

SPRING 2001

*MANUSCRIPTS*



# Manuscripts

*Are you lonely looking for yourself out there.*  
*--Train*

Butler University  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Volume 69, No.2  
Spring 2001

## **Manuscripts Staff**

### **Senior Editor**

Aaron Black\*

### **Associate Editors**

Elizabeth Sidley\*

### **Faculty Advisor**

Fran Quinn

### **Editorial Staff**

Leah Anderst\*

Catherine Lewis

Nathan Pose

Pamela Salling

Carol Wukovits\*

\* Denotes members of Sigma Tau Delta,  
National English Honorary

## Table of Contents

A Piece of Paper.....	Ralph Brandt
American Gateway.....	Jake Walsh
An Outsider View of Indiana.....	Jacqueline Hawk
“He’s a business man...”.....	Carol Wukovits
Ashtray.....	Abel Contreras
Cocaine.....	Laura Partridge
“the truth is...”.....	Helen Straight
disc .....	Abel Contreras
Swimming in the Wake.....	Grant Gooding
Good Times Bar and Grill, 7:58p.m.....	Sarah Delaplane
Dodgeball in the House.....	Abel Contreras
“guess you were plugging your ears ...”.....	Catherine Lewis
I’d like a Yellow Shirt.....	Marie Ursuy
Languid Suicide.....	Carol Wukovits
Moonlight is better than Opium.....	Jake Walsh
My Artist Friend.....	Marie Ursuy
Sensation.....	Laura Partridge
Small Courages.....	Ralph Brandt
The Truth is.....	Helen Straight
The Urge to Fight.....	Brant Gilbert
The word “random” is entirely overused.....	Amy Vaerewyck
Treadmill.....	Sarah Delaplane
Weekend Visit.....	Jacqueline Hawk

Visual Art by  
Leah Anderst

## American Gateway

Smoking doesn't get  
me high, anymore –  
gray cells  
I thought I'd lost years ago  
demanding  
something new & fearful  
bold, beautiful –  
Like rolling up your skin  
the scalpel, precise, glint –Your cold gray eyes  
yearning.  
Like rocks falling, through  
thousands of yards of seething mist  
to break into daggerish slivers, against raging froth.  
Like flying bricks, from  
children who stone their parents in the streets,  
people rioting, biting  
dogs and pigs.

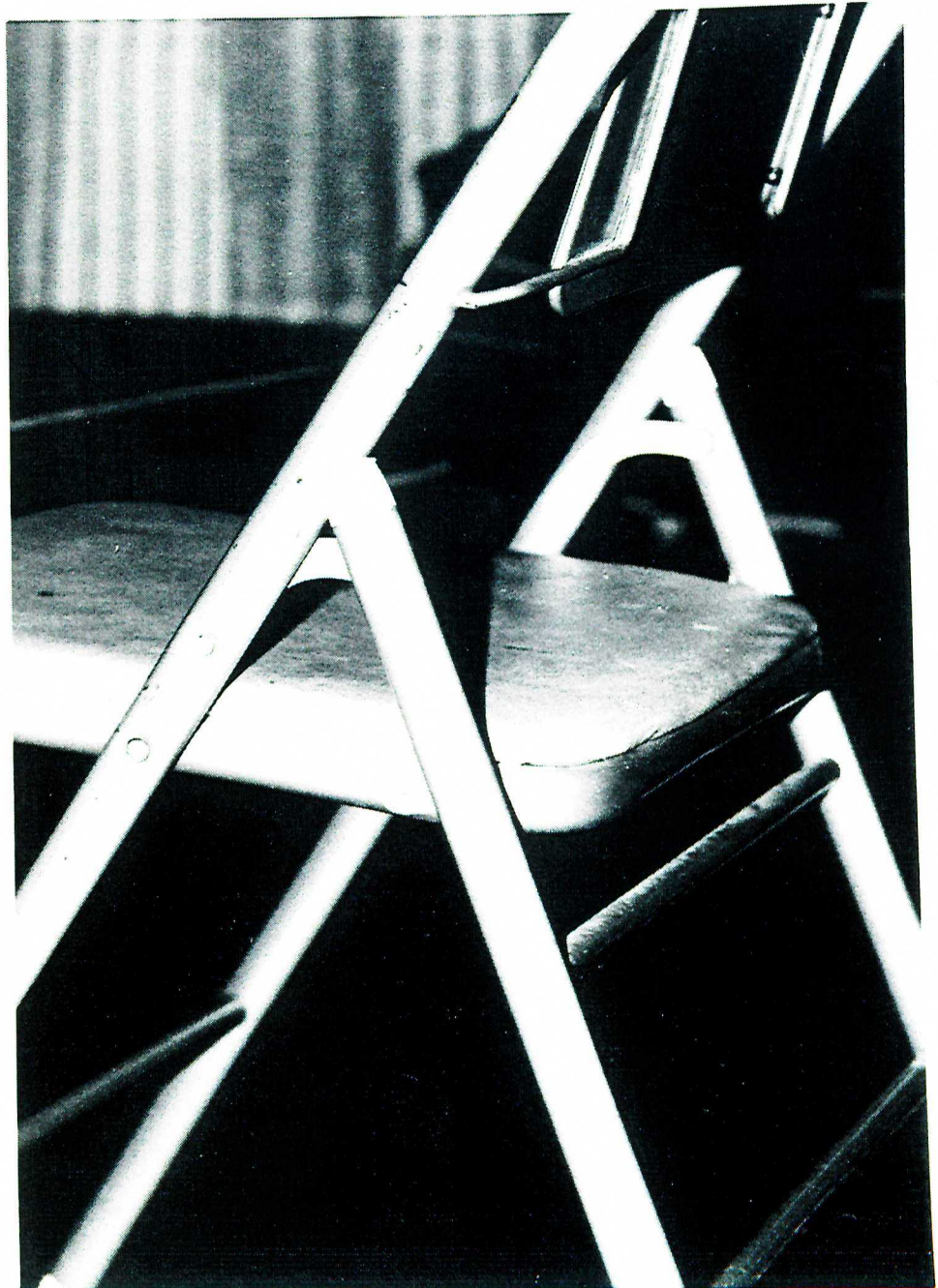
Smoking with you,  
nerves of shrapnel, hands  
brutal, ready to spring.  
You take off your pants and jump  
into my car. I drive, drive, drive  
down Mount Molhulland Boulevard  
and watch you flash the occasional  
rotting old man, stumbling up his  
lonely driveway, cursing  
for the murders, the Sears ads, and the goddamn  
obituary.  
The radio rages  
orgasms in hell. You snort bumps off my dashboard.  
I stare at nothing, passing  
amber waves of pain  
the color of your hair,  
tearing in my hands. You shake.  
The tires screech a seething  
melody, and something deep  
below my chest, begins  
to slowly heat.

