



VOICES *from the* ATTIC

JAN BEATTY | SERIES EDITOR

VOLUME XV

VOICES FROM THE ATTIC
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Series Editor: Jan Beatty



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for Patricia Dohler

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Introduction

Voices from the Attic, Volume XV, is the best work from the Madwomen in the Attic Writing Workshops in poetry and fiction at Carlow University in 2008 and 2009, taught by myself, Evelyn Pierce, Ellen McGrath Smith, and Stacey Waite. The writers in this collection represent a cross-section of talented women, ages 20-95, who have gathered to study writing in a lively, supportive atmosphere. The backgrounds of these writers are varied: from labor lawyers to Gestalt therapists to social workers; undergraduate students to women who grew up before the advent of electricity; arts advocates, web developers, graduates of Ringling Brother's Barnum and Bailey clown college. Our diversity is our strength, and we revel in it.

If you were to find yourself walking past a Madwomen class in progress, and if you waited a bit, you would most likely hear some raucous laughter. We take our work and the study of writing very seriously—and ourselves less so. If you stayed a bit longer, you would notice pastries, coffee, joy, disagreements, celebrations, sadness, extended conversations. All of it shows up, and often in one class period. The beauty of the Madwomen is just that—their willingness to be real, to bring themselves fully to the classroom and their work, to the task at hand.

This year, we are celebrating more Madwomen achievements. Cay Hamilton, our senior member at age 95, published her chapbook, *The Allure of the Blacksmith Shop*. Marilyn P. Donnelly, the maddest of the Madwomen, who has been a member from the inception of the workshops, published her chapbook, *Benediction of Love*. Liane Ellison Norman's

new book, *Keep* (with art by Ruey Brodine Morelli), was published by Smoke and Mirrors Press in 2008. *Blackberry Cobbler Song*, a new book by Sheila Carter-Jones, was published in 2008 by Watermark Press. Notable awards include the Thomas Merton Poetry of the Sacred Award (first prize, \$500), which was won by Madwoman Gayle Reed Carroll for her poem, “Dementia.” New Madwoman Madeleine Barnes’ poem, “An Inventor’s Finest Plan,” was the teen-contest-winning poem in the 2009 Borders Open Door Poetry Contest judged by Billy Collins. Leone P. Paradise also published a chapbook this year, entitled *The Healing Power of Trees*. On a sad note, our dear friend and treasured Madwoman Jo Ann F. Pratt died in 2008. Her chapbook, *Leaf Writings*, was published shortly after her death. We will miss her wicked sense of humor and her fine, fine poems.

Guest writers who visited the Madwomen this year include poets Alicia Ostriker, Nancy Krygowski, and Ruth L. Schwartz. Many of the Madwomen submitted their chapbook manuscripts for publication this year, and many others continue to send out full-length fiction and poetry manuscripts. Their work appears in national journals such as *Slipstream*, *Pearl*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *5AM*, *Poet Lore*, and *The Comstock Review*. The selections in this anthology speak to the courage, resilience, humor, and vitality of these thoroughly mad Madwomen—their singular devotions, outrageous desires, wild ambitions—their fever for living that inspires.

—Jan Beatty

Ars Poetica

She said: When leaves turn yellow in the high mountains, we sit in the woods for the elk. You go where they are and sit. You don't chase them or kill them when they are in rut, you don't hunt them at all or you risk spoiling the meat. And you shoot once, into the body. Bear hunting is different, since you're not after the meat. But you must not *think* Bear. Or Bear will know and you will become the hunted.

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Moth

for Davida

after Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon

I've feared the wedge-shaped head
and mottled thorax, vaguely prehistoric,
the bulging eyes
wings papery-frenetic, the dive
into the light that disturbs
again and again, we walk away.

I cannot answer when we shun
the strange, and when we embrace
it, a small body angled to
the moon. I touch a brittle wing,
gold dust surprising, delicate legs,
proboscis for drinking nectar, curled,
in the folds of the blind
I raise and let in the light.

Weaning

for Ella

Almost a month now,
I hoped you'd forgotten.
Then you caught me
bare-breasted, getting dressed
in the full-length mirror
like a cheating lover.
You squeezed your fist open and closed,
the sign for milk—I've been the cow—
then tapped your wrist to say "time."

For twenty-one months I fed you,
hard to believe—my B cup
little engines swelling overnight.
Your jaws were strong, latch not so good,
but it didn't matter: I'd spray in the shower
like a lawn sprinkler, once on the bedroom wall
an opalescent arc. You flourished.
Eyes shark-like at first, as though
you didn't see me, or looked right through me,
went straight to what you needed, or you *were* me.
Then you grew more human: twirling my hair,
slapping my chest with your little
monkey palm, popping off to look at me, actually
smacking your lips, then burying
yourself back. You loved us especially
before bed, eyes rolled back
in your head. You bit only
when you were falling asleep,
and I started to pull free; you'd take back
what you felt yourself losing.

Ivy

for Davida

after Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon

I've feared the shiny evergreen
its tenacity
its serried branches climbing
grasping the walls
glutting the windows
choking the doors
of the small abandoned house on the corner.

I cannot answer that I see in each leaf
the face of a wolf
rapacious in adaptation
ruthless in survival
as I walk past to
bring my daughter home from school—
that I know in its tangled mass
robins and wrens make nests
caterpillars rest through the winter.

February Dusk

Steely night

Stratus sky

A jet trail

like a diaphanous black heron

glides

stately

across the scabrous skull of moon

Stuck in traffic we watch

from the Homestead High Level Bridge

Safekeeping

I was small and hid in drawers.

Linen drawers, underwear drawers, drawers of short, slightly rotund old men, vegetable crisper drawers that conveniently slide in and out of your fridge for easy, efficient cleaning. Drawers that hold good silver, old stained napkins, decks of cards that don't quite make 52 and pictures of distant cousins. Junk drawers: paper clips, plastic and metal, toothpicks, rubber bands, pieces of scotch tape that have lost their stick, half-yawns, floundering hopes, erasers.

The Monthlies

Every month, the middle happens.
Monday opens with hesitation, but by Tuesday
it's a free for all: Space-Time loses its structure
and we are left to the whim of blurred monotony.

This is how it happens, the middle, this is how it tastes:
Rain comes down like it's lit,
like it's trying to soak a pan,
grease and grit,
burnt and common.

The grocery store closes early for inventory.
My pen scratches dull lines,
lives. There's ink, but my fingers
seem to press it away. I'm too hard
on the girl at the cash register.
She forgets that fruit bruises so easily.
I want her to remember.
It's always a girl.

My thoughts play me silent,
the days have at me.
This is what comes of routine:
the mollification of dreams within it.
We dress up the week with different dinners
and slapdash Time—blanket strangeness, sameness—
affixes itself even still.

In the basin where I soak my monthly linens,
my blood is taken by the water. The sediment
dispenses itself and lays, just lays at the bottom—

soil and soiled—and how
can I forgive it.

This can't be good for the environment.
All the clean, cold water I use to soak.
All the blood I cannot hold,
hold in.
Everything I let go.
All that I shed.

Belfast, 1941

I did not understand the word *bomb* until it fell like a mysterious seed who shoots itself out into the summer air, assault of red-orange and infinite petals that fall and fall. *Bomb* like something beautiful, the name of a firstborn, coal in the engine of a great ship sailing out into the flat map, a vaccine, a rare form of crystal, *bomb* like a loose-leaf page blown from a notebook, a coin below the tongue for admission to the next life, a river with a basket and a baby prince floating on the backs of reeds, wailing. *Bomb* like the finches warming claws on an electrical line, a pipeline fissure that floods the tallest building from bottom to top in a flash, all gone, like that. *Bomb*. My mother's apron, or a quilt, something comfortable to hold in the worst sleep, a gypsy house ringing with rubies and wind chimes tilted by a soft wind. A season's end, *bomb*. A new month, a species, an equator named and crossed, a continent shifting. *Bomb* like my hair twisted back into clips, jewels shining, old treasure in the webs of a shipyard. I did not understand why we covered the windows, why everyone shielded my eyes with the saucers of their palms, rocked me close, told me prayers in broken English, told me I was witness to a great change, a history spooled into my drawings, open fire, percussion of large-scale collapse. *Bomb*, a language vanishing into its people, a password I admired, held gently to the light. Then it dropped.

The Kite

When the tendons of wind had thickened
and the coastline dimmed and my hands
themselves hit a chord of the immortal,
the kite cut its own line, sailed

like a flashbulb into the palm-capped
seascape, hurdling its streamers
and newsprint flanks fast
as a compass face shattered

under pressure and vanished.

I followed bits of twine
through necklaces of sea glass,
bottle caps and shark teeth

meandering the shore's length,
searching out flares of frayed thread and
splinters of its frame. I spotted
the tail's knot in the anemone,

copper sun roped with kelp
and eyelet fossils. The lucky ones
know when to break for it,
when all four corners

are upheld by the tide, by everything
in sight, that when they explode
into a backward dive, the one
holding tightest will search out

their pieces. Watching gulls
plummet, I understood its reasoning,
the hem of coastline stretched
and flaming in the bright chords

of wind and physics,
the ghost ships peaceful
on the channel's boulders,
the ornaments of past lives

glinting in a ream of sail.
These are the shapes
of prayers: a starfish
cracked by a bruise of

waves, the needlework
of crab legs in my open
hand. The lucky ones
know how to spot it.

Recalling the arc of the
line and its tremor, poised
in the cables of universe
twisting, the spool running out,

how I chose to let it snap,
I remembered its fall, the parachute
of sky, rope cutting wind,
shaking everything below.

When something
dies, its counterparts dance.

Returning to Jane

If I loved you less, I could talk about it more.

Jane Austen, *Emma*

Returning to Jane again, my spine curled
below the headboard, returning to my dog-

eared world, where leaning into apple trees
I took my rest in the Bennett family, cursed

Willoughby, shushed Emma busybody, grieved
spinstress Ann, I was persuaded to regret

Captain Wentworth, to love Darcy, even
Mr. Collins—idiot of clergy, by Catherine

Morland no less, a country girl gone Goth
in Bath. Yes, returning once more, a tattered

bookmark pressed between tea stains, a smudge
of apple core holds my long-forgotten page,

propped among blankets, under a sheet, my
husband's back rises to meet Jane resting

on my knees, the flashlight's beam returning me
to Netherfield and Mansfield Park, to sensibility.

When the Johnny J. Jones Carnival Came to Town

she jumped the fence
snuck into a motorcycle
tent where they rode bikes
perpendicular and sideways, 1943,
she was twelve years old, alone,
she loved the freak show—saw a tall
man turning to stone, a woman covered
by hair half-human, half-gorilla (it was said
the woman's mother had been raped
by an ape), but she never did see
the hermaphrodite, who doubled as the fat
lady, couldn't sneak herself in, didn't have
the fifty cents, running home to Ridge
Avenue my mother thought it was the most
exciting place she'd ever been and was sorry
when the chance-raffed circus hams
turned out to be filled with sawdust.

Even in Autumn

*I was of three minds
like a tree
in which there are three blackbirds.*
- Wallace Stevens

On certain autumn afternoons I know
that even now: I am still of three minds

that rarely agree on anything.
I see the point

of a house without stairs,
or a house with stairs, or a tree house,

or no house at all, or a house in Santa Fe,
or even Mendocino.

Even in autumn I know I am not a tree.
I am blackbirds—wanting to fly—

to scatter in all directions.
Even in autumn: I want everything

and I am not convinced
by the wind, by the coming of winter.

The View from Highland Park

Once I had a husband who never thought I loved him until I learned to cook—lentil soup & matzoh, Belgian duck & pies of strawberry-rhubarb. Not his fault: his Polish grandma had been plucked to cook pastries in the palace. Now I live with Joseph who likes dinner at 5 p.m. so he can watch the news (vigilant to will the world away from wreckage). From our north window, Zhivago's Russian forest, from the west, a blue-plastic covered reservoir that glistens in the rain like Hanoi's Hoan Kiem Lake. How I love a vista! I have a system: one foot before the other, don't look back, dream a little—So the dinner is on time (or nearly) as I chop onions, carrots, skin the chicken, pour in amber broth, sprinkle rice & pumpkin seeds for a little crunch. Soon the thighs are simmering, while Joseph's on the couch, towel over his head, looking like a pharaoh, or practicing Tai Chi, a quirky swaying dance, lanky arms outstretched like cranes. Or playing "get the bunny" with the dog a wild-man whoop, a bolt of white fur, spring-loaded. Joseph's voice, not full-throttle baritone, deeper, softer. I say: *You want dried mango? A little snack?* (Chicken isn't done yet). I move blue irises to the table & gingerly pick up a dozen heart-shaped lady bugs who've circumnavigated our window screens to die, crumpled on the carpet. Maybe we'll take a walk tonight, if it isn't raining.

