

April

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A Poetry Anthology to Accompany
Tempe Poetry in April,
A Reading and Discussion Series
in its Third Season

Edited by Catherine Hammond

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Laraine Herring 1

Between Us

She come round here lot more than before.
she come round here with sirens in her eyes
rags wrapped round her throat
wrists long and bleedin' from the chains
she saw wrapped round them every day

She come round here lookin' for godknowswhat,
lookin' for whoknowswho —
sometimes I catch her eye when
I pass by a mirror or look out the
window when it's dark outside but
light as noon inside.

She come round here to snuggle deep
under your quilt as you lay with your new lover.
she come to slide between you
silent and slim
but solid,
separatin' you at the hips so you sleep apart
not even the soles of your feet touching.

She come round here to sit on the front porch
and rock with the wind with me waitin'
for the mail
me waitin' for the paper
waitin' for the preacher
me just waitin'.

She come round here to nuzzle up in your head
back behind your eyes in that place where
you do all your prayin'
that place where you do all your lyin'
that place where nobody but you knows the
real name of the spirit breathin' there.

Laraine Herring 2

She come round here to trace a trail
of perfume down the hallway
out into the kitchen and into the toolshed
where the two of you used to squeeze hard sweat
in the heat of the day.
Lady, oh, how I love to lay you down
mmhmmm, lady, oh.
she come round here to knock at the door
of your heart, slip in between your ribs and shake
you up like salad.
she come round here to wake you up and take you dancin'
naked feet leavin' footprints in the dewy grass
she come to give you dragonfly wings and colored chalk
to paint sidewalks inside out.
She come to kiss you gentle in the rain and
set your soul to flowin'.

Oh.

Cycle

- for g.b.

It all began with the peach
cut in halves, pit removed to sticky black juice
skin soft as yours was once and oh-so-tender
ripe and dripping
lemon sweat and sugar on my fingers

It all began with the scent of sage
mingled with the cooling spray of water from the pond
the scent of lavender on pillows
the flower petals strewn across the desk
like mismatched puzzle pieces

Laraine Herring 3

It continued with your touch
as warm and indifferent as sun.
Your breath hot in my ear, words cold.
Fingers connected to mine just enough
to hold me at the edges of your heart

Still more, your tongue
along the lip of my ear
inside the pit of my belly button
beyond the folds of my flesh
into salt and stamina

and so it ended with the peach
cut in half
skin ripe and dripping lemon sweat and sugar
on my fingers.

You apart
Me together
scooping the saline spray into cobalt bottles
to release to the wind

and so it ended with the scent of desert sage
and verbena and pepper
a tingle in my nose
and residue on my fingers of what I've loved.

I taste
and breathe
and lick the evidence away until the bowl is shiny
clean again.
The crack inside the base
Perfection.

Laraine Herring 4

Burdens

I gathered rocks today.
One for each of you.
I tried to choose the size, the texture, the color
that best suited you and me
and the story I have written.
I wrapped them all, six of them
with crimson twine,
bound them to another rock,
and I carried them
today,
physical, heavy, jagged.

I carried them up hills
into bedrooms and into kitchens.
It didn't take long (a minute or two)
to realize they were too heavy
to keep carrying like this.
I would have to devise another method
if I were to keep it up.

I was angry to have them.
Angry to keep them,
and each time I picked them up they got heavier
until I finally laid them down
and when I closed the door
I didn't miss them
and I could still see the sun.

Laraine Herring 5

Enigma

Music falls in piles of black and white poetry on the floor.
A pinch of fresh ground pepper; a splash of salt.
Keep your ingredients in ordered piles.
Connect the notes with fingertips.

Breathe.

Basil and sweet tomatoes; broccoli and cheddar
Simmer over a blue and steady flame.
Skin to skin.
Breath to breath.

Eat.

Use olive oil. Enough to get slippery.
Keep it pure. Organic. Natural.
Put the spices in first.
Make sure the pan is hot enough to sizzle.

Kiss.
Talk.

Breath to breath.
Skin to skin.
Day to day.

