



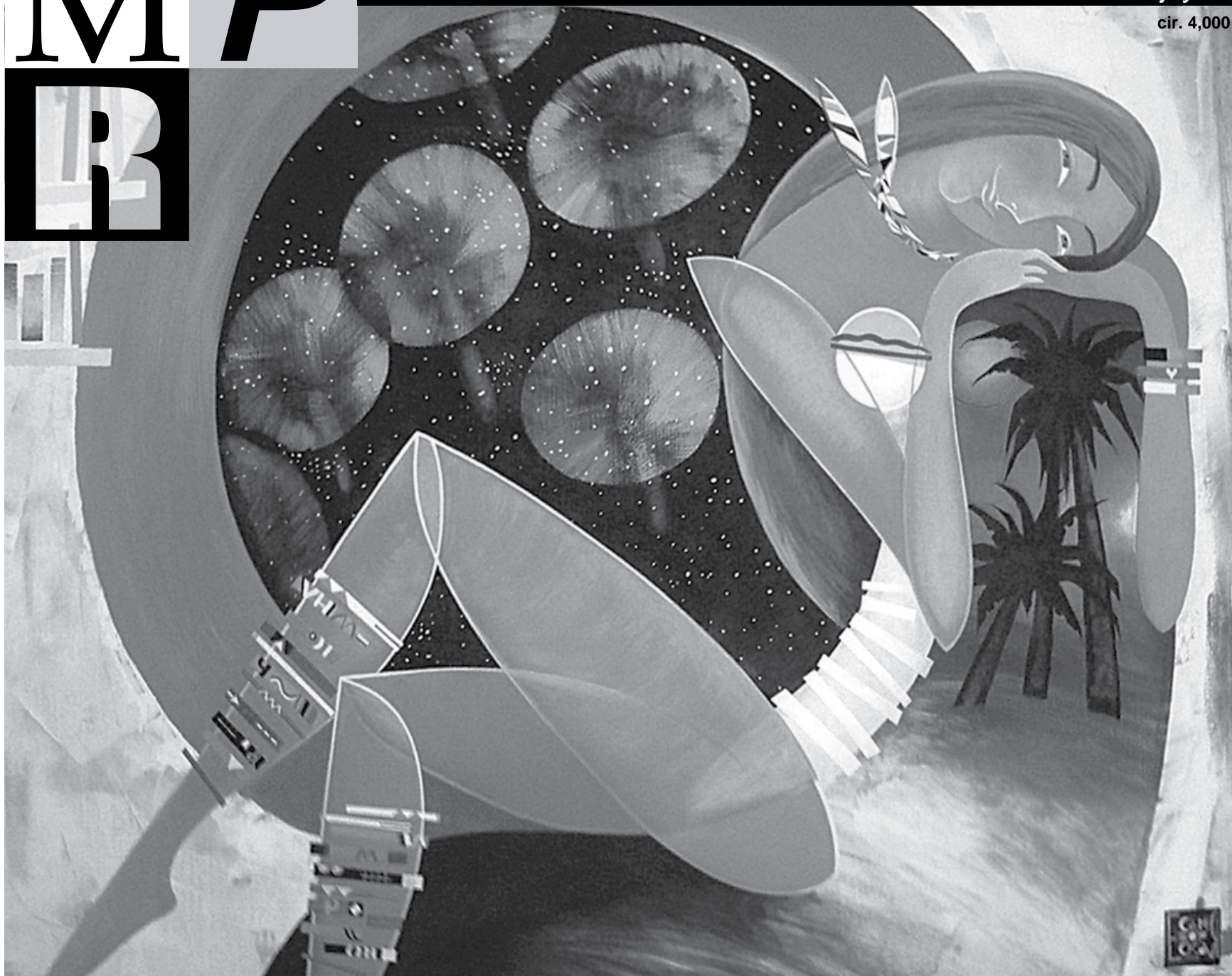
# monterey poetry review

Summer 2007

Vol. 3 / No. 2

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Art by Elena Samborskaya: thanks\_a\_lot@mail.ru

featuring poets from the Monterey, Santa Cruz, and South Bay Counties

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Zoology of words

Monterey Poetry Review  
PO Box 5885  
Monterey, CA 93944

[www.montereypoetryreview.org](http://www.montereypoetryreview.org)



## From the Editor



Photo: Jane Morba

Dear friends and poets,

After three years of having the joy and honor of publishing and editing the *Monterey Poetry Review*, I am retiring and moving on to new adventures. Therefore, we're putting out a call for an Editor-in-Chief, who will carry on the publication in the same, or their own fresh style and format.

If you, or someone you know would like to continue publishing local poets from the Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and San Benito areas (or expanding), please email one of the directors of the *MPR* listed below at:

montereypoetryreview@gmail.com

During this time of change, we are suspending our usual call for poetry submissions until an editor is selected and their format decided, at which time a call will go out for new submissions.

Our special thanks and gratitude go out to David Weinstock, who has served as Secretary of the Monterey Poetry Review Organization, our non-profit corporation. David and his family are moving to the East Coast, and our warmest wishes go with them. The position of Secretary is also open for applicants.

Chloe Noonan, our Intern from R.L. Stevenson School, has been an invaluable volunteer on the last two issues of the MPR. She will pursue a degree at Sarah Lawrence College in the Fall. Her poems appear on page 10.

Staying on with the MPR are Jennifer-Lagier Fellguth as Vice-President and Webmaster, and Belen Arellano as Treasurer and Graphic Artist, who will continue to support the future editor-elect with their time and talents.

We hope you enjoy meeting the poets and reading their poems in this issue of the *Monterey Poetry Review*, and that as a community of poets, writers and readers, you will continue to support the magazine's future and growth.

With great admiration and appreciation for you,  
Megan

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### Monterey Poetry Review Staff

Megan Lee – President / Editor (POSITION OPEN, PLEASE APPLY)  
John Laue – Advisory Editor  
Jennifer Lagier-Fellguth – Vice-President / Webmaster  
Belén Arellano – Treasurer / Graphic Artist  
David Weinstock – Secretary (POSITION OPEN, PLEASE APPLY)  
Chloe Noonan – Intern (POSITION OPEN, PLEASE APPLY)

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## CALL FOR MPR EDITOR POSITION See "From the Editor"



### Natascha Bruckner

NATASCHA BRUCKNER is a writer, artist, quilt-maker, and student of healing arts. Originally from Sonoma County, she now lives in Santa Cruz and attends Five Branches Institute. Her poetry has been published in numerous publications, including *We'Moon 2006*, *Weird Sisters*, *Sonoma County Women's Voices*, and *Harrington Lesbian Fiction Quarterly*.

### open hand

to reach for love  
is to change the shape  
of the arm

to look on beauty  
is to alter the eyes

prayer  
sanctifies the lips  
song  
liberates the throat  
dance  
fills the bones  
with light

love  
makes of the heart  
an open hand

for Max Regan

### earth i love

you are the earth i love. hillocks, ravines,  
arches, tangled underbrush. i billow over,  
gently sweep you cool. fall into your  
upturned fronds, fill your rose-mouths with  
rain. softly i speckle you with snowdrops,  
then lie upon you, thick and gold as sun.  
your misty scent rises: berries and peat  
moss, pinesap and stream. i curve to your  
contours, eddy in nooks, rush up to bend  
back your grasses, tumble your stones. i  
circle your roots and climb. you lift. bend.  
spread. open. i build and swell, headfirst  
to part your branches, tremble the limbs,  
sway the nests. birds startle up. your  
hundred beating wings embrace the sky.

### healing hands

slick with warm oil, she glides her fingers  
between mine. thumbs rub the belly  
of my palm. she is scented orange and  
almond. sparks rise like fountains in my  
thighs. she slides up my wrist, circles the  
pulse, slicks the tiny hairs with oil. loosens  
the bicep, tricep, rocks the shoulder in  
its socket. the blade slips into her hands.  
she polishes the bone until it shines like a  
song. vessels sigh open. muscles swing. her  
fingers like water swirl between tendons,  
lift and carry bones. thought-petals drift.  
she cradles, envelops, encloses me. rocks  
me in a hammock of hands. she caresses  
my ears until I hear sparrows. an outbreath  
of wind. the whispery dances of leaves.

### monsoon

night of heavy august heat. cicadas pulse.  
you are damp, brimming, a blossom after a  
rainstorm. i trace your edges, roll over heat,  
over sweat, in scent of roasted walnut. you  
are honeyed pear to the tongue. midnight  
jasmine. wild ginger. a crackling field on  
fire from a hail of stars. constellations  
sear the black. you are a cool dark lake i  
glide upon like flowers.

### monterey poetry review, Vol. 3 No. 2 Summer 2007

The mission of the *Monterey Poetry Review* is to make poetry accessible to everyone in the community. We publish poets who live in, or have strong ties to the counties of Monterey, Santa Clara and San Benito. It is a free publication, supported by donations and advertising. The MPR Organization is a fully tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity and registered California non-profit, to which all staff members donate their time and talents. The 4,000 copies of each issue are distributed free to the public in libraries, colleges, coffee shops, book stores, community centers and by mail on request.

