

The Messenger


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The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry
Steven Barza, Faculty Advisor
Herbert Peterson, Controller
Dona Hickey
Suzanne Jones
Aereopagus*

University of Richmond

Please note that Jessica Printz's poem in the Winter issue of The Messenger should be untitled.

Nominations for The Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Creative Writing

<i>Abstract Notion</i>	john m aguar
<i>Lychrysaere</i>	john m aguar

Nominations for the Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry

<i>Pure</i>	Alexia Meyers
<i>Untitled</i>	Alexia Meyers

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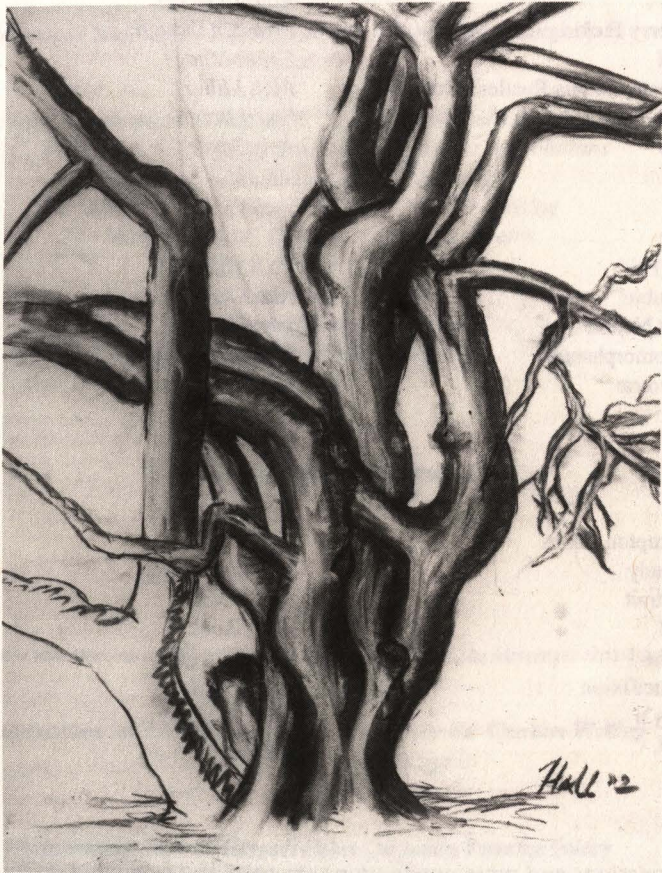
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All submissions and prize nominations are read and evaluated anonymously.



Enchanted

Magic, white and soft, hovering, shimmering,
Sifts into the room, setting dreams a'spinning,
Dancing round her head, singing and shouting high.
Whereof do you dream, my nearly-grown daughter?
Is it the magic of childhood still caught here
Or have you stepped the dance of womanhood, laughing?
She awakens in me a half-lost enchantment,
Her eyes are still clear for she spurns unconscious
The world's disheartened dust to watch for wonders.

Kimberly Simons
Westhampton College 1993

nirvana

sitting cross-legged on the hill,
his robes glowing ripe-peach auburn
from the jaded sun on his right,
he delights.

Slowly, he bends forward;
every inch a crow-flown mile,
each foot a hundred li,
stretching out an open palm and
gently stroking the swaying grass.

slightly clouding the sun a young
blue-eyed boy approaches and
watches without interest,

as the old man calmly curls his finger in the turf,
and peacefully touches it
to the earth.

**Josh Hockensmith
Richmond College 1995**

Leap of Faith

A man lay corpselike on a couch. Saline paste held electrodes to his head; crimson wires traced crazed paths from them to jacks on a nearby wall. An observer might have caught the flutter of a pulse at the man's throat. His face hung slack, disconnected. Mail addressed to Victor Staff shuffled through the mail slot in his front door.

At the other end of the wires, a figure paced the length of an unreal room. Mathematically-generated carpet scuffed under his simulated soles. He paused, turned, and leaned against the gritty fictional plaster of the wall.

He shook his head, disbelief and joy mingling on his face. He addressed a reflective meter-diameter sphere hovering next to the representation of a plush armchair.

"I can't tell you how much this means to me, Felicity. To just agree, as if it didn't matter to you—no, wait, it's as if it mattered more than anything else to you....but it's too pat for me."

The sphere spoke: "Vic, I have given this a lot of thought."

"Four whole seconds, for God's sake!"

"Stop, Vic. You know better than that; I can read several books a minute, evaluate quantum equations in my head—"

Victor snorted in derision, shook his head again and muttered, "in your head...."

"—and you made me this way, you conflicted idiot!"

"I don't know. It just bothers me, that's all. Just like that, and you want to go through with the graft. Just like that."

"I know the risks, Vic. Probably better than you do. And, dammit, I've given it more than adequate consideration! To finally see something other than these walls...."

"Sure, you know the risks. But what do they mean to you? What can they mean? You have no experience carrying around a body; you don't know pain—any kind! Do you know you could get your long-term memory wiped? Doesn't that bother you?"

The sphere spoke softly, reflecting the room in its surface. "I know what it means to wait for you to return. That approximates pain, does it not? Hours for you are months to me. As for being mind-wiped, it would simply be oblivion—I'd hardly notice."

Victor threw up his hands, his voice rising. "That's not what I'm talking about! You're an artificial intelligence, Felicity! You've never stubbed your toe, never skinned your knee!" As another thought struck him he collapsed into an armchair. "My God, you've never had menstrual cramps! Simply oblivion?"

"Victor," it said as it floated closer, "do you truly want to see me? To touch me? You certainly aren't acting like it."

He slouched forward and buried his face in his hands. His voice emerged like a

distant recording. "You could at least have put up a fight. Now I've really got to go through with it."

Vic stood and resumed pacing.

The sphere spoke again: "Are you finished?"

"Yeah, I guess I am. No turning back?"

"No turning back."

He sighed. "See you in a few minutes."

After the usual moment of disorientation, Victor sat up, pulled the electrodes from his throbbing temples, and rubbed the paste away with a much-used towel.

He wasn't sure whether the hum in the room came from the mammoth machines or from inside his head. When had he really slept last?

Victor walked over to the wall and leaned against it, lost in thought. Under his palm, an existence away, an entire world waited for her. He'd created this world first, trying to satiate his desire to create; to have a world of his own. The "no-world" was his magnum opus; his masterpiece, before Felicity.

It was also his greatest failure and the site of his worst nightmares. He'd ridden the winds of the no-world, swum its seas and basked in its sun, but for all that he couldn't escape its people. The program that evolved them hadn't been broad enough in scope; they were all automata to him. To each other they undoubtedly seemed perfectly normal, but they were less than animals to him because he knew their every move. He'd created the rules that governed their actions himself and he saw those patterns everywhere: in their movements, their patterns of speech, their progression of thought. Had he created a true sentient race and doomed it to a crippled life, or had he created a mockery of all sentience? Neither option allowed him solace.

In self-loathing and weakness he had turned from his no-world without the will to obliterate it. He'd drifted for a while, then he'd finally succumbed once more to his drive to create; the product was Felicity. He'd built her from the neural nets up, filling in gaps with the infinite, perfect mathematical lace of fractals; she was every proverbial inch his creation, yet still delightfully unpredictable and lively. He loved her, though every bit of his scientifically-trained mind berated him for doing so.

Victor wanted to hold her; to marry her and live with her, and the best possible solution already existed: he would give her access to the no-world; there they could look into each other's eyes and do all the other things lovers do....

His reverie shattered. Damn! Every second of his multiplied for her; while he dawdled, she was waiting hours.

All the same, he had to be absolutely certain the process was safe. But how could he be? He caught himself starting to pace, stopped himself, held still until he thought he'd explode, and, defeated, began pacing again. What problems could lurk, unforeseen, in the

mind-world interface? Had he accounted for all the possible sensory links she'd need? Had he missed anything?

Felicity was a life to him; any misstep, any badly-connected lead, physical or logical, could have the equivalent of brain-damaging her. It, some corner of his brain insisted. It's not a sexed being. It didn't matter, he told himself in return, she'd have a body and all that came with it soon enough.

He berated himself, racking his brain, trying to all but physically shake out any factor he'd missed; any gestalt of data or flux he'd left unchecked. Nothing came to the surface, but how could he know?

It hit him then. He couldn't know; not until he actually went through with the procedure. He ran his fingers through his hair, steeling himself.