My Mother's Needlework

for my mother

Hand in hand, you and your mother
scaled the stone steps leading to
the home of la sarta.

You learned to transfer designs on linen,
poking needles through carbon paper,
stitching thread on thread within that pattern
until the leaf or flower was three dimensional.

You monogrammed handkerchiefs, napkins,
tea towels and dresser scarves.

By sixteen, your intricate designs with
drawn threads, cut-work and lace
embellished sheets, pillowcases,
nightgowns and tablecloths.

You inserted tissue paper within the folds,
arranged your needlework in a trunk,
waited two years before presenting the dowry
to your groom-to-be and his family.

I wore the nightgowns when I gave birth
to your granddaughters. They wore them
to proms and parties.

I asked you once why you didn't insist that I
learn to embroider. You told me I needed the time
to learn my own art.

My Father's Morning

At five A.M. the flat ring of the alarm
drives him to the frigid cellar.
He pushes and pulls the cold metal lever.
Short deliberate strokes—until cinders and ashes
rumble to the ground in sooty puffs.
With square-jawed shovel against cement,
he lifts shiny lumps onto crumpled newspaper.
Using a rolled-up Sears catalogue page as a taper,
he coaxes the flame to a crackle, then waits.

Doors of the pyramidal toaster clank open.
The aroma of burned toast, then the inevitable scritch
of blade scraping bread.

He quietly goes out the back door
before I leave the warmth
of three woolen blankets.

I hear the grinding of a sluggish battery and know he's
muttering, *Dye gone some na bitches basstitch*,
hoping the engine turns over.
Then the diminishing tricka, tracka
of the chains on snow, as he drives his
unheated five-ton truck up our street to
the Pittsburgh Coal Company
to pick up a load of fuel for his customers.

The Burning

Books silently waited in darkness.
Books of Judaica,
Martin Buber, Kabbalah, the Tree of Life.

Hidden deep in a cellar in the Holy City.
Forgotten, as if they never were.
Saved by a German artist in 1993.

In my search for meaning I burnt these treasures,
again, again and again.
I fail to understand.

My people,
first they burnt books,
then they burnt people.

A slight glimpse into the working of a mad mind.
The power of fire, a country rises from the ashes.
The question to ask. The perished ones, where did they go?

Dismembered remains were glued onto the canvas.
Thick layers of oil paint dried instantly in Israel's unbearable heat.
No warmth, only frozen layers of ice.

Allenby Street

Seven o'clock in the morning
jolted out of a dreamless sleep.

Ambulances chase to South Tel Aviv.
The sound of countless sirens.

Later
the radio broadcaster announces
half a dozen killed,
butchered with one sharp kitchen knife.
The terrorist hacked them down
as they waited for the bus.

The next day I walk down my street.
The blood all gone,
cleaned up by the Chevrat Kaddisha.

A shrine of flowers, candles lit,
photographs of the ones lost.

The pizzeria I work at
employs Habib.
A Palestinian.
He handles the sharp kitchen knives
cuts the vegetables.

Each time I turn my back
I see the knife stab into my flesh.

Habib only talks about his pregnant wife.
He radiates love
prays for a first born son.
I am ashamed of my suspicion.
The fear of knives though stays,
as well as the fear of being in crowded places.

My friend Ruven has a memory, too.
His stomach turns
each time he smells barbequed meat.
He survived the Lebanon War.
His best friends Yehuda, David and Ben
did not escape the burning tank.

The Shimmer

It seems
a shimmering sun:
scorched roads
leading
nowhere
and everywhere—
dry
back-blown
insect wings
beat down
with the wind.

Saguaro
cacti stick
out like
stubble beard
from jags
of copper
rock.

Long ago,
we lost
oasis years,
the sizzling,
blaze
of life's
twists and turns—
now
only
death's heat

sears,
burns
in the shimmer.

Vultures everywhere.

Oranges

You need not tread the ochre
sand-soil groves of trees,
with shafts of golden light
shimmying between
the green leaves and red-orange
dimpled globes of fruit,

to taste the always-sweet
awakening juice,
mouth-filling and succulent—
(though less tangy perhaps
than that from her more
petite *cousine*, the tangerine,
who once undressed,
bares her hips easy
to the lips).

Delectable, too, are persimmons
as they hang from willowy trees
when all the leaves have blown,
and display puffed-orange
Japanese lanterns,
illumed under covers
of night by the moon—
a hideout fashioned
for secret lovers, thirsty
to consume this orange fruit's
fine Yamomoto wine—

More macho might be the mango,
blending shades of orange, red and green,
until his body is sliced wide,
to repose
bare-orange
alongside
his sticky-white-rice bride—
(where together they'll await
fiery mouths, deliciously
over-spiced from chicken in chili paste
or noodles—pepper-spiced—pad thai).

Then again: what of the peach:
Renoir-orange, suffused with magenta?
Is she less orange, less luscious than
her friends (known for their names) when
she calls out asking to be picked; no,
truth be told, to be grabbed off the tree?

True she is more tender, more tenuous
with time, and her flesh flows
out of her, off of her: the skin, the juice,
and, if she is ripe, the pit falls, too,
the pit that harbors a tiny seed
as deadly as cyanide.

Finding Home

A turtle takes her home with her
when she goes. To cross roads,
step through grass, sink into new ponds.

Some people are born to leave.
They are searchers. There are people
who stay. People who go.

To be still is more difficult than busy.
Still requires from empty
what busy fills up.

That small bird builds her nest
from faint twigs, pieces of string,
leaves and parcels of grass.
She sits in it when she is done. Looks out
to watch the world.

I like to sit in corners or along edges.
To touch brick or wood or stone (to know
it is there next to me) is to be held
steady against some wind.

Petals fall from their place
around the middle. Softly,
one at a time, until they are gone.

The intensity of heat required to make glass
is 2200 degrees Fahrenheit. It takes but a fraction
of a second to destroy its form. For it
to return to its sand.

8:13

A napkin folded with precision
and left on a table. The door
unlocked. Two glasses
with last night's shiraz etched
upon their lips. Music still plays.
A butterfly floats outside

and a day has begun.

There is sun.

Mail is being delivered.

People are buying milk.

Inside there is only
that music. It might
be skipping: a piece
of a track echoing
itself in circles. Maybe

not. She only hears her skin.

A pair of shoes is not in the closet.

A vase of daisies nests on a dresser.

There are some spots
on the bedroom window
that can only be seen
with this particular slant
of morning. She

can feel her toes. A dog
barks. That flutter might
be one of wings
in scattered flight.
She smells rosemary
and lemon. Or maybe

that is memory. A soft pillow.
A hooting car or the phone might
be ringing. Her chest rises
and falls. There is something slow
or maybe heavy. Ten fingers. And
a cat. There is laundry to do.

Song for the Devil

You knew my sorrow, knew
my spleen recoiled.
I recoiled from you, as well,
your grin so sour.

Complaint, your language of choice.
Why do I turn to you now
when all I want
is what I hope to make right.

You were never for right.
But, you smooth the way.
I sing the devil incredible—
you turn the critics.

I'm lost in your darkness, come,
make it feel like home.
I'll have no more stubborn bias for rules.
Teach me how to be nasty,
how to shout my voices down.
I promise to disobey.
To poke my nose in some ugly face.
Elbow through a closing door.

I sing static, thunder, results.
I shout your bad words.
Give me their quick respect,
their ink on my hot dotted line.

Patience takes so long.
Put your hand on me / mouth on me / fire.
O potentate of desire,
I sing your unquenchable flame.

One Week in the Hospital

Dad struggles to be what he can't.
Legs a shade of old paper, he flings
again and again at the locked side rails,
they won't quite clear.
Help me up, he says.

I'm helpless to obey: he's
strapped to the bed.
IV bag attached. Catheter tube
with blood from his tugging.
Face straining to scarlet,
he rages against a dying light.

The sheet is a wrinkled old face.
Nurse, minion of single purpose
scoots him back to the head rail.
Lie still / don't cause me grief.

It was never in him to quit.
I don't know which would be better:
for him to lie still and rest, or struggle
until he falls, exhausted.
Imprisoned air
breathes a silent sigh.

I have nothing in me to help.
Only a quarter-cup carton of plain vanilla ice cream
he, in turns, refuses / seems to enjoy.
I stroke the legs, for which he sighs,
accepts another cold vanilla spoon.

The room is a lab with no technicians.
I would like him calm, would like
knowing he knows me.
But praise the fight alive in him,
these last dregs of it.

Urban Myth: Man-Man

Daddy longlegs crawled up the backside
of the porcelain tub, stretched its legs
in all ten directions like Swamp Man's fingers
spread wide as he reached with two hands
to snatch my shoulders backwards;
suck me down whole
into the quicksand of his lap; fast and unyielding
like the slippery slope of porcelain
under Harvestman's long leg knees
bent in stiff concentration.
What to do...how to move...

I sit chiseled on Swamp Man's flesh-
chair; the back rises,
a crazy rhino lost in the sand.
Its head pokes my spine with one
crust of horn, forces...
What to do...how to move...

Big Daddy L.L.
takes his time, measures
the possibility of motion needed
to balance weight /no-weight.
What to do...how to move...
without losing the rhythm of eight legs in concert
and tumbling headlong into the spiraling song
of the drain.

I get caught up in the headmeat
of Swamp Man's words that spin inside my belly;
feel the gritty horn of rhino jerk—
wild and mean; slip-slide
like bog-talk drowns.
Big Man in the city says,
I'm gonna tame you.

What to do...how to move...how to
push thick weight of two legs
away from wide open mouth/
all talk, no bite.

Here Now: Nam

I have seen some great change
but none as grand as the one
I watch my brother do. He can
flip his mind back to the war
then flip back into this moment;
just as quick backward somersault
into that machete jungle full
of baby heads and baby guts.
And here now reclined on corduroy
Lazy-Boy, his own guts infected
with Mekong River blood, full
of H-I-Vietnamese carry-out disease.
He hears jibber-jabber of enemy syllables
sliding and hiding, crouched low
and suddenly drunk and reeling
in some Saigon bar he sees
a slant-eye girl-child who speaks
the only English she knows,
You want dope, Charlie?
I got good dope, Charlie.

Now in and out of the hospital
for veterans, my brother passes
red piss blood for urine sample,
nurses a belly swollen with Viet
Nam War water waist high
water he waded with gun overhead
each arm outstretched, pinned
against the air, crucified on AK-47.
He prayed *Take all of me at once Nam*
or leave me whole.

Here yesterday, I asked him,
How's your liver?

And this is what he said:

My liver! My liver!

*I spit it out. They gave me a new one,
and I swallowed it whole.*

*It wiggled right into place, and
I'm doing just fine.*

Robert

I litter my walls
with neon-colored charts
marking off squares
with stars, hearts
or whatever mass-produced
product will shine
and say, *Good Job,*
Great Work, Awesome!

I watch the children come in,
the rows fill up and Robert
becomes smaller and smaller
in the shell he wears so well.

It looks like his uniform top is
soiled, splattered, overly worn.

It sounds like the low wheezing
he makes when asleep
during Social Studies, Science.
I interrupt slumber for lunch.

It feels like another day
when we are following
another routine
and I take out my stars
stare in their eyes
and the survey begins.

NyAzsha—homework?

Trese—homework?

Usamah...Jamal?

With each name I say
Robert continues to become
small.

He looks frantically
through a desk top
that holds all he owns

through crumpled papers
where he writes
about shootings, shelters
and days spent alone.

Tell me,
how can I ask for his homework,
when there is no home.

Bodies, an Exhibit at the Carnegie Science Center

They are yellowish, dry, naked and wrinkled.
One is posed in a come hither posture,
hand under his head, ankle crossed
over his knee, penis semi-erect.
Another is kicking a soccer ball,
one holds a tennis racket,
muscles taut.

The next exhibit displays
the skin from a whole body,
scalp to toes, including nails,
hair on head and pubes.
My own skin prickles.

*We lose millions of skin cells every day;
Seventy per cent of our house dust
is dead skin cells.*

Lighted display cases with lungs and kidneys,
bones and veins are scattered about
the darkened room.
I scan the coronary arteries,
find the spot where my aneurism is
and point it out to you.
We find the part of the hip bones
where yours is wearing out.

Holding hands, we move on to the
reproductive organs, reading facts
about 250,000 eggs at birth, fertilization.