A lonely white house, surrounded  
by corn. Weathervane on the gray barn.  
White picket fence, an old blue ford,  
a pill-popping housewife  
with platinum hair  
we slice

like white bread, her blood  
gleaming like oil, like rubies  
Salty and sour, warm in the belly.  
You find her Demerols and  
crush them, with a Bible,  
We snort lines on her kitchen table. I jizz  
on her remains. We drive away, laughing.

Later, in a motel room,  
we smoke another joint, and little  
bullets, dancing in my veins, a tarantella.  
We talk about driving to California  
getting married, having kids  
or maybe becoming porn stars.

-Jake Walsh



### **A piece of paper**

A piece of paper, blank, folded,  
sticks out of my pocket.  
I put it there to get inspired  
hoping to record an idea from my bike ride.  
Riding jacket pockets are for essentials---  
gel food, tools, keys, spare tire and such,  
but a piece of paper seems unessential  
this cold, sunny Sunday morning.

There were ideas and experiences worth recording.  
The sharp, cold wind reminded me of  
how our fragile lives are insulted  
by just a thin protective layer from hurt or even death---  
like my riding clothes protected me  
from the perilous freezing cold.

A brisk, westerly wind,  
a wind chill of 3 degrees F.  
set eyes watering, face stinging, fingers going numb.  
I kept riding to stay warm,  
but mostly for the joy, and 16 miles  
after one full hour was more than just enough.  
I made notes; the ideas live.  
In summer, when the jacket is stored  
and the paper is unfolded,  
I will recall the bright, bitter cold.

-Ralph Brandt

### **An Outsider's View of Indiana**

Indiana is a backwards place  
Where the squirrels are red  
And the dirt isn't,  
Where greetings are warmest  
From those who like you least,  
Where there are trees in the city  
And none in the country,  
And Middle American teenagers  
Long for anonymity.

-Jacqueline Hawk



He's a businessman. Anonymous. Faceless. He hates his job, loathes it with passionless resentment, but goes to work everyday, commuting on crowded expressways full of men and women who resemble each other. They all look and act alike. No one seems to want to be different from the person in the cubicle or car next to him. His closet, spacious and well lit, is full of beautifully tailored black suits and black silk ties. He doesn't want to stand out, separate from the pack. He carefully hides his vulnerabilities, avoids them like he avoids color.

He married her because they had been sweethearts in high school. They had their picture taken for the yearbook once, her smiling blankly into the camera. He married her because everyone said they should, because it was time for him to get married. He had begun to loathe her as much as he loathed his job. She didn't understand him, only *more*. She wants more rooms and more furniture and more cars. She wants to own more and have it cost more than her neighbors and friends. They don't use all the rooms in the house. They couldn't possibly sit in all the chairs or switch on and off all the lamps. They have three times as many cars living in the garage as people living in the house. They don't drive them all. They couldn't possibly.

"I can see a clearing in the darkness," he says one day after fighting traffic for several hours to arrive at the empty house. "It wasn't always this dark, and it doesn't have to be. I know that now."

"What darkness?" she responds. He can already tell she doesn't care, and he's right. Her blouse matched the custom paint on the walls. Her arms are perfectly and artificially tanned in the sleeveless top.

"I saw a patch of blue sky today. For the first time in a long time, I remembered that blue existed, that there's color in the world. I think I can reach it, make it there, before it's too late."

"For what?"

"Before I stop feeling. Before I lose myself to all this. I think I'm buried under here, alive but slowly suffocating. So slowly I haven't noticed. But this isn't the life I wanted. This isn't what I dreamed of and wished for as a child."