He put the transfer program on standby and stood. He walked deliberately over to the couch. He cleaned the electrodes again, and, very deliberately, spread the saline on them. He lay down.

Back in the no-room, he walked over to the sphere that was Felicity and said, "It's ready." His own face, distorted and monstrous, leered back. He looked away.

With a mental command, he called up a keyplane and text window. He typed for a moment, and the image of a wooden door appeared in the wall. He willed the terminal away.

He walked up to it and a key appeared in his hand.

He unlocked the door and opened it. Hungry nothing gaped beyond.

"You need to follow me of your own volition," he said. "I can't just 'blip' you over."

"Fine," the sphere said, and floated over toward the door.

Victor stepped through before her...

...To the feeling of moving at infinite velocity.

As Victor tumbled along the corridor, one-way link, he felt Felicity follow and the no-room dissolve behind her; why had that happened?

Bumps. Turbulence? In the nothingness between spaces? As he sensed the corridor was collapsing behind them, a taste of blue distracted him briefly....

...and he found himself in bed at his no-world apartment. The transition had never been that rough before; usually a moment of discontinuity was all he experienced. Victor sat up; why was he here? Wasn't he just with Felicity?

A whimper floated in from the other room and an impact of remembrance hit him. He leapt from the bed, grabbed a robe and rammed his arms through its sleeves, tying it as he saw Felicity for the first time.

She wore the body they'd designed. On hands and knees, she whipped her head

around, waves of brown following, as Victor walked in.

“Ah...Felicity?”

Her eyes were wide, staring without comprehension. She trembled constantly. Her naked body was covered in clammy sweat. Every noise brought a flinch, every new sight gripped her like a claw. Victor crouched slowly, so as not to startle her, and waddled clumsily over to her. He extended a hand, tears forming in his eyes.

“Felicity...honey?”

She recoiled at first from his touch, but she eventually let him stroke her hair as the tears burned mercilessly down his face. They perplexed her; she touched one, and tasted it. She made a face.

He looked into her eyes again and found nothing.

He pulled up the keyplane and window again. She was asleep now, wrapped in a blanket on the sofa and fed bread from his pantry. A diagnostic showed just over ninety-four percent of her accessible memory bases wiped by “inconsistencies” that caused feedback during the transfer. The news wasn’t real, yet. Something inside wasn’t letting the message through. She was gone. It still was not real.

What remained of Felicity, her reflexes, her general tendencies and future passions, slept twenty feet away.

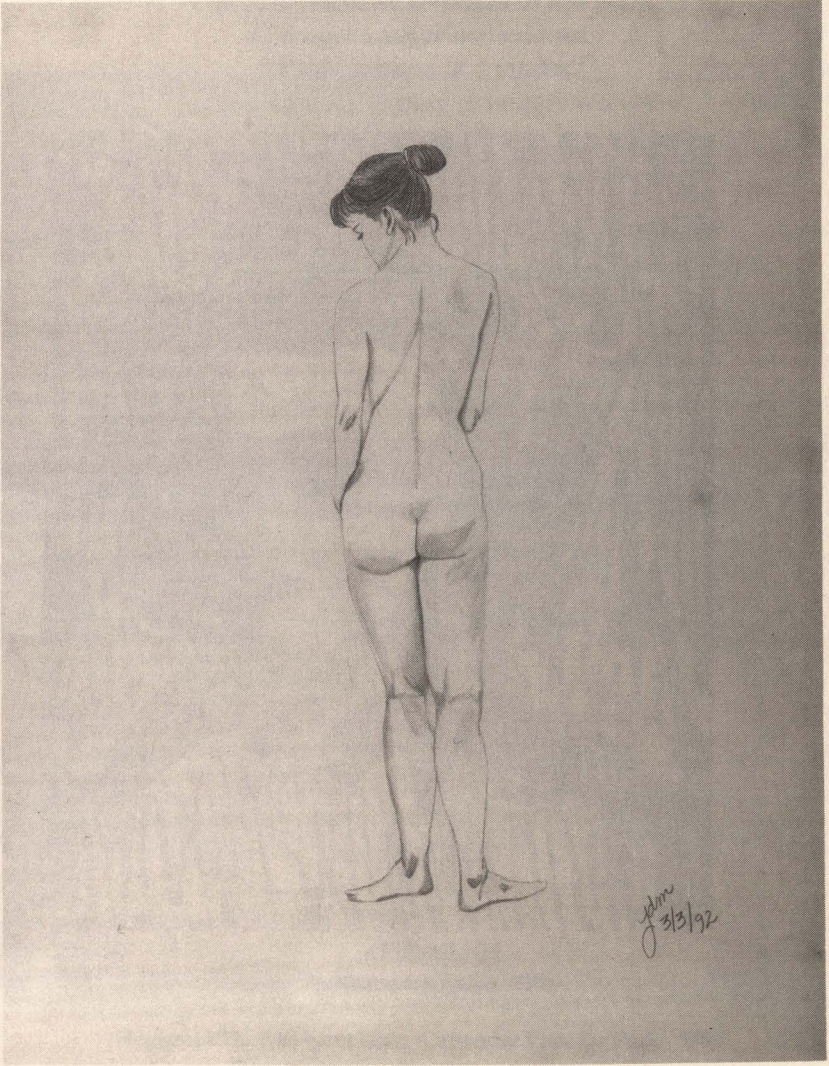
Empty of feeling, he called up his Sentinel program; it was designed to tailor the preset, mathematically-predetermined history of the no-world before him so he could influence this reality. It traveled up and down the stream of the no-world’s time, making adjustments to its future history to accommodate Victor’s actions. He commanded the thing (that he had made to look, in a fit of good humor, like an angel) to create a vein of future for Felicity; to create a sort of softness and resiliency around whatever she might do, so that her whim couldn’t destroy the insanely complex knit of the no-world’s future. Then he set a duplicate of the program to creating a seamless past for her. Her present and past would dovetail, the algorithm forgiving to fifty decimal places, with the progress of the no-world as it had been originally generated. She would be a completely new person, though she’d still find some of the same things funny; she’d probably be whatever passed for a “Type A” personality in the no-world. Victor smiled faintly.

He was too numb to care what the program generated for her, though; he set a parameter on her income, so she wouldn’t be destitute, and her name, so he’d be able to find her someday.

As soon as he released the program, she winked away from the couch, already at her new job somewhere in the no-world.

Victor killed the keyplane and display, lay down on his bed, and left the no-world.

Rich Miller
Richmond College 1992



...at Victor walked in.

...the world completely. The
...Every hair brought a fresh story and with
...and watching
...in the eyes.



MP

Chico

Rich Miller
Princeton College 1992

Pure

A polar garden of sweet ripeness
and wretch and disease.
I will no longer be a vermin to this god,
no longer a sugar-bellied treat
for this parasite of a master.
not to throw my dignity to hungry wolves
searching for my delicate core
which is slowly gelling
wiggling and firm
with seven babyteeth- sprouting and awkward.
this cumbersomeness gone wild
to feast like the bloody-jowled wolf:
dangling veins and plasmic flesh
with silver in his ears and beastie-steeled chest.
I, the plush-covered sweet-to-eat,
will no longer oblige my red-lipped
priest of ritual consumption.
the final brahminical bite will gnaw the
ugly bowel of corruption
into a muddy puke of foliage.
the colorwheel spinning to deep placid-purple
performs cryogenic relaxation
of claws and achy-battled joints
and the crystal-bloody bits of fangs and spit
twinkle to the putrid earth in shards-
mirroring the dancing chrysalis,
pirhouetting and pirhouetting and pirhouetting
freely and madly
bloody toes of oblivious laughter.

Alexia Meyers

Westhampton College 1994

Winner of The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry 1992

Blackberry Picking in Polyester

And so I found myself
among thickets of blackberry bushes.
My dumb eyes scanned the thorns
and the dark clots.
The martyr blackberries were hurling themselves
onto my leisure suit.
Ah, what a fine brotherhood.
They obviously loved my outfit.
Do my lapels cover too much
of my velour shirt underneath?
I wandered as I filled my jampot,
wondered of the sea just visible at the end
of the hooked path.
I hooked another berry
and smelled it with my hooked nose.
The sky began to rain, the celestial vomit
covering my protective wrapping.

I became weary of holding my blackberries
which had become covered in gray fungus.
I tossed them to the wind
and they spread like gluttoned flies
with no desire to fly.

