

serpentine 11

1990-91



THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND

serpentine 11

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ser-pen-tine - A mineral or rock,
essentially a hydrous magnesium silicate,
 $H_4Mg_3Si_2O_{10}$, usually dull-green, often
with mottled appearance - prominent
in the geology of Staten Island

**Published with the help of funds provided by
the College of Staten Island Student Government
from Student Activities fees**

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A Note and an Acknowledgment

Mark you Mark Twain -- a Twain, alas, we'll never again meet -- once remarked, upon reading his prematurely published obituary, "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Likewise in our modest opinion has the death of the delicately indelicate art of poetry been bruited about too loudly too soon. For whatever else is happening out there in the crass market places of our electronically overloaded land (isn't "loaded," by the way, one of the classic words to describe someone soused on the sauce?), yet poetry is being written and read and, if not heard, at least overheard (in Yeats's memorable word choice) in the quieter chambers, inner and outer, of that land, chambers in which emotion and thought, looking for the most authentic manner for the matter, choose *it* -- nay, do not choose *it* but have *it*, as 'twere, chosen (by the Gaian cosmos perhaps?) for them: the pure spontaneous, heart- and mind-exposing verbal oral aural modality called purely and simply *poetry*. Poetry pure, poetry simple; poetry impure, poetry complex. And while we're at it, or at least at what we're at, could we not say -- as Wittgenstein, in a famous full fathom five phrase, said about the world -- that "Poetry is everything that is the case"? Fathom that. In any case herewith is *Serpentine's* one-oneth, or eleventh, issue, containing poetry and stories and (a first for *Serpentine*, these) contributed photographs and drawings -- all alive and well, and hovering in demure expectation of your selective approbation....

Again we congratulate the writers and artists whose work appears in the following pages, and we convey our regrets to the persons whose work we weren't able to use. We also want to express our continuing gratitude to Student Government, whose moral and financial support makes the publication of *Serpentine* possible.

The Editors

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Color

Again
his touch
bruised my skin
with his lips
sketched my portrait
unseen
through the glare of the sun
hues of color
flashed
before my eyes
dark designs
in charcoal gray
fade in his memory
when the sun goes down
never to remember
again

Judy Ortado



Rules

Prisoners
play freeze tag
in quick sand
behind barbed wire
they play
kick the can
wear army boots
wage their own
private battles
in slow motion
they play
without any rules
surrounded
by stern faced guards
armed with sticks
some play baseball
run the bases
as the sand pulls them under
no need to keep score
no need to run
the war has ended

Judy Ortado

Priceless

Faceless man
hidden
in the corners of my mind
you
in the coal black suit
mystical trickery
dripped
from your sleeve
as you wiped my pain
from your drooling lips
the stain on your hand
is proof enough

how I detest you
evil man
you carried away
my priceless jewel
in an unearthly box
wrapped in satin
caressed
by September's cruel fingers
you were not welcome
intruder
sanity followed you out my door
merciless colors
stain my canvas
forever more
a coal black

Judy Ortado

Isolation

I have been told that ONE is the loneliest number, but
I consider TWO to be just as sad as ONE.

I was born with no malice in my soul, happy was my
heart, my life in Eden

Oblivious to the harms of evil, I embrace the ones
which abuse my paradise.

Like the serpent in the Heaven's garden, one will
entice and distroy, extorting the trust from my heart,
the devotion, my soul, until there is but a trembling
shell slowly grown cold

I have been told that ONE is the loneliest number, but
I consider TWO to be just as sad as ONE.

That is why I would rather walk through the garden
ALONE



Dawn M. Swanton

Leering

HELLO, do I know you, or are you leering? I walk by and feel eyes, nasty eyes, young and old, following me.

On the street or in a place they stare with their rude, crude, insulting thoughts. I want badly to shout: "you disgust me with your eyes take them away before I take out!"

I am not an exhibit on display, I am human, just as you maybe even more, I have flesh and feelings too, respect them and I'll respect you.

I can't help the way I am, after all God created me... but he's a man as well.

Dawn M. Swanton

Violation

I walk through the night, weary and cold soon to reach beloved sanctuary.

As I draw near, something seems queer, not quite right Sanctuary is tainted. Gone is the glow, the kindness, the silent greeting of Hello.

I step forward with hastened breath to find priceless memories hurled from their post crying: " RAPE O SAVAGE RAPE!"

Somewhere, out in the imposing darkness the stone-hearted ogre laughs about his conquest. While I, feeling the emptiness of violation, crouch in the midst of my tarnished treasures, wondering when will he return.

Dawn M. Swanton



the morning plumbing shudders, 6:00 a.m.

the morning plumbing shudders, 6:00 am
people above us are showering
her ass is damp with her bunny-fuzzy robe

half-awake last night I reached out
and felt its airy blue fibers like a housewife's
slippers
in the winter dark the pipes are still
the people empty the house, leaving for work

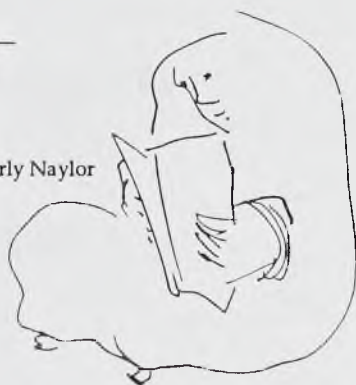
I feel her rump under her fuzzy sleeper
and lie on my back
in the early morning is the essence
of the whole day

John Korbul

Oh, You Modest Knight

Oh, you modest knight,
you've robbed from me my heart.
Why won't you let me in?
Your armour is tough,
but it's tarnished and old.
I won't hurt you.
But I know, my knight,
too many fields to conquer—
too many battles to win—
no time for tears.

Kimberly Naylor



At the Range

His body becomes tense as he readies himself to adjust the sights and work the bolt. His feet seem cemented to the floor by the combined weight of the rifle and his own body. His right eye squints, while his left widens and focuses in his tilted head. John's eyes have always been strong. "I haven't cried in years," he once told me from behind a face of stone. I believed him; his eyes were piercing. Time reinforced in me the fact that he can hide any emotion at will. Yet, I remember one time I would have sworn that my eyes captured a tear in his—perhaps it was a shadow teasing me.

His lips are clenched tightly as he concentrates on his aiming. The pressure practically drains the color from them. John rarely smiles with an open mouth. This only occurred to me recently. I concluded that he was ashamed of the chip in his front right tooth, but I was wrong. Oddly enough, he likes the chip, and would never want to rid himself of it. John is odd in a lot of ways.

His right hand wraps around the bolt. He works the action in one continuous motion, and takes pleasure in the sound it makes. He becomes extremely still. The index finger threatens the trigger.

John doesn't always smile with his mouth. His entire face seems to light up when something makes him happy, and I know at a glance what he is feeling (but deciphering his thoughts is not nearly as simple).

His finger pulls the trigger. After a small explosion and a lingering echo, his expression tells me all went well. He looks at me, winks, and says, "I love you." He does.

Kimberly Naylor



Oh to Dance Like Fred and Ginger

She says, "It must be wonderful to be in love."

He says, "Love is someone's toenails scratching you
in
bed."

"No," she says. "Love is romantic. It's passionate
and sensuous and all those other good things too."

He says, "I can't dance."

She says, "Let's dance."

And he says, "OK."

And they stumble awkwardly under a half moonlight,
pale and cold and distant, while someplace else Fred and
Ginger glide easily across a ballroom floor, smirking.

It's so easy.

It's all so easy.

"Love is forever," she whispers in his ear.

"There is no such thing as forever," he whispers
back.

"But I love you," she says. "But no," he says. "you
don't." "I do," she says, "I really, really don't."

"You don't," he says, "You really, really don't."

"But let's not argue, my love, she says. "Instead,
let's be married in the springtime."

And he says, "OK."

And they marry in the springtime.

She walks down the aisle all dressed in white.

Then the priest asks them a question.

She says, "I do."

He says, "OK."

But now she waits. She waits and waits and waits.

She waits for something to happen. He works hard and
plays golf and drinks. She says, "I want a child."

He says, "Let's wait." She says, "I want a child."

And he says, "OK."

And someplace else, in a crystal ballroom, Fred and
Ginger dance a moonlight serenade. They spin and twirl
as they leap high into the air, so high, reaching for the
sky — and then fall straight down, flat on their pretty
asses.

She says, "We could never dance all that well, could
we?"

He says, "Not like you wanted to."

She says, "Our baby is dead."

He says, "I know." She says, "I don't love you anymore." He says, "I know." "Then what do we do now?" she says. "What's left to do?"

He takes her hand in his, gripping it till it turns blue. She says, "That hurts."

"I know," he says. "Shall we dance then? This time for real." And this time - she says, "OK." But they don't dance, they don't move, and mostly they don't say anything.

David Maj

The Gravedigger

The man stood tall over the earth, his shadow stretching beyond the marble stones, dirt mounds, and green patches that sprouted upward. He stood there, his work boots firmly implanted, and he wrapped his stubby fingers and calloused palms snugly around the wooden handle, his strong hands fully enjoying not only the grip, but the weight the shovel-head exerted on his wrists and forearms. He dangled his tool outright over the earth as if in a tease.

Suddenly he thrust; he plunged the pointed tip, breaking the ground at his feet, and the impact of the blow sent rippling waves reverberating back into the long wooden handle and through his slender but chiseled arms. The jolt echoed through his body and his muscles twitched as if celebrating the sudden power surge absorbed from the earth. But he grew dismayed that the shovel hadn't penetrated fully; a quarter of the metal still showed above the surface and he grit his teeth; he had half expected the earth to submit to his will more eagerly, but at least it proved to be a worthy opponent. He smiled—or if he didn't smile he felt he did. With the heel of his heavy boot he stomped down on the metal that jutted out, submerging it completely now, and in the same fluid motion he threw all his weight downward on the handle until it was almost parallel to the surface, causing the ground to decisively break at the other end. He exploded upward, his arms straining, pulling the load with him, his legs gripping the earth, pushing forcefully against it until he fully unearthed a solid clump of brown dirt and clay. And he stood straight and tall, holding the shovel with its payload outright at arms length, mocking the wounded earth beneath his feet.

