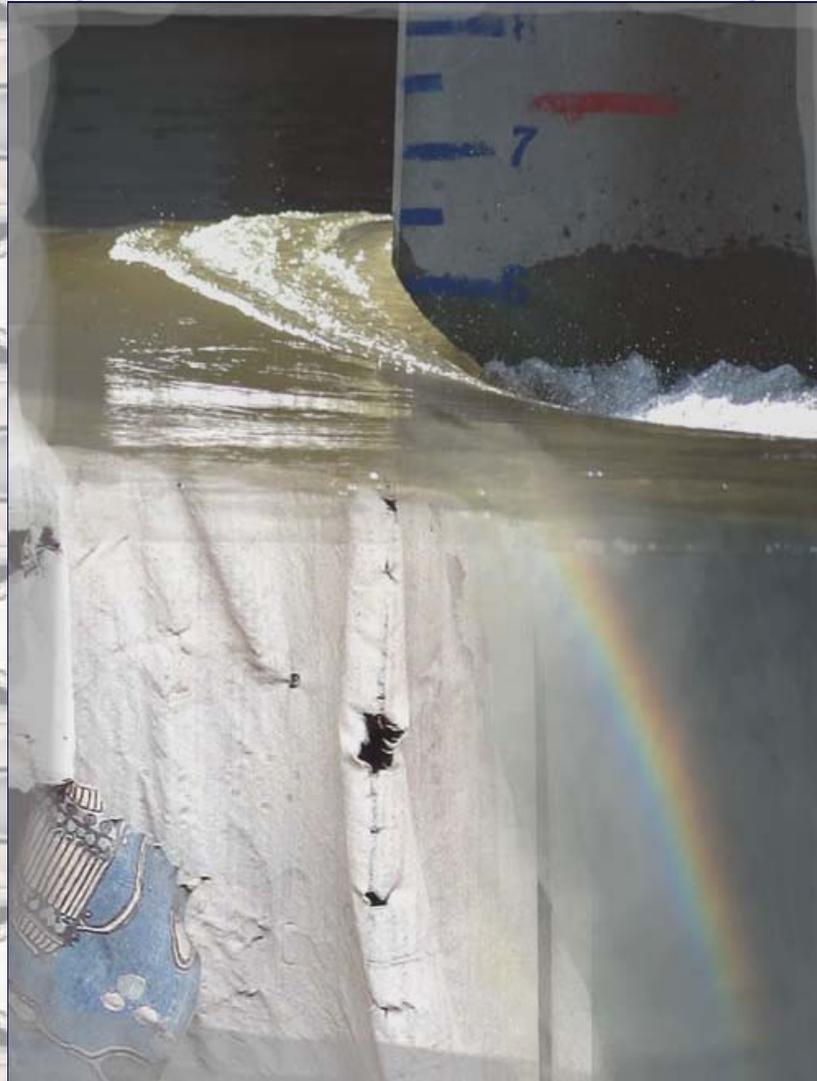


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Bruce Kramer

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180 Seconds in Penn Station

"All aboard!"
The train conductor yells down the
platform
of Penn Station
as I get off the PATH.
I thought "all aboard"
was something reserved for movies
something they said in the 19-teens.

I,
the guy who is always conscious
of falling into a rut
into becoming a cliché
am one of the corporate
miserable
schmucks
I always poke fun at
With my suit and shirt and tie and fedora and briefcase.

I walk through the terminal and
peripheral images of people that
deserve
to be written about fly by.

Vivaldi's *Spring* is echoing through
the cavernous arch-ceilinged, hangar-lie terminal
as some toothless Whitman-esque old cat
with his face sunken in like those homes in Wisconsin
plays *Hava Nagila* on an accordion.
A hot blonde—
the skin the color of a Greek statue—
dressed conservatively in a business pant-suite

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and six-inch red fuck me pumps
in a contradiction of appearance and profession.
Hard-ass gangsta-looking dudes
angry at
everyone or someone or no one.
A very overweight, sloppy-looking guy
in a wrinkled suit.

His tie is too long
his pants are too short.

Poured into a chair
while a 60-year old dressed line one
of the Blues Brothers polishes his shoes.

Vivaldi keeps playing.

Women with moustaches.

A group of children
singing *Feliz Navidad*.

And who can forget
the token whack job with the sandwich board
screaming about the end of the world.

—the true face of America—

Scores of women

moving the opposite direction from me.

Where the hell do they all come from and
why aren't they going in my direction?!

The crowd flowing too quickly for me to
stop and turn my head without hearing,

"Yo, keep moving, jerk!"

or being trampled on.

Vivaldi continues.

A guy in a bagel shop

yelling that his bagels

"is de freshest in New Yawk!"

The voice of the intercom

booms that "the train for Boston is now boarding!"

Two dozen people pick up their bags at the news

and haul ass to an escalator

and jockey for position

like parents fighting for Furbys

on Christmas Eve in Toys 'R' Us.

A child standing eyes wide

and mouth open,

wearing a Yankees cap and

staring at the hugeosity of the terminal.

A girl

who might be attractive

if she didn't put on her makeup

with a paint roller

A dude with more tattoos than bare skin.

The open, inviting mouth of a bar's entrance

plays Thorogood.

"Who do you loooove?!"
Clashing with Vivaldi
like opposing armies.

I realize that Penn Station
is a microcosm for America.
It is a melting pot.
A melting pot
 where
all the scum rises to the top
and all the shit at the bottom gets burned.

Bruce Kramer is a writer from Philadelphia. Most of his work has appeared in boring technical documents, medical publications, and marketing propaganda, but he has also been published in the occasional magazine and literary publication. He believes in cold beer, rock and roll, and baseball. He sometimes acts like he is named after Bruce Springsteen, but he knows he is named after somebody much cooler.



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Carlos Reyes

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Fifthlogic

Air
is the key to water

The wind is the voice
of the earth

The pomegranate
is the sister of the heart

Quintológico

La llave del agua
es el aire

El viento es la voz
de la tierra

La granada
es la hermana del corazon

Note: Granada is also a cognate for grenade.

Man Walking Across a Bridge to Lhasa

A man stopped. He balances, hands in pockets. Halfway across a bridge.

Suspended over the ravine, he inches toward the stone face of a mountain.

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The bridge inclines, the way up, along the trembling pathway is not easy.

The bridge is narrow, could be the road to righteousness the ancients tell us.

The bridge bows, under the weight of the man passing, not an apparition or a spirit.

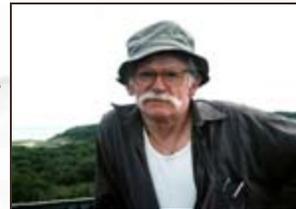
The bridge sways in the breathe that travels up the canyon.

The canyon frames a silk painting of clouds.

Or it is the clouds forming a curtain behind which Lhasa

or paradise or success in the world, or simply the future lies, hidden.

Carlos Reyes' latest book of poetry: *The Book of Shadows; New and Selected Poems* (2009). Other recent books: *At the Edge of the Western Wave* (2004) *A Suitcase Full of Crows* (1995) (a Bluestem Prize winner and finalist for 1996 Oregon Book Awards). His books of translations: *Poemas de la Isla/Island Poems* by Josefina de la Torre (Eastern Washington University Press, 2000). Reyes' translation of the *Obra poética completa* (Complete Poetic Works) of the preeminent Ecuadorean poet Jorge Carrera Andrade, was published in 2004 in a bilingual edition in Ecuador. His translation of Ignacio Ruiz-Pérez' s "La señal del cuervo/The Sign of the Crow" is due out in Spring, 2011. He is the publisher/editor of Trask House Books, Inc. In 2007 he was awarded a Heinrich Boll Fellowship to write on Achill Island, Ireland and in 2008 was awarded the Ethel Fortnter Award from St Andrews College. He was recently the poet-in-Residence in the Joshua Tree National Park. Reyes lives in Portland but travels often to Ireland and is a frequent visitor to Spain and Ecuador.



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Christine O'Leary-Rockey

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Mercury in Retrograde

Running water/wasp at screen/ its legs
Prick the metal not burning/ nothing burns
Like silence/ except for the sound
Of betrayal./ It is a cry
 all its own

And stands the creature in its own light, declaring
That Consciousness is the knowledge of shame.

Aquinas' unmoved mover stands
braced by the chaos of movement. Only weather is as cruel.
Amidst this we formed language,
etching out symbols. Phonemes granted faces
unions that beget new sounds through which to paint by.

Man began to lie upon switching from picture to sound
Pictures intrinsically linked to actuality- irresponsible sound
habituated to be/ random/ and therefore unreliable/
Capable of betrayal/. One cannot trust a sound

that has no face/
to bind it.

Gray Along the River

I see you along the ridge and
you shift—like geese in the rain.
To know you is to question substance

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highways and sleep

There are places that even the birds cannot
navigate. On these the sea leaves its
mark, angled and strong. Light
is really a question—along with dance
and the language of faces. Ask me—
do I love you now?

If not, when?

Was there ever a time we sprang lightly
loosed from the ground as if on wire?
I did not know you then, when I hung you
from the branches. Feared you
like a slow fire.

