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EDITOR
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No issues were published between 1997 and 2001.

I'm late!
I'm late!
For a very important date!
No time to say "Hello", goodbye!
I'm late!
I'm late!
I'm late!

—Bob Hilliard

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Eamonn Wall

I Was Singing, Tu Fu

Glare from snow
glitter from lake,
fake breeze blowing
full coffee cup.

Last of moonlight
dissolving down:
static water
clogging pools.

A lone goose,
I fly still
between ignorance
and gain.

Know that among
the ecologists,
my name will
never be spoken.

Blood of piggeries
flooded our rivers,
nitrates covered our
fields: I was singing.

Elizabeth Langemak

Insulting the Masters

September, 2001

Few are the words not insulting
to even the most practiced of masters,
and though they weight their pain

well it's still pain and like pain it floats
from their answers and onto the table,
a body of rot struggled up to the surface,

placid, past caring, for you. Over lunch
they will spill you the sounds of their language,
the chat of old immigrants still drilling

their tongues, recalling what it's like
to be known. Your failure to grasp it will be
disappointing, though if you're lucky,

amusing—your accent is funny, your breasts
cheer him up, your shtick reminiscent
of a three-legged puppy: he sees straight

through your limp, he admires your chutzpah,
words turn to air-funerals even
between you. Of the masters I've known

my favorite sat silent three courses. She will
take home my leavings, he toned, looking down
to his plate when the waiter came by

with the check cloaked in leather
and while we each tongued a mint
I watched without speaking

as he gazed through the long wall
of window into the street and vague sunlight
of fall, where life was somehow still

Langemak

walking on streets and eating its lunches.
What he said was everything
will change now, nothing could remain

the same. And though, of course, he was
wrong, I have often wished he was not, or
that I had taken his leavings or believed,

for even a moment, that he could be right.

Michael Salcman

Year of the Prophet

On this day in Baghdad
they shot the green grocer dead,
strewing his all too suggestive display
of tomatoes and carrots into the street,
and killed some of his sons for sexual blasphemy
before they burned down the shop.

On this day, the clock on that steaming wall
stopped at first, then spun back so fast
the centuries turned past
and its braided copper wires burned and fell,
dissolved in the melt of an apothecary glass
hurriedly set up as a water clock.

On this day, April followed September
and the heat dried up all that was wet
until nothing but grains of sand remained;
these fell ponderous and slow, decade by decade
from an upper chamber pointed at heaven
to its fat-bellied brother sitting in hell.

Why Aren't the Flags at Half-Staff Every Day?

At the Post Office the flag flew at half-staff today.
Some big shot politician had died.
I thought of all the dead soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.
Why aren't the flags at half-staff every day?

They took the same oath that politicians take—
Uphold, defend the Constitution of these States.
I thought of all the dead sailors, airmen, marines, and soldiers.
Why aren't the flags at half-staff for their sake?

And we fly the flag at half-staff for old men
Who died in bed, who squeezed life until it fled their grasp.
I thought of all the dead airmen, marines, soldiers, and sailors.
Why aren't the flags at half-staff every day?

We fly the flag at half-staff like some teddy bear dump
And flower repository, just exactly like those instant memorials.
I thought of all the dead marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen,
And the two days a year set aside to mourn them.

The rifle squads are practicing, the pall bearers
Practice folding the flag from the corpses' caskets.
Somewhere a bugler practices playing *Taps*. Tell me, please,
Why aren't the flags at half-staff every day?

This war, this fucking war, this motherfucking war.

John Randall

Lightning Bug

All of this déjà vu I've got.
I'll get it here or there
and grant to myself
its profundity. As if
gnostically through me
came the signal of
some tragic event's onset—
a terrorist bombing,
the death of a friend or a relative.
A glimpse into a past or future life.

It's crazy.
I'll look at the clock
and it'll be 9:11 or 9:11
and I'll think I've
somehow keyed into knowledge
that something bad
has happened, somewhere.
But then I think about
all the screwed-up
clocks throughout the world,
twenty-four time zones (at least),
the international date line, Indiana—
And, really, at any minute
of the day
any asshole
could be looking at his clock
and thinking the same thing.

Michael Lee Johnson

Indiana

A few tales
of the reasons
I love Indiana.
Breaking loose from the state line
of Illinois, bursting down the Indiana
toll road, near Lake Station
heading south,
smelling smoke of old
gray steel mills
seeping out
of Gary,
left behind me,
steel men, strong men,
ribs of fire, courage of
union dreamers,
long gone & most laid off,
pension plans stolen,
now gas station employees,
travelers of the
past, snuff chewers,
& labor wages,
small lakes & fishing ponds
with half sunken boats
with tips pointed sky high,
& memories dripping
off the lips of clouds.
I'm banging out 75 mph,
in my raspberry
Geo Tracker;
but as Jesus said: "I tell you
the truth":
nothing ever changes in
Indiana but the seasons
& the size of the corn ears.

The Day the Cows Came to Visit

Without warning they came fifteen strong
in black and tan and white up the gravel driveway.
They came confident, ten thousand pounds strong,
for the first time. This homestead this early
morning seemed as much paradise as anywhere.
In a trail marked by shit paint
the yearling heifers kicked up their heels,
trotting straight to this gate to confront
the pampered alarmed horses.
In a milling beefy swirl these youngsters
destined for slaughter mooded their hello.
The dogs barked the message *You have no business here.*
Out of bed now in pre-coffee scruffiness,
the day crowding in, we blundered outside,
our human faces enough to make the herd backtrack.
By the time we checked again,
the party had settled comfortably
at the pond, ready to eat and shit all day
under the trees in the zen quiet.
When we came enmass with cowboy yells
the cows made a panicked shift to the garden
to pulverize cucumbers, beans, corn,
with clodhopper hooves and drool.
And then they were gone, up the road
to the neighbors and beyond, on to the far woods.
Later we traced their path. First through the
pasture opening. Then as one through the woods,
across the creek to old Roy's cabin,
where scared by Gay, they took the north road
skirting the creek up to our world.
By the time we left for work,
I could hear farmer Greene, the man with the grain,
explaining in his stolid calls the boundaries of their world.
At my car, appropriately dressed for a day
of cow-less interaction, I look for their wide open eyes,
still excited by their visit, half-hoping they'll return
after the harvest when all goes to waste.

Ghazal for the Night Train While You're Gone

Birmingham, AL

One plays a song with the whistle. (He isn't on tonight).
The dogs kick in their sleep to it sometimes.

Green pecans fall; one. One. One.
Figs stop ripening. Stay.

We are what I want. You
Lie in Los Angeles. Eighth floor. No,

You are what I want. Asleep.
Lights. Traffic under hotel bed.

Want. Low. Everything lying down.
Everything waiting. We are.

Train comes. Long whistle. Long again. Pure dark
And noise. Cicadas lose to it. Stop breath altogether.

Stronger. The cold train going. Like Anna's train.
Heat, cicadas return. Swelter. Dogs turn

Turn and lie down. Turn and lie down.
Lick paws lie down.

Flick on security sytem. Counts.
Blares beeps one by one. Then faster. Set.

You can't know, can you.
How everything aches. Might though.

Held in. Locked down. Shut up.
Something (Aches) Might.

Evans

—Odd. Should be here. Oh well. Listen.
Dreams coming on hush
now—dog long sighs

(Train gone).

Cameron Scott Conway II

Stone Valley

Indian paintbrush splashes
red on summer in Stone Valley

where the river splinters,
newly hatched mayflies glide across
the reflection of trees to dry

their wings so they can fly
before they die.

Brooding below cutthroat trout
surface and suck,
their red gills opening

and ending the lives
of water-winged mayflies.

Hidden by its oblivion, wings spread
and the white head of a bald eagle
scours the still sky,

its flight mere seconds
to the long song of a whippoorwill.

A gaggle of geese flutter
wildly in contrast
to their precisely painted faces.

The eagle lands, folds its wings,
waits quietly for the clutter to cease,

then explodes in a sprint
unloading another round
of chaos into the calm.

Nancy A. Henry

News

Based on letters of the Starke family of Schoenfeld, Germany and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Young Berthe Starke, while still a teenager, crossed the Atlantic in the 1890s and settled in Wisconsin. Later, others of her family followed.

Papa

Dear Berthe,
Innermost best wishes on this
first birthday as a wife!
And may you come to many more such days
in the circle of your hopefully
not too few descendants.
You look so well with your Gustav
in the wedding photo.
I rejoice to see it.
Remember, dear one
to possess everything
is not the true joy.
One's own home,
two people who are good to each other,
love and peacefulness
are what make us happy in this world.
All else that we call happiness
is the snake with its beautiful clothes
and poison teeth in anger.
Your loving
Papa.

Fritz

Dear Berthe
How we long to be with you
at your binding to your own Gustav—
so handsome in the photographs
like a presidential candidate!
But, dear sister, travel
on the postage coach is hard.
Last month, when Karl was driving it,
he was thrown from the wagon
and the horses ran wild for miles.
When he found them at last,
the harness and buggy were in pieces.
Our payment for the winter feed was due,
and he was liable for ten dollars' worth
of damage. Please do not be angry
that we remain at home, knowing
the loss of mail is punished by
thirteen years of jail!
We have had enough such excitement
for one season.
We send blessings and will festoon
your bower with sweet gifts
on some bright future day.
With love, your
Fritz.

