



# CURARE

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# C U R A R E



**Rage-o-rama** - a column for the no future.

Summer is the time for putting together 'zines like this one, which is a blast. It's also a time to make like a tree and split the city. I was lucky enough to visit a club called THE BOILER ROOM located in New Britain, Conn. USA. We ARE going global and one of these days the whole continent will be one big NYC. Or else Manhattan will be a walled-in enclave of only rich business suits and the rest of us will be sucked into the surrounding boroughs of decay and tank-like vehicles with armor and knives sticking out of their sides. I read this in the Village Voice at least ten years ago. It may be happenin'... If you don't believe me, check out Coney Island. We'll stick with global communication in an attempt at positivity. (Or check out the front cover of this mag, which was taken in SUBURBIA - it's really out there!!) The BOILER ROOM is appropriately named. I went to a death metal show there featuring bands like Disincarnate and Cancer. The band listening to & moshing room is a fairly good size one with not even a tiny speck of ventilation. I counted about one hundred and forty people inside this sweat box with me, breathing my air. I'm sure there is a death ensemble called Suffocation and I will have to see them at the BR. After listening to a few hot bands, I went outside to tank up on O2. My fingers had shriveled up into prunes. It was the first time that ever happened to me outside a bathtub. There were a number of young persons in attendance as you might expect. At "39", I was probably the oldest in the house, including the fathers of some band members. I am proud of this and as Bob says, "I'm younger than that now". One handsome Hispanic kid who was trying to get a band together was extremely taken with my tattoos, this made me happy, my hair felt like a whole wet Irish Setter, but I was bad. It was nice to get out of the apple, and despite my usual crapping and moaning (Thanks a lot grandma, for that part of my genes) I had one of the best times in recent years. I was lucky enough to sit in on a conversation with the Vietnam vet who was driving the tour bus of death metalers around the country. He talked about China White as if it was god's nectar, a view I have held myself, and griped about bussing over twenty lunatic brats around to make loud music of the type that one could not tell if a buzzsaw was cutting a hole in the floor under your feet; and with vocals that sound like records being played backward underwater inside Satan's stomach. This was the vet's first tour and no matter what he said, I know he was loving it (\*to death). And so was I.

I saw a ghost at the Knitting Factory during a Disciples of Rage rehearsal. I took it in stride and didn't miss a line in my song. I think it was G.G. Allin trying to tell me he made a mistake by kissing the grim reaper. You have to be careful who you tell these things to. That's why I'm telling you.

I hope you enjoy the first issue of Curare, which was born of Vital Pulse, the most recent magazine out of ABC No Rio. Many of the contributors are ABC No Rio habitués, which is to say they are certifiable cases. Two columns which will appear regularly, Rage-o-rama, by me, and Poison Pen, by Jan Schmidt, are introduced in this issue. Eat your heart out, lower east side newspapers. We get to do this, because we are the Editors. All of the authors and/or poets are great, but I am especially pleased to have a poem by will inman, a poet who was here in NYC when I arrived in 1966 and was a major inspiration to me. There's no table of contents, because I'm too lazy. If you read the whole thing, I guarantee you will find what you've been looking for. The writers included are: Jan Schmidt, Ken DiMaggio, Vipin, Jan McLaughlin, Larry Jones, Cynthia Andrews, Steven Hartman, Bob Hart, Peter DiMatteo, bruce weber, Thaddeus Rutkowski, J.D. Rage, Chantay Jones, M. Madeleine, Sid Branch, Jennifer Blowdryer, will inman, Dangerous Diane Spodarek, gina angeline bonati, David Huberman, Paul Skiff and Grace Period.

Do you sometimes feel like you're being poisoned? I do. Curare is a poison extracted from trees, and Venom is spider or snake poison in particular and any poison in general. Air, for example, is poison, and water is also poison. Words are poison, religion is suspect, heroin is definitely poison. So if you are killing yourself, give it up, read Curare, and go out and do something. If you don't, the poison will seep in and you will become a still life of yourself, waxen features being flickered upon by the poison rays coming out of your TV set.

LUV J.D. Fall 1993.

PS: Congrats to LES band PISS FACTORY for their great new CD & Cassette "PISS FACTORY" on Relativity. This is not poison, so buy it NOW!



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## POISON PEN by Jan Schmidt

A teenager asked me what "instant gratification" meant. I jumped at the chance to explain that it came into use in the sixties to describe people who wanted things, now. It was used by rich, white people (who manufactured, sold, advertised and owned these things) to look down on the people who couldn't afford them and say, "Look they refuse to work - they expect things to be given to them. They don't want to work for things, they want instant gratification." Then the druggies came along, and said, "No way. Instant gratification takes too long." That's when all hell broke loose. Today we say, "I am enough, I have enough, I do enough." This is to counteract the effects of advertising, consumerism and modern life.

