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The Messenger



1996

**The
Messenger**

University of Richmond

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University of Richmond Art Department*

The Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Creative Writing

The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry

Steven Barza, Faculty Advisor

Herbert Peterson, Controller

Aereopagus

All those who submitted their work.

Nominations for Awards

**Indicates award recipient*

Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry

*Marriage**

Elisabeth Notturmo

"Who Am I?"

Dominic L. Finney

Reptiles

Timothy Dwelle

Margaret Owen Finck Prize For Creative Writing

*The Song of Sedona**

Tom Reale

Enough Coffee Talk

Christopher Himes

Computer Literature

Robert Define

Artwork and Photography Award

Meditation on Sand

Corrie Spiegel

Untitled

Ellen Little

Judging

Poetry: Dr. James Pethica, Dr. Louis Schwartz, Brian Magliaro

Prose: Dr. Steven Barza, Dr. mm Givens, Chris Kiesel

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Hit

Entranced, he watches her sleek,
sturdy body glide across
the glass tile motif.
Her rhythm is perfect,
other than the occasional
scraping of her bare heels
along the jagged cement
which connects the patterned squares.
His eyes follow; hers once met with his.
After gulping a taste of red wine,
the chopsticks
miss his mouth,
spilling a few grapes
which roll onto her path
and with her thick,
coarse skin, she conquers them,
smashing them,
just how the French writer preserves
fairies in a scrapbook- sustaining their
expressions the split second
they are caught between the pages.
He loses his sight as she rounds the corner.

--- *Blythe King*

The Tumor

Late one evening
An inky substance
Began leaking
Into her personal diary,
Blotting out
A word here
A phrase there,
Obscuring names and places--
Memories she considered
As solid as the earth--
A particular violet sunset
A grandchild's brown pigtails
The names of three daughters--
Leaving in their place
A cold, quiet fear;
As the sky vanished
Behind dense, dark clouds
And the thin air froze
In grave, expectant stillness--
The night began
To drain color from the world
Leaving gray shadows
And black vacancies.

--- *Stefanie Gesiorski*

Prayer to Our Mother at the Temple

White columns of the temple on the hill,
Erected by the sweat of brother's toil;
We climbed, we built, then made our weary way
Down dusty paths to supper as the sun
Fell from the sky.

The women, with our babies in their arms,
The women, our life, our strength, ascend the hill,
Bring down the words of Mother in the Sky:

*Have daughters, ladies, many many daughters,
and only beat your sons when they are naughty;
your husbands, too, be always kind to them;
They built your homes, you must remember that.*

White columns of the temple on the hill
Inside the gate there sings a shrieking shrill
All feminine and fear, men bow and hide
From curses of the Goddess-Mother-Bride
That, howling, crush and crumble Manly pride.

Oh Mother in the Sky,
Why does your land resemble Your own body,
The hills, Your curves, the ocean Your own mind?
Did the First Man offend You with his pride
When he was pregnant like his blessed wife?
What could a Man say, Mother, to offend You,
"My body," did he whine? "Is not as pale
and soft as hers, so Mother, take it back!"
And You, enraged, tore from his teeming belly
The home of life, and tossed it to Your dog.

We men piece words together like a hut,

And puzzle over what is meant by "Round
and bellyful the righteous Woman walks
across her town and worships at the temple."
Does this mean Men are dead and full of sin,
That Death is Sin, and temples are the door
To what is deathless, temples are the key
To our survival, our eternity?

But they are built by Men, our tendoned strength
And so I think,
You are a wise and tender Mother, yes,
You see a Son must come, if we will pray
With Faith as women do, and so He will,
The Son-Redeemer, He who loves Men's lives
As more than hunter, spouse or carpenter.
He, when not birthing, wears a beard and walks
On dust of earth, and thirsts all day and shows
Us what the face of GOD the Father is,
And when we ban our women from the temple,
And from the books, and from the alter there,
And force them to haul water from the well,
Oh Mother, they will sing and curse Your doom
And know their Death lay sucking in Your belly,
The Anti-Man, who slouches in Your womb.

--- *Emily Compton*

The Hummingbird

It is dawn in the garden.
I awake with the eastern sun.
The morning dew rises upward unseen
graced, as I, by the young rays.

A flash of red life
the hummingbird secretly flits in and out,
thrusting its being about the lush foliage
searching, feeding, searching,
continuous desire and fulfillment-
the beautiful cycle of life.

Green, blue, violet natural kaleidoscope,
its vibrant essence unites with the radiance
of the crimson hibiscus-
in a harmonious exchange of nectar and pollen.

Again and again, with vigorous continuity
the hummingbird probes deeply into the flower
in search of its succulent juice,
the flower extends its petals
reaching up toward the oncoming slender beak
as the two merge into one in an
engulfment of insatiable desire.

The sun showers the two beings in warmth and light.
I have planted the garden,
watered the garden,
reaped the garden,
witnessed its death and rebirth with the seasons.

Yet, I do not know the garden,
do not understand the garden,
do not truly coexist with the garden,
I can only behold its natural splendor
in awe and everlasting wonder.

The buzzing hummingbird knows its secrets,
the garden remains ever silent and wise,
and I am the intruder.

--- *Virginia Grant*

Enough Coffee Talk

Two leather jackets flew through the air, landing on vinyl benches opposite one another. Two packs of cigarettes, also briefly airborne, came to rest beside the display of assorted condiments. Their owners soon followed, throwing themselves into the booth.

Through thick clouds of smoke, the two friends gazed at the view adjacent to them. All the children at the school across the street played freely during recess. Every day they witnessed this mid-day break of the children in the lower school.