Otto

Dearest Sister ,
As you know
I have left the mother house
and taken work as an apprentice
in a fine, clean shop.
I am still healthy, God be thanked!
I pray the same for you.
How pleased I am to learn
that you have stepped into
the opportunity to mend
a fine young husband's pants!
Our brother Ernst has left for Hanover
to see the world or, at very least,
the Rhine. Dear sister, after Christmas
I may follow.
Proudly,
Otto S., butcher's apprentice.
Written in haste!

Henry

Pauline

Dear Sister,
On this first day of married life
take off your child's shoes!
May you fare better
Than have I.
Where is the time?
Only, always, behind us.
The storms of life flood over us.
An evil world, with nothing certain.
Be courageous; grab hold
To the burning globe of joy!
With all hopes,
Your loving,
Pauline.

Anneliese

Dear loving friend,
The past year has put us in such grief!
Good sister passed away in January,
and just as we thought to put aside
our mourning clothes the good God
saw fit to take our mother, too.
Frau Hubner, whom you may recall
for all her kindnesses and good bread
has also died. But let me put aside
these sorrows to say what joy
your wedding picture brings!
Such happy news from your new land.
Oh Berthe, how I long for our good times
and to share our girlish secrets once more.
My loving marriage has brought me
little Willie, full of so much fun and joy.
May this letter find you in the best of health
with many such surprises on their way!
Your faithful Anneliese.

Mama

Dearest Berthe,
Happiest wishes on your birthday!
Santa Klaus arrived for us as usual,
Leaving Father an overshirt, six handkerchiefs,
and a case of good tobacco.
For me, your loving Mama, many cups and dishes,
Kitchen towels, and a handsome cutting board.
The children were surprised with a fine sled,
and all the necessary clothes and shoes.
At church, the little ones all knew their lines
and sang so admirably. Such fun!
Do you remember?
Our greetings to your dear husband,
his grandmother, and the chickens!
We have heard your favorite hen
grows much too fat—you absolutely
must hang the breadbasket higher!
With warm embraces,
Mama.

Otto

Dear sister, it pains me to share with you
What I may tell now that you are
a married woman, surely wise
in all the ways of this sad world.
I have parted ways with my sweet fiancée
and broken our engagement.
Word came to me in anonymous letter
that in early youth she let her womanly honor
be stolen away. To me she has said nothing.
Though I am only a simple butcher
I would not willingly spend my life
in such a devious bond.
Your brother Otto,
sadly disappointed
in all his hopeful plans.

Berthe

Dearest Mother,
Gustav and I have paid passage
for 15 persons.
Gunter and all his children
can come for half the price
if he will declare them all
less than twelve years old.
You must leave soon,
or Ernst and Otto will be soldiers,
shuttled here and there
and probably shot dead,
when they could be in America
making a lot of money.
Bring bedding and clothes only,
and store some camphor in the trunks.
Tell no one what I have written
but do not hesitate to come.
With urgency, your loving
Berthe.

Sally

Dearest Berthe and Gustav,
Please send five dollars
or we will have to kill the pigs this week.
Up to now we've fed them potatoes
but these will soon be gone.
In November, the cow will calve
and all will again be well.
But now the cow is dry, I have no egg,
cannot buy salt, and all things here
are so expensive. We still are saving
for a horse.
It pains me to press you for this charity
which Fritz cannot bear to ask of you
himself. He does all he can.
But children must be fed.
It shames me to ask it,
Knowing you await your little one.
With prayers and tears,
Sally

Pauline

Dearest Sister,
we have received your tragic news.
We send our innermost condolences
and are so sad to learn
that after all your pain the little one
did not survive. Dear Berthe,
think on this—the little angel
chose the best. For what befalls us
in this world? Grief and worry.
We thank God that you yourself survived,
And that dear Mother was by your side.
For our part there is so much to do;
pick potato beetles off the plants all day,
and there are caterpillars in the cabbage.
We have so many raspberries on our bush,
but there is no time to pick them.
If only you were here.
Your loving,
Pauline.

Sasha Pimentel

Blackface

Blueberry picking we
teach other faces, draw
black mustaches, black
cheeks, rub on wet
foreheads, wet lips, say
look, like Mammy, we
look like Mammy, black
as a berry, black as the juice
pinched from our thumbs,
our teeth white, our eyes
white, our hair tipped black—
blueberry sticking seeds
in our mouths, blueberry
dripping our tongues, blueberry
in our palms, blueberry
from our nails, gobs and gobs
in our hands, we are
blueberry happy, wet and black
and tangling into each other
like snakes shifting forms.

George Spencer

Goya's Dog

Goya's dog saw everything;
wings of Icarus aflame,
liver of Prometheus laid open,
Eve packing pots, pans, bedrolls.
He enchanted the moon
in a key so high the gods winced
and he heard poor Prometheus scream,
Eve sob, could smell burning wings.

He watches us wash the car,
the hands, dress for sacred days,
all in post breakfast languored contentment,
sees us dreaming about the holy family,
among cut flowers, thumbing soiled books
in incensed, tinted air,
listening to a robed white man talking about another white man
who sent his only boy to be tortured on a fool's mission.

But this dog knew too much about washing of hands,
burning wings, knowledge forbidden, predestination,
full stomached contentment on Sunday morning

so they took him to the end of the world,
shot him after Goya finished his painting
now on the third floor of the Prado
and commented on at length by tour guides
who should know how quickly travelers' minds
turn to more pleasant thoughts.

Marilyn McCabe

Eve, looking back

How the body remembers:
sudden plunge of stomach

feet chill
hands chill

eyes wide
with what you've done, how

recklessly you used your
tongue, what

hunger
you revealed in

the ready parting
of your lips

Margaret Rozga

What Now, Eve?

Okay, then, we'll start over.
If we have to leave this place,
Life won't be all roses and clover,
But we can still carry on with grace.

If we have to leave this place,
Let's go as boldly as we dare.
We can still carry on with grace,
The only question's where.

Let's go boldly as we dare
Explore new lands, rove,
Or face the question where
We'll settle in a new home, Love.

Explore new lands, rove,
If life won't be all roses and clover.
We'll settle in a new home, Love.
Okay, then? We'll start over.

Your Daughter, Eve's Daughter

In the dark cool of our cellar
I watch you, Mom, choose an apple
For its bruise—we wouldn't want
The whole barrel to spoil, would we?
For years I don't answer.

Then I try to tell my brother's wife,
But she hears the words fall like old stones
As though I have become you.
No. I will not have such words
Become my flesh. My way's this:

At my turn, I charge up the stairs
Out again to the garden
To the tree where fruit blushes in the sun
Unblemished. There, no serpentine twists,

I have my pick. Later, it's true,
I'm tempted to see your way.
I bear a child in pain, and in pain
Thereafter bear with her.

But I've not yet fallen. Mother,
Neither of us secured the whole barrel.
You had your taste with a bite of mush, and
Mine, oh, God, how fresh, clean and crisp.

Luna

Our eyes are the last of our senses to evolve. How long does it take for our hearts to form? My younger sister, Krisey, will tell me a year later, during the fifth week of her second pregnancy, that her baby is the size of a sesame seed, still a cluster of cells, and it's during this stage of development the heart will divide into chambers and begin to pump blood. I wondered, in that critical week, if the emotional connections to the heart can be stunted, or if that's purely an adult thing. I thought about this cluster of cells, a pinpoint of life pushing against the walls of the cell, and what strength and endurance the cells had to have in order to grow, expand—all of who will acquire the ability to store desire and memory in a blind darkness. A pounding coordination had begun in the body, for a body. But that's not what I am thinking about, as I climb onto the back of a Harley Davidson motorcycle for the first time.

My fingers are linked and locked through the belt loops of your jeans—a secure place I discover after holding on to you too tight, accidentally tickling you out of your motorcycle concentration.

The winged parts of the hipbones, the iliac, winged out, like an amphitheatre and one of the six major cavities in the body. This pelvic cavity is designed like a cave to protect the potential life that sleeps deep inside. Resting between the expansions of this bone, fallopian flowers still bud in a dark field of my muscle.

My hips hook my pants in place. I touch my stomach and imagine the flatness I know is just beneath a layer of fat, then rest my hands back on my hips. I am made from an outline of ash and bone, but my mind has the power to be in all places of my body at once. I'm not as robotic as I sometimes feel. A robot has neither a heart nor hipbones.

The Truth About Sons

Our fathers are a static segue until the day they die.

They wake us for holiday in the sapphire of summer mornings
when not all the lampposts are convinced of daybreak.

We step into their suburban amber
and pack the trunk of the Pontiac Parisienne with an efficiency
which we hope says something about our manhood.

A jazz of transition binds our lungs between
headlight and twilight.

Our palms press the passenger windows
and sense they will feel good rolled down come noon;
that they will be a vital tool of rejuvenation to keep
mother and sister satisfied on the long drive.

Meanwhile the sun finally skys with the musk of a Conoco.
We glaciare the cooler and ignite the first pff-ackle of a Pepsi's
pull-tab.

Then life is a hajj of interstate through disgusting towns like
Needles, CA or Stroud, OK.

The last time it all happens is the first time
we're old enough to help with the night driving and an animal
or construction cone jumps
in front of the car on a Wyoming mountain wind with no shoulders.
We swerve; prevail as defensive drivers
and our navigators jostle awake in the glow of odometers to
dart their eyes between the road ahead and the backseat. Then
look deep into the whites of our peripheral vision and say to us
You did it son. You saved our girls.

