

# Poetry South

---

2011



# Poetry South

Issue 3      2011

*Yazoo River Press*

*YRP*

Yazoo River press  
MVSU 5032  
14000 Hwy 82 West  
Itta Bena, MS 38941

# Poetry South

Editor John Zheng

Associate Editor Claude Wilkinson

Art Editor Ben H

Advisory Editors Angela Ball, University of Southern Mississippi  
Kendall Dunkelberg, Mississippi University for  
Women Carolyn Elkins, Tar River Poetry  
Ted Haddin, University of Alabama at Birmingham

*Poetry South* is a national journal of poetry published annually by the Yazoo River Press. The views expressed herein, except for editorials, are those of the writers, not the editors or the Yazoo River Press. *Poetry South* considers submissions year round. Submissions received after the deadline of July 15 will be considered for the following year. Submissions and queries must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope in order to guarantee a return or reply. No previously published material will be accepted. *Poetry South* is not responsible for unsolicited submissions and their loss.

Subscription rates are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years; the foreign rate is \$15 for one year, \$30 for two years. All rights returned to authors after publication. We request *Poetry South* be credited with initial publication. Submissions, queries, and subscriptions should be addressed to The Editor, *Poetry South*, MVSU 5032, 14000 Highway 82 West, Itta Bena, MS 38941, USA.

ISSN 1947-4075

Copyright©2011 by *Poetry South*

Indexed by EBSCOHost/Literary Reference Center

## Contents

James A. Carter	5	el llanto
Dorothy Duncan Burris	6	Umbrellas
Joshua Ruffin	7	A Darker Emerald
	8	Rapture
Michael Shorb	9	Recycled
Steven Ray Smith	10	Austrolabe
M. A Shaffner	11	When We're Sixty-Four
William Doeski	12	September Song
Bruce Majors	14	Patient
David Crews	15	Interlude
Zoe Etkin	16	Visitation
Emily E. Shulten	18	North of Barcelona
Lauren Schmidt	20	Far from Butter
Jane Blanchard	22	Mea Culpa
Ruth Holzer	23	A Family One Evening in a Nudist Camp, PA
	24	Lacunae
Kendall Dunkelberg	25	Silent Spring
	26	Mississippi Sound
	28	Betsy
Diane Judge	30	Nightmare
Mack Hassler	31	Wandering Planets and the Emperor of Grade School
Lenard D. Moore	32	Home
Joseph Rathgeber	33	Mimesis

Charity Gingerich	34	Doorways
Lana Rakhman	35	Talking with my Non-Existent Sister over the Phone
Ken Letko	36	The Elm
Michael P. McManus	37	Hidden Pond
James Scruton	38	After the Wedding
	39	Fire Ants
Catherine E. Bailey	40	In the Presence of a Gentleman, Ephemeral
Laura Lamm	42	Tomato Canning Time
	44	Seconds Towards Eternity
Tim Dyson	46	Bastard
Shann Palmer	47	Six People, No Music
Robert Funge	48	Shh . . .
Susan Reilly	49	Angling Back to Dania Pier
Kenneth O'Keefe	50	Garden Harvest
Didi Gibbs	51	Cup and Song
Steven Reese	52	Daedalus Answers
Michale Hettich	53	Empty Sky
Tedd Haddin	54	Listening
	55	I Saw Time
	56	How Teeth Become History
	58	Cooking Greens
Ruoyu	59	Swing
Notes on Contributors	60	

James A. Carter

el llanto

When Lorca closed and locked the  
Latticed windows of his balcony,  
He thought he would shut out the sorrow:  
Sorrow that cries like a starving dog,  
Sorrow that grips like a violin,  
Sorrow that weeps like a wayward angel.  
But the crying could not be contained:  
It comes like ants in the spring,  
Like weevils fouling the flour,  
Like the first dead bird on the branch.

# Dorothy Duncan Burriss

## Umbrellas

*For Maya Angelou*

It rained the day my daughter graduated  
from Smith, but over and above that, Maya reigned,  
her voice the sound that angels, if they speak, make:

trumpets of love polished to a perfect pitch,  
the blast so strong it blows your hair straight back.  
At the time, I didn't understand how significant

the rain was, how it was her life, or how the  
brightly-colored umbrellas worked, how they bloomed there,  
flowers giving back the straight doses of sun

they had swallowed like so many flaming swords:  
Magic. That is the only word for it,  
for what she does. She melts into the mike, to do it,

liquidating herself, over and over  
again. Joy is the sole issue.  
I used to think of Henry James when I saw

umbrellas because his always “depended”  
from someone's arm. Now I hear a voice,  
and words whole audiences hang on.

# Joshua Ruffin

## A Darker Emerald

The quantum world gets off easy. Particles being simply there, then not—this, then that. The muon

can hurtle itself 700 meters into Mount Kamiokoka during its millionth-of-a-second lifespan before becoming

another ho-hum electron. Not the case with us. Our human scale of skin and colors and things demands

we bear witness, and so we box away our decaying—a great-uncle, cancerous in that off-limits bedroom, the leaves

of kale wilting in the fridge, turning a darker emerald by the day—and leave the earth to its work. Today

I tried facing it: you were freshly buried, and after the funeral I went home and watched *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*,

Spencer Tracy speaking within the frame his last filmed lines, Katherine Hepburn watching, crying actual tears.



# Joshua Ruffin

## Rapture

It won't be that different from orgasm,  
you know: yes, we'll expect it  
but be rendered no less

helpless from that instant enveloping  
of the world in light leaving  
loved ones' clothes behind

than from the bite-off-a-bit-of-earlobe  
blast of white behind our eyes, coating  
our brains in absences of color

and reason. We don't admit it  
but for a few minutes afterward  
we think of the partner as not there

in much the same way  
we'll regard the missing righteous  
as gone. That is, not with us.

