

ADANNA

LITERARY JOURNAL

Founder
CHRISTINE REDMAN-WALDEYER

Assistant Editor
MICHELLE OVALLE

Issue No. 3

Adanna accepts poetry, fiction, essays, and reviews. Please send a proposal for reviews. All submissions are electronically accepted in one file, preferably a word document file with a cover letter and a three to four line bio.

Visit our website for further details: www.adannajournal.blogspot.com

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About the Artist

Alphonso Dunn was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and moved permanently to the United States at 17. After completing undergraduate study in Chemistry at William Paterson University he went on to earn his Master of Fine Arts at New York Academy of Art. Following his MFA, he taught college art courses part-time while teaching high school chemistry in New Jersey. He is currently a full-time faculty at Passaic County Community College and also teaches part-time at Bergen Community College. Mr. Dunn has been a recipient of the prestigious Artist Fellowship Award granted by the New Jersey Council on the Arts. His work can be found in private collections across the United States and Internationally.

Notes from the Editor

Adanna, a name of Nigerian origin, pronounced a-DAN-a, is defined as “her father’s daughter.” I had a vision for a women’s journal that would be defined in multiple ways. This name represented how women have been defined by our culture, one that has historically been subservient, but also one where men have nurtured their daughters to be equals.

When I started the journal in 2011, I was thrilled to have the support of many known writers in the community. *Adanna* has been reviewed by *New Pages* and, most recently, was included in *Literary Mama’s* series of interviews with editors and publishers of women-focused journals and books. *Adanna’s* past editors have included David Crews, Rae Gouirand, Diane Lockward, Lynne McEniry, and Dr. Laura Winters, who have brought their expertise and own flavor to each of our issues. As a Jersey Shore publication *Adanna* also supported the stories of children who suffered through Hurricane Sandy. Our journal represents international and national writers and embraces diversity, featuring prize-winning writers and new writers alike. A special thank you to Michelle Ovalle for all her hard work on this most recent issue.

Christine Redman-Waldeyer, Founder

Foreword

“Somehow you just gotta/surrender to your own complexities.” – Tom C. Hunley

People, particularly artists, are incredibly complex. I think it is the product of so many ideas and colors and language in a constant, muddled struggle to become clear. With this in mind, I had no idea what to expect as a first time literary journal editor.

As I dove into reading submissions, I found that there were many common threads, which was surprising to me since this is a general issue, with no specific theme or beginning line or influence to draw from. And yet there they were, these base human instincts—memory, survival, humor—all dealing with a number of happy moments and sorrow and gray areas. We all go through similar challenges and frustrations and victories, but the moments are expressed differently. That, I think, is where the beauty begins in the written word: In our connectedness, we contain multitudes.

But great writing does not merely report beauty or grief or joy; writing that sticks with a reader for years to come wrestles with the human experience. With every seemingly black and white incident comes a flood of emotion. Joy and grief (or disappointment or frustration) are often dance partners. Even when an experience conjures one emotion solely, there are phases of that emotion that work themselves out within us. Great writing lends language to experiences or questions that may otherwise be silent for the reader. Giving substance to the human experience through language (or paint or caulk) is a type of surrender because both the artist and the reader are faced with an inescapable image rather than an abstract idea.

But what of those complex questions or experiences that do not have answers? On this subject, I think Rilke nailed it when he said: “Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now.”

Perhaps my subconscious mind was searching for questioning while sifting through the submissions. Even moments of clarity are part of wrestling because they posit, “Where do I go from here?” The work presented in this issue of *Adanna* is rich with complexity, which isn’t a bad thing. Gray areas should be embraced. As a writer and visual artist myself, one of the main reasons I create is to work out questions. Art is my way of reconciling the unknowable.

So how *do* you live with questions as Rilke suggests or surrender to your own complexities, as Hunley states in the epigraph? Read what sets you ablaze, and then create art that intrigues you, coaxes your vulnerabilities out of hiding, and even frightens you. My hope is that you find ways to live out your own questions through the words published in this issue.

Michelle Ovalle
July 2013

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POETRY

Lawrence Bridges

Imagine Everything, This is No Different

I stand in the hosed off rotunda. The sweet past spreads
with the present's edge through my repetitions,
adding soft wood to root. The woman came to me as a tree,
a hand to feel the good fortune and love beside it,
eating spinning seed. She burned tree to cook,
like bandages, magenta cloud smoldering
like moors by a shore, she the one less broken.

Lawrence Bridges

It's Better Wet in Your Head

Across the sprayed patio and wet deck chairs

I smell the fresh stale smell of flatwork steaming,

everything turned off and the city below with points of light

the shape of a flood plain. Our talk was repetition, a word

or two forward each time, fast enough to crack ceramic.

A woman, ten years into the future waves from a planet

with a note in her hand. In the present she is popular, unwrecked.

Lawrence Bridges

She Talks, He Talks

She sat on concrete, talking gravely. She talked at home, looked down from a window, paced with heart in half, answered his gaze with silent words,
as if it were *she* looking at *him*, straight-on. She drives and speaks, almost laughs, as she turns. He speaks Scooters. She pauses and thinks of her life with all of her men dead. He dries himself, admires his hair - sea with woodcut waves. He fits into a shoe and falls back short another day.

Sad eddy. Simple dam. Meadow stream. Nearby lake. Speckle of sunlight.

They are on vacation together, married, kids hiking

David Crews

The Same Dream

May you never sleep like the girl who could not stop
dreaming the same dream, the night

like two mirrors on opposite walls, and here, in the shadows
the arms of a little girl waving her arms

goodbye or hello and hello, well, I will stay awhile
tell you her story. But to tell you her story

takes more breath from my lungs, for her song sings
not the soft melodies your mother once whispered

into your starlit ears on nights your father slept
like he almost always did in the bed she'd return to, her song

does not cup the light of a falling moon
almost caught in your tiny open arms

and the moon could never tell a story like this one.
One night it began with a dream: out

of her sleeping body came a strapped leg, restless
and kicking the sheets

now stained and soaked in sweat
the girl saw herself sleeping

on the pillow beside her. And the next night,
there again. And the next night.

I could not say how many times her eyes woke from sleep
to see her eyes staring into her shunted eyes.

In sleep the wails would come, the tolling clatter

nothing an ordinary girl wished to hear,
swollen howls of laughter and fear, rage and love,
the stammering voices spoke of people

and places but sometimes
they just cried. Each night this little girl found herself

a visitor among a chorus of selves, the night a striking
ricochet pounding the underside of her bed

and sleep would not stop the dark's blaring rattle, sleep
like a plague squeezing her mind until a moment

unlike any she'd ever heard before: each voice
calling her name, the way

the cuckoo cries in the half-light unlike the blue jay
how the crow caterwauls the morning in

and even the hummingbird
(for there was a voice like the hummingbird too)

fluttering the stillness just above her sleeping head
as if to say

I'm always close. Some mornings the little girl would wake
find sunlight flying through the open window

and the birds were calling and the sunlight was falling
and sometimes she was all alone.

Barbara Crooker

Blue and Gold October,

The rooks and I rejoice not to be mute.

William Matthews, The Rookery at Hawthornden

and the air is ripe with noise: squirrels shuffling
through the duff, the high chirp of the chipmunk
as it streaks through the leaves, the discordant choir
of birdsong. Even the sunlight makes music, falling
in solid chords of gold on the ground. Up in the pines,
a nuthatch calls, *Why are you here, Why are you here*
down in the woods, while the rest of the world
works on? Not making any money, not punching
any clock, idling the afternoon away? I settle back
in my canvas sling, let my pen stutter
across the page, adding my words to the ragtag
chorus, the last notes of the year.

Melissa Cundieff-Pexa

The End

Last night I dreamed
what was not sun or moon hung in the sky.
Unhinged, round
science like a magnifying glass
held above flame. Its curve,
a vesseled eye watching
sun go to seed. I called

you over, and we pressed our
palms against the window as if to touch
the thing's luminous face, as if to ask
its name, or name it for ourselves.
For a while, we were gods.
We possessed astronomy with witnessing
the shape of some genesis stare down
our jawed, human faces.

And when a plume of actual flame
burst from the thing's
circumference and shone and split
its marital feathers, I knew we were about
to die. I ran to our daughter's bed
and put my hand on her chest. In the dream,
she looked the same as the day she was born,
fragile and pink as a root.

But she wasn't breathing
in the dark, still air
of nightmare. I heard that extra moment
of her unbeating heart, and all at once,
I was both grief-stricken and relieved
for her exit. I woke
from that hideous prayer
that I wouldn't speak with opened-eyes,

not even if fire was already rising just past our knees.

Jenny Dunning

Domesticity

My house is chinked—tunnels
under the fence, loose boards,
torn window screens. The cats
take up under the porch, grow fat
on tinned tuna and bread crusts. Bold,
they follow drafts inside,
perch on the couch, the bookcase,
change places with each other.

I take them all in. You there with the beard,
why pay for that room
at the Y when you can stay here?
Soup burbling on the stove. And cookies
for the children who press
their noses against the glass. My bed
creaks with their groans and mewls.

Before long the house reeks
with their breaths, their shit, the pail
of diapers soaking, the dead
voles left on my pillow. Screams
in the night—love, need, terror
indistinguishable. They dig sharp claws
into my shoulder, root at
my breasts, prod my ass and work
clumsy hands between my thighs.

They're using me up. Soon, I'll fit
under the bed. I'll scoot through the door
banging open in the cold rain, scurry
under the fence, stray.

Jenny Dunning

End of Summer

The hard frost on its way, we gather the last
tomatoes for sauce. Not enough, so we pick
the cherry tomatoes grown wild
across the walk, roughshod
over the broccoli, all yellow
butterflies now. We press them, hot
from the water bath,
out of their tight little skins, add them
to the pot. Summer squash as well,
plucked from shrivled vines. As hungry as
winter, we grab everything in sight—the kayaks
left out on the chance of an Indian summer
day, your glasses lost
on the riverbottom, the poems
I never wrote, my hope
that you would never
look at me like this.

Gabriel Falconhead

Limos, Matriarch of The Misbegotten

When the first one snaked its head from
the womb, you took for granted it had
no qualms. Took to sleep for it had no
quarrel, no tongue. It hung, as a pro-
tuberance, and ate what you gave. And
when the other heads slid out, what little
of yourself was left. For when they woke,
they sought your breasts. For when they
could, they chewed your dress. And when
the last head had come, what milk could
you proffer him? And as the heads grew
horns, their mouths teeth, they fed on
this youngest beast. They tore its tongue,
made flesh to meat. Bit its head, turned
limbs to bread. And when it bled your
eyes turned glass. And when it pled your
ears turned deaf. And when it returned
back to the womb, you bit it off at the neck.

Irene Fick

Cosmo Girl

On the death of Helen Gurley Brown

While mom and the neighbor ladies swapped
recipes for tuna casseroles, I sprawled on my bed

in curlers and cold cream, flipped through *Cosmopolitan*,
lured by breathless prose and models who flaunted

pouty lips, plunging cleavage and bedroom hair. I yearned
to mimic Helen, who scratched her way out of the Ozarks,

revamped herself in LA , snagged a stinking rich mate,
turned a tired literary rag into a digest for single girls.

Helen made me forget I was a mousy Midwestern type
who took careful shorthand, fetched coffee, but tanked

each time I tried the Cosmo quiz: *How sexy are you???*
Plucky Helen, made up lady stuffed with plastic, collagen and Botox,

was 90 when she died of natural causes, though it was said,
some of her parts were much younger.

Linda McCauley Freeman

Mother

before Mother
before Grandmother
she was who she is

the girl buying milk in glass bottles for her father
saving nickels for the red dress with the tulle skirt

dreaming
of Sicilian olive groves
on the number 5 subway

the woman who was

a daughter a sister

the young woman
I found in photographs
in the cardboard suitcase in the attic

lipsticked laughing
on a beach brushing brown hair
leaning on a doorway
eyes halfmoons
sitting on the shoulders
of a man
not my father.

Karen L. George

Embryos

Roll a hard-boiled egg
on the kitchen counter, feel
the oval in the heart of your hand,
hear the crackle as its shell fragments
and tickles the soft plane
where your life line pools.

Slip your fingernail under a loose shard,
lift and peel the egg free
of its crust and membrane. Wipe away
leftover slivers of shell.
If needed, pat with a paper towel
you lay aside for lip presses.

Place the egg on a white plate,
the mirror of its color,
shake out pure ground pepper
stars to circle the orb.
As you carry the plate, clasp
the egg in place. The index finger
works best. Don't let it
touch the flakes, yet.

Lower the plate onto a round table
next to a novel* begun the night
before, and a glass of ice water
with lemon wedge. Settle
on the button-tufted cushion,
sun on your shoulders and crown.

Dip the pointed egg, adhere its moist
curve to the pepper flakes, not only
black, but brown, cinnamon-red, tan,
even white, none uniform

in size, some glommed together.
Taste the white—simple, light,
tender. Bite into the heavy yolk, intense
center of pleasure, hidden. Your smile
widens because the yellow mirrors
the pattern on the plate's fluted rim—
daisy silhouettes, leaves tinted
iridescent green of spring's first
grass whose roots wait
in the ground behind you.

Rest your palm on the novel's glossy cover.
Recall how the girl feels the first flutter
of her child within, grown from her own
fertilized egg—sweet, heavy
secret. Sentences dense
as the yolk your tongue roots.

Karen L. George

Your Spirit Animal

You spotted the souvenir in the Ketchikan gift shop:
a sculpture of two gray wolves, necks entwined,
the female's head laid back, eyes closed,
tongue lapping the male's mouth,
his dark stare softened by her warmth.

The piece matched two at home

arranged on top of your stereo cabinet
on a square of lambskin the rich tint of soil.
One wolf head back, howling,
the other scans a valley from a rock outcrop.
So lifelike—wide foreheads, long, blunt muzzles,
dense fur pooled around necks, shoulders, haunches.

You cupped the linked pair
in your palms, raised to show me.
They weren't cheap, and since your diagnosis,
you worried about money, how I'd afford
the condo, new furniture, this cruise.

Every time I pass the wolves, I remember
how you nestled them, hesitant
to give them to the clerk,
asking they be bundled in bubble wrap,
reinforced with strapping tape.

Did you sense how little time
you had left to hold anything?

John Gosslee

Seraglio Girl

She puts on a purple dress
paints her nails pistachio-in-winter
veils herself with a fresh grape leaf
shimmers onto the carpet
her arms like a drawbridge over a river rise
sail a boat of eyes through the forest
her flag of dark hair whips
gold confetti baptizes candles
the ostrich step of her hips
honey poured into oil ripples
she trills like a rainbow shakes the sky
bends into a bow drawn by a cord
in a rhythm the shape of a root

Alysia Nicole Harris

Ishmael

Each mother squats & badmouths the sky: *God, it is easy to raise the son, from a throne. But who without full belly can stomach their own eclipse?*

The daughter-self quits the mother-self
to warn her—
The locus of feeding happens in the blood.

Magnificent Sarah, master with the withered womb
slaved for children 'til she was out of stillborns.
Slave-girl wished herself rid of sand, of bastard sobs;

Egypt in her reed-arms. Hagar walked
a desert, no milk in her breasts & yet
matriarch to a guttural cry.

Strength is a shared sigh. There are only used names for
daughters, like *Self*. Borrowed
from inside the waters of Adam.

The child of promise is *he who laughs* but *he*, a biology that never
mourns.

The women howl & call each other Ishmael, finally first-born.

Alysia Nicole Harris

True & Legitimate Wife

for Catherine of Aragon

Though your mistress waltzed inside gold, to the grave
my heart wore its widow's robes.
Sleeved in black, old tooth of poison.

Your brother never polluted my womb.
The almost sons you gave slept on clean blood pillows.
My belly was a catholic place. They couldn't be led astray.

The harlot's head still remains atop its tiny staircase.
How her bastard gains, Your Grace. This whore
is bold, boasting my death in canary yellow.

A nun's clothes are too modest for grief.
Alone in exile I hear the gout creeps and
pray for your health—where is Mary, our daughter

who argues in Latin, who keeps the faith
while her father flirts? Beloved, I can assure
as red to the pomegranate, I was pure.

I need no pope to confer my peace,
resolved as a king. Farewell eats all my air.
Rosary to charm my sleep.

Alysia Nicole Harris

Uses of Fires

I ate the words
warm from your mouth.
So wet they couldn't burn properly.
Turn of temper in the early autumn air
froze the paint
on the living-
room wall
to its truest yellow;
I lit other sweet-breathed candles.
Opened the ovens
around our home
and wounds.
Baking or cauterizing
until the marigold walls leaned away,
until we slid into each other
and didn't know where to pull
to dis-integrate.

We lay in the guest bed,
your knee hollowing
a bowl out of my knee;
silence such a rounded container.
Smoke pouring from
inside— how do I carry
these pregnancies to term?
Fertility doctors, marriage
counselors, pastors
say what I should pray for:
Surrogate, Sparks, Birth.
Isn't the phoenix
a kind of tearing too,
a ripping down of sky
after first reaping itself?
I'm on
fire, baby.
Not the holy kind.

Gather all
the candles together,
the ones for reading,
the ones for heating,
the ones for loving by.
See if they can't burn down your voice,
make you a bold barren
absence.
See if they won't
fight
you for the last drag.
See if there is any silence
they didn't
suture. If there
is even a shadow left.