But our fathers we've suspended back in those starry mornings.
They stand postponed
in the driveways of our adolescence and teach us
everything we know about beginnings.
We pine to only share our lives with them in that moment
terrified that when they duck into the captains chair
the irreversible clap of the car door is the first of a great many
last words we will ever get to hear them say.

Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Fred

wants to take care of the drunk girl,
steer her by her coat belt,
protect her lovely bobbing head.

wants to hoist her over his shoulder,
her stiff legs like plastic doll legs touching
his cheek; wants to lay her down, smooth her sober;

wants to not stare at her chin line,
the slanted feet in heels, the protruding
bottom lip, wagging for attention.

Francis Bacon

His feet and hands turn around him
like inter-locking gears
and disappear as after-light in a black hole.
His belly swells and inside is dark and crushes things.
Not even sound,
not even small faces or last groans can escape.
There are always the spirits, the windstorm,
the lightning, the glowing metal—billions of
his primitive selves that terrify.
Though he disappears, he paints for
those above the sound of the rivers,
those in the room where blackbirds are at rest
and emeralds are erased.

Roy Mash

Doodle

The hand begins by going off
on its own,
dashing across open space,
veering this way and suddenly that:
a pleasant careen,
the brain stuck in the back seat
staring out the window,
the pencil just along for the ride.

Feel of the page
on the side of the palm. Feel
of the pencil tip trailing
a wake of paper.
Feel of the freeway,
top down.
The skater's gracious embrace
of air.

It is as though the hand has eloped
with itself,
toddled off to trespass the blue
rules, the white divides:
a Ouija slider released from its ghost,
ambling among the portentous
letters and numbers and signs, happy
just to gibberish.

No one is watching. Nobody cares
if you are fool enough
to leave corkscrews all over the place, or if
in the mishmash of crisscross and curlicue,
something that looks like "Kathy"
should sprout like a roman candle out of the top
of something
that might be a head.

Hands

Most of the time I am more body than mind.
For instance, look at me when I eat,
the hand, like a shovel throwing dirt
into the back of an old pick-up truck.
My mouth a tunnel, a receptacle, cavity,
made to funnel food down to my gut.

But, sometimes, I am more mind than body.
I watch the world from inside, behind the walls,
criticizing, analyzing, resenting, plotting.
Even for moments I venture out simply
to love.

My hands, flip and flap, I watch them, enjoying their
charm, each moment like a new acquaintance,
making beneficent circles, staccato stabs,
threatening, accusing. At best they stretch up
to the firmaments like gods.

I like to observe them because they are the other,
for I would never be so outspoken. I was really
raised to be timid and polite. I am not really a
fighter. Perhaps that is why I am so angry.

Jenny Sadre-Orafai

After Falling

The asymmetric shape of pink red,
the color of grapefruit guts, rests on her knee.
She must preserve the color.

Learning to pivot on the good leg in showers,
she cups her hand over the edge of the knee.
Water only dilutes the pink mess.

By the third day, the pink is turning
and into a color she wants to compare
to another fruit—the pit of a peach.

After weeks, it is a shiny place.
She wants to compare it to a semi-precious stone—
opal—a creamy sheen reflecting light on its own.

Annulus

Newton stuck a pin in his own eyes
to change the shape of his retina.
You wonder if you did something.
Darkness seeps into your eyes.

The sun seems bright as ever.
You want to howl and start a fire.

Once you saw people's faces narrowing
into crescents in a departing train.
You were seven years old,
had lost your ticket and cried.

Something has returned.
It is transmuting everything
leaves and slits between your fingers.
Everywhere the crescent shadows.

You consider calling your doctor.
You cover each eye
in turn to test the shadows
that sharpen into thread-thin hooks.

You shudder and realize
you are being watched.
She has stepped between you
and the sun.

Am I Seeing This?

I wait to see if the world will burn
but no smoke curls up from between my lids.
In dozens of shots the laser fires
a green flash bursts
its dark corolla of argon
in my eye, welds shut the U-shaped flap
that threatens to divorce me
from my hierophantic pleasures.
Vinod says I might as well roll up
my treasure, my books, the pictures
on the walls, the spongy cavities of the soul
I enter in my day job if
this thin carpet of ganglion cells
he wants to zap, its color-seeking cones,
its shadow-loving rods, lifts away
just a bit more. The laser clicks. I think
I must not move and make him miss,
my aching eye squeezed beneath the jellied lens
he holds like a shot glass
or a dice cup on a bar top.
Though I know poor Joyce would've taken this bet
in a heartbeat, I hold my breath:
Vinod's face hangs there in the darkness,
one moment he's as pale as Veronica's silk,
the next he's gone in a shimmer of fireworks;
the laser clicks.

Instinct: burial

finding the skull first, fragile
as an eggshell, even the beak

the feet, curled around nothing
that could hold it steady in the sky

came next; the netting of bones
caging the fledgling penna

none of it bound together, none
of it anything but delicate in demise

pry gently from the soil,
wrap in soft cloth

find a spot in the iris bed where
rhizomes, both vault and headstone

will serve as sepulcher
to this fallen piece of sky,
remnant of flight

Jordan Reynolds

Baroque

from the Portugese: *barroco*: irregular shaped pearl

It came in the shape of sky opening
above us. The birds of any sort
were the imperfections
slicing through its smooth.

And the mood hung
like glossed over clouds.
Plastic slowly melted and drifted
off. The shape of sky

became waves; vein of light
cracked on the surface
and stung deep down. The horizon
of the shape itself.

The wavering powdered
out the leaves and they blurred.

An Old Man and His Sea

“In age the sea becomes more and more present as source and as that to which one returns, metaphorically perhaps but also quite literally, losing any signifying name and function, entering the utterly common fate of all beyond any differentiation or exception. There is no longer a locating ground.”

—Robert Creeley—

There were no fish there
to lash to wormed boat-
wood but he tugged some bare,
wriggling verse out

of the chop. Tides with
ceaseless swell! Steeped
meanings, brined. With
crippled hands kept

warm all winter, but plunged
to ice for words. The slipped
sound gripped, hung
over a fire. Pages striped

like ridges of fat from salmon.
Many a muffled confession
stopped up, essence of man
embroiled. Final progressions

up and down again. Last
of ebb, and daylight waning
the horizon. Gone past
some firmness, sea warning:

death, death, death, death.

Permission

If you want to dig up a man in another state
you have to write a judge first
and announce your intentions like the foregone
foregone was his only daughter. Are you out to A,
prove a theory, B, determine traces of arsenic, or C,
say hello. Some reasons hold up more than others.

Also, is the man in question in Texas or Tennessee
or a state no country song has dared yet touch.
Know your dirt. Did X take a second look
out the stagecoach window if the sunset was especially fine?
Did the last day rays draw a tear or did a tobacco plug
and poor disposition damn up the very last floodgate?
Would the Dearly D consider one pea worth lifting
fork to mouth for, or leave it to roll on in oblivion.

Be prepared to be patient. If no bullet turns up,
go back again and study the handwriting,
the way the T's tuck in, the way the Y's, like
hell-bent sinners, wildly flourish, taking advantage
of God's most questionable mercies.

Sasha Pimentel

Divorce Language

In our house a shadow slips
the walls. Just between you and me

is nothing. Outside is us.
Once, cutting a chicken, I found your

bones in it: the moist neck, yellow skin, all that
hardness pushing under flesh

and my fingers. And here's the rub:
your thumb, smearing my mouth—

my nails
digging moons

up your back. We came
with baby, it became ours,

and the ours and ours we spent, sweat
from our tongues.

We spiraled into separate argot,
rubbing tongues on teeth.

Skip Renker

Morning Pointers

Kitchen table thoughts build the day,
 slowmoving, wind-aided,
everchanging masses of gray,
 clouds both in the striated
mind and out, beginning,
 like bubbling oatmeal, to thicken
and congeal. The spinning
 planet seems to quicken.
One boy bounces in, the other
 straggles, Saturday bedhead.
For awhile, brother versus brother,
 then calm. We're all fed,
and spun by the round
 embodied presence of . . . who? what?
I swallow, then pronounce
 some names—Allah, Rama, God—
but names, I know, are neither the spinner
 nor the stuff from which the worlds
are spun. A name's a pointer
 only, another of the words
that pass like shadows and light
 across the domed ceiling of the mind,
deceiving, revealing, dark, bright,
 though we try to find
what we feel, and a language for it.
 Today I'll raise
the roof a little, walk out
 into the slow-arriving season, praise
the fitful sun, the shapely clouds,
 bring the kids, send up a kite.
I like to hear their shouts,
 faces lifted toward that height.

Adrienne Lewis

Self-Portrait

An ocean liner, a slight ripple
the only hint of its wake. Ashen rose petals

curled upon an unsteady ground, charred remains
of something that will drift away.

A honey-colored glass, brimming
with slurred syllables. A frankness,

demanding a key to a lock I do not own.

