

Issue #14 April 2009



This issue's photo has nothing to do with spring, but it is one of my favourite impulsive snaps, taken when I visited San Pedro de Atacama in Northern Chile during the Easter break of 2003—one of those vacations in life that had a considerable *wow* factor. This might also be said of some of the poetry I have encountered over the last three months. Check out "The Blacksmith Shop" for example by Czesław Miłosz, one of my favourite poets. He goes particularly well with a cup of

camomile tea. So do some of the wonderful submissions that have reached my inbox since Christmas—the finest of which I offer for your reading pleasure below. Do keep sending them in.

Happy Daffodils—Graham

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Paige Riehl (featured poet for issue 14)

AN IMPRESSION

The blue morpho butterflies
are drawn to your iridescent hair
and your soft hands like raindrops.
Other children squeal and attract
only monarchs.
We emerge from the habitat
pink faced, as if bursting through chrysalis
gazing at the open sky.

TREADS

In the dead of night sometimes
while the city seems dead too,
as if it has drawn its last "God, I'm so sick of it" breath,
I start awake
yellow rooms and trains so clear before me
that I almost forget
to breathe.

How long ago it's becoming.
Think about shoes worn and worn out, thrown in a box,
off to Goodwill. God knows who lays
50 cents on the counter and trods
across what sullen streets in yesterday's stink.

Maybe those shoes find their way back
like a dirty, loving mutt
to cobblestone, tramp with duct-taped
straps around and around the world
criss-crossing their treads
like a railroad across countries,
forever looking.

Sometimes the toaster snaps so loud
the coffee singes my chin
out of the daze of real life
the everyday morning dirty hair,
tired up and Adam off to work be grateful
reality.

Later, next to the bed, the pictures
only inches away
though untouched for years.
Their closeness is comfort, a reminder
you still
exist.

FLEDGLINGS

The morning has little hands
that pull me from webbed dreams.
"I want to snuggle you," my son whispers,
buries his tiny sleep face in my neck.

The house is quiet as an old man
waiting.
I close my eyes to my son's rhythmic breathing,
remember my grandfather, tall and dark,
long legs crossed, content to watch the robin
build a nest high on the porch.
He'd sit for hours, watching
her work like a tireless pauper
shaping twigs, grass, mud, string,
even bits of yesterday's news
into architectural art.

She sings when not working,
early, at dusk. She will sing even
when snow smothers the earth.
All that work and all that singing.
He watched and smiled.
It must be instinct, that kind of love.

My son curls tightly into a ball,
blue pajamas soft against my skin.
His hair smells of leaves and grass
from yesterday's play.

AFTER

After the wedding
someone gathers the slightly smashed
cake, the broken beer bottles,
the discarded corsage,
the still smashed best man.
The wine runs like a dirty river
across white linen.

The guests take their suitcases and headaches,
head for home on winding roads
gin slogging like old oil in their veins.
The matron of honor,
dishonored with the usher, lurches
off the dirty floor and dresses
in yesterday's underwear.

All the cameras have left already,
the food chewed and swallowed,
the dj paid in cash.
The bride and groom lay in tangled
sheets, tangled in debt,
credit cards already gathering power
like a forest fire started
by one small spark.

Christopher Barnes

THE RECYCLERS

Boys heavy-eyed on the hay,
budging, spring – they'll step
to the ladder of morning,
warily cold-shouldering the doorposts,
stretching from their nest
- a discarded Coke can –
to swim the hours till noon.

Against fun-loving wind
is the punched out way in.
Fizzy sunlight rims factory-built aluminium.
Tube-vault grey fits to the decking,
a dross of patted hay.

Distant, a whistle of rivers
flat-out to piers.

James Bell

FLOUNDER

the trouble with words is how easy
it can be to muddy the water with shallowness

he asked the fishermen what they'd caught - flounder
one said - without hesitation - sure of his fish

though flounder have a problem with identity
whether it is one or many with a flattened vowel

whether flounder as flatfish is variety enough
where with apparent ease it can be a noun or a verb

the conundrum reverberates round a music hall turn
where the act gets laughs for floundering about

while the real thing is close to a foundering ship
if only in sound alone and smoothed out to stagger

and thrash as many do without benefit of water
when they become attached to hook, line and sinker

AFTER THE CRAFT WAS DITCHED

There's a tilt on the sandbar
that make's it look like a flying saucer has ditched
in the estuary, with no sign of life on board;
no open hatches or tracks lead from it.
My imagination must have taken off again,
the one I planned to ditch
as it struggled with the onslaught of other lives.