Darla Himeles

To a Footbridge, Century City, California, 2011

after Larry Levis

Nobody climbs the outside of bridges,
clings to metal beams,
taunting her sister—
yet twenty times I swore I'd jump
unless she kissed my cheek.
Now I can perch over Avenue of the Stars for hours
if I want, untempted,
and she, lawyer-to-be, tucks away those fears.
If I pocket death like a lucky rock
it's because our mother hordes everything in boxes.
Working at Borders, I wore eye makeup and vinyl pants,
trailed stalkers behind me, and behind them, bicycle cops.
Invincible, I'd lean on the promenade's metal dolphin, stare at women,
walk anywhere to cultivate androgynous swagger.
It was exhaustion I felt then, and lust,
dreaming of deathbed confessions.
I still dream I will kiss every woman I've ever longed for
while perched in some hospital bed, and I'll whisper
how much I longed, and when, and how, and sing excerpts of our
songs—
for each lover I never had trails a soundtrack behind her that only I
know.
When I sit in perfect loneliness, these secrets
hold me; women like me lie
on bridges where we might have died,
our hearts taking off their trench coats
beneath autumnal blue sky
where clouds cascade like elephants in a line.

Darla Himeles

Pulse

Last night, swirled in breath-mist:

*we close eye-grasses, irises
pulse left, right, drink dream soil—*

Once
I spread bare toes on iridescent ground.

Twice
my dream-mouth exhaled tiny bubbles, flute noises.

Many hearts here throb, you know—

Having swum, rubbed cheek in silt, having
collected purple stones for you

I know waking leaves behind, I have dreamed anyway.
These hands

are never empty.

Linda J. Himot

My Mother's Hands

broad, square, no-nonsense fingers,
knuckles white and prominent
from wringing shirts, sheets, towels drier
than the spin cycle of her washing machine,
powerful enough to blacken the eye
of a man who made me cry.
One backhand swing, to send him
reeling, running, afraid of another blow.

knit me sweaters with chains of dolls,
yellow and green, parading across my chest;
sew meticulous evenly spaced
blind-stitch hems on my skirts;
make rapturous swirls of cream cheese icing
on devil's food cakes.
Give me the beaters to lick.

soft, smooth palms, pale, callus-free,
moisturized daily with Pond's cream
from a large white jar
on the bathroom shelf, protected
from dishwasher by yellow rubber
gloves two sizes too big.

hidden by cotton gloves – work ugly
river blue veins, tortuous, intersect,
course over the backs, disappear,
large bumpy channels above her wrists.
I play with them when she lets me,
flatten a vein with one finger,
empty it with another, watch it refill.
I am enamored of her hands –
long to have veins like hers.

proud to brush and comb my hair,
tease away painful snarls,
make perfect corkscrew curls,

pat them in place, velvet bow on one side,
then pull back to check their handiwork
before waving me off to school.

Susan McDonough-Hintz

Eve

You seem foreign
from where I stand
by your side,
of your side, neither
mud's nor mine.

that which could
have made anyone
made us,
first. I'm
no afterthought.

male
unless I was
female.
I want to lift that leaf
consider

to me, what exists
between us
what defines you,
redefines us
and who you'd be

The truth is

You couldn't be

who you are

without me.

Miranda Hoegberg

In the Backyard with Ana

epicranius

crackled footsteps on the back walk
the furrowed vegetable garden
the place between your eyes in the sun

risorius

a cherry tree dropping fruit into my mouth
the gutter smiling off the edge
of the flat black roof

platysma

the patio too—flat flat
sprinkler ticks and the curve of your neck
away from naked me

pectoralis major

tiny eggplant buds—we carry them carefully
the sweet smell of tomatoes and straw
our chests bulge with laughter

brachialis

sunflowers flexing to surpass the house
upturned earth trembling with worms
grit beneath our fingernails

pyramidalis

the humid center of a milkweed pod
between vines that look like legs
in the bath I see we are—almost—the same

gluteus maximus

charred air—steak and asparagus
the chairs leave imprints on our thighs
we run our hands over the puckered flesh

vastus medialis

a few stars –an impulse of moon
there is still grass on your knees
I brush it off

soleus

the house crouches on cool dirt
dark dark—our feet blend with damp grass
and our bodies—converging—take root

Miranda Hoegberg

Side Effects

Jane assumed it was
the chemo that was making
all her hair fall out,

but when horns started
to grow in its place, she was
pretty damn confused.

When the fur began
to spring up on her face,
she called the doctor.

Unfortunately,
she found she could make only
a quiet lowing.

Her body became
more bovine in nature till
hooves clicked kitchen tile.

She found she couldn't
perform many household tasks;
mostly stood, too big.

She felt the tumor
pulsing in her abdomen,
warm and familiar.

This was better than
nausea, she thought, but still
an inconvenience.

S.G. Jarvis

One Liner

He's so down-to-earth
A setting southern son,
a cool brainiac, looking...
but in just a few
fiercely gentle years
a die-hard New Yorker
thankfully dressed to impress
the vegetarian life-style
more than willing to start
a one liner romance
is standing at the door, holding
her only pair of red high heels

Alex Ledford

Bloodletting

Sorry, my love,
I was mending
one of your shirts,
the yellow one,
and I know
the splatter looks
like a mascara
teardrop from a weepy eye—
it is only
where I pricked my finger
and stupidly let blood spill.

Susan Maeder

The Indian Under the House

If it comes through the front door you can trust it.
That's what my Great Aunt said when I was seven.
She lived in the attic. It was always autumn,

cribbed trees outside the lace window, the last
home run of the season buzzing inside the radio. Dust.
Every so often the heat roared up through a hole in the floor.
She was dead serious, but no more than I.

I knew she meant to say
don't trust in Jesus so much, he lives in the sky;
don't heed the clicking tongues of men
hanging out windows with candy;
the man in the bank with red hair;
the Indian under the house.

That's where I went when I closed my eyes,
to that dungeon of hope, the basement.
Aunt Kate followed me in my descent.
No! she said, flapping her hands, flipping on lights.
No! No!

I thrilled to the scent of must and decay, to the
hollow sound of my voice --
Hello? Hello?

He was always waiting for me.
He taught me to braid my hair down my back,
wear sacks on my feet instead of brown shoes
that left tracks, rub dirt on my skin to protect me.

I learned to eat roots. I could look
a fawn in the eye and call it by name.

Your mother is a swan, he told me and touched my heart.
Your father belongs to the river.

There was drumming and smoke.
There were long nights wrapped in
animal skins, waiting out the moon.

When I grew ill, he held me against his chest.
He breathed miracles into me. I saw three suns
and a rainbow. I heard many gods winging above me
and the din of caribou clashing their racks.

I knew he would be mine to bury someday.
I prepared by fasting and carving his name in my arm.
I would bind my breasts to keep him alive.
I cut my hair close to the scalp.
I lined my eyes with kohl.

You will forget me, he warned, as I grew paler than bone.
I never wept. Storms swept through the house for seasons.
Aunt Kate at the top of the steps kept calling my name.
But I was floating away, graceful and white as a swan.

He had carved a small boat from a gourd.
I would follow the river until it was gone.
The moon kept coming back.
There were voices around every bend.

Karla Linn Merrifield

From Puerto San Miguel,

I imported small doses of Amazon mojo
in my photographs of *mestizos* children,
brown eyes shimmering in brown moon faces daring
to gaze away from my *gringo* wide-angle lens at full zoom.

One little *chiquita* wore her pet parakeet like a parrot-
green pendant at her throat, stroking him, soothing
herself, that bird of green-green palms in her brown palm.
The caption reads: *She tamed him, he turned her wild.*

Alex Millard

You and I Are Closing

for Yusef Komunakaa

The taste I put on the shelf
belongs to the man still humming
outside my door. Since last night
he loves like a section of stale chocolate
He loves like blueberries crushed
on my white silk pants
A ring of sour
enclosed about his
head now
I lie with my eyebrows
slightly arched,
while he loves
like a blackout in winter.
He loves like children play in dirt.
He loves like a paper
covered in ink dripping
He loves like antennae
of a snail attacked
instinctively withdrawn
The rabbit I've forgotten to place
beneath my top hat.
He loves like a creased bill.
He loves like an empty carafe
He loves like bright bitter water
on my lips.
He loves like the false notes he hums
ambitious but not accurate.

Erik Moshe

"Baptising the Albany Water"

Cecil's phosphorescent
skin cells
were displayed against
the shower curtains
blotches of gray housecat fur
glued to the slick nylon

A raspberry vinaigrette towel
rested on the counter
absorbing the morsels of
today's steampunk adventures;
which were rather
lilliputian meanderings

She wraps the towel tightly
around
&
around
her clean, gleaming thighs
as it prickles
like a teddy bear's
tart bleached tongue

Pomegranate gumdrops
fall on her sundress
and fizzle, tomato wine locks
of her hair unkempt
winding through the ivory gates
in a symphony of
whalebrush curtailed
by a bubble boy parade

The water instruments
clashing
in the tangerine mist
beating against
her coolly

pink resolve
told a sermon worth knowing by heart.

Deborah Murphy

How to be a Patient: Lessons from a Friend

When the nurse slides the needle
into your flesh with a smile,

smile back. Watch the liquid calculation
drip through the plastic lines into your veins. Imagine

it's toxic enough to kill
what needs killing.

Imagine each drip a warrior king.
Cut your hair before it falls out.

Wait for the line to be drawn
out.

Take a hot shower. Count each steaming drip
to the skin. The blessing of the mundane.

Wear the head wrap of blue today. Sammy's
favorite color.

Put your glasses on. Notice the arc of light
as it crosses the day. Watch the stars

wheel past the crescent of your window.
Let your oldest born climb into bed

with you, not too big to fit
the curve of your side.

Later, when you feel the rash eat your skin,
the nausea roil your gut, the fever

sear your brain, imagine the marauders
burning the village.

Priscilla Orr

Election Day

At the firehouse
older men open huge ledgers.
I look at the upside down page
to see how I've signed my name
then repeat that version.

The button, VOTE, shudders
when I press it. I remember Cusco,
sandaled women with bright-colored
pouches weighting their backs.

Six native people were slaughtered
the day before I arrived for protesting
the rise in gas prices and bus prices
the cost to get their goods to market.

The next day, they were still in the streets
undaunted by the risk. Mesmerized,
I followed them, oblivious to the policia,
shotguns over their shoulders
visored hats covering their eyes.
My friend yanked me backward
causing me to stumble and fall.

Tina Rapp

To the Man at Harlow's Pub on Monday Night

Come to me. No. I mean it. Come.
Understand that there are things I should tell you.
That I am damaged goods in the best way.
Like a cantaloupe, bumpy and yellow.
Unexpected sweetness.

I am that 50-something woman with silver-streaked
hair and a waist that once was pinched.
I have a story to tell still, to you.

You eat alone, gobbling a bowl of chili
with melted cheese that sticks to your lips.
Your shaggy, salt-and-pepper hair,
your white worker's hands waiting to talk
politics and art and business.
You sit coiled, like a spring latch, really. Ready.

Who are you? Where are you from?
Did you like the Celtic music on Tuesday night?
What did you think of Nan Goldin's photos?

I've forgotten how to introduce myself.
I have no fine red dress to wear.
Nothing to make you see me.
Can't tell if you are really trying to catch my eye
or you want to ensnare the one with lean, curvy calves.

You are too ruggedly handsome for me, I think.
I see the beautiful blonde with the short skirt and décolletage.
She walks past me in your direction, smiling
I don't bother to look back.

I can hear her laugh. I can imagine your grin.
I look at my check. The bill seems too high.
I pay it anyway, and vanish.

Lauren Samblanet

Symptom #2

and the body hiding in the bathroom
stall cowering down so as to escape
and the body shaking hideously
as the current toilet seat morphs in
to the bunk bed from when the body was
seven and the flash of naked child skin pressed
on naked child skin and the blue and green sheets
that smell like urine and the knot tying and
retying in the stomach and the taste of naked
child skin swelling against the tongue and the night
light glaring onto the wall too far away to soothe
and the smell of urine and the green and blue
sheets and the knot tying and retying in the throat
and the older child touching the younger child
here and there and the taste of naked child skin
washing down the throat and the knot tying
and retying and just like that
it is finished and the body rocks up
and back and trembles and thrusts out small sobs
that cannot not erase.

Katie Seltz

Dear Mr. Hoffman,

My name is Katie. One hour ago, I was your son's girlfriend.

Two hours ago, he began canceling his plans with me.

Three hours ago, before the sun had risen, he kicked me out of his apartment.

Four hours ago, he fucked me until blood ran down my leg.

Five hours ago, he got me drunk off tequila and whiskey.

Six hours ago, I told him I was saving myself until marriage.

Seven hours ago, he told me he wanted to be with me no matter what.

Eight hours ago, I loved your son.

Pete Wolf Smith

Rebecca

When I returned from the house of my father Betuel
with his servant, the talker, supple one,
he who I'd seen at the well
(and me had seen, splashing water with my sisters,
the wet robe clinging to my skin);
who said his name was Ishmael
and spoke all the while of his master
half-brother, his country, while I
heard only the music of his tongue
and, inhaling in the evening cool
his scent, my veil thrown back,
beheld him kneeling at my feet;
and discovered my fingers moving,
touching the hard close kinks
of his hair, and heard myself say,
"Will my friend say nothing in his own behalf?"

Evelyn A. So

Granmama Growing Up In China

in memory of my mother's mother

One New Year's Eve, she took her bowl
and washcloth out to the steps, secretly

washed her feet and waited
for something *bad* to happen.

Her family slept. She turned
her collar against the cold and listened,

toweled her toes. One year's
misfortunes...Old superstitions.

She could make anything bloom
over and over. Cyclamens,

poinsettias, the once-a-year night-
blooming cereus.

The Japanese Army fanning out. Fleeing
sisters, brothers, mother,

father. Husband and infants,
one sweet potato

apiece, each day
the blockade. *Give us this day*

our daily bread, Sunday services,
Baptist churches, American neighbors,

Red Scares...Letters from China:
Don't come back!

The Communists—

The scissors she gave her children

and grandchildren. Their pennies
against the blades.

Karen Terrey

Inevitable Morning

Your heart is a fiddlehead curled tightly,
 a stubborn child's fist;
no memory of otherwise exists.

You've killed all the spiders,
their bulbous bodies and scratchy legs
crushed with the slap of a t-shirt.

A stack of books by the bed stand grows fur.
Although July, a chill wafts
 among white-starred ground cover.

Yet the body insists
 on inevitable morning.
Transplant the geraniums first, pinch
limp petunias from the hanging pots.

One day, grief slinks away
without announcement, withdrawing
 her wet gauze from your throat.

Laura Thompson

Finger Painting

I am already unclean.

Why not soak into unbleached
cotton and terrycloth, let it dry
under my nails, leave traces
on door knobs.

I already smell.

Why not draw veins of iron,
trails of magma, pools of bilge,
bogs full of carnivorous plants
and cranberries and corpses.

I am already stained.

Why not squeeze out
rich oils, paint my palms
with my own soft brush,
make finger print flowers,
cumulus clouds, meteor craters
and still life clots of grapes.

I am already hungry.

Why not use this one ingredient
to make strawberry jam,
black strap molasses, guava and chili,
firm pasta in slow cooked sauce.

I am already in pain.

Why not press against
this throbbing wound
and spread this iodine
over everything that hurts.

Laura Thompson

Roses

The color code was decided

long ago:

Red (I love you),

Lilac (at first sight),

Light Pink (but gently),

Dark Pink (gratitude), *In Between-*

Pink (condolences),

Orange (desire),

Peach (sympathy),

Yellow (jealousy or

let's be friends), *White* (missing you,

especially if you're dead),

Blue (you ask too much),

Black (we are so over).

The latest seed catalog offers multi-colored
strains, as if to plant a bed

of mixed signals:

Yellow-Peach (I feel your pain. I should

since I

inflicted it),

White-Peach (I know how you feel, being dead myself),

White Striped

(that night at the barbershop),

Purplish Black (I loved you at first sight
but that was yesterday),

Yellowish orange

(friends shouldn't have sex
this good).

With every shade, spot, stain, tinge, and bruise available,

are coincidence,

and pure love,

impossibility.

Madeline Tiger

Learning How to Teach

for Mrs. Schlegel and her 4th grade

Forest Avenue School, Glen Ridge

Especially if the day is January grey,
wear red. Drag yourself out of bed
by the hair. Pull on your warm sox
and high-top Reeboks. Find folders
and fill them with flyers of wild images,
leaping phrases, puns, poems. Pack up
your lunch, consider the angles
of wind in the trees, words for these
things kids can use. Wear bright bangles.

Wipe your glasses so you can see possibilities
of the sleeping secrets carried in lead
under their erasures. Get there

in time to listen to the early lesson. Learn
what the kids without words explain, the weight
of history, the height of stars. Keep

turning questions around the room as you
turn in your black skirt. Recite something by
heart. Repeat, see if the kids join in.
Make it inviting, let the voices rise,
then be quiet. At last, if it needs asking, ask them
to write.

Cetoria Tomberlin

Mr. Dickinson

I wonder who he was. His man everyone
assumes stole the unattainable heart. I shouldn't

say everyone, really. Plenty disagree: a myth, a fable,
a lie. But there the pages lay staring us all directly

between the eyes. Experimental poetry incorrectly disposed
of—probably just her imagination. I can't help hoping, though,

someone brought the loaded gun to her knees. That she found,
despite her talent, she wasn't in complete control either.