The fetal exhibit has a sign
at the entrance to a sheltered room:
*This display may disturb some people;
caution is advised.*

The tiny body of the four-week fetus
floats at the top of the container,
smaller than my pinky nail,
perfectly formed body, no face.

Later, at home, we make love for hours.

The Corn Field on Avenue D

It is the early forties, before the mines
drain into the creek, turning it orange
with rust and sulphur. Every few years
the land is enriched when the Loyalhanna
Creek spills over its banks,
washing rich loamy soil onto the fields.

The mid-July corn is sweet and tender.
Farmer Williams takes our dollar and trusts
us to pick just the three dozen we pay for.
Our mouths water. We count carefully.
The sweat trickles down our backs as we snap
ears from stalks in the hot afternoon.

In the back yard, my brother and I shuck,
stuffing the mess of silk and leaves
into brown paper sacks. Mum slices tomatoes,
puts a huge pot of water on to boil.

Grandma sniffs: “Corn is for pigs,”
in her thick German accent.

When we smell it, it is done.
Juicy kernels stick to our cheeks, greasy with butter.

From a novel in progress, *Catshapers*

Chapter Six

“But where are we going?” Cerwidanth whined for about the twentieth time.

Owain was finding it difficult to hold on to his patience. It was dark and cold and there seemed to be thorns everywhere he stepped. He was sure his one paw was bleeding and his fur was full of burrs. He looked enviously at the stout boots and sturdy leather body armor that Sir Graynin, the Catshaper Guardian, was wearing and, for the first time, wondered if perhaps feet and clothes were better than paws and fur after all.

“We haven’t been informed where we are going, My Lady,” said Elfin when Owain remained silent. “It was thought to be safer that way.”

“Well, how do we know that we’re even going in the right direction then?” said Cerwidanth.

“We were told to go to the city. We will be met by a Cat Guide when we get there and receive more instructions at that time,” said Owain with a sigh.

“I don’t understand why Rowendanth can’t come with us,” Cerwidanth complained yet again. “Why can’t we hide together?”

“I’ve explained this to you before. It was considered too dangerous to hide you both together.”

“But why?”

“Because The Catmother said so!” Owain had come to the final end of his patience. “Now be quiet!”

Cerwidanth was quiet for the next several minutes. They moved quickly through the forest, their feet or paws almost silent, except for Cerwidanth who stumbled from time to

time. Her borrowed boots were too big and the hood of her heavy cloak kept falling over her eyes. She pushed it back yet again and scowled at the backs of her Guardian Cats' heads. The initial fun of being disguised as a Human servant girl was fast wearing off. She wished very much that she was old enough to be able to turn herself into a cat. She looked enviously at Owain's and Elfin's sure-footed and seemingly effortless pace. Paws were obviously better for traveling through a forest. "I'm tired."

"Yes, I know, My Lady," said Owain in a more gentle tone of voice. He was feeling guilty about his outburst. The kit had been through a lot over the last few days. "We're almost there and then you'll be able to rest."

"But we've been walking forever."

"I could carry her," Sir Graynin offered.

"Would you like that, Cerwidanth?" asked Elfin.

"No, I can walk myself. I'm not a baby anymore," she said.

"Of course not, My Lady," said Elfin. "Besides, the outskirts of the city are coming into view now." They paused on the slight ridge they had reached and looked out through the thinning trees. The city stretched below them. Torches illuminated the tall stone wall that encircled the buildings. It was a large city by Purdoran standards, inhabited mostly by Humans, with maybe two hundred structures built of wood and the native gray and tan stone. A small river meandered through the main business district and several local cargo boats were tied to the docks of the warehouses. In the predawn light, the city looked gray and ghostly, especially where wisps of fog swirled up from the river.

Owain saw that the tall arched Main Gate into the city was closed and heavily guarded. He sighed. All the cities and castles in Purdor had increased their security because of the

growing threat from Anoki. Fortunately, he remembered, they wouldn't need to use the Main Gate as the Cats had one of their own. Owain sighed again with weariness and depression as he tried to remember exactly where to go next; the thing about invisible gates was that they were very hard to spot. He was about to give up and ask Elfin if he remembered when he noticed a cat approaching up the slope from the city. Lord Graynin moved down the hill to meet the new Cat. They conferred quietly for a moment, then the Catshaper Guard motioned for the others to join them.

"Here is our guide," said Lord Graynin.

The Cat, a young brownish gray tabby, bowed first to Cerwidanth and then to her two Guardian Cats, "It is an honor to be of service to you, My Lady, and to your Guardians."

"Thank you," said Cerwidanth. Elfin and Owain nodded to him politely.

"If you will all follow me?" He led them downward, out of the trees and through the meadows and farmland that lay outside the city and directly up to what appeared to be a solid part of the city wall.

"We go through here," said the Cat Guide.

"But I don't see any gate!" Cerwidanth whispered.

"Shhh!" Owain hissed at her.

The Cat Guide walked directly up to the wall, and then passed through it and disappeared from view. Sir Graynin followed but almost immediately reappeared, or at least his head did. Cerwidanth had to repress a giggle at the sight of a man's head seeming to grow out of a solid stone wall. "It's safe, at least for the moment, but we must hurry," said Sir Graynin and disappeared again.

Driving Home After Our Son's Wedding

—for Carolyn and Christopher

In Hope Valley white lilac blossoms blanket the streets
From a hazy distance they appear to be snow
Until you remember it is almost May.

Road crews used to sweep away the layer of lilacs
Until the men refused to work becoming dreamy
And drunk with the heady scent of strewn flowers.

Long ago I saw a man reeling by the roadside
White blossoms covering his eyes and fingertips.

The birds sing all night
Frantic with delight.

Dream at Dawn

Oh, to wake

to melon

and morning glories

with

my young lover

lying at my side.

A Small Branch

falls to the ground. I can see it through the windshield of the 61 C. I lean over and look up. The early morning traffic slows the bus, giving me time to view the beautiful city canopy of trees swaying to the breezes—oak, pine, and willow in their summer multi-colored greens. They seem to be saying *hello, we are full and happy, breathing as best we're able, dropping small branches.*

Bird

the nights are long,
and often starless
on the cusp of the solstice

daylight finds you
in your little flocks
huddled against the flurry

of the snow, ice and wind
you sit on stems of branches
replacing the leaves

fallen long ago
is it *safety in numbers*
or is it *for the warmth?*

spring will refract you
into pairs again
alive with egg,

defending the branch
where your warm friends
now perch:

procreation and nesting
will replace
the gathering

Your Lips, My Lips

Aperture of love,
your lips swell—
speaking, puckering
two pillows, bedded
capillaries of arousal,
flash of creamy white
flute sounds,
wet and moist
as berries.

I want to come
to know the world
through my lips only—
to kiss my way through
landscapes, countries,
literature and men,
to kiss your lips now—
pressing and resting
pressing and resting

Le Clown Bar

114 Rue Amelot, not
far from Place de la Bastille,
a wine bar for clowns,
French clowns, others—
from Cirque d’Hiver
a few doors away—
Paris’ Winter Circus
November through March,
a permanent Big Tent
built in 1852, the cafe in 1907.

On the menu, fruity whites
from the South, spicy reds
from Cotes du Rhone,
each glass hand painted—
slapstick scenes, clowns tumble
with every sip, a neighborhood bistro,
bushy browed bartender
behind his zinc bar—
the jester chandelier
juggles lighted globes
jewel-like décor.

Ceramic tiled clowns
vintage posters,
a classic Whiteface sparkles
from the ceiling above—
Burgundy Poached Eggs &
Caviar, Herrings in Oil, Blood Sausage

with a Potato Puree & Crème Brule with
Candied Orange Zest—
After the meal, a few drinks,
you feel good here.

Desert Storms—Chapter 4

January 20, 1991

Neena refuses to see dead people. I had to guide her to the kneeler in front of our grandmother's casket as if leading a blind person. No—in that case, I would have been gentle. Because Neena is my sister, who irritates me, I gripped her arm as if she were under arrest. As a longtime civil disobedient, I have experience.

My fingers fitted into the spaces of Neena's hand-crocheted sweater, just as Sitti Leila's blunt arthritic fingers had done when she made the sweater for Neena, nearly twenty years earlier. With its matching hat and gloves, the rainbow ensemble represented one of Sitti's rare stabs at fashion. Neena was pretty enough to carry off an outfit that made her look like Ali McGraw in *Love Story*. I dug my fingers into her arm a little harder.

Sitti's casket was enormous, fashioned out of dull gray metal with a rounded front end, like a nose cone. It looked like a ship from an even more warlike planet than our own.

"We're here," I told Neena, in a low hiss that bystanders could mistake for a respectful whisper. "Kneel down and pretend to say a prayer."

I released Neena's arm as we sank to the padded kneeler, made the sign of the cross, and bowed our heads. Neena shut her eyes tighter; I kept mine open.

Sitti's profile, with its long, slightly beaked nose, was as proud and uncompromising in death as it had been in life. Her silver hair was elaborately waved, but her skin was gray, a few shades paler than her casket. I wondered if she—with her passion for controlling the details—had left instructions that

the funeral director put no make-up on her face. Perhaps he didn't dare.

I attempted to formulate a prayer, but the only words that came to mind were Sitti's, describing the times that she was carried out of her house on a stretcher during her twenty-year wrestling match with heart disease.

Well, we give the neighbors a show.

I grabbed Neena's arm again as a signal to rise, letting go only after I turned us away from the casket. Then we lowered our heads and clasped our hands in front of our stomachs, like pious little girls who just had received Communion.

As soon as we were in the seats in the back row that Neena insisted on taking, she whispered, "What does Sitti look like?"

"Like herself, Ojinneen. In a weird sort of way."

"That's why I can't look, Leila."

Our baby brother, Peter, who had decided to join us in defying funeral protocol, suppressed a snicker.

Neena, craning her neck to inspect the almost living, didn't react to her full name, although no one used it except Sitti. The original Ojinneen (*like a spirit, a jinn that rises into heaven*) was Sitti's sister, who died at the age of eleven in the famine that followed the 1915 Lebanese locust plague. The calamities in every story that Sitti told us about the Old Country were of biblical proportions. Well, no kidding.

My mother—who felt that she had capitulated to her mother-in-law by giving her a namesake in me—first refused Sitti's demand to name her favorite grandchild. After a titanic argument (the gist of which Sitti repeated over the years, like the endless decades of her rosary), Mother gave in—but she put "Neena" on every document except the baptismal certificate, the only official piece of paper that Sitti ever saw.

My sister was so beautiful, I can't say how beautiful she was, Sitti said. No one takes after her. Until this baby, a little. So I ask one thing from your mother, one thing for respect for the dead...

Sitti never mimicked the charms of youth. She looked a bit like Maudie Frickert, the tart-tongued character that Jonathan Winters used to play on TV—shapeless polyester dresses, thick-heeled shoes, netted gray hair, eyeglasses decorated at the temples with a spray of rhinestones. A caricature, but with a scary strength, as if Sitti herself had decided to impersonate an old woman, just to express her disappointment with life. When we came to visit—never knocking, just pushing open the heavy black door that locked with a skeleton key—she would stand in the archway between the living room and dining room to greet us, wearing a damp apron over her dress. Her embrace was considered, grudging. Or she would make us seek her out in the kitchen, where she sat at the white enamel table—chopping parsley for *tabbouleh*, perhaps—her upper lip pleated with disappointment, her thick fingers performing the task disdainfully. *See what he brings me to? He was Jiddi, our grandfather, who died ten years before her, but who in her mind remained responsible for all her sorrows. Her posture told you, even before her words, that she had not been raised to do housework.*

My stomach growled, more from the memory of Sitti's bad cooking than from hunger. Peter took a Power Bar from the pocket of his leather jacket, and silently handed it to me. I stowed it in my purse.

* * *

Back at the house—Power Bar still uneaten—I unpeeled a layer of plastic wrap from a Pyrex bowl that had been waiting at the front door, releasing the smell of licorice. The bowl was

filled with boiled bulgur wheat with a shiny, sugary glaze, dotted with oblong pink and black shapes that resembled tranquilizers. Good 'n Plenty candies. This was someone's grief offering: Sitti's offbeat version of a dessert called *kambhie*, made for St. Barbara's Day. It usually was mixed with dried fruit and nuts. Sitti called the dessert St. Barbara's Miracle, because the wheat symbolized the transformation of the bread that the saint was carrying to the poor, in defiance of the law, into an innocent sheaf of roses.

Whoever had made the dessert had gotten things mixed up. Sitti had told me that there were two versions: the one with candy was to celebrate the birth of a boy, and the one without candy to mourn a death—or the birth of a girl. I took a silver spoon from a drawer in the dining room sideboard, and dug in.

