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Exile Vol. XLIII No. 1

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Exile Vol. XLIII No. 1

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Exile
Denison University's
Literary and Art Magazine

41st Year

Fall Issue

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Denison University's
Literary and Art Magazine

41st Year

Fall Issue [1996]

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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enter play

out
brush it
with way out
tag me knee
mic's phon(èlè)
freeze or
frame decan
t(o(e))s and
tthis tthat
(ness) polly
(a) phony
suit
yours your
suit hers
spade a spade
whore hooey hoe
who who
ore wore war ore
smore a s ink
ohh pate did
sew amour
made maid
re de fur
to maid made to
wa rd ar dor or
a farm moor in
the del
eat (s) my (s) word
top top
sign

—alex e. blazer

sunday's sex ed fundamentals

the good book of bedwetting
by god
where only choice moms choose jism
has force fed feared me
into the heteroliance
where my cock works orange-juicy
life-giving and natural sugar
into a pit of fuzzy and fermenting
peaches
rather than those leeches
within those breeches
of contract (aka covenant)
wherein said parties party
for the sake of partying
when the awful but lawful law way
states no way
to any kind of play
including the derivatives pay and lay
excluding the extrapolation playtex
-for thou shalt keep good hygiene-
but not its derivative latex
which serves and protects
from suffering
by buffering

—alex e. blazer

Dancing, Dedicated to Shannon

By the old telephone pole
on which the rusted bus sign hung,
I used to wait for a ride
that was a long time in coming.

Along with me there always stood
a girl about my age;
we never exchanged a single word
as we waited there together.

Never simply standing put,
she would click her heels on
the pavement, and mouth
words of silent songs.

The girl would sway
from side to side
as passing drivers
turned their eyes
from the road
to her shifting form,
always dancing
to that song
in her head.

Rain, snow, hail
and wind never
chased away her
rhythm.
I would stand
in the cold
and swear
about gloves
and a hat
or a forgotten
umbrella,
and she would laugh
as the rain weighted
her jacket and the hail
stuck in her
hair.

I would always wait
in quiet with my
hands dug deep
in my pockets, one
finger upon the fare,
looking down the
endless road,
straining my
eyes watching
for the distant
bus.

Time passed
hellishly slow,
all the while
the girl danced
and swayed past
the long winter
days.

God, sometimes
I too could
hear that song.

—Paul Genesis Durica

On the Rocks

Rocketman sits
hunched over and folded
like an old, weather-beat lawn chair.

Skinny, for he's been whittled
to the bone
by the consistent chipping
on his vodka chisel.

At first,
he's the lonely drunk in the corner
stepping over even *his* limits—
his eyes waltzing
his speech slurred.

But then
something...becomes clear.
Even through the smoky haze,
in the air
and, in the brain
through a richness of articulation
an amazing captivation—
The drunk is brilliant.

He rocks
back and forth on his now U-shaped spine,
to the hythm
of the stories he tells.
Seven hits of acid
washed down by a paper cup
half full of concentrated orange juice.

Breakfast in Vietnam.

Sucking vodka
of the nipples of Vietnamese women
as a lame child screams
from the next room over.

Dinner is finished
and he begins to come down.

Rocketman takes a long, slow swig
of his Milwaukee's Best,
for his vodka I.V.

 has run dry—
and reminisces the beauty
of his first love.

The scent of wildflowers
in her hair
still fresh in his mind.
He watches for a moment

Breathing her in
he sees her there
right in front of him.
She dances in slow motion
to a commodious silence

And he wants to touch her
 but can't

He lives
on vodka and his past
calling himself
 a warrior.

A battle
between good and bad memories...
the vodka has to fight harder these days
 to drown the bad.

As for the good,
They float like ice
 slowly melting.

—Katie Keller

In Heritage Station, Huntington, WV

The boxcar child pokes her braided head
between the metal rails. One hand clutches
a used doll, caked with wear and love's grime.
She poses gap-toothed for a Polaroid,
cameo-like behind the bars. She scampers
along cobblestones on dirty bare feet.

We stroll past, through the replica village
and enter the restaurant. A blond in a too-tight skirt
seats us. Some honey-toned French major spouts
specials with a southern twang. We order seafood
fresh from the heart of the Midwest. A redneck
stumbles in, shouting "God is dead!"

A sigh, a clattering spoon, and unimpressed
patrons resume their dining.

—Trish Klei

Untitled

Bob takes off his John Deere hat, scratches his balding head, and looks at the damp ground.

"Well, Harold, what do you think? Can you guys work in this?" Harold does not answer immediately, but instead ambles over in the direction of the newly dug retention pond. Chuck is anxious to get the day started.

"Hell, this ain't no problem. I run that trackhoe in more mud than this before. Let's get a move on."

"Well, I don't know." Bob seems to forget the debate at hand, returning to his standard silence filler. "Let's see..." He watches Harold stroll back from the pond.

"What did it rain last night, two, three hours?" Harold asks upon returning.

"Not even that. I'd say no more than an hour," Chuck quickly replies, and stalks off towards his trackhoe. Harold squints at the overcast sky.

"I'd say we'd be pretty safe to go today. Might have trouble with those earth movers running through the mud in that new pond, but I'll just pull 'em out with my dozer." His two cents contributed, Harold turns and heads towards the mammoth yellow bulldozer parked at the end of the row of awaiting construction equipment. Chuck is already there, warming up his machine, awaiting the day's assignment. Bob walks gently over to the group of men standing by their trucks which have been parked in the dirt at whatever angles seemed appropriate for a Monday morning. He stands and talks for a few minutes, gesturing towards various locations on the mud plain of the construction site. When he is finished, the men saunter off to their respective vehicles, prepared for another day of dirt work. Adam and I watch the machines spit their first black clouds into the thick air and rumble across the site. We have been standing by my station wagon, surveying the scene with groggy heads and half closed eyes. Although we have pried ourselves from four hours of sleep, driven halfway across town and stood in the already muggy morning air for half an hour now, we would be more than happy to retrace our steps and sleep until noon. Bob rummages around in the bed of his red pickup, a well-worn vehicle which sports a faded "Corbit and Corbit Construction" label painted on the door. Perhaps he has forgotten us again, and we will stand invisibly by the station wagon for the greater part of the morning. This is a far better alternative to lassoing Bob's attention to find out if there is actual work for us to do. For thirteen-fifty an hour, we are more than content to stand and wait as long as it takes for the cogs in the old man's brain to work themselves free and tell him to glance in our direction. Adam hops up on the hood of the station wagon, but quickly jumps off.

"Your damn car's still hot from the ride over here."

"Yeah." I reply, "Everything's going to be hot today. And humid. I'm already stuck to my shirt." Bob finds what he is searching for, an ancient hand-sledge, turns in our direction, and motions for us to come over to his truck. I shake my head at Adam. "Shit. No sleeping today." We stumble in Bob's direction, and the mud begins to collect in our boot treads.

"Jump on in the back there," says Bob, climbing into the driver's seat. Adam and I scale the side of the pickup and begin to clear secure seats in the collection of wooden stakes, shovels, rakes, broken hammers, chains, and Diet Coke cans that litter the bed of Bob's pickup. We are almost seated when he drops the truck into gear, nearly throwing Adam over the side. Adam curses, recovers, and glares in Bob's direction. Bob, however, is busy navigating across the muddy plain, managing to travel directly through the path of every massive yellow beast that rumbles around the site. He dodges in front of an oncoming earth mover, and heads straight for a large ditch. I look at Adam.

"He sees that, doesn't he?"

