

Featured Poet
Debra Kaufman

Exercises

Before the sun reaches California,
Jack wakens his wife.
She wants to sleep in, just once.
She can hear him pant
as he begins his push-ups.
He expects to outlast her:
this the audience knows.

Max the cameraman,
who sleeps in the spare room,
dreams about Jack's wife.
He loves the way she moves,
sloe-eyed and slow-hipped.
He wants her drowsy and warm.
He lights a cigarette
and heads for the kitchen,

where he spies Jack's wife
in the faint jacinth light.
She focuses on the fruit bowl—
six bananas, five pears, a mango.
Max wishes she'd fix on him
and whisper, *Let's wallow*
in slow motion, let's worm
our way to ecstasy.

But Jack springs in
and leads her to the studio.
Max follows, brightening the lights.
Jack tells the audience he'll swim
the Channel shackled to rowboats.
His wife turns her face
from the whirring camera.

Tomorrow, Max thinks,
I'll try a softer focus
and linger on her breasts,
her throat,
and her dim, dim eyes.

The Thing

He did it again,
climbed into their bed
after a few scotches,
did the thing that makes her freeze,
then complained of her chill air.

That shutting-out look—
a scrim glazes his eyes,
his shoulders tighten—
her heart hammers in her hollow chest.

She knows this cage
by its cat-piss smell,
its tensile strength. If
she breaks out he'll say
she doesn't love him.
If she huddles in the corner,
her own self's diminished.
Neither can touch the other.

They need new lines that signal
we are not what we each think we are.
A gesture meaning only
I am here. This is a moment.
This. Me. You. Now this.

DEBRA KAUFMAN, a poet and playwright, grew up in many small towns throughout the Midwest. She is the author of four poetry collections: *Family of Strangers*, *Still Life Burning*, *A Certain Light*, and, most recently, *Moon Mirror Whiskey Wind* (Pudding House Press). Her poems have appeared in many poetry anthologies and literary magazines, and her plays have been performed throughout North Carolina and in California. She is a member of the Black Socks Poets and lives in Mebane, North Carolina.

Jenn Blair
The Dead Make One Request

Only let us keep our dictionaries
full of wormwood and honey—our bug
bit mornings, frantic afternoons.
And weary nights. The Phlox and Jimson
weed and stinging nettle—all the
small moon welts rising to form
island chains across the ankle.

Our containers of yellowed cabbage,
keys to we know not what—our
bent in mailboxes, unopened bills,
and mismatched chairs.

Our water spotted spoons
incomprehensible longings
sun burnt arms.

JENN BLAIR teaches at the University of Georgia where she is a Park Hall
Fellow. I have published in *Copper Nickel*, *The Tusculum Review*, *MELUS*, and
The SNR Review.

Bob Caldwell
Arrowheads

My brain was dulled
By blows to the head
Both by machinery &
The hands of friends
& I've been dulling
It ever since.
The option was giving
My IBM bonus to
The Indians & growing
Cantaloupes in my parents'
Backyard. Catawba
Land, Cherokee, I
Don't know. There is
Blood in the dirt.

BOB CALDWELL is author of the chapbook "One More Ride." Having
disappointedly discovered in his youth that one can make far more cleaning
pools than being an adjunct instructor, he ended up with his own pool service
company. Now, tired of pool work, he is teaching again at CPCC and Gaston
College and publishing poems in *Main Street Rag* and other journals.

Pris Campbell
Mists of Time

Believing we would be safe,
hands clasped on our heads,
knees dug into the hardwood classroom floor,
we readied ourselves for the bomb.

Today's kids rush unprotected
by plump fingertips towards weapons
of mass destruction, return,
knees dug into stiff body bags,
hands speckled with Mideastern blood.

Budding angels, seared by a different future
than Ozzie and Ike prepared us for.

Charred wing tips flutter into my backyard garden.
Misplaced halos clatter loudly along my street.
Those days of our own childhood make-believe
have slipped into the mists of time.

Like the Edsel.
Like starched crinolines drying
in stiff circles for the prom.

