Exile Anthology

A Special Sesquicentennial Issue

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Cover Drawing:
Introduction

For me and many others, the creative writing program at Denison is synonymous with Paul Bennett. It is not merely that Paul initiated the program and, for a decade or so, was the sole member of the English department who taught Advanced Composition and directed student Honors Projects in writing. Nor is it only the assurance of stability and continuity which identifies Paul with creative writing at Denison. Even more important is the low-keyed but vital encouragement he has given to his students and colleagues. When an aspiring writer leaves Denison, he or she knows that Paul's active influence has not suddenly ended. Whenever an alumnus, alumna, or former student needs advice or encouragement, Paul is the one to whom he or she turns. Over the years he has remained in touch with an astonishing number of Denison writers—never overbearing, never harshly negative in his response, always generous with his encouragement and praise.

Thus it is very appropriate that this special issue of Exile features the contributions of Denison alumni, most or all of whom have experienced Paul Bennett's support and stimulus for their writing. These contributors testify to Paul's lasting impact on their college careers, and on their view of creativity as a lifelong endeavor. Some are published or professional writers; others write as an avocation, an extension of their liberal education into later life. All of them exemplify the results of Paul's encouraging motto.

As an alumnus with enormous gratitude for Paul's teaching and colleagueship, I urge Exile's contributors in resounding this motto: Write on, Paul Bennett, right on!

John Miller
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Horses
by Deborah S. Appleton

I keep horses in my stalls at night,
And you, what's that burning, ever so dimly,
Casting shadows on the trim front lawn?
Shadows that I trip upon, when, at dark,
Quietly I creep to your windows,
And press my wet nose against the icy panes;
Peering at the cold light and wondering;
Sitting my shadow down on the grass to wait.
He isn't coming back you know.
They have changed his silhouette
Into a shadow too.
But he is waiting.
Waiting for you.
The horses are getting restless.
It is almost morning.

Man and His World
by Clark Baise

1.

In the season of dust with the sun benign, a man of forty and a boy of twelve appeared at the Tourist Reception Centre, asking for rooms. Failing that, a house, with cook and servant.
The Centre was a modest concrete bunker with thirty rooms and a dining hall, and it was full. This was winter, the time for migrating Siberian songbirds and their Japanese pursuers. For the man and boy the situation was potentially desperate.
Jaisalpur was a walled, medieval town baked on an igneous platter a thousand feet above the desert. To the east, no settlements for two hundred kilometers. To the west lay twenty kilometers of burnt, rusted tanks and stripped, blood-stained Jeeps, an UN outpost manned by a bizarre assortment of ill-equipped troops, then barbed wire, mines, and fifteen kilometers of more trophy tanks and blood-stained Jeeps.
In the winter, buses dropped off passengers twice a week, picked up freight, and returned to the capital.
The man—who gave his name as William Logan—really should have booked a room through the central authority. That way, he would have saved the trip and, who knows, maybe his life.

2.

They had been on the road six days from New Delhi. Sleeping on buses, standing on trains, paying truckers. By day, the thin air required a sweater, through the sunburned with its mere intention. From March, when summer returned, the road become the world's longest clothesline and camel dung kiln.
Wealth was counted in camels. Camels outnumbered bicycles in the district. Camels pulled the wooden-wheeled carts and plodded around the water-screws, drawing up monsoon rains from the summer before. They yielded their carcasses more graciously than any animal in the world. The first sight of camels grazing in the bush had been a wonder to William Logan. Something half-evolved to mammahood, comic and terrifying in its brute immensity. It had confirmed him, for the moment, in the rightness of what he was doing.
In the desert near the Rat Temple, the government maintained a camel-breeding station. The sight of a hobbled cow being mounted by the garlanded bull, their bellows and the swelling of their reptilians necks, suggested to the Japanese naturalists on their guided tours an echo of the world's creation, a foretaste of its agony and death.
Before the invasion of Aryans, Greeks, Persians and British, the desert people had their own cosmology. The Mother of the World had given birth to identical pairs of camels, tigers, gazelles, elephants and rats. She did not distinguish between her children. She did not have a particular aspect or appearance; whatever their size or ferocity, her children all resembled her, perfectly. The people of Udirpur were still known as ratworshipers.

When she was nearly too old for child-bearing and the world was already full, she found herself pregnant again. And for the first time, she suffered pain, foreboding, fatigue. She bled, lay down frequently and grew thin. And from her womb came rumbles, lava, fire and flood. When she gave birth, only one child emerged. His strangled, identical brother fell from the womb and was hastily buried under the great stone mountain in the middle of the desert.

It is said that one brother was evil, but which one? They had struggled in the womb but the secret was kept. The tribes of animals divided. Those giving allegiance to the survivor became his servants. Others retired to the oceans and to the air and to the underworld, growing fins or scales or feathers, or shrinking themselves to become insects. They all kept faith with the one who had died.

It is said the survivor, be he good or bad, is born with sin and with guilt and condemned to loneliness. Nowhere on the earth will he find his brother or anything else like him. And with his birth, the Mother of the World died and the creative cycle came to an end.

Ten years earlier, over the mountains a thousand kilometers to the north, a woman had arrived in Udirpur: the palest, whitest woman the people had ever seen. She'd been discovered outside the Rat Temple by a lorry-driver who'd been praying to the God for a successful trip. He had offered sweets and lala milk while the God's children had swirled over his hands and feet, licking his still-sweet fingers and lips.

Clearly the girl was a hippie—the only English word he knew—one of a tribe he'd heard about but never seen. She carried a new-born baby and nursed him like a village woman by the temple gates. She wore a torn, faded sari, something the lorry-driver's own wife or widowed mother would be ashamed to wear, this village woman by the temple gates. She wore it well and seemed comfortable in it.

He spoke to her in his language, offering a ride to Udirpur, where at least there were facilities for foreign women and for babies. To his surprise, she answered in a language he knew. She gathered her sleeping baby and the cotton sack that held her possessions and followed him to his truck, without question. This was the way she had travelled and lived for the past three years. At some point in time lost to her now, she had been a girl in a cold small town on the edge of a forest, near a river frequented by whales, and she had left that town on a bus to work in the city, in the year of a World's Fair. And after that summer she's not stopped her traveling, until she welcomed whatever remnant of the world that managed to seek her out.

He lived in a tawny sandstone palace two kilometers from the center of town, at the place where the igneous mesa began to split, where a summer river fed a forest and residual privilege permitted the luxury of a gardener and his family, the appropriation of water, and the maintenance of a very small game sanctuary.

In the British days, the various Nizams and Maharajas had been afforded full military salutes. The British, with their customary punctiliousness over military symbolism and social hierarchy, assigned each native potentate a scrupulously-measured number of guns. Thus, powerful rajahs like those of Jaipur and Baroda enjoyed full twenty-one gun salutes, and the no-less-regal but less prepossessing rajahs of Cooch Behar and Guwalior and Dewas Senior and even Dewas Junior (the latter a one-time employer of a reticent young Englishman who introduced Gibbon to the royal reading room) were granted fifteen, or twelve, or eight guns. The Raja of Udirpur, grandfather of the current resident of the Tawny Palace, had been assigned a mere two guns on the imperial scale. He was therefore called the Pip-squeak Rajah, or Sir Squealer Singh, for the twin effect of his popgun salute and for the only worthy attraction in his district, the notorious Temple of Rats. It is not written how Sir Squealer, a genial and worldly man by all accounts, felt about his name or his general reception.

The grandson, Freddie Singh, occupies two rooms in the sealed-off palace. In those rooms he maintained the relics he'd inherited: swords, carpets, carvings, muskets, tiger-claws, daggers, and the fine silk cords designed for efficient dispatch. Freddie Singh's private Armory was as complete as any Rajah's but no visitor ever saw it. He kept in touch with his subjects, or those few hundred who still acknowledged his rule, and kept out of the way of the State, District and Conservation authorities who actually ran the town.

He had been out of the country once as a young man, then just graduated in business administration from the Faculty of Management in Ahmedabad. The first National City Bank (India Nvt. Ltd.) had hired him as a stock-analyst, and after two years of the fast life in Bombay, he'd been sent to an office in Rome, then Paris and finally New York, to learn stocks and bonds and how to trade in futures.

Those had been the beautiful years of Freddie Singh, those years on the Strand, in the Bourse, on Wall Street, an exiled princeling, smelling of licorice.

She and the baby—a rugged little chap, half-Pathan by the look of him—opened up a room on the second floor, assisted by the old Royal Groom and keeper of polo
ponies (now reduced to cook and gardener and feeder of the royal animals) and her very small daughter who became a companion for young Pierre-Rama.

She seemed to bring some order, perhaps some beauty, into the majority of people in his ancestral city, the Rajah (though still a youngish man), was either a relic or an embarrassment. When he at last took the unused rooms, he prepared to call her Rani if it pleased him. Other servants as well, in front of her but never him. The camel, bountiful in all things, provided an anthology of choice insults. The Rani was made to feel as worthy as the slime of a dead camel's tooth. Weeks, then finally years went by, without her ever leaving the compound.

Pierre-Rama was nearly ten when the man and his son appeared in town that cool day in late December. Since the Tourist Centre was filled with bird-watchers, someone asked if the visitor would object to accommodation in the Rajah's palace. No, he would not. Would the visitor mind sharing the floor with the beautiful, exotic, mysterious Rani? No, decidedly, he would not. Would he be patient with the Rajah, who, if he could not marry his guests, would often confer upon them lands or Mogul miniatures or dusty carpets that had been his grandfather's pride to disburse, but which now belonged to the state? Yes, he would be patient with the old gentleman.

They put the man and his son (a frail lad given to sneezing in the dust and whining for the newly-outlawed American soft-drinks) in Youssef's camel-drawn cart and drove them to the gully-hugging yellow palace. They made their own way through the garden to the main gate, and pulled on a rusty chain to alert the chowkidar.

It was the Rajah, clad in pajamas and a shawl and smoking an English cigarette who opened the door. He was younger than the guest, a vigorous man no more than thirty-five, with a head and mane of glossy curls, a rounded face andnbustling, bountiful in all things, providing an anthology of choice insults. The Rani was made to feel as worthy as the slime of a dead camel's tooth. Weeks, then finally years went by, without her ever leaving the compound.

That is how, this night in February two months later, under a sky pierced with stars, with meteorites flaring and bright silent things making their way across the heavens (not planes, satellites, possibly, if indeed so many had been launched under a sky that would embarrass a Planetarium, a sky that thrills the way it does...)

The stars over the winter desert are mythologically potent tonight, portending stories. The sky is an ocean, thinks William Logan; I could watch it forever. The Milky Way, luminous, the rip and tear of meteorites, blue-white stars glittering like messages, like interference; he thinks of old movies, the sputter on a sound system for every break in the film. But here is no sound but the sucking of milk. Logan is speaking. "Now this is a night for sea-turtles," he says very slowly, because English is the Rani's last language, the one she learned here, with a local accent, from the gardener and his widowed daughter. Sea-turtles she does not understand, but lets Logan go on.

