Encore: more of parallel press poets. 2006

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encore

more of parallel press poets

A Parallel Press Chapbook

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More of Parallel Press Poets

Edited by Elisabeth R. Owens

With a Foreword by Ken Frazier

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First Edition

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Foreword

It was the oddball appeal of age-old chapbooks that planted the idea of a poetry series in my mind. Chapbooks were the bottom rung on the print publishing ladder—almost a natural outgrowth of the invention of the printing press. A single printed broadsheet folded four times created an "octavo" of eight leaves or sixteen pages. When trimmed and stitched it made the simplest and cheapest of books—a chapbook. Chapbooks were the origin of popular literature, the comic books and pulp fiction of their time. They were sold by peddlers called *chapmen* out of the backs of wagons for the usual price of a penny. *Chap* meant cheap at a time when books were financially out of reach for ordinary people. It was the perfect medium for fanatical opinion (political and religious), jokes, fairy tales, songs, and poetry.

It was relatively easy to update the chapbook format for modern publishing. We used all the tools of modern computer technology to prepare the manuscripts, design the pages, and print the copies. Like the originals, our chapbooks are roughly handsome, reasonably durable, and relatively cheap. We now use this production system for other types of publishing. In the future, all of the Parallel Press publications will be freely available on the Internet as well as available in print.

Old chapbooks inspired the idea, but it was Andrea Potos who launched the poetry series. I knew Andrea was a poet from the moment I met her. Sonny Barger, onetime president of Hell's Angels, famously said that he did not *recruit* members, he *recognized* them. So it was with our first Parallel Press poet. Andrea not only looked like a poet, she had recently completed a fine collection of poems about the birth of her daughter. We talked about the difficulties and challenges of getting it published. When I read her poems I knew that we were in business—that is, if publishing poetry is a business.

Robert Graves's claim that there's "no money in poetry and no poetry in money" is half-right. There are great poems about money, but, in our experience, poetry does not make money. The Parallel Press poetry series has always required modest support from the UW–Madison Library's

unrestricted gift and endowment accounts to keep going. The subsidy has been small and the rewards have been great. In all respects—including financial—the poetry series has been deeply gratifying. Since 1999 we have steadily published six chapbooks per year of good poetry by fine poets. We have watched with pride as our poets have grown in reputation and enlarged their publication credits elsewhere. We are positively delighted by critical praise for the chapbooks and, especially, when our poets win prizes.

The chapbook series has become well known among poets, and therein we have encountered the one painful feature of the series. We receive more quality manuscripts than we can publish. It should have been obvious from the start, but it never occurred to us that we would have to reject so much good poetry—three out of every four manuscripts that are submitted.

This collection is wonderfully representative of the chapbook series. The poems both clash and mesh. Some of the poems look inward at timeless and universal themes—while others stride out in the world of a specific time and place. The poems of Carmine Sarracino, Alison Funk, John Niles, and Robin Chapman could scarcely be more different. In truth, we were always looking for new poetic voices and unfamiliar poetic sensibilities. For the first time we have asked the poets to comment on their experience with writing the poems. We continue to be interested in poets and the various ways they approach their work—we were curious about what they would say. We hope that our readers enjoy the comments as much as we did.

We think of Parallel Press as a modest contribution to one of the great achievements of the University of Wisconsin—a core value called the Wisconsin Idea. In many fields of endeavor and discovery, this great public university strives to apply our best minds and talents to the concerns of the regular citizens. If you think it odd to include publishing poetry in the services of the university, think again. Research libraries are dedicated to disseminating and preserving knowledge of all kinds. And, to my mind, nothing is closer to the business of living an ordinary human life than the recurring poetic themes of kinship, nature, spirit, love, loss, grief, hope, and reconciliation.

The Parallel Press poetry series is sustained by the work and dedication of Joan Kohler, Elisabeth Owens, and Andrea Potos. The design for the chapbook series was a product of collaboration involving Greg Britton, Tracy Honn, Dan Joe, and Don Johnson. The continued operation has depended on the care and thoughtful attention of Jay Huemmer, Sherry Kanetzke, Jean Looze, and Cathy Shapiro. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our student employees Jessica Hyldahl, Emily Schearer, and Sara Sullivan.

The Parallel Press publishing program would not be possible without the liberal and generous support of library donors. Among the most valued are the Friends of the UW–Madison Libraries—an organization that continually urges us to be creative in developing library programs and collections. May the invisible powers confer a special blessing on donors who express their trust and confidence through their unrestricted gifts.

We are also pleased to thank our organizational partners: the UW–Madison Creative Writing Program, University Communications, the Chazen Museum of Art, and the University of Wisconsin Press.

Ken Frazier, Director
UW–Madison Library
January 2006

The Origin of the Clock

She loved his small hand
resting on her big hand
but learned in time
she was the smaller one,
alone with the kitchen sink
or broom and meat sauce
in a pan, while he ran
out with sticks and bikes
and in again. She felt
herself grow long
and thin, a second
self that circled,
watched: each day
hastened separation,
drew them back again.
It nearly broke her heart,
the North and South
they startlingly became.
And always, how they got
to touch—restful, grateful,
before the pull again.

Marilyn Annucci

Poet's Statement

"The Origin of the Clock" is part of a series that includes poems on such disparate origins as sleep, pain, cereal, lesbianism, the alphabet, the tampon, the snow shovel, and he-man she-woman sex. I try to write these "Origin" poems without much prior thought, spontaneously, often deciding on the topic moments before I begin writing, and sometimes taking requests from friends. That way, images, metaphors and associations arise from my unconscious and surprise me. I suppose I am trying for as natural, or unfettered, an origin as possible—at least until the poem emerges. Then comes revision, where "nature" and "nurture" can duke it out.

In thinking about this poem, too, I realize that my understanding of time is linked to human relationships. Time makes sense only in relation to people and events. My first intimate relationship was with my mother. I have often felt sorrow that we cannot stop time or prevent the inevitable schisms or pulls back to one person or place and toward another that occur between people because of aging, experience, geographical location, and so on.

How the Mind Works

Lapping and overlapping waves
crash and slap and leave behind

miles of trash and sand.
Slipping on surfaces, watch

for maps that lead somewhere else.
What happens is always happening

and happened—endless rapprochement
of past and present, stopgap,

all covered over, uncovered
so many times only the odd

bits show: an apple core,
a cardboard flap, a mystery

package poking up, a hand.
What's buried: the bone

of things, hard, unchanging,
impervious to rain and rot,

no loose change but
the clap of something true.

Harriet Brown

Poet's Statement

This poem began with my giving myself permission to play—something I don't do often enough. I set out to experiment with rhyme and meter and not get too intent on making meaning out of it. At the time I was researching an article on neurotransmitters for *The New York Times.* I'm not trained as a scientist, so I had to start pretty much from scratch in understanding the brain. I became fascinated by the image of a tiny pulse of electricity leaping the synapse. What a metaphor, not only for thought but for connection of all kinds—how indirect it is, how oblique. We think of ourselves as analytical and linear, but in fact in our lives there is always both a gap and a leap over it—maybe that's the essence of being human.

Green Fuse

Bored with long division, I pictured the blue bicycle—
used, bent chain guard I could fix—
but my mother wouldn't buy it,
because Dad, drunk again at work, lost his shipyard
pipefitting job. My mother got hired at Franklin's
as a seamstress. I wept, wept at my sick cat, falling
grades, most anything. A distant station on my radio
broke in with a taped program of someone named Dylan
Thomas. Scratchy bass, not unlike Dad's whiskey-bruised
and smoke-sanded vocal cords.
"Young and easy under apple boughs" escaped me,
but I liked the sound. Looping sentences sped me
on a roller coaster, saying young and wild were ok, even good,
that green fields blossomed beans and grain, daisies and corn,
then died but burst again.
I didn't know what I was hearing was poetry.
My mother returned to check my work. "The Force..."
winding down, she stood there, hands on hips, head
cocked to one side. I was wondering what that force was that
drives just about everything.
She said, "You'll know about lovers soon enough,
especially the trouble they cause. Turn that off."
The tape was over anyway. She checked my problems.
For a change, I got more right than wrong.
That last poem I couldn't figure, but something told me life
is a *whoop* and a *holler* despite math phobia,
a green brain's tears, a father whose words fermented
little more than "Don't come home with dirty clothes, you're
too skinny to hit a home run, just get on base, I'd take you
fishing, but you talk too much, ask your mother
to help you..." I wouldn't call it love that "dripped
and gathered," and *whoops* and
hollers were a long way off.

Charles Cantrell

Poet's Statement

At first blush I note "Green Fuse" is somewhat like many of the poems in *Cicatrix*—in manner, matter, and mode. A narrative presents the speaker and mother, father or both in a tense situation, whose denouement may be ambiguously unresolved. Unlike most of the poems in my chapbook, this one is, I think, more expansive; it encompasses a wider world. I'm going to pretend the poem isn't mine; as a reader I might ask: what does this poem say about drinking, about poverty, about parental love? What does it say about a teenage boy involved with sexual awakening when that becomes more acute and mysterious with the Thomas poem? And what do the final lines say about a boy who fumbles forward, with his ambivalent and fragile connection to his father?

Praying to the God of Sixty-One Orders of Magnitude

Dear God, out of the whole wide beach
the children have chosen the driftwood ark,
salt enclosure, for play; with glad cries
they throw over their buckets and trowels,
the castles and moats at ocean's edge,
to climb into the lean-to of logs. What box
have I built for you? The play father,
coming home from work, the play mother
making tea and bread? Who can you be
in this world that unfolds within worlds?
Maker of flood and rainbows?

Six billion of us chant or pray or cry
our needs, hosts ourselves to congregations
of eyelid mites, dissident colonies of e-coli,
riverine dwellers in lymph and blood,
and those strangers we carry in every cell,
Eve's mitochondrial energy wheels,
with the hijacked machinery of limb buds
and bilateral symmetry, of memory's buzz.
Are you god of a trillion billion stars?

And of smaller worlds yet, curled into spaces
of vibrating string, god of the quantum
universe? Are you the god of the child
who invents her absent father?
Are you god of the mother giving birth,
and the lovers who wish only to touch?
Of the prairie vole retrieving her pups
from fire? Oh god of every magnitude
and attraction, bend and warp, of beginning
and end, are you small enough for planet Earth?

Robin Chapman

[previously published in *The Spoon River Poetry Review*]

Poet's Statement

This poem arrived out of odd conjunctions—walking the beach in Port Townsend, Washington, as the war in Iraq heated up, wondering how a lapsed Unitarian could pray and to whom, thinking about how many knowable orders of magnitude there were in the universe, the stories we tell ourselves, the stories we need.

