

# Fox Chase Review

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# Fox Chase Review

## 2009 May Special Edition Contents

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**Eileen Moeller**

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## **A Black Plastic Bag Is Rising**

on the wind, like a raven  
riding an updraft,  
a wingless bird  
without hope  
of ever gliding  
its way back down.

It billows and swells,  
now round as a fist  
raised at the heavens,  
then thinly, it twists  
and changes shape,  
becomes a moth unfurling  
from the chrysalis.

And this makes me ponder  
the dark smudge of the soul  
as it leaves the body,  
released all at once from gravity.

But this is the opposite of a soul—  
a polymer stretched and shaped  
for single use, and then turned into refuse,  
bearing our fingerprints into the world,  
our carrying urge made  
manifest, run amok,

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Eileen Moeller lives in center city, where she is busy working on short stories and poems, and practicing Cane Fu. Her poems have recently appeared in magazines: *The Comstock Review*, *Philadelphia Stories*, the online journal: *Kritya*, and an anthology from Spinster's Ink Press titled, *Women.Period*.

an indestructible  
piece of flotsam.  
They're everywhere.

I look out my window,  
and see a land-locked jellyfish  
wending its way through the city,  
harpy, black spot, blight,  
omen, burning tire, bit of midnight,  
flake of ash from a funeral pyre.

One of millions.  
And where, oh where will it light?

### **City Just Before Dusk**

In the turning down of the day  
the light folds  
like clean white sheets,  
then drapes in swathes across  
whole groups of buildings,

so great sections of city glow,  
bright as a Pre-Raphaelite angel's face  
as he announces another  
coming of twilight.

Then stringy clouds,  
that pull everything horizontal, fill the sky,  
as if the atmosphere's lying down  
having just been roused  
from a lengthy nap,

so whole neighborhoods slow  
and drowse in half tones of charcoal blue,  
as Vincent's views of rain, through  
the window of a Saint Rémy asylum, do.

In all of this we see night awakening  
like the baby newly baptized,  
and called for the first time by name.  
Close by, his parents watch him  
wriggle in the arms of the priest,  
both their hearts aflame.

## First The Heart Goes

then the head.  
That's how it was  
with the ruffed grouse  
you found in the backyard,  
knocked out of the sky,  
windfall for some nighthawk.

(And isn't that just how it was  
with your grandmother?  
Knocked out of life  
by too much,  
loss and sorrow?)

Of course, you went out to look,  
filled as you are with reverence  
for such beauty, the kind  
that never lets you close enough  
to see more than a quiver and blur.

(Wasn't she like that too—  
quicksilver; couldn't sit still?)

And it took one day  
for its chest to be emptied  
hollow and dry as a cave;  
the tribe that once lived there  
long gone, feathers blowing.

(Her heart, torn into pieces,  
first by losing two husbands,  
then when your mother died.  
When they had to take her car away  
she told you her chest felt deserted;  
cavernous as an empty house.)

And just one more day  
for the body to abruptly stop at the neck,  
mindless as you are right now,  
lured by the long tail feathers, the golden ruffs,  
bent over this bloodless thing,  
to pull them out, so easily,

(It got to where she couldn't stop  
crying, began to burn  
her dinners, forgot how to take her pills.)

Listen to you: making tiny crow sounds,  
as you spread desire's shadow  
on the relics of a radiance you yearn for,  
until it's over and you're ready  
to toss the leavings to the clean-up crew in the  
woods.

(So little left, by the time she died in the  
nursing home.  
Just the scalloped golden wedding band,  
that fits on the end of your pinky,  
and a little pile of pictures,  
you keep in a drawer by your bed.)

