

**Richard Allen Taylor**  
**Carolina Summer, 1963**

We begin in June with sun and sweat,  
the sandy soil of my father's fields,  
the endless rows. We hoe tobacco  
and take the harvest, and then  
the late August reward—  
a cottage on the beach,  
nights with open windows that gulp  
the nightly breeze. Boys sleep  
to the pop of damp laundry  
that flaps from two-masted clotheslines,  
to the soft hammer of the Atlantic,  
and the salty smells from a fishing pier ringed  
in light bulbs like a movie marquis.  
September comes and we head for home,  
the windows on Dad's old Buick rolled down,  
late-blooming honeysuckle puffing the air.

RICHARD ALLEN TAYLOR lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and is co-editor of *Kakalak 2006: Anthology of Carolina Poets*. His chapbook, *Something to Read on the Plane*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2004. His poems have appeared in *Rattle*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Ibbetson Street*, *South Carolina Review*, *The Powhatan Review*, *Main Street Rag* and *The Aureorean*, among others.

**Kristen Berger**  
**Leveling the Yard at Dusk**

Under the old plum tree  
the earth is swept black,  
plucked of leathery weeds  
and last year's spent pits,  
except for white blossoms falling,  
some whole like loosened charms --  
stars of snow drifting across the soil.

I take the split-handled hoe and tease  
clumps and petals into a place  
a small foot could walk upon, evenly,  
into an idea of grass.  
I shake the roots of spearmint  
and though I cannot see, I trust  
the filaments are releasing

dirt back to worms worrying  
over their lost tunnels.

Frogs join the song of hoe  
tripping on sunk rock,  
the planet now dark.  
Stars just begin to make their way.  
They will shed their lantern husks,  
trade their worn white light  
for a sturdy green promise,  
what was for what might be  
as soon as my back is turned.

KRISTEN BERGER lives in Portland, OR with her family and writes poetry, essays and fiction. She has received the New Poets Prize from the Oregon State Poetry Association.

**Beth Cagle Burt**  
**Recovery**

Three times I walk, alone, the thin  
waistline of graveyards clutching  
pallid flowers between my teeth,  
digging the moist earth of ancestors.

Three times I suck dirt from my nails  
climbing the spine of stars to morning  
naked but for grandmother's cobwebs;  
secrets waiting between my fingers.

I dream of chicken coops and mudpies  
while a buzzsaw moon slices sunrise  
and a syrup voice pours over me,  
pushing crumpled cutouts in fat palms.

I sit in my bed, elbows swollen.  
Three-foot iguana yawns behind glass,  
queen without a kingdom. Crowned and  
no place to go, crawling over feces.

Sometimes, I love my twin for her false  
simplicity, watching her nod from  
inside my own glass dwelling, caged  
energies digging their way out. I rise

to sit at desk; prop chin in one palm,  
pen in other hand. Then swallowing  
blueprints of turmoil, I pour a glass  
of grape voice for today's nurse.

BETH CAGLE BURT is the Co-Editor of *Kakalak Anthology of Carolina Poets*

**Nancy Kenney Connolly**  
**What Language Do You Speak?**  
*200 miles west of Calcutta*

As when the chatter of a jungle stream  
stalls  
    in an uphill moment,

the train to Jamshedpur stutters  
to a halt  
at a ravine.

    No journey is without  
an opportunity for contemplation.

    I do not need the local grammar  
to understand compartment-mates  
who fling the door ajar,

    peer fore and aft,

    leap down to pee and bark instructions.

Or to translate the way a father's arm  
enshrines his child,

the way he pinches a banana and sets morsels  
    on her tongue, then gestures amiably

at Brahman cattle ambling the slope ahead.

NANCY KENNEY CONNOLLY's work has won numerous awards, including the *Main Street Rag* Chapbook Contest 2002 for *I Take This World*, poetry inspired by India.

**Chris Crittenden**  
**Meditation on Autumn Trees**

so many brooms  
napping a cotton sky,  
their whisks rickety  
with lichen—

as if they'd been  
sweeping too long,  
dirtier now  
than what they absolve.

the sky never needed  
their help anyway,  
merely tricked them  
as a diversion.

forever is a long time  
to be a dome, life's  
steadfast albumen—

to watch forests come and go,  
and the raucous  
bug-like flails  
of needy arms.

CHRIS CRITTENDEN is a reclusive fellow who lives in the easternmost town in Lubec, Maine, a tiny fishing village with no traffic lights or fast food restaurants. "There are no street lights, so I can see the stars at night."

**Jeannine Pitas**  
**The Beginning**

You begin like this: you are sung  
in a voice as mellifluous as the hum  
of a flute, thin as a wayward  
thread you are sung  
In the cadence of all the ancient hymns  
intoned to the tapping of  
drums you are sung

You begin like this: you are flown  
like a bird born in water, fluttering,  
floundering on weakest of  
wings you are flown  
like a kite flying over its first  
city roofs, a kite that clings  
to its string you are flown

You begin like this: you are held  
in the young, green arms of the quietest  
hills, in the boughs of the moss-covered  
trees you are held  
in the softest cape of Queen Anne's  
lace, the violets' velvet  
cloak you are held

You begin like this: you are sung  
into life by the voice  
of the trees, flown on the sweep  
of the billowing wind, held in the earth's  
most tender embrace –

until you take hold  
of the air and fly  
until you open your lips  
and sing

JEANNINE PITAS is a writer and teacher from Buffalo, NY.