Now That My Daughter Lives in the Sunlight

Now that my daughter lives in the sunlight
the marsh sycamores where our river ends
shine more darkly through their palomino gray.
We have walked this hour under canopied shade,
counting jack-in-the-pulpit and mayapple,
their blooms rust-red and white as bird-lime.
I bear her small body, asleep in my arms,
past man-high cattails freighted with redwings
that flare off like sparks gashed from old embers.
At every step, the petals of her eyes
flicker with the tidal motion of starfish.
The world I know will harm her, as it does
all, and I think how she'll never again be
this safe. When the old heron starts slow
from the reeds and rows to the farther shore,
it seems that trespass haunts us daily.
Kneeling down by the bank, I trail my free hand
through a shallow pool warmer than dew,
as if I would christen my daughter
with the salted marsh water, the same salt
as my tears, then think better of it,
and leave her face dry, and her to her dreams.

Temple Cone

Poet's Statement

After my daughter was born last winter, I spent the early months like any first-time father, hovering protectively over her crib. When spring came, and she was big enough to tour the Chesapeake wetlands near our home, we went looking for an old Chinese hermit-poet of a heron who lives close by. I wanted my daughter to see its haunting beauty, thinking I could bind her close to this natural world I love. But she was asleep when the heron flew off, and it seemed I was being rebuked, gently, by something much older yet more innocent than myself. One has to find and love the world alone, I could see. That's the wonder of it. The heron was teaching me so. And my daughter, in her delicate, humorous sleep, to which she'd given over her little body so absolutely, was teaching me, too.

Michelle

The past is hidden in some material object which we do not suspect.
And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not. . .
—M. Proust

The black vinyl bicycle seat soaks up the sun
into a smell that is Michelle lolling up a lakeside hill

in short shorts. She's on my mother's 3-speed,
and I am folded, like a towel, in the back seat.

Michelle's legs go jingle jangle, her sandals slip,
my head bobs back and forth to the chain's slow

metal ache. This is—*was*—Michelle and me,
and my mother's bicycle seat. At the top of the hill

Michelle caught her breath while traffic passed.
A nearby wild rose bush sent us a sigh of listless

perfume. Michelle whistled to carpenters
passing by in pick-ups, grins wide, sun burnt arms

flexed out of windows, faces speckled with paint
and reflector glasses sending back our own image.

Michelle babysat me and believed like her friends
I wanted nothing more than to go to "the beach."

There I was versed in the heartland's tragic landscape.
Lakes dulled by an algae veneer; sand freckled

with imagined Bahamas and cheap booty:
plastic foldout chairs, brown bottled cocoa butter,

palm tree logos, foam cups masking *Lite* beer,
extra-large towels with I Heart the Beach.

Transistor radios boomed summer tunes,
shirtless boys honked like swans in convertibles

drifting by, couples kissed for hours, their arms
and legs entwined as hieroglyphs. This was boredom
made into an art: greased up bodies spending
a summer in the slow spin of roasting chickens,

girls readying for each night out when blue mascara
would make them look perfectly wounded

and desirable. Michelle: I lied.
I hated the beach; it held me in a thrall

of delay. I longed only for the ride back up
the winding hill, the sounds of the lake

disappearing behind our backs as if a hand
were turning the radio down low.

I yearned for departure the moment we arrived;
the steepest spot in the hill where each time you stopped,

caught your breath, turned, winked at me,
the smell of your skin and the seat which was you

or my mother's absence floating up in currents.
I already knew there was nothing waiting

at the end of our ride. Maybe you tried
to keep me from the shade of being in a cool house

with rooms, furniture, but no one near.
They were always gone; still are. Yet

as I write this and realize it does not—will not—
ever exist: I still want to go home.

Francine Conley

Poet's Statement

"Michelle" is a poem born of a desire to pursue and pinch what makes the Midwestern urge for summer beach freedom so desperate and strange. It starts with the smell of a bicycle seat, next develops into something darker. I was reminded of a place or an object's hidden depths that on any given day can stir up the unexpected.

Moving Day

Bodies get buried, their homes get tossed
Into cartons marked Thrift Shop #3.
"The seller bears most of the closing cost."

Is your moving van big enough for a ghost?
Do your packers charge extra for memory?
Bodies get buried, their homes get tossed.

A seller's market, but death can accost
The most neon of brokers and set its own fee.
"The seller bears most of the closing cost."

The floors you can sweep, the fridge defrost,
But corners stay sticky with what I can't see.
Bodies get buried, their homes get tossed.

This bridge cracks and sways when it's crossed.
Burn it? Yes, but the flames singe me:
"The seller bears most of the closing cost."

Checks checked, forms signed, lawyers paid, Edens lost.
But this door can't be locked with any key.
Bodies get buried, their homes get tossed—
Catch, seller, and bear the closing cost.

Heather Dubrow

Poet's Statement

I wrote this lyric when I was in the process of selling and clearing out my parents' apartment, which did indeed have closets jammed to overflowing with memories of them, of my mother's final illness, of growing up in New York. Here, as so often when I write about particularly stressful personal experiences, I reach for a traditional form. (Similarly, I am struck by the fact that almost all my poems on the death of my ex-husband were prose poems.)

Green Shoe

I have a lump in my throat. That's the way my friend says, "nodule in the thyroid." Sometimes it's smooth and flat, like a skipping stone, and sometimes it's more egg shaped, like a primitive tool for working leather. Sometimes it hurts, but I don't know if it really hurts, or if thinking about it somehow hurts me. Today the lump feels a little bigger. I don't know what it's up to. No one likes to hear the word cancer. This is why I bought a boat. People like to hear about it. I suppose you could say this lump is boat shaped. It goes nowhere, which is what everyone hopes for cancer.

I bought a boat when it became clear to me I could die. The boat is green and light as air, a solo canoe. I bought this canoe when it became clear to me that I was going solo. My dog can ride in it, but that's not the point. This boat can go in small streams and swamps, places I like because they are forgotten, fecund, alive in a way that barely matters to anyone. Wetland legislation is written because few love a wetland. Wet and land don't go well together. Like cancer and neck. I have a kayak paddle because there are times I want to go very fast. Split the water and fly. My blades are wooden wings. They were terribly expensive, but the man who sold me the canoe said that wood and hands go together.

Now that I have the boat it sits on its side in the garage. I have to park very carefully to get around it. Sometimes my hand goes instinctively to the lump, as if to guard it from injury. A friend told me that when her baby was suffocating because his trachea had collapsed, and she was in the back seat of a car, racing for the hospital, she didn't want to go the hospital. She wanted to bolt from the car, take him in her arms and run into the dark where she could hide with him behind trees. I understand this because of the boat shaped lump in my neck. I think I feel tenderness toward it, like something I conceived and now carry. I would run away with it, look for some trees.

Lobectomy, thyroidectomy, radioactive iodine treatments. The word "nodule" is for tumors that are under 4 centimeters. That's all I can say for a fact. The rest involves hard decision. I know more than I should know. That's what my mother says. It was easier when you just did what the Dr. said. But think of all the breasts that were thrown into the trash. Now women have lumpectomies, better possibilities. Women also have more thyroid cancer.

I don't know what these pairings are about. The boat man said that I found one that fits me. A large green shoe. A kick in the neck. This is a very lightweight cancer. "An easy one," they tell me. Honestly, I don't even think I should use the word. There are people for whom this word means just what you think it means.

When I touch it it's like a lake stone, cool and truthful. It makes me come clean about things hidden: stresses born over and over in the body; stresses born also by the system sustaining it. Vulnerable. I eat and drink water and sleep like everyone else. Even with some care. But one thing lives inside another, a boat in a stream. Hands on the wood, I'm part of the whole: beauty and damage, both.

Gwen Ebert

Poet's Statement

I was reading a piece of nonfiction from a literary journal, and though I don't recall the source, I do remember how comfortably the tone of that piece slipped into the writing of this poem. The short sentences and matter-of-fact pacing of that piece were so unsentimental and droll that I felt able, finally, to write about something that seemed off-limits to a poem. This one came to me as block of prose, which sometimes happens when I have something difficult to say that needs more mass on the page.

Adirondacks, May

Let it be night when you plunge
on wheels through the ravenous
forest. Bats, ecstatic, twist
into illumined view and shoot upward;
the lewd-faced possum trails his nude
tail into the spotlight of your high beams.
At the bend, there, nibbling, the doe
bares her throat to your oncoming glare,
holds you sideways in the gaze of her one eye
in light, and you see that it's your own
slow longing she's captured—in the neck,
the tongue, in the lithe, submissive body.
Let the trees claw at wind. The moon,
half occluded, is your lost eye
opening; the road's a rough tongue
through the pubis of leaves and your tense,
rabbit heart is the dark calling
dark: the double blade of headlights dividing.

Barbara Edelman

Poet's Statement

Something about movement, the drive, something about drive; the destination so feared and longed for that you stretch the getting-there, and in the slow stretch of each moment, the getting-there is all.

Sometimes you drive through a wild place and wish only to be out of the car and into the temperature and slow surface of it. Other times the barrier of glass and power and speed makes what's out there even more astonishing and haunted.

The event of this poem was a going-towards, through fabulous darkness, where every eye outside me shone back my own excitement and fear. It's an event that may never have happened, but having worked it into words, I now remember it vividly.

In My Father's Silver Boat

When the sky hangs dark as lake bottom,
the horizon, a glimmering scrim,
opal as a splayed shell,
from a deep dropoff of summer sleep,
he would waken me,
rinse sand from my eyes and row us out
to weed beds where he said
the big ones hide, fat bluegills
we could snag if we were only patient,
the value of a thing connected
to what you give to get it.

With his broad hand over mine, together
we would cast the line, its shrill
whine of gut arcing out like silk,
our wrists one motion waving back like kelp.
Over and over we'd reel in our catch,
the sun hauling itself up
from black water, its bracelet of silver
circling our single pulse.

We'd drift that way for hours, sometimes
over sandbars where I searched for clamshells,
the rare ones open and still hinged
like heirloom lockets, or like butterflies
unfurled from their dark chrysalid.

Or like him and me, drifting in the mystery
of blood and water, the slow
insistent signal of time working
long enough at the hinge
until each numinous dish floated out
and away from the other.

Him and me, once thick as mercury, joined
in a silver shell on silver water,
fish sucking rainbows out of the sun.