### **Heart of Washington Square**

When the birds fall  
out of the trees behind you,  
light as a cloud, when they lift in an arc,  
wheel and bank right over the man you love,  
as he stubbornly sits on a bench in the sun,  
reading his book, while you hunch on another  
one  
in the shade, preferring to take  
the dimmer view, until those tiny wings  
take flight, and your spirits rise up when they  
do,  
as you will soon, conceding to a clearly cosmic  
connection, the sparrows, their sheer velocity,  
like Cupid's arrows shot between you,  
affirming that incongruous as the two of you  
may be: red dwarf, white giant, ashiver, ablaze,  
written by light, gently bathed in ink,  
you're part of the same constellation, linked.

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Rafi Lev

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## 9th Street Mercado

The sarape wrapped woman  
whines tamales  
in response to  
shoppinbag  
man's pleas

doting nonnas  
offer biscotti to  
wide eyed ninos

Sal shrieks  
Non Toche  
as produce mavens  
sniff and jab

Vendors trade barbs  
all warming their hands  
over burning cans

wafts of stoked charcoal  
and strong coffee compete

Muffled mariachis seep  
from a brown young man's  
suped up truck



Rafi Lev is still searching for a reliable Muse. Currently, he serves as the Arts and Spirituality Center's Board liaison to Greater Philadelphia's We The Poets initiative. In addition, he is involved in museum education, diversity training and para-chaplaincy

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The Asian family smiles  
quietly clipping grapes

A torn tortilla  
straddles the border  
between sidewalk  
and street

### **Dancing in the Village Square**

When asked what she remembered  
Of her home, Grandma faltered

Dancing in the village square  
Faint music, laughter  
Neighbor's glasses clinking  
Scattered lanterns aglow

Years later I learn  
That other girls were dancing  
While she ran, clutching  
A handful of her life

Waving to empty windows  
As darkness pursued her into the woods

Hungry dogs barking

### **Dusk Descending**

The trees are on fire  
reddened orange sears the sky  
brilliance smoldering

Fleeting light reflects  
pure blue, clear white  
yellow angles without scorching

Crisp leaves flung  
like wanton ashes  
as dusk descends

service. For five years, he performed with Full Circle Theatre's Intergenerational Improv Troupe. Originally from the Midwest and an avid linguist, he has lived and studied in Latin America and the Middle East, as well as worked and traveled extensively in Africa, Asia and Europe. Rafi is proud to be a member of Center City Poets for the past three years.

Chilled breeze  
carries shadows  
in its darkening pockets

My hearth sparks, then crackles  
before it retires  
under night's thick blanket

### **Winter Awakening**

S l o w l y  
these leaves fade away  
like crumpled sponges  
just before they're tossed

shingles reappear  
across the street  
bricks rebuild themselves  
o n e b y o n e

Bits of blue grey whiteness  
peek through, almost pressing  
against the pane  
Wind's shrill call rattles

**A**s this puzzle completes itself  
I await awakening  
to my window's  
full view returned

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# Fox Chase Review

**Paul Selbst**

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## A Summer Gambol

Say, the summer's coming through our window,  
Flickering through our window  
With a summer rain that stands in drains,  
That runs in rivers by the curb,  
But can't disturb the children in the yard  
Until it falls the harder and they run away.  
The echoes of their play, like rivulets,  
Trickle through the mist of early evening.

Say, the summer's breaking overhead.  
It frolics on your face and in your bed,  
Like sun playing on your eyes,  
Like little winds skipping through the door,  
Like screens that tease persistent flies,  
Or leaves of doubtful patterns on the floor.  
The mornings turn to dusty days  
With evening music of the streets.

Say, the summer beats in our chests,  
Fills our veins with searching,  
Pours like beer from our laughter,  
Rocks with drums in the street.  
The summer trips over us like a cursing giddy  
old man.  
And we are clowns who cry when we can,  
But take his hand now

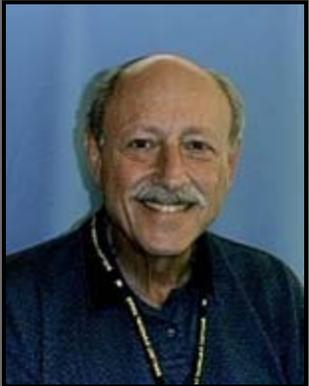
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Paul Selbst is a resident of Roxborough, Philadelphia, who has written poetry for most of his life. He is a professor, a folksinger, a musician, a hiker, and a learner. He appreciates art, loves life, cherishes friends, and tries to develop his mind, his body,

And laughing, run with it.

