

Some poets whose work we accepted submitted an author comment for their poem(s). Click on the author comment links to read what inspired them at *The Wild Goose Poetry Review* blog.

Featured Poet

Sara Claytor [[author comment](#)]

Abalone Skin and Blue

down in the Keys
patches of dark blue water
where you can dip hands
rub fluid on your skin like ink
knowing deep below
sand shifting around seaweed clusters
a single hammerhead
shredding silver fish into pink threads

down in the Keys
in shallow dark blue water
a barracuda brushes your knees
palm trees etched against hard, blue sky
bodies gleaming with burnished teak skins
white sand, white shells, white rocks
white clouds paralyzed, stunned by heat
a lunar landscape out of sync

down in the Keys
your eyes limpid blue stones
scanning a seascape that does not move
fly rod taunt, sun burning hair;
comes the sliding red sunset, your abalone skin
dances with fiery sparks, face melting
like wax held to a flame
your hand calluses as hard as dried fish scales

down in the Keys
murky canal water flowing
yellow moon, a vacancy sign blinking in its ripples
we encircle arms, your warm thigh pressed tight
speak of when we kiss, coral rips loose
from ocean floors, wind whistles through sea shells
geyser foam bursts against rocks
black night water turns to blue velvet

SARA CLAYTOR is a former teacher who holds two graduate degrees from UNC-CH and has received numerous poetry and fiction prizes. Currently, she co-ordinates the McIntyre's monthly poetry reading for NC Poetry Society members. She is author of a chapbook *Reviving the Damsel Fish* and full-length book entitled *Howling on Red Dirt Roads*, which placed second (2008) in the Poetry Council of NC's Oscar Arnold Young Book contest.

William L. Alton
Carving Breasts

The boy carves the wood down
to a dancing girl.
He smiles when he shapes her breasts.
Her hips are wings and catch
the wind of his breathing,
blowing away the shavings
from under her feet.
Her back arcs under his hands,
her legs stretch and pull
together with her arms,
rising up over her head,
A prayer for more music.

WILLIAM L. ALTON started writing in the Eighties while incarcerated in a psychiatric prison. Since then his work has appeared in *Gloom Cupboard*, *Amarillo Bay* and *Breadcrumb Scabs* among others. He earned both his BA and MFA from Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon where he continues to live with his wife and sons.

Jessie Carty
Fontanel [[author comment](#)]

She threw the pot at my brother, aiming
just to the left of his face. When the copper
bottomed pot hit the paneling next to his ear,
it shook the bookcase and one of my father's
bowling trophies spiked my brother
in the center of his skull. Streaks of black
flowed from the spot across his brown hair
like cooling lava.

That was the same spot into which my teeth
had sunk when we played chicken in the community
pool—We lost—I tumbled from his shoulders.
My overbite found that spot; my mouth tasted a hint
of metallic tang before I hit
the chemically blue water.

There, that spot, that he is now holding under his hand
once flexed so his head could pass the birth canal;
so he could fall towards the cracked tile with his eyes
squished together unwilling to see. The spot that now,
though hardened, can still scar.

Fat Girl: The Superhero [[author comment](#)]

You won't be Wonder Woman
because you wouldn't wear
that outfit. Although, when
you were five, and not fat
you had those red boots
that you swore made you run faster.

Your least favorite is Super Girl,
the girl, the skirt, how close the word
Super is to Supper and how you'd fall
out of the sky targeting
the first red Wendy's sign.

Maybe you could be the awkward/
obscure Gigantic Girl whose gift
was growing tall, not out you notice,
but up. She was hefty, having
strength and size like a man.