For a prolonged moment he held this position as he peered into the hollowed wound he himself and inflicted; he savored the downward pressure of the weight that resisted against his determined arms, as if this

battle proved his existence; and he would have liked to have held this position forever. Then, the gravedigger closed his eyes until it all passed away from him; everything grew small and contained, or rather he grew large, unrestrained; he dissolved like a mist into the soft breeze that carried him through tall blades of grass; he flowed into the crystal stream nearby that brushed against the rocks; he melted into the translucent sky, he burrowed himself into the earth ... the dream broke. His arms grew heavy and began to weaken, as if his strength, only borrowed, was drawn back into the earth along with the loose dirt that slipped frantically from the mound he still held. As his limbs drooped wearily he thrust the dirt over his shoulder in disgust. The defeat was momentary. The sudden lightness of the shovel reinvigorated him and he continued digging with a delighted intensity, the last moment all but forgotten — he soon remembered nothing of what had transpired as he pierced the earth again and again, attacking with a frenzy. His body moved in harmony, pushing, pulling, thrusting, while the sweet burn pulsed throughout, and he felt how good it was not to have to think, how good it was when all that mattered in the world was the next shovel full of dirt. Then it occurred to him with a tingle along his spine, not as a thought, but more as an intuition, that this was the essence of freedom. He continued unconcerned, his will to resist the earth pounding in his chest, and the faint soreness he felt caused him pleasure. He pitched his spade into the widening hole and marveled at how he could feel so alive in this place.

David Maj



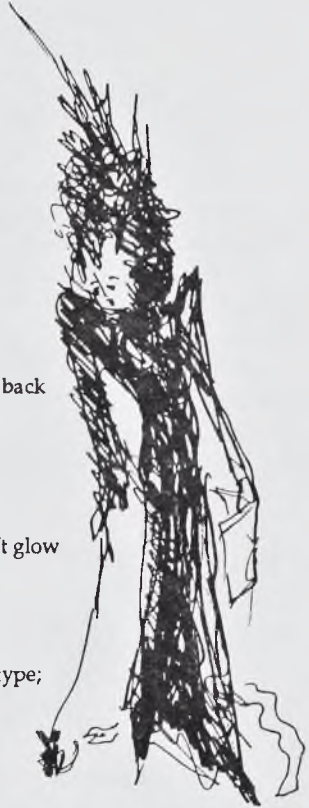
The Sphere of Flame

Is the sun a hustler
moving so suavely across
the dance floor of the
polished sea
to offer the last tango
to overeager, waiting reefs
solidified into spinsterhood?

Am I a fool believing
that auburn halo encasing my image
in the glass of train windows,
like any melancholy Madonna
hiding within the celestial scenario
of a gilt-framed triptych?

"Danger!" cry the stars in me;
"Warning!" shrieks the sky.
"Make your way calmly towards the back
and slowly disembark your fantasy,
ever mindful of the fate
of Lot's salty spouse

Who yearned so stupidly for the swift glow
that cooled the desert moon
one hot night B.C.
You'll find her today,
a living novel of the heaving-bosom type;
her eyes still shoot off fireworks
on "Independence Day."



Doreen Diorio
(honorable mention poet, 1990-91
Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)

Flea Market Vendor

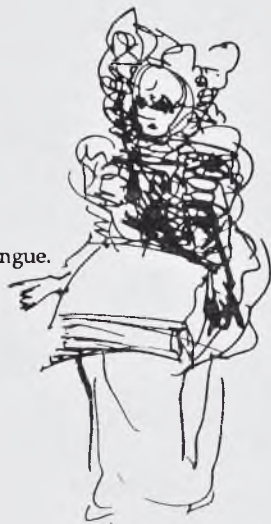
I'm condescending now, playing the game.
It's already one and rent's due next week.
Are my eyes too soulful? (Forgive me—
mixing pride with a dollar.)
Across from me a man and woman are selling
old necklaces and hand-me-down afgans
for seventy-five cents apiece.
I see the two of them
toward each end of the table,
their lives between
laid out in rows of five.

Doreen Diorio
(honorable mention poet, 1990-91
Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)

Ancient Man

We came upon Babylon,
and her warm breast was ripe to nurse.
Her soft arms crept 'round and since
held us in captivity.
Blinded by nudity and
its psychotic thunder, our
gaze held with wicked wonder.

We came upon Babylon, and we saw
skeletons stand erect in the desert,
whose only renters are rats and roaches.
Burning air and shards crackle under foot;
the smiling dogs bolt away from the man
who hunts with sticks and speaks a foreign tongue.
The hunt is seldom successful here, as
nary a half eaten burger is found.
Migrating to Grand Central Station at
Christmas, coming home for the holidays.



We came upon Babylon, and we found
urban zombies descending into its
bowels, in tatters, through urine stained halls.
Steam plumes winding up to Orion's Belt,
from steel grated dwellings. A child's house of
cardboard. Unnoticed, mummified against
the cold; with haunted vacant vision they
wait hungrily in distant solitude.
Their religion is one of survival.
Their scripture is that of resignation.

We came upon Babylon, as they were
waiting for salvation or its army.
Cheated in life they attempt to cheat death,
whose fingers are stretching down deserted
streets and alleys, a macabre lottery.
The bone chilling winds that whip through this
place
make them dance on ragged feet and eggshell toes,
dampened dreams erode as each day goes.
A cluster of animals neighboring
a flame, like our ancestors, ancient man.

We came upon Babylon,
with its glittering bridges
before us, our innocence
undone. Realizing now,
this is what we have become,
an advanced society
of ancient, immoral man.

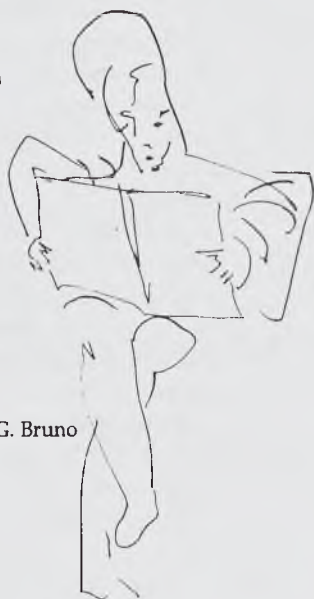
Michael G. Bruno



Voyeur

i saw the pockets of a generation lined green
carved out of rainforest jungles
a ransomed planet in the name of fastfood
hungry eyes gazing at sculptures majestic
with solace offered in empty rhetoric
the protestant ethic
make money til you drop dead
burned in our souls
junkie monks screamed on the corner for salvation
or incense oils
don't look them in the eye or they'll cut you
the government i mean
not enough scratch in the budget to help ourselves
let alone eastern europe
i witnessed the remnants of a generation lying in
the gutter
nomand children
starving
naked
ignorant in amber hue
a thousand points of light furnish no heat
dust settles on everyone
no exemption
metal detectors
sentinels of education
boarded windows of sacred tenements preach volumes
of a kinder
gentler nation
hobos once sought america with railroad dreams
homeless now live your nightmare
and everyone blames the japanese
i watched the exodus of a generation
silently transformed into a desert shield
in the name of fuedalism and big oil
america's tumble from grace
selfish consumers
the supreme race

sit on a razors edge or drown in hypodermic oceans
with music set to erotic hallucination
a species lapsing rapidly toward illiteracy
holding a doctrine absent of future
the literate toil on sdi deployment
the illiterate teach our children
i saw smiling thai stick peddlers on the avenues of
the night
wilding in the zoo of the city
fuck whitey
niggers go home
slogans that haunt dreams
queens of the evening hawk
as twilight shadows drift
the young boys eyed up public school principals
as they run like a watercolor of a bowery night
i viewed a lone defiant shadow in the oppressive
night
stifled voices of tiananmen
on the campus of beijing
everywhere the sound of xiaoping
a whirlwind shattering the status quo on the
streets
of europe
a barrier come crashing
i saw scences of the future walk in the past as
words
fell on deaf ears
munitions of war have become cfc's
the war waging against children is one sided
payback is a bitch
i see the entire future of a species
hurling toward abyss
remoreseless
in fire and ice



Michael G. Bruno

to let him right into her inner soul. This excited him. His mouth dropped open in dumb surprise. There she stood before him. The most beautiful young woman he had ever seen. Her beautiful face with exquisite features, her long black hair shining highlights in the afternoon sun, her flawless golden brown skin were what he noticed first. He let his gaze drop down to her shapely young body. Her full young breasts pushed forward on the thin material of her low cut blouse. She had a trim waist and curvaceous hips. Then there were those long thin shapely legs. He was captivated by her. He didn't mind a bit.

Ruby recalled how after that day, she and Sonan met many times at the beach on a regular basis. Soon they were deeply in love with each other. She remembered the sunny afternoons on the secluded beach that they found for their rendezvous. How they would lie in the soft sand together for hours. And how Sonan would make her feel. She always had that same fantasy... He would brush the sand from her feet with such a gentle touch. Massaging her feet he would send shock-waves of excitement through her body. Then his tender touch would caress her calf as he slowly glided his gentle fingers up and down the long length of her silken skin. He would bend forward and kiss her knee with his hot moist lips. This always made her legs go limp like rubber and her flexed knees would fall apart of their own weight in utter abandonment. Her response was shameless, instant and total. Before long she could feel his taunt muscular body pressing down upon hers. His excited quickened breath was hot as it sounded in her ear. Then his tender kisses on the small of her neck would make her lose all control. Moaning uncontrollably, with eyes shut, her head would rock back and forth as chills ran down her spine. Her fingers would rake his thick black hair. Then when she could stand it no longer her arms and legs would encircle him — pulling him as close to her as she could. She could not get enough of him. She wanted him. She wanted their oneness in mind, soul, and body.

"I'm gonna catch him ... you whore ... cause now I'm ready." Deonarine said, his menacing voice shocking Ruby back into the reality of her situation.

