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Alan King

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / alan king /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

The Narcoleptic

What sounds like bodies
pouncing in my parents' attic
raps on my djembe heart.

Something creaks like floor boards
under the foot-falls of a killer.

That death stalks us like a villain
from a horror movie, sometimes
I wonder if I'm a misstep from being

a scream in the dark. A misstep from
smiling back at the world through obits.

My 14-year-old mind says the house
might be haunted. My friends call it
paranoia. Say bogeymen only appear

in nightmares. So I must be asleep
in America. The voice inside me

is a voyeur, looking for Armageddon.
Some members of Congress
are bogeymen. Rumpelstilskins

taunting the opposition. Maybe
the House is haunted. Maybe

I'm a lunatic who thinks
he hears voices in his head,
yelling something.

On this Page

[The Narcoleptic](#)

[Trespasser](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Trespasser

Should I fear the brothas gathered
on the corner? Canines glistening
like the fangs of something wild
picking up the scent of its prey,

or the scent of a boy sent to the store
for butter and evaporated milk.
Mom at home cooking macaroni
and cheese. Sometimes I wonder

if she knew what waited outside,
what roamed the streets looking
for wandering kids. A guy yells
from the pack: *Lemme get a dollar,*

Lil' Man. I'm back in front
of my bedroom mirror, staring down
my reflection. I'm a lion cub practicing
his roar the way I work my face

into a look I hope says,
Don't mess with me.
What I hope says, *Leave me alone*
or else. A look that doesn't stop

the brotha from asking again:
Lemme get a dollar, Lil' Man.
Even the moon sneers
while a jagged horizon

wounds the sky at sunset.
Isn't there something sinister
how even the wind
shoves the trees?

Alan King's poems have appeared in Alehouse, Audience, Boxcar Poetry Review, Indiana Review, MiPoesias and RATTLE, among others. A [Cave Canem](#) fellow and [VONA](#) Alum, he's been nominated for both a Best of the Net selection and [Pushcart Prize](#). He writes about art and domestic issues at <http://alanwking.wordpress.com>. When King's not reporting or sending poems to journals, you can find him chasing the muse through Washington, D.C.— people watching with his boys and laughing at the crazy things strangers say to get close to one another.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Amy Burns

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / amy burns /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

True Flies

Ex-wife was the first one out of the car. She said, "Let me handle this."

'This' was Stella.

Stella was sitting on the porch watching rain fall into a coffee can. Bernard saved coffee cans. He painted them blue and potted them with geraniums.

The yard was littered with pellets of ice. Hailstorm: machine-gunned tin roof. An August cold-front stunned the summer heat. Intermingled, coalesced. Hail stopped. Rain started. Cool air felt like an adrenaline rush, unexpected relief from the heat felt stolen.

Ex-wife ran across the yard and up the cinderblock steps. Ex-wife's name was Lauren.

Lauren was still in her funeral clothes: silk sleeveless polka-dotted blouse, black brushed-cotton skirt striated shiny from acquaintance with a hot iron, canary yellow belt, tortoiseshell clasp. She used a Food Town flyer as an umbrella.

"Good Lord, who ordered this weather?" She wiped water from her tanned arms, shook her hands dry and sat down in Bernard's rocker. "Missed you at the service. Breaks my heart when it rains at a funeral."

Stella looked at the others waiting in the car like abandoned lap dogs. She said, "People die everyday. Some days it rains. You do the math."

Lauren's patent leather Mary Janes scooped wide across the top of her foot revealing four star-shaped tattoos. She followed Stella's gaze and proudly flexed, stretching her foot so that Stella could see. "I've got four stars, one for each of my children."

"Do you have four more for each of their fathers?"

Lauren was momentarily distracted by her chipped fingernail polish but not for long. She was already bored, not in the mood. She said, "I suppose you've had plenty of time to get your things together. Are you about ready to clear out so we can get his stuff sorted?"

On this Page

[True Flies](#)

[About the Writer](#)

"By 'sorted' do you mean take what you want and throw the rest away?"

"Let's not make this more difficult than it has to be."

Stella watched Lauren's mouth: thin lips, poorly capped, off-colour teeth, slanted crocodile smile, lipstick faded into puckered creases, crevices, tongue working to get something from between teeth, got it, chewing.

"I know it's an inconvenience for you but think of Denise." Lauren pointed out to the car. "It's her daddy that's dead."

Stella said, "It's an inconvenience for me but a great loss for everybody else?"

"I'm sure you *liked* him. He was a likeable guy. But he was a husband and a father to us."

"Actually he was an ex-husband and he hadn't heard from Denise in over a year but you all come running as soon as he's dead."

"Really Stella, this whole thing is pretty simple. Get your things and go. Everybody's trying to be nice. Don't make me call the sheriff. Bernard would want us to be civil and I'm sure he'd have wanted you taken care of. I'm not going to send you off without nothing." Lauren stood up, held open the warped screen door and motioned for Stella to go inside. "Hurry up. Mosquitoes are getting in."

"Did you know that mosquitoes are true flies? They only have one pair of wings rather than two."

"Stella! Get inside! I don't have time for nonsense."

Things, mostly packed except: toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, hairbrush, decoupage cigar box a gift Bernard cut from the library's collection of *National Geographic*.

Lauren said, "What's in that?"

"Are you afraid I'm going to steal something?"

"I don't know are you?"

"You couldn't give most of this stuff away."

When Stella was ready Lauren gave her an envelope with a fifty dollar bill inside.

"Is this my inheritance?"

"You're not family, not married, not common law. Take it or leave it."

Stella took it.

Outside she could no longer see the others waiting. Car windows: fogged from hot breath, anticipation, droplets of lung mist, boredom and *when she gone be done, we should have brought the sheriff, turn on the radio while we wait, can't will run the battery down, I'm about to starve, wish she'd hurry up.*

Lauren said, "There's talk in town."

"There's always talk in town."

"I know you and him weren't sharing a bed but if you were sharing needles best get yourself checked by the doctor."

“What makes you think we weren't sharing a bed?”

Lauren laughed.

Amy Burns is originally from Birmingham, Alabama but now makes her home in Scotland where she is a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. Her poetry and prose has been published (or is forthcoming) in print at *Biscuit Short Story Winners' Anthology 2009: The Possibility of Bears, Let's Pretend (InFidelity) Anthology, Green Muse, QWF, unbound press* and online at *971 Menu, Clapboard House, From Glasgow to Saturn, Brown Williams Journal, Short, Fast, and Deadly, Dew on the Kudzu, The Legendary, Fiction at Work, Metazen*. She has worked as an editor/publisher of the literary journal *unbound press* and is now the editor of *Spilling Ink Review*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Antonia Clark

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / antonia clark /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

A House Climbs a Hill

I like the way a house climbs a hill,
the hill rounding its shoulders
like a man stooping
to let a child climb aboard.

The way the house clings, stands
upright, the way the child straddles
and rides high, unafraid.

The way I rode on my father's
rounded shoulders, waving
to the world spread out below,
hills and houses waiting
for a new word to rise to my lips.
A gold wand in my hand.

This house, this hill, this man.
The way we bend, bear, shoulder
one another, moment to moment.

Dear Tendril

Petiole, part leaf, part stem,
rootlike thread, hair of the vine,
you twist any trellis, twine
around whatever you touch,

tenacious.

Slender tentacle,

On this Page

[A House Climbs
a Hill](#)

[Dear Tendril](#)

[Amends](#)

[About the Writer](#)

nothing but coil and spiral,
grabbing the branch,
grasping the straw.

All you can do, like any of us
is clutch and climb,
clasp and cling,

hold on.

Amends

Regret lingers, niggles. Yellow lilies
on the table, gone brown in the vase.
The garden we talk about, endlessly,
but never begin, deterred by tough sod.

On the edge of the walk, the wheelbarrow
full of stones waits like an undelivered
apology. Within, the floor needs scrubbing
and only hands and knees will do the job.

I know that forgiveness is a simple meal—
a salad, a boiled potato, a glass of tea.
Easy to prepare, to offer. That the silence
afterward will satisfy, perhaps even nourish.

Antonia Clark works for a medical software company in Burlington, Vermont, and co-administers an online poetry workshop, *The Waters*. Recent poems have appeared in *Anderbo*, *Apparatus Magazine*, *Eclectica*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Soundzine*, *Stirring*, and elsewhere. She loves French food and wine, and plays French café music on a sparkly purple accordion.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Bill Wunder

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [bill wunder](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Hurricane Season

The clenched fists of waves
hammer a reeling shore.
Squall lines pinwheel
from this great howling ache,
a category six unnamed storm.
What could you call it?
What name would soften,
and personalize such pain as this?
It's July, only the start
of hurricane season back home,
yet already I'm flotsam,
battered, and blown out
as if to an unrelenting,
slate gray Atlantic.
And I cannot recall
a hurt this vast,
this cold, this deep.

