

The Decision of Taking a Lover

It is usually a matter of possibility.

I mean that you are awakened by all the small delicious pulses firing through toes curled over the precipice of your next possible step, through thick blue foot-veins, along the ridge of your shin, over a small hump, past liver, duodenum, clavicle, esophagus, sinus cavities.

I mean that your sense of the possible arrives through these various body lines to a singular room busy with little cartographers warbling unignorably, condensing the data onto a map which you may follow, but which is probably incomplete, topo lines petering out into blank space.

This is the sort of map you want: unfinished, suggestive—full of possibility, like those early maps detailing the things the explorers wished to find—passages, new continents, imagined clusters of islands—and absent of features known only by going there, by being turned around by mudflats or escorted north by unexpected coastlines.

The decision of taking a lover is the decision to learn the coastline by following it, to search for the mountains and valleys of your dreams by setting out vaguely in the direction of their possibility, to learn the contours of another's mind by feeling it with your own, the contours of his shoulders

and toes by exposing them in the dark. But it is a decision marked by uncertainty, by possible navigational mishaps. There may be lines or irregular shapes on the map which indicate another's property, and if you wonder about crossing boundaries, walk yourself clear to their edge and learn the extent to which the lines are real. Learn whether there is barbed wire, and why, and whether the boundary is political, social, economic, personal, semantic, irrelevant.

I have slept on beaches marked "private," not believing in the ownership of such places. I have accessed mountain bowls through private drives which have fenced off public lands. And I have run inside cattle pastures only to be chased off by a bull.

But usually I set foot in the places with the fewest named mountains and streams, the fewest recorded stories, the fewest straight lines, and the most unmapped terrain, so that the possibilities rise unannounced and thus far uncharted.

Amy Crawford

The Story of Asteroids

for Gene Shoemaker

1.

Gene

puts his ear
to the mouths of craters
and hears songs in tongues
eroded and weary.
And from the mouths of craters,
he says,
*A small object
traveling at a high speed
will make a very big hole.*

Gene dreams of the moon but catches comets
in the net of his sight:
the telescope's roving eye,
blinking open on the spangled sky.

Gene dreams of the moon but catches the neatest girl
he's ever known.

The story of asteroids is a love story
Gene and Carolyn in the night,
taking glowy pictures of the sky,
shy valentines alight
with star and planet,
and the fuzzed lines of comets
that are named like sweethearts or daughters:
253 Mathilde, 243 Ida,

Shoemaker-Levy 9.

Gene and Carolyn find
objects in near-earth orbit,
courtly kisses of ellipses:
near misses
drawing newly known scribbles
in the pure Copernican sky.

2.

Which is to say:

somewhere in the universe there may be
a comet with your name on it.

Or, if you're Gene Shoemaker,
there are thirty-two with your name—

thirty-two angels of iron and ice,
borne on hydrogen wings.

3.

From the vacuum of our solo souls,
you arc toward me,
I wobble in my orbit,
you fall into the well of me,
I burn you,
you gouge me,
you dissolve,
I am plunged in fire.

New animals creep out of the dust.

If each had a pure integrity
of self, we would be
stony islands
in an empty sea.

Instead, God gives to each
its share of gravity.

This is why one thing heads for another:
why rock falls to rock,
why cell clings to cell,

why, even as they perish like phoenix lovers,
each thing still reaches for all the others

The story of asteroids is a love story, you see.
The universe
just can't leave itself alone.

Jeanne Obbard

Gene Shoemaker (1928-1997), a geologist who specialized in the science of crater formation, later became a renowned astronomer as well. His early dream of going to the moon did not materialize, but Gene, his wife Carolyn, and his colleague David Levy discovered 32 comets in near-earth orbits over the course of 11 years, thus founding the modern science of near-earth objects.

Lake Ripley Believe It or Not

for my sister who died yesterday

When I was a boy living in Chicago
and it was hot, I rode down to the lake
on my bike to cool off. The whole city
was there. The lakefront being God's
and city-planner Daniel Burnham's gift
to the working poor. Now sixty-one, I
hop on my 10-speed, Motobecane bike
and peddle to a little country lake, Lake
Ripley, where migrant workers and their
families swim. I feel right at home.

As a young boy Ole Evinrude circled
this 2 by 3-mile lake in his hand-made
sailboat perhaps even then dreaming
of outboard motors. Today jet skis slap
by, kids scream and afternoon seems
never to end. Next to the beach there's
a graveyard on a hill. Now that's small
town city planning—if it's good enough
for a picnic, then it's good enough for
eternal rest.

And why shouldn't life (and death) be a
picnic: we'd work in swimsuits, wear
cologne the scent of charcoal starter,
suitcases could be colorful coolers and
we'd have the option of being buried
in our favorite cars. Ole, I hope your
coffin was a wooden fishing boat. And
you, reading this, if you can remember
ever yanking the cord of an Evinrude,
you've lived a damn good live.

John Lehman

*Many men go fishing all their lives without knowing
that it is not fish they are after.*

—Thoreau

The bright lures caught him,
Their intended victim.

Hula Popper, Lazy Ike, Daredevil, River Runt.

The lake will turn over like
A sleeping woman, and

He will be there with rough cracked hands.

Bushwacker, Sonic, Hawaiian Wiggler, Whopper Stopper.

He craves the sleek contours
And simulations of life

In obscenely intense plastic.

Hooks are always there, just hidden,

Neatly packaged like suburban adultery.

Hellbender, No Alibi, Dipsy Doodle, Slurp-it.

He squints the shimmer of water from his eyes,
And mutters a kind of love
Or excuse for loneliness.

Bayou Boogie, Hot Spot, Dying Flutter, Buck Bush.

The choices, intricate as guilt, fascinate him.
With drooling visions it is all here just for him.

Puddle Jumper, Roostertail, Blue Demon, Bingo.

