

# THE BEND

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Number One

University of Notre Dame

The Bend  
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The Bend does not read unsolicited manuscripts.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the 2004 installment of the showcase for the work of students, alumni, and friends of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Notre Dame—the journal known, in previous incarnations, as *Dánta*, *La Rue Barbarian*, and *The Rhubarbarian*. This year's edition has been expanded to include fiction and will simultaneously appear online. Hence, a new title, *The Bend*, in honor of our beautiful city.

I have received help from a number of people and would like to express my appreciation. Many thanks to Chris Fox and The Keough Institute for Irish Studies, whose generosity made this publication possible; to Corey Madsen, Jayne Marek, and Charles Valle, whose assistance was essential in putting this publication together; to James Matthew Wilson, for compiling and editing the impressive Irish poetry supplement; to the faculty of the Creative Writing Program, William O'Rourke, Sonia Gernes, Kymberly Taylor Haywood, John Matthias, Orlando Ricardo Menes, Valerie Sayers, and Steve Tomasula, for their guidance; to Kevin Ducey, for his assistance; to Dana Gioia, who, in a brief conversation at a cocktail party last fall, provided one young editor with a great deal of inspiration and sound advice; and, of course, to the contributors, without whom this would be a thin publication.



That's enough from me—I'll soon be imposing a couple of my own poems on you anyway. There's some exceptional writing to come. Read on.

—S. D. Dillon  
Notre Dame, Indiana, March, 2004.



JOE FRANCIS DOERR

**Los Murciélagos**

At least the children  
of Piquete Ziña seem content  
hunting the skies above Austin  
each dusk in summer

stuffing their bellies  
with thousands of pounds  
of nuisance, gnat  
& niggling no-see-um—  
West Nile Virus beware.

A mass of Mexican Free-Tails,  
displaced this last millennium,  
has colonized the underside  
of the Congress Ave. bridge.

They fled a drowned cavern  
lost to rising water  
when a river in Oaxaca,  
dammed to harness power,  
jumped its banks in the rainy season  
and made their home its own.

One point five million  
winged it north across the border,  
becoming urban & Norteño,  
becoming refugees & “bats.”

And these eyes love such refugees,  
the refugees their digs.

May a congress of such outcasts  
conquer Texas in the end—

May the Bat God smile upon their deeds.  
May Piquete Ziña be praised

and grant that there might always be  
at least one of us amazed  
to see the nightly hunt beginning,  
the flooding skyward,  
the billowing swarm  
like sheets of black mosquito netting  
hung about the bedposts of the sun.

**While you're out remember**  
*for Ken Smith (1938-2003)*

Don't stop in Canning Town,  
the *pub's shut and the lift's out*  
*in the towerblock.*  
Don't lose your head in Plaistow.

Move on till you're  
one stop short of Barking  
in a room above the garden  
in a haze of vodka and orange,  
a little weed and jet lag.

Settle on these stones:  
try the eyeholes of a death mask,  
finger the broken church glass  
just this side of the border—  
linger, longer if you want.

All the guests of this Republic  
of Bad Manners come to shed  
themselves of burdens, lives unlived.

We vie for the place of honor  
in the corner by the loo.  
We laugh and love and leave.

And tomorrow  
Theydon Bois and all its ghosts  
will find us limping  
up that hill  
where we ditched that branch of yew  
that had served us all that day.

KEVIN DUCEY

**Movie Nostalgia**

I could never think of your hands without smiling  
—Zbigniew Herbert, *Elegy for Fortinbras*

Morning /  
side the loose  
ore I stopped over  
nostalgia rim glass  
penny lipstick palm  
without pencil too too many  
caribou on the  
derricks act  
rough  
sand napkin craft.

The lid making an ingratiating craft  
smile the child  
learns loose  
I am the Delivery Man, act  
tree: white ash, oak, nostalgic  
quirky day du jour—  
many  
coins come face up on the palm.

Face powdered, white  
ash, palm  
pumice rusting potatoes: the craft  
of maize drilling the many  
(more for their sake than  
mine). That loose  
death of nostalgia—  
in reward for labor. The act

of self-mistake; more, I  
racken, the act  
of a few coppers / dropped into demanding palm—  
wishing for agency,

the nostalgia  
of a trench boss for his craft  
(a lace windsock in a hurricane — loose,  
but exact, expectation). Many

for position, look to the  
cattle, tho many  
offered in sacrifice (waiting for a  
Fortinbras in the Fifth Act).  
The prize in the thornbush worked loose  
and between us and the angry deity only an open palm  
—Wittgenstein finally gets it (the craft),  
but it leaves us stranded, suckered by nostalgia.

We once thought we  
died of dieing, but the nostalgia (more  
for your sake than mine) of many  
swamps the open soul on the ocean  
in a craft of thin bone,  
the outcry — act  
of silence — laughing the palm  
of the moon  
always the same stars set loose.

The stars are tongues loose  
in themes of nostalgia. Palms up to catch a falling kindness,  
we watched the man set afloat on a paper craft.

### Letter home: Horses

The dead horses between the lines have begun to stink in a way I can't describe. No one told us it would be this way. No one knew what it would be. The officer I thought the epitome of intelligence led the first cavalry charge into their guns. The snow coming on harder and the horseflesh should freeze—though the lice grows thick on a still-warm body. The officers speak in whispers now, but it doesn't matter: victory or defeat — what do those words mean? Would I were a bird to fly away home; a horse useless now for this new world. I take solace to think that you will remember our General Ri and his plan of attack.

## Correspond

Rimbaudelaire

The night around us thickened  
and the archipelago drifted like  
amber and benzine. You will remember  
the beauty of caresses. Oh, the ghastly

eyes of prison ships — and the crouching  
faith of children. The night around us  
thickened; at the top of the road  
near the laurel grove

you, enfolded in gathered veils. Night  
around us even as you fall  
asleep in my arms the archipelago

drifting amber and benzine. The white  
fog settled in the depressions of the  
city. Those oaths, perfumes of the night.

SARA SWANSON

The Little Cell Called Your Life

Standing at the fish counter, wondering if the mussels really are from Prince Edward Island, or just Maine, Kat decides to ask if the salmon will be scaled. Unlike last week when she brought the white wrapper home, proud, pleased with her luxurious purchase, and then, peeling off the inner layer of plastic wrap only to find the fish still covered in its silvery naturalness. Her knife block does not contain a scaler. She opted to use a serrated knife usually reserved for crusty bread. Despite her fastidious cleaning, this morning she spied the dull glint of a scale between the rim of her sink and the countertop, right where a sliver of what once was, would be.

The fishmonger (she amuses herself: is this word still used? like haberdasher or cobbler) is a woman, robust like Kat. Both share a large frame and oversized glasses. Above her sloped chest, is the fishmonger's nametag: Sylvia. A familiar name. Kat used to have a doll she called Sylvia, a little pink thing with a gingham bonnet. She remembers her now, not having thought of this doll in years. She wore a silky blue dress, with lace on the hem and sleeves.

The real Sylvia has graying brown hair, pulled back with a black clasp Kat notices when she turns around to address a coworker. A balding man with a stained apron, large mitted hands.

Kat waits. Time does not matter. She has nothing to hurry for; she has no stressors in need of her attentions. She grasps the cart's red plastic handle, avoiding the broken bit with the nail shoving through. The width of the cart comforts her; it's shallow and roomy, like steering a row-boat. You can cut through other carts' wakes. You can bob against the neatly stacked shores.

Another shopper stands beside Kat. An older woman who is inspecting the swordfish. She runs her ridged fingernails across the glass. Pantomime—tracing the red centers of each fillet. Her nails are painted a silvery blue. Kat looks down at her own nails—functionally short which haven't felt the synthetics of varnish since her brief girlhood.

"And how would you prepare something like that?" the lady asks Kat, now tapping her fingers on the glass. Her eyes are a yellowed green, like a dry leaf. In her cart is a loaf of bran bread from the bakery and a bunch of carrots. Their filigreed tops hang limp over the edge of her cart.

"I suppose with lemon," Kat says.

"You mean baked with lemon? Or poached, then lemon on the side? Because my husband doesn't like poached. It gets too wet you know, like Kleenex then."

Despite Kat's approachable appearance: soft body, smiling round face, simple clothing, she feels neither friendly nor open to beginning any sort of polite associations. She is never the one to begin these grocery store conversations and yet she is routinely a part of them. Softly laughing with a mother whose son is constantly finishing the last box of Corn Pops, nodding with the man with chronic arthritis (the weather *is* turning cold), wheeling her cart away from the stockman who wants to know if it's the price or the name brand that made her choose Campbell's over Progresso. Is it because she buys the same items as they do? The overstuffed packs of toilet paper, the sloshy gallon jugs of skim milk, the unassuming bags of frozen corn and broccoli florets? Do those women who whoosh around the aisles with their organic apples and tofu and shiny bags of whole bean coffees get asked if they've ever tried this new whitening toothpaste or if Tuesdays are Double Coupon Days and not Thursdays?

"You can fix this swordfish in many ways: broiled, roasted, or my favorite, you marinate it in some soy sauce and then grill it," the fishmonger says. Kat looks up at Sylvia. Both women smile.

"Grilled! You expect me to have some sort of fancy equipment? I'll take two of these perch fillets," the lady says. "I know I can fry those."

Kat's prior presence at the fish counter goes unnoticed. Not by Kat, of course, but by Sylvia, who, really, should have jurisdiction over the rules of the first come, first served system. Kat continues to wait. An announcement over the PA declares a phone call for Produce. A young mother driving a hulk of a car cart bashes one of the fake wheels into Kat's ankle. Kat readjusts her grip and notices that her hands really are turning into her mother's—venous and brown-splotched. It is nine thirty-three. A 7UP distributor in ridiculously tight kelly green pants lugs a gurney loaded with bottles. The old lady squeaks by, clutching her white fish parcel.

Sylvia asks how she can help Kat and in a flashing moment, like opening her eyes underwater, Kat feels like she could be with this woman. This conscious attraction brings a flood of anxiety to Kat's body. She can feel the pound of her blood.

"What would you like today?" Sylvia points to a shimmering line of rainbow trout. "These are on sale. And so are these." She motions toward a heap of oysters. A nest of three is open, their gray-blue insides lying in their own silvery liquid.

Kat looks at her list; half of the items have already been scratched off with the stubby pencil she keeps in her purse. Below *margarine/butter?*, is *salmon—scaled*. Below that is *chocolate ice cream if I feel I deserve it*. Maybe she should continue with her shopping, forget the fish, race through the dairy section, bypass the seductive freezer case, pay, and drive back to her apartment, where she can unpack her purchases and then take a nap

even though it's still mid-morning. The salmon was really a want, not a need. Like, she needs shampoo but not luscious smelling body wash. Or, she needs paper towels but not one of those fancy floor-polishing systems. She requires some source of protein. It could be a few cans of garbanzo beans instead of the salmon. Or cottage cheese.

"Do you need a few minutes? You can ring the bell if you need assistance."

Not a time to berate herself. Her confusion of finding Sylvia attractive will not be allowed to rule her present self. Kat pulls her hair behind her ears and looks at her list once more, just to make sure that indeed, last night, when she made her list she in fact wrote salmon, that at a point in her life she felt as if she wanted to buy *salmon*, she felt she could afford it, she felt she knew how to prepare it, she felt she was able to make adult actions to purchase salmon, take it home, and eat it. Relying on her rational last night self, she extends her index finger toward the bell and pushes the little metal disc.

She waits. There is a clash and clang from behind the heavy vinyl strip door. The pretty little mussels again catch Kat's attention. Did they really bathe in the cool Maritime waters? Did their farmers step through the red island mud to pull up the loaded nets? Would a slip of Canadian mussel down Kat's throat be a welcomed change from the usual American ones, those heavy-bearded, lichen-clinging shells?

The bald fish-man appears. He looks at Kat, nods his head, pulls off his rubberized black gloves, wipes his hands on his apron, asks if she's ready. He wears a gold wedding ring. How many bellies has that ring been inside? The blood and organs it has drawn through just to go home to his lovely wife and rosy children? His name is Tom.

Relief, sparked with disappointment, allows Kat to tell Tom she will take two pounds of the mussels. She watches him, making sure he doesn't shovel some ice into the plastic bag. She will not tolerate paying for saline. He works with a large metal scoop.

"Anything else?" He quickly shoves his hands into the pocket of his apron, a kangaroo's pouch.

Kat once again consults her list, written on the back of junk mail, an advertisement for heating and cooling systems. She used it because of the heft of the paper: like a rough index card, withstanding the indentations of her dark pencil and the rigors of her heavy handbag. The smiling face of the owner of the heating and cooling company stares at Kat, urges her to ask about the salmon. He is too good-looking to have gotten his start snaking through cold air returns.

Tom continues to hold his hands in his pocket, a mother curling against her child. Kat's bag of mussels is still on the countertop—the

black-blue of the shells now a dim gray through the hazy plastic. Kat exhales. "Is the salmon scaled today?" She lets go of the cart handle.

Tom darts his left hand from his pocket, scratches the thick ridge of his nose. "Should be. Actually, always is."

"Not always," Kat surprises herself. Her passivity is the main reason she gets sucked into meaningless conversations with fellow shoppers. "Last week I mean. I bought some salmon and when I took it home it wasn't scaled."

"Yeah, probably Sylvia. I'll have to get on her about that." He clears his throat. "I'll make sure it's done. How much would you like?"

Does he use Lava soap like Kat's father did after changing the oil in his car? Does he have to shower in the basement, in a tiny stall with mildewed tile and a faucet dripping rusty water? Does he have to smell like High Karate or Old Spice or English Leather before he can even stand near his wife? But once a fishmonger, always a fishmonger, meaning, don't the sea life odors seep into your skin and create a whole new chemistry, incorporating itself into your pores? Do his children complain that Daddy stinks? Does he go to church?

Poor Sylvia, shrugging off one of the most important steps in producing a palatable fillet. Did she find scales in her hair days later? Did the slip of a deceptively sharp one draw blood beneath her fingernail? Or was she just too busy with other duties: draining away the melted ice, flooding the floor with bleach, dealing with indecisive customers?

"I would like one fillet please. That one right there on the end," Kat points at the selected fish. "No, toward you a bit."

Tom fumbles through the fish. He has only three fingers on his right hand.

He pulls a fillet, not the one Kat had in mind, but she nods anyway. Such struggle to ever get what you want, really. She watches him slap it onto a sheet of plastic, weigh it. The digital numbers of the scale are green and wavering and Kat nearly expects Tom to slide a thick fingertip onto the metal bed, tipping it in the store's favor. He seems like the type of man who likes to bother women—likes to have the upper hand.

"Anything else today, ma'am?" That *ma'am* sends Kat over. When did she become a ma'am? *Miss*? Kat is thirty-six. *Miss* is for Jane Austen heroines and Easter Day parades. *Ms.* then? "Anything else today, ms.?" And the grocery clerk never asks for an ID when she shuttles the Beefeater through the scanner.

"Nothing else, thank you." Kat reaches for the package. She brushes against the hole of his hand, the hardened growth of skin. If she is a different woman, she would shudder, but instead, she lingers, briefly, a curious wave through her fingers. What reaction does his wife have?

Accustomed to his accidents, seeing a regular hand, fingers where they once were? Kat abruptly stops, excusing herself. Tom lets her feel his empty hand. He does not pull away.

He splays his hand on the countertop, fingers like Roman numerals. "Have a good day, then." He smiles, pulled thin lips. Kat continues to watch him, thinking of Sylvia in the back, disinfecting tubs, soaping beneath her fingernails. Tom turns, leaves. Another customer has appeared, a man in a white sweater smelling of juniper aftershave.

Kat places the fish in her cart, keeping it close to her purse. Just one more glance at the slick array—the striped clams, the doghead of the grouper, the pillowy scallops. Artificial seaweed snakes through the display, loops amid the ice chips creating borders between species. Kat stretches her neck toward the back room. Sylvia is obscured. Kat resolves to never shop here again.

The fancy Belgian beer bottle is hard to open. Naively thinking it would be easily twisted; Kat bared her palm to the cap. Now gouged and cursing, she's rummaging through her junk drawer trying to find the long bottle opener, one she hasn't used since soda came in glass.

Into the pot. The dark translucent liquid. Olive oil, minced shallots, some fresh parsley. The mussels, cleaned of their mud and greenery, sound like rocks, like something hard to digest. The recipe instructs: turn heat to high, cover, steam for 8 to 10 minutes. Occasionally shake. Kat opens another bottle of beer, pours it into a glass and leaning against her counter, drinks, watching the clock.

It is not as if she truly wanted Sylvia. Just briefly there was some kind of recognition, like seeing a cousin at the bus stop. Like with like; familiarity as a comfort. This is all. Within Sylvia there was a part of Kat, however small and ephemeral, Kat saw it and needed it. Maybe attraction is nothing more than falling for yourself, finding the person you know as you embodied by another. Kat finishes the beer, wipes the foam from her lips, clanks the mussels around, shell upon shell.

However lonely Kat can become, she will never be able to find solace with someone. Man or woman, there is no difference, just a system of cells and vessels, organs plush with blood. She sits at her table, lights a candle. The heaping bowl steams, the oceanic scent filling the room. Ripping the baguette, soaking it with the liquor, Kat dines alone.

The first time she ate mussels: a French town in New Brunswick. Smug in her passable accent, she ordered in French, amusing no one but herself. It was white wine, not beer. It was a knob of butter, not oil. It was with the company of her family, not one face. You don't chew her father told her. Just bite and swallow. Something dirty there and how

would he know anyway, Midwest country boy, raised on beef roast and potatoes, country boy who wouldn't know the difference between a mussel or a clam, country boy who couldn't properly pronounce *s'il vous plait*.

She whispers to herself: I deserve this.

Small luxuries—a bubble bath, a silken robe, a pair of Egyptian sheets. Who else would spoil Kat if she didn't do so herself? It's not a question of money. Rather, it's a matter of worth. She is valuable; she is worthy of pleasure. She reads Hardy propped on four pillows.

Tomorrow she will inspect the salmon. She will anger if it is unscaled, but she will not complain. She will take her bread knife and scrape again. She will clean it all away.

DAVID ALYN MAYER

**Being Alfred Hitchcock**

[Clearly, then, you, at the foot of your mother's bed,  
as a child, being required to recite your day, directly  
influenced the memorable Anthony Perkins' scene.]

*This is what we do to bad little boys.*

[Sir?]

What

I wanted inscribed on it. *I'm in on a plot*, is what  
ended up there. People like to write about the girls;  
about my preference for blondes, Ingrid, Kelly, Eva,  
Kim; for hairstyles, close-ups; they study my films—  
note, *how love scenes were filmed like death scenes*—  
spend their whole life inside my head, linking  
coincidence—Jimmy Stewart racing up a flight of stairs—  
complicating, story-boarding, grand-scheming it all;  
pretending I did the same . . . I didn't . . . a moviemaker,  
yes, but always a boy, always . . .

. . . trying to please.