PRIS CAMPBELL's *poetry has appeared in Main Street Rag, Mipo publications (digital, print , OCHO: most recently the OCHO Tweeter Poets Issue), Chiron Review, and Boxcar Poetry Review. Her third chapbook, Hesitant Commitments (reviewed in Wild Goose Review and Tears In the Fence), was released by LummoX Press (www.lummoXpress.com) in the fall of 2008 as part of its Little Red Book series.*

Ann Fox Chandonnet
Sacraments in Simple Things

"Thunder snow"--
the biggest storm in five years.
At the supermarket
a tall gent in new overalls
escorts his diminutive spouse
to the automatic door.
He holds her elbow tightly.
The icy parking lot gleams like a disco ball.
She tries to scoot on her slick slippers,

each foot aimed straight ahead.
Each step slips.
He grips her elbow tighter.
They are laughing.
They have not touched in years.
They are laughing.
The ice has brought them together,
and he takes her arm as if
the door opens onto a dance floor.
They are laughing.

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*.

Peggy Gambill
Braided Collage

Today, I stare into the mirror
of my Art Deco vanity,
comb my hair,
imagine Mama standing
behind me, brushing
my long curls 100 strokes
with an heirloom tortoise-shell brush.

Once, when I wrapped brush rollers
into snarls taking hours to untangle,
Mama threatened
to cut my long blonde hair,
gap my tresses like a cat
excised of fur matting.

Root weary, scalp sore, red-puffed eyes,
I sobbed, "No, Mama. Please don't cut it."

Before my first middle school dance,
Mama paid a hairdresser to tease
a bouffant, just like hers,
only she was peroxide blonde,
while my blonde locks matured
into what Mama called
"dirty dishwater brown."

By the time I was 26,
I covered an eyebrow graft
and scars on my forehead
with wavy bangs.
Disfigurement, a first
and last date gift from a man
who left the scene
of the crash and my face hanging
in the fractured windshield.
Mama cut short her vacation
so she could come home to tweeze
glass and hair from my face.

I do not remember the exact year
Mama gave up coloring her hair,
allowing grey and white
to take her straight to old.

Now that she is gone,
I think of all the things
I could barter:
a hand, maybe a foot,
part of my liver,
sacrifice my cats,
to have Mama back
and young ,
standing at the mirror
brushing my hair.

PEGGY GAMBILL, once native to Georgia, now lives in the Raleigh area. She has published works in *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Cape Rock*, *Bay Leaves*, *Mount Olive Review*, and *Pinesong*. Her first book of poetry is titled, *Patchwork*.

Kathryn Jacobs
Trust Your Ears

Your *ears* can tell what's sexy. Taste the sounds:
A slippery, resistant, spongy S
that wriggles around stoppers; consonants
that swallow sound, absorbent: runny Ys

that trails off endwise. All that resonance
must saturate your trembling orifice --
don't tell me you deny it. Ws
like warm wet blankets, fuzzy at the edge:

a little Velcro, maybe. Tickly Zs
that wriggle, over-stimulate the ear:
all squeezed together in a music score,
compact and sweaty, wrestling, spilling out
in just-contained, orchestral harmony:

no wonder men personify the muse.

Heard Fireworks Are Sweeter...

Like popcorn from the inside: like you sat
smack in the middle of a big machine
that spilled it out in fountains. Or like rain
spattering the glass, in wind: alphabets

of isolated sound – staccato scraps
erupting on our glass and mortar skins.
Reverberating: birds caught nesting in
a giant cosmic drum. Till sense collaps-

-ses in the static. Stuck: a dial between
two stations, crackling: little verbal bits
mixed in with squeal and squelches as our wits
cohere again, and fragment. Like a screen

of wriggle-worms: no picture; just a flare
like pins in sockets: speckles everywhere.

KATHRYN JACOBS is a Medievalist who has published on medieval marriage contracts, and a poet with a volume of poetry called *Advice Column* (Finishing Line Press).