On this Page

[Hurricane Season](#)

[Moons](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Moons

There are many of them—
the one I see tonight—
no solace
that I'm turning sixty,
the one that silvers the corn,
the one indifferent
about my cancer,
the luminous one
that guided me home

from rice paddies
and the one that mesmerized
the world in 1969.
I was twenty then,
awaiting orders when
Apollo orbited the dark side.

I know the old man's expression
will pull the tide no matter
how many more harvests I'll see.
But the allure faded
after that first powdered step—
Armstrong bounded
across his own white field of dreams,
planted the flag as if
we owned the cosmos
when we didn't deserve the earth.

Bill Wunder is the author of *Pointing at the Moon* (WordTech Editions, 2008) and a chapbook, *A Season of Storms* (Via Dolorosa Press, 2002.) In 2004, he was named Poet Laureate of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His poems have been widely published, and he has twice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize in poetry. Bill has been a finalist numerous times in The T. S. Eliot Prize, and the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. In 2010, he was nominated for a Pew Fellowship in the Arts. He has read and lectured in local schools, colleges, festivals, book stores, libraries, and on public television. Bill serves as Poetry Editor of *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

All Written Works Copyrighted © by the Indicated Authors

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Catherine Chandler

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / catherine chandler /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Ballad of the Vernal Equinox

Her cup of coffee's getting cold,
she's poured herself some gin,
her melancholy uncontrolled,
her winter-patience thin.

She pulls the curtain back to see
the bitter silver storm
that's come to numb Sault Ste. Marie
when weather should be warm.

The snow has stopped, the moon shines hard,
the wind's a gentle hush.
Coyote drifts into her yard,
out from the brittle brush.

He stares her down with raw desire,
his coat a map of scars,
(for after all, he's stolen fire
and spilled a bag of stars).

*I know a place where daffodils
are pushing through the ice,*
he hints with all his trickster's skills,
and hopes she won't think twice.

She smiles at him without a flinch,
reflection in her eyes,
knowing she dare not give an inch
to one both mad and wise.

A flick of tail – and then he's gone

On this Page

[Ballad of the Vernal
Equinox](#)

[Boots](#)

[About the Writer](#)

without a backward glance,
his one-time offer now withdrawn.
Too bad. No second chance.

Yet when the geese return, and love
is nowhere to be seen,
she'll scour the woods for traces of
those brazen spikes of green.

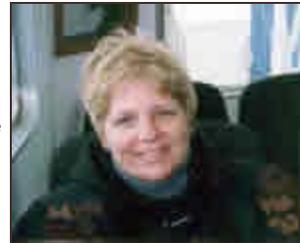
Boots

The grown-ups called her Boots. Stilettoed. Brash.
Hayna Valley girl. All skin-on-bone.
Afternoons, impassive as a stone,
she'd strut downtown to trade her time for cash
(they said) from college boys. As rumors flew, it
made me perk my ears. Living next door,
I learned new words like *incest*, *jailbait*, *whore*.
As for her real name, I never knew it.

And then she moved. The Amy Vanderbilts
sang hallelujahs. Thanked their lucky stars.
Boots could not belong. She came from Mars,
thumbing her nose at coffee klatches, quilts,
silk stockings, and the picket-fences of
Earth's fond contrivances passed off as love.

Catherine Chandler is an American poet. Born in New York and raised in Pennsylvania, she holds a Master of Arts degree from McGill University where she has lectured in the Department of Languages and Translation for many years.

Catherine's poems and English translations from French and Spanish have been published in numerous print and online journals and anthologies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. A multiple Pushcart Prize nominee and twice finalist in the Howard Nemerov Sonnet competition, Catherine is the author of two chapbooks *For No Good Reason* and *All or Nothing*.



A member of the Greenwood Poets, Catherine currently lives in Saint-Lazare.

[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Dawn Sperber

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / dawn sperber /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Astro Mother and Girl Odysseus

I. Mother

She wanted to be a dancer. When she was a kid there was the Nutcracker on TV every Christmas, ballerinas long and light and so quick no one could catch them, not their brightness inside. They had moths under their skin and their bones knew how deer feel; they couldn't be caught, not while they were dancing. No, if you tried to grab them they'd light away and do it so pretty, you'd let them go just so you could watch. And that's what she wanted. To be powerful in lightness and grace.

But the only dance schools around her neighborhood taught tap. Loud clacking instead of silent leaps. She went anyway. And she swung her arms in pinwheels and tapped her feet as fast as a typewriter. Her bleached blonde instructor clapped her hands and yelled "Go on, Sue. Woo-ee! She's got the devil in her!" And she kept dancing so quick, trying in a way to run from her own feet's racket, trying to dance so fast she escaped sound and flew right into a silent celestial time warp. She danced, spinning her arms and twisting her feet: swing step, ball and shuffle; as her blonde instructor threw back her head and howled like a coyote, and all the other little girls in the class stood back watching and glaring, and she kept dancing to the Broadway tunes muffling from the loud record player by the mirror.

She looked at her reflection in the middle of all that noise—the sharp jerks of her body and her blurring feet, and her sad eyes wide and wishing. She hated herself for being a jester. And everyone that was there was watching her legs, no one looked up and witnessed, but tears were coming down and mixing with the sweat on her face, and at that moment, they all said she'd never danced so good, but she knew that was a lie. She knew what she could *really* do, because in bed she dreamed that when she stuck out her stomach and her navel opened, moths and butterflies flew out, and deer licked her legs, fawns nuzzled her toes, and then she danced so light and silently, no clacks from the tap dancing school could be heard anymore, and the record players spun around and around but the only music they could play was air, and her beautiful silence was so powerful, it overwhelmed even the coyote howl of her teacher. That was when she was lovely; that was when she danced just right.

Everyone was mad at her when she quit, and they looked down at her with their eyebrows lowered so they could barely see her at all. Her mom, embarrassed, tried to explain to the teacher, "Aw Janis,

On this Page

[Astro Mother and Girl Odysseus](#)

[About the Writer](#)

she's just lazy. She never keeps up with anything. She'd rather spend her time losing her head in the lawn, staring at the sky. Better not to waste your time on her."

And while they talked about her and she stood staring straight ahead, listening, the girl kept putting her hand on her chest to feel the moths fluttering inside of there. Her mom jerked her arm when it was time to lead her away.

A few months after she quit tap, her brothers were running around the yard hooting and jumping, and Joe crawled on the ground growling while Rich poked him with a plastic patio chair. Then Rich called out loudly to an invisible audience, and bent down before Joe's open mouth, sticking his face in his brother's grimace, like a kind of horrible kiss.

The circus had come to town. "Can we go?! Let's go!" they screamed at their parents, and Rich whipped Joe with an invisible lash, while Joe screamed, roared, and tackled Rich. Their dad bellowed for quiet loud enough to stop both boys in mid-punch, and the girl sat on the floor and waited to see what the eventual answer would be.

And so it was that she'd been a trapeze artist most of her life. She could barely remember a time when she didn't know herself as a flyer, beyond gravity more than most people. Her life seemed blurry and sad back then, so she usually didn't try to remember.

All she cared about was that when she was up there, whisking through the air, she didn't hear anything: the world was calm. At first that was a problem because she wouldn't hear when her partner called directions, and she couldn't figure out why her hearing went away when she was fly—*swinging* (they sighed at her when she said flying). She tried to explain how the air rushing her ears was too loud to let anything else through. Maybe it was an imbalance in her inner ear that made her mind swim. Finally, she learned to hear his voice inside her thoughts. Maybe it was just routine she was hearing, but even when he surprised her, she followed perfectly.

Being on the trapeze was wonderful, knowing the music was crashing with each trick and the people were calling and clapping and the popcorn vendors were yelling, but to her, she was in the calm sky. Sometimes she heard thunder, but that was a majestic natural sound, and it only came when her thoughts were raining. She'd sail through the air in utter peace. When she dropped to the net at the end of her piece, the circus noises would depress pause and come roaring back. But since she knew they could be defeated, she smiled, and flipped her legs off the net for the noises, and smiled at the noises, and winked as she walked off stage. Defeating the roar of the tap dancing world was her main battle and love affair. It fueled her life and made her happy.

II. Girl

Won't be a trapeze artist, not after seeing the fall and watching the flying mother who doesn't fly forever and she acts like she could, that she could lift right up like she knew a secret rip in the tent top, and she'd swing as if to meet her partner, but then swoop up instead and fly away.