## Being Ed Wood

*Sucks to be infinitely more famous dead, eh, Ed,*  
and I say, *Yes*, and, *Would*, and, *Therefore*, etc, etc,  
*Worst Director of all Time!* and then, laughter,  
Tim Burton, and more, *Given the dialogue*,

but amidst, *His tendency to resort to stock footage*  
*of lightning during dramatic moments*, and, *decline*,  
*directing undistinguished soft and hardcore porn*  
*before a premature death*, I should mention,

I was a dream, a moviemaker—what choice? A boy's  
eyes . . . I only wanted to do what I wanted to do.

*Glen*, and yet, *I miss you Bela*, now, self-quoting, *Glenda*,  
something I never said.

Johnny Depp as Edward D. Wood, Jr.:  
*Why if I had half a chance, I could make an entire movie*  
*using stock footage . . .*

Half a chance . . . yet I would. Everyone else does.

SHANNON DOYNE

**Snipe Hunting with Kim's Uncle**

She's my friend who kills deer and quilts and gets hit on all the time at the symphony.  
When she asks me to visit, I think she wanted to show off

the five cars that pass her house during the day, the nine people at the ice cream stand she  
knows by name, the zero coffee spots. We go to a fire

at her sister's house where they have horses but it doesn't mean they are rich; it just means  
they  
know how to take care of things and we put our sandwiches inside metal boxes

on long arms we slide into the embers on this hill. Mountain pies, pie irons, they call the  
things we are using and I, the stranger, feeling the eyes of the uncle whose arm is jailhouse  
tattooed

with a woman's name that isn't Betty, his wife, I who didn't laugh true when he brought  
the tray of hotdogs and said, hey, everyone, grab your wiener,

I said, did you ever call them fire sandwiches when you were little? Well, they didn't. Then  
the uncle asked me if I wanted to go snipe hunting

So I no-thank you'd him, thinking maybe snipe was skeet and hunting was shooting, but  
he wanted me to know the snipe is a bird you wait

to jump in your pillowcase deep in the woods after sitting quiet and still until you have  
the bird  
right in that sack that was once so close to your dreaming

it probably even smells like your hair and saliva, you swing the bag against a tree until  
the bird bursts. I am from a place like this, an old coal mining town

to the east where oldtimers hold court in fleabag diners until the college kids come in  
to eat pancakes at three in the afternoon

and the old guys feel driven out by the laziness, the way the young stretch their limbs to give  
the waitress something to step around

so the old guys *who don't pay by credit card* go home to hose down the aluminum siding  
and Kim's uncle wants to tell me I'm not occupied,

wants to tell me my life is missing a certain necessary brutality. I haven't sacrificed  
something close to me for nothing, but I have.

17

You who told the prettiest girl in the grade  
she was a dog with prehensile hands just because

she was cruel and you were dying. Dead by senior year,  
dead by the nineties, Greg, you never knew a kiss or

how smart the internet would make us, smart as you, maybe,  
without it, your thickened skin, your green bruises

that marked time. Tonight I watched the cops  
arrest a man on the sidewalk, watched them cuff him,

ease his head into the backseat and the driver, the cop,  
Greg, do you think it feels like heat on his neck and head?

how you must have managed our heat along with being sick.  
We let our eyes say don't touch us but they mumbled

live, live, live. But we were teenagers so we only said it  
in the mirror with the door closed. So much for our joy.

Did it fall from us like blistered skin, were we ugly?  
When I miss you I miss the mean things, oh Greg I'm sorry.

22

**The Women**

I. Photograph of My Mother

At sixteen, she wears a bikini  
she would not have let me wear  
at eighteen: standing there in some  
unknown backyard, leaning against  
the white aluminum siding of some  
unknown house— the floral print  
hoisting her breasts into globes  
right below the sharp wishbone  
of her neck. She will not meet my father  
for another year.

Her belly is tender,  
flat, and the bow on one side  
of her bikini bottom has wriggled  
loose under the persistence of her  
hipbone. The possibility of her body  
hovers here before me, frightening  
as if that scheming look, that  
seductive poise of her lips  
could still reverse the course of history,  
was still inviting the camera man  
to step inside.

II. Sister

From across the street I watch her.  
She is bent over pine stumps  
working away at the dirt with fingernails  
that bleed into the soil.  
She is small, but rigid  
pitted against the leaning duplex  
where her babies are sleeping inside.  
I did not expect her to be up this early  
an am surprised to find her  
scratching at roots  
that form endless knots  
she rips, pulls to make way for her tulips.

I say nothing, only watch her work  
as morning sweat weaves a shroud of light  
on her skin  
and her red t-shirt, smeared with earth,  
flowers in the wind.

### III. In the Garden

My niece has entered language, has found  
joy in the naming: cup, cookie, shirt  
and bug—everything bug,  
everything with legs and life: dog  
as bug, bird and toad. She wields her arm, a sword,  
pointing here and here—Bug,  
everything bug—but not people, people are  
baby and man, dad and you. The difference  
between the namer and the named hard-  
wired before speech, before birth. I watch her  
running shirtless through my sister's garden, her body  
curved in a perpetual question, the indent  
of her lower back like a fresh thumbprint in clay.  
She calls all the birds to come to her, screams  
for the dogs to leave her alone, and when  
she discovers a beetle lumbering across the patio,  
she declares its name, raises a foot  
and flashes my mother's smile.

## CAMPBELL IRVING

### Thanksgiving Day Mass

“I,” he began to apologize.

“You what?” James interrupted, no longer looking at him with the left corner of his lips sunken out of habit and the right corner elevated in a sneer. Now the lips were even.

“Nothing,” he said.

“You’re damn right nothing. You’re nothing.”

He watched the empty casket, still opened and showing off the velvet red of the lining slightly hidden by the shadows of the dim light of the room. The chapel room was organized fittingly for the family, a humble stretch of folded chairs placed in four neat rows of three accessing the podium to the left, the casket at center and a view outward beyond a single-paned window to the right, the line of simple houses festooned with fallen leaves and a careless collapse of siding from age. The chapel now absorbed the stench from the casket that absorbed the stench of the body, a mixture of pine and creek water. He looked up while James paced in short meandering lines between him and the empty box, muttering to himself about it being Thanksgiving and who ever heard of church on Thanksgiving.

“I guess if we hadn’t of needed to do it at the mortuary none of this would have happened. I guess if my wife’s nephew weren’t so goddamn scared of dead bodies we would’ve been in the clear. Now I’ve got two problems. You and that goddamn church.”

“Am I fired?” he said, honestly and bravely now, shedding the insufferable face of confusion and guilt that followed him not just on that day but on most days prior with some moments the confusion overriding the other and other days the reverse. He wore his black suit that was no longer completely black, but was smeared through with the smells of the room-casket-body and the mud from the body-casket-room. If he was fired he could change and if he wasn’t he would need a new suit.

“No. You’re not fired. I’m not quite sure what I plan to do with you, but you’re not fired. Poor Tracy’s in there cleaning up your mess. And both she and I want to get home so we can enjoy the day. And now it’s you and that goddamn church.” James stopped and glanced at the boy.

The black lining of the latter’s shoes were crusted over with the soles invisible beneath the purple towel reading the business logo.

“Did you get what you wanted?” James asked.

“No.”

James stopped to glare once more and then walked towards the hallway and the side door that led to the adjacent reception hall. He

stopped again at the window, rubbing his face with his hands.

“Go sit with Tracy. I’m tired of looking at you.”

And as he rose, James barked out, “Slide out of here with that towel. I don’t want you tracking mud.”

\*

His mother told him before he left to ask James for a raise.

“You’ve been working there now for three years and you’re still making the same money. Just tell him how much you need the money. How much I need the money. He’s a good man. He sees dead people every day and when you see a dead person you see a crying mother. You tell him I sent you and he’ll give it to you.”

He continued to shave and listen, picturing James in his father’s black suit, looking grim and pale and shadowed by the low light of the chapel. And then suddenly illumination. The beams from the construction spotlights next door burst through the home and James is lifted above by an accidental crane that crashes through the ceiling and there in that moment of ascension, caught miraculously between earth and heaven James would reach down and his twisted lips would settle and then begin to scream. Begging to be let down, James would offer double pay if he would lower him. Then I’d say something, he thought. Him dangling down like, like something. Then I’d say. Some thank you and then something else.

“You’ll tell him?” his mother said, flicking the lights in the small bathroom.

“I’ll ask him,” he said.

“Good. I’m going to the early Mass and then to your aunt’s for Thanksgiving. You going to make it?”

He shrugged and dropped the razor into the sink, watching a single spot of blood mushroom on his chin.

\*

Tracy heard him sliding clumsily down the hall and felt him, with the clairvoyance that she claimed she inherited from her grandmother, enter the room. She hunched over the reclining figure, curving her light toward her and away from the shadows from the open chapel doors. Everything was dark except her hands and the body.

“You come to help?” she said.

He remained silent, balancing himself against the molding along the doorway. He wiped his shoes once again on the towel.

“Don’t you bring those muddy things in here.”

He looked at her.

“Take them off. Are your socks the same?”

“A little.”

“Take them off, too,” she sighed.

The body, newly dressed in a polo shirt and khaki pants, reclined with a look of smug acceptance beneath her careful light. The wrinkled flesh above the collar was tightened by clamps and stitches sewn into the back of the neck. Every few seconds, she would spray Lysol into the air above it and cough into her rag. His eyes were opened and held by tape while she wiped the bits of dirt and sand from the corners and painted the jaundiced flesh along the nose with a shade of what he thought was brown. The eyeballs were still and his white hair, freshly washed, sat damp and ordered on his head. The flatness of his nose remained as it was when he saw him earlier at the hearse. Then the flesh was pink and shallow from the fluids, now it was yellow turning brown from the makeup painting the death across him, giving him the fake semblance of the face from earlier that morning. An artist’s creation. But the eyes remained open, watching the light and her angry, busy face.

“Come here,” she said. “I want you to look at this.”

She pulled back from the body and pulled the light closer to where the faint spots of makeup from earlier could be seen.

“See that?”

He looked at her.

“Look at this,” she said and propped his mouth open with the brush. She held the light closer now, right above the tongue. The gums were wrinkled and smeared with mud. “I can’t get that out,” she scolded him. “The only improvement I made in there was to pull this thing out.” And she held a greenish minnow, now dead, underneath the light.

“He looks pretty good.”

“Well, my sister came in from the hospital and laced him with about ninety stitches in his neck. And I’ve been on him for about a half hour. That’s why he doesn’t look like shit. You see these hands?”

Her hands were stubby and colored by a chaos of blues, browns, yellows and pinks.

“Are these miracle hands?”

He looked at her.

“These are artist’s hands, not miracle hands. It’s bad enough the damn family wants to do this today. *Don’t make it too special. We just want a small ceremony in the chapel. No visitors or visiting hours. Just slap some paint on him, stick him with some clothes and keep the casket open.* And then there’s the wife, needing it done by this hour of the day so she can attend evening Mass. *He never was into religion. He wouldn’t want anything special.*”

“You had him looking good at the hospital.”

“That was before you mutilated him. Go bother the caterer. I don’t even want to look at you.”

He bent down for his shoes when she stopped him.

“Keep them off.”

He turned and stared intently at the body. It’s mouth remained opened, along with the eyes, so that the look changed from smug acceptance to sudden, muted horror. Coming back to life. Coming back to life, he thought.

\*

Earlier that morning the boy stood against the hearse and listened to the coroner and how he viewed the whole mess in terms of balance. Take a man with a good paying job and comfortable lifestyle, mix a good family with properly raised children, and then he dies on impact. That’s good balance. You have to mix formula and chaos.

“This fellow here. He has a good Christian wife who cares more for the good and Christian than for the wife. He has snotty ass sons who aren’t going to miss a football game for anything, anything. Now that’s a lot of chaos,” he proclaimed while the two of them stood outside the hospital. “His home was torn to shit, you see. So he dies from a long illness, something where, in his case, you lose your muscles and your joints are rot. Formula. You see? Like today I’m out here against my will to look at whether this woman died by accident or by murder. I see an equal share between the two. But if I know this woman from what the family told me, I believe without even examining her that it’s probably murder. A good woman, but she had trouble paying taxes. Some guy hits her with his car, I’m thinking he knows what he’s doing.”

“Because she didn’t pay her taxes?” the boy asked.

“No. Because it’s proper that what does her in isn’t some sudden moment, but some less sudden moment with deranged logical thought behind it. Balance. You see?”

He nodded.

“I’m breaking this down in the simplest language possible. I had another woman in here the other day. Cancer. Whole family was messed up. This past Saturday I had a gunshot victim. Retired TV repair man. Nothing fancy or wild. Gunshot was accidental.” The coroner stopped and patted the hood of the hearse, warming in the sun. “Now this guy has a chance.”

“Chance at what?” he said.

The coroner flipped his cigarette in the grass and watched the cars pile front to back at the house across the street.

“Chance at whatever,” he said and slapped the boy on the back. “I figure Tracy’s about done. Tell James good luck.”

When they brought the casket to the hearse, Tracy opened the lid and cursed underneath her breath.

“Emergency,” she said. “He’s not going anywhere but his sons are and his wife. *I just can’t miss church on Thanksgiving.*”

The body was dressed in a suit, khaki above blue and the tie loosened because that was how the wife remembered him when he came home, formal/ casual. The face was pinkish from the embalming, and, as if relieved from the diseased blood and excrement, showed a degree of comfort. Satisfaction. What he once was, a man in his sixties suffering in and out of treatment and rehab, he was no longer, now a frame. A satisfied, accepting corpse covered in familiarity, suits and skin, and finality, embalming fluid and face paint.

The boy stared mesmerized, a habit. This is how it ought to be, he thought. Almost like he’s smiling.

“He looks like he’s not dead.”

“Trust me, he is,” Tracy said, closing the lid.

“You did a good job, Tracy.”

“That’s what I do. Oh here,” she said, pulling a gold watch and tan wallet from her bag. “He had this on him when he died. His family forgot to pick it up. A friend of his slipped me two hundred dollars to bury him with. Said he owed it to him and that nobody else should get it.”

“Son,” the coroner called. “Remember, it’s all about balance. You can’t one thing without the other.” Then he leapt down from the brick boundary separating the lawn from the walkway. He stretched his arms and strolled into the hospital. A car horn sounded and a woman’s joyful scream turned his head.

\*

“Just basic stuff was all James told me,” the caterer said, watching him enter the reception hall barefoot. “Finger foods, and hardly even that. You’re not here to tell me different, are you?”

“No,” he said, stopping at the rear wall of the room, listening to the cars rolling past outside the window, trying to distinguish without looking which sound was moving distantly east and which distantly west. Some roared hurriedly past, rushing to families and homes for Thanksgiving meals.

“You’ve got to get out of the way,” the caterer said, lugging a bowl of carrots and celery with obvious strain. He placed the bowl on a covered table in the rear and stopped to wipe his face with his hands, counting with a soft murmur across his lips. He turned and examining the austere presentation of three tables, three linen cloths, six bowls of food and a few chairs spaced apart for the tired and the weak. “If they don’t care, why do they need me?” he said.

He shrugged.

“Of all days. I’ve got my wife’s family in, my daughter’s home

from school. They call me for finger foods.” The caterer reached a finger into the bowl, puncturing the mound of carrots, sending a rush of clear liquid towards the top, dimming the already obscure orange of the food. “There,” he said and nodded.

“How much do you pay your drivers?” the boy asked.

“My drivers. My drivers,” the caterer thought for a moment, then pulled the linen tablecloth forward to even the creases caused by placement and heavy weight of the bowl. “I don’t pay them a damn thing.”

“You serious?”

“Son, do you really think I’d be out on a day like this if I were the boss. Shit. I’m flattered, but I’m not the one you’re looking for. Besides, I saw what you did to the old man. If that’s how you treat a body, God only knows what you’d do to a plate of lasagna.”

The boy rubbed his feet into the carpet, aware of the breathing body looking in. James stood in the doorway, his silhouette lean and demobilized by the chaotic thrust of his imagination, thinking now of the family and the body. A pair of his own pants and his own polo shirt. Perhaps I should have called to ask for something else. New clothes, more time. A holiday. Then the outrage. What have you done. A priest told me to keep the casket closed. *We said keep it open.* A priest and a look to the widow, head covered in a shawl, beady eyes without remorse. *If a priest says it.* This goddamn day, he thought and called to the boy, telling him he has another pair of shoes and perhaps another suit, navy blue but would do fine.

\*

After leaving the hospital, the boy drove back to the funeral home slowly at first, watching the warm, peaceful glaze of the sun pierce the windshield, warming the seat behind him. Outside the houses became populated through strings of dormant cars meaning the hidden people inside the homes gathering, perhaps some in solemn appreciation of family or food or a holiday and perhaps others excitedly for similar reason. He turned the hearse at a shortcut and came to a back road, watching the time on his watch and now driving slower still as the face of Fall painted the corners of the windshield slanted collections of separated yellows and brown, spaced apart by the blue sky or the morning sun. He listened to the rustle of the casket as the mud and dirt beneath the tires collected in bogs and peaks. A single, meek figure walked the road ahead and he slowed more as the figure became the face of an old woman, her shawl-covered head and slouching weight stopped and stared back to him, crossing herself beside a tree stump and nodding at the hearse.

Mother.

The boy reached towards the passenger seat, pressing the gas harder. He took the dead man’s wallet and searched through it for spare money.

He found twenty dollars and cursed.

He again heard the casket behind him shaking against the walls of the vehicle as he curved and sped against the road, slowing him, catching him against itself as he spun out, roaring now. He turned his eyes to the jumping, bustling box as the shade of trees grew thick, replacing the colors and the sun with a black blanket of shadow. And the heat of the seat froze while the mud dried to lines of hard clay broken apart by inches, rattling the hearse boy body into a thrust of living metal, no longer the color of black paint, but now the color of the shadows covering the foreseeable pass. He returned to the wheel, pressing the gas harder, watching the passage of time on his wrist. The boy drove onward, examining the sides of the road for an opening.

A mile down, the river appeared and with it a clearing of deforested riverbank and a small, paved shoulder. He stepped out of the hearse and began sliding the casket on its wheeled platform stand from the back door. He propped it at an angle, the front wheels at the head elevated towards the ceiling of the car and the back wheels hanging towards the ground. He opened the box slowly, holding with strain against the angled platform with his knees, and saw the body as they were staring face to face. Inside, it remained in that pink and satisfied gloss, the color of its eyelids tanned and the cheeks and nose circled with blush. But still, the manmade blood continued rushing through it so that the pink, though not as prominent, retained a vivid hue. The boy pulled the coat open and searched inside the pockets, thinking, two hundred. No one will know. Two hundred and a raise. Christmas. Christmas and maybe school. Then he reached behind the body, searching the pants, thinking, school and then I'd look at James and say. Say thank you and then I'd say. The boy's rage building, thinking, then I'd say. He tried turning the body over, but the fresh layer of makeup smeared from the cheek to the velvet lining. Then I'd say, and he pulled the body by the arms out of the box, pushing with a thrust of his knees against the small crease where the platform and casket met. The weight shook the bottom half of his body as he gave and stumbled back, causing the platform's wheels to open farther and slide down the shoulder's hill and towards the river. The casket collapsed head first against the ground. The dead man fell against him as he caught it with his shoulder, lugging it now with its feet elevated and its arms over his back, hanging. He reached behind it again, pushing the body upward on him, trying to reach into the back pockets, still with the Then I'd say, then I'd say. The two, linked in a single, grotesque union, twos and fours of everything except one beating heart, turned and twisted in struggle, in grotesque dance. Whirling around the shoulder, the boy reaching. Come on, then I'd say because that's what he told me to say. I'd say it just like he said it once. Spinning against the

settled hearse, he said it to me the first day. Sixteen. A first day. His face red like the walls of the room, he told me. Tripping against the casket, they fell to the ground.