"People watch too many damn movies now, that's all I'm saying." George inhaled deeply from his black Russian cigarette.

Tito retorted. "Maybe some people enjoy taking in an occasional motion picture with a friend or date just to, you know, take in the cinematic experience."

"Bullshit!" George continued to puff away on his imported addiction. "People go to movies just so they don't have to talk to each other. Plain and simple, that's all it is, just a way to avoid conversation."

Tito let out a condescending laugh. "That is ridiculous, half of the people I know talk all the way through movies. The other half avoid social interaction altogether. How can you group all movie goers as inept conversationalists and social frauds?"

Cigarette in hand, George propped his hand on his temple and tried to look intelligent. His eyes probed Tito's. "My friend, all I am saying is that most people would like to avoid talking to one another for at least ninety minutes of every social outing."

A well-endowed waitress, Candi, smirked and asked them if they would like more coffee. They both accepted, as Tito antagonized his friend further.

"Your arguments are getting more ludicrous every time you open your mouth! What about the couple who goes to dinner for two hours, talking all the while, goes to a movie for a couple more, then does dessert and gin rummy at her house? Are you telling me that *they* are scared to speak to one another?"

George, emulating Harvey Keitel, wore his finest stare, lips crooked, left eyebrow cocked, right eye squinting. "And what, Tito, about the emotionally incapable dad who works too hard? Probably divorced, he sees the kids one weekend a month, doesn't even know how to act or what to say to the poor little things. What do you think he wants to do with his children? Go to a fucking movie, so he doesn't have to deal with them. 'Cause kids love movies so much, mom hears no complaints until that one Sunday night when the eldest, now about sixteen, asks 'why doesn't daddy ever do anything with us?' Then, he has to face the music!" Proud with his condensed sermon, George leaned back in his booth and sipped his coffee until his friend responded.

Tito smirked, as if to discard such a foolish thought, and wondered what to say. "Schmucks like that guy don't talk to their kids anyway, so that's a crappy example. I'm talking about the average Joe and Amy going out on the town. So they take in a flick; does that mean if they watch TV together that they can't cope with verbal interaction?"

"Yes." George's thoughts caught up to his mouth; then he continued. "But it really depends on what shows they watch."

"What!?" Tito nearly choked on his toast.

"You know. Like there are some people who are intelligent enough to appreciate a challenging show like all that shit on PBS or A&E, but most cats prefer to watch MTV or ESPN. They're the losers who, if they even leave the damn house, pay \$7.50 to escape."

Candi reappeared, offered more coffee, then poured it, and left.

Tito thought a moment, lit up a Marlboro with his brass Zippo. "I like to watch movies. I would watch them by myself. It really--"

"See. That's my point, you would watch them alone. Who are you avoiding then? Everyone! You would be avoiding everyone, so on what do you still disagree?" George lit a new Russian with the butt of his old one.

Exasperated, Tito lashed out. "Every time you open your mouth, nothing comes out. Why do I even talk to you about serious subject matter?" He was now shouting. "You don't even let me talk because you're scared I might say something you can't prove wrong. But I should know better, because you are always right!"

Candi came over, asked them to keep the noise down, coughed on the smoke, left the check, and vanished into the kitchen.

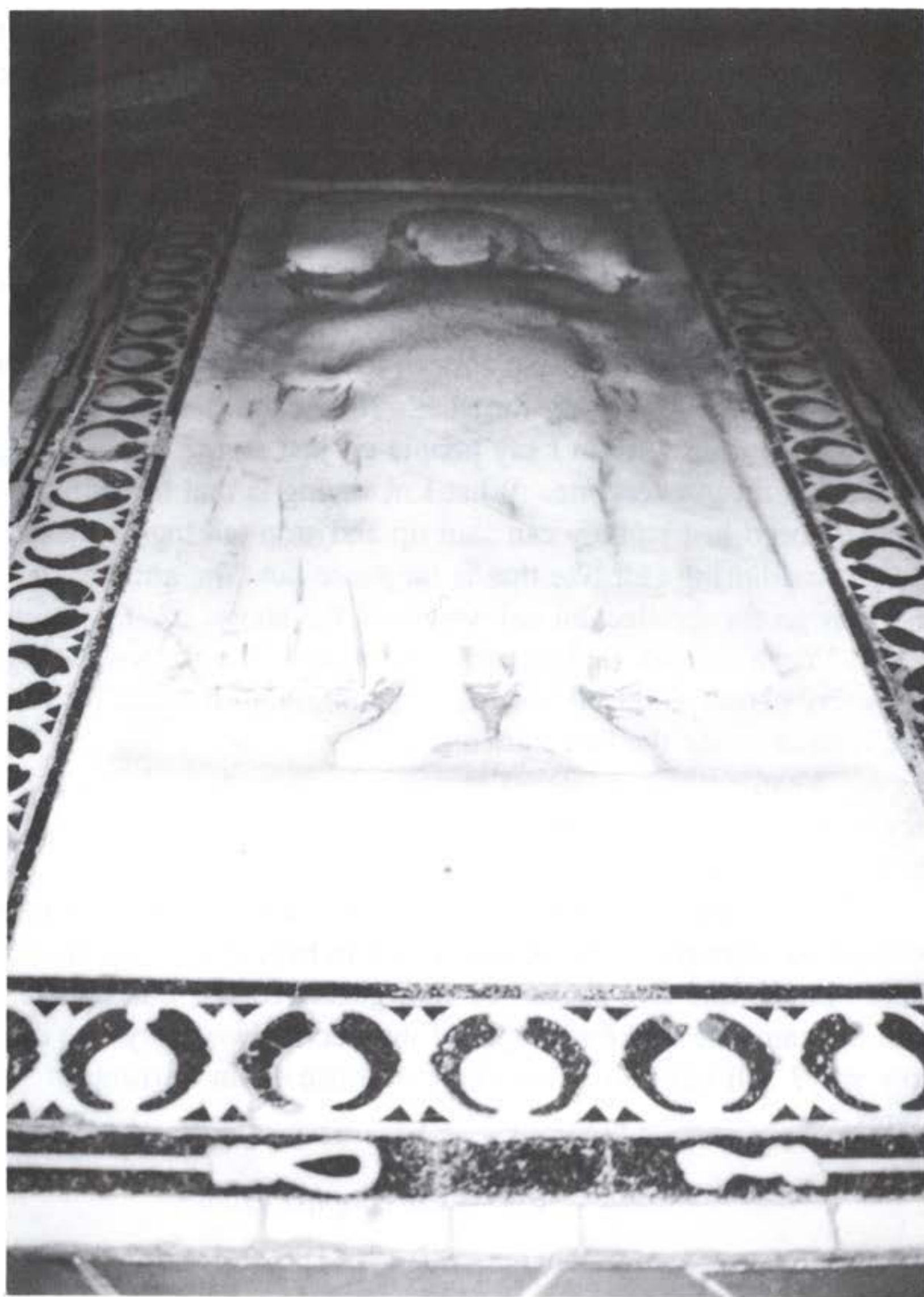
George, calmer now to offset his friend's temper, began softly. "Come on, Tito, I didn't mean to interrupt, but if you want an apology, you can fucking forget it. Now calm the fuck down." Tito obliged. "Now when I say people go just so the don't have to talk, I don't mean everyone. What I'm saying is that the number of people who go just so they can shut up and stop talking about the weather and boring shit like that is far more than the number of folks that go for intellectual enjoyment of the show. Fair enough?"