Some stay, some go. Focus, then,  
on the intensely terrestrial.  
I've had practice: in the days following

your leaving, waking to find  
my mouth pressed to the sheets, gently  
sucking the spots where you'd gripped.

# Michael Shorb

## Recycled

I build this  
out of breath  
and synapse  
careful to use  
only recycled materials

you could take the electric  
choppiness of the sea  
left over from a scene  
in Homer where all drown  
save Odysseus

you could stand there  
bitter as Job  
toothless and hungry  
watching them slaughter  
the earth

using the awe of Blake  
you could unravel  
the numinous possibilities  
of god using only  
fossils etched in rock  
the dark blue  
color of thunder

a few memories  
lodged in childhood  
nearly impossible  
to grasp.

## Steven Ray Smith

### Astrolabe

Someone said that every sunset past  
the solstice is shorter than the afternoon  
before, but when the lifeguards took their last  
recess and three teenage maillots mooned  
with elbows crooked atop the grass and four  
bikinis rushed the slice of pizza stand  
while the same guard who always bore  
the leaf skimmer torqued his upper hand  
around the pole to net the leaves, nothing  
had ever happened there or anywhere.

Amid such comfort, who saw anything  
to change the everlasting youth of hair?  
Who saw in the sky the astrolabe?  
It was the one who when she noticed less  
sienna leaflets in the seine of braids  
changed her one-piece for a cocktail dress  
and found the angle where the rising moon,  
refracting from the ripples an argentine light,  
reshaped her sequined body on that loom  
that weaves a spark into a sexy night.

M. A. Schaffner

When We're Sixty-Four

Not a title but an observation:  
a gutted abandoned trailer near Muttonhook Road;  
the flank, from upraised thigh the hollow  
above her hips, right breast bold, shoulders flowing  
from the light into the shadow of the sheets.  
Once our lives as eras, our time together  
as history, as metaphor, now literal as  
sunset clouds, as mountains, the early stars  
silent companions equally afar  
and approving. Across from the trailer  
an assortment of new housing, estates  
from previous centuries intermixed  
with today's colonists. All of us fit  
roughly in the middle somewhere, but now  
the rich stand higher like the sea from the beach  
and the others fill the aisles at Dollar Stores  
even when alone. We don't have many  
of these nights together left. The world gets  
steadily smaller and meaner, or we get  
older and more dissolute. It doesn't matter;  
the buzzards love to roost on those grand houses,  
huddled in pairs on the chimneys or alone  
spreading their broad wings over the shingles  
to catch the sun for themselves, and then leave.

# William Doeski

## September Song

On the sidewalk a fledgling cranes  
its neck, willing its parents to feed  
or encourage it to fly. But no tweet  
or twitter of adult nearby

promises to save it from forces  
gathering in the pallid glare.  
I'm among those forces. My shadow  
falls on the tiny creature. Its beak

opens, exposing its red gullet.  
But I can offer no insect or grub  
to satisfy its bottomless need.  
A boy and large dog exit a house

a few yards away but wander  
west toward the post office, ignoring  
the bird stranded in its failure  
to fly. If I leave it maybe

it will unfold itself and rise  
above its own dismay. Glancing  
toward the Ford dealership down  
the street, I try to pretend

I haven't met this helpless creature.  
Maybe the parents will rescue it.  
More likely the dog will eat it.  
I kneel and extend a finger,

hoping it will perch. Moving it  
to the shrubbery might help. The beak

opens and closes on my finger,  
the folded wings shiver. I rise

and resolve to let the absent  
parents find their offspring and do  
whatever desperate birds do  
on dull September afternoons

a month before every robin  
in New England has to migrate.  
The hot white concrete unlimbers  
like an unrolled bandage. New cars

lined up at the dealership gleam  
like a huge carnivorous grin  
as I turn my back on the fledgling  
and continue my aimless stroll.

# Bruce Majors

## Patient

The first thing is the smell;  
medicinal, mercuric,  
a kind of sterile disinfectant  
which dissolves even  
the most hopeful thought.

I.V. meters click away hours,  
sharp needles heal with pain,  
grim faces in hospital garb  
tell it like it is.

Nothing preambles death,  
pain is always bipartisan.  
Grim faces smile sardonically  
in hallways,  
leaving a small dejected  
man to worry  
alone.

# David Crews

## Interlude

I don't know much about jazz  
but Coltrane  
slipping through

the radio on low tone can cook  
most meals  
potatoes

spinach a sax player you judge  
before the interlude  
each solo

moving almost below the music  
more vibration  
bass sound

nothing like food to a mouth  
the tongue for garlic  
mind image

scenting a room somewhere else  
dark chianti  
candlelight

hiding in the foyer of a woman  
named Aisha  
capellini

dancing

*after John Coltrane's "Aisha" (Olé, Atlantic/Wea, 1961)*



## Zoe Etkin

### Visitation

My grandmother stands  
over my bed  
her eyes hollowed out  
teeth gleaming

She doesn't speak  
but I know she is trying  
to tell me something  
Her mouth articulates

Her dentures  
slop between her lips  
but nothing—  
not one word

I sit up, ask her  
*Why have you visited me*  
and *Where are your eyes*  
She laughs

then yanks out her dentures  
Her mouth becoming  
a black, rotten hole

I don't want to look  
It's too terrible  
how her face caves

her body turning inwards  
blackening  
becoming small

Her clothes fall to a pile  
on the floor  
Something twitches underneath

I get up  
lift the pile  
and find a small black crow

# Emily Elizabeth Schulten

## North of Barcelona

I was somewhere north of Barcelona when I realized  
I'd been talking to your absence

since the last morning we woke up together.  
I'd tell the starched white sheet next to me

about the place where the road bent  
on the night-walk back to my room

where a restaurant was dim and acoustic inside,  
about the way Moroccan scarves and nagchampa

waved from the doorways of stores,  
and postcards made attempts to tell those left behind

what summer looks like in Spain. I'd tell you  
how tired the stairs to my hotel made me,

how I got lost the first day, and how the view  
was my redemption after a western walk from the bus stop,

meandering through the entire fishing village,  
stammering for what was left of the Spanish on my tongue,

for the bus ride that made me nauseated  
and the jeans that squeezed my thighs in a paste of sweat.