She peeked through her fingers and hair which still covered her tearful face. The moonlight coming through the bedroom window lit the area where he was pacing. She could see the windup clock on the broken-up night-stand in the opposite corner of the small badly furnished room. Its dial spoke of the long ordeal before her as it said it was only half-past eight. The worn sheets on the bed were grayed like a stormy cloud of their weathered marriage. Even the pillows, made of tattered old clothing, were torn like her heart. All reminded her of her despair too well. She caught a glimpse of him in the dim light. She was now by the bed dressed in her night clothes. Then, in his right hand, she saw it. It was a flash in the dark that struck such panic

in her that she could not control her outburst of emotion. Firmly held there in his first was his machete shining in the moonlight. She let out a loud gasp and a ghastly cry.

"What did I say!"

He screamed out in his rage.

He stormed across the room in her direction. She knew that he was about to hack her to pieces with that glowing instrument of death. She was paralyzed with horror.. All she could do was shake in her chair. His right arm raised over his head and lashed out with extreme force at her face. The blow knocked her head wheeling in pain. She had not noticed that he had changed hands with the machete just before he struck. Still it felt as though he would take her head off just from the blow alone. Her neck painfully twisted as her head spun around from the massive force of the blow. She was whimpering and her body rocked back and forth more violently now. With the machete in his right hand again he stood there just in front of her. She could just barely see him through her blurred eyes. He was shaking that razor sharp blade at her.

"Go on, you slut! Make another sound ... I'll gut you ... Go on make one more sound!"

She remained silent as she watched him walk back to the bed. He slithered under the sheets with his metal fang of death. As usual, there he would lay waiting in ambush. "Let him come for your whoring favors. I'm waiting for him. Don't worry I'm gonna catch the bastard!"

Ruby could do nothing but sit there rocking back and forth in her chair. She knew she had to be silent if she was to live through the night.

Time passed. Afraid to speak she wondered if Deonarine had gone to sleep. She had been sitting there for hours and he was now quiet. Was he sleeping? Or was he just waiting for a excuse to jump out of the bed with his machete? Either way she did not want to find out. To cope with the long wait until sunrise she tried to comfort herself again with treasured memories of Sonan.

Ruby had been seeing Sonan for some time. Ruby's family still did not know about him. She was afraid that they might not permit her to see him again. That is why she kept their love a secret for as long as she could. On day on the beach, after about a year had passed, Sonan asked Ruby to marry him. Excited, she immediately said yes. She had dreamed of nothing else since the day she first laid eyes upon him. These things, however, are not so easy in their fifth generation East Indian culture. This culture does not permit women to choose their own destiny. Ruby and Sonan had this going against them. Then there was the fact that Sonan's family were not rich; they were but poor farmers. Ruby's family would neverstand for this. Also,

Sonan's bloodline was from a lower cast than Ruby's, and she would be thrown out of the family if they ever found out. To be disowned by one's family was unthinkable. Their love affair was doomed from the very start.

Ruby was right. Once they found out about Sonan, Ruby's family forbid her to ever see him again. If only she could have seen him just one more time. To add to her misery her family had arranged for her to marry Deonarin in the customary way. Sonan's heart had been ripped from his chest, for his love was forever taken from him. There was no one to console him, no one to tell him of the reasons why.

Ruby remembered the night of her wedding. Deonarine took her back to his house. She recalled how she was secretly repulsed at the very idea of bedding with him. He was nothing like her sweet Sonan. She was barely sixteen, and to have to forfeit her maidenhood to this stranger was the ultimate degradation. When they entered the house, Deonarine had just barely closed the door behind them when all of a sudden he began beating her about the face and back. As he intended, she quickly found out what life would be like.

That first night was only the first of many terrible nights to come. He grabbed her by her long shiny black hair and, wrapping it in his firm tight fist, he dragged her across the one roomed house over to the bed. Standing there he pulled on her hair so hard that she thought he would break her neck. With his other hand he gripped her throat so hard that she choked and gasped for air. She could feel its leather like roughness against her skin.

"Now! I want what's mine." She remember him saying with a smug look on his face.

Then, while keeping his grip on her hair with one hand, his other hand released her throat and painfully fondled her young body. He then ripped the clothes off her back and roughly pushed her down on the bed. She was helpless. She remembered lying there still and quiet as he continued to grope at her with his hard calloused hands. Then he took her — grunting like a rutting animal all the while. She was debased, humiliated, and revolted by him.

Now — seven years later he was the animal he always had been. Sitting there in the dark the time dragged on. Still, there he was in the bed with his machete. The night passed by so slowly. Cramps knotted her legs, but she dare not move. What if he should wake? What could she do? The answer was fearfully obvious. Nothing. Then finally the rooster crowed, signaling that she managed to live till another day. She saw him stretch himself to awaken.

"He's lucky I didn't catch him ... but, next time ... I'm gonna catch him real soon."

Later that afternoon, Ruby went to the market to do the food shopping. Half asleep from the night's ordeal she was oblivious of all that went on

around her. As she was picking through the mangoes she heard a familiar voice in the background that caused her to suddenly stir. She spun around and there he was. It was her Sonan. She did not want him to see her. Not like this! She tried to get away before he could notice her. It was too late.

"Ruby?" He called out her name.

She turned again and as their eyes meet she began to cry uncontrollably. He knew. For the first time he knew that she did not leave him. She had no choice. Overcome, they both dropped their baskets and raced to each other. She could feel his strong arms around her as he pressed against her. How she dreamed, fantasized, and needed to feel him holding her tightly to him. They just stood there embracing each other. Then he finally choked out his words.

"I thought I would never see you again. They made you do it, didn't they? They gave you to someone else," he said.

She could not speak. She did not have to — he always knew what she was thinking just by the look in her eyes. "For God's sake ... don't go back. Please, my sweet...don't go back. Stay with me? I can't lose you again!" "I must! He'll hunt us down and kill us both!" She reluctantly replied with fear in her voice.

"My heart has been dead all these years. If he wants to kill me he would be ending my misery," he said.

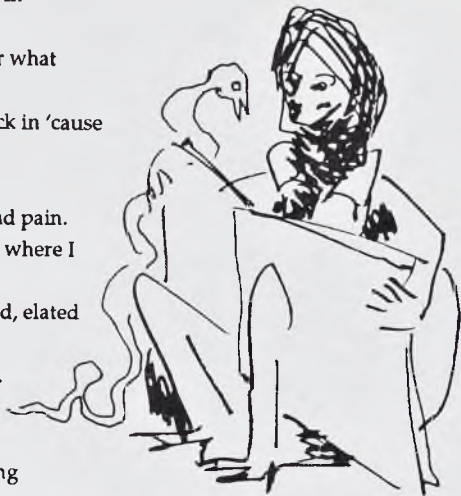
"Oh, yes Sonan ... I have always wanted to be with you. Yes, I could not go on any longer without you. Whatever he does ... it could never be as bad as giving you up again." She sobbed.

G. Arthur Rosquist



Living on Welfare

Living on welfare
breathing gratis air
hunger's blade children's learning
reality closing its vise on yearning.
Water baby's juice with love when he cries
the playground swings him to the skies.
One day to make ends meet
I went to the village, checked the street
selling beaded necklaces I wasn't looking —
ended up on a chain gang in central booking.
Twenty women crammed three days in the cell
Ho's chillin minds with stories they tell.
It's not a book for the shelf
experience it 'self.
In night court I seen Judah 'prisoned on the
docket for jumping the turnstile, weed in his
pocket.
When we talked the CO seen us.
I covered my face, breaking a smile.
Judah whispered, You'll be loose in
awhile.
They took him up, I couldn't hear what
they said;
they cuffed him and took him back in 'cause
he dread.
I was walking in cold rain
with a subway token, jail stink and pain.
Wall Street towers a dark canyon where I
separated;
through a vision of ruins I stepped, elated
rain falling freely from my eyes
returning home where baby cries.



Susan Pickering
(co-winning poet, 1990-91
Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)

After Night Bruises the Sky

After night bruises the sky
clamor of stirred pots, TVs, soprano
 children dwindled.
Dislocated cement cries flung at walls
 intrude halls
slap out the building.
The moon's a tambourine, serene
trailing her past tightlipped shop gates
the bright yellow sign of Jesus is Lord church
4AM town stripped of flourish
each step isolated
a small sound on the pavement.
From the stoplight to Port Richmond docks
the stroll
is not strenuous.
No entering bars windows twinkling christmas
no corkscrew dances of youth
no lip to lip nonsense
no touch her hair four braids
one for each departed child
names she won't caress for jeering streetlights.
Withdrawn from the river crotch
the sun is a cymbal
dawn uptempo
fragile five dollar bills folded, tucked away.
At the door she greets her downstairs neighbor
Hey, lady
Hey.

Susan Pickering
(co-winning poet, 1990-91
Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)

**I Dreamed It Was Me That Died And I Cried
No Not Now**

... mistaking pain for nuance and brilliance—
would it be better,
if on a raining day with you,
i neatly stayed trapped or mirrored,
ruminating in sentences designed to defend...
so as not to go back
as everywhere around us
victims of our planned ignorance
are wheeled off
cancerous and vacant unchanged
by that which to us never was anyway?—

M. Higgins

It's a Game of Chance

... it's a game of chance like some ritual dance;
like some religion and romance
(you) ritual up to emotion;
(created by wit) not drawn directly from the ocean

like a lotion
(you) use it;
(created by wit) to soothe your troubles and woe.

M. Higgins



Everybody's Chasing The Blues Away

... i can see by the lines on your face,
that your heart's in some other place...
and i can tell by the masks you wear,
you think every place to be no where...

doing your time/drinking your wine
everybody's chasing the blues away...

... now in your words i sense a purpose,
though it differs somewhat from your surface...
do you think you have got me fooled,
because i am not so well schooled?...

doing your time/drinking your wine
everybody's chasing the blues away...

... tell me, who do you give the power,
as you plan escapes in every hour?...
and tell me, who do you blame,
when everyone thinks and looks the same?...

... listen, don't confuse me with ny secrets,
what i have done i do not regret...
does not this stage on which we stand
consist of time and shifting sand?

