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NEW **80** PAGE SPECIAL ISSUE

LITERARY + ARTS MAGAZINE  
**SERPENTINE**

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Egyptian Goddess of Magic and Rebirth

# Serpentine Magazine

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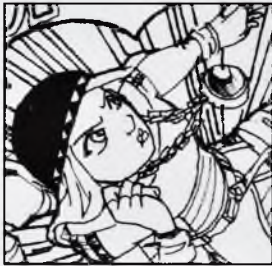
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FICTION

POETRY

ART

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS



**Note from the Editor...**

I'm a dork...

So the last day of class is May 18th."Episode III: Revenge of the Sith" comes out that night. Are you going? I'm there with 20 geeks pointing out how Hayden Christiansen's acting has improved (hopefully). Come to the midnight show, it will be part of whatever huge release party our budget will let us have. So, why the "Star Wars" tangent? Because that trilogy ends as this trilogy ends.

The third and last issue of my "Serpentine" run. I hope I have lived up to the standards of the people who created "The Serpentine" 20 years ago. From here on Serpentine will be produced twice a year. I hope the same quality of writers and artists continue to contribute. I am thankful to have been able to work with such talented people, and given such a great opportunity. Many of these people should be thanked.

First off would be Jennifer Hermus, for giving me the opportunity to take over as Editor-In-Chief after she revived this sleeping giant of a magazine. Also, there is Professor Sarah Schulman, who pointed me in the direction of Serpentine in the first place, when I became very serious about my writing career. She deserves another thank you, for having enough faith in me to pull off three issues.

Serpentine wouldn't exist in its current form, if not for Patrick Montero. The one, the only, quite possibly the greatest art director any publication at CSI has ever seen. Serpentine now has a complete staff. I broke it down into



three sections. Poetry is overseen by our Managing Editor-Meghan Hagerty, along with her co-editor Richard Fedey. Meghan did a great job putting together the bios of all the people who submitted to the magazine this time around.

Short Fiction and every other type of written expression is Overseen by Victoria Gueli, who will be taking over Serpentine for the next issue (I'm sure it is going to be even better than anything I have produced yet), working with Victoria is funny, and the well endowed Mike Bongiorno (see his Revealing Photo in this issue).

And all the beautiful artwork that has been put in was chosen by the aforementioned King of Layout, Mr. Montero.

Last but not least- Thank you for reading our magazine. Stick around for the ride. My circle is now complete.

**Editor-in-Chief Peter Marsh**

*Peter Marsh*

# WITNESS THE EVOLUTION OF SERPENTINE



FALL 2003



SPRING 2004



FALL 2004



SPRING 2005

special thanks to sarah schulman, carl stiles,  
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this issue was constructed to the sounds of:



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COLDPLAY - A RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD



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THE SHINS - CHUTES TOO NARROW



PAUL OAKENFOLD - CREAMFIELDS

# Montezuma's Revenge

A story by Enrique Ignacio Inocente

It promised to be an eventful night. The rave was taking place in an abandoned warehouse by the pier. The general vicinity was a decrepit mess of derelict depots, rusted industrial cranes, and crumbling railroads. I was in a car with a couple of friends. We drove steadily towards the venue. In the distance, we could see kids outside drinking, shouting, and dancing to loud electric music. There were cars lined up in no real order with people leaning on them, or sitting on their hoods. I saw one car in particular with its left front tire dripping with vomit, and next to it a body passed out on the ground.

My crew went their separate ways once the car was parked. I entered the warehouse and spent most of the time wandering around aimlessly; absorbing the sights and sounds of my first rave.



*The floor pounded with the fierce energy of people jumping and bouncing on the dance floor to blazing techno sounds spun by a DJ as seizure inducing, psychedelic lights pulsed from a projection mounted on the ceiling. A hazy fog engulfed the room, softly filtering the assorted colors of lights lining the walls like Christmas decorations. At the far end of the smoke-filled room was a table managed by what looked like a burnt out hippie.*



He wore a tie-dye t-shirt, wide brim glasses, and a handmade peace sign necklace. The man was balding, but what little hair he did have on his scalp was unkempt. Adding to his disheveled appearance was a beard that was greasy and quite possibly disease-ridden. On both his sides were two big, burly men dressed completely in black and wearing sunglasses. These were obviously his hired muscle to keep potentially rowdy customers in check. At Hippie Guy's table were all sorts of drugs, drug paraphernalia, and miscellaneous items: piller drugs, powdered drugs, herbal drugs, prescription drugs, bong, intravenous needles, spoons, pacifiers, beads, and, curiously enough, dildos and yellow rubber gloves. It was all laid out in meticulous fashion for all to see and hopefully buy. This was not a problem because a line was already formed as druggies waited impatiently for their fix. Kids that weren't dancing or shooting up dope were somewhere in the darkened corners of the warehouse making out or blatantly having intercourse.

As interesting as all these sights were to me, the most peculiar was that of a table stacked with bottles of water and a banner hanging prominently over them that read in bold typeface: Don't Drink The Water!!! Even more baffling was the fact everybody was drinking the same, exact bottled water the banner warned against. I couldn't make any sense of it other than it may have been just some silly gimmick to encourage kids to break the rules; rage against conformity, stick it to the man, and all that rot. I took one of the bottles, knowing I'd be thirsty later.

After some hours of waddling around, and observing all the perverse attractions worth seeing, I sat on one of the many soiled couches scattered around the club. Natalie kept me company. I wasn't on familiar terms with her, but we shared the same car ride to the rave and she looked like a nice enough person.

We talked a little but the conversation was a strain to our voices, given that we were shouting at the top of our lungs to speak over the loud music. Both of us had nothing remotely interesting to say, and the things said never went beyond five syllables at a time. Our mindless banter got a bit more colorful when Jewel joined in. This was the girl that originally invited me to the rave, but had since abandoned me to kick it to some girl. This new girlfriend of hers accompanied Jewel. They were both heavily stoned out on something. I wasn't sure if it was acid, ecstasy, marijuana, or all three. The girls were laughing and giggling and groping each other like newlyweds. Jewel's new friend looked a little Goth with her pale skin, crimson colored hair, and lips and fingernails painted black. She was dressed in a Catholic school uniform with patches sewn onto a skirt so short and skimpy it showed off her panties. The patches on her skirt varied in size and content. Some had provocative images such as Satan smoking a cigar out of the Virgin Mary's vagina while others had dirty limericks and one-liners. One such patch read: What would Jesus do for a Klondike Bar™.

"Hey, y'all," Jewel said holding her partner's hand. "This is Geneva. You know, like the convention."

Jewel and Geneva started laughing at what I guess was supposed to be the joke of the century. They laughed and laughed until they were light headed and had to sit down. Both sat Indian style in front of Natalie and me.

"So what are you two doing just sitting here?" Geneva asked.

"Taking a breather," I replied.

"You'll never find someone just sitting here."

"It wouldn't matter to him, either way," Jewel said with a baleful smile.

"Why's that?" Geneva inquired.

"He has absolutely no game."

"Can't get any, huh? Poor thing," Geneva said with bogus empathy. "You're not missing much. Trust me. I just got out of a pretty solid relationship. At least, I thought it was solid. Ah, it was something full of such promising promises. We were two star-crossed lovers swimming in a sea of ardent infatuation. I still remember the day he first uttered those few precious words every girl yearns to hear. I remember it almost as if it were yesterday, though it was only two days ago. Anyway, it was at Adobe Blues and we were both piss drunk. He started puking all over the bar counter and then I threw up. He wiped the vomit off my chin and looked into my eyes and said he loved me. Oh, how I loved him. God help me, I still do. I love him so much it hurts my insides."

I wasn't exactly sure how sincere Geneva was on account she spoke with the theatrics of someone performing Shakespeare on stage.

"What happened to you two?" Natalie asked, moved by Geneva's dramatic performance.

"Well, he sorta got mad at me when I told him how many people I slept with."

"Did you cheat on him?"

"Heavens no!" Geneva said, disgusted by such an accusation. "I loved him too much to be unfaithful, but I kinda lied about the number of people I slept with."

"How many did you tell him?"

"You know the Rule of Three?"

"Of course," Natalie replied, almost insulted anybody would question her intellect because there was nothing she didn't know. She'd seen all the American Pie movies. "The Rule of Three states that guys lie about the number of people they've slept with by multiplying the actual number by three, and women lie about the number of people they've slept with by dividing that actual number by three."

I found Natalie's explanation amusing because she said it with such gravity you'd think she was proposing a scholarly thesis.

"The Rule of Three," Geneva reiterated. "Yes, well, I sorta, kinda told 'im I had sex with only seven guys."

"Holy crap," I said, quickly calculating the number in my head.

"Why'd you even tell him the truth?" Natalie asked.

"After he told me he loved me, I reevaluated our relationship," Geneva stated, "and it was then I realized I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him. I didn't want any secrets between us. I wanted to build our love on a foundation of trust."

"It just goes to show you have to lie if you want a relationship to work," I said.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jewel asked with authority.

"It means what it sounds like," I replied. "Honesty kills a relationship. The truth is hardly ever anything positive. Nothing constructive can come from honesty. People like being lied to."

"Gee," Geneva mumbled derisively. "I wonder why this one's single?"

"Because I'm upfront with girls the moment I meet them."

"Upfront about what? That you're gay?"

Geneva and Jewel laughed like goddamned maniacs.

"Fuck all you guys," Jewel shrieked. "Men are scum. Nothing but sperm donors for all I care."

***"Girls are far more sensitive to another girl's sensitivities," Geneva said, licking Jewel's neck and fondly caressing her breasts. They began kissing passionately, groping, licking and fondling each other's sensitive areas like primates in heat. Natalie turned her head away disgusted, but I continued to stare, thoroughly aroused by the erotic display. Jewel stopped to look at me.***

"Enjoying the show?" she said with a seductive smirk.

"Oh, I think he wants to join in?" said Geneva.

"Yeah, it's too bad he's a man," Jewel added. "We hate men. Isn't that right, lover?"

"Too true. But his friend over there is pretty cute. I'd like it very much if she sat on my face."

Natalie was first oblivious to whom Geneva was referring to, and then appalled when it finally dawned on her.

"Don't even," Natalie said defiantly. "I have a boyfriend."

"It's not cheating if it's with another girl," Geneva said, her fingers running swiftly up Natalie's inner thigh like a naughty little spider.

Natalie jumped up, startled, and pulled down her miniskirt.

"That's, like, so fucking rude," she cried. "I don't have any problems with your, like, sexual preferences, but don't push it on me."

Jewel laughed. "C'mon, she was just kidding. Sit down."

"No thanks," she said agitated. "I'm fine just standing."

Geneva giggled. "Looks like I scared her."

The atmosphere of the room was becoming increasingly hot, dry, and salty from the horde of sweaty bodies dancing and rubbing against one another. The intense heat and humidity was suffocating.

"What the hell are you doing?" Jewel yelled as I was about sip on my bottled water.

"What?" I cried out, exasperated. "What's your problem?"

"Can't you read," she said pointing up to the disclaimer on the banner.

"I'm thirsty," I said. "It's friggin' hot in here."

"Dude," Geneva whispered to Jewel, "you think he'll really drink it?"

"He won't if he knows what's in it," Jewel whispered back.

"What's in it?" I said, irritated that they were whispering right in front of me.

Jewel was about to explain when Geneva interjected.

“Don’t ruin the fun. He’ll find out soon enough.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Jewel said, conceding to her partner’s advice. “Besides, what’re the chances he’d get the winning bottle?”

“Winning bottle?” I said, angry and confused. “What the hell are you talking ‘bout?”

“You’ll see,” Geneva said coyly.

I was exceptionally peeved. Everybody was in on the prank except me. I looked to Natalie, hoping to draw on some sort of camaraderie, but her bemused face made it clear she was just as clueless as I was.



All their eyes were on me: wide-open and waiting for my next move.

“Bottoms up,” I said, tilting back my head, slugging down the water and draining the bottle empty. Geneva and Jewel clapped and roared like I was a superstar.

“You da man,” Jewel said with much stoner pride.

“So what was the big deal?” I said feeling rather refreshed from my thirst-quenching swig.

“I give you ten minutes,” Geneva said in a scheming sort of tone.

Ten minutes passed.

“So you feel anything?” Geneva asked anxiously.

“Nope.”

“Oh well, false alarm.”

“Actually...”

Every eye rose hoping to witness me suffer any kind wicked symptom.

“I have to take a leak. Where’s the bathroom?”

“Oh,” Geneva said let down. “It’s over there behind Hippie Guy’s table.”

I walked to the place she pointed out and was stopped by the lurching presence of one of the burly sentinels protecting Hippie Guy and his merchandise. The bodyguard was wearing sunglasses but it was obvious he was staring me down from the sneering curl of his lips, and sharp, descending arch of his eyebrows.



“Uh,” I said, intimidated to some extent. “I gotta use the facilities.” I’d never use the word facility to refer to a bathroom but his ominous gaze and sour breath made me meek and proper like a schoolboy. He just grunted, which I took as a positive sign because he could just as well have picked me up and thrown me across the room. I scurried past the man and entered the darkened bathroom.

All the stalls were occupied, but not with people relieving themselves. Instead, there were two or three dopers in each stall either shooting up heroin or snorting cocaine off of a compact mirror or the rim of the toilet. I detected a slight odor of urine coming from the sinks. It was evident everybody was using the toilets to snort coke and the sinks to piss in, as did I with the sink.

After relieving myself, I turned the faucet to rinse my bodily fluids down the drain. It swirled around like a whirlpool, but soon the sound of water seeping from leaky pipes ceased. Oddly, the whirlpool continued to

swirl except now with a colorful amalgam of bright lights. Red, blue, yellow, green, all the colors of the rainbow twisted and twirled like a spinning top in the sink. The sight enthralled me, and I was curious to find out how the colors would feel if I touched them. Would cool colors like blue really feel cold? Would warm colors like red really feel warm? What happened if I mixed red and blue? Would violet feel icy hot? I bathed my hands in the colors to quench my curiosity, but all I felt was a pins and needles sensation. A feeling I thoroughly hated so much that I cursed myself for putting my hands in the colors. I pulled them out but pins and needles continued stabbing me, working its way up my arm until it reached my spine. I spun around in a panic, but a more disturbing sight met my eyes. I turned to see the people in the stalls meshed together into revolting globs of flesh. Heads, arms, and legs dangled out this pulsating heap of exposed muscles, veins, and arteries. Horrific screams filled the air, screams so blood-curdling it could melt the skin off a newborn. The screams were ceaseless, but I quickly realized it was I who was screaming. My cries drew the attention of the gory mound of body parts. Its multitude of grotesquely misshapen heads and faces turned towards me simultaneously.

***My heart raced like a jackrabbit's as bloody tentacles teeming with dagger-like fangs shot at me from the mound of flesh. I dodged its attack by hurling myself to the floor. I quickly got back on my feet, leapt out of the bathroom like a ninja, and tripped headfirst into Hippie Guy.*** I could feel my soul fly out of my body as I collided into his sweaty back. The momentum from the collision hurled Hippie Guy over his table of drug paraphernalia into a pair of floppy, size D breasts. His two bodyguards came at me like an avalanche, tackling me to the floor like a common thug. My body splattered on the ground like an insect hit by a racecar. I struggled and shrieked because I soon realized my body was liquefying, and draining into a sewer drain. I was becoming a pile of goopy mucus. I began grinding my teeth because it was the only solid thing on me, and I hoped doing so would help solidify the rest of my body.

People gathered round me. Their unwanted attention overwhelmed my consciousness and I was left confused, angry and scared. I could see through the foggy, neon colors they too were melting into a fleshy mass of pulp. They were oblivious of their sad fate, and drooled gelatinous saliva as my captors tried to restrain me. Since I had no skeletal structure, they could not hold me down long. I slipped through their fingers because I was Jell-O™. Since my legs had completely melted away, I had no other option but to slither away like the amoeba that I was. I continued to scream, howl, and spit as I made my escape, but was held back by somebody who had a firm grip on my feet, the same feet I thought had melted off. It was Hippie Guy. He had me by the legs and was angrily swinging them about as his eyeballs bulged out of his skull. Pink, chunky brain matter spilled out of his ears, nose, and eye sockets.

“What the fuck’s your problem?” he hollered, veins bursting out of his forehead and neck.

“Please don’t drink me!” I cried.

His exploding face looked at me like I was a raving lunatic. Jewel took time out of fingering Geneva to come shield me from Hippie Guy’s wrath and halitosis.

“Hey, what’s all this?”

“This shit-pile with you, ‘Trixie?’” Trixie was the name Jewel went by at raves.

“Yeah.”

“What’s his problem?” he yelled. “What’s he on?”

“He didn’t touch – “ And then she remembered. “Oh, wait. That’s right. He drank the water.”

A silencing gasp fell over the crowd.

“How much,” Hippie Guy asked with a tremble in his voice.

“Just a bottle,” Jewel explained. “No biggie.”

“Shit, Trixie,” he said. “This fucker’s a lightweight. One hit and he’s gone.”

“Well, duh. It ain’t like he’s a dooper.”

“Bloody hell!” he hollered. “Say fucking what? What did I tell every swingdick about tonight? No newbies were to touch the water! It was every toker’s job here to inform all their fucking newbie buddies to not touch the motherfucking water! I specifically said it was some new shit meant only for the hardcore! Only fuckers with high tolerance towards paramethoxyamphetamine will be able to handle this shit!”

“You also said only one bottle out of two hundred had the shit. What were the chances he’d get it?”

“Fuck, Trixie!” he cried, practically pulling out what little hair he had left on his chrome dome. “His body can’t handle it. Right now as we speak the serotonin in his brain is depleting, his blood pressure is rising to dangerous levels, and his heartbeat is becoming seriously irregular. Shit, just look at him twitching there and grinding his teeth.”

Jewel looked at Hippie Guy with her face twisting in revulsion. "You knew the side effects and you still put it out there?"

"Spare me," he replied disdainfully. "These are side effects to every drug you've ever done. My new shit is a thousand times more powerful than any hallucinogen on the market today and just as safe."

"You fuckin' ghoul!"

"Listen, Trixie, take your brain-dead buddy and get the fuck out of here before he gives me a bad rep."

"You donkey-fucking, fudge-packing dingleberry!" Jewel yelled, as odd as it may sound. "We hafta call an ambulance."

"Fuck that shit," he replied angrily. "This ain't turning into News at 11. Get the FUCK out of HERE before I excommunicate your ass from all future venues!"

"Excommunicate?" Jewel said with raised eyebrows. "You think you're the fuckin' pope now?"

"BITCH! I cast thee out!"

"No, you sperm-addicted, nine-toed, acid baby! First we call an ambu—"

Before she could finish her clever retort, a gargantuan bouncer with muscles bigger than our heads slung Jewel and my twitching remains over his shoulders, promptly expunging us from the scene with Jewel kicking and screaming all the way. He took us through the side exit where there were no witnesses, and literally threw us into a pile of garbage cans.

"If I come back 'ere an' seez you two still 'ere," the brawly bouncer threatened. "I'll make sure n'body ever seez youz two again."

He slammed the door shut. Jewel slowly sat up with a garbage can lid on her head.

"Okay," she sighed, "I'm officially having a bad trip."

She eventually dug my body out of the debris and tried to talk me down from my own bad trip. She propped my head up on her lap and caressed my forehead. She spoke to me with a soft, soothing voice.