16 May, 1998

My mother sits on the yellow sofa
in front of a lit candle.
I, across from her with my drum.
We are singing songs.
My mother is a Christian in her body
but in her soul she flies

Laraine Herring 6

I am showing her ritual.
She knows from church -- stand up, sit down
fight fight fight
but this is not our way.
We are singing birthday songs.
We are celebrating friends.

It is her father's birthday.
He has been dead for 20 years.
We sing to him and she is unsure
but then she smiles and sings,
"Kauko," over and over "Kauko,"
his name.

She is surprised the tears come.
I am surprised.
My mother, ever practical, ever calm.
grieves internally
and I see the green glow of her heart chakra
split and split and split again.

My mother carries her pains in her body.
Her thin frame, wide smile, young eyes.
She presses sadness into her belly where it
dances madly in the night and robs her
of her dreams
but keeps her safe in layers of thick wool.

This is the first moment I realize her heart
is ripped apart. From father to husband.
She loved.
She buried.
She wrapped up clothes still carrying the scent of
Mennen and emptied her house.

Laraine Herring 7

She looked to the future because that is what you do.
When your bones break you find glue.
You work in the garden.
You work on the car.
You pay the bills.
You cry in darkness.

My mother and I carry the same throbbing
light in our skeletons
we view the daylight through the veil of mourning
and guard with spears of vulnerability
that raw place where stoked fires sear
white hot patterns in our cells.

John Olivares Espinoza 8

Aching Knees in Palm Springs

My younger brother Albert and I
Spent a gray Thursday of our winter break
Plucking grass from petunia beds
Large as swimming pools
In the center of a condominium complex.
These are one-story stucco blocks
For those with money in their palms.
We spent our vacations in shivers—
Raking, trimming, and mowing
Frosted gardens with Dad.
At the eighth hour of kneeling
And picking, the weight on my knees
Was too much for me to continue.
So every time I pulled out a fistful of grass,
I stood up tall and stretched,
The cold air sneaking under my shirt.
When Father noticed me squatting
And the weeds slowly filling the trash can,
He said to me, “You’re packing down the dirt,
Kneel on the lawn and weed the beds from there.”
And I told him, “I’ve bent down
Since nine this morning,
“I am at least entitled to some circulation...”

I kept the truth from slipping from my lips,
About how I didn’t care about dirt and weeds
From a garden of a bourgeoisie—
These few men I learned about in Sociology class—
Who raked in more hundred-dollar bills
Than I did citrus leaves in a day.
I wanted to tell Dad that these men didn’t care
If Mexicans spent ten hours—or even a lifetime,
Bent as old limbs of lemon wood,
Weeding out the same bed the following week.
To only tell him about the hours I felt wasted,
When we could’ve rested our sore backs on a bed
And drowned in the lake of a much deserved sleep,
Or sailed through Tierra del Fuego, us standing
On the deck and never bowing, not even to the sun.
Or how he could have learned to read,

John Olivares Espinoza 9

And I would finally show him
A poem I wrote. But I didn’t.
Because I knew what he would say—
“It’s the only way to put you through school—
This oily sweat.”

I kept my tongue hidden behind my teeth,
And watched my brother hunched over,
Tossing weeds and years inside
A green plastic can without a word.

La Cucaracha en la Mañana

They sniff around with their two strands of hair
In the kitchen and they slip through the cereal box-tops

As easily as an envelope under a door,
Munching on the dry Corn Flakes you thought were Raisin Bran.

In the bathroom, they dip their faces in uncapped toothpaste
As if competing in a cream pie eating contest

And massage their bellies against the bristles of your toothbrush.
In the bedroom, climbing over the ravine of your mouth,

They become the first things you see waking from a dream,
Then tickle your toes when you put on your boots.

When I turn on the light early morning before work,
I see them on their knees, elbows resting on the roach trap

They use as an altar, pincers pressed together in prayer, offering thanks
To a god that makes their living conditions more comfortable than mine.

John Olivares Espinoza 10

Ode to the Sandwich

Sandwiches are the suitcases of meals:
Five food groups compact,
Health and nutrition fit into our hands
Like a vitamin Bible:
In the beginning was Manna,
The cold cuts, vegetables, and dairy...

No spoons or forks, nothing
To wash afterward— maybe a few crumbs
To brush off the plate like excuses for the wind.

