

# POETRY

God has given you one face and you  
make yourselves another.'

~CHINESE FORTUNE COOKIE

## IMAGINE THIS

Imagine the ghosts of Arlington  
gathering in Congress to say they  
know the answer  
does not lie  
in bayonets and dirty bombs,  
empty skies moaning with drones

imagine the possibilities  
in sky, in blue with a few wisps  
of cloud, and Einstein telling us  
what equals what and who  
we should die for; imagine

living instead, imagine  
meadows in the craters, paintings  
in caves brought to light,  
imagine the deep  
sound of thought, brushes  
brushing against the truth of it  
and pens scratching  
like beaks of extinct birds  
reminding us  
of the past pointing  
to this future.

~GERALDINE HELEN FOOTE

## SAYING GOODBYE

Rocks, shells, sand, dirt and trees  
Smells welcoming of evergreen  
Air always washed clean  
Salt, blowing through on the breeze  
Numbered streets running chasing  
Winding back  
Alphabetical barely keeping order  
Fishiness along the tracks  
Hollow sound of walking  
Tap tap tap  
Everything uphill  
Always sliding down  
Strong legs and stronger souls  
Intertwining friendships and lovers  
Yellow orange pink purple Columbia sunsets  
Quiet streets of 11:00 p.m.  
Burned once  
Burned twice  
Don't go underground  
Bridges going nowhere  
Bridges coming back  
Water. Constant. Stirring.  
All the way around  
Us all connected to...  
The heart resting underhill  
Warm. Beating. Feeding us  
All of us thriving here  
This heaven. This glade, this beauty I've found  
Shhh...this is our secret place  
It's our special place  
As long as we believe  
No one can take it away

~MIRANDA LEA RINKS

(Miranda leaves for Arizona sometime in October.)

## GEARHART GENUFLECTIONS

You should see the Big White Victorian  
Beach Front House I own in Gearhart  
That everyone agrees, who sees it,  
Has the Awesome Ocean View in this burg.  
And most who meet me must agree  
I have almost nothing to worry about.  
You see, my wife, with Betty Davis eyes,  
Just drapes herself all over me when I  
Make an appearance, home from my  
Very high rolling ultimate business opportunity.  
However, I must daily turn away swarms of  
Beautiful Buxom Women  
Who loudly scream that I'm always breaking  
Their tender little hearts  
When I drive by in my gold Mercedes  
With hot leather seats.  
These women claim, though, that they are very grateful  
That I acknowledge them with a little nod  
In their direction.  
And it has been said by most in this bizarre universe  
That I am their answer to perfection in flesh.  
I know all the answers to all the questions  
Worth asking.  
I know everything worth knowing.  
I possess the only clock in this time and space.  
I am not arrogant,  
Only supremely knowledgeable  
Of my superiority to those beneath me.

~ROBERT LEGG

## I'M BITTER

The soft illicit sighs —  
"our love," you said  
"will never die."  
so when I see you with  
the new man and  
the new smile  
I wonder if your love perhaps  
has broken a leg.

~TERESA BARNES

## INDIFFERENCE

Indifference  
eventually burns  
through its mask,  
shows its teeth.  
Its vast need,  
comes in fierce  
wailings,  
anger,  
in deference.  
Indifference,  
the gritty hanger on,  
tearing up  
everything,  
to feed  
its unmemorable  
existence.

~THEDA SPRACKLIN



"SHE HASN'T SLEPT IN DAYS" BY HAYDEN GREELMAN, AGE 9 (2003)

## WORLD

Olive green of pond water, tea-  
colored is the newt's body.  
Legs stroking, it floats close  
to the surface, lazily circles  
the dock's posts, a fish  
swallowing in the shallows.  
Its feet once walked moss, logs —  
A world and name, *eft*, left behind.  
Pinpoints of vermilion  
freckle its skin. It nudges  
under floating leaves, blown down  
from the trees. Saturdays,  
the zebra-striped plane flies up  
from the neighboring fields.  
Its roar follows the tree edge,  
our porkchop-shaped parcel of land,  
turns back at the boundary. Over  
the woods, over the dock,  
narrow trails and deer paths,  
the dead tree where the vulture roosts.  
A finite number of times the engine  
will go up, up. The zebra in the circus  
ring prances round. Rises  
the snapping turtle's triangle face  
from the mud. My wishing to nudge  
the days larger, longer. A girl's run  
in the woods at dusk — blue shorts  
the hunters saw briefly as the deer's  
flickering of blue sky.