**In this issue:** Rochelle Arellano, Natascha Bruckner, Dane Cervine, Tamara Childs, Lily Dayton, Grant Flint, Catherine Graham, Dan Linehan, Helen MacKinley, Joan McMillan, Dean Mimmack, Chloe Noonan, Connie Post, Doren Robbins, Patti Sirens, Robert Sward, Meg Tinsley, José Antonio Torres, Sterling Warner, Joan Zimmerman, Patricia Zylus.

**THE MPR IS NOT ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS AT THIS TIME.**

### Special thanks to our supporters, advertisers and distributors who made this issue possible!

**Poetry Angels:** Belen Arellano, John and Sandra Laue, Rudolf and Ida Tennenbaum.  
**Patrons:** R.A., Oliver Fellguth. **Donors:** Nancie Brown, Peggy Heinrich, Celia Lawren, Grant McLeman, Barbara J. Rios, J.T., M.T.

## FOR TOM

*though no longer my husband,  
always my loved and loving friend*

*—They found the tumor  
tangled with his portal vein  
in knots too tortuous  
to unsnarl.*

### 1. November

I cannot let go of  
the phone.  
Next to the drafty  
window I hold our sons'  
voices to my ear,  
stare far  
into the downpour  
as though my eyes  
could reach nine hundred  
miles to touch them.  
We feed our words  
gently into the wires.  
Cold leans into the glass  
like a hollow-cheeked  
creature, and my dread  
condenses  
on the panes.

### 2. Spring

We circle around his courage  
like soaked travelers  
around a fire.  
The regimen he has made  
his life — the schedule  
of pancreatic enzymes,  
juiced carrots, liver cleanses —  
this opulent care strengthens  
him. Hope glows  
like a hint of sun  
through thinning clouds.

### 3. Indian Summer

As I walk with him  
around the pier's end  
matching his small slow steps,  
the atoms of his body  
diffuse into the glittering  
air. He holds his arms wide  
as if to surrender  
his skin and bones  
to the immaculate  
sky. He is not disappearing  
so much as turning  
to light.

### 4. April

Years before the cancer  
took root  
he dragged heavy  
rocks up from the creekbed  
and set them in the field  
to mark the solstices  
and compass points.  
Now on this green day,  
his body is ash  
and we give him  
to his circle of standing stones.  
At the meadow's edge  
yellow finches gang  
in the wild apple,  
knock sparkled drops  
of the night's rain  
onto their feathers  
then sing themselves dry  
in the sun,  
and sweet blossoms  
keep their hold  
on the tree.



## Patricia Zylius

PATRICIA ZYLIUS is a copyeditor who lives Santa Cruz, California. She gardens, practices tai chi, walks, and listens mostly to music written before 1750 and jazz. Her poems have appeared in *Porter Gulch Review* and *Monterey Poetry Review*, and will appear in an upcoming issue of *Caesura*.

## COMMUNION

Such a small pile in my palm  
palest gray, bits of bright bone  
among the ash  
and the plain white gold band  
I never got rid of —

we sat on the back porch that night years ago  
and unmarried ourselves,  
wet our fingers in our mouths so we could slide  
rings over knuckles. I don't know  
what he did with his, but I keep mine  
with this meager teaspoon of him.

I pick up the biggest piece  
and rub my thumb along its smooth side,  
turn it over and look with aching fondness  
at its tiny pocks and grooves.  
What part of him was this? Finger  
bone in a hand I held?  
Did I caress the skin that covered it  
when we made love? How miraculous  
to survive the fire!

When I pour him back into the little Chinese box,  
a powdery residue sticks to my hand,  
won't quite brush off. I touch my tongue  
to the dry nearly sweet dust,  
take him into me.

## THE ROAD OF LIFE

*—in memory of Tom*

Like a tongue-flapping dog at the car window  
nose inhaling the trip, eyes bounding  
across the countryside,  
he was a riot of glee.  
If the ride took him past stagnant ponds  
floating scum rocking in the wind  
like semisolid jello, he'd savor  
the grand and sour smell,  
delight in the clash of fungal orange  
against green murk.  
When a spikey landscape slowed the journey  
he'd leap out to investigate the natives,  
chase any musky beasts lurking  
among the trees, and rejoin the expedition  
muddy-pawed, sated with play.

Then the big white van appeared.  
Still, as his captor neared  
he kept on barking his genial song,  
never stopped chasing even thorny sticks.  
He pulled every zigzag move  
his weakening body could manage  
till at last he was carried off,  
tail wagging to the end.

## Workshops with Patrice Vecchione Prose ∞ Poetry ∞ Collage

The waves are running in verses  
this fine morning.  
Please come flying.

-- Elizabeth Bishop

### Summer and Fall Offerings

- ∞ 6 and 8 week series in  
Monterey and Santa Cruz
- ∞ Esalen Institute
- ∞ UCSC Extension
- ∞ The Monterey Public Library

For details:

www.patricevecchione.com or 831-394-8459



## Dean Mimmack

DEAN MIMMACK teaches in the Santa Cruz City School District—three decades at Harbor High and one decade at Soquel High to date. He is planning to retire to furniture making, travel, and writing.

## BONFIRES

Whatever it is in bonfires that mesmerizes men,  
she had that burning thing in her eyes.  
I would watch from the periphery, as it were,  
among the changeling shadows  
as wild tongues of flame swarmed up  
from the hive of light that was her body,  
and spun away in flights of naked energy  
that even she did not think to contain.

## CURATIVE LEACH

Even as the dodo, the mastodon, and passenger pigeons  
(or more accurately, the scythe, girdle and curative leach)  
eventually became anachronisms and quietly vanished,  
so gods—Zeus, Anubis, and Romulus—fall into disuse  
(though once, in capricious moods, they shook empires)  
and now are obsolete as the three-hundred baud modem.  
Still it's possible (like shoulder pads on women's dresses)  
that Ra and Aphrodite enjoy some retrograde popularity.

## STILL-LIFE

Kitchen tea towels hung in parallel.  
A family of dining-room chairs  
gathered around, rigid and silent.  
A vase of roses, heads drooping  
despite aspirin in the water.  
An exhausted fly that can't find escape.

## THE SAME BLOATED BALL

At sunset, it's always the same bloated ball  
balanced precariously on earth's edge, when  
it would be nice to reverse the spin for once  
(though it would annoy the pansies)  
and watch the sun bob up out of the Pacific  
dripping wet, tangled in kelp, scales glinting  
as it climbs into the dawn sky as brightly as  
a salt-water taffy wrapped in red cellophane.



## Connie Post

CONNIE POST is the first and current Poet Laureate of Livermore, California. She has been published in *White Pelican Review*, *California State Poetry Quarterly*, *Carquinez Poetry Review*, *Mid West Poetry Review*, *Hardpan*, *Mobius* and other anthologies. Connie has earned over fifty awards in various poetry contests throughout California. Author of five published collections, in 2005 she presented her poetry on the nationally syndicated radio program, "West Coast Live."  
 Connie@poetrypost.com

## GUIDELINES FOR SPRING CLEANING

They say if you haven't used something  
 In one year  
 You should throw it away

But how am I supposed to know  
 What to do  
 When thoughts I haven't  
 Uttered  
 Even to myself  
 In decades  
 Keeping showing up

How do I know  
 How many times to shake out  
 The winter rug

How do I fold the oldest towels  
 Assure the frayed ends are tucked in  
 Where do I place them  
 When the room is too full

I go back and forth all day

I bump my shin into the edges of the coffee table  
 Each time I pass  
 Like knowledge that sticks out  
 Too far

I arrange for a few smaller boxes  
 To go to the attic

But some  
 I know I must burn

Others have stayed  
 In the same spot  
 Since I was born

Those are the ones  
 I dare not ever move

## CAPITOLA

If all the seagulls suddenly perished  
 From this one beach  
 Upon whose wings  
 Would the mist fall

How would the pelicans

Remember the way to shore  
 Remember the sand crabs  
 Or how to keep the secrets  
 Of a sacrificial tide

Too many fallen feathers  
 Too many ways to get lost in the sand

Too soon  
 A young girl  
 Will find a dead bird  
 In the footprints of her adolescence  
 Pull it away  
 From the chaos  
 The knotted kelp

And stand quiet  
 While the bird  
 In its death  
 Will thank her

For wading long enough  
 In low tide

To let the monastery of pelicans  
 And swallowed fish  
 Find her  
 Return her  
 At last  
 Where the water ends



## Meg Tinsley

MEG TINSLEY recently relocated to the Monterey Bay from Berkeley. After the birth of her daughter two years ago, she suspended her practice in somatic psychotherapy and now has the pleasure of engaging in the sometimes frustrating, but always amusing dance of being both a mom and a writer.