Who was the one that broke the distanced's heart? Was he tall,
handsome, short, fat? Did these features even matter to Dear Emily?

I see her, as we all do, in the perpetual wedding dress disrobing
in frozen Amherst winters, alone in her father's house.

John J. Trause

Translation:

Horace, *Odes* I. 5.

(Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa)

What slender boy, O Pyrrha, bathed in scents
Free-flowing, in the midst of many a rose
Beneath a pleasant grotto holds you close?

For whom do you bind back your golden hair
Simply exquisite in your sense of class?
How often will this one lament, alas,

Your infidelity and altered fate?
How often will he in his innocence
Be so amazed at your rough temperaments—

So rough with darker blasts— this one who now
Enjoys you and believes you golden-fine,
Expects you to be always clear and kind,

Unmindful so of your deceitful airs?
O miserable are they to whom you shine
Untried. The sacred wall of this my shrine

With votive tablet indicates that I
Have also hung my garments ocean-steeped
To that almighty godhead of the deep.

Chavisa Woods

Ring

if I came home
to a marriage
I would not want
to be
a wife

if I came home
to a marriage
I would not want
to find
a wife
there

drizzle
on the scraped out
pane
looking like a looking
out from within
some dusty wetness
as if we are owed
anything

doll face
ring

anything
that keeps us holding
to the legacy
of this old house
rocking
we come home to
where
we are kept
and have been,
now keeping
one another

away from our shattering
nature
sex blooming in the trees
that was our power
once
to swing it around
like a cape

this old house
with boxes of moth eaten
cloths tucked away,
we bought it,
batch up the latches
hatch up the shores
the chipping paint
we wanted to breathe this
Lead
of theirs

F

Fiction

For the Love of Zen

Ira calls Fay from New Mexico and tells her that his lecture tour is going great guns. Fay hears cocktail lounge noises behind him and asks him who he is with, and Ira says he is with Dana Brownell, his publicist. Fay thinks of asking him if he is fucking Dana Brownell but then remembers that she is the president of the Bowery Zen Center board of directors and is supposed to be above such petty, wifely carping. So, telling him to send Dana her regards and wishing him well on the next leg of his tour, she hangs up and goes back to the twelve-inch Sony on the kitchen island counter and resumes eating potato chips and feta cheese and drinking diet root beer while watching *My Man Godfrey* on the Turner Movie Classic channel. It is past midnight, and Carole Lombard is chasing William Powell to his hobo retreat near the docks of what is supposed to be New York, actually only a few blocks East of where Fay is sitting now, when the telephone rings again. Hoping it is Ira calling her back to tell her—as she knows William Powell, in the penultimate scene, will tell Carole Lombard—that, since she has stopped acting like a spoiled brat, he can love her, that she is, after all, his long-held dream of the perfect woman, needing only a shanty and a mattress and a coffee pot to be happy, and not four-hundred thousand dollar lofts and Business Class air tickets for her rummy of a Zen teacher; the kind of woman who would curl up with him as snug as a bug in a rug under the Brooklyn Bridge, if it came to that, and still consider herself the luckiest woman in the world—as Carole is at that very moment saying on soft camera, her eyes glittering like rhinestones on the tiny television screen on the counter. The phone rings seven times before Fay picks it up, for she is thinking about Carole Lombard's dying in an airplane crash, and that sets off a cascade of morbid death fantasies revolving around her Zen teacher Eikei trapped in his Business Class seatbelt, red-eyed as he goes down in a fiery crash which he miraculously survives.

On the seventh ring, Fay picks up the telephone. She has not turned on the answering machine in the hope that Ira will call back and say that he has decided to call it quits with his latest foray into the creative visualization healing business, and wants her to leave Eikei and Zen behind and join him in the Algarve, where they'll eat crayfish and write mystery stories together under the combined pseudonym Corman Watkins. Carole and William are kissing; "The End" flashes across their midsections as Fay reaches on top of the refrigerator for the wine rack,

takes down and opens a dusty bottle of Beaujolais, and, after pouring herself a glass, picks up the telephone.

It is walleyed Keiko at the other end, the twenty-four-year-old import from Japan, Eikei's newest favorite Zen wunderkind. Fay has tried hard not to bear Keiko a grudge. She's worked for three months since Keiko joined the Zen group on Halloween eve to keep from hating her younger rival for the slinky ease with which she has maneuvered her way ahead of the zendo's senior members and for laughing and exchanging jokes in Japanese in the kitchen with Eikei while Fay stood around feeling superfluous. Most of all, Fay resents Keiko for supplanting her as her teacher's cook and confidante.

Thus, Fay controls the little ripple of pleasure that threatens when she hears Keiko sobbing at the other end of the line. Fay reckons she would be the last person Keiko would be calling in tears on a Saturday night at twenty minutes past twelve, since Keiko (in very un-Japanese fashion) is known for bragging to anyone within earshot that she is seeing Jan Vandenhag, the famous Dutch neon artist who just happens to be in New York enjoying a Whitney retrospective and is in the process of shedding his latest girlfriend, the equally famous, cigar-smoking British feminist writer, Lindsey Polk, in favor of the exotic Keiko.

Fay has had to restrain herself from smashing Keiko's little snub nose further into the fleshy folds of her moon face every morning as she opens the door to the zendo and finds the Japanese woman already perched on her cushion in deep meditation. Lately, Fay has been digging her nails into her palms during interview periods when she hears Keiko and the Eikei engaging in what she assumes are brilliant Zen dialogues and laughing so loud that all the other non-Japanese speakers in the room shuffle uncomfortably on their cushions. With great effort she has managed to keep from telling Keiko to please stop bringing her ikebana flower arrangements and setting them on the altar, since two zendo regulars have complained of being allergic to flowers, and she, Fay, is only stuffing them in the trash can in the parking lot behind the zendo afterward. Fay has worked hard not to insult Keiko since the day Eikei informed her that the young woman was some kind of Zen genius, whizzing through koans in a week that even he had struggled with for months. Fay has consequently given Keiko a wide berth. Still stumped by Eikei's claim that enlightened people came in all shapes and sizes, that, yes, there could be unlikable and even immoral ones, Fay has been keeping a sharp eye on Keiko from a distance.

"Fay-san," Keiko says breathily, "I so sorry to disturb you so late. But I have emergency and you the only person I think to talk to."

Fay takes a sip of wine and holds it against her teeth.

"You there, Fay-san?" Keiko asks.

"Mmm," Fay replies in the act of swallowing.

"Can I come over?"

"What about Jan? I thought you said you were going to a party for him tonight." Fay glances at Eikei's sinewy calligraphic circle depicting emptiness hanging on the white brick wall above the sofa across from the counter where she is standing and momentarily entertains a doubt about the authenticity of Keiko's enlightenment. The mind at peace, she thinks, doesn't get this rattled.

"I left the party. I calling you from telephone booth on Hudson Street; can see your building from here."

"Sure, come up. I'm not sleeping."

Keiko was underdressed for the weather. The streets were blanketed in slush, and a wild wind was blowing up from the river; Fay could hear it whining through the elevator shaft out in the hall. Seeing Keiko standing in the doorway in only a shabby brown turtle-neck sweater and the tiniest, tightest excuse for a black leather skirt, her Chinese cloth slippers waterlogged, the droplets on her black hair hanging over her face like a beaded curtain, Fay led her into the loft. "You're shivering, I'll turn up the heat," she said, removing an oversized orange bath towel from the linen closet in the hall and handing it to Keiko.

"Thank you, Fay-san." Keiko bowed and removed her shoes before stepping inside.

"Take it in the bathroom with you; there's a dryer there for your hair, if you want."

With atypical humility, Keiko bowed every step of the way to the bathroom. Hearing the hum of the dryer, Fay poured herself another glass of wine and took a seat on the stool at the counter opposite the sofa. Noting that the Saturday Night Horror Special was featuring *The Thing*, she reluctantly switched off the television set.

She heard the hair dryer being turned off and the bathroom door open and close. Seeing Keiko tiptoe down the hall on the balls of her bare feet, Fay handed her a pair of socks and a fringed purple afghan and suggested she curl up on the sofa. Then she went to the stove and made a pot of green tea; lacing it with cognac, she passed a cup to Keiko.

"So, what can I do for you?" Fay said, taking the stool from the counter to the sofa, sitting down and placing her wine glass on the Lucite

cube coffee table separating them. It was hard not to focus on Keiko's off-center eye, follow its gaze to the window, so Fay concentrated on Keiko's perfectly shaped kewpie doll lips instead.

After putting on the socks and placing the purple afghan alongside her on the sofa, Keiko sniffed once and said, "I not so cold anymore. Please, you have patience with me—"

"Did something happen at the party?" Fay leaned forward and asked in a low, comforting voice.

Keiko pulled back and, making a conscious effort to regain her composure, looked around the loft and said, "You have beautiful home. I never here before."

Fay nodded and took up her wine glass. She was getting the uneasy feeling that Keiko might be engaged in a bet with Eikei that Fay could easily be manipulated into taking an action she would later regret. Fay pictured him and his star pupil sitting across from each other in the interview room, laughing about the gullibility of westerners. She made an impatient gesture with her glass, and the wine sloshed against it. Keiko uncrossed her legs and leaned forward.

"Fay-san, I tell you the truth about my situation. But you must not interrupt me, must believe every word I say to you. I tell you the whole truth of my situation tonight." Keiko wiped her eyes with the back of her hand and said, "Eikei have visitor. I very upset, I discover her earlier tonight when I come to bring him Japanese newspaper. I see them from window facing parking lot behind, the blinds open and all the lights on. She very tall American lady, very skinny, with brown hair and long braid hanging down her back, and very long skinny legs, like bird legs. I never see her here before. She not zendo member. Coming up the street from parking lot side, it easy to see everything in studio, and I see lady putting her arms around Eikei's neck, sitting him down on kitchen chair and sitting on top of his lap. They hugging and kissing..." Keiko let out a sob, rattling the tea cup against the top of the Lucite cube and startling herself. Both eyes were equally dark now, almost aligned in their misery. Like the two of us, Fay thought, cold sweat running between her breasts. Thinking Fay was about to speak, Keiko held up her hand and said, "No...you must let me tell you everything. Say nothing until I finished."

Fay got up and tore a paper towel from the roll on the wall above the sink in the open kitchen. She bunched it up and, tucking it under her sweater, dried her cleavage with it. The paper was harsh against her skin; she had run out of tissues. Very deliberately, she walked over to the shopping list tacked to the refrigerator on a pineapple magnet and, taking it down, wrote "Boutique Tissues" on it before tacking it back onto the

refrigerator again. Keiko's cup was empty, and the tea had turned cold. Fay opened a cupboard and took out a second wine glass. Without asking Keiko if she wanted any, she poured her the last of the Beaujolais, then opened the refrigerator, took out an open bottle of California Chardonnay, and poured some for herself. She brought the two glasses with her back to the Lucite cube and, handing Keiko the Beaujolais, sat down facing her again. If she hadn't moved around while Keiko was talking, she knew she might have blurted words she'd be sorry for afterward, just in case it was another one of those "Zen discipline tests" Eikei had cooked up for her and borrowed Keiko to execute. For now, in the narrow, ungenerous spaces of her envy and mistrust of her Japanese rival, she sensed a far more dangerous presence. Had always pictured Eikei's fiancee as the kind of woman who would have birdlegs and a single braid down her back.

Keiko gulped her wine and said, "I get up on top of parked car right under the window to see better, and get full view of them sitting in chair, kissing and hugging. She much bigger than him, long legs hanging over him, making his face disappear in her neck. I jump off car and start running around corner into building, open zendo door with my key, and come right into the room, stand facing them and screaming—"

Fay couldn't help but interrupt her then: "I can understand your shock, your disappointment; I just don't see, though, what makes you feel you have the right to interfere with Eikei's personal life."

Keiko jumped up from the sofa and, putting down her wine glass, came around to where Fay was sitting and knelt down in front of her. With one eye staring directly at her and the other struggling to join it, but gazing off at the window again, Keiko said, "Because I Eikei's lover for all these months, because I teach him how to make love in bed. He virgin, know nothing about where to put penis, know nothing until I teach him! We sleeping in bed together every night, even I hear you coming into zendo in morning, turning key, sometimes lying without moving in bed, without making a sound, not even able to go to toilet and feeling like bursting, having to pee so much—but Eikei no want you to know, he say you go crazy if you find out."

Holding Keiko's hand, Fay asked, "How many months exactly?"

"Since I joining zendo and become Eikei's student."

"From the first day?"

"No, not first day, but very soon after, a week, maybe. But, Fay-san, you not ask question now. You ask me after. You promised."

Fay removed her hand from Keiko's and sat back on her stool. She would have gotten up and added toothpaste to her shopping list, for,

absurdly, it popped into her head that she was almost out of toothpaste. But Keiko remained kneeling in front of her, looking like one of the supplicant women she'd seen praying to the enormous Buddha in Kamakura, so she stayed put. "Okay," she whispered, placing her finger on her lips, "not another word."

"I try to pull her off him. She jump up and slap me in the face, asking him who I am and why I have key. And Eikei then get very red in face and very angry with me, and order me to get out, saying it none of my business who he invite as guest on weekend, saying he not interested in me anymore, I troublemaker, bad woman he would not even look at in Japan, say no nice Japanese man would marry me after I come to America and sleeping with so many western men. And tall American lady then go into toilet, and I hear her taking shower. Eikei then take me over to Buddha statue on altar and make me swear in front of Buddha never to tell you any of this, saying that woman just very good old friend, that she fly down for weekend from Maine to see him, that she love him, but he not love her. I ask him if we still can be together, if he still want me to sleep in zendo with him, and he say better no more sleeping together. But then I tell him I not getting period and going to doctor for test and test say I pregnant. And Eikei get very red in face then, and very angry, and start yelling that it probably white foreigner's baby, and that I nothing but painted bad woman, probably carrying disease, and that I lying about pregnant..." Keiko broke off and buried her face in Fay's lap.

"Can I talk now?" Fay asked.

Keiko's shoulders moved up and down, and Fay said: "Is it true that you're pregnant?" Keiko emitted a muffled wail that left no doubt that she was. Smoothing Keiko's hair, Fay said, "He's partly right, you know, it could be Jan's baby and not his."

Keiko lifted her head and, contorting her tear-streaked face, said, "I not sleeping with Jan the whole time I Eikei's lover. I loyal only to Eikei. Making excuses to Jan, saying I sick or I too busy. And Jan very understanding person, not need sex much, having trouble making penis big."

Lifting Keiko to her feet, Fay walked her over to the sofa and sat her down. Then she sat down alongside her and covered herself with the afghan, for it was now she who was shivering. In a very calm voice resembling her mother's, she asked: "Did you leave then?"

Keiko put her chin to her chest and shook her head. "No," she said, "I tell him I kill myself if he not want me anymore."

"And did you mean it?"

"Of course. Japanese never joking about suicide. Especially since he shame me, telling me I never can go back Japan."

"And what did he say then?"

"Eikei light cigarette and say that he not care what I do so long as I not kill myself in zendo and make Buddha statue dirty with my blood."

Fay let out a deep sigh of disgust. "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" she heard herself whisper.

"And was that when you left?"

"Yes, I run out of zendo when American lady come out of toilet wearing bathrobe and towel around her head, and she smiling..."

"And did you go to the party?"

"No, I walk around in street, in rain, too scared to go home, too scared to kill myself. Don't want to die so young, but don't want baby, either. Then thinking about you and walking cross town from Bowery to here and thinking you kind, really loving Eikei, and you help me get abortion so he not have bad reputation in United States and scandal not spread to Japan."

"What makes you think I love him that much?"

"Fay-san, everyone but you know that you in love with Eikei, only too pure lady. All Zen students here think you sleeping with him, even I thought that, and I very jealous of you at first. But Eikei tell me truth about you, saying you purest person he ever know, and he not want you to go crazy from being disappointed in bad monks. He tell me you have deep karmic relation to him and that you beautiful lady, and he have to make sure you not lose husband and everything because of him. He say he train you very hard and say bad things to you to make you not fall in love with him, like all lady Zen students doing and getting into trouble with teachers, making scandals. He want to protect you."

"Be my umbrella," Fay said.

"What?"

"Nothing."

The two women had folded their legs and were sitting facing each other, like teacher and student in the interview room. Fay thought of pointing this out to Keiko, but didn't. "I think the best thing for you to do tonight is to sleep here on the sofa. And for me...to...think over everything you told me. We don't have to act right away, bring on a catastrophe. We have to think first, always, about our practice, about Zen—"

Keiko looked at her and smiled wanly. "You really sincere student, most sincere Zen student, like Eikei say."

Fay's teeth were chattering. She got up and went into the bedroom, fetched her flowered nightgown with the pearl buttons, and brought it to Keiko. "You go to sleep now, and we'll talk about it tomorrow."

She sat for a while at the counter with her face in her palms, listening to Keiko wash up in the bathroom. Then, before turning off the light in the kitchen, she wrote in block print letters on her shopping list: TOOTHPASTE.

At eight in the morning, with a strong sun warming her back and a cold wind bruising her face, Fay walked East through the slick black and white streets. Keiko had fallen asleep instantly, but Fay had not gone to bed. She had sat in the dark, watching the curve under the afghan on the sofa that marked Keiko's sloping shoulder. Keiko slept without making a sound, and Fay had watched her until the light started filtering through the slatted blinds. Keiko was still deeply asleep when, tucking twenty dollars into the inside pocket Fay put on her down jacket and high top sneakers and slipped out of the loft.

