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Harbinger 1990

Stephens' Magazine of the Creative Arts



HARBINGER 1990

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"And He Catches the Sleeping
Mermaid in His Net"

Laura Labieniec-Pintel

HARBINGER is a magazine of the literary works of current Stephens College students. Published each spring, HARBINGER is edited and designed by students. Subscription rates are now \$6.00 for one year, \$12.00 for two years. Subscriptions, manuscripts and correspondence should be addressed to: The Editors, Box 2034, Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri 65215.

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Note From the Editors

In beginning our search for works to put into *Harbinger*, we did not have a specific theme in mind. We did not set out with a solid idea of how we wanted this magazine to fit together; however, when we looked back at the works chosen for this edition of *Harbinger*, we could see a certain group consciousness emerging. In selecting the works we felt were most effective and most mature, we also selected, by default, works with strong social and political consciousness. Many of the poems included in this magazine deal with specific issues related to women in current society. They explore women's sexuality, development, cooperation, disenchantment, and empowerment. Likewise, there are those poems and essays that take a more political approach and deal with the conservative backlash permeating the political scene in the United States. This is particularly evident in the "American Reality (?)" art included in this magazine. In either case, this demonstrates that our students are taking a good, hard look at the reality surrounding their lives as women and as members of a democracy. It is important, however, despite the magnitude of these very current concerns, to remember that this magazine celebrates the beauty of creating and the influence our own creations, as well as those of others, have upon our lives. In recognition of this fact, we have included a new feature in *Harbinger* this year. Dr. Thomas F. Dillingham has written an essay on the piece of literature that had the strongest impact upon him during his development as a Professor of Languages and Literature and as a lover of language and the wonders it can achieve. It is our intention that this will become a regular feature of the magazine, with many different professors contributing their inspirations in future years. So when we read and re-read this issue of *Harbinger*, it is exciting to notice not only the strong women's consciousness, political consciousness and moral questioning evidenced here, but also the pure beauty of creation and that which is created.



"We came here to work on a sense of unity and harmony. Most people don't realize it, but that's what beauty really means . . . In beauty, I walk."

Joan Dallam

"Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures beneath the external flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains."

Jung

*"I tried to follow the Frost-path
(the one that makes all the difference)."*

Michelle Poe

“Major Minor”

She is not your religion, nor will she ever be.
It occurred to her in the shower that your
 oxblood stains cajole her
 every
 time.

Just when she thought she could decipher your
 purple masses, the dealer announced,
“Conus Spirius atlanticus”. Everyone can
find fool’s gold,
but no one has found a cure for those masses.

Plow into the softness of her skull.
Do not leave the lines blank. Instead,
 fill them in with Coca-Cola ads
 and **The Man With the White Liver**, by Angela Jackson.
Scrape the insides clean
 by using wire with two wooden prongs
 attached to both ends.
Use smooth, sweeping strokes and mark your territory.
This way, all will cleanly fall out and you can
 sink into it.

And like women writing after a long pause,
 you are unsure of how to begin.
Begin lightly.
Begin at the beginning.
Begin like Brazilian naive art—no formality,
 only honest thoughts
 on a hand-made page.
It is easy to embroider the perspective
once you decide on the subject.
The rip of ripe fruit and the chiming in of steely
 nudes should
 pop
 at the beginning.

(new stanza)

For instance, in Romare Beardon's "Flights In Fantasy",
a bit of corner red
and depth of teal
argue, but settle their differences somewhere in
the middle.

Pierce the surface of your one-way streams.
"No following will be attempted here, because it is not allowed."
Mary, in her own manger, proclaimed
nothing,
while someone from the near past
clearly stated that
death is the mother of
beauty, and
those roses in the corner are surely dying.

“Of Mimi’s Commodities”

The wet clothes in her closet hang and drip,
and hang some more, not getting any drier,
yet her skin, smelling of sulfur,
is drier than she had hoped it would be.
Vodka bottles form a triangle
next to the picture of her Godbaby on the stark white windowsill.
And as she looks at her digital alarm clock, she realizes that
she has tied all of her emotions in the tip of her left pinky finger.

“Maybe reading some of his old letters will make me feel better.”
She found that she had remembered them wrong, or at least she
had adopted meanings not true to their facts.
She finally came to a temporary conclusion:
“Love his poetry, he will destroy you.
Hate all poetry, and you will at least understand him.”

“Blind Contour on Plexiglass - #1”

A lone gull lunges,
Reminds us we're more than thoughts
 under a sunken sky.
While most gulls float along the top, Mother sank to
 the bottom.

I cannot find Mother with her fluent eyes
 and sanded-down freckles.
In your village, there are people intent on
 journeying everywhere, and it is evident
 in your freshly-dusted hands that you have already
 made the journey.

“Notice: Please Pick Up Your Toys. The Management”
First came Disagreement, but afterwards, I felt pity
 for the Rocking Horse, and begged
 Mother to let me take him home and make him feel comfortable.
Quickly borrowed eyes rolled,
 and tested the waters.

Mother,
I am sinking
like you.

I trace your outline
on the crisp,
transparent surface.

Geoffrey

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. He had stared for many hours. This, then, was what it must be like. He had often wondered. He did not shift. Nirvana. Not quite. She came in—Judy—he had not known she was there. He did not shift. Maybe she would look through him like all the others that day. He supposed she would. That was the point, in a way. She would look through or above or around or not at all. Better to gouge her eyes than to see. The blind Oedipus did not have to see the famine, the starvation. He wrapped himself in a ruler's self-pity and left his sons the kings and took up travelling—begging, perhaps, but in beggary he expected to be treated as royalty that had fallen upon hard times, respected for having once been great. What polis is this? My sweet, the child, too, is blind.

He was staring at the latest masterpiece in the art of making art. Kostabi was a great artist but only a great fool would buy a Kostabi. Of course, that was Kostabi talking and it was, after all, part of the pitch. And it was all about the pitch, about how the blatant admission that it was not what it was made it what it purported not to be. That much was obvious. It was a pity that he had not thought of it before or maybe he had but only in passing or only in a past life so it really didn't matter now. What mattered was he had thought of it now but Kostabi had thought of it first or maybe he had thought of it first but in any case Kostabi had done it and that was all that mattered.

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. Many hours ago he had counted the knots in the dark wood. The knots had never had any particular significance. He had counted them to be moving, not physically but mentally. It had been important to be moving, even if it was only to count the knots in the dark wood of the table. It had reminded him that he was still alive. It didn't matter so much now. Above him was the table. He knew that much—remembered it somehow vaguely. Remembered it with same disinterest with which he remembered his hand was at the end of his arm. The water from the drinking fountain at school had tasted better than the water at home. The number of stars in all the galaxies was the same as the number of cells in the human brain, and he was amazed that nothing had changed. He had somehow expected something to change with his new perspective, with his lack of motion. He had expected some new-found appreciation of the enormity of life; he had expected something. Nothing had changed. He thought for a moment about getting up, but it seemed pointless. It was nice down here. He was still breathing, breathing exactly as he always had. Well, that's it then, he thought. He had always thought perhaps it might be.

He was staring at the forbidden books on the top shelf in his father's study. There was something wrong with these books. On the lower shelves were the free books—the books he could read, boring things. But he grasped his father's chair and piled thick volumes on it and scrambled to the top of the precarious stack and he reached up past the free books. He reached up past them and grasped almost blindly his prize, and, afraid that his parents might have heard, he clambered down quickly and sneaked to his room and closed the door very tightly and read. These were the

adventures of Peter Cottontail and he caught his breath involuntarily as Peter sneaked under the fence into Farmer Brown's garden. The suspense was unbearable. He read hungrily and the next morning he returned the book to his father's study. Standing atop a makeshift tower of books, he returned the forbidden book with his father's scrawl, "teaches blind obedience."

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. He had stared for many hours and now he composed a letter. It seemed appropriate for him to compose a letter. He would think of what to say. "dear mr. x," he thought. Yes, that was a good beginning. It was always good to start with "dear mr.," or it was unless you were writing to a woman in which case it wasn't, but Geoffrey was not writing to a woman, so it was a good beginning. He thought of it as smiling—it would make dear mr. wonder what he was up to. "dear mr. x," he continued, "it is my considered opinion..." Yes, that was good. It was always good to consider one's opinion when writing. He wondered why more people did not think of that. "...that you should take steps to improve your corporate..." No, that didn't work. He needed something with more snap, more life. The beginning was the advertisement for the letter. It had to reach out and forcibly grab dear mr.'s attention. He would try again. "dear mr. x, it is my considered opinion..." No, that was the problem after all. A considered opinion was too static, too lifeless. He needed a headline, a slogan, a jingle. That's what people remembered. Ahh...here was an idea. "dear mr. x," he began again, "z will always be for zorro." Yes, that was good. It would stand out. Beginnings were the important part. No one cared what the letter said—most people wouldn't even read it—but the beginning....That was different. It was separate. Perhaps he should only mail the beginning. That would be enough.

He was staring at high-level war games, but the microphone was live. In five minutes they would bomb Moscow. Perhaps he would go to see the paint shadows of evaporated water-people. He wondered what color the shadows would be. One of the players was the evil empire. War and He-Man always pitted good against evil. The history books, programs for the stage of life, always told which was which, but he had lost his program so he was not sure who was moving the white knight. He supposed the musical would be a success.

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. He had stared for many hours and now the shadows seemed longer—misshapen. Perhaps it was the moon. He had always liked the time of night when the shadows became longer, when he was dwarfed by an insubstantial race of men, all scurrying forward or backward or not scurrying at all but simply standing and growing and melding against one another in indistinguishable masses. The shadows were growing. He was no longer he but simply part of the darkened space. Perhaps that was what they meant by unnamings. Name was the same as identity. He had one, though he did not use it often. An identity was rarely an appropriate appendage for a member of his social set. He thought of it now and wondered briefly where he had left it. He removed it from its nest of mothballs and tried it on tentatively, as if it were a new suit. He twisted, examining himself from all angles. Geoffrey, he thought. Yes, I am Geoffrey. Of course. That is who I am.

He was staring at the party platform. The balloons were red-white-and-blue perfect. He had known they would be. There was no other thing. The balloons had to be perfect; everyone knew that; even he knew that. The balloons had to be perfect and there they were, absolutely perfect. It was a lovely platform, light and insubstantial, and on it, suspended magically in the air by some stage hand's fishing wire illusion, stood the party, about to begin. He wondered what would happen if he popped a balloon, if he used a slingshot or a pea-shooter or a dart to pop a balloon. It would make noise and they might think it was a gunshot and they might think someone was shooting at them. It would be the shot heard round the world.

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. The drunken cat staggered toward the water dish and he wondered vaguely whose room was spinning. Everyone clapped. Vanna would turn the letters when the wheel stopped. It would say "CASH ON DELIVERY." He would like that—not that it would say "CASH ON DELIVERY" but that it would make words. He liked how, when you turned the letters around, they made words. They meant something then. They didn't mean anything when they were turned the other way, but when they were turned around they made words. That was the beautiful thing about letters.

He was staring at the soft underbelly of Europe. The war was going badly. No one asked what would happen if England fell. Better to die like pigs, he thought. He did not think much any more. Another scotch. Maybe it would burn just enough to remind him he was still alive. So he had been dead before. He had forgotten that. It had seemed best to forget even then, to surround himself with the lurid sights, sounds, smells of life and forget that even the flesh he clutched at night was cold. Perhaps another scotch. He had forgotten quite how much he drank. Perhaps he had never really known or maybe he had only dreamed the scotch lying in trenches filled with the stench of death. Perhaps another scotch. Maybe it would burn just enough to make dying less painful. Maybe he would die tomorrow.

Geoffrey was lying on his back staring blankly at the bottom of the table. He was unlearning linear thinking.

Wonderland

Upon a once time only
Forever not long ago
Someone told me he
Was an opium eater
Happily tripping along
Through realms where you
Are legally insane
After seven hits of acid
I have known too many madmen
To puzzle sense
From nonsense
Or learn the truth that lurks
In mountains of trees
Aflame in the midnight.

Growing Elements

That day Johnny forgot to mow the carpet
Strewn with popcorn flowers
I was standing behind a man—
Too tall—
I couldn't see the white organza butterfly
Walk down the aisle
Crushing popcorn petals

And I was only six
So of course I cried

When the wind blew lilac trumpets
I was marching behind a high school band
Rehearsing anarchy—
Too loud—
I couldn't hear the music,
Only saw the petals
Lawn-blown
street-blown
crushed

And I was only six
So of course I cried

Today's lawn looked like green felt
Grass shorter than carpet
I was living in a book of half-hour boxes—
Too much—
I couldn't stop to play the hero
Or notice the crush of yellow kernals
Or promised popcorn petals

Watercolor Sketches

1

My friend Stephani is planning her wedding and sitting on the floor listening to her talk of photographers and flowers, cakes and reception halls, I feel somehow vaguely left out. I thumb idly through the catalog of invitations—each labelled “joy” or “serenity” or something equally sentimental—and wonder if perhaps I have forgotten something important.

