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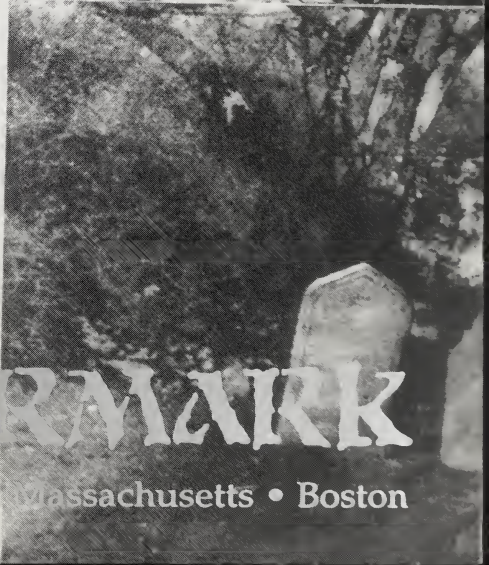
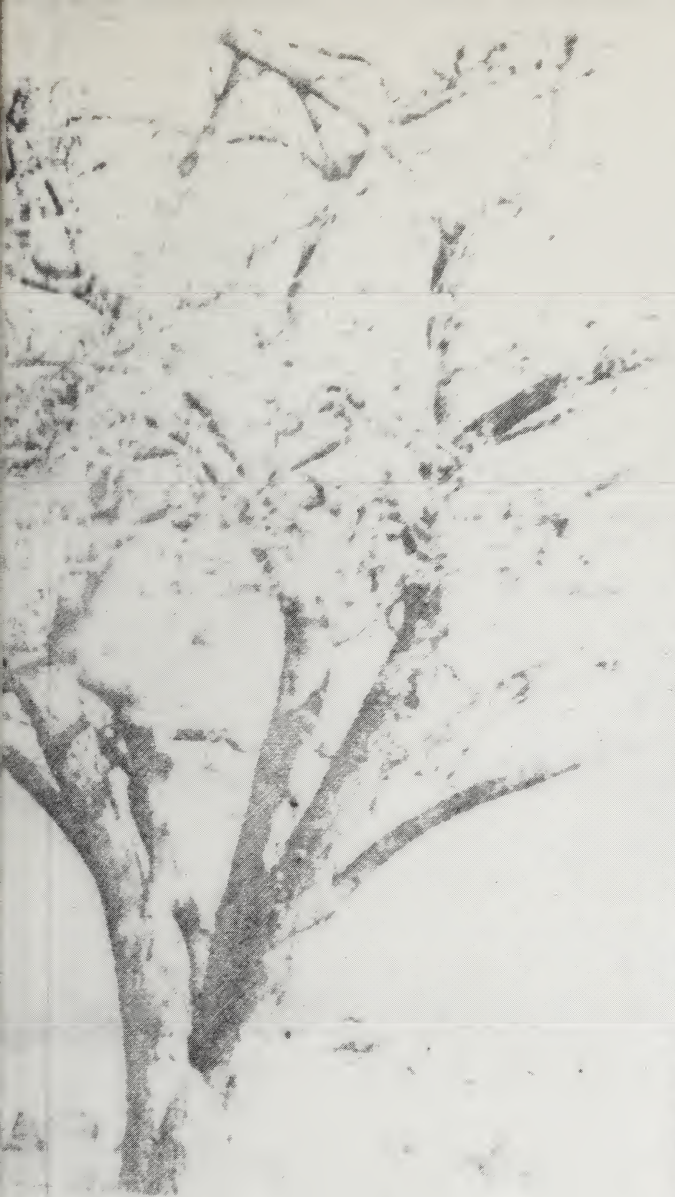


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THE WATERMARK

A Journal of the Arts • University of Massachusetts • Boston



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The Watermark

Volume 5 1997-1998

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Editors' Note

We would like to thank everyone who contributed in the production of this year's edition of *The Watermark*, as well as show our appreciation to those responsible for the journal's success in the past. *The Watermark* is a student-run and funded publication, existing to showcase both the art and writing of UMass Boston students. *The Watermark* is published once a year and is distributed free of charge to the entire UMass Boston Community.

The selections included in the present volume were chosen by an editorial staff made-up entirely of UMass Boston students. They represent what this staff considered to be the best work among the total submitted to *The Watermark* over the course of the year. The selection process was long and difficult and the editorial staff struggled with many of the decisions that had to be made along the way. However, these decisions were necessary to produce what we think is another first-rate edition of *The Watermark*. Those students whose submissions were not accepted for publication this year are encouraged to submit again next year or seek other homes for their work. The selections made are representative of the standards and dispositions of the current editorial staff. Anyone with suggestions or criticisms from which future editions of *The Watermark* might benefit are urged to drop us a line or—better still—join next year's staff and put your own two cents in.

Join *The Watermark* Staff

A journal like *The Watermark* is not an easy undertaking but there are many rewards. Working on *The Watermark* staff provides students with a chance to become involved in the planning and production of a major publication. Anyone interested in joining next year's staff can just drop by the office (M-5-407) or call us at 287-7960. We'd be happy to talk to you or answer any questions you might have.

Submit Your Work

Any UMass Boston student is encouraged to submit work for the upcoming edition of *The Watermark*. General guidelines follow: We ask for blind submissions. That is, only your student ID number should appear on the work. All other information about yourself should be on a separate cover sheet and include your name, student ID number, address, phone number, title of your work and its medium.

Written work must be typed and not exceed 4,500 words. Fiction and non-fiction should be double-spaced and submitted in duplicate. Poems should be typed as you would like them to appear and submitted in triplicate. Please bear in mind that artwork needs to be reproduced and (often reduced in size). Please limit your total submissions to no more than five. Feel free to call us if you have any questions.

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Front and Back Cover

Untitled, photo etching by Joanne F. Desmond

Errata

In last year's edition of *The Watermark*, Patricia Arrington's poem, *Fireflies*, was wrongly attributed to Griffin Urbaniak. *Fireflies* is reprinted in this edition. The editors would like to extend their apologies to both Patricia and Griffin.

Fireflies

They play in the streets
under the nuclear plume
a glowing sunset at mid-day
dusting May-day children
with invisible radiation.

Two days later, they are packed
onto buses with few provisions
for the field trip from which
they will never return.

Their dogs howl, scratching
the closed bus door,
fur filled with uranium fleas.
They turn feral in the fallout
scavenging for food
hunted down and shot
by soldiers.

The children ride off to Kiev
on wheels that contaminate
the road beneath them.
In Chernobyl, their set tables wait for dinner,
their toys will never be rescued.
In each new town,
children taunt them.
Ask if they glow.

Love Songs

There are songs you only love from behind
the wheel of a car, preferably a '78 Pontiac
LeMans, black, with tinted windows. Elton John
was made for backroads. "Rocketman" only feels good
winding around the curves on Bayberry Road or Indian
Lane, doing fifty in a twenty past the blind
driveway and slow children signs. When Indian Lane becomes
Route 138, you can open it up and blast
Pat Benetar all the way to the Town Spa Pizza two
towns over on 27. It's essential to play Tom Petty
when the Pontiac's parked with the windows rolled down
behind Messenger Field in the dark. I love to drive
down 128, early on a Sunday morning, when
the only songs that make sense are
by Journey. "Open Arms" and "Separate Ways"
remind me of high school and parking
behind the American Legion way past curfew on
a Wednesday, and Thursday morning
rush hour needs the opening riff of anything
by the Rolling Stones, and as long as the engine's running,
it doesn't matter if traffic stands still.

Every Summer

We left the beach in a daze, all sunburns and sand,
smelling of dried seaweed and humming
along with Duran Duran. Heading north on 24,
you drove with one hand on the wheel, the other
combing your feathered hair, while I applied
frosted pink lip-gloss in the vanity mirror and pretended
I was the girl on that album cover. *Her name*
is Rio, and she dances on the sand, just like
us. I close my eyes and picture us, two Nagel girls,
twirling down the boardwalk, a blur of purple
satin and bright pink cheeks, and
that never happened. I was too young
to wear blush and too straight
and narrow to twist on the beach, and you
never had a pink convertible, so our hair
never blew in the wind on the way
home from Horseneck or Nantasket or even
Hotan's Pond. Instead, I watched Valley Girl
obsessively painted my toenails
pink and wished I was old enough to drive south
down 24, where you spent every summer
in my mind.

Pink Convertibles

I wish I could still drive
down West Dennis Beach, in the back of a wide-open
Mustang, in a purple maillot and espadrilles
the color of dusk, with the soundtrack playing 80's pop songs
and the sun would eternally be on the verge
of setting, but it would never really
disappear, just sink a little lower in the sky
and rise again, just before it reached the edge. It would
continue on like that forever, rising and falling
but never dipping below the horizon of the beach where everyone drives
a pink convertible that looks iridescent when it's not really
day and not really night. I'd ride with my feet up
in the back seat, and you'd drive
real slow, so all the pink convertibles could stare
at our vintage black Mustang that almost looks
purple in the in-between light, and the drive would take
all summer and the summer would last
forever, and as long as the sun burns the pink convertibles
never leave West Dennis Beach and our purple
black Mustang has nowhere else to go.

Brian Buckley

Child

(Translated from Jiranun Pitbricha's Thai original)

. . . Snuggled one so sleepily soft
O precious one soaking in my sweat

resting on my lap
clinging to my skin

When you hunger and thirst
When you feel sad, lonely, pained

when cruel clouds tremble
I will lighten these

Carrying you in my cherishing arms
Pouring the way into you

filling you up with love
giving my entire soul

If you hurt, I hurt
To soften what may come

in your time of need, I pray
as if our lives were one

As you chew warm, white rice
You grow, following the day

as I feed you, my love
I accompany, following you

Pai, Poyou
Thailand
The end of rainy season
1979

Brian Buckley

black tires and white walls

i shall die in dorchester
on a snow day
at twilight
i will know that i should not have been out
(or should have called)
but how could i stay in
in a moment, in a word, like this

i will be wondering
about time differences
and seasons
and if they will hear
and if they will know
that i was driving
from yesterday

brian buckley is dead
snowflakes still enter broken windows
night still flees the sun's return

Don't Ever Give Up

I saved from the trash
a picture of a pelican being choked

by the frog he was trying to swallow
whole. I thought about

feathers for my head-
dress. I whistled a ballad for

tadpoles and one for
eggs. Dreamt about water and

dreamt about sky, while growing
jealous that I lacked

waterproof wings.
But the captions there

remedied the everything,
that hibernated in the back

of my head. When all I did
was save from the trash

the frog choking the pelican
trying to swallow him whole.

ONCEUPONATIME

Remember that Snow White movie queen
flowing down marble stairs, in that scene
dressed in black? (We'd been waiting through
all those technicolor reds and blues.)
Her cheekbones were angled like wings,
Her eyes wicked and green,
her cape a spreading stain, like sin,
behind her. She held all colors
like a prism, sending out that one cool glint.
You thought of the sinuous grace
of dinosaur necks in Fantasia,
the kiss a rich aunt once gave you.
We waited for her to come back,
to do tricks with magic and mirrors.
We knew we should care for Snow White,
that snubnosed bitch, and whether
she got the prince.
We knew the Queen would want him
like a starfish wants a clam.
We wondered, dazed,
what that seduction would be
as we watched bluebirds, jammed
our sticky fingers into jujubes.

The Moped Ride

Helmetless, over the brow
of Thornton Street hill
in the light of day
(he is forty-eight, I am fifty)
I sit clutching his waist,
my legs hugging the sides,
one foot pointing east, the other west
to avoid touching the street,
the two sisters—my mother and his—
waving us on with astonished smiles
as they had done when
I was six and he was four
on our first merry-go-round
at the beach.

Exhaling Joanna

A drawl that panged a
Tuning fork against my skull.
Twisted knobs inside my cage, so
That I
Could taste a little more. Oily
Resin stained palette,
Printed fingers black as tar.

Rolled into balls on my desk, on the dash—
Curled and pressed against my chest.
Fetal positions.

Scraping brain for solutions to
You,
And I.
Watching yellow lines blink
Quickly, with no
Relief in sight.

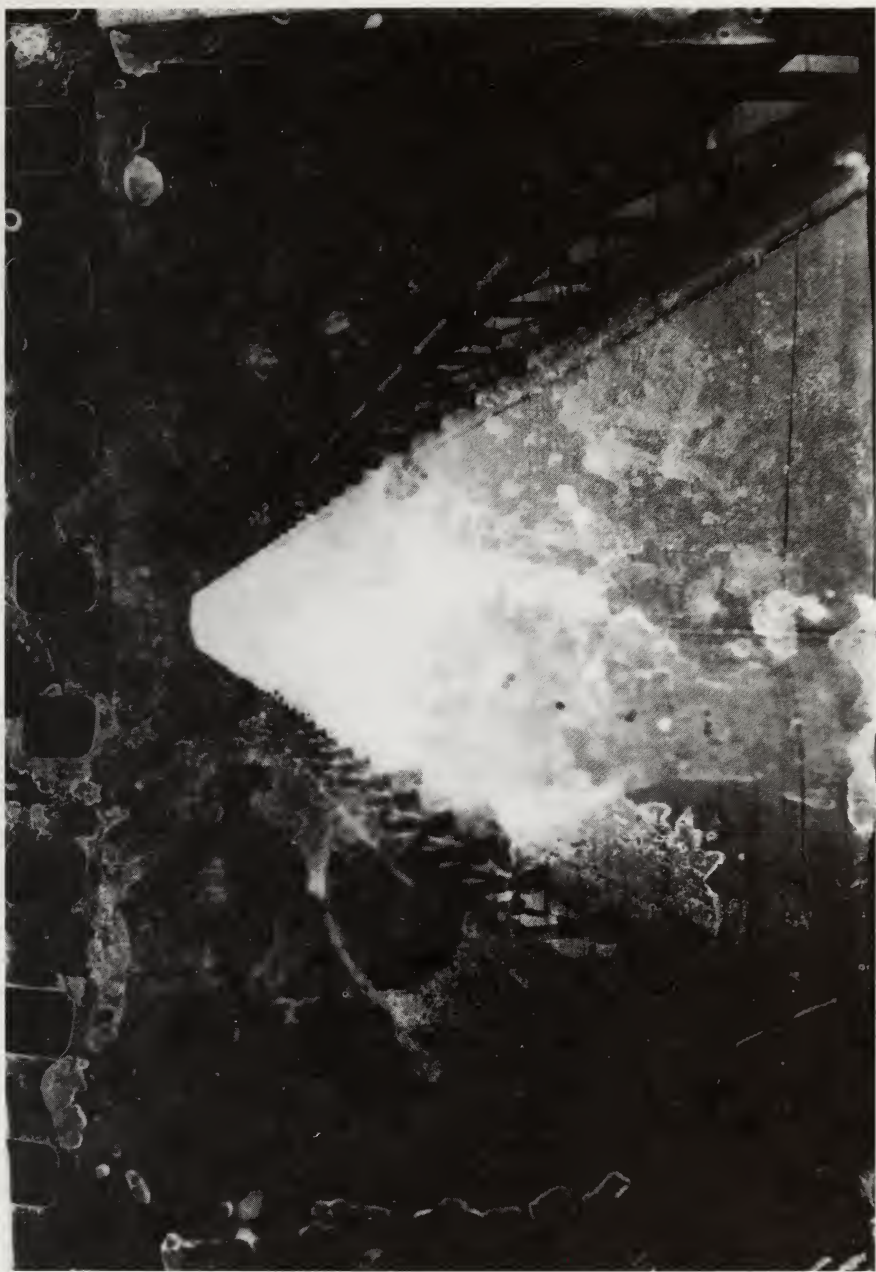
Settled, back into closed eyelids, trying to find a
Center inside my head.
Scanning a wider gyre, looking.

The gravity to hold it all together, the stringy glue that just won't
Budge.

I'd like to see you in the morning, hand floating against my shoulder,
Breath whispering old languages across my lobes.
To paint your hair
Back with fingers, brushing you awake.
Looking for a clean screen to hold the last of that sticky
Paste.
Exhaling Joanna—feeling the smoke catch in my throat.



Luke Baer
Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Luke Baer
Untitled
Black and White Photograph

Honduran-American Identity

I came to this country when I was young. I was only seven years old and at that age I was not fully capable of understanding or developing a sense of comprehension. I barely remembered my country, my home, and customs. All I knew is that I lived in Honduras in a nice house with a big yard and patio. I was happy and nothing worried me because at that young age all that mattered was my toys and my friends. I had no idea of differences or social classifications. I even thought that all the actors and actresses from the American shows I saw were all Americans. I had no idea of the racial tensions America had with people from different cultures. I was brought up to treat everyone equal. It was proven when I got hit for mistreating Doña Nila (Mrs. Nila our housekeeper and caretaker). I also remember when I visited my aunt in Honduras. I was not able to talk to her maid as much. I was not even allowed to give her my clothes that I wanted her to have or got out with her. I was just never aware of what "American" meant.

Once I came to this country, I lived in a Hispanic community. my family didn't tell me that I was an immigrant or an illegal alien. I always believed that I was equal. I became so acquainted with the community and the customs that I was even considered to be Puerto Rican. I was naive and so accustomed to my surroundings that I never knew that I was not equal. It was not until seventh grade that I figured it out and understood the true meaning of being American. It was at that time that I began to hide my identity.

I hated to be called *mojada* and most of all having to show my green card as my I.D. I felt hurt because I thought I was American. I had the same dreams as an American. I wanted the house with the picket fence, a career, a Mercedes or BMW, and most of all I wanted to retire to some tropical island. I preferred celebrating Thanksgiving like Americans did, which is having pumpkin pie, squash, corn and gravy. I hate when my family cooks rice and potato salad for Thanksgiving. I considered those dishes to be non-American. I didn't like to hear Spanish music and never bother to learn to dance Merenque or Salsa. I even began to loose my native language because I often spoke English in my home. All that time I thought I was American.

Once I began to understand the racial tensions through my American History courses in grammar school and high school, I realized I could never be American. I did not come to this country because it was hard to live in my own. I especially did not come here for the freedom to practice religion. I came here because I was forced to and because my family wanted more of what they already had. We were very well off in Honduras but I guess they wanted more. I was also

reminded of what I was and that was being Honduran.

The sad part of it was that I didn't fit in as a Honduran. I don't know how to cook Hispanic foods or any kind of dish. I considered myself to be the 1990's kind of woman, which is the single parent with a career and who uses the microwave to make her meals. I guess I could be considered "white" as my ex-husband and friends considered me to be. I also do not go out with my own kind, meaning Honduran men or any Central American men. My Spanish is not great. I speak Spanish and English at the same time or what my family considers "Spanglish." I could not even tell you what Merenque songs are popular. I can not relate with the new immigrants. For example, if the person just came to this country I do not feel pity for them having a hard time finding a job or communicating. They constantly complain about what they had given up in order to come to this country and my thought is why did they come? I hate myself for being this way but why follow a dream that you can never have. I have been trying and my family had been trying for years, and they are still at the same place as where they started, with nothing.

