Saw palm florida literature and art





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At World's End // Puzzle Globe

Terri Witek

We build water first, tabbing toward a given:

hollow turquoise heaven. Breath nations sussurate in space.

A serene deluxe. And lucky us who, ascending finger by finger,

bargain a wriggle from blank seas then find our feet. A little dizzy.

No dove with vineyard in her beak? Not to fault the plan (I loved you)

but which zone, exactly, bears our weight? Another gust.

If the least spume or grit accrues in it, Bottoms up, blue cup!

20 - 25 MPH

Terri Witek

Today a consonant vanished, leaving verbs minus jangle,

nouns so small only moons could moor them and, over the city, a ululating wind.

Do you scent a river inhaling rain? March again. Spring's shivery tangle.

I flit about inside, dodging what's thickest: buttons, deadbolts, ceiling fans, lintels.

In the house of the lost consonant, then, a thousand wings keep beating —

they could smash out a window, scythe the lawn's sudden humbug of bloom.

What holds in such wind? The last bitte o ange?

Blue Skies Retirement

Chantel Tattoli

Someone departed and a villa opened up. Tiny lizards, trees heavy with orange and to a lesser extent yellow, palms, and water, lots of it: pools, retention ponds, brown lakes, bluegreen springs, the gulf, the ocean.

She took it, of course. And when she got there hung baskets of Christmas cactus from the rafters.

The "villas" are bungalows. Wood, thick stucco like lotion not yet rubbed in, sea-foam green tile, paint white and blue like Little Greece.

Northern widows go south toward the sun. There is a single-male resident, just one, Ashley Calvert, and he receives a casserole or a bundt cake regularly. Whether or not she was interested was a hot topic, until she made it known she was not interested *in the least*. Her pal Cheryl, though, is determined.

Example (phone rings):

Hay, low?

You? Odette has baked Ashley a pineapple upside-down cake. It might be better than Cheryl's own red velvet. What does she see coming of this?

Diabetes?

You! Tonight's bingo.

She knows, she isn't going. She has never gone.

Someday you might, though.

She can smell rose-scented power, omnipresent and nauseating. The cumulus hair, the clouds of Blue Skies. No never. She says she's heard that Ashley likes blueberries.

Well, what about cobbler then? Á la mode?

Yes. Yes, she says, and dust it good with sugar.

Blue Skies is in a south Florida beach town. It doesn't matter which because they all look the same, the blood of tourists runs through them all.

These towns are ready with cheap motels (Coco Nut Hut). Attracting moths to bright neon paint and signage, proffering tees

whose enamel letters will crack (t-rific), offering shell chandeliers (She Sells Sea Shells)—hundreds of old mollusk homes to dangle above their Ohioan breakfast tables and swat at in the cold-titted winter.

She walks the beach. Her wrinkled bronze in a one-piece. Smiling at children who make their castle's towers from Starbucks' cups. Pursing lips at every-member obese families, kids with no-necks and jiggling paunches, not their fault. She looks for whatever good stuff the ocean has pushed up. There's blobs of jelly to skirt; now the rim of a china plate, gilded, bearing the suggestion of a pink lotus, smacking of her wedding dishes. Brown froth in the water from a cruise ship dumping close to shore, or oil. Can you believe it? The few dead-husband shirts she's squirreled away are lead in her bureau.

Ever and Ever

Adam Berlin

I criticized him for three years and then one night I took the pipe. Until then, we'd been friendly, but not friends.

Dennis was back in Boca.

"What is it there?" he said. "Twenty degrees? People running around the city in down coats? The swine flu making a comeback? That's what I saw on the news."

"It's cold," I said.

"Eighty-two degrees, champ. Eighty-two degrees. I'm sitting on the deck of our pool watching a crane fly by. You've got to come down and hang out, buddy. I'm serious. Just get on a plane and come down. Dude, there are beautiful women all over the place for you to violate. We'll go to the beach. We'll eat cheesecake at the Cheesecake Factory. We'll go to the driving range so you can smack balls into the highway. We found a couple of new bars where you can go wilding."

"It's almost tempting."

"Be tempted."

"I need an adventure."

"Dude, you always need an adventure."

"And you never need an adventure."

"I'm a lucky man," Dennis said. "No need to stray from home. I'm married to the greatest woman in the world and I'm back living where I want to live. It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood without any wind chill factors. I'm a happy man."

He was still with Lauren, he still wasn't working, and he still mentioned the degrees Fahrenheit every time we spoke. Nothing had really changed for Dennis since he'd left Florida, a five-year hiatus in Richmond, Virginia to take care of Lauren's sick father. When her father died, they decided to return to the place they loved, selling their house in Richmond, buying a house in one of Boca Raton's gated communities that, Dennis said, was nicer than the last one, with a great Olympic-sized pool and a slew of hot wives who lounged around all day working their tans. Dennis exaggerated everything. Every time I visited him,

the women weren't so beautiful, the bars not so crowded. We'd end up hanging around his house, smoking pot like we used to in college, eating and laughing, talking. I didn't really mind. It was a break from Manhattan.

Dennis was too young to be in Boca and he knew it, but he loved the weather and he loved the slow life, the year-round warmth making it easier for him, I guessed, to do nothing.

"What do you say, champ? I know you miss Florida. I know you love it here."

A trip south was tempting, at least for a few days, which was all I could take of Dennis and his wife and his life. It had been a cold three weeks in the city. Two days before a snowfall had softened Manhattan's hard angles then turned slush gray and stayed that way, dull, soggy and sad. Growing up, my family had spent summers in Florida, a few miles south of Boca in Hollywood, in a hotel called the Attache by the Sea. Whenever I saw palm trees, life felt good.

"All right," I said. "I'll book a flight. I'll shoot for Thursday."

"Jet Blue," Dennis said. "They're running deals. We'll have a great time, buddy. I'll reserve a shuffleboard court just for us."

When the plane touched down, I saw rows of palms. Everyone outside was wearing shorts and T-shirts and sunglasses. I got my carryon, folded my jacket, stuffed it in my bag, flexed my arms like I was heading for an adventure and not a gated community where nothing adventurous got in.

Dennis passed me the pipe. It could have been the same one from college, but I didn't know. We were sitting by his pool. It was oval and too short to swim laps, but it was new and clean and the underwater jets, filtering and chlorinating, were just loud enough to sound like real nature, a waterfall in the distance or a stream moving with the force to polish stones. We sat in lounge chairs that smelled brand new, our faces to the sun.

"Where do you want to eat tonight? We've got the Cheesecake Factory. We've got a bar called Wowies that has thirty-one big-screen TVs and some fine-looking waitresses. We can get pizza. There's a place called Dominic's that makes a decent pie."

"Let's see what we're craving after we smoke."

"We can go to the beach later if you want. Or we can go to the

driving range. Lauren has to work all day so it's just us."

I was glad about that. His wife was fine, she had a sense of humor, but when she was around it still felt like an effort. In college she'd been unsure of herself, unsure of her future with Dennis. It had been easier then to say or do whatever I wanted in front of her. It had seemed easier for Dennis too.

"I was reading about the Everglades on the plane. You can take a boat ride around the swamp and check out the alligators. Have you ever done that?"

"I've been meaning to."
"But you never did."

"Nope."

"Dr. I."

"Dr. I has been meaning to for ten years," he said.

"Well, then. No rush."

Dennis started laughing his laugh, slightly hysterical, his face turning red. He looked like a kid when he laughed, back in college, nothing to do but smoke his days away. He still had nothing to do and didn't seem to mind. He'd come from money. He'd married money. Lauren worked for a Jewish day school just to get out of the house and, from what he told me, Dennis spent his days in front of the computer reading about politics, he was a Republican hawk when it came to defense, and in front of the TV watching sports. He always had a plan to do something, but it always stayed a plan, and so he spent most days, as far as I could tell, hanging out at home, kicking back on the sofa, stuffing a bowl and relaxing. I called him Dr. I for Industrious. He called me champ, like I was the middleweight champion of the world. In college, he prided himself on never having bought a textbook. In college, I'd walk Boston's streets late at night, alone, looking for anything that was the opposite of college.

"How's teaching?"

"It's fine."

"Any good writers?"

"A few good ones. A lot of shit ones."

I felt the sun working my skin, my arms and shoulders most.

"What makes a writer shit?" Dennis said.

"He's born that way."

"So it's all about innate talent?"

"You need the talent and then you need the discipline."



"So it's both. It's nature and nurture."

"It's nature and hard work. I'm paid to nurture my students and I do, but once they leave my class, there's no more nurturing. They can ask their friends to read their work, the ones that compliment and don't criticize, but that doesn't do anything. It doesn't change what they can do on a page."

"So you're telling me you can be the hardest working writer in the world and if you weren't born with talent you'll never be good?"

"I see you haven't lost your love of third-degree interrogation."

"See that?" Dennis said and pointed to the sky.

"See what?"

"The Florida sun. It's better than any spotlight. It's better than any beam shining right in your eyes. I can see everything under that sun."

"I see things too."

"So getting back to the original question, you'll never amount to anything as a writer if you're not born with talent?"

"You may get published."

"Then you're a writer," Dennis said.

"No. You're published. You're not a real writer."

"What are you?"

"Me?" I said. "I'm not worried about me. I wrote. Now I can't seem to get published so I stopped writing. It doesn't matter if I have talent or if I had talent. I don't do the work."

"Here," he said and passed the pipe. I inhaled, held, exhaled. I took another hit. I hadn't smoked in a year, since last time I'd visited Dennis, in Richmond. The pot took the edges off but not like snowing. It took the edges off by warming them, melting them, just a little.

"Still dating your students?"

"No. When I got tenure, I called it quits."

"Come on. You must be."

"I'm not."

"Look at me," he said.

"I am looking at you. I don't care how bright the sun gets."

"I don't know, champ. Don't get squirrely on me."

"I'm not getting squirrely."

You're telling me you haven't fucked one of your students in the past year?"

"I haven't."

"How many students have you fucked in your life?"

"Why are you so interested in my love life? You getting bored of your marriage?"

"Nope. I love my wife. She's the greatest woman in the world. The best thing I ever did was get married."

"Methinks the lady doth protest too much."

"Not me. Fifteen years of marriage and I still know it's the best thing I ever did. There's no one better than Lauren."

I took another pull. He was sitting back. He was playing it cool. I leaned back into the chair and turned from his eyes, looked over the yard, a lime tree bearing fruit, a tropical plant with wide green leaves that looked thick and full of water. I looked over the pool, aqua blue, pool blue it had to be called, soft.

"Do you ever swim in this thing?"

"Never."

"So it's just for show?"

"It's there so I can pay the pool guy to clean it twice a week."

Dennis was wearing shorts, a polo shirt, socks up to his calves, sneakers. The few times I'd gone to the beach with him, he didn't go near the water. He didn't even take off his socks. He just sat on the sand, fully clothed, and watched me swim. For someone who loved Florida, he did nothing connected to a tropical place. I was in my bathing suit, pushed down low so I could get the most sun. When I got hot enough, I'd jump in. The agua blue paint made the water look pristine. The chlorine smelled like summer. When I was a kid, when we stayed at the Attache by the Sea, a man named John had taught me to swim. At five years old I was jumping off the high dive. I'd walk to the end of the board, gather my courage, close my eyes, hold my nose and jump. The drop tickled me, a nervous tickle that was scary and attractive, that kept me climbing the twenty-two steps up, the ten steps across to the end of the board. It was a rush to look down. One afternoon, I jumped and felt my body tip forward as I fell through the air. I'd never had the wind knocked out of me, so it was all new when I belly-flopped into the water. It was a panic moment, my stomach burning from the hard slap of impact, my mouth sucking for air, trying to stay afloat even while I couldn't breathe. I wanted to cry but nothing came out. I dogpaddled to the side of the pool. I forced my arms against the concrete, struggled to pull myself up. My parents were talking to other parents. They didn't see me. I couldn't move. And then my breath came back and I cried.

"So what's new with you? Good to be back? Feeling industrious lately?"

"I need a hit for that," Dennis said and pulled at his pipe. He was a real smoker, not a show smoker. He didn't make a performance about holding the smoke in his lungs.

"It's great to be back. This is the life."

"Even when you don't take advantage of your own pool."

"Even then. Especially then." Dennis smiled. "If you want we can go to the big pool and check out the scenery. All the wives are there. I'm telling you, champ. That's the place to go wilding. I never knew forty-year-olds could look so hot."

"Too bad you're not single."

"Nothing bad about it."

"Does Lauren still smoke with you?"

"Nope. Just me. That's the one thing we don't share."

The sun was on him, but he had his shirt on. His forearms were dark, darker than mine. I knew he didn't exercise, didn't do push-ups and sit-ups like I did, didn't run, didn't swim, but he still looked fit, still looked young. There were no lines around his eyes. He'd never put in the hours reading pages, pages and pages, and these days I only read pages that others wrote and when I was done nurturing I needed a drink.

"So how much do you smoke?"

"Less than we used to in college. You stoned?"

"Maybe."

"You're stoned, champ. Two plus two. Four plus four. Ten times three." $\,$

Dennis started laughing.

"That was classic," he said. "Those stoned girls hanging out in the dorm, answering all your math questions as fast as you asked them. Like they felt they had to. Like they were taking a final exam. That's when we knew they were wasted. Amateur smokers always concentrate too hard."

"Or don't concentrate."

"Or that," Dennis said.

"At the end of senior year, I'd be sitting in class and looking at the ceiling and studying the patterns. Twenty minutes of class gone by and I'd be connecting the dots on the ceiling. That's when I stopped smoking."

"I'll never stop," Dennis said. "It relaxes me. It calms me down."

"I thought Florida calmed you down."

"It does," Dennis said and took a pull. "Look around."

I'd always been a drinker, preferring the 90-proof rush that warmed me and moved me, got me running from one bar to the next, one party to the next, always looking for better, always alone when I looked. Smoking was hanging out with friends, the sharing of pipes and bongs, ideas spun while the joint was rolled and passed, always laughing, always hungry, craving food more than anything else, party fare, salty and sweet. For three years Dennis tried to get me to smoke and for three years I called him a loser for smoking. And then one night we smoked. Hit after hit after hit. And I came back for more the next night. And then it became a habit, every night in his dorm room, every night getting high, content to do nothing but smoke. The first six months of senior year were a blur. And then I stopped. I didn't want to study ceilings, didn't want to decipher patterns, didn't want to think too much and not think at all, which is what the pot did to me, making me zoom in and zone out. I wanted the rush of alcohol. I wanted the movement, bar to bar, woman to woman. And then I moved to New York, And I wrote, And I sold a book, And another, And the whole time I drank, forging myself, shot by shot by shot, into the image I felt I always wanted. And then I couldn't sell another book. And then I stopped writing. But I kept drinking, always drinking. I was a drinker.

"You're not going in?" I said.

"I told you. The only one who touches this water is the pool boy. I never go in."

"So why did you move back? You could have not gone into the pool in Virginia."

"Two plus two," Dennis said. "Four plus four."

He started laughing.

"I love it here," he said. "Good weather. Sunny skies. High temps the whole year round." $\,$

"And you can keep your socks on at the beach."

"If I so choose," he said.

"What do you do with yourself all day?"

"Whatever I want."

"I'm bored. I go to work and I'm bored. I walk around the city

and I'm bored. Even when I go out these days, I'm bored. You have to be bored with your life."

"Smoke another bowl."

"No. I want some alcohol. This shit's too mellow for me."

Dennis stood up. He didn't look stoned. He walked into his new house and I studied him walking, concentrated on him walking with his long stride, his long legs, his socks pulled up to his calves. I'm stoned, I thought. I'm hot, I thought. I stood up. I sat down. Next to the pool. I put my legs in, eased myself in, the aqua blue soft, the water soft and cool.

"Glenmorange. Single malt." He held the bottle up to the sun. "See? It doesn't blink. This stuff is pure. I got the bottle just for you."

He poured scotch into two rocks glasses full of ice. Generous pours. He was a lucky kid, Dennis, a lucky man, and lucky was the word I always thought about with him, the song coming into my head about the lucky old sun, the words and the sun and the golden brightness of the scotch, and he really could do nothing all day, and he did it, nothing all day. I got out of the pool. We touched glasses and drank.

The third degree was over. It would come back, later, the next day, sometime soon. He always questioned. As if making me stumble on an answer would make his choices smoother. We'd known each other for a long time. He'd question me and then I'd question him back. I had always been a counter puncher. I knew how to make him stumble, knew how he played it cool, calm even as he thought about another life, my life, what it would have been like to not get married. When he stumbled I knew it stayed with him longer than he'd ever admit.

"Lauren has a fund raiser tonight if you want to check that out," he was saying. We were still sitting by his pool. The sun was hot. "There should be a few cute girls there. Or we can go out to that place I was telling you about. Wowies. They've got thirty-one big-screen TVs."

"And hot waitresses," I said.

"Very hot."

"Do you usually sit out here or inside?"

"Inside."

