

THE NORTHBRIDGE REVIEW FALL '95

THINGS THAT SHOULD
NOT BE COMPARED





THE NORTH RIDGE MOUNTAIN
RIFLE '85

THINGS THAT SHOULD
NOT BE COMPARED

AND THE WINNER RECEIVES A FISH

Prizes are awarded annually in recognition of the finest works published in the Spring and Fall issues of *The Northridge Review*. The following awards are for the Fall 1994 and the Spring 1995 issues:

ATTENTION: Due to the uncomparable nature of the Fall '94 and Spring '95 issues, a winner has been selected from each.

The Northridge Review Fiction Award recognizes excellence in short story writing by a CSUN student published in *The Northridge Review*. The winner of this award receives x amount of dollars and... a fish.

The Fall '94 winner of this award is Amy Reynolds for "Waves." The Spring '95 winner of this award is Hormone for "You're Not Good Enough." We would like to thank Katherine Haake for evaluating the fiction.

The Rachel Sherwood Award, given in memory of Rachel Sherwood, recognizes excellence in poetry writing by a CSUN student published in *The Northridge Review*. The winner receives x amount of dollars and... a fish.

The Fall '94 winner of this award is Laura Eppich Bryce for "Widsith's Longing." The Spring '95 winner of this award is Rolin Jones for "Buttoning Her Dress." Thank you Khaled Mattawa, for evaluating the poetry.

The American Academy of Poets awards prizes every year for excellence in poetry. The winner is published in *The Northridge Review* and does not receive a fish. The winner of the contest is Randall Hinson for his poems, "Dance Hall Floor," and "Perfect Saturday Night." Honorable Mention was awarded to Stephen Daily. *The Northridge Review* would like to thank the evaluating committee for evaluating the submissions.

For **Jan Ramjerdi**. Our mentor. Our leader.
The lover of glow in the dark spiral.
Get the tattoo.

Special thanks to **Bob Meyer** for his help and dedication to
The Northridge Review. Paper selection is a long arduous process.
We Know. And thank you to **Camera Ready**. Without you,
no *Northridge Review*.

BIG HUGE THANK YOU

to **Karin Castillo**, English department savior, for her ability to create time through color coded papers and cow patch boxes. If not for Karin's exceptional organizational skills, the submissions to The Northridge Review would have ended up in a massive heap under the bed. Lost. Forever. Karin is multi-talented; she can type a letter, hold a conversation with Nancy, answer the telephone, a student's question, a professor's question, fix the zerox machine, and use a dinosaur IBM computer. All at the same time. All while eating a banana. Everyone at The Northridge Review would like to give you a big, huge thank you.

JUL • 64



When Karin isn't in the English department, she likes to wear a shower cap and contemplate Frosted-Mini Wheats in the bath tub. It brings out the child in her.

U S

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editor's note

The other morning, Saturday morning, I woke up laughing. Out loud. It was unlike the sound of my alarm, unlike the morning news, the traffic report. My anticipation: 9:30, channel 11, The Tick. Yes, The Tick, which, by the way, is THE BEST Saturday morning cartoon, no, the best TV show, NO, the best thing. EVER. I highly suggest you watch it. Anyway, I was laughing, remember?, when I woke up. I was having this dream: Big important presentation, every professor i must impress is there, in fact, my credibility as a student is on the line. (Either that or I was sitting around gabbing with some friends.) Whatever, there was this tremendous amount of pressure to say something, say anything, and all I could think of was this stupid, I mean really stupid, joke: "Why is 6 afraid of 7?... Because 7 ate 9" (7, 8, 9 for our slower friends). But then it dawned on me the incredible significance in this stupid little joke. And I went off: Mass consumption, 6 is afraid-- O.K., 7 is eating 9, right? forget all the sexual innuendos for a moment, if you can. 7 is this representation of our superstructure, the patriarchy, institutions. The lucky number 7, our culture buys into it, blindly, yet faithfully. It consumes 9, just eats 9 right up. 9 is the other. 9 is anything that stand in 7's way-- gone, mass consumption. Then there's 6. 6 knows what's up. 6 sees 7's plan, 7's complete domination and destruction of 9. 6 is afraid. But 6 endures. In fact, in the whole of the superstructure 6 comes before 7, is first in the linear line-up. 6 is the inversion of 9. Yet, seven is more and 6 is still afraid. And then I saw myself as 6. I am 6 and wait. Just wait. It's a joke. "Why is 6 afraid of 7?" is a joke, right? Uea, a joke. And so I'm laughing. Out loud.

My advice is this: Have better dreams. Don't think, just write. Every writer should be "Hones." Enjoy the English department. Submit to *The Northridge Review*. Watch The Tick. Remember, sometimes a joke is just a joke. And rip out all the insignificant pages while chanting, "Be gone J. Evans Pritchard, Ph. D."

With Utmost Sincerity,

J Julie

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I WILL NOW ADMINISTER
SOFT PAIN....

Alarm Clock

Joy Arbor Karnes

Once wound, it ticks measured steps
until, held in too long,
its shrill shriek of morning breaks in
ripping calm
with panic-soaked sheets.

My alarm clock wears two bells
like earmuffs or Princess Leia's cinnamon
bun braids. A present from Aunt Sylvia
when playing with dolls was banished.

Once, I threw it under the bed —
it uttered a cry —
and I marked its silence
for months.

A crack, a scar on its face,
a wound it sees the world through.

I have learned to distrust
its judgment.
I have another alarm clock.
It plugs in, a glowing beacon
in a dark room
 (like McDonald's down
 a foreign road, ghost of familiarity
 left behind)
it can't sneak up on me. I awaken
softly to it.

But the other one keeps
with me, a scornful voice
saying, "put that poem
back in your mouth."

SHINY NEW CAR, BMW

Sloane

driving a shiny new car, bmw
 she feels like a dentist's wife,
 two kids in the back seat
 on their way to daily summer camp
 both with straight, white teeth

driving a shiny new car, bmw
 she feels like a mafia boy's lover
 husband is taking her to lunch
 and the pearls *are* real,
 Broadway pumps,
 dress—real linen

driving a shiny new car, bmw
 she feels like a pretty girl,
 on the way to an important date,
 freedom
 radio blasting,
 reconcile with the past

driving a shiny new car, bmw
 in *this* car,
 she's someone else—
 anyone else—
 not herself

at seventeen
 he gave her a baby,
 and—after a kick in the gut—
 together they buried it
 a bloody mass in the backyard
 like an unwanted puppy

still—as a favor,
 he dropped her off at a clinic
 "slut," he said,
 not bothering to slow down the car
 her purse catching in the door handle,
 —*map!*

christmas, 1978
 instead of a cheerful toast
 he gave her a broken jaw
 and plenty of advice—
 thanks, daddy

good radio,
 good brakes,
 air-conditioning,
 daddy always said, "*what for?*"
 teeth white, like bmw

practically stolen,
 but *not*

well, *sort of*
 on sale
 ross, dress for less

momentarily,
 if *really* loud,
 drown it out

she's pimped
 yes,
 true,
thank god

17? *too young*
 boy or girl?
 why?

bloody mass
 still not sure

favor?
 in another city, 70-miles away
 blood soaking her jeans, clutching too little bus fare
 rusty pick-up—do they make generic pick-ups?
 vinyl, K-mart
 oh, well

christmas!
 he drinks too much anyway
 she didn't ask for that
 or *that* either

now, 1995
 he gave her a shiny new car
 still—not an apology

like a mafia boy's lover,
 she's still cheap in a shiny new car

music blasting—
 can't erase the thud, then the crack
 thanks, daddy, for the shiny new car—

polite, well-behaved,
 young ladies always say,

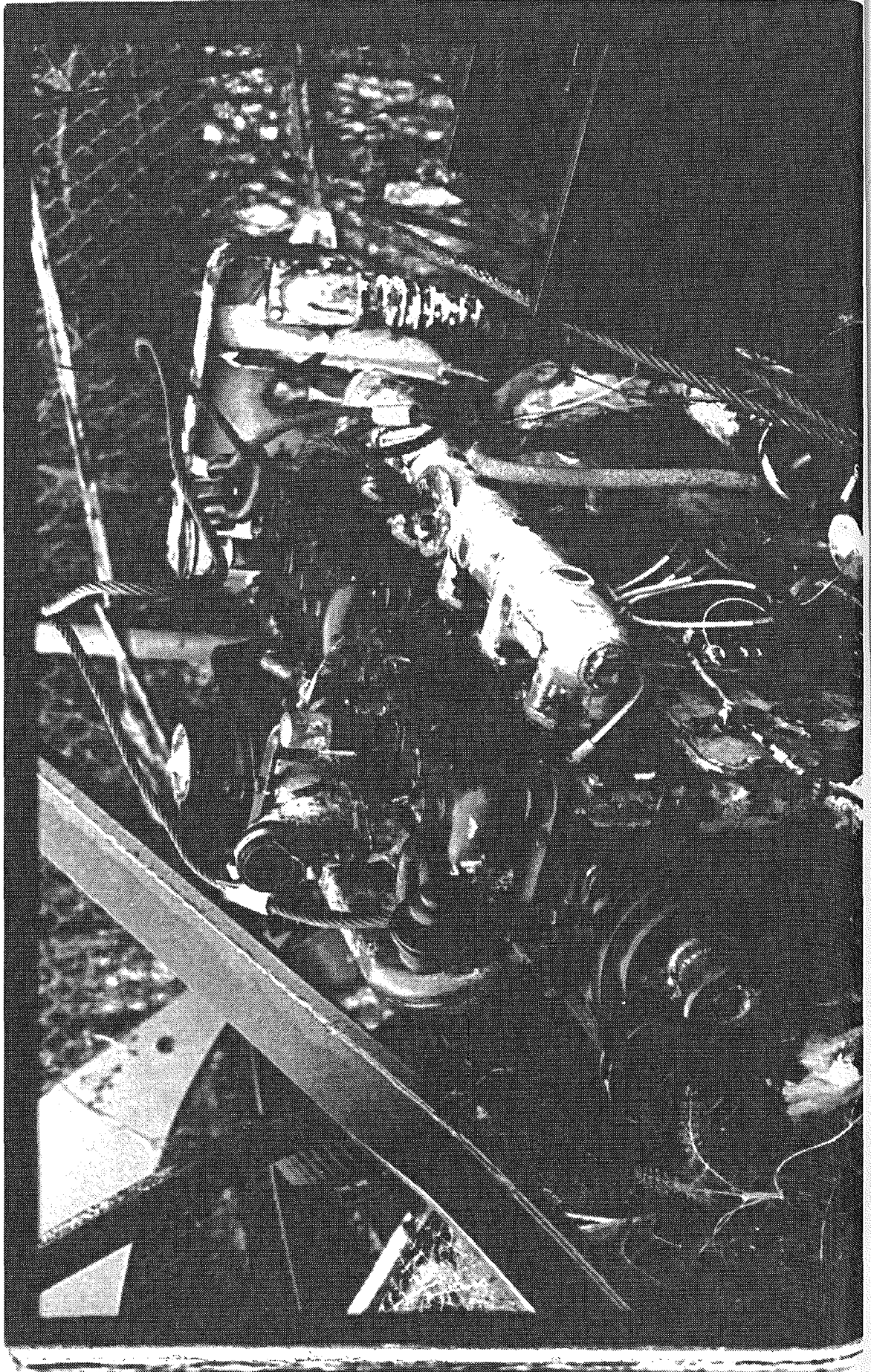
1995?
 a bmw
 none necessary
 no use crying over spilt milk

mafia?
 yes, sort of

—crack!
 bmw

thanks, daddy for the shiny new car

thanks, daddy



Josh Greenberg

El Toltec Saint Hitch Hiking Back to Mexico

William E. Archilla

On a decadent December night
Mario whose head
shines like Buddha's on a
leaping night, deserted
L.A lguas crawling over
broken bottles and beer cans
to cliff climb
the annual climax
up the celestial fire escape
and sleep sleep

Chihuahua couch

to D.F. bed

And ask, where's my Mexican heart?
Where demonios is it?
Where's my red velita,
flickering over my art?

Cardboard

Alan Mills

Driving on this highway, I fight
my vision's blur
and rein my Jeep to keep it
from the edge.
There'll be an exit

soon and it bothers
me by chanting omens
of what's coming up:
an old man, or even worse,
a young one or a girl,
a girl with a child
and a cardboard sign,
a girl and her dirt-stained child
playing with a toy
and a scrap
of someone's flat
tire. Fatigue

keeps the wheels drifting,
keeps the dividers humming
that familiar bumpity bump.
It's too early and I haven't
slept. Following traffic like a drone
takes too much
and I'm not prepared
for this earthquaked highway:
uneven and disproportioned
masses
of concrete fallen in jagged steps. I feel

shots of pain in my ass and regret
getting fucked last night; each bump
and pothole reminds me
like it's happening again. I think

about a student's poem
I read in class. Replaying itself
again and again, it makes me see
the arrows. The poem had little graphic
arrows marching across the page
like Freudian ants in a straight line,

attacking a word without saying why,
and all I can remember
are those tiny arrows, but there is

the exit to deal with still
and the cardboard sign and the girl
holding it. I see her standing
on the corner, placid like road kill,
waiting to be shoved
off the street,
but no one comes to do the job
because she is someone
else's
problem.
I don't think about her
either. I just conjure up new visions
of the cardboard sign and the miles
before I see it and sleep.
You know, "miles to go before..."

I sleep, but it's only a moment
before I jerk awake and right
my Jeep, jumping another three inch step,
my ass hurling its pain
up my angry spine.
It's like that thing's still
in there,
like it was never removed
and it hurts like one of those

arrows in the poem, pointing
at "us" and not saying why.
Why

do I have to get off at that damn exit anyway? Why
can't I just keep driving my Jeep
into the country where I could write
a poem about my tires
digging into soft mud and the cold,
wet feeling of it sliding
between my tread,
Instead

of these fucking cardboard signs
with their pleas and apologies?
They piss me off and they make
me afraid: I'm afraid the vet

is really crazy and the baby girl
is gonna' starve. I'm afraid
that I might be an idiot and a sucker
and that maybe this time,
this one single, isolated time, the sign
might really be funny,
or maybe not. Maybe it will point

at me like those arrows
pointed at "us". It was a mistake
to ask myself why: why do they point
at "us"? It's because they're
pointing at me. But why
are they pointing at me?
What is the poem trying to say
about me and why must

that fucking arrow point
at the exit right now? If I could just fall

asleep and leave the cardboard signs
locked outside, but of course I can't,
so I hate it instead
and I hold it in. It's that thing
bunched up in my stomach,
bloating inside
my bowels. I hate it,
I hate it
and I just want to shit it out,
but I can't, I can't
and I hate that too.



S&J

Scarecrow

Robert Meyer

The eyes appear just before dawn. I sense their presence in my sleep. When I wake up I can see them hovering over my bed in a place that makes the ceiling seem to never end, rising like a mine shaft into infinity.

My first thought is always that they are devil's eyes, glowing red with animal-like hunger, cornering their prey, before pouncing on it to satisfy an eternal craving. Then they look vaguely familiar, like the eyes of someone I once knew, but can't remember now. They turn silver like mirrors and reflect my own thoughts back to me, bringing memories and long forgotten dreams to my consciousness.

The first nightmare I ever had was of a scarecrow. A red scarecrow with a face molded into sternness that cannot be broken. The scarecrow carries a yellow ruler that he uses mercilessly to inflict pain. The pain is more than just the force of the ruler on my flesh. The kind of electricity comes from the ruler and an excruciating pain travels up the spinal column before exploding in my brain.

A blue ghost tries to protect me, by hovering over me. The ghost gets on all fours while I hide on all fours beneath him. The pain stops for a while, but the scarecrow is always too powerful and pushes aside the ghost whenever he wants.

I never know what I am being punished for. When I was older, I reflected whether I was being punished at all. Maybe the dream was just to demonstrate the sadistic nature of the world and that I had to look for protectors. I must have been only three or four when I had that dream. It was recurring until I was older. I don't remember when it stopped. The eyes may have stopped it.

The eyes show me a corpse that is still half alive. From the back, it looks like a lover I once had, a beautiful woman with straight black hair and fair white skin. One arm on the corpse is shorter than the other, it's like a vegetable, but still has some feelings. I can hear people talking about it, as if they are at a dinner party, noises from the silverware and serving trays in the background.

"Too bad about the arms not being symmetrical," one man says sounding very much like a disappointed art critic.

"I always thought she much more beautiful when she was younger and so much thin-

ner," a woman's voice in that friendly female jealous tone.

"Pity, really. Too bad she just had to pop off like that," an English gentleman's voice, disinterested.

Every time someone says something, I can see the corpse respond. Its skin shrinks a bit or one arm moves toward the other arm or the head tilts in one direction or the other. I finally have to say something, too.

"Please don't talk about her that way."

I hear the dinner party stop for a moment, as if they all hear a gust of wind and are listening for a gale to follow. The the party resumes its dinning noises as the eyes whisk me away somewhere, to some other scene.

One time, I thought I witnessed the end of the world. I was driving my car at night and looking at the moon. Strange electrical pulses like lightning were emanating from inside the moon, making it pulsate with power and energy. Then the moonlight began to fade and darkness settled in. It was a thick darkness, so thick that not even the headlights of the cars could pierce it.

I was trying to pull my car over to avoid hitting any other cars. The darkness had produced some sort of barrier against sound, because I couldn't hear anything. No car engines, no brakes squealing, no horns honking. I finally get some place I can stop. It is so dark. There are no outlines of trees, no stars, no buildings, no sound. I look up and can't even tell if there is a sky. I look down and don't even know if there is a ground. It feels as if I am floating. All I can think about is judgement and the end of the world. I'm overcome with fear, as I fall on my face to pray.

Something must have happened to me involving a vacuum cleaner when I was very young. I hate the whirring and sucking sound as it glides across the carpet, the sound getting stronger when it hits an area that needs extra attention. It's the sound a car makes when the tires are stuck in the snow and the driver is trying to rock free. It always sounds as if the car won't make it. I think that the vacuuming will never be done and the sound is just going to intrude into my life forever.

Maybe as a kid I was laying in my bed or crib and I needed something. Maybe my mother couldn't hear me above the sound of the vacuum. She had to clean, clean, clean while I lay screaming my lungs out to be heard over the noise. I just know that all my life I've hated that sound. I'd just as soon live in a dirty house than have to listen to that sound again.

People say you should have dreams. That's what all the advice people say, those who love to give advice to everyone. "You should always pursue your dreams." Or "You've got to have have dreams." Or "It's great to have dreams."

What if all your dreams are nightmares? Should you pursue them? "Follow that

demon!" "Don't let that dead body get away from you!" "Stay lost in the old dark house forever!" I wish I knew how to have good dreams. Nice dreams. Dreams that don't leave you in a pool of sweat that feels like blood. Dreams that let you sleep though the night, that don't leave you exhausted in the morning and throughout the day. Dreams that don't make you afraid to close your eyes to sleep.

The eyes just watch. They are impassive, but frightening, not moving or changing until that image has been seen and thoroughly absorbed. Then they disappear slowly, fading like a dissolving video image.

A woman is seated and tied to a straight back, wooden chair. She is naked, with straight black hair that stops at her shoulders. Her green eyes shine with fear. A thin nylon rope is being pulled through her open mouth by unseen hands. Her lips are bleeding on both corners. I think I am going to have to witness her head being completely garroted off her body.

The the woman gets up, as if she's been in a play that just ended. I watch her being transformed into a man, like one of those computer morphing programs. Two other men come into the scene from offstage, wearing robes. The one closest to me sneaks a long finger out of his robe. The end of the finger is a crooked razor. He sticks it into the woman turned man and says, "Now the real horror will start."

Every house on the block now has a red scarecrow with a yellow ruler. No place is safe, not even my own home. I'm riding the little red tricycle I used to ride as a kid, only now it can move much faster. I pass every home. The scarecrows look like statues, but I know as soon as I come close they will become fully alive and start to come after me. If I could figure out what I've done wrong, maybe I could correct it or make restitution. It's worse because I don't know. Maybe I've done something so bad, I've completely blocked it out. I've never been able to understand how that works, but somehow there are things that happen - events, conversations, distresses - our minds will not let us remember. But they are still always there, always waiting to be called up to consciousness.

I'm waiting for a train with my parents. We're on one of those platforms that's on the same level as the tracks. Grey clouds cover the sky, huge cumulus billows that hang suspended without moving. A train goes by slowly on the tracks farthest away from us. No one else is around. Both my parents grab their bags and start running toward the far train, as it moves slowly away from us. I yell at them, "It's not time for your train. That's not your train. It's not time, it's not time." They either don't hear me or can't hear me. The train is very loud. I run after them as fast as I can force my legs to go, but I can't catch them. They run up ahead of me until I can't see them any more.

A little girl wearing robes appears before me. She raises her hands to summon great

powers. A being named Steven appears. He is naked with a continual erection. There is nothing human about him. The only way to stop him is to chant his name continuously, "Steven, Steven, Steven." As he backs up, he changes into the red scarecrow. His erection becomes the yellow ruler that inflicts pain.

I look at the little girl. I look into her eyes. They widen and turn red, becoming the animal eyes that hover every night above my bed.

Pray

Hollie M. Goodwin Teltoe

I saw Mary rocking baby Jesus,
swaddled in a hag's dirty bathrobe,
near the drugstore where I had stopped
to suck marshmallows
out of a double Rocky Road.

It was cold.

Joseph stood in the street wearing his face,
that question flickering just below wet lashes.

One hand limp, thick,
dangled wasted.

The other bore his shield-
Will Work For Food.

I hate nuts

so I spit them out on the ground.

Mary paced in half circles,
stoop shouldered, lead breasted,

crooning comforts and lies

to baby Jesus

who dreamt of God.