Forgetting the Earthquake

Someone in the supermarket reminded me of the Mexican earthquake I'd been in. Truth is, I'd forgotten. How can you forget the earth trying to give you up? It's uncanny, how I keep forgetting. At first I thought it was just me, getting dizzy. But Dante knew right away it was all of us *and* his bookstore. Me, succumbing to hundreds of dusty, frayed paperbacks. A fitting end. I had come in for his "American sandwich," ham and cheese without the chilies. Good conversation, authors trying to raise money for the local library. He made me a papaya smoothie.

"No, this is not a usual thing, not a usual thing! Earthquake!" he responded to my asking if the building always swayed like that. He grabbed his cell phone, a talisman against disaster, and out the small door we all flew like Stooges, ahead of the books with the cell phone in front. I considered going back for that Alice Munro but changed my mind when the electric poles and road started to sway and the lights went out. This wasn't happening.

Down the way was a doctor who specialized in colonics. On his wall was a before and after poster—your colon like a Bosch representation of hell, your colon like a tenderly laid garden, your choice. He hooked the tourists up to this machine; hope against hope no one was hooked up that night.

I started for the beach. "No, you'll be pulled under the sand."

"What about a tsunami?" I heard myself ask.

"If you hear the water go out and the surf stop, run for that hill." I knew I'd never make that hill in time.

The lights came back on. Things stopped. I checked out the surf's cadence then followed the crowd to the square to

hear a hundred earthquake stories. I listened hard. Somewhere a television blurted out in speedy Spanish that the epicenter was in Colima, and it was bad.

“I hang crystals in my windows,” said a woman from Seattle, “so I can tell if it’s my low blood pressure or the earth. Did you know there’s this taxi driver in San Francisco who knows where the next one’s going to be? He’s good at where, but not at when.” Everyone had a story. Then there was me. I was disconsolate that day for no good reason—for which the colonic doctor would’ve had the solution.

The next day, two plates in my head crashed together. That’s what it felt like, Lord save me. At home, up east, where the tectonic plates are indolent, it’s easy to forget. But I’d already started to forget even before the aftershocks. It’s like this: I like to know where I stand.

Marcel knew where he stood. He moved his family down from Quebec and surrounded everyone with his art. *El Paseo del Beso*, the Way of the Kiss, he called the bridge which led to the town square. He painted everything—roosters cavorting, not cock fighting; porpoises frolicking; iguanas winding on the heads of a couple in love. Sharp cooking smells, leaky sewers, naked babies, dogs spread out on warm cobblestones. All doors open, part of the art.

At the end of the stinking, trash-filled riverbed the effluvium from the *Indigenas* colony merged into the Pacific, which crashed and shimmered like white-hot coals in the sunlight. Marcel could see it from his palm-covered rooftop, and the earth occasionally moved, loosening his art but only slightly. Thin like the rest of them, he ate fish tacos and fried bananas in the streets, developed their hard stomachs, their calm brown eyes, patient fisherman savvy. The net throwing at dawn, dusk, out past the breakers. The small cache of fish

wrapped in sand, squirming. He knew Dante the bookseller, but Marcel didn't need books.

Up the riverbed, the Virgin of Paz had usurped the power of *Quetzalcoatl*, Feathered Serpent. Rueful, she eyed all of us from frames of blinking lights, feather headdresses, drums. They said she stops hurricanes, lets the earth open only so much, fills the small people's dusty bowls. The night of the earthquake, Gloria, Angel, Emmanuel and Jesus didn't trust their mission church. They ran to the big church in town, jammed in beside Marcel, Dante and everyone else under eight swaying glass chandeliers. I stayed outside with the woman from Seattle who wasn't comfortable in crowds. "There's nowhere else for them to go," she said.

The next day when the aftershocks were thought to be over, the town blasted cannons, sent up flaming balloons, carried out to sea the Virgin with flowers. Marcel went back to his painting and Dante cleaned up his books. The hot bubbling in the floor of the Bay of Banderas, which keeps the whale pups warm, never stopped. It bubbles into the heart of the artist, past the bookseller, up the riverbed past the mesmerist's trailer where the *Indígenas* part with their *pesos*. With peyote, in *Wirikuta* land, one can see how it all fits together, one can draw earthquake symbols in yarn.

"*Hola, Amiga*, you can take these pretty yarn drawings home and hang them in your kitchen." I did take one home, did hang it in my kitchen. Because, I thought, I really don't want to forget.

Fireflies

Prolific scrubby sumac
becomes a brilliant red
joe-pye weed pleases us.

Tall and purple
the regal ironweed,
goldenrod sways.

Poison red dogwood seeds
shine for passing youngsters
but they've been warned.

In formation, honking geese
draw us outdoors to see
a perfect V in the sky.

Crispy brown locust shells
now a frosting of mud pies
and the fireflies are gone.

Moonlight, Papa and the Crosscut Saw

Under mid-winter's full moon,
after work and supper, my father and I,
bundled in mackinaw and woolen work gloves,
made our way to the back yard
where two wooden horses stood
holding long elm trunks
which we cut into fireplace lengths.

It's a thing of beauty, this crosscut saw.
You develop a rhythm
with the push and pull of it
becoming a graceful dance.
You work as you pull,
glide when your partner pulls.
Back and forth, back and forth.

Someday, a young man would stand where
Papa now stood and I'd tell him about Papa,
the moon and the crosscut saw.
Twelve-inch wooden handles for easy
grasping with both hands, jagged notches
of the eight-foot blade glistening
in the moonlight like silver, mimicking the stars.

Elegy for a Gift of Roses

for Louise Glück

Your refusal of the extravagant bouquet
stunned me as I sat second row center,
heard you say you were returning
to your hotel room and what were
you supposed to do with them as
tomorrow you'd fly out of the city?

You could have smiled.
Accepted the lovely longstems,
held them just a minute,
cradled in the crook of your arm.
Held as a borrowed newborn,
you could have smiled, offered thanks,
lied. Oh! Pulitzer Prize winning Poet Laureate!

Later back in your hotel room
you could peel back the tired spread,
remove your top and pants,
your underthings.
Rip petals from their stems and strew them.
Watch them float and fall to one side,
where no one would sleep
or on the sheets where you would lie.

Place a single petal on your tongue.
Ponder your mortality.
Cover each eye with one, rub the rest
between your forefinger and thumb.
Breathe in the scent of accompanying
eucalyptus branches left under a shower stream
in the hot-tiled, steamy tub.

You could leave the roses whole. Fill
the insulated ice bucket with warm water
and listen to them open during the night—
the night you had to sleep in Pittsburgh.

Oh Laureate, you could dream
of horses climbing hills.
Next morning housekeeping
would discover your abandoned bouquet.
Think you really enjoyed your stay
had they found the crushed petals,
traces of pink all over the wrinkled linens.

Absence

I long to be present and wonder if it's possible
to exist not outside myself, watching from above.
I see those around me and all appear feeling,
alive, and I know they must suffer pain and loss
but they don't display vacancy or seem immobile
and are capable of active engagement, response.
I have difficulty remembering what it feels like
to experience full pain or joy or even in between
and some people seem to float through, laugh, unscathed
and for godsakes I just can't conjure up any sensation
but am anesthetized and no one knows I'm not here.
As I lie on a mattress, gaze at the moon, how it fits
between the fire escape grate, and though it glows
luminous onto my hands and face, casts light
I can't feel it and sense everyone else reflects
radiance as angels.
And when a hint of a tingle, as a foot awakening after falling
asleep under the other foot, I believe I could distinguish
yesterday from today. I observe the world around me,
make notes, everyone breathing and alive, like me
and it seems there could be some acknowledgment
and recognition that I'm not here.
I am tired of peering inside closed eyelids
to search for a face to see me. I am not about to argue.

All is Quiet

All is quiet except
for the bubbling sound
of air being provided.
A multitude of equipment
has been shut down, only
the air remains
as your chest rises and falls
but your heart is shutting down.
Your mom, dad, sister hold
your hand, touch you, nanny too.

You lie there heavily medicated
so you won't feel the pain.
Still our voices speak
hoping you hear our words:
*I am here. I love you. All
your family is here for you.*
Your mom whispers in your ear
and your nanny says,
*save a seat for me.
I'll be coming soon.*

To Matthew

All the family came,
came here to Pittsburgh, PA
from Ohio, Minnesota,
Florida and Philadelphia.

Also Washington state
to honor you, say good-bye.
How can we say good-bye,
we cry? We love you.

Many flowers displayed
the esteem for you and family.
One arrangement included
a blanket designed with an angel.

Your mom gave it to me
and we placed it on the chair
where you sat as you tried
to bear the pain, recuperate.

Many others came as you lay
cold in the casket, greeted
weeping mom, dad, sister,
your nanny with a broken heart.

How can we bear it?
We want you here among us.
But the angel with a smile
must have come for you.

Left With Round

I can't stand the sound
of my daughter's crazy laughter
when there's nothing funny,
nothing funny at all
about her autism,
her imaginary friends.

I don't want to hear
about her going to the prom,
marriage, children;

I don't want to hear
what her stepmom says,
about how she looks like cancer
when she wears barrettes,
and that she's stupid.

I don't want to hear the sound
of future, of what will happen
to my girl. I don't want
the sounds of sadness.

When I hear them, I feel like stone.

When I hear them, I feel like stone—
The ships have left the harbor:
I am left with round and round.

Only the music saves:
Nyro crooning,
*no one hurries home
to lonely women.*

No ship hurries home to lonely women.

Deposing a Retired Welder

Lying on a bed
in your living room:

five lawyers
and an oxygen tank.

Your wife and sons
stay with you

as you answer
all their questions

about working
at the mill,

about your welding,
exactly how

you cut
the asbestos-covered pipes.

Did you wear a mask?

Did you smoke?

And can you
tell us who made

those gloves you used
back in 1962?

End of the Ice Age

The frozen tundra is only lately visible,
revealed by a glacier newly receding.
Under layers of insulated cold
nothing ached, nothing groaned,
nothing knew that land was even there.

Now what is visible is the curve of the valley,
the striations along the edge hauntingly familiar
like a book read long ago and only partially remembered.
When all trace of water is gone signposts remain,
perceptible reminder: winter does not so easily lose a terrain
once owned so completely.

Looking Out my Kitchen Window

The bacon grease cools on the stove,
and out the window a fat squirrel digs up
the snow crocuses and tulips
I planted only yesterday. Their anticipated colors,
their purple earthly smells,
have been rolled away, half-eaten,
into another fissure, a secret
fault line you might walk
over and never notice.
I push against knowing,
try to forget this remembering that solidifies
in my chest like wet chalk.
I don't know my body. I can't trust it now,
the way it keeps leaping into oncoming traffic,
not bothering to dodge all the rusty cars.
You may notice all that I am made of
is dried bone, split ends.
Or how I wear that other woman like a wound,
and finger her open so the blood cakes
my nail beds. There
will be no healing. No pretty
pink scar. This I will tell you:
I still blame myself. It was me
with the knife.

After Watching *Diary of the Dead*

you amend your original plan, decide
that you don't want me to shoot you
if you ever turn into a zombie.

You want to try it out. Figure there
is nothing to lose anyway, once you
are bitten. I don't know how or if
I'll get away. But there is something in me
that wants to tear into you first,
to feel my teeth rip into the firm flesh
of your shoulder, belly,
the part of your thigh
where no hair grows.

I want to snap the muscle,
connective tissue, maybe open
the iliac vein, burst something inside,
feel the warm fluid squeeze out
and spurt between my curled fingers.

Ella's Cakes

I'm on my lunch break
at my 1950 summer job.
Round and sunny Ella sings
in the bakery down the hall
swirling gobs of frosting
in blues and pinks and yellows
over butter-rich party cakes
while we waitresses hunch
around the battered table
in our crowded upstairs lunch room
eating the cheapest dinners
on the menu.

I select link sausages
and mashed potatoes covered
with brown gravy (green beans
on the side). Not bad for paying
nothing. Turkey, swordfish
and roast beef are out of bounds.

Sweating in the dark, airless room,
we never taste Ella's cakes
that melt in your mouth and are prized
for weddings and important gatherings
all around town: frothy blossoms
with green leaves assembled
on white ambrosia icing.

September on Blue Mountain

Wasn't it a perfect Sunday?
You mowed our long, sloping lawn.
Sweat poured off you in rivulets
onto the arm of your chair.
I baked steamy pies
with leftover apples and grapes—
not to waste them.

One would have thought
we were leftovers too,
but at sixty-nine you
are strong. So am I—
learning to live on a mountain
close to snakes and hawks;
inside clouds and freezing rain.