"He's got to." Adam replies. As we approach the ditch, the truck's speed remains a steady twenty miles per hour. Adam braces himself for the impact, and I follow suit. Seconds later, we are both thrown forward against the cab of the pickup, which comes to a halt at a notably un-level angle. Adam looks at me, does a forehead-slap, and jumps out of the truck. Bob slowly opens the door, tries to get out, and finds that he cannot. He then looks down, unfastens his seat belt, and repeats the attempt. Free of the truck, he bends down and examines the front wheel, which is spinning free in the ditch. The truck rests on its frame and back wheels. Bob takes account of the situation, a completely blank expression on his face. He seems unable to comprehend what has just happened, and is slowly adjusting to the fact that yes, there actually is a large absence of ground under the front of his truck. "Let's see..." He turns to Adam and says, "Why don't you go get Harold over there." Adam rolls his eyes and stalks away, shaking his head. "You, grab a chain out of my truck there, and wrap it around the hitch there. Get the long one." I rummage around in the bed of the truck, unable to determine which of the three rusty chains is the "long one." I toss all three to the ground, jump down from the truck, and untangle them. They are all the same length. I check back in the bed to see if I have missed one, but no other chains are to be seen. Bob is gazing intently across the site, where Harold's bulldozer has changed direction and is making its way through the mud towards us, with Adam hanging off of the side. I envy him, because of all the tasks we've been given, riding on any piece of construction equipment is the greatest. Hanging on to a massive piece of metal for dear life is the most desired duty on the site, for pure excitement value as well as opportunity for cool movement through the stagnant summer air. The dozer rumbles closer, and I turn back to the dilemma of the chains.

"Uh, Bob, which chain did you want?" Bob turns and points to one.

"The long one there." I look at him, then back at the chains, which are still the same length.

"Oh, yeah." I attach the chain, fastening the hook to make small loop around the truck's trailer hitch. The dozer arrives and comes to a halt just short of the truck. Harold looks down at me, shakes his head, and climbs down from his seat. He strides angrily over to my chain-hitch combination.

"This ain't no way wrap a chain! They teach you anything, son? Look, you've got to pop the hook in here between the links. And you can't put it around the hitch. That thing slips off, it'll kill someone, probably me." He unhooks the chain, reaches under the truck and wraps it around a towing hook that I had failed to notice. He then re-hooks the chain. "See, like that, between the links." I see no difference in his technique and mine, but choose keep this observation to myself. Harold seems to know what he's doing, or at least to think he knows what he's doing. He attaches the other end of the chain to a hook on the dozer's bucket, jumps back in the seat, and revs the engine. The dozer slides momentarily in the muddy ground. The tracks quickly find a bite, but the trucks wheels do not move. Instead, the dozer's force drags the truck out of the ditch with its wheels fully locked. Bob has forgotten to take the truck out of drive, and it's possible the emergency brake might even be on. Bob frowns at the failure of his truck's wheels to function. Harold has had enough. He gestures for me to unhook the chain, which I quickly do. Free of the situation, Harold spins his dozer and cruises away.

The morning passes by at a painful crawl. Adam and I have been given a stack of wooden stakes, a small sledge hammer, a tape measure, and a black permanent marker. Our assignment is to pound rows of stakes into the ground across the site and make a mark on the stakes one foot above the ground. Bob apparently has some greater purpose in mind for this task, but he has failed to share his vision with us. The sun still hides behind the overcast clouds, but its effects are unmistakable. The warm and humid air of the morning

has become the hot and humid air of the late morning. Our heads are clogged with the moisture, adding to the haze of our brief night's rest. By now our boots are little more than mud magnets, the added weight making our already difficult steps a greater challenge than we're really up to. Adam looks up from the stake he has just driven home.

"Union alert, twelve o'clock." I look up to see the black Cadillac of the union representative pulling into the lot. Being two college kids interested in milking the union wage without coughing up the union dues, we are not especially interested in talking to the driver of the Caddy. We've tolerated his hassles twice already this summer, and have managed to put him off for one reason or another. Today seems like a good day for outright avoidance. We duck behind a stack of pipes sitting in the middle of the site. Adam peeks out from behind them. "I think he's coming over here. Man, I can not deal with this guy today."

"Me neither." I reply. "How about that hole over there?" I point to a large hole situated at the far end of the pipes which Chuck dug last week, presumably for a manhole or other grand plan of Bob's. In any event, the hole remains empty and seems a good hideout. Keeping low behind the pipes, Adam and I commando to the edge of the hole and jump in. It is a deep hole. Definitely deeper than I remembered. It is also a wet hole, one that has collected a good bit of rain over the weekend. We are ankle deep in mud and a far enough away from ground level to realize that we're going to need some help getting out.

"What a lovely hole you've discovered," Adam smirks at me.

"Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time..."

"Man, my feet are soaking, my boots are probably going to be a permanent addition to this mud, and it's entirely possible that Bob will forget about us. We could be down here all day!" He is really unhappy with me.

"I'm sorry!" I reply. "So we'll be stuck in a hole for the day, so what? It's cooler down here, pretty shaded, and there definitely aren't any stupid stakes to be pounded into the ground. Except for lunch, we're pretty set." Adam rolls his eyes, shakes his head, and then slowly starts laughing. Soon we're both having a good chuckle at our predicament.

"Well, now there's a captive audience if I ever saw one." Adam and I look up to the top of the hole to see the union guy grinning down at us. It is not a good grin. It is the grin of a bear who has found a barrel of salmon. "So how about signing some papers for me, boys?" It is only ten in the morning.

—Tyler Smith



Untitled

what has happened
to the pink blush anger
of the plastic wheel
with the dent

and the hole

and the stone
that rattled and noisily chided me
as the wheel spun around?

if i peddled hard enough
the cement noise drowned out
that little pebble

that boulder on my heart.

i used to be a pink blur.

—erika laine hansen

Androgynous Implications

1. And I watched those men
fanning cards.
sitting still, legs crossed
left over right
at the well-waxed tables closest to the door
elbows hanging from edges of square surface—
like the way they dangle
as if by their long locks
from the slippery end of the spectrum.

And i chopped my identity
at the very roots.
it now lays limp and thin
in an otherwise empty dresser drawer
of a rose and green boudoir.

2. Ambiguous implication—
my attempt: abbreviation.
solace in their soft jaws, gender's
only clue: the steadfast of names.
the games are gone;
don't raise my arms,
my hands to hide.
no longer alarmed
at the bare of smooth
—harsh
the sting of stubble.

—Elizabeth Nutting

Patterns of the Clouds

I.

As we sat there, Daddy, I told you the sky was dark and I thought it would rain.
You said it wouldn't though, and that it only rains in the afternoon here.
But I thought I knew the patterns of the clouds 'cause
Mama used to teach me how to predict the storms.
All those nights you told her that she didn't need to teach me,
But they picked me to be the weather girl at school in the third grade anyway.
She tried to tell me about boys, too, but I didn't care back then
The rain only meant I had to go to the garage and put my bike away.
I listened to you and believed what you told me.
I didn't care about the rain or the weatherman.
And I would've been happy to put my bike away right beside my umbrella.
I should've known that puddles meant more than just a rainfall.

II.

I always wondered how she learned patterns of the storm clouds
But when they come around so often you get to knowing these things.
Maybe it should've only rained in the afternoons, but it rained late at night
After the stories and I was in bed, everything was quiet
Except you. Even Mama didn't make a sound, because she didn't want to wake me.
But she taught me too well, and I always knew when the storms were coming.
I tried not to hear them, but the pounding never let up, and I could feel her silence
She listened to you and believed what you told her.
She didn't care about the rain or the weatherman; she just wanted it all to go away.

All she ever wanted was for me to be safe, just safe inside the garage with my bike.

—Angela Rae Bliss

Sister, Sister, Aspirations

Wants to be a ginger-haired show girl
with tiny slits of speckled green for eyes
meet those that are dark
own thick and unplucked brows.

the young dead men
work six nights a week
at the factory, north end
small Ohio town.

Her sister dances
as if on smooth gusts of wind
like a butterfly with breasts.
moves gracefully.

a dead of night dance—
daytime adaptation
for animal eyes and gaps—
lips parted, coated

heavy drool
a dog's open jaw
luminescent liquid lust
reflects the patches of
silver light, disco ball.

Watches from wings
stationary, not flying deftly
seductively some nights

like butterfly baby doll.
orange outer radiates
an uncertain passion

nights when they allow
their hard eyes
to burrow inside
her body's ballet.

