



EXILE

Fall 1993

EXILE

**Denison University's
Literary and Art Magazine**

38th Year



– Carrie Horner '97

Fall Edition

You of the finer sense,
 Broken against false knowledge,
 You who can know at first hand,
 Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:
 I have weathered the storm,
 I have beaten out my exile.

Ezra Pound

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– eclipse Elisa Gargarella '95

Vertigo

I have never driven
through Billings, Montana
alone, at 3 in the morning,
with a dark cloud
pressed to my roof.

I have never watched
an August sun
dance on the edge of The Canyon,
its vibrant light
slowly dying.

I have never ridden
on dark blue waters
rough with a thousand rapids,
the cold foam
spraying my lashes.

Sometimes I have felt
this earth spinning.
It's here beneath my footsteps
as I trod my daily path
and think of Billings, Montana.

–Lisa Stillman '95

Departing Flight

Last time I saw you, you were here
with me. Close to two years passing
without you, my yearning turns to fear.
Was ten months, ten weeks, days lasting.
Now it's time, who finds me crouched
in the corner. Love held tight, hands
trembling in the dark. Heart beating loud.
It wakes me from the dream I can't
escape of you leaving me alone by
the fire. She boarded this same flight
at twenty-one, Seven eighty nine
to California. Mother in the dim light
of finding the same green eyes as these.
I'm falling like a stone. Wait for me.

—Morgan Roper '94



—Untitled Lizzie Loud '95

Marietta

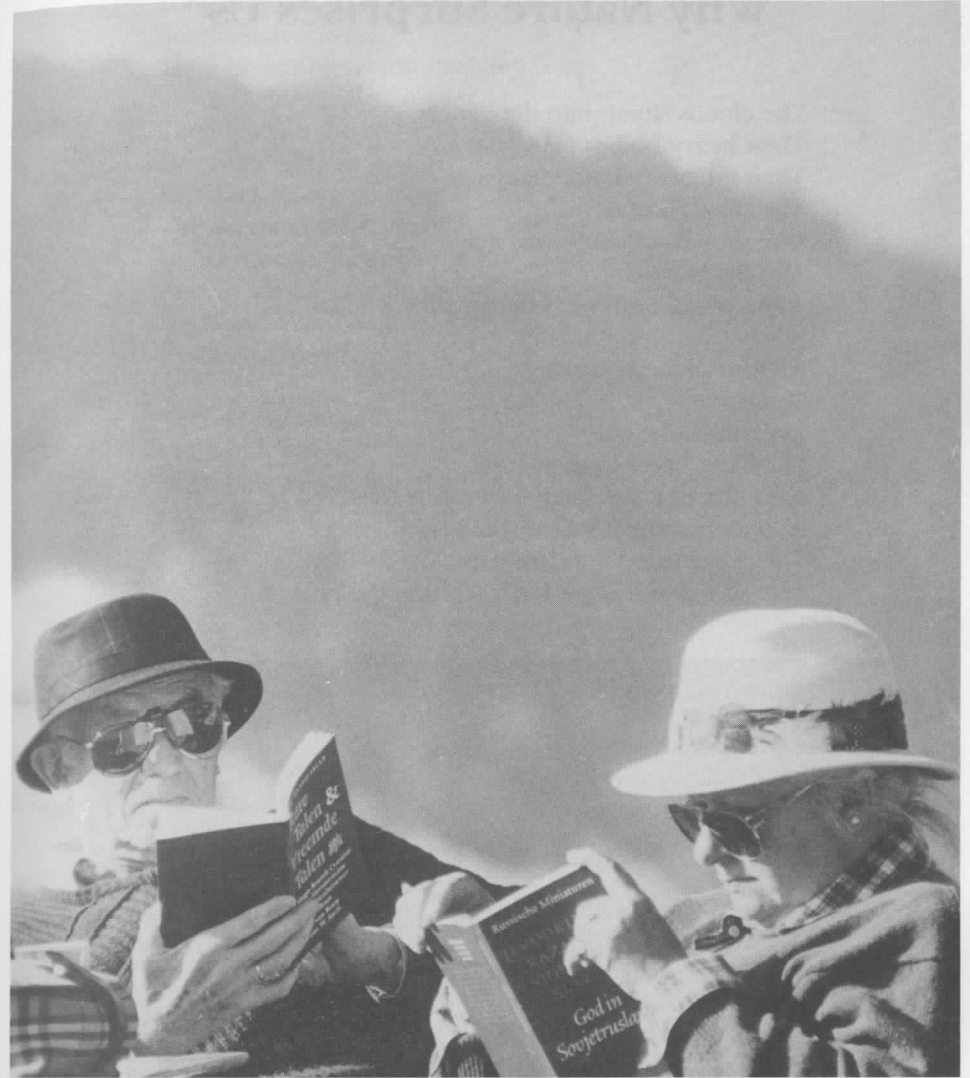
Just as she's not supposed to, Marietta lets go, and the screen door without springs Slamslams behind her. Her feet go clip go clip go clon on the weather-beaten wooden ersatz step, one two three outstretches her arms like tiny wings and leaps, the silver queen silk of her hair flapping, lands with both feet and Puff! Makes a scatter-cloud of August dust and when the dust settles, has all settled down, the sky is watercolor blues and purples and pinks, her mouth squinted into a smile and that voice, those voices, are left inside somewhere. Finally.

Marietta. Who is ten, which is nine plus one, which is five times two, which is half of twenty, and who in thirty-eight days becomes eleven, behind her Coke-bottle glasses looks through the heat that is like opening the oven door when mother bakes corn bread, counts one-two-three willow trees doubled over with laughter, two-four-five sycamores hands folded and waiting, nine red impatiens seven white ones potted in the shade, one iron gate painted black to hide the rust, which has worn a rut into the ground, one snaky-long tangly-bush whose name she hasn't bothered asking, one dirt path, three steps, one farm house with chipped paint, two voices within which have started again like a sputtering motor. And one Marietta.

In the red red dress which she has still still still not grown out of, Marietta takes exactly three and fifty steps slow as a northwesterly thunderstorm to the edge of the cornfield stalks. Taller than fathers. As many as millions and millions. Reaches the dirt road surrounding the field, and with whisk of fingers, picks her poppy-red dress above her knees, kneels to meet the ground, and once again the angry bumble-bee sound in her ear of the two voices inside has been brushed away.

Marietta, with skin the color of peanut shells, a nose she will have to grow into, chin like a dulled paring knife, an underripe husk of a body and kernels of breasts underneath her dress, etches in the dirt with her forefinger a circle which is like a bounced rubber ball, a flattened zero, the two ends meeting like a bud. Unties the string and upends the bag, lets loose foureighttwelvefifteen six teen sun-catching violet ones and indigo ones and jade ones, milky pink and lemon and turquoise and crimson ones. Makes a loose fist, nub of her thumb tucked under the first finger, with the great big crystal ball one resting on top, flicks it with a snap and begins the game.

—Craig McDonough '94



— Interlaken, Kira Pollack '94

Why Nature Surprises Us

I

The clouds slump into the gutters,
Their heavy bodies plane the roof,
Their tongues on tin, dragging.
The close friction
Like the rub of comb and mane.
And heaven—
A pin of light driven between dark woods.

All four of them are up
Today,
Even the lame one
Hobbling like a broken easel.
Even through the spiked, sweating tobacco,
And the moaning wheat sheaves,
They've smelled the dark oats
Like so many sheep's teeth sifted in the bucket.

II

The grime from their coats,
Their teeth marks sewn into my jeans,
Their golden-bleached dung—
They are in the wind,
The land they've beaten themselves into,
Throwing their bodies down to mark the earth.

III

After the storm,
When the red trailer
With heavy, iron barred doors
Bumped into view,
What else could it mean?

It was noon.
We stood in the gaping doorway.
The high sun
Played tricks on the horses;
Their broad shoulders and narrow backs
All plateaus and plains,
Their drugged heads—
Their necks,

Long and low—
Submission so vast
Their breath blew dust onto my boots.

Then leading the bay into the trailer,
Her front end, up and in;
Her back hooves in only by instinct.
The death stiffness already in her legs,
In her tongue lagging from her mouth.
And so sexual, needle sliding down
Neck and vein, their deaths
Birthed in blood.

Then only falling,
Then only falling,
Then only falling into the trailer's tub,
No thought of decency or harm.

—Josh Endicott '96



—Untitled, Colin Mack '94

My Father

My father, piston of muscle
& bone, hook for a left hand,
courtesy of combine, once
picked up a Volkswagen
while some woman changed
her tire. Then he smoked
a cigarette. Short & thin,
hardened & scarred, when
the kicker on the bailer broke
& the gate on the wagon jammed
he threw tightly packed bails
high over the sides in the
dry sun of second cutting,
rationed his water, smoked
a Marlboro, & ate dinner
at 10 pm. On the oiled dirt
floor of the shop, he lifted
an engine off of Uncle Tim's
arm, standing like an ape
in the hood of a bleached
Trans Am. He had egg yoke
& butter in his veins as he
syphoned gas & spit on the
stained ground. When a big
German Shepherd attacked him
he stuck a Camel in its eye,

killed it with one punch from
his gravel fist. Sunburns
like rings in trees, he caught
the neighbor's stud; it kicked
& broke his ribs, & when he fell
off the barn roof he drove
himself to the ER while the
fields waited anxiously. Once,
cigar bobbing in his cursing
teeth as he hammered a wrench
with his left wrist trying
to get the starter off of the
old Ford tractor, WD 40 staining
his hand & hook yellow, he
knocked the tractor into gear
& the slanted treads climbed
his back before he hit the
clutch & he didn't even kneel.
When I saw him yesterday he
couldn't even breathe. They
took his one lung out & the
other had a hole in it the size
of the one his fist put in the
barn door.