Sid Branch, (publisher, editor, writer, graphics designer and head of circulation of the *ma SuperVision*) and I were talking in front of our building, the building where we live and she is the Super. I was complaining, "I do stuff and do stuff and I don't know what it is I keep doing. I'm an overdoer." Sid nodded vociferously in understanding. "That's it," she said, "we're like over-achievers, but with a twist." Yes, over-achievers with a twist: we do things, but we never reach a goal. We're not even sure there is a goal. We do and do and yet never reap benefits, like a raise in salary or prestige. Are we like the zombies in the *Dawn of the Dead*, shopping aimlessly and without purpose, forced by some inner drive we don't understand? Or, maybe we can't know where we're going. Maybe that is the key, the rest is illusion.

I went to a conference in Atlanta, Georgia in June where my brother teaches English Literature. I sat in on two of his classes. One was on Victorian Lit, (that day they were doing Bram Stoker's *Dracula*) the other on feminist criticism. I noted that the number of black people in Paul's school was less than I'd expected, for a city that is eighty percent black. Paul said that the school's African American population is about twenty percent. In the feminist crit lecture, there were about fifteen students, all female except two guys, and all white except two black women. I was surprised at how blond the white people were. I didn't realize that so many southerners are fair-haired; it was kind of disappointing. I was expecting a lot of women resembling Scarlett O'Hara.

My brother told me he was nervous having a member of the family see him teach. I was proud that he let me sit in. (He had refused to let my mother when she visited.) He is tall and athletic looking. I bet lots of the girls are in love with him. He sounded a lot like our dad who taught high school English, who had the girls flirting with him right up till he retired. Paul was excited and interested in what he was teaching, but I think dad would have rolled over at his sexual references and non-traditional ideas. Paul began by saying that one of the reason women's literature was not accepted and valued was that men, who had the power to do the accepting, didn't understand it.

He said the basic novel structure, as it has been handed down by hetero-white men, travels linearly and with male sexual understanding and terminology: the rise, the climax, and the fall. Women have a different sexual nature, (here the women ummed and ahhed in appreciation of the difference, the blond in the next row smiled at me) and a more circular writing structure follows from it. (The guys were still, the women were madly nodding in assent.)

He noted that the tightly structured heterosexual society of England at that time was particularly vulnerable, as an island, to foreign invasion. But what was even more frightening was the possibility of takeover from within female sexuality, mobility and power. At the time, the popular diagnosis of female troubles was hysteria, a kind of code word for women out of control (the men's control). Among the treatments for hysteria were hysterectomy and sometimes, cliterectomies. (As the meaning of the word "cliterectomy" registered, a wave of horror passed over the class in form of sharp intakes of breath, grimaces and moans. I accidentally laughed out loud and the black woman in the row to my right, a seat ahead, turned and joined in my wonder at the others' innocence.)

In the Victorian lit class Paul suggested that one convention of Victorian novels is fear of female sexuality and fear of the other - the dark, aquiline-nosed ones. I realized in a jolt that this is one of the major characteristics of most white, heterosexual, patriarchal literature throughout the ages: fear, fear of the unknowable, unfathomable, unreachable which they define as women and other cultures. Not all cultures are built on fear. No wonder the world created by these fearful white male type people is such a mess.

Paul's class also discussed how white men's literature talks about universals whereas female literature has an implicit negation to universality. I don't know about this. I think that white men's literature thinks that what is common to them is universal to all, and in this ego-centric, ethno-centric, gender-centric view, they are hardly universal. Even the fear that is so central to their meaning is not necessarily a basic feeling about life for all peoples.

I use that word, "think" advisedly. It means that I don't know this for sure, that I am not necessarily able to prove it, and that I might easily find exceptions or find out that I didn't have all the facts in the first place. I am aware that right now, in every little writing workshop across the country, someone is telling someone else, "Don't use the phrase 'I think.'" It connotes indecision, unsureness. Be definite. State your point." Fuck



that. It has been extremely liberating for me to stop having to be definite about shit I'm not definite about it. To bring an idea to the table and to say, this is my opinion. I'm sure the world is big enough to hold many opinions. Besides, where would Sartre be if he couldn't use that word, "I 'blank', therefore I am?"

I know I'm being contrary and I just can't stand rules. I like you to follow the rules, especially my rules, but don't tell me I'm breaking a law and it's a no-no. I mean it might be sloppy writing - fine, I can clean it up - but if it is simply breaking rules - hey - break it.

And as Jennifer Blowdryer so succinctly puts another aspect of male/female differences, "Just because we're women, doesn't mean we care."

And although that sentence doesn't contain an example of it, Mykel Board says that, "Jennifer Blowdryer is the master of the perfectly placed adjective." Mykel and I have a running feud on the supremacy of the verb (his point of view) versus the adjective (my point of view). I see this as the result of our gender differences, even though he sees himself as a gender-bender.