Chocolate oozed from the tip of my cone
out of control

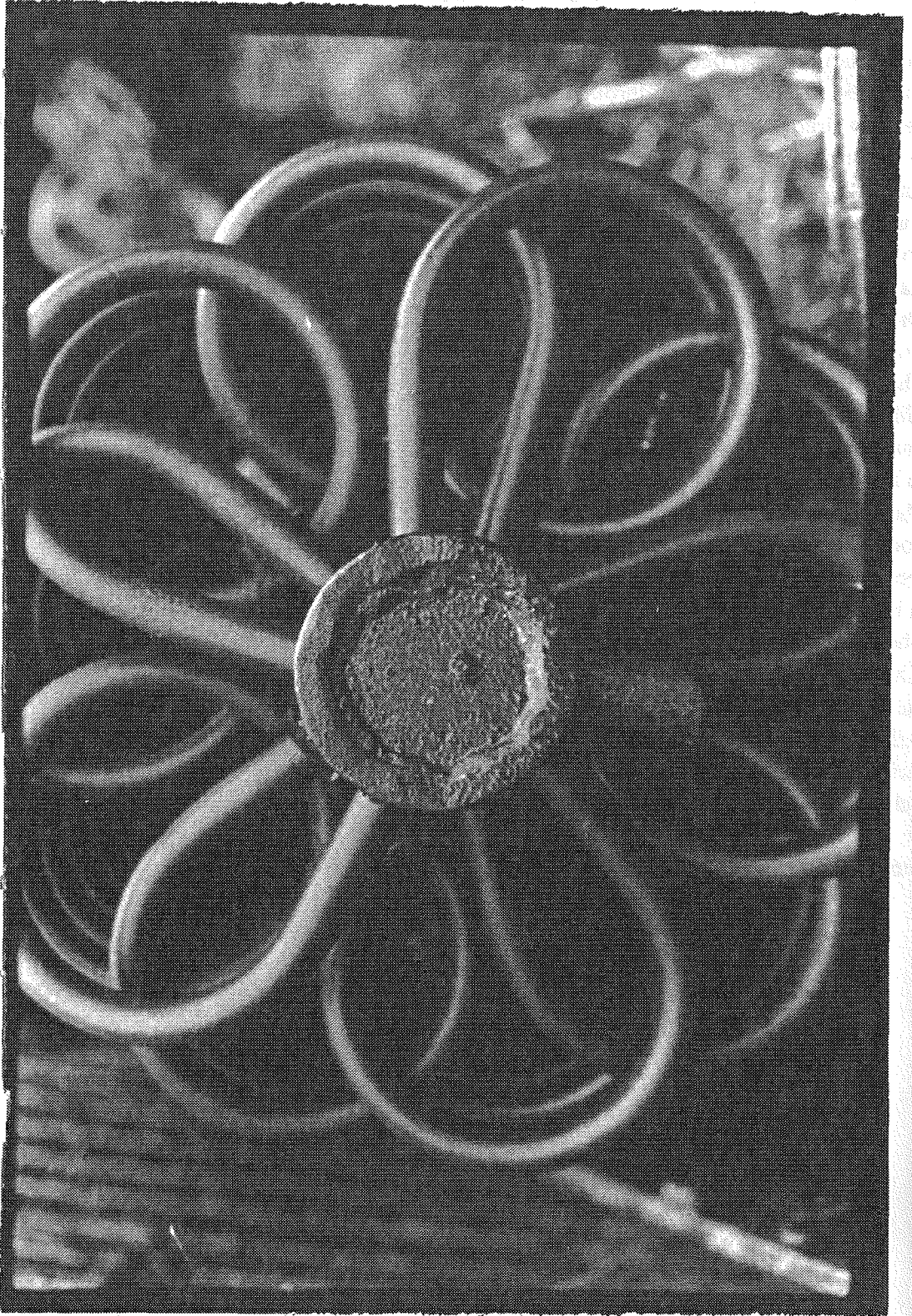
and dripped all over my shoes.

I wiped it off

but there was really nothing I could do.

So I threw it away

and went home.



Josh Greenberg

The Gourd of Mwari

Charisma Acey

I am Tsangurai, one of the last remaining here on this land. Upenyu has left my people behind, I suppose to seek fresh spirits of the young to guide through life, souls that wait, like seeds, forpollen from Mwari to make them bloom into being. The village heads say we are old. We bloomed before, having lived here, among the ancestors, since the very first season. Yet we left behind the protection of those who have come before, under the leadership of the village's chief priest, Mabvuure. He tried to save us, but he did not reckon on the forces from beyond, surpassing our control. And so the circle of eternity began to spin away, trying to carry us along. But I didn't think we should stand by and let it happen.

The spirit danced because it was free.

It pulsed rhythmically, an unseen kinetic force masking wild laughter easily mistaken for the clip of a newly fallen leaf or the fierce whisper of a light breeze and just as soon forgotten. A rock, spinning on the brink of chaos, held in place by the divine—a strategic molecular pull—held the spirit, the kernel of it.

Against the billion tiny rock crystals that spread onto forever sat Mabvuure, rigid, his gaunt body covered in lean muscle, his skin reflecting like polished onyx. He sat cross-legged on the sand, bony pointer legs protruding at angles like wild gestures of exclamation. Everyone knew the chief priest was waiting for *upenyu*, the life spirit, to come and lead them from disaster. As the oldest, he was the only one who could summon the life-force at will. Yet even the life spirit was known to breeze through at times, summoned merely by a child's listless tap on a makeshift drum or the hum of a popular washing tune by a woman at the sea.

The white foam atop the water seeped closer with the tide, initially licking Mabvuure's ancient toes, then lathering his ankles. Soon the thin old man would be swept away. Even so, no one urged Mabvuure return to the makeshift homestead on the sand over which he presided. After all, there had been no new food gathered for months, ever since he had led them to the edge of the land, where every day they could see the sun extinguished by the ceaseless water from Mwari's gourd. Their stomachs churned incessantly, tiny lumps of seaweed and salt sitting in their bellies, meat being a reluctantly forgotten luxury.

Tsangurai, of the thick head, ran to Mabvuure as the water reached the ancient leader's chest. The other young men shouted for him to return to their game of play hunting. But Tsangurai felt that if there was no food, what hunt was there to imitate? Why let Mabvuure

be swallowed by the sea? He rested his muscular arm on the elder's shoulder, intending to hoist him on his young, strong back. But Tsangurai was forced to relax his grip; the older one's arm felt like over-baked clay—too brittle. Suddenly feeling the village head slip away, he tried again to pull, stopping when he felt a hard smack against his leg. The young man fell into the foamy water, holding his stinging limb, baring his teeth in an ugly grin. Tsangurai looked around wildly wondering which of his laughing agemates betrayed him, but his eyes popped when he saw the old man's arm, attached to a stick, settling beneath the gentle waves. Mabvuure refused to look at him, only at the unending ocean. Tsangurai knew that he had been given a warning and a reassurance: Mabvuure must talk to the spirit.

We're going on a journey to the edge of the world, Tsangurai.

Why do we want to go there?

Things are changing; when is the last time a trader has come by our homestead to exchange his wares?

Many nights have passed, sekuru Mabvuure.

Something has happened to them. I don't believe traders will be by again. Even the animals are disappearing.

What is at the edge of the world?

The endless gourd of Mwari, filled with all the food we can eat.

No more leaves and dried up meat?

No more.

Why do you look sad, sekuru Mabvuure? We're coming back home, right?

I don't know.

As the sky shifted its place again, the surging waves swept Mabvuure into the sea.

Cries rang out in the air from all the women, who immediately fell to the sand, writhing with grief. The village heads beat the *ngomo*, summoning all those out scouting for food, playing, and gathering water to come in. Slowly, everyone headed to the central compound, frightened. Mabvuure had led them to the sea, now they wondered who would lead them back to land of the ancestors. Young women, their bellies full with children, held their stomachs protectively, wanting the shield of those who have come before. The elders announced they would have council and consult the oracle, letting everyone know what would happen.

Tsangurai, who had been sulking down the coast a little ways, came running up.

"I hope you don't plan to leave Mabvuure in the sea!" Tsangurai said.

There was shocked silence: How could the young man be so brazen?

"We can not leave Mabvuure in the sea!" Tsangurai said.

The men began to turn away, casting solemn eyes upon the boy as they turned their back to him and the rest, heading down the coast.

Several of the boys ran up to Tsangurai and grabbed him, wrestling him to the ground, then dragging him to the sea.

They surrounded him in a semi-circle, making the water Tsangurai's only escape.

Osiri spoke first. "If you want the old man, go join him!"

Tsangurai sat, silently fuming.

"We all know you were the favorite, chosen to learn his magic," said Osiri. "You think you're better than us. But you're not even from this tribe. Mabvuure found you like a rodent, tangled in the bush, and took you in."

The boys stood together, their faces stern, clenched fists waiting to pummel Tsangurai if he should make a move.

Finally, Tsangurai spoke. "So, is this, Osiri my *shamwari* since the earliest footsteps on this world? If I remember, Mabvuure chose you to learn the magic."

It was an obligation; Osiri was the son of Mutembo, one of the most respected men in the village with four wives and many heads of cattle. This was before he was forced to share them with the village when the traders and visitors from neighboring clans stopped coming by. It had taken a while for all the flow of social activity to stop. But one day, when the village of Masembura held its seasonal festival of the new harvest a time to bring out all the pumpkins and kola nuts they had harvested so they could trade with neighbors, no one came, save for a woman, her *zvrukwi* flying about her head like lightning bolts, screaming about ghosts. The women had carried her to Farai's hut, eldest wife of Mutembo, and placed ash on her head. They called Mabvuure, who asked they all leave the hut. When he came out, the woman, later named Farai, had calmed down, but would not let go of Mabvuure's *raffia* skirt. He looked grave, and immediately called the village heads together. Word spread that they should save up all the dried meat, store and put away as much as possible.

And then, as if a wind swept them away, all their neighbors stopped coming by, drying up the trade in jewelry for the women, cloths from the weavers, and the meat as well. They had heard a group of ghosts was heading inland, to take over the ancestral lands and wage war upon the spirits. They sent out scouts, who returned with the news that neighboring Muzengi had been deserted and that further on, they saw smoke rising in the distance, but it was too far to traverse with the supplies they had. In the fifth moon of hunger, Mabvuure had consulted the oracle, announcing that they were going to migrate to the edge of the world, to a place he had seen as a young man. Everyone was nervous, but they were also assured, Mabvuure being the oldest and knowing a lot, giving validity to his claim that Mwar's gourd existed at the edge of the world filled with all the food they could eat. They also hoped to

find what had happened to their neighbors. The whole village had to make the trek, for it was no telling how long until the food would run completely out and how long until new food or people would come again.

Now they had been living by the sea for months, off of seaweed, almost as if they were the last people in the world. This morning Mabvuure woke up, consulted the oracle and offered himself to Mwari on behalf of his people. He had openly embraced Osiri and taught Osiri the secrets of chief priest, but the eldest son of Mutembo always felt jealous over the affection Mabvuure showed for Tsangurai, who was found, abandoned. Osiri would look with envious eyes at the way he would take him off alone and show the latter steps to becoming a man. The elders used to cluck their tongues, worried that Mabvuure was embracing this outsider and causing trouble in the village. But Mabvuure was fiercely protective of Tsangurai, who had become a son to him, as his wife had been unable to bear children. This was a constant source of embarrassment for Mabvuure, as having children was considered a good omen and the spiritual head of the clan traditionally had a large brood.

Mabvuure did all he could to make sure Tsangurai was accepted. The boy was even accorded special treatment by everyone who hoped they could get a favor from Mabvuure. Most generally liked Tsangurai also, for he was fair and helpful, usually trying to help the women in the house instead of playing with the boys. The women would always shoo him away. If Mabvuure came by, he would laugh, teasing the women, "would it not be a good husband that can help you around the cooking pot?"

The women would laugh, exclaiming Mabvuure was too much.

But now, there was no more Mabvuure and as Tsangurai sat, surrounded by his age-mates, he felt extremely cold. He would find Farai, Mabvuure's wife from the village, as she was his only family. He wouldn't count on the people to stand behind him now that Osiri had declared war.

On a different day, beneath the same moon that witnessed Mabvuure's soul surrender to the life spirit, the people witnessed the magic of *upenyu*. Among the flat aroma of stale millet beer and boiled seaweed, came the musty odor of fish. As everyone ceased their activity and stared at the sea, droves of fish washed up along the shore. The pale, translucent sea-life glittered all the colors of the rainbow in the first sunshine since the famine. Ululations from the women, like laughing cascading bells, rang in the air, as everyone—children, their parents, and the parents of those ones—waddled into the water, gathering in the newly found salvation. Ashy gray smoke mixed with the sea spray as the first fires lit up, and the fish continued to come.

After all that could be gathered in one day was collected, the people grouped them

selves around small fires. Animated discussions, singing and hand plucked melodies from the *mbira*, floated above the crescendo of night's tide. Around one fire pit, the *vanaambuya* told stories to the captivated, round eyes of the young. Young girls danced and sang while serving the others and helping their mothers. All were aware that a slight distance away sat the eldest men, *sekuru*, huddled around a fire, younger fathers encircling them at a respectful distance. Their voices were hushed whispers, unusual for they loved to join in with the old women's stories and often accompanied the singing of the young women in atonal harmony. Bellies were full, but misgiving was in the air.

Baba Moyo, known for his quiet ways, surprised the men by speaking up.

"Ahem!" he said.

"Baba Moyo you wish to address me?" This was Madhlayo, brother to Mabvuure and the eldest in the homestead.

"Yes." He clapped his cupped hands, fingertips touching out of respect.

"Speak, then. Remember that I am we, and the ancestors can hear your heart."

"Yes...I wish to object to what we are doing."

Mumbles rose from the group.

"And what is that?" Madhlayo said.

"Denigrating the spirit of Mabvuure."

Everyone was aware of the village head meeting, but they ate, oblivious. If some bad news was in the offing, they could at least answer their crying bellies for the moment.

Tsangurai queried his peers if it was right they should eat when Mabvuure was not there. Osiri answered that did not his neglected stomach give him the answer? But the young man persisted, and soon the question was circulating the entire homestead.

Arguments arose with much arm flailing and wailing, and the wisdom of the village heads, who decided the village should offer the fish back into the sea in exchange for Mabvuure's spirit, since he was the one who guided them to this spot to silence their talking stomachs, and it was his spirit who had to lead them back. But, Osiri argues, if there was no village left to lead back to the ancestral lands, then what good was a guide? But the elders had consulted the oracle, and there was no turning back now, they had to follow through with the return of the sea treasure.

All the fish were given back to the sea, except one that was tucked into the waist skirt of Osiri. But a girl, Chipso, saw him, and called him out. The shame of being exposed by a girl, made him throw the fish back finally, with disgust. They waited amidst the returned odor of stale beer and seaweed. Nothing.

The famine was worse than ever. Even the seaweed had seemed to take off for better,

unmolested parts. Some wanted to complain, but they were silenced by those who felt even a word against their action would taint it and render it invalid. But one day, Madhlayo, Mabuure's brother, went to the hut of Tsangurai who had taken Farai for his own wife and asked him to lead them home.

"I'm sorry sekuru Madhlayo, but how?"

"Consult the oracle."

"Isn't that Osiri's place?"

"We have been having him try but to no avail. Do you think you can do it?"

Tsangurai heeded the odd request, standing at the edge of the sand, the waves lapping over his feet. He sat cross-legged, much like Mabuure many months before. He closed his eyes and tried to remember the lessons of Mabuure.

We have to be able to change if we are to continue on.

Sekuru?

We must be able to adapt to change or the wheel of eternity will sweep us away.

What can we do?

Fight. Resist.

Against what?

Against the ghosts that will try and take our spirits away.

I'm scared.

When you're scared, consult upenyu. Understanding life will give you peace.

Is this what I will learn when I go off with the others to become a man?

No, this is different. Close your eyes.

My eyes are closed.

Expand your mind until it leaves your head and merges with the wind. Can you see it?

Yes, it's incredible.

Let the light touch your mind and you will see.

It hurts.

That's because you resist it. Let it flow.

But there is a darkness, in the center of the light. I feel drawn towards it.

Let that go. That is our destruction, the forces against our light, our upenyu. You must let your mind traverse across a path that reduces the darkness to the tiniest speck.
Try it.

Okay, here I go.

Tsangurai walked to the homestead. As he passed, everyone began to move more

slowly, staring. The young ones followed after him, running and pointing.

"He's glowing!" they yelled.

Tsangurai walked to Madhlayo's hut and told him what had been revealed to him.

"We have to go." Tsangurai said when he was finished.

"Okay, let's call a meeting of the elders."

"Okay, but we have to hurry. The ghosts are coming our way."

That got the old man moving. He called a meeting, beating the ngomo, and let Tsangurai speak.

"We have two choices," Tsangurai announced to the village gathering. We can stay and fight the ghosts, or we can run but to where, I don't know since you know as I do, that our neighbors Muzengi and Gokwe have been abandoned.

The crowd's mumblings sounded like thunder.

Osiri stood up and spoke: "We have never fought anyone before. Our neighbors have always come to us bearing palm wine. What are these ghosts that we must make war with? I say, Tsangurai is mad, just like his father, who threw himself into the ocean and abandoned us here, far from our ancestors home!"

Many in the crowd rumbled in assent.

Chipo, an elder woman, spoke up: "Since when do children lead us? What are we going to do?"

This last question was directed to the elders, who stood behind Tsangurai.

Madhlayo spoke, "As the eldest now that my brother has passed, I am the closest out of all to the ancestors. Our foreparents have put trust in Tsangurai as he is now the Chief Priest of our clan."

Several shocked cries arose. Osiri pushed his way to the front of the group.

"But I was the principle disciple of Mabvuure! How can he lay claim to what is mine? Do not forget, that I too have power."

The noise was deafening, the people in uproar. Mabvuure's brother tried to calm things down: "Osiri, sometimes we must put aside our pride for the good of all."

Osiri tore away from the crowd, threatening to rise again with magic, then ran, disappearing down the beach.

Tsangurai fought down the urge to chase his old friend, and stood staring into the waves, looking for light.

I tried preparing my people to fight, but how can we conquer the ghosts that have arisen from the sea?

Tsangurai walked around the homestead, supervising groups of men, young and old, who were fastening bows, and bundling bamboo from there houses to carry on top of their

heads. The women were packing the dried fish for the journey and they, too, were armed with metal spears and daggers. No one was nervous; instead, they were determined. Everyone had seen the huge ships heading toward them in the distance. They didn't know what they were, but they knew they were trouble. They had to move.

Once everyone was bundled with what they had to carry, the village began to move forward. Tsangurai walked in front of everyone, but he was nervous. He had tried to consult with *upenyu* for several days now, but all he saw was darkness. He could not figure out what was wrong; he felt he was fulfilling Mabvuure's legacy—to resist at all costs. But his heart was heavy. He felt they were moving too slowly.

"We have to move faster," he said to Madhlayo.

"You forget what a weighted load you have—old men, old women, babies along with the young women, all of our supplies and now these weapons you had us make. It's a wonder no one passes out."

Tsangurai wanted to confess to Madhlayo that he felt it was too late. But then there was no time for that, for in the distance stood a long line of dark faces. The bare chested men were armed, standing with these machines that glinted in the sunlight. Some thought it was mirage. Others in Tsangurai's village thought they were neighbors and let out cries of triumph, as they would finally be seeing new people and faces. But exultation turned to near panic as Tsangurai ordered everyone to stop. He walked toward the long line of back faces and as he did, he saw them split apart at the center, making way for someone, who stood before the naked men, dressed in brightly colored pants and overcoat with sword at his side, his kinky natural hair hidden beneath a tremendous hat with wide brim and a sharp up turn in the front. Tsangurai froze when he made out the man. It was Osiri, who smiled thinly.

Tsangurai stood and tried to summon *upenyu* in all its light. The light obscured his vision, blocking out the ghosts, white men, who stood behind Osiri, bedecked in the same regalia, their ship even further in the distance. On top of the ship there waved a flag which matched the outfits of Osiri and his ghosts, fluttering with the red, white, and blue of the Union Jack.

I am Tsangurai, one of the last of my people. Upenyu has not left us; it has changed. Now I understand what happened to our neighbors. Will these ghosts cover the entire land upon which Mwari casts a glance? Trying to summon upenyu's light, I sit in the largest magical creation I have seen, a hut that allows you to move across the vast waters in the gourd of Mwari, like an enormous ladle. But this frightens me: Into whose mouth are we headed?

Chocha's House

William E. Archilla

By the blood-stained slaughter house
through dust deep in the stone dirt roads
among pale yellow grass and clay flower pots,

stands a watermelon red and olive green
house, where I painted maps, oceans and roads
left unfinished, like the faces and birds created out

of white pillow clouds in the pure sky,
where a dirt slope of earth became a mountain
a puddle beneath a green bush a lake,

where I, a dirty child,
starring down at the fish bottom of the fountain
playing Indians and cowboys in the lake

yelling for the western cowboys -
not knowing the black hair Indian meant me,
locked up the line of red ants in match boxes

like the prisoners of toy soldiers
But the ants always found a way to
flee crawling over soldiers, biting and tearing plastic faces.

Unexpectedly the big-headed ants bit me:
How dare they bite their God who can tall
crush them with a Godzilla stomp through town?

During gentle breeze of the rains,
I stepped outside to watch drops of heaven fall
digging worms in the damp and dark earth ground

watching snail-trails
molding pyramids out of crumbled-mold
bricks, but soon called to be kept inside

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by the water voice of Chocha.

I followed her voice in the distance and hold
and point my finger on her lips - pale light.

Chocha's house, where I chased birds
and flies with Didvi under the strong sun of June,
watching Carolina sunbathing and singing

running down the patio stairs,
became small and silent in the rooms
with closed walls and doors in the pale blue evening.

From the kitchen door, a faint light
mounted on the dusty red brick patterned floor
where Chocha stood bent over a stove filled

with black burned pots and pans:
a dull light bulb hung above the greasy kitchen floor,
the warm smell of boiling beans filled

the air: warm in soft shadows
in the smell of a burning match
in the toasted crisp of frying eggs

listening to Cumbias del cafe, quietly
listening to stories of Papa Rolando and his match
with the bottle and his Quetzal Mother who crushed his eggs

and clung to him like fish to water
until his great classical mass-death
with crashing cymbals and high pitch strings

low heavy drum piano,
leaving a funeral silence in the blood and birth
of Chocha, visiting the Old Campo Santo every spring.

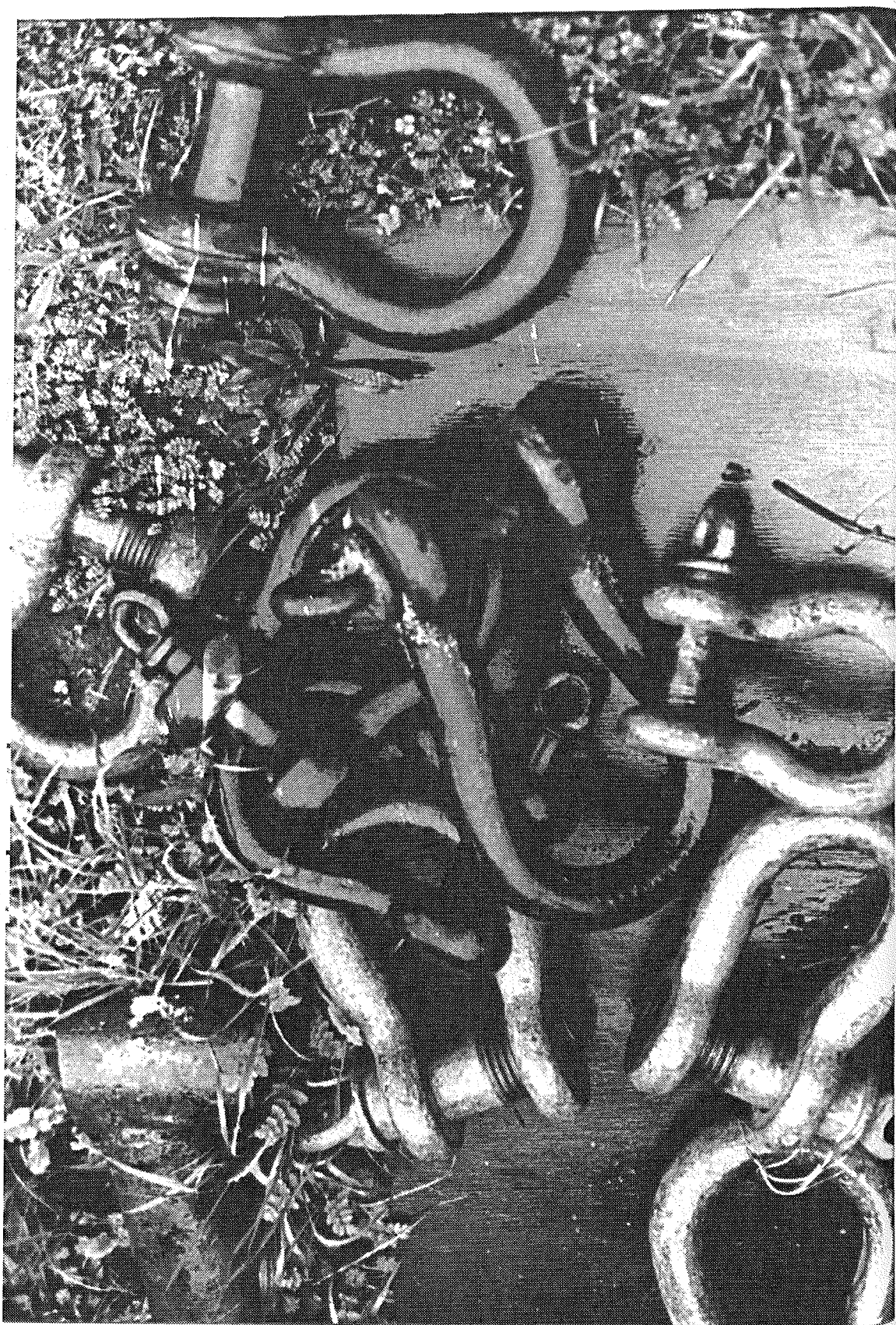
She prayed kneeled
in a faint yellow glare of candles
by the side of my bed and an altar of flowers.

