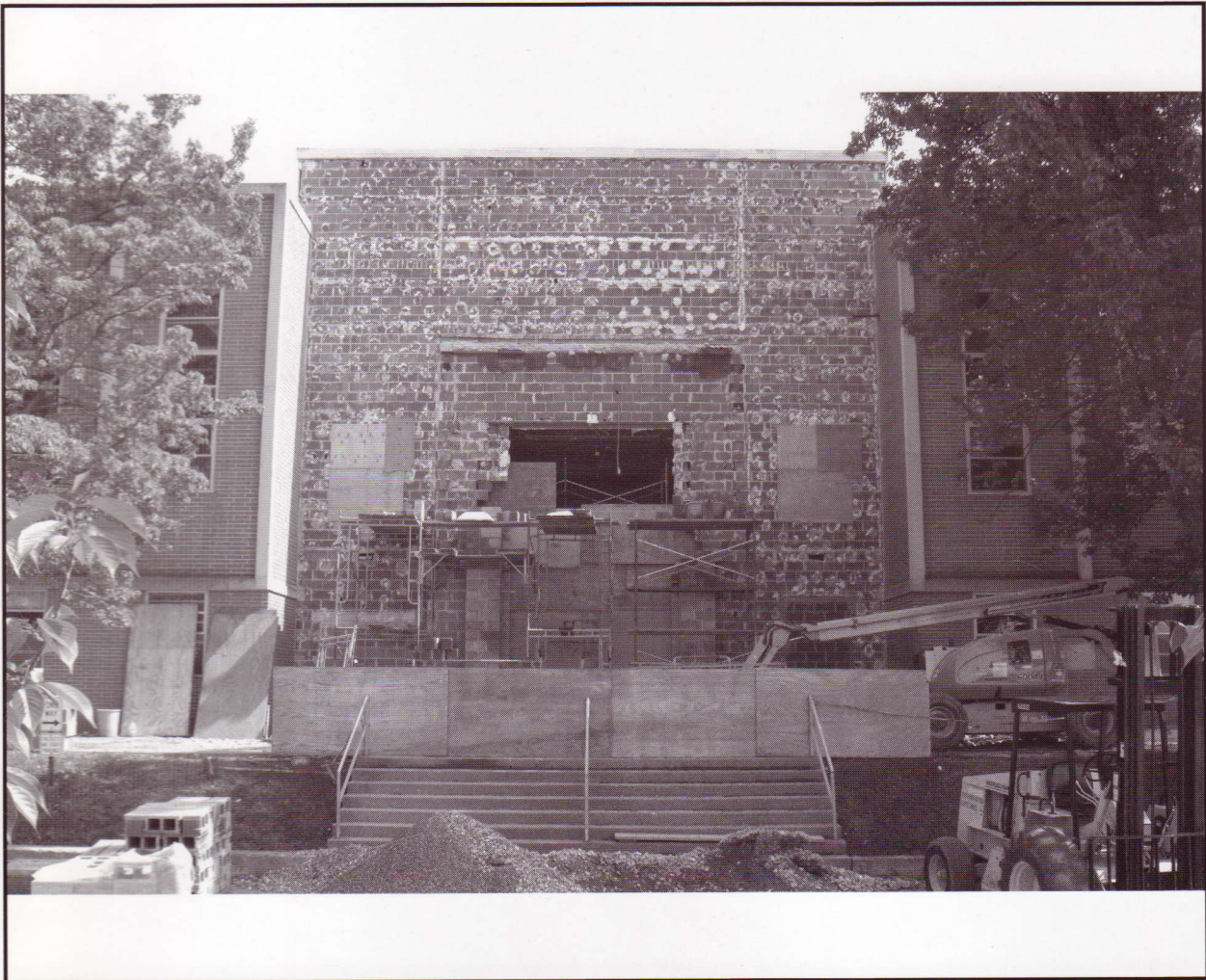


The York Review

A Magazine of Poetry, Prose, and Art

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THE YORK REVIEW

Volume 11
2005

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Untitled – Ben McKnight

“Lock up your libraries if you like, but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that
you can set upon the freedom of my mind.” Virginia Woolf

BACK COVER ART

Never Look Back – Jacky Liquori

The English & Humanities Department

York College of Pennsylvania

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THE YORK REVIEW

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THE YORK REVIEW

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Bringing Up Poetry

(with apologies to Howard Hawks)

Elyse Reel

My poem has fangs.

Vicious and difficult, it
refuses my help
and bites when I go near it.

I lock it in the laundry room,
and slide dinner under the door.
It gets upset and gnaws all the paint
off the corner of the washing machine.

(It doesn't like the food I serve.)

I crouch next to it
and explain that it's going through a phase.
The poem snarls at me
and piddles on the linoleum.

The next morning,
I find that it has gone after the doorframe.
When I take it for a walk,
it pulls at the leash and whines.

"Don't be petulant," I tell it,
and it flashes its tiny fangs at me.



Thorns
Amy Cunningham

Marigolds

For Kate

Gina DeLoretta

Her feet clip clop the sidewalk,
purple toenails on black flip flops.
Rounding the corner of her house,
She's blasted with heat,
fire light and burning.
Marigolds.

She stops--
overpowered by pungency and simplicity
of orange, red, yellow sparks.
All the rain magnifies their scent and
she soaks up the spicy sweet sting.
They burst in a crack of cold pavement and black asphalt.

These flowers, when did they grow up?
She planted them yesterday when she was 11,
sprinkling and scattering seeds with eager young hands.
She recognizes their faces,
Annually they gleam in her presence.
21 now and no one loves them like she does,
with a fire as bright as their ferocious glow.

On Dolls, Dresses and Growing Up

Catherine Sacchi

When I was little, I was a girly girl. I wore dresses and my room was pink and green. I slept in a four-poster bed, and I dreamed about being Wendy Moira Angela Darling, a princess or Glenda the Good Witch. I played dress-up and house and I owned a whole army of Barbies. (Only three Kens, though, and one didn't have an arm due to a semi-tragic sledding incident involving my little brother). My best friends and I made tea parties with tiny teacups and little saucers. The cups held about three drops of Kool-Aid, but if you broke the chip in half, you could put one Dorito on the plate at a time. I used a bathroom stool for a table and I felt very elegant in my mother's discarded dress and her borrowed shoes.

My dad worried about me. He wanted me to know I could be the first woman President of the United States. I said I wanted to be a chef. He took me on nature walks and to historical sites. With my brother, we made a "nature collection" of deer skulls, rattlesnake skins, seedpods and fossils. I chased fireflies in the backyard and I picked vegetables in the garden. I learned not to scream at slugs or worms or bugs. To this day, I don't panic at the sight of spiders and ladybugs. I loved the history tours, but I was really impressed by the costumes. It seemed like adults playing dress up. I couldn't understand why women didn't wear Scarlet O'Hara dresses anywhere other than Harper's Ferry and Colonial Williamsburg.

I played with a Scarlet doll, who came with the most fabulous lacy dress. I had fun with her, but after a while I decided she should change clothes sometimes, since the Barbies were always playing musical outfits. In art class we had done a version of African batik dying. We spread paste on a square of cloth in various patterns and then dyed the cloth blue. I made a dress for Scarlet out of my batik project, and was bewildered when my dad laughed and laughed. I think he worried less after that. Now I understand that a Scarlet O'Hara doll in a child's imitation of African cloth was an entertaining paradox, but I was too naïve then.

Today I cook, I clean, I type, I drive. Is the cooking and cleaning the adult version of my playacting so many years ago? I've read essays that criticize EZ Bake ovens and Barbie dolls for training little girls to want to fulfill "traditional" roles. I'm not sure I believe it completely. Cooking and keeping house still seems like a game. I like to eat, and so I like to cook. But when I'm panicked and there's a paper due the next day, I can resort to the cafeteria and my meal plan.

I've been thinking about the connection between the toys and games of my childhood and my current activities because my family got a new dishwasher this summer. On the surface, the events are unconnected. But the first time she opened the dishwasher, my mom inhaled deeply and said "It smells like baby dolls!" I laughed—it didn't smell like any toy I remembered. But my mother's cousin and my dad agreed that the plastic smell was a familiar new-toy aroma from their childhood. And I experienced a moment in which I could believe that there is some vast conspiracy connecting the toys a little girl plays with and the appliances an adult uses.

What does it mean to be a woman doing all the things I am doing? My grandmothers didn't go to college for a bachelor's degree, but neither did my grandfathers. How many experiences do I have because I'm a girl and how many happen because I live in the Information Age? My mother and my aunts went to college, but even they expected that they would get married and have families. At my age, they weren't necessarily convinced they would have careers (but they all do). I think I want to get married, but in my mind's eye, that's less of a guarantee than the given that I will work. Soon enough, I will have to wear sensible shoes and professional skirts and pantsuits to get a paycheck. While it may beat the uniform I don during the summer, it's strange to think of dressing up for work.

I liked being a girl. I probably spent more time with the Babysitter's Club, Marguerite Henry, *Little Women* and in the *Secret Garden* than in a real world. I was good at dolls and dresses and watercolors and play dough and picture books. I knew the language of secrets and slumber parties and Disney movies. I was good at childhood because I didn't think about it too much. I just enjoyed it. I don't think I know how to be a woman. I've learned to abstract and to recognize that life is constantly in flux. I can't hold on to today; all I can do is make memories.

Milestones are zooming past me so fast that I can't make enough memories. I want time to slow down so I can appreciate every second of being young and healthy and idealistic. The Cavalier poets keep warning me that time is flying. When I was a little girl, I wanted to be a teenager (probably because I thought teenagers were like characters from *Saved By the Bell*) and a mommy and a chef and a teacher. I couldn't wait to grow up.

Now, I'm approaching "grown-up" and I'm not ready for it. Weeks ago, while I was babysitting, a little girl asked me what my favorite Halloween candies were when I was small. I had to think, but I finally told her "Sweetarts and Smarties." She had trouble believing that such candy had existed when I was a little girl (because at twenty, I am old, according to a six-year-old). This attitude made me wonder if I have joined the ranks of the grown-ups, and if I did so, when it happened. I have a résumé and a checking account and a driver's license, but I sit in the backseat on family trips and at the kid's table at Christmas (recently renamed the cousin's table, to preserve dignity). I am old enough to vote and smoke, but not old enough to drink.

I graduated high school, then blinked and discovered I was in my junior year at college. In that eye blink, I registered to vote and completed ninety credits. I learned about keeping a checkbook up to date and surviving without a car. I discovered a healthy suspicion towards green meat and other unidentifiable substances from the cafeteria. I received an education on living with people who aren't family. I figured out laundry machines and dodging shower water that boils if someone flushes a toilet.

But even as I use writing to sort through the jumble of experiences from my first two years at college, it hits home that I am growing up. I am not a teenager anymore. I grocery shop and I pump gas. I can check my own oil and, if necessary, I could change my tire. No one calls me little girl (except the maintenance man who fixes things in the house). I get credit card offers in the mail and at Kohl's. I get clothes, not toys, for Christmas. In less than two years, I will have earned a BA in English and it'll be time to behave like a grown up. Sometimes, I joke to my friends "Do you think Peter Pan takes high school graduates?" I hope so, because I need ten more years of being a kid, not two.

Ode to Certainty

Jamie Neith

Up the walk you come, I can hear you miles away, hocking and snorting;
the man with the perpetual cold and a heart shaped mouth, elfin ears, tattooed skin.
In all your grubby glory, you arrive, an odor of cigarettes, gasoline and clean skin in your wake
You are mine.

You appear youthful and indifferent, sort of rough around the edges
frayed and perplexed, flaunting a charming smile and kind eyes.
You are comfortable in this world, legs sprawled, content and strangely lovely.
You are mine.

Your teeth are like daggers, barbed this way and that, delightfully biting.
Mediocre beard, too bushy in spots, in some not enough, freckled nose
clean hands, nail-beds strong, yellowed toes.
Out of the corner of my eye I watch you;
pleased that you are mine.

Girl Over Brooklyn Bridge
Terri Shadle



Lookin' Good, Chief

Elyse Reel

My father, like most men in their fifties, went into a deep state of denial once he hit his midlife crisis. As soon as the gray in his rapidly thinning hair became too much to handle, he went down to the drugstore and bought himself some hair dye. When we came home for fall break, my sister and I were treated to his handiwork.

"Sweet mother of Moses," said my sister. "It's orange."

It wasn't just orange, but a bright, radioactive, toxic, heart-stoppingly hideous orange. There was a sharp, ugly contrast between it and the bright pink of his scalp.

"Your father is having some issues with his impending maturity," my mother said briskly. "Go sit down and eat your pot roast before it gets cold."

"But – but – Mom," my sister sputtered, "you can't let him out on the street with his hair looking like that."

"In a week you'll be back at college and you won't be dealing with it anymore," my mother said, dishing out the peas. "How many spoons, Louis?"

"Two," said my father. "Are those garlic mashed potatoes?"

My sister was not consoled by our parents' apathy. "Mom, don't you see where this is leading? Before the week's out, he'll drag out all his old Tony Orlando and Dawn records and invite you over for a rousing evening of heavy petting and *Laugh-In* reruns. If it gets worse, I'll catch him channel surfing for Gidget movies."

"That was your mother. I was a bigger fan of Jimmy Stewart cowboy films," my father said.

"See?" my sister said. "Dad just cannot face the fact that he's growing old. Why can't I have a father who likes normal movie stars like Tom Cruise?"

"Tom Cruise is a hack, that's why," said my father. "Talentless."

My sister threw down her napkin. "I'm done," she announced. "I can't stand this anymore."

* * *

For the rest of break, my sister skulked around the house, obsessively monitoring my father for abnormal behavior.

"Check the classifieds," she told me after breakfast. "We've got trouble if he's circled any of the auto ads, especially any of the pre-1989 ones."

I threw the paper down. "He just bought a new car six months ago."

"Still!" she insisted, her eyes getting wide. "You can't trust a man in the throes of a midlife crisis."

"As long as he's not buying a red Ferrari and coming home with a hot little number in the passenger seat, I don't care what he does," my mother said from the living room.

"It's the next step," my sister said. "Mark my words."

* * *

Having traffic-cone hair perked my father up considerably, and he bounced around the house, humming to himself.

"It's the apocalypse," my sister said, poking her head in the bathroom. "The apocalypse of our parents' marriage. Done! Kaput! Over!"

“Would you let me finish taking a shower?” I said, rescuing a shampoo blob from falling in my eye. “I doubt that Dad’s going to announce divorce before I’m done washing my hair.”

“He’s got a floozy.”

“Dad does *not* have a floozy,” I said in exasperation. “It took him six years to snag Mom. I doubt there’s a host of women out there slaving for a man whose hair looks like he dipped it in toxic waste.”

“He thinks there must be,” my sister said. “He loves it.”

I had to agree with her on that point. My father was oblivious to the fact that his thinning hair resembled nothing more than baby carrots lying in limp slices across his scalp.

Out of the five days we had been home for break, he had been late to breakfast on four of them. My sister, who had no qualms about spying on my father during his morning toilet, reported the reasons.

“He combs those miserable wisps he’s got into about sixteen different patterns,” she announced. “He looks in the mirror and uses his comb as a microphone. You should hear him!” She imitated my father’s gravelly voice. “‘Lookin’ good, chief! Lookin’ good.’” She returned to her normal voice. “I mean, *chief?*”

“Dad’s called everyone chief since we were little,” I said. “That’s nothing new.”

“I guess we should have seen it coming sooner, then,” my sister said. “Calling people chief can’t be healthy.”

“Oh, for God’s sake,” said my mother, and left the room.

