The Red Wheelbarrow
the red wheelbarrow

1983-84
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Editors' Quotes
Molly Malloy: "Druid Power."
Robin Abramson: "Nine times out of ten, it's constipation."
- Kurt Vonnegut, God Bless You Mr. Rosewater

The Sacrament
The old woman stands at the stove shoulder bent, strands of faded hair falling from her braid. She stirs potato soups, the broth pale as her skin. The knuckles of one hand whiten around a cane as she carries a porcelain teakettle with the other. Her cup awaits its fresh teabags and at her first sip, she rises, like steam, into life.

Dawn Dreisbach
After You Leave

I try to sleep,
but rain drops from the ceiling,
silver as pearl from the moonlight shining in.
My fingers glide along the satiny edge of my quilt,
pulling it to my cheek,
two smooth layers.

Water falls, drop by drop on my head.
One, warmer than skin,
trickles down my cheek
pressing deep into the comforter.

Charlane Simmet

Loretta Sharp: "In the beginning were the letters,
wooden, awkward, and everywhere.
Before the Word was the slow scrabble of fire and water."
In Praise of ABC by Nancy Hillard

Charlane Simmet: "Birthday Party started as an English assignment. We had
to choose a painting or photograph and describe it in
the poem. I wanted to amuse Jack Driscoll, my teacher,
so I chose a nude party photograph."

John Coyne: "I can't think of anything."

Rebecca Benson: "To God be the glory."

Anneke Campbell: "The United States must possess the ability to wage nuclear
war rationally." - Carlin Gray, Defense Department 1982
Birthday Party

At the party, people smile, naked behind their masks.
A Jimmy Dorsey nose hangs over a mustache, eyebrows rising into a forehead, one wrinkle for each decade.
A chest swirled with hair and a thick neck hold up Oriental eyes, lips tightly precise, and rice powder.
If she has a body, it's hidden by the ones in front of her, the hag with the hair knotted in curls that droop long on the face, lined as a dried apple.
A woman with light hair has chosen a man's nose, a sloping forehead, and a black-brimmed hat.
Someone's breast sags over the cake, the nipple, like the tip of a party balloon, centered in the eye of the camera.
Their song has ended, their hands clap.
Twenty-three candles bent from flame send smoke into the eyes and mind of the revelers.

Charlane Simmet
Triptych

1.

People stacked under tarpaulins, alive, barely moving. "They like it under there, but they're ready to come out, when needed," the Emperor tells me. I blink, and he says, "You can lead them into battle, when ready; I want my kingdom back."

I call to the people, and try to pull them out, but they don't like it out here and keep trying to slip away. They want to be stacked again.

2.

As leader, I find the enemy is too much like us and the margins of their army fade into ours. We destroy our own flesh.

Contributors' Quotes

Peter Steadman: "I don't know why." - A.A. Milne

Tom Murdock: "And Norman says he's done washing the scum from the boat."

Norman Korpi: "Art through my vision is an unknown reality outreaching its own boundaries."

Kim Baker: "It is good to have a friend to come and shake your hand when you think your final hour has come." - Louis Aragon
accept the fact that this was the last Sunday that he was going to play in the yard.

To make peace,
they show me a white owl in a cage
and how to spear nine frogs with a fork
to fry for supper over a bright flame.
I will let the owl go because his stare burns.

3.

I leave the Emperor and the army in a building pillared, white, which masquerades liberty;
and on a one-way staircase, I climb to the roof
where workers pour tar in white cracks.
"The only way back to the ground," the workers tell me,
"is to climb down the barbed wire."
Demonstrating, one says, "The trick is to miss the barbs."
The only liberty, I think, is to jump.

Susan Lamb
how filthy he would be. They asked him where he had been but Harry never told them. He lied to them. He didn't want anyone to know that he went to the yard to play with Charles because he thought that the fun they had would somehow be spoiled.

One Sunday Harry woke up and went to meet Charles and to his surprise Charles was not there waiting for him. Harry couldn't go to the yard by himself. He needed his partner. He went to see if Charles was home and when he approached his house he saw Charles and his family coming out of their house. Charles was dressed in the clothes that he wore for church: a navy blue three piece suit with a light blue tie. His mother was grasping his hand. She was forcing him to go to church. Charles looked at Harry and nodded his head apologetically. Harry knew exactly what this meant. Charles' parents had found out that he was going to the yard instead of going to church. Charles waved goodbye to Harry and he got into the family car.

Harry returned to the yard and started to play by himself. He tried to pretend that Charles was there playing with him. He was uncomfortable. It didn't feel right playing by himself. There was no one to talk to, no one to laugh with. He lined up several bottles on a plank of wood and threw rocks at them with all his strength. His aim was off but when he did hit the bottles there was a pain, an anger, that could be heard. He was mad at Charles' mother and he realized that she would tell his mother. Harry continued throwing rocks at the bottles but he was hardly reaching them. He cried and mumbled to himself, cursing Charles' mother and complaining about how she did not want him to have any fun. Harry was too tired to keep on playing by himself. He knew that if Charles was there he wouldn't have any problem regaining his energy but Charles wasn't coming because he was in church with his parents.

There was no use in trying to pretend that he was having fun. Charles had to be there. Harry walked back home unwilling to
On Sundays, instead of going to church, Harry and his friend, Charles, would go to the yard near the old railroad and play. It wasn't an ordinary yard with slides and swings. It was an abandoned parking lot filled with bottles, bricks, rocks, and a lot of dirt.