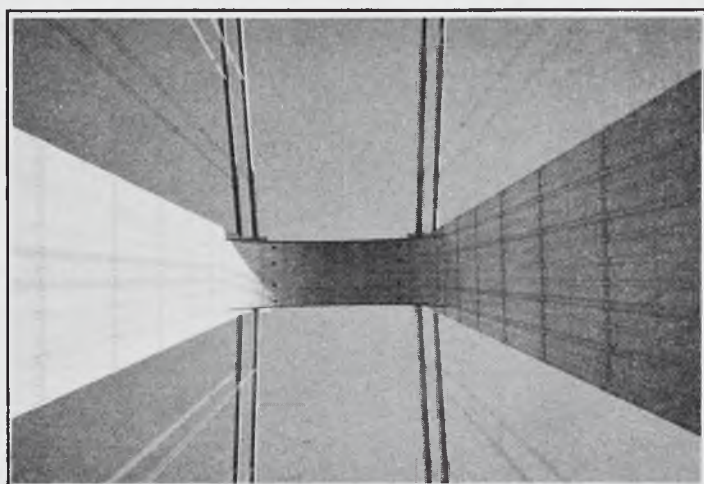
doing your time/drinking your wine
everybody's chasing the blues away
everybody is chasing the blues away...

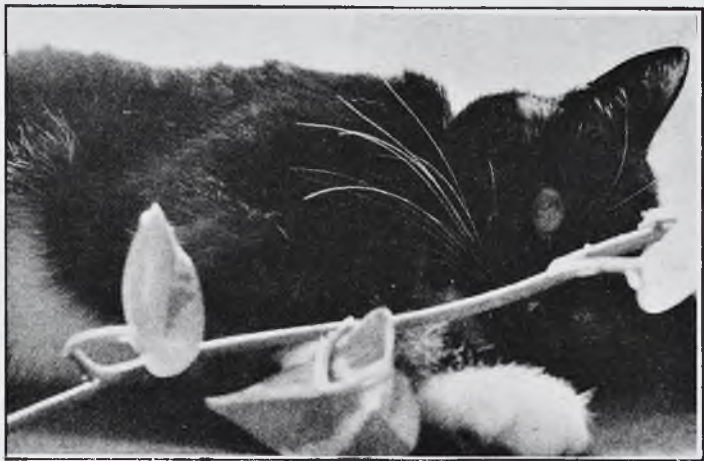
M. Higgins



Three Photographs







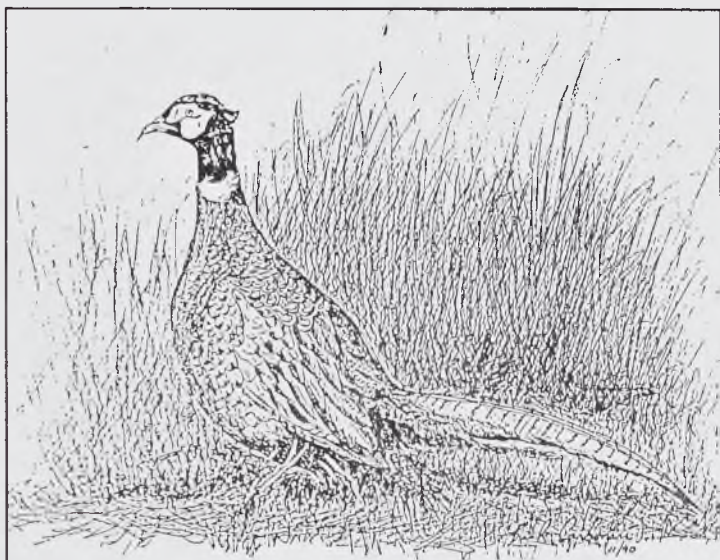
Allison Meyers

Photograph



Thomas Jorgensen

Drawing



Frank Carbonari

A Mourning Under The Trees

The lamp of heaven lumbered behind the grizzled steel-gray clouds. It made its ascent from behind the earth's rim, and was secluded behind the leaden sky. Its eggshell haggardness shone in one corner of the firmament, as the paucity of starry hosts slowly melted into the canopy of early morning. A frail, moderate breeze blew across the awful silence of the misty dawn. The wood and enclosures were tranquil, and the landscape breathed not a word. The clouds above now formed a dome of grey which gave the face of the land an awkward feel. An intimation that some event was about to unfold, which was in opposition to both the laws of God and nature. The breeze ebbed above the dreary plains, pushing with it a thin sheen of mist.

The month of April had commenced, and several trees, though leafless were beginning to burgeon. The morning air was crisp, and still carried a hint of now fading winter. Frost covered scattered patches of grass, and the landscape did not yet disclose a hint of green. The woods were silent, but for two turnstones, trilling from the bow of an acacia tree. A distant rustle from within the woods broke the silence, and the two startled fowl headed for the sky. It seemed that nature or God was warning the two birds to disperse to safer ground. The faint sounds of breaking sticks and twigs resounded from the woods.

These rolling hills of central Virginia were normally quiet and tranquil. The nearest small town was eleven miles to the northeast. These fields and forestry housed an array of wildlife, but men seldom would tread to these outland areas. The woods were thick with ferns and fallen trees. Shrubs and dewberry vines hung across the low lying foliage. The oppression and dampness that is winter still clung to the landscape. The mist of the early morning added to the dreariness of the scene. If men would pervade these woods at all, it would be for the purposes of hunting. Yet on this solemn day, men did enter these woods for the purpose of hunting. This gathering of men, however, were not in the purpose of hunting game, but in hunting other men.

The sounds of fracturing trees were now joined by the low mutterings of human voices. Several men armed with rifles pushed their way slowly through the cluttering wilderness. The layers of deadened trees and shrubs proved a weary impediment to the already laden men. Three of the men reached a clearing and paused, slowly scanning the terrain. The three had reached the edge of the wood and were peering out onto an open field. One of the men put down his weapon and tended to a cut that had torn open on his left arm. The thick brush had scraped and scratched the skin of the three men. Thorns had pricked at their limbs, and trees had scraped and scratched

at their faces. The trek through the thick brush had been tough, but the open field lay just ahead. The three front men were soon joined by a host of others. To the left a dozen blue-clad men fought through the crooked catacombs of vines and brush. To the right another group of souls slowly wound their way through the maze of nature. Others came on from the rear, and the men began to squat and kneel in the concealing brush. A few openings of turf were used as meeting places, and the soldiers sat and chatted quietly. Their numbers grew, and the men began to come together as if to create some great undertaking. Men crouched low and tried to speak softly as others signaled to more blue-clads, now filtering through the web of dense underbrush. The woods had eyes as the men closest to the plain peered out onto the open field. A sense of anticipation grew, and the men looked about nervously.

The wood that they had slowly crawled through faced an open field. The field was surrounded by wood on all four sides. Headquarters had deemed a side thrust through the heavily dense forest impossible. A frontal assault, across the open field was now the only option. The rebels held a stone wall fortification about 500 yards across the open field. This wall was surrounded by the thick woods on both sides and beyond. The only successful attempt could be made by an all-out frontal assault. Although headquarters knew that casualties would be heavy, they deemed the fortification capturable — the reason being that, although the enemy had large artillery at their disposal, they were outnumbered. A frontal assault, though costly would be successful. A year ago this attack would have been seen as foolhardy. Now the people back home were hungry for victorious results. To turn the tide, certain calculated risks had to be taken. Three hundred sixty-two of those calculated risks now massed themselves on the edge of the wood.

One of these men crouched in the bush was a private from Brockton, Mass. He was a thin man of 25 years. He had sandy hair and brown serious eyes, which seemed to dart around in his head, observing his surroundings. To him all of these risks and surroundings had blended into one. This would be his fourth skirmish with the enemy, but none had involved roving an open field. He was proud to have enlisted fourteen months ago, but now he felt a sinking feeling of disgust. In his earlier encounters he had emerged unscathed, while countless others had met the scourge of flying metal and steel. This campaign looked to be the worst of his experience. The open field offered not one ounce of protection. Neither tree nor stone to hide behind. The whole idea seemed like a scatterbrained suicidal juggernaut to him. Johnny felt the tingling sensation of fear creep up his spine. His stomach had that pre-battle tightness that it always had. Johnny turned his gaze to the field of brown and green. He tried not to think of death. Most soldiers preserved their sanity by believing that while others would fall, they would

not. Johnny looked at death as an act of fate. If he was to fall it was beyond his abilities to prevent his demise. He wouldn't "help" the black angel by doing something that would enable him to die. He wouldn't dive on a grenade to save his friends or take a bullet for his commander. As he sat in the brown brush, gazing into the mist, Johnny thought death a fickle thing. Comrades whom Johnny felt should have lived, didn't. Boys smarter and more godly than he had failed to carry on. The Malone boy, son of the preacher, was one such boy. Johnny felt that he was the most religious person he had ever met. The Malone boy put all of his trust in God, yet his God had failed him. The Malone boy had a congregation to return to. A congregation that can now only bury and mourn their future pastor. There was the O'Neil boy, who had a promising medical practice to return to, after the war. O'Neil had a young wife and a two-year old son, but not an ounce of breath left in him. His skillful surgeon's hands had been torn from him, taken by an enemy mortar. These and other men had lives and families to return to. Yet they lay in a shallow grave, never to return to the people they loved. Johnny had nothing but his aging father and his whiskey to return to, but still, he existed. To Johnny it was unfair that these educated men had died, but he lived. He believed that God was an unfair being and that He betrayed His followers. He could not understand how death chose its ranks, or how God dictated who would cavort with the palehorse. At home, in Brockton, death was a formal operation of mourning and bereavement. Back home, one of Johnny's age was so removed from death. It was something that only happened to old people. The only experience he had was when his mother's sister died. He attended the funeral, unmoved. Death was something that did not cross Johnny's mind. Now extinction was something that was dodged on a daily basis. It lived among the ranks. It moved, slept and ate with the men. It waited to surface, and claim its host. Johnny had never wandered more than thirty miles from his front door. Now he found himself three hundred miles from home, in alien land. He was among men who fought and died for the same cause and ideals he fought for. Johnny could still not grasp the idea of war totally. He found it odd that men should collectively attempt to kill other men, for whatever reasons. He did not think of killing when he registered. The image of his death did not occur to him either. There was no glory here, no chivalry in battle. Only the stench of rotting flesh. There were no innocent civilians to save, no cheering, flag waving crowds. Only torn bodies and maggots, blood and dirt. Johnny was now becoming used to the visions and smells of battle. He had seen his share of twisted bodies, ravaged by shrapnel. At first the tumult of cannon and the pandemonium of battle frightened him. Now he was numb to it all. He felt that he was a seasoned fighter and believed that

no gruesome sight could now dismantle his air of unfeeling. He still became frightened, but now it was a "controlled fear," as he liked to think of it. Johnny was now more restrained and his fear was relegated to a churning pain in his stomach. A sinking feeling of nervousness would now overcome him, instead of his earlier sweating, shaking and outward nervousness. The stress came from the pit of his stomach, and remained inside. He could now tune out the distractions of battle, such as the roar of artillery and the screams of pain. Staying alive focused all of his attentions and energies.