"When sea-turtles are born, they have maybe twenty minutes to memorize the exact location of their birth. Their exact twenty feet of sand, in the world. And these are among the stupidest animals on earth--can you imagine?"

"That is amazing," she says.

"But I've seen them down on the beach at Grand Cayman. Caribbean sea-turtles. The old she-turtle waddles ashore and digs a deep trough about fifty feet up from the water. And she drops in her eggs and pats down the sand and goes back to sea."

"That is beautiful," sayd the Maharani.

"But they don't make it, see. No, no, the natives hide behind the trees, waiting for the old she-turtles to lay their eggs. They are too tired now to move..."

"Yes, I am knowing that tiredness..."

"And so the natives attack them, turn them all over on their backs. And after a few hours they build fires on the beach and heat iron spikes red hot and then push them under the shell--"

"Oh, Mr. Logan, please. This is terrible. No more, please."

"Please do not be upset, Solange," says the Rajah, snapping awake. "I too have seen this. What we are witnessing, he goes on to suggest, is the death of a species from over-specialization. It had lived two hundred million years in one form or another, an insult to intelligence, without enemies, enjoying near-immortality. It is a model of organization, more like a religion than a living creature."

A long silence ensues. "I have seen skies like this only up north," says Logan.
"I have seen skies like this every night since I left Europe," says the Rani. "Every night on the Black Sea and on the Caspian and in the desert of Kandahar and in the mountains of Kashmir were all like this. I could not live without stars like this. It is a head full of jewels, the people say. And in the monsoons when the stars are covered, the people say the camel has closed her eyes and people get sick."

"Mr. Logan had not yet spent a monsoon."

"I was saying, about turtles. Not about the she-turtles—that is sad and barbarian. I grant you. I was thinking of the babies. Just seconds after they hatch and climb up through the sand and they're no longer than fiddler crabs and move just as fast, and there are hundreds of them all on the same night racing from the dunes down across the wet sand of high tide to the water. Thousands of birds have gathered and all the natives who were there for the mothers are there for the babies. They came in baskets and they scoop up turtles with both hands the way we'd pick berries, and that's not the amazing thing. The amazing thing about those baby turtles is this: they have only ten minutes to break out of the egg and get into the water. And they must survive odds that stop the most intelligent beast on earth. And that's not what they're thinking about. What they must do beyond anything else is plan for their return to this beach, this very beach, for spawning. And they do it by printing the stars indelibly in their brain. A perfect star-chart. It's as though they are born with the most perfect sensitive instrument in the world, they use it once, remember it perfectly, and then when they hit the water, if they get that far, the mind snaps shut and they live on instinct for the next three centuries."

"That is very beautiful," she agrees.

"We are the only animals who can get so lost, Mr. Logan," says Freddie Singh.

Under the sari, the Maharani shifts the baby to the other breast. For several minutes they watch the meteorites and the steadily-moving things that the Rani thinks of as extraterrestrial.

"When our geese are flying south," says Logan, "it is said that they can hear the Gulf waves crashing on the shores of Texas and they can hear the Atlantic surf on Ireland. From Winnipeg, or Montreal."

The Rani says nothing but she feels that she has travelled as unerringly as any turtle or any goose and that even tonight she could hear every voice in every language that had ever been spoken to her. This man Logan, a country-man, was over-impressed with the brains of lower animals.

"You are a restless man, Mr. Logan," sans the Rani.

The three-block frontage of William Logan's birth was Stiles to Raglan, between Portage and Wolseley, in the city of Winnipeg. Though life had stretched him, he often returned to that original scene, in his memory, to his house built by his father on land purchased by his grandfather, on the Assiniboine. In his way he had swum the world ever since. He had lost his bearings.

He had been in Montreal in 1967, living in Westmount and working in textiles. He'd just been divorced. He was thirty that year with a two-year-old boy and he
"That day in the park. You called me the au pair girl but I noticed you alone in
the park and I watched Mrs. R. watching you and I could see you were both very
experienced in the world... I was not, not at all. I wondered how you would get
together." She took a long breath, and wrapped the sari-end over her head.

"You speak a lot more when your husband is gone."

"My husband is never gone."

She listened awhile to jackals on the plain, the leathery sway of palms in the
desert, the distant clatter of wooden wheels, a cart and camel over cobblestoned
roads.

"May I call you Solange?"

She pondered the question longer than he thought necessary, "I cannot stop
you."

"Then what are the chances of our getting together? Surely it means something
no? It can't just be (he thought of the stars) just coincidence."

"You are perhaps too restless, Mr. Logan."

"It's just that I don't wait for things anymore."

On his last flight from Egypt to Montreal, Logan had sat next to a pleasant
moon-faced man bound for Athens, and maybe Montreal. He's asked Logan
shrewd job-hunting questions and Logan had been flattered by his interest. Then
he'd asked how much he was south of Athens. Logan told him and
the man jerked into a new posture. He stood and opened one of the Red Cross
emergency medical bags that was in the storage area immediately overhead. At the
same time, six other young men stood and opened other emergency bags. Oh,
no, Logan had thought: the boxes were full of grenades.

There is nothing in the modern world quite like eight days of siege to 
focus a man's attention on final matters. They had landed a few hundred yards from the
hillside home of the Delphic Oracle. Low has fallen the prophet's house, quoted
one passenger. Women and children were released; Logan made his peace. As
good a place as any to die; as good a reason as any. His life was a hostage-taking
anyway, he was a passenger only, detained by fanatics. He vowed, if he survived, to live his life
from that moment on as though the person next to him was a terrorist, that every package contained grenades, that every flight would end on a
hillside, surrounded by troops.

Just a few weeks before, but a millenium ago, he had landed in Montreal, flown
to Toronto, taken the airport limousine to the door of the expensive school he paid
for and asked for Billy Logan, a boy who was a stranger to him and whom he'd
come to dislike just a little. He'd taken Billy with him back to the airport and they'd
flown to London, bought tropical clothes and Logan had sent telegrams to his boss
and ex-wife. Resign effective immediately... I have Billy don't look you'll never
find us. He bought tickets to a dozen destinations, under various names. Not merely
restless, he'd become impulsive.

Some nights, sleep is an act of will requiring as sharp a focus as thought itself.
Under such heavens there could be no sleep. Listening to the Rani was like listening
to an Indian woman—the accent, that is—only better. It's strange but familiar.

Freddie Singh sits in his Armory, wondering if this is the night. He has come to
like the visitor. The boys have become inseparable; there is hope for the boy. But
Freddie Singh is still the Rajah of the Tawny Palace; he knows what happens on his
grounds as his grandfather once knew what happens on his grounds as his grand-
father once knew what happened in his larger durbar: he knows that an uprooted
man is the principle of corruption, will spread it wherever he goes. When you an-
nounced yourself from Canada, the Rani said get rid of him immediately but I
could not. You needed rest, just as the Rani has needed rest. But she has healed,
and you have not, my friend.

The people here know of dualities, of coincidence. Every day they see the sand
turn to embers. Every night to ice. Ten months of the year, never a drop of water.
Two months, walls of mud.

The Rani arrived in India with a friend, another girl from Que-beck. But the other
girl met a handsome Frenchman at the airport and the Rani struggled onward, to
the desert. Her friend followed the boy to Bangkok, Hong Kong, Djakarta, Nepal.
She loved him, she cooked for him, she helped poison people for him, maybe
dozens of young travellers, like her, like the Rani. She may be in jail for the rest of her life. She was not evil, not born evil, but she had become lost.

We have known others, thinks Freddie Singh. A four-teen-year-old girl gives birth in a paddy field in Bangladesh nine months after a week of raping, after her mother’s rape and murder, her village’s rape and butchery. She slashes the infant’s throat and wrists, hocks up the body like a fish’s, then throws herself successfully on the knife. But someone came by, picked up the smaller body and took it to the hospital, and the corpse was resurrected. And the baby was adopted by a family in Levis who named her Marie-Josee and now she’s the best student and the best figure-skater in her school.

The people here have seen enough of life to know that coincidence itself is no motive for action. Coincidence on your level, Mr. Logan, is a turtle’s coincidence, nothing but instinct.

Coincidence is coincidental, thinks Freddie Singh.

"My husband is back."

Logan, sipping the last of his cold tea, turned in his wicker chair. "Freddie, I...

In Freddie’s hands is stretched taut a valuable artifact from one of the desert tribes. In the old days they had joined caravans across the desert, offering their services as entertainers and animal-handlers. And the caravans never reached their destinations. The people were called thuoquus and they worshiped the principle of creation no less than other tribes, though their ultimate loyalty was to the brother who had died.

Death moves swiftly across the heavens, obliterating the stars at a point just short of meaning, and across Logan’s brain like some long-sought solution made suddenly apparent, only to retreat again. He looks up, about to speak and across to the Rani who now is standing, and turning away. Then he looks down, at himself, sees his head perched crazily on his chest and the widening dribble of tea on his luminous white kurta, and the stain spreads to fill his universe.
Heads And Tails  
by Tim Cockey

"Well what the hell would you have done? Danced around her room playing finger cymbals?"

Peter Diaz slammed the car dash with his fist.

"I might as well have," he muttered to himself, "for all the good it did me."

He hit the dashboard a second time; the brown plastic Buddha rattled against the windshield glass.

Peter Diaz glared at the benign little statuette. Whatever happened to the old Happy Face?

Have a Nice Little Crummy Day, Fleaface.

Peter turned the key and rocked up and down with the car.

"Come on, baby, come on now..."

The engine sparked and kicked into life. A cloud of oily smoke belched from behind the car. Peter set himself in the seat and pulled away from the curb.

As Peter drove into the city his car radio squealed out urgent demands that he wash up, eat right, drink beer, and shop around for low priced appliances. Peter wanted none of it. There was talk of news at the top of the hour and of music in the next hour.

"What hour?" Peter muttered, but nobody seemed willing to surrender the moment to the airwaves.

National security, thought Peter; state secrets.

How Peter wished for an old locomotive style cow-catcher for his car! With a little armor around the front and sides of the car, he pondered, the drive down St. Paul street might wax productive. Doors flying open suddenly from parked cars, as they always did, could be clipped clean, inquisitive bumpers inching into intersections might be tested, and those cars that muscled or weaved nonchalantly between lanes would simply have to suffer a 40 m.p.h. scrape and escape.

Peter set his upper lip to do battle. Where in the world the dashboard Buddha got off laughing on a day such as this was beyond him. Peter doubted there could have been a worse way to begin the day than to have had another needless argument. He knew he'd have to call her, he always did.

