

[Home](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Autumn 2007](#)

[Summer 2007](#)

[Spring 2007](#)

[Winter 2007](#)

[Autumn 2006](#)

[Summer 2006](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

[Fall 2005](#)

[Summer 2005](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)

[Contact](#)



### **The Stumble at the Gate**

Even a horse race isn't a horse race  
if you can comprehend the imponderables.

There's the horse, the jockey, the track,  
the trainer, the weather, and the post position.

Grasp all these and the game is yours,  
The whole racing world is yours to command.

Trouble is, while you think you're in control,  
the imponderables ponder on despite you.

The best horse stumbles at the gate.  
The clouds open up wetting your dry horse.

Life is like a horserace all right. Only it's the  
imponderables that are racing. You're the purse.

### **Eminently Victorian**

When the homosexual writer, Lytton Strachey,  
took up with the virgin painter, Dora Carrington,  
they created an oddly mismatched couple.

He was all sticks and stones; she all fur.  
They were totally incompatible sexually.  
He chased boys; she painted but did not show.

Carrington was afraid of sex, hid away in her art,  
but Lytton's docility brought out her protective nature.  
She painted his rooms like the Garden of Eden.

He wrote *Eminent Victorians* throwing  
conventional biography a new, personal twist.  
She eventually had a few casual affairs of her own.

But she always cared for her Lytton best of all.  
Eventually, she married a returning war veteran,  
and all three lived together in a cottage in Wiltshire.

The painter pursued the writer who rejected her;  
The writer pursued the soldier who rejected him;  
The soldier pursued the painter who rejected him.

On the surface, they got along swimmingly,  
each reinforced the other in this queer harmony,  
but beneath that, they knew it couldn't last.

Strachey died of undiagnosed stomach cancer.  
Carrington followed taking her own life with a shotgun.  
The soldier wandered off into the mist between the wars.

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### **Riding on the State**

When Susan B. Anthony was arrested in 1872  
for voting and being a woman  
(the crime was only in the combined admission),  
she was taken from her home on Madison Street  
to a trolley on West Main by a deputy marshal  
to be booked at the Central Police Station.

As they entered the trolley car,  
the officer dropped his coins in the box,  
but Susan refused to open her purse.  
She's being arrested,  
he explained to the car man.  
*I ride on the State*, explained Susan.

Since when does that excuse the fare?  
She looked at the car man indifferently.  
He looked at the deputy indifferently.  
He looked at them as they took their seats.  
What else was there to be done?  
*She rides on the State*, the car man grumbled.

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### **Tormented by Mosquitoes: July 22, 1944** *for Tamura Tsunejiro*

The rainy season is over.  
It has suddenly gotten very hot.  
I have no incense or mosquito net.  
I spent a sleepless night swatting at them.  
The mosquitoes attacked all night  
with no mercy for my old body  
worse than the enemy planes.

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### **Finding the Energy to Teach First Grade**

When Frances Evans got up some mornings  
she knew she didn't have the energy to face  
her class of first graders.

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She was in her mid-70's.  
The death of her youthful husband,  
the minister, taught her the necessity of work.

There were days in 1952,  
when Doctor Bessie got the call  
from Mrs. Evans rather early.

By 6 AM, he had walked down Pawling Avenue  
and up Maple Street to her apartment.  
He knew where the key was located and let himself in.

He found the bedroom and pushed open the door.  
She was always facing the wall and never acknowledged him.  
He lifted the bed sheets and gave her a shot of Vitamin B 12.

If she had money to give him, she left it on the bed stand.  
I don't know what modern medicine says of this practice,  
but with B12 Frances Evans summoned the energy

to pull up her girdle and march down Maple Street to the school  
where many of her first grade students reported decades later  
that she gave them some of the best education they ever received.

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**Gary Lehmann** is a writer, playwright and poet whose poems have been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His poem "Reporting from Fallujah" was nominated for 2006, and his poem "First in Flight" was nominated for 2007. His three act play "*Susan B.*" about Susan B. Anthony's role in the suffrage movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century has been produced three times in Rochester. He is the director of the Athenaeum Poetry Group and editor of the group's first chapbook, *Poetic Visions*. He is co-author and editor of a book of poetry entitled *The Span I Will Cross* [Process Press, 2004] which anthologizes poems of the poetry group, Five in the Afternoon. He is author of a book of poetry, entitled ***Public Lives and Private Secrets*** [Foothills Press, 2005] featuring poems on the private lives of famous people. His short play, "My Health Care Worker Stole My Jewelry" was selected for professional production in January 2006 by Geva Theatre, Rochester, NY. His second book of poetry, *American Sponsored Torture* was released by Foothills Press in May 2007. It explores the moral implications of the American decision to accept torture as a means of gathering information. He regularly publishes over 100 articles per year. Visit his website at [www.garylehmann.blogspot.com](http://www.garylehmann.blogspot.com).