Dory L. Hudspeth

My Son's Trip to Yellowstone

Thirteen years out and wildness is your food.
You have a man's hunger, for grizzly, elk and moose
and eat them with your nose, your eyes
but leave the table still unsatisfied.

Is it because you are Aquarian
that you prefer the bubbling sulphur springs?
They are fire-water for a burning teenage soul
left parched by years in dry suburban schools.

It's here you find liquor to quench your thirst,
in this boiling, deep blue chalice of the earth's.

Judy Hall

My brother was always bringing food home.
 In my memory the back porch
 was fringed with ducks
 the slow drip from their bills,
 blue sheen of their swaying necks.
 After plucking they were more
 than naked, scarred by buckshot,
 feather down clinging
 to the blue pimpled skin.

Beneath his feet
 fish scales curved
 like jewelled fingernails
 as they dried; on fishing days, the cat
 was my brother's most ardent slave,
 one urgent knot
 of hunger, bolting into darkness
 with the fish head.

His daughter has a way of moving
 in forests, her feet the quickened
 roots of trees, taking the silence with her
 where she goes, into forests of birds
 whose breeds she knows the way we know
 our alphabet. Her hands are the shape
 of a small bird's body, they flutter
 with the tiny lives who stray
 too close to her and find themselves
 caught in a living cage.

My brother is teaching her now
 about trees, they go together into woods
 and speak the names
 of the leaves and needles that hold

the sky together; he shows her how to read
 the wood, its crumpled skin
 and amber flesh, how it maps its coded history
 of age and illness, and how that body gives up itself
 to the teeth of the saw to be reborn one day
 as a wall, a floor, a room of burnished grain.

Rhona McAdam

It's a little person, almost,
looking up at me every time
the refrigerator door
opens.

It knows the source of what it loves,
what's green and quenching,
what's crisp against the teeth.
And it knows how to ask.

It's not afraid
to stand in its place, calling.
It never doubts
the answer will come.

Corner to corner,
it sniffs, sips, tastes,
quiet, private, within
its domain—

all right, its *cage*,

but not to it, I'm sure,

not according to its view of things.

Because it has a genius
for being fed, for being fully
satisfied.

It's happy in this life,

I can tell. It believes

in things. You can see
that knowledge clearly
in its eyes,

which are always open, lit
by a kind of eagerness.

Hillary Sallick

Sidi-bou-Saïd, Tunisia

All that remains of Carthage is the sky—
this indigo, indelible as if

Dido brought the blue with her from Tyre
and built a dome for the city with the dye:

That isn't Carthage, spread below us there
in lumps of dun sand dead by the sleeping sea.

The white and purple Carthage Dido knew
under this pantheon of sapphire-vaulted

air—it's gone; it's somewhere else—a poem.

Down there, the Romans plowed the soil with salt.
Nothing remained of Carthage after Rome.

But Carthage is more than the city Scipio wept;
it's the blue song Dido painted overhead.

Things that matter cannot be destroyed,

and those dun lumps were built again with words
into another Carthage—one we've read.

Forget the hills down there; the words have kept
the ruined city so alive that, dead,

Dido is even more alive than I am.

She's not here in Sidi-bou-Saïd;

she's closer, poised on a scaffolding in air
painting the only Carthage that we need.

Deborah Warren

Lost to landscapes scrolling past,
She sits knitting in the carriage of a train;
The blurred needles scintillate and glance
To the upbeat cadence of the wheels.

Rows of tiny coils and eyelets like beads
Of condensation, gather on the upper rim
As she zips along with loops and riffs,
Nimble delving with needle tips,
Her tilted face serene and still.

Once in a while she gives a heave
To loosen more yarn from the skein
Of Curragh wool—brushed worsted weave,
Spun and carded from the richest fleece
Deep in the wicker basket by her feet.
With each tug the feeding line of yarn
Becomes less taut and life flows on
More easily in these kind-fated reprieves.

The needles flash mesmerically
With ancient rhythms and attack
Of duellists in their chainmail coats.
With little hesitation she can tack
From plain to purl to blackberry,
Count back by rote or slip a stitch
While the fish-eyed gimlets gleam.

The rib-worked cables fall and teem
From her enthralled hands;
Tresses and plaits, braided fields
Of heraldry, celtic-cross evangelists
With smocks and little saintly feet

All gather profusely in her lap,
As windfall trove, rich-patterned
And warm with peach-fuzz nap,
All crafted from a single line of yarn.
Marvels fall continuously from wise
Spell-binding hands and all is well for now.

Mike Casey

Jamie Morewood Anderson lives in the village of Cedar Crest in the high mountains of central New Mexico. She and her husband share a plethora of pets including livestock, domestics and exotics. Her poetry, prose and journalism appear in local, state and national publications.

Anne Caston's first book of poems, *Flying Out With The Wounded*, won the 1996 NYU Press Prize for Poetry. She appears in *The Bread Loaf Anthology of New American Poets* and in *Where Books Fall Open*. She teaches writing at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

Mike Casey, an Irish poet, studied and taught at University College Dublin and at Cambridge. He worked for three years in Washington DC. He has published in a number of magazines and been awarded both national and international prizes. His novel, *Come Home Robbie*, is set in Virginia.

Philip Dacey's latest book is *The Deathbed Playboy* (Eastern Washington University Press, 1999).

Mark DeFoe's poetry books include *Bringing Home Breakfast* (Black Willow Press), *Palmate* (Pringle Tree Press) and *AIR* (Green Tower Press). He appears in *Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review* and many anthologies, including *Urban Nature* (Milkweed) and *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture* (University of Michigan Press).

Amy Dengler's collection of poetry, *Between Leap and Landing*, was published in 1999 by Folly Cove Books. A resident of Gloucester, MA, she is the recipient of a Robert Penn Warren Award from New England Writers.

