



Spring 2006

## The Forum: Spring 2006

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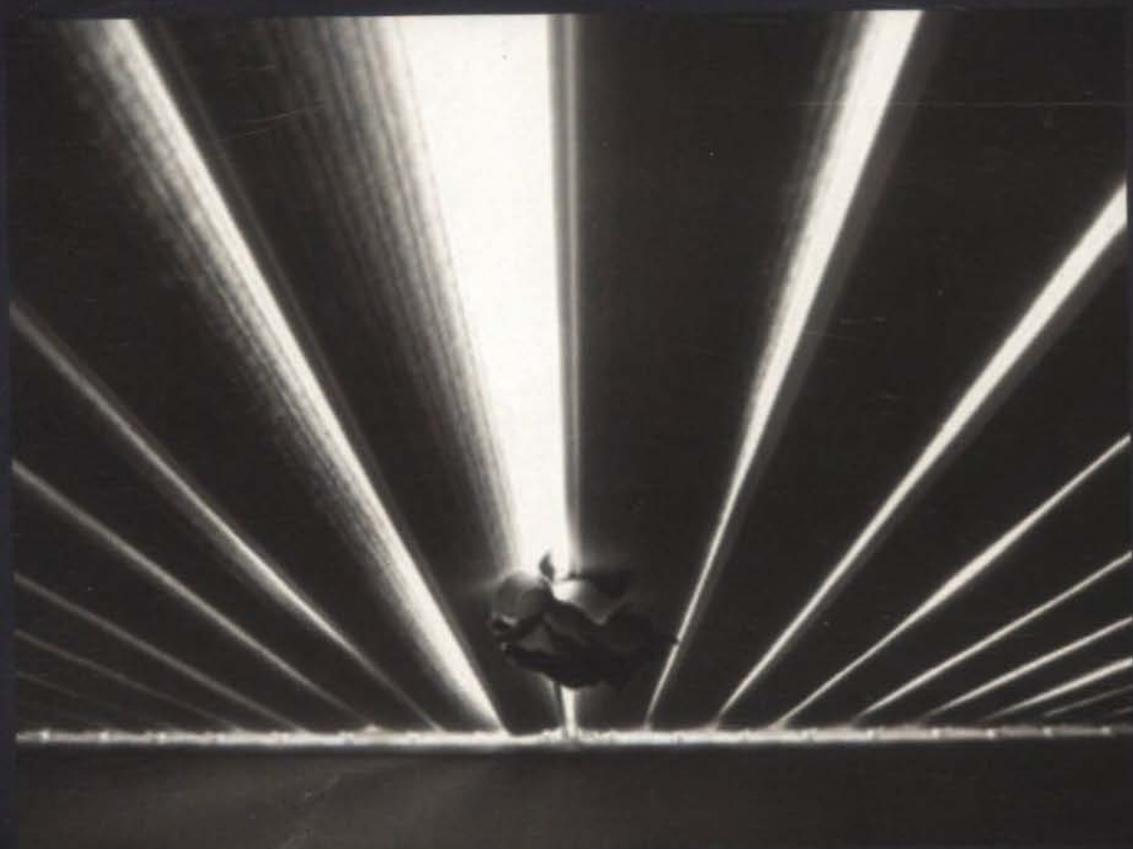
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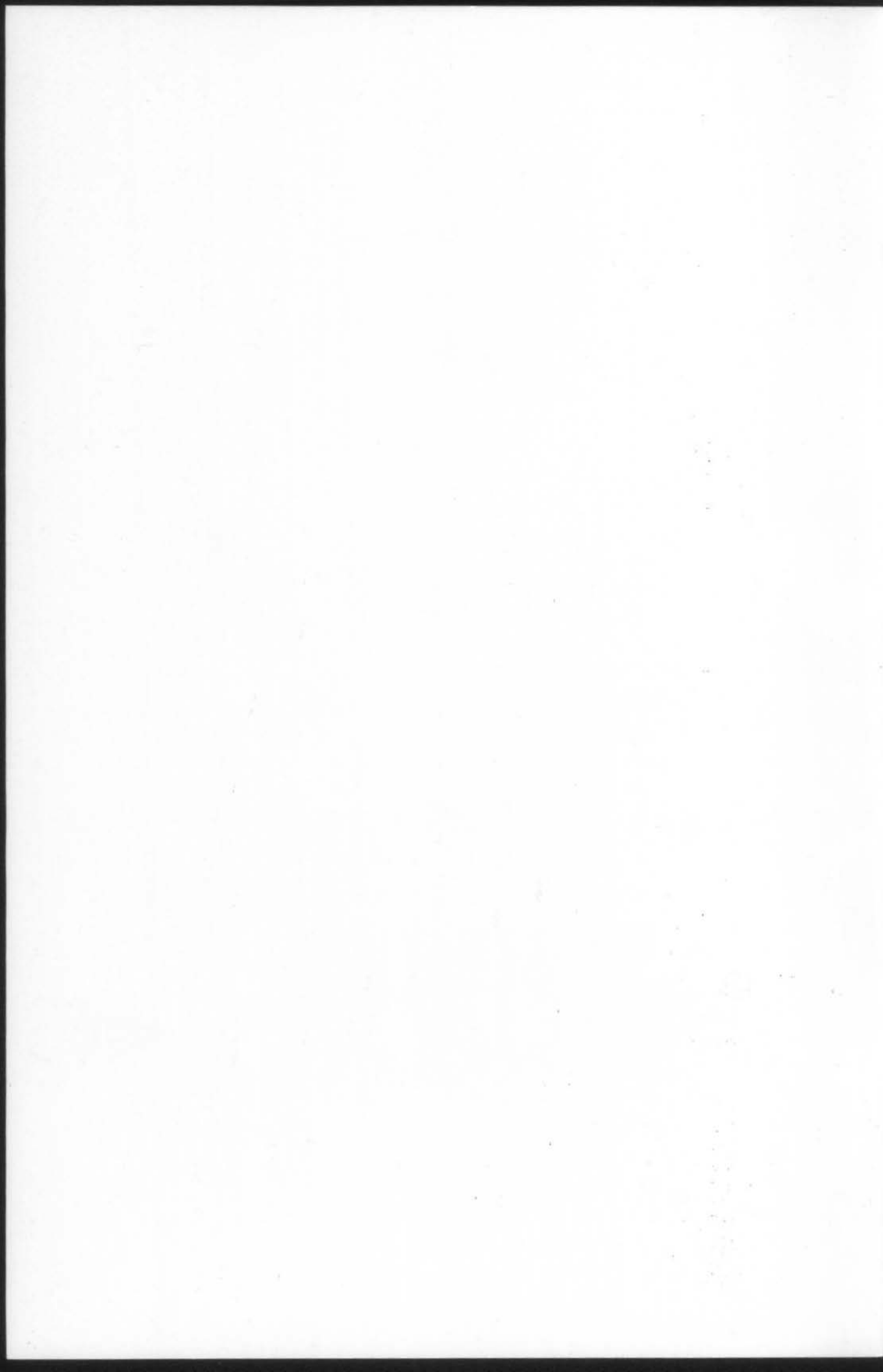
# the Forum

