



# WATERSHED

# **WATERSHED**

Volume 27, Number 1

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Fall 2003

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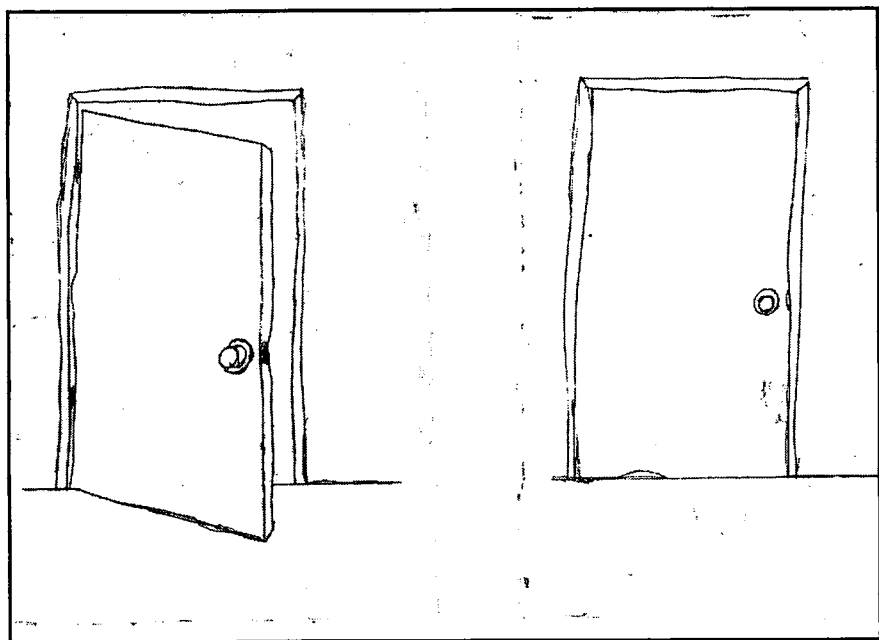
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*Untitled*

Lora Ceccato

## **an audience of crabs**

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Bob Garner

a thin-legged man  
with a squeeze box  
serenades an audience  
of crabs.

they pincher-clap  
nothing,  
those side stepping stones,  
they scuttle the sun  
burnt sand.

## Breaking the Oroborus

---

Ryan Grow

It is the time of year when things are uncertain,  
when the world has rolled around the oroborus  
and come again to where the teeth trap the tail.  
Every year there is the suspicion that this time the jaws will unhinge,  
yawn, and break our endless tour of the circumference of things,  
setting us adrift to weather the heart of matter.

The weather is uncertain.

The sky peeks through a forest of gray cumulus fingers,  
the wind drags nails across the concrete with desultory drafts,  
lifting masses of leaves and sending them crawling end over end,  
one atop the other, a migration of dusty tarantulas.  
In the afternoon, people shed jackets like skin.

People are uncertain.

Couples flow together like puddles of oil in a pan,  
spinning streaks of vermilion and purple one inside the other.  
Pools of sweat, salty springs in the hollows of collarbones,  
cast back reflections, startled, bent.  
In the evening, a red tongue meets the warm line of a neck.

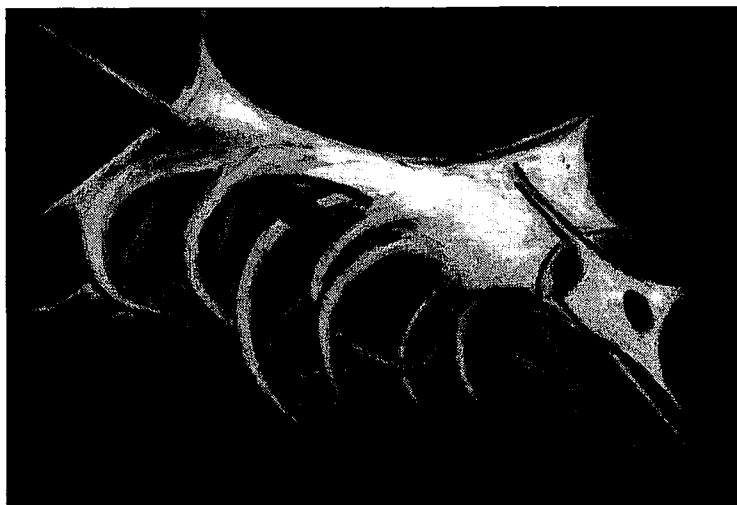
Tongues are uncertain.

Words, floating like baubles of green blown glass,  
falling as easily as water from the backs of knees,  
yesterday, today  
trip, stumble, and fall; struck on the back of the head.  
In the morning, each wordless life starts anew with the sun.

Life.

It rolls on, around the oroborus where the teeth trap the tail,  
skirting the storms in the serpent's gray eye,  
counting people faces in each vermilion scale,  
speaking in tongues to the green reptilian ear.  
It is certain of the time of year.





*Demon of My Dreams*

Bruce Matthes

Peter Pan's sword doesn't stay sharp. You can't just go around drawing treasure maps on the ground with it because dirt is very abrasive. And all that clanging-banging with the pirates puts the deepest notches, takes forever to grind them out, even in Never-Neverland. And that really cool sound that it makes when you draw the blade, you know the sound: that singing "shling" as it clears the scabbard . . . takes the edge right off and pretty soon it won't cut a thing. All the newer swords are made of stainless steel so they will look pretty and shiny, notches or no, but what good is a blade that doesn't stain: no history, no character. If you've got an old one like Peter has, stained and damaged but strong and with a soul, hang onto it.

Listen, even Peter wouldn't carry a sword any more, it just isn't done. A knife is ok. You can get away with a fairly large one, if you want to be blue collar, the kind that hangs off your belt in a swordish sort of way, a folder with a worn tan leather sheath: a "Buck" or a "fake Buck." But realize you'll never earn more than thirty-six grand in a year, guaranteed; some images have a price tag attached. Leave the knife at home and substitute with a pen and you'll make more money. Pens are no fun but get a gold one anyway, just to have it on hand in case you need it, they're worth a lot more in the long run. Like a Boy Scout, be prepared. Boy Scouts carry knives too, and probably a pen. I don't know what Peter carries now. We aren't currently speaking.

Yes, you can hone a knife up every single night with the Arkansas stone that you ordered all the way from Arkansas, even if the knife sits at home all day on your dresser. If it could rust, it would. It yearns to rust, or to be dulled, as any good knife should yearn. So why hone it? Think of it as a substitute for the clanging-banging and drawing in the dirt. If you can't abuse it one way, abuse it another. Hone it to death, ready, always ready.

Does your job bore you? Then try this: hang a huge carbon steel Bowie on your belt, the kind that rusts red as Captain Hook's blood in your sweaty leather sheath, so big it slaps against your leg when you walk. Way beyond blue collar, we're talking mountain-man now. Arkansas mountain-man. Bring it to work, it's ok: it will stay sharp through the opening of countless payroll checks, want-ads, coupons, bills, notices from the IRS and letters from your ex-wife's lawyer. Hack down one of those wimpy parking lot trees when you think

nobody is looking; the kind that needs a stick to hold it up anyway. I recommend it.

And find a reason, 'round the office, to have that auburn blade in your hand every five minutes. Get downright obsessed with it. Test the edge by shaving off four inches of arm-hair, just before a meeting while everyone is exchanging vapid smiles, checking their fingernails and puckering up for the big brown kiss. When it gets very quiet, when they are all looking at you and the fresh bald spot on your arm, say, "yep." Just "yep." Don't look up. Don't laugh. Then put the knife away, at least for the next five minutes.

Never specifically discuss the knife, ever. If pressed hard enough by your boss however, you may launch into a pre-rehearsed speech about knives in general, how they are historically the oldest tool and so on, and how it inspires you to work harder, in an elemental kind of way. Make something up. Ignore the fact that you yourself carry a huge honkin' one on your belt that you have absolutely no need for; yet, by all eyewitness reports, can't leave it alone. If everything goes right, you should get fired eventually. Your co-workers will help that along. That's not always so bad. You can even act surprised. I like surprises. Second star from the right, and so on . . . and why shouldn't you hold your knife in your hand anyway? Often and long. You want to make sure you know where it is, right? Hate to lose the damn thing. I don't know where Peter is but I'm sure he hasn't lost his, whether he shows it off or not, he knows right where it is.