Gayle Eleanor is a retired Marriage and Family Therapist living in California. Her work has appeared in *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Manzanita Quarterly*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, and *Snowy Egret*. Her collections of poems are *Grace Happens* (2001) and *Nahanni* (2002).

J.C. Ellefson has taught writing and literature at Shanghai University and the Universidade Dos Acores. New poems are forthcoming in *The New Orleans Review*, *The Madison Review*, and *Confusion*. At this time, he supervises the verbal insurrection movement at Champlain College, where he serves as Poet-In-Residence.

Douglas Goetsch's most recent book of poems, *The Job of Being Everybody*, won the 2003 Cleveland State University Poetry Center

Open Competition. He currently teaches creative writing to incarcerated teens at Passages Academy in the Bronx, and can be found at www.janestreet.com.

Judy Hall of Ketchum, Idaho, is an Environmental Artist and Director of Fund Development for a non-profit organization working to restore watersheds and wildlife in the Rocky Mountain west.

Norman Hane's first collection of poems, *Riding into the Solstice*, was published in 1994 by River Oak Press. His work appears in *Poet and Critic*, *Plains Poetry Journal* and *The Spoon River Poetry Review*. He lives in Oak Park, Illinois.

Dory L. Hudspeth of Alvaton, KY is an herbalist and historical researcher. Her stories and poems appear in *Shenandoah*, *Poet Lore*, *Thema*, *Mid-American Poetry Review*, and *Wavelength*.

Ann Lauinger's poems have appeared in *Global City Review*, *Confrontation*, *Natural Bridge*, *Rattapallax*, *Rhino* and *Tampa Review*. She won the 2002 Erskine J. Poetry Prize from *Smartish Pace*, and teaches medieval and Renaissance literature at Sarah Lawrence College.

John Lehman is the founder of *Rosebud* magazine, poetry editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, managing partner of Zelda Wilde Publishing, and editor/publisher of the Madison street quarterly, *Cup of Poems with a Side of Prose*. His latest collection is *Dogs Dream of Running*. He lives in Rockdale, WI with his wife and four dogs.

Rhona McAdam has published four collections of poetry, including *Hour of the Pearl*, *Creating the Country* (both Thistle-down Press, Saskatoon, Canada) and *Old Habits* (Thistle-down, Canada / Slow Dancer, UK).

Alfred Nicol's poems appear in *Commonweal*, *The New England Review*, *The Formalist*, and the anthology *Contemporary Poetry of New England*. A collection is forthcoming from the University of Evensville Press.

Jeanne Obbard is a recipient of the Leeway Award for Emerging Artists in Poetry. Her work has appeared in *The American Poetry Review* and *Red Tree*.

Andrea Potos lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Her work appears in *Poetry East*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *A Fierce Brightness: 25 Years of Women's Poetry* (Calyx Books), and *Claiming the Spirit Within* (Beacon Press).

and two children, ages twelve and nine. Her poems have appeared in literary magazines such as *Northeast*, *Passages North*, and *Hawaii Pacific Review*. A former teacher, Hilary volunteers at a local public school. She is also a dedicated piano student.

David Shumate teaches English at Marian College in Indianapolis. His prose poems appear in *Mississippi Review*, *River City*, *Worcester Review*, *Mid-American Review* and *Louisville Review*. He was nominated in 2001 for a Pushcart Prize.

Robert Thomas's book of poems *Door to Door* won the 2001 Poets Out Loud Prize and was published by Fordham U. Press. A 2003 NEA recipient, his poems appear in *The Atlantic*, *FIELD*, *The Iowa Review*, *New England Review*, *Southern Review* and numerous others. Website: www.robertthomaspoeems.com.

Jeanne Wagner's chapbook *The Falling Woman* was published by Pudding House in 2001. She appears in *Quarterly West*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore* and *Southern Poetry Review*. A three-time International Merit Award winner, she is a tax accountant by profession.

Deborah Warren's first poetry collection, *The Size of Happiness*, appeared this year from Waywiser Press, London. Recipient of the 2001 Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award and the 2002 Robert Frost Award, her poems appear in *The Hudson Review*, *The New Criticism*, and *The Paris Review*.

Gary Whited is a poet, philosopher and psychotherapist. He grew up on the plains of eastern Montana, and his poems draw heavily on images from the prairie. He lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts with his wife, a daughter and son.

I love you how garden green things growing
Each tendril where to reach everything knowing.

I love you every bird its own path winging
Over creek sandy shallows all stones singing.

How I love you in cold is coal orange burning
In dark night to light momentarily turning.

I love you how ferns their fronds unwinding
Secrets of jug-plants children finding.

In autumn how heavy crows corn-shocked calling
And I love you how in wintered woods all snow falling.

Mildred Greear

It takes hours to make ice cream, a few minutes to make love,
seconds to die, though sometimes months, a long hard night to be born,
just a heartbeat to get your heart broken and a lifetime for it to mend.

You can lose the farm in a moment if the dealer flips over an ace,
or you can give up gambling, lose it all much more slowly, then get religion
and read the Bible straight through. That takes about a year.

It takes billions of years (or a week) to make the earth, eons to make rocks,
eighteen months on an Oklahoma chain gang to break your unfair share,
thirty days to break a bad habit or yield to it once and for all.

It takes half-an-hour at 400° to bake bread, nine months in the oven
to make a daughter, two decades for her to grow up and go...
an indeterminate period to catch a trout in a deep pool and release it.

Everything takes time. Everything. And the time it takes is never enough,
not to appreciate its iridescence before the rainbow vanishes with a flick of fins,
not to hold the newborn before she slips through your fingers into her own life;

never enough time to slice hot bread, butter it, and watch the butter melt,
not to better your odds against the house or hacksaw your shackles
without getting caught because you had to stop for a smoke.

How could there be enough? Even if you had eons like a rock,
geological time, you'd still want more when it ran out—
more life, more love, more homemade ice cream.

