

Adrienne Drobnies

Turning the Crank

Turning the crank was what we did
on hot summer evenings
to make ice cream

We took turns as
it got harder and harder.
You packed in the ice and salt
till you paddled out some mealy mixture.

It's not the same now
when you pull the plug just before the motor runs out.

That's what we did hot summer evenings
to the distress of the horny toad
who lived under the porch,
while watching the stars
or fireflies die in a jar,
little lucifers –
tiny demons we smothered.

Then one 4 July I sat in front of a fire and watched fire
drip from a stick --- little pellets of congealed petroleum.
The same stuff used in those days to burn Asians
we used to cover our food to keep it fresh.

Through this fire I watched
a woman make love to a man.
The white bodies grappled with one another
trying to find a solution.
In a tangle of limbs and melted wax,
he flew a helicopter above the heads of people running.
He looked down and shot them.
Girls were what he needed at the time
who knew death only as an abstraction.

The rest of the revelers had fallen into an opiated sleep
and drawn themselves into the corners of the night,

where I was left alone with the lovers,
indifferent to my pleasure
or their own.

Now the woman daily drinks herself to death
on a farm in southern Illinois
and I write about it.

The man has probably touched the earth again
or else has found a place inside it.

Adrienne Drobnies is PhD Biochemist and poet living in Vancouver, Canada. Her poetry has appeared in literary magazines, including *The Toronto Quarterly*, *Scrivener*, *The Sow's Ear Review*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, and *Ibbetson Street*. Her long poem, "Randonnées," was a finalist for the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) literary award for poetry in 2009. She is a member of The Bagel Bards.