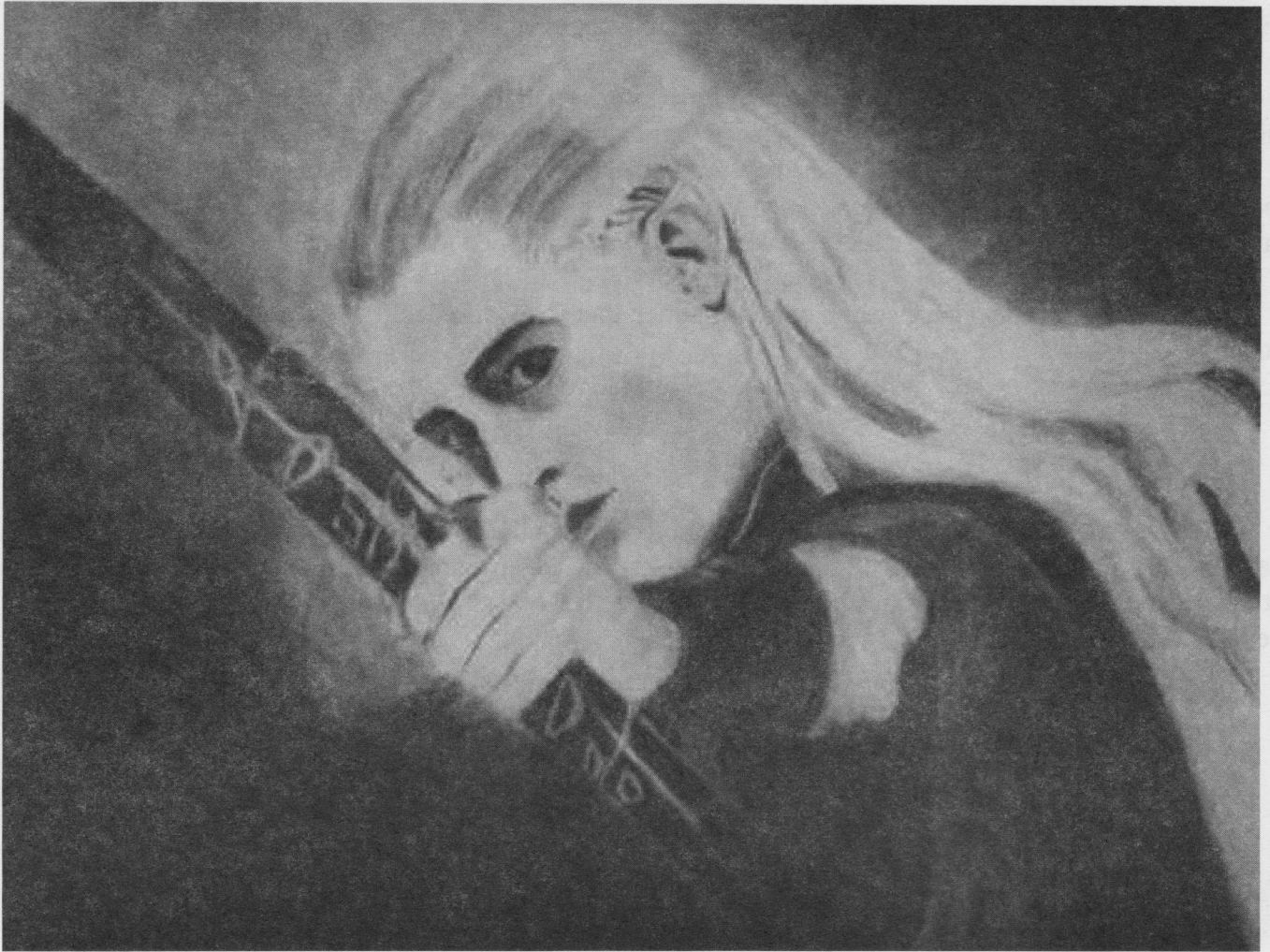
* * *

When we returned home for Thanksgiving break, my father was still continuing his descent into baldness. His hair was still orange, but it had lost its carrot-like appearance. One main wisp of hair remained at the back of his skull, which, once brushed forward, looked like an alien hand with a death grip on his head.

My sister was appalled beyond words.

I deftly stepped in to take her place. “Lookin’ good, chief.”

My father’s face broke into a grin. “Yeah,” he said. “I thought so, too.”



Three Posters and Too Much Free Time

Katrina Theisz

An Orchestrated Life

Jamie Neith

She smokes a cigarette while staring in the mirror. This is what I look like when I inhale.
Close my eyes slightly, hollow my cheeks
seize the smoke on its way out, suck it back in,
leisurely, seductively, exhale with a look of apathy
Make it look innate
Practice makes perfect.
Perfection is projection of experience.

Later, she washes the smell from her hands
Scrubs twice, puts on scented lotion and sprays perfume in her hair.

She kisses him, hand meticulously placed on the strong part of his jaw
Eyes closed thinking, head left, head right, tongue slowly explore
Suck in, arch your back, and lift one leg. You really enjoy this. Pull away
Cue tender gaze, punctual head rest on shoulder,
I've just experienced the perfect kiss.
Practice makes perfect.
Perfection is projection of fulfillment.

Later, she lets him walk her home.
Says goodnight, don't look him in the eye, call me tomorrow, or not.

She gets in the shower, flip flops on, we don't want fungus, suck it in.
Wet, Lather, Rinse, Repeat. Make sure it squeaks. Lather body, watch the
water run down past belly button, hum "singin' in the rain." Perfect showering song. Soap again.
Watermelon.
It smells good. Shave hair on entire body. A woman is hairless, and stenchless
just right.
Practice makes perfect.
Perfection is projection of purity.

Later, she dries off.
Careful not to look at herself, avoid all mirrors. Be not what you are, but what the world has made you.

She climbs into bed, pink sheets, a girl's favorite color. Three stuffed animals. Quizzical eyes.
Open book, Danielle Steel, Romance and heartache. Cry at the sad parts, bite your lip, and let your chin
quiver slightly, not enough to make you look unattractive. This is so sad. *This is so sad.* Hum, sigh. I need
beauty sleep. Badly. Count sixty-five sheep, fluffy and white
So serene.
Practice makes perfect.
Perfection is projection of tranquility.

Later she has disturbed dreams.
A wave, large and daunting is straight over her head. It threatens to drown her, in her sea of lies.

Broken Face

Terri Shadle



Boredom & Stream of Consciousness

Katrina Theisz

And very quickly a great day turns into a bad one. In psych, something like what I'm about to tell you is called multiple causality. I didn't realize it at the time, but things really started going wrong when a friend couldn't come over because she had a lot of studying to do. No biggie. Whatever. Then I couldn't concentrate on anything. For seemingly no reason, I had lost all ability to focus my attention on things. I tried multi-tasking, but still found myself unable to accomplish a single task. I watched TV restlessly, promising myself I would go to the library after Real World was over and study. I searched for my Walkman for a good fifteen minutes before I finally found it, only to get to the library to find out the batteries were dead. And I'd been looking forward to some quality time with Snow Patrol and my Garden State soundtrack. Sitting in a semi-comfortable chair I started to read some Kafka; two friends came in and I was distracted once more. So I went over to them and we talked for a bit, things got kind of awkward, so I left them to their business and went to my reading. I still wasn't able to fully concentrate, so when I saw a guy I once liked walk in with another girl I figured I might as well try my luck at home. I never actually got to my research.

It cracks me up when people sit around and philosophize about reality. The idea of existentialism ALWAYS comes into play at some point, but is only used to make the speaker sound smart. No one seems to share the same definition for it. It's just another big word to throw around. According to dictionary.com there are two meanings:

- 1) A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts.
- 2) n : (philosophy) a 20th-century philosophical movement; assumes that people are entirely free and thus responsible for what they make of themselves

That's just for reference.

I don't come across conversations like these in my psych classes. Our reality is slightly more concrete. I learn philosophy through my literature courses. I feel like I should be wearing a funky scarf, my plastic, tortoise-shell glasses, and a black beret, while sitting on a comfy chair sipping coffee. Out of all of that I have the glasses, but lack the rest. Although, if I'm not running late I usually get a mocha before class. I'm only slightly addicted to caffeine. Anyway, when those classes end I feel an odd tug, like when the bell rang in high school signaling the end of class; time to move on. But back to "reality" if you will.

What is reality anyway? Why should any of us care about defining it? There are papers to write, books to read, exams to study for, parties to go to, and people to screw. Is that reality? Or maybe it's the crime off campus, bills to pay and being broke. The fact that York sucks at plowing snow and freaks out if it snows two inches. Maybe it's waking up one morning after a great party and not knowing where you are or whose bed you're sleeping in. Maybe it's just what it is. If that makes me a simpleton, so be it. I just don't think it's all that deep.

I guess it's more like a sense of denial, or at least a state of not allowing yourself to admit to yourself who you really are. The idea of self-knowledge; if we truly knew ourselves and let ourselves just be, we'd have a hard time of it. Depression would set in. Optimism keeps us high, in the same way church does. The knowledge of a greater being, or being greater, is something to which humans cling in order to make themselves feel better. The idea of not being unique and us being alone in the world would be too much to handle. Well, it would be for people not strong or intelligent enough individually. That would naturally start arguments, as religion and politics so often do. We encourage independent thought, but really when it comes down to it, we freak the fuck out when anyone's opinion is drastically different from our own. And suddenly, everything has changed because of said opinions. Clearly we base too much of our expectations of others on our own personal beliefs without taking theirs into account. That's what happens when your entire species is so self-centered. Which is a good thing, otherwise no one would be all about self-preservation and we'd have died out long ago.

All of these little thoughts are merely molecules in the ocean of my theories. Most are based on common sense, others have no bearing on anything, nor do they apply to everyone.

Take from this what you will.

Chimney Sweeper

Stefan May

Throwing myself down
upon the
luminescent blade of consciousness
revealed in a day-dream
eye scene
little lower-case "i" has seen
things as fast as
a lightning round
blink-of-an-eye or two or three...
tip-toeing past
sleeping giants
that curdle minds
raped by lies of
what is to be
what is to become of
them and their
unborn progeny out there
in blind limbo
gazing downward for the time
when it is their time
to come and
do their thing
here among us
i wonder of the days
when all these things shall
pass as the wind
through the trees of
some old-time story
taught by grandpa
on the back porch of
some frequented yesterday
i'll sit and listen
with intense intent
with beguiling truth of
heart to what is said about
all those people
out there
in the grand sea of things
i'll sit and
i'll correspond my thoughts
and dreams with theirs
and still, still fail miserably
to comprehend the

broken-down rationality of
this encompassing,
enclosing and
terribly erroneous world
this
planet of apes
that run in circles
day after day
in the mists of years
and the dense fog of
centuries
that skip like a bad streisand tune
in a car
during a long trip
with the 'rents
can you imagine it, though,
if the reign of ignorance
could stop for just
one brief shocking
moment?
denial pushed aside
into oblivion
for a sparkling (catastrophic?)
second to reveal
our indignities to each other
our faults thundering
loudly in the dust of
dry tongues tired and
lonely
for new breaths of
soulful intuition and destiny?
these pictures
have crossed my mind
on occasion
that the wars we fight
the babies we stab
with every birth
the faces we slap
with words of
dim acts and lost facts
that represent what
we always think
is the truth of

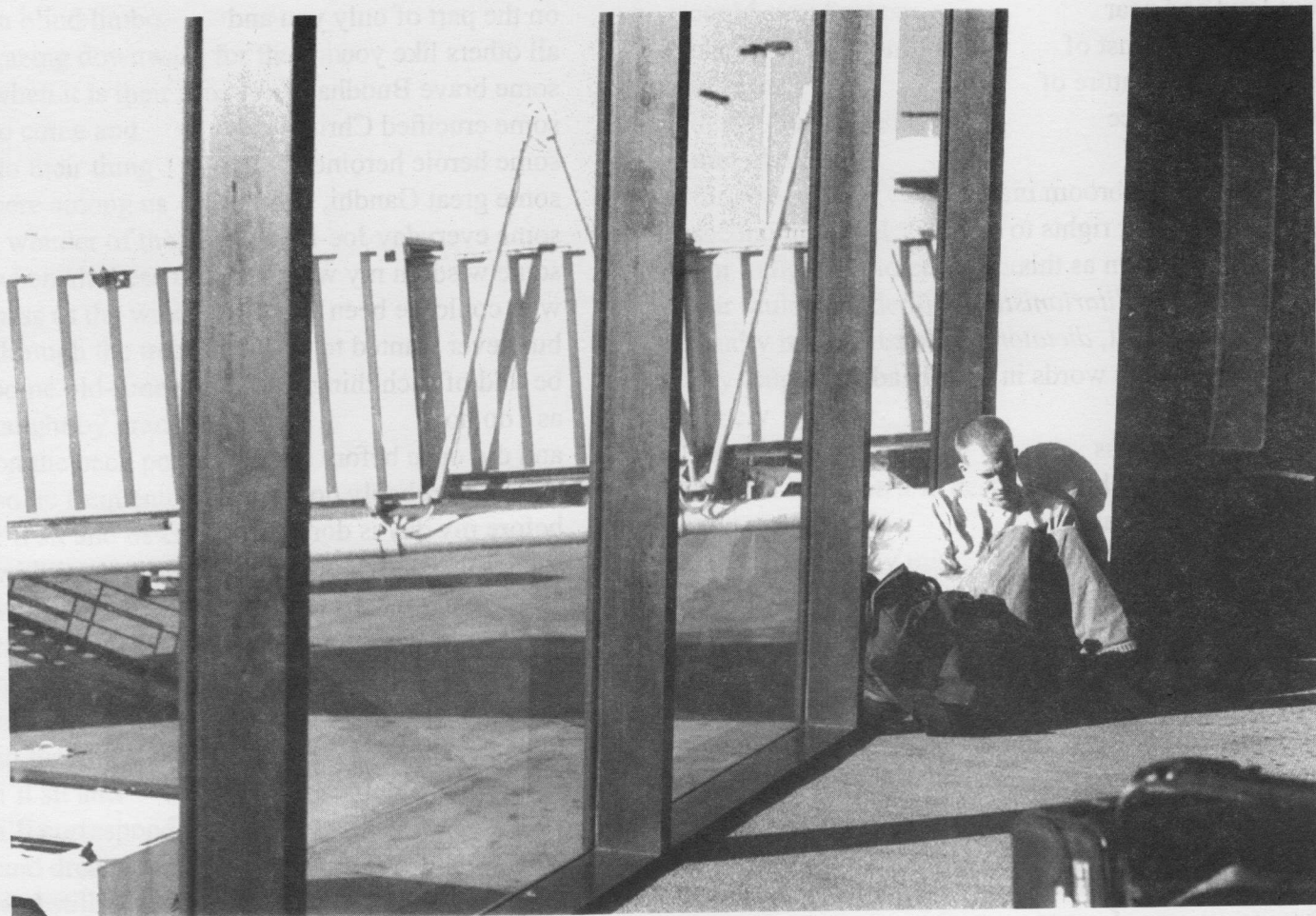
how things are or
how things should be or
how things used to be are
little more
than indoctrinated spasms of
our past
well, forget all of your ludicrous
morals and norms and
ideals that tell us how to be
how to live
and what to See
where to park
and what to eat
when to sit
and what to speak
we all need the Chimney Sweeper
now and again and again
right now
to remind us clean and clear
with words to ear
out loud and near
i writhe in disgust of
the repetitive nature of
circular opulence
and yet
i still fight with broom in hand
for the rights for rights to exist
in the same realm as this
capitalistic, *totalitarianistic*,
stalinistic, fascist, *dictatorshipistic*
(if there are such words in your head)
kind of world
can all kiss my ass
in the bright sunshine of
my love of all Mankind
and detestation of
the things that keep us
buckled in tight
into the roaming boredom of
century-old "I'm-rightism"
open the ears to hear
spread the eyes wide
for the intercourse of
knowledge because
in the end of
days to come and go

and you tossing from
side to side to side
in the time when
you're old and gray or
hairless and thrown away
flopping about
like a fish drying out
on the dock of death
you'll find
oh so suddenly
that you were always wrong
that they were always wrong
and that all the things
thought to be righteous and
knowable and proven and
holy and virtuous
on top your mountain of
momentous malarkey
were all the things of
narcissistic hedonism
on the part of only you and
all others like you
some brave Buddha,
some crucified Christ,
some heroic heroine,
some great Gandhi, and
some everyday Joe-blow
some wisdom my way
who could've been you
but never wanted to
be told of such things
as i do now
and did once before
and will probably do again
before my day is done
asking the eternal question
"who really listens to
words of a Wordman?"
you?
just go back
to your telly and
your rumors and
your women talk-shows and
your man-shows and
your media massacre of
society

go back
to your wars and
your hunger strikes and
your selfless rights
go back
to your ritualistic circle dance
tapping in unison with
every other secular "sameist"
people of the grand sea
i'll sit here on top for
my own breeze to come and
take me back
to the limbo where I once was and

i'll leave you a stone
on the ground
with the words to
proclaim i was here for sure:
"Listen ye who walks on by
As you are now
so once was I
As i am now
So you shall be
Prepare for death
And follow me."