### **Autumn Simply Ends**

Autumn simply ends  
where the sun winking  
through shrinking trees  
trills the flute of a brook,  
laying a lyric  
with the lute of the breeze.

An echo lingers,  
the song smoldering  
like fire wet with wine  
where branches blushed  
to hear the ringing voices...  
yours and mine.

Shadows fondling your hair,  
fearing the moon,  
hide in your eager light  
till your song ends simply,  
fast as a lover's flight,  
soft as a peacock's cry  
cursing a winter night.

### **The Butterfly Farm**

seeing the butterflies  
around the corners of your sight  
knowing their Latin names  
genders  
sex lives  
life cycles  
life spans  
host shrubs  
contributions to pollination

but now you sit  
watching their ethereal flight  
patterns

forms  
delicacy  
such fancy of color and light  
savoring the delight  
hearing songs in their wings  
stillness in their glide  
trajectories of spirit  
destiny of sun and flowers

and what of we higher powers  
if we could transpire  
their freedom to move  
to then know the touch of love  
the immensity of love

### **My Mother's Voice**

Today I heard my mother's voice  
In the murmuring of doves.  
Was it a warning or a caress...  
An imagined touch of love...  
Lighter than sunlight  
Invisible as memory?

My mother is one with the earth,  
The clouds, and the birds.

I see the pigeons  
In their silent rooftop vigil  
Watching me as a mother might.  
And as the birds take flight  
My spirit dances on their wings  
And in the sunlight.

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**Elizabeth Quigley**

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## Twice In One Day

I startled a doe  
on the hill  
leading down to the creek  
for a caught breath she stood  
head high  
achingly beautiful  
in seconds she slipped away.

My youngest daughter  
stopped by today  
she stood where the sun  
warmed her dark hair  
achingly beautiful  
my heart caught.

## The Well

Imagine  
death as a well  
stare down its long shaft  
to cool darkness waiting.

Watch  
your dreams



Elizabeth Quigley is from the Roxborough Section of Philadelphia. She has been a member of The Center City Poets Workshop for three years.

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silently spinning  
into soft welcome.

Wonder  
to drift slowly  
a dry leaf  
to waiting water.

Would it  
be restful  
floating easily  
without dreams.

Would water  
be cool  
and sweet  
against hot skin.

Would it  
spill  
through being  
filling emptiness.

The well waits.

### **That Word**

You say it so easily—the word slipping  
your tongue like cool water dripping  
onto smoldering coals; damping flames  
before they would leap into life. Names  
come to mind of your other loves, and while  
I am held by your arms and the smile  
in your eyes, I wonder how often they  
heard that word you so easily say.

Truly I did not expect to hear  
that word again in a year  
of life times. I am content so far  
with the low burning coals that we are,  
warmed by your friendship, and asking not  
for anything more than what we've got.

## Weapons of Small Destruction

Sometimes words are small, sharp stones.  
Flick one; see it score.

Hold back and feel the hard words drop  
into the hollow drum of you.

Demosthenes held pebbles in his cheeks;  
polished each word smooth

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**Walt Feldman**

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## **New Orleans Maw**

Like a moth in for a soft landing  
in a hard, deep porcelain vale,  
As white as light: Steep surround-basin:  
sound, sleepy walls, sheer walls, sheer wings,  
flightless still-life  
thinkless, idle flake;  
Quiescent,  
translucent, infinitesimal  
pulse.  
as silent as light.