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· stories · poems · essays · art ·

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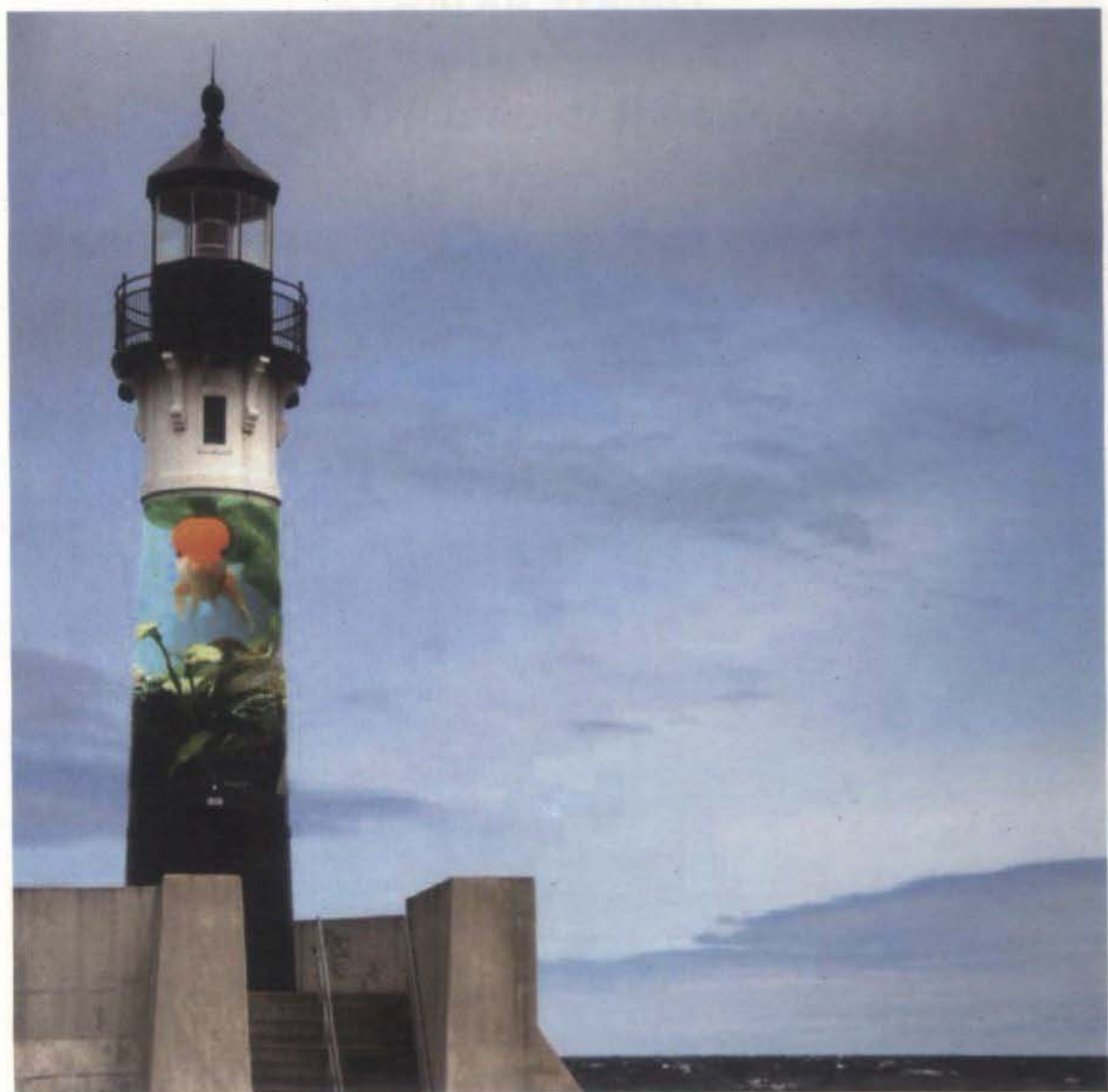
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*Inner Whispers 2*  
Mary Jo Titus  
Digital Art



