





# downtown brooklyn

a journal of writing

english department  
brooklyn campus  
long island university



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number fifteen

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See the appendix of this issue for contributors' bio notes & submission guidelines.

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**Michael Bennett**

**VERTIGO**

The voice of the void is heard by those who listen;  
creation and destruction coined together with fear.  
Better perhaps just to exist  
like the sleeping dog, tramping boot, or well-worn carpet.  
Choose a leader who treats us as we wish to be:  
inert matter,  
solid,  
whole.  
No more the pull of darker forces;  
only surety of the terrible brightness.  
Step over the rail and plunge into the ceaseless sea  
or ride the ship to its alluring destination.  
Fly off the cliff and be perhaps reborn  
or trudge down the certain path.  
Be what we make ourselves to be  
or pretend we have no choice.

**Wayne Berninger**

**MAYBE THURSDAY SHE CAN SLEEP**

My sweet little Victoria is an electric doorbell & she loads up on bagels. My lovely Victoria is a fantastic portal (from here to there) & she loads up on Batman. My fascinating Victoria is efficient & she loads up on oven timers & she paraphrases Little Boy & Fat Man with every move she makes & she knows it. My mysterious Victoria is an alchemist & when she plays billiards, it's on stilts & she's queen of the night & she don't take no lip. My sexy Victoria is a carnival barker & she loads up on castor oil for what ails me. My sweet Victoria cultivates a fine garden & she can read my mind & she loads up on bootleg whiskey. My smirking Victoria isn't afraid to put in her two cents on the topic of professional vacuuming & she holds a mean grudge (so look out!) & she do like her waterbeds. My sweet Victoria is a badass & she plays guitar in a rock & roll band & every Halloween she puts together the sexiest witch costume you've ever seen. My eccentric Victoria is the world's most fabulous gymnast & she is better than you in every way & every night she consumes vast quantities of spiced ham & she churns out poems that change the world & she knows it.

## **HERE THERE BE DREAMS OF MONSTERS**

At this time, the poem will tell of my eating toast under the watchful eyes of Penelope (dog) & Huckleberry (dog). Now comes the section about my putting off the required bundling of metal & plastic recyclables. Such a beginning to a poem (somewhat understandably) makes you squint your eyes & shift your weight & consider moving on to something else—but you decide to give it a little longer. Then, as if sensing your restlessness, the poem offers some excellent financial advice & fixes you a brilliant cup of coffee & makes you forget all about your troubles & suspicions. Perhaps it won't be a total waste of time & money to read a little more. Oh, here's the obligatory political section! Unfashionably right-wing, I'm afraid, so keep your fingers & toes safely inside the vehicle at all times. Then there's this fabulous stuff about the history of fish & here's some delightful onomatopoeia—which makes you fall in love again with the idea of me. As might have been expected, the appearance of the word "hearth" makes you get up & walk out but then you come back in & apologize. Kind of puts a damper on things, if you want to know the truth. Stanley (three-legged cat) follows me into the bathroom & jumps up & drinks out of the sink. I need to get a Crock Pot.

## **SEX IS ONLY DIRTY IF YOU DO IT RIGHT SAID THE PIRATE**

The old gardener grows tired of treading water more quickly than he used to. It's much worse than being made to dance for two hours. At the end of the day, he's happy for the jumping to be over as well. When you mention jogging down by the sea, he says *I ain't lost a thing down by the sea*. All he knows is he gets up and drives to work every day. Maybe he wouldn't even mind the jumping so much if he got a steak afterwards. His daughter Sarah shouts at his grandson, who appears to have avoided studying for the last nine weeks. *Don't them fool teachers notice when you go missing for days at the time?* The old man pretends to listen to her & he nods his head but he's really watching the TV & he's wondering whether news announcers dislike their jumping as much as he dislikes his. Sarah informs him that his little niece won't stop dropping things in the well, but he can't think of too much to say. What good would it do? The pilots seem to enjoy jogging. He used to love dancing & when Suzanne was alive, he liked skiing among the trees. He picks up his fork & tries some flattery: *Don't you practice cooking nicely?* He used to like to eat at home. Now he somehow regrets walking so carefully & running so carelessly.

**Lawrence Bracey-Johnson, Anna-Kay McNally, Tiffany Toale & Wei Wong**

**CLASS POEM**

—composed in response to Aurora Levins Morales’ “Class Poem” at the last meeting  
of Deborah Mutnick’s English 13 class (Fall 2001)

This is a poem about me as a reader.  
I’m not a bad reader but not a great one either.  
I need to slow down so I get what I’m reading.  
If I learn to slow down and analyze, I know  
Once and for all I will be a great reader.

This is a poem about me as a writer.  
I cannot write with the TV on.  
I can’t pick out my mistakes  
And my papers are all wrong.

I am not a bad student and I know  
I can do better but if I get a B, C, or D  
I will just tell myself, hey, you can  
Do better. I will pick myself up and do it again.  
Maybe this time I will get that A.

And after I graduate, all I will say is  
Look out, world, here I come!  
This is my poem to honor my English class,  
Which taught me a lot, although  
I can never be a good writer.  
The professor has helped me a lot.  
She has helped me to see my essays.

This poem is for my classmates,  
Who were kind enough to tell me the problems I had  
And who also gave me hints on improvement  
For which I am glad. This poem is  
For some people I got to know very little.  
I wish I knew them more.  
I would ask them questions  
But will they ask the same ones to me—I am not sure.  
But I hope they get to know me a little.

This is my poem to celebrate my success.  
I’m glad I have the opportunity to go to school.  
I’m glad I play soccer, glad I met new people.  
I’m glad I learned how to read and write.  
And how to run, ride a bike, and roller blade.

This poem is for my parents  
Who sacrificed much so I could have the best,  
Who taught me to talk, read, write, and love,  
Showed me how you need dedication  
Not only to family but everything you do in life.

This poem is for the people who taught me  
The ones that said if you're doing well  
You can do better, the people who pushed  
Me to be the best I can be. I thank  
Everyone who contributed to my success  
Because they helped me be who I am today.

This poem is for the thousands of people who died on September 11<sup>th</sup>.  
This poem is for the families that are left grieving.  
This poem is for all the hate and anger in our world.  
This poem is for our generation.  
This poem is for our generation because we are the ones  
Who can make a difference.  
We are the ones who can abolish all wars, crimes  
Poverty, hatred, and anger.

This poem is for my family, the ones who encourage  
Me to follow my dreams.  
This poem is for my teachers who have taught me  
Nothing is impossible.  
This poem is for God who has sat and watched  
This poem is for me that one day I can make a difference  
This poem is for our world that one day  
We will become one.

(collated by Deborah Mutnick)

**Allen Brafman**

**DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT SOUNDS**

Rain is always on the way. What she said  
Is pain never goes away. Everything  
He remembers from childhood, years

Of reruns of home movies shadows  
Flicker like flames. This is a movie  
Of my father watching us play catch.

This one almost too dark  
To make out the faces is my father  
Watching us on the Fourth of July

Gaping at fireworks exploding  
In the sky over Lake Etra where we  
Spent summers fishing and swimming.

Whenever it rains on television  
he runs upstairs to close the windows.  
He no longer recognizes the face

in the mirror he shaves in the morning.  
He has forgotten the names of his children.  
On the anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>

he shouts "Get out! Get out of the building!"  
at an amateur video of the plane approaching.  
He dreams his tongue is a flame

licking at the feet of office workers  
running to thick windows to escape.  
He opens his eyes to extravagant smoke.

Once I lost one of the oars out  
In the middle of the lake. I went over  
The edge to bring it back. Don't go,

My mother begged. I was gone  
The boat rocking in the still water  
Behind me. There is no movie of me

Swimming in deep water to bring  
back the oar. Or my brother's admiring face,  
my baby sister sleeping in Mommy's arms.

All there is of that August afternoon—  
Sun ricocheting off the lake—  
My father was not there—

Is a poem my mother wrote the following week  
and read to me this morning in the hospital.  
Through vines of plastic tubing

Rain is always on the way, she said.  
Always wear your galoshes, she said.  
Pain never goes away.

## IN TIME, THEY SAY

Soon after, her soft  
white hair, tears  
falling from his face

he could feel with  
his skin, their  
beard growing them

together he could  
stroke with his hands.  
Every corner he

turned, another  
mirror forbidding  
him to look, nothing

but blind light  
highlighting increasing  
loss, glass

reflecting glass. They  
see eye to eye now  
when there is nothing

left to see. How  
long could he  
keep tears from

turning into long  
white hair streaming  
down his face. A sharp

blade this morning he  
cut away his mourning  
face all but a thin line

above his lip he is  
terrified to lose, but  
he knows its days are

numbered, as he knows the  
days of this sadness  
too will one day die.

**Sonia Mae Brown**

**LIFE RAFT AS AN ASCENT**

You are my musician  
My artistic energy  
My work a megabyte  
Dividing the strata of low density lipoprotein  
You are my capacity  
Grasping the palanquin of life raft  
Sacrificing my gray fallopian tube  
I deliver forceful strudels  
Painting away a masthead  
Imp in spite of debenture.  
I darken the brow as you raise a finial  
Personal retinue due to my fencing deferment  
Don't move.  
I need to capture the essence of your bedbug before I lose you.  
I need to paint this pied-a-terre so the worry wart can see and understand  
Why am I sacrificing my low density lipoprotein, my sapsucker, and myself?  
In defiance of splashdown, shade, and my separation  
Androgynous idiom  
Men are lunge and  
Women are ignoramus  
Yet  
My hearth persists in beating  
And  
My xanthippe exists as a desert to be saved.

## Nicole Burns

### UNTITLED

Going back to my childhood always seems to bring a smile to my face. It's like bringing back the things that mattered to me the most. Growing up in Flatbush Brooklyn seems like: where else could I have grown up? Our street was the coolest street ever. It was jam packed with excitement on a daily basis. Our home was a two family with eight bedrooms and three bathrooms. The house was a two family even though the entire house was all family. It was a fairly old house, which my aunt and uncle renovated in the 70s to make it look more modern. The outside was white siding with black trimmings. I loved the antique look on the inside. There was wood paneling on all the walls, and the ceilings were so high I used to think it led to heaven. Each of the two floors was separated with a wooden banister.

These banisters kept me occupied for hours at a time on Saturday mornings. I would slide down over and over. It got to the point that I would even try to slide up. This became boring to me when my little sister's cartoons were over and she wanted to slide too. I hated when she wanted to slide because she would wake up the whole house screaming and laughing as she slid down. This would only get me in trouble. I would be accused of egging her on to slide and I would also get the guilt trip. "What if she had fell and hurt herself?" No one was worried about me if I did it too or if I had fallen.

Like many other children at the age of about nine or so, I loved adventure. I had the biggest imagination. Our backyard was all the places I ever heard of. I never went anywhere outside of New York so another state, island, or country that I heard of would be the destination of my new adventure. Our back yard seemed so large to me, and as I look back it was ridiculously small. My aunt had a grapevine out back along with various flowers, vegetables and herbs. She was never seen gardening but she kept a beautiful garden front and back. The grapevine was held up by a white metal arch. I imagined it was a wedding arch and I would line up my little cousins and have pretend ceremonies.

The backyard was where we were sent to get out of the adults' hair. When someone would get in trouble we all were sent to the back yard to "just go play in the dirt." Now as I look back we were sent out there for hours. I didn't mind this at all because at age nine sciences interested me. I dug up worms, bugs, and plants all out of curiosity. The backyard didn't remain our punishment destination for long. All the creatures that I dug up always came into my room under my bed. On particular day my grandma was getting our laundry. As she picked up clothes bugs fell out. It appeared that the bugs had mated in my room and now the two or three of the same species had mated and now there were so many bugs dropping from the clothes. I thought that the shoe box I put them in along with some dirt, grass and leaves would keep them comfortable. It seemed that the bugs were just as mischievous as I was. The bugs crawled out of the box and lived in the dirty clothes hamper.

My punishment was of course the belt. Not only do adults don't understand kids but they act like they were never kids themselves. I got a whipping because I brought bugs in the house and our room had to be cleaned and disinfected. To this I replied "but you gotta clean it anyway." This only infuriated my grandma so in return she said, "well, if you think cleaning ain't so bad then you do it, and it better be to my liking." So this began the start of my chores. I had to keep everything in my room clean and on the weekend I was to gather the clothes for the laundry and dust everything in sight. This didn't bother me as much because I was bored anyway. But as it became Saturday and my friends were outside it infuriated me. I couldn't go out until my chores were done and I thought that by the time I finished it would be too late. I believe this my grandma knew.

I loved playing with my friends from the block on Saturday. It was my only time besides school to play with kids my age. The kids on my block came from every Caribbean island that you can name and some you've never heard of. I loved playing with them so that I could learn the dialects. My father's side of the family, which I lived with, was American and my mother's side was from Trinidad. So trying to learn all these dialects and accents was fascinating! I even was taught Creole by my best friend Mercedes, my neighbor from across the street. I never picked it up or understood it. I just thought it was great to speak two languages. I envied Mercedes because she told me when she was mad she could tell people off in Creole. I thought it was so funny when she went off on her tangents and people thought she was crazy; I knew she was just telling them like it is. Sometimes people thought I knew what she was saying and I would just make things up.

Mercedes and I grew up on the block and did everything together. I remember one year when I was about eleven or twelve, and I wanted a pair of new jeans. I asked Mercedes to come with me to ask my grandma. Mercedes was scared of my grandma because my grandma had permission to spank Mercedes if she acted up. It was a thing that people did back in the day, giving neighbors the right to spank their kids. Mercedes had seen both my sister and me get spanked before and she swore she didn't want any part of it. My grandma hated when Mercedes spoke Creole to me and told Mercedes that she better speak English in her house. We approached my grandma and asked for money. I took the bold approach by taking a deep breath and walking right up and said, "Granny, can I have some money to buy some pants?" Very calmly she put down the potatoes that she was peeling and said, "here is twenty and bring back the things on this list." I never knew how and why she had a list ready and prepared for me, but I was so happy to get off the block by myself. I was like a bird set free.

This was a monthly routine for Mercedes and me. We would go shopping for ourselves and she for her mom and me for Granny. Flatbush Avenue seems so big when you are walking by yourself at eleven years old and have a pocketful of money. I was now able to make decisions on what I wanted to wear to school. I was even allowed to do the family grocery shopping by myself. Not only was Flatbush Avenue big, but I thought our block had all ethnic groups there were. I heard all types of accents and dialects, many of which I could not distinguish, but some sounded similar so I understood. Not only did I get freedom, but it was only between two blocks up and one block down. You would have thought I had to travel on a bus or something. To a kid a block seems so very far away.

**Bruce Chadwick**

## **LIFE OF THE MIND**

Steven got the call at 12:30 AM. It wasn't totally unexpected, but it was still a shock. He knew she had been suffering from lymphoma. She, his cousin's wife, had died about an hour before. She was only age 55. He felt relieved that she would no longer suffer, for she had been diagnosed with the disease over a year before, and he had felt so bad for her. He thought of her wasted flesh being eaten from within, a frenzied feast on her lymph nodes, moving on next to her vital, defenseless organs. Lying awake, he remembered a phrase from a P. D. James mystery he had recently read. Adam Dalgliesh is musing on the recent death of his elderly aunt, looking at some old photos she had left for him, dating back to her ancient younger days, ca. 1918: "She must have known, realist that she was, that other eyes than hers would eventually see them [the photographs]. Or did extreme old age free one from all such petty considerations of vanity or self-esteem as the mind gradually distanced itself from the devices and desires of the flesh?"

That phrase, "devices and desires of the flesh" stuck in Steven's mind. That terrible late-night phone call of news about dead flesh which will never experience desire again. He had been asleep and in the midst of a dream about a woman whom he'd known only casually a long time ago, but in the dream, it was different: They had become lovers, and he knew her intimately, her luminously dark, naked body coming alive under his watchful gaze, his arms about to encircle her waist, his surprised, but politically correct penis awakening. A strange time to be disturbed by this awful phone call.

Yet, he wondered if these two incidents—his dream and the phone call—were as alien as he'd thought. Passion arrives unbidden in many forms at often inopportune times. He thought of other passions he had felt at strange times especially that time he'd seen a nun sitting across from him on the Fort Washington Avenue bus, her grayish-black habit carefully draped over her body, the squarish white-fringed helmet enclosing her pasty, prim, heart-shaped face, the pursed lips, reflecting, in his mind, the tight closure of her *Mons Veneris*, hidden beneath the spread of her habit. He wondered about her own devices and desires, whether they included more than those of simply death, its polite invitation to an afterlife, for which she had spent her entire spiritual life preparing. She looked content. He wondered if she had felt her flesh to be so vulnerable.

Watching her, he had felt aroused. He saw beauty in the look of confident, committed spirituality on her face, the disciplined focus of her passions. He wondered, How did she do it? He wanted to learn about her passions without worrying about the "devices and desires of the flesh" which he'd been unable to understand in his own waking life, reflected in his dreams. He wanted to know how he could direct his passions into some new vision of an uninhabited universe awaiting him, which he could count on, to look forward to, without their messy temporality as if they were beamed into his consciousness by alien beings from another planet, then just as quickly beamed out.

He wanted to know about the nature of passion itself. If he just could have understood why his yearning, his fleshly desires, felt so painful, as if he were dying, then he wouldn't have minded having them. But looking at her, he didn't think that she had felt death to be painful, but more a reward for having lived.

Now, after this dream, and the stark reality of tragic death, he thought of the nun and wanted to confess to her what he had experienced after the late-night phone call, to let her know that he had awakened to news of fleshly death at the precise moment that he had dreamed of being so vividly alive in his own flesh, a coincidental experience that he could not really explain, which seemed as powerful, which ironically created in him a feeling of intense life,

minus the placid vision of redemption that he had thought she had achieved so clearly within her spiritual life, and which was so visible in her eyes and on her lips. He wanted to know, Was there a light at the end of the tunnel?

**Cynthia Dantzie**

**NATURE TV**

“The snake approaches  
the spotted salamander. . .”  
*Quick, change the channel!*

“The lion chases  
the galloping impala. . .”  
*Time to change channels!*

“The hawk dives quickly  
to lift up the watersnake. . .”  
*Let's turn to the news!*

**José Manuel del Pino**

**THE GREAT COOKING POTS OF MEMORY**

An eagle has fallen from the sky  
and plunges its beak into my chest  
savagely.

The luck of understanding  
that only one hole in the ground  
provides the solitude that is most extreme.

Fear. I miss your breath on my mouth.

A thousand years of your eyes  
and still my damp bed preserves  
the warmth of your presence.

Alone.

In the simple hollow of my absence  
the great cooking pots of memory  
are forged.

(translated by G. J. Racz)

## SOLITUDE, JASMINE AND NIGHT

### I

Solitude, jasmine and moon  
luminous upon objects around me,  
lights on the boats in the bay.

Moon through black clouds;  
noise rises from the streets  
up to the hill of the green gallery.

Moon of round light  
on the white window illuminated  
with beams of nocturnal violence.

The night curls up in the palm tree  
and floods the rooms  
like a sea at high tide.

Solitude, jasmine and night,  
misty love surrounding the dwelling,  
fire and water on the geraniums.

Light among the cold-eyed fish  
and a frightful radiance,  
bursts of silver in the water's depths.

Lukewarm darkness of autumns  
above the glassy roof tiles,  
on the pink sheets hanging out to dry.

Solitude, jasmine and moon,  
you who lick with a sweet tongue  
the anguished bosoms of your faithful.

## II

The radiance of the light bulbs  
and the beams of the full moon  
pour their saliva on my face.  
That is why swimming pools shine brighter  
and are clearer at night.

Dogs bark on the rooftops  
and in the yards; from here, at times,  
the mute anguish of taut chain-links can be heard.  
Their leashes are iron wires  
between the white lime of the walls  
and throats convulsed in howls.

Oh night, sacred darkness of demons  
and of love! In your womb mysteries lie!

Oh night, propitious accomplice of despair  
and love! Naked beings find rest in you!