Don Thompson

Even now those crystals
of salt are at work
giving birth to themselves
in order to sprinkle

our lives with their light.

Even now they are gathering
their shining into the
large tears of our seas

that connect land to land,
or building their brightness
inside the heart of the earth,
so that our shovels will

find their hard glitter.

Does salt understand why
we must dig that light up
and carry those crystals

into our dark-roofed homes
to season what is as
dull and dim and bland
as our ordinary lives?

Does salt realize how
much we need its sharp
dazzle that delights
our poor overworked tongues,

which both eat and speak?
And how without that brilliance,
there would be neither
the zest we crave nor wit?

Sue Owen

Oughtn't we have more things to say about clouds?
Now that we're among them so regularly on commercial flights,
six miles and higher in the air, gazing out at spheres of haze,

stratus, cirrus, cumulonimbus, heads alive with storms
and darkness and the sky more blue, even, than we've ever seen
before, the massed scapes intact, distinct, in character,

perhaps, like the first rocks on this earth before the first
rains, rough and impossibly wild in reach and scope
and thrust... Then white, nothing, the sound of jet engines

as we fly into them. Oughtn't we make a language
of flight for the intensities of white and gray and light,
the fabulousness of the shapes? The April galleons?

Leslie Whatley

Suspension Bridge of Disbelief

No one knows what's down there.
We hear the water
but cannot see it.
Under the bridge, steel
columns disappear
into fog. The lonely cry
of boats weeps upward.
No one knows
who built the bridge
or how it was engineered
to stand year by year.
Even the boatmen, who tell us stories
of what they've seen
(rocks honed by water
to needles, fish
the size of the moon)
cannot explain it.
And if they could, no one
would believe them.
They wring their dirty hats
with pale, water-puckered hands.
Lies hover about their heads
like seagulls. They say
if a man fell from the bridge
he would not die
from the fall
but that falling his heart
would split,
an overripe tomato,
either from fear or
most likely
from the inexpressible joy
of what he finally saw.

Stephanie Lenox

State of the Union Heart

My heart is like a lamp turned out
in a room where no one sips tea
in stiff-back wine-velvet chairs
and the piano is left untouched.
Not even young hands, in clumsy learning,
sound out the first jangled dimensions
of their talent on the keys
or test the melody of personal artistry.
A piano unplayed in a silent room
is a rage against all manufacturers
of musical instruments, even oboes.
Inner strings tense with anticipation,
its unfulfilled existence poses a question
of creation, seeks an excuse
for the hundred elephant deaths
that supplied its straight ivory teeth.
In the dark, one can imagine
the music the piano wants to compose,
a tune welled up from her wooden core,
foot pedals aching to tap out a song
that expresses her stillness, her wait.
It would be music only a piano could write,
resonant of wood and bone,
heard by sad and silent hearts alone.

Karen Dell Kinnison

Hymn to Restaurants

Forks, a glass of water fitted with a wedge of lemon, a knife, a basket of bread, butter by the slab, the sound of a man Opening and flapping and folding his newspaper, the sun tenderly glazing his bald head, art on the walls, aquarium Rectangular in the center, overhead fans, napkins clean, seashells on the tables, jingle of ice cubes, slosh of water,

Conversation and quiet, cool soloists emerging out of the harmony of hum, "Honey, do this okay?" and "Sometimes He means a lot to me, but then there's an eclipse," waiters, waitresses filling my cup of coffee, asking, *Is everything Okay?* not realizing my sweet equilibrium of sugar and half and half is now ruined, but I nod for them, *Yyyyeahp*, Shake more sugar in the cup, pour a thin stream of half and half out from the tiny silver pitcher and stir, the spoon Moving weightlessly through brown ether, forming ripples and eddies and currents, pulling morning inside the cup

In a soft swelling pool, the balance restored, waiters and waitresses moving to other tables and happily upsetting Other equilibriums, doing anything they can to maintain their own among so many bitchy moms and cheapskates, All the people moving through like minor tornadoes, spraying salt, exploding egg yolks and sugar packets, crunching Chairs, plates loaded and neat and lifted and lowered then greased and splattered and scraped, fatty run of red meat To be dumped, plop and smear of ketchup to be dumped, soggy mass of vegetables to be dumped, chairs straightened, Silverware lined up, salt and pepper shakers clicked, table brushed off and *voila!* a miracle rebirth, a fresh new place

To sit down to, a mooring for the lonely, the unable to cook, the artists, the readers, the couples on first dates, settling Into gazes, the married couples looking everywhere but at each other, the families tearing each other apart at home, Friends reunited, living in different cities, friends drunk and too rowdy from clubbing, insomniacs, romantics, fathers

Stuck with their sons, all those rejected by love, terrorized by the silence in their own apartments, they're clearing places In Paris, New York, Florence and Barcelona, Jerusalem, Beirut, London, Dublin, they're clearing places in Cleveland, Downington, McLean, places unseen on maps, on the sides of freeways, they're clearing places in airports, skyscrapers, Malls, hotels, places covered by darkness, places pounded with snow, they're clearing places at Clark's in New Haven, The Neptune Diner in Queens, places of permanence, places like home, O morning, noon, and in the middle of the night They're keeping things light, keeping things clean, opening up a booth, calling out your name, showing you the way.

Jason Koo

It's the best place in town,
and Vlad wears black, of course,
to match his lank, black hair.
A diamond stud shines in each ear;
his face is night-light white.
His girlfriend Vi is black-haired, too.
Her sister Sal is all confused.
Vi used to be a blond like her. Sal smooths
her shell-pink shirt, her paisley skirt.
She blinks at Vlad. Is he a rock star?
Vi won't say one damn word
about how and where they met.