And sometimes she'd wonder if this would be the night her mom would do it, swoop up, squeeze out, and fly up away into the sky, on a rainy night, gotta be a rainy night, that seems right. And sometimes she'd cheer her mom on, and look past the fact that she'd be left on the sawdust and popcorned dirt ground, left without her astro mother, because it seemed all right to pay that price, just to have proof that she really was daughter to a goddess, and she knows the hero's cycle, she knows that all real heroes are half divine and don't know their true father, must go in search of him, but she, this hero-ine wouldn't go in search of her father, nah because men suck and they put fingermark bruises on your neck, but guys are okay, girls are better. Especially if they wear sequins, that gets her, or if they sell the tickets to ride the make-you-throw-up Roundabout. Don't have to wear sequins then because that

girl has wide eyelids that never open all the way, and her hands can flip around and push the button, stash the money, tear off three tickets and two kids price, all in half a second—without ever totally opening her eyes.

Sometimes she'd watch her mom and concentrate, trying to detect the hint that'd give away that yeah, right now, she's about to do it, fly away—and she'd be excited adrenaline rush because Fuck you all you cheering people waiting for her to fall, she's not gonna fall, she never falls, but she is going to surprise you, she's gonna show you something you'd never expect, gonna fly.

But she fell instead. Goddamn. What do you do when the world's never read the Odyssey and doesn't follow the pattern—or worse yet, says yeah, that is the way it goes, but not for you. Not for you. Because you are terribly mortal, just like your mother. Limping now, because she twisted her knee.

You know leaves fall all the time and seed cases, those prickly balls, pollen, all that is made to fall, so falling must not be that bad for them, that's their joy instead, to fall, the big moment, second only to planting. But those are trees, you know. Not people. And if you're going to impress the Roundabout looker, you have to be superhuman, do something wonderful so she'll open her eyes finally all the way, because she's looking at you. That sounds horrible, doesn't it? But it's true. Because what do you do if you know that being humble is the best way, you understand it from books, all the classics and the fatal flaw, aw hubris, you always are the screwy divide in the main man, but damn. It's hard when you open your mouth and no one understands a bit of this good stuff you have to say. You have to woo them with ACTION. Be a superwoman, a goddess.

But her mom fell. Fell. And it's just so hard to be a tree spewing falling pollen and be okay with that when there are women in sequins that shine so you have to look at them when they walk through the spotlight, and you don't have any sequins, just cut-offs and dreams, and no one is looking at you at all.

Dawn Sperber's stories have appeared in *Annalemma*, *flashquake*, *Hunger Mountain*, *The Pedestal*, and *Rosebud Magazine*. Her writings are forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Witches and Pagans*. She lives in New Mexico, where she's at work on a collection of short stories, and is pursuing her MFA at UNM.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Dilruba Ahmed

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / dilruba ahmed /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Solstice

The fog casts its net
over everything: cinnamon

branches, bone pavement.
Milkweed deepens
to indigo.

A flush of light brings
the angles of your face

close to me. I rise to find
jackets strewn
across the couch,

CORDS curled under the table.
There's a blood-orange

wisp of color in my tea.
The bed covers become
a version of myself—

softer, crumpled, still warm.
Outside, someone

has strung tiny bulbs
over brick.
A leaf's three points

blur into the sidewalk.
As I enter the cobalt

chill of twilight,
the air carries

On this Page

[Solstice](#)

[At the Stove-Side](#)

[Advice](#)

[Lightning](#)

[City of Bridges](#)

[About the Writer](#)

faint smoke,

burning paper, leaves.

The night grows and

grows until it swallows

the day. It obscures

my shadow, and hides my face.

At the Stove-Side

What a thing! She arrives just in time

to slice onions for me, the rice
overflowing with froth at the lid.

The guests were happy with drinks

in hand but soon wanted

more than the *poppadoms* I'd fried.

I was glad when I woke but

sorry all day—she was no longer at my side

while chopping potatoes, stirring the *dal*,

frying seeds as they sputtered.

Now I've burnt this minced garlic, which adds

bitterness no matter how fresh

the vegetables. No matter, as my mother

often said, "No point in pointing

fingers when a mess has been made—I'm the one

who'll have to clean it up."

She watches me always, I think—

especially in April, when crocuses

poke through and die before you blink.

I lost her twenty years ago this week.

Advice

A child enters water

first, then a name and then

a body—a history.

She needed avocado

flesh, almonds, and

milk, more milk

than any student funds

could have supplied

(*when a half-cup fed*

both mother and unborn

child). Her children

grew round and gold,

fed by another country's
butter. When they, too,
grew heavy

she instructed them
daily: three full cups
and lots of rest.

They did not guess
she ever carried anything
but a worried

look on her face. Or that
for a cup of rice
a local midwife had delivered

each one of them,
delivered from water
to breath. What little relief

from the silver pins
used to stitch
her whole again.

Lightning

She punched
holes in jar-lids
for walking sticks
and crickets
but not for fireflies.

Instead, the sidewalk
became her canvas,
each bug her paint,
with glowing bellies
scraped onto pavement.

Lips bitten
in concentration
and loose strands
slipping from a jeweled
clip, she cupped

each yellow bulb
with tenderness.
Then the twig,
the precision
and patience.

City of Bridges

Insomniac or thief,
 you're not content
to simply steal my sleep:
 you make me crave
your city size—
 all day, all gray, my prize
for living here,
 a place where I forget
myself. You render me
 invisible:
I'm faceless, bleak—
 even the summer days
are laced with some
 regret, these dandelions
shoving between widening
 sidewalk cracks,
wrenched free of seed
 and origin. The nights
you churn, I rise

 and search your streets,
lacking a magic
 bag of salts, a spell
to purify each drink,
 the daily air
I breathe. And so I walk
 until your sound grows
low and sweet, until I
 hear your lullaby,
and sing as though
 I would put myself to sleep.

[Dilruba Ahmed](#)'s debut book of poems, *Dhaka Dust* (Graywolf, 2011), won the 2010 Bakeless Prize for poetry. Her writing has appeared in *Blackbird*, *Cream City Review*, *New England Review*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Indivisible: Contemporary South Asian American Poetry*. Her poems are forthcoming in *Asian American Literary Review*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Cerise Press*, and *The Normal School*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Eileen R. Tabios

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / eileen r tabios /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Snap-Shot

Sometimes I think I do get to places just when God's ready for someone to click the shutter.

—Ansel

Adams

mushrooms doff white caps over grass

belly bulges over matchstick legs, African desert, a distance defined by a vulture's eyes. . . the only water a father's tears

old buffalo staring right at you, in the background a man points a rifle

five-year-old boy salutes oldest brother lying in a flag-draped coffin

baby napping, its butt up in the air, background a wall with peeling paint, foreground a pile of dirty laundry and scattered boxes from McDonald's

1995 concentration camp, men behind barbed wires, cheeks hollowed, ribs protruding, eyes burning burning. . . in the distance, a body drips from a tree limb

student offers daisy to impassive face atop uniform

teenagers with tiny swastikas tattooed on their cheeks

father hugging a dead child, blood on a crumpled tricycle, cops handcuffing a weeping drunk driver

old Chinese man slowly walking the length of a subway train, selling plastic toys for a dollar each from a brown paper bag, his grin requiring more practice

three white men beating a black stranger

three black men beating a white stranger

On this Page

[Snap-Shot](#)

[About the Writer](#)

—pardon me, I was distracted, as I was saying, a patch of mushrooms . . . no, no, perhaps that was my problem—staring down at the ground. Try looking at heaven: mountain tops kissing the bellies of storm clouds, snow painting the edges of cliffs, cracked boulders etching Roman profiles against the horizon, geysers ending where clouds begin, a bright full moon pasted against a starless sky, no storm to ruffle an angel's wings . . . where is God?

Eileen R. Tabios has released 18 print, four electronic and 1 CD poetry collections, an art essay collection, a poetry essay/interview anthology, a short story book and two novels. She most recently released *THE THORN ROSARY: Selected Prose Poems (1998-2010)*, edited with an introduction by poet-critic-painter-scholar Thomas Fink and with an afterword by poet-scholar Joi Barrios-Leblanc. In poetry, Ms. Tabios has crafted a body of work that is unique for melding ekphrasis with transcolonialism. Her poems have been translated into Spanish, Italian, Tagalog, Japanese, Portuguese, Polish, Greek, computer-generated hybrid languages, Paintings, Video, Drawings, Visual Poetry, Mixed Media Collages, Kali Martial Arts, Music, Modern Dance and Sculpture. She's also edited, co-edited or conceptualized nine anthologies of poetry, fiction and essays. She blogs as the "[Chatelaine](#)" and edits [Galatea Resurrects](#), a popular poetry review journal.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Elizabeth Pallitto

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [elizabeth pallitto](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

The Cooked and the Raw: After the Iliad

"Americans eat human meat,"
says the butcher of Balat—
slicing away with practiced strokes—
to Meltem and me, her American friend.