Tony Leuzzi

Exposition

From
where
I stand
I can see
through the uncurtained
window of a neighbor's bedroom
that the walls are bright green and the rumped bed sheets red.

|

should
perhaps
step back now
knowing only this—
but the pale blue sock flung over
the stiff back of the black arm chair draws me further in

as
do
the dense
clutter of
papers on the desk,
the turned-down bottle of pills
on the nightstand, and the open door into the hall...
.....

Autobiography

He
was
afraid
of thunder
that prefaced the storm
and therefore made new myths for it:
God bowls a perfect strike...Heaven's maids are vacuuming...

He
was
afraid
of closed doors
when he was alone.
So, as if it were a sword, he
carried with him, room to room, the handle of a broom.

He
was
afraid
of shadows
and mostly his own
and thus it was his policy
to refer to himself strictly in the third person.

TONY LEUZZI is a teacher and writer in Rochester, NY. His poems and prose have been published or are forthcoming in *The Sentence*, *The National Poetry Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Pinyon*, *Double Room*, and many others. His first

book of poems, *Tongue-Tied and Singing*, was published by Foothills Press in 2004.

Helen Losse
How a Poet Speaks

I didn't set out to be
a poet, nor did I know

I should use a poet's words.
I planned to be a teacher,

then a mom. But what does
a poet who is not part teacher,

part parent? Poets seek
to *capture the light*,

knowing that when
something's clear, using it

is wise. The earth's cycling
was known to the ancients,

before St. Paul preached at
the Acropolis, where he gave

name to "the Unknown."
Did he try to eliminate

mystery forever? Because
if he did, ought he not be

banished for the very act?
What a poet seeks is *truth*—

simple truth like no one can
imprison God in His heaven.

HELEN LOSSE's first full length poetry book, *Better With Friends*, was released in April from Rank Stranger Press. Helen is the Poetry Editor of *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*.

Deborah T. McGinn
Skydiving

Midnight says, do something wild before you die,
though death has yet to confront me. Skydiving
lessons, too much to spend, yet not spending is like
losing air. Is this my sentence? Urging me to get out of
my writing room piled high with unfinished stories
to leap from a plane not quite above God, shaking
like a skeleton hanging from a tree? Someone will push me,
I suspect the pilot waiting too long for my injection, his flying
machine without a director. *Get back to the wheel*, I cry.
A kaleidoscope of color runs like blood, clouds are ghosts
starving—spreading themselves like giant window sheers.
My eyes under shields are slits of hazel. My legs straighten,
boots point and then go flat, preparing for the landing thud.
My calves split open with nerve endings shooting nails. Under
a yellow-blue parachute, I survive barely, breathing hard,
wanting to cry. When next Midnight calls, I will imagine
her suggestion, and write it as if I'd done it. Until then, I am satisfied
with poems and stories floating around my writing room, landing every Saturday.

DEBORAH T. MCGINN lives, teaches, and writes in Lincoln, Nebraska. She has published in *The Iowa Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Plains Song Review* and *Wild Goose Poetry Review*.

Paul Nelson
Inca Pastoral

Swallows slice from their bulb nests
beneath the eaves of the mossy boathouse.
They fraction a galaxy of flies, and one bird
ticks my hair with its blued, tempered wing.
I step back from their gorgeous swoops,
from the pond, glazed as an altar at sunset.

From congealing shadow, a pretty
neighbor's kid, in white summer frock,
dirty feet, drags a doll by its gold hair
up the bank, the grooved steps past me, around
the small garden full of turban squash,
green, shiny tomatoes. She doesn't look at me
or the dark little demons slivering air,
strafing the pond, dimpling the slick.
They will morph into bats in an hour.

She's had her grape-ade, staining the corners
of her mouth, straggles by, hauling the sleepy doll,
right past her brother, sulking by the path,
his hair mohawked, spikes dyed green, red,
plumed by the dying sun. His studded wristlet,
the rings hooked in one eyebrow, nostril, lip,
glint, and his soft white hand
strops a jack-knife on rock
as the birds, finished feeding, vanish
under the eaves.

