



February 2010

Volume X Number 2

- COVER
- GREETINGS
- EDITORIALS
- LETTERS
- COLUMNS
- ARTS
- LINKS
- ARCHIVES

NEXT Issue coming
out on the 1st

[Word Worth[®] is now accepting unsolicited contributions.](#)

[Word Worth's
Site of the Month](#)

In This Issue:

[2009 Contest Winners](#)

[New Contest—Poetry](#)

[Alastair Reid](#) [Classic Readings](#)

Love Child?—Not Hardly

As a result of the damage that stray pairing has done to individuals, families, societies, and even nations, human cultures have rules for unions. When the rules are broken and offspring result the children have been referred to as bastards and as being illegitimate. Recently, ... a number of sources refer to such a child as a "Love Child." That label is far worse ...

by Anna Seymour *in* [Editorials](#)

The Rocks

I went to see the flat rocks in the creek today. I went to feel them pressing into the earth beneath my boots, to smell their wet muddiness, to curve them in the palm of my hand, to crouch down and fling them across the surface of the water and watch them skip—five, six, even seven times—before they disappeared underneath the flowing current of Tannery Brook.

by Elizabeth Morana *in* [Columns](#)

Poetry



in [Arts](#)

“Love Child”? – Not Hardly

by Anna Seymour

As a result of the damage that stray pairing has done to individuals, families, societies, and even nations, human cultures have rules for unions. When the rules are broken and offspring result, the children have been referred to as “bastards” and as being “illegitimate.” Recently, there has been recognition that disparaging labels for such children is unfairly placed on them since they had no choice in their generation. Consequently, a number of sources refer to such a child as a “love child.” That label is worse than any of the others.

John Edwards’ fiasco is the perfect case in point. To refer to his bastard daughter as a “love child” implies that his other four children were not the result of love. The history of his eldest child’s death is well chronicled, as is the devastation that the event brought to John and Elizabeth. Elizabeth pursued scientific resources so that she could produce children well after biology normally permits. There is always considerable risk with carrying and giving birth so late in life. It’s unfathomable that someone would imagine that any one of her children is not a “love child.”

While the unfortunate child should not be held accountable for the egregious misdeeds of the illegitimate parents, the parents certainly should be. What Edwards has done to his wife would be unspeakable even if she did not have incurable cancer. He has sent a message to his daughters that they have to expect disloyalty and betrayal from a man they love and have reason to trust. He has set a very low example for his son to follow.

Add to that the fodder that gossip writers spread around claiming that “all” men are unfaithful, that men can’t be expected to follow the rules, and the bar gets lowered for everyone. All men are not unfaithful! Since the ratio of men to women is roughly equal [more boys are born than girls, but boys die earlier], either there is an unfaithful woman for every unfaithful man—since they have to have someone to be unfaithful with—or there are some pretty busy women out there.

The notion that men are inferior creatures who don't have the moral spine to follow the principles that their sex historically created is appallingly gender-biased.

In addition, women who actively pursue married men hardly have the right to complain. After Bill Clinton's book came out, Monica Lewinski whined, "... he talked about it as though I had laid it all out there for the taking. I was the buffet and he just couldn't resist the dessert." But, by her own account of thrusting her naked, thong-decorated butt in his face, that's exactly what it was. In the Barbara Walters interview, Lewinski was pathetically unrepentant.

While Lewinski managed to cash in on her notoriety for a little while, Rielle Hunter was a million dollar winner right away with her payload illegitimate child, Frances Quinn. It's a very unfortunate way for a child to come into the world, making life difficult for her father's three legitimate children and torturous for his mortally ill wife. There is certainly no "love" here.

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)



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COLUMNS

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COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

Elizabeth Morana, Ph.D. is a writer, writing instructor, a Regional Representative of IWWG, and retired Clinical Psychologist. She facilitates unique writing groups for both adults and children that enhance personal development by embracing significant life experiences through writing to prompts. Her writing explores themes such as family history, the healing effect of constructing family narratives, and the spiritual connection to one's

The Rocks

by Elizabeth Morana

I went to see the flat rocks in the creek today. I went to feel them pressing into the earth beneath my boots, to smell their wet muddiness, to curve them in the palm of my hand, to crouch down and fling them across the surface of the water and watch them skip—five, six, even seven times—before they disappeared underneath the flowing current of Tannery Brook.



I hadn't intended to. I'd meant only to drive out Maple Road toward Route 400, to leave East Aurora and its creek to the night that was soon to settle over it.

But no. I made the mistake of glancing upstream, over the Maple Street Bridge as I drove by. And there they were. The rocks. Some exposed along the shore in irregular patches, others on the creek bed with the water rushing over them, continuing to shape and smooth their already-perfect surfaces in its

hurry toward Lake Erie, still miles of journey ahead. And there were the exposed roots of the White Oak that seemed to threaten to fall into the creek any moment but whose other far-reaching roots grasped the earth near Howe's Funeral Home and held on for dear life.