## SECOND INITIATION

Her curled body  
 slowly  
 presses the stubborn womb muscle open

A smith working copper  
 into a bowl,  
 she kicks  
 a comfortable shape

Her work bends  
 the skin of my stomach  
 like leather being shaped  
 for shoes

Her soft, sticky head  
 pries open my hip bones,  
 the way we wrench holiday  
 fowl for a feast  
 and scores the walls of the birth canal  
 in three places

Though it will be years before she drives,  
 midwives call the two side wounds  
*skid marks;*

*Look for Bryant Clifford's  
 new book!*



*Available at The Henry Miller Library, Big Sur*  
<http://themonarchofeveningtime.com>

the first in a long line  
 of peel outs

For days I look at the stitches  
 (tiny black fists)  
 with the same plastic mirror  
 in which I first saw  
 her hairy head,  
 poking  
 burning  
 until they all fell out

If I had known  
 I would have taken pictures  
 like before and after shots:  
 vagina one      vagina two  
 torn the first time he entered  
 torn the first time she left

## HUMPBACK SHOW OFF POINT LOBOS

There are three of you, patrolling the area in blue and white  
 on assignments nearly a month old  
 Your spouting spray, an arcing waterfall of mace  
 hangs in the air like smoke    floating  
 Or maybe you heard a joke at the water cooler and laughed so hard  
 you spit your drink in elephant time—a long, lingering    *ffffffsssst*

Your fluking tail flags speeders down  
 When they don't listen  
 you bring the fin down hard, cracking  
 three consecutive warnings  
 like shooting blanks in the air

Most people drop everything when they see you  
 to stand in mute wonder;  
 or the lady who shouts her jubilation  
 like you are a preacher, saving her wicked soul

## bottom of blue

desert house    nicotine steeped walls  
 I graze with yellow longing  
 for the fort made by his cowboy legs    dry November lungs  
 mouthful of pungent splinterings, my blue ghost  
 grills other men through narrow passages  
 fires beaten in the impossible    shiny circle of missing  
 like pennies sucked under the tongue  
 blood-orange sleep

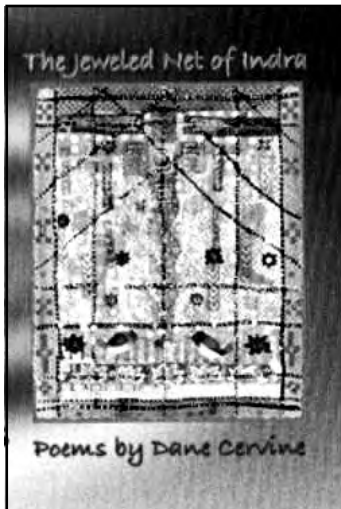




## Dane Cervine

DANE CERVINE's work was chosen by *The Hudson Review* for its New Writers Edition, and has appeared recently in *SUN Magazine*, *Atlanta Review*, *Birmingham Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Poetry Flash*, and *Bathyspheric Review*. Dane was chosen as the *Porter Gulch Review* 2006 Poet of the Year. His book, *WHAT A FATHER DREAMS*, can be purchased

from the author at <http://danecervine.typepad.com>. Dane is a member of the Emerald Street Writers in Santa Cruz, where he serves as Chief of Children's Mental Health for the county.



## The Jeweled Net of Indra,

Dane Cervine's new book from Plain View Press [www.plainviewpress.net](http://www.plainviewpress.net), also available from Amazon, or signed copies from the author at [danecervine@cruzio.com](mailto:danecervine@cruzio.com)

*"In the great fields of his country—not just the U.S. but the country of the heart, the country of poetry—Dane Cervine sits with and questions what is unfathomable but must be lived anyway. I admire his faith in poetry. I admire his demand that it serve us. His lyrical and image-rich poems help light the way. They shorten the distance between us."* --Patrice Vecchione

## LEANING TOWARDS THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

*Samara, Costa Rica*

Veranda, hammock—refuge from what I'd become.  
Small red frogs with immense toes sit silent  
in trees nearby, poisonous, bearing witness. Forgetting myself,  
I worship every cocoanut husk, green parrot, afternoon rain.  
Even mosquitoes sound like singing, feel like tiny bruised kisses.  
All insolence drains from my body, reverence the only tongue I know.

There is something here: milk inside the husk.  
Beneath the ground, a single bean germinates.

Inside the bean, the husk, a mountain grows:  
it is my life.

## AT THE RUSSIAN RIVER

It is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July—loud revelers stand  
in the river with beers in hand, bellies big  
as good-luck buddhas gone bad, noise radiating  
across the gorge like imperial Americans immoveable  
in the rockets red glare. All the best songs  
from the seventies blare into air that tingles  
with this human bombastic carnival. For a moment,

I am seduced, want to join them at drunken horseshoes,  
raucous banter, because *this is our planet, our country,*  
*and you god-damn got it right that it's a grand party...*  
Watch instead from my balcony as the revelry fades—  
and the big beer-belly man, who has floated down river  
with his beer-bellied wife, slowly pulls her back  
against the current with a rope, splayed unconscious  
on her black inner-tube like the sleeping queen  
of a lost country.

## AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

I became fascinated with old benches,  
old theater pews  
saved from demolition

like the ones from Café Pergolesi  
behind the old bookshop  
before the big quake.

I'd wander from cafe to cafe  
sitting in each wooden chair found,  
dispersed in second hand sales  
across town,

the soft weathered touch  
a sign-post of survival

that one can be found  
again and again

even after the earth  
opens

to take you from  
all you know.



## Tamara Childs

TAMARA CHILDS, a magna cum laude graduate of San Francisco State University also holds an M.A. from the Institute of Transpersonal Studies. She writes tirelessly about identity and has performed her solo pieces *Characters in Anger* at Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center in Los Angeles. She lives in the Santa Cruz mountains where the clean air is helping her grow back brain cells lost while in LA.

## INHERITANCE

I have two mothers. One thinks Cool Whip is one molecule away from nylon and the other thinks Jesus created his own mother. This is what I have to work with. As for fathers, one is an absentee Black and the other is an absentee White.

One mother is a cross between Doris Day and Edith Bunker who writes zealous emails in search of a response and the other writes one stoic email a fortnight. One of them never shuts up and the other barely speaks. One can't stop gushing about the virtues of WalMart while the other builds a house off the grid. They both believe the end of the world is the day-after-tomorrow, or perhaps next week. To this end, one can't wait for the Rapture and the other for the polar ice caps to melt. Raggety-Anne- on- Prozac- turned- to- Jesus versus Annie- Get- Your- Gun-turned- Contradancing Sufi. We're talking a strange mix here.

My two mothers. At first I felt deprived. One mother just wasn't enough. I had to go find my "genes." An adoption search later, as far as mothers go, it seems I now have two too many. This is the problem that comes when you try to figure out who has your eyes, as if that matters.

## GYPSY

I'm not the poster child for joy. What were they expecting? Foster care was a weird detour.

Try 1970's New England mill towns run by suspicious packs of tow-headed Lutherins, eating Twinkies and drinking Budweiser and sometimes slapping their grammas, tough old ladies in their own right wearing K-mart housecoats, and staring outside their doorways long enough to ask me, ain't you Greek?

Adopted mom saying how cute is my 'lil high ass hussy – that's what they call you but it's okay to be different- just remember Black people dance on the upbeat.

When you're on the outs there's always a place in the commune, and whole wheat bread with sprouts. It's okay to mix with contra dancing hippies. In 1966 they were the only folks who would have me. History lesson a day with the Quaker highbrows. I was living history in black and white while my real mom couldn't make a marriage of her attempt at racial charity – plus she had red hair. So she dropped me off and left me with questions and a temper.

History became a fairy tale told to me at bedtime in which I was a peculiar papoose left on the Tamarak tree. But to keep me real, we watched Roots. Just me and my white guardians, just to get the story straight, about what happened on the plantation.

Frizzy Kizzy – just like me. Hair unlike the neighbors. Not Quaker. Not New Hampshire hair. Hair harassed by Prell shampoo. Slave-girl hair, that's what it was and there was no hiding it.

Getting into my costume box didn't help. There are no black princesses. Bright blue eye shadow circa 1976 only brought out my gypsy skin tone.

I'd like to be the poster child for joy – some symbol of interracial deliciousness. I wish Halle Berry would step down but that's a hard-won position and why should she move aside?

Now I'm thinking interracial angst is obsolete in a world where the Sprint commercials are gracefully turning brown. Multiculture is a hot tasty dish- and we are all hungry. People don't know Kizzy anymore, and should they?



## Lily Dayton

LILY DAYTON's writing includes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction. Her essays have been included in *The Back Road to Crazy -- Stories from the Field*, and *A Mile in Her Boots -- Women Who Work in the Wild*. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from Humboldt State University and a Master of Education degree from Texas A&M University. Lily lives in Moss Landing with her husband and two daughters.