Without the sandwich no one
Would have invented the potato chip.
Or its American cousin in a leisure suit,
The hamburger— the warmer version of its ingenuity.
What about its impoverished relative the hot dog,
Who brought us use of useless
Animal bi-products?

Sandwiches boosted our economy.
We have created Oscar Mayer,
Frito Lay, Wonder Bread, ZipLoc,
And the individually wrapped cheese slice,
Thin as an administrator's soul.
All employ thousands of Americans
Working hard in front of tank-like machinery,
Just for our sandwich needs.
Which leaves me wondering if at lunchtime,
They settle in their cell-like break rooms
With a ham-and-cheese on rye
Or an unevenly cooked microwavable burrito
In the convenience of five fast minutes.

*

John Olivares Espinoza 11

We ate where the rich would not see us,
That is why they believed we ran
On the sun's energy:
"The new affordable and more efficient
Solar-powered gardeners.
See your local dealer for more details."

For our only meal in the ten-hour day,
Mom made each of my brothers and me
Two ham and American cheeses
On white generic bread.
They use to have the trimmings.
But the tomato's juices dissolved the bread
And by mid-morning, the Palm Desert sun
Dried the lettuce into the same texture
Of the grass we'd just mowed.

It was now down to plain ham and cheese,
Thin as two sheets of binder paper.
But the cheese melted over the ham
Like a lava of yellow dairy.
So Mom placed our lunch in an ice cooler,
But the ice melted like, well,
Snowballs in the desert,
Soaking our bread into white mud.

After as many attempts
As hundred degree summer days,
Mom separately placed all
The sandwich parts in their
Individual waterproof bags.
Our saliva leaked slowly
From our mouths like
Slightly over-watered pots,
As we quivered to assemble
Our humble lunch quickly.

John Olivares Espinoza 12

For added taste, Albert lined his lunchmeat
With Fritos— every bite sounded
Like the crunch of gravel under Luis' workboots.
Luis splashed dots of hot sauce on his,
Appearing like the drops of Albert's blood
From an afternoon nosebleed
Splattered on the hot cement.
He bled continuously,
Like the mystical wounds from a saint's stigmata
We had learned about in Sunday school,
Which seemed more realistic than
Getting ahead in life as a gardener.
Father's cold bean and egg burritos
Were heated on the dashboard—
The gardener's microwave.

Our lunches lasted half an hour.
By then, our bellies were packed
Like leaves in a can.
We wished our heads could rest,
Stone-like, sinking deeply on a pillow of roses.
But we knew we had machinery to push,
Energy to convert skin into calluses,
And miles worth of lawns to mow,
Before we could eat again.

No Matter How Bad

It was a Saturday of violet clouds outside.
In my small palms, two red and blue
Plastic pegs from my toy box. I threw them
At the sun with the force of a small sigh,
Arrogant to think that I could stop
This spot of fire in the sky
That seemed to pick on only my family.
Or that I could calm this comet threatening
The world's tranquility and Saturday
Morning cartoons.

John Olivares Espinoza 13

The pegs, light as dried bones,
Fell back to earth repelled by the sun's rays.
I did no more than knock a fig off our tree
And a crow began to pick at its fleshy insides.
I headed inside, defeated by solar blindness;
I tripped over a garden hoe left out of place
And sliced a red frown between my ankles.
I ran, cried to a mother squatting over the toilet,
Then I was lying in the back seat of our Buick.
The back windshield webbed with water stains.
The sun never let go sight of me, nor forgave
My betrayal, torching me with all its hatred.

At fourteen, I hoed dried weeds
From a thirsty earth and cursed my father
For making me do it. The sun cursed him also.
After thirty-five years of gardening, he died
Of skin cancer, a dark mold across his face.
At his wake, I tried reading an elegy,
But couldn't get past the first stanza because
The wash of grief stung me
Like an eyelash caught in my eye.
I tried reading it to mother years later,
But didn't have the lungs for it anymore—
She had gone hard of hearing after all
The yelling from her father, her husband.
I could do no more than fold it in eighths
And slip it into her robe's pocket,
Let it all be forgotten with the wash.
Turning fifty now, with rheumatism,
Each evening I come home with shoulders
Slumped and weary from mowing lawns.
Despite the searing in my knuckles,
Despite the cave-dark air of my apartment,
I write a few lines, no matter how bad
Or uninspired. It is then that I go back
To eat that fig fallen among the gravel,
And taste the moment under what I didn't know
Were the embracing arms of light.

