

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Pamela Uschuk**

*Learning the Theremin*

~ *For Steve Romaniello*

This instrument looks like the black box salvaged  
from a downed Russian jet except for the halo  
tube at one end to modulate tones  
eerie as whale song or the elastic  
stampede of rogue elephants  
booming in outer space.  
Leave it to my people to invent music  
replicating the songs of ghosts rising  
from Stalingrad's mass graves  
or the long starved bones of poets  
and physicists exiled by Stalin's torture squads  
to die in Siberia. With its own bizarre ethos,  
this instrument is a heart too sensitive to be touched.  
When Steve plays "Over The Rainbow"  
with one vibrating fist aimed at its antennae  
and the other hand spread, levitating  
above the halo, Judy Garland warbles vowels  
from her tomb, and our bodies resonate  
like moonstung swamp reeds or like  
skulls pelted by meteors until they crack  
open to let in a spectral summons  
we'd rather forget. Who could bear  
to listen to an entire concert  
tinged with blind eye sockets, the hinged  
ends of charred arm bones, grave stones  
slick with moss erasing epitaphs and names?  
This music lacks blood in the same way  
a cobra's eye ices as it charms  
its victim before it strikes.  
But, as Steve's hands mesmerize the invisible,  
conjuring those quavering notes from  
the quickened air between us, we  
cannot move away, sucked by inevitability  
into black holes of longing  
between constellations mapping each of our cells.

First Place Poetry Prize  
~ In the 30th Consecutive NMW Awards ~  
Summer 2010 ~ Judge, Don Williams

## **Jim Glenn Thatcher**

### *Interlinear*

He sits in the darkness and watches the blizzard  
and listens and thinks about language  
while the wind whooshes and whispers and howls.  
How words rise from our nature to make the world legible,  
struggling toward meaning through the stutter of being;  
through a gale of chaos and instinct and chance.

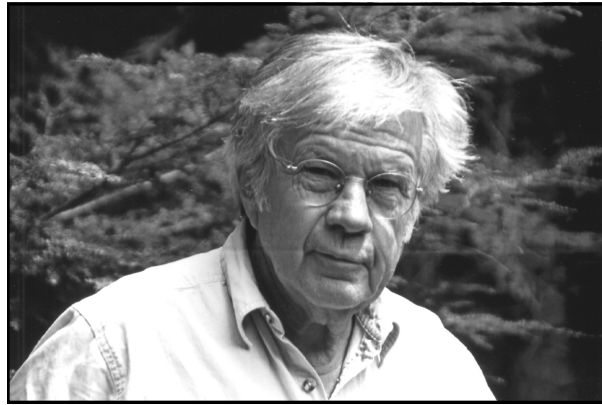
How the storm tonight is filling the woods  
with a new page in its ancient encryption;  
a swirling, shrouded, secret literature  
that revises itself as it falls, obscuring every track,  
every signature of life, in whirling drift;  
spreading its hidden meanings  
among the cuneiform scrolls of the birches.  
Spruces sag under its portent.  
The hemlocks stand their dark runes,  
and each black twig in the scrub  
is a character spelling its changing tale  
in the white space forming around it.

By morning the storm will have gone.  
He will go out under a blue and brilliant sky  
to read the auguries of its passage in hieroglyphs  
of shadow and light, ice and melt;  
the ongoing translations of the text of the night  
into that of the day, the ciphers of the thaw,  
the always-decaying script of one moment  
into the always-rising context of the next.

He will walk down the road to the field  
by the water where new signs have formed,  
passing from the instant of their imprint  
into the history of the two hours since dawn:  
The travels of two deer; a brief scatological

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*'Humanity has been "reading between the lines"—interpreting the world around it—long before writing was even invented, in some of the terms we still use to describe that need: "Reading the omens", "reading nature," "reading the tracks" and so on. In fact, it was probably the imagery arising from these*



*observations that gave rise to the prewriting of primitive art and hence to writing itself. Growing up, I began to see this "writing" in nature as such—in birch bark, tracks, and so on, in ways that—rising out of dimness—sparked my feeling for it. In "Interlinear" I was able to bring that obscure and mysterious language into both voice and what might be described as something like legibility. "In "Mystery Incarnate" we have the nature that perceives that greater nature which envelops it, and, again, interprets—or misinterprets—that greater nature as best it can, feeling out its meaning through both faith in—and doubt about—itsself, in the highest forms it has so far found to do so—myth and literature. '*

*~ Jim Glenn Thatcher*

excerpt from the autobiography of a fox;  
the fragment of a narrative of aging and hunger  
in a hawk's fluttered and frustrated  
strike in the snow.

He will be listening for the life of the day  
all around him, straining to hear nature  
reflecting upon itself in every stir of breeze  
and drip of melt, every skitter of dead leaves  
across the already crusting snow, every unseen  
movement of flesh, each flicker of thought  
rising through his own being.  
He will be wondering what that fox hears  
in what he hears now:  
The endless epiphany of existence  
in the calls welling worldward  
from a wheeling Babel of crows.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Sandra Kasturi**

*pirandello street*

down by the abandoned railway line, rich  
with wild flowers and small darting mammals

old women hum at the washboard, warm  
sun beating the backs of their black dresses

as they bend and swish to the rubrub slap  
the music of cotton sheets in the washtub

old women untouched by machines  
indifferent to the possibility of ease

whose knotty browned hands wring  
and twist water from cloth

or from squawking chickens,  
caps from green glass bottles—

strange fizzy drinks bought  
in decayed little corner shops

that still sell loose tobacco  
and pipecleaners, where old women

sit on the bench outside  
with their pipes and shawls

telling tealeaf fortunes  
for passersby who dare to pause—

old women resting for a brief  
moment at the end of washday

their ankles even more swollen  
hands waterlogged, puckered

with wrinkles, their sheets and shrouds  
in the wicker laundry baskets

scrubbed to a blinding whiteness

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Penelope A. Thoms**

*There Are No Children Here*

They were blown away in holocaust ashes.  
Small bits, the size of buttons or petals were found  
on hillsides, in hedgrows, or sprinkled in summer gardens.

Here there are no children.

They were taken by the fairies wanting something sweet.  
The little ones, just bite sized, melted on the tongue.  
Everyone was hungry then.  
The youngest, taken first, toddled toward the open arms,  
the gaping mouth of famine.

There? No children are here.

They were murdered: burned, shot, killed in cities, towns,  
east, west, north and south.  
They flamed briefly, small candles.  
Firewords became firebombs  
in a place where there are no birthdays.

Are there children here? No.

Now there are tears where there were children.  
Mothers rend their hands, keen and call for them.  
But they hear no sound.

There are no children here.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Katharyn Howd Machan**

*Tess Clarion: Redwing, 1888*

I might have found a house, a home,  
even a barn or weathered shed  
with open door to welcome me  
in full-cut frock, my belly huge  
and ready. Too many miles alone—  
what choice had I?—the horse fatigued,  
the flivver jolting this way, that,

and suddenly a tiny inner  
kick that loosed birth's waters warm  
and certain. She was my second; I knew  
the clench and pull. No time to hunt  
for bed or rush-strewn floor: I clambered  
down to roadside pasture, hoping  
for a level place of moss and grass,

my petticoats for rags. How long  
I pushed—the swells of breathlessness  
and breath—who knows? A cloud-whorled sky  
and patient grazing horse in harness  
the only witnesses to blood  
and cord and sharp beginning cry  
as tiny dark-haired daughter met

the light and rose to breast in my  
glad hands. We lay in summer's lap  
adrowse, sun shifting gloom to gleam,  
sweet clover at my elbow, pain  
a shared commitment, bodies' bond.  
I think a redwing called, I think  
the nearby stream sang both our names—

but memory's a trickster when  
a woman's merged with God and given  
love the shape of life. I knew

my husband still awaited me  
the next town over, anxious for

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my help, his hip so badly bruised  
he could not walk nor ride; but I

let time take her and me along  
in goldswept journey lying there,  
breeze like softest feathers astir,  
our foreheads' sweat a halo. *Angel*  
I mused, her mouth my mouth, her hands  
such small curved stars. *We'll always share  
deep summer's voice, and wings to soar*

*through air.*

### **Cathy A. Kodra**

#### *Hunting*

Every now and then the red-plaid ghost  
of my father treads heavily across the room.  
I smell the sad stream of cigarette smoke,  
hear the rasp of labored lungs. He whispers  
that if he could, he would have loved us more, stayed  
home at night, left his guns in the gun rack, kept his dark  
fingerprints off my mother's heart.

He shudders and moves air around my shoulders  
ever so slightly. He hums the songs I knew  
at nine—tones to soothe or stir a storm.

I tell him that I love him, send it hard and true  
toward his fading form. I feel the faint quintessence  
sift away through walls that won't hold a spirit  
long enough to absolve the host.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Georganne Harmon**

*Turtle*

~ *To Grandmother*

From under the thick shell  
that holds your papery life  
and closes around your dying days,  
every so often you emerge.

Out comes your craning neck,  
listening for an old song  
of rendezvous, A Bicycle  
Built for Two. Your blue

eyes find me, and know.  
An arm slides out, a hand  
craped as reptile skin  
grasps mine and holds.

You tender mine against  
the cool of your cheek.  
Your mouth empty as a cave  
finds an opening, a craggy

smile. Each day a nurse  
stretches all your limbs,  
you, splayed under sheets  
like a terrapin overturned.

“You’ve got the best legs  
in the clan,” we always said.  
Still it’s true, all splotched  
and crazed with these last years.

And though you said  
again, again,  
you were not smart or good,  
(“No, siree!”) I see, now

(you all drawn-in  
the light expectant tremor  
on your lipless mouth),

a kind of glow, or maybe  
it’s a drift of song  
from some tunneled  
ever-place

and reaching in your face—  
does a turtle smell a cool creek  
not far away, or autumn  
loam, and turn to it? Do we?—

and I know that smart or good  
could not count for much  
After a hundred years.  
Only the hymn-singers like you

would worry so, only  
the tenders of the poor, like you,  
and you were smart enough,  
Good enough.

Go, go I tell you,  
to your burrow in the widening  
dusk, and in the spring  
I’ll crane my neck to hear you sing.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

### **Zakia Henderson-Brown**

*abbreviated manual on how to keep a human heart intact*

#### step 1

practice cowardice\*—following the instinct to beat around bushes; discussing the weather and no more; ignoring the elephant suspended between you and the person who agrees that yes, it's much too cold for this time of year.

#### step 2

occasionally administer what translates to a doggie treat, a caress under the ribcage—cheerios, aspirin, physical humor, cycling.

#### step 3

mistake potential suitors—despite build, wit, or sparkling repute—for nightmares; follow suit pets, their life spans like lightning, like breeze

#### step 4

seek intimacy. then, confuse casual banter with intimacy.

#### step 5

masturbate.\*\*

#### step 6

stock your shelves with: light tales and warm endings; sweet histories of the world that replace conflict with snapdragons; oversized picture books.\*\*\*

#### step 7

think of the foul locations courage has led your predecessors:\*\*\*\*  
underground, exile; anywhere, cracked into unmendable parts; small  
inconsolable apartments.

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\*think here of a talking lion, early on, a full road away from that sham, the wizard.

\*\*self-serving: safe, effective. zero chance of creating a connection that could ruin you, have the heat haunt you, the kiss break you.

\*\*\*it's a pumping organ after all, requiring tending to, unable to withstand disappointment in large or small doses, no matter the font or circumstance.

\*\*\*\*fannie lou hamer: dead by "heart disease"; assata shakur: surviving with limited use of her pulmonary valve; winnie mandela: accused of not owning a heart, then of eating them; your own mother; her own valentine.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

### Deborah DeNicola

#### *Rewind*

The walls of the two towers pick up their plaster and dust sucking upwards into blue. Those who jumped don't, but blow softly up through open windows to sit at their desks intact. Two hundred firemen moonwalk back to their trucks, hang hoses up like warriors' swords as the running pedestrians stop, turn on their heels and stroll back through the park and plaza shops. The melted church rights its ribs, pulls its roof back on like a hat, while fallen spires resurrect from blueprints. Both aircraft tanks siphon back flames of gas, and glass mosaic uncoils from debris, folding into steel archways. Two planes resume their flight to Los Angeles, and Los Angeles. White exhaust feathers through morning, early and clear. Three thousand busy people loved by others are still right here. Gorgeous. The Indian-summer sky.