"Hey, don't freak out, man. You're not going crazy. You're just tripping out on some ill stuff. Just stay calm. Listen to my voice. C'mon, it's me, Jewel," she started sobbing. "Dammit, snap out of it! It's just a stupid drug! It can't do shit! You can beat it!" Jewel giggled softly. "I should start taking my own advice. I'm so fucking wasted right now. How am I supposed to help you? I'm always out of it. So fuck-ing out of it." ***She then broke into wild laughter. It was a laugh so unbearably empty and sad. Her maniacal gaiety turned increasingly upsetting as she started wailing with dreadful sobs.***

My body went limp and ceased to carry any signs of life. Tears flooded her eyes, and she became still. An ethereal serenity shrouded the night. Not even the booming electronic music from within the warehouse perforated the silence in her mind, but this quiet serenity faded once Jewel caught attention of muffled laughter. She looked down to see me trying to hold a straight face. I couldn't help myself any longer, and burst loose with wild cackling.

"What the hell's so funny?" Jewel said trying to sound harsh, but still trembling from the uncertainty of my demise. "Stop laughing! What's so funny?"

"You called that guy a donkey-fucker."

Jewel stared at me utterly disorientated. She continued to stare at me like a ghost with befuddled eyes until she too started laughing, and we both laughed like crazed banshees about the donkey-fucking hippie. The world remained a hodgepodge of colors and images to me, but I wasn't anxious or terrified anymore. Everything seemed natural to me. Life as I knew it before that night was just a bad dream. A computer-generated dream world, in fact, built to keep us under control. I was now waking up to a better existence. A real world. I never experienced happiness so absolute, void of ambiguity. My joy was short lived though. The sobering sounds of sirens and flashing red and blue lights filled my senses.

"Shit!" Jewel cried as we cowered in the dark alleyway. "It's a raid. Let's make like a tree and get the fuck outta here."

We were stoned out of our minds and lacked proper motor skills. Jewel and I held onto each other as we fumbled our way out of the alley, and fled into the night like bandits.

Numerous police vehicles surrounded the vicinity as partygoers spilled out of the warehouse like rushing water from a collapsing dam. All the kids were as messed up in the head as Jewel and I, so what followed was a comical scene of druggies falling over one another to escape the considerably lucid authorities. Arresting ravers wasn't their main priority. They'd eventually detain a couple for good measure, but their primary objective lay inside. Officers, heavily armed, knocked down fleeing teens as they pushed their way to the interior. Hippie Guy's determination to keep his venue from becoming a crime scene went unrealized, but he'd have plenty time to mull it over in prison as he hung off the belt loop of the inmates who would pass him around like currency.



## A Small Island Off the Coast of Antarctica

*by Meghan Hagerty*

Hidden between giant pillars of ice  
 where the ground is made of sharp  
 broken pieces of river rock  
 birds make nests in industrial waste  
 From one shore you could see  
 the other if not for the small shack  
 that sits directly in the middle  
 Inside, a lone man sits waiting  
 for water to boil, cocoa in hand,  
 his only extravagance.  
 Outside, snow is falling though it is summer  
 and it has been dark for months.  
 Those birds whose homes are built  
 from the skeletal remains of a government  
 that has long forgotten this place  
 are sheltered from the storm.  
 Ice chips are brought in with the tide  
 and both the birds and the lone man  
 venture out to investigate  
 what the snow has buried.

## Epistle to the man from Da Nang

*by Meghan Hagerty*

Your picture has haunted me these thirty years.  
 The one tucked in your uniform when we faced  
 each other across the heavily traveled path.  
 I recognized the red flag on your breast, the enemy  
 frozen as I was, with fingers on triggers we stared.  
 There, among the banana plants, its imposing leaves casting  
 menacing shadows on the forest floor it was kill or be killed.  
 Whoever shot first would go home. You hesitated, I saw  
 fear in your eyes. You were my first blood.

I stepped over your body later. Among the cashews rotting  
 in the dirt, I saw a photograph. You untouched by years of war,  
 your arm around a little girl whose features so resembled  
 your own, she couldn't have been anything but your daughter.  
 I picked it up for reasons I'll never understand and tucked it away.  
 I stared at it later, the girl's brown eyes staring at me, accusingly.  
 Her long brown hair a funeral shroud she seemed somber  
 the longer I stared. I was a child that day, forced to become a man  
 in a foreign place, alone.

I met your daughter, the girl from the picture, a woman now.  
 I brought her the photograph I took from you, and flowers  
 for your gravestone. She cried, clutching your picture, hugging me.  
 She said I brought her father home, it was the only picture of the two  
 of you together. She brought me into her home, fed me your favorite meal.  
 I took her to that forest, where we almost met. I thought that would satisfy  
 you, but still you haunt me. I suspect you always will.



## The Diner

by Meghan Hagerty

There's a man in a black hat  
and a woman who's pale white.  
They order coffee with milk, nonfat  
please. They've been out all night.

The woman who's pale white  
is discussing the pros and cons of mescaline.  
They've been out all night.  
The man orders a sloe gin

and discusses the pros and cons of mescaline.  
I think she's an addict.  
The man orders a sloe gin  
again. "What are the effects?"

"I think she's an addict"  
whispers the waitress as she strolls by.  
Again, "What are the effects?"  
the waitress hears the woman cry.

Whispering, the waitress strolls by  
"Crazy bitch" she says under her breath.  
The waitress hears the woman cry  
in the bathroom. She's out of meth.

"Crazy bitch" she says under her breath.  
They order more coffee, for the shakes.  
In the bathroom, she's out of meth.  
She complains that her jaw aches.

"More coffee!" for the shakes.  
They order coffee with milk, nonfat  
She complains that her jaw aches  
and there's a man in a black hat.

## Femme Fatale

by Meghan Hagerty

I am a glittering goddess  
faded to pure ivory.  
Long sanguine nails  
Cracked and chipped and broken  
like tiny serrated knives  
across your back.  
Your screams bounce off the walls  
as eruptions of pleasure  
like tiny shards of glass  
trail along your thighs.  
You don't know me  
when you look at me anymore.  
I was a glittering goddess  
blowing cigarette smoke rings  
through crimson lips  
and teeth that could tear you apart.



## ISSUE #1

### Issue #1 Peter Marsh

My role in the first of the newly revised Serpentine issues was minimal at best. I submitted one short story, which I hadn't even edited, and the typo stayed in for some reason! Little did I know, my work in each subsequent issue would be plagued with typos and spelling errors. "Editor-in-Chief".

As far as those who were involved in the issue, it was an impressive group of students that stood out at CSI.

### Issue #1 Patrick Montero

I had absolutely no involvement in the first issue, but when the Editor-in-Chief, Jenn Hermus, asked me to be the Art Director for the next issue I used this issue as a basis for the layout of each issue that followed. It was more of a guide of what not to do. This issue screamed college-zine and looked very amateurish. There were typos, page 20 and 21 were exact duplicates of each other and the general layout was not imaginative.



## ISSUE #2

### Issue #2 Patrick Montero

Ugh, I think the layout kicked butt, but there are a lot of butts in this issue. I did lots of research, checked out other magazine, zines, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, etc. It was my first shot at being an Art Director without having to answer to anyone higher than me, I would have final say on all my ideas. Needless to say, I made a bunch of layout errors, but I learned a great deal about layout and I thought that the general layout was successful. BUT, there were so many complications with the printers, first off, they printed the issue with a three sided border, which just dumbfounds me how anyone could make such a blatant mistake. Then there's the no cardstock cover that we asked for. Then there were problems with certain images not lining up. It was the worst printing job I've ever seen, Oh yeah, F & D Printing Inc. was the place where we had the issue printed, never go there. But, like Pete said above, he took some of the blame. After we received all 1,000 copies of these horribly wrong printed issues I told him he should call up the printers and ask for a reprint or refund and we would bring our business elsewhere. But, he didn't move on it and opted to just suck it up and start circulating the issues on campus. But, it's all good, after the issue was released, Pete and I had a chat - and he has grown some cajones since then. (8 butts)

### Issue #2 Peter Marsh

Here was my chance to prove myself. The last four weeks before it went to the printers was filled with phone calls to Pat saying, "I don't think we are going to be able to put it out this semester," followed by calls from Pat of, "we can do this, we just need to finish everything tomorrow and send it to the printers!" It's my fault there are borders on each page and also on the non-card stock cover... sigh.

### Issue #3 Peter Marsh

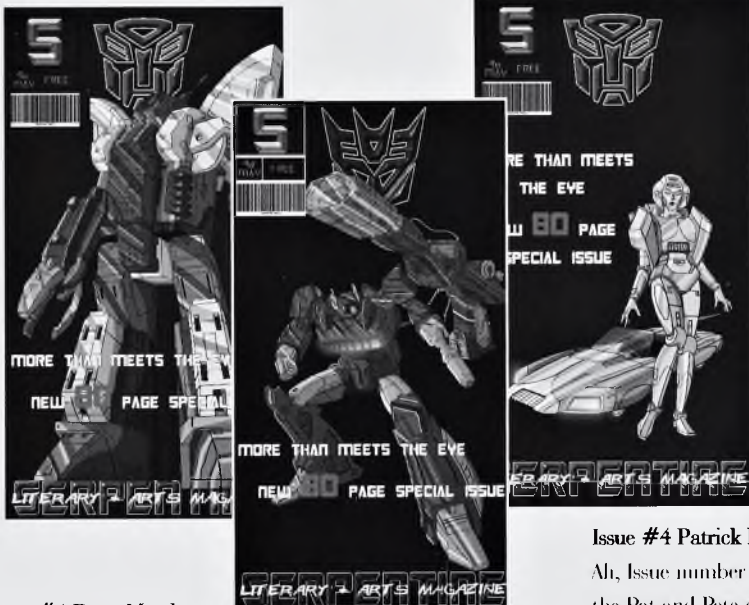
Wow, how many of the thousand of copies have been displayed or handed out without one of the staff members cutting out the white box in the front? This issue was beautiful, except for the goof the printers did by mixing up the order of the pages. It had a beautiful cover and smooth gloss pages throughout. I stepped on a lot of toes making this issue, lost a few acquaintances, but made some strong friendships.

### Issue #3 Patrick Montero

Yeah, I wasn't too happy with the layout in this issue. I felt we had too much literary content, which we pushed to fit in. We should have cut a bunch of submissions rather than cram them all in, and I think the layout suffered as a result. And the printer, this time a new printer, Wall Street Group Inc. is a really good company. There was a minor problem with two pages. Wall Street accidentally misplaced them, which altered the continuity of the zine, but Pete called them and was able to get a discounted price. One noticeable aspect of the zine was Josephine Maisonet's artwork. The other funny thing about this issue is that Pete had called me up one day to tell me that someone had requested to be let into the Serpentine office to grab a few issues, they ended up taking two boxes and handed them out. This was ok, but the issues that were handed out did not have the covers cut out. I had personally cut out two boxes worth of zines and had handed those out, but after the issues with the uncut covers got out, the staff decided not to continue cutting out the covers.



ISSUE #3



### Issue #4 Peter Marsh

Well, I'm writing this before the issue will be printed, so I don't know what the end product will be. By now I have a quasi-celebrity status at CSI (Wow, what an accomplishment). I'm Pete - The Serpentine guy, which made the process of putting this bad boy together all the sweeter. It showcases the work from all the people in my Poetry 372 class, who are probably some of the strongest poets on S.I. Also included is work from some of the talented people I have had the good fortune to befriend in the past year. It's a great finale to the trilogy. The circle is complete. I'm a dork.



ISSUE #4

### Issue #4 Patrick Montero

Ah, Issue number 4, and the 3rd installment of the Pat and Pete dream team. Well, enough of that. I know this is a bit premature but this issue is gonna kick ass! We have Josephine Maisonet on board again, the legendary Enrique Inocente giving us a double punch with two comic submissions, interesting art from Jhon Singleton, 80 pages, 4 different front and back covers, a kick ass Serpentine staff, 12 color pages, literary submissions from some of CSI's best, interviews with the artists, Pete and myself, and a budget the can handle all of this craziness! It's been a fun ride with Pete and I think anyone who picks up this zine will be very pleased to own one.

# Josephine Maisonet

## JOSEPHINE MAISONET

It is clear that you have the ability to draw well, and that you have experience with putting together images using a program like Photoshop, which form of art do you enjoy creating more?

I do not think I enjoy one art form over the other. The fundamentals and challenges of composition, color, perspectives and so forth that are applied to creating traditional art such as drawing or painting is also applied to digital art as well. For me whether I use oil paints, or programs like Maya and Photoshop, are just mediums, a means to express myself creatively. Each medium has its unique qualities, of which I can utilize and choose from.

Which one brings up the most challenges? Why?

Well, challenges such as in life, is always in a state of dynamic flux, isn't it? It's like a toddler who is to learning to walk for the first time. Once the

child has mastered that, it's no longer a challenge is it? Similarly for me, learning a new program or learning a drawing technique in the beginning is a challenge in flux. With discipline of practice and time, mastery of it will eventually come. The challenge for me is not so much whether I understand how to use a program, or achieving a higher level of skill in painting or drawing, but whether I can tangentially express my vision satisfactorily and to express it in the medium of my choice.

When Editor-In-Chief Peter Marsh came across your website dedicated to all the different types of Goddesses, he became extremely happy and cried out 'Finally, a definite theme to run throughout our magazine'. What led you to want to take on the Goddess theme in your work?

The Goddesses have been and still continue to be an ongoing creative project that I have an inter-

est in. It's my own way of expressing and keeping alive myths that humanity has created, in all its different ages and cultures, to give answers and meaning to life's challenges. It's my tribute to Joseph Campbell and the spirituality movement.

Why did you choose certain Goddesses to showcase?

My goal is to showcase as many different goddesses of all different cultures from around the world. My first showcase dealt with the most common mythological goddesses that most people know, such as Venus, Diana, and Isis. But I also, as part of my decision making, choose goddesses that represent closely the finished artwork that I created. There doesn't exist some kind of set order as to choosing the goddesses.

Which Goddess image are you most proud of? Why?

I'm attracted as an artist to rich and vibrant pure colors. So much of my artwork reflects that. I would say that Venus, the Roman goddess of love, with the rich red hues I used is my favorite. Not that red is my favorite color; I don't have a favorite color, but because of the vibrancy of this color, expresses my vision of this goddess.

Which was the most difficult to put together? Why?

My latest goddess is Yemaya, the African goddess of the ocean. It took me a while to achieve visually what I have mentally envisioned, elementally made of water yet human at the same time.

One thing our readers might not know is that you are the model that is featured in your work. What made you come to the decision to feature yourself within your goddess pictures?

I have been a professional model for along time. Over the length of this career, I have worked with and made friends with artists and professional photographers. The goddess project is something that has been with me for a long time, years in

fact. A close friend and professional photographer based in NYC, Robert Milazzo, is quite familiar with my visions and goals. He has photographed the majority of my poses for various goddesses for my project. There were other times with other photographers, in which we were only testing, for our portfolios. As a result I have amassed a large archive of poses and images. I feature myself only because of the availability of my archives and the avoidance of legal issues with model releases. Eventually I would like to use different people, especially when I start to represent the male mythical gods, sometime in the near future.

Usually artists remain faceless when their work is presented. At any point were you worried about not only having your work on display but your own image connected with it?

For a while I did have concerns that people would be focused too much on the "model" instead of the artwork. But I cannot control how people will perceive my work so I've decided not to worry about it.

Have you been featured in any other pieces of artwork?

No. In my drawings and paintings I use a wider range of subjects and ideas.

What type of training have you received for both the background art?

For the traditional art I have taken workshops, studio programs and classes at the Snug Harbor Art Lab. I plan in the near future to take studio programs and workshops abroad. I had the privilege of receiving private lessons from the well known fantasy illustrator and artist Boris Vallejo, as well as being self-taught from books and self study. The software that I use in my work such as Adobe Photoshop, Bryce, Maya, Adobe After Effects, Premiere, were learned by taking courses and self-study using excellent pedagogical books. In 2001 I graduated with a BS in computer science from CSI. ■





# The Martial Artist

Oil on Canvas

16" x 20"

by Josephine Maisonet

## Making Love to Virginia Woolf

*by Victoria V. Gueli*

Look, I've found us a hidden place-  
 the corner where the hedge mazes join, a garret of sorts.  
 Leonard cannot see us, I've blocked his office windows with  
 thick black books; the help have all been sent away.  
 Come towards me, on bare and narrow feet, stained with ink,  
 your arms full of paper, your long hands full of pens.

Virginia, I have longed for you!  
 Felt each strand of your hair, loosed from it's  
 knot, as I stroked the page,  
 pressed my hands against the tome's spine and your slender back-  
 Laid my flushed cheek to the cool leather of every volume,  
 feeling the softness of your breasts in each, your  
 heart full of thudding manuscripts.

If I slide my tongue into your mouth,  
 will it come out white and flat, printed with words?  
 Goddess Hogarth, with my palms brushing your thighs,  
 the voices will die down to a whisper, the imprints of  
 George's hands will fade-  
 let me open and read you with my own soft mouth:  
 nothing hard shall enter that room of your own.

Yards of fine-woven linen tangle beneath us, your  
 Skin fairer than mine;  
 I read the goosebump Braille of your pink nipples, watching  
 the purple letters pulse under your pale skin like veins  
 and the patterns of leaves brand shadowy words on your stomach.  
 Virginia, hold up your chin- your eyes are  
 closed, your brows are drawn together,  
 they give you the bearing of a duchess, diadem and all.

In a quiet green library, to this soft couch I've summoned you,  
 and my scholar's arms are outstretched in welcome-  
 No Vita; Victoria will have to do, and you'll see how  
 studious I can be;  
 kneeling before you, my fingers parting pages,  
 my tongue speaking a silky language as I get lost  
 in a good book.





# Dead Man's Party

by Victoria V. Guchi

Dr. Jonas Elm: 1943-1988.

His long bones dangle over the stone—  
his pant cuffs are a little ragged, I notice;  
his tie, quite worm-eaten, his jacket  
shiny at the elbows. "Get it?", he chuckles,  
slapping one thighbone. "An atheist—  
all dressed up with nowhere to go!"

Ms. Penelope Ramirez: 1932-1957.

Long slinky dress, painted-on eyebrows;  
she shakes her skull, fiddles with her hemline,  
sighs and scrapes some moss from  
her jawbone;  
"He fancied himself a comedian back then,"  
she says, draining a ghostly martini glass.

Mr. Peter Tuttle: 1971-1997.

the tiny spiders still in his eye sockets attest to  
his determination; he's trying to preserve himself,  
they say, poor man. His coffin's lined with parts—  
the smell is dreadful, says Mrs. Sarah Murphy:  
1951-2002. She can't imagine how he's done it.  
He's peering suspiciously at a canape.

What a crowd! Pushing past one another,  
chatting, dancing, laughing, when  
someone starts up the music; one long-dead  
pianist sits down at the transparent baby grand—  
he invites requests.

Someone asks for the Funeral March.

"What bad taste," mutters Mrs. Murphy.



## Graveyard Scene

by Victoria V. Guchi

Alas, poor Victoria!

I knew her well. Her jokes were poor,  
her silences pointed, her poems  
filled with purple prose; but still,  
she had a sort of beauty, if only by  
candlelight. Her skull seems to move  
by the flickering of the lamp.

Smooth and ivory, she's finally got  
that grace she always craved. Buried  
in the earth so many years, I wonder  
what she's learned; I lift her clean jaws  
to one ear, but that seashell won't roar.  
They say she died for love of a man and  
haunts notebooks, trying to write him  
poems.