Harry usually woke up earlier than the rest of his family so he could go to the yard and play. After breakfast he would meet Charles near the railroad and go to the yard. If they wanted to play the entire day they could have but they had to go home for dinner. If they had a choice it would be to stay in the yard and play all day long.

Running around, then, seemed like the only way to spend their time. It seemed like the only thing that they could do, forever, without anyone bothering them. Harry and Charles could afford to be reckless because there was no one near the railroad that could tell them what to do. They played in the yard every Sunday.

Their day started by running through the yard and throwing rocks at each other. When they got tired one of them would run to the store and buy some juice while the other one kept time. They changed turns every Sunday. If they were well rested they would practice their aim by lining up bottles on a long plank of wood and throw rocks at the bottles. The one who knocked off the most bottles would win. The results were usually even. Races, and more races, followed by more rock throwing kept them busy until it was time to return home.

Harry and Charles helped each other. If one could throw a rock farther than the other they would aid each other until they threw the rock the same distance. They knew the yard served the same purpose—a place where they could go and have fun—except they never discussed it because they were too busy having fun. There was no clear relationship between Harry and Charles but they helped each other as though they were brothers and, unlike brothers, they rarely argued.

When Harry returned home his parents would be amazed at

Untitled

I mount the wooden stairs, and you are there, alone in my pitch room.

Standing in the center: bemused, smiling gesting expectantly towards the door and my entrance.

Sitting at the desk: engrossed, absorbed: reading my parchment-bound thoughts glistening eyes yearning for mine.

Lying beneath the sheets: desiring wishing: naked underneath a nightshirt waiting for my warmth to supplement yours.

After opening the door, my finger hesitates heeding the pleas of my fogged eyes, my clogged throat.

Then, as always, the switch is thrown and you are gone.

Why must you run from the light.

Anon.
Beyond The 13th Floor.

My world fills with people on the 13th floor.
The electronic door swells shut.
I am trapped in stale air,
the elevator rising.

Fat men wearing black
business shrouds
glare at Asian-skinned women
and their eggplant children
cry.

I look at the elevator walls,
they are short with no pores for moisture.
Refined steel trapping
flat stomachs sweating in piss.

I want out now, but my voice is muffled
beneath the sign that reads
capacity 7 billion.

Norman Korpi

"Oh," he sounded surprised. "It's just that...well
this is how we always do it."

As she leaned back the rusted tuning knob came off in her
hand. Not sure of where to put it, she rested it on the faded
knee of her blue jeans. She hoped it wouldn't rub off and leave
a stain. She watched it for a second:
as if the rusty orange would materialize instantly, then let her
eyes shift up her legs. They were so thick, so round compared to
Larry's. As he pressed on the accelerator she could see his knee
shifting beneath the material of his cotton blend pants. It made
her so uncomfortable to notice things like that; she felt angry
with him for coming home. She wanted him to feel badly, too.
She listened to herself as she half-whispered the words:

"I know. It's just that when you're home.... I feel
like I'm being pulled along. You drive me everywhere. I feel
like I'm being pushed and pulled forward at the same time. You
come home.... and sort of take things over. Then you're gone
again, and everything's the same--except, I feel kind of hollow,
like something in me gets taken away. Oh, I don't know."

She looked at her brother. He kept opening his mouth and
snapping it back down. She saw shadows in the hollows beneath
his cheekbones; they looked as if they might burst right through
the skin. His eyes were black rings left over from finals week.
She hadn't realized he looked so tired and sick. His Adam's
Apple jerked up and down as they tuned into the driveway. She
looked at the ocean view house where they had lived so long as a
family. When they first moved in, the next door neighbor's little
boy had stolen her favorite doll, and Larry had scared him into
apologizing and buying her a new one. He seemed so big, then.
Now, the only thing that seemed big was the house, drawing them
in. She felt so awkward about Larry coming home, and she had
ruined it all in the first hour. He was still opening and
closing his mouth, the broken radio blinking off and on. Larry
reached to the volume knob and turned it off. He turned to
Sarah.

"I'm sorry.", the words were choked. His hands trembled
and she could see the bones beneath the skin. "I'm sorry.", and
he turned off the ignition.

Robin Abramson
"Not really. But if you are...
"No. That's okay."
Sarah felt angry at herself. She knew that she should have said yes. She could have watched what he ate. She could have been sure that he ate anything at all. She looked at the cracked green of the dashboard. The radio light blinked on and off. She wished that Larry would either find a closer station or turn it off. She wanted to tell him so; but it was too awkward. They hadn't seen each other in a long time. It was hot. The static from the radio hung over the car.

They were driving by the beach. Sarah could see rows of cars and teenagers in the parking lot. She wished that they could pull over for a minute, but remembered other occasions when Larry had driven her there and then refused to leave the car because he looked so skinny in his swimsuit; because girls laughed at him. She rolled down the window to yell to a friend. The hot salty air stuck to her face. Songs from dozens of radios lifted above screaming teenage voices, seagulls and surf. This was worse then Larry's radio. She rolled the window back up.

"Larry, do you think I might change the station?"
His head jerked up in the same bobbing motion his throat usually had. "Uh, sure Sarah. Go ahead."
She leaned against the weight of her seatbelt to twist the rusted knob.

"Thanks for picking me up, Sarah."
She always met Larry at the airport when he came home. It was a running joke with the family. When he'd left for school she was too young to drive, and now that she had her license their parents always sent her to pick him up. Larry would pretend that she was too young and demand the keys. She began to wonder if Larry really did feel badly about her driving. Maybe he had some frozen image of her: a perpetual fourteen.

"You could have let me drive."

