



Spring 1997

The Lantern Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 1997

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Recommended Citation

Marinell, Jim; Nechita, Oana; Sabol, Kristen; McCoy, Tim; Maynard, Jim; Hamrick, Brian; Podgorski, Michael; Ewertz, Gudrun; Robinson, James Clarke; Mintzer, Jen; Price, Bonnie Lyons; Catalfano, Joe; Petersen, Lyndsay; DuBois, Jaime; Newkirk, Lauren G.; Demers, Jessica; Rakes, Jared; Levinthal, Jodi; Cerulli, Gino; and McCarthy, Dennis Cormac, "The Lantern Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 1997" (1997). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 149.
<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/149>

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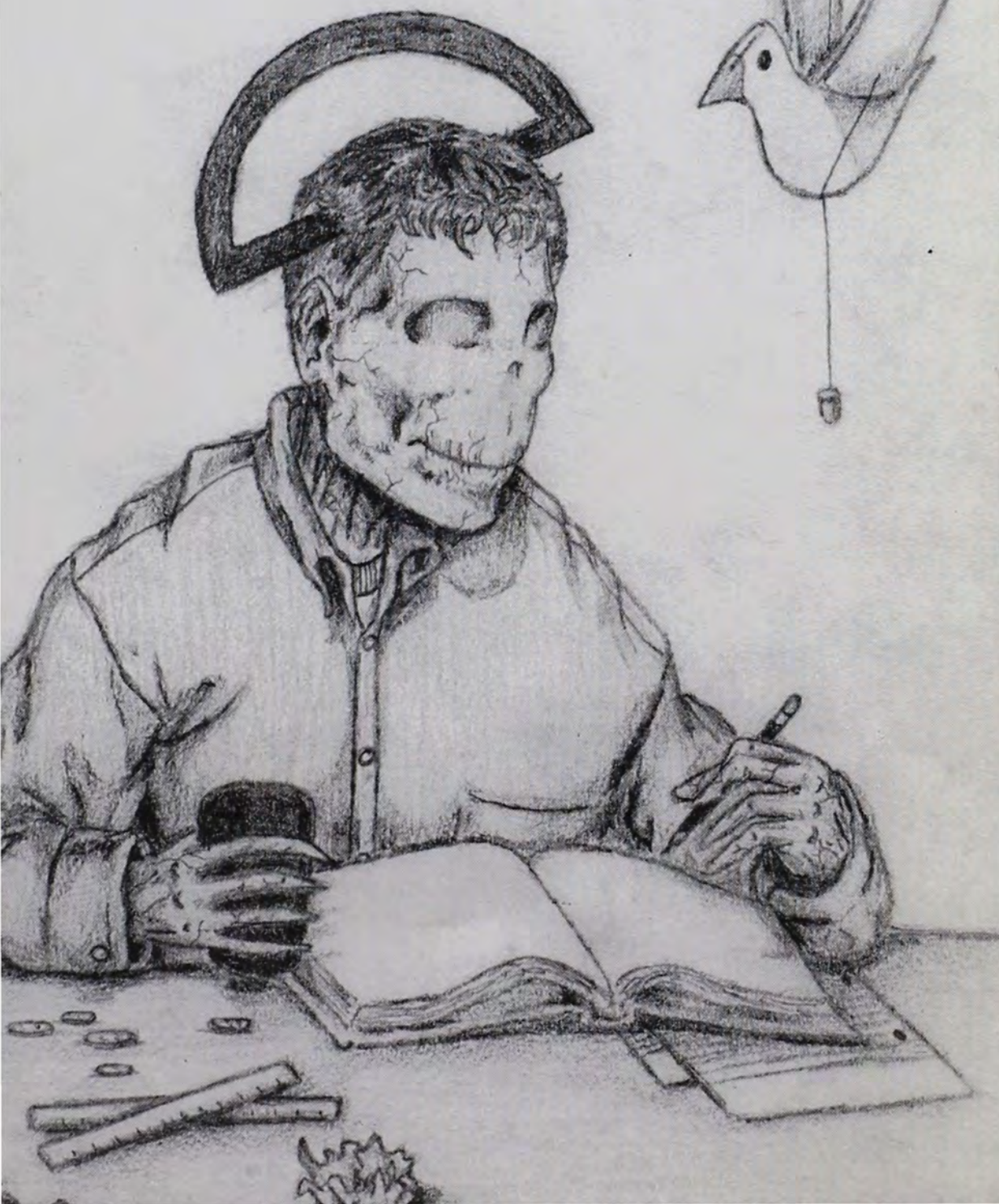
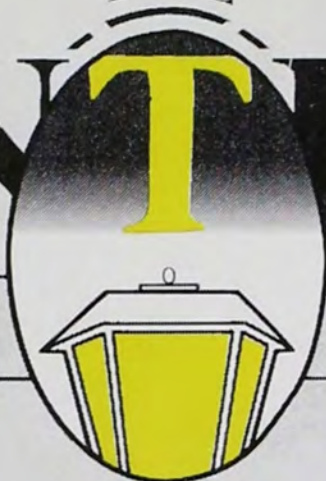
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THE
LANTERN

Vol. LXIV, No. 2

Spring/Summer 1997



THE LANTERN

The Ursinus College Literary Magazine

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Editor's Note:

The Lantern congratulates Jim Marinell on his prize-winning poem "Year's End, with Resolutions." Thank you to Louis A. De Catur for making the difficult decision as judge. Congratulations also to Paul Guidry for his winning cover illustration "Study Break."

Over the past four years, my work with *The Lantern* has been an important and meaningful part of my life. I have had the good fortune of reading many excellent poems, short stories, and essays, and of working with many gifted individuals. To all of you--the editors, the reading committees, the patron drive volunteers, the typists, the publicists, the proofreaders, the writers, the artists, the judges, and last but certainly not least, the readers--I say thank you, and enjoy.

--Jim Maynard

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Judge's Note:

One of the important functions of poetry is to serve as a format for human emotions. That is the reason so many poems deal with love, an all-consuming emotion which taxes the poet's and the reader's linguistic skills at various stages of life. When the language of the emotions is translated into poetry, we find that we can recognize a parallel emotional experience in our own lives. The poetry that touches awareness in our emotional existences marks itself as especially valuable and worthy of praise, because we are cognizant of the sense of difficulty, the insecure groping, that we experience when we try to deal with that emotion without the poet's help. The winning poem this year deals with an emotion more powerful than the love in love poems . . . an emotion which is not love, yet closely related to love. In many ways the emotional statement is more complicated than a declaration of love: it is a declaration of anger, perhaps hate, which may be the dark underside of love. The title of the winning poem is "Year's End, With Resolutions."

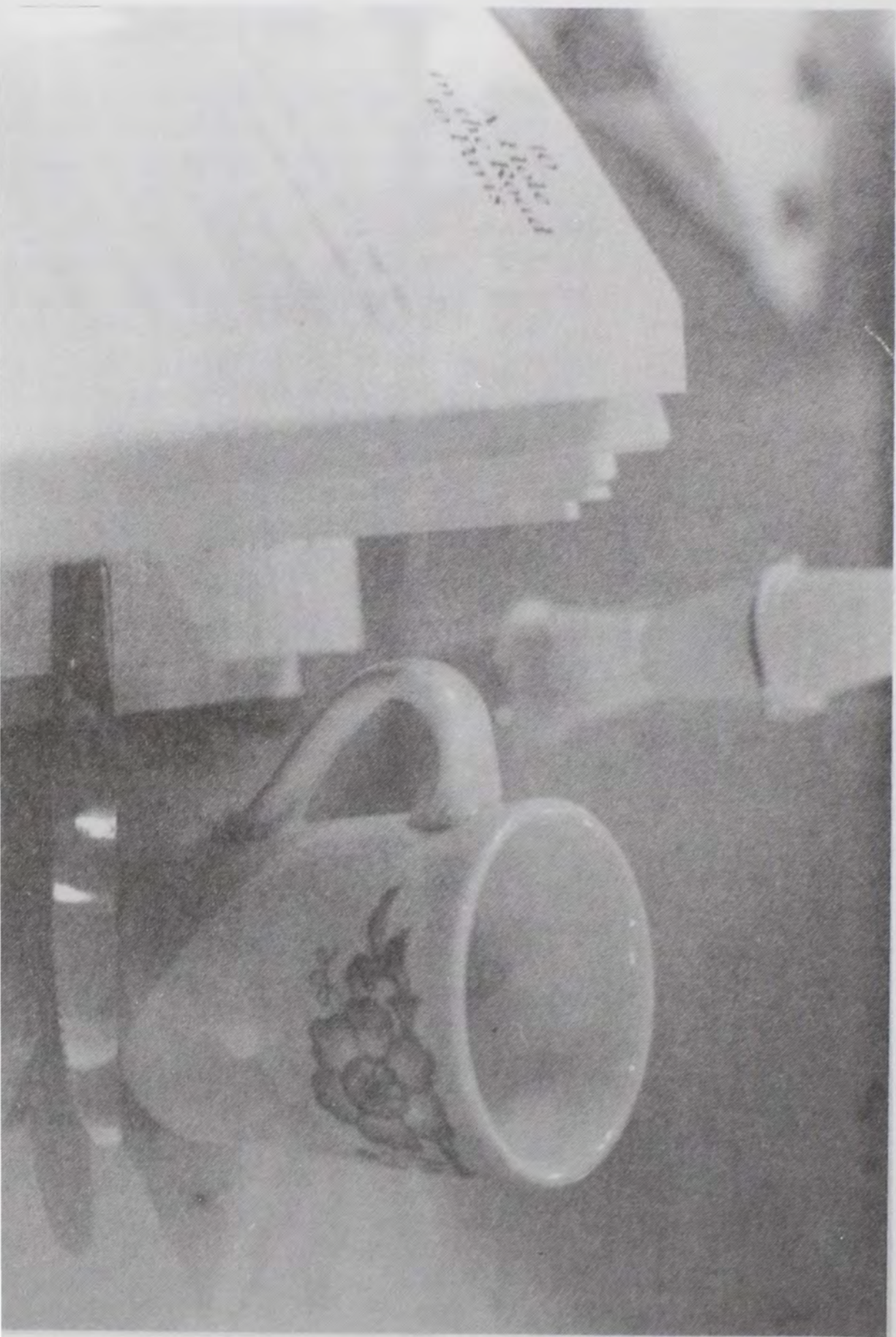
--Louis A. De Catur

Jim Marinell

Year's End, with Resolutions

Restless remembrances rise like the unburied dead.
 They stare balefully over the shoulders of invited guests,
 seeking a handful of dirt to put spent dreams to rest.
 Their reproach is just, if only for the time I've killed.
 Somewhere between the circling hors d'oeuvres
 (nightmares erupt from indigestion)
 and the Earth's orbital plunge to the new year,
 a wheel has slipped. I tell jokes
 to the wrong people, forget names,
 remember peccadilloes best forgot,
 and listen to someone's cousin declaim,
 "The writing game is pretty dull.
 You find the cosmic metaphor,
 And then you're done. That's all there is."
 Before I have to answer, a clock in the hall
 chimes the third quarter, eleven forty-five,
 and leaves a silence, a silence with the sour smell
 of a sickroom and a child with a fever
 who has missed the beat of two breaths--
 two whole lifetimes. Somewhere a shaft screams,
 heats up, and prepares to seize, tumbling
 mountain into valley and river into sea.
 A slow stream runs backwards.
 My unshakable companion stares at me.
 I offer him a deviled egg laced with jalapenos
 and pray to the river gods. Let him plead for water
 as many years as I am older. Let his hair fall out,
 but not until so many girls have spurned him,
 and editors his smugness in rejection slips have drowned.
 Out on the porch the darkness comforts me.
 The night draws off my fire as it's cooled the light of
 stars.
 Horns blare. A metal spoon clangs upon a pot.
 It must be twelve.
 --Another milestone on the road of time.
 --Another gravestone in the field of time.
 From Capella, Betelgeuse, Aldebaran, and the Gemini,

I'll learn serenity. I'll forgive him when the stars
no longer shine.



Lauren G. Newkirk

The Odor of Continuums

Pinned down

by love, for you the only natural action,
are you edged more keen

to prise the secrets of the vault?

--Adrienne Rich, from "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"

I sit down and start to write about my father's mother, an old woman who sits ten miles away in a small room like mine. As I stare at the screen, a faint yet distinctly unpleasant odor suddenly drifts up from the direction of the computer keyboard. I can't be sure -- it may be coming from my trash can. It is a stale, human odor of unwashed acrylic sweaters mixed with the acid breath of cat pee. Squirming around in my chair, I sense that there are also old coffee grounds caught up in the breeze from my window. I am attacked by memory-smell -- the irrepressible bouquet that in an instant and blinding slip of focus transports me back to a specific time or place. What disturbs me so much is knowing that this is the sad new smell of Nana in the 90's; she is no longer the fuchsia-lipsticked, Talbot's clad, tightly-coiffured Grand Mother of my youth.