He took a quick right turn.

The sun was high and bright in a cloudless sky. Peter rolled down his window and took a deep breath. As he passed the park in the next block he saw a man and a woman standing nose to nose on the walk. An Irish Setter a short ways off barked at them. Peter noticed that the large tree in the middle of the park, merely an umbrella web of branches these past months, had gone suddenly green. A young girl in a short dress was leaning into a water fountain, and a man who was kneeling in the dirt of the flower bed straightened up to reach for one of the several cardboard boxes that were sitting on the grass behind him.

Peter consulted the Buddha.

"When did all this happen? Did I miss something?"

"You been working on the pipeline?" she asked in a scratchy voice. She wore a light green jacket with her name punched on red label tape on the pocket.

"Nothing by it, hon," she said. "Just thought you were a bit over bundled."

Peter looked down on his sweater and boots.

"Oh."

"It turned overnight," the lady said, moving away from the register. "It is beautiful outside. I wish I could get out there."

Peter nodded and hurried outside. Skirts and shirts. Everybody was showing their legs and arms. Men had their jackets hooked on their finger and thrown over their shoulders. Girls' necks were bare, their toes were exposed.

Cupping two dimes in his fist, Peter walked down the sidewalk looking for a phone booth. The first one he found was occupied by a short man with a grey mustache. Peter raised his eyebrows through the glass, but the man shook his head vigorously and continued talking. Outside the next booth a tall girl stood stiff arming the door and tapping against the glass with her fingernails. Someone, her boyfriend probably, was inside, hunched over, his back to the girl.

"Will he be long?" Peter asked the girl.

The girl lifted her free hand and let it drop against her side. She smacked her lips.

"Who knows?"

Peter forced a smile and moved to a bench on the curb where he sat down and lit a cigarette. His palms were sweaty. He decided to take his sweater off. He grabbed two dimes in his fist. Peter walked down the sidewalk looking for a second booth. The first one he found was occupied by a short man with a grey mustache. Peter raised his eyebrows through the glass, but the man shook his head vigorously and continued talking. Outside the next booth a tall girl stood stiff arming the door and tapping against the glass with her fingernails. Someone, her boyfriend probably, was inside, hunched over, his back to the girl.

"Do you have a cigarette?" she asked. Peter dropped his sweater on the bench and pulled out a cigarette. The girl took it and sat down next to him.

"Match?"

He handed her his cigarette.

The girl was thin and angular. Her dark brown hair was short and straight, styled in a way that the ends came to a point on either side of her jaw, reminding Peter in the uniformity of its roundness of the old college football helmets. Her lips were painted red and her eyes highlighted by a symphony of blues. Two dark slices above the eyes suggested eyebrows, and an unflagging flush of the cheeks, Peter supposed, was intended to represent a sort of gaunt vigor. He wondered that her pillow case might not rival a Peter Max poster or a Leroy Neiman some mornings. Breathe and water diet. Lots of fiber.

Peter sensed, though he displayed the good sense not to stare, that the girl was sending her cigarette smoke through an intricate series of steps, up the nostrils, around the tongue, through the lungs, and out the lips, with each puff. He fancied...
a few smoke rings on his own, though the wind proved prohibitive. He tossed his cigarette away before it was half finished.

He pointed, at length, at the phone booth and asked, "Your husband?"

She turned her colors to him and smiled.

"Not on your life," she said smoothly.

"But you're with him," Peter said, swallowing hard. "Or are you waiting for the phone, too?"

The girl pulled on her cigarette. Peter waited through the gymnastics for her answer.

"No. The phone is yours next. I'm with him." She tapped her dark burgundy fingernails on the bench. They were long and curved like a hawk's beak.

"If you're in a hurry, however," she added, "you might want to try another phone. Charles is so slow he might be in there until spring."

Peter sat up.

"It is spring," he laughed. "It's funny you said that. I would have said that, too, this morning, except somebody tipped me off. Look!"

He held out his feet for her to see his boots. He also laid a hand on hers and smiled.

"It was winter when I got up," he added. "Cold as hell."

The girl tapped her cigarette out on the bench and flipped the butt away.

"It is still winter," she said evenly.

"I don't think so," he started slowly. "Look around. The leaves are back. It's warm out, everybody is running around with their sleeves rolled up... Look at you. You don't have a coat on."

He blushed immediately. The girl's dress, a blue crepe outfit with a tailored slit up one side, was ripped nearly to the waist. Peter had not even noticed. The tear extended upwards from the slit. The girl's entire leg was exposed.

"I don't have a coat," the girl was saying, "because Charles over there insisted I would not need one. One god damned robin and he's jumping into his swim suit. All this gung-ho for spring nonsense is ludicrous. We are still involved with winter."

"Oh?" she said mildly.

"I'm glad to see someone dressed properly," she added, "even if you think you're not."

Peter said nothing.

Holding her dress, the girl crossed her legs and leaned slightly towards Peter, forcing him to look at her.

"Are your phone call important?" she asked in a milder voice. "He really might be awhile."

Peter lost, for a moment, the reason for his call. He was studying the girl's eyes. Then the events of the morning flooded back into his head. He rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"I had a fight with my girlfriend this morning," he said. "I was going to call her up."

"To apologize?"

"No. I've thought of some nastier ways to phrase what we already yelled about..."
and Old Spice. His skin was a waxy pink. The moustache looked like a propeller.

"Glad to have met you," Peter mumbled and stepped aside. The girl hooked her arm around his. Peter whispered something in her ear as they moved away. She laughed and yelled over her shoulder, "Have a nice day!"

Poem
by Christine Cooper (Oosterbaan)

I used to walk and watch my feet
squash prints in the uncut grass
or break the crippled twigs
from a long-dead tree.
I lived to swing up high
and breathe in hard,
pumping, pumping into the feather clouds.
I raced with butterflies.
Grass tickled when I rolled in it
or hung it through my toes.
Sometimes I bunched it up in blankets
for broken eggs. It kept them warm.
Glassy fairies lived in the poison mushrooms.
In the orchard I watched caterpillars
web the trees
or let them itch my fingers.
I ate the still-green cherries
and kept the seeds.
When it rained I skipped stones
in the oozy puddles
then hid in the kingly trees.

I think I was twelve when I stepped on a bird’s egg.

When The Bough Breaks
by Alison Orleans Conte

There’s a family of yellow birds out back,
Darting through branches
Blending in with the dandelions.
These immigrants from Baltimore,
move too fast for sight to catch.
A nest emptied in one of the trees.
Its contents spilled,
fluttering aimlessly
never touching ground.

704 Gladstone Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21210

Suite 250, Kalamazoo Center
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

30 N. Old Oak Drive
Beaver Falls, PA 15010
Flood on the Jemez

By Doug Cox

working late,
osaum, stacking
rock to save
a hot, murky,
bath

O Moon!
Rising with
your beard
of pine

Look out
fleas! Leaves
are falling!

To cool
myself
i jump
into full moon

San Antonio Canyon

By Doug Cox

not knowing
where there’s a
trail: just walk

Busy Being Born

By Lindrith Davies

Harley Casey had given up smoking cigars about twelve years ago. He hadn’t given up cigars though; since it’s easier to render the habit harmless than to quit it, he chewed them now. He was a cautious driver, but he chewed while he drove, at forty-five miles an hour, with pleasant mood-music on the FM, letting his mind wander. As he moved down the El Producto he would spit bits of tobacco that would land on the dash and windshield and harden there. Perhaps this was slovenly, but he wasn’t ashamed---what else would you do with the stuff? Spit it into issues? That was ridiculous. He was too careful a driver to spit it out the window, besides, the car was air-conditioned. His tobacco-specks were a more distinctive badge than the specially engraved nameplate on the dash. But he couldn’t in good faith pry the damn nameplate off and still take his friend the dealer to an occasional lunch in the car. All in all, the tobacco-dots weren’t a bad compromise. His wife always drove the newer car of the two—they drove that one to church on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and on their infrequent short vacations. He chewed in his wife’s car, but never spat in it.

Harley Casey didn’t hold much for the conventions and ‘new products galas’ that his business seemed bent on holding a few times each year. They were a wart on the arm of progress. In the auto parts racket, one does something with a product if its quality is acceptable and enough of it can be bought at the right price. Such products don’t need to throw parties to get you to buy them. The meeting he was headed to this afternoon was especially annoying, because he was slated to be honored there—as if doing the largest volume of their brand over twenty years had been a selfless service to the lucky company. Sure, Casey wasn’t really deeply concerned with the fate of the Fram corporation, but their award was the kind of formality, like being listed in the Who’s Who in Business and Industry, that it was better not to fight. He was acquainted with the men who would be there; met them at conventions over the years. He disdained the gun-ho guys. But, with some of those who were just as bored as he was, he’d exchange stories, and pictures of grandchildren.

Harley Casey had no respect for all these people looking for a free ride through life. Doing as much driving as he did, he was always passing hitchhikers on the road, and they were the constant, ever-annoying symbol of that freeloader spirit. He had never, not since he had his first six-year-old Oldsmobile right before the start of World War II, ever picked one up. Driving was his time for contemplative solitude. He could still chew cigars with a stranger in the car, but what right did some freeloader have to interrupt his thought? And, thinking sensibly, if someone doesn’t have the resources of a vehicle, or money for a bus ticket, or at least a friend with a car, one has no business traveling on the freeways. It was a practical objection, not a moral one—but then, morals and laws are, after all, very practical things—they prevent chaos. Then why did Harley court chaos at the on-ramp on Breezewood, Pa., by unlocking his door for a little blond in sandals, raggedy blue-

Canyon Poems

By Doug Cox

Thinking like crazy, brain gears getting hot, step by a stream: pissing on a rock

creeping down canyon walls: it doesn’t seem even to move:
September sunlight

tasting the taste of icy mountain morning water: does my mouth remember?
jeans, and a purple t-shirt with some kind of red tongue and lips printed on it.

Maybe he'll never know why. But hell, Breezewood, Pa. is a pretty boring place.

She lugged open the door, threw a duffel bag in the back seat, plumped herself down, and said: "Oh, Harley, You just don't know. I've been praying all afternoon for a ride with air conditioning and velour seats. I've gone delirious and this is all just a marvelous hallucination."

Harley loosened his tie and searched for a break in the westbound traffic. How in the hell did she know him? He scanned his memory. She also had freckles, and purple hoop earrings, and a purple sash tied in her hair. One of his grandson's friends? Wait, shit, of course, the nameplate. Clever girl. "Where are you going?"

She closed one eye in great thoughtfulness. "West on I-70."

"That's where you're at, honey. Where are you going?"

"I'm on I-70. I'm going west on I-70. Hi! My name's Ramona."

"Thanks, now we're introduced. Ramona what?"

"No last name. Really--none. Just Ramona."