I'd tell you that the sea was lacquered sky.

I visited Salvador Dali's house,  
and I wanted to move there with you.

We would catch whitefish and cover it in salt,  
and eat it with Spanish red wine, we'd sleep

under sketched surreal angels,  
painted coasts, clocks and branches.

People would come to see us, we wouldn't have to leave.  
Every night before I fell asleep in Cadaques,

I told the empty space next to me about my day,  
about how I didn't know where home was.

# Lauren Schmidt

## Far from Butter

I scrub my hands clean three times.  
    anti-septic soap stings my fingers;  
its stink burns my eyes and they water.

I stand behind the waist-high table  
    in the kitchen with offerings of butter,  
half-frozen sticks of must-be-used today

butter, stacked sticks of unfit-for-sale butter.  
    This evening, I must cut them into even pats,  
each the width of a nickel, one pat per visitor.

The butter is so cold that I must lean  
    my weight on the spine of a meat cleaver  
to force the blade through until it touches

the table. A deep ridge forms across my palms  
    like a lash mark. Looking at my hands,  
pink and swollen, it is clear that I lack the strength

to cut through this wealth of refrigerated butter,  
    much less the strength to make it. I lack the patience  
to wait for milk and cream to pull their bodies

apart from their emulsive embrace so the cream  
    can rest on top. I lack the precision it takes  
to skim that thick collection at the hem where

cream and milk meet. My forearms are too slight  
    to press into the belly of that wad of fat  
for it to release its milk. I don't have the shoulders

to churn that butter, or the hands to give it its texture.

It is only in feeling a bar begin to melt beneath  
my warm grip, like a muscle grown weak,

that I realize how far I am from butter, the work  
it takes to make that butter. The kind of work  
that is holy like butter. Not water-into-wine work,  
but real work, hard work, work we can be grateful exists

if for no other reason than the joy that comes  
when it's done. I want to taste that holiness,  
so I pull a pat of nickel-thick butter stuck to the flat edge

of the blade and drop it on my tongue.  
I push it to the roof of my mouth at the seam  
of teeth and gum, and wait for it to melt  
to tell me that I know nothing of how to suffer.

# Jane Blanchard

## Mea Culpa

My loving husband often says  
that I apologize too much,  
and so I say I'm sorry, and  
he rolls his eyes or waves his hand,  
and so I say I'm sorry—dammit—  
and vow forever nevermore.

Of course, I fail to keep my word—  
my mouth defaults again, as if  
to hold mere me accountable  
for Eden's loss and Troy's fall,  
the end of empire and the plight  
of pelican engulfed in oil.

## Ruth Holzer

### A Family One Evening in a Nudist Camp, PA (Diane Arbus photograph)

The heavy husband rests between  
pot-bellied wife and chubby teen,  
in the country, where they won't be seen.

On a patch of grass they sit,  
each wearing what the rules permit:  
sandals, glasses, and that's it.

Submission limns the woman's pose;  
her disappointment fits like clothes.  
This is not a life she chose.

Their daughter crouches to one side,  
showing what she wants to hide.  
Her modest body mortified.

Not much to look at, but enough:  
the sadness of our common stuff.



# Ruth Holzer

## Lacunae

Every lake in the state,  
she tells me, is artificial:  
a fact I hadn't known.

Married to a native son,  
now she's learning  
this sort of thing.

Even Deep Creek Lake,  
stretching to the horizon  
like an inland sea,

the lake at Rocky Gap  
in the west, mirror  
of so many autumns,

Little Seneca and Linganore,  
man-made, dammed,  
stocked with bass.

It's a bit of a letdown,  
I admit, but it gives  
us something to talk about,

here in this lakeside pergola  
in the middle of Greenbrier Park,  
something to fill

the pooling silences  
that grow deeper, colder,  
the longer we stay.

# Kendall Dunkelberg

## Silent Spring

The life that once filled North Key  
is gone. Mother pelicans  
no longer build nests,  
no longer lay three large white  
eggs, no longer brood.

There are no feeding orgies  
where the infant pelicans  
stick their heads into  
their mother's throats so far they  
nearly can't get out.

Young males no longer extend  
their huge wings in the storm wind  
longing for first flight  
some carried aloft, only  
to settle again.

The shells of their eggs grew thin.  
Their young didn't hatch, victims  
of pesticides like  
DDT in the water  
and the fish they ate.

What silence, where once there was  
such a hissing and squawking,  
each time a mother  
would appear with a throat full  
of fish for her young.

# Kendall Dunkelberg

## Mississippi Sound

When skies above had no name  
*tiamat* mixed with *apsu*  
salt water and fresh  
to form a womb for the gods  
of Sumeria.

Here the Biloxi, the Pearl  
and the Pascagoula mix  
their fresh waters with  
the salt of the sound behind  
barrier islands.

The lesser gods are minnows  
mullet, octopus, and shrimp,  
while the greater gods  
are the hammerhead, flounder,  
turtle, and porpoise.

The greater gods of the air,  
the terns, kingfishers, herons,  
pelicans, ospreys,  
and cormorants, feed on the  
small gods of the sea.

When Zephyr begins to win  
her war with cold Boreas,  
the small gods of air,  
the migrating songbirds, may  
return to the isles.

Life thrives in the sound, guarded  
by the islands' dunes and trees

from the harshest winds  
and strongest seas, nurtured by  
the land's sweet waters.

# Kendall Dunkelberg

## Betsy

On his last trips he began  
to see pelicans again,  
first a pair, then three,  
then six, and then seventeen  
flying together.