*Raindrop*  
Sarah Walker  
Photograph



## Sarah Walker

### *A Traditional Wedding*

"I hope the clouds go away. It's bad luck to have rain at a wedding."

Jolie, who was only halfway buttoned into her silky white gown, glanced back over her shoulder. "You can't control the weather, Mom."

She felt her mother's skirt swish against hers as the woman turned back to her task. Her hands felt cold against Jolie's back as she hurriedly hooked the many buttons. "It's bad luck," she insisted.

"Don't." Jolie shivered against the satin. "There's no use worrying about it."

She felt her mother's hands pull away, and the tug of fabric stopped. "Turn around, dear. Let's see how it looks." Her mother smiled. "You're beautiful. He'll love you."

Jolie looked at herself in the small room's mirror. White dress, pale skin, pale hair. Even her flowers--a half-dozen large, long-stemmed roses--were white. She blended into the white walls around her.

She could feel the acid building in her stomach as she looked.

"Why don't you sit? It's natural to be nervous," her mother said.

"I'm not nervous," she said, but she sank down onto the cream-colored cushion of the chair.

"Relax," her mother said.

"I wish I didn't look so pale," Jolie said.

"You always look pale," her mother said. "It's your complexion."

"I don't think I do well in light colors," Jolie said.

"You're imagining things. You've always looked lovely in pastels," her mother said again. "Now, you'll be all right here if I run out to use the lady's room, won't you?" Jolie nodded, and her mother smiled and patted her shoulder and vanished into the white walls.

A green tree outside the window gestured to her. It had grown too close to the window, and the gusts of wind blew the branches against the glass. The storm was approaching.

There were only birch trees near the building except for this one, and if it hadn't been hiding in the back, it probably would have been cut down. The brown of the bark stuck out.

She shook her head, and her cold earrings brushed her white neck. They were mother-of-pearl, expensive and heavy.

"Wear these earrings tomorrow," he had said. "I want to see them on my bride."

"Something new," Jolie's mother had exclaimed. "And you're borrowing my pin--now, where's your something blue?"

The brown branches tapped the pane again. Jolie peered past them; the sky was an even wetter shade of gray.

She stood up, and walked to the door, flinging it open. "John!" she called.

She heard a woman's laugh stream from another room. Someone in the hall gasped. A bridesmaid hustled her back. She heard mumbling. A minute later, a soft knock. The door opened slowly, and a man in a tuxedo inched his way in, staring at the floor.

"You can look at me, John."

"It's bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding," he said.

"Don't be ridiculous," she said. He lowered his hands, and smiled.

She smiled back. "Let's elope."

He stared, then laughed. "Funny."

"No, I mean it. Let's go--let's go to Acapulco." The name tasted warm in her mouth, almost crumbly, like toast. "I'll take off this dress and we can run outside until all our wrinkles turn brown."