## MONARCH MIGRATION TO NATURAL BRIDGES

*Santa Cruz, CA*

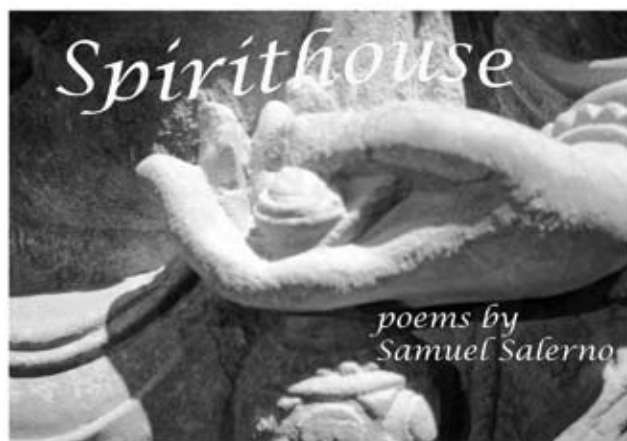
At first glance – clump of autumn leaves  
dappled orange and black, trembling  
in the breeze that rides the bay, thousands  
sway in ripened clusters  
grapes dripping from a vine  
but dizzied flurry in a swatch of sunlight reveals  
silent-winged seraphs, butterflies  
capture pale November light  
on scaled wings

These winter migrants – the lucky ones?  
lives span the long, cool months of wind, rain  
maybe half-a-year at best, roosting like bats  
velvet wings folded  
club-tipped antennae at rest  
thoracic muscles not used in beating flight  
only shivering for warmth  
hearts sluggishly pulse  
hemolymph pools *slush slush*  
in its bitter milkweed stench

But still – *spanning* – and on some days the sunlight  
reaches through damp leaves and their hearts  
quicken with flight.

Unlike their wintering lepidopteron descendants,  
or ancestors,  
the northern spring monarchs  
live briefly, two months at most frolicking beauty  
hearts vibrate *tic-tic-tic* in slender black thoraxes  
sipping nectar through curled probosces – wild bergamot flowers  
offer their sweet sex like ladies unfurling ruffled dresses  
silken nectar oozes, sustains this brief life  
these two months of gossamer beauty  
(how I take my century on this earth for granted)

As if these ectotherms have a pre-determined number of heartbeats  
accelerating when the temperature rises  
*fire raging*  
*drum beat pounds*



## SAMUEL SALERNO A New Collection

Samuel Salerno is the author of three books of poetry: *JANUS DREAMING*, *PYGMALION'S CROSS*, and *THE NEW WORLD*. A graduate of Wesleyan University and the University of London, Mr. Salerno's work has appeared in *Freshwater*, *Red River Review*, *Free Verse*, and *The California Quarterly*. He teaches at the Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, CA

slowing when it's cold  
*glowing embers*  
*patient, hollow thrum*  
the score even in the end  
*wings crumble to dust*

At what point does the heart's measure begin –  
first dewy throb within the egg  
still pulsing when the caterpillar turns to Chrysalis?  
(how I love that word of change growth possibility  
*Chrysalis* whispering resurrection like *Christ*)  
larvae liquece into green protein soup  
minty green like the color of stuccoed walls  
from a house on a Mexican street corner  
or the chalky green of medicine  
your mother used to pour down your throat  
by metallic spoonfuls  
legs, jaws, ocelli -- dissolve to genetic broth,  
polypeptide blocks reassembling the new body  
the metamorphosis  
of the butterfly

And what about the heart?  
Is it also pulverized and liquefied,  
silent residual, trace of life scarcely above flatline  
quiet whirlpool, waiting to resurge  
or does its throbbing presence pulse pea-green soup  
through the cocoon, score each heartbeat  
like a tiny stubborn fist?

Perhaps *I* have a limited quantity of heartbeats  
a pre-determined number of times  
this thick-walled cardiac muscle in my chest  
will contract  
count its measured pulses  
like a metronome  
a chronometer in each of my cells  
dictating seed to shoot to blossom  
The threshold that, once reached, triggers *senescence*  
fleshy pink petals  
scatter to the floor

Better to span the long, cold months  
in slow, lingering roost  
or flutter freely,  
rapidly dying,  
sucking sugary nectar?

And when the warm breezes finally do arrive  
these lepidopteron aerialists will fly away – their last dance  
catching updrafts to ten-thousand feet in the air  
miniature stunt pilots  
Thousands of butterflies migrating thousands of miles  
pheromones ride the wind  
The sweet scent of sex  
searching for the bitter nourishment of milkweed  
to continue this relay of generations  
across the continent, seasons  
their final offering:  
hundreds of eggs, shimmering  
seeds of yellow pearl

## WHITE BARK

In Idaho -- a ghostly tract of birch  
you carved my name in white-paper bark  
beneath pendulous green  
quivering, each letter a wound, a delving  
into cork cambium eventually grown over, encased  
by blackened scar tissue as though etched  
in your own white leg, blood-sap sticking the knife shut.  
So when you try to open it, months later  
you will picture that tree, silent white *Betula*  
alone among all others  
witness to fervor -- the hope that crinkles  
like paper-thin bark peeled back  
scarred black letters weeping sap that dries like glue  
persists through waxing moons, waning days, the bare  
white sunlight of autumn, papery leaves slow yearning spiral  
to dirt, where some day a hunter may pass, grizzly-haired  
army-fatigued -- everything about him rough, sinewy  
like gristle in the venison he chews  
and for a moment he'll pause, trace your furtive declaration  
with calloused eyes, taste my name on chafed lips



## SPRING TIDE

There must have been a thousand  
on that moon-drenched strip of beach  
each rush of wave offered sterling bodies  
slap-dancing in soaked darkness  
females nestled into glistening sand, moaned soft  
watery squeaks while males curved  
around them in metallic commas, moon-slivers  
secreting cloudy milt – drizzled down silvery backs,  
buttermilk seeping between sand grains  
to nests of seedy orange eggs, in wait  
– a breath held, a match unstruck –  
for the spark that fans this pewter-dance

*Here, get a hold of them like this*  
my father says, his five-gallon bucket shimmied into sand  
large hands fumble silver grunion  
scoop fish like coins, spilling  
into tumultuous surf  
and the loud *thwack* of flesh hitting  
empty plastic, weedy smell of salt  
as the lucky ones slip away beneath a spray of foam

*The spring has nothing to do with the season*  
– though it is spring, that time of year  
when the grunion run  
and school lets out in eight weeks  
humid midnight stirring up  
some restlessness in me –  
But rather, it's because everything's  
lined up just right – sun moon earth  
and the spring in the tide refers to ocean  
literally leaping away from planet  
– the earth holding onto everything but the water.

Chin tilted to yellow moon  
silent sad watcher  
the ball of cheese I prayed to, witness  
to my wishes, breath held, eyes clamped  
tugging on slippery sea – must be  
some kind of magic –  
this ocean sprung from earth  
bulging at the seams of gravity  
like the flesh beneath a too-tight dress  
And how do these fish know the time is right  
to catapult from sea?

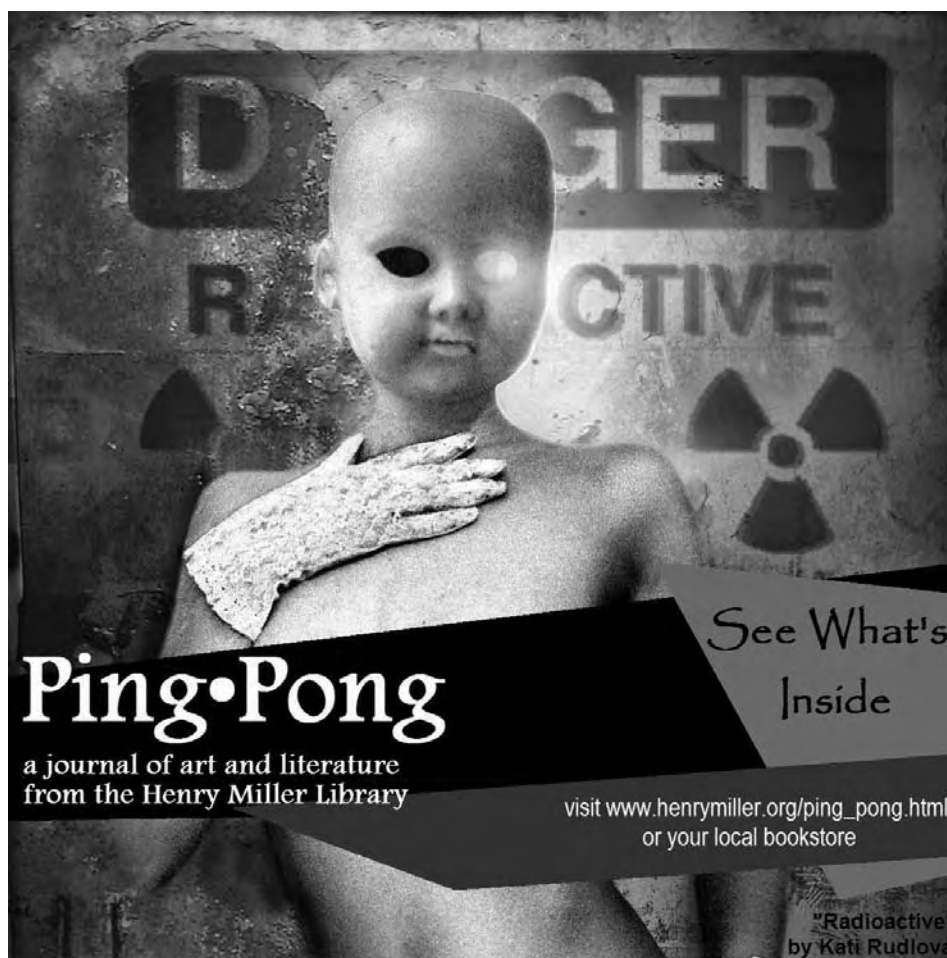
That precise moment  
each spring, when the sand is warm  
and the ocean's fingers nudge far enough  
to shore – *the trick is catching the highest tide*  
my father whispers – *that moment before everything slips away...*  
And the lucky ones, the patient ones,  
the daring, the wise:  
Throw your whole tarnished self at the moon.  
the hope that leaves eggs buried, unharmed,  
to develop through the neaps  
like some sweet miracle  
until the next spring tide bursts  
tiny egg sacs, carries young fry  
to sea like glittery strands of fate, silvery luck

The stakes are high.