"Yeah." Tito glanced at his Ironman. "Look, we gotta get there early before they sell out. It's opening night, and if we miss it we'll have to see the late showing.

"I can't stay out late. I'm partially grounded. Let's go." They packed up their cigarettes in their bookbags and paid the \$2 check for their pair of bottomless cups.

As the door slammed behind them, Candi commented to a group of co-workers. "Those kids come in here every day after school, smoke like five packs of butts, guzzle coffee, and debate about the same stuff like a couple of intellectual wise guys. You know why? I'll tell you. Too many of those damn Tarantino movies."

--- *Christopher Himes*



Why me? Why not?

So you left me, you bastard,
even you don't know why.
You hurt me and crushed me
and watched me cry,
with the images reflecting
in your glass grey eyes.

And when you turned to go,
I saw Confusion;
the creature sat hunched on your back,
attaching his claws
and his monstrous jaws
to your soft long neck.

"I'll wait," I screamed
in the silence that loomed
over your kindly brow.
And you sighed with a smile,
as sweet as a child's
and quickly backed out of the room.

"Why me?" I pleaded.
"I'm sorry," you choked
with your eyes fixed on the stair.
And the creature grinned,
"Why not?" it croaked
and laughed at me through your hair.

--- *Elisabeth Notturmo*

Reptiles

i. the premise

crawling through this post-industrial wasteland
inebriating myself on digital opiums
waiting for the second holocaust to come
and i realize
somewhere before madness i must have lost my soul
or then again, maybe i never had it at all
can't trust everything that God tells you these days
can only count on those primal, animal yearnings
there's a monster inside all of us
and right now
it's time to feed the reptile

ii. the dance

the moon it whispers sweet poetry
patron saint of the damned
urging me to shed my skin
this civilization i wear like a mask

so at last i'm free from bondage
like i was tree million years ago
a lizard king
a lizard king
and saurian instinct reigns supreme
a lizard king
a lizard king
tasting the world with a forked tongue

and yes i've always been cold blooded
even when i pretend to walk upright
so now the day has faded away

i make my offerings to the gods of the night

i need to sacrifice a virgin
on the alter of unbridled sin
i draw my dagger from its sheath
see how it glistens with beads of sweat
see how she glistens with beads of sweat
feel the rhythm as the two of them meet
feel the rhythm as they entwine
feel the rhythm as i pierce deep inside
feel it, can you feel it
this is an offering of blood
want it, crave it
it is the nature of the predator

and this is how we express ourselves
when we can't name for what we hunger for
so before you call me a sinner
walk with me through a season in Hell
do the slither of the reptile

iii. the interpretation

stumbling blindly between the rational and the carnal
i realize now that this fever will never break
man cannot separate himself from the reptile
so maybe what i seek is not to regain my soul
but to reclaim the dignity of original sin
for i know that man is evil
his snake wiggles before him whenever he walks
cast out of the garden and into a pool hall
called the lucky eightball on the south side of the city
a seed little place
just a winking bit of neon lost in the oceans of the night
but somehow between the clouds of cigarette smoke

impending stupor and the crack of the pool cues
the prostitutes look like the Virgin Mary
exchanging eternal salvation for small bills
this must be the temple
to praise the valor of Adam and the sons of man
for cast out of Eden
forced to bear the ignominy and spite of a vengeful God
never again to taste the sweet ambrosias of the garden
we drink from the polluted ditches
and we call it wine
and perhaps we are slithering through this wasteland
of all-night discotheques and fallen towers of Babel
waiting for a convenient apocalypse
to save us from the sins of the world and dance music
but all i can see is man's redemption
for instead of despairing the fall and memories of Eden
we escape into the man-made hypnagogic dream-states of
television and sex
a panorama of burlesque palaces and decadent speakeasies
aluminum mosques to worship the music of the night
we are not gods we are men we are beasts we are reptiles
we can't stop these monstrous cravings
they're our strength to go forward and face the abyss
and as i stand here perched upon the precipice of eternity
i see
it's time to feed the reptile

--- *Timothy Dwelle*

I Send You Spinning

I play with you, Globe, and send you spinning,
Beneath books and green curtains in my father's den.
You, the replica, of perfect but merciless Earth.