Instead, she sat at my other grandparents' dining room table last Sunday at Thanksgiving, hair slightly askew, sawing her meat with the knife and daintily dipping her fork into pools of gravy like she always did but no longer especially concerned with closing her mouth while chewing. Eyes locked on the contents of her plate, she smacked softly and interspersed her familiar outbursts of gay laughter with an occasional, nearly inaudible burp followed by a much louder "Oh dear . . . excuse me."

Maybe that's part of getting old; you lose the ability to know how to work your jaws, to suck in the proper amount of ice water from your glass without the loud and sudden sucking in of air as well, or to keep your lips fastened in an appropriately sealed fashion while negotiating green beans. Any way we look at it, whether self-conscious and uncomfortable like me or silently guilty like Dad or conspicuously repulsed like my younger sister, sitting next to Nana at a meal isn't what it used

to be. Equally ashamed and fierce, my sister and I fight silent eye-wars with one another from across the room while jockeying for seating arrangements; whoever the loser turns out to be ends up seated next to soft, wet smacks and the new smell. Last week it was me, so I concentrated on inhaling the aroma of turkey and stuffing, fresh and green with parsley and dotted with the spark of pepper. The table set, my father leaned over, lighted the candles. I closed my eyes for a brief instant, and all I smelled was acrid match-strike, all I heard was the Ffffttt! of flame.

Dinner stretched on. My mother repeatedly asked, "Mom, please pass the celery? Mom . . . yes, the celery, thank you." She had dealt with Nana a lot in the past year, so she knew the right amounts of tolerance and mystically detached patience with which to approach such close contacts with someone so removed from the reality of her own decay. After we relocated Nana to a senior home in Boyertown from the rancher in suburban York, my mother washed her girdles and pantyhose, took her to the dentist or to the hairdresser or simply sat with her, watching. Mom saw the changes in Nana and accepted them as a mother accepts the antics and inconsistencies of her own child. To me, it seemed that Mom had somehow moved past the painful period of moving Nana out of her home, of realizing that the changes in her were real and irreversible in the same way that we unconsciously watch a season, or a day, quietly slip away from us. I sat at her elbow last week at Thanksgiving and wished desperately for the same kind of resolution. I waded through stuffing and turkey, waiting, as the candles sputtered from a sudden draft. I looked up and into the kitchen. Opening the stove, Mom took out a steaming pie of some sort, probably pumpkin, and went through the open storm door by the stove to the side porch, where she placed the pie on top of the grill to cool. The spiced steam hung in the air, and for a moment pushed away the other smell. Mom sat down as I slid a quivering blob of cranberry sauce on to Nana's plate for her.

"Mom, here. Just in case you need it during dinner." She handed Nana a tissue.

"Oh, yes. Yes, here it is, I certainly will need this. Yes." Nana peered at the tissue for an instant, as if trying to recognize it, and then automatically stuffed it into the left-

hand cuff of her blouse. I've seen my other grandmother do the same. A generational thing, I thought at the time. Moments later, while my sister and I watched her poke thoughtfully at a mound of mashed potato, Nana said, "Excuse me, I'll be right back. I just need . . . to get a tissue." Breathing hard, she took several tries to get up from her chair.

My mother sighed, said, "Now Mom, what's that you've got up your left sleeve?"

Silence. Nana rummaged around in the folds at her wrist.

"Oh, yes. Yes, here it is. Well, I'll be . . ." She hooted, blew her nose loudly to our prim embarrassment, and beamed delightedly at her daughter-in-law's helpfulness. She spent a few more agonizing moments buried in her tissue, and then tucked it back up her sleeve and picked up her water glass, lips trembling not from emotion but from exertion. My sister put down her fork, her appetite gone.

Dad looked pained and motioned to the half-bird, half-carcass in front of him. "Can I . . . get anyone some more? Who likes dark meat?"

* * *

I stop typing. My darkened room swirls like candle smoke, easing in and out of focus as I think of the nights over at Nana's old house when we were all much younger, of the heavy smell of bananas slowly ripening over in the hutch as I walked out of her green Formica kitchen and into the living room. I think of one particular day when I found my grandmother reading her *National Geographic* by the fireplace. Her rings gleamed in the late afternoon sun.

"Can I listen to the sea, Nana?"

"Why, of course, of course, honey, go right ahead. It's right over there." She pointed with a rose-lacquered fingernail, a veined hand with the same fingernail shape as my own.

I went over to the shelves along the hearth, beneath the uniform ticking of the mantel clock my father built. There, smug and white on its three little feet and glistening pink on the inside, lay a conch shell the size of my sister's head. I picked it up and sat very still, hearing the crash and hiss of

the infinite chambers as I imagined the smell of salt. Nana tilted her sculpted white head back as her laugh flew into my exposed ear.

"I'm so glad you girls have such good imaginations!"

I've always known Nana by her smells first. The smells of home, of *her* home, began with the pink, white, red and pale yellow blooms of her backyard rosegarden. Their smell excused the thorns, somehow, in my ten-year-old mind. It made meeting Japanese beetles, who once scared me with their waving hind legs warning of the sudden buzz straight up into the air, worth the risk of drawing close, of breathing deep. Inside, there was her achingly floral perfume in the bedroom along with freshly clean sheet and fabric softener scents. In the kitchen, the aroma of Honey Nut Cheerios in glazed green earthenware battled with coffee in the gurgling percolator. At the electric stove in her pink slippers, Nana scuffled seamlessly from pancake flipping to slicing cantaloupe, batting the breeze as we yawned, swinging our legs. There was the powdery, filmy soap smell of the brown-tiled bathroom with the frosted sliding glass shower door, the only fun incentive for taking baths there when I was small. And over in the tiny study, once my father's bedroom, the musty tropics of the avocado carpet and a coordinating green and yellow striped chair acted as the deodorized neutral zone, a shadowed, dim sanctum smelling faintly of old books and older cushions.

These are smells I want from Nana. Coughing and lung-rattling beside me at Thanksgiving, she smelled like old lady. Like dying crepe paper. Like time and memory muffled and stifling beneath layers upon layers of molding bedspreads.

* * *

Staring again at the flickering account of her life, recalling only cracked, yellow fingernails and misplaced laughter, I cringe and move to shut the computer off. My hand hangs in the pungent air as I contemplate the veins, the nails, the smooth palms just turning to deepening lines along the crease of my thumb. I want to turn off my nose so I can really love the new her. Could I love her as I loved the bathrobed and slippared Nana of the Formica kitchen and the huge piles

of yard leaves? The fallen leaves, at least, smelled of a good death. A clean death of vegetable matter and bark. Now, the dying remains of her coffee filters, the corner of the worn green sofa where her dispirited and decidedly cranky cat lives -- it all smells like this new smell, this new combination of urine and grounds and sloughing tissue that emanates from my laptop. And it is as though I am afraid of unpacking it all from my head, of throwing back all of the bedspreads one by one only to find nothing underneath but my own chattering skeleton. The skin of my emotions has been drawn back over my bones, so I bleed and bleed with the white showing. I cannot shake it, nor can I feel especially thankful that she was directly next to me at that Thanksgiving table and not presiding over her house in York where the Christmas cacti breathed in the sun over by the double windows. Where the vacuum hummed, sucking dirt.

* * *

I am tired. Tired of typing, tired of thinking about her in this way, and I don't know how to get past . . . but wait. Wait! I spring up from the chair and head to the phone.

"Mom?"

"Yes? Hi, hon! How are you?"

I take a deep breath. "Um. Um, Mom? What are you doing right now, today?"

"Well, just a little laundry, and I thought about running out to the store later on, why?"

"I'd like to visit Nana. You and I haven't gone up there in a while, at least together"

Within half an hour we are on the road, and in another half an hour, at the front doors of the low, brick retirement home. There are twenty people waiting inside to die under crocheted throws and hand-quilted bedspreads, I think to myself. Shivering in the November air, all I smell is approaching snow. Presently, a small, bent woman with sparkling eyes and beige orthopedic shoes shuffles up to the security door and lets us in. My mother smiles familiarly at her. I carry the new cardigan sweater Mom had bought earlier for Nana as I pass through the entrance vestibule, into the dim foyer, past mauve carpets and soft, deceiving oil paintings of

Jesus to the guest book where I write my mother's full name and my own, neatly. I pause for an instant to consider the "Relation" column, then bend to write "daughter-in-law" and then "granddaughter." The hesitation is involuntary; it is the forgetting of rosebeds and bananas, the echo of hissing waves and mornings of percolating coffee. It is remembering instead phone conversations when Nana forgot who her granddaughters were, or long weekend days spent vacuuming layers and layers of cat hair and potted plant soil from her cream carpet, where down the hall my parents snapped at one another over the strain of moving out their own memories.

I turn to face the long central hall, with its pale green walls and grey linoleum, and am bombarded by swirls of smell--weakened ammonia cleaner, candied yams and yesterday's unknown meat wafting from the direction of the kitchen at the far end. I smell new plastic, old antiseptic and burning hair as I begin to come back to myself and notice that there are extremely old people shuffling about. They do not seem to see me, but I stay a healthy distance from touching them as they slide their walkers forward with baby steps. Thank god Nana doesn't have to use one of those things, or a wheelchair, I think, keeping my eyes somewhere near my shoelaces.

"Oh, hello Mrs. Price, how *are* you?"

I have been studying my shoes long enough to have missed a thin, wispy woman turn the corner, holding onto the railing that ran the length of the one main hallway leading down to Nana's room. I look up to find Mom approach her slowly, as if approaching a scared animal, with a strange look in her eyes that I've never seen before. She touches the woman lightly on the back of her bright red sweater, and Mrs. Price stops her slow crawl, her face turning in degrees. It seems like minutes have passed before her eyes, a deep, watery violet, find my mother's own.

"Mrs. Price, how *are* you, my dear? Don't you look pretty in that red!"

My mother is cheerful, but her tone is infinitely gentle, calming. I stop, transfixed at the hidden sadness and pity rising up in her voice. Time, too, has stopped, and the only movement is the quivering of Mrs. Price's lower lip. It quivers and moves in response to my mother's soft questions. Suddenly, Mrs. Price stands very still, then sways slightly on the railing

and tries to say something. She looks imploringly at my mom, moves her lips again, and raises her wasted arm up, then down, hopeless and confused. I stare, feeling a push of tears rise up unexpectedly from behind my eyelashes as I watch my mom take the fuzzy red arm, tilting her face close to those fluttering lips, those watery, almost tearful violet eyes. Despite myself, I creep a few steps closer.

"I . . . I . . . cannot" Mrs. Price barely breathes the words. She stops, lips quivering, as we wait.

"What, what is it? What did you say, dear?" my mother asks, her face and body now mere inches from the old lady, her arm completely around the stooped shoulders. I cannot tell how old Mrs. Price is, because her skin looks paper-thin but smooth, with few wrinkles. She could be sixty or ninety-five.

"I . . . don't . . . know. Why can't I . . . it's gone. All gone" Her brow furrows for a second, then relaxes. She whispers, "Can you tell me . . . do I go here? I . . . don't . . .," and points to a brass nameplate on the nearest door. It is my grandmother's room. Mom takes her hand and strokes it gently as they look at each other. Neither one speaks, and slowly, Mrs. Price's gaze grows less direct, becomes hazy, and drops from my mother's face, as if she were falling softly asleep. Lips still moving over words she cannot find, she stares vacantly over Mom's shoulder, who realizes that the conversation is over once again. Suddenly the scared animal has become the sacred.

"I know, sweetheart, I know. You just can't say it, can you? I know"

Slowly, they both walk down the hall to her room. I have not moved since sliding closer a moment ago. Or was it an hour? Mom comes back, her face hard with tears, and offers me a tissue as I turn the knob of Nana's door. Smiling at one another, we push open the door.

* * *

In the past, I held my breath when entering that room, partly from seeing the piles and piles of magazines, dirty laundry, the unmade bed, the disquiet on her dresser and the anarchy in her bathroom. In the past, I also breathed out

slowly through my nose and in through my mouth as the overheated room blasted me with the decay of my grandmother. I was afraid to touch her, afraid that my smooth hands would crumble her own to shredded crepe paper. Now, her broad, friendly face breaks out into a smile and she hoots, "Well, LOOK . . . WHO . . . IT . . . IS!" The same greeting I've gotten for twenty years. She struggles to get out of her chair, but I reach her first.

"Here, Nana, take my arm." I help her up and hug her hard, feeling a familiar, wet kiss from the soft, quivering lips. When I open my eyes, pictures of me and my sister, of my entire family, smile at me by the brass reading lamp. A cooking show burbles on the television, where a chef lovingly garnishes a golden turkey. The wedding-ring quilted bedspread is pulled loosely over the sheets on the bed. But it's made.

"We decided to surprise you with a visit, Nana," I say. Breathing deep, I look out the window at newly falling snow. I hear her laugh at a word from my mother, and smell nothing but fresh coffee steaming in the bedside mug. We are all in a room where over on the tiny sill African violets warm in the sun, blooming against a vast expanse of white.

Oana Nechita

Addicted

I do it very often; every day, several times.