Frank Sinatra crooned 'something stupid like I love you' on the FM. Ramona drew a breath and settled down to a long hitch-hiker's rap. "Actually I'm not at all sure what my destination is right now, but the main thing is--"

"You have no last name, and no destination? Do you exist?"

"Oh, you bet I do!"

"And the deal is, you get out when I'm going, get another ride, and keep going west?"

"Yes, that's pretty much the deal, Mr. Casey." She seemed baffled by his tone. Perhaps he had been gruff, he hadn't meant to. "You don't—you're not one of these guys who has other plans for me are you? You don't look like the type—I'll bet you have three grandchildren, right?"

"Four."

She grinned. "Oh wow. I bet they're great kids. Probably spoiled as all hell."

Then in a flash she had spun around and was leaning over the seat, ass in the air.

"And you're in business--let's see here...tire prices, shock absorbers, ignition parts, exhaust systems—you're in auto parts! Jeez, this catalog is thicker than six bibles!"

"If you don't mind--"

"I'm sorry." She spun around again and slid down on the seat, legs under her. "I was just curious. You're interesting. Gave up smoking?"

Harley suddenly laid his cigar in the ashtray. "Must be ten years now, or more. I had a monstrous cough. Emphysema."

"Emphysema? You inhaled your cigars? That's hardcore there, Harley."

"No, I smoked cigarettes too. I'd like to know where you get an expression like 'hardcore'."

She shrugged. "Picked it up on the streets. I don't know, it's an expression. Refers to a very ingrained habit--like a vice, right? Does it bother you if I smoke?"

"No, not at all."

Instead of cracking her window a sensible inch for the smoke, Ramona became fascinated with the power window button--zoomed the window up and down a few times, absorbed. She leaned over the seat, ass in the air again, and pulled a pack of cigarettes out of her bag. Lighting one, she asked, "Would you mind terribly if I fiddled around with the radio?"

Harley shrugged. He made his best attempt to concentrate on driving, but he was watching Ramona's smoking and slowing down. Hardcore, that was her word. She took gigantic drags on the thing and held them in her lungs. The cigarette was handrolled, and the smell wasn't tobacco.

"What if some cop stops me right now?"

She waited, rolled her eyes, blew a gust of smoke out the window. "Oh come on, Harley, you haven't driven faster than forty-five since I've been with you. Minimum speed is forty around here though. Speed up so we don't get busted, OK?"

"We'll take our chances, sweetheart." But he caught himself pushing the gas a little harder.

She managed to pull a rock 'n' roll station out of the static, and then turned the radio down to a whisper. "I'm sorry. I can get pretty obnoxious. I guess you just impressed me as a guy I could bullshit around with a little. Please don't let me upset you."

The pot should be extinguished. The joint should be handed to Harley so he could try it. He shrugged to himself and gave up on both ideas. We must look like a father and daughter driving along in silence; perfectly normal, the eternal generation gap. He with his royal blue tie, she with her purple sash. Harley is everybody's father. That's how he runs the store--the old man, teaching customers how to keep their books so they could pay all their bills, including his; teaching the meaning of Ramona's glad word, hardcore--reaching out to a pair of alcoholics, one inspired, the other alienated. Both customers and employees ran to him with problems; they called him "coach". And this little sexy rat here who said she had no last name--that convinced him that she did indeed have parents, no matter how long she'd been running her way around the country, she was too young and too clean not to have parents who weren't worrying. Like Frank Sinatra's song, there he was--with something he had to say that wouldn't do a damn bit of good.

"You know, Ramona, if you really were an orphan, you'd be proud to have that last name."

She stared for a while--tried to pick up a little more about Harley Casey parts man than his cigars and his catalogues showed. He had a bit of a belly, but he was pretty trim for his age, and wore a well-worn wedding ring. He reached for that cigar with a patriarch's authority. Hmm. He listened. He had her, he didn't deserve to be bullshitted.

"I'm not ashamed of my last name, I just don't use it anymore. It is Washington. You gotta make some decisions in this world. Do you like music, Mr. Casey?"

"Everybody likes music."


"You'll get a few of those pretty teeth knocked out of your head one day. That
FM shit, as you put it, I find soothing, like a bath. You’re soothed by your music—juana, I’m soothed by that FM shit.”

“Fair enough. But what kind of music do you like?”

Harley sent a little tobacco flying at the windshield. “Well, I’ll tell you. I enjoy organ music. I play the organ at home--I can’t think of a better way to wind down after a long day. But—it’s funny, I haven’t thought about this in I don’t know how long--I’ve always hankered to play a cathedral organ. To play a Bach fugue on a cathedral organ. I don’t know if I’d know a fugue if I fell over one. But the idea always turned me on. Years ago I went out and bought a record, of Abbe Schweitzer on an organ in France, playing Bach. But then when I listened to the damn thing, it was nothing. How the hell do you record a cathedral organ?”

“Well for God’s sake, Harley, go to Europe and play a cathedral organ! You can afford it! What are you waiting for?”

There was some bitterness in his little chuckle. “If it feels good, do it, right?”

“He who is not busy being born is busy dying. Bob Dylan said that. Probably stole it from somewhere.”

The cars on I-70 traveled smoothly. Predictable. Go to Europe and play a cathedral organ. The Caddy swished along; most of the rusty little Mavericks and Mustangs passed it like it was standing still.

“What a sunset! Man, how can they talk about Heaven being somewhere else? What a farfetched idea! There’s a window of Heaven, Harley. Imagine that scene over the great plains, the continental divide, the Pacific!”

“This may be your heaven--”

She laughed. “No, this is my heaven: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting, Amen. Aw, man...”

The Apostles Creed. Her parents must have substituted prayer for sleep since she skipped out. “Well, if you’re going to find your Heaven on earth, baby, be prepared to find your hell here too.”

“Damn straight.”

They passed through a short mountain tunnel and crossed the bridge through Wheeling, West Virginia. They both detested the structure, a many-tiered steel-and-concrete bridge, eye-level with the smokestacks. Ramona finally closed her window to shut out the rumbling echo.

Suddenly she jumped at the radio. “Oh! Wow, wait a second. Anybody who fantasizes about cathedral organs owes it to himself to hear this song. I want an honest opinion, OK?”

Apparently the rock aesthetic required tremendous volume. You’re gonna compare cathedral organs to this woman wailing amid all this beating on electric guitars? Still, it was the stuff of power-fantasies. He tried to catch the words. Storm threatening. If I don’t get some shelter. Mad bull lost its way. In one quick motion he clicked the radio off. “Ramona, what are you running away from?”

“What are you running away from?”

“Hey, Bub, you realize you just turned off the Rolling Stones, the band whose emblem is emblazoned across my tits—not down, mind you, but off--”

“To answer your true question, I am running away from Washington’s grocery store. 3131 Howard Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Now please don’t ask anything funny. And if you don’t mind--” She reached for the radio again and caught the song at its climax:

Fair enough. But what kind of music do you like?”

“I love it! Harley, you’re a conservative old fart. But I like you a lot.”

They got out of the car; she threw her head back to gaze at the stars and stretch—“I was getting hungry myself. But Ramona--! think your politics are full of shit.”

“So they sat at the counter. “Would you be able to find it in your heart to spring a quarter for the jukebox?”

“Haven’t you got any money either?” He handed her the quarter.

“Thanks. You’re sweet.” She turned to the waitress, a tired, kindly redhead in a baby-blue dress, smiling at such a father-daughter rapport. “He’s such a worrywart. I love it! Harley, you’re a conservative old fart. But I like you a lot.”

Harley found himself watching her; she wasn’t stretching, she was radiating.

Harley Casey walked through the gift shop of the truck stop to the restaurant, with his little Ramona dancing along on his right arm. “Oh wow, Dad, wanna sit at the counter—remember like we used to at the drugstore, where you taught me how to eat a chocolate two-scooper so it wouldn’t drip, like this...”

So they sat at the counter. “Would you be able to find it in your heart to spring a quarter for the jukebox?”

Harley learned that rock was our age’s contribution to serious music—jazz came from an earlier age—and that Jimi Hendrix was destined to take his place in history beside Wagner and Tchaikovsky, not to mention Coltrane and Parker. And...
we've been buddies all along. He's spoiled me a bit though." She winked at them and danced off to the jukebox. Harley braced himself for the cacophony about to issue forth and Ramona scampered off to the ladies' room.

The lady behind the counter gave him a wrinkled smile. "I bet hung." The jukebox played Frank Sinatra: That's Life!

She couldn't possibly be older than eighteen—and for a few dollars she probably would keep him young all night. "That she does—or maybe ages me before my time—sometimes I don't know which." The waitress laughed politely. The burgers went down on the grill. It was time for Harley to walk directly across the restaurant and make a phone call. His heart was suddenly pounding, what of these truck drivers on the way to Missouri, or some God-forsaken place. Certain things had to happen; he allowed himself no more than a good long sigh, till he swung his stately and suited carriage off the stool and walked straight to the pay phone. The call went through. He reported a runaway, a girl, seventeen blond, wanted in Baltimore, five feet tall, named...

The phone went dead. And then the receiver was jerked out of Harley's hands.

"A woman hitching needs a good knife." She clicked it shut. "Goddamn Harley, you even played Daddy and goofed on the truck stop with me. You're a dumb shit, you really are a dumb shit. Go pay for the burgers, old man—Feed them to your Cadillac."

"Now you listen—" She jumped away before he could grab her arm, gave him one more chilling stare, and ran out the door and out of sight. He heard a card slam. Must have been getting her duffelbag. Harley went and paid for the burger...
**La reine est morte, vive la reine**  
*The Queen is Dead, Long Life The Queen*  

by James Funaro  

(Excerpt from *The School of Animals*)  

(Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,  
Our Life, our sweetness and our hope...)  

I am the great Queen Bee, mother of mercy.  
Mistress of honey, the bloodless sacrifice.  
I am the waxing moon with court of stars.  
My virgin daughters are my ranging thoughts  
That flit among the minds of men and swarm  
Over the grains tending unborn cells;  
We teach the highest wisdom in the world:  

Here, the womb’s regina to the realm,  
Not head or heart; for egomanic man,  
Tangent to our circle, must create  
The therapy of art and state and war  
To compensate for marginality.  
I’ve outlived a thousand quickleg kings  
And am driven by no inner droning needs;  
What I am is my reason to be.  
We here are organs in a single body  
And each becomes an integer of One,  
Hence greater, as the chord exceeds its notes.  
Systems at one level coalesce  
To form a higher being at the next.  
Such is the universal principle.  
Be ruled! I am the transcendental way.  