Shun iambs and tetrameters, I imagine  
her saying: keep your treasure box closed,  
and the flesh on your bones. Poor gentle-  
woman,  
tired poems and straggling hair were no  
way  
to make an exit. Was it really a man, then?  
My gaze searches her empty eyesockets,  
but the rest is silence.



## Never Give Up In February

by Victoria V. Gueh

The undertakers all seem to agree:  
February is a good month. People, they say,  
just give up: business booms!

Tall, lean columns in black suits,  
they steeple their long fingers  
together, pale knuckles like hard knots.

They smile and nod around me, a little too close,  
the embalmers glower at me from the corner.  
I'm safe from them at least- they're underpaid.

I scribble shorthand notes while  
nodding politely; I silently vow  
to never give up in February.



## Articulating the Author's Skeleton

by Victoria V. Gueli

"I feel like my skeleton's been ripped out",  
he said.  
I nodded, and kept numbering the bones.  
Swaths of swatches covered the cool steel table,  
dozens of needles littered the floor  
Dropping a pin from my mouth,  
I unrolled my thread, found my thimble.  
I was prepped for surgery.

He sighed, and lay back-  
his pale hair gleamed against the cold blue tile.  
Calmly, I fitted the long sheets of paper  
to the skin; gently, I stitched the warm yellow paper  
over his veins- Yeats for the shoulders,  
I should think; let me make  
two v-shaped notches.  
He would be lovely as a falcon.

Cover the long bones with fresh, green Wordsworth,  
slim vines twining about his joints;  
neatly fold small fires full of Blake into his blood,  
little red envelopes, racing through femoral,  
jugular; and finally, the heart, soaked with thick  
Shelley, calcium-rich.  
The clink of my scalpel and pins make music.

He glows softly now, skin translucent,  
tiny black print against the gold like ants  
crawling inside a Chinese lantern; the light pulses  
from the stitches. All is in place.  
I shall remove my gloves and mask now.  
I shall pack my sewing basket.  
The author is finished, the operation a success,  
the writer is both born and made.

## Queen Machinist

by Peter Marsh

My Queen is a craftsman,  
Doing excellent work  
With the machine I can be.

She knows just the right bolts  
To use, when preparing  
My braces, and the strongest

Steel, to prop me up, keep  
Me from falling forward,  
And digging a hole straight

Down, with the rotating  
Shovels welded in my  
Head. Eventually, I would

Fall in, face down, never to  
Get up. Thank you my queen,  
Always telling me what I

Should read while she tunes me  
Up. A complete marriage  
Of science and royalty.

## The Endless

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*by Peter Marsh*

I wind the thread in my skull again,  
To pull the seven of them back to me,  
But they will only come if I use their sigils.

Dream is the first of the siblings I find:  
I follow the trail of sand dropped from his hand  
Leading to his kingdom made of imagination.

He is with his older sister, Death.  
Her smile draws me towards her,  
She shakes her head and says, "Not your time".

Destiny paces outside in the hedge maze,  
Moving back and forth, his hooded head held down.  
I offer anything I can to see my page in his book.

I travel to Desire's statue;  
He/She lives within the statue's head,  
Smoking, wondering who to confuse next.

I would choose not to find Despair,  
But she's behind my mirror,  
And yours, tearing at her own face.

Destruction travels throughout our world,  
No longer wanting to be known as one of The Endless,  
Yet mountains still shake when he laughs.

My search leads finally to Delirium:  
I'm wrapped in delicate confusion, forgetting  
What I was looking for in the first place.



## The Livingroom

*by Peter Marsh*

The sofa becomes the size of my childhood  
 With me looking at me  
 Trying to love the blue waves  
 Coming from the television  
 Siblings roll into the living room  
 My brother is the pillow trying to  
 Snuff my sister's screams.  
 Until she pushes him with  
 The restrained anger of being  
 The youngest child  
 Her foot connects with his head  
 A caved in pumpkin  
 Dozens of red butterflies flutter out,  
 For us to land on their wings.

## A Lifetime, 3 Seconds

*by Daniel Leahy*

I cried once (One Second)  
 And a tear ran down my face.  
 It stood out like a crystal in a coal mine.  
 Stood out like an orange tombstone in a graveyard  
 Stood out like Bush on a welfare line  
 Stood out like a black cat in the snow.  
 A tear whose inside was alcohol  
 Whose presence burned my face  
 Whose life was an amoeba  
 Whose split moment was like a dying star.  
 A tear that had no home  
 That came and went like Christmas  
 That was a hobo for a small period of time  
 That celebrated its death with champagne.  
 A tear who once wished for a lake  
 2 be a lake (2 seconds)  
 Who once wished it lived on blade of grass  
 As dew  
 Who once knew the earth was round  
 But never knew why  
 Whose heart would've been shattered glass  
 Had it lived.  
 A tear.  
 That only evaporation could conquer  
 A world-class champion boxer never to be beat  
 A dynasty like the Patriots  
 An undefeated season.  
 Only 1-0.  
 A tear.  
 Whose short life was filled dichotomies  
 Was ruined by wanting more  
 Was diminished by hope  
 Was ended by a pure white Kleenex  
 (3 Seconds)

## Rewind *by Daniel Leahy*

As time passes I picture my life and how it was through the glass  
 Does it pay to hold strong  
 Or does it pay more to break up and be free?  
 Every kiss matters but does everyone count?  
 Wish I knew what to do,  
 Wish I knew what was right  
 Don't want to slip 'cause there's that shimmer of US.  
 It was all green in the beginning,  
 All dark but not at the end.  
 Try to block out thoughts when they walk by,  
 Confusion ricochets through my mind when she's not around  
 I need this woman to survive,  
 It's only a shame we see different edges of the knife.  
 Miss her when she's away,  
 Want to erupt when she's around  
 Me and my crazy world that I live-  
 Will it ever be the same?  
 Will I continue to look through the glass?  
 Or will strength prevail  
 Only to assume its role on our next date?



# Mexican Eyes

by Laura Psonias

I had a friend. Her name was Michelle. She asked for us to call her Mitch. My friend was a boy trapped in a girl's body. I called her Michelle. Mitch loved my other friend. Her name was Tiffany. Mitch and Tiffany loved each other. I was on the outside. Then there was an accident. There was a car accident. Tiffany was paralyzed. Tiffany could not walk. Mitch was sad. She was a sad, Mexican boy. I was angry. Tiffany hated me. I should have been there. I should have fought for her. I never visited. Mitch was angry. What kind of friend was I? Mitch loved Tiffany. I should have fought. I should have stayed. Tiffany lost her freedom. I lost my friend. So I went. Saint Vincent's. Mitch was bleeding. Tiffany was some where else. Mitch wanted to go. I said no. You're bleeding. Stay. Wait. I'll help you. You need me? I need you. I'm sorry. I'm fake? NO! I do love her. I love you. Please. I'll beg. Don't go. So Mitch went. She went to her love. Her love was paralyzed. Her love could not walk. Mitch was bleeding. I was gone. They hate me. I am a fake. I don't care. I am selfish. They hate me. Time goes by. I am left with my mind. Tiffany hates me. Mitch hurt me. I am sorry. I couldn't tell. I walked. There you are. You are here. You are in front of me. Mitch is in front of me. I freeze. You stop. Your eyes are lost. I see your eyes. You need my help? Mitch needs me. You want to ask. I want to walk. Your eyes tell me. Your eyes are Mexican. Your eyes are deep. I stare. You stare. Then I walk. You stay. I wanted to ask. I wanted to scream it. You are dead. She can't walk. Right after I saw you. I walked. You are dead. I didn't help you. I didn't ask. You took your life. I'm sorry. I walked. I walked. I walked.

## Star light — by Jennifer D. Anderson

"Star light, shine bright on me  
 Be my companion that holds the truth to my fate.  
 Hold me into your faithful grace  
 Guide my heart to only home."

## Fly — by Jennifer D. Anderson

Fly away, Soar high into the sky  
 Fly into a dream, a dream that will change your life.  
 Soar high in the air of crisp  
 Capture the moments with your grasp.

## Vision — by Jennifer D. Anderson

Shall that tiny clear dream be found  
 That tiny structure make end closer...  
 that more myself would I lose,  
 my vision or a new creation  
 filled with desire to dream and make end closer?

# The Lost Summer

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*by Alban Merdani*

Albania 1992. Two years after the fall of the 50-year long Communist regime. Religion had once again been reborn for people to find comfort in and keep their faith alive. Churches and Mosques once used as stables and storage houses were now reopened. Different organizations and missionary groups had overwhelmed the country. The Greek Orthodox Church had seeded its members in the southern cities of Albania. Catholics had their eye on the West and Northwest cities of this 28,000 square kilometers underprivileged country. An 85% Muslim population had occupied the rest of the country. Islam had been established during the Ottoman Empire conquest, starting in the fifteenth century and lasting for nearly 500 years until November 28, 1912; this was Albania's independence day.

Ernal had been born on that particular day fourteen years ago, deep in the mountains of Albania where his family had been persecuted by the Communist regime for the previous 15 years. The ordeal that his family went through had all started because of religion, and to make it worse the regime had accused them of political propaganda; the same reason his uncle was incarcerated for sixteen years. It was their belief in God that kept his family strong during unthinkable mental and physical punishments. But they had all survived.

Ernal - meaning mountain air - had a meek nature. He had light brown hair and was physically different from most boys his age. He was tall and, due to malnutrition, skinnier than most of his friends. His eyes were a light color between blue and green; they conveyed the story of his life to anyone who looked into them. He knew very little about his family's origin and the fact that, before the Communist regime took over, they had been the third wealthiest family in the country. His parents had tried to keep these things from him fearing that because of his naïve and innocent character he would talk to his friends and perhaps get the family in more trouble.

Having left everything he knew behind, Ernal and his family had finally returned to their original home in the city. Korea was a city known for more than its beauty and culture. The Albanian alphabet was written there many years ago and the city was nicknamed "Little Paris" by the dictator Enver Hoxha, who loved to visit it during the winter. It was a romantic city to live in and visit; but to Ernal everything was strange, and the house, on which the rough winters had taken a toll, didn't seem like much. On the other hand, being in such an immense city meant a great deal. He knew he had a lot to learn, starting with the street where they would live for the next two years. Its name was Ajet Gjindolli, and it ran through almost half of the city. The street had its share of wealth, gangs, open markets, billiard halls, and late night cabarets. The Bowery of Korea, it might have been called. At first, it was too much to handle and Ernal found it overpowering.

Happy to be back in their own house after fifteen years, the family moved in right away. It was a two - family structure with one entrance. His grandparents and uncle occupied two of the rooms upstairs; his cousins took the other half of the house, and he, his parents and sisters occupied the one room that was left on the first floor. There was not much room to do anything and privacy was not an option, yet everyone seemed content.

It was during the summer that year that Ernal was going to start religion classes for the first time, and learn more about what it means to be a true Muslim. His family was very religious especially during the hard times they had been through, but he didn't know much in detail about the Muslim religion. He was confused most about circumcision. He had been told that for health purposes and mostly because of religion, boys were circumcised when they were babies; however, he was fourteen.

During that particular Sunday morning, Ernal could feel the warm rays of the sun penetrating the window. It reminded him of the beautiful summer to come. Outside, the cobblestone street was almost

dry after a prolonged cold and wet winter. The mud had turned to dust and the kids playing soccer would soon be spreading it around.

While cleaning his winter shoes and putting them away for next season, Ermal could barely wait to hit the street and meet his friends. He had yet to experience the city and what it had to offer during the summertime. The one daily event that Ermal looked forward to was the late afternoon walk or stroll that all the citizens took down the main boulevard. It was a long-standing tradition; people would dress up and get together with friends or family to enjoy a simple conversation, coffee, ice cream, or perhaps sing traditional songs in the shadows of the trees. You would see anyone and everyone, especially little kids playing by water fountains and flower gardens.

Running outside, Ermal was surprised when he did not see any of his friends around. It must be too early. He decided to walk to his cousin's store and get something to eat. When he got there, people were talking about politics and mostly religion, and how the mosque had invited a group of doctors from Turkey to come to Albania, specifically to Korca. He listened, quietly taking a seat at the corner of the counter and nodding his head at his cousin in greeting.

It wasn't often that outsiders visited Albania, and when anyone did visit, the news flew quickly. He listened tentatively to people's assumptions about the services the doctors had come to offer. Nothing sounded interesting. He ordered a warm bowl of grits.

Ermal took a spoonful of his favorite breakfast and savored the taste in his mouth before swallowing it. Before he could enjoy a second mouthful, one of the neighborhood kids came in yelling. "The Imam from the mosque, together with the group of doctors, are going up and down Ajë Gjindolli street performing circumcisions, and offering five dollars plus a plastic sport watch to all the boys." It was a service they offered to all the young boys, the new members of the mosque.

Five dollars meant five to six thousand lek in Albanian currency and you could not get that kind of money very easy. However, selling the watch could mean another two thousand lek. Ermal quickly thought of a few of his friends, who would volunteer just to get the money, but he was not desperate.

When Artur went on to mention the address where the doctors were going to next, it was Ermal's house. The news came as a shock to him. Suddenly, he lost his appetite. He knew nothing of the procedure but just the thought of a knife cutting off his foreskin made him nauseous and scared.

Knowing that he would be asked to go home, he slowly snuck out the door and ran towards the open market, thinking he could get lost in the huge crowd that gathered every Sunday to sell and buy goods. He spent two hours walking up and down the market, tasting different foods: marmalade, cheese, grapes, toasted sunflower seeds and dried meats, as though he was looking to buy something. Ermal decided to return home, hoping that the doctors would be long gone.

Nearing the house, Ermal was thinking of excuses to give if anyone asked why he had run away. A scared, curious little boy, he opened the door. There was commotion in the hallway. His curiosity, fear, and confusion were at once intermingled. He had stepped into the trap he feared all day.

The doctors had just returned to visit his younger cousin, on whom they had performed the procedure earlier. His cousin was doing just fine, but Ermal started to hyperventilate as the voices became louder. Turning slowly towards the door, he froze in his tracks as he heard his name called. He had never before dreaded the sound of his own name so much. Swimming in mixed emotions, with false confidence, Ermal turned and faced his uncle. His first words were: "It's your turn."

His parents were not around for him to turn to for comfort, and before he could say anything or make any sudden moves to escape, Ermal found himself in the middle of the room surrounded by men wearing turbans. They spoke a language he could not understand. Fearing what would come next, his sweaty hands grabbed his belt buckle and squeezed it tight. His heart was pounding, ready to crash through his ribs; everything else seemed to move in slow motion.

Held standing up, facing east towards Mecca, the holiest city in Islam, Ermal found himself a live replica of da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. He was stripped of his clothing. Five different men, one his uncle, held him at five different points of his body. The Imam read out loud from the Koran while the doctor prepared the contraption.

"Stop, stop, stop," he screamed as he heard the clang of the surgical knife.

"Don't worry, you will not feel a thing," his uncle reassured him.

"You'll be a man and a true Muslim soon," said another.

"I don't want to be a man," answered Ermal faintly. Cold tears fell down his face, and he could hear them crashing down onto the old hardwood floor, evaporating through the cracks.

There was nothing he could do.

What's the need of calling on God when these people are his servants? How can they do this to me? I don't need the money, or the watch.

His thoughts were interrupted by a long, painful pinch caused by a wooden clamp-like device, pulling his foreskin tight. His body tightened as though going into shock. The pain, which was like nothing he had felt before, was now numbing, and for a short second he thought the torture was over.

I survived, that was not too long.

He relaxed his muscles, breathing freely. At that precise moment, the doctor raised his hand and with a smooth strike as though he cutting through air, incised the foreskin.

"Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar." It all happened too quickly. There was no time to scream.

Medications to help the healing process, which took longer than two months, were hardly available. Although he had a smile on his face - he had just overcome what seemed the hardest part in becoming a truly religious person - Ermal and his friends saw each other only through their windows that summer.

## Clitoris ——— by Diana Muniz

the phone rings — he finally calls  
 a race — is about to begin  
     my first date  
 finally going to see — Metallica live  
     it's December, time for — presents  
 the mosh pit — is consuming — me  
     that's — my song blasting on — the radio  
     prom night  
 parachuting — for the first time  
     party at Tom's — house  
     they picked — me — from the audience  
     I got the gold necklace — I — wanted  
 he just said — those — three words  
     the spotlight is on me

## The Enemy ——— *by Anthony Bongiorno*

“And it all comes down to this, doesn’t it?”

Sitting across from the enemy of mankind.

“Everything else I’ve done. And all of my other achievements. And this is the hand I’m dealt?”

He remembers it so clearly. He always has.

Foggy night.

“Help me, Officer.”

Rainy night.

“I’ve lost my money, sir. Please help me out.”

Humid.

“Get away from my car.”

“Please sir, I need help.”

The kind old black man’s kind old face.

“I’m in a hurry.”

His hand held out.

“I’m going to call in reinforcement if you don’t leave me alone! I’m in a hurry!”

“Officer, I’m afraid. Please don’t make m’beg.”

Driving off. He had someone more important to save. No time to waste on this bum.

Sitting across from the old fool.

Sweat dripping from his brow.

Over the years, his age has become much more familiar.

The grey in his temples. The quiver in his voice. The fear in his eyes.

“We were at the end of the road then, weren’t we?”

“Yes, officer. I believe we may have been.”

He knows now. Somehow, someday, he has always known.

The old fool reaches out and pats him on the leg.

He cries like a child. He can feel the temperature rise in his head. He feels the pat of the

Old fool’s hand on his knee.

“So. You’re him. You him, aren’t you?”

The enemy of mankind smiles.

“Buck up, son. It ain’t as bad as ya’ think.”

## The Day the Moon Melted Into My Eye and Made Everything Hard ——— *by Hugh Withers*

A man-made clock telling time,

telling his friends no lie.

They all gathered close,

to see freckles on his face.

The sun turning shades purple to silver to red,

trees inhaled their limbs;

the wind blows in static,

the stairs are all flattening

Spoons and forks jump out of drawers,

chased by chopping knives.

Flowers slide their tops to the ground,

vomiting stems from which roots grow.

Time never tells lies to his friends,

but who is a friend of time;

we have made him, and have made him a God.

And this God demands a sacrifice.

# Lackluster

by Mike Bongiorno

I prayed for something like this to happen...

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP BEEP. "God, no." BEEP. "Not already." BEEP. I had only had four and a half hours of sleep by the time the alarm on the cell phone by my head began shrieking like a banshee. The sky was dark out, yet it was eight o'clock. It was going to rain, I knew it before I even looked out the window. Last night's dietary laps was still sitting in my stomach like a rock. The cigarette I lit immediately after waking up wasn't helping my hearthurn. Why did I start smoking? Boredom? I sat upon the edge of my bed, like a skydiver standing in the doorway of the plane before he inevitably must jump. I did some quick math. Class at nine, over at ten, come home be back in bed by eleven. "I can do this".

I put my hand over the showerhead to try and block out that first evil burst of ice-cold water that shoots out before it turns hot. As always that barely works. Hair first. Shampoo. I contemplate not going to school. Maybe I could cut just one more time. I knew I was going to go, but it felt good to entertain the thought.

I step outside as the rain starts. I get into my car. My car, my window to the world. Real enough to get me where I'm going, fake enough to make me feel the world whizzing by outside isn't real.

I see the room is dark before I open the door, yet I do anyhow. No one. "What the fuck?" I put down my bag on the windowsill in the hallway to take out my book, which has my schedule on the back cover. Maybe I had gotten the room number wrong. As I take out the book a pretty girl I knew from high school walks by. Probably doesn't remember me. I smile. She doesn't look at me long enough to even acknowledge it. I was wrong the room is right, the time is off. I'm an hour early. "Damn it!" What do I do now? Stay, be awake another hour?

