

## Fall 2008 Muses' Gallery from [www.highlandparkpoetry.org](http://www.highlandparkpoetry.org)

**Ravinia**

Dripping with steamy perspiration  
the

**By Edward P. Kaufman**

Air melts slowly upon  
the  
musical notes, condensating them  
into  
pools of moist, thick, pleasure.

**Night Prowler**

Poetry ambushed me  
as I turned a corner  
grabbed me by the throat  
and whipped me around.

**By**

**Lois Barr**

Whispered incantations  
drummed incessantly  
in my head  
jabbed me in the gut  
till I bled words  
of anger, wonder,  
joy, pain  
tiny lessons of the heart,  
sagas of the rain,  
It jostled memories of things  
I'd never seen.

Poetry jolted my synapses  
constricted my jaw  
pulled me through brambles  
to a canyon of doubt  
a ledge of oblivion  
where my fingers lost their grip  
so I fell  
into bed  
slept  
deeply once again.

**Prayer**

Breathe  
let the world enter  
and the soft summer wind  
sighing through the willow  
surround you  
engulf you  
enter you

**By Herb Berman**

let birdsong  
inform you of its urgency  
and the shadowed light at dusk  
release you to its promise  
of another day

let the old couple  
in the setting sun  
on the leafy dappled lawn  
and the toddler in their tender care  
open you to time and chance  
and possibility

may your hand relax its grasping  
and your mind know silence  
may the world you know  
your only world  
softly  
softly  
share with you  
its holy breath  
its exultation



Kenny Sommer, Photographer

**Who Is It Knocking At  
My Door**

**By**

**Bruce McNutt**

Knock, knock, knock  
Who is it knocking at my door  
Could it be friend or foe  
I cannot take a chance  
My Mother told me so

Knock, knock, knock  
Who is it knocking at my door  
A policeman calls out  
What am I to believe  
I answer not

Knock, knock, knock  
Who is it knocking at my door  
A doctor come to help  
I do not remember asking  
I answer not

Again and again  
The knocking continues  
All trying to help  
So they say  
But I believe them not  
I cannot take a chance  
I answer not

With each new knock  
Each attempt  
My resolve increases  
My mother's lesson  
Too much to forget

At Last there is a final knocking at my door  
It is my mother  
My family  
Love ready to enter  
I want to answer  
But I cannot  
My life is over  
Death does not knock

**Five Haikus**

**By Charlotte  
Digregorio**

cherry blossoms scatter  
along the uphill path  
to the cemetery

arctic winds . . .  
the chimney  
bubbles over

walking  
through darkness . . .  
trillium

pulling her  
into sunlight  
on my old sled

evening flight . . .  
turbulence  
in stillness

## **Old Folks**

**By Mel Holden**

When I was a kid  
most old folks looked alike to me  
gray as an wintry morn  
slow as an uphill climb  
quiet as an empty church  
dull as a boring book  
Their out-sized clothes billowed  
like wash flapping in the breeze  
hiding them inside  
their shoes were soft and shapeless  
like cherished pillows  
too costly or comfortable to replace  
They'd shuffle down the walk  
with well-worn faces sagging  
like wrinkled balloons  
slowly leaking out their lives  
Back when I was a kid  
old folks weren't listened to much  
and seldom were noticed  
except when Grandpa got lost  
on a midnight stroll one summer night  
and Mom's note in his pocket  
brought him to us by the cops  
to sleep on our screened-in porch  
Back when I was a kid  
old folks seemed to whisper all the time  
and cupped their hand to hear you  
and smelled like hospitals  
and read with magnifying glasses  
and were always off ways  
like a glimpse of phantom deer  
in a distant wood  
as you sped down the highway  
in the back seat of your Daddy's car  
Back when I was a kid  
I never gave old folks much thought  
Way back then  
Way back when  
I was a kid

## **Dominos of Days**

**By Robert Klein Engler**

*To read more of Robert's poetry, visit his store at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) and search for his name.*

High school boys rest on the post office stairs with their skate boards. They cup their heads in their hands. Their bodies are smooth wonders, poised for earthly happiness. Above them, a flock of gulls spins and looks for something to scavenge. See how wings cut the light to swirl and swirl as if the sky opens a drain.