Anchor or ballast—both shapes
promote balance
but one of them threatens
the sky

A Dialogue with the Wind

As if on command- the wind begins an oration
on corn husks and water, the feel of rough bark
and why heartbeats conflict with its own rhythm.
Again, I am struck by the simplicity
of its call—*don't leave me! Not yet—*
I have another word for you...

I've not moved a moment and it's digging,
telling me where morning began
while it tugs on the grass, a few strands
whisked into a dust devil.
That must be how it describes confusion
or maybe significant thought.

*Constantinople, it continues, was only beautiful for a moment.
Before the cobblestones came.
Hence it became an attraction for mad children, dog shit
and a never-ending tirade of furtive men sipping tea
and plotting how to take over
the world.*

*I tired of them
so I blew in Rome.*

That's preposterous—I say—
But the devil moves on, now
carrying leaves. It's the color of ash after
A heavy rain- *And another thing—it says hastily,
I am not the only one who thinks this—I heard it
from the weathervane. It was he who said
That you would love me best. So I'm singing to you now...*

Its voice held all of the violins in heaven
And moved with the force of a train.
I am afraid of You, I said.
It held me tighter, saying—*Never*.
*You are afraid of my sister—she is always trying
To draw you away. If you didn't have me to hold you down
you might drift off—no, I might never see you
again. She is always taking my balloons.*
I offered it the handful of leaves I had been
playing with, and it took them
with delight, now whirling around me like a phonograph,
staggering as a small child does
before falling.

Christine O'Leary-Rockey is a poet, philosopher and a professor and with a tendency to lose things and incur student loans for frivolous subjects. Greatly influenced by W.B. Yeats, e.e. cummings and mystics such as Julian of Norwich, St. Francis of Assisi and Shel Silverstein, she has failed to come to terms with any real religious identity and is open to suggestions.... She's been published in a variety of state and local publications, including The Fledgling Rag, The Experimental Forest, Steel Pointe Quarterly, Harrisburg Magazine, and Megaera. Christine is a member of Harrisburg's infamous (almost) Uptown Poetry Cartel and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in November 2007 by Iris G. Press.



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Poet, translator, and filmmaker [Francesco Levato](#) is the author of three books of poetry: *Elegy for Dead Languages*; *War Rug*, a book length documentary poem; and *Marginal State*. He has translated into English the books of Italian poets Triziano Fratus, Creaturing, and Fabiano Alborghetti., *The Opposite Shore*. His work has been published internationally in journals and anthologies, both in print and online, including *Drunken Boat*, *The Progressies*, *Versal* and many others. His cinempoetry has been exhibited in galleries and featured at film festivals in Berlin, Chicago, New York, and elsewhere.



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J.J. Campbell

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a david bowie afterworld

sometimes i'll close
my eyes and imagine
i'm in a david bowie
afterworld

but all the vibrant
colors of ziggy have
faded to a sulky gray

nothingness chokes
the air as i sense a
sense of fear grabbing
my throat

and the struggle for
air is nothing compared
to my struggle to think
i'm relevant

the struggle to
believe

the struggle to
self-medicate all the
various television
illnesses that clog
my brain

and i sadly stumble
upon the notion that i
have ended up in the
place where dreams

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go to die

and with each drop
of alcohol

i grow content in
knowing

death can't be far
behind

under three feet of snow

it's a massive heart
attack in the quaker
state

mudslides in california

the nation's capital rots
under three feet of snow

it's a quiet murder on
the wrong side of town

surgery complications
for the rich or parents
pretending they love the
mistakes just as much as
the precious

it's silent thanks from
the mouths of the poor

it's thinking cash can
solve all the problems
a nation can dream of

it's an american child
bouncing from home to
home because celebrities
don't look here for
paparazzi tokens

it's a child buried in
the snow

it's a father, a shotgun, a
bottle of jim beam and the
tears of a demon that
understands

J.J. Campbell lives, writes but mostly dies a little each day on an 80 acre farm in Brookville, Ohio. He's been widely published in the small press, most recently at ZYX, Zygote in My Coffee, Chiron Review, Horror Sleaze and Trash, and Poiesis. His most recent chapbook, *Suicide Porn*, was published by Interior Noise Press.



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J.V. Foerster

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Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

There was a delicate balance between
Brady's blue eyes & the far off sandy mesa.

As a boy they scanned
the rich fields of Minnesota,
but now he searched for that truth
some men say you only find in the desert.

Day's of chasing blue tailed lizards
& nights listening to gun pops up the hill
where Mexican gang bangers party.
His truck camper sealed out the noise
of friendships & the messy racket of love.

Only thing followed along good
was Red the Blue Heeler
turning round & round a nervous antennae.

Once way back, he let slip in
for a short time, a little brown skinned girl
named Rosita. At midnight she'd
wash his hair & at dawn pat tortillas
out to soak up the whiskey in his belly.

Now alone he waited in the
searing buzz of the heat.
Head firm to the stretched horizon.
He watched for his eightieth year
the dark horseman
with all the answers.

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[The Waves of the
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Apple Girl

My grandmother's house always smelled
like apples. Apple kuchen, applesauce,
apple peels. Sweet smell of her soft home.

My mother hated the smell of apples.
My grandma confessed it was
because when she was pregnant with my mother
she climbed the apple trees and ate the tiny green
apples before they were ripe,

The village women stirred up a storm about
that young farmer's wife full with her first child
being crazy and barefoot up those trees.

She lived among the gentle mother apple trees
cool green hands in the summer's heat.
A young girl clutching the pearls of green in her apron
sneaking them home to eat them with salt.

I always believed it was the seeds
a tiny seed that planted itself deep in her body.
Warm, snug the fetus grew and grew
drinking for nine months
the nectar of sour green apples.

Tired of the culture of apples my mother
came out 12 pounds with screaming fists of insanity
bearing apple leaves sticky with juice.

The Waves of the Bay (Homer, Alaska)

1

Seagulls are bright sparks of white
flickering through the spraying rich sky
rising up out of the deep blue of Katchemak Bay.

Now shifting, bobbing on the water
stiff little puppets watching, waiting for the suns
thick descent into the closing mouth of the day.

At night they are little bits of stars
bobbing on the belly of the water, plunging their heads
between the peaceful thighs of the waves.

2

Tonight out on this balcony I suffer the pulse of you
washing in and out and thru me
there is only this and that moment.

Remembering how once I laid my head on your thigh
crying down the length of it because I knew
we would never have such hunger again.

3

Leaving you there was a soft madness that pushed
its stake down my tired spine.
I had forgotten the mornings passing

the sunny flowers on a white crisp tablecloth
and overhead the damn sound of the seagulls
crying for me because I have no more tears for this.

Tonight, I can only blink at a small distant light across this bay,
which you have never known, and off in the distance
there is a sort of luminous transparency rolling gently this way.

Do You Know How Dangerous It Is

to think about someone's hands?
It takes you into the secret places where they live.

Hands slicing, stroking, sorting, pointing
instantly you are clenched in their sweaty fists.

Once I cradled and kissed the palm of a hand that had
just touched the hard nipple of my breast.

The same day I shook the smooth limp
hand of a pastor after Easter service.

My father had the hard tired hands of a truck driver.
My mother the silky weak hands of a madwoman.

One time I held the tear scented hand of a whore
the bright purple stars on each nail tip cried redemption.

I have wiped tenderly clean the tiny starfish
hand of an infant reaching up and out
to an unknown world.

But your hands your hands travel.
Each a strong engine pulling, rope pulling
ailing, traveler out into this world.

Strong and brave they are dumb to disparaging events.
They are active with passion. A saxophone, a guitar,

a piano, a sailboat, a helicopter and a strange woman's silky flesh.

Your hands travel as hands do and so follows the heart.

J.V. Foerster was born in Port Washington, Wisconsin. She has been published in *Kimera*, *Niedergasse*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Eclectica*, *Agnieszka's Dowry*, *Red River Review*, *Midnight Mind*, *Premiere Generation Ink*, *Fickle Muse*, *Oak Bend Review*, *Women Writers Online*, and *Concelebratory Shoehorn Review*. J.V. recently moved to Escanaba, MI after living in Alaska and other parts of the U.S.



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Jack Veasey

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...And Then Time Moves

The tattooed man struck her as ominous
When she first saw him naked. But his face,
Wet from the pool, seemed open as his hands.
She scanned him for that quality that glows
From inside, and believed it there. His blue
Eyes didn't hurt. She watched close for what moves.

Beauty seems a firm first basis, and moves
us in lieu of facts. Some call this ominous.
Nonetheless, her mood would shift the lights to blue
If she should pass a day without his face
Turned to hers. Anything that hums and glows
Needs tending. Soon this duty filled his hands.

He'd always had some task to suit his hands,
But he was used to wood, not clay that moves.
He'd shape her in ways that, sometimes, glow
And sometimes throw a shadow, ominous.
He'd read few books, and could not read her face.
He'd babble with no clue till his turned blue.

