

## Winter

By Karen Mary Berr

Where have you gone Father, how far?  
Here, in the solid snow, the seven-days snow,  
your shadow walks ahead of me.  
I wear your thin lips in mirrors like a whore  
and your brisk smile like the shape of a war.  
Time finds no asylum in me,  
the past strangely grew roots of light,  
nothing's dark, nothing's buried,  
I haven't slept for years.  
Between the madhouse and the grave,  
the massive drugs and plastic knives,  
do you remember me ?  
Does any music bruise your lethargy?  
Did you unlearn all the songs  
that multiplied like cells  
in your daughter's body,  
before the schizophrenic detonator  
convulsed your steel-blue eyes ?  
You should know, you have to know,  
they play silently at your door.  
Every day, I watch the wooden arms of trees  
dance in the cold air, and what my hands  
want to say to yours, they let go.  
You lie, unawakened, immensely dead  
in your double-edged cruelty,  
guilty of nothing, devoted to no one.  
In your sleep, you drool like a baby,  
while the photographic chamber of night  
develops pictures you don't recognize.  
Oh daddy, where have you gone?  
How far ? To which dark address  
have you sent your heart ?  
Even the night cannot tolerate  
such senseless black.  
See, I wear your lips bright red in mirrors  
and swathe your blood in my veins  
like the loud noise of impossibility,

# Writing Raw

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Hoping one day, the space you dissolve into  
will take forever this version of me.

## Chalk Dust

*for Thierry*

By Karen Mary Berr

Here you are, back from gender traps  
back from stereotyped edens  
with Adam's broken rib and an old viper  
calling at night for no reason.  
You fix your chin on your fists,  
and watch days volatilize as gasoline.  
There's no sky here,  
just Brighton Pier's countless bones  
in blue backlight.  
The wind is gone, birds anchored.  
The sun keeps touching the boy  
who never kissed darker lips than yours,  
but he never returns  
- that yellow eye  
only warms the stone.  
No need for another What is wrong.  
What went wrong. What the hell.  
You shake the dust off your feet  
and locate home inside your elbow,  
in a vein full of crystals.  
Such a perfect exile.  
No geography, no maps,  
no roads no bridges  
to cross anymore.  
Music floats in your arteries,  
silted with violet and silver sparks  
showing the way,  
whispering your name, your name.  
No one knows if you will come back.  
Where you live, letters never arrive.  
I listen to your voice at dawn,  
your new language is unknown.  
In the sand I lie with the loss of you,  
I repeat these words you said,  
about sad sex, gay porn and guilt  
like a ditty.

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Some days your laugh comes  
to me, unchanged.  
The stars get closer,  
clear flashes of proud light,  
roofs glitter, without shadows.  
Brighton Pier's skeleton has a golden heart,  
a queer fish, beating fast in your chest.  
I see it every night,  
flickering on my cigarette  
red, electric,  
spilling its burning flesh.  
Life swings here, impatient,  
waiting for a puff.

## Oppositions

By Karen Mary Berr

Close your eyes, it is finished  
we have died, you and I.  
Your name, April, is gone  
and October broke open,  
unopposed.  
We have no mouths and no cries,  
the venom lost its course.  
The abyss says nothing, just blinks,  
curved and warm like a shawl of ink.  
In pure darkness,  
it is your voice I remember most,  
devouring the sheets,  
where the pain now lies,  
impotent.  
Memory downstairs is calling,  
keys shine in every lock,  
like knives.  
There's not a fault missing.  
Nothing abstract nor pale,  
nothing we wouldn't recognize.  
Except, your fist is empty of fury,  
and my kiss on your solid neck  
persists.  
You are not another,  
only the man I always loved.  
I am the same naked fool  
left with an unforeseen seed.  
And there's no more clinics  
for blossoms,  
no more pills for absence,  
only the sound of us dancing  
into a razed distance.  
Each note is new yet familiar,  
each wave a violent cause of joy,  
and even if all seasons are gone,  
we know,  
as we knew thirst,

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I won't cure myself of April,  
and you'll keep craving for October.  
One entirely made of flesh,  
the other invisible like music.

## Metamorphosis

By Karen Mary Berr

It's all happening without mercy  
on time and inevitably  
like breathing.  
Shadows in full blossom  
suddenly pierce your crackled heart  
in that blue hour before dark.  
Before washing the dust out  
of the day in the sink,  
before lighting a cigarette  
and smoking the world away  
or simply getting undressed.  
No matter what you've been doing before,  
now you're the one naked,  
the one alone.  
You can clothe yourself in chain mail  
you are naked,  
but no one can see you.  
Faces and words retire  
behind soft padded walls.  
Senses derive in their own cage,  
under synthetic lights.  
Each night there's less and less  
carmine, less and less dope  
in your favorite wine.  
Then, here you are,  
unable to lie or hide -  
and all that breathes and sighs  
slips on your skin,  
Solitude has silked your body, entire.  
Oh what a dirty little secret  
is the chamber of your dissolution.  
You lie there like a peeled fruit  
birds keep singing,  
milk oozing from trees,  
but your eye still open  
has no meaning,  
your pulse not stopping

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is a vain trance.  
Yet a tender rustling  
comes along with it,  
no louder than cigarette paper  
unfolding,  
As if buried within your cells  
lodged a capacity for wings.  
Maybe nothing of you will remain  
except that frail music,  
maybe like the moth  
there's nothing else to save  
outside the chrysalis.  
Life, before it liquefied  
was just a tight net.  
Now some voices in the dark  
have the gall to call  
you winged.  
Oh please don't stop,  
mystify them.



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**Karen Mary Berr bio:** Karen Mary Berr was born in France, where she studied Applied Arts and Art History. She lived in Bosnia, Lebanon and Canada, before returning to France in 2004. Short films based on her poetry have been featured on Moving Poems, Hypocrite Design Magazine and File Electronic Language (Highlike) and screened in festivals. Her poems have been published in Lost Coast, El Aleph Press, Deep Water Journal, Construction, and other reviews.