Virginia Chase Sutton 14

Ars Poetica

She unfolds a bent staple the way
someone unwraps a creased handkerchief,
smoothing the edges open. Without
a mirror, she cuts into her face. The staple
scrapes from forehead into the crease

of her mouth. Deep red kisses well
along the ragged scratch, a farewell
to her obsession. Someone removes
the cap from a cheap pen, saws her left wrist
until it separates, bleeding. She spends

an entire night sitting in the hallway
outside my room. At midnight I crouch
beside her, whisper *come back, come
back*. A pillow's untouched and someone's
left her a small stuffed dog. The famous

psychiatrist who runs this place challenges
me to write a poem, his face blooming
via video conference call all the way
from Dallas. *It can be*, he says,
about nothing. I'm already dead.

He tries to stump me with quotations
from Blake and Eliot. *Buddy*, I want
to tell him, *I'm medicated off my ass*.
Last count ten different meds. I don't
self harm. So the staff opens a little office

and I'm left alone. Nearly three hours later,
I have a couple of lines. I wrap myself
in a blue hospital blanket, head to the dayroom
where everyone's watching TV. Someone
turns down the volume. *Did you write*

Virginia Chase Sutton 15

a poem? They want to hear it, my suicide
poem, but why tell them what they've
already lived? On the third evening here
my roommate unthreaded the string
from her sweatshirt's hood, wrapped it tight

round her neck. Not a hanging, exactly,
more like strangulation. It took two nurses
to unwind her. She was sent to the other part
of the hospital, dressed in a paper gown
and a paper blanket to keep her safe. And me,

left alone to write a poem after weeks
of observation? I sit in an office chair
and try to work, don't even check the clock.
Maybe I miss the mandatory fifteen minute
check-ins, click of the flashlight

in my face, fists banging on a closed
bathroom door, always someone
with a clipboard and careful little notes:
*Patient in the unused office for two hours
and forty-five minutes. She did not*

self harm. How odd to suddenly
be unwatched. When I read the poem
to my therapist, she sits for a minute,
*says somehow I thought
it would be much longer*.

Virginia Chase Sutton 16

How He Saves Me

for D.S.

Last summer I spent an entire morning examining expensive handbags. Reaching into store shelves, skimming metal skeletons with their weight of strappy

bags, I touched brown, black, even whimsical straw. Finally I bought one I didn't need or want but I liked the secret compartment for keys. He called, insisted

I get rid of my pills. I shook them from my grandmother's bone china teapot, dug at the lining of my new purse, bottle in the nightstand, even those melting in the darkness

of my closed fist. This morning David asks *do you know anyone who chose to live?* Carolyn bought a gun at a pawnshop. The first time she fired was into her mouth.

Randy was a simple overdose and Sweetie refused the tumor until it was too late. My favorite death was Harry's--rock and roll on the radio, car chugging in the garage as he fell asleep.

I've acquired more pills. Not a lethal dose, mind you, just-in-case. *Give them up or go back to the hospital,* David says, marches me to the psychiatrist's private bathroom.

So I toss the pills into the scrubbed bowl. Notice their bright flare as they scuttle to the bottom, tumbling little gems? *Flush it,* he says. Dr. S says hello as we pass in the hall.

Do you feel like an alcoholic pouring a bottle into the sink? Such heaviness in my chest. Then he takes the empty bottle, won't give it back. I remember everyone in the hospital,

hundreds of brilliant plans. I'm so ordinary, the same-old same-old. *I'm such a failure,* then I cry.

Virginia Chase Sutton 17

Lithium and the Absence of Desire

It is not advertised on the pill bottle, merely mentioned in the product description from the drug store.