All is calm, is well, is right  
is lull,  
until a shadow veils, and then...  
and then the cock turns; the blind  
animal wakes, the innards come,  
the guttural caw, the serpent hiss, the uncocked  
spigot sputters  
faucet roars  
pours,  
blasts  
in titanic wash,  
seizure and lift,  
twist and break,  
start and startle and remov-  
al go-round in

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Walt Feldman, after a brief stint in retailing, taught English for over 32 years in the Philadelphia High Schools, bouncing from drop-out prevention programs to advanced placement instruction. Since retirement, he has concentrated on lawn mowing, writing and reciting poetry, studying voice and performing at occasional recitals.

Walt is proud to be a member of Center City Poets for the past three years.

futile in-  
finitesimal shock in-  
stictive limp-  
winged too slight,  
might too mighty:  
the flush and crush, the wrathful  
roiled waters,  
the swirling whirlpool suck  
into the maw—  
the manmade maw,  
into the maw's  
abyss.

### **"Officially Attached!"**

Could the Window that was chilly  
and the Shade, alas, forsaken,  
Be made just for each other,  
was it romance in the makin'?

Might a minister be handy  
to service such a match-up,  
To handle the proceedings  
and get a proper latch-up?

And who would be the wedding guests  
but Ceiling, Wall—and Door!  
Pairs of matching Chairs and Tables  
would occupy the Floor.

And though but a single wedding band  
this couple could afford,  
It would dangle from a string  
to always guarantee accord.

And with, at last, the wedding  
of Shade and Window done,  
each day providing visitors  
to sit in shade and sun...

the Window gets its blanket,  
the Shade gets hung a-right,  
And the Ups and Downs of passing years

bring shadow, and give light!

### **in Relief**

My father died  
last night in sleep  
alone

to be expected  
a habit with him.

In sleep a year ago

my father cried and trembled  
Screaming to the night  
called me

A pattern  
in the night's black watch  
Horror  
a habit with us

On the top floor  
adrift  
my father fell  
into my arms  
Bright eyes against the night  
we touched.

A wish  
bright  
obscured by day's excess of light

A habit with me  
in privacy in secrecy  
darkness is relief

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# Fox Chase Review

**Cheryl Grady Mercier**

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## Calling Janine

I used to call your house: "This is  
Janine. Leave a message and I'll return your  
call.'

Often, once I'd said my name,  
You picked up with a laugh.  
At work, I called you so often  
3725 in my fingers' muscle memory

I dialed and then you  
Were in my office  
Or I in yours  
A rare working friendship  
Our methods, not-so-corporate  
But we built an outstanding, warm and  
Friendly team among  
Driving business units  
I retired  
You took my place

I heard you were sick and called  
Left messages at work  
Left messages at home,  
Talked to your sister-in-law  
But one day you answered

Your voice hoarse, the cancer inexplicable



Cheryl Grady Mercier graduated from Rowan University's M.A. in writing program. Her work has appeared in *Philadelphia Stories*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Drexel On-line Journal*, *Girlfriendz Magazine*, *The Aroostook Review* and others. Her poems and short stories have

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"One more doctor may operate  
Give me more time."  
But mesothelioma moved faster

3725—I called your number  
Days after you died  
Four rings, then the automaton  
Droned "Your call has been forwarded  
To an automatic messaging system"  
Pause  
The mailbox belonging to"  
Your voice  
"Janine Klein"  
Automaton  
"is full..."

Your voice  
Your voice

### **Life Observed**

Petulance threw dinner across the kitchen  
Do not expect me to feel sorry or to  
Coddle you. Or to make another plate.  
Go to bed. Wake up happy.