Stand before me, Man, and learn the secret.  
I am forever my own genetrix.  
Meditating passage in and out  
Of the sacred path of life and love,  
And in my lap you die and are reborn.  
I am at once your mother, wife and child.  
My gentle humming soothes your anxious glands;  
My prism eyes clothe you in shining aura  
And turn your every gesture to rippling light.  
Come to me, my Son, I will remake you:  
Female, loving, immortal.

---

**The Gates of Hell**  

(Excerpts from *The School of Animals*)  

By James Funaro  

We are Vultures, striking first for the eye.  
Seers, we live by probing entrails,  
And our skulls are naked from bloodbaths.  
Unbiased lovers of mortal meat,  
We black sisters, in cowls and shirts,  
Are the oldest conscience of mankind:  
Our beaks pluck the corpse so cruelly  
That it dances as though it could escape  
While we free its soul to hell.  
Yet, in the air, we are queens of the wind,  
And our babies are blue and violet,  
As tiny and fragile as flowers.

---

**What The Chorus Said**  

(Brekekekekex koax koax)  

I am Frog, blue in twilight  
Veins pale pulsing, eyes like pearls,  
My throat swollen with a song of sperm  
That mocks the rivercrossing dead.  
With my brain reamed from its stem  
I still could kick myself to orgasm.  
And I say to you: Chaos, chaos.
Coronado

by James Gallant

Fr. Marcos, whatever his commitment to the conversion of the heathens, seemed a man who loved having a good wilderness to hack through. It was soon apparent to those of us who went on the expedition to the Seven Cities that his reports misestimated the practical difficulties of travel in the North. What seemed an obstacle to the ordinary voyager obviously did not strike him as one. Our men grumbled against him.

He had led us to believe there were gold and silver near the Seven Cities. That was simply not true, of course. And the "cities" turned out to be small, widely spaced villages of mud houses looking somehow crumpled together.

If there was no gold at Hawikuh, the first of the cities we conquered, there were turkeys and maize. Our condition being what it was upon our arrival, we were thankful for that. We had a meal. Then we surveyed the place. The men began once more to grumble against Fr. Marcos. After darkness fell, Fr. Marcos vanished. He was never seen again.

In time, the chieftains and priests from the other villages came to Hawikuh to pay us homage. No doubt they had heard of the size of our company and the nature of our weaponry. They were conducted to the pueblo where we had our headquarters. Coronado was not in, so I went to find him. He was beside a pueblo wall with an old Zuni and one of our interpreters. There was a sizable hole in the wall. The old Zuni slung adobe up into the hole with a spade. Coronado tampered the mud into place with a long-handled tool. The adobe covered Coronado's face, hands, and clothing. The Zuni might have just stepped from his bath. Seeing me coming near him, the Zuni laughed and pointed at Coronado. He said, through the interpreter, "The Indian builds a pueblo without dirty fingers. The white chief patches a hole and becomes a black chief."

I looked at Coronado. I could see the whites of his eyes. He grinned and waved his tool around in the air.

What was he doing?

I had first seen Fr. Marcos in the northwestern frontier settlement of Neuva Galicia some months before the expedition to the Seven Cities was organized. Coronado was governor up there at the time, I his private-secretary. One day Marcos and company came galloping into the outpost with their tale of the discovery of Hawikuh.

Coronado, the Friar and I went off into a cabin together--I was to make a record of what was said.

One of the Friar's interpreters, a fellow whose earlier successes with the Indians had made him overconfident, had rushed into Hawikuh without permission of the Zunis, who promptly filled him with arrows. After that, Fr. Marcos decided against trying to enter the city with his small company. But putting together what he had heard from Indians about Hawikuh, and what he and his men had seen from a distance, he concluded Hawikuh was the center of the great Indian civilization. There were stone houses four and five stories high, and great caches of gold, silver, and turquoise, according to the Indians.

When Fr. Marcos left the cabin, Coronado remained seated. He appeared to be reflecting on what the Friar had said. I revised my rough notes. Finally, he said, "How much of that do you believe, Castaneda?"

I glanced up. Believe? I had been living the past year in Neuva Galicia. I was certainly in no condition, emotionally, to disbelieve a word of it.

I had followed Coronado to Neuva Galicia.

The two of us had been sitting in Coronado's office at Mexico City (he was a city-councilman then) when the courier from Mendoza arrived. Coronado opened and read the letter. "I am offered the governorship of Neuva Galicia," he said. I smiled knowingly.

"Will you accept it?"

"For the greater glory of the One True Church and the Emperor Charles," he said quietly. His face was expressionless. His black eyes, set a bit too closely together, revealed nothing. We had heard of Neuva Galicia: Indian priests who rode with nubile maidens in a rite of first fruits; fiery Indian insurrections in the night; rampaging unicorns that spared the Emperor's sheep; native women down on all fours in the noonday sun mounted from behind like dogs. There were those stories of the sodomites and the offal-eaters.

There were not even bullfights in Neuva Galicia.

"I suppose you'll haul me up there with you?" I said.

"Unless you have some other prospect of employment, yes," he said, smiling.

We had small cabins at Neuva Galicia. Living arrangements were more satisfactory than one might have imagined. The sodomites and incendiaries were off in the safe distances. No one there had ever seen a unicorn, except in a woodcut.

Coronado heard a few cases in criminal and civil law each week. Now and then he played innkeeper for itinerant traders. In general, the governorship seemed to be part-time work. It was as if the Governor's main responsibility were to wait for something to happen. "I am going fishing," Coronado would say. I would have the morning off.

At Neuva Galicia, Coronado somehow arrived at a theory of "correct" fishing days and hours. The first "correct" day that came along, he went fishing. I had the day off. He caught (I quote him) "three of the largest fish ever caught by man or beast in the New World," and the next day an aureole of grace shone about his face. That was the day he first met Dona Beatriz, who had been visiting a friend at Neuva Galicia. I introduced Coronado to her. Two months later, they were married.

Coronado could scarcely have made a better match. Done Beatriz I had known from childhood. She was beautiful, lively, and intelligent. Her family was wealthier by far than his. At the wedding party, she said to me, "Pedro, how can I ever thank you enough? Except for you, I might never have come to know Don Francisco."

"You weren't acquainted before in Mexico City?"

"I was aware of him, one might say. He seemed a rather dull figure to me-
always off by himself doing some odd thing or other."

"What changed your mind?"

"That day you introduced us...there was something about him, I don't know." She looked off over my shoulder. "He seemed a man who might have just conquered the world."

Shortly after the wedding, Coronado disposed of his fishing calendar as worthless rubbish.

As for myself at Neuva Galicia, I had long thought of writing something about the Spanish experience in the New World, and there I found the time for it. Coronado encouraged me. Instead of making my usual, short journal entries, I gave my pen liberties. Soon it was producing little essays each day or two. In a few months I had written hundreds of pages. But then my interest flagged. The sense of overall purpose and direction I had hoped would emerge as I wrote had not. And it began to seem to me my problem in composition adumbrated the larger problem of the Spanish destiny in the New World. Over here the question always coming to mind was, what for?

What really were we to do in and with these lands? Surely it was better for us to have them than not to have them? (If we did not have them, someone else would have them.) True, we were beginning to draw some gold from the mines, but the provinces were (as they still are) economically dependent on Spain.

Two hundred young Spanish noblemen, second and third sons of their fathers, without substantial inheritances, had come to Mexico City full of hopes. No doubt there were opportunities for them here—if only we could find them. Meanwhile they roamed the streets of the city and dawdled about Mendoza's estate and stock farm. When a new shipment of spinsteresses came in, they were down at the docks. Shortly before the expedition to the Seven Cities—which created the momentary illusion that occupations for these young men had been found—Coronado composed a letter which he sent to Viceroy Mendoza. It was occasioned by two young noblemen having killed one another in a drunken duel over the reputation of a young lady of Seville.

Neither had ever met the young lady of Seville. We learned in time that there could be no marriage between them. Coronado wrote his letter to Viceroy Mendoza. It was occasioned by a young nobleman having killed another in a drunken duel over the reputation of a young lady of Seville.

I kept a journal of our travels—not a very absorbing document, filled as it is with entries like these: "Twenty miles from Compostela lay Jalisco and by the time we had come there we had climbed numerous hills.” "We traveled today along a dry gulch.” One night after our return to Mexico City, while reading through the journal, I fell asleep in my chair. I slept very soundly through the night, too. It occurred to me the next morning what a treasure for humanity a select library of such charms would be.

Reading through the journal one might suppose my literary skills were rudimentary—or had I gone on the expedition blindfolded? I have often noticed that when I am on the move my mind’s acuteness and eyes’ sensitivity are reduced.
Really there is nothing I am less inclined to do while travelling than write. Travelling is an absorbing pasttime, rich in forgetfulness—I would not wish to denigrate it. But my Traveller is a fellow with neither subtle observations nor eloquence. The gravel rattles pleasantly in his head as he jogs along.

My journal's silence concerning what we found when we reached the Seven Cities has its own eloquence, though. After we occupied Hawikuh, we spent some weeks making exploratory excursions into the surrounding countryside. It was quite remarkable how little of interest we found.

Eventually we went up to the Northeast. We had been told the "prosperous" Pueblo Indians dwelt there. By Indian standards they were prosperous, because on the plains up there the buffaloes were as numerous as fish in the sea.

It was among the Pueblos Coronado met the Indian we named "The Turk." and one day The Turk told Coronado that near the village of Quivera lay deep mines of gold and silver and fishes the size of horses.

Following the Turk's directions, Coronado led our company toward Quivera—or so we thought. One of our interpreters insisted from the beginning that The Turk was misleading us. We eventually discovered The Turk had intended to lead us into a wasteland where we would perish for lack of water. When we found that out, Coronado had no alternative but to order the execution of The Turk.

But I am ahead of myself in telling the story of The Turk, and I have left out the most interesting part: when we had first reached the villages of the Pueblos, Coronado had expressed his desire to learn how the Indians hunted buffalo. The Pueblo chief assigned to him The Turk as a mentor, and the two men went on a hunting trip. The Turk showed Coronado how the Indians on horseback rode alongside buffaloes and thrust javelins into them. Coronado tried this technique. Then he devised one of his own. He stood a distance from the buffaloes using their large heads as targets, he shot them dead with his harquebus.

The truth was that buffalo-hunting did not appeal to him. One night beside the campfire he took out his chessboard. Through the interpreter he explained the game's basic rules and principles to The Turk. Soon the two men were hunched over the board in the firelight.

In the first game, Coronado soundly defeated The Turk. The next day, the two men did not hunt buffalo. They sat on the plain under an awning. The sun went up, down. Coronado won three games at chess that day, and the next day the two men did not hunt buffalo, either, and The Turk won his first game of chess and then his second.

At night, by the fire he won his third. After that the two men played chess each day and Coronado never did defeat The Turk again right up to the time he ordered his execution. And when Coronado was informed The Turk's throat had been cut from ear to ear, he wept. It was the end of the chess games.

