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## Three Poems

*by Gary Lehmann*

### Watercolor Fantasy

One day after dinner, Thomas Gainsborough tried something new.  
Just for fun, and because he was having trouble getting clouds right,  
he attached a small rag to the end of a stick.

In several dishes, he mixed up a very light set of multi-colored washes.  
Dipping his stick from one dish to the next, he swept the rag over the paper.  
Then he walked each wet sheet across the room to dry it by the fire.

Anxious to get back to wetting more, he called in the maid to take over.  
There were the clouds that had evaded him, emerging as if from no where.  
He noticed that the darker colors created valleys and mountains just as easily.

With the simple addition of a few people, animals and trees,  
he suddenly created a new landscape, a house set into the hillside, a dream.  
It was magical, like discovering Alice in Wonderland inside a simple pencil.

### The Orphan Train

We'd pull into a station whether it was day or night.  
The Children's Aide Society lined us up on the platform.  
Lots of people came to see us. Free children. No questions asked.  
I stood holding my brother's hand so they'd know we wanted to stay together.  
Those who were selected went off with their new parents -- then and there.  
The rest of us got back on the train bound for a new station and a new chance.

Mother died of tuberculosis in 1925 in Elmira.  
Father Floyd was still suffering from war injuries.  
He couldn't hold a job and had to give us up.  
The Society arrived in a big car and offered us candy.  
That was the last we saw of our parents, home, or friends.  
For a time we lived in an orphanage in New York City.

Then in December 1927, we were put on The Orphan Train.  
For days we lined up on platforms from Philadelphia to Atlanta.  
Victor and I always dressed in our best clothes.  
We'd hold hands quietly and wait. There was nothing else to do.  
The hardest part was getting back on the train,  
knowing some children had found a home in this place we hardly knew.

Then one blizzardy night, the train rolled into Wellington, Texas.

The Society took over the lobby of a local hotel to get everyone inside.  
Victor and I got so used to rejection that we hardly looked at the people.  
A rancher came up to us and asked if we'd like to live on a farm.  
*It'll be hard work, he said, but you'll be outdoors most the time.*  
We looked at each other and shook our heads. Yes.

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## **Fluffernutter**

In 1507, a German cartographer  
working in rural Saint-Die, France  
decided for no particularly good reason  
that he would name the continent  
on the other side of the Atlantic

-- America --

because it is the Latin form of the  
first name of Amerigo Vespucci,  
the man who first suggested that a  
continent might be in that location.

Fluffernutter was named with more sense than that!

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Twice nominated for the *Pushcart Prize*, **Gary Lehmann's** essays, poetry and short stories are widely published. Books include *The Span I will Cross* [Process Press, 2004] and *Public Lives and Private Secrets* [Foothills Publishing, 2005]. His most recent book is *American Sponsored Torture* [FootHills Publishing, 2007]. Look for his next book from Foothills in 2010, *American Portraits*. Lehmann holds a Ph.D. from Duke University in History and English. Visit his website at [www.garylehmann.blogspot.com](http://www.garylehmann.blogspot.com)