I hoped there would be no trial, apart from
a small sense of loss, from which I would recover.
Within poems possessed of Wang Wei's,
out of the four hundred that survive from thousands,
I find he handled loss well;
hoed marrows, or watched the river from his temple;
picked up his pen and experienced some calligraphy.

Maybe this is enough - maybe this is my calligraphy,
though comparatively formless,
takes no strong metric stance, rhyme or end stop
when I retreat from a strong wind on the river
to write it all down - then, unlike Wang Wei, I can no longer
see my vision - though remember the tilt - how I left no tracks -
remember a planet that compels me to return.

Allison Rae Hipple

FROTH

She's just so *frothy*—
Like an overzealous cup of chai,
Sitting there steaming and tugging on
Her little skirt, the one that fit snug two years ago
But now dangles off her hip-bones like a raggedy flag.

Meanwhile, he's wearing flannel
In July and smoking thick cigars
That he says remind him of his grandfather,
The grandfather who crossed the Atlantic
In a canoe and once wrote haikus with Ginsberg
On a train traveling from Boston to New York.

They could write a novel about all
The things they don't say, but
Three-quarters of it would be filled with blank pages, save
For some scribbled guitar chords that accompany wordless songs
And a few drawings of imaginary houses that shelter
Naked lovers and thick Persian rugs.

Brooding and smoking, they wait for a knee
To knock another knobby knee beneath the table,
Or simply for the table to rupture into two separate halves and
Carry the frothy and the heated to their respective parts
Of the world—the island, where she will compose airy love songs
On a string-less ukulele, and the mountaintop, where
He will blindly illustrate the silent melodies.

GINGERBREAD LADY

Gingerbread lady,
no sugar or cinnamon spice;
years ago arthritis and senility took their toll.
Crippled mind moves in then out, like an old sexual adventure
blurred in an imagination of fingertip thoughts.
Who in hell remembers the characters?
There was George, her lover, near the bridge at the Chicago River:
she missed his funeral; her friends were there.
She always made feather-light of people dwelling on death,
but black and white she remembers well.
The past is the present; the present is forgotten.
Who remembers Gingerbread Lady?
Sometimes lazy-time tea with a twist of lime,
sometimes drunken-time screwdriver twist with clarity.
She walks in scandals; sometimes she walks in soft night shoes.

Her live-in maid smirks as Gingerbread Lady gums her food,
false teeth forgotten in a custom-imprinted cup
with water, vinegar, and ginger.
The maid died. Gingerbread Lady looks for a new maid.
Years ago, arthritis and senility took their toll.
Yesterday, a new maid walked into the nursing home.
Ginger forgot to rise out of bed;
no sugar, or cinnamon toast.

Michael Lee Johnson

HARVEST TIME

A Métis Indian lady, drunk,
hands blanketed over as in prayer,
over a large brown fruit basket
naked of fruit, no vine, no vineyard
inside-approaches the Edmonton,
Alberta adoption agency.
There are only spirit gods
inside her empty purse.

Inside, an infant,
restrained from life,
with a fruity wine sap apple
wedged like a teaspoon
of autumn sun
inside its mouth.
A shallow pool of tears starts
to mount in native blue eyes.
Snuffling, the mother offers
a slim smile, turns away.
She slithers voyeuristically
through near slum streets,
and alleyways,
looking for drinking buddies
to share a hefty pint
of applejack wine.

CHARLEY PLAYS A TUNE

Crippled with arthritis
and Alzheimer's,
in a dark rented room,
Charley plays
melancholic melodies
on a dust filled
harmonica he
found abandoned
on a playground of sand
years ago by a handful of children
playing on monkey bars.
He now goes to the bathroom on occasion,
relieving himself takes forever; he feeds the cat when
he doesn't forget where the food is stashed at.
He hears bedlam when he buys fish at the local market
and the skeleton bones of the fish show through.
He lies on his back riddled with pain,
pine cones fill his pillows and mattress;
praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads
Charley blows tunes out his
celestial instrument
notes float through the open window
touch the nose of summer clouds.
Charley overtakes himself with grief
and is ecstatically alone.
Charley plays a solo tune.