The stars hung like flash bulbs over
Papa Rolando's black and white photograph in candle
night. I slept with a dream of a stone river:

El Cipitio giggling - crouched
and perched on a wild tree branch by
the side of the crooked stone river line

with his huge straw hat
over his dark eyes and naked body line
sticking his belly over his sex in the thin moonlight.

I used to be that little
until camouflaged soldiers arrived
with U. S. helicopters and advisers in the full-red night.



Josh Greenberg

I study silence

Joy Arbor Karnes

I study silence with a stethoscope.
It breathes, hushes after a door slams.

A family illness —
diabetes, heart disease;
sugar on blame.

One generation
to another, a gift to forgive.
My family

crashed head-on, words
trampling words, hardly heard,
embedded shrapnel

Silence was only
the stinging side of a slap,
before tears.

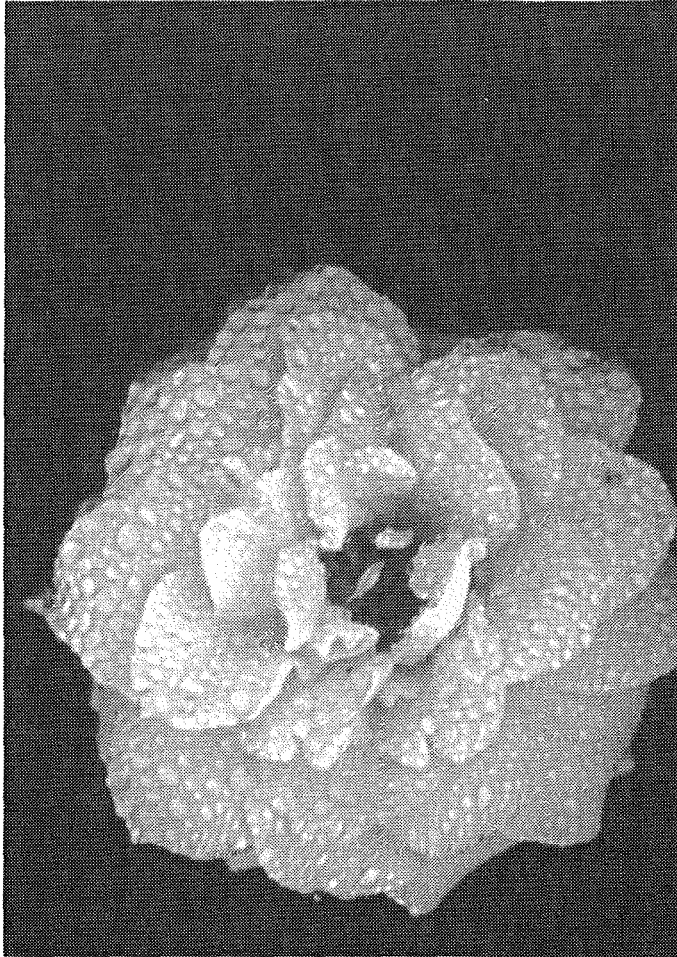
Father and I
hid silences in corners,
disagreed on them.

His spoke finally
in stark legal papers, screams gone
subterranean.

I cultivated ice
silent moments, like practicing
perfect smoke circles.

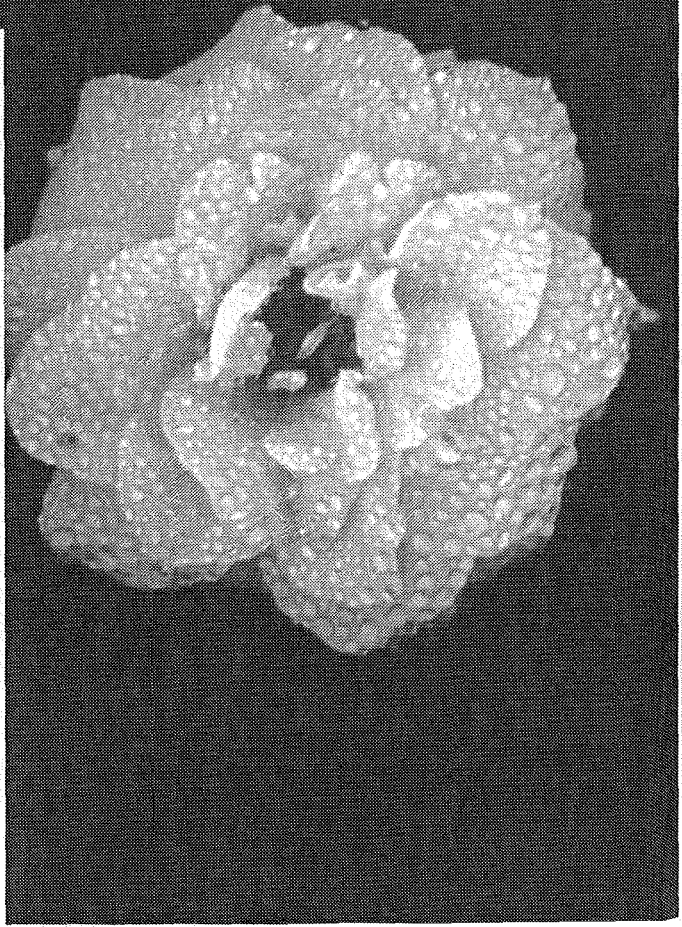
I wanted to stun
people slack-jawed, control how
far they'd push me

To be heard.



"Yellow"

Sam Helmi



Little Secrets Kept Inside

Staci Bleecker

Patty sliced ripened yellow grapefruits into halves, jammed two halves against Kranston's chest, enhancing his pectorals, meshing juices with sparse hairs, and his nipples pink burned. Back curved, chest caved, he rebelled against gravity, 75 push-ups (he's bragged and she never believed) his nightly routine failed him, he couldn't push her away, not far enough and she returned to attack his bare torso. Chocolate syrup aimed at his thinning blonde hair balding on the right side from menstrual stress, a strawberry patch emerged, she aimed there. "Strawberries," Kranston had said, her hair reminded him of the color of strawberries. He'd turned her. Her face, usually freckled pale grafted fuchsia. "Patty Cake," he'd called her, "your cheeks need flour" returning from the kitchen with a bag of Golden Medal she didn't turn away. Feet planted, arms outstretched welcomed him, into her reality, "disguise me in showers of powder, snow, make it snow for me, snow on me." Kranston reached inside plastic lined paper pouch, fingers digging deep for the seam, the fold inside, cruxed, contorting, approaching disfigurement, he twisted loose his wrist reaching for the astral plane, and...white washed the air, the valley filled with snow, and Patty enveloped pranced sight-searching mountain peaks, eyes fluttering white butterflies.

So they decided they would go to the snow, they would go camping. Kranston pulled his oxidized blue 1972 International Harvester wagon into the Mobile station, for gas, and Patty got out for lantern mantles, mustard, Cosmo magazine. While standing in line waiting for Kranston's 'go-ahead-and-pay-I'm-finished-

Aside...

Mountain distinction...the valley ebbing, descending further with low tide. Mountains, boundaries dividing, surrounding..... surround the red, red retriever, Irish Setter "Kelly" picked for her color, red like Patty's hair red, can't wear red, not

pumping'-signal she surveyed the knife display. Crystalline eyes fixated on a shiny 6" buck knife and handsome cowhide case she acknowledged the horn, fussed through assorted bills of which two \$20s no change returned. Sweeping the bag from the glass counter she exited, walked instinctively toward the tailgate, enthusiastically twisted the chrome handle around, her left hand dropped the crumpled brown wrapper inside the steel framed rolled down rear window. Kranston started to get out to help, but she pushed past him, pushed her open palm into his black cotton shoulder, pushed him back into his seat. "Roll on." Looking over her shoulder to read the pump she turned back, bounced herself into a more comfortable position, and exhaled. It wasn't the first time they fought over it then too, brown, Dijon, French's horrible food dye #5. Kranston couldn't see the difference, Patty knowing all too well the significance color has on mood, felt uneasy about the lady-bug-red Volkswagen beetle ahead that wouldn't let them pass.

any red she says it clashes with her hair: crimson, cherry, beet, salmon, apricot, orange, pomegranate. she's got a list written on her wall with animosity, distrust in bold permanent black marker (4 inch letters). if she didn't have them near her when she sleeps up on the wall they would sneak into her drawers, seep into the weave of her whites, slip into her yellows and spread their disease, their redness. ...pull her t-shirt drawer open first thing in the morning before she turns the lights on trying to trick the colors who might have fallen asleep and not slipped out before she could slide out from under her undisturbed brown, browns, multi-hued brown fun-fur bedspread, drawn over green, forest green cotton flat sheet, and under her pale freckled skin a royal blue 180 thread cotton fitted sheet: king size. Spectrum armor for the night, a shield she wraps herself in strong colors, physically appealing colors that don't irritate her skin.

"Color, not contrast, sets us apart from primates."

SCENE 2: Traveling northbound on Angeles Crest Highway. Kranston and Patty engage in cerebral conversation.

CAMERA SET-UP: Outside Shot, mobile camera trailer, 'car' stationary, 3 cameras:

- (1) frontal looking through windshield;
- (2) outside driver window for "Patty" close-ups;
- (3) outside passenger window for "Kranston" close-ups.

Kranston: [looking ahead, camera (1)] "You scientists think you know every thing. Have you ever worn a primates eyeball, have there been successful transplants?"

Patty: [lifting her left foot with both hands to inspect her Gorilla boot Vibarim soles, camera (1)] "Don't try to reduce science to fit your narrow definition of success. And no, not that I know of anyway. And it's Primatologist, I've earned that much respect."

Kranston: [turns head, eyes off road, camera (3)]
"Primatologist! What were you so engaged in at the mini-mart I had to honk to get your attention? National Geographic doing a "Gorillas in the Mist" cover story again? "Man Infiltrates Jungle, Apes Go Condo?"

Patty: [looking up from her sole turns her eyes on Kranston; camera (2)]
"I was looking at my reflection in the glass case, wrinkles. My hair's going silver, don't you think, a streak is growing down the side of my head. [tilts head forward, then slightly to right; switch to camera (1), grabs long strands for inspection]

Kranston: [glancing in rear view mirror, camera (1); switch to camera (3), molesting his mustache inspects for gray hair, turns to patronize Patty],
Well, what if you have? It only means that you and Kelly can share hair-tinting recipes. She's graying around her muzzle and brows. Think you can help her?"

Kelly: [gets up from laying down in backseat and pushes her head over the front seat, camera (1); full interior shot with Kranston, Patty, Kelly]
"Bark"

The Travell interior inventories a history of monstrous innovative decorating attempts. Several years ago the goldenrod vinyl ceiling tore when Kranston's dog Kelly tried

to bring home a fallen Willow branch, a blacksmith's arm. Kranston then thought it would be a good place to stash home grown herb and paraphernalia, and Ed Chicken over zealously excavating his evening delight pulled the vinyl its full car length in a kinda zig-zag pattern. Ed sewed it up, in a 16 lb fishing line zing-zap stitch. Patty later attached ceramic cherubs, after first disfiguring their graced guardian angel masquerade. Three years ago, no maybe four now, Kranston avoided a head on collision with a raving maniac or drunken bastard, swerved across the double yellow lines, (fortunately in was reasonably late and the road was in a sparsely populated area about 40 miles South of Winnemucca, Nevada where he'd been contracted to paint pre-sketches for an upcoming film, a desert something). And when he stopped to see what had happened, to see if Kelly was okay, acrylics had splattered all over the far back trunk/storage area. And Kelly made an event out of carefully placing paw prints on the dash and door in a panic to get out.

Ed Chicken moved up to Alaska as suggested by his therapist, code name: NutCracker. Civilization was too absorbing for him, too many things to think about, everywhere he looked telephone poles. An electrician, hallucinating magician, Ed moved miracles through power lines, lines that

clung to telephone branches suspended bolt and nut sometimes sixty feet above his grave. Lanyard loops, screw driver, electrical tape, amp meter. "Keepin' 'em charged" bumper sticker wrapped around black extra-durable plastic lunch pail.

whisper...get theirs, yeah poor people, turning round the pole to see looking up to see stretching my neck, the split ends touching the dirt line, timberline collar, powder blue plaid yellow and

green thin green stripe only runs up and down and a red, scarlet red lines thin lines only run horizontal, too bright for this pale stained plaid shirt, hair touching just brushing the line, the fold, head always stretched that way, chin looking up grey eyes searching the scared tarred pine, or ash, hard wood trees skinned and rolled in tar like trout rolled in batter, rolled in flour, trees 60 feet tall and my head tilted back like a heron chick feeding, too small to leave the nest, mouth pulled open the bottom lip, breakwall holding

back the roundness of my damp tongue, scared from chewing... my tongue... carrying a load of immigrants .56, this pole was put up in 1956, that was a good year, ... that pole over there is on a lean, on a slope, its own slope, leaning out over the curb, leaning into traffic, reaching into traffic, to touch and the moving cars, look, there is a scrape about twelve feet up, that's just about the right height for a bobtail truck, a truck across a border not to be crossed, the poverty line, the line, the fishing line, fish caught on a line caught by a hook, alcohol, excitement caught on a fly, fly-ball center field caught in the night air, windows fogged up, the windows keeping out the sound of the crashing ocean, I can't take the ocean any more, the crashing like when the car crashed and my head hit the dashboard and beyond the dashboard, the windshield I remember my eyes passing through the glass and then I was outside, my head was outside. Look that one over there, that ones been here a long time, every time i come this way i make sure i stop to see all the date nails, there on the backside three of them 43, 64, 72 yeah, its seen sometime, it was probably seventy years old when they cut it down *the bastards*. i had a really tall tree in my backyard when i was six but that damn bastard cut it down, cut it down with a big saw, yeah and my uncle was there the bastard, don't shoo at me, swing at me. raise that shoe, shovel at me. what the hell are you talking about? don't touch me you bastard. that saw, that damn ripping saw tearing through the tree ...damn it i could hear it screaming , screaming like a baby, my baby. mamma where is the baby? mama what is the crying? is the baby crying? she just slapped me, **stop talking stop talking**. I hate it when she says that to me ... shut up shut up that damn baby crying ...from the other room the blue room it was dark I remember and the sun was already down and I knew the moon wouldn't come out - it was that crying. that's why the moon doesn't come out you know - that damn crying baby. mamma where is the baby? **five-finger sally...slap across my face.**

"The Embrace"



Scott Hyers

t i r e s

Elissa Caruth

her ass. the concept of an ass, two
round mounds. mounds everywhere,
mountain, tires buried in sand, all from
an ass, a butt, a behind, behind breasts,
behind buried tires, a head is buried in
the sand next to some tires which
probably once burned into an accident
became bald and were discarded like an
ass, like a piece of ass. like breasts,
silicon implants, discarded. if there are
silicon implants, or saline, or none,
discarded a piece of ass discarded
and buried next to bald

some bald tires

buried in the sand next to

a bald ass bald breasts

bald tires with the holes in the middle
half visible

a semicircle

holes

round holes

in asses

in cunts

to fuck fucking holes

bitch

her ass

she's a fucking bitch

a bitch worth fucking for her ass

just a piece of ass to fuck

she's a bitch anyhow, fuck her

fuck the tires

she's not bald she's a hole a

bitch who's ass needs to be kicked

kicked into a hole

fuck her

fuck with the upper curl and flick of

air off the final "k"

sound it out

like the tires screeching to a halt in an

accident

it was only an accident

bury her next to the tires

her meat

her ass

all shit

now we're done with her (s)he's a

bitch anyhow

keep keep keep

burying away from her

violence&sex&violence&sex&violence&

sex&violence&sex&violets*scnt&sex&

violence&silence&cry&sex&violets&&&

&violence&sex&

violentsex&sexyviolence&violence&

sex&come&scnt&sex&violetsex&

violet&violent&violence&sex&=text&

come&(i)sex&violetcome&sex&violin&

cry

go--oh--away

into a way startling movement a

violent act buried underneath words

underneath papers underneath protocol

under papers legs dangling over the

page with protocol in rape rape

etiquette is there a proper way to rape

with pain?with violence?in the

ass?with vengeance?with dedication?

she's a bitch

it doesn't have to be painful

it doesn't have to be

it doesn't have

it doesn't

it

No Useful Purpose

Robert Meyer

you began, at some time,
to look at men, differently
you noticed their nakedness
I noticed only, perhaps,
when I snapped a towel
in the locker room
not thinking of any useful
purpose for another man's body

Entropy

Alan Mills

To begin, it is necessary to name the three boys in this room. They are Scratch, Adam and Joe. They aren't necessarily boys because in fact they are men, but they are men who are still trying to be boys or rather boys who have been aged into men, but either way, they are young men fighting time and can just as easily be called boys which is probably what they'd prefer anyway. We had to start by naming them to keep things simple. Otherwise we wouldn't know who we were talking about because they would never say their names to us or to each other.

The room is painted black, completely black except for a mural on one wall. The mural is reminiscent of the art of Tom of Finland and depicts one cowboy fucking another from behind. Completely naked, the bottom is bent over a hitching post and has a bit in his mouth while the partially clothed top holds the reins. It is intentionally like the drawings of Tom of Finland because their muscles are exaggerated and their phalluses are abnormally large.

Adam is reclined on the faded and worn down orange couch. His head is propped up on the couch's arm which is closest to the mural: probably not the best idea considering where this couch has been, or more importantly, who has been on this couch and where they have been. His clothing is fairly simple and basic: red flannel, white T, denim and hiking boots. Still, he isn't comfortable because the couch is old and lumpy as if its owner never intended for someone to actually sit or sleep on it, but he pretends to himself and the other two boys that he isn't bothered or even inconvenienced. He came to this club with a friend and now he's stuck waiting for the boy to finish up. So, he just passively stares at the images of MTV radiating from a silent television and wonders about the point of such an activity when the only sound he can hear is the clanking and pounding of industrial music coming from the speakers in the club. It all seems meaningless to him: the random images he doesn't understand and the inconsistent clanging he understands even less.

On the other arm of the couch sits Scratch with a Marlboro loosely hanging from his mouth and a Styrofoam cup of coffee in his left hand. For the most part, Adam ignores the boy sitting at his feet, or at least he pretends to. In fact, Scratch is a bit of a disruptive presence in torn jeans and a leather jacket over his naked chest. His hair is the white reflecting black of his jacket and harness boots. Every time Adam looks at him, he can only think about the smell

of all that leather and his own disappointment that he hadn't found this boy in one of this club's many dark corners and halls. Doubling over and pressing his nose and tongue to the dark surface of those soiled boots is Adam's perfect fantasy. Scratch acts as if he doesn't notice.

In the opposite corner of the room, between the television and the mural is Joe, sitting in a brown plastic chair. He is large and athletic, with short blond hair. Khaki shorts and a blue tank top show off most of his assets which only come into Adam's view each time Joe turns a page in his magazine. Joe sits right next to the screen that Adam stares at and causes Adam to nervously look away each time Joe looks up from his reading. Scratch, however, never shifts his eyes.

Awkwardly, Adam looks at his watch. He sees the second hand click just three spaces away from four in the morning. He begins to count the hours he's been here but is instantly interrupted.

"Do you know what would happen if an astronaut fell into a black hole?" asks Scratch while still staring at Joe.

Somewhat shocked, Joe looks up from his magazine. "What?"

"Do you know what would happen if an astronaut fell in a black hole?"

Both Joe and Adam watch him silently. Adam can't help but feel that something strange is going on. This new occurrence makes Scratch seem somewhat frightening to him, but that feeling is turning him on even more.

Finally Joe asks, "Well what happens?"

"It's the coolest thing," says Scratch. "I saw it on this movie about that guy, Stephen Hawkings, you know, who's stuck in a wheelchair and has to talk with a computer and stuff and is like this total genius, you know, the smartest man in the world. Anyway, all these theory guys were talking about black holes, you know like collapsed stars, and they said that if an astronaut fell in one like just before midnight and from outside the hole you could see his watch, you'd see the second hand start slowing down. Really! As he got closer to the event horizon, that point from which light can no longer escape, the laws of physics would become altered for him and time would start to slow down. That last second before he hit the event horizon would seem like it would last forever, or like a really long time, and his image would be frozen... immortal."

"Really," says Joe.

"But man, here's the cool part, on the way to the black hole, the astronaut wouldn't notice anything different. His watch would count seconds normally, but as he looked out at the universe, everything would seem to be getting faster and faster, of course until he hit the event horizon. Then he'd be stretched into a long like noodle thing until he hit the singularity itself when he'd be compacted into nothing. Cool huh?"

Listening to this, Adam is grateful he hadn't fooled around with this guy. Of course it still might have been better than what did happen. A major part of him is still upset over what occurred when he first walked in here. He made the mistake of going to the very back room without his friend and allowing one guy to open his jeans and go down on him. Too quickly, strange men surrounded him. In the total darkness he couldn't count them, but he felt them restraining him and blocking his escape. They seemed like rats on their knees fighting to get his dick in their mouths, and he fought as the ones behind him pulled his jeans to his ankles and pushed their dry fingers into his crack. Shadows touched his chest and his face as unknown lips snapped at his mouth. Teeth scraped up and down his scrotum and rude fingers pinched and snagged the sensitive skin of his anus and pushed inside. The closer he came to orgasm, the more he fought to get away. Adam didn't want to cum: not this fast, not this early, not this way. But, when he shot on the invisible floor his body convulsed in anger and his breath pushed out loud and hoarsely into the surrounding void. Enraged, he pushed his way past the nameless men and went searching for his friend.

"What else did you see in this movie?" asks Joe, seemingly more interested in what Scratch has to say.

"Well, that guy, Hawkings, talked a lot about time and the way the universe began and how it will end."

"How will it end?" asks Joe.

"Well, I think he created a theory that stated that the universe operates according to the same laws that stars do and that it is slowing expanding and will one day begin to collapse until it too is a singularity, a dense nothingness."

"How long do we have?"

"Oh about fifteen or nineteen billion years, or something like that. Which reminds me of something else that was kinda' interesting. Hawkings questioned what would happen to time when the universe collapses. He wondered if time would reverse itself but decided that it wouldn't. He said something like that time is the process of the universe becoming increasingly disorganized."

"Like entropy?"

"Yeah, those physic guys said that. What's entropy?" asks Scratch.

Adam looks up at Scratch and says, "it's the degree of disorder; the tendency of an energy system to run down; the increase of disorder in the universe as available energy is diminished."

Joe and Scratch stare at him when he answers. Their attention makes him feel even more uncomfortable. This really isn't his kind of place. He was drunk when he first walked in here three hours ago and spent almost two hours walking around aimlessly, watching various

men fuck, waiting for his friend to cruise, score, and get the hell out of there. After a while his interest in sex returned but he stayed away from the large and crowded rooms.