Field Trip [[author comment](#)]

It was a two hour drive from my school to the Norfolk Zoo.
On the bus ride, I hovered around the chaperoning mothers

especially Mrs. Harvey. I loved that on top of her little
round head, her hair sat in a small afro that

reminded me of a gumdrop. She sang "Jesse's Girl" to me
while she and the other mothers talked about how

fine the singer of that song was. I wanted to like the song
but in it, Jesse is a boy. Except for me, Jesse

is always a boy. At the zoo, I stuck close to Mrs. Harvey
until we arrived at the Nocturnal Habitat. She didn't

want to see "no rodents." Inside I tried follow my teacher's
shirt while I kept my hand on the left wall as my class

passed through the rooms of raccoons, shrews and possums.
The girls huddled, whispering about the boys

who were lined up in front of the enclosures, tapping on the glass.
There was just enough space for one more. With my hand

below the glass, I placed my face against the window. There
was one bat hanging from a branch near my corner.
I was the only one who saw his beady eye.

Amphibian [[author comment](#)]

Her curls poke out
from a black
with white lettered cap
that starts to sag
as sweat slinks down
her tan and freckled cheeks
collecting on the neckline
of her T-shirt

With her feet bare to the asphalt
she treks to the community pool
feeling the diving board
and the *ga goooooon ga goooooon*
rhythm as someone dives

Beside the pool girls lay out
in their small bathing suits
suits picked to allow
the sun to spread
the most color

These girls do not dive or swim
They dip in the shallow end
before applying
more coconut lotion

She walks by the girls
on their backs
and she tosses her T-shirt
before she jumps into the pool
splashing up water
with her strong feet

JESSIE CARTY is the author of a collection of poetry entitled *At the A & P Meridiem* and editor of a unique YouTube literary journal called *Shape of a Box*. She is a graduate of the Queens University creative writing program and currently lives in Charlotte. Her poetry has been widely published online and in print journals.

Harry Calhoun

3 and 2 count, old and crafty [\[author comment\]](#)

I'm not pushing 50 any more, I'm pulling it
and I feel the weight of years dragging
like a pitcher's dead arm. And while I'm not much

into sporting analogies I remember
my boyhood, how I could throw
the high hard one hopping past the hitter.

I'm sure I don't have the fastball any more,
but this is poetry, not baseball,
and I have this knuckleball that dances
like bright dust in a sunshaft,

and I can shrug off the dust of years
and throw that flutterball at you
until the stadium collapses around me
and I hope you stand up in the ruins

like sunflowers and say,
"C'mon, Calhoun, show us
that ol' tricky knuckler

one more time."

Re-psych-ling [\[author comment\]](#)

Drank tap water most of my life then turned
to bottled because I didn't like the taste
coming out of the faucet
and now I find out that bottles
may leach toxic chemicals into the water
as they degrade.

Thinking about that makes me consider
how I lived with this insane anxious angry
thing bottled up inside me and only
let it out enough to help ruin two marriages
and who knows how many relationships
and now I see it for what it is

and with therapy and a good woman's patience
I'm trying to teach my brain
to leach chemicals
of kindness and restraint
into the degrading but steadfast

vessel of my body

HARRY CALHOUN'S articles, literary essays, book reviews and poems have been published in magazines including *Writer's Digest* and *The National Enquirer*. Recently, his online chapbook *Dogwalking Poems* and his trade paperback, *I knew Bukowski like you knew a rare leaf*, were published. He has had recent publications in *Chiron Review*, *Still Crazy*, *SNReview*, *Orange Room Review*, *Bird's Eye reView*, *Abbey*, *Monongahela Review* and many others. Recently, he was one of 12 poets invited to *LiteraryMary's* anthology, *Outstanding Men of the Small Press*.

Daniel Casey

Cleave One Flesh [\[author comment\]](#)

—April 3rd 2009

Rain in April is a cliché
but that doesn't make it any less
of a fact or make me less wet.

My problem with prejudice is
half the time it's wrong and then
half the time we'd like it to be.

Maneuvering throughout, between
other bodies, these things, a path,
a fiction of friction, fluid—

how do we endure such a move
from Iowa to Binghampton?
What proof, what defense, accusation

or lament? What celebration
is proper when dealing with this
sluice of others, this fact, this slant?

One triggers something in another,
something that can't be washed away
even if April should last well

into the next month, even if
here lives can finally begin
and there for no reason they end.