We were a third into the bottle. What I'd felt from the pot was

gone. The buzz I had was all alcohol, like I could do anything and I was restless to start moving.

"The Everglades. You said you'd never been. Now's your chance."

"No drinks in the Everglades."

"I was there when I was a kid."

"Then put a check mark next to it. Things you've done. Like fucking your students."

I lifted the bottle, tipped it into my glass.

"Why don't you want to go?"

"I'm relaxing."

"You're always relaxing. You can relax on the boat. I was looking at a map on the plane and the Everglades are pretty close."

Dennis kept quiet. I knew how to push him.

"What's wrong? You're not sober enough to drive?"

He gave me the look I hated, but it was worth getting up, getting out, a trip to somewhere, something. His head was tilted a bit to the left, his upper lip raised, his eyes steady on mine, a steadiness that would break if there were even the hint of a real challenge. I controlled the impulse to punch him in the face. He kept holding my eyes, steady. Like was I kidding. Like didn't I know he was a man.

"Oh boy," he said.

The road was rough and narrow and straight and bordered by a gully. It was wild here even in the daylight, even with the straight line of the road. Fewer palms, more brush and cattails, green and brown and almost-golden brushstrokes, a place someone could get lost in or hide, a place where alligators could live. A white heron flew out of the brush and sailed past us, its yellow legs tucked in.

"This must be it," I said.

"I don't know."

"I smell reptiles. This is the best way to drive. Without a map. Just gauging the scenery."

"It's the best way to wreck my car."

There was a man walking on the side of the road. From the back he looked wide, wide shoulders. He was wearing a straw hat on his head

"Pull over."



Dennis slowed and stopped. His Audi stayed smooth, even on the beat-up pavement. I lowered the window.

"Excuse me," I said.

The man turned. His face was also wide, flat nose, eyes sunk under a pronounced brow, skin baked brown. He looked like an old-time boxer, Jack Dempsey-tough.

"We want to check out the alligators," I said.

"Okay." His eyes stayed on mine, not challenging, not curious.

"Is this the Everglades?"

"It's part of the Everglades. The Everglades stretch for miles and miles."

"They stretch for ever and ever."

"I never thought of that," the man said.

"Is there a place we can take a tour around here?"

"Down the road. You'll see the sign. Turn right."

"Right at the sign. Thanks."

"Don't get bit," the man said.

Dennis took off.

"For ever and ever," I said.

We bought two tickets from an old woman whose face also looked pressed in by life. Next to the cash box was an alligator skull, an Ace of Spades stuck between its teeth. The woman yawned and pointed us to a path that led to the water. There was no one else around. The setup wasn't close to the polished advertisements in Jet Blue's guide to Florida, glossy panels of tropical colors speaking of exotic sights.

We followed the path to an opening in the swamp. There was a boat in the water, a bare bones craft that had seats ascending like gym bleachers with a propeller at the back. A woman, thin and muscular, her biceps tight and round as a teenage boy's, was sitting in the boat talking on a walkie-talkie, probably to the old woman who'd sold us the tickets. She laughed too loud, looked us over, signed off.

"Welcome to the Alligator Boat Tour," the woman said. The lines around her eyes were deep, cut by the sun.

I handed over the tickets and she handed us each a headset.

"When I start the boat put these on to block the noise. If we see an alligator I'll stop the craft for you to get a good look."

"If we see an alligator?" Dennis said.

"They're wild animals, sir. They're not here for your viewing pleasure."

"You're making a profit off our viewing pleasure."

"Would you like to get a refund, sir?"

"Sure. I'll take a refund."

"No refunds," I said. "We paid the price and now we're here to see some alligators."

"Then take your chances," the woman said.

We walked up to the top bench of the boat.

"Look around," I said to Dennis. "It's a break from your routine."

"I like my life."

"But do the alligators?"

"I don't care what the alligators like."

"Relax. Don't let the alcohol rile you up."

Dennis looked at me.

"Two plus two," I said, fast.

The woman started the engine and the propeller started turning like a giant fan. I put on my headphones. The outside went from loud to dull. The pressure against my ears blocked out almost everything.

The boat moved forward, but it was more like driving than anything that had to do with a boat. The water was so shallow it looked like we'd be grounded at any moment. There were birds, white herons and darker birds and birds that looked like small hawks that flew in circles over a tree and cattails and saw grass surrounded us. Dennis was surveying the water on his side and I did the same on mine, looking for alligators. The woman stopped the boat. She took off her headphones and we followed her lead, took off ours.

"Have you seen anything?" she said.

"Nothing," Dennis said.

"Alligators are black." She sounded like a bad elementary school teacher, more scolding than educating.

"Thanks for the fact," I said.

"You don't look very closely do you?" she said.

I took the flask from my pocket. I'd filled it with his Glenmorange, the good stuff.

"You're right," I said. "I'm not a good pot smoker. Not like Dr. I over here. Not like my buddy. I'm a drinker. Drinkers think they see. They write stuff down on beverage napkins at the bar and the next

morning it's all so much shit. But pot smokers see everything. They can concentrate on the smallest piece of nothing and be content to sit there for hours."

"There's no drinking on the boat," the woman said.

I took another swig from the flask.

"I said no drinking on the boat. You put that bottle to your mouth one more time I'm turning back."

"Are you looking closely?" I said to Dennis.

"I look closely when I want to," he said. "I don't look closely when I don't."

"It's your money," the woman said.

Dennis moved his eyes to the woman. "Idon't see any alligators."

"Did you look?"

"I looked. All I see is a lot of swamp."

"The Everglades spans one and a half million acres."

"Fascinating," Dennis said.

"What's fascinating is how blind you both are. Look over there, right below you. What do you see?"

"I don't see anything."

"Why don't you look?"

Dennis turned his head. I watched him look, let him do the looking, and then his arm went out, straight.

"There," he said.

I followed the line of his arm. And I saw it. It was black. Not green as I had pictured. The alligator was just lying there, not moving, its face away from us so we couldn't see its eyes.

"Finally," the woman said.

Dennis lowered his arm.

"Not very impressive. I can see why they're easy to miss."

"You don't want to miss them," the woman said.

"Have you ever been attacked?"

"No."

"Have you ever seen an alligator attack anyone?"

"Not personally."

"I didn't think so."

"People get killed by alligators every year."

"But you've never actually seen that happen, have you? You've never actually seen one of these lazy-ass lizards move a muscle, right? You've been driving around the Everglades your whole life and you've never seen a thing. So you don't really know what would happen if I got out of this boat and kicked that alligator in the snout?"

"You want to find out?"

"Sure." It was my voice, not Dennis's voice.

The woman looked at me.

"You have an attitude," the woman said. "You both have an attitude."

"Good. And you had a problem with us as soon as we walked onto your boat."

"No I didn't."

"Look me in the eyes," I said.

The woman looked at me, her eyes hard and steady, and I held her gaze.

"Check it out, Dr. I. Let's see if the Florida sun leads to the truth. Do you want to take over the interrogation or should I continue?"

"I say we get back to Boca," Dennis said. "I'm bored."

"I thought so." My eyes were still on the woman's eyes. "My bored buddy here is a master of interrogation, but I picked up a few of his tricks. And I'm guessing I have a lot more weight behind my eyes than he ever had. I'm guessing all the shit I've done and then haven't done makes my eyes that steady, right there."

I could feel Dennis looking at me but I didn't look at him. I wanted to win the eye game with the woman first. I wanted to laugh a mean laugh when I won.

"So what's with your attitude?" I said. "You should be grateful we're here. Business doesn't exactly look like it's booming. People aren't exactly lining up to see a bunch of sleeping alligators that look like clumps of mud."

"Are you done?"

"Right there," I said and pointed to my eyes. "So what's with the attitude?"

"I had a bad day," the woman said.

"We're all having a bad day. I came here to forget the day. I came to Florida to look at palm tress and forget. I thought some alligators would shock me out of my little moods."

"You're drunk," the woman said.

"Talent and hard work," I said.

I lifted my flask.

"Cheers."



"That's it. You were warned. Tour's over."

The woman moved her eyes. She turned on the propeller. The noise took over.

"Wait," I yelled. Loud. Like a threat. Like everything I'd been feeling for a while was underneath the word. Like the subtext I told my students about, the power under the lines, exploding.

She cut the propeller. It ran down and was quiet again.

"Thank you," I said.

I looked at Dennis

"What do you say, Dr. I?"

"What do I say about what?"

"Did seeing that alligator shock you out of your little life?"

"I like my life."

"Are you stoned?"

"No."

"Are you drunk?"

"I'm sober."

He started to make the face. Tilted head. Lip up. Eyes steady.

"Don't even try," I said. "Let's do something different. Let's see that alligator jump. Let's shock whatever it is that needs to be shocked."

"We're going back," the woman said.

I put my feet just over the edge of the boat. This was Florida where I'd learned to high dive. This was Florida where I'd felt the first pain I could remember.

"Don't be stupid," the woman said.

"Don't you want to see what those alligators can really do?"

"Cut the shit," Dennis said.

"Don't you want a thrill? A change of pace? You question me about my life? What about your life? You never quit anything because you never did anything? And you have to tell me something. How do you fuck your wife after all these years?"

"Fuck off. I love my wife."

"Tell me the truth. Don't get all squirrely on me. Do you really fuck her? Or do you just dip your cock in as often as you dip your socks into your pool?"

I didn't think he had it in him. But he did. He swung at me. His arms were long, his fist was closed, his face was red and then I felt his knuckles against the side of my head and I felt my body moving.

It wasn't a splash. There were too many reeds and the water was too shallow, but my body, my side and my arms, hit the mud and I heard a sound. It wasn't loud, but it was different from the other sounds. The birds flying around the cattails. The slow movement of the trees.

The alligator spun that fast. I was looking at its tail and then I was looking at its eyes.

I stayed still. The alligator didn't move, waiting.

There was no air. I couldn't breathe. I wanted to cry but I couldn't.

The noise blocked everything out. The propeller at the back of the boat spun. The wind pushed against me. The alligator turned to the noise. The fear in my gut worked like rope, pulling my hands to the boat, pulling my body over the boat, pulling my legs over the boat. I shivered when I pulled my legs into my stomach away from snapping jaws I only imagined.

Dennis was looking at me but not with the look. He didn't know he had it in him either. He'd done more than talk. He'd done more than question. He'd done something. And he was looking at me the way my parents hadn't looked when I'd jumped as a kid. No one had seen my fear then.

I wiped at my face and looked at my muddy hands. Dennis threw me the headphones like they were a buoy.

The woman's hands were on the wheel, guiding the boat through shallow waters. She didn't bother pointing at the black figures, outlines of tail and torso that looked sluggish in the heat. I looked up. Past the trees. Past the birds circling. Up to the sun. I looked into it, forcing myself to look, and then I couldn't look anymore and I closed my eyes and it wasn't like falling, wasn't like turning in the air before I hit the water, my kid stomach soft then, wasn't like that, but it was something close. It was close and I knew it. It was like I'd been scared forever.

Ghost Crab

Leslie Adams

In the salt-thick dusk all the birds are bird-shaped voids, the lack-arc of their wings like the children we aren't having

whose faces slip fish-quick under the incoming tide and school with the blackened coins of mantas in the shallows.

They stalk ghost crabs at surf's edge as all along the beach the imprints of families glare in the cameras' startled flash, fathers sand-stumbling

into the frame ahead of timers, mothers looking away from white-shrouded children who stare raptly towards the lens.

A father lifts his small daughter against his back, her pale legs clutching his waist as they watch the rays' ephemeral passage.

From my seat on the balcony I watch too, sun-shaded, more darkly unseen than the rays in the ocean's insistent break and drift

How is it that I feel sometimes I've lost a child I've never borne in the frame of my hips, a child we carry jointly between us still, divided?

Dark hollows in the moon's implacable face, milk-thin light luminescing the toss of shells at tide-line, small-palm size, brittle spirals;

held to the ear, they hold only the heart's pulsesignature,

the singular heart, as the waves unfold their blue sheets

over the day's scrawled names, over the shells' fingerprinted whorls.

On Art and Life: A Conversation with Award-Winning Author A. Manette Ansay

Sharon Snow Pinson

A. Manette Ansay grew up in Wisconsin among 67 cousins and over 200 second cousins. She is the author of six novels, including *Good Things I Wish You* (July, 2009), *Vinegar Hill*, an Oprah Book Club Selection, and *Midnight Champagne*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, as well as a short story collection, *Read This and Tell Me What It Says*, and a memoir, *Limbo*. Her awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, a Pushcart Prize, the Nelson Algren Prize, and two Great Lakes Book Awards. She lives with her daughter in Florida, where she teaches in the MFA program at the University of Miami.

A. Manette Ansay's latest novel, *Good Things I Wish You* is an interesting mix of the historic and the modern, with two love stories, set apart in time by over 150 years. The novel contrasts the story of Jeanette, a struggling author/college professor in her first post-divorce relationship, with the story of real-life pianist and composer, Clara Schumann, her husband Robert Schumann, and their protégée, the young and handsome Johannes Brahms.

SSP: You say that this novel took its time being born, evolving from a serious historical novel to a modern novel with the historical elements set as metafiction within the story, so that both stories, the modern and historical-based story, unfold together. When did it become apparent to you that you needed the modern story to discover the themes and bring them to life?

AMA: It became apparent that I needed to think about the entire novel differently after I'd completed roughly three-quarters of the historical portion. Basically, I ran into the same wall that others writing about Clara and Brahms have faced: what happened between them in

Switzerland, why did they part ways, how did the friendship survive? I didn't want to make up events to complete the narrative arc, so I began thinking of ways to set up a parallel story, one in which key events could stand in for the missing portions of the historical text.

SSP: Did you find yourself drawn to one story more than the other?

AMA: They became part of the same story as I was writing them, so for me, it's hard to pick a favorite.

SSP: You take the current and the historical, fact and fiction into the actual physical structure of the novel in a fascinating way, by the use of collages that include pictures of your personal journals, excerpts from scholarly research and pictures. How did you arrive at this unique structure, and how did it contribute to the understanding of the overall structure of the past and present stories?

AMA: The collage structure evolved accidentally. I wrote a lot of the novel while commuting by Tri-Rail to Miami, where I teach. For awhile, I was lugging a suitcase full of research--books, photocopies of journals, not to mention my teaching materials and lunch-- but then I fell down the stairs on the train and decided I'd better lighten my load. I began taking photographs of my desk and importing those photos into my Word files so that I could have, if not my actual desk, the images from my desk at my fingertips. After doing this for awhile, it occurred to me that the images weren't just affecting the writing of the book. They were part of the book. It helps that the portraits of Clara and Robert and Brahms are so striking in and of themselves. And, like Jeanette, I do keep writing journals for each book I'm working on. Some of the journals in the image are actually mine; some are fictionalized. I really enjoyed making these clutter-collages. And it was always a good excuse not to clean my desk.

SSP: Your first date in nineteen years is the inspiration for the opening scene of the novel where Hart asserts to Jeanette that "men and women can never be friends." His question is answered in seemingly similar ways throughout the book: Clara and Brahms appear to move uneasily between friendship and romantic love throughout the course of their lives, Jeanette and Hart do an uneasy dance between love and friendship in the same way of Jeanette and her husband Cal, and even

Jeanette and her long-distance email pal "L." What do you think happened in the real-life story of Clara and Johannes? Do you believe that men and women can, or should be friends?

AMA: I think the real-life story of Clara and Johannes mirrors the real-life drama that often plays out between contemporary women and men. Brahms longed for Clara as long as he could not have her. The moment she was free, he fled. Throughout his life, he continued that pattern, attaching himself to women he could not have. Clara writes to him that she wishes she could find longing as sweet as he does. Yet she, too, had her own fascination with longing, with the energy of attraction and its subsequent obsessions. For Clara, as a woman, fulfillment of longing would have meant more children, the end of the second, mid-life career she claimed after Robert's death. For Brahms, it would have meant, in different terms, much the same: the banalities of day-to-day living as a couple, the drain of one's time and energy on domestic concerns. What they felt for each other—as friends and as would-be lovers—got translated into music. I believe that without that friction, that spark, their art would have been less passionate, less mercurial.

SSP: Clara was in many ways, very ahead of her time as a famous female concert pianist and composer in an era when female artists were rare. Even more amazingly, she combined her career with running a busy household as mother of seven children and nurturing her demanding, mentally unstable husband's career most often ahead of her own. Jeanette's book about Clara's life as a struggling mother/artist parallels her own struggles as a newly single mother trying to find time and space for her creative work in the modern workaday world in academia. As a divorced mother of a young daughter, you also have had to balance the pressures and time commitments of motherhood, everyday life, and your job in academia with your writing life. Do you mine your own experiences as a single mom to help you with these details?