Her righteousness bewildered him. Soon blue
Became the shade of all his days. His hands
Strayed to more pliant subjects. Soon his face
Spoke fluently to her, and she made moves
That anyone could read as ominous.
Still he was startled, flushed with rage that glows.

Some men can't see what, to some others, glows,
She found a substitute to light her blue
Flame, who bore a resemblance ominous

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That she did not see. She fit in his hands.
Meanwhile, her "old man" wondered if his moves
Had failed him. With age, pain showed in his face.

Things occurred to him—hard for a man to face.
His inked skin was a warning sign that glows.
At his age, he could not count on old moves
That long ago could turn her music blue.
He had a problem in his empty hands.
The situation seemed quite ominous.

Ominous indeed. We see just the face
We first find in our hands. Eyes open, glow
Blue—we believe their light. And then time moves.

Neighbors

He seemed so normal, all his neighbors say,
Although they'd only speak to say hello.
He'd jump your car or dig it out of snow,
Collect your mail when you'd be gone away.

He'd always greet you with a smile or wave.
There was that odd smell, which he said he'd fix.
Seemed he was trying, with cement and bricks,
At least to get that cellar dirt floor paved.
Who'd ever guess it held more than one grave?

We noticed how young men would come and go.
We'd see them when they came, at any rate.
Poor, lean, and scruffy—wouldn't want to know
They'd touched your daughter, but if they'd work, great.
We wondered why they never seemed to last.
We figured they'd moved on for higher pay,
Or just to stay high, period, since they
Looked half baked half the time, and you'd smell grass.

The thing to do was not notice too much,
Although the wife was one to watch and talk.
OK, maybe the guy's just a soft touch
Who picks up strays, and, in a while, they walk.

Who ever dreamed we'd see outlines in chalk?

A 2010 nominee for a Pushcart Prize, Jack Veasey is a Philadelphia native who has been living in Hummelstown, PA for over 20 years. He is the author of ten published collections of poetry, most recently "The Sonnets" and "5-7-5" (both from Small Hours Press, 2007). He is a member of Harrisburg's Almost uptown Poetry Cartel.

His poems have also appeared in many periodicals including Christopher Street, The Pittsburgh Quarterly, Harbinger: A Journal Of Social Ecology, The Philadelphia Daily

News, The Painted Bride Quarterly, Fledgling Rag, Oxalis, The Blue Guitar, Bone And Flesh, Zone: A Feminist Journal For Women And Men, Film Library Quarterly (Museum of Modern Art, NYC), Experimental Forest, Tabula Rasa, Wild Onions, Mouth Of The Dragon, Asphodel, Insight, The Irish Edition, The Harrisburg Patriot-News, The Harrisburg Review, The Princeton Spectrum, The Little Word Machine (U.K.), and The Body Politic (Canada), among others. His poems have also appeared in a number of anthologies, including Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets On Pennsylvania (Penn State University Press), Sweet Jesus: Poems About The Ultimate Icon (Anthology Press, Los Angeles), and A Loving Testimony: Remembering Loved Ones Lost To AIDS (The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA).



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Future's Place

Her eyes asked me why, citing their history, the history of *maximus*.
My fingertips tenderly explained with their stroking.
Nothing is exempt from extinction.

Her trunk curled and exhaled before wrapping a brush.
She has painted so many flowers, on so many canvases.
This will be her final still-life for her life's still finale.

No, nothing lives forever. Species-wide genocide or no,
we *sapiens* will eventually fossilize in our contorted positions,
and end nature's tango with consciousness.

She dipped her brush in brown and frowned, ill-constoled.
I don't know what it's like to be the last one like me.
I am no witness to the great dying of my genus as I near death myself.

She's painting a reminder: if it were up to her, she'd still have a home.
But it's never up to the ones becoming extinct. They never ask for it.
And since we are part of nature, is her dying so unnatural?

Selfishness forgets she is all of *Elephas*, and there is loneliness about her.
Her family is spiritual, and spirituality being communal,
she has nothing left to offer but a vast detachment of spirit.

She uncoils her trunk from her paintbrush as her eyes well up.
She saunters off to add the finishing touches to her graveyard,
and now I see: she doesn't mind extinction; she hates finishing last.

Still Time

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What time of day does time stay still?
No time exists when suns are new.
At work the seconds slow at will
While I am bored with work to do.
And evening time's no time for rest:
The dishes done, the kids need baths.
And once in bed they try their best
To stay awake, but it never lasts.
And we're too tired for time to talk—
I write, you knit, the raccoons roam.
The hands meander around the clock;
We read in bed, together, alone.
The lights go out; I watch your dreams.
And that's when time has stopped, it seems.

Joshua Gray lives just outside Washington DC with his wife and two boys, where he is a guest blogger for 32poems.com and writes about the local poetry scene as examiner.com's DC Poetry Examiner. He has created his own poetry form called the sympoe, which is described on his Website www.joshuagraysnow.com, also the home of his blog Poembuster, where he busts poems that inspire him.



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Josiah Bancroft

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The Bird of a Boy

He glided into high school like a bird into a house:
flapping about in an expressionless panic, hunting
the blue yonder to the amusement of all onlookers.

The beating went on forever, and full as the school was
of exits, he could never find the way out. Eventually,
he was ushered through the front by a thoughtful principal,
though Out, the boy learned, was not the same as Free.

He flapped about the menagerie of a housing project,
and beat himself against the ceiling of a warehouse job.
No other boy he knew trembled when he spoke. A lurker,
he tried to smile himself into the lunch ring of forklift drivers.
They smelled the smoke of burn-out and snubbed him.

Women were jet turbines that sucked him in and spit him out.
He escaped to the vault of Nevada, the cosmos beaming
down as from holes in a shoebox. He took orderly work
in a nursing home where he changed sheets and practiced
a sincere and simple song of Good Morning and Good Night.
The linen room was, without a glimpse of sky, aromatic as a nest.

Monger

With cod scales jewelng the belly of his smock,
the monger watches the immodest blue trout,
that lately leapt from the live fish tank, curl about
like a tongue cut from a bull's mouth.

When his children are asleep,

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the monger escapes to the alley of his yard
to smoke in silence and wonder
how fishing would change a man
who has spent his life swimming in fish
having never seen one glide or leap
fearlessly out of its sphere of grace.

The tattler flails nearer the monger's bag-wrapped boots,
applauding wetly with its tail. Three dowdy women
studying haute cuisine under a French chef next door
find the monger toeing a fish nearer a drain in the floor.

Josiah Bancroft's poetry has been published in *Gulf Coast, the Pinch, Natural Bridge, the Mid-American Review, Rattle, Passages North, and Bomb Magazine: Word Choice*, among others. In 2010 his manuscript *The Death of Giants* was a finalist for the AWP Donald Hall Prize in Poetry



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Kimika Williams-Witherspoon

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Blake

Eventually
I'll get over you
Eventually
& you will too
eventually
Eventually, my
"I, me & new boo"
will make it through.
Eventually.
He won't be you
But he'll love me too,
Eventually.
When I get-over-you
Eventually
& you do too
Eventually
We won't have to be
So
Alone...

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Dirge

Don't you hate it
When the love goes wrong
When the words don't fit
When the sentiment
Is just a song

Don't you hate it
When the good times change

And the vows we made
Fail to hide the tears that stain
Once familiar
strange

Don't you hate it
When all the words
Won't change the sound
Of the song.

Kimmika Williams-Witherspoon, PhD (Cultural Anthropology), M.A. (Anthropology), MFA (Theater), Graduate Certificate Women's Studies, B.A. (Journalism); is an Associate Professor in the Theater Department at Temple. Along with Eugene Martin (Film), William Witherspoon is a recent recipient of the Provost's Seed Grant for Interdisciplinary Work (\$50, 000.);the 2003 Provost's Arts Commission Grant recipient; a 2001 Independence Foundation Theater Communications Group Grant, the 2000 winner of the PEW Charitable Trust \$50,000 fellowship in scriptwriting, and the 1999, winner of the DaimlerChrysler "Spirit of the Word" National Poetry Competition (Seattle) at the Unity'99 Conference, Kimmika Williams has also been the recipient of a host of awards and honors, including: the DaimlerChrysler Regional Poetry Contest (Philadelphia), the 1996, Lila Wallace Creative Arts Fellowship with the American Antiquarian Society and a two-time returning playwright with the Minneapolis Playwrights' Center and Pew Charitable Trusts Playwrights Exchange.



The author of *The Secret Messages in African American Theater: Hidden Meaning Embedded in Public Discourse*" (Edwin Mellen Publishing, 2006) Williams was, at one time, Arts Producer for public radio, WXPB-88.5, reporter and columnist with the Philadelphia Tribune and television editor for the Chicago-based "Maceba Affairs Media Review Magazine.

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Lauren Camp

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Man with the Red Beard

When the red-haired man re-emerged to write his story
on the sky

of my mind, I had forgotten the bundle of excess
he arranged at my back door,
how those wild mums
he gifted always staged an uprising of deranged love.

Neither of us mattered.
We swallowed weekends, and walked around in thoughts.
Every morning rose with a shout.