“Goddamn it,” the boy said, kicking the body in the side. He stood and leaned over it, kicking it, beating it across the chest and legs. The boy took a stick from the road and beat it more, collapsing on top of it, weeping. “Goddamn it. You goddamn bastard. Where is it? Where the hell is it?” Then he fell again, his face colliding with the chest, as he wept and punched its sides over and over, in slowing repetition. He tried once more the coat pockets and found one one-hundred dollar bill. He rose, alive now. His reddened glare lightening to a tired yet unvanquished white. He grabbed the body once again, questioning it.

“Where’s the rest of it? You filthy bastard. You’re hiding it.” Closer. A little more and I can tell him. Please, let me find it. Let me. Help me.

The body weighed heavier now, seemingly building strength against his fatigue, but he held on, eyeing the face. He stumbled slightly, lifting his foot and uncovering the other hundred dollar bill, curled on the ground.

Time. Shit, the time.

The body dropped from his hands and flopped over the road and down the shoulder’s hill, arms extended outward, into the river. The boy turned to his watch and stopped as the body drifted slowly downstream.

He sprinted down the bank, calling out, screaming. He hurdled the logs torn from the stumps, and he hurdled the stumps, as well. An upward slope expanding into acres of bald hill. A distant chime of bells signaling the end of morning Mass. He tore through uprooted weeds and small piles of trash strewn across the mud, searching for more space, an extension. The river sloped down as the body sped further and then sloping against the dividing rocks, wafted into the slower stillness and the river’s expanse. It had turned. The upward face, the pink and tan hue, now submerged into the water.

He raced to the expanse and waited at the bank, searching now for anything. The bell-chime matched now by the growing murmur of the something, anything. The water livened with small waves rippling toward the riverbank, depositing the sunken earth from upstream. The body shifted, increasing in violence as the small boat approached, and with it the shapes of two people, whose faces grew from scrunched confusion to terror.

“Henry, what is it?” a woman screamed. “Oh God, Henry.”

“Jesus, son,” the man said. “What the hell is that?”

The boy’s face sank into guilt. He watched them approach, and as the man reached his oar out to push the body, the boy, perhaps by nature or

through some unconscious movement for his body to break the stillness, tried to cross himself.

“What the hell is it?” the man asked again.

The boy walked towards the water, and with a stick tried to reach and coerce the body back to him.

“Well?”

“I work for the funeral home up the road.”

“And so what the hell is that?”

“My responsibility.”

The man poked the body again and the woman screamed. The he poked it again, prodding.

“Your responsibility?”

“My responsibility.”

The man kicked the body over towards the bank and the boy grabbed it by the arms, smearing the mud across the face and into the mouth. The cold had chilled the pink as the sides of the head were both wrinkled from the water and jaundiced, James’ failure from the embalming. He laid the dead on the bank. The eyes were opened and the mouth hung agape, mixing wonder and horror.

\*

James and the boy stood, blocking the window, to the right of the casket. The family piled in, six rows of two making twelve, collecting themselves into solemnity. The widow watched the time, dragging rosary beads in her hands. As they came, the boy ceased breathing and his face was drawn tight against his skull. James glared at him once more.

“Watch their faces when they see the mess you’ve made.”

## AMY WRAY IRISH

### Brushstroke

Above the roof of her Frank Lloyd Wright-style home,  
She floats like a Chagall over geometric foundation and form.

The well-planned city grid of houses, streets,  
Lives is falling away. Below, people scurry with predictable need

While she hovers, backlit against a limitless O'Keeffe-  
Blue sky, glowing like a bone scoured desert-clean of time.

Nothing in her world has ever been routine, not even  
Routine surgery that should have gone like clockwork.

She can now see each molecule, each atom of the earth  
Like Monet's glittering dance of the sun across the water.

I am just one brushstroke, one impression of color in a billion,  
But it was she who painted me. And as her daughter, her

Work of art, I hope she will turn back from the final  
Masterpiece a little longer, take up her paints again.

## The Transcriptionist

*He remembers when Braille went out and audiotapes came in . . .  
He now believes it marked the end of his own literacy.*

From "As Braille Goes Out of Fashion, Blind Adults Are Becoming Illiterate"

In 1960, Braille began  
to die. After the summer,  
gone. Entering 5th grade  
the raised dots like  
gooseflesh, the message of skin,  
no longer on shelves.  
Replaced by slow puzzling  
of "sighted" books, letter  
by painstaking letter,  
with whatever vision remained.  
And when even that vanished  
words were nothing but sound,  
breath in the throat that quavered,  
faded, fell away.

*What is language? What  
am I? Whispering via phone,  
he is 50 today, unable  
to conceive of his words –  
sole proof of life, thought, self –  
stored safely in anything  
but another ear.*

But later he dreams, blindly  
stumbling back to the connections  
made as a child:  
feeling the texture of words  
slide across his fingers  
like a landscape across his lips;  
he regains the palpable meaning of every word  
his body ever consumed.  
Here he begins to speak all  
truths, the message of the forgotten,  
while the last Braille transcriptionist  
begins, hands large and white  
as pages raised with print, to slowly type.

JAYNE MAREK

**Riverside Cathedral**

*It is too high for defense  
and so it speaks  
idealism: the other sense*

*What a Gothic tower,  
opening above square streets  
its deep-raised collar*

\* \*

After years apart  
we are jealous now  
for each other's time

and walk together  
the old ways  
of your new city

gray as the granite  
walls of college  
days years ago

here in the open  
streets the November wind  
snatches our words

and wails of the world's  
regrets around the steps  
of the church

\* \*

The baby your son cried  
and cried, accepting  
no comfort  
his whole body  
tinged with morning sky  
pink and blue

his heart starving  
from its own gift  
to itself

blood to blood  
channeled a new way  
a moon-shaped eye

in the heart, and you said  
God could have prevented this  
and didn't

what then is love  
that rocks and rocks the dying  
to silence them

\* \*

Entering the empty nave  
we find the story windows  
like daylit jewels  
  
and scattered letters  
of light rolled between the spindles  
of candles

and stop for a time, quivering  
with the beat of breath  
over our hands

like syllables  
we repeat to one another  
in those moments

we forget, after long study,  
that this is  
a strange language

\* \*

Now, we ascend,  
we have agreed  
to ride in the dark box

of the elevator  
that plunges upwards  
toward the belfry landing,

a mass of stone and cables,  
all the earth  
opened beneath

here are saints  
etched in the tense  
hollow wall of each bell

their hands lifted,  
not stretched out to help,  
mistaken piety

upheld by columns of air,  
it seems the weight  
of these mouths tolling

could pull  
the whole thing  
down

\* \*

Vast space below our feet  
the enormous bells silent  
the supports groan

half a name spoken,  
you grip the rail  
can go no farther

on the catwalk woven of holes  
through which the wind tears  
with its mouth open

laughing at those  
who hesitate  
one step at a time

\* \*

Now alone amid  
the colonnades  
of variant light

I stare into the faces  
etched in steel  
as with titanic pins

the saints' feet fainter  
like shadows  
along edges of stone

upheld by faith,  
heart reaching over the bricks  
and iron grips

the unsmiling figures  
watch with eyes fixed  
by their knowledge

as if human still  
awaiting the hour  
they will lean into the wind

\* \*

You refused this  
even though the fear  
was shared between us  
but I cannot say  
why I resist  
this space

the intervals are safe  
the bells, the supports  
anchored

so that the heavy swinging  
when it comes  
is accepted

even the air-sway  
of this great tower  
accounted for

the shadow moving  
slightly across the roofs  
a hundred feet below

regular as rhythm  
inside a body  
and required

\* \*

For me to tell you  
this presumes  
too much

for what do I know  
about the real  
standing inside

the shadow of the real,  
crossing the sidewalks  
full of people

all moving  
but the pattern fixed  
it seems

each person a syllable  
the rows of them  
scattered

from here, what the eye  
discerns  
flows close and separates

the inflections clear  
to eyes that have learned  
to read the figures hung

in blank light  
inscribed in bright shards  
and raised into view

\* \*

I waited for you  
you say, the words  
echoing from the landing

where the windows pore  
over the fearsome vacancy  
of the world

far below, not so open  
as the caged belfry walks  
from which I descend

to find you, to find  
the body of the voice  
the bravery

that shames me,  
the knowledge of fear  
that goes in grace

\* \*

We descend, sharing  
the silent fall of the elevator  
through the tower's core

and emerge  
onto regular streets  
yet the seams

of the sidewalks, and the gray  
crevices between stones  
of the cathedral

are like marks  
drawing a whole closer together  
a kind of healing

after violation, a kind of scarring  
that runs from breast to belly  
in gray flesh

\* \*

You have shown me  
the clean stigma  
of disbelief

turned real  
the whole that upholds  
the hollow

and the closure  
of one time  
in the opening

of another,  
the sacrifice of faith  
in the waiting

I would not have believed  
but in your words  
scattered by wind

you have told all  
of your son  
and the life he bore you

## CHRIS GERBEN

### Two Trees

#### I. *White Oak*

try to believe  
that this is not it  
that you are not it  
that everything is  
nothing and when it's all  
added up you'll be left  
at least with some-  
one you can call  
at 4 a.m. to say  
"Hey, it doesn't matter  
and tomorrow—which is  
today—I'm gonna buy you  
a piece of furniture"  
and neither one of you laugh  
but it's love  
nonetheless

#### II. *Buttonbush*

one more and then  
I'm done man I'm  
through with this side-stripe  
drive-by that only occurs  
when he's high or you're  
gone but I'm not  
I'm trying to meditate  
on the goodness that lies  
within then speaks  
the truth after long gulps  
that end a day  
and brings some  
screeching tires

## Bark

In school  
this would be called “poetry  
of place.”  
And in my mind it should  
be called “poetry of place.”  
But in Detroit,  
as summer realizes its calling,  
it’s probably called  
“not having a job”  
while listening to a hounddog  
yes—in Detroit—a hounddog  
trapped in a house  
bark its heart out  
all night I’m willing  
to bet.

His family is on vacation  
and though a neighbor,  
not me,

feeds it once  
a day I’m calling it  
“has no one to love,

no one to love and  
no place to be.”

So he barks  
and I write.

When does he breathe?

If I were  
a child I’d be  
more inquisitive,  
more demonstrative,  
maybe even cry

“sweet insomnia!”

But you can’t  
be sad in a heat storm.  
You can’t cry  
in such insufferable humidity.  
Is he lonely?  
Is there meaning?

A year ago I left  
my lights on  
so you'd know  
I was the king of late nights:  
The Master  
    of Sociability.  
It rained and I heard  
Footsteps.  
It rained and I fell asleep  
finally cool enough  
to sleep.

Did he just stop?  
My friend tonight . . .  
    No  
*Bark*  
*Bark bark bark*  
    Breath?  
    *Bark bark*

In school  
they'd scan that out;  
beat it to death  
on a blackboard.  
I'd get a low grade  
for saying nothing  
though if I just  
opened my mouth  
to say—  
    Bullshit.  
That's how you succeed  
    *Blah blah blah*  
    Breath  
    *Bark bark bark*  
Oh man if this old  
hounddog knew,  
if he knew  
I was writing his screams,  
dreaming of graduate failure.  
Knowing this,  
    would he turn  
    self-conscious

they way I do  
anytime I write more  
than a page?

In school  
they'd say end here  
for dramatic effect.

True.  
But they'd also say  
you're young.  
And, yes, true,  
but now I'm hearing airplanes  
and insects  
at a hum that is content  
to lay low.  
While in a lofted room  
it's starting  
to get to me—  
this place.

## Of Ireland by Grace: Recent Irish Poetry and the Diaspora

One of Kerry Hardie's poems included in this selection begins, "I am Mochta— of Britain by birth, / of Ireland by grace of Patrick." These lines remind us of something both well-known and perpetually disputed: if the qualifications for being an Irish poet are not based on "dubious origins," as Clair Wills has written, those origins nonetheless must be founded on a more divided and difficult concept than geography alone. Given the deep historical connections running across a green Atlantic between the United States and Ireland— connections as vital and relevant now as they were in the last century, when American dollars were fueling the Irish efforts for independence; and given the even more fluid movement of the Irish through the states of the European Union since Ireland joined that organization nearly a half century ago; to speak of Irish-ness or Irish poetry requires, if not a post-national consciousness, then at least a post-nativist one. My ambition in editing this selection has been, in part, to present a wide range of poetic practices and subject matter. By serendipity more than any formulated intention, these poems exhibit the ways in which Irish poets, like nearly all poets writing in English today, seek to recover the local and the immediate within an ineluctably global context.

Conor O'Callaghan's treatment of high-culture, love, and pop music in an age of kitch suggests that a formal sensibility can control, if not overcome, the consumer and tourist sensibilities endemic to the contemporary west. Eamon Grennan's poems touching on the violence of September 11th drive home the spiked truth that a turn toward Irish poetry is not to shelter oneself from the contemporary nightmare of an ongoing conflict wherein Islam, Christianity, Capitalism, Imperialism and myriad other forces collide. Justin Quinn's poems harness the energy of an Anglophone living in Eastern Europe; while Joan McBreen, Bernard O'Donoghue, and Peggy O'Brien realize in language the intricacies of place, whether it be western Ireland or western Massachusetts, as few poets have before. In the interest of brevity, then, let me offer these poems as literary examples of the only intelligent position available to writers and citizens both in our present state of routine global catastrophe: a rooted cosmopolitanism.

This project began because I wanted to see Joan McBreen's poem, "Rosses Point," made available to an American audience. But her contribution exceeds that of inspiration. Her ready help in making contact and seeking out so many of these poets made this selection possible; without that aid, it would never have come to pass. For that, I offer my sincere thanks. As do I offer it, once again, to all the poets who so graciously submitted their work, new and old, to my editorial glance.

—James Matthew Wilson  
South Bend, Indiana, March 2004

## Joan McBreen

Joan McBreen is from Sligo, living now in Tuam, Co. Galway. Her poetry collections are *Winter in the Eye: New & Selected Poems* (Salmon Publishing, 2003), *The Wind Beyond the Wall* (Story Lines Press, 1990), and *A Walled Garden in Moylough* (Story Line Press and Salmon Publishing, 1995). Her anthology *The White Page / An Bhileog Bhán: Twentieth-Century Irish Women Poets* was published by Salmon in 1999 and is now in its third reprint.

### At Rosses Point

And in Memory Harbour the air  
is still and Sunday; sea-gulls  
rise and disappear  
beyond the waves and little hulls.

And mourning you I feel the sun  
warm this chill on Rosses height,  
know you are gone and must go on  
as I will now and meet the night

and the low, pale light on the land,  
the long, long light on the sand.

(from *Winter in the Eye: New & Selected Poems*. Salmon Publishing, 2003).

## Bringing Bread

This is the day  
the saddest month turns.  
Sun floods through big windows.  
Outside the patio stones are wet  
and a wind gathers.

Trees sway over the wall.  
One crow swings  
on a telephone wire.  
I carry bread and water  
to the feeding station.

Then they gather: robin,  
blackbird, linnet,  
finch, wood pigeon.

Instead of reading old letters  
or dreaming in dregs of tea-leaves  
I have chosen this small act  
and in return am given  
a garden filled with birds,  
a sky where clouds  
break, letting in such light.

## Winter Light at Lissadell

Trees are the same  
as in my childhood—  
oaks, rowans and silver birch.  
Winter light is still  
shining over water,  
bent grass and Knocknarea.

But the people I knew  
are gone.  
Purser's Constance and Eva  
stare out from a canvas.  
The ghosts of my parents  
pick bluebells at Lissadell.

Clouds lift over Ben Bulben.  
Other children run across  
the great lawns  
and through the house,  
their cries echo  
an earlier splendour.

The light. The weather. Now.

## Conor O'Callaghan

Conor O'Callaghan was born in Newry in 1968. His first book of poetry, *The History of Rain* (Gallery Press) was published in 1993 and was short-listed for the Forward "Best First Collection" Prize. His most recent volume is *Seatown and Earlier Poems* (Gallery and Wake Forest University Press, 2000). He is married to the poet Vona Groarke and a father of two.

### Halogen

Our longest-running gag. I step up to your place,  
trip the burglar light, and cast myself as Withnail  
playing the Dane to camera while you put on your face,  
soliloquising to letterboxes crammed with junk mail.

On a good night, I get about as far as the 'nor' of  
...man delights not me; no, nor women neither...  
when I ham up fluffing my lines or losing my nerve  
until the gods begin to stir and the light to splutter.

If it were for real, and that were us, we'd be history  
before the programme notes had dried. I'd be toast,  
last heard of as the sidekick to an aardvark on kids' TV  
or giving classes in transcendental theatre on the coast.

Alas, it isn't. I am here. The time is now. The flat is yours:  
your bell, your breath, your prompter's snigger to my 'Yes'.

### Cover Version

Sugar. Isn't it odd that we've never had a song?  
You know, where your pre-history mimes in sync  
with mine for three otherwise unremarkable minutes.  
It could have something to do with old shared habits  
such as learning the lyrics by heart and forgetting the air.  
Whatever the reason, it keeps us second-guessing rapture  
and wondering in its absence what it sounds like  
leaves us dancing to the silence between each track.  
So, before we lapse again into mutual self-pity  
or succumb to the glamour of being gloomy, permit me.  
Since, let's face it, every means is its own end  
and every crooner their own one-piece tribute band  
and every number a free translation. This, therefore,  
goes out to all of those who kick off at the encore  
and dispense with the main set, the loner who stays  
to watch a lap of honour and ignores the race,  
the hopeless case who prefers a rolled gold ring  
to eighteen carat, a pale imitation to the real thing.  
And goes like this: a remake based on no original  
like cloudless blue that yields a minute's rainfall,  
a chorus misremembered until it's not the same,  
a string of variations on no particular theme.  
Imagine 'You Are Always On My Mind' sung sean nós  
or a street ballad done as a show-stopper in Vegas.  
This is closer to an echo than the crack of a shotgun,  
the reconstruction bereft of its night in question.  
This is the story that begins with its characters leaving,  
a day dawning to the shadows of perpetual evening.  
This is the tune they're playing on some station  
in the grey light before sunrise that you wake in,  
and hold for days and can't quite put a name to.  
This is not yet love and yet already love's memento.  
This is the arrangement of a standard in its final take  
that gets cut after the studio has filled with smoke  
and the band splits for home; half-hummed, half-said,  
unaccompanied; that surfaces as a throwaway b-side  
years from now, ahead of its time and lost in action  
like the vivid recollection of something still to happen;  
that accentuates the words above the melody, its saccharin,  
and how very sad they are, and what they actually mean.

## The Middle Ground

We wear this weather the tennis shirts  
we once thought a scream. We compromise  
when it comes to cuisine and the arts.  
We find birth moving. We vote for peace.  
We praise long stretches, and hire a strimmer.  
We call our doctor by his Christian name.  
We flick through catalogues in bed. In summer,  
we intend to watch less telly, join a gym.