My eyes follow round oceans, my thumb rides
The mountains, and the borders of the nations.
You, the replica of perfection, like Plato's forms or man in
Jesus.

Like the near affinity of our sizes proportion,
I wish that you were really the earth,
And my space much more took in its universe.

So I could wash my face in oceans,
Tiptoe cross whole mountains,
And the desert be just a pile of dust, dirtying my hands.

Mere names like Jerusalem and Paris and Sahara I'd understand,
Seeing all activity, know better, and better love.
And with the tip of a finger, I'd send the world spinning.

Or I'd send the world spinning, with the sigh of my breath,
My arms round the equator, I'd hold the world in place,
Carry it silent and still, in a gentle embrace.

But then I dance to volcanic rhythms
Of exploding eruptions. Clothed by clouds,
A thunderstorm tickles. And I giggle with the roaring

Of a river overflowing. Flames:
Blindly raging, to forests ravishing,
Be for me a campfire, warmth comforting.

Ruin promised by nature's fate, I await
A crush from the Giant whom you model.
You be the world, me tears can be sweet rain,

To nourish and sustain, while she feeds me.
But I am fed only to be crushed, my size so small,
Grand only next to you: mere imitation.

My flimsy finger delirious, I send you spinning.

--- *Catherine Claire Wedemeyer*

The Song of Sedona

Although chipped and felled, its lone arm proudly pointed to the sky: a solemn, simple gesture towards the clear blue expanse where seldom a bird and never a cloud flew. Through the stillness, shards of light broke from the sun's pane. Yet, the shattering of glass didn't ring the air; rather, low bongo thumps rhythmically fed the land. The beat of beauty pulsed across the Arizonan desert and soaked into the crinkled foliage and chalky earth. The soft red clay cradled the post in its final days as director for lost souls or tourists--whoever happened to wander by. Two young travelers were privileged to the imperceptible rhythmic incantations of the director. They saw the post, but were numb to the translated musings. "David, take a look at this wild old sign post."

The twelve year-old stooped to peer at the worm infested wood. "I bet it used to point up to Devil's Arch."

"Yeah, back in the day when people flocked every evening in holy pilgrimage style," said Henry. He madly threw his arms up into the air. Three arms lifted to the sky; two of the flesh, one of the spirit. A lone spire hovered above them all in grave stateliness as if it never sang. "This whole scene, man. It's nuts. You won't ever want to see another sunset again." His pack pulled him to the ground, and he plopped himself on a rock. "It's only a little further up. Wait'll you cross the ridge. You won't believe how beautiful it is," said Henry as he adjusted the clasps. He jolted his back to better rest the pack on his shoulders; pops and creeks soothed his rotating neck. Henry's younger brother bounced from rock to rock. From a distance, his excitement looked like a crazed dancer, twisting and curling to the rhythm of the earth.

"C'mon, then" squeaked David, "I don't wanna miss a bit of it." He ran around in a circle, and hopped upon the old wood. It gave a sigh, and David looked heavenward. The even blueness was just starting to develop shades of violet. And the

violet complemented the reds, yellows, and oranges in all the massive rock formations surrounding the immense valley. The dry walls sparked his dry mouth. David walked over to his brother and unclipped the water jug from Henry's pack. As the water dribbled down his sweaty chin, he blinked at the orange and violet contrast between the spire and the sky. He was suddenly humbled and whispered, "Henry, we should get goin'," and he clipped the caribiner back on the pack. David knew his older brother was slow up from a stop, so he excitedly bopped up the north face of the butte that eventually connected to the totem pole by way of a natural stone bridge. Close to a thousand feet above ground, the thin rock crossing gently swayed to each breath from the earth.

Beneath the butte, sounds subtly grew louder as the sun fell. The boys felt the orchestra in their hearts, but failed to recognize the sounds. Henry rose and followed his little brother. The butte was covered in Sedona's foliage: maroon and olive rubber trees, ten armed cacti thousands of years old, and sprightly rusted bushes. This garden drank the water far beneath the staggered walls and boulders. The water that used to fill Sedona valley had evaporated over millions of years allowing wild greenery to erupt from the ancient ocean floor. Now, only pulsating sound waves of nature separated the sky from the sand instead of the forgotten rocking sea. The lack of water couldn't grant His reflection, but there certainly wasn't a lack of rippled faces amidst colors, crooks, and crags. Pillars of natural expressions erupted from the desert; some laughed, some cried, while others smiled a secret smile understood by but those lost souls looking for a wise old sign to guide them. Guide them like it did the earth; the area grew and died in cyclic rhythms directed, channeled even, by an ancient conductor that never ceased to gesture for crescendo. Every day, the beats pulsed louder and louder until nature erupted in song.

Henry hummed a tune and thought of all the great sunsets. At nineteen he thought he had seen every sunset in

Sedona from every possible vantage point. Of course, he wouldn't treat his brother to anything less than one of his favorite spots--especially for his first one. No one came to Devil's arch; it was such a long hike that even the most adventurous were deferred. Fewer and fewer people scrambled the 12 mile gradual incline. As of late, the young pure hearted seemed to make it to the end. David and Henry were the first people in two weeks to make it to the base. They crossed the top ridge of rock, and David scrambled atop a boulder. In the falling sun, he appeared as a wild creature, gawking at the streaming rays with piercing blue eyes. His light brown locks wrapped and clumped in a gentle breeze. Round and round in a shower of gold. "Here we go," whispered David, and almost bowed to Cathedral rock, aptly named for its appearance. A sight no less than majestic was the distant cliff formation bathing in the falling shards.