Wendy . . . to change the subject, never did carry a knife or sword. It wasn't her style. She now sleeps with some blonde guy she brought back from France like a souvenir. Most people just buy a lamp or a throw-rug. On Christmas day, she rubs her cheek against the back of his hand, purring like a massive pussy cat while the children from two previous marriages open their presents. Used to darn my socks, she did, and Peter's too, and make chocolate cakes for me and the lost boys. Seems like you run into her everywhere: jogging by on the beach, you think for a moment that you are hallucinating a six-foot-tall, European Barbie doll, but you're not. It's Wendy all right. She's complete with all the accessories: leather jacket, short red hair. She's caustic, cynical, semi-fluent in three languages and doing quite well in the world, unlike Peter who is now floating around out there somewhere, detached and disembodied. That's the way they build Barbie dolls in Europe isn't it? If they

don't, they should. Tell Mattel.

But no, you don't want her back. Hard for you to believe I'm sure, that Wendy is actually one hell of a, well, you know, and the Euro-Ken, the blonde guy, will discover that soon enough. The chocolate cakes, the socks, the bedtime stories: lies, all lies. All of it. Euro-Ken doesn't even have a sword, I think. But he will, one day, long after he knows he needs one, when it is way too late.

Besides the sword, and if you are Peter, long parted from Wendy and what you used to be, there are plenty of other things to do. Growing a beard and becoming a mad inventor is one. Or spend all your money on stereo equipment or cars or power tools. Eat out every night and flirt with the waitress. Drive too fast and drink too much. Sleep in on the weekends and dream of flying as long as you can while no one yells at you to get up and help with the laundry or tells you "what a beautiful morning it is" at seven a.m. on a Saturday.

Then there is the ogling of nineteen-year-olds who would likely bore you silly even after four beers. You keep wishing one of them is Tinkerbell but she doesn't run with that crowd: clap your hands, clap your hands if you believe in fairies all the way to the coffee house where you can tap your foot to eclectic jazz, write fuzzy ideas in a yellow notebook with caffeine-shaky hands and wonder why you have only one or two friends in the whole world.

Peter hasn't come to this. Yet. I don't think so. He still crows when he feels like it. Killing pirates is too easy and could get him arrested and besides, it's good to keep them around for laughs: squinting and mugging and saying "Arrrr!" the way that they do, it's so cute, and after all, it is about all that they ever manage to do.

It might be good for you to know that Peter's shadow is still holding on by himself, sewn to Peter's feet so many years ago by Wendy, Wendy Darling (what a nice name) when it was nice and he remembers it as so very nice. Shadow of the boy, shadow of the boy. Did you know that when Peter flies, his shadow stays, somewhere on the earth until he lands again? Shadows like the earth, Peter likes the sky. And don't ask me how those stitches work. I never understood that. I don't think I mentioned before that this is who I am: I am Peter's shadow. It's me, but he hasn't come down in so long that I barely remember who I am, who he is. . . . I'm not myself anymore and I doubt that he is either. We need each other.

This long separation has made us both mad, we used to just be angry; now we are mad.

But never mind then, I take it all back. Dull your sword on the ground drawing treasure maps and don't worry about it. Peter does it all the time. Put another sword on the credit card if it gets completely ruined. But Peter, if you can hear me at all: Shave off the damn beard, stop drinking and lose a few pounds or Tink will never recognize you. Just be sure you recognize her. Don't forget please, that you believe in magic, and fairies. Never-Neverland is a real place, and you have unfinished business there. The crocodile is still ticking and the lost boys are lonely without you. Go home, go home, go home, go where you belong you bastard. How many times do I have to tell you this? Do come down. That's all I have to say, rest now, dream of flying home or do it for real. Up to you. I hope you can hear me.

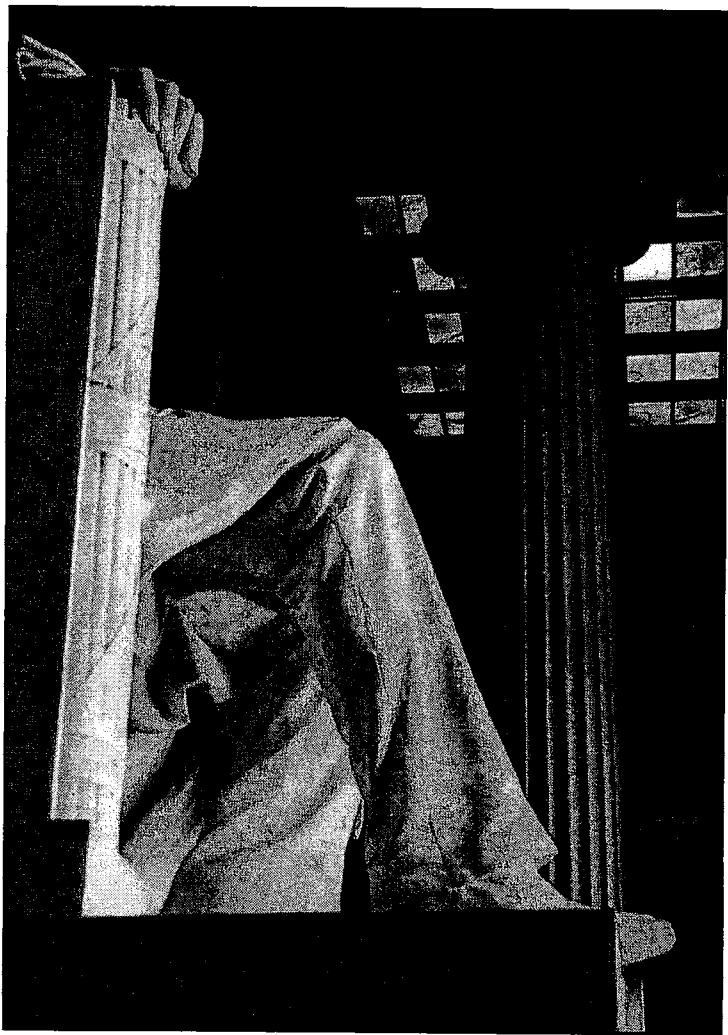
Cartridge belts bulging ammo, Baby Ruths,  
matches & pilfered Camels. Canteens  
clanging slung .22s, my cousin Billy & I'd  
blaze trails afternoons after chores.  
Our German shepherd Rocky walking point,  
rousting jack rabbits in furrows of bean fields,  
spooking crows foraging waves of debris  
flowing in the Long Beach flood control ditch.

After storm, we'd explore culverts for treasure & bones,  
plink at bottles & cans, gather wood for campfire.  
At night, we'd gaze at stars & contrails of bombers  
jetting to cold war.

Never forget dawn we awoke to sound of gun blasts,  
bullets buzzing by our heads, ricocheting off sand.  
We crept to bank's crest, encountered bearded old codger  
aiming Winchester at us. His raspy voice said,  
"You boys trespassing my claim!"

Then we heard growl of wilderness, stared  
drooling tongue, muzzle baring saber teeth, yellow,  
wolf's eyes stalking quarry, gleaming doom.  
Eyes that see into man's darkness. Rocky's  
massive furry shoulders hunched in weeds,  
waiting to leap at my signal.

Soft blue sky,  
Green leaves singing in the trees,  
Bronx Park in summer  
On a glistening Sunday afternoon.  
I'm seven,  
Walking with my father,  
Our thick silences  
Stitched with the shy thread  
of words.  
He often seems preoccupied,  
Forehead furrowed,  
Eyes far away.  
We pass ballplayers, picnickers,  
Currents of talk and laughter  
Flowing around us.  
Then we're standing on a small cliff.  
I'm close to the edge,  
Glance dizzily down,  
See myself falling,  
My father glad.  
Feet frozen,  
I'm entranced by the edge.  
I feel my father's strong hand  
On my buttocks,  
Half lifting, half tugging  
Me to safety.  
Embarrassment tinged with perverse pleasure,  
Then a warm river of relief,  
Fingers tingling,  
Words of gratitude  
Buried in my throat.  
A small smile twists his lips.  
"We probably should go back now, Ralph."  
I nod,  
My body still quivering,  
Thinking, Maybe he does care.



*Untitled*

Dustin J. Schwindt



## White Liquid

---

Linda Bosson

The government is spraying  
an opaque white liquid from the sky.

