

Featured Poet
Linda Annas Ferguson

Journey

I see the world from behind two blades,
windshield wipers that never quite clean
the crust of an insect or let go
of a piece of leaf caught in the hinge.

The clock on the dashboard is wrong.
Music from the radio keeps time
with the rain, never breaking rhythm,
raspy song of rubber fast on the highway.

On my journey, you are a distant place,
the road empty of others. I pass the dark
buildings, vacant lots. The sun pulses
on the horizon, the blink of my eyelid

counts the moments until it will be gone.
I listen to my breath, shut out
the pounding sounds on the pavement,
hear my own heart beat.

I know the feeling of being inside,
inside the lamplights beginning to burn
as I turn the corner of your street, inside
the cool walls of your bedroom, inside

the heat of the 40 watt bulb by your head
inside the skin of your sheets, inside
the space between prayer and sleep,
where all that is fragile has entered you,

spread across your flesh like wrinkles.
Thoughts wind through your hair
like gray, whisper "Stay"
from the warm corners of your mind.

I Wanted to Hear Her Howl

Mother rarely raised her voice,
only sighed as she picked the eyes
from raw potatoes with fingers
that never knew polish or lotion,

never whined, trapped in the to and fro
of hanging wash on the line, slapping
overalls against the wind, taking them

down again, oblivious to the coarseness
against her skin, never wept as she cleaned
the floor, never danced with a broom,
spinning around the room.

She scrubbed mud stains with its bristles,
swept dust and crumbs outside
browning the green grass beyond the steps
where others said their goodbyes.

Most days and nights, the house held her in,
although the doors were never locked.
She rose early without swearing, stared
out the window where railroad ties began.

Beyond the trance of waving weeds
train whistles declared their leaving,
roaring in her head like a scream.

LINDA ANNAS FERGUSON is the author of four collections of poetry: *Bird Missing from One Shoulder* (WordTech Editions, 2007); *Stepping on Cracks in the Sidewalk* (Finishing Line Press, 2006); *Last Chance to Be Lost* (Kentucky Writers' Coalition, 2004); and *It's Hard to Hate a Broken Thing* (Palanquin Press, University of S.C. Aiken, 2002). She was the 2005 Poetry Fellow for the South Carolina Arts Commission and served as the 2003-04 Poet-in-Residence for the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, S.C. A recipient of the Poetry Fellowship of the South Carolina Academy of Authors, she is a member of the Academy's Board of Governors. www.lindaannasferguson.com

Janet A. Baker
At Your House

A quail throws itself against my morning window
behind your Roman shades

Other birds in other places fling themselves
once, then fall
stunned on the patio floor

Some commit suicide flying into the hard glass
of skyscrapers

But at your house one quail is tough enough to crash
over and over

throwing its feathered self against the same window
indeed the same spot on the same window

over and over again

JANET BAKER is a professor at National University, San Diego. Her poems are inspired by nature, mythology, and dreams. She has recently published in *Cider Press Review*, *Room of One's Own*, *poemmemoirstory*.

Pris Campbell
Silk Blouse

It hung from a sidewalk consignment rack,
whispered secrets into my ear about
the perfumed woman who'd worn it
to champagne dinners and, once, to a costume
ball where Lancelot unbuttoned her
in some dark Camelot corner, tumbling
her breasts into his arching hands

I had to have it...this wanton blouse.

Not from a Neiman Marcus or Saks, this blouse,
but abandoned to a cobblestone street
where chickens run in circles
and children shriek like gulls
as popsicles dribble orange down their chins.