You have no idea what you are giving away. Winter's amnesia is coming. At first it seems impossible

because you live so fully in mossy, rainy lakes. You have watched pelicans sail over a mirrored surface

just above and just below the water. It is so easy to shudder beneath a sun as it burns rock to fire over

the island's bumpy landscape. So you drift all the way in, dozing in light and soaked color. Here you have lived

more than thirty years, as alive as yesterday's romantic boil of rain and hot skies, the fever popping all along your prickling skin.

You are perfectly at ease in this watery hive. Under the surface you blur as kisses trail between your open legs.

You are not prepared for the gray clouds stealing close, shriveling the shoreline to a smudge, sucking at the waves.

Still, you take the medication as prescribed. At first you imagine your body may adjust or the pills

will come to understand you. It is no use. Desire falters after the first mouthful, a little

swallow. How you will miss it, the tug and pull at the body's sweet dampness. You think of escape

Virginia Chase Sutton 18

sit in a small boat not far from shore where you eat
pale apricots faded like old wallpaper's delicate skin.

Strain all you will but you have given desire away.
No choice since you must take the pills. The land

contracts and flips over. The medication's flash
freezes you to winter. After time passes, will you remember

the fizz of greenery spilling down embankments,
how you once drank from the lake's clear aluminum?

Back then it was easy to drown in a cup of water,
but this is an unexpected kind of going under.

How you will shiver, forced to settle for icy
ruin, numb winters of regret.

Last Day in Paris

Idly watching pilgrims
at prayer, I set out two candles
for my dead parents,
let them burn. Stepping

from the cathedral, beggars
swarmed me, women dressed
in bright gauzes, babies
on their hips. *American?*

Virginia Chase Sutton 19

As I nodded, a woman in violet
stuffed a tattered paper
into my hand. It read: *I require
money.* Surprised, I stepped back

as she screamed *I must
have cigarettes.* She chased me
across the river until I returned
her note. Sometimes we are all

beggars. I recited my medications
to the hospital psychiatrist: *zoloft,
seroquel, buspar, lithium,
ambien, tegretol, ristoril, effexor.*

Then added *they took away
the xanax.* Jesus, he said.
That's quite a list. Each morning
he slid the window open at the nurses'

station and waited. *We want to sleep,
we desire nightmares to lift, voices
to quiet. We're so tired of visions.*
Change dictated by his careful hands,

gentler than any priest. *You want
to be well?* I wanted an evening
boat ride down the Seine, my chance
to pretend I'm Audrey Hepburn dressed

to the teeth, hollow background
of *Moon River* as I floated along
the best view of city lights. But
the river was rising and streets

Virginia Chase Sutton 20

were flooding. I saw a small white car
wedged in the graceful arch of a bridge
where it floated. I didn't get what
I wanted. Do we always require

a little more? *You're over medicated,*
he said and I nodded. *I have*
a million ideas. So I stayed alive
another four weeks. The morning

I left the hospital he held out
a piece of paper with one word
written across it—*depression.*
He explained, *you don't know*

who sees your record. He pressed
the crisp sheet into my hand,
knowing we believed the lie.

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 21

Fetish

*. . . a fetish is a story
masquerading as an object
– Robert J. Stoller*

In ballet the foot disappears
and even the swan walks on air.

In this marvelous disguise of the body,
deception and beauty weigh

equally. Form is no dance,
though looking is, the leap

from here to
light's pink shrined upon the stage
while the music shivers. It's some winter, this
story of the foot

that later, through the stage door, walks away
in its black stiletto

the clarinetist behind watches disappear like a smaller
and smaller and smaller black champagne glass,

the mournful little toasts of desire over
and then that spectacle of bondage

as her strapped ankle withdraws into a taxi.
If this were the fairy tale,

the shoe would be in his hand, her shape—
and the shoe would be glass so that

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 22

her shape would seem to walk on air.
He'd name her Farewell.

But he'd keep her in a closet, he'd keep
for himself that image of the five red

half-moons of the toes, cozy and lingual.
He'd let that heel grind into

his breastbone, and why not, just think
of what we'll stand for in the name of love,

just think what we'll become a street for,
or a giving earth, a meadow for, a mud,

a heart-rooted grass. Think what we'll
disappear for in all our flesh, just to know

the gravity of our desire which is
always walking out, out, into distance

and then, when there's nothing
more, drawing itself up and lasting

a brief second like a circus goat
climbing a ladder, pitiable

miracle, our love, our art.