AMA: I tend to draw on personal experience—or, failing that, personal interest—in all of my books. I can't imagine researching a life that did not contain elements that interest me, and since hours in each day are numbered, elements that interest me tend to be those that help me interpret and/or explain the world I know. My writing process

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has changed a great deal since the birth of my daughter 7 years ago. Before I was a parent, I used to work in long stretches, particularly early mornings and then, later in the day, between 4 and 8 PM. Those hours now belong to my daughter; there's really no way around that. Like Clara, like Jeanette, I'm working in stolen moments. Writing *Good Things*, I was both learning what that meant for my creative process and describing what was happening to that process. For me, art and experience go hand in hand.

SSP: How much of your private life do you use and how much do you withhold?

AMA: I don't think about it that way. When people asked Anne Sexton if her poetry was true, she'd say, "It was all true when I wrote it." Sometimes, because readers ask me to, I'll go back into a section of the book and try to parse it, line by line, this one fact, this one fiction. I feel as if I kill the story when I do that. I feel as if I'm killing something in myself.

SSP: Jeanette talks about fate dismissively with Hart, almost as she half hopes it to be true, but intellectually dismissing it. You have a great deal of unique circumstances that led you to writing as a career: you became ill and couldn't keep up your rigorous concert pianist training schedule, someone secretly sponsored you for a writer's conference, your boyfriend helped push you to write a novel. Do you believe in fate, or like Jeanette, the more we think of it, the more we influence our choices?

AMA: I believe that, in order to survive psychologically, we assign meanings to the things that happen to us, much like, when writing fiction, we plumb details for their thematic significance. I don't believe in fate. I don't believe things happen for a reason, aside from reasons we assign. But I do think the things we give energy and attention to go on to influence our subsequent choices, so in that way, our own behavior does impact, to a certain extent, our own lives. I don't believe in fate or, for that matter, any kind of god. Things happen because they happen, and the real trick about life is to embrace the largeness of that simple statement, the great mystery, and live with it peacefully.

SSP: In your website, you say that you missed the world of academia.



Are you glad to be back teaching?

AMA: I am glad to be back teaching but I'm doing the usual dance in terms of finding time for everything: home life, writing life, teaching life. At the same time, I know how very lucky I am to have a life so rich that it contains all three. What a terrible thing, to sit home, being bored! Sometimes I wish the balance were better, but at least I'm not one of those people living my life in front of the TV.

SSP: Speaking of teaching, what are the biggest mistakes that your creative writing students make? What would be the best advice you could give them?

AMA: The biggest mistake my creative writing students make is thinking that they are too busy to write, that somehow, after graduation, things are going to be different. This isn't the case. Life will always interfere, and the older you get, the more complicated things are. If you want to write, make time for it now. Take advantage of the academic environment, your teachers and your classes and your peers. If you get overwhelmed by feedback on your work, just listen to whatever comments help you write the kind of story you yourself would like to read.

If I Have Not Jessie

James Kimbrell

"When I was a child, I talked like a child."

-- I Corinthians 13:11

If I vibrato in the tongue of angels and crows, but have not Jessie, what am I but an idiot crooning into a hairbrush microphone, or that jerk that lives upstairs and does nada but beat up the bongos while his woman slings eggs and hash all day because who wouldn't rather cut toast into perfectly even & buttery triangles in some armpit of a breakfast café than to hear the cosmic rhythms of his unemployed man fire, spirit thump of his sanctimonious dude aura? If I have certain paranormal gifts, as in my flair for sniffing out the right drive-through five minutes before closing, thereby scoring abundant fried chicken and dinner roles for a fraction of the common cost, or if I'm having yet another mind-popping invention idea—the guitar boat-paddle, automatic defrost for ice cube trays, skin-colored eyeglasses—or if I hybridize a tree that blossoms Dixie Beer and gold doubloons every Fat Tuesday, but have not Jessie, I am nil. I would not even go to Mardi Gras. No King Cake. No moon pie. No boobs of all nations worth lobbing beads for. Or if I perfume the entry blanks for every junk mail sweepstake, offer my credit card to each online survey, but have not Jessie, I win squat.

Jessie is so hot, if she was a dentist, I would fill a sock with sugar and chew on it all summer so I could lay on my back and stare at her chin, watch her eyes dart toward cavities that I'll never see, and when the gas kicks in, I would build my nest inside her hula-hoop earring and sing so that only she could pick-up what to everyone else would rise like the dog-whistle shriek of a half-fried hearing aid.

Not for all the go-go dancers in Texas would I



give up Jessie. She is twice what a regular cowboy could bare. White leather boots up to her knees, tassels spinning from her buttons and chaps—there would definitely have to be a law against Jessie. She puts the "fast" in steadfast, the "doll" in dollar, the "us"in gorgeous, the "om" in home, the "id" in fidelity, the "yow" in YOwwww!

Jessie is sweet,

and when we sleep, her feet keep my feet warm; my snoring does not bother her much, nor does she hog the covers. She isn't jealous of her sister who has perfect eyebrows and married an ear, nose, and throat specialist from Belize. And in the hot-dog light of last Friday night, when we drove to the bookstore and she stood reading in front of the wall-sized map, her strong and delicious fingers tapping the spine of some lucky book, she didn't seem overly proud when I noted that her legs were long as the eastern seaboard. No! She strode across America to the coffee counter and ordered me a mocha froth!

Jessie never fails. When she

steals my Foreigner "Double Vision" shirt, she washes it before I can steal it back, and when I unfold it I breathe deep her secret detergent, Tide, though it smells like everything sweet that I remember about childhood, honeysuckles and mint and cinnamon and the same softener sheet used in the dryer of Ms. Hotchstedder down the street when I was twelve and whose yard I would mow each week for ten bucks.

How could I have known?

If I had prophesied back then that I'd find Jessie, I would've fidgeted like a blind man brushing off fire ants. What good would the tea leaves or hen guts that deliver such predictions have been for me? For tea leaves say most of all that your cup is now empty, and who wants to stand in the backyard with half a hand up a hen's ass?

But when Jessie arrived

in the stall next to mine at the Sonic drive-in, and her speaker was out of order and I hollered through the window for her to just tell me her order and I would say the magic words into my own perfectly functioning speaker, my future was like an old hotel walloped by a wrecking ball

and from that brick dust and mouse crap there bloomed her eyes like green emeralds.

Oh when I was a hound dog, I talked hound dog, my every other thought was hey-baby this and looking-tight that, shake it but don't break it, took baby Jesus too long to make it. I mean I have smacked cars into light poles at high noon while gawking at some cut-offs and a halter top wearing stranger gracing the sidewalk with her sexy groceries and infant stroller. All because I reasoned like a hound dog. Minus the heart's calculator. Testicular calculus. Mr. Penis Logic. I was like a lost man at an intersection where some punks stole all four signs, and I with no side, no rear-view mirror. Now I see Jessie on every road that adds up to my address, my vision corrected, my glasses the sum of all prescriptions, even as I'm seen full-on for the Jessie's banana nut bread loving slob that I am.

And now these three remain. Regret: for the women I ever wronged, even the one who slung a set of bocce balls through my kitchen window during the last minute of the Saints almost winning on a warm October Monday night. Hope: that I may rise to Jessie's standards, that my belly might not become a water balloon refilled with Pabst; that my hair might not thin overly much, thus revealing my own grandfather's weirdly dented knob head, that my eyes might home like pigeons back to Jessie's ruby lips, and not upon the pheromone fabricating Aqua-net up-do of some wayward jukebox punching Jessie wanna-be. Regret, hope, and Jessie. But the greatest of these is Jessie.

Pantano's Florida Flash with Virgil Suárez

Daniele Pantano

1) Why Florida?

Because no other place would do. It was love at first sight for me and Florida. I arrived in Miami in the Fall of 1972, and then my parents moved to Los Angeles and broke my heart. I longed for Florida all during my youth, and then when I graduated from graduate school, I returned. Florida is my psyche barometer, which is always out of whack, and I love it for the strangeness and the beauty of its waters. Florida (and Miami more specifically) is where one day I will sleep with the fishes.

2) Your best-kept Florida secret?

It has to be HWY 27. I ride my motorcycle up and down at least four times a year. From North Florida to Miami, all the way down to where my mother lives in Hialeah. It's a gorgeous main artery for the State. I love the way it runs down through the little forgotten towns. I love the bears and gators and wild boars crossing the highway in the fog of morning. HWY 27 is my favorite Blue Highway in the United States.

3) Your strangest Florida?

Has to be coming into Miami on a plane over the Everglades, all that patchy greenery and then the onyx smooth darkness of the water. There's something enchanting about it. How deep? How long before you disappeared forever. The Everglades is magical and beautiful, and hopefully everlasting.

4) Your silence before the storm?

Oh no, never silence before any storm. My wife and I throw hurricane parties for family and friends. We've had a few scary moments, but nothing that we have not been able to survive with a great deal of humor and lots of Gumbo. I love storms, they take me back to Cuba and my childhood. A good storm is only the dead speaking back to us.

5) Your six-word Florida memoir?

I arrived, live it, love it!

This interview was conducted on 8 October 2010 via email.

Veracity of Knowledge

Angela Masterson Jones

In the fogged lisp of morning before a booming sun has its say, a spray of cloud-white ibis strut and peck their grassy way to gray.

Satan's Fear of Mayors: An Interview with John Brandon

John Henry Fleming

Daniel Handler wrote in the New York Times Book Review, "With Citrus County John Brandon joins the ranks of writers like Denis Johnson, Joy Williams, Mary Robison and Tom Drury, writers whose wild flights feel more likely than a heap of what we've come to expect from literature, by calmly reminding us that the world is far more startling than most fiction is." Brandon, raised on the Gulf Coast of Florida, took a break from receiving similar accolades to speak with Saw Palm's



advisory editor, John Henry Fleming. In addition to *Citrus County*, he has written the novel *Arkansas*. He now lives in Oxford, Mississippi, where he teaches at Ole Miss and writes a weekly blog for GQ.com concerning Southeastern Conference football—at least during the season he does.

Note: This interview was conducted on the otherwise empty bleachers of a New Port Richey high school during after-school football practice.

JHF: This guy number 65 doesn't even have a receiver's number and they keep throwing the ball to him. He drops it every time. What do you think is going on?

JB: He's the coach's kid. He's not big enough to block anybody. It's like he doesn't have fingers or something.

JHF: You grew up here in New Port Richey. Is there something unique about Florida that could produce a kid like Toby [from *Citrus County*]?

JB: It's not unique, but that part of Florida--the Nature Coast, they call it--has a lack of identity that can leave kids a bit lost. It's sort of rural, with all the disadvantages of rural places, but then it's not wholesome. There's no wholesome farming culture and lots of the people are transplants. Likes and dislikes are unfocused. There aren't even tourists to hate. There's just not much there that might orient a kid's soul. There's church, but church isn't for everyone. The native Southern folks, some of them rednecks, don't seem refreshing and full of common wisdom as much as seeming like they've missed out on something, that they haven't gotten an important newsletter. In the Kentucky hills, hill people make sense. In flat Florida, they seem like a bad theater production. And the retirees in Hernando and Citrus and even Pasco aren't the good ones. The good retirees, the ones from Minneapolis or Kansas City, they all end up south of Tampa. The Jews go to the East Coast. There are a bunch of accents in Northwest Central Florida and none of them are comforting. That said, I guess Toby has more fundamental problems than where he happens to live.

JHF: In the opening pages, Toby resembles an old-school antihero, the outsider who will tell the truth and take shit from no one. Even his meanness to the kid outside the taco shop is excused because, as Toby says, the kid will one day "make one heck of a hall monitor." The kid's a stand-in for rule enforcers everywhere. Shelby seems attracted to this antihero image of Toby. Mr. Hibma is also drawn to him. The reader's inclined to give Toby the benefit of the doubt until he does the inexcusable. As you wrote Citrus County, were you interested in exploring the fuzzy territory between sociopath and antihero?

JB: I never had to think about Toby being an antihero. He just always was one. For me, those sorts of character labels fall away once I'm in the heat of the narrative. What I was conscious of was giving the reader the choice of feeling sorry for Toby or not. I didn't want to force it on them. Some people feel for him and some just hate him. I wrote a story

a few years ago in which the main character was a version of Toby that used his powers for good. I enjoyed the kid but I wanted to write a bad version of him. The do-gooder Toby probably wouldn't have been interesting to me for a couple hundred pages.

Most of the kids at Citrus Middle give Toby a wide berth, but Shelby is intrigued by him because he seems to be playing a different game than the other students. He seems to have his own troubles and goals. He's mysterious, I guess. When they meet, Shelby is light and Toby dark, but somewhere along the line they switch, Toby wanting to be normal and Shelby acting out—at some point Shelby is dark and Toby light. They can't get what they want out of each other.

JHF: You mentioned that you didn't know Citrus County all that well but used to drive through it on your way to and from Gainesville. That experience of driving through a place—you're not even a tourist, just a bored traveler—can open up the imagination, I think. Do you find it easier to write about such a place—a drive-through place—than the place you live or know well?

IB: I feel like the less I know for sure, the more elbow-room my imagination has. I don't think just because you happened to grow up somewhere is always a compelling reason to write about that place. For me, the place has to excite my curiosity. I'm not a big fan of writing what you know. Maybe I prefer writing what I want to know. Citrus County isn't all that far from Pasco County, but it's quite different. Citrus County, FL and the state of Arkansas had something in common, to me. They were both places that were hard to figure out. When you drive through them you have no idea what's going on off the main roads. That's what it is in Citrus County--those straight, shadowy, hard-packed dirt roads that shoot off from 19. There's a fear that creeps into you, that can make you a not-bored traveler in a hurry, that comes from not knowing what to be afraid of but suspecting there must be something menacing nearby. That type of fear is more intriguing than being afraid of the suburbs because they're dull or afraid of the ghetto because you might get shot or afraid of the ocean because you might drown.

You need a place that interests you enough to get started writing, and

then you can do whatever you want to it. Like I tell students, your responsibility is to your book, not to the chamber of commerce.

JHF: Do you avoid researching your settings for this reason? And do you consciously choose lesser-known settings that you can shape to your own ends?

JB: I stay away from research as much as I can, partly because I'm bad at it and lazy, but at times it cannot be avoided. I never find anything interesting. Everybody else does, I don't. I'm thinking of writing a book set just after the Civil War, and that sort of thing is pretty much impossible to do without research. Anything present day, I'd prefer to just have the vibe of the place and a couple searing characteristics. But there's a higher thing than setting, which for lack of a righter word I'll call atmosphere, and atmosphere is the domain of well-imagined places rather than accurately rendered places. Someone who read Arkansas told me, "Sorry, bub, but there aren't no hills in Pine Bluff." My reaction to that: In my book there are, because there was a scene in which I needed hills and that scene took place in Pine Bluff. Maybe that's the advantage of lesser known places; not that many people are from Pine Bluff so not many people know there aren't no hills there. Sooner or later I'll write something set in a big city, just like sooner or later I'll do mentionable research. There has to be something about each book that's new, a new challenge. Libraries. Urban Centers.

And anyway, if there's a bluff achieved, the place can't be totally flat. Right?

JHF: I like this idea of the well-imagined place. Some writers use research or firsthand knowledge to stake their claim on a place. Others, like you, seem to rely primarily on the imagination. If we can get crafty for a minute, do you use any techniques when you write to help you inhabit a setting?

JB: I don't think more detail is always better. You want the details that do work for you and then you want all the details working under a common program, as far as the tone they set. That's the ideal. I try to take something familiar and alter it a bit so it seems noteworthy, or there's something unfamiliar and I'll repeat it enough that it seems

commonplace. Something I learned from writers like Joy Williams is to pair the concrete and the poetic. That's a useful technique for settingyou state something plainly, a physical fact, unadorned, and then follow it with something fanciful that casts a shadow back onto it. A menacing shadow or one that brings relief, depending. In all aspects of fiction, I think it's good to mix the easily-swallowed with the outlandish, the everyday and the oddball. It's one way to conjure the feel of real life. One of many, I'm sure.

JHF: And is there a specific image or set of images you recalled from your drive-throughs that guided you as wrote Citrus County?

JB: What I could never escape were the strip malls and the way the woods around there are marbled wet and dry. None of the woods are what you want woods to be; they're either dusty and sandy and buggy, or a buggy swamp. And those town names on the Nature Coast are also terrific. Red Level. Inglis, which I don't know how to pronounce. Weeki Wachee. Centipede Bay. Beverly Hills, for crying out loud. Yankeetown, for crying out louder.

JHF: Inglis is the town that banned Satan by mayoral decree, by the way.

JB: That's convenient, because in the Bible it says that the only mortals Satan fears are small town mayors.

JHF: And Yankeetown is still haunted by Elvis—he filmed *Follow That Dream* there.

JB: That raises hundreds of questions.

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JHF: Look, they've given 65 a glove—just one. He looks like an overinflated Michael Jackson doll lining up in the receiver's slot.

JB: Budget cuts. One pair of gloves for two receivers. I'm hearing "Beat It" in my head, like the offense and defense are going to break into a dance-off.

JHF: Are there any questions you'd like to ask yourself?