Levis rolled to calves  
I dip moon-kissed fingers into lacey foam,  
dredge up one gravid female  
press her viscous body to my cheek  
– She flips wildly, I hold tight –  
It must be the moon  
The full-light or new-dark filtering into water,  
or maybe it's the pressure from all that pull  
light and water whispering  
into every cell of the body  
Leap! Spring! Run!

Onto shore she crashes  
through white-frothed surf, throws all her argentine life  
onto this nubile strand  
succumbs to this dance, this purge  
of eggs youth blessed energy  
She slips from my grasp  
like the ankle bracelet I forgot to clasp  
disappears with the rush of a wave  
Fragile silvery strand  
slinks into sea

[www.montereypoetryreview.org](http://www.montereypoetryreview.org)



## Dan Linehan

DAN LINEHAN is a full-time writer. He recently returned from Antarctica, Argentina, and the surrounds where he studied wildlife and environmental concerns. Dan is currently finishing his first non-fiction book, *SPACESHIP ONE: THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW SPACE RACE* (Zenith Press 2008). He is also an editor for *Ping-Pong*, a literary journal from the Henry Miller Library. [www.dslinehan.com/antarctica.html](http://www.dslinehan.com/antarctica.html)

## CATS AND DOGS

at the Bottom of the World  
the dogs run free

in the streets

they are very happy  
because there are

no cats in sight

## DOGS NO. 5

the happiest of all the dogs  
are those that lay

in the middle of the road

licking themselves  
hour after hour

they have the right of way

## DOGS ON BICYCLES

sometimes the dogs  
are too happy

to walk and run

when this happens  
they ride their bicycles

if their legs

are too short  
to touch the peddles

they ask little girls

to do the peddling  
and then they let

their tongues hang out

to flap  
in the wind

and to taste the air

## DESTINATIONS OF DOGS

happy dogs  
trot past windows

even when the tables inside

are at ground level  
and spread with the food of diners

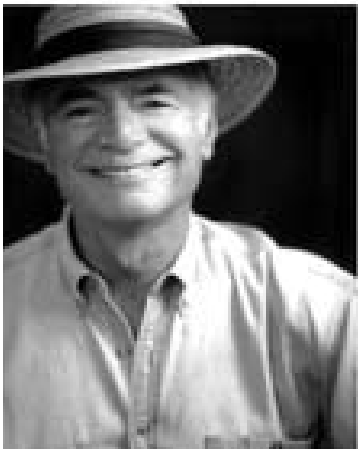
they are too busy

with the day to be bothered  
they are off to sleep

in the doorsteps



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## Robert Sward

A U.S. Navy veteran, ROBERT SWARD served in the combat zone during the Korean War. Winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Canada Council, Villa Montalvo and other awards, Sward has taught at Cornell University, the Iowa Writers Workshop and UC Santa Cruz. His 25 books include *FOUR INCARNATIONS*, *NEW & SELECTED POEMS* (Coffee House Press) and *COLLECTED POEMS, 1957-2004* (Black Moss Press). His latest book, *GOD IS IN THE CRACKS, A NARRATIVE IN VOICES* (Black Moss Press), will be available in September 2006.

## THE SCHOOL OF LIGHT

### 1. *Science of the Unseen*

“Son, did you know wood decays  
at the same rate as the human body?  
So what’s the good of a casket?  
What’s the good of a body?  
Go, go without sleep!  
Goddammit,  
it makes you crazy.  
Read, then. Read this Rosicrucian.  
*The wise man sees in Self those that are alive  
and those that are dead.*  
Yeats, Yeats,  
you should read *The Rose*.  
For me now, it’s back to school. The inner college.  
It’s a brotherhood, it’s science,  
College of the Unseen, but science.  
Roses and crosses. *Ach*, you’ve seen the ad.  
Then you’ve seen the eye of God.  
So I wrote away. They sent me this.  
Beauty. Splendor.  
Mercy. Wisdom.  
It’s not Jewish, but you think it’s not Jewish?  
It’s not so not Jewish.  
Nightmares. Your dead mother. *Oi*.  
A man needs to get through the night.”

### 2. *Fraternity of the Earth*

“Beyond the point where nothing is known  
is called The Beginning.  
Within The Beginning, the Unknown created God.’  
Talmud says. And this they teach,  
the Rosicrucians.  
Over here, son, can you smell?  
Roses, roses and incense...

the aroma of infinity.  
*Ach*, what would you know?  
You, you think it’s easy?  
Burlap bags she patched,  
so we could eat.  
And could she read, your grandmother?  
In *shtetl*, in Poltava, who could read?  
But look, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Popular Mechanics*...  
Here, an ad again, the School of Light, see?  
‘Holiness pervades physical matter.’  
And you, questions, questions...  
‘What is Rosicrucian? What is Rosicrucian?’  
A fraternity, a brotherhood...  
Enough. She’s dead, your mother, I need this.  
A man needs to get through the night.”

### 3. *A Trip to the Zoo*

“Lead into gold, easy!  
But I need a fraternity,  
that’s right, a fraternity.  
Brotherhood,  
the Fraternity of the Earth.  
Why? To learn the language, do the alchemy.  
Here, I’m going to pull an eyelash.  
Now, under a microscope...  
mites, bacteria, fungi, see?  
I’m your father, but what am I? A zoo.  
You’re my son, but what are you? Also, a zoo.  
Yes, there’s a universe in a grain of sand,  
a father—10,000 fathers—  
and sons too  
in this one eyelash.  
So, as many creatures on our bodies  
as there are universes, as there are fathers, as there are zoos,  
zoos, zoos, and the zoos of zoos.  
You think you’re alone?  
Here, son, a Rosicrucian eyelash.”



## Joan Zimmerman

Free-lance writer JOAN ZIMMERMAN has published poems in *Runes*, *Quarry West*, *Convergence*, *Watershed*, *Heron’s Nest*, *Coast Lines*, *At Our Core*, and elsewhere. She has won the Mary Lonnberg Smith Poetry Prize and has hosted the Poetry Show on KUSP radio. She has worked as a solid-state physicist, falconry apprentice, and a surveyor at archeological sites.

## BETWEEN “NO” AND “FORGIVE”

One word was my first;  
one shall be my last.  
Meanwhile the years break  
into gold-flecked water.

Two red wings pivot  
past the ball of light.  
Trees breathe. Everything  
moves with me toward home.

## 4TH OF MAY

Bartolomeo Cristofori (born 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 1655) invented the pianoforte;  
Thomas Henry Huxley (born 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 1825) coined the word  
“agnostic.”

Each instant  
today worldwide  
ten thousand pianos  
resound, mostly  
un-tuned, many  
played with one  
hesitant finger,  
striking keys  
by chance  
more than choice  
with only hints  
of a tune.  
Laughter over  
each wrong note  
outweighs the sighs,  
teases the scales  
toward, even  
a grouch agrees,  
glee. Only a few  
listeners wince.

Meanwhile this moment  
a hundred women  
and men  
in separate workrooms  
abandon their plans  
for proof  
and disproof.  
Alpine meadows  
of flowers  
are toe-prints  
of gods,  
or they’re not.  
Cloud banners  
streaming from peaks  
in Tibet and Peru  
hide the sighs  
and wings  
of gods,  
or they don’t.

Nobody knows  
what is true  
inside every niche  
of a soul. Could a man  
be mud sparked  
by a finger of light  
that glinted  
five millennia  
or five billennia  
since? A woman  
can’t decide,  
dithers and lingers,  
begins to play  
a *partita* by Bach,  
glides into a line  
of walking bass,  
slithers singing  
into boogie-woogie  
in a major key.