## **The Pumpkin**

**by Jennifer Dotson**

The gardener, no bumbling Jack, plants the seed in June  
With dreams of a magic Jack-o-lantern  
and eating Thanksgiving pie.  
The catalogue promises a "Prize Winner."

In beanstalk time,  
the pumpkin consumes the garden.  
A horizontal invasion.  
Its thick, prickly-haired arms  
(too numerous to count)  
sprout elephant-ear leaves.  
Fans for a maharajah  
shade delicate fist-sized flowers  
and block the sun for more timid  
eggplants, beans and watermelon.  
Dwarfing them.  
Smothering them.  
Its only mission is unilateral digestion.  
Thwarted on one flank by the garage wall,  
it thrusts an arm across the garden path  
tightly wrapping tendril fingers in a choke-grip  
about the stems of a screaming, terror-filled  
pepper plant, about to be cannibalized!

Searing summer heat does not discourage it.  
The Gardener's shears cutting cutting cutting  
only whets its appetite.  
From a distance,  
the Gardener's family nervously admires  
the tenacious vegetable and wonders  
if it will attack them in their sleep.

## **Violet**

i saw violet in the  
woods today

**By M.J. Gabrielson**

*remembrance: forest fisher -  
paternal grandfather*

unexpectedly,  
as i walked  
alone

i felt mosses grow  
beneath my toes  
and velvet  
centipedes

there is no other  
forest green,  
cloaked and  
often brooding

ivy lay beneath  
the trees  
veiled in wisps  
of color

unaware  
meandering  
past a bend or two  
i thought I heard  
robin call

and ran through  
bearded trees out  
into the twilight

unexpectedly,  
i found violet,  
back in the sky  
today.

**She is a hack and lacks  
what you have, Barack**

**By Jason Shimberg**

Barack is on the attack,  
Barack picks up the slack  
Hillary can't sack Barack

Barack is watching the clock  
His time has come  
It is his turn

Which he earned  
After he learned  
The news about the bombs in Iraq

The right vote is Obama comma Barack  
So stuff the ballot box  
Vote twice, stack for Barack

Hillary lacks Barack's skills for change  
And hope to rearrange the world  
Clinton free

Be farther left, I am not smitten with Clinton

Yell and scream and Barackthevote  
Be a Baractivist

As this race is tight  
It will come down to the states  
The Junior Senator has affected

So Clinton wants new laws to be written  
She wants to tour the country without mittens  
She thinks everyone will give her a warm welcome

Well Ms. HiC, look for it to be abominably cold  
This is not a small town, district, township or city, Ms. Scandal  
excuse me Ms. Pretty  
This is not your father's country this is clearly an  
ObamaNation.

Obama, yo yo mabama, if you leave my ma out of this, all you  
have is the OBA  
Our Best Applicant  
End the drama and vote Obama

Primary and caucus  
Vote the best democrat into office  
As the state of Alabama is the first state in alphabet

Obama will be the first President of his kind for many reasons  
Stay Black Barack!  
You got my vote, and come back again in 2012.

Make this country well, and former first lady  
Show some feminine chivalry  
And bow out Hillary.

Signed  
Sealed  
Delivered

Barry, I'm yours!

P.S. My llama loves Obama

## **I Seek The Praise Of Ordinary Men**

**By Robert Katzman**

I seek the praise  
Of Ordinary Men  
Whose lives I reveal  
And then capture by pen

Men who slaughter cows  
Who farm and cut trees  
Men who suffer pain

In theirs backs, in their knees

Carpenters, Cops  
Women who teach  
People who protest  
And march in the streets

Slaves to computers  
Men who pour steel  
Sentenced to their lives  
And there is no appeal

Oil-stained Mechanics  
With grease on their hands  
Printers and Plumbers  
Now, where are their fans?