Here, behind the next log,
copperheads lurk
in the undergrowth,
but you in high boots
are prepared with your stick,
and I with my watchful eyes.

Groceries run out.
I gather up leftovers.
Nothing is wasted—
not old apples or grapes;
not your first love or mine.
Not divorces or deaths.

They all come home to us daily
in early morning stillness,
through the forest,
inside mist and clouds
hanging over our mountain.

92 Degrees Fahrenheit in June

Yellow Charles Austin roses bloom
fresh and clean as new-made butter,
then the heat sinks in and cooks them
on their stems, which makes me think

how a polar bear, feeling ice crack
and crumble under the pads of its feet,
frozen cliffs crashing into its home water,
might wonder what's to come.

Driving Near the Old Federal Arsenal

I'm driving in Lawrenceville, turning right onto Butler St.,
potholed, narrow and, at this hour, bumper-to-bumper.
Car lights on. Sullen rain clouds shred blood-red sunset.

*Just two streets over from here, during the Civil War,
the iron shoes of horses' hooves, clattering
on the driveway of the arsenal, struck sparks
that ignited scatterings of gunpowder on the cobbles.*

The driver of the car to my left motions me to turn right
in front of her, and when I get to the green light, a stream
of traffic opposing me, another driver allows me a left.

*The explosion killed the driver and the boy with him,
maybe his son, and 83 others, mostly girls who worked
in the magazine house, packing and storing ammunition
so that Northern soldiers could shoot Southern.*

I keep thinking of these invitations by anonymous drivers
to turn ahead of them, a sense, maybe, of the common good,
how often, on this street, right of way yields to courtesy.

*Houses nearby were shattered. Some of the bodies
were never found, shredded by the explosion. The detonation
sounded across the Allegheny River. The whole city mourned,
though the purpose of the enterprise was destruction.*

Why stop at red lights? Why heed the signs: *No turn
on red? Don't enter, One way?* Why signal to another
driver that she may go first, though it slows you down?

*Some rules of the road make us care for these
but not for those. The girls, laboring
at so young an age, making ammunition to kill
the children someone else had borne.*

Second Thoughts on a Burial

My son Daniel is buried
out in West View. I can
find his flat stone grave.
I know where he is
but no son, no Daniel.
No one else could manage it.
If I had to do it
over again, I'd pick a site
where the other dead have big granite markers
and forsythia in spring bloom.
I like that better.
We had an understanding
but the blank spaces were
never filled in.

One Thing I Know

Miss Jeanette Vander Pol, my sixth grade teacher,
asked me why I couldn't be more like

Rosemary Antelman. What did she mean?

Rosemary my friend, not my best friend,
but my friend. She was pretty, short blonde hair,
careful, restrained. I liked her.

Her sister, Anne, went with Dave Premack, whom I
really liked. So that spoke well

for Rosemary. She of the quiet smile. I never
got what Miss Vander Pol wanted me to do.

I was a noisy tomboy, jumped high hurdles.

My social studies report was on "Can Germany Oil Her
War Machine?" Didn't sound like Rosemary.

But I do know one thing.

Rosemary committed suicide and

I'm still alive.

Reruns Part II

I was watching a rerun of *Jaws* when my mother died. I sat at the head of her hospital bed with my fingers on her carotid pulse. She had lost her radial pulse hours before. She still had a carotid pulse; that meant her diastolic blood pressure hovered around 50. Her urinary output had long since dropped below 30 cc's per hour. That was ominous. I'm a nurse. I know these things.

My sister and her husband were asleep, cocooned in an oversized recliner in the corner of the room. My husband slept on the floor of the family lounge across the hall. Nurses walked by murmuring "that poor man" as they passed him.

The television flickered a bluish light. The volume was turned down but the menacing song, the da-dum, da-dum, da-dum, of the film was ever present. That evil, vile, destructive shark, in the depths of the dark sea, threatened death to any who waded into those waters.

My mother's minister had been in earlier. My sister and I teased him because he looked like an older Richard Dreyfuss. He smiled when we told him; he had heard it so often. And then, in the deep of the night of her inevitable death, Richard Dreyfuss valiantly tried to warn the characters in *Jaws* of the danger lurking in the unknown. My mother's pulse flickered beneath my fingertips like frothing bubbles of phosphorous surf.

A resident came in. He recommended a pleural tap, intubation and a feeding tube. He had on a short white lab coat, pockets bulging with handy reference cards, miniaturized PDR's, a reflex hammer, a stethoscope and a packet of cheese crackers. He was quite enthusiastic. He left her room, brimming with plans and good intentions.

The attending physician came in a few minutes later. He reviewed the resident's action plan and then paused. His shoulders were tense, pulled up towards his earlobes.

"What would your mother want?" he asked.

She would want to walk on the beach, I thought. On the beach in the early morning sun. Carrying her sandals, swinging them back and forth in her hands as she walked. This woman, this gentle woman, child of the depression saved string and turned cuffs and collars on my father's shirts. I heard the ding-ding of a patient call bell in the hall. A nurse scurried by with a tray of medicines. This woman, this gentle woman, at the age of fifteen, watched her mother die and knew she would be the primary caretaker of her younger brother. My sister turned slightly on the recliner but didn't wake; her husband pulled the flannel blanket up under his chin. Richard Dreyfuss pleaded with a town official to pay attention to the danger. This woman, this gentle woman, had to forge the welfare checks before her alcoholic father could cash them because she needed to buy food for her younger brother and herself. A security guard walked by, his shoes black and polished. This woman, this gentle woman, had to call the police when her alcoholic father wouldn't seek medical care for the younger brother when he had appendicitis. Two attendants pushed a patient on a gurney past my mother's room. The patient's hand hung limp, dangled, over the edge. The wheels squeaked, and the sound faded down the hallway. This woman, this gentle woman, endured foster care and separation from her beloved younger brother once authorities recognized the unsafe home condition. She beat up another girl who teased her when she wore a dress bought at Goodwill because it once belonged to the girl who teased. A phone rang and rang at the nurses' station. An aide pushed a stainless

steel cart with yellow plastic pitchers of ice water. I heard the sloshing of the ice. This woman, this gentle woman, as a very young adult lived through World War II and became pregnant, unmarried, in those turbulent times. The movie broke to a commercial for toothpaste. This woman, this gentle woman, meticulously ironed a navy blue dress with a large white collar for me when I was four. The collar was starched and stiff and scratched my neck. She told me to hide behind the furnace because my daddy was coming to see me. She wanted me to be able to come out and surprise him when she called my name. She told me to stay clean and not get into the cobwebs. I tried. Truly. But my daddy was loud and swore and she never called to me. He left and she came to me and told me she'd love me enough that I wouldn't need a daddy who was too loud and talked too mean. Her hands felt so cold. Colder than ice water. She met a man who wasn't loud and didn't talk mean. They married and raised me, and I could call him Daddy. She quietly celebrated life every day. She sang "Jesus Loves Me" as she dusted, baked a cherry pie every Sunday and hung the laundry outside to dry by the lilac bush. She'd take the clothes off the line, hold them to her face, and inhale the scent of clean clothes and lilacs. This gentle woman nursed the man I could call Daddy through Alzheimer's with resolve and quiet determination. And after his death, after the grief had almost shriveled and erased her, she determined to enjoy life again.

"What would your mother want?" the attending asked again.

"Chocolate ice cream," I answered.

His shoulders relaxed and he smiled. "Yes," he said. "Yes. Chocolate ice cream. And a morphine drip. Yes."

I sat in the flickering blue light and watched *Jaws*.
Her pulse was ebbing, fading away like the tide. There will
always be the unknown, the danger, the deep dark sea.

Little Red Car

She jokes about me acting like *such a lesbian*—so I tell her. She talks about my many boyfriends. I talk about best friend sleepovers and the meaning of the word bisexuality. I hear her say *perversion of the devil and your bastard of a father* as I linger by my chair. Our words scramble across the kitchen walls and settle in the cool room. These words curl in the spirals of my ears, thickening and tightening against my head. She sits at the dark wood table smoking her way through packs of Newports. I start towards the back door: *this is just a phase/ I should have never let you be friends with that lesbian/ most college girls go through this*. I run up our slanted hill of a yard to meet up with Amber and Quisha to head out for the night in beat-up old Matilda, the little red car.

Just Going

Driving over the Bourne Bridge
traffic thick and streaming against
the sky high road. Took about an hour
but just kept going. Dee's fever was 102,
Children's Tylenol choked down
not working. I gave her gum
watermelon Bubblicious.

The broken glass, the hot tomato soup,
on the floor, all left alone in that house
by the beach, on the Cape. Carlo's overheated
Mercedes wouldn't be behind us. I shoved
his keys, three hours ago, deep in the dirt
in the bottom corner of Cupcake's dog house.

Now Dee is sitting on the floor of the car,
gum in the thick brown curliness of her hair.
I stop the car somewhere on I-95
wrap her in my bone thin arms humming
Hush Lil' Baby to my sweetness. My four-
year-old's tears mix with my own, we lay
cheek to cheek on the floor in the front of the car.

From the Novel *Storm Dreams*

Note: Sonya, 48, has recently been forced to share her house with her ex-husband, Ted, because of financial problems. They have encountered a few tensions.

She looked forward to getting absorbed in a book. The romance novel, not her usual taste in literature, had grabbed her attention at the library's book sale with its cover illustration promising a happy relationship between the attractive hunk and fair maiden. She comfortably slouched on the sofa and smoothed her red satin nightshirt under her. Deep into the story, she only realized Ted had come home when she heard him shoving the kitchen door open. He said something, probably cursing the sticking lock, which she couldn't quite hear. She opened her mouth to call out to him when there was a laugh.

A woman's laugh.

She shot up from the sofa, her book tumbling to the floor. Before she could go anywhere—not that she would leave before she saw who this was—Ted appeared in the archway looking dapper in his best suit, followed by a woman in her mid-30's, with dark hair pinned in an upsweep, wearing skin-tight black slacks with a slinky bronze top and heels so spiked and thin that they could cook shish-ka-bob. Sonya tugged on the hem of her nightshirt, wishing the satin would stretch, imagining that one of her thighs was twice as thick as both of this woman's.

Ted greeted her with a lopsided grin. "Hiya, Sonya, didn't think you'd still be up. This is Heather." He turned to the woman, "Heather, Sonya."

Heather wobbled her way to Sonya to shake her hand, her purple-red lips in a half-pucker as if she were trying to stifle a giggle. "Sorry if we came too soon. We tried hard to wait, I

mean, Ted said you had an early client tomorrow and would be sleeping—in your room.” Her alcohol-infused breath blasted Sonya. “Let me get that for you.” She bent forward aiming for the book on the floor, but Sonya snatched it up first. What did Heather think—that Sonya looked too old to bend down?

“Thanks anyway,” Sonya mumbled. “If I knew to expect company, I’d have gotten dressed.” She managed a stiff smile at Heather, then glared at Ted.

“Can I use your bathroom?” Heather looked from Sonya to Ted and teetered a bit, as if she wanted to make a quick getaway but didn’t know which way to get going.

Ted grabbed her arm and pointed her in the direction of the stairs. “Use the one on the second floor. I’ll meet you up there. My room’s the first on the left.” She lurched off, leaning back from the knees up to keep the heels from tipping her forward. Ted watched until she turned at the landing.

Sonya waited with arms crossed. There could only be one reason why he’d tell her which room was his. As soon as he turned back to her, she said in a harsh whisper, “What do you think this is? A cheap hotel?”

“Hey, if I could afford a hotel, I’d have gone there.” He reeked of alcohol, too.

“Don’t tell me you’re really going to, umm—you know—right next to my bedroom.”

“Since when can’t you talk dirty?”

“Maybe I’m not so young and juvenile anymore. I see you’re still picking up babes in toyland.”

“She’s not that young. And, what’s juvenile about bringing a woman home with me? Not like you haven’t had your share of—”

“That’s different. I never had a boyfriend fifteen years

younger than me, and I wouldn't bring home a man of any age while you're living here." Although if she had the chance to with Scott, would she?

"Well I'm getting too old to do it in the car and she wants me tonight for the first time. I figured you'd be asleep by now and we'd hang down here without bugging you." He whipped off his tie and unfastened the top buttons on his shirt. "Look, Sonya, it's like this, she's got kids at home who are, you know, old enough to wake up and be curious, and she doesn't want us there. And, hey, it's been a long time since I had any."

"So? Deal with it!" Her knotted arms ached and the book dug into her shoulder.

"If you were in the same position, I wouldn't mind if you brought a guy here."