(translated by G. J. Racz)

## TENDER AGE OF POEMS

—*for L. J.*

Beneath the light of a bamboo lamp  
I leave behind my weapons: forgetting and fleeting pleasure.

Absent, you fill the whole room;  
entangling yourself among the books on my shelves,  
you play around naughtily on my mattress,  
saddening my dreams some nights,  
appearing as real as an old ghost.

In the silence I howl your ill-fated remoteness,  
the definitive loss of your body,  
and hear in the silence the monotonous creaking of wood,  
noises the kind darkness offers me.

We could have been happy in this place;  
love might have filled this house with gold;  
days and time, however,  
mercilessly betray a fire stoked with passion.

We died one winter afternoon,  
almost in spring, to judge by the smell of the orange trees.

I have drawn a wall of shadow  
between you and me, but in my weakest hours,  
when the sun breaks through between the waters  
or at just that moment when it flees, weary, behind the mountains,  
you penetrate the crevices and occupy me, foreign girl.

Forgetting is a cruel lance I use to smash your image;  
forgetting invades my bedroom and the months; in spite of me  
you come, unexpected, and destroy the bold prison  
where you have lain a long time now.

Perhaps love was adverse to us and pushed forward our meeting...

because a passion so voracious and sweet was too much  
for the tender age of poems and parks,  
for the helpless season of rapture along the boulevards.

(translated by G. J. Racz)

## OF ADORABLE VENUS

*Tonight is a final night,  
A night chosen by a soldier to die,  
By a priest to love. . .*  
—A. Fisher

I am spreading propaganda about the crazy night;  
mornings are the stretchings out of life  
that prepare the blood for nocturnal rites.

I am also sanctifying shamelessness,  
the gnashing of teeth, not out of fear  
but of pleasure and strife.

Your head of blond hair is a sacred  
chalice in my hands; I want  
to taste its wine on my lips.

Your mouth smells of grapes, of coins,  
and the beach is an accomplice to our pledge.

Caressing you, I sip  
the music of our rhythm,  
the proud beat of our bodies.

I love not knowing your name  
and praying before an unknown image!

What is it about your feet, about the skin of your knee,  
the soft feel of your shoulder,  
of your ear—a bed of kisses on fire!

What happens with your quivering neck,  
with my hands massaging breasts  
born solely of the pressure of my fingers!

For me, you see, your origin is  
as sacred as psalms and prayers.

Your arms, the boldness of your body  
and its carefree daring  
are more divine than perfect marble statues,  
than the barren curves of adorable Venus.

(translated by G. J. Racz)

**Tiffany Dunbar**

**FOR YOU TO NOTICE**

I dance with the two-year-old the same way I dance when nobody is watching.

Close your eyes and picture your soul mate. Where is he right now? What is doing? How will you meet?

A subway ride is much more fun when it's just you and your friends in the car. Running, laughing, shouting, pull-ups, flips, space...

The ride home was much more contained. Not because we weren't alone, because we were again. But now all life is drained due to alcohol and dance. Our eyes are heavy and all we need is a strong shoulder to lean on.

I fear my afterlife will be boring; a fluffy cloud, perfect climate, angels everywhere... I'll miss the drama.

Tonight the moon transformed into a beige haze like the illustrator of the book of my life repeatedly went over the once perfect moon with his eraser.

That sudden rush of cold damp tears streaming down a hot face is saltiest when the irreplaceable facet of your life has forever gone astray.

He sits atop the bar stool lacking balance and you wonder exactly why he just chugged that frosty mug of beer: Thirst? Anger? Emptiness? Numbness? Heartache?

One forwarded email from one good friend designs an exceeding smile while in front of your PC screen and you sincerely appreciate the power of the female friendship.

A single tear emerges when you recall the many times you've been disappointed in life, but then you stop and realize maybe it's you that's the disappointment.

"Out of the thousands that have crossed my path, it is you who I have loved the most...but I still wish that I had never met you!"

Another day of painful gray. The rainfall streaks down my forehead onto my eyelids, forcing a battle between open and close.

I smiled more today than I did yesterday.

The possibility of change is all that gets her out of bed each morning.

That night for the first time she experienced sex as a punishment rather than a privilege. She left him the very next morning.

ROAR!!! Adults can play make-believe too.

I amuse myself by moving around my roommate's possessions. I achieve delight to hear her complain how she is going senile as she frantically turns our place upside down.

I stared at the actress on the screen who was receiving multiple stabs of the knife by the masked villain. I began to ponder what it would actually feel like to be stabbed. The pain, real feeling...Curiosity leads to desire.

"1 NEW VOICEMAIL." "3 MISSED CALLS." There exists a simple satisfaction of being pursued.

Today I witnessed the sunrise over a cup of coffee and a smile. I really do have a lot to be thankful for.

The vendor who sold me this apple bears a strong resemblance to my fifth grade teacher Mr. Griffith...Didn't he try to kill himself?

Never underestimate dinner from a box. The pasta produced the most enticing, garlic aroma and each swallow traveled down my insides with most satisfied delight.

The toddler wrapped her arms tightly around her mother, screaming and begging for her not to depart. I wanted to capture this moment and reveal it to her fifteen years in the future when all she'll want is to free herself from her mother's hold.

Start a trivial argument with your sister because you are older and so you will probably win.

With a look of hope, the slightly overweight teenage girl entered the dressing room clutching three pairs of jeans, two skirts, one tank-top, and three tops. She emerged eight minutes later with nothing but a look of defeat. RE-RACK.

The hopelessly optimistic teen sat on the worn-down green couch, stared intently at the screen, and mouthed the lines along with the Oscar-winning actress: "I'm just a girl, standing in front of a boy, asking him to love her."

He trots down Lexington Avenue, head bobbing, volume up, headphones blaring. He's blocking out the street noise, blocking out his girlfriend troubles, and blocking out the stress of the job, even if it is just for four more blocks.

Our waitress purposely avoids the vicinity around our booth because she knows that I need a refill!

Sitting across from us at the restaurant is another couple on a date: an ancient old man in a thousand dollar suit and a twenty-something blond in half a dress. He orders the most expensive wine on the menu. She giggles and massages his leg with her toes underneath the table. I contemplate giving up on love completely.

The black bird's left wing flaps noticeably slower than the right, but he still keeps up with the flock. Never give up.

I edited my classmate's essay this afternoon and I took it upon myself to add a substantial amount of punctuation, especially parentheses. It reminds me of hugs and snuggles.

He took extraordinary care of the wound. He cleaned it, applied Neosporin, added a Band-Aid, and waited one full week. To his disappointment the traces of the injury still lingered. Some scars just never fully heal.

Sometimes he stealthily sneaks out at night and goes to various bars. He changes his name on each outing and assembles eccentric and extreme personas for himself. He has become really good at it, pretending to be someone else.

Behind the drawn curtain lays a strong, muscular, burly man who is cuddled up in his bed right now, squeezing his blanket tight, while blubbering through *Moulin Rouge*.

Someone cracked off the leg of the turtle I molded in pottery class while it was hardening in the oven. I suspect it was a hate crime.

She wrote a self-revealing letter to someone she had never met before in her life, someone whom she will never meet for the remainder of her life. She divulged her heart and soul.

He sat on the subway with his two best friends. One of them was talking, but he was not interested enough to pay attention. He wondered if these two guys would be his friends forever.

If I was a midget I would run around all day pulling people's pants down. I'd be gone before they ever saw me.

**Robert Feinsein**

## **THE GRAFFITI ARTIST**

Louis Mitchell stepped back and smiled as he surveyed his handiwork. He thought the face on the poster was considerably improved by three extra eyes and a dash of profanity to the forehead. As a final touch, he scrawled “MITCHELL WAS HERE,” in huge letters, partially obscuring the fine set of teeth which had given testimony to the effectiveness of a new toothpaste.

A distinctly antisocial man of forty-five, Mitchell was obsessed with graffiti. Graffiti gave him a sense of importance, a measure of pride, and he never went anywhere without an assortment of felt-tipped pens. Thousands of billboards, walls, and doors fell victim to his artistry. Occasionally, for big jobs such as subway cars, he would use cans of spray paint. Mitchell had lately been toying with the idea of going over to the pier and decorating a boat.

Before emerging from the subway station, Mitchell printed one of his favorite phrases, “I LOVE LOUIS,” on the turnstile. His apartment was still ten blocks away, a distance he knew could be shortened by cutting through a cemetery. Although Mitchell had lived in the neighborhood for more than a year, he had never once taken advantage of that route. He did not think of himself as especially superstitious, but he just simply did not like the place. Funerals, coffins, cemeteries...any of death’s reminders gave him the jitters.

Still, on this particular afternoon his feet were hurting a bit, causing him enough discomfort to make the cemetery more inviting. “What the heck,” he said. “I’ll do it!” Mitchell always avoided saying, “What the hell.” Hell reminded him of death.

As he walked past row after row of graves, Mitchell felt surprisingly calm. His surroundings began to fascinate him and he soon forgot about fears and the tightness of his shoes. Eventually, he found himself standing in front of a mausoleum. It was the closest he had ever been to one and he decided to peer through the glass door. “Interesting.” Mitchell then turned a brass knob, but the door would not budge. Deeply disappointed, he continued on his way, after scribbling “WELCOME” on the tomb’s threshold.

A few steps down the path, Mitchell paused to study an ornate headstone which contained a porcelain photograph of the deceased. This was the eternal resting place for the earthly remains of one William Blodgett (1814-1889), who, according to his epitaph, “Always lived by the Golden Rule.” Feeling that there was something less than satisfactory about Mr. Blodgett’s face, Mitchell added a mustache to the portrait, and prior to departing, wrote “MITCHELL WAS HERE,” on the monument.

Evening was approaching and Mitchell quickened his pace, for enjoyable as it was, he did not want to be locked in the cemetery. Consequently, he was relieved to find that the caretakers had not yet sealed his exit, and he cheerfully passed through the open gate.

Minutes later, as Mitchell approached the building in which he lived, he saw a tall, gaunt figure wearing a top hat. Ever quick with a wisecrack, Mitchell yelled, “Hey, fella, there’s no wedding here.”

Those were Louis Mitchell’s last words. The coroner’s report listed the cause of death as a “massive coronary.” Nevertheless, detectives continued to search for the morbid prankster who had inked a mustache on Mitchell’s face and inscribed “BLODGETT WAS HERE” on the sidewalk next to where the body was found.

## Sidney Fink

### BELOVED

—dedicated to the memory of my beloved wife Lilleta

I sit in a crowd  
Of people  
Yet I am alone  
For you are no longer with me.

I sit alone in bed.  
I stare  
At where you  
Should be beside me.

How will I live now  
Without you?  
Are you still here?  
But I cannot see  
Or feel you?

I am in a dark period.  
There are a few rays of light.  
I await the end of night.  
When will it come?  
I wait—

How much can I remember?

How much will I fantasize that I cannot so many years later recall?  
Yet our children have pleaded with me to try. To try for their sake, for we all loved her so.

Until now. . . we. . . I had no reason or cause to think as I now find myself doing. Life moved on and we were enjoying each passing moment of it.

Now, all has changed, suddenly, unexpectedly. My life. . . that life has dissipated. . . vanished, leaving me and my days empty, for she is no longer with me. . . half of my being is forever gone. . . save in just memories. . . I don't want memories. . . I want her.

“You will feel this way for awhile and you will then move on.” I have heard this from so many who loved her and still love me. . . and perhaps, perhaps they are right and I will somehow, suddenly move on. . . the loneliness and seeing her everywhere I turn although she is not there. . . in our home, our car, the empty seat next to me in the movie house, or the stage play, the concert. . . and then not being able to enjoy my presence there. . . how long can that truly last?

Will I find someone that I am not looking to find. . . someone that will want to lose their loneliness too by blending theirs with mine so that we can then both move on? Will it happen next week, next month, next year, ever?

What would my beloved want me to do? “Our children have their own times and lives to live. They cannot live ours.” She would advise me.

I will move on. . . how, when, where. . . I suppose it will come as they say “like a bolt from the blue” and it will strike my soul into doing as she would want me to, but not. . . not just

yet. . .

I will write my beloved and my words will carry the sounds of music because of you and your love for them. . . and for me. . .

Outside, I laugh when I am with friends.

Inside I cry.

Hurting in deep agony

And they all know and feel it.

They see it in my eyes.

## Christine Gans

### AVIATORS

From a cart in the heart of Chinatown  
Destiny unknown  
Fear devoured the sunglasses  
a thirty-something bartender would pick them up,  
a thirty-something bartender at the dive on the corner,  
the bartender that resembles Elvis, but insists his name is Frederick  
the dive with the neon sign that reads “bar”  
he would pick them up only to leave them occupying a seat on the Queens bound Q train (a  
father’s day visit home)

or

Left on a table at a bistro in Brooklyn  
(his ambitiously youthful girlfriend’s idea)

or perhaps

dropped on a sidewalk at St. Marks and Second Avenue  
(while searching for a black studded wrist decoration for his brother-in-law,  
whose birthday was four days ago  
whose mid-life hormones bought a motorcycle)

or maybe

Frederick would finally read the suggestions in the small blue box by the door  
    Tiny umbrellas in the drinks might brighten up the mood  
    The table by the jukebox wobbles like a Weeble  
    Hire more females... please!  
    Stop wearing those blue suede shoes, you’re faking me out!

## THE PENGUINS

I have driven your new red Mustang.  
No permission was granted  
and now it lounges with its back tires on the sea foam green tile in the kitchen  
compacted between the refrigerator and the pantry,  
with complete disregard for the breakfast nook.  
while its front end is stuck in the yard  
with complete disregard for the blossoming New Guinea impatiens.  
Please forgive me, but I am only seven and assumed that “R” meant *radio*.  
Please forgive me,  
but  
don't you agree that Gina is a perfect name for a mustang?  
and it was Gina that requested some oldies.

## SHOOT THE MOON

Thrilled by the maple leaf cap of a Labatt,  
in Newcastle, the green  
jacket of a Heineken warms up the crowd.

A Real Masterpiece from Holland, but the Belgian Stella Artois  
is disenchanted by Grolsch. She stares  
out her window, an eagle guards the Yuengling barrel,  
hearing a Coors silver bullet in the distance,  
now a Moosehead occupies the wall in her father's study.  
He blames Anheuser-Busch for illegitimate children:  
Carlsberg, crowned in red for sponsoring an English team,  
Michelob Ultra with 95 calories in her body, and  
even three frogs in the pond, "Bud" ... "Weis" ... "Er."

The mountains on a Keystone can were  
handcrafted once in a Blue Moon while  
Beck's supervised and  
Yuengling claimed to be the oldest brewery, but  
what about Old Milwaukee? He seems pretty old.

Across the border, sombrero sips Corona with lime and isn't  
intimidated by shoes of Colt 45, pissed because  
the Pabst Blue Ribbon went to George  
Killian's horse, Irish Red, who has always dreamt of  
Victory, and a win in every sip.

The Rolling Rock did not hurt anyone like  
the mean green killer bee from Micky's that was  
found in the Hoegaarden. Belgian response: "Bier op Gist, Bier Sur Lie."  
American response: "It's Miller Time."  
Guinness' record breaking darkest beer, should be  
substituted for a meal, not like Samuel Adams who  
has been known to flirt with St. Pauli Girl while  
sharing a stein in the Iron City, cheering along the Pirates, Penguins, and Steelers,  
The Red Stripe table next to them reeks of ganja and patchouli, and  
the double red X's of Dos Equis dare them  
to hold a Foster's can without speaking in an Australian accent.

**Susan Halio**

**PASSING**

Passing  
under Cortlandt Street  
the train comes to a halt;

I have time to think about  
Who lives.

I hear  
we should be moving shortly  
but we don't—we are stuck

in the space where  
p a r t I c l e s  
of human dust cling

and indifference  
and ambition  
and time are passing  
over Cortlandt Street.

## HAUNTED—APRIL FOOLS' 2005

respect is a lost notion in America:

Nothing is more piercing than the  
death of a child—  
such grief makes one easy prey.

A living human being—  
with a loving heart and sentient brain—  
is of no interest to theocrats.

Opportunists speak for those  
who cannot speak for themselves  
because the voiceless can't talk back.

Those who would  
deny spousal rights do not  
honor the sanctity of marriage.

Praying on the lawn of a  
stranger on Easter Sunday  
is the annulment of family and values.

Compassion is  
not the exploitation of mourners, is  
not the acquisition of heaven, is  
not the allotment of patronage  
to the synchronous madding crowd.

Compassion is  
the will to sustain the person  
most unlike you.

There is nothing  
conservative about compassion—  
Compassion is liberal by definition liberal.

And breathing is not the same as living.  
Descartes was right:  
life requires consciousness—  
but also *conscience*.

Now let someone who loves you  
know whether you wish to be kept  
alive for the TV cameras to capture you  
grimacing helplessly  
when all hope of living is gone—  
for this is how the world will remember you.

## Barbara Henning

### THIRTY MILES TO ROSEBUD

In Detroit, my brother, Bob, and I take 8 Mile Road East over to see our aged aunt. When he unlocks the door, he calls out her name, but she doesn't answer. I find her in her bedroom, lying on her bed rolled up in a blanket, absolutely still with her eyes wide open. Aunt Gin, I say. It's Barbara and Bobbie. Oh, she says, do you live here now? I pull the blanket back and she asks, Who am I? Then she smiles and sits up, slipping her feet into an old pair of pink slippers. Grasping my arm, she follows as I lead her through the living room into the kitchen. Very old and almost blind, wearing pantyhose and a pair of burmuda shorts. How old am I? I point to the sign with a big red 87 on the refrigerator door and say slowly, Eighty-seven. In the drawers in the kitchen, there are stacks of meticulous notebooks full of lists she kept as she tried for years to hold on to every movie she'd ever watched, the date and time she changed a particular light bulb, the record of all her doctor's appointments, car repairs, the order of her household chores, the birthdays of all her relatives, and so forth and so on. An incredibly beautiful young woman. She's still a beauty, I think, as she lights her cigarette and leans her thin gray body against the garage door, smoking and watching our shadowy figures sweep away the old leaves and vines.



My stepmother locks the door to her house and then comes slowly down the front steps, hesitating before each step. She hugs me. Nice to see you, Barbara. Her hair is completely white and her face puffy, probably from taking so many meds. I take her to K-marts where she slowly wheels her cart up and down each aisle, buying only one pair of socks—for me. I love to shop, she says. Don't you remember when I'd walk miles with you girls, just to look at everything I couldn't afford. Then we drive down Jefferson Avenue, and I drop her off at the Senior Cruisers for a poker game. I look into the ballroom where Bob and Kathy were married and where six-year-old Michah mesmerized the crowd, break dancing New York style under the glass chandelier. Now about fifty white haired ladies sit at round tables, some shuffling, dealing, and others studying their cards. Only two men here. Later that night, Bob and I sit together on his front porch in Livonia watching fireflies. In 1975, we sat together on a rickety old porch on Commonwealth Street, stoned, while he played his guitar—wild amplified sounds under the drifting clouds.



The Upper Peninsula. Along the roadside, in the low areas, the grass is green, in the sun, it's yellow. Tall cattails, mailboxes with little plastic flags, a tall plant completely woven with spider webs. Something melancholic about the moment in the eye of the camera, isolated, framed and honored, like a memory that keeps resurfacing. Then the sun goes down and the trees are blowing and rustling, the dogs barking like crazy. No one's there, or no one I can see, just some eyes way back in the forest, maybe a bobcat, a mountain lion, a coyote, a doe, a bear or maybe a man. Uneasy, I sit on the swing in the dark, rocking back and forth, trying to reach my sister on the cell.