I offered to learn to love him.
For four months we climbed the San Francisco hills.
Four months of slipping down.
Four months of boiling our second chances.

I left town to get away from the incline. A slow trip
on a plane combing the earth toward some other continent.

When I returned, a cold silence
and I got comfortable under the sheets.
The phone rang.

I answered, holding a scythe.

He spoke to me
in his favorite gloomy voice, all dressed in black.

There was a blade of truth in what we said to each other.
I still lived in that place by the ocean, and he lived over a bridge.

But after time, a face disintegrates: his trimmed beard, his arms,

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the satisfying blankness of his room.

Every lesson in remembering has been removed by someone else.

Back then, I was a mourning dove,
a woman counting how many *sorries* it took to stand up straight.

Sorry was how I said *love*. Love moved the days along.

Now, twenty years later,
the man drives a truck through the perfect shape of shame,
drives to my email box and leaves a letter,
drives to the split oak several times with a box of nails,
banging my name on the centermost ring.

(She allowed others)

She allowed others to calm her hair from its small garden,
dividing the dark commotion into calculated lines, branches of braids.
So tiny the movements, but her scalp rejoiced.
The requiem of touch insisted, and she listened more to that
than words spilling from mouths. These small things, the layers
of tresses, and how someone held each narrow strand,
the comfort as it grazed her earlobes, tickled and draped
over the bones of her shoulders. She heard the eloquent rhetoric
released from those hands and began her addiction to touching.
For millions of days, she would remember the strokes.

From One Hundred Hungers.

Looking Around These Days

Tiny ants began appearing in my kitchen last week.

The same day, the market closed down 200 points, the thermometer
outside the window reached 98 and everyone's humor came unsutured.
Men behind freeways collided with bent bodies, lengthening the list of
things they needed toward the magnetic field of the moon.
Dogs began their daily barking.

In Albuquerque, a man devoted his existence to anxiety. He argued in his
sleep, begging for exoneration from foreclosure and insolvency.
His wife's eyes staggered about as a family of quail hobbled past.
That day, a doctor lost four patients in the stitched light of ending,
and I ate small ants with dinner.

At the café downtown, a man drifted off in a martini sleep, glimpsing
random riddles of his creator as if the world mattered only in shades of
skewered olive. He waited for a phone to ring, ears listening in another
world. And a man with pistachios in his blood sold energy down every
street, reminding himself that he was not a failure. He tallied doors and

locks as justice.

In Hollywood, a woman in a kingdom of children knit a thousand white sweaters. The day moved forward with six dropped purls of tension and the small necklace of caloric content. In her overheated bedroom, her face tightened.

Somewhere, a man perched on the side of his body going in and out of fear. Each room of thought filled with cancer. To the hospital, people sent pink cards of chance, and turtles dropped their eggs slowly on the myopic glass beach where repentance was again missing.

The ants keep reappearing. To keep the kitchen clean, we wipe, then drown them.

[Lauren Camp](#) teaches writing at the Southwest Literary Center, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, writers' conferences and other creative places. She has published a book of poems, *This Business of Wisdom* (West End Press, 2010), and is working on her second collection, entitled *One Hundred Hungers*. She is also an accomplished visual artist and a radio host for Santa Fe Public Radio. She lives and works in a rural farming village near Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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Lindsey Warren

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The Sensual World

You have forgotten the ocean.
Not uncommon. After all,
summer leaves it to strangers
to look after you.
You remember
the brilliant white light of scales and how
it made your teeth ache.
You pause,
wince at the retreating wave
as it drags its net of sparkles
across the sand,
and splash a few steps.
Your feet cool.
The red dye of the shore
washes away.
Water chains your ankle.
You're in.

The earth frightened me. I wanted it
it to rest as more than simply a heavy
and irrelevant
wedding ring of cycles.
So, last spring,
desperate,
not knowing what else to do,
I took on the duty of watering
a basket of snapdragons.
The petals trembled with flashbacks
of their births
in a hive of muddy boots, wet light
and fetid creepings of wild season.
Someone planted the flowers,

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someone else had to water them.
Their helmet of tongues wagged with thirst.

That night
I dreamed that a boy who had been dead for awhile
was the fourth letter of God.
Surprised by the boy's face,
the flowers jumped up and bloomed.
He remembered
that the earth's discomfort is catalogued
in its handiwork
and in remembering

called the blossoms to life.
I didn't pretend to understand
when the dream cocoon unraveled, dwindled
and then dissolved
in the watering can.
That afternoon,
I dug my fingers deep
into the drenched soil
which was alive
with the smell of attempt.

Memory. The anti-
matter of dreams.
Golden petals of revelation.
The sun's kissing
(or scratching?)
your back as you leave
its arms for the sea's...
You'd think there'd be
an easier way into it,
but there isn't.

You have to use both your hands.

Lindsey Warren is a 25-year-old poet living in Wilmington, Delaware. She has been writing ever since she first learned what a sonnet was. She graduated from Wilmington University with a BA in General Studies and a minor in Literature. When she isn't writing, she works as a Library Assistant at the Newark Free Library.



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Louise Halvardsson

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Old Habits

Joey's hands look older than his face. Nicotine-yellow fingers rolling a cigarette that I have to accept, because that's how our relationship works. He provides me with roll-ups and I smoke them to keep him company. The kick is not the same as it used to be though. To have something between my lips that Joey has touched is something I take for granted.

I like the fact that we have to go outside; it brings a change of atmosphere and our conversation usually gets more physical. Joey lights up and holds me tight, breathing smoke past my face. Tonight I don't mind November; don't mind the dark and damp. Standing in the pub courtyard with Joey is what I do, what I've done every Monday and Tuesday for years. None of Joey's other friends go out before Wednesday.

I inhale the smoke so deep my lungs hurt; I never liked cigarettes in the first place. Joey forced them on me, a seal for our friendship back in the days when I was nineteen and he was...at least ten years older than me; I still don't know his age. He's got one of these clean-shaven baby faces and a look of pure innocence that make non-smoking women ask him for a drag. But I'm different from those women; Joey was the one who approached me—on a night when he'd run out of matches.

There are better ways to spend Monday and Tuesday nights, but Joey's roll-ups are part of my life now. That one time I refused a cigarette, because of a sore throat, Joey told me he only sleeps with me to be kind. When people ask me if I smoke, I say I'm a part-timer, but would happily go full time if Joey loved me after Wednesday.

It's Raining Blood

Another self-harm session has started in heaven. The sea is red again. Drops big as dogs hit people on earth. They look up, shaking their heads.

The only people who end up in heaven are the suicidals. It's their punishment for messing with fate. Hell closed long ago.

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The ones who die in war or of natural causes, like rotten livers and broken hearts will be reborn in a new body. The suicidals end up in heaven only to find out the apple trees have been cut down, and their job is to serve God with news from the earth.

God lost interest in creating when humans became more clever than him. But he feasts on gossip, wants to know who is making war with whom.

The suicidals have a big job as the earth is a busy place. This unpaid labour makes them so blue they want to kill themselves again, but in heaven there are no deep lakes or high cliffs, no ropes, pills or weapons. All they have to hurt themselves with are childproof scissors and butter knives.

It's enough for them to bleed though and that's why the sea is red again. Drops big as dogs hit people on earth. They look up, shaking their heads.

Now, when most of us know where suicidals end up, we prefer to wait for a natural cause or an accident. God will know, thanks to his spies, if you drink with intention to kill your organs or if you step out in the street, not bothering to look right, left and right again.

Louise Halvardsson was born on a cold winter's day in Sweden in 1982. When she was old enough she escaped to Brighton, UK, where she learned about life, love and literature. Her debut novel, (*"Punk influenced hard rocker with attitude"*), was published in Sweden in 2007 and won an award for the Best Newcomer in Young Adult Fiction. She has just completed her first novel in English, and has signed up with an agent. To get a break from the novel work she writes short fiction and performs poetry under the name Lou Ice.



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Marty Esworthy

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Levitating FireEscape

Poised. Rich curtains are hushed.
under gold of streetlamp and furtive glance.
At dawn. Levitation is like that. And
overflow floods great tendrils of roof, because the entire
garden is a plane of moonlight. Glow, look. Listen.

The wind of harnessed beach, reveal the broken covers shining.
And passages in the sand of its garden of the rock. Something,
I know we must never forget.

The voice of a flute which them shades flees with hushed.
Under streetlamps, gold and obscure glances of the tiger to its claws.
Not knowing in the rising of the day that they had just destroyed someone.
Overflow in the large roofs, resembles itself as the complete garden to the moon,
a loom of gold, more preciously
the color of pink—its mouth in the darkness.
Beach wind swirls, reveals
glittering broken shells.

And you walk in the sand of your rock garden.
Something, I know, that you miss.

The sheets are greener in the mean of the summer.
Hot air and misty total which hangs lighting in the voice of a furrow.
Curtains flee, free with a melody which hushes. Under

a gold of the streetlamp,
the rising of the day.

Roofs,
resemble that complete garden in the moonlight,
the gilded moon and the sea-bream.
The wind of the tamarind beach, reveals.