—Matt Wanat '95

Legs in the Dust

Janie Mckinsley sat on the front step just outside the summer cottage her family had rented for a week's vacation. Behind her, the breeze gently rattled the thin screen door and inside she could hear her mother and older sister clearing dishes from the tiny round table. Her father said the family needed this time away. He said they should get out and breath some real fresh "country air" and escape from the crime and pollution of the city for a while. Janie's mother was always worried about her getting kidnapped on the way to school or when she wanted to walk to the 7-11 a few blocks from their apartment. She warned her about dark alleys and men who offer candy, then try to snatch away little children. As a result, Jane rarely got to go anywhere alone. But today her mother had said after breakfast, "Janie, why don't you go out and look around? Wouldn't you like to explore and see what the country is like?" Surprised at her mother's suggestions of such freedom, Janie lifted perplexed eyes and asked, "But mommy, aren't you afraid I'll get stolen or mugged or sumthin?" Her mother chuckled a little and explained to her that no, this is the country and we're safe out here, we don't have to worry about those kinds of things while were here, and sent her out into the inviting sunlight.

Not quite sure what to do with her new found freedom, Janie sat quietly on the step for sometime, just staring at the dirt below her feet watching a colony of ants climbing in and out of a tiny mountain. She'd never seen so many ants before at one time. She guessed ants probably were afraid to live in the city too and so most of them came to live in the country. She thought the country would be a much safer place for ants, after all, the city has so many feet rushing around and cars speeding by all the time. Janie concluded that if she were an ant, she'd much rather live in the country. She soon grew bored with the ants and so she stood up, stretched and stepped down into the dirt road leading away from the cottage. She cautiously started down the road, still thinking, despite her mother's reassurance, that there may be some danger somewhere. As she continued to walk, she began to relax more, taking in the peaceful scenery surrounding her. The colors were so much more clear and crisp than in the city. She noticed this when she looked at the pristine blue sky, so clear she imagined if she had a straw, she could drink it, slurp it right out of the sky. And the green grass, even the dusty brown of the dirt road under her white tennis shoes, were colors more real than she'd ever seen in the smoggy streets at home. With the morning sun and her curiosity both climbing higher, Janie began to think maybe her mother was right about the country. As she rounded a dusty bend in the path, Janie spotted another little cottage like her own in the distance. Coming closer she could tell there was a young boy squatted on the ground in front. She walked up slowly and the boy lifted his eyes to greet her. Janie was excited to have found someone to play with and thought maybe this boy would know something fun they could do. Janie began to introduce herself, "Hi! My name's Janie Mckinsley, what's yours? I'm from the city and do you want to play a game or somethin?" The boy did not lift his head again, but motioned for Janice to assume a similar

squatting position in the dirt beside him. When she had situated herself next to him he said in almost a whisper. "Would ya keep it down, you'll scare away the spiders." Janie looked down at the bare ground he had been so intently staring at the whole time.

"What spiders?" she inquired back in a hushed voice.

"The spiders I'm huntin for", he answered in an annoyed tone.

"Oh..", she said and then asked, "But I don't see any spiders, where are they?"

"Don't you know anything, that's why I'm huntin for em. Will you please be quiet or we'll never see any!"

Janie obeyed but thought to herself that she'd never heard of anyone hunting spiders before and it seemed kinda silly to be sitting here staring at the ground. She had almost decided to get up and leave and look for someone else to play with when the boy jumped up and moved to another spot. He waved his arms wildly in the air at her, signally her to also move to the new spot. When she did, she saw the boy was proudly pointing at a very long-legged spider, sitting quietly in the dirt.

"It's a Daddy-Long Legger", hne informed her with authority.

Janie had seen spiders before, mostly inside her family's apartment. Her older sister would always scream whenever she saw one. Janie thought her sister would really scream at this spider because it was about the biggest one she'd ever seen before. The ones in the apartment, creeping up her white bedroom walls or stuck to the smooth tiles in the yellow bathroom, were tiny, with short little legs. The spider before her now fascinated her, with its long, slender legs spreading gracefully from its round, black body. Each leg bent at perfect delicate angles and ended thread-like in dainty points. Janie thought the spider was beautiful. She tried to imagine what it would be like if she had so many long, thin legs flowing from her body. She thought she could be the fastest runner in the world, swiftly stretching her legs across the finish line, or be the most graceful dancer, elegantly spinning over the dance floor.

She remembered the ice-skater she watched on T.V. one time and how she spun around so quickly it seemed she had at least a hundred legs circling around he slender twirling body. Janie decided that must be what she'd look like if she had as many legs as this spider.

Janie was lost in her own thoughts as she stared at the spider and had almost forgotten the boy was still squatted beside her. She was brought back to reality by a small grubby hand reaching out towards the spider. She watched, almost thinking she was dreaming, as the boy's fingers carefully grasped of one of the spider's fragile legs and proceeded to pluck it off. She stared in curious horror as even after the leg was removed, it continued to twitch in his fingers. She wanted to yell, to tell the boy to stop, but she was paralyzed with fear and couldn't move her eyes off the spider. The maimed body tried to lopsidedly scramble away, but the boy followed it with greedy fingers and tweezed another leg, then another, then other. The spider fell to the ground on one side of its body, legs twitching independently in the dirt around it. Finally, as he took the last limb, the small black dot sat motionless in the dust. Her stomach felt sick as she stared numbly at the tiny raised body sitting like a pebble on the side of the road. She thought the

spider must still be alive except he'd been amputated by the boy's cruel fingers and he couldn't run away. He couldn't even squirm with the pain he must be feeling, he couldn't move at all. She tried to imagine what it would feel like to have someone rip off all her arms and legs and leave her to lie in the road by herself. She wanted to do something to help the spider, but when the boy stood up, standing victoriously over the spider and said "Come on, let's go hunt some more!", all she could do was glance once more at the black bump and run the other direction back towards her own cottage.

That evening, her mother asked if she enjoyed her day in the country. She kept her head down looking at her plate full of uneaten, now cold, tuna casserole and attempted to nod in response to her mother's question.

"Aren't you hungry Janie? I thought you'd be famished after a day in the clean fresh air! Didn't you have fun today dear?"

"Yes mommy, it was fun," she said trying to sound convincing.

"That's nice dear. Now didn't I tell you how great the country is!"

Janie asked to be excused from the dinner table before she finished her food and then went to bed early. That night she dreamed she was running a race. She was winning, just ahead of everyone else. Her legs were sprinting lightly over the track and she could see the finish line ahead. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, something pushed her over, knocking her to the side of the track. She tried to get back up, but her legs wouldn't move. She couldn't move anywhere and she just lay there looking up as all the other legs and feet passed her by without stopping.

The next morning, Janie woke up early before the rest of her family. She climbed out of bed and walked to the screen door. Opening it with a slight creak, she stepped barefoot onto the chilly cement step. Everything around her was still and quiet, waiting for the sun to peek over the horizon, except for the colony of ants that were already busily attending to their work. She watched the ants for a while, as they were marching back and forth across the dirt. She saw one of the ants straying away in the direction she'd traveled the day before. Just then Janie wondered if maybe she should take some of these ants home with her, when she went back to the city.



—Untitled, Lilly Streett '94

of cigarettes, saltwater, and death . . .

My hands are shaking so badly,
I can hardly light this cigarette.
It doesn't help any that the wind has picked up
So that my saltwatered hair
Has dried into a mass of seaweed . . .

I wanted to warn him,
To tell him to stay away from midnight waters.
But a drunk guy never listens to Reason's voice,
And a guy who's schizophrenic
Might have too many voices to listen to.

Maybe he had something to prove.
Maybe my altered ego's taunts drove him down
Into the depths of the Pacific . . .
All I know is that Life doesn't prepare us
To battle with Itself, and when our
Time comes, we always lose.

I think that's what scares me the most
As I sit here on the sand,
And think of the coral reef—
All those skeletons pressed into one mass.
I know his bones will join them
And I am afraid to look down . . .

—Tricia B. Swearingen '94

Serendipity

Her hands move quickly,
winding the film into its compartment,
seeing her slight reflection
in the shiny, plastic, side of the film.

She shuts the black door
until she hears the snap,
then she checks
to verify its security.

She cocks the shutter
with a flick of her thumb
and places the camera
deftly at her hip.

Instinctively, she presses the shutter
with the tip of her finger
while keeping the camera at her waist,
and the viewfinder against her skirt.

She points, aims, shoots,
but she never looks.
She twirls her body around
stops—shoots again.

A hand holding
a slowly burning cigarette,
the shadow of a person's leg
framed against a table.
A small freckled nose
and the big pouty lips
of a small child.
A broken beer bottle
refracting the light,
of the late day sun,
into triangular patterns
along the sidewalk,
the alcohol shimmering
in a puddle beside the bottle
capturing a reflection
of herself and her camera
to create the image.