Susan Elbe

[previously published in *Passages North* (Winter/Spring 2003)]

Poet's Statement

I was ten years old, bundled neckless in my bulky orange life jacket, sipping Coke from those wonderful 6½-ounce green, glass bottles and eating greasy potato chips, the thrill of something tugging on my line like an answer. All about attention—to the task at hand and undivided from the parent. This poem represents to me the Zen of childhood. It began as a phrase I couldn't get out of my head, the first line: "When the sky hangs dark as lake bottom." I had no idea where the poem was going. I love that poetry itself is a metaphor, in this case, for fishing. You cast your line and reel in whatever grabs the hook from someplace deep, quiet, and mysterious.

Negative Capability

for Marion Stocking

Wife off to work, I awaken late, punch on CNN,
make the bed, hear in the background
of the movement for the canonization of Padre Pio.

It's not the bleeding, not the power of healing.
It's he's said to have had the capacity
of being in more than one place at once,

out distancing, I think, the Road Runner maybe,
who, had I satellite on a Sunday morning,
might be up there on a couple of channels,

and I think of both my sons, now grown, out on their own,
yet on my mind. Downstairs on the kitchen counter,
I'm able to predict, any list of what needs to be fixed

is nixed. Neither is it like Bill's note to Bess with plums
gone from the icebox. "Happy Father's Day," the note
will say. "Decide where you want to go out to eat."

Mile and a half into the morning's walk
I stop at a painted turtle trying to climb the curb,
three legs swimming the air, only to pivot

and fall back. Years ago I would have carried him home
to my kids. Why now do I not stoop to rescue,
as if I believed the revolving earth and chance

a better caretaker? On a bookshelf in the Vatican
there are six bound volumes in support of the beatification
of Padre Pio. If my inertia were but one page of that

we might say of the father he was a quack,
not that anyone says this father was a quack.
I've twice tried mass, in fact. Which is pretty good

for a Protestant, I'd bet, a former Protestant, that is—
"Methodist" stamped in tin and strung on my key chain,
the one thing I kept the Army gave me—complete

with name, serial number, blood type—as though
if I ever got shot, out on my walk, they'd know who,
what not to hang, and not to call a priest,

that I probably don't want a vet or the president but
the god of A positive. Not that I've never believed.
This I did and do believe: I believe in the power

of fathers to screw up their sons. Consider
the case of the author of the ad I'll call
The Billboard with the Black Background on Calumet

Have you read my #1
best seller? There will be
a test. —God

With a season in hell inferred, how's that
for two syllables shy of a haiku? Recalling it,
sans title, from a year ago, now I know where

I don't want to go: anywhere they serve turtle soup.
For heaven would be hell without home.
As to the test, I figure it would be true/false—

no multiple choice—as well as pass/fail.
And while I'd not earn a hundred,
I'm not anti-sainthood, though most of the time,

unlike Padre Pio and with sons as my witness,
I hesitated. I hovered over what is best.
I dwelled in more than one place at once.

Karl Elder

Poet's Statement

". . . capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason," Keats wrote to his brothers on a Sunday in 1817. Despite thoughts in the letter about the "Man of Achievement," such as Shakespeare, Keats's careful definition of this Zen-like phrase he coined belies any notion he necessarily imagined a perpetual state of detachment (enlightenment?) possible in the human—*capable* here a pivotal word, subject to interpretation: capable always? Keats's prowess was hardly congenital or constant. Though intensely sensitive, he earned originality in proximity to deep and roiling familial turmoil and through supreme effort. In 1821, at 25, he died in Rome and was buried there in a Protestant cemetery, far from home. While Keats had no kids, he [my word coming] "mothered" his siblings. I think of him as having suffered, besides tuberculosis, something akin to the "empty nest" syndrome—only so profoundly as to have had breath and greatness squeezed from him simultaneously. Thus the tribute in the form of this poem's title.

Crossing the Great Divide

Your real country is where you're heading, not where you are.
—Rumi

1

Hooked in this space between sea and sky
like a hammock
pitched from a cliff
I look out at the day, death in the corners of its eyes.

Only the goat-hoofed, the cloven
survive in this place
scrambling for toe-holds, hanging in the crags.

The gecko clings with tacky feet to the stucco wall.
Stupefied at noon
he curves around a roofbeam
abandoning his long body to its love for the hot dark.

I let myself down, inch by inch.
On the ledge, white wine withers in the glass.
I live in the holes.

Life slows to a lizard's pulse,
a hot stone.
I hold the quick between my thumbs, stroking its throat.

2

The sea asleep, brassy serpent
sullen in the shallows now
a muddy swell
slithering through trees below.

I shall live out my life rejoicing
ribboning under the jagged shadow of the hawk.

There is no reason for this joy
eagle-bald, knifing through me like a canyon.

There is nothing in this landscape that defines me.

3

Freed from the past with its priest's hands
we are grails
crossing a great divide,
below us, the abyss, ahead, the dense glass—
Believing we will crash, we are passed
whole
through the rose
the blue
the needle's eye of God.

Jean Feraca

Poet's Statement

I was stranded at a remote seaside villa in southern Italy, nursing my baby through his first serious illness, when "Crossing the Great Divide" first came to me, along with a catch of other poems that in my state of sleepless semi-delirium simply gushed forth onto the pages in a chaotic jumble. But this was a poem that was way ahead of me. I didn't understand it at all at first and as a matter of fact I had to wait several years before I was able to find its language. The word "grail," for example, eluded me until I heard Joseph Campbell use it in his televised conversations about myth with Bill Moyers. But the poem itself led the way and eventually became a kind of talisman. I had been searching for my roots in Italy, but this poem led me far beyond ancestral landscape into a wilderness of jagged joy where identity finally has nothing at all to do with family of origin or inherited religion, and even God as a concept must ultimately be left behind.

Long Division/Multiple Choice

You must change your life.
—Rainer Maria Rilke

We think the night divides the days
but it's pain, pain
something hurts it's me it's me
pain divides the day and night
pain tells the moments
pain tells the days
pain tells the life
pain is life

Q. When is more pain better?
A. a. When the warriors lay down their weapons.
b. Right before the warriors lay down their weapons.
c. When it leads to better jokes.
d. Tomorrow. I mean yesterday. Last year. Back in the old days.
e. In the Bible. In church.
f. When the pain of holding too many possibilities in mind leads to a simplistic view of the world – that benefits me.
g. Right after kickoff.
h. For others? I don't care.
i. When it reminds me I am alive.
j. When it gathers my fragmented attention.
k. When it reminds me I am alone.
l. Never.

More than one answer can be
true. Pick one.
Then change your mind.

Jim Ferris

Poet's Statement

We love our pain—if it doesn't kill me, it makes me stronger—even as we do almost anything to be rid of pain—billions upon billions spent each year on analgesics, not to mention alcohol, chocolates, pornography. Pain—the unpleasant visitor who won't go away because he's really not an outsider at all. . . Would we really know day without night, summer without autumn, pleasure without pain? Answer in one hundred words or less; take as long as you like.

How did this poem come to be? Late night, early morning, I was lying in bed, feeling some pain, noticing myself feeling some pain. A line floated into my head, I picked up a pen and notebook and started writing in the light of the clock radio. . .

On Pruning

Cut it way back.
Do not be afraid to pinch the first,
the only blossom. The berry cannot thrive
in freedom. Have no mercy,

gardener. Train the tree to a leader
crowned by the uppermost bud.
Make ten o'clock your angle
for the outstretched limbs
of the apple. Prune
when the knife is sharp,
taking care that the scar be neat.
To share the surgeon's belief in healing,
you must trust what has been taken from you
is a blessing. Trust

by April the cherry and pear
will fill in, stitching
the dreamiest lace, *punto in aria,*
think of it
as a veil if you must.

And the rose, this is a special case.
When winter's close, cut back
the tallest stems, then with soil
topped with straw or leaves, bury the plant,
make the mound as high as you can,
as if the grave were your own
impermanent home, as if you believed anything
could bloom again.

Allison Funk

Poet's Statement

When I started to write "On Pruning" in May of 1996, I remember having on my mind a Biblical passage (John 15:2) on the subject of "pruning." In an effort to save a rose bush my son had given me, I was also reading a gardening manual with instructions on pruning. Initially, I had planned to include the poem in a sequence I was writing titled *From the Sketchbooks of Vanessa Bell.* But by 2002, when Parallel Press published the sequence as a chapbook, I'd taken "On Pruning" out of it, realizing by then that this poem was in my voice, not in the voice of artist Vanessa Bell, my speaker in those poems. This is, in fact, a poem I feel very close to still.

Homer

The dark goes haywire, streaks
of underlit clouds everywhere in the east.
It's a dull town, but morning doesn't mind,
the sun still barely tucked in the pocket
of pre-dawn—and these long lit clouds?
Homer, who was blind, called them rose-fingered.
To me they're that corny shade of pink
Vasari used to paint the heavens of the holy rich.
On the other hand, light *as a hand*
is what Homer implied,
that the day reaches
up into the dark, finger at a time,
though he couldn't have seen it—
the stroke of early light across the face,
the bark of the gull ignited—
he was right about that, and the rose
was how warm it felt to be that right.
All poets are blind to the world
without imagining, might be the point.
It's physical, this daybreak, long
lit clouds over the cold town.
Dawn in the fingers duly writing this down.
It's so small, that first breach of warm
on the window, the skin. Finger of dawn,
and therefore a hand, and therefore
a body, and therefore a mind
whose illumined reach is day
that put out Homer's eye,
that light might rake the low ledges
of cloud and gull wing and grace
the dull town breaking alive.

Max Garland

[previously published in *Sycamore Review*]

Poet's Statement

The poet Homer used a shopworn phrase, "rosy fingered dawn," a cliché even in his time, to describe first light of day. It's easy to dismiss such stock figures of speech until you actually try to describe dawn yourself. Then you find that it's not so easy to improve upon the image of light as a hand, as reaching forth. And although I feel the writer shouldn't poke his/her nose into the reader's business once a poem is let go of, I will poke enough to say, as a reader now, many dawns later, I see some suggestion here that imagination may be a by-product of light. Or maybe the reverse is true.

Instructions for Winter

Eagle, Alaska

You must private away a secret summer,
cached and fed by darkness like sourdough
in a larder, so that each noon numbered
in lamplight is matched by a midnight, yellow

with the slant of June. Against such permafrost,
you must toughen yourself on carrion;
you must fatten on summer—berries and moss—
to carry you across the windswept barrens.

Live—but remember the reason, the source
and abyss where everything living dies.
And when the first flakes swirl into drifts, hold

summer close and let winter run its course.
Curl in your den, sleep; and when you arise,
shoulder forth lean and perfected by cold.