No wonder he felt so blessed,  
as if time had turned back to  
when the world was one.  
Even the tiny crabs used  
his footprints for beds.

Everywhere, he found full nests.  
Blackbird families squabbled  
in front of his nose,  
the young demanding their food,  
father giving in.

Then came the awful sunrise,  
vermillion against turquoise,  
the black spirit bird  
hovering before the clouds,  
sounding a warning.

The noble forms of the waves  
were replaced by the storm surge.  
In the dark of night,  
he moved camp through flooded trees  
to the highest dunes.

In the morning, he surveyed  
what remained of his domain.

The beach was built up,  
but his camp was gone, simply  
sliced off by the waves.

In the war between the sea  
and the sand, the hurricane  
had gained some ground, as  
the east point of the island  
had been wiped away.

Yet the change was magical.  
All along the beach, he found  
ravishing jewelry,  
the scintillating colors  
refracting in foam.

## Diane Judge

### Nightmare

I laughed in bed with my mother's boyfriend  
as he lifted me atop him  
and teased me so I couldn't lie still.  
He moved my clothed body against his  
until he shuddered  
and my giggles stopped.

That nightmare  
sometimes startles me awake.  
Pieces of me,  
incapable of lying still,  
slither to rejoin one another.

## Mack Hassler

### Wandering Planets and the Emperor of Grade School

Several things stand out in my mind from yesterday,  
A dull Saturday. I bought another Caesar book  
Used and got a message on my phone that the kid  
Who was best at everything when we were twelve  
Had died of Alzheimers twenty years ago.  
And, I almost forgot, Betty wrote that Pohl,  
Twenty years older than us, still writes books.  
So many wandering planets, so many Gateways,  
The lines keep circling in my mind, the orbits  
We get assigned. To map Al Swisher, Julius Caesar,  
And Frederik Pohl with my little phone is easy.  
We all occupy one small corner of one galaxy,  
And I think I still get bars.

In fact, they killed Caesar  
For the old Republican ideal that every die, every bird,  
Should roll. So I guess such death is necessary and,  
Though we only speak a rough, Gothic tongue and our  
Planetary weights still are marginal, like Fred we shall  
Not give up our wandering nor utterance. My new book  
Says, I see, that Caesar's last words were not in Latin  
As Shakespeare pontificates but were Greek. Similarly,  
My lost girlfriend from the far reaches of seventh grade  
Emails text that sounds like Greek, "We are blessed, Mack."



# Lenard D. Moore

## Home

The clotheslines we left  
sag against the horizon;  
the wash buckets burst with rust,  
shingles dust the yard.

We left old mules  
grazing on wild weeds;  
the plows sink deeper,  
orange dust in the yard.

The fishponds we left  
dry in the sun;  
scales silver the crater,  
bones bake into fossils.

We left barns that creak and crack,  
splinters crumble;  
in the dusty yard,  
footprints blown away.

The wisteria crawls  
up homemade trellises;  
root-snakes overgrow the yard.  
We left cornfields burning with sun.

# Joseph Rathgeber

## Mimesis

We are animals learning by imitation—  
we ape, we parrot, we copycat. We resemble  
our parents, we forge their signatures  
on our report card failures. We become

an irate kid screaming *stop copying me,*  
*stop copying me.* We wear replica jerseys  
of our favorite professional athletes. We  
state our demands, gimme this, gimme that,

gimme mimesis. We ridicule, we mock,  
we impersonate. We duplicate, we carbon  
copy our coworkers and colleagues, we  
xerox dittos to distribute to the class.

We facsimile similes, because where else  
can *like* and *as* possibly go? We imitate  
to flatter, we mimic to deride. We represent  
but decry false representation.

We pantomime in a shock of whiteface,  
black mascara, and striped suspenders—  
we climb ladders, pull ropes, and become  
quarantined in invisible boxes.

# Charity Gingerich

## Doorways

Every day with you is a treasure hunt:  
acorn gnome top hats, old red and blue factory glass, fossils  
and feathers. When I kiss you, I am searching for seashells,  
like the faint purple Coquinas I found on Lido beach as a girl.

Tonight, hemstitch of fireflies threading the dusk  
with their small-winged longing. You explain that the females  
hover lower over the grass than males, their protectors,  
*who must be quick with their light*. I stood in every doorway  
of delight. Like a silver smear  
the moon came up over the trees and we walked a little while.

## Lana Rakhman

### Talking with My Non-Existent Sister over the Phone

remember the time our mother,  
threatened with the promise of rape,  
backed onto a balcony and told  
her date that she was going to jump?

she waited until he left the apartment  
and crossed the street, then yelled  
keep walking; stole his butcher knife;  
uses it to carve bowls out of wood.

# Ken Letko

## The Elm

This elm he has  
cut down was a victim  
of the beetle. For many  
summers it provided  
shade. For many seasons

it was a sturdy friend  
with whom he shared  
the long slurred whistles  
of cardinal, the movement  
that gives shape to

wind. He cuts the limbs  
into firewood, rakes  
into a pile the twig  
branches. He observes  
how the smoke filters

migrations, how  
ashes become soil.

# Michael P. McManus

## Hidden Pond

Reflected on the water's surface  
was a second-growth loblolly pine.  
I knelt to see the bark's uneven weave,

smell the odor of its summer pitch.  
But too late, I did not see the coiled moccasin  
with its angry tail beating the air,

or its diamond-shaped head preparing to strike  
as lightning would the unassuming man.  
The fangs were halfway home

to my outstretched hand,  
when from some high and hidden place,  
a squirrel dropped its acorn into the water.

I waited for the venom's searing burn  
to swell the arm into something  
unbearable to touch.

But there was only the ripple's undulating merge  
its weightless travel from water to shore.  
There was no tree. No squirrel.

Nor any snake that could withstand that world.