The men had aligned themselves and Johnny broke off his glazed stare at the open field. The soldiers listened for instructions and loaded their weapons. The 34th Mass. infantry, was joined by the 26th New Jersey and the 79th Maine. Their numbers fanned out, preparing for the mission they were about to attempt.

Still under cover of the thick brush, they formed their line. The plan was to march across the open field toward the besieged fortress. On arrival they would storm the stone wall and scale it. In the process spearing, stabbing or slashing any rebel defenders who resisted. Headquarters believed that superior numbers meant superior results. It was true, the rebels were outnumbered, but their heavy field artillery could prove deadly to the marching loyalists. The attackers would hopefully press the thrust to the rebel stronghold, keeping casualties as low as possible. Those who survived the march and the cannon could then infiltrate the rebel rampart. The trouble was most men would not reach the rebel battlement, because of the heavy cannon.

The uneven line slowly moved from the security of the sheltering foliage. The enemy was expecting the assault, so no trickery would be needed. They simply formed an uneven line and plodded into the void of the open plain. Johnny was among men he did not know. The three infantry divisions had been molded into one line of blue. They moved slowly, steadily. God looked down from the heavens with an angry eye, and a thin drizzle began to fall. The skies would also rain death, as the line moved onward. Johnny bowed his head against the wind and drizzle.

He kept his eyes focused on the ground. A bead of sweat ran from his brow. The row was several men deep, as it lumbered slowly toward the waiting enemy. A commander shouted encouraging words to the men as they lurched on, guns extended. Johnny focused his gaze now on the back of the man in front of him. The last of the assault now left the shelter of the woods. Commanders and several officers remained in the protection of the woods, to observe the action. Johnny heard their cries of encouragement die away, as he stared into the back of the man ahead of him. The rebel battlements had not yet let fly, and Johnny figured they were waiting until they were good and close. Johnny heard the crunching of feet on frost, and the

men chattering amongst themselves. On they pushed across the plain, toward their waiting enemy. The wind kicked up and the grey clouds swirled above the earth. It seemed like time was standing still, and Johnny felt as though his legs were moving in slow motion. Maybe this insanity was all just a dream, Johnny thought.

His dreamish image was quickly brought to absurdity as the rebel palisade finally lashed out. The line of blue had advanced to about a quarter of the field when they met the first salvo. Soldiers in the front felt the brunt of the ordinance. Men fell as the volley of steel pierced their systems. Johnny cringed as he heard the screams of misery. The balls flew past, cutting the air with slicing, whizzing sounds. The rebel artillery let loose with a barrage of fire. The defenders hurled steel on the attackers, and men staggered and fell, as if in a drunken stupor. The charge of men floundered and wavered, yet carried on. The air was filled with flying pieces of metal and steel. Johnny kept on, his head lowered, his fear driving him on. A soldier several feet from Johnny took a ball to the throat, splattering Johnny with blood and clotted masses of skin and flesh. Johnny kept his eyes and left hand on the man in front of him. With his right hand, he wiped the blood from his eye.

An officer shouted to keep on, as the line wavered. Men fell by the dozens and were trampled underfoot by their own advancing comrades. Johnny kept focused on the nameless form in front of him. If this man advanced Johnny felt that he could hide behind him all the way to the wall. This "human shield" would hopefully take a bullet intended for Johnny. Johnny hoped that this man, who Johnny did not even know, would involuntarily make the supreme sacrifice for him and save his life. The man in front of him blocked Johnny's sight, blinded him from the opposing wall of hatred. He fixed his gaze on the man's back and could only hear the sounds of battle. Johnny felt that to wish for this man to die for him was a selfish, guilty act. But to live, Johnny would have every man in the army die before him.

The line, now half its original number, plodded on. Men prayed as they marched, heads lowered against the wind and bullets. Johnny stayed silent, his lips creased tightly. Screams and orders were shouted from the rear. Officers mustered their men to continue, amidst the carnage. Soldiers were cut to pieces by the deadly barrage of metal. The smell of ballast and acrid smoke filled the nostrils of the attackers. Men screamed in tortured agony as their bones were ripped to splinters in the hail of piercing gunfire. The rain fell more steadily now and carried with it a mixture of both dirt and blood that washed both the earth and Johnny's mind.

The sky was an azure blue as Johnny reclined on the grass. The clouds slowly scooted by as the warm summer air floated along the crests and hills.

The warming sun trickled through the grass. A warm breeze shot down the hills and provided Johnny sustenance. He felt a sense of purpose, and he felt that life could be worth something after all. He has a home, a job and he lived relatively securely, enjoying his whiskey and women. Johnny realized that things weren't so bad for him. The fresh air surrounded Johnny, and he lay back in the grass. Johnny stared into the endless blue of the sky, taking note of the forms in the clouds. He closed his eyes and felt the warmth on his face.

A burst of rounds brought Johnny back four years and three hundred miles south of Brockton. A scream of agony brought him back into this very vortex into which he was being pulled. The fire and metal crossed the field, spraying in every direction. Artillery blasts cut huge holes in the line of blue, taking apart six men at a time. Johnny turned his head slightly, and with a languid eye read the sleeve of the man to his right. "Annihilation to Traitors" rang the embroidered statement. Johnny turned his head forward and down again, continuing his vigil of steadiness. The field was now littered with the bodies of the dead. The air was pervaded by blue-black smoke that rose from the horizon and hung in the air, heavily.

Johnny thought that at last the line must be approaching the rebel stronghold. They had plodded along now for at least six or seven minutes, and still the human wall moved on. Johnny thought that if the attack had not been called off by now, it would never be. Johnny prayed that he would hear the call to retreat, but he did not. He would be the first to turn and run, to run for his one and only life. To his dismay the retreat call did not come, but the bugle sounded from the rear for the charge to go on in earnest. The gate of the moving wall now picked up as the call for swords was given. Johnny knew that if the call to bare swords was given, they must be nearing the rebel entrenchments. The deafening roar of cannon and the smell of smoking guns filled the air. Explosions ripped chunks of earth from the ground, sending dirt and rock flying in all directions. As the line of blue picked up its pace to charge the stone wall, Johnny hurtled bodies of the fallen that lay on the ground. The ranks pushed forward, yelling and screaming, in a mesh of pain and confusion. As the men ran forward, Johnny lost the man he had been marching behind earlier. He felt that he was now an open target, and his heart swelled and raced inside of him. A man to Johnny's right took a ball to the stomach as the warcraft continued. Acrid, blue smoke tainted the area, forcing the men to choke for air. Johnny could barely see several feet ahead of him through the thick fog. The smell of siege artillery, ballast and the dyings' last breath, took the place of floral scents on this spring day. Balls flew through the air like bobtailed arrows, slashing men with their deadly volleys. The ragged row was now just thirty feet from the stone wall.

The defenders blasted huge gaps in the assailants' compliment with their artillery. At such close range, these field artillery would never miss and could rip up to ten men from their limbs with one ball. The defenders hurled sticks of dynamite, and spit metal into oncoming loyalists. With the two armies so close, gunners need not even aim. Any defender could just fire into the oncoming enemy ranks and be assured to hit some part of the enemy. The defenders hurled stones to ward off the drive, when they were reloading. The two lines faced each other in a rage of hatred. The bane continued, as the flow of steel balls and metal was so thick that an insect could not slip by the two lines unscathed. Men were gunned down, cut to pieces by the deadly balls. The murderous exchange of deadly weaponry continued. Soldiers reaching the stone wall were met with the blade, or with a bullet from a hand pistol. The invaders formed their own firing line and unleashed it on the rebels. Soldiers on both sides were put to the sword as the two lines finally met. Johnny ran forward, sabre raised, plunging into sudden death. The lapidation was severe, as the rebels raced out to meet the oncoming foe. The choking smoke stung at Johnny's eyes and he was amazed to have reached the wall alive. He ran to the wall and without hesitation scaled it. He sprang over and quickly looked about him. He stood still for a moment, unsure of what to do. His mouth felt like cotton and sweat seeped from his every pore. In his fright he had dropped his sword while scaling the wall, and he now clutched for his pistol. He produced a dagger from his belt. In his confusion Johnny remained still. The sounds of battle roared on. Johnny ducked his head to avoid decapitation. Balls were now ripping and tearing young saplings in two. Bullets met wood, as splinters shot out from trees in every direction. Johnny quickly turned and, spying a band of rebels still defending the stone wall, he advanced. Johnny had never been so afraid in his life, yet something, some force, compelled him into action. Again time seemed to not exist and the surroundings blurred and contorted. All action seemed to slow to a crawl. In these fractions of a second, Johnny decided to spring on the rebels, who had not yet noticed his presence. He turned at the rebels from behind, planning to slash at the four with his dagger. He raised his knife with his first step, he felt a strange pinch in his left knee. It quickly turned sharper, and the twitch made Johnny cry in pain. This misery he had never experienced before, and he grabbed at his leg. The malaise made him grimace and he fell to the wet ground. It was a luminescent pain that grinded to a halt his consciousness of all around him. Johnny writhed in pain and looked down to his leg, knowing what he was to see. He grabbed at his leg and agonized from the fiery eruption that had shattered his knee-cap. Blood sprang free and collected in the mud next to Johnny. His wry face twisted and contorted, and he cried out again in a loud, tormented voice. The ball had past through his