**Richard Lighthouse**  
**born** (for my daughter)

in answer to your question,  
here is why you were born:

to instruct autumn leaves on proper falling  
to steal the frog's watery croak

to bumble like a bee proud of the bruising  
to sparkle with magic in firefly air

to thunder like clouds impatient with rain  
to summon geese home each new spring

to laugh like jet planes scraping the sky  
to whisper AshLee secrets each blue moon.

RICHARD LIGHTHOUSE is a contemporary writer and poet and a corporate executive and has traveled all over the world.

**Michael Steffen**  
**A Gradual Loss of Light**

Tree shadows cross a field of bluestem  
pitched by wind into palatable hay,  
leafy grass giving up its ground  
to frost in the narrowing day.

All those restless vanishings—  
geese willed south by thermals,  
green to gold, the hardwoods turning,

sparrows deserting a dark wire,  
dead oak stacked on a neighbor's porch,  
enough to fuel a winter's fire,

the white carnations of my breath,  
a random cumulous roll  
curtaining the moon, a quickening star,  
Night unwinding its vacant scroll.

MICHAEL STEFFEN's first book, *No Good at Sea*, was published by Legible Press in 2002. His second, *Premature Gods*, is forthcoming from Pecan Grove Press.

**Gail Peck**  
**On the Mountain**

1

The master said:  
In Chinese pictures  
there's usually a mountain;  
you can follow the strokes  
of the path upward.  
At the top is a house  
facing the other direction  
so the view that way must be good.

2

The house is a man  
who's turned his back to me,  
welcoming the woman  
who places firewood near,  
snow still on the ground  
in late spring.  
Wind blows through  
and rain slides from the roof  
seeking the wild flowers  
steadied by rock.  
Only the sounds of birds  
through the fog.

GAIL PECK is author of two chapbooks: *New River*, won the N.C. Harperprints Award, and *Drop Zone* (a full-length) won the *Texas Review Breakthrough Contest*. Another chapbook, *Foreshadow*, and a full-length, *Thirst*, were published by *Main Street Rag*.

**Doug Ramspeck**  
**The Garden**

Witch-hazel grows there, buttonbushes, too,  
corn cockle, pinkweed, velvetleaves.  
When it rains the smell is like the dead  
cicadas that crawl from the earth in  
hopeless multitudes—and then decay.  
This is her garden—no one goes there.  
Scaly pholiota sprout in great abundance,  
parasols, green gills, hygrophorus, wood bluet,  
willow polypore, chanterelle, bitter bolete.  
She sees blister beetles, wood borers, snouts, scarabs,  
mole crickets, crane flies, leafhoppers, assassin bugs.  
At night the moon is pale and white as wasp larvae.  
The summer air is thick and suffocating in July.  
Her family lies asleep. They do not know her.  
And there, beyond the wooden shed, it waits.  
She smells it through her open bedroom window.

**Plantain Bridge**

Rain falls silently into this river.  
We do not feel it on our skin.  
When we were younger we would  
stand here late at night when the river  
was as moon-soaked as a wonderfully  
distorting mirror. Now we climb  
down and wade up to our chests.  
The current presses in  
and urges us downstream. On the  
far bank a farmer's field is laid newly open.  
Once we, too, were raw and made of loam.  
Now we swim. Water plantains brush past us  
with their promise of white flowers. We hold  
our breath and let the current carry us.

DOUG RAMSPECK has been published widely, directs the Writing Center and teaches creative writing and composition at The Ohio State University at Lima.

**S. Thomas Summers**  
**Instead**

I want to take a long  
walk around the lake,  
startle a heron as it wades

in the shallows – its neck  
coiled like a spring, ready  
to spear a lazy fish –

but the baby needs a diaper,  
you're sprinkling sugar  
on the apples you'll bake

into a pie and the closest  
lake is really a pond – well,  
a puddle the afternoon heat

has yet to devour. Instead, I'll  
scoop up our boy, creep  
around the puddle's shores,

spook a thirsty finch, and inhale  
deep the sweet spirits of baking  
apples rising from the oven.

S. THOMAS SUMMERS is a teacher of English at Wayne Hills High School in Wayne, NJ. His chapbook *Death* settled well was the winner of *Shadows Ink* publication bi-annual chapbook competition.

**Amorak Huey**  
**My Image of You**

Tallahassee balcony  
Your first cigarette  
My name on your lips  
Bluebottle wasp suspended  
    a pale shell  
    at the window  
Your left eye turns green when you cry

AMORAK HUEY is a native Midwesterner who grew up in Alabama and now lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he is an editor at a daily newspaper. He is nearing completion of an MFA in poetry at Western Michigan University, and

his poems have appeared in journals such as *Barrelhouse* and *White Pelican Review*.