DANIEL CASEY earned his MFA from the University of Notre Dame in 2003. Currently, Casey is the editor of *Gently Read Literature*, a web journal devoted to criticism of contemporary poetry and literary fiction. In 2008, Gold Wake Press published his first electronic poetry chapbook, *Well Enough*. Casey currently lives in New Haven, CT.

Curtis Dunlap

Abigail Beasley: Town Gossip [\[author comment\]](#)

Old Bob Hathaway
wears tin foil
under his straw hat;
claims it's the only way
to keep space aliens
from reading his mind.

Now I ask you,
why does Bob Hathaway
sit on a wooden stool in his back yard,
hat planted firmly on his bald head,
gazing at the stars at night?
Is he trying to keep *Them*
from reading *his* mind?
or, is he really trying to read *Theirs*?

A Conversation Overheard Outside the Court House [\[author comment\]](#)

actually,
you're getting off light,
considering what you blew
in that breathalyzer,
and you called a cop a son-of-a-bitch,
ten weekends in jail,
hell,
I could do that with my eyes closed,
just one thing:
sleep on the bottom bunk;
hot air rises
you'll be cooler below,
oh,
and when you're lying on your back
trying to figure out how
you landed in such a predicament,
know that there are
98 air holes
cut into the bottom
of the metal bunk above you,
it helps the mattress breathe,
counted them enough to know.

CURTIS DUNLAP lives near the confluence of the Mayo and Dan rivers in Mayodan, North Carolina. He has been published in a variety of journals including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Magnapoets*, *Modern Haiku*, and *Sketchbook*. He was awarded 3rd Prize in the 11th International Kusamakura Haiku Competition in 2006 and the Museum of Haiku Literature Award in 2008. His web site is located

at tobaccoroadpoet.com. Curtis also blogs along Tobacco Road at tobaccoroadpoet.blogspot.com.

Tawnysha Greene

Birds of Shreveport [[author comment](#)]

A white riverboat sits docked, lights still on
as birds flock to its rails, resting before gliding
to the riverbank and circling back again.
Beyond is a bridge, the section on the river rusted over—
on it, a train, black and white cattle cars
rolling past crumbling storefronts—red, yellow, green, blue—
passing vacant car lots and a casino—the El Dorado,
a gilded archway over an empty street.
The birds land on tracks, still warm,
watching the train's smoke spiral away.

TAWNYSHA GREENE is a PhD student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Her work has appeared in *The 2River View*, *The Arava Review*, and *Loose Yarns*.

Richard Krawiec

Worship [[author comment](#)]

we light the candle
in an upstairs room
read Bible verses
on 'love' 'forgiveness'
sing hymns to the power
of faith and healing
share a communion
of wine and crackers
as broken as we feel

in the sorrow
of attempting
to undo what can't
be undone we see
as if for the first time
our perishable flesh
loose drapes of skin
wattled folds
lines and wrinkles
another chiseled
unchangeable past

we reach to embrace
what remains
kiss stroke hold
worship
the stark light

of the declining sun
our adoration
the dark purple
petals wild irises
of the soul still
furling forth

RICHARD KRAWIEC is the author of two novels and one short story collection and editor of four other books. His first book of poems, *Breakdown*, was a Finalist for the 2009 Indy Book Awards for Poetry. Krawiec won the 2009 Excellence in Teaching Award from UNC-Chapel Hill for his online Fiction Writing courses.

Marvin Lurie
Picking Wild Blackberries on the Sandy River Delta

...is thorny work.
Threading my hands through tangles of thorns,
reaching for the plumpest fruit
high in the bramble,
red specks and streaks bloom on my hands and arms.
I reward myself with tastes.
Only right then can I savor their full lush sweetness.
My dog follows me from bush to bush,
lies in shade, waits for whatever the day might bring.
I feel the missing presence if she is distracted, out of sight.
When she reappears, wagging,
and stretches out in the shade,
again there is a sense of completeness,
sun, sweet berries, an old companion,
the green and yellow sweep of delta grasses,
as if there were no other reason for being there
except to make the day whole,
of a kind when nothing else is needed
to be complete.