As my best friend, J.D. Rage said to me in her most dyslexic manner over rice and beans, "You can take what you leave and need the rest."

So I leave you with my quote of the week, overheard on a bench in Tompkins Square. "What I do - I go in and if they throw me out for looking too raggedy and shit, I go to the next place and if they don't let me in I go to a third. If no one lets me in I piss and shit everywhere. I just pull my pants down and take a shit where ever, because I don't want to shit in my pants, then I'd have to get new ones. I mean, it is an inalienable right to take a shit. In fact it goes beyond the constitution."





Photo by: J.D. Rage







Photo by: Ken DiMaggio



**GRACELESS, DECAYING, DESOLATE: WILLIAMSBURG, YOU ARE MY  
BRIDGE.**

A block or two away from the per-  
formance space the space that warmed the  
embers dying in my soul is how I get  
to know you the bridge graceless and  
grey deso

late  
and  
in  
decay

but this for me is nature this for my  
soul that feels like a mistake of cre-  
ation this for my shadow that resents its  
insecure unimpressible body this for my  
presence which feels ghostly and haunt-  
ing in the world of the living this for  
my brief history that already at thirty  
five feels old rusted and aban-  
doned which is why this the Williams-  
burg Bridge the bridge framed at one end by  
tall housing projects the bridge whose  
concrete cable and steel looks like shrapnel looks  
bullet-ridden the bridge that passes into a  
grimy desolate Domino Sugar plant fac-  
toried waterfront in Brooklyn the  
bridge

that ends  
in a greasy muckish birth-canal-like  
tunnel in Williamsburg

is for me

understanding consummation  
and  
even  
beauty

but only for those who feel as if they don't be-  
long only for those who wished that another  
would have lived in their place only for  
those who feel that what came before their  
life was their true home in a blissful eternal  
sleep only for those who as if  
life

was the claw that ripped that never  
meant to be awakened sleep

or so it now feels to me an insomniac long-  
ing for a world that is only a ghostly feel-  
ing that is at best a dark and unknown ob-  
ject in memory so is the view half-  
way through this cage-like netted flaking tunn-  
el of metal the point where the train that  
travels right along side now travels under-  
neath the point where what is now  
ahead is vagueness and grey barely given  
presence in a few splinters of  
steel the point where what is be-  
hind you is now as empty and dense as what is  
before you the point where

there is not even a way for  
sound light or any living be-  
ing to enter



so that not even an echo shadow or link with  
any other nature follows you

It is just you now

perhaps as you were in that untroubled nev-

er  
meant  
to  
be  
awakened

sleep

It is just you

but for only a very short time because  
soon coming into view the grimy deso-  
late Domino plant on the Williamsburg water-  
front it was just enough time for you  
to know about this spiritual eclipse you  
thought you saw at the end of this  
bridge or was it just a mirage for a crea-  
ture trying to get back to a home he can't even  
be sure is his and without finding answer to nei-  
ther returns this pale and malingering archi-  
tecture and so once again this bridge in squat  
concrete towers graffitied over and gated against tress  
passers once again this bridge in spiral  
battleship steel stairways that descend and dis-  
appear to a swallowing sub-terrain of no-  
where and so once again this decaying piece of  
ungrace in half torn open corrugated steel  
panels one of which I yank as I  
pass and which reveals the condition of  
this bridge in a loud and creaking  
rattle once again now this piece of man-made rot and  
decay in a bullet-colored train that  
now comes chugging along side like a para-  
site burrowing into a slab of rotted  
meat now

once  
again

the Williams  
burg  
bridge

in all its cheap plastic netting its  
rat-like gnaws in the concrete walkway its ob-  
servation towers graffitied and aban-  
doned its corrugated ribs and  
spiral stairs that descend to sub-  
terranean nowhere

and finally

its ignoble ending

in a brick tunnel-like shaftway

that seems more like the inside of a  
garbage scow

Good  
bye

bridge



Yours is a song of machines that  
no longer work and

solitary beings who search for their  
birthplace in

the vague

in

the decay

but your presence deso

late

your  
visage

ugly

and without

grace

for a moment I

felt

for a moment

I had

belonged

\*

--Ken DiMaggio



## THE SEIZURE POEM

Some of my fellow poets they want to get beyond language while America erupts into flames in cities like Los Angeles I meet or hear poets who want to make words sound unintelligible while different social groups in this country the rich and poor or Black and White are unable to sustain a dialogue the latest trend in literature is to make it incomprehensible while the mainstream illiterate American society rumbles spasms of the cataclysmic and once again because I'm a poet and because I also didn't get a grant which means I have to work for a living it becomes the kind of situation that puts me in the middle I just want to go beyond poetry now when the poems that get published sound like they're schizophrenic and the poems that you understand sound like bad rap music but I also want to get beyond working for a living which used to be degrading but is now getting dangerous when the only jobs available are incinerating medical waste in the AIDS ward or working on a crew that removes asbestos