In the morning I load up my little old Honda, stop in Iron Mountain for gas and take Highway 8 through Norway, a little town at the corner of here and there. When the floating tongues of ice from the glacier, finally melt in the hundreds of years to come, I wonder what will happen here. Will the Great Lakes dry up and all the land around me become a desert? Or will they overflow covering these towns. Rolling hills, trees, signs about logging and buying guns, little taverns, stores, gas stations and small motels owned by families. Tonight I'll pull into a motel like that. The telephone and electric lines create a diagram across the landscape. Then Minnesota with corn fields as far as the eye can see, miles and miles, and occasionally a farmhouse. Anti-abortion roadside signs. Then a little mill town with big silos and warehouses, population 154, population 3,000, a few blocks of urban blight, part ghost town, dark skinned workers walking along the main road while those with wheels pull into the Conoco Station. Ray Charles singing America, America the beautiful with his twang while I'm looking at this wide-open sky. America is beautiful, but it was not *given to us* to use up or to use God as an excuse for using others. I'm following this line of people in big trucks and signs to support our troops, support our lifestyle, vote for Bush. I stick with the interstate for one hundred miles, stop at an Econo Lodge with an Indian manager from Bombay. As he fixes the refrigerator, I remember someone fixing my refrigerator in Delhi and then I feel kind of at home.



On Highway 90 amazing yellow corn fields everywhere, Beautiful black cattle gathering around a pond, tails rhythmically swatting at the flies, their calves lying beside them, just passing time until slaughter day. Little trees and rolling hills. McDonald's here, too, divvying up the beef in small portions. I stop at the mini mart, and the woman working there gives me my cup and water free because I have my own tea bag. She loves the beaches in Mexico, but she can go only as long as the corn crop is good. It looks good now, but with one storm like last year, we can lose it. At a big round table in the back, eight men—sixties and older, grey hair, overweight, glasses—are laughing and talking. They remind me of my father and I expect any minute now someone will whip out a deck of cards and they'll play a game of poker. I drink my tea as they watch me out of the corners of their eyes, fiddling with this tape recorder.



I'm going to lie on a picnic table for a few minutes to straighten out my back. Call up my Aunt. Hi. Who are you? Barbara. Barbara? You know, Aunt gin, I'm your brother's oldest daughter. Ohhh. Where are you? I tell her about the sky and the hills. And where are you, I ask. Just lying here, listening to the television. Some low crop is growing here. When the wind blows, the leaves turn up and back, dark green, light green. When the wind ripples, it looks like little waves across the fields. Near Mitchell, South Dakota it's cooler. No need for the air conditioner. Passed by Aberdeen. Less hills, dryer, bales of hay, wide open, flatter. Big trucks passing by. Some one else speeds up to pass me, a blue Geo metro with everything in the back, just like me, in a hurry to get somewhere else. Cattle here and there and lots of bales of hay strewn over the hills. Sandy colors. Now one lane. 250 miles to Rapid City.



After seventy-five sleepy miles, I pull into Murdo. A strip of motels, all but two, very rundown, mildew smelling places. The other two clean and more expensive than they should be. Even so I rent one because I'm tired and I like clean. Maybe a couple hundred houses, most of them dilapidated, a big mill to process grain. On main street half the buildings are boarded up, the other half, half-boarded, a hairdresser, a Lion's club, that kind of thing. I don't see anybody walking around, only an occasional car in a driveway. The man in the ramshackle grocery store, the only one in town, has everything I need, oranges, apples, celery. He tells me when the motorcycle convention comes to town, the motels raise their prices to \$150 a night and that's what you call highway robbery.



83 South, a pond, bales of hay, cold in the morning, and the hills are rolling from here to there. I am the only person on this highway and the sky is breathless. I always thought of plains as flat. If this road is going to be isolated like this, I know my old car will run smoothly along these stretches because she likes to treat me right. Rolling along, just me and no one else, pulled over and photographed an incredible two story abandoned house, decaying for at least 200 years. A herd of cattle. A few houses on the left and a trailer across the way. *Yea, I live here—I hear a voice—and my brother across the way and hey that guy across the road that's my Uncle Joe.* Welcome to White River. That's where I am right now. Must be something to grow up here and then go somewhere else, but definitely do go somewhere else, even though it is beautiful, somewhere else so then you can know where your mentality comes from, rather than seeing White River as the only reality. Very small. I am the light on the statue of Jesus in the cemetery. Lakota Chapel, everyone welcome. Here and at the Dollar day, casino. 30 miles to Rosebud.



Just being here and then thoughts surface like a subdivision in the middle of nowhere, little square frame houses, all exactly the same. I guess it's not the middle of nowhere, it's the middle of White River and Rosebud and the sign says, Rosebud, the place that made the movie. A Sioux reservation. I remember a sled with a rose painted on it and citizen Kane dying with the word rosebud on his lips, the haiku he clung to as his wealth and belongings took him further and further away from simplicity. Something is changing. The hills are becoming little mountains. A big hill ahead with its head chopped off, maybe a little canyon. Passed an oil tanker on the left. Another gasoline truck. More vehicles now. I like driving with no cars behind me. 30 miles so far with no one.



The sky darkens. Rolling hills. I look up and think, shit I'm in tornado country. I thought I could see a tornado, but as I get closer it's an electric wire structure reaching into the sky, almost touching the dark clouds. Then, it starts raining like mad, a wall of water and lightning flashing everywhere. Cross over a river, and right behind that big black cloud, a ridge of mountains, around and down under the fog, sky all around. I've lived in a cave for so long. I pick up a radio station. Some country western music and news. Roadside bombs are the most prolific killers of troops in Iraq. And how do the Iraqis die? Raining hard. At the roadside stop, an older couple, both on Harleys, both gray haired, tired, with rain falling on their leather shoulders. Wow, that's devotion. She is heavy and wrinkled, but still she puts her helmet on, climbs on her bike and off they go, heading west.



Patches of trees. Maybe this land was covered with trees before the first European explorers arrived. Or maybe this wild grass always covered these hills. I imagine stopping here, renting a trailer for a few months and writing. Then the road comes to an end and I turn left, following the same highway, flatter, lots of cars, an arrow leading to Rosebud Casino, bales of hay, flattening out, getting ever so much closer to Nebraska, really astoundingly beautiful sky, a covering of gray clouds with blue around the edges. Flatter, corn again, watering the land, dry land, then a giant casino with black jack and poker, a gas station, hotel. Must be where the folks in this part of Nebraska go to have a good time.



Sand dune hills, very brown, scrubby, hardly any buildings or cars for 125 miles, Hay and alfalfa, \$3.00 a bale, Harm's cattle company. Most of this country is unpopulated. Down into the valley and corn is growing, black cows in a field, cattle for meat. White ones on the left. They look almost like rhinoceros



Very bright afternoon sky, blue and heating up. 55 in the am supposed to go to 85. More black cows in bondage. The guy in front of me in the white truck is wearing a big cowboy hat. Gravel road, hills of corn, yea more corn, 30 miles outside of Platt, on Highway 80, anywhere USA, 75 miles an hour. I'll end up in Boulder tonight and maybe practice yoga with Richard Freeman tomorrow. Straight and flat. Could just as easily be Ohio. Cut off on Highway 30, railroad tracks on the left. No one following me. Lots of corn, a train going by on the left, a little gas station, a town where everything went out of business when the interstate came through, abandoned houses, a big bull farm, corrals, muddy and stinky, cows lying down in the filth. If you're going to dominate the animals, at least create a good environment. Sometimes I think we deserve Mad Cow disease. More and more corn, a big mill, gas stations closed, arrow to 80, café lounge, trailside market, a junk yard. Nebraska has its moments. Oops went the wrong way. Get off and go back. Then on the interstate following a Coca Cola truck. Trees, I like trees a lot. I'd camp here if there were a few trees.



Woke up in Fort Morgan. When I asked the woman at the desk why motels don't have doors on them anymore (like little houses, like my apartment in the city I guess) she took it so personally and she'd only give me the room for the disabled. I had to drag my stuff all the way down a corridor. The old style was too low class, stopping in the mom and pop with the kids and the station wagon. Now everyone's high class, staying in an *Inn*, paying more for no door and dragging everything down the hallway. In the morning I give her the key and she smiles. In the coffee shop I read the paper, the fundamentalist Christians at the abortion clinics and fundamental Islam, both working hard to purify the world and rid it of the infidels. An old story. I head south. On a back road, suddenly I think of my brother so I call him. No answer. Then there is a beep on my cell. While I was calling him, he was calling me. Strange the way we think of each other at the same time. When we were babies we were in the same room, two cribs, eleven months apart in age. Again corn fields. So much corn. I'm telling Bob that corn seems like the only crop when suddenly this amazing field of big orange sunflowers appear.



Then I weave around the curves up the mountain and up to the Boulder lodge to meet my friends who have just arrived. In the National Forest, we follow a path and walk by the river, take photographs of each other. There's an elk, a few coyotes, a mule deer and a little rabbit. The altitude gives me a headache, nosebleed, and cramps. At dusk, I am afraid because of a warning—Stay in groups of three or more in case you encounter a mountain lion. As a child, lions visited me at night many times, chasing me through the living room and bedroom. Sleeping rough, sweating and tossing and turning. Is it the altitude or the people outside talking so loudly? The sound of the vehicles passing overhead on the mountain pass. Maybe it's the plastic cover on the mattress. Or the sound of a woman telling off the eccentric poet dressed like Neruda, hanging out at the picnic table giving everyone copies of his poems. He says something that strikes her as racist and she lets him have it. Now he's nervously talking to this person and that person, trying to defend himself. I wake up and change the bedding, putting my own sheets on the mattress and then I fall asleep.



I'm driving over and through the horizon. How blue the sky. At the first rest area in New Mexico, I pull over. There's so much space here, one looks for a place for the eye to rest, fields of sage, dry hot air and not much eye contact between people. A guy is standing there looking out under a cowboy hat. The restrooms are very sturdy and clean. Outside picnic areas with overhead shelter from the sun. I drive across the basin between the mountains, turn right on Cerrillos Road, driving into Santa Fe. Pretty adobe shopping centers, car dealers, multi-national big box businesses. Now I'm in America. There's supposed to be some rain this evening, says the radio announcer, but it's still a scorcher at five when I pull into a motel, call my friend and tell her I have arrived.

## Mary Kennan Herbert

### THE PARTHENON

In Nashville we visited that replica,  
pseudo-Greek temple in the Athens  
of the South. Art exhibits inside,  
mockingbirds and infamous humidity

outside. Not long ago a tornado  
shrieked through the neighborhood.  
Spring brought destruction as well as  
sweet songs in the honeysuckle. Old

oaks were felled by a vortex monster  
wind, a Vanderbilt student killed, but  
this temple of legacy was mostly  
unscathed. A Greek philosopher

ought to ask: what could be the point?  
This concrete replication, is it to assure?  
Columns rise, crumble, and storms spare  
no culture, magnolias are not immune.

We remain strolling romantics, bold  
in Centennial Park, carrying donuts  
and coffee to Athena. Students still  
loungue on the campus nearby. In spring

Nashville offers its balmy history:  
boys in blue and gray are still dead, trees  
are felled like ten-pins, a storm, a war  
are our souvenirs. Sing, southern birds.

## AN AFTERNOON AT SHEA STADIUM

Yup, another baseball poem is used here to symbolize  
our estrangement from the Deity and the futility of pop flies

as we watch that perfect white sphere up there close to Heaven  
soar against the cerulean blue sky only to plummet with gravity

into Beelzebub's mitt. No one can save me, not Pedro,  
not Beltran, not the umpire at home who calls "Safe!" in the eighth

for an abundance of runs for the Mets. So I'm doomed, yet this  
is as good as it gets on my planet. I recommend that you too

play hooky from your austere offices and follow me right  
to a cool blue seat near home plate. Here kind minions

proffer popcorn and amazin' hotdogs, and an Apple arises  
from a seedy top hat. Awash with beer here, dreams here,

watch those metallic angels wing their way to LaGuardia.  
A breeze from the Sound soothes a troubled cheek.

## **MS. AMERICA REVEALS ALL**

Like Venus on the clam shell  
I arise from the galvanized wash tub,  
Our make-do wading pool.

Quick comfort on a steamy Missouri  
afternoon in July. No school!  
Just paddle till lunch calls

semi-nude third-graders to table.  
My cheap cotton panties cling  
to wet skin, rivulets of that long-ago

water slide down a hungry belly.  
Kids in the next yard shriek, hoot  
with discovery: "Oh Mary, we can see

everything!" I am shivering,  
radiant, but suddenly shy. Have I  
deceived this audience with beauty?

**John High**

## **KILLING THE OX DRAWINGS**

It was under Comrade Stalin that the story of our journey really begins, Hempis. The dictator pacing the Kremlin in the waning days of his own life, grieving the loneliness of his years. A sad man who has killed everyone he has ever loved. I do not despise him or feel pity. Nor do I do know why I tell you. Ghosted boats by the shore and the albino crow remind me of Stalin's singing. I heard him singing once—he had a deep longing in his voice. The dead slip through the realms of history without carnage, and tonight Natasha reminds me. She is there on the shore, waiting on her horse.

A stone in a hand that is not my own, looking back at the sea tonight. The hand sees. Zo Shan's hand writes. Or must I tell someone and you are the only one who will hear in the darkness and understand the laughter coming from a mouth. Maybe the ravage began earlier, when Rasputin felt the knives entering him at the palace in St. Petersburg. Natasha and I visited the palace where he was murdered and drowned in the Neva before our marriage when I received the Young Pioneers Award from Stalin as Outstanding Komsomol of the year from the Urals. I was only seventeen years old, Hempis—and already I had become proud to be *one of them*. Or maybe we began when Stalin killed a child for the first time while sitting beside her on a train in Tbilisi before the Revolution. He killed her and her mother in front of all the passengers to show what might happen to them if they did not obey his orders and empty their pockets. I see the former seminary student sitting there, lamenting his decision to kill the girl—she was innocent—but knowing no other way to do what had to be done. The Party needed money and he had found a way to gain it, robbing trains. Is this not like the one we called my father? I see the road leading to the station the day Stalin and his red bandits robbed the train. The leaves brown on the earth. The fog covering the bits of rain on the windows. Perhaps this is why you never asked me to tell you before disappearing into these hills & stones, Hempis.

Perhaps you already knew.

At first, after our father brought us over the border, these Russians did not accept me, Hempis. It was 1937. Many had died in the first war against the Germans, millions of others in the Revolution, the famine and Civil War that followed, and many later fought with the Germans against Stalin, too. I was only nine years old, a skinny kid with hardly the clothes on my back and a shaved head. After witnessing the death of my sister, Yulian, I had gone into the countryside one night and returned to our refuge camp missing a finger—the first I severed. I almost bled to death before my father cauterized the wound. I had wanted to bury Yulian's body when the planes flew over Lhasa and he would have nothing to do with it. We must run, he said. We must escape the Chinese. But he was Chinese himself, and he refused to even bury his own daughter as the planes flew overhead.

Though she was not his actual daughter, was she, Hempis?

“You have the face of a Mongolian,” the Soviet boys would tease. “A retard.” I uttering in my broken bits of Russian, hiding under the desks every morning in the corner of the school that year. It was a small brick schoolhouse with two rooms and no chairs. The teacher, Comrade Kuznetsov, wore a uniform, as did those of us who had them. Petro Petrovich was the only one with stars on his officer's coat. He had been in Moscow and even in Paris, some said, tracking down enemies of the people. Later my father told me it had been Petro Petrovich who had been skilled enough to trick and eventually betray the great poet Osip Mandelstam in 1931. He had eyes the color of blue marble so pale and muscular in the cheeks

that the other officers secretly looked up to and feared him. When they sent Mandelstam to the Gulag my father eventually came to command, I met the poet and we became friends. Even to this day I carry the poems he dictated to me on our walks.

Of course, I could not speak their language at first, and I was sick when we arrived in Vladivostok on the trains. If the man I called my father had not gone directly to the police and met Boris & Dima's father, Colonel Bokov, we would have starved to death like the countless others who died in the famine that winter. But our father gladly traded the secrets he had learned from both the Tibetans and the Chinese. This, too, had been arranged in advance and shortly after Stalin's spies infiltrated our country, Hempis. He knew trade routes and the names of banking officials, and he had a certain ruthless charm, so he proved useful. He had planned it well in advance of Mao's invasion that came later, and our mother was right, this is how we had escaped Tibet with little loss when so many others were slaughtered. It is, no doubt, why our mother married him before the infiltration was complete, and why he was allowed to approach the Soviet officers that day when the Chinese surreptitiously bombed our village—killing my sister, Yulian. It is why my mother lied to me and to you, too, Hempis, saying she loved him. It would not be long before they conquered the country, and the Dalai Lama himself would be forced to flee through the mountains.

She had always loved you, Hempis.

Boris and Dima's father, Colonel Bokov, agreed to take him to the Commissar, who turned out to be the father of Petro Petrovich, the young propaganda chief of Vladivostok who would one day help me up in the Party ranks only to betray me as he had the poet Mandelstam.

For a while we lived like gypsies on the outskirts of the village, and no one would talk to us until he began his work for Colonel Bokov. When they did begin to speak to us, it was with terror, for my father was a man who was sent in the middle of the night to arrest those who later disappeared.

After months of enduring their jeers and teasing in school, one day I went out to Boris and Dima's house, the two bullies who later became my friends but who then would hit me every afternoon as I walked home over the iced and turquoise water of the lake. Gradually, they would beg for my forgiveness and to become my comrades, but that day I hated them. I walked in the open of the field as I approached the old mansion the Bokovs lived in, one that had formerly belonged to a minister of the Czar. I walked with my coat open and the machete out. I entered the barn behind the dilapidated mansion, went straight to the stall that housed their livestock, lifted my machete and sliced an ox in the shed across the lower edge of its belly. I knew enough to understand that I would be beaten and severely punished, possibly killed for the act.

Only ten years old, two days after my birthday, but already I had begun to teach myself to read in the library. The first book I found in the library on my own was a biography on Rasputin, I knew it was more than coincidence when Natasha told me that afternoon after school that Rasputin was born outside our village in the house she had shown me. Later, I took the book to her as well, and she started teaching me how to pronounce the words and understand old Slavic ones I couldn't find in our Party dictionaries. As the superstitions and myths had it, Rasputin had "jinxed" the villagers as a boy by leaving blood on the snow in front of all of their houses one New Year's Eve and killing one animal at every home.

I was right that the superstitions and fears had not completely changed. My powers were returning. The Beirut of this Russian village were ancient people who practiced the way of the Old Believers and simply gave lip service to the communists after Trotsky conquered the region, only to be murdered by Stalin himself.

When the boys and their father came running out of the house that morning, I jumped on the ox's back and rode the terrified beast about the yard deliriously screaming until the animal collapsed in the snow, its blood smeared on my face.

"Soon, I will ride on the back of each of you Russian whores!" I shouted in my broken Russian, waving the machete in the air.

As fate would have it, the ox did not die, Hempis. It was not done with me, or with my karma. The next morning, one of Colonel Bokov's cows had a mysterious litter, and all of the peasants were certain the cow had become impregnated from the blood that fell on the snow. Soon, they started to come to me, shy and humble, as other cows of the herd mysteriously had litters as well that winter. Certainly they weren't related, but the peasants around the lake believed that they were, Hempis. Like the priest Rasputin who was born here a generation before, they presumed in me the evil power to bring life from blood.

From then on, my so-called father, your brother, had me consult them on the illnesses of their stock in exchange for milk and eggs and other food. I studied hard. We became wealthy. My father rose in rank. Nor did my act escape the scrutiny of the KGB—then known as the NKVD—who eventually drafted me into a special school for Young Pioneers who were considered worthy of training in Moscow.

I was even invited to meet Comrade Stalin along with Petro Petrovich and several others from around our great Soviets, and three weeks after receiving the award, I was personally escorted onto Red Square for his funeral in 1953.

In the village, some of the Beirut even believed his death was related to my visit. But Petro Petrovich knew, Petro knew what really happened and one day, he would tell me—but by then, it would be too late for the others. He would betray me just as he had betrayed my only friend as a boy, the poet who roamed the camp my father commanded. Within a few years I would follow at Mandelstam's side, giving him pieces of candy and writing down his poems.

Our father let me do this.

Stalin, too, knew.

Because he, too, loved the poet Osip Mandelstam.