"I'll test you out on that sometime." Her mind ran through a list of her willing former boyfriends until a part of her revolted in distaste at that game.

"You would?" A shadow of distress crossed his features and made her wonder if the thought of her with another man bothered him.

"Teddy, are you coming?" Heather's voice floated down the stairs.

"Teddy?" Sonya squeaked. She threw the book onto the sofa. "Oh please."

"Sorry, Sonya," he said, and for a moment when he met and held her eyes, his expression told her he'd meant it. She thought he would change his plans. Then he said, "It won't happen again." He turned away and jaunted up the stairs.

My Wanton Mother

A day out: chicken chow mein,
wonton soup, a gourmet lunch.
The future in fortune cookies.

So foreign
So special
and chopsticks too!

Lamps covered surreptitiously
during air raids. Nolde's bread
gleaned from the company trash.

Homemade fudge eaten all alone.
Board game cheating interrupted
her monotony. Children sent out
for evening games. Hose wickedly
rolled down to the ankles, cool
the legs. Exotic cigarettes. She was
a shameful woman, my mother.

So wanton.

Watching the Summer Away

Those dive-bombing hummingbirds
are back, chasing each other around
and around a ruby red globe
filled with sugar water, the center
of their universe. As I watch
the summer away in my patio chair,
wings whirl so close the hairs
on my head blow in the air
currents of their flight. Their tiny
iridescent bodies, more like giant
insects, hover above the perch
of my nose as they check out
my trustworthiness. Ready
at a second's notice to put out
my eye with an epee-like beak
then fly to a nearby tree to gloat.

Gold Star Time

It's Wednesday and I've lost 3 pounds. 3 pounds—my reward for a whole week's worth of drinking water and eating watercress. I'm not exactly pleased; I expected to lose at least 5. Betty Ann, the woman who weighs me, wears a bronzed name tag with "I lost 55 lbs in 1976" under her name. 1976, the year of the Bicentennial, the year after I was born.

At ten till noon, a dozen or so of us cram belly to back into a space that was built to accommodate the three scales spaced evenly across the front of the room, the two metal shelves stocked with sugar-free chocolate bars and molded brown disks masquerading as butterscotch suckers that line the back, and a few *average*-sized women. But we manage. We hold our breath and squeeze our buttocks together and hope and pray the strain will burn a few extra calories as we wait to weigh-in and pay-up.

Betty Ann looks angry about all the ladylocks she hasn't eaten over the past thirty years, and her hair is unforgivable. Peroxide and a pick like right and left arms. She's four feet tall and maybe 95 lbs. with that huge dead hair, and she's wearing a jumpsuit made from the same material worn by professional wrestlers in their leisure time.

"You're down 3 pounds this week. That'll be twelve dollars," she says. God she looks old. Older than last week, anyway. And she seems genuinely annoyed with the moment or with me, not sure which. When I stepped out of my shoes and onto the scale on my first weigh-in day and looked up to meet eyes with the person who'd soon know my darkest secret, I was stunned. I don't think it's a cliché to claim to be stunned when one's body actually reacts to the stimulus. Maybe it's the bronze tag making her chest cave; I bet it weighs a ton. What

a burden to be one flaky, buttery pastry away from having the tag revoked. It's a life sentence, really. No wonder she looks so bitter and sharp. Of course, judging from her teeth, which are retreating to a place behind her throat, I'd guess the Marlboro Man might also have something to do with it. He's been shackled up with her forever. In addition to being a weigh-in woman, Betty Ann is also our group leader—someone who leads the motivational meeting after weigh in. She's more likeable when she's at a safe distance—not close enough for me to smell the tuna fish she ate for lunch like she is when she tells me I owe her twelve bucks.

In the meeting room, Betty Ann stands before us and gestures like a televangelist. She talks about the power of positive language and points to poster boards upon which she has written magical words with a red marker. Smile. Breathe. Move. Yes. Betty Ann has been a leader for at least ten years. I know this because I was here then, too. This is my third attempt. Third and final. I mean it this time. Every few years I gain and I lose and then I gain again. Even before I need a new pants size my genetically thin friends remind me to be careful. Be careful as I lift my fork. Be careful as I swallow. Be careful, they say, you're gaining back your weight. My weight—as if it were something I purchased on a whim, something stupid like a treadmill, and when I finally come to my senses, decide to return the damn thing to the store and discover I've eaten the receipt.

Smile. Breathe. And then it's time for the recipes Betty Ann's recently discovered or, I get the feeling, have been in her possession since 1976. I also get the feeling she recycles her stories. And in the middle of the third step to making pureed strawberries with non-fat no-sugar gelatin, a woman who looks to be in her middle sixties interrupts Betty Ann

mid-sentence. This woman must be new. No one interrupts Betty Ann. But the woman presses on; she's bursting to share. She absolutely must tell us that just the other day she walked past the New York style hot dog stand outside of Sam's Club, breezed right by the diced onions, her resolve unscathed by the crackle of the sizzling meat as it turned on the spit. Isn't that wonderful? I wait for Betty Ann's face to slide from her skull, iced thick as it is like a cupcake with cosmetics, but she just smiles. She gives this poor woman a gold star.

"You're a star," she says. "Good for you."

A younger woman, closer to my age than Betty Ann's, raises her hand to say that she lost 3.8 pounds this week. This is the time for recognition. This is gold star time. I smile, too. And applaud. But all I can think is that she has a *long* way to go. It's not that I don't admire her effort. I know it isn't easy. Lord, how I know. And of course, there's my effort. What of that? You certainly won't catch me with my hand in the air, waving it about as if 3 pounds is something to advertise, to merit accolade. Now 5 pounds—that would be different. And this one is easily 75 pounds heavier than me. Don't misunderstand. It's not that I dislike her, nor do I begrudge her the .8 pounds more weight she lost than me. Really, I don't. As I sit here, surveying the room from my metal folding chair, wearing my push-up bra—albeit plus-sized—sporting my soft hair amidst a whirlpool of sagging breasts and over-processed manes, I actually feel pretty good. I have only 67 pounds to go and these women have a distance to travel. Mine is the moon and theirs the sun. Now that I think about it, 67 pounds to go sounds a lot better than I only lost 3 pounds. A 67-year-old is still in her sixties. Still graceful enough to make the cover of AARP. It's like being 27, really. Yes. It really is.

“Joe Rock” Painted Everything

Coat racks chairs tables lamps stones in the yard
sometimes just one part
sometimes the whole thing,

like the buffet, sprayed white and gold or
my stepstool, red and blue with *Erika* in white/outlined in orange.

The cans of paint—long dried—
in rows under the workbench
until we cleaned out the basement
for the estate sale.

“Joe Rock” Drove a ’68 Bonneville

two-door/blue/vinyl bench seats/8-track player.
We’d listen to polka music—Frankie Yankovic—
or sing our favorite song:

*moon, moon,
bright and shiny moon
won’t you please
shine down on me?*

He’d drive through the country
with me, his two-year-old granddaughter.
Take me for ice cream
or
to the 5 & 10.

Summer Night

Unaware, they closed me out
when they went in
to their homes,
soft warm whispered
laughter caressing their walls,

me, longing, on my porch
alone, in the even though
sweet summer air.

Bare, blank street
now Goliath gray
my world an instant mute.

Who will welcome me
in now?

Whisper-less, companion-less,
bent by the weight
of my disabled heart.

My house, empty, dark.
My lover, dead.

Morgantown Bus Stop

Simple, square houses
planted plain on
a gray workshirt street,

moldy cinder block
skims the sparse, wilted grass line—
not a living flower in sight.

Still, on some crooked hilly yards
plastic plants thrive
inside rimless tires,

saw horses rot
on disintegrating front porches,
tinny grills now wasted wrought iron,

broken whirlygigs poke through
hard clay front yards.

Cigarette butts scatter like pearls,

pale blue siding
sold by crooked salesmen
hangs crooked-loose from

sick walls,
flapping plastic sheeting
thumb-tacked on wilted window frames.

Forties long-haired men in
1980 big-trunked cars
dull paint, noisy engines,

mud sprayed tires,
teenagers balance babies
on their hips.

The Five Million Dollar Coat

It was 2AM Sunday at Shark's Place. A small group of men and women sat in semi-darkness around several beat up, oval wooden tables. Some were afraid to go home; others had no homes to go to. A lone choppy-haired and obese woman in a tight red dress bent over, hugging the jukebox and feeding it quarters. She played the same "He done me wrong" song over and over again as tears streaked her heavily rouged cheeks. Those who still had a few bucks left sipped watered-down alcohol, adding to the stench of yesterday's drinks already decaying in their guts. Although the so-called bar was technically closed, a pulse still beat inside.

One of Shark's two proprietors, a goateed, droopy-eyed man named Mullens, was rinsing beer steins and glasses, placing them upside down on tin trays on the counter. He didn't bother to wash them in soap and water. His belief was that alcohol could kill every germ known to mankind, even the germs that caused heartache. He secretly looked upon his many customers as roaches and scum that crept in underneath the woodwork—else they wouldn't patronize this place. There was no need to worry about illegal number players and after-hour drinking; several pseudo-lawmen had become conveniently blind. They greedily lined their pockets with some of the weekly profits. The only patrons Mullens and his partner wouldn't tolerate were dopers or pushers.

Shark's was a usual haunt for Amos Shaw, except that his purpose for coming this time was different. He and his co-worker Gus were here to finalize a plan that the two of them had previously discussed. They chose a corner table next to the noisy jukebox. Each had to be certain that anything

said wouldn't be overheard. The two sat sipping beers while waiting for Gus's associate Boomer Barnes to arrive.

In about ten long minutes later, Boomer, a stunted statue of a man with a raspy voice, showed up. He didn't offer an apology for being late. "Just came from a boring party," he said.

"You know Boomer, don't you, Amos?" said Gus. "I introduced you guys several weeks ago."

"Yes," said Amos. "How's it going, Boom—"

"Cut the chat," snapped Boomer, "let's get down to business. I promised a chick I'd meet her later. You guys got the good faith money?"

"Yes," said Gus, "but first let's hear your story."

Boomer slid readily into the chair with the hole in the bottom right next to Amos. He leaned real close and whispered his hot musky breath directly into Amos's ear. "Hope Gus told you I got a good rep about delivering what I promise. I ain't got no time for mistakes, understand?"

"Yes, Gus told me that you—"

"Okay, here goes," Boomer interrupted. "The swap will take place exactly at midnight on Wednesday. I'll meet the two of you on the off trail atop Mountain Hill Road. Very few cars travel that narrow road after dark." He scratched his nose. "Okay now, for the second half of the business," he said, taking a small white box from his pants pocket. He slipped it underneath the table and placed it in Gus's waiting hand. "Look around before you open this."

"Jeepers," gasped Gus. "I can't believe this. Here, look." He passed the box to Amos.

Amos stared at the tiny zirconia inside. It was the exact replica of the real deal that nested downtown in the Winston Museum. It even looked more convincing than the one on

loan from the New York gallery. Amos had to admit, even though he didn't like this jerk, he seemed really good at what he did.

"Don't gawk too long," whispered Boomer. "I don't want the bartender to think I brought drugs here." He reached over, took the box, and replaced the lid. "The down payment dough now, please," he said, looking at Gus. He took the thirty one-hundred dollar bills Gus handed him and hurriedly stuffed them into the money pouch in his jacket pocket. "I'll see you two on Wednesday." He got up hastily. "Remember, no goof ups."

Amos slept until noon on Sunday. He awoke with a metallic taste in his mouth. His stomach was distended and uncomfortable. Must have been all the beer he drank at Shark's the night before. He placed his hand beneath the sheet and rubbed his midsection. He needed to cut down; he was getting a potbelly, and Rita didn't like potbellies. Although he missed his fiancée, he was glad that she'd left town for a few weeks to visit her sister. He was already apprehensive about next Wednesday and didn't need her around to distract him or question his antsy behavior. He rolled onto the side of the bed and sat up. The magnitude of what he, Gus, and Boomer were going to do hit him with this foreboding feeling that something else wasn't quite right. It had Boomer written all over it. He really didn't trust that man.

chin-up

tenth grade
gym class
dirt smells
sweat and
wrestling mats
mitch mcmunn
doing chin-ups
forearms flexed
shoulders straining
his legs taut
from his calves
into a pert
butt

his face red
broken out
not cute
but hard and
focused
the tip of
his tongue
sticking out
between
his teeth

makes me
want
to lick
the scruff
of hair
along his
jaw

makes me
think
about taking
off his
threadbare
t-shirt
to watch
his back
work

makes me
not mind
when he
cheats
off me
in english

makes me
wet

Tuesday 6:19 a.m.