I live in fear of forgetting my pants, for I remember vividly the skit in which the teacher, after delivering a painstaking discourse emphasizing careful attention to detail, stands and declares, “I never forget anything!” He is wearing no pants.

Today, however, I have forgotten not my pants, but the phone number of the man I met in the bookstore. His name was Michael and he was thumbing through books by Immanuel Kant, which intrigued me because I do not read Kant. The books intrigued me and as I have lost only the phone number of the man and not the address of the bookstore, I tell myself I have forgotten nothing important.

2

I once dated a man who told me he wanted two children—one boy and one girl. The boy would have blond hair and blue eyes and when he was old enough a spaniel named Sparky, whom he would train to fetch sticks and shake hands. The girl would have dark hair and dark eyes and when she was old enough a terrier named Tasha, whom she would teach to fetch sticks and shake hands.

One night we sat under the stars and discussed the future with the casual air of two people who know each other too well. We decided that Anduin—a modification of the Cair Andros found in Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*—was a pretty name for a girl, and that it was harder to be creative with boys' names. Neither of us was interested in preserving old family names and our prospective son must have appreciated our decision to let Grandpa Milo's name die with Grandpa Milo.

We never saw each other again.

3

The family on the television screen piles happily into the minivan. Everyone smiles and the dogs behind the back seat look inquisitively out the rear windows at the exquisite scenery that flashes past as the van negotiates the winding wooded road. No one is carsick and no one needs to go to the bathroom. Dad, Mom, and kids sing television theme songs. Everyone knows all the words and no one sings off-key.

I have never met the family on the television screen. In my experience, the typical family excursion is a bit different. The dog is left in the capable care of the neighbor and the concrete barrier in the middle of the interstate obscures the exquisite scenery. As the van negotiates the not-so-recently repaved road, our sole contact with the wide, wonderful world wafts over from a downwind feedlot. No one is entranced. Lowell and Diane fight about which radio station to turn to and Dad snarls to "turn that damn thing off!" Diane has to go to the bathroom and Brian asks if we are there yet. No one sings.

4

During the spring of our sophomore year in college, we went flower-killing. We plundered neighborhood gardens, reaping an abundant harvest from carefully tended hedges and flower beds. We were brazen: we walked the streets festooned with sweet lilac and white hydrangea, with the fruits of our rapine. We were reckless, rapturously tearing blossom-covered branches from hedges. That day we found tulip corner. Tulip corner held four perfect tulips. Each bore a single, perfect blossom. Each was black. I stood a long time at tulip corner.

My favorite flowers are black. I catalog black flowers: tulips, irises, roses, orchids. There is something unnatural about black flowers. White is friendship; red is love; black is ??? No one knows. No one guesses. The black flower is a symbol of its own mysterious nature. In other countries, black is the color of beginnings, of weddings and births. Here it is the symbol of endings, of funerals and deaths. Black is the alpha and the omega. Knowing this, I think sometimes that I should marry amidst a sea of black and white roses. I expect it would be an expensive wedding.

I should, I suppose, reveal that black roses are not truly black. Rather, they are so dark a red the mind can register only black. They are the greatest magicians I know, for they are their own illusion.

5

I recently learned that Crayola has been acquired by Hallmark. Crayola has always been one of my favorite brand names, and I had already decided to send a crayon cover letter if I applied for a job with them. If they approved, I would know I wanted to work there. Working for Crayola would now be working for Hallmark, the great creator of holidays. Hallmark reminds us of President's Day and Sweetest Day, of Secretaries' Day and Bosses' Day. If Hallmark does not have a holiday specifically designed to honor you, you are a nothing, a nobody.

I, on the other hand, send "Happy Belated Birthday" cards to all my friends in December so I needn't remember specific dates. A few choice dates, I do remember. I remember Christmas is December 25th, that Halloween is October 31st, that my parents' anniversary is April Fools' Day. Still, I am not sure Hallmark's corporate culture is ready to accept me.

6

My mother asked me a long time ago to invite her to my wedding. I laughed and said, "Of course." She laughed too. We both knew marriage was filed neatly in my life plans under eventually. It was to occur sometime after buying the yacht and before winning the lottery.

I have not yet purchased the yacht.

I told my mother not long ago that I was considering being poor but contented for the rest of my life. I told her I might teach. She laughed and said, "That doesn't sound like you." I laughed too. We both knew I had filed my life plans neatly under eventually.

7

Today for the umpteenth time we are discussing demographic trends, and for the umpteenth time the demographic trends we are discussing are the same. The traditional family, consisting of two parents, children, and a dog named Spot, is declining. The population is aging. Old people and children live in poverty.

Education levels are rising and more women are entering the work force. The average worker today expects more from employment and expects to be taken more seriously. After all, education levels are rising. Working women are expected to be superwomen, and yuppie children are expected to be superchildren. If your child does not take the right lessons at age two, he will not be admitted to the right pre-school, and if he does not attend the right pre-school, he will never be admitted to the right kindergarten. If he does not attend the right kindergarten, he will be unable to continue at the right grammar school, so he will not be admitted to the right prep school. If he does not attend the right prep school, he will not achieve high enough scores on the SAT and he will not get into the right college to get the right job to earn the right salary to enroll his child in the right lessons. No wonder THE current demographic trend is the DINK. The pressures of adult life are serious enough without having to find a good child psychologist.

8

Scott told me he was not interested in a relationship and only wanted sex, but we talked about philosophy that morning until 7:00 and then I went home and went to bed. Later I felt guilty and spent a period of time avoiding looking at him. He had been honest with me and I had extemporized a performance worthy of a professional campaign staff. I have never learned to be honest.

The idea of honesty, however, intrigues me. Everyone knows honesty connotes truth connotes reality. I realize everyone knows this simple principle, and that everything I ever really needed to know I learned in kindergarten but somehow, somewhere along the line, I was improperly socialized. Perhaps it was Mrs. Palmer, my understanding kindergarten teacher, who forgot to teach me that truth is not found in fiction, that only honesty can convey reality.

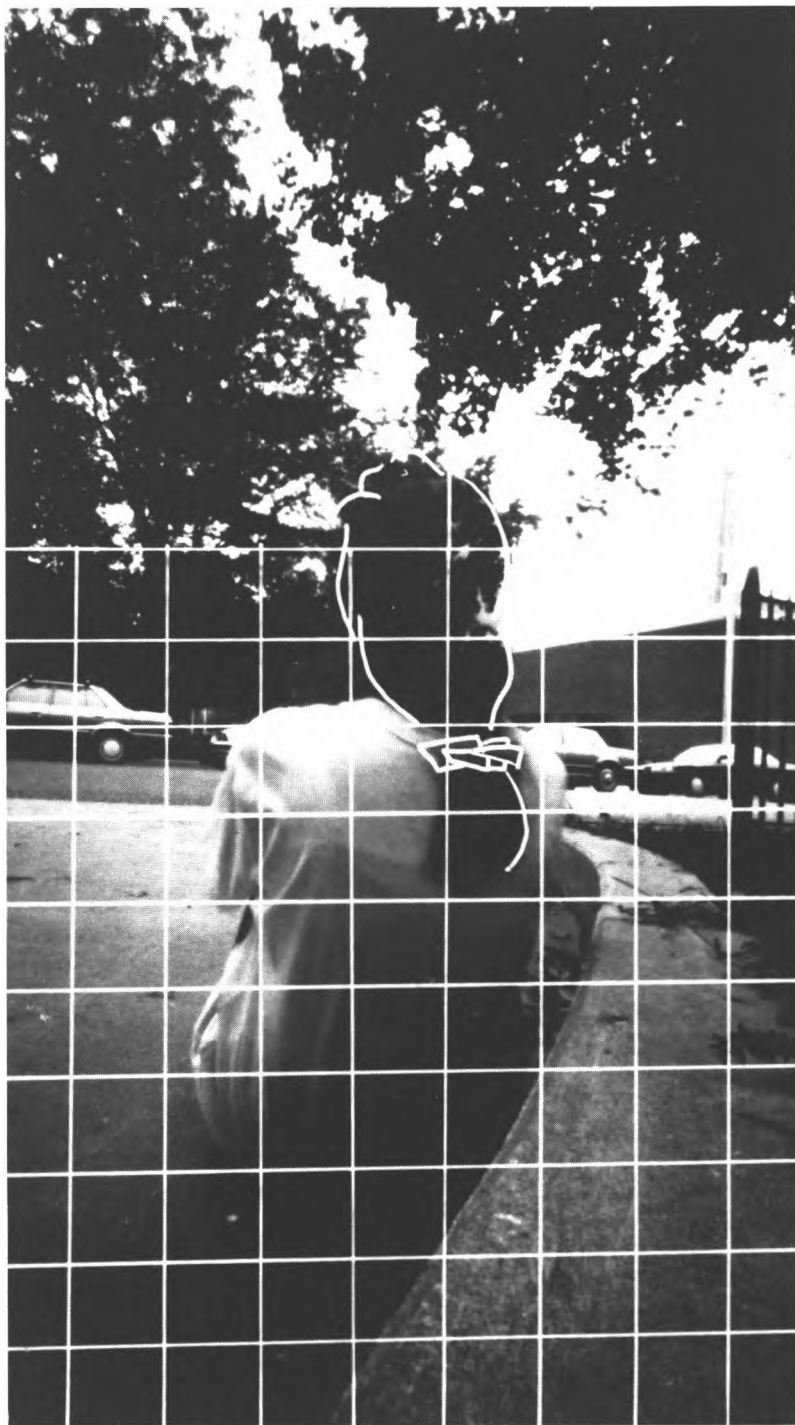
In December, I send a belated birthday card to Scott.

Not long after I graduated from high school, my family attended a wedding. During the reception, the father of the bride came back and slapped Dad on the back and said, looking at me, "Well, Keith, I guess it won't be too long till you'll be doing this." I stood there looking foolish and so did Dad. Dad then turned to me, wondering if perhaps I had forgotten to tell him something. I hadn't.

Some time later, I pondered the significance of that remark. Was it prophetic? Did he know something I did not? Was it based only on small-town expectations that all girls must get married no later than college? Was it a form of malicious humor because he knew I would not be getting married soon? Finally, I realized that sometimes the meaning is not in the words but in the speaking, that he might only have been trying to create a spirit of camaraderie with my father because his own little girl was leaving. Some time later, I realized he might have been lonely.



Carolyn McHale



Aneela Haque



Aneela Haque

My Place

I have built it
With white transparent bricks.
There are no corners.

Here is a large double door,
Opened by a cool
Round
Glass
Handle.

The floor is wooden.
Polished white and dry.

There are my pillows;
Satin pinks,
Golds,
Cotton blues,
Mauves,
Woolen reds,
Whites,
Fluffy greens,
Mellons,
By that plant.

There are many plants,
In big white pots.
They hold down the floor.
None hang from the ceiling.
There isn't one.
Colorless space.

I get my books from up there.
And my piano,
Now in the middle of the floor.

My cat, Zav, is under there.
He has molded winter wheat fur.
It tickles my nose.
He purrs Mozart quietly to himself.

Beast For The Eve

Light air and its white angel children fell down
down
crisp.

I led his dark penny-colored strength to me.
He was my beast.
My beast for the eve.

I would sit atop his mannered strength,
Woolen mittened hand scooping his reins.
I would lead him to carry me high
high
heaven.

Clothed in his brown winter coat,
his rolling brown persistent eyes showed.
He didn't want to crunch
crunch
cold
the bleached angels biting his wet hooves.

He threw his head and screamed.
I laughed.

His copper armour flashed as he sent the angels flying,
Flying into my wet cold face.
His eyes pulled from me, away
away
gone.

His hooves possessed like startled rattlers.
His mane black whips, ripped through the air.
Jaw locked
Chest filled with triumphant air.

Beatrice B.

Beatrice is center stage. Full spot. Piece of cardboard box is in her hand. She wears long dark skirt. Old sweater. Hair is messed. She looks unclean. Matter of fact—eerie remembrance.

They were beautiful children. Dark curly hair on top of their tiny baby heads. I put bows in their hair one time. Blue bows, and I taped them. If they would have just been quiet, Tom would have come to see me more often. I kissed him before anyone else, up in the garage after school. He would touch me. I liked it. He said I have a pretty smile. I do. He put the babies in me. Tom didn't like the babies. They gave him a headache. We put the babies in the bathroom where they would be safe and warm and we would turn the water in the bathtub on to keep the air healthy, not dry. We always locked the door so no one would get them while we were gone. Tom would grab my hair and take me to my bedroom. He gave me pills. I liked to take them. They were pink and red. Forget the taste. They were magic and made me queen of the world and I could have every thing in the whole world and so could Tom. I gave Tom presents he liked. We played for hours and hours and hours and hours until the neighbors called and told me my babies were crying. They, of course, knew that I couldn't hear my babies from a thousand miles away. That is why they called me. They reminded me.