In my room, on the floor,
in the hot shower on a cold day,
on the hallway, after a class,
while brushing my hair
in front of the mirror.

I do it at 2 p. m. when I'm at work,
at midnight, alone with myself,
and sometimes when I awake,
in front of the cup of coffee.

I do it slowly--enjoying it,
heartedly--getting it all out,
shortly--when pressed by time,
but necessarily every day.

I do it in French sometimes,
like a passionate addict;
it happened in German once;
I dance when I do it in Spanish.

I do it in front of a flickering candle,
of an open book,
of a Renaissance painting,
in front of the face of the moon.

I do it because of my red scarf,
because of rain sometimes,
sometimes out of too much happiness,
or too little sleep.

I do it invariably every day;
every day I cry; I cry until
I fall asleep, holding myself.



Kristen Sabol

Muerte, Carlos*Carlos Peña:*

I remember you--
 like dusty soled moccasins
 shuffling along, Moroccan
 scuttling songs in your step,
 like the egg-shaped shakers
 clasped in crooked creases
 of khaki trampled chinos:
 Colombian.
¡hola pescada!

Carlos Peña:

I read you--
 like riddles
 and ridiculous word-play:
 "armadillo!" "arugula!"
 conjugated curiosities
 cut curt: "cuga!"
 a pantomime of palindromes:
 "Rats live on no evil star,
 madam."
 You list "Hello, Fish"
 in thirteen tongues,
 then complain--
 Carlos Senior curses
 in incomprehensible Spanish:
no habla ingles.

Carlos Peña:

I see you--
 like the snoopy-dance prance
 in purple tux,
 propped with a cane,
 for a rave--
 avoiding prep school proms;
 you giggle,

juggle grapefruit,
and pick a pastel bass:
pale as the sterile sheets
of his sedentary confinement:
(*El hombre solo*)

Carlos Peña:

I hear you--
like frantic piano notes
pounding into family portraits
hacked out over spread hands
under a panic-paced,
maniacal, marijuana-laced,
tooth-toned grin--
a titled impression--
"Swatting Flies."
And you hated him
in heated harmonics
with hope for his
"larga siesta."

Carlos Peña:

I speak you--
like watery wishes dubbed
in Pittsburghian slang--
steeled with your stele:
"Word up, G!--Let's
catch a square."
(watching thick smoke
light up some Coltrane,
drift off oiled
under Pat Metheny skies:
colored coffee)
Squirrel Hill.
"Back to the crib
to crash with the rays."
Buenas noches,

Carlos Peña.

I collect you--
in fossils and rocks,

folk tunes and flutes,
 Brautigan, maps,
 sheet music, jacks,
 zoo cards from National Geographic,
 vegetarian chili, marbles, magic,
 brontosaurus soaps
 that squish in your fist,
 Hendrix riffs and sneaky card tricks,
 letters and bills,
 paisley blankets for hills,
 handshakes, doubletakes,
 earthquakes, still lakes,
 stickers and stars
 and old matchbox cars,
 Matisse prints and masks,
 button-down shirts, hidden hip flasks,
 wooden spoons, miscellaneous keys,
 incense, dominoes and *yodel-layyhihees*
 clutter memory and--closets.
 Yet he sneaks in
 unnoticed unwanted
 uninvited to concerts,
 seated dark in back,
 smoking,

Carlos Peña,
 smoking.

I protect you--
 picking seeds
 from plastic
 bags of pot
 in orangely lit rooms
 over college desks
 with i.d. cards, licenses, tweezers
 intended for other purposes.
 you are ded-
 icated and the distance
 to daddy
 is longitudally
 erect. You

are not there,
(*El hombre solo*)
Carlos Peña.

Carlos,
I live you--
like single-sheeted beds
slim enough for one,
staring off through plaster
to adobe and double dotted
lines delineating Amazon rain,
begging for Brazil
or Argentina, Buenos Aires,
a Latin lover,
a link back
round complete
like your Latin
jaw.
¿a quien culpamos?
¿a quien--

Carlos Peña:
I sing you--
like three-man bands
with jugs, congas,
and washboards,
waking me under windows
with songs "just for you"
and a wink-wide eye
announcing lyrics:
"Stinky feet
taste real neat"
echoing out arching
over arboretums,
hillocks, kiosks, trees.
I sink into wooden planks
smothered by wool
in gazebos
letting light life
ricochet back.

resemble their *padres*.

¡Carlos!

I proclaim you--
like noses pressed
to cars passing glass,
perturbed by disproportionate
numbers of blacks
in a Poconos town,
(my coal mine shaft)
mentally marking
before I knew what
minority meant.

Conga! Cuga! Coffee!
Colombian!

I can not say
"My Father's Skin"
in Spanish.

Tim McCoy

Motions

I.

Marble sculptures of dancers
are out in the muddy flood waters.
Rain dulls their features.
Heat draws no sweat.
Destined positions of the Earth and Moon
relative to the Sun will create a force
to haul one down
and then the next.
Their limbs and skulls fracture as the result
of gravity's pull.

Weight and time are an exponential equation
of which the marble has felt the worst.
Once flesh moved gracefully
and blood brought warmth measured
by a metronome, which guided steps
and the reaching curl of an arm.
When the pulse skips the dancer's glide
stumbles.

When the cadence ends the dancer
freezes without an aim.
Glossy stone erupts outward from the center
of the chest, engulfing the immobile figure of solitude.

II.

Rain brings cool relief upon us.
Water on our tongues will secure us
as we slide between the inert mockeries
of movement and grace.
Together, we provide the pulse which will guide
us among those that remain standing
and those unseen beneath the wet, filthy shield.
For you, I gave and responded.

With two seams ripped I can't help but bleed
upon the floor on which we dance
where there is not even a puddle.
Instead there is a slight tint of rich red
beyond the natural laws of pulls and pushes
and positions of constellations and time.

Jessica Demers

My Father's Daughter

He sits in the middle of the aisle of heavy traffic in Video Ville, brown and worn moccasins molded to his swollen feet like a second skin. The blue corduroy O.P. shorts he wore everyday at the beach when I was younger have a comfortable waistband for his bloated stomach. His hair never changes, tousled and light brown. He hasn't worked in over two months, but his hands are still damaged from years of hard labor. He turns a video box over in his hands and I see the burns that cover his palms, palms sprayed with boiling water and leathered from years of making French cuisine at Marcel's Place. I look at him through the eyes that he gave me, an embarrassed teenager unable to accept her father. I do not know the person before me, although he is mine and I am his. This is only the beginning and we have no time.

I fidget with the car keys and flap the back of my flip-flop against my heel. Customers stare at us and I try to focus on those hands. The last visit I made to my father's house was a month ago. He talked about his doctor's appointment and how he was going to need chemotherapy. Even after five years of being in recovery, the previous twenty years of his life were taking their toll.

I'm looking down at my father, sitting Indian-style in this video store, because I want to be able to say that I know him, that I don't hold a grudge against him for his absence. I'm allowing him to replace the shadowy figure guiding me down the aisle at my lacy Cinderella wedding in my little girl dreams.

He looks up at me, holding out The Terminator, and says, "Did you ever see this? Wouldn't Luc like it?"

I think of how quick my little brother is to start a fight with me and I smile. "Yeah, I think he'll like it. Did you remember your card?"

He offers me one of his callused hands and I help him to his feet. "I don't need to worry about a card here. The guy behind the desk is a friend of Bill W."

We rent the video and walk outside together. I unlock the passenger side of my father's Chevy Spectrum and open the

door for him. He winces as he sits down and I walk to my door. He says, "So, how do you like your new car?"

I fumble to put the key in the ignition and say, "How much is it going to cost me?"

He crosses his arms over his chest, nods and smiles. "You don't have to worry about money."

I turn left out of the parking lot and head back to his house. He fiddles with the buttons on the radio until he finds the local '80's station. I listen to "We Didn't Start the Fire" blaring from the small Chevy speakers. He says, "Faster. Go faster." I try to drive fast, but we're on winding country roads and my permit is only a week old. He reaches to turn up the volume again and I'm happy that the video store is close to his house.

I pull into the driveway and wave to my mother as I get out of the car. It's odd to see her standing on the porch of my father's house next to his girlfriend, Diane. The two make a funny pair. An unlit cigarette dangles from Diane's mouth as she gives her pockets a pat down with plump hands. She discovers the lighter in the back pocket of her tight stone-washed jeans and my mother inches away from her. Diane lights her Salem Light and combs her dry, bleached hair with her free hand. She smokes and my mother fans herself with fragile hands. My mother is tiny next to Diane and her billowing cloud of smoke and hairspray.

My father steps out of the car and rests his arm around my shoulders. I help him up the three steps onto the porch and he nods to my mother and says, "Hi, Bet."

She acknowledges him with her usual questions. "How are you feeling, Marcel? Can I do anything for you?" He shuffles on into the house, ignoring her.

My father has put a lot of work into this house since he bought it last year. Before he was sick, he built front and back porches and covered the house with light gray vinyl siding. He managed to continue the renovations after they found the cancer because the welfare system offered out-of-work Americans free replacement of every window. My father has never been a man to wrestle with his pride.

The four of us walk through the simply furnished living room and pass the TV resting on a red milk crate and the only piece of furniture--a beige La-Z-Boy. I hear my brother

and Diane's two wild children playing in the pool as I lead my father to the back door. Outside, he reclines on a chaise lounge, pats his thighs, and says, "Sit down, honey."

I place one hand on each armrest and ease onto his lap, cringing until I rest lightly against his distended belly. He runs his fingers through my hair and says, "I've always been so hard on you." I shrug my shoulders and wait a few minutes before turning around. He's asleep and we sit like that together until the day is gone.

Nana, my mother's mom, arrived at our house yesterday. Whenever my mother needed Nana to come over and baby-sit when we were younger, some weather condition would keep her from making the drive. When she does visit, she has a good reason to risk two hours in a car with herself behind the wheel.

She sits on the love-seat in our living room rustling the pages of The Star Ledger. She looks up when the hardwood floor creaks under my feet and says, "Good morning, Colleen. Sleep well? Hmmm?" I nod in her direction and walk into the bathroom to take a shower. Through the running water, I hear her walking around the house. I worry about becoming my mother when I'm older, but I fear becoming my grandmother.

I wait until the hot water heater is empty and the water is frigid before I step out of the shower. I look at my face in the mirror and my reflection forces me to consider the past few days. I've talked to my father on the phone and every day he becomes more incoherent. My mother called his father and brother yesterday because she worries about him. She gave them an update on my father's condition and they left Quebec early this morning, so they should arrive around dinner time tonight.

In my room, I fill my backpack with a change of clothes in case I want to sleep at my father's house. Nana drives us over to his house and parks behind the hospice worker's car. I walk into the house and my father is sitting in his La-Z-Boy. He looks over when the door shuts and smiles at the three of us.

Nana is Irish, and like any good Irish woman in a time of sadness, she takes off for the kitchen. My brother and I sit by our father and talk about our summer vacation. He rests his

head against his recliner and closes his eyes while my brother talks about his new bike and fishing at the pond by our house.

"Papa, wanna come to the pond with me when you get better? It's really fun and there's a whole bunch of worms in Mom's garden."

"Sure, when I get better . . ."

My mother drops by after work and a few hours later Grandpere and Emile arrive. When they walk through the front door, my father pushes himself off the La-Z-Boy and slowly walks over to his father and brother. He gives them each a hug and starts to cry. They lead him back to his seat and take chairs from the dining room to sit on either side of the La-Z-Boy. Grandpere is eighty-five and in extremely good health. He is fluent in English, but because Emile has trouble with the language, they speak to one another in French.

I sit at the dining room table watching them and enjoy their conversation. The two brothers joke that their father is an old man, and Grandpere teases my father that he is the one that looks like an old man. The three of them laugh and my father makes fun of his aches and pains. I look at Grandpere and wonder what he sees. He is able to laugh, but he is going to outlive his son.

After dinner, my mother, brother and Nana leave for home and I stay behind. I help Grandpere and Emile carry their luggage inside and into the spare room. They've had a long day and are ready to sleep. My father decides to sleep on the recliner. I pull cushions from his bedroom closet and lay them down on the floor next to his chair. The house is quiet except for my father's light snoring.

I wake up to my father kneeling in front of me, tapping me on the shoulder. "Colleen. Hey, Colleen wake up." I sit up and wonder what time it is. "Colleen, you have to do me a favor. You have to help me get into the attic."

I'm confused. "The attic? What do you want to do in the attic?"

He waves away my question and tugs at my arm. "No questions. No questions. Just come on." He reaches for my hand and helps me stand. I follow him into the den and he points at the ceiling. "You have to pull this down for me." I look up and see a string hanging down from a piece of the ceiling hiding

the ladder to the attic above it. I tug on the string and pull the ladder down. When it touches the floor, my father steps on the first rung. He slowly lifts one bloated foot to the next rung and continues to climb. He stops when his knees get to the top and calls down, "Do you remember where I put my hammer?"

"No, Papa. What do you need to do in the attic?"

He climbs down the ladder and says, "I need to finish the house. Go up there for me and find my hammer. I can't climb all the way up."