Ted Genoways

[previously published in *Poetry*]

Poet's Statement

"Instructions for Winter" is another poem about Abe and Anna Malm, the Finnish odd couple I began chronicling in *Anna, washing* (Parallel Press, 2001). In this poem, Anna is speaking to herself, reassuring herself, as she faces another winter, her first after Abe's death. To my mind, it had to be a kind of love poem. So I modeled it after Rilke's "Sonnets to Orpheus II, 13," translated so beautifully by Stephen Mitchell. Apart from the connection of subject matter ("among these winters there is one so endlessly winter / that only by wintering through it all will your heart survive"), I chose this poem to emulate because my wife memorized the entire sequence one summer while working at a cannery in Alaska. She recited it to me on the icy February night of our first date. How could I not hear it behind every poem of love and longing?

All Souls' Eve

Polish Military Cemetery, Kraków

Dusk and so many flowers, lit votives, mourners
who come leaning leggy baguettes on headstones

with vodka shots, steaming containers of soup—

some open their gifts directly on the graves.
One woman, a friend, upends the local pilsner,

her dead man's pleasure, and the piss-steam

hisses a hillside specter. I'm here but somewhere
else: my mind, racing, moves at the speed of dreams.

The woman's son climbs from my shoulders

and sprints the length of cobbled graveyard wall
toward some inscrutable fury, becoming all voice

—like the white-bearded cantor on Rosh Hashanah

who for one vast moment arrived at a resonance
I could almost taste

as it held us alive and at the brink of shattering.

Rick Hilles

[forthcoming in *Nimrod*]

Poet's Statement

I lived in a Jesuit monastery in the medieval city Kraków, Poland for two seasons—summer and fall—at the beginning of this century, and so much from that time is still vibrantly alive to me: traffic sounds, shadows, the raspberry-stained hands of street vendors holding their wares—here an orange, there a fat ripe peach!—so many scents stinging the air. There was a sense of hauntedness I felt there, almost all the time—in streets broadened to accommodate Hitler's tanks—and especially in the silences of the old Jewish ghetto, the Kazimierz. On Rosh Hashanah I attended services at the Remuh Synagogue, built in the tenth century. I'm told it is the oldest temple still functioning in Eastern Europe. When I heard the cantor's ancient melodies taking flight in that context for the first time, I felt that the centuries had been compressed.

Catch and Release

Now as the ice begins its slow
spring shrinking from the lakeshore,

fishermen will drop anchor and like spiders
cast their lines, and the boys will be found,

the two who disappeared one November
storm ago. When they are discovered,

their families might finally be released of their grief,
finally free to let them go, only to find that a different

ache will lure them, and they will know
there is no getting beyond the pull of the shore.

And the boys—they are tired of floating
under the water's thick shell, tired

of sturgeon gnawing their skin, tired of their
thin and drifting hair, of hands grasping

at prayers. They'll be glad to be found—
if the dead are glad of anything—

after all those months of freefall,
the second rising that always comes in spring.

Karla Huston

[previously published in *The Cape Rock* and in the chapbook *Catch and Release*]

Poet's Statement

In November 2003, two Oshkosh boys had gone duck hunting on Lake Winnebago only to be caught in a late November storm—rain, ice, high winds. While their bodies were not found, their boat and dog washed ashore. The following spring, I was thinking about how the ice was melting off the lake and that the boys would likely be discovered by early-season fishermen. That's where the poem began. My thoughts were with the families of the boys and their grief. Coincidentally, the day I wrote the poem, one of the bodies was located in the morning and the other was discovered later that day.

The Firefly in the Bedroom

No sooner did the light go out
when one came on, the slow
winking of a bright green eye.

At first it was a child's game
("Find me. Catch me.")
then an S.O.S., a ship
tossing in dark waters.

I watched cool fire
come and go,
lighting up like a lover's face,
then turned on the lamp
to let him out into his house,
the night, but he was gone
like the last breath
and I returned to dark,
falling into a dream
of caves and night lights.

Waking at dawn
I found him again,
stiff and curled against a wall,
and I cradled him in my palm
to see him glowing still,
lit from within, and I remembered
how my father's heartbeat quickened
even in that coma when I touched his face
and whispered, "I'm here. I'm here."

Carl Lindner

Poet's Statement

While this poem came out of an actual experience, it went through several drafts (as most of my poems do), and the ending turned out to be entirely different. The first draft made no mention of my father at all. Just another reminder that the unconscious is way ahead of the conscious mind. As I look at it again from time to time, it has new things to say to me and, I hope, the reader.

What For the Women Poets

1.
Virginia, we are welcome in the syntax now.
No tweedle-dum or tweedle-dee to take away
our rights to eat a peach or strike pins to gutters
in the alleys. Grass grows beneath our feet
within the libraries. Still the old rage glints
like sun on spoons. We ladle boiled
broth in green tureens and sup:
(there are sesame seeds on crackers;
lemon wedges in the water; cubes of Monterey
Jack and triangles of Brie.) All the geometry
of eating though we've got a handle on that, too.
We're post-fork. We've simply stopped.
We're thin as dermis, thin as phylo.
And *still* we want to say something.

2.
Here's the bra I spill out of; here's the thong between my cheeks.
I'm still the same dress-undress-
able daughter. Even Vanna found a job to fit her wardrobe:
I'm in letters, she might murmur. *I put pressure on the vowels.*

3.
Hostess, hostess, *moon* is now a party favor, decorative,
discrete. Can't talk of pansies, rose or foxglove-pabulum
sentiment! Mother of our mothering. And when we return to moon,
we're reminded of *his* footsteps—Wordsworth, Byron—in the craters,
flagged, quantified, *don't tread on me.*

4.
And to the male poet who said, woman, *you don't need a book*
as much as me because you have a child, I say—
And to my peer who said *your poems won't speak*
until you write cunt and prick *in them*, I say—

5.
All the world's a world
and all the phrases in it equal; we're all equal
to the text. So, drive off, attentive enough to kill
a moment. And to what end? *Scene-grazer,*
scene grazer, make me a match: horse white
as hoarfrost in Kent; yarrow-gold
fields outside Johnstown.
Image drive by: tail snaps flies to hooves.

6.
And the necromance of literary lives—
every book of famous women poets with its suicides:
rocks in pockets, heads in ovens, scars
as currency of the word-trade, scabs
as metaphors for just how deep a well.

7.
Ancient history—she put the apron in the chipper, would not smile
when she vacuumed, charred the brisket, burped the eggs, boiled
the child. Clothes churned. Cycled, cycled. Consonants whined
for air. She was more canine than her boxer, more Fahrenheit
than August, more blade than nurse. Words were stuffed
in pork roasts, wrestled into empty corners
where the spiders built their nests.
Sometimes, in desperation, she hid
phrases in the reek and piss
of diaper pails.

8.
I've met him at close of day
in Speedo, cupping women
cheek to cheek, seen his saggy
jowls milk the teats of language dry.
Seen him exiled, profiled, pedestaled, lauded, applauded,
sticky flystrip to the swarm of literary honors.
And the buzz!
Good God, the buzz! At his every *if, and, the*!

Sharon McDermott

Poet's Statement

"What For the Women Poets" was woven together from many different threads, as most of my poems are. One thread of inspiration was my own love for women's creative work—so I played with this, alluding to Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, and Sylvia Plath. I was also reading a wonderful collection of contemporary Mexican women's poetry at the time, *Sin puertas visibles*, and was especially struck by the incredible voice and energy of Cristina Rivera-Garza's work. I wanted to write a poem with that kind of zest and heat rising from it. Most poems are a pastiche of dialogue, memories, passions, things we read, smell, desire, question—the images that won't shake off. But, ultimately, the key to writing "What For the Women Poets" was on the level of language itself—delighting in the malleable nature of words and playing with their connotations. I like a poem to have a palpable energy, a sense of surprise, and an innate muscularity and musicality that amplifies what is being said in the poem.

Stability

I love the tree for its steadfastness.
Alone in rain it sends its roots
into familiar soil. It stands,
which is not to say it waits. It lives
through the inquisition that is summer
and the departures of fall.
It wears with grace
the baldness of winter,
and sings to itself in spring.
It stands. It opens leafy pages
to the coming year.
And green is the prayer and here
is where it lives. By choice or chance—
it seems to matter not—
its happiness is now,
withholding nothing for a better day.

I love the monk for that one vow he takes.
To save that bit of land by taking not one step
beyond his gate. To tend the garden
he has fallen from.
To open hands to earth and sky.
To stand.

Mary Mercier

Poet's Statement

For much of my life I have been fascinated by the idea of becoming a monk. Not the reality of becoming a monk, just the idea. It's a romantic notion not unlike running off to sea, although with the opposite effect. For among the vows that some monks take is a vow of "stability," which is a promise to live out one's entire life in one place. I have never been very good at that, but I ferociously admire those who are. Like monks. Like cottonwoods. . . .

Eating Pepperoni on Good Friday

After stealing the magic stick from my father's meat case,
I try to think of where to go. Not into the closet off the kitchen,
Where the smell will hang with that of salty boots; not down

To the cellar with webs on my face, or out back to the '56 Chevy.
I must go where only my punishment can follow: I go up to the roof
High over 8th Street. Only God, above the oaks, can spot me,

The weight of my sin hard in my hands. Oh, it's terrible, I know,
To eat Pastucci Brothers' on Good Friday, everyone in dark rooms,
The thin Bible pages turning slowly to the Sorrowful Mysteries.

And I'm caught as the chimney stack hisses red with anger.
Okay, okay, I accept it: I will pick each sandy grain
From every last rooftop on 8th Street; I will be sentenced

To an eternity of shingles, standing here forever, veils of steam
From Friday flounder rising without me. Yes, but first, this bite,
Teeth breaking salty skin, smell drifting straight up to Heaven.

Stephen Murabito

[previously published in *The North American Review* (Spring 2005)]

Poet's Statement

"Eating Pepperoni on Good Friday" is based on the real experiences I had as a kid growing up on the corner of West Eighth and Oneida Streets in Oswego, New York, where my father and mother ran a little grocery store. That is where I probably learned ninety percent of all a writer needs to know: Watch people because they have the answers; work a little at a time but all of the time at something you love; do the heart's portion of your life's labor for the imagined other; see how the beauty of the world emerges in the worn knife handle, the grain of the cash-out counter, or the back-lit piece of sharp provolone. Oh, and every once in a while, steal a stick of pepperoni, run to the roof, and let the world hit you like the gorgeous freight train that it is.

The Piper's Triumph

When I play the flame of wrath
there is no tuft of grass from Islay to Ardnamurchan
that is not left smoking.
If there are twins in the womb
they are at one another's throat.

When I play the notes of joy
every spider perched in the rafters
claps its small hands in delight.
Even the witch of Ulva
hums a tune as she stalks about.