"We don't have wrinkles," he said.

"Yes, but--"

"You're just nervous." He winked. "I love the earrings."

She cleared her throat. "Thank you."

"And don't worry," he said. "You worry too much, you know?" He bent over and kissed her forehead, then slipped away from her across the room, toward the door.

The branches ticked against the window. A-ca-pul-co, A-ca-pul-co. A little staccato beat.

If she were there, she could hear that beat all the time. She could run out in the sun until she became as brown as the tree, until she was unrecognizable. How easy would it be to run away, now?

A splatter of rain patted against the window. A mini stream of water rolled sideways and down the glass. Jolie watched as the stream widened, blurring the green leaves of the tree like runny paint. The leaves looked like a thick green veil.

She smiled. "I do."

## Nathan Leidholm

---

### *Impermeable*

**D**arkness closes in on the claustrophobic insomniac.  
Behind the jaded grin lies a translucent aphrodisiac.  
Hidden behind the cumulus shroud,  
Conceived and deceived by the malicious crowd,  
The vivid rainbow is covered in an uneasy black.

Killing himself with the products of counterculture,  
He can't seem to free himself from the glare of the vultures.  
Dreams in the mind of an ancient adolescent,  
Are now lost in the tumultuous aqueous descent.  
Hope is as fleeting as Medusa's self-destructive lure.

What would the village elders say,  
When the boy comes home at the climax of the final day?  
Who, then, will receive his gracious self-hate,  
If the victim becomes the prosecutor when he transubstanti-  
ates?  
Perhaps the latex wasn't impregnable today.

**Jeremy Bold**

*facebook.com*

**Message Received:** 1/24/2006, 11:31 pm

**Subject:** no, you don't know me, but allow me one minute to explain myself

**H**i \_\_\_\_\_,

As I said before, you don't know me, and I don't really know you either. Then why am I talking to you? This whole facebook thing is strange in that way, so let me explain.

I found your profile when I searched for people who listed one of my favorite movies "Blue Velvet". Yeah, I know the bizarre subject matter of that movie is not necessarily the best terms to start this conversation off on.

You like Norah Jones too though, and I am just realizing she is amazing; so that is cool. Oh, and Nick Drake! I've never really had universal favorite songs, but 'Pink Moon' is pretty much the highest choice I can make. And what about Elliott Smith? Wow, that's all I can say...

What is all this buttering up, I'm sure you're wondering. Well, I am doing my best to convince you that I'm not a creep - seems like the more I write, the more opportunity I have to do that.

Anyway, I was just interested in you because of the things I read by you and about you. I figured I could waste this whole opportunity of facebook.com by only using it to talk to people who are already my friends, but I said, "To hell with it," and decided to send you a message in the idea that I might meet someone new and interesting.

I don't expect you to do anything when you get this message. You don't have to add me as a friend, you don't have to send a reply, you don't have to acknowledge that this message was ever in existence. You could completely block me from your profile. Whatever. All I'm asking is, if you are interested, I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to me. Not necessarily in person, but through facebook messages. If you don't use facebook messages or

like facebook at all, then you will probably just ignore this message anyway. I just think it would be interesting to have someone new to talk to, someone I know very little about, but one who seems particularly intriguing among the others.

I anticipate that you might talk to \_\_\_\_\_ about this message or me, given she is pretty much the only connection between you and me. She probably doesn't know much about me either though.

Good luck with your decision - ha, it sounds like I'm sending you off into the jury room to discuss the verdict - I hope I don't sound like too much of a prick.

- Anonymous

## Connor Paulson

---

### *Prayer of the Faithless*

**M**ost Unknowable God,

What beautiful gift is my life! And what gratefulness abounds from my most  
knowing passions!

But is this Your gift? Am I Creation? What vision could I lack that I am blind  
to my Creator?

Or have my brethren wool-covered eyes? Have they become lost in the Gar-  
den of the Real, running with pipe dreams of no one else's doing? Whose is  
wisdom and whose is foolishness?

I fear never an answer will enter into me. What answer can one expect from an  
inattentive people and a mute God? What muteness do you torment me with!

What terrible request of omnipotence is it to open my senses to You?!