*Rewind previously appeared in Solstice Literary Online Magazine's Inaugural Issue.*

### Maureen Doyle McQuerry

#### *Load Lines*

The water has risen above the plimsoll line: ship's sinking  
or the weight of this cargo is too burdensome for the frame  
to bear. My friend photographs the rust

on ships' hulls, the red, yellow, black fire  
inscribing the skin of boats. Her art  
the wearing away and what is left:

that texture of attachments we cannot pry  
from our hulls, barnacles, corrosions,  
steel stressed beyond the fatigue limit.

It takes years to wear thin enough for light  
etched seams, to cultivate an eye  
for the beautifully distressed,

patina of peeling paint, orphaned letters,  
the spirit crackling through  
the body's shell.

*Load Lines appeared in a slightly different form in Rock & Sling.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**E.A.M. Morse**

*Ah, At Twenty Four*

Ah, at twenty four  
is it possible to feel  
the slippage of the years?  
the faint discoloration of growing old  
the constant rub down from a pumiced motion  
and for me, the striking of my match  
drawn one, each once  
in match-boxed days  
extinguished  
or expended  
wafting in and out of dance halls  
leaving smells?

An impassioned twenty four  
bleating twangs  
on metal strings  
leaving coffee stains  
to settle yellowed mattresses  
and all along  
shuffling through  
dead mail  
repulsed by children  
and consumed  
in a night's sex

What is left of a person at twenty four?  
but belches and gas  
circuses of grooming  
before and after  
the deflations of parties  
and carelessly pitched tents  
the stopper removed  
from an already exhausted bottle

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**Christiane Jacox**

*Swan*

*All things innocent, hapless, forsaken...*

~ Theodore Roethke, 'The Meadow Mouse'

Wrapped in an old blanket and the arms  
of the neighborhood bad boy who crouches  
on the beach beside the lake, the swan lays  
her head down in the saddest curve where  
he has bunched up the layers of old wool  
smelling of fish and lake and last year's moss,

the fishhook buried deep within the white,  
wild beauty of her curved neck, without blood  
but hopelessly quiet in this soft light. Done  
thrashing in his arms, for she must have thrashed  
for who knows how long in the shallow water,  
lifting and sweeping her great wings forward

without any hope of rising from the lake  
in that simple mystery of flight. Caught  
in a tangle of line, exhausted, she  
no longer lifts her head toward the seven  
cygnets who paddle anxiously this way  
and that, nor to the father who has placed himself

between them and the boy hunched on the shore,  
curving his wings in one heroic gesture,  
thrusting his sure way through the water, though  
in this hour and place, no other danger  
seems near. The boy bundles her a bit  
closer, easing himself down to the sand

as if to settle in for the long haul,  
tucking his head towards hers, his dark curls wild  
against her soft white feathers, his shoulders  
heaving, and we turn away; this is all  
we can give them, to walk on to our  
destination, leaving them to certain

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outcomes, with pity and longing, but no  
miracle to lift her to him up from  
this misery, to walk on, in late spring  
where everything else is blossoming  
under heaven's pale green latticework  
of leaves, even this inexorable

scene as it arcs in memory, rooted and rising,  
mute and unforgiving, which we will  
return to year after year without knowing

what it means or why we must carry it.

**Wayne Lee Gay**  
*Silence Is Pleased*

Motion and stillness,  
Darkness and light,  
Silence and noise—  
And the greatest of these is silence.

Silence covers the world  
One second after the moon begins to wane,  
One second before the pond starts to freeze—

Silence occurs  
Just before the baby remembers how to suck  
at the mother's nipple,  
And silence is pleased  
In that instant just before the lover gives up all,

And in the space between the reader and the page.

**Andrea Turner**

*Remembrance Day Picnic at the  
Sequatchie Valley Graveyard*

We walk the two miles to the graveyard  
as we always have,  
gathering towards the end of September;  
before the winds come up into the trees  
flipping the leaves like coins  
and tossing them through the finished corn stalks;  
before the kudzu vines have released  
their stranglehold on anything caught  
standing still in the heat,  
which has wrapped around us like a warm moist quilt  
with the constancy, the ceaselessness  
of the scraping and the humming of insects.

A few trucks pass flying  
trails of dust, and waving arms.  
Most of us are wearing white,  
and as little as respectfully possible,  
our steps as slow and metered as a wedding march.  
Every face is shaded under some sort of cover.  
Free hands brush the warm air and dust  
over our liquid skins,  
with picture fans of the Good Shepherd.  
At Ms. Pickett's we turn from the main road  
that connects the Sequatchie with Chattanooga  
on one end, and I don't know what on the other.  
The smell of blackberries simmered  
in thick sugar sticks  
following us long past the kitchen,  
where her violet stained apron  
hangs uncommonly thin. It's the last house.

The gradual climb begins here to our yard,  
which we tend like city slickers  
in a prized slice of garden.  
It stretches unnoticed through the meadow,  
up one side of Daus Knoll.  
We have planted a memory here with granite stones;  
our family albums, every photo placed face down,  
the white rectangles appearing at a glance

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like windows set in a dark green sheet,  
except for the names and particulars scrawled on each.

Families push through the gate  
as familiar as their front doors hugging,  
and slapping backs: "Golly, it's good  
to see ya! I cain't believe that's the baby."  
Grandma arrives finally arm-in-arm  
with the daughter-in-law, a foreigner  
from L.A., who has never seen a grave before  
except from the freeway: "But ya know,  
ya cain't see a flower from a gallopin' horse,  
sweetheart."

Wilbur Tate pulls a blanket and a mason jar  
of cherry juice from his armpit and settles  
near May's stone which he carved last year,  
"Beloved wife and Mother."

The fried chicken comes out, a gasp escapes  
from a jug of fresh opened pickles and is absorbed  
into the voices clattering  
through bites of corn muffins spread with jam:  
"Who picked these blackberries for ya, Grandma?"  
"Not you, that's for shor." They laugh.  
And the grey woman rocks forward on her woven knees  
buried under skirts, stretching to kiss his cheek,  
a year older.

Still there are things to be taken care of.  
The last child is grabbed playing tag.  
Stiff limbs are straightened, pallets folded, set aside.  
Backs start to bend, bobbing like a gaggle of snowy geese  
around the mounds picking the graves  
clean of weeds, stuffing some into a separate poke  
for tomorrow's salad. The gate is scraped  
and washed with paint, the hinges oiled, stones brushed clean.  
A whippoorwill answers a katydid.  
An engine grinds to a start,  
and soon another.  
A few, hating to let go, stand talking,  
already missing each other.

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**Jennifer Campbell**

*The Curing*

She escapes into the woods, real  
not metaphorical, for a time,

tired of seeking meaning in the mundane,  
but the buds have opened a great deal

since April. "I'm not coming home"  
still gives her trouble, unsure how to take

a concrete declaration, infuse it  
with color and shade. She once read

about distressed Greeks finding peace  
at sleep temples. They tracked

worries in their visions for months,  
winding unsettled hallways, waiting to dream

about a curing. Her dreams haven't included  
dim figures or dropping down a great well.

Instead she sees an orchid rising  
from a swimming pool, a child who fits

in the palm of her hand, topaz lightning.  
She most envies Kawabata's Dream Hotel,

its promise that seems like health, the snow  
in its infinite grace, falling, falling.

*The Curing appeared previously in Saranac Review.*

~ NMW First Verse ~

**Annie McNeil**

*Proper Procedure (as taught by my stepmother during her illness)*

Fleshy berries, red and black,  
    hanging bound  
in a fine white net, smother  
themselves, hemorrhage,  
    and drain.

Yeast, flour, and fat—kneaded,  
    rested,  
re-kneaded—devour each other,  
lose themselves, become one.  
    Patience,

she says. The fruit must drip,  
    concentrate  
like wine. The dough must rise,  
arch tall with air. Add heat.  
    Eat.

Jelly seeps through bread,  
    a creeping  
blue within white like the slow  
sneak of cyanosis. I  
    remember

how the dried purple juice  
    on her plump,  
pretty hands matched bruises  
pooled there by her own poisoned  
    blood.

How flour filmed those dark knuckles  
    and glowed  
and marked her brow white when she wiped  
her hairless, kerchiefed head.  
    How  
she went on making jelly and bread.

*Proper Procedure is Annie McNeil's first published poem.*

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**David Cazden**

*Calling The Minnows*

Any man she could find  
she brought to the fish pond.  
She surprised them,  
painting crosses on the tips of the clover,  
fishing for minnows,  
drawn up on her slender line.

They laughed at her boldness  
until the silver hook stuck.  
Then they would fight,  
barbs tugged the gills,  
scales swirled in the wound.  
They tried to leap in the dark  
belly of the pond,  
but she was insistent, unhurried.  
She whispered and breathed in the waves.

She knew a small, blind fish  
swam within every man,  
that there was the thought of a tree  
inside every tree,  
that the idea of the minnow  
would slowly emerge,  
to squirm up the thread  
of her voice, the invisible line—

Once she went alone to the pond  
and found the idea of herself  
walking out of its flesh,  
beyond her dress as she moved—

She explored the weeds, pondside;  
plovers' high knees plowed the edge waves,  
water lapped lavender flowers—

~ *Continued*

*Calling the Minnows previously appeared online in Poems Niederngasse and Stirring.*

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She stretched over the banks,  
feet in the mud and algae  
blooms, watching hundreds of minnows  
flip like coins in the sun, tangling her hair,  
calling the minnows that swim below,  
asking the world  
to swallow her whole.

***Meredith Hadaway***

*Drift*

A veil of mist blends sky and  
roof and trees and everything that  
softly hums across

the water in a windless  
hour before the sun—which never  
really rose—goes down.

This is the weather of sleep.  
The calm that says there will be  
no storm, only the tide's slow sip

at the shoreline. What light  
is left curls up in the sky's  
gloved palm, sliding

sideways toward its final  
gesture. The river is a reason,  
if you need one.

*Drift previously appeared in Hadaway's collection  
The River is a Reason (Word Press, 2011).*

## Davida Adedjouma

### *Portia Co-Opts History*

Portia, Portia, damn near white, auburn shoulder-length hair,  
lost to the rapture of her skin. Portia's arms open  
and bleed 14k gold and sweet oils. Portia gathers her body,  
spreads open her legs before us, begging to be kissed, tells us  
*I love you*, as if it wasn't written across her milky pierced breasts.  
Portia, the youngest Portia from a long line of Portias, grabs us  
by the wrist and handcuffs us to this room by the strength  
of her voice alone. Portia is lover, slut, woman  
of valor is Bathsheba, is Ophelia, is Cleopatra, is Nefertiti,  
is Sappho, is known only by her first name, is Maya—  
was illegally circumcised, was brutally raped, was tortured—  
is Myrlie, is Coretta, is Rosa, a rose of Sharon,  
a lily of the valley, is none of these, was the winner  
in the end. She co-opts a history she ain't never had.  
What Portia saw blinded her, rendered her mute.  
But didn't I hear her cries from garbage-strewn  
sidewalks, from the bowels of roach-invested tenements  
with peeling lead-based paint and urine-drenched hallways,  
blood stains on the dance floor, and didn't I grow up  
in those very same conditions, didn't I?

As Portia speaks we women hold hands, our only thoughts  
a drink of wine. We are Babylonians; we speak in every tongue,  
emeralds fall from our eyes. We all sing, waiting to be born  
inside our heads. After ten years of such women gatherings,  
this darkly-lit room has become sanctuary to many of the sistahs  
but for me it's incredibly frightening. Drenched in the sound  
of her voice, the sea crashes when she talks.

Portia's is a soft wash of voices chanting on Gullah Island  
while she snaps beans and combs nappy heads and greases  
ashy knees and elbows and sings hymns and wails a gut bucket  
full of blues, daring every woman in the room to feed her brain  
the food of her own history. We swallow Portia's speech,  
wallow in it, wash our bodies in the blood, eat her.

I go to the *Ladies* and think about what Portia has said,  
walk with her words hand-in-hand like lovers strolling  
through Central Park. True lovers. For the first time I recognize  
myself in Portia's reflection I see myself of Portia I sing. Not  
placing her above a Higher Power, she is twelve steps beyond  
the rainbow, she skittles across the grain. And I love myself  
because I too am Portia, of her flesh, she eats my sins. Amen.