When I play the notes of noy
Christ hides his face,
angels in heaven howl.
Dogs snap at their own tails
and old scars spout new blood.

When I play the good old gabber reel
water leaps up from the bucket,
stars jump down from the sky.
Mice dance on the kitchen table
and crabs pirouette in the sea.

Now shall I begin?

John D. Niles

Poet's Statement

The great highland pipes are more than a musical instrument. They are a force of nature harnessed to human ends. Depending on the circumstances, the piper can set the pace for a stately march or can bring a crowd of celebrants to break out into a highland fling. The piper can also attack a mortal enemy in a kind of shamanistic warfare. The pipes can also be contemplative. If you have ever been in a small room where a master piper is playing a piobaireachd (pibroch)—a leisurely tune not unlike an Indian raga, often in the form of a lament—it can do more than raise the hair on the back of your neck. It can lift the skin off, too. So the pipes have this tremendous range of function and feeling, as I've tried to suggest in this poem.

This is from an unpublished set of poems on Scottish themes. Since my wife is from Scotland, we go there when we can, and I've spent a lot of time recording traditional singers, storytellers, and musicians.

At the Genetics Counselor

The clinical fluorescence allows no room
for softer light or shadow.

A glass of water trembles on the table.

The notebook displays disorderly chromosomes:
the proliferate migration of pairs

like a marching band gone awry,
an extra column in silent practice

changing the symmetry of the whole.

We must chart our family histories,
make a tree of missing branches,

bring all that weight to bear
on an unnamed question mark.

What happened to your Aunt Rea?
A blackjack dealer in Reno,

the last my husband heard.

Peasant Irish on both sides, I believed
myself a sturdy transplant.

And when she calls with bad news,

something very rare, something worse
than we imagine, the teacups rattle

on the shelf and branches knock
against the house.

The summer leaves turn silver,
as if awaiting rain.

Elizabeth Oness

[previously published in *Fallibility* (Sutton Hoo Press, 2003)]

Poet's Statement
Motherhood is both remarkable and harrowing.

The Best Looking Man at the Funeral

It was the wife of the deceased who said
I was the best looking man at the funeral.
And I did look rather spiffy in my blue
blazer, light blue shirt, dark blue tie
and pants of a complementary hue,
a proper ensemble sliding to a dark closure
of black wingtips with a slightly cleated,
selfishly comfortable sole, though nothing
disrespectful or inappropriate.

I blushed at her words, more so when
she followed up with *When's your next movie?*
as if I were some sort of Sean Connery
or Kenny Rogers, with whom, I'm told,
I share certain features. Speechless,
her husband lying just beyond the crowd
of mourners moving slowly past the casket,
I stepped back and merged with the other suits,
my face blood hot, burning still with mortal pleasure.

Roger Pfingston

[previously published in *Earthbound* (Pudding House Publications, 2003)]

Poet's Statement

The "deceased" in "The Best Looking Man at the Funeral" was the father of a close friend, and for a long time I held off sharing the poem with him and his mother, thinking they might find it indelicate, too self-serving. But they received it well, even sent copies to other members of the family. When it first appeared in a magazine, then a chapbook, I gave copies of those publications to my friend, hoping he would also share with his family the poem's broader "acceptance" in its published form.

To Emily Brontë

Eleven years old and sunk in the red velveteen
chair at the Fox Bay Theater, I absorbed
the raw sculpture of Penistone Crag,
bracken and gorse, the peat
blanketing the Yorkshire moors. Heathcliff
with his sea-green eyes, black cape swirled
around him, how tall and alarmingly
handsome he looked.
At Catherine's grave he cried, you wrote:
I cannot live without my life,
desire held hostage in his eyes,

my heart held stunned in my chest.
Years later, I return to your words;
travel to the stone-
flagged floors of your home;
your desk-box saved under glass,
its lining worn, purple velvet
splotched with red sealing wax.
Walking the rocky footpath towards swells
of purple heather, I remember the words
of the local stationer who saw you
returning one evening: *her countenance was lit up*
by a divine light. I imagine
I hear your skin
brush mine, whisper what you know:
the silence, the stars
that burn through the page.
Hone the hours to their core—you might have said—
wind and poem, passion and moor.

Andrea Potos

[previously published in *Poetry East*]

Poet's Statement

Since girlhood I've been enthralled with the Brontë sisters, their books and their lives. I've loved the other-worldly wildness of the English moors—Emily's moors, Catherine Earnshaw's and Heathcliff's moors. When I took my pilgrimage to the Brontë Parsonage in August of 2001, the heather was in profuse and startling purple blossom. I walked onto the moors just as it began misting rain; there wasn't another person in sight. "What could be more perfect than this?" I thought.

A young and gorgeous Timothy Dalton starred in the 1971 movie version, of which this poem speaks. He was the quintessential Heathcliff. That movie haunted me; I saw it over and over again. I still haven't recovered.

The Last Banana

(Or, lines written when I learned
that the banana could become extinct
within the next ten years.)

It was found hovering
over a tiny zoo in Kokomo,
Indiana—monkeys calling out

to it from their noisy cages.
Already its wings were growing
dark; already it was losing

altitude, and then a boy
with a butterfly net captured
it and took it home. Scientists

from a nearby university arrived
the next day, and experts are now
working on the mummification

process. The last banana will be
on display (suspended by nylon
thread in a medium-sized plasticine

box) from 10am until 4:45pm Tuesday
through Saturday in a local museum.
Fruit flies will be pumped in daily,

and plans are now underway
for widening all roads leading
into Kokomo, Indiana.

Eve Robillard

Poet's Statement
It's really no secret that the banana may well become extinct within the next ten years—the news was on Wisconsin Public Radio and in several newspapers; some dreaded virus—for which the banana has no defense—is supposed to manifest soon. I was intrigued when I heard this, and I believe I was reading a lot of Billy Collins around that time. He's one of my favorite poets, and sometimes he just seems to "un-hinge" my brain. And I found myself wondering, "How would he handle this?" The next thing I knew, I'd written this silly (or, not so silly) poem.

Letter from Shiloh

Camp near Pittsburg Landing,
Tennessee
April 11, 1862

Dearest Jenny,

I am up to my neck in work. It is slaughter, slaughter.
I have grown quite callous to death, and now watch
even friends die with little feeling. When first I entered
service I recall the wounded of Bull Run lying
along the road or passing on wagons and litters—
how my heart did ache for them! Now I find myself
surrounded by the most horrendous wounds
and can only command: "Gather the amputations
and arrange tables, here and here. —What! So many?
Then clear these stomach-shot, these lung-shot—
all the hopeless cases—to some quiet place to die."

Well do I see what happens to my heart. At night
I open the gutta-percha case with Andrew's photograph
and Elisha's beside and gaze at those beloved.
All these boys (I tell myself) are such sons
of parents somewhere far. Or fathers themselves,
or brothers. —But grief, when it does arise,
hesitates and shakes my hand. I am best to the hurt
surrendered to what I am become, impassive and cold.

The moon is nearly full. It looks to me
like some once-dear face I can no longer name.

A million stars, and every one
against this heart of mine has turned its back,
against this heart so dead. —Jenny, I do fear
I am my own most hopeless case.

Carmine Sarracino

Poet's Statement

In reading journals and letters for my collection of Civil War poems, I came across collected letters by a Union surgeon, Daniel Holt. In one letter he describes his dismay at realizing that he has become hardened by overexposure to the suffering of the wounded. I am interested in my collection in documenting, so to speak, all manner of wounds, so his plight moved me. The first two lines are lifted almost verbatim from a letter of his, and from there I imaginatively entered his mind and heart to say more, even, than he dare actually put into his letter.

Back Route to Baraboo

Mrs. DiFranco's son
writes anonymous love letters
to a lady in her bridge club
Edith I saw you
at Sentry on Sunday
& was thoroughly struck
by the line of your profile
Hope you don't mind
I had to discover
your name & address
once you caught my eye

holding his pen
at a backwards slant,
stashing envelopes under
a board in the attic,
driving 20 miles south
for a Baraboo postmark.
As the weeks charged past
his letters praised the curve

of her ankle, the grace in her pivot,
claimed he'd welcome the chance
to make her acquaintance if only
she'd give him a signal, a sign.
This divorcée from Durand
who'd gone six months hardly smiling

started styling her hair and wearing
stilettos, stopped smoking Pall Malls,
began smelling of roses.

On Saturday nights, Mrs. DiFranco's son
listens from his bed to the laughter
of the bridge club, the gasps, the clucks
flushing up through the heat vent,
wonders should it be Doris
he upgrades next.

Shoshauna Shy

Poet's Statement

I've often enjoyed reading the names of towns on state maps, and was amused to discover that Wisconsin's own pioneers had fun with some of them. It takes whimsy to come up with names like "Carcajou," "Pucketville," "Diamond Bluff," and "Pulp." By the same token, I decided that "Baraboo" deserved to be mentioned in a poem, and this was the result.

Prayer Flags

I see now why each line of wash
in a backyard makes me want to drop
down on my knees, that I am witnessing
the prayer of t-shirts, blue jeans, sheets
and underwear—the prayer flapping
below the terra cotta rooftops in Siena
repeated in the same tongue right here
in Tioga County, Pennsylvania.

Don't tell me those women don't know
they are praying. Have you ever
watched even a busy woman hanging
out the holy ghosts of her family?
Seen her stand there afterwards,
her empty basket resting like a child
on her cocked hip, as she adored
the spirit of the wind tossing them
into the deep blue mind of heaven?

Even a grieving woman feels her feet
lift from the earth when the breeze
kicks up the ankles of her drying khakis,
feels her shoulders sprouting wings
as her blouses take flight. I don't know
if she is grateful as she clips each
garment to her line, or if each one
bodies forth a precious worry.
Maybe her clothesline is one long wail.

But watch her hours later
when she goes to bring her wash in,
leaning into the warm scent of sun
woven with birdsong, closing her eyes
for just a second as she guesses
this must be how God smells,
pulling each piece into an embrace
of folding, settling it in her basket,
and giving the whole stack a final pat.

Judith Sornberger

Poet's Statement

The idea for "Prayer Flags" came to me as I was watching a documentary on Tibetan monks in exile. The film showed long strings of colorful prayer flags strung as a kind of sacred border around monastery grounds. I was struck by how much they looked like lines of laundry. I remembered another film called *Clotheslines* about the ways that women feel about doing laundry. I live in rural Pennsylvania, in the northern tier of the Appalachians. Ever since viewing *Clotheslines*, I have paid more attention to the way that women hang out their laundry. Sometimes it seems that the love that they have for their families comes out in the artful ways they hang out clothing. Sometimes it seems a kind of declaration of who lives in the home. Sometimes it seems like the only artistic outlet some women have. I see this poem as a salute to all those women who make prayer out of household tasks.