I enter the room. Empty. I sit in every chair like a little kid would. I want to see the room from every perspective. I write on the board, pretend to be the teacher. I even sit in the teacher's desk. As I look around the classroom I think about it's melancholy atmosphere. I think they meant for it to look modern but it's just cold. Every room colorless and gray, no pictures on the walls. No personality, every room resembles a computer lab. I imagine the "sad monster", a monster who comes in riding a machine that sucks all the joy out of everything. I see him going up and down the hallways, into every room, taking the life out of this school everywhere he can.

I sit in my usual chair, and as the class begins and the people pile in. I watch them enter one by one, without a doubt all of them have their bottles of water and cell phones handy. What did people do before cell phones, talk to the people around them? Amongst the strangers I doze off.

At home I go straight to my room, take off my clothes and fall into the bed. I dream of something I can no longer remember. RING. Something about the apartment I used to live in as a child. RING. I walked up the RING. I was once again dragged out of la-la land by the phone. As long as you own a phone you will never sleep again. My friend Mike who I've known since the advent of water, invites me to his house to "hang out" which means, do absolutely nothing. I've learned the trick to life is not to try and do things, because you waste all of you're time planning, it's to do nothing together. At least then there's a lot of noise as your life fades away.

When I go to Mike's house, the usual happens. He comes to the door, shakes my hand then I follow him in. Today though something was different, a fair smell in the air. Before I can even begin to guess he tells me.

"My sister is home from school, she just graduated, I'll introduce you to her later." He then leads me to his room. All I really want to do is meet this girl, but I can't let that be known. She has to be good looking, with a smell like that, she has to be.

In Mike's room we wax on the usual topics. TV, film, comics, media basically. Nothing of any importance. He lie and tell him I'm thirsty and want to go get some water. I will him in my head to not offer to go with me, which he thankfully does not.

I walk into the kitchen to pretend to get a glass of water. There she is. I spy her butt first, but only because it's the only thing showing of her as she rummages through the fridge. She rises with a carton of milk and begins drinking it straight from the container. She doesn't notice me. She is short, thin, in a cute petite way. Her hair, dark with light streaks in it. Her neck looks long and amazingly sensual as I watch the gulps of milk take the elevator down to her trim tummy. This girl is acting like a pig, and I am in love. She finally notices me. Laughs in embarrassment and begins to speak.

"Oh Sorry, I didn't see you there, want some?" She gives me the milk. I don't know why but this is

the most seductive thing I've ever seen a girl do. There is something so cavalier about her. I pour myself a glass of milk as she sits down at the table with a tub of ice-cream and begins to eat it with a spoon. "Do you want some of this?" She says with a head tilt.

"Yeah, sure," I reply slickly. Always a quick wit I was. "Well get yourself a spoon." I get a spoon and she pushes the ice-cream into the middle of the table so we can share. "I'm Bridget" she says as she puts her little hand out toward me. I tell her my name and shake her hand. It is so soft, I think I'm going to break it.

Out of nowhere she says "Is there something on my forehead?"

"No, why?"

"Well you're staring at it." I am caught, the truth is I hate to look people in their eyes. I just can't do it, so I look at their foreheads or their noses this way I can at least give the illusion I'm looking into their eyes. "Are you afraid to look in my eyes?" I fess up. "I never look into anyone's eyes."

"why?" she asks with a cute pouty face. "I just have a hard time doing it."

She grabs my hands from across the table. "Look into my eyes." It is a friendly hand grab, not a romantic one. Yet I am compelled to move my thumb along her soft hand. But what if she gets mad or something? "Okay now don't be afraid, you've got to open up, I'm sure you've got nothing to hide, like I'm sure you've never killed anyone or anything so don't be afraid to let me look into you." A slight move of my thumb, almost immeasurable yet my heart is racing. I move it again. God, she's soft. I look into her eyes.

"Okay now, see this isn't so bad, don't look away. Have a moment with me, talk to me with your eyes." I move my thumb a little more, now back again, I have to create the onward motion.

"Your eyes are beautiful..."

Who said that? I didn't see her lips move. Damn it had to be me. She lets go of my hands. "Okay I think you've got it now." She is visibly awkward, embarrassed for me. I'm an idiot. Now it's her who's not making eye contact. I hear my name being called from the other room. I get up. "Well I gotta go, it was nice meeting you and stuff."

"You too" she smiles. My heart hurts.

As I drive home I replay it all in my head. Man, does this hurt. I haven't felt pain like this since high school. Tears fall from my eyes. I am heartbroken. The pain seems unbearable. But in a good way, like water rushing through a dried up river, I feel the pain run through me. It has been so long since I've felt this way. Why? I feel alive.

As I lay down, I have a smile on my face, I feel reborn. I prayed for something like this to happen.

## Feasting on Her Virginity

— by Mike Bongiorno —

## I'll Kill Myself Tomorrow

I situate myself at the table  
folded napkins, forks and knives, glass of wine,  
I begin to imbibe her –  
A whimper, a coo, a refreshing release of held-in air  
I focus my eyes on her;  
A wiggle, a long groan, stillness  
I wipe my mouth with the napkin  
Perhaps I'll have the same for dessert.

His clothes comfortable and warm  
his hat, a sentimental token of his youth  
his words weary and well-chosen  
He warns me against women –  
"The government, landlords and staying out  
too long in the sun.  
the conversation ends as it always does:  
"I'll kill myself tomorrow."

## MIKE BONGIORNO

Yes, you're seeing the adjacent picture correctly. And yes, Michael Bongiorno is indeed very, very naked. I would know; I watched him pose for that picture. Patrick waited down in the basement with his camera, doing technical things with it that made click noises and looked complicated, while I fidgeted and watched the bathroom door. Behind it, Mike was disrobing.

He strutted out, wearing a mauve towel and a grin. "Hey baby," he said, putting his arm around me. His very warm, uncovered arm. I tried not to look down.

Mike was positioned against a plain wall in the basement; deftly, he exchanged his towel for the copy of *Serpentine* in the photo with nary a flash. Then he started vogue-ing.

Other people might be nervous about being photographed in the buff, but not Mike. A filmmaker, writer and professional comedian, Mike's used to baring it for the whole world to see.

"The nudity in the photo represents the nakedness of being onstage," he said. "Nakedness represents honesty."

Mike, who has performed at the New York Comedy Club, Caroline's, Gotham Comedy Club, Stand Up New York and the Comedy Cellar is a former member of the comedy troupe, The Cousin Brothers. He also runs the Comedy Open Mic Night, held at 7:30 p.m. every first Sunday of the month at the Muddy Cup. There, you can find other stand-up comedians, and watch amateurs from the audience come up and try their hand at the laughing game.

When asked to describe his comedy, Mike opens his mouth, then closes and opens it again, as though collecting what's about to come out. "I would call it lowbrow disguised as highbrow disguised as lowbrow. It's childish humor I present as having meaning in the guise of childish humor: but it truly has no meaning. I actually-" He hesitated again.

"It's just open wounds comedy," he said seriously. "It all hurts. Things that I wouldn't talk about with a close friend, I talk about onstage."

Mike didn't start out as a comedian; in fact, he never intended to be one in the first place. "I started for fun," he said. "And I was surprised I was good at it." Mike had already written and directed four films - *A Walk In the Park*, *Paint It Black*, *Making of the Cat*, and *Chiaroscuro* - by the time he graduated high school; while in college, he created *Louis Beach* and *Nicotine Fit*. He also acted in *The Fall of He-Man*. "I wanted to be a filmmaker, but, like John Lennon said, 'Life is what happens while you make other plans.' I continued doing it because it's like an oral diary - it's about acceptance. I call laughter 'mommy hugs!'"

A mischievous smile spread across his face. "It's like therapy that you pay for, not me."

When I asked him what he wanted people to take away from his comedy, he fired the answer off fast.

"I'm not the type to shock you just to shock you," he said earnestly. "The worst thing is to get no reaction, because I want people to think and feel. I want to do more than entertain you, I want to provoke you. As corny as this sounds, if I can make somebody's life better for five minutes, then my life is worthwhile."

Just as suddenly, his expression became bland again. "Also, I did it to get chicks."

by Victoria V. Gucli





height: 5-8

weight: 220

hair: black/grey

eyes: Green/Hazel

super power: Flight/X-ray Vision



# HE-MAN CONTEST



- |                            |                  |                               |                       |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1- Beastman                | 17- Hordak Droid | 33- Roboto                    | 49- Sssqueeze         |
| 2- Blade                   | 18- King Hiss    | 34- Sawred                    | 50- Stinkor           |
| 3- Blast attack            | 19- King Randor  | 35- Scarecrow                 | 51- Stone Dar         |
| 4- Buzz-Off                | 20- Leech        | 36- She-Ra                    | 52- Stratos           |
| 5- Claw-Ful                | 21- Man-at-Arms  | 37- Skeletor                  | 53- Sy-Klone          |
| 6- Dragster                | 22- Man-E-Faces  | 38- Skeletor (Battle Armor)   | 54- Teela             |
| 7- Evil Lyn                | 23- Man Tenna    | 39- Skeletor (Dragon Blaster) | 55- Trap Jaw          |
| 8- Faker                   | 24- Mekaneck     | 40- Skeletor (Terror Claws)   | 56- Tri Klops         |
| 9- Fisto                   | 25- Merman       | 41- Snake                     | 57- Tung Lashor       |
| 10- Grizzler               | 26- Misquitor    | 42- Snake Face                | 58- Turbodactyl       |
| 11- Gwildor                | 27- Mossman      | 43- Snake Mountain            | 59- Webster           |
| 12- He-Man                 | 28- Orko         | 44- snout Pour                | 60- Whiplash          |
| 13- He-Man (Battle Armor)  | 29- Prince Adam  | 45- Sorceress (Human)         | 61- Zodak             |
| 14- He-Man (Flying Fist)   | 30- Ram-Man      | 46- Sorceress (Zoar)          | 62- Castle Grey Skull |
| 15- He-Man (Thunder Punch) | 31- Ratlor       | 47- Spydor                    | 63- Two-Bad           |
| 16- Hordak                 | 32- Rioblast     | 48- Spikor                    |                       |

# HE-MAN CONTEST

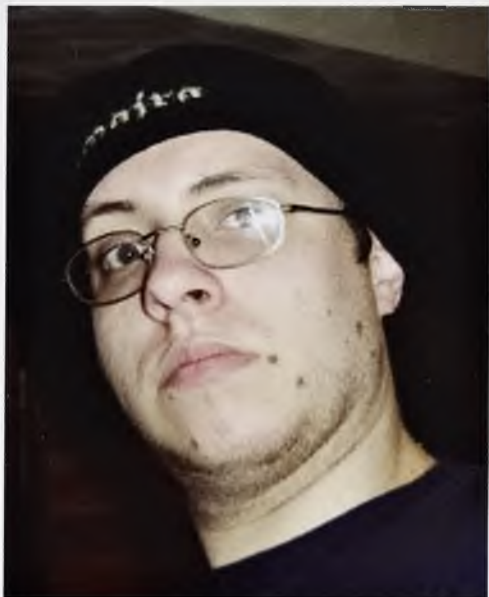
*In our last issue, we set up a contest, where one of our lucky readers, with a vast amount of valuable knowledge of He-Man figures, would be able to guess the names of each figure included on the cover, and win themselves a Limited Edition Skeletor!*

*Though when the time came to interview this fan of Eternia never responded to our questions. We then tracked down one of Staten Island's most hardcore (those of you who know him will get the pun) action figure collectors. We showed him the cover of our previous issue, and he was able to guess the majority of the figures.*

*So Brian Coursen, 2nd place winner of our contest, now owns a new skeletor figure!*

*Just so you can get an idea at how extensive Brian's collection of figures is, check out the pictures he took of his room (notice the complete lack of He-Man figures).*

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How were you able to list the names of all those figures we featured on the inside covers of our last issue?

I just knew them (most of them) off the top of my head; I still have all my old He-man figures and most of the figures from the newer series.

Are you a big fan of Masters of The Universe, like many of the people on the Serpentine staff?

Yes, I am definitely a fan. I was sad to see the new cartoon and toy line go. But at least they're releasing the old cartoon in season format on DVD soon.

What did you think of the live action movie version with Dolph Lundgren that came out in the 80's?

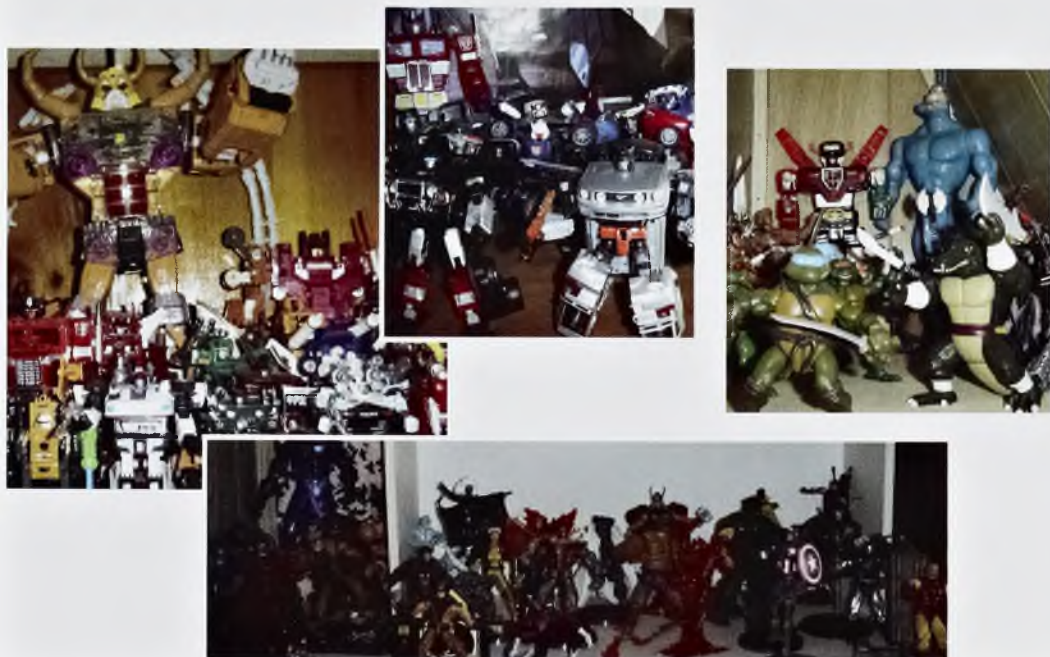
I loved it. Frank Langella was a great Skeletor, there's also a rumor going around that John Woo may remake the film starring The Rock.

Are you are a collector of action figures - like many of the people on the Serpentine staff? How large is you collection of figures?

Yes I am a collector, I don't know the exact amount but it is easily over one thousand figures, 45% of which are Transformers.

What do you think of the 80's toy theme we have had for these last three issues?

Definitely cool, I'm a big fan of the old cartoons from my childhood and since it is my favorite, I am excited to see the transformers related covers you have coming up.



# I never hit you while you were sleeping

by Frances Mitilis

Dear "Victim",

Thinking of you  
I'm still in  
a bad mood.  
I was in  
a bad mood  
the day you knocked  
me out.  
Once I walked  
into class  
You were the first  
that sneered  
at me,  
but I still  
sat down.  
Then you started  
to talk about me.  
I just snapped.  
That was enough  
to make me.  
You were a football player  
and I was your cheerleader.  
The one you always  
tried to date.  
I hated you.  
You got in my face.  
You told me  
to hit you.  
You dared me.  
I got on the chair  
because you were so  
big, tall, and dark.  
I slapped you.  
You punched me.  
I fell  
and hit my head  
in three places.  
On the desk,  
chair,  
and floor.  
I was unconscious.  
You hit me again,

again,  
and again.  
It's okay,  
don't worry about it.  
I didn't feel it  
till I woke up.  
I didn't see it till  
I got up.  
Some of the students  
finally started  
holding you back.  
While I was falling  
in and out  
of consciousness.  
The EMT strapped me  
down.  
They carried me out  
like a queen.  
Everyone is asking  
who I am.  
Some were just screaming  
my name.  
At that very second  
the fifteenth  
rumor was made.  
They put me  
in an ambulance  
and drove away.  
I stayed at the hospital  
the whole day,  
was expelled,  
and missed the big game.  
You were at football practice,  
had in house detention,  
and played at the big game.  
Even in court  
they accused me  
of attacking you.  
But, I never hit you  
while you were sleeping

Sincerely,  
Victim

## Fears All Washed Away

by Carol Franklin

One particular stormy night,  
 as I laid, afraid, in my bed - the branches scratched viciously at my window  
 as if they were trying to reach out and get me. "Mother, Mother,"  
 I screamed, "It's coming to get me." "Who?"  
 "The rain! It's angry; the thunder and lightning is going to rip the house  
 open. Please, let me sleep with you, I don't want to be alone!"

I really believed that I was doomed if I had to be alone.  
 In the daytime, the rain wasn't so bad, my  
 nightmares were what sent shivers through me and my house  
*Tap, tap, tap*, the branches would say as they hit my window  
 The loud crashing of thunder, the quick lightning, frightened me when it rained-  
 It always left me sweating and screaming for my mother.

One evening I was in such a fret, my mother  
 couldn't take it any more. She didn't leave me alone,  
 instead she stayed and told me a story about the rain.  
 She said, "The rain washes away hidden creatures from the earth at night  
 and the thunder, lightning and winds is God, tapping on the window  
 to let us know that our house

has now been cleaned, and rid of monsters."  
 "But how?" "God is mightier than all; He protects us like a mother  
 we are all His children. Look out the window  
 now." I swear the branches were still and quiet! Were they alone?  
 God really did wash the creatures at night  
 away, with the clean rain.

The thunder, the lightning, the rain  
 isn't scary at all. Nor is being in the house  
 alone. No monsters lurch in the night  
 I love my mother-  
 She allowed me to see that being alone  
 Isn't bad. I smile to myself, as I open my curtains to my wet windows

I can clearly see out my window  
 Today I look boldly out at the rain  
 It's okay to be alone,  
 as I think of the cleanliness of my house  
 The story that washed my fears away was told by my mother:  
 When darkness approaches, I think of that night.

The revelation of being alone on a rainy night  
 could bring comfort and security in a house  
 and to a scared child, if one has a mother's story to wash away the fears.

## Sweet Morning Doves

*by Matthew Cassone*

Morning dove, Oh, Morning dove,  
You are the delicate thread  
that weaves a pattern into noon  
and into evening tread

Moaning sounds that lovers do  
passionate and small  
You are more than ordinary  
when you make your call

Where is morning during night?  
Where are morning doves?  
And the sounds that fill the day  
Tell me where you play

In a sweaty state of mourning,  
I wake up to you  
listening to lullabies  
calming, peaceful tunes

When you've shown my city  
all the things to say  
Fly away from sunrise  
Fly away from day

Littering the skyline,  
all you morning birds  
Thank you for your stories  
Thank you for your words.

## New *by Matthew Cassone*

Not long ago, in a sullen room  
a tremor jarred  
the glass  
A hard, hoarse mewl hacked the dank

The heaven-sent men  
had many chains  
of salty spoiled sweat  
wrapped around their rankly skin

When four, maybe five came dizzily\_cries came from the room  
Rugged crowds drooled there  
standing, with their furious

Eyes, they wandered there  
Kicks and giggles  
In a drunk, state, he seemed though  
the wind was just knocked

Yes, she came around  
Screaming to be lost  
as something new  
and unfamiliar came, came.