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**Melissa T. Greene**

*No Words*

If I could I would walk with purpose to  
the window of your language, lift  
my hand through the slats of light, draw  
down gently the blinds.  
I would push aside all your words designed for  
convincing, explaining, telling, push  
them to the corners, sweep away the dust to  
reveal a nice spot for working.  
I would drape your reasonings with my *sh-h-h-h-h*  
quieting the tap tap tap of keys endlessly putting  
into print every word of substance.  
In this warm dark silence let me  
lead you gently into a space of no words where  
there are only electric neurons firing in  
the mouth and skin, where  
there are no treatises or briefs, no  
summaries or blogs, only senses mingling  
into their own senses. You can  
touch the taste of the orange's  
sweet inner flesh, swallow firelight crackling  
somewhere inside you.  
Here it is safe to  
lose the limits of language and know  
how it feels when words crumble  
upon themselves, leaving you only with  
the scattered sparkles of a body unbound.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Adam Day**

*His Dementia*

I slept with my face to the wall,  
hands clapped flat between my knees.  
My grandfather shuffled through French doors,  
put his hand on my shoulder.

I rolled over slowly, and held crisp  
hand-skin like black cabbage, the skin  
of one badly burnt. He leaned close—

cataracts. Eyes green  
marbles under ice, and I  
could see beside the long darkness  
of his ear's tunnel, a blue sore,  
a decomposing berry.

And he said, that he wanted Houdini  
alive in the Hippodrome with Jennie  
the elephant, and his black stack  
of scratchy Red Seal albums  
for the crank up Victrola, the dunes  
and cut & pressed glass ruins of a coastal town.

I let him into bed, and we listened  
a long time to the furnace—I sang Caruso  
into his good ear, until he began nodding  
and I escaped from my skin  
leaving it beside an old, deaf,  
nearly-blind man, a palsied  
pile of nylons, a world of snow.

*His Dementia previously appeared in Carolina Quarterly.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Mary Elizabeth Parker**

*Night Fears, Afghanistan*

The mourning dove  
sobs its four notes  
from the scrub tree outside  
the smallest room,  
where the women urge  
their minds to pull to them  
every thing of value so it may be  
shushed beneath their skirts.

*Here Alexander marched.  
Impossible. Yet it lifts again  
like spores from this rock soil:  
lions hauled in for sport,  
crated behind Hannibal's  
goat-elephants stumbling up  
into terror, sillified by the lurch  
of themselves over rock.*

Hariri, who left to sell pizzas  
in Pittsburgh, has slouched home,  
where he's chief now,  
training his handful of strutting  
pals toting Kalashnikovs,  
raising their chins toward  
the same outcrop where Macedonians  
first fell down on them  
thick and drowning as snow-mass.

The women weave a warning  
into the carpet beneath their feet:  
a Persian lion over and over  
sinking its teeth into the haunch  
of a startled hart.

How to cinch a golden ceinture  
around the babies, against

the dream of lions, that muscled climb  
up the back of a still-writhing something.

Inside the smallest room,  
women imagine repeating ranks  
of mirrors, reflecting  
their own thousand hands

flung out to the rock paths to pinch  
a seed from a passing bird's wing  
to plant, to force  
a green thread struggling up.

## **Mitchell Untch**

### *Portrait*

Looking out the window I see a stem, a long lean thread of a stem  
gesturing like a finger in the breeze, a branch of bougainvillea  
pointing upward, heavenly, its violet blooming petals like the wings  
of exotic butterflies resting in the sunlight, napping under a gaggle  
of luminous white clouds. I admire the bougainvillea, its tenacity,  
the voraciousness of its flower like gossip moving from one ear to another,  
one fence to another, how it ascends and descends simultaneously, concurrently,  
how it never loses its footing climbing through chain-link, over walls,  
down the slippery slopes of rustic chimneys, impervious to smog,  
the cold, drought, and even brief but oftentimes violent outbursts of rain,  
like so many hearts holding on, so many unopened valentines.  
I see them in the recesses of parking lots awash with color,  
sprinkled with light and dashes of shadow like the advertisements  
of the Renoir exhibit that have been hanging all over town  
flapping flirtatiously in the wind, the painting of a woman with light  
that seems to rise from between her milky white breasts,  
her blouse fallen open and the ruffles on her sleeves  
that seem as though they might actually be moving but actually are not.  
That is what we're meant to believe of course, that something's going on,  
in the air, that something is happening right in front of our eyes,  
that she is having a conversation and that the conversation  
she is having is real, something to be listened to, eavesdropped on,  
though her lips are actually closed and it is really her milky white flesh  
that is doing all the talking, all the illuminating.  
I would say it is the wind that is making her hair move.  
I would say it is the sunlight that is making her eyes glisten.  
But isn't that just the thing he would want us to believe?  
Suppose she was someone he just made up, some ghostly apparition  
that appeared in his dreams one night who sat stroking her hair  
sipping tea at a quiet French café just outside his studio,  
her lush lips fluttering like the bougainvillea I am looking at now?  
I can't hear them of course, the bougainvillea, just as I can't hear her.  
But isn't that the point? Though something tells me they are laughing  
at me sitting in my chair while they are outside basking in the sunlight,  
relaxing in the breezes that blow like kisses over their tender bodies,  
unfolding their paper lips, the woman in the painting leaning forward,  
the light shining through her body as though she were a candle burning  
from the inside out looking as though she wanted to whisper  
something in my ear while the bougainvillea watched and the windows  
in my apartment began to darken, began to blush.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Lin Powell**

*Big Band Theory*

With the loudest possible cymbal crash, the universe  
springs forth from the tiniest womb, a primordial  
black hole, the mother of god

and criminals. Yin-yang must have been there from the start, being  
formed in the sour crack between lonely half-steps  
tinkled on an ol' blues piano.

After banjos were created in the guts of supernovas,  
the brasses wah-wah, the walls quake and shake, and dancers  
fall on their knees to praise the lord,

halleluia! Doctor gravity and his einstein wonders sweatin'  
and jumpin' for three minutes of magic tune, the good doc  
pumpin' the rhythm, drivin' folks out the door

for air. An atmosphere of rapture fills the room,  
fills the lungs; the division of the saxes take place  
right there on the bandstand, as we twirl and sashay

amidst bear, elk and eagle, floods and porpoises,  
slippin' and slidin' with the funereal dixie 'bones,  
cuttin' the ragtime residue of ever-expanding universes.

*Big Band Theory previously appeared in Palo Verde, Vol 5, #1, Spring 1997, under  
pen-name Yogi Carmichael, and in Arizona State University's Emeritus College  
Newsletter, Vol 4, #2, Spring 2009.*

## **Ruth Hill**

### *Climb in Me*

Climb in me, wet dripping salt sea spray,  
Helly Hanson dark green rubber rubbing  
gunwales and corduroy wales and whales you see.  
Climb in me, and sail.

This handsome transom ransomed me...  
this rainstorm, hailstorm, sleetstorm warm,  
this rising high and dipping down away.  
Sway, play to the ridges and the runnels,  
where the water drops out from under you,  
and you feel the elevator plunge,  
then God's hand lunges ya up again.

Hold fast to the mast, straddle the cradle  
of ship's ribs flexing, breathing,  
swaddle of sail spiral tied on boom yard,  
hard over to spill the windy sea,  
lest we be tossed and lost, you and me.

Climb in me, taste the salty tears invisible  
in the rain and plainly overdue, as you  
realize this could be your last ride,  
but for your boast the Holy Ghost  
is sitting in the crow's nest,  
the best guide to ride with.

Climb in me, look through lashes  
holding drops with prisms in 'm,  
so this dark green scene with fog screen seems  
filled with rainbows, rain ranting on your pontoons,  
pantaloon, and side-washing spittoons.

Climb in me, and hear the wind screaming,  
seeming to tear the seaming, where  
you need the wind to hold, to steer  
near the shore, where more  
waves wash higher, deeper, sharper, steeper,  
and you must cross them, the most dangerous,  
before you get to tore and gore lore. You swore  
you'd never come back again, but here you are,  
wind-whipped hair and wide-eyed stare,  
speed, exposure, indeed composure, greed, pure.  
Grab the sheets, hock the chocks in shock  
and swing, wing high on that storm in the sky, the sea.  
Climb in me and see...*sail...wail...*

*Climb in Me was a finalist in the BC Burnaby Writers Society 2010 Contest. Winning Writers Newsletter published it online in October 2010.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Marilyn Greenberg**

*Sleepless*

Quick to hear trifling  
sounds, he keeps occupied  
during the twilight hours,

reflecting on how the lightning bug stays lit,  
like the moon, which even when halved  
still glows, still does what it must

and he thinks he too can endure,  
do whatever it was he used to do  
before his wife rose from the table  
to pack most of her things,

prompting him  
to think about the summer he was eight,  
when his mother left in the night  
and he put lightning bugs in a jar

to make a lantern to look for her  
because there was no moon  
and the moon renews so slowly.

*Sleepless previously appeared in the California Quarterly as third prize winner in the Ernestine Hoff Emrick Awards.*

**Jesse Wolfe**

*Good looking*

He looked in books for clues to how to love.  
He looked in Charlotte Brontë,  
And Virginia Woolf: in books.

He went to dinner, movies too.  
With women named Clarissa, Cathy, even Jane.  
He tried to kiss them  
On the first date. On the cheeks or lips  
Or somewhere else. Sometimes this was soon,  
Too soon, for them. They wouldn't call him back.  
—Their gentle way of saying *Bye*,  
*You kissed too soon*, he said.  
They didn't call him back  
Because he kissed too soon.

He looked in books for how they kissed or touched.  
They weren't so hurried, then.  
They loved in stages, touching  
Only very slowly, then.  
He wouldn't kiss at first sometimes.  
He'd sit across the table  
Speaking in well-crafted sentences,  
Like one who'd been to school for many years.  
He'd been to school for many years.

They wouldn't call him back.  
—Their gentle way of saying *Bye*,  
*You didn't kiss, nor touch enough*,  
He said. He said  
They didn't call him back  
Because he didn't touch.  
He spoke in elegant sentences,  
Like one who'd studied Henry James  
And T.S. Eliot.  
He'd studied Henry James  
And T.S. Eliot.

He looked, he looked, in women's books  
For clues to how the women felt,

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

About the words that wooed,  
The touch, or touch deferred.

He said he'd look in books  
For how they love, in books,  
But not how he would love, today.

He said he'd love both ways: one way  
Inside the books; outside the books  
Another way. He said  
He'd go on loving every day.

**Vernon L. Gillian**

*Appreciation*

To sit and watch the lovely ladies pass  
under warm spring skies.

To wander the gentle paths of their voluptuous gardens  
through an old man's eyes.

Is to know, if only in memory,  
*the young man still survives ....*

**Devreaux Baker**

*Spirit Of New Orleans*

This morning I called down the twin blessings  
of black coffee and French toast.  
I wanted to resurrect the flickering shape of summer

winding her body into all my back alleys  
with names like Funky Butt, Flea Hop, Snake Hips,  
Sugar Foot or Susie Q.

I wanted each dancing silhouette to stretch a net  
across my floor, so we could haul in our catch  
of one hundred dancing fish and create the Creole Tango  
or Fire-Eaters Waltz.

I wanted New Orleans to be my dance partner,  
my sweet song, my sugar sprinkled on toast,  
or French Cameroon with pearls at her throat.  
My man blowing his sax, my wanton, my girl,  
my ghost.

I wanted the BoogieWoogie to happen in my bones  
so birds would make their spring nests  
in the windows of my soul, and I could hold you naked

as some new beginning, where we slide our dancing feet  
in circles of salt on your Grandmother's floors  
and the moon melts in all our wine glasses  
causing the boy you flirted with  
to carry you home on his back.