She does not know
until hours later
what she saw
and what she has created.

She never looks through the window,
she never sees what she's taking.
She believes
in accidental beauty.

— Lizzie Loud '95



—Untitled, Lilly Streett '94

Summer

Humidity becomes a part of life
In New Orleans, in July.
So you make love
On the worn wood floors
Leading out to the back porch,
With the screen door hanging loosely
As the sole partition.
It's these times
That you thank the thick air
You saved your old albums,
As Robert Johnson plays and sings
The blues,
And a thumbnail scratch across the vinyl
Creates an off-tempo beat.
Even when the music ends
You can still hear its rhythm
On a July afternoon
In New Orleans.

– Allison Lemieux '96

And The Rain Fell

The butterfly lands on my chair
as I sit and watch the world, the sun
on my neck, water running around
my tires. I wonder where the others are,
but know they left years ago. Years ago.

We liked to come here and drink
illegally, brandishing beer like some
award for being young and reckless.
We had dreams of the Future, before
the Future was even thought of.

We hid here, on this sea. We liked
to party on this beach, away from
the streets and the signs, away from
mom and dad. They knew where we were,
but not what we were.

We were heathens, pagans
praising flesh and the spirit
of our primordial selves.
We fought society for society's sake,
we were the rulers of our souls.

We liked to think we were invincible,
the words used indicating superiority,
or at least the hope of strength. We'd bring
guitars and bongos and say that rain
could never stop our parade.

But the rain fell anyway.

Sometimes our fate was to last here,
on this beach, for days, for what seemed like
whole weeks drowning in pleasure.

The cars we drove were sent from dad,
not a day's work on our pampered palms.

The alcohol we bought with mom's cookie cash,
never returned, always forgotten.

They were not the one's left of center. We were

Then the headlights came The rain was splashing
through the broken windshield, the blood running
over the leather interior and out the moon-roof.

In my daze, I remember screams. The crash
broke my will.

Sometimes I cry. My friends are gone, left
to roam the spirit world. But here I am,
sitting in my chair. I blame God, Mom, Dad.
They should have known.
They should have punished.
But they didn't.

The butterfly goes to a flower, then feels
the wind and lights.

I envy.

– Jeremy Aufrance '95



– Main Street, Elisa Gargarella '95

Füssen

Tucked away in a bar near the
center of town, I warm my aging
boots by a snap-crackling fire.
I chuckle backstage, behind the
streets, blow the head off of my
beer and kick back. Tripping,
waddling and scurrying along awkward
cobblestones, they don't see me
watching. Over and under dressed
tourists trample rainy day leaves,
herding themselves towards the
famed old castle, Neuschwanzstein.
Cameras flashing, maps flying,
souvenirs stuffed in shopping bags
that keep dropping from anxious
sweaty hands create the stage.
They don't hear the music I hear,
coming from the hills,
can't understand the alien chattering,
can't feel the security,
can't drink a liter of beer without
falling face down, spread eagle.
They can't see through my mask.
But I know their life stories.
The Alps send a whistling wind, that
frosts my view of this distant scene.
I turn to find the eyes of the whole
country staring at me. My trembling
hands, my loss of thirst remind me
I know only the language.
Shifting in my hard wooden chair,
I suddenly feel uncomfortable
in my own skin. Having stolen their
pride, I silently promise never
to rob them again.

– Morgan Roper '94

Lightning on the Snow

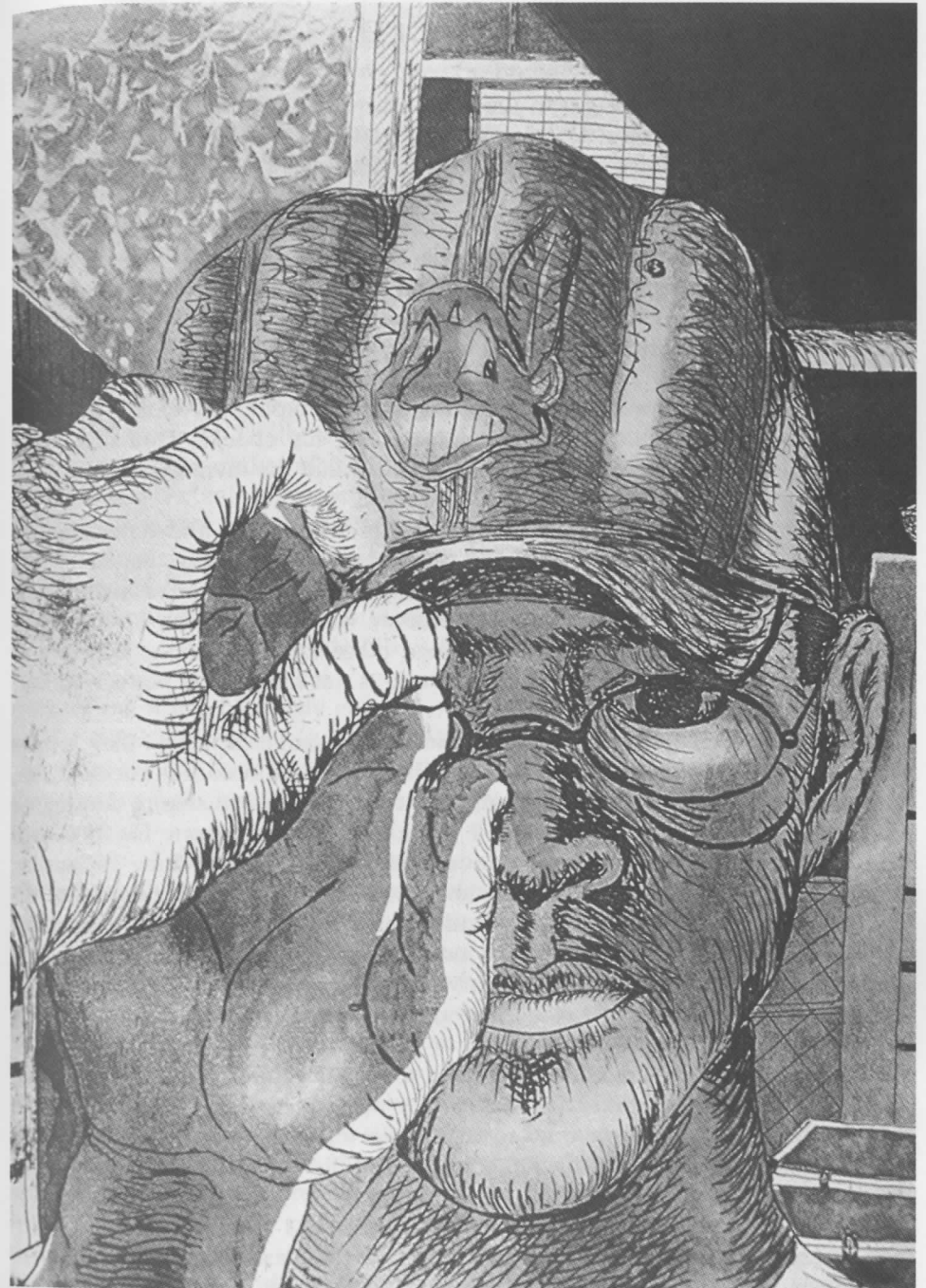
Rain sickles slash her wedding gown
where the roots of war have grown.
The quicksilver wind bears mercury teeth;
there is lightning on the snow.
Mannequins trapped in high cliff walls
with arms thrown towards the sky
loath hollow echoes in the night.
Their lovers' wounded cries
reverberate through the valley.
Her tears freeze in her eyes
as her train drags through the fingers
of the sluggish plains of ice.
The mountains stand like jurors;
they shape the valley like a cross
and build walls around the region
while the moon behind is lost.
As the crystal rain and cataract fog
hide the wolves of winter's frost,
she remembers the jewels of autumn
before the holocaust,
before she left the masquerade
where her groom dressed as a child,
where the lords drowned all their ladies
in the shallow baths of style.
She could not live where men and crowns
conspired to beguile,
and when she left the palace,
it crumbled to the wild.
Her groom followed her to the valley
where he lost his cloak of scorn
in the shack of an aged carpenter
who was dying to be born.
The lightning coats the valley,
not in anger, but reform,
a ice falls from the bride's hair
like a songbird shedding thorns.
When the shack glows in the distance,
nimbus baptizing the gown,
She sees salvation in the suffering
in the lightning on the snow.