A glint travels from his long knife's polished sword-hilt
to wild eyes that dart every which way,
as if an unseen enemy is lurking in the street.

He learned it in the *camii*, so he knows it's true,
as if the walls were designed by Mimar Sinan to absorb speech
and bounce back corrected waves of sound, rearrange them into truth.

Or have so many years in the *kasap* trade
brought him closer to death, to the ancient gods
with their demands for oxen, bulls, and wine?

Like a priest, he decides when a mortal creature dies,
wields in his hand the means to its end; weighs
in his scales the sacrifices. Just so, Zeus weighed
the lives of Hector and Achilles in his golden balance.

Despite the countless hecatombs offered
on Priam's household altars, the fumes of smoky wine
the pleasing smells of roasting flesh
poured as a libation upon the dark earth,

despite the fragrant smoke reaching Olympus,
filling Zeus the Father's nostrils—
Hector's day of doom came all the same.

Despite our sacrifices, fasting, and prayers,

On this Page

[The Cooked
and the Raw:
After the Iliad](#)

[Sea, Land](#)

[About the Writer](#)

the goddess Fortune rules in the end,
dispensing her favors with blind detachment.

Despite rituals so elaborate:
horns bounds in gold or, garlanded in flowers
like Iphigenia at the altar—
in the version where she dies, heroically, for Troy?
What happens to her lifeless body
A last-minute substitute: a hart? a deer?
Some graceful female animal, as if species
were interchangeable at the will of the gods.
Even Abraham would have sacrificed
his son, but for that last-minute stroke of luck,
the *kurban* in place of the boy.

And when a cow is butchered on *bayram*—
as I saw in Sadrazam Ali Pasa Sokak,
the long knives of the Fates

cutting its life short
so that its bones join the others
on the funeral mound of history—

how do we know that the dumb beast,
eyes imploring mercy,
is not a human in animal guise,

metamorphosed, like Io, by the wrath
of the implacable gods?

Sea, Land*

Some men are men of the sea,
some, men of the land
Just like women
men were also divided
between sea and land

When a woman of the sea
falls for a man of the land
or a man of the land,
for a sea-girl
in a storm

A fishy metaphor, this
for the lostness
that opens to the sea

An existential error

When love does not hold
between people who are in love
the sea opens, the land closes

* "Deniz, Kara" by Murathan Mungan
translated by Ruth Christie, Idil Karacadag, and Elizabeth Pallitto

Elizabeth Pallitto has just returned home from a year in Istanbul, Turkey, where she taught Creative Writing and Classical literature as a Visiting Professor at Kadir Has University.

Elizabeth has translated the contemporary Turkish poet Murathan Mungan, the Iraqi exile Thea Laitef, and the historical figures Tommaso Campanella and Tullia d'Aragona (1510-1556). Other translations appear in anthologies: *The Bread and the Rose: Neapolitan Poetry from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (NY: Legas, 2005) and *A New Map. Migrant Poets in Italy*, (L. A.: New Integer, 2006), ed. Luigi Bonaffini. In 2007, she published the first English edition of the 1547 *Rime* of Tullia d'Aragona as *Sweet Fire: Tullia d'Aragona's Poetry of Dialogue and Selected Prose* (NY: George Braziller, 2007).



Elizabeth's own poems have appeared in *The North American Review*, *Litspeak*, *Foolscape*, and the *ArkAngel Review*. Herself an academic nomad with sojourns in New York, Boston, Istanbul, and Hatfield, Massachusetts, Elizabeth wants to put down roots in the NJ/PA area.

[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Father Luke

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / father luke /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

A lifetime of commitment

As the bus begins pulling away from the curb, the old woman moves from her seat to the aisle.

“WAIT!” she says to the bus driver, stopping the bus.

The door opens.

Out of breath, her husband steps into the bus, and sits next to her.

The door closes, and we drive away.

Wet Roads

Can you pick me up, she said into the phone. I'm at the airport. It's raining, and I don't have a ride.

I looked at the television, and I cracked a sunflower seed. There was a commercial on for diet cheese. I'm watching something on television, I said. I tongued the sunflower seed out of its shell, and into my mouth.

You're watching something on television?

Yeah, I said. I could hear her disappointment, and it made me happy.

I hung up the phone, and sat on the sofa. I watched it raining outside the window, and I cracked another seed.

On this Page

[A lifetime of commitment](#)

[Wet Roads](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Father Luke lives with the woman he loves in Portland, Oregon waiting for a perfect world.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Gary Sloboda

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [gary sloboda/](#)

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Succession Song

The community is a judas eye. Preoccupied by the prospect of renters and beheaded orchids. No signs of forced entry. Just the dominance of mildew. The wavering pitch of gnats rotating through the broken shafts of light. They collapse on the ear like a wave among placards for the dead for whom we have no voice worth singing. But a prolix pulse at the sight of our unelected dance. The morose quaking of hands in a shivering lot where autumnal shadows bleed towards the crowd and a blazing sun adorns the flags. Collective breathing traced like ragstone in the air: follow its edges to the dogwood's burned out galaxy of buds. And all the way out to where one cares the most: by the stream. Where contours of a forgotten kiss signal a stabbing pain. Like a symptom of god. Or a forced inheritance. Nothing to counteract the moods brought on by late night nostalgia for dead flowers pinned to our shirts by anarchists who walked the earth once in red chuck taylors. Until the weeping of industrially processed farm animals was rain we could pass through on fire.

On this Page

[Succession Song](#)

[Pastoral II](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Pastoral II

Dew point at a lower altitude than usual. A truer perspective palpable in the early light: unanticipated assertion of fact that turns the wind off from the flags. Mutilated quartz sparkles in the eyes of convenience store clerks. Beside walk-in coolers of 12 packs and red bull cases. To see the wreckage and set a piece of it here. With the toddler's plastic toy infused with perimeter lights on the exposed oak tree roots and the strand of raven hair engrooved in the windshield. Can't cry the loved ones from their encasement. Though the figs remain as sweet as ever, the dust columned in patchworks of sun. Having applied for each occupation in the database and received endless nada in reply. Just rest. Type with one finger in memory of dolls the cats mauled in spasms of libidinal joy. By the bungalow where the trinkets pile high. And the straight set faces of the watchful are heeled into the earth. Into fields of discarded glass. Where. With a few minor adjustments. The warbler pushes its list of hollow needles through the air. An invisible arc that flowers painlessly. Out. Over the slate roofs shimmering. And the buzz cut hills the color of deer.

Gary Sloboda is a writer and musician living in San Francisco. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in such places as *Rattle*, *Drunken Boat*, *Glitter Pony*, *Filling Station*, and *Barnwood Poetry Magazine*. In 2008, he published a chapbook of poems, *Pine*.

Previous | [Top](#) | Next

All Written Works Copyrighted © by the Indicated Authors

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Jen Michalski

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [jen michalski](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Monkey Mountain

The summer my brother got mad we slept under our beds. The wood was cold on our cheeks and sometimes we licked it, pretending it was ice pops. We would have stayed there all day if our mom didn't push her broom under, stirring the dust into our eyes and noses. But no matter how cold or how hot it was, we always played on the hill. Our house backed up against it, and from the top it was a good ten or twelve feet into the woods below. We rolled our trucks and matchbox cars, our sister's dolls, ourselves, and even old Peanut Butter down the hill. His woof was loud and soft, loud and soft, all the way down. We loved the hill against our backs, our shoulders, our knees, the sky turning slow, warped, as we stared up from the bottom.

It was Marvin, my brother's idea. When I scrambled up the hill for the fourth time that morning, panting like Peanut, he squirted me with the garden hose. It was brown and faded like a shoe bottom, and water leaked out a little in the middle.

"Fucker." I made my way toward him, arms out, as the water pelted my face.

"What, it don't feel good?" He let his lower lip, pink as bubble gum, drop as he directed the water into his mouth. Some of it ran over unto his chin. "I got an idea, Reggie."

"You ain't had one good idea all summer." I wiped my face with my forearm, off my bare chest. We didn't wear shirts on those days, and mom didn't complain. Less laundry to keep clean.

"You remember when we went to the water park last summer?" He asked, as if I could forget it. It was the only good thing about last summer. We went with our church group, the same group that asked my mom not to bring us back again until we learned our manners. There were slides of all sizes, ones that felt like you were falling from the sky and others that spun you in circles so fast you didn't know which end hit the water first. I still dreamed at night about flying on the water, like a raindrop down my window. But we never could string enough days of manners together.