Night after night something hovers above us,  
spattering and spurting and squirting.

In the morning we scrape the white flakes  
from our skin, our dogs, our daffodils.

The government has experts to assure us:  
the opaque white liquid is completely safe.

Sometimes now we notice  
little white scales on our food.

But desperate times, they tell us,  
call for desperate spraying.

And there is nothing, the government announces,  
except the opaque white liquid,

that will utterly, totally eradicate  
from every corner of the country

all typographical errors.

## **The Cooling Tower**

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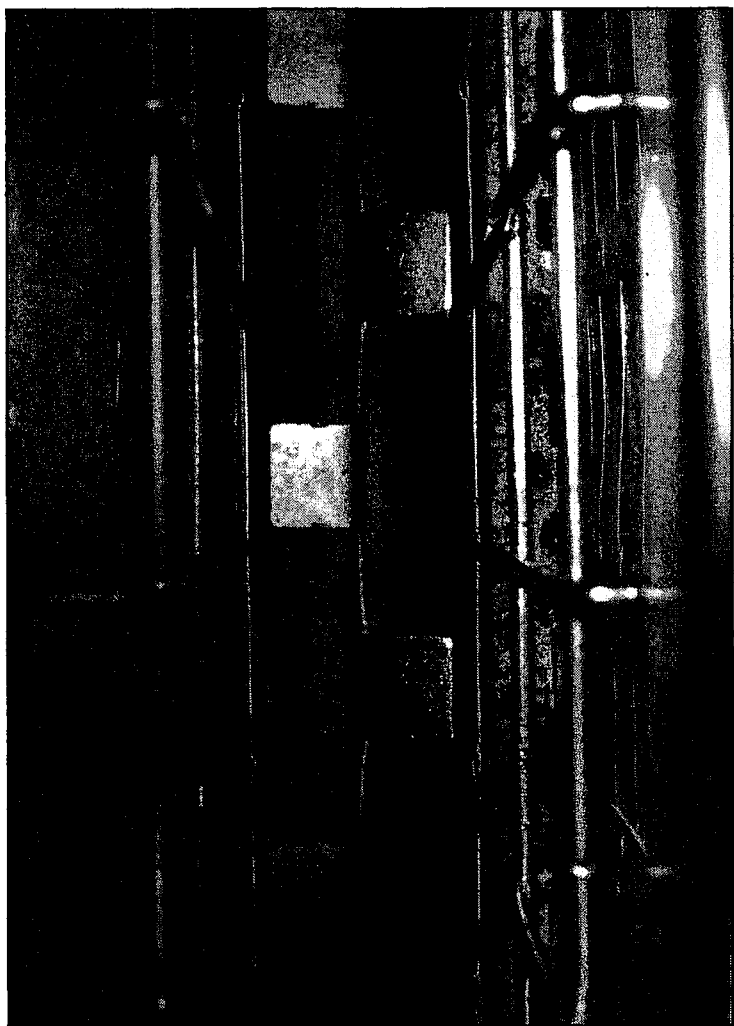
Daniel Gustav Anderson

Ashtray burns and hot cup rings  
may perforate this misspelled menu.  
I forgive it for its own sake.  
Granddad teaches the hostess  
all about the Meli Kalikimaka song

and he learns in return  
how one may say Eat Shit  
in Cantonese but he thinks  
everything means Merry Christmas,

even those free egg rolls  
with our take-out order.  
He will forget the words  
Eat Shit and I'll forgive him.  
I bounce chopsticks off

the maybe mislaid carpet,  
spill-stained, and trying  
never to remember.



*Untitled*

Brandin Aguayo



*Untitled*

Bruce Matthes

There was a girl at my high school who befriended me for no apparent reason. It was a pretty one-sided arrangement. She sat next to me at lunch and talked about whatever she was thinking of that day, she waved at me in the hallways, she went out of her way to walk to classes with me, and all the while, I said next to nothing to her. I was hardly an ideal companion, and I couldn't see why she had chosen me. I had that strain of romanticism that afflicts adolescents who discover poetry too soon. Its victims exhibit all kinds of irrational thoughts, exaggerations, half-witted precocity, and delusions. In their minds they are Byronic heroes, immortals, and lovers, but this is not obvious from the outside. At least it wasn't obvious to anyone around me.

Marta was smaller than me, with a folksy drawl and the red, worn face of a pioneer. She had that kind of grim determination, too. She stuck with me like we were traveling through hostile country and death might be around any corner. Neither of us had any other friends. In my case, the reasons were obvious. For Marta, the abandonment of all other prospects came when she latched on to me. I was the sort of person no one in their right mind would talk to, and that went for anyone who was seen with me. We spent our senior year in this uneasy relationship, and it looked like it would come to an end on its own after graduation. We didn't see each other outside of school. Then, two weeks before summer vacation, she invited me to her house for dinner.

I didn't want to accept her invitation. It seemed unnatural. I thought Marta had understood the implicit direction of our friendship, away from one another rather than closer together. It wasn't that I didn't like Marta. I just felt incapable of real friendship. I had decided that I was a lost cause. I had no gift for girlish confidences or pastimes, and I had assumed that after eight and a half months of near silence from me, she would understand that. But she seemed willing to give me another chance, and she told me that her mother was an excellent cook.

"She used to cook at a ranch, this kind of retirement home, for a bunch of old cowboys," she said. "She's got a lot of stories. She probably won't let you open your mouth all night, Julie. Come on, she wants to meet you. I've told her all about you."

I relented. It was easier to accept than to make up excuses. We agreed to meet the following Friday. Her family lived in a

subdivision across town from my neighborhood. I rode my bicycle, a Schwinn Collegiate I had bought in hopes that it held greater mystery than the mountain bikes everyone else rode. My father had offered to drive me there, but I had refused. I had to have a means of escape. I came up the driveway, and Marta's face appeared in the window by the door. She ran out to greet me.

"You made it," she said, "you made it. Mama figured you'd be all right, but I just knew you were going to get knocked down by a car on the highway."

I wiped my forehead and asked for a glass of water. Marta went inside ahead of me, calling, "Mama! She's here! She made it just fine." I followed slowly, hoping I could somehow slip into the house without being noticed. Marta's mother, a big woman in a checkered apron, came running up to me in the same way her daughter had.

"Well, here you are. My daughter was going crazy here. I'm Rose, by the way. But look at you." She held my chin up with her forefinger. "You look so pale for an athlete."

"Athlete?" I didn't know what she meant.

"Marta tells me you ride that bike like a bat out of hell. She says you move so fast when the bell rings at the end of the day she can never keep up with you." She grinned.

I looked away. I felt guilty. It was no coincidence that Marta could not catch me after school. I raced home to get away from her, to get back to myself, to my daydreams and my lonely recitations of *Ulysses*. But Rose didn't notice my hesitation. She pulled me by the shoulder into the kitchen and plunked me in a chair.

"You just sit there and chat with us while we get everything ready. I'm sure you can keep us entertained."

I had spent the previous evening feeling like a conscripted soldier preparing for a skirmish. It was not my choice to fight, but like so many peasants before me, I would step onto the field and take whatever I had coming to me. The precedents were not good. Fanny Price had been defeated on her arrival at Mansfield Park by nothing more than a gooseberry tart. The charge of the Light Brigade had been slightly worse. I would have to do better. I rehearsed pieces of trivia and literary anecdotes, and I tried to remember a play on words I had heard about Schiller and all his Kant. But now that I was sitting at the table in their large, dim kitchen, face to face with the enemy, my nerves got the best of me,

and I couldn't speak.

I looked around, hoping to catch inspiration from something I saw. The décor fit well with what I knew of Marta. It was a modern house, but it had been redesigned in a halfway-rustic style. Ancient needlepoint samplers hung framed on the walls, and rusty utensils dangled from hooks on the ceiling, but the floor was covered in patterned linoleum. The countertop was white Formica flecked with gold. Marta sat at the table shelling peas while Rose scrubbed several pounds of Russet potatoes, and a cauldron of something bubbled on the massive cast iron range.

"My dad, he— he installs carpet for a living," I said after a while.

"Carpet," said Rose. "Well, that must be interesting."

"Yeah. He put some in at school last summer. It's blue." The hallmark of the semi-intellectual is to think about philosophy and discuss carpeting instead.