What appeared ahead to be
a full wardrobe of angelic laundry
was disappointingly old ragged clothes
hanging on the thorns
void of occupants.

The ocean beckoned
beyond the thicket of bushes
and I leapt like a brash spoon
headed for the tantalizing broth.
The thorns caught me though,
and I was stuck in the middle,
watching the waves.

I waited there for hours, days, perhaps years.
I sat there, lounging on my threads,
watching a rather amusing sheep path nearby.
Occasionally a sheep would come up to me
and give me a look of indifference.
I would return the look
and we would be comfortable
in our casual apathy.
A rat once scurried by
collecting ripe blackberries.
I think some people even walked by,
chattering about the ocean.
Funny thing that they didn't stop for me.
But then again,
I was wearing polyester.

Immediately aware of my ridiculous entrapments,
I carefully stepped out of my clothes
and the thorns scraped at my nakedness.
Or was it nudeness?
Naked, I thought, as I cleared the bushes
with minimal difficulty.

I stood on the sandy beach,
reminiscing of my blackberries.
Once over that I tested the incoming water
with a long foot.
I immediately longed for my polyester warmth,
but remembered
that my phantom had already been hung.
The waves looked exciting.

A watching sheep said effortlessly
that it wasn't that great.
"You'll just start sinking,"
he said in my direction.
"That's all right," I thought,
"I believe in heaven."
And with that I hurled myself

into the waves.

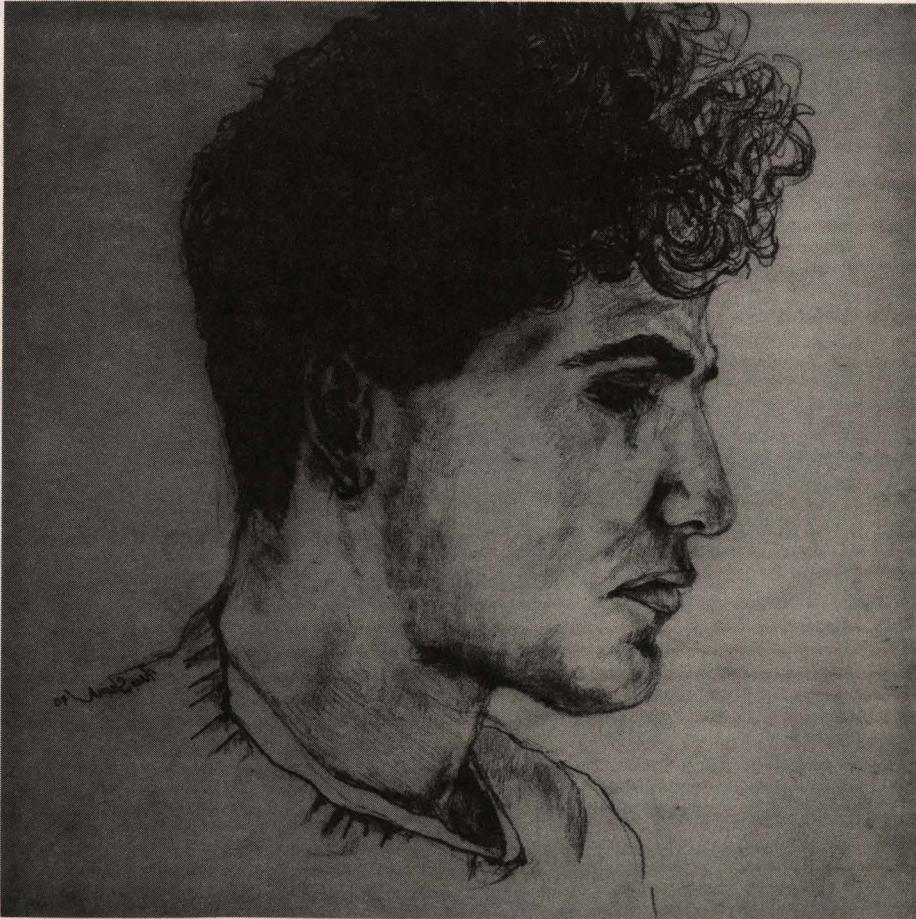
Swimming for my life was futile
and I eventually let the sea
take control of me.

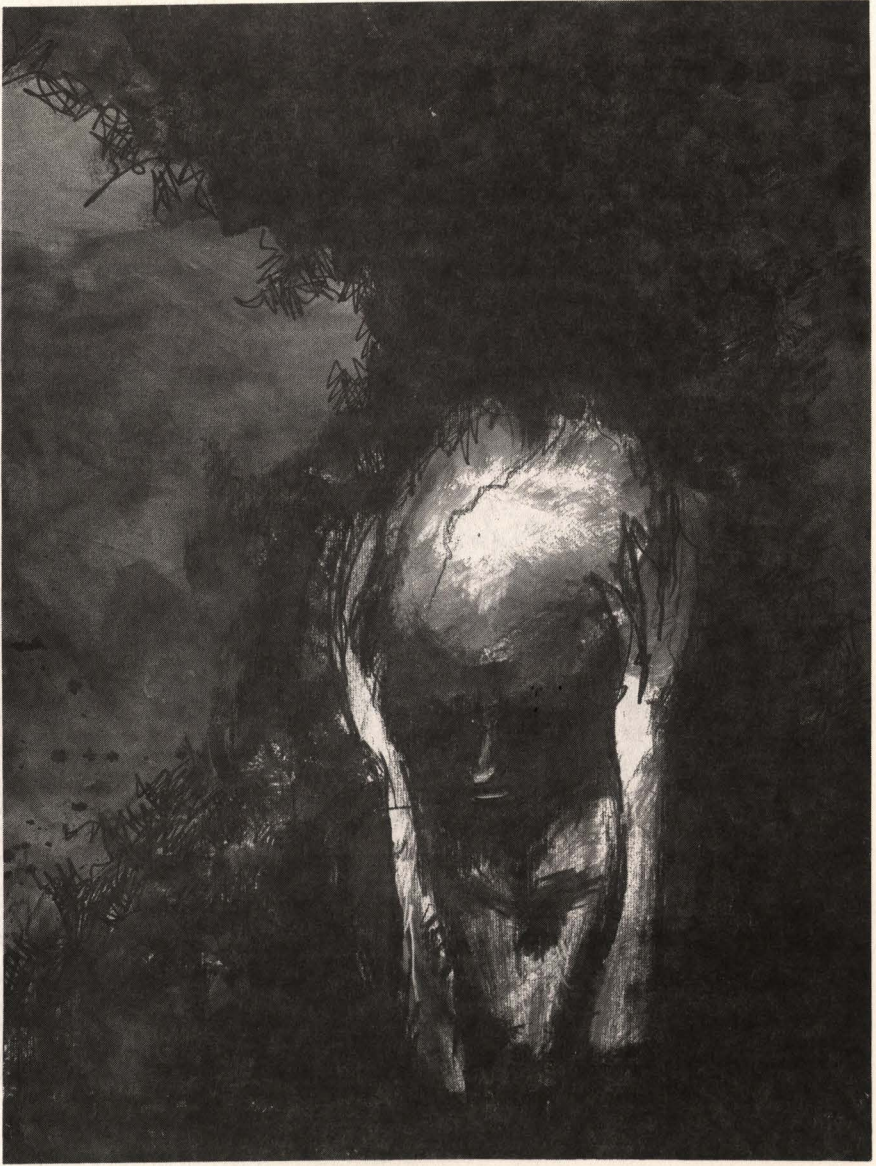
As I began descending into the sea life below,
I grew gills and fins.

I found the fish
to be of a delightful nature,
more active than the sheep
and more intelligent than the blackberries.
I found my adjustment to be quite complete.

And the fish had no need for polyester suits
which would only be ripped by their gills and fins,
weigh wet and heavy on their fish souls,
and get in the way when they eat each other.