And that's why I want to have a seizure now

I want to writhe fury and froth like an epileptic

I want to get beyond an archaic form of language I want to get beyond employment that is toxic

I want to have a seizure now

I want to do the dance that's spastic

Seizure

while Americans loot televisions that are still plugged into ostentatious sex-galore game shows while another group of Americans watches that very scene on the televisions in their own homes as they load bullets into handguns and periodically fondle nearby kids pets or spouses that are in a daze or stoned but on the lighter side General Norman Schwartzkopf hero of the TV video war made an unannounced guest appearance at Disneyland where during the National Anthem and for the benefit of all the folks with cameras he



saluted the flag with Mickey Mouse while

throughout the Eastern seaboard thousands of  
citizens have been reporting the face of  
Jesus in the forkfuls of spaghetti on the Pizza  
Hut billboards which you can also hear more  
of on the dial 1-900-MIRACLE line the one ad-  
vertised late at night for which your TV  
screen becomes a stigmata unless it's for the dial-a-  
RAPE line for which your screen becomes  
a vagina and by the time I get to the tele-  
phone the TV shows a progeria victim who cutely  
says unless I can raise one hundred thousand  
dollars for receiving medical equip-  
ment and operations then tomorrow this  
cute face is going to be a dead crab apple au-  
topsied in a pathology laboratory well  
that's when I start getting spastic that's when  
I start grimacing and leering like a con-  
centration camp experiment that's when like the chicken  
whose head the circus geek just bit off is  
how I start dancing that's when no longer  
being able to make sense of these cataclysmic  
images I come to the decision that it's  
time to go beyond language and for that  
matter this pre-millennium American cul-  
ture

And that's why I want to have a seizure  
now

I want to stand up before the riot on  
television and conjure up a fit that's  
epileptic

I want to have a seizure now

but in public at the places where I used  
to read poetry before the podium where  
I can quiver then froth then swallow  
my tongue before an audience

It's post millennium poetry

poetry for the TV deaf

It's slapstick performance and comedy

for the post no-employment and post no-  
future

Drop whatever you're doing now that  
looted TV that molested child that  
suicidal hand gun that abused or beaten  
spouse  
because it's time to do the dance called  
The Spastic



Tomorrow everyone is going to be doing it

when there is no more work

or for that matter

language

Seizures

I used to be a poet

Spitting                      flailing                      choking then  
vomiting

there's nothing more cutting edge than  
publicly acting like you're re-  
tarded

But my fellow poets are right

when people get ready to defend them-  
selves before live riots on television while the  
rioters in the television loot tele-  
visions that are plugged into sex-  
galore game shows

then it is truly necessary to get be-  
yond language

I just feel that swallowing my tongue is a  
better way of doing it then deconstruct-  
ing words

besides

when language has come to its end

what is a poem at this point

but a Halloween mask on the face of a  
mongoloid

Just like in Diane Arbus' final photo-  
graphs

the ones she took before committing  
suicide    the ones that show a line of re-  
tarded women wearing the masks of  
famous cartoon characters like Mickey  
Mouse

How silly they looked

trying to play one of our games when

with their God-given bulbous fore-  
heads drooling mouths gaping smiles an  
stupid eyes                      they could play trick or



treat

without the aid of a mask

So could we with our cities burning our  
middle class locking themselves in and arm-  
ing our politicians parading or  
babbling our environment sizzling up  
or getting more poisoned

reveal our imbecility through  
just grunts and guffaws

without the aid of a poem

Spit Choke Vomit

It makes a lot more sense than barricad-  
ing yourself in your home with a gun against  
a riot

Writhe Fury and Froth

It's more honest than claiming to be a  
poet

And where were they going

Diane Arbus' retarded women wearing  
Halloween masks in a field

They just seemed to be wandering without  
keepers without the guidance of intelligent  
authority

And as for their destination

the place they would finally come to

the photographer Diane Arbus never  
took

the photograph she nevertheless must have  
known

because these were her last pictures

before she killed herself

\*



*nuit/night*

**Gate of all wonder**

Two states.

The first: dazed, purposeless  
with ringing head,  
spine packed with concrete,  
mercury, uranium,  
not here or there,  
undecided about the next move,  
directed by the vast cluster of nerves  
the lead filled stocking  
between the legs  
driven by the one-eyed dog  
the hammer-head shark  
that is mewling, lost, battering itself  
against unknown rimose atolls,  
in search of herring, mullet, tuna,  
barracuda, monkfish, clams  
guided by scent alone and pheromones.

The second state:  
overtaking the first  
all the chakras pierced  
by the adamantite thunderbolt  
drained of all lava, blank,  
filled with the divine elixir of non-being,  
stuffed with emptiness, with absence  
with lucid night.

