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Poetry

Tibet Woman

you see my hands?
Well they aren't
polished with plum
color or delicate
for nothing. In
Tibet we have big
hands. We need
them to carry timber,
100 pounds with
out gloves thru hills
the snow's not far
from, out of Kama
Valley on the east
side of Everest. When
I sweat my baby's
warmed thru wool
that wraps both of
us. It's a three day
hike over a 16,000 ft
pass in the village
of Kharta where
trucks pick up wood
to ship to the tree-
less plains. So few
trees, so few blue sheep
and antelope, hardly a
snow leopard tho every
spring all kinds of
rhododendron, each
with a different flower,
explode and splash the
valley with rare color,
bright as my baby's laugh

—Lyn Lifshin

Lyn Lifshin's poetry last appeared in *English Journal* in May 2004. A Virginia resident, she is described by the *San Francisco Review of Books* as "frighteningly prolific and utterly intense."

Slow Suicide

It wasn't difficult for him to do—
no skulking firearms purchase
no dubious swallowing of pills
no messy slitting of wrists.
All he had to do
was make love
with Mr. Right.

—Jaime Hylton

Formerly a junior high language arts teacher, **Jaime Hylton** works in the Department of Education at the University of New England. She moonlights from time to time in the English department.

Postcards

My mother lied for years on postcards rather than waste vacation time in Ireland, her father's birthplace. She'd buy a stack of them each summer and, back in St. Louis, fill them with news to come the next year: "Spending the week at Maureen's. She hasn't lost her touch at making scones. Ed slowing down but looks good. Lots of rain. Tomorrow to Dublin and Maeve's." And so on. Returned, she mailed them to her friends, and none was the wiser. Now I realize I'm my mother's son, sending to you for decades postcards disguised as poems, their truths made up, all honest lies. But this is no postcard; it's a straight salute to one who invented her world, then flew there by jet.

—Philip Dacey

A repeat contributor to this space, **Philip Dacey** teaches at Southwest Minnesota State University. His seventh book of poems, *The Deathbed Playboy* (Spokane: Eastern Washington UP), was published in 1999.

Mother and Child with Walkman

The mother wishes she hadn't given the daughter
that rain slicker yellow Walkman
with snake wire and plush cushion ears.

Lately her daughter has too much to ask for
and she said *yes* to stop
her from wanting so much.

But now the daughter, in jeans, a white tee,
thick black belt, mouths silent words.
Her rubbery soles bounce up and down, up.

The mother, all slick Saturday out,
silk, ruby-red lipstick
clacks her bracelets. *Give me that!*

Cornered, she watches her daughter's
hands land on her young hips, one, two.
Besides the tinny bass, all the mother

hears are horns and sucking boy lips
as the daughter, rocking, nodding,
twirls down the main street.

—Elizabeth Crowell

Elizabeth Crowell teaches high school English in a Boston suburb. Her work has appeared in *Nimrod*, *Atlanta Review*, *Louisville Review*, *New Millennium Writings*, and other publications.

While Auditing a College Myth Course, a Recently Divorced Woman Responds

Before Orpheus looks back,
he already sees what she no longer is.
When he does turn, he looks past
the metamorphosed creature
wearing sweat pants, with crow's feet wrinkles
and a dye job revealing iron gray roots.
Living in a hell, of sorts, will do that,
will add the pounds; what else is there to do but eat
the damned seeds, just ask Persephone.
Eurydice does what any good wife does, follows
and hopes he won't look back,
expecting to find the woman she was.

—Richard Glowacki

Richard Glowacki lives in Seattle, Washington, where he is a high school English teacher.

Probate

Personal Property:
One working team
" driving horse, named Jack
" black cow
" black heifer, 2 years old
" grain binder, no twine
" grain drill
" walking plow
" harrow
" wagon, one spare wheel
" buggy, newly painted red

To my son, Jim, I give, devise and
bequeath, the sum of One Dollar.

To my daughter, Mary, I give, devise
and bequeath, the sum of One Dollar.

All the rest, residue and remainder of
my estate, real, personal and mixed,
wheresoever situate, I give, devise and
bequeath unto and to the use of my
wife, Sarah.

(A letter from Mary: I am returning the
One Dollar.)

—Carol Smallwood

Car Wash

When we entered, the kids pretended they were
afraid; the churning water and mist, snake-like
cords were the narrow straits of Scylla and
Charybdis from *The Odyssey*.

To tell if we or the machines were moving,
I watched the sign, "A Clean Car Reflects You,"
while attendants hopped with sponges in green
spotted uniforms; when foam covered the
windows, I gasped for air.