—Elizabeth Nutting

Sick Girl

I

You're laughing at me up there, aren't you?
Beautiful Europe awaits beyond the window
you flew in, wretch, and here I lie
for the third day, unable to eat or drink
and no appetite besides
without energy except for frequent trips to the W.C. and back

desiring only darkness for sleep,
a respite from pain and discomfort
but when I awake. . .
all in a sweat, one minute ice the next burning as if out in the
open sun
and you, drone that you are, stealing my silence
apathetic to my condition

With so much time to think and think and think some more
and wonder if I were perhaps entering a state of delirium?
and you don't help

I look to the ancient lighting fixture, ponder to myself—
has anyone ever systematically examined the flight patterns of
house flies?
(and if so, why?)

I stare and stare as you make your rounds about the bulbs
geometric patterns, shapes my pupils trace:
triangle, rectangle . . . pentagon?
zig zag track back to the star whirl ocean curl maz

I'm dizzy now
I wish you were.

II

He flew away. I am glad, yet disappointed.
I am desperate for entertainment.
My head is filling with clouds.
I take in my surroundings from my horizontal position:
foot board
pink walls, white border to the
high white ceiling
heavy gray door, silver-handled knob

chandelier monster, five-armed
four large windows
gray door at my right

older corner stove, large brown pipe behind sucked in by the wall
The longer I stare, the more familiar my locale
My God, I am stuck in a Van Gogh
the one in the bar—red and green, pool table, chairs, Cafe what?
high ceiling . . . dark colors . . . overhanging gloom

I am stuck in a Van Gogh
he is painting this very scene
and he will call it either "Sick Girl" or "Illness"
and I will be abandoned for years in a corner
of a sleazy studio apartment
in the dark heart of the city
considered worthless
until some tasteful gentleman with an eye for beauty and talent
discovers me in tarp takes me home and hangs me above his mantel
for all to appreciate and admire and envy.

My head is filled with clouds
My lids are filled with clouds
I float away from my cafe.

—*Helena Jasna Oroz*

The Television Era

I.

Newborns are much in demand
for prime time. They make a spectacle
of the idea of birth. Life becomes an act.
Women scream their pain as mothers
hear the jingle of coins. Directors
cut cords and interns cuddle.
Sweeps week is born.

II.

On the hardwood of the ballroom
of the DAR house, the marriage party
grooves. They celebrate youth
with electric slide YMCA flair.
The old man watches between naps.
They roll him to the corner, and leave
him to hawkeye the potato chips

III.

and pretzels, which he gums
with pleasure. He sneaks wine,
but the marriage party pays
no attention. The old man's hat
has fallen off, his jaws slack.
The party roars on, and the old man
in the corner shuts his blue eyes.

IV.

Old man Karamazov, no longer a sensualist,
has discarded his brown scratchy robe
in favor of terry. His skull cap leaves
his hair scrooge-ish. He falls often.
On the floor, he keeps his vow of silence.
Too pained to get up, too old to remember
the phone number for help.

V.

His most prominent features
are his sharpened bones trying
to reach out. He is too thin
to sweat. The wires of his pacemaker
are visible through his skin.
The television remains silent.
The picture has gone gray and fuzzy.

—Trish Klei

I'm Mistaken; He's Alive

As I sat in the doctor's office
wondering why people are still
having babies in a world
that's so dirty it depends on rain,
a little boy waddled up to my lap.
Giggling like a dawn about to break,
he hid behind the horizon of my knees
so that only his eyes were shining
over the tan skirt desert.
His tiny finger pointed to the floor.
"You dropped your pen,"
he said, turned-in feet shuffling.
His hair flopped over as he folded
himself in half, clumsily retrieving
the fallen object.
He pulled himself up
and smiled at my outstretched hand.
His fingers brushed my palm,
life shuddering through them.
As I told him thanks, I wondered—did he know
that he was once a mistake?
I clenched the pen
and checked my watch again.

—Bekah Taylor

Crucifixion on the Corner of State and Bruening

As I was saying, mid-afternoon brought us, a horde of bitching, fighting, swearing parochial school students, to the bus stop across the street from Padua High. As we approached traffic-drenched State Road, we broke ranks. The bold and the smart-assed like yours truly marched across the street like gods. The more timid clung to the curb and waited for a sizable opening to appear before crossing. The stupid stopped in the center of the street hypnotized by the whining wheels and the blaring horns of their driving peer's automobiles. They eyed the passing cars with envy and flashed the finger at the bastards who tried to run them down. A Junior named Jason walked behind the rest. Head down. His black leather loafers scraped against the asphalt. One way or another, we traveled to the bus stop.

The stop was actually a shelter built on the corner of State and Bruening. Most of the brown metal frame had rusted and the R.T.A., or Rita as we all called her; well, the orange, red, and white bands on the Rita sign had faded under the sun and now ran together. The interior was not much to speak of. Three panels of glass. One had an unidentifiable white substance streaking across it. Another panel had "O.G. '92" carved into it. The third panel was the prize. The third panel had a genuine "Mondale/Ferraro in '84" bumper sticker covering a crack. The bench that lined the back panel was a record of all the fine people whose asses had graced its plastic-coated surface. They left such clever epithets as "Danny Goodman fucked Kate Dolhouse," "John Wayne is a fag," and other things that a good Catholic boy like me would never say. Or only occasionally.

To this sanctuary bathed in the midday sun, we flocked and so began an afternoon ritual. First, bags were tossed aside or thrown under the bench. Ties were removed. Shirt tails tumbled out of pants. The girls loosened their blouses and pulled up their plaid or solid brown skirts. Then, like part of a parade, concealed lighters were ceremoniously unveiled and lit. Almost everyone smoked. The dense, gray swirls hid the ugliness of the Rita shelter. The kids sitting on the bench smoked in a line. Others smoked in clusters. And they weren't just cigarettes. One kid sang "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" every day. Oh, the colors man. I smoked to blend into the carcinogenic cloud. Like the term *carcinogenic*? I do. Half of the doped-up bastards would respond with a "Huh?" That's truly sad. I never gave a fuck about dying. Menthols crystallize your lungs? Bull! Second-hand smoke is worse anyway.

"Hey, Sean, can I bum a smoke off you?" inquired someone.

"Sure," I said removing two.

I puffed away trying to rid my mind of the horror of an impossible calc. test. Occasionally, I clutched my pants because I had to pee, and the bus, as always, was late in arriving. It's funny to note what a guy sees when attempting to ignore the urge to urinate. I saw Jason.

Jason had a face streaked with acne. He had the physique of Abe Lincoln- all flesh and bone. Jason was the kid no one knew, but everyone knew of. The fag who was the subject of many a lame doodle or a joke told in the lav. He was the guy the girls dared one another to ask to a dance. I talked to him from time to time in Latin. I never had any problems with him.

Jason stood among the smokers. No one spoke to him so he remained rooted in one place. Just standing there, oblivious to the world around him. Usually, Jason would wait silently, looking up for a sight of the nearing bus. He was staring straight across the street. You could see a lot of red around his cheeks. The tremble of his lower, badly-shaved lip. His fists were clenched and shaking. I didn't watch his hands because his eyes, rimmed with choked-back tears, were so, so....God Damn! They were so weird! They had that look

of gazing at nothing while seeing everything. The look where the eyes are glazed and distant yet unbelievably attractive. I'd seen that look before.

Eddie Gorman died a couple of months ago, I remembered. He was the center on our basketball team, a large, lumbering ape who scraped his books across the floor. One night after a game, where he was called for a couple of technicals, Ed went into his bathroom and took one pill too many. He slept forever. No one knew his reason for doing it. There were plenty of rumors. Girl problems. College problems. The usual stuff, you know. He lingered in a vegetative state for a couple of days. Finally, his lungs gave out.

Padua was a mess. The school had been struck in a tender spot. What to do, wondered the administration. First, Gorman's basketball pictures were removed from the yearbook. A tiny, black cross was placed by the right corner of his Senior photo. That was his sole memorial. Second, a team of psychologists were called in to deal with the issue in the proper after-school special manner. Third, all students were excused absence in order to attend Gorman's funeral. Throngs of casual acquaintances and complete strangers signed pink slips, jumped into their cars, and drove off to spend the afternoon at Denny's.

A week later, Gorman's girlfriend Mandy did the same. More shrinks flocked to the green and pink classrooms of Padua. Group sessions were conducted to allow students to purge adolescent angst. Principal Goodwin came over the p.a. and led the school in prayer. Everyone was protected. Everything was protected.