**Karen Jasper**

**TONGUE TIED**

I wish I could write  
a haiku for you but I have  
too much to say.

**FAITH**

While I was trying  
to help you stand on your own  
I lost my balance.

**AMBIVALENCE**

She has a mind like  
a steel trap, nerves of steel, and a  
heart rusted through.

**AMBIVALENCE 2**

It's just a muscle:  
the heart is not a valentine;  
blood does not love.

**AMBIVALENCE 3**

Dried leaf on the vine.  
I am growing ambivalent.  
Still, I cling to you.

**AMBIVALENCE 4**

You act like you are  
disappointed that I don't  
have pity for you.

**SHAME**

I never can find  
the right clothes to wear, can't find  
the right things to say.

## THE DAY AFTER VALENTINE'S DAY

We were ripping sugar packets  
we were shredding stacks of napkins  
we weren't looking at each other  
we weren't discussing what had happened  
in the waiting room (we waited too long  
to take him); we were tired and broke  
and sick of each other, we knew we'd  
never have sex again, so I forced a  
smile for the waitress, waited for her  
to slosh your coffee to give you something  
to bitch about before I took  
a bite of pie and said *Let's say  
something about life, like we're in a  
bad movie* so you held up a fry  
like it was a cigarette, like the ketchup-end  
was the lit part and you pretended  
to take a drag before you tapped it  
against the ashtray and you said  
*Life IS a bad movie, Sweetheart*  
which is exactly what someone  
in a bad movie would say.

**Sarah Kolbasowski**

**VALENTINE'S DAY**

well it is eight o'clock pm and I'm sitting on a train. the windows are peppered with raindrops and the guy down the aisle in wearing a red tie. red. my sweatshirt is red but I didn't really think about it when I put it on this morning because I just wanted to get to school on time. I'm never on time.

today someone told me that the way I was feeling was wrong. wrong. I don't know if that's possible, for my feelings to just be incorrect. sometimes you can't help a feeling. it just enters your mind like an uninvited wedding guest, setting up shop at the open bar, hitting on all of the bridesmaids. you can't get rid of it unless you try really hard, even if you know that it could be wrong, or harmful, or inappropriate.

but you can't rid yourself of that feeling any more than you can take that human being and bodily throw him out on the street, his knees cracking against the pavement like shattered champagne glasses on the day someone offered you a divorce as if it were a stick of cinnamon gum.

(you were decked out in your prettiest red that Valentine's Day.

you were ready to start all over, pass go, and collect two hundred dollars).

yesterday my man gave me diamonds and I felt like a girl. a girl giving into this hallmark card holiday with all of its hype and all of the happy couples that I had loathed for so many years before. but nothing could match how I felt with that chain around my neck, sparkling like,

oh wait, they were diamonds.

and I thought of the years I had secretly wished for someone to know enough about me to know

that I would wear those jewels. that I'm not just a boy in sheep's clothing. that maybe one day

you would glue those champagne glasses back together and put them on display in your new home, away from the prying eyes of all the happy couples.

Valentine's Day 2010 you would have become yourself again,

and my feelings might still be wrong. and the rain could still be making me think of how I didn't mean to put a red sweatshirt on that day. and maybe you would have already landed on Park Place, pretending he never existed, he never picked such a red day to tell you that you just didn't do it for him anymore, you just didn't make him hard, you'd just turned into his mother.

## THE NAME OF MY STREET IS JUPITER

With grass pricking my ears and grazing along my earlobes  
I turn my head lazily to the left with my chin resting lightly on my shoulder,  
me, horizontal on the square front lawn.

I see the pink tongue of my pitbull panting  
grunting  
licking

toward the mailman in his blue gym teacher shorts,  
his headphones blaring the Electric Light Orchestra in summer  
On my right, the old lady next door is cutting her front lawn  
with old rusted scissors because her son came last week to tell her  
she can't mow the lawn or drive or snowshovel anymore  
(but he's never  
around

anyway, I think,  
he's left his mother here to rot away with  
her cigarette butts still burning on her fingernails,  
turning the cuticles sickly and green around thousands of tiny wrinkles,  
and the piles of yellow newspapers she's collected in the living room  
and the hideouts of hideous animals and creatures  
setting up shop in the green swampy hole that used to be a pool  
in her overgrown backyard.)

At the end of the street,  
a new family has moved into the black and white house  
with the screened-in deck and the gazebo.  
It sold for four hundred grand  
thirteen years  
after my parents bought  
their house in this neighborhood in this part of Jersey  
for a little more than one nineteen.

I was thinking  
about bringing them over a gift of some sort.  
Maybe a small survivalist's guide to living here,  
right here in the seemingly harmless den  
of adolescent slack and suburban primping and preening  
that I rifle through and gaze at from my spot on the lawn.  
(for there are things.)

There are things you must do to protect your house  
from the teenagers who used to be me.

Don't let your children bounce balls  
or draw hopscotch boards with bugs stuck in the chalk  
unless it's on the cracks of the sidewalks  
far far away from the tricked out Hondas  
doing eighty down the road.

The Chinese grandparents at the top of the neighborhood  
give out egg rolls for Halloween,  
and nobody eats them.

The pizza boy double parks and there's nothing you can do about it  
but wait until he goes  
because the damn streets are too narrow to get around him.

And don't yell at the teenagers who've somehow forgotten how to move out of the way  
everytime they're in the middle,  
right in the middle  
of the main road playing basketball because someday,  
you'll have cold, frozen egg yolks making yellow icicles off the knob of  
your front door or the left headlight of your Acura.

The swamps are behind this neighborhood,  
bringing the crickets,  
chirping crickets with Jersey attitudes  
and a refusal to shut up.  
Go far enough down the dirt road  
past all the other roads,  
and you can reach those swamps  
and there, you'll find kids building bonfires  
and smoking joints the size of magic markers  
and planting their leftover seeds in the ground  
in the hopes of growing that perfect plant,  
somewhere the cops don't bother to go.

Here in my place, I know about bonfires,  
I help build them  
and I know exactly when the fireman down the street is going to  
rush out of his house to find one  
and I know the names of all the dogs on the street.

And when the old lady's son comes back,  
with a month's worth of measly groceries  
and no grandchildren greeting cards  
boasting big pink hearts  
drawn in carnation pink crayola in his hand,  
I'm going to stop him to let him know  
all about the creatures in the backyard  
with the fangs like cancer  
who spring from the green pool every day  
to eat his mother's heart.

## Diane Macaraeg

### BETTER

The day after William proposed to Nancy, his parents invited him over for dinner. There was nothing unusual about this, except that they requested that he come alone. He thought they'd want to celebrate the engagement by having Nancy over too. But he didn't protest during the quick phone call from his mother. Instead, he wondered if maybe there was important, or possibly bad news about the family that needed to be broached in Nancy's absence.

William left his Upper West Side townhouse on bicycle, and briskly crossed the Park to his parents' Upper East Side townhouse. The air was crisp and cool; this helped prepare his mind for whatever news lay ahead.

His mother, Victoria, answered the door, looking impeccably polished, as usual. She wore gray tweed slacks and a light blue cashmere sweater that highlighted her blue eyes. Her graying blond hair was pulled back, which accented her high cheekbones and signature diamond earring studs. William was always impressed by his mother's elegance and style. At sixty-two, she was still a striking woman. She hugged him, and kissed his cheek.

"What's new, Mom?"

"Not much, except I want you to look at our new photo albums. We just had some of our oldest photos restored. Take a look." She pointed to the coffee table in the living room as she made her way to the kitchen.

He wheeled his bike in, and looked at the collection of leather-bound albums, each engraved in gold with a roman numeral, and their surname: "Tennant". "These look great, Mom."

"Have a look," she called out from the kitchen. "Dinner's almost ready."

He opened the first one, which revealed an old photo he hadn't seen in years—it was his great grandmother as a seventeen year old girl in Roxburyshire, Scotland. She stood in front of the family estate dressed in her white debutante gown. Her broad smile revealed a sly confidence that she could have whatever she wanted. She was famous for her thick, auburn hair, which he and his father inherited.

He flipped through the album and came to one of his favorite photos. This one showed his grandparents, wearing white swimsuits on the beach at Cannes. William had a framed copy of this photo on display in his house. He loved it because his grandparents looked like glamorous movie stars from the twenties.

"Hey, William." Russell Tennant walked down the steps dressed casually in khakis and a navy wool sweater.

"Hi, Dad. You're looking fit."

"Not only did your mother force me to buy a treadmill, but she also forces me to use it," he joked. Russell sat down in a chair facing his son, picked up a photo album, and absentmindedly flipped through the pages.

William found it odd that no one congratulated him on the engagement, or even mentioned Nancy. "Is everything okay?" he asked his father.

Russell's kind face flashed a look of concern as his mother told them that dinner was ready. "Let's talk over dinner," his father answered with a reassuring smile.

The three of them sat at the dining room table with plates of salmon and asparagus spears before them. William felt too nervous to eat; he reverted to childhood paranoia that his parents would divorce. He was surprised that a knot formed in his stomach, as if he were his ten year-old self, listening to them shout insults at each other. "Well, the suspense is killing me."

“Don’t worry, everything’s all right,” his mother reassured him. “We just wanted to talk to you about your engagement.”

He’d never seen his parents look so stifled and uncomfortable. Russell said, “Well... um, first of all we really like Nancy. We think she’s a nice girl. A *really, really* nice person. But... we’re just a little concerned about your choice in marrying her.”

“Why?”

His parents glanced uncomfortably at each other. In a measured tone, his mother continued, “Look, I’m going to be honest with you. Your brothers and sisters are all very concerned. They don’t want to say anything, but your father and I can’t just keep our mouths shut about this.”

“Lay it on me,” said William. “What’s wrong with Nancy?” His tone was sarcastic as he felt himself growing defensive.

“She just seems a little unhealthy,” Victoria said in a gentle voice.

William knew exactly what they were thinking. “Unhealthy” was a catch phrase for fat. They think Nancy’s ugly, and doesn’t fit the role of the upper class. He hoped his parents might be beyond such crass snobbery.

“What’s worse,” William taunted, “being overweight, or being immoral?”

He knew he struck a nerve with his parents. They got along perfectly well in their old age, but his childhood held memories of drunken fighting, yelling, and adultery. It wasn’t unusual for his father to disappear for weeks at a time for “business trips”. During his absence, Victoria would stay out late every night to distract herself, and occasionally bring men home while drunk. His youngest brother, Henry, was so traumatized by the fighting that he developed ulcers at age twelve.

Quickly changing the subject, Russell said, “Let’s be clear about something. We’re not judging Nancy for her appearance. We just think she’s... well let me ask you something. Does she *try* to be healthier by eating right and exercising?”

“No.” But she will, William told himself. *As least I hope so.* He knew that Nancy was overweight, and not what society says is beautiful, but he loved her because she was selfless—beautiful on the inside. She worked at a day care center, and all the children loved her. He’d never dated a woman more creative or kind. *When she sets her mind to it, she’ll lose weight.*

“Hey, I’m not exactly an Adonis,” William said with a smile, to ease the tension.

“You’re a *very* handsome man,” Victoria emphatically replied. She looked at her son and saw a tall, slim, and successful lawyer who was president of his fraternity at Brown, and captain of the lacrosse team. He’d always made her proud.

Russell regarded his son as a younger version of himself—a man who is capable of having his pick of the women. Russell was shocked when he first met Nancy and saw that she wore knee socks under a skirt that was too short. He was appalled by the rolls of fat on her stomach, and he thought her face looked shapeless and wan. Where’s the charm? he wondered. He couldn’t believe his son would want to mix their Tennant genes with hers.

“She seems different from all your other girlfriends,” said Russell.

*Yeah, she’s not a rich bitch whore,* William thought. “Nancy is a hard worker who comes from a good family. Both of her parents are lawyers. I’m surprised you never said anything before.”

“We thought you were just going through a phase, because of all the trouble you had with Sarah,” said Victoria.

“I’d rather not talk about that.” His mother had admired his ex-girlfriend’s delicate blond beauty and style. He wished she’d quit bringing up her name.

Sarah was a Virginia debutante who broke his heart during his last year at Brown. They talked of getting married after school, but her attention was swayed by a young lobbyist during an internship in D.C.

He might have gotten over Sarah more quickly if she hadn't been so cold when she broke up with him. They dated for over a year, yet she found it sufficient to dismiss him over the phone with the din of TV in the background. He pictured her casually flipping through the channels with her new boyfriend sitting next to her. She sounded irritated and impatient as she explained that their lives were going in different directions. Worst of all, she ended the conversation by adding in a friendly voice, "Don't worry—you'll find someone else. And I will too."

*And I will too.* Those words haunted William. All it took was four small words to convey an assumption of privilege—an iron clad belief in herself as someone who will always be valued. *And I will too.* . . . He was ranked third in his graduating class at law school, yet it never occurred to him that he deserved to have anything handed to him. It never occurred to him to flippantly tell a girlfriend that he'd find someone else. His mind didn't work this way, and neither did Nancy's.

Suddenly, William thought about the photo albums and wondered if his parents wanted him to look at them to remind him of who they were: industrious and wealthy people who inherit a good life as a birthright. In a way, they're right, he thought. Nancy doesn't fit in, at least not physically. But I can't see how this matters. None of this blue blood shit matters. I've dated "beautiful" women my whole life, and they've all made me miserable. Nancy and I will get married and they'll just have to accept this.

Eight months later, William helped Nancy unpack her things into his townhouse. It was a warm and sunny June day. "Let's take a break and go for a walk in the park," he said to Mrs. Nancy Tenant.

"I don't know... there's so much work to do." She readjusted her bandana to keep sweat from dripping down her face. Her feet were killing her from the physical exertion, and she was beginning to get strong menstrual cramps.

He threw his arms around her and kissed her cheek. "Come on—we can get ice cream." She stepped back and glared at him. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing. I just thought we could go for a walk and get an ice cream cone."

"I'm not a weak person who can be lured with sweets. You know I don't like walking around a lot. Why don't *you* go while I finish unpacking these boxes?" She turned away and continued placing books on his shelves.

"Okay, honey," he gently said. "I won't be gone long."

William walked through the park, confused about the mood swing Nancy just displayed. Sometimes I forget how sensitive she is, he thought. She's been judged her whole life about her appearance and her health. I should always be sensitive... *that's the moral thing to do.*

**Meghann McCormick**

**FOREVER FORLORN**

The moon was half last night  
    clouds covering  
to create a lemon slice table  
yet not quite  
lemon yellow  
more a fair-skinned  
    Irish child

Like that child  
this half-moon  
    smiled  
and although it was beaming,  
all gums revealed,  
I saw right through  
the lunar shroud  
of clouds.

I saw an empty face:  
the sullen craters  
shaping    eyes  
sunken deep  
into its  
mind  
the moon  
was weeping  
for a cloud to  
    embrace it  
instead of change and  
    erase it.

## JUNCTURE

Sitting on a crowded Q  
in a stolen subway chair  
(acquired by beating the frumpy man  
to the Chinese woman's  
vacant seat)  
on the east, furthest from  
the city—  
the horde of heads  
all turn in reverie toward  
the 5 o'clock skyline  
creating their own curved  
and crooked line of sky  
with their tall squat short  
thin figures blocking  
the sunset backdrop.

I bob my head  
to catch a glimpse but the people  
structures barely blink long enough  
to wince or shrink for me to see  
they're packed too densely, immensely  
blocking my view  
A man moves left  
just enough to leave me  
a keyhole peek—  
the tail end of the  
Brooklyn Bridge slithers  
into sight with the Watchtower  
sitting still behind it.

I hunch my shoulders in  
despondence and scribble down  
this internal correspondence.

**Lindsey Michael Miller**

## **ZOMBIE**

Brown are the leaves, resting aimlessly on the ground for the wind to pick up. The children are reading their usual brightly colored comic books, flapping from page to page in anticipated ecstasy. The park is filled with lovers, sun bathers, children playing/pushing/laughing/crying, walkers, riders, runners, Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asians, rich, poor, and others somewhere in-between, gamblers, stalkers, druggies and dealers, businessmen, carriages, models, plumbers, dentists, janitors, benefactors, aristocrats, and none of them seem to notice any of the others.

Grey are her clothes—the woman with no hands. The beggars in other parts of the nation aren't nearly as impressive. They lack the true flair of someone homeless because of disability rather than the desire not to work. She shoos the pigeons away from the crumbs of bread she threw for them moments earlier. The leprosy of other eras were sent away to live in communes and fend for each other; and so weren't allowed to speak to those in normal civilization. The unclean in this era are simply ignored.

Red is my face, blushing as I hand a dollar to her. There is life and pity in me, but no love. This urchin doesn't need money as much as she needs friends, lovers, saints, mentors, children, grandchildren, courtiers, comrades, acquaintances, enemies, nemeses, associates—interaction. She smiles, winks, waits, reaches, pulls back, reaches, stands, sits, smiles, frowns, and then takes the money.

Colorless are her eyes as we both realize that this torture of human inexistence has torn away her mind, leaving behind a body and a wraith that accosts the cement walkways of New York parks for a faceless eternity.

## CLOCK

tick-tock clock  
scoot switch

clock  
tock  
sizzle-  
bring bean—tick tock  
bring bean—clock

clock tock

sizzle

clock-tock sizzle sure  
hap sleep tip yell switch sizzle bleat  
cringe pick pack trip Alaska

tick-tock clock sizzle grate grill sizzle  
pack tock tick tock yell bleat griddle

sixty bring me ice-tea nicely fiercely wiry

tick-tock clock sizzle shirk clock shirk tock tick sizzle

switch sizzle clock tock tack tock tick tock clock

grate graze graft grill slap sizzle tock tick tack tock clock

book switch griddle ladder brittle fight fat fizzle  
pick pack pill pot jolt cot cat kit drizzle

tick tack tock clock clack clock pack track back pack trip trap  
trip Alaska

tick-tock tock tock clock clack clock

tick-tock clock

## **Hisae Aihara**

### **IS ANYBODY THERE?**

Clothing, shoes, and bags—these are the general items that we go out with everyday. Apparel and accessories companies are eager to promote new merchandise through mass media and retail stores. Consumers who think themselves trendy and fashionable cannot help being driven by the various tactics used by those companies. In this project of photographs printed on vinyl, I observed those daily items in a different way, a way that implies the existence of something external to but connected with them.

Clothing, shoes and bags can be meaningful when they are used by human beings. What if there is nobody? In this neighborhood, there is nobody at all. Why are these items in those empty streets? Did somebody abandon them? Did somebody forget them?

“Is anybody there?” It is as if these items are trying to reassure themselves of existence and meaning. Imagine each image without those products. We can feel how meaningful those items are in each frame. The empty ordinary streets in the industrial area are revived by those tiny pieces. They are not only practical tools but also something that can create aesthetic scenes.

### **Eight Photographs**

- ❖ *Blue Sandals* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Red Bag* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Blue aelisheva Dress* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Black Shoes* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Denim Bag* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Beige Sandals* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *Beige & White aelisheva Dress* (digital photograph, 2006)
  
- ❖ *White Bag* (digital photograph, 2006)

[These photographs appear on the eight (unnumbered) pages following page 56.]