JB: Yes. "What are you working on now?" That way I can get a little early plug in.

JHF: You're in the process of editing a novel set in New Mexico, still without title. You're with *McSweeney's* again. You can guarantee a barn will be burned, a coma, and lots of music.

JB: All true.

JHF: Is there a list of anything you'd like to have us publish?

JB: Places I've lost glasses:

- -- Tangier Island, Virginia
- --Charlottesville, Virginia
- --Nashville, Tennessee
- --Sanibel Island, Florida
- --Palm Island, Florida
- --Ireland
- --New Orleans, Louisiana

This isn't interesting in any way. It just goes to show that my eyes aren't all that bad.

JHF: I've lost wallets in a couple of these places, but, in New Orleans, at least, that's expected. Would you like to plug any writers or works of fiction that you feel don't get the attention they deserve?

JB: I'll give a list of books rather than authors. And maybe some of these do get the attention they deserve; they could still use more.

- -- The End of Vandalism by Tom Drury
- -- The Sharpshooter Blues by Lewis Nordan
- -- A Woman Named Drown by Padgett Powell
- --God's Country by Percival Everett
- -- Taking Care by Joy Williams

JHF: Can you tell us a little about the origins of "Further Joy," which

appears in this issue of Saw Palm?

JB: I've been interested lately in plural POV, in 3rd person and 1st person plural. 'They' is more authoritative than 'she.' It's got the sound of legend to it. And there's something creepy about groups of people who all believe the same things. The uniformity, you know, it's eerie. In "Further Joy," the girls are mostly hopeful and reasonable, and the fathers are hopeless but also reasonable—to me, at least. The girls are happy enough that I didn't feel like their half ought to have paragraphs, whereas the fathers wanted that bit of consideration, of gravity. I wanted it to be a bunch of light-seeming details that add up to a heavy whole. I guess some of the details are heavy on their own.

I wrote this while my wife was pregnant with our first child and we didn't know if it would be a boy or girl, so...

JHF: And the verdict is...?

JB: Boy. Name of Charlie. I've got him pegged for a blocking tight end.

JHF: Congratulations. After watching this practice, how would you assess the team's chances this season?

JB: Pray for rain, that's how.

JHF: 65 finally caught one, anyway. Listen, thanks for coming out.

JB: I'm glad he caught one before it was time to go. I feel better about things.

Further Joy

John Brandon

One girl locked her bedroom door after soccer games-the lost breath and slick tanned limbs, the push of opposition, the spiked shoes. One girl came within a week of perfect attendance and then to avoid recognition stayed home from school doing nothing, lonesome, nibbling pastries and watching old high school movies full of outdated, luxurious clichés. One of the girls' fathers owned a fast food joint that did wine pairings. One of the girls' fathers did not trust his documents in the trash, even if shredded, and he saved them all up and conducted a backyard fire every few months, no matter how steamy the weather. The neighbors would complain but by the time someone from the county appeared, the fire would be over, the sky hazed with secret finances. The girls noticed that their fathers did not pursue women but instead waited for women to pursue them, and the girls wondered if when their fathers had been young this had been the custom. They prayed this custom did not return. A few of the girls enjoyed the zoo, but they didn't go there together. The zoo required a bus ride. The zoo was a place to be alone and not feel lonely. The girls did not imagine themselves old like their fathers; they imagined themselves as young adults in unknown gray cities, wearing coats that swallowed them up and coats snug to their figures, living in spare apartments nestled unknown distances above unknown streets. They imagined young men, middle class and willing to do enough to stay that way. The girls were of many minds concerning bangs. One of them locked her bedroom door after long days at the beach-the thirst, the baking limbs, the feet. The girls had what they considered a common-sense policy regarding marijuana: They would not purchase it but would accept it for free from people they knew, and only if another of the girls was present. The girls were fifteen. They went to a brand new high school where nothing was decided. They lived in the middle class section of a town known for wealth and their fathers knew what the wealthy liked to eat. The girls knew that their soccer coach was gay and resolved to keep his secret. He wore sunglasses and polo shirts like everyone else and spoke like everyone else, but the girls knew. There was no charge in the air, no slight tension. At the end of practice

when they got down to sports bras and chugged near the cooler, spilling down their fronts, he could look at them with casual eyes and speak to them and they felt no need to pose their limbs. One of the girls' fathers owned a bunch of stands that served homemade popsicles in outlandish flavors. Popcorn. Duck. The girls had little preference where they went to college. They would move away from home, but were not in a big rush about it. The girls hated to be asked what their talents were, their interests, their strong points; they found their shortcomings more engaging. The girls had at one time or another boycotted war movies, celebrity perfumes, the Internet, bikinis, crab cakes. They had attempted to get a number of expressions to catch on, until they boycotted new expressions. One of the girls' fathers owned a restaurant named 6TABLE that served six parties per night, Thursday through Sunday. The menu often featured testicle. For a time, this girl had waited tables. One evening a lady had raised her voice at the girl and slammed down her glass and the girl's father had thrown the lady out. Like all who ate there, the lady was rich and bored and so she had dedicated herself to making trouble for the restaurant. Reviews soured, the inspector appeared repeatedly, an annual gala turned elsewhere for its catering needs. Eventually, and not because her father asked her to, the girl wrote a letter apologizing to the lady, and then showed up at her home and apologized in person. It was hard to know what to apologize for, but the girl managed, leaning on the concept that the customer was always right. Boredom was the woman's problem, the girl knew, not wealth. The poor grew bored too, and did terrible things. Even so, now the girl held ill will toward the wealthy. She wished them harm. The girl was ashamed to feel this way. The rich girls at school, sometimes she hoped their fathers would perish in plane crashes. She'd never thought anything like that before. When she was younger and used to hang out in the kitchen of the restaurant she used to switch the regular coffee and the decaf, but that was wholesome mischief. None of the girls would run for a student government office. They didn't despise student government as some did, but the idea of losing an election was frightening. They were thought of as free spirits and could do most anything, most anything—they couldn't run for treasurer and lose. They couldn't run for vice president of the student council and make posters and distribute lollipops and give speeches and then fail to win the election and not reasonably expect to lose something in the eyes of the rest of the school. One of the girls, cold turkey, stopped locking her bedroom door. She wanted to save it all up, the thrill, bottle it. She didn't know if it worked this way, but maybe it did. One of the girls had once hated her freckles, and now was proud of them. She relished sitting under her parasol at the beach. It was glamorous, not being tan. It was original. She could wear black. She could blush and bruise. The girls' fathers had stopped giving them actual gifts on their birthdays. Instead, the father would take the girl and all the girl's friends to dinner. The girls missed the wrapped physical objects. They missed imagining their fathers wracking their brains, bumbling from store to store, asking advice. The girls sometimes stayed up all Friday night making bracelets and then sold the bracelets the next day at the craft market. They were often given a stand next to a bunch of country boys who sold jerky. The boys were from out in the swamps but did not seem poor. They were cocky in a way that was fun rather than despicable. The girls could hardly understand their accents but they could talk about anything—hot rod engines, the local tax system, the nation of Denmark. If these boys pressed hard enough they could get somewhere with the girls, but these boys didn't press. These boys took it as it came. They were like the girls' fathers. Returning home from the craft market the girls would find themselves full of a diffuse, pulsing frustration. The girls' fathers claimed to loathe clutter, but they kept all the girls' old papers and prizes. Their fathers, the girls noticed, never entered the girls' bedrooms. The girls would come up the hallway and catch their fathers peering in if the door had been left open, looking skeptical yet awestruck, like nonbelievers peeking into a dim cathedral. One of the girls had been mildly fondled by a shoe salesman. No more than three years separated the girl and the shoe salesman, yet he'd been a different element. He had veined forearms and jaw muscles and an accent that didn't come from the swamps but from some other place the girl would never go. He stopped talking. The girl was the only customer in the store and had gotten her hair cut that day and had gotten a pedicure. The shoe salesman had taken her bare feet in his hands in a way that was gentle but certain. The shoes sat in their box, impartial. He was only touching her ankles and toes, looking into her eyes, knowing all he needed back from her was nothing. And she gave it—a flat look, empty of protest. They felt like someone else's feet; they felt like the feet of a beautiful woman who would never run out of stunts to pull. He let one of his hands wander quick to her hip and then the other hand, on the other leg. When he

had an equal grip, dug in close to the bone, the girl knew she wasn't her own. When his fingertips ventured under the elastic of her underwear, she heard herself gasp. A thin old lady came in then, toting a pert baggie that probably contained new sunglasses. The girl knew that if her father ever found out, he would hurt the shoe salesman. The shoe salesman was basically a man, but not like her father was a man. The shoe salesman didn't have a daughter. The girl would never have been able to explain to her father that nothing had really happened and that if it did she'd wanted it to. That wouldn't be important. It would be between the two men. Each girl already appreciated her father. Each girl appreciated that her father was soft spoken on the sidelines of soccer fields, that her father allowed her to try anything she wanted and allowed her to guit those things if she wanted and try something else. The very land, the streets of the neighborhood the girls lived in, possessed a flatness that often felt more than merely topographical. The girls recognized their home terrain instantly in photographs and movies. This literal lack of relief added an air of invincibility to the diffuse and pulsing frustration the girls were always falling prey to.

The fathers dressed alike, sport coats and no ties.

One of the fathers followed a Mexican soap opera. The women were huge-eyed and single-minded, and the story would never end. It would outlive the father and maybe even his daughter.

In theory, the fathers wanted for their daughters every enjoyment life could offer.

The fathers did not understand their daughters' fascination with low budget slasher films.

To the fathers' wonder, their daughters drank like 35-year-old women—a glass of wine with dinner, a cold beer at the end of a long hot week. They are whatever was presented, whatever was handy, with equal zest, whether braised veal or a frozen cheese pizza.

The fathers could not discern the status their daughters held amongst their peers. It did not seem to matter that they were not wealthy. It did not seem to matter one way or the other whether they played sports. They were free to earn high grades if they wished. Their daughters were a clique, but unnamed and without purpose. Exclusivity and welcome occurred naturally and were accepted as natural. The fathers knew that the world was getting worse, but when they thought of their daughters it was hard to believe. It seemed nerds

no longer existed as they once had, or sluts. There was peer pressure to do such things as recycle.

Each father understood that he could not tell how physically attractive his daughter was. Each assumed his daughter was beautiful because she looked similar to the other girls she hung around with, who were without doubt beautiful.

The fathers did not pal around with one another.

One of the fathers' daughters had a suitor, a white boy named Tyrone. The father did not know if the boy's parents had named him for a joke or a statement. He didn't know where the name Tyrone came from, originally.

One of the fathers was in debt. He'd sold his crepe shop but no one knew for how little. He'd gone into debt to open the place, and then sold it at a loss. Now he cooked at an upscale breakfast place, folding up fancy omelets. He didn't know what people thought—that he'd gotten weary of the responsibility of owning, that he wanted to stay in shape in the kitchen. He hadn't allowed his daughter to notice he was broke. He took her out for sushi and then alone he ate peanut butter sandwiches. He had begun rooting against his daughter's grades. He hoped she didn't get into a prestigious school. He had found himself, in conversations with her, devaluing the importance of scholastic achievement and talking up visceral, hands-on experience. He had sold things out of the back of his garage, exercise equipment and a beat-up grandfather clock. He had sold his good bottles of California red. He had never decided what occasions might prompt him to uncork the wines, and now he'd never get to decide. His daughter was the smartest of the girls. She was a math whiz and an uncanny judge of character. He could not stand the thought of her being disappointed in him.

One of the fathers' daughters had tested out of foreign language classes at the high school. She and her father had hosted a girl from Zimbabwe for several summers and the daughter had picked up enough of some African dialect. The school wasn't allowed to discriminate. They had to bring in an expert from a university to test her. She was fond of an expression that went, "You whom marriage has favored, Your pots too may crack."

When the girls went out, the fathers were quiet in their empty homes.

One of the fathers, years ago, had bought his daughter a boxy

antique camera. Later he found it in a spare room and tracked down film for it on the computer and he took pictures of the stagnant canals that snaked through their part of town. He tried to catch the canals at low tide, when clans of exposed crabs lined the oyster beds.

The fathers depended on their daughters to keep them in the correct shoes.

The fathers encouraged their daughters to participate in team sports, but did not hope for them to perform particularly well.

The fathers were aware of how far things were going. Girls were paying plastic surgeons to give them scars, to make them look interesting. A girl at the high school had flown to Venezuela and gotten her toes reconstructed because she feared they were not cute.

One of the fathers hired an escort every few months, a general reward. The older his daughter got, the less purely he was able to enjoy this practice.

The era the girls were growing up in had no texture. The music betrayed nothing. The generation preceding the fathers had been wild, and the fathers themselves had been jaded, but the girls were past all that. Jadedness, to them, was implied. Wildness was stale. There were no trends. Everything was a trend. Some trends lasted two hundred years and some didn't hold on for a semester.

It crossed the mind of one of the fathers, whenever he brought a date by the house, that he wanted his daughter to feel jealous of the woman.

One of the fathers already thought of the afternoon his daughter's braces had been removed as the moment he'd lost her.

Before their daughters had come along the fathers had thought of themselves as overqualified for life.

One of the fathers wished he could work on cars. He wished he could prop his hood in the driveway and hang that competent and hopeful lantern from the underside of the hood and straighten up to his full height while wiping his hands on a torn green rag, and men like himself, driving by on the street, would notice him and feel lost.

One of the fathers thought of one of his daughter's friends while he lay awake at night. He thought of her during slow moments in the day, but in the day he only felt fond of the way she looked and spoke, while at night it was something worse. He didn't think in terms of being in love. He had, apparently, been in love twice before. He knew there was no distinct advantage, when smitten, to doing something

about it. There were numerous disadvantages. The father had never been addicted to anything, had never been unable to control himself. He would weather this, just another sorrowful secret. In so many ways, he was incomprehensibly lucky. His daughter was lucky. Her friend, with her feline face and shabby fingernails, was lucky – lucky to be desired by a man who would not act on his desire. When the father picked all the girls up from somewhere in his restored classic Jeep, he hoped the girl he loved would sit in the passenger seat. He had no way to encourage this. When it happened, when she hopped up beside him and the rest piled in back, he felt overcome, dizzy, like he'd eaten too much rich food. Her teeth were gleaming and slightly crooked and her skin looked like that of a rotting peach. On the inside of her ankle, a pale beauty mark in the shape of a tropical fish. Her tummy sometimes showed. The soft depressions behind her ears. She regarded the father with formality yet comfort. She could never understand him, yet she trusted him. When she was in the front seat she didn't lean back into the others to join the gabbing. She listened, an amused outsider, same as the father. He wondered what she would do if she ever noticed how he looked at her, but she would never notice. Or she already had. This was the father's problem alone, not the girl's. It was best to keep his visions plain and present, but the nights were long and soundless and he would imagine the two of them living on a ranch with meadows or living in Central America, local children running into town to fetch them produce and rum. He imagined teaching the girl how to cook, even bickering with her. He imagined her coming down with a swift and exotic illness, and nursing her back to health, restoring the gold color to her limbs. He even allowed himself to imagine the fallout. His own daughter's injury. The other father's rage. But nothing was going to happen. He was unfamiliar with that abandon that caused people, helped people, to commit murder or rape or break into houses over a fix, that ended gamblers up homeless, that caused old ladies to hoard knickknacks until their houses were condemned, that turned the upbeat chubby into the grotesque obese who couldn't leave their apartments, that got men fired from office jobs over the contents of their hard drives. No, his mind was like his lawn; he let it grow unruly only for the neat joy of trudging out into the heat and mowing and clipping and raking. He had seen the girl in sundresses. He had seen her in men's-style pajamas. He had seen her in a soccer uniform. He had seen her in a thin, stiff coat and soft hat. He had seen her in a

faded clay-colored towel the same shade as her skin. He had seen her in a ball gown and in a middle school graduation gown. He had seen her in a beat-up sweatshirt, eager to paint houses for the poor. He had seen her in sneakers and a tennis skirt.

The fathers knew it was important to have meals with their daughters. For one, breakfast was convenient. For another, dinner. One of the fathers regularly picked his daughter up from school and took her for salads in the quaint town center of their neighborhood. One of the fathers was only free on Sundays and he took his daughter to brunch on the water, and he always felt, sitting there just the two of them in the midst of so many hungover, sated couples and sprawling wedding parties, oysters and champagne everywhere, that something was not quite natural about he and his daughter lingering over this sunny midmorning luxury, like he was in a foreign country or a television commercial.

The fathers imagined themselves at fifteen, inept and unformed. Yet they'd had their victories, few but glorious, and their secret sorrows.