Nose tracking lilacs  
Past azaleas lit by streetlamps  
Spring walk at night

Calling my mother  
On a whim one afternoon  
Her voice was hoarse  
I knew I was the first one  
She talked to that day

At the edge of dark  
I have failed so often  
Do I despair?  
Or simply bask

received recognition  
from *Writers Weekly*,  
*Atlanta Review*,  
*National Writers  
Association* and *Rowan  
University*. *Monkey  
Business: Animal  
Antics and English  
Language Learning*  
internationally  
anthologized a poem  
and short story.  
Mercier also co-  
authored a  
memoir/autobiography:  
*My Lover the Rabbi*,  
*My Husband the  
Doctor: What more  
could a Jewish girl  
want?*

In the sunset

Standing where the dead are waked  
Marked for my future  
Today, Ash Wednesday

### **First Sight**

In this place of noise and light  
Giddy at the end of my marathon  
My husband's kiss still on my lips

I look up into your eyes  
Captured, I stare as you're carried  
Across this room of earthy scents  
Talk and laughter

But I hear only your voice  
Expressing irritation to the crowd  
Between us

When they part, your gaze  
Holds mine, your eyes bind  
I cannot turn away.  
All disappears, save you.

Suddenly you are in my arms.  
Lost in your eyes, I barely notice  
Your bald head, your wrinkles

Your glance strays to my husband's face  
He stares back as I  
Hand him your swaddled body  
And you start the seduction again.

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**Mary E. Brucker**

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## Opportunity Knocks

Danger, nowhere?  
I walked happily with opportunity.  
Freely, like a five-year-old walking with her  
mother in a great city.  
Opportunity showed me glistening lights  
dazzling dances, glorious scenes,  
never seen before by another.  
Away we drift!  
Further away,  
Protection's warnings unheeded.  
Warnings, reality, then risks lost.

But again, Opportunity knocks.  
But I walk wearily, rather stand, —watching.  
It's beckoning hand untaken.  
Rejection, deception, betrayal.  
Opportunity knocks,  
I watch its grandiose ship.  
as I stand on the shore,  
Afraid to climb aboard.

But again, opportunity knocks.  
I step wearily.  
Its hand out stretched.  
Sails unfurled.  
My eyes desiring, heart despairing,

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Mary Brucker is a Social Worker, and has been writing poetry for the past seven years. She has read her poetry widely in the Philadelphia area and has been active in The Center City Poets Workshop for three years. Mary is from Glenside, Pa.

For opportunity knocks,  
Beckoning hand.  
And I walk wearily.  
Should I walk?

### **My Inner Child**

Last Sunday, I caught a glimpse of my inner-child.

Hidden for so many years, she emerged,  
But stayed oh so briefly.

How old was she? 14, perhaps younger? –  
This one so lost?  
Kidnapped by life.

Laughing, we played together,  
She - dancing, enthralled by the world around  
her.

That world she rarely sees.

Smiling - laughing more that day,  
Than I had for months— perhaps years.  
light-hearted sunshine—  
undisturbed by reality's oppressive humidity.  
Unicorns dance around her discarding their  
illusive glow.

Catching rainbows.

She holds them in her hands.

She looks for no pot of gold.

For she loves those rainbows for only  
themselves.

Ahh, my child, —  
stay with me always.

Ahh, my child-  
never disappear.

Never crawl back into your strangling prison!  
For you are not meant to be chained!

But ahh, you are —.

For Time will not stand still,  
And reality reasserts its restraint.

Its net surrounds then entangles,  
snatching you to its hiding place.

### **Modern Babylon**

A flittering bird flies in darkness.  
Flying alone as in distress.  
Has it lost its way as we have?  
Has it gone from your breast?  
Gone its separate way?

The night reveals its story.  
A siren screams to the unknown.  
A Harley whirls its mournful song,  
unknown to what may come.  
It will go on and on.

This is my Babylon, my hopeless love.  
You wonder so unseeing  
you skip on cliffs so high above.  
Not caring for its meaning.  
You skip so close to destruction.

So gracefully you dance with ease.  
Not knowing how far the distance.  
You refuse to look at where you trapeze,  
so lost in your resistance.  
May you wake before it is too late?

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