Smoke-eating Firemen  
God fearing people  
Rabbis and Mosques  
A Temple, a Steeple

Citizens who vote  
For "promise-making" men  
Though they've been lied to  
Again and again

Men who plant trees  
Electricians and Nurses  
Wistful Mothers in stores  
With no cash in their purses

Cowboys, Truck Drivers  
Railroad ticket-punchers  
Artists and Writers  
Quiet souls who crunch numbers

I write stories of hope  
Screams of outrages  
Real people, real lives  
Who come alive on my pages

Stories about anger  
People cruel or wise  
Not just about my life  
Because I hear the cries



Of the children whose fathers  
Were sent off to war  
Who can't comprehend  
What they're fighting for

I hear you, I see you  
I feel your frustration  
With our country derailed  
With our misguided Nation

Every person matters  
Though poor, with no power  
A Man's not more precious  
Because his name's on a Tower

I write about hope  
Revenge and satisfaction  
I urge you to resist  
To become Men of Action

So I write with a passion  
Again and again  
Because I want to get it right  
For all you "Ordinary Men"

**so above, so below**

**by devin wayne davis**

This was published this year in his collection, *Lue4d3b*. Mr. Davis lives in Sacramento, CA and heard about our Muses' Gallery and website through the internet.

a church  
for the birds, there

and a hotel where  
cats lie,

bawdily,  
on a porch,

they get in  
perfectly trimmed bushes. . .

these act  
as a not-so-great divide

**StaTe of tHe UnIon**

**by Kenny Sommer**

What is America?  
Who are Americans?  
The melting pot is now an overcooked soup  
Pledge to the flag

A mature red, white, and blue  
Osama's still speaking  
W, has really screwed me and you  
Dollar shrinking  
So many homes foreclosed  
Our 3<sup>rd</sup> world, homeless  
Over crowded school rooms  
Illiteracy, under funded  
Violent crimes in every backyard  
Middle class shrinking  
Economic slide, bear  
Can we bail out many more banks  
World War?  
Jesus isn't a Republican  
Looks down in shame, ignored  
Huge spending, trillions in deficit  
Lowering taxes, doesn't add up  
It's not 1870  
Don't want to see another Civil War?  
America is your Nationality  
Not where your grandparents are from  
We need to rebuild and protect our homeland  
Hated by too many nations  
Put Billions into our roads, schools, bridges, parks, homes  
Not the hundreds of billions  
On a lie of a war  
We need to stay in Afghanistan.  
Get the cowards who struck our World Trade Center  
We the people have to protect our constitution  
Voting needs to be Law  
NRA selling hand guns and assault rifles to gangs  
Another 12 year old girl murdered on our streets  
Prohibition didn't work  
New Capons all over towns  
Way behind in the environment, global warming  
Need to compromise on State Sovereignty, social issues?  
Another natural disaster  
National Guard isn't home  
2008 election, so important  
A new president, set to the right course  
Be patriotic, an American  
From the Atlantic to the Pacific  
We are going to lead again!  
A peaceful, beautiful Shock and awe