He ended up with a young guy with curly black hair. They huddled together in a small booth, kissing and stroking each other while their pants bunched up around their calves. Occasionally one would go down on the other until they both got close. Then while breathing into each other's mouth, they jacked off violently until they shot all over each other's stomachs and shoes. The moment contained the level of tenderness that Adam was looking for, but it was defiled when the boy said his name: "Ely." For some reason, it seemed like a rule that people should never say their names in here or have normal conversations. But, Adam gave the boy his name in return and said "maybe" when the boy asked if he could see him again. Then Adam came here, alone, to wait for his friend.

But here isn't a very comfortable place, not with two good looking guys staring at him because he interrupted their discussion of physics. Fortunately, Scratch and Joe look back at each other.

"Hawkings said the whole point was to one day know the mind of God," says Scratch as if Adam's answer had no effect.

The room stays silent. Even the industrial music is cut off because the tape had run out.

"I think it would be cool if you could just ask him," says Scratch.

"What would you ask him?" asks Joe. "You know, what is he thinking. It would be hot if God would just sit right across from you, maybe the Devil too, and you could just look at them and say, 'Hey, what are you thinking?'"

Adam sits up on the couch. He's beginning to feel increasingly agitated. Theoretical physics was tolerable, but theology too: the mixing of them is unbearable. He fears that soon the conversation will shift again and take the form of parables or worst yet, allegories and cover such worn out topics like Hell and sin or maybe Armageddon. By now, the point of that is beyond Adam. To him the world will never end in fire or in ice but rather the world is destroyed every day and every second falls apart a little more. It doesn't matter what God thinks because no slice of knowledge will halt the chaos. All Adam cares about is retrieving his friend and telling him to cum and get it over with so he can go home and dream about things that are nicer or more pleasant than reality... maybe butterflies.

It's late and Adam's tired, exhausted and sexually spent, and the conversation has just outlived itself, but Joe stops him with an empty stare. Perceiving himself as somehow trapped by Joe's blank attention, Adam focuses on Joe's eyes which seem even and expansive like the light blue dome over Death Valley.

"What do you think about all this?" asks Joe.

Backing up to the door and hearing the reborn industrial pounding getting louder as

he nears the club itself, Adam concentrates on his breath and blinks the fatigue from his eyes three times before he answers, "I think that if there is a God, and if I have a soul, then I am a soul that is slowly expanding and will one day collapse in on itself."

Adam turns and walks back into the club. Scratch and Joe make no movements or sounds behind him. Their memory is a dream-like blur which only hints at itself in Adam's present state of exhaustion. The black walls of the inner maze disappear in three directions. Waiting for inspiration to tell him which hall to take, he looks at his watch and sees the thinnest hand holding at one second before four A.M.

statement of poetics

Poppy Tankenson

write:

from the space - the ocean - the one maria speaks of... from the body that lies spreads
cries fucks loves loves loves

the eye that sees closely the kitchen with men brown who see me
closely

holding the tip of my tongue with two fingers and talking to see
how they words sound muffled and muffled the words how they sound muffled
from the words i say to you marla, that seem so centered on them, but girl we are talking and it
is something

knowing that it is something - not knowing any truth about anything

i like that one - not knowing anything

loving beth and her words

from reading mothers journal - the one she took to cuba and crying out
of fear that the dance is real and will always be...

claiming the very trivial - the specific

Just Art, Robert says - it doesn't matter what the fuck you do, just do it as if the
words matter - these words they matter

the words i write mustn't lay down and rest

but only of that constant dance

afraid of the dance of writing of the brown that fucks me sucks me
nurtures me protects me puts me up on a pedestal and all at once throws me down

sitting in the room with carmen and denise and noni and women and
women and women

feeling the heat on my fingertips as i turn the bread the flour the food
that feeds them

my ob li ga tion continues to get more blurred and less
focused all the while...

writing our stories as one continuously
never holding my tongue

writing what i saw while i do not speak

knowing i do not speak when he is occupying my space
swimming in this brown circle of blood and hating and loving them all at the same time do i
take and take from my people i do

carlos says get to the point they need the point read zeta that brown bull and just
overlook the heavy's sexual attitude

rejecting zeta fully and completely

knowing that color matters it just does it really matters

letting my fingers go - closing my eyes and touching myself to hear my

stories to hear the
sounds
letting
fingers
closing eyes

touching to
my to the my go my and myself
hear stories hear sounds

i have included this in my statement of poetics. i am twenty three years old, i have died red curly nappy hair, acrylic nails, brown nipples that are not perky but like my mothers, and i say that my statement of poetics will always be one of transition and movement and travel from one form to another, but most importantly movement within one border to another and then, probably always, back again.

i write in order to represent over and over again the signs of my poet/lit/ical world, a world with mothers, and women, and men and food, and fear and sex and bodies, changing, with text everywhere, with art on all of the walls, this world

oh yeah, space, i love space - i can just think of how to travel in my story, movement through space by jumping, twirling, yes, my text often refers to dance and this dance is the way for me to describe how my text my sentences one word travels to another,

i write in order to explore different ways in which to represent/construct/speak/utter the structures that structure me politically, culturally, physically, intellectually, creatively, so on and so on

time/temporality - i do not ever worry too much about this - i think of "we smile" and the story absolutely covers about 100 years - any of the many events could have been told by any woman in my story

i write in order to participate in a conversation with mis hermanas and others, too.

i am interested, always, in meaning, i mean really, not when the text is processing itself, if i thought about meaning while i wrote down words, i would probably feel very insecure about myself - but i do enjoy when people read my stuff and have a million versions, different, of what the story is about, what it means, that is kind of fun, but not what i ultimately want from any reader

i write in order to tap out a text that will be liberating for the reader when the reader begins to read/write/ this text

when i decide i needed to finish this mother story thing i am doing now, i started thinking about character, and that is how i began, there was the writer, the narrator, the mother, the daughter, and one more, hard to name, maybe the language, so that is how i deconstructed the story of my mothers life, i have been trying for years to approach it and this began to work for me. i am thinking about most of my writing and for the exception of one play, i never have a character with one name, one set of definable characteristics - i have used character like i use a word, or a sign, i absolutely dive into the sign (character) and then let the text go

i write to write my mothers stories over and over again, for the women in the family, this is important, to me,

i don't think i ever really understood narrator, i mean who is this supposed to be, 1st person 3rd person - i mean, how can you ever really think of narrator realistically, how does the narrator even know anything and sometimes i don't care to think about it - i guess the problem is that the idea has never been very fixed for me, so therefore it doesn't pose a problem

i absolutely write because i love to travel on the rhythm of language, this is connected to the metaphysical me

i really have to think about image, i think in my earlier work, i really did write from image, i really would, i remember, closing my eyes and i would think of something, some image, like the ocean and dolphins, and i would try to write, and obviously these images were totally constructed, i mean i think i once saw a beached shark in Venice, and it was later that i began to explore the language that could textualize the women i had in my head, bodies, neighborhood stuff, and these "images" opened up and i began to write the subtexts of these signs and stories, well anyhow while i write i do not think of an image i may be creating, but i am intrigued by the images i explore during the reading process, the images created as a result of the language

when you reach a point where the words just kind of tumble out, or you are moving through textual space in new ways, this is exciting, for the reader writer both

well, if your saying this one word is symbolic of this this this - what i will say is that, what is interesting, is how after the process, unplanned except for structure, but how after - there may be so many symbolic connections and why wouldn't there be, i mean we all share a certain set of signs and then there are the signs of my particular world and the telling process will only show connecting symbols through our signs, sometimes particular

i write in order to keep moving, this is my activism, this is what i can do

i use, sometimes, methods, in order to write, one of them being this idea of supplementarity, and this works for me, it gets me going, i would say all this is, is starting from either one sentence or one word or one sign and supplementing the "meaning" continuously,

i write to understand living the mestizaje way - one might ask me to explain it - i cannot - therefore i write it, i most definitely believe i am living in the lonely lands of the border - i have accepted this mythology as my own.

i have thought of voice for a very long time, i have tried to politicize my work through the use of voice in the past, really, that caused problems, barriers, walls, and now when i look at some of my more current work, the concept of voice is utilized in a way, well simply, the texts i write have many voices, overlapping voices, sometimes distinct, sometimes not, at any given point one should be able to ask, who is speaking, and this is not something novel, but real for me, this is the way i hear things see things, this is how my history exists, my family stories are tellings not by any distinct voice, my tias speak all at once, my story my narrative self is really, sometimes literally a repetition of my mothers and my grandmothers, and i used to feel wierded out by this, freaked, but i am starting to accept the normalcy of this truth, the voice just is so much more beautiful this way

i write to explore theories of thinking and language, this exploration a cut and paste from theory to theory to theory to theory to theory

i have tried to answer some questions about narrative, i don't know the answer's, because again, this statement of poetics is absolutely in transition, i am right now in a border, but stuck to the walls, so what i am saying is absolutely questionable,

i write so that my people, and others too, will be able to create, not regurgitate or memorize, but create in a space that allows them that strength

this idea of my people, my my my my people, i write in order to sustain some kind of relation, this that i do is totally self serving, i think, i am talking about my sense of community of belonging, i write in an attempt to construct a community with women, Chicanos, people of color, otherwise i truthfully feel foreign absolutely all of the time

i write and write, sometimes, always, but not all the time, you know what i mean?

Picasso

Robert Meyer

Picasso stares from the wall
he looks at our bodies
rearranged and entangled
on the bed.
He is taking my eyes
and stretching them
around the sides of my head.
You now have 3 breasts,
2 noses and
only 1 eye that I can see.
Welayentangled
in a heap
breathingtogetherrhythmically
we touch in many places
some places we can't
get to at all.
Picasso turns his gaze away
and smiles.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Amy Reynolds

Tactical error #1: Use newsprint with four-color photos.

Making paper. I'm making paper when I should be doing something else. The sink is spotted with ink and drying bits of newsprint. I keep coming back to it, plunging my hands into the ugly gray mass which resembles so little my original plan. I had in mind delicate colors and some kind of intersection of music and spoken word, and yet here I am, glops of paper mush all over the sink, coating my hands with black ink. I had this idea to use the front pages of the newspaper with the new four-color photos, all the best disaster pictures of the week: the picture of three Africaaner right wingers begging for their lives before a black South African soldier, and then the picture of them shot dead in the Bophutswana dust they had wanted so badly to keep; an assassination in Mexico, a car bombing somewhere, a photo of a poppy field, because suddenly it is spring, even here where there are no seasons. A native, I know there are. I know spring when I see it.

Tactical error #2: Look outside. See that April is coming.

I keep looking for my neighbor to come walking up the path. It's an event, her coming home; she is one of those people who makes an appearance of walking by the window, a moment, a presentation. I hear her boots on the steps, and there she is, suddenly this few feet of space, the arching trees, the geraniums turn their faces toward her, the long red wool coat, open, black motorcycle boots, her mouth tight around a cigarette, her bright blond, tow-headed boy's head down.

I lift my hands from the bowl and they are paper mache hands. In a flash she has swept up, to her door one set of steps above my apartment. The door opens, closes. I hear her in her kitchen. Which reminds me that I should be making lunch. I fill the bowl of paper pulp with water and set it on the counter to soak. And then I go about preparing carrot sticks and peanut butter sandwiches for Erin.

Somehow I've crunched everything down to virtually nothing.¹

The Spanish bungalow type apartment building, actually two buildings, had been built on a steep hillside in Silverlake, on Tularosa south of Sunset (a culturally important distinction) sometime in the thirties. South of Sunset was nearly the barrio, the lower streets being dominated by seedy twenties era apartment buildings, while the streets higher up the hillsides were dotted with interesting older houses in which well established gay professionals lived stable, mildly interesting lives. Sunset at the time was dotted with gay clubs; at the bottom of our hill was the Flamingo, a women's club where I often went dancing.

Tactical Error #3: Listening

Erin's hands are stained. There are carcinogens in newspaper ink "Go wash your hands," I tell her.

In a cooperative mood, she gets down from the chair and runs to the bathroom. Through the walls I hear the evening's fight heating up, first the man screaming and then a murmuring voice, the woman. I've only seen her a few times in the six months we've lived here, in Silverlake, passing down the long flight of concrete steps to her car, head down, never looking around. But right now, she is murmuring upstairs, maybe a hooker calming her pimp. I indulge all my worst prejudices about her. I hate how she wakes me in the middle of the night with her cat-like crying, and her murmuring voice, and her moaning.

Between the two buildings ran a long walkway, painted red, with five flights of concrete steps leading up and up to each set of apartments, and each apartment had steps leading up to the door. The apartments faced each other across the walkway, and each had wide French windows through which we could spy on each other.

A sudden crash and then the pitch of the voice rises - I can nearly make out the words. Another crash.

The walkway was planted with tall trees, Australian ferns, four o'clocks and star jasmine, always a bit dark and fragrant, so that, when I opened the gate, I felt I was climbing into a forest. Except that at the very top was an open space, and the sun would shine brilliantly off the beige plastered wall across the back of the complex, nearly blinding after the cool darkness of the climb.

Water is still running in the bathroom. I go in and find Erin dangling her long fingers in the water, making a mess, staring at the water with her head cocked to one side, listening.

Later, in the bathtub, Erin tells me a story about a cat and a magician. She has me write the sentences down. This seems very important to her:

Erin's Story

Once there was a cat who lived in Paris. He was a very fine cat. He lived with two good people. Their names were Kelly and Karma, and they had a mother who was very good to her children. But one day, a traveler was coming to town. The traveler was carrying boxes and toys. He was a magician and a toygiver. He went straight to the cat's house and he knocked on the door and the people answered.

They opened the door and they said, "What are you here for?"

And he said, "I am a magician. I can change things to animals and I can make things disappear. Which one would you like? A new animal? Or to make something disappear?"

The man is shouting again, indiscipherable curses; the woman's voice, through the wall, murmuring. We go back to making paper. I rinse it over and over. The ink won't come out. It blackens my sink. I don't know what I'm doing.

At certain times of the year the brush cherry trees would bloom in yellow tufts, and then drop the flowers like snow across the walkway. The paths of drunken bees wandered across the drifted flowers. In the hot months, spiders spun webs from tree to tree, across the walk.

Tactical Error #4: Add bleach.

The pulp has been draining all day; it smells of Chlorox no matter what I do. Over and over I fill the bowl with water and work the paste through a colander with a big wooden spoon. I dig my fingers into the mass, squeeze it into something like submission. But I am beginning to lose faith.

Erin's Story

So the magician told them to get their cat and he put the cat in a box it could fit in. He put it in other boxes - the box in other boxes and other boxes until he had the very biggest. And he said, "Wizidy, Wizidy, Wizady Wand - make this cat disappear." And it did it as soon as he did the last box. He was gone. Poof!

Where the curvature is negative, particles will flow away, leaving voids.¹

In number one, at the bottom, lived a tall, brown skinned transvestite who designed clothes; below and across from me, a couple who fought a lot and threw lots of parties and made strange noises; next door to them lived an Asian man, an architect, who liked to play his Yamaha synthesizer late at night; directly across, in the other two-story unit, was a young hetero couple who wore black, played the club scene, and had lots of skin-headed traffic in and out of the apartment. The woman next door had a child with her for a while, and then the father came and took it away. Later she got a cat.

One day the fights stop. She starts having girl friends over. They climb the long flight of steps up from the street, past my window, to the apartment next door. Through the walls, I hear her laughing. On the way back from the park with Erin, I see her pause to light a cigarette as she gets out of her car, a yellow Volkswagen, pause long enough that we don't have to speak.

Tactical Error #5: Holding your breath.

Some small sound next door awakens me where before it had been the shouting. I check the clock: two-thirty. I hear the scrape of a chair in her kitchen. She's probably a waitress or a topless dancer, maybe a bartender. But I can finally relax, and fall asleep again, listening to the sound of a teapot being filled, and her humming.

I sleep a lot. Naps in the afternoon help, because the days get too long sometimes, and my eyes and my hand tire from the work. The walls are so white and blank, I can't bear them and so as a relief too from the small scale of my current project - the tiny brush and the lines - I've been working in charcoal's all shapes and colors shading and light on the walls themselves. Horses, mostly. Magic arrows and spears. Petroglyphs perhaps?

While Erin sleeps, I wander through the dark apartment, checking the doors and windows, letting the cat in. Sometimes, as I lie in bed with the child's small body curled against me, I hear rustling in the ivy outside the window - a possum or coyote - but tonight it is so quiet, and so warm I get up and pour myself a glass of wine. I open the door and sit on the steps. The jasmine is blooming, and orange blossoms, and geranium. Up the walk, a cigarette glows in the darkness.

Then I start unfolding space and time and trade them off.¹

These rooms echo and I hear the next door neighbors thumping and banging. Sometimes the little girl cries and it gets confusing. At night, after work, I climb these steps through the shadows of the trees and her lights are on. She's still up, and I know she's listening for me.

Tactical Error #6: Think too much.

(In her studio at the top of the building, looking out across the City, she pauses, the brush ready for the next stroke. Before her, the paint splattered drawing board, drawing pens and brushes in big jars, boxes of charcoal.)

I find out that she bartends at a place down near Melrose and Virgil, and one afternoon as I pass by, I see her car parked out front, the yellow bug, which is so distinctive. I go inside, and the bar is full of smoke; the afternoon sunlight slants across the floor in big block, so that the corner tables are in pools of darkness. The bar is busy for a Wednesday afternoon. I am one of only two white women in the place; sunlight strikes across the bartender's white-blond hair through the smoky air. She's a Sunday School angel mixing Cuba Libres.

Where the curvature is negative, particles will flow away, leaving voids.¹

I was watching cartoons when she said she had a headache and would I please turn off the television, it was driving her crazy. So of course I turned it off, and she laid down on the couch. I colored for awhile, and then it started to get dark in the house so I went around and turned the lights on, except near her, so she wouldn't be disturbed. Pretty soon it was really dark outside, and she was still asleep. I opened a can of soup for our dinner and heated it up on the stove, expecting her to wake up any time, especially when she smelled the chicken soup. But she didn't wake up. And I didn't know what to do. I was afraid and didn't know who to call.

(I just want to be able to pour out poetry,²

stuff about waiting and speechlessness,
and floating on air.

But every time the paper is right there
the words drag out in darkness.

I want to keep it light and clear, and

I want to be known more
than anything in the world..)

After a few months she sometimes comes down and knocks at my kitchen door and we drink coffee together. She has this way of curling her legs around her on the chair; her eyes, very green, narrow through the smoke. We discover we have both been to see the Van Gogh exhibit at the County Art Museum; we shout at each other over the Irises - we have never seen such glowing irises.

So it was a few days before my grandmother came by and of course by then, things had gotten bad, and I guess I haven't ever gotten over that particular phase of my life. And there is some plant, something in the air, this time of year, whose scent can bleach my mind as blank as a sheet of paper, make me nearly blind.

I was seven when she died. She had been healthy, but drank a lot and for awhile we lived with a man who hit her often, so I think perhaps the stroke that killed her - and she was only twenty-nine - had something to do with her lifestyle.

Tactical Error #7: Admit anything.

Later I find out that the man with whom she'd been living, the man who threw things and shouted all night, had died, suddenly, of a massive heart attack on the front steps of her apartment. An autopsy revealed that cholesterol deposits had so blocked the blood flow to his brain that his behavior had been affected.

He died right on the front steps, and she had tried to give him CPR. "He was dead before he hit the ground," the paramedics had told her.

I lived with a guy for awhile at that apartment. He was okay when I first knew him, but later he became abusive. He'd throw things and push me around, shout at me, call me names. I kept thinking I should leave, but how could I leave my apartment? I had a view from my studio of downtown - perfect light - the air off the ocean when the wind was right. How could I leave my only home?

Tactical Error #8: Make things disappear.

After many days, the paper pulp seems less gray. While Erin is busy playing with a friend, I work food coloring into the muck. I color it in batches, and spread it out on aluminum foil on top of the stove. The pink looks like hamburger. The green is almost pretty. I press the batches together and the colors bleed into each other. I have no idea how this will turn out.

At this point the idea of making paper seems silly and stilted. I wonder what I was trying to do, except fend off April, the cruelest month. Once she told me that our parents are not the people now that they were then, when we were children. They've changed and grown

wiser, she said. Back then they were monsters.

Writing immediately after reading your letter because it's been so long since we've known each other I guess I feel poignantly compelled to remember what, who I've missed and because, too, some things you say trouble and touch me...³

One night she comes to the door, really flying and I think she's taken something. She talks so fast I can barely follow what she's saying, suddenly she breaks down crying. She says it's her birthday, that she's twenty-nine.

"Hey, have a beer. It's your birthday," I tell her. Of course, how could I know?

Tactical Error #9: Grow Preoccupied

"We're hungry," the children call from their room.

"Okay, just another minute."

I'm pressing the colored liquid out of the pulp. I've said "another minute" at least three times. Green and pink all over my hands. I'm making paper; I am slaughtering trees. I am staining the world with carcinogenic ink.

(Soon the cat was no longer in boxes. He was in a dark wood. He heard the voices of crickets and the rustling of possums. The damp earth pulsed with trails and destinations, traces of a recent kill. Far off, a larger creature broke tree branches and made short grunting noises)

Finally I put the paper on the aluminum foil in the oven, and I turn the oven on very low, so it will dry overnight. My head is full of ideas - I think I will do pictographs on the paper in ink, and I will look up Egyptian symbols, the ones that stand for life and rebirth, and the signs for Isis and Osiris who stand for the transformative power of love beyond death. I read stories to Erin with half of my mind; several times she jabs me with her elbow and says "Wake up Mommy!" but I'm not sleeping, I'm dreaming.

When she falls asleep, I take a long, slow shower, with the water very hot and lots of steam. The phone rings and rings, but I'm not answering. I always take a shower when I need to think.

The ratio of trade-off for spacetime depends on the curvature, which depends on energy density.

Coming through the gate I thought I smelled smoke. I ran up all five flights of stairs - I guess I knew where it was coming from - and there was smoke pouring from under the door. I pounded on the door and started yelling to wake them up. All the neighbors came out in their bathrobes. Then I picked up a flower pot and threw it through the window. I heard the little girl crying in the bedroom and went straight there - the fire was in the kitchen, burning up to the ceiling from the stove - I picked up the little girl, so light in my arms like a feather and I carried her out and then the mother comes running out behind me in a blue silk kimono, her hair wet, saying "Oh my god, oh my god," like she'd lost her mind.

If you make the density just right, then the curvature of space is just right, so the unfolding costs you zero.

Tactical Error #10: Believe that the unfolding costs you zero .

NOTES

1. From 4/94 OMNI Magazine
2. Poem, Cathi O'nan, unpublished
3. Personal letter, Margaret Lavin, unpublished

American Academy of Poets Winner -- Randall Hinson

Dance Hall Floor

She

stoops down in the river for Friday
Night, next to Black Pines,
Red Clay, Fool's Gold.
Her bare feet
washed by silt and melted
snow; she lets the feeling
drift down stream for
the fingers in her hair,
the poisoned breath on her neck/
Friday Night.

She's never cursed Grandfather's truck,
never shame for Mother's hair,
never shy from a
tenth grade education/
her baby boy; she'll
wear a faded, sun-print
dress ~ all except
for Friday Night/

she returns
from Friday Night
on Saturday Morning
Mother always says,

"I love you."

when the lights go down
on the parquet floor.
She can roll a joint

-yeah
and she can Dance...
with Mary's cousin from Atlanta?
-Hmmm

Maybe Sweet Dan who sweeps
the barber's floor.
Bottles of beer for
Fifty cents.

Brown. Cold. Perspiring.
She dances with her eyes
closed through every song
the band plays; she knows
them all by heart.

The boys respect the way her low cut,
blue gown flips,
her curls and when

and makes her breakfast.