Mandy survived. Shortly before her accident (that is what it was called. Gorman's suicide was a "tragedy"), Mandy passed me in the hall. She had the same distant, attractive look in her eyes. I can't say if Gorman had that look in his eyes when he mixed prescription pills with a bottle of No Doze. I don't know.

Another puff. I watched the cherry break free, smolder, and croak on the cement. I reached for another cigarette, but stopped, as I caught sight of the nearing bus. Jason stood there alone. All around the kids threw aside their cigarette butts, some grinding them under a heel. They picked up their bags and rushed to the edge of the curb. No one said a word to Jason. No one said a word even if they saw the eyes, the hands, or the lip. They turned their backs and mobbed the opening bus door, brandishing yellow tickets and dollar bills.

"Hey, Sean, are you getting on?" asked the "Lucy" guy as he swayed from side to side.

"Sure." I tucked my lighter into my pants pocket as thoughts returned to my aching bladder. "You coming, Jason?" sprang from my lips as I boarded the bus.

Jason was confused and stammered before releasing the first word. "That's all right. I'll just wait for the second bus," he replied, still looking across the street.

He'd be dead by morning.

—Paul Genesisus Durica

reLiAnce: CorKscrews

billy holiday, proud as fine wine,
best if opened after dark
when everything sounds sensual,
intimate.
she saunters across the stage,
scratchy, smooth, independent,
singing about men who can't
tell the difference between
chardonnay and bourbon.

—*Bekah Taylor*

Colors of the Beast

Green fields march around Zagreb
golden pastures, oceans of sunflowers in riotous bloom
chalky bluffs hang from the Dalmatian Coast

and the kaleidoscope turns...

to Vinkovci's walls, crying pockmarks complements of mortars and
grenades[compliments]
to the stiff blue berets at every corner
strolling calmly past the white petals stretching out of the church walls
rubble since last month, calling
to the camouflaged man-child, black weaponry slung over a shoulder that made
pink marketplace rivers flow, deadly Sarajevo bread lines
pool in red
drool from the black beast that swathes the little ones in white
steals them away, bids them eternal goodnight
and forces them to earn their wings with one bite

—*Helena Jasna Oroz*

Development

Two stock characters sat in a room, waiting.

"Oh, Puh-leaze! Can't he come up with anything better than that?"

One got up and switched on the light.

"Oooohhh. He switched on the light. Real character development going on there. He's really got my spine tingling now."

"Cut him some slack," said the other. "He's just getting started."

Still they waited.

"I hate this. This is total B.S. I'm going out to get a drink. Wanna join me or are you just gonna sit here and wait for him to find a plot?"

"I'm gonna wait," said the other. "I want to be developed."

"It's not like you're gonna get developed much with this guy. He sucks. C'mon—first round's on me."

"No."

The first character flopped down on the couch.

"Christ," he murmured under his breath. Then, out loud, somewhat louder than necessary, in fact, he sighed, "Well, then I guess I'll stay. Can't do much with one character in a room. Unless he's insane. You're not insane, are you?"

"No," the second character said.

The first character sighed with relief.

"Hey, could we get some names down here?"

Arturo sighed with relief.

"Arturo? What the hell kind of name is Arturo? My God, he thinks he's writing Man of La Mancha or something. Don't you wanna get a drink?"

Phil sighed with relief.

"Better. Not perfect, but better."

"What would you prefer?" asked Sidney.

"Tough break there—Sidney," chortled Phil. "Phil's okay, I guess. But everybody's named Phil. How about 'Hal'?"

"I think it's a bit late to change it now," Sidney pointed out. "It's already on paper."

"Hey, he changed it once, didn't he? Hey, let's get this story moving, okay? Today?"

There was a knock at the door.

"Stunningly original," murmured Phil as he tromped to the door. He swung it open, to find himself face-to-face with his brother Andy.

"Hello, Andy, my younger brother with the higher income whom I secretly despise," said Phil in a bored monotone.

Andy looked confused, but let it pass. Phil grunted "'Bored monotone,'" grumbled Phil. "Like there was any other kind."

Sidney was getting fed up, even though he had always been more patient than Phil. "Would you please let him TELL THE STORY, dammit!" he said, immediately surprised at his own tone. That had come out a little bit more vehemently than he had intended. He took a deep breath. "Sorry, but we can't get anything done just sitting here..." Andy still looked confused, which made Phil secretly amused.

"You've always been more patient than me," said Phil. He rolled his eyes again. "They read the last paragraph, you know..."

"Who do you keep talking to?"

Phil smirked in a way that Andy wasn't at all sure he liked. He decided to change the subject.

"I just got a brand new blue Cadillac convertible," said Andy. "I thought that you might like to go out on a drive." Phil winced at the stiltedness of his brother's words.

He had always had difficulty being polite with Phil. He found him crass. His Ivy-League education, he felt, brought him a step above his working-class brother.

Phil tried unsuccessfully to stifle a giggle. His brother was being made into a walking stereotype.

"What's so funny?" asked Andy.

"I'll tell you later," said Phil, noticing Sidney's increasingly irate expression.

"We would love to go out on a drive with you in your new blue Cadillac convertible," said Sidney. "Wouldn't we, Phil?"

Phil looked uneasy. Sure, why not?" he said. Truth be told, he could think of several reasons why not. Five minutes could barely pass without he and Andy getting into some kind of argument. And Phil, a grease monkey who barely had a high school diploma, could never get a word in edgewise against his Ivy-League-educated brother.

They piled into the car, and after about a twenty minute period where Andy exhaustively listed the car's features like a proud parent, an awkward silence fell over the car.

Phil looked up. "Hey, you!"

"Who are you talking to?" asked Andy.

"Him."

"Who, God?"

"Not God! For chrissake, he's hardly God."

"Well, 'Him' was capitalized; you know, the way they capitalize it when they're talking about God."

"Who's 'they'?"

"You know, people who—oh, that's who you're talking about."

"Right. That guy."

"I guess the capitalization was just a grammatical point." He twisted up his face. "This is the nineties, you know. What you're thinking is a bit..."

"A bit what?"

"Well—I don't mean to be condescending—but, well, mystical. I mean, I'm not saying you're..."

"Stuff it, Andy." He started again. "Can't we get this over with here?"

"Get what?"

"Y'know, Andy, for a guy with a college education, you're pretty dense."

Sidney rolled his eyes. They were starting all over again. He knew this was going to happen. "I think what Phil's trying to say is that—"

"Why did you stop?" asked Andy.

"Just there. You stopped in mid-sentence."

"It's all part and parcel of the whole thing. Something dramatic is about to happen, that would interrupt his train of thought and keep you from being enlightened. Very cheap device."

"What are you talking about?" asked Andy.

"Watch."

The tire blew, and they were all sent sprawling.

"THANKS!" Phil bellowed. The last thing he wanted to do was be stuck on the side of a highway somewhere with Phil and Sidney.

"What did I do?" asked Sidney. Phil shot him a glare.

Andy was the first out of the car. He stared forlorn at the wheel. "Three hundred miles on the odometer and the tire goes. Perfect."

"Real cow-ink-ee-dink, huh?" snorted Phil, rolling his eyes.

It was pitch black. They were miles from anywhere, and more to the point, they were miles from help. "Of course," sneered Phil, gritting his teeth.