James Kilner

EVIDENCE

was what we strained to conjure
blindly from the darkness
inside the abdomen
not yet swelling.

Tests repeated,
feverish debate concerning
the strength of a purple line
emerging on a thin strip of paper.
Endless fathoming of the word
“equivocal”
pronounced by a doctor’s receptionist
in her afternoon torpor
as she glanced idly down the blood test report.

Later, more certain –
but still finding panic in a twinge,
and in nausea, perverse relief;
wishing our will alone
would drive the silent forces
(of which we could not conceive)
to sustain, strengthen and transform.

And then illumination –
the lights went on in your dark chamber.
“There’s your baby”,
the screen turned towards us
and there was our evidence, unequivocal –
you.
Thirteen weeks in the womb
and active almost as a newborn,
already so at ease with your existence,
you scratched your head
at our amazement.
You had formed so fully

while we were sleeping,
riding the Metro,
walking the disused railway track.

And now again you are hidden
and we are left to re-imagine
our first glimpses of you
and watch the blank canvas of the abdomen
beginning to swell,
trusting the silent forces
to sustain, strengthen and transform.

We'll be here
waiting for you.

THE ENORMITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP

is such
that sitting silently together in a takeaway
could undermine the building's foundations –
shift slightly in our seats
and the whole place might come in.

Giggling together on the Tube
could turn Tories into trade unionists –
“proselytising pair!” they'd cry
and we'd wonder why.

Our smalltalk could bring down governments,
a teatime tiff wipe out an entire species,
a knowing look begin a new religion.

The touch of your bare shoulder,
cool to my fingers,
could knock the Earth from its axis,
send us spinning out of orbit.

Arthur Leung

LOST NUNNERY

Gong strikes, you wait there, East Gate,
Wild wings of moths fall from the *pailou*.
Your crimson silk, streaming hair lead my way
Through the lotus pond where cold owls gather.

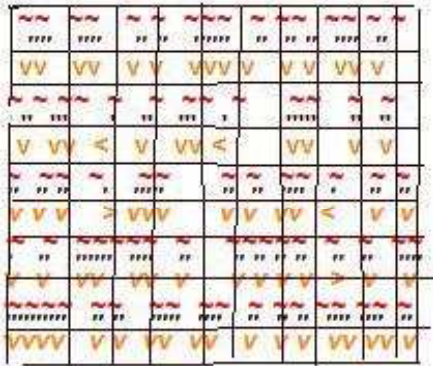
Wild wings of moths fall from the *pailou*
Blasting open four rows of abandoned lanterns
Through the lotus pond where cold owls gather.
Flash of a second, your right eye meets my left.

Blasting open four rows of abandoned lanterns,
You show me the wide crystal of waking dragon.
Flash of a second, your right eye meets my left,
Across the back gate night wind giggles.

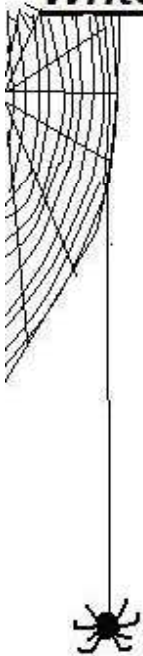
You show me the wide crystal of waking dragon,
Your crimson silk, streaming hair lead my way.
Across the back gate night wind giggles
And the gong strikes, you wait there, East Gate.

Chris Major

OH CLUCK- Intensive Farming Poem



Writers Block



Rick Marlatt

MECHANIC

He yawns in a good-ache morning
sucks in grease and oil's dependable
coffee, blows blue frost from broad
fingers, his breath visible in crystal
formations of last night's jukebox,
old high school yarns, bottled messages
in tequila seas, the fatal eight ball.

This is his domain-
reluctant lights rouse in sporadic flashes
of concrete squares, heavy duty jacks,
a rolling toolbox with a bronze-bikini'd
brown-fleshed brunette advertising August
tropical island style.

Substantial boots beat the ground,
bounce off discreet walls, his Marlboro
Red's soft torch leads the way by the 89
Pontiac, 93 Ranger, and the Moon-blue Iroc.

The open-end wrench is a cold wound
in his palm as he kneels down and pastels
black ash onto a cold concrete canvas,
he pictures the Brunette stepping in from
the wind fingering supple hair from those
sapphire eyes offering her credit card-he'll
say we don't take those so she'll write
a check that crisps like a coconut crack
from the booklet as she tears it out.

