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

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
Slinked 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