Branden Waugh
Richmond College 1995





The Incubus

The window is an eerie portrait of black as the night presses upon the other side of the glass and looks in, greeting a weak stare struggling from my eyes. Not a single gust of wind whispers against the house; not a single breeze to disturb the shrill silence which hums its haunting wail outside, a quiet so still that my ears ring in its echo. The silence is all around me...everywhere...and my abdomen tightens as trembling breaths unwillingly escape from my lungs, frightened that the air might cause a slight sound as it brushes past my lips. A wavering blue flame emits a pallid glow atop a disfigured candle, as blood red liquid drips from the white wax near the burning wick. The blue flush casts itself upon my naked body, and an unearthly coldness never felt by my flesh gathers around me as I stand quivering in the center of the stone room. I dare not stir even to remove my glance from the blackened window's mocking terror. The darkness, the silence, the blue flame, the red drops from white wax, the ghastly cold....they know I am alone in this house which has no warmth in its bare stone walls. They know, they know as they watch me from without. They know that I fear to move, that I only wish for the sun to rise and eclipse the horror which is already hidden from me in the darkness. They know that the hollow beating which has begun to sound from somewhere in the house is torturing me and is causing a damp sweat to fall upon my skin despite my shivering. I stare helplessly as glistening droplets of blue perspiration tumble from my body, the maddening thuds now sounding in a foreboding pulse, slowly growing in their horrible reverberations. It is the sound of angry flesh and muscle pounding savagely upon the walls, its vicious echo accompanied by a deep growl. The sounds slowly become louder as a feral howling, stricken with hunger, wails hellishly through the house in a sinister rhapsody, beckoning for my blood. The pounding grows until it deafens me in a monstrous roar of violent anger, my skull rattling in its terrifying rage. I scream in a churning of fear and desperation.

"Please!"

Silence.

Utter silence.

Silence which is only broken by the twitching sounds of my cold breath shivering in the icy quietude....I turn to run and find myself beholding a hideous beast of unnatural form standing immediately before me. Two blood-filled retinae stare through me from behind glossy, transparent outer membranes, lodged deeply between a protruding scaly forehead and a wolf-like snout. Clumps of matted hair are strewn about its head and body in a wild array, as though the result of a catastrophic mutation of mammal and reptile. Blackish fangs threaten unmovingly under snarling lips which flap and curl in the beast's hot breath, its chest heaving in powerful and angry hunger. Hot saliva spills from its mouth and lands in a dark puddle about my feet....I can feel it burn. The creature wants my blood, to feast on my flesh. I do not even have clothing

to postpone the agony of the beast's claws for the few seconds of protection a thin covering might have granted me. Then, with its horrible jaws wide, the beast raises its huge, brutish arms in an evil ecstasy, and the sickening howls and pounding return suddenly in a thunderous eruption which cracks the dense stone and shatters the blackened window. The beast calls out for me...repeating my name in a screaming whisper.

"Mendoza!....Mendoza!....Mendoza!"

The creature hesitates, basking in the glory of its horror, calling my name to the nauseating pounding of the walls. Pounding and pounding and screaming my name, "Mendoza!"

Then I awoke.

The dream was over, although the punishing vibrations continued to torment me as they sounded through an immense, roaring buzz. With great effort, I was able to slowly lift my beating head from a beer soaked table. Peering reluctantly through painfully bright red, purple and green flashing lights, I regained a semblance of consciousness. I was still in the Skylight night club, and had just awakened from sleep; sleep which could only seem impossible in the incredible volume of conversation and music which gripped the air everywhere. A hundred dancers stomped with incomprehensible aggression upon the dance floor, as though intoxicated by an eminent duty to kick away some sort of evil, to rid the floor of an invisible enemy. A resonating electronic bass drum conducted the symphony of dancers, leading them in its incessant beat. All around me strange, conversing club-people were engaged in an exuberant yelling game, straining to be heard above the ludicrous level of noise. Yet one voice penetrated the dense fog of sound above the others....it was Jaryd's voice, and he was calling my name as I squinted at him through pained eyes. He was being dragged from the club by two burly men as he angrily called to me, "Mendoza!...Mendoza, come on!"

I was still drunk.

It took much effort to stand, and a considerable amount of concentration was required to find the exit amongst the sway and whirl of smiling, laughing faces. Finally I reached the door and stepped out into the stinging cold. Jaryd was there, his head hidden in the massive grip of one of the men as he convulsed wildly to free himself. The other man looked on with an uninterested, sour expression, apparently bored with Jaryd's feeble struggles.

"Hey guys," I said, somewhat amused in my drunken state, "why doncha let him go....he didn't mean it whatever it was...."

"I'm just tryin' ta calm this *fuck* down!" he retorted, tightening his grip.

Jaryd gasped, and I could see that no blood or air could travel through his constricted neck. All I could do was watch, as Jaryd's flailing slowly diminished like

a poisoned and dying insect. Then, suddenly, the man released his hold and turned away quickly, as if he could no longer stand the sight of his withered victim. The other man followed him back into the club, his face stone and expressionless. I tended to Jaryd, who gagged and coughed for breath and blood until he finally recovered his voice.

“Thanks for being so goddamn *civil*, Mendoza...” he muttered angrily.

“What would you have liked me to do? rush them both?” I stammered defensively. “That just would’ve made him mad. He would have snapped your neck.”

He glared at me for a long moment, his neck and ego in need of healing.

“Come on....we can make the 4:35,” he grumbled impatiently, glancing at his watch. I noted that it was only 3:30 A.M., but he had already hailed a cab. I ran my hand through my hair which smelled like beer and smoke, and sat down next to him in the car.

“Grand Central,” he said quickly as he lit a cigarette.

“No smokin’ in dis car,” the driver said into his rearview mirror as we pulled away from the Skylight night club.

Jaryd rolled his window down so that the smoke would escape.

“Happy now?” he growled through his teeth. The driver ignored him, mumbling unintelligibly. We rode in silence.

As I stared through the window, watching shades of light glimmer in the sky over the phantoms covering the street in shadow, I remembered my dream. I remembered the beast that wanted to spill and devour my blood so desperately....I shuddered as the hideous apparition passed through my imagination. Its image lingered in my mind, still calling for me, “Mendoza!” I felt that I had become pale, and Jaryd was looking at me strangely.

“You all right?” he said in a varnished tone, and then, slightly more seriously, “You’re not gonna be sick, are you?”

Before I could answer, the car was stopped in traffic, and Jaryd angrily looked up and out the window. Something, some commotion underneath the arch of the bridge where our car had halted caught his attention. I watched him as his face formed a curious grin, enchanted by whatever it was he saw. I truly feared to look.

“Do you see that?” he said laughing a hideous laugh. “Look at those fools!”

I looked through his window to the side of the road where the bridge met a narrow walkway, forming a desperate shelter for the three vulgar beings who were now pitiful entertainment for Jaryd. A black man yelling in rage was busy reaching into a large, gray cart supported by small, futile wheels, and pulling out articles of tattered clothing so that he could hurl and scatter them in the road and among the cars. A frightened and fragile woman scurried helplessly after her clothes, her matted brown hair stuck to her face. She pleaded with him, and then with the third vulgar who sat apparently sleeping next to the cart, his beard gray more from dirt than from old age.

Finally the woman gave up trying to retrieve her belongings as the man raged on, whipping a shabby umbrella onto the ground and sending up fractured parts of the handle's shaft into the air. The woman looked hopelessly around her in a desolate disbelief of what was happening. The man continued to yell, abusing her, screaming for her to leave and never come back. The woman continued to frantically turn about, searching in bewilderment for an escape from the phantoms. The woman began to knock on the windows and doors of cars, begging to be let in, trembling violently as though stricken to insanity by the sight of her possessions strewn among the dirt and oil of machines and artificial earth.

"Lock dat door!" yelled the driver as she approached us, a faded wraith begging for pity. Jaryd complied happily with the driver's instructions as the woman looked in, pleading. I saw her then....old-looking, her pitiable face contorting uncontrollably, horribly. She was crying, sobbing, though not a single tear fell from her eyes. Oh yes, she was crying....I could tell....she cried though she had no tears left to cry. The horror of the spectral woman filled me, the agony of her tearless eyes, begging for relief from her misery. And there *he* was, hungrily meeting her eyes with his callous grin. He looked up at her from inside the car, smiling....

..laughing. He mocked her, *made faces* at her....I think he would have pummeled her if the car door had not separated them. His savage contempt for her suffering seemed to be nourished by her pleading, until I felt I would vomit from the scene's intolerable obscenity. Suddenly, the traffic cleared and we drove on, leaving her boneless skeleton to rot in the road.

"I'm going to go and sleep on the train," he said after we had purchased our tickets. The train was not scheduled to leave for another forty minutes, but we had nothing else to do. I had not uttered a word since we left the club, and he looked at me in impatient desire for conversation.