And she'll look back before driving away
at the mechanic who finds slow-motion
destiny in her passenger seat's leather. Long
hair jet black blazes from the streaking moon-rock.
He smiles, drunk on her spirit and visions

of white-capped worlds.

And though the carburetor bolt swore
it couldn't dance the old wrench winds
its wounded song around in perfect time.
When the music stops, things are in their
proper place. But a smile remains that
even warms the heart of Ms. August just a little.
SLEEPLESS

I used to do this when I was young
first my father, then mother, sneak
into their room late at night, pull
back their eyelids while they slept,

how they stared back at me in such
motionless peace, in the glassy scope
of those eyes I could've been anything,
the only time they saw me for real.

Tonight the sliver of light in your half-
open eye is a window to a world forgotten-
the pearly egg of an immortal bird, a
brilliant moon breaking free from clouds

the slow coming of winter, a fresh fog's
white breath, an unconquered peak, a
burning star, a prayer drifting alone in
a mysterious straight stranded at equal
distance between life and death,

sunrise on one shore sounds its luminous
veille, me on the other blowing you a kiss
hoping a good breeze will send you home.
What fresher eyes than to wake up at home.

Gréagóir Ó Dúill

A FORD ANGLIA DUMPED ON A HIGH BOG ROAD

Even now there are places where the language might survive,
abandoned schoolhouses with fragrant earth privies
old script copybooks growing lichens in a splitting press,
old pubs, their licences sold down in to the thirsty Pale,
slow sibilance in the weeds rampant in the sagging guttering,
cottage ruins, where purlins part from walls,
chimney breasts are stained with turfsmoke of generations now gone,
small congested districts piers with no access but by curragh and by foot,
famine graveyards, minor hummocks and declivities in suddenly fertile ground,
the plaster-scored cells in burnt-out constabulary barracks

and in a dumped Ford Anglia on a high bog road,
its recurved rear window gone with the rest in splinters in and out
for breaking windows is universal sport and
God knows, there's no lack of stones to hand here.
But it has given, in its day, shelter from a summer storm
for turfcutters, packing shag tobacco in malodorous pipes
with scarred and blackened thumb-pads, lidding them with care
and talking slowly without saying much.
Shelter, too, for teenage lovers negotiating a way
for desire through an inarticulate shyness,
an urgency of tongues, an exploration of hands through clothes.

Animals, too, have been here: at first before the car was dumped
creeled ducks to market, then a tethered ram was brought for tugging,
farm to farm: his rampant piss
never left the back seat, after that, and the driver amused himself
by giving lifts to city walkers who begged release. Then some hens
guarded by Ford from fox and other predators,
laying in the ripped upholstery, yoke clinging to steel springs.
Then hauled by tractor up the bog road to its current lair, just dumped,
another black boulder on the mountainside, stripped of all its assets
- battery, bulbs, tyres, most seats and of its identity, number plates removed
for fear a zealous county official might take stated policy for real (small fear,
here).

A weathered medal on the dash, not intended for the elements, could be Padre Pio
or a crucifixion scene. Cheap metal and plastic do not survive this weather.

The weather turned vicious this autumn day, and I was glad
to duck down in the open door, close it after me to shut out
the horizontal rain. I must have slept, waiting for the storm to pass,
and wakened stiff, disoriented in the gathering dark,
soft voices echoing in my head, slow or urgent, three generations
through near sixty years and a language change
and enforcement of regulations on turf cutting, running sheep on the hills,
fishing for salmon, the others taken as waste.
The car rusts slowly, will make in time another unidentifiable hummock in the
bog,
its people and their journeyings forgotten.

THE AUTUMN OF OUR LOVE

This is the autumn of our love,
heat undiminished but occasional, the close greenery
loosening to crimson, gold, to letting go.

Branches bend to the weight of ripening fruit
and birds begin to mass in trees, on wires,
discussing weather and the time to go.

Insects move in air, settle everywhere,
their thin wail, alien metallic dress
exotic in a space-invading show.

Night comes earlier and we take joy in that,
dusk takes its own decisions and we fall in with them
first fall, first fruits were so long ago.

Soft bloom on everything for the gentle touch,
peach, birchleaf, raspberry, your skin most of all; burnished nut, too
falls to palm, seeks mouth, as apples do.

This, then, is the autumn of our love, the season's
need to flare, store memories away, to bed down
deep before the winter comes, the worm and crow.