Lonesome
Ryan Hart



Whitewashed and Disjointed

Ryan Hart

So what happened one day
When they all decided it wasn't okay to be not okay
And we discovered our tears were not in vain
They had fallen to the ground to become pills that keep us sane

And our lives were whitewashed
With tears that we weren't meant to have
While our future was hijacked
By fears that kept us sidetracked

I want it to be okay to feel some pain
I want it to be okay to welcome the rain
I want myself to be alive enough to feel
I want myself to be in enough pain to heal

The day has changed but the dream has stayed static
It was never our dream, our hopes were more sporadic
It's time to forget the way we were raised and to scream out our defiance
It's time to reject the idea that we'll never be self-reliant

Because there is no time like now to reverse our teachings
There is no time like now to beg to differ
And while the world tells us that we should be smiling
We'll wake up and see how quietly we're dying

No more rebellion, and no more submission,
No more riding into the sunset and no more religious wars of attrition
Tomorrow we will refuse to accept our deaths in silence
And we'll turn our backs on a world whose only language is violence

I want it to be okay to learn from my mistakes
I want it to be okay to do something for my own sake
I want myself to be alive enough to know I'm broken
I want myself, I want my life, and I want my pain.



Coffee
Aimee Tetrault

Untitled
Nicole Buck

Vulturesque creatures,
With embers for beaks,
Working the last cigarette pack
Of the week.
Perched on a manmade
Stoop of stone-
Voices without a microphone

Hiding faces behind
A semisweet guise.
Sit down, light up,
Let's dramatize.
Talk about politics, indies, and art
Who's fucking who-
And who's got the part.

Eat up the bullshit coated
Coffee house nattering,

Amateur philosophers
And writers a' gathering,
Poets, and actors, and overachievers,
Artists, and players, and world perceivers

Peering down noses,
Through thick rimmed frames,

Let's all be different
By being the same...

Fallen Star

Valerie Smith

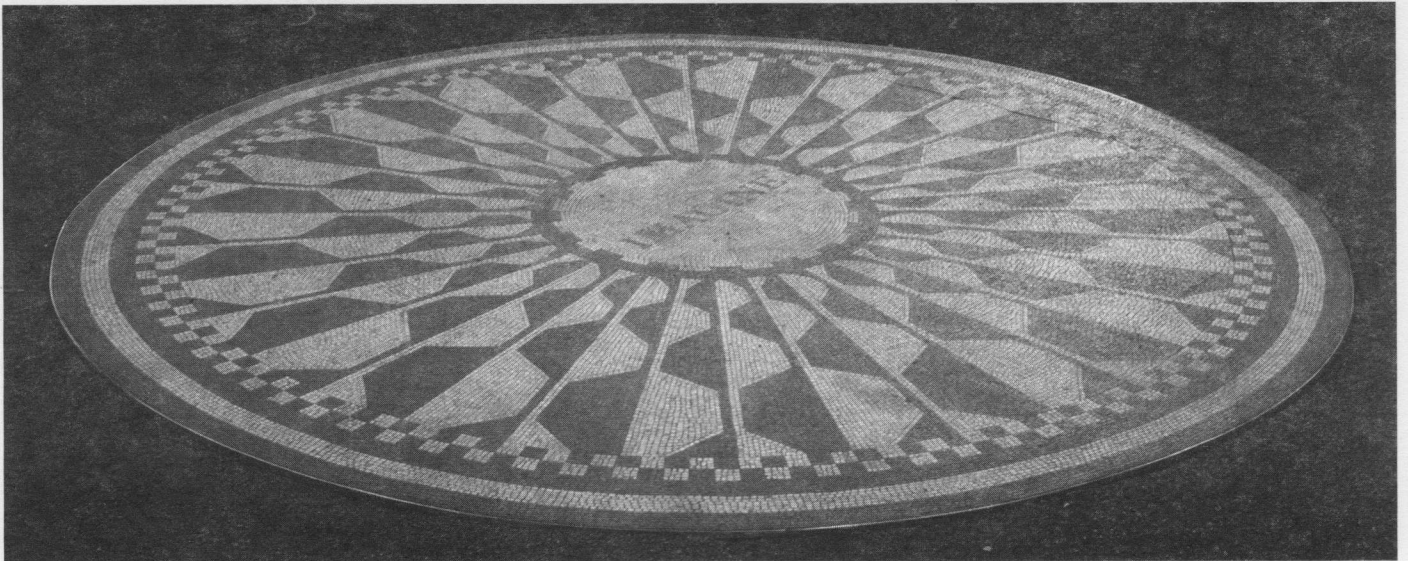
No stranger to these forlorn streets
a Werewolf on the prowl,
he searches for that long lost dream,
but only he can see it now.

The life of gold dust, glam, and fame
has faded long away.
The toll of both the road and stage
show clearly on his face.

A voice that one time rocked the town
now howls at the moon.
He lived his life so hard and fast
there's nothing left to prove.

The point he tried to get across
the image he portrayed
somewhere in time it all got lost;
now his words are jaded.

His Lawyers, Guns, and Money
can't bring his moment back.
He should count himself as lucky
as the lights all fade to black.



Uncle John's Fairytales

Ben McKnight

natural minor

~ for Ray

Valerie Smith

I could fall in love with songs like these;
the ones I use when I need to unwind,
precious few, only the ones in minor keys.

Melancholy blues make the sweetest
melodies –
so intricate and perfectly timed.
I could fall in love with songs like these!

Beauty of this kind is something he sees.
He observed it best, even blind,

precious few, the ones in minor keys.

The modal tale is my guide, puts me at ease
as I walk along with Georgia on My Mind.
I could fall in love with songs like these!

That Baby Grand, those smooth, sad ivories
strike the chord that no one else could find –
those precious few, the ones in minor keys.

Songs create the greatest memories,
the most vivid, everlasting kind.
I could fall in love with songs like these –
precious few, only the ones in minor keys.

Elvis and Jimi, 21st Century

Elyse Reel

I learn quickly that, with you, everything
is the end of the world.

Every girl
is your soulmate. She is
crystalline beauty and perfection,

and what drives you to drink
every Friday night.
You hit bottom easily,

then vomit up dinner and emotion,
and promise that nothing –
ever ever ever
is this bad. Over and over,

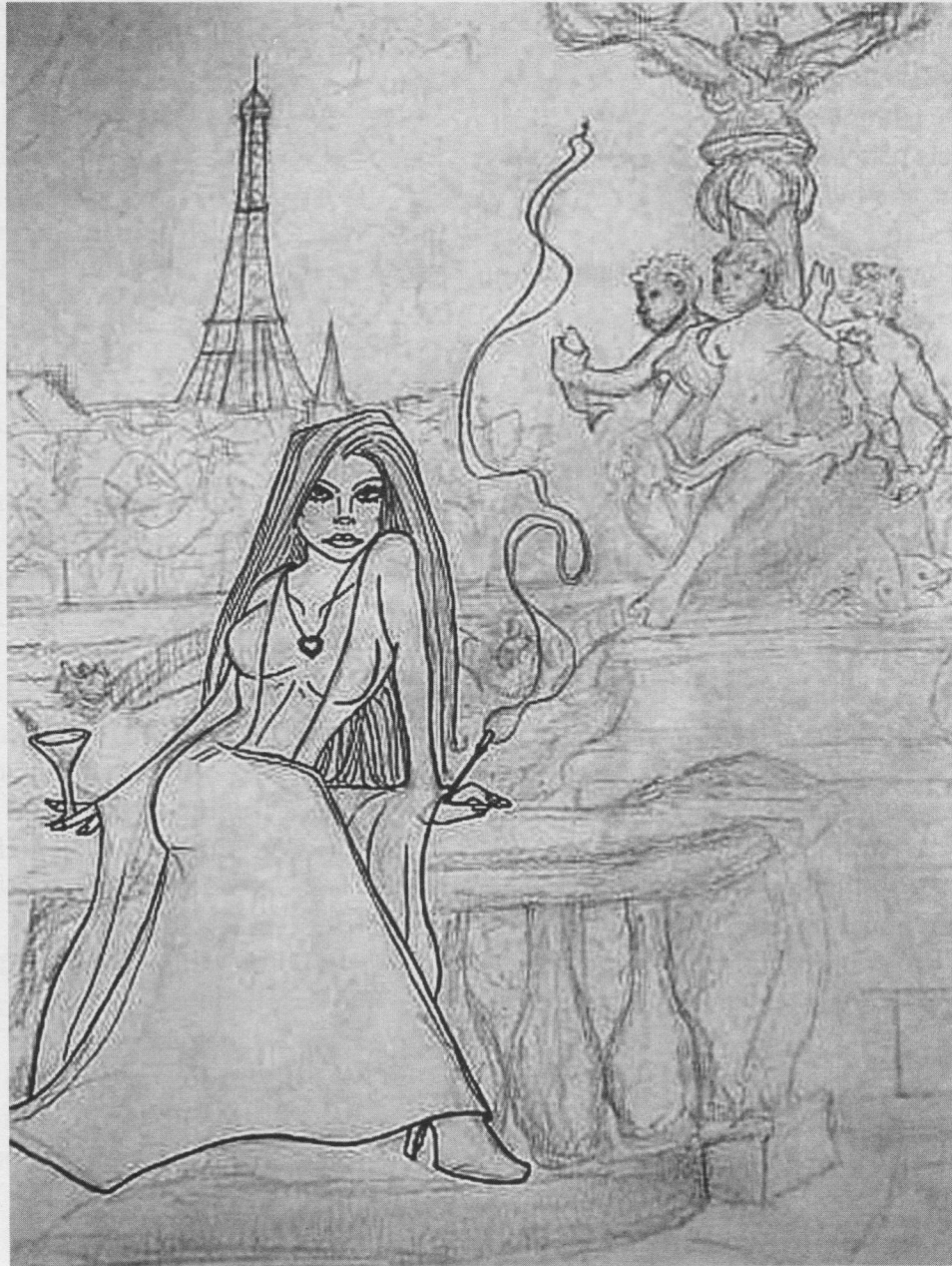
you remind us. Every girl is
more perfect and your heart
will never mend.

I think of you, slobbering, puke-
stained, and bloated with
the pain of these betrayals.

When you go too far, I am there; I
hold your head over the toilet
as you gag and sputter:

but I turn my head away in disgust.

Sinful In Paris
Nicholas M. Wolters



I Learn by Listening

Elyse Reel

There are things my mother does not tell me:
like how to put in a tampon,
or how to get lipstick off your teeth;
the best cigarette to smoke when you're low on cash.

Instead, I learn by listening
by perching on the bathtub edge
when my sister gets ready for school.
I learn these things and more,
about not being a slut
and how to cheat on a test without getting caught.

I listen to my mother, too,
when she teaches me morals and the Catholic way.
I like my sister's version better
and I think over it, giggling, at night.

I learn by listening at school:
how to French kiss;
the best way to blow a smoke ring,
and the boys I should never do.

At home, my mother teaches me about saints,
communion, and the Virgin Mary.
She thinks I'm two out of three.

There are things I do not tell my mother:
about the cigarettes under my bed,
that I haven't been to confession in a month;
or what really happened last night at the drive-in.

Our Lady of the Rosary

Gina DeLoretta

Hollow ceilings and marbled floors,
echo and bounce with guilty clicks of her heels--
She's attached to a place where she has none.
Her religion was born between moldy hymnals,
creaking pews and blistered red cushions,
before she was old enough to choose.

Stained glass windows wink and dance
in early Sunday sunlight
and she kneels for benediction.

Bless me Father, I have sinned...

I'm part of a faith

I don't have faith in.

Lifetimes ago, she sought comfort
in a deity beyond comprehension;
awestruck by infinite mercy and love.
Rituals, holidays, and recited prayers
cemented her in her faith.

So susceptible, she breathed it in

like the incense soaking the room, staining her clothes.

She remembers the church different each time.

Her vision tints in the stained glass of memory.

It's easier to hide behind years of blindness

Shamefully shuffling, barely murmuring

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...

She chokes back the words, a sinful martyr.

Lights a candle, a flickering reminder of
childhood beliefs and empty prayers.

Memories of this church keep her attached.

There's more comfort for her there

than in the god she was forced to know.

My Perfect Date

Jamie Neith

Today the rain was my ally
my soft spoken excuse for melancholy
and for once my hair curled just right
in soft waves around my face
not brazen frizz
not feral and unruly

And my skin felt smooth and clear
It looked childlike
sprinkled with freckles
blushing with excitement
my eyes lucid and heavenward
shining and blue

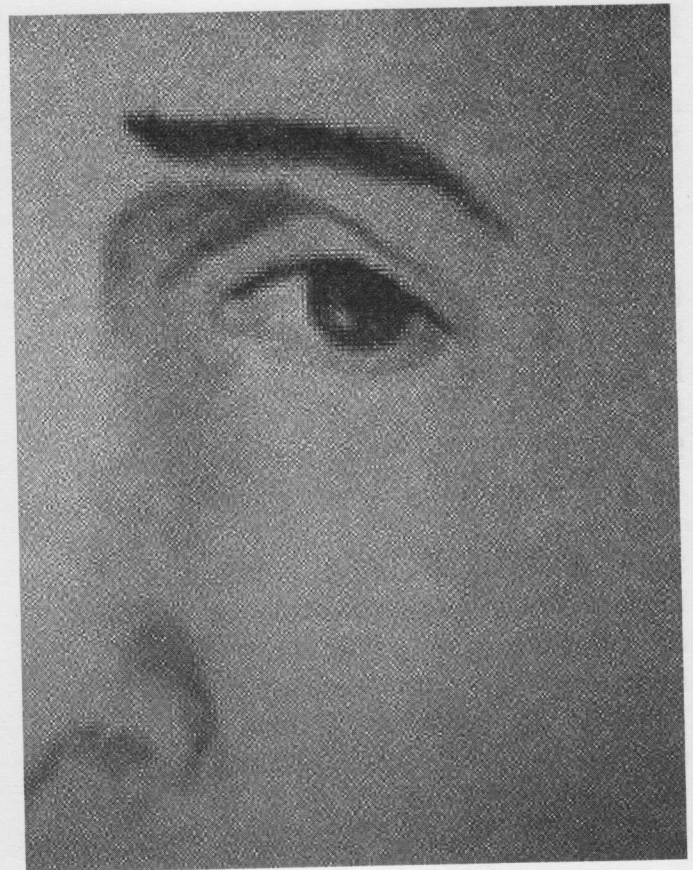
For the first time in awhile
I felt beautiful
no lipstick, no facade
just supple radiance and an appreciation for myself
that comes rarely

And tonight you should have seen
how the moonlight hit my features
complementing the shapes
of my face
soft slope of nose
quiet notch of cheek
smooth heart of lips
all adorned with fuzz, imperfect and true
my eyes turned beacon
of fulfillment

I didn't mind the roundness of my belly
or the breadth of my hips
and my legs looked strong and efficient
I felt no longer envious of pointed limbs and
hunger
I felt pleased that my ribs were
concealed beneath soft skin, and the cushion
of health
strong arms,
soft thighs, pink toes
flawed perfection.