We save up our statutory days of leave  
like pesetas in a jar. We place our trust  
in the laws of averages and nature. We love  
our tots in ways our parents were against.  
We do jobs around the house, and see to it  
the sitter doesn't walk home on her own,  
and phone out for a pizza on Friday night,  
and blow every other New Year on the sun.

Our sisters aren't grannies when they're thirty.  
Our daughters don't stand in nite-club queues  
using language, smoking, looking tarty,  
in their teens and gangs and platform shoes.  
We don't blare car horns at all hours,  
or leave beer cans and cigarette butts  
on the pavement. We don't piss in doors.  
We don't blame others, or fuck like rabbits.

We wake instead to Sunday's civic order,  
still together, to heaven in a garden centre,  
an agnostic grace, a roast, and getting older,  
milder, lying out the back on plastic furniture.  
When the golden hour throws in eighties hits  
we hated once, we know the words, we reminisce.  
We don't mind if the ground that separates  
the high rises and horsey sets is ours, this.

## Trompe L'œil

A littoral aquarelle on the wardrobe door  
of a moth-ridden 'pension' we had to patronise  
in passing, a month inland of the plush Atlantic  
and many moons ago, it told a kitsch  
delightful lie

we must have liked enough to remember  
as having adored. The afternoon's parenthesis  
would always be unclosed, our lives stay static  
the moment we wished them to and our kids  
never die.

A balcony, a solitary table and wicker chair,  
a novella left abandoned, a glass of pastis,  
the afterthought of one odd plimsoll, an anorak  
hung out to bake, a shut parasol, a cat's  
shadow, a dragonfly,

and below the bits-and-bobs of yachts on water  
where the arc of a breaker's broken promise  
doubled as a row of awnings serving after dark  
to the heartsick and chess-playing duffel-coats.  
Since flaked dry,

or touched up annually, or long glossed over,  
the illusion remains indifferent to its own pastiche,  
or the blue before dawn in which we lay awake,  
or when on the road the heatwave called it quits,  
or exactly why

we split the way we did, skipping 'petit-déjeuner',  
and our shared paperback *This Side of Paradise*  
got left behind, or where we finally unpacked,  
or how what can happen happened more in can'ts  
for you and I.

## Caitriona O'Reilly

Caitriona O'Reilly was born in County Wicklow and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where she wrote a doctoral thesis on American poetry. Her first collection, *The Nowhere Birds*, was published by Bloodaxe Books in 2001 and was awarded the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature. She lives in East Yorkshire.

### X-ray

A vertical chain of spine:  
flesh cloaks the bones'  
articulation in shadow.  
The Tree of Life, but not  
of Knowledge: shot through  
with this god's radiance, light  
shook from his metallic hair,  
the gravity of his glance  
decreeing me unscrolled  
as the killer might decipher  
his victim, delicately  
parting the belly's vellum.  
I am laid against the plate  
and dazzled: the light inimical,  
the weight that enters weightless.  
A thrown shadow dissects  
the self from what it was.  
Can flesh become all shadow?  
Not yet: as through a glass  
brightly and fragile as a bird's  
shine my long blue bones.

## Lag

Although it is the hottest day of the heatwave, clouds  
are hauling their sackcloth bellies over volcanoes,  
leaving silvery animal  
or mineral traces behind.

The liquid will never seep far enough down  
to kill that angry flicker in the earth's throat.  
Seams of live fire  
like snakes or veins are feeling  
the surface. The extinct naturalist with his primitive camera  
could tell the whole story with his burnt bones,  
only they do not speak.  
And this is what I wake up in—

mornings where it rains and I have forgotten my name.  
What lapses from an eye not quick enough to see  
ivy hooking itself to a tree,  
how the numb foliage explodes?

**Diffraction**

Ceil qui gardes en toi  
Tant de sommeil sous un voile de flamme...  
Paul Valéry

The electrical cicadas,  
the little brown lizards,  
here on the hill

light's own properties  
colour the landscape in.  
Those rocks on which

the theatre perches  
are from the Greek:  
sand-gold sea bullion,

and in the high cemetery  
the cenotaphs' duty  
is to face an impossible blue.

I stumble among them  
in the heat-struck noon,  
seeking a tomb

by the lavender beds.  
The sun-striated sea.  
The thousand gazing sails

of the dead.  
And the light—  
it fills my eye-vessels

to overflowing, shifting  
the rods and cones  
of their ravenous geometry.

Not the Catalan woods,  
their calm green, their  
shy beasts out of Rousseau,

can rub from my sight  
this dazzle.  
Days later I notice it—

a half-moon gone,  
half a sentence  
smudged from the page.

It was the dark  
ajar in my head,  
a portion so aswarm

with ants or flies  
it was invisible.  
At St. Pau hospital,

its medical machinery  
buried in earth,  
I am seen inside.

Argus, my x-ray, says:  
there are limits to what  
any eye can absorb.

## Bernard O'Donoghue

Bernard O'Donoghue was born in Cullen, Co. Cork in 1945 and he still lives there for part of the year. In 1962 he came to England; he has lived since 1965 in Oxford, where he teaches medieval English at Wadham College. He also teaches and writes on Anglo-Irish poetry, and he has been director of the Yeats Summer School in Sligo. He has published five books of poetry. *Gunpowder* in 1995 won the Whitbread Poetry Prize. The most recent is *Outliving* (2003), published in London by Chatto & Windus.

### The Starling's Lament

Life, they say, 's a battlefield, and I for one don't doubt it.  
From every garden in the land my kind and I are routed,  
Even by ornithologists who lower their field-glasses  
When we come into focus. Crowd of solemn, lunch-packed asses!

There are birds that people write about and birds that they throw sand at:  
Just like the Manichean split between the vole and land-rat.  
It's fashion simply; that is all. That's simply all there's to it,  
Like cultivating liking for a toadstool or a blewit.

Look in the book: my wing's magentaish— cf. the pigeon.  
My feather is as ink-black as the blackbird's. Yet the widgeon-  
Watcher growls when I approach, and then goes mad about a peewit.  
What's so great about the nightingale? I'm sorry, I can't see it.

It's like writing on Piers Plowman or on Hoccleve or Duns Scotus,  
Or translating medieval verse and signing it Ignotus,  
Which should surely win us standing or acceptance with the best of them.  
Yet all we get is ostracised and sneered at by the rest of them.

Once I tried my hand at writing goliardic measure.  
I thought that such formality might give some kick or pleasure  
To those who write of throstle or of cuckoo or of linnet.  
I might as well have saved myself the bother. For the minute

That they saw my name (like 'Kerry', 'Bush,' or 'Nader')  
They were off! They wouldn't read it!— though they'd simper, I would  
wager,  
Over Ashbery or Olds or some other favoured Thyrsis.  
If they'd only give me half a chance I'd show them what a verse is.

The way they're so sure that this year's garb (this is what pisses me off)  
Is the very best conceivable, so they all start saying 'Be off  
With you!' in their poncy bloody upper-middle voices!  
As if you couldn't drive without defining what Rolls-Royce is.

So how about a break? It would be more fair and bolder.  
Even the crow's apologist gives starlings the cold shoulder.  
Yet we don't destroy the wheatfields; we don't defecate on Wembley.  
So how about a higher place in the avian assembly?

Thanks a bunch for listening! Yeah, sure! Beholden to you, brother!  
For, unless I've got you wrong, it's in one ear and out the other.  
So sod off back to your elite, to Paul Muldoon and Seamus Heaney,  
And I'll hop back up on my perch, like Heaney's loony Sweeney.

## The Sugawn Road

You're driving down the Sugawn Road,  
Just before midnight, late July.  
The mist from the Araglen below  
Ribbons in white patches by.  
Ahead you know, less than a mile,  
Is the cross by Foil School, where  
You have to turn left for home.  
But, as the car hums through that air,  
Suspended in the radio's music,  
You might by good fortune never reach it.

(from *Gunpowder*. Chatto & Windus 1995)

## A Nun Takes the Veil

That morning early I ran through briars  
To catch the calves that were bound for market.  
I stopped the once, to watch the sun  
Rising over Doolin across the water.

The calves were tethered outside the house  
While I had my breakfast: the last one at home  
For forty years. I had what I wanted (they said  
I could), so we'd loaf bread and Marie biscuits.

We strung the calves behind the boat,  
Me keeping clear to protect my style:  
Confirmation suit and my patent sandals.  
But I trailed my fingers in the cool green water,

Watching the puffins driving homeward  
To their nests on Aran. On the Galway mainland  
I tiptoed clear of the cow-dunged slipway  
And watched my brothers heaving the calves

As they lost their footing. We went in a trap,  
Myself and my mother, and I said goodbye  
To my father then. The last I saw of him  
Was a hat and jacket and a salley stick,

Driving cattle to Ballyvaughan.  
He died (they told me) in the county home,  
Asking to see me. But that was later:  
As we trotted on through the morning-mist,

I saw a car for the first time ever,  
Hardly seeing it before it vanished.  
I couldn't believe it, and I stood up looking  
To where I could hear its noise departing

But it was only a glimpse. That night in the convent  
The sisters fussed me, but I couldn't forget  
The morning's vision, and I fell asleep  
With the engine humming through the open window.

(from *The Weakness*. Chatto & Windus 1991)

## David Wheatley

David Wheatley was born in Dublin in 1970. His books include *Thirst* (1997), *Misery Hill* (2000), and *Three-Legged Dog* (2003, with Caitríona O'Reilly).

### Scrimshaw

I have stood by the pier so long  
I am little more than quivering blubber,  
though you'll bleed from me

no oil for the watchman's lamp,  
no ambergris to smooth  
these cracked cheeks over,

harpoon-widow, good  
for a daguerreotype in my half-door  
or leaving a fish-head out for the cat.

But spare me your genre pieces:  
my worst imaginings dive deeper,  
longer than any plankton-eater

and cut like a flensing knife through bone,  
my one good ear always cocked  
for the house-high slap of the minke's tail

whiplashed along the Iceland current  
past Whitby and Brid  
to me, the whaler's mermaid wife

painting myself with a wig and an idiot grin  
on a walrus tusk, for filing away  
with the chess pieces and shaving sets,

reconciled to my years  
as the accessioner's curio hostage,  
second only in his affections

to the stuffed polar bear;  
dependable as the fog horns  
carrying from the estuary

again tonight—  
like clock radios, you think,  
turning over in bed,

sounding their wake-up call  
over and over for an appointment  
you will sleep through,

dead to the blood-red hours,  
their promiscuous designs  
on your eyelids, ghosting

my form there, like scrimshaw.

## Chemical Plant

'I am pure ohm'

Seventies concept album cover:  
green fields round the chemical plant,  
a torch flared in the breeze's shiver,  
all the crop circles you could want  
and two smoke plumes that go on forever.

Wind down your window for a smell  
of the muskily igniting beast:  
exoskeleton, pure shell  
of power that hides no pacing ghost  
but only purely living steel

slicing through the riverside view.  
Always there but never seen,  
let all humanity be the few  
hard-hatted shadows that we join  
to work this chemistry we do

to feed the fire firing the hum  
that rises snaking from each tower  
and drives the chain reaction home  
that surges when it finds us, lover,  
and runs to ground through our pale flame.

## Peggy O'Brien

Peggy O'Brien, a native of western Massachusetts, teaches in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She also spent the better part of two decades living in Dublin, where she taught at Trinity College. Her poems have appeared in periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic and her first collection, *Sudden Thaw*, has just been published by Orchises Press in America and Lilliput Press in Ireland.

### Stripped

An old farmhouse clad in asphalt shingles  
My father's polyester leisure suit, a chipped but opulent onion  
Dome in the front garden, like an angel  
Fallen by a baleful wind from grace, severed forever from heaven.  
Origin is myth, the silver shiver of birch leaves,  
Whole forests, in even a second generation farmer's dreams.  
Broad leaf unlike shade tobacco never suffers under gauze.  
It takes the sun's punishment on the chin, straight up,  
Then three days and three nights, a lifetime dying, Jonah  
In the barn: the hanging, curing, stripping  
Of the body from the soul. Towards autumn's end, a dampness seeps  
Into the mornings, moisture like the merciful God weeping.  
Suddenly the brittle leaves can bend again. One flick  
And the spine lifts off the flesh, a fish filleted.

## Lent

Ash Wednesday in Camogli.  
A fisherman sits on a stone wall  
In the harbor mending a net.

He holds like a China cup  
In his man-sized, callused hands  
A shuttle wound with thread.

I assume it's strong. It's also  
Thin, strength deriving from the cell  
Principle of a beehive, geometric

Dawn to noon to dusk to midnight  
Days that hold the otherwise  
Intolerable weight of a life.

His sea eyes search far  
Beyond the rainbow painted, hope  
Anchored, wildly tossing boats.

His land eyes mind the work  
To hand— ghosts are punishing  
This coast, rising up, evaporating

Rocks. A time to mend,  
Weave in and out like waves,  
Or the swaying net underwater,

Quite invisible. How does he know  
Where it's been rent? So intricate  
And fine and folded over time

And time again like a man  
Tanned and whipped and ground  
To sand by sun, salt and wind.

Repairing is his way of making  
And remaking the same, seamless,  
Original net he can barely

Remember or know for sure—  
Will the catch hold, one little,  
Glittering fish slip through?

## A Hanging

I walked right in, the broad, barn doors wide  
Open, propped that way with two-by-fours, an earthen  
Floor, the farmer who let me stay, provided  
I agreed to ask no questions.  
In through the mouth, down into the belly of the whale,  
Eyes adjusting slowly to the smoky, latticed dark,  
Ribs of light, tobacco speared on poles,  
Bunting for the hanging, a ritual to mark  
The harvest, beams at ascending levels, boys  
Balancing, straddling the ties, trapeze artists  
About to fly in relay, lifting their burden up with ease,  
Higher and higher, priests elevating the host.  
An ocean growing over my head, a dimness censed,  
Leaves anointed with their own perfume, the cure commenced.

## Malamute

We are but stubble, locked  
In ice and caught between  
the white enamel of a snowfield,  
cloissoné of cloud and sky.

Weather sent to temper us.  
Tonight the door to the North  
is ajar and the Arctic blowtorch  
is blasting through the crack.

What's more, to regard iron  
silence through the clamour of a fever,  
clangorous cold and heat,  
is like seeing God Almighty.

It's then you know zero  
is more than a barren concept,  
not nothing when there can be  
less than this round nothingness,

minus our hand-to-mouth,  
hacking cough of an existence,  
strung between one thermometer  
and another, mercury and blood,

spiking in opposite directions,  
asking which do you prefer,  
the sublime chill of angels  
or fevered efforts of the devil?

The only good seems neither  
is an absolute, the ultimate of thules,  
beyond which nothing can compare.  
There will be more loss

and this one, small benefit:  
the furry malamute out back  
who always seems nostalgic  
for the Arctic, is right at home,

lifting his splintered howls  
to the human looking moon,  
emitting ice-pick yaps,  
chipping away at what's inside him

## John O'Donnell

John O'Donnell was born in Ireland in 1960. He won the Hennessy/Sunday Tribune New Irish Writing Award for Poetry in 1998, and The Ireland Funds Listowel Writers' Week Prizes for Best Individual Poem and Best Short Collection in 2001. *Some Other Country*, his first collection, was published in 2002, when he also won the Irish National Poetry Prize. A new collection, *Icarus Sees His Father Fly*, is forthcoming in March 2004 from Dedalus Press.

### In the Car

*for my father*

Where are we going today in the car?  
The endless I-Spy, stops "to go," and you saying  
"All ready?" We seemed to have travelled so far

on those hot sticky seats, rumbling over the tar,  
the huge world a blur through the fogged window pane.  
Where we were going those days in the car

matters less than time wasted, hour after hour  
when we should have talked. Could we start again?  
But already we seem to have travelled so far

apart from each other, the distance a scar  
that won't ever heal, that'll always remain  
wherever we're going. Today in the car

my son's in the back, pointing out the first star.  
"They die before we see the light" you'd explain.  
Now red-eyed, I see: to have travelled so far

through the darkness together, in silence, at war  
— until it's too late; at a graveyard, in rain.  
Where we're all going, some day, in a car.  
And already we seem to have travelled so far.

## A Wedding Guest

We stayed just outside Cana, which is actually  
A very pretty town, although the military  
Seemed to be everywhere. The weather on the day  
Was perfect— I wore my new papyrus shoes—  
And the bride looked absolutely radiant  
(Her dress cost a small fortune). They did choose  
To serve the best wine last, after a slight delay  
But the customs they have here are different  
As Zach explained. Still, it did seem rather odd  
As did that young man (the woman by his side  
His mother, I believe) who spoke to the stewards;  
So quiet and assured as they fussed over the ewers.  
The group with him were whispering about a sign:  
A rough lot, they were. But the wine tasted divine.

## The Grip

Later, on a summer's evening, we drive out  
to my father's club to play. "It's time you took up  
golf" he says, meaning that it's time I spent  
less time in the pub. We park among the sleeping

chrome and head for the first tee. Swathes of green  
and figures clustered everywhere, but all I can see  
is my father as he steps up to plant the ball: a pause  
and then he hits off neatly; short, but straight and true.

My turn. I draw a sword from the borrowed bag  
and wait. "The club is an extension of yourself"  
he reminds. I feel the five-iron go limp in my hands.  
"Don't try to hit too far too soon." I am going to show

him and the watching world; I am going to smash  
this ball onto the moon. Blood-thunder; the club-head  
hurtles past. I gaze hopefully a hundred yards ahead  
then back down at my feet: the ball, unmoved, still there.

This is called "a fresh air." Another go; the ball squirts  
twenty yards out left. Already I am struggling to keep up  
with him, listening to the same advice I seem to have  
been hearing all my life: Take it easy. Instead of getting

closer I am further away than ever, slashing and  
hacking through scutch grass, or looking for a ball  
I'll never find in the deep rough: in trouble everywhere.  
Keep your head down. He's out on the fairway,

alone; I can hear the small clean thwock as he swings  
and follows through, the same thing every time,  
mechanical, unrelenting like the arguments  
we have each time we meet. Hummed snatches

of Sinatra as he waits for me to join him, so distant still.  
Go back slowly. I am counting once again the atrocities  
of our wars, the years of peace that might have been  
now lost to us as surely as those dimpled spheres



long forgotten, nesting in the gorse. The light fading,  
he turns to me: Let's finish here. He bids me come  
out from the weeds and thorns and I do, ending up  
beside him on the edge. He plops a new ball

down, then steps behind and puts his arms round me.  
I feel his hands closing over mine. Try holding it  
like this. The club purrs, lofts the ball into the dusk.  
So close then, the two of us; almost close enough to kiss.

## Kerry Hardie

Kerry Hardie was born in 1951. Her publications include *In Sickness* (Honest Ulsterman, 1995), *A Furious Place* (Gallery Press, 1996), *Cry for the Hot Belly* (Gallery Press, 2000), and *The Sky Didn't Fall* (Gallery Press, 2003). She has also published two novels and won several awards. She received the Friends Provident/National Poetry Prize in 1996, was twice winner of the Women's National Poetry Prize, and was joint-winner of a Hennessy Award for Poetry.