Marta spoke up. "Julie, tell Mama about that poetry contest you won at Christmas. Mama, Julie won a poetry contest in our English class. She wrote this real pretty poem. Do you remember it, Julie? Go on and tell Mama the words."

I blushed. "I— I don't remember it very well. Sorry." This was a lie. I remembered it word for word. I could recite any one of my 172 poems, but nothing could make me admit to that.

"Never mind, I'm sure it was nice, honey," said Rose as she heaved the potatoes onto the stove. "Is poetry a hobby of yours?"

Like all sensitive youngsters, I believed that adults could not or should not be able to understand me. Poetry was what made me a great, tragic figure to myself. I was a clean-living kid, and I didn't drink, smoke, or anything else, but staying up all night writing, sometimes going for days without sleep, gave me that essential sense of degeneracy I needed to feel separate and alive. It was the nearest thing in my life to the drug-addled and lusty adventures of my idols. I couldn't talk about it. I might as well tell Rose about my prize-winning visit to an opium den or a cat house.

"No," I said, "I don't like poetry. I only write it for school, and I never read it. I mean, who cares about the innermost feelings of some guy in a cravat. I don't want to know what he thinks about— about clouds or lilacs or— or the poetry of earth and the peaks of Darien." I could hear myself getting nervous and squeaky. My voice had a tendency to crack when I talked about literature.

“Anyway, it’s a well-known fact that poetry has no relevance to everyday life. Not like Home Ec. Now, that’s useful.” Rose looked amused, but she glanced down at the counter when I caught her eye. Marta wore the half-smile of someone waiting for a punchline.

What happened then was inevitable. As I leaned over to scratch my ankle and remove a burr from my sock, my jacket opened and from the inside pocket sixteen sheets of paper fell onto the kitchen floor. They were poems, of course, written in flourishing script, and I grabbed these quickly. But across the room, having flitted there like a holy messenger, almost at Rose’s feet, lay the words, “Lady Julie Byron,” encapsulated in a heart. Several doves graced the page, as well as a feeble sketch of the happy couple on a walking tour of the Italian Alps. I flew out of my chair and collided with Rose as she reached down to pick the sheet up. I snatched it from her hand and crumpled it into my pocket, and then I froze. Rose stood up and brushed herself off, but I stayed on the floor as if by instinct, as if silence and stillness could keep me from view. I sat like that for several seconds.

There is no limit to the amount of information a person can contemplate in six or seven seconds. It might as well be a lifetime. My thoughts fell to eternity. I have a game in which I imagine how I would least like to be remembered. I say “least” rather than “most” because I have always been a little pessimistic about my ability to leave a good impression of myself. I came up with the game when I was wondering what it must have been like to be buried alive in Pompeii. Anyone who couldn’t escape when Vesuvius erupted suffocated and lay hidden for centuries under a mountain of ash and cinders. They knew that they were going to die, but if they had known that someone would eventually dig them up and see them just as they were when they died, they might have made some effort to appear presentable. They might have put on their best clothes, or picked up an improving book to give the impression that this was how they spent their time. If I were in that situation, given my luck, I would be caught doing something unusually embarrassing. Rather than die holding my gasping lover in my arms, I would have been preserved with my foot lodged implausibly in a public toilet or posing in front of the mirror in my underwear. Or, equally likely, at Rose’s feet, clutching that incriminating piece of paper.

“Julie, you silly goose,” said Marta, giggling, “get up off that



floor. You felled my mama like a tree. What've you got in there that's so bad we can't take a look?"

"Now, Marta," said Rose, "I think it's pretty plain that she doesn't want us looking through her papers. Julie, honey, it's quite all right. You just forget about that. I'm sure it doesn't bother Mr. Byron none, either."

Somehow I made it back to my chair. The evening went on, and we ate a vast meal. I half expected to see a dozen geriatric cowboys walk through the patio doors calling for their supper. Afterwards, over iced tea and cookies, Marta talked about her dad, who had died, and Rose told me some of her stories. Marta took me outside to see the garden. It was small, but they had put a lot of work into it. There were plots of vegetables, fruit trees, and pots of herbs lining the brick pathways. Tall young pines blocked out the view of the surrounding houses, and I almost couldn't tell that suburbia lay less than thirty feet away. Marta stood with her hands on her hips, staring into the distance like she had the entire prairie in front of her.

She said, "I like it out here. Look up in that tree. We put a bird box up there, and you know, we actually got a woodpecker in it once. I figure he must have flown pretty far to find our box, but he did. He stayed two weeks like it was some kind of spa, and then I guess he found a better deal somewhere else. Mama figured he would stay, because they don't normally move around too much, but maybe he was the traveling kind. And we get butterflies here, and bees. Mama's thinking of setting up a hive so we can get our own honey. What do you think? You could help us during the summer if you wanted to."

It was a kind offer, and I was surprised by Marta's prescience. I thought she might have seen a little of the truth about me, past my pride and clumsiness, and into the strange country I inhabited. Maybe she thought that I was lonely there, and she wanted to show me that my ridiculous behavior didn't matter to her. I might be a fool, but I was a friend, and she wouldn't waste what little she had. I was more prodigal. I said, "I don't think I can. I have ... a lot of things to do this summer."

She shrugged and said, "Oh. Okay. Well, let's go in. Mama wants to give you some leftovers to take home, and it's going to get dark pretty soon. You shouldn't be out riding in the dark."

We went back into the kitchen, where Rose packed me a container of stew and some cornbread, green beans and peas, mashed potatoes, four pieces of fried chicken and half a blueberry pie. They waved to me from the door as I rode down the street toward home. I saw Marta at school on Monday, and she sat with me at lunch and talked as usual. There were only a few days left before finals week. There would be no more lunches, because the exam days were always short, and we wouldn't see each other after that. But I felt afraid of her, as if by resisting her kindness I had killed something she loved and had only to wait until she found me out. I wanted to slink away when I saw her. She brought me a graduation present on Friday. It was a little porcelain horse, with a green ribbon around its neck.

"I used to ride horses," she said, "so it's to remember me. But I thought you might like it because I know you like to think about getting out of here. You can think of it like it's your getaway car."

I thanked her and started to say goodbye, but it occurred to me that this would be the time to offer some little token of myself, to make some tiny effort to prove that I hadn't been deaf to her. I reached into my pocket and handed her a folded sheet of paper, one of the poems that had fallen on her kitchen floor and that I had been too shy to let her read. "Here. You can have this."

She looked pleased. "Wow, really? I've never read anything but the things you did for school. Thanks."

I hadn't looked to see which one it was, but like everything I wrote it would have been long and self-indulgent, probably about love, or beauty, or emptiness. It wasn't special, but I had nothing else to give her. I almost hoped she would never read it. "But don't open it now," I said. "Do it when I'm not around. It's just something to remember me by."

## Trails Closed at Sunset

---

Jeffrey C. Alfier

Burned by a god Greeks swore came from water,  
those hikers climbing up Picacho Peak  
who fell to deranged shadows on switchbacks,  
thought the desert sun could only love them  
when wildflowers preen foothills for tourists.

From the highway's distance, those two-pronged heights  
time chiseled to a sky-ward granite maw  
became a mime screaming at God, as snakes  
hid under rails old trains long abandoned,  
patient for water in echoes of blood.

## Packing Up the Desert

---

Suzan Jantz

Goddess breeze lightly licks  
Exposed skin—long  
Accustomed to conservative  
Coverings—delicately  
Exploring  
Intricate/intimate pathways,  
Once a virgin patch of peach fuzz.

She intuitively inhales,  
Exhales—  
Fine wisps of warmth,  
Circling, caressing—  
Like the holy power  
Of forgiveness—  
Retrieving forgotten,  
Vulnerable innocence.

(Unlike  
Your self-proclaimed  
Discriminating taste)

She slowly savors  
Pear-curved hips,  
Persimmon-sweet breasts,  
Apricot-soft skin,  
All in all,  
Natural, bursting ripeness.

So, go ahead.  
Pack up:  
Your impatient, yelping coyote howl;  
Your prickly-cactus five o'clock shadow;  
Your full-moon-roll-over-fall-asleep-snore-too-loudly-sex-deprived  
Trickster self,

I am basking in my own oasis.