As if bled by feather, light-headed, I imagine
condors sailing, set on air a mile high
over blocks of stone as big as box-cars
riding each other precisely forever,
no room for mortar in the fit.
There are messages chiseled everywhere,
every century, love, commerce and ego
while Andean breezes slip pacifically
like flute music through the astral ruins,
washed by hemic rain.

Tim Peeler
gravity XXII

tonight he prays for the poles that hold the barn
for ripped tin and raised nails for the ivy-covered
fence line for rain rushing into the green gorge
for rusty cars pushed under a row of brittle pines
for the old limping dog blind in his left eye
for the crazy neighbor who lost his wife last year
for the preacher with the Moses tattoo on his back
for his son who always wanted to be a wrestler
tonight he prays for the poles that hold the barn

gravity XVII

she sauntered
across the parking lot
in the sudden rip cold
of an April afternoon
her skirt billowed
heels gashed
quick zeroes
in cheap asphalt

she carried
chemistry and
calculus books
in a bulging pink bag
that rested
in the small of
her flawless back
past languid peers
through bright weird light
as if this world
could not stop her

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*.

Frank C. Praeger
More Than Ever

A dead racoon, dried-up bear scat with large yellow seeds,
two turtles slipping off a floating derelict door
into a lily pad covered pond.
Stone wall ruin leveled.
After overcast days,
an immense blue figuration of sky.

Verbal abuse in a shaded hollow,
pockets of gas fumes warp across the hillside,
sheets of newspaper fly up, flatten,
trappings of an inconclusive past.

Abandoned tire, burnt out candle, empty tin can
trespass one after the other.

Mosaic of sunlight and maple leaves,
a raven's dark, guttural call,

absent clouds,

absent talk,

and other absences that were no longer thought of.

FRANK C. PRAEGER is a retired research biologist who now lives on the Keweenaw Peninsula which juts out of the northwest corner of the Upper

Peninsula of Michigan into Lake Superior. He has been published in various journals in both the USA and the UK.

David Rigsbee
A Life Preserver

He watches the light move in and out
behind the evening clouds and listens
to the wild duck's long, sad cadence,
interrupted by crows. He senses
the still air is indifferent
to these rituals. For all that,
he knows the connections there
are the nodes of moments
already deep in the braid
of a rope, coiled and put
in a public place under lock and key,
a life preserver, in case of emergency.

DAVID RIGSBEE is the author of seven full-length collections of poems. He is also the author of four chapbooks, two works of criticism (on Carolyn Kizer and Joseph Brodsky, whom he also translated), and editor of two anthologies, the most recent of which is *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Southern Poetry*.

Shawn Sorensen
Mouth of a Jet

Ready for
departure
in front aisle
seat
that's

next to
a mouth
I can't
stop staring
at

twinkling
lights
ice
in my glass

green and wide

fields
rushing by
beneath

our
hurtling
streaking
tender
machine.

SHAWN SORENSEN manages a bookstore in Vancouver, WA. His poems have appeared in *Mannequin Envy* and he won 1st place in the Oregon State Poetry Associations spring 2009 contest, New Poets category.

Elizabeth Swann
Liminal Space

All summer, a thrumming
beyond the threshold –
now leaves' tender green gives way
as veins of red run on gold
before letting go to reel
across cold slate stones.
Pearlescent eggs left
on the underside of a blade
burst, loosing ravenous
black-striped worms.
Each gorges and curls
into a self-made sarcophagus,
then breaks free with wet wings
to ride the rush of wind.
In the tall grass,
a black snake slips
its delicate, filmy sheath,
flexes and coils in the sun.
She stands in the doorway,
eyes on the fleeing geese,
their uneven V-formation,
her hand pressed against
her blouse, the restless stirring
beneath her sternum.