### St. Mochta

I am Mochta— of Britain by birth,  
of Ireland by grace of Patrick.

In Rome, Pope St Leo created me bishop  
and twelve came around me

and journeyed home with me  
and settled and built in Louth.

I am old now, the last of Patrick's men,  
and people gather and call me holy.

I tell them I'm holy, as they are—  
no more and no less. A handful of dust.

But they don't want such talk,  
they demand the miraculous,

they say there is a fragrance on me,  
by this they know me.

So I tell them that over this dust  
there once grew a tree of flowers

and a flower fell into the dust  
and drenched it with scent

Still they protest; they argue the toss.  
Then I tell them this handful of dust,

this most ordinary handful of dust,  
once lay in the yard of a saint.

Note: St. Mochta [c.445 -535] reportedly died at ninety, the last of Patrick's personal followers.

**Dublin Train, Solstice.**

*for my Father*

There's a cold sky and gulls in the new ploughing  
and ice on the stretched water glazing the fields.  
The year's nearly done and I've not once taken this train till now,  
not sat at this window, back facing the future,  
watching the landscape unravel into what's gone.  
Your death knocked the thrive out of me.  
Knocked the thrive out of the year as well.  
The sky is spreading itself out and breaking open  
and I'm tired of fretting the mind over mysteries,  
am nearly ready to give up and not understand.  
This wraith-mooned daylight is thin and cold  
as the smell of a lemon.  
There's an ash by a wall in a field above our house.  
I go there in winter to find you in the empty branches,  
in the way the tree stands to the sky. The dogs quarter,  
snouts dropped to the smell that has them by the nose.  
I'm not far off that myself— hard on the scent  
when the bird has gone. This is the fiercest week of the year,  
this descent into dark, into the formless heart of matter.  
Our souls enter our bodies, hungry for experience,  
they run us around like the mice that live in the skirting  
and skitter across the floorboards in the stillness,  
their quick, sure darts scoring the emptiness behind the eyes.

## Eamon Grennan

Eamon Grennan's most recent collections are *Relations: New & Selected Poems*, and *Still Life with Waterfall* (which was awarded the 2003 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize). He is the Dexter M. Ferry Professor of English at Vassar College and spends as much time as he can in the West of Ireland.

### One Dusk

What the sky was saying is impossible to report: as if  
The whole dome were in flames and we were a sea.

Silence may fall but I doubt it. You're still there, inside  
The rooms your nerves are getting used to. Light

Comes in without knocking and is still there after nine,  
Leaving its shadow-selves six stories down

Pottering under plane trees towards that park bench,  
To sit among bottles and long overcoats, listening

To the litany of Our Lady of Misfortune (shadow of  
Stumbling mothers, pray for us; shadow of crumbled wits,

Pray for us). From a window you watch the evening  
Fray slow to rose tatters, rags of cloud, a whisk

Of mint green suddenly coming through. Soon  
The time for words will put its cool fingers to the skin

Of your neck and waken the warm there: you'll come to  
As if you'd been dreaming, and find the room empty.

## Driving the Pike: Past Manhattan

Through the washed blue mist of heat the city is a shadow city traced on  
ricepaper, a gauze  
Gleam over the blue sheen of water. It is that kind of morning, no mourn-  
ing for a minute

At least, until—behind the chalky scrim of things seen at a distance (a set of  
floating shapes  
Sketching “Manhattan”)—the solid shape of what’s missing makes its pres-  
ence felt and my eyes

Are all over the place, not finding. But the morning is still a feast for sight,  
and in words  
Like North and South, and in that truck I haven’t looked for in the mirror,  
I recover the way

Of our world again— its crushed animals, burnt-out cars, the silence of soli-  
tude while moving  
At high speed, the beautiful lost faces of the drivers as they disappear on me  
into the distant

Conflagration of trees, the shadow a line of geese draws along the horseshoe  
of a stone bridge  
In sunshine and—where the borders between states are—a hail of radiance  
I’m rushing into.

9/12

Up here things seem normal as grass in Galway:  
muscular sunburned men in tank tops are turning  
over the earth, laying foundations, building walls,

or they stand to contemplate the space they've made  
and try to fill it with the picture in their head, of girders  
and brick, the walls rising rose-colored and inch by inch:

the roof, the glinting windows. Some are laying down  
grey footpaths, smoothing the wet cement with  
what look like tender strokes of the palette, slicing

straight fissures in it so the frost and all its flexings  
won't crack the concrete, so the hardened pavement  
will hold. This is the good work, I say, seeing a man

on his knees spreading straw where the new grass-seed's  
been scattered: the bale is a spiky, disheveled block  
of gold, the spread straw a sort of lemon-brown, each blade

sustaining its own distinct sun-polished sheen, the  
glisten of a newly polished brass dagger, a thing  
for ornament only, not a knife, not a weapon

to bring a great city to its bloodied knees or bring  
our neighbours flaming from high windows, bring the  
big word 'evil' out of the blue to smite with stone first—

stone heart, stone eyes—the innocent in their living  
spaces, taking the world that's all around them  
for granted. So not that inaugural instrument whetted

to a fine point by the sharpening stone that can whittle  
our world to a phalanx of abstractions ringing  
in military file a smoking building, a hill of rubble.

## Justin Quinn

Justin Quinn was born in Dublin in 1968 and now works at the Charles University, Prague. He has published three collections of poetry, most recently *Fuselage* (Gallery 2002), and a study of Wallace Stevens. With David Wheatley, he edits the Irish poetry magazine *METRE*. He also translates Czech poetry into English. He is married with one son.

### I.M. PETR LÉBL

Up in the flies, above the stage's glare  
the director's quietly sorting through the bunches  
of cables & loose ropes, while they have luncheon  
below on an estate in Russia somewhere,

or so The Sea-Gull has it. With slow care  
he secures the knot & tenses for the punch-line.  
At the very moment of the final gun-shot  
he quickly steps off into the dark air.

Outside, it's night-time. The river is black ink.  
Up on the hill, the Castle's brightly lit  
& the traffic's stuck although it's getting late.

People rushing by or having a drink  
in costumes & with incidental props.  
The city tilts gently on blocks & ropes.



## Lost Dizane

The sky is sundered endlessly  
into bright facets by the waves:  
small bits of azure tilt & see-  
saw broadly to far shores & coves;  
they lose themselves in coastal caves,  
come out, commute between the two.  
My flesh is sad. I gently blow,  
blow harder at the sea & change  
its placid surface of pure blue  
into a swelling mountain range.



## Death of Wallenstein

They rush into the room, made brave with wine,  
to assassinate the man who out of nowhere  
stepped into Europe's turmoil, fully knowing  
his strength, his means, & with a grand design

to change things from the Vistula to the Rhine,  
in love with war & its violent heroics,  
its massive panoplies of soldiers flowing  
in answer to the will of Wallenstein.

The palace & its gardens cool & set  
as he falls headlong from the labyrinth.  
Nymphs turn to stone. They dream of amaranth

& of the god's force moving through them yet,  
a marvellous fury gathering them up whole,  
before he put them down here for a while.

## Patience

Game after game  
I deal myself—  
no hand the same—  
& the hours dissolve.

King up, ace out,  
gather & fold . . .  
I am about  
forty years old

or ten, wide-eyed.  
I am my mother  
or father. Outside  
there is some weather.

## COREY MADSEN

### Mackinac

Around the time he first ordered the beer, and just following the disgusted, coffee-redolent sigh that blew across the table and into his face, Pete could not help but stare at the woman sitting opposite him and wonder just what in the hell had possessed him fifteen long years ago to marry such a stubborn bitch, let alone to have taken her to Mackinac on his first day off in months. In light of this consideration, he folded his hands on the table and stared at the grit underneath his nails, as if searching for the answer there and, once finding it, deciding it would be best to dismiss her protest politely.

"I don't give a shit what you think," he said.

"It's barely noon." Rita folded her menu. She placed it on the table and arranged her fork and knife so that they lined up with the spoon, making her half of the table almost perfect. "Don't get that way already. Why don't you just order a coffee, like I did?"

"I don't want to drink coffee," Pete said. "Coffee reminds me of work."

"Then why don't you order hot cocoa or something? It seems wrong to drink so early in the day. It makes me depressed to think that you'd want to drink already. Who drinks at ten-thirty in the morning?"

"I've been busting my ass all week," he said. "I'm having a beer."

"*Busting my ass.* You stand in front of a conveyor belt all day with your arms folded."

Pete used the menu to block his view of Rita and, while looking at the meal descriptions, found he was a little too wound up to decide on anything as important to him as food. Instead, he peered through the collage of fall decorations painted on the window to watch a horse-drawn carriage shuddering over the pavement, to note the small puffs of steam bursting from the Palominos' snouts, and to appreciate how the coachman whipped their docile asses into a productive sort of motion. This sight having refreshed him, Pete felt perfectly able to attend to the number of entrées listed on the menu, which were too many to count. At five pages long, it was nothing like the cheap, two-sided ones at the dump where Rita worked, and with everything from Italian chicken pesto to oven-baked Polish pasties, he had enough to keep his mind occupied while waiting for the waitress. When she returned with his sweaty glass of beer and another coffee for Rita (which meant she'd have to stop and pee every ten minutes), he felt so overwhelmed by the number of grilled and sautéed animals he could devour that he asked for a few more minutes.

"We stopped serving breakfast at ten-thirty," the waitress said.

"Just so you know." Setting the menu in his lap, Pete considered his serv-

er's presence for the first time since sitting down and had to force an expression that hid the list of jokes and insults flooding his usually very accepting mind. The sides of her smock were stretched the width of her body. She made Rita look like she'd lost twenty pounds.

"We won't be ordering breakfast," Pete said, biting his lower lip.

"Good," the waitress said. "Because you can't."

She set down their drinks and left, leaving Pete to wipe up a small puddle of spilled beer. He then folded his menu and watched her work her way slowly to the bar, where she leaned against the counter to talk to one of the foreign-looking cooks in the back, exposing a fold of lumpy skin just beneath the hem of an already lengthy skirt. Pete watched her lips smack and imagined the spiteful words pouring out. She was talking about them, the fudgies from the south. She was probably calling Pete an asshole.

"Service never used to be like this," he said.

"I thought you said you've never been to the restaurants around here?" Rita said. "How would you know?"

"I just know. Things were different back then. People were nice to you. That waitress must've just been hired for the fall. That's the only way I can see it."

"They have walleye here," Rita said, indicating where on the menu. "I bet you could go for some walleye. Remember when I used to fix it all the time, with the bread crumbs and the lemon?"

"I'm not hungry any more," Pete said, tucking his menu behind the napkin dispenser as if he were casting his final vote. "Maybe I'll just get a sandwich and say to hell with it."

"To hell with what? What are you saying to hell with?"

"I don't know." Pete took a good steady pull of his beer. He set it down and turned the glass clockwise on the tabletop. He grabbed a napkin and poured salt on it and set the glass on top of it. "If she expects a nice tip, she can just forget it."

"Would you forget about her? I wish you wouldn't give people such a hard time. Maybe she had a bad morning. Maybe she stepped in some horse shit on her way to work."

"I'd be glad if she did," Pete said. "I wouldn't care one bit if she fell in it headfirst."

"What's gotten into you all of a sudden? There's no reason to be so angry. I don't know why I even deal with you sometimes. Let's just be happy, okay? This is supposed to be fun."

"Please don't yell at me, Rita. I can hear you perfectly fine."

Pete finished his beer. He set the empty glass on the table, folded his arms, and waited for the waitress to return. He let Rita order first. She chose the special—a club sandwich with French Fries—since it was cheap.

The waitress scribbled the order down and then looked at Pete. She stared at him as if the next thing he said would decide her future as a waitress.

“What’ll it be for you?” she said.

“Another beer to start with,” he said, grazing his finger over the tabletop. He could feel Rita watching him and he didn’t like that, not one bit. “And for lunch I’d like the walleye. My wife thinks that sounds really good.”

After the waitress left, Pete began to think he had let her off easy. He waited for Rita to say something, to compliment his outstanding behavior, but she had turned her attention instead to something outside the window. She was watching two boys on a tandem bicycle try to keep their balance, seeming to delight in their failure.

“Rita,” Pete said. He grabbed hold of her knee and shook it. “Rita, I’m sorry.”

\*

“I had no idea walleye was so expensive around here,” Pete said, stepping onto the sidewalk outside. The wind had shifted and was now coming hard off the straits, tangling leaves between their booted feet and whistling in their already reddened ears. They tightened their shoulders and bunched their collars around their necks, huddling close to one another. “If I had known, I wouldn’t have ordered it.”

“It was good though, I’m sure. Wasn’t it good?”

“Of course it was, but that’s not the point. Don’t you see the point I’m trying to make?”

“Maybe it wouldn’t have been so expensive if you hadn’t ordered those drinks. You should have thought about that.”

As Rita hooked his arm and led him down the street, Pete could think of a whole list of things on the island that gone horribly and irrevocably wrong since his visits as a kid: some corporate-minded juggernaut named “Reba” had slapped pink awnings on all of the family-owned fudge shops and turned them into a franchise, a few of the antiquated bed and breakfasts had been bulldozed for the new shopping center, and souvenir stores had pulled local art from their shelves to make room for useless crafted ceramic models and glass paperweights. The antique stores were closed, and so was the one private museum he remembered, with displays of flintlock muskets, bayonets, and the relics of 18th century warfare. He began to think the whole day was turning out to be one big wasted trip until he realized another ferry had docked while they’d eaten. The streets were picking up, now littered with tourists in thick winter coats, toting shopping bags and boxes of fudge wrapped in white paper.

“Look,” Pete said. “This place doesn’t seem so dead now, does it? I told you a lot of people would have the same idea as me.”

They wandered up the redbrick sidewalk, which became a chal-

lenge for Rita as it sloped up towards the Grand Hotel. It had been built in 1887, on a formidable terrace overlooking Lake Michigan, and as Pete recalled this wonderful history to the wife he left lagging behind him, he stared at the massive Doric columns, the Victorian arches over the windows and gables, and pointed out the long front porch, which happened to be the world's largest.

"Can you believe that?" he said, coming to a halt. "A world record, right here in Michigan."

"What did you say?" Rita said, fighting to catch her breath. "I can't hear you when you walk so far ahead of me like that."

Once on top of the hill, they both could see the entire village below, sprawled out along the shoreline like a mosaic of little shells that had been pushed into a pattern by the surf. Pete felt a head-rush coming and tasted the beer in his throat.

"It really doesn't look like many people from up here," Rita said.

Queasy, Pete left her side and headed up the freshly paved drive of the Grand Hotel. His hands were beginning to sting from the wind so he stuffed them in his coat pockets. Over the entrance hung a large purple awning with gold trim, and, when Rita caught up to him, they stood under it shivering.

"You need to see the inside of this place," Pete said. "Holy shit is it nice."

Before he even motioned towards the door, Pete was stopped by a smartly dressed doorman in a trim black suit, with gold buttons that glinted even in the sunless gray of a Michigan fall.

"There's a dress code, sir," the doorman said. "The signs back there should have told you."

"I just want to show my wife the lobby," Pete said. "We'll be in and out in a jiffy."

The man seemed to wince at Pete's breath. He removed his hand and placed it on the door handle. It was then that Pete realized that the only way he and Rita were going to glimpse the lobby was if he'd break this man's fingers.

"I'm sorry, sir," the doorman said in an impenetrable tone of voice. "Even if you were properly dressed, there's a ten dollar tour fee for those without reservations."

"Jesus." Pete could feel his patience dwindling. The back of his neck flushed the way it used to when somebody at the plant was about to get his ass reamed out. "Wait just one second. Let me see if I understand this, and then we'll get off your nice red rug here. You're telling me I can't go inside because I don't own a sports coat or have a reservation? Is that about right? Well, do you see that bridge over there?" Using his finger,

Pete directed the doorman's gaze toward the straits, where in the mist the Bridge's three suspension towers hovered. "My uncle helped pour the footings for that goddamn bridge."

"That's pretty impressive, sir," the doorman said.

Pete turned to Rita with his hands shaking out in front of him.

"Every time I try to do something nice for you someone else..."

He could feel his voice fluctuating and doing things he didn't care for.

"It's okay, Pete," Rita said, rubbing his tensed shoulder. "Honey, it's all right."

"I'm telling you, Rita. My father and I saw every corner of this hotel when I was younger. I was doing fucking cartwheels down the hallways."

"Okay, let's not swear. If we can't go inside, let's just see what else there is around here. Don't worry, we'll see all there is to see."

"I'm sorry, sir," the doorman said, leaning forward to whisper. "I wish there was something I could do." He let go of the door handle and returned to his cadet-like stance, hooking his hands behind his back like lengths of velvet rope.

"It's okay," Rita said, tugging on Pete's arm. "We'll come back better dressed next time." She let out a laugh that wasn't entirely sure of itself.

They decided instead to circle the outside of the building to have a look at the grounds. At Pete's suggestion, Rita tried to peer in through some of the windows, but all of the shades were drawn. They entered a large flower garden where the petals from dogwoods had blackened on the grass and roses had wilted into shriveled brown fists. A few landscapers were in the process of tying burlap bags around the tall shrubs and fastening them with twine.

"Can you stay here for one second?" Pete asked Rita. "There's a gazebo over there I remember from when I was younger. I remember burying something near the back there. I want to see if it's still there."

"What is it?" she asked. "What did you bury back there?"

"Let me see if I can dig it up," Pete said. "I'll just be a minute."

He jogged to the gazebo, which sat hidden behind a cluster of vines entwining a wrought iron fence and two leafless oaks. He went to the back of the gazebo, pushing the dry branches and stems out of his way, wading through the ankle-high accumulation of dead leaves. He undid his pants and looked around, closing his eyes while he urinated. When he finished, he buttoned his pants back up and met Rita in the garden.

"Did you find what you buried?" she asked. "I want to know right now what it was."

"It wasn't there," he said. "Someone either dug it up or that wasn't the spot. It was a long time ago. Forget about it."

He took her by the arm and pulled her along the brick pathway. She fought his grasp and planted her feet in one spot, demanding to know what he had buried so many years ago. He told her his wristwatch. He lied and said that it had broken on him.

“Oh, my God,” she said, heading away in the direction they had come. “And to think I actually started to feel sorry for you. Like I couldn’t figure out you went back there to take a leak.”

\*

Fort Mackinac was closed on that particular day. A sign outside the roped-off entrance read that a crew was in the process of winterizing the entire structure. Pete stood before the upright log walls, staring at the tops.

“The soldiers carved tips on the logs to keep the Indians out,” he explained to Rita. “They were so sharp at one time you could slice open your hand if you so much as grazed one of them. Of course they’re probably weathered and dulled down now.” He stuffed his hands into his pockets. “We need a goddamn camera.”

“It’s getting really cold out, Pete.” Rita rubbed her shoulders frantically. “What do you say we buy some fudge and head home?”

“There’s no need to winterize this fort,” Pete said. He set his teeth, while frustration became the pinch of fingernails on his palms. “Do you have any idea how long this structure’s been here? It’s built to last. What they’re doing is pointless. It’s bad for business. It doesn’t make any sense.”