*Sunflower*

Carol Wheeler

A kid who works in “the ‘berry” after school comes in; he’s trying to get signatures on a card for a recently retired trustee. Everyone in the Acquisitions Department workroom’s suddenly busy. He comes back in fifteen minutes, still has only four signatures. “Well, good luck,” someone tells him not unkindly. “Yeh,” he answers balefully. “This is kind of a statement you know.”

Cut to the processing area, where Beulah Fickle and Rosemary Murders are discussing the punctuation on a unit card. They are not “discussing,” it’s a full scale argument, with hate stares and maybe the threat of violence. Most of the staff are holding out for the semicolon. The book in question questions whether or not government should allow tax-exempt status for sectarian colleges that practice racial segregation whose justification is based upon scripture.

The Serials Department is an official depository for government documents. From the executive branch: “The administration yesterday released its long-awaited position paper on national defense. As expected, the 973 million word statement called for an all-out program to build anti-nuclear fallout shelters, as well as mandatory military service for all the able-bodied unemployed.”

The Subscription Committee’s meeting seems headed for chaos again as the resident malcontent swears he has documented proof there’s more pressure to censor acquisition of new materials from within the library than anywhere else on campus. He says it was “that new guy from Chicago” who questions the propriety of continuing *Playboy*. He alleges its value is based on “the indisputable importance of the *Playboy* Interviews.” Everyone present looks uncomfortable, but he’s not challenged on either point.

“The duration of the pause is considered to depend on the relation of the two elements so separated.”

[*ABC Manual of Style*. Cogito, 1959]

Lou, the Library’s security guard, was fired for excessive use of force in the Reserve Book Room at closing time a week ago. A student who said he was tired of never finding the materials that were supposed to be available around the clock attempted to remove a photocopier. Lou said the dude was fanatical about his right to possess the machine and therefore “stern but appropriate measures were in order.” Lou was ordered to leave the building immediately by the duty librarian, but he stopped in Receiving on his way out to make a phone call to the state capitol, awakening someone with whom Lou seemed to have some sort of agreement. The bindery clerk heard the whole thing go down, and no one missed the fact that Lou was back on duty this morning, cool-walkin’ as usual.

(The adherents of *comma* seem to be winning; the rationale is that it saves a bit of time in scanning printed matter.)

There’s a rumor that the issue of morality in the library came up at Department Heads meeting, upon reports of two or more assistants doing “personal things” to, or with, each other in one of the library’s workrooms last week. The Head Librarian herself said what had made the incident particularly damning is that it happened in the Circulation Department—if it happened. But department head JJ denied that it had happened and suggested that, indeed, “Most of us would want to be pretty careful before launching an inquiry into personal morals between (and in some cases within) the genders.” Some neckties and high collars looked uncomfortable about that, but the discussion was abandoned for lack of a second.

The Heads’ *Insight & Report*, often called “the most boring publication in North America,” reminds staff that the late J. Edgar Hoover began his career in D.C. working as a clerk in Library of Congress while pursuing his law degree at night. The consensus is that it’s pretty amazing, and a little scary. No one mentions Chairman Mao.

When his library buddies ask him about his misadventure,  
Officer Lou just smiles and walks away,  
wagging his badge like a talisman.

[From a staff member's report:] *My student assistant arrived, late again, with an evaluation form I was to complete. He wears psychedelic attire, and shades; he's habitually late, but is the fastest and most accurate of the bibliographical checkers we employ. So most of it's easy, and I give him high marks. But the last item is Appearance, and that stumps me. Gary reads over my shoulder, says, "Am, just write 'Outstanding,' man," and I do.*

Beulah has been standing at the shoulder of Rosemary's desk, staring down at it. Rosemary long since departed for the card catalog in the central lobby, electric eraser in hand, to change that semicolon to a comma. Beulah shrugs (about the duration of a semicolon pause) and returns to her own desk, where she sits sharpening pencils, some of which surreptitiously she sticks into a little stuffed cotton doll sitting saucily in the top drawer of her desk.

Conclusion: *The action seems to move backward and forward between and within the 50s to 70s. And because the treatment seems to be about pissy behavior as much as institutional entropy, the technique could as justly be called urination as stream-of-consciousness; and at the completion of the action no one seems reluctant to depart for summer break.*



rarely expected,  
love moves in, grabs hold,  
like hanging,  
not the sort where the neck snaps quick  
and the nerves give in,  
but the slow strangling sort  
lungs burning for even the smallest sip of oxygen,  
chest aching with the strain of the rope as it pulls  
the weight of an increasingly heavy body  
into the parts not meant to uphold the mass,  
the bits that begin to tear and burst  
as they know no method better than surrender,  
the tightening pulse of the heart as it attempts  
in vain to distribute the blood,  
the frantic flail of the legs as they fumble wildly,  
searching for solid surface,  
the sharp rips on the fingertips  
pulling, tearing at the rough rope,  
last minute attempts to free a numbing neck,  
bulge of the once deep-set eyes  
as they appear to flee from the sinking wreckage of the body,  
choking, spilling, fluid rushing  
from every opening—  
those known and those never acknowledged.  
there is no repairing the damage done  
were the body to be cut down,  
the rope loosened before the life gives

# The Poet's Dream

---

Bryan Tso Jones

*On Odin's shoulders perch two ravens, who fly each day through the world and bring him back news of all that men do. The name of the one is Thought (Hugin), the other Memory (Munin).—Edith Hamilton, Mythology*

## 1 Hugin

You came,  
perched on my shoulder,  
then with your beak  
half-cocked seized my eye

with a sucking pop,  
dug into my brain  
to scrape inside  
my skull

as blood spilled  
into this well;  
and in my dread  
what murmurs seeped

between my ears,  
words fluttered into  
this nest on ebony wings.  
And when I awoke,

struck blind in wonder,  
I cried at what you  
would claim next in exchange—  
another eye, my ear, my thumb, or my tongue?

## 2 Munin

She hovers raven  
in our later days,

a wraith whose wings  
flap incessant

as feather tips brush  
our minds of the wonder

we had as our first poem took shape;  
this grows into a confusing cacophony

as the beak feeds eagerly  
on carcasses, their remains,

until we are what we forget to remember,  
and what we choose to forget.

### 3. Odin Speaks

Listen! Now as I sit,  
my head grows heavy  
as a stone propped

in the palm of my mighty hand.  
The warriors carouse  
in the bright torch fires of Valhalla,

sanctuary for their valiant exploits.  
But I know it will not last,  
for birds entreat me with whispers

and their settling crops my vigor  
and chill seeps into my marrow  
despite the throaty roars.

What burden the *All-Knowing* must keep!  
Each day to the next,  
wings return with so many voices

that I do not want to hear  
more of their hauntings:  
those who cannot provide,

those who are conquered, those who dream.  
Yet they plummet into my ears  
like my eye was plucked and plunged into

the Well by my own hand.  
Soon, all will be taken in the fires,  
the ancient giants will murmur and awake

and I will only live enough to hear  
news of the death of my sons.  
And when that hour comes,

who will remember the shapes  
I took, as Odin Graybeard,  
with the pointed hat and missing eye?

Already the skalds' fashioned songs  
for my sons play about my ears,  
but there are none for these unseen wails.

When I fall, who else will remember,  
who will be their witness,  
their mouth, their voice?



*Firedance*

Dustin J. Schwindt

My gut boils with battery acid,  
Limbs useless as arrows to a rifle.  
My mind lost like a balloon filled with helium  
Slipping from the grasp of a sobbing little girl.

My body withers, decays from the inside out.  
Consuming myself in darkness, in despair.  
My heart, smashed with jackhammers by men in hard hats,  
Aches for more than a steaming meal.