Everglades Entry

Mark DeCarteret

Here amidst the sutured mangrove where even the sunlight has dreamt of being something less decisive in the future and the bugs have devoured their own halos we can finally see through our own ears what we once believed with our whole bodies. Hell, who wouldn't rather be figuring in some diamonds, the content of a leathery flask with fingers long-stubbed and tongue flopped over, wouldn't rather their eyes rimmed with red from all the maps and spy-peeping, the promise of untampered with worlds. Yep, it's always someone else's idea of what we're stuck with for paradise. Those questions long put to us by snakes. Even the clouds appear bored by anything white as more cross-eyed fish work their way up through the weak-tea of the lagoon.

If I leave out a towel please exchange it.
For a tree that can only whisper ash
when asked about its razed history
or at the least, a funeral procession of snails.
Now, even more of our words will be rationed,
every syllable twined in the clearing of throat.
Who will construe the rogue warbler's cant
when it offers to swap us its season?
And is there anyone spry enough to pursue it?
When the rains eventually invade,
the bay's surface gently cratered,
even our heirlooms will seem foreign,
the discourse from our hearts
the most sublime mumbo jumbo.

As of yesterday I have nothing to report, not an inlet strung drunkenly with lilies, their throats the whitest-bite of an apple, all turpentine-breathed, or the yawns from a sun-pocked crocodile and its worshippers. With even the top of my mouth burned, my skin interrogated by spider web, to say I have walked amongst like-minded pine in what's perfect panther purlieu is a stretch. Instead I feel spurned, undeterminable, like a blossom that's rooted to air. This past tastes like nothing I've tasted before. Because of this I've left little but letters for those who had thoughts of coming after.



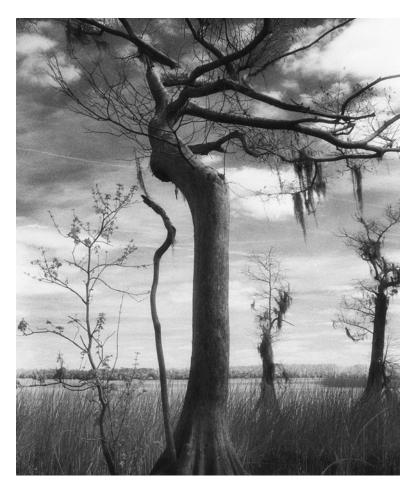
"A Brief Brush with a Thrush" by Hernan Bas



"Hurricane Signal" by Robert Fichter



"Ancestors" by Anita Dallar



"Somber" by Kevin Boldenow



"What Stories Could Be Told" by Dianna Van Horn



"Lines in Skin" by Eleanor Leonne Bennett



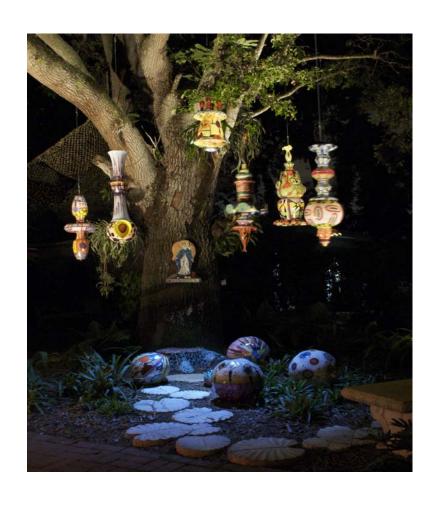
"Get Back Better On" by Eleanor Leonne Bennett



"Se Parece Tanto al Fondo de mi Casa" by Nicolás Leiva



"Serie Alegoria de mi Primavera" by Nicolás Leiva



"Quo Tendas" Patio Installation by Nicolás Leiva



"The Dark and Another's Green I" by Nicolás Leiva



"The Dark and Another's Green II" by Nicolás Leiva

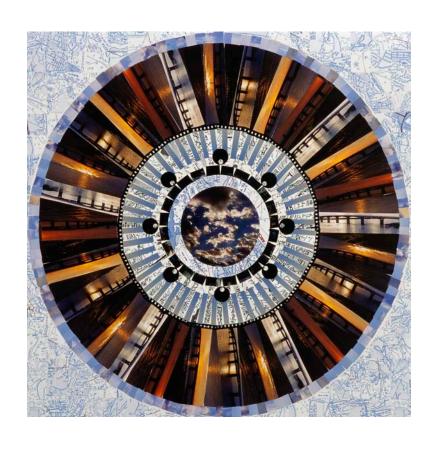


"Ring Tree" by Nicolás Leiva



"Two Tutus Gray" by Clyde Robinson





"Anchorage" by Meg Pierce



"Styx" by Gary Borse

Interlude: His House

Joann Gardner

A basket of mung beans putting forth shoots, breathing on their own in the locked container.

Ripe tomatoes on a sill, hefty, firm, and the knife slices through them like paper.

An old bicycle in the hall, disassembled, dusty, tires flat, rims rusty.

Lifting a bicycle over the stile on a path after someone you've believed in, something you need,

like sunshine, like green, trying to get down to business. As if a voice would call, as if anyone could hear it.

Put a finger on it, the words that warm: he or she returning over the sea to the deaf island.

The Journey

Joann Gardner

River of pain carrying the dead branches of spring snagged on a rock on a heart on a moment of maybe he leaned over the gunwale moving south into a tropical wilderness looking for relief for a reason to continue life (assuage me)

Stare into brown water consider a future personal or otherwise a word to remember or forget eel grass the graves of other steamers. Wooden heart dredge it up the slow work of barges and cranes the canal sound

of chains moving through a winch grinding cotton stacked to the beams of warehouses wide oak airy commerce canvas-bound and caked

How he awoke to a silence layer of fog hanging low on the water then in the distance the sound of an engine cranking dead battery no start and then from the other direction another engine trying to spark Alligators

calling out in the blank their fiery eyes and slow desires suspended in the wet muck

The Fluid Pen: An Interview with Lola Haskins

Melissa Carroll

In a word, Lola Haskins' body of work is impressive: Her ninth book of poems Still, the Mountain has just been published by Paper Kite Press and her prose includes Fifteen Florida Cemeteries: Strange Tales Unearthed from University Press of Florida. (Selections from both of these books are featured in this issue of Saw Palm.) Her in-print collections include Desire Lines. New and Selected Poems (BOA Editions, 2004), Extranjera (Story Line, 1998) and The Rim Benders (Anhinga, 2001). She has also published a guide for people interested in poetry, Not Feathers Yet: A Beginner's Guide to the Poetic Life (Backwaters,



2007). She received the Iowa Poetry Prize and has twice won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, among many other awards. A Florida resident and nature lover, Ms. Haskins' essays and poetry have been published in *Wild Heart of Florida* (University Press of Florida, proceeds to Nature Conservancy) and *Book of the Everglades* (Milkweed), among others. She teaches at Pacific Lutheran University's low-residency MFA program.

In a few more words, Lola Haskins' writing is elegant and complex with a precision in language that resonates with readers long after they've put her work down. The magnetism she creates on

the page signifies that she is not only an extraordinary writer, but an extraordinary person who listens for the meaning in what goes unsaid and sees beyond things as they appear.

MC: Much of your writing is a dialogue with the natural world. How does Florida's unique landscape and culture shape your creative work?

LH: The landscape here arouses the kind of passion in me that poetry does. For years, I wrote very little directly about it, but more and more it's become important to me to put words to what I feel when I'm kayaking in a river where the dip of my paddle is the loudest sound.

MC: In your latest collection *Still, the Mountain* most of the poems were previously published and not originally written for this book, yet as the Author's Note explains, "They're together now because the mountain has made them want to know each other." Can you explain the process of creating this book, in essence building the mountain, or did the mountain always exist?

LH: I didn't know until I started putting the book together where it was going. But it went unusually smoothly so I knew it had wanted to be that way from the beginning. What happened was, I think, that I've reached the time in my life when I'm ready to see the mountain. Before, I'd probably not have been willing to admit it was there. Or maybe I'd looked at it so long that I'd stopped seeing it.

MC: Could you discuss this metaphor a bit more, perhaps as it relates to your writing process...or do we just have to go out and read the book to discover it for ourselves?

LH: Well, I was talking about life but, now that you ask, the metaphorical-but-real mountain does apply to my writing process as well because I need to always be working towards something I can't see. If I anticipate the end when I begin, I think what I write wouldn't be true.

MC: As both a poet and prose writer, how do you navigate between both genres in terms of writing process? Do you immerse yourself in one for a while and switch, or is it a more fluid experience?

LH: Writing prose is good because it leaves me starved for poetry so when I get back to it I feel urgent. When I'm stuck in a poem, I go try prose. It's a little like washing your mouth out with sherbet between courses in either case. Poetry, though, is who I am in a way prose isn't, because if I have any skill with words it's being able to get in and out before anyone notices. If I'm writing prose, even I notice.

MC: Many of your poems, as well as your new book of prose about Florida cemeteries (some of which are published in this issue), involve various speakers from distant eras. What intrigues you about embodying these voices? What initially aroused your interest in the cemetery project, and was the research process like?

LH: Embodying the voices lets me live more lives than one. As to the cemetery project, Florida history is so intriguing and so few people know much about it that I thought I could bring it out... and what better way than by using cemeteries which, if you think about it, are vertical cities in that they go back in time. Besides, there are as many stories in a cemetery as there are graves. Imagine!

The research part was different for each cemetery, so it's hard to generalize. Maybe the common thread is lots of reading and at least one attentive visit to each place.

MC: Do you have a particular place in Florida that fascinates, inspires, or perhaps even disturbs you in any profound way?

LH: I find swamps deeply moving. As to being profoundly disturbing, I'd cite southwest Florida where every time I go, big yellow animals are



chewing up and spitting out something else.

MC: Your readings are quite unique in the sense that you don't actually read your poems but perform them from memory. Can you talk a little bit about this style? Has your experience with the performing arts inspired how you share your poetry with audiences?

LH: Actually, it's the other way around. I never had any experience with performing arts, well, other than singing—not especially well—in night clubs, before I started telling my poems. The thing about them is that it's not that I have them memorized, it's that they're in my body. And to me, doing poems is singing, no difference.

MC: Your tenth book of poetry, *The Grace to Leave*, is due out in 2011 from Anhinga Press. Can you give us a glimpse of what this book entails?

LH: You're onto me. All my books have some sort of arc and so does this one. It begins with odes to parts of my body, then moves to the point of where it all has to be left behind. The last line in the book may sum it up—"When something is too beautiful, we do not have the grace to leave."

MC: To finish up, here's the classic question: What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

LH: I have three "advices." First, read all the time. Second, never give up. Elaborating on the second: don't let people who are all talented intimidate you. Just because you may not be skilled now doesn't mean you can't be a wonderful poet. If you care enough and work hard enough for long enough, you can. And third, never write to be praised. Write from inside yourself and let the chips fall.

Burrows

Lola Haskins

Some begin ambitious then abruptly end as though the digger had thought what's the use, and turned to face his life. Some veer from sight, we cannot say how far but a turtle backs down hissing, scuffling the flung sand. Some are owned. The fox who streaks across the road like water shares with no one. But a snake moves into the rabbit's hole, and who will tell him no. We see the signs—the delicate paths of tail, the small heel prints, leading mingled into the dark that can snap a horse's leg. Oh daughter leaving my door your heart thudding like hooves in the moon, watch how you gallop tonight.

In the Adirondack Chair

Lola Haskins

Looking the other way as the pad beside me flutters in the wind, I find I can't tell pages from wings.

Elegy

Lola Haskins

The afternoon is pouring off the trees as the boy drills the soft earth, sinking his finger to the quick, while in the holes his father drops the pink and withered corn. And so down the long rows until the father's hand turns rosy with poison and his son's nails black-rimmed. They cover the last seed and walk together in the humming dusk towards the square of light that blossoms across the field.

- After MacDowell, Forgotten Fairy Tales opus 4, number 4

Upsala Cemetery, Sanford

Lola Haskins



photo by Christine Best

In the late nineteenth century, many Swedes left their impoverished homeland in hopes of finding a better life. Possibly because of the proliferation of "land of opportunity" recruiting information in Sweden at the time, most of them traveled to the United States. In any case, a census taken just

before World War I revealed that one-fifth of all the Swedes in the world were living here.

It's commonplace that there are lots of people of Scandinavian descent in states like Wisconsin and Minnesota. What's not so well known is that, as the migrations went on, significant numbers of Swedes either went directly to central Florida or ended up there.

The first group of immigrants from Sweden settled in the general area in the 1850s, but the bulk of the population came later—beginning in 1871—to work in Henry Sanford's orange groves. Sanford, who had been ambassador to Belgium under President Lincoln, went to Florida in 1870 because he thought there was money in citrus. After looking around, he decided that the central part of the state would be best for his purpose so he bought 12,500 acres on the south side of Lake Monroe. He began by planting an eighty-six-acre grove (named "St. Gertrude" after a thirteenth-century German saint) just west of what is now downtown Sanford. When St. Gertrude's soil turned out to be inhospitable Sanford had the trees moved to another grove, where he'd already installed seven hundred banana trees and four thousand orange seedlings. That grove, "Belair," still exists as an agricultural experiment station. Belair's biggest claim to fame is that its manager,

Carl Vihlen, developed the Valencia, which would become the mainstay of Florida's citrus industry via a strain of orange from an English import called Tardif-Brown's Late.

Sanford started his citrus business by hiring locals. When they turned out to be unreliable, he imported sixty blacks from Madison, in northern Florida. But soon after the new workers arrived, a group of whites armed with shotguns swarmed into the camp where the blacks were housed and drove them away. Whether anyone was killed is a matter of dispute but the incident certainly proved that the two-race solution wasn't going to work.

Sanford then considered importing Chinese labor but decided against it. Finally, an entrepreneur named Wilhelm Henschen, who called himself "doctor" because he had a PhD from Uppsala, persuaded Sanford to try Swedes. Henschen knew central Florida well. He had emigrated there himself, planning to start an agricultural community at Lake Jessup, but his wife rebelled so aggressively at the pioneer life that he moved the family to New York where he worked for a shipping company and started a Swedish language newspaper.

For the recruitment process, Henschen teamed up with his brother Josef, who was then still living in Sweden. The Henschens charged Sanford \$8.75 a head plus expenses. The first group they brought in, some thirty-three people, a few of them children, earned them \$300. The Swedes were allowed into the country under the Contract Labor Law, a federal statute—essentially indentured servitude—that offered immigrants citizenship in return for a full year of work. The idea was that by the end of the year the immigrant would have repaid the cost of his passage and would then be free. But in practice many new Americans ended up working under substandard conditions and for periods considerably longer than a year.

Sanford, though, at least intended to be fair. The agreement he made with his first group of workers was that in return for the year's labor, they would be housed, fed, and their children would be educated. Later, justifiably worried about losing his help, Sanford offered the Swedes five acres if they would promise to stay with him for that many years. Those original land grants were the beginning of the settlement of New Upsala (from "Uppsala," a town in Sweden).

The first recruits came in steerage across the Atlantic. Seasickness was rampant in the unventilated conditions below decks. Even if you weren't sick yourself, the odor from those who were must have been

overwhelming. From New York, the workers-to-be were given deck passage in three stages: to Charleston, to Jacksonville, then up the St. Johns to Mellonville, where they finally arrived, weak-legged, with at most one foot-locker's worth of possessions.

There were glitches with Sanford's handling of this first group. To begin with, the one-room frame structure he'd had built (at a cost of \$300) to house the new workers was so small that about half the floor space originally intended to be divided between men and women ended up mixed-sex. There weren't enough beds either, so many people had to sleep on the floor. Sanford also lacked understanding of the effects of traveling so far and to such a different climate. The Swedes had arrived at the start of summer but instead of giving them time to adjust to their new environment, Sanford put them straight to work. The men were assigned to clearing land while the women cooked, sewed, or did laundry.

It wasn't long before the workers complained that their living conditions violated their contract. Sanford responded by giving them some straw for bedding and some clothing (much of what the immigrants had arrived with was now beyond use and many of them were without adequate shoes). He also offered them credit at his store for tobacco and provisions. But despite the fact that the Swedes' potatoes, beans, rice, and beef (they did their own butchering) were costing Sanford less than \$6 per person per month, he charged them so much that many of this first group were forced to extend their contracts.

Early on, the skilled workers in that first group (most of the men) had complained about being made to clear land, but they were such fast workers that the problem soon took care of itself. In only six weeks, they'd finished that work and were reassigned to projects more suitable to their backgrounds: a store, a hotel, and a church.

By the time a second group of twenty Swedes arrived in November of 1871, life in the groves had settled down. The new arrivals were assigned to a new twenty-by-forty-foot bunk house and after a few days of supervised adjustment, they were given the supplies the first group had been forced to demand.

There was considerable local prejudice against the Swedes. Contrary to the way most of us perceive Scandinavians, one of the complaints most often lodged against the new arrivals was that they were dirty. The main reason the community didn't like the Swedes though—and this should sound familiar—came down to jobs. One

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morning a note appeared on the door of the church under construction threatening to burn the place down if Sanford didn't get rid of the "foreign labor." Happily, the threat turned out to be a bluff. Sanford ignored it and the church, at the time the most elaborate in that part of Florida, was completed without incident.