Waking up in the skin splitting
over your knuckles, today our bed
is a solar system and we are planets
urging the fleshy parts dark, hard
revolving onto themselves.

Your palms catch me
silently unaware. Over my shoulder
crossing beneath ribcage
your fingers fold against me
digging in snatching my whispers

(I'm sorry, I can't, not now)

away. Gravity pulls you closer. I need a little
to be left alone. Your fingertips
slip back, the alarm rings.

Then its *good morning*
needing to pee,
stretching, hunger.

Red Dot

Dreams fulfill wishes, according to Freud.
Why then do I, at age eighty-five,
dream about children night after night?

Is it new kids I want, or those I once had?
But I had only two and my dreams
are invaded by groups of all ages.

Sometimes the children are French
and I have trouble understanding them.
Could one of them be my mother?

She was orphaned at seven, her sister was eight.
But why would I want to mother them?
Why would I want to mother anyone now?

I have a dog who loves my cooking, a cat
who adores me because I can make a red
dot run around the room for her to chase.

It doesn't matter that she can't catch the dot,
unlike human offspring who have to win,
expect to be handed the moon and the stars.

Ode To Sleep

Come blessed sleep
to bury the pain of losing a son,
so beautiful, so young
who towered over his small wife,
proud owner of a three-bedroom house
they shared with two watchdogs,
a husky and a malamute.
He was rebuilding a garage
to shelter his jeep in the Boston winter
but nothing could protect him from himself.

Come blessed sleep
purveyor of dreams
that bring back the baby
with wide-awake eyes, diagonal smile
and sun-gold hair,
the toddler who marveled at the cat
having kittens on his bed,
the boy who caught a rainbow trout
but threw it back so it wouldn't die,
the math whiz who taught his father
how to use a computer.

Perhaps someday we'll be together
in someone else's dream.

From a novel in progress

Chapter One

Each morning I am blissfully blank. As wakefulness washes over me, the sum of my life meanders in, centering me. The mingling smells of my husband and me in our bed, the bird song outside my window, the dog's shout at early morning joggers and walkers. Yes, when waking in my bed, my life is simple. Ordinary even.

Then, as a part of my morning ritual, I remind myself of my past. Each time I look in the mirror as I brush my teeth, I think, you are partially responsible for the death and dismemberment of another human being. And that's it. If the thought pops into my head at any other time during the day, I ignore it. Sweep it into the dark recesses until the next morning. Once a day is all I can handle. To think about it more often than that would interfere with all of the competing tasks I must accomplish.

In another stage of life, being involved with a murder might not have come so easily. It would have kept me up nights. Tormented me. Made me unsettled. In the moral certitude of my twenties I couldn't have lived with myself. But after surviving another twenty years I realize most of life is lived in gray area between the absolutes of right and wrong. Morality for me is a slippery slope. So, I wake each day like everyone else, brush my teeth and acknowledge my past. I feed my family, clean up the house, work my part-time job at the library and pick up my kids after band or basketball. I cook dinner, try to connect with my husband, and fall into bed exhausted. I am more or less like every other wife and mother, until I face myself in the mirror the next morning.

No one grows up thinking she is capable of killing another person, does she? Most of the time murder comes as a surprise—a fit of passion or a cold calculation whose equations are quickly forgotten. My friend says it was a brutal mistake; the force of the cast iron skillet was too strong for her husband's skull. She is small, her muscles slight; it doesn't seem she should have been able to swing that hard. But, I took her at her word and treated it as a mistake, as if she had run over her dog by accident in her SUV. Other friends and I rallied around her to protect her. Somewhere deep in our hearts, we realized that any one of us could have made the same mistake.

It's odd that such a morbid act would draw us so closely together for a few weeks and then send us spiraling apart. For a moment, our lives felt terrifyingly exceptional. We had vital work to do—work that would keep us with our families and out of jail. Daily, we whispered passionately on the phone about abstractions like justice and vengeance, and concrete details like police visits and murder weapons. Then, we avoided each other at school drop-offs and the grocery store. Love and hate mixed us up. We covered up for our friend and hated ourselves, hated each other, for doing it. But where else could we turn when sleepless nights took their toll? Or hours of crying had left us empty? Nobody else knew our story, our truth, our lies.

But then slowly, almost imperceptibly, our lives drifted toward normal. Eventually the crying stopped. Orthodontist appointments, school performances and work demands restrained us again. Lives that were once so close, so intimate, scattered the way friendships sometimes do once kids grow up and jobs or husbands change.

Whether you think what we did was right or wrong is meaningless. What is important is our feeling as if we were accomplishing something big—something more important than making breakfast or re-shelving a book. We were saving three lives at the expense of one other. Sometimes we felt noble and powerful, like women warriors. Other times we sobbed with guilt, like the murderers we were. Then, we'd convince ourselves that we were actually saving lives. Right or wrong, noble or not, it's something I can't afford to dwell on at this stage of my life, but my conscience has its own agenda as it forces the memories to bubble to the surface, unexpected, like when I see a ten-year-old girl with her loving father or when I wake deep in the night to find myself crying from a dream I can't remember. It is then that fear grips me with the conviction that our wrongs far outweigh the righteousness we so carefully cultivated.

And so, I've written down everything that happened, the secret story of the death within our lives. I write so that this secret can have a place of its own.

About the Madwomen

BARBARA ALSKO is an English teacher currently staying at home to raise her daughter. She studied English at the University of Pittsburgh (BA) and the University of Maryland (MA).

MADALON AMENTA has published three books in the hospice field, one of which won an *American Journal of Nursing* Book of the Year Award. She has studied poetry with John Holmes at Tufts University and in Pittsburgh with Judi Robinson, Ellen Smith, and Michael Wurster. A member of the Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange, she has been published in *Parents Magazine*, *Salon.com*, *Signatures*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and *Stories About Time*.

MOLLY BAIN has worked as an educator of both the language arts and multiculturalism from public primary schools to the University of Michigan. She has also worked at Interlochen Arts Camp training children in the fundamentals of theatre practice. She teaches composition at the Community College of Allegheny County.

MADELEINE BARNES is a freshman at Carnegie Mellon University. Her poem "Afterlife" received Princeton University's 2007 Leonard Milberg '53 Secondary School Poetry Prize. She won first place in the 2009 *Three Rivers Review* contest. Her poem, "An Inventor's Finest Plan," was the teen-contest-winning poem in the Borders Open Door Poetry Contest judged by Billy Collins.

TESS BARRY received her MA in literature from the University of Pittsburgh in 2008. Her poetry has appeared in *Three Rivers Review* and *Pittsburgh City Paper*, and she has been a guest poet on WYEP's weekly radio show *Prosody*.

JOAN E. BAUER is co-editor of *Only the Sea Keeps: Poetry of the Tsunami* (Bayeux Arts, 2005). Her poems have appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *5 AM*, *Italian Americana*, *Poet Lore*, *Quarterly West*, and several anthologies. In 2007, her chapbook, *Another Country*, was published by Pudding House, and she won the Earle Birney Poetry Prize from *Prism International* for her poem "Sleepers." Her first full-length book of poetry, *The Almost Sound of Drowning*, was published in November 2008 by Main Street Rag.

GERRY ROSELLA BOCCELLA is an arts advocate, educator, and designer. She graduated from Carlow University in 1958 (then Mount Mercy). In 1994, she received the Carlow Alumnae Service Award in the Arts, followed in 1996 by a Carlow Woman of Spirit® Award. Her poetry has been featured on *Prosody* on WYEP-FM and in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *Pittsburgh City Paper*.

DORIT BRAUER grew up on a dairy farm in Germany's Lower Rhine Valley. She studied fine art and painting at the Avni Art Institute in Tel Aviv—Jaffo, Israel. Her abstract oil paintings have been shown in Israel, Germany, and in the United States. Brauer graduated from the Mahut School for Complementary Medicine and Holism in Tel Aviv in 1997. She practices holistic medicine and teaches meditation and

guided imagery. In 2006, she traveled 7,430 miles on her motorcycle across the United States and walked 46 labyrinths. She is currently writing a book about her great labyrinth adventure.

JUDITH A. BRICE is a recently retired psychiatrist who practiced in Pittsburgh. She has written poetry for close to 30 years, but since retirement she now writes poetry full time. She has attended many writing workshops over the years, most recently at the University of Pittsburgh and Carlow University.

MELISSA BUTLER teaches kindergarten in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and works with the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project.

GAYLE REED CARROLL taught art in the Clairton, Pennsylvania public schools. She also taught calligraphy at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and in the Mt. Lebanon School District's Adult Education program. She earned a degree in Art at Hood College and a master's degree in Graphic Design at CMU. Her poems have appeared in journals such as *Poet Lore*, *The Comstock Review*, and *Black River Review*. She won the 2009 Thomas Merton Poetry of the Sacred Award for her poem, "Dementia."

SHEILA CARTER-JONES is the author of a book of poems, *Blackberry Cobbler Song*, published by Watermark Press, 2008. She was raised in a small coal-mining town in Western Pennsylvania, and most of her writing is inspired by the people who still live or have lived there. She has taught

writing at the Young Writers Institute through the University of Pittsburgh and at Chatham University.

CJ COLEMAN is a Pittsburgh Public School teacher during the day. The rest of the time she spends with her daughter, her partner, and a good pen.

KAY COMINI earned a BA in writing and women's studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Her poetry has been published in *Pittsburgh City Paper*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*, and the anthologies, *Dark Side of the Moon*, *Voices from the Parlor*, and in the Sandburg-Livesay anthology, *No Choice But to Trust*. She is a certified Gestalt therapist, retired welfare caseworker, and an energy healer.

WENDY DAVIES graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a BA in creative writing. She won the Grand Prize for Fiction and First Place in Poetry from the Westmoreland Arts and Heritage Festival in 2004. Her poetry manuscript is titled, *Dancing the Blank Stage*, and she is working on a collection of short stories called *Photo-Reality*. Her chapbook, *Morning Alive*, was published by Mad Books in 2009.

MARILYN P. DONNELLY has been with the Madwomen in the Attic since the beginning, and considers herself the oldest and maddest of the Madwomen. Her poetry has been published in journals such as *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Cape Codder*, and *Sojourner*. Her forthcoming chapbook is titled *Benediction of Love*.

MARY ALICE DRUSBASKY earned a BA in liberal arts, with a creative expressive arts major, from the University of Pittsburgh. She is an amateur studio artist and works with children as tutor, childcare provider and creative movement teacher.

VICTORIA DYM is a graduate of Ringling Brother's Barnum and Bailey Clown College, Bachelor of Fun Arts-Humility, and has earned her BA in philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh. She is currently working toward her MFA in creative writing—poetry at Carlow University.

ANGELE ELLIS is the author of a book of poetry, *Arab on Radar* (Six Gallery Press, 2007), and co-author of the diversity workbook *Dealing With Differences* (Corwin Press, 1997). A 2008 recipient of an Individual Creative Artist fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, her poems have appeared in *Mizna*, *Grasslimb Journal*, *Rune*, *THEMA*, *Encyclopedia Destructica*, *Pittsburgh City Paper*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Ya Basta!*, and the anthology, *Come Together, Imagine Peace* (Bottom Dog Press, 2008). She won third prize in the 2007 RAWI Competition for Creative Prose for an excerpt from *Desert Storms*.

ALICE FUCHS, a Madwoman since the mid-'80s, with time out to work towards an MFA at the University of Pittsburgh, is working on her third novel in a family saga series. She has published two chapbooks, *Morning in Agrigento* and *Blood Poppies*. She lives on a farm in Washington County.

CAY HAMILTON is 95 years old and a lifetime social worker. She writes poems about her father's blacksmith shop, World War I, and the horse and buggy days. Her chapbook, *The Allure of the Blacksmith Shop*, was published in 2009.

RUTH E. HENDRICKS teaches Art in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. She studied photography at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Pittsburgh Filmmakers and is a member of Silver Eye Center for Photography. Her film portrait of Dorothy Holley, *Quart Jar Poet*, premiered in fall 2005. An award winning photographer, her work was shown in June and July 2009 in *Forever Hold Your Peace*—New Orleans Photo Alliance, and *Works of Man*—Center for Fine Art Photography in Ft. Collins, Colorado.

DOROTHY HOLLEY completed her third book of poetry, *Late Day Thoughts*, published by FootHills Publishing, in 2008, fulfilling her goal of a trilogy. FootHills also published *A Whole Quart Jar* (2005) and *The Garden Journals* (2006). She has published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Tale Spinners*, *Pudding*, *Pittsburgh City Paper* and *St. Anthony Messenger*. Her work was anthologized in *Along These Rivers: Poetry and Photography of Pittsburgh*.