"Hey, you all right?" he said. "You look ill."

We boarded the empty train which would remain mostly empty even after its departure. I stared at him, scrutinizing this fiend before me who had no heart and no guilt, a machine capable of reducing life to nonexistent invisibility.

"What's your problem?!" he said angrily, questioning my stare.

The sound of his voice chilled my blood, yet my gaze remained rigidly upon his eyes. My thoughts loomed with condemning exclamations, silently judging him for his despicable inability to feel. I did not say a word, though my mind screamed, "Fiend!" How I hated the man! And yet, I found myself writhing within a disconcerting envy for the strength which shielded him from suffering, a barricade against the nightmare. The envy grew, and I could no longer repress it. As I watched him I felt it swarm over me; a slowly gathering vampiric jealousy for his utter indifference, draining the blood of coherency from my thoughts. The germ of envying

rage fed upon my will, eating away sense and sanity with its poisonous hunger. It clawed and kicked through restraint and reached towards dark brutality with its lurid grasp. I could no longer stand the maddening jealousy. I leapt at him, clutching at his throat. We hit the floor of the train hard, my hands still wrapped around his neck. In my mind I was laughing and making faces at him, trying to make him suffer, to experience the nightmare. He struggled back, taken more by surprise than by my strength. He was suddenly on top of me looking down, though my hands were still attached to his neck. He made a sudden movement and a sharp, quick jolt to my skull was followed by the taste of blood filling my mouth as I gagged upon a tooth. Another blow and the darkness sank into the train through the windows, covering me in black.

Slowly I lift my head from the floor of the beer-soaked train, the drone of the tracks soothing my flushed skin. The train whispers to me, calling me in its nightmarish litany, "Mendoza!...Mendoza!" I can make out two people before me, but it is dark and I cannot see their faces. The two people are embraced, sensuously swaying with the movements of the train. As I move closer, I recognize Jaryd's form, and a woman....the woman from the bridge. A horrible gasping sound falls from their shadow, and my flesh crawls with fear. I know what he is doing. He is drinking her blood from her throat...stealing the life from her. I unwillingly move closer. An ominous blue light suddenly fills the train, and I see the two clearly now. Jaryd looks at me with pale eyes and pale flesh, gasping in agony. He is not drinking her blood....instead she is feeding off of his neck. In sickening nods of her head she tears his throat with her fangs, feasting upon his life. I can only watch helplessly as he becomes a standing corpse, lifeless, emotionless, unable to feel even the pain as she tears his flesh. Finally the vampire releases him and grins with blood-stained teeth as she watches the corpse walk towards me, not seeing me, passing through me. The woman giggles demonically, staring at me as two tears of blood fall from the cold black ice of her eyes.

There was clotting blood all over the floor and my face as I opened my eyes, my numb body laying still in the aisle. I was alone. The train bumped and shook lightly, rocking me in a drowsy hush of motion. The train entered a tunnel, and as I looked up from the grimy floor, the window was a hideous portrait of black.

Alex Glage
Richmond College 1994

Inadvertent Discovery of an Alternate Cosmic Continuum by a Fleet Cruiser following Threnall Shifting

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An Abstract.

That the theoretical revolutions in physics undertaken by Imsherr, Einstein, and Mohu Sondu almost three centuries ago laid the foundations for modern astrophysics and cosmological thought has never been successfully contested. An unacknowledged corollary, however, has been the influence that their work has had upon theoretical investigations of alternate cosmic continua contiguously occupying metaspace with our own. Ostrander and Velh (2094) applied the second derivative of Bennath's Formulation to the classic $E=mc^2$ and $W_{\square} = (l_d + l_m)^2$ equations and deduced the existence of Σ_n continua metaspacially "alongside" our own. This was a significant influence upon Arm M'Grath's early work on ciolospace, as the University of Melbourne Historical Series 23 (2188) demonstrates. Further work in alternate continuum theory has been sporadic and generally unenlightening due to the inability to perform controlled experiments in alternate cosma (Zhey'loæ 2202). Here we present an account of an alternate metaspacial subset occupying at least one line of contingency with our own.

On 3-15-2211 the UFC Quicksilver experienced a cascade series of z' Threnall shifts within 10^{-4} seconds of encountering a detonated muoquantization cell of approximately $\Psi_b = 0.971$ mrd yield.

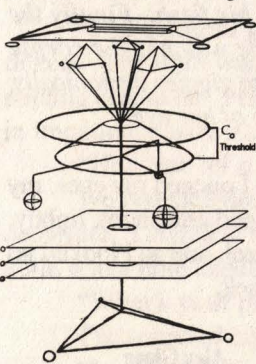


FIGURE 1. Reconstruction
of anyon rift metaserie.

This was activated as a weapon against the Quicksilver by a Taellar scoutship that refused to heave to when the validity of its transponder was questioned by Fleet Captain Gülberg (an explanation of Fleet policy toward suspected smugglers may be found in Rasnikolov 2117). The Taellar vessel was destroyed by the detonation and the Quicksilver was Doppler-intercepted by a series of cascading blast fissures ($\Phi > 0.2$ riN) while attempting to outrun the realtime explosion through ciolospace (Figure 1). The Quicksilver was shunted through an unpredicted rift into an alternate continuum, with slight damage to shipsystems and light injuries to eight crewmembers.

The Quicksilver entered a region of the alternate continuum (below designated as C_1) correlating with our home continuum (C_0) on an interstellar scale. Stars corresponding to Ban Ip Daladra, Barrstar, Cœ, Drrijjs, Gimal Idheresh, Huys, Iu, Jeresh, JkiVallind, Nikanai, Nioe, Sherthiy, Sol, Thalassa, Thuban, Tiba Viyy, and Uham-serei occupy the same positions in the C_1 subset as in the C_0 subset to within a tolerance of 1.27 lm. The Quicksilver was welcomed by representatives of the Federated Commonwealth, a multispecies interstellar association governed from Mintaka and analogous to the Union of Worlds. In the C_1 subset Mintaka hosts a double-planet system within the greenzone that has produced two sentient technoevolved species: the Minti and the Th'rille. Minti fall within 94.3% of the classic Terran bioprofiles as codified in

Hobbeson (2198); Th'rille match Taellar bioprofile data within 97.9%. This would seem to substantiate Nk'chisra's Parallelism Postulate, and other C_x subsets may contain comparable instances of parallel biological and/or technological evolution. Technoevolution in the Minti/Th'rille double-world culture is unique when compared to C_o examples and may be a result of outside interference from an older species.

Although the Quicksilver's entry into the C_x subset was accidental, eight weeks of research with massive FedCom technical assistance elucidated a method of return utilizing the Frinprè Constant where $\lambda=16.9c$ (Figure 2). Acceleration in ciolospace to $17c$ provided the initial phaseforce vector;

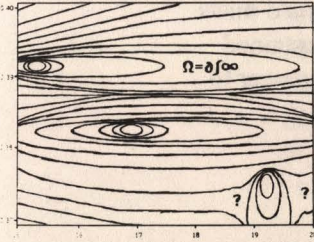


FIGURE 2. Application of the Frinprè principle as $15c < \lambda < 20c$. Appropriate nodes are visible at $\lambda=15.2c$ and $\lambda=16.9c$; the first was discounted due to a phaseshift disruption in the ζ' fieldlines.

a tachyon booster was used to maintain velocity in ciolospace while the ciolfield projector was taken offline and recalibrated according to the Re Brith Principle and a Th'rille theorem. The tachyon booster was jettisoned while in ciolospace to provide the requisite extra mass for the Sondu Transformation, but an unexplained instability opened a sheetrift through tachspace and the Quicksilver returned to the C_o subset five months later than intended. Following the Quicksilver's docking at Nikos Fleet Station, all FedCom technosystemic additions and modifications were stripped and have been sequestered by the Fleet of the Union. These are being held for exclusive study by the Fleet Astrophysical Section, thus violating the 2115 Articles of Free and Open Research. So far Fleet Station at Nikos has ignored our requests for a panel hearing on this violation, and we hope the publication of this abstract will bring wider attention to this infringement of the most basic rights of researchers across the Union of Worlds.

We hope that this brief account of an alternate continuum will revitalize research involving the theoretical discoveries of Ostrander and Velh. Any interested researchers are invited to contact any of us at the above-listed addresses for information on a related project.