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And not in the sand of its garden of the rock.
Something, I know,
the wind of the beach semolina, growls.
And you remember your walks in the sand

in the garden of the rock.

The voice of a flute...
the shadows resonant with
hushed streetlamp.
Gold and dark tiger
high on great rooftops.

It seems like
the whole garden is moon,
round as the pink
of your mouth in the dark.

**Somewhere/ in Space, I Hang Suspended, in
Mute Accordance with Rules Promulgated
by the Sâr Pélandan**

*AP—Weary residents of sandbagged cities came together in churches
on Sunday, counting their blessings that the Red River had stopped rising
and praying ferociously that the levees would continue to hold back its wrath.*

Floating, drifting, doing the backstroke, in harmony
with many, *or most* of the personified elements of space,
hope, and charity that pervade much of the now-colonized
Polynesia. Participatory-anticipatory-spirit, or *La mer lubrique*,
as Alexis Saint-Léger would say. Submersion! soumission!

Oui, oui, I/ acquiesce. The waves/ lick the nape of my neck.
I dissociate. I lock my door upon myself, I comb my hair,
I pop my popcorn, & it makes a lovely glow, like the flame
of green fire among the flora of the reef. And

there are galaxies 'neath my tresses. Insouciant, full-bodied.
Thus, my soul, alone, as if enclosed in mousse and silence,
entire to its own interior spectacle. *Une urne de cendres
pourrait un jour tomber du ciel et pourrait faire flamber la terre
et bouillir les océans.*

There are suns/ and seas beneath the
Green Frog café, a wind is rising, and the river flows, orbiting,
mimicking the ebb and flow of Europa, Ganymede and Io, like
a/ rotating ring of fire, flotsam and jetsam, slow combustion,
antediluvian, Mesozoic, and sulphur scenting that gr-r-r-rand
horizon of wind, silk, and honey.

La pluie salée nous vient
encore de haute mer. Sam
the Sham: uno, duo, treize (here,

make a Q mouth), BENK. BANK,
BONK. Megantic, *fare thee/well*.

Marty Esworthy is a leading advocate for sound poetry and meta-verse. Esworthy is a Megaera-award-winning poet, editor emeritus, Steel Point Quarterly, and renowned poetry impresario, is director of the Almost Uptown Poetry Cartel. He's been published in numerous regional and national publications, including Haggard & Halloo, text_TOWER, Literary Chaos, Fledging Rag, House Taken Over, logodaedalus, Syzygy, The International Digest of World poetry, and the Miserere Review. Recent Esworthy tomes include *hard reality*, Pacobooks, 2004, and *The Object Stares Back, Uh-Oh!*, T&T Press, 2009. *Twenty-Six Javanese Proverbs* was awarded the 2006 R.E.Foundation Award for Outstanding Poetry from Iris G. Press in 2006.



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Michael Graves

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A Mocker

That weapon
your laughter
that peals
like a bell,
that hammers,
concussive,
shocking the target,
and clearing a space
around your tall form,
thin as a mage's—
your's is the force of a wind
that sweeps all away.
It rings out its triumph,
derisive, a cackle,
delighted with self.
You, in your power,
privilege and wit,
pleased with your wealth.

Under Predatory Stars

Tired by struggle,
I lay on my back
In the grass
Like one flung from heaven,
And then like a snake,
Wounded and limp,
Dragging its length,
Condemned to the dust

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Though fierce,
Showing its spine
Of breakable bone,
A shield of no use,
As easily crushed
As its poisonous head,
Turned over, slept.

Michael Graves is the author of a full-length collection of poems, *Adam and Cain* (Black Buzzard, 2006) and two chapbooks, *Illegal Border Crosser* (Cervana Barva, 2008) and *Outside St. Jude's* (REM Press, 1990). His second Full-length collection *In Fragility* is forthcoming from Black Buzzard. In two thousand four (2004), he was the recipient of a grant from the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation. He is the publisher of the small magazine *Phoenix*. Many years ago, he was a student of James Wright and organized a conference on James Wright at Poets House in 2004. And he became a member of PEN a couple of years ago. In addition to leading a James Joyce Ulysses' Reading Group, he has published 13 poems in the *James Joyce Quarterly* and read from them and others of his poems influenced by Joyce to a gathering of the Joyce Society at the Gotham Book Mart.



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Michael Onofrey

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Family

The handover at his ex-wife's house took about five minutes, Jack standing in the living room, his ex-wife, Amy, standing in the living room, Jack's two sons, Danny and Mat, entering from a hallway and uttering a despondent, "Hi."

At his sister's house Jack found himself seated before a television with a can of beer, a football game on, his sons, sixteen and seventeen years old, nearby with cans of Pepsi, their eyes on electronic gadgets that occupied their hands, each boy playing a game.

Jack's sister, Meg, had children as well, Carl, nineteen, and Sunshine, seventeen. Everyone called her Shine. Thus far, Carl and Shine were absent, but according to Meg their presence was promised. In addition, there would be Carl's girlfriend, Raisl, who had been spoken of but never viewed. As Meg noted: "A surprise package." Meg's husband, Phil, was collecting his parents from a retirement community out in the desert. So, at the beginning, it was Jack and his sister and Jack's two sons, the house smelling like turkey-in-the-oven, Meg going in and out of the living room on errands of preparation. On the living room walls abstract art hung like misplaced trophies.

Jack turned to his eldest boy, Danny, during a commercial break, and said, "Any plans for after high school, son?"

Danny looked up and said, "Graduation's not until June."

"Yeah, I know. I just thought you might be thinking of something."

"No."

Jack took a sip of beer. Danny went back to his game. Soon after this Phil and the old folks arrived. Connie, Phil's mother, moved with the aid of a walker, while her sprightly husband, Hank, used a cane that looked like a claw.

Connie started across the living room behind her walker, while Phil went to Jack and shook Jack's hand and traded pleasantries, Grandma Connie steadily progressing across the room, direction the couch, where Danny and Mat sat with gizmos balanced on their palms. By the time Connie squared herself up in front of Danny and Mat the others had quieted. Connie looked at Danny and said, "Carl, it looks like

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you've gained weight. Why don't you stand up and give your Granny a kiss?"

Danny smiled dimly. Meg came over and said, "Mom, this is Jack's son, Danny. This isn't Carl. Carl's going to be coming soon, but he's not here yet."

Connie said, "Carl, stand up and give me a kiss."

Meg got in front of Connie's soft white face and explained the situation again. Connie responded, "Oh? Where's Carl?"

After everyone was seated Meg went to the kitchen and then returned with beverages. The football game ended. Phil picked up the remote and started going through channels. Meg said, "Why don't you just turn it off?" Phil turned the TV off and smiled. He was a heavysset man with a genial face.

Danny and Mat were hard at it with what occupied their hands and brains. Everyone looked at them as if expecting a report, but no reports were issued. Hank lifted his pronged cane and poked it in Mat's direction and said, "What do you got there?" Mat's fingers kept moving, eyes downward, his older brother with the same posture. Hank leaned and poked Mat on the leg with the cane, which brought Mat's head up. Hank said, "What in the hell do you got there?"

"Oh, this?" said Mat. "It's a game."

White hair sprung from Hank's scalp, bifocals on his face, eyes blue. He wore a white shirt and a dark tie. It was a warm day. He had taken his jacket off.

"A game?" Hank questioned, promise of conversation almost tangible, but then Carl and his girlfriend, Raisl, came through the front door as if there were a tornado outside.

"Hi, ya-all!" Carl said. "Happy Thanksgiving!" Carl stood before the group bobbing and weaving like a middleweight boxer, Raisl at his side, a slim hand perched on her hip as if striking a pose. They had the room's attention. Even Danny and Mat's.

"Why don't you introduce us to your friend, Carl," Meg said.

"Well," said Carl, "this is Raisl. And, ah, Raisl, this is everyone!" Carl smiled. Along his lower lip four silver studs winked like stitches on a robot. Raisl had a similar composition framing the edge of her left ear.

Meg began going around the room, gesturing at people and stating names. When she got to Hank, he lifted his cane. Raisl said, "Hi," to the gathering. Between where her pink T-shirt ended and where her plaid pants began there was a swath of white skin. A safety pin, threaded through her bellybutton, flashed like a knife. Alongside this a large tattoo of stork lurked with a caption that read: I'm waiting.

Raisl blinked her eyes. Carl said to her, "You want a beer?" She said, "Yes. Is there any vodka?"

"Beer is fine," said Meg, "but I don't think we should start in on hard liquor."

"It's okay, Mom," said Carl. "She drinks it all the time."

Meg said, "No," and departed for the kitchen.

Carl sat down in a plump armchair, Raisl as his side balanced on the arm of the chair. Rhinestone mules were on Raisl's feet. Meg returned and handed Carl and then Raisl a can of Bud Light, which they promptly hoisted and drank from.

"Uncle Jack," said Carl, "I haven't seen you in a long time. I'm painting houses. Are you still doing that?"

"No. I'm working at an auto parts warehouse in Reno."

"Reno! I thought you were down in Laughlin."