—Carol Smallwood

A Michigan resident, **Carol Smallwood** is a frequent contributor to this column. Her *WWW Almanac: Making Curriculum Connections for Special Days, Weeks and Months* (coauthored with Sharron McElmeel) was published by Linworth Publishing (Worthington, 1999).

Laureate (1960)

Here is Mr. Faulkner
in his tan tweed jacket
standing on Beta Bridge
at dusk facing west
toward Afton Mountain
his best books behind him
his Nobel on the wall
in Oxford, his mouth
dry from too much talk
with too smart professors
and too eager graduate
students, none of whom
knows horses or plays
five card stud poker.

—James Brewbaker

James Brewbaker, *EJ* poetry column editor, recalls seeing William Faulkner from time to time during Faulkner's term as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. Brewbaker coedited *Poems by Adolescents and Adults* (Urbana: NCTE, 2002) with Dawnelle Hyland.

Canoes

The Iroquois traveled in canoes
Paddles dipped into green water
Birch-bark reflected white and black.
I have been thinking about canoes
Since I drifted alone on Emerald Pond
Since I glided along the shore of Long Pond
White dots glittered across to still rocks,
To the line of deep green, thick on the edge
Where tree meets tree until death.
What is it about canoes that draws me?
As a kid I canoed down the Delaware River
We tipped it over on purpose on the rapids
We camped on the riverbank under stars
I forget the longing in the sleeping bag.
Why are canoes on my mind?
Why do I think about canoes?
When I am late for a train to Boston
When a bill is past due
When the baby doesn't sleep nights
When I have a hundred compositions to mark?

—Dan Sklar

Dan Sklar teaches writing at Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts. His poems appear in many journals including *Poetry East*, *The Village Rambler*, and *Atlanta Review*.

Prospero on Hay Creek

I have wasted my life.
All those years surrounded by
water & my mind elsewhere,

plotting revenge that withered
to forgiveness. Who would have
predicted I'd find happiness
in the Midwest? A most un-
royal land! The less said
about its bland food & rude
weather, the better, but none
of the old concerns—magic,
power, exile, arranging
the proper marriage—compares
to the heart-starting yank
of a golden ten-inch
German Brown. O,
brave new world that has
such fishes in it!

—Dallas Crow

Visit

Because she was always well-prepared,
and treasured the precious minutiae
of this world, I am not surprised
that when my favorite former student
visits me in a dream, she is as bouncy
and joyful as ever, as full of life
as any teenager, and truly pleased
with how well Heaven is organized.

—Dallas Crow

A repeat contributor to this column, **Dallas Crow** teaches English at Breck School in Golden Valley, Minnesota.

Temptation and Regret

Nude Summer
 Slinking by
 Behind a towel,
 Trailing an exposed thigh
 Gold as honey.

Fall blazes
 Naked and clean
 As a bleached skull.
 Leaf hulls lie
 Like knucklebones
 That have slipped from their glue
 To rattle inside
 The hollow eyes.
 High above,
 Bare branches mourn
 The memory
 Of terry cloth
 Slipping through fingers.

—John Paul Heckathorne

John Paul Heckathorne's work has appeared in *Ginger Hill Anthology*, *Lucid Moon Anthology*, and other publications. He teaches high school English in Franklin, Pennsylvania.

On the Perils of Teaching the History of the English Language

“Chaucer’s *boot* was pronounced like Tennyson’s *boat*.”

I wish my students
 Gave a hoot
 Or groat
 That Chaucer’s *boot*
 Was once pronounced
 Like Tennyson’s *boat*,
 But as is their wont,
 They don’t or won’t.

—Louis Phillips

Louis Phillips writes humorous books for both adults and young readers, including *Ask Me Anything about the Presidents* (New York: Avon, 1992). He lives in New York City with his wife and twin sons.

Teaching Plato at a School in Camden

Dark eyes stare passively
 Politely
 At the cryptic words.
 They know about courtrooms
 About gathering on corners to converse,
 The insecurities of those in power.
 Socrates argues his defense
 Making the losing cause appear the best.
 They understand the music of his speech
 Though the meaning of the words—
 Virtue, philosophy—
 Will not unfold.
 Without
 The sun yawns
 Above a field of broken glass and
 tampon tubes
 With no apology.
 Tomorrow is Wednesday.
 What else is there to examine.

—Michael Northen

Formerly editor of *Chimera Poetry Magazine for Children*, **Michael Northen** has taught in situations ranging from first grade to prisons. Today he works in Philadelphia, where, among other things, he conducts poetry workshops for physically disabled adults.

The Iraqis Are in Iraq and the Iroquois Are in New York

The Iraqis
 Don’t annoy
 The Iroquois,
 Iroquois
 Don’t tease
 The Iraqis.
 If you wish
 Peace to start,
 Keep everybody
 Far apart.

—Louis Phillips