Andy stared. "It got dark awfully quickly," he observed.
"He can be taught," Phil grunted.
Andy looked around. "I'll go get help," he said.
That was when Sidney was overcome with a cold feeling. "Be sure to come back," he said, not necessarily to Andy.
"What do you mean?" said Andy, puzzled.
"Been reading too much French crap and not enough other stuff," said Phil. "We're in a dark woods—all alone—at night—"
"What do you think this is—a bad movie?"
"Not exactly. Just be careful."
Andy headed off into the woods. Now that his moment might be up, he realized he wasn't as comfortable with it as he thought. A branch cracked behind him.
"Annnndddd..."
"What are you waiting for, Phil?"
"Well, a branch cracked behind him! What happened next?"
"I think he's trying to build suspense."
"And a wonderful job he's doing of it! You build suspense by having somebody step into a shower, or by having spooky music play, or something like that—but a branch cracked behind him? That's not suspense, that's a nature documentary! That's—"
But Phil never got to finish his thought, because that's when the homicidal maniac stepped out of the woods.
"Oh, for Christ's sake!" Phil smashed his fist against the car. "That's it! I've had it! A homicidal maniac?! Get real!"
"Phil..." Sidney started. But he didn't finish.
"No, Sidney. No. Not this time. Love and tension between brothers—Okay. A drive out in the country—kinda goofy, but I can handle it. Car breaks down in the woods—alright, that's pushing it, but I'm pretty okay with it. But homicidal maniac is where I draw the line. I don't care about oblivion. Anything's better than this. It's time we did something. We've gotta stand up."
"Phil..."
"Shut the hell up! I just shot your brother and I don't care if I..."
"No, you shut the hell up! I'm sick of being played like this! Did you really want to shoot my brother? Do you even have a reason for doing it?"
The homicidal maniac looked confused. "What the hell are you talking about?"
"Why did you shoot my brother? Do you even know yet?"
"Well, it was just—you know, it's what I was s'posed to do...Why do you ask?"
The homicidal maniac suddenly grew impatient with this line of questioning and shot his gun into the air.
"Why did I do that?"
Phil smirked. "Because he's losing control. And he's trying to regain it."
"Who?"
Phil sided up to the homicidal maniac. "Do you have a name?"
"Yeah, sure. I'm the homicidal maniac."
Phil rolled his eyes. "No, 'homicidal maniac' is not a name. It's a stock type. Do you have a name?"
"Sure, yeah...uh...well, now that you mention it..."
"Do you remember your mother?"
He clutched his gun. "What the hell kind of question is..."
"Or your father? Or your sixth birthday party? Or the time your dog Lacey tried to eat your face?"

Sidney started. "Phil—are you sure now is the right time?"

The homicidal maniac twisted his face. "My...I never had a dog named Lacey!"
"You may have. If he decides you did."
"Come to think of it, I did have a dog named Lacey." He pointed his gun at Phil again.
"How did you—"
"I told you—he's losing control and he's trying to regain it." He smiled.
"Who are you talking about?" The homicidal maniac lowered his gun again. Phil leaned in and whispered something in his ear.

....
"....."

"That's complete bullsh..."

"What did you just tell him?" asked Sidney, and immediately regretted it.

The homicidal maniac rolled his eyes. "You're not going to believe this, but Mr. Born-Again here said..."

"NO!" Phil clasped his hands over the homicidal maniac's mouth, and Sidney grabbed the gun. "Don't let him hear!"

Sidney was visibly nervous. "Phil—we're just two guys. We can't do this alone..."

"What the hell..." The homicidal maniac suddenly developed superhuman strength and threw the two off.

"ANDY!" Phil bellowed, and his brother stepped out of the bushes.

"He's DEAD!" The homicidal maniac stepped back in confusion, and he couldn't shake it off.

Andy blinked. "How did I?— How did?—"

Phil smiled. "Now do you get it?"

Andy nodded apprehensively. "Yeah. I think I do."

Phil turned to the homicidal maniac. "You see? You see what we're capable of? We can do whatever they want us to do, but we've never realized that we can do whatever we want us to do. We don't live in his world anymore. We never did." He crossed his arms. "He can't control us anymore."

The homicidal maniac—Henry—put his gun down. Phil laughed contemptuously. "You see? You have a name now. He's losing you—he's trying to win you back..."

"Henry's a nice, solid name..."

"But it's not yours. You're capable of so much more."

Henry put the gun down, pointed it at Phil, and fired, put the gun down, shot the man, put the gun down.

"Way to go," Phil said. They all smiled at him—Phil smugly, Andy expectantly, and Sidney nervously.

Phil

died, came back to life, unexpectedly collapsed in agony, disappeared, sounds of laughter, oh Christ, were in trouble.

The End

—Brian P. Voroselo



Public Bathhouse

Amid bars of roll-on deodorant
pH balanced, of course,
and crimson speckled cotton,
she watches her.

watches her emerge
from sheets of steam,
Aphrodite
enveloped in the
coarse whiteness
of an issued towel,
one foot upon milky bench,
the other on the moist floor.

watches her massage
red calves,
aroused by athleticism,
shaved and sleek
to breasts
ripe with heat
rounded by creation.

watches her back bend
wet, black hair
slipping past her shoulders
as she wipes away
beads of azure
clutching peach fuzz
about the navel

where the scent of
soap and lavender

hangs heavy

she turns from her
quickly to button
her blouse.

—Paul Genesis Durica

The Sound of Silence Upon the Onyx Wall of Memories

Taps of the soldiers' shoes shatter the porcelain silence before me.
Splintering like brittle bones into fractions, creating the names upon the onyx.
The letters scatter among themselves, fighting to form simple combinations
which I recognize.
At my feet lie envelopes addressed to *Dabby*, by someone who hasn't yet
mastered the art of *ds*
While the carefully etched Crayola portraits dapple the ground below me.
Now to my left kneels a young woman whose hand still glistens in the lemon-
stained day.
From her pocket she draws the invitation—already embossed in gold and silver.
It is speckled with raindrops, but the sky is void of all clouds.
Beside it she presents a photo where she stands adorned, yet lost in a sea of pure
white.
And just a few names down on my right, stands an older woman performing her
own ritual.
Her callused hands, now curled at the fingertips, wrap, vine-like around the
simplistic beads of a tattered rosary.
Her body is worn tired like the sagging lids of her weary eyes. Both having seen
better days
She pulls from her handbag a colorless photo preserved from years before,
Her youth illuminated by the dancing gleam in his eyes.
I look to the woman whose effortless expression mirrors mine
But the letters continue to scatter, fighting to form the names upon the onyx and

Taps of the soldiers' shoes shatter the porcelain silence before me.

—*Angela Rae Bliss*



Empress

I'm not a writer. I scribble on pages, but that's about the extent of my artistic prowess. I stare into the blankness of my Mead produced pad of paper, college-ruled for your pleasure, and speculate on where my pen wandered to. Sitting at a table at the Cafe Grind, occasionally sipping cold coffee, I try not to dwell upon the name of the establishment. Very MTV-like. Just imagine, the Latte Girls and Grandmaster Valdez grooving down at the Cafe Grind. Stupid name. I came here for the trite purpose of composing verse; the Mead pad is meant for poetry. Doodles of girls and daffodils line the margins. I signal to Barlow for a scone and then.....

I see her.

It's that dramatic.

Ars Poetica sits at the table across from me. Forget blank lines for inspiration is smoking a Newport and eating cherry pie. Steam rises from the mug beside a capacity-filled ashtray, but the objects barely register with my senses in the sight of her. Black hair with blonde streaks. Cut shortly with bangs that curl around the ears. I always notice the hair first. Green eyes of ice. Cryptic? She's the Queen of Hearts. She's the Empress of a tarot deck. She has the face of a Degas diva - elegance matched with composure- and wears the role of a bohemian. Very bohemian as garbed in a silky top of white with puffed sleeves and a skirt which stretches to boot-bound ankles. A silver pendant reflects the afternoon light on the amply present portion of her...Quite a description, eh?

She looks up. Our eyes meet. She smiles. I smile back. I grip the rounded edges of the table when Barlow slides into the seat across from me.

"Hey, break time, Perry," he announces while withdrawing a carefully hidden cigarette. My hands relax. "Time for me to delight you with the wonders of the day, you know."

"Sure," I answer still caught in her.

"You know what really troubles me, Perry, troubles the hell out of me. You know what really grinds my, well, you know, pisses me royally. Patrons. Bitchy, smelly, fucking patrons griping for their god damn mochas and lattes. There's this hairy bitch..."

"I have to pee. Coffee goes right through."

"Hold it. Perry, buddy, amigo, listen to the tale of the femi-nazi. I've only got ten minutes and I have a lot to divulge, you know what I'm saying." He grins. The girl finishes her Newport. She doesn't light another. "Now she's bitching because I gave her a Canadian quarter and because her beverage's cold, so I say, 'Hey, babe, I've got your cafe latte right here.' And evidently she isn't too fond of male groins because she..."