I wanted the wafer of Christ placed on my tongue  
so I could eat New Orleans in a holy ceremony  
and get blessed with JitterBug steps that run thicker  
than blood or water,

those moves with no names,  
that hold out their arms from bodies  
that smell like the Jive or just risen bread to say,

*Come on home  
lay your head on my chest,  
follow my lead in this shuffle foot Shim Sham,  
this hot morning, black night, circle Champion Strut,  
for a New Orleans kind of prayer.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Allan Peterson**

*Worried Sick*

Even with the chance of oblivion  
no one being sure an atomic chain-reaction  
would not be the end of the atmosphere  
they took it  
a few guys needing the possibility of power more  
than the future of life  
demonstrating a sickness so vast  
all the molecules of their families were enemies

Afterwards a few months of stuttering began  
by some who had seen it  
from their lawn chairs through flight goggles  
and others elsewhere  
began noticing fissures of the brain  
looked like a kind of erosion

Later I saw a drawing at Semolina's  
of what appeared to be a pelvis  
nested in roses ragged with the loss of flesh  
bloomed like the death flower  
over Los Alamos the poplars an artist's rendition  
of its shadow someone worried sick  
since we had established for all time selfishly  
any risk for destruction  
is justified  
any terror will be used

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Li Min Mo**

*The Underworld Goddess of P.S. 65*

Almost every morning she comes  
in late, spreading her cheap perfume;  
in her high-heeled gold slippers  
she sashays to the third row from  
the front. Her dyed-blond curls, still  
in rollers, face pale without makeup,  
only black mascara, make the girls in  
the eighth-grade homeroom glance at her  
sideways, the boys hold their breath,  
stare at the blackboard while the whore  
of Mott Street slides into her seat.  
Her white leggings show off her buttocks;  
a beige raincoat, unbuttoned, reveals  
a red tank top that embraces her perfect,  
full bosom; her painted red fingernails  
spread like a spider web upon the  
scratchy school desk, all carved up by  
those punks who were bored with school  
or felt doomed by their initials. *Napoleon,*  
*Alfonso, Juan, Francisco,* became chiseled  
vengeance, no different from the way she  
feels, a misfit who becomes in just a few  
minutes our heat of the day, our unrealized  
fantasy, our underworld-goddess.

We want to inhale her whole, feel her  
thighs rub against our faces, squeeze  
her breasts, let her buttocks wiggle  
on our laps, draw our tongues across  
her belly; we want to suffocate  
her with our desires, we want  
to set her on fire...

One late night, walking down Mott Street,  
I see her arguing with two cops; her green  
eyes framed by fake eyelashes grow angry,

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

with repeated mouthing of profanity.  
They cuff her, shove her into the cruiser  
...the siren calls are still ringing in my ears  
as I descend into the subway.

Where is Persephone?  
Imagine Demeter's grief—  
she'll roam across the land, perpetuate  
winter on earth until her daughter is found.  
Lord of the Underworld traps her in  
Bowery, where booze, tobacco smoke, violent  
ways of penises, asses, semen, desperate  
hands, insatiable hunger enslave her; she  
swallows one pomegranate seed.

### **Marilyn Kallet**

#### *Storm Warning*

I am the queen of a rainy country  
whose king has gone dark.  
He's a speechless river  
but I have not stopped listening.

The king left his voice somewhere else,  
holds his cruelty close.  
I have not stopped listening—  
thunder, roar of the rising river.

More wall. His cruelty  
huge and other-worldly.  
The swollen river breaches the banks.  
Indifferent gaze behind the weather.

He is the sullen king of elsewhere.  
I am queen of a country where the wall is gathering.

**Soma Mei Sheng Frazier**

*Comedy*

We've all been  
the butt of someone's joke,  
learned too late that we weren't this  
or that enough; too late to  
excuse ourselves, stand up and  
leave before the punchline.

We've all sat at the table  
as the hot room swelled  
with laughter. The wisest of us  
learn to join in, or to evoke silence  
with our eyes. Most of us,  
at any rate, don't die from it

but my mother, sweet soul,  
never toughened to laughter  
so one Sunday morning I found myself  
in an ill-fitting, too-warm suit  
on an unforgiving pew in a narrow  
Midwestern church

and when the preacher said it was  
the stroke that had killed her  
I stood up.  
My tongue trailed along the glossy wall  
of my teeth, but before it pushed

a word past my jaw, which hung ajar  
my father put his hand  
on my shoulder and pushed me  
back down. This is how she felt,  
I thought, when she  
tried to leave the table.

I adjusted my collar while  
the preacher paused, considering  
me gravely, then continued.  
She had followed him once, I  
remembered—my father—  
out past the maple trees  
tapped

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

in the sugaring season  
to the untidy bed and breakfast  
where he and his lover liked to meet,  
parked not fifty feet  
from his truck, and sat for two hours.

When the two emerged, nuzzling  
she'd sprung from our blue family wagon  
to catch him off guard, but  
he was unsurprised.  
*You're embarrassing yourself*  
he said as she lay down

in front of his truck and  
he shut the door of  
the other woman's car behind her  
and then he laughed.  
He got in the truck, backed up, and  
drove around her

down the long, sun-dappled drive  
back to the main road  
and in doing so he  
ran over her foot.  
Then she sat for another two hours  
waiting for me

to lift her into a taxi and  
I was only sixteen at the time and  
the cab driver wore a half-smile and  
my mom repeated my father's words  
several times, incredulous, and  
I wished she'd called an ambulance

instead of me and  
that was neither the first  
nor the last time that she would  
fail to stand up for herself.  
I looked over at my father without  
turning my head. So many years of comedy.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**John Blair**

*Gauguin's Savage Poems (Poésies Sauvages)*

The painter's conceit was to ask the eye  
to feel poetry rather than pigments, to taste

the vague lispings tropes and not the brown girl,  
her hand raised in a vague mudra of fearlessness.

Her heart is not a poem; it is four words held  
loosely between her teeth. When the police found her

stray-spooned in the Paris streets she wore a placard hung  
around her neck on which was penciled *envoi de Java*,

and so she was given to the painter, *un petit cadeau*,  
who knew his lost girls, dark fish hovering in cool eddies

shaken by beads of rain. When he took her hand she was  
weightless, child of the veiled world, small café

of a gentleman's desire, blown aside like a curtain to reveal  
*anything, monsieur, anything at all*. A willing life, and brief,

away from the cold-stammered streets, too transient to become  
more than one fragment of his beautiful, rendered world.

The words of her heart are the din of feet on winter stairs.  
The words of her heart are polished splinters aching in his hands.

The words of her heart are *never you, my love*.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Madelyn Camrud**

*The Bird In My House*

A small bird slept  
in my house last night.  
some may doubt it, but I swear  
in the presence of God  
I found him, like an oversized moth,  
fluttering against the glass  
kitchen window. Couldn't shoo him out,  
though I tried again and again.  
The bird was smarter than I,  
and more nimble. He flew with butterfly speed,  
stopped high atop a window  
I could not reach. Nothing I could do  
but let him roost like autumn chickens  
on the farm escaping the coop.

The season was late, wind and rain  
had changed the trees.  
If I were a bird, I'd have sought shelter, too.  
As it was, I went out for the evening,  
and, home again, found the bird  
nowhere to be seen, had to accept him, a truth  
that refused to come to light.  
Upstairs in bed, I imagined his head  
tucked under a wing, sleeping  
the way you rested, head on your arm  
beside me. Before I nodded off,  
I wondered again how the bird found  
its way into my house, come not  
at all like a thief, more like a strange  
kind of forgiveness or acceptance,  
whatever it is that breathes  
love into the night.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Sarah Maté**

*Safe*

He whispered and sang to his dog  
grasped him as the flood waters  
rose. Mama and daddy went down  
to get his brother. They did not answer  
when he called them. Not any more.

His aunt died.  
Flies blacked her open mouth.  
She swole and stank.  
Then the house next door fell silent.

The water spoke. I'll get you too. Just sleep and see.  
He could hear it wherever he hid.  
Come here, said the water, you and that dog.  
Grandma and grandpa were all he had left.  
I won't leave you, he told Snowball, we'll die together  
if the man don't come.

Then it happened. Thwap thwap  
of the chopper blades. Food and water  
falling from the sky  
and the man,  
promising to get them.  
*It's just Grandma and Grandpa,  
Snowball and me.*  
They waited for the chopper  
to get low enough  
to scoop them up.  
*Son, 'at dog can't come.*  
The boy sank to sitting. *I'm sorry, son.*  
*They don't allow 'em in the shelters.*  
The child looked at the dog in his arms  
he had held safe from light to dark and light again  
times he could not count.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

The water laughed until it hiccupped.

*Boy, get on up here.*

*We'll get you another dog.*

*They say he can't come, he can't come.*

*We got to get your grandma out.*

He risked one look back through the hole in the roof  
at the speck in the attic still looking up.

*Mama?* he asked the man  
who looked sad and hugged him.

He sobbed until he vomited  
and drew away  
from anyone who said  
it's going to be all right.

Lies. Flies. Spit on them all.  
The water knew.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Kim Farrar**

*The Garden*

Your roses went crazy that summer.  
In August blossoms echoed  
across the yard—pink, yellow, red.  
Where are you? they called. Look at us, they begged.

In August blossoms echoed.  
Too many thin shoots strangled the birdbath.  
Where are you? they called. Look at us! They begged.  
It seemed mean that you couldn't brag.

Too many thin shoots strangled the birdbath.  
Thorny tendrils unclipped and untended.  
It seemed mean that you couldn't brag,  
lay claim to the overabundance.

Thorny tendrils unclipped and untended,  
stems drooped with weighted blooms.  
You were always one for overabundance,  
although your big belly was gone.

Stems drooped with weighted blooms,  
the colors were magnificent.  
Although your big belly was gone,  
in your dark glasses and maroon robe

you were still magnificent.  
They were gifts for a dying man's comfort.  
In your dark glasses and maroon robe,  
you watched your garden loosen.

They were gifts for a dying man's comfort:  
across the yard—pink, yellow, red.  
You watched your garden loosen.  
Your roses went crazy that summer.

*The Garden first appeared in Lullwater Review.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Josh Cooper**

*Monastic Dog*

He has had enough of this world  
and its transient offerings:  
short-lived walks, balls lost  
under sofas, sticks that break in the mouth.  
He sees now the truth of it all—  
that fetch is a meaningless cycle,  
that his barks are unanswered questions.  
He renounces the joys of the senses—  
no longer smudges windows  
with nose-markings, nor perks his ears  
to a distant whistle.  
Scent is a leash that has dragged him by the nose.  
Today, he cuts free.  
He disowns the urge of hump and howl,  
the endless impulses  
that had him chasing life in circles.  
He takes his vow of devotion—  
shakes off his collar,  
his tag making its final jingle  
as it falls against the earth.  
Disappearing into the woods,  
his tail does not wag but hangs  
behind him like a robe's end,  
and piece by piece,  
hair by hair, sheddings  
of his former self  
loosen free  
and catch the wind.

**Ellen LaFleche**

*Midwife Man*

Julia wants to die in the hot tub  
but the fool doctor says no,  
too dangerous.

It's her time. Blood-bag sky,  
full moon bulging like a cervix.

I boil the water. Turn on the pulsating  
jets, light a patchouli circle of candles.

I dress Julia in her black  
silk pajamas, detach  
the morphine pump from her stuttering pulse.

She is all skin and eaten-out bone,  
weightless in my arms as a sac of flute-song.

I sit on the edge of the tub,  
bearded legs opening like a woman's,  
and ease my Julia into water.

Her black pajamas blacken.

Julia cannot swallow  
but she holds a wine glass,  
the cold stem a remembered  
pleasure in her hand.

Her skull hairs wisp like cilia toward the jets.

I hold Julia long after  
the last breath comes.

Wine spills, a red cord  
trailing from her goblet.

I turn off the jets.

The water spikes and ripples,  
spikes and ripples,  
spikes and flat-lines.

*Midwife Man first appeared in Southeast Review.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Calder Lowe**

*The Christmas Tree in the Hong Kong Restaurant*

Has lights that pulse in a portion of my brain  
where rebuked, misery slinks away into the darkness.  
Pain gains no foothold, but joy drifts  
its petals in the meadow from the cherry tree  
perpetually in limbic bloom.

Those lights tap a Morse Code the tiniest of creatures  
teeming in subterranean waters decipher with their fins  
and astral travelers in Katmandu translate into intra-  
galactic languages my great-great grandchildren will speak  
with fluency some day over afternoon tea.

The tree, inviolate, roots in my heart,  
its branches, ventricles in a highway  
leading to inalterable peace,  
regeneration, and incalculable possibility  
always one twinkle away from realization.

*The Christmas Tree in the Hong Kong Restaurant* previously appeared in *Holding the Light in Your Arms*, (Jacaranda Press, 2010) Calder's book of poems and flash fiction.