I push my hair behind my ears and say, "OK, but I don't think it's up there." I climb up the ladder and look around the attic. Just a lot of insulation between beams. There's an empty cardboard box and a suitcase on my right.

"You have to get in the attic and walk around."

"Papa, I don't want to climb around the attic in the middle of the night. I don't see the hammer."

"Colleen, it's up there." I look down at him from my perch and he massages his forehead.

"Oh, never mind. Just never mind."

I climb down the ladder and push it back under the square of ceiling. My father scratches his head and says, "We'll find it later." I convince him to sit down again in the recliner and cover him with a blanket. I get back under the covers on my floor cushions and rest my head on my pillow.

"Do you know what I miss?"

I roll onto my stomach and prop my chin in my hands. "What?"

"I miss the blue bedroom. I want to sleep there. Colleen, will you drive me home and let me sleep in the blue bedroom?"

When my mother and father were still married, their bedroom was downstairs. The walls and carpet were light blue. My mother and I had fun painting that room. After she divorced my father, she moved her bedroom upstairs. "Papa, the blue bedroom isn't there anymore. Don't you remember? Mom changed everything."

He sits up and throws the blanket on the floor. "Colleen, it's still there. Get the keys." He shuffles across the floor to the front door, opens it and steps outside.

I grab the keys and follow him. "Papa, what are you doing? I don't understand."

He gets into the passenger side and I walk over to his side. His door is open and he's rifling through the glove compartment. He mumbles about needing the spare key and whines, "Colleen, give me the keys. I'll drive myself."

I put the keys in my pocket and walk back into the house. I sit down at the dining room table and wait for him to come inside. He's safe in the car because he can't drive with his bloated legs and feet. At least not how he drove when I was younger. He would manage the steering wheel with his knees while rolling a cigarette and fighting with my mother about the speed limit. She spoke in French. He spoke in English. Each of them was practicing the other's language but they never had a conversation in the same one.

He walks in and sits on his chair. "Can you make me a cup of tea?" I nod and walk into the kitchen to boil the water.

He drinks the tea and finally falls asleep.

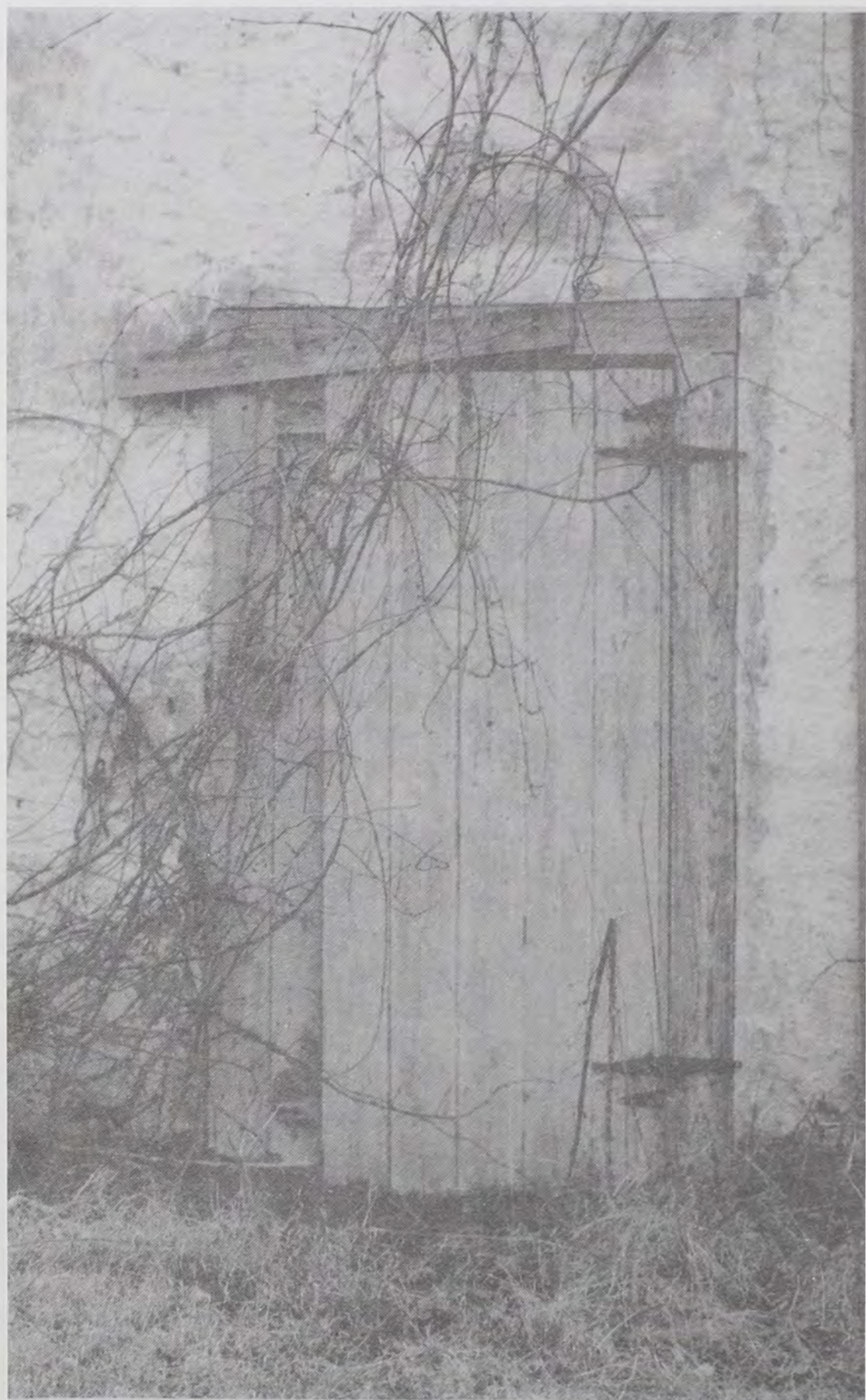
The next morning I wake up to my mother's voice. "Wake up, Sweetie. You have to say goodbye to him." I look at the recliner and he's still there. Then I hear it. The same sound my grandfather made before he died. They call it the "death rattle." He rocks back and forth in his chair, mumbling about a gate and needing the key.

Diane, with the same bleached blond hair and stone-washed jeans, wails, "Marcel, you have the key to my heart. That's all you need, baby." My father doesn't see her and continues rocking. I walk out of the room and wait for Diane's wailing when he's gone. The hospice worker walks over to my mother and I make out pieces of their whispering: ". . . shame . . . clean five years . . . damage done . . . so young . . . the two children . . ."

The woman hugs my mother, promising to see us at the funeral, and leaves. We sit around the dining room table. My mother, Grandpere, and Emile discuss the details of the funeral and plan to get rid of Diane. Grandpere speaks of the money he sent my father last week and his suspicions about her role in its disappearance. Diane walks out of my father's bedroom and sits next to my mother at the table. My mother suggests that my brother and I go in to my father's room and pick a couple of things to bring home with us today.

We walk into his bedroom and I pick out a couple of shirts and his wedding band. We search his drawers and find

the coin collection from Grandpere. Luc wants it and I don't object. I look through his night table and open the top drawer carefully. The AA coins, years two through five, and the first year didn't count because he messed up. They meant so much to him. They rattle when I slam the door.



Jim Maynard

At the Wyeth Gallery

A memory:

my mother and I, an art gallery.

A slow afternoon gives us the place
to ourselves and we enjoy it, walking
from room to room, picture to picture.

Even though we are by ourselves
we still feel the need to whisper.

We don't talk about how I will be
leaving again for college in a week,
or how, after rearranging my bedroom
for the fourth year in a row,
she will soon just avoid the empty reminder.
Instead we talk about art.

These paintings are memories for us,
memories that hang in our galleries within:
of days when the family came here
at least once a year for the holiday exhibit,
of how we as children were so fascinated
by model trains and Christmas trees,
when art was a language we felt but couldn't speak.
She and I then sit together on a wooden bench
before glass panels that overlook the muddy river,
the sky a watercolor wash of grey, winter grass
like scattered yellow brushstrokes on the banks--
is that our reflection in the window?

The sweeping motion of the water
makes it seem as if we are gliding by
as the world outside stands still.

I think of this as she and I continue walking,
she observing the paintings, I observing her.

We are both growing older,
and poems, too, are memories.

As if she can read my thoughts, she pauses
before a painting that we have seen every year:

You know, I've always liked this one.

Why don't you write a poem about it?

But my mother doesn't realize

that I have come here for different reasons,
that every moment contains a poem,
and that she and I are already
in the midst of a better one.

Brian Hamrick

Between Contexts

Perhaps is a one-way street with the sign pointing up
Perhaps is a kind dismissal
Perhaps is a blinking yellow construction light
Perhaps is a good-bye kiss on the cheek
Perhaps is a movie preview
Perhaps is the child-safety switch on a lighter
Perhaps is tap water
Perhaps is an out-of-tune piano
Perhaps is a resin hit
Perhaps is a long, dark, lonely corridor with no doors except
 one, barely in sight, lit by an old, dusty lightbulb
Perhaps is never enough
Perhaps is a friend's toothbrush
Perhaps is a faded sweater in late April
Perhaps is a candle with a buried wick
Perhaps is a pair of sunglasses
Perhaps is three-day-old coffee
Perhaps is fumbling for the right key
Perhaps is pent up in a room smelling of stale cigarettes and
 empty beer-bottles re-reading a bruised copy of Lolita
 with the cover ripped off
Perhaps is the last time you make love to someone
Perhaps is an empty vase
Perhaps is the tarnished silver
Perhaps is the last chocolate
Perhaps is an old copy of Cosmopolitan
Perhaps is a faded photograph
Perhaps is a telephone number scratched on a bar napkin
Perhaps is an empty bottle of cologne
Perhaps is a scab
Perhaps is the last flight for Las Vegas
Perhaps is the last cigarette
Perhaps is a single tear easing down your cheek as you stand in
 the rain by the grey gravestone of a friend you never
 knew
Perhaps is the easiest answer to give
Perhaps is too much

Michael Podgorski

I'm Allowed (and More Nonsense)

I love capitalism and I love having become and being a good consumer.

Big and better and bigger and best and Big Brother and biggest and even more better and more bigger,

And the space shuttle exploded and I screamed, "hoorah,"

And Gatling guns killed people in a country,

And Big Foot smashed cars I used to sell,

And Hulk Hogan was such a good wrestler, he went into acting,

And 800 dollars in phone calls to my psychiatrist, Fred, and my psychologist, Betty, and lots and lots of drugs and some of them habit-forming and the counselors who were paid to restrain me in the clinic who I dated after I was re-released because they understood me, and the sex was good and then more drugs, legal and illegal, natural and synthetic, home-grown and store-bought,

And whether I'm hungry or thirsty or neither, I can go to McDonald's or Burger King or an A.A. or N.A. meeting or White Castle or Wendy's or Taco Bell but they don't sell beer at these places, but that's okay because I can go to Beer World and go through the brew thru, and I can go back to those places, and I can order what I want and I don't have to produce anything,

And they give me mayonnaise in little packets and napkins and ketchup and sporks and knives and salt and pepper and honey mustard sauce and barbecue sauce and I can cancel my order at any time because I am free and I don't understand why the euphoria hasn't struck me dead,

And I can drive there in a Ford or a Chevy or a Dodge or a Toyota or a Nissan or a Mercedes or an Accura or a pickup or a sedan or a two door or a hatchback or a sports coupe,

And I can buy one or lease one or rent one or steal one or borrow one and drive back and forth on my asphalt driveway all day long and the police will just eat doughnuts,

And I am allowed to have 41 beepers and I can have them vibrate all over my body as long as I keep beeping myself

from cellular phones or cordless phones or touch tone phones or rotary phones or pay phones,

And they let me buy CD players that play 500 discs so I can listen to industrial or house or jazz or blues or gothic or country or pop or classical or rockabilly or western or rastafarian or techno or dance or classic or alternative or modern or hard rock or heavy metal or latin or reggae and I know there is at least one more,

And I have lots of these CD players so I can listen to one thing at a time or Front 242 and Thelonus Monk and Alan Jackson and Abba and Metallica and En Vogue and all at once and it makes me want to explode but I don't have to if I don't want to,

And that guy with all the wire got me 500 hundred channels so I won't miss Zorak or Bob Barker or Bob Dole or Riker or QVC or MTV or the 10:00 news,

And I can wear nine pairs of socks at once, red and blue and black and yellow and pink and gray and white and off white and shark skin,

And I can smoke 750 cigarettes, lights, mediums, kings, menthols, 100's or otherwise, and nobody will stop me but somebody will yell, "somebody call up Guinness,"

And I can put toothpaste in my hair and smear deodorant all over my body and brush my teeth with gel and eat cherry flavored chapstick and sniff glue and magic markers, blue, green, or red,

And I can be me or you or somebody or nobody or my father's son or my mama's boy or all I can be or a clown or a goodfella,

And I can believe in God or Satan or Beavis and Butthead or me or you or nothing or everything and anything because this is America,

And we are allowed to do what we want because we are free,

And we are the best and we have the biggest breasts and the biggest dicks and the biggest guns and the biggest buildings and the biggest houses with big green lawns with big dogs with big teeth who take big craps on your front lawn owned by big people who also take big craps,

And the world will soon be America because our culture will infect you like a disease or a drug that you will need but

that hasn't been classified as a harmful addiction yet but don't worry about it.