She looks away from him and walks over to the couch and collapses beautifully in the expensive upholstery. She stares intently at the walls of the room, as if they hold a secret she might discover if she looks hard enough.

"I think I should have this room repainted," is her reply.

He looks at her, draped exquisitely on the couch, her shirt mating the walls she wants to repaint. Outside, the sky becomes a little darker. The patch of blue moves further toward the horizon, away from him and his house and his wife who matched the walls. He walks to the liquor cabinet and pours scotch into a crystal glass. The glass is heavy and old and expensive. The scotch has been aged 25 years. He leaves with his expensive glass full of expensive scotch and walks sedately to the linen drawer in the butler's pantry.

The scotch goes down in one smooth swallow. He doesn't flinch or grimace as he purposefully drops the glass to the floor. It crashes to the hand-painted Spanish tiles, tinkling a sweet melody as it shatters. The song continues as shreds of expensive glass, droplets of expensive scotch still clinging to them, fly into the air and hit the walls.

His feet, shod in expensive Italian leather shoes, crunch as he removes too white linen tablecloths from the drawer. Hand woven by indigenous people in some country they had visited. He vaguely thinks of child-slaves losing fingers in looms as he stumbles back to his wife, who hasn't moved. She isn't concerned by the noise of shattering crystal or interested in the odd look of his face or the children dying in a country far away.

Is he mistaken, or has more black taken over the sky, the blue strip even further away? Impossible to reach?

He steps up to her, wraps one cloth tightly around her face, cover her blank, uncaring eyes. He wraps the other even more tightly around his own.

"This is the best think I can do," he says. "For both of us."

-Carol Wukovits



## Ashtray

An ashtray, which is lined with coins  
sits at my windowsill. I treat it as if  
it belongs to a museum, like an artifact  
from Aztec civilization; like this signifies  
North America's first sign of a currency;  
but these are Mexican coins, newly expired.

The Ashtray fakes off a culture that I don't have.  
I can imagine them in the real world as  
poor peasant money, authentic and beautiful.  
The dirty metallic coin clenched in a Hispanic hand,  
the scent of sweat, soil, and brass comprise  
a culture that I have long since abandoned.

The man with the beads of sweat  
lining his face from the heat and humidity,  
his deep red skin feeling the days wages,  
rattles the change in his pocket that he  
imagines to be small bits of gold.

He sits at the counter and waits as  
coins are lifted from his pocket.  
A cerveza is bought and drank down  
so fast that it almost pours down his face;  
the streaks of liquid shine against the midday sun.

Being deemed to old for use, the coins are  
cleaned, polished, and waxed.  
These coins are gently lined  
against an artificial metallic base to offer me,  
a meaning as extinct as the coins themselves.

The ashtray is what results but,  
I don't smoke anymore than I speak Spanish.  
I'll keep it there,  
Reminding me as I think to myself  
why the hell I learned French.

-Abel Contreras

## Cocaine

O, puppeteer why don't you put on your glasses? I keep running into things  
and all I hear is laughter, and I'm sick of being funny because you have an astigmatism.  
Also I think we need to work on my head turns, I'm not blinking at the right moment.  
I think I am a little too prancy as well so maybe we could do some legwork.  
Oh, and you have to stop drinking before the show, it ruins everything.  
And should we find a new piano player  
because Earl just isn't cutting it, that's a fuckin' shocker.  
I was thinking about my voice too because the way you do it now seems  
a bit too slow. I think we need to speed it up a little. Are you going to  
get up because the phone is ringing and I can't really answer it now can I, all of our hard  
work would go to waste. Stop looking at me like that, you  
know it wouldn't work, and are you listening to me! I sound  
like Tweedy Bird, I said quicker not higher.  
God,  
you're just impossible.

-Laura Partridge

The truth is,  
every time I get caught watching the news,  
(once or twice a year), nothing has  
happened.  
On those nights, viewing nights, seen nights,  
ever assassination-free nights, they always  
run the same terrifying healthwatch report:  
American Childhood Obesity.  
Fat kids and statistics forever.  
Gruesome footage, flashing  
happy, hefty, headless kids,  
with protrusive, unquestionably  
newsworthy,  
bright pink bodies, playing in the public  
pool.  
Flesh, sunburning anonymously.  
Hooray, the unsolved mystery remains.  
Nothing has happened.  
No one has died.  
No news again.  
We're fat!

-Helen Straight

## disc

thin, perfectly symmetrical,  
orbiting its singular universe  
I listen, evaluate  
the translation, physically  
explodes through the color wheel;  
I look at its rain-bowed nakedness,  
and discover my own reflection.

It adjusts to my ever-changing mood.  
This time, I'm driving sixty and  
cornering at ninety degrees  
in the perfect elasticity of darkness  
the diminishing of light  
increases attitude exponentially

first, gesturing slowly, smiling  
subtle continuous nods  
like only my head was placed on a rocking chair  
timed with the precision of a metronome  
without knowing my right foot,  
joins in concert and I've escaped

later, I'll become the translation;  
at that moment, every place in particular  
is no where to be and I'll step inside the circle; the symmetrical floor  
I'll look at my own reflection again  
but this time, from the inside out.