On Canal Street, the Chinese vegetable vendors were opening for the day, and the parking lot that served as a flea market on Sunday was already filling with sales people. A jacketless man in a tee shirt with a handlebar moustache and multiple tattoos was unloading a battered minivan with Alabama plates. As she passed him, Fay saw that the man was carrying a slender gilt-coated Thai Buddha in his arms, and she almost tripped. The mustached man from Alabama called out for her to watch her step, and, taking it as a sign Fay pressed her palms together and bowed.

When she reached the Bowery, she felt her stomach rumble, and the resinous taste of last night's wine mixed with phlegm formed a clot in her throat. She longed for a cup of coffee but couldn't spare herself the time. Not that she was intent on "catching" Eikei and the tall pigtailed woman in the act (she was half hoping Keiko had made the whole thing up), but because she wanted to talk to him before anyone else did. Now convinced that Keiko was more than a little unstable, Fay wouldn't put it past her to make her story public. Whatever the reason, it was clear that Keiko would not stop until she had brought Fay's world tumbling down.

Fay let herself into the building and, passing up the elevator, climbed the two flights of stairs to the zendo. By the time she reached Eikei's door, she was simultaneously sweating and chilled to the bone. The smell of incense seeped into the hallway. As she would on any normal day of the week—though three hours earlier—Fay noiselessly turned the key in the lock and opened the door. She hung her coat on its

usual peg and left her high tops on the rubber runner alongside Eikei's Wellingtons, the only other footgear in the hall. He could be hiding his visitor's shoes in his bedroom closet, she thought, as she walked into the zendo and made the obligatory bow toward the altar. Dressed in his black robes, Eikei was sitting on his cushion, facing the Buddha in meditation. The altar had been given a thorough cleaning; a fresh cup of water and a new dish containing the rice offering were neatly arranged on a beige silk altar cloth she hadn't seen before. Bowing before the cushion nearest her, Fay sat down, crossed her legs, and instantly fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

She woke to the blissful aroma of brewing coffee and followed it to the elevated kitchen off the entrance hall. Eikei stood with his back to her, talking in Japanese on the telephone. He had removed his robes and was wearing only a sleeveless undershirt and sky blue monk's workpants with a rope for a belt. He had tied an oversized handkerchief around his head and was smoking. His glasses and the ever-present digital blood pressure machine were side by side on the counter. Moving so as not to disturb him, Fay sidled into the kitchen and poured a mug of coffee. Eikei turned around then, and she offered it to him, but he pointed at her and shook his head, so she took the coffee around to the zendo side of the open kitchen and drank it with her back turned to him.

Eikei yelled "Mushi mushi" into the phone twice, and, on hearing him hang up, she turned around to face him.

"What happen, Fay-san, you too much drinking last night and falling asleep on Zen cushion?" Eikei laughed, pointing at her with the cigarette nesting between his middle and forefingers.

The mug was shaking in her hands, so she set it down on the counter. "No, it's not a hangover. But I didn't sleep last night..."

"What, you have fight on telephone with Ira-san? I tell you many times it better you travel with husband. I take good care of zendo here, no need for you to stay home alone and make husband angry."

"Ira's not angry. He's doing quite well, in fact."

Eikei motioned for her to come around the counter into the kitchen. He placed two chairs so that they were facing each other. "You sit down. You all white in face, no look good." He waited for her to sit, then perched himself on the chair opposite, leaving only about a foot of space between them and forcing her to sit with her legs at prim right angles.

"Keiko came over last night. She . . . Eikei, can you put out the cigarette? The smoke is bothering me."

Eikei turned and tossed the cigarette into the sink.

"Thanks," Fay said.

"You want more coffee?"

She shook her head.

For a minute or two they sat looking at each other. Seeing his swift little brown eyes blinking monkeylike at her made her want to pet him, make it up between them regardless of what he'd done. But then Eikei smiled and was no longer vulnerable, and, at that moment, she hated him as she had never hated anyone before.

"Keiko says you made her pregnant," she said flatly.

Eikei raised his eyebrows and looked puzzled. "Why she tell you that? You know, Keiko a crazy girl. Not right in here," he said, tapping himself on the temple.

"She also says that you were making love to a strange woman in here last night, that she saw you through the window. A woman with a long braid down her back."

Eikei snorted. "Keiko big liar. I have no womens in here last night." He rose from the chair and, turning his back on her, went to the sink.

"I don't care what you do with your private life, but fooling around with students is out!" Fay said.

Eikei had turned on the faucet and was scouring the sink with Brillo. "I have guest here; Gretta Lewis from Maine, she fly down to New York for weekend to see boyfriend here who work for newspaper. She not making love to me...she only have time to stay for one hour before meeting boyfriend for dinner. She want to see zendo and make sure I okay. Japanese girl crazy, I tell you."

"As I said before, what you do on your own time and with anyone who's not a student is your own business..."

Eikei turned off the water, threw down the scouring pad, and whirled around from the sink. "That's right! My business, not yours! You no come and tell me how to run zendo affairs. I Zen master here, not you!" His face had turned blood-red and a vein in his forehead was throbbing.

"What will you do when the crazy girl comes and kills herself in front of the altar?" Fay screamed. She was about to get up from the chair, but Eikei pushed her down again.

"Don't you dare touch me!" she cried.

"You too excited, not knowing what you talking about! You going crazy from too much zendo business and not seeing husband, Fay-san. I not wanting you to have nervous breakdown..."

Fay could see that he was holding back his own anger now.

"Stop bullshitting me, Eikei," she said. "Are you sleeping with Keiko?"

"She very bad womens, like I told you. She start by making me homesick for Japan, cooking Japanese food very good, then giving me massage. Soon she taking me to bed and making penis big, but I no love her. She very low society girl in Japan; parents own sweet candy factory in Kyushu, very bad manner girl who sleeping around with everybody."

Fay placed her palms against his chest. Under the thin sky blue cotton of his monk's shirt, she felt his thudding heart and the hardness of his tiny skeleton. "You miserable bastard," she whispered. "You make her pregnant and then tell her you don't care if she kills herself as long as she doesn't get blood on your altar!"

"Fay-san—" Eikei pried her hands from his chest. "You sit down and drink coffee and we talk."

"No!" She flailed her hands in the air and tried to hit him, but he caught them and pressed her down onto the chair.

"You listen to me!" he said hoarsely. "I am your teacher and I order you to listen!"

Fay pulled herself free and jumped to her feet. "Not anymore, you're not! You're nothing to me anymore, you lying piece of shit!" With that, she scooped his glasses and the blood pressure machine from the counter and tossed them at the altar, shattering them against the stone Buddha. Lunging at her, Eikei landed a glancing blow on her cheekbone. Almost as quickly, Fay struck him on the mouth with the back of her hand. Then seeing that she had drawn blood and that he had another blow in store for her, she ran past him to the door, grabbed her shoes and jacket, and quit the zendo. As she took to the stairs she heard him yell, "What I tell you, Fay-san? From very beginning I say you too pure for Zen!"

Smoke and Mirrors

The summer had been a long one. Emily draped her hand across the open window of her mother's twenty year old Chevrolet and felt the breeze snake between her fingers. The car slowed as it neared an exit and crawled to a stop in front of a one bathroom interstate rest stop.

Inside the car, the smell of gasoline and dust hung thick in the air. She stuck her nose out of the window and breathed in. There was no difference. The stale, heavy cloud that hung over the back seat had become almost suffocating. She pushed her torso through the window and strained to peer around the side of the car as her mother dropped the keys into her pocket and shoved open the driver's side door.

"If you have to take a piss, now is the time to do it. I have to make a phone call."

They were the first words the two had exchanged in two hundred and fifty seven miles. She watched her mother rummage through her pockets for spare change as she ambled away. There was a defeated quality to her appearance and it was reflected in every exhaustive movement she made. Her feet slung gravel as she disappeared around the side of the brick building. Emily slid back inside the car and stared at the bathroom door for a long moment. It was propped open with a crumbling brick and the dank aroma of sewage was already reaching out to tickle the inside of her nose. She gagged. The thick August heat only intensified the odor.

They had been on the road for six days. At times, she wondered if her mother was even aware of where they were headed. Truthfully, she probably wasn't. They had left Des Moines with fifty two dollars and sixty seven cents in cash, two packs of cigarettes and the clothes that were clinging to their sweating backs. It was two in the morning when her mother snatched her out of bed and shoved her into the back seat of the car that had been permanently borrowed from her grandparents twenty minutes earlier. The details of the next few hours were sparse, save for the memory of the streetlights flying by overhead from her makeshift bed in the backseat.

Emily took a deep breath, held it and forced herself from the car. She walked toward the bathroom and brushed past a woman who looked all of ninety eight as she inched out of a stall.

"Smells like shit in there," she muttered more to herself than Emily.

She was right. Emily stifled another gag and pulled a cigarette from her back pocket before taking a seat on one of the corroded toilets. Her lighter clicked twice before producing a suitable flame. When the embers at the tip glowed orange, she took a deep inhale and sucked in the comforting taste of nicotine.

It was a horrible habit, especially for a fifteen year old, but it was one of the last refuges readily available to her. Despite her own demanding habits, and they had become plenty as of late, her mother hated the sight of her with a cigarette. Similarly, Emily hated the sight of her mother with a bottle in her hand, but that never stopped her from holding one. Her mother's hatred of her smoking never kept the cigarettes out of her pocket either. The irony wasn't lost on her.

The sound of water pouring from the sink outside of the stall was harsh in her ears. It was followed by the dull roar of the hand dryer coming to life, only to sputter to a dying cough again just as quickly. She heard the old woman mutter a few curse words under her breath. Through the crack in the stall door, Emily saw her dry her hands haphazardly on her khaki pants and disappear back out into the blinding sunshine.

When they left Des Moines, her mother had promised that it would be the last time. Of course, she had said that before and for some reason Emily always had the strangest desire to believe her. The more birthdays she had, however, the harder it was becoming to do trust anything. She took another draw from her cigarette and stifled a cough that brewed suddenly in her throat.

Her mother's problems, for the most part, had started in 1992. Ironically, that was the same year Emily was born. She tried to avoid making that connection, but it was a fairly obvious one that couldn't be ignored. That and her mother made a point to remind her of the coincidence as often as possible. Somehow, the smell of smoke between her fingers was strangling the smell of urine and vomit pouring from the exposed pipes and she settled back a little more comfortably on the seat.

She took a few more draws and let the smoke tickle the back of her throat. There were times when she thought of leaving. She had imagined more than once in daydreams how she might do it. In one scenario that she was particularly fond of, she saw herself running down a deserted highway with nowhere to go and not a care in the world. The sun was at her back, the breeze was running through her hair like water and she was completely free. In another, she was riding carelessly in the back of a dark sedan, being whisked away by some dark haired stranger with promises of good times and a better life.

She heard footsteps in the bathroom and peeked out through the crack to see a young woman appear and then disappear back outside with an expression on her face that said she had caught wind of the smell. Emily held back a smile and let the cigarette dangle dangerously loose between her fingers. It was all pointless, really. While the desire to escape was strong within her, the courage and will were not. She was painfully frightened, although she wasn't quite sure why. Still, part of her wondered.

She finished off the last few remaining breaths of smoke and flicked the cigarette into a murky brown puddle of water that was in a stagnant pool near her feet. Maybe, she thought sadly, it was just the way life was resigned to be. There was not and never had been freedom. She stood from the toilet and coughed twice to clear her lungs. She had to get back to the car before her mother finished her phone call. With shuffling steps, she slipped out of the stall and headed back out into the painfully bright sunshine.

Pausing, she stood on the sidewalk and stared at the spot where her mother's car had been.

Lines

The box was different. Susan sat down on the edge of her bed running her fingers over the “new and improved” cover. The label was pink and there was a picture of a woman holding a baby. This updated label replaced the former plain one that simply stated “Pregnancy Test, A Family Planning Tool.”

Susan had thought of buying another brand, but it seemed like a bad idea, like starting over. Crazy superstitions and omens— all self-made, raced through her mind as she stood in the neighborhood pharmacy superstore. If she didn’t use the same test that she had been for years the results might be not what she wanted, jinxing her. Maybe this new label would bring her good luck—a new beginning.

“Are you ready?” Max asked, peering over her shoulder as she flipped the package around.

“Just give me a minute.” Susan liked this time, felt comfort living within this moment of possibility. Once the test was finished that comfort went away, drifting into the past like all the other false alarms and dashed hopes.

“What if it’s negative?” Susan said.

“What if it’s not?”

Max was always the positive one.

Susan sighed and got up to make her way towards the bathroom. She paused for a moment, looking back at Max. He sat there in his work shirt, torn jeans, work boots and thick, brown hair that spiked out in different directions. Max looked out of place: his worn appearance clashing against the tailored curtains and custom textiles. Their bedroom was soft, warm and full of pale yellows and blues. The sun played on the carpet, sprinkling its light like glitter through the thick pile. Susan smiled at her husband.

“Make sure you brush your hair.”

“Make sure you aim right.” Max ran his thick fingers through his hair and gave her a wink.

The carpet gracefully flowed into the granite tile of the master bath, double sink vanity and whirlpool tub. Susan sat the new box on the edge of the sink before tearing into it. The device was the same as before, no reason to read the directions. She had been using the same test for close to four years now, waiting for two lines, but only ever finding one.

There had been a time when she had seen both lines, blazing at her

as if they had been drawn with purple Sharpie marker. That had been when she was in college, when the time was wrong. This test was the right choice; it had worked before, when they were in college.

#

“You’re pregnant?” Max asked. He gripped the steering wheel tighter, the color fading in his face as he shook it from side to side.

“Yup.” Susan stopped watching him. She sat in the passenger’s seat twirling a string from her sweater tighter and tighter around her finger, tears stinging her eyes. She thought this was the perfect place to tell him. The place where he first told her he loved her, pulled her close and made her world spin.

“We both have two years left in school. Are you sure?”

“The test said positive.”

Max’s eyes were large and dark when he took her in his arms and, for a moment, she thought everything was going to be all right. But it wasn’t, the time was wrong, they were too young, and Max held her the same way after she left the clinic and climbed into his car. It was done. Her dream of a family was not gone—simply postponed.

There had been false alarms, like the year after they had married and went up North to the Cape for the weekend. Her pills were forgotten on the kitchen counter and two weeks later they sat in the same bedroom, waiting for the two lines, but the second one never came. Max said he was relieved. Susan pretended not to be disappointed.

“Maybe next time. It’ll be better once the business grows,” Max had commented as he rubbed her back. Susan nodded, and slipped her brown hair behind her ears before tossing the test in the small blue trashcan that sat in the corner of their bathroom.

It wasn’t until they started trying that they realized there was a problem. Susan had become fascinated with the baby section at Target. She would slip in to purchase a flash drive or patio light and find herself wandering through the aisles, gazing at cribs, running her hands over fleece receiving blankets, and inhaling the essence of baby powder. Max noticed. He would stand on the outside of the baby department, after spending his time in electronics or hardware, watching Susan wander about, picking up bottles, bibs, and soft stuffed animals.

Their friends all had babies. Each pair swearing it wouldn’t be them that they were not ready to trade their sedan for a mini-van, but then one by one, it happened. The dinner parties changed to play dates at Chuck E Cheese. Group vacations to the lake were replaced by a holy

trek to Disney World.

“Ella and Tom are expecting,” Susan said one morning while making breakfast.

“Wow. That’s a shock. I thought they didn’t want kids.”

“Guess they changed their minds.”

“Guess they did.”

Max lifted his coffee to his lips and hid behind his newspaper.

“Why don’t we try to have a baby?” Max said. The words came out and Susan latched onto them, smiling as she cradled them in her mind.

“Do you think we should?”

“Yea, I think we should.”

He held her like they were teenagers again.

It didn’t happen the first month. Susan had bought lots of lingerie, satin and lace. She made romantic dinners, and filled the bathtub with bubbles and rose petals. They were in love again. She enjoyed feeling Max’s body pressed against hers. It was exciting, here and there, in the car, his office, and the kitchen—playful. But still, only one line.

By the fourth month, Max was tired. Susan noticed he was working later, sleeping longer and didn’t care for her new purchase from Victoria’s Secret.

“Don’t you love me?” Susan would ask while running her finger up the length of his thigh.

“You know I do.”

And he did. It was the baby magazines, fertility vitamins, and sex for a purpose that he didn’t like. Susan knew that. It was time for an intervention for that ache only got stronger in Susan’s breast, the need to hold a sweet baby against it.

“Am I barren?” Susan asked Dr. Morrison

The doctor smiled and leaned forward over the large mahogany desk that surrounded her like a moat. The doctor was a woman. Her own fertility success plastered on the walls, with family portraits of smiling faces, Disney hats, and baby strollers.

“We don’t use that term anymore dear. You just need some help,” she seemed to sigh the words through her artificially white teeth.

Max sat next to Susan— head low— gazing at the spots of dirt on his work jeans.

“What kind of help?” Max said, more to the floor than to the doctor.

“We will have to do some testing, but I am sure that we can find a way to make you parents.”

Her smile was blinding.

Susan reached out and squeezed Max's hand. She had always drawn strength from Max's hands. His fingers were thick and callous, stained with grease and paint but the palms were soft, like brushed suede. She stared at his hands from the doorway as he sat, pressing them into a ball.