**Steve Newton**

**THERE WERE BELLS RINGING IN THE CITY THAT MORNING**

There were bells ringing in the city that morning  
when he went out for coffee and a newspaper never  
thinking that he might not be back right away but  
there was a crowd on the corner by his apartment and

sirens in the distance and looking down through the  
bent over people he could see the face of a woman  
staring up into something that he could not see above  
her and this was the beginning of a day that turned

out differently than he was expecting that it would  
how could it not even though we always know that  
life is fleeting and can be snatched away in an instant  
it was that look up as the ambulance approached that

made him turn away from his plans and start down  
the sidewalk taking the first steps of what was going  
to be his new life and oddly enough he did not have  
any idea at this point what this life might be other than

it was going to include much more good food and a  
meal every day that he would be able to look back  
on and remember but that's all he knew at this point  
just a man starting off with a desire to begin eating

in ways that he had never eaten before and he quickly  
started imagining menus and settings courses and  
appetizers and stocks and freezers full of giblets and  
necks and fish roe a mouth watering beginning that

was starting to multiply and speed up even as he was  
walking still within sight of the crowd receding behind  
him this group of kind people bent over the shape of  
someone who would not have truffles and wild boar

in northern Italy or calamari with garlic on the Dalmatian  
coast grits with smoked ham for brunch in Charleston  
or enchiladas with huevos rancheros and salsa with the  
Sangre de Cristo mountains white and blue in the distance

then all of a sudden this was enough for him and he turned  
around and went back to all of the things in his life that  
had grown so dull but from then on he read recipe books  
and looked at travel magazines and ate a new meal every

day this was the new life that he could never have prepared for and it turned out that it was not the food or the meals or even a newfound appreciation of the brevity of life that was his gift it was the new way he looked at what he always

had the things that had been there all along and while this is hardly anything to write home about it was a new life for him a new beginning for the man in this poem this imaginary hero who never existed outside of these lines and words and

in fact did not even have a life until sometime around the fourth line of this poem when he came upon the group looking down at the lady with the heart attack who is still there by the way and the ambulance is still approaching if you are wondering

because here time is collapsed with his future and her present mixing and blending in the metafictional world of this poem that just this evening was born and now finds itself strangely awake looking around at the world with its eyes made of words

## MANY OF US HAVE THINGS IN OUR PAST THAT WE DON'T

Many of us have things in our past that we don't tell people about and I am certainly one of those people especially when it comes to certain private matters which of course are different for everybody

but anyhow sometimes it's good to get things out I guess and maybe it is and maybe it isn't time will tell but there was this one time that sticks out through the years of all kinds of crazy things going on and it's

not even that weird by some standards but here's what happened I was always rather lax when it came to keeping the inside of my car clean or maybe it's more accurate to say that I was about as extreme as you

could imagine with the entire back seat filled with books and junk and soda cans and magazines just a car full of garbage a rolling dumpster and it would take years of analysis to understand why some of us are this way

and over the years many people have commented on the condition of my various cars their wanton disregard for any order what a wreck but occasionally back in those days I would go out on a date with a young

lady and would oh not really clean the car but kind of rearrange things so that it didn't look so bad as crazy as that sounds until this one time I was dropping off this girl at her parents' house and pulled over to the curb

and as she was getting out she for some reason reached under the seat a little bit and said What's this? at which point I thought Uh oh this can't be good and she pulled out a baggie with an old tuna sandwich that had seen

better days and when she saw this she screamed and dropped it on the floor of the car where it burst open oh my God fucking maggots everywhere squirming and crawling all over the floor of the car what a moment

then she bolted out of the car but with enough presence of mind and spirit to lean in and say Steve I love you but you are too much before walking across the lawn leaving me sitting at the curb with a car full of maggots so shocked

that all I could do was drive away glancing down at the boiling mess it sure had wrecked the mood but at least I have this to remember all these years later and now you do too this secret gift waiting patiently through the decades to explode

**M. A. Reid**

## **SOMETHING SWEET**

“Walter. Are you raking those leaves yet?!”

“Yeah, Mary.” Mackie flicks a cigar stub away, his head still under the hood of his Chevy pickup. He wipes the dipstick and, replaces it, then steps away from the bumper and closes the hood.

“I’ll be back Mary, I’m going to the store.”

Mary comes to the door, her Everybody Loves Grandma apron still on. “What?”

“I’m going to the store.” He talks slow, pronouncing his words carefully.

“Then the least you can do is pick up some eggs, will you, Dear?” On the other side of the screen door Mary’s frantic, dusting and sweeping for tonight’s guests. A delegation of Elks, congregating in the front room, around Mackie’s sable tweed armchair with the worn cushion, and arguing over the new baseball field and the Thanksgiving Day parade. She made a cake for afterwards.

Mackie walks over to the driver’s side, his left leg dragging a little as he gets into the truck and hunches over the steering wheel; he takes two aspirin from a bottle in the glove and tosses them down his throat. The engine starts clean, and Mackie pulls off down Church Street, turning left at Main past the three story walk-ups that now house the town’s main source of income, namely twenty-five antique shops that saturate downtown, attracting tourists and would-be bargain hunters up from the city to grab themselves another slice of Dayton, and right onto 302. He turns again down a ways into the town Shopping Plaza, parks his truck, covering the white divider line, and makes for the third shop over from the right.

“Hey, Chief.” A tall man, belly tight against his gray sweatshirt, exits the shop, bag full, and lifts his hand towards Mackie.

“How you doing there, Louis? You going to the school board meeting on Friday?”

Mackie takes a pull of his stogie, knocking the ash and most of the head to the cement.

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world. I’ll see you later tonight, Mac.”

“Have a good one, tell your wife I said hi.”

Three bells jingle at Mackie’s arrival. He walks on to the counter, past black and white photos of the old iron works his father worked at when he was a boy, before the Depression swallowed it up, to the pit-marked teenager sitting there, reading the *Star* and sipping on a coffee. “Hey, Mr. Mackie.”

“Good to see you, Brenda. How’s school been treating you?”

“Oh, it’s fine. Mrs. Bensing is having a practical in Biology, tomorrow. Julie took it last week. She said it was hard.”

“I remember when I was there, we used to hide the old English teacher’s erasers from him. That was the same year I was captain of the football team. It was the first year we had a team in these parts. No helmets, little pads. . .”

“What can I get for you today, Mr. Mackie?”

“You couldn’t throw a forward pass back then. . .” Mackie looks over the various selections for consumption. “I think maybe something sweet.”

“Which one would you like?”

Selecting a treat from the seldom wiped display case of Janie’s Bagels—cream covered pastries, apple chunked danishes, plain and sugared doughnuts, and swollen crumble cranberry scones, about to burst against the glass—leads Mackie to pause, swishing his slightly smoking cigar butt back and forth in that large wrinkled mouth of his with the stubby yellowed teeth still in it, still putting pressure, still gripping at each other like when he would throw orders at the

gangly, loose-shirted boys on the block to go and fetch him a box of mock Cubans, a newspaper, and his quart of Beefeater from Kopelesco's Corner General.

"I think I'll just have a cookie, give me a black n' white."

"Sure thing." Brenda opens the case, removes a large round disk of chocolate and vanilla sugar, and takes it over to the counter to wrap it. She taps a few strokes on the keyboard, the bright green digital readout informing Mackie that it's \$1.75. "Anything else?"

"No, listen just put it on my tab, will you, Dear?"

"No problem, Mr. Mackie."

He turns for the exit, "Oh, and Brenda, if Mary asks, I wasn't here, all right?"

"Haven't seen you. Bye."

"Take care."

Mackie gets back in the truck and begins the two-mile ride to the new Dayton grocer, a sore thumb in the otherwise wooded landscape. He picks up eggs, milk, and his cigars, makes a little small talk while helping an overloaded housewife bring her groceries and three children to a waiting hatchback. In the truck, he opens the egg container, and takes one out, throwing it onto the pavement. In its place, he puts a small black felt box he pulled from the glove, his anniversary gift for Mary for tonight, their fifty-first. He starts the truck, pulls out of the lot and begins heading back.

The radio is playing "Earth Angel" through the static. Mackie sings away, like he would do with Mary when they were young and the town was still small. She told him the night of the Harvest Fair when they met that he could croon his way into almost anywhere, but now she'd just as much listen to the news, all the same to her and the contraption that barely passes for a hearing aid the Medicaid people provided for her. Mackie leans back against the seat tapping his fingers on the wheel. He doesn't notice the pop at first, but eventually the continual thud of the rubber against the pavement pulls him off the road to inspect the tire.

He stops the car and grabs his jack and tire iron from the bed of the truck, moves to the right side of the vehicle, standing half in the ditch and half on the grass. The car goes up easy enough, and Mackie begins loosening the lugs. The fourth one sticks a little and he leans over to get some leverage. He grips the iron with both hands, his face heating up, accompanied by drops of sweat, sticky as Mary's prize-winning jam, before there's another pop, only this one is inside his head. Mackie drops the four-way, and falls back, a slight trickle of blood coming from his mouth, where his cigar usually sits, his eyes rolling back, seeing the blue of the day just before green and brown thickets replace the clouds. Then everything turns a fuzzy gray, and then goes black.

Twenty yards down the road three boys ride their bikes into a side trail. They see the red truck, strange and out of place, but they continue to their original destination, heading along the tire-carved dirt track towards Marigold's Pond.

Across town Mary finishes cleaning and begins supper, cursing Mackie and her lack of eggs.

**Joseph Reister**

## **THE DANGERS OF FLIRTING WITH STRANGERS**

For a second the world flew forward and then just as suddenly snapped back into place like nothing had happened. The violent motion jump-started Xavier's heart and shook him awake. He sat straight up and rubbed his eyes as he stared out the window. As his vision came into focus, he wiped the drool off his chin and looked down at his watch to see what time it was. He chuckled and then looked out the window again to watch the telephone and power lines that ran parallel to the train tracks. The thick wires sank and rose as the train continued on its level path, and he followed the connecting lines for several miles.

"Kind of makes you feel like you're not getting anywhere, huh?" he heard as his eyes started to gloss over. He looked at the woman sitting across from him and smiled.

"How you doing?" he asked with his hand extended toward her. "Xavier Francis Moriarty, pleasure to meet you."

The woman smiled back, staring at his symmetrical features, clear skin and the few strands of dark hair that hung in front of his dark blue eyes. "Nice to meet you," she said. "Cleo Harriman."

They shook hands and Xavier's smile broadened a bit. "That's a pretty name."

"Thank you," Cleo said with a bit of color rising to her cheeks. "My Mom always thought it would inspire me to do great things, not that I would ever be a queen or anything, but that I would be able to accomplish whatever I set out to do."

"And have you?"

"Not yet," Cleo said, looking away for a moment, shrugging her shoulders and then turning back to him. "I've got some plans, though," she added with a smile. "And I think it's just a matter of work and sweat before I've got something to show for myself."

Xavier nodded. "What are you doing now?"

"I'm in law school. Second year."

"Really." Xavier said and his eyebrows went up. "A good friend of mine used to go to Northwestern. I've met a couple of guys from there. Maybe you know some of them."

"Sorry. I'm at the University of Chicago."

Xavier shrugged. "Northwestern's pretty big anyway. The chances that we would have known the same people are pretty slim." He smiled. "I suppose 'do you know whoever' is just one of those things people say when they don't know the person they're talking to."

"I did that all the time when I first moved to Chicago," Cleo said with a laugh. "I guess it gives people a chance at having a conversation?"

"Most definitely," Xavier said and looked at her for a few seconds. "I imagine you must be coming back from a Christmas vacation, eh?" he added, a smile still on his face. "If I'm not getting too personal, where you from?"

"Boston," Cleo said. "Actually near Boston. I'm from Hopkinton, which is a small town close to the city, and where they start the Boston Marathon. There isn't much to see there really."

"Your family is there, aren't they?"

"Sure, they're the reason I go home," Cleo said. "Outside of my parents and brother, though, Hopkinton doesn't have a whole lot to offer. I mean you can go into Boston and hit the bars, but it's been almost six years since I spent any kind of serious time there. You probably know how it goes. You got on at Buffalo, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I imagine you've fallen out of touch with most of your friends from high school

and even college.”

“Most of them, yeah.”

“So, when you go home, you see your family, maybe see a couple of old friends, go out to a couple of bars and talk about old times, right? You look around at people you used to know and you find yourself thinking about them in ways that remind you of your high school or college days. Of course both you and they have changed a lot since then, but you don’t know how they’ve changed and they don’t know how you’ve changed, so you don’t know what to talk about. Right?”

“That makes sense.”

“That happens to me whenever I get back together with my old clique from high school or whenever I see most of my old friends from college,” Cleo said. “I feel like if I start talking about law school or what I want to do with a law degree most of them wouldn’t be able to relate to what I’m talking about, or won’t even care about what I’m saying.”

“So you just rely on old times and movies, eh?”

“Basically,” she said and smiled. “And unless you’re Siskel or Ebert, movies can only keep a conversation going for so long, right?”

“Yeah, I suppose it’s easier to talk to strangers than to talk to people who now just seem strange to you,” Xavier said. “At least they don’t have any preconceptions about who you are.”

“Exactly,” Cleo said, and for a long moment she just looked into his eyes.

“Well at least Boston has good food?” Xavier said, blinking and looking away from her. “At least if you’re hanging out with people you don’t know anymore you can at least enjoy a good meal. You can’t say that in most cities, eh?”

“You sound like you know what you’re talking about.”

“Buffalo might be a pit, but it’s got excellent food.” Xavier said. “Pizza, beef on weck, wings, pierogies, kielbasa and decent beer from Canada. You can’t go wrong with any of that.”

“I’ll bet.”

“I was in Buffalo to see my family, but even if they didn’t live there, I’d still go for the food,” Xavier said. “I mean, Chicago has good eats, but compared to Buffalo, it’s second rate.”

Cleo’s eyes narrowed on him and then opened wide.

“I’m just kidding,” Xavier said with a laugh, and Cleo joined him with something approaching a giggle.

“Look, despite this ridiculous talk about food, I really am hungry. Do you want to get some bad train breakfast with me? I haven’t eaten anything since my Mom cooked up scalloped potatoes and ham last night, and I hate eating alone. Please? My treat.”

Cleo’s smile returned. “I think the dining car is closed,” she said and reached into her bag, pulling out a box of Oreos. “How about some of these, though?”

Xavier nodded and took a couple of Oreos. “Thanks.”

Cleo’s smile got even bigger. “This is about the fastest train trip I’ve ever been on.”

“Sleeping for most of the trip and good company will do that, eh?” Xavier said, swallowing a cookie. “A lot of people avoid the trains because they’re too slow, but for me, there’s something nice about their reliability.” His eyebrows went up. “Yeah, they’re not always on time, but they rarely get stopped by the snow, you don’t have to pay attention to where you’re going, and you don’t have to worry too much about crashing into the ground.”

“You don’t like flying?”

“Not really,” he said, shaking his head. “I fly when I have to, but I pretty much like to stay on terra firma whenever possible. That way if the car or train crashes I at least have a chance of getting out and finding a hospital on my own.”

“But air travel is so much safer. Statistically you have a greater chance of getting struck by lightning than you do of crashing in an airplane.”

“Yeah, and when I went to Europe I got on a plane instead of swimming the Atlantic,” Xavier said. “It’s just the whole idea of crashing and burning, and relying on some pilot I’ve never met, makes me nervous as hell. I know it’s irrational and stupid, but that’s just the way I am.”

Cleo bit her lip and nodded. “Okay.”

“Don’t get me wrong or anything,” Xavier said. “I work in a hospital and I’ve seen up close and personal that cars can do horrible things to people, even with seat belts and airbags. But the difference between a plane and a car is that if a plane has even a minor screw up, you need someone’s assistance to get out. That whole idea of being completely dependent on someone else gives me the willies.”

“So you don’t like relying on others?”

“No, that’s not it at all. Without my housemate’s help, my car wouldn’t even be alive right now. No, it’s just that with planes you see the ground from a few miles up, and at best, people and cars look only as big as very tiny insects.”

“That’s true,” Cleo said. “Flying isn’t too natural unless you’re a bird.”

Xavier laughed. “Yeah, and like I said, if it’s a long way I’ll take my chances with a pilot. I’m not stubborn enough to swim three thousand miles just to get to Ireland.”

Cleo laughed with him when all of the sudden everyone on the train lurched forward again.

“Whoa,” Xavier said, catching Cleo’s upper arm in a firm grip. He steadied her for a second and then the whole train shuddered backwards, slowing down. “Hell of a ride, eh? It means we’re almost there.”

“At least the people outside don’t look like insects.”

“Yeah,” he said, letting go of her arm and looking out the window. “But even with a ground view, I still can’t figure out where we are.”

“You don’t live on the south side?”

“No,” Xavier said as he turned away from the window. “No, I live about seven blocks northwest of Wrigley Field. Share a pretty nice two-bedroom walk-up with a buddy of mine from college.”

“That’s a nice neighborhood, isn’t it?” Cleo asked. “I went to a Cubs game last summer and I remember that there were a lot of cool bars and restaurants around there.”

“Yeah, it’s pretty nice,” Xavier said and laughed. “The neighborhood’s got some interesting characters, but it seems we’ve got some good people living in our building.”

“What’s so funny?”

“Nothing really,” he said, grinning.

“Come on, Xavier, tell me,” Cleo said and poked him in the ribs.

Xavier laughed at her touch and straightened up in his seat, reaching into his jacket and pulling out an envelope. “Just before I went to Buffalo, I got a thank-you note from this new guy who just moved upstairs,” he said, handing the envelope to Cleo. “He moved in just before Christmas, and Dante, my housemate, and I had him and his girlfriend to dinner. No big deal, really, we just wanted to figure out who he was and if we had anything to worry about.”

“So what’s so funny about that?” Cleo asked, examining the normal-looking card.

“Ah, it’s stupid,” Xavier said as he took the card back and looked into Cleo’s eyes.

“Dante and I were just surprised that his guy was so friendly is all. He seemed like your average Joe, and we shot the bull with him and his girlfriend for a couple of hours, just to get to know who we were dealing with. The dinner was nothing special either. Dante whipped up some baked ziti and I bought some decent bread and a good bottle of wine. Bill and his girlfriend,” he paused, his eyes narrowing, “whose name I can’t remember right now, they had a good time, I guess, but the whole thing wasn’t anything amazing and we certainly didn’t deserve

a thank-you note. We just had dinner, nothing else. We were just trying to figure out what to expect from them in the future.”

“Some people just appreciate simple things like being invited to dinner,” Cleo said. “My Dad always says it’s the littlest things that make people happy.”

Xavier nodded and watched the passenger platforms pass by. “I guess my Dad always focused on the bigger issues,” he said, looking back at Cleo as the train coasted and sputtered the last few hundred feet into the yard.

“Nothing wrong with that,” Cleo said. “And nothing’s wrong with someone sending you a thank-you note for dinner, either.”

“Yeah, I know, and I liked the card,” he said, holding up the envelope. “But even after three years of being out of the Northeast, I’m still not used to people being so polite.”

Cleo laughed and stared at him. “Xavier,” she said with a smile. “You’re about the friendliest man I’ve met since I came to Chicago.” She paused, staring into his eyes and examining his face. “I’ve only known you for ten minutes, but I’d send you a thank-you note, too.”

Xavier’s lips twitched up and a long moment passed as he looked back at Cleo. He was about to say something when the train stopped.

The conductor’s voice immediately came over the loudspeaker and said something about watching your step and forwarding connections while a few hundred people reached for their luggage. Xavier picked up his bag as the other passengers started to rush out of their seats. “Walk you out?” he asked as he pulled his stuff together.

“Sounds good,” Cleo said as she finished getting her own things together. She pulled on her coat, zipped it up and handed Xavier his fallen scarf.

“Can I help you with your bags?” he asked, slinging his duffel over his shoulder.

“I don’t have much,” she said as she reached into the overhead compartment and grabbed two very large suitcases. She brought them down with a stifled huff.

“Here, at least let me help you out,” Xavier said as his hand reached down to pick up the larger of the two bags. He pulled up the suitcase slowly and with a tight grip.

“Thanks,” Cleo said, looking away from him. “Do you mind walking me to the cab stand?”

“No problem. I don’t have to be anywhere for another few days.”

Cleo smiled. “So do you have off until Monday?”

“Yeah,” he said as he stepped off the train and helped Cleo down. “I figured I’d need a day or two to recuperate from the train ride and then reacquaint myself with my apartment. Kind of an airlock back to work and real life, if you know what I mean,” he continued as they started walking down the platform. “I don’t like coming back from a hectic vacation and then having to walk right back into work. It’s too much of a rush and I don’t feel like I’ve really relaxed, you know. It’s not good for me, and it’s not good for the patients either. They’re already sick, they shouldn’t have to deal with me being in a crappy mood.”

Cleo stared at him with big eyes. “You work in a hospi...”