## OCCUPIED NORWAY: THE RESISTANCE ANGEL

someone with a gun  
shoots me down  
nicks my left wing  
but I can almost  
glide a little  
as I fall

three farm boys  
find me  
on the snowy fjord shore

one tears off  
his shirtsleeve  
to bandage  
my bruised brow

they cut saplings  
make a stretcher  
on which they carry me  
to the school  
for the crippled  
and the blind

behind the shutters  
and the passworded doors  
thin children  
sit at low tables  
constructing bombs  
no matter who  
shot me  
these children  
bandage my head  
take me in  
splint and fold  
my wings

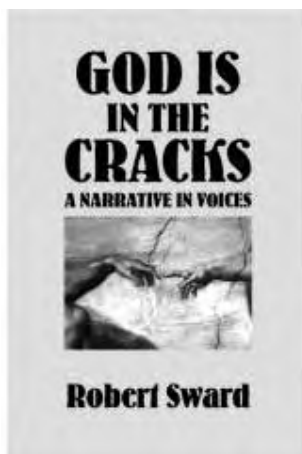
they feed me  
a bowl of fresh milk  
a stew of winter turnips  
let me sleep

next day they show me  
the map to the enemy’s  
Base of Occupation

something bites me  
sharp as a ferret  
on the shoulders  
but is only my wings  
unfolding

now the children  
strap bombs to my body  
lead me outside  
to the colder air  
the starlight  
the free and buoyant wind





**God Is In The Cracks: A Narrative In Voices**  
(Black Moss Press, 2006) By ROBERT SWARD

Reviewed by Catherine Graham

“It’s all really one work, and, in a sense, I’ve never stopped,” muses Robert Sward in a *Poetry Flash* interview. Citizen of Canada and the U.S, Sward certainly hasn’t stopped, he’s been writing poetry for over fifty years. Born and raised in Chicago, author of over twenty books, he currently resides in Santa Cruz, California, but he’s brought the windy city with him. Memories from his formative years serve as the creative wellspring for much of Sward’s literary output including his latest collection: *God Is In The Cracks: A Narrative In Voices*, from Black Moss Press.

The book reads like a play, with monologues, dialogues, even stage instructions: Car door slamming behind us as we exit. It reads like a novella, with supernatural elements and a touch of magic realism. But free verse is the poet’s form of choice and Sward deftly fills this form with voice: mother, father, stepmother, stripper, son (Sward the young poet) and the family dog. These characters come to life throughout Sward’s skillful narrative and are, in his own words, “Best read in the order printed.”

Throughout the vocal tapestry, the voice of the wise and the wise-cracking father dominates. A Russian Orthodox Jew, a podiatrist by profession, he disseminates his passion for feet to his “round-shouldered, dreamer” son: “How many times do I have to say it / A pair of feet have 25,000 sweat glands / Can produce eight ounces, a cup of perspiration in one day.”

After the untimely death of his beloved wife the father grapples with the mysteries of the afterlife. He becomes a Rosicrucian and practices his “College of Invisibles” alone in the family home basement. “There are two worlds,” he says, lighting incense, “the seen and the unseen...” / Meat into spirit, darkness into light.../”. These are the themes of Sward’s collection: the visible and the invisible. “Just a tiny crack separates this world / from the next, and you step over it / every day / God is in the cracks.”

The father’s personality leaps off the page and the narrative pops with his lyrical snippets. The motherless son, in need of guidance, asks his father to tell him how to pray: “Burst,” says the father, “burst like a star.” And when the father links his reverence for feet to his belief in the healing powers of a wedding, he shows his ability to tag the earthly with the sublime: “The socks come off and you make love.”

Yet the son, as an adult, lives through not one failed marriage but many. This stretches the father’s patience: “One, two, three...shame and more children / than you can count.../ How many times does a foot marry a foot?” Four times in fact as illustrated in the fourth section appropriately titled: “Marriage 1, 2, 3, 4.” Individual poems also read like scenes: “Kit Kat Club”, “He Takes Me Back as a Patient”, “Arch Supports - The Fitting”, give the collection a down-to-earth tone and guide the reading journey.

The father wrestles with his son’s romantic failures, through foot imagery of course, but eventually recognizes the humanity behind his son’s unorthodox behavior. We all make mistakes, his son is not alone. But not feet. Feet don’t fall. Feet, no matter what, are held in the highest light: “Truth is / people’s feet is too good for them.”

The first poem, in the last section, “Darkness Is A Candle Too” brings us to the end of the father’s life and is aptly titled “After the Bypass”. Even on his deathbed, the father continues to spout fatherly advice: “Don’t trust the world, son / It’s filled with holes. / The best thing is love.” He doesn’t stop there. He continues with another four lessons, the last of which ends with this powerful metaphor: “Death is made of eyes / made of eyes, dressed in eyes.” True to character, the father can’t resist tailing the profound with the comical: “But remember: you’re still gonna need money / when you die.”

Turns out what’s really needed, to get to heaven, is a dog: “Heaven is a place that cannot be found, / but if you got a dog / you can find it.”

Funny and poignant, simple yet complicated, Sward’s compelling and accomplished collection seams the crack between comedy and tragedy. Winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship, former book reviewer and feature writer for *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, soldier during the Korean War, creative writing instructor, Sward didn’t become a podiatrist like his father nor a doctor like his mother urged him to be, but he’s definitely taken on his father’s advice: “Some day you’ll write about arch supports.”

We’re glad he did.

CATHERINE GRAHAM is the author of *The Watch*, *Pupa* and a forthcoming poetry collection (2008). She teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto. Her work has been published in *The New Quarterly*, *LRC* and *The Fiddlehead*. As creativity consultant, Catherine has led her unique workshops through GlaxoSmithKline, York University and Envirionics Communications. Catherine’s poems are featured in *Discovery Landing*, Burlington’s new waterfront building and her work as a poetry coach is highlighted in *Poet’s Market* 2007. She is Vice President of Project Bookmark Canada, a non-profit organization that seeks to mark the real places that serve as the settings for imagined stories. Visit her website:

["God is in the Cracks," book review first appeared in *Northern Poetry Review*, Spring 2007]

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**Joan McMillan**

JOAN McMILLAN has lived in Santa Cruz County for over twenty-five years. She now lives in Felton, CA, near Roaring Camp. Her poems have appeared in many journals over the last twenty years, including *Poetry*, *Onthebus*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Saranac Review*, and *Quarry West*. She

graduated in 2005 with an MFA in Creative Writing from San Jose State University.

**MALOCCHIO**

*for Maria Barasso*

If born in a different decade,  
I might have paid her a visit, great-grandmother,  
Mamma Nonna, old woman with hair the color of lightning,  
her dress the deep black of mystery,  
gold at her wrists, gold around her neck,  
the kitchen dark as iron, no lamps,  
no windows to dispel the secrets sleeping  
in corners, in shadows, her coffee  
steaming in a cracked red cup,  
thick, bitter, a potion to banish my lethargy  
as I told her of the man whose serpent’s voice  
spilled lies like a river of venom  
while I served him meals on my best plate,  
a pattern of apples, vines, and heart-shaped leaves,  
Now, with my bed emptied of him,  
I described the way sadness lingered, heavy  
and acrid as the taste of an unripe persimmon.

Her remedy was simple: from a high cupboard,  
she took a small white bowl,  
bone china edged with silver,  
into which she poured water, salt, and olive oil,  
a few careful drops, clear green and fragrant,  
from the lip of a tall glass bottle.  
If the oil gathered to one slick circle,  
she knew that *malocchio* clung to me, evil eye,  
his hatred covering me like dried spit.  
By cutting the circle with a brass key  
three times as she whispered an incantation,  
she closed the door of his anger,  
lulled the eye of evil to sleep.

Nothing more was necessary except to follow her  
through the backyard thicket of tomato plants,  
thick-stemmed and pungent, past columns of snapdragons,  
salmon pink and yellow, until we reached the shallow pit  
dug by my great-grandfather for this purpose:  
to tip the bowl and watch as water, oil, salt, and sin  
vanished in the earth’s cauldron, the open eye of fertile soil.



## Helen MacKinlay

HELEN MACKINLAY grew up in New Zealand. She photographs the human figure and enjoys running and climbing mountains. Her poems have been published in *PuddingHouse*, *The Monserrat Review*, and *A Plenitude of Poets*. Her book of poems is *SECOND SKIN*, in which these two poems first appeared.

## THE PEACH TREE

The peach tree and I  
had a good thing going,  
until last summer.  
I'd water, feed and spray  
to ward off mildew and curly leaf.  
With spring came a cloud of pink blossom.  
In summer its branches drooped  
under plenty of peaches.  
I liked to bite through warm  
peach skin fur into juicy yellow flesh.  
I filled rows of jars with peach halves  
in sweet syrup, my peach cobblers  
were masterpieces.

But last summer after fifteen years  
of mutual esteem,  
I jeopardized the peach tree,  
allowed a neighbor to slice  
its roots so he could fix his fence.  
Too bad, says he, but your tree is old,  
it's run its course.

The peach tree leaves wilted,  
fell early,  
its branches against the sky,  
were skeletal,  
bark crumbled, sap oozed  
from old limbs.  
The peach tree, the fence  
and friendship with my neighbor  
were all finished.

I pulled on leather gloves,  
slid the saw into the trunk  
made a deep merciful cut.  
The peach tree falls.  
I am sorry, troubled  
by thoughts of my own demise.