ELIZABETH SWANN is a former high school English teacher currently pursuing her MFA degree at Queens University in Charlotte, NC. Her work has appeared in *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Main Street Rag*, and the Charlotte Writer's Club anthology *Only Connect*. She has earned awards in the Deane Ritch Lomax

poetry contest 2008 and in the Kentucky State Poetry Society's Grand Prix Contest in 2007. Her work will also appear in the upcoming issue of the *Kakalak* 2009 and in the upcoming CWC anthology *Journey Without*.

Dennis Vannatta
The Flora Dora Girls

Best friends from the age of two, they'd wear
their mamas' outsized shoes and dresses,
scarves, beads and hats, and on the wood parquet
they'd do a sort of dance. I call it dance.

We, their fathers, called them the Flora Dora girls.
Later, they'd call us soul brothers,
and they were soul sisters. Still are,
I think, despite the falling out.
What went wrong? I don't know,
unless they saw in the other's eye
too much pain, the pain to come.

Thirty years now since they danced,
my God, thirty years! Flora now lives
in the little house with the big dogs and writes
fine poems, and puts them in a drawer.
She does not go out much. Dora wrests
small victories from a hard world:
a real job at last, her own credit card.
But she will not marry, she will not
give birth. "What, bring a child into this world?"
She has cats instead.

What caused them to fear life so?
Something their fathers did
not protect them from. But what?
"We did all we could," we say.
"We could do no more."
Yet once they were the Flora Dora girls,
and once they danced as if they'd always dance.

I Put away My Things

At the end of the day,
I put away my things.
Books on the bookshelf,
papers into a folder
I don't bother to label,
clothes into the closet,
shoes under the bed,
keys and coins and comb
into the silver serving tray
that once held mints and nuts
at a Baptist wedding reception
but now sits on my nightstand
waiting for me to empty my pockets,
this day now done.
I fold my glasses.
I lay them down.

At the end of this long day,
I put away my fond things.
The friend I sat beside
on the one-lane concrete bridge
and ate sunflower seeds and spat
the hulls into Muddy Creek below
and wondered where they'd drift to,
and where we'd drift to, and,
well, now we know.
And my sisters: Delores,
fifteen years older than me.
I hardly knew her until
she was dying, but we
had two good years; and Kay,
more life in her than I ever had,
old now, and gray. Well, me too.
I put them away, along with my father,
the gentlest of men, and my mother
with her ferocious love.
And my daughter, who'd grab
her sandwich with both hands and eat
straight through, grinning, peanut butter
and jelly in her ears. And my son,
who does not suffer fools

but suffers me, gladly. And you,
on that day you were all in white,
white veil like frost on your long gold hair.

This day, too, this day,
I put away.
Now the sun is setting.
It has set.
And now the night.
I lay me down.
I turn out the light.

DENNIS VANNATTA has published poems in *Panhandler*, *Paintbrush*, and elsewhere and three collections of short stories, *This Time*, *This Place* and *Prayers For The Dead* (both by White Pine Press) and *Lives of the Artists* (Livingston Press).

Earl J. Wilcox
Waltzing the Charleston

Hand me down my walkin' cane,
I'm going to leave on a midnight train
is fast paced, a snappy lyric sung with
gusto, lots of swagger, perfect tempo
for song and dance. Yet when my love
says *hand me my cane* she's not offering
to tap dance with Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly.
Once she could keep time to the jitterbug,
swish and swing to the Charleston thing.
Now, when she asks for her stick it's for
propping, stop her wobbling like a teen
trying out for the high school musical.
When she waltzes with me she knows
that midnight train's left the station.

Carolina Morning Minion

It was not his plumage display
Rarely ever seen here
Bright orange breast, mottled wings
Tail feathers, ebony head, cone-shaped bill
Piercing eyes visible from
Our sun porch, sunrise, a mild
February morning.

Not even the unheralded
Arrival of a Black-headed Grosbeak
Without notice, no *chink, chink*
Captivating us, believing he was an Oriole
Splendor flashing from beneath
Shining forth.

It was, we felt, the mystery
Of his presence, here
In Carolina , far, far away
From his home filling
Himself with sweet suet
Head hammering
Fast like a black
Nail driver.