I shouldn't have looked. But I did. I swerved the car, made a U-turn, and parked in a grassless patch by the curb. The rays of the evening sun shed long lines of platinum across the field as I picked my way down the steep, muddy incline to the creek.

The rocks glistened along the opposite shore. I stepped gingerly into the water, careful of each footing before taking the next step over the slippery rocks that covered the creek bottom.

I was ten years old again and on my way down the creek to play cowboys and Indians in the woods behind Howe's funeral home—the woods that no longer existed, trees struck down to make space for a sleek house,

ancestors, whose lives can be explored through their letters and journals, dispersed possessions, and artistic creations. Her memoir, "The Creep," won Honorable Mention in the 2007 Soul-Making Literary Competition sponsored by National League of American Pen Women, Nob Hill branch.

hills flattened for a yard for other children, leaving less landscape with which to imagine.

My father had loved rocks. "Come on, pile in the car! We're going to Hemstreet!" There was many a Saturday morning in the mid-fifties that started with this chant, as our father would round up his five lazy children sprawled in front of the TV watching Bugs Bunny cartoons. "We're going to capture a rock!" he shouted as he flung the front door open.

After a short spat about whose boots were whose, all five of us found protective coverings for our feet and tramped out to the Studebaker station wagon, singing, "We're going to Hemstreet! We're going to Hemstreet!" We hung onto the door handles or the back of the seat as Dad stepped on the gas and careened down Girard Avenue and out Girdle Road to go rock hunting.

Other cars drove by on Maple Street but no one looked down into the creek; no one questioned my presence. I pulled a plastic bag out of my pocket and began to collect the flat rocks, those amazing missiles that fly like space ships over the water's surface, looking for a safe place to finally land and hide. I turned my back on the house whose windows looked over the creek and hoped the occupants would not call the police to complain of a thief on their property. Yes, Officer, I think she's taking our skipping rocks. Those rocks are protected by the NYS Environmental Protection Agency, you know. Can you please send someone over?

I kept shoving the premium ones into the bag; the slender ones, the ones that fit just right between your thumb and finger, discarding the too-heavy ones, the ones that plunk into the water like a lead weight, throwing a frenzy of water up in their wake. I held my bag of booty in front of me and out of line of sight of the possessive land owner who was probably dialing the phone at that very minute.

I hadn't always been such a goody two-shoes, such a worrier about rules.

I'd been a hippie in the 1970's, and long away from home, when I decided one day to hitch-hike to Elizabeth, New Jersey to visit my father in his new home. My last ride dropped me off only a block from his house on Stiles Street and as I came around the corner, I found him in the front yard, studying a long row of medium-sized boulders, which stretched across the front of the small, square yard. A six-foot slab of plywood resting on some two-by-fours served as his work table.

His face glowed. "Melissadee! How's my Lizaduft?" He was so immersed in his work, he didn't think to ask how I'd made the four-hundred-fifty mile trip from Buffalo. Dusty from the rocks. Dad carefully set down the smooth brown rock in his hands, hugged me, and showed me his half-completed porch. The trellis that had decorated the wooden porch had been removed, and in its place were several rows of rocks, one as different as the next, cemented into the beginnings of a wall.

Dad pointed to the rocks on the ground, explaining, "You have to think about it first. You gotta look at its size, its shape, its color. It's like building a mosaic." For the next hour, he lifted each one of the dozens of rocks cluttering the front yard, caressing it and explaining its chemical composition and how the earth had formed it

—whether it was spit out by a volcano, crushed mightily by rocks over it, or dropped by a glacier.

Hunched over the skipping rocks by the Maple Street Bridge, with a pale wind cooling my face, I press against the ground with my palm to hoist myself up to standing position. The shadows from the Oak now stretch in long, slender designs along the field that was once the cowboy-and-Indian-woods. I remember the warmth of the rose quartz tucked between my bra and my skin as I flew to Mocksville NC to attend my father's funeral in 1991. Again I see my brother Frankie placing the still-warm piece of pink rock in my father's stiff hands, neatly folded in his coffin.

He will hold that rock until his hands are no more, and only the rock will remain there in the earth where he once lay.

I look downstream, watching the white spots of foam on the water's surface, vaguely wondering how long it will take that particular gallon to reach Lake Erie.

Then, something happens. The place becomes very quiet and the trees begin to hum. The whole place—trees, rocks, water, mud—begins to hum a soundless mantra and I see the physical world around me, now overlaid with an alternate universe, vibrant and energetic, standing here with me, pressing against me. Silent, invisible, persistent, alive.