At the Writers' Retreat in Scotland

I want to believe
nothing happens by accident
and thus—
if the step-down transformer
I used to convert the current
has somehow fried
my laptop's power source
it must be I am intended
to live like the poets of yore,
work with pen & ink, my hand
an instrument that channels
the brooding romance of Hawthornden—
medieval turret, Lover's Loup,
ghosts of Ben Jonson and Drummond,
the River Esk in its leafy glen—
into marks mysterious and true
as Pictish glyphs
scratched in a cliff's sandstone.

I might have discussed
these ideas—predestination,
reincarnation, how to live
a poetic life—with the Hindu astrologer
at my Edinburgh B&B
but he was rushing out the door
disk in hand, to find an Internet cafe
where he could print out the ad
for his evening lecture:
Applying ancient science
to the 21st century.

Judith Strasser

[previously published in *Chapman* (2004); and *The Reason/Unreason Project* (Lewis-Clark Press, 2006)]

Poet's Statement

I arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland, at the end of August 2001; I'd been invited to spend the month of September at Hawthornden Castle, a writers' retreat outside the city. I was planning to write new poems for my manuscript-in-progress, *The Reason/Unreason Project*, exploring the ways the mysterious Picts, rumored to have lived in the caves under Hawthornden in the ninth century, made sense of life before the Age of Reason. I wrote the first draft of "At the Writers' Retreat..." on September 3, the day after the residency started. Of course, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington eight days later cast a new light on the concepts of reason and unreason. *The Reason/Unreason Project* won the 2005 Expedition Award from Lewis-Clark Press and will be published in 2006.

And Still the Music

in memory of Josie Avery, 1953–2003

One month after your death,
and I'm doing my every-other-day-when-I-don't-run workout
at Curves for Women—Stoughton, Wisconsin's
equivalent of a gym—where I've already
won a "Curves buck" for guessing tonight's
trivia question, and the big news
is that the local Wal-mart won the best
"hometown store" award, and the ladies—
as they call us here—are sweating and panting
their way through the circle of machines
when "Great Balls of Fire" comes on
and damn, if you aren't right there before me,
the slit between worlds opening and closing
like an elevator door as I hustle
from the pec-deck to the recovery pad,
and for just a second, for a breathless,
high-stepping, hip-swaying, triple beat
second, I see you, dressed in that vintage
purple lace you wore to a dance in college
almost thirty years ago, waving a rhinestone
cigarette holder, your arms open, your mouth
red and alive, startling me so I almost stop,
until I see that if I hesitate, you fade
and that to keep you here I have
to keep moving because you never
sat any dance out; and so I do,
powering my way through the leg press,
the oblique twist and the knee squat,
until my muscles burn, moving my arms
in and out, up and down, running non-stop
on the pads, singing under my breath
with the music, which somehow becomes
"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" and then "Great Balls of Fire"
again, and every good dance song that dumb college band
called Widespread Depression played, the sweat

pouring down my face as I dance with you
in this room full of middle-aged women
trying to stop time or at least hold it at bay,
and who wouldn't cry? as I dance with you,
as if my good heart and lungs could somehow
bring you back—breathing life into you the way
the heart-and-lung machine could not—in this room
where you both are and are not, and the music
keeps going, and I remember you twirling once
at a dance and saying, *I'm happy, so happy,* as if
you could have died then—and still the music
carries us, and tears splash down my arm
for the girls we were together and the women we became,
for the empty place on every dance floor without you.

Alison Townsend

[previously published in *Water-Stone Review* (2004)]

Poet's Statement

This poem came as a visitation, inspired by the actions it describes. I was working out at Curves, a women's gym I resort to when Wisconsin's harsh winter weather makes it difficult to run. My best friend from college, whom I'd known for 30 years, had recently died, very quickly and unexpectedly. I was desolate with loss. The oldies music at Curves that night conjured up memories of college dances, when we whirled the night away, drunk on youth and possibility. And suddenly, there she *was*, exactly as the poem describes, dancing before me. A ghost? A figment of grief's imagination? I chose to see the beautiful apparition as her spirit, returning to comfort me. Obviously informed by the rhythms of music and exercise, the poem is my elegy for her, as well as a tribute to those days when life felt limitless and rock and roll seemed to tell us everything we'd ever need to know.

The People

through metaphor to reconcile
the people and the stones
—W. C. Williams

Time and rain beat the stones.
Time and rain beat the stones
and the people there. The people
and the stones. Words and fish

moved with the people from year
to year, from childhood to death.
There by the sea. The people
and the words. Time and rain

beat them, and the words made
fish dance and stones children.
Waves moved with the poems
and stories from death to death,

from love to absence. The people
and the stones. And the music
of waves and sorrow and hope.
And the music inside the stones.

Dennis Trudell

Poet's Statement

I wouldn't have written "The People" if I hadn't gone to the west of Ireland shortly before. Nor if I hadn't admired William Carlos Williams' lines of the poem's epigram for some years.

The poem is about the resilience and grace, the wonder, of humans making stories and poems and music, magic, from their lives and work, their loves and losses—and from words. Making those things for one another and children and for themselves and descendants. The poem is about doing that despite their, our, awareness of being specks compared to seas and time. . . and inevitable death. I went to Doolin, a village in County Clare at the edge of Europe, known for traditional Irish music in its pubs. Near vast cliffs and surrounded, little Doolin, by boulders, rocks, and more stones than words I will write.

Lives have been hard there and on islands off that coast, yet those who dwell there and visit make a music of talk and grins, stories and laughter, fiddles and beer. And they do that sort of thing everywhere, my lovely fellow people: and may they do it long after the stone hearts and greed-pit minds of those ruling my country and threatening our species and planet are mere echoes of shame.

Fall

You tell me the sky's going to fall
soon, all the gold leaves testing gravity
on their way down. They'll let go,
drift, fade past the colors
of anger. Their voices will rustle
over the still-green ground.

When you rise, the shape of you
lingers in the bent grass, as if
the earth wants you back
in its embrace. I watch the blades
spring up again, all our effects
unlasting. I've felt it too, your body's
weight, the grip of your roots
in me, now windblown, brittle,
scratching against my skin.

I keep forgetting to grieve. I keep
releasing you, like the trees
making room for something new
and unguessable. I've shaken you off,
still beautiful in your last days, red
on the tree, turning to gold as you fall.

Tisha Turk

Poet's Statement

Falling is, of course, one of the most common metaphors for how we end up in love or out of it. I wrote this poem at the end of September, when the leaves outside my window were just beginning to turn; I wanted to think not just about what falls but about what's left behind after the fall, the roots and branches that remain, the shift from necessary connection to separation. It was an easy poem to begin but a difficult poem to finish.

In the Realm of Possibility

Oh, to be back in the township of risk,
in the village of chance,
in the state of doubt and uncertainty,
feeling like you actually belong there,
where youth and health are
everyone's business; your vocation:
assembling imagination and luck.
You think this time would be different,
you would seize the opportunity,
you would take good fortune to heart,
and not be so dead
set on leaving, your pockets jingling
with change, every step you took,
every decision you made,
taking you further away
until you finally arrived
at what you'd never have guessed
would be your last destination:
this country of regret,
this land of limitation,
this world of the backward look,
and you a solid citizen
of comfort and security,
with memory, that poor relation,
your only traveling companion.
And yet, you shouldn't sell
anyone short. Poor relations are
better than none. Who's to say
she can't be
your sweetheart, your queen,
in the kingdom of the ordinary,
the empire of the mundane?
It's well within
the realm of possibility.

Ron Wallace

[previously published in *Four Corners* (2005)]

Poet's Statement

I rarely start a poem with a title (how can you know what to name your offspring until it's born and you see who it is?), but in this case I did. *In the Realm of Possibility* seemed to me an ideal title for my last book of poems, due out in the spring of 2025, and I needed a title poem. This one might not be it, but it's at least within the realm of possibility.

Blue Lace Colander

This would have been a poem about a colander,
a philosophical poem, startling and provocative,
but her blue lace underwear was so distracting—
peeking out above her low-cut pants
where she sat with her back to me in the coffee shop—
that I lost what would have been the first line
    of this poem.
Lost it completely.
I probably could have reconstructed it
if I pounced right on it,
but the delicate blue lace of her underwear
kept derailing my attention
as she twirled strands of her hair
round and round her finger.

She seemed to be working hard on something
and was not distracted by the noise and the bustle
    and the cell phone voices—
just as I am not distracted by these things.

As far as I remember, this poem would have partly been
to explain why I keep an old enamelware colander
    by my writing desk,
up on a windowsill
where it collects the morning sun
and leaks sunlight through its patterned perforations
    onto my page.

I think I was going to make the case
that all existence could be explained by this colander—
how the vast stream of impressions and sensations
passes through us like pasta water through a colander,
our minds retaining only the bulkier strands
    while the fluid passes through.

Because, yes, this antique colander does remind me
how our lives are mediated by filters and screens—
    like window screens keeping things out
    and colanders keeping things in.
We could make a list of such things:
    fishnets, coffee filters, memory,
    slotted spoons, dust masks, *CliffsNotes,*
    all our bodily membranes, our five senses,
    our digestive systems, all recorded history...
There would be no end to such a list.

And now my quaint enamelware colander
and her blue lace underwear
somehow seem to go together.
Enamelware and underwear...
blue lace and this perforated steel bowl.

I suppose colanders and lace are not entirely dissimilar—
how the lace invites the eye in
through delicate openings where a hint of skin
    shows through.

And I suppose it would not be impossible
to fashion a colander of blue lace
as a way of saying that it is the colander itself
    or the lace
that should capture our attention
even if our fleeting inspirations are so easily lost
    down time's gurgling drain.

Timothy Walsh

[previously published in the *North American Review* (March–April 2005)]

Poet's Statement

The lost line. The dream poem that vanishes upon waking. The perfect word or phrase that escapes before you have a chance to get it down on paper. None of these things were on my mind as I sat in the coffee shop tinkering with some notes and jottings about the old colander I'd recently placed on my writing desk at home. For some reason, I'd become fascinated with the old colander as an object—with the idea of colanders, their inherent beauty and their hint of the esoteric—with the way a colander seems to leak its emptiness into the surrounding air. My few notes were clunky and unshaped. I sipped my coffee and stared out the window. Just as the ghost of a good line began to take shape amid the swirl of thoughts, the young woman at the table across from me leaned forward, affording a glimpse of her attractive blue lace underwear. . .