I am also not Honduran because I am an American citizen. I have given up my Honduran identity. In Chelsea they don't like me much because I do so well on my own. I think it is because I considered myself to be almost American. They even criticize my way of raising my child because I dressed him in nice clothes and because we have nice accommodations. One friend of mine told my mother that I'm wrong to dress my child with expensive clothes because I'm spoiling him with privileges that won't last long. I guess she meant I am not white or rich and that good things in life only happen to those who are white and don't live in Chelsea.

Another difference is the level of education. The highest education level most of my friends reached is high school and some only continued as far as the first semester of college before dropping out because it was too much for them to juggle. I attend college, work full-time and take care of my son. It is not my fault for trying to achieve in life and have different perspectives than they do. I refuse to waste my life and depend on the government for help. I got scared when I got married because I was heading the same way. I told my husband that I was not going to become a welfare recipient and that I was going to continue my college education. He supported me and I am still continuing my education without his help.

I feel like a stranger because I have nothing in common with my friends. I remember bumping into one of my best friends and I told her that I was back in Chelsea. She gave me a smirk because my perfect life had crumbled and I had to give up what I had. Her smirk disappeared when I told her that I am still continuing school and that leaving my husband was the best thing that ever happened. The divorce actually gave me the opportunity to concentrate more on my goals and school.

There was another friend and this one thought that because I was a single mom I needed a man in my life to support me. I burst his bubble when I told him that for being a single mom, I'm able to pay for a weeks vacation to Walt Disney World for my son and my mother. It is very common in Chelsea for women to share boyfriends and vice versa and to find a man to support your children or child. I especially know that I don't need a man to support me when I can do so much on my own.

Does being independent mean being white? What is American? I depend on my mother and struggle just as hard as they do. I pay for childcare and bills. For example, I am struggling to find an apartment but no place wants to assist me because I do not have the tenant experience or because they are concerned that I might not be able to afford the rent. I even tried to apply for those subsidized homes but they won't consider me because I make too much money.

I even had a hard time admitting my child to a certain school because I make too much money. I was trying to sign him up for Head Start and the man in charge told me that the only reason they would take my son is because of his speech impairment. I wanted to smack him for such a stupid remark but I just went along. My mother told me that the school is where all the welfare parents put their kids in and they serve them first because the government pays for everything. I was just amazed by the whole concept of this life.

If I am not Honduran, why do I have a hard time finding an apartment or admitting my child to school? Why do Americans discriminate against me? Why doesn't a white man from Charlestown or South Boston go out with me? Why is it that I get referred to a Hispanic person when I need assistance? Why do I get stared at when I go into an expensive store? I don't understand the concept of being American.

I enjoyed the moment when my family took me out to celebrate my citizenship. I felt proud for a moment in my inauguration. But then reality struck and all my proud moments disappeared. I would never be accepted anywhere in society as long as I have my accent and my pride for being of Honduran descent. I remember my mother saying that being a citizen will give me a better opportunity in life but it was only a comfort line to ease my doubts of becoming a citizen.

I feel sad for my son because he's American and I have no idea of how to tell him to identify himself. I dress him in Gap clothes so he will look American instead of Hispanic. I don't want him to have as hard a time as I do. I even make sure he speaks more English than Spanish so he won't have an accent like me. I know it is wrong but there is no other way in this "Land of the Free" life. I want him to be everything he can be without having to face discriminating attitudes because of his heritage.

I am grateful for gaining my strength from my grandmother and my mother. My grandmother went through 5 marriages and raised 10 children on her own. I am very proud to have discovered her

strength as a single parent who risked everything to come to this country. My grandmother did everything to provide the best for her children, which is why all of her children are living here today.

My mother put up with my father's affairs for 8 years and she did well on her own. She went back to work as an accountant and raised me. She sent me to the United States so I would have more opportunities. She wanted me to have the best education, clothes and life that America had to offer. I know at onetime I did not see it that way but now I do because I would never be where I am today.

Each day I struggle to get up for work, prepare my son for school and put time in for my studies. It is very hard to maintain a job, a three-year-old, and an education. The hardest obstacle was going through the divorce and having to explain to my son why his parents split up and why we must stay with his aunt and grandmother. My son and I stay with my aunt during the week and on the weekends we stay with my mom and depending on his father's schedule he stays with his father in the weekends. I find myself being proud for my accomplishments. I have done pretty well in classes and my son understands my explanations of "Why." I am happy to have gained such strength.

It is very amazing to find out that a single person on her own is able to succeed. I think that it is why I am so quiet and so friendless in class because I can not fit more into my schedule. I just want to graduate and have a career so I can provide the best for my son and make my mother proud of me. I want to fulfill her dream of having her daughter achieve that "piece of the pie" dream.

I know that in time I will own my house with a picket fence, have a great career and even own a family car, a Volvo, and be considered as an American, so I could say, "I finally did it and can retire." Life is hard and full of obstacles and having the strength and mind to face them makes me American enough. I already know I am almost American but very proud of being of Honduran descent. My Honduran heritage is never forgotten because that's where my strength comes from and where my heart is. I accept my heritage when I am not ashamed to let people know where I come from. I know my son will say that he is very proud of being of Honduran-Philippine descent and American.

The Lasting Charm of Birth Defects

My wife has this tumble-about friend who goes way back in the Way Back Machine of their old days when they prematurely discovered women, gay bars and liquor. They met at the local K-Mart where they held down part-time jobs in high school. K-Mart would have been reason enough to avoid them. I admit it, I am shallow; I am an aesthete whose sensibilities are deeply offended by the mere mention of K-Mart—yet I can't be that shallow—I did marry my wife, which means I not only got a bunch of useless pets in the bargain, I also got her best friend Lucille.

Oh, Lucy, who built a gargantuan display of disposable douche and K-Y Jelly. There it towered next to the cash registers: Douche, left side; K-Y Jelly, right.

Lucy's display was located so all who passed through the check-out line could behold it. Lucy called it her "slip and glide" display, and the products sold each other, being as you can't have pepper without salt, metaphorically. But the masses of repressed ladies and old men from Natick, Massachusetts were deeply offended.

Then there was the manager who went red and sputtered upon stumbling into her half bought out display. Lucy was reprimanded, and with the display replaced by one hawking products for jock itch, life went back to normal.

I have heard such K-Mart tales, and will hear the K-Mart tales until I die. I imagine myself senile someday, with those stories floating around in my head and blending so beautifully with the Canterbury Tales, I won't be able to tell the difference between my life and Chaucer's.

Beyond the issue of not being cool, my Wife and her friend Lucille were dangerous.

They were the kind of girls who'd slap a Stay-Free Maxi Pad on your back and then let you go about your day. In the very least, they had the decency to use a clean pad. On the T.V. screen in my mind I can picture them in 1975: The Wife has just bought a 1966 Econoline van with 200 thousand miles on it. She is proud because she not only got it for a hundred bucks, it has arrived completely lined with faded olive-green fur. The fur made the van look like it was a rolling combination Chia Pet and mossy cave. The Wife, Lucy, and Hank-the-Mutt-Dog whose fur matched in length went everywhere together.

Imagine them, I have seen the pictures: They both wear plaid flannel shirts from Sears. Lucy has a crew cut that looks like it belongs on the head of Elvis. On her feet are high-top basket-ball shoes. It is 85 degrees heading up towards 90, but Lucy and my Wife are wearing

their bell-bottomed jeans because they are cool. Lucy's pants are falling off her ass, exposing her butt-crack, a look popular with working union men, and popularly known as the "union crack." Her ensemble is fashionable 20 years before its time.

Between them on the engine block sits the panting dog—one ear up and one ear down. Neither of them noticed that Hank-the-Mutt-Dog was a walking flea farm until the day they both realized the van fur was alive and thriving. They itched all the way from the Orleans Rotary to the pet store where they purchased a flea bomb. They set it off in the van while they were parked and sunning all day at Herring Cove. Never mind that the aerosol shot straight into the ceiling fur, saturating it with enough Dow chemicals to cripple their off-spring, should either of them ever decide to spring someday.

What are some of the things I love about my wife? To start with, I find it simply amazing that I know how to strip a car. The Wife taught me this to set me free. Should I ever again lose my alternator at the Hyannis Rotary at midnight, I know not only how to extract one from a parked car, but how to install it in my own. I can do a brake job in a pinch, but I feign ignorance when it comes to changing the motor oil because it's messy. Believe me, though, I know which nuts to turn, and where to place the drip pan. Should your 1987 Plymouth Horizon ever be missing anything significant such as a carburetor or starter motor, don't hesitate to call—I've probably borrowed them.

I'm impressed with myself. In fact, since I became empowered I confided to the wife I thought the car needed souping up. No sooner did I mention fat tires, when fat tires appeared on my buggy. Lucy then appeared like magic to help the Wife change the universal ball joints. All this involved some slapping around of tires, hoisting, heaving, cussing, beer drinking, belching, farting, and hardy-har-harring. Ball joints in place, some monkeying with the suspension later, I had me a fat little low rider.

Wow. Look at me go. No hands, Mama! It is not obvious to the naked eye, but my car—the car I inherited from my Grandma—is really a Hot Wheels car in disguise. You can fool me fine, because when I'm in my car, as far as I'm concerned, I'm swifter than a playboy in a Porsche. A slow low ride close to the ground always seems faster.

As a token of affection the year we started dating the Wife gave me my own socket set, with my initials monogrammed on the pink plastic case. Top that. There will never be anything sissy like a book of poetry. No ma'am. My motor oil will always be fresh; my brakes pads new. I also find it amazing that when Bucky O'Happy owed my wife a hundred bucks for far too long she simply went over and took the new tires off his sports car, and then left it up on cinder blocks.

Boy I love those tires, and I love the resourcefulness of the little woman. I married me a one-woman mob. With Lucy in the picture make it a two-woman mob. What a bargain.

Why is it important you know all this? Because I now want you to imagine these women as mothers.

There is nothing my wife would like more than to be a mother, and when the subject is brought up she gazes at me all mooney eyed. It's a good thing one of us is not a boy because we'd be in all sorts of trouble. When Lucy called us up last year and said she was trying to get pregnant, all we could do was fall down on the floor laughing. I mean, come on, Hank-the-Mutt-Dog was her dog, and he was so dirty he left a ring around the house whenever he visited. Get real, how was she going to deal with things like diapers?

But a baby was what Lucy wanted so a baby is what she'd get. Lucy was pregnant after the third nocturnal visitation of the blessed turkey baster. The donor, a strapping young man who didn't mind filling the baster instead of a towel, was glad to stay over to accommodate them. Meanwhile, Lois—Lucy's newest and much improved wife—was the collector and deliverer of sperm.

What romance! To be able to impregnate your wife even though you were not born with the equipment. It is like the birds and the bees: collect the pollen, then go and sprinkle it on your Buttercup. Such power gets me hot, I tell you. It makes me want to fire up my car and screech around the supermarket rotary ten times. Repressed creature that I am, I now have to skip all the conversations Lois and Lucy had with my wife and me about getting me schnookied. I'm cutting to the chase when Lucy had swelled into her 8th month.

We arrived in Maine at the cabin on the lake, for what had been whittled down from a week to a 36-hour vacation. Life for the Wife and I was disastrous as usual. In one day we'd suffered three calamities: Our dream home—a Three-Bears chalet combination shack on a lake—had been bought out from us an hour after we thought we had a done deal. Our kitty wasn't hurling hairballs because she was annoyed, but because she was doomed, and one of our favorite fags was diagnosed with the Plague. This was after we spent the week in court with the white-trash loser people whose pitbull ate our dog.

We were shaky achy breaky and ready to snap at the world. Each other was the next best thing. We knocked on the cabin door seeking refuge and Lucy ambled to the screen holding a swollen breast in each hand.

"My tits are about to explode," she announced "and what are you going to do about it?"

That's when we discovered another lesbian couple had shown up, responding to a rather vague invitation. Gosh, six of us in a tiny cabin, the Wife and I glowered at each other; we'd have to be on our best behavior and pray it didn't rain. I was relieved we'd be sleeping on separate sofas, while the lesbian couple would be shacking up in the bedroom with the double bed. They were on a lesbian honeymoon, after

all, whilst we were suffering through an August of sheer discontent. Me share a bed with the Wife? I'd rather eat pickled onions. Me have a baby with her? Harumph. What a ridiculous idea, I thought. Especially when I saw how miserable Lucy was. Lucy was Little-Miss-Oh-Be-Joyful herself because she couldn't sleep, and suffered from dueling heartburn and nausea.

Lois and I quickly took off, abandoning our spouses to stew in each other's contrary company. We took a quick dunk and parked our butts in low-rider lawn chairs.

"There is something odd about Marguerite," Lois said.

I looked out across the lake at the skinny stranger who was newly gobsmacked with Barbara, Lois' ex-girlfriend.

"Marguerite is missing some toes," Lois blurted.

We'd been deep in the throws of conversation about feminist-psychoanalytic theory, and we'd begun to bore ourselves to sleep.

"Missing toes?" I said.

"She has three on the left and four on the right," Lois said in a gravelly voice.

She peered at me over the top of her glasses. She looked like a middle-aged Lolita.

"Birth defects!" she whispered, gravely.

"How do you know that?" I said.

"Because I admired her nail polish, and she insisted on showing me how it matches her feet."

"What are they like?" I said.

"Like the feet of a space alien. I told her: 'That is the most bitchin' green glitter polish I have ever seen,' and then I counted. One two three...one two three four...wait a minute. One two three, one two three four."

"No way," I said.

"Way," she said

"What did you do then?"

"Well, I was fine. I said nothing, it's just that Lucy piped right up saying—'hey, are those your real feet?'"

"Noooo!" I said, embarrassed for her. "Has she no etiquette?"

"None what so ever. Lucy's infertile soil."

When I want to I can be a classy dame. My mother beat it into me well. Rule number one by age five: One should never laugh at people with birth defects. Even so, getting an eyeful of Marguerite's feet set me off. Having seven toes was not nearly as odd as painting them with green glitter and then wearing sandals. I was able to keep my mouth shut. But the wife and Lucy, that's another story.

That afternoon Lois and I sat on the beach talking our heads off about more feminist theory. I was ready to nod off when out of the corner of my eye I spotted our wives, with their faces pressed against the

screen of the cabin like two bad kids. Lois and I ignored them. To acknowledge them was to invite trouble. Out on the lake pressed nose to nose over an innertube were Marguerite and Barbara, very much in love.

"This little piggy went to market..." I heard my wife sing.

"This little piggy stayed home..." said Lucy.

"Stop it!" I hissed.

Silence. The water shimmered, and a loon flew over. I wondered if Marguerite and Barbara could hear them.

"This little piggy never came home . . ." Lucy said.

Snicker, snicker, snicker.

I looked up at the house, they were now jumping on the beds—all of 8-months pregnant Lucy, and 200-pounds-plus of my wife. Then they stopped. We could hear them whispering.

"No piggies," sang Lucy.

"Missing piggys."

"Miss Piggy's missing..."

"Come home soon."

The wives were supposed to be napping, instead they were pressing themselves against the window screens so hard, I thought the screens would pop out, and they'd end up in the lake below. I stifled my impulse to yell. Oh Let them fall into the lake, it would serve them right.

"This little piggy didn't even exist so there was no roast beast to be had."

Snicker, snicker, snicker.

"Lucille," bellowed Lois.

The two of them dropped below the window frame and laughed hysterically.

"It must be an existentialist piggy," I said, trying to see if a smile would crack on Lois' face. It didn't. Lois was a mother, Lois had been raised by a mother. Lois was about to be a mother again. There was going to be no smiling on Lois' face when it came to birth defects. What if God was listening in and should strike a few toes from the feet of their unborn baby? What if that baby was born and something was missing? God forbid. God forbid.

The Wife and I wore pagers for a month. Lucy had invited us into the delivery room, and there was no way we'd be missing it short of a transportation break down, which was not likely. On a rainy night we were beeped so we set off for the hospital where we were promptly sent to the waiting room. We were so excited we'd donned Viking horns and had forgotten to take them off. This offended the over-serious staff.

Lucy's parents, Horrace and Doloris, soon arrived; the mother—an austere woman with white hair—was dressed in an old Halston suit. Doloris was suffering from a Victorian hangover. She did not love the

idea of homosexuals, especially the kind like Lucy who not only admitted but flaunted it by having a baby with her lesbian lover.

According to Doloris, it was all right if people were gay—she just didn't want to know about it. I wondered if Doloris knew Halston was both dead and a queen. Never mind the fact her house was decorated and designed by queens.

I was worried. I knew Doloris kept a chilly distance from my Wife because she blamed her for the delinquency of her daughter. This was partially true—in defense of my Wife I have to ask, neither of them came home pregnant as teenagers—so what was the problem?

Lucy's father, Horrace, came on in and switched the football game on the T.V. Never mind the opera I had tuned in. He hitched up his pants and sat down. He was a Mr. Couldn't-be-Happier, Couldn't-have-cared-less about much of anything. Because the local pro team was winning he was decked out from head to toe in Patriots football team garb. Frick and Frack they looked like.

I could hear Lucy moaning. The mouth on Lucy's mother dropped open. The Wife said nothing. The father smiled. I had some pangs; Lucy sounded like she was having one hell of an orgasm and it was catching. The wife was mooney-eyed. Her flushed cheeks told me she'd love it if I were in Lucy's stirrups.

Lucy moaned again.

"Oh I can't bear it!" said the mother "I can't bear to hear my baby in pain! You get in there!" she said to my Wife "You get in there right now and help her!" She pushed my wife, horns and all, and slapped her ass, which surprised us all.

Needing little prompting we stuck our heads in the birthing room, and Lucy motioned us inside. She rolled her eyes, tried to smile, and cried as she seized up and went red.

The nurses rushed around in their dance, and moved us to face Lucy's vagina on the birthing table. They had just cut her to make room for the baby's head, and she looked torn open.

Oh Christ that's gotta hurt—I wanted to say. Instead, I stifled my impulse to scream and grinned falsely like the Wife does at a poetry reading.

Contraction.

They sat Lucy up and pushed her knees up to her ears.

The midwife caressed Lucy's clitoris to calm her; then her vulva, and slithered her hand into Lucy's womb.

The baby's head was in place. Lucy bore down and pushed.

The nurses pushed Lucy's knees up, to make room for the baby to push out.