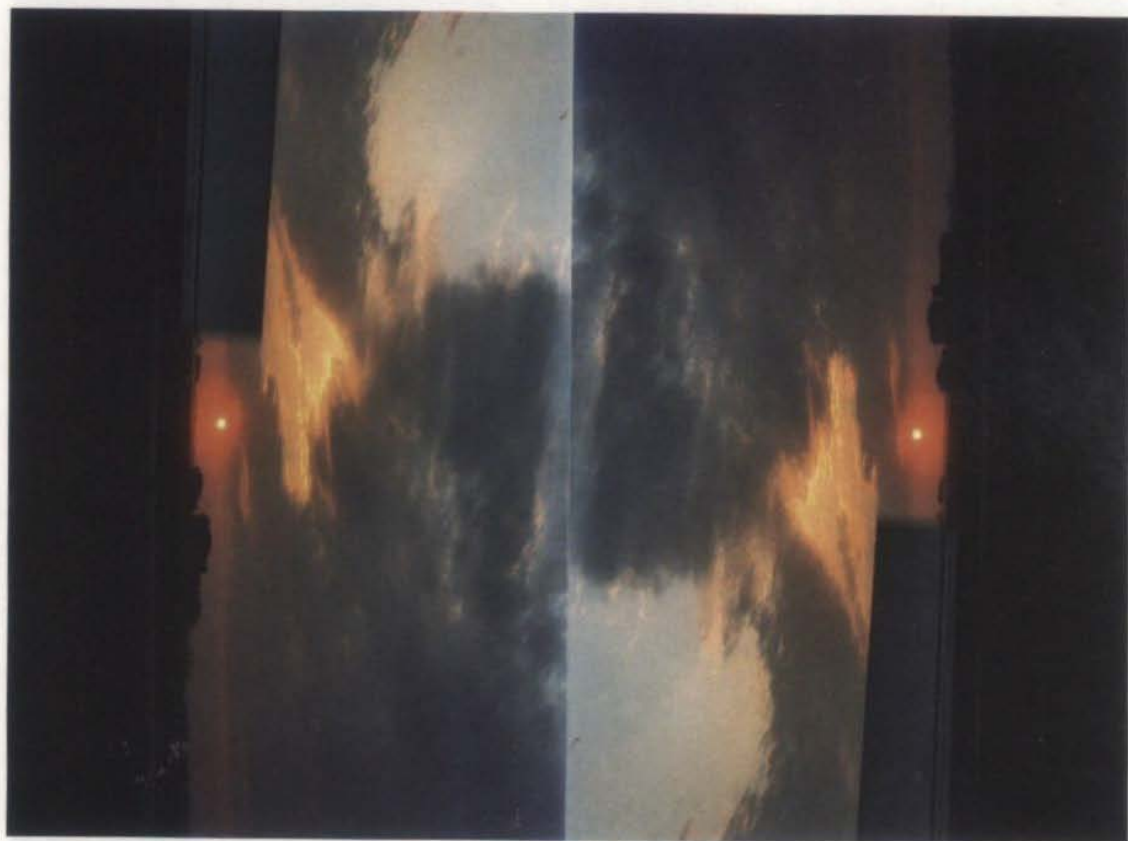
And so, with not a cubit of divine counsel, it is my damned choice to not or to  
continue to submit myself to my brothers' interpretation of Your person. With  
what sense of integrity could I name You *Person*? Are You *Person*, or are you  
a human-born personage?

Should I keep the faith, or free myself from it?

Amen



*Inner Whispers 3*  
Mary Jo Titus  
Digital Art



*Sunset Dust*  
Jan Sher  
Photograph





*Earthbound*  
Jeremy Bold  
Photograph



*Perspective*  
Sarah Walker  
Photograph

## Sarah Walker

---

### *Retribution*

Jackie knew then something was wrong  
As she sat beside her waving husband  
And replayed her life.

She knew he went off to meetings  
Of silvery dresses and cocktails  
And soft, drowsy music.

She saw him after in every picture,  
Blue and red and pink and yellow and staring back  
In Marilyn's stead,  
Warhol's lucky magic haunting her.

Later all she remembered was the nothing,  
Stunning the air for seconds after the crack,  
The scared shriek she had bitten back,  
And the sense of recognizable relief.

Emily Hilleren

---

*From Riot Grrrls to Cybergrrlz:  
The Shaping of the Girl Zine*

The Riot Grrrl movement lasted from 1991 until approximately 1995, though its influence can still be felt today. A key feature of the Riot Grrrl phenomenon was the girl zine, a variation on the punk fanzine that dealt primarily with issues facing women. At the same time Riot Grrrl was gaining national attention, the nation was beginning to connect to the internet, with hosting companies such as Geocities, which was founded in 1995, making it possible for anyone to create his or her own web page for free, in a matter of minutes. The confluence of Riot Grrrl movement and the personal website movement led to the rise of e-zines targeted at female audiences. Two of these e-zines are riotgrrl.com, founded in 1996, and cybergrrlz.com, founded in 1997. While both are rooted in Riot Grrrl ideals, their contents and ultimate fates varied greatly. This paper will look at these e-zines in relation to Riot Grrrl and each other, illustrating two ways the girl zine adapted to an internet audience.