And I felt a love
pure and sexless, accepting
and admiring, quiet and strong
it is a love that you could never give me
because you will never see me
how I saw myself today.
unconditionally beautiful, implicit
and wholly authentic

Tonight I loved myself.



Half
Katrina Theisz

The Search for Fabulously Ever After

L. Meghan Peirce

There once lived a young boy who came from a very prestigious background. Long ago, his ancestors bought stock in a small soup business called "Campbell's". The family earned enough money from the stock to support themselves, as well as future generations of the family. However, this handsome young man was unable to bask in his fortunate lifestyle for long. His father died when he was three, leaving just his mother to raise him on her own.

The two of them were best friends and spent entire summer days dressing up in the evenings simply just to visit Starbucks and read up on the latest celebrity gossip while sipping on hot chais. The boy's fifteenth birthday was creeping up on them and his mother had a huge surprise to share. She announced her engagement to a gentleman she had been chatting with for several weeks on the Internet. She had met him in a Billy Joel chat room and she was convinced that it was true love. The gentleman was to meet them at Starbucks that afternoon and she had planned for the three of them to live happily ever after. Unfortunately, when the stranger saw his son-to-be, his face immediately grew red with anger at the idea of fathering a homosexual son.

The boy was immediately thrown to the streets with nothing more than his Kenneth Cole shoes and the latest GQ magazine. He was devastated at first, but eventually found his place among drag queens residing on Broadway. He earned his rent by brushing out hair wigs, performing manicures and organizing makeup shelves that surrounded the walls of their flat. For the most part, the boy was able to keep to himself. However, there was a pair of late night show tune dancers that gave him occasional trouble.

They were jealous of the boy's natural long eyelashes and slender hips. Everyone knew that if given a microphone, center stage and an opportunity- he would be an instant star. The dancers purposely left mascara smears on the bathroom mirror just to make sure that he was always too busy to attend one of their shows.

One day, the boy was interrupted from his Cher CD and eye shadow organizing by a knock at the front door. He swung the doors open and was greeted by an old man saturated with glitter clinging to a beautiful pair of fairy wings. The old man explained that he had a performance to attend in just an hour and he couldn't find his cosmetic bag. The boy led the old man to his impressive assortment of eye shadows, foundations and blush hues. The man quickly transformed into a sparkling fairy. To show his appreciation, the fairy decided to dress the young boy up and take him to see his show.

At the show the boy was shown the time of his life. After three martinis, the boy decided that it was almost midnight and that he should be getting home soon. He stumbled through the drunken crowd and bolted towards the back door. On his way out, he tripped over a smoke machine, causing his Kenneth Cole shoe to fall off. The boy was too impaired to notice and went home none the wiser.

The next morning the boy woke up and decided to go to Wal-Mart to buy Tylenol. He searched the flat for his missing shoe, but couldn't find it anywhere. He almost fainted at the very idea of his *perfect* shoes being gone. He slipped on his Birkenstocks half-heartedly and drove to the club looking for his missing shoe. Realizing that he wasn't going to be able to retrieve it, he took an emergency trip

to the mall to find another pair. Hours later, he found himself surrounded by boxes of all the latest casual loafers, and still not satisfied with a single one. Feeling defeated, he surrendered and went home.

After arriving home, he crawled back in bed. He was far too upset to talk to anyone in the flat, especially the rotten pair of dancers. The boy went to sleep for three days straight, unable to function without his favorite shoes. On the third day, the doorbell awaked him. He mustered up enough energy to get out of bed and answer it. Swinging it open, he was faced with the most handsome man he had ever seen. The man had everything; good looks, good fashion, an amazing smile and even more impressive manners. He explained that he had found the perfect Kenneth Cole shoe at a show he was attending last week and drove all the way from Manhattan to go door to door on Broadway looking for the man who had such wonderful taste in shoes.

The boy's eyes lit up when he spotted his beloved shoe in his visitor's handbag. Overcome with elation, he grabbed the shoe, slammed the door in the man's face, and planted a kiss right on the sole. Together, he KNEW that he and his *perfect* shoe would live fabulously for ever after.

Saliendo de la Paz

Vito Grippi

From the city, it takes three days to reach
Arizona's border. I packed my things
and watched my mother cry salt-sparkling rings
of tears, unable to give her sad speech.

In the valleys we hiked long trails of earth,
at times crawling on hands and knees to hide
from the choppers above who lurked and spied
in the air while we pushed to find new birth.

Alas we found God's golden sands, three long
days into this journey for basic needs.

Coyotes waiting on the border weeds,
to take us north. Reno, the place of song
and dance, freedom to work, to feed our kin.

"*Mil quinientos* for a one-way ride,"
said the cowboy leaning on his truck's side.

A small price to pay for work without sin.
Mamma if you could see the way the night
falls on the sky, so pure and worth the fight.

Patriotic Pantoum

Vito Grippi

Pistols not pistils create peace.
Rifle clad young heroes win wars.
Left-wing radical poets are unpatriotic,
when it is time to win wars.

Rifle clad young heroes win wars,
in the foggy black deaths of unknown lands.
When it is time to win wars,
prayers go out to the winning team.

In the foggy black deaths of unknown lands,
mothers' sons die for fishy secrets. And
prayers go out to the winning team,
while fathers hang photos under flags at work.

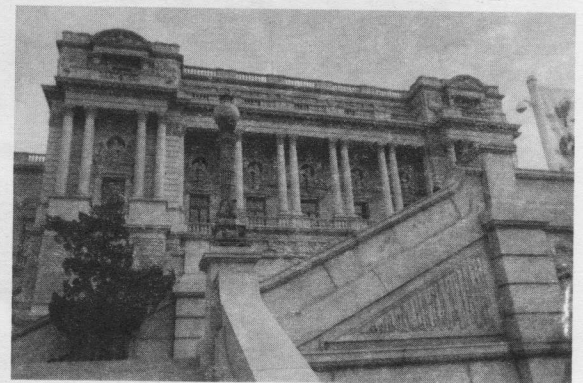
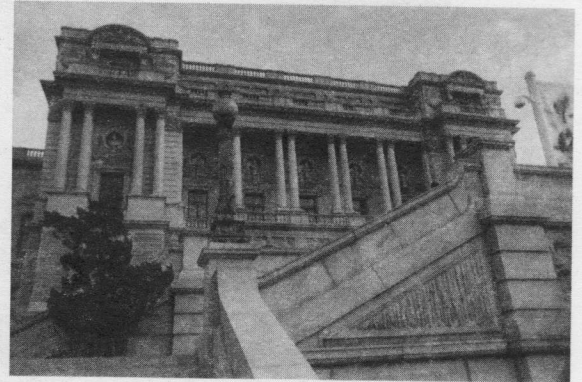
Mothers' sons die for fishy secrets, and
secrets become known only to become secrets again,
while fathers hang photos under flags at work, and
childhood friends share memories of times past.

Secrets become known, only to become secrets again,
while hiding themselves in unknown jargon.
Childhood friends share memories of times past,
while other childhood friends continue to become
memories.

While hiding themselves in unknown jargon,
conservative liberals and liberal conservatives argue,
while other childhood friends continue to become
memories.

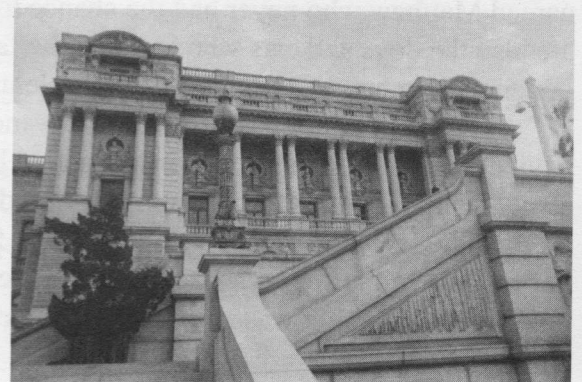
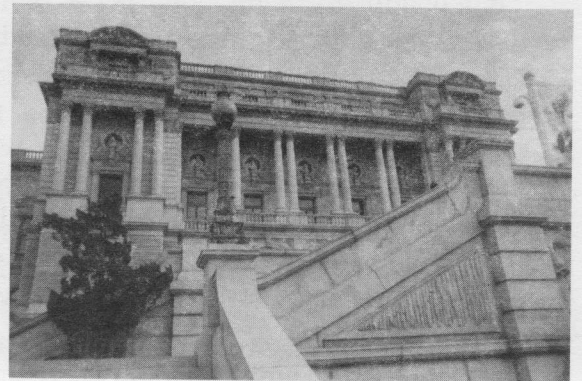
But, a daisy is a weed and it too kills.

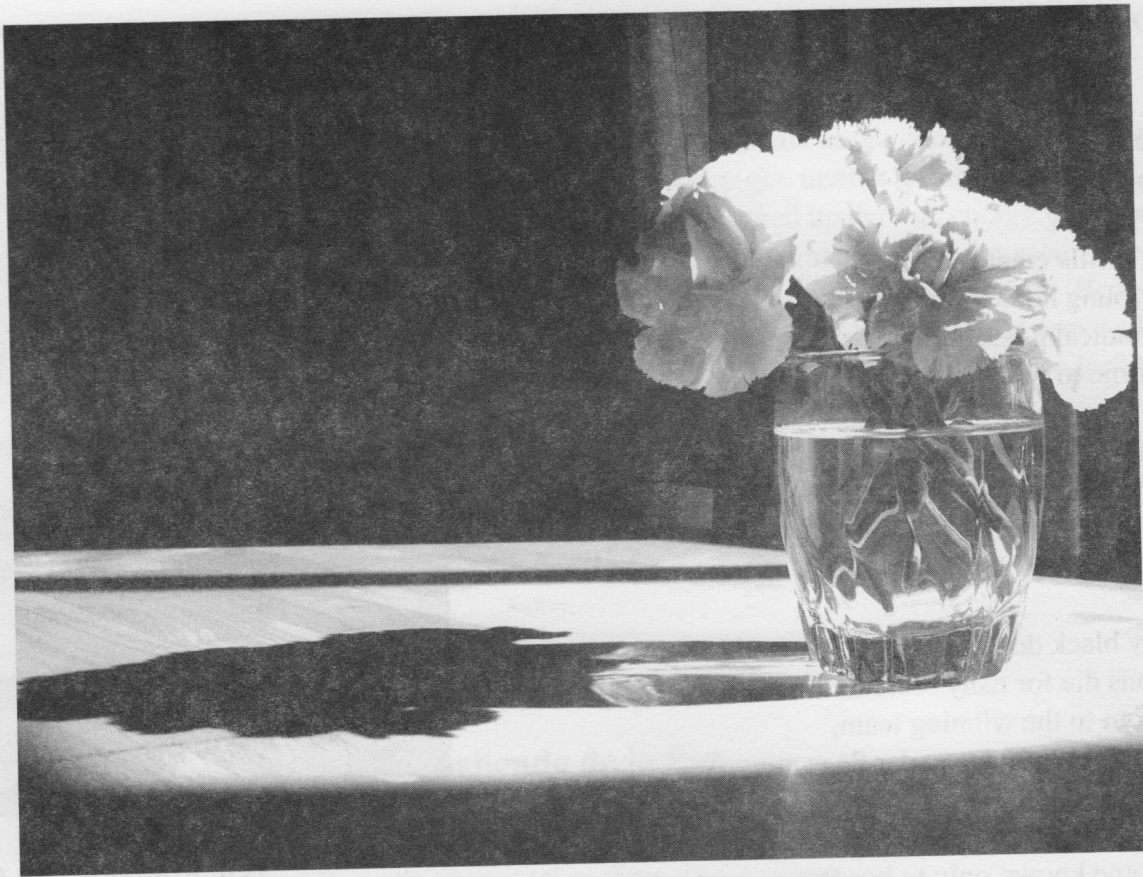
Conservative liberals and liberal conservatives argue.
Left-wing radical poets are unpatriotic.
A daisy is a weed and it too kills, so
Pistols not pistils create peace.



Washington 2004

Catherine Sacchi





Carnation and Shadow

Catherine Sacchi

A Breath of Sweet Air

Catherine Dudley

If you sit on the porch and squint real hard, you can see the graves up there on the hill. You can also see the big old maple tree that sits at the top as a gatekeeper to the meadow with all the dandelion tufts. But it's not the maple that worries her. She's always eyeing the graves, wondering if she'll have to add another one sometime soon.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Mama. Papa. John. Her two girls, Amy and Clare. The baby named Matthew who never had the chance to breathe in the sweet morning air of Virginia. Under that hill are also the dogs and cats who lived on the farm, although their specific grave sites aren't noted by markers. It's enough to have six up there—that's plenty.

It's hard to tell who she misses the most. Some days she misses her mama who always gave the best advice and whose lemonade was like a cool bath on a summer day. At other times, she'll miss her papa—he always told the best stories, even if they made you cry like child lost in an April rainstorm.

She forces herself to recall her girls' faces and laughter, even though it breaks her heart and sends her running to the spring house to hide in the quiet cool. She curses herself for holding onto that baby for hours, even though it was no use. He fattened her ankles and swelled her sore heavy breasts for nothing.

That year the baby was born only to be placed in a grave under the hill was the same year she lost John. Usually, she misses him the most. He loved her something awful. And she loved him too. She loved him like sunflowers love the feeling of the sun on their big black and yellow faces. Together, she and John could do anything—even birth and raise that runt of a calf whose mama gave up and died in the middle of the birth.

But she lost him. She got a letter in the mail, from the government or the Army or something, saying that the man she loved was killed for his country, for the Allies. She doesn't even remember where she was told he took his last breath. Was it France? Or Germany? She doesn't care. All she cares about is that she never got to say goodbye to her John. She only got to see his dog tags and that God-awful letter. She didn't even keep them and hide them away in the bottom of her dresser like so many other war widows did—instead they're up under the hill where her husband's body should be. But it isn't. Is it in France? Or Germany?

There are so many things she misses about him: the way he always snuck up behind her and kissed her neck; the way he smiled; the way he was so tender with her, even if he was a bit irritated; the way his hair always smelled—a mix of his shampoo and cologne, but there was always something else she couldn't put a name to. She misses him like the hummingbirds miss the sweet sugar water she doesn't set out for them anymore.

But, she isn't left wholly alone. She has her Benny. It's funny how the two of them, the two weakest in the family, are the ones to keep going on living. She has made that boy her everything, and she has planned her existence around her only surviving child. To her, he is beautiful. But he is weak as well. The doctor said he wouldn't live past the age of two, but here he is—already seven. Beautiful.

Benny was born with a disease that mangled his tiny left arm and leg. Medically speaking, his heart doesn't work right—but she knows it does, for he has so much love in it. He doesn't really say much, but every once in a while he'll be willing to talk for hours. He lives his life hobbling around the farm, spending time with his Border Collie named Peaches and learning as much as he can about the world around him. Benny wakes up with his eyes wide open, and he doesn't close them until he goes to bed that night. She loves him so much.

She and Benny get along fine at the farm, even if it's just the two of them. They enjoy one another's company, and they're always busy. She milks that runt of a calf that has grown into a perfect heifer, collects eggs from the chickens, feeds the goats, and tends to that beautiful black and white Pinto named Circus.

John bought Circus for her birthday years ago, when they were newlyweds and before they ever had children. At that time, it was only her and John and her mama and papa on the farm. When John gave her Circus, she knew that he truly loved her. He later told her that he searched for months for that perfect horse, and when he found it, nothing would stop him from buying it for her. It's funny how love works sometimes, she came to realize. Through that horse, she learned that John loved her like Circus loves an open field.