Also, of course, it was the end of the expedition. We were then quite without a destination, and our supplies were nearly exhausted.

I found Coronado sitting by his fire alone that night poking at the dying coals with a stick. I sat down beside him.

“So,” I said, “it has all come to nothing.”
The End Of Art
(who took six years to graduate)
by Dianne L. Goss

Sifting bathroom graffiti,
Irate wives search
Remote husbands
Disconnected by a missing phone.

The somnolent card-playing drinker
Tosses a beer to his waiting throat.
Anxiously searching the recesses of the barroom,
He guards the door with his heavy eyes.

As the clock ticks reproachfully,
He settles back for one more
Quick game of euchre,
One more beer
For the road.

Concentrating steadiness,
He slows the Chevy
And coasts to the floating door.

Unsuccessfully he paws through his mind
For the key to his home,
The entrance to his wife.
Angry glares deny access
Searching unfound explanations
In the comical bleary-eyed face.

Familiarized with the procedure,
He trots to the car to wait for his summons.
Softly, his flannel-covered belly begins to snore.

Visiting Relatives
by Cynthia Hohn

It was a half hour ride on fast, bumpy roads and now she felt sick. Isabel told her mother that she knew she shouldn’t have come, that she was probably going to throw up on their plastic coated furniture. Her mother slammed the car door and bent down close to Isabel’s face, then hissed through clenched teeth and stiff red lips to please behave. The family entered the apartment building. The thick smell of food and people living together surrounded them as they entered the pale green door. Isabel began breathing out in short, loud puffs so the smell wouldn’t get in her lungs. Her mother turned around slowly and glared at her. Isabel whined that she was really going to throw up and anyway, she should be home studying for the spelling bee. Her mother turned her body sharply back to face the rows of white buttons on the wall. She picked one, pressed it firmly, then released it. Somewhere above them a door opened and an excited babble fell, echoing metallically, through the stairwell. Her mother called up something in a light, cheerful voice and marched up the stairs. Isabel was the tail end of the parade. Her mother and father were leading the two bouncing blonde heads of her sisters. They were too young to know what they were in for, thought Isabel. The noise of their shoes banged madly against the walls, as they made their way to the third floor. Isabel caught a glimpse of her parents’ faces as they turned and began the next flight. They were both frowning. Her mother was saying something about “old Nana Dear”, but she could only make out a few words of the discussion.

Isabel couldn’t keep breathing out anymore, so she clapped her hand over her nose and mouth and inhaled carefully. The familiar smell of her own hand covered some of the apartment smell, but as she rounded the last landing, her father caught her eye and held it while her mother was being engulfed by the pudgy arms of Aunt Rose. Her father shook his head at her, which was his usual silent way of expressing his disappointment with someone. Then, he let himself be embraced by the bunch of fat, chattering women blocking the doorway. Soon she was going to have to pass through it.

The last of her sisters was sucked lovingly through the entrance, and it was her turn. The three women pulled her into their cluster of reaching arms. It was like being eaten or at least tasted by an octopus. They petted and stroked her hair, pinched her cheeks, kissed her forehead, circled her wrists with their fingers, frowned, smiled, hugged and cooed at her. Isabel waited. She stood perfectly straight and pretended she was in the nurses’ examination room at school.

Soon the arms of the woman ushered her into another room. It was dark, and a faint smell of sickness mingled with the cigar smoke. People sat in the over-stuffed furniture. The chairs and couches had been pushed against the stained wallpaper. A half eaten display of silver bowls of puddings, platters of cold cuts and old pictured china plates lined with fancy Italian pastries was spread across a lace tablecloth. The thick wooden legs of the table protruded from beneath the white lace. Isabel was given a plate and two pairs of hands were quickly transporting spoonfuls
of assorted foods onto it. She held the plate straight armed and watched the plate closely. Finally, the plate was loaded to their satisfaction and the hands patted her father's knee. He stood up and Isabel ran over and hugged him, just like the giant clam she had seen in a Walt Disney movie. Isabel sat down cross-legged where she stood in front of the table. She set the plate on the floor and stared at the food. Her eyes met her mother's. They were pressed tightly against each other. Isabel stood up immediately. Her mother was pointing at something underneath the table. She put her plate on top of the table and lifted the table cloth to find a small foot stool. She knelt down, pulled it out then looked up at her mother. She was wearing a tense smile as she mouthed the message to Isabel to please sit down. So she did and crossed her arms and put her legs straight out. The place for her heel was lumping up strangely on top of her foot since Isabel hadn't bothered to fix the one twisted leg of her tights this morning. She leaned down, tucked it underneath the strap of her patent leather pumps and glanced back at her mother. Her mother was still watching her and mouthing something else now. Eat. Isabel twisted around and slid her plate off the table without standing up. Her mother shook her head and turned to Aunt Clara with a fierce smile. Aunt Clara patted her hand, laughed and resumed talking.

Directly across the room sat the frail, staring body of Nana Dear. Her hair was a transparent veil of white, and the pink of her scalp showed through the shiny curls. Isabel remembered her from her previous visits. They both had the same name, which seemed reasonable to Isabel since they were both the oldest in their families. But Nana Dear's brothers and sisters had never seen the Bronx; they all died over in Italy. Isabel had never talked with her because Nana Dear couldn't understand English. She used to pinch her cheek, but not in the same rough way as her aunts. Nana Dear pinched them as if she were simply squeezing them to see what Isabel felt like. The touch of the old woman's fingers against her face felt almost comforting, but the sight of her veiny skin was frightening.

Nana Dear seemed to have grown smaller since Isabel had seen her last. She appeared only as big as Isabel herself as she sat sunken, motionless in the paisley armchair. Isabel thought that the dark, wrinkled gap of her mouth opened and closed as if she were speaking. One hand was limpely curved over the arm of the chair. Isabel watched the old woman's fingers moving in shaky nervous gestures independently of each other. Isabel poked at the rice ball on her plate until it fell apart and the meat and raisin filling was exposed. The tomato sauce in the filling made it look bloody, so she covered it with a lump of ricotta cheese.

The old woman leaned forward in her chair and struggled to straighten herself. Her mouth twitched in exaggerated movements. No one noticed. Her sunken eyes seemed to focus on Isabel. But she couldn't be sure; they were too glazed. The embroidered pillow which had propped up her head now slipped behind her back, and she sat in a strange, arched position. Her head had fallen backwards in an odd and obviously uncomfortable angle. The dry, shrunk edges of her mouth moved exaggeratedly, revealing its decaying insides. Isabel stood and walked through the blue-gray layer of smoke hanging in the still air. It swirled around her back as she passed through it. Her father looked up at her, quickly smiled and continued his emphatic nodding. Isabel stood looking down at the face, which was more discolored than she had realized from across the room. There were hundreds of tiny dark veins radiating upwards from the loose skin around her jaw and across her eye lids. Her eyes glowed a brilliant blue and her pale, freckled fingers were stretched out straight and shivering. Her palms were pressed flat against the cloth of the chair. Isabel was amazed at the strength left in Nana Dear's hands. Her mother complained that she already had arthritis in her fingers.

Her sister was still laughing at Uncle Henry's smoke rings, which bothered Isabel. She wanted to touch the slightly transparent skin of Nana Dear's hand, but instead she stood watching the eyes that were focused up at her. Then, the hollows of the woman's cheeks moved upwards, forcing more wrinkles around the glassiness of her staring eyes. The hand fell limp and still. Isabel reached forward and finally touched its pale blueness.

Directly across the room sat the frail, staring body of Nana Dear. Her hair was a transparent veil of white, and the pink of her scalp showed through the shiny curls. Isabel remembered her from her previous visits. They both had the same name, which seemed reasonable to Isabel since they were both the oldest in their families. But Nana Dear's brothers and sisters had never seen the Bronx; they all
Swinging
by Kathy Kerchner

With him I rose
Starting slowly till my legs
Gained confidence,
Pulled farther from
Hard earth,
Rose, head back
Seeing only sky,
Sun lighting my face,
Wind lifting my hair.

When he cut the rope,
I laughed with him
But my throat locked
In pain.
The whirling fall
Tore my numbed limbs,
Emptied me
On concrete.

He kissed the bruises
With cold lips,
Soothed my body with
Casual hands.
Through tears
I watched him leave
And smiled,
He ran so awkwardly.

The Big House
by Kim McMullen

I peer at the big house through a gap in the azaleas and tick off the possibilities. I think venus fly trap, the house of seven gables, Circus Maximus. I keep it light, picture packing all those boxes of books and music scores and moving out again, haunting the bulletin board at the Coop for another rental ad.

In a corner of the garden behind a clump of manzanita, the peacock drags its tail through the droppings in its tiny cage. A siamese dangles a paw over the mesh overhead, absentmindedly terrorizing the bird. She sometimes takes a sparrow up there to eat, leaving feathers down on the neurotic peacock. No one ever bothers with it, but sometimes I hear it squawk at night, rasping like a woman with her throat cut. Then the siamese will cry like an abandoned child. I say to myself:

PEACOCK, CAT. Sometimes I even manage to roll over without checking the chain lock.

And today I search for images, the things I understand best. It comes careening down the hill like a runaway circus wagon, wrenchless but familiar. Were it anything else—a face glimpsed on the bus perhaps, an old queer with touches of mauve at the eyelids—one might have a right to suspicion. But it is just a house, sprawled in its walled garden the way houses in Marin County do, with its requisite pool, redwood deck and orange trees. And it garage apartment with its requisite student tenant parked next to the BMW.

Even before I moved here I knew these places. Hired by the hour for weddings and soires, I'd sit at the baby grand watching the water rings spread from misplaced glasses. I would eye the silver and the Chinese porcelain, and occasionally catch the eye of someone's husband. The guests would break and wash around me and always, bobbing through it all like a lost beach thong or some other piece of incongruous jetsom, the student— a sleepy-eyed dancer in a green leotard, an anthropology major in dirty pants: hungry-eyed, charming, as exotic as the brass Buddha on the patio. They gestured emphatically, drank earnestly, and disappeared into rented lairs until next summoned.

But I returned home to Berkley and a coed household, still suffering culture shock after six months away from Atlanta. I was banned from cigarettes in my own living room; Barry sold grams of cocaine out of the kitchen to buy books for med school; Elise was worried that ours was a strictly hetero household and didn't I think we should recruit a gay. I was on the verge of raving fascism, ready to throttle the whining Spanish brats next door. Then it came to me one day, spreading itself as gloriously as the spray of Birds-of-Paradise behind which I played Chopin for a reception: I was not occupying my appropriate space in the scheme of things. If a dusty anthro student could do it, what about someone with my promise? Comfort, la dolce vita, the tasteful excesses of the very rich—mine for a song. The minute I saw the ad on the bulletin board I tore it down to make sure no one got there ahead of me. "Garage apartment, pool, garden, music room" it read—such matings are made in paradise.
"Sarah, is that you lurking in the shrubbery?" Erica calls from the deck.