**Silas Tsang**  
**On a Rainy Sunday**

The yellow leaves rolled through our backyard.  
Under a daisy bush,  
in a fountain of raindrop,  
they are strong, covered in froth.  
In puddles all day  
my wife and I  
braid the wild rose to the fence.  
At my mother's home we could be sipping  
honey-lemon tea  
in brown calligraphic cups.  
We care for a plant so vast  
it can never tell--  
curl or stop growing.

**Soil in the Spring**

At the start of winter,  
the soil was like mulch and softer to pick through.  
Today the soil has fine hairs and weeds  
blooming white flowers.  
They are not out of place, and the hair  
does not look distinguishable  
in the light gray dirt.  
When the gardener digs to pull the roots,  
the soil blackens, which says  
to us the weeds have grown too much.

SILAS TSANG is an MFA student at the University of Nebraska Omaha, living and working in Toledo, Ohio

**Justus Zimmerman**  
**Homework**

She reclines,  
narwhaling  
her pink

highlighter,  
the pads  
of her toes

spread  
like Roman  
columns.

She studies  
and I skim  
the lines

of her  
spring-bare  
legs.

JUSTUS ZIMMERMAN is an avid rock and ice climber, and up until recently I was living out of my car and climbing full-time. I've now settled down just outside of Pasadena, CA and am working doggedly on an acting career.

**Sean Lause**  
**The Gift**

The day my mother dropped a net  
of oranges on the kitchen table  
and the net broke open and the oranges  
rolled free till we snatched them,  
my brother and I,  
peeled back the skin and bit deep  
to make the juice explode with our laughter,  
and my father spun one orange in his palm  
and said quietly, "This was Christmas, 1938,"  
and he said it without bitterness or anger,  
just observing his life  
from far away, this tiny world  
cupped in one palm,

I learned  
I had no way, no vision, no right  
to comprehend an orange.

SEAN LAUSE teaches courses in Shakespeare, Composition and Speech at Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio.

**Rumit Pancholi**  
**Ruined Turnovers**

Mother, when I see you bent over the granite counter,  
apron pinching wiry hips, I see grandmother's little  
mementos: vintage bowls at elbows, nails pinching shut  
corners of pastry dough, comb of hair barring eyes.

I notice the geometry of your hands: fist squeezing tube  
of sweet caramel into lines, and like drawing henna  
on sister's palms, this, too, she must inherit. But as I stand,  
repeating your gesturing hand, you shake your head.

Why don't I belong in this inheritance of lungs drying  
out from shock at this terrible crisis. It is your son sighing  
with you for your turnovers, splitting open in cubes  
of apple, caramel, honey, not now. Where's your sister?

RUMIT PANCHOLI is an MFA student in poetry at the University of Notre Dame  
du Lac.

**Aditya Shankar**  
**November**

Standing beneath  
the dense and dark bamboo bunches in Kadampanad  
where rain water flows like a soul,  
time an enormous standstill;

There must have been a time  
before all time

when walls did not know about clocks  
clocks about hands,  
hands about the trap set by circles that  
makes them redo fate to perfect history.

when mind could unfold itself like a parachute  
and float through the never ending expanse of hope

when the night could go on unending  
for lovers hand in hand

Long after the play was over,  
The seats in a theatre would have  
shared jokes and burst into laughter then

Letter from a friend in Kuwait that read:  
'The desert now looks only into its own days and nights  
Send me the smell of stones, the colour of basements,  
the feel of rice grains...send me Kerala'  
would have been read even without sending.

Standing beneath  
the dense and dark bamboo bunches in Kadampanad  
where rain water flows like a soul,

There must have been a mind  
before all minds

ADITYA SHANKAR, editor of the bi-lingual magazine *kavitakko*, was born in Kerala, India. His first book, *After Seeing*, a series of poems based on movies, was published International Film Festival Thrissur.

**John Sibley Williams**  
**The Deer Under My Porch**

I.

Under my porch the deer  
shade from the harsh summer

Oregon sun drooping along  
the sky, exposing each crack

and dry river bed, brown fur  
hot to touch, they gather

every night in the dark  
that's never dark enough

to sleep soundly. Their violin legs,  
bucking and entangled,

sound a rhythmless tap dance;  
then each morning I eat

toast and jam and watch  
them untangle again.

II.

Some days a rifle burst  
perks their ears sideways

as my neighbor levels off  
another coyote's hide

for his collection. "They're eating  
your deer, friend, and my cows"

he mumbles, drying slick hands  
on an orange flannel shirt.

"Predators ain't adding no beauty  
to the land, no siree."

And as he talks I think of building  
a second porch, on the other side

of the house. The deer and I watch  
him piling and burning

the carcasses, smoky ghosts reaching into cloud;  
their foe of ash now dispersing

like dandelion seeds, the deer remain shadowed  
by the porch and shiver in unison.

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS presently calls both Boston and Vienna home, and he is compiling a book of poetry and art, as well as beginning his first novel.