The neighbor appears, offers help.  
"No." I say, "Go paint your fine fence."

## THE SNAKE

The snake crossed my doormat uninvited,  
Slipped silently into the kitchen.  
Its electric magnificence mesmerized me.  
I fed it chicken hoping it would stay  
In the corner where I could admire it.

But it flowed fearlessly  
over polished floors.  
Holding its head erect,  
it disdained my living room,  
Confident the patterns  
On its body it were superior  
To those of Persian carpets.  
Spellbound by its rippling motion  
I watched it slither into my bathroom,

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Slide smoothly along the cold porcelain tiles  
Into the bath where it coiled itself neatly  
In the plughole and stayed for days.

I willed it back to the jungle.  
It blinked and flicked its tongue.  
When I risked being poisoned  
And reached to remove it,  
It hissed and bared its fangs.  
When I tried to smother it with a towel,  
It wriggled out and vanished.

The snake reappeared in my bedroom,  
Lay long and lithe on the patchwork quilt  
Watching my discomfort with mosaic eyes.  
Fear and courage rose high together,  
I seized a pillow, hit its head, knotted  
The quilt ends tightly, threw the bundle  
Out the window, out of my life.



## Chloe Noonan

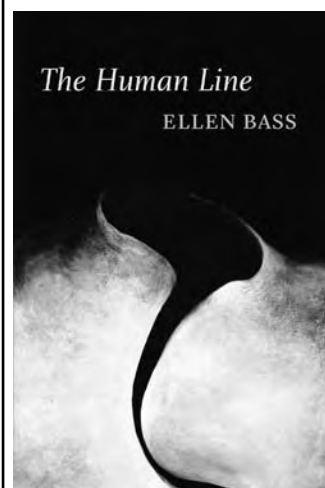
CHLOE NOONAN graduated from Stevenson High School and will attend Sarah Lawrence College in September. She is deeply in love with the world and hopes that moving to New York City will provide her with ample people-watching opportunities and inspiration as she intends to continue writing poetry and become a published novelist someday.

## DISSUADED

Perfection  
gently pushed me elsewhere  
with his elegant fingertips,  
sheltering me from the ache  
of knowingly existing  
without him.

## SAGE

Twenty years from now  
I'll settle in the natural relief  
of my stinging insecurity  
and make a visit, long unpaid,  
to your fluid, liberating prose  
and ponder vaguely why it was  
that I never saw the easy way you bemused others  
with otherworldliness  
and shook my previously divided attentions  
into sentience.



## THE HUMAN LINE

by Ellen Bass

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*"Ellen Bass's frighteningly personal poems about sex, love, birth, motherhood and ageing are kept from mere confession by the graces of wit, an observant eye, an empathetic heart, and just the right image deployed at just the right time. The Human Line is full of real stunners."*  
--Billy Collins



## Sterling Warner

STERLING WARNER teaches at Evergreen Valley College where he coordinates the annual Creative Writing and Poetry Festival and edits the campus literary magazine, *Leaf by Leaf*. He received the 2000 Hayward Award for Excellence in Education. Warner's books include *VISIONS ACROSS THE AMERICAS: SHORT ESSAYS FOR COMPOSITION*, *PROJECTIONS: BRIEF READINGS ON AMERICAN CULTURE*, and *THRESHOLDS: LITERATURE-BASED COMPOSITION*. He writes and publishes fiction, and his poetry collection, *WITHOUT WHEELS*, was published in 2005.

## DIRECTIONS

for Andrea

Gyrating opposite  
Gravel-faced engineers and  
Flabby, smooth-skinned suits.  
Stayin' light, moving among  
Stripped cars along side-streets of the El Camino  
Only place that felt like home til' supplication from  
Hilo, Saigon, San Blas, Cuzco, Nepal, B.C.  
A smothering spiritual empire of  
Sexy collar bones, waistlines, low backed tank-tops,  
Tattooed wrists, and patchouli bodies.  
Back then, BART pushed across landfill,  
Burrowed under the San Francisco Bay, and just  
Thinking of women felt like liposuction on gray matter.

Down the creek Andrea,  
Raven-lipped mistress of shadows and delight-  
Some say child abuse-would brush her  
Taut breasts against my back,  
I lay back into them at eleven years old (onto them at fourteen)  
Proposing to her in my mind,  
Wondering what Monsignor Healy would say, would do  
Given half a chance to tilt  
His chalice in her direction.  
She, with Kama Sutra hands, Corinthian thighs, and  
Chimney swept hair,  
Left a young boy feeling like Tarzan, searching for the  
Jewels of Opar, finding Glenda, the good witch-  
Ah, where not any temptress or angel would do-  
As intoxicating as fields of opiate poppies,  
Cradling imagination, nurturing fascination and perplexing affection.

Patrician pretensions had no place, past or future  
Amid Andrea's wilderness and natural inclinations, just as I  
No longer slid between cars off the El Camino, and  
Razors recovered an appearance of youth,  
Andrea abandoned recent memory,  
The nights embracing under Bo trees,  
Fixing our immovable spot in the present, and the  
Days of skinny dipping in water tanks and  
Percolation ponds full of mosquito larva and algae,  
Their growth never touched us nor we them  
Yet they bit into an awareness  
Cleft it clean with nowhere to progress.  
Idyllic moments, defiant gestures--laying fireside friendly on  
Scruffy, bearskin rugs, or stretching across streams like natural bridges  
We wandered from windowpane romances and bath water ballrooms into  
A world of terrycloth towels and other women.





## Rochelle Arellano

ROCHELLE ARELLANO is a writer and book aficionado. She works at the Gilroy Barnes & Noble, where she helps others discover the joy of reading and occasionally channels past lives. Her poetry has been published in the *Bathyspheric Review*.

## FOR DAN

“In the end the sea  
takes everything.”  
You, with your  
coy, gladsome  
blue-eyed smile, setting  
fire to ripened wheat-  
gold hair should know.  
All the quiet plans  
and crazy schemes,  
in the end the sea takes.

Everything is just  
that. Nothing floats back  
to shore to be  
retrieved  
in the end,  
coy, gladsome, blue-  
eyed smile, all  
are swept away  
leaving  
the body bared like  
an empty beach  
casting about driftwood  
limbs and everything from  
crazy schemes to  
the quiet plans,  
setting fire to  
this body  
like ripened wheat  
so that it  
trembles and shakes  
at everything, in  
the end, the sea takes.

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## MERMAID

You, slipping beneath  
the slowing tide of the breath,  
as easily as once  
you climbed to the tops  
of the tallest trees, understood the  
disparity of distances  
in desire’s corridor.  
Here, you floated,  
a mermaid between worlds,  
whom no one would call back  
to shore (your younger brother  
found you on your bedroom floor),  
not even after the ambulance  
arrived, and  
harsh-coated priests  
of day hooked you up and  
reeled you in  
on plastic lines  
and artificial  
pulses of oxygen.



## José Antonio Torres

JOSÉ ANTONIO Torres lives in Santa Cruz, by the harbor in a small but lovely one bedroom a few blocks from the ocean. His daily existence consists of viewing films, running, hiking, writing and studying for an M.F.A. in Poetics at New College of California in San Francisco.

## “ARE YOU TIRED? SHE’S TIRED.”

Ruth, mouth half open, all the  
time now, knows they talk about her  
without listening to her mouth half  
open. And when she hears  
them, when her left ear is working  
and turned on, she answers, “No,”  
yawns, and her mouth widens  
and the corners turn up slightly,  
her eyelids go slightly down.

They continue talking about  
her in the third person. Pronouns  
never felt so final.

She promises to stay awake  
for the nurse. Conversations  
continue. Everyone agrees that to  
give her hope is false. She says  
she is not ready to go. No one wants  
to lie to her.

She knows  
that they are preparing to let her  
go, except for Bob. He feeds  
her hope. And she fills herself  
with it until she is tired  
and sleepy, secretly turns  
her left ear off and watches her  
childrens’ mouths move. Filling  
them with the hope she wishes  
to receive, letting them answer  
their own questions.

## TALK GENTLY TO HER

talk gently to her  
even when she does not  
hear. speak closely and  
softly into her good  
ear. energy has no  
sound but immense  
force. speak gently  
to her and she will  
understand and you  
will understand  
it was never about the words  
but how they are given.  
so come close and  
whisper her gently  
into infinite existence.

**Monterey Bay Poets Consortium**  
The second Tuesday of every month at 7 PM at the  
East Village, 498 Washington St., Monterey. \$5 admission.

**UPCOMING READERS ARE:**  
Aug. 14---Julia Alter Canvin & Kathryn Petruccelli  
Sept. 11---Ed Jarvis & Garland Thompson  
Oct. 9---Dane Cervine & Donna Wobber



## Doren Robbins

DOREN ROBBINS’ poetry, prose poetry, autobiographical monologues, and short fiction have appeared in over seventy literary journals, including *American Poetry Review*, *Cedar Hill*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Cimarron Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Indiana Review*, *International Poetry Onthebus*, and others. His books include *PARKING LOT MOOD SWING*, *DRIVING FACE DOWN*, which won the Blue Lynx Prize,

and *MY PIECE OF THE PUZZLE*. Currently, he teaches creative writing and literature at Foothill College, where he is the coordinator for The Foothill Writers’ Conference.