[Cover] [Greetings] [Editorials] [Letters] [Columns] [Arts] [Links] [Archives]

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ARTS

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COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

REID

READINGS

SELECTED POEMS BY JENNIFER CAMPBELL

An English Professor at Erie Community College in Buffalo, NY, and a co-editor of the feminist literary collective *Earth's Daughters*, Jennifer Campbell has recently had over fifty poems published in journals such as *Slant*, *Slipstream*, *Rockhurst Review*, *Caesura*, *HeartLodge*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Letterhead*, *Not Just Air*, *Circle Show*, and the Canadian journal *PRECIPICE*, and work is forthcoming from *Eclipse* and *Louisiana Literature*. Her first book-length collection of poems, entitled *Driving Straight Through*, was published by FootHills in 2008.

[Visiting Ruins](#) · [Worry Dolls](#) · [Georgia](#) · [Artistic License](#) · [Ostensibly](#) · [Last Touch](#)

Visiting Ruins

“In the name of Zeus! Of what use
are words when one’s in love?”
—Nikiphoros Vrettakos

The colored birds of Companionship and Desire
set out one year ago, searching for the world’s
center point, on which they might alight. Today
they collide atop the navel of the world.

Your Delphic hands cause rockslides, your eyes
father earthquakes. I ease into the Sacred Way
of your temple, barefoot and marble-smooth.
I am no Zeus, you no mere mortal. The more

you give, the less that remains, yet you willingly
crumble into my cupped hands. Then you spread
oracles, seeds into my future, possibility
sprouting from stone. Long after becoming ruins,

a study in art and torment, I will discover your
core, find it smoldering, vital, within mine.

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Worry Dolls

I can't sleep some nights with so many
stacked under my pillow, propping my neck
in uncomfortable angles. There's one for you, Lisa,
and your matter-of-fact answer: *mini-strokes*
or a tumor. It must have frightened you,
vision failing one day, but I imagine
you rushed home anyway to fix the family dinner
with peripheral sight. One for you, Becky,
and your sabotage of seven sober months.
What did you think about as you flew down Main Street
drunk, playing chicken with police on the eve
of your sentencing? Tonight, you all become the dolls,
dream wires wound with bits of yarn, linked by hand
in a colorful chain—*gather your hot, silvery fear*
into one wand, and I will anoint you with light—
the women who never see it coming, who barrel
through blackness, straight toward disaster.
Muñeca, sweet green and orange beauty, lined beside
a purple-blue sister, peel open your heavy, heavy eyes
and focus upon hope, one night at a time.

Georgia

She doesn't second-guess.
Peering through windows, neighbors
note the impossible, Grinch-like heaps
of empties, flowerpots, firewood,
tracing the high ceiling of her dilapidated
mansion. Curls of paint drop to the floor
in piles of forgotten finishing school etiquette,
tarnished dessert spoons indecently drape over
steak knives in the sink. The townspeople
choose to ignore the lingering smoke
and respect her right to gather crap, leave
the house in torn jeans and chat up the man
at the nursery about Keats while she buys
far more flowers than she can plant. Back inside,
it's a symphony, really, the sound forty cats
make crashing down the halls, some with cans
stuck on their heads. They say it's a wonder
how someone so brilliant and well-read
lies all day in bed when good firewood
is expecting to be invited inside.

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Artistic License

—upon having poems rejected by a journal

You can reject
my poems before
the ink dries—
that won't change
the fact I ruined Eliot
for you, disproved your
theory of a scared prude.
Fourteen thousand
attended his lecture in
a Minneapolis ballpark,
to hear him argue
the stuff of poetry
(that is, emotion) must
be created, not merely
felt. He wasn't hiding
behind Prufrock; he was
refining the insecurity,
sloppy pain we all feel.

You can refuse
to imagine Van Gogh's
*Iris*s, but I've proven
his sanity by these
very flowers and their
uncharacteristic precision.
His ghost isn't haunting
galleries, rewriting
artist's statements—
he is dead, on his own terms,
leaving Gauguin to inhabit
yellow chairs, doubt
his own superiority.

And you can try
(like Ginsberg did)

to make Walt gay, but after
holding hands with Allen
in a neon supermarket,
Whitman had a hot date
with a young widow
under cubist clouds and

a notoriously starry sky,
Degas' dancer perched on
on his tiny ceramic fingertip.

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Last Touch

—after Dorianne Laux’s “Her First”

It won't be her first death, but you
will be her first man. She will smooth
down her scrubs, consider how to lower
your eyelids, close the shades on a man
never this exposed. Not quite those of a father,
there is something familiar about your
rough thumbs and uneven cuticles, the skin
on your chest far softer than hers.

She will imagine that one night your hand
reached out, guided a woman's doubt
into that warm palm, and led her through
a crowded concert, the drums hammering,
changing the rhythm of your taxed heart.
She'll sense that you made this woman whole,
filled in her shallows like heavy, welcome rain.

And hesitate when placing the pad
of an index finger atop eyelids
that never stopped seeing, never allowed
total repose, just stood watch
over lovers and friends.
Locking the speculation inward,
eternally, she'll never forget how long
it took the warmth to hand over your body.

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)



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