Henry was suddenly overcome by a strange feeling in his stomach. It was like a band was playing through the valley--a band composed of marching drums. And the thumps penetrated his chest, and entered those well guarded areas of the soul. No light sounds, only the sudden pounding from below. Henry had to drop his pack. The Pentax fell out of the top compartment. His left arm wrapped itself around his stomach. He tried to think, he tried to control the pounding, and it hurt so bad. He clenched his teeth and they vibrated to the thunderous sounds. His knees started to buckle, and then...it eased up. Just a bit. Just enough for Henry to raise his head and look at his brother.

On top of the curled rock, David danced. He was not in pain. And there was a smile on his face. A secret smile. Like freeing himself from a great weight, the smooth boy twisted his neck and cocked his arms in awkward gestures. The young boy allowed the rings of color to pour over him as he swayed back and forth to the beat of the earth. His movements became smoother as glass hula hoops spun wildly round him. The sun spewed its crystal forms as the earth let loose a swell of beats for

the entire valley. The more Henry watched, the more the pain subsided, and the more he wanted to follow the rhythm of nature. The band marched on, and the old conductor continued to point straight up. Louder, it gestured. Louder for these boys to see the world as it was. Yes. And maybe they will hum this tune to all of mankind.

Henry's body rocked to the booms and thumps that seeped into all of his crevices. The sun blew shapes of glass that floated on the earth's orchestra of drums. The heavy sounds permeated the entire valley. Only two humans danced that day. But they certainly danced. The earth pounded on its chest and the sun blew red, gold, and silver bubbles that bounced, popped, and seeped into every living thing. And then continued to seep into things that people don't believe to be living. They, too, woke for their annual jaunt.

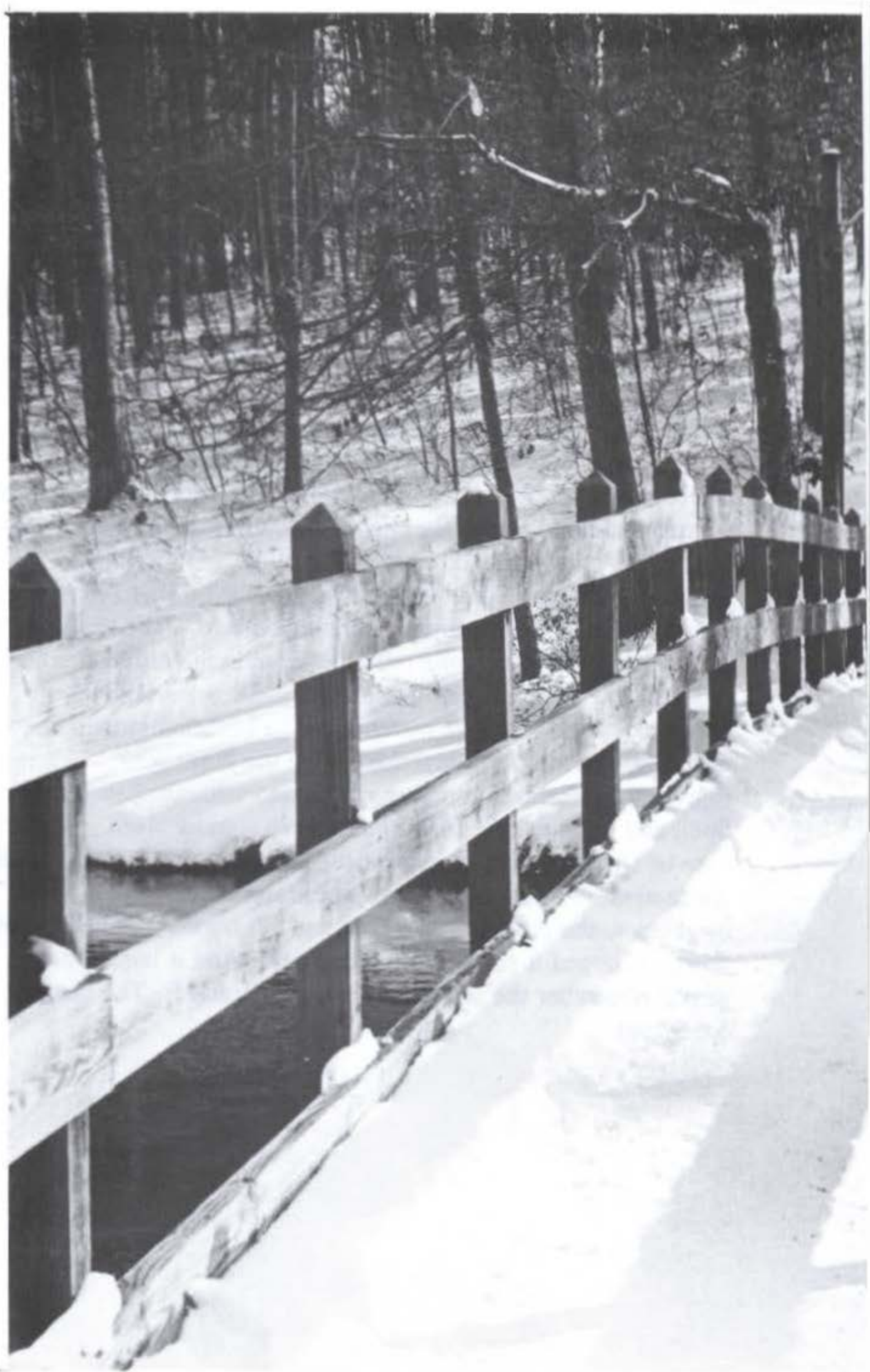
Henry bent down and picked up the camera. He placed the strap around the neck with ballet grace. He pressed the eye hole to his right eye where it would remain for the duration of this celebration. He traced David's movements. A tall, wiry figure bobbed in identical fashion to his small companion. Movements all around and beneath them caused David's head to twitch violently back and forth. Henry followed his brother's crazed movements. He, too, saw the scurrying shadows. The valley was dancing an ancient dance to an ancient song. For the next few moments they were both frozen as a tidal wave of beauty washed their spirits away. Henry's index finger rhythmically pressed and released the shutter. He followed the rhythmic jerking of his brother. Neither could see the creatures creating the streaking shadows. They didn't care though. They just followed the swirls of rhythm and the shapes that floated down from the sky. A sky that beckoned the violets and reds to waltz on the mountains.