Death: The Latest Fad

I paint the virus upon my chest.
Wear it gladly.
Who wants it next?

"Styles have changed."
"Fortune comes your way with a taste of my shirt."

Malevolent flies lap their tongues,
sugar for their lives.
I sell and waste
because I want more.

Norman Korpi
Floating

Streams of cars on the highway closed in and around the old brown Nova. As they drove home from the airport, Sarah felt pulled by the speed of the cars ahead and pushed by those behind. She glanced to her brother Larry who was steering with one hand and fumbling with the radio with the other.

Sarah always felt awkward when Larry came home from boarding school. He was two years older, and lately, every time he visited, he seemed completely changed. She remembered when they were younger and still lived in their Chicago apartment. In the summer after dinner the two of them would mix a bowl of detergent and water, and bring it out on the fire escape with two bubble wands. They blew bubbles and watched them float the three stories to the sidewalk. The center of each bubble was a speck of almost electrical color, and as the bubbles floated too far for their outlines to be seen clearly, it was these specks of light that the children followed until they burst.

She looked across the seat. Larry was tapping the steering wheel and humming to the radio. The station was too far away and faded in and out; but Larry liked the song (it was some weird jazzy thing she didn't recognize, a trumpet kept hitting grating high notes that made her head ache). He left it on. He was thinner than his last visit: as his fingers moved up and down, she noticed how bony they seemed. She wondered what he'd been eating at school. He was allergic to bread products—they made him lose weight. She knew that lots of times he ate them anyway.

Larry had a large Adam's Apple, and his neck was so thin that it stuck out as far from his neck as his nose did from his face. Sarah watched it moving up and down as he hummed. She looked down at herself: rounded thighs pressed against the seat with humidity, the slight bulge of her stomach. It seemed funny that Larry was her brother.

Larry cleared his throat and his Adam's Apple jumped. "Are you hungry?", he asked.
Dream (from Pneumonia)

A man in a boat tells me it's a test. Those before me head for the shallows where muck swallows them whole. I swim for the deep.

There, snakes preach a sermon of death as clear and cold as the water. In panic I swim for the shore, the muck sucking my abdomen, drawing the heat from my body.

I heave my body on shore, finding dead albino rats piled in some sort of ritual. Steam rises from their bodies and they stare with pink eyes.

John Coyne

The Cake

Louise did not even try to turn on the kitchen light (the bulb was out anyway), but went directly to the old white frigidaire that rumbled in the corner next to what was left of the chipped wainscotting. She bypassed the diet food and pulled out the chocolate cake her mother had left her to take to the church potluck dinner and put it on the counter. The cake was her favorite type because it was like the birthday cakes her mother used to bake with the coins or messages wrapped in seran wrap or tin foil baked right inside.

On her way over to the drawer to get a knife she tripped over one of the pieces of vinyl floor coverings that the Greek family who owned the place had used to patch the floor. The family was selling the house now, and was going back to Greece as rich people from Canada. Sprawled on the floor, she wondered whether she should get up. She supposed that she should, but the floor was cool and comfortable, and the kitchen air was so hot and heavy. Maybe she should just lie there and rest for awhile. Not that sleeping was really tough, but her mind had been very busy lately.

Her mother had visited yesterday while the real estate agent was bringing through a young couple for the third time. Louise had been given the required twenty-four hour notice, and had planned so that her mother would come long after the real estate agent had left. However, as luck would have it, her mother was early, and the real estate agent late. Her mother had sat in front of her cooling tea watching with contempt the young couple and the architect they had brought in to inspect the building examine everything.

Louise didn't care for the people but she remembered her mother had cared for the whole situation even less. After the group had left her mother didn't speak for ten minutes. Instead, she had stood up with her
cup of cold tea and left Louise's bedroom/sitting room, (which had once been the dining room), and went into the kitchen to rinse out the cup, taking long enough that she knew Louise would realize she was annoyed. The first thing she asked when she came back in was, of course, whether or not Louise had been to church the previous Sunday. She was an ardent backer of the Protestant faith (her father had been a minister involved with the Gideons), and viewed the owners' statues of Jesus and Mary with their ring of red lights that were placed above the door in the common hall as sacrilegious idols.

Louise had admitted that she hadn't been to church. "I knew it. I could just sense it as soon as I walked in. That's what happens to young women who leave their family homes without having been married. A family environment is so important."

"But Mom, you can be stable without..."

"Nonsense. You were a perfectly respectable church-goer before you moved into this," she waved her arms around, "this place." She glared at Louise. Louise looked down at the floor.

"But Mom..."

"Look at you. You can't even look at me straight. It's the influence of those people who own this place. I warned you not to move in here...I warned you. Fat. You can't even control that much of your life. Humph."

Upon ending, Louise's mother took the two paper bags she had come in with into the kitchen and started to replace Louise's food with the diet food she had brought. Louise resigned herself to this and followed her in. Then her mother pulled out the chocolate cake.

"The church is expecting you to bring this to the charity potluck dinner tomorrow night. After dinner they will be making bookmarks for needy and backward natives in New Guinea. Everyone is expecting you there. I should hope your sense of charity is still intact."

At the door she glared at the door handle, said her good-byes, expected a kiss, made a face at Jesus and Mary, and left muttering something about atheists.

---

Nat Horowitz

The Slave-Keeper

(For Tina)

In the basement of my house
In the corner by the furnace
I keep slaves. Chained

To the cinderblock walls
lying in cold dirt
Or pressed against the furnace.

Sometimes they sing songs.
Other times when they would be silent
I make them sing me songs.