The parents are wondering just where
they went wrong. First Vi saw that biker,
then a poet, then a juggler, then a mime.
They watch in shock as Vlad and veggie Vi
finish off some bloody steaks.
Still Dad trots out a smile when Vlad
retrieves the check. Tentative, Vi's mom
leans in to kiss him on the cheek.
Unlike the last one, this guy talks
although he looks a bit too old for Vi.
Oh, what the hell, Mom thinks. So what
if his teeth are just a little long!
At least he has some cash.
Maybe Vi *should* go with him
to Transylvania (wherever that is). The girl's
not getting younger after all.

Karen Glenn

What I really want is a seven-foot wingspan.
The face of a fox.
Sonar.

I want to perch upside-down in a cave
with thousands of my kind
listening to the walls bounce back at us
like a mass political rally
by the non-human species in Eden to protest
the innocent also
being kicked out of the Garden
or like the near-death
experience of the religious throng one
neighborhood over
who watched another predicted Judgement
Day pass
without even a temperature change.

I want to zip around suburbia
at night looking for the lit
upstairs window where the last
one awake on the block is reading
a book in bed not expecting
the huge sucking of a vampire
mouth suddenly at the window.
I'd wheel away laughing wildly
at the crowds of movie Draculas
peeking around the corners or fluttering
down the corridors of the subconscious.

The truth is that the notion of turning out
endless and indiscriminate hickies
like an assembly-line worker is too boring.
I'd rather pig-out on fruit, flowers, and leaves,
which accounts for my trim figure
and the success of my organic products line.

Like humans, I believe in an afterlife,
though the angels in mine are perhaps
a little fuzzier and blinder than yours,
and none of mine, of course, has ever fallen.

Because I pity you
for being enamored of plain daylight
where every blemish
looms like a crater on the moon,
I pray incessantly
for you and your inverted place
on the chain of being,
to say nothing of the food chain,
though my prayers
to your ungainly ears will undoubtedly
sound only like tiny
whirrings, the sudden whoosh of the night sky
leaving you behind.

James Doyle

Eager Beavers

Last year they dynamited the dam
to empty out the slew.
It was the beavers that blocked the stream
and made the creek a pond.
You can see the evidence of their work
all along the water's edge.
They gnaw a tree in half
and muscle it into the flood.
All that's left is a stump
with a sharp little point.
The stumps are everywhere.
You can tell the fresh ones from the old
by the color of the pulp,
which turns dark with time.

Last year they dynamited the dam,
but the beavers don't complain.
They just look at the open flow
and think, "There ought to be a dam,"
as though they had just arrived
and not lived here their whole lives
and seen their life's work destroyed
for the convenience of men.
They don't hold a grudge, not them,
not when they need a new dam
and their teeth are aching for the work.

William Olaf Gulstad

Followed by crows, from just north of Evanston all the way to Lake Cook Road, there are almost no other cars this early in the morning.

Squirrels warm themselves on the concrete's pleasing glow. Swallows jump from tree to tree along trade routes as elaborate as flowering lace. Wisteria, and the scent of lake breeze. The sound of surf beneath the engine's low drone. Too early for dogs and their sleepy owners.

Too early for hoarfrost, for smoke to rise from the chimneys in great sweeps. The way the road curves in on itself must have something to do with it,

conserving its heat like a garden snake, staggering the vistas in careful loops so that the evil that travels in straight lines gets trapped in hollows

and is soon dissolved. A long, luxurious braid of hair the cat and the husband sleep on. Easy to drift between lanes

towards the public boat launch. Towards the thing that makes the spirit soar and the mind snatch it back. You cross the tracks

where the willows hang their trellises and the stationmaster will not let the City cut them down. In the fog

it's a scene from a thriller. Coffee and pancakes in the grill across the street. America, as we had imagined it, a sign and a blessing.

Alpay Ulku

Gacela of Narcissus City

The buildings loom large over the water.
The city is luminous upon the water.

A crowd of buildings is bright as the moon.
The city's stones ache to return to the river bed.

It sees itself made of drowned lily pads and fish.
O, soul of mosquito larvae and water spiders.

O, soul of farm soil silt and pollution.
It sees itself made of tadpoles and algae.

City of dropped petals of *loves me—loves me not*,
its arms reach out across the river to me.

Tonight the city has the look of water.
Tonight the buildings' eyes fill with water.

J. P. Dancing Bear

The Summers, Like Tomatoes

Chicago, 1958

Just before night cracks its dark husk and spills into light, the night shift from Campbell's Soup factory punches out. In a slow ferment of August heat, black men at the bus stop, stewed down and shining with sweat, glow like foil in the haze of streetlights. Flicking their Zippos to Camels, they inhale blue smoke to scour the sharp taste of acid from their tongues.

The great factory boilers ka-chunk and hiss white steam. Eighteen-wheelers downshift and ease around corners, their brakes whistling under the weight of love fruit, its acrid perfume settling in our damp sheets and skin, oiling the haywire gears of our dreams.

Susan Elbe

Bed of Nails

Emily the new operations manager seems to take delight in doing things normal people would think absurd like there's this place outside where the pigeons have been nesting for years and one day we come in to work and there's this razor wire and nail screen covering the landing where they nested like something out of a torture chamber only this was just a stupid family of pigeons nesting there for generations now they had to move and shady territory isn't easy to come by and we're all standing outside smoking and looking up at this job this girl did to these birds and not one of us could figure out why and the most frustrating thing about this woman is that tomorrow when I ask her why the hell she did that I'm sure she'll have some perfectly logical explanation that will make me seem a silly bleeding heart hippy who will never lead a corporation or ever really do anything worthwhile at all and I won't be able to tell her what I think of her like I can now.

Mather Schneider

Squirrel Mythology

I've never seen a flying squirrel.
Around this park, only your meaner
cousins fret their timid ways
up and down trees, all feet and fear.