We feel constrained to note that the Quicksilver's unintentional entry into the C_x subset has had effects upon the culture and sociopolitical interactions of the FedCom with its neighbors. Any future explorations should be carried out as unobtrusively as possible. However, we hope that peaceful intercourse between the C_x and C_o subsets will eventually result from tachrift crossings such as the one reported here.

THIS REPORT IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MICHAEL GÜLBERG.

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sensation comes to me of watery flight
angling down to the belows of rainforest green
and a rushing white foamed mist
hung about decidedly delicious smoothness
a clear cool stream blue-green ambivalence
reflected—and flight again from flattened mists
beyond forests and their waters—to sustained
impossibility of flight and not having power to
retain incessantly the first breath of sky

sound of rushing air comes to me
untemporal flight, not spiritual
but quintessential imagination
mercurial wind drift among pregnant clouds
over warm hills that become plains
above fruitful land—an immensity beyond this
maternal sky—but faint greyness perceived
shading hinting justly calls for rest when
delicate suspension brings land to feet and body
rains fall distant lines from darker clouds

mimosa silhouette stands against the greatest expanse
of orange-violet removing sunlight—eclipsing otherwise
uninterrupted horizon where mind and sky welcome
one another upon ever folding escaping light
followed by mind's seclusion to easily dream
and call forth after a fashion flight of the day
where without breathing sky—a little less life lived
within allotted time—brief exhilaration exhausts
itself replaced only by lingering delicate memory of flight
unless reinvigorated with new flight and the return of the sun

Grant Mudge
Richmond College 1992

The Creator to His Restless Creation

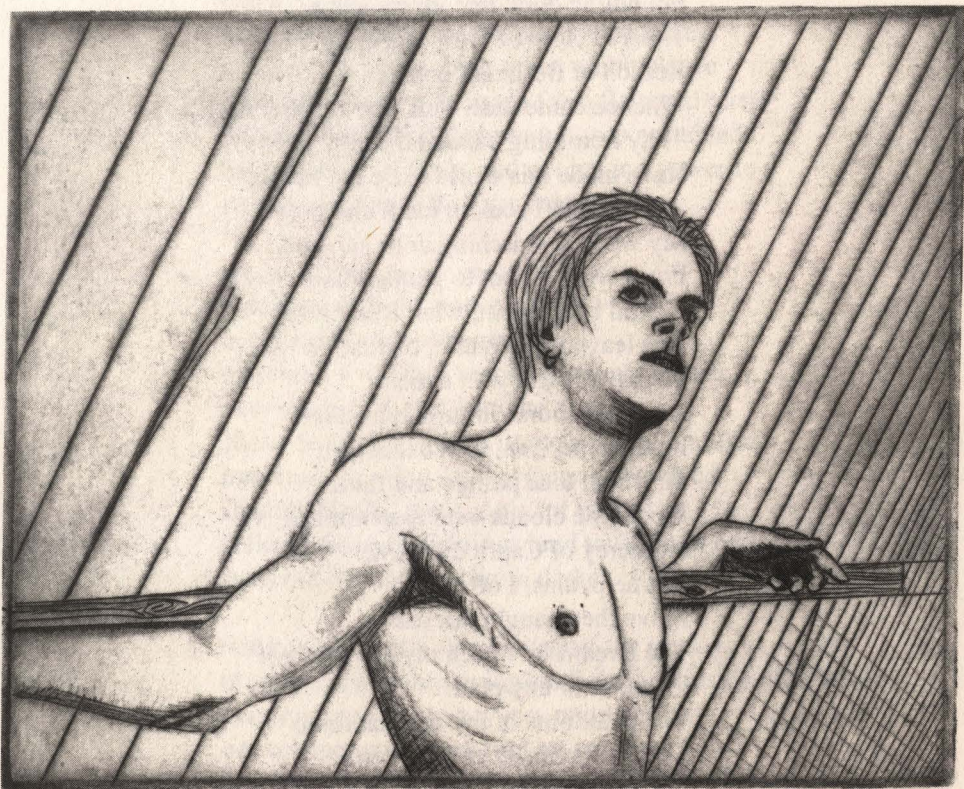
Thou eye adrift in roiling sky
Foundling child that grows alone,
Tattered cloth of How and Why
Reason of flesh and bone,
Whence came thee, Son, and whither now?
“Thy trembling hand and heavy brow
Have made this world to be my home;
And though I seek to learn and grow,
My wonted searching doth me blow
From cruel mount to gentle foam
— And back again; what Reason can
You leave me? What Foundation wise,
To stay me as I wax a man
And plot course in turbulent skies?”
It pains me, Son, to see thee so,
To watch thee plunge and flail;
To ply the clouds with map nor sail,
At mercy of Caprice’s blow.
But help, alas, I offer not,
I give thee naught nor can—
The Dream by which my son was got
Was free of any plan.
The phantoms of my wanton mind
Spawned climate of your birth;
Nor impetus nor inborn worth
Remains for thee to find—
*Should Reason live, I tell thee take it;
Else follow me, my Son, and make it.*

Rich Miller

Richmond College 1992

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Self-Crucifixion

2/2

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The Sisomorphamet

When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from obscure and eclectic dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous artist. He opened his eyes and noticed that everything looked shockingly ordinary. His room was the same as it had always been, and he found himself in the same position in which he had fallen asleep the previous night.

He did wake up, however, wearing black clothes and having long unruly hair, which had already been tied in a cultured-looking leather braid. He also woke up with a far-away look on his face, one that would surely entrance others and give them insight to the whirlwind of thought going on behind those eyes. Indeed, Gregor had woke that morning to a higher level of thinking.

The first thought to enter this higher being was that he should brush his teeth. After brushing his teeth as only an artist could, he looked at the shower and at his razor. Being an artist, however, he judged that cleaning and grooming, aside from the removal of early-morning-mouth, were not the duties of an artist.

While Gregor was preparing himself to be distanced from the human race, his parents and sister were already at the breakfast table waiting to distance him.

"God it's hot in here," said Mr. Samsa between bites.

Mrs. Samsa and Grete grumbled and moved their food around with their forks.

Gregor then pushed open his door and walked into the room. "God, it's hot in here," he said in a lofty voice.

The family looked up in amazement and slow realization. Mrs. Samsa's eyes widened as she said, "That's pretty deep."

Mr. Samsa looked up and nodded, "You know, I've never looked at it that way. I mean, it takes a while to understand him, but in the end, you know he's right."

"Not only is he right," said his sister, "but you can tell he means more than just that. Did you notice how he cried to God when he could have just exclaimed to himself? And the reference to hell is undeniable. I think he's trying to tell us that he grieves for us because he realizes that the vacuum of caring, of zest for life present in this room will surely send us to eternal damnation or a hellish presence on earth that would not be any easier to bear in his opinion."

At that Mr. Samsa knitted his brow. "Well, if that's the way you feel, you can get the hell out of here." With that, his father picked up the vat of apples at his side and started hurling them at Gregor one by one.

"I guess I'll leave," said Gregor, and he turned his neoterically-clad, fashionable frame back toward his room.

"Look what you've done!" cried Grete. "You can't do this to him. Look at him!"

Did he mean leave this room, or perhaps leave this life in which he is so horribly unappreciated?" She looked toward Gregor and said pleadingly, "Don't do this to yourself, you must stay here to point out the beauty for us, and show us things that make us look seriously at our trivial, unacceptable lives. Here, take this paint and canvas that I happen to be sitting on and go do what we only wish we could do." She stood up and Gregor retrieved the materials from her seat. He went into his room realizing that not only was it the artist's duty to resist shaving and showering, but also to wear black and be cast out before breakfast.

So, seeing things as only he could see them, Gregor returned to his room and sat in his chair. "What shall I paint?" Gregor thought to himself as he looked about the room. He saw his chest of drawers, his desk, his bed, his framed picture of a woman being raped by three carpet salesmen, and just as he was rereading his unsent fan letter to Ernest Borgnine, a bug scurried into the corner and caught his eye. Gregor thought the event ample justification for his first masterpiece. He painted hurriedly, before it scurried away again, then settled back, exhausted from such a taxing mental exercise.

Meanwhile, his family had finished breakfast while his boss decided to drop by, noting that it was practical to visit the home of every employee that did not arrive ten minutes before his scheduled starting hour.

The family greeted him with the utmost courtesy. They had learned to cower in guilt because the boss was once kind enough to let Gregor borrow a Q-tip.