"What? You find out a way to sneak on the church bus?" I lurched forward and turned the hose on him.

"Stupid ass." He pushed me on the ground like I was nothing and wet me once more for good

On this Page

[Monkey Mountain](#)

[About the Writer](#)

measure. Then he aimed the hose at the hill. "We make our own water park, see?"

"I ain't rolling in that shit." I watched the hose make a muddy ravine down the hill. "That exactly what it look like, too, like when Grandma Hill's toilet pipe backed up in the yard."

"No it don't." He watched the ravine became wetter and wetter. "It look like chocolate milk."

I guess a case could be made for both, but I still wasn't rolling in it. I watched as Marvin backed up toward the house, got a good running leap, and belly flopped down the hill. The hill wasn't wet enough, and he had to paddle himself down about halfway there.

"You look like a shit skunk," I said when he climbed back up, a big mud stripe from his chest to his pants. "You are one stupid motherfucker."

"It just need to be wetter." He turned the hose back on a rested it on the edge of the hill. That someone wouldn't see what we were doing and smack our asses into next week didn't occur to either of us at the time, although I expected more of Marvin. But Marvin, Marvin was always thinking. Even those rare times I thought to warn him, I never did, because I could never wait to see what he did next.

After a puddle winder than our bodies had settle in the dirt, Marvin backed up again.

"Reggie, make sure that ain't no root coming out of the ground." He pointed toward the middle of the hill, and I stood near the edge, straining to see what he was talking about. I never thought a step ahead of Marvin, which is why I wound up on my stomach going down the hill when he came over and pushed me.

"It's good, right?" Marvin stood at the top of the hill, hands on his hips. Somehow he would graduate high school and sell insurance, although the years in between he would angry.

"Yeah, it's good." The mud was cool on my skin. I stuck my thumb up and scrambled up the hill while Marvin wet it down for himself.

"What are you doing?" Our sister Ursula had come out of the house holding a glass of Kool-Aid. Ursula was quiet and usually stayed in her room with her dolls. She had barrettes all over her hair of turtles and bunnies and kittens and when they were on her head they were in her hand, her pets. She was too small and too sweet to bother sitting on and tickling.

"You wanna take a ride down chocolate mountain, sista?" Marvin laid on his back, his head hanging over the lip of the hill. He pushed himself off, his feet out in a V, his arms up in the air.

"It's fun," I assured her. "Go put your bathing suit on so you don't get your dress dirty."

I wet the hill as Marvin climbed up and got one more slide in before Ursula plopped her bottom on the top of the hill. Marvin gave her a push, and she screamed all the way down.

"Shut up, Ursula!" Marvin hissed, glancing back toward the house. "You want to get us in trouble?"

Our pop slept during the day for his shift at night, which is a big reason why Marvin and I were always outside, even in the dead of winter. Plus, with his belt, he could lay a strip on our ass that looked like a piece of bacon. Marvin listened until he realized he wasn't hearing nothing. Then he wet down the hill again.

"Watch—the piece du-a resistance." He flung the hose down by Ursula, who picked it up and drank from it. Marvin was taking French in school, but that's not the same as learning it. He backed up toward the house and took another running start. At the edge of the hill he planted his hands and flipped over. But

he hit the hill funny with one of his shoulders, and by the bottom of the hill he was holding it against his body as if it was going to fall off.

"What happened?" I scream-whispered to him. When he didn't get up and slid down the hill on my butt to him.

"I think I broke it or something." He grimaced, holding it like it was a sick puppy.

"Let me see." I reached out to touch it. Marvin smacked my hand away.

"I tell you, Reggie. I can't move it. It feel like it gonna fall off."

"Maybe you just popped it out or something."

"I don't know." He shook his head.

"What are we gonna do?" I looked up toward the back of the house, where Ursula stared down at us.

"Nobody gonna find out about it. Help me up." I linked my arms around his waist and pulled. "You see, Reggie, there's a clinic downtown. It don't cost no money. Jefferson gone there when he had the flu. We can walk down there and let them take a look."

"That clinic far away." The mud had begun to dry a little on my chest and shoulders, and was whitish silver. Like fairy shit.

"We can walk it." He started toward the woods.

"Like this?" I gestured toward my mud-caked body. But he was already going.

I looked up at Ursula, who stood watching us, hose in her hand. Still on.

"Ursula, turn off the hose, go in the house, and get cleaned up." I waved her back from the hill like I was directing a plane. "Don't let anybody see you, and don't say nothing."

Marvin was really hurt. He didn't have to say it. I caught up and we walked through the woods. It was the middle of the afternoon, and sweat ran little paths through the mud on our bodies before drying up. When we came out of the woods and behind the school, the asphalt was hot on our bare feet and we had to walk in the grass.

"You think you hurt now, just wait until we get home and Mom seen what you done to the hill." My feet hurt from the rocks and heat. Each step, my patience with Marvin was going.

"What I done? You rocked chocolate mountain too, brother." He spit on the sidewalk. It was foamy. I hoped they had a water fountain at the clinic. It was in a little storefront sandwiched between a thrift store and a dentist office in a run-down shopping center, although at the time I knew nothing for comparison. The farthest I'd been anywhere was that water park, and that was maybe an hour away.

Marvin went up to the receptionist and I stared at the posters on the walls of black babies, Hispanic babies, something about prenatal testing. There was a couple of women in there, too, pregnant, an older lady with a scarf on her head and no eyebrows. It was nice and cool inside, the air condition and linoleum and vinyl-seat chairs, and I'd almost wished Marvin had fucked up his arm sooner. I looked at *National Geographic* and *Dirt Bike Rider* and wished I had a shirt to tuck them under and take them home. When they called Marvin I was so into an article about African tree frogs that Marvin hit the side of my head with his good hand.

"Come on, Reggie." I decided to take the magazines in the room with me but instead of reading I

wound up spinning on a stool while Reggie sat on the bed. It wasn't really a room, and it wasn't really a bed. There was a curtain that separated Reggie's bed from a bunch of other beds in one big room. A nurse came in and took Reggie's temperature blood pressure, like they did once a year at school.

"What happened to you?" she asked, but she didn't seem really interested. She wrote something down on a chart while Marvin explained he fell riding his bike. "Where's your mother?"

"At work," he lied. "We tried to call her but we couldn't reach her. It hurt so I came here."

"What's your phone number?" She looked up at him finally. She wasn't pretty. Her head was kind of fat and square and she had thin lips. "We can't perform any treatment without parental consent."

"Shit," Marvin said, drawing out all the letters like he was spreading honey on a cracker. We had walked all that way for nothing. The nurse disappeared behind the curtain, and we watched her white shoes walk around, meet up with a pair of brown shoes, I was guessing the doctor's.

"Marvin Jessup is a hold," we heard her voice. "No parental consent. What kind of moron receptionist did the temp agency send, anyway? Can't she see he's not eighteen?"

"What's the problem?" A male voice asked.

"Possible separated shoulder, maybe break." The feet shuffled a little. "You should see those monkeys. Who knows where they came from."

The male voice stifled a laugh. The feet walked away. I looked at Marvin. His eyes were slits, his jaw clenched.

"Whachyou looking at, monkey?" His eyes narrowed even more. I laughed, but he didn't.

When Mom came, she heard her voice first, beyond the curtain. Apologizing for us, laughing nervously. It didn't take me long to figure out what probably happened^¾Ursula's muddy bathing suit in the tub^¾or worse, on the floor of her room or on her bed, our mother giving her that look, the look that could melt glass. I could feel the heat of it outside the curtain. When she appeared, still in her Saturday clothes, she touched Marvin's head, it disappearing into his thick hair, before she reared up and smacked it.

"We'll talk about this when we get home." She frowned. "Reggie, get up."

I stood by the bed with my magazines as my mom sat down on the stool. She looked too big for it. It seemed to want to escape her, sliding a little across the floor without her permission, her jeans tight against her calves. She stood up again.

"Reggie, sit down." I took back my spot and decided to leave the magazines on the floor. I would have to find out about those tree frogs another time. If there would be another time, another place where I could get my hands on some magazines. Maybe when we went back to school and could use the school library, if my manhood wouldn't be threatened by going into that old dusty book room where the newest books were ten years old.

"What the hell did you think you were doing?" My mom shook her head in the front seat, occasionally glancing at Marvin in the back seat. The doctor had snapped his arm back into his shoulder like he was squeezing a nutcracker. For a second I could see the white all around Marvin's eyes and then it was over. Good as new, the doctor had smiled, peeling off his mud-stained gloves. "Just what the hell is wrong with you two? You wait until your father hears about this."