"Jeepers, that's why girls can do the splits," I said.

"Holy cow," muttered my Wife.

"He's crowning!" someone said.

She pushed. The head between her legs got bigger. She relaxed

and cried.

"I can't do it!"

"You will do it!" snapped the mid wife.

I saw the baby turn in the womb. Lucy and I locked eyes.

Then I saw the top of the head rise like the moon. A hand like a star fish popped forth as his face appeared. In what seemed like one last easy push, came hand head arm shoulders back and leg, foot and cord.

Free of the womb, his mouth opened, splaying an arch of fluid that had kept him silent all those months.

Lois cut the white chord.

Rupert was so pale a shade of lavender I thought perhaps he was a dolphin changeling. He was sleek, and there he was.

Now what? I wondered. So much for peace and quiet in our lives.

"There's my handsome boy," cooed my Wife, taking a Polaroid. She then ran the photo to the grand parents.

I stood by Lucy to watch the afterbirth.

I had to watch every gory detail to see what I'd be in for if I decided to give birth.

Lucy's legs were shaking, so I pushed against her to steady them.

With a yelp, out came the placenta, purple and vibrant with blood.

The entire birth was the coolest damn thing I'd ever seen.

"Better give her a little Honeymoon stitch," my Wife said as the midwife sewed Lucy up.

As soon as she was able to sit up, the baby was placed in Lucy's arms. We all stood cooing over the new life. Rupert was turning pink as the air filled his new lungs.

He was also having his first erection.

"Wait a minute," said Lucy.

"Could that be right?" said the Wife.

"I don't know," said Lois.

Rupert had a gigantic penis and scrotum.

"Wow. Is he hung," I said.

"Does the donor pack a basket anything like that?" said my Wife.

"How should I know," said Lucy. "I never saw the equipment. Did he?" she asked Lois.

"How should I know?"

"Well you collected the goods," said Lucy.

"But once he was done he had on his shorts," said Lois.

"Darn," said the Wife.

"You could have gotten pregnant the conventional way—then you'd know," I said. But Lois and Lucy looked at me like that was the most preposterous idea they'd ever heard.

"The donor looks like he has prime equipment," I said. "I'd do him."

"Now what are you doing cruising men?" said my Wife.

"How could I not? You guys have been playing the "Find the donor" fantasy game for me for months, so I started looking."

"Honey!" said my Wife.

"Oh don't start," I said. "I love some good penis action now and again, so why shouldn't I think about it when you're talking babies."

The Wife looked both startled and hurt. No one can wield a penis better than she can, not even a man. It's just that one can't conceive with a dildo.

"Do you think he's all right?" said Lucy.

"He has all his fingers and toes. Nothing's missing," said Lois.

"If anything, something's added," said Lucy. "Do you think it's a birth defect?"

"I don't know," said Lois, "It's an enormous package."

Lucy kissed Rupert's head, and looked him over again "Can you imagine Rupert having a half brother borned by you?" Lucy asked.

"It could be weird," said my Wife, who was more conventional when it came to life and death matters.

"I think it's a brilliant idea," said Lois, "a beautiful, beautiful idea."

"There goes my life." I said.

"Pop out a brother for Rupert and you can run the talent agency from home," the Wife promised.

"Yeah, sure." I said, doubting I'd ever be up for it. What a con my wife can be when she wants something.

At that moment the grandparents came in. Lucy's father took one look at the baby and puffed up.

"Look, he's grown a stinger already," said Lucy.

"Takes after my side of the family," Lucy's father said, proudly.

I looked at Rupert who smiled.

"We're worried," said Lucy, "it's so large, could there be something wrong?"

"Something wrong?" said the father, "something wrong? He's going to be popular with the ladies, that's all."

"Baby boys are well endowed," said Doloris.

"Still . . ." said Lois.

"If anything, he was born with a little extra, it won't do him no harm," said the father.

When her parents had gone, and the lights had dimmed, I watched Lucy and my Wife struggle with Rupert trying to get him to nurse. They passed him here and there, sat Lucy at this angle and that. And then it dawned on me—they were dealing with the baby like changing a tire. A precious tire on a Model-T Ford. The baby was the missing part to make the car of their dream-lives complete. The great tumble-about buddies had not only grown up, but become family.



Theresa Hadley
Double Negative with Gun
Black and White Photograph



Theresa Hadley *Untitled*
Black and White Photograph



Chizu Hyoda
Black and White Photograph



Herbert Kirshnit Cafeteria
Black and White Photograph

Dazzled

You have tossed your word
before me, a crown which
circles the forest of your truth
like flame, weak of breath
but tenacious, ready to torch
the roots and raise its hissing
head among oak and scrub.

You have abandoned your life at
my feet. In your end, you say,
I have my start, but now I
cannot see to breathe or hear
to speak. Your face, white by
its own light, collapses the night
and strikes a wedge into the day.

You have claimed me, as real
as treasure, weighed me out
heavy in emerald and pearl.
Where I am offered, supplicants
kneel, hunch and moan; when
I am withdrawn, the veins of
royalty flow cold, low and clear.

You will return to me in time,
arriving on foot when there is no
reason to expect you, when all
the clay vessels fired by your words
are but dust. You will touch me as
I sleep, lay the silver mesh of your
vision in folds across my dream.

Future

This mirror cauterizes every
floating emotion and scours them
all into rough calluses on the air.
It is a surface full of itself,
the way a comic fancies
his own pratfalls and
nurses the crowd for laughs.

Mornings the mirror captures
the pitch and yaw of all vision
like waves in sets pouring
themselves against the hard
comfort of the sand. It holds up
eyes that circle like snail shells
out from centered pinnacles.

By afternoon the mirror has lost
all sight of flesh, like its brethren,
the empty sleeves, who brush each
other and moan with short breaths.
The mirror squanders no effort
in its quiet shining to rhythms
of light all others have missed.

The mirror faces lamplight as
distantly as the dark. It watches
the room's shadowy caresses
without a story or remark. It need
not remember to believe, nor will
it forget. It shows off even what
it defies, like cold breath in warm air.

Giddy Gets Carried Away

Giddy swallowed her ginger ale wrong, an ice cube sliding past her teeth and lodging momentarily in her throat. She coughed hard enough that she almost dropped her notes but caught them before they tumbled into the spot of soggy sawdust at her feet. Giddy felt her face tighten, her French braid pulling her features—all of them at right angles that made it seem like she never looked straight on at anyone—instantly more taught. Her lucky cashmere sweater, all softness and colored stripes, itched her, and she realized that she was sweating lightly like a coolish glass under a lamp.

Her turn was next, her first turn after haunting this poetry slam for months, watching pokerfaced from the back tables or sitting so close to the stage that the spotlight licked at her knees. Was she ready for this, she thought, had she practiced enough in front of the mirror, in front of her figurine dogs stenciled with pastel patterns, her music box ballerina, Mickey, Pluto, Donald, the Grinch and Batgirl, this audience that grinned perpetually, supportive certainly, but aloof and always easy to make eye contact with, neither Giddy or her audience ever blinking.

Giddy had been practicing her premier performance poem, “Growth,” which started:

I’m gnarled,
gn-arl-ed and
stricken, battling
like an embryo
plant against
the bonds of
this blind seed
buried in you . . .

She thought this beginning would be pretty effective as she slowly lifted her arms until they extended straight above her head like cornstalks with stiffly knitted tufts of fingers at the top, bringing her biceps so close to her face that it was as if she were speaking from behind bars. (Pinnocchio had liked this move even if his reaction looked a little, well, painted on.) She’d speak very slowly and remain completely stiff until she said “plant,” and then the slow shimmy downwards would begin and last until she’d reached a kind of fetal crouch, in which, mike in hand, she’d continue:

I absorb and swell,
swell and push, right

into your spine until
you can only double
over, you cannot pass
me or dissolve me or
vomit my new growth . . .

She was very taken with the drama of this extended seed/growth metaphor. It epitomized, she thought, how she so loved Truth and only suffered Reality. Besides, as the seed expanded, presumably consuming the vital humors of its victim, she could sit down ponderously, splay her arms and legs slowly outward from her sitting posture in silence and then crook her arms abruptly towards her face so that the mike would be placed just right for her to continue:

You sleep only a little
between dreams of
iron lungs and walk-in
freezers. you who would
not embrace me feel
handcuffs around your
bowels and clamps on
the back of your eyeballs . . .

By this time she would have gradually folded herself into a shape resembling the lotus position, only with her face craning towards the ceiling and the mike floating over her mouth as if she were going to swallow it, the whole process of unfolding—or unfurling—concocted so as to put her into perfect position for the dramatic conclusion.

But before Giddy could rehearse in her head any more of this choreography guaranteed to win her tonight's \$20.00 gift certificate for window treatments at Pane in the Sash, she heard her name called and the two-sentence intro read by the MC: "Giddy Blevins is appearing here at Tapioca for the first time. Her poetry has appeared in *Turnip* and *Poetry for Now*, let's give her a nice greeting . . .," and she was standing under the klieg light, her note card already growing damp. For an instant she couldn't think of what to say as the audience sat sympathetically silent although probably on edge, out beyond where she could distinguish anyone or anything.

But Giddy started to focus and remembered to say the title, "Growth," although the word came out a little like a squawk. It was enough, however, to break her open, and she said, "I'm gnarled, gnawled, and stricken. . ." With that phrase she started her slow stretch up to antenna-like stiffness, except that something was wrong. Her left knee wouldn't stiffen, it felt like warm, sticky paste. She couldn't get control of much of anything on her left side. Her lips felt like they were sagging on that side, and the word "battling" flapped out of only the right side

of her mouth as “baffing.” Instead of rising, she was sinking; she felt as though a fountain had surrounded her and was pulling her down even as it spouted up in cool jets of clear effervescence all round her.

Giddy realized that she had collapsed on the stage where she lay staring at the audience, some of whose faces she could just barely distinguish among the disks of light that jiggled in front of her eyes. For some reason she could sense only warm support from this audience of Truth lovers, and she knew that someone would come to help her, and in fact, she could see several get up—first Donald, with his huge behind bobbing and his sailor hat squared over one eye, then Dopey, shambling and shy as usual, and, finally, St. Francis, with all his animals in tow. They reached her all together, and immediately St. Francis knelt, rested three fingers on her forehead and said a blessing, which she heard as “Sleep, Seeker . . .” before she heard nothing more.

Making Somethings of Ourselves

My sister and I
pick families from the Sears catalogue.
Mothers and fathers from swimsuit and lawn care pages,
big brothers and little genderless toddler siblings.

We pick out furniture—
canopy beds and the entire rainbow collection of bean bag chairs
cutting them out carefully with scissors
and pasting them, numbers still attached,
to lined notebook paper.

We make fake driver's licenses for ourselves
using the pictures that were too good to be family members
and give ourselves names and addresses from the phone book.
The finishing touch is laminate
brought from a sticker vending machine
with our fifty-cent allowances.

We drive the kitchen chairs
and strap the cat in an old baby car seat.

Then we pick out families from the real world.
She chooses an apartment in Medford
and a job at a bank.
I drive across the country with my boyfriend
and dj college radio.
She marries a Muslim and dons a head covering,
renouncing alcohol before she turns twenty one.
I snort coke and move in with a girlfriend,
accepting rock and roll as my personal savior.

My sister totals her car on the way back from Christmas
and forgets to retrieve the oversized toy monkey
that I seatbelted into the back seat.
The guys at the tow lot
joke about it with her husband in Arabic.

I am shaky because she could have died
and we don't even know each other yet
or know ourselves.



Maureen Dolon
Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Jordan Pond 1:13 pm Sept 28, 197

Maureen Dolon Jordan Pond
Black and White Photograph



Maureen Dolon
Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Meg Togo *Untitled*
Black and White Photograph

Excerpts from the Magazine Street Log

Abstract

The following consists of an annotated series of excerpts from a journal kept by a group of young adults (ages ranged from 21-27) in a co-housing situation to document their experiences as "conscious shitters". The journal is the result of a four-month experiment for the duration of which the participants were expected to keep an on-going, written dialogue on the topic of their own bowel movements. The goal of the experiment was to see if focusing awareness on the most "defiled" aspect of daily life could generate any kind of personal enlightenment for the participants. The experiment was an unqualified success. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants.

Introduction

When you want to find an animal, you follow the trail it leaves behind. Forgetting our animal roots, we have come as a culture, to believe that we can find ourselves in a doctor's office, in self-help books or adult-education classes. Not so. Like everything else that eats, our most primary form of self expression, our most personalized greeting card, can be found in our own feces. Here at 80 Magazine Street, we decided to forgo the usual, contemporary means of self-exploration for a more earthy approach. We decided it was time to take a long, close look at our bowel movements, to reflect on them, and to share our experiences with one another despite the vulnerability we all felt. What you hold in your hands is a selection of readings from the diary of our journey inwards.

Often, as most Westerners tend to be, we are protective of our "filth". We opt to joke about our most intimate creations rather than to celebrate them as we should. As a reader moves chronologically through this work, s/he will find a gradual relaxation of these inhibitions—a growing sense of self-acceptance among the regular writers. This journal is an early one, I'm absolutely certain that even more profound revelations and spurts of growth will be revealed in subsequent volumes.

In a sense, the participants in this log are really just beginning to open up, to flower. As tiny buds in this process, they already have the courage to share their stumbling attempts to grasp their illusive inner selves with all who care enough to read their stories. Their fondest wish for you, dear reader, is that this journal will act as a laxative upon your alienation from your own gut.

The Log

A regular, marble-covered composition book was left in the bathroom at 80 Magazine Street with the following instructions written on its first page: "Please use this book to describe and discuss your bowel movements in as much detail as you feel comfortable. This journal is for you. You may write anything that comes into your mind while you are on the toilet, but we encourage you to focus your attention on what you are doing while you are in the bathroom as a starting point for your ruminations." The initial response to this request was a slightly shocked, but curious jocularity:

"Um, why is this [notebook] here?" (Kerry).

"Um, it's part of a government census project that requires all U.S. citizens to describe every bowel movement they have until 1999." (unsigned).

"Maybe It's the result of a constipated imagination. Ha ha." (Sam).

The subjects of this experiment were well chosen and quickly warmed to the idea of describing their bowel movements. Within a day of the notebook's initial appearance in the bathroom, the experiment's participants were, however modestly, describing their bowel movements:

"My shit flew out of my butt with a burning sensation. I flushed." (Kerry).

"It was soft, light brown, and smelled like a Falafel Palace falafel sandwich without onions." (Helen).

"Mine took a while coming, and then revealed itself to be long, dark and thin. It sank to the bottom. Looked remarkably like a dog dick." (Alice).

"Insignificant pellets. Dark little weights sink to the bottom and then flush to meet fishy friends." (Helen).

"I've got a one-pound King Kong burger from eagles coming up next. There it is, well greased. A real slider." (Sam).

"Shit early. Small, hard. Had bike helmet on, felt like an astronaut." (Kerry).

This first mention in "The Log" (as the experiment's subjects began to

refer affectionately to the notebook) of a personal as opposed to a physical feeling, seemed to unlock something. The descriptions suddenly gained added dimension and an interest developed in the experiences of (muscular) tension and release that often accompany the evacuation of the bowels:

"It sat around hard-packed, like a single bubble-blap-fart. Once the jughead pushed through the sphincter, an eight-inch soul scraper burned me into a head-swelling sweat. Then, my muscles resigned themselves to a sour-sleepy tingle which will follow me around for a while. I grimace, wipe and squeeze with a shudder." (Sam).

"One big nagging thrust, two pellets slide right out. No need to push anymore, just leave the muscles open, and a couple more things slide out. Squeeze to make sure it's all gone. It is." (Alice).

"Long, soft shit. Muscles ache from the pressure, it extends down through my calves. Mouth open the whole way through. I'm impressed by its length and pleasant brown-reddish tint." (Alice).

This early recognition of the pleasure involved in moving the bowels, shows a willingness on the part of participants to be freed from the socially bred shame that often overshadows such pleasure. Though humor continues to act as a low-level defense mechanism, the participants in this experiment, began obviously to relish both the experience of shitting and the activity of describing it to one another:

"I put on a little mood music, lit a candle and sipped Manishevitz. It worked like a charm. Again, the shits themselves were small, dark and swarthy, but afterwards I needed a cigarette. . ." (Helen).

"Shits are hard, solid, quick. I fart a lot— blow wind in and out of elevators. Been getting spooge on my bike gloves when I wipe. Gotta take 'em off." (Kerry).

"Had a Caesar salad for lunch. The fiber is working wonders. It just slid right out! A lighter color brown, and it's floating complacently along the surface." (Alice).

"Scratching ferrets claw their way out." (Sam).

"Buns packed into the throne, I began to cough spasmodically and the defecants flew out like projectile missiles." (unsigned).

It was during this creative phase that reference to the journal itself as part of the experience eventually surfaced. The first references were brief asides:

"Sitting in the wake of someone else's undocumented shit, a few spongy corks expand from my rear like the creation of canned foam rubber." (Sam).

"A moist, runny, farty concerto for all to hear and smell. I write quickly and flush." (Sam).

These were followed by a sort of acknowledgment of the reader and the alteration of context represented by The Log:

"This is not one of those shits you feel coming for twenty minutes before it does. I'm having to squeeze it out a bit. PLOP! There's the first part—hold on—I'll stand up and look at it. Oh, it's a weird one. It's about two and a half inches long, a healthy, chunky lightish brown. It's standing on its head in the toilet rather than lying down—I'm not sure why. It is joined by two more piddling things roughly the shape and size of Cheetos. I think that's all." (Helen).

This new level of awareness became its own version of the famous "Heisenberg Principle":

"I think that writing in this here book makes one more rather than less constipated. I mean, when you read *Mademoiselle* or *How to Talk to Your Pet*, you forget where you are, what you're doing and whoosh—it just slips right out. Whereas here, you don't forget for a second what the mission at hand is. That can be kind of intimidating. PUSH. Ah, there it is. See ya!" (Alice).

But also a step towards deeper self-examination:

"I'm always more tempted to write about what's going on around me rather than about the shit itself. I think this is because to me, everything is a conglomerate experience. I think it's hard for me to focus on one thing." (Kerry).

The next direction the journal's entries took can best be summed up as "confessional". After a good month and a half of "chatting" about shitting at home, participants began to discuss their experiences as shitters in the outside world:

"Shat at 2 Copley. It hurt." (Kerry).

"I know you all think I've "pooped" out of this club, that I think I'm too good for it, but I'm here to say that that's just not the case. The poop scoop is that I haven't been shitting at home much. Sorry guys. Call me funny, but I shit regularly in an office bathroom stall, with stockinged co-workers touching up their make up in close proximity. All I can say is that I wonder how they feel when my shit makes that soothing "PLOP" sound that they can no doubt hear? Is it wrong for me to enjoy torturing them with my fecal habits?" (Alice).