And the sun blew a final glass ball that slowly drifted to the two boys. Below it all, the conductor stretched his arm even further towards the sky. One loud boom for 'em. The orchestra

gathered all their strength and together, in one final sweeping motion, as the beautiful swirl of purple floated down amongst the crazy shadows on resonances of past beats, the musicians pounced on top of solid bongos and bass drums. The boom was heard throughout the valley, and the swirling beauty funneled back into the earth like a flushing toilet. The shadows retreated down the slope and back into the crumbling kingdom, and two brothers fell limp on the echoing earth.

Curled in a little ball of exhaustion, David drifted asleep. Half an hour later, Henry's index finger twitched on the shutter that had incessantly clicked through nature's party. He rubbed his eyes and shook his head. Nope. Didn't happen. Couldn't happen. He looked at his peaceful brother. Without a sound, he gathered his things and woke David. They smiled at each other. A secret smile only the faces in the cliffs recognized. Well, maybe it happened. Ok, it certainly happened. And the boys marched to the beat that most people never groove to. They marched down the butte with rejuvenating feelings coursing within and without their bodies. Spun and hung to dry, their spirits were starchy clean. At the base of Devil's Arch, they paused. Darkness was enveloping the entire area. Although darkness would eventually give way to brightness, the post looked a little sad. It hoped it did the right thing. It hoped it showed them the way. And it hoped they would remember the song. The song it directed. The song it conducted.

--- *Thomas Reale*





Exogenesis

Polka dot accordion player
Waltzing four-four time for imaginary *ubermunch*
In the purple swirling motorcycle
Pit of my mind.
And I guess that's why
You drove the wooden stake through my head:
To stop the dreaming,
Releasing me in an orgiastic shudder
To descend the spiral staircase
Of nine generations of fascism
And bathe with the rest of the cannibals.

No one gets out of here alive
The children are hungry

And this is only the beginning...

--- *Timothy Dwelle*

Temptation

Don't point that cross at me:
twigs tied together with frayed string--
a feeble symbol.
Little man, shave your beard
and put on those rags you call clothes.
Come join the circus:
multi-jointed elephants and stallions,
limbless women baring all to see.
Come trample angels with rabid hoofs
in the city upon the clouds.

--- *Robert Define*

If Only...

If only you had been there
To see what I saw,
To feel what I felt:
Such a strong sense of awe.

If only you had been there
When I was alone,
Staring at cities:
To most, unknown.

If only you had been there
As I kissed you goodnight,
You, a familiar:
An unreal delight.

If only you had been there
To look out to sea,
Toward faraway islands;
To see past me.

If only you had been there
To meet those I met:
Symbols of others
From times we forget.

If only you had been there
To see me grow,
You'd reinforce the memories:
The things I know.

--- *Anthony R. Scisciani III*

Untitled

They sat in the cafe at the tiny round tables sipping their hot coffees and he gazes at her over the steaming cups. "I need you," he says, but all she can hear is the grinding of the coffee beans and the rattle of the Espresso machine. "I love you," he says, but she doesn't hear a thing except for, "That comes to two-fifty please," and the jingle of change being passed. And he wants her to answer, but she doesn't know what to say, how to tell him over the blare of the loud jazz on the radio, how to answer through the hazy smoke that hangs in the dim room, how to speak through the dryness in her throat, so she sips the hot coffee and responds as she knows how: "You got a light?"

--- *Rory Burnham*

Marriage

When he came through the door,
she watched him
with those cornflower blue eyes.
And when he asked for his dinner,
she walked out of the kitchen,
figure erect and defiant.

For the first time
she looked at her husband;
Nobel Prize winner,
robotics engineer,
spouse.

He was good at everything. . .
except marriage.

“I’ve realized something, dear.”

His stubby brown finger drummed at the table top.

“You have to see me.”

Rhythmically, he didn’t miss a beat.

“I’m not one of your machines.

You have to stop treating me like one.”

Sobbing, she yelled,

“You’ve hurt me.”

He didn’t blink.

“Answer me!”

He pushed his chair back,

stood up,

walked behind her,

put his hand at her neck,

and turned her off.

--- *Elisabeth Notturmo*

Untitled

Epitaffy
Sinew candy
Sweet words
To remind me of you

Chewy sticky
Finger licky
Slav'ring memory of
Bucket kicky

Gnashing cuspids
Knead the acrid
Eulogy stuck
To your mouth's lid

Picking teathy
I bequeath thee
Peace to know
I'm swallowed at last...

--- *Morgan Benton*

Untitled

and you don't know
what It's like.

(I just want to be)

It festers and thrives
upon my soul.