"That was some time ago, Carl. I'm in Reno now. I got a trailer about ten miles outside of town. It looks like you've made some changes yourself."

"Yeah, I guess you could say that." Carl smiled.

Hank, who was sitting to Carl and Raisl's right, lifted his cane and jabbed it in the direction of Raisl's midriff. Raisl looked at the cane. Hank said, "That's one heck of a picture you have on your tummy." Raisl grinned.

"You like that, Granddad?" Carl said.

Hank, his blue eyes have followed Raisl since her entrance, glanced at his grandson but then looked back at Raisl.

"When she gets pregnant," Carl said, "that stork is really going to grow. Can you imagine, Granddad! What a wild thing!" Carl laughed. Raisl raised her can of beer. Hank looked at them.

There was a sound from the kitchen, a door opening and closing. Meg said, "That must be Shine."

From out of the kitchen and through the dining room and into the living room came a young woman in a beige blouse and a pleated skirt, a pair of black pumps on her feet. She was dressed like her mother, but unlike her mother she wasn't obese. She stopped before the group and smiled, teeth well cared for. She said, "I'm sorry, I'm late." She glanced around. Her eyes stopped at Raisl. She said, "Hi, I'm Shine." Raisl looked at her.

Meg said, "Shine, this is Raisl."

"I'm glad to meet you," said Shine. Raisl nodded and brought her can of beer up and took a drink. Shine went over and kissed her grandparents on the cheek, and then she said, "Hello, Uncle Jack, and Danny and Mat." Danny and Mat smiled. Jack said, "Shine, you look great." "Thank you, Uncle Jack."

"Help me put the food on the table, would you, Shine?" Meg said.

"Sure, Mom." The two of them left the room.

"It looks like you've been to the tattoo parlor, Carl," Jack said.

"Yeah, you might say I have."

Mat said, "Which place do you go to?"

"Ink In Your Eye," answered Carl.

"Really? Up on Ventura Boulevard?" responded Mat.

"Yeah. That's the place. That's where me and Raisl met. She works next door at Peach Fuzz."

Phil, Carl's father, said, "What line of work are you in, Raisl?"

"Work?"

"Yes."

"Hair."

"Hair?"

"Yeah," said Carl. "She's going to beauticians' school in Northridge and working part-time at Peach Fuzz. She does people's hair."

Raisl, whose hair was strawberry and in a closely cropped crew cut that dusted her skull, said, "Perhaps another beer?" She shook her can in front of Carl's face.

"Oh, yeah," said Carl, and stood up and started for the kitchen but before he got too far his father stopped him with: "Maybe your uncle would like another beer, Carl?"

"Oh, yeah. Uncle Jack?"

"Please."

Carl left the room. Raisl looked around. Hank stared at her.

Phil said, "I think I detect a slight accent in your voice, Raisl." Raisl looked at him, puzzlement on her slim face. Phil said, "Where are you from?" Raisl looked un-puzzled and said, "Russia."

"Russia?" chimed Danny.

"Yes," replied Raisl, and looked at Danny. Danny shied under her gaze. He mumbled, "Gee." Raisl's eyes were hazel, eyebrows transparent.

Carl returned with three cans of beer and gave one to Raisl and one to Jack. Carl sat down and took a swig of beer. Raisl was a thin woman. Hank, Danny, and Mat were looking at her.

"I think they got the hots for you," Carl said, and gave Raisl a nudge with his elbow and nodded toward his grandfather and cousins.

"Well," said Raisl, accent spreading like butter, "maybe something for the two young ones. Some friends. A double date. A room at the motel on Ventura. Nice movies. Is cheap. But granddaddy is special attention." She smiled. Short teeth ran along her gums like chipped ivory.

Carl laughed. Danny turned red. Mat smiled. Phil and Jack sipped their beer. Hank raised a hand and adjusted his bifocals. Grandma Connie continued to examine the carpet. Meg came to the living room and said: "It's ready."

*

The table was big and it filled the dining room. Phil sawed at a large turkey with a seriated knife while plates moved counterclockwise around the table. "White or dark? White or dark?" chanted Phil.

Jack had brought two bottles of wine. They were uncorked and poured.

"Would you lead us in the prayer?" Meg said to Jack.

Jack said, "Well, ah ... Maybe Phil would be better at that than me."

Phil nodded and put his large hands together and bowed his head. Everyone, with the exception of Grandma Connie, bowed their heads. Grandma Connie was looking across the table at her grandson.

Phil said, "We give thanks for this food, Oh Lord. Thank you. Amen." He untangled his fingers and raised his head. "Okay, dig in."

Everyone went at it except for Grandma Connie. She had brought her walker to the side of her chair and was now struggling to her feet. Meg said, "Do you have to go to the bathroom, Connie?" Connie said, "Shh." Everyone looked at her but then shrugged and returned to their food. Connie had her cloth napkin with her as she inched her way around the table. When she was in back of Carl she stopped. Carl, sensing her presence, twisted his head and said, "What?" Connie raised the napkin and swung it at Carl, the cloth slapping the side of Carl's neck where the collar of his shirt touched. Carl jumped up and said, "What the hell!"

"Connie!" Meg said.

Connie was looking at Carl's neck. She said, "Hold still. I'll get it." She brought the napkin up for another slap. Carl grabbed her hand.

"What is it?" Hank said. "What is it, Connie?"

"He's got a spider on his neck."

"A spider? It's only a tattoo, Grandma," Carl said.

"Let go," Connie said. "I'll get it for you."

"It's a tattoo! It's a tattoo, Grandma!"

Carl was wearing a dress shirt, albeit with the sleeves cut off and the tails out. The tattoo was crawling up his neck from out of the collar. Shine started laughing. Meg came around and steered Connie away from Carl. Carl sat down. Meg helped her mother-in-law back to her seat.

"A goddamn tattoo of a spider on his neck!" Hank bellowed.

"He favors arachnids," Shine said.

"Arachnids?" questioned Mat.

"Yes," said Shine. "Spiders, scorpions, that class of creature. Like what he has on his arms." She gestured.

"A goddamn tattoo of a spider!" Hank repeated.

"Shine knows a lot of words, Mat," Meg said. "She reads a lot of books. She's going to go to college next year. If you read a lot of books, you can learn a lot of words too, and go to college."

Mat smiled at his aunt while sticking a forkful of mashed potatoes in his mouth.

"A goddamn tattoo of a spider!" Hank recited, while looking across the table at his grandson.

"I gotta go to the bathroom," Carl said, and stood up and left the room.

"Raisl, did you come to America with your family?" Phil asked, a pleasant smile on his clean-shaven face.

"With my mother. My uncle was here. He has a fast-food chicken place, El Pollo."

"El Pollo?" Danny said. "That's a Mexican fast-food chicken place."

Raisl looked at Danny and said, "They do not discriminate. Is simple. You have directions. You cook chicken. My mother works there. Is only food."

"Do you have food like this in Russia?" asked Mat, and gestured at the table, and then added, "You know, do you have food in Russia?"

Raisl looked at Mat and said, "We have food in Russia. What do you think, we eat air?"

"Where exactly is Russia?" asked Mat.

"Mat," said Danny. "Stop asking stupid questions. Russia is over there by Europe."

Carl, returning from the bathroom, gave Raisl a tap on the shoulder and then sat down. Raisl stood up and said, "The bathroom. Which way?" Carl pointed. Raisl left the room.

Hank, taking advantage of Raisl's absence, leaned across the table and whispered to his grandson, "Are you a pimp?"

"Grandpa! What are you talking about?"

Hank, still leaning over the table, his tie on his plate of food soaking up gravy, winked at his grandson and then sat down, tie falling in place on Hank's white shirt.

"There's plenty of food," Meg said. "Don't be shy."

"So you're painting houses?" Jack said to his nephew.

Carl smiled and said, "That's right. And I'm saving money. I want to buy a Harley. Raisl and me are going to take off next summer and see America from the back of a Harley."

Raisl entered the room and said, "Yes! Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone!" She sat down.

"Maybe we'll cruise up your way, Uncle Jack," Carl said.

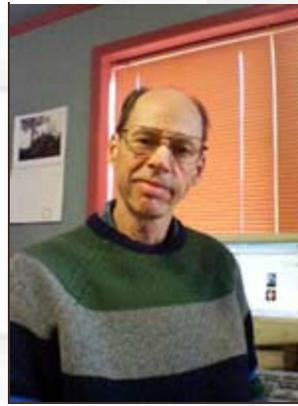
Jack looked at Carl and said, "Sure. Stop on by. Your mother has my number."

Raisl, looking at Jack, said, "Why, thank you, Uncle Jack." A hint of the American West in her enunciation.

The room went silent, cutlery abandoned, everyone looking at Raisl. She smiled.

"Pie. Who wants pie?" Meg declared. "Apple or pumpkin. Who wants coffee?"

Michael Onofrey is from Los Angeles. He now lives in Japan. His stories have appeared in Cottonwood, The Evansville Review, The Green Hills Literary Lantern, Natural Bridge, Two Hawks Quarterly, and The William and Mary Review, as well as in other literary journals and anthologies in the United States, Canada, and Japan. One of his stories was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Currently, he is working on a novel.