Lisa Parry

THE PASTORAL

At night, the English look
up, see aeroplanes where they once
saw witches; trace fumes
from where they circle; wish to
be on board, searching for home.

THE DAY YOU LEFT

You didn't wash your cereal bowl or rinse out
the un-sipped dregs of tea from your mug. You
didn't even swoosh water around the sink once
you'd shaved with that fun Neptune-like glint
in your eye, summoning storms from the taps
to wash away the foam.

Instead, you hurriedly clicked the door shut,
posted the key back through the letterbox. I felt
like a leftover, my thoughts of a future dead as the
whiskers you left, stubbornly clinging to the sink.
MARRIAGE (Poem for a Wedding)

At first, it's a smell of newness
clinging to furniture
bought for your new home.

The sofa hasn't yet met
the wine and coffee stains which
you'll conspiratorially hide with throws.

And the carpet feels so thick and warm now
you wink at its toe-tickling,
even in the heat of an Indian summer.

With time though, this smell of
complete newness will fade,
even though you'll add new things –
a lamp maybe, some photographs,

and the carpet, worn and trodden,
is taken for granted, until those familiar snaps
of English cold cause you
to remember and treasure it.

But from time to time,
you'll look around your home,
hands clasped around mugs of cocoa
or coffee, smiling at each other,

and in those moments,
you'll reconfirm this day, what marriage is:
you'll replace things together,
change things together,

but whatever happens, you'll know each other,
instinctively,
in the same way, when at home,
we know where light switches are in the dark.

Lauren Scharhag

THE WINGS OF HORUS

The hills in autumn are hawk-colored.
The wind flaps and screeches through dry straw,
burlap and denim wait to be stuffed and faces painted on.

Masked, we ride the wings of Horus into the dead season.
Corn husks twist into figures. Gray-white sky begs
for a hag's silhouette, and chrysanthemums adorn the steps.

The fool grins with apple seeds in his teeth.
At night, he'll be lit from within, smiling at tricksters,
the brightest fruit of the harvest carved.

Our bribes and ceremonies only hold for so long,
Then we must trade: candy for coins, costumes for names,
and all souls for the crook and flail.

Mary Sutton

INDIAN SUMMER

Last night you slept with your arms across your chest.
When I touched your shoulder,
you took my hand and lay it on the cool space between us
on the mattress.

In the morning you made the bed
pulling the sheets tight,
tugging at the corners
so the imprint of our bodies disappeared.

You are leaving.
I learned this over morning coffee.
The sunlight coming in through the windows
made a pattern of pale squares on the carpet
in front of us.

I have moved through this day slowly
as though underwater.

I did not fold the laundry.
I left it in the basket by the rocking chair
feeling no need to hold up the red towels
and make their corners meet.

I washed the breakfast dishes,
but only so I could feel
the comfort of warm water
on my hands.

You are leaving.
This has hung in the air all day like smoke
so that now in the early evening
I swear it has seeped into my hair and clothing.
It is difficult to breath.

It's mid October, Indian Summer,
but the days will grow shorter now, and darker.
Soon the bright maples will drop their leaves.

It is not yet six O'clock, but already
the evening shadows have covered the grass
and in the distance
a jagged row of pine trees
swallows the sun.

Korliss Sewer

BOYS NIGHT OUT

Another night of bar noises
from across the street. Music spills
through smoke glass doors
into the parking lot lit by only
a few lamp posts. He sits on the
hood of a car which rattles with bass,
carousing with friends and enemies alike,
passing jibs and doobies amongst
their huddled bodies.

He's out there; and not here.
The bed remains unmade;
and she awaits his cold feet
and smoky breath...

Christian Ward

THE BAT

unveiled itself
like a magician in the attic,
appearing without warning.
I did not see it earlier
in the evening when I sorted
through the remains of my father's
life, cataloguing items from
his days in the RAF: his dusty
uniform, his old medals. Underneath
the grime and muck was a childhood
letter I had written twenty years ago,
that I never knew he had kept. I had
always thought his love was invisible
like the bat, since he would always disappear,
leaving only a mark that never healed.

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Contributors notes

Christopher Barnes won a Northern Arts writers award in 1998. He has read his work at various venues in England and Scotland including the Edinburgh Festival. He has also been involved in a range of projects including making a digital film with artists Kate Sweeney and Julie Ballands, a collaborative art and literature project, the Five Arts Cities poetry postcard event, a solo art/poetry exhibition at The People's Theatre, and the South Bank Centre in London recorded his poem "The Holiday I Never Had". He has also written reviews for Poetry Scotland and Jacket Magazine.