There are thousands of these moments, chance convergences and serendipities, but most raw happenings aren't likely to show you the hidden doorway you're searching for. This one did. The underwear and the colander fused in my mind and in the poem.

A couple of months after I sent the poem off, I heard it had won second place in the *North American Review* James Hearst contest, chosen by Billy Collins. Needless to say, I was very happy. A few weeks later, I was in the coffee shop when the woman walked in—the blue lace woman! My first impulse was to introduce myself and thank her. . . but as I mentally rehearsed my explanations, it seemed less and less a good idea.

Bathing

To picture myself, planted in the eternal bath.
To beaver my bathtub til it runs over the forest floor.
To bear myself, woolly and naked, ready to wash.
To toad myself up to the rim of the pool.
To peeper my merriment in pond-rippling delight.
To slug my way into a rain-filled fairy tub.
To turtle and submerge my embarrassment.
To crevice my thoughts til they lather with form.
To sphagnum myself, soaking in all senses wild,
    sponging off all weighted boggy problems.
To wasp away my nasty angers, daubing
    life's stings and scratches with mud.
To trout my face with riffles.
To otter my back in drenching purification.
To waterbug my belly, gurgling with joy.
To cattail my arms and legs with the pollen
    warm energy of summer.
To heron my feet, swabbing the undertows.
To snail myself in a whirlpool of content.
To salmon myself through waterfalls of triumph.
To frog my future children's love into puddles
    singing in life's bathtub to my mate.
To salamander in Nature's cleansing irrigation
    til the water goes icy and I skim my way out.
To lichen myself in a cold sauna of fog.
To spruce myself in a flurry of golden tamarack needles.
To sparrow myself dry in a cloud of dust.
To lynx myself over with tongue-brushing neatness.
To moose my chest in a wallow of musk.
To jewel my weedy fingers in dewdrop appliqués.
Too human, to take in the whole experience.
To Ark all of this life inside.
To spirit myself clean.

Matt Welter

[previously published in *The Kerf*; originally composed for the Cable Natural History Museum]

Poet's Statement

To me bathing has always been a sensual experience. As I began to write the poem I took a chance and turned the animals and plants I had seen bathing into verbs. The voice came out strong, sensual and narrative, mirroring both my own act of bathing and what animals do in the wild. The hard part was finding an ending until I realized I had a collection of animals.

Tobacco Heart

I dreamed a silhouette hazed in elegance, flare between her lovely fingers. A siren-self, chanteuse. Such a charmer. And who could resist her? In Prague and San Francisco, Wisconsin taverns, living rooms in Alaska—She whispered *Have one. With me.* You and me together and him too. All of us in dragon-smoke, at the kitchen table where I spoke a Sanskrit poem with fire in my hand. She whispered *Darling.* Sometimes, palpitating and sick, I placed one hand pledging allegiance, the other on my stomach and repeated my name *Katharine* until I feel calmer. And I know this part is over, done to death, all this noise. The gestures and pacing, the coquetry. All those huddles over flame in the wind, brother and sister of it, mingled sex, map made of burning. I reached for contact; brought it into my mouth like religion.

Katharine Whitcomb

Poet's Statement

The intimate nature of smoking with people suggested to me using personification as a way of capturing the seductiveness of the activity. The title refers to a medical condition that occurs when you smoke too many cigarettes in succession and your heart palpitates.

GRANDMOTHER

hears
that one big
ocean
say—
back when the world
was
all
water—
make
this world
BIGGER
I
need more room!
So
she
made
land
made
LESS room for
water
broke that
too-big-for-his-own-good
ocean
into
many smaller ones.
And
now there are
waves—
all those waters
trying to
get back
together
into
one again.

J.D. Whitney

[previously published in *Grandmother Says* (Arctos Press, 2005)]

Poet's Statement

Dominant, Euro-American culture stands to (needs to) learn from all the peoples who inhabited North America—gently and successfully—long before 1492. Creation is not done, not finished. The world was not made primarily for human beings. There are no such things as "lower forms of life." All the creatures and energies on this great Earth have personhood—spirit, energy, sentience, purpose, rights, knowledge.

So while the argument continues between the Evolutionists and Intelligent Designers, Grandmother sits back, watches, and laughs (some) as she goes about the busyness of keeping all the persons in Creation as happy and balanced as she can. Her work is never done—resolving little disputes and misunderstandings, clarifying things, making adjustments to the world and how it works, and having a little beasty fun while she's at it.

Artistic Encounter

He said: "I beg your pardon,
But please sir, hear my plea.
It will only take a moment,
I'm down & out, you see.

I only need a little cash
To see me through the night.
I've had some bad luck lately,
and there's no relief in sight.

I used to own a business
But the market got so bad,
I went completely bankrupt,
Lost everything I had.

Lost my wife and family
Lost everything but one...
All that I've got left is
This little bitty gun!"

Mason Williams

Poet's Statement

I got the idea for *Punch Line Poetry* out of one of my old journals. In the process of searching for information for the Parallel Press printing of my *Them Poems* chapbook I ran across a roughed out poem titled "The Touch." It was a poem I had never finished and it was never printed in any of my books. When I read it to my friend, Ed Ruscha, he thought I should title it, "Artistic Encounter." I like the idea of the punch line at the end.

There are poems with clever endings, surprise endings, etc. What I can foresee is a poem form that would be well-written verses of poetry that build up to a punch line. The concept has the potential to make a poet or versifier into a good literary joke teller. Good jokes have good story lines leading up to the punch line. This is where the poet or versifier has to make a good call, i.e., he should ask himself, "Is the set-up a good story in itself and does it have a great punch line?"

On a broader level I like the fact that this idea has the potential to inspire people to write their own poems or verses as literary ways of telling jokes. I can even foresee a contest where different poets would each write individual lead-ups to the same punch line. The winner would be judged on the basis of whomever wrote the best set up to the punch line.

Contributors

MARILYN ANNUCCI is the author of *Luck* (Parallel Press, 2000), and her work has been published widely in journals. In 2003, her poem "Cosmography" won Second Place in the 2003 *Tin House*/Summer Literary Awards contest, which sent her to St. Petersburg, Russia, for a month, and her story "Wanting to Stay" won the 2004 *Maize* Prize for Short Fiction, sponsored by the Writers' Center of Indiana.

HARRIET BROWN is the author of *The Promised Land*, a chapbook of poems from Parallel Press (2004), as well as *The Good-bye Window*, *Madison Walks*, and other nonfiction books. She's the editor of *Wisconsin Trails* magazine and lives in Madison.

CHARLES CANTRELL teaches English at Madison Area Technical College. He has been a fellow at Ragdale, The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and The Vermont Studio Center. He has won grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his poems have appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *The Literary Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and many others. Parallel Press published his chapbook *Cicatrix* in 2001. Pudding House released his *Greatest Hits* in 2004.

ROBIN CHAPMAN'S most recent poetry collections are *Once* (Juniper Press, 2005) and *Images of a Complex World: The Art and Poetry of Chaos* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2005; with J.C. Sprott). With Judith Strasser she is editing an anthology, *The Fourth Quarter: Poems about Retirement and Beyond* (University of Iowa Press, 2006).

TEMPLE CONE lives with his wife and daughter in Annapolis, Maryland, where he is an assistant professor of English at the United States Naval Academy.

FRANCINE CONLEY, performer and poet, has written a chapbook of poems, *How Dumb the Stars* (Parallel Press, 2000), and produced seven one-person plays, including the current "Lost and Found" (francineconley.tripod.com). A Ph.D. in French-Theatre from UW–Madison, she is a professor of French at the College of St. Catherine in Minnesota.

HEATHER DUBROW, Tighe-Evans Professor and John Bascom Professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, *Transformation and Repetition* (Sandhills Press/Main-Travelled Roads) and *Border Crossings* (Parallel Press), and a play, *The Devil's Paintbrush*, produced by a community theater. Her recent poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Southern Review*, and in the anthology *Wings and Waking Dreams* (Abbeywood Press).

GWEN EBERT won the Four Way Books Prize in 2000 for her manuscript, *The Little Bat Trainer*. She has received numerous poetry awards and an MFA from the University of Pittsburgh. She currently works at the UW–Madison as a poet spy in the College of Engineering.

BARBARA EDELMAN teaches writing at the University of Pittsburgh. Her recent publications include a short short story in the journal *Arts & Letters* and a short essay forthcoming in the journal *Rattle*. She's currently working on a play.

SUSAN ELBE is the author of *Light Made from Nothing* (Parallel Press, 2003). Her poems have appeared in many journals including *Atlanta Review, Ascent, Calyx, Crab Orchard Review, MARGIE/The American Journal of Poetry, Nimrod, The North American Review, Passages North,* and *Smartish Pace.* She is the recipient of a Rowland Foundation fellowship to the Vermont Studio Center and won the Lois Cranston Memorial Poetry Prize sponsored by *Calyx.* She lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

KARL ELDER received in 2005 both the Chad Walsh and Lorine Niedecker awards for poetry. His recent collections are *The Minimalist's How-to Handbook* (Parallel Press, 2005) and *Mead: Twenty-six Abecedariums* (Marsh River Editions), for which some of the work they contain has been anthologized in *The Pushcart Prize* (2000) and *The Best American Poetry* (2000 and 2005).

JEAN FERACA is an award-winning poet, essayist, and public radio broadcaster. Her first two books of poetry—*South From Rome: Il Mezzogiorno* and *Crossing the Great Divide*— were both nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She published a chapbook, *Rendered into Paradise,* with Parallel Press in 2002. Winner of an NEA grant, a Wisconsin Arts Board grant, and the 1975 Discovery Award, her poetry is anthologized in *The Dream Book,* which won the American Book Award in 1986. She is the host/executive producer of "Here on Earth: Radio without Borders" from Wisconsin Public Radio. A book of essays, *I Hear Voices,* is forthcoming from the University of Wisconsin Press. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband.

JIM FERRIS is the author of *The Hospital Poems,* selected by Edward Hirsch as winner of the 2004 Main Street Rag Book Award. His work has appeared in many journals, including *The Georgia Review* and *Michigan Quarterly Review.* Recipient of a Literary Artist Fellowship Award from the Wisconsin Arts Board, he is president of the Society for Disability Studies, the leading international scholarly organization in Disability Studies. At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, he supervises the instructional staff in speech composition and teaches communication arts and disability studies.