But Marvin wasn't hearing anything. He was staring out the window, his mouth set like concrete. Marvin, who couldn't shut up to save his life, not at a funeral, not even when he was asleep. He stayed

mad like that, and when he opened his mouth it was to say something about the white man, how oppressive he was to our people. How we needed to rise up. He found our grandfather's glasses, these ones with thick black frames, and knocked the glass out. He wore them and carried a book by Malcolm X he had wanted for his birthday. The hill dried by September and nobody knew nothing for it. But as it got cooler, darker at night Marvin sat on the curb in front of our house, on the bench at the bus stop, outside the old pool hall, and he wasn't Marvin anymore. It wasn't because of his glassless glasses, either. He just stared at people, eyes thin, just daring you, daring you.

Jen Michalski's first collection of fiction, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, is available from [So New](#) (2007), her second is forthcoming from [Dzanc](#) (2013), and her novella *MAY-SEPTEMBER* (2010) will be published by [Press 53](#) in October as part of the Press 53 Open Awards. Her chapbook *CROSS SECTIONS* (2008) is available from [Publishing Genius](#). She also is the editor of the anthology *CITY SAGES: BALTIMORE* ([CityLit Press](#) 2010), which won a 2010 "Best of Baltimore" award from *Baltimore Magazine*. She edits the literary quarterly [jmww](#), and is cohost of the monthly reading series [The 510 Readings](#) in Baltimore.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Jessie Carty

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [jessie carty](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Without a Will

We had discussed death.
We both wanted to be cremated.
But what should be done with the remains.
I can't hear you saying—Keep me in an urn,
dear. You'd never have said dear. Maybe
some of the remnants should be left
in the backyard of your childhood home,
perhaps a sprinkle at the college where we met.
And, of course, some here at our home
on the wooded lot you are so proud of,
even if I can count the number of trees
without using up all my digits. And then what remains?
I can't take you back to Japan, to the
Normandy beaches or even to San Francisco
which we saw twice together; which you saw
once by yourself. There are too many flight
regulations of what you can carry on, on what
you can stow. How to explain handfuls of dust?
But what is left is *something*. It is flesh converted
to heat and ash, ash into soil or ocean and then
unseen bits of atoms or some other soul-like thing
that travels but is yet unnamed, a something that we
both had faith in because we had faith in a re-joining.

On this Page

[Without a Will](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Jessie Carty's writing has appeared in publications such as *The Main Street Rag*, *Iodine Poetry Journal* and *The Houston Literary Review*. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks *At the A & P Meridiem* (Pudding House 2009) and *The Wait of Atom* (Folded Word 2009) as well as a full length poetry collection, *Paper House* (Folded Word 2010).

Jessie is a freelance writer and writing coach. She is also the photographer and editor for *Referential Magazine*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Jonel Abellanosa

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [jonel abellanosa](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Rehearsal

Three hours before bringing
Beethoven's *Emperor* back to life,
He sits under one spotlight
Illuminating his fingers'
Ebony and ivory path.

He breezes through Scriabin,
Rachmaninoff's Paganini variation.
When silence seems to have suddenly
Suffused the hall, sweat from soles
Form three sets of footprints
On sheen of plywood's subfusk,
The third where he stops to take off the drenched
Till he can be mistaken
As Michelangelo's David.

Then he returns with chords thundering,
As though within him a cage is opening,
Releasing Originality's angels with their notes
Fluid as Revelation, mellifluous
As Serendipity rushing suddenly so free.

Soon arpeggios trickle like rivulets
Meeting at his nose and chin. He closes his eyes,
As though he yearns for the Cosmos to open:

He imagines the river reflecting one
Lightning bolt. The thundering subsides
Into pianissimo. In his mind he follows
Something flowing, something serene within
Like pebbles dropping in water, resting
In the silence of his inner void.

On this Page

[Rehearsal](#)

[About the Writer](#)

He sees moonlight leading him to
The woods beyond the riverbank:
He withdraws his fingers from the keys
And opens his eyes, realizing
He could never have emptied
Himself to the river
As this moment,
When from himself he is
Totally absent.

Jonel Abellanosa is a poet living in Cebu City, the Philippines. His poems, short stories and essays have been published in leading national and local Philippine magazines. Many of his poems have been published in anthologies in the United Kingdom. One of those poems is included in a collection presented to Queen Elizabeth for her 80th birthday celebration.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Justin Hyde

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [justin hyde](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

"i'll do it myself daddy."

even the grizzled
old truckers

withered gargoyles
who rarely speak
or move at all
while leaning over
their food.

even they smile
like peeled bananas

when my little boy
not even three years old

trudges across the
truck stop restaurant

dragging back
a high chair
twice
his size.

insufficient funds

the past few months
have been
more drinking
than writing

On this Page

["i'll do it myself
daddy."](#)

[insufficient funds](#)

[an old song](#)

[About the Writer](#)

more malingering
and clock watching
and short-stick hustling
of every
judy garland
in every bar
up and down
ingersoll avenue

a blue fog autopilot
of jameson
and bud light
right up until
this afternoon

where
pale faced
rock gut
and hum of bone

i stare
at the screen
of the atm
which says:

insufficient funds:

dead broke:

the 3800\$
i'd saved up
ran through
in eighty-six nights
like
defective puzzles.

sum-n wrong
sum-n wrong with
the sum-bitchn machine?
asks the old man
behind me
in a yellow billed hat
with a voice
not unlike
a long piece of
paper
torn in two.

an old song

the stillborn child
with his first wife

looks exactly
like the one and only daughter
born to his
second wife.

he's never
told his
second wife this.

sometimes he watches
his daughter
and his mind
sticks to the page:

what are you thinking about?
his wife will ask.

an old song,
is all he says.

Justin Hyde lives in Iowa.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Kristina Moriconi

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [kristina moriconi](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Weather Report: Summer-Fall

—For Annie Lawrie Robbins

The steady northeast wind stirred up summer's dust;
by sunrise, the clean wash hung in the garret again.
Clouds clustered across the midday sky, banded
thunderstorms forcing farmers back inside.
While out gunning, Maria's brother shot off
his thumb today.

Inside, there was sweeping to be done, on the stove
the rendering of fats, the tallow and the lard.
In the shed, sodium hydroxide dripped into the vessel
beneath the hopper where wood ash lye was made.
The soft soap filled a wooden barrel, beside the tomatoes
waiting to be canned.

Mother is not well today. I wish she'd never fall ill.
I read to her from *Women of the Bible*, the stories
of common ladies, of matriarchs and queens,
before I returned to scrubbing and tending
to a hundred little things.

Tomorrow, I will put up pumpkin pies,
gather autumn leaves, preserve in wax
their beauty, my hard work.

On this Page

[Weather Report:
Summer-Fall](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Kristina Moriconi is currently enrolled in the Rainier Writing Workshop low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, where she is working on a collection of essays and a collection of poems. Her work has appeared most recently in *Verbsap*, *Opium* and *Barnwood*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Lisa Lewis

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [lisa lewis](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

April Storm

Under the gutter, sheaves of boxwood bend like dictionary pages, long words
washed away.
This happens every year: fear, and flooding, and the wait for wet mulch to clear
a path, back steps to cedars.
I was a fool to buy this house, thinking of shade and stretch of roof, not the water
at its roots
rushed there like blame, swirling eddies from high ground to the lowly, from
castle to moat.
I was the kind of fool a woman strives to become, answered by the modest
promise of surface,
inexperienced. What if wet ivy wreathes my neck? What if the berry bramble
stops me cold?
I stand still because I must and shudder because I must. I always pretend to take
my time, watching and walking.
I read my image upside down in steamy windows, and my flat heels mark the
clay.
I'm not going anywhere. I clock the sun scorching clouds like sheets where the
flat iron falls.
I'll wade to the shed at the chain link fence and stand on tiptoe to reach the
shovel. Then I'll dig, no one to ask
the angle for the blade, or where I think I'm pointing that wheelbarrow full of
blasted twigs.

On this Page

[April Storm](#)

[Eavesdropping](#)

[Diurnal](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Eavesdropping

Say you don't like the way you walk.
Or your hands braced at odd angles on the pillow
beside your cheeks each cold morning.

Sparing you from the kids next door

the cathedral points line up
atop the chain link fence, praying nigh to bleeding,
the configuration of divine symbol

and the jet thrust of rising to it,
looking to rest there in perfect denial,
though it's only a wall.

Say you waited all day for the magnolia
shadow binding the street's sore belly

and it showed up late.
You might take that as reason enough
to imbue the entire slowly aggrandizing past
with the humor of peeling bark

and the sure knowledge of friends getting
the joke. But it would be more correct not to.