## James Scruton

### After the Wedding

No rice these days, we all blow bubbles  
as the newlyweds come down  
the steps, a festive soapy gauntlet  
the couple has to run from reception hall  
to waiting limousine, evening air  
shiny with promise.

And as the long car  
slides away I notice how the bubbles rise  
past streetlights just now blinking on,  
how it would make a nice shot  
in a movie scene, so many small gleams  
lifting softly into the dark forever,  
blown like kisses from our lips.

## James Scruton

### Fire Ants

If as they say some insect  
will inherit the earth, my bet's  
on a swarm of these, fiery mites  
whose every colony is another Sparta.  
One year we moved far south enough  
to fear their tell-tale mounds,  
suffer spear-like stings, welts  
from toe to shin. Every time I sprayed  
some hive boiled up like lava  
elsewhere in the yard, thousands  
of them ready to lay down  
their burnished bodies for the others.  
I could hardly believe what finally  
worked: instant grits—any brand!—  
sprinkled from the box, grain by grain  
carried down to their last breakfast,  
after which, I'm told, each gorged ant bursts.  
When next I looked, every anthill  
was abandoned, an insect ghost town, empty  
as those ancient temple cities  
discovered sometimes in a jungle,  
countless, selfless souls disappearing  
after hauling stone on stone  
for generations, vanishing  
in such a hurry (I read somewhere)  
they left dishes on their tables,  
meals half-finished.



## Catherine E. Bailey

### In the Presence of a Gentleman, Ephemeral

in the spring, cherry blossoms open  
like hands cupped to the sun  
and you, my visitor, arrive  
in the dappling footfall of light on the platform  
a black fedora  
the scent of old paper  
and a curious penchant for pawpaw

on the train ride to the old capital,  
a city swollen with shadow and memory,  
the bones of our knees clatter a dialogue  
bruising each other with every track's turn  
like heavy purple stones

for days we subsist on tangerines—  
the shovels of our thumbs discolored  
by the constant plumbing of their skins—  
and bean cakes so small, golden brown beneath the plastic,  
they notch in the divot of your palm

crows spatter the graveyard  
rain and your chapstick shines on my cheek  
and I fear the old gardener will see

the blossoms shut their hands  
and quick as proverbial cats  
walking rooftops far too thin  
we tumble out of love  
howling as we fall

on the pavement our tails  
flash down steep and crooked alleys  
and under darkened dumpsters  
and away

## Laura Lamm

### Tomato Canning Time

Most of summer  
the huge steel wash tub  
leaned against the back porch.  
But today  
it sits out in the backyard.

At sunrise  
we head to the field.  
Grandmother heads the parade of fully grown women,  
wearing their favorite  
gloves, aprons, hats and scarves,  
while the girls lag behind,  
wearing boy's rolled up jeans, thick cuffs.  
Myra and I bring up the rear,  
fall against each other,  
laughing,  
waddling  
closest to the short rows.

Green spiny plants,  
I don't know why they call them vines,  
staked, taller than I am  
make a parti-colored partition of  
whites, greens, and reds.  
Both hands  
bend the stems back  
picking tomatoes.  
A peck turns to four.

Right before noon  
grandmother goes on back to the house,  
lays out cold fried chicken, biscuits, molasses, sweet tea—

Granddaddy drives out his old Ford pickup.  
Off its bed hang boys and men,  
bumping along like cow hands.  
In the field family joins,  
bends lifts and carries the load—together.  
Like a herd of ponies,  
we turn our noses towards the house.  
Chicken feed would've tasted good right then.

The wash tub is filled with water, and tomatoes  
bob like apples, waiting  
to fill the bowls at our feet  
with juice and flesh.  
Down drops the skin,  
peeled away in a long curling ribbon  
until it puddles on the grass.

Shadows stretch across the yard.  
Finally, when grandmother finishes the last tomato,  
we move to the kitchen.  
Into huge pots of boiling water  
Aunt Elsie drops clean glass jars, lids, and rings.  
Within minutes the hot jars stand on clean dish towels,  
crammed to the brims with juicy tomatoes,  
wooden spoons squish the fruit till no bubbles remain.  
Lids are placed— rings tightened,  
canned tomatoes,  
plunged back into their water bath.  
Twenty minutes later,  
jars cool down,  
lids snap tight.

## Laura Lamm

### Seconds towards Eternity

It's December 23rd,  
long past visiting hours,  
and cold  
despite the heat from the radiator beneath the window,  
Ward B, room 234.

I can't believe that there are no more blankets,  
so I search the same drawers again, the closet.  
A single bedside lamp pools light near your head.  
No one has scraped the beard from your chin.  
Your tattoo is drawn  
as if the Marine Corp didn't know its name.  
You moan in the night air.  
Only your tongue moves, warbling  
behind what used to be a smile.  
This sound is new to me, dad.

The life support machine is gone and it is just the two of us.  
From the white and blue hall,  
come wafts of disinfectant, the whirring of the floor polisher.  
Perhaps I should close the door.  
The phone rings, but I don't answer.  
I hear you,  
feel you, struggling to sit-up,  
hold you, seconds  
towards eternity.

The nurse pokes her head in,  
Honey, don't, they all do that just before they go,  
as if you are not here,  
right below her,

wrapped tightly in white sheets,  
only your shoulders and head exposed.

I lean closer,  
No, dad, I don't want to hurt you.  
You squeeze my hand  
so small in yours, despite the loss  
of strength I saw there only yesterday.  
Through blind eyes you see me.