I do not answer her. I am sitting on a legitimate stone bench, I do not look. She glides into the yard, stooping to pick snails off the artichoke plants. As far as I can see it is the only attempt at gardening made in weeks. There are oranges rotting exactly where they fell and the pool is clogged with maple seeds. Flashes of underpants appear under Erica's Peter Frampton t-shirt each time she bends over. It is all vaguely obscene, and for my benefit no doubt. Every time I see Erica with clothes on I feel like she is taunting me. I tug my black tank suit over one check and wish I had gone to reheat.

Erica was naked when she handed me the key. I memorized the design in the oriental rug, and gazed determinedly over her brown shoulder at the mahogany gleam of a distant piano. I tried to respond appropriately, as mother had taught me.

"The T.V. room is yours to use," soothed the mocha voice. "The hot tub, library, and of course the garden." With a little work--coiffed, brassiered, and suited up--she could have been vice-president of a Junior League. In Atlanta she would be tasteful in her eccentricities, collecting brass andirons or working one day a month in a day care center. But this was California. And that was why I stood before this fifty year old matron, avoiding her fifty year old breasts puberty, and appendectomy scar, trying to concentrate on her pearl earrings.

"Really dear," Erica said, "anything in the big house is yours, except upstairs of course." And if I hadn't been rationalizing, hadn't thought 'her tennis-colored face, the mahogany piano,' I might have seen the wink. Call it paranoia, but I'm sure it was there.

Instead we took tea--Erica with her legs tucked gracefully underneath her, me feeling perspiration slither between my breasts and into my bra. Andrea, Billy, Susan she said--we'd meet, we'd all be friends. She leaned for a cookie instead. "Shit," says the boy, and he stoops to pick snails off the artichokes and flik them into the pool sludge before wandering back out.

I try to return to my theory, but the augmented fifth has lost its wonder. A normal teenager would have crawled through a chink in the fence, masterbated to the scene for weeks.

"They have a special room to fuck in," Megan from the conservatory told me.

"We all do," I said, "it's called a bedroom."

"No this one is different. Weird." Megan herself was weird. Nearly a dwarf in a Jean-Pierre Rampal t-shirt. Megan did not like me, a natural animosity I'd imagine, part of being a mezzo-soprano and four feet tall. But more, she wanted me to be like the Atlanta in my voice: dogwood blossoms. She did not feel my sophistication warranted. Megan had studied in Paris.

"It's got mirrors and strange carpets. It's got devices," she said.

I nodded. "Devices."

"Devices. The usual I'd imagine." There was a smugness in her voice. She lived on bean curd and gossip.

"Trapezes maybe? Uneven bars and trampolines? Sounds like fun."

"Be absurd," she said. "You'll see. Anybody in the City can tell you." She tugged her t-shirt and Rampal's eyebrows arched over her droopy breasts. "You know how he died..."

"Mid-air fornication with twin contortionists?"

Megan sniffed. "Nitrous oxide," she said proudly. "At a party. He stuck his head in a garbage bag and never came back out. Yale Law, '49. A real pillar of the community." She picked up her portfolio and as I watched her fat ass disappear I did not see it. I'd recognize it immediately and everything would make sense. I'd know where he died...

"Centrifuge?" I ask her, "Or Andrea or someone I've never seen before. Sometimes the stereo is turned up so loud I can't hear myself."

"Oh," she said, "it's called a bedroom."
“Linda’s been wondering why you’ll never go hot-tubbing with them,” she says.

“She thinks you don’t like her.”

“Oh no, it’s not that,” I reply quickly, not wanting the responsibility for an adolescent identity crisis. “It’s that I never have the time. If I’m not practicing, I’m reading. If I’m not reading, I’m practicing. Busy, busy.” I sigh to demonstrate my plight. The truth is, I cannot bring myself to even imagine sitting in a hot tub in a naked circle with six other people, rubbing knees. The thought makes me shudder. There would be bacteria that could crawl almost anywhere; there would be nothing to do if everyone suddenly began to play some sort of est sensitivity game with feet under the water.

Erica smiles her most maternal smile, assigning me to idiocy. She knows, god damn it; I know she knows. And before I cower completely, and confess to every one of my inhibitions, tugging her arm for forgiveness, I retreat to the gate. But she halts me once more to deliver a final challenge.

“We’re having a party Saturday. Linda is sweet sixteen. Just some friends for dinner.” Her smile is like a password which I obediently repeat.

“Sure,” I say. “Sure.” Because it all sounds innocent enough. Kids and ice cream, sweet sixteen.

A dark man swoops in on me before I can set my present down, clutches me chummily around the shoulder.

“You must be the musician,” he smiles. “Erica promised you’d be here. She’s told us everything.” He looks like Rasputin in cowboy boots, forty and weary, magnetic. What’s everything, I wonder.

“I’m Derrick and we really must talk.” I search the room for help, but the kitchen is populated by unfamiliar faces, tanned and shagged, with abalone jewelry. All looked ridiculously middle-aged, like my parents would in caftans.

“I’m an artist too you know. I’m a writer. I write I have a cabin in the Sierras,” Derrick buzzes. When he pulls my arm I nod and smile. “It’s really important for artists to communicate, don’t you think? Exchange ideas across mediums?” I nod again. Cocktail party swagger. Of course, he could well have written the latest Pulitzer winner. To dodge, I become engrossed in the niagara of platinum hair on the man to my right. He turns, and I realize the color is not platinum but white. Over my shoulder I watch him fiddling with my shoelace and staring hard at the door as Derrick paces up. He bobs his eyebrows. “It gets better.”

“Any warlock, servicing a coven of thirteen, and after the black heat of their needs, this woman washed around him like cool coastal fog.”

“Jeez, I think, Jesus. And I feel like I’ve eaten the wrong half of the mushroom and have grown too tall to leave the room. On the other hand I’m safe: if he’s reading, he can’t make any moves. But God knows what would happen when the verbal foreplay stopped.”

But then that seems absurd. Derrick perches primly on his chair, as innocently as if he were reading THE CHRONICAL. And I am left to consider precedents: D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller. The writing itself was pretty good. What if he really was somebody famous and I bolted like a school girl? Because there is a level upon which this is all innocent. Strange but innocent, like nearly everything that happens in this house. It is a ritual of manners I have not yet achieved, as precise as my mother’s buffet dinners or Father’s Sunday bridge. “A lady is at home in any situation,” my mother used to say, and only someone as crass as Megan would bolt.

“Well what do you think?” Derrick asks at last.

“Interesting,” I offer lamely. “Detailed. You’ve a good eye for details. There are a lot of nice adjectives.”

He shakes his head impatiently. “No, I want an honest reaction. Did it affect you at all?”

Affect? At all? And as I consider the possible meanings of the question, the possible interpretations he might give any answer, and whether the existence of a Pulitzer Prize might somehow alter either, I hear miraculously through the walls so-and-so call: “Dinner—come please. This way.”

I rise obediently. I walk directly toward the door. “We can’t be rude and miss dinner,” I tell Derrick, and plunge into the cool air of the dining room.
We balance our plates on our knees, the dark sauce of the coq au vin pooling near the salad. The scene has become comfortably familiar again as we scan ourselves among the maroon persians and frothing fern stands, and I can see Mother worrying over the chafing dish. Father would turn to the woman in the wing chair. "Nicholas," he would say. "Wasn't he an inspiration on the fourteenth green? It took my breath."

"You know I've had a terrible time finding decent acid," says the woman in the wing chair. "I don't know what it is."

"It's since Owsley retired," says a sad voice at my elbow as Frances' white-nails splashes down beside me. "Owsley-- what a mind."

Lights, colors, they say; watching the fog cover Big Sur from someone's yacht a Dead concert. Nostalgia is as thick as if someone had mentioned Benny Goodman. Why couldn't someone have mentioned Benny Goodman? These were hardly young hippies--they were people's parents. What right did they have to crawl around on the beach with strange creatures from a Hunter Thompson novel? What would happen if they were about to close a sale, deliver a brief, and suddenly decide to hit with a flashback that left vague objects fluttering in their peripheral vision? Pillars of the community indeed. I gulp my wine indignantly.

Frances nods his head, passes me a joint. "Tim, Alan and I would hike up Tamalpais in the dark, drop a few hits of White Lightening and wait for the sunrise." He smiles vaguely.

"Tim?" I say. "Alan? Friends of yours?"

Frances beams. "Watts would do mantras of course, to the sun. And Tim was the only one I'd trust my son to on his first trip--twelve years old and flying."

As Frances turns to accept another joint I scan his forehead for lobotomy scars. The room has grown warm and the dim lights have tangled the rug's patterns into dense cobwebs. I feel far too drunk and out of it, but Frances is watching and I must hit the joint anyway.

"Erica always manages to find the young and beautiful," Frances says breathily, grasping my wrist. His teeth are yellow as walrus tusks and his nose is riddled with pores.

"Were they lost?" I giggle nervously.

He fingers my wrist. "My dear, your pulse is racing and your pupils are dilated. You should be more relaxed." He adopts encounter group tones and caresses my hand. "There is too much fear in this world, and there is really nothing to fear. I'm a psychologist and I see people like you every day. Tense, suspicious." My eyes trace a single tosette woven into the rug, but I can't seem to get the pattern straight. "Look at me, dear. Look up. You can trust me."

A hand slithers across my shoulder and, for a moment holding both of Frances already, I am afraid he has grown a third. But it is Derrick back again, and I turn to him in relief.

"Linda's opening her presents," he announces.


"I got her a novel," I offer Frances' bared tusks. "EMMA--a comedy of manners." The room is crowded and Frances and Derrick draw closer. I spot Erica at last and she waves, calling gayly "Watch those two!" like any carefree hostess.

Once again the scene rights itself, becomes almost normal. And Frances wanders away, taking the tightness in my shoulder with him. I even begin to enjoy the way she interacts with Linda, playing Abbott to her Costello, handing gifts, acting the straight man. I like Linda even better for this ugly friend.

"Do you feel you're more Dionysian or Apollonian?" Derrick is asking me.

"Scorpio," I say.

"No, no. I mean we all have both possibilities within us, but one dominates." He peers into my eyes. "Apollonian, obviously. I myself am Dionysian to the point of return. Sometimes it worries me. But it's better than being Apollonian and totally out of touch." He sniffs. "Don't you feel alien to yourself sometimes? To your body I mean. A message might help."

"You're tensing again dear," Frances says, sliding his returning arm around my waist.

"We're discussing her Apollonian dominance."