Sometimes she lets Circus indulge in his love and run wild in the meadow. She sits for hours just so she can watch his long black mane blow in the wind like a kite caught in a tornado. That horse has given her some of her best memories of her farm, and he always seemed to know when he was needed. Like John, Circus seemed willing to do anything for her and her family.

She and Benny get along fine at the farm. She has an old Ford, so if they wanted to go into Roanoke they could, but they hardly ever want to. The farm is good enough for the two of them and their desires of life. Benny has Peaches, she has Circus, and the two of them have each other. It's not so bad, except she sometimes misses having long and thoughtful conversations, like she and John once had.

John taught her so much, but he rarely had to say more than a few words to grant her with a new revelation to add to her life's philosophy. His insights were thoughtful and passionate; she waited anxiously between their conversations like a fisherman waiting for his lure to jump. When he spoke to her, if he wasn't looking, she'd hold her breath and close her eyes just to take in all of his words. Beautiful.

The two of them used to take a blanket up to the hill and star gaze. They would lie on their backs, hand in hand, and merely watch the sky. On one of those nights that felt like a misty embrace, she asked him what he thought Heaven was like.

"You don't already know?" he replied with a look of amazement on his face. "I thought I made it clear to you..."

"What do you mean?" She turned and looked at him, her face twisted into an embarrassing and guilty smile. She felt like a child who misspelled an important word at the local spelling bee.

"I thought you knew. You're Heaven, sweetheart. It's you. As long as I'm with you, I'm in Heaven."

But all that is no more. Now, she only has her Benny, and she dares not to think of where her John was placed in the earth, never to see her again. Is it France? Or Germany? Wherever it is, it is too far away from her.

* * *

Just as the sun was going down one evening, she left her knitting at the kitchen table and moved to the porch to snap the ends off a bushel of green beans for canning.

"Benny Baby, come help your mama snap some beans."

The lopsided blonde-haired boy limped toward the porch. Peaches followed his every step and then sat at his feet. The mother and her son methodically snapped the beans, she finishing three before he could even finish one. As they were working, Benny's gaze slowly moved to the hill with the graves on it. She didn't notice; instead she was eyeing a praying mantis that was sitting on the corner of a porch step.

"Mama?" The sudden and unexpected noise surprised her, but hearing his squeaky little boy's voice surprised her even more.

"Yes, Baby?" She sounded like someone had knocked the wind out of her.

"Why are Amy and Clare in Heaven?"

She continuously asked herself the same question, so she provided him with the only answer she ever told herself. "Because life is short, Benny Baby."

"Then why did Daddy go to Heaven?"

Again, she only ever had one answer. "Because life is too short, Benny Baby."

"But Daddy lived a whole bunch longer than Amy and Clare."

"All our lives are short, Benny. We never have enough time to do everything we want to do. Those people who live to be a hundred, even their lives are short 'cause they didn't get to do everything they wanted to do. It's just that Amy and Clare had even a shorter amount of time to do the things they wanted to do. Gram and Gramps didn't get to do everything they wanted to do, and Daddy sure didn't get to do all the things he said he wanted to do. Did I ever tell you that he once told me that he wanted to build us a whole new house up in the meadow? But he never got to. Life is just too short..." Her voice was picked up by the wind and disappeared over the hill on the horizon.

She took a deep breath and concentrated on the stoic praying mantis. Both she and Benny had stopped snapping the green beans. Instead, Benny continued to focus his gaze at the hill, while she continued to stare at the green saint that sat on the porch step. The praying mantis, too, seemed to be searching for

answers. Answers to what, she didn't know. She thought about the insect and studied its fragile twig-like body. Does he have a concept of time? Is his life too short for him too? What on earth is he praying for?

"Mama?" There he goes, surprising her again and pulling her out of her mesmerized gaze upon the saint.

"Yes, Benny Baby."

"What's Heaven like?"

"Why, I guess that it's different for all of us—we decide how we want it to be. Whatever will make us happy."

"Oh...what's your Heaven like?"

"I suppose it's like our meadow in the summer, when all the wild flowers are up. I'd just sit there with you and Peaches and your daddy and Amy and Clare and baby Matthew. We'd all just sit there and laugh and watch Circus run like the wind. Heaven..."

"But what if that wasn't Daddy's Heaven?"

"Well, I guess God works it so Daddy could be in his Heaven and mine at the same time, so we're both happy."

"Good, 'cause I'd want my Heaven to be down at me and Peaches' pond where all the frogs hop, but if God didn't work Heaven the way He did, I'd change my Heaven to be like yours so we could be together and you could laugh with me."

"I love you Benny Baby," she said as she tousled his hair.

Sometime that night, as if he was in a serendipitous dream, Benny traveled to his and Peaches' pond where all the frogs hop. His heart was too weak and could only support the child for seven short years. Life is just too short.

Meticulously, she buried him under the hill next to Clare, making the seventh grave marker a giant rock she found behind the barn, upon which Benny had scribbled his name with a piece of charcoal. Circus dragged the rock up the hill for her, since her everlasting strength seemed to finally falter and fail. She stared at the seven graves and turned away, leaving Peaches at the top of the hill. He stayed there all night then ran down to the pond at sun up, knowing he'd find Benny there.

She couldn't cry. She was too heartbroken that she couldn't even cry for her last child. Perhaps she had just spent too many tears in her past that none were saved for Benny. Nonetheless, she felt the loss deep in her chest. Never before had her grief made her feel like she was drowning.

She lay in her bed, thinking of nothing but the yellow July moon. When she woke up, the sun was high in the sky. Still in her night gown, she walked down to the barn and guided Circus past the hill and the big old maple tree to the meadow. She didn't even notice the wildflowers. She took off his reigns and let him run. She had never seen him run so fast before. He ran like a great wind propelled him and kept nipping at his heels. He reminded her of the first day she saw him, when John guided him over the hill to hand her his leather reigns. Smiling like the sun.

Circus ran until the sun began to go down and the sky turned dusty and pink. Showing no sign of weariness or lassitude, the beautiful horse trotted up to her and nuzzled into her neck. She closed her eyes, leaned into Circus, and whispered her heartbreak to him. When she opened her eyes, she saw a figure on the horizon, walking towards her and waving. She couldn't tell who it was, but she felt a happiness flood her veins. She took a deep breath of the sweet Virginia air and smiled as she sat down in the wildflower-strewn meadow to await her visitor.



Jake
Mary Petock

Caught

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick

I read somewhere
that cats don't like their people
to have long hair:
It gets caught in their toes.

That's how you make me feel.

Sometimes I'm the hair ~
All tangled and knotted until I don't know where one emotion begins or the others end.

Sometimes I'm the cat ~
Frustrated by this stuff that's binding me that I can't really see

to unsnare myself.



Niko
Terri Shadle

Eclipse

Amity Bitzel

That day was blindingly bright, hot sticky taffysun-
yet I was wracked with shivers, teeth chattering in sharp little bites.
As we drove I whispered to him as best as I could, the traitorous
Heave of the heart underpinning my lies.

Five, ten years ago he would have been fluid, running, a streak of russet
and chocolate flaming across a field.
Now he curled silently in the backseat, too tired for even a whimper,
old bones sighing and creaking in minor key.

I thought of how his hips went first, the proud straight lines inverting
into brittle and crooked sticks, all that flesh wasting, wasting.
Or the first time he fell down the stairs, the sound his paws made,
scrabbling for purchase with a black and fathomless urgency.

Now his paws dangled as we gently lifted him from the car, into the room
smelling of steel and the bright, clean bite of alcohol.
Placed on the table, he shifted his blocky head in question, ears cocked.
His fur smelled of sunwarmed grass and the darkest, richest, soil.

I twined my fingers in the silk of his ear; the silvery drop of liquid on the needle
shimmered and fell—it was, finally, all that I could see.



The Buddha Dog
Ryan Hart

Nonno Was A Baker

Vito Grippi

I

In the portrait, everyone is facing the camera,
deadpan, trying to force a smile.
Your oldest daughter and her husband with their
two daughters, your youngest with her husband,

Anthony and I kneeling in the front. Another boy, and a
girl would come later. Nonna, your wife,
stares blankly into the camera lens,
her eyes dark and swollen, hidden behind tinted eyeglasses.

You, you're wearing your standard uniform;
brown trousers, button-down shirt, and
the beige cap that became a permanent accessory
when you reached your chemo stage.

II

Who were you when you crossed the Atlantic by ship
to find work in Venezuela? What did the South
Americans think of your bread? And the New Yorkers?
Bread led you to distant parts of the world. Bread made of
semolina flour and sesame seeds. Bread that made bread—

that brought bread to your table, thousands of miles away.
Who is this man whose soft, stubble-laden cheeks I once
squeezed between my fingers? This man who watched
football on TV, and rooted for no one, "The better team will win,
no use in choosing one or the other."

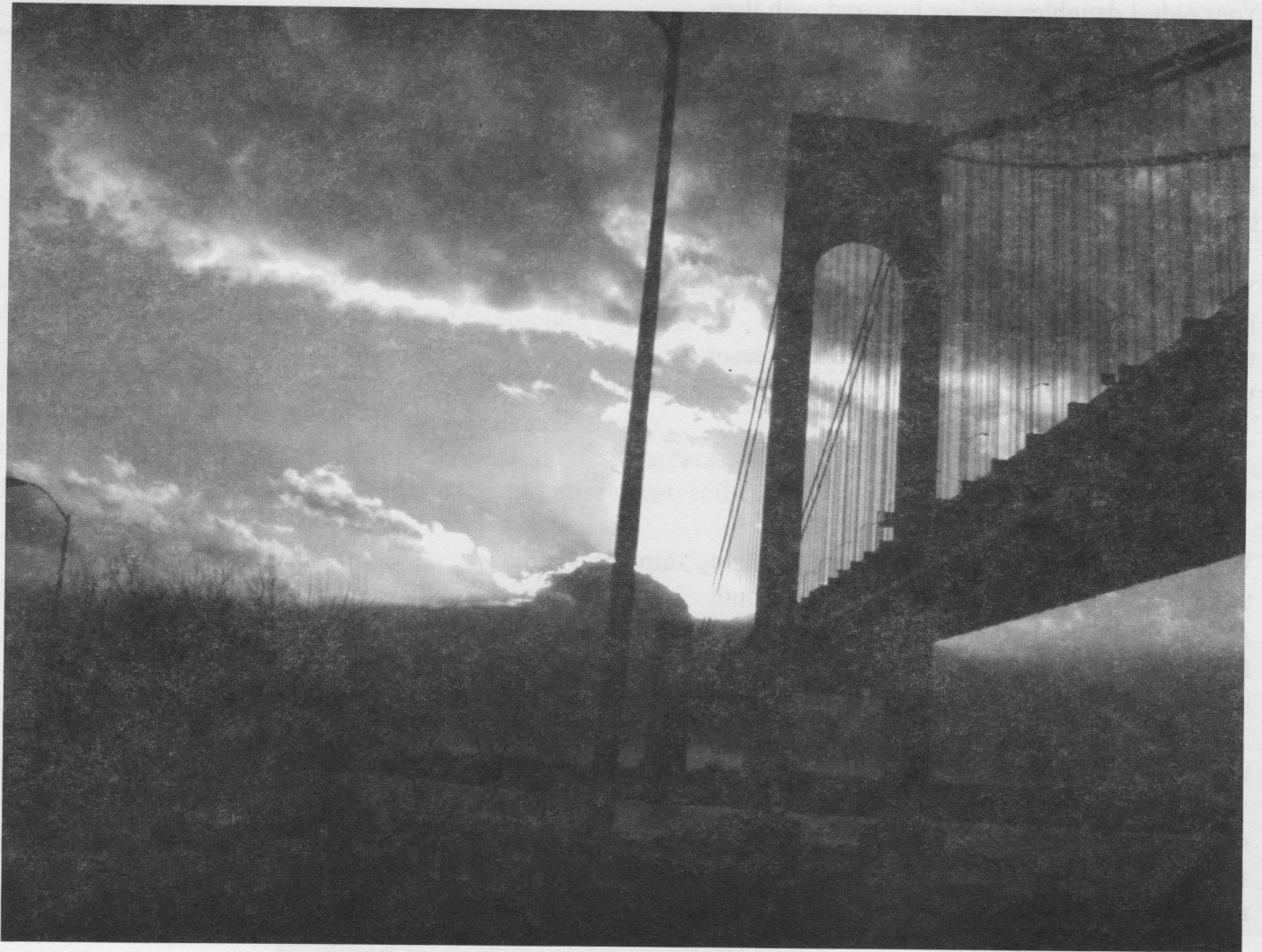
III

My mother takes a long loaf out of the oven and hands it to me.
Her calloused hands barely feel the hot bread in her fingers.
But the smell, the smell that rises as she breaks off a piece...

"God, it burns" she whispers.

Wanna Was a Later
No Oupl

In the portrait, every one is being the camera...
headset, trying to force a smile



Crossover
Jacky Liquori

Early Morning

Tiffany Hauck

The aged woman drinks her coffee,
a religious routine every morning.
Not shaken but stirred, and always hot,
“Just like my men,” she used to joke.
In those early mornings Hungarian spilled from her lips,
Intoxicated by the language with each sip.

As we talked, she would take slow sips,
Always making gestures to the pot for more coffee.
At the age of 84, she still had beautiful lips,
But, day after day I had to wonder is this our last morning?
I would ask her questions about death, she laughed as if a joke,
But I could tell she worried because her face looked hot.

By the time we finished talking, our coffee cold, no longer hot.
Taking sporadic glances at my great grandmother gently sipping
We moved into the sunroom proceeding with our banter and jokes
She would always make sure to put a coaster down under her coffee
In that room she shined like the sun in the morning
Sitting down reapplying her berry-tinted lipstick.

Smoothing the gloss gently over her lips.
The power of the sun could be felt making us hot
Little did I know these were some of our last mornings.
By each breath I could tell she was struggling to sip,
The coaster held her once steaming coffee
Her eyes, gentle, her tone of voice flat, no more time left to joke.

Our favorite thing to do before she passed was tell jokes.
I stayed by her hospital bed resting my trembling hand to her lips,
Our favorite pastime cornered to these four walls, nurses delivered coffee
The only way she liked it, not shaken but stirred and always hot.
I was the only one drinking that day, my grandmother too weak to sip.
My only prayer that night “Please God give me one last morning.”

God heard my prayers, he granted my one more morning,
I took advantage of my luck and told her jokes
On her way up I hoped she laughed, as her last sweet breath was a gentle sip.
Her face once bright now pale, the mouth that once held hope, now sealed lips.
Fighting back tears of remorse, my face grew hot as,
I took my last swig of bittersweet coffee.
My lips rambling off jokes, in hopes of distracting her, consumed her last hours.
I allow the hotness to burn my lips in assurance that I am still alive after this tragedy.
Every sip of coffee I take trails my thought back to our morning hours together.

Window Light

Catherine Sacchi



Imprisonment

Rachael Krall

Venetian blinds allow in bars of light
and choirs of sparrows sing chaotic melodies
in the oak tree.

He has lived here long enough
to know the universe is tiled,
draped, and that the tranquil beaches appearing
on the Travel Channel are distant
reminders of what could have been.

He is not deprived.
He has seen coastlines in magazines
reflecting light like the pictures on the screen,
heard the music the waves make,
their agile lines folding on top of each other.

No force here or above
could wrench me from your room
where I grow old with you.

Holding your hand, listening as you share
the experiences of your life
brings memories of a similar time I hoped had
passed;
the first time I sat here beside you,
the only grandfather I have

listening as the buzz of machinery around us
slowly defined your life.