**S. Brady Tucker**

*Falling In Love During Wartime*

I am missing eleven months, nine days, and give or take, fourteen minutes from my life. A good portion of 1990 is lost, and a large piece of 1991 has disappeared. People talk to me about Brokaw's War Time America as if I were there, as if these pieces of someone else's life could exist. I missed the yellow-ribbon orgy, the flags flying for "the boys over there," the night when everyone closed together around their radios and televisions ready to mourn the fallen, or exult for their heroes. The robbery was complete, crimson, it was ancient, it was cleansing, it was forever. I'm sure that the beaches in North Carolina were quiet that year; the water was warm, the sand on the beach yielding, and the girls too—worried for strangers like only beautiful, uninvolved people can be. Here is what I want: I want that night, that night when I am twenty-one, when I can buy a bottle of wine legally, when I can sit in the dark night of the park with the girl I am in love with. I know her well because she lived with me in the desert, at night rising with the cold roasted moon. She is fair skinned, almost olive, her hair a light brown, and she is thin and muscular as a fawn. Oddly, her face is much like the woman from my only pornography in the gulf: the Victoria's Secret Fall 1990 issue, which I still own. And she understands me like only I understand me, and we are leaving the party on campus, we are holding hands like people hold hands when holding hands is new to them—anxiously, moistly, tightly. We are leaving the party because we cannot bear to watch this war that is on television. Maybe we are too sensitive to violence, or maybe we just don't want to be reminded that there are people just like us in a desert that has turned cold and hungry and loose, like it is trying to swallow up everything above it, and we don't want that on our conscience, we don't want to think of men walking into white flashes of light, into red tracer rounds, into the blackest fortress of sound imaginable, into faces streaked with tears, into faces streaked with blood and tears, into faces streaking in front of their vision, their fingers tightening around triggers uncertainly even though those fingers, those hands, have been trained to obey, and these boys, who are as handsome as they will ever be, wonder if the bullets hitting their chests will feel like paper cuts or like explosions, if it will be clean or if it will be messy. We walk out of that party, in love, our eyes linking like bodies copulating, and the bottle of wine is in my hand. We are both feeling high—we are six beers and a half bottle of Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill into it, drinking while we watch faceless soldiers push up on an invisible border that was already in flames above the skyline. We had to leave, our feelings for those soldiers impelling us to rise and escape with our wondrous

love intact. We walk to the park. It is cool out, the grass is cold where the dew has touched, but the earth still harbors the heat of the day underneath. We are barefoot and the streets are empty. The static sound of gunfire is far off, pouring from the blue flickering lights of the houses, and we are walking away, letting the sound fade until only her breath can be heard, and mine as well, swallowed up in the sound of our sweet and innocent blood moving through muscle and bone. We sit on a park bench, I wipe the wet night off before she sits, and we move close—the heat of our bodies swirls with the cool night as we move, and we drink wine from the bottle and she has a glistening shade of pink wine above her lip for a split second before she licks it off. And the look in her eyes right then—like there is a metaphor for that. The darkness is swallowing us, it is closing around us, pulling the light from the stars away, and the moon, and there is only reflected light to see by, and her face is pale and sharp, as if the dark has outlined her face in pastels, and all I can think about is how lucky I am to be this guy, here with her, and the night agrees; the night takes us and lets the alcohol do its work.

We embrace, and I can feel the soft ripple of her ribcage against mine, and I can feel the side of her breast with my arm, and her breath is moist against my ear as she whispers things about love past our hair, which is entwined like the dark grass of the park. She tells me she will never leave me alone, that we will be together forever, and I know she is lying, but it feels so good to hear it that I will believe it forever. Tomorrow will be the same. We will come to this park again. I will feel like the world is collapsing into itself, that I could reach out through my bedroom walls and touch Mr. Earnest next door, that I am a part of it all, and I will feel how it feels to be a part of Blitzer's America At War from the outside, I will wake up with the dreams of a civilian, I will hold a candle out on an all-night vigil, I will stand in protest I will hang ribbons I will support our boys over there I will pray even though there is no god I will remember things that never happened I will fill the space between the boy on the bench and the boy in the desert and I will always, always make sure he is with someone, I will maintain that the desert is a fiction, a fiction of lights and noise, and I will assert to the boy on the park bench that he will never get to feel like he was a part of something missing, that the years would be kind, that his sleep would wind like silk, and unlike the boy in the desert, when he looks up, the white sun will shine upon his face without passing through.

*Falling In Love During Wartime was previously published in The North American Review, and in The God Particle.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Glenis Redmond**

*Schooled*

Learning takes hold best when placed  
in the body. When seed takes root

branches past the brain, places itself  
in the heart, where knowing becomes known.

I recall the moment in fifth grade,  
when Senora's voiced drenched the class

with a calming rain, beating a cadence  
we could feel. Her words sounded

a sweet a foreign river to my *first* week  
in Italy ears. How her lyrics flowed

in and out as she proclaimed  
our Italian names. *Michael* became *Michele*,

*Angela* turned into *Angelina*,  
*Charles* translated into *Carlo*.

When she came to *Glenis*, the pause  
seemed to last forever. How I waited

on the word, the ebony reed of myself  
stranded in her inhalation of wind.

Finally, *Gladiola!* It took me years  
to understand the grace in the name,

an African flower striving  
in unfamiliar terrain.

Like me at my college alma mater  
As the whole campus sang,

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

*Here amid the same traditions that our fathers knew.  
I remember crumbling, leaving convocation.*

I professed to Dr. Gorry how I could not  
sing this song, because my forefathers

did not walk these halls or know  
these traditions. I remember

the language of his eyes aligned  
me like both sun and moon,

as if to say, carry this lesson deep  
in the meat of your bones:

*Your forefathers built this land  
with their blood, sweat and tears.*

*They watered and prepared this ground  
upon which you stand. It is their singing*

*that brought you into these halls.  
Honor them with your being.*

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Nancy Wahl**

*A screaming comes across the sky (Gravity's Rainbow)*

Tonight, as I usually do, I will look up  
into the sky—& while the ancients were looking for  
the Sky God—I will be looking into that dark midnight blue,  
into that deep, deep primordial black  
for a glimmer of the beginning of time  
& all I ask is for a faint intermittent light,  
each light of each star flickering making  
an incomprehensible pattern  
like birds in flight wild & disorganized  
as they try to avoid crashing into each other.  
I begin a fall through time, through golden netting  
like Gustav Klimt's Tree of Life, into darkness past  
the Limitless Light of God....  
I've been making my way through Thomas Pynchon's  
large novel. Hard man to read. Not just  
his screaming V-2 Rocket or Slothrop's paranoia,  
but the consanguinity—  
the dark humors of art telling us like it is: Kurt Vonnegut's  
tenderly ferociously sad humor taking us closer  
to event horizons & black holes that suck us in  
where joy & spontaneity & laughter & tears spiral  
inward, bifurcating into spiritual disconnections  
—so much darkness  
we swirl in space in unreal time, imaginary rivers,  
Tigris & Euphrates, say, between the Star Anunit & the Star  
of the Swallow—somewhere around Babylon-in-the-Sky  
trying to go back—looking for the return—  
there must be a return—  
Even today, in my world—in the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
with WMD's, Kinetic energy anti-satellite missiles,  
suicide backpacks, Vorpole Swords &  
multi-media granfalloon—you have to wonder  
about Angels flying in low Earth Orbits. Pynchon, himself,  
asks, "*What are the stars but points  
in the body of God where we insert the healing needle of  
our terror & longing?*" You have to wonder

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

about the cosmic significance, of August 6<sup>th</sup>  
& Hiroshima & the Feast of the Transfiguration  
& why anyway can't we read the past?—  
As I fell into that void,  
I saw the *In the Beginning* with the unbroken truth  
& the breaking of symmetry & I heard  
the Word being spoken & I saw the trillions of Light particles  
cascading into Creation....  
My son had a five-way  
by-pass & while he was recovering he described a dark despair.  
A Vladimir Nabokov kind of despair where “„the lamp is black  
& dead...bits of my past litter the floor.”  
The doctors expected the depression, the heart is angry,  
having been shut down & nearly frozen. Joy,  
they say, cometh in the morning & it is morning  
with Light shining on the young boy walking toward me  
from the River where he used to run along the shore  
& swim in the rapids,  
the man, now, healed & healthy, the Light  
on him shining from two-thousand years ago across  
the Oceans through Terebinths and Pines  
through a flock of blackbirds I'm suddenly seeing, looping  
& coming together making a new pattern—a Stoclet Frieze:  
a quaking gold leaf Tree—& all this returning Light  
emanating  
from that holy place high on Mount Tabor.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Jim Bainbridge**

*A Husk of Fog*

When I was a child, I  
repeatedly asked my  
father, What am I?  
He seldom led me  
to the same answer twice:  
the boy he loved with all his heart,  
a story I told myself,  
the working out of a kiss  
planted years before,  
evolving strategies for dealing with the world.

One day, while meditating with  
me cross-legged on the floor of his study,  
he suggested that I become  
fully attentive to myself and  
answer my own question.

I found a heart beating, the quiet  
rise and fallback of breath, the pressure  
of my body touching the floor—  
and silence  
drifting into my mind,  
like fog spills over hills  
and down into valleys,  
seeking its shape in emptiness.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**George Petty**

*Bowline*

The starboard sheet is snagged around the winch,  
limp while the sail strains on a jury rig,  
and I must grab the clew to loose the knot,  
and tie another line before we tack,  
minutes to work to keep us in the lead.  
The crew is young and fierce; they love to race  
more than to sail. I hardly know their names;  
I'm twice their age, my body worn and slowed.  
One foot balanced on the swaying lifeline,  
my left hand clinging to a shroud, I curve  
full length over the rail, my fingers' ends  
seeking the loop that sets the bowline free.  
I work by touch, the knot is cold and wet,  
the numbed nerve whimpers by the aching bone,  
and through the scudding spray below, the sea  
forever young spits its insistent hiss,  
wanting blood on the sails, a salt-stung jeer  
to tease my body closer to the waves,  
to risk the slippery footing farther out.

*Bowline previously appeared in Off the Coast, summer, 2010.*

**Eleanor Lerman**

*When We Were Vagabonds*

It is surprising that you would even ask  
why we have to move. The answer should  
be obvious: we have to move to outwit death  
Isn't that what everybody does? You wake  
up in the morning, pull up the shade, and  
what do you think that caravan is, outside  
on the highway? U-hauls, wheelbarrows,  
backpacks and shopping carts: a generation  
has burned the mortgage. They have notified  
the Post Office. They have said good-bye

Will it work? Who knows. But it has to  
be done. The idea of pacing off the  
remaining days in "the last place" with  
all its clutter is inconceivable. Life cannot  
have accumulated solely in these objects  
and it cannot be lost among the other  
things that we can no longer find  
I will not have it, nor should you

Remember: when we were vagabonds,  
we could not die. When we did not sleep,  
we could not die. When we changed our  
names, we could not die. When we abused  
ourselves, when we were sexual and beautiful  
and mean and murderous, enslaved when it  
suited us, hungry, worldly, haunted and never  
done—then, we could not die. Don't try to  
pretend that you have no memory of these  
things because you do. I know you do

So perhaps at your desk. Perhaps on the  
platform waiting for the commuter train  
in the nighttime rain: your adult life  
approaches and wraps its arms around you  
because it never bought a raincoat  
Because it does not need its dinner  
Because it wants to go away and take you  
with it. Your old grace, the quick step  
you were known for—they are already  
way ahead of you on the road out of town

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Louis Girón**

*What if*

the earth were flat  
and dragons were known  
to sleep beneath the seas,  
and maps were still drawn  
on vellum, and, on them,  
some countries, such as you and I,  
were marked in Gothic script  
“*here bee mysteries*”?

What if  
wishes of hummingbirds came true,  
and perfumes tasted as they promise,  
and usurers were not vestrymen  
and no kisses were like Judas’?

What if  
this warped mirror were the world?

What if  
all songs were sung in tune,  
and the saddest songs were short,  
and sleepless elves played Mavens and Mortgages  
and you could hear the chanting of the roses?

What if  
every man had daily bread,  
and the name for heaven  
and the name for hell were not  
for the same so what?

And, what if,  
in the Garden,  
the Devil had told the truth  
and God had lied?

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Veronica Kornberg**

*Family Reunion*

A brother arrives from Alaska  
his arms loaded with  
a styrofoam chest of steelhead trout,

his laughter sifting through the rooms  
as if he weren't terrified. He runs  
a race to trim the hedge, square the door,

marinate fish in a plastic bag. Paralyzed,  
the family sits beneath a backyard tree  
where cherry blossoms drop and catch on them

like snow on statues in a park.  
The brother chatters like a squirrel,  
scours the grill and details the treatment

he'll receive for a cancer of the tongue.  
He points to tattoo targets on his neck and jaw,  
and splays his fingers across his cheek

to demonstrate how, with a face mask  
he'll be bolted to the radiation table.  
He might not lose his mandible.

He has no regrets he says, prefers instead  
to remember the time he went fishing  
in a hurricane, how everyone else was sick

below decks while he—laughing  
into the waves—lashed himself to the boat  
and hauled in an enormous catch.