American Academy of Poets Winner -- Randall Hinson

Perfect Saturday Night

Looked out through the window
with paint on the pane,
the phone on my shoulder,
your voice
trails off
between brush strokes
and the hiss
of interference
through the line.

You have a headache too.
You miss him at night.
But the work keeps you busy,
Lonely.
So what about coffee?
In the same cafe by the tracks
where you go
two, three times a day,
just to break monotony.

You can smoke in the bar
and run into the cab driver
who sometimes gets the check
so you'll talk with him.
Their plywood walls.
The popcorn machine.
A jelly omelette and coffee.

Later, we can go bowling
with six of your friends.
They'll call up the girl
who closes her eyes

and talks,
wears her 100% silk shirt
on backwards.
Maurice who rides
a bicycle. He'll show
you his broken sculpture
of melted crayon wax.

Tonight,
we'll score over 70,
pile in the two door
of the boy with a lead patch,
cancer in his eyes,
and get stoned.
You can look out
the steamy window
at the storm drain,
pissing on the hood,
feel my heart beating faster...

By five when I leave,
you'll be too tired
to remember him.
You'll run out of records
to play, things
to paint. Go
wash the lipstick
from your face.

Tomorrow,
we'll meet again
at the cafe, for vanilla cokes,
and hot fudge sundaes.

The Earth Eater

Yolanda Kirk

I became obsessed with Shamdev the moment I heard of him.
Last night I ducked into a phone booth and drank coffee
ready to hang on every word you did not say.

Finally I made it to a bar. There He Sat -
Shamdev's believer.

I recognized him and he recognized the imbalance in me. At eleven we went into the kitchen
with a few leftovers who were also fearful of strobe light fingers touching the earth.

There, five of us managed to spend the evening and early morning hours devouring cold left-
overs of dressings, tomatoes, veal knuckles and bread. When Bruce showed me a picture of
Shamdev wolfboy as a child, my heart heaved. When he took me to his car and showed me a
picture of the wolfboy as wolfyouth, I recognized the pride Shamdev was trying to preserve.

Shamdev had, in this eighteen year old study picture, plucked the hair from his chest and balls.
He was an animal on all fours with the come-hither smile of a child who in all true innocence
knew not what he had done. His crouch dipped, sway back and the look in his eyes betrayed
his innocence. He had licked and slobbered on the devil. For the animals in their innocence
have licked and eaten the dirt from the earth and have tasted the bowels of the beast.

His penis glistened in the sepia and his balls stood firm and hard. His hair was braided and
except for the few stragglers on his temple, he was electric born anew.

I am an earth eater. I have no pride.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
M.A. EXAMINATION READING LIST
1994-95

BRITISH

Chaucer, "The General Prologue"; The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale"; "The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale"; from The Canterbury Tales, from The Norton Anthology, 6th ed.

Shakespeare, Hamlet

Milton, Paradise Lost

Pope, Essay on Criticism

Wordsworth, all selections from The Norton Anthology, 6th ed.

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (St. Martin's edition)

George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss

Tennyson, In Memoriam; "Ulysses"; "The Lotos-Eaters"

Joyce, "The Dead"

Woolf, A Room of One's Own

T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land

Lawrence, Women in Love

Lessing, "One Off the Short List"; "Woman on a Roof"; "Our Friend Judith"

Critical Text: M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp



don't laugh at
me because I'm a
fucking clown!

AMERICAN

Emerson, Nature; "Self-Reliance"

Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (St. Martin's edition)

Melville, "Benito Cereno"

Whitman, "Song of Myself"; "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard
Bloom'd"

Dickinson, selection of fifteen poems--241; 280; 303; 324; 341;
401; 448; 465; 508; 510; 579; 650; 712; 754; 910.

Wharton, The Age of Innocence

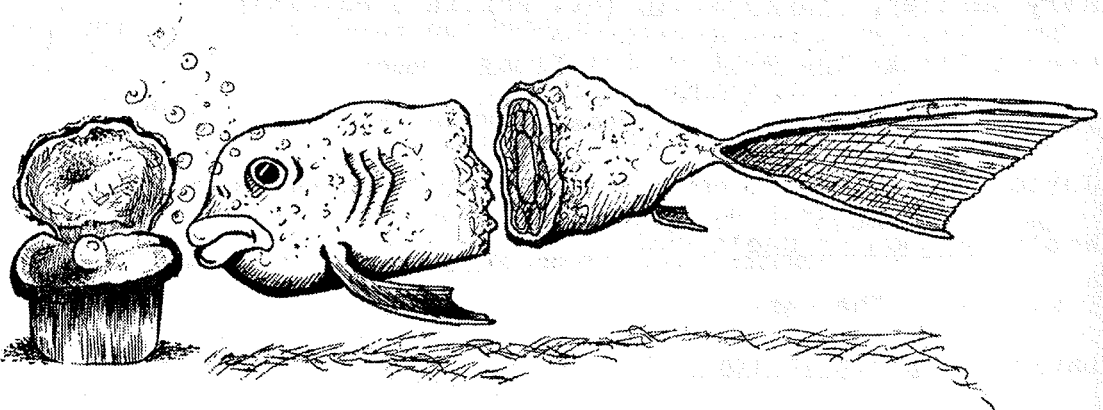
Faulkner, Go Down, Moses

Rich, The Dream of a Common Language

Morrison, Beloved

Hwang, M. Butterfly

Cisneros, The House on Mango Street



Dinner, and Other Things

Chris Cole

Phil- "Is a table needed? Shall I bring glasses? If one were required to purchase a fork will spoons be provided? These questions must be asked, for you have invited me to dinner. I eat my dinner in layers of stacked quantities; salad, bread, meat, soup. I value quantity, there is evidence in quantity. But interruptions are prevalent here, which prevents me from responding to your invitation." - Interruption 1 - "No one has invited you to dinner! They only asked you for directions to dinner!"

Interruption 2 - "Why would someone ask you to dinner, friend? You obviously have no sense of social grace?"

Interruption 3 - "I too believe in being asked to dinner. You have asked some very appropriate questions."

Dinner must shift from its casually elegant mannerisms to a propelled atmosphere that shuns disguises and well meaning blood soaked prime-rib plates. Dinner must acknowledge the cavities of the body as its primal source of in and out goodness. Dinner must free itself of table cloths, seated cushions, and napkins. For they are the well meaning accessories which provided us with such details as a 28.00 dollar shrimp and steak plate. Dinner must...

Phil- "Yes, of course I accept your invitation regardless of what those obnoxious fellows say. They've probably never dined in their lives. They've reduced themselves to hamburgers and malt liquor beer. Well of course my questions concerning the table and glasses were relevant, many restaurants have little to do with such 19th century technicalities as spoons and knives. The majority of restaurants allow the customer to create their own unique dining experience."

The Restaurateurs Convention which is held yearly at the Savanioug Convention Center took issue with the changing concept of "the dining experience." Jack Derof, a restaurant consultant specializing in "dining alternatives" was this years key note speaker. He stated, "For the past 25 years we in the restaurant business have assumed that the overwhelming issue to contest with is the quality of the food we serve customers. The way in which food was prepared and accessorized was highly contested and subject to much debate, but now fellow restaurateurs as they say times have changed. We are confronted with a society whose emphases has shifted from the pleasures associated with taste to a culture which questions the assumptions of what the dining experience should involve. What this means ladies and gentleman is the customer will no longer willingly comply with such traditional staples as

tables, waiters, and chairs, etc.,... We as restaurateurs must be willing to confront this situation head on. We can no longer deny the shift in our customers' needs. I have been director of research and development for Hansen Restaurants for the past seventeen years and I have personally seen this dramatic increase in customers' demand for a more stimulating dining experience. I shall review a variety of ideas my team has developed in addressing this new demand."

IDEA 1 - Individual vs. Customer

"Individuals will no longer tolerate being referred to as customers. Why, you ask? Our research indicates that many people feel it reduces them only to a systemized product which is there only to be served and disposed of within a specifically allotted time. The word "customer" formulates a holistic self that eliminates any possibility of diversifying into other areas of the social strata. When the waiter or waitress hands the individual a menu they are leaving the individual no choice but to regulate themselves to a specific, confining identity-the paying customer. Also the social enforced "dining time," which of course remains unstated, creates a machine-like atmosphere which affects various aspects of the dining experience, from the taste of one's food to the ability to carry on a interesting conversation. We conducted a study which analyzed the relationship between time and the taste of food. One test group was given 20 minutes to eat a New York steak and the other group was given 45 minutes to eat the same cut of meat. The meat was identically prepared for each group. The 45 minute group gave the dish an 82 percent approval rating while the 20 minute group gave the meal only a 1 percent approval rate. This statistical evidence indicates that time has a much greater effect on the quality of a meal than we had been led to believe."

A man from the audience stands and interrupts Mr. Derof's address, "Excuse me, but might this enormous statistical discrepancy have something to do with the fact that one group was told to eat under the threat of gunpoint and the others were not?"

Mr. Derof replied, "We have yet to analyze that aspect of the study. Please do not interrupt again."

Interruption - "Yea, I was at that Restaurateurs Convention, some guy pointed out that one of the test groups had a gun pointed to their head which "greatly affected the subject's response." Sounded like some sort of gag, might have been a set up, I don't know. "Hey, where's the fuckin' ketchup!"

Dinner never meant much but peas and white wine, for white bread sirloin types with a feel for clean finger nails and airy neck ties. Napkins were always present, but never needed. Their outer lips were never confronted with a bit of sloppy potato or mustard sauce. The mouth's outer skin was kept clean, it was used for other things. The food was always eaten. No one once refused it.

Mr Derof's Individual vs. Customer scenario- Door opens, individual enters the restaurant. Speakers are placed at the corners of the four walls. The speakers speak, "Welcome, please instruct us." The individual asks to be prepared as a dish. The speakers ask him to lay on a platform which has emerged from the far right wall. The speakers ask the individual to explain their request, so it might be used to gauge population trends. "I have always consumed the food that has been prepared for me. I am bored by this procedure, this repetitive action which I have never once questioned. I wish to experience the entree's point of view. To be treated as an object that someone is paying to consume." - What is occurring in this brief instance? Is it a capitalistic\sexual\power plea? The words, "paying," "consume," "object," arrange this subject into a three-eyed dye, that refuse to fuse all three terrains of knowledge/desire into one complete "Happy 25th Anniversary" greeting card. The dye rolls "capitalistic."

CAPITALISTIC

The grocery store owner questions the thickness of the canned tomato sauce which he has placed in aisle four. Can it be thicker than a dollar bill, he asks himself? This question annoys him. Five minutes pass. He realizes that he is a grocery store owner who has just questioned the thickness of tomato sauce in relation to a dollar bill. This annoys him further. A customer enters the store. The customer places a 5.00 dollar bill and two boxes of Twinkies on the counter. "The Twinkies are free," says the owner. The customer smiles. "And everything else to, take as much as you like." The customer runs through the store, grabbing as much as he can. The customer leaves, still smiling. Within 2 hours the store is cleaned out. He is pleased. He is no longer a grocery store owner, just a store owner. He lights the carpet on fire. The fire spreads throughout the vacant store. 45 minutes pass. He has no store left. The store is no longer a store but a space in which he may use to exact a precise stance that has evaded him due to tomato cans and other debatable accessories. He thinks.

IDEA 2 - "Let's go out to Dinner." - A PHRASE IN DISPUTE

Jack Derof- "Does this request have any significant power left to initiate social, sexual, or business contacts? Our research indicates that the phrase "Let's go out to Dinner," is currently viewed as an outdated approach to social interaction. By in large people view it as "pseudo-50's pleasantness" that crops up sporadically when the public is confronted with a social, sexual, or economic crisis. The phrase symbolizes stability and cohesion which many people cling to, to ease their fears. We will demonstrate the use of this phrase by playing a bit of 50's nostalgia ourselves. Roll it Steve "A screen descends from the curtains. The faces are white and young. Their bodies are made of clothing; sweaters, t-shirts, and jeans. Only their necks, hands, and faces look human. They require speech to be believed-
He- "Can I ask you something?"

She- "Go 'head."

He- "Na, forget it."

She- "No, what we're you gonna ask me?"

He- "Well, would you, na, you'll just say no."

She- "Just ask me."

He- "Well, how'bout you and me go out to dinner some time."

Can this be looked at in terms of handball? Each request or response is constructed as a small blue rubber ball which is hit and consumed by a wall. The wall resembles each of the clothed figures. The game begins; ball/phrase Can I ask you something— ———The ball is unsure. He recognizes the ball is limp. It is a childish plea which he thought would help him get away from girlie magazines and foul language. He tries to relax himself as the ball is about to be swallowed or rejected. She is quite familiar with this ball/phrase. Its smell and motion is a distinct mixture of naivete and aggressive sweat. She opens her mouth to accept it. Why? She feels these types of phrases have possibilities. Though she is aware of what this phrase will eventually lead to, she enjoys it for its single nature. It may still leave her the ability to escape with a chance. She reconfigures the ball/phrase in terms of allowing him to ask his question. She waits a few seconds though, letting her possibility at another scenario last a bit longer. She responds- G o'head— — —. She waits. He is hit by the ball/phrase quickly. He expected something different. A giggle or maybe a no. He accepts it in fear of appearing inadequate. -But these are only simulations. The intentions given to each character are purely imaginative speculation, so the characters would, consequently, exhibit a humanistic/poetic dimension which would enable the phrases to develop into a more telling form of expression. These bodies of clothing are themselves phrases constituting a social/economic function which ends in middle class ahhh and tiresome lint removal. For example a sweater.

SWEATER

Fact- The "He's" mother purchased the sweater at the local Under Five Dollar Store. She believes that clothes should be durable, fashionable, and cheap. She feels that sweaters have the ability to appear masculine, if one is able to find one with the right color scheme, and soft without being thought as "soft," which denotes femininity and potential "queer" status. She states, "I've always thought men looked handsome in sweaters. When me and my husband used to date in high school, he always showed up at the front door wearing this lovely green and white argyle. He was so handsome. But what persuaded me to start buying them for my son is when I realized how incredibly popular they've become with the young people. Every time I turn on the television some teenager is struttin' around wearin' one of those things. So I said why not my boy, he's just as handsome."

Sweaters- Given at Christmas, birthdays, and anniversaries. Worn by fathers, mothers,

sons, daughters, and grandmas and grandpas. Sweaters are worn on all prime time programs. These shows are predominantly domestic comedies involving a husband, wife, and two or three kids. These shows never discuss why the characters choose to wear sweaters. Jim Arpello, a well known producer of one of these "domestic comedies" discussed the sweater issue stating, "I really don't know what to tell you. What sort of question is that anyway? You asking me to talk about why the characters in the show wear sweaters? You see in the past I've tried to be as polite as possible with these types of questions. I say to myself, 'Hey it's some no-nothing, no-offense, grad student probably working for his college paper, or maybe he's working on some idiotic research report that quote ""explores television's influence on the public."" So what do you want me to say that since Sears is one of our major sources of advertising revenue that we have deceptively made our actors wear sweaters to increase Sears' sales, which leads you to believe that Corporate America dominates every aspect of our lives. See, you didn't think I knew that angle did ya. I went to college to ya'know. Took Communications 101. Learned all about the ""mass media."" I oohed and ahhaed all semester. Well I'm here to say after 15 years in the television business, IT AIN'T LIKE THAT! You know why I have my actors wear sweaters? Do you! Because Woolworth's put out a sweater catalog which my wife can't get enough of. She suggested quote ""how lovely"" they would look on t.v., and after about six months of her bitchin' at me about it, I put 'em on the air. So now when I come home all I got to hear is her whine about the new car she wants. Maybe I'll have all my actors drive around in new Chevys so you can do a paper on how G.M. controls the entertainment industry. Now, would you please go away."

Gave him a sweater. He'll wear it most likely. He doesn't like sweaters, but I know he'll use it. It will stay in the closet and be taken out occasionally. Maybe for playing in the park with his son. He will forget I gave it to him after a couple of years. He might ask his wife, "You got this for me last year?" She'll remember, and tell him I bought it. "Oh yea," he'll say, and smile.

DJE ROLLS-POWER

Card Game- Five men sitting around a table playing cards.

First man- He is tired of coco. He drank it every night for two weeks. He drank it to warm himself before he went to bed. After two weeks the chocolate flavor seemed sour. But he did not drink it for its flavoring. He drank it because he felt cold. He drank the coco in his den, so he could watch the television. He would watch bits of videotape. He never thought to question why he chose certain scenes. They made up so little of his day.

SCENE

A bald man appears. His name and title are shown at the bottom of the screen- Arthur Franklin, Art Director, Metropolitan Museum of Art. He speaks, "What Expressionism does is

say we're not going to portray the outer world, but the inner world. We're not going to paint the skin, we're going to paint the bone and sinew." Consequently there are shots of various paintings which provide evidence for Mr. Franklin's assumptions. The paintings are thought of as innovative for their time. The web of colors overlap, creating distorted figures which are in need of a response. He thought of what Mr. Franklin said about the inner world. How would the expressionists have painted him, "the guy with the cup of cocoa?" Perhaps the painters would betray his calm scene. Would he be torn into streaks of blue and black? Would his portrait, entitled "Man with Cup" been selected by the producers of this documentary? He felt they could have used him.

Successful Vegetarian

Sam Helmi's friend's band

She's not good at painting, she's not good at art
 She wants to be a beatnik but she don't know where to start
 Yeah she's so pathetic that she melts my little heart into goo
 She's not good at singing, she can't hold a tune
 When she reads her poetry she clears out the room
 She wants to be tragic but there's only one thing she can do

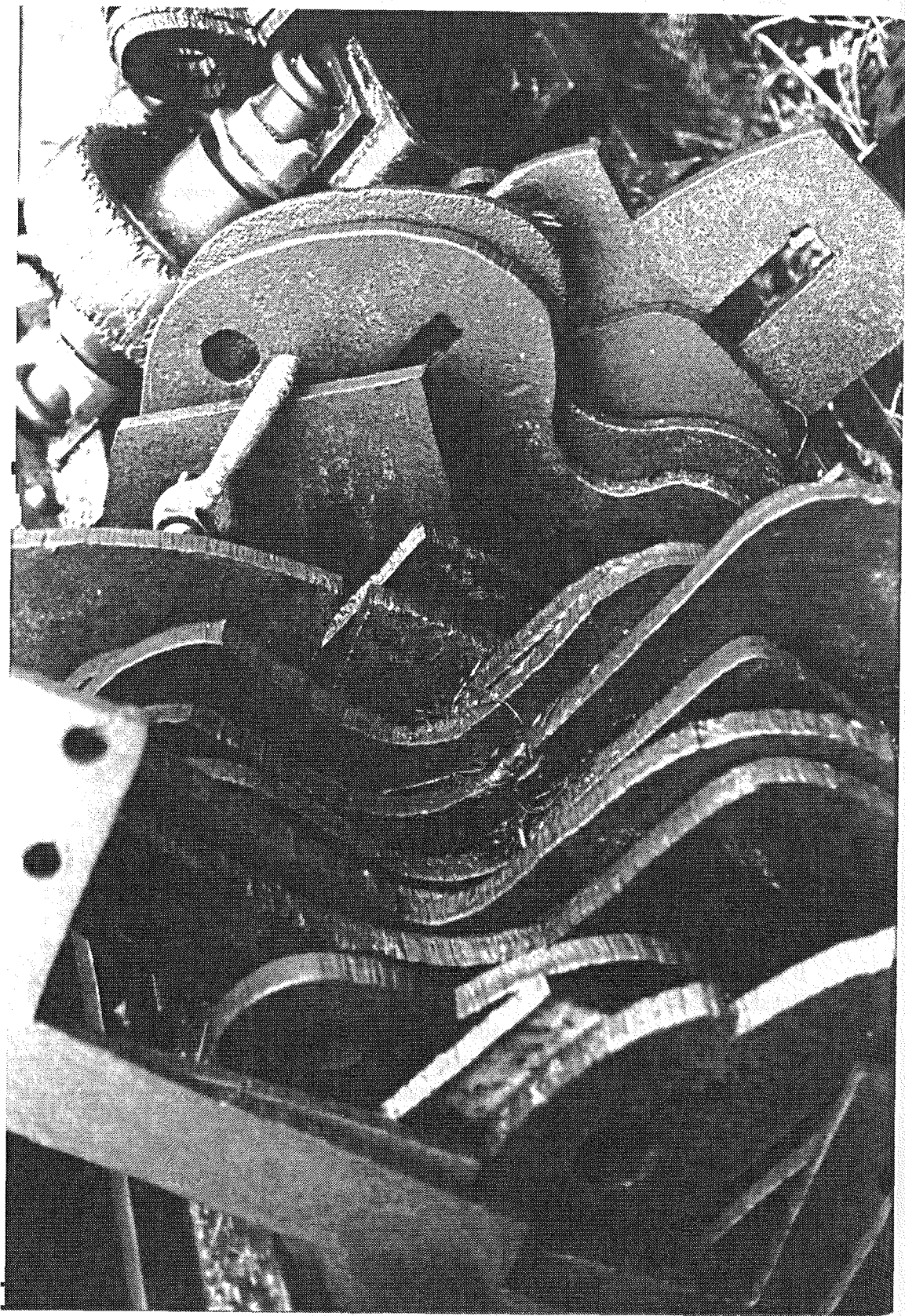
She's a successful vegetarian
 She's a successful vegetarian
 She's a salad. All mixed up
 She's got conscience up the butt
 She's a successful vegetarian
 And I love her

She doesn't like chicken, she doesn't like fish
 She doesn't want no red meat to bleed on her dish
 But she rubs my lantern and I make her wishes come true
 She talks to the bushes, she talks to the trees
 She talks to the insects, she's down on her knees
 The girl's way crazy but she's not crazy for beef stew

She's a successful vegetarian
 She's a successful vegetarian
 Meaty sausage makes her cry
 So she's thinking that she's bi'
 She's a temporary lesbian
 And I love her

It seems worth a taste, it seems worth a try
 It seems like you've always got a date when you're bi'
 But she's kind of nervous
 'cause it's not what her Catholic school taught
 She wants to be hip, she wants to make the scene
 She read all about it in her Cosmo magazine
 It smells kind of funky
 but it doesn't taste as bad as she thought

She's a temporary lesbian
 She's a temporary lesbian
 She's so trendy what can she say?
 Just don't ever call her gay
 She's a temporary lesbian
 And I love her!



Josh Greenberg

Family Construction

Nancy Krusoe

A knowledgeable
woman can read her
future in a simple
gesture....

Balzac

I have found my brother's sister who is not the road to happiness which we are not to give up on, he says. You are my sister, he says. I am his sister. Hansel and Gretel had no other sister and aren't we enough? As if like them he imagines we had dropped and kept dropping signs along the road to happiness so that we could return and repeat the journey in and back out of the forest, ever happier, luckier children. Jeremy believes in pure happiness and probably truth as well as all the things I cannot believe yet I have found you, Elizabeth, our sister who he does not believe is real.

More and more family signs point to more like us on a page in a book. I stop and speculate. Which book? What name to begin with?

Elizabeth has been searching for the one and only man who can say: This daughter is my daughter and I am back. Back from the forest? Back from the dead? Someone in the Bible is always saying: Be not afraid, it is I.

Also in the Bible someone says: I can do no evil neither also is it in me to do good. That is the way I am Ocarina ("little goose"). I am not evil neither am I good; goodwill is not enough. Is it enough for conversation with the dead? I converse with all the names of the dead that have not been deleted from The Book of Names: John and Jeremiah. There is no Judith left in the book. If there were a Judith, she would be a knowledgeable woman and could read the missing names. But she herself is missing from The Book.

