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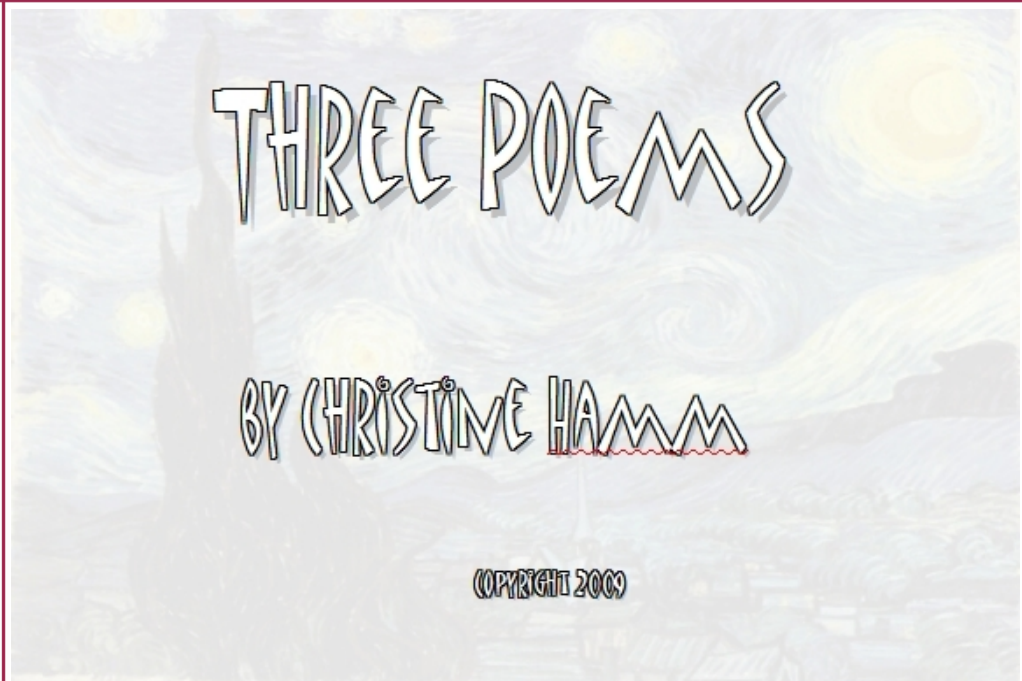
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Beyond the Porch Steps

the ground is full of entrances:
rivulets, groins, fissures,
glands swelling from under
brown leaves crisp as paper,

roots grab hold
and twist like a blind
hand finding an eye,

dark mold,
in the crotch of things,
on the rotted squirrel
skull, on the fallen hive

In the Garden

the singing of the invisible
known only by deliberate
dark flicks in the shadows
of spiked leaves sounds
like children speaking very
rapidly and suddenly

she has never seen these tiny birds before
they move oddly
swinging up and down in the air
before landing, she is new
to this place, their song unfamiliar

the noise of the birds
constantly changes,
falling and rising as she enters
the space between bushes

she thinks perhaps they watch,
and are following her

Tristessa

lush, snow white, you hated your round calves
and cheeks, your hair so straight and dark, bangs
a severe horizon across your eyes, the dresses
your mother picked out and altered, always something
navy, nunnish, the skirt a little too long, you were the first
and last girl whose hand I held without panic

we gave each other horse names
during recess, I held strands of your hair
behind you as if they were reins, we clucked
to each other when we moved, the clicking
tongue riders use along with their heels,
a sound like stuttering cicadas, when the boys
hit you and made you fall down I hit them back

you were twelve and you used pills, not
very many, the first time

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Christine Hamm is a PhD candidate in English Literature at Drew University. She won the MiPoesias First Annual Chapbook Competition with her manuscript, *Children Having Trouble with Meat*. Her poetry has been published in *The Adirondack Review*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Lodestar Quarterly*, *Poetry Midwest*, *Rattle*, and many others. She has been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize, and she teaches English at CUNY. *The Transparent Dinner*, her book of poems, was published by Mayapple Press in 2006, and her next book, *Saints & Cannibals*, is due out in Fall of '09. For more about Christine, go to chamm.blogspot.com.