This one's on the house, my friend.

Gudrun Ewertz

Wall and Piece

*Berlin, in the months after
November 9, 1989*

tap tap tap
the woodpeckers
are tapping at the wall

take
the taste of the tears

knock knock knock
the woodpeckers
give it another knock

gentle gaps in the
graffiti-graced wall

how many?
how many?

hammer hammer
again and again
the woodpeckers
are knocking down the wall

I, too, want my piece.

Jared Rakes

The Meaning of Life

S'like, what am I going to do, write a story about how I was sleeping with some guy and I started to question the meaning of my life? I mean, can you say "trite?"

Not that it matters anyway. Nobody would *get* it. I mean, how warped is it that I know what "ersatz" means but I can't say exactly what I feel to, like, my fellow humans? I want to connect with the world--yes, that's what I *really* want.

"Yeah. Hate that misprision. Could you shift to your left a little?"

Okay. So maybe it's my fault. Maybe all of ours. We watch everyone else driving in minivans, we listen to commercials telling us to live the perfect housewife life; next thing you know you're on a deterministic course toward definite indedefinablilty. But at least it's perfect there, wherever there isn't.

Not there, dear.

"Oh. Okay. How about this?"

Sure. I could try to forget about how perfect my life would be without static cling. I could try not to think about the commercials where the mother and daughter walk down the (unrealistically empty) beach and talk about *clean*, but who even identifies anymore with pure, raw thought? Probably nobody. And who would read what I wrote if it didn't have simulacra-appeal or cyber-shit in it? Of course, if I were desperate, I could throw in some gratuitous sex to keep their interest . . .

"I'm going to come now."

Yes! Yes! That's it! God, the things I've thought about while staring at that ceiling. I could write a book just about these ceiling-thoughts. I could connect with people on a deep internal level. I could write about striving to overcome the inherent subjectivity of interpersonal communication. Or I could write about *this* and hope it's apparent. People would read my ceiling-thoughts and realize that they're sociocultural participants, like me, that what *they* do matters. I could speak volumes! I could be the anti-Prufrock of

the '90's! Oh, yes!

"Oh, yes!"

That would be really hard, though. And I bet someone else has already done it. Story of my life. It's finished with me before I've even started. Right, Bob? . . . Bob?

"Zzz."

Dennis Cormac McCarthy

The Timekeeper's Workspace

1.1 Countdown

The Q-key sticks. A rigmarole of q's marches eastward through the doldrums, to this obsolete model's preset right margin. Pixel timepieces brand the dark face with ambered likenesses.

My dog-eared companion, an abridged dictionary lacking etymons, fetches meaning without any intention, consistently opening to the heading *perpendicular I perspective*. It has no meaning.

We three are machinery with schemes of exploitation. Inveterate, I feed one to the other, and in the daily outpour of gobbledygook, my sole aim is best described as downright.

The wall clock leers. The hand-me-downs, never belonging, define themselves no longer, sticking but discerning nothing, my poor aphasiac kindred bastards. The second hand overturns the day.

1.2 Visage

The last cigarette sizzles stale in a coffee mug still warm with filter kindling buried in ash. No one remains to witness the brief relapse, to hear the prayer whispered, *save me*.

In the November air, the conditioner hangs from the window sill like Christ and will not let go, murmuring opposite me incomprehensible all the while, *nihil . . . nihil*. It has no meaning.

We three are relics outliving our usefulness. Attending to time, I breathe in meter, and in the daily labor to exhale with deliberation still no poetry gets written this time of year.

The windowpane mimics my work space with obvious flaws:

the wall clock fibs that twice as much time has passed; the monitor makes vague proclamations; that sloth stares back at me; Daddy.

Intermission: Perpendicular Perspective

Circumscribed, the cubicle could rotate on the curvature of my spine. I would claim a swivel desk chair for my perch, a kind of interior decorator with wall-hangings for a merry-go-round,

and hold my arms outstretched, a propeller to slice through atmosphere, gaining ground as blades reach to embrace a hub with hidebound skin, and consider that I could abandon speaking

in the Name of the Father. My right hand is an automaton to caress my forehead with fingertips brought together to slip through the intellect, wrinkling my brain instead of my brow.

Whose holidays approach from the east to reinstate outmoded identities, reminding me of the glutton I have come to know through the fat cheeks of my tears and through my own abuses?

and of the Son. The five-pointed lodestar descends to my sternum, probing beyond the liver. What child is this that creeps through the cemetery on hands and knees to recreate my point of view,

bypassing the other tombstones standing shelf-segregated on some distant hillside, plotting to steal the blanket spread on Daddy's grave for Christmas and no more drunken episodes?

and of the Holy Ghost. The lateral incision crosses my shoulder blades, to know the fear of spillage and of spaces between. My tongue, slippery like inside, flaps itself out of the cage,

to confirm that my thoughts descend when I am the bow, that easterly is a relation without determined direction, that this is all that I can know, that all I can know means nothing.

2.1 Deus ex machina

The wall clock has reversed its lie. I move through the wake of conditioned air to draw the translucent shade, to forget him, and the murmur culminates in an indecisive gurgling chill.

It does not matter that it could wake the dead. Sound evacuates the room, plunging through a now empty window frame in which the bleak visage grows brighter, setting a cryptic precedent.

I require a radical belief. Agoraphobic, I could crash through the atmosphere, no longer straining to heed the slurs of sobriety, never again having to be a witness to nothing.

I plainly hear my lungs collapse and the telephone not ringing. The door latch struggles to escape its notch, incited by a blast of wind. Outside, missile rigs storm through morning traffic.

2.2 Kindred

Hotclock wears an overcoat and streaks through the sky, settling above my apartment complex. Scanning directly beyond the thoroughfare toward the eastern horizon, I make out a steeple.

Gray-haired men and their wives, comforted not by children, but by religion, storm out of the church doors, within which they have congregated for meaningful deaths in a holy war.

The Q-key comes unstuck, deus ex machina. Inveterate, I will adjust the preset right margin before manufacturing reproductions jerrybuilt with keystrokes and ticktocks.

Once more I engage my reflection. Someday he might set fire to my papers, schedules, journals, and throw himself out of burning building to join the others who live in outer space.

James Clarke Robinson

The Process

Slacker.

That's me. I've been called worse.

Time for the caffeine attack.

Not from coffee, however.

That's for those that can't hang.

Good ole' fashion tea with

A thick

Unadulterated

Chunk of ginger

Melting on the bottom of

The hot pot.

That's what a true

Slacker drinks.

As I sip

The ginger snaps at my throat

And the fumes loose my thoughts.

I slump back ever so relaxed;

Ever so calm.

My senses . . . gone.

I nearly drop my mug,

But it finds it's way to the table.

I am on air,

my mind reaching

New plateaus

As the ink from my pen

Touches my stained paper.

Nothing happens.

For hours it seems

I sit--writing only air.

My tea is getting

Cold.

I sip again.

New sensation; none like

I have ever felt before

Or since the last time.

Ginger melted.

Ginger melted.

Ginger seeps through my finger tips
Into my pen
Where it becomes fluid ink
Which produces fluid words,
Sentences,
Phrases.

Again, I am creating air.

One final sip --

Rather gulp.

My tea is cold

Brisk as they say.

Gingersubdued

Settles in my belly

Sits for minutes . . .

And then suddenly reacts

To the air it is exposed to like a

Hydrogen balloon

EXPLODES!

Sentences, phrases, tea, ginger.

My poem is done.

Jodi Levinthal

I Aim to Tell

I aim to tell a story that nobody has ever told. I 'spect that's cause nobody ever had the guts like me. But my guts run down deep inside. I know cause I can feel 'em when I'm scared. Guts is what make you strong and they tell you when things aint right. Grandpop said that I get my guts from my daddy. He went and died before I was born, but that wasn't his fault. Grandpop said he would of stayed if he could of, cause he loved me best of all. More than anyone in the whole, wide world, Grandpop said. Even more than my older brother Joe, but I wasn't never supposed to tell him that. I 'spect I just did, but it don't matter now cause Joe don't believe anything I says anyway. He's gone through the change.

Anyways, these guts from my daddy came in real useful to me and my momma. I don't know exactly when the troubles started, 'cause I was probably too young to remember. At first, I never knew what all the troubles was from. Sometimes I would wake up early in the morning and everything downstairs would be broken and momma would be cleaning it up and yell to goes back upstairs on account that I might get hurt in the mess. I always did what Momma said 'cause she was real quick with the back of her hand, but sometimes I hid behind the banister upstairs and tried to see all I could. Sometimes she would be crying, on account of all the mess, I 'spose, but she was always real quiet 'bout it. Momma is a real quiets person. She hardly ever yells and all she ever had to do was to look at me or Joe and we knew to shape up. But she is real nice too. Sometimes she would hold me on her lap and read to me for hours out of real long books that she never would finish. But I didn't mind 'cause I just liked hearing the sound of her voice and watching her. Momma is real pretty. She has long blonde hair that's almost bigger than me and even though she doesn't put any color on her face, she is always glowing like the sun in the morning. Whenever I'd ask Momma 'bout those broken things she'd always tell me to hush and never to talk of such things again.

When it got real hot last summer more strange stuff started happening. You could hears screaming late at night

and things smashing and breaking, 'specially on nights when Momma came home real late and you could hear the wind whistling at real strange times and the shades flapped and you could hear howling outside. I 'spect I was the only one who could hear it 'cause Momma always told me it was my dreams and Joe never woke up for anything. I told him it might be ghosts but he said I was spending too much time out in the sun. Momma might have been just trying not to scare me though, 'cause she told me and Joe to never ever come out of our rooms at night or we'd have to deal with her. And sometimes when the windows would rattle and two bright lights shined in, she would look out and yell for us to runs upstairs and not come down until she say. Most of the time it was just Ray though, Momma's boyfriend, and she would tells us we could come back down. He was real nice too and would sometimes bring me and Joe toys. He sometimes had a funny smell on his breath that Momma would get mad at, but most of the time she was quiet around him.

When I went to visit Grandpops that summer I told him about all the things that had been happening and how scared I was and he listened real hard for a real long time and looked real sad. But he told me not to be scared on account that it was just Goopers. I told him I didn't know what Goopers were and he explained more. He explained that Goopers are the spirits of people who died but somehow got lost on the way to heaven or the other place. Some are good and just want to stay around the things they know and most of these kind you'd never even know they were there. But some are real bad and throw a terrible fuss. That must have been the kind we had.

Grandpop gave me a necklace that would protect me against those Goopers so I wouldn't be scared but he was sure to say that it still wasn't good to mess with them so to be sure to listen to my Momma and stay locked in my room at night like she said. I told Grandpop Momma and Joe would need a necklace too, but he said not ever to mention it to them because they didn't believe. Grandpop said every child goes through the change and stops believing and even the ability to hear or see the Goopers disappears. He said that even he stopped believing, but when you get real old, you start again. Grandpop said that's how you know you're closest to God. Either when you're born from him or when you're about to go

back and I 'spect he was right, 'cause Momma told me Grandpop did go back not long after we was back home.

After Grandpop died those Goopers got worse. I could hear them almost every night and one morning I saw that they had scratched and bruised Momma's face. She told me she must have done it in her sleep but I knew that wasn't the truth, so I told her about them Goopers. She got real upset the more I insisted and called me ridiculous and a child and said I didn't understand nothing. I told her to explain it to me then but she got real upset and slapped me in the face and started to cry so I thought I'd better stop insisting.

One morning those scratches were real bad and Momma yelled at me to go back to my room where I almost always was. The glass table was broke and I could tell she'd been crying. I looked at her real long and saw her hair was cut and on the floor. I didn't know if she or the Goopers had done that so I didn't say nothing. But it didn't look very nice. Momma looked so tired and weak and she never read to me anymore and yelled all the time at me, especially at Joe. Joe and I never talked no more 'cause he started being real mean all the time. I knew Momma would just get more upset if I brought up the Goopers again, but I had to help her 'cause I was afraid they might kill her. So I stood in front of her and squinted my eyes real hard and tightened my shoulders up in case she was to slap me and told her about the necklace Grandpop gave me before he died and held it out in my hand to her. I told her to please wear it because the Goopers were going to kill her if she didn't and I still needed her. But all I felt were her lips kissing me real soft on the forehead and when I opened my eyes she held me real tight and cried for a real long time. I guess she almost believed in those Goopers and was scared too. I told her not to worry 'cause I would protect her but she just tried to smile at me and cried harder.