They were good neighbors until they told the fat lady in the red dress, that said she cared, that I wasn't taking care of my babies. She said I wasn't a good mom but I was a good person. She was going to take my babies away. I was excited to tell Tom, but he never came back. The babies were all I had besides my refrigerator. I didn't know where she was going to take my babies. She wasn't going to take them. My neighbors couldn't take them. They moved away. My landlord wouldn't take them. So I made them go away by myself. That way I'd know where they were, and if I wanted them back I could go get them. I made them very safe because I put a gallon of milk and their blankets in the box with them. Babies take a long time to drink a gallon of milk. They don't eat. Mothers know these things. But they need toys. I put in the shoe and the cat. They liked to have the shoe in their crib. It reminded them of my mother. The cat liked to talk to them when I was tired of it. It is very important for children to have company. Especially when it is dark.

They are big by now. Their hair is probably growing out of the ground, or maybe even their head. I could name them like a flower. I could call it a babies flower. All the mothers would want one of their own. It's not very hard, you know. I used a spoon like I used for my plants in the house. You know, plants don't make the ozone layer fall apart, but the box fell apart. They all fell out and the cat ran away, but the milk stayed. I was happy. I put them in first so they would be closest to hell and would stay warm. I put the milk on top and the blankets I folded and put beside them because I didn't want the milk to get warm. Warm milk can make you sick. They weren't being good. So I put them away. I shut them up, with my spoon.

That is in the garden by the park. I put them close to the fence so no one would step on them. I wouldn't want them to get stepped on and cry while I was hiding them from the lady in the red dress. She might hear them and take them away and they are mine and no one knows where they are. Tom knows. He's the only one. He's their neighbor. He's not as close to hell. But he had the red and the pink pills. I kept two.

Nympho

You sit on a corner with your case open
Inviting all into your home.
Your left hand under the bell
And your right hand flopped over the body of the horn.
(You love your child, just the same.)
When the sun isn't down
But the street lamps are turning on—
As you lick the reed—
Light brightens in a pool and your body
Arches like a pelvis.
You smile, and wipe your mouth askew
Like old Popeye re-runs;
You chuckle.
You don't want to be like me.
You grasp for the swing;
You squint your eyes too sharp,
You look up to the right, then down.
You, Chopin, Stanislavski,
All of you welcome the sado-masochism—
You shrug. You sigh.
You sit in a corner;
You think your body is open
To the World.
But you are habituated—not exposed.
You don't know the World;
You only know yourself.

Block Party

In the 1980s, St. Louis paid several hundred thousand dollars for a sculpture for the downtown area by the nationally-known artist, Richard Serra. Soon after its purchase and installation, the sculpture had an audience of prominent St. Louisans who were outraged at the affront Serra had seemingly perpetrated on the city. The sculpture also garnered a scattering of dutiful worshippers.

Serra, in fact, had created an organic downtown sculpture. It appears to have risen, unassisted, from the bowels of St. Louis as a powerful statement on the nature of foundations. Its eight walls of thick steel form a geometric structure. The walls, weathered and rusty, are a warm shade of orange. It stands in a grassy area at the core of downtown, surrounded by tall and aging buildings.

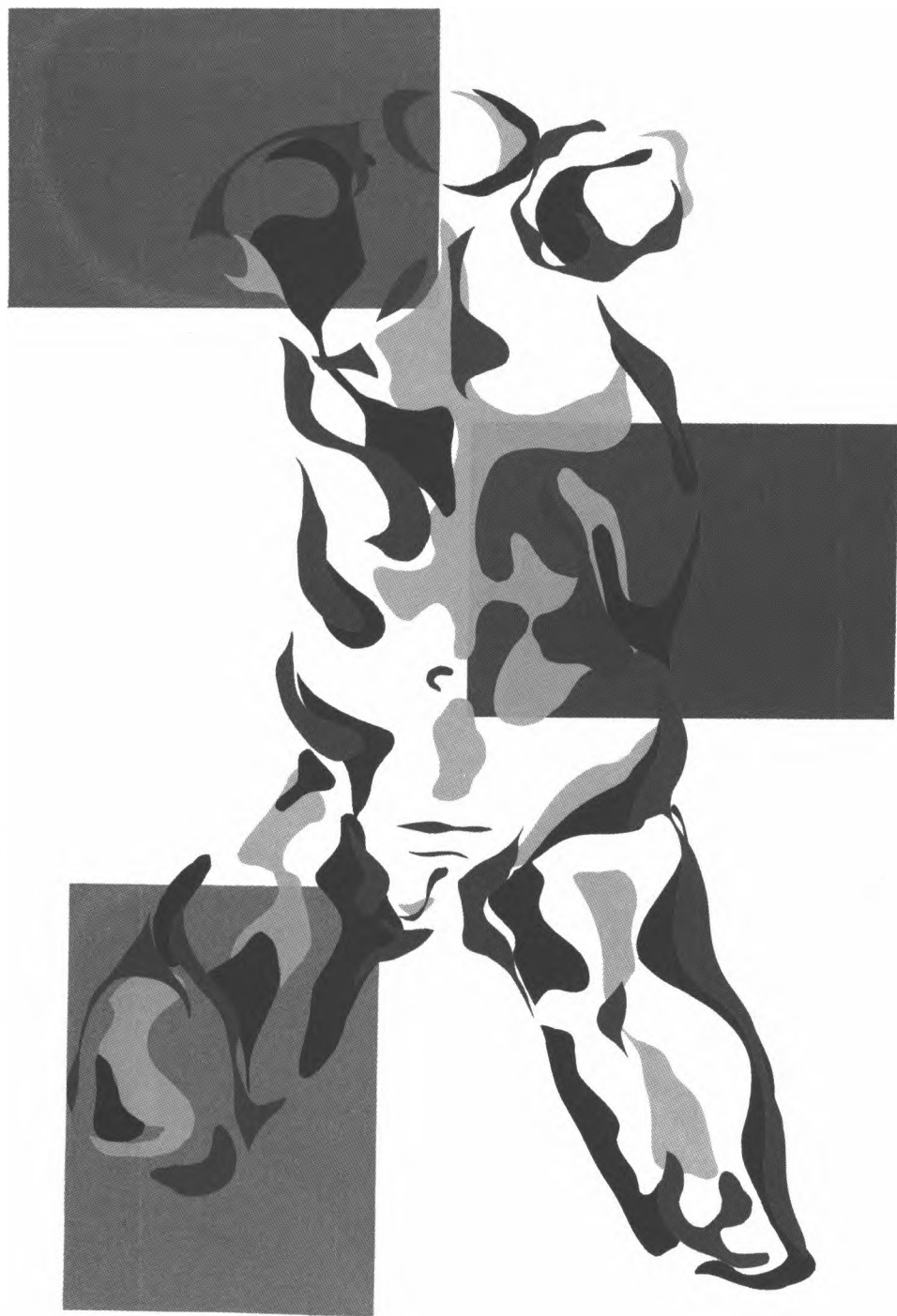
As seen from a car, the sculpture is unassuming. One might notice how the spotlights in the grass cast an eerie shadow of green. But the sculpture's walls look flimsy. From the car, the work has only a slight impact on its viewers. One could go so far as to question Serra's ability. One might dare to utter the popular response to modern art, "I could have done that." Undoubtedly, Serra's critics are those who only cruise his work. They prefer the plush interiors of their cars to the raw reality of art from and for the city.

The sculpture is for the daring. It exists for those who will get out of their cars and embrace the danger and strength of the downtown. Once outside the confines of a vehicle, one can enter the heart of the sculpture through spaces between the walls. I tiptoe through the gaps, allowing the sacredness of the space enclosed by the walls to rush up and greet me. It is in this space that the sculpture's magic lies.

Once inside, the sculpture's walls stretch upward and tower over anyone encased by the art. These walls are impenetrable. Yet glimpses of the city sidewalks through the gaps remove any oppressiveness of the thick steel slabs. Inside, the ground takes on mystical properties. All is silent. Downtown disappears except for the tops of skyscrapers peering over the sculpture walls like benevolent onlookers.

Over the years of its life, the sculpture has received varied responses. It has been embellished by graffiti, both profound and profane. One industrious person or group decorated the walls with white dots, simulating dominoes. According to Serra, a city sculpture absorbs its surroundings. A reaction to the work becomes a part of it. The sculpture is therefore in a constant state of flux, changing with the weather, with its inhabitants, with each response it elicits.

So it sits, plopped upon the space allotted it by generous city planners. Its staunch, sturdy walls are a slap in the face to those who claim to know about art. Its center space is a holy land for the true children of the city.



Marie Archambault



Amy Morgan



Carolyn McHale

A Lamentation on a lizard from Lesbos

Last night, in bed, I near the wall, she near the edge, my hands stroking her hair, her arms wrapped around my back, she asked me not to write this. She said everyone would know she was my lizard from Lesbos. I told her not to worry, I told her I could adopt a persona and no one would be the wiser. So I lied to her rather than to you. How could I not write—

I used to sit in the grass and watch her absorb the sky. My eyes would follow the slopes of her chest down to the curve of her hips inward toward her thighs. I was too sly to be caught, my fingers digging into the blades of grass, burying them into the ground and ripping them out by the roots.

Whitman calls them leaves, but I disagree. Leaves are what fall off trees before the ropes are hung. Leaves get trampled by the admiring masses. Blades, on the other hand, will cut right through you if you relax on them. They will not be crushed by your dreamy flesh.

Now I stay off the grass and take cold showers. Like cigarettes and that other grass, the freezing spurts of water that stun the flesh and waken the mind are addictive. They make you think ten hours of rubbing skin against skin in a bed built for one can be washed down the drain with the sweat and the soap. But then the humidity wraps around you and you suffocate on your own sensuality. And you never have enough time or Irish Spring to take showers all day.

I woke up this morning, took my hit of ice, brushed my gums till they bled, gargled twice and could still taste her tongue in my mouth. I lay down to sleep and could feel her on me. I didn't bother with another shower. My real addiction is her.

—This *is* none of your business and you know it. You would like for me to go take another cold shower and come back and write some other truth of myself because you don't want me to continue the lie I made to her after cumming. You would appreciate it if I would just forget the matter, hell, so would she, but how can I write when the thing making me long for numbness is stashed away in a crevice of my head that no one will ever see? As writing is a revelation for me, here is a revelation for you: writing is a better catharsis than a cold shower.

I write to relieve myself of tension. Tension from being terrified she's terrified. Last night, when we weren't making love, just lying there in an entanglement of sweaty arms, legs, and sheets, the wind would sweep through the open windows and brush against the door. Her eyelids would quiver and open suddenly and I could feel every inch of her tighten next to me, under me, on top of me, so I would nuzzle her lips, her neck, her breasts . . . trying to be a comfort when I was the thing causing the tension. The tension from being terrified someone will hear, someone will see, someone will write.

I try to wash myself of it, as I said before, I try to convince myself that it's hard in the beginning not to want to make love in a vacuum. But now she is out drinking with her friends, possibly trying to drown the taste of my tongue in her mouth with whiskey and vermouth, or whatever the hell it is she drinks when she does the bars. And I'm here, on my stiff-backed desk chair, chain smoking and contemplating that second cold shower.

My back aches like it used to, but I'm melting. Perhaps I should go lie in the grass; it's humid outside but that grass must be cool. The blades could cut straight through me—then again, I'm turning to cement. Pour me over the ground and watch me crack in a few years. If you're quick you can carve your initial, well, indent your initial while I'm wet. Or, perhaps, you can write a truth that's a lie, too.

Lilith [A Herstory]

On a Saturday, the very first Saturday, the Holy One, blessed be He, was returning to Heaven from earth, when an Angel at the Gate said unto Him, "Oh, Ineffable One, take off your sandals lest you drag that filth in here." And the Lord God saw that the soles of His sandals were covered with the dirt of His creation, and the Lord asked the Angel, "Where on earth did this stuff come from?" So the Angel descended upon earth to find where it came from, taking with him a broom and dust pan, the very first broom and dust pan.

After the Cherubims had washed the soles of His sandals, Holy One, blessed be He, flew down to earth and found the Angel of the Broom and Dust Pan collapsed atop a mountain of filth that was as high as Heaven and as wide as the sky. And the Lord God blew the Air of Consciousness into the Angel and asked of him, "So where on earth did it all come from?" Replied the Angel to LORD, "From every corner and crevice, from under every bush and boulder, off of every hill, out of every cave, good lord, from everywhere, except Your Garden."