"Shat at 2 Copley, 10 Post Office Square, and 215 First Street in Cambridge." (Kerry).

Suddenly the confessions became surprisingly intimate:

"I use my hands if I'm in a hurry. You know, a slight nudge on the rectal passage and an otherwise ten-minute shit pops right out. I wash well afterwards." (Kerry).

"Could you do me the service of drawing a diagram? I'm not sure I fully understand the procedure." (Helen).

"No, actually I can't. I'm em-bare-assed." (Kerry).

"When I wipe, the key to my bike lock gets stuck in my ass crack." (Kerry).

"For years I took all of my shits perched above the seat with my heels wedged into the part of the toilet seat in front where there is a gap. (This required me to remove my pants and socks for full flexibility and because part of the thrill was feeling the cold porcelain on the soles of my feet.) I continued this practice until about three years ago when a certain exboyfriend caught me in this position and told me that it wasn't how most people did it. . ." (Helen).

There was a brief backlash of protective, but humorous description following the confessional period where the participants began fabricating unbelievable bowel movements:

"It took a while to pop the cork, and once opened, sour Yoo-hoo from 1973 splashed its creamy chunks to the bottom of the bowl. Ugh. This one took twelve wipes." (Sam).

"I've been eating sushi compulsively for the last few days so I guess I shouldn't have been so surprised when the first shit I took in that time came out on a little bed of rice with a piece of

seaweed wrapped around it." (Helen).

"So I took this dump at work today and the sprinkler guy measures it for me, one and three quarter feet. Quite impressive. Anyway, we passed it around and all had a bite. Quite yummy actually. Impressed with what I must have eaten, in order to have produced such a fine shit, everyone decided that they would all come to my house on Saturday for dinner, and see for themselves." (Sam).

"I'm recording my 5,423rd shit tonight which leaves me now only 572 more to go before I get my 6,000 shit chip. I'm very excited. This one is kind of dinky, and sort of almost gray, but it counts. I made it, and I'm proud." (Helen).

After this ironic phase, there was silence. No one wrote at all for several days. The return to "The Log" was gradual, regressed, and slightly resentful:

"Well, a moment ago I had to shit real bad, but now my muscles are fighting each other. I can't help but notice that I haven't been here for three days, and only one person admits to shitting in that time. Maybe it's none of my business, but if you need it, there's a bottle of mineral oil under the sink that Alice kindly dedicated to our cause. Hmm. One plop, no fizz. Sigh." (Sam).

"I didn't shit at all yesterday because I didn't eat enough the day before. Today I shat two lumps, but I'm sick and was coughing when they came out so they splashed and my butt got all wet. I didn't like that very much." (Helen).

"Goose bumps, clenched teeth. Feels like I ate sand." (Sam).

"Unfortunately, all of my shits have been taken in inhospitable locations—secretaries powder rooms down padded, quiet hall ways lined with fake, dead flowers. These shits have been large and painful, always followed by slight diarrhea. I think it's stress." (Kerry).

"Oh boy, like major diarrhea day. Rushed back from errands to spew soup. This sucks." (Sam).

"Wicked strange diarrhea that I knew was coming when I stood outside of 1280 Boylston yesterday. They smelled like those inflatable beach balls or rafts or flippers you get in the pool at your grandparent's house in Florida. Plastic. Have I eaten plastic lately?" (Kerry).

"Nervous, wet, coffee shits." (Sam).

"It's been at least eight hours since I've heard from "Mr. Brown". His absence worries me—should I call a dietitian?" (Alice).

"I pushed and wondered if it would come out my ass or my mouth." (Kerry).

The resurrection of The Log as an open and understanding community of writing shitters or (shitting writers) was the result of the participants exchanging consolation and (almost traditional folk) wisdom with one another:

"Give him time, give him time. Shitting is Zen and not to be rushed." (unsigned).

"May your excretion cleanse you" (Kerry).

This seemed to get the descriptions of shitting started again, with a renewed interest on the part of the participants, in going back to the basics:

"All right, all right, hold it right there a second. The shit descriptions are getting downright vague. I want details—product descriptions—bar code numbers. Have we run out of colors here folks? Pretty little adjectives? I think we're all getting too hung up on the process and not putting enough emphasis on the actual (waste) products. Inventory: four objects of the golden brown variety with hints of river-bass green as highlights. One is shaped like a mini-banana, one is about the size and shape of an unused OB tampon, another of roughly the same dimensions but boasting a lump towards one end (reminiscent of a submarine). The final object is a thin, concave replica of the banana object. It looks like a section of banana peel and I suspect it was somehow the outer layer of one of the other objects and came off in the evacuation. The smell is mild to medium hot—not bad as far as shit smells go, but then it's mine so I may be biased." (Helen).

"I am pleased to say that one beer and two whiskeys had only a slightly negative impact on the consistency of my bowel movements this morning. I'm glad, because I'd hate to inform you otherwise. Let's just say we have two (2) inch long spherical mounds, medium to dark brown in tint, one floating, the other hiding. Nothing to write Natural Health Journal about, but satisfactory." (Alice).

At this point, the experiment's subjects leaped, not merely back up to the level of insight and openness achieved previous to the point of regression, but far beyond it. They began use their shit metaphorically:

"This shit is like a journey: we launch, all effort is concentrated, goal is immediate. I become restless, my mind wanders. The shit is still coming, but of its own accord. Suddenly a fart brings my consciousness out of the shit journal. The road becomes rocky, I shit, fart, clench my fists—then a lull—I read more, I write. The water gets rough. I fight the current, pull in the sail—one chunk drops, but there's more coming. Who bought all the disposable razors?" (Kerry).

"I took a dump. On people, on friends, on acquaintances, on strangers. Mostly for drugs, sometimes for rent, sometimes just because I could. I changed my life, quit drugs. I learned to work for money. Last night I got shit on. I lost my tools and my stereo. I slept the night in my truck's belly, holding its crotch and rocking back and forth. Funny thing is that even with someone else's shit all over me, the only thing that smells as bad is the shits I've taken." (Sam).

"I see in the plight of my shit, parallels to my own life. Sometimes you are placed in the same circumstances over and over before you learn something that life is trying to teach you. I watch my shit bobbing, resisting the pull of the flush, fighting like it might, someday get out of the toilet. With an objective viewpoint my shit will never have, I know that there is no chance it will escape. My shit is finally dragged into the whirlpool of our plumbing, and recognizes that it is no different than any other shit—just another brown lump destined for Boston Harbor." (Helen).

"What is it doing while I wait? Is it saying goodbye to friends? Thought: Maybe all of our passages through time are just our being shat through the bowels of someone (God?) Sometimes we resist, sometimes we fall easily; drowsy and over-digested." (Kerry).

This enlightenment was catching. Guests to the subjects' household began responding to the call of The Log:

"I've never shat here before, so I was worried I would smell up the bathroom and that no one would like me anymore. Reading this stuff made me feel a whole lot better. I did stink up the bathroom, but I don't mind. I can accept the smells that

I make. Thank you." (Julie).

The regular writers took full advantage of their new, strong, shame-free shitting. Every bowel movement became an opportunity to observe and learn. At the same time, shitting itself became an almost transcendental experience:

"Shitting while reading the latest entries, I just want to note how physically different it feels from shitting when all your energies are focused on the act. You read, and you (almost) forget why you're sitting on this stool; the shit creeps up on your bowel, which gives way unprotestingly. With the plop comes an all-body shiver, goose bumps that bring you back to your reverie." (Alice).

"This log is helping me learn about myself: On my way home, about 15 minutes ago, I let out a loud fart. Then, just now, I took a shit. Though I've seen it discussed in here frequently, I myself have never in my life as a conscious shitter, made the connection between shitting and farting. I mean, I know they both come from the same place, but I've never really farted and thought 'gee, I must have to shit.' I've usually either held it in, wondered what I had eaten that made that smell, or just hoped no one was around to catch wind of it and tease me mercilessly. Today while I was shitting, I remembered farting on my way home and realized that *The Fart* was indeed a predictor of *The Shit*. In general, I'm realizing that my connection to my bowels is abstract." (Helen).

"I feel like I'm shitting into a controlled atmosphere. Not too fast, not too slow—just right. Not too big, not too little—just right." (Sam).

"I think that there is actually a political-economic dynamic to shit. Shit is the place where the buck stops. It has no exchange value. I put my 75 cents into a vending machine, and out comes a bag of Smartfood. I put the Smartfood into my mouth, and out (of my ass) comes a lump of shit. Then it's over. The shit is the final manifestation of the 75 cents. It's alchemy—I can turn silver dollars into brown stinky lumps that industry won't co-opt. Shitting makes me feel like an anarchist." (Helen).

"A brief moment of praise: I love my shit." (Kerry).

Conclusion

The average reader may find the preceding material unbelievable, fantastic, perhaps even repulsive. These are all perfectly normal reactions to what you have just read. The conditions under which this material was generated were extraordinary and the content, therefore, quite unfamiliar and possibly frightening to most readers. In answer to your fears, doubts and disgust; we can only say that what you read here today is absolutely real.

The testimony quoted in here is from a real journal, written by real people who probably would have thought the same things that you're thinking right now before they started this project. Their names have been changed and you are only getting a tiny fraction of the journal here, but nothing has been "made up". The entire experiment may seem like a "load of shit" to you, but it was a very successful one. If you, dear reader, feel that this has not been a useful endeavor, there is nothing more we can do to dissuade you from your position. But we would encourage you, if you ever find yourself wondering how to better understand yourself, to put your ear to your rumbling stomach for answers. If you conduct this experiment on yourself, and write diligently in your own shit journal, we can guarantee that you will find, in your own excrement, some of what you are now missing.

"As the Storm Passes the Beach"

(Translated from Leonid Martynov's Russian Original)

As the storm passes the beach
I hear the crunch of your grinding stones.
Oh Sea, Sea, you are the master
Painter of abstract-canvases.
But I won't join in the debate,
It seems a pointless case: I don't care,
Sea, what pictures you leave
Here and there, on these pebbles.

Larry Madden

Gods and gurus often live

On mountain-tops
circumvential vision

You taught me to fly
fish, scale and filet
I read you my poetry

You have to know where your arc is at all times

You don't have to know the whole meaning

But I do

You taught me to rock
climb, tie knots and repel
I showed you the local flora

You have to know precisely where your next grasp will go

You don't have to remember these names, or listen

But I want to

You want me to learn all the things
that are important to you

There's nothing I want more

I want you to learn more
of me

Fear that there would be no more

The air was ribboned with the smell
of bacon, crackling and popping
in the pan above the tiny fire

*Never put too much wood at one time for cooking, always
low flames*

You placed the orange Lilies and the Brown Eyed Susies
together in the plastic water bottle
that you cut into a vase

A white-throated sparrow sang his song
in the tree-top, while a crisp
breeze slid over my exposed shoulders
I shuddered as your arms
wrapped around my waist from behind

Kisses across the back of my neck, nibbles on my shoulders
your chest presses, like a wool sweater, against my back

I hope this is okay with you

I hope with you this is okay

The mountain stream cascades, churns over jagged rocks
now smooth, our bodies slide together
my fingers work a lather through your hair
coolness crawls around us, defeated only where skin meets

Shampoo rinses down stream
My hands run over your shoulders and down your belly
tracing a line of silkiness, like a blind man reading scripture
to the hard sameness between our legs

You taught me to enjoy the moment
ask few questions, breathe deeply
Listen

Are you okay

I think so, there's something I need to say

I know

The Rosebushes

The couple who bought our old house
called me last month. They were
putting a cement patio out back
and some of the rosebushes
would have to be removed.
Did I want them?

Only three bushes.

After I dug up the first
two I paused, looked up
at the window of what had been
you and Dad's bedroom, the window
you used to look out
at only you knew what.

Thirty summers ago we scooped
out chunks of the inner city,
planted part of your rural childhood.

As I wiped the dirt from my face,
cleaned the shovel, then lit a cigarette
I saw what looked like pieces
of your sunglasses, the pair
that slipped from your face
and I accidentally stepped on,
still on the ledge
of the basement window.
And I saw you turn away, again,
so I wouldn't see the bruises
around your right eye.

For weeks the cuts from the thorns
kept opening on my hands,

and I finally understood
why you were so specific
about where we planted those bushes.

She Said, He Said

The woman across the hall
in apartment 22C was arrested
last night. In a vodka lubricated
rage she nailed her husband's hands
to the headboard with a steak knife
while he slept.

She claimed, as the police
were taking her away,
that she loved her husband
but lately he just stared
at her "With his Alfred
Hitchcock-camera-eyes—
You know, first victim, then villain
like in Rear Window."

Nailing him up
was the only way
to turn the camera off,
she said.

The husband was carried
out on a stretcher by EMTs
and said, as the doors
on the ambulance
were closing: "Next time,
I hope the crazy bitch
can find it in her heart
to love me
just a little bit less."

Reconstructing a Name

Shoe-Shine-Doctor-Mike, my father
told me when I asked how he got his name,
had been drafted out of his second year
at dental school into the 366th Infantry
to dig latrines with my father and others
for White American troops
on layover in North Africa, waiting
for orders that would send them all
to the liberation of Europe.

Months later on a narrow snow-littered
mountain road north of Rome
the week before Christmas, 1943,
a German artillery shell blew up
the Jeep he was driving
to deliver letters and packages
to a frontline unit; blew him
and the Jeep off the road, over the edge,
creating a sound in his head
like millions of bees searching
for a way out of darkness.

Back home after the war, in
and out of chronically
disinterested Veteran's hospitals,
shining shoes, skidding the brushes,
making the rag
pop across their surface
pulling from their dull depths a luster
so reflective you could read the date
on a dime held three inches away,
was the only job that calmed
Doctor Mike, helped him
quiet the bees.

Yuk-Tai Man

She Kissed Me

She kissed me. I was mad and cursed. Robert stopped me.

I don't remember her name. I want to call her blonde. She was new to our second grade. Mrs. Goodwin picked me to be her friend. The new girl and I both lived in the apartments towers along Rindge Ave.

I should have walked her home. She said her family had just moved from Kenya. Her dad had been a missionary doctor. I might not have known what a missionary was; I might have known that Kenya was far away. My family had come from Hong Kong.

I must have walked her home. But when she came to play, I left her with my sister.

"You were lucky she kissed you," Robert said.

Everyone liked Robert. Everyone looked up to him. I did.

I rubbed my cheek. I shouted to Robert. "She kissed me. She kissed me."

"You were lucky," he said.

Like Frost's traveler on "The Road Not Taken," I think to a moment "that has made all the difference." I think back to the girl in the second grade. I think, and I could believe. Robert was right. I had been lucky. But I broke that luck and set it crooked.

If I had thanked the girl in the second grade, in college Sara might have kissed me. If I had apologized, if I had just not shouted, Sara might not have said no. Sara might have stayed.

"Ages and ages hence," Frost's traveler might also believe. The traveler might "be telling this with a sigh." The traveler might say that where "two roads diverged"

I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.

But in the poem's first two stanzas and in the first two lines of its third, Frost's traveler describes the two roads as "really about the same." From where they "diverged in a yellow wood," the traveler "looked down one [road] as far as I could" and then "took the other, as just as fair." Though the traveler suggests that one road has "the better claim / Because it was grassy and wanted wear," the traveler admits that

. . .the passing there

had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.

If the two roads were “really about the same,” if neither were really “less traveled by,” then taking one over the other could make no “difference.” Thus, the traveler could not “sigh” over that “difference” without irony.

In the poem’s present, the traveler has not yet “sigh[ed].” That “sigh” lies in an imagined future, “ages and ages hence.” In imagining that future, the traveler anticipates remembrance—“I shall be telling this”-and perhaps nostalgia—“with a sigh.”

In that future, looking back, the traveler begins a re-telling of where “two roads diverged” with the same phrase that begins the poem. That future traveler, though, already condenses a detail: “in a wood,” not “a yellow wood.” A colon marks the beginning of this re-telling, and a dash marks a turn:

Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-

The future traveler might still regret “not travel[ing] both [roads]/ and be one traveler.” The future traveler might still remember-might admit-having “know[n] how way leads on to way” and “doubt[ing] if I should ever come back”—knowingly giving up one road for the other. But in the poem’s last stanza, the future traveler takes consolation for “the road not taken” in the “road less traveled.” Again, the tone of “sigh” depends on the tone of “difference.” If the future traveler believes in a “road less traveled,” in that “road” “ma[king]” real “difference,” then “difference” loses its irony, and “sigh” too. That future “sigh” would be sincere.

That “sigh” would signal a belief not only in a “difference” but also the consequences of that “difference.” The choice of one road the future traveler looks back at as pivotal, as fundamental-root to the rise of that future. In looking back and finding a “difference,” the future traveler finds an explanation for the life lived since “two roads diverged.” For the future traveler, “the difference” lies as much or more between the life lived and a life not as between “the road less traveled” and the road not. In this way, the future traveler creates a personal mythology, and an accident of history transforms into a moment of fate.

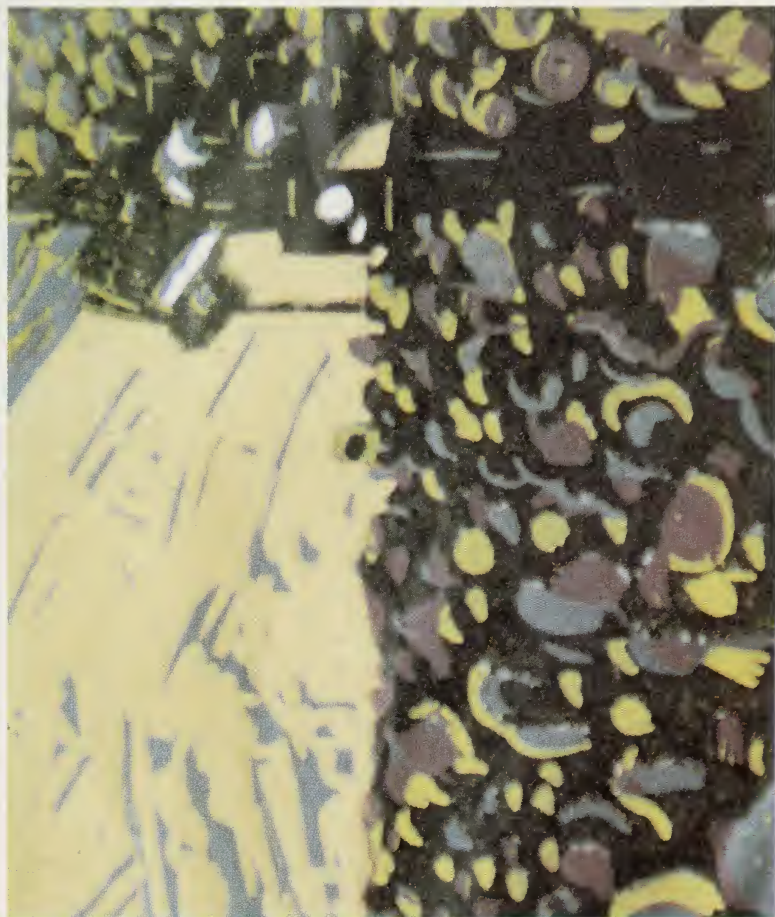
The present traveler, though, knows better. The present “sigh” is ironic. Just as “all” might total much or none, “all the difference” might measure extent, the reality, of the “difference”-or the lack.