## Before Rain

*by Matthew Cassone*

A heavy load of dinginess  
sits above me  
now the wind hurls a party favor  
a single leaf

The bag lady  
strolls with a navy suit  
and a carriage carrying decanters  
she halts to nibble the asparagus tips, fresh

Soon the bus hums its tune  
passing institutions  
with windows that reflect no light

The baby's eyes are paralyzed,  
he is seduced today

## Nature Bowl

*by Matthew Cassone*

I crunch on nature's protocol  
The twists and turns of white  
of green, purple,  
sometimes olive  
heads of washed roughage

When I choose my shirt  
or jeans to cover feet  
of my dripping wet,  
callous filler, I use fat  
of a boar that was stripped of life

Coupled with the bitter-sweet tang  
from a chilled bottle  
that sat for days  
in my tall, white box  
I am not the first to sprinkle

Pig upon his plate  
Though I count my calories  
I try this very date  
When the cubes are soppy  
and only three are there  
I am left with ecstasy  
I have swallowed air



## Beaute Cassé

*by Rosalia Dechberry*

I sit beneath nerve endings that twitch  
in the wind. My back warps  
like a wooden floor and my lap,  
a pretzel laying in the sun.

My eyes divorce. One stays pinned open,  
the other turns away, unable to watch.  
My clay tongue refuses all company and  
lonely words bury themselves in the sand

All sounds are a hammer;  
Pounding the walls of my brain.  
I can't get up. I'm nailed down  
To my bed and all I want is sleep.

But sleep isn't welcomed when dreams  
remind me of who I used to be.  
Knowing that if I never find my way back,  
I have to force my eyes closed

and go after the girl whose smile  
was a marble banister before the rain  
melted it. But I never seem to make it past  
the orange field in my eyelids. I sit there.

The aluminum foil lake speaks honestly.  
My mouth doesn't have to escape to my ear.  
My smile creeps back to where it had been  
before my face contorted. I was still the belle.



## Family Traced *by Stefani Lagna*

Family bloodline traces  
 In far away places.  
 No faces.  
 Time erases  
 Family separated  
 Memories dated  
 Distance hated.  
 I am here today because of yesterday  
 A day so far away, but it wasn't my fate to stay.

## Blue Suitcase *by Stefani Lagna*

With a cautious hurry to all belongings we packed.  
 I was little, I had no worry  
 I had no comprehension.  
 Are we leaving something behind?  
 The first time I wasn't sure, I was only four.  
 On to the airport, the neutral base.  
 Then, arrival at our destination:  
 Once new,  
 Twice acquainted,  
 Thrice be home!  
 No. The suitcase became my mobile home.  
 Unpacking was the end of our travel  
 I always thought,  
 But this action, closure never brought.  
 So we fought.  
 A permanent settlement my heart sought.  
 I left the travel behind  
 And a beautiful settled soul found me,  
 And made me his home.  
 To look at the suitcase now  
 A great shadow it casts.  
 It reminds me of my past.  
 The suitcase was heavy as lead.  
 Now it lies dead.

Family bloodline traces  
 In far away places.  
 No faces.  
 Time erases  
 Family separated  
 Memories dated  
 Distance hated.  
 I am here today because of yesterday  
 A day so far away, but it wasn't my fate to stay.

## Asymmetry *by Stefani Lagna*

As always I rise above  
 To look down  
 As I am  
 Purest shades from the ground  
 Where I stand  
 All those wish to be found  
 What I am  
 Too complex to break down

Look at them  
 Gleaming in their disguise  
 What are they?  
 Beaten from drug's delight  
 I am sober  
 Reality has me pinned down  
 What I am  
 Steps ahead of the crowd

As always  
 I start walking beside myself  
 As I am  
 Here to project my voice  
 To strengthen strength  
 With my visual intake  
 What I am  
 Created by a source I know rules

## Circle *by Stefani Lagna*

That awesome pride they think I have  
 Keeps me outside their circle.  
 What they don't know, I hide  
 To them, I don't confide  
 Things do change with time.  
 I'm ashamed to say now we're older.  
 We are all acquainted strangers  
 Denying trust in any word  
 I keep my distance close  
 My feet on the rim of a whispering glass.

The glass spills over  
 Their circle bends  
 I was put under the words that overflowed.  
 If you couldn't comprehend then,  
 Now I don't try to.  
 I've purified my air:  
 My friendship stands behind a glass.

# Thirteen Seconds

by Richard Fedey

Driving home from his latest construction job, Jay reached into the pocket of his flannel coat for cigarettes.

"Assholes took my last one and didn't even have the courtesy to tell me."

He threw the empty pack out the open passenger window of his pickup. His employees always smoked his cigarettes and never replaced them.

"Not that people taking what they can from me is anything new." He punched the dashboard. "Bitch took my son."

Jay lost custody of his only child, Doug, in the final stages of his divorce. His ex-wife already had three daughters from her first marriage to a deli owner. Now she was trading up for a stockbroker.

All Doug means to her is one more thing to take away from me, but I love him.

The only memento Jay had of his son was the gold name bracelet he bought when Doug was born. His ex-wife wanted to sell it, but Jay refused to give it up. It was his only consolation since her lawyer had made sure he would never see his son again.

He pulled into a 7-11 to replace his cigarettes, and walked out with a six-pack as well.

Jay parked his truck and walked into the lobby of his building. He wished the doorman a pleasant evening and got in the elevator as soon as it arrived. He pushed the door close button rapidly, not wanting to make small talk with the doorman, an old man who never got tired of telling people to look on the bright side of everything. Once the elevator door slid closed, he pushed the thirteen button and took a beer out of the 7-11 bag. He had drained it by the time the elevator reached his floor. As he walked down the hall to his apartment, Jay finished off his second beer.

He entered his apartment, the same as every night since the divorce. He put the bag on the dining room table left by the previous tenants and drank his third can. The table had seating for six, but he only needed one chair.

Because of her.

Just like every night, he neatly hung his coat on the back of the one chair he actually used.

Normally, he headed past the kitchen to his bedroom to climb out of his work clothes. Waiting for him, as always, were the faded and torn blue jeans that he had since before he was married and a white T-shirt bearing the logo of a smiling man in overalls carrying a ladder in one hand and a paint bucket in the other. The words "Jay's Carpentry" were printed above the happy little man.

"I think I need some air."

Foregoing his usual routine, he took a cigarette from his new pack, picked up a lighter from his wooden coffee table and walked out onto the balcony.

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Unknown to Jay, he was not alone. In his dark kitchen, panicked by his arrival, was Marcus. A man with a family of his own to feed and one step from the street, he had no choice but to resort to stealing just to keep clothes on his children's backs and food in their mouths. He had already been through Jay's bedroom where he found nothing but two hundred dollars and a gold name bracelet engraved with the name Doug.

He clutched the kitchen knife that he grabbed from the block on the counter (lighter, ready to use if he was discovered, when an idea crossed his mind).

Only one person came into the apartment, and he must have a watch on him, or at least a wallet.

But you told Cynthia that you wouldn't hurt anybody.

I'm not going to hurt him; I'll just scare him a little.

You know it won't be that simple.

Why won't it be simple?

Has anything in your life worked out like you wanted?

This is different; I am in control.

Marcus crept from the dark safety of the kitchen and, looking through the living room, spotted Jay with his back turned on the terrace, smoking. Sure that he would not be seen, he made for the balcony where Jay stood.

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With every inhale of his cigarette Jay counted a dream and watched as they floated away one by one, dissipated by a light breeze from the north.

The breeze blew the cigarette's smoke back into his apartment and into Marcus's face, almost mak-

ing him cough.

Jay took one final puff and threw the cigarette over the edge of the balcony, and watched it fall slowly earthward.

As Jay watched the cigarette tumble he felt a sweaty hand close around his arm, the cold bite of a knife against his throat, and warm breath in his ear.

"Gimmie your wallet and watch and any other valuables you may be carrying, Doug."

On the sidewalk thirteen stories below, the butt landed with a silent explosion of ashes.

Jay began to laugh.

"You think this is funny cocksucker?"

He only laughed harder.

"Shut your fuckin' mouth!"

He laughed harder still.

"What the fuck is your problem?"

Still laughing, Jay pulled the knife away from his neck and turned to face Marcus.

"First, Doug is my son." he said with perfect calmness, "Second, do you think there is really anything left to fear in this world?"

Thirteen stories below them a bus stopped, let off one person, and continued on its way.

"There is plenty to fear, fucker." Marcus regained his composure and lunged at Jay, aiming for a fatal blow.

Jay knocked the knife from Marcus's hand and grabbed him from behind.

"You stupid bastard, I was just about to jump. You could have walked out and kept the bracelet, but you had to interrupt. Now you can come with me."

And they fall.

## Common Ground (030800) ————— by Matthew T. Bellino

I look around at the darkness that is before me. Misshapen black figures climb along the tall wooden walls. I am lost to the river of thought that consumes me at the sight of them. There is a fire amongst us here at this sight of exclamation. It is set in a fortress of rocks, each one set in place by one of us. The fire gleams hot against my face as I refuse to look up to see the truth behind these shadows. These are the few that I grew up with, those that I love as though they were my own flesh and blood, yet right now I feel discomfort as though my skin were alive with the crawling of thousands of spiders. Despite the four loud voices, and the sound of liquid drowning itself followed by the crunching of tiny keg cans, I am here alone. The fire continues to burn brightly before me as one of the shadows jerks me out of my daze. This shadow is different from the rest, it is my own. I look and see what my mind captured moments before, me watching five shadows. I am watching five people even though there are only four around me. I am watching myself, but not myself, and I admit to myself, we are missing one from our group. Aloud I address the question, and the fun of the campfire is put out. I simply ask if anyone misses him, and one shadow after another comes to join the fifth. Like the long tree branches above us, the elongated arms of shadows reach out to touch my own. Their branches carry leaves of beautiful color, each memories of the one not with us now. I watch, still seeing five when there are only four, and then before a minute has passed, all have become one. We have come together to remember the one not here. We remember the one who was my flesh and blood, the one of three lesser years that passed more than forty years too early. As the fire burns away my doubts, I look up to face my companions. Here amongst the fallen twigs and discarded rocks of a recycled campground, we have found common ground.

## Here At This Church

*by Matthew T. Bellino*

Night comes quickly as the shadows begin their dance  
along the walls of this brick building of God.  
A lamp stand on the nearby street sheds light

upon the old stained glass windows.  
A chill breaks the air as the trees stand still  
and the streets below are cast in darkness.

A man draws near without any emotion at all.  
It is late and the church is locked up tight.  
But if it wasn't, would he even care to step inside?

He comes closer still, making his way up the steps.  
Through the front door he sees a reflection of light,  
a silver carved Jesus stretched out to die before him

but he doesn't even care.  
Once this all had meaning,  
once this was his place of worship.

Now it's just a building,  
just stone and mortar.  
He sees no spiritual reason

to admit it being more.  
But he strives to see past this man-made object  
to see the beauty of the Divine.

But that part of his life is more dead  
than the lifeless Jesus before him,  
and his faith is nailed away somewhere in that church.

Memories of a childhood come back.  
A time when the sun shined brightly  
through images made of stained glass.

But he can hardly see this past  
actually being his own.  
It's just a fiction likened to his faith.

Now he has to admit to himself  
that to him this is no brick building of God  
and all that is left in his life is darkness and shadows.

# A Day Goes Bye

by Michael Annalitano

It was late Monday morning when I finally opened my eyes. Seems the alarm failed to wake me sooner because of my throbbing head. It's been one hell-of-a-weekend. It's hard to say when I first suspected she was playing me for a fool, but it ain't the first time a dame in heels got the better of Detective John Gage and I'm sure it ain't gonna be the last.

Connie was her name; at least that's what she'd told me. It was three days ago, Friday, July 13th when she first contacted me at my office. The moment I saw her I knew she was trouble. You might say she was dressed to kill. She displayed a low-cut magenta top, a knee-high black pleated skirt, and heels. I'd seen centerfolds that held more mystery than her; at least that's what I thought.

Being the gentleman that I am, I offered her a scotch. Now most dames prefer the sweet stuff, but she grabbed the devil by the neck and made herself a double. She began telling me an unbelievable story. Her adventure started in a small South American country called Suriname. It was there that she first met an American by the name of Jake McGuiness. The name was familiar to me. Back in the early '40s, Jake ran a crooked craps and numbers racket here in New York. He was really walkin' in the green 'til he started steppin on too many purple feet. The Wops didn't like the idea of a Mick drinkin their action so they hired a con to lie in wait, go down, set him up, and then kill Jake; but the box was empty. Jake got lucky; the minute he felt it comin' he pulled out. That was five years ago.

Connie proceeded to tell me that the two of them eloped. It seems that her mother didn't like Jake; said he was too white. I think she meant he was too transparent; she could see the evil in him. It didn't take long for Jake to prove her right.

An old African proverb states: "A Cheetah never beds with a Lion." I guess Jake never heard this, or maybe he just didn't care. He was determined to return to New York to settle old scores. You see, nothin' hurts a man more than losing his pride. So Jake told Connie that he had diabetes. Said they'd have to move to the States so he could get medical care. His diabetes was nothing short of diabolical. The only sugar that Jake needed to control was "dice" and "bets."

Upon arriving in New York, Jake changed his name. He tried passing himself off as Vito Revengato. A stupid Mick hoping that the Wops were stupider. He still had some bucks from the old days, so him and Connie shacked up in Little Italy. He use'ta run his racket in the Bronx so he didn't think anyone would recognize him in Manhattan. Besides, Connie said that he grew a 'stache, smoked a stogie, and ate a lot of garlic; in other words, he blended right in. The only Wop words he knew were the ones that they use'ta call him, so I guess he was well prepared to prove his Mick-Guinea-ness.

It didn't take long for word to spread that a new kid in town was lookin to take over some action. The mob had grown hungrier since the end of prohibition. They took Vito to see the top dog, Don Enzo. He was impressed with Vito's ideas and even considered making him part of the family. Little did he know, Vito was really Jake McGuiness. A man who, five years earlier, had been a dead man walking. A man who had dreamt of the day he would restore the honor to his name. A man who would be the last person that Don Enzo would ever see. Without hesitation Jake plunged a knife into Don Enzo's black-suited heart; it was done.

At this point Connie began to cry. I held her in my arms, her head resting on my shoulder. I don't know if it was the scotch or her story that made me want her, but I did want her. As my hand slipped down her back, I felt her wanting me too. I had to remind myself that she was just a dame; business is business. And pleasure? Well, let's just say in my line of work pleasure is business too.

Connie continued her story. She said when Jake returned, he was whiter than an angel. It seems that revenge wasn't as sweet as he thought it would be. The hunter was now the hunted. He told her that everything would be all right. The Feds had wanted Don Enzo's skin for a long time. He could turn States evidence and bust open the whole crime syndicate. He told her that he had to leave till things cooled down. She was to lay low in the flophouse and he would send her money.

Every week she would receive a crisp hundred dollar bill in an envelope. This went on for two months and then the letters stopped; no money, no Jake. She waited a month before contacting me. She had heard I was the best;

I made sure she wasn't disappointed.

She paid me four hundred dollars up front. I assured her that I would find her dirtbag husband dead or alive. Now it's not that I disliked the man for being a murderer; I disliked him for getting Connie mixed up in this. If the mob knew that she was his wife, her beautiful legs would be twisted like a pretzel. I thought it best that she stay at my place uptown until I had a handle on what was going down. Besides, it was Friday night, and it was hot.

Saturday morning I decided to check the only clue that I had to go on: the envelopes that he'd been sending to her. I knew the return addresses would turn up bogus, so instead I looked at the post marks. Turns out they were mailed from a station in Bensonhurst Brooklyn. This was a lucky break 'cause that use'ta be my old stomping ground. Back in the old days, I would cut a rug at a speakeasy on 18th Avenue, and then go into the city lit, pickin' up ladies of the night. Those were the days. I find it strange, back then, booze and dames seemed to look and taste sweeter. I guess in my line of work, everything starts turning bitter after awhile.

I began my search at some local watering holes. Figuring that Jake was low on money and numbers were his only skill, I felt it wouldn't take long to flush him out; but I was wrong. My old haunt had changed. All the familiar faces were now gone. Jail or death was pretty much the only way to get out of the neighborhood. I've often wondered which one I chose.

Next, I went to the 62nd Police Station on Bath Avenue to see if any of the flatfoots had the skinny on Jake or Connie McGuiness. I spoke to a Sergeant O'Malley. He wasn't much help, but then again, I didn't expect much from a Mick. He told me that they wanted to get their hands on Jake before the mob got to him. Truth is, they wanted to pump Jake full of holes just as bad as the Wops. Jake, you see, was known as a squealer. Squeeze him too tight, and he'd rat on all the crooked cops in New York. And with all them square hats gone, who'd be around to protect the public?

I asked O'Malley about Connie McGuiness. Said he couldn't find any record of a dame entering the country with that name. Told me to stay away from her; some crap about watching my back. I didn't know if he meant from her or from him. Said he wanted to interview Connie before she "ends up dead," so I gave him the address of Kelly's Funeral Home on Bleeker Street in the Bowery. Couldn't give up a deader end than that. Sure hope he had a sense of humor.

It was getting late so I decided to make one last stop; Big Al's Pool Hall. This was where I cracked some of my biggest cases. This was also the place where some of my biggest cases cracked me. Since it was Saturday night the place would be crawlin' with crooked noses. You see, in Brooklyn, everybody knows their place. Monday through Thursday your common street punks show up; Friday it's the Mick's; and Saturday? Well, that's reserved for the upper scum of society. My favorite kind of people.

The first person I met at the hall just happened to be an old friend of mine called "Boulder." We met while fist-fightin' over a dame back in '32. She turned out to be a slut so we both had her. It's funny, neither one of us could remember the color of her hair. Back then we were both young and stupid; now we're older.

After sharing stories with Boulder about the good old days, I asked him if he knew anything about a Jake McGuiness. I heard the word "no" as his face suddenly showed its age. Said he wasn't called Boulder anymore. Asked to be called by his real name, Sandy Meeks. Explained that he'd gotten hitched, three kids, good job; I could see the fight was out of him. He'd become a lackey. A dame can do that to a good guy. I asked him to cough up a few snitches he use'ta know from the neighborhood. He timidly obeyed.

I thanked him for the info, wished him a good life, and left him standing alone by an empty pool table.

Back at my apartment, Connie began making herself comfortable; a little too comfortable. The sex was great; a little too great. I should have realized back then that something wasn't right, but the man in me kept getting in the way. My only vices are booze and dames. I should have known that she was just playing with me, but it was hard keeping my head cool with Connie in my bed. She asked me if I found Jake yet. I told her that I had a few solid leads. It's funny, I never find it tough lying to a pretty dame. I guess it goes with the turf.

The next day I went back to Brooklyn. There I took the number 5 trolley on the McDonald Avenue Line, and got off at the West 5th Street Depot in Coney Island. This was one of the places where Boulder said a stoolie might have the skinny I needed. In the criminal world it's often said: "A stoolie is the same as a stogie because they're both cheap, they both stink, and eventually they both get smoked." Truer

words have never been spoken.

The streets were pretty quiet even for a Sunday morning. It turned out that the first pigeon I shook claimed to have the scoop, but it was gonna cost. What happened next really threw me. I slipped him some green, and he told me where I could find Jake; just like that. On the mean tracks of New York, it's still the greenbacks that talk. At the time I remember wishing all my cases were this simple, but that was before the shoe fell.