#

"Did you read the directions right?" Max asked, checking his watch. The other tests needed five minutes, only five minutes to change their life.

"Of course I read the directions. I'm a pro by now. I know how to pee on a stick."

Max frowned as Susan sat down next to him. She leaned into him, placing her head on his shoulder. His scent was comforting, the strength of his arm soothing. He was much stronger than her—able to not notice the children's laughter as they drove past the park or the little boy riding on his father's shoulders in the grocery store. Max had shoulders like that, strong and supportive, waiting for a child to perch upon them. She saw the ghost sometimes of the child that they didn't have. It sat like a reminder of a bad choice around Max's neck, little legs dangling above his heart.

#

"He would have been eight this year," Susan said when they were on their way to their last fertility appointment.

"Who?" Max replied.

"Our baby."

Max's eyes turned to the road, softening as his wife's pain reached out and stabbed at him.

"In my mind it was always a boy. Thomas, I would have named him Thomas."

"We didn't know that it was a boy. Don't do this to us."

Susan let her words slip out the window as the tears trailed down her cheek. She turned away from Max and out into the sunshine.

"We were just kids, Susan."

"If I had have only known that was my one chance."

"Don't do this Susan."

A wall broke that day, the one that surrounded Susan's heart. She

let her tears mourn the loss of her child, the child they chose to let go. Max didn't touch her much anymore. It seemed so clinical, their love. Love was wrapped up in dirty magazines, plastic cups, ultrasounds and injections. Max dropped her off at the door to the clinic and didn't go in the building. Susan stood in the lobby for a moment, watching him hesitate before pulling out of the driveway and into the flow of traffic.

"I'm sorry Susan," Dr. Morrison said, before beginning her medical explanation of why another insemination didn't work. The doctor's words were heavy with medical terminology, long and lofty. Way too much for Susan to comprehend, especially after the words, "no baby." Those words landed like lead in her lap. The last thing she heard was, "Have you considered adoption?"

Susan looked over at the empty chair sitting next to her, its void taking up more space in the room than Max ever had.

"Thank you, Doctor. I'll talk it over with Max."

It had ended that day. Susan took a cab home and grabbed all the baby magazines, tossed them in a barrel and tore pages of *What to Expect When You're Expecting* out before tossing the whole book, then lit the match. The flames took it all away quickly, pulling it under its bright orange blanket, reducing it to ashes. All of Susan's tears could not put the fire out.

Max came home that night. Susan felt his footsteps as he moved across the floor, trying not to wake her. He settled in next to her, wrapping himself around her. Susan felt him sobbing, body quivering with pain. She turned to kiss him and together they let go of all the rules Dr. Morrison had given them and made love.

They made a home again, got a dog, and renewed their vows. Max seemed to understand that they should not park near Babies-R-Us when they went out to dinner. They skipped the diaper aisle in the grocery store and they redid their bedroom. It became a retreat where they would make love late on Sunday mornings and watch old horror movies into the night. The new sheer curtains let the sunlight glide in, muting its brightness. It helped Susan in the mornings. She could take her time listening to the quiet, and live in the moments of possibilities that still flickered in her mind. They even made another trip to the lake, a second honeymoon. There they renewed their vows on a patio overlooking the lake as the sun set, painting the water amber. It was a weekend to remember.

It took Susan longer than usual to realize that she was late. The calendar she had used to make her cycles had been shoved in a drawer. There was no need to count days anymore. The realization came to her

as she passed the coffee aisle. She had forgotten how good real coffee tasted after months of decaf. It had been over a month since their trip to the lake, over two since she had her period. The thought was brushed off. No need to spend the money, only disappointment—but, what if? The thought nagged at her, pulling at every corner like a burning itch that needed to be calmed. Susan quickly pulled her car into the pharmacy parking lot and found the test kit had a new label. It almost eluded her.

#

The time was up, five minutes of levitation. Susan lifted herself from the bed and the comfort of Max.

“Let’s go back up to the Cape this weekend. Just you and me,” Max’s voice called after her.

“I would love that.”

Susan felt Max walk up behind her, his breath poured down her neck.

“Everything is so different now,” Susan said, gazing at the box in the trashcan.

“No matter what, I love you.”

Susan turned to Max and wrapped her arms around his neck, melting into him.

“I just want us to be happy.”

Max stroked her hair and whispered in her ear.

“I know, sweetie, I know.”

They embraced in the shallow light of the bathroom as two lines appeared on the test.

Jen Vos

Excerpt from *Uprooted*

based on the family history and memoirs
of Haticha K.

The fire in the clay *tamdyr* was hot, ready for the dough to be stuck to its walls. It looked like an oversized anthill, Tohtagul had always thought—rounded with a big hole on top. The difference was what lay below, or rather what didn't. There were no underground tunnels, no villages of bakers beneath the earth's crust waiting to be discovered if one were to crawl in.

Tohtagul's mother had just finished stamping the bread with the metal seal, which marked it as hers with a flower and let the air in, too. You could always tell one woman's bread from another just by looking at it. Her mother picked up the jar of water and dipped her fingers inside. She splashed the water against the sides of the *tamdyr*; the water hissed against the hot clay and steam rose up in clouds. She put the mitt on and picked up one round, flat, unbaked loaf of *nan*. *Slap*, she stuck it firmly to the hot wall of the oven. *Slap. Slap*. There went another and another.

The knock on the wooden compound door didn't cause any alarm. Tohtagul stopped sweeping the path to the house and unlatched the metal gate, ready to greet whichever neighbor or relative had decided to stop in. Her house robe was cinched tightly around her thin waist. *Slap*, another *nan* took hold on the *tamdyr* walls. Tohtagul pushed the metal out of the latch and pulled the door open with a creak for each year it had been on its hinges.

"*Salam*," she said and then turned her eyes to the ground.
Slap.

"Is your father home?" the thin, dark-haired man asked.
Slap. Tohtagul thought he looked like a turtle. His neck had a little too much skin, and it sagged beneath his chin. His eyes were on the beady side and bulged just enough to make him rather unattractive. She had seen him around town before and knew he was from the mayor's office. Her mother looked up. She took the mitt off.

“*Gyzym*,” she called, referring to her daughter as such, “come finish the *nan*.” Tohtagul leaned her twiggy straw broom against the compound wall. Mother and daughter switched places. *Slap*. Another loaf clung to the clay. The heat of the fire in the bottom of the oven warmed her face and scared her. She was always afraid that one day the whole *tamdyr* would catch fire and the smell of burnt bread would singe the air for days. Bread was too holy to let burn. She couldn’t hear what the man and her mother were saying, but it couldn’t be good. Anytime anyone from the government came, it was never any good. Her mother led the man inside. *Slap*.

Moments later, the teakettle whistled. The first few loaves were ready to be pulled out, so Tohtagul opened up the bread cloth and placed the warm sweet-smelling loaves inside. She quickly ran them in to her mother, who was busy setting up the tea. She had the guest cloth spread on the floor, the good cookies were out, and the bread was placed reverently in the middle.

Tohtagul ran back outside, not wanting the bread to be any darker than the golden brown it was meant to be. Another knock at the door.

“*Allo?*” Her father’s voice questioned deeply through the compound door.

“Coming, papa,” Tohtagul placed another loaf onto the bread cloth and went to the door. She gave him fair warning of the man waiting inside. A cloud came over his face briefly, and he went inside the house, slipping his shoes off deftly as he did. Once the bread was finished, Tohtagul tied the neatly stacked discs inside the patterned cloth and then wrapped it again in a thicker, embroidered quilt-esque one. She brought them through the back door into the kitchen. As she was about to escape back into the compound yard, her mother appeared.

“Come,” she said. “He is here about you.”

“But I haven’t finished sweeping,” she pleaded.

“The dust can wait.”

She followed her mother into the living room and sat down with her legs folded to her right side. Her father was leading the man out the front door.

Tohtagul’s mother poured her a cup of tea.

“Do you see the bubbles?”

“Yes.”

“That’s good luck. It means true love will come to you.”

“But doesn’t it always have bubbles?” Tohtagul asked.

“*Gyzym*,” she began affectionately, “you are fourteen now.

The man who was here works for the *Khan*. He is making the bride selection for a young man in the village.”

Tohtagul almost choked on her tea. She stared at her mother, wishing it could all be a joke, but the pit of her stomach told her it was all very real.

“One week from today, we must bring you to the town hall. If you are chosen, you will be married.” With that, her mother got up to prepare dinner. She was never one to waste words, even when a little sugar coating would have been nice. Tohtagul popped each of the bubbles in her tea.

That night, she dreamed that she was locked out of every compound in the village. She kept knocking and knocking, but no one let her in. She could hear them all on the other side, laughing and talking, but she was stuck in the street, alone. She woke up with a pillow soaked in sweat and a heaviness in her chest. Six days remained until *Huday* would decide whether she could remain a girl for a while longer, or cross the bridge into womanhood.

Those six days seemed to fly by. Tohtagul tried to slow the seconds down, tried to stay awake as long as possible to keep the days from ending, but time passes whether it is watched or not. She had no excuse not to be at the town hall. Everyone would be there. These kinds of things always drew a crowd. She pulled on her best dress, the one she’d had embroidered for her cousin’s wedding. The neckline was stiff with the thousands of stitches ringing it. She sat on the floor in front of her mother, who began to braid her thick dark hair, firmly yet still somehow, gently. That was the essence of her mother. It was written in her hands, strong from years of kneading dough and scrubbing floors, with an indestructible delicacy that only a woman’s hands can have.

The whole family went to the town hall together. When they arrived, she could tell who the other girls were simply from the look in their eyes. It was sheer terror in each one. The *Khan’s* Assistant, the man who had come to their home, lined them up in a

very straight row. It was uncomfortably hot already, not even the slightest breeze, and barely even an exhale. It was questionable whether or not the girls were breathing. It was far too still for any of this to be real. The girls looked at each other, knowing exactly what the others were thinking. No one dared to say a word. It was as though, if they were still enough, if the whole world was still enough, they just might disappear.

The groom-to-be was hustled through the crowd, his parents beaming with delight. His tunic-length robe had been embroidered with care, just for this occasion. His pants were brand new and finely sewn as well. His shoes sparkled in the sunlight. His little brother, in tow, had a telltale streak of black shoe polish on his left arm. It had been a family affair to get him ready for such a momentous day. He stood, as only a teenage boy can, with his thin limbs dangling awkwardly as though he didn't know where such long things could have sprouted from. He tugged at the new clothing, looking boyish rather than manly. The ten girls stood, a row of eligible beauties from the right tribe and the right families. The boy's parents could envision the dowries behind each pair of eyes. They saw rugs and dresses and gold and flour and goats. They were prepared to pay the bride price, even if it meant calling distant relatives for help.

The *Khan's* Assistant, now looking like a puffed up turtle who had just shined his shell, approached the boy and his parents.

"Orun," he said to the boy. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, sir. I am."

"May Allah help you choose well." He said and handed the woolen *telpék* to him. Orun held the large hat in his hands. It still smelled a bit of sheep, and it was heavy, much too large for a boy. The inside had been stitched well and the outside was covered in beautiful gray wool curls. Looking at it from the top, it seemed big enough to fit two heads inside, but it was only built for one. He put the hat in one hand and then the other, to feel its weight. He felt eyes boring into him. He looked up at the ten girls lined up for him, for him to choose. He scanned the row. They all had their eyes on him, all except one. Her braids shone in the sun as she stared at the ground. *What could she be looking at?* he wondered.

Tohtagul was watching an ant stumble around. It kept climbing over obstacles in the dirt, obstacles which seemed so small to her but must have been mountains to this poor creature. She watched it try to find its way somewhere else, but it kept going in circles. There didn't seem to be any other ants around. It must have gotten separated somehow, and now it was lost and scared. So, perhaps, if it were a she-ant, Tohtagul thought, maybe it's not lost at all. Maybe it's right where it is supposed to be, here with the other scared girls. She smiled to herself as she finally looked up.

Orun saw her smile and thought it was for him, as boys and men often do. He caught her gaze, lifted the *telpék*, and hurled it at her. She didn't realize what was happening until the wooly hat hit her square in the stomach. It knocked the breath out of her, but she caught it. She stared at the *telpék* fiercely, as if it had decided to throw itself at her of its own free will. She was definitely still standing.

The crowd cheered. Murmurs of the new match and the wedding to come wafted through the crowd like wind through leaves.

The girl next to her hissed, "What's the matter with you? Why didn't you fall?" Her unibrow was lifted high in shock.

"Fall?" Tohtagul was perplexed. "Why would I?"

"If you fall, then you're not ready for marriage. You could have stayed at home a while longer."

"But I didn't know that! No one told me to fall. Who told you?"

"My older sister. She tells me everything," The girl with the unibrow walked off with the lightness of girlhood in her step. Tohtagul still held her ground and the *telpék*, unsure of what would come next.

C

CREATIVE
NON-FICTION

Recorded and Snapped

Dad pushes play on the VCR but there's just white fuzz and static on the TV screen. What is this? My behind is already starting to go numb from sitting on the brick edge of the dormant fireplace in my dad's living room in Nampa, Idaho, but it's where I always sit. It makes escape to the kitchen easy. I can hear my siblings shifting on the couch slightly behind and to the left of me. Sarah, Drew, Brady, Ella—the cushions squeak under their weight. They're giggling.

"I think it's broken, Dad." Brady says.

"Yeah." Sarah's thirteen-year-old sarcasm isn't subtle. "Maybe you should have checked to make sure your surprise would work before you tried to show us."

"Shut up." Dad jiggles some cables hooked to the back of the VCR. "Just wait, you're gonna love it."

"Yeah right," Sarah mutters.

The giggling must help because the white fuzz abruptly vanishes and is replaced with a grainy video recording of—me.

Goosebumps rush up the back of my spine and I feel the blood drain from my face. A frigid lump of ice positions itself in my belly. What. Is. This.

There I am. A pale, skinny, long-armed, long-legged female infant.

I can't believe it.

"Is that Nichole?" Ella asks.

Dad laughs. "I told you you'd be surprised."

There's silence for a moment. I don't know how to respond.

"Wow," Drew says. "You weren't very cute."

A tension breaks and everyone laughs. Drew's right, I was not a cute baby. I'm hairless and my little outfit is non-gender specific, which doesn't help. I gaze dolefully into the video camera from the confines of my quilted bouncy chair. My dark eyes blink slowly, like I'm waiting for something to happen. There's a Christmas tree in the background, which means I can't be more than four months old. The ice lump grows.

"Is my mom in this?" I ask.

Dad rubs his hands together. "You'll see."

That's the problem, I'm not sure I want to see. I keep watching anyway. I wonder how I'll tell Mom about this when I go home

tomorrow. In the video, I flail my scrawny arms above my bald head. “Where did you get this?”

My dad laughs and leans forward. The living room always feel smaller when he’s in it. “I found it in the basement, isn’t this great?”

He keeps laughing and looks back at the TV.

“*Hey Mara!*” Dad says in the tape. My infant self jumps and furrows her brow at the hard edge in his voice.

My fingers clench around the brick of the fireplace I’m sitting on.

A demure voice answers in the background, but I can’t hear what she’s saying.

“*Get over here!*” He’s yelling. It’s Christmas, the video camera is rolling, his daughter is looking up at him, and he’s yelling at my mom.

My gut tightens and I know what this is.

It’s condemning evidence.

I was thirteen the first time I saw a picture of myself as a baby. My mom didn’t have any photographs. The only things she took with her when she left my dad in California to return to her parent’s home in Idaho, were my diaper bag and some clothes. I used to wonder why she didn’t take more stuff with her. Now I wonder if that was part of her escape.

Sometimes I envision the house the day she left—what it must have felt like, how it may have smelled. The sensation my father must have had when he walked in the front door and found everything in place: The dishwasher hums in the little kitchen outfitted with thick, austere cabinets; there are lines left behind on the stained beige carpet from the passage of the vacuum cleaner, a pile of mail sits on the kitchen counter—an Amway catalog and the power bill. Everything is static in the slanted sunshine peering in through the cracks in the blinds. There’s the scent of an open window, fresh, but with a hint of the dirt the wind has dragged in. Sagging couch, scratched coffee table, haphazardly-made bed, mismatched chairs, and the absence of breathing beyond his own; no present heartbeats to thrum along with his. Just still air and dust motes. No note. Not even an empty closet.

I pity him in that moment.

The walls, maybe there were pictures there; maybe my mom walked by them on her way out. Maybe they watched her in an accusatory sort of way, so she looked down, tightened her grip in the handle of my car seat, and focused on taking the next step. Or perhaps there was a box of photos under the bed, or an album on the side table in

the living room—just lying there in the quiet as she made her way across the carpet. All stillness, except the dishwasher, as the door clicked shut and the screen door slammed. No room to pause.

It was June. I was nine months old.

She didn't think about photographs then. For a long time I didn't think any existed.

"Get over here."

The room has become stiff with spilled over tension.

My mom's pant leg enters the frame first, *"What is it?"*

"I want you in the thing, c'mon." My mom steps towards my bouncy chair. *"Hurry up,"* Dad says. *"Right there."* The camera jostles as he presumably gestures towards where he wants her to sit. Her knees begin to bend. *"Not there, that's not what I said. You're blocking Nichole. Move!"*

My mom doesn't look at him, she doesn't even say anything. Just settles quietly on the carpet. As I watch, every muscle in my body constricts. My throat burns with the desire to say something, to turn to my dad and shout, "Do you know what this is? Do you see what you're showing me?" but I don't. I just sit there. I can't look away. I want to run into the next room, but my body doesn't move.