-Abel Contreras

## Swimming in the Wake

"You have no idea. No fuckin idea. Do you hear me? I mean, do you fuckin hear me, you clean-cut Gucci wearing piece of shit?" Music pumping inside the building rattled the windows with base. Each window was covered with purple paint so that only a faint glow shown from inside.

"Yes, Philip. I hear you. I am listening to you." Piers rolled his eyes and opened and closed his hands over and over. His breath made white clouds. Philip's breath was mixed with cigarette smoke.

"I mean, have you heard? I know you have. Don't lie to me, and you need to smoke. Here. Have a smoke. You need to start if you don't." Philip held what looked like a joint out to Piers.

"What the hell is that?"

Julie didn't bother looking up. "It's a cigarette, dummie. Philip rolls them himself. They're better that way." She took a drag off of her own hand-rolled cigarette and made her own enlarged cloud of breath.

"That's fuckin' right. None of those poisons that Microsoft puts in the water. Fresh as a summer day. Fuckin' great. I even grow the tobacco myself. You know it's legal to grow weed as long as you don't sell it, but tobacco is against the law if it's home grown. Have a fugitive smoke, my friend." With a jerk of his hand Philip forced the cigarette to Piers.

Piers slowly took it from Philip's hand, looked at it for a moment, and put it in his mouth. Julie offered him the tip of hers to light it.

"What do you mean Gucci? I don't wear any..."

"It's just an expression. Just an expression. You need to relax. Re-fuckin-lax, man. Look at everyone here. Look at em." Philip made wild hand gestures at the rest of the crowd on the sidewalk. "They are relaxed, my hombre. You need to ree-lax. You are never going to get in if you're all discombobulated."

Piers stood on his toes to get a look down the line. He thought he could see the door. He wasn't sure, though. Even if he could, the line wasn't moving at all. It hadn't moved in nearly ten minutes. It would be another half hour if they were lucky.

"Can't they...why aren't they going faster?" Julie shifted from one long leg to the other. She played with her long dark hair wrapping it around her finger, slowly wasting away the hour she had spent fixing her hair in the first place. She held the cigarette in her other hand letting it burn of its own accord. "I've never seen a line for a club take nearly this long? I mean, I know it's Gadot's..."

"Don't finish that sentence, because you'll be wrong." Philip pointed his middle finger at Julie. A silver ring glittered on it with the initials P.M. "If you woulda finished that fuckin' sentence, I would not have been responsible for my fuckin' actions."

"Dammit, it's cold. It's really damned cold." Piers breathed onto his hands trying to warm them.

"Hardens the blood. And the nipples. It's great for everything in you. Wakes you up and reminds your balls to keep on watch. Hot damn, it's good. You complain about it and I'll make you eat your jacket, my son. Make some use of the damned thing, anyway."

Julie tried wrapping herself in her thin arms. She looked up the side of the building. "This place don't look like a funeral home."

"Doesn't, my dear. The word is 'doesn't'. Proper English is a must." Philip flipped open his cigarette case and pulled out another hand-rolled cigarette.

"What...what do you mean? Why should it look like a funeral home?" Piers' brow furrowed in confusion.

"Don't you know shit? I guess not, otherwise you wouldn't be wearing those pants. This place, or at least part of this place was a mortuary back in the day. That's why it's called Gadot's Wake. Gadot bought the place and hardy hardy hardy, we got us a party. I think another part of it used to be apartments or something. The place is as big as God and twice as fun."

"We've been here for twenty minutes already. Why don't we just go..."

"Now, Piers, my boy, you really must shut the fuck up. I have only met you three hours before now and I enjoyed not hating you. So be a peach and don't go fucking with that? Si?"

"Yeah," Julie chimed in, "going anywhere else now would be like admitting defeat. And anywhere else we go'll just be full of people coming from here or getting ready to come here."

"Most probably just claim one of the two honors, however, my dear. Only a select few make it, only a select few." Philip tried to make smoke rings and found that he didn't really know how.

"And you've made it?" Piers took a quick drag from his cigarette and tried to hold in a cough.

"I will be the first to admit that I have not. I have not. One time did I try and one time did I fail. That was three years ago when I was a naïve sprite not yet wise in the ways of the world. I am a better man today, oh yes."

Piers looked at Julie. "What about you?"

"What about me what?"

"Have you ever been here?"

"Yeah. I mean, no. I've never been inside. I've waited in line twice before. I almost got in last time, but some of the people I was with were...well..." Julie trailed off.

"So...neither of you have even been here before?"

"And tonight we go into the breach never to be the same fools again. Our penetration through yonder door ends our virginity, or my name isn't Nathan Arizona! Goddamn, it's cold as a witch's teat out here. Makes a man wish for more hair, yes sir." Philip danced to music in his own head.

"You know," Piers said after a moment, "a guy I work with, Clark, he said that they have a fountain at one end of the club. He said that water runs in little canals that are up above you head and..."

"I never heard that," Julie cut Piers off. "I heard that the main room has, like aquariums, but with fire blowing through them. But they're heat proof, so they're not hot. My sister's friend, Amy, told me that the aquarium things are even cold. She said that there's this big bon-fire..."