For awhile I try to argue, point out gray areas, times that I too have been frivolous and abandoned. I argue the beauty of the mind. Then if occurs to me that there is no winning this. It is simply a hustle: my body, your body, let's all go out to the hot tub and grok. Humanity, they whine, emotions. I pull away abruptly and feel like I've stolen the finger cymbals from a Hare Krishna.

"It's Apollo," Frances says, "censoring. Flow with it dear, don't fight it." And his hand works busily down my back.

Vaguely in the marble foyer, I see Linda with a piece of birthday cake for her friend. They stand awkwardly at the door, as if returning from a date, saying goodnight. Suddenly Linda giggles and strikes an ironic pose. "Goodnight, goodnight! Parting is such sweet sorrow. That I should say goodnight till it be morrow." I smile at the line everyone has used sometime to achieve such exits, but the girl does not stop at the single irony. She bows over Linda's raised palm. "Sleep dwell upon thee eyes, peace on thy breast! Would I sleep and peace, so sweet to rest!" Their embrace is quick and the kiss is brief, and I try hard to pass it off as a charming piece of theatrics. But Frances catches me watching and runs his tongue over his lips.

"Cute kids."

Suddenly I feel sick, hot and nauseous, unable to take any more. I sway on the snaking carpet, first into Derrick then into Frances, my ears ringing, the lights hazing. This isn't right, any of this. I try to blame the alcohol until it occurs to me that the stew must have been spiked, the wine electrified, that I'm in the middle of my first acid test and failing miserably. My eyes dart from Derrick to Frances. Both of them wait expectantly. Flow with it, I think. But I really want nothing more than to sink into the arms of some white-coated intern. Halt the experiment.

It is Erica's cool hand on my arm that steadies me finally. "You've held her captive long enough," she says to Derrick and Frances, in smooth hostess tones that
would have done any of my mother's friends proud. "Now you must share her with us all."

My flush dissolves and I smile in relief. Then I panic. Share? With us all? Megan's words come rushing to mind and I see the room upstairs, with crowds of persons and devices waiting to dig out the Dionysian impulses cowering in my Southern soul.

"We're showing slides of the wedding," she soothes, "in the garden this spring it was beautiful with all the trees in blossom." Tiny diamond and jade earrings dance reassuringly against Erica's Oil of Olay skin.

"Do I know the bride and groom?" I ask as we stroll arm in arm down the hall.

The surprise is not that they are naked, every last one of them, but that I am not surprised. Yet even now the sheer nakedness of the scene takes my breath. The bride is naked, the groom, the minister--priest?--and dowager aunt. They shine down from the screen, gathered around the swimming pool and smiling at their naked reflections. No one hides behind the azaleas, no one lurks in the shrubbery, parting the vines, and the sun shines, shines, shines on follicles, moles, goosebumps, wrinkles, pimples, and stretch marks, and everyone smiles, smiles, smiles.

"Doesn't Harry look well?" one of the guests asks.

"That's not Harry," she is told.

"Oh," she says, lifting her glasses. "I guess not."

"Where are you going?" Erica calls, but I do not even bother to answer.

So I am back in the bushes again, peering in the library windows, locking the back gate, making sure they're all in there where they belong and I'm out here and in control. The peacock squawks when I lean against its cage and I cringe further into the azaleas. I figure I can wait them out this time, until the last motor starts and the last window is dark. But I'm not budging. The house sits like a broad-shouldered matriarch in the moonlight, and it suddenly occurs to me that if you were to happen upon this garden accidentally, standing uninformed in the bloomy vines, and smelling the scorched-sugar bitterness of rotting oranges, you might simply blame a summer of overgrowing, merely too much indulgent sunlight.

Seasons
by Dan Pancake

Imagine seeing you
In a rain drop
Or in the mist of
Morning

I wonder often
If I melted you
On fingertips in
Winter

And did I feel you
Brush my cheek
In Fall
As you tumbled
From elm
to earth

In Spring
Were you a cloud
That held me still
Or flower
That bloomed
When touched

When Summer came
I thought I heard you
Whispering through trees
And watching me through
Sunlit haze

It's almost Winter now
And I listen to the
Change in season
For the new sound
Or sign
Of your being

One day
I will
See and hear
You clearly
When your weather
Is mine

And when
I come to you
And others
Look for me
A leaf might fall
On wind that
Never tears

If you listen
Carefully
If you're aware
No one ever
Really goes
Away

Class of '61
185 Cascade Drive
Indian Heads Park, Illinois 60525
Basho’s Road

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Autumn nightfall
floods the road

no other
traveler
chose.

Basket Charm
By Angela Peckenpaugh

I am putting a center down
and winding reeds one by one
to make of grass and twigs
a place of worship.

The red and black
you see on each corner
will spin when I
throw my platter to the sky.

Your feet are across from mine,
our arms bent out like
the heron’s question mark
Wind sails the grasses
like airborne boats.

Who will remember how we
ug cool mornings to find
the roots. Who remembers
the winters of wet knuckles?
The dust increases your heat
and the dice fall into a square.

Back Home

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Insects complain
in the old village.

My parents’ voices turn
among the leaves.

75 Shepard Circle
Weston, Maine 02193

All the figures run.
All the circles spin.
I have a hat and we
have a boat.

You will remember when
you caught the prize.
You will leave
as I but the grasses will grow
and the boars sail through the
years. Fingers have formed
what we know
and they may read
and they may dance
what we loved.

This basket may be
placed in your home.
There Is Something
by Deborah Pope

There is something of every good-bye in this.
Somehow it is always winter,
there is snow at the curb,
the driveways are gray.
The soles of your shoes are turning dark and wet.
She stands there in her bathrobe.
She has just come from packing sandwiches.
You are pushed by some schedule
and the weather,
compelled by her voice,
which is speaking.
She kisses your cheek
and hands you your life in the neat paper bag.
For this moment, in her face,
all your seams are mended,
your habits white.
You hug her and smile.
Your gift is your silence.
You leave.
Yet later when you remember
it will be that
always her eyes were sad,
her hand on your sleeve.

Twilight Loneliness
©1980 By Robert Smyth

The moon and pine trees
reflected in this granite quarry.
Crickets calling from the woods.
Wanting to carry this back to my apartment
with its distant train whistles across the river.

Molting
©1979 By Robert Smyth

In the last two days,
I've moved the spool table
into the bedroom's bay window;
bought incense and flowers for the coffeetable
I've moved under the window in the livingroom;
decided to build a loft
so I will have room for the blanket chest
my parents just gave me.

Tonight,
in the last moments of twilight
to the sound of
rain,
a neighborhood dog,
the poems of four strong
beautiful women
I light the kerosene lamp
on the back porch
feel my body shiver
slide out of this old skin of mine.
The Guest
By Dennis Trudell

Parkman
by Mary S. Treco

After the Spring when the blood of the womb
has dried on the calves,
great tractors bellow in the dusty fields
making furrows for alfalfa
wheat,
and the bells from St. Edwards call through open windows
as chicken fries in the vats.

Thick night, first of early summer-
George's Market smells of mildew, sawdust,
next door
The Hardware is lost in ceilinged cobweds,
mouse traps and yellowed ribbons.

The gazebo is strung in lanterns and mist
while old women in polyester
pass paper plates of chicken and corn
into soiled hands of Christians.

Box 164
Gates Mills, Ohio 44040

round. meanwhile making small talk
with those on each side--a fat man
with a cold and a woman who suspects
her son has not married wisely--
and joining in the general laughter
at the jokes of a horny-looking man
spilling food at the far end--which
proves a mistake because as your
head is back in mirth, a hard roll
smotes you on the shoulder and you
can't decide whether it was thrown
by the small boy behind the peas
or the thirtyish woman with slattern
eyes who keeps looking over at you,
and who either by design or accident
slips into the chair on your right
when dessert is over and everybody
is herded into an ashtrayed parlor
to watch slides of the host's recent
trip to Columbus, Ohio: which slides
go on and on until you begin losing
interest and stick your hand up into
the beam of light and start making
shadow animal heads while everyone
either laughs or whispers "Ssssh"
and the host says "Okay, let's knock
it off", but you don't and he says
it a couple of more times and you
hear even the horny-looking fellow
and the small boy and the woman
with slattern eyes join in with
"Hey, enough is enough" and so on.
but you keep doing it until the host
moves cursing to a wall and turns
on the overhead light just as you
softly click the front door shut
and hurry across the hallway
to knock upon its twin.
The Light In Our Bodies

After supper, the children go out to play.
It is a holy truth.
Notice I did not say, "After supper
we go out to play".
We went out to play, as we walked
back and forth to school,
full of the light in our bodies--
which the adult world didn't know
what to do with.
Having lost their own,
they became teachers or irrelevant
to us behind their newspapers.
My parents' love
was as holy as hide-and-seek,
but I couldn't play with it.
So I cleaned my plate and ran away.
and came to this place where every night
after supper, the children go outside . . .

Milkweed

by Bonnie L. Verburg

It was not love, to be carelessly
snapped from her dreams, a milkweed pod
whose gnarled body succumbed to the prying
fingers of a preoccupied visitor.

Propping her open, he sought nor found release
in the arms that let loose
a thousand white and downy fairies
dreams lifted and scattered by wind.

Each word from her quivering mouth
disappeared, unheard, in the flurry; lost
on a man sighting his mission and stepping away,
letting her crumpled hull fall to the field.

It was not love, but the brown-grey of October
that swallowed her body silently, without sympathy.
as every particle of down became
a seed for next year's harvest.
"Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere.
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there."  

The voices you have built
around you
are like stars:
stars you
listen to
and speak to
each night.

You wear gloves
when you touch them
because they are hot.
Arranging
rearranging
into circles and lines.

Tonight
you outline a lady
in a long bell-shaped skirt, then you lie
back in cold tangled grass
and watch her dance
above the tips of spruce and juniper.

And as you imagine
yourself the nineteenth century mahogany desk
you saw in the antique shop
your breasts
are ink wells
your palms: paper
your fingers: pens.
And as you turn
on cold earth

you seal
your secrets shut
and offer them
to the stars
like food or blankets
hoping that in return
they will stay, and change with you.

And these
are the stars above
a distance much farther than touch, these are the stars
that wrap themselves in clouds the clouds that have changed your history.
But the stars within,
frighten you and are dim.
They are blind and hunt sight,
their eyes the sizes of children's stomachs.

Moon light
sticks to you like wet clothes,
the energy of the dark makes you whole.

The rush of sisters
lovers laces
fine webs over your eyes,
memory's spindle,
heavy grey thread.

In the empty field
as moon descends,
you stand
scream
disturb
the silence
of high places.

(She hopes she never forgets to love her the way she knows)

The sun hot
on shoulders
the water
cold on toes

In the stream
clouds like silver
white fish
reflect
Summer lit poplar leaves swim
and branch-tied demand space

She bends
and breasts
tiny edges
of winter moon
swing from her body.