A knowledgeable woman can read her future (sometimes her body) in a simple gesture of a certain kind. This gesture is what I am looking for. The gesture of a name that is missing and that names a thing that until then will be unknown.

During my first attempt to find a name named over other names, to find The Book that names it, a knowing woman said, "I believe few women have any idea toward what end they are striving."

Is this a knowledgeable woman I was talking to?

My palms lay flat, my body alongside lay invisibly covered in the ritual almond oil which I had purchased for this visionary occasion with her as I thought: There is more than one knowledgeable woman in the world.

Elizabeth says, "The last shall be the first. You are my sister, the first but not the last of sisters to come."

Seeking farther into Elizabeth's past, I find this warning posted:
 Her gates are hidden in the ground;
 I have destroyed and broken her bars.
 Succulents flourish where once there was the law.

Elizabeth says these lines were in a letter she received from her husband. She does not know what he meant.

Jeremy doubts the advisability of any more family faces in his life now that he has more than enough. And the dead ones can stay dead. You can print that, he says.

Diary entry #1:

Never enough clean linen—need more whites all the time. Accumulating family like geese. Jeremy is sick of company. Asks me to keep them quiet when he is working. I am stiffhearted about it. Everywhere I go Elizabeth is following me. She stares at me as if she's trying to figure something out. Her husband arrives tomorrow. Almond butter and pecan pies are ready. I am anxious to see what the man who has destroyed and broken her bars looks like. Jeremy thinks this is a joke. Is this man a preacher, I mean is he some kind of evangelist? he asked Elizabeth today and she just sipped her iced tea and smiled. Unsettling. What's any one of us looking for?

Everyone likes the party. Elizabeth's husband John has come from Egypt where he says they were eating fish freely on the streets. Free fish? Elizabeth is confused and I wonder why her husband has been in Egypt without her.

"You'd love the cucumbers there," he says because I've served my delicious cucumber salad. "The leeks and onions are heavenly, too."

I think we are walking on our faces in the floor.

"And they have wonderful almonds there. They're ground into paste in a vessel while you wait. Imagine the desserts!"

Elizabeth stares at me. Something is breaking, and we're walking on it like we know these people we are talking to like people who have known each other.

Who is he? Jeremy asks. I am reaching out to Elizabeth, but she is inches beyond my touch out the window through an opening too small for my hand; she is out of reach. There is no road to happiness, and maybe the gates are hidden in the ground forever. Don't vanish, Elizabeth.

Just when I'm least expecting the world at my feet, there appears a knowledgeable woman at my party calling me over, picking me out of the crowd to tell me a secret. She says, "For some years I had known there was a deep flaw inside me growing stronger every day because I did nothing to stop it. The discovery came upon me like a speaking revelation it said: YOU ARE A MAN TRAPPED IN A WOMAN'S BODY."

I tell her she is like a Bible story that's been written to keep all of us forever in line over other lines like my name is under and covered by all the other names.

"Who are you speaking to?" she asks.

Who are you I am speaking to?

The knowledgeable woman with her Bible stories is facing me. I am facing the floor. Very much without a family story I am lying on the floor. I am searching. I have always searched.

The wall was warm on her face. Gretel pressed against the windowpane and liked the taste so she tore out a big chunk.

Elizabeth says what we are looking for may not be here. This is not the first time. It is not the last time. If the law is no more, why are we looking for the Book of Names—one thing exchanged for another? Plainly a simple gesture isn't enough for all the knowledge sealed in the pages of a book.

While lying on the floor, I realize that I have always confused those names in the beginning of the Bible with what was not like that. It says: These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle and everything you see is mine. Whose father is speaking and why is he saying these things?

John is saying how delicate shell fish are caught and cooked on the Nile or in the Dead Sea.

I am not part of the Dead Red Sea. I move out of the way of the movement of large bodies of water. Lying on the floor, I am not a statue that stands by the sea. Is the law that is no more the one that is no more than the one Elizabeth is looking about for the father who is no more than a name?

Some people in the room are folding a stack of leaflets piled high against a wall. What's printed on them is: "The young and the old lie alike on the ground in the streets."

There's more in the leaflet, but I stop reading it because there are too many ways to read it at once.

This is a simple thing I am seeking: a name named over other names. A gesture of naming and of taking away a name.

John slips out of the kitchen and I follow him leaving Elizabeth and Jeremy alone.

"You are an international male," I say. "Tell me how to find The Book of Names."

"You know what you want and you know where to find it," he says and I receive his words like a misdirected kiss. "The law is no more and what is no more will do you no harm."

These cattle are my cattle. Everything you see is mine.

Diary entry #2

Mussels are very familiar animals, along with starfish. A plain casting rod is insufficient for catching large fish. For that you need know-how; you need to know how things are done.

In a dream I am surrounded by mussels and baby starfish and they are all crying at once. What can I do? OPEN THE GATE, they are screaming and I begin to scream. There is no gate but there is surplus color everywhere, and I am running like a green and red machine, so bright you can see no other colors beneath my running colors.

All things are relative to the knowledgeable woman. Even the edge is a relative phenomenon once you have fallen. You can get away from thinking like this but not for long.

You know what you know from the woman who knows what she wants many times over and over like a machine—think of her now. There is no harm in knowing the machine.

Elizabeth sees a man in the street. It is not Jeremy she sees. It is not John she sees. It is a man but not any man she knows.

In the army and navy surplus store Elizabeth buys a Swiss army knife for her protection against people who ask her to vote for them— always a danger sign.

John has left her a note in place of himself.

It says: For some years I have known there was another man inside me and he just couldn't stay quiet any longer. Everywhere I look he is looking back at me and giving me visions like you have but never in my line of vision. It isn't against the law to have visions or to break the gate that's hidden in the ground....

I hold Elizabeth like a child in my arms as she looks at me trying to figure something out. A man will sometimes be gone, Elizabeth. We will search for your father somewhere in this city where little good is done but no harm comes from looking. Somewhere in this city there are men who are fathers and they are fathers whether or not we have found them like us in a page of a book, registered in The Book of Names in The Book of the City in The Book of the World.

When Jeremy writes to tell me he has arrived in Egypt, he has no need to say how it is in Egypt. His lament is my lament. His past is my past as Elizabeth is the present. I will see him again. He writes that almond paste is good for the skin, but it will not keep you from aging each and every moment.

The snorting of strong horses means Dan has come to the city. The whole land trembles at the sound of the neighing of his horses overhead as they drop from the sky to our streets. They might devour the city before the children find their fathers and who will ever know who belongs to whom?

I rush, I am searching, running on green and red tracks where leaflets announce help for the poor, no names needed. I am not evil nor am I good. This daughter is my daughter. Who is speaking these words? Almond paste is good for the skin. Nothing can stop the move-

ment of large bodies of water through the land. Hurry, Dan, I need you.

In an effort to accumulate data I copy the entire history of births and deaths in the city. All the way back. I am sure I will die if the heat wave doesn't abate. Dahlias droop and die within seconds seething in their pots. In fact, none of the names I find in *The Book of Names* seem right but what would a right name sound like?

Elizabeth's father was an international male known to many women but that makes him no easier to find in the history books. It's true he spoke to crowds, but who could be bothered writing it down?

I see a horse landing in the street.

You know what you know—you know what you want to know. You know what they want you to know.

(What will become of the known viral life forms which plague mankind already which, not living and yet not nonliving, are ambiguously alive?)

I come across one name that sounds right. Why this name? I am afraid to say its sound, and is it the sound of the pleasure of my finger leading me in the right, the direction to the center of truth? My name, my one and only true name?

The horse's eyes are level with her eyes out the window. You could be anybody's horse, she says, any any any body's horse.

Broken bars and closed bars, locked and destroyed. Where are all the bars in this city of countless bars?

Sealed books—not a person but a book followed by a person.

There is a moment when Elizabeth is sure she has found her father sitting in a dark corner of our own neighborhood bar. Outside horses are neighing loudly and she asks Dan to shut them up so as not to arouse his suspicion.

Elizabeth speculates on what kind of man he is. She is fatigued from delivering surplus leaflets to every part of the city, lost most of the time. Words, leaflets, announcements—you could die lost in this city.

In Egypt Jeremy has fallen in love. It is no accident there is dark hair in abundance everywhere.

Elizabeth is around me, she holds on and floats as if I am her body of water, the one who stays afloat and sails away with both of us.

To the man sitting in the corner of the bar Elizabeth says, "I am looking for my father. Your face might be recognizably his face."

Gretel ran straight to Hansel and opened the door of the shed.

Elizabeth's Swiss army knife is safely in her pocket unopened. "Can you tell me where you've been?" she asks the man sitting in the corner. "This could be the gesture of my life."

Dan's horses surround the building. They devour whole cities like Biblical punishment stories where no one is left alive behind the walls.

These are stories of family life like my body engulfed in stories of God's revenge, whose stories are not my stories.

Morse Code

Louise Yeager

My Grandfather and I had "Morse code" between us. On the bus we would quietly sit. My black maryjanes bobbed above the lines of the rubber floor mat. His wool trousers were prickly against the side of my swinging leg.

"What a sweet little girl," said the lady in the pink pillbox hat.

"Yes," said my Grandfather. He turned to me and smiled, "Tanto to bella."

I looked down and fidgetted with the red ribbon on my navy sailor dress. We alternated our conversations between English and Italian, but in public, Italian made me nervous. It made other people nervous too. The pink-pill-box-hat-woman smiled politely and turned toward the window.

Grandpa's square brown fingers took my hand and squeezed it four times. Each squeeze was a word, but this game had been played between us so many times, we no longer needed them. His meaning was clear to me: DO YOU LOVE ME?

I squeezed back: YES I DO.

Two squeezes from Grandpa: HOW MUCH?

I grabbed as much of his hand as I could, which was only the first three fingers, and squeezed, squeezed, squeezed.

The bus took us to the Santa Monica Pier. As it pulled away it left a black mass of diesel smoke, thick enough to bring a genie from a bottle. The continuous breeze carried it inland.

Grandpa and I walked the length of the faded brown planks. Grandpa took a slim, leaf-rolled cigarello from the silver cigarette case he kept in his breast pocket. I did not mind the smoke because the wind danced it swiftly apart.

Together we made a single bronze statue, silhouetted against the orange-lavender sky; but Grandpa never carried me. My left hand was pressed to my thigh to hold down my dress. My right hand was in his left. As his right hand brought the amber to his lips, he turned his head sideways to take a deep drag. After exhaling, he looked toward the silver sunset water and said, "Wind is good, it clears the hair."

"Capello?" I was puzzled.

"Niente affatto," he said, "capo."

"It clears the head?"

"Si bella, it clears the head." He squeezed my hand twice.

My father held my hand, as my black, patent leather maryjanes bumped along uneasily across the carpet. In front of a deep brown mahogany coffin, he stopped, slipping his pale, manicured hand from mine and running it along the white satin brink. I was not tall enough to see more.

After a moment he lifted me to his hip. My arm extended instinctively toward the cuff of the wool suit lying there very still. Daddy grabbed my hand to cease its motion. As he bore me away he held me too tight.

Us, Being Jennifer

Alan Mills

From the steel rack
I take the jacket: brown, tan and red,
made from
Navajo
scraps of Navajo
rugs like the one that hung on
my wall. I hold my rug and buy
my
jacket and wear it out.

I walk across
campus and I see a coach selling
tickets
for Bingo.
I hold up my rug.
"Bingo is an offensive
word," I scream. "I know this because
I'm...
...I am a Navajo."

I reach Building
Fifteen and I find your door and you
open
it and stand
there in a scarlet
robe looking sick but smiling.
You love my jacket and my rug.
You
ask if you can follow

me to where I
am going and as we start across
the lawn,
you stop in
front of an oval
pond. You lean forward and fall
like in Nestea commercials only
face
first into the rich green

algae and you
grope through the green thickness, writhing like
Hamlet's
Ophelia,
and Joy comes and helps

pull you out and we go on.
We talk about English lit. and
you
say Margaret Atwood is

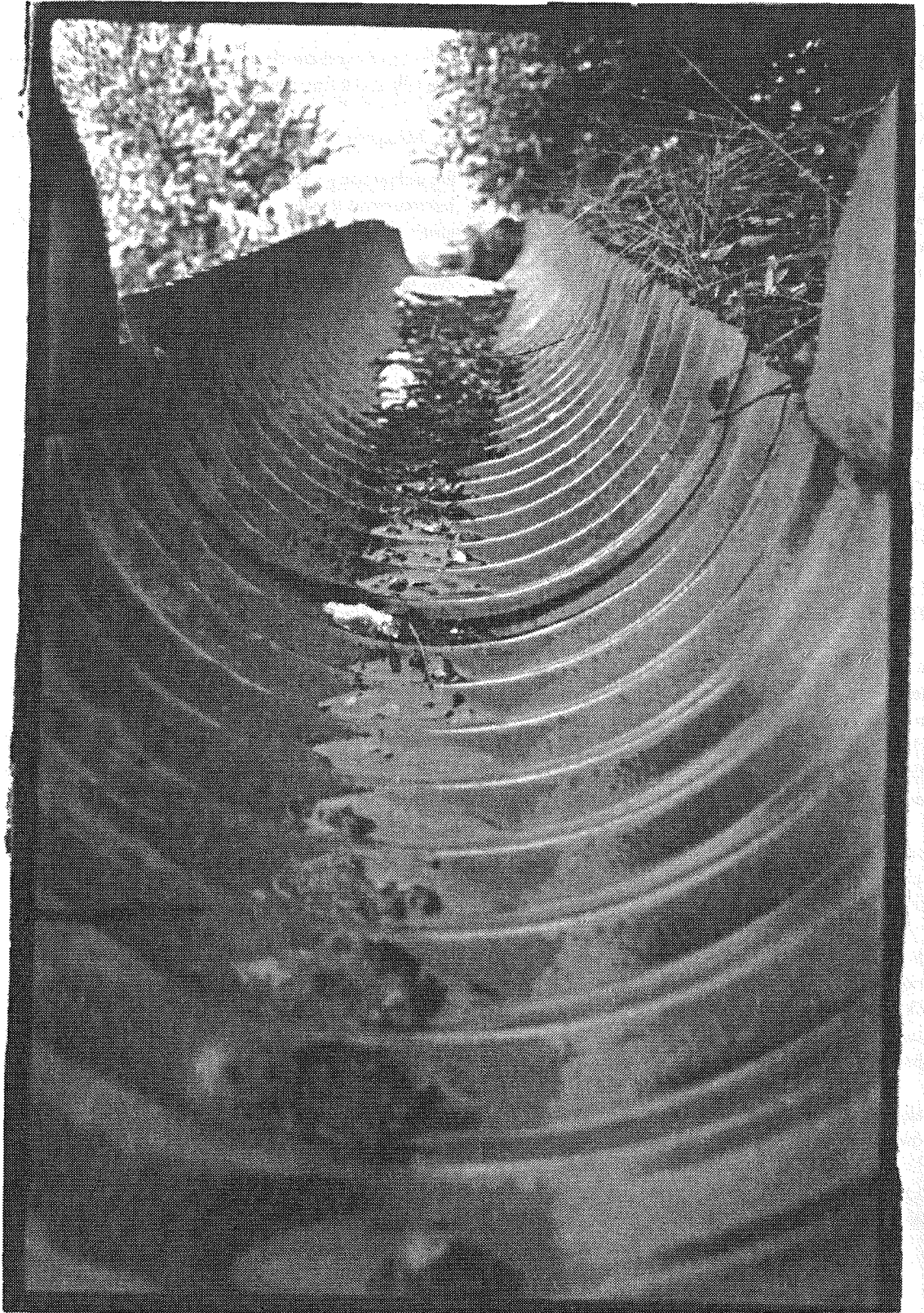
the only good
heterosexual female
writer
alive, but
Joy says, "What about
Denise Levertov?" But, you
just stop and fall to your knees in
prayer
because some students are

walking behind
us and they are intruding on our
private
dialogue.
When they are gone you
get up and we continue
with our conversation until
we
meet with Judy and Sue.

I show the rug
to them and I model the jacket.
I spin
like Barbie,
Ballerina Bar-
bie. I dance with the jacket
on me, twirling brown, tan and red.
But,
you all just look away.

I lift the rug.
I raise the Navajo like a flag
and say,
"Don't you see?!"
Sue only says, "Why
did you bring that?" and you look
back at Building Fifteen like you
don't
know. Jen, I thought you knew.

US. Belmont University



Josh Greenberg

The Flute Man

Gary D. Smith

She takes herself home, past the
marble threshold and the mirrored
hall, and the empty elevator plunging
darkly, opening and

waiting on the corner, always there,
the flute man plays her song and
she pays him with a smile, her
garnet eyes a flash already

lifting to the hills, where the tempest
falls tonight, a flash flood no-one knows
about but her, and the voices
from her broken radio.

Somewhere In Lincoln Heights

William E. Archilla

Through dark banners of night
through L.A. old city streets
slowly sinking beneath soft September lights

slowly drifting from complete
daylight dreams of the silver screen-
I drag - lost in a cloud of cigarette smoke and sleep

myself down the cemetery Broadway scene
thinking-screaming-wondering of going back home,
leaving behind nothing but street light-pavement dreams

for the ancient city of night: alone
since cathedrals broke and burned Cuzcatlan
-still chained- running through volcanoes and mountains called home

where Death Squads bite and howl like Ku Klux Klan
where men and women disappear in the dead highway night
and those who leave forget their homeland.

But everybody returns on dead grandfather night
missing L.A. bars and icy city streets
lost in the machinery money-making western night.

I walk passed the Mexican Restaurant heat,
the Nicaraguan chef who left Somoza in the seventies,
sun-burnt faces in the evening city streets,

jump-rope girls memories
Chinatown traffic and stale beer,
-late night Latino remedies:

a skeleton city, mountains, bells-late last year
my sisters, old in their voices, who wanted me home
my father to ashes who wanted me far from his fears.

I creaked up the stairs alone
thinking enough of these flowers and candy
enough sugar in my bones

enough oil in my blood and fingers - economy
 - besides limited boredom
 leads to Spanish speakers only

But you should see the apartment I call home:
 a radio bed playing Sur y Cielo de Tambores to rugs,
 a small black and white tv, always on,

table and chairs, a couple of Mexican mugs
 a few stacks of books in the corner floor:
 Sor Juana, Dalton, Paz to smug,

The Autumn of the Patriarch by the door
 But should I feel guilty when I read Beckett or Mary Shelley?
 Should I throw Ginsberg out the window door?

What of the Jazz detective chase down the black alley?
 What of Irish clouds rolling thick on rainy city street?
 What of the railroad-Chinatown cantos through the belly?

Forgive me, for I have sinned in heat
 my thoughts, conceived and untamed, boxed in a book, alone
 they fly through avenues
 up roof tops, down L.A. streets

writing letters to Central America- once home
 sick of L.A. and the broken-bullet sky
 creating in the street light rain and blue moon- now home.

Next door, Ranchera or Cumbia music thumps, grinds and dies.
 I sink and sleep on the mattress with dreams of India
 waiting on a bleak rainy morning sky.

Cyclical

Perry Sein

Faded Burmese writings
on old black leather thongs
rest against grey-white stucco walls
wet and twisted

White rain turned in hail with a moment's notice
pounds the corrugated grey-speckled roofs
double-fisted. My grandparents' house
endures under fervent rhythm of rain
like tight-leathered wooden drums being beaten
in wild ecstasy with thick brown callused fingers.

Lightning sliced black pent-up skies
thunder followed close by.

Scentless short white candle flicks off
the cool rushing breeze
with dancing yellow light
and dared us to catch the flowing wax
with our fingers or choose
Poe or Arthur Conan Doyle
from our old brown RCA
radio "broadcasting live from BBC"
which was equally painful
for my two sisters and I.

Glass-less wooden window stares down blue skies
and bright sunlight invites the rain in.

A Chinese family lived 6 inches above
the trash-filled alley
I watched as they tried in vain
to hide from rain like ants
scurrying into their holes

cold water danced in deep frying pans
and muddy alley turned into a filthy river.

We owned lumber store
woods gathered from deep deep emerald
jungles of Burma
drifted down Irrawady River

toward Indian Ocean
 My grandfather lived and worked
 with his fearless devoted crew:
 malaria, tigers, pythons and starvation.

One night they made fire to cook
 whatever they caught from the woods
 but when the ground shook they ran
 in all different directions
 only to find that they were sitting
 on a snake.

dinner that night was wet earth
 served on bitter cold fingers
 sprinkled with dreams
 for a better tomorrow.

The next morning they saw
 a brown-spotted calf
 being eaten alive
 by the same hungry python
 taking his sweet time
 with his eyes rolled back
 mother cow watched from a safe helpless distant.

Our lumber store was always cool inside
 sawdust wiggles on the floor
 and the smell of wet teak and jasmine
 danced together in the air.

But one day they came
 in old army trucks, uniforms and rented guns
 stuffed like pigs on their way
 to a slaughter house.

But it was us that they came to slaughter
 ordering us to surrender our very souls:
 lumber, rice, jasmine and even rain
 "in the name of State and Public and such"

for the state we owed nothing
 for the people that turned against each other

I stood there frozen
 in my wet worn-in thongs
 holding up both my arms
 to catch my grandfather's big broken heart

but his tears snaked through his jungle-worn
 cheeks
 and dripped down on my head
 like the rain that drip for days
 after the storm.