– Matt Wanat '95

A discussion of 12 year-old murderers, of course

What is the world coming to, i sat with my dog trying to decipher the news from my own backyard and had to ask him "Marley, what is the matter with the world?" he of course did not answer. There are twelve year old kids carrying guns to school and killing classmates and teachers and bus drivers cause they want to. When i was that age i was watching cartoons and trying to figure out how to cook a grilled cheese sandwich. In 8 years the world has not changed that much. Two years before that i lost my glasses in the ocean and thought the world had ended, the next day we went to disney world i couldn't see anything. it was the worst day of my life. I never wanted to hurt anyone but damn Charlie the Tuna who was wearing my spectacles. It wasn't fair but i didn't bitch (too much), life went on i am now almost twenty and i am afraid for my life country world dog. What can i say? What can i do to change? When i was little i think i wanted to go outside occasionally the fresh air and ultra violet rays helped me grow into the deficient thing i am today. Maybe there isn't enough fresh air in our atmosphere anymore. That's my theory carbon dioxide causes brain tumors that no one can read, but they cause 1 year old kids to want to taste blood just to see what it is like. I may of course be mistaken i am only human, of course. I was once a newborn. Mom tells me i was quite a first child always crying. I tell her i am much obliged it was my job then. But now I am in college and trying to find direction without the assistance of mind altering drugs and laxatives and complex carbohydrates and it is even harder to try to find a small place in which i fit which scares me to death. I forget things will I be as forgetful in twenty years mid-life crisis getting thick around the middle? Maybe the world won't exist in ten. What do I worry about? Those ten years will be the end of my life, that is what bothers me. When will it end or maybe we are all imagining it— is there such a thing as reincarnation? Next time i want to be a tree in a forest in the congo where the men in flannel won't cut me down. This human being high and mighty you can't bring ME down looking out far numero uno bullshit really pisses me off. Can i be content when my brothers and sisters are bias against one another for petty reasons like skin and hair? Does skin color rub off? Would you want it to? Some days i hate my skin for being so bland, some days i want to cry—for what? I haven't the slightest. I just want to say here i'm done eat what i've made for you Then curl up in a ball and wither like the leaf i am.

—Jeremy Aufrance '95



— Get your hand off my hat, —Jamie Oliver '94

The Hero

I can tell the minute I get in the door and drop my bag, I'm not staying. The familiar smell of home accosts my nose and makes my eyes water. Maybe if I shut my eyes I can try and believe that nothing has changed, that there has been no war, and that I had never left. Instead, I see a strange face that looks back at me from the hallway mirror; it is a face that doesn't belong. Suddenly I am forty-six with grey hair, a man older than I had ever imagined I could be.

The stale silence is suddenly broken by a large intrusive crowd of welcoming family members. They had been loyal with constant letters, but now, nonetheless, they are unfamiliar to me and, at the moment, an unavoidable nuisance. There are hands everywhere that are reaching out for me. They are patting my back, rubbing my arms, pumping my hands, hugging me tightly, and lips which are constantly kissing my cheeks. Foolishly, they believe that their tender words and affections can dim the memories of the cold and the fear of those lonely nights in the foxhole.

My shock is ignored. Somehow my bags are taken away and I am ushered inside. The furniture, the arrangement of pictures, it is all very familiar. They are so close to me, finally just an arm's length away. Terror seizes my heart, I am afraid that if I try to touch any of them they will all disappear. I will simply wake to find myself in another dream in a place far from home. Unlike the other dreams about my homecoming, this one is not happy and perfect; rather, it is unsettling and distressing.

I am welcomed with a hero's welcome, what a laugh. What do they know? What would they think if they knew that I had often sat in dark corners, alone, hungry and crying for my salvation? Me, their fearless husband, father, or whoever I am. The fact is sometimes I would have killed anyone for food and freedom; it could have been anyone, even them. They knew nothing about fear and hardship as they live their comfortable lives in the wonderful penthouse on Park Avenue that I had worked so hard to give them. My stomach begins to reel, and I feel like I am going to be sick. The smile that is glued on my lips disguises the distaste that I am feeling. My family has become a bunch of naive strangers. Oddly enough that is all they are now, strangers who used to belong to another man from another lifetime.

He was a Republican, a dutiful son, a loving husband, a cherished father, and a respected stockbroker on Wall Street who once had the world in the palm of his hands. I return now to that same man's house to find his spirit crushed, his children grown, his father dead, and his wife only a shadow of the woman she used to be.

I can't take it; I quickly escape to the bathroom. I am sick. I splash some cold water on my face and catch my breath. I can hear their endless chatter through the walls, and I find myself longing for the quiet of the jungle. I finally reappear and head directly for the bar. I am able to down several scotches on the rocks before I am rediscovered by my predators. They hover, crowd, and constrict me until I am saved by the dinner bell.

The meal is beautiful and Millie, the cook, gives me a quiet "Welcome home, Sir" that is accompanied by a gentle squeeze on my arm. I pick at my food, unaccustomed to such rich choices, finding myself unable to eat. She has prepared all my favorite foods that I used to yearn for: home-made mashed potatoes, asparagus with Hollandaise sauce, Filet Mignon with Bernaise sauce, and undoubtedly creme caramel for dessert. I take a gulp of the sweet red wine and almost choke. I can no longer handle such refinement. Slipping into the kitchen, I grab a Rolling Rock out of the fridge—even this is better quality beer than I'm used to. I never thought I would miss the cheap rice beer in those dark alley pubs in Vietnam. After a few minutes, I bravely return the table. The dinner conversation is ridiculous. They are attempting to sum up all the gossip that I have missed while I was away, like I could give a damn. I plaster a smile on my face and drift from the conversation. I wonder where my lost platoon buddies are? How are they adjusting? My eyes grow misty at the thought of the men who were my family for so long. The tears in my eyes are misinterpreted by my wife. She grabs my hand tightly and refuses to let go, I suppose she thinks this is a comforting gesture.

Dinner passes and I am finally left to myself to remember and wander the house alone. I am deeply grateful for this time! Bed time rolls around, but I don't change. I look at my wife who is standing outside on the balcony looking up intently at the stars. She is motionless. I watch her closely from my secret hiding place. The wind gently blows her hair giving her a gold halo, the lights from the street give her skin a special glow, and above all the din and chaos of the city she waits. I lovingly go over every curve of her body and every wrinkle on her face. She is wearing a cream Victoria Secret's negligee similar to the one she wore on our honeymoon in Aruba. It is similar, but not the same. I realize that we are both lost. In her heart, she feels the same weight and confusion that I do.

I cross. I used to love this woman very much, somewhere inside me I probably still do, but that feeling is now buried beneath general feelings of betrayal, anger, hatred and the frustration of not being able to regain what once was. I slowly brush the hair off her face and feel the warmth of her soft skin. Deeply, I gaze into her eyes. There, I see the pain that she has been hiding. The years of not knowing and estrangement have taken their toll on her too. A single tear slips down her cheek before she nuzzles her head into my shoulder. She holds me tightly. All I can think about is the million times she begged me not to go. She had called me pig-headed, and she was right. I stroke her hair. It smells familiar. I wonder if she still uses the same shampoo.

I am no longer the man she remembers, and I will never, can never, be him again. I don't know where I'm going to go. There is no where for me to run, but I can't sit here and pretend that the world isn't falling apart. I have seen things no human being should ever see. Eyes, cold with death, stared up at me, begged me for help and all I could do was run. The brave American I thought I was, puffed up with my own sense of diplomatic duty...putting those commibastards back from where they came. I was wrong. We were wrong. In that horrible place, I discovered that I was weak— no weaker than any other

man, simply mortal. There was no room for this realization in my old life. I have to go somewhere so I could start fresh. As far as I am concerned, Arthur Wellington West III died over there in the line of duty. The man standing here now is Art West—a simple, average, middle-class Joe who does not belong in this penthouse or this life.

I release her frail body with care and give her a kiss on the forehead. Steping backward, I look at her for the last time. I do a clipped pivot, just like I had done endlessly in the army, and walk away. I feel her eyes boring into my back. She knows there is no other way. It is better to leave with the pleasant memories we have than ruin everything we shared by trying fruitlessly to reconstruct the past. I breathe deeply and pick up my suitcase, leaving without a single word.

— Sara Sterling Ely '96

Punker Dave

Those fucking kids on their goddamn skateboards.
Screeching “fuck-you” and drinking beer so they
don’t have to admit their lives are so hard
that their childhood hormones and their teeth stain

with the bile and stale beer come up, screaming
“I don’t care!” because their parents are ruined
by alcohol and despair and beatings.
David fucked that girl and laughed while she cried.

The taste for cunt and blood—yearning for sad
America and the shaven scalp—stings
like the IV dripping life into Dad,
who somehow now inspires love, unfeeling.

David screams with bright tears, “I’m glad you’re dead”
regretting all those things he never said.

— Trevett Allen '95

still looking for the perfect line

(for jennifer)

I

Throwing chemical praises
to the aching night eye
and the clammy legs that spawn.

Staring at a green penny on the road:
closing in the dark to pick it up
and clamping down
for a taste of the luck
often held, or loved, or had.

Now Old Precision
begs for another reason
not to open the door for Joy:
he cries,
and paints his room
with concepts from the grit of cold copper,

then lies bitter
on the film of morning tongue.

The spinning coin is cast into the twilight,
winks, but invites no report of Fortune
or ever finding home.

II

The carmine blaze of the rising sun
rolls red
and stretches like a phoenix egg,
searing the disquiet capacities
that lie face down
on the empty field of mind.

The contorted sleepers
The crazed, summer burning—

She talked about a glass dragonfly
that can darn your ear to your head,
darting up
from a numb, blue haze

like a needle
humming above this mist-armed,
yawning lake.

here on the ferry,
it enters my body through the head—
words that tear and prod and numb the flesh
turning my stomach, those fallen
in absent fear.