MARVIN LURIE is a retired communications and association management executive, originally from the Chicago area, who lives in Portland Oregon. He has been writing poetry on and off since high school. Lurie was published most recently in two issues of *Verseweavers*, the Oregon State Poetry Association's (OSPA) annual anthology of award-winning poems. He is on the Board of Directors of OSPA.

Felicia Mitchell
Scientific Method [[author comment](#)]

We left the bloodroot by the side of the creek,
its rhizome red against brown mud.
Earlier, when I dug it up,
scratching through soil like a conjure woman, I fingered the roots

and pulled lightly,
thinking kind gestures make a difference
even to plants.
When I handed the flower to you,
you explained the scientific method.
Nodding, I stared at the red at the base of this small flower
and tried to believe it was not a corpse but a harbinger of spring.
I imagined the whole world upside down:
blood red roots grasping at the sun
while white petals found ground water.
By now more rain has fallen,
and I'm sure our plant is no longer by the creek.
It's in water rushing over rocks.
It's my belief in the scientific method, drowning.
It's Ophelia floating downstream.
It's your hands reaching into mine
and taking something almost whole
and breaking it in two
to teach me a lesson I will never forget—
that the scientific method can yield as much poetry
as results.

A Certain Slant of Light [\[author comment\]](#)

There is a certain slant of light
some winter afternoons
that oppresses
and there is another that delights,
like a Pileated woodpecker
on the side of a tree
or chocolate-covered cherries
pulled out of a backpack
and handed out one by one.

FELICIA MITCHELL, a native of South Carolina who grew up in South Carolina and North Carolina, is the author several chapbooks, including *The Cleft of the Rock* (Finishing Line Press, 2009) and *There is No Map*, an online chapbook from *Dead Mule*. Her poems and essays have been published in a variety of journals, and she writes a weekly column for *Washington County News* in her adopted home of southwest Virginia, where she teaches at Emory & Henry College.

Grant Morgan **Country Life**

So this is the country life
Rock. Rock. Listen to the melody of the hills
Crickets. They sing a song for all to hear
The tree frogs chime in with a tune

The harmonics are soothing
From inside I can hear the Red Sox beating the A's
A cigarette burns slowly to my fingertips
Light is fleeting.
The gentle, nightly fog rolls in for the evening
Neighbors drive by. We wave with a surreal familiarity
An unmuffled truck drives the mountain sides
Probably been in the family since the late 50's
Back when Eisenhower was in office
Those were the good ol' days
Are they so different from today?
Same families. Same roads. Even the same truck.
Where does the time go here?
Maybe it just seeps into the ground
And makes everything green.

GRANT MORGAN is a doctoral candidate in Educational Research and Measurement at the University of South Carolina.

Simon Perchik

Each base egg-white, the kid
rounding third, slips and you hear
the ball still falling.
Nothing wants to fly
not even the rain.

You hear the leaves and look
at your hands --a small plane
is reaching out to be fed, a field
jumping to its death.

It's almost noon.
Nothing could be further away. Or darker.
Even with your eyes closed
it's never dark enough
--you need both hands to hear the leaves
the cry they make
to be fed on the ground
as worms: not even the rain
with all its feathers.

You hear the ball carry back its shadow
on your shadow and your hands
seem to move, the plane
caught in midair though your eyes
were closed, were fumbling
for the rain in your hands
still falling.

SIMON PERCHIK is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. *Family of Man* (Pavement Saw Press) is scheduled for Fall 2009. For more information, including his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" and a complete bibliography, please visit his website at <www.geocities.com/simonthepoet>.

Sam Rasnake

In Praise of Flannery O'Connor [[author comment](#)]

In a thick dust that settles the baked roads,
dark scent of pine and cedar, the stiff shoulders
of a summer sky that won't make up its mind
on grays or reds, she is the constant voice,
like lazy turns of creek bank, with a mouth
for the real world that refuses to let go,
refuses to become anything other than
what it is, what it has always been.