“Plus, I need to buy some food, pay my rent and make sure my housemate is alive and still out of jail,” Xavier said, looking past Cleo. “Which way is the cab stand?” he asked as they entered Union Station.

Cleo looked around for a few seconds. “Over there,” she said with a finger pointed to the east side of the station. “That’s where I got a cab the last time I was here.”

“Sounds good to me,” Xavier said, changing his grip on Cleo’s bag. “That’s the way to the El too.”

“Yeah, that’s right,” Cleo said. “Which line do you take to get home?”

“I can take either the Purple or Brown, depending on how far I feel like waiting or walking,” he said and frowned at the broken escalator and the long row of stairs that led up to the cabstand. For a second he took in a deep breath, tightened his grip on the handle of Cleo’s suitcase again and adjusted the position of the duffel bag on his right shoulder.

“You need help with that, Xavier?”

“Only if I start to fall down,” he said with a wink and started up the stairs.

Cleo followed and looked at him from behind, blushing.

When they got to the top, Xavier put Cleo’s bag and his duffel down. “Give me a second, eh?” he asked as he flipped his scarf around his neck and pulled out a wool baseball cap and gloves.

“Of course,” she said, looking through the glass doors at the three cabs waiting for fares. They moved together toward the closest one and Cleo got in as Xavier and the driver put her bags in the trunk.

She smiled for a long moment until she heard Xavier say, “It was nice to meet you,” and squeeze her fingers gently in a handshake good-bye.

She looked up at him.

“Maybe I’ll see you after next Christmas,” Xavier added and let go of her hand.

She swallowed, still looking into his eyes. “Yeah, that would be nice.”

He closed the door for her, waving as he turned away from the cab and headed toward the El.

Cleo frowned as the cab driver asked her where she wanted to go. She shook her head. “Damn it,” she said. “Was he just playing mind games with me? Did he just get a sick thrill out of charming the hell out of me for ten minutes and then leaving me hanging as he walked away?”

The cab driver shrugged and Cleo looked back at Xavier.

He turned around and smiled at her.

She raised her hand slowly and waved to him. “Maybe he’s just a complete idiot,” she said.

Xavier waved back and kept walking toward the El.

**Giorgios Qure-Lacroix Retsinas**

**EACH THING SEEN IS THE PARODY OF ANOTHER**

When I was  
a little boy  
my mother  
told me  
sex is  
dirty  
girls are  
nasty  
and  
pornography leads  
to everything  
bad  
She told me  
communism is  
fictitious,  
Bill Graham  
is  
God's machine gun,  
contentment is  
another form  
of resignation,  
fascism creates  
national identity,  
priests smoke cigarettes  
and drive fancy cars  
belying their inward grief  
She said  
the best pimp  
is a faggot  
and most men are gay  
My father told me  
after six years  
of prison  
you remember  
every pussy story  
ever told  
He said jail is bad  
it's horrid  
rotten  
and unforgiving  
He said  
tempests of fate  
carry inebriated steps  
know spirits hide  
within the unlucky roll of a die

Beware of liars  
They smile their secrets at you  
in roomfuls of confusion  
He said  
don't rely  
on the power  
of disruption  
Use your mind  
but  
be careful  
with your brain,  
America could drive  
anybody out of their skull

New York black as night  
flourishes through the darkness  
devouring all

My mother said  
we are  
crows  
amongst doves  
pacified citizens  
like sheep  
on the hillside  
being led  
to the  
slaughterhouse  
She told me  
people are  
walking time-bombs  
in suit and tie  
selling out  
with blood on their beards  
digesting the world  
with taste so cruel  
it burns their mouths  
She said  
we are here  
to ruin ourselves  
break hearts  
and love the wrong people  
until we die  
We glide like echoes  
as birds dance  
in the sky  
rustling like crisp air  
in a vacant city  
My mother said

love is  
a movement  
incapable of stopping  
at a single being  
passing  
from one to another  
Things do not  
particularly improve she said  
Time  
Dresses itself  
like the son of Simon  
and kisses us  
deep and passionately  
on the cheek  
kidnapping our innocence

**IN A VILLAGE WITH “same thing” THINKERS THEY FORGET THAT THEY ARE  
DIFFERENT AND BECOME LIKE THE PEOPLE THEY TOUCH**

WAVE

The travelers  
are mapping out a book  
crossing over pages  
falling out a window  
sailing through the trees

and calling it

wind

DISCOVERY

The searchers  
are lost in the caverns  
The friends  
in the city limits

HEARTACHE

The mothers at home  
worried  
about the sound  
falling from the sky

INFLUX

The vehicles  
toothed in their severity  
plod the highways  
cascading into pools and fields

BILLOW

In contrast  
sits a whole town  
of strange hands  
in a pink evening  
of chemicals

## MODEL

A bare harvest  
from an old season  
is this new depression  
that sinks a town of sidewalks  
deep into the ridge

## APATHY

Where she said her name  
and no one wrote it down

## HOPE

The Moon Maids poured more  
milk and cream and alcohol  
filling with faith  
the forms of  
no rest  
in the sticks

## JEOPARDY

Where everything is reversed  
The television is replaced with the dinner table  
and the answering of questions  
with the questioning of answers

## INSIGHT

A suggested format  
Applicable to law and science

“Judge a man by his questions  
rather than his answers”

They did not know all the answers  
But they knew what questions were being asked

## POWER

The rich tongues  
of broken creatures  
bored out of their minds  
drunk in their ranges  
and called it youth

## **EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL**

I like getting high.

I *do* coke.

I eat macaroni and cheese out of the box.

I was a vegetarian.

I don't watch TV.

I cheat on my girlfriend.

I don't believe in psychology.

I know God exists.

I think Jerry Falwell is the Antichrist.

I've fucked girls on their period.

I've kissed a killer, once.

I've been to jail, twice.

I cry.

I'm bipolar.

I'm fine.

I read a lot.

I smoke cigarettes a lot.

I don't have a lot of friends.

I have cash in fuck-you quantities.

I think love is sexy.

I think a love affair is sexier.

I have a compulsive need to buy nice shoes.

I lost my innocence around seven.

I'm not good with time.

I'm not good in math.

I think literature is worthless.

I don't believe in addiction.

I don't believe people are born gay.

I wish I had a better relationship with my sisters.

I've slept with my brother's wife.

I am a liar.

I think lying is fun.

I prefer print pornography over video.

I hate working.

I can't sing.

I don't gamble.

I steal money.

I like nasty girls who don't say no.

I'm still in love with my ex.

I masturbate daily.

I'm afraid of the old man in my complex.

I lied on my job application.

I'm sick.

I do stupid things.

I don't use condoms.

I drive drunk.

I mainline.

I bumped lines with Cate Edwards in the Dark Room on Ludlow & Houston.

I'm afraid of never being loved.

I can't see very well out of one eye.

My glasses are too big for my face.

My parents aren't cool.

My jokes aren't funny.

My concepts have no meaning.

My unwavering devotion to my ideals often reaps poor results.

I have an undying interest in a girl named Jacqueline Elizabeth McCormick.

## Harold Rodriguez

### FONT OF MY FAMILY...

Beneath a desert of hardened talcum powder, cracked by years of dust and neglect, the font of my family sat with all the quiet dignity of a dried well. It had spent over a decade holding silent vigil on the second wooden step of a rickety fifty-year-old ladder. This moldy, worn ladder served as impromptu shelf and denizen of the bathroom's dark, forgotten corner.

It was a typical Saturday morning, and my mother woke my brother and me, as she usually did, with the sound of salsa and her singing. I complained then with all the vehemence of a rebellious teen, but there has never existed so sweet a sound as my mother's rhythmic lullaby sung in time with the music she taught me to adore. But I digress.

My brother and I normally shared the chores in our room, leaving the rest of the two-bedroom apartment to be divided among the three of us. My mother handled her own room and part of the living room (wisely not trusting her sons *not* to break anything valuable), my little brother was in charge of the bathroom and our birdcage (shitty jobs that fell to he who was the lowest on our familial totem pole), and I was in charge of the all-important kitchen and the living room floors (which I hated doing with all the blazing hot intensity of a thousand suns).

I was on my way to the bathroom, to use it, though honestly to gain a secret seated reprieve from the insurmountable mountain of dishes I had yet to even put a dent into, when I walked in on my mother telling something to my brother. I did not hear much of it above the omnipresent salsa that echoed rapidly from each and every corner of my home. But my little brother held something in his hand, something he must have discovered in his cleaning, that he smiled at.

It was the pale, sickly, pea-soup, yellow/green color that modern hospitals reject as too painful for sick eyes to endure for very long. It could not have held more than a gallon of water, if that much, as its slightly melted sides, curved in and resembled in shape, if in no way else, a discarded bed pan from the early 70s.

But as my brother held it in his little hands, my mother began to stroke his back as she spoke Spanish to him. Why would they look so lovingly at such an ugly thing? Why would they waste what time I could have spent sleeping, on the viewing of a piece of plastic? It was when my mother began to sing that I remembered, as one would a year-old dream, and I finally saw this plastic *thing* for what it really was.

*My mother had bathed my little brother's infant form in this half-melted plastic mold. She had held him upright with one hand, and splashed lukewarm water on his round soft belly with the other. Singing away his fears of the sweet scented water, caressing a smile from him whenever her singing required a bit more oomph to be a suitable distraction. Here she was not the strong, unbending, merciless woman the world knew her to be. Here before this altar of plastic she bathed her infant son with all the grace and gentleness of a young master in the art of being a mother. Here she did not let the world enter or disturb us. This world, no matter how humble it may have been, was hers to create and shape to her will. Here via these soft ministrations my brother would learn to trust her despite his fears, and love her all the more for their dispelling.*

*Here was only for her, only for him, and when she smiled at me and asked me to hold him and help, then it became only for us. Here he would daily reaffirm the bond I shared with this beautiful and patient woman. And as she had me hold him up, we would reaffirm the bond of brother with each other. She was preparing to wrap him in a towel and bring him to his warm soft baby-smelling clothes, when I looked at him.*

*I looked at him as if for the first time, and he was not even aware that I was there. His little round face, balanced precariously on a neck that seemed almost too weak to hold his round, soft, bald head, was bent in concentration. In his blessed innocence, he reached five small, pudgy fingers around the tepid stream that fell from our shining steel faucet like a wondrous waterfall. His little hand closed slowly around its little, crystalline cascade, and he laughed aloud as the splash of its passing ran through his tiny fingers and sprayed him miraculously in the face. He looked at me with a toothless smile and laughed again before bending his face once more in concentration, attempting to capture the flowing, lukewarm water from this metallic wellspring in his hand again.*

*I turned to see that my mother had long before retrieved my little brother's towel and stood behind me in equal wonder at his innocent exploration of one of the worlds most basic laws. He looked at us both when another lukewarm mist rose from his little fist and he laughed aloud in our direction, sharing with those he loved what marvel of the world he had just uncovered.*

*My mother sang her lullaby as she took him from the plastic, and I washed this marvelous vessel reverently before putting it back on its appointed pedestal within our wooden bathroom shelf. Located secretly in the darkest, coldest corner of our little bathroom, for where else would such a treasure be kept from the world? And it became my job to get, wash, and then put it back, with every bath my mother and I gave him.*

I returned to the realm of the living with a start as my mother ended the story of how she used to bathe him in that little plastic tub. She smiled at me with that mother's smile, and she said that I too had been bathed in this little tub. Though my brother and I had forgotten, my mother cherished this hunk of plastic for all the moments we had shared as a family within it. And for another wondrous instant in time. . . we all stood in saddened silence, paying homage to what we may have outgrown, but within whose plastic boundary the foundations of our love, of our trust for one another, had been laid. In silence we marveled at this dried piece of plastic that served as the font of our family.

**Anele Rubin**

**IN THE LOCAL FLORA SECTION OF THE BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN**

A squirrel drops its acorn from a tree down beside me.  
I hear the cars going by on Eastern Parkway.  
A cardinal darts from pine to pine.  
A bee lands on a Black-Eyed Susan's center.  
Leaves are stirring and trunks are still.  
A fat grey rat runs across the path.  
The water in the stream is scummed.  
The ferns lean and flutter.  
The real ground is hard and pale brown.  
There are dead leaves and new blades of grass.  
I am here on a log and it almost doesn't matter.  
Yet in truth a piece of me  
is following each of my children  
and each of the siblings I worry over  
and a part of me  
is wrapped around my husband's heart  
and a part of me  
is looking over my shoulder  
for the shadow of my mother.  
Yet my body like an empty cicada shell  
hunches forward, motionless here,  
as my eyes roll for pleasure  
in this dirt strewn with last year's life  
and that bird, unseen, is singing  
what I want to say  
in a tone I will never acquire.

## WHO CARED FOR THE ANGELS?

Who cared for the angels when they lost their silken threads,  
their dear little minds, the “if A, then B,” who  
washed their faces and turned them to the east  
and lit their candles and combed their hair  
in the somber silence? Did anyone  
show them how to fold their hands  
for the Feast of Wings, how to beat their wings  
against the bright morning air as haloes shone,  
or was it hallucination, the image of divine  
protection? Were they really always  
on their own like the sparrows and hummingbirds, like the girl  
at Mandeville with crimson wrists?

(Mandeville is the common name for Southeast Louisiana State Hospital, a mental health facility.)

## ON THE CORNER

A woman stands on the corner of Grand Street,  
tired and not sure how to get home.  
She's not the only one with yellow teeth  
or wrinkles around the mouth or memories,  
and the sun is descending behind the buildings.  
*We're still on the earth! We're on a planet!*  
She's laughing and a man passing  
thinks she's a lunatic and hugs  
his briefcase to his chest.  
But it's evening in the city  
and little birds are clustering  
in what trees there are, clinging  
to crowded branches,  
their beaks too full of song,  
bursting. Suddenly she notices  
a certain place where the concrete is cracked,  
a familiar mark that always reminds her  
of the way very young children draw people  
without trunks, limbs sprouting  
from big round heads. Now she remembers  
where to turn. She's not the only one without  
a sense of direction or to whom happiness comes  
sometimes like a sharp pain.

## Morgan Schulz

### NIC CONSUMED

Nic was what he ate three weeks ago. He told Jean as they walked down Avenue A. She laughed. She said he thought too much. He did, but not about what she thought.

He told Jean, “No, really. I’m what I ate three weeks ago.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” she said.

“Right now, a falafel, and a lot of booze and drugs,” he explained.

“That’s it,” she replied, smirking. “Sure you aren’t packing more down there, Bub?”

“I’m bloated, Jean. . .” he said. “My skin’s puffy. I’ve been hanging out too much.”

“With me,” she said. She gave him a big shove.

Nic’s stomach rumbled. Then groaned.

Jean punched his arm. “Hungry,” she said.

“What time is it, anyway,” he said. He rubbed his wrist, where his watch used to be.

Jean’s face lit up with annoyance. “Buy a fucking watch,” she said.

“Your watch, your time,” he said. “Not mine.”

“You’re fucking looped in the head,” she said. She looked at her watch. “It is. . . sometime after twelve.”

Jean thought she’d got one over on him, but Nic preferred knowing the general time. In New York, he thought, time’s pretty irrelevant. All you need is a reference.

“Let’s go to 7B’s,” he suggested.

“Why,” she replied. “So you can sit and stare at all the NYU cunts, pretending you’re one of them? You’re fucked and you know it. A loser just like me.” She stomped a black steel-toed boot on the ground.

“Punk rock, Jean, punk rock. Right, right,” Nic said, rolling his eyes. Jean didn’t notice. He wondered how she couldn’t notice. He barely hid it anymore. “Let’s go anyway. I want to hear that song by The Fall. . . L-L-L-A-A-A. . . That song kicks.”

“Repetitive new wave shit,” she complained.

“Like punk’s not the same shit over and over again,” he said. “I’ll listen to my repetitive shit and you can listen to yours. Besides, the Genesee’s dirt cheap.”

“All right,” she sighed.

“Ahhh. . . poor Jean.”

“Fuck you, pogue.”

“Right, right. Punk rock, baby, punk rock.”

“Oi, Oi, Oi,” Jean yelled, kicking over some trashcans. Next, she kicked a new black BMW. Then, she hop-skipped down the street, fist in the air.

Nic inspected the dent Jean left in the BMW. He kicked the spot again with his heel. He figured he must’ve raised the damage by at least one hundred bucks. The driver would no doubt appreciate the extra cash.

The thing Nic got about Jean was she was in her late thirties and her punk rock husband was dead. A real tragedy, it had been almost three years, but Jean blamed herself. Her almost famous punk rock husband, “Screaming Dick,” doing the glamorous death-by-heroin thing. They were living in London. She knew Dick was spiking. She didn’t stop him. Instead, she stopped herself, thinking if she showed him how to be clean, he’d follow. But, like the few true punk rockers, Dick couldn’t deal with tours and labels and fans and a wife. He wanted to spit on them all, only his mouth ran dry. So, he opted for the long, slow death. Their entire time together, all that while, Dick must have been thinking, When will I finally OD. . . when will this shit end?

Jean returned to New York and had been living off her people around two years, when she spotted Nic at 7B's. She liked his angry look, she said. He looked pissed off at the world. They hit it off instantly. Nic was in transition, the oddest place for him, the time he felt most schizophrenic. Or manic-depressive. Maybe both, Nic really couldn't be sure. He didn't have a death-wish, though, not like Jean, at least. But he wasn't looking at the bright side of things exactly. Not at the moment. What anchored him was he knew where he'd been and where he was going. The grating, high-pitch hum in his head, the sunk, empty feeling in the pit of his stomach was a feeling. It would pass.

Nic got into his part, immersing himself in his role—the transitional, in-limbo loser, down and out on the streets of NYC. Jean became his tour guide to every hole-in-the-wall, every dive, every after-hours with vinyl couches and makeshift, linoleum bar tops. He met lots of Jean's people, people who knew her or pretty much were her. Speedballing was his favorite mode of travel. Something about finding the right balance. He and Jean went for days at a time. A week once.

Nic liked to think, too, that he'd always had a taste for the decadent. Some things simply had to be gained through a certain kind of experience. Then again, he thought. Some things not.

The problem was, within a couple of months, Jean turned solely to Nic, as if she needed him and no one else. Her emotional baggage he could weather, sure. The self-destructiveness was a tough haul but so was his and he could handle that no problem. And, true, he had the money to blow, though he kept quiet about how much. The truth was he wasn't staying long, not long at all, but he kept that quiet too. He should've been freer. He wasn't. He was stuck. Jean attached herself to Nic more and more, to the point he felt she depended on him entirely. Not a feeling he liked. Her dependence.

At first he ignored the obvious, that he'd become Jean's only people, but after a few months, he could no longer ignore the fact. Increasingly, she set his teeth on edge. He felt cloying inside, like a fist clenching in his gut. Nic tried distancing himself, getting out on his own. The problem was Jean was never far. Somehow, night after night, morning after morning, she found him or he her. They were tied together, Nic knew, and he thought he knew why. Simple. He and Jean were momentarily in the same state of mind, moving in concentric circles. Her needs were his. His were hers. It had nothing to do with reliance.

But nothing justified the extent Jean relied on him, Nic thought. For everything. Money. Conversation. Support. She couldn't talk to one of her former people without dragging him over and in the conversation. She couldn't leave a bar without taking him with her to score. Partners in crime, she said. Takes two to tango. Two losers sharing a season in hell. She gave a lot of reasons. She knew a lot of expressions.

All of which might have been true, Nic admitted to himself. Nothing changed the fact though. It had been maybe six months and for the last month or so, he was sick to death of her. It was as if Jean's every word, every gesture were words and gestures he knew by heart. He wanted to shake her, slap her, break her out of the routine of her with him. . . He couldn't. He couldn't face that much confrontation. So he kept it in, which made things worse. When he heard her voice now, he cringed. When he saw her, he wanted to run.

The fact was by this point Jean disgusted him. The fact was too self-evident, now especially, now with the end this clear in sight. He was leaving and now he could be honest. To himself at least. About Jean. She was a parasite, plain and simple. Not just to him. To all her people. She used him. She used them. How could she stand it, Nic wondered. Living off people. Using.