Though most of the Swedes stayed where they arrived, from the beginning some single men had been running away which, given their indentured status, made them fugitives. By 1872, the Swedish equivalent of the Underground Railroad had grown up to care for the escapees: a safe house in Charleston, followed by spiriting away back to Sweden.

In 1873, Henschen gave seventeen of his workers five acres each in New Upsala, a colony just north of Belair. As time passed, more and more Swedes settled there, and by the late nineteenth century, it had become the largest Swedish settlement in Florida.

Life in New Upsala wasn't physically easy. The weather for most of the year was steamy—not ideal for women dressed in Victorian clothes. The terrain was so wet that a swamp split the settlement in two, upper and lower. Still, for the unassimilated, New Upsala was a comfortable place to be. The grocery store—supplied by a car handhauled by narrow gauge from Sanford—sold such familiar specialties as lutefisk and salt herring. There was a local school where children who spoke Swedish at home were in the majority. For social life, there were two Lutheran churches.

One of the churches was accessible only via a foot-wide board-walk through the swamp, which made attending service a teetery business for ladies who would not think of not wearing long skirts and high-button shoes, not to mention hats susceptible to catching on overhanging branches. Sometimes gentlemen waded alongside them to be sure they didn't fall in. One of those gentlemen, a Mr. Larson, was said to have caught consumption from repeatedly sitting through services with wet feet.

It was whispered about in those days that the boardwalk was haunted since often when the lanterns people carried at night reached a certain point—always the same point—they would flicker and go out. Loud splashing would follow, to the accompaniment of eerie noises. Some ladies would faint under the strain and their gentlemen escorts would be forced to carry them home. A few skeptics suggested that the young men had invented the ghost to soften up their girls so that

when they proposed to them, they'd be accepted, but that uncharitable contention was never substantiated.

In 1894 and 1895, back-to-back freezes dealt a one-two punch to the citrus industry. The first, in December, caused a good deal of damage. Then, in the predawn hours of February 7, just as the groves were beginning to recover, there was a second hard frost. Many of the trees cracked loudly as expanding sap burst their trunks and branches. By morning, virtually none were left alive. Since citrus had supported nearly everyone in New Upsala, all but sixteen families were forced to leave. The churches, now without full-time pastors, cut their Swedishlanguage services to once a month. Happily, within ten years, many of the families that had left returned, and as time went on, other Swedes joined them. By the 1920s, the town had a thriving population of over five hundred.

Among New Upsala's early inhabitants were my ex-husband's grandmother Helen Malm, and her family, which consisted of her parents and eight sisters. Helen, who married the Sanford postmaster, lived on Sanford Avenue in a house whose yard was filled with huge citrus trees planted from seed when she was a young, just married, woman. The last of the Malm sisters, Aunt Alma, was recruited along with other Swedes to work for the telephone company. She worked there all her life, and her daughter after her. Aunt Alma lived in a tiny Cracker house out of town until she died. She was one of the sweetest people I ever met, and despite her numerous privations I never once heard her complain.

Sweden is still a presence in the Sanford area. Although Swedish is no longer spoken in New Upsala and most of the original buildings are gone (with the exception of the Presbyterian church built in 1892, which still stands on the corner of Upsala Road and 25th Street), the many local descendents of those original settlers still dress up at Christmas time to commemorate St. Lucia. The St. Lucia tradition involves the youngest daughter in the house getting up first on Christmas Day. Then, having dressed all in white and put on a crown of candles—these days, they use Christmas lights—she serves her family coffee and sweet rolls. Though it isn't commonly known, a love of strong coffee is as traditionally Swedish as a partiality to lutefisk.

Upsala cemetery is located on twenty-five acres Henry Sanford gave the Swedes to use as a worship center and burial ground. The first church they built there (now gone) was, naturally, Lutheran since Lutheranism is the state religion of Sweden and native-born Swedes may leave the church only by formally disaffiliating. But though services were conducted in Swedish by a Lutheran minister, the original congregation decided not to affiliate with the national organization. Instead it called itself the Scandinavian Society.

The original congregation took back its withdrawal and reaffiliated with the Swedish Lutheran Church in 1892, when some of the younger Swedes left what they saw as their antiquated religion for Presbyterianism. This situation has caused some confusion as to the age of the cemetery. It's been erroneously dated from the beginnings of the Scandinavian Society's formal affiliation with the Lutheran Church. Actually the earliest burial there was in 1831.

It says something about Swedish nature that the young people's departure to Presbyterianism didn't cause a rift in the community. Instead, people in New Upsala would go to both churches, attending the Lutheran service in the morning and the Presbyterian social in the afternoon. And no matter what their affiliation, any local Swedes who died were buried in Upsala, on the land Sanford had donated.

Upsala—announced by a historical marker—lies along Upsala Road just out State Road 46 from Sanford. To get there, you pass a mix of farmland and older houses interspersed with gated communities that look out of place in this rural setting. The church that used to front the cemetery is long gone, and the land is being cleared to make way for its (still Lutheran) replacement. In the course of the land clearing, though some large trees were left, many others were brutally cut, so to get to the cemetery you have to traverse a balding area. You would think all this destruction would have ruined the atmosphere of the cemetery. But you'd be wrong.

The place is a jewel. Because there are still trees and a row of jasmine bushes shielding it from the partially constructed church, it feels so remote that the sight of a truck driving by on the road seems as dissonant as a freighter suddenly looming over the top of a canal embankment. Doves call from the horseshoe of woods of oaks, palmetto, and cabbage palm that cup the grounds on three sides, the way a mother's hand might present water to a thirsty child. Native grasses carpet the area. Appropriate to a place sheltering pioneers and their descendents, there are no grandiose monuments, only simple stones, sometimes only markers left by a funeral home recording births and deaths.

As you come in, there's a small grove, bamboo at the back, fronted by a tall bush with spiky red flowers sheltering a wooden fence with an undated sign that says "Angel Joy, Beloved daughter of Joyce, loving you always." In front of the fence is a lovely, thoughtful planting of bromeliads, several of which were, the day I came, in pale pink bloom. There's also a small statue, almost hidden by jasmine, of twin angels into whose laps flowers have fallen.

The antiseptic beauty of golf-course-quality maintenance seen in other cemeteries is completely absent here. The grounds feel intimate and natural, as if the woods were slowly reclaiming their own. Unswept leaves lie gently on some of the graves. It feels as if people who would come to such a place would come not for pride's sake but simply to kneel and remember.

There are many family plots with names like Lundquist (beginning with John, born in 1885, all the way to the twins Joanne and Gerald born in 1933, who lived no years and nine years, respectively), Erikson, and Bengtson (Christina, born in 1839, Erik, 1836, Elias, 1844, and the last of the Bengtsons, Edward, born in 1881). There are also Tyner (including Leonard in 1906 and his sister Gussie, who followed him four years later, neither of whom reached a second birthday) and Stedt (Carl, b. 1841, and Emma, b. 1871). The Stedts' graves and Frank Erikson's (b. 1848) were originally together, described by a rectangle of iron pipe interspersed with irrigation pockets—they look like stone pots—taken from farms. Similar pockets can be found all around the cemetery.

Some of the graves are so hidden by vegetation that one needs to kneel to see them properly. One of these belongs to Patsy Ann Holloway, b. 1935, who lived only two years. The letters on Patsy's marker are intact but grown over, so you have to find out who she was by using your fingertips—a perfect metaphor for the way we find the past, as if we were in a dark room, descrying its boundaries and stories with our hands. Patsy's parents, Walter and Jossie Holloway, lie nearby, just on the other side of the tree.

Another of the nearly hidden graves is John Borell's, born 1857, died 1943. His wife, Christina, lies in a depression nearby, her place marked only by a funeral home marker under cracked glass now almost impossible to read. Christina, it says, lived ninety years, ten months, and twenty-nine days, a way of marking time usually limited to children, and making her birth date, April 9, 1870, available only

by subtraction. John Borell's grave is concealed differently from little Patsy's. Hers lies under the arch of a large palmetto, his is sheltered by bushes at the foot of a very tall tree that was almost surely not there when John was laid to rest.

A couple of the women in this yard—and probably many more—deserve particular mention: Christina Bengston, for example, came to Florida in the early summer of 1871, part of the first group of Swedes Henry Sanford imported. When the family arrived, she and her husband, Elias, had two small children. Twelve years later, when Elias died, she had ten. Eleven mouths to feed yet she persevered, and did it alone. She must have been a saint. Among Christina's descendents buried here are her daughters, Augusta, who married a Fry, and Matilda, who married a Tyner. Finally, there's Christina's granddaughter Eunice Martin, "Aunt Eunice" to the Swedish community. Eunice was born in New Upsala in 1901 and lived almost 102 years. Late in her life, she joined a social club called the Birthday Girls, made up of direct descendents of New Upsala's early settlers. The activities of the club consisted of periodic gatherings for coffee and sweet treats. At the time the club was founded, almost all its members were in their eighties.

When you visit New Upsala, you will find yourself inadvertently walking over many sleepers under the ground because what you see is far from all there is. Somewhere between twenty and thirty no longer marked graves have been located so far but, considering the population of New Upsala and the fact that almost anyone who died locally was buried here, there must be many more

Before you leave, take a moment to stand in the center of the grounds Sanford gave the Swedes those many years ago and breathe in the peace that surrounds you—the bird that calls somewhere out of sight, the spirits of the people who lived and died on this land, and the spell of Florida: the palm and jasmine and palmetto that outlasted them and will outlast us all.

Floating the Chassahowitzka

Scott Ward

At the Seven Sisters' headwaters, we put in, our slim keel gliding over cypress branches, hunks of sky. We watch the subterranean waters ripple our cumulous faces.

The silence of Baird Creek is architectural. Here the groin of cicadas' huzzing, unraveling seven years' dream, the clerestory of Fish Crow's cawing, like a wood spirit's laughter setting all at naught but joy's deep core.

In stretches the depth gives out, and we haul our canoe by the tow line, our foot soles feeling feathered mortar of sand, accepting no impression of footprint, till the creek widens, the bottom plunges and black water gives back the generous cypress trunks, our paddles sheering off in their reflections. We push off the shoal silent, not to alarm an improbable stack of cooters and spook their hair trigger grips, toppling the ramshackle stack into jackstraw splashes or disturb the heron's godly gaze sounding a depthless sky, his hunger trembling in silt perfections that blossom in satisfied

clouds. Our vessel slides over soporific humps of manatees, benign spirits of the river bottom, over portions of cumulus sky, the simple blue, the same shade we find at the spring's source, water so transparent it might be solid, the small fish trapped in amber. In the picture I took of my sons, they stand in that swath of blue, the three of us housed in a quiet man did not make and cannot mar. My sons are smiling in a dense wood, knee deep in pristine waters, a fine concentric pulsing quickening the woods and sky, erasing their beautiful reflections.

Panhandle Freeze Tag

Scott Ward

We are the children of heat and green sunlight splintered in pine needles, offspring of teenage love cars, of trailer park escapes, audacious prison breaks of the young heart, a Babel and mad kingdom of longing for cruel joys.

Here is a sprinting girl stopped dead in her tracks. Her name was Evelyn and she was blond and tall, the rolling barrage of our laughter throbbing above our heads, poised to crash down like rose petal shrapnel, a church hymn destruction,

a brand of sacrifice, as we weave in and out of the bare knuckled sunlight and fractured pine shadows. Her lip beads with droplets of sweat untasted, and what could be more lovely, more feminine, the pack of us desperate to touch her, running

till our knees are weak with exercise, till we fall together, a casualty sprawl in pine shadows.

Tracy Crimshaw sprints behind me, darling of the snake doctor's scarlet swerve, his feet breathing on straw

as if the wind were dodging

after me. And here is his body revealed in a shivered Nova, baptized in blood and rain, but now he breaks away for Marla Hugh, the delicate girl imprisoned by her mother against all chimeras of death; lithe and quick and happy,

she always sang as she ran, and now she is with me, the sweet shock of her smell, an opiate plunge in my blood as she kisses me on the fifty yard line, night of the senior prom, the both of us washed pale in tracers of moonlight, wrestling

in a Kalashnikov choreography, whispering the promises we learned we must exchange, lozenges of happiness, and she sings the eerie song she sang at freeze tag. For her the law, a partnership in Dallas, a leap from fourteen stories, but here she is frozen

in the pine tinsel menagerie of faces, innocent of elaborate winters, the apple hiding the razorblade, the ball peen hammer of heart break. I am it, my hand a sawed off shotgun blast, always almost touching her heaving back.

Becky's Story

Laura Andrews

"They've been circling like that for nearly an hour now," Sarah said as I rode into the dooryard. She was only twelve. She kept the little ones close to hand on Wednesdays when I rode into town to trade our eggs and whatever vegetables had managed to make it to ripeness before we ate them early. Or the wild things got them.

I'd watched the turkey buzzards flying over the south field all the way down our dusty, dirt drive, so I didn't bother to dismount, just handed her the flour and apples I'd brought. They were last year's and a little soft, but they'd be gone come supper.

"I'll go see," I said.

"What if..."

"It ain't them," I said fierce, so she'd shut up before it came out of her mouth like a curse. I stared her down until she looked instead at the flour and apples in her arms. I leaned into Blue's neck and kicked him hard with my heels so that he bucked sideways and leapt up into his rolling run and we headed into the blue.

Our parents went into the blue five months ago, looking for some cure to Ma's illness, but us older kids, Kelvin and Cole and I, knew it was the radiation, finally caught up to her. We didn't expect her back, but we'd hoped Daddy would find his way home. Kelvin left first, headed towards Jacksonville in search of work or a trade that might tide us over a while longer. But that was near three months ago, and Cole had been gone sixteen days now, leaving us girls to keep the farm running. He just walked off one morning when the kids were screechy and whiny with hunger, and Sarah and he I and were dragging weary.

We were down to nine chickens and one hog.

As I had no idea, really, what to do with the hog, I kept hoping one of the men would come home. I wasn't even particular anymore which one. Just whichever one could slash that hog's throat clean and fast. I couldn't even catch it, so we were pretty much screwed otherwise. Ma had left two books that would help with the processing. If the methods were correct.

Blue broke from his gallop to a trot just as I burst into tears, my face flushing hot and my chest close to bursting. It hurt so hard, I jerk-

ed on him, and he stumbled to a stop. I bent over and hugged his neck and cried open-mouthed, gulping air. Blue stood patiently.

Less than two years ago, he'd have sooner dumped me than stand for that. He'd been sassy and full of himself. I'd shown him all over Florida, barrel racing for ribbons and a pat on the back and looking up my pictures online later. Now he was a worn, subdued skeleton and online was so far past, it might as well have never been invented. The fates of my high school friends were mysteries and my family seemed just as determined to disappear one by one.

I sat up and wiped my eyes and looked as far ahead as I could. But I couldn't see further than supper tonight and washing the little kids off with a bit of water heated on the wood stove we were lucky to have. Well, I could see to breakfast, too, and the little sweet corn and flour patties Sarah had learned to make without milk. Milk was scarce. I could get it, but I'd have to sell myself to Nick Larker first.

A gallon every time I'd put out, he'd said, just like that. I had said I'd think about it, ridden down the road, and thrown up out of his sight because I didn't want to offend him. Just in case.

The little ones needed the protein. And the calcium. I didn't know what rickets looked like in particular, but Ma had made it sound lumpy and wrong.

I knew the time would come when my innocence, and my sisters', for that matter, would either be too valuable or too big a threat to our safety to keep, but I planned to hold that fort as long as physically possible. Fucking Cole. Just had to leave us on our own, and took the shotgun to boot.

I tamped that thought down and concentrated on seeing how far I could peer into the blue.

Today it was hovering above the horizon as a miasmic mass of shifting shades. No one knew what it was, exactly, but it blocked the stars at night and the sun was never brighter through it than overcast days used to be before.

We still sunburned, and most plants seem to grow okay, though they were leggier and weaker than before. Nothing was robust, not the crops or the animals, but we were still here and weird as it was, I wasn't interested in moving on. No one knew much about what was happening beyond the county, but the fact that people weren't passing through with news from the outside seemed ominous. Maybe Pa or Kelvin or Cole would convince me otherwise when they came home.

Looking away to my right, I found the buzzards again. They weren't over our property, but over what used to be state land. There wasn't much in the way of shelter, no buildings or sheds, so no squatters bothered to put down there. The nearest water source was back on the other side of our house, so we'd been left pretty much in peace after the first few turbulent months following the blasts, which the adults decided must have been nuclear in nature.

There was no war on American soil, as far as we knew. No government officials had showed up to reassure. No aid agencies. Things just stopped. And after a while no strangers passed through anymore, sick or otherwise. The people who'd stuck it out, like us, either stayed or drifted off, like Kelvin and Cole. At first there'd been rumors. Leave, or you'll fall sick, too. Leave and you'll be shot at the border.