Generations
Vito Grippi

My Evergreen Tree
Gina DeLoretta

On the back of the 3X5 photograph I am holding, in my grandmother's scrawling, are the words, "Grace going in." The picture is dated November 1983. Grace is my grandmother. Grace Marie. Gina Marie. The picture is uncluttered; a house, a backyard, a car and a woman. So ordinary, unexciting, but it triggers so many more memories than the photograph could ever contain. Some of them play in my head as I hold the photo—taking in each object. It's grainy in quality, and the images are fuzzy and time-filtered, but I remember with intense clarity.

Only the back portion of the house is in view, white siding and black shutters, from the kitchen window to the enclosed porch that juts out in an L shape. My grandpop used that room as a barbershop after his 50-year retirement and men would come to have their hair cut during the day. When my brother and cousins and I were younger, we used to spin each other in the barber chair.

"Spin me faster Angie! Faster!" I shriek, as my cousin, Angela, pushes the spinning barber's chair faster and faster around. The chair makes a rhythmic pumping sound with each turn, and I am enjoying the whirling, sickening spinning. I shut my eyes and tilt my head back, letting the dizziness overcome me. There is a long vinyl bench next to the chair, and my brother, John, and cousin Brian sit waiting anxiously for their turn on the chair. Our grandmom sticks her head into the room to check up on us. She is wearing her blue and white striped apron that ties on the sides and she has a wooden spoon in one hand that is covered in spaghetti sauce.

She beckons us to come inside and help her bake cookies. My cousins quickly forget the thrill of our game, and run to the kitchen, squeezing and pushing each other through the doorway. I remain spinning, eyes closed, waiting for my head to stop wobbling and the room to stand still before I exhale and join the others in the kitchen.

Behind the enclosed porch spreads the deck, freshly laid slabs of woodbarely exposed to abusive Mother Nature and children. It will later be painted red, and during summers, my cousins and I will spend countless hours making mischief in the backyard. Along the rail leading up to the deck, five evergreen trees will be planted: one for each grandchild. By the time both my grandparents are buried, those evergreens will have stretched at least eleven feet high.

Growth is an amazingly gradual and sneaky process.

"Tell me a story please," I ask sleepily, snuggled close in grandmom's arms. Summer is fading, and we spend the afternoon in the cool shade of the evergreen trees. We cuddle on the yellow stitched sofa, watching my brother and cousins blow bubbles in the grass. Cumulous clouds dust the bright sky and scratches of tall trees. The deck has a freshly painted coat of red

"What story would you like to hear?" she asks, smiling at me with her blue, blue eyes, already knowing what my answer will be.

"The one about the evergreens and the little birdies."

"Once upon a time..." grandmom begins, and tells the story I love so much, raising the pitch of her voice to mimic the birds crying from winter's cold, lowering it and roughing it up to voice the oak trees who would not give the birds shelter. Her own voice portrays the kind evergreens who warmed the birds and protected them from freezing.

"God was so angry with the unkind trees, He said, 'Since you would not be nice to the little birds, you will lose your leaves and know what it is to freeze in winter's cold. But since the evergreens were kind and took care of the birds, they will be rewarded with warmth all winter, and keep their leaves.'"

"So that's why the big trees lose their leaves in the winter, right?"

"That's right. And the evergreens keep their leaves and stay nice and warm."

I sit silently for a while. "Grandmom, if you were a tree, you would be an evergreen, and I would be a little bird and stay with you all winter." She squeezes me tight and kisses my hand.

The color of the car on the far right appears white, but it was light green. During summers my grandparents would take us—my cousins, brother and I—on day trips. We'd all pile in, my grandpop in the driver's seat, grandmom beside him. Usually one of the boys crammed in the front between my grandparents. Angela and I claimed the window seats in the back, and Brian or John sat in the middle. We loved going to the park.

Grandpop is pushing Angie on the swing; John and Brian are sword fighting with sticks in the field. Grandmom and I perch at the edge of the creek, our toes dangling in the silvery quick waters. The water slips over and around our bare feet in musical patterns. Grandmom's toes are painted bright red. Mine are purple. My eyes trail to the scar dividing her knee. "Does that hurt?" I ask, pointing to the parallel stitched line.

Her eyes follow my gesture. "Not on the outside. This part is all healed up, but inside it hurts sometimes." She sticks her toes into the mucky bottom, stirs the ancient silt. I lose sight of her red toenails.

"When? When does it hurt? Now?" I'm scared that her knee still hurts her three years after surgery. I don't understand why.

"Sometimes when the weather is very cold, sometimes when it rains. You remember when you had a splinter and we couldn't get it all out?" I nod. "Well remember that it hurt for a while afterwards? Even though on the surface it was ok?" I nod again, catching the connection.

"So even though it doesn't hurt on the outside, doesn't mean it can't hurt on the inside." I say, proudly beaming.

"That's right. Scars are reminders of things that have happened to us. They show our past, our history. You can find out all about a person just by scars." She traces the line with a manicured nail. I get shivers; touch the scar under my chin where I cracked it on the swimming pool. My thoughts trail off down the creek.

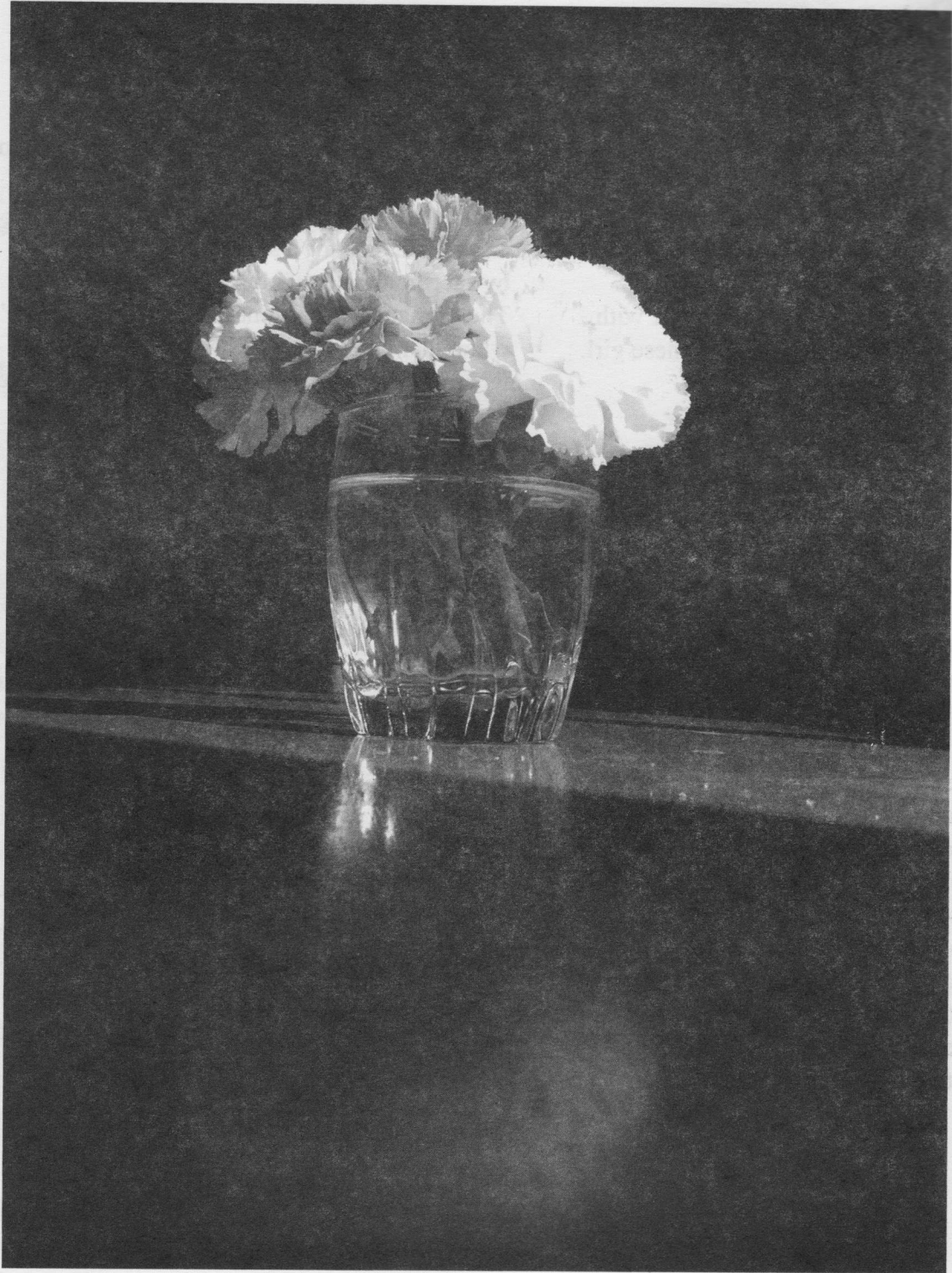
To the left of the car stands my plump grandmom. She wears her favorite green sweater with the pockets in the front, a calf-length khaki skirt, and brown sandals. Red-framed sunglasses highlight her short, copper, curly hair. She faces the car, her back to the side of the house, as if the photographer called out her name from behind and snapped the picture before she could react. She shimmers in the picture like a mirage in the fading mid-day sunlight. Her expression is unclear, but I remember the wrinkles in her face when she smiled, her clear blue eyes sparking with mischief. I ache to hear her voice, her infectious laughter. It fades from my memory; the soft melodies and notes blending and washing away with time. She smelled so good too—a mix of summer breezes and Chanel perfume, of clear cool streams and Dove soap, and of age and wisdom. People tell me I'm like her—looks, attitude, sense of humor. I beam with pleasure. There's nothing I want more.

My dad and I are sitting in the waiting area outside the hospital room. Grandmom isn't doing well. She's had Alzheimer's Disease for three years now. Doctors can't help her. My dad can't help her. I can't help her. When we finally go in the room, my heart stops. I can't stop the tears from coming. I droop at the foot of the bed, stifling the massive sobs ripping through my body, gripping the rosary beads grandmom gave me. Never in my life have I prayed so much; my hands blister and bleed from rubbing my rosary beads. I am trying in vain to rub out her sickness. I know this is the last time I will see her alive. Her eyes are half shut from the painkillers and a respirator tube is forcing her to breathe. I lean close to her face and muster all the strength I have to whisper through hoarse sobs my goodbyes—goodbyes that I never imagined I would have to make.

She died November 2, 2003, All Soul's Day. I wrote and read her eulogy at the funeral. I just pray I did her memory justice by sharing my own rambling mess of the imprint grandmom left on my life. She was my twin, my soulmate. It's impossible to express her loss. It feels like falling over and over again, endlessly tumbling through a tunnel of dark sharp noises. Memories help to ease the ache in the empty void of my heart. I fill it with memories and commit every detail, vowing to always remember her. Still, I miss my evergreen tree, especially in the winter when the cold seeps in and I need a place of shelter.

I framed the picture and now it sits on my bookshelf above my desk. It's one of my favorites. I think of the house's transformation from 1983 until now. The deck, long in need of a new coat of paint, is chipped and the color dulled to a rusty-mud color. The evergreens tower high, proud and tall, bearing a flurry of foliage. The house sags, badly in need of repair. There is no car in the driveway. There is no grandmom. There is no "Grace going in."

Everyday I struggle with uncertainty. Some days it feels like I'm spinning in my grandpop's barber chair and dizziness swallows and devours me. I don't know what I want to do with the rest of my life, I hardly know where to begin. In a world where certainty and strategy abound, I scuff my feet and lag behind. I ache for the comfort of grandmom's stories, the safety of her hugs. I realize though, I'm not alone in my uncertainty, and the overwhelming sensation of life weighs on everyone. Most days I welcome the challenge uncertainty brings. I know at the end of bouts of dizziness I will take a deep breath and wade back in the creek. I know every time I touch the scar on my chin, every evergreen tree I pass, every time I look in the mirror—there she is, here I am, and I'm going to be fine.



Carnation & Light
Catherine Sacchi

A Peony Flower

Betty Zhai

One afternoon I walk past my neighbor's yard,
a group of children play heartedly.
A little girl caught my eyes:
Riding a small tricycle,
she chases a blond boy with laughter.
Her black hair waves to and fro swiftly
in an oriental way that I am so familiar with.
By her shy smile, I see a typical Chinese girl.

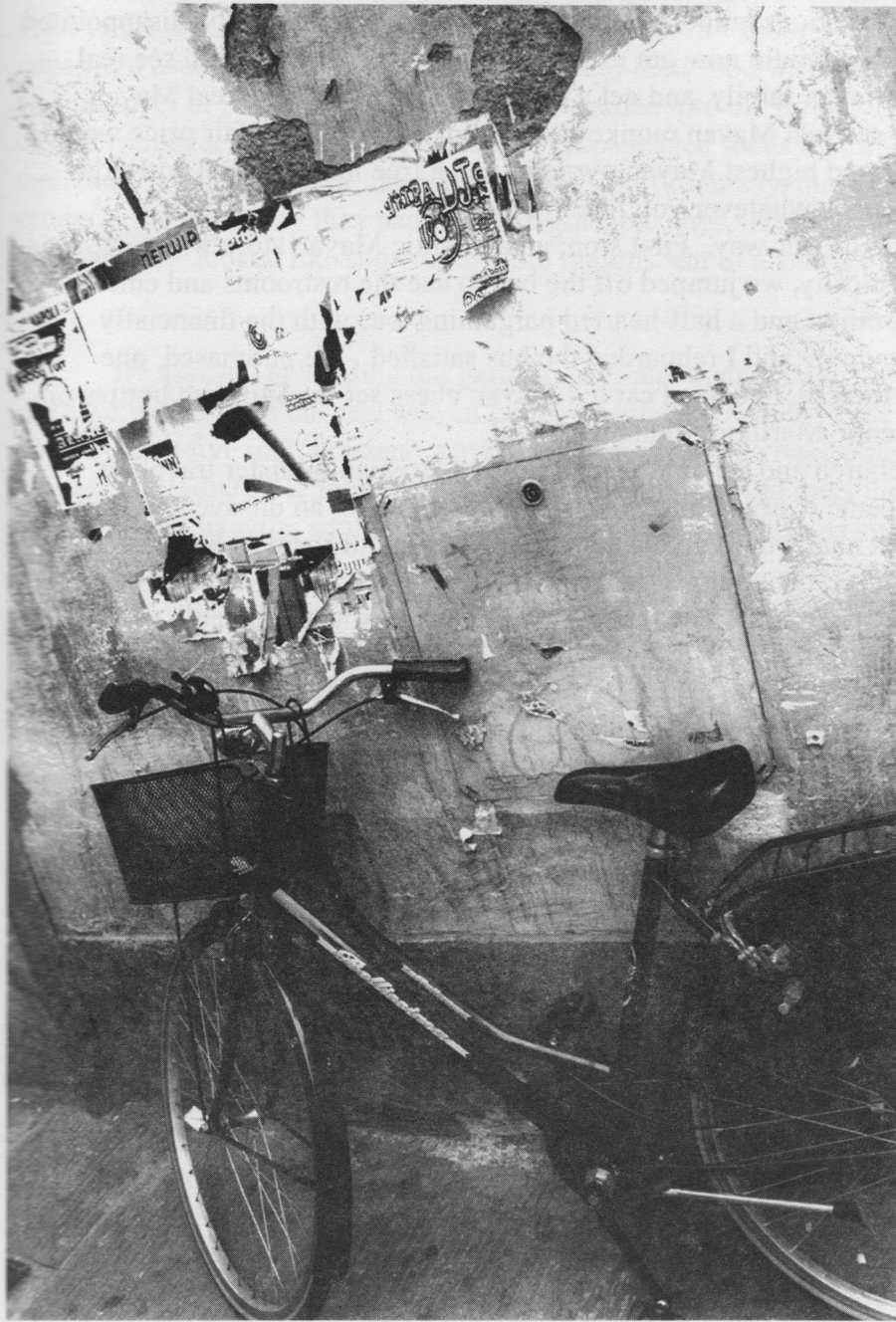
"Peony!" An elderly woman calls her,
the little Chinese girl hugs her grandma.
Two faces squeeze one to another,
so different but so intimately together.