You don't have to like those hands.
You don't have to think about walking
that walk, each shoesole pressing
the roof of heaven or the fast steel floorboards
of purgatory. If you were a fly,
it wouldn't make much difference.

God, I love every atheistic inch of your gestures.
But you can't see me from here.

Diurnal

The whole day. Round as a starved trashbasket.
Dawn's streaks, smoke, air the element
Of birth and speech: it doesn't last.

Sky-writing's dashed out, and on the fencepost
Not the head of your enemy but the morning
Paper, dew-damp stories inked to epic.

The car door swings open to accompaniment
Of beeps and twangy slings, dashboard diagrams
Outlining the obvious. Your boots tattoo grids in dust.

Pry the gate. Track its arc across the driveway.
Furled grass, gravel, round bales looming like parents
Above wrongdoing, staying their hands out of love.

Here comes life on its own legs, the horses hungry
And confident, their long heads technical.
The dun gelding urinates into spotless dirt.

You throw him hay and he nudges into its nest.
The whole day on fire, dry acres down the section,

Later a truck pretending to hurry,

Water's more costly than air because your tongue's
Shriveled paper and nobody's there to talk to, the whole day
Which, spelled across sky, might warn meetings.

Reach your hands to take up the matter of care,
The clean food of farm animals. It's all: all around you.
You breathe it, carry it, wear it, swear at it, veil it.

Geese slip their vee like dancers
Whose wrapped feet are clouds, and the armadillo
That dug your neighbor's lawn lies split in the gutter.

The hunters sleep late, yearning for the season of license.
The beetles stir in pinebark when the sun warms it,
And you tend to everything, the whole day,

Where the sun answers your stoical questions
You want so badly to speak aloud, and heads to its rest,
Tangled in the done, the undone, pasterns of mares, tails

Of rabbits, desiccation of dying, the natural angle
Open and closed, the whole day: the whole,
Geometrical, reliable, unfinished day.

Lisa Lewis's books include *The Unbeliever* (University of Wisconsin Press, Brittingham Prize), *Silent Treatment* (Penguin, National Poetry Series), *Vivisect* (New Issues Press), and *Burned House with Swimming Pool*, forthcoming from Dream Horse Press as the winner of the *American Poetry Journal* Prize. She directs the creative writing program at Oklahoma State University and serves as poetry editor for the *Cimarron Review*.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Marie-Elizabeth Mali

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [marie-elizabeth mali](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

The Length of You Narrow

Those eighth grade afternoons on our backs
in the potato field by Malva's house, remember?

There were days, silenced by your parents' latest smash-up—
your mother's dull thud against your shared wall, the red

ring-width welt on your father's cheek, the shattered glass
you'd eventually sweep up—you'd twist your black hair

around your index finger, the length of you narrow
in the field's furrow, the dirt's heat your mantle.

To bring you back, I'd say things like, when we grow up
wedding bands may come made-to-order from human bone.

I'll wear a piece of my love on my ring finger
and if he hurts me, I'll crush him under my shoe.

Once, you answered, *Imagine the day a letter
is injected into each sperm: every ejaculation, a poem.*

All year, until you moved, we'd hang out in the field
as the normal kids played soccer and practiced ballet.

When the sun crawled below birch-tops, we'd brush off the dirt
and pick up as many of the little potatoes as we could carry,

those escapees from the harvesting machine's teeth.
We'd pray to stay this kind of safe, never ending up

on a dinner plate in front of a boy like Sammy, his falcon eyes
unblinking, fork and knife poised to flay us after grace.

On this Page

[The Length
of You Narrow](#)

[Rebecca](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Rebecca

The week before marrying your husband
I wake up thinking about you. About the time
a year and a half ago, two days after you died,
I heard you say you freed him, and I replied
that you tied him to you forever. But the dead
know better, possessed of a longer view.

We don't live across the street from each other anymore,
moved as soon as we could sell our apartments.
I still choose other streets, sure that the stain
from your head on the sidewalk
is there with your wedding photo, lilies, and candles.

Why didn't you leave him a note, save him
a year of waiting, hoping to find one in a jacket, a book?

My doorman said your body's impact woke
the first three floors. Why did you wear
those high heels? What did you think
as you climbed out in them and let go?

Rebecca, meaning *bound*, I never knew
what a popular name it is, Rebeccas serving us
at cafés, teaching yoga, sitting next to me
in class, catering a wedding, singing. A trail
of skinny women resembling you, Rebecca,
hair wound in tight knots, hands outstretched.

Marie-Elizabeth Mali is the author of *Steady, My Gaze* (Tebot Bach), forthcoming in 2011. She serves as a co-curator of louderARTS: the Reading Series and the Page Meets Stage reading series, both in New York City. Her work has appeared in *Calyx*, *MiPOesias*, and *RATTLE*, among others.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Mary Madec

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / mary madec /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Calliope

She knows someone is parsing her body,
Trying to decipher the rules by which she is put together.

She knows someone is observing her principles
of engagement as subject,

working up a theory of how
or if the head or heart rules.

She feels someone's gaze, as the morphology of her limbs,
her face is searched for some logic of expression,

even the size of her thumbs, the shape of her fingernails,
her teeth set into a formula of who she might be as she inflects her voice.

She knows someone is secretly wondering how she is conjugated
by tense, mood, assessing the aptness of adjectives, adverbs.

And she, author, oracle, desires to be the shaper of her own truth.
Poet, not muse.

**From the collection In Other Words published by Salmonpoetry 2010.*

Without a Word

For Andy

Had I not been born first, I would have been the injured one,
tossed into a tunnel where the train stopped.

On this Page

[Calliope](#)

[Without a Word](#)

[Dire Consequences](#)

[In Other Words](#)

[About the Writer](#)

I would have been the one with my lungs clogged
as I struggled for my first breath at the end
where the light was.

Had I not been born first, I would not be able to contemplate
the terror of your limitations,
and what you could have been if you were not hurt.

You arrived after me, with wounds like the Christ,
your limp body and broken mind sacrificed
on some as yet ill-defined cross.

Like Thomas, I press my fingers into the holes
And is this really you?

Had I not been born first I would have been swirled
into that vortex of silence,
left as you are.

Without a word.

Dire Consequences

Cassandra. I gave her the name, refused the metaphor.
Each day has its own supremacy of best laid plans
Yet,

she came when she was called,
walked across the road as if.

The lorry, a second out
slid and dragged her into timelessness.
The hours after seemed as before.

She lies like Cordelia, I weep like Lear,
wonder if there was a choice of outcomes

in that moment. It took the road
two days to bleed from the thaw.
We shook woodshavings on it,

seeds to make it something else,
so she might rise like a phoenix from the snow.

I call her name into the frozen air, *Cassie! Cassie!*
I stroke her first coat. Condemned by fate,
who would believe she was never meant to go?

Something is happening inside my tense fragile skin
like ageing, warning of the future.

In Other Words

I'd like to gloss your post-modern grin
with a labio-dental fricative to begin.
Then, a bilabial plosive.

God knows what would come out, if I started to use
my west-of-the-Shannon round vowels,
which you are colonizing.

As you purse your lips to front yours,
I notice that it goes very well with your chic-about-town suit.
You speak foreign D4 to the men in my parts,
who respect sibilants that don't make a difference.
Know that SHTOP is surprise, not a rural marker
separating them from the wise fellas
up at the University.
Or a noun,
something they would do to sort out
A poseur like you.

You flex your intellectual biceps
obsessed, not only by your manhood
but by the kind of man you are.
The genre, an obtrusive voice,
your life, a metafiction,
a revised identity.

Now, your grandmother, a professional woman
who walked to school from May to October
in her bare feet
is unsure about her story.
It is not one of the images you are staying with today.
Your voice echoes in the 1970s box architecture
of the new Irish University,
hollow as Plato's Cave.
The sign of the times no more than
the minute's silence for Guinness,
for Irish before the singing of the national anthem.

The men in my parts still check the sky for the weather,
are ensconced in a world that loves them,
will turn up at the funeral,
pay respects to one of the best.
You wish your words still had meaning like theirs.
It's what you left behind,
men pulling their wellies up over wool socks to go out on the land,
while you lace up your expensive trainers
to jog on an asphalt running track.

You can hear the chortling of a bird
coaxing you back to your senses.
It would be too much like innocence
To know whether it is a lark in the morning,

a sparrow chattering, or a robin claiming territory.
You put up the volume, adjust your earphones,
check the zapper for the electric gate is in your pocket,
home is only a block away.