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 23

Being Pharaoh

My grandmother turned into an old man,
deaf, with a hairy chin. It is August,

the damp panting of nights—I am
gradually building my own underworld

not just with prospective grief but
wires to hold up the asphodels.

Into it, a whole migration of shapes
skinned by light, pears gone

flat, and cars, and shadow like a floored heart.
They're the file of a river

and the Greeks had a river, the Romans.
The Egyptians who civilized the dead.

Tonight I am sick of every man
and his past. And the past is tired of his

request that it love him. I am trying
to make my bed. I am trying to keep

an angel from cracking my hip. The moon's
sleeve is flipped back in a drawer . . .

Thrush, you little singing spade—
I'm an unforgivably domestic mourner

and I might sleep through someone's
late supper, or hunger—just think how

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 24

oblivious he will be. While I am in
the dark rustling my own inventory:

Each time we fall out of love we
say it wasn't really love at all as if

landing, a plane would say *no, not
actual sky*. While I am in the dark

getting fit for an afterlife. Admit
we never know the difference, like the woman

who stands up in the cinema and becomes
the black keyhole we peer into. I am

trying to keep her head down. So long
even her mother and mother's mother

turn blue. I am trying to keep
the ancestors out of the bedroom

so I can conceive a new face and new
arms, the feather trees across

the river, the curious shore dog.
Keep the distance simple like the top

deck of the parking garage from which
we can see the hospital. The present

may bond to any molecule, future
or past: My parents were kissing

while someone dragged the body past
the doorway, bag zipped to the chin

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 25

on the gurney, the head wound in white gauzes.
My father had taken off his mask, still

hissing oxygen, and mother was bent.
Of all things I've seen it was

old love that kept them from seeing.
Beautiful discretion, what moment will you

save from me? This should have been
a dream, something to wake from

but I never do. I am trying.
I will be pharaoh yet-

sealed with tiny boats and slavish
figurines. I am sick of every face

floating a sex by itself. Take in
this lampshade and these

curtains. Objects are memory.
As a child, I pictured the soul as a glass

wing, fluted, gelatinous, detached
as my voice under water. I made it up

a body-a paperweight-no snow
in the water, no water under the earth,

no music ever again in my hair, after
my hair. The dead will point to it,

What was the name for this, point to my hand,
What was the name for this? One life

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 26

has been mine so long, streets
and bicycles, monuments

descend in it. In the bedroom, a shirt
has fallen on shoes. Keep me

from seeing: Moon wanting into the dark
like the torn from—

the photograph--
It is August. One woman is so long

longing does not come out of her.
But this time I have loved you

so long I become
the boy you were. I must still

be alive, for everything is changing and
incomplete. Half a tree, half

drives its shadowy web near the shutters.
August has just turned September. The ancestors

want 4,000-year-old grain, hard as quartz,
in grain jars. All I have are cigarettes.

What a night this is. What a night.
I'll lie down and my pillow will thrum

like a machine. I'll go barefoot
to the window, see if any light is

still on in any house. Who else
is afraid of missing something. Who else

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 27

knows one thing God can't enter
is my memory: I, a minor

twentieth-century poet, the first
of September, 4 A.M., finish one thing.

Twentieth-Century Children

Everything she finds she drags home,
the cat, the ruined boots, the rusted knife,
the legless doll—

Can I keep it? And the boy is packing
a snowball in the freezer to save
for August. The sisters, no wiser, are
keeping warm

some small blue eggs on a cotton ball
constellation under mother's make-up lamp.
Things will stay.

Things will wait. This child's
America cooks up forever, and the stars
get pasted in their Book of Looks—

This light.
This word.
This favored found stone they sleep with.
And the moth they've sealed in

Beckian Fritz Goldberg 28

a plastic pin box and buried beneath
their folded summer shirts, so that someday
when they leave or when

they marry, they will find it
still, thing
and no more
the dream around it—

He Said Discipline is the Highest Form of Love

All three girls were in love with their music teacher. At a lesson, he told one: You wear your heart on your sleeve. Then the other came in, dark hair parted in the middle like a black book. She had the longest most promising fingers, but he did not love her. The third girl did not come until the next day. In the night she dreamed that he spread his arms out behind her and then wrapped his left arm to hers holding the instrument, and folded her fingers so they touched the strings. His right arm crooked with her arm holding the bow. They were just one violin.