Her body, wrapped in poison that will consume her,
aches with evening coming on and a backdrop
of soundless birds, hard pressed to the task.
The car's horn, once, the dog's bark ending,
the hidden wave of cicadas in bushes, then nothing,
are last reminders of a deep purpose.
This is the beauty she sets her hand to.
She has no idea of that other world, or its silence.

Here, she speaks, her tongue unfolding such
geographies of dread and shift, crease after crease,
a perfect undoing of loneliness on the page.

Beggars' Banquet [[author comment](#)]

– after viewing *Viridiana* by Luis Buñuel

*For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth
forever, or at least until we find a home.
We will eat ourselves out of this one,
surely, but not before the blind can see,
our lepers are cleansed, and women give
up what they will.*

That was another time.

Here, the dead stay dead, with nothing more
required.

Desire is the cruelest word, and
destination over journey, the creed to follow.
We stuff our mouths, and let tomorrow scrounge
like dogs for itself –

We stuff our mouths,
our bellies to a ball, a last supper, the dance

of beggars while the voices sing *hallelujah*
for stockings, for crosses, jump rope and cards.
No heroes, no villains – just a fetish
for the fragmented world
that will not be saved.

At times, SAM RASNAKE believes he's a highway in a Bishop poem or a character in a Buñuel film, but occasionally he writes, and his works have appeared in journals such as *MiPOesias*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Literal Latté*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Ecotone: Reimagining Place*, and *BOXCAR Poetry Review*, as well as in the *Best of the Web 2009* anthology (Dzanc Books) and the *Deep River Apartments* anthology (The Private Press). The author of one chapbook, *Religions of the Blood* (Pudding House), and one collection, *Necessary Motions* (Sow's Ear Press), he edits *Blue Fifth Review*, an online poetry journal (<http://www.angelfire.com/zine/bluefifth/index.html>).

Tony Ricciardelli [[author comment](#)]
Ryan O. (October, 1973)

They size me up with Quaalude eyes, cartoon grins,
talk about me like I'm a mile away,
but I'm here, across the room,
dry-mouthed, strung-out,
wishing I were dead.

Malignant voices mock me, broken glass in my ears.
Like city wind stink blown through the drainpipe,
their lungs explode in narrow, knifing blasts.
GIVE THE ASSHOLE A BEER!
FRICAN LUSH!

In a dozen hours from now, I'll peel myself from the sofa,
and I'll wander the streets,
choke on caustic bile,
empty my bowels in the alley,
shake and twitch like a sonofabitch before I find my next bottle.
And in my misery, I'll plan eight hundred ways to do them.

Burn them, blast them, cut them, slice them.
Pull off their heads, sodomize them with a red hot iron.

SHIT, NO! I WON'T DO ANY OF THOSE THINGS!

I need them to buy me beer,
toss me their leftover toxins,
scrape me off the sidewalk and dump me in the vestibule.

I live to suck the foam-spit sludge from their empty bottles,
swallow the smallest roach left in their ashtray,
lick up the ashes left in their bong.

They can beat me, kick me, rob me – it's alright.
I once let them ring my neck with cigarette burns
in exchange for a pint of Mad Dog.

And they love it when I beg.
One night they found me delirious with the tremors,
so, they gave me a Prestone and Seagrams cocktail,
and they pissed themselves laughing
when I realized they had poisoned me.

One of them is my step-brother.

I tell everyone that they are my friends.

Five days on the street is better than going home.

I'm fifteen and I can't stop drinking.

TONY RICCIARDELLI is the Tutoring and Developmental Services Coordinator at Mitchell Community College, where he also coordinates an open mic reading series. He holds degrees from the University of Massachusetts and Salem State College. He now lives in Huntersville.

Gabriel Shanks

Mott Street [author comment]

Mott Street is barely, just barely,
a street.

No sidewalk to speak of.
A ribbon strip of tar and cigarettes
over rounded cobblestones
that pebbled into place
over nothing more
than the dirt
that remembers it
was an Indian trail
through natural fibers
and unexpurgated forest.

Anna Sui
does not know this.
Nor Carolina Herrera.
Nor the Gucci walking past me,
stealing focus.

