

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Erin Belieu**

**- poems -**

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## **Against Writing about Children**

When I think of the many people  
who privately despise children,  
I can't say I'm completely shocked,

having been one. I was not  
exceptional, uncomfortable as that is  
to admit, and most children are not

exceptional. The particulars of  
cruelty, sizes Large and X-Large,  
memory gnawing it like

a fat dog, are ordinary: Mean Miss  
Smigelsky from the sixth grade;  
the orthodontist who

slapped you for crying out. Children  
frighten us, other people's and  
our own. They reflect

the virused figures in which failure  
began. We feel accosted by their  
vulnerable natures. Each child turns

into a problematic ocean, a mirrored  
body growing denser and more  
difficult to navigate until

sunlight merely bounces  
off the surface. They become impossible  
to sound. Like us, but even weaker.

Erin Belieu

## **From On Being Fired Again**

I've known the pleasures of being  
fired at least eleven times&mdash;

most notably by Larry who found my snood  
unsuitable, another time by Jack,  
whom I was sleeping with. Poor attitude,  
tardiness, a contagious lack  
of team spirit; I have been unmotivated

squirting perfume onto little cards,  
while stocking salad bars, when stripping  
covers from romance novels, their heroines  
slaving on the chain gang of obsessive love&mdash;

and always the same hard candy  
of shame dissolving in my throat;

handing in my apron, returning the cash-  
register key. And yet, how fine it feels,  
the perversity of freedom which never signs  
a rent check or explains anything to one's family...

Erin Belieu