I've never seen a photograph of my parents together; not on their wedding day, not with me, not ever. I'm not really sure I want to. I have no memories of them married, and the time before my stepparents entered the picture is very fuzzy. I've never really had my own family—not in the sense of a single family identity. I've always had two: two dads, two moms, two sets of siblings, two different ways of filling the dishwasher, two wardrobes, two beds, two lists of expectations, two roles—two me.

My mom has an oval face, with brown eyes and softly curled hair. She's young, twenty-two, I think. She glances in the camera for half a second and quickly looks away, but not before her eyes crack open and I feel like I can see everything. She looks tired. She looks...chased and cornered. If she were a rabbit she'd be shivering. She looks like me.

"Is this what you want?" She asks.

"That's fine, I guess," He pauses, *"Well, say something."* The camera jostles again. My dad likes to talk with his hands.

My mom looks down at her baby, at me. Her body perceptively softens. *"Hi, Nichole,"* She whispers.

I was ten or eleven when it finally dawned on me that I was alone in the world. I don't know why it took me so long, maybe I was in denial. The day I realized I didn't have any siblings just like me, that we were all only half related, I crawled into my bed and fisted my hands in the blankets. I screamed into my pillow till my throat hurt so much I couldn't scream anymore. Then I buried myself in the confines of the bedding, sucked in the esophagus-burning scent of Downey fabric softener, and submerged myself in darkness.

I cried.

I think that's when I started identifying myself as the floater child—the one who existed in limbo. My two families lived only twenty-three minutes apart. Twenty-three minutes every other weekend, every other Tuesday, every other holiday, and seven weeks during the summer. I, the only common denominator between them, was a superfluous link. Always, I felt like I didn't quite fit in either place. Like I didn't quite fit anywhere. I was just the extra bit of fiber on the end of a too-long shoelace. If I didn't exist, they wouldn't even talk to each other.

I have one photo of me with all of my siblings—six from each side. It took years and years of asking and asking before it finally happened. Even then, only my imminent departure to college was powerful enough to draw everyone to the same front lawn for a few simple clicks of the camera. Thirteen of us in all. We're lying in a circle on the ground, laughing up at the camera. Christopher is in the middle, not even a year old yet. Even he is smiling.

I cried that day too.

Sarah and I huddle around the box of recordings Dad dragged up from the basement.

"Let's watch this one," Sarah says. She holds up an unmarked tape.

This time we don't bother with the TV. Sarah and I are pretty adept at using the various video camera models Dad has around the house. He buys a new one every few years and says they're to preserve family memories. My siblings and I say they're to make movies. Sarah and I like to set up the camera on the floor in her bedroom, climb on her bed, and preform marionette puppet shows it front of the blinking red light.

Sarah sticks the selected tape in a video camera that has a foldout playback screen and pushes the correct buttons. There's a click and a hiss as the tape rolls, then the picture appears. Our heads bump as we lean in close to see the tiny screen.

The person recording is sitting in the passenger seat of a car. The camera is pointed out towards the windshield and pans slowly to the side window, filming the pine trees and several feet of snow as they pass by on either side of what appears to be a road through the mountains. This continues for about a minute. Sarah looks at me and raises an eyebrow. “What is this?”

“I don’t know,” I say.

“It’s so boring, it’s just stupid trees. We can see those whenever we want.” She begins to eye the rest of the tapes in the box. “Who would make this?” She mutters.

The person in the car starts to lower the camera. “*Can I stop now?*” It’s my mom’s voice. Sarah’s head whips around to look at me. Our skulls almost crack against each other. Her eyes are wide. I swallow hard and try to keep my fists from clenching.

“*No!*” my dad snaps. The camera jerks upward and I know he’s reached over to yank it into the position he wants. “*Keep recording. I want all of this.*”

“*Okay.*” My mom’s voice sounds small and far away. I wonder if I’m born yet. Maybe I’m in the back seat.

Sarah and I sit there in stunned silence for a moment, then she silently moves her thumb and presses the fast-forward button. The trees begin to whip by. Dad wouldn’t have my mom record the trees for that long, right? One minute. The trees and snow are still zooming past. Two minutes. I feel like I might throw up. Three minutes. Trees and snow. How long does this go on? I really am going to throw up.

We don’t watch the whole thing. Without a word, Sarah folds the playback screen against the video camera. It clicks shut. The hiss of the tape moving inside begins to die, then it clunks to a stop. I can hear my own breathing and my heart thudding. Condemning evidence.

I remember then, my mom and stepdad have never owned a video camera.

E

ESSAY

Anna Murray

Ode to Hot Rollers

“Girl, you a mess,” Sonja says.

The shocked waitress scrawls down our drink order and leaves.

I crack up. Boy, is she ever right.

“I know. The hair’s really getting to be a problem.” I heave a sigh.

At 46, I have decided to grow my hair. It’s a rebellion. Against a recent beauty-advice article in *More* magazine. And against my mother. Any anyone else who decides to remind me the older a woman gets, the shorter her hair should be.

Of course, I’ve confessed my reasons to Sonja. There’s a bond that exists between people who meet as children. It’s as if our true selves are closer to the surface then. It may be one of the few times a white girl and a black girl can become best friends. Sonja and I met in seventh grade. Then, after three out-of-touch decades comprising my family’s move, college and general adult busy-ness, we reconnected on Facebook, picking right up where we left off, sniggering, gossiping, eating French fries and discussing the beauty-topic-du-jour. Like my hair revolution.

But there’s long and curly, and then there’s conducting a business meeting with your tendrils making finger puppets on the projector.

“You white women just don’t know how to take care of your hair.”

“I could put it in a ponytail.”

Sonja looks down at her menu and then cocks a disgusted glance up at me over her reader glasses.

Sonja is tall, long legged, and gorgeous. When we were kids, she wanted to be a fashion model and asked me for my assessment of her potential. I was her best friend, after all. Also my mother was a former cover girl, making me the resident junior-high expert.

Career path was serious topic among us fourteen-year-olds, who felt adulthood looming near, just beyond high school, drivers licenses, SATs, and Prom. I paused over my fluffer-nutter, considering Sonja’s African-American beauty against the standards of our day: Cheryl Teigs and Christy Brinkley. Beverly Johnson was the sole minority model on covers. She was black, of course, but somehow not quite all the way. What was it about her? I thought hard.

Sonja looked at me expectantly. “I think you’d need to get your nose fixed.” We girls were always talking about whether we’d ever have our boobs done, or our thighs sucked. “It’s probably too black.”

The shock on Sonja’s face seared that memory in my mind in a way that’s lasted thirty years. I hope she’s forgiven me for it. I hope she doesn’t even remember it.

Tonight, Sonja sips her wine and remains disapprovingly silent on the matter of the pony tail.

“Kinda defeats the purpose,” I concede. Sonja’s own hair falls in smooth crests to her shoulder. “*Your* hair always looks great.”

“Mmmm,” she says, with a little head shake. “Going against the grain takes commitment.” Then she describes her own extensive coiffure-maintenance practice, involving weekly trips to the hairdresser and nightly head-wrapping. “I don’t talk about it a lot. Hair’s the third rail with black women. You know, the idea that black women want hair like white women.”

I rake my fingers through my own frizz. “Some white women want hair like white women.”

She laughs so hard she nearly spits out her wine.

Fussing about one’s hair in this world does seem a little crazy. Previous girls-nights-outs we’ve talked about seemingly more serious topics: The way Sonja’s mom made calls for Obama. When she chooses, like Sonja, Mrs. Washington has perfectly white speech. A number of folks on the other end of the line said they wouldn’t vote for an N.

“Don’t give in, boo. Keep the hair. Get yourself some hot rollers.”

“Hot rollers?”

“Don’t go cheap. Hundred dollars. Your style’ll stay for a week.”

++++

Sleek hundred-dollar cylinders warm, soft felt over their steamy bodies.

“Ten minutes. While you brush your teeth,” Sonja advised. “Put too much heat on the hair, it’ll break over time.”

When they roll off, heavy weight dropping, my hair springs in perfect waves. Those curlers are freaking magic! Sonja is right. I don’t have to touch my style for the next five days.

Despite a slightly singed scalp, I don’t mind the rollers. They are snug and warm, like a blanket. When they’re on, I march around the

apartment, toothbrush a-scouring, in proud but ridiculous solidarity with Sonja, the war of gender, politics and ethnicity, which always gets played out on women's bodies, waging itself on my head.

From a beauty perspective, my rebellion is an unqualified success: I have fabulous long hair. People comment on it in elevators. From a moral perspective, I've lost track of the point I was making. Was it about age and hair? Black women or white women? I'm not really convinced whether I've made a point to the beauty establishment, or it has made the point to me.

B

BOOK REVIEWS

Julia Lubomirsky Friedman

A Review of *Hourglass: Poems*

by Jacqueline A. Kolosov

San Antonio, Texas: Pecan Grove Press, 2012

ISBN: 9781937302023 1937302024

47 pages (22 cm)

\$7.00 (paperback)

Available from: Pecan Grove Press

The cover is an out of focus photograph of a woman in a red dress bending over and holding her child's hand.

Kolosov has had several other full collections and chapbooks published by such publishers as Winnow Press, WordTech Communications, Finishing Line Press, and is the receiver of several fellowships. She currently teaches at Texas Tech University.

Hourglass is a collection of twenty-one poems.

The shape of the hourglass epitomizes the figure of a woman's body, as the hourglass itself represents the movement of time's passing. Jacqueline Kolosov's newest collection of poetry, *Hourglass*, contains poems that embody the notions of life's brevity, as well as the significance of the present as a meeting point between past and future. In many of her poems, the reader is invited to share in the speaker's feelings of fulfillment and excitement in sharing her life with her daughter, beginning from pregnancy and throughout birth and upbringing. The speaker also considers her relationship with her own mother, who is represented in her final stages of life. Throughout her book, Kolosov uses the various symbols of the hourglass as a connection between the eternity of God and mortality of humans, as well as the relationship between mothers and daughters. The shape of the hourglass also imitates the female body, which is able to reproduce in order to create children who will repeat these stages of life.

In the same way this book moves the reader throughout its many stages of life, the poems are set up for the reader to move through them in the hourglass pattern. The poems begin with the birth of the speaker's daughter and end with her mother dying. In a way, while the final grains fall from her mother's cup of life, the hourglass is simultaneously prepared to be turned over for the empty cup to be refilled, as the cycle

of life is carried on by the speaker's daughter:

It's dead, Mama. My daughter is matter-of-fact, a sturdy child
in boots and sweater. I search for something, some offering,
wishing she had not seen the squirrel – why hurry this?

But she is off
again,
spiraling into leaves. *Look, Mama,* she cries,
light, delighted, burrowing deep. *Look, I'm making a nest.*

This stanza in the final poem of Kolosov's book serves to show the movement through time, as well as life's brevity. The dead squirrel that the speaker and her daughter find are connected to the speaker's mother who she knows is dying. Although the speaker is worried about her daughter experiencing loss and seeing death, her daughter exclaims that she is making a nest, preparing to continue the cycle of life. The hourglass is an important image, as it is able to be turned over in order to create another hour or, in this case, create new life.

Throughout her poems, Kolosov uses the theme of nesting in terms of pregnancy, and many times evokes images of birds, usually a bluebird. Furthermore, Kolosov's recurring image of the bird also represents the book's theme of movement. Movement is shown in the first stanza of the first poem, "Little Tesuque", giving an introduction to the book's theme of movement through time:

If past and future meet
in a room we step through
let that room arc into sky.

The theme of flight connects to the movement of time, to nesting in terms of pregnancy and mother-child relationships, as well as to the angel who anoints the Christian Mother Mary. Just as in most Christian art works, Mary is represented in blue clothing, so too, Kolosov represents Mary with symbols of blue throughout her poems. Blue is brought up through many different images connecting the speaker to her daughter, such as the blue color she paints the baby's room during pregnancy, the blue eyes that they share, the association with the Christian Mother Mary and, finally, through connecting everything back to the bluebird. These repeated images help to create movement that parallels the movement of time in the shape of an hourglass. Part XII of

her poem “Nesting” concisely demonstrates this theme:

Only once have I seen a bluebird
high up in an aspen flushed orange-gold.
The bluebird’s feathers married sea and sky,
and I wanted only to hold that creature
within the innermost blue of my innermost eye.

This particular stanza of the poem shows the speaker’s desire to connect the beautiful song-filled bird to her future daughter:

I will set the bluebird free
within the cavity of my body,
its music quickly becoming one
with the branching canopy of rib.

With time, the speaker’s daughter is born, and the images of blue continue, connecting themes of time, Mary, and mother-daughter relationships. In “Just Two”, for instance, the speaker describes her daughter who is getting ready to go to church, and putting on a blue dress with her mother’s help:

...You’re two, and still I
recall the hour of your birth, the first hour I
nursed you. I nurse you still. Snug in my arms,
your periwinkle blue eyes provoke me
into a giggling tilt-a-whirl, the antithesis of blue.

Kolosov compares the connection between Mary and her saintly child to the speaker’s earthly ties to her daughter, and elevates their relationship through this association. In “Just Two”, the speaker remarks on the passage of time, as she recognizes that her daughter has grown a few years older, but is still being “nursed” by her. She represents the universal mother-daughter relationship, and the notion that a mother’s job is never done.

Kolosov’s book of poems is filled with beautiful concrete images and themes of life’s transitions and mortality that would resonate with everyone, perhaps especially with mothers or people who have close relationships with their mothers or grandmothers. I believe that *Hourglass* does an exceptional job creating vivid images that pull the reader into its own world of time.

Lynne McEniry

A Review of *Local News from Someplace Else*

by Marjorie Maddox

Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock., 2013

ISBN: 978-1-62564-094-9

104 pages

\$14.00 (paperback)

Available from: Wipf & Stock.

In his poem, *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower*, William Carlos Williams wrote, “It is difficult/to get the news from poems/yet men die miserably every day/for lack/of what is found there.” Marjorie Maddox writes poems that convey the news that Williams is talking about in her most recent collection, *Local News From Someplace Else*. The poems she has collected here explore what Williams called the “hunted news,” that he learned from his patients, news that was real and true and human in a way the generalized news we get from the media is not.

In the title poem, Maddox explores how television reporting has a way of “disguising our town” with its “27-inch space // of otherworldliness, the familiar/and the foreign switching uniforms/to the tune of Time and Temperature.” Her poems ask us to consider how we become strangers to ourselves, strangers in our own homes and hometowns, and how everything we think we know becomes alien to us when viewed through the lens of popular news reporting.

Throughout the collection, the poem titles and epigraphs are borrowed from actual contemporary news stories. From natural disasters, to a mother who drowns her own children, to a tragic plane crash that impacts her home community, for Maddox these details have also been the inspiration for deeper reflection. In *Fatal Shock Mystery: Experts Look For Answers After Tragedy*, she conveys details of a young boy’s murder and ends the poem with these four lines: “But let’s back up to the boys pitching stones,/trying to squeeze through chain link,/with nothing there suggesting God’s/premeditation.” This is just one example of the “hunted news” of her poems, the poet’s delving into how we try to make sense of life after the worst has happened.

Maddox experiments with form in *Sixteen-inch Black and White* by arranging the text on the page to look like the television, antenna and all, to move us “beyond camera and crew.” She brings together the contrasts and conflicts of truth and invention, and one’s experience of the

spiritual, the current economic situation, memory, the arts, the familiar and the alien, the natural and the scientific, health and illness, life and death. In *Best Friend*: “You’ll live but with a limp,/if you’re lucky, a scar/large enough to warn others./yourself.” And, in *June 1st Liturgy*: “What could she hum on the way down/but hell, the bright dark of death praising/the ordinariness of error?”

Local News From Someplace Else is Maddox’s own poetic investigation and reporting on human reaction and resiliency in the face of catastrophe. These events did not just happen to some stranger someplace else. The serious reader of these poems cannot separate herself from her human connection to these reported stories.

Carol Smallwood

A Review of *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis*

by Lois Marie Harrod

Cherry Grove Collections, 2013

ISBN: 978-1625490094

122 pages (6" x9")

\$20.00

Available from: Cherry Grove Collections, Barnes and Noble, Amazon. Cherry Grove Collections, one of the six imprints of WordTech Communications in Cincinnati, Ohio, concentrates on lyric poetry submitted from U.S. poets that "...sing the essential human songs of our times." Their other imprints are: CW Books, David Robert Books, Turning Point, Word Press, WordTech Editions.

The cover is photo of a bronze and aluminum sculpture in New Jersey, "Zeus and Hera II" by Carole Feuerman, taken by the poet herself.

The Acknowledgments includes forty publishers beginning with *The American Poetry Journal* "Headway Beyond Fresh Kills" and ends with *Zone 3* "What the Polar Bear Sings". It is dedicated to the poet's husband, children, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren.

Lois Marie Harrod should be read slowly to enjoy her quicksilver changes of mood, her choice use of words and form, sense of fun, and the appreciation and application of the universal. She surprises, makes us wonder, keeps us wanting to read more which surely is the mark of a good poet. Her range is wide, subtle, breathtaking.