A junkie's for life, Nic realized. A junkie's always in need.

And what about her, he concluded. Look at her. The scarred face. Gashes on her wrists. Spiked, unwashed dirty blonde hair. Crooked blue cow eyes. Her get-up. What a costume. What a role. This used-up woman acting the young punk chick. She was played out. Used up. How could she stomach it, to herself most of all.

Nic could no longer remember how he first saw her, the time in 7B's when she approached him, drunk and sloppy, telling him, "Always look them straight in the eyes, kid. You've got the stare. Hard as nails. Use it. Oi, oi!"

Yeah, punk rock, Jean, Nic thought to her thrashing form ahead. She moshed in the middle of the block, spitting punk rock anthems. As if anyone cared. And to think, Jean actually thinking she was doing some real damage, some real anarchic shit by kicking that BMW. What she didn't appreciate, no, what she didn't want to think about was the owner had to have insurance. A brand new BMW, come off it, already. The owner would get a high estimate, get it fixed dirt cheap. A fat cat just got fatter.

That's the problem with punks, Nic decided. Especially used up ones. They never see past their own destructiveness. If they did, they wouldn't be punk. And then where would that leave them... where would that leave Jean....

#

Nic and Jean walked into 7B's. 7B's was crowded like normal and, as usual, filled with NYU kids and East Village holdouts from the 1980's. Jean immediately circulated, locating, as she always did, her now former people. Wouldn't be long before she'd have a drink in one hand, a cigarette in the other and a bag of blow. Blow... Not tonight, Nic thought. He was through with blow, speedballing... with drugs period. At least for a while. He'd had his fill, and for his next stop he planned more or less to return to his old self. Drinking would be enough.

Nic hung on the jukebox, selecting "L.A." by The Fall. He threw in a couple of old punk songs as a gift to Jean. Tonight was the night. He was feeling generous.

Nic spotted an empty seat at the bar. He sat between two pale-skinned, darkly made-up, dark-haired girls. The pint of Genesee came and he pounded it. He glanced left then right. The two girls were ignoring him. He ordered another pint and a shot of Maker's. The Maker's he shot, slamming the shot glass on the wooden bar top. He didn't look for Jean. He knew. She'd find him.

The Fall came on. Nic jiggled a little in his seat, raising his pint high in the air, mouthing the letters, "L-L-L-A-A-A..." One of the girls next to him giggled. The girl to his left. He looked over. They touched glasses and drank. She drank Genesee too. It was cheap. They talked more. He'd heard it all before. Her name was Lisa. A junior at NYU. Film major. She related further information. Her view on life, who her friends were and weren't and why. He even got her phone number. Already, however, Nic could tell an invitation wasn't in the cards for the night.

The usual deal, Nic knew. Wait and call and show interest like he was really into her. Maybe he was. He kept talking with the best intentions. His view on life, the type of people his friends were and weren't and why. Lisa's eyes shined. She nodded enthusiastically.

It was some kind of bonding, if not the kind Nic was after.

Lisa excused herself to go to the bathroom, telling him she'd be right back. As she rounded the back of the horseshoe bar, Jean slid around the back of Nic and sat in Lisa's seat.

"You're getting nowhere and you know it," she said. She always looked him dead in the eye when they talked. He always looked directly back. She'd told him too many times to use his eyes and fuck them if they can't take it. He steeled his eyes. Jean didn't flinch.

"I don't know, Jean," he said. "You know, I sort of dig her."

“You won’t call, because by tomorrow you’ll have forgotten already why you wanted her. All you’ll remember is that she wouldn’t go home with you tonight.” Jean took a long haul off her drink. Nic fell silent, knowing she was right about tomorrow. He sloshed around the little bit of Genesee left in the bottom of his glass.

“Fuck it, man,” she said. “Punk rock. They can’t fucking hang.”

“Right, right,” he said. “Then let’s get out.”

On the street, Nic asked Jean the time. She told him it was still after twelve and to stop doing the countdown. He told her he couldn’t help it. It was necessary. She said he was fucking looped in the head.

##

They went to one of Jean’s favorite haunts, The Bank, a nightmarish vault of goth heads. She got them in for free as always. The behemoth bouncer waving them in was one of her former people. Inside, Jean left Nic alone on the dance floor, off to see her former people, Simon.

Nic danced, waving his arms around, imitating the goth heads around him. He liked the music. He liked to dance, even if tonight he felt more like an imitation. Before long, he saw Jean weaving slightly back towards him.

“Simon’s in residence,” Jean said, spilling some of her drink on her black tee shirt with sleeves ripped off. On the front was a pink silhouette of her dead Screaming Dick in the shape of a penis, all a blur. “How much should we get?”

Nic dug in his pocket. He counted out five twenties.

“Right!” Jean said. She kissed him on the cheek then swaggered off.

Nic swirled around the dance floor, doing the Robert Smith Cure dance. A girl with a spider web tattooed to the side of her face swung in to sashay with him. He revolved out of her way, nearly getting kneed by a guy with a crow’s face, lunging with his knee in the air.

Jean took too much time to return as usual.

“C’mon, luv,” she said, smoking a cigarette. “It’s already cut. We’ll use the back room.”

Nic studied her face. The heavy mascara bleeding at the edges. The twisted mouth. The crooked nose and crooked lips. The latticework of fine white scars on her cheeks and forehead from when she OD’d and crashed through a glass table. The thick, purplish scar at the right edge of her upper lip. Dick did that, Jean had told him. How many times she’d told him. He’d never forget.

“You go ahead,” Nic said. “I’m into dancing right now.”

Jean gave him a long, piercing look, flicking her cigarette. Shrugging her shoulders, she weaved her way back to Simon in some far off back room. Nic watched her disappear. He moved to the bar, ordering a Stoli and cranberry. He slammed it, then ordered another. Almost time, he could feel it. Bauhaus played. *Bela Lugosi’s dead*. . . Nic closed his eyes. . . He was in a cage, clawing the bars, a caged animal screaming to get out. Rail thin, black hair spiked, Nic clung to the bars, feeling his skin turn to wax, melting off his bones, seeping on the black iron cage floor. . .

The bartender asked him if he was okay. Nic opened his eyes and told her he was “entranced.” She said, “Oh,” turning to serve someone else. Nic faced the dance floor. The floor crowd had thinned. A few people filed out the front door exit. He looked around one last time for Jean, but she was still far away. The opportunity was now, Nic knew. Now was the time to go.

Nic made his way confidently to the exit. On the way out, he bumped into the behemoth bouncer. He expected the worst, cringing in anticipation of steel fingers on his shoulder, on the

back of his neck... What he got was a pat on the back hard enough to make him stumble. The behemoth bouncer waved him off. Of course. How could Nic forget. He was one of Jean's former people.

The coke would be his final gift to Jean, Nic decided. No one knew he was leaving. He told no one. There was no one to tell but Jean. He hadn't the heart to tell her. Jean. . . Jean, he figured would be upset awhile, but then she'd be fine. She was a survivor. After all, she always had her former people.

Only now they wouldn't be former. She'd be back to where she started exactly when he met her. As would he.

They'd both be better off.

She'd be fine.

So would he.

###

Three months later, the day it was due to run out, Nic called his old voice mail number. There were eight new messages. The first message was from Jean. She worried about him, wanted to know if everything was all right, if he'd lost it, or was just on some kind of mega binge. He skipped to the third message. Jean's voice pleaded in his ear. She sounded upset, asking why he hadn't returned her calls. In the seventh message, she said, her voice sounding distant, "I'm leaving. Going to Connecticut. Found somebody to take care of me." In the last message, she said, "Anything's better than this shit."

Nic hung up the phone thinking Connecticut wasn't very punk rock.

**Sarah Shapiro**

**THE THINGS I SAW (FOR VENEZUELA)**

Green on top of green  
A brown hand hanging  
From a bus window.

Garbage, piles of it  
Left to die  
On the side of the road.

A man walking against  
Traffic in a dark tunnel.  
Another man eating food  
Directly from the garbage.

I gave him half my sandwich.  
I took a picture of the hand.

People stacked into a bus, screaming  
At the driver. Him threatening  
To kick them off.

And the rain.  
How it came out of nowhere  
Like a sickness, wet  
Amidst the firecrackers.

Mud amidst the catcalls  
On the streets.  
And it was so green.

Houses flicked into the air  
That landed next to eight  
Palm trees and an entire  
Woods of fauna.

Houses without glass windows,  
Just bars open for air.  
Animals. Dogs, cats, horses, one ox  
And an old lady,

Shrouded in white,  
Sitting on a red plastic chair.  
Small, wrinkled, shivering back  
And forth waiting  
For the bus to come.

## THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT YOURSELF

1.

Among the throng of moving people,  
Pushed together in the crowd  
The only one looking up was you

2.

A hand rests beside  
The lamppost on the corner  
Where you and he used to meet

3.

I don't know which is worse  
That you left  
Or that you still question why

4.

The awful smells waft in your window  
You deserve it  
But your wrist is so alluring

5.

There is an unseen weakness  
In your cheekbone  
There is something in your smile  
That is not right

6.

Hair tussled against a bed-sheet  
He had no comb  
It is seventy degrees and  
Pollen gets in your eyes

7.

Is it possible to change your breath  
When with somebody else?  
You used to sneeze three times,  
With him, only twice.

8.

And this is nice  
And so poetic  
Using numbers to count your pain

9.

What kind of animal sits  
On your window  
Scratching to be let in?

10.

Don't keep your demons  
In the closet  
They don't become you

11

You little child,  
Your pretty smile  
Your windblown hair  
You'll never get it

12.

I hope your heart is  
Just as sweet

13.

You talk like some version  
Of a creature  
Touched by solitude  
Who will never know love.

**Michael Sohn**

**HAPAX**

**[This work appears on the following eight (unnumbered) pages.]**

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## **Michael Sohn & Wayne Berninger**

### **SCHOOL DAYS QUIZ**

#### **Michael's Quiz**

1. Big Bellybutton has an unexpected skill in the classroom. What's that skill? Does that change how the Teacher treats him?
2. Picked on at recess, Big Bellybutton had something up his sleeve, actually in his pocket. What was it? What did he do with it? How did people react?
3. Big Bellybutton and the bully have it out, finally. How do they have it out? In 2-3 sentences, describe their final fight. What did the little boy think of all this?

#### **Wayne's Lining**

Big Bellybutton has an unexpected skill in the classroom. What's that skill? Does that change how the Teacher treats him? Picked on at recess, Big Bellybutton had something up his sleeve, actually in his pocket. What was it? What did he do with it? How did people react? Big Bellybutton and the bully have it out, finally. How do they have it out? In 2-3 sentences, describe their final fight. What did the little boy think of all this?

## The Reversions of Michael

1.

Big Bellybutton unexpected  
that  
skill? how  
Teacher  
recess,  
sleeve, actually  
What was it? What did he do with it?  
Big Bellybutton  
bully out, finally. How  
In 2-3 sentences,  
fight. What  
little boy this?

2.

Big  
that  
  
sleeve, actually  
  
out, finally.  
What  
little boy this?

3.

that

this?

### Coda

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**Robert Donald Spector**

**MEMORIAL**

All is quiet in my garden  
Birds no longer gather there.  
Somehow they've come to realize  
How dangerous the cats have been  
To all the creatures of their kind.  
Perhaps their absence signifies  
Silent tribute to a friend  
Who perished there not long ago.  
I'd like to think that it was so.

## **MY ACHING LEGS**

As I walked to the station this morning,  
I was sad to learn that my legs were gone.  
Every muscle cried out in great pain.  
The joints would never again be the same.  
In the days when I ran cross country,  
Those legs and I were the best of friends,  
And we worked very well together,  
Yet they were suddenly betraying me,  
At the young age of eighty-three.

## NATURAL GARDENS

Why is it we look down at dandelions?  
Weeds, after all, are nature's flowers.  
Crab grass is as green as grass itself,  
And yet we treat it as a heinous growth.  
With such views as these, it's plain to see  
The kind of gardener that I must be.

## **RECALLING WHITMAN**

I hear America singing,  
But all I hear is a dirge.  
The values I'd learned to love  
Are drowned in the sounds of war,  
Lost in imperial gestures.  
I long for the songs of Whitman,  
A music dear to the heart,  
The most soothing orchestral tones  
To please a patriot's heart.

**Mike Traber**

**CITY PARK**

Strips of green and brown  
Pets on a string

Bits of buns  
Butts, Gum  
under chairs

Strips of grey and  
Stained statues,  
Pigeons walking  
waddling like two-leggeds

Did their kind think  
if food getting is easier  
where no cliffs or canyons are  
hawks would not come

I see  
I soar to a new skyscraper  
I somersault  
swoop like a two-legged's dive bomber

They scream

I eat dog meat

## NEW YORK VOICES

Squatting behind a bush  
sipping the caw in coffee  
waiting for the hawk to rise

Crows mob the tree  
“Caw, caw, caw  
Gra, gra, gra”  
One predator in a neighborhood  
is one predator too many

Walkers of the daw in dog  
leave Central Park,  
the hawk ascends  
beyond grey clouds,  
leaving the meek  
to inherit the earth.

**Lewis Warsh**

**NIGHTMARE ALLEY**

I think I owed you  
something  
I couldn't give.

The garbage trucks  
stop & the garbage men  
empty the cans.

The words  
reverberate in someone  
else's head.

An airplane  
on the runway  
going up in flames.

\*

A cherry tree  
might hang

precariously

from the infrastructure  
of a tenement window

without  
fear of falling

on the head  
of a passerby

\*

The Parable of the Wayfarer  
The Song of the Retrobate

financial services  
& health care

(soaps, body  
oils, bath salts, creams)

demagogues who treat  
people like servants or  
babies

the spectacle of clouds  
mounting the horizon

the flowers abandoned  
in the dust on  
Highway One

\*

It was hard to believe that things had become  
so bad made it easier to believe that precognition not  
to mention love had drifted so far off the map  
you had to dive beneath the surface before you came up  
with anything edible.

\*

I'm sorry I offended you  
for offering money  
at this time of day

Fire & water are elements  
but it was our anniversary  
& the glass was empty

\*

A bridge over a swamp leading to a house  
near a lake. We escaped through the emergency  
exit & left town on the next train. The houses  
have gates & lawns & the windows are covered  
with glitter. Names of cities, the fork in the road,  
human voices, original sin. A flag of defiance,  
a hall of mirrors.

\*

Someone I didn't know well  
told someone I didn't know  
at all what I had said, but by the  
time it got back to me  
I had lost the thread

\*

If you wanted to give me something, what  
is it? There might be an understanding  
that no one was home. An icy road, maybe, gazing  
outwards, an enclosure.

A young adult novel

about the Sirens on the rocks.  
The stubble on my chin, something  
I lost without thinking.

\*

"Forgive me," the Marquis wrote,  
"if I have presumed to write  
the history of your soul, when  
all I wanted to do was describe it."

\*

She was abducted by men  
in ski masks on her way home  
from band practice

An overly obedient child  
sets fire to the house

No empty packages,  
no existence without anger

\*

"The millions of human beings who were shot,  
tortured, jailed, starved, treated like animals & made the  
object of a conspiracy of ridicule, can sleep in peace  
in their communal graves, for at least the struggle in  
which they died has enabled their descendents,  
isolated in their air-conditioned apartments, to believe,  
on the strength of their daily dose of television,  
that they are happy & free."

\*

The folkdancers are out tonight,  
bathing naked in the dark.

The parking meters & the plums  
nestling in the uppermost branches.

The tenement steps too steep to climb.  
The water in the lake too cold to go in.

\*

For awhile, even love was on sale.  
I passed the store window without  
looking in. A running figure in  
a suit & tie between the headlights.  
Single letters swell across the sky.  
The triumph of reason over myth marked  
the end of Greek art. For awhile,  
even appliances were being sold  
at half-price. I need a new soap  
dish, our clothing looks muddy,  
the colors have blurred.

**Sharman Yoffie**

## **THE GORGE**

It is true that I knew what happened, but it was not I who started it. That should count for something. The priest says that the guilt is mine because I did not try to stop the others. The priest no longer pleases me. He knows nothing. I go to mass only for Francisca.

These Anglos. They think they can live in our town just because they want to do it. This is America, they think, so they have a right to come. We all laugh at them. They act like fools. He helped to dig the arroyo last spring, and she sat sewing with the women. But they can never be a part of this place.

Jim was tall, blonde, not like us at all, with long hair like a woman. Yet he worked like a man. Every day he split wood with a hammer and a wedge. In front of his house there was always a pile of logs. What am I saying? It was not *his* house. It belonged to the other one, the redhead with a beard. For two years we did not see the redhead. He learned that this is not the place for Anglos. So he found another idiot to stay here for him, to guard his house and land. From the start, I could see that he did not tell the new ones what had happened.

Ann was pretty, very pretty. She had long dark hair, shiny and always clean. Every evening Jim walked across the road to fill his water jugs from the tap next to my house. I told him he could use it, but I did not guess he would take so much. She must have washed her hair with it.

Each morning, when I drove the tractor through the field in front of their house, she would be shaking out the rugs. She asked my wife to teach her how one cares for a dirt floor. This did not please Francisca. "Ann thinks that I am an expert, that there are no floors in my house!" she said. Francisca is proud of our linoleum, of how much it cost us. But she remembers when she kept the dust down, how she used to sprinkle the floor with water from a coffee can, how she made holes in the top and shook it. Then she used to sweep it out to make the floor hard and smooth. She told Ann how to do it. Ann did not know how much the women joked behind her back.

Jim was always friendly, very friendly. He wanted me to teach him how to kill the pig in autumn, how to scrape the hairs from the hide, how to boil down the lard, how to smoke the meat. They did not have a pig. Ann did not want to have one, Jim told me. But he wanted to be a man like the rest of us. He came to help Ortiz kill his pig, so we showed him how to do it.

Ann was pregnant most of the time, and it sat well with her. She did not become as fat as Francisca always is with our children, especially the last two. To me, Ann seemed proud, in a good way. She took great care with her clothes. In the late afternoons she and Jim would walk by the Pecos River. He skimmed rocks across the water. He showed off for Ann. She sat on a log and cheered when the stones bounced on the river. They would shout to me when they passed in the fields, "Hola, Manuel!" It was like they were always on vacation, a honeymoon. They had no crops, no animals. He smoked a pipe sometimes for hours. He would sit on a big chair in the shade by the side of the house. Sometimes he would read or write in a notebook, like the ones we used in school. Often I asked myself, what is he thinking? Why does he sit without working?

According to Francisca, they had no pride. They took food stamps from the government. That was the reason they drove once a week into Santa Fe and returned with

bags of food. How else did they pay for it? They used to wash their clothes in Santa Fe. They would carry the basket of clean laundry from the flatbed of the pick-up when they returned to El Barranco.

These men around here, they drink too much. Sometimes when they said they would force the Anglos out, I would say to them, "Leave them in peace. What have they done to you? And Jim helps us with the arroyo. He is strong and he digs well. Leave them, leave them in peace." But soon, I was fed up with the couple. To me they did not matter.

She thought she could do anything in front of a man. Ah, but she does not know how fat Francisca is, that I am tired of sleeping with my wife. I am still a young man, very virile. My blood runs red and hot. After her baby was born, Ann sat on the couch. She unbuttoned her dress in front of me and put her breast to the mouth of the baby. In front of me, a man who was not her husband! After that, what did she expect I would do?

Jim used to take his truck to the mountains to look for wood. Sometimes it was four hours or more until he returned. I saw her shaking the rugs, with a scarf around her head to keep it clean. Her body was young and thin again after the baby. She called to me on my tractor, "Hola, Manuel!" She was so friendly, such a fool. She believed that if she spoke some words of Spanish, she would be one of us. It was starting to rain. I stopped the tractor and came to see her. Big clouds covered the sun. She was calling her dogs to come in, telling them to come in and stay dry. She treated those dogs like children, better than some people treat their children.