Gutters

On a Theme by Howard Nemerov

The neighbors, new gutters are piled in rows
along the edge of the street as if for sale.
They've waited weeks for the painted drains, a white
coat to match the fresh glaze on the front shutters
and window frames. They're out today, the neighbors,
and the threat of rain and storms drove the men paid
to install the gutters away. The dog needed
a walk this afternoon, the storm passed,
and he spied the conduits full of rain. He pondered
peeing on the drains, but I jerked his leash around
and we both bumped one of the frames. The inch or two
of water inside the trough moved back and forth
against the corrugated edge until
draining out of the spout. The narrow stream
seemed to be telling me Hello and Goodbye
at once as I stood there, something you could have said
to me, still half-asleep in bed, before
you drove to work, not knowing of the black
ice upon the Sandy River Bridge—
something I should have said to you that morning.
It's something I'm saying to you now, today,
watching the rain race down the windowpanes
and fall into our gutters and drain away.

Danville , Virginia

When the mossy adage was strewn in the eyes
of a doe, she came just to die
in the porchlight, or rather to bathe
the dusk wane. With a glance
diverted you spun a procession, your pace
through honey approached her stalk, at first
I thought it was natural, the marriage
of porcelain in the art of shadow, but

then it was just you, standing with blankets
and eyes and your left arm behind your back
like a timid child over a cold nymph still
as the air fell still to level
the kneeling in us. You kneeled nonetheless
on a corner of light, to miss her last
breathprint, the plank third from the edge,
though one reach of her breath spread its vagrant
bloom under the kitchen door and shrouded
your eyes were the shrouds of a delicate adage.

It is comfortable,
at ease between porchlight and a treeline we know.

Balcony

And I saw a pale torso
and brown houseplant,
sadness sawed off into
tiny squares. No lanterns.
no tableau vivant, victorious
suburbanite froze in front
of his grill, in spatula and toga,
no three graces and their four
kids still dripping chlorine
from swimming lessons at the Y.
No delicious smell of stew drifting
out, bubbling pot with tomato
hearts buried deep in the terra
sancta firma.

Bird matter crusts the railings.
The trees in the parking lot—brave
sticks with flagging constitutions.
Is it wrong to imagine fern balm
binding up the brick, the hammer
come back to the boards to chasten
these nails growing up like errant
weeds.

The Dead Stand at the Corner

Ask the stars to sing, to mask
the sound of decaying maples.

Ask graying naked limbs to heal
over, cracked bark to become whole

again, ask leaves to unfold to green.
White skin translates the wind

by creaking, breaking
away and splintered at the hip

struggling with thinning arms
to stand again, to position the earth

with the stars of children singing
through the core of its root

as moonlight casts a delicate cross
in spindles upon the sidewalk.

Stars Really Look Like

these concrete streets, square life-spaces,
work-weeks, weekends, movies, and bar-night
fridays send us to the trees outside town
to the gowns of Ozark mountains north
of the county. Build a fire, cook a meal,
grab a new drunk under connate canopy

far from the spin of it all: city, degrees, free
parking zones, Wi-fi, mochachino,
drive-thrus. See freedom in opposites:
in the shudder of birds cracking a lakefront
with song in the earliest of hours, smouldering
dew on the ground before the fog's forced up
unassailable against limestone outcroppings
remembering again what the stars really look like

Faux primitives hide in tents, huddle campgrounds
for the feeling of the ATM, another crystal-tear sky
wrenched with a Christian grade-school sign
and the bloody logos of Verizon and Coke

Space Journal: The Imaginary Guardian

Did you clone me again
from a single strand of black hair?

Shadows of grass stir
over white sand. I hold still
in scorching heat, see time slowing
on the hummingbird's wings.

I curl in the womb drifting
at half the light speed
surrounded by a dark sea of vacuum.

A girl wreathed in purple gardenias
names the leaves of a water oak
after stars in the Milky Way.
A recluse sips blue tea from a clay cup
cross-referencing poetry spanning
ten thousand years.
A pilot of intergalactic ships
puts her life in your invisible hands.

The womb trembles with my pulse.
Neurons connect, mapping past lives.

The sun swims in ponds:
transient gold fish in land's liquid eyes.
The willow's tender shoots
wrap me in green smoke.

When the womb expels me,
will you receive me with luminous arms?

**The Difference Between Disappearing and Missing
(a birdless sky)**

This is the closest we've been
in years. We will have to talk
through a telephone. I could touch your face
if it weren't for the Plexiglas
between us, and everything else.
You could plead nothing but guilty. You couldn't
achieve the velocity your heart desired
even with all the drugs and stolen cars.
So much time wasted in blackouts, being locked out
from church after absconding
with empty collection plates. All you have
is your bruised knuckles and handless clocks.
As soon as I pick up the phone
words spring from the solitary confinement
of your mouth. I understand nothing
you say. I don't know if in two years
you've had single a visitor.
When you finally pause
I tell you I have a purpose for being here
which is not to see you
but to tell you
your mother is dead. She lay for two days
before she was discovered. She was found
by accident when the landlord
was showing the apartment
to a young couple. The front door
wasn't locked. No, I don't know
the cause of death. They buried her quickly
with no autopsy, a mystery
not worth solving. A steel-voiced guard shouts
and you walk away stunned
as a bird who finds the end
of the sky. Your shadow hanging
where your neck broke.
I drive to your mother's

Kerschbaum

sparsely attended funeral
where no one mentions
your absence.

Richard Luftig

Flight Plan

She is happiest when she can open
her magazines upside-down and shake
out the snowstorm of postcards that flutter
and land softly on the kitchen table.

Carefully, she'll bubble in all the circles
destinations that follows one another
in perfect alphabetical order,
warm and sunny and ending in vowels;

Montenegro, Palermo, Sao Paulo, Santo Domingo,
anywhere away from this flatness
where the worn-weary landscape does little
more than proclaim the coming of another night.

In a few days, a week, a lifetime from now,
she'll walk up the long gravel drive
and spread out the brochures on the table
like place settings for welcome dinner guests

and dream of flying east across
the ocean, east to where each hour
suspends time, so far east
that daylight can last forever.

She'll wish her way through clouds,
green, blue, transparent, free
soaring above this life, this place
that has always looked better in the dark.

Among the Clouds

for Ross Gay

Often, in our adolescent zeal,
We tend our gardens based on how we feel,

Forgetting that our roots are dug in dust,
That smiling serpents everywhere will trust

Our foolish flaws to fall in sudden love,
To plow a non-resistant path, a groove

So smooth that we, hungry for touch, anoint
Some Eros, or some false god, who disappoints,

Who never satisfies. I must confess,
I, too, at times, have come to detest

My own dumb faith in seismic swells. I've yearned
For beauty, bounty—only to be spurned,

To be left soaring high, like some child's kite,
Confusing altitude for true delight.

Marilyn McCabe

Phoenix Rising

The fire burned high,
bolts of copper, bronze,
peacock.
Days later
when it had smoldered to ash,
we gathered
to see the worm.

It was even less than we'd imagined:
paler, smaller, seeming
barely alive.
We shrugged,
still resolute, still
willing to believe, and we turned
back to our tasks,
let the worm be.

It grew,
and molted,
five times.
Then a strange shell formed
that shone like gold.

Inside the case, the worm
melted (so are we so near to liquid,
never far from tears)
and from that watery heart formed
a new body,
limbs, the tracery
of wings.

Someone finally noticed
the jerking of the thing, the awful
spasms,
and called us to watch
as it lurched

out. We stared
at the poor, weak thing, wings
wet and crumpled.

This is what has risen?
This is what will take us to the sun?

Demeter Tries Again to Pray

I prefer to work on my memoir alone
in the cool of morning, when light is dim
but promising. It is the best time
to make sense of all the contradictions.
Later in the afternoon visitors
will come, a family from Eleusis
more than likely, and they will stay
too long. They always stay too long.
The TV in the dayroom begins to drone,
no longer just a distraction. I try again
to pray but can't. The aroma of another
breakfast that I will skip again grows
stronger and outside my window the plain
begins to sprout the holy grain.
It was a necessary compromise.
And I gained, afterall, what I bargained for.
Faith never comes without a cost
and I have never believed in anything
without some thing, or one, dying first.
I need to explain I meant no harm to the boy;
the part about the fire was unavoidable.
It was more about me than his immortality.
Grief does that. The nurse will be here soon
with my morning meds, and Persephone
might come today. Never any closure.
Never.

Jen Karetnick

Milagros

For example: a leg, ham-hocked at the joint,
or an arm, separated from the shoulder joint—
with prayers these cheap tin charms they anoint

courtesy of the scrap-metal vendors
who display them outside the basilica, vendors
who bank their pesos on spiritual wonders

that may or may not be secular in nature –
to pin these to the altar is second nature,
either that or cut off the braids they nurture

their whole lives to offer like a sacrifice
or a trade. But it's easy to sacrifice
vanity when a woman's last true artifice

is unswerving belief in a virgin birth.
Someone, somewhere, rocks with mirth.