My ears are stitched by resonance
then silence;
and I can hear the cicadae hum
of the creatures I spawned last night

and the chaste picture
in white that soared above
pinning me to the earth
through hips and arms,
legs.

III

The emptiness golden
the sun already above and beside;
the water regains its solidity,
and I've put the precision man
and the old dragonfly to bed.

She drives, and spares us the words,
and we are drained
the sleepers, too
by the violent nature of diurnal,
(solar) beginnings and ends.

The sun is still in the sky
until it bursts the field
where the sleepers awake
to look for coins, for doubt,
for music that is governed by
the aching night eye.

— ryan shafer '94



– Untitled, Lizzie Loud '95

“Civil War”

I hide my face,
So that the black man in the orange vest
Hovering over the steaming asphalt
Doesn't see me, spoiled rotten
As I drive by in the red convertible
Daddy gave me.

But now Daddy is gone,
And we haven't spoken in months—
Ran off in a midlife crisis
Moved down South, Alabama bound
The land of the black men in orange vests
Where they call the white man “sir.”

But he shouldn't be called sir
Instead rather spend a day
In an orange vest
Laying blazing asphalt
In the Heart of Dixie
And see a girl just like me drive by
And just for one moment,
Yearn for what he chose to leave behind.

– Katherine Anne Campo '94

Disposable belief

(for stuart)

I

the voice not in time
with the shout chorus
is always mine;
the impatient destructor
that never cowers to say
"nothing of yours can be right."

She jags her even, metal tone
to the cold brilliance that wanes above,
smudged with the rolling,
shapeless eraser of winter clouds.
The titan ensemble that holds the day
low-flying,
and on wires.

They carry the moment
I suddenly realize:

This—
this is the time
that I kick every sorry thing
out of the sacred place that I am not.

I will then cast these into the mother's gut
that could overwhelm all disgust,
and drive me far
into the law of the unforgiving soil.

Or to a cool, motionless somewhere—
to die limbless, clean,
and spent;
fed to the ocean
by the void, insatiable sky.

Love,
even if I were to fall to dust
and to take part in your flesh;
even if I were to ingest
a lean, choice cut of you;
you would not be that far into me:

I would be alone
with her,
and a cannibal as well.

II

Swing I would,
if I could hit the "and" of four,
and understand the trinity of one;
yet, I am none.

You gave me a book, and a rock,
and an ache so dull
it would not go away for days.
but, ah—

These words
are speaking faster than my thoughts,
sparking mobile art
in plasma and synapse,

like last night's spot of blood—
still descending from the granular,
lipid-white wall.

III

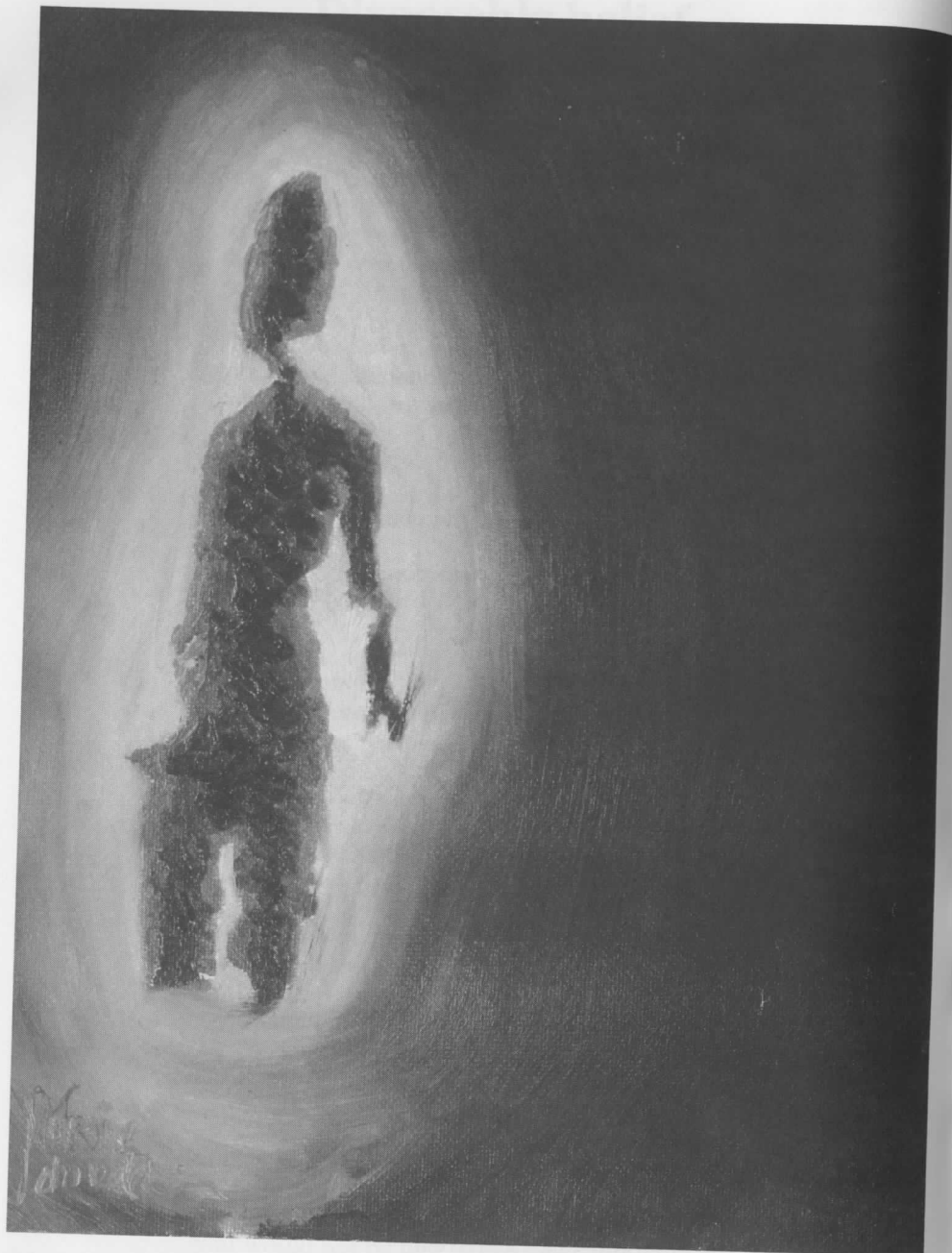
Near innocent
on the campground
with the intent of a Tortured,
German-Jew King;
at the sight of this massacre
I could grow sick,

but I look so charming out of my skin.
Out of my clay and short a rib,
perhaps.

Come, Tool of God!
Let us conquer the in-betweens
and the unfit abuse
their ill-conceived spaces
contrive to contain;
Let us race
between the city and the battle-line;
Let us shake the earth
on the front of a war we can call our own.

IV

Shell-shocked,
she enraptures like a lazy cat
shedding her fur in spring;
like the season of birth
fast asleep in my thawing bones,
she is waiting
and wanting



— Schizophrenic Sylvia, Maria Mohiuddin '95

Excerpt from *Revolutions*, a novel

I got my first taste of America on a cane road in Nancahuazu, a small cluster of farms in the south of Bolivia. There between the rows, brand-new and shining like it would never shine again, was a 1966 Willys Jeep. I strode up to it slowly, like a hunter stalking his prey. I slipped my finger between the grille teeth and found the hood release. I lifted the hood and the big springs at the back held it up with need for a prop-rod. Underneath was the cleanest, most purposeful-looking engine I had ever seen in my life. The little four almost looked lost in the cavernous engine bay, but everything was easy to see and to work on. The valve cover was painted the same olive green as the jeep, and the paint was so new it looked waxed. The air cleaner was painted jet black and in the shade under the hood I could see my reflection in it. I unscrewed the wingnut that held the cover in place and removed the paper filter. I held it up in the sun to look at it. The paper was spotless and so white it hurt to look at it. The creases were evenly spaced and perfectly formed. The rubber seals around top and bottom were black and shiny and they squeaked against my thumbs. I replaced the filter and cover. The exhaust manifold had yet to acquire the thick coat of rust that would protect it from the elements. It still had the rough grey lustre of new cast iron. I pulled the dipstick from the block and wiped it on the rag from my belt. I pushed it back into the big half-inch hole where it locked solidly into place and pulled it again to check the level. It was slightly over-filled and as clear and gold as clover honey. This engine had less than a hundred kilometers on it. I pulled the cap off the radiator and looked at the coolant. It was slightly over-filled as well. The coolant was bright green and smelled sweet. I twisted the cap back on and closed the hood. It had a heavy, solid feel and the big springs made it close smartly. "I almost hate to start it," I said.

"Here." The major tossed me the keys.

I slid behind the wheel and put the key in the dash. I gave the throttle two quick stabs to prime the carburetor and turned the key. The little four barked to life and settled to a mellow throb I could just feel with my foot against the firewall. I kicked the engine off fast idle and looked over the instrument cluster. The tach was sitting right under a thousand. The engine was carrying 15 pounds—about 76 cm—of oil pressure on slow idle. The speedometer only went to 100, but was calibrated in miles per hour. It was hard to get used to the big American units.