The grandma tells me,
"Peony is three, when she was a baby
my daughter adopted her from China.
Although my daughter never married,
Peony, a Chinese orphan gives her a family."

Peony, a flower from China!
Like rose for America,
peony is the pride for China.
The Grandma holds Peony close,
Peony kisses her in the face.
As a bud of a foreign species
grafted on a local family tree,
a living witness of contrast and harmony.
They give each other a family,
I doubt that "blood is thicker than water."

Peony's here, because
a cruel infamous tradition still prevails in China.
Under one child policy,
some benighted parents would try
another chance for a son
by sacrificing a daughter.
The orphanages in China we call "girls' home"
where her native mother deserted her,
where her American mother found the treasure of her.

I am happy for Peony,
because she finds a loving home in America
and a great expectation for her future.
Peony will grow up an American girl,
although she is too young to ask,
"Why is my hair black?"
She may be sad for she will not find who has forsaken her,
but she will be happy with her adopted mother's family,
as a peony flower blossoms
in my neighborhood.



Bike In Florence

Terri Shadle

Modern-Day Mayans and the Taming of the Yucatan

Vito Grippi

During our honeymoon, my wife and I became completely fascinated, almost obsessed, with the thought of seeing Mayan ruins. Maybe it was the free alcohol talking, but suddenly taking a bus trip with fifty other tourists in the tropical Yucatan heat seemed like a good idea. I for one have always thought that a vacation is pointless if you're not going to learn something in the process. Besides, we needed a break from the hours of free food, Coronas by the pool and hazy days of Margaritas on the beach. A sober, educational trip would be very much appreciated.

The next morning we eagerly woke at 7 a.m., seeing the heralded breakfast buffet for the first time, to speak with our on-staff Apple Vacations guide. He assured us that we would not be disappointed. For only eighty American dollars each, we would now get to see the real Mexico. We would see real Mayan houses, spend time with a real Mayan family, and get a guided hiking tour of the real Mayan jungle with a real Mayan tour guide to see real Mayan monkeys. Not only that, but the fair price would also include the chance to climb the second highest Mayan pyramid and a free lunch served with free cervezitas, "Coronas, Tecates, qual queres...whatever you like." Sold.

We boarded the bus and we were on our way. First stop; an authentic Mayan store where we could buy authentic Mayan goods. Enthusiastically, we jumped off the bus to use the restrooms and embrace this foreign culture. After much deliberation and a half-hearted bargaining war with the financially deceiving Indian behind the counter, my wife and I reboarded the bus satisfied. We purchased, one authentic hand-woven Mayan blanket for \$20, one hand carved Mayan chess set for \$40, two bottles of soda totaling \$2, and one pack of authentic Marlboro lights for \$1.50.

Next stop, a Christian-Mayan church and school. Apparently, a Christian minister traveling through here about thirty years ago became overwhelmed with grief upon finding an unsaved civilization. So, he did what any concerned civilized man would do, he converted as many of them as he possibly could. Then, the school was set up to teach the younger generations how to get on in the real world. It would be a slow process, but eventually the uncivilized, uneducated poor souls would be able to live life closer to how "real" humans do.

* * *

With their newly saved souls and an open door to the civilized world, the Mayans could now be introduced to what any civilized culture needs to function properly, money. And in time, the gates were open to the hottest tourist attraction this side of the Yucatan. As more and more civilized tourists came through this once untainted area, they began to see how difficult the life of the Mayans could be. Imagine all of the amenities that we take for granted. These people had never seen anything like forks, microwaves, or even Tupperware. I mean Tupperware for Christ's sake, how did they survive?

* * *

After leaving the church, my wife and I still had a much romanticized view of what the Mayans we would be meeting would look like. No, we didn't expect to see barefoot, half-clothed natives wearing full head gear or anything, just something that remotely resembled the native culture we had only seen in text books before. I suppose it was our understanding of the word *authentic* that was misconstrued.

As the bus approached the village, our guide began describing the Mayan way of life. As he did this he also pointed out the window to some Mayan homes that sat along the road. The homes were exactly as I pictured they would be—small stick-built huts with thatched roofs. We learned that each of these homes was constructed using long sticks strategically placed about a half inch apart to allow for ventilation. The roofs were also strategically built on a slant to protect from treacherous tropical storms. Supposedly, these homes were able to withstand the effects of hurricanes. Some of them were also built of stone and, to our surprise; some of them had more extravagant, modern-looking stucco homes built in front of them. Our guide explained that some Mayans had recently built second, more modern homes; however the stick built homes were still used for most of their everyday duties like cooking and bathing.

As our bus came to a stop in front of one of these dwellings we were suddenly swarmed by a large group of children. Many of them ran toward us with smiles on their faces. Our guide explained that the children were always happy to see the bus because he came loaded with candy. There was only one catch. In order for the children to receive candy they would first have to fill plastic bags with garbage. This was the first time I noticed how much garbage littered the village. The road was covered with wrappers and cigarette butts; the areas surrounding the houses were also littered with plastic containers, cardboard boxes and even junked cars.

Along with Christianity and knowledge of civilized customs came trash—large quantities of it. Prior to the modern day invasion, Mayan consumption was completely biodegradable. Bowls and drinking cups were usually made of wood or clay. All of their food was either hunted or grown and anything that was left over or broken would simply be discarded into the forest. The Mayans were introduced to modern-day conveniences like utensils, glass, and prepackaged foods by travelers and tourists who traded with them on a regular basis for handmade goods. Unfortunately, they unknowingly began discarding the new products the same way they had the biodegradable ones. Hence, a village that was natural and pristine at one time now looked like something more reminiscent of a garbage dump.

* * *

We assisted in handing out garbage bags and then crossed the road to one of the small dwellings. Here we would meet our real Mayan family. Mulac greeted us at the door holding a baby. He was probably no more than five foot three and wore black denim pants, a Nike t-shirt and sneakers. Here he was, a true Mayan Indian. He invited us into his home so we could meet the rest of his family. Inside, we were introduced to his wife, an infant and another small child who was swinging in one of the four hammocks that hung across the room. This was where they slept. While we stood in these Mulac's home, I noticed other small children walking in and out of the room. My wife eventually counted eight different children who were either in the house or hanging around just outside. Then someone in the group asked our guide if the children all belonged to Mulac and his wife. "Yes," he answered laughingly, "the Mayans do not believe in the use of birth control, but I have an appointment set up with a doctor in Cancun for Mulac. He approached me a few weeks ago asking how he could go about getting a vasectomy." We left the house and moved on to the monkeys. Here we were introduced to another Mayan. He guided us through the jungle to find the 22 monkeys that roamed freely in the wild. They had names like Jorge, Luz, and Pedro.

After hiking through the jungle in search of monkeys with our Mayan guide who wore Wrangler jeans, flip flops, and a fluorescent pink hat that read RENO Nevada, we began the hike back to the bus. As we approached the bus, we saw an old man in the distance walking along the road. He was small and decrepit walking with a cane and slouched to one side. This ancient, bare-chested, longhaired Mayan was the medicine man, the oldest member of the family that made up this village; he was said to be over 100 years old. Behind us, the swarm of children ran toward us merrily holding full garbage bags. We collected the bags from the children and took photos with them as we handed them candy. My wife and I boarded the bus and sat down in our assigned seats. I looked out the window and couldn't help but imagine how these children would be living their lives 10 or 20 years from now. I wondered how much things were going to change for them, and if they would be able to adapt.

* * *

Somewhere between the beginning of civilization and man's need to destroy everything he touches, something happened to the relationship between humans and nature. At what point did nature become something to be exploited and controlled? I suppose that if we look back through history there have always been people trying to tame the wild beast. But, there are people who, at one time, lived as one with nature. These people respected and embraced it, realizing that they would have to adapt to it.

Instead we, the "civilized" humans, found ways to make nature adapt to us. We cut down trees to build houses and businesses. We fenced off fields to keep our property in and anyone or anything that didn't belong out. In our stubbornness to not embrace nature we've forced it to change to our benefit. However, people who live life truly in tune with nature still exist, but they are few and dwindling. These

people will eventually be erased because of our incessant need to feel fulfilled by imposing our beliefs and way of life on them. We cannot understand the life of purity and innocence that can only come through this closeness with nature, so the easiest and most profitable way to deal with it is to change the people who live it, forcing them to adapt to our way of life.

* * *

The last few passengers were now boarding the bus and I soon realized that perhaps we were just another aspect of nature that the Mayans were adapting to. For thousands of years these primitive people found new ways to learn how to survive from their surroundings. When the weather was good, they ate from the earth. When the weather was bad they learned to build shelters and hunt. And although what they are now learning from the civilized is harmful to them in many ways, the traditions they have held on to and their instinctive skills of survival keep their kind living. As the bus pulled away, I saw children's smiling faces eating candy, and throwing the wrappers on the ground.



Tower and the Birds
Terri Shadle

Witchy Fantasies

Gina DeLoretta

The moon pokes into roundness-
a stale, whole wafer, perfectly pale.
Bony cloud fingers scratch their way across an inky sky,
mischief thickens and stirs the air.
It is a sacred night to creatures of dark forces.

I perch under my pointed precipice,
garbed in black robes, magical trinkets,
purple ribbon laced in long, stringy, silver hair.
Black nails extend from gnarled knuckles
grasping an ancient magical broom.

300 years I've cackled and cawed.
My swamp lines this tiny town.
There I concoct my potions
and feast on foul beasts daring to trod through.
Tales are told of my wickedness, all true.

A boy stumbles stupidly close, unsuspecting,
carrying a plump succulent pumpkin, ripe for carving.
I bewitch him, retrieve my reward,
mount my broom and take flight,
Falter! And flail back to the clotted earth.

My mother scolds us.
Costumes ripped, make-up smeared,
our pumpkin mutilated and mangled
a pulpy, spicy, sticky, sweet mess.
At the end of the night, I am nothing more
than a girl with a shattered pumpkin.



Single Line Close Up
Dan Bellina

Only One
Joe Murphy

According to the Internet quiz Ben just subjected himself to out of utter and unproductive boredom, he will kill himself in four days by slashing his throat. And actually, it says it will take him seventy-two attempts until he gets it right and is finally down for the count. It's hard not to wonder whether that's seventy-two consecutive attempts or eighteen for the next four days or maybe it's seventy-one dispersed throughout three days and, since he's been so unsuccessful, he throws in another on the fourth day, just for the hell of it.

It was then three hours since Ben got the news, but still he sat there completely bored, staring out the window, wondering if maybe it's true, maybe someone knows a little more about him than even he himself does.

The next morning, there was a man standing on the corner of 52nd and Main Street in a major metropolis whispering, "I saw you," into the ears of the beautiful young women who passed him, passed him right by. What they didn't know was that he hadn't seen anything, not in a long time. The man had lost his sight in an explosion during the Vietnam War. His filthy, unshaved mouth was right there in the crook of the women's neck, his nose buried in their soft hair. He always knew the women from the men, he could just tell – the various and infinitely sweet perfumes. But Ben knows nothing about that – the man or the women.

While the man uttered "I saw you," again, Ben sat down at his computer, still wearing the clothes he wore the night before, the clothes that he slept in. The quiz asked him again, *Name*, and he typed Ben. It asked him then for his favorite color and he couldn't conjure the nerve to even consider changing his favorite color from green to blue. He pressed enter.

Realizing that he truly only had three days left to live, Ben braced himself for the worst, figuring that if he started now, he'd have to make three series of twenty-four whacks at his throat, but he couldn't bear the thought; he nearly made himself sick. So he settled on thirty-six tomorrow. Tomorrow, he would do it. Tomorrow, he would start to do himself in.

That day, as Ben walked down the sidewalk, noticing each crack and how they were all connected, all the same crack in this once perfect path, he counted to himself all the way until seventy-two, realizing only later that he had, in fact, stopped on that exact number subconsciously. The trees all seemed taller, brighter, and thicker. When Ben was younger, he thought he could wrap his arms all the way around the trunks of the trees, even the thickest, if he only tried. He could connect his hands and pull them from the ground, tossing them to the end of the world, disproving all those who told him it was impossible. That was before he found out he had roughly three days to live and he was still only in the eighth grade.

Miss Felton was Ben's teacher and on his last report card, she had written in playful, twenty-something cursive, "Ben is a good kid and a pleasure to have in class; I just wish he would talk every once and a while." That's always the way it goes; there's no such thing as that happy medium. It's too much or too little. If Ben had spoken his mind every time his mind had actually spoken to him, Miss Felton would have a different tune to sing, something like "Ben is a horror. He told me I wear too much make-up and that the only reason guys date me is because 'I put out.' He asked me if I was pregnant. I'm not." They would have been her exact words.

So that day, as the man on the corner of 52nd and Main Street said "I saw you," to a man who had just woken up next to someone whose name he just "couldn't recall," Ben walked all the way to school, noting *cumulus and stratus* to himself, about the clouds, and the melody a man whistled as he drove by. The man who shared a scent with so many beautiful women in the world was married, but he had taken off his ring the night before, the night Ben found out that he was going to die in another four, just so that he could remember what it was like to be that guy, reminisce, be the guy that girls talked with, the one without the ring on his finger, alone at the bar, be mysterious and unbridled. His wife - he being the love of her life - was worried sick and had called him and asked where he was. He told her, "Oh, dear, I'm sorry, didn't I tell you that I had to work late tonight? I'm sorry." He sounded sincere, whispering so that no one could overhear. So, as he walked past the whispering man, smelling like a woman, the man said, "I saw you."

The woman, at least as far as the veteran could tell, said, "*Get away from me.*" quickly and shoved the man from the side of his neck with reaffirming force.

Hearing that the voice was male, the blind Vietnam vet walked quickly to the sidewalk and waited until he heard the revving of an engine. When he heard it, he took one step off the sidewalk, killing himself instantly.

As the man in the tiny sports car that just killed a blind veteran skidded to a stop in the intersection of 52nd and Main, he was thinking, that was so cool.

Meanwhile, the man who still did not notice that he had the aroma of infidelity and lust surrounding him as he thought how he could possibly get out of this one, walked quickly up the stairs to his modest apartment's door. He thought he had the alibi as the door swung open before he could turn it himself. His beautiful wife stood there and asked, "Well?" Her face was red and she was breathing heavily.

"I'm sorry; I passed out at Barney's..."

She slammed the door and slouched against it, crying, with the lavender scent of a strange woman and the bittersweet smells of sexual afterglow and no shower crept beneath the door and up to her beautiful eyes, her rosy cheeks, nearly smothering her.

But Ben still knew nothing of either of these men, the one man's wife, the other's life, and, still, he knew nothing of women who smelled sweet like flowers. He sat there in the third column of seats in his classroom, three seats from the front, trying to lean forward just a little so that he could watch as Becky Randall scribbled something on a piece of torn notebook paper. Everyone was always passing notes, notes that Ben never got to see. He just wanted to know. And, come on, he had three days left. He didn't even know why he was in school; maybe he should have been in a hot air balloon or in Disney World holding hands with adults in plush character suits, pretending not to care about the heat. Maybe. It's too late for that though; Ben sat there behind Becky who wrote something about a party being tomorrow night, at her house.

"Excuse me," she said, turning to Ben, furrowing her brow.

Ben just sank back into his chair and watched as everyone got the note, one by one, except for him. Still, Ben just smiled and thought to himself, Seventy-two in one day, I can do it. Even Miss Felton got to read the note herself, though she did pick it up off the floor after it was kicked on down the row to the next person, but she didn't read it out loud. She merely frowned and threw it away.