What border? Daddy asked one white-eyed fellow. The one between here and there, he said, and wouldn't say anything else. That night he hung himself in the barn, and Daddy and Kelvin buried him out under the wisteria with our old dog, Shep, and Sarah's guinea pig, and Ma's old mousers.

I picked up Blue's reins and squeezed him up into a trot along the Australian pine windbreak. I could follow it out to the south field. I told myself there wasn't anything to be afraid of under the buzzards' persistent flight path. Probably just a wild thing that had given up its ghost. A raccoon or a boar. Maybe a deer. If it wasn't blown, I could maybe even cut a roast off, or take a haunch.

I pushed Blue away from the woods and took my bearings again before plunging into the thicket at a walk. The state had conserved the land as hard woods, so there were oaks and maple, and wild black walnuts. The walnuts had made our Christmas last year. Sweet and dense, we savored every one.

My heart lurched again, with the fear that it would be just us girls this year.

Blue weaved between the trees and stepped through the sharp, pointy palmetto scrub without much guidance, like he'd been doing it his whole life. I focused on crooked trees and funny colored shrubs ahead of us—keeping us going as straight towards the field as we could.

Midway through, a wild turkey jumped up under Blue's feet. Snorting, he rocked back on his hind end and I slid, my legs dangling off one side of him, hanging on to his mane, until he shook his head and bunny hopped. I thumped him hard as I landed against him and fell. He scooted off, his eye rolling in fear.

"Blue!" I yelled at him.

He stopped about ten feet away, but wouldn't come to me and when I went to him, he backed away. Sighing, I turned myself around, found the tree I'd spotted last and trudged on.

After a minute, I could hear Blue following along behind me, blowing air out of his nostrils at every suspicious crackle in the woods.

Nearing the field, I crept to the edge, trying to stay hidden between the scrub palms in the tree line. The buzzards were still up above and now there were two on the ground. They stalked back and forth, fluttering their wings and rubbernecking at something I couldn't see.

There was movement beyond them and they scrambled up into the air, heavy and ungraceful. A black and white cow lumbered to standing as I watched. A red string of tissue hung from her nether region, and her white was marred with blood. She turned, lowered her head to the ground and started licking at something there. She wore a black halter and the black cotton lead trailed across the long grass.

I held my breath, unable to believe she had just calved, right there, just like that. Blue bumped me in the back with his nose and I clapped my hands over my mouth to keep from screaming. He snuffle-breathed on my neck. I shivered and reached back slow to take a hold on the reins before he decided to leave again.

I eased out into the field and the cow raised her head, marking me. "'s okay, Cow," I said, in the same sing-song voice I used to coax the little kids to sleep at night. "I'm just gonna take a little peek. Shhh."

She lowed, a deep, bawling sound that I knew would carry pretty far through the woods. If I wanted her, I'd better be quick about it. I turned back, tied Blue to the nearest pine, and then walked up to her as smoothly and confidently as I could. She watched me but didn't move away.

The calf was huddled in a ball at her feet, but as I crouched down to look at it, I saw a man lying less than four feet away, face down, dressed only in filthy jeans torn open across one thigh.

His back and upper arms were torn raw, a bloody crisscross of stripes gouged into him. He was dirty and gaunt. He looked dead.

I was too scared to move. The cow swung her head and knocked me over onto my hands and knees. She butted me again, trying to move me away from her baby, which was starting to struggle with itself, its head wobbling on its thin neck, huge, black eyes staring blindly.

I looked up at her. My eyes slid to her flank. The Larker Ranch brand stained her hip, dark as sin. I crawled forward, already knowing, but my heart didn't drop until I flipped Cole over.

His forehead was cut; blood crusted the dark bruising around his eyes and over his cheeks. His nose was broken. His lips swollen and chapped. Massive black and purple and yellow clouds covered his chest, darker bruises peppered his ribs. His wrists were chafed and swollen.

He wasn't dead.

His chest rose and fell.

The cow was licking, licking, licking behind me.

"Cole," I said, afraid to touch him.

Shaking, I reached out and stroked his face. He flinched away, his arm coming up all of two inches to fend me off. I took his hand and leaned over him, feeling stronger.

"Cole," I said again. "It's Becky, Cole."

He stopped, his eyelids fluttering, and squinted up at me. His throat moved, though his lips didn't. He swallowed. I leaned closer. He reeked of sweat and blood and urine and shit.

"Where were you, Cole? We thought you'd left us." Stupid question, since I already knew he'd been to Larker's, but it rolled out of my mouth anyway.

He swallowed again, stretching his neck out.

I wished I had water for him. I wished I had a cell phone to call 911, and Mama and Daddy, too.

"Cole," I whispered, my own throat closed tight.

He closed his hand around mine tight enough to hurt and pulled. I toppled over, and with his lips on my ear, he breathed, "I killed 'im."

My head spun.

I closed my eyes while he panted in my ear. "Ain't never... gonna bugger... no one... again... get me home...ain't gonna die out here."

I let out a ragged breath, blinked back my tears. His hand fell from mine as I stood. I pushed the cow over, moving her back feet away from Cole so he wasn't in danger of being stepped on, and ran for Blue.

It took five tries and the day starting to die on us before I got Cole onto Blue's back, slung over face down, since he couldn't sit up. It had to hurt his chest like hellfire. I wasn't willing to let the cow go. The calf

was up by the time Cole was, so I held Blue's reins and the cow's lead in one hand and kept a hand on Cole's back with the other. He cried as Blue walked, a terrible sound, and passed out before we hit the tree line.

The animals kept walking around the opposite sides of trees, and the cow was nervous over her calf keeping up. The palmettos scratched my legs, and mosquitos whined in my ears and hovered in a cloud over Cole's brokenness. It was full on dark before I started up the windbreak to the house. Sarah ran down to meet me and I handed her the cow. Her eyes were big.

"It's Cole," I told her. "He bought us a cow down in Alachua, with money he made fighting, and that's all we know, no matter who comes asking, got it?"

She nodded, her mouth turning down.

We put the cow and her calf in the barn, and Sarah helped me drag Cole into the kitchen. I made her take the kids out to settle the cow and Blue.

Trembling, I cut Cole's jeans from him. I'd never seen a fully naked man before. I can't forget how white his skin looked between the whip marks on his back, how smooth the back of his unmarked neck was. How he shivered as I wiped his thighs and buttocks and cleaned him free of Nick Larker.

I was so glad it wasn't me and so furious, I shook.

I passed the night by calling up the adult hidden down inside me while my brother shuddered with fever and reaction.

The next day I trapped the cow in the old wooden cattle chute behind the barn and figured out how to milk her. Using the kitchen paring knife, I cut the skin holding her brand right off her hip and buried it. Then I went tracking, sweeping along Cole's back trail towards the Larker Ranch until I found Daddy's shotgun and brought it home.

I sat on the porch watching the blue light fade, wondering what it was, what was out there. My hand steady on the shotgun, unwavering and resolute, my scarred brother healing in the back room, we were growing up, all of us, into something hard and wild, as unreachable as the sky.

Overcast

Audrey Walls

We haven't seen the sun in four days, maybe five. It has been so long that we can't remember the warmth, the blindness that comes from too much light. The world outside our door is soaking and choked with rain. The grey has started to creep into our daily lives as we realize that we can't go outside now. We can't walk through the cemetery that borders our house and talk about what will happen when our parents die. The flowers we planted are drowning. The sidewalks, now lakes, turn brown every night. He says that the rain reminds him of his childhood. *In Florida, the sky always looked full of water. It rained every day. Just like this.*

After the Burial

Audrey Walls

DeLeon Springs, Florida, 1997

Trash: the newspapers that lined cabinets and pantry shelves, the freezer burnt bread loaves from church dinners, a small, cracked bar of Dial soap.

Sell: the Hoosier cabinet in the room where no-one dined, piles of pleated khaki shorts and linen suit jackets, two fishing poles and a rusting red tackle box.

Keep: boxes of photographs, yellowing film, the blue porcelain butter dish, the coffee table with curved-paw legs, his bifocals in tortoiseshell frames.

Astronaut Affair

Flower Conroy

Circus in the sky. You left before I could read the clouds aloud to you; now this fusion.

The sun slinks into the cold gown that is November's midmornings.

I think of your train of cages to the moon—not to the moon, but to moon's...what is it? Open outer space embrace, where you embark, pioneer of cosmic sideshows.

I walk out onto the balcony to smoke. The edge of weather gnaws my fingers. Who loves a spaceman?

Nine thousand hours you dance across sky, stratosphere, ozone.

On another planet your ultrafamily smiles when you walk in the door. Your doppelganger dog squeaks & exposes its plutonium belly.

You put down your suitcase; take off your helmet. Honey; honey; honey. Your home is my alone.

Unquenching

Flower Conroy

Mind dipped in fairy tale slumber—crystal formation within the disc of an erupting star—you dreamt upon ocean, rocked into nap by liquid arms—Andromeda ship's unexplored cradle.

I sponged afternoon, absorbed the view: across water's surface sunshine dazzled—mercury beading with each wave's blistering, hypnosis of drowning unremembered kaleidoscopic warped pattern.

Yesterday I overheard a stranger call the blue of this metamorphous pool *miraculous* & I contemplated:

stars' dark star wombs; blue-green atmosphere; cosmic seeds dividing; sprouts sprouting; that

succulent sound. I imagined vineyards lifting smog veils with damp fingers; I concocted waterfalls of lava thickly smudging jungle mountainsides of a curled, rooted island—then coagulating

into beds of cobalt ash. Dusty dead stars. The color of the post-equinox. The hemispheric longitude of Venus. Lunar mountains.

You sighed. I ached to steal a sip of your lips...but my

drizzle touch awoke you. Beheld by archipelago, sunspot flecked satellite eyes—they mirrored volcanic firebody so that I swallowed deep, thirst-struck, whet for you, while the world surrounding lapped patiently against the parched, evaporating infrared aghast light.

Birdfeeder at the End of the World

Flower Conroy

The desert spontaneous cemetery/ Vultures among the Venus roses Beautiful mind of the coyote | collapsing/

Cloud shadows irregular as the Miami Coastline where others wonder where Are the lights the yellow ice the raw

Blue of time | at the end of the world All cities are no city | limelight lit become/ Sulfur | Cities of sulfur | Caves of sulfur At the edge/ beyond the Sulfur gates | Lake of sulfur | beyond the lake of sulfur | Burning buzzing sizzling string horizon/

Turquoise & silver necklace exploding sky/ Upon your oily breastplate of tanned chest Bronzing hermaphrodite hallucination/

Wild dogs pace the landscape/buzzards Eat out the heart of heat's carcass/ Slender/ & glittering with sun money

An Egyptian deity reincarnated as a Hummingbird sips from the pool of your Cupped palm an ice cube's melted face

You are a thing of indulgence/ hums wings Your mouth / a canary now drinks from your Hand/ is a mouth implanted with diamonds

Bottom Fishing

Jeff Newberry

Between saw grass & cattails I cast a line in the shadow of a live oak's overhang,

try to picture the muddy creek's depth:

the brown strands of wilted weed, lost jigs & beetle spinners tangled in cypress drifts—

a fat-headed water moccasin sliding by my baited hook.

I jiggle the pole, dance the dead cricket & hope a passing bream takes the lie so I can claim another victory that I'll only throw back.

But I can't see past the opaque surface, can't cipher the way a channel cat sometimes bumps the bait & leaves it alone or half gone.

I plumb

the creek's bottom with baited questions & often come home empty-handed, bait gone, swallowed in darkness.

Trying to Beat the Blues in Port St. Joe, Florida

Jeff Newberry

It's no use trying. The mill's shut down, the streets whittled thin, & the last good beer you drank was seven years ago, dangling your feet off the gazebo, down by St. Joseph's Bay. Low tide. Salt marshes glimmering in the evening fade. You pitched cigarette butts just to hear the sizzle & promised your friends that one day, you'd leave this town behind, let the road unspool behind in an unrecorded song. You'd write sometime, maybe drop a line from Texas or Los Angeles, wherever you ran out of money or will. You imagined walking down the Santa Monica Pier, the Pacific taking your breath, & maybe you'd have kneeled, maybe even said something like a prayer, the words leaving your mouth like smoke from a storm drain. Tonight, you drive out east of town, lay down five spots for PBR & smoke the rent money. Wander out on the back deck, where a blues band plays "Sweet Home Chicago." Some ghost white kid with a pimpled voice tries to wring pain from six strings & a wish. Let the music win. Ignore the missed notes, the styled slurs. Something about pain rings true, even if you're telling a lie. The evening sky slows, a brackish wind

rattles the pines. Crickets & cicadas scream to the lightning bugs' strobe. The mill whistle still blows at 11:00. Look at the time. It's so late.

The Next Literary Superstar: An Interview with Patricia Engel

Jaquira Díaz

Born to Colombian parents and raised in New Jersey, Patricia Engel earned her undergraduate degree at New York University and her MFA at Florida International University in Miami. When her debut short story collection, Vida (Gove/Atlantic), was released last October, it took the literary world by storm. When we conducted this interview last fall. Vida had just been named a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection. However, in the weeks since the interview was finalized. in addition to being named one of NPR's Best Book Debuts of 2010. a Barnes & Noble Best Book of the



Year, and one of Latina's Best Books of 2010, *Vida* was selected as a New York Times Editors' Choice and Notable Book of 2010. Michiko Kakutani referred to Engel's use of voice as "immediate, unsentimental, and disarmingly direct," and her writing has been compared to the likes of Jeffrey Eugenides and Junot Díaz. The short stories in *Vida* are set in New York, Miami, Colombia, and New Jersey, and are comprised of characters who deal with complicated relationships, coming of age, and the duality of the immigrant experience.

JD: I grew up in Miami, and I'm fascinated by your ability to capture

its complexity and strangeness in stories like "Desaliento," "Cielito Lindo," and "Vida." Why Miami? How has living there influenced you or your writing?

PE: Miami is a city on the verge; a main artery of the Americas with so much integrated cultural life, so much manic energy, so much beauty as a city by the sea with the sweet ocean air, a tempestuous breeze, that pulsing heart full of secrets and shadows. I adore its complexity and that as a creative landscape it's still in its early stages of discovery. There is so much yet to be written about Miami and I'm only revealing a very small part of it.

JD: *Vida* is set in New Jersey, New York City, Miami, and Colombia. How important is setting in your writing process? How does a story begin for you? Do you start a story with a particular place in mind, or is setting determined by another factor?

PE: I think of setting in relation to the character rather than as a separate entity. I'm interested in how people and place dance together and the human interior is reflected by exterior. Sabina's New Jersey is different from even her own brother's New Jersey. Her Miami is different from my Miami and your Miami, and *her* Colombia is extremely specific to her, but in that specificity there is an intimacy I hope a reader can connect to.

JD: Other female authors who write about Latinos, and whose work is set in South Florida—I'm thinking of Jennine Capó Crucet and Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés—are often labeled as "Latina writers." How do you feel about being labeled or referred to as a Latina writer?

PE: The "Latina" label wasn't yet popular when I was growing up. We were Hispanics or Spanish, at best, but of course *we* didn't think of ourselves as Hispanic or Spanish—because we weren't from Hispaniola or Spain—but as Colombian, or even more commonly, as Paisa (from the region of Antioquia) so you get an idea of how disconnected we were from what we were *called*. I think the need to designate literature the way they do for food in the supermarket aisles is sort of a recent trend and one that I try not to give too much importance.

JD: Do you have any advice for beginning writers?

PE: Marry your writing. Be prepared to make sacrifices in order to get work done. Confront the gaps in your education, and continue to educate yourself. Read a lot, especially outside of your comfort zone, and seek out international literature.

JD: *Vida* is a collection of short stories with a protagonist in common: Sabina. Can you talk about the origins of Sabina? How did she come to be?

PE: I wrote one or two stories and it was like meeting a new friend I wanted to know further. I found a vulnerability and an integrity about her; she is honest even in her dishonesty, so I stayed with her over a few decades as she told me who she wanted to be.

JD: Who would you consider your greatest literary influences?

PE: Albert Camus, so much so that growing up, I named our family cat after him. I also loved Anaïs Nin, Maryse Condé, and Marguerite Duras, though I am equally influenced by music and visual art because I grew up around a lot of painters and musicians.

JD: *Vida* was just named a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection, and you've been compared to writers like Junot Díaz, even referred to as "the next literary superstar." Is this how you always envisioned your writing career? How does this change the literary game for you?

PE: I never envisioned a literary career because I had no idea there was such a thing. Like a lot of immigrant kids, I had to figure out college on my own, had no mentors, and no idea one could major in creative writing or there was such a thing as an MFA until years after I'd graduated. I always wrote for myself and never shared my work. Writing was a private act for me. It still is. The fact that my writing now reaches an audience beyond me is beautiful, but my stories are still my confidants, born of love, whether they are published or not.

JD: What are your favorite Florida spots?