They sing about the furnace,
About the walls, the cold.
Sometimes their songs mention me.

I feed them well. I feed them
Whatever they ask for. I have only taught them
My words for water and bread.

Oh yes: their songs also mention
What they eat.
Their wastes go in a hole in the corner.

In the basement of my house
In the corner by the furnace
I keep slaves.

Nat Horowitz
From her place on the floor, Louise noticed that the cracks in the ceiling were barely visible at night. She sat up, and with one hand clinging to the counter and the other to the table, pulled herself off the floor.

She opened the drawer, but couldn’t see into it, and decided that it was ridiculous for a grown woman to creep around her own kitchen at night without a light on. So she turned on the only light in the room which worked, an old desk lamp, and got out a breadknife. She went back over to the cake on the counter and stared at the thick, delicious looking chocolate frosting. Her mother could make one great chocolate cake. She poised the knife over the cake then plunged it in. To her surprise, when the knife went down to about the middle of the cake it hit something hard. She cleared some of the cake away and pulled out the little square package wrapped in tinfoil that had been baked inside the cake. Upon opening the package, she found a letter and a small Gideon Bible. In the letter her mother had written "I knew you couldn't resist temptation. Maybe you should take more care reading this. Phone me when you've come around."

Louise let out a startled whimper. Then she took the cake, the message and the Bible and threw them into the garbage before running into the other room.

Susan Lamb
Arts Academy , for Corrina

Your life uncoils its own design,
draws me along occult cords
here, where instruments hum
in the halls, and snow drifts against
staffs of winter-blown glass,
and falls from branches suddenly
of its own bright weight, with the soft
thud of an over-ripe peach.
Blue knickers with newborn babies’ fingers —

And one night steeped in cold
five young women dance deep
in dark on a snow-blanketed stage
an offering for four thousand empty seats,
for the milky way,
for me alone.

Moon Children

"...The Cuna Indians have the world’s highest incidence of
albinism. ‘Moon children’ (as the Cunas know them) have earned a
distinctive role in the Indian community.” from Molas: the folk-art of
the Cunas

Moon children,
pale as starlight,
their skin slick,
like the skin of new-born rabbits.

Moon children long to know
how blue waters sparkle at midday
yearn to feel the drag of woven nets,
sifting fish from the sea.

They sit protected,
in the hand-shaped shadows of coconut palms,
tugging on cotton threads,
mending the ragged holes
where fish escaped.

When moonlight slips
through bamboo walls,
only moon children are awakened
by its caress.
They leave their hammocks
to walk along shores,
hear the secret whispers
of waves on sand.

Buffy Stockwell
Dance

You rock within the womb your early cradle
softly swaying in an arc of bone, you
waltz to waves of a fluid syncopation
weightless as a whisper you tumble
the thermal body tides that bathe and buoy you,
your universe a shimmering balloon,
your universe this dance of blood and bone.

Anneke Campbell
Sitting With Jezebel

One night
I sit by water
and listen
to the rapture
of Jezebel, my toad.
She is happy
next to me
next to the water.
The music
grows in her throat;
she sings
to the wrinkled moon
in the waves.

Molly Malloy
Taste

Piranhas
diffuse through the platypus.
Their eyes are gilded indigo
as they throng
to the marzipan
of the breast.
A piece of bitter skin
salt oil burning foams
green glass water shock.

Molly Malloy

Poetics

He could've thought rice,
small, polished, and hard,
but when the heat is on,
rice loses shape.
Not for him barley-dreamed metaphor
halved and seamed again,
nor cow patties, dropped fresh
in wet grass to catch the unawake.
No--the kid saw mouse turds,
each one distinct,
each an all-color shining
chorusing a silent passing by,
a stopping long enough
to take in
whatever comes one's way,
a gut-level gratitude,
you might say.

And so to the kid who could show
not tell,
who could look, not think,
who stuck in his thumb
and pulled out that plum
an "A" for Aristotle's sake.

Loretta Sharp
Workshops: The Inexperienced Writer As Doctor

The doctors sit in a circle:
white lab coats
and notebooks:
we trust them and offer our children,
passing them from one to the next
for inspection. We believe they are healthy
to the core.

Diagnosis:

The doctors chew on pencils,
a few chuckle - that back of throat chuckle.
They lean back, exchange glances
brimming with knowledge.

"That's a rather raspy cough."
"Hmm, those bones don't seem to be setting correctly"
"What's that nasty rash?"
"Possibility of retardation."
"Cancer, definitely cancer."

A Cross
after Robert Creeley

She kneels, head
bowed under
saint's
candles and
prayers,
dry whispers
of loss flutter her
skirts. She watches
him die again and
again, the
love
emblazoned.

A pool of
blood, words,
spills from palms
to the floor.

Lisa Shirley
To The Boy Who Asked, In Sixth Grade,  
"Wouldn't It Be Cool To Be Magic?"  
for Wendelin

John,  
while the clouds puffed over our playground  
and we sat against the wall of the school,  
you spoke to me of gnomes,  
+10 swords, engaging battle with a dragon  
in the arroyo in back of your house.

You tilted your head,  
scanned the clouds  
and asked  
"Wouldn't it be cool to be magic?"

Now after years  
of wondering if it would,  
now with friends,  
speaking of potatoes  
that scream when you put them in the oven,  
watching the trees  
that stand so still,  
that smell so good  
when they burn

I have found the need to tell you  
that it is.

Peter Steadman

Prescriptions  
begin with syrups and lozenges,  
build to orders for x-rays and barbituates.