Fanzines first became associated with the punk movement in the mid-1970s, and though localized, served as an important tool in "connect[ing] a worldwide Punk network" (O'Hara 64). Though fanzines and punk fanzines predate Riot Grrrl, zines played a more prominent and celebrated role in the Riot Grrrl movement than in most other punk movements. Rather than dealing broadly with punk bands and politics in general, the zines spawned by the Riot Grrrl movement dealt largely with feminist issues. The music and zines of the Riot Grrrl movement gave a voice to angry girls who had missed out on the second-wave feminism and first-wave punk rock of the 1960s and 70s as outlets for anger, and served as platforms for these young women to define their own agendas and their own views of feminism and female empowerment.

As Riot Grrrl was so special to its members, supporters, and followers, they were reluctant to give interviews with the media or to define Riot Grrrl as one concrete thing, fearing that it would be misrepresented and co-opted if they did. One girl summed up this fear in her description of Riot Grrrl as "something that's really important to me and I'm afraid of it being exploited" (qtd. in Sinker 60). As a result, Riot Grrrl was left largely open to interpretation, and when girls heard about it, it was as a vague notion of female

empowerment through punk rock and do-it-yourself music and publication, "molded ... into digestible forms" by the mainstream publications that did write about it (Thompson 60).

The Riot Grrrl movement was violently opposed to capitalist production, heavily favoring the idea of "do-it-yourself." Because of its do-it-yourself attitude and its refusal to be defined concretely the Riot Grrrl movement lent itself easily to the upcoming internet revolution. Numerous websites and internet communities for young feminists were founded in the mid-1990s, including Riotgrrl and Cybergrrlz.

Riotgrrl was started in 1996 and its original content basically consisted of a typical Riot Grrrl zine translated to the internet. The layout was simple, featuring pink and purple text on a white background, accompanied by images. By the end of 1996, the front page had a more professional layout, adding a chartreuse background and an official logo into the mix (Wayback Machine). The content mainly consisted of essays by its creators and contributors, adding a few features, such as "Feed the Supermodel" later on. The site served as an outlet for its authors, including an e-mail newsletter and a form for readers to submit their works. These authors were fulfilling goals of the Riot Grrrl movement by "tak[ing] over the means of production" of their zine and using the internet to "make it easier for girls to see each other's work" (Hanna). By 2000, Riotgrrl had worked to foster a greater sense of community by adding online forums for its readers and contributors to share ideas.

The content was highly entertaining, often very controversial, and usually encouraged readers to challenge traditional beliefs about women. Riotgrrl carried the anger of the Riot Grrrl movement towards societal definitions of girls, and like other Riot Grrrl zines, sought to create its own content to challenge these ideas and create an alternative to them. Riotgrrl seemed to closely adhere to the Riot Grrrl Manifesto, holding to the idea that "doing/reading/seeing/hearing cool things that validate and challenge us can help us gain the strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodiedism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives" (Hanna).

Cybergrrlz began as an online publication "for girls with brains and a sense of humor" featuring a chat room for its readers almost from the moment of its creation, and a message board by the beginning of 2000 (Wayback Machine). Its appearance was similar to that of Riotgrrl.com in terms of a simple layout and a green/pink color scheme. However, unlike Riotgrrl, the content of Cybergrrlz was broken into sections and was more reader submission-oriented than essay-oriented. Popular sections included Hit Me, a page that presented girls' opinions about current events, often in a hard-hitting manner; Aunt Crabby, a joke advice page that mocked the advice columns of girl magazines; and various humor pages, including one for general jokes and one for humorous chat quotes.

By providing a community for intelligent young women and a vehicle for their expression, Cybergrrlz was very similar in appearance and purpose to other Riot Grrrl publications. Cybergrrlz also bolstered this sense of community by having an annual get-together, called the "Cybergrrlz Convention" and several smaller meet-ups among its members, giving them a chance to know each other "in real life," in addition to online. These resembled Riot Grrrl conventions in purpose, allowing young women who were connected through a particular scene to meet in person, share ideas, and further establish the sense of community and support they wished to achieve.

While these websites created a sense of community for their members, they were not always linked together, and even if they belonged to the same webring, there was no guarantee of mutual support. In one instance in 2001, Cybergrrl.com, which had also started its life as a feminist e-zine, threatened to sue Cybergrrlz for trademark violation, and as a result, Cybergrrlz changed its name to Purple Pajamas, a friendlier name more suited to its increasingly young audience (About Us). The hostile and competitive attitude between some e-zines runs counter to the attitude expressed in the Riot Grrrl Manifesto, "BECAUSE we are interested in creating non-hierarchical ways of being AND making music, friends, and scenes based on communication + understanding, instead of competition + good/bad categorizations" and even fits the description of something that Riot Grrrl fought against, "girl/girl jealousy and self-defeating behaviors," by choosing to compete with each other rather than embrace each other as fellow fighters in a feminist crusade, as Riot Grrrls were encouraged to do (Hanna).