My breasts form dark circles beneath
the sheer and I pretend you are with me--

you are with me and this secretive
silk blouse, one finger already
slipping inside me, my own hand
rimming you to hard, before your clothes
join with mine on the chilly linoleum floor.

you asked why i came to europe

one day the air seemed suddenly heavier
as if i could drink it, slice it
into thick slabs for a sandwich,
warm my feet with it at night.
i threw out my dress-for-power
outfits, the boyfriend with the cosmetically
perfected teeth, quit my job.
i walked through the trembling and stripped forests,
past streams filled with dying trout
sat with human shadows curved into cardboard boxes
strewn all along our city streets.
i walked to the continent's edge
where a tramp steamer sighed
and took me under its wing.
In greece i baptized myself with
crushed garlic and olive oil, threw salt
over my shoulder, planted a tree, wore
jeans sunup to sundown, worked odd jobs,
sent half my savings to greenpeace.
the air gradually lightened, turned
gold like the pale wings of fairies
i'd seen in my childhood.

the highways of europe became my new home,
and the woman i once was disappeared.
her ashes ride sidesaddle in my pocket.

The texture of Your Body

is as I remember, yet changed
by our lovemaking
and I relax my porcupine spines,
lean into you.
We sip wine, decadent
in our red morning robes, watch
thick-ankled women pass
on the boulevard below.
You are a butterfly, supping

from my most intimate places, thunder
growling across my bare skin.
(You see how maudlin I've become
in my lust for you?)
In my paint-by-the-numbers brief marriage,
I thought love was a woman backing off,
hands clenched, under a half-lit witch's moon.
You say love is the sun waiting;
it waits only for my dark side to turn.

PRIS CAMPBELL's poems have been published in *Poems Niederngasse*, *MiPo Publications* (print/digital/radio/OCHO), and *Boxcar Poetry Review*. She has two chapbooks: *Abrasions* and *Interchangeable Goddesses*, the latter with Tammy Trendle.

Ann Fox Chandonnet
Jam for the Lamb

Of course
there are blackberries in heaven!
They took their color
from the hooves erupting from Satan's feet
as he clicked his heels
in his final dark dive.
Beneath the Tuscan sun,
the hand swoops among thorns
like a sharp-shinned hawk among pine branches,
pursuing lunch.
Scratches heal quick as a wink,
almost painlessly.
Juice never stains white robes.

The result is succulent as ripe melon.
Even if the berries have been frozen for months
before convening with sugar,
He always knows.
As the watched pot boils,
the Lamb appears at the kitchen door,
shuffling in His ecstasy of desire,
begging for fresh bread
with a smear of hot jam.

Gleaners must have faith;
one cane may bear only four ripe globes.
The thrill of the hunt obtains even here,
complete with its whiff of suspense.
Last year's pins and needles, this year's

and the unending next
all guard the gleaming treasure,
rapiers ready to shed blood.

ANN FOX CHANDONNET has been published in anthologies including *In the Dreamlight: 21 Alaskan Writers, Merrimack* and *Last New Land*. Her poems have appeared in magazines such as *permafrost, Ice Floe, Abraxas, New Kauri, MidAtlantic* and *Callapooya Collage*. Her seven poetry collections include *Canoeing in the Rain, Ptarmigan Valley*, and *Auras, Tendrils*.

Chella Courington
Dream of New Mexico

In La Madera, you find me
late afternoon sun at my back

hips wider than yours, gathering
skulls. We roam red hills:

ocher, orange and purple earth
cracked by hot blowing sand.

A solitary penitent, dark veil
over torso, trudges near us.

Bulky black crosses cover the desert.
You kiss my scars, ghosts of my breasts.

Seven years mortification fall away
evening bells from Ranchos de Taos.

CHELLA COURINGTON teaches poetry, fiction, creative writing, and composition at Santa Barbara City College. Her recent poetry appears in *Prism Review, Touchstone, Dark Sky Magazine, SUB-LIT* and *Studio*. Her second chapbook, *How to Teach Grammar*, was a runner up in the 2008 *Main Street Rag* Chapbook Competition.

Brenda Mann Hammack
Sunday Afternoon

after the painting by Leonor Fini

There is no doubt to the sincerity of cats
for a purr is to a growl a matter of cadence.
Cats are sincere even when they're fickle.
They mean each movement.

Even when they peer down fist-sized
cubbyholes, they are sure to fit
although their skulls are larger
than the space they mean to usurp.