Chemotherapy is popular.  
Also amputations:  
entire limbs and body parts  
hacked off.

We offer our children  
for dissection.  
Mass autopsies.

Returned:  
flesh ripped from muscle,  
head shaven and opened,  
assorted organs in a plastic bag.  
We gather them together,  
patch with masking tape and staples:  
return for fresh inspection.

Robin Abramson
"Flook.\textquotedbl", said the man with the square.
"Flook?\textquotedbl"
"Flook.\textquotedbl"
"Flook?\textquotedbl"
"Flook.\textquotedbl"
"Flook? Okay, flook. I said it.\textquotedbl"
"Say it again.\textquotedbl"
"Why?\textquotedbl"
"Say it.\textquotedbl"
"Flook.\textquotedbl"
"Say it.\textquotedbl"
"Flook.\textquotedbl"
"Good, again.\textquotedbl"
"Flook. Flook. Flook. Flook.\textquotedbl"

The man with the red square exited the room. He found the general.

"Sir, I think the prisoner is responding.\textquotedbl"
"Is he speaking now?\textquotedbl"
"No, sir.\textquotedbl"
"Good. Good work, Admiral. What treatment did you use?\textquotedbl"
"Flook.\textquotedbl"
"What?\textquotedbl"
"The Flook therapy, sir.\textquotedbl"
"Ah, I see. He hasn't said anything?\textquotedbl"
"No, sir. Not for awhile.\textquotedbl"
"When is awhile?\textquotedbl"
"Couple days, sir.\textquotedbl"
"Good. Please proceed.\textquotedbl"
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"Say it.
"Flook.
Good, again."

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for inspection. We believe they are healthy
to the core.

Diagnosis:
The doctors chew on pencils,
a few chuckle - that back of throat chuckle.
They lean back, exchange glances
brimming with knowledge.

"That's a rather raspy cough."
"Hmm, those bones don't seem to be setting correctly"
"What's that nasty rash?"
"Possibility of retardation."
"Cancer, definitely cancer."

A Cross
after Robert Creeley

She kneels, head
bowed under
saint's
candles and
prayers,
dry whispers
of loss flutter her
skirts. She watches
him die again and
again, the
love
emblazoned.

A pool of
blood, words,
spills from palms
to the floor.

Lisa Shirley
Taste

Pirhanas
diffuse through the
platypus.
Their eyes are
gilded indigo
as they throng
to the marzipan
of the breast.
A piece of bitter skin
salt oil burning foams
green glass water shock.

Molly Malloy

Poetics

He could’ve thought rice,
small, polished, and hard,
but when the heat is on,
rice loses shape.
Not for him barley-dreamed metaphor
halved and seamed again,
nor cow patties, dropped fresh
in wet grass to catch the unawake.

No—the kid saw mouse turds,
each one distinct,
each an all-color shining
chorusing a silent passing by,
a stopping long enough
to take in
whatever comes one’s way,
a gut-level gratitude,
you might say.

And so to the kid who could show
not tell,
who could look, not think,
who stuck in his thumb
and pulled out that plum
an "A" for Aristotle's sake.

Loretta Sharp
Sitting With Jezebel

One night
I sit by water
and listen
to the rapture
of Jezebel, my toad.
She is happy
next to me
next to the water.
The music
grows in her throat;
she sings
to the wrinkled moon
in the waves.

Molly Malloy
Dance

You rock within the womb your early cradle
softly swaying in an arc of bone, you
waltz to waves of a fluid syncopation
weightless as a whisper you tumble
the thermal body tides that bathe and buoy you,
your universe a shimmering balloon,
your universe this dance of blood and bone.

Anneke Campbell
Arts Academy, for Corrina

Your life uncoils its own design,
draws me along occult cords
here, where instruments hum
in the halls, and snow drifts against
staffs of winter-blown glass,
and falls from branches suddenly
of its own bright weight, with the soft
thud of an over-ripe peach.
Blue knickers with newborn babies' fingers —

And one night steeped in cold
five young women dance deep
in dark on a snow-blanketed stage
an offering for four thousand empty seats,
for the milky way,
for me alone.

Moon Children

"...The Cuna Indians have the world's highest incidence of
albinism. 'Moon children' (as the Cunas know them) have earned a
distinctive role in the Indian community." from Molas: the Folkart of
the Cunas

Moon children,
pale as starlight,
their skin slick,
like the skin of new-born rabbits.

Moon children long to know
how blue waters sparkle at midday
yearn to feel the drag of woven nets,
sifting fish from the sea.

They sit protected,
in the hand-shaped shadows of coconut palms,
tugging on cotton threads,
mending the ragged holes
where fish escaped.

When moonlight slips
through bamboo walls,
only moon children are awakened
by its caress.
They leave their hammocks
to walk along shores,
hear the secret whispers
of waves on sand.

Buffy Stockwell
From her place on the floor, Louise noticed that the cracks in the ceiling were barely visible at night. She sat up, and with one hand clinging to the counter and the other to the table, pulled herself off the floor.

She opened the drawer, but couldn’t see into it, and decided that it was ridiculous for a grown woman to creep around her own kitchen at night without a light on. So she turned on the only light in the room which worked, an old desk lamp, and got out a breadknife. She went back over to the cake on the counter and stared at the thick, delicious looking chocolate frosting. Her mother could make one great chocolate cake. She poised the knife over the cake then plunged it in. To her surprise, when the knife went down to about the middle of the cake it hit something hard. She cleared some of the cake away and pulled out the little square package wrapped in tinfoil that had been baked inside the cake. Upon opening the package, she found a letter and a small Gideon Bible. In the letter her mother had written “I knew you couldn’t resist temptation. Maybe you should take more care reading this. Phone me when you’ve come around.”