“I don’t care,” Rita said. “Why would I want to see some crummy army fort? You think I give a damn about how sharp the tips of the logs used to be?”

“Rita,” Pete said. He tore at the lining of his pockets. “I’m trying to make the best of this. I thought you might want to hear a bit of the history, is all. Don’t you think you should at least try to appreciate history once in a while? Try to take some interest in what *I* like for once?”

“What do *you* know about history? You work in a goddamn *plastics* plant!”

Pete kicked around the gravel at his feet. He watched a pebble roll over the toe of one of Rita’s boots.

“You know what, Rita? That’s just what I would expect to hear from a big fat cunt like you.”

Rita tucked her hands underneath her armpits. She regarded him a moment, as if finally glimpsing all her reasons for resenting him in one fell swoop. Shaking her head, she turned and walked away down the slope.

“I’m catching the next ferry back,” she said. “You can stay here and gawk at your fort for all I care. Take a piss on it, you fucking asshole.”

He watched her descend the path, breathing deeply and curling his

fingers into fists, until her figure became miniaturized and lost in the specs of people dotting the square downtown. For a while he tried to locate just anyone in a red coat like hers, but even that frustrated the eye and misled him. When he could no longer stand the biting wind on top of the hill, he regarded the walls, the watchmen's holes cut out of the lumber, and the lookout tower beyond the barracks one last time, knowing with an almost overpowering certainty that he would never accomplish anything in his life even as remotely astounding.

\*

When he finally checked his watch, Pete was in a tavern called the Mackinac Brewing Company, with the bar all to himself. Rita had been gone for over two hours. He wondered if she had taken the ferry back. Reaching into his pocket, he dug for more bills and felt a tinge of self-contempt for having left his credit card with her.

"We're closing up in fifteen minutes," the bartender said, arranging glasses at the far end of the counter. He was an older man with the local look of pleasantness creased on his face. An apron was tied around his neck and a bar towel around his belt, as if this were the fifties. His blue eyes had seen just about everything there was to see in Michigan, Pete was sure.

"Awful early to be closing, isn't it?" Pete asked. His voice seemed to fall flat in the emptiness of the place. Every chair in the dining area was propped on a table.

"Well, I don't know," the bartender replied. "This is when we've always closed in the fall. Island's usually dead."

Pete ordered another and finished the one in front of him. He stared at a painting that depicted the building of the Mackinac Bridge amidst a swirl of whitecaps and curling blue swells. The three suspension towers were painted a dark orange, set against the background of a mounting storm cloud. Pete imagined that his uncle was somewhere in it, hidden in the tiny black brushstrokes of worker-filled barges.

"That's some painting," he said.

"Where?" the bartender asked. He set down the beer mug he had been drying. "What painting you talking about?"

"It's right there. Behind you. It's a painting of the Mackinac Bridge."

The old man stared at the frame a moment, and then ran his fingers along the canvas. He tapped it with a knuckle to hear the wooden base.

"That's the Mackinac Bridge, all right." He grabbed the empty mug again and nodded at Pete. "You want another one?"

"I had an uncle who helped pour the forms. He told me all about

it when I was younger. That's almost exactly the way he described it. The waves, the barges. Everything."

The bartender took another look at the painting. Then he shrugged his shoulders at Pete.

"I wouldn't know a thing about it. I grew up in Detroit."

Pete picked up his glass. He drank from it and then swished the beer around in circles.

"It was hell on that bridge," he said. "They dug up the poorest crews they could find and stuck them all on those barges. All immigrant workers and such. Made them work during storms, just like in that picture. My uncle told me all about it. Couple of guys actually fell into the forms while they were pouring the concrete. They're still inside those suspension towers, he said."

The bartender bit his lip. He shook his head and then kept looking at Pete as if waiting for a punch line.

"I don't know if anyone's told you, but that's just an old wives tale the islanders tell the fudgies to mess around with them. The only thing inside those pillars is stone and concrete."

"I'm no fudgie." Pete set down his beer as if it had been contaminated. "I only live forty miles south of here. That's a hell of a lot closer than *Detroit*." He stood up and began wringing his napkin. "You know what? You don't know what the hell you're talking about. You don't know what you're talking about at all."

"I'm just saying." The old man picked up a mug and dried it with a rag arbitrarily. He shrugged again. "Maybe your uncle was just having some fun with you."

"Don't say another word about my uncle." Pete looked down into his hands. He was tearing the napkin into shreds. "He watched two of his best friends fall into those forms. You don't know a goddamn thing. You're like all the rest of those flatlanders who come up here and think they know it all. You don't know anything about history. My uncle helped pour the fucking forms for that bridge. They put him in a goddamn barge with a bunch of other workers and then they worked their asses off, from the bottom of the lake up. Took them years. And I know damn well people died along the way. They were hard-working sons-a-bitches who could knock you over with their spit."

The bartender regarded the painting, looking at it as if it were a pair of off-color drapes.

"I'll go get your check," he said.

Pete got up and threw the last of his money down onto the bar, leaving without another word. He felt buzzed, and it seemed perfectly all right to kick the door open as he left. Outside on the blacktop the air had

turned bitter. Wind lashed at his face in cold strokes, buffeted his shoulders, pissed him off. He hunched his back and treaded towards the docks, almost certain now that Rita had taken one of the ferries back. It would be just like her, to try to make a fool out of him. He told himself that he would take his sweet time getting back. She could wait outside the car, in the cold, until he came with the keys.

He tried the door of a few fudge shops along the way, but all of the stores had closed. The streets were empty, the sun was settling on dusk, and even the horses were untied from the carriages and put off into stables. There was no line for the ferry, so he spent his time leaning over the railing of the dock, spitting into the water. He felt himself sobering and the veil of frustration falling away. Gazing across the straits, he could see the Mackinac Bridge faintly behind a cloud of mist like a drawing not fully erased on a blackboard. He stood there for a long time before deciding to check with the ticket booth.

“When’s this ferry coming?” he said into the glass.

A pimply-faced teenager in need of a haircut and a bigger uniform was counting money inside. He had lost count and looked at Pete as if he were every reason his day would never end.

“You missed the last ferry,” he said. “It ran about forty-five minutes ago.”

“Well, when’s the next one coming?”

The boy resumed his counting. He placed one-dollar bills into a neat stack and grabbed a handful of quarters from the till. He scattered them on the counter in front of him and slid them into groups of four, one at a time.

“Tomorrow,” he said, letting out a puff. “Tomorrow morning. It might be a long wait, but it’ll come.”

“What about the other ferries?” Pete asked. His voice was cracking. He pressed his hands against the glass. “When do the other lines run? I’ve got to get back to my wife. You don’t understand, our car is locked and I have the keys. She’s probably freezing half to death right now.”

“I’m sorry, sir, but everything shuts down at this time.” The boy stood up. He started pulling a steel slat with a latch down over the window. “Might want to find a hotel for the night. There’s one down the street. Real cheap.”

He watched the boy secure the screen, heard the lock click shut on the other side. Pete walked out onto the dock. He started jogging to the end of it, looking for boats somewhere in the harbor. All the ones he saw had tarps thrown over them or were tied to cleats for the night. The whole place had shut itself up without him even knowing. He looked back and saw the boy locking up the ticket booth, jiggling the door handle.

“Hey!” Pete shouted. “Hey, goddamn it! Wait just a second!”

The boy let go of the handle and shuffled down the street, disappearing around a corner. Pete scanned the docks, the path up the hill, downtown. The Grand Hotel was just a white blot on the horizon, the rest of the village a clutter of buildings muted in the dusk. He checked his watch and saw that it was five-thirty. He could not even begin to think where the time had gone. A moment later he fished into his pockets for his money and his credit card, but felt only car keys, which he jingled frantically with his fingers. It was quite some time before he could bring himself to do anything else.

# JESSICA MAICH

## **The House of War**

### *Middlesex Hospital*

Dawn, and the breakfast carts  
roll with ammunition.  
Then, an Oracle or two sends

underlings scampering in reply,  
while the poking prodding bandage brigade  
seals the wrap-around curtain

in one swipe. Fresh troops  
arrive each day on schedule.  
We learn to tell their rank.

There are good Generals  
and bad desk-sitting Generals  
who never looked up.

The front line has two chairs  
for sitting, sleeping,  
for family history witness

though, we leave the room  
sometimes to take a rest  
that isn't found in any room.

SHANNON BERRY

Chasm

Joy slips, so bitter,  
like soap and water across the wood floor.  
Try to remember summer and fingers

against skin and hair. Poor  
church bells ring with Latin choirs  
singing as bills heap and food

fades in children's hands—briars  
that stick to bare feet, kettles  
without tea, motion without music. Tired

echoes hope—sound rattles  
better in canyons. So thank the vacuum  
of midnight, thank the hypnotic battle.

Your soul is a quiet church. *Pax te cum*  
repeats in the back pews—resonance  
louder than the nothing, yellow louder than the blue.

## Mining

The deeper we go into this cave  
the more stone we find  
glinting black and red—  
coal and iron ore—  
hard but not yet diamonds.  
Those jewels are still in these earthen presses,  
shifting beneath so much heat and tension  
uncomfortable with their wealth,  
longing for light to augment them,  
yearning to reflect prisms  
from the crook of some happy woman's finger.

Men with lanterned hats wait at the gates,  
gathering up such cherished secrets  
with their mammoth, shrieking mechanisms,  
titling their glowing heads when they find  
an angel wing  
in this dust.

I, too, wonder at such discoveries  
when I stand ankle-deep, panning another's red river.

How many silent, lucid shadows have suffocated trying to save us,  
pressed between magma and stone,  
precious,  
turning humbly into our sapphires and rubies,  
illuminating the bleak canyons  
before we even knew they were there?

The Excursus

The world<sup>1</sup> is<sup>2</sup> my<sup>3</sup> cloister<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> a. The sum total of reality is the world . . . We picture facts to ourselves [Wittgenstein].

b. Words become their things, like dolmens, the earth-dome at Newgrange, Leelenau vineyards, the falcon in the clerestory.

c. Null set. Or, a poem with everything in it.

d. Still another conjecture declares that the company is omnipotent, but that it exerts its influence only in the most minute matters: in a bird's cry, in the shades of rust and the hues of dust, in the cat naps of dawn [Borges].

e. The fear of death is a misprint [Hejinian].

<sup>2</sup> Linking verb, or a Gestaltic tendency.

<sup>3</sup> a. Thou shalt not *klaxonner dans la rue*.

b. The shame of neighbors, a glass to the door.

c. . . . nothing can humiliate / those unable to judge themselves . . . [Pasolini].

d. Hypotonia, the neuromuscular disorder that produces a floppy baby.

<sup>4</sup> a. . . . there's beer, beer for everyone at Cloister Inn tonight . . . [A Celebratory Hymn].

b. That is, not Colonial or Terrace, nor the defunct: Arch, Key & Seal, Cannon, stacked chest-high with Oreos.

c. The crowd in the exedra mocks the newly dead.

d. Enclosed space: concentric circles or a spiral; Cistercian tonsures.

## Derivation

A pine cone: your world.  
You: its scales  
—Ingeborg Bachmann

A squirrel jounces a branch:  
fall of \_\_\_\_\_  
from shoulders.

Procreation, whorls  
painted up a hill—

needles sever limbs.

Reductionism: \_\_\_\_\_ within a  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Moment of images  
a reflecting pool  
the sun.

Leaves coast on dyed water,  
platinum bowls  
against the cidery sky.

The limits of translation:  
my world, yours—  
everything relative,

individual meanings  
assigned to a single \_\_\_\_\_.

JANET McNALLY

## This Myth, Like All Myths

### I. To Explain Certain Phenomena

My sister Daphne tells me that she's getting married over the phone, two weeks after I've come back home from visiting her in Chicago. She speaks low and slow, her voice sliding over the words like caramel. *You'll never guess!* Daphne says. Try me, I answer. She alternates between exclamations and whispers, taking turns like hopscotch. I can hear the girl who lives above me stomping around in her signature platform shoes.

"Don't you think you could have told me this was going on *before* I left?" I say. "Shouldn't I be with you when you tell me so we can hug and squeal and do girly things?" I am trying to keep the sarcasm out of my voice, so I channel my energy into wrapping the phone cord around my finger a hundred times.

"Thisbe, I didn't know it was going to happen," Daphne says with an implied *"silly girl,"* as if I should know this, as if it's common knowledge. And maybe she's right because I have heard this story before, checked off like a list: it was a complete surprise, there was a black velvet ring-box, he was down on one knee. It's what the girls I know have whispered to each other from grade school forward, just one of the stories they tell, except with this one they write themselves into the myth.

Daphne is still talking, spinning plans like cotton candy, sweet and light and almost all air. The color pink is mentioned. I find it hard to believe that this is my sister, the same one whose Barbie dolls had unfaithful, invisible husbands and long, terrible marriages in milk-crate houses. My sister who has been a bridesmaid three times, never worrying about the "never a bride" superstition and always cursing the dress.

"Are you listening?" she asks.

"No," I say, and she, exasperated, begins to repeat.

### **of all the bookstores in all the world, she had to walk into this one**

Our parents named us from the myths. This may have made sense if we were Greek or if they had been classics scholars with twin dissertations on ancient civilizations and early religions, but my mother is a clinical psychologist and my dad teaches chemistry. Really, the whole thing started with a copy of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* bought in a used bookstore on Lexington, something my mother picked out of piles of books no one wanted, while inhaling the dust of a thousand stories. My mother was reading this book when she went into labor with my sister. She clutched it the whole way to the hospital and halfway through the birth, until there were five little dents on the cover from her fingertips. My father read her bits of the stories while they waited for my sister to appear, to "take her

mind off it," he says. (*There is no taking your mind off it*, my mother told us later, *pretty stories or not*).

Three years later while they were waiting for me to be born, my father read to her from a pile of psych journals. I appeared sometime during a study of language development during infancy, screaming at the top of my little lungs. It didn't matter what she was reading, though, my mother had already picked out my name—Thisbe—because she liked its pretty syllables.

I read all the stories. Spread the books in front of me on the kitchen table or the edge of my bed, learned the family trees, the cross-references, the maps of ancient Greece. It might have helped stave off my obsession if I'd been given some other paradigm to look up to, but I was raised by a pair of very-lapsed Catholics. For a time I really believed that Zeus and Aphrodite and Apollo lived up in the sky. But then, I suppose it's all the same.

The copy of *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, printed in the year of my birth, was my favorite. I liked its tight, yellowed pages packed with alphabetized lists; its concise, don't-waste-a-word explanations and the way the author said: *we are all Athenians, in a sense*. I read it until I could rattle off the gods' names like spelling words, pronouncing them with their accent marks intact.

Daphne appears in Ovid as a wood nymph, daughter of the river god. She refused to marry (*who needs it*, she said, and dashed off to frolic in the trees). Though her father lamented about the grandchildren he'd never have, she just laughed and hugged him and eventually he forgot about it. Apollo fell in love with her—his first love, if you can believe it—but she told him he didn't have a chance. He was taken aback by her rejection, pouted and began to walk away. It was then that he remembered, *hey, wait, I'm a god*, and went after her.

Daphne ran like some kind of inter-forest track star, but Apollo followed right at the heels of her sneakers. Here's where, for me, my sister takes the wood nymph's place: running, lane 6, in her maroon and white track uniform, number 37 pinned to her back. Only my Daphne usually placed second or third, at least, and nymph-Daphne—her feet went numb and heavy, spreading out and taking hold of the earth, and her fingertips fanned out into glossy green leaves. Her father turned her into a laurel tree.

The story I was saddled with, Thisbe's story, is just an earlier version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Only this one involved a lion, a mulberry bush, and a bloody shawl. The double suicide with its slow near miss is mostly the same, though they both die by the sword.

You may not have read the story, but I'm sure you can fill in the rest. We all know how it ends.

### **howdy there, partner**

I don't really know Henry that well, only that he runs a little theatre on State Street, because Daphne took me to a play there before I even knew he existed. I sat there in the near dark wondering why we'd come to see a play that combined pop songs from the 80's with the dreary story of three middle-aged Czechoslovakian immigrants. *It's an anti-musical*, Daphne had told me while we waited for our turn with the ticket-taker. *A comment on the way society subjugates women by placing them in rigid roles.* Even then I thought she sounded suspiciously like playbill-copy, and I couldn't quite put together why from time to time one of the actresses would stand still mid-dialogue and softly sing the Pointer Sisters or Debbie Gibson. It was cold in the theatre and I pointed this out to my sister.

"I'm wearing my mittens," I said.

"So?"

"I'm indoors!" None of this seemed to be Daphne's style. She likes plays with a clear beginning and ending, no songs involved. Afterward, when she led me over to a tall, good-looking guy with a wide smile and coffee-colored eyes, I figured it out.

"The jig is up," I said in what I imagined to be a 1930's private eye accent. "Now I see why we were huddling in the dark watching an anti-musical." She shushed me, introduces the man as Henry, and we three walked to a restaurant down the block.

"That was just a stunning performance," I said to Henry, and this was true in a sense. I still hadn't figured out why the actresses were constantly cutting out paper dolls and flinging them about. He thanked me, and Daphne smiled. She thought I had decided to behave.

"Yes," I continued, and Daphne's smile abruptly disappeared. "I too think that the Pointer Sisters have contributed to the downfall of mankind." Henry looked as if he didn't know whether to laugh or not, but he did, and that made me like him a little bit more.

The place Henry took us to was Italian, small and dimly, warmly lit, candles flickering against the brick walls. Later, I found that the bathroom had candles too, and baskets brimming with potpourri. It was enough to make someone nervous.

"Are we on a date?" I asked my sister while Henry spoke to the hostess. We were shown to a small table in the back of the restaurant. "So long as he's paying, it's fine with me," I whispered, and Daphne glared.

When we were seated, I noticed that Daphne slid her chair a few inches closer to Henry. I actually caught her twirling her hair around her

finger while she talked to him and suddenly felt threatened: my hackles rose, I wanted to surround my sister with that yellow tape that says CAUTION in big black letters.

“Your name is very formal,” I said to Henry halfway through the meal. I had had three glasses of wine. Henry didn’t seem to know what else to do but smile.

“Really though,” I continued, pressing, “does anyone ever call you Hank?”

At that point, Daphne shot me a look, but she knows she has to do better than that. “He’s a theatre director, not a cowboy, Thisbe.”

I smiled, picturing Henry in a ten-gallon hat. I suddenly felt five years old.

“Do you at least have a horse?”

## II. Dictionary of Mythological Husbands

### **Erysichthon** (er-i-sik'-thon)

He told me he was a gypsy. Sat holding my hand in the school-gym-turned-ballroom, Peter Gabriel blasting through the speakers, till the music seemed like a place, seemed solid and tangible. It created a cocoon in which we lived, curled in those folding vinyl seats, things ready to metamorphose. He held my hand palm-up with his fingertips, both of his hands cradling mine, and read the shallow fault lines that crossed and crossed. You will live a long life, he said.