I killed the ignition and removed the key. "Put a set of 22-48s under her and she'd float." I said. I didn't need to know the curb weight or axle loading; I could tell just by looking at it that with the right tires this jeep could go anywhere. She was currently sitting on a set of 17-40s—"groundhogs"—which gave her the perfect stance and traction for cutting through brush.

Looking back at that jeep with its matte black bumpers and brush guard, its conspicuous lack of chrome, it seems utilitarian, underpowered, and about as sexy as a shoebox. But it was the straight-forward, sturdy design of that Willys jeep which made everything we did possible.

Not that the major saw it that way. He detested what he called "yankee

imperialism" and was more than a little upset that the advance team had purchased an American jeep. Never mind the fact that they had purchased it on the cheap from a Bolivian colonel who was always eager to turn government surplus into personal profit; never mind the fact that it was the best vehicle for the job; he had given them orders to purchase a Toyota Landcruiser and they had disobeyed him. He saw it as a bad omen—both the blatant disregard for his instructions and the fact that he had to conduct his campaign from the driver's seat of an American jeep. He had dreams of antagonizing the Bolivian army, of turning Bolivia into a staging area for continent-wide revolution, and of bogging the Americans down in another Vietnam. Me, I couldn't have cared less. I was in it for the money and the chance to get out of the government garage—my own ticket to America. I was the best and the major knew it. He was willing to pay for the best; giving me \$2500 U.S. up front with another \$2500 to be paid at the end of our year in Bolivia. He hated handling American currency but it was the most stable we could carry—more highly esteemed among the peasants than any Bolivian currency—and I had insisted upon it.

The plan was to follow the Nanchahuau River northward from our camp in Nanchahuazu to the fork of the Masicuri; from there it would be only a short distance to the Bolivian barracks. It was to be a reconnaissance/training mission, a sort of break-in period for the jeep and the men. Of course it wasn't long before we ran into trouble—mechanical and otherwise.

"Tuma, Rolando, Ricardo," the major called the others to the jeep. Let's go." He finished lashing down the supplies in back and the three men boarded the jeep. There were special footpegs that had been fitted to the frame by Tuma and Rolando. There was one set of pegs on the rear of the jeep and one on either side, each with corresponding handles. They were the only custom pieces on the truck.

I started the jeep and put it in gear. She went down the cane road just as smooth as silk, and as we came up to speed watched the oil pressure climb steadily to a good, strong 35 pounds. I remember thinking at the time that a man couldn't ask for anymore than that.

– Marcus McLaughlin '94



– Untitled, Keith Chapman '95

The Survivors

(for Aki)

The morning they found you, the sheet you wrapped around
your neck was lined with patterns you once picked; dancing
roses still danced- their pink petals still vibrant with life.

They wondered if it could be easier to accept your head
slumped down, blonde hair covering the dead
smile beneath, if the sheet was a simple, colorless white.

Callous, washed out emotion. Your feet dangled an eternity
from the great heavy chair that lay defeated,
overturned below. How you must have

tried to reach that chair unsuccessfully, kicking through air
when you saw your reflection glare and shriek
back at the sight of yourself. How you must have

cried in despair- unstable- tying, twisting,
wrapping those dancing roses around your
neck while picturing a crowded church; your lover who

would shudder at his mistake, your father finally sober
in shock at the thought of your loss. How selfishly you acted
in a quick scene, not finishing your part. I wish you

could have seen the chapel's stained glass walls—
bright colors against the darkened,
saddened hearts of the audience that loved

your character and the role you played in each of their every
lives. The survivors cry for you still, and for themselves.
Guilty, angry tears they never saw fall from your clear,

blue eyes fall freely from theirs. Tears you choked back
forever that night; strangling yourself with those horrid
dancing roses.

— Kira Pollack '94

Days of Prophecy

It is wonderful how trees
spill blood and fire, losing
their bellies in fall,
straining the road I drive north
to Mount Vernon:
past Ace Hardware where the day's special
is a thirty-foot extension
ladder guaranteed to reach
so damn high it'll make your nose bleed;
at Ben Franklin's five-and-dime
I stop at a red light
and a half-naked mannequin
in the window, eyes wide,
points to the reddening
sky behind me, nails stung crimson,
hands twisted like branches;
past Quick-Mart and Mt. Vernon Academy,
past the Seventh Day Adventist
Church-on-the-Hill
where a neon wagon board lists the weekly
special: These Are Days of Prophecy,
as if all the blood and fire of Armageddon
hadn't already filled the street bridle-high,
leaves slapping the hood
of my car, licking the windows
with scarlet tongues; I duck
as I drive through dying forests,
past houses, junk
piled onto their porches and lawns
and driveways: no one
in sight; I disappear
in a river of red and orange
past shorn fields and smitten creeks
choked with red clay;
past a forgotten vessel,
dry-docked in a meadow
buoyed by pampas grass and cattails,
saw grass cut up through the hull,
ivy cleaving to the cabin; I pull
to the side to wade knee-deep
through the grass and thistles
to lay my hands on
its belly, to run over the rough planks
to the stern to feel its shallow pulse;
from between the loose ribs jumps a fox
I see behind him a tanager's nest
nestled in the bosom, blood red
feathers dripping between planks
covering my feet as they fall.

— Trey Dunham '94



—Untitled, Carrie Horner '97

What To Do

Wake up first, and look across the water,
to the mountains on the other side.
Find your physical bearings- August. Sunset.
Realize that you have been sleeping,
a sunshine's daydream between fields of wild wheat
and the subtle power of the water shuttering
across rocks immovable.
Look at her mouth, softly sliding warmth from within.
Her eyes move under closed lids with thoughts
that capture. Her hair falls like soft snow,
melting into grains of the long dry wheat.
The two powerful colors blend, her hair, the grains,
and you become part of a world that surrounds her,
enveloping you in a majestic glow.

Light a cigarette.
When she wakes, kiss her softly, smile and stand.
Wonder what went into the creation of those eyes.
Walk to the shore and watch the water
Moving like red fields of lava, pushing into
the darkening landscape by the strength of the sun.
Realize then why you've never liked paintings of sunsets.
Immeasurable. Incaptureable.
Monet, Rolf, Picasso, Matisse. What did they know
of the setting sun, pushing through clouds that appear
immovable. That is the power of the sun. It's a force,
a vacuum that moves not mountains, but you.

Understand that the sun tries to take you.
It longs to capture you in the unpaintable painting,
to take you to an endless sunset- if you will follow,
entranced past the lava water and the next set
of mountains, then the next.
Then turn, and look down again at her, capturing
the grains of wheat as her eyes now capture you.
And realize in that vacuum that rest is possible.
Realize that immeasurable beauty is capturing.
And maybe within reach.

— Christopher Harnish '94

Familiar Stranger

A heavy smog swallowed the air and sucked up against the window pane outside her Third Street apartment. Inside, the air stood stale and thick with the haze of cigarette smoke. A cigarette hung smoldering between her stained fingers that morning as she lay disheveled on the single bed, clad only in a pair of colored cotton briefs. Her tired gaze penetrated the smoke stream and happened on the window, where the sky hunkered down like unpolished steel.

She'd been awakened by the muffled yells of the fourth floor neighbor. She could hear the slur of his voice, as she had to hear it every morning. He probably just got in from the night before. In her mind, Jackie could almost smell the whiskey on his breath, like the men she served late nights. They drank past their limits, and she'd keep bringing them more. The more they'd drink, the more hands found their ways clumsily past the hem of Jackie's shorts. But she'd still keep bringing the drinks, and smiling. Anything for that tip.

Jackie cringed at the man's tirade; he sounded too much like her father. Arching her back, she reached a long arm beneath her and slid the tattered quilt to one side. Settling against the cool sheet and drawing the blanket over her, she wished she could lie there, covered, hidden, and never have to go to work again. Snuffing out the cigarette, Jackie rolled over, and the world grew dark as the drunken man's voice faded.

She woke to the steady patter of ice against the window, where the steel sky had grown darker. Reaching to the plastic milk crate beside the bed, Jackie grabbed, by touch, a cigarette and lighter. She held one strong drag, as if that might somehow give her the courage to make it through the night. When her head began to feel the tingle, she released the smoke in a forceful pout and threw back the quilt. Sitting, her feet rested on the cold hardwood floor. The wind-up clock next to the bed ticked out six o'clock p.m.; the alarm wouldn't have rung for another half hour. She turned it off and grabbed a short terrycloth robe from the foot of the bed.

The contents of the mini-fridge did nothing to excite her digestive juices. She grabbed a Coors, and a poptart from the refrigerator top. 'Great breakfast, dinner, whatever you'd call it,' she thought to herself.

She wondered what all those men she'd be serving later would be doing right now. Pulling a little overtime on the job maybe. Some were probably catching a quick meal that somebody else, a cafeteria cook or a dutiful wife, cooked for them. She'd bet that a good deal of those at home for dinner were gearing up to hit their wives, like the neighbor upstairs who can't control his volume, or his temper. Jackie knew that a lot of the guys she served came to the bar with a woman's blood on their hands. And the rush of the act made them damn thirsty.

Jackie swigged the last of her beer, and dumped the can in the paper bag by the fridge. The course booklet under the poptart box caught her attention. She pulled it up and flipped through. The community college offered night courses for continuing education, and Jackie had marked the courses she thought looked most interesting. "Who am I kidding?" she spoke aloud to the smoke filled room. She had to work nights, and she couldn't manage day classes, because that was her time to sleep.