A few years ago, EARL J. WILCOX retired from 40 years of university teaching and writing about Frost and Jack London. He began writing poetry at age 71, and is now published in more than two dozen journals online and print. His work appears in *Kakalak*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, *AETHLON*, *Underground Voices*, *Arabesques Review*, *Strange Horizons*, *New Verse News*, and others. An avid St. Louis Cards baseball fan, he lives in Rock Hill, SC.

Special Student Section

The last few pages of the Summer Goose are devoted to the work of Scott Owens' students.

Deanna Mullins Self Service

The Laundromat man reaches out
for conversation, spreads his secrets,
biases and past times with strangers.
The Laundromat man shares insights,
keeps the rinse cycle running past midnight,
dismayed at going home alone.
The Laundromat man reminisces on how life was,
happy as long as someone listens.

DEANNA MULLINS is a student at Challenger High School, part of Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC. This is her first publication.

Jeni Conklin
Freckles

You have them everywhere,
across your face,
the bridge of your nose,
down your shoulders
and arms,
on your knees
that you skin in summer
on hot concrete.
I know I'll have to count them all,
stretch you out on green grass,
peeling away clothes.
I will trace them across your chest,
down your back.
They dot you like stars,
a giant constellation
I can map out on your body,
places yet uncharted.

If You Ask Me Why I Brought a Bowler Hat to a Funeral

Nathan had pale curly hair
and pasty skin.
I remember the night he lost his mind,
Christmas Eve; he was standing in the street
with nothing but a bowler hat on.
It was three a.m.
I brought him a blanket.

I remember one night when Father heard of this.
Father went out and
said to him
Boy, where are your clothes?
Boy, where is your home?
Why are you here, standing on my road?
And he said
Sir, I don't know.
Sir, I don't know.

The car was a 1980 Ford Fairmont station wagon.
It had seen better days,
and I'm sure it had seen better owners.
It was driving down Westlock Drive.
He must not have seen the car,

Or the car didn't see him.
The officer said to me,
Boy, where are your clothes?
Boy, where is your home?
Did you know him, this boy whose body we've found?
And I said,
Sir, I don't know.
Sir, I don't know.

JENI CONKLIN is a student at Challenger High School, part of Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC. This is her first publication.

Jacob Gryder
Like Van Gogh, but More Ears

self portraits
painted in the night.
some of people
she had met,
some of them were strangers.
some looked more like landscapes
some like Art Nouveau.
some were very classical,
some, quite abstract.
I just hope, from the distance,
that one of them's of me.

JACOB GRYDER is a student at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC. His poems have appeared in *Dead Mule* and he was a participant in the Aroma of Art Ekphrastic Poetry Event.

Houa Lee
Helplessness

Drugs
Murder
Runaway
Unexpected rumors
The mother I knew
Now the woman who
Makes headlines
Life she kept hidden
Body she laid dead
Children she left behind
True or not
The media remain the narrator
The mysteries lie within

Scribbles

No resource but my thoughts
Purpose to express myself
No limitation
My own work
My mind rises as my hand moves
My heart thumps spewing
Emotion ready to erupt
Paper
Pencil
It's coming out

HOUA LEE is a student at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC.
This is her first publication.

Graham Ponder
Icarus

Just like a man!
Has to rise up so high.
Not satisfied until
you've melted your wings off!
Here I must wait,
not knowing what to expect,
ignored, abandoned,
while you see this world
and the next.
I'm expected to be

the silent rock of stability.
On the other hand,
if I'd gone, I'd be . . .
just like a man.

GRAHAM PONDER is a student at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC.

Keegan Blankenship
Steve

sits in the alley
all day,
drinking and smoking.
His
eyes, beneath the
drunken, bloodshot
layer,
tell stories
of murder,
limbs blown off,
heads
rolling.
Stories of rape and
torture.
For a moment,
Steve remembers,
then has another
drink.

KEEGAN BLANKENSHIP is a dual enrollment homeschool high school student at Catawba Valley Community College. His poems have appeared in *Dead Mule*.