"You're both right, you crazy sons of bitches." Philip took a long drag before continuing. He looked at Julie. "Well, I suppose you're a daughter. But what my many sources have informed me is that there are multiple rooms. Rooms of fire and water and earth and air and lightning and ice and bourbon and little umbrellas and tall oriental car salesmen that juggle women and screaming three nipples ducks covering heavy metal versions of Scot Joplin tunes and flying acrobatic bartenders that can make any drink with both eyes tied behind their backs."

Julie and Piers looked at Philip for a moment. Philip continued to dance to music in his own head. After an extended pause, Piers said, "Are you ever not full of shit?"

Philip stopped and turned to Piers. He poked him in the chest hard. "My fine feathered friend, do not fuck with the likes of me. I am a soothsayer that speaks only hard-boiled truth. You remember that and you'll live a long and well insured life." Philip went back to bouncing to no music.

"Don't poke me like that, you fruit," Piers said after a lengthy pause. Philip stopped and turned to Piers again. He poked him in the chest again. "Like this?"

Julie rubbed the bridge of her nose. "Fucking guys," she muttered to herself.

Piers shoved Philip's arm away. "Stop that."

"What kind of fruit am I, eh? I hope I'm a citrus." He put his finger back on Piers' chest. Piers shoved it away again.

"You're an asshole fruit, asshole."

Poke.

"Asshole fruit, eh? Am I at least seedless?"

Poke, poke.

Julie shifted her weight. "Would you two idiots stop it?"

Poke.

"I want to find out if I'm seedless. Huh? Am I? What say you, sticky britches?"

"Fuck you, Philip."

Poke.

Piers grabbed Philip's hand and squeezed it tightly trying to crush his fingers. "I said, 'stop that.'"

"Better let go of that, son. Might go off."

"Yeah, and I might pull it off." Piers tried to look intimidating.

"I've studied high karate, so I'm only gonna give you this one warning. Just this one. One warning, Pharaoh. Let my fingers go."

"You gonna make me?"

"Just this one warning. Just one. Just this one fuckin' warning, and then look out, Jack!"

Julie was sick of this already. "Will one of you just hit the other and get this over with?"

Philip looked at her. "Sounds like a plan." He belted Piers, but not very well. Piers stumbled back and let go of Philip's hand.

"Love it when a plan comes together."

"You shit!" Piers charged at Philip and struck him in the chest with all his might. Philip took a step back from the blow and shook his head.

"Won't do, my boy. Will not..."

Piers rammed his fist into Philip's eye knocking his sunglasses off and leaving them with a large crack in one lens. Philip fell backwards into Julie. She caught him and shoved him back up.

"That was a good one. Let's tussle!"

Philip lowered his head and rammed into Piers' stomach. Both men slammed into the window and there was a crunching sound. Piers hit Philip on the back with his hands clenched, just like he'd seen in the movies. Surprisingly, it kind of worked and Philip fell the ground with an, "Oof." He then grabbed Piers' legs and pulled him down on the ground. Both men rolled on the ground hitting each other in the legs, as they were facing opposite directions. The rest of the line was happy to get some entertainment while they waited. After about a minute of this, they broke apart. Philip stood up and beat his chest.

"Ah-ha! Men with men. Good for the sinuses. Need a hand, my brother?" He held his hand out to Piers. Piers looked at him for a moment, and then took it.

Philip put his finger on Piers' chest. "You did good. I think it's an omen of goodness to come. Julie, what are you doing? Come revel with us!"

Julie was crouched by the window. She spoke slowly and quietly.

"You...you guys broke the...the window."



Philip and Piers quickly joined Julie at the window. The surrounding crowd pushed in to get a look.

Inside, crystal tubes reached to the ceiling containing flowing fire or small manmade tornadoes. Rivers of crimson gold waters flowed beneath the dance-floor. Light somehow drifted in a pale cloud around the ceiling. Smoke melted down from above covering the walls, but didn't fog the room. Waterfalls were scattered about with live vines draping down from them. Without looking like a jungle, leaves and vines jutted out all over. Live parrots made their homes in them. Tropical fish swam in the floor. Black leather chairs, the type that mold to your body, surrounded the tables at the edge of the dance floor and by the bar. But there was no bartender. And the chairs were empty. And so was the dance-floor.