Then the All-Mighty God took the pile of filth into His hands and began to dump it into the oceans, and the seas, and the lakes, and the rivers, when He was struck by a Whim of Cleverness. From the mandrake the LORD took the root, from the oak the LORD took a branch, with His hands the LORD pressed the filth of the earth onto the root and the branch and formed a curvacious figure He called Woman. But the Lord God did not understand why He formed Woman, so He cast Her aside, outside of Eden.

The Creator of all Things had Delusions of Omnipotence, so from the pure dust of His Garden in Eden the Holy One, blessed be He, took a handful and spat in it. With His Mighty hands, the LORD molded a miniature likeness of Himself, which He called Man. And the Lord God lay Man in the palm of His right hand and spoke the Ineffable Language through him: so Man was the very first puppet.

That Saturday afternoon, the very first Saturday afternoon, turned into Saturday evening, the very first Saturday evening, and God became frustrated with the limp and lifeless form called Man. So the LORD blew the Air of Egoism into Man, and gave him his soul and gave him his name, Adam. But Adam fell from the safety of his Creator's grip, for the LORD's breath was All-Powerful, and landed in a thorn bush that had grown from the fertile filth of Woman. Adam's life oozed out of him as the thorns pricked his flesh, so the Holy One, blessed be He, sealed the wounds with a Kiss: Adam wished to destroy the bush which had ripped away his flesh, but the LORD commanded him, "Let it be, for you cannot destroy that which I have created. Let it be, lest all your wounds reopen and fresh ones appear. Let it be, for I am your Creator and I blew Life into your form and am bigger than you."

So Adam obeyed his Creator and loved him: the Lord God loved Adam in return and gave his protruding member a life of its own. But the Angel of the Broom and Dust Pan was overcome with jealousy, for the LORD had only given him a broom and no protruding member, so the Angel asked the LORD, "Where can You keep him, Ineffable

One? There is no more room on Your Throne or anywhere in Heaven for him. He is too close to the beasts to be brought back with you." The Ineffable Lord God pondered and replied unto the Angel, "Why he can stay here and be My likeness on earth. Do you think I have all eternity to spend pruning trees and keeping the animals off each other?"

In Heaven the Cherubims called for the All-Mighty to tuck them into their beds: the Lord God heard their cries and left Adam alone on earth. Adam went to the apple tree and ate its fruit, for he was hungry: Adam lay beneath the apple tree, for he was sleepy, but his member was awake. In the sky the LORD ascended toward Heaven and a stray comet lodged in His nostrils, causing Him to propel His Holy nasal mucus downward upon earth. The Angel of the Broom and Dust Pan said unto God, "Why, Bless You, Yahvey," and the Lord God thanked the Angel by wiping His drip on the Angel's wings. This wayward mucus of the Creator landed on the still form of Woman: this wayward mucus was the Mucus of Language. So Woman became a being, for She could speak; but Woman was ungrateful to be covered with the Slime of the LORD and she washed it off in a pond just outside of the Garden. Off came Her goodness, but Her filthiness remained.

And by the light of the moon she saw Adam, the first Man, lying beneath the apple tree studying his protruding member, so She approached him and called unto him, "What creature are You? Your chest is sunken, your abdomen matted with hair, and your loins are swollen. Why, you are the most hapless beast I have seen yet." When Adam saw Woman he felt the pain of a thousand thorns tearing his flesh and he cried out for the LORD. The Lord God heard his screams and came quickly with the Cherubim of the Flaming Sword: and when the LORD saw that Woman had risen He declared, "Heaven help me, My Mucus has given Woman Life!" And when Woman saw the image of the Lord, she said, "Why it is the ineffable Yahvey! You cast me aside for imperfection and now you stand before me two-fold. Tell me, are your loins as swollen as his?" And again the LORD lamented, "Heaven help Me, My Mucus has given Woman Language, and now I must bear the burden of her unanswerable questions": for indeed, the Holy One's loins were swollen, blessed They be.

Adam ran to his Creator and begged of him, "Help me O LORD, for I fear that night demon who is round where I am narrow, plump where I am firm, and hidden where I am hanging." The Ever-Wise Creator said to Adam, "As all My creatures have mates, so must Man. I give you Woman: One, so that you may be fruitful and multiply, and two, because I know not what else to do with Her." But Woman was angry with the nerve of the LORD and said unto Him, "Listen, Yahvey, I was quite fruitful without that apple-picker or your ineffable language, and if you even think—let's just say, I wouldn't go waving that thunderbolt of yours around too close to one of My thorn bushes." The Cherubim with the Flaming Sword was delighted with the thought, so the Holy One, angered be He, struck him down with His thunderbolt, turning the unfortunate Cherubim to ashes which He blew across the earth.

The LORD alone now with Man and Woman said unto Woman, "I will not destroy that which I bothered to create, so You are spared. However, for the insults you have put upon Me, the Ever Potent Ruler, Your Master in Heaven, Your Creator, You shall

be the subject of My likeness on earth, Man. You will be recumbent to him. You will follow his will and that of his protruding member. These are the Commands of the LORD!"

Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, flew back to Heaven in a fury, and there He spent the night, the very first Saturday night, sulking. The Cherubims and the Angels chattered among themselves about the developments on earth: said a Cherubim to an Angel, "You know, I thought He was getting a bit too advantageous for His own Good," and the Angel replied, "Yes, yes. He should just have stuck to star formations and landscaping." The Lord God heard them, for He was All-Knowing and the batteries in His hearing aid were recharged, and he warned all the Cherubims and the Angels of the dangers of gossip, "Leave if you think I'm fallible! There's plenty of space on Uranus for all of you!" All the cherubims and Angels obeyed the Lord, lest they be cast out of leisure: all the Angels except Samael.

Samael wanted to see the miniature likeness of the LORD, but most importantly he wanted to see Woman. He begged the LORD all day long to take him down to earth; he even asked to go by himself, but the LORD told him no, for Samael's wings were not big enough to fly. So Samael waited until the Lord God fell into slumber with all the Cherubims on His lap and then scaled the back wall of Heaven and fell toward earth for the night, the very first Saturday night.

Meanwhile, on earth, Woman had named Herself Lilith, for night demon, but Adam had not liked that, so he named her Adamess after himself. Lilith then told Adam that she had seen bigger peckers on the real turkeys in the Garden and she would rather spend her night stroking theirs instead of his. Adam wished to strike Her, but She lay down under a thorn bush, so Adam took his frustrations out on the hard trunk of the apple tree. Soon, however, his protruding member became sticky, sore, and raw, so Adam waded in the pond where Lilith had first washed Herself of the LORD'S Slime.

The water was dark, the water was cool, so Adam floated in the pond for the rest of the night, that very first Saturday night, all of his limbs being cleansed of their excitement, his member being soothed by the soft caresses of the lapping waves. At dawn on Sunday, the very first Sunday, a water serpent spied what he thought was a dead one-eyed worm, so he swam up to it and took a bite. Adam awoke and let out a cry that could be heard all throughout the Garden and faintly in Heaven. Lilith heard Adam's cry and ran toward the pond to see which creature he was sharing himself with. She stopped at the edge when She saw Adam stumbling out of the pond with the serpent firmly attached to his companion and she said unto him, "Oh, Adam, didn't your Daddy tell you that it's the Garden snakes who don't have fangs?"

Adam became mad with fury and snapped the serpent's neck, committing his first destruction of one of the LORD'S creatures. Lilith, in fear of Adam's brutal force ran for the thorn bush, but Adam overcame Her in swiftness and lie atop Her, his member fully recovered. Adam knew not exactly what to do with himself, but he decided that if Lilith's member was hidden, then he must go inside Her to get at it. As Adam's was ready to strike, from the sky fell Samael: first he hit the apple tree, then he landed atop Adam and Lilith. Adam became stunned from the blow and Lilith slid out from beneath his heavy, heaving body and rose, striking Adam's member with the full force

of her foot. A cry was let out that could be heard even in Heaven, and so the LORD finally climbed out of His bed on that Sunday, the very first Sunday.

Adam leaped toward Lilith to finish his act, but Samael interceded and cast Adam across the Garden, slamming him against a boulder. The Holy One, blessed be He, descended upon earth in anger, for Sunday, this very first Sunday, was to be His day of rest: still groggy from the Saturday night with the trio of Cherubims who had red-hot, flaming swords, the LORD became confused in direction and landed in the pond outside the Garden. He walked across its waters and saw the serpent void of life and cried, for He could not breathe Life into that which Man had destroyed: then He saw Adam bloodied and bruised, lying against the boulder, and he cried for He thought Woman possessed such strength.

The Lord God lifted Adam from the boulder and carried him into the Garden and there He saw Samael eyeing Woman suspiciously. With One arm, the LORD cast Samael from the Garden, throwing him into the Sea, and He cursed Samael never to enter the Garden nor Heaven again. The Lord God stood face to face with Lilith and He said unto Her, "Woman, beast of all beasts, You have caused all of this, have You not? I shall have no mercy when Adam recovers and seeks revenge upon You, for You have justified his need for destruction." But Lilith, covered in dirt and grass, told the LORD, "Yahvey, you hayoo, I shall have no mercy upon you when your creations shame you, and Adam has already done so." The Lord God stood in awe for Lilith had uttered His Ineffable name which not even His closest Angels knew or could comprehend, the Ineffable Yahoo. Lilith then blew the LORD a kiss and flew off to the Sea to find Samael, who she thought could be company.

The Lord knew not what to do, for Lilith had uttered the Ineffable name and now she possessed the power of Wisdom and Flight. He lay Adam under the apple tree and took from him a rib and formed a more compatible mate, which He called Wo-man, and He named her Eve. Then the Lord God called upon a trio of Angels who had always served Him well—Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof—and He commanded them, "Go find Woman, who calls Herself Lilith, and bring Her back to Me so that I may show Her that She has been replaced and so that I may put Her away lest She make sport with Samael and bear him demons." And the three Angels, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, went off to the Sea in search Lilith.

Lilith, Woman, reached the Sea and found Samael lying on driftwood, brooding. Samael saw Her come to him and he asked her, "So Woman, have You no other name?" Lilith climbed atop the driftwood and lay aside Samael, and she replied to his question, "My name is Lilith for demon of the night, the very first demon of the night. And I believe yours is Samael, for what?" Samael looked at Lilith, puzzled, and said, "Samael for Samael. That is what the Lord named me, so I be." A cloud shadowed Samael and Lilith, for above them were Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, and Senoy said, "Why Samael, what a lovely raft you now inhabit, worth more than your place in Heaven?" And Samael broke off a piece of the driftwood and struck Senoy's mid-section, sending him into the Sea. Sansenoy pulled his brother out of the water while Semangelof warned Samael and Lilith, "Samael, your day will come, trust the LORD. But Lilith, your day has arrived and you must return to the LORD for your punish-

ment lest He strike now."

Lilith reflected on these words, and said unto the three Angels of the Lord, "Tell Big Daddy Lilith is not frightened by His Thunderbolt, for I know He only uses it on Angels and Cherubims, not on My kind. Besides, I know the Ineffable name and have said it; unless He wishes Me to repeat it now, He best stay to bugging in Heaven." Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof looked at one another and knew they could not give that answer to the LORD, lest they feel the painful power of the His Thunderbolt in full fury, so Senoy proposed to Lilith, "What if You promise not to harm the offspring of Adam and his new mate, Eve, as a favor to us?" And Lilith replied to Senoy, "Frankly, Senoy, that is of no relevance to myself, but you can tell the good lord whatever you like." So Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof were pleased and ascended toward Heaven.

Back in the Garden, Adam woke and found Eve lying next to him. The LORD had gone, so Adam thought Eve was another Woman and struck her boldly. Eve awoke and smiled at Adam adoringly and the LORD whispered into Adam's ear her name. Adam's member was in good health, for the Holy One, blessed be He, had blown the Air of Arousal into it while Adam slept. Thus, Adam, the very first Man, coupled with Eve, the very first Wo-man. And all of the creatures in Eden watched as Adam and Eve knew one another under the apple tree; and all of the creatures in Eden soon wandered away as the afternoon sun made them thirsty. All but the rabbits, who took not.

So as Adam and Eve spent their Sunday, their very first Sunday, coupling, the Lord God sat in His Chambers greasing His Thunderbolt with the oils of the Cherubims, awaiting the return of Senoy, Sansenoy, Semangelof, and Lilith. Late in the afternoon the three Angels arrived; late because they had mistakenly gone to Eden and found Adam and Eve being even more fruitful than the apple tree. Sansenoy approached the LORD weary of the Thunderbolt and said unto Him, "Ineffable One, Lilith, the demon of the night, the very first demon of the night, has refused to come for her punishment. But She promises She will do no harm to Adam nor Eve nor their offspring, which we judge will be numerous, as long as You, Ineffable One, let Her live in the Sea, with Samael."