That night the Goopers were worse than ever and Joe even woke up and knocked on my door and I let him in. He asked me if I was sleeping but I said no 'cause I was hiding under my covers like always. He sat on the bed and said that we had to help Momma. I told him 'bout the necklace before I remembered that he didn't believe but he didn't yell at me like usual. I felt those guts in me, the ones from my daddy, and said I was going to go downstairs and make those Goopers leave

us alone once and for all. Joe went down first though and made me promise to stay in my room and he'd come right back and tell me what was really going on. But Joe didn't come back and I heard Momma screaming "Get out" and I knew it was up to me. I knew I was the only one who could kill them Goopers 'cause I was the only one who could see them. So I went downstairs and it was real dark cause the lamp was broken but I saw one of them hitting Momma and I saw Joe lying on the floor and I screamed at that Gooper to leave us alone. That Gooper took the shape of a man and came after me but I ran under the table and he couldn't catch me. Then I saw Momma grab that Gooper around the neck but he threw her down and kept hitting her. I got the big pan from the kitchen and was going to hit him over the head with it but he turned 'round and grabbed it and that's all I remember.

Next thing I know I woke up at the hospital and Momma was holding me and reading me a story from one of those real long books. Momma said she was glad to see I came back and that I had done real good fighting those Goopers. I was surprised that she said that but she just smiled and told me they were all gone. I asked her how she knew they wouldn't come back and she said that once you beat the Goopers you have a special protection from them for life and you never go back. But that we were going to move away anyways so I wouldn't be scared. Joe was there and he was real nice to me like he used to be and him and Momma looked at each other and laughed a lot. That was a sound I hadn't heard in forever. Those Goopers never did come to our new house and most of the bad stuff has gone away, except for the knocking radiators and flapping shades. But I 'spect those are the good Goopers just hanging round till they find their place. I asked momma why people turn into Goopers instead of just doing what they're supposed to and she said she didn't know but that we should feel sorry for them and not be afraid. I told her I wasn't afraid of anything anymore and she just smiled and kissed me on the forehead and started another story that she'd probably never finish.

Kristen Sabol

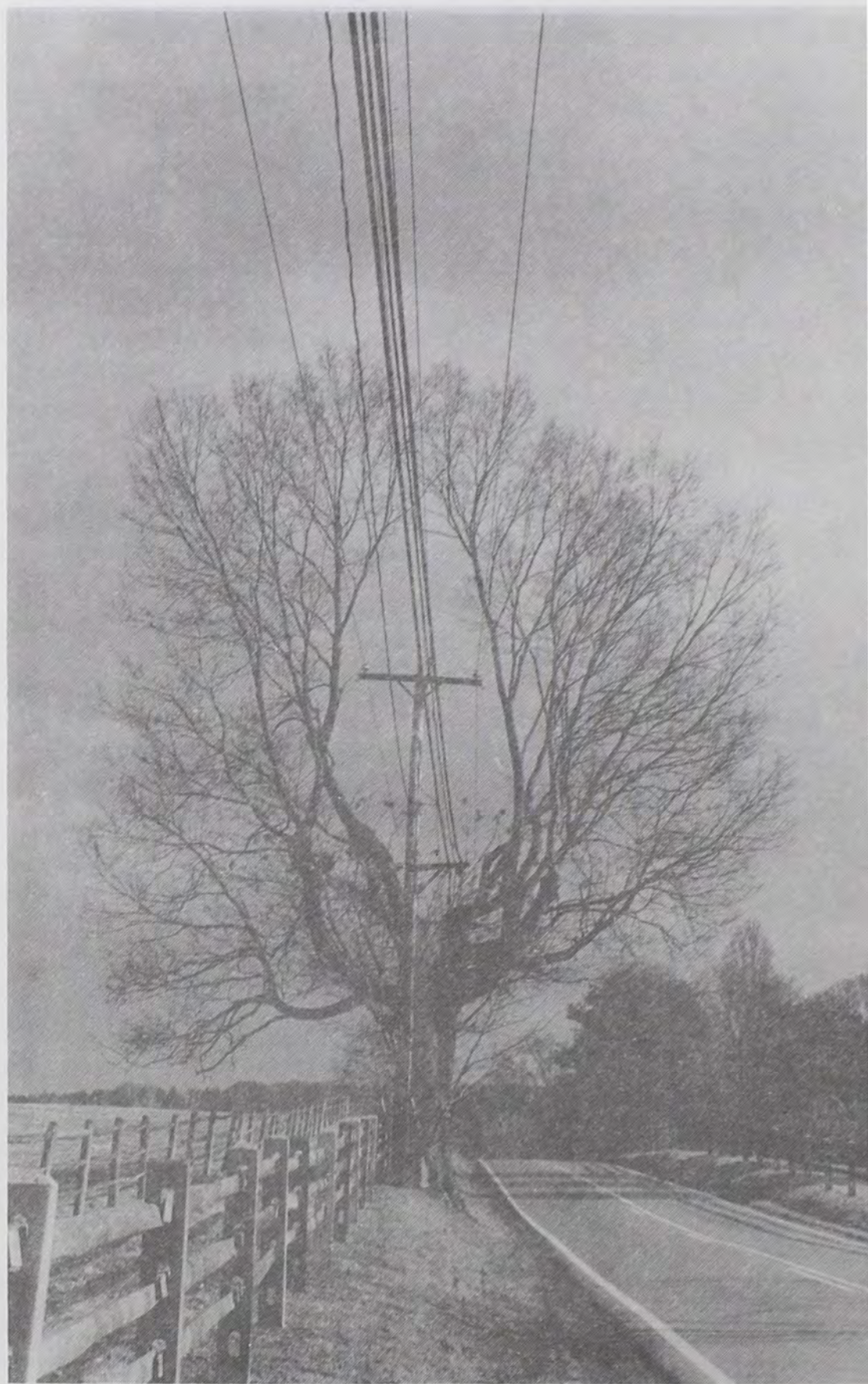
Second Sex: A Portrait of the Artist as a Woman

i lie on flannel sheets, a skimpy fuzz
 in underwear; his brittle leaf between
 my knees: *knock - scratch - and slap* ((to force my buzz))
 (me cold and quivering). **Uncovered Scene:**

esteem with bloodshot eyes:: i sleep and rise,
 small breasts point west in sagging skin of blue,
 i don a broken denim, snap demise
 to hips and thighs, draw lips to sip and slew.

i *speak* in hanging mirror, synthetic,
 to image / subject / person / object / me
 in written jazz jive jumping poetic--
 my *voice beats* black upon my flesh like he.
 a complex bruise on brain ensue and set:

i will seduce myself in sonnet yet.



Jen Mintzer

On the Side of the Road

Down-winding to a H . . . A . . . L . . . t
Jalopy piece of shit
with the real faux leather interior,
rusted shut trunk,
and a sticker I can't quite peel off that
says:
"If you can read this, you're too close."
A strange woman with wire-rimmed glasses
and a chihuahua wearing a sweater in the backseat
pulls over
and asks if I need
Help?
But I tell her I don't
and she edges back out into traffic.
In my warped rear-view mirror,
I watch the speck of noise vanish.
Others follow---
Some stop,
though most are only
spits of showroom chrome
flying past the point of my break-down.
Darkness descends
on the side of the road
and it is then that I realize
I have
no
engine.

Bonnie Lyons Price

Joe

Behind the church on Lewis road we walk.
Cooper and I do laps. He marks the stones
although I scold him each and every time.

The one that makes me think of you is small.
In spring its careful caretaker sets out
a pastel pallet of small eggs to hunt.
February hearts magically appear.
And on it goes, each holiday, each year.

She died the day that she was born in June.
That's why my brother you come to mind.

Before there were any reasons to have
or not have kids. My mother bore us five.
All of us came in unwillingly but you
gave up before you ever took a breath.

Our mother planted hope in rock gardens
and waited patiently for it to grow.
When she had finished making do that day,
she prayed to God inside the cool pine grove.

And where was he, the one who changed his mind.
Small wonder, precious brother, who gave his place for mine,
Unmarked, alone, he floats somewhere between.
When I was young I felt him comfort me.
Now I worry there is no place to mark,
no hearts, no lambs, no pastel eggs to lay.

Jim Maynard

To Matthew Arnold

I.

When people ask me that ridiculous question of what historical figure I would like to have dinner with, you are always my answer.

I imagine us sitting in a restaurant, perhaps some English pub or outdoor French cafe, and talking of all we have in common: of poetry, your thoughts on education, and how the hell any of us are to find some measure of happiness in this difficult world.

You see, I have read your writing, and after three or four pints of ale I would probably give you my honest opinion: you write some of the worst poems I have ever read, but your poetry is very beautiful to me.

I would tell you this and more if we were friends.

II.

What were you like?

I cannot believe that you were the Victorian stuffed shirt that everyone makes you out to be.

Surely, after that moment by the bay when you told her all your fears, the lights of France glimmering in the distance, you and she made passionate love the entire night, her gasping breath for a brief while stronger than the sad sounds of the surf.

Surely, you weren't always interested in formality and high seriousness.

I only ask because I know what it is like to be thought of as such.

III.

Did I mention what I think of your writing? I am sorry if I

upset you before. It is only that sometimes I am afraid that my own poems are the same as yours, and that I will end up just like you.

IV.

I have never been to Dover but I have seen the sea of faith.

I have seen the falling tides from the eastern shores of my America.

Sometimes, though, I can still hear all of its strength when I hold your words up to my ear. It is silly, I know, but it just proves that you were right: we have had to turn to poems to interpret our lives, to console and sustain us.

So what was it that made you stop writing about yours?

V.

Do you know that I have dedicated myself to searching out the buried life? I have spent years studying the real and imagined lives of myself and others:

of children who dream of their future, and of adults who dream of their past,

of men who hide everything they are for the sake of being men, of women who display everything they are not for the sake of being women,

of friends we once spoke to every day but haven't seen in years, and of strangers we have never met but think we know,

of cats and dogs and parakeets, and of the old grey men who cut my hair and clean up laundromats for a living,

of lovers who are searching for a more human love, and of those who are content not to,

of mothers who sacrifice everything for their children, of fathers and sons, of mothers and daughters, of brothers and

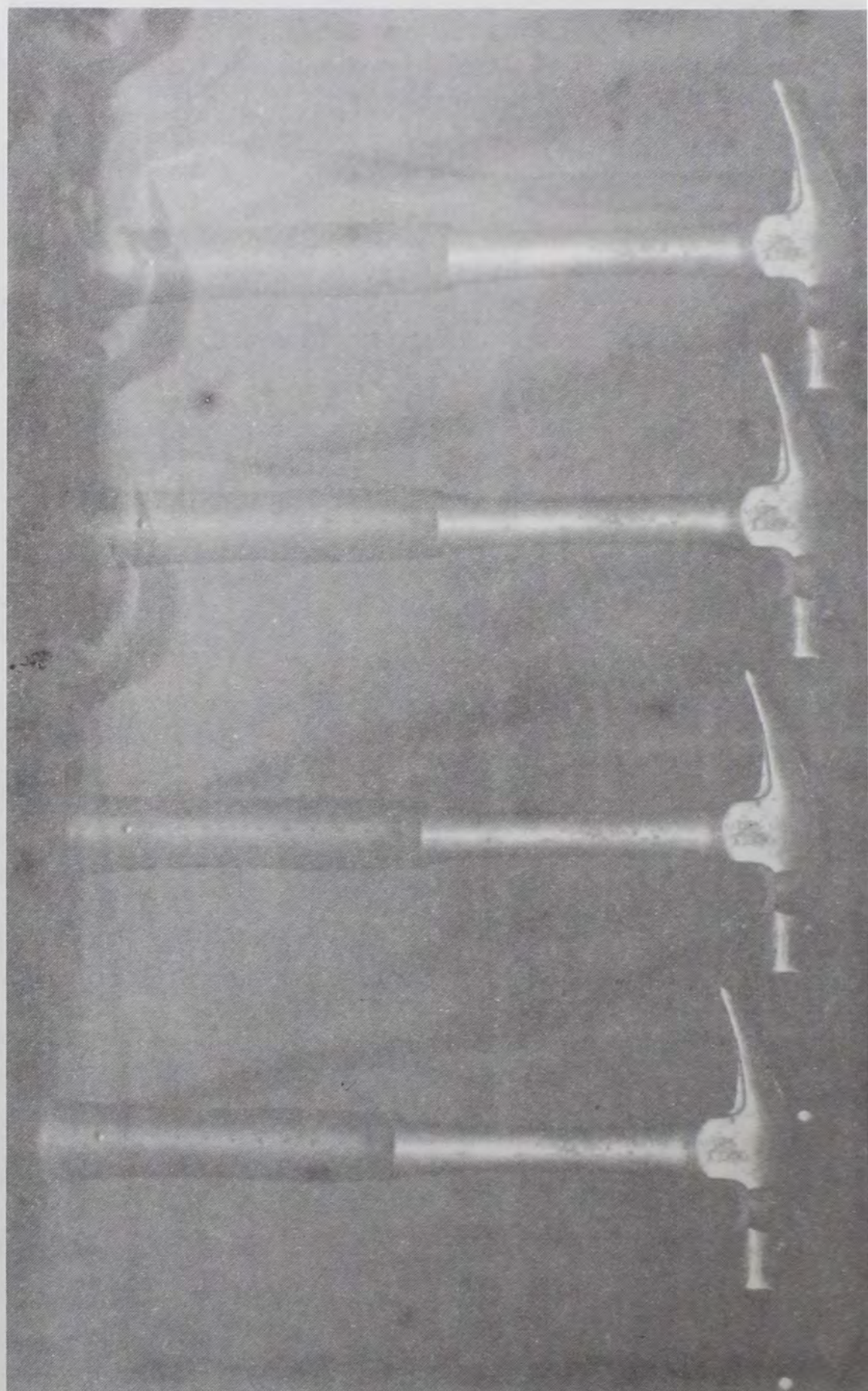
sisters who can never know each other as anything else but
brother and sister,

of amateur astronomers who stand on the tops of buildings
searching the sky night after night and season after season for
things they cannot find on earth,

and yes, even of dead writers whom I have never known but
would like to meet.