But you must be more regal. Flesh
must hang like robes from your thin
frames; you, reluctant child kings,
pushing up bulky sleeves of skin

and rubbing eyes, awed by yourselves.
Or maybe more like monks, with awe
for something greater. The miracle,
when, heads bowed, thousands of you throw

yourselves from stunned trees, skin stretched taut
over the spindly bones, like kites,
and swoop in breezes, filled with faith
that your bodies will not let you die,

despite all logic. Do you think,
in your religious ecstasies,
of city squirrels—whole bodies gripped
around the branches, jerking eyes,

their tails question marks fat with doubt?
They have no faith in far-off woods
and mythical squirrels said to fly
like elegant pancakes. Maybe gods.

Megan E. Weireter

Cat

All misfortunes are because
I see before me
The usurious eye of the cat—
Grandchild of standing greenery,
Merchant of grass from the sea.

There, where Kashchei eats fiery
Cabbage soup with pleasure
By the speaking stones—waiting
For guests brought by chance,
It nips gold nails while its claws
Touch and prod the stone.

The cat on its sleeping mat
Doesn't live for play alone
In its burning pupils lies
A squinting mountain treasure.
And in its icy eyes,
Begging, entreating,
Round sparks dance.

Osip Mandelstam
translated from the Russian
by Seth Zimmerman

The Effect of Barry White Music on Shark Mating

An aquarist told CNN, "Nothing has happened yet."

At the marine centre in Birmingham, England, scientists, like those couples late in life, are saying, "We're trying."

In the artificial sea of dating, it's natural for us to turn to the "Walrus of Love," pipe his bass voice to the sharks' radar.

But music is crude compared to the ocean's longer song, its millions of years grooving to the moon, a gravity beyond even Barry. The ocean is all anticipation, teases, stalls, tides prolonged, pleasure the sea never surrenders.

And if the shark sees beyond consummation, what is it that scientists can't admit? "Love's Theme" is the endless silence where all is dark. Of the millions of people or miles of sea, it's the sudden shark attack where we find each other by chance.

Maybe the he-shark's spoken-for in a way only sharks can be. Maybe her roundish eyes and subtle nose are ugly. Maybe sharks like Mozart.

But no self-respecting Mako says yes to sex in a soup can. He hopes for open water where he waits for her to look at him just so. He nips at her back's thick skin, not knowing why, but knowing it could never happen in a disco. Still, he smiles wide, swims to her side, whispers in a honey-bass voice, "You've got it together baby."

Chris Green

The High Point of Japanese Cinema

is not the great battle in *Ran*, the green field mobbed with charging armies in swirling reds, golds, blues.

It's not in *Seven Samurai* when the Master meets his Enemy, they pose with swords held high, clash together, dash apart, and resume posing until the Enemy, bisected, falls.

The high point comes, for me, when the blind samurai, eating a bowl of rice, plucks a fly out of the air with his chopsticks. I was 13 when I first saw it

small, bumbling, unloved by girls, unfearful by anybody over four feet tall. Now here was proof that with practice, any handicap could be conquered,

any skill attained. A legless samurai could level armies with his hands; a paralyzed samurai, with his eyes; a dead samurai, with his astral body.

My astral body never reached its goal of sneaking into bed with Sandy Pershing's earthly one.

All my practice sessions petered out too soon.

Still, I can't forget that fly. When age has plundered my storerooms and torched my fields

when Death struts outside my house, gleaming

sword in bony hand, it will be time to sit on my tatami, a bowl of honey-baited rice at my crossed feet, chopsticks in my hand.

Charles Harper Webb

Stuck Behind a Hearse

for once I didn't succumb
to the internal monologue
pushing "c' mon, c' mon."
Didn't shuffle through
the rolodex in my mind
to see who I would disappoint
or aggravate by being late.
I just let it go
and decided to accept
the hearse for what it was—

a black reminder
that rode long
and cool and clean.
I settled in behind it
and took in the day
like I never do.
Took in the day
like I had all
the time in the world.

I couldn't make out
the hearse driver's face.
I assumed it was set in stone,
with a slight five-o'clock shadow,
a few flecks of red in his eyes.
An unflappable face
like most of the professionals
who get their paychecks from death.

I envied the gallows humor
that driver held
beneath his black hat.
The serenity
of his crisp black
slow-driving world.

The hearse's wake calmed
everything down to slow-motion.
I watched the late October
shadows of crows
drift by on the pavement.
Felt the stoic clock
inside my blood.

Bernard Jankowski

My Father's Shirts

Inside the dryer
my father's shirts
tumble and spill.
Wet towels are heavy
against them and
his jeans leave them
little breathing room.

No wonder
when I see them later
they are angry.
They pull his arms sharply
as he speaks and
make his hands grab
at whatever I offer him.
They have tightened
against his chest
and refuse to close
at the collar.

My mother must have
separated things differently,
used a better softener.
I remember how
before the dryer was done
she pulled them aside
smoothed their wrinkles
with her hands. Whatever the case
they are angry now.
Even at night
while my father sleeps
one sulks on the knob
to his door, empty
as half of the bed.

Linda Opyr

After Dad's Death

Sadness rises from opened drawers,
stale smells of clothing no one wears.
The window in my bedroom clouds over,
mist in the space between layers of glass.
I lie in my bed, hoping nothing will happen.
I've been loved and listened to all my life.

I should get up and walk.
Walking's a simple thing to believe in.
My mother continues her diligent mile
each day in the neighborhood
she and Dad walked through for twenty years.
I know there's a world out there.

Leaves and brown needles drift in rain.
Bright colors seep up the sides
of mountains. Fog slides
down darkness into the dirt.
When I go out, I drive to the pharmacy.
An anxious line of us forms at a counter.

While I wait, I touch nit combs,
condoms, glitter bracelets for little girls.
Avoiding the talk of the others,

I look hard at my own feet.
Would I know them if they slipped out
of my old blue shoes and strode away?

Barbara Daniels

Questions for Satyama Tathagata, the Buddha

Are you altogether sure you did the right thing to leave for eternity brisk walks through autumn woods at dusk, the chickadees and the thrush, the moon over the ocean

or your lover's hand in yours, not a word spoken?