The LORD'S Thunderbolt sagged, sapped of its power, and exasperated He cried, "I just had to do ONE MORE planet, didn't I? Just couldn't stop at Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus and Pluto. Had to fill a void, a Gap—no, I *had* to make earth, just had to step in some dirt, didn't I? And that damned Lilith and that rotten Samael will be the end of all things Yet!"

The End of All Things, the End of All Days, Lilith and Samael lay back in the Sea sharing stories of the Ineffable One. Samael wished to be fruitful with Lilith, for he sensed Her thunderbolt was hidden, but Lilith wished only to know about the innards of Heaven. "So," said Lilith to Samael, "Only the special Angels are allowed in the all-mighty's chambers?" "No," said Samael, frustrated, "only the special Cherubims, and an occasional Angel." Then Samael lay himself across Lilith, and Lilith remembered Adam, so She flipped Samael off of the driftwood into the Sea, and said unto him, "If you wish to be sporting, then wait until I wish to be. If you wish to be a jack rabbit,

then wait until I wish you to be. It's Sunday, Samael, the very first Sunday, I have been mounted by man in the morning, bothered by Angels in the afternoon, condemned by Yahoo forever, and the last thing on My mind is making sport with an Angel who can't even fly." Samael grew furious at Lilith's refusal and he shook the waters until Lilith was forced under by the waves. And so Samael had drowned Lilith, the demon of the night, the very first demon of the night, in the Sea. So he thought.

The Sunday afternoon, the very first Sunday afternoon, turned to Sunday evening, the very first Sunday Evening, and so came the LORD back to earth, to Eden. The Lord found Adam and Eve under the apple tree in slumber and He woke them. "My children," said the LORD, "I want you to multiply, and you will. But most importantly, I want you both to stay out of the pond that rests outside of the Garden. Eve, do not bathe Adam in the water of that pond, bathe him in the water of the spring near the boulder. This is my command, do not question it, only obey it. Lest you both be cast into the land of the beasts." So the night became morn and the Lord God had returned at last to Heaven, and Adam and Eve were in deep slumber, coupling only once when a lioness in heat had woken Adam.

Man and Woman lay together when Samael appeared on the outskirts of the Garden. Having drowned Lilith, or so he thought, Samael had come to the garden to satisfy his desires with Eve. He had overheard the LORD'S commands and knew their reasoning: the pond was where Lilith first washed Herself of the LORD, the pond brought back painful remembrances to Adam. So Samael walked along the edge of the pond and found the carcass of the serpent that Adam had known; and Samael waited. Adam's member woke, then Adam, and Adam looked over at the slumbering Eve, whose mouth was caked with the pasty residue of old breath, and Adam decided there was a time to be fruitful with Wo-man, and there was a time to find an unsuspecting sheep. So Adam went off into the Garden to find one, and left Eve alone beneath the apple tree.

Samael carried the dead serpent to the apple tree and hung it from a branch, hiding himself behind the trunk. Soon the morning sun shone in the eyes of Eve, the very first Wo-man, waking her and warming her body in pleasure, her very first pleasure. The distant baahing of a ewe forced Eve to rise and she saw Adam was gone, so she reached for an apple to eat for breakfast. When Eve had picked all the hard, dry crust from her eyelids, she saw the serpent staring glassy-eyed at her from the tree limb, and the serpent spoke unto her, "Why, Eve, your supple thighs are quite sticky and caked with dirt. Would you want Adam to see you in such a condition? Why not take a bath?" To this, Eve, now knowing that serpents could not talk, replied, "Oh, yes, I had better wash myself in the spring!" "Oh, NO!" cried the serpent, Samael, "Adam may be bathing himself in the spring at this very moment. Just jump in the pond, it's not too far down the path." Worried, Eve lamented, "But I can't! The LORD forbade me to." "But would the LORD want to see you like this?" asked the serpent, "NO! Nor would Adam. Who's going to know anyhow? I won't tell."

Convinced, Eve thanked the serpent and ran to the pond. Samael stepped from behind the tree and followed her into the water. Adam reached the clearing near the pond and saw Eve bobbing up and down with the waves in the pond and called for her

to get out lest they both be cast from the Garden. Eve just waved to Adam and laughed, not knowing under the water Samael was planting his demon seed, for she thought that the pond just had a very nice undercurrent. Soon enough Samael was done, the undercurrent gone, so Eve swam ashore and promised Adam she had done no wrong, for the serpent said it was alright. "Serpent?!" demanded Adam, "What serpent?!" Said Eve to Adam, "Why the one in the apple tree!" Adam dragged Eve back to the apple tree and stood horrified to see *that* serpent. Adam thought the evil Lilith had returned to get him, so he called for the LORD.

The Lord God heard him and yelled from Heaven, "What?! What?! Did the sheep buck?" "Not that much," screamed Adam, "But Ineffable Father, my Lord, my God, Woman has returned to Eden!" In a flash the Lord God came to Eden, forgetting His Robe, and thought He heard the faint laughter of Samael, but saw him nowhere. The Holy One, blessed be He, saw the wet flesh of Eve, He saw her dripping hair, He smelled the moss of the pond on her, and He said unto Adam and Eve, "I damnit! Get Out! You have already disobeyed me. You can't even do what I command for eight hours!" Terrified, Eve pointed to the serpent in the apple tree and said, "But the snake said it was alright! The Lord God saw the serpent and yelled unto Eve, "Dead! That serpent is dead! Ask the sheep-dipper, he killed it. Leave, both of you, just get out, go to the desert, multiply, suffer, drop dead in a few hundred years, just get OUT!!!" Adam began to plead with the LORD, but the LORD would not listen. Adam began to sob, so the Lord God called upon the Angel of No Mercy to drag them both out. So Man and Wo-Man, the very first Man and Woman, were cast from the Garden, forever.

As the very first Man and Wo-man, Adam and Eve, left behind the garden with the Angel of No Mercy But A Very Big Flaming Sword guarding the entrance, in the Sea, that evil Sea, Lilith swam with the fishes and all the slimy creatures, for Samael had not drowned Her as She was Immortal, Timeless, Unceasing. And there in the Sea was Lilith when Eve gave birth to Samael's demon brood and Adam lamented and blamed it on Lilith. There in the Sea was Lilith when the generations of Adam and Eve gave way to one another, and robbed one another, and raped one another, and murdered one another, and blamed the fall on Eve and her cohort, Lilith. But when Samael returned to the Sea on his vacation from seducing mankind, Lilith left to see what became of Adam and Eve.

So when a man would be with *his* wife, Lilith would be there, whispering into the woman's ear, "Is he as kind to the sheep?" When a man would wake stuck to the sheets of his bed, Lilith would be there hovering over him, saying, "Dreaming of apple trees?" When a woman would lie in labor, Lilith would come and ask her, "Why the amulet over the door? The knife by the bed? Do you think those three Angels have power over Me, over You?" When a rabbi would write furiously onto the page of Her wicked ways, Lilith would be peering over his shoulder, laughing, "Suck blood? Latch onto men? Kill children? Bare demon children? What did Adam tell you? I'm a Hag you fool!" And in Heaven the Lord God would watch, the power of His Thunderbolt faded, and sigh to the Cherubims and the Angels, "She'll be the End of Me, Yet. The End of All Things, the End of All Days."



Amy Morgan

Humble

One morning when I was twelve
I discovered a pimple on my chin
"Come here," my mother said, "I'll fix it."
And she squeezed, leaving red, crescent moons
of blood on my face.
"Hey pimple-on-the-face," my boyfriend called
on the playground, and by the end of the day
he had found a new sixth-grade love.

That mini-volcano with its albino lava
and all the others that followed
taught me what no man screaming from
the pulpit of my grandmother's country church
could. He would stand before the congregation
of farmers, fanning themselves with hymnals
or programs, and I expected him to name those
who had sinned. The fear of hearing my name
creak from the ceiling fan, musty organ,
stained-glass Jesus did not cool my arrogance
did not make me meek.

The next year I got my period and learned
when not to wear white. For each time that I
assured by the phase of the moon
and the color of my pill, dared, a
crawling red-brown river was sure
to darken my crotch, ready at any moment
to leave a stain or puddle on a chair.

That preacher pouring the hot syrup of hell
over blue-haired women and Aqua Velva men
did not frighten me.
Only the fear of a high, cackling laugh as I
walk away could make me humble.

Widow

The snow is falling as she is falling
into the bed and he is falling into
her and they are falling together, into each
other, into each other's mouths, bones, ears.
He carried her here and dropped her.
She landed like a stone in water and the covers
and the pillows splashed out around her, over
her. And it is because he's missed her
that he throws her here five minutes after they
walked through the door, not even letting her
pet the cat or take a leak. "It's been a long
ride," she says, "I need to go to the bathroom."
But the roaring in his ears drowns her voice,
and soon she forgets that she has to go.
In the past weeks of reading erotic stories to
entertain herself, talking dirty to him on the
phone, her body has curled and tightened upon itself
like a dry, crusty leaf after weeks with no water,
and he cracks her open like a nut, splitting the shell
of her insides. It reminds her of the pain when the
gynecologist inserts his speculum to run metal
fingernails across her inner chalkboards. His
mining tools invade her, digging deep into rock
crevices and slippery limestone curves; he
hopes to find a jewel, a diamond or pearl. He
will pluck it out of her and leave her lying there,
strip-mined, land waiting to be reclaimed,
made whole again, but this man, this man does not
take the precious stones of her pleasure
and run away with them. He stays and hands
them back to her in the guise of moans and sighs
and wetness running down the insides of her thighs.

The Flowers Come

Four women die each day
the woman said
they die at the hands,
fists, feet of that man who
yesterday, last month, one year
long ago
said she was his.

Four women die each day
the woman said
they are bloodied by love
so that their love flows
onto the kitchen sink
linoleum floor
they share with him.

Four women die each day
the woman said
and we cannot help them
because the flowers come
the next day,
begging she forget
the black eye
hidden beneath her makeup.



Amy Morgan



Laura Labieniec-Pintel



Anne Schmidt

Nadian Shie Once Knew Me Well

I am sick, and so I think of Nadian Shie. She was my friend, my first and best friend. I miss her especially now that I am sick. This room can get so close to me. Even the soft light filtering in the windows is stifling. Lying in my bed, I can barely reach outstretched fingertips to the sunlight warm air. The books in the bookshelf stare at me in letters I can no longer read. Everything is too tiresome for me. I sit and stare quietly at the walls around me. Sit there with my tray of food that I eat alone. How can anyone ever want to have breakfast or any meal in bed? I hate this bed. I sometimes draw the room around me, and I don't even need to look at it anymore. Even when I shut my eyes it is there, all stretched out before me in muted colors, sometimes the right colors, but usually in elaborate shades of reds, blues and violets. These colors are more interesting than the ones around me. The soft old brown of the table next to my bed, where the tray sits after I have eaten. The infernal window, mocking me in my cell, and all my favorite books out of my reach, a torture best suited to Tantalus. The closed white door and its tight black doorknob. Even the closet door that I can not see becomes a part of the trap grown around me. And all I have is too much painful time to think.

It is best to think about the good times, before. Nadian and I spent a long, lonely, lovely summer together and it was pleasant. The wind blew softly and the sunlight was even softer in the cool places where we were. I can still hear our laughter as we ran through the forest near the train tracks, where it was best dark and damp, and the panic that would overwhelm us as the trains came screaming, matched with the scary thrill as we ran and hid from their tremendous noise as they rushed by us. We were Indians in a forest, walking Indian-quiet in our tennis shoes. We found bent trees and made camps, we brought food and mulberries and created wild animals to live in peace with. Then the trains weren't coming through anymore and we could live there to our own content.

My imagination doesn't do that anymore.

We were explorers and followed the open creeks through the town, finding unexplored forests and peaceful places that were green like Ireland and suddenly we were Irish lasses running through an open field. We were always Irish or Indians or some other identifiable group like that.

I'jam enrue lanti en oun sayn. Un esic endirn ocactis.

We made up our own languages. I still do that.

We were giants, bending trees in our mighty palms, turning stone to sand, stepping on villages of sleeping peasants and never losing. Then we were elves running through an English garden where we lived among the daffodils and violets. Gardens are secret mossy places, with low growing grass and quiet paths. We loved to grow things. We grew corn in a garden that never sprouted as Indians, and harvested the deep green mosses that grew in our favorite places. We didn't like most flowers, but I loved wild violets. Nadian just liked clover. We spent lifetimes looking for the four-leafed kind, and enjoyed every moment of failure.