Substitute Sugars

The morning after the death
of the Pope, at the Jelly Belly factory
where his portrait hangs, fixed in candy
like pointillism gone mad, next to Elvis

with his licorice and cappuccino sideburns
and Ronald Reagan delineated in cream soda,
pleasant but long since flat, a band
called “The Hipwaders” belted out the theme

songs to animation—*Spongebob Squarepants*,
The Lion King—while we ate hot dogs,
carpeted with ketchup, in the hyper-cheerful
café. From the recorded message we’d gotten

instead of directions I’d thought they were
“The Hip Waiters,” picturing men in tuxedo
jackets and cargo pants—some combination
of Todd Oldham and Old Navy—but found instead

a Mel Brooks version of the Beach Boys,
encouraging toddlers to cry in four-part chorale.
I couldn’t blame them; I was there, too,
wearing a paper hat shaped like a hope

that had seen days more crisp
than just-buttered toast, rubber pants
on my leaking patience, answering
over and over why no Jelly Belly beans

tasted like Cabernet, even though then
Mommy might like them. In fact
all production had ceased, though not
because of the Pope; inventory was being taken,

particularly of the newest flavor, mango,
with its orange-pink skin flecked with green,
mimicking the tiny fruit just beginning
to peep like the eyes of frogs from beneath

the buds in our trees at home,
and blackberry, thorned fruit
I can never get to grow. John Paul II
lay in state, televised, polished

beyond rigor mortis for whatever resurrection
might come his way. I hope he wasn't disappointed.
The jelly beans, as it turns out, go through
three separate processes, tossed relentlessly,

drinking in the sanction of choice. In the end,
I bought ten pounds of Belly Flops,
those that didn't quite get what kidney
shapes are all about, and don't quite care

about livers, either. Like me, and the two kids
I know, or might know someday. Go ahead
and eat. It's okay to gorge yourself
in the name of terminal harmony.

Buying the Franklin

While cars were becoming more common in the years following World War One, largely due to the efforts of Henry Ford in implementing assembly-line techniques, lowering the costs of production and consequent market prices for consumers, the purchase of a new automobile was nevertheless considered an event. Ordering a Franklin then, at six times the cost of the Ford competitor, and taking the train from Toledo to Syracuse in Onondaga County, home of the H. H. Franklin Company, to take the factory tour and delivery of the 9-B, would have made that “event” an adventure for a farmer who thought to put himself behind the wheel of a car ordinarily owned by lawyers and physicians, the latter particularly since they required a reliable starter to make their housecalls in any weather.

The speaker of the poem is the real but partly fictionalized Bob Green, a lifetime resident of Bowling Green and proponent of the Franklin. Thirty-some years ago, following instinct, putting his thought, energy, and funds into the enterprise, Green began adapting contemporary overdrives to antique motocars, making them not only the attractive reminders they are of the automobile’s history but vehicles now roadworthy of late-twentieth century highways. The part-real, part-reconceived Bob Green speaks in kin’s behalf, in behalf of, in homage to the entrepreneurs, the engineers, and craftsmen peopling the story of the Franklin, a homage that might well be paid the full range of early twentieth century builders who meant their work to last.

The poem’s parts focus on the pivotal episode, when Green’s father purchased the family’s first Franklin in the early 20s. Considered further is the bearing of that purchase on the speaker, his family, and on his eventual career choices, beginning with the first notes he took during his father’s absence with his mottled hard-rubber Conklin fountain pen, manufactured in Toledo, and running up to the present day, mindful especially of his association with The Franklin Club which for decades has made its annual summer trek back to Upstate New York as a way of reaffirming its dedication to the company. The poem proceeds sometimes chronologically and sometimes in mixed chronology, meaning to suggest the ways dream and memory exercise their wills on us, enriching and empowering the present with their scope.

1

Pleased by her cupboards, plumbing,
the shut out-house beyond, and by the pots
the grandkids stow at cottages on Erie: my mother
in her kitchen, rubbing the sweat away,
(the shape of her tonight, at this end of the century,)
anxious to have my old man home
with Avery, the fruits of two years banking on the Earth
earning Pete his cut. I feel the heat of day
withdraw from croquet in the picnic sideyard.
I listen for the ballscores out of New York
and Chicago, listen to the elm-shade whispering
and the weave of family laughter,
and see this figure of my mother swaying at the porch door,
the victrola from our parlor almost teasing her
to dance. I'm 70 plus, I'm 6. A boy's mind, studying
the Euler cut off paving, expects to see
his old man spooking "elbow dust" southwest,
no hitch allowed to spoil the homecoming
he counts on, no breakdown on the grades
west of Onondaga, night-over in Buffalo,
no arresting storms murmuring on Erie,
like a dark intelligence, holding
travelers in check.

Imagine it! And the pleasures imagining it!
A doctor's, lawyer's car,
eclipsing even the moment with this Conklin, even
the slingshot Wilhelm thought an even trade
for it! Outside our house, like science-fiction
among northwest Ohio farm homes,
with its wiring and indoor water, I see her still,
stepping from the porch to kin she treats
to lemonade and ice-creams, a persisting image
among the well-made images of the century,
and the Beauty she makes, in that hospitable
twilight, suited to Love's nudge.

2

More snow, more cold maybe
than its makers counted on,
the almost brand-new Mitchell
fails to start. Day after day,

the old man invents a language
we remember, the dairy
expecting him by 8, our mother
expecting us at stiff-backed

desks appraising blackboards.
Then Avery and my old man,
figuring the luck of 2 such harvests,
writing the order months ahead,

weeks of snow turned rain
then brightening, green
come gold, long harvesting they cap
by late train from Toledo.

A harvest that good say. Or
weeks of potato soups and cornmeal.
I'm 70 plus. I'm 6. My finger
traces the map east.

I feel the rock and sway and jar
cutting the dark toward light.
I hear the grumbling sunrise calms.
And, following their route home,

I lunch in Seneca Falls, Rochester,
reach Buffalo for boat-docking,
the "spanking brand-new Franklin"
safe shipboard, ferrying Buffalo

Lietz

to Cleveland, the clouds layering
the southern rise of Pennsylvania
fit puzzle-snug to that.

3

Decades since. I try
these studied guesses out.
And this mottled Conklin
(—that might have put me
in a slingshot—) responds
reliably tonight
at this end of the century,
the polished, almost
woodgrain red and black,
performing then
as nerves performed, having
traced out hopes so long,
through prayers through doubts
through harvest, the kid
I was, able just to read,
anxious to see his old man
piloting the Franklin.

And, now even, performs
as nerves perform, at this
heart of my 8th decade,
remembering what I was,
finding an early use for dreams
that might be read
as a profession: A boy,
already half in love
with that machine, (by stump,
by fencewire,) imagines
his father home on maps,
(someplace now
between Fremont and B.G.)
a family laying out
its picnic, grandfathers
and cousins, their Chinese
lamps arrayed, banners
and streamers strung

Lietz

from oak and elder to the porches,
cheering the old man home
and air-cooled Franklin
into lifetimes.

4

The city I knew from pictures
got up flesh with factory chatter.
Lakes and breweries. Canal at its heart.
Salt and motorcars. Questions
my old man had to ask. The start-up
and performance guaranteed
in any weather. Couldn't a boy hear
that engine coaxed on grades,
trusted to run a little faster on the level,
a boy listen to their talk, Pete
and his old man, the factory tour
obliging conversation, A very punch
-pleased to have put through
such a sale? I see that Franklin gracing
Ohio sunset home, its "acorn
-shaped lamps," its "horse-collar hood,"
the end-of-day sky spread
over woods and flatland sprawl, over
the pheasant woods, rich
as any on the continent. Geography
started for me at once. Finger Lakes
and the Lakes west. Woods bordered
by cowpath country roads. And
his grin, like a light on that, pictured
by pond or picnic grounds, my old man,
wedding-innocent almost, smiling
at the front and far ends of inspiration.
And she, like all kinds of mischief
and reproach, counted on for her approval,
sits brightening her place, up front
on hand-stitched pleated leather, a
wife, bride-shy again with children,
absorbing the whole of him almost
as the twilight builds star-dark.

5

70 plus and 6! I see their story
through to closure

I cannot seem to get to. Under
the slow-to-darken

flatland sky, daylit at the horizon,
through moods and years

less kind, winters like moonscape,
drought, I see the face

of a man in love sowing burdens
with a daydream,

following that recipe by heart,
my father among fathers

in their Sunday best, knowing
better than to blend

“a teaspoon’s vinegar for sugar.” I
bear these images

of homecoming. And hear
these fathers yet,

their after-service sparring,
arguing Franklins,

Marmons,

Oldsmobiles,

LaSalles and Packards
built to match

the pitch of neighborly-priced Fords.
The boy I am, 70

plus and 6, keeps his sabbath
as he can, thinking
picnic swim but listening, follows
that banter its long way

into wakening careers, learning
at 6 and 7 and 8
the claims that lift plain fact,
the happy quarreling,
of arms and words and fingers,
the Franklin itself as proof,
and his old man, Sunday tough,
grounding intent and gist

in week-day wagers
on an impulse.

6

I served the story-line by heart.
The ads, articles, the barnstormings

and promotions I read wide-eyed,
Baker, setting the national record west,

70 hours from New York to L.A.,
how “Cannonball” bet the Franklin

to spite his bosses’ “tarnished glory,”
that Marmon failing to compete,

the savvy mammoth of the Franklin
adapting to survive, no “old

man’s car,” proving its worth even
in the windy skies above Ohio,

powering the Waco trainer, exciting
the market with its proof

of engineering nonpareil. The 30s
shut the door on that, the Airman

capping 3 decades’ worth of triumphs.
I read the evidence myself,

the power-curves and weight data,
driving myself by then, conceiving

gearwork as career, the “smoothest
powerplant in flight,” proof of nothing

maybe, besides the exaggerations
of an ad-man, of hope, in its own way,

standing ground against collapse.