## Tim Dyson

### Bastard

At some point in the fall of 1947, somewhere near our capital,  
Two people made love, hopefully they cared for one another.  
He bought her dinner, maybe even kissed her goodnight.  
A few weeks later, the queasiness set in  
And she felt her first born and her fist formed  
A blow to be struck against the night.  
The whispers came round the water cooler, office chatter  
About what was the matter, normally cool demeanor seemed shattered.  
Though no fingers were pointed, her world was disjointed.  
She waited for the #5 bus all those winter evenings,  
Heading home to her two room flat outside of Rockville.  
She made herself some tea on the hot plate and decided to wait  
To tell the new dad about the lasting memory.  
As the loneliness seed took root in the belly of the least,  
She prayed, took a warm bath and felt a swoosh,  
A little womb step down the road so many have travelled—  
Water to water, home to home, healthy, unwanted, alone.

## Shann Palmer

### Six People, No Music

A bleak and inexpensive funeral for a insignificant man  
who'd been making do under a bridge off I-95  
in the shadow of the Governor's School, he died without notice.

Morrissett Funeral Home took care of his remains,  
his eldest sister directing from afar. In her email she said  
"I loved my brother, but he didn't love himself. Keep it simple."

She did insist he go to ground since "Rapture be here soon."  
he would need some place to rise up from whole and pure,  
be what he was: a promise, a soldier who deserved a decent bed.

For a double sawbuck each, the six men were picked up  
at the temp stop on Broad St. Strong men to carry him down  
the hill to the old family plot. They started to sing him out,  
but the box was heavy and been told "No music."



# Robert Funge

Shh . . .

Jukeboxes used to have one record  
that had nothing on it. You could  
put in your dime and purchase  
three minutes of silence.

— Brian Eno

As with most old things it seems  
too good to be true. Imagine, for a dime,  
being able to shut out the world  
while you nurse a plate of over easys  
or a cold libation, or just sit quietly  
making a wish. A dime would be

small payment for the things we've lost,  
a nickel cup of coffee and  
the penny lemonade. A dime today  
won't tip the kids on the corner  
hawking their summer treats without  
some sour looks for change.

And buying silence for a dime?  
Would that we could, but since a wish  
still goes for a copper penny thrown  
over your shoulder into a well,  
I will—wishing in silence  
for something that I can't tell.

# Stephen Reilly

## Angling Back to Dania Pier

How many years since our lines last reached for snappers?

You leaned bored against the rail and threw our bait and lunch

to the gulls hesitating in flight,  
their cries harsh laughter against the sky.

Cheeks blushed beneath your bikini  
as I caught an angler fingering thoughts about you.

Bluefish danced in his brain.

Redfish in mine.

Now I know why no hooks ever set:

always snatching back my lines too hard and too fast,  
always fearful of the tugs from those bait-grabbing grunts.

# Kenneth O'Keefe

## Garden Harvest

Before I knew of school the summer ended  
When pots of steaming juices bubbled on  
The basement stove. Redolent odors blended  
As women—who had rendezvoused at dawn  
To peel and slice the peaches, plums and pears  
From pails Grandfather set beside their stools—  
Talked of the cares that family-friendship shares.

I marveled how their fingers ruled the tools  
That cored and cut the fruit before it cooked  
For pouring into pint-sized jelly jars.  
When Grandma, Mom and Aunt Clarissa looked  
Stilled as astronomers who study stars,  
They streamed the radiance of fired-fruit flavor  
Into a memory I still can savor.

## Didi Gibbs

### Cup and Song

The small, bleached bird's skull near the water, a tiny cup to be filled with dew and occasionally rain. Sometimes the opossum will venture out from under the deck and he may drink from such a cup.

A small bowl of bone, shell-like  
if home for mollusks.

There are so many shells scattered:  
applesnail, mussel. But there is no muscle, no wing, no flight.  
Eyes are hollowed, as if emptied by the sculptor's drill.  
Feathers elsewhere. And gone too is the song.

# Steven Reese

## Daedalus Answers

What provokes the master builder's  
wings  
begins as pressure, perched at his shoulders—  
the great bird Clamor. What it sings  
oppresses and bewilders

with its labyrinth of sounds  
he can't escape or translate yet.  
Soon it surrounds  
him, and swells; the bird-weight  
compounds.

Until at last a counter-pressure  
builds inside, a pushing-back that goes  
measure for measure  
with the maze of birdsong, then grows  
to such a delirious pain/pleasure

it bursts from his back as flight's  
bone and feather,  
and from his lips as his delight's  
new cry. He rises. He slips the tether  
of quiet acceptance and rides the heights

of resistance and reply—  
a song of our earth-life, sung from the sky.

# Michale Hettich

## Empty Sky

On the last healthy day of our lives we'll dream  
backward, she insisted, and unravel all our memories  
like a spun top growing smaller, back to the moment  
we were born, back to the moment we were

an inevitable potential, when our parents made love,  
back even further, back before they even touched,  
back when desire first awakened and the mystery  
trembled between them. We can this the birth-place

of the soul, she told me, and as we leave this life,  
we return there, like a cloud might return to rain.  
She claimed that other cultures, cultures she preferred,  
taught children to carry honey bees in their mouths

which buzzed through the winter, so when they kissed  
something else happened. Their silence was not  
the same as our own, though she claimed we could eat  
the gestures we'd try to protect ourselves with

if we were really starving. But we're not, so we don't  
live except by artifact, or someone else's story.  
This is why hair grows all over our bodies  
in all its tiny follicles, and why it fills with dust

or dusk when the weather is just right, and the windows  
glint in the sunset that was once filled with birds  
flying in small flocks just overhead  
back to their rookeries, beyond this empty sky.

## Ted Haddin

### Listening

I want distance in my  
song now, late at night  
Lars Eric Larson writes  
for *A Winter's Tale* a far song  
like snow coldly calling  
us away in a cold wind,  
as though everything  
could be gone; but the song  
has in it buried nostalgia  
you can feel when the song  
comes on or seems to go  
away as your memory  
slides away but keeps  
you listening for what  
seems to want to be gone.

## Ted Haddin

### I Saw Time

I saw time sliding by,  
in a race I could not win,  
so I gave it a quick, smart crack;  
whereupon it rolled over  
on its back, and showed  
me time again.