James Bell Was born in Scotland but has lived and worked for many years in Devon, England. He is widely published in terrestrial and internet magazines. His chapbook *the just vanished place* was published in 2008 by tall-lighthouse.

Allison Rae Hipple is a 19-year old college kid attending University of Wisconsin-Parkside. Despite declaring a major in Humanities, she really has no idea what she is doing or where she is going, but she's happy to be here. She's also a bit of a pyromaniac. Her first publications will be featured in the April 2009 issue of Flutter and here at Words-Myth, the beginning of what she hopes will be many.

Michael Lee Johnson is a poet and freelance writer from Itasca, Illinois. His new poetry chapbook with pictures, *From Which Place the Morning Rises* and his new photo version of *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom* is now available at: <http://stores.lulu.com/promomanusa>. He also has 2 previously published chapbooks available at: <http://stores.lulu.com/poetryboy>. The original version of *The Lost American: from Exile to Freedom*, can be found at: http://www.iuniverse.com/bookstore/book_detail.asp?isbn=0-595-46091-7. He has been published in more than 280 different publications worldwide. He is also publisher and editor of four poetry flash fiction sites--all presently open for submission: <http://birdsbywindow.blogspot.com/> <http://www.poetriclegacy.mysite.com/> <http://atendertouch.blogspot.com/> <http://wizardsofthewind.blogspot.com/> Author website: <http://poetryman.mysite.com/>
Author email: promomanusa@mail.com

James Kilner is a PhD student and former journalist. He will soon give a valedictory wave to the world as he disappears under a mountain of dirty nappies - he will become a father in May.

Arthur Leung was born and raised in Hong Kong. He is a regular performer of his poetry and has poems published in anthologies such as *Hong Kong U Writing* and *Fifty-Fifty*, as well as in numerous magazines and journals including *Smartish Pace*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Existere*, *Paper Wasp*, *Bravado*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Poetry Kanto*, *Makata*, *Crannog Literary Magazine*, *Pulsar Poetry Magazine* and elsewhere. Leung has served as External Editor for *Yuan Yang* and as Guest Poetry Editor for *Cha*, and has been featured in the Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival. He was a finalist for the 2007 Erskine J. Poetry Prize and a winner in the 2008 Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition.

Chris Major lives in Staffordshire England. He has had poetry in many print and online mags, including Words Myth.

Rick Marlatt teaches English in Nebraska. He has BAs in English and Philosophy and a MA in Creative Writing from the University of Nebraska, and he's currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California Riverside at Palm Desert. Marlatt's previous publications include Words-Myth, Paradigm, Hamilton Stone Review, Blue House, Trillium, Slow Trains, Language and Culture, Events Weekly, The Carillon, The Reynolds Review, Prairie Poetry, The Bumbershoot Annual, and the University of Nebraska Research Journal. Marlatt performs prolifically, most recently as the featured poet at the Nebraska State Reading Association annual conference this spring.

Gréagóir Ó Dúill, was born in Dublin and he grew up in County Antrim. He taught creative writing in Waterford Institute of Technology, was co-director of the Poets' House, Falcarragh, County Donegal and was for a period lecturer in Irish and Celtic Studies in Queen's University, Belfast. Much published in Irish, eight collections, his selected, two anthologies, biography, short story, criticism, translations. He now also writes in English and his collection, *New Room Windows*, was published by Doghouse in May 2008.

Lisa Parry currently lives in London where she works as a freelance playwright and scriptwriter. Her work has been performed across the UK and also in the US and her poetry has appeared in several UK magazines, including *Iota*, *Magma*, *The New Writer* and *Aesthetica*. For more information, please see www.lisaparry.com.

Paige Riehl is from St. Paul, Minnesota. She teaches writing and literature at Anoka-Ramsey Community College, located just north of the Twin Cities. She is currently on sabbatical and is working on her MFA in Creative Writing at Hamline University. Her poetry and prose have appeared or are forthcoming in such publications as *The Honey Land Review*, *Tryst Poetry Journal*, *Prairie Poetry*, *Mississippi Crow*, *Plum Ruby Review*, *The North Coast Review*, and *Red Weather*.

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