

## Two Poems by Laura Orem

### Interstice

Dry as an August sun, cornstalks rustle and sigh  
along the running path, a conversation  
close enough to hear but not to comprehend.  
Hooves of deer, paws of fox and field mice scuttle  
in the fallen husks, invisible past three rows in.  
They wait like breath inhaled and held  
for me to pass along the road.

Slap of foot, flap of boot-sole, cadenced with drums  
and dust, twang in my thigh and calf muscles  
every time my sneakers hit the ground. I feel the rifle  
rub against my shoulder with each step. The ghosts of soldiers,  
marching west to Gettysburg, gaunt as smoke,  
whispering behind me in the stalks of corn -

my sons, my grandsons –

## The Feathered Man

*for Abbas Ibn Firnas (810-887 A.D.)*

*“He flew faster than the phoenix in his flight  
when he dressed his body in the feathers of a vulture.”  
Mu'min Ibn Said, 9th century poet*

Then he leapt off the cliff  
onto the confidence of his own genius,  
brash enough to hold him up  
two hundred feet or so  
as he swooped and dove  
above the astonished faces  
of the “trustworthy writers”  
who witnessed his magical flight.

No, no, not magic,  
he knew, but invention and  
the willingness to risk disaster,  
which he almost met, forgetting  
in the white heat of his Icaran vision  
to make a tail to rudder him down,  
so he crash-landed in a bloody heap  
at the feet of the crowd.

Still, the teeth he spat out and  
the torque in his spine were worth  
all the pain. For the rest  
of his life, as he hobbled by,  
he heard the whispers floating  
on the air of his wake:

*It's true, they all saw it -  
Like the birds, just like the birds,  
he flew, he flew.*

**Bio:**

**Laura Orem** was born in New York in 1961 and raised in Maryland. She holds an MFA in Writing and Literature from Bennington College. She is the author of the chapbook, *Castrata: a Conversation* (Finishing Line Press 2014), and her poems and essays can be found in many venues, both in print and online. Currently, she teaches writing at Goucher College in Baltimore. She is a featured blogger for *The Best American Poetry Blog* and is a senior editor at Toad Hall Press. She is also a jewelry designer, bookbinder, and mixed-media artist. She is the mother of two grown sons and lives in Red Lion, PA with her husband, Rick.