Are you certain you opted wisely when you refined your soul to the rarefied point

that you could politely decline the burden of reincarnation and the senseless repetition of all that pain? Or could it be that perhaps the pain

of that phone call telling of a friend's death or watching a parent wither day by day or your face month by month changing in the mirror,

all that pain is part of our love for the world, and needs to be blessed as well as avoided? Yes, the pain's intense sometimes

but it's not the suffering, but the thought that all of this comes to nothing that scares me. Don't take me wrong (and understand, I've tried

to learn from you, an apprentice forever, admiring tranquility), but you've got things easy, with your assured eternal soul and your escape from the curse of rebirth.

I mean, what if there are never any other lives, Satyama, and we didn't earn what we got here through karma, but some people are just born rich and lucky?

And the creep who ditches his stalwart wife and four kids for the foxy student, then wins a Pulitzer and preens on tv, just gets away with it all: that's something to swallow, huh, Tathagata?

But if the world's unjust does that make it wrong to give ourselves away to those early winter sunsets, purple behind the frieze of twigs, or to the smooth bellies of lovers?

Shouldn't we give ourselves to memories of our silly great aunts from vanished Christmases, one a hunchback, the others lanky as stick-figures, coming through the farmhouse door

with stringbags full of glossily packaged gifts, their images like their inexpensive gifts lasting not forever, but just a brief while before broken or lost?

As for me, Tathagata, I wouldn't give up even those morning drives, caught in a snaggle of snow, late for work with some phony on the radio,

after I nicked myself shaving and took a pratfall on the ice, or those evenings I spent wrangling with my soon-to-be-ex over the checkbook.

There may come a time with snapdragons, foxgloves, and larkspur in a red vase on the mantel of the disheveled McInnre house in Salem,

with the three-story stairway winding like a nautilus shell, airy and lyrical for over two-hundred years, up which you follow an eager lover to her bedroom.

And there may come a time with harlequin ducks riding the ocean swell, painted gaudily by the precise sun, or the meditative and assured call of the owl

to console your insomnia, unwinding over the moon-silvered New England commons. Yes, you gave up something like that, too,

and the suffering, well, I'm just an amateur there, but the shock of a sudden death, or a son's going to jail, or the youthful alcoholic bouts, or the divorce—

memo to self

The pain isn't real anymore;
all the long knives have been
removed without a scar.
It's time to empty out that
kitchen drawer full of
ransom notes, and let the clouds
go. Leave the trees alone, and
leave that mountain right
where it is.

You're done.
It's over.
It's safe to leave
this world without a trace.
There's a fresh pot of
coffee in heaven, and
an angel waits to paint
a flower on your face.

Buildings turn in
to ocean mist, where
skies are kept on file,
and empty hats hang
from statues of ash;
city streets collapse
upon themselves, folding
into paper airplanes;
trains fly off the rails,
dissolving into Monday
afternoons....

It's gone.
It's all
gone now, so
sleep, and let your catherine
wheels burn out, and
lift the veil of gravity
from your eyes.

John Abrahamson

I'd live all that crap again, and the boyhood in Wisconsin,
the walks to school by the hotel where the girl was murdered,
that sense of evil, then the stock humiliations of adolescence,
and more painful, the memory of my own pettiness,
the sufferings of others inadequately felt,
to know what to do too late, to know who to be, without
the flinty spirit to be him—I'll take it all.
But if it's true, Satyama, that we must forge or contrive
sense for ourselves out of this tangle and mire,

then nevertheless I still hope to find
in the brush of a hand or the zigzag of snow
a spark of the divine.

Charles M. Boyer

John Abrahamsen is a disc-jockey at KVNA-FM in Flagstaff, AZ. **Shekhar Aiyar** has published in England, Sri Lanka, India and Canada. His first poetry volume, *Continental Drift*, was published in Calcutta, India. He now works in Washington, D.C.

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J. P. Dancing Bear is host of the "Out of Our Minds" poetry program on KKUP public radio, and Editor-In-Chief of the *DMQ Review*. His chapbook *What Language* won the Slipstream Press Chapbook Contest in 2002, and Turning Point Press will publish his full-length collection *Billy Last Crow* in 2004.

Barbara Daniels's chapbook *The Woman Who Tries to Believe*, won the Quentin R. Howard Prize from Wind Magazine in 1996. Her poems appear in *The Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore* and *Slant*.

Esther Cameron appears in *Poetry*, *Edge City Review*, *Hunger*, *Bellowing Ark*, and *American Poets and Poetry*.

Inara Cedrins travels and teaches widely in Asia. Her anthology of Latvian poetry was published by the U. of Iowa Press. She appears in *The North American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Chelsee*.

James Doyle's most recent book is *The Silk at Her Throat* (Cedar Hill, 1999). He appears in *Literature: An Introduction to Critical Reading* (Prentice Hall, 1996), *Poetry*, *Chelsee*, and *The Iowa Review*.

Susan Elbe's chapbook *Light Made from Nothing* will be published in 2003 by Parallel Press. Her work appears in *Permafrost*, *Calyx*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Rattle*.

Barbara Fisher is a Sydney poet and antiquarian bookseller whose work has appeared widely in Australian journals and anthologies.

Karen Glenn has poetry in *Poetry Northwest*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *North American Review*, *Seattle Review* and *National Forum*.

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Carolyn Hill-Bjerke is a partner in a bi-coastal film management company. A recent MFA from Columbia, she coordinated the 10th Anniversary reading of Dante's *Inferno* at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York last April.

Bernard Jankowski's first book is *The Bullfrog Does Not Imagine New Towns* (Washington Writers Publishing House, 2001). His poetry appears in *Baltimore Review*, *Cumberland Poetry Review*, *Visions International*, *Poet Lore* and *Willow Review*.