It's only May yet suddenly  
the sun seems high for evening hours,  
a cardinal flutters from clothesline to tree.

We lay a cloth over the splintery table,  
set out the plates—knife to the right, fork to the left—  
and raise our glasses of pinot noir.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

We let it explode against the palate  
then wait for the burn to wash through the throat.  
We brush the petals from our eyes

and tune our ears to the sizzle  
of pink flesh hitting the grill  
in this, the first picnic of a new season.

### **Doris Ivie**

#### *Key Zero*

The madcap magician  
appears wherever there is laughter.  
“Now isn’t this absurd!” he muses  
as another shrivels in the mirror,  
caught in the image of his own deeds.

A scent of roses trails behind  
as he approaches the precipice,  
his eyes ever and only trained above;  
his actions an aleph... an egg.

Knowing the one Reality,  
what can the Fool do  
but live in laughter?

As surely he knows  
the Absolute is No Thing,  
he breathes the immeasurable.

*\* Key Zero is a designation for the Fool card in the Tarot.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**LaVonne Natasha Caesar**

*The Missionary Position (or Unity again)*

My grandfather  
murdered snakes, left handed, with his machete  
and beat my father  
senseless, till he was scarred  
sexless, scared sacred  
and became a pastor.

But all that is secondary,

This story is about: slaughtered genius,  
gutted dreams, and  
burned poetry.

stamped letters  
slashed across the wet skin of your back:

foreign warning symbols for Aliens  
alien warning symbols for Foreigners,

or, the stench of your dreams  
stuck to your hands when you bleed,

(and giving birth below-zero in a hand-me-down church basement).

\*

Coming to America  
is like circling  
an infinite revolving door  
that gets stuck on its blood-wet hinges  
to trap you:

heaving at your back  
the uncoiled masses pounding  
chant: *work! work! work!*

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

and before you, pinstriped,  
behind the glass ceiling  
the long, White-Men  
with their pointy fingers  
pointing. *pointing. pointing.*

Still...  
If you have never paddled  
up the *Baracara* river  
at dusk in a canoe  
Then you couldn't know.  
There is a Communist colony:  
300 of my Barbarian-brown relatives  
inter-married  
half-naked  
cook-fishing-breathing  
the pissed-in,  
drinking fountain  
bath-water river:  
(sun-licked-savagery-barefoot-urchin-fornication-happy).

\*

My grandfather  
traveled 52 miles on foot  
to take Jesus to the people:  
and the people?  
they strung him up  
Bible between the teeth  
and burned his bones: *brujería.*  
*brujería. brujería.*

*The Missionary Position was previously published in Statement Magazine.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Michael Meyerhofer**

*Oasis*

I spent most of this day trying to decide  
whether life is more like a lacuna or a palimpsest  
when I realized I would be better served  
at that bar down the street—the one  
with swords and deer skulls hung on the wall,  
the pretty waitress who has never heard  
of J. Alfred Prufrock, retired old men  
propped against their pipes and beer steins.

I confess, I find it hard to mourn  
the loss of polar bears without first toasting  
the extinction of soda jerks and Christ,  
the fact that what happens in poetry  
still stays in poetry, Vegas be damned.  
And the bearded boy from my Comp class  
who stalled a bullet with his skull,  
who left more than his heart in Afghanistan.

Let there be pretzels and microwave brats.  
Let there be coasters for Irish beer  
imported from some factory in China.  
Let there be cigars that go well with cognac  
in a town that serves no cognac,  
one shot called the Mind Eraser followed  
by another called the Non-Metaphorical Sunset  
and its sour chaser, All We'd Die to Forget.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Gaye McKenney**

*Twelve*

Before I turned twelve,  
I was an ice cream float, cool  
and frothy, sweet in pink taffeta.  
I never wore tight-fit jeans,  
or low cut blouses—  
didn't wear eye shadow  
or push-up bras.  
I never dyed my hair.  
Content to read Highlights,  
collect leaves, draw,  
I never sought attention  
as if it were the sun  
and I a wilt of white dahlias.  
I never walked up  
and down Montgomery Street  
past the taverns, craved  
the steady looks of men.

Before I turned twelve,  
fathers returned home at 5:30,  
mothers hummed in kitchens,  
pots simmered, newspapers were read—  
there were good night kisses.  
I never stayed in my room for days, weeks,  
had low voices at my door,  
saw the somber eyes of my aunts  
as they spoke of the truck that swerved,  
learned of mortuaries or graves.

Before age twelve, I had never ridden  
without permission to the river,  
tasted whiskey, taken long swigs  
in the back of a Buick.  
The earth had never spun off my fingers,  
gyred out of control, felt the way liquor  
spins the brain, waters the eyes.  
There had never been a man's breath

on my neck or his razor stubble; rough  
hands had never been shoved under my shirt.  
I had never let someone's fingers  
probe my panties, tug off my pants,  
lift my blouse up under my chin.  
I'd never been pinned to the ground,  
slobbered over, fucked.  
I'd never been promised I'd "like it".

**Danny C. Knestaut**

*Three Ways of Waking*

1.  
What hooks have landed  
in our dreams, reeled us  
up, swimming in sheets,  
tethered to bird songs cast  
through a wire net  
of window screen.
2.  
She wakes singing;  
*Chick-a-dee, wren,  
house finch, dove.*
3.  
Outside, noon crawls  
to bushes, crouches  
before it creeps back out,  
fingers in the wrinkles  
of day's face, her jaw  
guided by evening  
and the swift cheek  
of a cricket moon.

*Three Ways of Waking previously  
appeared in Whistling Shade.*

**Suzanne Owens**

*Apache Country*

Once, late at night driving home  
from some small town,  
I pulled over on the shoulder in the dark,  
to let a tailgater pass by. But today,

on a lonely country road  
Driving over a narrow bridge  
that crosses the river  
with the mountains changing colors all around,

a large, black truck fills my rear view mirror.  
The angel of death  
shimmers behind me almost kissing my bumper,  
while the mirror reflects  
obscene gestures.  
I stop my car,  
get out, smile, walk back to him.

His head leans out the open window,  
a caged bear waiting to be fed..  
Damn you lady,  
who the hell taught you to drive. . . .

Even though, Mafia drifts before my eyes,  
I don't care if he's six foot five,  
a serial killer  
or has a gun. I myself am packing heat.  
Hi, how's your day?  
Can you feel mother earth  
as you drive over her back?

His face changes, not to shock, exactly  
but bewilderment.

Do you know, the Apache people see a river  
as the circle of life,  
and the mountains holding us to  
spiritual connections,  
so I ask you, just where are you going?  
Are you famous,  
are you important like Opra?  
I wave at the sky. I wonder if you saw it all.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

Mechanically, he scans the sky.  
Can you see, it's entirely blue; not one cloud,  
and can you hear that flock of geese?

So Bite me lady. Bite me.

Feel the cool air, not freezing yet,  
but fresh with the smell of winter in it.  
Now, look over there, those trees,  
how they catch the light: pure gold.  
In two weeks, all will have vanished.

His eyes dart around, fearful, yet incredulous.

Did you know, Tall Bull of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe  
says, "use your senses, experience the gifts  
of smell, touch, hearing, taste and sight." He says,  
"these are all needed for our healing.  
We must take time to see the beauty, to feel  
mother earth as we walk on her back.."

A quick, unconscious side look.  
Are you out of your Mind  
What's this all about?

Well, do you know,  
Apache people put their  
unhealthy feelings in a rock then  
throw it away. This is why  
you never pick up a rock when  
you are in Apache country,  
for it's said that  
you might pick up another's  
anger and tribulations.

He guns the gas. Screw you lady.

As I go back into my car, I wave goodbye.  
Enjoy your life. Treasure this day.

It could be your last.

Driving on, I imagine our rocky Massachusetts soil,  
all the stones within and wonder,  
would there be enough, if we were in

Apache country.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Donna J. Rice**

*The Younger Woman*

I.

It's the long, slim legs she shows  
(skirt mid-thigh, body loosely draped),  
her blonde hair, strong voice,  
and bold walk that welcome all men's eyes.  
Her gaze is a panning shutter  
capturing any man at his own will.

Her eyes pause to include him,  
to move him toward her.  
She weaves in our direction, sultry.  
I force my face to smile, resist rudeness,  
command my legs to "stay."  
His knees, aching an hour before,  
awake from tired boredom.  
Jokes *I* might enjoy, but am not privy to,  
excite their talk to banter.

Ignore it?  
Ignore the gaping blouse,  
black lace brassiere? Of course  
he was numb to her elbow nudge,  
the glance that zipped his body down  
then zipped it up again in fun.

I entertain your old eyes,  
still young with the sight of me,  
widening even during dinner.  
Forget her "profound" words.  
She makes you young before *my* eyes—  
until you take me home.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

### II.

I *am* the younger woman,  
who warms you close with your own heat,  
easing curve into hollow  
hollow into curve – a perfect fit.  
I thirst to taste your mouth in rain.  
You lie quiet, watching me  
tie tiny ribbons in your body's hair–  
a peaceful celebration.

I am *still* the younger woman,  
reluctant flesh caught old in a masquerade;  
I can't resist or turn away.  
Now, the first snow lights my hair,  
brushed free by your gloved hand  
to melt on the pavement, as it did then–  
you were twenty; I was seventeen.  
My summer mind runs with you,  
then slows to roll limber  
in the flattened grass.

We pass a cup between us  
not knowing who will hold it last.  
I rest strong in the crook of your arm,  
held in sleep by your young hands–  
I see them no other way.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Claudia M. Reder**

*Letter to Hansel*

Dear Hansel,

pick up your phone,  
I want to talk to you. At night  
I dream of our arms around each other  
in that moonless forest,  
our tiny steps hurrying towards  
the V in the road, you barely hesitating,  
darkness edging my skirt hem-  
smudging your socks-  
I trusted you to find the way through  
the maze of trees-oh Hansel,  
the trees—I can still hear  
the throttling frogs, the coiled leaves  
you filled with water so we could drink.

Sometimes I find myself balancing  
on fallen tree trunks, wobbling  
on those volatile logs, I lose my way  
and wake up directionless, screaming.  
Hansel, I am a mother with three children  
and a husband. All he can do  
is calm me, and guide me  
back into sleep—you are the only one still alive  
who knows what we lived through-  
how those years in the forest  
defined us.

Snow sugars the driveway.  
I need you to come this Thanksgiving,  
to celebrate the anniversary of our survival.  
I know you don't like to talk about the past,  
but the past is in us, Hansel-  
it just is.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

Each year on this day my breath  
sours with olive pits from a witch's mouth,  
a mother who didn't want us,  
a father whose tongue seemed paralyzed- I don't  
forget how we sucked our fingers  
trying to savor something a witch could not touch.  
denial has its beauty, Hansel.  
The gaps in our memory are our protection.

Love,

Gretel

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Claire Mowbray Golding**

*Autumn Afternoon*

Run a finger, now,  
around the rim of this clear day  
and find that it is crystal:  
the blue, unbroken, hums above your head;  
a yellow, orange, red vibrato  
stirs what slept  
through all the summer's  
aimless talk.

Green is failing you.  
Your daughters ripen  
in the golden field, and drop  
from branches, laughing  
and unbruised.  
You feel the ribs of winter  
poke your boots;  
the fleshy give is  
wasting, drawn by frost.  
Swallows slice their last  
few circles of the sky  
and watch you  
disappear.

But  
near the barn  
the skinny milkweed sidemen  
still grasp their shriveled trumpets.  
White possibilities are bursting  
from those horns:  
spring jamming, pickup work,  
perhaps a humid wedding.

You blow them out  
by handfuls to the wind:  
a few last songs  
from the lip of a lonely season.

*Autumn Afternoon* previously appeared in *The Worcester Review*, Vol. XXIX, 2003.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Emily Williamson**

*Temptation and the Return to Eden*

Temptation, the bastard son of morality  
has hooked fangs and a forked tongue  
and a voice that nestles  
in the soft spot of your neck  
like an Italian finger on the  
small underside of a spoon handle

The Bitch walks fast and clicks her heels on marble  
as he/she slithers and tries to seduce  
her, tries to find her ankle, her inner thy, her throat.

We all feel it in our DNA  
as we drive along the suburb freeway mall  
bread smelling grey road...  
we glance at the dark eyed hitchhiker.  
we spot the blood red purse in the window,  
Eye the bend or arch of anything  
our lips are plump  
eyes dilated.  
We eat bread to curb our hunger.