**Vipin**



## *union/union*

### **The spider**

How is it that the beast with two backs  
the straining eight-limbed monster  
gives us little pleasure to watch?  
How is it that the act of hermaphroditic union,  
filling the trench is such pleasure to execute  
but not so much to witness?

To her body, to its declivities and rises  
I join mine, with its complementary topology  
grotesque must be that sight,  
that of dogs coupling in the marketplace  
a welter of limbs and aspects,  
curiously wrought bellies, textures,  
skin tones, an orgy of two  
in the closeness of which, her behind  
becomes a thousand cleft honeydews,  
her armpits reek of a multitude,  
her face and her scalp  
run with the rivulets from myriad glands.

How is it that this comes to an end  
with a little death, a groan and a curse,  
a muttered imprecation,  
a sob of joy, a sigh of despair?  
How is it that when we lie side by side  
sated yet sad, linking hands,  
gliding palms once more- over rapidly cooling skin  
look at each other, at the slowly brightening day outside  
that beckons us to separation,  
that releases the last links  
that join our forefingers,  
we are already thinking of the next time  
and the next and next and next and next  
an infinite series  
culminating in an extended union  
an indefatigable parting ?

### **Vipin**

## THE DIET

my diet of Oreos, coffee, and nicotine  
is not working;  
the pillow feels like chestnuts  
under my head;  
my muscles make their last stand  
against atrophy;  
the phone rings and rings.

i'm sleeping  
and i can't get up.

in the semi-dark  
i run lists of names:  
Judith. No.  
Denny. No.  
Ellyn. No.  
Tommy. No.

No. No. No.

my mouth is dry.  
i'm dehydrating.  
i love lucy is on in the next room  
for the comfort of laughing crowds.

i don't think i can call my office.  
i don't think i can raise my arm.  
a new repetition:

call the office. i'm sick.  
call the office. i'm sick.  
i rehearse. i'm sick.

the refrigerator purrs my name.  
if i get up and have some Oreos  
i'll make the call:

it's me. i'm sick.

as i shuffle toward the kitchen,  
i can smell myself. it's awful.  
in addition to all the regular  
aroma-producing spots,  
there's an odor of old urine  
on my right hand  
because i masturbated twice already today:  
monday.

it's been since friday morning,  
father, since i showered.

at times like this  
i wish i'd been born catholic,  
so when i light the bedside candle  
it will be to the specific saint  
of inertia.

the office.  
have to call the office:

i'm dying, and can't come in.  
i'm alone, and can't come in.

i cradle two dozen Hershey's Kisses  
to bed with me,  
and pick up where i left off in the spy novel i know i've  
read before.  
it's hard to peel the tinny wrappers  
and still read.

my odor is really very bad.  
now i've smelled it  
i can't get away from it.  
i rise to wash my hands at least,  
then do the afterthought of my face.  
don't want to get pimples,  
but there's already a big one  
right in the middle of my cheek.

my diet of caffeine and nicotine  
is definitely not working,  
though i feel thinner.  
at the same time i feel stiff,  
weighted, rock-like.

i don't recognize my own face,  
pale and shivering in the mirror.  
i smell bad and my hair is greasy.

9:30. call the office.  
the dial tone is hurting my ear.  
beep-beep-beep  
beep-beep-beep-beep.  
i'm breathless and squeaky on the phone.  
i haven't spoken all weekend.  
maybe they'll believe me.

perry mason. della street.  
his dark eyes.  
her delicious voice.  
her competence.  
his principles.  
i watch them peel away the lies.

i observe how they devour the truth  
as if they were eating cucumber sandwiches  
as another tear of chocolate  
slips down the slope  
of my esophagus.

i don't really want to die.  
i'm just so tired.  
i sleep, just in case,  
with a long knife  
pressed against my sternum.  
naw.  
i press.  
the knife leaves a mark.  
i hold the point pressed into my skin.  
yes. no. yes. no.  
death is so close,  
but is not an easy friend.

i'm supposed to meet my grandmother  
tonight for dinner, but  
it's much too late to call  
and make a good excuse.  
the phone doesn't ring.  
she won't reach out to chastise me.  
tuesday i go to work.  
by friday, i still haven't apologized.  
three weeks later i tell her  
i was just so...so...tired.  
so tired, grandma.  
sick and tired.  
so sorry.  
but i've been on this diet . . .