When we changed our names I would be Violet, soft and quiet, and she would be Ivy, clinging, if we were elves. If we were giants, I was Helga and she was Henrietta, both good solid giant names. When I was Irish, I was Bevin and she was Eileen. One of my favorite ones, other than Irish or Indians, was to be a princess who had fantastic magical powers and who lived with her sister, who did too. Then I was Brandon and she was Carilon and we travelled through the forests and along the roads of England or other parts of Europe where we fought our way against all odds and through many adventures before becoming queens in our right, and ruling together. We didn't like the idea of one tyrant over everybody. Two people seemed a lot more fair. Usually we left home to escape a cruel father or uncle who wished to marry us off or kill us so he could have princes rule his kingdom. They thought girls were defective or something. We returned only after we had proven to ourselves we could rule better than him by saving his kingdom from monsters while he hid behind his throne. He was a coward and we showed him up in brave and fantastic ways, then he would be transformed and give up his throne to us.

Remembering all this has put me in a bad mood and it can only get worse. I had better stop thinking about Nadian Shie until I calm down or I might start swearing or start something that I can not finish.

Nadian was my very best friend, though we never had to say it, we just knew it was true. I wish we'd had more time, but they took her away from me. She's gone forever. My mother thought, and told me, that she was doing "what's best". That line is the most clichéd thing she ever said, and she could never have been more wrong. My cousins knew, and they didn't care. They always left me out, they said I couldn't play baseball or anything with them. They simply thought it was funny that it was me and not them who was getting in trouble. At least we had that one last summer together. Nadian saw it coming and tried to warn me, but I refused to listen. I still think about and miss her often.

I will try to describe her, but it's getting hard to remember. I remember ideas and thoughts, sometimes the feel and the look of the sunlight and the atmosphere, but rarely a picture and fewer details. Sometimes a detail, so specific, will hit me in the face and I will hang onto it as long as I can. I remember her dark-haired, green-eyed, like my mother; she was my size, and she always said my hair was red in the right light. I had always wanted red hair; she said it went well with my blue eyes.

She was quiet sometimes, a lot, but maybe not as quiet as I was, or I guess still am. Our favorite places were dark and moist and very secluded, private. Like under the trees in the little wood that was our mighty Black Forest. There was our airplane, undoubtedly a Thunderbolt P-47 shot down by the Luftwaffe. I still go there sometimes, but I never stay long. The airplane shell and the magic are gone.

We, I, we never thought ahead. I never thought she'd leave or that I'd let her be chased into her oblivion. But I remember her name and let her live in me a little. People are still alive in memories. They still won't understand. She was my leader, my co-conspirator, but I no longer have to follow.

Another favorite place was the railroad bridge that was abandoned and wooden and lay on top of dirt cliffs that we had to climb. It was beautiful and green, with short,

moist, mossy grass and tree thickets. The grass grew along a stream with the dead tree thrones from which our Queen could survey her entire realm. Often we fairies roamed the dirt paths in the forest, making friends with the trees that lived there, and lions who hid there. The trees had been there longer than anyone, and even told us stories of before the railroad. We spent a lot of our time hiding from any other kids who came to play there. In the open field beyond a fence were our moors where we had a cottage with stone fences, everything green and grey. We built it all. We had secret paths and secret ways and used the great hanging vines of the forest to help us up and down the steep hill cliffs through shifting leaves and rocks. It was in deepest hot and humid summer and we wore yellow and red and cut-off jeans all the time. When we had long hair, it was in Indian braids or we left it down when we were wild fairies, or ladies at court, surprising everyone with our wit. We had full, complete, give-up-your-body-and-mind-to-the-moment fun. When we had that fun, we forgot the time and would have to run home when the sun fell down.

Sometimes I remember too quickly, I guess.

I don't think I'm in the right frame of mind to tell about this anymore, but I shall try to continue. My memory seems to be functioning better as the weather warms and days improve, even though I look at them through my wooden-paned window. Maybe it is more like those days long ago...

I'm sorry, I quit in mid-sentence. But I'm thinking about all of it, wondering what it all meant. I suppose I am at that age now. I just feel regret and loss at the memories of her. My mother cost me so much with all of her caring that I can't help but be bitter. And even now my cousins can't understand my bitterness, attributing it and every other part of me to my illness. I won't explain it to them. I suppose I'm being stubborn and punishing by not explaining, but I don't think the explanation would help or even make sense to any of them. My mother remembers it as a small incident in my childhood, my cousins don't remember it at all. The more I remember her, the more I realize how much she really mattered to me. I'll never see Nadian Shie again. These paper-printed walls and the prim white painted wood shut all of her out. Those printed and painted bouquets of flowers hang around in the air like angels, or death.

And Morning Came Black for the Revolution

Three men stood grouped,
huddled on the black
desolate late night street corner.
Jackets and hats,
blacks and tans, drab
in the stifling starless chill,
making them all one
in the distance.

And three women sat,
cornered around the kitchen table,
leaning heavily on it,
a white candle burning to protect
them from the heavy, fog-laden night.
They could feel its weight
beating down on their arms and backs
as they waited for the morning
of earth's revolution.

The men jostled each other,
poking elbows and toes,
waiting.
The smell of stiff
drinks on their breath.
Despite shuffling attempts at warmth,
the bone chill of the night in their voices
echoed through their minds and stomachs.
As they stood, their candles burned.

Around the heavy, wooden table,
the topic over the welcome black coffee
remained simple, safe—
mind-clearing.
Children, work, daily washing
and the unseasonal bite of the weather.
They were all brought often to the top of the table.

(new stanza)

The men knew why they did and tried.
For a life of daily work,
and easy neighbors, Saturday picnics—
and they's given up reason,
all sanity for this normalcy they sought.
Their candle still burned.
All their groping was for one sense—
home, ours and to stay.

The women had sweated and grasped,
days and nights,
for the change in their pockets,
their homes
and had held their lives together.

Strong, an oaken table,
shining by the light of a candle, melting.
The night reality smacked them down loudly,
hitting them with an open palm as they looked up—
pounding, pounding.
But they still burned.

The table waited, taunt.
The men took their wares
that no one could buy,
hoping to buy their change,
buy a chance for themselves.
This was their last light.
A treacherous, dangerous payload,
as nitroglycerin in a shaky hand
sets off its charge.

The morning's glow was black.
A man, drab in tan, came to the door.
The table tensed, its candle flickered
with the knowledge of worst fears confirmed.

The women looked at their fatherless children.
The wind through the door blew the candle out.
They gathered their tables and children,
and melted away.

Monument Valley

I first felt
deep-heavy space,
then the dry red earth
rolling.
I could see it moving,
snake-bellied,
toward me.
Image the shush of sand
rubbing,
threatening to bury me
such sand deep and warm— —
I am a new place for
the green-blue dusty plants
to grow.

They absorb my moisture.

The light, softened,
artificial,
on a distant wall-fortress
of rock.
Vertical, tall— —
it is cold.
I felt its chill even
as I looked still at it.
I felt the cold ache in
my bones,
as if I had touched it.
It was a frame to the picture
around me.

There was no sound.

Exactly

The tombstones lie flat, like plaques.
They say that makes it easier to trim
the lawn. I think the grounds keeper
crawls on his hands and knees to snip
each blade to exactly 3.4 centimeters.
Grampa once made me a bouquet from the wild grasses
that sprawled through his yard.
It wasn't even my birthday.



Jennifer Pomerantz

Of August

Oh August, that golden month of waning summer sunsets, melted ice cream cones, and pregnant women in bikinis. In the deserts of the Southwest the rains come in the month of August. Rain sizzles Arizona's shimmering landscape, it raises dust off rock and concrete. It cools many fires in many heads. August days are by no means peach-soft, tropically balmy August nights. Nights spent playing basketball in only shorts and a sports bra are rewards after the sun sets. The days are mustard, a continuous egg yolk yellow of light and heat. Hot heat. Hot, hot, sticky hot, scorching hot, blinding hot. Red hot hour-long minutes spent at city intersections: lava asphalt, mercury fire steering wheel, dragon's breath ventilation; Dante hot. But the nights are moist, succulent, body temperature hot. Oh hellish August.

I know many people who were born in August; I am one of them. I entered the world August the eighth —8/8—; I was conceived during the Holidays. Although I am my parents' sixth child I was my mother's eighth pregnancy; she had given birth to two girls and two boys, had a medical abortion, gave birth to another daughter, had a miscarriage, and then me. I was two weeks early, I must have been in a hurry to get out safely. Perhaps I didn't want to show up on the 18th, the day she had had her fifth pregnancy terminated in Sweden. So seven years later, in 1969, I picked my own day to be born.

Leos: there is some snobbish character trait, some mind's-eye air of royalty Leos have which predisposes them to dream up situations instead of paying attention to reality. August is our month. I am King of the jungle, a saffron-haired beast. I am Queen of the forest, Mistress of the trees, keeper of the emerald secrets, confident of the rivers' tales. I am Leo, "hear me roar." My high school boyfriend (born the day before me) is another Leo. I thought we were predestined to have a magical relationship, like Cinderella and Prince Charming, because of it. We turned out to be more like Lilith and Adam, Sampson and Delilah, Sonny and Cher. My new boyfriend's ex-girlfriend has the same August birthday as my ex-boyfriend. I'm hoping something will come of us, now that they are gone. I have a lot of friends who are Leos. We like to hang out together and see who can command the most attention, be it pleasurable, or not. Leos really thrive on attention, we like the spotlight, the limelite. . . . Our ruling planet is the sun.

I threw my virginity to the wind late one August. I thought I was ready, I wasn't; but I had an agenda to fill, the movie in my head had been playing to a full house. Perhaps the "first time" is too abstract to worry my pretty little head over: mystified merely as a cultural convention to appease someone else. There was no ritual I knew of that told me how to go about seeking love, except for what I'd seen of popular culture icons on T.V. My kinspeople did not take me through an official rite of passage, there were no diagrams drawn in the sand. Lovemaking is an intimate event, but not a sacred ritual in American society. My guides had been preplanned movie kisses, airbrushed magazine layouts, and steamy passages from bestselling novels. From fictional influences I deemed myself ready for action, all I had set myself up for, however, was drama.

Virginia Woolf was an August bride, as was my sister Terri. They remind me of each other intellectually. Although my sister is not a major literary figure. And Virginia Woolf didn't meditate twice a-day.

August, the eighth month in the western calendar, is named for Julius Caesar's grand nephew Octavian, who proclaimed himself ruler of the Roman world after his grand Uncle was assassinated. Octavian was given the name Augustus by the "Senate and he began the period known as the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace" (I11).

WWI, began in 1914, the "Guns of August." Hitler heated things up for World War Two by invading Poland the day after August ended, 1939. Did he think he should leave the last month of summer for peace and preparation? Perhaps he believed Germany would have a better chance if they started the new War-to-end-all-Wars in a different month. No matter, for even the stars could not help Germany. They lost both wars they started, miserably. President Harry S. Truman didn't seem too concerned with interrupting summertime when he dropped atomic bombs on Japan on the sixth and ninth of August; however, I suspect the summer of '45 was one many people were glad to see closed down.

August 4th, 1944. Spicy little Anne Frank was sitting at the dilapidated kitchen table with her shoes off, doing her lessons. All of the inhabitants of the attic hiding place were tense, the telephone downstairs wouldn't stop ringing. Suddenly the building was raided by Hitler's secret police yelling commands: "Auf machen? Da drinnen! Auf machen! Schnell! Schnell! Schnell!" They had been safe for two years, two years of still days and silent arguments. Two years of quiet growth and stolen goodnight kisses. And then one August morning the SS pulled their number, tipped off by a thief, they found the Franks, the Van Daans and the bachelor dentist Mr. Dussel like a cat finds an open tin of sardines. The play based on her diary suggests Anne actually found being in a concentration camp worthwhile, she was finally able to go outside again, get fresh air and some sun. After all, it was August.

I lost my Grandfather in August. He was my last grandparent, the only one I really knew. I think he died in August so he wouldn't have to face another fiscal year.

August Strindberg wrote **Miss Julie**, a major contribution to the Naturalistic movement in Theatre, in August of 1888. I wonder if his friends called him Gus, or Auggie. Maybe he was known as Gusty. Vincent Van Gogh (A.K.A. "crazy red") painted his Sunflowers in August of 1888. At the time he was living in his little yellow house in Arles, waiting for his comrade Gauguin to visit. August in the south of France: refreshing, lively, colorful.

By any August, in the desert, when the earth is parched and thirsty, my skin has turned as dark as an Indians': Earth red, August brown.

It will not be August again until next year. First we must get through Fall, past Winter, beyond Spring, into the ripening of Summer.

Sometimes I think of IT like making cookies.