Writhing in It's grip-
straining, reaching

I cry for you.
And you don't know.

--- *Marta Valenzuela*

“Who Am I?”

“Who am I?” you dare to ask.
I am more than the eye can behold and
I am more than the mind can perceive, yet
I am just a part of some colossal being.

I run my fingers through the black soil and remember how our
Mother and father came to walk across this earth.
God worked hard to make them, for his sweat was their strength,
And yet, it is also our strength.
Our father stood strong and tall, never wondering,
Just being.
And our mother, beautiful and wise, was right there beside him.
They were one, as it always should be.

I am the hard sole of Mammy’s bare foot which dared to stomp
Heavily across the torture that was endured for years and still
Silently exists today.

I am the coal that burns within all of my sisters and brothers’
Hearts which fuels the fury and melts the bitter cold of enemies.

I am the beat that forms the rhythm as we march, hand in hand,
To the gateways of Heaven.

I am the ambition that spreads over this world and lifts us onto
The pedestal of success.

I am the soul who whispers the old, sweet spirituals in the wind
And drowns out the Voices of Failure.

I bet you never thought that with every lash of the whip,
My blood would come out just

As red as yours--
Trickling down my jet black back,
Creeping down my father's leather-brown back,
Crawling down my mother's light-skinned back,
Dripping onto the soil that made us.
With every lash came the cry of my people, bellowing out from
The many hearts.
Echoing the pain and anguish through the years.
Our voices creep into every crevice of your body,
And you shudder in disbelief.

Today, at this very second, you are not the only one grasping
our Ankles, once bound in shackles, forcing us to drag your
Contempt along with us.
We have somehow managed to bend over and place our hands
With yours, joining in the force to bring us down.

Animosity pulls the trigger,
And hatred is shot into our veins.
Death at every turn and a child wonders why.

All of us need to remove those hands and place them firmly on
Shoulders.
All of us need to stretch beyond the crimson red horizons of this
World.
All of us need to look into each other's eyes and realize that we
Are all human beings.

We are the ground that has supported the many Marches of the
Past and present.

We are the tough, hard skin that refused to break under the
Pressure of the many hoses that spat on our hopes.

We are the hands that pulled out the rusty nails of ignorance that
Held us to a burning cross.

We are more than the eye can behold, and
We are more than the mind can perceive.
We make up that colossal being.

“Who are we?” you dare to ask.

--- *Dominic L. Finney*

Untitled

Of it all?
crumpled soul
 the onionskin paper
trapped at last with plastic
but the soil under your fingernails
His bright teeth
Her erupting voice
 gave you
 alone
Remember that rush?
 Once
 from almost nothing
 What a hoot!
So far away
 it makes me spin
purity
 if only
Singled between the kindling
Folded in the minestrone
Out of the window (how awful!)
shaping wheat
 you were searching
oh, it tired me
New then...couldn't've been
 but covered so quickly
how it lost me
never bore me
Alone

--- *Neville Uhles*

Solo on Moosehead Lake in Maine

There is silence
mimicked only by silence
just as the reflection
of trees and mountains is
mirrored by itself
within the rippleless glass menagerie.
I sit staring out upon it
from my vantage point boulder
bounded on the edge of somethingness
grasping out toward nothingness.
My tiny speck of an island would not suffice
for this solo venture.
I wanted to leap
into the fantasy world of water images
and start afresh.

Silence is broken,
the haunting mournful call of the loon
coming from somewhere between
this world and the other
is suspended and swallowed in cold thick air,
the song beckons to me
I try to match it with my own forlorn human cries,
they are born within despair and
bred within solitude.

Suddenly, hot breaths, guffaws, wheezes,
my terror, has the devil come to take me?
My cries subside into astonishment
at the sight which has been bestowed upon me;
two moose have come to visit,
their steady pants echo across the mountains
emanating from massive heavy skulls

covered in slick brown fur.
They navigate through the water
their eyes stare cold and deep
as they swim by my island
steam rising from their bodies
bewildered at my melancholy,
I realize that my island is my refuge
that all of nature shares with me.
In my solitude I delight
and revere in unbroken silence.

--- *Virginia Grant*

The Whisper

It is not a sonic boom,
a crash,
shaking your soul,
screaming in your ear,
announcing its arrival.

No.

It is a sedated whisper,
ever creeping into your veins
like the silenced sun brightens slowly the hazy horizon at
daybreak.

Love seeps under your skin,
into your thoughts,
melting down your defenses before you can resist.

The whisper becomes understandable now,
but it is too late.

The spell has been cast--
all you can do now is soak in the warmth while it lasts.

--- *Lindsay Woodworth*

Computer Literature

I hopped on yesterday, the superhighway. Mr. Gates popped up and began talking to me in a digitally remastered voice. Something about a vision but it sounded more like the apocalypse. The horsemen just passed me in the fast lane, as I putt along on my 386, 1 RAM, 20 megahertz donkey. So the vision came to life in his head right before Harvard lost its worth, I believe. Scholar, disregard the volumes and love your Pentium, then the center shall begin to hold. I merged yesterday with the superhighway. The Library of Congress shut down again, so I found the book on-line.

What book did I search for, and need as sustenance? No, not a collection of poetry; we all can write a verse. A job. The book on jobs: how to find one; where to find one; why to find one. Three words for those in my position: COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED. So I went out last night, turned off the heat in my house to save some of the dispersing cash, and burned my books from college. Don't worry, I wasn't a computer major, nor an engineering major, not even a math major; I read Literature. All kinds of Literature: French, English, Irish, Swedish, Austrian, African, Feminine, even American. I never felt so warm as I did last night, roasting marshmallows over Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Then, I cleared my shelves and made room for Gates's vision.