## **Under A Storm Drain**

**By Michael H.  
Brownstein**

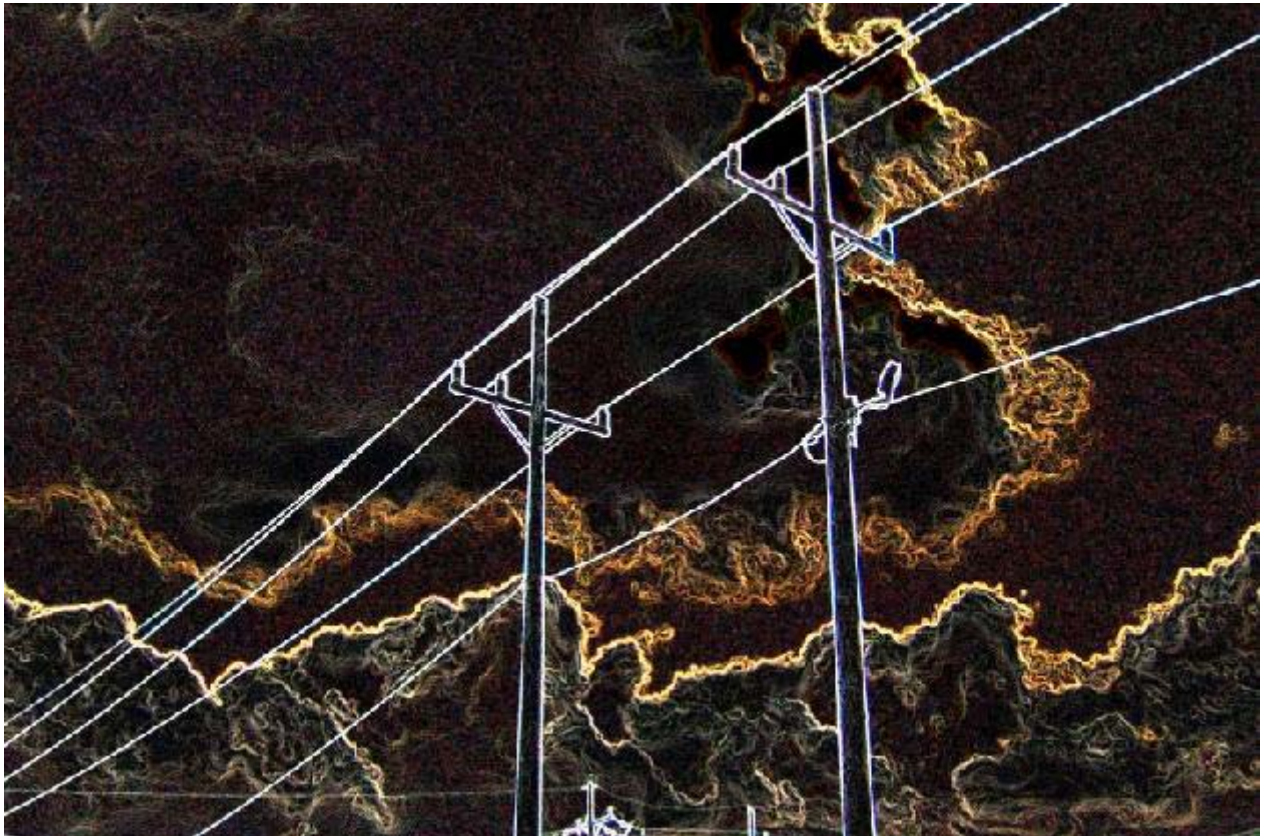
There is too much earth between us  
And I no longer wish to study the dead.  
Do you know how easy it is to remember  
All of the terrible things in your life,

Every dreadlock of lost opportunity,

Every symposium on self repulsion?  
Vulcan is too much like you.  
He never got used to all this noise either,

But he learned how to dispose of it.  
Uncomfortable with his body,  
He taught himself to be handsome,  
And one day stopped thinking like the dead,

Moved mountains into the sea,  
Blew fire into clouds.