## Ted Haddin

### How Teeth Become History

It's when you're lying there  
thinking of each tooth  
and the endless brushings,  
waiting for the doctor-dentist  
to come and poke in, you  
focus, somehow, on that one  
you always roll your tongue  
around, with the sharp edge  
from honing with a lower tooth,  
the little depression you can't  
get any food out of, that  
you are suddenly aside from  
teeth and regard them as things  
in themselves in a strange mouth.  
Then their histories begin.  
Like an archeologist you calmly  
peruse the find: an upper  
incisor patched about thirty  
years ago, still slicing down;  
an upper molar riddled  
with silver fillings; lower  
front teeth a crooked fencerow  
even after successful straightening;  
and on either side shining,  
the golden molars of wrecked  
teeth while dining. To contemplate  
the distance between a war and

what is lost requires this distance  
to see what remains for use.

## Ted Haddin

### Cooking Greens

As chopped cabbage falls  
into mustard greens and onions,  
I take a raw slice  
to taste the garden's earth  
and fresh hint of water  
the cabbage holds. What  
steams in the pot has known  
the sun and flutter of wings,  
of white butterflies mating  
and tasting above the prize  
they love. So what if their seed  
is sown to seal the fate  
of cabbages. Though I work  
to save the survivor,  
the green worm that gnaws  
their holes turns green,  
and here, the whole house  
roars with steam and stink  
of onions, garlic, and greens.

## Ruoyu

### Swing

The swing belongs to childhood,  
To youthfulness,  
To my father—  
It has been thirty years ever since.

This morning  
The swing, the stories about it, the breeze and sunshine  
Belong to me

How joyful my child is—  
Watching tadpoles and catching little frogs the whole morning  
by the lotuses of the Pure Heart Pool.

Ah Fu, who watches the boy,  
Looks back now and then  
To swing my heart with his glances.

*Translation from the Chinese by Yin Xiaoyuan*

## Notes on Contributors

**Catherine E. Bailey** is a visual and literary artist from Seattle, WA. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English and Gender Studies at Western Michigan University. Her writing has appeared in *Line Zero*, *Yes! Magazine*, *Afterimage Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism*, *Three Percent* and other journals.

**Jane Blanchard's** poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Blue Unicorn*, *descant*, *James Dickey Review*, *Light*, *New Plains Review*, *Pearl*, *Thema*, *Third Wednesday*, *Turtle Quarterly*, *REAL* and elsewhere.

**Dorothy Duncan Burris** is a 20-year veteran of the Kalliope Collective and poetry editor of *Kalliope*, Volume 15, No. 2. Burris has published poems in *Negative Capability*, *The Sow's Ear*, *West Branch*, and *The Cape Rock* among others.

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, **James A. Carter** received BA in English from the College of Charleston and MA from The Citadel. He is an adjunct professor of English at Miller-Motte Technical College.

**David Crews's** poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Greensboro Review*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *The New Guard* and others. He received an MFA in Poetry from Drew University and teaches and lives in New Jersey.

**William Doreski** lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. His poetry collection is *Waiting for the Angel* (2009). His fiction, essays, poetry, and reviews have appeared in many journals including *Massachusetts Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *New England Quarterly*, *Harvard Review*, *Modern Philology* and *Antioch Review*.

**Kendall Dunkelberg** directs the creative writing concentration and the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium at Mississippi University for Women. He has published poems recently in *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume 2: Mississippi*, *Texas Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Valley Voices* and *Pilgrimage*. He has published two books of poems, *Landscapes and Architectures* and *Time Capsules*. The poems published in this issue were inspired by the paintings of Mississippi artist, Walter Anderson, and *The Horn Island Logs of Walter Inglis Anderson*.

**Tim Dyson**, a retired HR professional, took thirty years off from poetry after spending two years in a university writing program before the money ran out. His poems are upcoming in *Aroostook Review*, *Off the Coast* and *Work*.

**Zoe Etkin** is a poet from Memphis, TN, but she currently resides on the West Coast. She is a recent recipient of the Beutner Award for Excellence in the Arts. Her work has appeared in *Glyph* and *Burning Word*.

**Robert Funge** resides on the San Francisco Peninsula, in San Carlos. His book, *The Passage*, was published by Elo Press of Dublin, in 2001. Recent publications include *Epoch*, *5AM*, *New Letters*, *Poetry East*, *Quarterly West*, *Rattle*, *Salamander*, *Spillway*, *Wisconsin Review*.

**Didi Gibbs** received her M.A in English and poetry from the University of Central Florida. She currently teaches Art History and Humanities in Central Florida, and her poems are forthcoming in *Passage North*, *Sierra Nevada Review* and *Grey Sparrow*.

**Charity Gingerich** received her MFA in poetry at West Virginia University. Her essay, "Of the Meadow," published in *Ruminate Magazine* in December, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her poems have also been featured in the Center for Mennonite Writer's Journal and *Congerries*, a special edition of Connotation Press.

**Theodore Haddin**, a professor emeritus from The University of Alabama in Birmingham, is the author of two poetry books, *The River and the Road* and *By a Doorway, In the Garden*. He has published articles and reviews on American literature.

**Mack Hassler** is serving as Chair of English this year after many years of teaching at Kent State. He has a prose/poetry project coming out summer 2011 from *Emanations* on faculty politics.

**Michael Hettich's** poetry collection, *Like Happiness*, was published by Anhinga Press in 2010. A new book, *The Animal Beyond Us*, is forthcoming from New Rivers Press in fall 2011. His most recent chapbook, *The Measured Beasting*, won the 2011 Swan Scythe Chapbook Contest. He lives in Miami and teaches at Miami Dade College.