Where “two roads diverged” “long I stood”—not this “morning” but “that morning.” “That” suggests a past. The present traveler establishes this past before imagining a future’s revision—from “a yellow

wood" to "a wood." While irony might ring in the dissonance of what is against what should be, in this poem irony rises in the clash of what the present remembers and what it anticipates the future to want to believe. For the present traveler, "the difference" lies in this, and this the present traveler knows.

The present traveler, though, makes more than irony. The present traveler not only knows; the present traveler tells. In the poem, the present traveler not only anticipates a future's revision but presents it in contrast to a remembered past. The present traveler-"I shall be telling this"-mocks a future self-"with a sigh." Not years or decades but "ages and ages hence"-the exaggeration of time in turn exaggerates "sigh," distending it from emotion to melodrama and so further self-mockery.

I can't say I lost Sara. I never had her. Years or decades-still I want her. I want even to have had her. So I imagine. The girl in the second grade-I don't remember her name. I only want to call her blonde. But I remember enough. I improve it. I make from a figment of memory a figure of fate. I mythologize-I know. Unlike Frost's traveler, I don't anticipate revision; I've made it. If I believe that apologizing to the girl in second grade would have let Sara stay, then I believe that Sara wanted to stay. Then I believe that I had Sara to lose-and that "mak[es] all the difference."



Janet Willard *Jazz*
Subtractive Print on Rice Paper



Erica White Untitled
Color Photograph

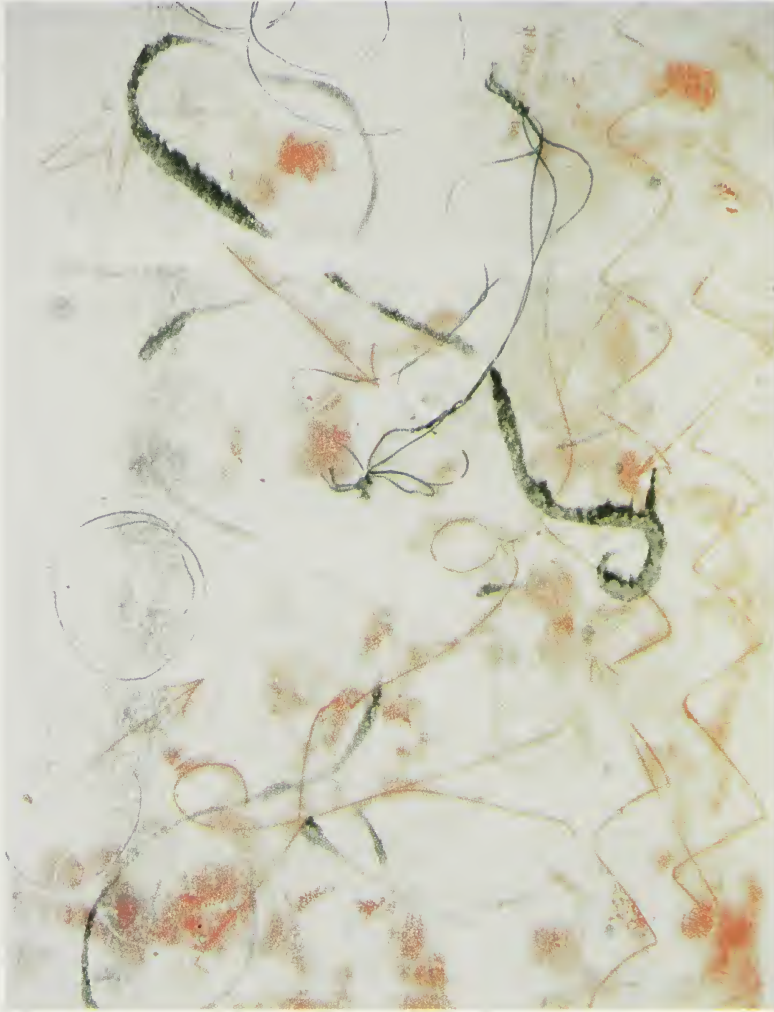


Erica White *Untitled*
Color Photograph

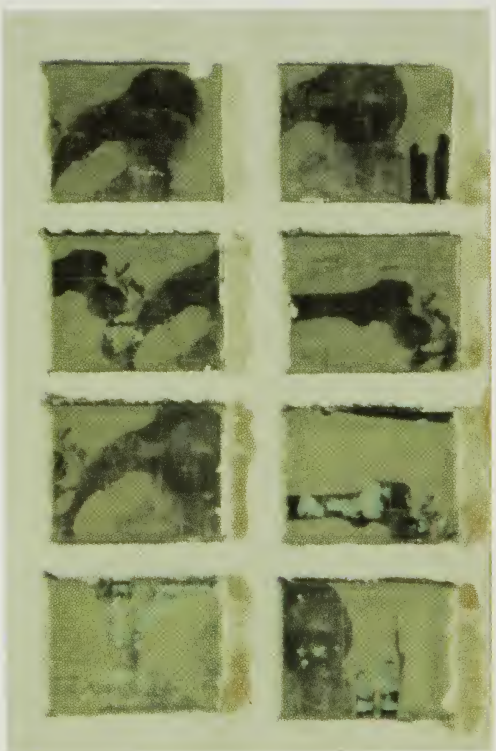


Joanne F. Desmond *Untitled*
Monoprint

Color art



Joanne F. Desmond *Untitled*
Monoprint



Joanne F. Desmond *Untitled*
Monoprint



Darlene Fahy *Reaching*
Subtractive Print



Sunil Gulab Untitled
Acrylic on Canvas

Where the Heart Is

She surveyed the chaos in her little house with despair. The brown and white swirly-patterned curtains that she had picked out with such care hung limp and filthy in the breathless heat of midday. All the furniture that she had so joyfully bought when she first moved here looked tired. She looked at the pale blonde wood bed with the elephant head legs (one of them was broken) and wished she could take it with her. She remembered that she had such trouble buying things for the little house because it stood in the middle of the watercress fields, accessible only by an old and cracked cement footpath elevated slightly above the muck.

When she discovered the strange bed in the tiny furniture shop down a side lane in Tai Po Market, she decided she had to have it. There could not possibly be another one like it. It was a low wood platform bed with drawers on the side and when she bent to inspect it more closely in the cool dim interior of the shop she was astonished to find that each of the short chunky wooden legs was actually carved in the shape of an elephant's head replete with a painted ivory tusk. The head-board was elaborately decorated as well, with the Chinese characters for "double happiness" etched into the pale blonde wood, flanked by a phoenix and a dragon. An old Chinese man with scrawny shoulders erupted out one of the gloomy corners and asked her what she wanted. When she explained where she lived and tentatively asked whether the shop could possibly deliver the bed to a place where it was necessary to carry it on someone's back, the old man laughed.

"Mouh mantaih," he said, "No problem. If I restricted my business only to those who lived on roads, then where would I be? Once my men carried fourteen chairs and a long table up to the Che Kung Monastery."

The old man showed her a wooden wardrobe with the same elephant head legs and a raised carved strip with plum blossoms and birds on the doors, and she immediately decided to buy it too. She was entranced with her bed. Not only did she read and sleep in it, but she wrote, corrected papers, and ate and drank in it too. The mattress was thin and so hard that she could easily balance a full cup of coffee on it. At night before she went to sleep she would reach up behind and trace the outlines of the phoenix and the dragon with her fingertips. In the spring when the Arabian jasmine bloomed in her garden, she went out at night and plucked the fragrant white sprigs (which were always full of insects) and put them under her pillow. One morning she woke up to find, as a result of a construction project gone wrong on the other side of the town, her room full of filthy red water and the elephant heads

submerged.

When she had first moved to the little house in the watercress fields six years before, she thought she had found a secure niche for herself. She would continue her romantic and solitary existence and stay here forever; well, at least for the foreseeable future. One of her friends back in the U.S. had accused her of being like some character in a Joseph Conrad novel, presiding over the death of the last star in the crown of the British Empire. How ironic, the government had plans for massive development, plans for demolishing the village of frail houses where she lived. At almost the same time she had lost here employment visa, and therefore, the right to stay in Hong Kong.

"Ha," she thought, "I doubt if Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad ever had to worry about working visas." It was ridiculous—she wished she were a man—a famous explorer, a seaman, a world-renowned author who floated along sluggish tropical rivers in old rice barges. When she was a little girl she wanted to be a pirate, and she thought that now she lived a little bit like one. Actually there really were two famous women pirates, Anne Bonney and Mary Somebody-Or-Other. However, they both escaped being sentenced to death by hanging at their trials because they were both pregnant. How ignominious she thought—she would have preferred to die like a real man on the gallows.

So now here she was trying to cram twelve years of her life into two suitcases and a few cardboard boxes to be ready to leave in two days time. The doors of the enamel white cupboards in the living room gaped forlornly open. Her powers of judgment were sadly skewed; she could not decide what went where, and what she should do next. She grabbed a large black ceramic teapot, lavishly and improbably painted with pink, blue, and yellow morning glories and peonies, out of the cupboard and wrapped it in a gray rag of a tee-shirt and tossed it casually into a carton of musty yellowing books.

Two light rectangles over the doorway marked where the blue cloth paintings of the Thai dancer had hung. Now that the paintings were gone, Violet and her children had nowhere to live. Violet, the small purple lizard who used to live behind the picture frames, was an expert at catching mosquitoes. She looked sadly at the empty spaces and thought that she would miss sitting here on hot summer nights drinking San Miguel beer and watching Violet at work.

The German washing machine that squatted malevolently and aggressively in the kitchen she would not miss. She bought it on the same day in the adjoining appliance shop as the elephant-eared bed and wardrobe, but it was not such a felicitous purchase. It had been in the shop for many years but no one had ever bought it because it was so big. She paid only a hundred dollars for it, and it came without any instruction book. Under its lid were polysyllabic capitalized words and numbers in Germans, but she certainly did not understand any of it. The washing machine mysteriously made its own hot water, and incin-

erated many loads of laundry before she figured out how to control it. It was also fond of secreting green socks and red underpants in its bowels so it could dye the next load of laundry sickly colors before it was discovered. Its most favorite trick was to jump up and down on its spindly iron legs while emitting ear-piercing shrieks and pulling its cord out of the wall at the same time.

She had a blinding headache brought on by the heat beating down on the tin roof and the pain of having to decide what to do with all the things she had accumulated. Her hair was plastered to her head and the sweat ran down through her eyebrows and joined with the tears, nearly blinding her. Visions of cool ocean water the color of young green wine shimmered in her head. She thought about the squeaky white sand at Bun Yuht Wan, a bay like a half of the moon, on an uninhabited rocky island far out to sea. She glanced at her watch and noted it was quarter after eleven. If she dropped everything right now, she probably had enough time to find Uncle Chan among the fishing junks at Sai Kung Harbor and hire his *sampan* and go out to the island one more time. She would not tell him it was probably the last time she would use his boat.

Peeling off her sweat-sodden clothes, she decided they were totally unsalvageable. She rolled them up and threw them in the trash and stepped into the bathroom where she sluiced herself with dipperfuls of icy cold water mixed with disinfectant that she kept stored in a giant plastic garbage bin. Hong Kong was experiencing yet another period of water rationing, and the taps were only on from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and again in the evening from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. This caused everyone to keep very odd hours and created traffic jams in the evening as everyone dashed home to take a bath before the water went off.

She dressed quickly in a tee-shirt and a pair of pale grey baggy cotton pants and stuffed her bathing suit, towel, and cane mat into a wicker market basket and was out the door. Water she would buy later at the pier. Despite the fact that Hong Kong was so small, it took almost two hours to get from where she lived in the north of the New Territories to Sai Kung Harbor in the east by train, subway, and public bus due to the constant traffic congestion and the fact that it was necessary to go to the center of Kowloon before traveling out to the Sai Kung peninsula in the east.

She stepped out the door into the withering bast of hot air. At midday the village was eerily silent. The people in the village were lying low, trying not to sweat too much, and awaiting the arrival of water at 4 p.m. to wash themselves and their dishes. Most of the two hour journey was fairly painless as she spent the time reliving the high points of the past six years in her head. She was painlessly ejected from the electric train and moved along the conveyor belt of the escalator to the subway where she took the line to Choi Hung Estate where the terminal for the buses to Sai Kung were. The heat did not really register on her until she had to stand outside in a long line of people corralled like

buffalo into chutes marked off by heavy metal barricades. An ancient sagging red and cream-colored double decker bus lurched up. The angry-looking sweating red-faced driver, spit, cursed, and cranked the door open. he then moodily ignored the passengers. She noticed that he was wearing two plastic sandals that did not match. He swore again, slammed the door on a young mother carrying a baby in a red embroidered cotton sling on her back, and abruptly took off.

She eagerly bounced off the bus in the direction of the harbor, searching for the old fisherman that everyone called Uncle Chan. A barely discernible breeze from the south floated around her body. The water in the harbor was like the blue-green glass of a *sho-chu* bottle. Pale fingers of mist hovered insubstantially over the water. Uncle Chan did not go far out to sea for fishing these days. He kept himself busy by ferrying people who wanted to go swimming out at Bun Yuht Wan. He lived on a big high-prowed fishing junk with his wife, many plastic buckets of fresh water, a black cat, and a very neurotic dog in the harbor and used a small *sampan* to do his water-taxi business. The *sampan* was a funny little flat-bottomed boat with a curved bonnet on it like a covered wagon from an old western movie. It rode very low in the water and was festooned front and back with black rubber tires. Uncle Chan tried to exercise the black-tongued, curly-tailed dog by him over to the mainland in his *sampan*, but the dog only hovered on the pier and yelped anxiously to be brought back to the junk. Mrs. Chan, in her hard cone-shaped straw hat, was usually seen cleaning fish in the bow of the junk, unconcernedly tossing overboard fish heads and guts into the polluted water of the port shelter.

She almost did not remember how she first met Uncle Chan. She guessed she had gone along with some of her Chinese friends in a group to go out to the island for swimming and by chance they had rented Uncle Chan's *sampan*. She did not speak Chinese then, but as soon as she became somewhat fluent she was happy she could hire Uncle Chan's *sampan* by herself. When she first started going to the pier by herself the other fisher folk tried to get her to hire their sampans. One of them had tried to charge \$50 instead of the usual \$40 to which she retorted,

"forget it! That's too expensive. The price of gas this year is the same as last's. \$40. That's it."

After that when they saw her coming they always went off and got Uncle Chan without her asking. They were not very friendly, these independent people who had lived entire lives on the water. She particularly did not like Bun-Jek Jai who lost half of his arm and one eye because he had been experimenting with dynamite as a means of catching fish. He gave her a hard look today, but Uncle Chan appeared shortly, all smiles and glittering gold teeth.

"Very hot, isn't it. Always like this before a typhoon. Water calm like in a soup bowl here in the harbor. But the waves have white heads outside. You'll see out at the island. Now no problem. Maybe later

tonight."

Actually, she did not know Uncle Chan very well, but she liked him very much anyway. He was quite casual with her and almost treated her as if she were another man. He talked to her quite a bit, although she did not understand him completely as he spoke Cantonese with a trace of the boatpeople's accent. He asked her quite a bit about herself, but he never asked her about the people she sometimes brought with her or why she was usually alone. He was seventy-three years old, although he looked fit and healthy. He was slim and dark-skinned, about five feet six. Except for the wrinkles around his eyes which she supposed he got from squinting into the sun all the time, his face was surprisingly unlined. He had a very long face and the back of his head was rather flat, almost as if he had been strapped to a board when he was a baby. He usually wore one of the hard straw broad-brimmed hats that always protected the heads of the male and female boatpeople and a grey tunic with a high neck. Uncle Chan was proud of the fact that he and his wife were Catholics, converted long ago by a Brother Felix from Ireland.

Although he never wore a watch or carried a notebook or a pencil Uncle Chan was never late picking up any of his charges from the island. The island was uninhabited and had no source of fresh water or any trees; it probably would not have been a particularly good place to spend the night. When she first started going to the island by herself, she had a terrible fear that he would leave her there some night and in the beginning this somewhat marred her enjoyment of the elemental pleasures of the place. Once in a while she displayed the island to a few people as if it were a rare and beautiful treasure that they were royally privileged to see. One time she had been on the opposite coast of the island in a tiny cove with two of her friends. Uncle Chan had appeared at the horseshoe-shaped bay of Bun Yuht Wan to pick them up. Not finding them, he had anchored his boat and walked over the whole island searching for them. Unlike almost every person she had ever known, Uncle Chan had never failed her.

Today she felt instant peace when she climbed into his boat. The sun was shining so brightly upon the water that it was impossible to see anything. She felt like she was inside a helium balloon suspended in time and space. At first there was nothing but the same humid calm, but as soon as they slipped out of the port shelter, the waves began to slap hard on the sides of the *sampan*. She braced herself and sat out in the bow in the open and felt the salt spray on her face. She and Uncle Chan began to laugh at the same time. As they rounded the point the propellers lifted straight out of the water for a moment. As soon as the boat bounced back and recovered itself, the engine coughed, choked and died and the boat came to an abrupt halt as if some undersea monster had eaten up the propeller. Uncle Chan abandoned the tiller and anxiously peered over the stern. He muttered something she could not understand and threw the anchor over the side. She was slightly taken

aback to see him stripping down to his underwear. He jammed on a face mask, snatched up a gaff hook and jumped over the side. They were far out at sea now right on the edge of the shipping channel and possibly in the way of container ships and oil tankers here. She knew the water was over a hundred feet deep here and was oily, black, and sinister looking. Several minutes crawled by and Uncle Chan did not reappear. She was very worried—he was in good shape, but after all he was seventy-three years old—just how long could he hold his breath? Suddenly, he shot up at the stern with a tangle of heavy steel wire.