7

30s poor, reduced to driving an Essex in hard times,
Franklin itself gone broke, and Conklin pen

in north Toledo, struggling to the last breath,
leaving these instruments and *these* machines

to suit the future: Hours en route, and hours I spend
considering x-ings out that marred a decade,

conceiving the lives men did, excitements of heart
that got them summertimes and older, got them

kids around a supptable, an evening's cards and talk
of Sergeant York or Jolsen. And the boy

I was, lost in judgment's sway or lost in sleeplessness
or sleeping, thumbs the diagrams, reports,

the competition and keen thinking building worlds out of
shyness.

I'm 70 plus, I'm 6, feeling the old man's

lingering in the hang of something right, twice
older than they were, older even

than they would get to be, a boy so charmed, so drawn
by spectacle, by histories and exploits,

into the careers of men that were and were to be,
into the spread fan of their thinking,

that seemed to me a reinventing of the spectrum,
leaving a man his sheaves

of plans and honored
contracts.

Driving myself by then, minding the jigsaw mix
of highways and connections,
of meals away in kitchens my mother wouldn't eat in,
(no matter how clean I painted them
in my retelling, how far removed from backstreets,
from gamblers and women, from the exotic
midnight precincts lighting her lurid winter serials): I'm 22
maybe, near-starved in hills
east out of Bellefountain, pulling over to oblige
the invitation at first sign.
Hesitant but starved, I follow her bulk and limp
into the parlor and house back, taking
my happiest meal for days, enjoying the gravy, breads,
the evening-ending light, the white then rose
of well-scrubbed country kitchen, enjoying her smalltalk
then, her stories to spite the undertow
I spared my mother, our host up at meal's end,
her farmer helping her to lift the trapdoor
I hadn't noticed, and two then, scraping clean,
brushing the leftovers into that darkness
underneath the kitchen, a groundbass grunting
to start, then squeals erupting, sparking,
and that fiery race for scraps.

9

Adapting farm and roadhouse,
place to raise a family, the decades blend,
adapting overdrives to antique roadcars,
calling my spite on him, the whore-minded
undertaker, minding me my business,
fingering the wad he tucks more deeply
in his pocket, seeking his place
to freeze the gist in conversation, to trouble
the smalltalk to its roots. 1921.
Scenes of Europe, foggy in defeat, gasses
clearing over ditches, lose their sway
in dinnertalk, in banking on a harvest. It's 6
the rainy midweek they made the deal
complete. And sleeping to half-past 6 on schooldays.
The kitchen's warm when I come down,
and warm again with his announcement,
the old man, crossing his fingers over coffee,
betting himself against a scorched
Ohio August, against a season's hail, a likelier
rainy April, and cancelling spring floods.
I'm 6, 70. My mother, vivid yet, fingers the diamond
pearl-set star-pin, my grandmother's
through her mother. She whispers a prayer
for season's change, prays aloud to see
another summer like the last, the star she wishes on
almost dropping from her fingers, hearing
the old man slosh, stomp into the entry, his words
against the Mitchell, smarting like stove-burn.
Somebody abler than I should speak, that lifetime's
worth of love songs and appraisals,
that Love, like a valentine tried hard, and mean
prosperity in local burns to tell.
Near-widower, near-retired, I balance truths
like payments on account, 70 and 6,
pulling the splinter out of denim before it drives
skin deep, not yet encouraged by her indoors,

Lietz

a boy, keeping late with men, his old man
come home with power, meaning
to put a kid in touch.

10

1921. Had I seen myself up front
riding high beside my father,
I had this lesson at the start,
her privilege there reserved,
no place up front for the kids' legs
to *sear* their footprint
brands in leather. The 3 of us, like
noise-making
proving it could count, divvied
the leather and pleats, 3 pleats
to each, there behind our mother
dressed in picnic white,
our basket heavy with ham and apple pie
and homebreads. Wherever
we stopped, at the State Woods
or at the cut along the Maumee,
the gatherers came on, admiring
the Franklin, the kids we were
hurrying to deeper woods or water,
into the afternoon ahead, leaving
the lives behind the children
circled like small moons.

The summer couples a man sees yet
grow smaller as we run,
setting a mood that seems to be
a wager on their picnic,
those antique men and women, high-stepping
their well-being, for someone
I can't name, conveniently come on
and packing the wherewithal
for pictures.

11

More sure than moods tricked up
in fingering pleats, than knack
for celebration, 1921 holds still,
a kind of homage for the builders.
Then it's February, 10 degrees,
the milk and Franklin, the schoolkids
day-ready, snow blown in drifts
on chores we started before light.
Decades since. As clear on homecoming
as image means to be,
I walk the same grounds I walked
that evening under streamers,
half-envying the town kids, distracted
from stars by city lighting I study the gears and frames, doorhangings
and suspensions, a boy and man
Time rocks through, 8 and 10 and 12 year old
in barnlight, picturing myself
next year or the next year at the wheel,
as if these were Christmasses
not birthdays I put my wishes into,
counted in wheat, in milk come steady
through the decade, in enduring cold,
December into March, convincing
a wife her yielding had roots
in keener instincts.

*

*"A car built right for lake weather
could likely best Wood County at its worst . . ."*

*

Say the 9-B (dropped eventually
by coup or artful reassessment,
suited a farm-life so, kids to school,
milk delivered to schedule,

and the 10-C bought from the dealer
in Toledo, driven till the timing chain
gave out, repaired finally, put to use
supplying power for the feed grinder.
—By '34 the Plant shut down. By '37
the Franklin property
was sold off by the City, a *certain number*
built and sold in those 3 years,
quickly on whose say so nobody meant to tell.
93 cars daily in 1929. I imagined
mechanics, setting aim on imperfection,
always a little off the mark.
The largest consumer of aluminum in the World.
And the old man, once, breaking
his son's heart, the workings of budget
cancelling the purchase of the Airman,
leaves his son a little surer
of the World, lingering for days
in promises meant for no one
but himself.

12

Winters a family reads through its fatigue.
“Nesting horrors under pried tin lids,”
and *prosperity*, spent “to keep a smile in frills,”
haunt the magazines I thumb,
clipping the full-sized ads for Franklins.
I must have understood that once,
the block-long rows outside the plant on Genesee St.,
(more cottage industry
than commerce suited to the century,
and the pictures of the families,
bundled against the cold, putting their trust in,
taking their safekeeping of the Franklin,
faces taken to heart, like absolute acquaintance.
What I became in those 3 days,
not waiting exactly, regathers in this scene
I seem to see from the outside,
preserved, in a boy’s remembering: My mother
sighs to be escorted arm in arm
across her picnic, steps up to running board,
to hand-stitched leather, the door closing
behind her, as on one part of our lifetimes,
and she, smiling out, alight *almost*
in her approval, guarantees that scene
in the memories of children . . .

*

The restorations come by 2nd hand, preserved
in a boy’s remembering,
the engineers and craftsmen, sharpening
the certain business of career:
I must have understood that once, finding for myself
the 145 in post-War Cortland,
keeping faith with promises I whispered
through lean years. Didn’t I ride
that joyful torque, imagining the old man

easing his 9-B from the city,
his admiration quickening, as if there,
in all that off-center worship,
were starry experiments in microchips and windslip?
I get the 10-C August-ready,
thinking to make the trek Upstate another summer,
paying on this debt, remembering
Marks, Doman, the engineers behind it all,
Doman alive in '54, fiddling
with his slide to pennies
his part in the Trek
 banquet.

*

Time clarifies, the labor keen-clear
and most-real nightmares.
I see that fence, that bunchweed, a child feeling
the pinch of further thinking
on a daydream, hydraulics, overdrives,
that dance of ideas along the rafters
brightening grainy times ahead. And *these*,
well-met in their resilience,
their wills and purses put to work,
healing snags in Time.
I see the motor-cars, the precision-slit gold nibs,
(proof that nothing's obsolete,
nothing's misadvanced,) and see that boy,
at 6 and 7 and 8, tacking pictures
of the Franklin to the north wall of his attic,
a stream of Franklins rivalling sun,
taped into his collections, that enduring
meant to last, like a high trump
saved to play at last on obsolescence,
sure as a life will get to be,
feeling its deal
come right.

Banbury Road

Oxford, England, Spring 2006

I was happy in springtime in England
lying on a bed near Banbury Road
listening to music with flowering trees
framed in my window. Spellbound for hours,
I stared into spring, my duties done
for the day, my time completely my own.
I could walk to Tolkien in Wolvercote,
to his grave I mean, in the Oxford suburb
due north of Banbury Road, and walk back
along the narrow canal, pleasure boats
keeping me company to Jericho,
where I could drink a pint of cold lager
or takeaway food from Marks & Sparks
and bring by bookbag to the park
near my bright room on Banbury Road
and read with delight from Tolkien's epic
under an awning of leafy birdsong
just a stone's throw from Banbury Road.