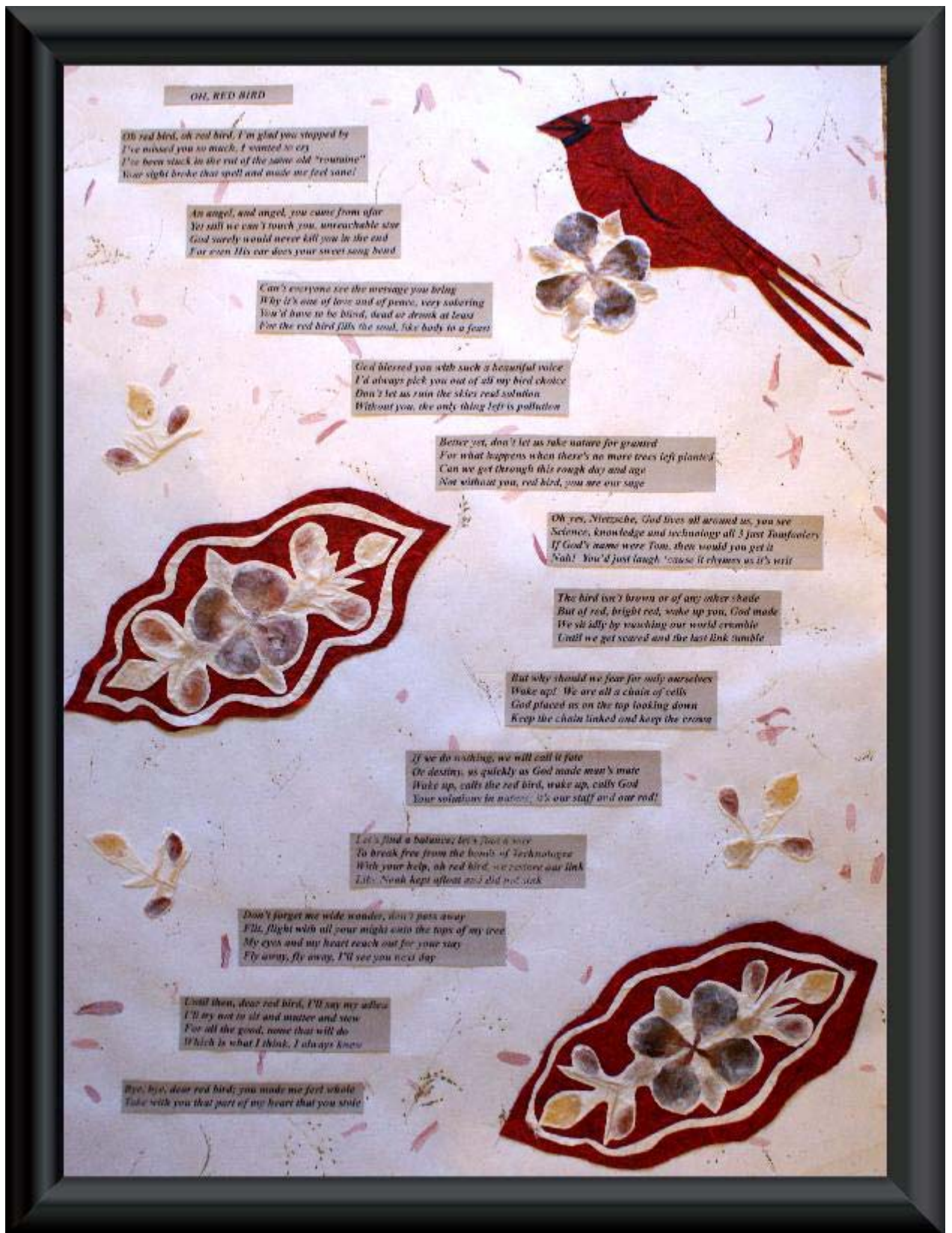
Tomas Farrell, Art Photographer

**The Clown Was In The  
Outhouse**

**By Tomas Farrell**

The clown was in the outhouse  
Even clown's sit down  
When the enemy surprised us  
And their army breached the wall.  
We met them at the wall  
And we fought them in the courtyard  
But their numbers overwhelmed us

And we knew that we must fall.  
There was no one there to save us  
And the clown just slipped away.  
They say he traveled far  
With his flip flop feet a-flying  
And a single tear a-falling  
As fast as clowns can go  
To the army that would free us.  
Once they knew our peril,  
They came hard and fast to save us  
And they broke the foe that day  
When the battle was all over  
We thought that we should thank him  
But no one there could find him.  
So we honor him today.  
For  
He was as brave as any  
Who stand with flip flop feet.



**OH, RED BIRD**

*Oh red bird, oh red bird, I'm glad you stopped by  
I've missed you so much, I wanted to cry  
I've been stuck in the rut of the same old "routaine"  
Your sight broke that spell and made me feel sane!*

*An angel, and angel, you came from afar  
Yet still we can't touch you, unreachable star  
God surely would never kill you in the end  
For even His car does your sweet song heed*

*Can't everyone see the message you bring  
Why it's one of love and of peace, very sobering  
You'd have to be blind, dead or drunk at least  
For the red bird fills the soul, like body to a feast*

*God blessed you with such a heavenly voice  
I'd always pick you out of all my bird choice  
Don't let us ruin the skies real solution  
Without you, the only thing left is pollution*

*Better yet, don't let us take nature for granted  
For what happens when there's no more trees left planted?  
Can we get through this rough day and age  
Not without you, red bird, you are our sage*

*Oh yes, Nietzsche, God lives all around us, you see  
Science, knowledge and technology all I just doubtless  
If God's name were Tom, then would you get it  
"Nah!" You'd just laugh 'cause it rhymes as it's writ*

*The bird isn't brown or of any other's shade  
But of red, bright red, wake up you, God made  
We slyly by watching our world crumble  
Until we get scared and the last link tumble*

*But why should we fear for only ourselves  
Wake up! We are all a chain of cells  
God placed us on the top looking down  
Keep the chain linked and keep the crown*

*If we do nothing, we will call it fate  
Or destiny, as quickly as God made man's mate  
Wake up, calls the red bird, wake up, calls God  
Your solution is nature, it's our staff and our rod!*