Louise let out a startled whimper. Then she took the cake, the message and the Bible and threw them into the garbage before running into the other room.

Susan Lamb
cup of cold tea and left Louise's bedroom/sitting room, (which had once been the dining room), and went into the kitchen to rinse out the cup, taking long enough that she knew Louise would realize she was annoyed. The first thing she asked when she came back in was, of course, whether or not Louise had been to church the previous Sunday. She was an ardent backer of the Protestant faith (her father had been a minister involved with the Gideons), and viewed the owners' statues of Jesus and Mary with their ring of red lights that were placed above the door in the common hall as sacrilegious idols.

Louise had admitted that she hadn't been to church. "I knew it. I could just sense it as soon as I walked in. That's what happens to young women who leave their family homes without having been married. A family environment is so important."

"But Mom, you can be stable without..."

"Nonsense. You were a perfectly respectable church-goer before you moved into this." she waved her arms around, "this place." She glared at Louise. Louise looked down at the floor.

"But Mom..."

"Look at you, you can't even look at me straight. It's the influence of those people who own this place. I warned you not to move in here...Now look at you. Fat. You can't even control that much of your life. Humph."

Upon ending, Louise's mother took the two paper bags she had come in with into the kitchen and started to replace Louise's food with the diet food she had brought. Louise resigned herself to this and followed her in. Then her mother pulled out the chocolate cake.

"The church is expecting you to bring this to the charity potluck dinner tomorrow night. After dinner they will be making bookmarks for needy and backward natives in New Guinea. Everyone is expecting you there. I should hope your sense of charity is still intact."

At the door she glared at the door handle, said her good-byes, expected a kiss, made a face at Jesus and Mary, and left muttering something about atheists.

The Slave-Keeper (For Tina)

In the basement of my house
In the corner by the furnace
I keep slaves. Chained

To the cinderblock walls
lying in cold dirt
Or pressed against the furnace.

Sometimes they sing songs,
Other times when they would be silent
I make them sing me songs.

They sing about the furnace,
About the walls, the cold.
Sometimes their songs mention me.

I feed them well. I feed them
Whatever they ask for. I have only taught them
My words for water and bread.

Oh yes: their songs also mention
What they eat.
Their wastes go in a hole in the corner.

In the basement of my house
In the corner by the furnace
I keep slaves.

Nat Horowitz
Dream
(From Pneumonia)

A man in a boat tells me it's a test.
Those before me head for the shallows
where muck swallows them whole.
I swim for the deep.

There, snakes preach a sermon of death
as clear and cold as the water.
In panic I swim for the shore,
the muck sucking my abdomen,
drawing the heat from my body.

I heave my body on shore,
finding dead albino rats
piled in some sort of ritual.
Steam rises from their bodies
and they stare with pink eyes.

John Coyne

The Cake

Louise did not even try to turn on the kitchen light (the bulb was out anyway), but went directly to the old white frigidaire that rumbled in the corner next to what was left of the chipped wainscotting. She bypassed the diet food and pulled out the chocolate cake her mother had left her to take to the church potluck dinner and put it on the counter. The cake was her favorite type because it was like the birthday cakes her mother used to bake with the coins or messages wrapped in seran wrap or tin foil baked right inside.

On her way over to the drawer to get a knife she tripped over one of the pieces of vinyl floor coverings that the Greek family who owned the place had used to patch the floor. The family was selling the house now, and was going back to Greece as rich people from Canada. Sprawled on the floor, she wondered whether she should get up. She supposed that she should, but the floor was cool and comfortable, and the kitchen air was so hot and heavy. Maybe she should just lie there and rest for awhile. Not that sleeping was really tough, but her mind had been very busy lately.

Her mother had visited yesterday while the real estate agent was bringing through a young couple for the third time. Louise had been given the required twenty-four hour notice, and had planned so that her mother would come long after the real estate agent had left. However, as luck would have it, her mother was early, and the real estate agent late. Her mother had sat in front of her cooling tea watching with contempt the young couple and the architect they had brought in to inspect the building examine everything.

Louise didn't care for the people but she remembered her mother had cared for the whole situation even less. After the group had left her mother didn't speak for ten minutes. Instead, she had stood up with her
Floating

Streams of cars on the highway closed in and around the old brown Nova. As they drove home from the airport, Sarah felt pulled by the speed of the cars ahead and pushed by those behind. She glanced to her brother Larry who was steering with one hand and fumbling with the radio with the other.

Sarah always felt awkward when Larry came home from boarding school. He was two years older, and lately, every time he visited, he seemed completely changed. She remembered when they were younger and still lived in their Chicago apartment. In the summer after dinner the two of them would mix a bowl of detergent and water, and bring it out on the fire escape with two bubble wands. They blew bubbles and watched them float the three stories to the sidewalk. The center of each bubble was a speck of almost electrical color, and as the bubbles floated too far for their outlines to be seen clearly, it was these specks of light that the children followed until they burst.

She looked across the seat. Larry was tapping the steering wheel and humming to the radio. The station was too far away and faded in and out; but Larry liked the song (it was some weird jazzy thing she didn't recognize, a trumpet kept hitting grating high notes that made her head ache). He left it on. He was thinner then his last visit: as his fingers moved up and down, she noticed how bony they seemed. She wondered what he'd been eating at school. He was allergic to bread products — they made him lose weight. She knew that lots of times he ate them anyway.