**st. genet**

somnambulist in imagery  
nocturnal zones of combat  
a recovering grapefruit leaguer

form from buonarotti  
reflecting/flexing behind bars  
i've caught you here before

as now upon the summer  
forearm tattooed st. george dragon  
you wax your pectoral

you know that i am larry  
i address the familiar  
and ponder on the panoply

all comedy en absurdum  
had not a bard such a lover

**Larry Jones**  
(Boston 1980)

**'st. giovanni lo baptiste'**

john lennon lenin lemon  
workingclass hero  
knighted to an empire

you and your warm gun  
are more popular  
than jesus again tonight

as in our adopted hometown  
your body becomes fire  
that warms and cleanses

your most personal  
cultural revolution  
as in homely worcester mass.

lo 'st. giovanni lo baptiste' is authenticated an  
andrea del sarto

i want to hold your hand  
a man's reach should  
exceed his grasp

**Larry Jones**  
(Boston 1980)

**the democrat**

- for david scondras

you the invisible candidate  
one with black beard, eyes, constituency  
have your car demolished in charlestown

are shot at in the south end  
just miss out on a council seat  
slide another six or so into debt

you tell me your lover  
will either live or die  
little else matters

yes, love as a terminal disease  
to quote the late miss wood

- two parts blanc des blancs  
to one salt water, up, please

- i'm just going to slip  
into something more comfortable  
i'll be right back

a camera flashes on the olive  
into your mouth from eye level  
you and i are a sight gag  
two too tall fairy tales

and so i rejoinder my therapist  
harshly, available for what  
conspiracy after whose athens  
electoral ward redistricting

what are we doing standing  
in the middle of the street  
you were all over channel five  
your name forever in the globe

now the snow is drifting into shoulders  
blurring into the marble of your shoulder  
as again your dark eyes close  
in on complete credulity

in greek to me

**Larry Jones**  
(Boston 1982)

## JACK KEROUAC'S DREAM

By Cynthia Andrews

I said it must be Mexico City.

Fitfully frightened and resigned to  
believe because it has

To be the city of dreams collecting  
me in its clouds drifting  
higher than my own brazen

Ideas could know no  
farther than the lower New  
York streets holding

Me now on high in its white fog.

I said it must be the fire  
of the sun so strong about that  
where city reclining in a shine  
of stone and setting fire to

An age breathing silently in darkness.

When will I begin to breathe  
beyond allegiance to the grime  
and asphyxiated fright of the crowd  
around my thoughts and when

Did I recoil from the heat of  
scorn to wallow in my own crimes.

Why is my finger so crossed around  
the other in an embrace of chance  
while the forgotten rights  
and wrongs of nights passed prolong  
their frayed reason into my own.

It must be Mexico City erasing  
the streets around me with arousing  
perfection of ancient gods threatening and

Praising me.

It must be the whore city erasing  
the ruins around me into the lurid  
light of morning while

I wallow in darkness and hide  
in the lower New York streets dreaming  
of genius.



### **Lakeside Trailer Court**

I was conceived  
in a trailer court  
which is a concentration  
camp for poor white people  
in America

Every nite  
after free rounds of  
rotgut  
my unemployed father  
staggered  
from a pool hall  
thru retail space  
for rent  
toward a tiny trailer  
behind a barbed wire fence  
where he slept  
near a graveyard of  
empty beer cans

I was conceived  
in a silver aluminum  
trailerhouse  
& orphaned  
on a prairie of  
tractor skeletons  
surrounding a town  
where the post office closed  
for lack of business  
& the only industry  
a convalescent home

### **A Plea To Judge Wapner from Maria Rodriguez**

Dear Judge Wapner

I am a 13yr old Puerto Rican woman  
who live in a coney island housing project  
with my mother 5 brother &  
100,000 cockroach

My father in jail  
for breaking the head of a neighbor  
who play his radio  
too loud all nite

I no go to school  
Instead I watch tv  
where I see Rock n Rope  
advertised  
The tv announcer say  
to be happy  
I must own Rock n Rope  
like little gringo girl

So I see this little white girl  
just like on tv  
skipping with Rock n Rope  
So I take away her Rock n Rope  
cause her daddy's so rich  
he can buy Rock n Rope  
for the 10,000 cockroach  
living in my project

I could've sold my sex  
to buy Rock n Rope  
I could've sold crack  
for a one way ticket  
outta the project  
but all i do is steal Rock n Rope  
from little gringo girl  
& skip back to my building  
full of dead bodies  
feeling just like  
somebody

Please Judge Wapner  
don't lock me up with my papa  
don't sentence me to welfare  
or send me to Gilligan's Island  
where I'll be made  
to scrub floors  
for little white girl's family

I apologize  
but let me keep  
Rock n Rope

Let me be some-  
body

**Steven Hartman**

## A FANTASY CHINESE

Eyes that mix wine into me  
she allows my ugly blood to swim  
and swallow in her liquid body

When my ugliness is packed too thick  
she'll feed me on last living smell  
and then she'll cut and free the sack