**Ruth Holzer** works as a freelance translator and editor. Her poetry has appeared in journals including *Southern Poetry Review*, *Freshwater*, *Broome Review*, *Spillway* and *California Quarterly*. Her chapbooks are *The First Hundred Years* and *The Solitude of Cities* (Finishing Line Press).

**Diane Judge** resides in Durham, North Carolina. She is a member of the Carolina African American Writers' Collective and her poetry was published in *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*, *34<sup>th</sup> Parallel* and *Obsidian*.

**Laura Lamm** is a retired theatre arts director/teacher who is writing seriously for the first time in her life, noticing the specific things that make up her losses, longings and loves. She teaches English skills to the provisionally accepted freshmen at Methodist University.

**Ken Letko**'s poems have appeared in three chapbooks as well as a number of anthologies and magazines, including *Ale House*, *Bloodroot*, *Dos Passos Review*, *Natural Bridge*, and *Rattle*. Former Editor in Chief of the *Mid-American Review*, he currently edits the *Kerf* at College of the Redwoods, Del Norte, where he teaches.

**Bruce Major**'s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Arts and Letters*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Ontologica*, *Wordgathering*, *Pinesong*, *The Distillery*, *River Poets Journal* and others. His collection, *The Fields of Owl Roost*, was named first finalist in the 2005 Indie Excellence Book Awards. His chapbook, *Small Patches of Light*, is to be published by Pudding House press.

**Michael P. McManus**'s awards in poetry include a Fellowship from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, The Virginia Award from The Lyric, and The Ocean's Prize from Sulphur River Literary Review. His poetry has appeared in *Soundings East*, *Texas Review*, *Raintown Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Prism International*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle* among others.

**Lenard D. Moore**, a North Carolina native, is the Founder and Executive Director of the Carolina African American Writers' Collective. Moore's poems, essays and reviews have appeared in over 350 publications such as *Agni*, *Callaloo*, *African American Review*, *Colorado Review* and *Crab Orchard Review*. His poetry appeared in over forty anthologies.

**Kenneth O'Keefe** says, "Upon retiring from teaching in the public school system, I discovered the solitude that afforded me the opportunity to pursue, with some intensity, my long-dormant desire to write poetry. At my age it seems my mind is drawn back into time towards those childhood experiences that were most influential in my formation. The poem presented within these pages is representative of this truth."

**Shann Palmer** is a Texan living in Richmond, Virginia where she hosts and participates in readings, workshops and open mikes to provide opportunities for other writers. She is published in print and on the web with recent work in *Short, Fast, and Deadly* and *Redheaded Stepchild*.

**Lana Rakhman**'s poems are published or forthcoming in *Main Street Rag*, *Juked*, *Rougarou* and *Requited*. She is the poetry editor for the literary journal, *TriQuarterly Online*, and holds an MFA from Northwestern University.

**Joseph Rathgeber** is a writer and high school English teacher from Clifton, New Jersey. His fiction and poetry have appeared or are forthcoming in *Fourteen Hills*, *Redactions: Poetry & Poetics*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Quercus Review*, *Chavez*, *The Normal Review* and *Blue Collar Review*.

**Stephen Reilly** is a staff writer for the Englewood edition of Sun newspaper in Southwest Florida and was a member of the editorial staff when the Sun was nominated in 2005 for a Pulitzer for its breaking news coverage in the wake of Hurricane Charley in 2004.

**Steven Reese**'s second book of poems, *American Dervish*, is forthcoming from Salmon Press. He is on the faculty of the Northeast Ohio MFA and teaches at Youngstown State University.

**Joshua Ruffin** received his MFA from Georgia College & State University. He has held jobs as a peach picker, radio producer, English instructor and was once the most un-intimidating bouncer at the Soul Bar in Augusta, GA. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Eclipse*, *The Pinch* and *491 Magazine*.

**Ruoyu**, once a P.E. teacher in a vocational school and a hotel manager, is a freelancer at present. Her publications include *I Saw a Flower Smiling*, *I had Returned Once on a Snowy Night*, and *Unrevealed Love*.

**M. A. Schaffner** has poetry recently published or forthcoming in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Magma*, *Stand*, *Poetry Salzburg* and *Frostwriting*. Other work includes the collection, *The Good Opinion of Squirrels*, and the novel *War Boys*.

**Lauren Schmidt**'s poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Rattle*, *Nimrod*, *Fifth Wednesday Journal* and other journals. Her poems have been selected as finalists for the 2008 and 2009 Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize. Schmidt teaches writing at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey.

**Emily E. Schulten**'s collection *Rest in Black Haw* was published by New Plains Press in 2009. Her poems have appeared in *Los Angeles Review*, *Versé Daily*, *Hollins Critic* and *Rio Grande Review* among others. She is currently a doctoral candidate at Georgia State University.



**James Scruton** is the author of *Exotics and Accidentals* and winner of the 2009 Chapbook Prize from Grayson Books. He has poems in recent or forthcoming issues of *Comstock Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry East* and *Poet Lore*.

San Francisco-based poet **Michael Shorb**'s poems have appeared in over 100 magazines and anthologies including *The Nation*, *The Sun*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Commonweal*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Rattle* and *The Great American Poetry Show*. His collection, *Whale Walkers Morning*, will appear in winter 2013 from Shabda Press.

**Steven Ray Smith**'s work has appeared in *Dogs Singing - A Tribute Anthology* from Salmon Poetry (Ireland), *Kenyon Review*, *The Raintown Review*, *Lucid Rhythms*, *The Concho River Review*, *The Alembic*, *SN Review* and others. He is the president of a culinary school and lives in Austin with his wife and children.

**Yin Xiaoyuan** is a member of Translators Association of China and of the Poetry Association of China and editor of several official poetry magazines. Her work has appeared in many journals including *Ottawa Weekend*, *Tong Hua Daily News* (Thailand), *China Daily*, *Global Times*, *Yi Lin Magazine* and *Poetry Monthly*.