Larry had a large Adam's Apple, and his neck was so thin that it stuck out as far from his neck as his nose did from his face. Sarah watched it moving up and down as he hummed. She looked down at herself: rounded thighs pressed against the seat with humidity, the slight bulge of her stomach. It seemed funny that Larry was her brother.

Larry cleared his throat and his Adam's Apple jumped. "Are you hungry?", he asked.
"Not really. But if you are..."
"No. That's okay."
Sarah felt angry at herself. She knew that she should have said yes. She could have watched what he ate. She could have been sure that he ate anything at all. She looked at the cracked green of the dashboard. The radio light blinked on and off. She wished that Larry would either find a closer station or turn it off. She wanted to tell him so; but it was too awkward. They hadn't seen each other in a long time. It was hot. The static from the radio hung over the car.

They were driving by the beach. Sarah could see rows of cars and teenagers in the parking lot. She wished that they could pull over for a minute, but remembered other occasions when Larry had driven her there and then refused to leave the car because he looked so skinny in his swimsuit; because girls laughed at him. She rolled down the window to yell to a friend. The hot salty air stuck to her face. Songs from dozens of radios lifted above screaming teenage voices, seagulls and surf. This was worse than Larry's radio. She rolled the window back up.

"Larry, do you think I might change the station?"
His head jerked up in the same bobbing motion his throat usually had. "Uh, sure Sarah. Go ahead."
She leaned against the weight of her seatbelt to twist the rusted knob.
"Thanks for picking me up, Sarah."
She always met Larry at the airport when he came home. It was a running joke with the family. When he'd left for school she was too young to drive, and now that she had her license their parents always sent her to pick him up. Larry would pretend that she was too young and demand the keys. She began to wonder if Larry really did feel badly about her driving. Maybe he had some frozen image of her: a perpetual fourteen.
"You could have let me drive."

Death: The Latest Fad
I paint the virus upon my chest.
Wear it gladly.
Who wants it next?
"Styles have changed."
"Fortune comes your way with a taste of my shirt."
Malevolent flies lap their tongues,
sugar for their lives.
I sell and waste
because I want more.

Norman Korpi
Beyond The 13th Floor.

My world fills with people on the 13th floor. The electronic door swells shut. I am trapped in stale air, the elevator rising.

Fat men wearing black business shrouds glare at Asian-skinned women and their eggplant children cry.

I look at the elevator walls, they are short with no pores for moisture. Refined steel trapping flat stomachs sweating in piss.

I want out now, but my voice is muffled beneath the sign that reads capacity 7 billion.

Norman Korpi

"Oh," he sounded surprised. "It's just that... well this is how we always do it."

As she leaned back the rusted tuning knob came off in her hand. Not sure of where to put it, she rested it on the faded knee of her blue jeans. She hoped it wouldn't rub off and leave a stain. She watched it for a second; as if the rusty orange would materialize instantly, then let her eyes shift up her legs. They were so thick, so round compared to Larry's. As he pressed on the accelerator she could see his knee shifting beneath the material of his cotton blend pants. It made her so uncomfortable to notice things like that, she felt angry with him for coming home. She wanted him to feel badly, too. She listened to herself as she half-whispered the words:

"I know. It's just that when you're home.... I feel like I'm being pulled along. You drive me everywhere. I feel like I'm being pushed and pulled forward at the same time. You come home... and sort of take things over. Then you're gone again, and everything's the same- except, I feel kind of hollow, like something in me gets taken away. Oh, I don't know."

She looked at her brother. He kept opening his mouth and snapping it back down. She saw shadows in the hollows beneath his cheekbones; they looked as if they might burst right through the skin. His eyes were black rings left over from finals week. She hadn't realized he looked so tired and sick. His Adam's Apple jerked up and down as they turned into the driveway. She looked at the ocean view house where they had lived so long as a family. When they first moved in, the next door neighbor's little boy had stolen her favorite doll, and Larry had scared him into apologizing and buying her a new one. He seemed so big, then. Now, the only thing that seemed big was the house, drawing them in. She felt so awkward about Larry coming home, and she had ruined it all in the first hour. He was still opening and closing his mouth, the broken radio blinking off and on. Larry reached to the volume knob and turned it off. He turned to Sarah.

"I'm sorry," the words were choked. His hands trembled and she could see the bones beneath the skin. "I'm sorry," and he turned off the ignition.

Robin Abramson
the yard on Sundays

On Sundays, instead of going to church, Harry and his friend, Charles, would go to the yard near the old railroad and play. It wasn't an ordinary yard with slides and swings. It was an abandoned parking lot filled with bottles, bricks, rocks, and a lot of dirt.

Harry usually woke up earlier than the rest of his family so he could go to the yard and play. After breakfast he would meet Charles near the railroad and go to the yard. If they wanted to play the entire day they could have but they had to go home for dinner. If they had a choice it would be to stay in the yard and play all day long.

Running around, then, seemed like the only way to spend their time. It seemed like the only thing that they could do, forever, without anyone bothering them. Harry and Charles could afford to be reckless because there was no one near the railroad that could tell them what to do. They played in the yard every Sunday.

Their day started by running through the yard and throwing rocks at each other. When they got tired one of them would run to the store and buy some juice while the other one kept time. They changed turns every Sunday. If they were well rested they would practice their aim by lining up bottles on a long plank of wood and throw rocks at the bottles. The one who knocked off the most bottles would win. The results were usually even. Races, and more races, followed by more rock throwing kept them busy until it was time to return home.