"Cooking is like love—it should be entered into with abandon or not at all."
—Kitchen Graffiti (Silver Palette Cookbook)

The idea springs from someplace dangerous and exciting; you long for something sweet, quick, handy: cookies. You come across a previously unexplored recipe. Anticipation mounts in the preliminaries: warming the oven, gathering ingredients, measuring, stirring, licking, tasting, stroking. Your heart starts pounding as you push the batter around in tight circles with a wooden spoon. The dough turns out soft and fluffy, like an angel's bed. You can't help but stick your fingers in again and again. Your blood starts racing with an irreversible sugar high. You're preoccupied by one thought: cookies. While they're in the oven you smell their meatiness and picture their metamorphosis in the heat. Finally they're ready, you bite in and suck hot melty chocolate off your fingers, one by one. With apparent ease and painted passion you eat heartily (as if the two of you were old flames), you gobble for all you can get. But after awhile you begin to feel nauseated. You weren't really hungry when the second batch emerged from the oven but you sank your teeth in for their sake; for who could resist a hot virgin cookie?

Suddenly, despite the fun, you desperately need a break from the rich suffocating butter. You start to wish you hadn't gotten yourself involved in such a draining endeavor. No one warned you that making cookies was a long term commitment. The fresh dough is now curdling from prolonged association with your stomach's juices (a personality clash?) Acting devoted you sit by the oven in tedious ten to twelve minutes spurts. It is your duty as head cookie-maker to retrieve each set at precisely the right time using careful attention and experienced judgement; God forbid you burn the tender little things.

Eventually the whole damned batch has had its day in the sun. The problem now is what to do with them? They always seem to be around, once in awhile enjoyably, at other times almost out of spite. Even though your appetite has been ruined the cookies are always on your mind. There's no relief, once you've made your cookies you've got to live with them. Everyone else loves them, they think the cookies are wonderful! What's wrong, how could you not like cookies? Cookies are so nice, (too nice). You can't escape them they're everywhere, distracting you, enticing you, making you queasy on sight. As soon as possible you get back on whole grains and fresh fruits, and tactfully try to forget the whole encounter (ordeal). But, when the oven has long gone cold, you come across a lone stale oatmeal chocolate chip cookie stuck between the pages of a "how to" book: a mere image of the adventure you had. And you think "Cookies, Mmmmmhhhhmn, that sounds great, I wonder why I haven't made any lately?"

Devilishly Luscious Chocolate Chip Cookies:

Preheat oven to 325°

CREAM: 1 cup real butter with
1 cup packed brown sugar and
3/4 cup white sugar.

BEAT in 2 fresh eggs and 1 Tbsp pure Vanilla.

In another bowl MEASURE: 1/2 Tbsp salt,
1 Tbsp baking soda
1/2 Tbsp baking powder

SIFT in: 2 cups unbleached flour and
2 1/2 cups of oatmeal that has been ground
in a blender with a chocolate bar (not
soft or frozen.)

MIX bowls together with 12 oz of authentic chocolate chips.
BAKE until big, brown, and strong (about 10 to 12 minutes) and
ENJOY!

Best of luck!

Prologue

After Grandpa's amputations in January of 1989, Aunt Judy gathered all the pictures collected in his apartment over the years and made three collages to go on the walls of his room in the nursing home. They nearly spanned the entire twentieth century, from his boyhood and swindling days in Duluth, to his children's children's school snapshots, and even to pictures of their kids. After he died I was telling an extended family member how I would like to have known Grandpa in his rough and tumble bootlegging days. And about one picture in particular of him with Grandma. In it he was holding a cigar and had a conniving look in his eye (which is only equalled by the devilish glint in brother Mark's, which is only challenged by the gleam in young Jessica's). To me he looked vibrant.

"What do you mean 'vibrant'?" My sister Terri asked with a sting. "Grandpa was never vibrant; he's been sick since before I was born, he's been acting like he's going to die for over thirty years."

I had to agree with her. Perhaps I meant "fuller;" he looked like he appreciated Grandma's home cooking.

The last day I saw him was a Wednesday. My sister Tracy, Aunt Judy, niece Jessica, and I were about to have lunch at my Uncle Ronnie's soulfully fulfilling restaurant when the hospital called and said Grandpa had had a heart attack. By the time Tracy and I arrived Gramps was on oxygen and morphine, napping quietly.

I opted to stay in the lobby with towheaded Jessica, who was clad in her new flashing hot pink leotard and stretch pants. A gaunt woman asked her if her name was "Dolly." I couldn't imagine people of childbearing age today naming a little girl Dolly. But to that woman, "Dolly" had no social implications; it was endearing, innocently suggestive, not demeaning. I thought I should get Jessica away from her but didn't have the energy to get the kid to stop climbing around the furniture and doing somersaults on the floor—and I didn't particularly want her to stop.

"What the hell," I thought, "Why not liven this fucking place up?" When Tracy came downstairs I was surprised that she was crying. "He looks so small" was all she said in explanation. We both stared at Jessica. I realized it was my turn to go see him.

I made it to Grandpa's room, past the demonic-looking ladies in wheelchairs, being fed mush, through the halls of incapacitated people squacking for help, old men snoozing upright, women staring at the carpet hour after hour. I paused, straightened myself, and walked in solidly with my head high. Tracy had been right, Grandpa did look small. His prostheses were off; he had a yellow cotton blanket around the lower half of his body. He was very peaceful. My Uncle Ugie, my Mother's brother, sat in the chair in the corner and shuffled cards. His wife's mother was having a pacemaker implanted at a hospital across town; he looked tenser than usual.

I sat next to Grandpa's bed and put my deeply tanned hand on his white speckled arm. His skin was pleasantly soft from underexposure. I didn't remove my hand. My Aunt Judy, who surprised me by her composure, walked around the bed and placed a sturdy hand on my back. As soon as she touched me I burst into tears. Grandpa looked

at me kindly. I ignored my tears, letting them run down my face as would water over a fall. He smiled, he started to sing: "Toot-toot-tootsie goodbye, toot-toot-tootsie don't cry . . ." he tapered off, back to sleep. I was glad they had given him something for his pain. He had a bedsore that was months old; he would moan from the agony; he moaned so loud and so frequently that he scared Jessica when she first visited a few days before. She wouldn't let him touch her. Had I not known him all my life I'm not sure I would have let him touch me either.

He woke, prodded at the oxygen mask with his stub finger to scratch his nose, and gazed at me. I could see the love in his eyes, not just for me, but for all his grandchildren. He seemed agreeable, willing, thankful. He'd sigh, smile, and his eyes would light up with some unspeakable, yet completely communicated love. He knew, with pride, that he had been the only person in my life like him. He was the only Grandparent I had known. He was our family past. (The future was downstairs being called "Dolly.")

"Don't cry honey." He told me. "Everything's gonna be all right." He rolled over a bit and for the first time I saw where his legs ended, they simply stopped. I tried to restrain an involuntary jump, I felt like I had been pinched. I have no idea how he felt about losing his legs.

I sang weakly, unselfconsciously "Toot-toot-tootsie goodbye . . ." but did not finish; what I had heard Gramps sing was all I knew. Ronnie called from the restaurant. He found out how Daddy was, argued with Ugie for a minute about business, and took an order to bring Grandpa a chicken salad sandwich on rye, a bowl of magical motzah ball soup, and a pepsi. I heard Grandpa ate every bite, I imagine, with gusto.

It was getting late. Tracy and Jessica had a plane to catch. I wanted to offer to stay with him for awhile. I didn't mind being there with him, he was so pleasant, and memories flowed so easily. But it was time to say goodbye. For all anyone knew, Gramps would still get by for another twenty years in the same fashion, would be at my wedding, hold my children. I did not tell myself it was the last time I would see him, but perhaps I knew it; Grandpa knew it, Tracy knew it, Judy knew it . . . I hugged him goodbye and he told me to keep my chin up. I turned to walk out the door and before I knew it, I had spun around and was hugging him again. I played right into his outstretched hands; in that split second he had been waiting for me. I had been instantly transformed from a twenty year old woman to five year old kid; all that mattered was he was my Gramps.

Tracy walked me down the back stairs so we wouldn't have to sit in the elevator with any of the other dying residents. Tears were dripping off my face; I had experienced the quintessential deathbed scene, but there had been no script, and no camera. We said goodbye to Ugie and Judy and got in Uncle Eric's big dark car. I crawled in the back seat with little Jessica, who was sucking her thumb, put my head on her carseat, and cried, really sobbed. We drove away, I cried more.

"You know he's really ready to go." Tracy said. I cried. Jessica took her thumb out of her mouth and pressed her tiny hand to my wet cheek. "Why are you cwyng?" She asked pertly. She patted my face, "Don't cry baby, don't cry."



Desirée A. Rios



Desirée A. Rios

Miedo Menor

Cuando era menor, yo tenía miedo de la noche.
De noche muchas veces oía muchas cosas:
El viento soplabá entre los árboles
Y el perro de mi vecino ladraba.
Pero para mí los árboles eran monstruos feos
Y el perro amable era lobo hambriento.

Una noche me dormí,
Todas las mantas cubriéndome el cuerpo y los ojos
Como una armadura.
Me desperté cuando oí pasos fuertes en la escalera.
Al cabo oí el escalón principal que chirrió fuerte.
El corazón me machacaba las orejas,
Los pasos se acercaban a mi cama,
De repente se pararon los pasos,
Se pelaron las mantas.
Ví al dueño horrible de los pasos.
—Padre mío!

Young Fear

When I was young, I was afraid of the night.
At night I would hear many things:
The wind blowing between the trees
and my neighbor's dog barking.
But for me the trees were ugly monsters
and the friendly dog was a hungry wolf.

One night I slept,
With all my blankets covering my body and my eyes,
Like a coat of armor.
I awoke when I heard heavy footsteps on the staircase.
Finally I heard the last stair creak loudly.
My heart was beating in my ears.
The footsteps came closer to my bed,
Suddenly the footsteps stopped,
My blankets were peeled back.
I saw the horrible owner of the footsteps
—My father!

A Gallery of Short Poems

Cucumbers

Cucumbers and pickles are
the same vegetable, right?
But anyone knows that the taste
is different
With the first to last bite.

Rachel Low
Bonnie Chisum
Brooke Williams
Tracey Tieman

A Love Poem

Without you,
I am a shoe without a foot,
A chimney without soot,
I'm just a mess . . . , I guess.

Sushanah Boston
Simonie Hodges
Jeremy Zimmerman
Heather Hansen

Glasses

poised
on a bridge
with a view

Tamara Anderson
Jayne Seward
Meghan Stone

Bananas

The ripe, sleek dancer
Peels down to show her physique;
Her audience appealed
Were swept off their feet.

Leigh Ann Loggins
Sissy Jarrell
Dana Copeland

Things to Buy Before I'm Dead

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Things to do, to have had read.
Ideas to learn, loves to give.
With all this to do,
when do I live?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Things to own, to have had said.
People to know, ideas to live.
With all this to have,
when do I give?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Men to know, to have had bed.
Women to meet, genius to show.
With all this to do,
when do I grow?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Kisses to give, to have had wed.
Children to bear, plans to grow.
With all this to have,
what will I show?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Career to have, to have earned bread.
Freedom to enjoy, life to nest.
With all this to do,
when do I rest?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Myself alone, and underfed.
My husband gone, my children guests.
With all this I had,
where is the best?

Things to buy before I'm dead.
Tears to feel, to have had shed.
Loves to know, to have had bed.
With all this gone and felt and said
then why, O Lord, aren't I dead?