Really, he wasn’t a gypsy, he was half-Vietnamese, with glossy black hair falling into his black eyes and a smile so lovely it was almost ridiculous. He got kicked out of his farmland high school because someone called his younger brother a gook. Broke the boy’s nose, he told me, the dark cherry-colored blood staining his shirt and then the floor. They called his mother then, and she came from home with her head still caught up in the spider-web of soap operas and carpet swatches. She was remodeling their house, but by the time I knew him, he didn’t live there anymore.

He lived with his grandmother in a neighborhood my mother would have called “rough,” an upstairs apartment that I only saw once. I remember little things like snapshots: a long crack in the living room window, the bedroom door that wouldn’t close, three tiles missing in the center of the checkerboard kitchen floor. Mostly, he came to me, riding the long streets on buses with headphones clamped tightly over his ears. Sometimes, he’d stay too late and miss the last bus, but he’d return me to my house and leave to wander around till dawn. I don’t know what he did out there, I could only watch him take the turn off my street at the end of the block, watch until he was out of sight. I imagined that he spent the time thinking about things—the stiff, well-off Catholic boys at his new school; his broth-

er, who still went to class at the school he'd been asked to leave; his mother and her paint chips, "thirty different shades of the same blue, and she swears there's a difference."

All these wars waged over a word, I said. Semantics, I said, just letters arranged in a certain way. Fortune-cookie characters, hieroglyphics. Of course I was wrong, but I could say all that because back then I didn't even know what the word meant. "I prefer my wars abstract," he said, and smiled, but before long he was kicked out of another two schools for fighting over much lesser things, and after that stopped riding the bus to my house.

**Picus** (pi'-kus)

I met him in my Spanish class in college. He sat down the row from me, and wore thin button-down shirts always open at the collar. I learned his name from passing his quiz down, and sooner or later we began to talk to one another instead of just looking in that sideways way.

I would go see his band play on weekends in one smoky bar or another, sitting on a barstool in low-rise jeans, my legs crossed at the ankles and one of his cigarettes burning between my fingers. He read me bad poetry he'd written sometimes before he dropped me off at my house, and I was too infatuated to make fun of him, even to myself. It was only after he told me that we couldn't hang out anymore—something about another girl, his first love or something, he had to figure it out—that I saw his sonnets and cigarettes for what they were.

Later-later, months after, I ran into him at some show or another in a high-ceilinged, low-lit club on Washington Street. I ignored him but he came over, holding his cell phone in front of him like a sign.

"Look, your number's still in here," he said, his green eyes wide like he was beginning a story, like he had something to say, like it mattered.

**Seth** (seth)

This last one, he says that he'll quit smoking someday, just not now. Maybe when he has kids, he says. Or when something tells him it's the right time. Like when they have to remove your lungs, I say to him, and he just smiles, impervious to my brand of sarcasm. Now, he's never without his slim box of cigarettes, packing them in his palm, pulling one out to rest between his fingertips. He even leaves one lit and dangling from his lips when he plays the guitar, and it drives me nuts.

Pancakes are the only thing he knows how to make, and he still has a rotary-dial phone. I know this because when I call the bank to see how low my balance has dipped in the past month, I always have to wait

for the operator. We met in a bar and we don't really have a story yet. But I like the way he drives my car home when I'm too tired, how he knows the names of about half of the stars, how his hair is always a mess.

His name is Seth. He's not only the latest entry, but the only one still around. I could tell you his is the only name I remember, but that would be a lie.

### III. To understand ancient civilizations

My sister and I have been playing Scrabble since we were little. It started out with my father, the master of wordplay and coerced fun. He thought that it would help us build our vocabularies, and wanted us to amass words like an army preparing for war. At that point, I just liked holding the dictionary, the Random House unabridged edition. I thought of it as a list of all the things humans have needed to talk about, so far. I figured there must be a whole other list of words, not yet realized, that just haven't come up.

This time, smew is my word. Doesn't sound like it, but it's real. I brought a dictionary on the train to the city and flipped through it for a while when we were passing near Toledo. It was heavy, but I wasn't bringing much else. Now, the game board is spread out in the center of Daphne's living room, and she is spread out beside it.

I spell it out with the little tiles. S-M-E-W.

"Smew?" Daphne says. "That is not a word."

I pull out my dictionary and flip through the S's. I've marked some of the best and most random entries, the ones I know will drive Daphne crazy.

"Smew," I say. "A certain type of small duck."

Daphne leans back on the couch. She knows I am in one of my moods, as she calls it when I come armed with an arsenal of obscure words that aren't even that good for points. She pulls her fingertips through her hair and I remember all the teasing she used to get for sharing a name with the ditz from Scooby Doo. But there's little defense, as you might guess, to retort, "I'm named after a nymph!"

It followed her into high school, the Scooby jokes, though it wasn't malicious because everyone loved her. They just couldn't resist referencing the cartoon in almost every conversation. She's tall and pretty, but her hair isn't red, it's brown, and though she wears it long it lacks the curvy, cartoon look of her namesake's.

"But you don't wear miniskirts," I told her when she was in ninth grade and I was in sixth. "Or mix purple and green. And there are no fake ghosts constantly following you around."

"It's just frustrating," she said, applying mascara, her eyes wide

open in the mirror. “Daphne was the daughter of a god.”

I fell back on the bed and met her eyes in the mirror. “Yeah, but he was just a B-list god with bad judgment. You might be better off with the miniskirts and the ghosts.”

#### IV. A Short Guide to Matrimonial Mythology

The wedding shower is held at my aunt’s house a few days after Daphne gets to Buffalo, arriving just hours before Henry’s family—the “troops,” I’ve been calling them—start to appear. Aunt Kate’s husband left her three years ago and still she doesn’t have a decent wine bottle opener, or for that matter a coffeepot or a microwave. These were the things he took. I survey the kitchen as Aunt Kate arranges chocolate lace cookies and strawberries on a platter. I open the wine with the corkscrew on my Swiss Army knife and hand the bottle back to my aunt. I tell her that my motto is *be prepared*, like Nancy Drew and Girl Scouts, and she smiles and cuffs me on the ear.

The bridesmaids are as follows: our cousin Kim, tall and dark and here from New Mexico, wearing enough turquoise to be mistaken as a priestess. Daphne’s friend Jenny who sounds, with her low, smoky voice, like a hooker, but doesn’t look like one—she’s subdued with librarian glasses and trim charcoal-colored suits. There’s Lane, Daphne’s best friend from first grade, who is largely pregnant and flashing her own shiny engagement ring. Last, there’s me. My hair has begun to grow out from last year’s Tinkerbell phase, and I can manage tiny, pointy pigtails. No updo for the wedding, I guess.

“Your hair looks sort of freaked out,” Daphne says. “Not bad, just frightened.” She is wearing a huge, hideous carnation corsage on her wrist, baby’s breath fanning out over her little poking bones. I roll my eyes at her, but I let it go. Really, I am just glad no one has made her wear a crown of wrapping paper bows.

If one was to take a straw poll among my mother’s friends here, sitting on the couch and leaning against the kitchen counter eating cake, most would say that Daphne’s long overdue for this wedding shower, this wedding, this marriage itself. Most of my mom’s friends, miraculously, are still married, and have spent the whole time telling their own cute and inspiring stories of marriage’s ups and downs.

My Aunt Kate, she’ll say something different. I know this because my mother digs her fingers into my palm when Aunt Kate gets up to make a toast, still holding her cake-plate.

“Daphne should have gotten married earlier,” she says, holding her fork in the air like a torch. “That way she’d figure out the mistake she’s making when she’s still young enough to start over.”

My mother is standing wide-eyed, her friends sit stiffly on the couch like a set of unnested nesting dolls. Daphne bites her lip. Between us, silence smooth as glass.

“That’s a hell of a toast, Aunt Kate,” I say. Someone shifts, our film reel resumes.

“I’m holding cake, not champagne,” she says, though her wine glass is just within reach. “I’m allowed.”

#### V. To Authenticate Customs and Beliefs

My sister gets married on a Saturday morning with the sun high in the sky and birds actually singing in the trees, as if flown in from some Disney movie. Among the footage that the videographer rejects will be me, motioning to catch his attention, mouthing, “Look, real birds!”

But now I’m wearing pink in my parents’ backyard, standing in the bridesmaid line and looking at my father, whose fingers clutch the back of the chair in front of him. He knows the Daphne story—whether he knew it or not when he named her, I’ve told it to him a hundred times. “How could you do it, Dad?” I always say. “How could you pick a story where she ends up as vegetation?”

I look at my father and then at my sister, watching her fingers for leaves.

#### explain...

Myths, the books say, were created to explain the unexplainable. Within them, in the thick books I used to carry around, everything makes some sort of sense. Fly too close to the sun, and your wings will melt off. Misbehave, and you end up fastened to the sky with stars. Fall in love, and you’d better make sure that it’s worth the consequences, because if it isn’t meant to be, it won’t.

My sister and I, we’re living in the shadows of Daphne and Thisbe. We try to learn from their example, at least in love, which is all we really know about them anyway. Should I have been seduced by my phone number waiting lazy in a cell phone, or given birth to beautiful, one-quarter Vietnamese, faux-Gypsy babies? Or should I choose Seth and eat pancakes for the rest of my life?

There’s another choice, of course, to refuse to become one of those star-crossed couples. The thing about these boys, they always have stories stretching out ahead of them like kite string. Come join my story, they say. I have a place for you. But if you pick the wrong one you’ll lose any chance at your own story—some of these boys, they don’t make room.

If you look up Thisbe in the Short Guide to Classical Mythology, all you get is this: **Thisbe** (thiz’ be) was beloved of **Pyramus**. I saw that and

asked, wasn't she the one who came back and braved the lion? After Pyramus was so stupid as to kill himself upon just seeing her cloak in the lion's mouth, she ran the sword through her own heart, and that's when she lost her story. What's to learn from that? You can love, but be sure your lover knows the boundaries—what stays your story, and what you're willing to give to him.

**no lions, tonight**

When I get home I call Seth and wait for him to answer or not, counting the rings with each flower I untangle from my hair. When he answers, I'm up to six, and his voice is soft with sleep.

"So how was it?" he asks, his words curling around each other.

The whole evening is laid in front of me like snapshots on the table, the so-sweet-it-makes-your-teeth-hurt wedding cake, the line of matching bridesmaids' shoes along the edge of the dance floor, how Henry scooped my sister up in his arms when they were ready to go. Seth yawns into the phone. I think about the pancakes we will have in the morning, if not tomorrow than some other.

"Well," I say, "the good news is, she didn't turn into a tree."

## C. KUBASTA

### Reliquary

*Whatever a work of art consists of, it runs to the finale which makes for its form  
and denies resurrection.* —Brodsky

as in a vessel for bones  
a box that holds bones  
a container for the remnants of notable persons, primarily bones, bits of hair,  
cloth

a vessel for the remains or artifacts of saints  
bones awaiting resurrection  
pieces of artifacts: the one true cross, torn edges of a robe, cloth stained with  
blood, sweat

(more commonly, in a locket, a bit of hair, tied with pretty ribbon)

blessed bits of bodies  
blessed bodies

a city of bones

\*

— — — — ?

— — — — ,

— — — — , — — — — !

\*

son as in sun

\*

(you) / (called) (named) / (me)

(tea) / (give) (urgency)

(give) (urgency) / (poet) / (jam) (preserves) (stewed fruit)

(Natalie sees a man with a donkey cart, the word \_\_\_\_ carrying with it the  
promise of a whip)

(Rebecca says we have no word for the fruit. Jam is not right. Its texture is  
both thick & thin. You eat it plain, with a spoon, not spread over anything.)

(the self-reflexive pronouns)

(the simplest of translations: poet. Brodsky says: "For some odd reason, the  
expression 'death of a poet' always sounds somewhat more concrete than 'life

of a poet'. Perhaps this is because both 'life' and 'poet', as words, are almost synonymous in the positive vagueness. Whereas 'death'—even as a word—is about as definite as a poet's own production, i.e., a poem, the main feature of which is its last line."

\*

*I dwindle—go unnoticed now.*

*But in affectionate books, in children's games*

*I will rise from the dead to say: the sun.*<sup>5</sup>

\*

By naming create

*bone-yard* (Mayakovsky calls/names his god. The god

demands obeisance, service, solicity,  
the cart-man with the whip.)

Kenning becomes keening, begging the grief from simple nouns.

to name, to call up, the cleaving  
to carry the bits of whatever it was with you

\*

A friend kept two bones: 3rd joint of the phalanges, partial metatarsal, in an empty clove cigarette box in her glove compartment

(her grandmother's. She'd combed the box of ash for these two bits.)

part of a finger, part of a hand

\*

all the names I invent are unfair, a travelogue, an American set of eyes, a set of kennings that reads as a list of clichés

I want to make the window grillwork into skeletal fingers (I am trying too hard)

echoes abound

*if there is such a thing as a language of truth...*<sup>6</sup>

light-cage (but the others say this is too pretty, to elegiac)

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<sup>5</sup> Mandelstam

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin

\*

Brodsky again: "As a theme, death is a good litmus test for a poet's ethics. The 'in memoriam' genre is frequently used to exercise self-pity of for meta-physical trips that denote the subconscious superiority of survivor over victim, of...the alive over...the dead."

*I don't understand these big words,*

*poet,  
billiard.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Akhmatova

ALAN LINDSAY

**Like a Line**

Do like old poems pretend like there's lines  
like in the world you know like lines  
in the sky like words you could read  
I mean words right in front of your eyes like laws  
we could line up behind like a line  
some asshole feeds you like food like a line  
in the road that tells you like what you should know  
like where you can go like a line  
in the sand like a line that you toe like a line  
at the end of the page that you sign  
like a broken up regular line

Do like old poems  
set it down in a line so you know  
what it is so you know  
so it's set  
like a line that you draw  
like a box like a box  
with nothing inside like a box  
with nothing but nothing  
inside

FRANCISCO ARAGÓN

Views from a Speeding Train

.....  
...In a dream, he is  
a dragonfly.  
What does this

*mean?* It means  
that he  
sees the dragonfly

as a gaze  
—so many colours  
so many shapes

in which, for us,  
the primal  
nature is, in fact,

in the gaze—Good  
heavens: it is  
the dragonfly

not very different  
from the one  
terrorizing

the *wolf man*.

.....  
...In fact, it is when  
he is a dragonfly he  
understands the roots

of his identity—the  
dragonfly who paints  
himself with his

own colours—it is  
because of this that  
in the last resort, he *is*

Japanese

.....

...But this does not mean  
when dreaming  
he is captivated by

the dragonfly—he is  
a captive one, yes  
but captured by nothing

for, in the dream, he is  
a dragonfly  
for no one. It is when

he is awake he is  
Japanese for others  
and caught in their

dragonfly net

.....

*after Lacan*

EVAN KUHLMAN PETEE

**When Accordions Mattered**

Whenever my sister Jelly and I were in the living room at the same time, our mother took it as a divine sign that she should be telling us a story about the Old Country. Mama wasn't really from the Old Country, but she knew that "back in the Old Country" was a much better lead in to a story than "back in Sharon, Pennsylvania," which is where she really came from.

"Back in The Old Country," Mama would start, and Jelly and I would begin our escapes. I might flip open one of Mama's fashion magazines and look hard at the words, wondering what it would be like to be on the other side of the words, the poorly lit side, looking back out at the world. I tried to place myself on the shadow side of the sentences, and imagine how words like "percolate" and "frogman" would look written backwards. I'd do this until my brain ached, until the E's, C's and S's started flipping rightwards. My sister's evasive actions mostly involved tying and retying her sneakers (first by bunny ears, then the loop and twirl method).

"Back in the Old Country," said Mama, this one time, "around 1910 or so, we had this terrible shortage of air. Just terrible. These... these vortexes, more like upside-down tornadoes, would appear when weather conditions were just right, and suck the air right out of our little town." Jelly stopped her tying and ran to the picture window, almost tripping over her shoelaces, and looked fearfully up at the sky. "Not to worry, darling daughter," said Mama, "upside-down tornadoes are restricted to the Old Country. Just like those bees the size of watermelons I told you about, which never make it further north than Amarillo, Texas."

I guess my sister felt comforted, as she sat down and started up again with the laces. Mama's stories often lead to lingering disturbances in me and my sister's sense of the world, in that they added things to life, such as Super Bees, the heroic monkeys of Madagascar, the Exploding Fingers Plague of 1952, and other items that probably ought not to be there. While we were certain that about ninety-five percent of what Mama said were fabrications by a woman a little lonely for love from a man and a little too hopped up on coffee, what about that other five percent? Could life be even a little bit stranger and magical than we thought it was, like our mother claimed?

"So you had all of these air-hungry people," continued Mama, "being rushed to the hospital by donkey ambulances."

"Donkey ambulances?" asked Jelly, who had been studying her fingernails. "Wouldn't they be really slow?"

"The donkeys of Romania are the fastest land mammals in the world," said Mama, "easily reaching speeds of two hundred and thirty miles per hour. Hollywood just shows us lazy donkeys, which is a stereotype.

"Anyway," Mama mercilessly went on, "to make matters worse,

Romania General Hospital was a terribly poor hospital—they didn't have luxury items like oxygen tanks or breathing machines. So when those vortex victims had trouble breathing they had to find inventive ways to help them out, to get some oxygen into their frail lungs. First they tried bellows...

"Like you use to spark a fire?" I asked, deciding to be a sidekick to Mama, and thus earning an extra strawberry or two on the night's promised shortcake.

"Exactly right, Clyde," said Mama. "The only problem was that the nurses' arms would get so tired from pumping the bellows—in and out, in and out all day—that they'd almost fall off, even did fall off on several occasions, but fortunately they were at a hospital so their arms could be easily reattached. But it was a sad sight, I tell you, seeing those poor vortex patients with their desperate mouths wrapped around the bellows, turning blue, while waiting for their nurse to get her arms sewn back on."

"You were there, Mama, you saw all that? But you weren't even born until the fifties," Jelly said, knowing that a factual inquiry would sometimes put the brakes on Mama's runaway stories.

"Did we not just last week have that discussion about past lives?" asked Mama. "Didn't we?"

"Yes, Mama," Jelly said. 'Past lives' was how Mama accounted for many of the inconsistencies in her stories, especially since me and my sister were even more skeptical of her previous explanation that she was one of a handful of individuals who had access to universal and timeless knowledge.

"So one day," Mama went on, "that famous accordionist, Wally... Wallace Campbell was his name, was walking through the hospital, playing his accordion, feeling bad about all of the armless nurses and sick patients, when he had an idea with a capital I. He ran outside, ripped a hollow branch from a bamboo tree, ran back inside, stuck one end of the bamboo in a patient's mouth and the other end in the windbag portion of the accordion, that stretchy ruffled part, and started to dance and play, pumping melodic accordion air into the man's lungs, and, within minutes, rosy life and healthy breathing returned to that man, who had been terribly stricken by the vortex. By the next day he was able to leave the hospital and lead a perfectly normal life.

"And that first patient's name, you ask?" Mama blabbered on, "Tom Selleck, Sr. That's right. Had he not gotten better and gone on to father Tom Selleck, Jr., there would have been no "Magnum P.I.", none of those hilarious movies about bachelors raising a baby. And the world would be that much more awful."

Jelly and I smiled at each other, believing that the story was over. We should have known better.