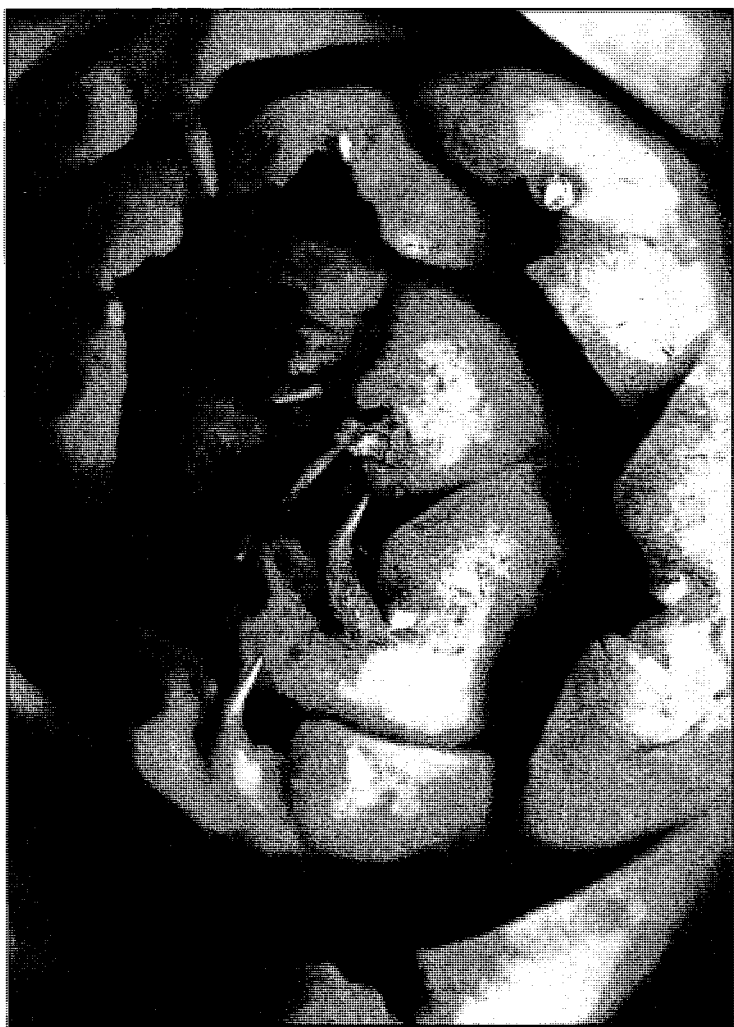
I sleep on a bed of ice, nothing more than a  
Breeding place for nightmares.  
My time is flying away, tied to the racing hearse.  
Another month, another egg unfertile.

I ready myself for one last hunt.  
A sprayed on mask of concealing paint.  
I mist on an alluring scent to attract my prey.  
My small black bag and shoes polished to match.

I remember when it was just a game.  
My black dress a touch too short,  
My heels a tad too high.  
Armed with a dangerous smile and attitude to match.

Sometimes I would catch a large buck,  
It would fill my belly for days or weeks.  
In the end, when the meat was gone or spoiled,  
The maddening hunger would return.

Meals find me much less often now.  
My mood is black as a widow at funeral.  
Hope is dark grey of the fading sun on a winter evening.  
Tomorrow will be the same.



*Artichoke*

Brandin Aguayo

i am  
a fake  
a phony  
a failed spiritualist  
and an amateur drunk  
i am one who lacks substance  
laughs at others' misfortunes  
and drinks coffee for the taste  
even though it tastes like shit  
i am a disappointment  
a hypocrite  
a slut  
a real ass to the max  
a narcissistic son-of-a-bitch  
who missed his grandmother's funeral  
to vacation in Mexico

and you  
you are drinking champagne  
listening to van morrison  
and staring at the sky by yourself

and i can't have you

it makes me sad

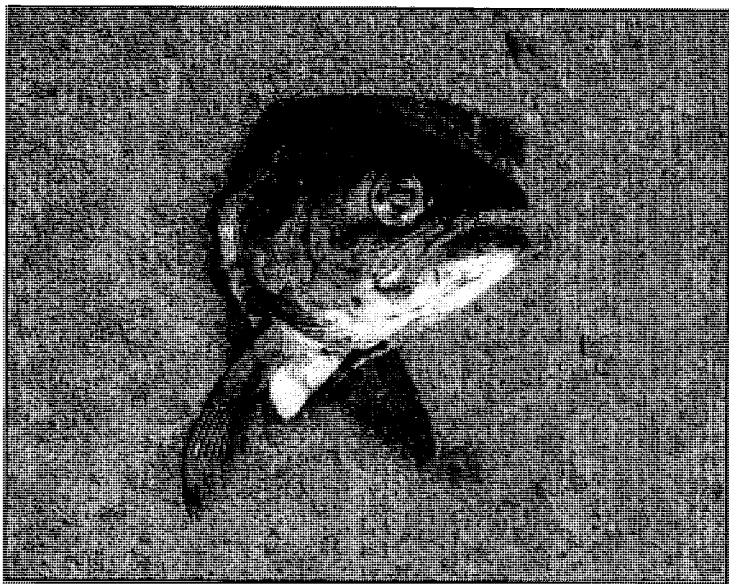


### **Limerick #3**

---

Timothy John Muir

Two crooked cops on the take  
Used the Men's Room for deals they would make;  
While emptying their bladders  
They discussed private matters  
And sealed each deal with a shake.



*Catch of the Day*

Renée Suzanne Muir

He drives me up the wall. At least once a week. In a tiny red convertible with the top down. Bumpety-bump across the pattern of flowers.

Sometimes we stop halfway up to picnic on the mantelpiece. What a breathtaking view of the green paisley couch!

When we reach the ceiling, I'm not certain if we'll make it all the way across. Sometimes we crash down on the head of his aunt. "Don't obstruct traffic," she scolds us. "Pull over onto my shoulder."

warm air blows pale blue curtains  
billowing over a pristine porcelain sink,  
filled with half cleaned dishes . . .  
the lemony soap scent pushed into the air with each gentle gust.  
the door beside the sink hangs open,  
crisp sunshine bounces in, dancing across the kitchen,  
splitting into rainbows as it lands on  
the broken body of a bottle—  
quietly resting on the smooth tile,  
surrounded by the spreading puddle.  
liquid trickles south, stumbling  
over a once white shoe,  
browned with bits of dirt still clinging at the laces.  
the man who wears the shoe  
kneels over the spilt orange juice  
he runs his hand gently up the neck of the bottle,  
lovingly allowing a sly jagged shard to slit his finger,  
the tear gapes, his eyes narrow, watching.  
crimson blood slides over the shattered mouth,  
drips into the orange in swirl patterns,  
darkening the spill.  
he pulls away, citrus stinging the fresh wound  
wincing as he shakes the fleshy pulp from his hands,  
sends it falling to the floor with thick splatter,  
the blended blood juice scattering as it hits,  
sinking stains into the clean white grout.  
he smiles as he gazes down upon it,  
lips curl back to expose rotted teeth  
sunk into grayed gums,  
the colors please him,  
oranges like the strands of her hair,  
white tiles of pale flesh.  
he straightens, moves to the sink,  
lifts the hastily dropped sponge,  
running it over the remaining dirty plates.  
she would have been pleased.

### I

Finished posing, he descended the funny stairs, fixing his hair. Taking them two at a time, building more momentum than he could control, he turned too soon. His side and hip hit the rail like a fist smashing against a brick wall, the pain of the impact was a revelation that never came, yet drowned out all other thoughts, all senses, never filling the void.

He grabbed the rail like a gladiator clutching the hilt of the sword freshly thrust into his sternum, knuckles white, tightly clenched.

The doors were swinging open; he could hear the heavy wood reinforced by steel clang shut with the momentum of its own weight as body after body clambered through the portals into the dark theater. He looked back at the stairs as he hobbled away. They were too steep he thought. Fifty-five, sixty-five degrees?

At the door he forced off his limp and entered the buzzing darkness, allowing his eyes to adjust to the lack of light, as his ears adjusted to the many voices, filtering them into individuals.

The screen flickered as he began to step down the aisle, then illuminated, white. He waited again for his eyes to adjust.

Before the class stood the squat man, a soldier commanding troops, arms akimbo, eyes glaring through light brown glasses, mustache silver and shaped like Stalin's.

"Quiet."

When sight returned, he saw that he was three rows from the screen. Three rows from Professor O'Shea. He quickly sat, a little to the middle, just out of the area of most probable sight, for Professor O'Shea thrilled at choosing students to answer questions asked only after calling their names.

"The role sheet will circulate as the film starts," he foretold as if it were a prophecy. Nothing could ever be commonplace with the bright blank screen to his back. O'Shea looked like some chosen man of God, heaven behind him.

"This film you're going to see may seem much like the last five or six films, but believe me, it is different. You will enjoy it kids." O'Shea began to stride up the aisle, and he would have made it had a student in the front row not flailed his arms, straightened, his posture perfect, and began to speak, stopping him.