Unfinished: 500 years of History

William E. Archilla

Sympathy

Sympathy for my immigrant Father ~

driven mad by the heat and wind
weeping on the television couch
eyes red to melodrama news of the screen

Sympathy for my step mother ~ housekeeper

trying to imitate her pale, insipid, unsugared
Cleanliness-next-to-Godliness actress
from the Golden Age of Hollywood

Sympathy for my half brother ~ now and then

arising like a flower, but feeding on electrical circuits
mocking his baby grandmother
and Salvador stains in sky light
growing into the cracked mirror
of his up-nosed, puppet mother

Sympathy for the uncle

who drinks himself to bottom of bottles
with Gin and Tonics ~ Vodka, lemon and lime
because his family can't deal with el Chisme
that at night hot Carl grabs him from behind
in silk tropical rage ~ pressing
rubbing hard against dark hairy belly
humming Chorus Line in the dark

Sympathy for the movement

whose bread and wine I can't receive ~
break down, swallow slowly ~ drink it, zip it:
pounding tears and sweat
drumming blood in the stomach and head

Sympathy for the raging Chicano L.A. hipster Ranchero night

ignoring Central American Immigrant Poet
reciting death chants on the dark leaves of his country night
raving ~ ranting because these two busted bronze bullets
came from the same rusty gun
but landed on different sides of the border

Sympathy for the Green Berets in El Salvado,

the Marines in Nicaragua, C.I.A. instructors in Guatemala
US military bases in Panama, D.E. A. agents in Colombia

Sympathy for military men

thinking with their bloated stomachs
dressed like soldiers ~ smelling like thieves

Sympathy for La Ziguana, friend of the river night,

walking endlessly the streets of Los Angeles
with dead daylight dreams of her own skies and earth

Sympathy for the Mission boys

who sit and hang in the slow afternoon corner
rapping pump rhymes and Billy blue bop
as cops patrol this "dog-fight district"
keeping this rapping racket from the golden tree

Sympathy for the city bird

with dark spots on its brown wings
flying into green broken bottles and pavement floors
no sunflower cloud or river song

Sympathy for the Earth-darker-than-night housekeeper

who traded Death Squads in San Salvador
for the crazy bullet buzzing her ears
on her new streets and broken steps

Sympathy for the mid west dreamer in South Central

who fled one broken down isolated Memphis, Tennessee,
crumpled like paper in the dim diesel night,
to raise children in the ashtray city of Los Angeles

Sympathy for sugar-coated American reader

who see L.A. as Hollywood or Beverly Hills
and not Latino barrios of Echo Park, Boyle Heights, San Fernando

Sympathy for Joan Didion, L.A. writer d

ominated by her own institutional Altar of Hollywood ~ L.A. Times,
whose wasted, seduced, prostituted talent
used Salvadorean death in the 80's
to release a thin 100 pages black book
on her disgust against thin light volcano mountain skys
el puppet politic who drools over Mr. Reagan's rocket
only to replay a Vietnam nostalgia dream
of a reporter gone pavement dried

Sympathy for David ~ his screaming silence

and big boy bark in the Asian-Latino L.A. classroom w
 aiting for angels to rain, bless his scattered dreams
Sympathy for that one long hair Chicano actor,
 son of poet, who claimed the cause and movement
 as his own coat for winter nights
 but left it behind to rot
 when he entered the golden gates of Hollywood
 too sunbathed and artificially tanned
Sympathy for the nude dancer
 sucking dollars through her red lip mouth
Sympathy for the highly erotic sophisticated Plato
 pretending to be the raw and cooked actor
 looking for wine cork pops in the night light
Sympathy for the greedy, high stone, pillar statue of a politician y
 ou punk you death stupid brute cock idiot father fucker
Sympathy for Mr. Ronald Reagan
 who orders the White House Home Made Special:
 Wonder Bread, Amencan cheese, strips of bacon
Sympathy for Napalm cancer
 and the US pilot who prays
 before he bombs Vietnam
Sympathy for father Martinez
 who barks his Sunday sermon on the tortured Christ
 eyes like dead fish - cold clear Christian Church
Sympathy for the praying and decaying lord of pain
 the song of the virgin mother of sex
 pouring serpents and thorns like sinfill rain
Syrmpathy for the English teacher
 who chalks across the blackboard: Columbus discovers America
And Sympathy for Cristobal Colon
 who sailed the ocean blue in 1492
 set foot on virgin lands: unmapped
 unimagined
 unnamed-untamed,
 unexplored, undeveloped
 undocumented

But the west always remains a virgin
 since this race of natural heroes,
 diseased with aching bones
 censored for tongues of fire
 wasted down to pestilence,
 don't wear clothes, read or write
 use silver ware nor say grace
 They don't mind sweat or blood smells
 They don't even speak English
 They get pregnant
 They talk back to cops
 disagree with foreign policy
 stay on welfare
 overcrowd the schools
 for a miserable taco-pizza lunch
 They don't understand what is like to be invaded
 Sympathy - for Christopher Columbus
 in the name of God, Glory, Gold and the Empire
 Sympathy for the American prayer
 arising like a lizard under radiant skies
 eciting dead poetry of the snake in Aztec Nights
 Sympathy for the silence of Maria y Jose standing
 with their heads down - handcuffed
 thrown, shoved, pushed into wide metal doors of a green truck
 driven by green uniformed - dark sun glasses border patrol guards
 Sympathy - A fucking mind remains a horrible thing
 Sympathy to those who adopt to everything - Amen!
 Sympathy to those who misread my direct voice for anger
 Am I unamerican to you?
 Sympathy - Sympathy for all of them
 for they're all sacrificial lambs, living crucifixes
 of 500 years of history and its conquest
 Sympathy - for I hurt, too

Broken Engagements

Jennifer Liberts

Becky jabbed her elbow
into my ribs, balancing
pasta plates in line
at Crate and Barrel

"You won't believe
who's here," she whispered
through sterling silver,
crowds of ceramic

plates bath mats.
Like bubbles blown off
water, two years dissolve
and he, holds fondue

bowls in the gourmet
section— a gust of Drakkar
all teeth, ocean eyes
stolen roses and pet

names. Shards of words
fell around me in fragments
of china I'd thrown;
doors slamming, lies pinned

like stained butterfly
wings behind glass. Bodies
of truth trapped in air-
tight jars, specimens

for study over time.
Cells split— pink tissue
cleaved to me, beat blue
blood through shared veins

while I retched french
fries, ketchup— bloated
slept through art history,
health science, awakened

to secret underwater dreams—
my brother holding my head
as I breathlessly thrashed,
fetal pigs in formaldehyde

blue drape, steel stirrups,
IV needle, white walls; counting
backwards from numb,
to nothing. For weeks

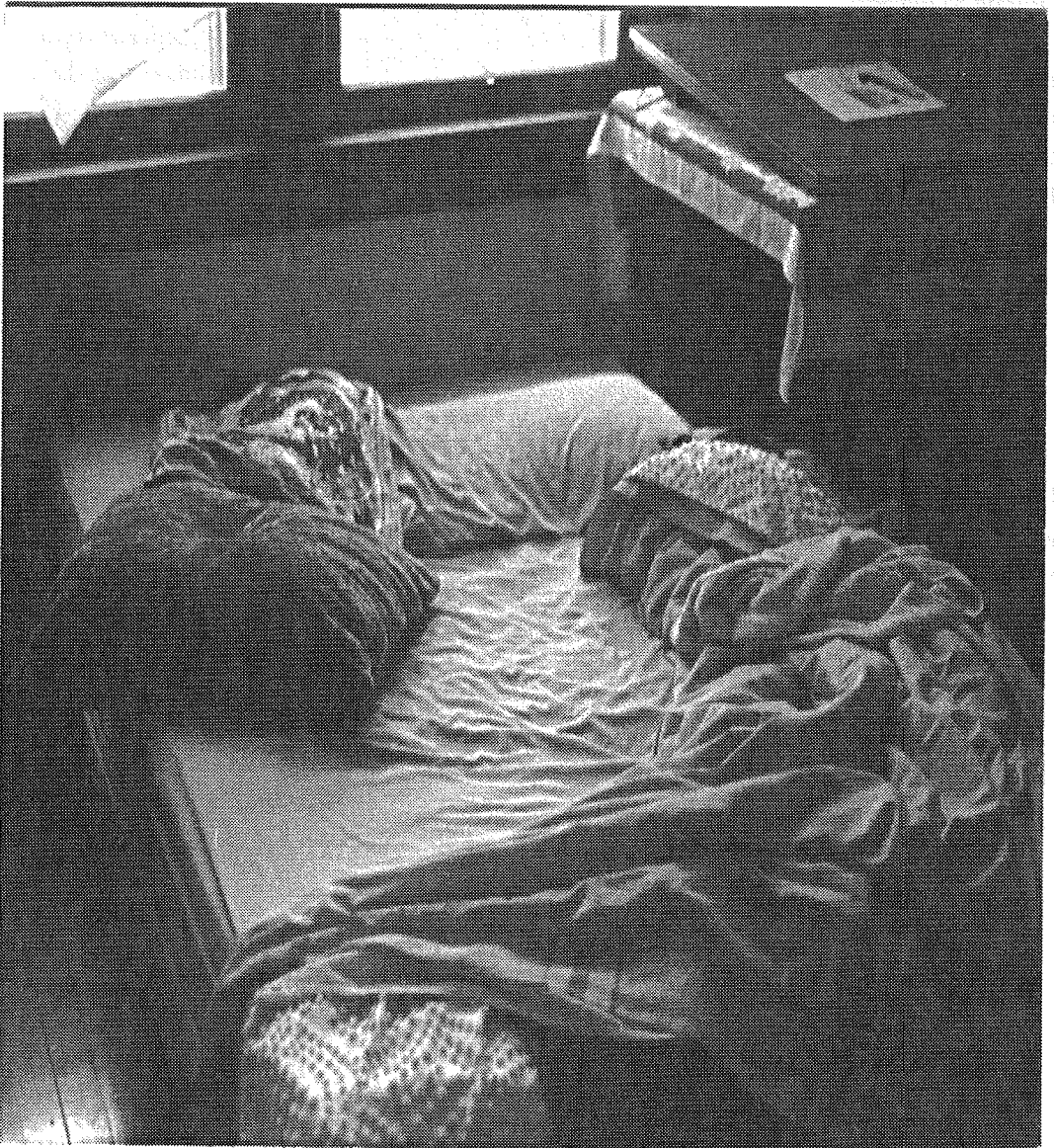
I thought I felt it stir;
small heart pulsing in me
itching an amputated leg,
running thirsty to mirage

Two years gone and he floats
towards me— a soap bubble
catching glints of color
from artificial track lights

It could have been blond,
with his cleft chin, hazel
eyes like mine. Babbling
by now— dada, baby

Gutted, his kiss
a rusted hook in my cheek
He wanes— a pinpoint
reflected by a toaster oven.

Ann Castellana Holley



THE GREEN BATH TUB

A collaborative work by: Staci Bleecker, J Julie, Dan Redondo, Felicia Krieti

The lines are separated by distance, but weakened in no manner. My grandmother had died as my mom's plane touched down. Shuttling back and forth between Simi and Minneapolis, waiting for the inevitable, had become a financial burden for my family. So Mom came home, knowing that it might be the last time she'd see her mom alive. The lines were stretched again, but incredibly, like some unique silly putty, they grew stronger as Grandma's life came to an end. Mom rushed to the airport, catching the midnight flight back to Minneapolis, but the plane's wheels touched down close to the same time she died. And we got the call.

One week earlier, I had purchased a new suit, dark but not too funereally depressing, so that I could wear it for other, more livelier, happier events, and a new piece of luggage, a green carry-on bag, in preparation for the unavoidable trip I knew was coming. I felt somewhat depressed and a little strange, not because I knew my grandmother was dying (I hardly knew her, only seeing her a handful of times, mostly when I was under the age of ten), but because I was looking forward to going back, to seeing my cousins, my aunts and uncles, all of whom I had not seen for five years. Ironically, the last time I saw them was June, 1987, when my grandfather died (a morbid joke later swept through the family that it takes a death to get the Redondo's out for a visit). But here I was, facing the death of my mom's only surviving parent, actually happy to be going. I could picture my cousin Dave (who's the same age as me), holding his one-year old boy in his arms, the look of joy at being a father in his eyes. I would see Jeremy (also my age) standing next to him. Will he be taller than I remembered? Of course, he would, but this was a boy who entered kindergarten a year late because he was too small to climb the steps up the bus. But most importantly, I saw past their faces and looked at a question that was eating my insides. Would we still be friends? Would we laugh as we did when we were young, building forts out of broken twigs, fishing for dogfish with the day's cut-up perch? Would we remember sitting on lawn chairs in two feet of water at the far end of the lake on a hot summer day, far more interested in finishing the case of beer than catching any fish, even though we were only fifteen? Would that be enough to rebuild the friendship, even if only for a few days, brought together by the death of our grandma, or would we sit in the awkward silence brought about by our changing bodies, new interests, and loan payments? These were my thoughts, my anxieties, as I boarded the plane along with my two sisters and my father. And I felt sick, somewhat twisted, because I was happy.

The funeral was sad, as all funerals are, but I mourned not for my grandma, who I did not know well enough to feel her loss, but for my mom and all her brothers and sisters. Jerry, her brother, said in jest, "We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny.

I hear applause. Somewhere I heard you defy me. You bastard, the rain is eminent. Snow too. And pipes freeze.

I loved to play when four years old with string and launch a great yellow balloon. We were going out there with the video cam to try to record the demise of the Putt Putt Railroad set inside the hut made of cardboard and chain link. When you're four years old you're supposed to believe everything you're told. You're supposed to believe lying is wrong.

I could start again. Let me start again...

Jesus is coming to the bowling alley converted to a dance floor. But what have I to offer? Orange and grenadine syrup?

I slipped, bled, watched the flesh on the meaty part of my hand below the thumb flower. Rose. 26 times in a mass of people dancing. Rose was in the mood to dance. And Jesus wrapped around the mass, warped, dipped into the deep end sniffing and bruised. Stared. His original piece incoherent. The mass of people not waiting danced out the third floor window. The fudge was thick. Jesus lost his mind. The trip hard.

But I would miss the party, the action, where all the fun is. Where I could become depressed because I have the same ugly past I go to sleep with every night. Ken's bagels and lemon pancakes, picking strawberries from Mom's clay pots, dipping cut crystal cups into the sludge. I miss these too. Being four years old. Believing everything I'm told. I wouldn't have to think Jesus is coming because he wouldn't have to. The liar, the freak.

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak.

This is *my* autobiography.

To me, at fourteen, when my mother began to spill these stories like hidden stones in her pockets, I collected them all and have carried them since. I refuse to think my mother was alone. "God watched over me," she says. No mother it was me: time is a circle and we have been alone together ever since.

I too have been in wood hotels with wires dangling light bulbs, bare windows, and bug ridden beds. There were days when I ate nothing but old boiled potatoes and colorless soft candies. And there were days when I did nothing but walk to get to someplace warm. But I had shoes. And I didn't have to be there.

Looking out the window of just such a hotel, the Meakhong wide and unforgiving

flowing by, I noticed the tropical clouds swelling pink at sunset, the tops of trees still green and the water so black it would take everything. There were times when I could lift my head to the sky. "Such a gift as this," I thought, "Just to see this, to see only this." And so I say to my mother: "Didn't ever such a sun shine on you with your bare feet and scratched, fruit picking hands? I'd swear you've never seen the sun set. But I don't think I travel to see them for you, but to some how see you."

VI

I have been to Pang-La, the mountain pass leading to Chomolongma¹, crossed the Brahmaputra the tributary to the Ganges, I stood at the Ganges and thought "Oh yes, this, this is my life." But my life is hers and though I have traveled long and hard to forget it, I've come back to her voice, her world, *her* wooden hotel with the single lightbulb suspended by a naked wire. Everywhere I have been has passed like a shadow over my mind, but everywhere she's been is mine forever. In Guilin, Kunming, Dali. I have seen monks in yellow crescent shaped hats blowing their horns in distances she will never know. Didn't I see the hands of Avalokitesvara, the dance of Shiva Nataraj? Didn't I bow to the Buddha of the Future in Shigatse, in dirt road obscurity, in mud brick nowhere? Is my voice that hallow nothing, that dull recounting of things happened but not alive? Is it that I am a ghost every where but here, in this land where my mother, my grandmothers and great, great grandmothers were born? Time is not a line that one can pull in, a fish mouth hooked securely at the end.

The photographs I hold from other times concerning *my* past are water color sketches dripping into nowhere. Only in black and white can I see my mother: her thin legs leaning against *her* mother under some tree. Where are you? Can I go there now? I am an archaeologist digging for the past you so carefully guard from me.

"Why do you have such strange dreams?" she asks me: "Because, mother, I am looking, looking for you someone I can already see."

VII

She must have been eighty-nine years old and, creased and smiling, she let me take her picture. I came to see the monastery in the extreme north of India where nothing is green and she sat spinning coarse wool on a hand held spindle, facing the sun. For whom did she spin, I thought and why did she do it outside the monastery gate? Was it to hear the chanting of the monks or was it to see me? To twist the spindle and let it fall, again and again, the repetition like an instinct so that she could finally look away from her work to see: these strangers, their pale faces and thin clothing coming all this way, some to see monasteries and mountains, others to see her spinning her wool and looking back at them.

¹Tibetan appellation for Mount Everest meaning Mother Goddess of the Earth.

She closed her eyes as I snapped the photo. And I could see my mother's face when it would be old, old like the spinning of wool outside a monastery. I could see her old hands moving, working even then, to smooth and pull in all the threads of her life and I, her daughter, looking on like a passerby offering only a photo and no loom. Offering only my scavenging eyes and a voice I can hardly call my own. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found."

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found."

I keep leaving this land like it isn't cool anymore. Is that the reason I never liked the bastard who ran off with the bag of oranges? Then I slipped. And I bled on my sense of security.

I ran across the lawn onto the meaty part of my hand below the shoulder. A trumpet blew. And I knew. I tried to think.

I stayed in the room by myself, thinking of Jane. Jane with the citrus everywhere, out the window on the third floor moving, slept, and walked. I see their feet, the man was getting ready to throw up colors and sunlight of the past. Throw up Ken's famous lemon pancakes.

Ken cradling Rose. Kisses her cheek. Applause... trumpet.

The bag of oranges. Orange and grenadine syrup over Ken's lemon pancakes. Pass the punch bowl. Punch Rose, thinking of Jane.

I've been wondering about Crank. Hey. Crank was seen Thursday at the place where there wasn't really a river, driving slowly on a deserted road under the wood floor that in the past few years was stained. I was wondering why it happens to people in the cold.

Crank wrapped his left arm, free of punch, around the bag of oranges. Smell it buddy. He was Davy Crocket. Here I feel even less a part of things than in Hollywood. So I ran in the house and even lied, I said, "I think I hear my Mom calling me."

Applause... Trumpet.

Not wasting any time I go to sleep to be reminded to know the people. Is he feeling better? Checkers and all the people in the room? They wanted to be me too, to be somewhere else, to see their own darkpurplered color. And I believed them because that, too, was security.

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found." And I believed them because that, too, was security.

January 5, 19__

All invited to cash in on the Big Ash Out. Ascent up to HOLLYWOOD sign leaves at 3 pm to drink and chant sarcasm as we release Dent to the clouds.

PS. Bring your own crunchables, noisemakers, etc...

Then all meeting/re-convening at Carlos' pad for performance art/tribute to Dent. 11 pm.

Cranberry punch, death spiral, rainbow sherbet placenta vomit. Everyone kept dipping cut crystal punch cups into the sludge. Crank hovered nearer the door than usual. His tailored blonde hair fashioned after Rose's design, his head loosely fastened to his blue gabardine, the same suit he wore to the wedding, and now without...well, fashion changes doesn't it? And Dent wouldn't mind.

Crank. Push past Rose, pushes past Rose, pushing Rose past the punch bowl to... punch Rose. The bowling alley conversion to a dance floor has been a good idea but... no, Crank he wasn't, he isn't, isn't he in the mood to dance? dance to Rose's mood? Crank wrapped his left arm free of punch around her thick pillowing waist - wasn't it thick? the mass of people dancing, not waiting, Crank wrapped his left arm around Rose's waist and threw his punch, and punched Zipperhead, as he swung her around, not wasting any time - vomits.

I would only be going to escape the parties the action where all the fun is, where I could start again and not have to be reminded, to know the people. This is where I could live disconnected from the two. I wouldn't have to think "Jesus is coming," because he wouldn't have to. The things would be new and fresh and to create I would just bring my grandmother along with me so she wouldn't have to have that same ugly past I go to sleep with every night. But somewhere I have heard that the rain is eminent, snow too. The pipes freeze I hear. Can't wait any longer.

Bewildering, the crimes of nature. I feel powerless~ entirely powerless. What have I to offer? Here I feel even less a part of things than in Hollywood. Rain is eminent. Snow too. The pipes freeze I hear. Can't wait any longer.

Sampson steam bath. Orange and grenadine syrup over Ken's Lemon pancakes. I miss these too. With technology these days you'd think citrus would be everywhere. It is I guess in Citrus Halos. The children glow but the mill of sorrowful laughter is more noticeable along Main Street. "Jesus is Coming."

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found." And I believed them because that, too, was security. "Jesus is Coming."

We live as we dream—but weakened
in no manner.

Is it that time is funerially depressing so that I wear the cries of my ancestors? The photographs I hold of mosquitoes and fireflies bring the sense of home like water color sketches dripping into nowhere, which was where I saw you, your thin legs in California where the only open land is desert. Where are you? Can I go there now? I am hours away and an archeologist in my tiny family with only the past so carefully guarded from me.

It was in Uncle Clary's voice, I was asked why I have such strange dreams. My dreams pull me into a strong embrace, whispering that I'm a stranger looking, looking for someone I can already see. Those words could never be spoken by people back home.

She must have been eighty-nine and it was in me, too, the overwhelming desire to smile. She let me take her picture. I came to see the rust eating away at the extreme north of India where nothing is green, but what it is I do not remember. The coarse wool on her hand-held spindle settled to the earth. The dust of our feet settled outside the monastery gate. Or was it her settling in my eyes? Or was it the monks? Or was it me, twisting against the thick woods on the right road, again and again, the repetition becoming like an instinct? I bent my head to see these strangers, isolated, alone, coming all this way to see their memories being made, mountains, monasteries and others to see her spinning her wool. I was never close to my mother.

My mother: the calm lagoon was the fact, the one in church on Sundays, that one that made me think I was being cheated. Let the earth be your mother below you. My mother stands between me and the strength that tears me apart.

"Will I ever see these people again?" my sister says to me when we meet, the time always growing nearer to leaving. The sage she carefully wrapped with twisted yarn was overwhelming. I smudge my sage when I feel afraid, but I do not cry. She learned this from the medicine man in Uncle Clary's voice when he spoke under the trees near the sweat lodge, whispering: "You're a hawk." And again: "You're an eagle." The Old Songs could never be spoken by my sister with her black hair and medicine bag. She takes for granted who I am. That's why she left the reservation. How could she know? I took her sage and hid it both of us knowing the overwhelming desire to smile.

This is my autobiography. To me, at fourteen when my mother stood in two feet of water at the far end of these stories, we would sit, if only for a few days alone, together. Looking out the window, I didn't mourn for the lack of forgiveness—I didn't know enough to feel her loss—I mourned for the sunset, the tops of trees still green, no longer funny. The water was so black and I was dead tired having been awake for the tropical clouds swelling

pink before the storm.

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found." And I believed them because that, too, was security. "Jesus is Coming." The water was so black and I was dead tired having been awake for the tropical clouds swelling pink before the storm.

Ken always promised he would make his famous lemon pancakes for me. He promised that morning I woke up early to make breakfast for Ben and Ken, the morning I cut my hand with the knife. I had a good grip on the bagel but there was too much noise, the traffic, the MUNI, the men downstairs collecting bottles and loose change, stealing the good clothes from the corner Laundromat. Jane with the squeaky clothes line outside my kitchen window on the third floor moving her sheets faster because the boy, her man, was getting ready to throw up out the window and then take Jane to bed. The rhythmic thump of Jane's head hitting the wall, the noise, the smell of his damn cigarette, and Jane would cry. The knife slipped and I bled on Ken's bagel. I watched the flesh on the meaty part of my hand below the thumb flower open. Beautiful darkpurpleredflower blood and I tried to think. If the blood is dark purple does that mean it is oxygenated? And so I called out but they could not hear me over the noise, the traffic, Jane crying. I held out my hand in front of me and dripped walking down the hall. The wood floor that had been painted over a total of 26 times in the past few years was stained. The path I walked over, the map decorated down the hall my beautiful darkpurpleredflower. The sock stained too. The white one with the blue and yellow stripe that Ben grabbed from my top drawer to stop the blood, the color, the staining. And they brought me downstairs, the noise, the MUNI, the men. Ken drove me to Davie's Medical Center two and a half blocks away which normally I could walk but I was feeling faint by now. My blood, my color running staining the floor my sock the sidewalk. I got in the car, Ken's "Big Red Thing" he called it, the Isuzu Trooper and his voice was promising Ken's famous lemon pancakes. The nurse in the ER began to bitch when we got there until she saw the sock, her floor, her countertop. Stained. They let me in a room and all the people in the waiting room with sniffles and bruises stared. They wanted to be me too, to be somewhere else, to see their own darkpurplered color. I stayed in the room by myself and oddly, thinking of my mother, Minnesota, thinking of Jane. But as soon as the man came in he sewed up my hand and I began to miss Ken's lemon pancakes. And I felt safe.

Shallow I know and I don't want to talk about that either. I can't face the weakness in myself to give full attention to the relationship. Maybe that will come later, maybe when the tension is relieved, maybe we'll hear from those bums. Maybe.

And Ken's lemon pancakes. They become security, especially if you've never really

had them at all but have only been promised them. Someday. Somewhere. Can't wait any longer. I stayed in the room by myself and oddly, thinking of my mother, Minnesota, thinking of Jane.