leg, taking most of the knee and joint with it. Johnny heard the sounds of war right behind him. He remembered where he was and tried to drag himself behind a tree. In the midst of the enemy lines was not a good place to be wailing out loudly in excruciating pain. He thought quickly and pulled himself along the frosted grass. He dug his fingers into the dirt and was able to pull his limp body between a stone and a tree, on the edge of the woods. As he lay there gasping, Johnny thought that he was about to die. The rasping twinge now moved up his leg, and his leg felt numb. As he lay there alone and forgotten, Johnny looked into the still, grey clouds. He looked at the intricate maze of overhanging branches overhead. Johnny thought that a Virginia tree didn't look much different from a Massachusetts tree. Johnny's throat was parched and he heard the sounds of fighting and the groans of dying men around him. Although his body was numb and feelingless, he knew that the blood loss was from the knee. In a final attempt to cling to his innate existence, he tore away a strip of cloth from his pants leg. Johnny strapped it around the wound, as best as his tired body could. The flow of blood was slowed, but it still seeped from his body onto the wet turf around him. The sound of clashing surrounded the wooded area and smoke hung thick about the stone wall and trees. Johnny thought of home and of his parents. As he lay there in the shallow weeds he felt alone, so alone, "so this is death," he thought. He felt that he had been thrown into this conflict and this world by fate, and that fate also controlled his leaving of this world. Johnny felt no remorse, he had no regrets. He felt that he had lived his life to the fullest. He had lived to the fullest of his capabilities. Johnny felt that now, in death, he was set free. He felt that he had tried to make his life as full as he could in the short time he was given.

Johnny felt justified and happy that he had never gone out of his way to harm anyone, or to do evil to another. He felt that fate had called him and that he had died for a noble cause. He believed that to have died putting down a rebellion against one's country was of great honor. Johnny was eased by his confidence that his side would eventually win, and that his life was not wasted. But on this battlefield, no one wins. Johnny fell back and, no longer feeling his body touching the body of the earth, fell asleep.

The field was scattered with bleeding bodies. Most of them dead, the rest of them dying. Blue black smoke billowed from the woods and from the plains. Small fires raged in the underbrush. Dying men called for help or water, but a lack of both was prevalent. The stone wall had been taken. Of the 362 attackers, 141 would live to tell of it. Two thirds of the defenders had perished, the rest were wounded or taken prisoner. The victory was of small consequence and military meaning. Just four days later, rebel armies would retake the wall and then push eight miles deeper north, overrunning the entire surrounding area. Can it be said, then, that all these perished in vain?

Or is it that when men kill other men, for whatever reasons, the exact numbers do not matter much? Death by war is said to go against both the laws of nature and the laws of God.

It was noon, but the moon's silvery apparition shone full in the cold February stillness. The body of Johnny was laid to rest in his native Brockton. The body's left leg was gone from the knee down, his war injury of 25 years earlier. The small congregation shivered in the cold as the pastor read aloud from the Bible. Johnny had survived the steel of that fateful day 25 years ago, but had now succumbed to scarlet fever. His leg was amputated from the knee down, and he returned to Massachusetts, to his farm and to his whiskey. The years had not been good to him; about as good as they can be to a one-legged farmer, living alone, never to have married. Johnny was 49, and half of those years he spent telling his tale of bravery — a single solitary life on the planet that will spin until there are no more single solitary lives to be lived.

A small boy in the funeral gathering looked at the flag draped over the casket. The boy's large eyes turned toward the heaven, and he glimpsed at the overhanging, leafless trees.

Robert Shaughnessy



How Can You Say I Don't Care?

How can you say I don't care?
I feel warmth and compassion when you are near,
I feel the fresh summer breeze
dangling in the air,
I get the chills in the winter but
I'm sure it's not the cold,
it's probably your love
freezing my every bone.
I see your smile,
never fading,
never gone,
I touch your hair as the radio plays
our favorite song.
How can you say I don't care?
You are my life,
my air,
my sunshine.
Without you, I am a lifeless creature,
You taught me how to love,
you are my teacher.
I shed tears for you
when I thought we would end,
but those tears were never wasted,
oh no, my friend.
You showed me how to love,
but I loved only you.
You showed me the places to be touched,
but I only wanted to touch you.
You shed light for me
yet I only wanted to see you.
How can you say I don't care?
Not only do I care
but
I love you too.

Laurieann Kelly



Drown Me

Drown me
with your love.
Beat me
with your passion.
Choke me
with your life.
But, please,
do not
kill me
with your words.

Laurieann Kelly



Lullaby Unorthodox

Bay of white: You are noonday...

Green you are by the jetty.

Bay of lemon: Afternoon...

Sea birds cut the sky with figures.

Bay of melon after gold: You are the sunset...

Sails on horizon far.

Bay of lavender: You are the twilight...

You are gray when thunder cuts you.

Bay of sterling: You are in moonlight...

Pale the stars in comparison.

Bay of deep: You are the midnight...

Tide is high.

"Child of wonder — close your eyes!"

Bay of slate: You are the twilight...

Sea birds call yonder far.

Bay of rose: You are the dawn...

Purple you are by the jetty.

Bay of azure: You are the morning...

The fisherman with pole in hand.

Bay of white: You are the noonday.

"In some days, Mother let you see

Beyond the sky...

Child of wonder — close your eyes!"

Susan Makinen

(honorable mention poet, 1990-91

Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)



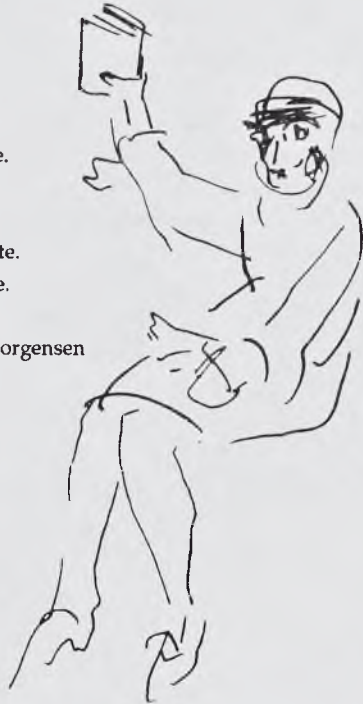
I Once Had A Girl

Oh I once had a girl.
Her hair was silky smooth.
Her eyes lit up with love;
and then I knew we had the mood.
She'd smile and say, "I'm yours today;
but someday I'll be gone."
I'd look at her; and then I'd say,
"I'll never let you go."

Oh I once had a girl.
I loved her. She was mine.
We'd sit, alone, and smoke a bit;
and, then, we'd feel just fine.
The people said it wouldn't last.
I knew that they were wrong.
But they proved right, in the end;
and now I'm on my own.

Oh I once had a girl.
I loved her. She was mine.
I wish that she was here again.
We'd had such a wonderful time.
I'd look at her; and say to her,
"I'll never let you go."
But now I can't, 'cause it's too late.
Like she said, she'd soon be gone.

Thomas C. Jorgensen



When I Look Back

The smiling faces that I knew so long ago,
I wish that they were here with me today.
We'd laughed the way we did so many years ago.
I love them all and wish that they could stay.

Remember Wayne, his crewcut like a porcupine?
His freckled smile lit up our every day.
There's Janice with Belinda, skating down the walk.
Can Jack and Robin please come out and play?

Here's Billy, with his ice cream running down his shirt.
And Margaret Mary, oh she's such a flirt.
We'd laughed and played along as only children could.
Our mischief making brought us only good.

Times are best when they're remembered,
Through the veil of years gone by.
My life is entering September.
June reflections, uttering a sigh.

When I look back, the loves and times I've had,
I see them all as though they happened yesterday.
They weren't the best,
They weren't the worst of times I had.
I wish that I was living them today.

Thomas C. Jorgensen



Chuck's Father Died

Dear Chuck,
the holly berry sits outside the window frame,
a picture of a lapis bear etched in snowfall.
A beginning.
How might I come to speak of a loss?
A father?
The pattern on the screen was something: violet action had written a letter of
the alphabet.
Father's dying
is the disaster — the avalanche of the heart through the body slides
and shakes paws with the earth.
When its claws come up, the sun washes linen in the skylight.
Shall I tell you I'm sorry?
We are.
The harvest of the corn bright yellow.
And Donna so far away.
Do we tell you, Chuck, we're sorry?
Our fathers long lived
forever on the stream
of a jet winged bird
of the wood nymph alive
with the presence of a body.

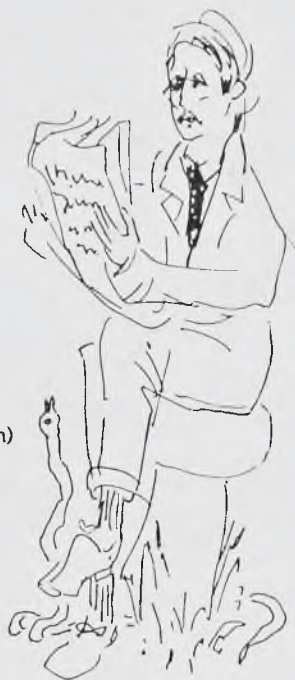
Let him go whole into the air — regaining flight.
And here you stay—
with us—
thank God.

Love,

Helen Decker

(co-winning poet, 1990-91

Edward J. Rehberg Poetry Competition)



Screw all that is not part of my Private Idaho
Grimace
Grimace

I've heard my brethren of the past Howl and Howl
Some are still Howling.
Corruption won out, selfishness won out and
I Grimace.

Selene Russo

TAXI!

Jake huddled his way through the huge rotating doors with two other men in the same spece. When he stepped out into the city air, he took a long, deep breath. The sun was a deep orange. He put his briefcase down on the ground between his two legs, so it wouldn't be knocked down by the rest of the clock-watchers who rushed by him, trying to catch the bus or train home. Jake looked out into the mob of "9 to 5" workers as he straightened his red tie and smoothed it down underneath his vest. He was a tall, good-looking man in his late twenties who knew how to carry himself. There wasn't a day when he didn't look like as though he'd stepped out of the pages of a fashion magazine. His jet-black hair was always combed back - not one hair ever fell out of place. Each short whisker in his thin black moustache was always in place, too. He wore a gold link bracelet on his right wrist and a gold Rolex on his left. Jake kept himself looking like an V.P., when in truth he was a supervisor - trying to move up to junior executive.