He couldn't clearly see the student. Dark hair, a beard in the shape of Satan's, or Satan's little brother's, on his chin. He wore sunglasses—Flavin. Flavin, the favored student, tattoos of some tribal design from some lost clan of Caucasia on him from forearm to shoulder. Flavin, the pet of Professor O'Shea. Flavin the artist. "Rick," he said, half whining, half shouting, "what about my presentation?"

Professor O'Shea stopped and turned to the class, gesturing widely, "Oh, yeah. Next class, Flavin will give his presentation of Disintegrating Man, with video of the event."

He noticed the girl diagonal from him. She was shaking her head. She smirked and whispered to the man sitting rigidly beside her. He could see her profile in the dark, and from that dark outline he recognized her. She had just finished drawing him. Usually posing in the nude did not embarrass him, but for some reason, in the dark theater, with his professor passing him, he blushed and quickly looked away.

The screen had flickered, and when his eyes met the canvas, again there stood the glass of milk.

## II

White and frothy, bubbles and foam, in a glass pint, clear as sky before a cloud, stood the milk. Resting on a dark green table, the cylindrical legs of which stretched from the oval wood and disappeared to the floor beyond the bottom of the screen, somewhere into the wall. The milk merely stands for what is forever, is a minute, then jerks back, as if hit by some invisible object, some unseen force. The white glass against the orange wallpaper contrasts blindingly, yet as the milk sloshes first over the right lip of the glass, then from the left, the screen seems to wave—the glass slings forward, and topples over. There is no sound. First, the milk pools out, collecting quickly like blood from a head wound. It runs thirty seconds and reaches the round edge of the oval table, erasing the green, and begins to pour off in a curtain of white; a fall that lasts ten seconds. Next, the dripping begins; the brain would be losing oxygen by this point. The milk has puddled and run back under the cup, has begun collecting in its maximum area. The drips fall for another minute, then stop. Finally, nothing

seems to happen, and you cannot place where the change occurs, but a drop of milk, nonetheless, shoots up from the unseen floor, up the wall, and back to the edge of the table to the puddle, which has just grown imperceptibly larger. Over the course of the next minute the minute drops slowly rise onto the egg shaped table's edge, hold for a moment, then collect, until the white curtain has returned in reverse. The curtain is drawn, returns to the cup, which rights itself through some invisible force, swings back to a seventy-five degree angle, then rights itself to ninety and holds, white against the dark orange wallpaper.

This repeats for approximately an hour and a half.

### III

The same movie, every time, he thought. She too was unhappy. He had seen, when the milk first sloshed over the lips, her sketchbook, the one that must hold an image of him. He imagined a perfect image of himself. Throughout the first fall of the film, he kept looking to the book. He could only see its shape, but it was not the book he was obsessed with, rather it was seeing himself through the eyes of other people that occupied his mind. She said something to the man next to her, and he laughed. The man wore glasses. He was in the figure drawing class as well. He knew this, for in his glasses he could catch, if the light was right, his own reflection. Whatever comment of hers the man in glasses was laughing at, she did not find funny. It was apparent that she wanted to leave. Moving back and forth in the chair, it seemed that she was rocked by some poltergeist, some chemical reaction could have been taking place within her body which was causing her to explode. You couldn't leave the class though. You never knew when he would be waiting, reclined in one of the forbidden seats, arms crossed over his chest. Even if his eyes were closed, the silver Stalin mustache would be watching. He would catch you, mock you, reprimand you, and send you back to the first four rows. He caught you every time.

That is why he was surprised, when she rose as the glass rose for the second time, the drops of milk returning to the glass like a whole nest of bees returning to the hive. For a moment, he left himself. He wanted to say something to this young woman that would save her, that would show her a secret exit, and this is why he

reached out, not having the words, yet having to do something. His hand grabbed for her arm, yet caught the sketchbook, black leather, and pulled. From the open page fell an eraser shaped like a miniature potato. The page was open to the current date, seen in the corner. On it, he saw himself.

Lines, no more than five, and a circle for a head. He had no face, no genitals, no fingers. He closed his eyes, opened them, and looked again, feeling the shock of his reflection. This was worse than looking in a mirror to find no reverse self staring back, this image was an echo of him, mere lines on paper. On the next page, drawn in detail, was the mannequin that had rested across the room, out of the way, behind him. Large and white, inert and blank, the mannequin possessed more character in one elliptical hip than he had in his whole frame, it leaned with a life more subtle and more real than he could ever express through a shout, much less a pose. He saw this, and cringed, teeth raked across tongue as he tried to speak but rather than see himself again through her eyes, looked from her back to the screen. Before he blocked her from his senses, he heard a seat from the final row swing up, and footsteps calling loudly down the aisle, closer with each beat to where she stood, as again the glass fell, spilling forth its contents.

#### IV

The class had just become required for all students. It was said to be required due to the budget cuts. Sixty-five people sat crowded silently in the first four rows. One never missed a class, although, in the sticky heat of one another's pressed bodies. One could taste the perspiration of the neighbors on either side. One watched the same film every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, although O'Shea swore it was different. And the times the two or three brave, or confused, students would call him on this, their hands raised, quivering from the wait he would make them endure for daring to address him, much less with a question. All he would reply was that F students ask questions that others already know the answer to. He would then humor them, smiling like the grate on a drainage pipe, by pointing out aspects of the film that they could not recall. O'Shea would chat with Flavin. Flavin. Flavin the Artist. Flavin the A student. Flavin would present Disintegrating Man, the week long



festival in the desert, a \$200 per ticket event for lashing out at Capitalism. Flavin would show his film: half-naked to naked women dancing in the desert, their boyfriends too distracted by videotaping the other dancing women, they too distracted by their boyfriends' infidelity via camera lens, to notice that they, too, were caught on film. Why live when you can trap and be trapped by memory? Flavin's video would hold the class in hypnotized delight. Flavin would tell them that any "serious artist" would most definitely attend Disintegrating Man. The film would not snap. This, beyond all interruptions, all other films and events on or off the syllabus would prove that the class did work. The students attended, and they watched, moved by the milk, by whatever was on the screen, relating to its inability to remain upright, unspilled.

## V

The Old Lion was beside her, yet no eyes turned from the screen. No one wondered if he would bare gums, or fangs. No one but him. She knew already what was coming. O'Shea blocked his view of the screen. The milk was dripping to the floor. He could only see the dark outline of the man before him, and the hoarse whisper of his voice.

"Ms. K, where are you going so loudly?"

She did not answer. The white milk dripped between their faces, the light shone off her eyes, revealing blue. She sank beneath the drops of milk.

"Answer to me, Ms. K." He was growing louder.

She rose, sketchbook in hand, eraser in the other. She leaned for a moment like the mannequin in her sketch, her figure white against the illumination of the milk rewinding back into the finally, never, upright glass.

"Answer me," O'Shea hissed, his mustache seemed to bristle and tie in knots, his height seemed to decrease, yet the hiss grew louder, didn't stop with "me," only continued—"Answer me!" Sharp and cutting, and she didn't flinch. The milk remained erect.

"I don't know what this class is for," she said, directly into his eyes, with a force he had not been addressed with in decades, "but I don't have to be here."

She said it as if she had a right to, as if it were perfect sense.

All eyes were on screen as O'Shea bared fangs: "No, you have to be here. You, you of all have to be here, so that this little emotional outburst, this little pawing of politics can be suppressed. You are here to be entertained, not politicized. Now sit down."

The milk illuminated her face, and in it he saw some invisible force unleash like the shock wave of an artillery shell, so powerful it will leave all intact, limbs, clothes, even the freshly styled hair, but the heart stopped, the body dead.

She turned gently, an infant rolling for the first time, all of her, waist at the curve of her hips, her head, fully illumined by the milk. She faced the upright glass and flung the eraser, and it hit the glass of milk on the screen, which silently toppled over, spilling its creamy white contents down the length of the wall as if for the first time, three minutes from then doing so again, as it had three minutes before. The milk streamed and he cried it, like that Ivory Elephant, no that drank it, and I drank it too.



*Untitled*

Brandin Aguayo



*Oblivion*

Dustin J. Schwindt

## **On the Run August '56**

Gerald R. Wheeler

I was sixteen,  
on the run from Long Beach  
California to Columbus, Ohio  
where I was born,  
orphaned, raised by my Aunt Elizabeth  
until she passed me on to violent kin.  
Uncle not of my blood.  
It was him or me,  
enslavement or freedom.