“No problem,” he announced, “Everything’s fine now. Just some garbage caught in the propeller. Made it stop.”

He splashed a dipperful of fresh water over his head and took up his position at the tiller again. He replaced his hat but not his clothes.

She thought about the people she had come to the island with before. She always showed the island to people who were just passing through Hong Kong and would never return. The island was certainly no secret, but she did not want any more people showing it to their friends. The only person in Hong Kong she had ever brought there was a former boyfriend, Ron, or was it Sam? He told her his name was Ron Scott, but he used Sam Scott as a stage name because back in England there already was a jazz musician named Ronnie Scott. But everyone else she had ever met while she was with him called him Sam—she wondered what he was running away from.

Ron/Sam had thought the island beautiful and swam with her all day in the cool green water of the horse-shoe shaped bay. He said that she and the ocean water were like lovers. She thought he was somewhat like a pirate himself when he told her all the tales of his former lives. Before coming to Hong Kong this time (he had lived here during the 1960’s), he was a business student at the University of Guam and played the piano at Shakey’s Pizza Parlor. Three years ago he had tried his hand at being a professor of business studies at one of the local colleges run by the Baptist Church where she had met him while she was teaching English there. Unfortunately, there had been a purge of the godless and they had both lost their jobs. She had been caught doing imitations of a visiting evangelist in the staff room. Then he played the piano in a jazz band at Ned Kelly’s Last Stand until 4 a.m. every night. In another of his incarnations he had owned an English pub, the Yard of Ale, in Bangkok. She had liked him but they were never in sync with one another. Sad, one day he decided he had had enough of the Orient and went back to England. He never wrote to her.

The bare, steep island loomed up surreally against the bright blue sky. Two peaks rose sheer from the water. They were connected by a saddle ridge with a thin dusting of green on it. There were no trees on the island, only thorny unfriendly bushes whose leaves gave off a sharp herbal tang when stepped on. The bushes bore blooms made up of tiny

florets colored pumpkin and rose, mixed together in the same flower head. The cliffs fell straight down to the foaming sea which made sonorous booming noises as it went in and out of the caves at the base of the cliffs. In front of the saddle ridge was the most perfect beach with squeaky white sand and a bay of clear green water that was almost closed off by the fangs of bare rock outcroppings that surrounded it. Small black and white striped fish rose up out of the water in a fan in front of them. Perhaps Treasure Island looked like this. Uncle Chan butted the bow of his boat up against the rocks and she scuttled quickly up the ribs of the rocks.

Of course the time flew by. She stopped swimming when the sun was low in the sky because she could not see very well into the pools of deep water under the outcrops of sheer rock. She never looked at the paperback novel she had brought with her, preferring to spend the time gazing at the sky until it was streaked with red and Uncle Chan came to pick her up.

Two days later her friend Andrew came to take her to the airport. She was sagging with the grief of having to leave. Andrew tried to comfort her and said,

"Don't worry. Everything will be all right. You should be happy you're going back to your native country. You'll be near to your family again."

"No, you don't understand. You don't have a family like mine; they're like the combined cast of Hamlet, King Lear, and Othello all rolled into one. They make me crazy; they suck the life out of me; they drag me down. I don't really want to be anywhere near them. All they want to do is to sit around and groan about how terrible life is treating them. And they want me to join their circle and be helpless too."

"But it's better to be back in your native land where everyone speaks the same language that you do."

"It was an unfortunate accident that I had to be born there. I never felt I belonged there. Once I came here, I thought I would always be here. I remember everything there as being grey and dead. There's so much life here. Oh, I know it has its bad points. It's so hot a lot of the time, it's too noisy; the air is bad and it's much too crowded. But I always feel so alive here. My heart beats faster when I'm on the streets of Hong Kong. When I wake up in the morning I think about whether I'm going to do something Chinese today or something British."

She closed the bright green metal door of the little house. She had to use a handkerchief to do this because it was so hot. She did not lock the door. She stepped out and yanked viciously at the plastic tether of her suitcase. The suitcase did not want to follow her and tangled its wheels up in the long grass that poked through the cracks in the cement in the courtyard.

"No," she said, "Nothing will ever be all right again."

The Flapper Rapper

The Official Jay Gatsby Fan Club Newsletter

Beth Niece, Editor

Is Gatsby Great



Recently some skepticism has surfaced regarding the greatness of Mr. Jay Gatsby. Without naming names, we will say that the question over Jay Gatsby's greatness or lack thereof was first posed by a certain American Studies professor at the University of Massachusetts—Boston whose initials happen to be L. R. As president of the Jay Gatsby Fan Club, I have been asked to issue a short statement explaining our position in the debate.



We know that it will come as no surprise to readers that we stand by Gatsby, continuing to believe that he is, indeed, great. Jay Gatsby is a man who, like young Ragged Dick, sees the truth and beauty of the American Dream, and understands that he need only work hard to achieve greatness. Now, we've heard some speculation that Gatsby's death could be symbolic of the death of the American Dream (blah blah blah). This couldn't be farther

from the truth. In fact, Jay Gatsby is alive and well. Allow me to explain: Realizing just in time that the wench Daisy, who ensnared him and led him on for years, would ultimately lead to his downfall, Jay silently escaped in a hot air balloon moments before crazy Wilson's arrival.



Unfortunately, after floating aimlessly for several hours, the balloon was assaulted by a moribund eagle. The resulting tear in the vehicle's hide forced an immediate landing in a desolate region of Michigan. There Mr. Gatsby met up with a pitiful young man who seemed perpetually annoyed by his presence. Because this nomadic fisherman refused to assist Gatsby, our hero was forced to "borrow" some gut leaders in order to repair his small craft. However, using his unfailing charm, Gatsby was able to persuade the young man to assist him in carrying his balloon to a clear spot beyond the nearby bog in order to attempt a launch.



Although the weak young man perished in the trek through the

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swamp, Gatsby got through without difficulty and the launch was a success.

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Gatsby has continued to thrive. After establishing his position as one of the most prominent grape growers in California, Gatsby went into textiles. Later, he invested in casinos and inner city real estate. Clearly, despite suggestions to the contrary, Gatsby is great, and the American Dream lives on!

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(Please see our september issues for the most recent sightings.)



Ask Hillary

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Dear Hillary,

I am an inner-city youth who would like to buy a house one day. Forget about being rich. I just want a little house in the country. How do I do this when I can't even find a good job?

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Dear Hillary,

I am writing because I would like to know why your organization insists upon keeping Gatsby alive. Don't you understand that he is dead. You people are completely missing the point. Even as a fictional character Jay Gatsby wasn't real. Jimmy Gatz was a young man who bought into a media generated myth. He invented Jay Gatsby, a sad fraud who had to resort to illegal activities to even come close to realizing the fantasy. Even so, he didn't stand a chance of survival in a world of Buchanans.

The American Dream never really existed. It was always an illusion. The sooner you realize this the better.

Fitz From Afar



Dear Fitz,

I have printed your letter in an effort to show the exact attitude which will ensure defeat every time. The American Dream an illusion? I think not! Just look at Michael Milken and Bill Gates. These are two fine young Americans who have taken the initiative and attained the prosperity they deserve!

The Flapper Rapper

The Official Jay Gatsby Fan Club Newsletter



Up & Coming

December 24

Open seminar, topic: *The Business of Religion in America*. The link between profit and spirituality will be explored and discussed in this two hour meeting. Proceeds will benefit the Young Republican College Fund.

February 14

Annual Gatsby Ball Join us for this great event held in honor of the famous Gatsby party. Free drinks! Free food! Free shirts! Tickets only \$350.00 each. Call for more information.



Recipe Corner

Mock Cherry Chesse Cake

1 jar sugar-free cherry preserves
1 pre-made graham cracker crust
1 cup egg substitute product
3 cup fat free cream cheese
1/4 cup artificial sweetener

Blend egg substitute and cream cheese until smooth. Add artifical sweetener to avoid bitter flavor. Pour into crust (You may make homemade but we don't recom mend this as it will require work.) Top with cherry preserve. This won't add much flavor but it will improve the appearance. Enjoy!



We Love Gatsby!

These Connemara Men

for P.J. McDonagh 1975-1994(97)

waked at Murphy's
after three years
internment in the dark black water
of a foreign quarry

three years . . .

and tomorrow one last
plane ride home

sitting aslant
my father and uncle
in the pub afterwards
drinking stout,
talking of the dead
—all those old old men,
but your name
we do not say it aloud,
for these shadows of the past
thrown in profile across each other
there are no words in an english
learned working for Mcalpine
in Southhampton, London and Newcastle
to say what can only be sung in *Gailge*,
caps pulled down to eyes
dulled a mercury-blue from
staring into the sun
glimmering off water,
and later, off the high
American construction skies,
the rake of their noses
like hawks of the sea
shaped by that wild Atlantic
spray, and the *cruaca* of turf
cut from fields of bones
in Muckinagh,
where you were born,
laden in the belly of
an báid mór
bound for the islands

glittering like fields of nitre
rising above the foam crests,
when our father's were
as young as you were
sinking sinking
three thousand miles away
sinking alone

three year . . .

and tomorrow one last
plane ride home

and now I know
that black bog of bones
in Muckinagh
where our families
once cut turf—
its bottom
is endless.

Blue

Poppin pills and chills
on my motorbike
I'm a megaton peacemaker
burnin with white light
a methadone speedracer
speedin through the night
a mach two heroin jet
burnin entrails across the sky
my heart pumping pumping blue
bleedin through
 my insides
--Fix, Blue Declan Macguire
The Literary Journal, December, 1976

Dec was a poet, a fuckin artistic genius, we always knew that. The way he'd lay back smokin and drinkin and doin his thing, words comin like they were just meant to be, like no words we had ever heard before, not there in that place, so easy like the way spit forms in your mouth is the way Dec formed words and he never swallowed. And the sounds stretched like a trombone or like a slide on a guitar where all the notes of all the chords in between trail right along. None of us were ever jealous of Dec, we didn't want the responsibilities of the Words, but we did respect him, I guess you could almost call it worship. Yeah. We worshipped Dec like some people worshipped God on Sundays, got down on our knees those lonely nights in solitary knowin we could make it through the terrible silence if we could only hear Dec's words, his songs. When Dec sang you knew there was a chance you were goin to make it, everythin was goin to be alright. But sometimes even that hope wasn't enough to get everyone through.

But Dec went right on speakin and singin those honeyed words like the caresses your mama gave you when you used to be sick—I mean really sick, no foolin this time—and like those types of caresses you got when you was older from all the sweet women you ever touched—but there ain't no women in here so you try not to think about it cept when Dec is singin, cause then you just can't help yourself an you start thinkin about Mouse who crashed on some bad stuff and accidentally broke a guards nose—man if he'd justa left im alone we'd a brought him down alright. He's near dead now, might as well be, a fuckin vegetable up the country. God they kicked him so many times in the head I could hear it splinterin an I could hear all the brains oozin out of him. You'd never think somethin as strong as bone could sound like that. Or the time

young Jimmy Laruzza bought some bad junk that JoJo brought in from outside—everythin he had on one last high before he went home—shootin up in the bathroom, pants around his ankles, shiiit every place, all booted up an his veins popped an the expression on his face like it all hit him quicker an uglier than a freight train.

Young Jimmy was a good one, he didn't deserve to go that way—there's some in here that do, wouldn't bat an eye if they did, but not him. So some took it out on JoJo, y'see, it never stops in here, nu-uh, never. So JoJo, he doesn't sell anymore. I mean—he can't, not after what they did to his hands. But he can still hear and as long as you can hear you can listen to Dec, croonin those magic words like he was one of those black gospel singers 'cept his voice rarely ever raised, just liquid oozin over those caramel lips always curled in laughter or a smile, not talkin or singin about things like God and Hallelujahs but things we could touch and see and feel, things that we thought of or dreamed of to forget about all the things in here—things that meant we were really closer to the outside than we thought.

Blue Declan knew what it did to you when you felt trapped, felt like there was no way out, like the way it was when you couldn't hear his words, just like Blackjack. He didn't listen hard enough I guess, maybe he didn't want to listen anymore, maybe he'd been dreamin too long about stuff he never thought he'd see comin true. Maybe he just couldn't hear Blue all the way down in solitary. Tied his socks together and then he tied them around his neck. And they let him swing through the night. That's what I think about, Blackjack swingin all alone in the dark, and up here Dec singin and us in all the light and the magic and the dreams. Gets hard thinkin like that sometimes. And I wonder how many more times I can stand the beatins the guards put on us, how many times I can take bein bent over the porcelain by the same hairy mothers, how many lifetimes do I have comin down and findin this is all real findin me right where I left me, how many more times can I handle solitary, and then I start wonderin an gettin scared that I won't have enough chances in solitary at all to do it right—like Blackjack did—an I get scared that I think like that but it's hard, y'know?

So I listen to sweet words drippin from Blue Declan's mouth, shapin em an contortin them so's they come out more beautiful then you can imagine, Ain't nothin not real up here an that's what Dec says an we believe him the sweet prophet-poet speaking the future and we close our eyes and trail his words like the notes that frame a chord and we make it real fat an full, an as I close my eyes I'm hearin Billie Holiday gurgling her brassy blues through the puke as the blood boiled in her popped veins, with her fixin's strewn across the floor in the stink of some cheap motel bathroom, and her dress hiked above her scarred thighs an I hear Blue Declan sayin **It's all real like the yellow brick road**, an shit **Just gotta believe**, an I smile though I'm scared because if I believe I can lift this chair, fling it across the room, and if I believe I

can struggle a little bit till they get me in the hold I believe I'll have one more chance in solitary.

An I'm so scared cause the chair is heavy real heavy in my hands an I don't want to swing alone in the dark like Blackjack did, but then maybe all that blackness it'd be nice, and quiet, and better than listenin to Blue Declan singin, singin off all the birthdays like a role call before you turn twenty-one, like all the dreams you ever had, or would have had, but never will have again, singin **Make em Real Make em Real**

so's you know they ain't never gonna be real,
and they ain't never, ever,
gonna be your own.

Thomas O'Malley

Oweny

Start a song, Tomás, my uncle coughed and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. I sat on the high stool next to him at the bar. He handed me a packet of crisps, and a bottle of Cidona. He took a gulp from his pint of stout; his throat convulsed, two bulging movements, and when he put the glass back on the bar it was half empty. And he coughed again. Just off the Wexford road in the pub he always stopped off at, and outside in the old Morris Minor, the three plaice were still wriggling about in the back even though they'd begun to stink. Flat-headed, and slick, and still alive though they should be dead, they scared the hell out of me. When I told him, he laughed and hugged me. I didn't understand but it was comforting to feel his arms about me, smelling of muck and fish and tobacco and alcohol. Aye, he said, ugly divils.

As I walked by the dockside one evening so fair,
to view the salt water and take the sea air,
I heard an old fisherman singing a song,
won't you take me away boys, my time is not long

His house, a green whitewashed cottage with a leaky rusted corrugated tin roof, lay sunk in the bogs down by the river. His wife, their four children, and two dogs squeezed into two rooms and a kitchen with a fireplace. Two industrial fishing reels, a scale, a dart plaque, a torn net he had not yet fixed, the sacred heart and a plastic holy water font hung from the stained walls. The ferrets had their runs out back. With a goat and a pig, a cock, some hens and some bantams. People asked Oweny why he kept a goat and pig, sure he had no use for them. Aren't I an aspirin farmer, he replied, sure Power down at the cross hasn't a pig the likes of this, begod, with a pig like this you're doin alright.

Even the dogs were next to useless. Black as the ace of spades, he'd bring them out near dusk with his gun but the fools would always drive the hares underground. The whores couldn't find their way home sure if'n they didn't have me to folly, he'd say, while their tails stirred the air. Their tails were always slapping the stone floor in front of the fireplace even as they were kicked out of the way.

Now Fiddler's Green is a place I heard tell,
where Fishermen go if they don't go to hell,
where the skies are all clear and the dolphins do play,
and the cold coast of Greenland is far, far away

When high tide came in it often rose up the path from the river and encroached the door. He loved the river but it seemed like a bad relationship. He always worked harder than other men drawing in their lines, and always came up shorter. He'd lost a friend and a favourite son to the river and still he loved it. It had broken his bones; slipping down the green slicked rocks like a shattered puppet, shards of glistening bone rearing through the skin. He'd lain out on the rocks all night as the water rose and his breath had quickened and his heart had filled with sadness but also a warm peace knowing that he would soon see his son again, until they had found him, shivering and pale, and singing into the dark.

When you get to the docks and the long trip is through,
there's pubs, there's clubs and there's lassies there too,
where the girls are all pretty and the beer it is free,
and there's bottles of rum growing from every tree

The doctors told him to lay off the drink, and he smiled and nodded, and as soon as he got in the old car he headed off to Campile, the pub on the hill overlooking the slow sluggish thread of the Barrow and methodically he downed his black pints one after the other, and his eyes reflected the shadows that coursed and rushed across the river's glimmering surface. So far away and yet one could see it; it gave the river the appearance of movement. And a clock ticked loudly against the wall.

Now I don't want a harp nor a halo, not me,
just give me a breeze and a good rolling sea,
I'll play me old squeeze-box as we sail along
with the wind in the rigging to sing me a song

On Sundays he started driving by the Molloy gravesite on the way to Wexford. The car crawling up Vinegar hill, him praying and cursing it on, for the love of God, come on now girl, come on now ye whoore, with his exuberant spit cleaning the windshield with cracked veins of blood, and then the car roaring down the other side into Christchurch, the bald tires smoking and screeching to a stop at the shop where he'd always pick me up a bag of bullseyes.

He pointed where my mother's parents were buried. I'd never known them; they'd died of consumption. He pointed to my mother's resting place and then his own. He pointed to where his own family would lie if they wished. He stood before his son Dick's grave for a long time and I couldn't tell if he was talking to me or Dick. When he didn't look up I walked to a corner in the sun and sat down, looking

back on his dark shape. A great oak overshadowed the site, it seemed like the only part of the graveyard shielded from the sun. It was windy and cold, and the tree limbs swayed and groaned, cracked like tired dead voices. And you have your place here too, Tomás, he said, if you want it. But I already knew then that I didn't.

All along the Wexford road he encouraged me to sing and he smiled but for once didn't join in. He just smiled and nodded and stared at the road ahead. But the sound I filled did not seem like enough without him, so I stopped but he encouraged me to continue with a sad smile on his face and I knew something was wrong but I continued, singing as hard and long and clear as

I could, until my throat felt raw, and he reached over and tousled my hair. Grand job, Tomás, grand job. And his eyes glistened, and I fell silent, my words my voice strangely hurting with every thump of my heart.