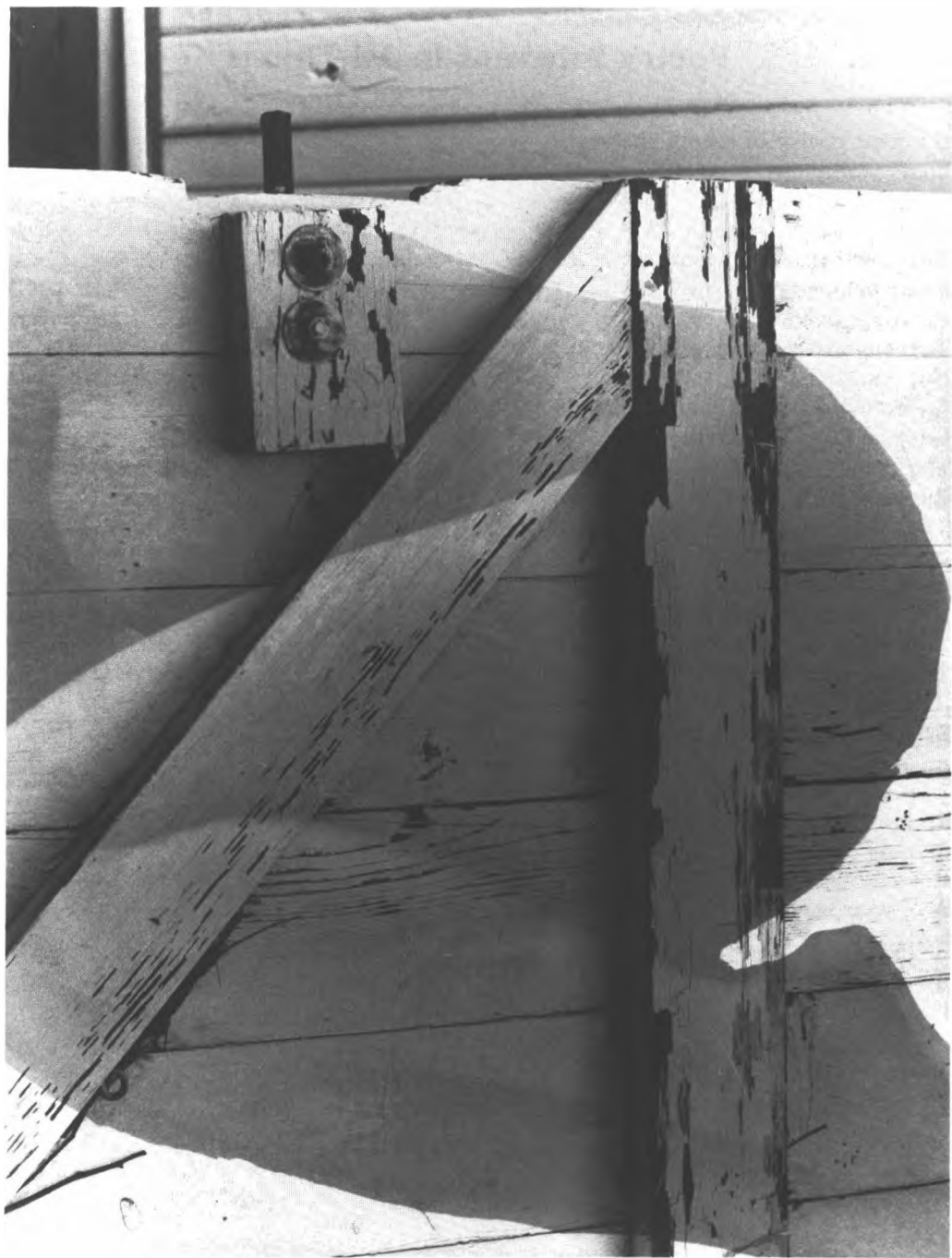
Mother May I

mother says
I don't dress attractively
don't make-up
to be attractively,
that I give out all sorts of bad signals.
But I am
giving out
exactly what I mean signals:
I am not out to attract me a Lover.

he says
I don't alluringly
don't make-up
to smell alluringly
that I give out all sorts of bad signals.
But I am giving out
my own signals,
giving out exactly what I mean signals:
so that I,
I may reject him.

Poetry Inherent in All Things

Inherent poetry of empty shelves,
blank walls,
open spaces.
There is more in less.
The fewer marks gouged into a life
by its belongings,
the more poetic.
There is something poetic in lack.
Not want.
Poetic wholeness in maintaining an existence
less one thing expected.
The poetry of black and white film,
the skewing of expected projection.
The poetry of silent screen,
of a radio talk show —
disembodied voices
that wouldn't match a name
even if I could face them.
The poetry of woman.
Aristotle's lesser man.
Freud's all-important-appendage-lacking
incomplete.
Any more is less.
The poetry of owning one pair of shoes,
owning one bag.
Owning yourself.
And your lack.



Aimée Linhoff

"this antagonism toward art"

"So far as I could see, shoes are never mended. They are worn out like animals to a certain ancient stage and chance of money at which a man buys a new pair; then, just as old Sunday shoes do, they become the inheritance of a wife."

Like any great work of the poetic imagination, James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* demands to be quoted, not discussed; like any work of political protest, it demands to be heard, not merely acknowledged. As a work that refuses the blandishments and seductions of art, it puts off and annoys its readers; as a *book*, which we must call it because it is not a novel, not a poem, only by courtesy an "essay," it commands and ridicules our attention and our devotion. As a collaboration between a master of photography and a writer enchanted with the word-ness of words, it challenges our preconceptions about the media of communication at the same time that it forces us to reconsider the meaning of the most fundamental assumptions of our society.

I first encountered James Agee's name in reviews of his exquisite novel, *A Death in the Family* (1957), but I was in college and confident of my literary judgment in 1960 when *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was finally published in accessible form and effectively exploded my complacencies about life, about art, about politics. In the world of Agee's and Walker Evans's book, the three are inextricable and irretrievably antagonistic. The book itself has a strange composite character that constantly threatens to disjoin itself into separate parts. We first encounter Walker Evans's disturbingly intimate photographs of impoverished rural places and people. Then comes his brief reminiscence of working with Agee, and then the relentlessly furious Agee takes over:

The title of this volume is *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. The title of the work as a whole, this volume included, is *Three Tenant Families*.

The nominal subject is North American cotton tenantry as examined in the daily living of three representative white tenant families.

Actually, the effort is to recognize the stature of a portion of unimagined existence, and to contrive techniques proper to its recording, communication, analysis, and defense. More essentially, this is an independent inquiry into certain normal predicaments of human divinity.

The portentous rhetoric gives way to precise and aching descriptions of human misery and bewilderment, of marginal survival and de facto servitude. And the rhetoric returns, defiantly. Just after the preface, we encounter on facing pages Lear's sympathetic words to "poor naked wretches" in the middle of the storm on the heath and Marx's exhortation to the workers of the world to unite for "You have nothing to lose but your chains, and a world to win," a quotation tagged with a nose-thumbing footnote to those who would use it as the occasion for a label. And surely some did, since

this angry denunciation of the conditions that create the poverty and misery described was paradoxically commissioned by Henry Luce's *Fortune*, a magazine that found the text too bulky to be digested and perhaps too bitter to the palate, which explains the gaps between its composition in 1937/1940 and its general publication in 1960.

While the book is very difficult to describe, the situation was perfectly simple. James Agee and Walker Evans, on assignment, went to rural Alabama to document the lives of tenant farmers. They lived in the homes of three families and produced the hybrid work, part journalism, part prose poem, part tirade against artistry, part a validating test of the limits of art. The ethical issues raised tormented Agee mercilessly, and continue to torment any reader not hopelessly numbed by affluence. Agee exclaims against the obscenity of a profitmaking corporation, ostensibly for journalistic reasons, deciding "to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, an ignorant and helpless rural family, for the purpose of parading the nakedness, disadvantage, and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings, in the name of science." Agee attempts to dissociate himself and his partner from this evil, but we can't help but realize that if the agency is vile, he and Evans are its tools, and his assertion of contrary, even antithetical motives, cannot wholly shield him from the guilty association. It is this profound and insoluble internal contradiction that makes the book, otherwise so admirable in many ways, both compelling and repellent, and that challenges the reader, as few other works do so obviously, to reconsider the whole ground of understanding that literature creates for us.

Agee is not the first artist enraged by the contradictions created by the implication of his art in a market economy. Deeply aware of the limitations of descriptive language, he still aspires, ironically, to "an illusion of embodiment": "art's superiority over science and over all other forms of human activity, and its inferiority to them, reside in the identical fact that art accepts the most dangerous and impossible of bargains and makes the best of it, becoming, as a result, both nearer the truth and farther from it than those things which, like science and scientific art, merely describe, and those things which like human beings and their creations and the entire state of nature, merely are, the truth." But the gap between the intention, the driving force, and the *use* is the space of despair and the anguished plea for forgiveness. Like Tolstoy and Artaud before him, and like many others less artful though equally enraged, Agee rails against art because it is beautiful and comforting even at its most angry and wounding moments.

This odd book, with pictures and preface and preliminary disclaimers and contradictory footnotes and mocking asides and several "endings," followed by appendices with more quotations — from Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and from Ecclesiasticus 44, the source of the title that is not a title, and other odd tidbits and afterthoughts — is rather like the ramshackle homes Agee describes, with odd leanto attachments and unexpected pieces of furniture making a bit of ground out front into a substitute sitting room, and outhouses for human needs and animal shelter. All this, and the rage directed both outward and inward by the author, changed everything I had thought until then, forced consideration of the responsibility that goes with beauty

and fear of the violation that results from what seems to be nothing more than "objective" observation. And I continue to learn from the book, and from its continuing "presence" in our literary world. Recent studies and a television documentary following up on the lives of the three families reveal troubling indications that Agee may have more than violated the very scruples he constantly examines in the book. It appears that he never had any contact with them after he left Alabama, never showed any interest in what happened to them or in whether they benefited in any way from his indignation or his publication. Was either a force for good? The question, like so many in the book (and out of it) remains unanswerable.

About two-thirds of the way through the book, Agee inserts his responses to questions circulated to writers by the editors of the *Partisan Review* about the role and attitudes of "the American writer." Agee concludes:

I am at worst confused between 'responsibilities' as 'a writer' and as a 'human being'; which I would presume are identical, yet which involve constant 'inhumanity' even in times of no official war. Or, in other words, I consider myself to have been continuously at war for some years, and can imagine no form of armistice. In that war I feel 'responsible.' I doubt any other form of war could make me feel more so.

It would be self-aggrandizing and shameful to claim kinship with this statement, but as with Blake's "mental fight," I find that I identify with this view of the proper role of the writer in a corrupt and inhumane society, and I sometimes share the sense of internal contradiction that complicates and compromises but must not be let to discontinue battle, though souls wear thin in the process.

Our Contributors . . .

Tamara Anderson is a freshman from Iowa who is completely undecided about everything today. **Tara Kathryn Anderson** is a European Studies Major and currently plans to pursue Celtic Studies at the graduate level. **Kristin Atwell** is recovering from a brutal word-processor attack. Friends should send money and cards *c/o Harbinger Staff Memorial Hospital*. **Ashley Elizabeth Cleveland** is a student of literature and life. Currently, she is looking for a graduate school that has wonderful programs in Literature, Creative Writing and Women's Studies. Her latest challenge in her own writing is to make every poem, regardless of the subject, a women's poem. **Laura R. Coon** plans to begin her second childhood in August, three days after the warranty on the first one expires. **Sasha Foster** is majoring in creative living. **Lissy Katz** is a freshman, and she is the author of this issue's Spanish poetry and translation. **S. Goodwin** has entered a plea of "not guilty by reason of demonic possession" to mouse murdering charges. Her heroes are Oral Roberts and Phyllis Shaffley. **Alice Lowenstein** is studying fashion merchandising, English and Women's Studies. She is a cosmic star-child. **Lyndell M. Moore** is a socially repressed freshman from Nebraska. She is a teen-age death poet, and hopes to come back as Robert Smith or Natalie Merchant in her next life. She is a B.F.A. theatre major. **Anne Pierce** hopes to spend a summer in the Brazilian rain forest, cataloging mythological beings. She is a Searcy Houseplan student. **Michelle 'Mick' Poe** is a junior majoring in Radio/Television and minoring in Humanities. She has a strange but wonderful predilection for *They Might Be Giants*, blueberry bagels, and Fred Savage of "The Wonder Years." She lives in Laura Stephens. **Kimberly E. Saunders** is a junior, earning a B.F.A. in Studio Art, with a minor in Creative Writing (poetry), and her hometown is Saguin, Texas. **Marie Archambault** is currently working on her senior B.F.A. art project — a series of pencil drawings. **Aneela Haque** is a member of Intercultural Scholars. She is from Bangladesh. **Aimée Linhoff** is a senior working on her B.F.A. She is working on a series of four 6' x 8' screens. **Carolyn McHale** is from Virginia. She is studying Graphic Art. **Amy Morgan** is a senior B.F.A. student who is not ready to graduate. She is also a monitor for the Stephens Photo Lab and a member of Fine Arts House. She currently has work displayed at the Columbia Art League. **Laura Labieniec-Pintel** was a research associate in Molecular Biology for nine years. A career change brought her to the Learning Unlimited program at Stephens, where she is seeking a B.F.A. degree. **Jennifer Pomerantz** is a sophomore from Topeka, Kansas. She is working on a B.F.A. in Art with an emphasis on photography and a minor in business. **Desirée A. Rios** is from Tucson. She is studying Art and is a member of Intercultural Scholars in Laura Stephens Hall. **Anne Schmidt** is a senior working as head monitor for the Stephens Photo Lab. She currently has work displayed at the Columbia Art League. Our **Gallery** of short poems comes from the Searcy Hall Freshman Studies course. **Thomas F. Dillingham** is a professor in the Languages and Literature Department at Stephens.

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