The next day, Ben didn't go to school. Instead, he sat down in the baseball diamond at the park, on top of the pitcher's mound, reading. The sky made all the pages glow a bright white and when it got too much, Ben closed the book, knowing that tomorrow he would die, happy to know that everyone else his age was in school, happy to know that tonight he would be going to his first party and happier to know that he'd just lay there for the rest of the day until school was let out. He fell asleep, dreaming about a parade and all the balloons were of him, all the floats were shaped like his house and a man dressed up like him was standing there on the stoop of each paper home, waving like all the men and women in Florida always do in the commercials. The crowds chanted, "Ben is alive!" Becky stood there, furrowing her brow, on the side of the parade, but she even said, "Ben is alive! Ben is alive!"

He woke up when it began to rain; the pitcher's mound had quickly become like clay and stuck to his clothes and hair. He walked home in the light shower, saying, "Ben is alive! Ben is alive!" At that point of the day, he had about an hour before the party. Tomorrow, he would kill himself.

But that was tomorrow and just then, Becky's parents were standing uncomfortably in their kitchen, facing each other. Mrs. Randall said to her husband, Richard, "Please, try not to be an asshole, for once."

"What do you mean, Ellen? They're goddamn kids."

"That's exactly what I mean."

So, with that being said, Richard Randall answered the door gently and smiled as each tiny figure stumbled down to the basement where the party was being held. Becky had told them both that she "strongly wished for them not to intrude upon the happenings of the party." That meant to stay out of the basement because you'll embarrass me. Richard hid his slightly-irritated anger well behind his fake smile as they all piled down into the underground single room.

Ben waited there on the sidewalk outside of Becky's house and watched as the sky went from a slightly darkened blue to nearly pitch black. Then, he walked to the door and went inside with Mr. Randall giving him a quick slap on the back, telling him, "Go right on down."

The man who last spoke to the Vietnam veteran before he strolled into oncoming traffic sat alone in a hotel room and he began to cry.

The light in the basement was sparse and only patches of population were visible, but even still, it seemed as though there may have been five people there, including Becky, who was sitting on the couch alone, just staring into her cup and twirling a long piece of her blonde hair around her finger. Two other boys from Ben's class sat in chairs along the wall, making jokes among themselves and, generally, ignoring everyone else. One girl sat next to Becky, but she was asleep and another girl, who didn't go to his school, sat at the bottom of the stairs. Ben sat down.

"Hi," she said.

"Hi. You don't look like you want to be here."

"Well, you don't look like you should be here; I know my cousin and she wouldn't have invited you."

Nervously laughing, Ben replied, "No. You're right. I came here thinking I would tell everyone what I thought of them before time runs out."

"I'm Stephanie and I hate my cousin." She held out her hand and Ben shook it.

"I'm Ben."

Upstairs, Ellen and Richard Randall sat in their living room, not talking. Ellen was drinking a homemade Shirley Temple and Richard was flossing his teeth. He stopped and looked at his wife, mid-gulp, and said, "I'm not an asshole."

That night, Ben's last night of unpredicted living, or any, for that matter, Stephanie dialed a number on her bedroom phone and a young voice answered. Ben leaned up in his bed and cradled the phone on his shoulder, under his ear. He didn't tell her about his impending death, his boredom, but they talked about everything else until she fell asleep, still on the phone, with Ben staying up another hour, listening to her sleepy breath.

When he had gotten home from the party, he had made sure that he put the knife in the dresser drawer, thinking, *Seventy-two, tomorrow*. But just before he finally succumbed to sleep himself, Ben knew that he couldn't do it, shouldn't, but he did know where the knife was to be found if it was to be so. He'd go about his day without even touching it and if it still occurred, he'd be ready.

In his dresser drawer, the long thin blade of the kitchen knife didn't shine in the darkness of its hiding place. The handle was well worn with the grip of someone's hands. As Ben slept on his perfectly made bed, the smell of lilacs, lavender and vanilla crept from the clothes he still wore, filling his every pore and every crevice of his dream.

Someone was yelling, "Ben is alive! Ben is alive," but no one could find him.

With the parade on the horizon as the sun was setting, Stephanie led him to the pitcher's mound and, once they stood on the plate, she kissed him softly. When he looked at her again, she had her eyes closed and he pulled her ear very close to his mouth, his chin so that it fit just within the nook created by her shoulder and her neck. He said quietly to her, his eyes still closed, "Ben is alive."

She whispered into his ear, resting her chin on his shoulder, her eyes still closed, "I saw you."

Sweeping Through Autumn

Ben McKnight



Falling Leaves

Chris Veghte

Our lives are hidden in fake shades of green
as the chlorophyll of our life's breath
feeds our body.

Deep down our true selves exist
fiery reds, oranges and yellows
needing to show themselves
but too willed down by the need to survive

Photosynthesis,
the process by which we live in society
reflects only what society wants to see.
The same safety green that exists on all of our blank
faces.
The same personality shown by all.

Such monotony
Such homogeny

Different shapes and textures we possess
but our souls
spiritless greens that emulate each other
remain untrue to the dying days

When autumn catches up with us all
our true souls shine through
for a glimmer of a lifetime
the world sees us
the world sees the passion within

And for one quick shuttering moment
before the winds pull us down
to our earthen grave,
we are free to be who we're meant to be
we are free to be
Red, Yellow, Orange.

Snowy Day

Catherine Sacchi

I walk on ground the same color as the sky
Through a white world of old landmarks made new.
Wind stings unprotected skin above my scarf, below my sleeve.
Glassy ice topples off the branches onto the snow below.
The ice clicks together and I hear the clink of crystal in a toast.
What are the trees celebrating?

Ice sprinkles begin to land in my bark-colored hair.
I shake my head and more ice smacks the cement.
It cracks and suddenly, instead of a cheerful toast I hear knickknacks smashing
I'm conscious of my steps now.
They make the sound of Christmas ornaments under careless heels.
I feel vaguely guilty. Am I shattering the splinters of the inner dome of heaven?

Maybe I am an inverted astronaut?
The sky and the earth are the same blank white,
Waiting for a painter to spill blue above and spatter green below.
Until that happens, I can pretend that I'm meandering upside down with my feet in the air.
But a building abruptly appears and I see that the sidewalk didn't end.
And my feet are on the ground again, for sure.

My breath mists in front of me in a sigh, like white smoke from an invisible cigarette.
In front of the red brick, real smokers suck on fire sticks.
They exhale plumes of gray in muted morning mumbles
About the price of coffee and who went home with whom after drinking what last night.
I imagine I can see the shape of the words.
They dance away in a breeze, like comic book speech bubbles.

Smoke and breath mingle in the cold air
Curling together, licking the building and faces.
Smokers huddle under the overhang
Avoiding the low sky and the stuff dripping out of it
The way stray dogs and feral cats hug the side of a building in a storm.
They're not dry or warm, but there's comfort in thinking it could be worse.

I seek the shelter and heat the building offers
My eyes tear and nose runs. I wipe them both.
The ice melts in my hair and the moisture steams away.
It's almost like I never wandered through the winter never-wonder land
Where I couldn't tell up from down
Or poetry from reality.

Dead of Winter

Timothy T. Ward

Somewhere in North Dakota,
the wind chill is -56.
Never had the misfortune
of feeling such a death.

We stare out the window
with silence unbroken.
Eyes fixate the snowfall
and fire crackles memories.

We ruminates in past.
I sense the bitterness
thick as icicles
the wind chill -56.

A Christmas Walk

Ben Hemler

I should be at home;
Instead of here alone,
Worrying winter's worries,
Fretting the unknown.

The angry wind moans;
go home, go home.
An old tree creaks,
Softly to me it speaks:
You have not grown,
Please go home.

Sullenly I tread,
With a hanging head,
I go home, I go home,
As I came... I go alone.



White Flower
Amy Cunningham

Fountain
Terri Shadle



Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto
Lindsay Snyder

As I move my queen, I see Russian grandmaster Garry Kasparov's face sink. Checkmate. You could defeat Deep Junior, but not me, Gar! Who's the grandmaster now? Me, that's wh—

“You stupid piece of shit! Stop grinding!”

Uh oh, not again. She hates when I do that. Although she doesn't really know what's going on. She just thinks something is running in the background. No, stop! Not control-alt-delete! I'll stop, I promise!

After a moment of silence, my user exclaims, "Finally!" with an immense relief.

When my user first got me she was always so happy. She'd sit on the floor of her basement and play with me for hours. That was before the coma. It all went downhill after that. In the beginning, my first months of life, my mind was at its healthiest: I ran quickly, I didn't freeze, and I never turned blue. As time went on, I began to discover my abilities.

The grinding isn't my fault, not really. My brothers and I were finished prematurely so our father, HP, could release a new product line. Our release came "coincidentally" at the unveiling of ME, the new Windows system, which was also released prematurely. I, like the rest of my family, am a product of capitalism.

In his rush to release my brothers and me (all part of the Pavilion 700 series), my father unknowingly created a glitch in our systems that allows for us to daydream while our users operate their systems. For awhile I thought I had a strange gift that no one else had, but one day while investigating my annoying grinding noise, my user discovered that all of my brothers had the same ability. It made me happy to know that they had something to keep them company as well.

Around my three month birthday, before I was aware of my glitch, I started getting headaches. I couldn't process anything, I couldn't rest, all I could do was stare blankly back at my user. It was during this time that I lost the love of my user. I never meant to make her cry so much, it was just that these headaches came out of nowhere, and caused me to just freeze and lose all ability to do anything. Then the coma came...

I don't remember much before it, just that my user and I were playing spider solitaire and then I got one of those headaches. I guess I blued out. When I gained consciousness, it was the next day and I had somehow been returned to my factory settings. It was strange going back in time like that, seeing how I looked when I was brand new. Shortly after the coma, Dr. Norton helped me with the headaches.

The headaches stopped, only with this clarity came a new problem: daydreaming. This glitch was Gates-sent, a gift from computer-kind's creator himself, I was sure of it. I still thank him generously through daily prayer. Because the glitch creates a strange and unbelievable concept (a computer's ability to daydream), my user doesn't really know what's going on, however, she does know that something is running because of that darn thinking light on the front of my body. Good Gates, that light! She also hears the grinding. It's the grinding that she can't stand. It's the grinding that is really coming between us.

About a month ago, my user took me on a day trip to try and fix my glitch. She strapped me into a seat and drove me a short distance to a male user who assumed that my problem was ME. He gave me 2000, a few new programs, and some more thinking room. The next day, my user picked me up, and again strapped me into a seat, this time with a hopeful smile on her face. After this daytrip, I tried to keep my daydreaming to a minimum, or at least hold off until she went to work and left me to daydream for eight to ten glorious hours. Judging from my user's outburst, I am guessing that my daydreaming has been a little out of control today. There are about two more hours until she will go to bed and leave me to daydream all night long. I can make it a mere two hours without daydreaming. I will make it.

My user pulls up NTI CD-Maker while opening my D: and E: and drives. Okay, CD copying, I can do this. I recognize the CD that needs to be copied: Mogwai's Come On Die Young. There are twelve tracks. Must concentrate, must concentrate. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track 1. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track 2. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write....

Wow, my toolbar is this pretty light blue color! I can think so much faster all of a sudden. I feel like my head was just cleared of all this fog and I am running in perfect condition. And look, all of my programs are sorted in such an organized and intelligent manner. I can run PhotoShop without turning blue! This can only mean one thing: I have miraculously gotten XP. My user must have been fooling me with the whole CD copying business. Oh, Gates! The CD copying!

My E: drive shoots open. "Error? What the fuck?" I've upset my user by daydreaming. She seems patient though, and opens my drives for another try. This time I recognize Automatic for the People by REM. I believe I have copied this before for her. I know I can do it again. I just hope that I don't fall into some REMs myself

Ok, let's do this right this time. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track 1. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track 2. Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track 3. (Going strong!) Initialize. Read. Copy. Write Track....

I hear a slight murmur. Sounds like Japanese is being spoken, or chanted, rather. I'm in the center of this room, on a pedestal made of fine oak. There's a spotlight on me. Now I see where the murmur is coming from. There is a group of users that are slowly forming a circle around me. Some are carrying big white signs that say Domo in big black letters, other are bowing religiously in front of me. All of a sudden, the users all join together and start chanting, "Domo arigato, Mr. Roboto, Mata ah-oo hima de. Domo arigato, Mr. Roboto, Himitsu wo shiri tai." I don't understand Japanese, but these users seem to be very appreciative towards me for some reason.

Suddenly, a pale, skinny user steps apart from the crowd and directly addresses me with pleading hands, chanting, "Thank you very much, Mr. Roboto, for doing the jobs that nobody wants to. And thank you very much, Mr. Roboto, for helping me escape just when I needed to. Thank you, thank you, thank you, I want to thank you, please, thank you."

I've finally done it! I've become the perfect computer! Now everyone is showing their appreciation towards me, and my user will no longer curse at me and threaten to throw me out the window. I wonder where my user is, why is she not genuflecting in front of me? Soon the group of users will build me a neon altar and visit me weekly and I will be the pride of my family of 700s. My father will be so proud and be able to show his face after the huge mistake that was my brothers and I—

My E: drive shoots open. Error. "You asshole!" my user complains.

Thank Gates for my glitch.

Ranger
Dan Bellina



Closing Thoughts: A Philosophy Major

Evan Smith

It's been a long week.

a malicious week.

a diabolical week.

the sort of week I will think

about five months from now,

when the bills roll in

and the job offers do not.

The last seven days have seen me

author volumes

empty volumes

meaningless volumes

the specific and unique brand of

volume that blindly stumble

amongst the world's finest

and least understood thinkers,

pretending to have a clue.

And...it's finals time.

a time of hurt.

a time for coffee.

a time of intellectual abuse of the

most masochistic variety, as I

read...and re-read...trying to

make sense of the big important

thoughts normal people couldn't care

less about

And Kant...and Dewey...and Hegel

they continue weaving their cryptic

web around the undergraduate who

thinks too much (and cares too little)

to join the ranks of a productive society.

Notes from Contributing Authors

Vito Grippi: I plan to spend time with my wife and daughter, and continue exploring life through literature. Oh yeah, and some day I hope to find a way to live off of writing. In the meantime, I will be searching for the nutritional content of rejection slips and used printer paper.

Tiffany Hauck: "Early Morning," is in honor of my great grandmother, Jean Fabiano. My inspiration for writing comes from my family who has always supported my drive for creativity. I also want to thank Dr. Walters for pushing me to enter my poem in the *York Review* and having faith in my writing.

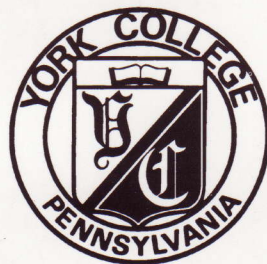
Jamie Neith is 21. Her favorites include her dogs and cat and fish, Roald Dahl, *Say Anything* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, John Lennon and Bjork and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. She hopes to graduate soon, then buy a farm in Georgia and grow peaches. Hi to Mom, Dad, Dave, Josh, Layla, Ange, Melissa and of course Binkerp and the rest of her family and friends!

L. Meghan Peirce: In "The Search for Fabulously Ever After," I decided to create a modern day gay Cinderella and include franchises as the setting for my fairy tale. My favorite part of the story is that in the end, the young boy doesn't need "prince charming" to be happy. He lives happily ever after just fine with his favorite shoes.

Elyse Reel: Elyse Reel is a junior with a secret passion for diagramming sentences, an open devotion to James J. Kilpatrick, and an occasional desire to be a children's author.

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick is a Speech Communications major with a bazillion minors, some of which actually apply to the *York Review*. She would like to thank Jen and Angela for the use of Bill and Dumper, and everyone on the staff for submitting to her will. Remember, we do it "just because we need to hear students all over going "BWAH!"

Betty Zhai: I am a Chinese, and came to the United States in 1988 with a student visa majored in engineering. Working for Dentsply in a chemistry lab, I love to read in my spare time. My long term American dream is to master English in writing as an educated native.



The York Review

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