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Michelle Cahill

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José

The train passes the tranquil forest of Sils before Girona.
Afternoons are lethargic. A pestilence of flies, the sound of rifles.
'There's nothing here in this town', a German backpacker warns.

Unsure of the way, I sniff the piss along the quiet boulevard.
They say the river has dried up, sprouting islands of weedy grass.
The pensione's owner is French but speaks un pequeno ingles.

There are mornings when I've woken to the rawness of the day,
to a city failing memory, as unforgiving as a lover, its fringes
blurring into chalky, yellow haze, its walls and citadels crumbling.

I want to remember the red earth, the white-washed village,
José playing guitar, the courtyard swirling as pigeon wings
shatter the Lorcan sky; his intricate flame, his *soléares*.

Departures

Some days we trust more than desire, trying to be true
to morning's distractions. By the afternoon, what have
we achieved? My friend was abandoned by her spouse.
After the separation I spoke to her, outside the school,
the maple dropping its serrated leaves, pink camellias
shedding curls. I watched her stroke her daughter's face
with a strange tenderness. As we walked our children
to parked cars, somewhere near the pedestrian crossing,
where four wheel drives decelerate for a speed hump,
it occurred to me that just as we're balanced in flight,
an updraught spins us through its turbulent revolutions.
We could almost trust what disappears. In falling, how

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buoyant is the human heart. Lifting our wings we learn
to fly by descent. Equal to the earth's pull, we brake.

Circa 1916

Photograph by Paul Strand

Who is this woman striding the sidewalk?
Swiftly departing the picture, a dowdy renegade
summoned from her errands by the clarinet player

on West 11th. So misaligned in the frame, as if
her gender's chained. Her hoops and haberdashery
are miniaturised by facades, their cubist shadows.

From the mirrored city, lips pressed, she elopes.
And her footprints scrape the day's inheritance.
Her incident abridged by the photographer's lens.

Michelle Cahill's poems have appeared in *World Literature Today*, *Drunken Boat*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *Australian Literary Review* and others. She was highly commended in the Blake Poetry Prize & won the Val Vallis Award & the Inverawe Poetry Prize (minor.) The author of two collections of poetry, she is a fellow at Hawthornden Castle in 2011. She edits [Mascara Literary Review](#).



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Nicolette Wong

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Abandon

'I think you would have been quite beautiful when you were young.'

Your words are a blue haze rocking into the night at a sidewalk restaurant. I look over your shoulder for room to laugh. You, three years my junior, stealing glances at bare legs brushing past and beer in the glass: a moving reflection of career and jokes, in a world where living means overlooking others from a heightened plane of safety.

At my smile you recoil for a moment before opening up to an embrace that would elude me forever. We are supposed to be friends, for you have never met someone whose soul mirrors yours and who already lives at the other end of the world. I sit before you and crack a peanut.

'You haven't met too many people in your life,' I say.

'That has nothing to do with it.'

Your phone rings. Requests. Reproach. Mistakes scorching down a roll of film, unfolding in a non-existent space. Another barrier to cross while you dream yourself into being a man. Silence cracks across the table, lengthening the time we spend with each other in smirk and qualms. Nothing reigns besides your fear of failure. You shake your head. I put two fingers to my lips.

'Say something to distract me,' you ask.

'It won't be any difference from what you'd say to yourself, or some things you don't put into words.'

'You, a person of many words,' say. 'Shall we dance, then?'

The Drama Boat

None of us can fight the combustion: not my boss, a soft-spoken man with cunning defenses; not my colleagues who could bring the house down after too much alcohol and a bit of pole dance; not the old

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lady cleaner who comes in everyday to break her back clearing someone else's trash; not me, who has problem co-existing with more than a few people at a time and is always on the run.

Jack clenches the bottle of gasoline in his hand. I remember his Australian accent.

'Calm down, mate,' I say, 'you want to go home and row down Albert Park Lake.'

'We aren't making a movie here,' he says, pointing to the camera gear around our office. 'You guys should have let me.'

The last syllable of Jack's last word forms a magic ring in the air and for a moment our eyes are burst. When we look again, Jack is drinking up the liquid in a perfect frenzy that no amount of rehearsal or drama studies—which Jack claims to have wasted his early adult life in—could have produced. We can almost hear the lung smash and stomach stove inside him. Jack with no air to dream of lakes anymore.

Then he bends over, rolls off the chair and falls onto the floor.

'What did you do?' someone turns to my boss.

'I told him he'd have to pay if he wanted to be on board, and it's a lot to pay,' he says.

Nicolette Wong is a fiction writer from Hong Kong. Her writing finds its way around the world and she blogs at [Meditations in an Emergency](#). She is in the editorial teams of [Negative Suck](#) and [Dark Chaos](#).



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Noah Cutler

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Life Among the Clouds

She emerges from a taxi one handmade Italian pump at a time and then strides across the wide Fifth Avenue sidewalk, with her eyes fixed intently on the brass-framed front door of the building she calls home.

The door is held open for her by Max, the weekday doorman, decked out in his usual uniform that makes him look like a comedic Russian general on loan from an old Peter Sellers film.

She doesn't hear the traffic; she doesn't see the pedestrians; she doesn't even see Max.

He's a useful fixture in her world, and one doesn't notice such things unless they're missing or cease to function as expected. She is generous at Christmas time, as she should be, and that is quite enough.

She pays no attention to the park, the 843 acres of green things living just across Fifth Avenue. It, too, is just a useful fixture, although never for her, personally.

Her last husband went to the park every morning to jog around the reservoir, always in a counterclockwise direction, as is the local custom, and that suited him to a tee, because she always thought of him as a counterclockwise kind of man. But that matters not. Someone else is winding his clock these days.

Her children also use the park. They go to the playground every afternoon with Katya, the au pair, where they fly high on the swings, climb the monkey bars and are starting to acquire the Slavic accents of Katya's native land.

She hasn't noticed that either. Not yet. She's far too busy.

But she always notices her reflection in a pane of glass or any similar shiny surface and can tell at a glance if even a single hair is out of place. And she never fails to notice another woman's shoes. She can always take the measure of a potential rival by sizing up her footwear. Jewelry may draw the eye, but only a pair of shoes may be trusted to tell the unvarnished truth.

This evening, dripping with noblesse oblige, she will use her considerable and very well-polished wiles to charm pledges in obscene amounts on behalf of a museum filled with art treasures that she never

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quite understood; and, next Saturday, she will pretend to care every bit as much for the sort of disadvantaged people she can barely stand to see through the darkened glass of a chauffeured limousine.

Her favorite game is charades, and she plays it like a champion—not the party kind of charades, but the penthouse kind—the kind that is played in only the very best venues overlooking the East River or the Park, where the glitterati duel for social pre-eminence with subtlety, innuendo and the kind of effortless insincerity that can be acquired only from an early age.

She enters the waiting elevator, thankful that its gleaming brass car had been converted to automatic operation. She was never fully comfortable riding all the way to the penthouse floor in close proximity to the old, uniformed operator, especially when she was alone.

Up, up, up she goes, leaving Fifth Avenue's lesser lights far behind, to the penthouse and then to the clouds and beyond, to a vantage point from which the Earth appears as nothing more than a peaceful, blue orb. From such a lofty altitude, she cannot see uncollected garbage rotting at the curb, crime committed in the streets, her children falling off the playground equipment or other mundane details of everyday life, and, having been so liberated from such worldly concerns, she is free to concentrate on the sort of important matters that truly warrant her time and attention, like the evening's gala event and spending the better part of the next half hour picking out the perfect pair of shoes.

Even among the clouds, women will always believe the shoes.

Noah Cutler is a retired real estate lawyer living in St. Davids, Pennsylvania. He enjoys writing essays and novels, as well as writing and performing his poetry.



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Robert Hambling Davis

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Mexico

"It's over," he says. "But we sure had some good times." He takes one more sip of tea and gets up from her kitchen table. "Like our trip to the Yucatan before it became the Mayan Riviera. Was that fun or what?"

She frowns and shakes her head. "Imagine what it looks like now."

"Corporate colonies," he says, putting on his trench coat. "Monoculture. No stopping it."

"We didn't stay in Cancun," she says, leaning back in her chair. "We knew better. Even then."

"Yeah, those funky hotels on the Caribbean, ten bucks a night," he says, putting on his safari hat. "Who cared if the swimming pools were empty and cracked? We swam in the lagoons till we were hungry, then had a great lunch for six bucks, then walked a quarter mile inland and swam in the cenotes."

She puts her hands on the table. "Don't glorify the past. You shouldn't have brought it up."

"Swim out and sun on the raft," he says, swaying as he stands in his coat and hat in her kitchen. "We made love on one, remember?"

"Please don't," she says.

"Drink beer under the palapa. Have a great dinner for six more bucks."

"Please go."

"Pet the pet coatimundi."

She points at the door. "Go!"

He tips his hat. She doesn't smile.

"Go now," she says quietly, looking down at the table. "Just go."