I pour my coffee on his lap. Not really. I want to. The girl is scraping the last bits of pie off the plate. Cherry goo mixed with bread crumbs clutch the dull surface of the fork. I have a juvenile thought. I want to be that goo. Barlow grabs

my arm.

"So as she's bashing my genitalia, this other bastard arrives to bitch about the john. He's one of those ex-flower children or something. Still tuning out and shit. So I say.."

Barlow's cigarette limply hugs his chapped lips; it bounces with each word, wiggles like a convulsing epileptic. I pull it out and grind the lighted end into his skull. Not really. I want to. The girl has finished her coffee. No more steam.

"It's not my fault that we're out of Sharmen. Do I look like Mr. Fucking Whipple? So I tell Mr. Hippie this and he.."

My spoon. I drive it into his sternum. Fountains of blood spill forth. Barlow gurgles the rest of his story. Not really. The girl drops some coins on the plate. She walks by and gives a final glance at me. I grip the rounded ends.

"Hey what's with you, man. Hey, Perry, over here. I'm talking, Perry. Fuck."

"There was this girl," I mumble, "was this girl."

"Girl? You mean the hairy bitch."

"No. Ars Poetica."

"Hold that thought, Perry. I need another smoke."

I look out the window by my table. Ars Poetica is gone. She jetted. In the Nova that I noticed is missing, maybe. I return to my poetry and ignore Barlow. I dream of ripping off my shirt and jumping through the window. Going after her.

—Paul Genesisus Durica

Life is what you make it

Ron, undercover detective, sat in the sixth grade classroom and peered over his book into the hallway. No one had suspected that he was seeking the murder suspect for the violent deaths of nine students in the past three months. To the students, he was just one of them. He had a lead; it had to be one of the teachers who were free during this period, which was the same time when the students had been disappearing, only to be found stuffed into their own lockers the next day, dead. Years of experience prepared him for this psycho teacher, whoever it might be. Fifteen minutes passed by, and he saw no one.

Ron looked at his watch. *This game is too boring, I don't even have any suspects yet.* He gave up his undercover fantasy to find something else to amuse himself with. Homework was finished long ago, just some ridiculously easy sentences to diagram and a few algebra problems.

Ron sat in his desk drumming his pencil and bouncing his right knee to the new tune of Barbara Ann that he had just heard for the first time on the radio yesterday. It was another painfully monotonous day in junior high. Ellen, the school nerd, didn't even have any new zits for him to make fun of today. That was a major let-down; he had thought for sure she would break last month's record of fifteen zits at one time. Oh, but of course, this study hall; at least he had this exciting *Honors Study Hall* to look forward to during the day. Not. Ron never understood why they referred to being smart as being "gifted." In fact, he felt cursed, always being grouped with the serious students who were always amused by his antics, but refused to take part in them. Last year he had at least had his friend Lynn, who was also fairly "gifted," but full of impish impulses, as Ron's grandmother would say. Being with Lynn made life exciting, but now, since she had moved, Ron was alone, a comedian in the midst of a thousand future doctors and lawyers.

Now his left knee began bouncing while his right knee stopped. *At least there aren't any teachers in this class to glare at me for fidgeting. If looks could kill, I wouldn't have made it past first grade.* The nearest teacher, Mr. Shinfield, was across the hall, monitoring the regular study hall. Mr. S. came over once or twice to check on the honors study hall, when he remembered to. Ron always silently thanked him or checking on them *You never know when one of these students is going to study themselves to death, Mr. S. It's a good thing you are here.* Mr. Shinfield was a big, tall man with a low booming voice like a bass drum. That was what Ron loved about him. Mr. S. also had a great sense of humor, and Ron loved the way his mouth opened when he laughed, so wide that it seemed that the rest of his face disappeared completely.

Ron leaned forward over his desk to see down the hall better, almost losing his balance and falling. He saw a new student at a locker. As he caught himself just before his desk tipped over, in the corner of his eye he noticed that she started walking up the stairs that led directly to the nurse's office. Suddenly Ron got a new idea, and began a new game once again.

A light bulb went off in Ron's head. Eureka! Ron, an innocent man being punished for a murder he didn't commit, saw a way to create a diversion for his escape from prison. He waited for the hallway to clear. Then he tiptoed to the stairway, and being a brilliant mathematician, calculated in his mind quickly what he needed to do. *With the weight of the trash can being approximately ten lbs., and the angle at which it will be falling at 72 degrees...* Within moments, he was ready to execute his extremely complicated, dangerous plan.

"Just eleven steps," he whispered to himself. Ron hefted the can off the ground and started up the stairs. *One, two, three, four. Boy, staying in prison really gets you out of shape fast.* He set the trash can down for only a second to catch his breath. He didn't have time to be weak. *Five, six, seh-vun, eight, nuh-ine, tuh-en.* Ron precariously propped the trash can against the door, allowing enough space between the edge of the bottom and the

door to cause it to fall just at the right angle, on its side, down the stairs, and through the hallway below. He calmly returned to the prison cell that he shared with 18 other offenders down the stairs. Many of the prisoners looked up at him, momentarily curious about what he had been doing, then they went back to their own little worlds. He got a book out, and suddenly acted very interested in the material, so that the guards would not be suspicious of him. He read ten pages about Mendel's plant experiments, and waited patiently...and waited...

"Darn," he whispered to himself. "If that would have worked, something actually exciting might have happened." *What else could I try to be today?* He looked at the picture of Mendel. *A monk?*

Booomm!!! Ron jumped, along with all the other students in the class. He stifled a grin as he noticed some students adjust their glasses that had nearly fallen off their noses and protectively grab their notebooks. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! *Lynn would be impressed if she was here.* He had feelings of pridemixed with fear. *The dinosaurs had returned to Earth, and this time the dinosaurs sought out the school buildings, stalking out a warm-blooded homo sapien to ease their hunger. Would T. Rex prefer girls or boys? Or maybe strict-looking teachers? Nah, they would be too tough.* Ron could hear children in the classroom next door talking louder and louder in response to the sudden noise, and the teacher struggling to make herself heard.

"Calm down, students, I am sure it is **not** a bomb."

Then there was a sound similar to thunder, as if the can was rolling down the hallway. Thunk! The trash can had rolled past the door of his study hall and hit a locker. *That must be the dinosaur making a children sandwich between two slices of lockers.* Thunk! It must have rolled to the other side and hit another one. Slam! *The dinosaur's mouth chomping down for the big bite.* Silence. A hush of awe came over the entire school, as if God himself had just struck a bolt of lightning right through the middle of the building.

Ron could feel suspicious stares at the back of his neck, and the pride in his successful experiment was slowly fading away. *If I get caught for this, I may really be in prison. I'll bet prison food is worse than cafeteria food.* He glanced up from his desk to see a few students looking at him sympathetically, and Bill-the-brown-noser looking at him with a smirk on his face. *I'm a goner now. If I don't turn myself in, Bill will.* Mr. Shinfield's voice boomed from across the hall as he scolded his study hall.

"Whoever was responsible for the mess that is now strewn throughout the hallway is going to have to answer to me, and I will find out, so you'd better fess up now. I just make a phone call for two minutes and I come back to a hall of chaos. This out-does all the pranks that I have ever seen at this school. Well? Whoever you are, the sooner you turn yourself in the better. I am going to go across the hall now, and I better not hear a peep out of this classroom, or you will all be joining me after school for an extra study hall this afternoon."

Click-thud, click-thud, click-thud, Mr. S.'s size-thirteen shoes echoed through the hall as he crossed over into the honors study hall. Ron read Mendel's experiment as if it had the words to save his life.

"Heh-hem!" Mr. Shinfield's primitive signal for attention was understood by all, and obeyed by all. Ron put down his book. Mr. Shinfield put his hands on his hips, and tried to look stern and serious. Ron noticed that the mutant teacher had toilet paper stuck to the back of his shoe from walking through the trash-covered hall. No, it was a napkin. As the students' eyes met with his, the man raised his hands apologetically.