-Grant Gooding



## Good Times Bar and Grill, 7:58 p.m.

table six needs a refill, pepsi or diet? i'll just get...shit,  
order up on four, about time, i put that that order in twenty minutes ago,  
bad tip but they wouldn't have given me much anyway, look at his cheap  
plastic-smelling-wanna-be-leather jacket, and her,  
that nasty glare she gave me, put the steaks down ENJOY  
smile and walk away...watch out with those plated buddy,  
damn new guy needs to pay attention to where he's going,  
i don't need any more stains on this shirt, refill on six,  
i'll get it after table seven HI, CAN I GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK?  
two waters GREAT, BE RIGHT BACK  
cheap bastards, order a real drink, damn,  
table three's those same kids from last week who wanted beer with no i.d.'s,  
i'm not losing my job for underage punks, they didn't tip me either,  
i'll let them wait awhile and get table six a...EXCUSE ME SIR,  
DID YOU SAY KETCHUP? I'LL BE RIGHT BACK  
you'll need a lot of ketchup to cover up the taste of those disgusting fries, first  
i need table one's salads, two bowls lettuce cheese croutons tomatoes ranch  
and repeat, perfectly sloppy, they'll eat it anyway  
HERE YOU DO AND HERE  
YOU GO, ENJOY damn i forgot table two's ketchup and table six still  
needs...oh no, not table five, it's that guy from the bar last month,  
why my section? i don't want him to see me,  
maybe he has the underwear i left...SORRY SIR,  
I'LL GET YOUR REFILL RIGHT AWAY the ketchup,  
grab a bottle of ketchup, damnit,  
he saw me, i can't tell if that smile was good or sly,  
i bet we wouldn't...  
SORRY FELLOWS, I'LL TAKE YOUR DRINK ORDERS IN ONE...  
he wouldn't have come...  
DONE WITH THE SALADS? I'LL BE BACK TO TAKE ORDERS IN ONE...  
come if he knew...  
STEAKS UNDERCOOKED? I'LL HANDLE THAT IN ONE...  
if he knew...  
SORRY, I'LL GET THE KETCHUP IN ONE...  
knew I was late this month.  
MOMENT.  
damn, table six looks pissed.

-Sarah Delaplane

## **Dodgeball in the house**

My fifth grade gym class had  
perfected my skills.  
Peter, the Russian, wasn't bad either.  
Our strategies involved,  
trench warfare behind  
couches and coffee tables

There was just... one thing  
I had the home-house  
USA advantage;  
and his feet  
gave away everything.

I sniffed around and then "Ah!!  
he's in the living room,  
Behind the blue love-seat."  
Silently, as my Navajo blood came  
To life, I made my approach.

It should have been executed  
Perfectly, but the KGV called  
gave him my whereabouts,  
and we steady/readied ourselves  
for and all out...

The first came flying out at me,  
as the yellow fuzz nipped the tops of my hair.  
I retaliated as Dunlop 3's and Wilson US Opens were exchanged  
like items in a black market,  
from Kaliningrad to Indianapolis.

We danced the same moves  
we would use  
for overhead smashes  
and slice backhand drop-shots  
down the line.

We decided on a draw,  
and no to tell mom about  
the broken vase.  
The scent of his feet lingered for days while  
the windows of my room were opened clearing out other emanations.

I guess I didn't really mind,  
the smell  
three months of it got me used to it.  
I wonder what readjusting  
Would be necessary in Russia.

-Abel Contreras

guess you were plugging your ears  
on that Disney-dream ride  
with all the little kiddies squealing  
“It’s a small world after all!”  
I should walk out the door  
pump in the code to your frat boy abode  
and rip your balls out of the socket  
you see, it really is a small world  
after all in Schwitzer Hall  
and third floor side dishes  
will, without a doubt,  
wind up talking turkey with  
the first floor main dish  
I’m not your valentine’s bitch  
not your road-side attraction  
on the pilgrimage to true love  
so you cried all night together,  
and then whispered “I’m sorry”  
out in the kicking wind  
while this little girl was putting  
her stock in you, fountain of truth  
and I remember looking at you  
eyes sprawled out over a leaking heart  
and chuckling my charm:  
“you sure you don’t have some secret  
girlfriend who’s gonna beat me up?  
“no, no one’s gonna beat you up”  
well, I’m want to crack you up  
cause I have been spurred and spat on  
too many times  
and so maybe she has a lovely soul,  
a lovey-dovey freaking hole  
right there where you belong and be  
but this unaware lover, now hot  
and discovered, is not content  
having been cottage cheese shit,  
served and eaten at your desire  
you see, it’s a small world after all  
and she may have your rotten balls  
cuddled up in sappy sweet forgiveness,  
but I’m not a self-trampling girl  
on purpose anymore, and I’m  
out the door and  
headed over

-Catherine Lewis

## **I'd like a Yellow Shirt**

The Yellowness of your shirt reminds me of Cake.  
Maybe with white soft icing and a clump of cream.  
Yes, it's making me hungry, that simple association  
Between you and something to be eaten.  
Don't think I'm dirty. It's just the right color for memories.  
After the cake I think of bright yellow balloons  
that I used to get for free with advertisements printed in black letters  
upon it's yellow, pregnant side.  
That shirt is Yellow like a dog-caused spot of snow in January  
That we used to joke about as kids. Telling each other  
To eat it, that it would be sweet like ice cream in the sun.  
Sun and hot summer days of barefooted-ness and prickly dry grass.  
The yellow bars of sunlight that would tickle  
Through the blue pool water to caress the speckled bottom.  
I would dive through those and look behind to see the bubbles.  
Rising, returning to the warm surface from which it came.  
See where that Yellow shirt leads?  
I think I need a yellow shirting hanging in every room,  
And on the ceiling above my bed  
So that it's the first thing I see in the morning.  
Then I'll probably want cake for breakfast,  
But then again, maybe you should just wear your shirt more often.