ALLISON FUNK is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *The Knot Garden* (Sheep Meadow Press). She is the recipient of the Samuel French Morse Prize, the George Kent Prize from *Poetry* magazine, and a fellowship from the NEA. She teaches at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

MAX GARLAND is originally from western Kentucky. His first book of poems, *The Postal Confessions,* won the Juniper Prize for Poetry. His poems and fiction have also appeared in *Poetry, Georgia Review, Best American Short Stories,* and other journals and anthologies. Awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship, a Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship for 2005, a James Michener Fiction Fellowship, the Tara Short Fiction Award, and a Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship. He lives and teaches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

TED GENOWAYS is the author of *Bullroarer: A Sequence* (Northeastern, 2001) and the winner of the Samuel French Morse Poetry Prize, the Natalie Ornish Poetry Award, and the Nebraska Book Award. He is also the editor of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and six books, including Joseph Kalar's *Papermill: Poems 1927–1935* (Illinois, 2005).

RICK HILLES has contributed to *Harper's, Poetry, The Nation,* and *The New Republic.* A former Stegner fellow at Stanford and Halls Fellow at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, he has taught poetry courses most recently at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor. He is the Amy Lowell Traveling Poetry Scholar for 2002–03 and this fall will join the faculty at Vanderbilt.

KARLA HUSTON is the author of five chapbooks of poetry, most recently *Catch and Release* (Marsh River Editions, 2005). Her poems, reviews and interviews have been published in *Cimarron Review, 5:AM, MARGIE/The American Journal of Poetry, North American Review, One Trick Pony, Pearl, Rattle,* and others.

CARL LINDNER is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, where he has been teaching since 1969. He has won several teaching and poetry awards, and has published three chapbooks and two full-sized collections, with another manuscript completed.

SHARON F. MCDERMOTT teaches poetry writing at the University of Pittsburgh. Her work has appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies, most recently in *Prairie Schooner, Seneca Review,* and the anthology *Commonwealth: Poems of Pennsylvania* (Penn State Press). A recipient of a 2002 PA Council on the Arts grant, McDermott's chapbook, *Alley Scatting,* was published by Parallel Press in September 2005.

MARY MERCIER lives in Plain, Wisconsin, where she writes poems derived from the country—drawn from the land and those who inhabit it. Before moving to southern Wisconsin, she lived for 15 years in the north country. She now advises students in environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

STEPHEN MURABITO is a former NEA fellow and University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award winner. His poetry has been published in many journals including the *Beloit Poetry Journal, Mississippi Review,* and *5:AM;* his fiction has appeared in the *North American Review, Antietam Review,* and *Paper Street.* He is the author of a poetry chapbook, *A Little Dinner Music* (Parallel Press, 2004) and a book-length poetry collection, *The Oswego Fugues* (Star Cloud Press, 2005). An essay by Lewis Putnam Turco on *The Oswego Fugues* is the feature article in *The Hollins Critic* (June 2005).

JOHN D. NILES is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a senior fellow at the UW Institute for Research in the Humanities. As a medievalist and folklorist, he has written extensively on *Beowulf* and oral narrative. He is the author of the Parallel Press chapbook *Chapman's Pack* (2003) and has recently completed a book on Old English enigmatic poems.

ELIZABETH ONESS published a collection of stories, *Articles of Faith* (University of Iowa Press, 2000), that won the 2000 Iowa Short Fiction Prize and was selected for the *Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Program.* Her novel, *Departures,* was published by Penguin (Berkley Books) in 2004. She directs marketing for Sutton Hoo Press, a literary fine press.

ROGER PFINGSTON is eight years into retirement after teaching at the secondary level for thirty-one years. He continues to work on poems and photographs with work in recent issues of *Texas Poetry Journal, New Letters, The Ledge, Poetry Midwest, Ellipsis, The MacGuffin, Reed, and Blue Earth Review.*

ANDREA POTOS' first full-length collection of poems, *Yaya's Cloth,* will be published by Iris Press in summer of 2006. She was the recipient of the 2004 James Hearst Poetry Prize from the *North American Review.* She works as a longtime, part-time bookseller at A Room of One's Own Feminist Bookstore in Madison, Wisconsin.

EVE ROBILLARD has been both a writing teacher and a children's librarian. She feels the latter position is much more fun! She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Everything Happens Twice* published by Fireweed Press, and *when gertrude married alice* published by Parallel Press.

CARMINE SARRACINO'S first collection of poems, *The Idea of the Ordinary,* was published by Orchises in 2003. *The Heart of War* was his Parallel Press chapbook of poems about the Civil War, and a full-length collection of these poems entitled *The Battlefield Photographer* will be published by Orchises in 2007. He is currently working on a novel loosely based on Louisa May Alcott's wartime experiences.

SHOSHAUNA SHY is a member of the Prairie Fire Poetry Quartet. She is also the founder of Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf, a program that places poetry in public places where it is not expected. Her poems have been published nationwide, and she is the author of three chapbooks.

JUDITH SORNBERGER has four published collections of poems; one full-length collection (*Open Heart,* Calyx Books) and three chapbooks: *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (which won the Talent House Press chapbook contest), *Bifocals Barbie: A Midlife Pantheon* (Talent House Press), and *Bones of Light* (Parallel Press). Her poems and essays have appeared in magazines such as *Prairie Schooner, Calyx, The Women's Review of Books, California Quarterly,* and *Puerto del Sol,* and in the anthologies *Claiming the Spirit Within* (Beacon Press), *Mother to Daughter/Daughter to Mother* (The Feminist Press), *Her Words* (Shambhala), and *Out of Line* (Longmire). She has taught in many venues, including, for two years, in the Nebraska State Penitentiary and Lincoln Correctional Center. She is currently professor of English and director of women's studies at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania.

JUDITH STRASSER'S book-length poetry manuscript, *The Reason/Unreason Project,* won the Lewis-Clark Press Expedition Award, and will be published in 2006. She is also the author of a memoir, *Black Eye: Escaping a Marriage, Writing a Life* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) and *Sand Island Succession: Poems of the Apostles* (Parallel Press, 2002).

ALISON TOWNSEND is the author of two collections of poetry, *The Blue Dress* (Gazelle, 2003) and *What the Body Knows* (Parallel Press, 2002). Her poetry and creative non-fiction appear widely, in magazines including *Crab Orchard Review, Fourth Genre, Michigan Quarterly Review, The North American Review,* and *The Southern Review.* She is an associate professor of English, creative writing, and women's studies at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater.

DENNIS TRUDELL is the author of a poetry chapbook, *Marquees of Buffalo: Movies in Poems & Prose* (Parallel Press, 2004). In addition, he has authored *Fragments in Us: Recent & Earlier Poems* (UW Press) and edited *Full Court: A Literary Basketball Anthology.* He is writing new poems and refining "keepers" from a stack of recent short-short stories. He has a poem in Garrison Keillor's *Good Poems for Hard Times.*

TISHA TURK is a newly-minted assistant professor of English at the University of Minnesota in Morris. These days she is writing creative nonfiction more often than poetry.

RONALD WALLACE'S most recent books include *Now You See It* (Parallel Press, 2005) and *Long for This World: New & Selected Poems* (Pittsburgh, 2003). He co-directs the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and edits the University of Wisconsin Press poetry series. He divides his time between Madison and a forty-acre farm in Bear Valley, Wisconsin.

TIMOTHY WALSH'S poems have appeared in *The North American Review, Soundings East, The Midwest Quarterly, Rivendell,* and others. He won the Grand Prize in the 2004 *Atlanta Review* International Poetry Competition. He has also won several awards for his short stories, and two of them have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His book of literary criticism, *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature,* was published in 1998 by Southern Illinois University Press. His poetry chapbook, *Wild Apples,* was published by Parallel Press in 2004. He is director of the Cross-College Advising Services at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

MATT WELTER is the Curator of Education for the Neville Public Museum of Brown County. He enjoys nature photography, finding new foods at *tiendas* and *taquerias* and learning.

KATHARINE WHITCOMB is the author of *Saints of South Dakota & Other Poems* (Bluestem Press, 2001), chosen by Lucia Perillo as the winner of the 2000 Bluestem Poetry Award. Her awards include a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review* and other journals. She lives in Ellensburg, Washington.

J.D. WHITNEY teaches regularly at the University of Wisconsin–Marathon County and occasionally at the College of Menominee Nation. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board. His most recent book is *Grandmother Says* (Arctos Press, 2005). He lives in Wausau, Wisconsin.

MASON WILLIAMS has recorded and released 7 singles, 24 albums, and 2 EPs. He has written 250 songs, half of which are pretty good, one of which, *Classical Gas,* is apparently really good. He has played at least 1,000 gigs in a lot of different places. Williams has written well over 1,000 poems plus a bunch of other stuff and created bunches of art too, published 16 literary/art books and 5 music books, written 174 hours of broadcast television (and even more hours of unbroadcastable television), and received 11 awards and 8 nominations.

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1999
Garland, Max. *Apparition*
Oness, Elizabeth. *Sure Knowledge*
Potos, Andrea. *The Perfect Day*
Whitcomb, Katharine. *Hosannas*

2000
Annucci, Marilyn. *Luck*
Ebert, Gwen. *The Twig Songs*
Hilles, Rick. *A Visionary's Company*
Welter, Matt. *Our Sainted Lady Esther*
Whitney, J.D. *What Grandmother Says*
Williams, Mason. *Them Poems*

2001
Cantrell, Charles. *Cicatrix*
Chapman, Robin. *The Only Everglades in the World*
Conley, Francine. *How Dumb the Stars*
Dubrow, Heather. *Border Crossings*
Genoways, Ted. *Anna, washing*
Lindner, Carl. *Eat & Remember*

2002
Edelman, Barbara. *A Girl in Water*
Feraca, Jean. *Rendered into Paradise*
Funk, Allison. *From the Sketchbooks of Vanessa Bell*
Mercier, Mary. *Small Acts*
Strasser, Judith. *Sand Island Succession*
Townsend, Alison. *What the Body Knows*

2003
Elbe, Susan. *Light Made from Nothing*
Niles, John. *Chapman's Pack*
Pfingston, Roger. *Singing to the Garden*
Sornberger, Judith. *Bones of Light*
Trudell, Dennis. *Marquees of Buffalo*
Turk, Tisha. *Getting Out Alive*

2004
Brown, Harriet. *The Promised Land*
Huston, Karla. *Virgins on the Rocks*
Murabito, Stephen. *A Little Dinner Music*
Robillard, Eve. *when gertrude married alice*
Sarracino, Carmine. *The Heart of War*
Walsh, Timothy. *Wild Apples*

2005
Cone, Temple. *Considerations of Earth and Sky*
Elder, Karl. *The Minimalist's How-to Handbook*
Ferris, Jim. *Facts of Life*
McDermott, Sharon. *Alley Scatting*
Shy, Shoshauna. *White Horses on Sale for a Song*
Wallace, Ron. *Now You See It*

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