When Ann answered the door, she was smiling. Her smooth hair hung down over her shoulders, and her face was pink. Her house smelled fresh, like damp earth. Beans were on the stove. Their odor filled the kitchen. "Manuel, it's raining!" she said to me without fear. "Come in, Manuel, have some coffee." But I stayed in the doorway. I shook the keys in my pocket with my right hand. The sound of them was like money. Like the sound of a motor, a cold motor, getting warmer.

She told me, "Jim is not here." She probably thought I had come to ask him to help me. To cover my tractor from the rain or to bring in the two cows and my bull by the river. I could not speak to her, the words left me. I stood there staring at her, shaking the keys. She picked up her baby from the cradle by the table and held the child close in front of her.

"Why don't you feed the child?" I asked her, and it was then that she knew why I had come. I wanted to see her open the dress another time. She felt this.

I tried to touch her arm, but she stepped back so that I could not reach her. It made me want to hit her. "Manuel, no!" she said in a high voice. Her face was not as pretty as before. I put my whole hand on her shoulder, and she tried to close the door, but I held it open with my foot. "Manuel, go now. Leave me alone."

I could see that she had fear, and it excited me even more. "What if I do not wish to go?" I asked her.

"You wouldn't want to hurt me in front of my daughter."

And it was true. With the child there, I had to go away and leave her, so I turned to go. I heard her slam the door with force and latch it from the inside. She never came out all afternoon, not to use the outhouse even. After that she never again spoke to me. Jim stopped helping the men from our town. Francisca complained that Ann considered herself too good for the sewing group, that she judged the women, that she never went, not even once, to Mass or to confession. But, of course, Francisca knew nothing about what had happened.

I was sorry to lose their friendly ways, how she would call to me from the porch. The sight of them gave me anger. Why did they come into El Barranco? But the young men, they had more than anger, the kind of hate our priest forbids. "The Anglos are growing drugs!" shouted Eduardo at the Cantina de Luz one night. Why should he care? He always drank more than anyone, and he took drugs too. All the young ones do. The morning before, he bragged, he had cut off the top of Jim's marijuana plants while he and Ann had been in their kitchen. "Jim grows plants in big pots," Eduardo said, "and sets them out to catch the sun every morning on the side of his house that faces southeast." I had seen the plants, but I could not say that they were or were not marijuana. Eduardo said that the barking of the dogs was terrible, but he was fast. He hid behind a tree by the arroyo. It was very funny, he said, the way Jim ran out of the house, with his rifle, like a true cowboy. "That maricón, he watches too many movies!" laughed Eduardo, and all the men in the cantina joined in and laughed with him. I just sat in silence. Ann was the one who had refused me. Jim, well. . . at least he was a man.

Eduardo had a plan, he said, to show those Anglos where they should go. He and the others would tie up the woman and rape her while Jim was away in the mountains looking for wood. A woman like that, they said, was asking for it. They would wreck the house. Maybe they would skin the dog like they had done to the last people and nail the hide of the dog to the door. It would not matter even to the policía because they had no patience for the Anglos either. But I knew that no one would find Ann alone in her house. Since the day she had pushed me away and locked her door, Jim did not travel far without her. And I? I wanted no part of any of it, I told them. "Stay out if you want, Manuel, but keep your mouth shut," they warned me. As if I would betray my own people!

The next week, Jim and Ann drove away to buy supplies in Santa Fe and gather wood. The basket of dirty clothes was on the flatbed. She carried her baby in a sling in front of her. The two dogs tried to jump on the truck, but there would be no space for them, Jim said. "Why not?" Ann asked him. He told her that he would need to fill the space with wood, so where would the dogs sit? I heard him talking as I stood by my own truck across the road. I was working to fix the engine. I saw the dogs disobey him. They ran after the truck. Jim had to stop the truck and shout at them. "Get!" he yelled, and he chased them back to the house.

Later, Eduardo came to see me. He saw that their truck was not there. He smiled at me because he believed, at last, that he and his friends might do the terrible thing. When I told him that Ann had left the house too, he was disappointed. But he was laughing, anyway, as he drove away. He drove very fast down the road and out of my sight.

When Eduardo returned, he was driving like a loco. I saw that he was drunk, very drunk. The back of his truck was filled with boys from our town. They, also, were crazy with drugs and alcohol. It was almost sundown. They were shouting and singing as they arrived at the house. I hid myself behind my own place. I did not wish to participate, whatever was going to happen. Yet I did not want the boys to call me a timid woman. I have five children. I am neither a woman nor a boy.

Two or three of them shot bullets into the air. I heard an animal howl. Ann's dogs had been sitting in front of the door on an old mattress where it pleased them to rest. The small dog almost flew, so no one could hit him. The big one with the very loud bark, the gentle fool I used to call him, he caught the bullet in the side of his body. He ran yelping into the field, trailing blood. The men kicked open the door of the house and entered it. Still, I

hid. This will bring her so much pain, I thought, but it gave me no happiness, no revenge. They had gone too far in killing the dog.

The boys left in perhaps ten minutes. They never knew I had spied on them. I don't think they thought about me at all. I crossed the street and ran into the field where the big dog had fallen down. He was not yelping anymore. Blood was all around him. His tongue was hanging out of his mouth, and he was dead. I left him there and walked back to the house because I wanted to see what the boys had done.

Everything was broken, everything! They had thrown jars of food against the walls, ketchup and a brown sauce, mayonnaise and maple syrup. It was like blood all over the walls. They had spilled out the big bag of dry dog food. They had poured water all over it from the jugs of water. Each piece had swollen. Dishes and glasses and lamps were in pieces everywhere. The baby cradle had been crushed and thrown around the room. Books and papers were torn and scattered. Clothing from the closet had been piled in a heap. A match had been put to it, it was smoking, but the fire did not catch. Everything was too wet from the jugs and containers that had been emptied. The curtains were slashed. Photographs and posters had been torn, strange posters with faces of people I did not recognize. If I had not stepped over everything with care, I would have fallen.

I stayed behind my house for the next two hours with my rifle, waiting for the Anglos to return. Come what may, I decided, I would not permit the boys to do more damage. The sun had set, and the stars were clear in the dark blue sky. Smoke rose up from the chimney in our kitchen. I could hear the children fighting over nothing. Francisca yelled louder than all of them.

The small black dog had still not returned, but as soon as Jim arrived, I saw the creature leap from nowhere and run to them. They were laughing, without worry, and happy. "Oh, good boy! Glad to see us, huh?" said Ann, petting him. "Where is your buddy?" That was when I crossed the street and pretended.

"Something terrible has happened," I told them, "something terrible." They looked at me as if I were telling them a joke. They were amused, they were perhaps glad to be my friend again. Perhaps they hadn't heard me. "People came, and your dog . . . they killed him." Still they seemed not to have heard me. They seemed confused. I walked with them to their house, to show it to them. "I was gone," I lied, "and I do not know who did this."

Jim was totally silent. Maybe he didn't believe me. Ann made a little cry and held the baby more tightly in her arms. She closed her eyes because she did not want to see. She did not weep. She was too shocked for that.

When Jim and I went to see the dead dog, Ann stood at the border of the field. She would not accompany us but stayed in our sight, for fear. Jim lifted him up and carried him to the Pecos. We buried him under the branches of a tree. All the time, Jim never spoke even one word to me.

That night they left El Barranco. They left all of it, just like that. In the morning, the boys came back, to steal things. I, also, took something. The scarf I had seen her wear, in the mornings, when she shook out the rugs to clean them.

## bio notes

**Hisae Aihara** holds an AS in fashion design from Shoin Women's College in Japan & a BS in fashion merchandising management from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. She widened her perspective from fashion to fine art photography when she came to the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, where she will complete her BFA in visual arts in late 2006. / A Professor in the English Department, **Michael Bennett** has taught at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University since 1994. He has published thousands of words, but "Vertigo" (included in this issue) is only his third poem. / **Wayne Berninger** is an alumnus (1992) of the English Department's graduate program in creative writing. His poems have appeared in *The World, Tamarind & Triangle Shirtwaist Fire*. He works as an administrator in the English Department, where he teaches freshman & sophomore courses in writing & literature, edits *Downtown Brooklyn*, designs & manages the Department's website & coordinates academic advisement of undergraduate English majors. He is currently working toward an MLS with a concentration in rare books & special collections. / **Lawrence Bracey-Johnson** is working toward his undergraduate degree in media arts at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. / In the late 1970s & early 1980s, **Allen Brafman** worked in the English Department, first as a teaching fellow & then as an adjunct professor. His work has appeared in *Mudfish, Cut Throat, New Works Review & Skidrow Penthouse*. / **Sonia Mae Brown** is an alumna (2006) of the English Department's graduate program in creative writing. / **Nicole Burns** is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. / **Bruce Chadwick** teaches as an adjunct professor in the English Department. He holds a doctorate in English education from New York University & his current professional interest is writing assessment. His creative writing has appeared in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Cynthia Dantzie** has been teaching since 1964 in the Art Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. Her work has been shown at the Brooklyn Campus's Resnick Gallery, as well as in East Hampton Gallery, St. John's University Gallery, Blue Mountain Gallery & Hillwood Gallery & is represented in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Rose Art Museum, Bard College & the Adirondack Museum. She is author/illustrator of *Stop Dropping BreAdcrumBs on my YaCht* (1974), *Sounds of Silents* (1976), *Design Dimensions: An Introduction to the Visual Surface* (1990), *Drawing Dimensions: A Comprehensive Introduction* (1999), *Antique Pocket Mirrors: Pictorial & Advertising Miniatures* (2002) & *100 New York Painters* (2006). / **José Manuel del Pino** was born in Antequera, Spain. A widely published critic & poet, Del Pino is Professor of Spanish at Dartmouth College. Selections of his poems, translated into English by G. J. Racz, have appeared in several American journals, including *Poet Lore, Seneca Review, Another Chicago Magazine, The Dirty Goat, Thorny Locust & Snake Nation Review*, as well as *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Tiffany Dunbar** is an English major concentrating in creative writing and minoring in Marketing. / **Robert Feinstein** completed his BA in history at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University in 1965. He also holds an MA & an MLS. He has published more than two hundred nonfiction articles, mostly dealing with the history of recorded sound & the U.S. Civil War. See his website at <[www.talkingmachine.org/Bettini.html](http://www.talkingmachine.org/Bettini.html)>. His short stories have appeared in *The Jewish Forward & Hatikvah*. / **Sidney Fink** is an alumnus (1950) of the English Department's undergraduate major program. His work appeared in LIU's now-defunct *Review* in 1950 & 1951. He did graduate work at NYU & graduated

from Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1956. His work appears at <www.jewishmag.com> & in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. The poem “Beloved,” which appears in this issue, was read by Mr. Fink’s rabbi on Yom Kippur in 2005. / A native of Pittsburgh & a member of the women’s soccer team at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, **Christine Gans** is an English major concentrating in creative writing and minoring in gender studies. As a member of the Omicron Zeta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, she presented (along with Meghann McCormick & Giorgios Qure-Lacroix Retsinas) a panel entitled “Plagiarism: Piracy or Creative Imitation/Manipulation” at the 2006 national conference. / **Susan Halio** holds an MEd in TESOL in the School of Education from the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University & a BA in English from Brooklyn College. She is an English specialist in the Higher Education Opportunity Program & edits publications for the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies & Culture in New York, including *Ladino Reveries: Tales of the Sephardic Experience in America* & *The Jews of Monastir*. Susan has taught reading, writing & research strategies across several disciplines & began teaching Core Seminar in 2006. / **Barbara Henning** is the author of six books of poetry & two novels—her latest is *You, Me and the Insects*. She is Professor Emeritus in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University & she presently lives in Tucson, Arizona. / **Mary Kennan Herbert** teaches literature & writing courses at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, where she is an adjunct professor in the English Department. Her work has been widely published in literary journals & other periodicals around the world. Last year a trio of her poems were awarded first prize by poet Stephen Dobyns in a poetry competition sponsored by the Greenwich Village Orchestra. / **John High** is the author of six books, including the award-winning trilogy of novels *The Desire Notebooks* & his recently published selected writings, *Bloodline*. *The Desire Notebooks* was a *Village Voice Literary Supplement* Top-25 Book of the Year & received a starred review in *Publisher's Weekly*. High has received four Fulbright fellowships, two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships & writing awards from the Witter Bynner Foundation, Arts International, Pen West & the Academy of American Poets, among others. He was the first recipient in the Fulbright history to be awarded four fellowships—and the first to receive a fellowship in the field of Creative Writing. His novel *Talking God's Radio* received an NEA Fiction Fellowship. A translator of several books of contemporary Russian poetry, High was the chief editor for the anthology, *Crossing Centuries-The New Russian Poetry*. His most recent Fulbright Fellowship was awarded to work on a new novel, *Ravage*, & to translate Osip Mandelstam's *Voronezh Notebooks*. During the time of his last fellowship, he succeeded in gaining copyright to formerly closed KGB files & in assembling an international team of scholars & translators to prepare an exhaustive study of the poet Osip Mandelstam's life & writing in exile. / **Karen Jasper** holds a BA in Languages & Literature from Bard College & an MS in molecular biology from the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. She is currently studying the Filipino martial art Kali, working in wildlife conservation & preparing for a career in veterinary medicine. Her writing has appeared in *Wildlife Conservation*, *California Quarterly* & in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Sarah Kolbasowski** is working toward her MA in creative writing in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, where she also works as a tutor in the Writing Center. Her poems have appeared in *Downtown Brooklyn*, *Thorny Locust*, *Spia* & *The Caellian*. In 2005, she read as part of the Voices of the Rainbow reading series at the Brooklyn Campus & was a recipient of the

Esther Hyneman Graduate Award in Poetry. / **Meghann McCormick** is an alumna (2006) of the English Department's undergraduate degree program in creative writing. She also majored in political science. As a member of the Omicron Zeta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, she presented (along with Christine Gans & Giorgios Qure-Lacroix Retsinas) a panel entitled "Plagiarism: Piracy or Creative Imitation/Manipulation" at the 2006 national conference. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in creative writing at the The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics of Naropa University. / **Anna-Kay McNally** is working toward her undergraduate degree (major undeclared) at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. / An alumna (2006) of the English Department's graduate program in Creative Writing, **Diane Macaraeg** was the 2006 winner of the Esther Hyneman Graduate Award in Fiction. / **Lindsey Michael Miller** is working toward his master's degree in creative writing in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. His illustrated children's book *The Circus* was published in 2005 by Hickory Tales Publishing. / A Professor in the English Department, **Deborah Mutnick** teaches courses in writing & rhetoric. In addition to occasionally publishing in *Downtown Brooklyn*, she writes about literacy, community-based writing, critical pedagogy & rhetorical theory. / **Steve Newton** taught from 1992 to 1999 as Assistant Professor in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, where he also served as the Director of the Writing Center. He currently teaches English as an Associate Professor at William Paterson University, where he directs the Writing Center. In 2005-2006 he was Fulbright Professor at the University of Graz in Austria. / **G. J. Racz** is Associate Professor of Foreign Languages & Literature at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. He recently completed rhyming, metrical translations of two Spanish Golden Age dramas: Calderón de la Barca's *Life Is a Dream* & Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*. His translations have appeared in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **M. A. Reid** works as a member of the maintenance staff at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. He holds an associate's degree from Rockland Community College & the story "Something Sweet," which appears in this issue, is his second publication. / An alumnus (1996) of the master's program in international affairs at George Washington University, **Joseph G. Reister** serves as an Academic Advisor in the Academic Advisement Center at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. His short story, "The Dangers of Flirting with Strangers," which appears in this issue, is part of *Lost in the Big Picture*, other chapters of which can be read at <http://geocities.com/jgreister/LostInTheBigPicture.html>. / **Giorgios Qure-Lacroix Retsinas** is an alumnus (2006) of the undergraduate degree program in creative writing in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. His minor was media arts with a concentration in photography. As a member of the Omicron Zeta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, he presented (along with Christine Gans & Meghann McCormick) a panel entitled "Plagiarism: Piracy or Creative Imitation/Manipulation" at the 2006 national conference. He attended the Harvard Summer Writing Program in 2006 & is now working toward his master's degree in creative writing in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus. His work has appeared in *Ψιθυροί* [*Whisperers*], *Barcode & Olive Tree*, as well as in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Harold Rodriguez** is a former employee of the Registrar's Office at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. / **Anele Rubin** has taught since 1988 as an adjunct professor in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. Her poems have been published in many literary journals including *River Styx*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Great River Review* & *Paterson Literary Review*. Her first

book, *Trying to Speak*, won the 2004 Wick Poetry Prize & was published by Kent State University Press in September 2005. The poems in Issue #15 of *Downtown Brooklyn* were featured in *Trying to Speak* but have never appeared in a journal. / **Morgan M. X. Schulz** graduated from West Point in 1992 & served three years as a lieutenant in Italy. He earned an MA in English (1998) from UNC Wilmington & completed a one-year writing fellowship with Ernest Gaines & Robert Olen Butler at the University of Louisiana. He began teaching at Hunter College in 1999 & completed an MFA in Fiction at Brooklyn College in 2001. He is currently shopping two completed screenplays & is at work on a novel cycle based on his West Point experiences. He is an adjunct professor in the English Department at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University & his work appears in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Sarah Shapiro** is a graduate student in the department of Communication Sciences & Disorders at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. Her work has appeared in other university journals, including those at Hunter College & Washington University in St. Louis. / **Michael Sohn** worked in the WAC program, taught Core Seminar & taught for many years as an adjunct professor in the English Department—all at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. He recently completed his dissertation on contemporary French poetry at New York University & is now Faculty Development Coordinator & Lecturer in the Brooklyn Campus English Department's Writing Program, where he will serve as Assistant Director for the 2006-2007 academic year. His poetry has appeared in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Robert Donald Spector** has published five books of poetry, twelve scholarly books & 500 articles & reviews & he has edited some 35 volumes. / **Tiffany Toale** is working toward her undergraduate degree (major undeclared) at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. / **Mike Traber** is an alumnus (1974) of the English Department's major program & (1984) of Pratt Institute's master's degree program in Library Science. His poems have appeared in *Anthology, Passagers, Aerial XX, Bellowing Ark, Potpourri & The Raintown Review*. / **Wei Wong** is working toward his degree in pharmacy at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. / **Lewis Warsh** is Associate Professor in the English Department. He is the author of numerous books of poetry, fiction & autobiography, including *The Origin of the World, Ted's Favorite Skirt, Touch of the Whip & Reported Missing*. A new novel, *A Place in the Sun*, is forthcoming in 2007. His work has appeared in every issue of *Downtown Brooklyn*. / **Sharman Yoffie** holds both an MA in Creative Writing & an MS in TESOL from the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. She is now ESL Coordinator & Lecturer in the English Department's Writing Program. Her writing has appeared in previous issues of *Downtown Brooklyn*. Currently, she is working toward her doctorate in Linguistics at the CUNY Graduate Center.

## submission guidelines

A new issue of *Downtown Brooklyn* is published each August. The editors then accept new submissions from September 1 until February 1 for the next issue. We will respond to submissions by early April.

Preference is given to work by students, full- & part-time faculty & campus staff (as well as alumni & former faculty & staff) from the Brooklyn Campus.

You should limit your submission to ten, single-spaced pages of poetry and/or fiction and/or creative non-fiction. Please do not put your name on the work itself, but include a brief cover letter in which you describe your affiliation with the Brooklyn Campus & provide your phone number, mailing address & e-mail address.

Save your submission as a Word document on CD (no floppy disks, please) & place it in the faculty mailbox labeled "Submissions *Downtown Brooklyn*" (English Department, Humanities Building, fourth floor). You may also submit via e-mail attachment. Send to the following address.

`wayne.berninger@liu.edu`

If you are unable to submit on CD or via e-mail, you may also drop off typewritten manuscripts at the abovementioned location.

We cannot return electronic files or manuscripts, so please retain a copy of your submission.

For additional information, visit us online:

<http://www.brooklyn.liu.edu/depts/english/DTB.htm>