-Marie Ursuy

## Languid Suicide

I'm the girl of his dreams, or so he keeps informing me. I'm anything and everything he's ever wanted in a mate, a life companion, a breeder of his offspring. He sees himself playing the role of my knight in shining armor, racing to rescue me, his very own damsel in distress, from the ever-clenching grip of danger and death. He sees himself as the ultimate romantic, bearing roses without thorns as he carries me off to this castle in the clouds. I exist because of him, and for his purposes, he makes me, molds perception. He doesn't see me, and he doesn't want to. But as my individuality increases, as I grown stronger and more aware of what I want out of life and how much I loathe my existence with him, the blindfold isn't enough to keep him in the dark. So he switched to a hood. It makes me, my soul, vanish. Completely invisible.

I'm just as guilty. I don't like looking, either, and I choose not to. I don't enjoy seeing myself reflected in his eyes. I don't like my reflection in the eyes of others. I've come to despise mirror. I hate looking at what I've become. I don't like realizing what he sees me as. I don't like his victory smirk as I succumb to his demands. I don't like the goat of triumph perpetually waiting, lurking, beneath the surface. He know I'll always let him win. He winds, and I stand by and watch as my life passes me by. I'm a spectator. I'd cry if I looked. I'd wail and throw shit through walls and break windows. I'd vomit and scream and tear at my hair in protest. I'd punch and scratch and tear and bite the victory from his face. I'd gorge out his eyes to remove my reflection. But I don't do these things because I've learned not to look. I wear a blindfold too. I'm afraid I won't be able to simply keep my eyes shut. It's too tempting to cheat, to sneak a peek from time to time, and go into a rage at the view. It's easier to not fight, or risk, temptation.

As time goes on, I can't stand his demanding mouth and tongue. I don't want to be the recipient of his kisses. I don't want his saliva on my face and in my mouth. His breath disgusts me. A touch of his lips on my mouth and neck is enough to send me into corners, screaming and fighting. So my blindfold becomes a hangman's hood. It covers my hair and my face and my neck. I can't feel or satisfy his demands. He won't have to see my eyes bulge as he pulls the noose tighter. He won't see the bruises on my neck as he slowly strangles me. He doesn't want to see. He doesn't want to be the bad guy. He only likes playing the hero.

I can still feel his hands upon me. They probe and prod and inflict pain. I hate the feel of calluses on his fingers and the uneven edges of his nails. I feel dirty and tainted after his touch, and I start showering compulsively. My skin is forever wrinkles and shriveled and damp. I never get to dry. So my hood becomes a funeral shroud. He can't see the imperfections. His touch still comes through, but he has to get through layers of shielding. It's diluted and invalid. It's lost its poignancy. Life itself has lost that sharp edge. It no longer taunts me, laughs at my defeat. I no longer see or hear or feel what might have been, what could have been. I'm left to my own thoughts. I'm no longer responsible. I'm no longer sympathetic or caring. I'm no longer vulnerable to him.

I am strong! I am not living.

-Carol Wukovits

## **Moonlight is better than Opium**

A bed of moss, under  
a reaching trunk.  
The breath of silent, kind  
animals, in dreams, worshipping.  
Our thoughts, soft & ragged tree, distant  
light. Cool,  
washing breeze, loving  
our naked bodies,  
  
amidst these silences  
of understanding.

-Jake Walsh



## My Artist Friend

Beauty is such a vague word, that if I said it  
The intimation of what I am trying to say  
might pass by.

Rather, if I gave substance to Beauty  
and I told you that your eyes are,

Deep pools of soupy, warm chocolate  
Framed in frail whip reeds, which rest  
in the sandy color of your satin smooth skin,

It would be only the faintest taste of comparison.  
It forms only the faintest shadow of what is truly there

But if I could, I would rejoice in the sound  
Of the raining of words from my lips,  
Praising you.

I cannot perform a grand heroic deed  
To win your fragile favor.

Trying might prove something, to myself  
Of what I am and am not capable of,  
And how many days it took me to figure that out.

Let me say this instead,  
That I am inspired by you.

I long to paint with your grace.  
Digging into the talent from the pocket in my heart  
Then placing it upon blank whiteness.

You possess such a glorious  
Forte of capturing everything around you.

I suppose, I must be what I am  
And be content to glow from your accomplishments  
And laugh with you.

I will await the return,  
How ever long your journey takes.  
Traveling the distance to China.

Your eyes will be missed, laughing without me  
Seeking the unknown on such a lengthy path.  
I long to be with you just the same.

-Marie Ursuy



## **Sensation**

thin pajamas against  
freshly bathed skin

sand on bare feet

a skirt worn alone  
when a breeze blows

the breath taken after  
a bite of hot soup

the rebound of a  
swing going so high  
it feels as if it might  
double over

a pant of anticipation

the fall of a tear

aloe gel on a sunburn

cool fruit salad on  
a summer day

the first big stretch  
after a long car ride

the soft ache of wanting

-Laura Partridge

## **Small Courages**

Small courages,  
gathered like raindrops  
in the basin of my fears,  
erode my anguish  
nourish my mind  
restore my will  
to crack the dam  
that holds me back

-Ralph Brandt

## **The Truth Is**

The truth is,  
I don't know or prefer,  
any of these same-suited, smile-talking  
people  
seated everynight, showing slightly  
modified hairstyles,  
and saying "the truth is".