"Soon," said our mother, "all of the master accordionists of

Romania, one hundred and twenty-seven in all, were summoned to the hospital, and thousands of Romanian men, women and children quickly and completely recovered from the upside-down tornado devastations, all thanks to accordions. Not surprisingly, Wallace Campbell was awarded the Nobel Prize in Music, and was elected president of Romania, a position he held until 1977, when he was called to that Great Dance Hall in the Sky.”

“Heaven,” I said confidently.

“No, no,” said Mama. “The Great Dance Hall in the Sky is a dance club in London, England. Wallace took ownership of it. That’s where I waltzed with Prince Charles, that night he got fresh with me.”

Mama paused to gather her thoughts, and my sister and I gave each other worried looks.

“Of course,” Mama continued, “like with any medicine, there were a few side effects. Some of the patients tried to get up and polka before their bodies were ready, and had to be sedated. Others became accordion-dependent. You’d see those poor fools hanging around the many accordion shops that dotted the land, peering in the windows to get a glance at the newest and shiniest accordions on display, their tongues hanging out like thirsty mongrels. The kind shopkeepers, for a small fee, would sometimes let these accordion addicts run their fingers along the keys and windbag, which seemed to give them a homecoming-like happiness.

“The Romanian Academy of Accordion Science even did a study,” said Mama. “It seems that those vortex patients that were healed due to accordion therapy had a tendency to seek out and marry accordionists. Whereas only 44.3 percent of regular people will marry an accordion player, for those vortex patients it was 96.7 percent. Since there were only a handful of female accordionists in the Old Country at the time (the situation has since improved, thank God, due to the Equal Rights for Accordion Players International Treaty of 1982), the male vortex patients had to search the world far and wide for accordion-playing sweethearts. That is how your grandfather Parker met your grandmother Colette. She was a professional accordionist for the Vienna Polka Orchestra, in Italy.”

“Vienna is in Italy?” Jelly asked.

“It used to be,” said Mama, “before 1968, that year of accelerated continental drift.”

“I thought grandma was a spy and grandpa was an astronaut,” I said, risking losing the bonus strawberries.

“That came much later,” Mama said.

“Do they still use accordion players in Romanian hospitals?” Jelly asked.

“Only for social reasons,” Mama replied. “By 1917 the Romanian hospitals had acquired oxygen tanks. But the accordionists were still needed

in the Vortex Wards until after World War I. You see, the Romanian Air Force...”

“There was a Romanian Air Force in the war?” interrupted Jelly. “World War I? We didn’t learn *that* in history class.”

“Another little known historical fact,” said Mama. “Anyway, the Romanian Air Force really didn’t have any missiles or bombs or anything, it was a very poor country until they started exporting... Romaine lettuce, so they’d have their pilots drop those full oxygen tanks on the enemy, which they confiscated from their hospitals, knowing that the accordionists would save the vortex patients. The famous Robert Goulet Art Museum in Paris, France was completely destroyed by oxygen tanks dropped from the sky. This led... this led to the first use of the phrase ‘air raid’.”

Mama smiled at herself, stood up, grabbed her feather duster, and began searching for cobwebs. My sister and I scattered, fearing that our mother might have another story inside her that was rattling its chains and about to break loose.

## TOM O'CONNOR

### Touched

"Follow those fire trucks. I think your house is burning down"  
he tells me—Tom Waits lyrics—on our walk home from practice.

Seth parrots the sirens, running to touch his chin on every  
mailbox in view. Greetings. And still, whenever his mom

banishes him to the backyard, she finds him lapping up puddles.  
If he escapes, our neighborhood watch responds.

Even when nothing's doing, neighbors curse him  
at their patio parties and dinner tables, the drug store.

Business men raise dogs to scare him far. So Seth jerks off  
with their wives in mind to settle the score, shows with his tongue

how to flutter every mom around. Our soccer team begs  
for him on defense: "elbow, high-kick, head-butt, trip."

In games, he fears no punch. On the field,  
our coaches watch only him. His mom prays

he'll survive the day. Meanwhile, the street lights  
distress: *be home before dark*. Sirens flare ahead.

Safe by my side, he cheers on the leaping flames.  
"You're like me" Seth tells me, grinning at the fire.

## Daughter of Horror

Yes, *the horror! The horror!*—it's true no more.  
Sons & daughters, play along. There's nothing here

to shock you. Nothing more. You say: *sometimes,*  
*I like to play games with people. I mean, if*

*you're dumb enough to hear what ya want,*  
*ya deserve what's coming, right?* You repeat one

mantra: *nothing more or less*, a mirage who looks  
away. It's not shame, if that's what you think. *The key*

*is to look available but stay unattainable.* It's  
40s Romance Noir: we spectators stay in our seats,

clutching the cliff's edge, that age-old, crap-tastic set  
on that big, empty screen. We're left like our hero,

dangling in the desert. There's no murderous hand  
anymore. You won't be content till

we can't fall with you, and the cliff's worn away,  
till the screen too comes down—all but the shadow-

play itself. *Nothing more.* So little darkness.  
There's no room for evil, no Hell. You daughters

& sons just turn away, who only play at emptiness.  
Even when you lose, you know you've won.

# JAMES MATTHEW WILSON

## Appropriations from China

### *I: An Interlude*

Beside the deep ink of a river,  
By mud slicked grass and a lone willow's  
Tuft of luxuriant, falling gray hair,  
A girl of high birth sits. The first glow

Of life still in her face, as light  
Beams through the stained glass of a door  
Onto the shrouded snow at night.  
A secret innocence, like powder,

Dappling the pale curve of her cheek.  
And she (as though she senses it,  
Yet never could find words to speak  
Of naïve kisses or the spit

And blood one left her for her tears),  
She lifts pale fingers to her face  
To brush away a few wind-fanned hairs,  
All but inured to age, time or place.

Not long ago, she was a whore.  
And now she is an indigent's wife.  
He doesn't sleep at home anymore.  
Her bed is cold like the blade of a knife.

### *II: The Wild Geese*

A stolen horse will never pasture well  
And flocks of white-downed birds prefer to keep  
A strict path, looped from north to south, avoiding  
The frozen miles beyond. We dwell in terrain  
Of habit, and become the necessary  
Colonists of routine.

How many croppies  
Fled execution, choosing exile instead,  
And serving in Napoleon's ranks?

One stood,  
Inured, dreaming upon the Russian steppes  
Stretched frozen to the heart of Moscow. Snow

Spiraled about, blurred the earth and sky.  
He felt lice creep beneath his collar and  
Against his neck, and felt himself half-driven  
Under a standard red and blue, and driven  
Forward without hope of return. Each round  
He fires, every soldier left sleeping in  
His blood, goes paid but unrewarded. It  
Has been ten years since he last saw Wexford,  
But can imagine his graying head – still, severed –  
Among those who died there, across the sea.

*III: Political Translations*

*Auden in China*

In January Nineteen-Thirty-Eight,  
He sailed for China, contracted to record  
The broken seams of tank treads in the mud,  
Rough serrated peaks and the half-built wall.  
Its tumbling blocks and snake-wind toward the sea  
Reminded him of how a land endures  
The free-willed drift of history, and how  
The remnant of past enemies, the floods  
That rise, consume, recede, remain like scars,  
Or stain to mossy lime a russet stone.

What had been practical now rests athwart  
A landscape burned beneath a rising sun:  
“They carry terror with them like a purse . . .  
And cling and huddle in the new disaster.”

He watched the refugees flee in a tongue  
As meaningless to him as was that wall  
To the invading Japanese; and toured  
Through emptied villages. He squinted at  
The lights of decorous diplomacy,  
Where jazz collided with the lanterned dark,  
And bobbed hair squared the faces of rich women.  
Both they and he were “wandering lost upon  
The mountains of our choice . . .” Both they and he  
Must “live in freedom by necessity,  
A mountain people dwelling among mountains.”

But when his tripper’s task was done, and pens  
Packed in a line like ammunition, he  
Alone would turn to meet the landless freedom,

Where not a precipice survives beyond  
The moment's surge of foam and wave against  
A steal bow: China and Europe sunk in war,  
He stared into the "changed and shaken" sea,  
That lonesome interlude of liberty.

\*\*\*

*Bei Dao in Ypsilanti*

The slopped white paint on rising cinder block  
Walls and a Tourettes-tick of fluorescent lights  
Gave to the sparse-filled lecture hall an air  
Of institutional decay. It seemed  
One only sidled down its crooked aisles  
To hear a guard's stout warning and begin  
Years of imprisonment with neither trial  
Nor hope that even a single word, one's name,  
Might penetrate the sweating bricks: "The honest  
Man bears his honor like an epitaph."

A scene from backroom samizdat: Bei Dao's  
Twanging off staccato syllables.

I waited, but half-curious, for the plump  
American professor to step forward  
And pummel to English all those wiry chords:  
"If the sea should break the sea wall, let  
Its brackish water fill my heart, if the  
Land rise up from the sea again, we'll choose  
Again to live upon the heights . . . that ancient  
Ideogram, the future's eye, gazing back."

Such words had been forged in a starving throat.  
I saw that throat. How thin and dark it seemed  
Near faded orange curtain, chipped lecturn.  
I thought how strange that this should be a place  
for waiting out an exile.

Freed from fear,  
And hosteled near the sprawled edge of Detroit,  
Where glaciers several thousand years before  
Had leveled out the mountains and the sea,  
He spent his days as one more teacher in  
An edifice of mass education:  
No lonesome voice would suffer for its words,  
Or burn a hole in the gray walls of night.

\*\*\*  
*S.G. in Sligo*  
(refrains from *Gu Cheng*)

I met his darkened eyes long after they  
Had given up their search for light. Behind  
Thin round lenses he peered out at me,  
Holding a full black pint close to his chest,  
The thump of bodhran and a keening girl  
About us in the thick packed pub. *The ship*  
*You've boarded is doomed to go under sea.*

For years he had taught English at the school  
Where I now studied. I had heard of him.  
Belated victim of the Cold War, he  
Was fired, they said, because he was teaching Marx,  
Russian and Chinese politics, when they'd  
Hired him to lecture on Irish poetry.  
*Every day you went the way you should*  
*Go, toward the sea you'd never seen.*

No work,

No family, no citizenship, cast out  
From the rhetorical world of academe,  
He thought to send his body where his mind  
Imagined it had been for years: to China.  
He mastered Cantonese and lived among  
Survivors of the Cultural Revolution.  
He saw how children in the most remote  
Villages were as healthy and well fed  
As those in Beijing. Even birth defects  
Were not ignored. And yet, he also saw  
A State long tired of communism in  
Anything but words.

He wandered once again,  
Now teaching Chinese literature wherever  
A chance job came. When he thought of China,  
He now thought of a land that hope had fled  
And set itself *to wander among the peaks,*  
*Dreaming another continent, another*  
*world.* Her great mass now left with no desire  
But for American dollars and factories,  
And to leave children in their villages,  
Faces cleft with harelips, fingers veined  
And stretching toward the smoke and steel of Beijing.

## JENNY BOULLY

### Slip

The letter will arrive soon to change things: the future suddenly no longer involving those trees or that city or children. Maybe I was meant to work with my hands after all—ample at erasing the dust collecting, unclogging plumbing, erecting whatever falls. There are many things that will keep on simply for the doing. The bathtub will continue draining too slowly; the toilet seat will forever need replacing, the check will arrive when it arrives. All these things we will have to learn to live with: your father sad for your leaving, my family never quite fitting in. Leave me then the kitchen sink, its spigot too low, the radiators cold, the bed sheets two sizes too small. I know I have you. I have you like a fragile egg blooming in boiling waters.

**It's about 9:20, midmorning.**

Were you, like me, before undressing, building shelter  
from the storm? The cabinets with their lack  
of two of everything cannot overcome

the racket of lovebirds. It became so easy to make up  
the dream: there were widows with umbrella  
hearts. It's about 9:20, midmorning, already too late

for the plan we've made the night before. And the teaspoons dreary,  
and you next to me, your sleep a snake skin sloughing.  
(But that coat, that pretty pretty coat.) So what if we've missed

the train, the taxi, the last boat? We can instead have the intended  
equivocation being held here briefly. This poem will never happen  
how I imagined: there can be no blue landscape, no birdsong interrupting.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Francisco Aragón** is the author of the bilingual poetry collection *Puerta del Sol* (Bilingual Press, 2004). Recent poems and translations have appeared in *Chain*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Heliotrope*, *Electronic Poetry Review* ([www.poetry.org](http://www.poetry.org)), and *Terra Incognita*. The founding editor and publisher of Momotombo Press, he is currently a Fellow at the Institute for Latino Studies at Notre Dame, where he coordinates the Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize.

**Shannon Berry** grew up in Lakeland, Florida and is currently an MFA candidate in poetry at the University of Notre Dame.

**Jenny Bouilly's** book *The Body* was published by Slope Editions in 2002. Her work has been anthologized in *The Best American Poetry 2002*, *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*, and in *The Next American Essay*. She graduated from the MFA program in poetry at Notre Dame in 2002 and is now a Ph.D. student in English at CUNY-Graduate Center.

**S. D. Dillon** will receive an MFA from Notre Dame in 2004. He was born in Detroit and educated at Princeton and Oxford.

**Joe Francis Doerr** (MFA 1998; MA 2000; Ph.D. 2003) published his first collection of poetry, *Order of the Ordinary*, in October 2003 with Salt Publications, Cambridge, UK. He lives in Austin, TX, where he is writing a collection of short stories. Will work for soul food.

**Shannon Doyne's** fiction and poetry have appeared recently in *Pleiades* and *The Mississippi Review*, where she was a finalist for the Mississippi Prize. Though she now works as an editor, she continues to teach a class each morning at Stivers School for the Arts in Dayton, Ohio. She and her students published the third issue of *Our Time Is Now* ([www.ourtimeisnow.org](http://www.ourtimeisnow.org)).

**Kevin Ducey** is a second-year MFA student at the University of Notre Dame. His book *Rhinoceros* will be available from Copper Canyon Press in September of 2004.

**Chris Gerben** is an adjunct professor of composition and rhetoric, which means he's good with grammar yet curiously underpaid. Though he's spent much of the last year listening to Stevie Wonder's "He's Misstra Know-It-All," Chris is once again facing imminent unemployment with reckless abandon. He can't stress enough, however, that you shouldn't feel sorry for him and that Red Delicious apples are a pox that plagues us all. Indeed, a good Braeburn or McIntosh is really what you're looking for.

**Amy Wray Irish**, MFA 1998, has been published in *Ariel*, *100 Words*, *River King Poetry Supplement*, *Dánta*, and *Wazeejournal.org*. Her recognitions include 1st place in Chicago's Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Contest. Amy



and her husband live in Colorado, where they are members of the Denver Lighthouse writers' community; they are expecting their first child in 2004.

**Campbell Irving** is originally from Douglas, Georgia. He earned both a BA and an MFA from the University of Notre Dame.

**Kelly Kerney**, an MFA candidate at Notre Dame, is the Managing Editor of *the Notre Dame Review* and the first recipient of the Nicholas Sparks Fellowship. She graduated in 2002 from Bowdoin College, where she received five departmental awards.

**C. Kubasta** lives in Wisconsin with her partner and her cat. Her work has appeared most recently in *So To Speak* and *Stand*.

**Alan Lindsay** is a graduate of the Notre Dame Creative Writing Program. His novel, *A.*, was recently published by Red Hen Press.

**Corey Madsen** received his BA from the University of Michigan, where he was the recipient of four Avery Hopwood Awards. He will receive his MFA in fiction from the University of Notre Dame in 2004.

**Jessica Maich** is a 1997 graduate of the Creative Writing Program. Her chapbook, *The West End*, was published by Green Bean Press. She is currently employed as an adjunct at Saint Mary's College and the University of Notre Dame, and lives in the South Bend area with her family.

**Jayne Marek** has degrees in literature and is now working on her MFA. She teaches courses in literature, writing, film, and women's studies and writes poems, plays, and fiction. Always in search of the perfect gazpacho recipe.

**David Alyn Mayer**, M.F.A. 2001, watches *The O.C.* His accomplishments include two Stan & Tom Wick Poetry Awards, a Bucknell University Younger Poets Fellowship, and a B.A. in English with a Writing minor from Kent State University. His work has appeared in *The North American Review* and *The Spoon River Poetry Review*. He understands why Seth chose Summer, but he will never forget Anna. David works as a writer in Cleveland, OH.

**Janet McNally**, an MFA candidate at Notre Dame, is from Buffalo, New York. She has a thing for myths and fairy tales, and of late can't seem to tell a story in a straight line.

**Tom O'Connor** received an MFA in poetry from Notre Dame in 1999. He recently finished a Ph.D at Binghamton University in literary and media studies. His poems have appeared or will appear in *Dánta*, *No Exit*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Soul Fountain*, and *Skidrow Penthouse*.



**Evan Kuhlman Petee** has been published far and wide, but also close by and narrow. In 1993 he abandoned a successful journalism career to join the glamour world that is fiction writing. To date he has earned \$140 as a fiction writer, which he blew on sweets and inkjet cartridges. He has had stories published in *Salt Hill*, *The Madison Review*, *Third Coast*, *Vincent Brother's Review*, *Zuzu's Petals*, and other journals. He is working on a novel which he hopes to sell for more than \$140. He grew up west of Cleveland, Ohio and prefers Ohio pollution to Indiana pollution any day.

**Sara Swanson** earned her BA from the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay. She received the Associated Writing Programs Intro Journals Award in 2003 and is the Nicholas Sparks writer-in-residence for 2003-2004. Her critical work appeared in *The Arkansas Review* and her prose has been published, or is forthcoming, in *Wisconsin Academy Review*, *Tampa Review*, and *Connecticut Review*.

**James Matthew Wilson** has published poems, translations and essays in *The Edge City Review*, *Boston Review*, *Slope*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Religion & Literature*, and *Dánta*.



## Recent and Future Publications by Notre Dame Students, Alumni, and Faculty

Francisco Aragón, *Puerta del Sol*. Poems. (Bilingual Press, forthcoming 2004).

Jenny Bouilly, *The Body*. Poems. (Slope Editions, 2002).

Jacque Vaught Brogan, *Damage*. Poems. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

Joe Francis Doerr, *Order of the Ordinary*. Poems. (Salt Publications, 2003).

Kevin Ducey, *Rhinoceros*. Poems. (Copper Canyon Press, forthcoming 2004).

Kevin Hart, *Flame Tree: Selected Poems*. (Bloodaxe Books, 2003).

Alan Lindsay, *A*. Fiction. (Red Hen Press, 2004).

John Matthias, *Working Progress, Working Title: Automystifical Plaice*.  
Poems. (Salt Publications, 2002).

--, Trans., with Lars Hakan-Svensson. *Three-Toed Gull: Selected Poems*. By  
Jesper Svenbro. (Northwestern University Press, 2003).

--, *New and Selected Poems: 1963-2003*. (Salt Publications, forthcoming 2004).

Orlando Ricardo Menes, ed. *Renaming Ecstasy: Latino Writings on the Sacred*.  
(Bilingual Press, 2003).

Steve Tomasula, *Vas: An Opera in Flatland*. Fiction. Illustrations by Stephen  
Farrell. (Barrytown/Station Hill Press, 2003).

--, *In & Oz*. Fiction. (Nightshade Book, 2003).