Momentarily satisfied, maybe we will feel  
the nudge from underneath the newspaper letters,  
the tv show, the site,  
the pull from the silence,  
that scent of exotic fruit from somewhere beyond  
our pressed sheets and ironed words,

We feel the ripening desire for more knowledge.

The snake never bit Eve before she was expelled from Eden.

He searches for her now,  
listens for the clicks of her high heel shoes,  
and seeks her exposed ankles  
when he finds her he will sink those hooked needles into her flesh.

If only she could transmute that poison  
then we could all go home.

**Karla Linn Merrifield**

*Under the Sleeping Rainbow*

In the thunderbird month of July,  
like an Aeolian dervish I come twirling  
from redrock rims. As an acrobat

on a katabatic swirl down slope from palisades,  
I fly to this valley of desire.  
Where a blood river gushes after

another afternoon monsoon, I rush to you.  
Like fast wind through  
a savage heart eons old, a soul

unafraid of riding gravity, I arrive.  
No one else is here to guide us.  
No other man, no other woman,

advises us to stay on the trail.  
Where on Earth do we go?  
Anywhere to wash the wings of bats

with bare hands before eating with coyote,  
before we succor swallows,  
sate the raven. You and I

lick rain from volcanic cups  
in the afterglow of the storm.  
Like lost canyon children weaned

by cougars, we run freely among willows.  
In no time, perhaps the very same night,  
by starlight, we take the names of stones

at the instant of the dark of moon.  
You call me Kayenta;  
I call you Moenkopi.

We tumble, make the ground tremble  
like the lightning earlier this singular day.  
We flash; we flood in the way of the wildest.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Curtis Klinghoffer**

*Swallowed by Time*

Maria's laugh  
The sloping hills  
Cardinal in the azure sky  
Red, blue, green  
Dissolved like pills  
Were any of these  
Ever mine?  
Pictures fading  
Through my throat  
I cannot call them  
Swallowed by time

Boat upon  
The simmering sea  
Liquid life runs out of me  
Dancing people dot the shore  
Sandy granules in my hand  
Were any of these  
Ever mine?  
Image fading  
Back the tide  
I cannot hold them  
Swallowed by time

Dreamless sleep  
To sleepless dream  
Something swirling in between  
Turning through this night of stars  
The sun will rise but it is far  
Planets fading  
Through my mind  
I cannot see them  
Swallowed by time

**Randall Willis**

*Kayak*

Tell me how  
to enter the moon hull  
of your elliptical soul  
Guide and glide  
these tense thighs  
ready towards the bow  
Let my hands pull the skirt,  
sail over the rimmed circle  
Let us venture from the safety of a  
    green shore  
and gently splash  
into the cool waters of the shallows  
A tender scrape,  
we are swept away  
by the Great Current.

Yesterday's scowl of rain  
is today—  
a ride upon a never-ending  
    magnificent river of curves

~ NMW First Verse ~

**Lucy Sieger**

*Escape of the Profound*

The Garonne meanders, a slow hand,  
like your breath arousing my sleepy skin.  
It's morning at home, you're by the river too,  
our river, foggy mists a balm to broken spirits,  
blue herons carving another day from the sky.

Let the river answer, I am told,  
but I've come so far, and I have no questions.  
I finger the greenness of grass at my feet.  
An ant, band of white draped around its neck,  
sashays across my notebook.

Do even the insects wear scarves in France?

A question! But on this point, on all points,  
the river is oblique, intent on its journey to Spain,  
unaware of detours to elusive clouds.

*For dessert, you can buy a pint of Ben and Jerry's, or you can do this*

Visit the corner of your herb garden, tipsy with sun. Pick two vigorous fistfuls of mint—not spearmint or orange mint or chocolate mint—just plain old mint, aromatic as morning. Pull out your wooden cutting board, scarred with a thousand meals, and your Wusthof knife, the one that reminds you of Julia Child all grainy and exuberant in *The French Chef*. Take the 1960s steel colander that belonged to a mother-in-law you never met, and give the mint a quick rinse. Chop until it's lacerated with mintiness. Mix with crushed pineapple, buttermilk and sugar, and freeze for six hours. Every thirty minutes, stop what you're doing (e-mail, beating rugs, making love, whatever) and mash it up with a fork.

With discipline, you will create pineapple mint granita, the best dessert on this or any other planet. By complicating a task that could be spooned from a cardboard carton, you will, inexplicably, perfect the proportions of your life.

*Escape of the Profound and For dessert... are Lucy Sieger's first published poems.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Bob Godwin**

*Biking with Bob—A Haiku Sequence*

spandex was gleaming  
pavement was smooth and dark  
white horse raced with me

grunting and straining  
pedaling up the hill  
deer bounds like a feather

headwind, cursed wind  
yin and yang say think again  
tailwind, blessed friend

the road calls loudly  
the fireplace even louder  
I'll have a lager

downhill plunge, sudden curve  
grabbed the brakes in panic  
could have gone faster

sadness for the road kill  
gladness for the vulture's meal  
nature never still

lovely meadow glen  
cow licks her newborn calf  
life and season spring

brooding storm ahead  
lightning cracks beside me  
deaf and dumb, but not dead

lovely face and shape  
she rides with grace and beauty  
what a tandem we could make

racing down the hill  
bee mistakes me for a bloom  
swollen lip throbs still.

**David Ray**

*Oil—A Haiku Sequence*

The world is turning  
more Kafkaesque every day  
as if he's to blame

for wars and torture  
past and present, familiar—  
nothing new although

no one in power  
seems aware of what the world  
has been through before.

And yet now and then  
new horrors add flames to hell—  
mostly there, sometimes here:

Gulf of Mexico  
plus tailpipes spewing bring thoughts  
of Armageddon.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Arlene Distler**

*Miami Beach, 1998*

The sleek sculls, each with four rowers  
and a coxswain skim over the surface,  
multiple oars pulling the body,

like water striders—  
unexpected vision of effort  
in this culture of gentility and ease.

I'm on a white-washed deck  
at my family home, everything kept on track  
these days by a phalanx

of hired help from Haiti,  
the Dominican Republic, Peru.  
A formidable group with their assigned tasks:

he washes my father, she cooks the food,  
another stays overnight in case, and so forth.  
They all have good hearts,  
work with precision and care, even humor.

On this trip I find out  
one has become enamored of another,  
scandals brew, sides taken.  
I feel like I'm on the Love Boat.

Mother sits inside, her mouth  
slowly opened and fed by Silvio,  
with whom she flirts  
in a modest way, the only way she can

since Parkinson's made her stiff and mute,  
stand-in for her glamour self,  
lover of good clothes, make-up, fine food.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

Father stares ahead at the walls  
he fashioned himself, that he swore  
he'd never leave "except head first."

When I talk to him he casts eyes down,  
like someone excusing themselves  
from the dinner table.

Last night I sat with him  
and he was almost not there,  
the ground dropping away,

as if his leaving not being gone  
were the thing to fear—a kind of nakedness,  
Biblical taboo.

His dying is a foreign country  
I'll speak of tomorrow to my sister  
and guests at her son's wedding

where we'll dance in a white mansion,  
roses growing over the terrace,  
sip champagne, eat fruit from toothpicks.

And I say Yes, this is good and right  
that death, folded aside like a crisp linen napkin,  
be lifted, spread onto the laps  
of the living,

as we watch bride and groom kiss  
under her veil,  
embarking on their forever.

*Miami Beach, 1998, previously appeared in The Best of Write Action No. 2: The Tenth Anniversary Anthology. (Small Pond Press, Brattleboro, VT, 2010).*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Simon Peter Eggertsen**

*Father's Eyes, Mona Lisa's Smile*

Seated in a gray-clothed museum wheelchair,  
my father's brown eyes look skinny,  
slowly disappearing from view as he ages,  
    wanders toward a dream in the afternoon.  
He ignores the art in the room, has not read the guide,  
    does not want to waste time looking.  
His thoughts are elsewhere.  
He is waiting, in his nap scene,  
    for someone he knows to pass by.  
He wants to catch a ride out of the room.

He will not be seen walking until evening in Paris.

Across the room, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* leans  
    against her wall.  
Hands folded, sharp shadowed eyes wide,  
    she smiles, bemused, down on him,  
wonders why, unlike the others, he is not paying  
    attention to her.

The mystique of her middle age mocks him with  
sweetness and velvet, the self-satisfaction of the moment  
turns up the edges of her thin-lipped mouth, barely.  
In the velour folds of her black gown, she hides some  
    sort of soft secret.  
She waits for him to guess it, or her true name,  
    then she will let him turn and go.  
She gives no hint to help him.  
She will hold that laconic smile until he makes his  
    suggestive guess or just gives up and leaves.

Someone should whisper "Lisa Gherardini" or "She is  
    pregnant" in his ear.

Then they can stop bothering each other.

*It Happens that I Am Tired (After Pablo Neruda)*

It happens, like Neruda, that I am tired of being a man, a father.  
It happens that I cannot go into my older children's houses and rooms.  
It happens that the imagined smell of their places makes me sob softly.  
It happens that I am tired to my nails,

of the lack of words that has cultured among us,  
of the looks of derision you cast in my presence,  
of the silly narrowness of the business that goes between us,  
of the conversations we struggle to compose of single syllables,  
of the personal confidences you have broken, again and again,  
of the insolent critiques that come whispering through back door screens,  
and through some of my sisters.

I did not want to inherit this many misfortunes.  
I did not want to be treated as black tire smoke, or a solitary snapped stick,  
or an earth-smudged stone, cold to the touch, things that as children at  
Wildwood we thought were bothersome or useless,  
should be repulsed, shunned, or thrown away.

I want nothing more than to rest away from your vague forms.  
You have shriveled away from me, become ungraspable,  
like the tightening fine ash from burning rice paper.

Mere wisps.

I have done too much and too little at the same time.  
And for this, you have shoved me into tight dark, damp corners,  
to the forgotten side streets of your lives where I cannot hear your voices,  
to certain eerily quiet places that remind me that you, my children,  
have silently fled, or been stolen, away.

While you stride along, wishing this isolation, stepping where ever  
you are going with your own slow fury and forgetfulness, I have decided  
to pass beyond Boston, where there is little promised for me now.  
Away, in Trinidad, I will clear my eyes of all these dirty little tears.

Just the same, it would be delicious to surprise you with some flowers  
from my garden, or to startle you with chocolate and peanut butter,  
or a verse or two fashioned from fragments of your grandfather's poetry.  
It would be beautiful to see you run through the streets of Cambridge  
shouting, incessantly, for me rather than for your mother.

But I know I will not, and that you will not...

I am tired of being a father.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Jennifer Hollie Bowles**

*Streaming Dreams*

If there's a stream—of consciousness—breathing  
liquid-like inside of the mind, it dreams of awareness,  
insight molecules inundating, gentle currents  
pressing against and through the skull.

The parable of where you end and I begin  
swims within this stream, upstream,  
downstream, the scales of fish and water  
snakes sparkling like mirrors.

The warm surface of the stream reflects the sun  
into the pneumata of eyes, too myriad and beautiful  
for discernment, as murky spaces join in fluid  
curve.

If there's a dream—of consciousness—breathing  
astral-like inside of the mind, it lives for awareness,  
grasping the unity of separation in the cool  
mud of the stream's bed.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Jeanne Wagner**

*The Salamander*

*Salamanders regrow lost limbs  
from memory.* ~ 'Findings,' Harper's

I know how it feels, remembering  
my own hands

when my fingers slipped into the suede  
sockets of my new kid gloves,

the backward pull of the seams  
sculpting their length,

and the way legs remade themselves  
when they slid into the gathered

silky ring of a rolled stocking,  
self-extended and waiting,

limbs searching their contours,  
the flare of the calves and

bald pate of the knee, the soft, inner  
thighs tracing themselves.

A journey, an arc, desire and memory,  
reciprocal peninsulas

of touch or near touch, like that small  
invisible arc

between the fingers of God and Adam,  
the gesture of that hand,

wrist bent as if it wants to break off  
and become a separate thing,

reaching out like Winston, the friendless  
boy in my grammar school,

who made toys out of balloons,  
twisting the tubular shapes

of elephants, dogs and giraffes,  
their latex skin squealing

under his hands as he stretched  
each gawky yellow neck,

tweaked their taut pink legs,  
then offered them

to the younger children, so they  
would remember him.