Today designer lofts
and Chinese warehouses
pimp Mott like a gaudy courtesan
unloading overwhelmed trucks

while preoccupied pedestrians
avoid the crowds of Canal.

I choose to fall in love right here,
at Mott's bend before the intersection
with a boy as yet unimagined
And I pray my asphalt affair
gets plenty of the sunlight
falling on the western edge
of this junk-glittering strip.

Protect this streetborne love
you gods of the lower east side
from the hordes shuffling up Mercer
past Soho's chic desolation

to the unaffordable heaviness
of Houston.

For Mott Street needs only joy
to expose the dazzle and glint.
That, and a fuzzy understanding
that roads are alive
and streets, however thin,
are speaking to you.

The Sea of Cortez [author comment]

Shaking ocean out of his ear, thighs set apart,
the way you must when trudging through sand,
his glittering shoulders drenched in the Pacific,

a promise of Poseidon, of Burt Lancaster,
the sun spreading skin like marmalade and butter.

Ocean songs should be written about such men
Set to a swaggering 12/8 time
And carried up, on scented Peruvian winds
to goddesses who understand

GABRIEL SHANKS lives and works in the New York City area. An award-winning poet, playwright and stage director, he was one of the creators of *The Village Fragments*, which received a 2007 OBIE Award. His poetry has been published in *From Now On*, *Spark*, *Chopin with Cherries* (2010) and elsewhere; theatrical recognitions include the Maxim Mazumdar New Play Award, the Southern Young Playwrights Award and the Theatre Project Honor for Outstanding Vision. He was recently named a "New Arts Leader" by the Washington, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

John Sibley Williams
A Handkerchief Waving

What more than light enough to read the night
must we require of a torch?

Be your sin plucking the feathers from angels
or loving, loving stubbornly like a man

or stoning the geese with a palmful of hardened grain

or loving, loving the thirsty sorrow

clustered and ripening upon the coastal vines,
still nothing judges like desire

for all you'll never read.
Go ahead. Line candles across the mantle, the headboard,

the pale belly trembling asleep beside you,
across the sky and name them stars,

still you have but words enough for words,
and no light or darkness may know its own shadow,

only those engorging the ships long set
that, like your own death,

you can already remember like yesterday
as a thousand hands condemned to waving handkerchiefs.

JOHN WILLIAMS has an MA in Writing and resides in Portland, OR, where he frequently performs his poetry and will begin studying Book Publishing at Portland State University in the Fall. He is presently compiling manuscripts composed from the last two years of traveling and living abroad. Some of his over sixty previous or upcoming publications include: *The Evansville Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, *Cadillac Cicatrix*, *Juked*, *The Journal*, *Hawaii Review*, *Barnwood International Poetry*, *Concho River Review*, *Paradigm*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Aries*, *The Alembic*, *Phantasmagoria*, *Clapboard House*, *River Oak Review*, *Glass*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Miranda*, *Language and Culture*, and *Raving Dove*.

A.D. Winans
Woman on the Balcony [[author comment](#)]

I see her two
three times a week
sitting on the balcony
when weather permits
here in old Italy town

in what is left of North Beach
her robe slightly parted
thumbing through the pages of a book
taking no notice of the people down below
I watch her stand yawn
legs like sturdy pillars that stretch
to reach the sky into the boundaries
of my mind
my eyes begging to read the pages
she turns with sensual fingers
wanting just one quick look
one intimate journey into the pages
into the space between the
parting of her robe
a journey to forbidden places
a flight back in time
to another place another world
high on a balcony where
I too ignore the
people coming and going
down below

A.D. WINANS is the author of more than 45 published works of poetry and prose, which have been translated into eight languages. He was the editor and publisher of *Second Coming* for 17 years. His book, *The Land Is Not My Land*, was awarded a PEN Josephine Miles Award for excellence in literature. In 2005 a song poem of his was performed at New York's Tully Hall. In 2006 Presa Press published a book of his Selected Poems. Further information can be found at www.adwinans.mysite.com