~TALVIKKI ANSEL

## MANLY TASTE

Never seen an episode of *Bay Watch*  
and haven't read Bukowski.  
Wish Rilke were still around  
and that he'd write me letters.  
Never been to a Quaker graveyard  
nor rhymed words with "Nantucket."  
Recollecting Lowell, I'm thinking  
he wasn't the last of the poets  
to have breakdowns.  
What breaks me down — coffee  
served in paper cups and people  
who feel compelled to talk about Jesus  
at the worst possible times.  
I can name more poets than sitcoms  
and feel real smart showing up places  
with books tucked under my arms.  
I don't do push ups while  
watching my broken 13 inch  
TV which might have been filled  
with the same babes whose plastic tanned  
faces stare down from highway bill boards.  
Don't know the stars' names like I do  
the women poets who grow tense  
and reluctant when asked to read.  
But when they do, it's always a smoking gun  
and me knocked flat,  
bullet-ridden, and gasping for more.

~JOHN A. FIFE

## FOR SHELTER & BEYOND

For battered women, battered  
by the fist of your keeper,  
by the nailed boots of the man  
drunk on the bottle or the booze of his will,  
by the angry man, by the self-pitying man,  
by the man kicked by those who can afford  
to pass on rage.

For battered women, battered  
by hunger, by poverty, by bills coming  
in with the old bills unpaid and the phone  
turned off and the children with no  
shoes to wear to school.

For battered women, battered  
by the rapist you thought your friend,  
by the rapist your uncle, the rapist  
in every man who uses women  
like something he can wipe himself on.

For battered women, battered  
by birthing methods invented for doctors'  
profits, with your baby  
yanked out of you strapped down,  
battered by social workers prying,  
battered by jail, battered by divorce  
court, battered by electroshock,  
battered with drugs that slow your body  
and snuff your mind.

For battered women, battered  
by insults on the corner and on the job,  
by the lack of love, by the loss of love,  
by the rancid garbage abuse that come  
to the aged, by the death of children,  
by the death of respect for you  
and who you are  
battered but alive  
women ready to give birth again to hope,  
ready to midwife hope  
for other bleeding women.

~MARGE PIERCY

## FAREWELL ASIA SOLDIER & THE AUSTRALIAN WHORE

Can it be that we are dreams  
Created by one for the other  
To shape life anew from a sleep  
Troubled by loneliness and fear?  
Forms bound by purpose begin  
In dream lines we create ourselves  
A song that the tongue refuses the lips.  
The words are lost on ears deafened by a sleep  
That the eye refuses.  
The departure  
Preordained by necessity  
Sees the voyage of hands over skin  
As the night blind seek reference  
Of a way home again, and again  
Across rutted streets  
Away from dark indifference.

~RICK BARTOW

## CREEPING WATER

The death scent of late autumn  
spreads thick on every somber molecule of leaf and soil,  
soft and damp and waiting for winter to come, in  
denial of the crisp stiffness in frost-rimed grassblade;  
fallen fading leaf.  
She doesn't seem to notice how, in the mornings sometimes even  
the loquacious river is still in glassy, earnest folds of gray ice,  
doubling in on itself in impatient wait for burbling freedom. In all her  
beauty, she doesn't see the baleful dark-eyed stares of delicate  
raven and crow,  
searching for prey while the cold  
has driven all the mice underground.  
Through mellifluous eyes she watches the river  
churn in defiance against the crackling chill,  
slower and slower until the first snowfall muffles everything from ear, the  
fleeting former warmth lost to bird, to snug grass-lined burrow,  
to the sharp-crying geese that follow her away to a better place, far  
from winter's scorn  
that tears at her throat with icy claws regardless.

~MARGIT BOWLER

Margit Bowler is 14 and a freshman at Astoria High School. This poem is one of 41  
finalists out of thousands of entries from around the world in the 2003 International  
River of Words Environmental Poetry Contest, and is published in the book "2003  
River of Words."