Harrod has had several other full collections and chapbooks published by such publishers as Black Buzzard Press, Iowa State University and is the receiver of various fellowships. Over six hundred of her award winning poems have appeared in publications; she teaches Creative Writing at The College of New Jersey and in the Evergreen Forum at Princeton Senior Resource Center. Her poems have settings beyond the United States such as: Pompeii, Italy, Hudson Bay, Canada, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, India, the Great Barrier Reef.

The collection of seventy poems is divided into three sections: Firmament, Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis, and This Pilgrim's Progress.

Firmament

The twenty-two poems in this section begins with “Firmament” Great Pond, Wellfleet, Massachusetts, followed by “Night”, St. Johnsbury, Vermont. In the poem, “Describing Things”, the poet compares “the soft clay of experience and its sharp stylus, /which is not unlike the pain of a loosening tooth” and how “quickly ache gives way to emptiness.” And again ambiguity appears “In Context”: “It’s not the circus that gets you,/ it’s the coupon, two tightropes/ for a dollar, one to walk/ and one to wrap/ around your neck.” And in “Day Lilies”: “Tomorrow’s skin/ shrivels like yesterday’s blossom/the trumpet of morning,/the cornucopia of grief.”

The poem, “The Mist”, begins with the memorable stanza:

If metaphor
were sufficient,
I would think of mist today
as a silent woman
wrapping her body
around the noise of trees.

Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis

The first poem of the twenty-nine in this section, “Cosmogony” begins:

I am thinking how pain
fills a space and then leaves it empty

just as time pockets itself
into the universe

The last is the title of the section and the collection, “Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis” which begins: “[Nemesis] leaped ashore, and transformed herself into this wild beast or that, but could not shake Zeus off, because he borrowed the form of even fiercer and swifter beasts.” Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*

This Pilgrims’s Progress

This section of nineteen poems begins with the poem bearing its title, more of a narrative poem than the other poems so far that begins:

When we walk our daily allegory,
down Broad Street past Rose and Chubby's

The next, "Photuris Lucicrescens" gives the reader the interesting information that "Caravaggio may have used a powder of dried fireflies to create a photosensitive mixture in his uniquely lit paintings."

Harrod's poems often include classical names like Midas, Pliny the Younger, Ulysses, Penelope, Vesuvius, Phoenix, Epimetheus, Prometheus, that echo the collections title and Zeus and Hera cover. The goddess, Nemesis, is connected with retribution, an important theme for the Classical Greeks: justice that cannot be escaped as in the tragedies of Sophocles.

Her observation of nature is sharp and poignant. In "The Crow" the poem ends:

But the crow sat leafless
in the silent tree

no song for himself
or another.

a homeless bird
his black cloak

hunched around
his thin shoulders

making us all
lonely.

Her sense of humor is evident in "You Could Buy a New Sky" in the conversations with the car salesman:

So how many clouds per hour
can I count on?-I try to sound

wise to his pitch—how much
thunder under the hood?
He gets out the specs.

One bolt of lightning from this baby
can toast
160,000 slabs of bread.

I don't eat that many carbs,
I say, but it might be handy on long trips.

Oh, especially at night, he says,
when there is no moon.

Her sensitivity in using form shines in "The Litany of the Mussel Shell"

I am black water
pouring into
your hands, black
sunrise in the sink, exquisite Chinese ink,
on rice paper, the sign for fan

Also in using the 14 lines to compose, "The Sonnet of Snow."

On the back cover, author Alica Ostriker, notes: "Do be careful with these poems, made of velvet and razorblades, hunger and anger, need and greed, family and scenery and mystery. Mystery and a crisp sharp music." Editor Gail Entrekin notes: Lois Marie Harrod's powerful new collection flows like the ocean from which its avenging heroine, Nemesis, emerges 'like a word rising from a pond.'"

Her poems reminds one of the definition of poetry by Octavio Paz: "Poetry is not what words say but what is said between them, that which appears fleetingly in pauses and silences."

Madeline Tiger

A review of: ***Vocabulary of Silence***

poems by Veronica Golos

86 pages & notes

Red Hen Press

c 2011 by Veronica Golos

Wild Words and Space in a Stunning Collection

“I have seen the sea lashed into fury and tossed into spray, and its grandeur moves the soul of the dullest man,... But I remember that it is not the billows, but the calm level of the sea, from which all heights and depths are measured.’ ”...President James A. Garfield, as quoted by Candice Millard in *Destiny of the Republic*

I could quote from every page of *Vocabulary of Silence* to show the compelling arrangements of words and spaces designed by Veronica Golos. In dealing with unspeakable human tragedy, her striking displays of lines and spaces express a wildness the words alone barely describe.

This innovative collection of poems displays heightened language, often by being in a reduced, concentrated pattern of phrases, and equally intense silences, represented by daring wide spaces between lines, phrases, single words. The subjects of the poems vary—from contemporary war and torture to biblical themes; from horror at Abu Graib to the image of a wild bird; but the motif of speech and no-speech, deprivation of speech, moves through all the poems, as does the poet’s effort to articulate for all who suffer, and just as passionately for herself. The poems are “stunning”—as in shocking, as if the reader were struck physically; at the same time, the writing is beautiful. Images are sometimes metaphorical, but often simply real, direct. And the sound patterns, while giving the requirements of voices, support the meanings. **The silence is equally vivid; it is as much an articulation in these pages as speechlessness is in suffering.**

Even in simply describing an egret, Golos tells how “...birth always clings,/ refuses even as it pushes/ so that to become what/ you were made to be/ the body must conjure out/ of the kiln of air/...” Having gone deep in so few lines, as if in and out of the “kiln”, her reader feels surprising passion. Then comes a sudden space-- And the poem continues with (sic)

“...slateblue shallows, what turns/ leg and beak black, leaving/ for the last, a stain/ of yellow for the foot.” As in so many of these pages, a reader is taken up with word play and subtle alliterations, while riding the strong lines, while moving in the articulate spaces: “...Full and feathered, lacey plumes/ a spread of white inside/ a denser white. The boy/...” and there is a huge space here: does a reader wonder why a boy is introduced into this poem of the beautiful egret? The lines continue as the boy “..watches it go to wing,” and we see the lovely bird circling in the sky, “...then/ unfasten into the wet shadows/ below.” These are succinct lines, moving down the center of the page. Another large space, and on the far left side of the page comes the last line: “Boy. Gun. Blank Sky. . .” On rereading one realizes what *unfasten* means in the two short lines and huge space above this blunt ending.

-2-

Golos’s lines are flags, she declares; her words are tinder, another poem reminds us; they are flames, they are signals. In describing cruelties and horrors, however, Golos is not just waving at the wrong-doers, the “warriors” and murderers: she implicates herself through painful passages.

When the poet experiments with spaces and leaps or allows the phrasing and spacing to work against sentence structure, her meanings bleed through, as in a poem about Cain. How else can she demonstrate what is inside the murderous brother but by half phrases and great spaces between fragments of the unthinkable: “It A voice / an itch always upon my skin / for It / I build earthmud/ mound/ all was/ green brother laughing / and ...”

A reader has to take in the fragments, how they carry urgency and despair and disconnected feelings, and one has to hold one’s breath through the awareness that Golos’s spaces demand. The book has so many virtues—of form and breathing, of sympathies and responses—that one has to begin by reacting to the sounds and silences at the same time as responding to the stressful subject matter.

In the title of the section “EDEN IS RUIN”, the slant rhyme supports the ironies to follow, as subtle prosodic devices do throughout the book. The first poem here is “Warrior”. The warrior is speaking. He is haunted, he

is a witness and a killer. “One can not measure/ death. I know...” This is a conclusion for many of the poems; one can, however, name death and accuse, in endless, furious ways, as Golos does, with guilt as well as pity. All the while decrying historic

cruelties, she is consistently writing about her selfhood, and her search for... what has no name:

In “birth(ing) Word” she declares, “... I am already transparent, already a/ shimmer, an aperture leading into aperture; then for a moment–still–solid–a passage.” Birthing and breathing connect, in this poem, and so do sounds: first a “zero howl”, then “the aftermath of echo...” then, translation, and “vowels I wept out...” After declaring herself “strung between each song...,” the language deals with speech, then the effort in writing: “Carved word to flesh to form” gives the image of inextricable body-and-language that drives the poem until it asks “What is it to be human?” This ultimate question makes another connection with all the rest of the work in the collection. There are no answers, but one dream speaker gathers “fragments of clay...// as if I

were going to make a bowl,/ using what is broken, as potters do.” And in “Unruly Alphabet” we see “The days glue together,” not for understanding, but “they do seem to be writing something.”

There are women dancing with veils, and in this movement comes a new kind of awareness: “Rebellious./ she billows out, a sheet loosened from its line.” Or: “Who speaks? Who listens?” Knowledge is in the noticing; art is in the going on. And there is always the great blue sky.

The poem about shooting down a beautiful bird, in the middle of the collection, makes a startling link with other pieces of more grotesque imagery or more telling “politics”. The threading of themes and images are as amazing as the arrangements of lines and spaces, all part of the telling, the fierce outcry, the heartbreak as well as an unspoken plea for the great beauty of this terrifying world, which poetry sustains.

I

Interview

Antoinette Libro

Interview with Award-Winning Poet, Artist, and Editor Pamela A. Babusci

Pamela A. Babusci is an internationally award-winning haiku/tanka and haiga artist. Her first tanka book, *A Thousand Reasons*, was published in 2009 to wide critical acclaim. She is founder and now sole editor of *Moonbathing: a journal of women's tanka*, the first all women's tanka journal in the US. This Interview was conducted for *Adanna* by poet and writer Antoinette (Toni) Libro over the winter months of 2013.

AL: How and when did you first become interested in writing poetry—haiku and tanka, in particular?

PAB: First of all, I would like to thank the Editor of *Adanna*, Christine Redman-Waldeyer, for the privilege of having this interview appear in this highly esteemed literary journal.

I became interested in writing poetry at the age of thirteen. I wrote to help myself cope with my life, living in a dysfunctional family. It allowed me to express my feelings, thoughts, fears, hopes, dreams onto the blank page, because I wasn't allowed to express these emotions verbally.

My interest in haiku started in 1994 when I came across *Poet's Market* at the library and looked under *Haiku* in the index. It peeked my interest, so I read every book on haiku in the Monroe County library system and started to write. In 1995 I was fortunate to get my first one-line haiku published in *Brussels Sprout Journal* and then my first one-line haiku in *Frogpond*, which won The Museum of Haiku Literature Award. A year later my poet friend, Kenneth Tanemura, introduced me to the tanka form. I fell in love with it and have been writing tanka ever since.

AL: How would you describe the difference between haiku and tanka forms for those not entirely familiar with them?

PAB: Haiku is the shortest poetry form in the world and originated in Japan about 400 years ago. It was originally written in three lines, containing 17 sounds units (*onji*) or less. It combined human nature with nature by juxtaposing these images.

Tanka predated haiku and originated in Japan about 1,300 years ago. English tanka are written in a five-line format, usually in a short/long/short/long/long lines, with 31 syllables or fewer. Tanka can be emotional and contain subjects like love, longing, loss, joy, sensual pleasures, pain, fear, loneliness, and other human feelings not usually written about in haiku.

AL: And the art form known as *haiga*?

PAB: *Haiga* is a haiku painting. *Hai* refers to the haiku and *ga* means painting. The form originated in seventeenth-century Japan. In contemporary English *haiga*, the elements are an ink-brush painting (*sumi-e*) or watercolor, and a haiku or tanka. The painting is usually quite simple and contains plenty of white space where the reader can interpret the *haiga*. Many poets use photography or digital art *haiga*, but I prefer ink-brush painting or watercolor.

AL: When did you found *Moonbathing: a journal of women's tanka*? What is the significance of its name and overall philosophy, particularly the preference to publish only women poets?

PB: I founded *Moonbathing: a journal of women's tanka* in 2009. I made up the name with the vision that it represented the carefree woman floating, lying on her back in a warm ocean or sea under the healing powers of the moon. There she could commune with nature to meditate upon her life, her spirit/soul, and the writing of tanka poetry. In *Moonbathing* (the first all women's tanka journal in the US) I wanted to honor the women's voice, her essence and her vision, within the framework of the tanka form. To this end, *Moonbathing* conducts tanka contests and each issue honors an ancient tanka poet.

I believe most women are not given enough credit or voice in the arts, including music, art, film, literature or poetry. I wanted to showcase the incredible talent of women tanka poets throughout the world. *Moonbathing* has published women poets from Canada, Japan, England, France, Australia, New Zealand, Romania, India, Trinidad, Netherlands, Bhutan, and the US.

Interested poets are welcome to contact me at: moongate44@gmail.com

AL: What tanka poets do you most admire from the past?

I admire and love the famous ancient female tanka poets: Ono no

Komachi and Izumi Shikibu. They wrote with such honesty and passion and weren't afraid to express their feelings. They were ahead of their time; they were trailblazers. Their themes were often autobiographical and conveyed feelings of love, longing, loss, sorrow, affairs of the heart and body, loneliness, passion and joy.

This is what I strive for when I write a tanka--to be completely honest and candid, and to reveal my life and matters of the heart. And these are the qualities I look for when I publish tanka in *Moonbathing*-- poets that are autobiographical, open, raw and unafraid to reveal a part of themselves. This makes for an excellent tanka poet.

AL: What contemporary poets and poetic qualities do you most admire?

PAB: I would have to say: Paul Smith (UK); Claire Everett (UK); David John Terelinck (Aust); Luminita Suse (Canada); Grant Savage (Canada); Tom Clausen (US); Christina Nguyen (US); Aubrie Cox (US); Sanford Goldstein (Japan); Aya Yuhki (Japan); and several other poets. I deeply admire them and their tanka for their honesty, passion, and sincere gift of writing from the heart. Their tanka move me, spiritually, emotionally and even physically.

AL: How would you critique the prevailing style of haiku and/or tanka in English today? Are there differences as far as gender is concerned? Are men and women equally represented?

PAB: Tanka has definitely changed throughout its history. The Japanese wrote it in five lines with a 5/7/5/7/7 *onji* sounds. Most contemporary English tanka poets tend to write a five-line tanka with a short/long/short/long/long rhythm.

I believe men and women do write in a unique style. Men write more with a detached view of life, whereas women write more with their heart. Certainly there are exceptions; there are no hard and fast rules, this is just my observation. Nowadays, I feel women are closing the gender gap as far as being accepted and published more within the haiku/tanka community. And there are more women who are haiku/tanka editors than in previous years.

AL: What publications for haiku, tanka and related forms exist today? And can you speak a little about your history of publication?

PAB: Some of the best publications for haiku are: *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest* (on-line); and for tanka: *A Hundred Gourds* (on-line), *Gusts Journal* and *red lights*.

In 1995, I had my first haiku published in *Brussels Sprout* journal. It was a simple one-line haiku: "counting stars counting kisses", but I was honored and felt very lucky to have had a haiku accepted for publication. A few of my tanka were first accepted in *Five Lines Down* in 1995. Even though I have been writing tanka for many years, I am still learning the "art of tanka."

AL: You have won many prestigious prizes and awards as a writer of haiku and tanka, and as *haiga* artist. Can you share your feelings regarding the awards and those that mean the most to you?

PAB: For me winning an award is a great honor, but, it always humbles me, because, next time you enter a contest you can just as easily not win. When I won *The Museum of Haiku Literature Award* in 1995, I was totally shocked and thought that the haiku committee must have made a mistake; I had only been writing haiku for about six months and the one-line haiku was the first haiku I had accepted in *Frogpond* (Journal of the Haiku Society of America). Winning a tanka certificate of merit and an excellence award in *Japan's International Tanka Contest* twice has meant the most to me. I write haiku/tanka because I love to write these forms and winning a contest is just "the icing on the cake"; I would write anyway, even if I never won any contest again.

AL: Could you tell us a little about your background and any other significant influences in your life?

PAB: I am from an Italian-American family in Rochester, NY. I was always surrounded by opera, classical music, art, books and lots of food. I went to Benjamin Franklin High School, graduated from Monroe Community College with a degree in Dental Hygiene, and then Brockport State College with a degree as a Dental Hygiene Teacher. I have always loved art and feel driven to write and/or paint everyday and make that my daily routine.

AL: How would you describe the creative process? Are you conscious of the craft when you create your poems?

PAB: I go out every morning very early for coffee and writing; I bring my notebook/pen and write tanka or haiku. Even if I don't like what I write, I write it down anyway and later revise until I get the tanka/haiku that I am pleased with. I am very aware of the art form when writing my poetry; I am a perfectionist and I strive to write poetry that I am proud of, hopefully poetry that will make a difference in the reader's life.

AL: Do you have any favorite tanka or haiku poems?

PAB: Yes, I have some favorite tanka:

buying a new
cherry blossom kimono
as if it could
replace
his spring kisses

breaking
the red lacquered comb
in two...
deep autumn
and still no letter

And haiku:

i climb the mountain with my eyes never ending snow

bamboo whisk ...
the tea master's
fluid hands

AL: So lovely! Is there enough poetry in the world today?

PAB: I believe the haiku and tanka literary world is getting bigger. With the use of our high-tech devices, like computers, Facebook and Twitter, creativity and knowledge are at our fingertips. Our world has become much smaller and we can now learn, study and communicate with people around the globe; we can share our art, poetry, music, and videos.

There can always be more poetry in the world, but I believe the world is teeming with poetry. If I had time to read all the poetry, I would have to

live several lifetimes to make a dent in all the wonderful poetry written and published.