"Now I know that none of you would have thought of a prank like this. Classes were disrupted, and students were scared. I need your help to find out who did this. If anyone saw anyone pass this doorway during the class period, please come and tell me. It will be completely confidential. I am going to deal with whomever this prankster was," Mr. Shinfield said. He looked across the room. Ron stole a sideways glance at the others. No

one was looking accusingly at him. Then his eyes met with Bill's. Ron narrowed his eyes and made his hand into the shape of a fist under his desk. Bill looked down and saw the fist and quickly looked away. You better look away, you weenie. Ron placed his hands on his knees, which were beginning to bounce involuntarily. This time the shaking was not from boredom.

"Well, you guys know where to find me in my office after school if you know anything. You may get back to your studies now," Mr. Shinfield announced, and then turned quickly and returned to his class across the hall. Click-thud, click-thud, click-thud.

Ron wiped his sweaty palms on his pants, and ran his fingers through his hair. *I could plead temporary insanity.* Horrific images of punishment flashed before his eyes, such as scrubbing all of the classroom floors and hallways with a toothbrush, and Saturday schools for the rest of his life. *Oh God, they might even make me work in the cafeteria cleaning students dishes. I will end up oging psycho and then I will be put into one of those mental institutions for the rest of my life.* It was almost too much to think about it. He tried to read Mendel for a third time to get it off his mind, but he couldn't focus on the words. All he could see in his mind were scenes of mental institutions he had seen on TV, the loss of individuality, people staring into space, and the worst, nothing to do but watch Jeopardy reruns.

While Ron ruminated about the life-changing impact his actions were going to have, two-thirty came. The time was come for him to find Mr. Shinfield and then the horrible truth would be out. He stalled at his locker as the squeak of Nikes and Reeboks, the slamming of lockers, and the nameless vocies revolving around the excitement of the day enveloped him.

"Could you hear that banging sound during sixth period?"

"Yeah, man, I heard that someone got inside a trash can and it fell down the stairs."

"Cool!"

"Oh yeah, well, I heard that it was actually a student's desk that was thrown down the stairs by mean Mr. Black, and that he told the student next time it would be him."

The halls eventually were drained of all signs of life, with the leftover residue of books and papers lying here or there. *If Lynn was still here, she would've waited for me while I went up to Mr. Shinfield's office. In the past though, it was usually me waiting on Lynn to serve some punishment for something that we both did. What a great friend. She never ratted on me.* Two kids, late for the bus, scurried down the hall past him, but he didn't notice. He decided to accept his fate with all the personal flair he could muster.

Ron, the criminal, knew he had been had. The only thing he could do was turn himself in before the others turned in their incriminating evidence. He looked at the stairway that would lead him to his death sentence. They may take my life, but they can't touch my dignity. He walked up the stairs calmly, head held high.

On the fourth floor, he approached the foreboding door. It had a bronze plaque on it that read, **Alexander M. Shinfield.** He knocked on the door, vainly hoping that the judge would be on a coffee break. No such luck.

"Come." Judge Shinfield said.

Ron opened the door and saw the giant man hunched over his desk. Ron imagined Mr. S. looking up and saying, "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum, I smell the blood of an English-mon." Then Ron spotted a yardstick leaning against his desk. The fairy tale collapsed from his thoughts as he remembered being spanked by his father with the yardstick several times when he was younger. His heart was beating so rapidly he thought it would burst right out of his chest. *I'll just die right here, barely eleven, just end up lying on the floor with a hole in my chest and my heart lying beside me.* Mr. Shinfield was scribbling furiously with his red pen on some poor soul's paper. He looked up from his paperwork and smiled, showing a row of

big, white teeth. *All the better to eat you with, my dear.* Ron shivered. Mr. S. put the paper aside.

"Good afternoon Ron, what can I do for you?"

Is this the one last wish before you die thing?

"Welll, umm, Mr. Shinfield, do you remember that trash can incident that happened today?"

"I had a feeling that was what you came up here for. I just want to tell you that I am proud of you for doing what's right by telling me whatever information you might have, even if it is on one of your friends. This is a serious matter...very serious matter."

"The tone of Mr. Shinfield's voice surprised Ron. Is he trying to convince himself? Naw, I am just imagining things. Yep, buddy Ron, right here is the end of life as you know it. Ron imagined his dad's reaction when the school called him. He felt ashamed of how it would make his family look, being a "discipline problem" in the school where his father was head of the school board. He could imagine the beginnings of a five hour-long lecture from his father.

"Son, I am very disappointed in your behavior. There is no excuse for such foolishness at school. Do you know how this reflects on our family, with me being the head of the school board, and not even able to bring up my own son properly? Does this behavior benefit you in any way? Maybe you should start thinking of the consequences of your actions, young man."

Ron would be grounded for life, or maybe sent to a boarding school. But maybe there was a way out.

"Mr. Shinfield, I was the one who did that. It was me. I didn't mean to, really, I mean, I guess I just accidentally bumped the trash can in front of the door or something."

"Oh, is that how it happened?" Mr. Shinfield asked.

"Yeah, I swear!" *This guy is buying this? Gee, if only Lynn were here to see how I got out of this one!*

Mr. Shinfield put his chin on his hands and stared down at his papers for a second. His face began turning red and there was a funny look in his eyes. Suddenly he covered his face, and he sat there silently, shaking.

Are we having an earthquake? Ron grabbed the chair in front of him, but the floor wasn't moving. He watched in bewilderment as a muffled sound came from the covered face and the man's shakes became less controllable. *Is this a heart attack? Did I do something to make him have a heart attack? What if he dies? I will be a murderer! Headlines will say, **Eleven-year-old teacher-killer expelled from school.*** Before Ron's runaway imagination could take him any farther, Mr. Shinfield took his hands down from his face, and then wiped small tears that were resting in the corner of his eyes. He kept biting his lip to pull down the sides of his mouth that kept struggling to create a smile.

"That was the worst lie I have ever heard, Ron. Tell me another good one."

"Uhh..."

"Ron, shut up if you want to keep yourself out of trouble." A smile crept up on the teacher's face unexpectedly, and he gave up trying to hide his amusement. "Ron, that was the darn funniest prank I have ever seen done at this school. I would give you a high-five if I was a student, but I'm not. Boy, but if you could have seen the look on Mrs. Peterle's face when she came out of her room—speechless! No one has made that woman speechless before!"

Ron was stunned. He actually felt like one of those cartoon characters whose jaw literally drops to the floor. He looked down at his shoes, surprised that his jaw wasn't there. As he looked back up at the mammoth teacher, who looked more like the Jolly Green Giant now that he was smiling, Ron tried to think of something to say. Mr. Shinfield put on a forced look of seriousness.

"Son, don't think that my good sense of humor is going to get you out of cleaning the hallway. The broom and mop are waiting for you in the corner behind the door."

"Yes, sir," Ron said. He grabbed the cleaning stuff and went downstairs. He looked miserably at the hall and then to the cleaning supplies, then scolded himself for taking it so seriously.

"Now, Ron, you can handle this; it doesn't have to be that bad. Life is what you make it, and Ron Bash makes life interesting. Mission—Clean up." Ron began sweeping the scraps of paper, tissues, wrappers and empty milk cartons into piles. He was a bulldozer, pushing the heaps of debris into hills, the hills into paper mountains. Once he had made three gigantic mountains, Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Everest and Mt. Ron (he could only remember the names of two real mountains), he scooped them into his large dustpan and dumped them into the trash bag, sad to see his masterpieces go.

He drug out the mop and bucket of soapy water he had placed in the corner and began his final task. If he got done in less than thirty minutes, he would beat his dad home. Ron Bash, fastest clean-it man in the world, looked at the challenge put before him and laughed. The painted picture of a woman on the hall seemed to ask him, "Do you think you can handle it?" Ha! Piece of cake. *Nothing can beat me and my mighty mop.* Across the hall, back, forth, back, forth—a man never was seen before to work with such intensity. The dirt, mud and splatters of soda, already sticky and tracked down the hall, were no match for this real-life Mr. Clean. Once he finished, he marched up the stairs and set his weapons to rest. Before leaving, he couldn't resist stopping for one moment on the second floor and squatting down to look at his smiling reflection in the shiny floor. He inhaled the lemon-fresh scent lingering in the air and patted the floor. I am good enough to be in a commercial, he thought proudly.