Every time she practiced after that she felt his limbs on her limbs, his breast at her back, like a man-shadow cast by her small girl body. An hour would go by like an arrow. That's what was hardest: what love did to time. The Brahms fell apart like a glass. His shoulders over her shoulders. Even when she grew up, which happened in a night, and was happy, she could still conjure him, this love skin. This whole petal of him.

When she came to her lesson the next day he tapped the lip of her music stand with a baton, tic-tic-tic, four-four time. She felt—a bit, a bit of his ankle in her ankle, and then the knee above that, floating. She wondered what he was like with the book-haired girl. She knew he loved those long fingers. Maybe that was enough. In time. ■

Catherine Hammond 29

One Core and Another

The girl knows she's a fool to follow
dry leaves as they—dark
and amputated hands—lure her
through the cut in the land. Walking

between high rock walls, air cooler,
she reaches the fruit tree, heavy
with mountain snow. Apples hang
plump and yellow. A robin pecks

at their flesh. In the wind, she hears rhythms
of a man and a woman—thighs rubbing,
the scrape of tongue on tongue, nail on skin.
The robin has chosen to stay the winter

for fruit that will shrivel and sweeten. He
does not look toward her as he digs out
one core—and another. The girl trembles.
Her skin can scarcely hold her.

Catherine Hammond 30

The Ocean, a Dress

Even now, the woman must wear the ocean,
a dress crumpled in the back of her closet
(put it on, the voice whispers). Having learned
lessons of salt, her eyes stare into distance.

Whatever she means to say, she says nothing.
Oh, she can talk about the sharp ping of milk
hitting a steel bucket, warm froth filling
her mouth. She watches for disguises—

lightning pretending to spread itself on water's
surface—while penetrating through to the heart.
Wind's caressing the undersides of leaves (don't
dare speak). Braiding and unbraiding her hair,

the woman considers singing—silence is always
the presence of some other thing. The man never
questions her absence—foam at her collar,
starfish caught in a sleeve. *Do you think*

I do this on purpose? she refuses to say.

Contributors' Notes

Laraine Herring, MFA, teaches creative writing at Phoenix Community College. She has an MA in Psychology and is training as a poetry therapist. Her first book, *Monsoons*, was published in 1999. Her novel, *Lay My Sorrows Down*, won the Barbara Deming Award for Women. She's at work on a new novel, *Throwing Bones*, a non-fiction book, *Missing the Man: Adolescent Father Loss: A Woman's Guide through Grief*, and a poetry collection called *Breath*. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

John Olivares Espinoza was born in 1978 in Indio, California, and spent his youth landscaping with his brothers and father, a Mexican immigrant. He is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Aluminum Times* (2002) and *Gardeners of Eden*, was the recipient of a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, and recently won El Andar Prize for Literary Excellence. A graduate of the University of California, Riverside, he is currently earning his M.F.A in creative writing at Arizona State University.

Virginia Chase Sutton was the Louis Untermeyer Scholar in Poetry at Breadloaf and a winner of the Paumanock Visiting Writer Series. She recently won the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and the National Poetry Hunt. Her poetry has appeared in *Paris Review*, *Boulevard*, *Poughshares*, *Witness*, *Antioch*, and *Western Humanities Review*. She has three Pushcart nominations and has been a fellow at Ragdale Foundation many times. Her first book, *Embellishments*, was published earlier this year.

Beckian Fritz Goldberg is the author of *Body Betrayal* (Cleveland State University Press, 1991), *In the Badlands of Desire* (Cleveland State University, 1993), and *Never Be the Horse*, winner of the University of Akron Poetry Prize selected by Thomas Lux (University of Akron Press, 1999.) Her newest volume of poems, *The Book of Accident*, will appear in Spring 2003 from Invisible Cities Press. Currently Goldberg directs the MFA Creative Writing Program at Arizona State University.

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