They're skeptical only of quantum limits.
Constriction is, to them, a faith dementia.
They're sure we could all fit despite religion,
law, or physics. If I could shrink myself

to a shelf's dimension, I could dawdle
with my cats. We could lounge like figments
of our own imaginations. On Sunday afternoon,
we could loll like anybody's business.

They would flex, at most, their whiskers. Or else,
like Schumann's *Träumerei*, they would launch
themselves at dust to provoke artists. On Sunday
afternoon, I'd be sure as any Christian

of my own significance if I could shape-shift.
If I could be so strange that I could be familiar,
if I knew that I would always land on my feet,
what wouldn't I endeavor?

BRENDA MANN HAMMACK is a poetry editor for Trillium Literary Journal and teaches creative writing, children's literature, and Images of Women at Fayetteville State University. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in a variety of journals including *The North Carolina Literary Review*, *Pedestal*, and *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*.

Helen Losse
Over the Atlantic

The moon's waxing brings monthly silver,
waning a touch of gold. A full moon
can sing a rainbow in the scale of a lunar
spectrum. An ocean itself is the color of emeralds.

The Atlantic can swallow the moon
then build, for her, a pewter altar,
while we sit in the pale of the ruby-red—
kneel in the tide-washed sand—

'til flashes of light topaz the sunrise.

HELEN LOSSE is Poetry Editor of *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*. Her recent poetry publications include *Ann Arbor Review*, *Lily*, *Ghoti*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and *Blue Fifth Review* and two chapbooks: *Gathering the Broken Pieces*, available from FootHills Publishing and *Paper Snowflakes*, available from Southern Hum Press. Educated at Missouri Southern State and Wake Forest Universities, she lives in Winston-Salem, NC where she occasionally writes book reviews for the *Winston-Salem Journal* and *CutBank Reviews*.

Carter Monroe
Poem for Jack Spicer II

Approaching the edge of placid potential
the harangue is left uneasy.
A palpable sense of wonderment
shadows all that seems workable.

Tension pushes the bellows
and time is forged within.
The frame is indefinable.
The meaning, inconsequential.

From the stars come the philosophy
in beams downcast and immobile.
The bursting occurs
after the glass is broken.

After the pieces slit the throat.

Poem for Jack Spicer VI

The matriculation lies passively,
alone and brooding in the next room,
waiting for a phone call
or an alarm clock
to counter the impulses
and deny the next step.

The radio surfs itself
as news, weather, sports
and three seconds of Lionel Hampton
connect in a discernable collage
making sound into something visible.

When the voice comes,
bringing the tide to a crest,
day and night will merge
and form an indistinct cloud
with silent thunder
and invisible lightening.

Words will fall like hail
and roll randomly across the page
like tumbleweeds on an imaginary plain
or hubcaps that find freedom from the wheels

CARTER MONROE lives, reads, and writes in the Provinces of Eastern North Carolina. He subscribes to Jim Chandler's theory, "If you can remember everywhere you've been published, you ain't been published much." His latest book is *The New Lost Blues - Selected Poems 1999 - 2005* (Thunder Sandwich Press.) The poems in this issue are from an unpublished series called "24 Poems for Jack Spicer."

Janice Moore-Fuller
Cryogenics

Midnight is the hour when old food
takes chances, thankful not to be eaten.
Eggs beaten into omelets shape themselves

into swans and palm trees.
Goat cheese sneaks off the saucer,
skates across the ice-box grid.

Sardines wish upon a star-shaped paté
no one remembers buying.
What is the color of decay?

Lavender? Gray? If things
don't find peace in the Kelvinator,
how can I forget Mother's limbs

underground near the railroad tracks
still crossing, uncrossing?
Planes circle the graves, trailing

boundless ribbons I'd like to loop
through her hair. I'd dress her
in a cowl-neck gown, loose enough

to let her breathe. On some other
planet, the oxygen is as dry
and unmarrowed as her cool, cool bones.