Rebecca Kavaler, a native of Georgia and two-time NEA recipient, has work in *Shenandoah*, *Yale Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her fiction has been selected for *Best American Short Stories* and the AWP Award Series for Short Fiction.

Jesse Lee Kercheval is the author of six books of poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. U. of Wisconsin Press reissued her novel *The Museum of Happiness* and her writing text *Building Fiction* last spring. She directs the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing and the U. of Wisconsin's new MFA program in Creative Writing.

Karen Dell Kinnison grew up in Louisville and now lives in Charlotte, NC. She appears in *The Texas Review*, *South Dakota Quarterly*, *Bottomfish*, and the *Yearbook of American Poetry*.

Jason Koo is a Senior Writer for Writers-in-the-Schools. His poetry appears in *Hanging Loose*, *Green Mountains Review* and *The Wallace Stevens Journal*. His poem "Party Pantoum" was performed as a one-act play by the Belfast Maskers in Maine.

Stephanie Lenox lives in Moscow, Idaho where she is completing her MFA at the U. of Idaho. She has work in *Raven Chronicles*, *Crab Creek Review*, and *Bellowing Ark*.

Elizabeth Levitski has appeared in *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Exit 13*, *BLUELINE*, and *Avocet*.

Melissa Morphew's poetry collection is *The Garden Where All Loves End* (La Jolla Poets Press, 1997). Anabiosis Press published her chapbook, *Hunger and Heat* (The Missionary Letters) in 1995.

she appears in *the Georgia Review*, *the Southern Poetry Review*, *Shenandoah* and *Alaska Quarterly Review*.

Linda Opyr is the author of five collections of poetry: *Small Sightings*, *Once Again*, *No Moon*, *A Sudden Truth*, and *Earth Time*. Her poems appear in *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Petroglyph*, *The English Journal* and *The New York Times*.

Sue Owen's three books of poetry are *Nursery Rhymes for the Dead*, *The Book of Winter*, and *My Doomsday Sampler*, all from LSU Press. She will appear in *Poetry* magazine's new collection, *The Poetry Anthology: 1912-2002*.

Susie Patlove lives in Western Massachusetts on a small homestead and works in an independent bookstore. Recipient of the 2000 Poet's Seat Poetry Contest award, her work has appeared in *Sanctuary*.

Timothy Pollard is a family physician living and working at the South Pole Station, Antarctica. He teaches poetry seminars for physician educators. His work appears in *Family Practice*, *Antarctic Photo*, *Poetry and Prose Calendar* and *Silence*, an anthology of new poetry.

Anthony Robinson is poetry editor for *Northwest Review* and *The Canary*. He appears in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Chase Park*, *Cross Connect*, *Good Foot*, *Kitchen Sink* and *Snow Monkey*.

David Rogers edits *Wavelength: Poems in Prose and Verse*. His work appears in *Pegasus*, *Poetalk*, *EDGZ* and *Kentucky River*.

Michael Salcman is former chair of the department of neurosurgery at the U. of Maryland, and is now president of the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore. His first chapbook, *Plow Into Winter*, has just appeared from Pudding House. He appears in *Harvard Review*, *Raritan*, *Notre Dame Review* and *Wisconsin Review*.

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Young Smith has work in *Poetry*, *American Literary Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Plainsongs* and *Ekphrasis*. He will be teaching creative writing at Eastern Kentucky University.

Virgil Suárez was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1962. His three new

poetry collections are *Palm Crows* (U. of Arizona Press), *Banyan* (LSU Press), and *Guide to the Blue Tounge* (U. of Illinois Press). He co-edited the anthologies *American Diaspora*, *Like Thunder: Poets Respond to Violence in America*, and *Vespers: Poetry of Spirituality*, all from the U. of Iowa Press.

Mark Terrill is a former merchant seaman living in Germany. Recent books include *Bread & Fish* (The Figures, 2002), *Kid with Gray Eyes* (Cedar Hill, 2001), *Here to Learn* (Green Bean Press), his memoir of Paul Bowles; and *Like a Pilot* (Sulphur River, 2001), translations of Rolf Dieter Brinkmann.

Maria Terrone's first book, *The Bodies We Were Loaned*, was published by The Word Works (2002). She appears in *The Hudson Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Poetry International* and *RHINO*.

Don E. Thompson has a new chapbook, *Been There, Done That*, from March Street Press. He teaches in prison and as an adjunct at community colleges. Recent work appears in *Mars Hill Review*, *Marlboro Review*, *In the Grove*, *Ship of Fools* and *PDQ*.

Charles Harper Webb's latest book of poems is *Tulip Farms and Leper Colonies* (BOA Editions, 2001). He edited *Stand Up Poetry: An Expanded Anthology* (U. of Iowa Press, 2002). Recipient of grants from the Whiting and Guggenheim foundations, he teaches at California State University, Long Beach.

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Alpay Ulku's first book, *Meteorology* (BOA Editions) was selected as a Notable Debut by the Academy of American Poets. He appears in *Ploughshares*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *The Malahat Review*.

Seth Zimmerman has work in *Willow Springs*, *RE:AL*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Nimrod*, and *Carolina Quarterly*.

Additional bio for the Spring 2003 (Spain) Issue:

Ingrid Martinez-Rico is assistant professor of Spanish and German at Florida Gulf Coast University. She is currently translating Bruce Weigl's memoir *Circle of Hanh* into Spanish.

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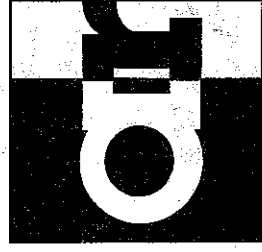
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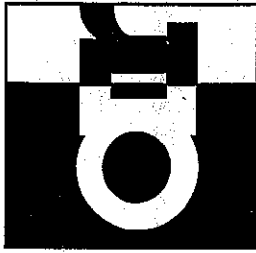
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