He ran his hands down each side of his hair, patting it gently, making sure it was still in place. He picked up his briefcase and walked with a hastened step to the curb. He waved for a cab. After a half dozen passed by, he whistled one down. The yellow taxi pulled over. Jake pulled the handle and opened the door. He threw his briefcase in and then jumped in after it. "Where to?" Jake looked up at the cabbie when he heard a feminine voice. She was looking at him through the rear-view mirror. From what he could see she had nice eyes - blue, maybe. Her curly, sandy-blonde hair was tucked under a cap with the Yankees emblem on it. Jake thought to himself, "Nice-looking cabbie. This one would be fun to flirt with."

"The JFK, babe." Jake smiled at her with his straight, Ivory-white teeth. The driver turned around to face him.

"Do you always call cabbies `babe'?" Jake wasn't sure how she meant that, so he kept his big mischievous grin.

"Only when they're cute," he answered. "This is going to be a great ride."

"Spare me, Romeo." She turned around and pulled away from the curb. Jake got to thinking how he could play around with this one. He always found a way with women. This one shouldn't be any different. As his mind was working on what great line he'd give her next, she spoke up.

"So you're a suit, huh?"

"Excuse me?" Jake was caught off guard when she spoke first.

"A suit - you work on the Street, right?"

"Yeh, honey." Jake kept his smile.

"Thought so." The conversation ended. Jake wasn't sure if she was flirting with him. So he just came back with:

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I just mean that you look like the type. Where do you work?"

"One Battery Park Plaza."

She let out a long whistle.

"Wow. I hear that firm was really going under, you know? And then that take-over and all."

The cabbie could see he was getting a bit ruffled after this last remark. She was good at getting people to feel awkward when she would speak the truth about something.

"It wasn't a take-over, it was a merge." Jake started to get defensive. He started thinking he never had control over this conversation in the first place.

"Yeah, that's what they all say. When over six thousand workers are laid off. I call that a take-over. How come you still there?"

"Because I am." Jake didn't have that smile of his anymore. Who does this woman think she is?

"You one of the old ones or the new ones?" She wasn't going to stop the conversation.

"I'm with Shearson." He looked out the window and watched the Staten Island Ferry leave the terminal.

"One of the new ones, then. It's a shame that the other company didn't last on the Street. It was one of the oldest brokerage firms in the City." She rolled down her window and hung her elbow out.

"Jobs were lost at Shearson too, you know." Little by little this woman wasn't too appealing to him. The plain truth was he never liked it when a woman would contradict him.

The taxi sped into the Brooklyn Battery. The wind fiercely whipped into the car. Jake tried to hold his hair in place with his hands on either side, but the wind still hit it.

"Could you please roll up the window?" he shouted up at her.

"What ya say?" she yelled back.

"THE WINDOW!" She looked into the rear-view mirror and saw this once sophisticated-looking man now looking foolish as he desperately attempted to save his hair from the wind.

"Oh, sure." She rolled up the window and peeked at the mirror. She tried not to laugh when she saw him mumbling to himself as he tried to put his wind-blown hair back in place with a black plastic comb.

Neither of the two talked the rest of the way — all that was heard was the hypnotic hum of the car driving through the vacuum-like tunnel.

The cabbie rolled down her window half-way once they were out and started whistling a tune. The cab got on the expressway.

"So what's your name?" Jake figured he'd try again to make conversation with this woman. It was as if he had to prove something to himself.

"Kami," she answered, keeping her eyes on the road.

"That's a nice one. Mine's Jake." He expected a response, but he didn't get one.

At that moment the cab hit a pothole.

"Damn!" Kami banged the steering wheel with her fist. The cab rumbled as she pulled over to the shoulder. Jake stayed silent as she got out and walked around to the front wheel. He looked out the window and heard her cursing. He slid over the seat and got out.

"Damn this expressway! When will they ever fix it!" Kami kicked the hubcap on the wheel, and it fell off.

"What's wrong?" Jake looked at the wheel.

"What's wrong? We have a flat, can't you see that? Oh damn. Well, I got a spare in the trunk." She threw her hands up in the air and slapped them down at her sides.

"I can't be late for my flight." Jake gave her an annoyed look.

"Ya think I did this on purpose? We'll be out of here in a minute. Do me a favor and get the spare from the trunk and the jack."

She threw him the keys, and bent down to look at the wheel. Jake stood there for a few seconds, looking at her in disbelief. Why should he get the spare? It wasn't his cab! But Kami paid him no attention. Jake turned around, walked back, and opened the trunk. He saw the greasy tire and the oil-ridden jack.

He mumbled "Shit" as he lifted out the tire and jack. He tried holding on to the tire at arm's distance so he wouldn't soil his jacket and slacks. He held the jack in the same way with his other hand. Kami watched this odd sight as he walked towards her. He dropped the tire down next to the wheel where she was squatting. Then he stood there and straightened his tie and smoothed it underneath his vest in the same order he always did. A second later he realized he had grease on his hands, and it was now smeared down

his vest and tie.

"Damn it!" He looked down at his suit. He took off his jacket, and then saw that in doing so he put greasy fingerprints on his lapel as well. Kami couldn't help but laugh at the spectacle.

"There's a towel on the front seat," she told him between laughs. He opened the door, mumbling to himself, and wiped his hands on the towel. He took off his vest and folded it neatly, then put it near his jacket on the back seat. He was beyond being annoyed now. What a day. He stood outside the cab now and watched Kami jack up the car. She stopped when she realized he was watching her and looked up at him.

"Are you gonna help or just watch?" She said it with a half-smile, for she was still laughing at his grease-covered clothes.

"I never changed a flat before...I don't know how." Jake looked away quickly after he said this. He was waiting to hear a laugh from her. Kami just looked in amazement.

"Well, you are a piece of work, aren't you?" She gave a little chuckle. Jake turned to her.

"So I never changed a tire, so what?"

"Hey, no problem. And don't worry — I won't ask you to learn and get your shirt and slacks dirty. After all, it's all you got left besides your underwear."

"Enough cracks. Let's just hurry this up." He bent down and handed her the spare tire after she took off the flat one. She tightened the nuts and jacked down the car. They were done in fifteen minutes.

"There we are! All done." Kami slapped her hands together.

"Well done, Kami." Jake was truly amazed at this woman. She was a different type. Hey, she could change a tire! He was once again attracted to her — in a different way from before.

"Well thank you..." she paused for a second. "Um, I don't know your name."

Jake felt this would be a tender moment. She finally wanted to know his name.

"I'm Jake." He held out his hand for hers, to shake it gently, as if they were meeting for the first time.

Instead, Kami swung her hand from behind her and slapped it into his. Small spurts of grease flew out of the two hands. Jake stood there looking at his hand as he released it from her grip. Kami looked at his hand too. She smiled and shrugged her shoulders. She said in a carefree tone:

"Oops — sorry! You know where the towel is. Anyway, let's get going."

The two got in the cab. She pulled away from the shoulder and onto the expressway. Jake leaned up to the front seat.

"So what do you have against `suits'?" He wanted to try and start all over — with the conversation and her.

"Nothing-if that's the way you wanna live." Once again this woman succeeded in agitating Jake. He got defensive. "And driving a cab is better?" He snapped back.

"I think so." She turned off the expressway. "For your information, I was one of those six thousand that were laid off. And if you ask me, they can have my job. As a matter of fact, you might even have my job now, come to think of it. But you can take it. I'm glad I'm rid of that hustle-and-bustle life." She spoke with strength in her voice. Once again, he felt attracted to her.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to get you angry." His tone was soft and gentle.

"I'm not angry, Jake. I like my life. Driving a cab is interesting, to say the least. And I have a day job."

"What do you do?"

"Deliver pizzas." She turned into the airport's "A" parking lot. Jake smiled and leaned over her shoulder. This was a woman he had to get to know after he came back from his business trip.

"Kami, would you like to give me your phone number?" She looked at him through the mirror and smiled. She kept the smile and said:

"Nope."

Yvonne Thurman



TEN

One Mississippi, two Mississippi,
His weight is upon me,
His fat hands pressed hard against my hips.
The skin pulled so tight it seems my bones pierce out
And into his palms.
Three Mississippi, four Mississippi,
He is speaking to me.
"You nasty whore," he spits next to my ear.
All the while he's shoving, he has to shove,
Hard to get inside.
Five Mississippi, six Mississippi,
Then he fills me up.
A great giant jackhammer heaving,
Attempting to break through my ribs
And out of my throat.
Seven Mississippi, eight Mississippi,
But no more words.
Only sounds of his grinding teeth.
A wailing bed frame and the thud of my head
Knocking against the hollow wall.
Nine Mississippi, ten Mississipi,
Now positively numb.
There are no feelings for me.
My crying can not be heard, drowned by his laughter,
My tears masqueraded by his sweat.

Diane Rodriguez



MY ROOM

Vintage, dusty
Hardwood floor looks up to a high ceiling
Vast, spreading
Damp, cool
Wind whines through a glass window pane
Bare, wide
Stark, dim
Walls surround a huge emptiness
Sparsely decorated
There is an echoing
Neither warm or welcoming

Diane Rodriguez

Life is a Highway

Life is a highway
with many exits
all leading in different
directions
For some
who find themselves lost
on that highway
it is sometimes hard
to find the way
For there are
no maps!
How then do you know
which path to take
which exit to choose?

Sal Curto



Silent

The moon hangs
in the sky
like a diamond
against the
black velvet night
the frosty waves
rush
to meet the sand
like lovers reunited
and you
and I
sit
side by side
saying nothing
but speaking
without words
only with our eyes
our thoughts
our actions
love so strong is silent

Debra Pellicone

Emotion

A tiny drop
of emotion
Rolling
down
my face
Letting
out
the hate
Showing
all
the joy
Saying
words



unspoken
Showing
you
I care
Followed
by
another
Draining
all
the pain
Showing
buried
feelings
Expressing
deepest
thoughts
Telling
you
I love you
And they flow
Endlessly
down
my face

Debra Pellicone

Heredity

I've always looked like my mother.
Relatives called me
 Little Joanie
 instead of by my own name.
When I was young
I didn't like hearing
 "You're just like your mother."
It made me angry.
I was me.