## SINATRA DOWNSTAIRS

Sinatra singing downstairs again. “That’s Why the Lady is a Tramp,”

more moronic than most moron lyrics in 1963. “Funny Valentine,”  
“I Think I’m Going out of my Head,” how many songs did Sinatra destroy? Don’t  
even touch a Little Anthony song, fucking Sinatra  
out of my head, blaring interior telephone, stop ringing—stop ringing!  
My temperament not exactly a stand of bamboo this afternoon; a lot  
of afternoons, after all.

The pepper leaves come up to the balcony rail, some other pale  
wide leaves I don’t know—erotic gloves I call them, glowing  
around the veins coming at the stem.

And me, someone I thought fatigue and will-less-ness would plunk  
into the ground sooner than I would outlast the problem—herb  
of a drier region I call that part of myself.

It might as well be the spoken word soundtrack advisor demon huckster  
Greek chorus leader disposable traveling salesman Willy Loman’s fantastically  
successful brother talking to me from the porch about my fantasy of missing a better  
life, trying to lure me deeper into his hallucination about the truth. One of them.  
One of the worst sounds in history.

## “WHAT’S UP?”

To walk down a street in that neighborhood  
and not get hassled you had to look like you  
could deal with abuse—and you had to  
be able to look into the lowered  
car’s tinted window when it slowed up  
to you, playing heavy bass you felt inside  
your buttons until it pulled away, because you  
looked like you knew and were not surprised  
by what that sound-track to a miserable time  
on cheap chrome wheels was all about.  
And you never let up remembering  
the faces outside wood shop, especially  
the one you thought was ready to rip  
your skinny white ass to pieces—and was  
about to you found out later. And you had to  
know and still better be able to, twenty-five  
years after, in a certain situation know again  
how to say in the right kind of tone, “What’s up?”  
And you have to say it with your eyes looking  
straight but maimed and steady with what they know  
from what they have seen that any harm someone  
intends for you isn’t going to be justified or worth it  
—and you better say it without anger—and you  
better say it with your hands outside your pockets,  
because you have to show in that look that you know  
the unwanted guest sits on a thorn, so someone wanting  
to mess with you senses you know it, and knows for sure  
you deal with it, because you do, and because that  
is going to be your bond.



## Patti Sirens

PATTI SIRENS is an ex-New York poet and punk rock musician turned surfer/kayaker. She comes from a family of mermaids, fishwives, net menders, and bootleggers. Her poetry has won prizes in the Artists Embassy International Dancing Poetry Contest, National Writer's Union Poetry Contest, and the Virginia Poetry Society Contest. Her first book of poetry, *ANTARCTICA*, was published by Burning Bush Publications in 2000. Patti lives in Santa Cruz, California.

## SPILLING SUNLIGHT

“sunlight must be spilling somewhere...”  
Lyn Hejinian

Sunlight must be spilling somewhere not here  
where the mentally challenged are sweeping  
the swill off the sidewalks from the night before  
and some young man too young to be so resigned  
begs for spare change says “god bless you” even  
when he gets neither gulls are circling over the  
dried river it’s a blessedly quiet Monday the  
sacredness of Sunday not yet worn off and we are  
not quite a blank slate chalk marks on the street  
from Saturday night’s drive-by or hit-and-run  
depicts a hand or foot bent at a strange angle  
the fog that crawled through the gash of the river  
like a snail misting everything erased the head  
and torso the cashier at the bookstore asked if  
I was a teacher I said “no” even though I  
teach poetry to juvenile delinquents who’d rather  
be smoking cigarettes and copping meth at the  
bus station I’ve been wearing too many hats  
lately and not sleeping around enough if I stop  
writing for only a moment I’ll let the coyotes out  
with their bitter howling but only I can hear it  
the way if you shut up for just a minute  
you can hear all the birds at once singing  
the sun up from the mountains all their trilling  
levitating that big fireball once I cracked a molar  
on a jawbreaker the spicy cinnamon ones and did  
you ever wonder what cancer-causing chemical  
makes them so hot? one thing led to another  
which led to that molar getting yanked out and now  
there’s a vacant lot in the urban landscape of my  
mouth these last few mornings I’ve heard the  
mockingbird sing on the telephone wires which I  
take to mean this spring I will finally fall in love  
again and sunlight must be spilling on some woman’s  
bed telling her wake up! today there is someone  
you are supposed to meet

## RADIO

My uncle upstairs  
in his boxers smoking cigars  
on a humid summer Sunday morning  
blares the polka station  
frantic accordions honking  
along with the Polish deejay  
my father his hackles raised  
and seething mows the lawn  
sweat beading on his browned body  
“lazy bastard doesn’t do shit” he spits  
between drags  
on a damp cigarette

I’m in the cool shade of the basement  
doing a paint-by-number  
inhaling the smell  
of linseed oil and dust  
Cousin Brucie plays the same  
top 40 songs over and over  
on WABC

perhaps it was Mrs. Robinson  
or Hey Jude or maybe  
that was the summer  
Billy Joe McAllister  
jumped off the Talahachee Bridge

and everyone had secrets then

my uncle fired from his job  
at U.S. Gypsum  
my father’s fifth of whiskey  
in the toolbox  
sister run off to Spain  
with her boyfriend  
my mother menopausal  
staring out the window crying  
and no one knowing why  
I practiced my guitar in the basement  
in the middle of the night  
dreamt of being in a rock band  
in New York City  
our songs would play over and over  
on the radio blasting  
through the unbearable summer silence

## SINATRA’S SYRUPY VOICE

reminds me of Christmas or something  
safe golden and old  
another era  
my mother’s red-tiled kitchen  
dishtowels embroidered with holly  
hiss of steam heat  
my grandmother’s sweet Lipton tea  
and sugar cookies  
outside  
the dull clink of chains  
grinding into snow  
thud of sled blades slicing  
the ice sheets of the streets

Frank romancing anything in skirts

this was the age of black and white tv  
three channels octagonal screen  
in a wooden cabinet  
rabbit ears  
nativity scene in the sun room  
ceramic Jesus with his nose  
missing cottonball sheep  
wooden camel with its broken leg  
wrapped in a bandaid

Frank dreaming of snow mistletoe and  
chestnuts

this was before microwaves Duraflames  
nonflammable artificial Christmas trees  
it was before strangers in the night  
and the summer wind  
it was before Sid Vicious did it  
his way

Frank was still lanky as a microphone stand

the lilt in his voice was a state of mind  
a swirl of snow no special effects  
just the voice pure  
hitting each note like a star on the top  
of the tree  
and some part of us still believed that home  
was not just in our dreams



## Grant Flint

GRANT FLINT has been published in *Poetry*, *Amelia*, *Poetry New York*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *True Confessions*, *People’s World*, *The Nation*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

## UNTIL THEY FIX YOU

They love you, women do, when you’re rumpled  
like me. They love you, in beginning, when  
challenge drips honey like o’er your body, sour  
body, foul body washed once a week whether

needed or not so needed at all, with nose hairs  
quite virginal, as virile as Sampson’s,  
unnoticed, untended to, unending, fierce  
tentacles, sweet sprouting things,

God’s innocent things, growing lush, lewd and pretty,  
but she sees them, ladies see them, giggle  
hopelessly and endlessly, beg to pluck them,  
merely pull them, simply grab them, yank them

tear them, oh they love you when yet they don’t  
have you, what a challenge, an innocent awfully  
virginal, unattached macho man. And they  
titter, tragically titter when they see you oh so

rumpled, hair so tangled, clothes so formless,  
soul so innocent, pants so unpressed, shoes so  
unshined. And you are single, how they love  
you until they get you, grab your privates in

lustful haveness and they own you, really have  
you, get to fix you till you’re fixed. Then  
they wonder, oh they wonder why they ever, ever  
loved you, you’re so incredibly terribly boring,

always awfully totally boring.

## NOT THE ENDING

She died as she lived, not too pretty but noble.  
Not refined, but hearty. Not sweet, not ornery,  
just a fine country girl with 83 years on her.

It was said she’d never die, even by the realists.  
And these were real realists, from the Sandhills  
of Nebraska. Where the summers will kill you,

and if not, the winters will. Too plumb full of  
living, was said, couldn’t fell her with an ax.  
But cancer can do it, can do it to anyone, even

the stout souls, survivors like Mother who  
could outman all men in all manly endeavors, yet  
succor a child as men can only dream of.

She died as she lived with the great common sense  
humor, a wild sense of humor, flipping jokes at  
the Devil and God indiscriminate, greeting death

with a child’s flippant awe. Not the ending, she  
said that last time I saw her, her wig off, her eyes  
wide with vision or morphine, her hand

gripping mine from her slab in the dark room, the  
hospital dead quiet just before midnight. Not the  
ending, the beginning, she said with her death

eyes fiercely loving. The beginning, she said, last  
words she gave me, dying as she lived.