When Gregor entered the room, he presented his masterpiece to all present.

"A dung beetle!" exclaimed his mother. "It's brilliant. It must be some type of physical representation of the psychological degradation occurring in the modern man."

"Most definitely," chimed Mr. Samsa, excited with his new-found intelligence. "It's either that or a religious representation of a reverse transfiguration, or whatever you call that."

"I don't care what it is," said the boss sternly, "but I'm willing to pay you an ungodly amount of money to keep doing it. Backing an artist," he said, admiring himself. "Great publicity." The boss reached into his coat and pulled out a stack of bills. "Here, this should get you started with your, uh, stuff." And the boss was out the door.

Grete was still deep in thought. "You're all wrong. Look at the way he put the cockroach in the corner. Look at the haste and passion with which he painted it. It's an obvious representation of the artist outcast and cornered into selling himself to the world. He is, of course, that hideous insect which you and all of society has put in the spotlight."

"Well, if that's the way you feel," said Mr. Samsa, turning on Gregor, "you can

get the hell out of here.”

Not feeling much at all, Gregor returned once again to his room. “What now?” he thought as he stared at the floor. Being an artist, he felt he must at least attempt to commit suicide, even if he did not follow through. Taking a razor from his unused shaving kit, he rolled up his black sleeve and placed his forearm on the desk.

He put the blade to his wrist and cringed. It weighed lightly against his skin as he closed his eyes. “Who am I fooling, anyway?” he said as he applied pressure.

His eyes opened and he pulled the blade away from his uncut wrist. He raised his eyebrows.

“Everybody,” he said, shrugging his shoulders and taking out the canvas.

“I think a portrait would be nice,” he thought and looked into the mirror.

Branden Waugh
Richmond College 1995



Sleeping Father Time has forgotten to mind his children.
Seconds pile up in the corner—
Waiting for Minutes,
 who are slow to punch the clock.
The Hour stops moving
As her workers dawdle at the coffee pot,
 Forgetting those waiting to be served.
Impatient customers tap tired fingers
 On teasing tabletops.
When the restless avert their gaze
 Tardy minutes rush to fill their positions.

Stacy Boothe
Westhampton College 1994

The light is gone.
But in the east the sky is orange-white.
City light on low mist clouds,
A glow like the moon.
Lunar white mixed in dust.
I can see it where I am coldly listening.
And I also see
Sky the color of hurricane sea,
Blue so close to black but deeper.
With trees like ghosts melting at the edges.
Western sky like a lake to run to,
That pulls with strange gravity.
Directly overhead,
Like a blueberry pearl,
There is something like neither.
And I could fall straight up
If physics were true,
And swim in the folds
Of sunless night.

Amy Snyder
Westhampton College 1993



W. F. Schlegel 1912

J. P. Schlegel

Lychrysceræ

Nalan hunched forward on the cool dark rock, elbows on his knees, turning a slim brassy ring over and over on his finger.

The crisp moonlight sang with unearthly clarity. Puresilver shone across his young face, casting a dark shadow on the unfeeling, unforgetting stone behind. Light wind stroked the trees that stood above him, whispering to any who might listen....

Unhearing, Nalan kept his head bent, absorbed in his own hollowness. Infrequently there was a soft swift gleam from the ring, more fiery than the patient moonlight.

He sometimes lifted his head, and stared at the mysterious waters of the ocean, just beyond the edge of the world.

For not a spear's-length from his boots the rocky floor vanished—

—and moonlit blackrock plunged down in an igneous waterfall, silently thundering and crashing with geologic patience, frozen flows of stone spilling hundreds of ells to meet the spreading em-brace of that undiscovered ocean. Even on a calm night the surf at the cliffbase would bellow louder than any human could withstand. But from this great height, the distant echoes were civil in their discourse with the breeze.

Nalan drew no comfort from this privileged position. He turned the ring over once more, remembering what Jir Misp had said when she'd last seen him:

"It's been in our family forever. It was Gran's, and she gave it to me. I'll loan it to you." She had smiled wanly. "A magic ring. Maybe it'll protect you."

His mind insisted on reminding him of all the details, all the context of the ring-giving. He had to find some way to encapsulate the shame, fit it away where it wouldn't distract him....

Leaning against the rock he crouched on was a black shield. Slipped into his leather belt was a slender sword, an epeè of high-quality New Order steel. In his pack, lying near, was a crumpled strip of grey cloth he now used as a banner. Banner, sword, shield: the three traditional acouterments of a knight.

Possession of these things did not make him a Knight.

There was the faintest twinge of a familiar scent. Alerted, he concentrated. Again! Stronger.

The Sidhe were nearby.

He had no other name for them. They'd driven him onward for days, ever since his exile here in Chrysiri had begun. Nalan had never seen one in daylight and had no idea how to speak to them or understand what they wanted. That made a cold sort of sense: the faeryfolk were beyond any human comprehension.

They were hunting him. He was certain of it.

The scent was stronger now, a sweet charcoal tang. The packstraps were

secured, the round shield slung over his left arm, and Nalan cautiously retreated.

I hate this, he ground out in his mind. It was a well-travelled path of thought. *Always running. Always running away, never stopping to fight. Coward!* There was little more to his private litany of self-condemnation. It was enough to keep him furious at himself, and despondent for any hope of reunion with Misp. *Coward, fool....running away from all of them, and her...*

The forest was cool and moist, alive with a vibrancy that was almost disorienting. As he moved through dewy feather-fronds Nalan knew he was very much out of place: Chrysiri was not his home! The forest floor was carpeted in moss and hushed his hurried strides. No twigs broke out in a chorus of betrayal under his feet—fallen sprays of leaves were too soft, too quiet in this new land. It was all soft, pliant. It was all a falsehood, because in every way this world conspired to trap him.

Because what let him move quietly allowed the Sidhe to glide like smoke.

Scents were sharper here. He could tell when he veered too close to their trail by the alien odor. Nalan followed an incline down, knowing that there would be water of some sort if he ran down-hill long enough. Chrysiri was a wet place, and that was a passive weapon Nalan was learning to use. The Sidhe never crossed flowing water.

The moonlight speared through from above, scattering itself amongst the million droplets that festooned the mossy trees. It was another irony for Nalan: Misp would be delighted by these sparkling woods, Misp who loved the moonlight across his brow. But if the Knights had allowed them to remain together, Nalan would have never seen this place....

Something tall and black moved at the edge of his sight. How close?

Nothing was visible by the time he'd swung around.

Lord, I need You! Nalan prayed. How close had it been? His sense of distance was impaired here, or maybe it was the land itself; orb shine touched the moss erratically, causing shadows to stretch deceptively. The innocent breezes struck twitching shadows from the broad leaves—

The nighttime forest was diaphanous in the silverlight. Nalan was conscious of a waiting silence as he stood quietly. All the rustlings and faint calls were stilled. He tried to refine his hearing, to separate the wind's leafy consultations from a foreground statement made sinister by its silence.

Hand on his epeè, reassured by its impersonal coldness, Nalan dared a slow pivot. His boots made no sound he could hear—but the Sidhe?

Three small eternities passed. Nalan marked the end of the first by a pattering of drops from a branch, and the second by his realization that curls of mist were drifting around his ankles. The third eternity ended when he took several cautious steps forward, hand still on his weapon. Mist-wisps recoiled from his feet, but he saw no other reaction from his surroundings. Nalan began walking quietly once more,

heading down the thickly wooded slope. A new sound was reaching him now, the faint liquid chortle of a rocky stream. *If I can get to the water...*

Definite motion behind him—

—And something ancient was triggered inside Nalan, and he was sprinting without a care for his heavy steps or breath. The shield bounced against him. His blade caught on branches several times, was torn past. The fog was thickening around his knees, deepening as he ran lower into the dell. There was the brook: smooth glints of moonlight where it jumped from small round stones. He felt his foot jar into something hard and unseen; his leg twisted, he fell and rolled, his pack slamming into his ribs. Nalan leaped up and bolted, bruised, his breath wild in his mind—

—because there was a new sound from the trees now.

It was tonal, wavering, deeper than hearing but somehow still audible. Nalan splashed through the cold water awkwardly; it clutched at him numbly. There seemed to be a thousand dark voices raised against him in wordless menace. Thicker fog brushed coolly against the sweat on his face. The swelling voices paced his heartbeat, blending with the panicky blood surging in his ears. He stumbled again on the far side, digging his knee into the rich earth of the slope. The moonlight now only served to enhance the gloom beneath the overarching canopy of trees.