VI.

May I never run out of things to celebrate, reduced to sitting all
alone in restaurants speaking softly to myself.



Michael Podgorski

A Deep Sleep on Hydrocodone

I wake up racing ahead of today,
but today laughs at immortality.
But I still wonder.

Should I be writing a prayer for your response, return,
reconstruction, reintegration, resomething?

Saying one?

To all my fathers?

Maybe . . .

if somebody could just tell me I've got a soul or
not.

Anymore, it doesn't matter.

Time's arrow and entropy have already picked up the
receiver.

There's no more time left to kill the day,
I'm only borrowing time from reds 'n' rum.

Instead, I borrow time to stitch my pieces to a whole, while
every morning I'm given notification that my obituary is
nearing completion.

And in my dreams I'm surrounded by people of varying lunacy.
Our brains are wet and slimy, and our breathing, hard and fast
like fucking, like living.

They do blood work on me, using my hands as the source,
as if they were probing for some extract, essence,
and I am trying to fight them off with a fishing rod,
but they still take my watch off its band and leave me
timeless.

But I'm not a danger to myself.

I'm no longer infected.

I'm just outside of people, and outside of myself, outside
existence, and outside of that.

And when I'm in that place

You make me

somebody

I think

And like a ghost sitting next to me, walking next to me,
sleeping next to me, and barely making a sound, I can still hear
You.

I've reduced you from city to map but the scaling never ends.
And in Africa, the land is burnt to nothing, to tiny bits of
glass that do not reflect the past, the beginning.

Still, You make me want red, like stains of dried blood, like
descending lines of wet blood, like blood in your veins, in
my veins, in my time.

Because, I'm blue, like tears in the winter ocean, like cigarette
smoke, like the LCD display counting down for me.

You make me green, like my eyes, like Christmas, like mint,
like a traffic light at 2:47 A. M.

Go go go don't slow down don't stop.

You make me yellow at daybreak, like vanilla, like lemons,
like bananas.

You make me black like my shadow, like midnight whispers,
like vertigo, like a deep sleep on hydrocodone.

You make me want.

You make me ask for less of You.

You make my shoe size bigger.

You make me never want to write down this zip code ever
again.

You make me tired

because You are

You make me tired

because

You make me tired

You make me afraid of death, sell myself to its adversaries,
its remedies, but nothing is nearly so patient.

You make me afraid of being aware because I'm not.

You make me drive fast when I'm late.

You make me scrap around, and wait.

You make me up late and long at cold dark day.

You make me find You under floorboards during the renovation,
after the midnight whispers, after the barbarians, after the
hydrocodone.

You make me dig in your jeans, in your back, in your skin, in
my memory.

You make me skin soft blood warm in January ice cube cold air.

You make the sheets, bed, sleep warmer, softer, longer.

You make me meantime.

You make ways in all myselfes.

You make the verse of at least one.

You make me always think I've something more to say.

You make me hit the bar for more pellets, more whiskey, more
hydrocodone.

You make me bite down hard cracked teeth.

You make me beat concrete in three dimensions.

You make my eyes smack and ripen, burn under pressure.

You make me hammer down imitation, inhibition.

You make the clock eat itself but only on paper.

You make me iterate retrospect to eternal bifurcation.

You make me lose You, me.

You make me and me and me ad infinitum.

Why don't you anymore?

Because

when teeth, people, you and I were removed

the dream ended.

Oana Nechita

Madness of a Night

I like to paint my body.
I discovered that last night at 2 a.m.
when I accidentally dropped
some ink on my left hand.
I watched it grow like a blue wart,
feeling it sink through my skin,
into my veins, poisoning my blood.
Then I took out my pens and markers,
and paints, eye liners and shadows,
lipsticks, and nail polishes,
hair dyes, and powders.
Black, and green, orange, and purple,
red, blue, yellow,
and the combination of those,
they enmeshed my eyes, lips,
ears, shoulders,
my breasts, and belly-button;
my elbows, and fingertips
to the center of my palm;
the back of my legs, and my knees,
my ankles, and my toes.
I looked in the mirror and
saw a naked flesh canvas,
breathing and moving within
the flexible transparency of the colors.
At 6 a.m. I was standing in the shower,
breathing slowly,
watching the rainbow of
flowers, butterflies, and snakes,
birds, and dolphins,
dots, lines, squares, and circles,
all sucked down into the dark hole
where the waste water goes.
I got out of the shower;
my skin was dry and clean.
I looked in the mirror, and resented
the plainness of my body.

It was boring, so I covered it
with colored clothes
to remind me of
the madness of a night.

Gino Cerulli

Nobody's Fan

It wasn't even my fan.

"Why am I holding this fan 4th class Bernini?" Mr. Walters sarcastically asked holding it by the chord, letting it dangle in front of me.

"I'll find out, Sir," I replied, utilizing one of the five responses I was permitted to use. The other three were 'Yes, Sir,' 'No, Sir,' and 'No excuse, Sir' and 'the correct answer to a question' of course followed with Sir.

"No Bernini, I will tell you why I am holding this fan. I am holding this fan because someone decided that it was OK to leave it on, even though they left the room. I seem to remember that being against the rules. Do you remember that Bernini?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then why did you neglect to turn this fan off before you left the room, Bernini?"

"No excuse, Sir."

"Are you fucking special, Bernini?"

"No, Sir."

"Well if you aren't special then why do you feel that you can disobey rules whenever you see fit?"

"No excuse, Sir."

"Are they the only fucking words you know? How the hell are you ever going to be able to deal with the responsibilities of an officer if you can't even remember a few simple rules?"

"I'll find out, Sir."

"I don't think you will, Bernini, I don't think you are going to make it through here. You continually fuck up, and me and Mr. Bracher and Mr. Hede and of course, Mr. Thompson are fed up with your fucking performance. Now, you and your fucking classmates are going to pay for your fuck up. But I am going to keep your fan and I want you to come up to my room later today to earn it the fuck back. And you better know your shit and your uniform better be shit hot. Don't fuck with me Bernini. Now everybody . . . front leaning rest!"

My hands landed with a thud on the gray tile floor as

I dropped into the push up position along with 29 of my classmates. One rule that was learned very early was that if any one of your classmates is doing push ups or flutter kicks, you are expected to join him. Everything I seemed to do was automatic anymore. My response came without thought, my actions happened without thought.

"Down!" Mr. Walters directed the push ups, which were usually done very slowly. The Academy had passed a rule that an upperclassman could only drop a plebe for twenty five push ups at a time, no more. So now, the twenty five push ups could take fifteen or twenty minutes. Ironically, the front leaning rest, as upperclassmen call it, is the farthest thing from a rest. After about five minutes, your arms start quivering and failing and it takes an incredible effort to keep yourself from face planting.

"One, Sir!" thirty voices cried out in perfect unison.

The incident with Mr. Walters was not a new thing to me. He had taken a special liking to me from the beginning. He always seemed to come up with a reason to bust my balls. At that point, I could take shit from any of the upper class fairly calmly. However, I was reaching my limit with Mr. Walters. He was no more than 5' 5" and 130 pounds soaking wet. He was a little skinny, squirrely bastard that I know, given any other situation, I could, and would have, kicked the shit out of him.

"Down!"

"Two, Sir."

It was different when Mr. Thompson got in my face. I was legitimately scared of him. He was also only about 5' 5", but unlike Walters, he weighed at least 190 and it was all muscle. He was going to be a SEAL after graduation. I respected and feared Thompson because he was worthy of fear and respect. I respected and feared Walters because I had to. Unfortunately, both these men were in positions to make my life very uncomfortable.

"Down!" Walters' voice cracked.

"Three, Sir." A pool of sweat accumulated underneath me, causing my hands to slip and further complicating the already painful push up process.

The fan was my roommate's and it was he who had left it on. But I could never say that. Ratting out your classmate is

one of the worst things a plebe could do. I didn't have to learn that though, I already knew that everybody hates a snitch.

"Down!"

"Four, Sir." I already was dreading my impending meeting with Mr. Walters. Absolutely nothing good could come out of that meeting. I had already 'earned' back my canteen from Walters. I had allowed it to get out of my sight, and Walters, always seizing the opportunity, snatched it up.

"Down!"

"Five, Sir."

Earning it back had taken about half an hour, most of which was spent either in the front leaning rest or in the flutter kick position, neither of which were very much fun. But, all in all, it could have been worse. I could have had to earn it back from Mr. Thompson.

"Down!"

"Six, Sir."

It was pretty clear how my afternoon would be spent. I began rocking back and forth, placing my weight on alternating arms in a desperate attempt to recover. I needed to conserve as much strength as I could for the impending confrontation with that squirrely bastard. Unfortunately, conservation of strength was a near impossible task at the Naval Academy.

"Down!"

"Seven, Sir."

"Well, I have to go see that dickhead, now," I told my roommates.

"Do you think we should go with you?" Covington asked, hoping my answer would be no. Covington was about six foot tall and soft with a good heart. I knew how much difficulty he had with the physical exertion so I told him not to worry about it and I could take care of it myself.

Brand, whose ears stuck out so far they looked like frisbees taped to the side of his head, quietly said, "I am really sorry, man. I left the fan on, I should go with you, or even instead of you."

Amidst a chorus of 'good lucks,' I headed to face the dickhead alone. Walters lived on the second floor. The second floor was one of the most dreaded areas for a plebe, because it

housed all of the upperclass in my company. There were no friends to be found on that floor.

I knocked. "Midshipman 4th class Bernini, 961158. Reporting as ordered, Sir."

"It is about fucking time, Bernini," the dickhead chirped from his room. "Get against the bulkhead and think about getting your shit together."

He made me wait about five minutes, while I imagined all the horrible things that awaited me. The fluorescent lights and dead silence added to my discomfort. Sweat poured down my neck and back and my legs went numb. I only hoped that my expectations turned out to be worse than the reality.

I tried to psyche myself up, 'I can take anything that this fucker dishes out. I have dealt with him before, he can't break me. I am stronger than he will ever be. I am . . . oh, shit here he comes . . .'

"Where the fuck are your roommates, Bernini?"

"In our room, Sir."

"Why the fuck didn't they come with you? The fan was in their room, and they should know that they are responsible also."

"I'll find out, Sir."

"You're damn right you'll find out. Go get your fucking roommates and bring them up here."

"Yes, Sir."

"And hurry the fuck up. I've got better things to do than fuck around with you jerkoffs."

I returned in less than three minutes with two very unhappy companions. "Midshipman 4th class Bernini, 961158. Reporting as ordered, Sir."

"Midshipman 4th class Brand, 963452. Reporting as ordered, Sir."

"Midshipman 4th class Covington, 962357. Reporting as ordered, Sir."

"What the fuck took you so long, Bernini?"

"No excuse, Sir."

"Damn right there's no fucking excuse. Now I want to know why you continue to fuck up, Bernini?" The three of us stood motionless, side by side, each wanting to be anywhere but there.

"No excuse, Sir."

"Don't give me that shit answer. I want to know why you are such a fuck up. Why, Bernini, why?"

"No excuse, Sir."

"I just told you not to fucking feed me that bullshit answer. Why are you such a fuck up, Bernini?"

"I'm not, Sir."

"What the fuck is that? Are you fucking disagreeing with me? And since when is 'I'm not, Sir' a proper response? You make me sick, Bernini. Brand, Covington, front leaning rest. Now!"

My roommates dropped into push up position and immediately I joined them.

"Not you, Bernini. Get up."

Slowly I returned to my feet. My proper place was in the front leaning rest with my classmates and that is where I wanted to be. I couldn't stand to watch them suffer for me, "Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir."

"No, you don't even deserve to do push ups with your classmates. Let them suffer for your mistakes. Maybe next time you leave your fucking room, you will remember to turn your fucking fan off. How fucking hard can it be to turn a fan off, Bernini? So maybe this will help you learn. OK, you two, Down!"

"One, Sir."

I could feel heat move up my spine, finally resting on my face which I could feel turning red. "Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir."

"No, Bernini."

"Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir."

"What the fuck did I just say, Bernini? No. You can't join your classmates. You should be happy. All you have to do is stand there, shut the fuck up and watch. Down!"

"Two, Sir."