Poetry has been around for centuries and will continue to be around for many centuries to come. People have a need, a desire, a passion to write poetry, and as long as we exist, we will write!

AL: Thank you, Pamela, for this insightful and illuminating journey into the world of haiku and tanka. Your many contributions to the vitality of these art forms, as both artist and editor, are most profound.

---End---

B

BIOGRAPHICAL
NOTES

Perle Besserman is the Recipient of the Theodore Hoepfner Fiction Award and past writer-in-residence at the Mishkenot Sha'ananim Artists' Colony in Jerusalem. Pushcart Prize-nominee Perle Besserman was praised by Isaac Bashevis Singer for the "clarity and feeling for mystic lore" of her writing and by Publisher's Weekly for its "wisdom [that] points to a universal practice of the heart." Houghton Mifflin published her autobiographical novel *Pilgrimage*, and her short fiction has appeared in *The Southern Humanities Review*, *AGNI*, *Transatlantic Review*, *Nebraska Review*, *Southerly*, *North American Review*, and *Bamboo Ridge*, among others. Her books have been recorded and released in both audio and e-book versions and translated into over ten languages. Her most recent books of creative non-fiction are *A New Zen for Women* (Palgrave Macmillan) and *Zen Radicals, Rebels, and Reformers*, coauthored with Manfred Steger (Wisdom Books). Two novels, *Kabuki Boy*, and *Widow Zion*, and *Yeshiva Girl*, a story collection, are forthcoming from Aqueous Books, Pinyon Publishing, and Homebound Publishing, respectively.

Lawrence Bridges is best known for his creative work in the film and literary world. He founded the award winning New York production and design studio, Red Car, and has directed commercials, music videos, and features, and recently completed six documentaries on American authors for the NEA's "Big Read" program, including Ray Bradbury, Tobias Wolff, and Cynthia Ozick. Bridges' poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry* and he has written two volumes of poetry, *Horses on Drums* and *Flip Days*. His most recent novels are *Gina*, *Found Again* and *Martin and Martine*. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife Elizabeth.

Amber Cooks's work has appeared in various publications including *Deep South Magazine*, *All Things Girl*, *Toasted Cheese* and *Dzanc Books Best of the Web* series. She lives and balances writing and motherhood in Tennessee.

David Crews (davidcrewspoeetry.com) has poems published or forthcoming in *The Greensboro Review*, *The Southeast Review*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *5AM*, and others. Essays found in *Adanna Literary Journal* and *SPECTRUM*. He both teaches and lives in northwest New Jersey.

Barbara Crooker's poems have appeared in magazines such as *The Green Mountains Review*, *Poet Lore*, *The Hollins Critic*, *The Christian*

Science Monitor, Nimrod and anthologies such as *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Her awards include the Thomas Merton Poetry of the Sacred Award, three Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships, fifteen residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, a residency at the Moulin à Nef, Auvillar, France; and a residency at The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Ireland. Her books are *Radiance*, which won the 2005 Word Press First Book competition and was a finalist for the 2006 Paterson Poetry Prize; *Line Dance* (Word Press 2008), which won the 2009 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence; *More* (C&R Press 2010), and *Gold* (Cascade Books, 2013). Her poetry has been read on the BBC, the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Company), and by Garrison Keillor on *The Writer's Almanac*, and she's read in the Poetry at Noon series at the Library of Congress.

Melissa Cundieff-Pexa is a graduate of Vanderbilt University's MFA program. Her poems have appeared in *Diagram*, *The Collagist*, *The Monarch Review*, *Coachella Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *Weave Magazine*, *Mead Magazine*, *Juked*, *42opus*, among other journals. A recipient of a Pushcart nomination and an Academy of American Poets Prize, she lives in Ithaca, NY with her family.

Jenny Dunning's poetry, short stories and essays have appeared in *Lunch Ticket*, *Literary Mama*, *Green Blade*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and the *South Dakota Review*, among others. Her story "Reva" received a Special Mention in the 2008 Pushcart Prize anthology. She recently moved from Wabasha, Minn. to North Adams, Mass., trading river and bluffs for old mountains.

Gabriel Falconhead is a writer of poetry, short fiction and short plays, as well a photographer and painter.

Irene Fick's poetry and nonfiction have been published in *The Broadkill Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Delaware Today*, *Modern Dog*, and *No Place Like Here: An Anthology of Southern Delaware Poetry & Prose*. She is active in the Rehoboth Beach Writers' Guild and the Rehoboth Beach Art League Writers' Critique Group. She lives in Lewes, Delaware, with her husband, Ed.

Linda McCauley Freeman has an MFA in Writing and Literature from Bennington College. She is a columnist for *Living & Being Magazine* and former poet-in-residence of the Putnam Arts Council. Her works

have been published in literary journals and anthologized in *GIRLS: An Anthology*. She is working on a novel. She and her husband are professional swing dance instructors in the Hudson Valley, NY (www.got2lindy.com).

Julia Lubomirsky Friedman is a student pursuing a degree in English literature at Bar Ilan University of Israel. She is a writer and artist that has had paintings displayed in art shows. She is excited to finally have her writing published as well.

Karen L. George, author of *Into the Heartland* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), has received grants from Kentucky Foundation for Women and Kentucky Arts Council. Her work has appeared in *Louisville Review*, *Memoir*, *Border Crossing*, *Permafrost*, *Blast Furnace*, *Sugar Mule*, *ninepatch*, *Still*, and *qarrtsiluni*. She reviews poetry at *Poetry Matters*: <http://readwritepoetry.blogspot.com/>.

John Gosslee is the editor of *Fjords Review*. His first book *12: Sonnets for the Zodiac* (Gival, 2011) was published in French, Spanish and English. He rides a yellow 1999750 Ducati Monster almost every day of the year.

Alysia Nicole Harris is pursuing her PhD in linguistics at Yale University as well as her MFA in creative writing from New York University. A member of the internationally known spoken word collective The Strivers Row, Alysia seeks to bridge the gap between largely oral and largely literary writing cultures. She believes in God, Ernest Hemingway, honesty, and all things slow and southern. Alysia currently resides in New Haven, Connecticut and Brooklyn, New York.

Darla Himeles holds an MFA in poetry and poetry in translation from Drew University. Her poems and translations can be read in recent or forthcoming issues of *5 AM*, *OVS*, *Lumn*, *Off the Coast*, and *Mead Magazine*. She divides her time between coastal Maine and Philadelphia, PA, where she is pursuing her doctoral degree at Temple University.

Linda J. Himot began writing poetry in 2005 after a career in medicine. Her poems have been published in such journals as *The MacGuffin*, *River Poets Journal*, *Emerge Literary Journal*. Other poems can be found on her web blog: www.pleasureinpoetry.com. She divides her time between Tallahassee, FL and a farm in the VA mountains.

Susan McDonough-Hintz is a poet and a web QA analyst for the Massachusetts Medical Society. Her poems have appeared in *The Camel Saloon*, *Gemini*, *Message in a Bottle*, *Fortunates*, and the Routledge anthology, *Queer & Catholic*. They are forthcoming in *Raleigh Review*. Originally from the Jersey Shore area, she now lives in Fitchburg, MA, with her wife and four rescued cats.

Miranda Hoegberg is an English major at Indiana University. She currently works as an editorial intern for the journal *Victorian Studies*. She is excited to finally have her work published in a non-campus publication.

S.G. Jarvis was born and raised near Syracuse, NY and graduated with a Bachelors degree in English and a minor in Theatre from Cazenovia College in 2010. In the last two years she has lived in Florida and in New York City studying theater and writing. She currently lives near Denver, CO pursuing my writing career.

Alex Ledford is an MFA Poetry student, teaching assistant, and poetry editor for Barnstorm online journal at the University of New Hampshire. She received her English BA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her work has appeared in *The Coraddi* at UNC-Greensboro and the online journal *MouseTales Press*. More work will appear in the University of Chicago's *Euphony Journal* in 2014.

Antoinette Libro was awarded Third Prize in the 2011 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. Her poetry has appeared most recently in the *Aurorean*; *Adanna Literary Journal*; *Atlas Poetica*; *Paterson Literary Review*; *Moonbathing: a journal of women's tanka*; *red lights*; and *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka 2011*. After teaching at Rowan University in the departments of Writing Arts and English for many years, she recently retired, and is working on a memoir and manuscript of poetry, as well as free lancing. She is co-coordinator of a new literary program for 2013, *Beach Bards: Poetry & Prose Reading Series*, every third Monday from June through October, at the Library in Sea Isle City, NJ.

Susan Maeder was recently awarded the New Millenium Prize for Poetry. Her book of poems, *White Song*, was published by Pot Shard Press. Her poems can be found in *Willow Springs*, *Albatross*, *Room Magazine* and *New Millenium Writing* among others. She lives in Mendocino, California and in southwestern France.

Lynne McEniry is a poet published in *Adanna*, *5 A.M.*, *The Stillwater Review*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, and others. Her poem, "Sunday Sauce" won Honorable Mention for the 2011 Allen Ginsberg Poetry prize, and her poem, "My Son, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Me" was nominated for a 2013 Pushcart Prize. Lynne collaborates with poets and visual artists to organize readings and workshops, and recently offered workshops on Poetry and Spirituality and "Encounters With Beauty Through Poetry." She is a guest editor for literary journals, including *OVS Journal* (ovsmag.com) and *Adanna*. Lynne earned her MFA in Poetry from Drew University and works at the College of Saint Elizabeth.

Karla Linn Merrifield has had 400+ poems appear in dozens of publications. Among her ten published books are these newest: *Lithic Scatter and Other Poems* (Mercury Heartlink) and *Attaining Canopy: Amazon Poems* (FootHills Publishing). Visit *Vagabond Poet* at <http://karlalinn.blogspot.com>.

Alex Millard studied poetry at University of Pittsburgh. She has a Masters in Writing for Children from The New School. Alex lives in Philadelphia with her partner, Hanif, her cat, Pants, and her dog, Miles Davis.

Erik Moshe grew up in a household full of women, and they taught him many life lessons that helped to shape him as a human being. His work has appeared in *Gloom Cupboard*, *Spirit of the Stairway*, *Camel Saloon*, *BoySlut*, and *UFO Gigolo*, among others. He currently resides in Tucson, Arizona. Find him at [TheCentersphere\(dot\)Yolasite\(dot\)com](http://TheCentersphere(dot)Yolasite(dot)com).

Deborah Murphy's poetry has appeared in *Chrysalis Reader*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Concrete Wolf*, *Smoky Quartz Quarterly*, *Soundings East*, and *Flash!point*. Holding a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and an MA from Tufts University, she lives in Amherst, NH, where she works as a freelance writer.

Anna Murray's humorous essays have appeared in the Piker Press and on her OpenSalon blog. Her young adult novel, *Sarah's Page*, was published in 1998 and her second novel is in progress. Anna serves as President of the Board of the International Women's Writing guild. She holds an B.A. in English from Yale and M.S. in journalism from

Columbia. By day, she works as a technology consultant and software developer and has written books and articles on technology. She lives in Manhattan with her husband, Chris. Her hobbies include her whippet Plato and horse, Hershey.

Priscilla Orr, author of *Losing the Horizon* and *Jugglers & Tides*, Hannacroix Creek Books, has published in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, and *other journals*, awarded fellowships from Yaddo, NJ state Arts Council, and twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Michelle Ovale is a New Jersey poet who graduated with an MFA from Drew University in 2011. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Edison Literary Review*, *OVS Magazine*, and the anthology titled *Dear Sister*, among others. Michelle currently teaches grammar and literature at a local county college. When not writing or teaching, Michelle enjoys photography, mosh pits, and red dresses.

Jeanette Perosa is a graduate of Arcadia University's MFA program. She resides in Limerick, Pennsylvania with her husband and four children, several dogs, and two rescued cats. She is a professor at Montgomery County Community College specializing in Creative Writing and Women's Literature. She has been publishing in numerous literary journals and is currently finishing her first novel.

Tina Rapp is a writer and editor from Peterborough, New Hampshire. Her work has appeared in various venues including New Hampshire Public Radio; *Yankee Magazine* books; *The Wall Street Journal* (Student Edition); *Concrete Wolf*; and *Smoky Quartz Quarterly*. She was a poetry editor and managing editor of *Shadow and Light—A Literary Anthology on Memory*.

Christine Redman-Waldeyer, founder of Adanna Literary Journal, is an Assistant Professor of English at Passaic County Community College. She received her doctorate in letters from Drew University and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Rowan University. She has been published widely including her book publications: *Frame by Frame*, *Gravel*, and *Eve Asks* with Muse Pie Press. Forthcoming; *Writing After Retirement*, Scarecrow Press. Her work has appeared in *Caduceus*, *Lips*, *Literary Mama*, *Motif Magazine*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Seventh Quarry*, *Schuykill Valley Journal*,

The Texas Review, Verse Wisconsin, among others. She has been a life-long resident of the Jersey Shore and resides in Manasquan with her husband and three children.

Lauren Samblanet is a poet and artist that currently lives in Boulder, Colorado. She will be graduating from the University of Colorado with a Bachelor's Degree in creative writing this December. She then plans to apply to creative writing MFA programs. She is inspired by nature, trauma, film, art, and travel.

Pania Seeley's first book she read on her own was *The Three Little Pigs*. Since that triumphant moment of personal reading accomplishment, her love of books and words has only grown. While the Big Bad Wolf may have given her her start, Pania has recently begun exploring creative non-fiction. It is quickly becoming one of her favorite genres.

Katie Seltz graduated from St. Olaf College with majors in English and Psychology. She lives in Afton, MN with her family.

Carol Smallwood co-edited *Women on Poetry: Writing, Revising, Publishing and Teaching* (McFarland, 2012) on the list of Best Books for Writers by *Poets & Writers Magazine*. She has appeared in such journals as: *The Writer's Chronicle*, *13th Moon*, *English Journal*. Her poetry has received a Pushcart nomination, a National Federation of State Poetry Societies Award, and other recognitions. Her reviews have appears in *Serving House Journal*, *Quarterly Small Press Review*, and others.

Pete Wolf Smith's poems, fiction, and non-fiction have appeared in numerous magazines, most recently *Bridges*, *Jewish Currents*, *Kerem/Living Text*, *Jews*, *Twelve*, *Peace Review*, and *The New York Review of Science Fiction*.

Evelyn A. So's poetry may be found in *Caesura*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *Measure: A Review of Formal Poetry*, *Red Wheelbarrow (National Edition)*, and *Reed Magazine*, among others. Her nonfiction is included in the anthology *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here*.

Karen Terrey is a writing coach and offers workshops through her business Tangled Roots Writing. Her poems have appeared in *Rhino*,

Edge, Meadow, WordRiot, Puerto Del Sol, Wicked Alice, Canary, and Gray Sparrow Journal. She blogs at www.karenaterrey.blogspot.com.

Laura Thompson earned her MFA in Poetry from Vermont College of the Fine Arts and is currently enrolled in the PhD program in English and Comparative Literature at the University of Cincinnati. Her work has appeared in *The Tributary*, *The Guardian*, *Tiger's Eye*, *The Fertile Source*, and *Oysters and Chocolate*. She lives in Cincinnati with her gecko, tortoise, axolotl, and hedgehog.

Madeline Tiger's recent collections are *Birds of Sorrow and Joy: New and Selected Poems, 1970-2000* (2003), *The Earth Which Is All* (2008), *The Atheist's Prayer* (2010), and *From the Viewing Stand*, (2011). Her work appears regularly in journals and anthologies. She has been teaching in state programs and private workshops since 1973 and has been a "Dodge Poet" since 1986. She has five children and seven grandchildren and lives in Bloomfield, NJ under a weeping cherry tree.

Cetoria Tomberlin is a poet and fiction writer who lives in Northwest Georgia. She received her bachelor's degree in creative writing from Berry College. Her work has previously appeared in *Fairy Tale Review*, *Southern Women's Review*, *The Battered Suitcase*, and *Spires*. She is currently at work on her first novel.

John J. Trause, the Director of Oradell Public Library, is the author of *Eye Candy for Andy (13 Most Beautiful... Poems for Andy Warhol's Screen Tests)*; *Inside Out, Upside Down, and Round and Round*; the chapbook *Seriously Serial*; and *Latter-Day Litany*, the latter staged Off-Off Broadway. His translations, poetry, and visual work appear internationally in many journals and anthologies, including the artists' periodical *Crossings*, the Dada journal *Maintenant*, and the avant-garde journal *Offerta Speciale*. His artwork has been exhibited in The Museum of Modern Art Staff Show (1995), at Il Trapezio Café (Nutley, NJ), and in the permanent collection of The Museum of Menstruation (New Carrollton, MD) to whose website he has contributed.

Chavisa Woods is a Brooklyn-based writer and artist. Her debut collection of short stories, *Love Does Not Make Me Gentle or Kind* (Fly By Night Press, 2009) was a Lambda Literary Award finalist for Debut Fiction. *The Albino Album*, her first novel, was released this spring by Seven Stories Press. Woods is the recipient of the 2009 Jerome

Foundation Award for emerging writers. She has read or performed at the Whitney Museum, Penn State, the New York Vision Festival, the NYC HOWL Festival, and many others.

Jen Wos grew up in North Jersey before studying creative writing and film at Emerson College. While serving in the Peace Corps in Turkmenistan from 2004–2006, she met Haticha K., whose memoirs and family history are the basis for Jen's first novel, *Uprooted*. A longer version of this excerpt was first published by Damselfly Press.