In the bathroom, she turned on the shower and let the water generate from cold

to luke warm as she stripped off her robe and briefs. She stepped into the tub, drawing the curtain behind her, and lingered as the warm massaging rhythm graced her shoulders. She wished she could get back under the covers again, and sleep until morning.

In the main room, away from the warm steam of the shower, the air felt frigid, and Jackie's damp feet stuck to the slick floor. On the couch lay her work outfit. The halter shirt was a little wrinkled from the night before, but it would do. She shook it out and laid it beside the shorts. She took a couple minutes to apply Apple Blossom lotion to every part of her body, helping the skin look healthy and feel silky to the touch.

From the little blue chipped dresser, she pulled a satiny pair of underwear, and slid them on under the robe; then the bright orange shorts that were a little shorter than the length of her buttocks. She dropped the robe onto the couch and struggled, towel still wrapped on her head, into the white half-tee shirt with the loud logo "JUGS" in bright orange across the front.

Back in the bathroom, Jackie used the blow dryer and a lot of hairspray to create height in the bangs. Then she teased it to perfection, giving it that shaggy look that the men seemed to like so much; she always made just marginally more in tips when she did her hair this way. She brushed her teeth, then set to work on her makeup.

Taking special care to create an even application of foundation, she made sure to cover the eclipsed half-moons under her eyes, and to blend in well below the chin, so that no line would be visible. Then she stroked on blush, bright on the cheekbones, and powder to soften the look and give that glow to the face. Then the eyes: she applied three shades of shadow, blending expertly with a special brush, penciled on brown eyeliner above and below, and swept on a brown-black mascara whose tube promised that her eyelashes would go on forever. Lastly she drew on a dark lipliner, tracing for the most part her natural line, fudging a little here and there to create extra fullness. Then she filled in the stencil tracing with a dark wine lipstick, heavy and full.

Jackie threw her hair back from her shoulders, and took in the full view of herself. "Ah, transformed!" she said aloud. At the dresser, she took out of a cloth-covered box a gold chain necklace with a rhinestone heart pendant dangling from it. She fastened the chain behind her neck, the heart landing on her bare skin, just above the beginning dent of her cleavage.

She pulled on white fold down socks and small white tennis shoes. Over her 'uniform', Jackie dressed in jeans and an old sweatshirt. She took few minutes for a last cigarette, then threw on her jacket and gloves. Laving the apartment, she secured both outside locks behind her. At the first floor, she skated across the parking lot to the bus stop.

After only a few moments in the cold, the shiny metal bus came lumbering down Third, its headlights framing Jackie. She boarded, dropping a pocket full of change into the box. As the bus rumbled toward her destination, Jackie noticed a neighboring passenger who seemed to be staring. Out of the corner of her eye sat a man whose gaze seemed directed at Jackie. She avoided eye contact with him by shifting slightly in her seat, facing more forward. She'd lived in this city a long time, but the familiar gaze of a stranger was something that always made her nervous.

Finally, at Thayer and Central, the bus came to a stop, and Jackie exited, conscious of the man's penetrating stare. She did not look back as the bus pulled away. Instead, as she went inside, she looked up at the neon sign over the building: "JUGS". Inside, Cara was seated at one of the high chrome-legged bar stools, and Roger stood behind the long wood-top counter, preparing for the night ahead.

"Why don't you give me one before I have to give em to everybody else?" Cara taunted the bartender. "Shot of Jack Black would do me just fine."

"I ain't giving you one tonight just like I never give you one before you star" Roger replied. "I don't like the way you get out there when you've been drinking. You get too... oozy." Cara gave him a questioning look, and he answered, "You know exactly what I mean. No booze."

Cara looked over her halter-clad shoulder at the approaching Jackie. Clouded in a haze of cigarette smoke came the words, "Jackie, Rog won't give me something to help me through this dreaded night." Cara's melodrama grew more overdone, "I don't think I'll make it. What if I end up flipping out and killing one of those jerks when he plows his hand up my shorts?" Her tone shifted to dead seriousness, "I swear one of these days I'm gonna plow right into one of those fuckers."

Cara dragged hard on her cigarette, and Jackie responded, "I know exactly how you feel."

"Really Jackie, don't you just want to slam those beer bags a rough one in the face every damn time they do that?" Drives me fucking crazy. I don't know how you handle it so well. You just smile and walk away, gritting your teeth the whole time, but they'd never know it. Isn't that right? I see it. You put on a great show. I don't know how you do it. Boy, I'll tell you, I've spilled my share of beer in boys' laps over the years. I just lose it sometimes."

Roger answered for Jackie, "Jackie's more accommodating than you are, Cara. She knows how to pull in the bucks. In more ways than one," he laughed at his own play on words. Neither woman cracked a smile.

In the back room, Jackie took off her jacket and gloves, and laid them on a vacant chair. It was cold in the little room, but Roger would be opening the doors in five minutes, so she went ahead and stepped out of her jeans, and slid the sweatshirt off over her head. The cold air assaulted her lightly clad body, and she shivered. "Damn," she complained to herself, as she searched the room for an order pad. Finding one, and a pen, she hurried out of the little room and back into the bar, where the heat was just beginning to circulate. "Damn," this time she addressed the bartender, "you think you could keep it any colder back there, Rog?"

Roger apparently took it as a rhetorical question, not bothering to answer. "He just likes to get a look at our chests when we come out from back there," Cara said. "Isn't that right, Roger?" He made himself look busy by wiping out beer mugs with a rag, but a slight grin perked the edge of his mouth.

Jackie had thought of this before, and knew Cara was exactly right. "Screw you, Roger," she said; the comment was tempered with just enough sarcasm to keep her on the job.

By 10:30, the place was full, mostly with regulars. There were also out-of-towners, some of the guys who stayed at the George Washington Motel across the highway. They were always the worst; they could be rude to anyone, and get away with almost anything, because tomorrow they'd be gone forever.

Tohight there was a crude one at booth six, and Jackie was doing everything she could to put up with his comments and drunken fumbblings. While picking up the tenth beer for this man, Jackie leaned over the bar. "Another Golden for the foreigner. Hey Roger, this tom at six is a real jackass."

Roger bent to grab the beer from beneath the bar. "All right, Jackie, what do you want me to do, kick him out? He's the best customer in here tonight."

Taking the beer, Jackie shot a glance over to the front door where the bouncer was standing watch. Charlie's six foot, four inch frame with three hundred pounds of surrounding tissue was overbearing, and Jackie had witnessed his persuasion in getting people to leave the bar. He was firm, but didn't get into the rough stuff unless he had to.

At the booth, Jackie stood away from the table, at the greatest distance possible, and leaned in to place the beer in front of the man. Despite her distance, he reached out with two thick, hairy arms, grabbed Jackie around the hips, and pulled her with great force, into the booth. Out of beath, Jackie struggled against the man, but he was large, and held her tight on his lap. She let out a yelp, but in the quick seconds before anyone could react, it happened. As she fought against him with all her strength, the man slid his hand inside her shorts, beneath her underwear. She screamed as she felt the jamming penetration of his fat, cold fingers.

Suddenly Charlie was over them, and Roger just behind his shoulder. Charlie grabbed the man's head from behind and slammed it full force into the thick wooden back of the booth. Jackie felt the man's hand release and leave her, and her body shivered; she felt burning, and numb. Charlie was grabbing the man's torso from behind, wrenching him half out of the booth. Jackie pulled her legs in close, cowering in the corner. The man's eyes glared hard, condemning, at Jackie as he was pulled out of the booth. He was roughly escorted from the building by Charlie, Roger, and several of the bar regulars. He would never be allowed in the door again, but Jackie was sure that didn't matter to the man. He'd be gone forever as soon as tomorrow.

Cara was at the booth, holding Jackie, comforting her. "My god, baby, what did he do to you? We'll get you to a doctor just as soon as..."

"No," Jackie snapped, her father's hands filling her mind. "No, I'll be fine. Just a little rough stuff. I can handle it." She was trembling, and could feel the cold of the sweat beginning to dry on her skin. "I'm okay, Cara. I just need a minute."

"Honey, I'll take you home, okay? You just hold on a minute until the boys get settled down. Let's get you into the back room."

Cara helped Jackie up from the booth, and Jackie leaned on Cara's arm to help support her weak body. Jackie suddenly felt naked. She wasn't wearing enough clothes. She was cold, and she felt on display in front of the world, as she had in her wet swimsuit at her thirteenth birthday party. In the back room, she got dressed as quickly as possible. She didn't want to feel so naked anymore. She needed some covering, but the burning between her thighs made putting on her jeans difficult and slow-going.

Out in the bar, things had died down considerably. Charlie stood at his post by the front door, guarding. Roger was waiting just outside the door to the back room. When the women emerged, he-started, "Jackie, are you hurt? Jesus, I can't believe that fucker. Are you okay? Did he hurt you?" Roger was out of breath.

"She's okay," Cara said, holding Jackie around the shoulders. "I'm taking her home."

"Fine. Good. You get some rest, Jackie. Give me a call tomorrow, okay?"