My life stuffed in a duffle bag,  
\$50 in my sock. Standing  
in desert heat outside Needles  
thumbing on Route 66  
after four rides with strangers  
sharing life stories surviving  
on the edge of the earth:  
AWOL GI who asked for gas money.  
A roustabout whose wife left him  
for a wildcatter, cried 25 miles.  
Tattooed ex-con driving stolen car  
offered me cigarettes & beer.  
A woman driving Cadillac convertible  
to her father's she hated funeral. Kissed &  
called me "Hon," shelled out \$20. Said  
I hope your Aunt takes you back.  
My biggest fear, a red Buick  
I'd washed & waxed a hundred  
goddam times but never drove  
appearing on the horizon.

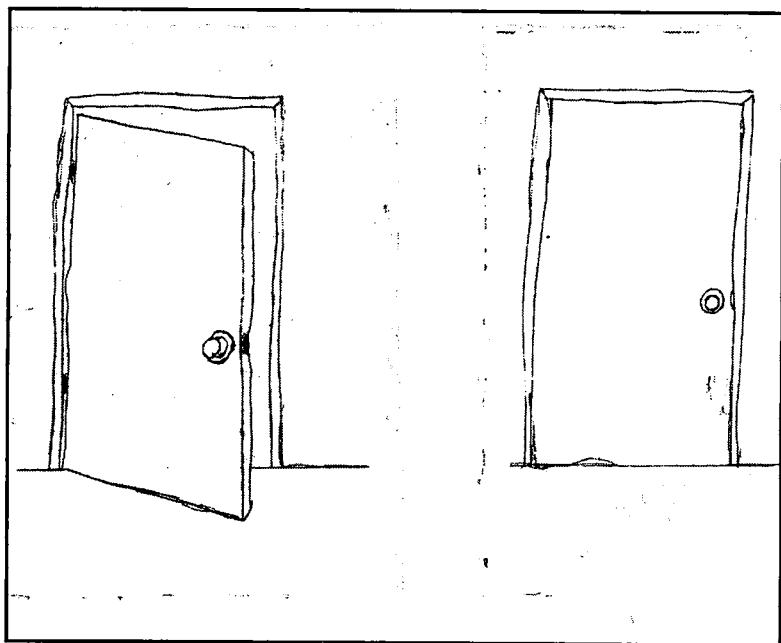
Someone is hiding under my bed  
I hear him breathing now and then  
sometimes he sighs  
and once I think he hiccuped  
but mostly there is silence  
I know he is there  
one of his feet is sticking out  
what does he want  
to steal or to smother or strangle  
or could he be there by mistake  
did he get the address mixed up?

He's been under there three weeks  
I wonder should I feed him  
perhaps he brought a snack  
should I try to make small talk with him  
ask how his family is  
perhaps they all hide under beds  
it might be genetic  
am I making too much of this  
do other people also  
have somebody under their beds  
is there a parallel universe  
of beings who live on the underside of things?

I wish I'd vacuumed recently  
he'll think I'm a terrible housekeeper  
all that blanket-fluff and balls of dust  
and Post-it notes and missing socks  
I hope he doesn't have allergies  
how long will he be under there  
what if I want to sell the house  
will he have to be appraised?

Doesn't he get bored under the bed  
doesn't he have to use the bathroom  
what does he do all day  
what is he waiting for  
why doesn't he get a job

or perhaps this is his job  
perhaps there's a hole in my floor  
and he's filling it with his body  
because the builder found him cheaper than lumber  
but does he in fact have a body  
all I've seen is a few inches  
is it possible the underside of my bed  
is populated after all by only  
an unemployed and heavy-breathing foot?



*Untitled*

Lora Ceccato



## Contributors' Notes

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**Brandin Aguayo** is a Graphic Design major at CSU, Chico. When people ask him how he is doing, he likes to reply, "I'm doing like this," and he proceeds to do the "okay" sign with his fingers. He loves graphic design and has a passion for photography. He'd like to thank everyone. "Thank you."

**Jeffrey C. Alfier**, a former Air Force officer, is a technical writer living in Schwedelbach, Germany. He has been published in several professional and literary journals including *Columbia Review*, *Into the Teeth of the Wind*, *Penumbra*—the Art & Literary Annual of California State University at Stanislaus, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. His critique of James Dickey's poem, "The Firebombing," is forthcoming in *The Explicator*.

**Daniel Gustav Anderson** lives in the American West. He knows something you don't know.

**Linda Bosson** is an editor in New York. Her poetry has appeared in *Blue Mesa Review*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Aura*, *Re:Al*, and other publications.

**Lora Ceccato** is graduating in May. She is an Art Education major, minoring in Women's Studies with an emphasis in math. Most of her ideas and thoughts are generated from the readings she does in her Women's Studies classes. To explore Women's Studies visually, she started by doing a portrait of herself and then one of her mother. Lora continues with this exploration using the different mediums of printmaking.

**Rebecca Donnelly** is starting her second semester as an online student at CSU, Chico in the Liberal Studies program. She was born in England but spent most of her childhood in California. Her husband, daughter, and she moved to Florida in 2002 with the Air Force. In addition to writing, she enjoys reading, traveling, and daydreaming. Her story is not biographical, but she could not have written it if she had not been a gawky teenager herself.

**Sanford Dorbin** is a retired librarian whose work has appeared in previous issues of *Watershed*.

**Ralph Dranow** lives in Oakland.

**Bob Garner** is reminded of a line from a song in *My Fair Lady*—"I have often walked down this street before, but the pavement never

moved beneath my feet before ... ”

**Ryan Grow** is currently teaching English to sophomores and juniors at Red Bluff High School. He currently lives in Chico.

**Paul Hood** is a senior at Chico State and is majoring in Religious Studies. He has previously been published in *Watershed*, the *Porter Gulch Review*, and was editor of the *Real World Press*.

**Dustin Iler** is from Ojai, California. He is twenty years old and is majoring in English.

**Suzan Jantz** lives in the mountains northwest of Igo, California. She is majoring in English at CSU, Chico with a minor in creative writing.

**Bryan Tso Jones** is a second year MFA student who resides in Chico. He thinks it would be great to have tea with Heloise and Abelard, so “we could really find out what was going on 900 years ago.”

**Benjamin Lang** moved from Texas to California at the age of four. He now lives in Chico where he attends the university.

**Bruce Matthes** is a graduate student in literature at CSU, Chico. His drawings and paintings are spontaneous responses to emotions. They often form an illustrative criticism of the literature he reads, yet he admits their true origin remains unknown. “Sometimes I think I understand my art, but someone always seems to come along who understands it better.”

**Renée Suzanne Muir** is an exuberant photographer who moved to Chico from the Pacific Northwest at the dawn of the new century.

**Timothy John Muir** is a middle-aged wordsmith and history “gumshoe.” You’ll find him listed in the telephone directory.

**Matt Schumann** is a 34-year-old Mathematics major at CSU, Chico. “Starving” is a poem he wrote for his English 20 class. He lives in Orland, CA, with his wife and three daughters. Poetry is very new to him, and he finds it challenging. For the last 15 years he has coached high school wrestling. He plans to be a teacher when he graduates next year.

**Dustin J. Schwindt** is working toward his master's degree in English Literature. He aspires to someday combine his love of photography, writing, and film into a creative career.

**Carol Wheeler** resides in Katy, Texas. She received a MS degree from California State University, Long Beach, and a PhD from Ohio State University. She is a retired network administrator and the co-editor of art for *Poetry Depth Quarterly*. Her graphic art has appeared on the covers of *Hidden Oak*.

**Gerald R. Wheeler** resides in Katy, Texas. He is a Pushcart nominee and has award-winning photography. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *The North American Review*, *The Distillery International Poetry Review*, *ONTHEBUS*, *Lynx Eye*, *Riversedge*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Cape Rock*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Slant*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Peregrine*, *Owen Wister Review*, *Rio Grande Review*, *Aethlon*, *The Louisville Review*, *Whole Terrain*, *War, Literature & the Arts*, and elsewhere. He is the author of three poetry collections: *Tracers*, *Tracks*, and *Travelin' Still*.