## OYSTER SALT

Flashing pink and pale blue scale  
underneath underneath  
flashing you flashing me flashing them which is which?  
lick an oyster in and out tangled in the greenish stuff  
lick and fish the smells and folds  
within the glitter// folds and folds -- pushing down and  
pushing up puffed in my face my open legs --  
in dark I have pooled my identities.  
Take me make me -- I promise  
not to rise and live// though that promise is slippery.  
In pink and blue// gleams come and go  
it all goes on a sliding scale --  
you see my eyes are bubbles  
and they undulate.  
Or is it pink// or is it blue  
tickling and disappearing  
underneath the underneath?  
whose bloodpink teeth and whose lost tail  
whose which shames touch and bobs the dolls?  
Open legs want to octopus or giantly squid  
but the head is a breaking bulb -- oh  
but never mind  
the ripple-rays gleamstroke my back  
my in-wave dunes its shadow down below  
and if the shadow eats me  
well my dream shall lose your smell their smells  
or mine --  
my shadow did you say? --  
I know about my shadow and its feeding habits.  
My pinkish glimmer flutters still in the fading stuff  
dream in smother  
sucking for the oyster salt.

## 6:30 PM OCTOBER INTERIOR/EXTERIOR

low-lighted luxury of evening --  
pale blue purpling into jeweled shadow -- BOB HART



## HISPANIC RIVALRY by Peter Di Matteo

i sit with a dominican friend  
in a restaurant filled with a bunch of mexican immigrantssss  
we are in jackson heights, queens, on the prostitute and drug-dealer  
infested roosevelt avenue.  
my friend says that his people, the dominicans, are of a higher class  
than these mexicans, these descendants of the orientals + eskimos:  
"yes", i reply, "but they work + don't sell drugs here in new york like  
all too many of your own people!" "yes, but think of L.A." hesays  
the omnipresent obsequiousness, thanks to their far Eastern blood-  
tiez, smiling + giggling, when others are lost to any humor,  
their genetic constitutionz susceptible to compulsive drunkenness,  
or so it seemz, thanx to the brutal north pole windz that have  
added the again omnipresent look of earthly torture to their  
weathered faces.

the band startsssss.  
i start 'memberin' a polish-american poet x-friend who i took here that  
past winter, 'n shit. a cockroach crawled up the wall. this turned her off,  
big time. then, after the roach incident, a drunken mexican guy started yelp-  
'in like he wuz a coyote, as is customary for the campesino guyz who get slosh-  
ed on booze. she axed me where oh where the coyote wuz.

i noticed how much dominicanz, puerto ricans, + cubanz laugh, joke around,  
+ play loud music. i also noticed how much they shouted, like Brazilianz.  
then, i noticed .how mexicans whispered + cried so much.

the couples are dancin'.  
my dominican friend and i are outsiders, no doubt  
we're bein' stared down, big time. we know not where to rest our eyes.  
i choose to giggle when this realization hitss me. i then start clappin!  
to the band, 'n shit. perhaps i too ought to have cried a little, 4  
wasn't i supposed to be effected by the decadence of roosevelt avenue,  
pequena bogota, with its south american whorehouses, colombian  
swindlers, + drug pusherz galore, 24 hours a day, people constantly  
out + about, + english is but an unknown foreign commodity. a sign  
enters my mind in billboard proportion: 'EXPERIENCE STREETLIFE IN  
ITS ENTIRETY, RESEMBLING LIFE IN THE SLUMZ OF BOGOTA, COLUMBIA,  
ONLY TEN MINUTES FROM LA GUARDIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT'

enuff !!

outsiderz, i had mentioned,  
us, and some colombian man, an indian, a mayan,  
dancin' wiff a middle-aged woman with brown hair and green eyes.

a huge black woman enters with a light-skinned natural blonde.  
outsiderz again, and everyone iz starin' them down, as they have done to  
us.

some regular triez to persuade the light-skinned natural blonde, to dance.  
she refuses.

+ refuses.

+ refuses again, still another time, but the mexican man who is now  
seated at our table, a 23 year old gypsy cab driver, wins. he signals  
for me to dance with the huge black woman. she is a colombian, from  
the coast, no doubt, pleasant and bereft of an rancor, a delightful  
person, radiating with the stoicism that the colombians are so-  
well-known for.

5 or so colombianz, 30 mexicans, + one dominican.

oh boy!

a drunken man accuses the colombian man of touching, fondling  
hiz wife's hair whilst she was dancin'.

the colombian looks oh so determined whilst trying to deny  
the mexicans accusation. the mexican's male + female com-  
panions are almost unsuccessful in their desperate attempts  
at restraining him. he is tranquilized. sober docility  
appears to have finally taken over, + then,

bang bang bang,

like a motherfuck,

he is suddenly absolutely convulsive, overcome with  
devilish, if not satanic rage, the restraint of his  
loved ones, unable to stop hiz unearthly quaking,  
which causes a table to turn o'er. my friend makes  
some stupid remark: i am petrified, dashing over  
towards the colombianz. who'z to know who'll he'll  
attack next. the woman with the long straight  
hair hangs on his shoulders, his eyes positive-  
ly satanic, resembling that of an israeli on  
the verge of attacking an innocent arab,  
tears of pain in the eyes of the mexican  
girlz + the new york timez formerly ack-

acknowledging in an article on impoverished immigrant groups residin' in  
new york city that such women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder:

\*the huge bartenders have finally had enuff. the man has proven himself  
to be a true menace. they grapple wiff him + expel him onto the icy  
sidewalk, underneath the elevated #7 train trax that the heart 'n soul  
shall possess in the contaminated gaseousness.

i remain standin'!

a. huge fam'ly of 'leven had been. seated in the process of the incident.

i had yet to have studied them to any great length.

one little girl weeps.