Ellipsis

Mysteries begin not with a crime
but an omission, a missing knob
on the tv, the absent scent
of verbena. No gory scene's
as compelling as the missing
chair at the dining room table
Clear water instead of wine.
When I was nine, the dog disappeared
one morning. Its long body stopped
pressing a place in the chair.
The old scratches in the hardwood
made us pause to wonder.
A choke chain, strange liquid in the bowl,
lean pieces of meat, uneaten.
No one voted to get another pet.
My father just wedged a puppy
in the box where the old dog slept
as if no one would notice.
No votive candles along the window.
The stone birdbath had lapped up
the water the dog used to drink,
gagging himself as he swallowed.

JANICE MOORE FULLER is Writer-in-Residence and Professor of English at Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina, and has published three volumes of poems—*Archeology Is a Destructive Science* (Scots Plaid Press), *Sex Education* (Iris Press), and *Séance* (Iris Press). Her plays and libretti have been produced at Catawba's Florence Busby Corriher and Hedrick theatres, BareBones Theater's New Play Festival, Minneapolis Fringe Festival, Polli Talu Arts Center in Estonia, and Rendez-Vous Musique Nouvelle in France.

Tim Peeler

Checking Out XXV

They'd come from the red dirt roads
out behind the drive-in screen
riding K-Mart bikes with wide
handle bars and banana seats,
popping wheelies up the driveway
past the dried-up fountain,
then weave into a single file

of long-haired punk kids,
hiding their bikes behind the
building that formed its brick mouth

into a horizontal C around the pool,
then sneak up the cement steps out
through the breezeway at 114.

Some days
when I knew the owner was gone,
I'd ignore them for an hour,
their crazed dives and wild hoops,
the cutoff jeans and bruised legs.
But then I'd have to do my job,
sneak around the corner, surprise them
with my voice, "What you boys doing here?"
I'd ask as if I'd never seen them before,
and they'd always reply, playing along,
"We're staying in those rooms back there,"
already filing out the pool gate, wet and
headed back to dirt roads, hot trailers,
alcoholic stepfathers.

TIM PEELER is the author of eight books, including four poetry books, two regional baseball histories, a prose collaboration, and the forthcoming book of interviews, *Voices From Baseball in Catawba County*. for review of fractured world.

Mark Smith-Soto
All Done

The back yard leans away from the house,
Walking down was easy with the shrubs in my hands,
Dragging the topsoil in its plastic bags,
Digging holes in earth softened by days of rain;

But going back has been difficult;
The house in the distance tilts the other way,
My feet weigh more with every step,
My hands feel emptier than I remember.

Alfonsina

Won't bother bending down
To pick big stones for her pockets.

The phone perched on the night table
Will ring on for the love of absence.

She will be a slow branch sliding under the surface,
Or a leaf too full of water finally.

The water will rise around her
Like a great dream.

Costa Rican-American MARK SMITH-SOTO is professor of Romance Languages, editor of *International Poetry Review* and Director of the Center for Creative Writing in the Arts at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A 2005 winner of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in creative writing, he has published two full-length poetry collections to date, *Our Lives Are Rivers* (University Press of Florida, 2003), and *Any Second Now* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co., 2006).

Harding Stedler
Water Turned into Weeds

Alligator weeds devour shorelines
in the way
 that cancers feed on organs.
Soon, there will be no water
for the boats to navigate,
no place for fishermen
 to cast a line.
Watersnakes and cottonmouths
are soon to own the lake
and terrorize morning joggers
 on blacktopped trails.

The city is about to own a weed lake,
and fish will fly at night
in search of water
as turtles swim upside down
 in murky shallows.
Red-wings will scatter
the only color there is
as they build nests
among the rushes.

My nights are spent in liquid thought
as I wring water from the green
and long for alligators.

HARDING STEDLER

Nikolai von Keller
Snow

Persephone wants to see snow,
just once.
But with every return her mother's joy
sears the earth into bloom.
And as for her lover,
he can only offer her his perfect body,
his unforgivable fruit.

NIKOLAI VON KELLER is a Bowdoin College graduate who recently returned to the USA from a year-long Watson Fellowship.