I couldn't wait to tell Connie the news that Jake was still alive and living in Brooklyn, so I called her up at my place. She was thrilled. She wanted his address and apartment number immediately. Said she would visit him in the morning; said she would personally thank me tonight. Needless to say, I served him up and hurried home to open my prize, but the "Cracker Jack" box was empty; it was done.

My confusion continued until I read this morning's Daily News. I then knew that I'd been setup and used. The headline read: "The Mob Gets Its Man." The dots on this conspiracy were finally connected. I'd been conned into becoming an accessory to murder. Connie, or whatever her name is, was a heel. She was contracted by the mob to finish her job. Five years ago she tried banging Jake; it was now time for him to smoke. Like I said before, the line is often blurred between business and pleasure.

The stories that she told me were just stories. The sex that we had was just sex. Of all the dames I've gotten over on, she was the one dame that got over on me. Nothin' hurts a man more then losing his pride, but mine was still intact; 'cause Connie was one in a million.

So here I sit; Monday afternoon, my head still throbbing, waitin' for the other shoe to fall. I ain't worried about takin' a hit for Jake's murder. These days the cops are just as crooked as the mob, and Jake was wanted dead by both. At least I still have a bottle of scotch left.

It's been one hell of a weekend.

## Words Within Words

*by Frances Mitils*

I don't understand, why (is there ever truly a start)  
 it's burning me to hold on to this, (Do things ever sincerely finish)  
 I know this is something I got to do, (could this be how a person is)  
 but that don't mean I want to, (or is it something they become)  
 What I am trying to say is that (Yes,  
 I have created an impression, masked with a voice  
 You have never seen beneath my pupils  
 At the very start I thought I was pure  
 If you got too close I would get foggy  
 I was crystalline as glass  
 A key stabbed in my heart  
 Unlocking me  
 It was an eruption- say bye to innocence  
 The second person, in the mirror  
 Always gets what they want  
 It's hard to turn from that  
 It's easy to deny kisses and everything else  
 It's easy to say I love you \_it's hard to say no to temptation)  
 I-  
 Love- You I just

# Jack Saroyan is Not a Murderer

*by Gregory Canifa*

Jack Saroyan awoke late on the 23rd. It had been raining, hard. The rain always calmed Jack, particularly when he was on the road. Only the sound of the medics attempting to resuscitate an elderly man in the adjacent room got him out of his park bench hard bed. He kicked his feet into the faded brown slippers he wore in a thousand other hotels, and traversed the burnt orange carpet to the bathroom.

It took his eyes a second before they recognized the person staring back from the cracked mirror. His face had changed over the past year. His cheeks were tighter and his moustache had turned blue. The tiny scar, left beneath his chin by his stepfather's belt buckle, had become more pronounced since the layer of fat had disappeared. And his widow's peak was sharper.

This is what that Russian Madam meant when she said my face had "charisma", he thought.

He grabbed the clipped porcelain cup from the window sill, mixed the Palmolive into a thick lather, and brushed it over the steel wool growing out of his forty-one year old face. He had a ritual when it came to shaving: first the sideburns, then the neck, followed by the cheeks, moustache hairs, and finally the rough spot under his chin that took forever to soften. Even with a seventeen month-old straight razor, he was never left with more than a benign shaving cut.

After a blistering forty-five second shower, he returned to the room and turned on the radio. Walter Cronkite's voice found its way through a labyrinth of static and crackling:

"Good morning America. It's ten forty - one central standard time. In the world of politics, Senator Goldwater has announced that the death of John F. Kennedy will not discourage him from running in the coming year..."

With the radio humming in the background, Jack stared out of the window at the jerkwater street parallel to the hotel. A steady drizzle tapped the dusty landscape, turning the brown Texas ground a muddy gray. Across the road, an elderly man walked his wife from the aluminum door of Chuck's Diner to a car they'd undoubtedly owned since their son was killed in the war.

"Here we go", Jack thought, as he began to fabricate yet another random biography for yet another random person he saw in the street. He pictured the old man as an eighteen year old in a WWI military uniform, the name "Riley" printed in faded black ink across his left breast.

It was in Paris, 1917 that Fennimore Riley met the withered redhead he was now helping into the enormous front seat of the old Packard. Her name was Margaret. Her mother was a call girl for an especially brutal pimp in the West End. Fennimore was awaiting a friend when the pimp, call him Hugo, dragged sixteen year old Margaret into the pale green whorehouse's foyer by the hair. Though Fennimore couldn't understand the Parisian's dialect, he assumed the hair pulling, punctuated by vicious face slaps, was meant to encourage the studious young girl to join the pimp's stable. Fennimore withdrew his military issue revolver and shot Hugo dead. He then swept Margaret up in his arms and carried her into the rainy Paris streets. They moved to the states after Fennimore was discharged, had four sons, and earned their living operating a bakery in Odessa until...

Jack snapped out of his daydream with the familiar thought that better things happen to better people. He did this for almost everyone he observed, justifying the absurd ritual with the rationale that whatever life he ascribed to someone was bound to be more interesting than the one they were living. The same could not be said about himself.

His eyes panned away from the old couple as their battered Packard crawled up the road. Though magic hour had passed, the horizon was still an ethereal blue, an anomaly for the Texas sky. In a few hours it would be its familiar yellow glare, and the ground, a burnt match. The south was like that. He had visited Baton Rouge three years earlier and found the weather to be as unpredictable as the people.

"...after eighteen hours of questioning, authorities are quote 'satisfied' that Oswald is responsible for the death of President Kennedy'..."

Jack switched off the radio. On this particular morning, Walter Cronkite's voice proved to be as appealing as rifle report. He looked at his watch: eleven thirteen. He walked over to the phone and poised his hand over the cradle. After a minute and fifty seconds, it rang.



“Saroyan here...yes...well an old man had a heart attack, but other than that nothing...I’m awaiting directions...I’d rather not stay in Texas another twenty-four hours.”

With the receiver cradled between his face and shoulder, he began scribbling an address onto a copy of Life magazine.

“Very good. Sixteen hundred hours,” Jack said.

He slammed down the phone and began pacing. The past couple of days had been the emotional equivalent of swallowing a saw and vomiting it up several times per second. This wasn’t his type of assignment. It was untidy. Too great a margin for error. He had waited in a storm sewer for over four hours for the motorcade to arrive. As the car rounded a corner, Jack fired a rifle round into the President’s throat. It was a kill shot, utterly negating Lucian Sarti’s exploding bullet that left John Kennedy’s head in pieces. Sarti was a sadist. The country didn’t need to see their President’s face turned to eggshells.

Jack didn’t like Sarti, though he knew they would both be part of the first coup d’état in American history. He had met the French assassin only once, in New York four years earlier. Jack was in an antique shop buying a clock from an old man who looked like his grandfather when he noticed a shadow on the wall. He turned. A handsome man with a thin patch of black hair had been standing behind him.

“I’ve come to pay the check,” were Sarti’s words.

“I’m not collecting,” was Saroyan’s response.

Sarti then looked down. In Jack’s hand was a twenty-two he kept loaded on a spring in his sleeve. Sarti dropped the dagger he held in the four fingers of his left hand, smiled, and left.

The attempt had been purely business. Jack knew that. And if anything, this operation was as much about mending fences between the American and French assassin’s guilds, as it was about killing a world leader.

The sound of a truck careening down the road reminded Jack that he was still in Texas. He looked at his watch, only a minute had passed. He dropped to the floor and began doing push ups.

“One, Sir – Two, Sir – Three, Sir...”

At floor level, he could see the light from the outer hallway shining through the gap beneath the stateroom door. The glare was periodically interrupted by the feet of patrons walking to and from the hotel lobby. Jack lost track of his push-ups as he began counting feet. There was a couple, followed by a single large man, whom he could tell was large by the waddle of his shadow. Jack’s stepfather was a large man. For a second he pictured him on the opposite side of the door.

“Imagine running into my stepfather here,” he thought. Though it would be a pretty neat trick since he was the first man Jack killed, and the only he ever did for fun. And, as Jack always said, enjoyment constitutes the difference between a murderer and a professional.

His biological father was a professional of some sort, or so he had been told. He never knew him. In his career, Jack killed thirty-seven people, ranging from heads of state to business owners who refused to sell to their partners. Of the myriad faces he saw go cold, and bodies go limp, might one of them have been his real father? And if so, should he be grateful for the opportunity to have rubbed out the deadbeat who left his mother to marry an abusive redneck like Otis Smythe, or sad that he would never have the chance to ask his father why he left them?

But both his fathers were gone. As was the fat man whose feet sparked Jack’s reminiscence. An old lady was next to pass by the door, taking almost seven seconds to cross the four-foot doorframe. He wondered if it was the little old lady from the diner, then remembered her car had driven into the sunrise many miles up the road. Pity. He might have asked her if the past he had imagined was at all accurate. Come to think of it, the woman who had passed the door was probably the wife of the poor bastard who dropped dead in the adjacent room while Jack was asleep. He began visualizing the heart attack victim. He was a government official? No. A Salesman. Maybe.

Simon Blythe was a retired salesman on the first vacation he’d had in years. Throughout his life, he devoted the lion share of his time to accumulating a nest egg so he and his wife may travel the country after their grandchildren graduated from college. For over thirty years he worked door to door, selling...vacuum cleaners! Yes. A vacuum cleaner salesman, dressed to the nines in a silk tie with a half Windsor knot, powder blue Richfield single breast suit, and on his feet...Cordovans. Yeah. Cordovans. Like Jack.

And like the pair of feet that moved tentatively up to the doorjamb as Jack was entranced in his day-dream, Jack returned to reality and room three-sixteen of the Sunset Motor Lodge. His eyes focused on the gap between the floor and the door. They were Cordovans all right. Easy to tell. The leather casts a glare. Not dissimilar to the ones he wore. Not dissimilar at all. His push-ups slowed to half speed and his breathing almost stopped. His eyes froze in an anticipatory stare. The man with the cordovans was standing right in front of Jack's hotel room. For a moment, he thought it might be a new boarder checking a room number, but his optimism dissipated as the shadow stepped forward. Jack's stare moved from the shadow under the door to the faded brass doorknob.

He waited patiently in mid push-up for the doorknob to move. After what felt like an eternity, it did. Almost imperceptibly. The knob shifted a quarter of an inch. Jack's eyes darted around the doorframe. First to the hinges, which would squeak if the man pried the lock with a narrow piece of steel called a "jimmy". Then to the eyehole, which would reveal a faint round eye of sunlight if the man stepped far enough from the door to break it down with a kick or tackle. Then to the doorknob again, which would vibrate if the man picked the lock.

He sprang up on his calves and silently retrieved an automatic from his nightstand. The shadow beneath the door moved, and the doorknob rattled, so subtly no one would notice if they weren't looking directly at it. Jack positioned himself on the opposite side of the room. His gun pointed. The pistol felt like a water balloon in his hand. The rain outside had stopped, and he could feel the hot morning sun piercing the window and baking his shoulders. His eyes remained frozen as he waited for the door to open. So much so that he almost didn't notice a photograph on the opposite wall shatter.

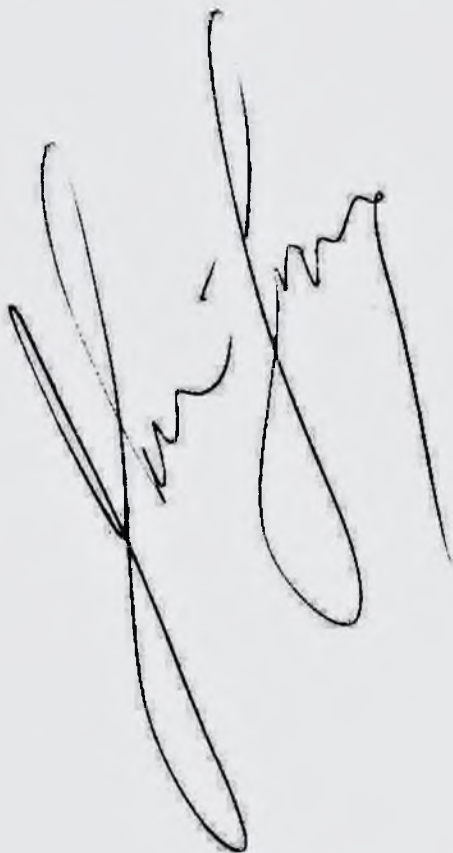
Suddenly, his eyes began to blur. The orange carpet between him and the door turned red and the room began to spin. Before he knew it, he was on the floor again. He feebly felt for his temple. He could stick his pinky into the exit wound from which his cranial artery sprayed blood across the room, leaving an obscene pattern on the brown door. The bullet was a .22. It had entered behind his ear.

The door opened. Then closed. Jack didn't notice. Lucian Sarti stood over him, smiling that genial smile he had seen only once before. Lucian waved his four fingers at the gunman atop the diner across the road who fired the round through the windowpane and into Jack's head.

"I guess, my friend, you would like to know why," Lucian said, as he pried the automatic from Jack's dying hand. "For every crime there is a criminal. And your government already has theirs," was his explanation. But Jack's eyes closed before Lucian said it.

## Heartbeats *by Carol Franklin*

Rhythms once in tune together on the inside  
 Now in tune on the outside  
 Beating in unison  
 as he lies asleep, swaddled, snuggly on me  
 I softly, quietly, hum him lullabies  
*beat - beat, beat - beat*  
 Soothing our souls  
 No lyrics  
 Soft thumps *thump - thump, thump - thump*  
 No altos     no baritones  
 No long notes     no short notes  
 Just precious notes...tunes



## JHON SINGLETON

One thing that readers will notice first when looking at your bio as well as the different types of work you have submitted to Serpentine, is that you work in many different mediums. You are an artist, a poet, you are also a singer. I guess my first question would be how do you have the time?

Now that you mention it, maybe I really need to focus....hah...hah.hah.hah. Seriously though, it isn't a question of time but a question of gravity of the moment. Let's say I'm gifted with DAVINCHISM, where a person has at least two equal passions/talents and he/she express those talents via a medium which is most appropriate to the "gravity of the situation. It's about exploring the human condition, even if it is just a pop song.

Though having economic success from your creativity is always nice. By the way, I have copyrites on the word, Davincism...

My second question is which medium do you feel the most comfortable working in?

This question is impossible to answer due to the fact that each medium for me serve different specific purposes; for example "love letter" that was published with you started out being a poem. But as time passes, I realize that the compactness of ideas that I wanted to illuminate was too expansive for the poetic limitations that I place upon my poetry. Yes, an artist must create boundaries around a creative moment in order to express symbolic coherence. This is what

makes free verse the most difficult to master. Rules must be created within a given poem, unlike formal verse where half the battle ( the structure) is already won before you begin.

When did your writing career begin?

Oddly enough, my prose/poetry career hasn't begun in terms of economics, unless you include scholarships and future fellowships. I first got paid as a singer/songwriter doing assignments as a "work for hire" when i was sixteen in a local Charleston studio. I started getting paid as a visual artist during my first year in college. I would sell countless pastel drawn scenes of the Charleston Battery to tourists. I started selling paintings a result of singing at private parties a few years later. You'd be surprise how many people want to understand the unique language of the visual arts. well, having a B.A. in art history, I'm more than happy to make a few enlightened comments and that's when you say, " by the way, I'm a painter!"...hah...hah.

My serious poetry (other than the songwriting structure) and fiction came along in graduate school. These two forms allow me opportunities of expression when the practicality of painting (studio space) is limited or non-existent. And of course, serious poetry writing is desperately needed when one can't sing due to the common cold...

Describe the process of putting your chapbook together.

There isn't a process really. I got a scholarship a year before to produce a manuscript of some kind- poetry or prose. Well, the theory Situationism and the long internal monologue, "Thoughts on Kissing You" were developed as a masters thesis paper a year before to attain my Master in Liberal Studies. The other pieces that were included were developed via exercises taught by Professor Cate Marvin, CSI's one and only. I was already working on a poetry manuscript thanks to a creative writing scholarship I received that year from the

Bronson Foundation, therefore it was a no-brainer. I received an extra creative writing grant to put a chapbook together and I simply had to choose which poems would be included. I sent the draft to the foundation and voila! They gave the okay and published the limited edition. The structure of the chapbook is simply a publishing industry format.

In your Chapbook you listed CSI Professor Cate Marvin as one of your influences. In what ways has she influenced your poetry?

Well, before I took her class, I considered myself a highly trained "amateur." That old cliché, "to know where you're going, you must know where you come from," holds true. Cate gave me that literary ancestry and my place in it. There has been so much innovation in American poetry that it is in a poet's best interest to take a crash course in recent landmark poetic progressions. You wouldn't believe how many times I read a fellow poet's work, which they think is masterful, but in my opinion just simply scratch the surface of the subject chosen. I show an example of a poem that tackles the same distinct issue and they become disappointed in there work or become angry protesting, "It's not fair to compare." Well, for those who disagree, art is intricately competitive due to the fact that its audience has been diminishing since the industrial revolution and even more pathetically so since the information revolution... Your work will be judged on its social significance, eventually, if you're lucky!

Poetry, unlike other forms of creative expression, is probably the only medium that demands so much risk to be taken from the start. Your work will be weighed first against your contemporaries, then with the various literary canons. But don't worry...most of us won't make it past the former scale...hah...hah. This is why a poet is a special breed of artist; recognition comes later than sooner, if ever at all! Plus any poet whose has tried to publish a book through a publishing house

knows the now cliché response, “oh, we don't do poetry. It doesn't sell!” So learning to write poetry in the most honest way is the reward and getting the chance to speak your words of sincerity in public is the icing on the cake...Gate's poetry class is a great start in learning how to do this.

What I learned from Gate is to allow yourself to feel and express ideas with brutal honesty because poetry can make you look like a saint or a fool depending on how sincere you are. Regardless if you write serious poetry or perhaps light verse, be brutally honest in your words!

You learn how to do this by reading great verse that has stood the test of time as well as contemporary verse you find in quality venues such as the internet webzine, POETRY DAILY.

For those not familiar with your work, what types of issues do you choose to address in your writing?

Well, it has changed twice so far and I expect it to change countless times more as my obsessions change. First phase, I obsessed over the process of falling out of love. Many artists have experience it but find it too painful to write about. And when they do, they're too close to the subject to not allow their verse to become melodrama or caricature. I believe I was successful with a few pieces. One example is, of course, the 400+ line poem, “Thoughts On Kissing You.”

Second phase was initiated via Cate Marvin's class. I felt like a child at Toys R Us! I discovered possibilities within subject matter and internalized Ezra Pound's famous words, “make it new”. I graciously let go of any innovations and furiously challenge my self to explore fresh ways of seeing cliché ideas, finding beauty in the banal, etc. A great example of that is “The Alchemist”, which is in my first chapbook.

I am now in a third phase exploring how the human condition is directly affected by various perceptions of language- in the critical sense of the term. For example, I just finished writing a

poem called, “Too Crack, To Love: ode to a crack-head.” It's new territory for me since I'm anti drugs but I felt that it was an honorable subject since crack-heads on some level enlighten the human condition vividly. However, what has remained constant is my fascination with the various forms of narrative and with marginalized subjects. This is due to my admiration for the early modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman. Also, I am interested in bridging that gap between Academia and the community. I believe it is possible for a poem to be high art as well as popular. It should be duty for poets to be the soul of a community, again. Poetry has its origin within the community, you know.

Which of your different talents do you see being used most in your future, and why? Do you see yourself becoming a famous poet, a famous singer, and artist?