Another challenge faced by the cyber grrl community were changes due to an increase in popularity. As more and more people began reading and contributing to e-zines, their audiences became younger and less driven by the angry girl feminism that most of their creators possessed. Many people were interested in simply reading, not contributing, in some ways injuring the sense of community. Additionally, as a website gains popularity, its operating costs increase, making it difficult for non-profit websites to survive and remain non-commercial, as Riotgrrl and Riot Grrrls strove to do. Citing no specific reason, the creator of Riotgrrl stop updating her website in early 2002, though the commitments of time and money required to maintain a popular website were almost certainly factors in her decision.

As e-zines like Riotgrrl faded out of the picture, e-zines such as the online versions of ElleGirl and CosmoGirl took their places. Many e-zines, including Cybergrrl.com, appear to have chosen Riotgrrl's path of nonexistence over adapting to compete with a new crop of e-zines that arose to address the needs of the waves of teenage girls interested in online content, but not specifically rebellion. In the face of these changes, Cybergrrlz/Purple Pajamas was able to continue funding itself, partially through allowing advertising, and also chose to adapt its content to its new readers' needs.

Over time, Cybergrrlz/Purple PJs shifted from having one joke advice column to having ten serious ones, including two concerned mainly with beauty tips. The description was changed to "an online community for girls," removing the requirements of brains or senses of humor, and the colors lost their lime green and bubblegum pink harshness for a softer array of purples (Purple PJs). Even with the shift from a more girl zine-like structure to a more girl magazine-like structure, Purple Pajamas could still be seen to embody many of the ideals of Riot Grrrl, as outlined in the Riot Grrrl Manifesto.

The readers of Purple Pajamas still produce the majority of its content, leaving the means of production firmly in their hands. With its increased popularity, it continues to serve the functions of fostering community and support among girls, and giving girls the opportunity to read and do "cool things that validate and challenge [them]" through reader contributions and the delegation of responsibility for each of its multitude of pages to girls who volunteer to become page editors (Hanna). By giving girls a voice in an online community, Purple Pajamas also helps girls to challenge the ideas of girls being dumb or bad or weak as Riot Grrrl strove to do.

However, the sense of creating the "angry grrrl rock revolution" that Kathleen Hanna spoke of is gone in the modern Purple Pajamas and many of the more popular commercialized or niche-oriented girl zines that exist today. Anger towards a capitalistic or male-dominated system rarely manifests itself within the website's content. In losing the sense of revolution, the popular e-zines today have lost an important element that connects them to Riot Grrrl and original feminist zines.

Oddly, while it fails to fulfill the Riot Grrrl goal of promoting a revolution, Purple Pajamas and other publications like it are still fulfilling what Hanna described as the ultimate goal of the revolution, working to "save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours."

Ultimately, looking at e-zines that grew out of Riot Grrrl can reveal several things about the movement and its goals. While Riot Grrrl did its best to prevent itself from gaining popularity and mass media attention, e-zines are unable to shelter themselves and reveal reactions to the popularity, which seem to include large amounts of self-destruction or adaptation to a more mainstream format. Also, the ways that remarkably different e-zines can still meet many of the same goals of the Riot Grrrl movement reveals the vagueness of the manifesto, the movement's ability to be adapted to and adopted by mainstream culture, and tendencies of women to lash out at one another over conflicting ideas and petty differences. At its heart, Riot Grrrl seems to be a dichotomy of angry grrrl revolution and friendly grrrl community. The angry grrrls self-destruct in the face of envelopment by the machine and the community-oriented grrrls embrace ideas that run counter to revolutionary principles in order to encourage young women to grow and feel loved. While the movement was originally able to resolve these two goals within its small following,

once it is applied to the larger world, or at least the world of the internet and online zines, the goals begin to separate themselves and e-zines find themselves forced to choose one or the other.

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*Americana*  
Medora Bouck  
Acrylic Painting



*oops*  
Jan Sher  
Photograph

## April Sullivan

---

### *Naked Friendship*

Why do I bother? You aren't even listening.  
Just pretend I'm not there. You're good at that.  
Call me when you want to. Not when I need you.  
A friend of convenience, that's what I am.

"What's new with you?"

"Nothing." Everything.

"What's new with you?"

"Everything." Nothing.

Call me tomorrow and talk for hours. I'll listen.  
Who will listen to the girl with nothing to say?

"Everyone." No one.