At the pub he said, Dick's in my dreams every night now, so he is, and Seamie Murphy, and Stef Burke, and Martin Culleton.

Remember him Tommy—he sometimes called me Tommy, it was the name of another son he had lost, in a trawler off the coast, that he never talked about—he was a right bastard with the young lads, he was quare mean, but he wasn't a bad sort sure he wasn't.

I munched at my crisps quietly.

He was in some state when they found him, he continued, his body had been down for over two weeks. Y'know sometimes they do get caught on stuff and stay down longer, well all manner of things had been at him. He shook his head, and looked at his left hand. A line had caught him by the hand years before and he had lost two fingers, sheared from the bone, in the struggle; the mark of the line was still wrapped around his wrist.

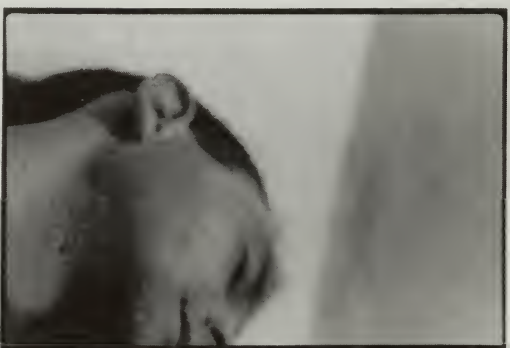
Driving home, the fading sun glancing blindingly off the high green ditches, I looked at my uncle's left hand. He had been lucky, the line had pulled him down but he had come back up. Some said he had cut his fingers off to free himself but no one ever asked him. He leaned his arm out the window and pressed his nubs into the wind, keeping his right on the wheel. Poor Martin, he said, don't think he ever had a good shag his whole miserable life. He looked over and laughed, Wha? and I laughed not understanding a thing but entranced and in love with the music that skipped from his mouth.

Wrap me up in me oilskins and jumper,
no more on the docks I'll be seen,
just tell my old shipmates, I'm takin a trip mates,
and I'll see you one day in Fiddler's Green

He died in his old Morris Minor at a crossroads leading from the pub.

Stout pulsating warmly, kindly through his veins and in his stomach. He'd just won a match of darts and his face beamed. The three large salmon he'd caught before dawn glistened in chromium blue on the floor. As he squinted into the sun there was only a slight quick pain high up in his chest that seemed to race up his throat and out his eyes until his vision was clouded and there was nothing to see but fading dancing shapes like silver arcs of water bent by the wind skittering across the dark surface of a rushing river, but when he fell forward onto the steering wheel, and the clutch slipped and the car lurched forward into the crossroads and eventually stalled with his head hanged across the dash, and the car smelling of the sea,

Oweny was miles and miles from water.



Ich will mich lieben lassen
In Welten, die nur ein Fremder sieht.
Ich möchte empfangen, erfassen,
Erleben, was anders geschieht.

Thomas A. Muench *Untitled*
Black and White Photograph

Seltzaam, im Nebel zu wandern!
Einsam ist jeder Bruch und Stein,
Kein Baum sieht den andern,
Jeder ist allein.

Seltzaam, im Nebel zu wandern!
Leben ist Einsamkeit.
Kein Mensch kennt den andern,
Jeder ist allein.



Thomas A. Muench *Untitled*
Black and White Photograph



Karen Yung
Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Karen Yung *Female Nude*
Charcoal on Paper

The Darkness Knows

Born from water
life sucks life
from a crying mother

whose mountains, lakes,
and seeds get stripped,
pumped, and poisoned

by single-minded reapers
who take turns
playing, "I'm the chosen One,"

on Her. Selling Her
body for arms,
trees for paper green.

With every passing spring
Her greens show
a little more black.

And some day,
the Darkness knows,
Her deepest sea will dry.

At Bottom

To the middle of the sea
where my will dove down,
down from the light
into blacker shades of green.

Pressure closed in
on my eyes, ears, and bones,
raised my blood hotter
and pushed my head down.

I would reach the bottom,
and force a final push,
to break the deepest darkness,
the coldest black within.

But as the grave called me closer,
a cold drizzle grew in my bones;
the sea then rumbled in thunder,
and Dark's red secrets were shown:

The Kraken climbed towards the surface,¹
while Woolf was on the floor,
bubbles lifted from her lungs and said,
"I-I-I w-i-i-i-l-l k-i-i-i-l-l m-y-y-y- s-e-e-e-l-f."²

She called his call to the purest black,
fell in doubt, and at bottom broke down.
He rose before dawn and died in dim light
for his evil creation: black vs. white.

Green light now shines down
through the deepest darkness,
to the warmest heart within.
Renewed will for Life was born, and

One voice to guide my climb.

1. From Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "The Kraken", . The monster sleeps at the bottom of the sea "Until the latter fire shall heat the deep; / Then once by man and angels to be seen, / In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die."

2. In Virginia Woolf's novel, Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and often says to himself, "I will kill myself," before succumbing to suicide. Also, Woolf killed herself by walking into a river and letting herself sink to the bottom.

The ABC's of Economics

Annihilating	Bourgeois
Children	Definitively
Eliminates	Future
Generations	Having
Influential	Jobs
Killing	Labor
Market	Negotiations
Overpowering	Proletariat
Quibbles	Reacting
Senselessly	Turning
Unusually	Violent
With	Xenophobic
Yankee	Zest

Surviving Racism

As I read a short excerpt from Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, I begin to understand the incredible complexity involved in caring for an African-American child in racist Arkansas in the time before the Civil Rights movement was born. A child needing relief from the pain of a toothache is a simple matter for me. but my experience is not one of a Black child or a Black woman. The relief of a painful toothache becomes a difficult and multifarious matter if that child is Black. The complexity grows to unimaginable proportions if the pain requires the crossing of racial barriers to obtain relief. Angelou, through a simple childhood experience, shares with my world the true meaning of the Black experience.

A black child feeling the excruciating throb of the pain of a toothache can enjoy that world of pain and suffering as long as she walks that path in her own neighborhood. As Maya and her grandmother walk down the road and cross the white boundary her enjoyment ends. She "had to stop moaning and start walking straight. The towel, which was drawn under [her] chin and tied over [her] head, had to be arranged. If one was dying, it had to be done in style if the dying took place in whitefolks' part of town" (2003). Can any pain be worse than denying the reality of our suffering? Yes, it is the pain of asking our child to deny hers.

Somehow the color of her skin changed the suffering of this child. Before the pain could be relieved, the matter of color had to be addressed. First there had to be the humiliation of her and her grandmother's Blackness. As her Momma asked for help, a child told them to wait on the porch. To add to the humiliation, they were kept waiting in the heat, and in a child's pain, for an hour. Humiliation was heaped on top of the physical pain because their skin was black. "It seemed terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness" (2003).

Dentist Lincoln owes Momma a great debt, but cannot break the rules of racism, not even for a child, not even for someone who willingly helped him in the past. The rules of racism are high above a Black child's pain. They are "policy" in the white, racist, southern world that Maya Angelou grew up in. Dentist Lincoln would "rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's" (2005). His racist attitude provides an excuse for irresponsibility and arrogance.

As Maya waited outside for her grandmother, she conjured up a magical scenario of her grandmother's confrontation with the ungrateful dentist. As her Momma demanded respect and took control of the

weasly dentist, he became humbled by her words and her presence. He begged for forgiveness and thanked her for his life. As they left, Maya had forgotten the pain. It had been numbed by her grandmother's imaginary triumph. She was able to lift herself up past the pain of humiliation which was much greater than the physical pain she was suffering. She later learned the truth, but "much preferred, my version" (2007).

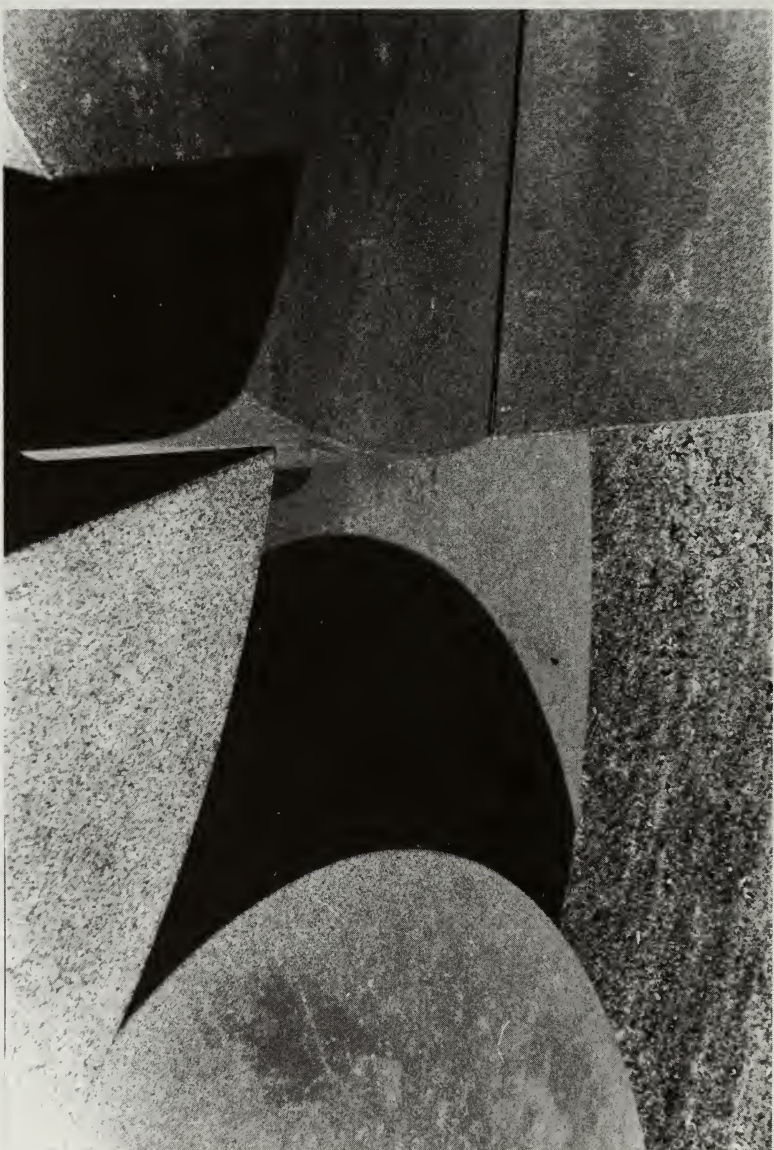
Her grandmother lost the war with the dentist. He did not take care of Maya's toothache. But she managed to come away with a victory in the battle. By making him pay for their trip to another dentist, she took back her dignity and power. After reading Maya Angelou's account of *The Peckerwood Dentist and Momma's Incredible Powers*, I began to understand why pain feels different in a body with black skin. The pain is worsened by the inability to feel it in a white neighborhood. The suffering is intensified by the inability of another human being to feel compassion for a child. A guardian's task of responsibility is anguished and difficult because of the Blackness of their skin. Somehow through this story Maya Angelou has communicated to my world the despicable definition of racism. But she has also communicated the universal and colorless definition of love. Angelou's need for a colorful imagination to survive being an African-American child in a racist environment, gave her the tools to help us understand. her gift is her ability to use her literature to relate to us through our common feelings and experiences.

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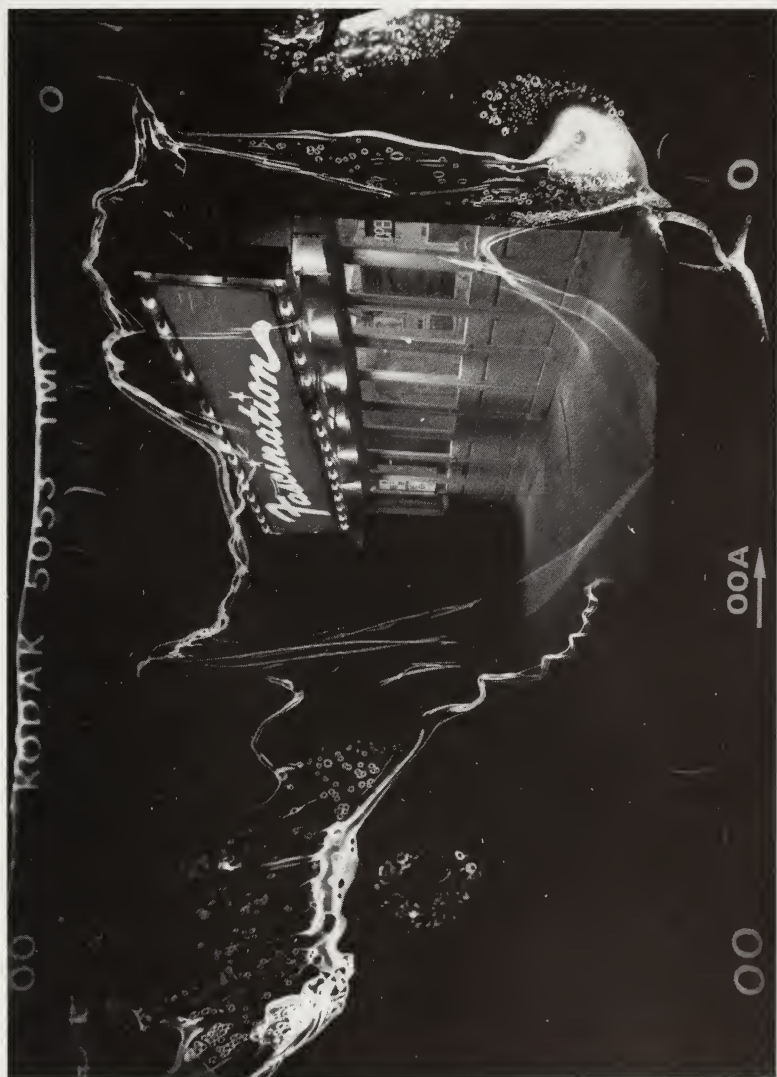
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Nicole Lyons
Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Fukiko Cudhea Untitled
Black and White Photograph



Brian McCarthy and Kimberly Jenner *Untitled*
Black and White Photograph

José Emilio Pacheco

El equilibrista
Entre las luces se perdió el abismo
So oye vibrar la cuerda

No hay red / sólo avidez / sólo aire
a la temperatura de la sangre

Suena el silencio
es invisible la luz
resbalosos milímetros acechan

Y la muerte
lo toma de la mano

Se deja conducir
pero la ve de frente
y ella baja la vista y se retira

Sabe respetar
a quien no la desdeña ni la teme

El hombre al fin
llega al extremo opuesto

Su pavor
se desploma en el aire

The Highwire Walker

(Translated from José Emilio Pacheco's Spanish Original)

The drop gets lost among the lights below
He attends to the rope's vibrations

There isn't any netting / only eagerness / only air
at the temperature of blood

The silence resonates / the light invisible
the treacherous inches wait

And death
takes him by the hand

He lets her lead
but looks at her straight on
and she lowers her gaze, retreating

She shows respect
for him who neither scorns nor fears her

The man finally
makes it to the other side

His fear
evaporates into air

From Like Waves in the Ether

(an excerpt)

Monday came after a weekend spent grading lab reports. All day Raymond half expected to have Monica come running to him to pay back the small debt. All day long, the other sensible half knew he would not see her. On Tuesday he bundled up against the wet raw cold and headed home to have a frozen dinner and read a newly published paper by a friend, a former colleague from Cornell. As he boarded the train he was jostled into the corner by the crowd of students, workers, and those anonymous souls who seemed to ride the trains all day. He was standing up against the glass window at the end of the car, holding on to the stainless steel bar over his head as the train lurched indecisively out of the station. His head was throbbing and his sinuses congested and Raymond feared that the first cold of the season was upon him. He was preoccupied with his health when he peered through the glass into the other car and saw Monica sitting there. If he felt like he was getting sick, she looked every bit as sick as he was going to become. Her skin was pasty, her eyes were wide and wild with fever. Raymond tapped on the glass to get her attention but either the sound was not sufficient or she was drifting off in some other universe parallel to his but divided by a great void incapable of transmitting the waves of his intent. As the train neared the next station, Raymond resolved to get on to her car.

"Howdy do? You look like shit." Raymond felt oddly at ease with her now that she owed him the twenty and also because she was so vulnerable. Her right eye was not as bad as he thought it would be, the storm there seemed to have passed, but her pupils were big dark pools of pitch. Raymond stood for a moment, could see his own image stuck there, and waited for a hint of recognition.

"Hey. I know you." There was a familiarity to her lilting voice that took Raymond back to the night in the cafe, and led him on to the slight kiss in the street. Yes, she did know him.

"You look like shit," he repeated.

"Yeah, well so do you. I don't feel so well. Why don't you sit down."

Raymond obliged and sat down next to her. His stop would be coming shortly so he felt they couldn't get into too much trouble chatting about their health.

"It's going around, I think."

"What's going around?" she said absently.

"Twenty-four hour thing, cold or flu. I don't know. I'm next. I

can feel it coming on."

Monica laughed lightly. It was a small laugh that echoed cold and flat.

"Well, make sure you bundle up. We need you professor types to be healthy, wealthy, and wise." There was a glint in her eye that betrayed a slight affection and Raymond was warmed by her brave attempt to put on a good face. It was clear to him the girl was suffering from withdrawal and his heart was breaking.

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe over to a friend's house. Maybe home. You're right about that twenty-four hour thing. I think I have that. I should go home."

"Where's home?"

She smiled at Raymond weakly and did not answer him.

"Well, my stop is next. I'm going home to warm up, eat some dinner, and read. Sounds pretty boring, doesn't it?"

"It actually sounds really, really nice."

The train came into his station. As it slowed to a halt, Raymond sat in his seat next to this frail and sick girl and regretted so much time had passed him by. Not so much here on this train passing niceties with a girl all sick for junk, but in his life chasing a similar high that would make him feel like he too belonged, like he too was loved. He thought that was why she must do it, why everyone must do whatever it was their appointed thing to do. He thought there really was very little difference between them, that all things were different only on the surface but if you probed them deeply they did break apart into a handful of particles—into fairy dust. As he sat there thinking on these things the door closed on his station and the train lurched forward, lumbering into an unknown for them both.

"I thought that was your stop."

"It was," he said.

They stood outside the apartment building, huddled under a ripped awning, chilled by the cold night mist blowing through their jackets. The neighborhood was one of many sections of the city that had been overrun by the transitory student population. Rents were cheap here and the amenities lacking. Monica reached out and pushed a buzzer, waited for the door to pop and looked at Raymond with as much protest as her sickened condition would allow. Or so he thought. In truth it was getting harder to tell what her looks meant as every step she took forward was accompanied by an ever increasing physical malaise. Her body had a slight tremor and her skin had a tinge of gray that seemed to glow cold under the florescent lights in this dilapidated foyer. A man's voice answered, Monica briskly stated her name and the door sprang open. Raymond knew his being here was a new development in his relationship to the world in general and to her in particular. What was possessing him to push himself here to this foreign corner

was beyond his limited knowledge of himself. In the absence of this data, he submitted his will entirely to the moment, hoping against all his training for a miracle that would reveal some part of himself and make an outing like this a thing understandable and devoid of mystery.