NANCY KRZTON is a lawyer and former journalist. Her poetry has been published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *5AM*, and anthologized in *Along These Rivers: Poetry and Photography of Pittsburgh*. She began writing poetry in 2001 after a 35-year hiatus.

JOANNE MARTIN is a clinical social worker who provides counseling services to children and adults.

CHRISTINA MURDOCK was awarded the 2006 Sara Henderson Hay Prize from *The Pittsburgh Quarterly Online*, and her work has been featured on the radio show, *Prosody*, a public radio show on NPR-affiliate WYEP-FM featuring the work of national writers. Her writing has been published in *The 10th Floor Review*, *Collision*, *Pittsburgh City Paper*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

MARILYN MARSH NOLL received her MFA in creative writing (poetry) at American University in Washington, D.C., in 1994. Her poems have appeared in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Folio*, and other publications. Her chapbook, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Bones*, won the 2007 Chapbook Award from the Pennsylvania Poetry Society.

LIANE ELLISON NORMAN won the Wisteria Prize for 2006 awarded by Paper Journey Press. She has published poetry in the *North American Review*, *Grasslimb*, *Rune*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Pittsburgh City Paper* and on the Pittsburgh Opera Web site. Her two books of poetry are *The Duration of Grief* and *Keep*, published by Smoke & Mirrors Press, which also published *Stitches in Air: A Novel About Mozart's Mother*. A biography, *Hammer of Justice: Molly Rush and the Plowshares Eight*, was published by PPI Books. She has published many essays, articles and reviews.

LEONE P. PARADISE has studied poetry with Michael Wurster. Her work has been published in *Brevities*, *Just Harvest*, and *Pittsburgh City Paper*. Her chapbook, *The*

Healing Power of Trees, was published in 2008. She has practiced labor law with the National Labor Relations Board for thirty years in Western Pennsylvania.

HARRIET PARKE'S work has been published in *Pittsburgh Magazine*. Her writing received an Honorable Mention in the *Atlantic Monthly's* fiction contest.

DORINA PENA was born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, and raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts and Fayetteville, North Carolina. She received a BA in English writing at the University of Pittsburgh, and is currently pursuing an MFA in poetry at Carlow University.

KATHRYN KATAFIASZ PEPPER received top prize in the Westmoreland Arts and Heritage Festival Short Story Competition. She is a student in the MFA program at Carlow University. She works as a life coach specializing in helping people with their own practice of writing and meditation.

JO ANN F. PRATT held a BA from the College of William and Mary and an MA in anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh. An award-winning visual artist for more than 30 years, she worked as a teacher and docent at the Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History for fifteen years. Pratt's poems appeared in *Pittsburgh City Paper*. Her chapbook, *Leaf Writings*, was published shortly after her death in 2008.

BRIDGETTE SHADE is a writer living in Pittsburgh. She is a student in the MFA program at Carlow University.

ERIKA SIMILO is a graduate of Bucknell University and of the Duquesne University School of Law. She is a co-coordinator of the Pleasant Hills Writers Group.

M.A. SINNHUBER was trained as an artist at Carnegie Mellon University and Chatham University, after having spent 20 years working in public television. She is an artist and teacher at Art by M.A.—Kidspaint, her art studio-classroom in Mt. Lebanon, Pa.

SHIRLEY SNODEY, a former student of the Community College of Allegheny County, is a writer of poetry, fiction, and song lyrics. Her poem, “Second Mourning,” recently appeared in *Pittsburgh City Paper*.

BERNADETTE ULSAMER earned a BA in poetry and a MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. Her poetry has appeared in *Pittsburgh City Paper*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Ophelia Street*, and anthologized in *Along These Rivers: Poetry and Photography of Pittsburgh* and *The Strangest Thing I've Ever Seen*. Her work has been featured on *Prosody*, a public radio show on NPR-affiliate WYEP-FM featuring the work of national writers. She has also contributed to and performed with the *Pittsburgh Monologue Project* and the *Hodge Podge Society*.

LUCIENNE WALD is an artist who writes poetry and fiction. She has won awards in all three categories from the Westmoreland County Arts and Heritage Festival. One of her poems has appeared in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

SUE WASHBURN is a freelance journalist and communications consultant from Apollo, Pa. Her articles have won several awards including an Associated Press Award, a Golden Quill Award, a Gold Award from the Parenting Publications of America, and a first place award from the Associated Church Press. She is presently writing her first novel.

Madwomen History

The Madwomen in the Attic Writing Workshops, named after the groundbreaking study by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar on the 19th-century woman writer, were formed in 1979 by Ellie Wymard, PhD, now director of the MFA program at Carlow, and esteemed fiction writer, Jane Coleman, after a campus visit by the writer, Tillie Olsen. When Olsen was mobbed by women with stories, poems, and questions, it became clear that there was a hunger and a need for women's stories to be told. Over the years, visiting writers such as Tess Gallagher, Maggie Anderson, Alicia Ostriker, Marita Golden, Naomi Shihab Nye, Judith Vollmer, Maxine Kumin, and Jean Valentine would arrive to feed this hunger. The workshops were originally taught by Ellie Wymard, then by Jane Coleman, and later the beloved poet Patricia Dobler directed and developed the Madwomen in the Attic Workshops until her death in 2004. Patricia Dobler dedicated many years of her working life to the Madwomen to create an inclusive, vibrant atmosphere where women of varied backgrounds could meet and study the craft of writing. For this the Madwomen will be forever grateful.

About Patricia Dobler

Patricia Dobler was born in Middletown, Ohio, in 1939. She is the author of *UXB* (Mill Hunk Books, 1991) and *Talking to Strangers* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), which won the Brittingham Prize in Poetry; a chapbook, *Forget Your Life*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press. She also completed a third full-length collection, titled *Now*. Her poems have appeared in such publications as *Mid-American Review*, *The Ohio Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. Her work has been anthologized in *A Gathering of Poets*, *A New Geography of Poets*, *The Carnegie Mellon Anthology of Poetry*, *Working Classics*, *Vital Signs*, *Anthology of Magazine Verse & Yearbook of American Poetry* and others. She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, fellowships from the Corporation of Yaddo and Villa Montalvo and a Pushcart Poetry prize. She lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and taught for many years at Carlow University, where she directed the Women's Creative Writing Center, the Madwomen in the Attic Writing Workshops, and was instrumental in developing the MFA program. She died July 24, 2004. After her death, her *Collected Poems* was published by Autumn House Press in 2005.

The Editors

JAN BEATTY directs the Madwomen in the Attic writing workshops at Carlow University, where she is also director of creative writing and teaches in the low-residency MFA program. She is the author of three books of poetry, all published by the University of Pittsburgh Press: *Red Sugar* (2008), *Boneshaker* (2002), and *Mad River* (1995), winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize.

Beatty's limited edition chapbook, *Ravenous*, won the 1995 State Street Prize. Awards include the \$15,000 Creative Achievement Award from the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, and two fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Her poetry has appeared in journals such as *Quarterly West*, *Gulf Coast*, *Indiana Review*, and *Court Green*; and in anthologies published by Oxford University Press, University of Illinois Press, and University of Iowa Press. For the past 15 years, she has hosted and produced *Prosody*, a public radio show on NPR-affiliate WYEP-FM featuring the work of national writers.

EVELYN PIERCE teaches the Madwomen in the Attic fiction workshop and undergraduate fiction at Carlow University. She has published short stories and two contracted screenplay adaptations, and is currently finishing her novel. She has been teaching writing since 1983, and is the recipient of multiple teaching honors. In 2004, she received the Sustained Excellence in Teaching Award at Carnegie Mellon University, where she teaches business management communication in the Tepper School of Business. She received her MFA in fiction from the University of Pittsburgh.

ELLEN MCGRATH SMITH teaches poetry for the Madwomen, as well as writing and literature at the University of Pittsburgh, where she earned an MFA in poetry in 1993. Her chapbook, *A Dog Makes His Rounds and Other Poems*, was published by Another Thing Press in 2002. Her poems have appeared in *5AM*, *The Prose Poem*, *Pearl*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Chiron Review*, with poems forthcoming in *Kestrel*. Smith's awards include a recent Honorable Mention for the Lynda Hull Award from *Crazyhorse* and a 2007 Individual Artist Fellowship (Poetry) from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Critical work has appeared in *The Denver Quarterly*, *The Pennsylvania Review*, and other journals. She is a regular contributor and Reviews Editor for *Sentence*.

STACEY WAITE teaches courses in composition, women's studies, literature and creative writing as a PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. After receiving her MFA in 2003, Waite published two collections of poems: *Choke* (2004 Frank O'Hara Prize in Poetry) and *Love Poem to Androgyny* (winner, 2006 Main Street Rag Chapbook Competition). Her poems have been published most recently in *Bloom*, *The Marlboro Review*, *Gulf Stream*, *Cream City Review* and *Poet Lore*. Her new collection of poems, *the lake has no saint*, is forthcoming from Tupelo Press in 2010. Waite is a practiced student of Tai Chi and Chi Kung at Still Mountain Studio in Mt. Lebanon, Pa. Her articles on the teaching of writing have been published in *Feminist Teacher* (2007) and *Writing on the Edge* (2009).

ROBERTA FOIZEY teaches writing and linguistics at Carlow University, where she is also coordinator of undergraduate composition. She focuses her creative writing on her family's experiences living with autism. She was second-line editor for *Voices from the Attic, Vol. XIII*.

KAYLA SARGESON is a creative writing major at Carlow University. Her work has been anthologized in *Voices from the Attic Volume XIV, Dionne's Story*, and an anthology of poets under the age of 25, edited by Naomi Shihab Nye. She is the emcee for the Hungry Sphinx Reading Series. In 2009, she was accepted into the Tin House Writer's workshop in Portland, Ore., to study with D.A. Powell, Kevin Young, and Marie Howe.

ANGELE ELLIS is the author of a book of poetry, *Arab on Radar* (Six Gallery Press, 2007), and co-author of the diversity workbook, *Dealing With Differences* (Corwin Press, 1997). A 2008 recipient of an Individual Creative Artist fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, her poems have appeared in *Mizna, Grasslimb Journal, Rune, THEMA, Encyclopedia Destructica, Pittsburgh City Paper, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Ya Basta!*, and the anthology, *Come Together, Imagine Peace* (Bottom Dog Press, 2008). She won third prize in the 2007 RAWI Competition for Creative Prose for an excerpt from *Desert Storms*.

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Books of Note

BY PATRICIA DOBLER:

- *Collected Poems*, Autumn House Press, 2005.
- *UXB*, Mill Hunk Books, 1991.
- *Talking to Strangers*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986 Brittingham Prize in Poetry.
- *Forget Your Life*, chapbook, University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

BY ELLIE WYMARD:

- *Talking Steel Towns: The Women and Men of America's Steel Valley*, Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2007.
- *Conversations with Uncommon Women: Insights from Women Who've Risen above Life's Challenges to Achieve Extraordinary Success*, AMACOM, 1999.
- *Men on Divorce: Conversations with Ex-Husbands*, Hay House, 1994.
- *Divorced Women, New Lives*, Ballantine Books, 1990.

BY JANE COLEMAN: *(additional titles not listed)*

- *Tumbleweed*, Dorchester Publishing, 2008.
- *The White Dove, Poetry of the American West*, High Plains Press, 2007.
- *The Italian Quartet*, Five Star, 2001.
- *The Red Drum*, High Plains Press, 1994.

BY JAN BEATTY:

- *Red Sugar*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.
- *Boneshaker*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.
- *Mad River*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.
- *Ravenous*, chapbook, State Street Press, 1995.

BY ELLEN MCGRATH SMITH:

- *A Dog Makes His Rounds and Other Poems*, chapbook, Another Thing Press, 2002.

BY STACEY WAITE:

- *the lake has no saint*, chapbook, Tupelo Press, 2010.
- *Love Poem to Androgyny*, chapbook, Main Street Rag, 2006.
- *Choke*, chapbook, Thorngate Road Press, 2004.

BY ANGELE ELLIS:

- *Arab on Radar*, Six Gallery Press, 2007.
- *Dealing With Differences* (co-author), Corwin Press, 1997.

BY LIANE ELLISON NORMAN:

—*Keep*, Smoke & Mirrors Press, 2008.

—*The Duration of Grief*, Smoke & Mirrors Press, 2005.

—*Stitches in Air: A Novel About Mozart's Mother*,
Smoke & Mirrors Press, 2001.

—*Hammer of Justice: Molly Rush and the Plowshares Eight*,
PPI Books, 1990.



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