**From the collection In Other Words published by Salmonpoetry 2010.*

Mary Madec was born and raised in the west of Ireland. She studied at NUI, Galway (B.A., M.A., H.Dip Ed.) and the University of Pennsylvania (Ph.D.), U.S.A. She has published in *Crannóg, West 47, The Cuirt Annual, Poetry Ireland Review, the SHOp, The Sunday Tribune, Iota, Nth Position, Natural Bridge* and *The Stand* (forthcoming). In Spring 2007 she was chosen for the *Poetry Ireland Introductions Series* and for the *WINDOWS Showcase Readings and Anthology*. She has read at *Over the Edge* and was chosen for *the Over the Edge Showcase in 2008*. In 2008 she also won the *Hennessy XO Award for Emerging Poetry*. Her first collection, *In Other Words* was published by Salmon in May 2010.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Philip Dacey

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / philip dacey /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Not My Angels

*"Angels with hearts of olive-oil."
Lorca*

Those are the angels never assigned to me
when I was growing up. My angels
had hearts of sweat, beads of perspiration
culled from the brows of remorseful sinners.
Mine never knew sun and nakedness,
were covered with rosaries
in the shadows of the statues of saints.

How much better than a holy water font
for dipping fingers to make the sign of the cross
a font filled with holy olive-oil for dipping bread!

The angels with hearts of olive-oil lounge around Jesus,
who has adopted the famous pose of extended arms and crossed feet
as he lies baking on a sandy Mediterranean shore.
The word "pleasure"
swims in the olive-oil in the hearts of those angels.

But mine scour their hearts clean,
like nuns on their knees in the refectory.
Intruders as pungent as garlic and
intoxicating as red table wine
are hunted down
by my angels with hearts of cleaning fluid.

Now they are looking at me—my angels
with hearts of weak tea made from a single leaf
to chasten the spirit in a perpetual Lent—
they are looking and frowning,

On this Page

[Not My Angels](#)

[Spending
the Day Reading
Seamus Heaney
and Juan Ramon
Jiminez](#)

[On a Photo of His
Daughter](#)

[About the Writer](#)

alerted by the whiff
of olive-oil
coming from my pen.

Spending the Day Reading Seamus Heaney and Juan Ramon Jiminez

How different these two!

One seems to make his poems out of stone
he sculpts and chisels,
each word weighed for its heft,
palmed and cupped for its shape.
You want to run your hand over
the surfaces of the lines,
to give it the pleasure of the hard textures,
the nubs and serrations.

The other seems to make his poems out of froth,
which is almost about to fly,
which is full of air, and wings,
a whiteness whose occasional dark flecks
are like the eyes in downy birds
who have learned to live by sucking the marrow
out of moonlight.

May I never have to choose
between these two.

May my heaven be
that froth running all over that stone,
pooling here and there
and sliding down its sides forever,
the two happy in a marriage
everyone said would not last.

On a Photo of His Daughter

I've never seen you on a horse before.
You look at home there, free of any care.

Behind you, Minnesota farmland runs
flat and far, your hands intimate with reins.

Though urban and urbane, you'd easily pass
for one who'd grown up deep in prairie grass—

or maybe for a female centaur, half
of you heavy brown flesh to hold you safe.

At thirty-six, you're somewhere in the middle

of your ride. Better than a throne, a saddle.

The horse's left eye is a darkened pool
where your future swims, gleaming like a jewel.

But this photo also brings a pang: that I
before long must bid you, Rider, goodbye.

Your sweet smile says, "I think I'll sit a while
longer here, it feels so right behind this pommel."

Horse, woman, daughter, farmland, tree line, sky—
each and all the answer to the question, Why?

Philip Dacey is the author of eleven books, most recently *Vertebrae Rosaries: 50 Sonnets* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2009) and *Mosquito Operas: New and Selected Short Poems* (Rain Mountain Press, 2010), as well as whole collections of poems about Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Eakins, and New York City. His honors include three Pushcart prizes, two NEA fellowships in creative writing, a Woodrow Wilson fellowship to Stanford, a Discovery award from the New York YM-YWHA's Poetry Center, and a Fulbright lectureship to Yugoslavia. With David Jauss, he co-edited the formalist anthology *Strong Measures* (Harper & Row, 1986).



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

All Written Works Copyrighted © by the Indicated Authors

Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Stephen Page

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [stephen page](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

The Old Man

On my weekly drives
to *La Limpieza*,
I sometimes see the Old Man
walking on the shoulder
of the road.
He is gray-bearded,
and calvited. He wears
a tattered black suit.
He lugs a filthy sheet
knapsack upon his
back. He never thumbs,
nor pleads for a ride
with his sun-bleached eyes.
he walks slowly, determinedly,
much slower of course
than the cars and trucks
that blow by inches
from his shoulder.
I never see him stopped,
sitting down, drinking
coffee in a truck stop.
He is always walking,
always walking.

The Horseback Vet

My white pickup was splashing mud
when I leapt out
near the wood in lot twenty-one.

On this Page

[The Old Man](#)

[The Horseback Vet](#)

[About the Writer](#)

A cow was lying on her side,
her eyes rolled back,
throat gurgling air.

A calf was stuck halfway out
of the uterus, bloody faced, tongue lolled,
crimson bubbles popping from its nostrils.

I grabbed it by the forelegs
and tugged it out, cleared its nose
and throat with my fingers.

I pressed on the cow's chest
every five seconds, then stroked
them both and whispered reassurances;

but I feared I had arrived too late
to prevent them from lifting
into eucalypti leaves.

Then He rode up behind me,
jumped from his horse,
syringes strapped to his belt.

He rubbed placenta on her nose
grabbed her by the tail and spun her around
so she could fully scent her calf.

We watched her wobble to her feet,
the calf roll over onto his stomach
and prick up his ears.

Stephen is the author of [The Timbre of Sand](#) and [Still Dandelions](#). He holds a BA from Columbia University and an MFA from Bennington College. He is the recipient of The Jess Cloud Memorial Prize for Poetry, a Writer-in-Residence with stipend from the Montana Artists Refuge, a full Writer Fellowship from the Vermont Studio Center, an Imagination Grant from Cleveland State University, and an Arvon Foundation Ltd. Grant.



Fox Chase Review

| [Home](#) | [Events!](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [About FCR](#) |

Susan Gibb

[cover](#) / [contents](#) / [susan gibb](#) /

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Elizabeth on a Good Day

She danced in the wash of the waves, avoiding their grip on her ankles, bare toes in sync with the rhythmic pull of the moon. Like applause they rolled in crashing claps to collapse on the shore, then faded back into the mass of the ocean leaving wet stains like tears on the sand. Elizabeth bowed deep in appreciation, her skirt held out in a fan of windblown sail.

From the windows he watched her. She disturbed his concentration on his work, skittering like a mouse along the edge of awareness, burrowing in like the needs of a child to be seen, praised, protected. Whatever he could give, he tried to give her but she always clamored for more. Never asking, just letting him into that instant in her eyes, like a glimpse inside Pandora's box, then closing herself against the reach of his words.

She turned her head to whip the hair back from where the wind had painted it on her face. She saw Robert watching, laughed and waved. He smiled as wide as his mouth could make it as if the space between him standing at the window and her windblown figure on the beach would diminish it as it traveled the distance. He waved the same way, exaggerated, with a pendulum sweep of his hand. He waved even as she turned back to the water, the wet foam slipping up and around each sun-browned bare foot, splashing and sliding back to the ocean.

Elizabeth sucked in her cheeks between her teeth, bit down hard just to feel how it hurt. She drew in a deep breath of the salt air, imagined it rushing down her throat, filling her lungs, splashing back as she exhaled. She took a step further into the incoming tide as it dragged at her feet, now reaching foam fingers cold and wet on her calves.

Robert watched for a moment more. She looked fine. She looked happy. Elizabeth had a love of the ocean that went beyond what he could understand. It filled the empty spaces he missed and he was grateful. He was glad they'd decided to come out here for the summer. She was safe here. He could relax. He sat back down and opened the laptop, waded through words, clung to numbers.

Before she walked into the ocean, she turned around one more time. She saw what looked like a shadow of him sitting. She wasn't sure, it didn't move, it wasn't watching. She was disappointed because she had wanted to wave goodbye.

On this Page

[Elizabeth on a Good Day](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Susan Gibb is a writer of fiction and poetry in traditional and hypertext form and is pursuing further study into narrative in new media formats. She has taken part in combined arts projects (100 Days/100 Hypertexts 2009, 100 Days/100 stories 2010) and presentations such as Hypertext '08 Workshop. She has been published in *The Blue Print Review*, *elimae*, *Bewildering Stories*, *The New River Journal*, *fourpaperletters*, *metazen*, *Litsnack*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Divine Dirt Quarterly*, *Camroc Press Review*, *otolith*, and others.



[Previous](#) | [Top](#) | [Next](#)

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