I was dizzy with anger and humiliation. "Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir!"

"You won't give up, Bernini. You are really starting to piss . . ."

"Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir."

"Did you just fucking cut me off, Bernini? Who the fuck do you think you are? When I am talking you should just shut the fuck . . ."

"Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir."

"You are just fucking asking for it now," Walters was jumping up and down he was so livid, "I cannot fucking believe you. If you cut me off one more time I am gonna kick your fucking worthless plebe ass. You have managed to be even a bigger fuck up than I gave you credit for. You will never make it through this fucking summer. You are not officer fucking material. You hear me, Bernini? I have tried to work with you, but I think you are hopeless, completely fucking hopeless. You . . ."

The assault continued and as much as I wanted to interrupt him with a request to join my classmates, I sensed that he had reached his limit and would be pushed no further. All my anger and frustration washed from my body, leaving only bitter defeat. My upper lip, no longer under my own control, quivered, ever so slightly, and tears welled up in my eyes. Walters sensed my weakness and moved in for the kill.

"What, are you going to fucking cry on me now, Bernini? You are really pathetic. I must really get to you. Do you not like me, Bernini?"

"No, Sir," I managed to say between whimpers.

"Is that so, Bernini? Do you hate me, Bernini?"

"Yes, Sir!"

"That is good, Bernini, because I don't want you to like me. I don't like you either, Bernini. You are a fucking slacker and you . . ."

"Sir, request permission to join my classmates, Sir." Walters' eyes bulged out of his head as he prepared to launch into another bout of assaults. But this time he would not get the satisfaction.

I removed my cover, which was a blatant violation of the rules, and spiked it to the tile floor shouting, "Fuck this, I am fucking out of here!" Just before I turned around and began walking down the hall, I caught a glimpse of Walters' face. For once, I left him speechless and in shock. He made no move to stop me and the look of defeat was written on his face.

Although Walters stood dumbfounded staring, Mr. Ferris, my company officer who lived two doors down from Walters, did not hesitate to act. He came flying out of his room and was in my face, yelling at the top of his lungs, before I knew what hit me, "You can't do this, Bernini. There are steps

you must take to quit. You are in the United States Navy. You can't do this!" I continued walking, oblivious to what he was saying, only aware of the fact that I needed to get as far away from Walters as I could.

I had passed through the doorway at the end of the hall when Mr. Ferris finally brought me to a halt. Before he could rip into me, my eyes teared up and this time there was no stopping them and I broke down. His voice became comforting, "Bernini, it's OK, calm down. Calm down, Mr. Bracher and Mr. Thompson will be up here soon and we will straighten this out. The mention of Mr. Thompson did little to calm me and I could not stop the tears.

I was facing the stairs and I could hear someone climbing them. Slowly, Mr. Thompson climbed the last few steps to stand in front of me. Upon seeing him I stopped crying, but the streaks running down my face and my red eyes did little to hide the fact. He just stood there for a few seconds and stared into my eyes. Then he asked, "What's going on, Bernini?"

"Sir, I am quitting, Sir."

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Walters is an asshole, Sir."

The amusement showed on his face if not in a smile and he replied matter of factly, "You aren't quitting anything, Bernini. Now go down to your room, get yourself cleaned up and calm down."

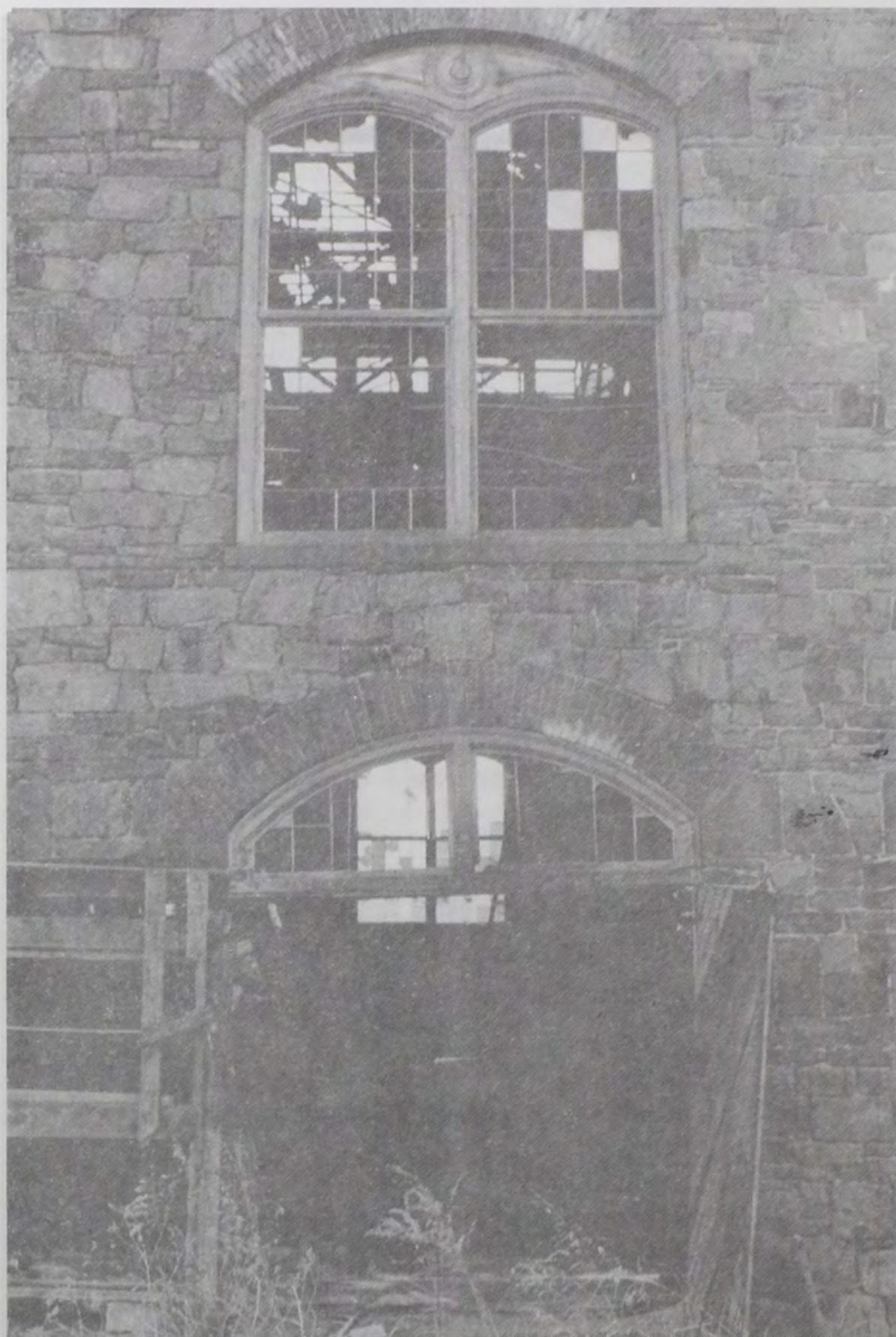
"Yes, Sir," I replied and walked away. I glanced back half expecting more, such as a "and don't be such a fucking pussy from now on" comment, but neither Mr. Thompson nor Mr. Ferris said a word.

I did eventually calm down and the incident was forgotten. But from that day on, for the rest of the summer, Mr. Walters didn't ever give me a hard time again. And it wasn't even my fan.

Tim McCoy

Return

It all became so natural.
The cast easily shattered
then unleashes every shard,
spinning and soaring
in a flurry in free jazz;
there are infinite options to seize,
all like the droplets of a splash
that will all plunge back into the absolute.
Everyone will descend towards there,
any of the gleaming specks can catch the eye and guide
or thrust. Your personal spill.
The dinky plastic cup given to hold
won't break. Bounce and roll, it has been made
to be dropped. The milk, no longer good,
will go sour and must be cleaned up.
Until the time one of the white drops catches the child
and falls into the puddle.
Now sour, how does sour taste?
I have thrown my cup. Melted my cup. Cursed and ignored
it, but plastic can't be destroyed. The grape juice heaved at you
causing an eternal stain, and the stench
of sour milk poured on every floor, rubbed into every carpet,
have escaped you. At the sight
of my twisted and forgotten cup
you stack more. A comical plastic fort of denial keeps our eyes
from meeting.
The dinky plastic cup for the use of an untrained hand has
returned
as the replacement for someone who first threw away their
own long ago.
You wish to pick me up and place me in it with the cup on a
high shelf
never to be touched or to fall.
In truth, all that can be put in there is the remnants of my
spills,
but it is enough to fill your dinky, plastic cup.



Brian Hamrick

A Farce

A homeless man walked the streets of the city
carrying his home-printed pamphlets,
preaching to no one as they passed him
about the joy of life,
the utter repugnance of war, and
by the way can you please spare some money for a prophet?
His dirty, multi-colored hair hung in ragged locks,
locks which made the occasional
hairdresser twitch their homosexual fingers
to wash, condition, crimp, and
possibly put a really nice mousse in.

Chocolate mousse is, quite possibly, the most
erotic piece of bedroom apparatus
the Senator ever allowed.

Distinguished actors often are to be found
drunk on an empty stage,
but not Lionel.

Othello, MacBeth, and Oberon would have been
staggeringly intoxicated by now,
but not Lionel.

Empty theaters and barren floors
are the burial grounds for some failures,
but not Lionel.

Thespians often find other, more lucrative careers
after they leave the spotlights and footlights,
but not Lionel.

Most people wear clothes
when they walk their pets down crowded streets,
but not Lionel.

The two women were locked in a torturous embrace,
their tongues dancing over each other's bodies,
their hands full of each other's flesh:
soft, tender, roughed in the rapture
of make-believe and pornography.

Sunflowers and daisies were linked together.

Hi out there.

The nursery rhymes had been stenciled on the walls
a long time ago, but they still held
wonder and magic in Jaime's mind.

Sure, what does a retarded four-year-old
know about words and symbols and meanings?

All Jaime knew was that the designs
gave pleasant dreams after the
smiling lady had stopped babbling and
left.

Simon says "Open your eyes."

Lyndsay Petersen

twists of fur

a tuft concerned of grass that worried
held a little blade too curious
to peek before its growing luscious

in eyes of wings with buttered flutter
landing soft on spread antenna
other eyes on wings will rinse the air
in sweet embraces to tickle whiskers
on their nearing of the shoots that
up and over neighbors triumphs mauled
were in delightful teeth of licks delicious
shreds of slipping tangles
falling shards of careless stems among the friendly

furry feet of muzzled warm
with sniffing cold wet hearing pointed
milky blue the blinks that close
against the leaning nervous whipping
bodies of the thinnest motion
slicing glance to vanquish seeing
in the warmly pulled with biting
 grunching and munching and spluttchering
 with snorring and rumphing-geschrump

until the finished crumpled leaving
under hairy foot of fall
feels the warmth that leaves as leaving
furry leaping biter tramples
loud unslyly trotting forest
scouring sadly walking sleeping
shivers ruffling warmest russet
covers dirty desperate baby
howling echoes never hearing

since the killing noises raining
heavy yelping with an end

to lovely licking warming pushing
nuzzles largely at the growing
smaller closing eyes at starry
blinking fading solitary
winking far alone for resting
body chilling violating
bluest cold ready waiting.



Jaime DuBois

Ambiguity

I watch you. I watch your expressionless face, motionless body. There is no language that escapes your pores. You. You are a walking nuance to me, a virtual watercolor in motion, hiding yourself, your feelings, your beliefs. Escaping, you make yourself invisible to me, keeping your veil hanging ever-so loosely around your body. I see no outline. I find no tucks or folds. I peer closer, deeper. And yet this quest for comprehension, or some slight understanding, keeps me fondling your ambiguity as you move further and further away from me. And I remain here, nestled in my corner, propped in my chair, with feet pulled in closely, trying to read your pages.

PATRONS

Jane Agostinelli	Joyce Lionarons
William Akin	Annette Lucas
The Alumni Office	Susie Maresco
Nicholas Berry	Denise Martella
Barbara Boris	Mary Ann McCabe
Laura Borsdorf	Brian McCullough
Adele Boyd	Todd McKinney
Johnny Cage	Jane McLaughlin
The Caia Family	David Mill
Antoni Castells-Talens	J. K. Miller
Chi Rho Psi	Deborah Nolan
Peter Crooke	Peter Perreten
Jeanine Czubaroff	Sally Rapp
Robert Davidson	Kim Sando
Louis De Catur	Patricia Schroeder
Carol Dole	David & Jill Sherman
Ross Doughty	James Sidie
Eileen England	Lakita Smith
Juan Espadas	Paul Stern
The Financial Aid Office	John Strassburger
John French	Lynn Thelen
Judith Fryer	Brian Thomas
The Grizzly	Upsilon Phi Delta
Patricia Gross	Jon Volkmer
Joyce Henry	John Wickersham
Houghton Kane	Sally Widman
Kappa Delta Kappa	Ted Xaras
Margot & Rob Kelley	Karl Yergey
Scott Landis	

Special thanks to Wismer Dining Services.