Helen Straight

## **The Urge to Fight**

It's inevitable, it's primal,  
And I can't stop the pounding.  
The rattling of tambourines echoing repeatedly,  
Clasps of brass and alloyed metal  
Combining an oak handle and the exact  
Rhythm of wrist and hand, pummeling one another  
In an epic saga that is trapped in the walls of my cranium.

This isn't an everyday occurrence  
For I am a sane man at least by definition  
And I have not been in more than four fights  
In my entire life.  
Yet when the urge to destroy something beautiful  
Comes over me like a heat flash,  
It takes very little to set it off.

A look, a smirk, a gesture, a grin, a poke,  
A spill, a bump, and the walls tumble.  
The echo is released to the heart where it is repeated but now  
Broadcast through all vascular tissue.  
I tremble, I drool,  
I advance.

Now it's a symphony of fists and feet,  
Colliding, corroding, and contorting as I deface  
The gorgeous figure that his family is so proud of.  
I swing with saws for arms, cutting down any living thing.  
Fuck you spotted owl, get out of my way.  
Dashing towards then crouching and crunching  
His cartilage with crazy hand.

Deleting any fear of losing,  
I boldly gash at his face in victory,  
With bleeding open knuckles and the anger of every man.  
My strength is incomprehensible and soon the incisions have  
Gushed just enough fluid that the rattling begins to slow  
And the demons and diseases drop from my decrepit  
And downtrodden soul.

Still cringing, and crawling for comfort,  
His eyes dilated and filled with oxygen carrying cells.  
Bruised, battered, and bewildered he inspects his incisions  
With diminished pride, like a tiger licking his wounds.  
I watch trembling with shame, surrounded by embarrassment,  
And immersed in fear. Fear that the next time  
The temptation and the tambourine will be louder.

-Brant Gilbert

**The word “random” is entirely over-used**

“this, ladies and gentleman, is america,” he said  
i’ve never seen a no. 3 or no. 1 pencil  
she says, “does that make sense?” a lot,  
and she almost always makes sense  
i like the way that ice looks floating black on the surface of a chilled coffee drink  
freshly-printed papers smell a lot like freshly-cooked noodles  
frustrated with analyses, interpretations  
today, can’t we just soak in the beauty?  
she used to write MIW on her hand to **make it work**  
but he never closes the twizzler box all the way  
american flies are lazy, he said  
too tired to have a birthday  
i tell myself it’s just pms  
but we agreed that love makes you act like a jackass

-Amy Vaerewyck



## Treadmill

My parents bought me a treadmill because I told them I wanted to change my life, at least physically, since that was the only part that they could see as being messed up, like when I laid in bed for three weeks from a kidney stone and was at a pack a day habit, I felt like a fat factory, and I hated mornings because I wanted to be in bed instead of class, and I hated afternoons because I wanted to shop at Wal-Mart and watch TV instead of studying, and nights were the most hated because I had my own place and was financially able to support a healthy social life, including good pot, not that crusty compact shit that looks like the smashed brown grass I peel off the wheels of my parent's lawn mower, but the big fluffy buds I used to only read about in *High Times*, but these weren't high times and when I'm done studying and working, I don't feel like socializing, I only get a few minutes to actually sit down in my Goodwill recliner, take a little, and watch Dave Letterman's Top Ten List before falling asleep, sleep that's never very good because it's always interrupted by my alarm which sounds like beeping to everyone else but all I hear is, "Get your fat ass out of bed and get to work, and when you're finished, crawl back into your cage like the dirty rodent you are, and run on the wheel, that tiny squeaking wheel that you must power by every once of your energy just so it can spin around and around," and so I follow my orders and go to class and to work and come home to walk on my treadmill because it's making me thinner and happier, and every time I lose a pound I'm amazed that a fraction of my flesh was destroyed by staying in the same exact place.

-Sarah Delaplane

## Weekend Visit

### I.

The Halloween block party  
And tonight the time changes.  
I've come home to visit my love.  
We're at his apartment  
(It's really just a room)  
and he's in the half-bath.  
The time changes tonight, I  
Say through the narrow blue door.  
The cops are out in riot gear  
And riot gear makes a riot, he replies,  
His favorite piece of local  
Common knowledge.

### II.

The drive to your mother's house is long,  
But for your sake it seems short.  
I try to like your mother,  
Though you must know I do not,  
Even if three years – only two? – has made me love her.  
And I won't speak to your step father  
If he doesn't speak to me. I always say this,  
But I always speak; and he,  
Sometimes, graces me with a grunt.  
When we arrive, the sister you adore is rude,  
Thoughtless, we agree,  
On the long, angry drive home.

### III.

When I return from the bathroom, you are asleep,  
Lying there all cute and lovable, warm, still  
Damp with sweat and smelling of sex.  
My naked body is cold with the night's chill  
When I slide under the covers, careful not to wake you  
With cool fingers and icy toes. I lie awake  
For an hour, nestled into your hair, listening  
To the traffic outside and your sleeping breath beside me.

-Jacqueline Hawk