PE: I love the beach. I love driving down to the Keys, the Everglades and any place where I can catch the sunset over water or an electrical storm. I love the small streets of downtown Miami, Coconut Grove, the corridors of Calle Ocho, Biscayne Boulevard, the Design District, and Little Haiti.

JD: If you weren't a writer, what else would you be?

PE: I really wanted to be a marine biologist who wrote books on the side but I had no talent for science. So now I'm a writer who studies marine biology on the side. My only real ambition was to do something meaningful and useful.

JD: What are you working on now?

PE: A novel set in Paris.

Contributors

Leslie Elizabeth Adams' poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Quarterly West, Cimarron Review, Adirondack Review, The Hollins Critic, DMQ Review,* and *New South* and been anthologized in *Southern Poetry Anthology Volume II: Mississippi*. She holds an MA in English from Mississippi State University and is currently an MFA Poetry Candidate at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Laura Andrews, a married mother of two, has workshopped with City Island Fiction Writers and is a member of the Florida Writers' Association. Two of her short stories were 2010 Finalists in FWA's Royal Palm Literary Awards. "Becky's Story" is her first publication.

A. Manette Ansay grew up in Wisconsin among 67 cousins and over 200 second cousins. She is the author of six novels, including *Good Things I Wish You* (July, 2009), *Vinegar Hill*, an Oprah Book Club Selection, and *Midnight Champagne*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, as well as a short story collection, *Read This and Tell Me What It Says*, and a memoir, *Limbo*. Her awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, a Pushcart Prize, the Nelson Algren Prize, and two Great Lakes Book Awards. She lives with her daughter in Florida, where she teaches in the MFA program at the University of Miami.

Hernan Bas, born in 1978, lives and works in Miami. He has had solo exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (2009), Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2007), The Moore Space, Miami (2004) and The Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (2002). Bas' work has also been exhibited in The Collectors, curated by Elmgreen & Dragset, Nordic and Danish Pavilions, Venice Biennale (2009), Busan Biennale, Korea (2008), Aspen Art Museum (2007), Schirn Kunsthalle (2005) and Whitney Biennial (2004). He is represented by numerous galleries, including Frederic Snitzer, Miami, Victoria Miro, London, and Lehmann Maupin, New York.

Eleanor Leonne Bennett has been taking photos for two years and won first place in National Geographic's Kids UK photography competition and The World Photography Organisation's Photomonth

Youth Award. She has also had her work published in magazines and exhibited around the globe. Some locations and publications include: *Dotdotdash, Guardian, RSPB Birds* and *RSPB Wingbeat* magazines, UNESCO, The Gulf Coast Explorium, The Jardines del Buen Retiro, London Zoo, and Bristol Zoo, all as part of the global tour with *National Geographic* and *Airbus's* See The Bigger Picture contest.

Adam Berlin is the author of the novels *Belmondo Style* (St. Martin's Press) and *Headlock* (Algonquin Books). His stories and poetry have appeared in numerous journals. He teaches writing at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City and is the co-editor of *J Journal: New Writing on Justice*.

In addition to his native Michigan, **Kevin Boldenow** lived in five states, including Texas, New Jersey, and Virginia, before moving to Florida in 1996. His work has been presented throughout the state of Florida, and has received numerous awards, including the South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowship for Visual and Media Artists (2004). In his own words, he seeks to instill "a sense of awe of the natural environment and the feeling of serenity we have when we allow ourselves to truly experience the beauty of nature."

Focused on the energy and spiritual essence of the landscape, **Gary Borse**'s originality, spectral and dimensional approach to painting has won awards, and his work has appeared in museums, public exhibits, magazines, and is collected worldwide in private, corporate and public collections. www.garyborse.com

John Brandon was raised on the Gulf Coast of Florida, in New Port Richey. His novels are *Arkansas* and *Citrus County*. His shorter work has appeared in *Oxford American*, *Mississippi Review*, *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, and other literary magazines. He is currently Visiting Writer at University of Mississippi. During the football season he writes a blog for *GQ.com* concerning Southeastern Conference football.

Melissa Carroll escaped her cubicle at an ad agency to get her MFA. Her work has received the Kite Trick Poetry Prize, the Zbar Award, and is nominated for the AWP Intro Journals Award. Her publications include *Blood Lotus Journal*, *The Splinter Generation*, *Barely South Review*, *GUD Magazine*, and others. She teaches yoga and is also an editor for

Sweet: A Literary Confection.

Flower Conroy graduated from the Richard Stockton College of NJ. Her poetry has appeared/is forthcoming in *American Literary Review, Oberon, Serving House Journal, Psychic Meatloaf, The Moose & Pussy, Ghost Ocean, Sweet, Lavender Review,* and *Labletter*. Ms. Conroy will be attending the Fairleigh Dickinson University's MFA program in January.

Anita Dallar is a printmaker specializing in intaglio monotype and collage. She has a BA in Studio Art and a Professional Educators Certificate in K-12 Art Education. Her collages are visual interpretations of thoughts, emotions and experiences. She reduces realistic imagery to shapes and colors and then reconstructs the subject matter into new perceptions and realities. Having lived in Florida as a child, Dallar has a deep reverence for Florida's natural landscape. Her studio is in a beautiful and untouched area of Florida's nature coast. "Ancestors" was inspired by the culture and landscape of the Florida Keys.

Mark DeCarteret's work has appeared in the anthologies American Poetry: The Next Generation (Carnegie Mellon Press), Brevity & Echo: Short Short Stories by Emerson College Alums (Rose Metal Press), New Pony: Collaborations & Responses (Horse Less Press), Places of Passage: Contemporary Catholic Poetry (Story Line Press), Thus Spake the Corpse: An Exquisite Corpse Reader (Black Sparrow Press) and Under the Legislature of Stars—62 New Hampshire Poets (Oyster River Press) which he also co-edited. Last year he was selected as the seventh Poet Laureate of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. His Postcard Project can be checked out at pplp.org.

Jaquira Díaz is pursuing her MFA in fiction at the University of South Florida, where she also teaches. Recently, her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Southern Review, Prism Review, Southeast Review, Los Angeles Review, Harpur Palate, Passages North,* and elsewhere. She's been the recipient of an AWP Intro Journals award, the Knocky Parker Award for Creative Nonfiction, and the Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers' Conference award in creative nonfiction, and a runner up in *Playboy*'s College Fiction Contest. She's working on a novel and a memoir.

Patricia Engel's first book, Vida, was named a New York Times Notable Book and Editors' Choice, and a Best Book of the Year by NPR, Barnes & Noble, and Latina Magazine. Her fiction has appeared in The Atlantic, A Public Space, Boston Review, and Guernica among other publications, and received numerous fellowships and awards. Born to Colombian parents and raised in New Jersey, Patricia earned her undergraduate degree at New York University and her MFA at Florida International University.

Rob Fichter's photographs, prints, books and computer works are lush and dense works dealing with complex sociopolitical issues concerning humankind and its interaction with, and destruction of, the natural environment. While Fichter's concerns are made clear, they do not undermine the originality, aesthetic quality and richness of his works. Fichter set up complicated tableaux of objects and images and photographed the scenes with a large size view camera to achieve the positive transparencies used to make a series of cibachrome photographs. Running through the photographs as a theme is the revenge of nature against the predations of man, as in "Hurricane Signal," which shows human dolls being devoured by stuffed largemouth bass. Fichter also created a color lithograph and combination lithograph and offset, on the theme of nuclear holocast and its effects on humans.

John Henry Fleming is the author of *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* and *The Legend of the Barefoot Mailman*. His stories have appeared in *McSweeney's, Mississippi Review, The North American Review,* and *Fourteen Hills,* among other literary magazines. He teaches creative writing at the University of South Florida.

Joann Gardner is an associate professor of English at Florida State University. Her poems have appeared in such journals as *Seneca Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Tampa Review*, *Louisiana Literature* and *Connecticut Review*. She is a member of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers and has had artist's residencies at Villa Montalvo, Saratoga, California and the Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mountain Lake, New York. Her chapbook *La Florida* won the Weldon Kees Award in 2005 and was published by Backwaters Press. She has a book, *Fierce Love*, for which she is looking for a publisher.

Lola Haskins' work has appeared in *The Atlantic, the London Review of* Books, The New York Quarterly, Georgia Review, Southern Review, Prairie Schooner, and elsewhere. Her most recent books are Still, the Mountain (Paper Kite, 2010), poetry, and a collection of essays, Fifteen Florida Cemeteries: Strange Tales Unearthed (University Press of Florida, 2011). Anhinga Press will bring out a tenth book of poems, The Grace to Leave, in early 2012. Haskins' prose efforts include a book of original fables about women, Solutions Beginning with A, illustrated by Maggie Taylor (Modernbook) and a poetry advice book: *Not Feathers Yet: A Beginner's* Guide to the Poetic Life (Backwaters, 2007). Among her awards are the Iowa Poetry Prize, two NEA fellowships, four fellowships from the Florida Department of State, the Emily Dickinson Prize from Poetry Society of America, and narrative poetry prizes from the New England Review and Southern Poetry Review. Retired in 2005 from Computer Science at the University of Florida in Gainesville, she teaches for the Rainier Writer's Workshop. For more information, please visit her at www.lolahaskins.com.

Angela Masterson Jones is the Advancement Communications Assistant at Eckerd College, where she is a PEL Honors Program student majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in Film Studies. She serves on the Editorial Board of *Eckerd Review* and the Advisory Board of Spoonbill Cove Press. Her poetry and prose have received numerous prizes, including the 2007 Douglas Freels Poetry Award, and have appeared in *New Millennium Writings, Eckerd Review, Sabal, Writer's Digest, St. Petersburg Times, Bacopa, Penumbra, Sunscripts, Palm Prints, Wordsmith,* and elsewhere. She published her vintage poetry collection, *Broken Kisses*, in 2004 (Double Ray Press) and lives in Palmetto with her husband, Paul, and their daughter, Jessie. Her poem "At the Crossing" placed first in the Writers Alliance of Gainesville 2010 poetry contest and is a finalist in Bennington College's *plain china: Best Undergraduate Writing* 2010.

James Kimbrell has been the recipient of the Whiting Writer's Award, the Ruth Lilly Fellowship, the "Discovery"/The Nation Award, a Ford Foundation Fellowship, and has twice received the Academy of American Poets Prize. Recent poems, reviews and translations have appeared in magazines and anthologies such as Poetry, Field, Fence, The Nation, Prairie Schooner, The Boston Book Review, American Poetry: The

Next Generation (Carnegie Mellon University Press) and *The Bread Loaf Anthology of New American Poets* (University Press of New England). He recently received a National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in poetry.

Larry Kimbro is a native Floridian originally from Pensacola with a broad interest in the fine arts. Beginning at an early age Larry found a painting niche that culminated into formal art study earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Auburn University (Class of 1980). A notable theme runs through Larry's eventful, artistic resume that includes graphic design, photography, painting, theatrical set design, commercial kitchen design to name a few. Larry's work emulates his passion for life in an attempt to capture the moment through his lens or brush stroke. Additional selections can be viewed at www. LarryKimbro.com

Nicolás Leiva was born in Argentina. He graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the Universidad Nacional de Tucuman and continues his studies in Buenos Aires. Leiva has exhibited widely and realized commissions throughout Latin America, the United States and Europe, as well as South Africa and the Middle East. Since 1996, Leiva has broadened his range of genres beyond painting and drawing to ceramics as well as the pictorial intervention of industrial surfaces, such as automobiles, clothing, motorcycles, surfboards and guitars. He divides his time between Miami - his own studio- and Faenza- producing ceramics at Bottega Gatti, Italy

Jeff Newberry, a native of the Florida Gulf Coast, is the author of *A Visible Sign* (Finishing Line 2008), and his work has appeared in a variety of print and online journals, including *Anti-*, *The Florida Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *New South, Memorious*, *Hobble Creek Review* and *Barn Owl Review*, as well as in the online anthology *Best of the Net 2008*. His writing has been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. The recipient of a Tennessee Williams Scholarship from the Sewanee Writers' Conference, he teaches at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia, where he serves as faculty adviser for *Pegasus*, ABAC's literary magazine. He earned his Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia in 2010.

Daniele Pantano is a Swiss poet, translator, critic, and editor born

of Sicilian and German parentage in Langenthal (Canton of Berne). Pantano's most recent works include *In an Abandoned Room: Selected Poems by Georg Trakl* (Erbacce Press, 2008), *The Possible Is Monstrous: Selected Poems by Friedrich Dürrenmatt*, and *The Oldest Hands in the World* (both from Black Lawrence Press/Dzanc Books, 2010). His next books, *Oppressive Light: Selected Poems by Robert Walser* and *The Collected Works of Georg Trakl*, are forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press, New York. Pantano has taught at the University of South Florida and served as the Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Florida Southern College. He divides his time between Switzerland, the United States, and England, where he's Senior Lecturer and Director of Creative Writing at Edge Hill University. For more information, please visit www.danielepantano. ch.

Meg Pierce is a graduate of the College of New Rochelle. She went on to earn a Masters in Art and Art Education from Columbia University in New York, and a Master in Fine Arts in Painting from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Other studies in art include the Vermont Studio School, Johnson, Vermont, Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Idaho and Oxbow Workshop, Saugatuck, Michigan, as well as study abroad in Italy and China. She is the recipient of the 2010 John Ringling Towers Visual Artist Award, including the Fine Art Society of Sarasota Residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

Sharon Snow Pinson is a graduate student in the MFA program at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. Her short stories have been published in national magazines.

Clyde Robinson, Jr. lives in Sarasota, FL where he enjoys photography and working on his photoblog of Sarasota, SRQPIX (srqpix.wordpress. com).

Virgil Suárez was born in Cuba in 1962. He's the author of four novels, a story collection, and seven books of poetry. He teaches creative writing and Latino and Caribbean Literature at Florida State University.

Beth Surdut's nature explorations encompass free diving with Hawaiian sea turtles, riding an Indonesian water buffalo, and canoeing with Florida alligators for three years, earning her the nickname "Gator

Girl." Surdut's multi-layered careers include designing architectural art glass and textiles, painter, illustrator, journalist and commentator for print, radio and cyberspace. She creates custom prayer shawls (tallitot) and healing head scarves for women undergoing chemotherapy. Currently, she is in New Mexico creating the art and story of Listening To Raven~Drawings, Myths & Realities, an ongoing exploration of science and spirit. These detailed story drawings, created with pen and pencil, heart and mind, are a vision quest expanded by paying attention to small moments. www.bethsurdut.com

Chantel Tattoli's undergraduate background is in cultural anthropology, and she is now after the MFA at SCAD. Her work has appeared in *Redivider*, *Nthposition*, *PANK*, *Wigleaf*, *For Every Year*, *Rosebud Magazine*, and other places.

Dianna Van Horn was born in Daytona Beach and raised in Merritt Island, FL, with generations of native Floridians behind her. She received her B.S. in photography and M.S. in journalism from Florida A&M University. Both her father's background as a professional photographer and her brother's work as a newspaper photographer set good examples to follow. She worked as a reporter/photographer, then editor, of a community newspaper in one of the panhandle's historic communities. It was here that she first encountered, and fell in love with, the unique structures found in Lakewood, FL--the state's highest point.

Audrey Walls lives in Richmond, Virginia, where she is an MFA student in poetry at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her writing has appeared in *The Legendary* and *The Best Young Writers and Artists in America* anthology, among others.

Scott Ward, Professor of Literature and Creative Writing, M.A., University of South Carolina, is a poet whose first book, *Crucial Beauty* (Scop Publications), won the 1990 Loiderman Poetry Prize. His most recent volume is *Wayward Passages* (2006, Black Bay Books). His poems have appeared in anthologies such as *American Poetry: The Next Generation* (Carnegie Mellon) and *Buck and Wing: Southern Poetry at 2000* (Washington and Lee) and in journals including *America, Southern Humanities Review, Hollins Critic, Blue Mesa Review, Shenandoah*, and *The Christian Century*. He teaches creative writing at Eckerd College in

St. Petersburg, Florida.

As a mixed media artist, **John Wilton** has participated in over 100 group and forty solo shows, winning a number of awards along the way. Wilton maintains a studio in DeLand and has served as a judge for more than forty art shows throughout Florida. In 1995, he was awarded an Individual Artist's Fellowship from the state of Florida. Formerly a senior professor and chair of the Visual Arts Department at Daytona State College, Wilton has a degree in design from Florida State University and has done graduate work in printmaking, visual communication and education.

Terri Witek's books include *The Shipwreck Dress* (Orchises Press, 2008), *Carnal World* (Story Line Press, 2006), *Fools and Crows* (Orchises Press, 2003), *Courting Couples* (Winner of the 2000 Center for Book Arts Letterpress Chapbook Contest) and *Robert Lowell and LIFE STUDIES: Revising the Self* (University of Missouri Press, 1993). A native of northern Ohio, she holds the Art and Melissa Sullivan Chair in Creative Writing at Stetson University, where she teaches both literature and poetry workshops.





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