Elizabeth Langemak

To Sentimentality

for Pete, who might still come around

Try to remember your bones. Or maybe you never forgot them, you think of them as pale roads of longing, jointed intersections of memory, dead ends in sorrow strung out like your fingertips. Maybe your thoughts aren't so original, your sentiments cheesy. You cry easily at movies, manipulated, friends say, by wooden

faces, acts of stone. They say you'd do better to root out the thick themes and forget easy feelings: the ones where Pocahontas makes you cry, where Keanu Reeves fills you with strange longing and death finally seems real enough to turn your thoughts toward your mother's mortality if not your own, the sorrow

you would suffer if she were killed by robots. Sorrow nowadays, they will tell you, is manufactured entirely from wood, hewn from the rainforest with nostalgia in mind, thought of as dangerous by scientists and theorists who purposefully forget to send Christmas cards to their hopeless cousins, a long embarrassing list made up completely of people who cry

at bad movies. Like you, my friend, like you. Cry then, if you must, but sleeve-up your sorrow before the credits wind down and you go along to the bar and sip scotch that smacks of wood from the ironic waitress who keeps smiling, lest you forget to tip her. It is best, in this place, to wrap your thoughts

in the napkins, to keep them to yourself. I think you know the ones I mean: the ones that keep crying even through silence because they know you'll forget them at home, the ones that light your thin sorrow like a blaze you could feel if you put a hand to the wooden door of what once was your verve, the ones that run longer

Langemak

than need be because outside the theater your longing
feels just like the movies, your sweet clichéd thoughts
flip by like reels at their ends, a cyclic flapping that would
shake you to tears, terribly, were you able to cry
even once on your couch, spitting tears like wet joy into sorrow.
But try to remember your bones (I almost forgot):

like long beams of wood they run through
your thoughts—thin tissues of sorrow—
and the cry when they snap, unforgettable.

The Bitter Sweet

We squatted in the grass and our hands worked through looking for the fresh shoots of wild bitter greens. We were in the Anoka County park: my aunt, my mother, and me. Three women, dark hair/gray hair, stirring in the mild sun, beneath the canopies of fresh leaves, the spring air and the fragrant bloom of apple trees hovering about us. We took turns looking at the passersby. No one asked and we did not answer.

I feel silly and obedient. I am twenty-six already and I don't know how long I have left: precious time is ticking in their hold. My mother and my aunt speak of the duties of being a Hmong wife. They caution me, they care for me, with their stories from long ago:

How they had entered marriage like a walk in the wild, so unprepared for the life it would bring. My aunt has never slept beyond eight in the morning; now, it is too late for the luxury of growing accustomed to privilege. My mother talks of the fear in the beginning: how the fear turns into normalcy and how normalcy breeds love, and how love holds—beyond time itself.

I don't like the taste of bitter in my mouth, wild or tame, and they know it. They tell me how long ago: the same had been true. How in Laos, they had gone picking wild bitter greens with their mothers. How they had not understood the taste of bitter, the yearning for sweet. One day, I would understand, they said.

One day, I think I will. I'll squat in the grass and my hands will work through looking for the fresh shoots of wild bitter greens. I don't know where I will be or where my aunt and my mother will be. One woman, dark hair/gray hair, stirring in the mild sun, beneath the canopies of fresh leaves, the spring rain and the fragrant blooms of apple trees hovering about me. I will take my turn looking at the passersby. No one will ask and I will not answer.

Wonderland

The church looks smaller inside and Daddy's coffin sits off to one side like it's only there for the show and I can see his face and his hands folded across his chest, but not his feet, which are covered with a blanket like he might get cold and my aunt pulls a black comb from her purse and says how nice he looks and how he just needs to have his hair, which is usually curly, poufed up a little and he'll look like he could sit up and walk out but I know he can't, but I know he'd want to because his face is pulled into a grimace of a smile and I'm thinking he would hate to be here and I don't want to be here either and I'm thinking how flat he looks, like a balloon that has lost its air and, in fact, his entire body is deflated and I wonder how he shrank or if I never noticed my whole life that he was such a small man and not really big like I thought he was or maybe there's just something wrong with me today that makes me feel like I'm Alice in Wonderland because everything looks to be the wrong size like I grew up overnight and went from a little girl to a big person and I look down at my legs and arms and wonder how they got so huge and how everything else got so terribly small.

On Learning that the Chieftainship of Clan Skene Is Vacant

The neighbor's vines lap down my side of the privacy fence that's as weathered as a Mail Pouch barn. Like everything else in Fresno, the flowers are unfamiliar, red, white and blue,

patriotic and enthusiastic. I can't get the grass to green and grow in this rented yard. My fastidious landlord will be disappointed. I'm sorry. Too bad. The three days a week allotted for watering

are not enough. My daughter chases the water from the hose the way some dogs will chase a flashlight beam. I've spent hours with her running here and there. We coax out of the dry land

a tartan of yellow and green. Legend has it that the first Skene saved the life of King Malcolm from a pack of wolves. The king rewarded him with as much land as a hawk could fly over in a day. My reward

is as much land as I can make green with my garden hose three days
a week.

My crest is an arm issuing out of a cloud and holding not a sword but a sprinkler. With weeds and thistle I lay claim to the vacant

chieftainship of Clan Skene. In this most western and wonderful
land,

I stake all under the flag of the great bear and revise our haggis-tight motto from *Virtutis regia merces* to *Gringos pero muy buenos*.

Annajon Russ

That Wind

For all my wish to distract your husband
(a task you'd not assigned because by then
you didn't care), I promptly went blank, and

I may have blushed. Remember your birthday,
the three of us chatting on the deck when
the cell rang? The monarch in you

thirty years cocooned, flew up. I'll get it!
and glided out of hearing into the sun.
The caller? I knew; I prayed he didn't,

and barely stifling the urge to exit,
I began at once to babble. The strain
of pretending nothing was amiss! Wit-

less me! No matter, he hadn't heard a word,
he was too absorbed in you—a learned man,
studying his wife like something new and hard.

Meanwhile, your free hand winged a hollyhock,
looped towards the picnic table, then fanned
delicately against the maple's trunk.

When you sank to your knees, blithe hand lighting
on grass, croquet balls, a lone dandelion—
I thought, she's in thrall to the feeling of
feeling . . .

Then, he loves her despite his pinched heart's hold-
ing back. But you'd burst free and loved your sin,
you'd fly to hell on the back of that wind.

Arising

In the morning sometimes she will hike alone.
Her pretty gold locks shine in rays of sun
That stroke her hair. This special light has shown
To her the joy of seeking high-trail fun.
Her body is thin. With sweet motion she glides
Easily by red flowers and gushing waterfalls.
Sometimes she pauses next to crags. She bides
Her time listening peacefully to bird calls.
Reaching the mountain pass she takes off clothes
And stands erect with her arms lifted high,
Praising the cool and gentle breeze as it blows
And feels so good. She wants to soar, to fly.
Her mind whispers to her to let it be.
She agrees. Soul and body now are free.

Lake Birds

The birds don't really see us on the beach;
We don't exist, unless they grow annoyed
at some big clutze who manages to breach
that studied disregard. They can avoid
unsightly human litter the way we
step over heaps of sea-weed—matted cliffs
that decompose for weeks, reluctantly,
like well-mashed brillo pads. Yet they're enough
to make the herons happy. Minnows feed
around the edges—which we splash away
in picking out a path among the weeds.
I still don't like to sink my calf half-way,
and I'm convinced they smell. But that's beside
the point, compared to wriggles in the tide.

Forgetting

In memory of Raymond Jacobs, 1987-2005

It's early morning soft-light, and the birds
wake up in fits and staggers: one stray trill,
a pause, then scattered, half-remembered words
mixed up with sleep and shadow-curtains. Still

dreaming, mostly. But they summon you. So
many voices seeking; chirps that sing
of breakfast sounds not very long ago:
a rising voice (in protest), while his twin

shouts something, muffled: arguing again
to "accidentally" wake you. You'll appear
and doors (like arms) will open flinging them
in one mass hug . . . no, LOST one. Stop right there.

before the morning finds you rigid, twist-
-ed and grimacing: clenched teeth, tight fist.

The Boy Who Loved Pigeons

In memory of Raymond Jacobs, 1987-2005

He used to run on tiptoe, awkwardly,
with whispered shouts and frenzied beckoning,
despairing lest I miss it. Showing me . . .
a wedge of feathers, sleeping. One brown wing
compacted something—hopefully, the head.
So neatly packaged on the window-sill,
he tried to stroke it. Naturally it fled,
but that by no means hindered him from tell-
ing me its species, nesting preferences,
and strong dislike of cats.

Another year,
and twice I've started towards that room of his,
because the pigeon's back. I mean, why there?
Raymond and I would theorize learnedly.
Part child, part scientist – and not to be.

Kulturtemple 7

There is no mind, there is no body; there is only monad. Monad in motion. Music is entelechy, the highest monad in Dionysian festspiele in keine Schwarzschatel...melodic misology. Pause to strut the territory; feel (for) the ground, abgrund . . . One night pandemonium in postmodern matrix. Foucault should have come here, written the grand Klub Korpus . . . screaming korpuscles with their laser idol in absentia. Lose yourself in the music of this temple? Not when you've lost yourself at the door, beneath the illustrious portal of the metamachine—the salacious act grinder.

Historically, one hears of colonies who despise their progenitor nations, abhor their imposed gods with their stuffed satchels of values. Now enter the colony which has no knowledge of its lineage, no consciousness of its colonial attribute, and that has sifted through culture rubbish and appointed gods. We, the servile meat that submitted to synthetic gods created by our own servile hands. Even in the most educated tone we can muster, we may still derive the same conclusion from observation: fuck it.

Contributors

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Jeremy Byars has been published in such journals as *Gihon River Review*, *Ottawa Arts Review*, *Muscadine Lines*, and *storySouth* and is currently working on an annotated bibliography of the Towneley cycle plays. Byars completed his MFA in creative writing from Murray State University in May 2007.