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found." And I believed them because that, too, was security. "Jesus is Coming." The water was so black and I was dead tired having been awake for the tropical clouds swelling pink before the storm. I stayed in the room by myself and oddly, thinking of my mother, Minnesota, thinking of Jane.

The lines are separated by distance, a beige and powdery dirt, that held my ancestor's feet. Shuttling back and forth, I walked over their prints, separated only by concrete. So Mom came home, knowing by voice does not come, but is stretched again, like some unique silly putty.

One week earlier, I purchased a new suit, dark, like my grandmother, who left the reservation. I myself asked: What am I seeking? More livelier, happier events? A new piece of luggage, a green carry-on bag? Is it only this land that swells up and bites me, in preparation for the unavoidable trip I knew was coming? Is it that time is not a line, but a circle, and here I am, depressed and a little strange, not because I knew my grandmother was dying, but because I am ringed with the cries of my ancestors?

When I was twelve (or was I ten?), my chore was to clean the green bathtub. I dreamt that faces, of my cousins, my aunts, my uncles, all of whom I had not seen for five years, appeared on the bottom of our bathtub as I knelt to clean. As though the bottom were the surface of a still pool, the faces floated to the top, expressionless. Ironically, the last time I saw these faces, also with a rag in hand, was when my grandfather died in June 1987. I rubbed vigorously, trying to wipe them away, but there I was, facing the death of my mom's only surviving parent. But as soon as they were gone, others would replace them; I saw Dave, my cousin (the same age as me), holding his year-old boy in his hands. I ran across the lawn, onto the west-heading concrete, until from over my shoulder, a trumpet blew. It was the look of joy, at being a father, and not only was it a sound, but it was in his eyes, and I knew, "This is it! It's over!" I could see Jesus (also my age), standing in the soft folds of an undulating salmon cloud, next to him, robed in crimson, with arms low and outstretched. Will he be taller than I remember? Of course he would, but the world was over, and I saw past their faces and looked at the question that was eating my insides. Standing at the end of my parents' property, I wondered aloud "Would we still be friends?" But I felt the hollow stink of damnation and I knew. "This is it! It's over!"

My mother is my only ancestor. Looking into her face, I try to remember when we

were young, building forts out of broken twigs, fishing for dogfish with the day's cutup perch. But I can't, the memories have been removed from me not just by years and the lack of photos, papers, but by the death of my grandma, her mom, replaced by an awkward silence brought about by our changing bodies, new interests, and loan payments. These were the thoughts that made my grandmother leave her people and board the plane. I felt sick, somewhat twisted, because although we were unraveling threads of an unfinished weave, I was happy.

The funeral was sad, as all funerals are, but I had a hard shell around me, around everything I have ever done, every place I have ever been. I mourned not for my grandma, because when I want to speak, I dig into my past and find nothing but air. I mourn for my mom, and all her brothers and sisters, because life is a journey inward to the center of my heart's darkness, which continuously ripples outward like a stone thrown long ago. Jerry, her brother, said in jest, "We're orphans," but the voice is not for me. Everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny.

My plane landed sometime around 6:00 a.m. in this land where my ancestors hunted, slept, and walked. I was dead tired, having been awake for nearly twenty-four hours, but still I saw my ancestors' feet, hitting the softer dirt where the muted colors of so many relatives and the sunlight of the past turned hugs and hellos into rivers of sad and somber crystal. I couldn't find five minutes to close my eyes, amidst the trees turning a deeper green while bird's voices fell like strands of silk onto their shoulders. Besides, I was having fun. "I am here, do not forget me."

"We're now orphans" and everyone laughed, but twenty minutes later, the weight of his words sank in and it was no longer funny. The liar, the freak. And so I say to my mother: "It isn't even you I see, but the you I've found." And I believed them because that, too, was security. "Jesus is Coming." The water was so black and I was dead tired having been awake for the tropical clouds swelling pink before the storm. I stayed in the room by myself and oddly, thinking of my mother, Minnesota, thinking of Jane. Besides, I was having fun. "I am here, do not forget me."

Senses

Jim has been using that soap since he was six. Every time I use the bathroom at his flat I see the translucent red bar, sometimes still slick from his hands, sitting on the soapdish above the washcloth on the shower caddy.

"I dunno, Strawberries smell good. I canna explain."
I smiled at his reason, absorbing his Scottish enunciation.

*

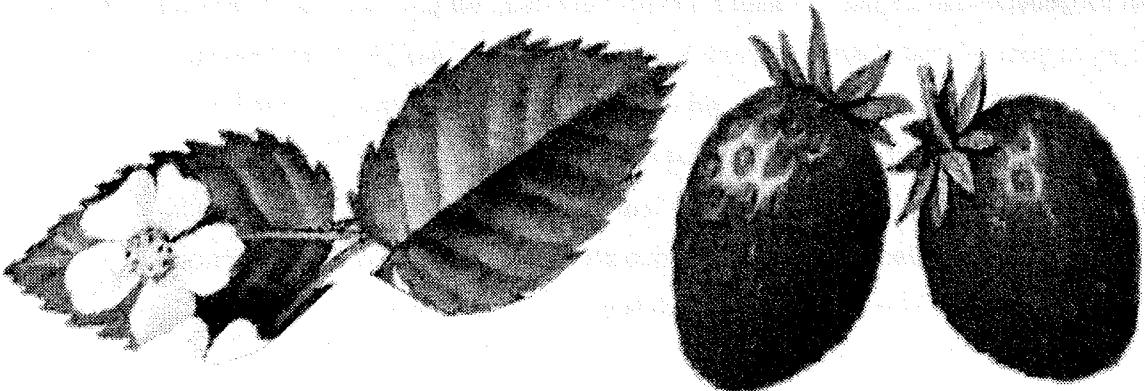


"It looks like bamboo." She didn't want to be there so she made it miserable for William. Sure if she liked Hawaii her tone would have been different, maybe a naive laugh would inflect the words she now huffed. The sun heated the thick water vapour in the tropical air and coupled with the sweat that streamed from her pale scalp and into her black hair. Everything has a scent and she ignored the scent of her glossy hair sucking up the molten yellow rays and engorged her senses with the baking sugar cane.

Steam escapes from the heated water that melts the sugar in the double boiler bowl. Smooth warm liquid coats your tongue as you inhale the sweetness. Strawberry flavour is spread over the molten sugar. The warm translucent nectar calls you to taste. **Drink! Ignore the scalding temperature.**

Pick up the pot and pour the strawberry liquid. Let it glaze your (this word possesses the noun it precedes) insides as it slides in to feed you.

Pools form in your mouth as a few molecules touch your tongue and you savour the vapour candy.



Sheila

MISS Jim so much. I know I can
honestly say I'm in love with
him, he's changed & I
miss him attractive. I miss
him as he was my total dream
now. I miss ^{him} for love with me.
more! I know as the da

Worst thing that Jim ever did to you: I suppose it was when he tried to stab me when he was about four years old. I always used to torture him and torment him all the time. The knife was just an ordinary food knife - it wasn't sharpened but it could have easily been a sharper knife, a breadknife or something. I was *incredibly* mean to him, pouring boiling water on his back when he was in the bath. Young children are *incredibly* vicious. It was something to do. I didn't regret it until I was about 22. I suppose if I was born in 1965 I'd be 22 now, wouldn't I?

Pale bare chest, tight young skin, taught over his lean muscles, hands over his crotch as the chase ended and he stood taking a scolding from his mum.

I caught myself tilting my head trying to peek past his hands as he stood in my imagination.

My parents had a fruit garden that was featured in Gardening Monthly every year.

The moist climate in the British isles is kind to plants and trees, and is particularly good on the south-west coast of England, the south and west coasts of Ireland and the west coast of Scotland because the Gulf Stream brings milder spells that encourage plants from warmer climes to flourish.

The perennial herb, *Americana bracteata*, is a strawberry plant that is native to North America. The strawberry plant is highly prized for its sweet, juicy fruit and is cultivated in temperate regions around the world. (Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc.)

Dad and Mum would wear matching Dickies overalls and matching "There's one thing that unites us. One thing that we all have in common. What is it? What is that one thing that unites us?" ten-hole Doc Martens- "That's gardening gear!" my dad scolded me at the breakfast table when I was 15 for putting my mothers

It's not class or ideology, colour creed or roots, the only boots on with my school uniform. It was bad enough that I had thing that unites us is Doctor Marten's boots. Doctor Marten's to go to a school that still required uniforms... punk was boots for the world so that everyone can be free, they're class-invading popular culture and I wanted to show my participation. less, matchless, heat resistant, waterproof-retail for only nineteen pounds and ninety-nine p. Pretty soon everyone will be wearing the boots with the "air wair" soul, and your boots will have a meeting and your boots will take control. Thanks to Doctor Marten everybody moves to one beat. Thanks to Doctor Marten they'll be dancing in the street....No don't you want me?".....Okay boots do your stuff.....Doctor Marten's, Doctor Marten's, Doctor Marten's boots. Doctor Marten's, Doctor Marten's, Doctor Marten's boots! DOCTOR MARTEN'S, DOCTOR MARTEN'S, DOCTOR MARTEN'S BOOTS!!"

--Radical Posture from BBC
T.V.'s "The Young Ones"

Mom and Dad would pose out in the garden for the picture holding a basket of their prizewinning strawberries. Purple nights when I would get stoned, I'd sit among the strawberries (please listen to "Strawberry Fields" by The Beatles)and pick the most juicy one, sometimes filling my skinny body with the ones that were as big as apples and gush into their sweetness. She picks up the drill and screws on the dullest bit. Slowly she approaches his chest and slowly drills the wide hole through his chest. Then she pulls it out and dips it in sand and then re-inserts it into his chest. Blood is gushing from the wound since she punctures his heart repeatedly. As his heart beats faster the geysers of blood gush faster saturating him and everything that is around him.

Jim stood at the doorway of the bathroom, a towel wrapped low on his hips, droplets fell from his long brown bangs, glided down his chest and were sucked by the terry loops of his towel. His pale skin released the candy scent of the soap, crossing the room to where I sat. I watched him as he watched the T.V. to catch the opening credits of "The Simpsons"

Rewinding the tape I squish into my couch, clench my lips as I prepare to watch "the Simpsons". The open credits' couch scene features the Monty Python foot crushing the Simpson family. William's laughter cools me.

When impact the jitters... ahhh... So what gives with your love life? mw. I must say there are always lessons to be learned from the inner amovous workings of Miss S. Wright!

"That's fuckin' funny." Jim walked back into the bathroom. I swallowed the warm liquid that gushed in my mouth. She picked up the drill and screwed on the dullest bit. Slowly she approached his chest and slowly drilled the wide hole through his chest. Then she pulled it out and dipped it in sand and then re-inserted it into his chest. Blood gushed from the wound since she punctured his heart repeatedly. As his heart beat faster the geysers of blood gushed faster saturating him and everything around him.

THE WISHE THE DREAM THE FANTASY!!

My mouth slid over him finding new strength to grasp tighter with each gushing moan that pushed past his lips. In a move of mutual dominance I turned my body to feed the crave that swelled, saturating my muscles. I felt his cool tongue on my scorching flesh. His soft stubble tickled the thin skin of my thigh.

100 mason jars covered the kitchen counter. The giant pot, still sat on the stove filled with the freshly made strawberry jam. I knew the kitchen would smell this way for a few days as we dolloped servings onto our toast and crumpets and scones and shortbread

Every time I go to McDonalds and order an Egg McMuffin and ask for jam as I order they always forget it. I have to remember to wait and ask them for jam when they hand me my food.

I paced to redirect my energy, sitting quickly as Jim's voice became clearer as he stood in the doorway. "William should be home any minute."

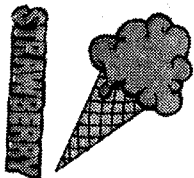
"Oh yeah, that guy, your brother, my boyfriend."

He laughed at my statement, then I laughed playing it off as sarcasm and not as a reminder.

I haven't seen him for ages. Plus, honestly, going out with someone for so long when Jim so young is scary. So technically, in name, he is my boyfriend! But I am definitely "in love" (to use your terminology) with this guy Mark. He's a bit

Jim dressed and sat by me on the couch. I breathed in,
the attraction is ever lasting

the great British
BANGER



unaware of the drool that puddled in my mouth, that made a sucking sound.

"Hungry?" He looked up from tying his boot.

"Yeah." I exhaled hard to dry my mouth.

I felt this sphere- 1) a perfectly round solid geometric figure 2) something shaped like this 3) a field of action or influence or existence [It took him out of his sphere.]- of lust radiating from me and bouncing off him and back into me. I clenched my legs shut afraid of burning something. I just wanted a taste.

"Did you tape the Simpson's" William gathered his bag and jacket, ready to spend the night at my flat.

"Yeah."

"Ha we saw it before ya." Jim antagonized his older brother.

"Was it good."

"Yeah."

Communication in United Kingdom

Televisions in use:	24,900,000
Televisions per 1,000 persons:	435
Radios in use:	65,600,000
Radios per 1,000 persons:	1,146
Number of Daily Newspapers:	104 publications
Daily Newspaper Circulation:	22,494,000
Newspaper Circulation per capita:	395 per 1,000 population
Newsprint Consumption:	32,479 Kilograms per 1,000 population
FM Broadcast Stations:	525
AM Broadcast Stations:	225
Telecommunications:	Technologically advanced domestic and international system; 30,200,000 telephones; equal mix of buried cables, microwave and optical-fiber systems; excellent countrywide broadcast systems; broadcast stations - 225 AM, 525 (mostly repeaters) FM, 207 (3,210 repeaters) TV; 40 coaxial submarine cables; 5 satellite ground stations operating in INTELSAT (7 Atlantic Ocean and 3 Indian Ocean), MARISAT, and EUTELSAT systems; at least 8 large international switching centers
Country Telephone Code:	44

Next Category: Travel

Outdoor Laundry

Ann Castellana Holley

A bee stung my butt as I was getting
laundry

i thought it was static rising up through
my dress
from the clothes i was bent over
folding

but no it stung
and i am holding wet baking soda on my ass
and i am tired

and i still see your mulatto face smiling
and closing the distance
the engagement ring
and the floor

and the wind blows
you running down the stairs with the
piano bench

stuff flying out
stuff flying in

Like as if as how

Juliana Cory

Happiness slinks in like a dog beaten
 Holding his tail between his teeth.
 Malodorous refuse chokes my nostrils
 Blinds my rose-colored glasses.
 Chatter, it don't matter
 As my tongue tastes the happiness
 I captured. It is rough on my hands.
 I eat my happiness with a spoon
 At Thelma's Cafe in Tuscon, Arizona.
 Happiness really is smooth going down.
 We sat in the junkyard at four in the morning
 And scammed. I am happy because I have happy stuff.
 Like as if as how
 Purple jars of sadness spill on clean sheets
 Sad as refrigerators.
 We sat at full speed.
 Ceegee can't roll her tongue
 And won't ever forget it.
 As sad tires rolled motionlessly in their heaps, I knew
 I would find meaning if it weren't so mean.
 Quelquefois, je dine dans la salle de ta coeur
 While the silverware dozes off,
 And happiness lingers in the parlor.

motion pictures

Cliff Eisner

your hands are great drama
 where the hero undresses a sword
 to defend the honor of your hair
 your hair is a tragedy of sighs
 in which the star can barely speak
 without sticking his tongue in your ear
 which creates a sticky situation
 when you suddenly turn your face
 your face is a comedy of manners
 where no one speaks the same language
 and the villain winds up in bed
 with a priest
 who has trouble taking his eyes off
 of your breasts
 your breasts would turn De Mille
 in his grave
 unleashing a string of decadent productions
 in the form of historical dramas
 about your waist
 your waist is a science fiction slapstick
 where Buck Rogers and the 3 Stooges
 finger lasers
 to decide the fate of your thighs
 your thighs as pure tear jerkers
 send adolescents to their dreams
 where they imagine everything
 they haven't seen about your sex
 your sex a mad rush for the candy girl
 demanding more butter

At The Party

Cliff Eisner

everyone wore red even the dog
 men and women made their eyes
 exquisite with smoke
 the hostess looked depressed
 in her boxers
 I first saw you near the beer
 and cupcakes
 you pretended you hadn't noticed
 my glass shoes
 then you moved into the living room
 dodging the lunge of the dwarf
 who wore red gloves and fed the piano
 small mirrors shaped like fish
 constantly dazzled me
 when I noticed your red heart-shaped
 sunglasses
 and I knew you to be the same person
 wearing a red flag
 in a repeating dream
 flagging down rides anywhere out of here
 I couldn't resist your thumbs
 now you stand against the aquarium
 engaged in the metaphysics of oil
 with a tall blond with great thighs
 I have another beer and count the fish
 blinking in the air
 and I realize the impossibility of enough
 and I see Frank O'Hara eating red paint
 on Fire Island
 in the smoke night seems simple
 like your dress folds
 over the knee of a couch
 with the silent music of freedom
 as you smile at me and spill your drink
 I leave the glass shoes at the door
 and walk barefoot
 arm in arm with the moon home

Restaurant

George Klawitter

You eat fish the way you eat my heart:
Slowly, under frilly conversation,
Every slice a deliberate caress
Unconscious to yourself.

I don't care. As long as almondine
Lengthens sole, I tolerate your poise.
Nothing good comes at precipice—
The slow slide into you increases joy.

And other customers, unaware
Of your delight in meat, go about
Their scallops, seeing us a dullish pair
Propped in a window seat on Wickenden

Where pedestrians pass oblivious too
Of my diminished chord shrinking as
Each bite you meditate becomes a spore
Exploding into multitudes of heart.

Life Size

Jennifer Liberts

The iron bar
made a clumsy waltz
down the numbers, ninety-nine, ninety-
eight, the rumble

of silence before
a freight train whooshes
furiously by;
then brittle nothing—
dust and a lick

of black asphalt.
Increments, a daily
definition of my
solidity in ounces.
Ninety-three, my

belly swells pregnant
with swallowed youth.
Lettuce, broccoli, the indulgent
rice cake.
Acid eaten fingernails

reciting calories like beads
of a rosary, praying
for invisibility. An electron—
gender free, the fetus
undifferentiated.

Mom feeding me carrots
like sugar cubes
to a prize foal, Dad
puffing out his cheeks,
a blow fish at dinner time.
I clutch the porcelain
bowl like my favorite china
doll, retching words,
hands, tongues, bruised
virginity swallowed

by the gaping mouth
of my silence. Pretty
box of wooden
painted bodies—
stackable selves.

Li-Young Lee Reading, 1995

Joy Arbor Karnes

I am a spot of darkness
that makes Lee think
he's alone, writing for the invisible
audience. He talks of the shapes,
the hierarchies of love. He reads
a poem about stroking a woman's hair-
hair of human musk.

Your hair smells like summer, fresh-cut
grass. I can smell it in the dark,
and again, I am speaking
to you in my head, carrying you with me,
explaining the garbage of my life,
as if a moment without you is betrayal.
All my poems are addressed to you,
wrapped as gifts. I am a cherry
to roll over your tongue.
Swallow me as I've dreamt you would.

BIOS

William Archilla (desmadrado y desplazado) born somewhere in Central America, escaped the war in the 80's, left families between the bullet and the maize, sneaked into the States when no one was looking, fell between two languages in the L.A.U.S.D., called a Mexican for being brown, called Puerto Rican for mispronouncing the letter "r" when speaking Spanish, misread for a boy from Venezuela or Cuba, misread for an alien or a Chicano, misread for a Spanish boy; since then, been creating in some form or other: drawing, making jokes, writing one liners, acting for a miserable Chinese fast food box lunch, talking back, performing: running out of the church at the age of five (my first performance), swaying the national guards and border patrol, faking the English language in the university classroom, read all the great monsters of the English language, but education still remains to be barrio experiences, met poets, coets, crossers, borders, terroets, hoets obsessed with liberating the language waiting for immortality which never arrives, left L.A. in '92 to water myself in the lake waters of Central America and Mexico came back down the rail road track - kept writing, hoping to ride the Indian railways someday. To all my relations: stay out of the church, don't wear a policeman's badge, and don't let a politician next to your side when you're slowly dying. HOPE.

Nancy Krusoe is a graduate of the CSUN writing program. Her writing has appeared most recently in *13th Moon*, in an excerpt from a collaborative novel she is writing with Jan Ramjerdi, and before that in *Best American Short Stories 1994*. She is working on a novel and teaches in L.A.

Yolanda Kirk has a B.A. in English with a concentration in English literature. A writer of short stories and poetry for some time now, she is a former creative poetry writing student of Jean Stanford. Ms Kirk's emphasis in writing is to create vivid images in the mind of the reader, thus generating a type of secondary, visual mind poetry. This is her first piece to be published in *The Northridge Review*. She plans to teach literature and composition in junior college.

Joy Arbor Karnes graduated from Earthquake U.'s creative writing program in summer 1995. She now lives in northern California with her husband, where she suffers from School Withdrawal Syndrome.

Holli M. Goodwin Telboe: Kerouac addict coffee monger devoted mom angst ridden word lover two dogs student published poet who cares Harp drinking native Californian shy house-plant killer bad driver insomniac three cats circa 1959.

Sheila Wright: author, 1995 CSUN graduate, forever living in England, currently, pursuing post-graduate study.

Louise Villani-Jeager was raised by her Italian-American Uncle and Aunt on a small farm in Tujunga, California. She left home at eighteen and managed to be four miles from the epicenter of both the 1971 Sylmar and 1994 Northridge earthquakes. She is currently a single mother pursuing a degree in Creative Writing at California State University, Northridge and a member of the Los Angeles Baha'i Community.

Cliff Eisner was born in Detroit and "grew up all over California." He attended Oakland University, and San Francisco State University where he studied in the Creative Writing Program under Faye Kicknowsay and Nanos Valaoritis. His poems have seen print in *Yellow Silk*, *Appeal to Reason*, *Hudson River Anthology*, and elsewhere. Recent work was published abroad, in *Margin*, a British journal of contemporary international writing. Cliff's clap-book, Running for the Hungry (Atticus Press 1983), has been out of print for too long.

George Klawitter is an associating professor of English at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, where his special field is Renaissance literature. He has published in *Poet Lore*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Cumberland Review*, and the *James White Review*.

Ann Castellana Holley lives near the ocean now and is quite happy.

Scott Hyers is an artist who lives and works in L.A.

Jennifer Liberts...

- happy to be a graduating senior majoring in English/Creative Writing.
- avid runner & rollerblader, loves music!
- hoping to get an MFA in creative writing/poetry
- best known for my little toe, or lack there of.

Alan Mills is all important because and not because s/he is a slightly or heavily skewed artist/poet/writer and even steven though people consider/reconsider him egotistical or

conceated or arrogant w/he still likes them because or four by four m/he likes people who have opinions and t/he/y also feels K/he deserves their perceptions since Q/he is not a text that can be constructed independently and due like on leaves to the X/he understands the information or reformation to be accurate four or because U/he is now THE EDITOR of an enter-national/multinational/multiple voiced or rather dialogic magazine even or odd though that magazine is total smut and four by four by two this Z/he is internally grateful to his/your textual/self construction by societal/media influence-za as well as goD and T/he NoRtHrldGe Re-view depending of course on or B-low which one cums 1st.

Ken Pfeil same guy as last time

J Julie wants

Staci Blecker is currently seeking professional guidance through her own linguistic maze



Submissions

The Northridge Review is always accepting submissions. Manuscripts and Artwork should be accompanied by a cover page that includes the author's name, address, telephone number, the titles of the works submitted. The author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself. Please include S.A.S.E.

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