*Let's find a balance; let's find a way  
To break free from the bonds of technology  
With your help, oh red bird, we restore our link  
Life: Noah kept afloat and did not sink*

*Don't forget me while wander, don't part away  
I'll, flight with all your might soon the tops of my tree  
My eyes and my heart reach out for your song  
Fly away, fly away, I'll see you next day*

*Until then, dear red bird, I'll say my adieu  
I'll say not to sit and wait and stew  
For all the good, none that will do  
Which is what I think, I always knew*

*Bye, bye, dear red bird; you made me feel whole  
Take with you that part of my heart that you stole*

Poem & Art Work by Wendy Warren

**Oh Red Bird**

**By Wendy Ann Warren**

Oh red bird, oh red bird, I'm glad you stopped by  
I've missed you so much, I wanted to cry  
I've been stuck in the rut of the same old "routaine"  
Your sight broke that spell and made me feel sane!

An angel, an angel, you came from afar  
Yet still we can't touch you, unreachable star  
God surely would never kill you in the end  
For even His ear does your sweet song bend

Can't everyone see the message you bring  
Why it's one of love and of peace, very sobering  
You'd have to be blind, dead or drunk at least  
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Not without you, red bird, you are our sage

Oh yes, Nietzsche, God lives all around us, you see  
Science, knowledge and technology all three Tomfoolery  
If God's name were Tom, then would you get it  
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The bird isn't brown or of any other shade  
But of red, bright red, wake up you, God made  
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Wake up, calls the red bird, wake up, calls God  
Your solutions in nature; it's our staff and our rod!  
Let's find a balance; let's find a way  
To break free from the bonds of technogee  
With your help, oh red bird, we restore our link  
Like Noah kept afloat and did not sink

Don't forget me wide wonder, don't pass away  
Flit, flight with all your might onto the tops of my tree  
My eyes and my heart reach out for your stay  
Fly away, fly away, I'll see you next day

Until then, dear red bird, I'll say my adieu  
I'll try not to sit and mutter and stew  
For all the good, none that will do  
Which is what I think, I always knew

Bye, bye, dear red bird; you made me feel whole  
Take with you that part of my heart that you stole

**Book Review: The Bending Limbs**  
**By Don Markus**  
Reviewed by Charlotte Digregorio

Don Markus, a Chicago actor, comedian, architect, artist, musician and poet, has self-published a slim volume of poetry, **The Bending Limbs**. This is a worthy effort for his first chapbook. It includes generous poems of self-realization in his quest to find solace and peace.

First, the chapbook has an interesting, artistic cover. Although one can't be sure, perhaps the beautiful photograph of a tree is one taken by Markus himself.

The Introductory Page has a revealing William Stafford quote: "The signals we give—yes or no, or maybe—should be clear: the darkness around us is deep." This portends to what we will find in Markus' poetry. The first poem, which I enjoyed, "The Color of Trees," has a tone that very much haunts the reader. It's a good beginning. I also enjoyed poetry about his mother. In particular, "A Dream of My Mother."

In places throughout the chapbook, there is too much narration in his poems, and some of them seem disjointed. Further, at times, Markus loses his opportunity to use evocative images—he merely relates his profound feelings. As a latter example, I refer to "Moving," which lost its potential beauty with images that needed to be developed. Personally, as a haiku poet, I feel a thoughtful person such as Markus might try reading haiku to develop a sense of writing evocative images.

Further, I was puzzled by his prose piece, "Former Nooner." I believe it belongs as a preface to his chapbook, rather than placed toward the end of the book. I wouldn't categorize it as a prose poem. It is merely prose.

There are some typos in the chapbook that should be eliminated before a second printing. And, in any subsequent volumes of poetry, Markus should work more on connecting with his readers through imagery. That is, showing, rather than telling the reader how he feels. This is especially evident in "Freedom."

All in all, it takes a lot of courage for any writer to put so much of himself on paper as Markus does. After reading his poetry, it's as if he is thinking out loud, and therefore, his readers can fully appreciate who he is. He's a person that most readers can identify with, and whom they would like to get to know. I would like to hear Markus read his poems at a poetry reading. Readers can learn more about Don Markus and sample his poems at his web site, [www.donmarkus.com/Poetry](http://www.donmarkus.com/Poetry)