I see my self doing exactly what I'm doing right now. I'm exploring them all! The meaning of fame for me has changed over the years and frankly if it doesn't happen, it's quite all right with me...I'm enjoying the journey, truly. I've never been happier in my life. Perhaps it's because I'm in love with life. Perhaps I'm laizze fair about fame because I know that it will find me, eventually.

Which medium will catapult me to fame is still in question, but it will happen. I'll continue to work at UPS for the great physical conditioning and maintain great healthy habits so when fame finally comes knocking at my door, I'll have the stamina to answer it!

So I better enjoy anonymity as long as possible...ha ha. I actually find it pleasurable shopping at Shop Rite without recognition, cooking Caribbean chicken for a friend, or jogging/sitting and sometimes French kissing a lover at dusk in Jersey's Lincoln Park while the ducks take their afternoon bath. Damn! Fame will definitely spoil those things! ■





**Archetype #2**

Acrylic on Paper  
58 3/4" x 47 1/4"

by Jhon Singleton

## A Simpling

by *Nosha Nuba*

The crackle of rain drops hitting the pavement, the car tops and the aluminum sides of houses softly streamed through the morning air. Yuka opened her eyes and beheld the wilting flowers on her nightstand. She closed them again and listened to the rain. It didn't matter to her that it was raining; she wasn't going to work that lonely Tuesday morning. She imagined that things would be different around the office without her, and so it would be. She missed the office, she wanted to go, but she had requested the day off weeks ago. She did it happily, too. Filling out the request form, counting the days until she could say goodbye for at least a moment. But now, she wondered if she had made a mistake. The work she would be missing, the pay she would be losing - not to mention the unwanted guest residing in her home.

Yuka glanced at the clock. The time didn't matter either - she wasn't late for anything. Yuka reached out from under her covers and turned on the clock radio. It was preset to a classical station she listened to on a usual basis. She buried her head under her blanket and closed her eyes again. The piano sounds of the woodwinds tangled with a tidal wave of percussion. She thought of times when she wasn't working, of times she missed and things she thought she would never have again.

Suddenly her thoughts were derailed by the abrupt turning of the radio dial. She felt anger welling up from her toes to her crown. She thrust her hand out from under the covers and turned the dial back to the station. Again, the dial was spun off its course.

"Stop it!" she yelled, lifting her head with the blanket still over her eyes.

The turning stopped. There weren't any footsteps, but the door slammed shut upon an exit. Yuka took the blanket off her head. She stared at the door. Partially anxious, partially tired, but entirely annoyed. She wanted the door to fly open and no matter who or what was on the other side, she wanted to get it over with. She hoped she would be able to do something to get the new-comer out of her house.

She got up and went into the hallway. She looked from side to side, and listened. There was silence. She expected a big rush of noises to catch her off-guard at any moment. But she knew that it knew she was waiting for it. She went into the bathroom. It was dark. There was enough of a glow from the cloudy daylight coming from the sunroof in the hallway, enough for her to see her silhouette in the big mirror, enough for her to get out her toothbrush and approach the sink. She contemplated doing her morning ablutions in the dark and as scary as that used to be for her, scarier was the thought of turning on the light and having a surprise waiting behind her.

She took a shower, then got dressed in her room. It was a good day for sweatpants and the old pink hoodie she used to wear during the old springs. But it was a new spring, and with every spring the old had to be pushed back, so far back that it couldn't come out any more. Until recently, Yuka hadn't thought about anything other than her job and her studies. She didn't have time or the desire to think about the things she used to love and the things she used to hate. She didn't have the time or desire to love or hate. The energy just wasn't there anymore. Although the new-comer was getting her closer to hating than she had been in a long time.

Yuka went into the kitchen. She opened the refrigerator. There wasn't much of a motive to eat anything. Perhaps breakfast was becoming a thing she only did as a routine; she was going to a place in her mind that was beyond hunger, beyond routine, more than fate, more than honesty. Altogether further than cereal. If only she could get back to reality. She wondered if it were possible.

She heard television being turned on in the den. The channels were flipping and the sound was increasing at a rapid rate. She swung the refrigerator door shut and bolted toward the den.

"Turn it off!" she yelled as she reached the room.

She found herself standing in the den alone with the television off. The remote had crashed to the floor upon her arrival. There it lay with the backpiece to hold the batteries on the floor in the opposite direction. She huffed and her nerves tightened. She felt a surge in her rise up like vomit from the lowest point of her stomach.

"What do you want!" she yelled.

"Who are you!" she screamed.

"Why don't you leave me alone!" she cried.

Knowing that she was in the room alone, but that there chance she could get an answer freaked her out in a way that kept her calm. She wondered if she sat down and talked to it again, like the first time she realized it was there, maybe it would be satisfied.



She remembered the first day she met it, the day she requested a day off from work. She was in the kitchen looking into the refrigerator when the oven timer went off. She knew she hadn't set it. She knew there was something in the house. It didn't surprise her; strange things had been happening to her all her life. This wasn't the first and she was sure it wasn't going to be the last. At least the others were more polite and sometimes they were polite enough to sit down and have a conversation with her. But this one was different. She had initially tried talking to it, but had been interrupted by the ringing of the telephone.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I was very rude of me to leave you hanging like that."

She sat down on the couch.

"I guess I haven't had time for you, or much of anything else lately." She looked around. She could feel herself calming down. "You never finished telling me why you were here." She looked around. She couldn't see it, but she knew it was in the room.

"That's alright, I'd rather not say much. After all, I think I've overstayed my welcome. Sorry for being such a jerk," said a gruff voice in the corner.

Yuka gave it a nod of acceptance. The front door opened and closed.

## Haiku *by Alban Merdani*

Warmth, brightness  
for now winter is hidden!  
-behind the sun

Happy children  
catching crystal flakes  
with their tongues.

Naked oak tree  
Exposed wrinkled skin  
Winter has come.

Hearing his jingle  
A mad dash toward  
Cold deliciousness.

## !Escape! *by Alban Merdani*

Seeing the cluster of clothes on the floor  
Makes me lose my mind  
I hear the knocks on every apartment door.  
Everywhere I see houses I adore  
I close my eyes; pretend I'm blind  
Seeing the cluster of clothes on the floor.  
Every hour inside feels like a bore  
I ask why life is so unkind  
I hear the knocks on every apartment door.  
Claustrophobia I try to ignore  
When will I leave this place behind?  
Seeing the cluster of clothes on the floor.  
My life inside is such a chore  
Living in this place feels like a grind  
I hear the knocks on every apartment door.  
I can't breathe or live here anymore  
Instead of forward I'm on rewind  
Seeing the cluster of clothes on the floor  
I hear the knocks on every apartment door.

## The one I miss !

*by Alban Merdani*

How can I start to tell you about her story?  
She was a person of virtue, yet I couldn't say I'm sorry  
For leaving and never going back to that place,  
Where I first wept, giggled and where she caressed my face.  
Remembering the things she taught me as a boy  
To never be jealous, harmful, or greedy with my toys.  
Being in her arms there was no safer place  
In a world full of turmoil, anguish and disgrace.  
But there is nothing else I can do to enjoy  
Her voice, to see the glare in her eyes  
In my heart, a great pain is deployed  
For not going back to say one last goodbye.  
Trying to search for unconditional love again  
I know I will find it when I meet her at the end.



## ENRIQUE INOCENTE

What are your plans once you graduate college- are you going to graduate school, where might you be working?

I plan to go to graduate school if I can ever graduate from this damn college. If I had to pick a job, I'd like to work at Dark Horse or Vertigo comics writing stories, or Mad Magazine writing stuff there. Those are my dream jobs. Maybe write for magazines, newspapers, movies, TV, or anywhere I can express my humor and creativity. I don't want to draw as a profession. It's more of a hobby, but, hey, if it can get me a job...

How long have you been writing and drawing?

The earliest memory I have of drawing seriously was at ten years old. I drew a whole scene of the Ninja Turtles battling Shredder. I looked at it for a long time and really liked it. I got into writing my sophomore year at the High School of Art and Design. I had two English teachers that really encouraged my creative writing. They told me I had a gritty way of writing. I liked the word gritty so much that I said to myself I would concentrate on gritty storytelling. As you can see, a lot of my stories are considerably gritty.

From what we have showcased of your work before, you are both a talented writer and artist. Do you prefer to work in either medium?

Actually, when I entered college I quit drawing, and was concentrating solely on writing. I quit drawing because of Ralph Bakshi. He's that big shot animator that directed Fritz the Cat among other acclaimed animated movies. He also directed that ghastly flick Cool World. Bakshi was a guest at my high school and invited to look over the portfolio of a select number of talented students. I was one of the few people

“lucky” enough to be chosen. He saw my work and pretty much told me I have no future in drawing. He wasn’t nice about it. He basically said I sucked. I figured if a professional like him thought my work sucked there’s no point in pursuing art as a profession. It was only when I joined *The Banner* did I pick up art again. They were hard up for a staff artist, and they liked my work because everybody else sucked major ass when it came to drawing. I did some small stuff at first, drawing illustrations for articles then moved up to drawing comics, and finally editor of the comics section. The comics section was trying at times because nobody contributed crap, and I had to fill two pages almost every issue. Sometimes I’d get desperate and draw the most offensive things to get a cheap laugh. Faculty members would write letters disgusted by my insensitive humor. To each his own, right? I like drawing and writing equally, but I find writing to be easier. Drawing takes a lot more mental and physical energy.

Which one did you become more accomplished in first?

I drew a lot first, and then moved to writing. I’m young so my skills in both are improving. What I write and draw today is leaps and bounds better than the stuff I did five years ago.

A lot of your comic work seems extremely satirical, are there satirical comics that have influenced you in the past? If so, who writes these books or draws them?

My writing style was first taken from young adult books like *Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. I’ve since found my own voice. My work is satirical because that’s the way I think. I’m a cynical bastard by nature so that always comes across in my work. I watch a lot of *The Simpsons*, *Ren and Stimpy*, and listen to way too much *A Perfect Circle*. Though Jhonen Vasquez has been having some influence over me as of late. He’s the creator of *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*. I really dig his sick and sadistic humor, and it makes me more accepting of my own sick and sadistic humor. My friend Jewel gave me a *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* graphic novel for my birthday. She’s also an inspiration in some of my work. In actuality, the real Jewel is not the drug-addicted lesbian I portray her to be in my stories.

In terms of artwork, which comic book artists serve as your influences?

My major influence is manga and anime. No artist in particular. I don’t really dig that cutesy style where the eyes are as big as their heads. I prefer the mature looking style. I have recently been adding more American style in my work. Artists like Matt Groening and Jhonen Vasquez and John K. (Creator of *Ren and Stimpy*) have influenced me since, and it’s apparent if you look at my latest stuff in *The Banner* where aliens look like deformed *Simpsons* characters, while other characters have facial expressions reminiscent to *Ren and Stimpy* or *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*. It’s all tied together in a nice little anime bow. I like to think my style is unique.

What was the first comic book that drew you into the field?

It wasn’t really a comic. The *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoon initially drew me in. All I ever drew in elementary school was *Ninja Turtles*. I got into the original graphic novels by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird a couple years later. I guess that would be my first comic. I used to copy pages from the comics. I still draw cityscapes like those from the original *Ninja Turtles* graphic novels. Old habits are hard to break.

Do you feel as if you are an artist riding the magna wave that is sweeping the United States?

No way, man. I’ve been into manga way before the big wave of anime junk hit the FOX BOX and WB KIDS. I got into it when *Akira* and *Fist of the North Star* were originally released in America back in the early 90’s. I have to admit it’s kind of cute watching these little kids today sprawled on the floor at Barnes and Nobles in the new manga section reading the comics. It makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside knowing younguns are finally getting to know a culture I loved for close to a decade. Unfortunately, a lot of the manga being translated is safe, commercially viable like those found in *Shonen Jump*. The crazy, mature manga, anime, and Asian films I buy in Chinatown and the Village are still pretty much underground.

What do you think of American artists inspired by manga?

I think it's cool if American artists are inspired by manga. Hell, I'm one of them, but I wish mainstream American comics would take a cue from Japan and give us more original and unique stories and characters. American artists use manga style in these old, tired super heroes that have been around since the Cold War, and it's pretty much the same crap in a new coat of paint. I hope to somehow add a little surge of originality to the industry.

You have taken jabs at other CSI students as well as faculty members in your comic work for the Banner. Is this done mainly for the benefit of the readers, or do you do it to get your opinion across to fellow students?

To be honest, there's no deep reason why I goof on CSI students and faculty. I sit around and think of funny situations, and sometimes I kick ideas to the staff. Whatever makes them laugh is what I usually go with. As it happens, my deprecating views on CUNY always seem funnier than my other ideas.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in the comics are my own, and do not reflect the opinions of the staff. Sometimes the faculty advisor that oversees the paper is aghast by the stuff I consider funny, but he lets it roll, and rarely censors me unless I use an obscene amount of vulgarity.*

What things about the CSI experience do you consider to be subpar?

I don't know? I think the college as a whole is sub par. Don't get me wrong, it's a good school with helpful faculty, but nothing about it is especially spectacular. Everything is about as average as a CUNY school goes. I hear the nursing program is pretty good. Really, I have met some wonderful professors as well as made great friends working at The Banner. I'd like to use this moment to give a special shot out to my homegirl Mellissa. Yo, what up, Squeaks!

When leaving CSI, what will be your next move?

I used to joke that I'd go straight to the unemployment office and then welfare. Now that I'm so close to leaving CSI, it doesn't feel like a joke. Honestly, I'd like to get this friggin' book I've been working on for five years published already. Serpentine has been nice enough to publish select chapters over the years, and I hope every body has enjoyed reading about my little nameless protagonist. Things are going to get crazier for him so stay tuned. People I know tell me I'm super talented, and I'm going to super famous in the future. I don't want to let them down. I hope to make everybody proud. ■




# RUNE BLADE

IN A TIME WHEN DEMONS, GHOSTS, AND SPIRITS FREELY WALKED THE EARTH, SKAKEL, LORD OF THE DEMON WORLD HAD TWO SONS, DUNO AND MELKAH. ONE FATEFUL DAY, DUNO BET MELKAH HE COULDN'T SEDUCE A PURE MORTAL WOMAN. MELKAH TOOK ON THE WAGER AND CHOSE THE MOST PURE WOMAN IN THE LAND, A PRIESTESS BY THE NAME OF SAKURA. MELKAH DISGUISED HIMSELF AS A RIGHTIOUS MAN AND GAVE HER EMPTY PROMISES OF AN UNDYING LOVE. ONCE THE DEMON LED HER TO FORNICATE, MELKAH SHOWED HIS TRUE FORM AND LAUGHED AT THE ONCE PURE PRIESTESS. SOON AFTER, NINE MONTHS TO BE EXACT, SAKURA GAVE BIRTH TO MELKAH'S TWIN CHILDREN. ASHAMED AND DISHONORED, SHE TOOK HER OWN LIFE. THE TWINS WERE ABANDONED, AND SHORTLY ADOPTED BY AN EVIL CIRLUS RINGMASTER THAT USED THEIR GIFTS AS DEMONS FOR CRIMINAL MISCHIEF. THE TWINS EVENTUALLY KILLED THIS MAN AFTER REALIZING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. AT THE TENDER AGE OF FOURTEEN, THEY NOW WORK AS ASSASSINS FOR HIRE.

## EPISODE 1


THE KING OF THE TYCOON KINGDOM HAS ASKED THE TWIN ASSASSINS TO KILL HIS KINGDOM'S MINISTER. THE KING FEELS THE MINISTER IS GROWING TOO POWERFUL AND IS PLANNING TO USE HIS CULT TO STAGE A COUP.




WE STAND OUTSIDE THE MINISTER'S TEMPLE WALL.

MOMENTS FROM NOW, MINISTER TYCOON WILL BE NO MORE.


MINISTER TYCOON IS THE KING'S ONLY SON. THURST FOR POWER HAS DRIVEN KING TYCOON TO PUT A CONTRACT ON HIS SON'S LIFE. THE HONOR FOR FAMILY WAS LOST.



NONETHELESS, WE WERE HIRED TO EXECUTE THE MINISTER.




AND THAT'S WHAT MUST BE DONE.




C'MON, AMONO, LET US JUST DO THIS!


MY SISTER RIN WAS ALWAYS THE EAGER ONE.



I LEAP INTO THE NIGHT AIR AND ONTO THE TEMPLE WALL.



PENETRATING THE BUILDINGS ONLY DEFENSE.



RIN FALLS TO HER POSITION. WE EACH KNOW OUR ROLES.

SHE MUST CREATE A DIVERSION TO LURE THE TEMPLE GUARDS AWAY WHILE I SNIFF OUT THE MINISTER'S EXISTENCE.

MY SISTER IS A VERY POWERFUL SORCERESS. MORE ADEPT AT USING MAGIC THAN MYSELF, BUT MY STRENGTH LIES IN MY STEALTH AND MY SWORD. HE WILL HAVE TAKEN HIS FINAL BREATH BY THE END OF THIS NIGHT!



AS MY BROTHER HEADS TO THE MINISTER, I GAIN THE GUARDS ATTENTION WITH A FIRE SPELL.



IT SEEMS TO WORK.



THIS IS ALL JUST A GAME TO ME. I'M MORE THAN POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DESTROY THESE MAGGOTS IN A BLINK OF AN EYE.

BUT I MUST DISTRACT THEM AWAY FROM THE TEMPLE LONG ENOUGH FOR MY BROTHER TO DO HIS WORK.

I'LL PLAY THE GAME FOR NOW.



LIKE AN AMETEUR I'M HERDED TO A DEADEND.

THE GUARDS WERE WELL ORGANIZED.

BUT THIS GAME WAS BEGINNING TO BORE ME.



I UNLEASH MY MOST DEVASTATING MAGIC SPELL.



SUCH FRAGILE BODIES THESE MAGGOTS HAVE.

NO ONE SURVIVES THE ONSLAUGHT.





WHAT'S THIS?!

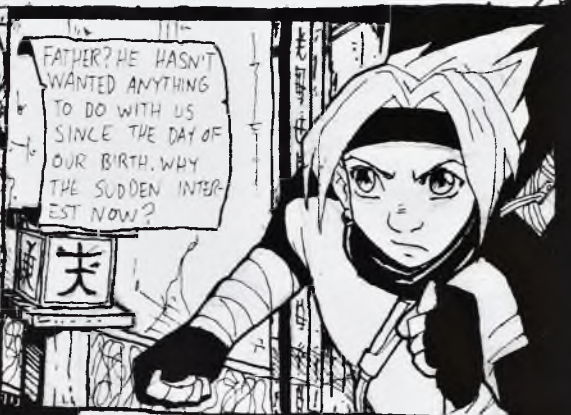
I WALK INTO THE MINISTER'S CHAMBER TO FIND MYSELF A TRAP!



KING TYCOON STOOD SIDE BY SIDE HIS SON, MINISTER TYCOON. WHAT'S HE DOING STANDING NEXT TO THE VERY MAN HE HIRED ME TO KILL?



I'M AFRAID THIS WAS ALL JUST A TRICK TO KILL YOU AND YOUR SISTER. YOUR FATHER MELKAH WILL BE PLEASED.



FATHER? HE HASN'T WANTED ANYTHING TO DO WITH US SINCE THE DAY OF OUR BIRTH. WHY THE SUDDEN INTEREST NOW?



MELAAH PROMISED US GREAT RICHES TO ANNIHILATE HIS BASTARD CHILDREN. THIS WAS ALL TOO EASY... THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE A MERE CHILD.