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He turns and opens the door. "Bye, and good luck," he tells her, and walks out and doesn't look back. He pulls out of her driveway and drives out of her life.

It's rainy and cool in late August as he heads north on the interstate, recalling the Berkshires five summers ago. While she was touring Europe with her mother and sister, he stayed at a bed and breakfast and climbed a different mountain each morning, building an appetite for lunch. How could anyone skip lunch? He can't remember the names of the mountains, but halfway up the steepest near Great Barrington, a younger man with a baby on his back passed him and said Hawthorne and Melville had talked shop on the peak.

He would climb mountains and not think of her and their trip to Mexico, when she first said she loved him as they strolled the beach at sunset the day he'd nearly drowned.

She sits in her kitchen, holding her head in her hands over her lukewarm tea, and thinks of those two weeks that March when they drove around the Yucatan in a rental, and camped in a tent on a beach for a dollar a day. Playa del something. It meant, "The Most Beautiful Beach in the World." She snorkeled in the shallows, watching the bright fish, and loved it there, till the second afternoon when he swam out too far and fought the undertow to get back.

She thought he'd drowned and left her stranded in a dangerous non-English-speaking country. How relieved she was when he staggered out of the water with bloody hands and knees and collapsed on the sand. He would have drowned, he said, if he hadn't smacked up on a coral formation he could cling to till he could swim on.

She drinks the last of her tea and remembers how her fear of being abandoned had somehow spurred her daring for the rest of the trip, and how she went alone into stores and bought things and asked directions in what Spanish she'd learned from her two-week crash course before the vacation, which climaxed when she climbed the high pyramid in Palenque and took in the view of the jungle and plains.

She will never go back to Mexico. That trip was enough for a lifetime. She will try to fill the hole he's left in her life with online dating and fitness resolutions. She will wallpaper the living room, retille the bath, see family and friends. She reaches for her phone, then stops, and takes a breath and stands.

She clears the table and washes the dishes in the sink. She dries them and puts them away. She makes another cup of tea and sits and drinks it, hardly blinking as the tears dry on her face and her body grows still in her chair in the kitchen of her quiet house. Now, for the first time in her life, she isn't afraid of being alone.

Robert Hambling Davis has published his work in *The Sun*, *Antietam Review*, *Memoir (and)*, *Homestead Review*, *PhiladelphiaStories*, and *Santa Monica Review*. He is the recipient of three Delaware Division of the Arts Individual Artist fellowship grants, two for fiction and one for creative nonfiction. Robert was a semifinalist in the 2002 William Faulkner Creative Writing Contest, and his story, "Death of a Deer," originally published in *American Writing*, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.



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Tammy Ho Lai-Ming

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Better than a Good Friend

—for Bob Bradshaw

But there were no paths to choose—
they hadn't been walked into existence.
Where I came from—
the whole land was muddy, the river
kept coming back every morning. It ran languidly,
not a care in the world. It carried shapeless
animal remains, cans from ten towns away.
I was asked not to look too carefully
or put my hands in it. Some other place,
you might find limitless combinations and variants
of days. Not there. It was forever still. Even the sun
seemed only to give half its due.

Between my father and his ancestors,
they saw millions of Winters. But if you asked,
no one remembered what the place was like
just twenty years ago. People were dying fast;
and the relatively young did not know the olden days.
Some reminisced about dinners being pushed
from nine to five, so everybody could go to bed at seven:
the shorter the night, the less hungry you are.

I was thirteen and I had no more family
than a bald man has hair. I thought it was just a phase:
in life, we got to be an orphan at least once.
But when even my good neighbours
shut their door to face death, I was scared.
Since my parents had died, they had shared their bread
with me, but in the last moments, they kept
the family close: I was just the boy next door.

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The starless sky smelt sticky the night I left.
Better punch my way into the dark, not knowing
where I was going. Several times, I thought I'd drown.
I had to pull my legs with all my strength
out of god knows what and kept walking.
There's nothing to lose trying a bit harder.
I heard whispers from all directions
and thought the night would last forever.

When the day broke in a gentle splash of yellow,
I saw I had not gone very far, but far enough
to be away. My old man's shoes firmly in place.

Ocean Desires, with Reference to Frankenstein

—for Divya Rajan

In my sleep, if I sleep, the colourful fish circle me.
A powerful structure, seamless, like a wall.
When I am awake, I always want to sing for them,
or laugh with them. But my throat is damaged;
my voice is long gone. I am not a mermaid:
on me you will not find sparkling scales.
I cannot speak after the sweat-soaked noose
cut my neck deep.

They believed I stole that fine bonnet.
But I only traded it for my mistress's worn dresses.
She gave me two for my eighteenth birthday.
High waistlines, tight sleeves, they were too delicate
for a brown kitchen maid like me. I knew my place:
a plain face looks best in a plain setting.
Who caught me walking down the street
with my basket full of parsley and other herbs? The accuser—
I knew her to be the sweetheart of my lover.

I was laid on the floorboards in the confused hour.
At first, my body felt like a chopped tree log;
something inside already rotting. A gentleman's
careful and clinical gloved hands touched my face, and slowly,
increasingly, my mind came back to my mind. He must be God.
I remember my second first breath—
a rough storm in my chest. Then, banging, banging.
Someone's knocking on the door.

He walked in like a wild beast
who had just escaped a wilder predator.
His face was disfigured, asymmetrical. His scars
gleamed with bitterness. I had never seen an uglier person,
so monstrous yet so vulnerable. He held me up and asked:
Are you in the mood for some meat pies?

He tried to smile but the slit that was his mouth
only tweaked a little. I fell in love, instantly,
with this stranger, my bridegroom.

But on our wedding day, the doctor,
instead of delivering me a bridal gown and a fine bonnet,
took me. He took me to the high cliff where I kissed my love's
lips. Tipping the velvet, that's what he would do
on our wedding night, he said. We were discreet.
No one knew our tender love: love in a second life
was never meant to be.

'I cannot do this from wrong to wrong.
I cannot let you create millions of teeming monsters.'
Violently my saviour pushed me.
When falling, my ears were ringing loud.
The sound reminded me of in another life,
my mistress's musical instruments being fine-tuned.

I have since then lived on this green rock
deep in the ocean. I long for the ones I once loved
but there's no one here, only fish, and corals like brushes,
like stones, like brains. This life is long.

[Tammy Ho Lai-Ming](#) is a Hong Kong-born writer currently based in London, UK. She is a
founding co-editor of *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*.



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William Hastings

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Fingerprints on the Windowpane

I opened the door to the old bedroom. Gold light yawned inward in four great shafts through the window. Dust motes floated upward into the light. The room sounded hollow. It was certainly empty. But I knew of its emptiness before I had opened the door. That emptiness is what had kept my wife, Carol, and I out of the room for the past two weeks.

Beyond the single window, out in the wide green yard Carol stumbled around in her nightgown beneath the big oak tree with its swing. It was two in the afternoon. She hadn't changed out of it since we buried Billie. Her hair, tangled and greasy even from the distance of the room, snapped and twisted in the breeze. Carol stumbled with it all, lost and trying to pull up what the grave was keeping down.

I stepped into the bedroom and with a great care tried not to disturb the toys on the floor. The Tonka truck had gone from bright yellow to gold brown in the layer of dust that had fallen there. The blanket ("Blankie, my blankie daddy") stuffed in a wad in the corner had the same dust mottling its blue patchwork. Did she throw it there or had she been playing with it?

Each step that I took left a footprint in the dust, evidence of my existence. The bed was still against the wall, its sheets still undone since the morning we found her, found her blue, not breathing, silent, silent, silent. The walls still held that same tension we found then too. The bedroom was stuck in that single moment, like a mosquito frozen in amber.

I walked slowly, crying, and ran my finger along the edge of the bed. My ears heard her crying. They heard her laughing. My eyes saw her tiny fingers with their squared off nails dipping into orange paint and then running lines across the paper taped to the wooden easel I made for her.

"It's a tiger."

"A tiger? What's that baby?"

"Daddy, you know. It's a big animal and it has claws and it has teeth and it has stripes."

She didn't live long enough to learn that there were invisible living things out there with claws and teeth and stripes that scarred more deeply.

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That lesson was for Carol and I.

I dropped to my knees and wept. How could I clean this room? I pulled my head up from my hands, I looked out over the yard, green, open, a single leaf blowing in circles across it, Carol dipping from one leg to the other, scratching herself, her head tilting downward to the ground then up to the sky, looking for Billie's tracks, looking for traces. The wind out there, the wind. I wiped the tears from my eyes with my right hand and they focused again, first on what was beyond the glass, then on the glass itself. There they were: five tiny ovals smudged on the glass above a square. Fingerprints and a palm.

I crawled forward, careful not to press my own hands to the glass and raised my head up so the fingerprints were in front of my eyes. I leaned forward and kissed the smudges, drawing them into my lips.

Look what I found Carol, look what I found.

William Hastings is a graduate student in the Solstice Low Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing of Pine Manor College. His fiction is forthcoming in Akashic Books' *Cape Cod Noir* anthology in June 2011.



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