Found this piece of equipment in a second hand store. It was new four years ago, and now it's refuse. I am a statistic in his mind. "We captured another today, and tomorrow, his children are ours." I don't know, I suppose I surrender. A virus on my diskette infected everything I once knew. Now I start anew, studying the Microsoft language, because Literature, that could never find me a job. A job. Back to the original argument of why I'm on-line.

I read Literature: past or present tense? Should I put this on my job résumé? The résumé is on-line, along with video

interviews on-line, and even physical exams. (Bill Gates has this new medical software; it's quite fascinating really. And the doctor's fees are taken right out of my digital wallet, which is actually worth more than the money it contains.) I never have to leave the house if I don't want to. With a couple more monitors, wall monitors, I can have the sky and sun and birds all around me twenty-four hours a day. Incredible.

Tomorrow, the first brain transplant will be attempted. Not a brain from one human to another, but a brain from one human to his 200 gigabyte harddrive. 200 gigabytes? You didn't see the Computer Towne advertisement:

200 GIGABYTES
More Space
Than The Universe!

So the jar encapsulated brain has these wires worming through it, and they all stream out into the new IBM, loaded with Microsoft's Windows (fill in the date, depending on the year). The brain comes from a twelve year old boy. He's afraid of dying; he wants to live forever. Computer genius Eighth grader fighting puberty. The boy does not want to die, and he knows God can't make him die. He says that he could be God, but we all laugh. You don't believe me? It's true; I read it on-line, searching for a job.

Over three thousand Microsoft-made millionaires, or so it says. They're driven individuals, Gates would probably answer. Over 5 gigabytes of American poverty. No incentive, the same responds. A plea to the Almighty: I pledge that I will neither use nor look at any software other than Microsoft software; Help me learn the ways so that I too might leave this cardboard shed and become your elite, and pass on to that better life in Cyberspace. I gave homage and now find me a job. I, Satan, ate from the Tree of Life, and now feel remorse for my

accusations of weakness. Take me back into your arms, and feed me the nectar on which you survive.

Finally, I move closer to Platonic Cyberspace with the jobs Master Gates makes for me. I've seen a couple of jobs that look interesting and that I might be qualified for. But with my knowledgeable background in Literature, only one can be the virtual future of my existence.

Poet

Qualifications: Must be able to use Microsoft Scramble in conjunction with Microsoft Word.

Description: Type in vocabulary that might interest you or someone else. Press left mouse button and wait while the program scrambles the words, creating Poetry.

The pay is good and a monthly check would help buy the groceries. There is a lack of trees in the world, and I'd be saving paper. Just download on-line so everyone could have a copy of my poetry. And if they didn't like a line or word, they could hack into the program and change it at will; everyone is happy. A service job. A Government occupation. Poet of Computer Literature.

--- *Robert Define*



Untitled

“Who says nothin’s perfect?” she mutters in her slow Southern drawl. “Who says nothin’s perfect? I can take you for a wild ride, baby.” The colors swim in front of her eyes: the flashing (flashing) of the fluorescent pink sign advertising “Girls Girls Girls XXX Come on in”; the harsh yellow glare of the streetlight; the red orange tip of her cigarette; and the shapes bend and weld together: a mass of twisting (snarling) dragons and monsters. He says, “I feel wonderful, baby” and “you’re beautiful” so instead of fighting with him she strips her brand new Calvin Klein jeans and they dance naked in the moonlight.

--- *Rory Burnham*

in spheres
(for grfn)

faithful steps-
baited breath;
she less young,
I less old.

hopeful sight-
sweet retreat;
I less weary,
she more bold.

graceful heart-
peace embrace;
she more golden,
I less cold.

--- *Ryan C. Roenigk*

September

It begins, starts, ignites,
With
A look,
A touch,
A passion.

Smoldering,
Beneath
The Surface.
Waiting, tempting,
Arousing.

This touch of yours, it
Leads
To another, and another, and another.
Oops, is that a kiss?
It couldn't be--but
It is.

Tease me, Taunt me,
Use me, want me.
Want us--to be
Together.

Didn't my
Mother
Warn me
About...

People
Like
You.

The seduction of
Words is seduction
Within itself.

The soft caress
Weakens that
Once strong
Reserve.

And don't get me started
On the touch of the
Tip of your tongue.

This poem would remain
Incomplete.

Take me from the Heavens
To which you've driven me.
Drop me into the depths of
Hell.

Oh,
You won't?
Well, then, it is time
for you to pay.

My hand moves
Lower
And then you moan.
There's a taste of your own
Medicine.

How does it feel?
On the other side? **Wait,**

Don't answer.
I know.

Exploring and exploiting
Each other's crevices.
Pillaging and plundering
Each other's senses as
Medieval troops would
storm the proverbial castle.

Make, share, have
Love
With me.

Turn me on,
Turn me up,
But,
Don't turn me loose.

Keep me, imprison me,
Hold, Hurt, Seduce, Slap,
Just don't
Let me free.

We twist and
Grab. Who will
Win this
Intense struggle?

And as we
Come together,
And apart,
And together,
And apart,

And together,
and apart
The outcome
Seems uncertain

Suddenly,
Overwhelmingly,
It comes together as
Someone's reserve
Begins to crumble away
And finally shatters.

Soft rain falls,
Brushing the soft, lush blades of grass.
Plummeting,
Into the abyss of the ground below.

There is no sound, no movement.
Merely,
The scent--the scent--the scent
Of fresh rain, dancing upon,
Staining, caressing,
The fresh dirt.

The sun shines now.

--- *Elisabeth A. Counselman*

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