Harry and Charles helped each other. If one could throw a rock farther than the other they would aid each other until they threw the rock the same distance. They knew the yard served the same purpose—a place where they could go to and have fun—except they never discussed it because they were too busy having fun. There was no clear relationship between Harry and Charles but they helped each other as though they were brothers and, unlike brothers, they rarely argued.

When Harry returned home his parents would be amazed at
how filthy he would be. They asked him where he had been but Harry never told them. He lied to them. He didn't want anyone to know that he went to the yard to play with Charles because he thought that the fun they had would somehow be spoiled.

One Sunday Harry woke up and went to meet Charles and to his surprise Charles was not there waiting for him. Harry couldn't go to the yard by himself. He needed his partner. He went to see if Charles was home and when he approached his house he saw Charles and his family coming out of their house. Charles was dressed in the clothes that he wore for church: a navy blue three piece suit with a light blue tie. His mother was grasping his hand. She was forcing him to go to church. Charles looked at Harry and nodded his head apologetically. Harry knew exactly what this meant. Charles' parents had found out that he was going to the yard instead of going to church. Charles waved goodbye to Harry and he got into the family car.

Harry returned to the yard and started to play by himself. He tried to pretend that Charles was there playing with him. He was uncomfortable. It didn't feel right playing by himself. There was no one to talk to, no one to laugh with. He lined up several bottles on a plank of wood and threw rocks at them with all his strength. His aim was off but when he did hit the bottles there was a pain, an anger, that could be heard. He was mad at Charles' mother and he realized that she would tell his mother. Harry continued throwing rocks at the bottles but he was hardly reaching them. He cried and mumbled to himself, cursing Charles' mother and complaining about how she did not want him to have any fun. Harry was too tired to keep on playing by himself. He knew that if Charles was there he wouldn't have any problem regaining his energy but Charles wasn't coming because he was in church with his parents.

There was no use in trying to pretend that he was having fun. Charles had to be there. Harry walked back home unwilling to
accept the fact that this was the last Sunday that he was going to play in the yard.

To make peace, they show me a white owl in a cage and how to spear nine frogs with a fork to fry for supper over a bright flame. I will let the owl go because his stare burns.

3.

I leave the Emperor and the army in a building pillared, white, which masquerades liberty; and on a one-way staircase, I climb to the roof where workers pour tar in white cracks.

"The only way back to the ground," the workers tell me, "is to climb down the barbed wire." Demonstrating, one says, "The trick is to miss the barbs." The only liberty, I think, is to jump.

Susan Lamb
Triptych

1.

People stacked under tarpaulins, alive, barely moving.
"They like it under there, but they're ready to come out, when needed."
The Emperor tells me.
I blink, and he says,
"You can lead them into battle, when ready; I want my kingdom back."
I call to the people, and try to pull them out, but they don't like it out here and keep trying to slip away. They want to be stacked again.

2.

As leader, I find the enemy is too much like us and the margins of their army fade into ours. We destroy our own flesh.

Contributors' Quotes

Peter Steadman: "I don't know why." - A.A. Milne

Tom Murdock: "And Norman says he's done washing the scum from the boat."

Norman Korpi: "Art through my vision is an unknown reality outreaching its own boundaries."

Kim Baker: "It is good to have a friend to come and shake your hand when you think your final hour has come." - Louis Aragon
Birthday Party

At the party, people smile, naked behind their masks.

A Jimmy Dorsey nose hangs over a mustache, eyebrows rising into a forehead, one wrinkle for each decade.

A chest swirled with hair and a thick neck hold up Oriental eyes, lips tightly precise, and rice powder.

If she has a body, it's hidden by the ones in front of her, the hag with the hair knotted in curls that droop long on the face, lined as a dried apple.

A woman with light hair has chosen a man's nose, a sloping forehead, and a black-brimmed hat.

Someone's breast sags over the cake, the nipple, like the tip of a party balloon, centered in the eye of the camera.

Their song has ended; their hands clap. Twenty-three candles bent from flame send smoke into the eyes and mind of the revelers.

Charlane Simmet
After You Leave

I try to sleep,
but rain drops from the ceiling,
silver as pearl from the moonlight shining in.
My fingers glide along the satiny edge of my quilt,
pulling it to my cheek,
two smooth layers.
Water falls, drop by drop on my head.
One, warmer than skin,
trickles down my cheek
pressing deep into the comforter.

Charlane Simmet

Loretta Sharp: "In the beginning were the letters,
wooden, awkward, and everywhere.
Before the Word was the slow scrabble of fire and water."
In Praise of ABC by Nancy Willard

Charlane Simmet: "Birthday Party started as an English assignment. We had
to choose a painting or photograph and describe it in
the poem. I wanted to amuse Jack Driscoll, my teacher,
so I chose a nude party photograph."

John Coyne: "I can't think of anything."
Rebecca Benson: "To God be the glory."
Anneke Campbell: "The United States must possess the ability to wage nuclear
war rationally." – Carlin Gray, Defense Department 1982
Editors' Quotes

Molly Malloy: "Druid Power."

Robin Abramson: "Nine times out of ten, it's constipation."

- Kurt Vonnegut, God Bless You Mr. Rosewater

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The Sacrament

The old woman stands at the stove shoulder bent, strands of faded hair falling from her braid. She stirs potato soups, the broth pale as her skin. The knuckles of one hand whiten around a cane as she carries a porcelain teakettle with the other. Her cup awaits its fresh teabags and at her first sip, she rises, like steam, into life.

Dawn Dreisbach
the red wheelbarrow
1983-84