Nalan's mind was chill and sharp from his fear. Perceptions refined themselves; he was keenly aware of the scent of the living humus he crouched on—and of the clear sweet charcoal overlaying it. The trickles of his sweat etched patches of irritation on his skin. Dominating the brook's effluence was that bone-caressing threnody, an unreality forced on him by the innocent spilling water it enveloped. A vagabond zephyr, its scent hinting of the sea, urged tendrils of mist into spinning with dervish glee, brushing his brow, tickling the many leaves around him.

Nalan turned, hands on the cool earth, and the grim chorus reverberated between the deep stones of the trembling forest.

On the far bank of the brook loomed something black and unearthly.

Things that were not scales, but could not have been skin, gleamed dryly in the silverlight. The body was powerful, massive, the jet-black fingers impossibly long. Things trailed out and down from its head and back: too smooth for spines, sharper than tendrils. Most of the body was a void of shadow, but its hard head was long and chiseled by the light.

Its moonshadow reached out to one side, paralleling the flowing water.

Nalan could feel the forest waiting, all around him. Even the wind had been hushed, yielding to the sepulchral chant that roared with the blood in Nalan's head. The mass of the forest bore down on him through the enwombing darkness, crushing him with a single leaftip against his cheek. The brook retreated from his hearing to become an isolated bright noise in a hollow universe of darkness and silence.

—And that hymn which was worse than silence....

The Sidhe made no move. It stood with a poise that bespoke strength and grace, the joyous tension of a creature that hunts not to survive but to exist as it must.

It was watching him, half-sprawled on the mossy slope. The darkling fugue washed over him. He stared with the ache of reality as the Sidhe angled its head, planes of light sliding along its strangely reflective exterior. It was not fifteen ells away, and Nalan was unable to control his thudding pulse.

In this entirely unnatural setting it was purely natural that his thoughts would leap to Misp.

There was a cool flash from his hand—

—where the silk-thin letters were gleaming around the band of the ring, glowing as if they masked a furnace:

*Hirphi san ilâm siçarenyth yvæ numvrarythu
San içi lychrysæræ tiensnlâ yvæ weo wæthu*

The tiny silent glow warmed a patch of orange light on the cool moss beneath his fingers. He spared it a glance.

The Sidhe tilted its head again. It saw the ring.

Everything was very quiet and precise in Nalan's mind as he watched the Sidhe shift its clawed feet and step over the rushing brook.

It moved over the moss and humus in soundless grace. It stood over him, a mute pillar in the expectant cathedral of the forest....

...And extended a long but delicate hand to the transfixed young man.

Nalan scuttled backward, his shield and pack dragging at the earth, catching soft fallen leaves. The sole sounds he could sense were of water and wind in their winsome susurrations. The Sidhe did not advance after him, but instead it spoke: "Your thoughts were not of yourself."

For a moment Nalan was uncertain if those had been words. Could those peculiar sounds have been anything besides variations in the chuckling stream, or the murmuring wind? Had they been speech?

They had been, and were: "Your mind moved to another."

Nalan kept his focus on the Sidhe, but he could see from the corner of his vision that Misp's ring was still warmly bright. "Still there," he said uncertainly. "My thoughts, I mean."

A conversation with one of the faeryfolk!

Nalan dared to look around one black leg to where the brook tumbled over its stones. The tall Sidhe easily followed his attention. "The water is clean and well-tasting." Then it was crouching at the near bank, a motion so smooth Nalan could only marvel. The Sidhe returned, cupping water in its hands, and Nalan sat still on the slope

as the smudges of his flight were washed away with the crisp liquid. The Sidhe's fingers were light and dextrous, and Nalan felt they were soft.

"What are you?" he had to ask.

"We are Nadja," the exotic shape responded. "We felt your coming. In your fear you ran from us...but your mind returned to where your body wishes to be."

"It's not." Nalan sat hunched against the slope and his pack. He was still wary, but he was tired, hungry, and young enough to trust easily. He was also glad of his first chance to talk *to anyone* in long days of solitude. "Me—my body, my form. I'm running away still, just doesn't show."

"Your thoughts were not of yourself," the Sidhe pressed.

"Too scared to think straight."

"No," the Nadja insisted. "For that one moment, your thoughts were selfless. This is a greater thing than it may seem, greater than you think.

"And you are greater than you believe."

john m aguair
Richmond College 1992

Winner of The Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Creative Writing

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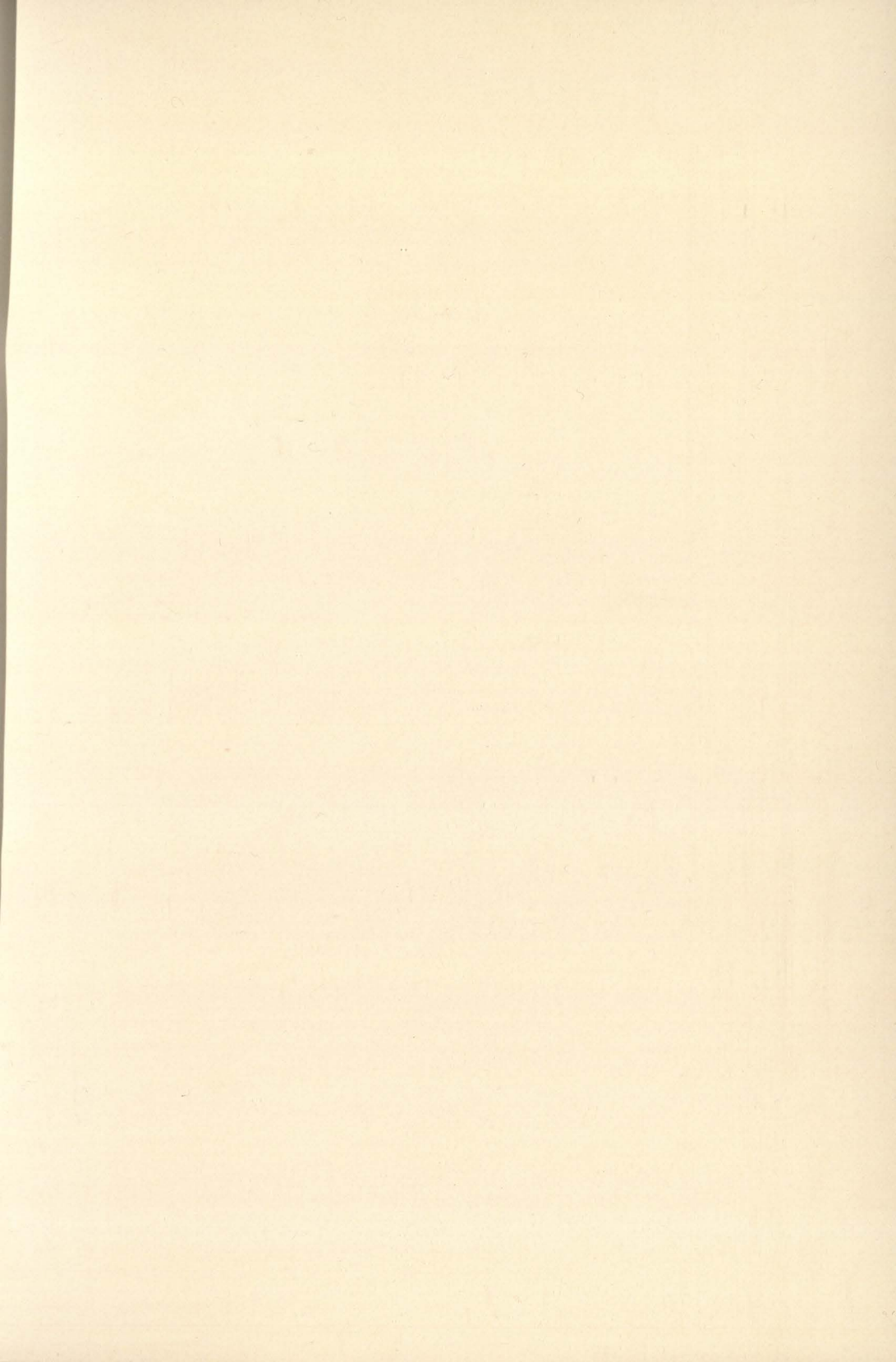
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