On the train, when he asked her to take him with her she laughed and said that would be quite impossible. But perhaps because of her weakened condition, or perhaps because she recognized the mutual benefit an excursion like this could have, or perhaps because there was a part of her that was responding to him, she finally gave in. Her only words of caution were that Cliff had a temper and might not appreciate the intrusion.

As they rounded the first landing, Raymond could see, in the dimness of the hallway, a door two floors up open and sending a wall of white light pressing up against the far side of the narrow hall. Into this wall of light walked the body of Cliff and all that light bent around the contours of his short and bulky frame.

"So who's that with you?"

"No one important. He's just a cop."

"Fuck you. Some of my best clients are cops. I'm serious. You know the rules. No one new. Who is he?"

"He's a friend. He teaches at school."

"No shit. A professor? I always wanted to be a professor."

"Well, maybe one day you will be. I can see you fitting in nicely at Harvard's Business School."

"Maybe I should leave." Raymond was unnerved by the mention of his profession. It had the effect of revealing the fraudulent nature of his being here. He was not a client. He was merely an observer. Raymond was startled at the irony. The same was true in his current position at school. He really wasn't involved there either. He was merely an observer. But the universe was a participatory one and the act of observing changes everything and now he stood in this hallway unsure of his business with Cliff or the girl.

"Well, I shouldn't be so rude. Come in. Make yourself at home. It's okay, Doc. You can stay. I've never sold junk to a professor."

"He's not here to buy or to sample. He's just here to. . ." Monica faltered. It was clear that she was physically and emotionally at her end. Her ability to keep up the charade had come to a severe halt and the exact purpose of Raymond's presence here escaped her.

"He's just here to hold your hand baby. How touching."

Raymond was developing a moral aversion to Cliff. Looking at him now, knowing that he had the power to alleviate Monica's distress, Raymond knew why a small man like Cliff sold drugs. The power over a person's soul was no unimportant thing and it was more power than Raymond had ever had. It was clear to him that Cliff enjoyed this part of the job, that he took pleasure, even sustenance in the deterioration of Monica's lapsed spirit. It occurred to him that he was probably the instrument of her recent beating and Raymond bit hard on his lip to

keep his growing rage in check.

"All right, kids. As stunning a conversationalist as I am at times, I know that you're here to do business so what'll it be? A bag or a bundle? Oh, kid. You got a habit. I bet you want a bundle." Cliff looked at her closely. "You know the deal. Strictly cash and carry."

"I know, but Cliffie. Just this once. Please."

"No way. You pay and screw. Nothing changes my mind."

"Look I'll pay for a full bundle, you keep two and I get eight." She pleaded. "I have a rig with me so I'll just go into the other room. No big deal."

"You'll buy a bundle, I'll keep four and you'll get the room. Because let's face it. Once you skin pop, darling, you're gonna be float-in' around for a while and I'm gonna be stuck with you."

"Fuck you, Cliff. Four's too much. It's not a fair deal."

"Not a problem. You can keep all ten bags and leave."

"You suck. Okay, but I only have a hundred dollars. Spot me the rest. I'm working tomorrow night. You know I'll have it."

"Now would be a real good time for your boyfriend here to step forward. Do the right thing. He's got money."

"He's not my boyfriend and I can't . . ."

"How much?" said Raymond.

"No you can't . . ."

"How much? I'm sorry. I couldn't follow the transaction. How much is she short? I'll pay whatever it is."

"Forty dollars short, Doc," said Cliff with a smile.

"twenty-five. Only pay him twenty-five. He's lying."

"All right. You give me the hundred, darling. Doc, you give me twenty-five. I give you six bags and a room to flop in and keep four bags for the trouble. Not a bad deal. Laissez faire capitalism at its finest."

Cliff reached into a brightly colored woven bag that was lying on the worn couch and pulled out a small rectangle that looked like a very small brick covered in wax paper. He opened this, pulled out four smaller rectangular glassine parcels, and threw the rest at Monica. She grabbed for them greedily. The look that registered on her bright face was pure hope. She went into the back bedroom and Raymond followed. He could not spend a single moment alone with a predator like Cliff. He followed her and felt a surge of complicit shame because he'd paid for part of her cache. And she did have a habit. He could no longer fool himself about that. He saw it in the reflex of her arms shooting out from her small body as she grabbed the tiny bags that Cliff had thrown at her.

In the back room, Monica took a small cup out of her bag and asked Raymond to retrieve some tap water from the bathroom.

"Just a little will do."

Raymond complied with her request and marveled at his total immersion in this rite that she was about to perform. Until two minutes

ago, he had never seen heroin in his life. Now the anticipation of bearing witness to the whole shooting match was beginning to create strange feelings in him that he could not name. Part of him felt that he should be more alarmed, more skeptical perhaps, or even outright ethically disturbed. But he was not. He was oddly at peace with the proceedings and completely willing to travel the distance necessary to see the reality of her need, the magnitude of her pain, and the efficacy of her solution.

He brought the water back to her and on a small table she had laid out the sacral instruments of her calling. There were the six bags which were one inch in length and a quarter inch wide fanned out with the confidence of a royal flush. Next to these and prominent on the table were three small syringes each with a four inch barrel no wider than a pencil. The needles were an inch and a half long and their tips were safely sheathed in small bright orange caps. The size of the needles surprised Raymond. He had imagined they would be larger. He attributed this larger-than-life fantasy to the mythic place that he had always relegated junkies to in his past. The smallness had a curious effect on him. They comforted him. Accompanying these and the glass of water was a small stainless teaspoon, several q-tips and the busy hands of Monica.

"Now, you're my student and I'm the professor." Monica smiled at him weakly and he was glad that he registered no trace of remorse or shame there. He wanted to be with her at this moment and he didn't want her to feel any sense of impropriety about that decision. She was what she was and it was time for her to be just that—a junkie, a priestess, a guide.

Monica took a q-tip, rolled and cradled one distaff end in her fingers, lightly pulling at it till it came off like cotton candy. She set this aside and picked up one of the six packets. As she turned it over in her hands, Raymond saw that the packet was stamped with a small blue star. She very carefully opened the packet letting it unfurl its length and at a corner she ripped a small hole to pour the contents out. This she did into the bowl of the spoon, being particularly careful to tap out the full dose of white powder. She then picked up one of the brand new syringes and held it towards Raymond as co-celebrant.

"Why don't you take the tip off for me?"

Raymond obeyed, mesmerized by the details of the offering. She then slowly dipped the angled tip of the needle into the glass of water and gingerly teased the plunger back with her dexterous index and middle fingers. This small portion of fluid she then transferred to the silver chalice and with the head of the plunger slowly stirred the contents until dissolution occurred. Next she placed the small cotton ball into the brine and Raymond watched as it quickly drank the liquid up. Into the safety of this filter, Monica eased the tip of the needle and gently pulled back on the plunger, emptying the spoon of its precious payload and filling the syringe halfway. She then held it vertical to the floor and

tapped the side with a flick of her free index finger and pushed the remaining air out of the chamber.

"Now you get to help. Push my sleeve up and hold my arm tight like a tourniquet."

Raymond couldn't speak. He just did as he was told. He was under her spell and for the moment he aided her with his diligence. He loosened the buttons on her left sleeve and very tenderly rolled the sleeve up and out of the way. Her cool-looking flesh was warm to touch and his trembling hands were eager to connect. It was the third time he had touched her. Raymond wrapped both his hands around her tiny upper arm, and slowly began to squeeze. Within moments he could feel the growing pulsation and rhythm of her blood being dammed by the force of his intervention. He looked down at the nape of her arm expecting the worse. Again he was surprised by the smallness of what he observed. No gaping, dripping sores or track marks like he imagined but rather several very small, almost imperceptible red lines about an eighth of an inch long. As Raymond kneeled squeezing her arm, Monica sat and balled her hand into a fist. She then took the syringe and placed the sharp tip on top of the glowing blue of her vein and tapped the end three times lightly before it was received. With the needle securely in place she pulled the plunger slightly back and Raymond saw a small cloud of red silk flutter into the chamber.

"Its okay now," she said. "You can let go."

Raymond did and as he held his breath, she let the plunger go deep into the chamber, releasing the power that lay dormant there and freeing herself from the agony of her condition. Raymond saw her retch immediately and reminded himself to breathe. It was over.

"Thanks. I hope it's what you wanted." She said this from a distance, peering at him from the fog. Her eyes were pinpoints and Raymond could see the color return to her like a spring shower that clears out the last snow. She very suddenly got up and ran to the bathroom and Raymond could hear her emptying what little contents there were in her stomach.

Now that the ceremony was over, he felt a certain anxious separation from the world and he thought of the paper he needed to read tonight. The publisher, a new science journal, was eager for new submissions and Raymond had scheduled an informal meeting with his friend on Friday to talk about the experience. Raymond needed to publish if he was to ever drum up interest in his research and this seemed to be a good vehicle. Raymond realized it was time to leave but he didn't know how.

Monica came back into the room and walked up to him. She placed her hands on his chest and leaned her head there.

"Such a sweet, nice. . . Such a lovely man. Sit with me." Monica slid down on to the chair and began to idly toy with the undone buttons to her sleeve.

"Sit and button me." She giggled warmly and Raymond could

tell that whatever caused the pain in her soul was under the spell of the drug and she had no concerns about the past and no concept of the future. She was transfixed by the luxury of the moment and sat deep in the lap of the god of opium.

Raymond stood not knowing how to take his leave.

"Hey, Doc, why don't you do yourselves both a big favor and screw?"

Raymond turned and saw the jealous glare of Cliff standing with the front door open wide for his departure. He thought he would take him up on the offer. He left and walked several blocks in the cold drizzle before he found a cab that would take him out of this student ghetto.

On Thursday, Raymond called his friend and congratulated him on a nicely researched piece. He then secured an appointment for the following day at noon after his last class of the week. The idea of having lunch at the Harvard Club rejuvenated Raymond and offered an assurance that in fact his career was just about to turn the corner. He seemed to have survived the worst of his cold and now as he turned the light out to sleep, he felt like a new man, ready to embrace tomorrow and begin his return to the fold. He lay there in the dark and drifted off to sleep, bright neutrinos spinning off in his dreams like a child's sparkler on the fourth of July.

The third ring of the telephone penetrated his deep sleep. By the fourth, he was sitting up trying to bring the clock into focus — 11:48. He anxiously reached over to the night stand and picked the receiver up.

"Hello?"

There was no answer, only the muted sound of hard, driving music and the labored breathing of a person in distress.

"Hello, who is this?"

Still there was no answer. Raymond was just beginning to get his thoughts under control, to return from the comfort of his dreams. He suddenly realized who it could be.

"Monica? Is that you?"

"Uh-huh."

Raymond could distinguish that the breathing in fact was the tail end of tremendous grief and Monica had been crying desperately in the quiet of night.

"It's okay. Where are you?" Raymond knew he wasn't asking for an address. He wanted to know her condition and made the correction. "How are you doing?"

"Not good."

"What's up?"

"You said to call."

"Yes?"

"To call if . . ."

"Yeah."

"I'm calling." Monica heaved into a new portion of her grief and though exhausted by continual crying, she began to sob.

Raymond could feel the power of her emotions come shooting through the wires and enter him transverse to his own emotional center. This surge of electrical grief that assaulted his senses affected him in a strange and wholly surprising way. This passion that entered him through Monica gave him a new awareness of his own deep sadness and disappointment. Raymond began to cry, softly and under the heavy blanket of shame.

"Please. I need your help."

Raymond knew he wanted to help this poor girl. He knew that's all he ever wanted to do because by helping her he could in some measure help himself. This was all very clear to him now.

"What do you want to do?" he asked.

"Look, I think I have a habit."

"I think you do too. I think you need to go to a detox."

"I can't do it alone. Will you take me?"

"When?"

"Tomorrow."

Tomorrow. It sat on his chest like a millstone. He was too busy tomorrow. He couldn't cancel class and he had his luncheon appointment at the Harvard Club. He could go afterwards, he supposed.

"How about around four?"

"Four? In the afternoon on a Friday? There wouldn't be a bed available anywhere, not with this cold weather. I'd have to go before one. Is that a problem?"

Raymond didn't know what to say. He couldn't just cancel because his friend was very busy and had to cancel an engagement himself just to meet with Raymond.

"That's a problem, isn't it? I'm sorry. I shouldn't have called. You've probably more important things to worry about than some junkie wanting to get clean."

"No. It's okay." Raymond heard himself tell her after a moments deliberation. "How about you meet me outside on the quad near the science building at 11:30. We'll get you into some place nice where you can get help. It's going to be okay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, its going to be okay. Just get some sleep and meet me tomorrow."

She thanked him and he hung the receiver up, stunned by the outcome of her claim on him. She needed him and he now had the power to change the course of a life for the better. He was no longer just an observer. He was a part of the universe and outcomes were being altered because of that fact. Raymond felt a particle whiz past him in the darkness of his room and he very contentedly fell asleep.

He called his friend early that morning and apologized for the inconvenience of altered plans but due to unfortunate circumstances beyond his control etcetera, etcetera. His friend was cordial, but it was clear to Raymond that a future meeting was out of the question. Raymond was oddly at ease with this. He was, in fact, becoming slowly aware of something new and completely outside of the range of possibilities he had assigned himself long ago in the research lab. He could be a good teacher. The students here at this school had come to him with their sincere questions, their confusions, and mostly their eagerness to learn mysteries which Raymond had taken for granted. This morning in class, he saw the interest in their eyes, in their questionings. They trusted he would have the answers. And he did. He wondered how he had missed this in the past. He guessed that it was lost in his chase for something beyond reach; something he was beginning to question whether he really needed. Research was all he had ever wanted for himself and now he was no longer certain. The particle accelerator had taught him many things about the base composition and behavior of the universe but nothing about his own soul. Talking to the girl last night had changed something in him. It was as if his soul had been bombarded by all her grief and that his own quiet suffering had been broken up into a thousand shards forever dissipated. His loss, the loss of his dream of neutrinos, the loss of esteem by brute association with research was finally acknowledged and in its place was an unknown quantity that made Raymond euphoric and excited about the future for the first time in many years. He was grateful to the girl and now wanted desperately to share that gratitude with her.

Unfortunately, it was almost noon and she hadn't shown up. Raymond sat on the concrete bench outside of the science building in the quad just where he said he would be. She was almost a half hour late and it was getting cold. Raymond didn't doubt for a minute that she would show up, feared even less for her safety, almost had a fatalistic sense that all would be well from here on out; with himself and with the girl. Raymond waited, shivering in the cold, and as he waited for Monica to show up, the air around him slowly began to fill with the tiny flakes of the season's first snow. To Raymond they resembled small bodies floating down from heaven, each unique, precious, and distinct. Delighted, he reached out his hand to catch one but as it touched him it melted, forever gone from the world.



Khue Si Bui
Untitled
Black and White Photograph

When It Was Still Yugoslavia

All that summer we drove
the crazy-built roads of Yugoslavia
in a Volkswagen van so bright green
the people stared
from their little towns.
We were twenty years old,
two best cousins,
the world on a string.
We pointed at stocky little women
draped all in black: head scarves,
heavy dresses and lace-up shoes,
black huddles at little market stands
along the narrow roads.
We pulled over when we got hungry,
jumped out on long tanned legs,
our bottoms just covered by cut-off jeans,
bought their small apples
and cartons of warm yogurt,
laughed as we drove away.
We swigged thick beer
with expensive chocolates.
We were skinny
and we were young.
Everyone was alive then.
And there was nothing else
we knew
or needed to know.

Early Indication

The table is set with heirloom linens,
silver polished and laid just so.
We've had our cocktail hour,
and dinner is prompt at six.
We are seated in the places
we always take. But her
speech is slurred again,
her head, wobbly. The aunt
who scares me is drunk again.

I see her across the table
through the insufficient
light of the family
candelabra. The meal
is long with many courses,
then she pulls herself
to standing and her napkin
floats to the floor
like a white flag of surrender
and she just makes it
outside, where we can see her
by the dining room window,
retching and retching
while we sit at our places.

The window is a beautiful thing,
lined with tiers of glass
polished each week to a gleam.
Antique curios shine
from each shelf: ruby cups and tiny,
amber dishes. Her face is lit
by the streetlight on the hill
and the candles
on the table reflecting
each smooth edge of color.

She is retching,
her face is distorted amber,
her ear blue. Hands,
red and sharp. When she swipes
at her slack mouth,

Nana, at the head
of the table, lifts her fork,
chews pie calmly,
and says, "Why, isn't this
the lightest crust
you've ever tasted?"
And it is partly the light
through the beautiful window
made garish, and it is partly
that no one looks up.

But if we had known
what was going to happen,
could we have changed
it? Would we have said,
she is going to hurt us?
This is only the start
and we will not recover, ever,
through we will have years to try.

She will fight with my father
and he will die that night.
His heart will stop.
And nana, we will lose you
so deeply to dementia,
you will smash
into a million glimmering
shards of colored glass
and it won't matter
what you're worth.
What if
that night, together
at the lovely table, we said,
The crust is so light
we can't believe it,
but Nana,
Nana, we are in trouble.

For my Daughters, Who Asked

The first time I got my period I was riding my new white ten-speed bike.
Jennifer Pace and I had just turned twelve and our parents let us ride

all the way over to Vittum Hill Road with lunch in our knapsacks. We found
a welcoming field below the Vittum farm where the owners couldn't see us,

laid our shiny bikes low in the grass and climbed through the perilous wires
of the electric fence. The sun was warm for May, the ground was almost dry,

and we were the farthest away from home that we had ever been alone.
I went behind a giant rock to pee, and there on my underpants was the drop

of blood, smaller than a dime, but all the beautiful, bright red proof I needed.
I had waited, longer it seemed, than any of my cousins or my friends,

and there it was finally: my perfect secret. I held it, warm between my legs,
inside. I didn't even tell Jennifer Pace, who'd had hers now for seven months

and was bored by it already. I kept it for myself. And as we rode home,
the long steep slope of Vittum Hill stretched out before us, and our wheels spun

on the loose-dirt road kicking up an occasional rock. I whispered over and over
to myself, in perfect rhythm: I'm in, I'm in, I'm in, I'm in, I men-stru-ate. I'm in.