Dear Forum Readers,

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Forum. Our goal is to encourage good writing and creative expression among Honors students. Share your talent by having your work published in the Forum. Just follow these simple steps when submitting written work or photographs:

1. Print a hard copy of your work.
2. Save it to disk as a text (.txt) file.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form.
4. Drop the above three items in a submission drop box found either in the Honors lounge or in the mailboxes.

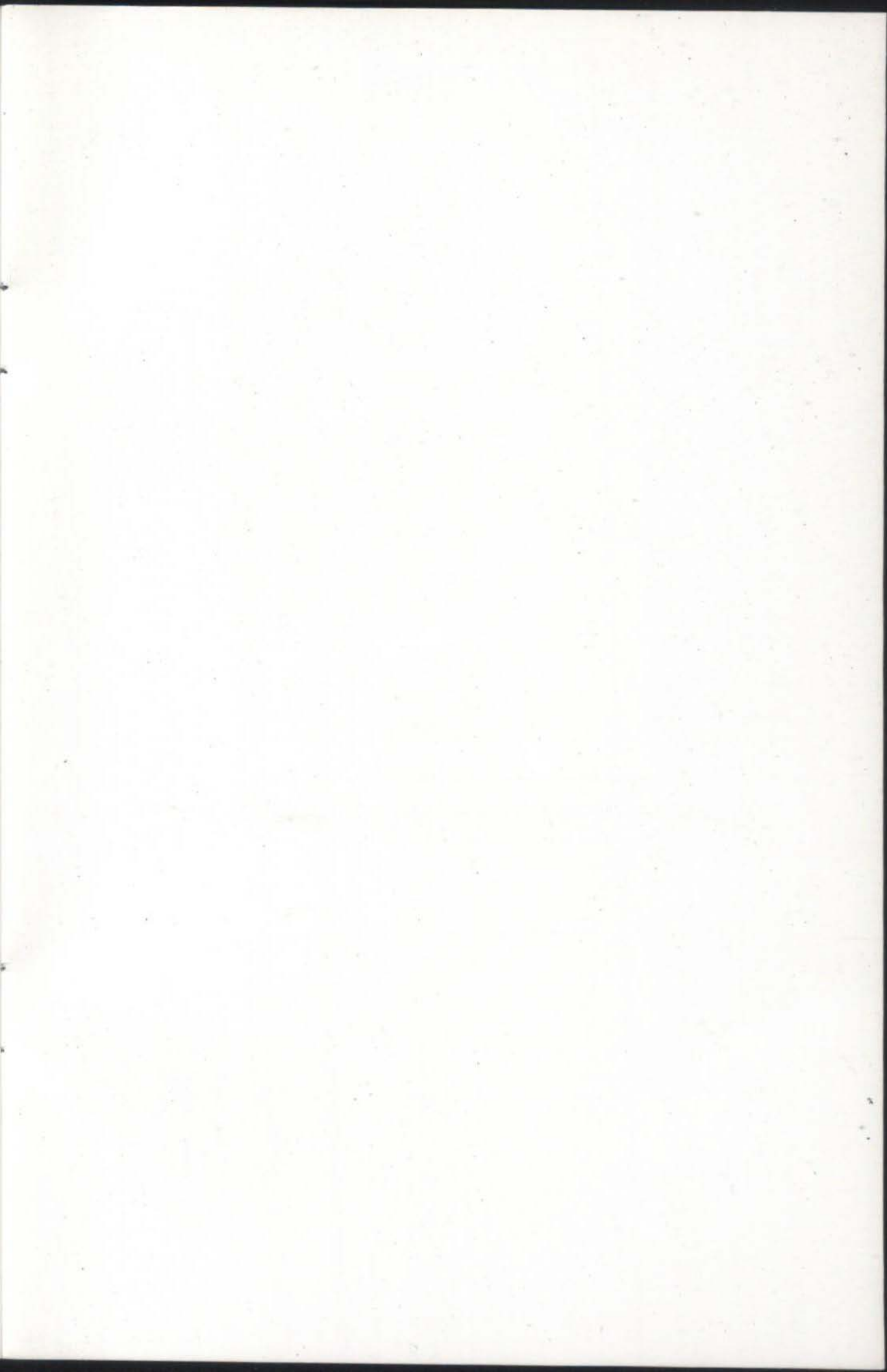
To submit artwork, please follow these steps:

1. Bring the art work to the Honors office.
2. Include your name and phone number with your artwork.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form and leave it in one of the drop boxes.

You can also submit work via e-mail. Please submit documents as attachments in text format (.txt) and images in tiff format (.tif). Send submissions to [honorsforum@yahoo.com](mailto:honorsforum@yahoo.com). You will also need to complete a Submission Release Form.

Thank you,

the Forum Editorial Board



the Forum

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