MY YOUTH DECEIVES YOU. MY MAGIC IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THE LIKES OF YOU TWO!



THE GRAVITY MAGIC MAKES SHORT WORK OF THEM.



P A T H E T I C !!!

THE NEXT DAY.



SO FATHER WANTS US DEAD.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

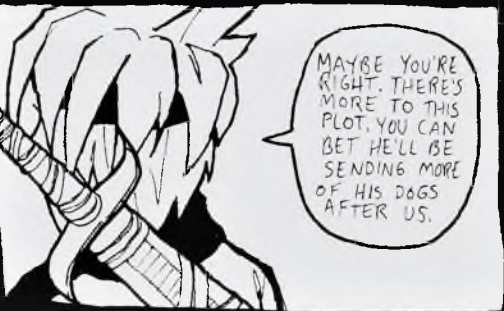
HE FEARS US. WE'VE GROWN POWERFUL.



IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. EVEN IF WE ARE STRONG WE HAD NO INTENTION OF REVENGE OR ANYTHING MALICIOUS. IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING ELSE.



MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE'S MORE TO THIS PLOT. YOU CAN BET HE'LL BE SENDING MORE OF HIS DOGS AFTER US.



LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET INTERESTING.



LET'S GET TO THE NEAREST VILLAGE. WE CAN PLAN OUR NEXT MOVE THERE.

BUT ONLY AFTER SOME NEEDED REST.



TO BE CONTINUED



# An Interview with Peter Marsh

by Victoria V. Cueli

The Cargo Cafe sits on the corner of St. Paul's Avenue and Bay Street comfortably but restlessly, like a punk teenager waiting for his friends. Leaping out to meet passerby, its ever-changing murals are a curiosity even to the art-impaired (its college devotees will always ask you if you've seen the new 'painting' on the Cargo), and for as long as most of my compatriots can remember, its name has only been illuminated in tiny, curly script in the far corner of a window. Currently, the building is painted white. The simplicity of the current color only makes everyone on the outside more expectant. The people who walk by glance at it, noting that its still at tabula rasa status; they know that soon, the vivid shades and intricate lines the Cargo is known for will return, its walls once again in their natural state of funky museums sans boring tour guides.

But for now, its still white.

And indeed, as I sat in the Cargo with Peter, Pat, and the Mikes (one staff, one not) that night, there was more ambience than art in the air. I chalked it up to the pseudo-Manhattan atmosphere: a jazz band was weaving music through the air from the back room, and short white candles squatted in glass cups on each wobbly table. In the ceiling rafters, fans whirred. The beer bong stood in splendor against the wall by our table, casting a seductive maple-brown shadow over our empty glasses. The guys goggled.

"What kind of beer is it?" asked (Staff) Mike Bongiorno, reaching for his glass.

"Who cares?" said Other Mike, tilting his own and filling it carefully.

Once all and sundry were situated with their lubrication, I pulled out my list of questions. Though the guys' eyes were darting appreciatively around the room, they kept their seats and sipped their beer while I began my interview with Peter Marsh.

Everyone has seen Peter Marsh around campus; they just don't know it. If you haven't seen him scurrying in and out of the Student Life office, he's been in one of your creative writing or poetry classes; and if you haven't spotted him there, he probably came into your writing or poetry class to advertise *Serpentine*, waving around the latest issue and turning a vague shade of crimson while encouraging the writers and artists out there to submit for the mag's next issue. And his work has paid off: under Peter's leadership, the *Serpentine* has been published bi-annually every year, a feat the magazine perviously hadn't been able to accomplish since 1997.

My gaze lit on his Adidas sweatshirt, and traveled up to his easy smile and inquisitive eyes. Even in the fashionable semi-dark of the Cargo, I could see the glint of red hair.

When asked what his job at the *Serpentine* actually entailed, he seemed puzzled. "I can't think of the word," he said, moving his glass around. "What's another word for 'annoying'?" He moved his hands around expansively, like he does whenever he can't find the right word or phrase. "I'm an irritating rash on the CSI community."

Staff Mike leaned over. "You don't have to try to be funny."

A lot of what Peter does is behind-the-scenes work, with a couple of public appearances thrown in here and there: in addition to the aforementioned wringing-out of the student population in order to get art and writing submissions, he's involved in layout development with Patrick Montero, keeps all contributors and staff informed on campus meeting times and places, keeps the staff on schedule when it comes to deadline time, and acts as the 'zine's representative at publication board meetings.

"I just raise my head and agree with everyone's comments," he said sheepishly.

Peter's involvement with *Serpentine* began in 2003, when he had a short story published under the former editor, Jennifer Hermus. "In 2003, I decided to get serious about writing," he said. "I felt like I had no purpose. I wanted to get involved with something, and Professor Schulman suggested *Serpentine*. Jennifer was leaving right around that time and needed someone to take over the magazine."

He smiled. "I was nervous - I had never taken on anything like that in my life."

Since becoming editor-in-chief of *Serpentine*, Peter has also taken on another responsibility; that of the head of the Staten Island Writers Group. Conceived and created by him in 2004, the Staten Island Writers Group is registered with the New York Public Library and presently boasts six members (though the number changes occasionally), with four of the writers students at CSI. The group meets every two weeks to critique each member's submitted short stories/ poems/plays/screenplays/novels, with the aim of the writers improving not only their own work, but helping to improve that of others.

"I wanted something more than Serpentine," Peter said. The roar of a passing 62s bus drowned him out for a moment, and I strained to hear. "Even when I was just a contributor to the magazine, I wanted there to be more...people were more interested in just churning out the magazine than talking about writing."

When I asked him where he felt he was in his career, the table exploded in laughter. I checked the time; it had been about 45 minutes. The beer, I supposed, was settling in. "Right now," Peter tried, "if my career was a tree—"

Staff Mike interjected again. "A dog would piss on it."

The table exploded again, Peter and myself included. (Author's Note: Staff Mike, or Michael Bongiorno, is an actual comedian; thumb through the rest of this issue to get the dirt on him, too.)

The last hiccups of laughter died away. "Okay," Peter said, drawing his chair in. He started again. He started waving his hands around again, too. "I'm looking for seeds...and I buy too many..."

Patrick, who hadn't participated in the conversation up to this point, looked up at this from his notebook. "What are you talking about?"

"There's too many seeds!" Peter exclaimed. "I'm involved with a lot of projects. I really should concentrate on just one thing."

A lot of projects, indeed. In addition to Serpentine and the Staten Island Writers Group (and graduation in June), Peter is the bassist for the black metal band Blasphemous Machine ([Blasphemousmachine.com](http://Blasphemousmachine.com)). The band is currently putting together their first album, with Peter penning the lyrics for some of the songs, including "Buried In a Wall", "Screams From the Forest" and "Burned". When he isn't doing that, Peter writes material for and performs at local stand-up comedy open mics, most recently those held by Michael Bongiorno at The Muddy Cup.

"I should write every day, but I usually write in spurts," Peter said. "I write everything very last minute, or when something excites me. If I read a horror story, I want to write a horror story."

"I tend to write about contrasts. My characters are neurotic people, people with internal conflicts." He laughed. "Kind of like me." He stared off into the distance. "What motivates me is weakness and ignorance in other people. I try to un-cliché the clichés." He grinned. "My writing is motivated by spite." Peter names Neil Gaiman, Mark Millar, Warren Ellis and Grant Morrison as inspirations. "I love comics, and I'd love to write comics," he mused. "My stories often have a comic-like twist anyway, I think."

The project Peter and Patrick are currently nurturing is the brainchild they call Cynosure: a literary magazine based in Staten Island that would serve as a showcase for the underground and undiscovered writers and artists here on the Island. Though it hasn't been determined whether the magazine will focus on just Staten Island or eventually be expanded to include all the burrows, Cynosure might arguably be the first of its kind here on the island: a tiny burrow often slighted by the bigger and brighter lights of Manhattan and its fresh young talent.

"I've always wanted to be part of a scene, or a footnote in a scene," Peter said. Staff Mike wandered off after a shapely, dark-haired girl. Other Mike appeared to be falling asleep. "I think this magazine might be a good start to generate an underground movement...I want there to be networking: to bring people together who might otherwise not have met."

When I popped him with a Surprise Question — "If rain were music, what would grow?" — he had this to say: "If rain was music...hard, crystalline foliage would grow and crawl up the walls of people's homes, trapping them inside where they'd have to spend the rest of their days in introspection."

I capped my pen and pictured long, crystal tendrils bursting silently out of the sidewalk, snaking clear, spiky leaves and vines up the ruined sidewalks, towards the Cargo. Each stalk twisting, curling, looping over the white building, tying itself into hundreds of brilliant little knots. The tendrils freezing there, creating an ice sculpture of the building, glittering and sending out fiery rays of color when the sun shone through, throwing thousands of diamonds onto the sidewalk in front of the Cargo.

Art against the plain white background; the writer standing out from the crowd. Sounds like Peter. ■

# An Interview with Patrick Montero

by Victoria V. Cuchi

Patrick, it must be said, is a man who looks best with a skyline behind him. Though he sat in the Cargo wearing a short-sleeved flannel shirt and knit hat at the time of our meeting, every time he moved, you could see the lines of his real clothing shimmering through: the blue squares and lines of his button-down melting and shifting into a smart gray pinstripe, the watch on his left wrist seeming to rest at the end of one immaculate white cuff. He ate chicken fingers with his hands; a bottle of Franziskaner rested to his right.

"What kind of beer is that?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said in the suave voice that seemed to issue naturally from his throat, "but whatever it is, it's imported." Even with his fingers knuckle-deep in chicken, he still had that cosmopolitan air.

Perhaps I think of a skyline when I see Patrick because of his profession. A photo editor at the New York Daily News, he regularly chooses images and restores, preserves and archives the photos taken by one of New York City's major newspapers. He happened upon the job while in New Mexico. "I was hiking through the Rocky Mountains; I was with the Boy Scouts then. And one of the kid's fathers was a caption writer at the Daily News. When I got back to New York, I gave my information to the his father, and he forwarded my information to the Managing Editor and Designer. She contacted me, and I've been there since October."

When Patrick's not organizing the layout over at the News, he's choosing the images and creating graphics for *Serpentine*.

"I also motivate Pete to get things done," said Patrick, grinning.

Mike, a staff member, turned around smiling wickedly. "By feeding him and walking him twice a day."

An artist since the age of six (sculpting, painting, charcoal drawing, etc), Pat graduated from the High School of Art & Design where he majored in Architecture. While in high school, he participated in a year-long apprenticeship to learn how to create stained glass art. Though he studied architecture, he spent his senior year learning studio art fashion design. After entering Cooper Union to study 3-Dimensional design and life-drawing, he went on to NYIT (The New York Institute of Technology) for architecture, and then the Fashion Institute of Technology for women's intimate apparel.

"That's when I decided I didn't want to do fashion," Patrick said.

Finally, he enrolled in CSI and briefly majored in art before changing his major to communications. After declaring his specialization in publication design, Patrick took an Introduction to Journalism course with Professor Kaufman.

"Each student had to visit the Banner twice during the semester," he said. "Professor Kaufman was working on the layout and asked me what I thought of it. I said it sucked, and he said, 'Fine, you sit down and do it.'"

When asked where he gets the ideas for *Serpentine* from, Patrick laughs. "It's all very organic. It starts off with a random phone call from Pete saying, 'Hey, I've got a great idea.' We each sleep on it and, then come back to each other." His eye-catching designs for past covers of *Serpentine* - which include a Lego pirate map and cartoon icons - recall the toy-culture of the '80s, the decade in which many students here at CSI grew up. "I think that after this issue, there could be enough of an effect on the student body so that everyone knows what *Serpentine* is; make it a household name. I want people to pick up the issue based just on the cover.

"I'm not sure, actually, if I go about it correctly. It's very sporadic - the layout is never fully complete until the day it's sent out to be printed. I tend to redesign as I read the submissions."

His artistic inspirations are numerous. "The subtleties of life. The more important aspect of people's personalities are their subtleties, their quirks: the way they laugh, the way they move when they speak, the way people talk to themselves. When I'm fortunate enough to be a witness to those events, that inspires me."

I put my final Random Question to him right before he headed outside for a cigarette: "If I gave you an elephant, where would you hide it?"

Patrick cocked his head to the side and smiled. "I have you ever heard of Thomas Aquinas?" He explained that the famous philosopher and theologian had often speculated that the Earth lay on top of a giant elephant. Somehow, Aquinas had used this to prove the existence of God.

"Under the earth," Patrick said, tucking a cigarette into the corner of his mouth. It jutted out at a jaunty angle as he strode away. "I'd hide it under the Earth." ■

## Michael Amalfitano

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Michael Amalfitano originally attended Staten Island Community College Sunnyside back in 1976. Upon reaching 40 credits with a 1.6 GPA he decided that a business degree was not for him. He enrolled at Teterboro School of Aeronautics and became a licensed aircraft mechanic for TWA. September 2001 he was permanently let go by the airline due to downsizing and decided to finish what he had started 26 years earlier. He currently attends The College of Staten Island along with his daughter Michelle, and has accumulated 136 credits with a 3.1 GPA. His goal is to graduate in the Spring of 2006 with 180 credits and BA degrees in Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology. Michael then plans to enter a Catholic Seminary to fulfill his true life calling.

## Matthew T. Bellino

Matthew is a twenty-two year old English major at the College of Staten Island. When he is not in school he is actively involved in his church, Calvary Chapel of Old Bridge. Born and raised on Staten Island he says he has been a writer his whole life. Matthew lists comic books, the Bible and life itself among his influences and likes to include life, not fictionalized or distorted, just enhanced in his work.

# Serpentine Magazine CONTRIBUTORS & STAFF

## Anthony Bongiorno

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Anthony is an eighteen year old English Education major. This Brooklyn native, now a Staten Islander, writes in his spare time, and his influences Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Anthony wants the world to listen to him.

## Michael Bongiorno

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www.comedysoapbox.com

Michael is a twenty-one year old film major. A stand up comedian who enjoys all manner of self-pleasure and self-indulgence, his influences include Lenny Bruce, William Peter Blatty and Ron Jeremy. Hoping to accomplish a lot in his career, Michael aims to be the next Truman-Capote, bad, but bad at everything.

## Gregory Caiafa

Gregory Caiafa was born 28 years ago in Brooklyn, New York. For the past ten years he's worked as a small business owner while nurturing his interests in Filmmaking, Screenwriting, and Fiction. The past year has been especially productive as he has completed three feature length screenplays as well as numerous short stories, and produced, directed, and wrote *The Shadow Beneath The Door*, a German Expressionistic thriller he plans to incorporate into an anthology.

## Matthew Cassone

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Matthew is a twenty year-old English major who enjoys writing in his free time. He likes to make use of imagery, alliteration and enjambment in his work and has been influenced by E.E. Cummings and Sylvia Plath. This goal-oriented writer plans to earn a PhD and prefers to write late at night.

## Rosalia Dechberry

Rosalia is a 20 year old English Writing major. Born in Queens, NY, she describes herself as a confessional writer and likes to incorporate culture and autobiographical material in her writing. She wants to teach English and hopes to show her students that reading isn't a chore and writing isn't punishment.

## Richard Fedey

Richard is a twenty-three year old Philosophy and English writing major. Born and raised on Staten Island he has been writing for five years and enjoys reading in his spare time. One of Richard's influences is Aldous Huxley who taught him not to question. This writer's humble wish is simply to be read.

"I am not important, but my work is" - John Doe, Se7en

## Carol Franklin

Carol Franklin (Baez) is a "happily divorced" senior at the college, and anticipates receiving her BA in English Writing this June. She recently enrolled in the master's program for Secondary Education, and is a Teacher's Scholar at Concord High School. "I enjoy teaching," says Carol. "It allows me to help others achieve their goals. However, writing is my passion. The poems featured in this issue of Serpentine are the first of a set of different genres of poetry." A mother of four, Carol looks forward to penning a few novels as well.

## Victori V. Gueli

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This twenty-one year old English literature major was born in Brooklyn and now lives on Staten Island. She has been writing for ten years and likes to write poetry and fiction. She is currently working on a piece of non-fiction about bulimia. A member of the Staten Island Writers Group and a freelance writer for various pagan e-zines, Victoria hopes to be recognized as both a journalist and a poet.

## Meghan Hagerty

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Meghan is a twenty-three year old English writing major. She was born and raised on Staten Island and has been writing for as long as she can remember. She hopes one day to publish both poetry and fiction. Her influences include Neil Gaiman, Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Nicole Blackman and Ai. When she is not reading and writing, she enjoys photography.

## Stefani Lagna

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Stefani is a twenty year-old Accounting major and has been writing since she was nine. She likes to include honesty of emotion in her work. Born in Manhattan, she lived in Brooklyn before moving to Staten Island.

## Daniel Leahy

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Daniel is a twenty-one year old English major and has been attending CSI for three and a half years. This Brooklyn native's hobbies include basketball and football. Listed among his influences are William Wordsworth and our very own Professor Cate Marvin.

## Alban Merdani

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Alban Merdani has been attending the College of Staten Island for six years and is currently working on his Master's Degree in Education. Born in Albania, Alban says that he has always had a deep artistic drive and hopes to one day get into show business. When he's not working or in class, he enjoys going to movies, reading and exercising.

## Frances Mitis

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Frances was born and raised in Brooklyn and attends the College of Staten Island as an English major Dance minor. A writer since was ten, she likes to include emotions, particularly love and anger, and everyday things in her work. She hopes to write a novel and put together a book of poetry.

## Diana Muniz

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Diana is a twenty-one year old English major. A new writer, with only a year under her belt, likes to include themes of heartbreak in her work utilizing both drama and cleverness. She likes to work out her anger at the batting cages.

## Nosha Nuba

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Nosha is a twenty-two year old Chemistry major. Born in Manhattan and attending CSI for two years, her favorite activity outside of school is dancing. Writing for twelve years, Nosha has no major literary influences.

## Laura Anne Psomas

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A twenty-three year old English/Writing major. Laura has always enjoyed writing. She believes that being one hundred percent honest with your readers is also being honest with yourself. Her influences include Kate Chopin and Sylvia Plath. Laura hopes to become a published author and a college writing professor.

## Jessa Shoutbaby

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A twenty-four year old Communication Arts/Media Studies major with a minor in Cinema, Jessa Shoutbaby has been writing "forever". She likes to include her heart and soul, and a penchant for anything anti-reality. She has many influences, including Francesca Lia Block's fantasy fairies, LJ Smith's dark romance, Saul Williams amazing beats and fairy art by Jessica Galbreth, Amy Brown, Suza Scalora and Brian Froud.

## Jhon M. Singleton

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www.Davinciism.com

Jhon is a thirty year old alumni of the College of Staten Island, having earned a Masters of Liberal Studies. Born in Charleston, South Carolina he now lives in Jersey City, New Jersey, Jhon is biracial, half black and half Black Catawba. He adheres to the Black Catawba codes of honor and they find their way into his work. Some of his influences include Cy Twombly, T.S. Eliot, Aretha Franklin and James Joyce. He has been writing professionally since 1985. Jhon likes to include sincerity and brutal honesty in his work.

## Hugh Withers Jr.

Koseitsu@hotmail.com

Hugh is a twenty-two year old English major and names the parking and the people as two of the schools problems. Hugh has always been a writer and one day hopes to earn a doctorate degree as well as have a family.





VENUS OF WILLENDORF



# YEMAYA

African Ocean Goddess  
Of The Crecent Moon



## Trace Elements

Acrylic on Paper  
46 1/2" x 36 1/4"

by Jhon Singleton