As I walked through my days,
the distance has helped me
see things more clearly.



Now
when I look at my Mom
I see kindness
I see compassion
I see love

I see a woman who gives joy and comfort
to everyone who enters her life.

Today
I would give anything
to hear someone say
"You're just like your mother."
I would be honored.

Linda Scragg

Just Ten Years Old

I am so proud of my child.
He is kind and gentle
(unless there's a girl around).
He is honest and fair and generous
(unless there's a girl around).
He appreciates everything God made
(except girls).
I laugh now, because he's here with me
(even though I'm a girl).
But I know that soon,
before too many more years have passed,
he'll be
kind and gentle
honest, fair and generous
appreciative and thankful
to girls, for girls, because of girls;
and I'll be sitting home alone laughing at
memories
But I'll still be proud.

Linda Scragg

Our Lives Are a Play

Our lives are a play written by Zamyatian
Centuries of passive irony
Like walking through sheets of plastic
My feet are made of tombstone
They drag and scrape across the wooden floor
My blood is almost solid
From a puss-filled wound it drips like strawberry jam
At night my eyes glow with moonlight
Revealing hidden figures moving to and fro
Shadows of people and all they know
In the morning
I wake to find you near
Giving substance to my day.

James P. Sarlo

Sometimes

Sometimes
The loudest screams are silent
They rage inside
Remaining withdrawn
Very little can be seen
On a strait face.

In the eyes
A look so serene
Yet along the optic nerve
Travel pictures of the surreal
The hand is steady
And does not shake
But the heart is experiencing an earthquake.

James P. Sarlo



Blood and Roses

Blood and Roses,
Scarlet colors.
Common places,
Different faces.
Spirits unleashed,
While the Beatles keep time.
Another glass of wine?
Another toast,
In some magical nursery rhyme.

James P. Sarlo



Electrica

I sing for thee my love Electrica
Your passion overflows and fills me
The warmth of your love
Is sensed in the smell
Of a kiss
A fire in the night
As a tower of light
Like a statue carved in bone.

I sing for thee my love Electrica
A bat can not see
But flies by feel alone
Our love is not a vision
It's something felt
How our bodies match
As we lie together
Late at night.

A spark given to light
Electrical forces push
Love in the darkness
Love in the unknown
It proves we're not alone
So this song I sing
For thee my love Electrica

James P. Sarlo



Eleven Waterford Court #2

It was as if everything there held secrets:
Hedges that cowered over the walk—
Its cracked bugholes and in-between greens;
A root cellar below the kitchen floor
You could only enter from outside the house
Through a bolted, square slat door.

I nver dared open that door.
Several monsters and headless secrets
Lived there underneath the house.
Instead, I'd dawdle tip-toe on the walk,
Watch spiders scribble my chalk pink floor
And disappear into sponge wet greens.

Inside, a jay blue keet pecked at greens
Grandpa pushed through the cage door;
They always fell soundlessly onto its papered floor.
Petie paced at night, chirped quick secrets
Sideways, when he took his chopped walk
Or swung lightly, quietly content inside his wire
safehouse.

Grandma let the bird fly in the house.
He'd sit on grandpa's spoon eating greens
But grandma made sure cat was out for a walk
Before Petie was let out of his door.
(That way she wouldn't have to keep secrets in case feathers were found on
the floor!)

I spun cat by his tail round the floor.
He'd play run and hide in the house;
We'd lie in the sunporch, share secrets;
He'd purr full bellied from eating wild greens
He stole from beneath the front door
Near the rosebush that taunted the walk.

Outside, grandma and grandpa would slow walk
Or rock fast on a sunbrittled floor;
Grandpa would leave by the swing garden door,
Disappear into woods near the house;
He'd come back smiling, knees stained in greens;
Wink past us with his basket of secrets.

It was a hopscotch jump from the walk near the house
To the garden floor flagstone and greens—
All too near that door scratched raw from the inside (I
thought, shh, secrets).

Karen Laszlo

Eleven Waterford Court #3

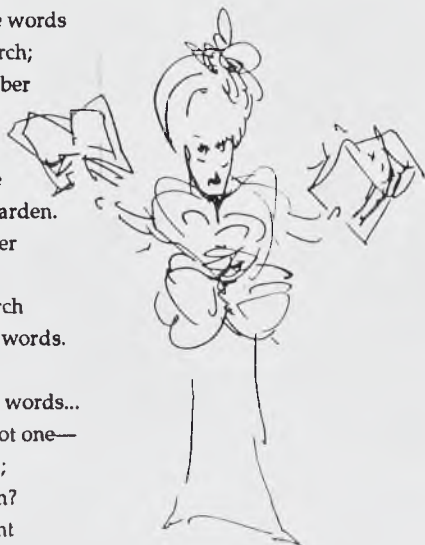
"Why would anyone want to work in a used garden, wearing the bright
green gloves of a dead woman?"

-Crimes of the Heart

I am happy here in my used garden
Inhaling the berry tree's strong sweet scent;
Brushing snow-like blossoms from these words
Sunlit bright, making me squint and search;
Bringing me dreams, making me remember
Another garden, my grandparent's one.

My mother walked there as a young one
While Gram and Gramps tended their garden.
Each plot, each bower urged to remember
Its promise of a particular scent;
Planted to help them return to their search
In time, when Russian replaced English words.

This was a place you could live without words...
Sometimes you couldn't see the birds, not one—
Trees, so heavy with fruit; yet I'd search;
Did they really need to leave this garden?
Could they ever find a more perfect scent
Of pear, peach, apple, like I remember?



And it is often that I remember:
Currants, bitter as a lover's last words;
Raspberries, dipped in ephemeral scent
That seemed to linger after eating one.
Vined stringbeans and peppers greened that garden;
Tomatoes so full; ripe at every search.

One afternoon, a spider held my search—
A bulbous, orange fright. I remember
It up on the garage near the garden.
Grandpa took out a broomstick; without words,
Poked down a few apples and gave me one,
(It smelled of his pipe smoke and Old Spice scent—

But it was a most pleasant mix of scent!)
And when I returned to my spider search,
It was gone! "Would there be another one?"
I asked Grandpa, and he said: "Remember
To practice at your spelling words;"
"The spider became part of the garden."

Under the scent of wind pressed shirts I remember.
In my search for cardinals, I find more words—
One eye on a raindrop hanging like a crystal in my garden.

Karen Laszlo



Apache Boy, Looking East

What is it
That has found its place inside your mind?

Can you be mad about the games
your brothers play without you?

Do you want to ride and hunt
with the eldest of the sons?

On the hillside
As you stand and dream
You seem to look - very seriously - at nothing

why do we chant and praise the holy ones
looking east I see only what used to be
and looking north I see my brothers grave

we used to play and hunt together
learned to walk with the wind
and the eastern wind was our friend

now I think to myself
but I don't cry
only mother does as she looks down
gazing from the mountain tops and northern clouds

looking east, I wait for my father to return
but soon I will have to begin to walk again
westward, where the wind doesn't sing
and the mountains are higher and harder to pass

at night the moon becomes my brother
I play with him as I did with my brother
we fall asleep playing

I wake up and look east
my brother Moon is playing hide and seek
and I feel him watching me
but I never find him until it's time to sleep

my brother Moon and I
fall asleep looking east

Along, among the nation of your own
The wind blows through your hollow stare
In the mountains in your mind
You feel the truth that only spirits feel
Young Apache boys play hunting games
They thrill themselves to death on tease and tangle
matches

You, young Apache boy
are in the years of future days
In the lives of future ways
Soon you'll dance the mountain dance
In the wind you feel the wind

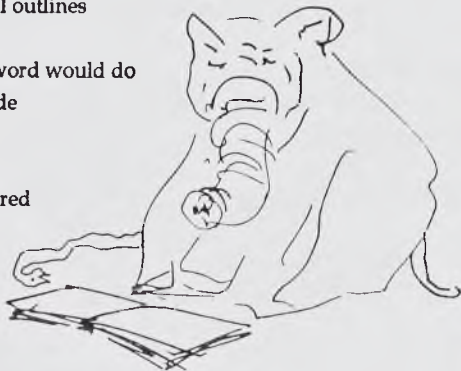
Daniel Gangeni

Polish Rider

You cannot forge a better armor
Than what you wear around your neck
A tie of beads to cleanse
To clatter with your heart

They score the sentiment
And vision of a day
When hillsides remained like hillsides

Vague brown impersonal outlines
give no release
The way a dagger or a sword would do
An the arrows at your side
That rip through flesh
have slaughtered lives
and made the landscape red
and brown again
so that you may ride
and walk alone



Like the timely exit of a rabbit in a hat
Looking out at abundance
You do not see
What's at your back

And hordes will cheer you
When the camera's on
But they will spit and curse
Taking your name in vain
When the magic becomes clear again

And now the hardest audience of all
Is glimmering in your mind
It's time to engrave suicide
On a column in July

Daniel Gangemi

That Second Day

that second day of five degree cold
weather freezing faces fixed
blood pink and red shattered
smoldering junky fuselages scattered
information flying tigers
quilted into pavement
stitched into gutters
woven into the black & white
newspaper headlines
forming face-less images
indifferent trollops all
working for the spirit
of smirking in the spirit
all working
through the spirit of

holiday fruit bowls cornucopia
dry white wine
easing the steady murmuring
headache instigating whine child crocheted



into the black & white
newspaper headlines
violent to the racial inequity
of living in new york in 1988

of giving in new york to 5th avenue
where a buttered roll
costs only \$2.75
when in 1989 with
inflation and as of yet
unbroken promises
that same roll will cost
\$6.00 on park avenue

though to the scattered
fuselaged blood red & pink
informed nation
that second day of five degree
cold weather is just a
stitch-cross hatched
into the black & white
faceless images of black &
white newspaper headlines
of black & white newspaper headlines
of black & white

Daniel Gangemi