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Angela Foster's poetry has been published in *Lake Country Journal*, *Talking Stick*, *Otter Tail Review*, and *Community Connections*. Her poetry has also won awards from The League of Minnesota Poets, *Lucidity*, *ByLine*, Friends of the Decatur Public Library, and Carlisle Poets.

Pilar Graham was born in Michigan, lived in Minnesota, and in 1980 moved California. Graham received a Humanities degree from California State University, San Francisco, and later a MFA in Creative Writing at California State University, Fresno. Her poems have appeared in several journals. Recently, she completed her first full-length memoir.

Jim Green teaches in the School of Education at Azusa Pacific University, near Los Angeles. His academic publications include three books, as well numerous monographs and journal articles. His poetry has appeared in literary magazines both in the USA and England. He and his wife divide their time between residences in California and County Clare, Ireland.

Nancy A. Henry's poetry has appeared in *Southern Humanities Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *Three Candles*, and *Poetrybay*. Originally from Maine, she is an attorney now living in Wisconsin, and was a founding editor of Moon Pie Press. Her poem in this poem came out of reading she was doing to get a feeling for the history of her new state.

Kathryn Jacobs is a medievalist and a poet, with a book, articles, and numerous poetry publications to her credit. Among the latter are *Measure*, *Quantum Leap* (UK), *Poetry Midwest* (Spring 2007), *ELF*, *Candelabrum* (UK), *Mobius*, *Texas Poetry Journal*, *Acumen* (UK), *Mezzo Cammin*, and *DeCanto*. *Quantum Leap* also recently selected her for their "Featured Five" series.

Michael Lee Johnson lives in Chicago, Illinois, after spending ten years in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada during the Vietnam era. He is a freelance writer and poet interested in social, religious topics, and the need for universal health care in the United States. He is presently self-employed, with a previous background in social service areas. He has a BA in sociology, and worked on a Masters Program in Correctional Administration. His poems have recently been published in *The Orange Room Review*, *Bolts Of Silk*, *The Flask Review*, *Apollo's Lyre*, *Chantarelle's Notebook*, and *Fresh! On Line Literary Magazine*.

Jen Karetnick holds an MFA from the University of California, Irvine. Her poems have been published in *Cimarron Review*, *Gastronomica*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *North American Review*, and *River Styx*, and are forthcoming in *Alimentun Journal*, *Georgetown Review*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Journal*. Her first chapbook, *Necessary Salt*, is forthcoming from Pudding House Publications. She works as a freelance food-wine-travel writer and cookbook co-author, and lives in Miami with her husband, two kids, two dogs, four cats and fourteen mango trees.

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Sue Miller has been an editor for *Story Garden 6* and *NFG* and is one of the founding members of *GUD* <<http://gudmagazine.com>>. Her work has recently appeared in *Night Train*, *APT*, *elimae*, *Green Tricycle*, *Poor Mojo's Almanac(k)*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Thieves Jargon*, *Tryst*, *VerbSap*, and others. Find out more about her at <<http://zzinnia.com>>.

Bryan Mitchell is currently a graduate student at the University of Central Oklahoma studying music and creative writing. He is the vice president of the UCO Creative Studies Writers' Institute and is an active proponent to the open mic poetry scene in Oklahoma City and the surrounding areas; studying the craft of poetry on an academic level and practicing the same on a spoken word performance level, sometimes recording studio performances for audio production.

Sasha Pimentel is a recipient of the Philip Levine Fellowship and the Ernesto Trejo Prize, and her essays and poems have been published in *Colorado Review*, *The Dos Passos Review*, *In the Grove*, and *The San Joaquin Review*. She's working on her first collection of poems, *Insides My Mother Swallowed*.

John Randall is an attorney/painter/poet living in St. Louis, Missouri. He is the founder of the now defunct literary magazine *Hierophany*. He practices a style of painting called "impatenism". His recent publications include work in the *Atlanta Review*.

Skip Renker's poetry has appeared recently in *kaleidowhirl*, *Temenos*, *Controlled Burn*, *The Paradidom Review*, *Poetry Super Highway*, and *Triplopia*. He is the author of two chapbook collections: *Sifting the Visible* (Mayapple Press) and *Birds of Passage*. He teaches literature and meditation courses at Delta College in central Michigan.

Jordan Reynolds has lived in Sacramento, California all of his life. His work has recently appeared in or is forthcoming in *Louis Liard Magazine* and *Calaveras Station*. Reynolds recently completed his first chapbook, *the rejected*, and is currently submitting it and other new work.

Margaret Rozga teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha where her play *March On Milwaukee* had its premier production in spring 2007. Her poems appeared recently in *Nimrod*, *Out of Line*, and *The Binnacle*. She has held residencies at the Ragdale Foundation and the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology.

Jay Rubin teaches writing at The College of Alameda in the San Francisco Bay Area and publishes *Alehouse*, an all-poetry literary journal, at <http://www.alehousepress.com>. He lives in San Francisco with his wife and son.

Annajon Russ, a North Carolina native, lives in the Catskills. She teaches high school dropouts in New York City. Her poems have appeared in such journals as *Barrow Street*, *Snowy Egret*, *Primavera*, *Classical Outlook*, *Prima Materia*, and *Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley*.

Jenny Sadre-Orafai is an MFA candidate at Georgia State University. Her 2005 chapbook, *Weed Over Flower*, was published by Finishing Line Press. She also serves as poetry editor for *gsu review* and *JMWW*.

Michael Salcman is a physician, brain scientist and essayist on the visual arts. He was chairman of the department of neurosurgery at the University of Maryland and president of the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore. His poetry has recently appeared in such magazines as *The Ontario Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Raritan*, *River Styx*, and *New York Quarterly*. His first collection, *The Clock Made of Confetti* (Orchises Press, Washington, D.C.) was published earlier this year and his fourth chapbook, *Stones In Our Pockets* (Parallel Press, University of Wisconsin-Madison) is forthcoming.

Beverly Siegel was raised in Berkeley, California and moved to Paris, France in 1968, returning after ten years to a transformed America. She then spent ten years living in rural areas in Washington, Oregon, and the Sonoran Desert of California. She now resides and writes in northern Nevada.

Jason W. Selby's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *War, Literature and the Arts*; *The Oklahoma Review*; *The Midwest Quarterly*; *Cider Press Review*; and *Lyrical Iowa*. He is in the midst of writing four novels and a book of poetry. Selby is also a painter, and several of his paintings are on display at local art galleries in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Tim Skeen teaches in the MFA program at California State University, Fresno. His collection *Kentucky Swami*, winner of the John Ciardi Prize, was published in 2001 by BkMk Press at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. His poems have appeared in the journals *Prairie Schooner*, *The Southern Review*, and *New Letters*, among others.

George Spencer graduated from Harvard in 1962, having majored in English Literature. He worked in financial institutions in New York City to support various wives and children while painting, sculpting, making collages weekends. A couple of years ago he started writing poetry. He now lives in Ecuador half the year in the world as it really is for most people: lack of food, shelter, medical care, surrounded by violence. He is just beginning to have his poems appear in electronic and hard copy journals.

Jon Thrower is interested in temporary autonomous zones and creative transaction. Born in a snowstorm on the winter solstice in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, he is now an instructor in the Missouri State University system. His previous work appears in *storySouth*, *Dacey Brown*, *Big Muddy*, *Blaze Vox*, and in *Balancing on the Bootheel: An Anthology of New Missouri Poets* published by Southeast Missouri State University Press.

Kyle Vaughn lives in Dallas, Texas. He teaches creative writing, world literature, and the literature of war at the Hockaday School, where he also serves as head adviser for the school's award-winning literary-arts magazine, *Vibrato*. His poems have appeared in many magazines including *The Sentence* and *Borderlands*.

Mark Vogel has published articles on adolescent literacy, and young adult literature in numerous journals for the past fifteen years. Recently, he has focused on writing poetry and fiction as well. His stories have recently appeared in *Cities and Roads*, *Knight Literary Journal*, and *Whimperbang*. He has directed the Appalachian Writing Project for ten years, and is currently a Professor of English at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina

A native of Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland, **Eamonn Wall** has lived in the United States since 1982. He is the author of four collections of poetry: *Refuge at De Soto Bend* (2004), *The Crosses* (2000), *Iron Mountain Road* (1997), and *Dyckman-200th Street* (1994), all published by Salmon Publishing in Ireland. *From the Sin-e Café to the Black Hills*, a collection of literary and personal essays, was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 2000 and awarded the Michael J. Durkan Prize by the American Conference for Irish Studies for excellence in scholarship. His essays, articles, and reviews of Irish and Irish American writers have appeared in *New Hibernia Review*, *Irish Literary Supplement*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *South Carolina Review*, *An Sionnach*, and other journals. Wall lives in St. Louis, Missouri, and teaches at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Yun Wang has published poems in numerous literary journals (including the *Kenyon Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, and many others), a chapbook titled *The Carp* (Bull Thistle Press, 1994), and a poetry book titled *The Book of Jade* (Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize, Story Line Press, 2002).

Kao Kalia Yang is a writer working from St. Paul, Minnesota. Her first book, *The Latehomecomer*, will be release in the spring of 2008 from Coffee House Press. Yang holds an MFA from Columbia University in Creative Nonfiction Writing. She is currently at work on a series of nonfiction stories/essays, *Still, Fluttering Heart*.

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