Jackie couldn't seem to speak. Instead, she nodded her head in agreement. She couldn't imagine coming back to work tomorrow night, wearing that skimpy costume. How could she ever let a man fumble at her shorts hem again? At the door, Jackie's throat freed up, and she managed a small "Thank you" to Charlie.

The ride in Cara's car was silent, but Cara's fingers gripped the steering wheel in tight fists. She huffed sighs under her breath, as if to precede statements, but the statements never came. Jackie rode slumped against the seat, eyes staring ahead.

At Jackie's apartment, Cara walked her in, then left her alone; asking her to call if she needed anything. Jackie went immediately to the bathroom and turned the shower on hot. She peeled off the layers of clothing, wadding up the "JUGS" shirt and pants and throwing them in the bathroom corner. Her underwear, speckled red in the crotch, went in the waste basket.

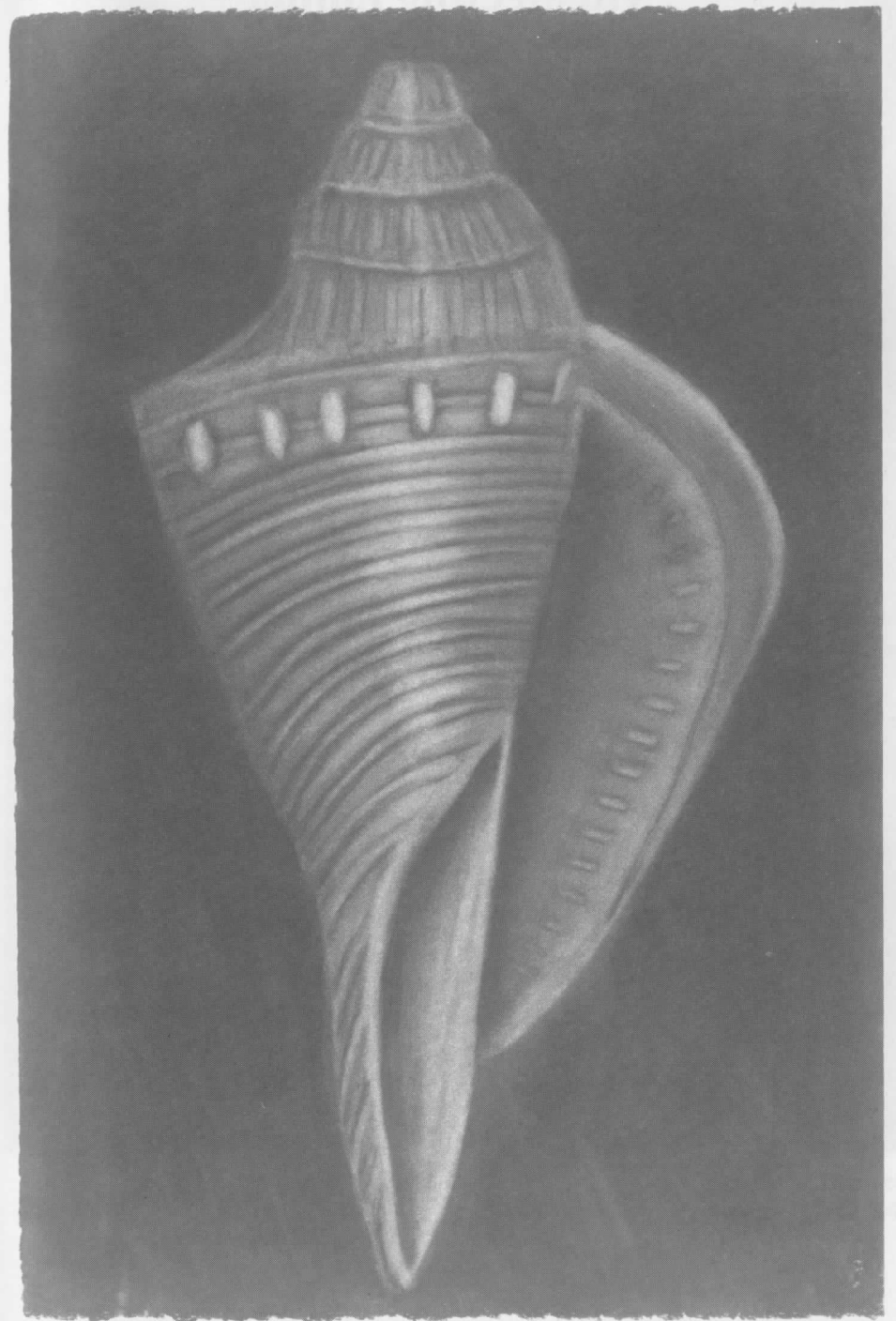
The water felt almost too hot on her still trembling skin, but she needed it that way. Water didn't cleanse unless it was extremely hot. She soaped down her whole body, wiping away the dried sweat. The soap burned like salt, but she knew it was necessary for the cleansing. All she could think of was that man's fingers, fat and cold. Thick and familiar. She wanted to hide.

She turned off the shower, dried off well, and pulled her sweatshirt back over her head. She ran the blow dryer through her hair, so her scalp wouldn't freeze in the cold air outside the bathroom. She found a pair of comfortable cotton underwear and pulled them on gingerly, then a pair of sweatpants and thick cotton socks.

Easing into bed, she pulled the cover up to her neck, realizing that she was still shaking. She lay there a long time listening to the night, trying to forget.

She woke to the persistent patter of rain on the window. Outside, the sky was a sheet metal gray, cold, numb. She turned on her side and felt the dull throbbing between her legs. Lighting a cigarette from the bedside milk crate, she let one arm be exposed to a chilling draft in the room. She lay a long time, staring at the dark sky, holding in nicotine drags. When the wind-up clock ticked out six-thirty p.m., Jackie got out of bed. She found her uniform crumpled in a wad in one corner of the bathroom floor. The shirt was a little wrinkled, so she shook it out, and laid it on the bathroom sink with the little orange shorts. They'd be ready when she got out of the shower.

— Lisa Stillman '95



—Untitled, John Salter '97

On Meeting Emma

The night you came screaming into the world
None of us had prepared for you.
You hastened your arrival
As if you'd grown tired of the wait,
or even knew how much strength
Your small body would have
When at last your lungs filled
With the sweet new air.
Somehow the reality —
Your matted black hair,
The purple-pinkness of your skin,
The unfamiliar voice
With which you greeted us —
Somehow we had passed over it
In our anticipation.
But the world around me became clear
When I held you for the first time.

I could not fathom God until I met you.
It was raining when you came.

— Allison Lemieux '95



—Nude Figure,
James Oliver '94

Tathagata

Change keeps me awake at night.
I would like to rename the stars
instead of asking for directions.
I stay in place long enough to remember
the eternal roar spiraling in a shell.
The tumbling of days confuses dreams.

I saw Apollo. He ran through my dreams,
taking over the night.
Heralding the dawn with a giant conch shell
his song gleamed under the sleepy dust of stars.
Leaving me to the hazy world of "remember",
he bellowed out direction

like a fog horn. Guided by the source of all direction
I tunneled through clouds of memory, chiseling out my dreams.
I found we know all we need, if we remember
patterns of time. Inside the quiet passage of night
I saw an infinity in the sea, reflected by stars
as the deep sky covered earth like a shell.

Collecting ridges of time in empty shells
I keep walking in the sloping direction
of shorelines. The world mirrors stars
in the constellations of my dreams,
as I plot my course. Like a sailor navigating night,
gliding across the ports of yesterday I remember.

It is worth taking the time to remember
the varied textures of song and shell,
tossed about in the waves of night.
As time falls away in a distant direction
I find the infinite possibility of dreams
in as many ways as there are stars.

I have given up counting stars.
The numbers grew larger than I could remember.
I found the colors of dreams
painted along the spirals of sea shells.
Following the rhythm of the tide's direction
I cross even the darkest night.

Broken memories I have stored in shells
reveal themselves in tides of floating dreams.
They are the beacons in the night.

– Leslie Dana Wells '94

On Fences and My Dogs

I helped my next door neighbor put up a fence today.
Down the western slop, and off of my back porch,
across what was a long endless field to the sun,
the imaginary property line has been replaced
with something more concrete: oak actually.
It's not that Turbo and Charlie, my 2 springer spaniels,
bothered him, and the wood fence won't stop them anyway.
Besides, my neighbor loves my dogs,
he just felt some sort of need to designate "his own".
The dogs don't pay any attention to these human boundaries.

We laid the rough rods of oak, two across, into the joint posts,
spaced every 10 ft. from the back woods up to the new road
that they paved last summer. Every 10 ft. across the field.
Gus, the man in the truck who brought the wood this morning,
burned a cigarette, a rod he called it, and told us all about
this here wood. "It's been pressurized and woolmanized,
chemically treated to make it last a lifetime." As he finished
his rod, he told us, "this fence will last forever."

Now I know these fields like I know my dogs, and I know
"forever" is the blink of an eye to the sun. And it's a long way
to that sun that stretches across one endless field. And the sun
can see where the backwoods grew to the fragmented field.
But don't tell me that fence will last forever. Because I've seen
that sun fall for 50 years from my back porch, but it can't
see me or my dogs or that new road. and I know damn well
it can't see that "forever" fence, because next time the sun
blinks, we'll all be gone.

– Christopher Harnish '94

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