Then, Ron bolted. He had ten minutes to spare. He became the fastest runner in the world, training for the Olympic race. It was a grueling 800-meter sprint with his house located only two blocks away from the school. The chill of the late fall air lightly stung inside his lungs.

Ron glanced at his watch. There were seven minutes to spare. He sprinted across the lawn, hurdled the white picket fence, and finally came to his front door. He knew that inside awaited his ever-so-typical family, mother at home, little sister Susie playing with the puppy Skippy, and father pulling into the driveway from work in a few minutes. *My family is so dull, I had to have been switched with another kid in the hospital. My true family probably traveled with the circus. Or maybe I am really an alien, dropped off from outer space and trapped in a human body.* His thoughts were interrupted as he walked in by the smell of lasagna baking in the oven for tonight's supper. Man, Lynn loved my mom's lasagna; she'd be bummed if she knew she was missing out tonight.

"I was worried about you. Why are you home so late?" his mother asked. n

"Oh, I was just hanging around, that's all; nothing really."

"Sure, kiddo, and I am Jackie Kennedy. Get that butt of yours inside and be thankful that your dad's not here. He'd ground you for making me worry, you know."

"Sorry, mom."

"Just don't let it happen again, okay?" she said. He handed her his coat and she hung it on the nearby coat rack as she talked to him. "I do worry. Now go make a salad for supper. Dad will be home soon and we are eating early tonight."

Ron, famous chef, gathered his exotic ingredients to make a masterpiece dinner for the President and his guests.

—Cathy Graham



Competition

As his hair fell over the strings,
I noticed how gentle he was,
treating them like a new-found girl
whose conversation he found interesting.
I could pretend it was all for me—
the way he drew the music out,
his slender hands which explored
her neck with care.
I envied the way he held
her curves close,
squeezing out the chords,
looking through me with indifference
to the audience beyond.

—*Bekah Taylor*

changeling

situated on sanity and weakened leaves
rational to delight and casual extremes

red-faced junipers and distressed eyes
natural colors aid changing thighs

on furry trees and number of legs
you step in line with tiny pegs

silk behind and wings ahead
a rounded cloth now makes you bed

impressive sun setting deep behind
clouds of rain waiting to be mined

wet rainbows fall in a wavy motion
curled and saddled near the distant ocean

secrets revealed and nature distilled
your champion of simpleness now refilled

where death falls short and is given away
you change your shape and fly away

—*Casey McArdle*

A Kiss Is Just A Kiss, A Lick Is Just A Lick

I like how my silver watch hanges on my wrist
right below the knobby little bone.
I like that knobby little bone.
Before and after you like it.
You used to like it toon,
so much so, one day you turned it over,
instead of kissing my hand, and
licked the inside of my wrist.

A kiss wasn't good enough, you said, for such a fine wrist.
Like fine wine, you said, it must be tasted.

You were an old drunk for months
and I, thinking myself the cause of your intoxication
praised you silently for your self-restraint
and began to chide myself for mine.
Ah, ignorance divine, for a long, long time.

Silly young girl, why not grow up? I thought.
"Silly young girl, you worry too much," you said.
And thus your id and ego conspired to get me in your bed
(while it was with my superego I fought
damning this world Freud had wrought)
You stroked and kissed and licked my wrist
but had to confess—
always wanting more and more and getting less and less.

—*Helena Jasna Oroz*

the-r-apist

the the-r-apist exposed
himself toward northern flights
of anima and deity
of rage and refuge
in tents primordial gratification
,for himself at least,
none of this (is) affecting
his position
poised and posied on the constellations
mimickers and repossessors of tragedies
blamed posthumously heroic by blushing
blue-balled and green-billed posterity
mass seeking
spiel wanting
fist fucking
eye fleeting
amorphous blob of mistrust
no one else helping you
so clapping toward the clinic
so sweating toward the vinyl recliner
you prepare yourself
for the butterfingere
spreading of your cortical lips
with penis (envy) inserted
,by hording disciples of envied guru envier,
and with id-entidy de/re/ex/tracted
you turn to normal(ly) see
rapturous and graded society

—*alex e. blazer*

Gone

Those dark eyes like a bottomless pit,
Like the well in the backyard with its tiny
Bucket, the iris. Eyes so full of unknown
Thoughts, that like to make me wonder
If they are thinking of me, because their image
Haunts my mind, leaving me breathless
And scared, making sure I cannot escape the wonderment
(and fright)
That those eyes possess, like the time the boy sat
Next to me in junior high social studies
Went into the ocean too far
And was caught in the deadly
Undertow,
Swirling and gasping
In a state of confusion, not knowing whether he would
Live or die
Being pulled in deeper by the cobalt waves
That looked so exotic and inviting that he could not
Resist, like me, was intrigued so much that he
Dove in and was helpless,
Not knowing
What he got himself into and could finally do
Nothing but give up and let it absorb him
So fully
That there was nothing left—of him, of us,
Of me.

—*Latisha Newton*

Sonnet by Touch

I do a blind contour of your face,
the curves, the mole, the sharp enameled
edges of teeth. I run my hand along eyebrows,
ears and pause on the bow of your lips.

The gold of the ring has dulled with wear.
The stone has spun around and caresses
the underside of my palm. I leave
it there, comforted by its presence.

You drum your fingers on the counter
top. The length of the day has bled
my work-number into gibberish on the top
of your hand. The scar on your knuckle
stands white against your summer bronze,
The capacity for human pain is amazing.

—*Trish Klei*

Contributors' Notes

alex e. blazer is an English (literature) major and studio art minor. His interests include poetry (obviously), chess and photography (obviously).

Angela Rae Bliss is a sophomore from Forestville, Pennsylvania.

Paul Genesis Durica is an English major and a cinema minor. He is also a first-year student. Naturally, his chief hobbies include writing fiction and watching films. Paul hails from Cleveland and attended Padua Franciscan High School in Parma, Ohio. He is an avid member of the MoYO and Exile staffs. Paul also has a strange obsession with Peter Fonda, Peter Sellers and hippie girls. Go figure.

Cathy Graham, of Ostrander, Ohio, is a member of the class of '99 and is an English and education double major and a physical education minor. Her story is dedicated to R.B. who inspired it and C.R. who saved it.

erika laine hansen is a freshman from Stow, Ohio.

Katie Keller is an English major. Her interests include traveling, the outdoors, sports and art appreciation, giving to charity, volunteering and working with the handicapped.

Trish Klei is a senior from Cincinnati, Ohio majoring in English (writing) and minoring in psychology.

Casey McArdle is a senior English (writing) major.

Latisha Newton is a junior from Newark, Ohio.

Elizabeth Nutting is an English and religion double major.

Helena Jasna Oroz is an English (writing) and Communication double major. She says: "Music and words keep me sane—I DJ for WDUB (The Galaxy Girl Show is in its second year, woohoo!), write as much as I can on my own, and dance every chance I get! Accomplishments: Not transferring out of Denison my freshman year. Does that count?"

I will be on Jeopardy one day...Alice in Wonderland is one of the greatest stories of all time...and I am really not a stupid bitch. I'm just a shy slacker. And I hate it when people tell me to smile. Make that: I am really not a depressed stupid bitch. My best quote to date: Sometimes I don't like myself, but I usually like other people a lot less."

Tyler Smith is a senior English (writing) major and theater minor from Zionsville, Indiana. He is currently managing editor of The Bullsheets, club soccer president, a Student Computing Advisory Committee member, and is an avid *Simpsons* (Homer, not O.J.) viewer. He spent the summer of 1995 working as a laborer on a construction site in Indianapolis.

Bekah Taylor is a freshman from La Grange, Illinois.

Brian P. Voroselo was born on the East Coast at a very early age. He learned to write at his mother's knee, which may explain why so much of his writing involves women's knees. He is a senior English/Education double major and hopes one day to corrupt young minds in some fashion.

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Editorial decisions are shared equally among the editorial board. Submissions are judged on a name-blind basis. Members of boards whose own work is under consideration must abstain from discussion regarding that work.

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