When we say *limb*, we mean *limn*,  
limn of the infantile bud

on the salamander's skin when the closed  
shaft of his body pushes it out

with one mind-bursting breath,  
then watches it grow,

this thing both vestigial and new,  
at first so close to the body

it's not an extremity. This ghost  
of an old motion, emotion,

this recursive limb, so slick and unscarred,  
I thought he'd be scared

of living with an imposter, some freaky  
neonate sprung from his body

with a sheen of new skin, and moving  
with such alien momentum

it seems to be running away with him  
into completeness.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Nan Becker**

*The Pattern of Happiness*

I am just something alive, watching  
The river with a straight eye, blind  
To the peripheral playing out—imagine  
The abundance just above and below

Just beside—only the whole already world!  
What *thing* is expected? Think of longing  
Then not, there and then not, like a ball thrown.  
Imagine a moment where misgivings

And regrets count as nothing. Then a sound  
—distinct and utterly alone, majestic  
Plumbs to the river with wings spread wide.  
It strikes and beats away into sunless sky,

Into quiet once more, the same the same again  
Save where once were two, now is one  
—what happened happens all the time.  
One cannot be ready.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Naomi Ruth Lowinsky**

*Is the Universe Receiving?*

We come with our begging bowls—  
we who were born for abundance—  
we ask only a star or two, a sliver of moon—  
we are hungry—our souls are empty—

The mountain meanders the edge of the sky—coyote  
in late summer yellow. It's lonely, we're hungry  
Distracted drivers are texting; traffic is snarling—  
when will we ever get home?

The Universe in her purple robes is in no mood  
to receive us. She's irritated, agitated, full  
of catastrophes: Her rivers can't breathe, her pelicans  
covered with oil, her moons can't remember

their dreams. What does she want  
us to do? Empty our minds? Chant?  
Stand on the roof with the Dalai Lama?  
Shut up and take our meds?

The mountain meanders the edge of the sky—coyote  
in late summer yellow—It's lonely, we're hungry—  
We who were born for abundance  
come with our begging bowls. The Universe  
is in no mood to feed us.

*Is the Universe Receiving? previously appeared in Psychological Perspectives, as  
part of the essay, My Home is Over Jordan.*

**Naomi Ruth Lowinsky**

*Your People Are My People*

*I'm going to be just like you, Ma Rainey...  
& sing from the bottom of hell  
up to the tops of high heaven ... ~ Al Young*

My people are the people of the pianoforte and the violin  
Mozart people Bach people Hallelujah people  
my people are the Requiem people Winterreise people Messiah people  
who crossed the red sea Pharoah's dogs at our heels

Your people are the drum beat people the field holler people the conjure people  
Blues people Jubilee people people who talk straight to God  
Your people are the Old Man River people the Drinking Gourd people  
singing the Lord's songs in a strange land

My family had a Sabbath ritual  
We lit the candles sang Go Down Moses sang Swing Low Sweet Chariot  
sang slave music freedom music secret signals in the night music  
my father said you never know  
when Pharoah will be back

i was young  
i was American i thought  
my people were the Beatles the Lovin' Spoonful the Jefferson Airplane  
singing Alice and her White Rabbit through all  
those changes my parents did not understand

That didn't last  
That was leaving home music magic mushroom music  
Puff the Dragon music floating off to Never Never Land  
now heard in elevators in the pyramids of finance

but Old Man River still rolls through my fields  
Bessie Smith still sweetens my bowl  
Ma Rainey appears in the inner sanctum  
of the CG Jung Institute flaunting her deep black bottom

My father's long gone over Jordan  
and I'd hate for him to see  
how right he was about Pharoah  
but I want you to know Al

every Christmas  
in black churches all over Chicago  
the Messiah shows up  
accompanied by my mother's  
Hallelujah violin

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Ouida Welch Williams**

*A Mockingbird Sang in Broad Daylight*

In front of the library, next door to Kroger's  
A mockingbird in the very top of a pear tree  
Was singing. He was singing and singing  
A song that was just for me.

For I was the only one who heard  
That oh-so-arrogant bird  
There in the the very tip-top of that tree  
In front of the library, next door to Kroger's.

I was looking out of my parking place  
In front of the library, next door to Kroger's  
When I heard that impudent bird.  
I stopped my car and listened to him.

For how could I go on while he sang  
And sang that ridiculous song  
There in that pear tree in broad daylight  
In front of the library, next door to Kroger's.

Who else would have ever listened to him  
As he poured out his plaintive, sad song  
All about how summer was over and done  
And it had been so sweet—just not very long.

But finally after he sang and he sang  
And after he sang and I listened, he hushed.  
And I drove away from my parking place  
In front of the library, next door to Kroger's.

But oh how brave and daring and noble  
He was to sing that song so improbable  
In broad daylight in the very tip-top  
of that silly pear tree  
In front of the library, next door to Kroger's.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Cynthia Neely**

*Comfort*

The sheets were pristine, so clean. Wait, go back...  
The air... yes. The air was clean,  
like a baby's breaching breath... no,

wait. Back further.

Before my pen described a needle.

Still, before a needle stilled  
your life. And Mother needed  
not to cradle me  
like an infant, or beg me

to remember floating on the bay.  
Before the needle sought its target,  
through belly swell, in amniotic sea.

Stop, wait, further

Before your father shaved my head  
Before the wigs I didn't like  
Before I shopped for scarves instead

No No No. Before,  
before the drip drip drip,

the cysplat poisoned veins  
discreetly positioned pans  
the vague white-coated comfort:  
*You can always have another...*

Before the errant cell  
Before I had to tell  
I'd choose  
me  
over you.

## NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

Yes, further.... Before,

before, when the air was clean,  
when I was clean, and wings were filled,  
and you still floated on your own private bay.

Before I balanced on reflection's edge,  
lay quiet on pristine sheets with stirrpped feet.

Before I harbored sparrows in my breast  
and could not speak  
for fear of losing those that fluttered darkly  
to escape.

*Comfort previously appeared on Web del Sol.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Mary Ann Donaldson**

*A Little Sin*

*I had a little Sorrow,  
Born of a little Sin...  
~ Edna St. Vincent Millay*

It's only a venial sin  
I tell myself  
barely a blip on the Richter scale,  
no rumble in the rhythm of the world.

A minor offense

a thin cirrus cloud  
dissipated by a blustery wind  
purging the sky to perfection.

A mere glitch

yet how it whirls  
repeatedly ricochets blows  
to my solar plexus.

A wee iniquity

resonating through time and space  
to rattle the gates of heaven,  
rupture the heart of God.

A minuscule nothing

whose heat sears the innocence  
from my soul. Too small –  
it couldn't. Could it?

This little sin?

~ First Verse ~

**Diana Cruze**

*Whirlpool*

*Sometimes when I'm alone  
I cry. ~ Tupac Shakur*

*Cry me a river, she sang  
I will, said I  
A Danube of blues  
Seine of sorrow  
Rhine of rumination*

For life unlived, wasted  
dreams abandoned  
the world not tasted

For nighttime reflection  
on chances not taken  
and rivers not crossed

*Cry me a river, she sang  
I cry, said I  
floating  
drifting  
sinking  
into a whirlpool....*

*Cry me a river, she sang  
No more, I cried  
For I am drowning*

*\* Cry Me a River is a song by  
Arthur Hamilton, 1953, first  
recorded by Ella Fitzgerald.*

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Doug LaVerne**  
*Priscilla Goodbye*

Priscilla pads to her  
ledge. She settles  
tucking her paws in.  
Perhaps the ledge is a table.  
Dust covers it.  
She leaves no pawprints.  
The last we saw each other  
she was skin and bones, her eyes  
half-lidded, she ate less and less,  
slouched with arthritis.

The ledge lies outside a small window.  
late in the day  
I doze inside in slanting sun  
fitful sleep.  
The light shines wan and yellow  
in a west window,  
exits east  
straight in her face,  
level with the day's shadows,  
not from above like summer.  
Her face is even,  
not a harsh hiss,  
not a cherub's smile,  
her ears forward,  
her spine supple,  
her tail erect,  
her coat  
shiny white and tabby.

The light leaves and she faces  
an October window that has seen Time  
and carries films of age and soil  
a day's last ember dying  
dying dying  
Two tears of mine dried on the inside

she sniffs the outside once  
and sleeps  
but wakes a minute later  
maybe more.

She does not look in  
I cannot see out  
She does not come in  
I do not see to come out  
Where is she now?  
Where am I now?

Yellowed light, sloping shadows  
It is late

Four pad to the edge  
of Priscilla's place.  
my Momma Cat  
orange white and black  
gone in autumn;  
folks' Domdaniel  
sable coat leonine head  
left in winter;  
Mother herself  
Father himself  
grey, no, red hair, robes  
left in summers;  
feeble then  
all sleek smiling now  
they trail no tracks

Priscilla stands.  
All stand and stretch.  
Priscilla lightly leaps up  
up up  
and disappears  
Likely forever.  
The others join her  
None leave outlines in the dust.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

**Victoria J. Medaglia**

*Christmas Cookies*

Reverently draw from the oak file box  
Three-by-five cards, yellow with age and vanilla.  
Fragile recipes, some in the giver's hand:  
Tassies, fruit slices, rum balls.

Measure with care.  
Butter, sugar, eggs, flour;  
Omit the salt, adjust the liquid  
To allow for tears.

One card, Aunt Eleanor's spritz,  
In the hand of a long-lost love.  
Made every year for an army of kin  
All fair, Swedish enough.

Knead Wanda's shortbread right on the counter.  
Butter, sugar, egg, flour;  
Halve the salt, adjust the liquid  
To allow for tears.

Sweet ghosts of Christmas Past.  
Traditions from mothers' kitchens  
Will not live in mine.  
Each year I try and fail anew.

Use real butter—it's Christmas!  
Never substitute!  
But omit the salt and adjust the liquid.  
I cannot hold back my tears.

## Laura Still

### *Answered*

*'When you ask the Lord for something, you need to be specific.'*

~ Linda Coots, *The Serpent Handlers*

I spoke to God everywhere, driving my car  
to school or work, walking by the river,  
choosing a cup for morning coffee:  
*Angels and ministers of grace, defend me.*  
*Lord, give me strength, hold me up*

or when torment ratcheted to dull misery  
just *Help me*. Stupor set in, stumbling  
from task to never-ending task, clutching small  
obligations in a world gone colorless, insubstantial.  
Despair spread a killing frost on my entreaty:  
*God, all my dreams are dead. I need a new dream.*

My eyes opened to you framed in a doorway.  
Dark and light shifted, shook colors out of trembling  
air, sharpened angles, limned contours. Pinnacles rose,  
chasms gaped in the instant before you moved  
toward me, smiling. *This is going to hurt. Thank God.*

### *The Rich Young Man*

He goes home, walking floors of bright tile,  
smooth touch of marble no longer comforting,  
just cold. He lifts the robe his mother made  
for his birthday, lets it fall; cynical sheen  
of embroidered silk winking from his closet,  
whispering behind his back: *So much for eternity.*  
Later he sits on his terrace, gazing out over fields,  
sips wine, tries to forget the sorrowful eyes  
of the prophet, only to find them hovering  
near rim of evening sky, in pools around  
a fountain, behind his own gaze in the mirror.  
*Follow me.* The call continues, singing below  
breeze at harvest, clear above cries of sheep  
at shearing time. He sells up in spring, drops  
the money at a shelter before leaving town,  
late, but no longer lost.

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

~ Humor ~

*The Narcissist*  
by d.c. dulik

I regret, and know I will pay,  
when I ask, how are you today?

I'm doing great, let me fill you in.  
Don't you think that I look really thin?  
I'm going to a luncheon date,  
I'm already a half hour late.

I'm going on vacation to Napa Valley.  
Jim is building me a pergola in the alley.  
I do wish he and the kids could go,  
but it's so expensive you know.

After lunch it's a bikini wax  
Then pick up six pairs of slacks at Saks  
After that it's Chico's for three new skirts,  
then to Walmart to get the kids some shirts.

At 3:00, it's my anal bleaching.  
At 4:15, a self-awareness class that Joyce is teaching.  
Home at 6:00, dinner to microwave,  
To cooking I'm not a slave.

At 7:00 it's Cole Hahn  
to try six new pairs of shoes on.  
Then to Victoria's Secret for thongs and bras.  
You can't have shabby undies at the spas.

Finally home I'll flop in bed,  
Jim will be busy making me fresh breakfast bread.  
We've decided not to have sex anymore  
I told Jim it's just such a chore.

Next time I see you, I'll have a new car.  
Please remind me to ask how you are.