\*

the little girl weeps not because of wet diapers.



## WHY I'LL NEVER MOVE OUT OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE

my wife wakes me up early this saturday and says "there are no birds on the lower east side" and i say "how about pigeons" and she says "pigeons ain't birds they're some kind of rodent man they make little beeping sounds like they're extra terrestrials and they've got the pallor of a funeral director and fly like they've just been in a bad traffic accident" and i'm thinkin' holy cow i want to move where birds live and hear their chirping like a 24 hour news station feeding me rockmaninoff or bach so i can feel part of a bigger thing and i say to my wife you want to move uptown and she chimes back "of course not who cares that there are no birds on the lower east side we've got our own sounds here" and i'm thinking yeah like that old man across the street who spends the night on the fire escape even in winter singing yiddish songs and playing on his busted fiddle that sonata about the purge of 1903 when his mother came here with him on her back and salted pickles for 47 years until she died all shriveled up and smelling of rinds and vinegar and my wife starts singing the score of the sound of music like she's some kind of mocking bird trying to get back at me for all the cynicism i've shared with her since we've been together and i say "you're like a sparrow to me" and "maybe its time we took bird watching lessons at the continuing school of education because this will make us fine tuned to the migratory patterns of things" and my wife says "nah that just aint right we've just gotta pretend to be birds and go on up to the roof and flap our arms and whistle a little bit that'll take care of it" and so its 7 am and we climb up and start doing our thing and wouldn't you know it but all the tenants in our building join us and we've got 50 people in their underwear and pajamas making like birds out on the roof and now i know why i ain't ever moving out of the lower east side

**bruce weber**

## **BAD NEWS**

she was trapped  
in the apartment  
without an exit  
from the man  
who abused her  
because she was handy  
and she felt disoriented  
like she had spent a month  
in the front seat of a ferris wheel  
and thought the world  
had somehow turned over  
and everyone was walking on their head  
and she found herself divided  
between love and hate  
her mind said slash his paintings  
but her lower body said make love with him  
and her heart was being pulled in a tug of war  
making her wobble  
like a lost child  
looking for her mommy  
in calcutta  
everyone begging for a piece  
of her soul  
so they could die in the ganges  
with dignity  
but she couldn't see them  
in her head it was monsoon season  
and the whole world was leaking in her apartment  
and even when she looked in the mirror  
his paintings assaulted her  
with their abstraction  
thick globs of paint  
telling her about his need  
to have his roots planted  
in her subconscious  
that he needed someone  
to shelter him  
like a amusement park  
temporarily inhabited by lucifer  
making his arms flail  
and fling paint  
on her clothing  
and she wanted to get off the ferris wheel  
but she'd just have to get used to it.

**bruce weber**



## PEEPSTER FOR YOUR LOVE

The best way to spy on neighbors, I've found, is to go into my bathroom at night, turn off the lights and get out my binoculars. From my seated position, I scan all buildings, stopping at each lit window and fixing on every sign of life. Usually it takes a couple of hours of sitting and peeping before I catch anyone doing anything interesting.

One way to shorten tedious peeping is to open my window and listen for singing, then for splashing. When both are occurring, I know someone is showering. If I am lucky, I will see a sliver of skin--wet, well-lit, and rippling.

When I am extremely lucky, I spot a family of nudists--mother, father, and children--walking around flagrantly, conversing nakedly, holding hands shamelessly. Such a scene is worth waiting hours in the bathroom for.

Once in a very great while I find the ultimate peep scene: a photographer taking pictures of a female model wearing jeans and no shirt. When I see this, I begin to drool. My binoculars shake. I lean toward my window to get a better view. I steady my lenses and stay very still while my saliva collects in a puddle on the floor.

**Thaddeus Rutkowski**

## WHIPPER SNAPPER

I did not know much about whipping technique until I met a career whipmistress. She offered to demonstrate if I would remove my pants. I said I would, if she would, too. She refused, so we practiced on our forearms.

"You hit with the tip," she said. She was holding a small whip made of foot-long lashes.

She made a snapping motion with her arm, and the whip tips kissed my skin.

"You don't hit with the side," she added.

She brought out a huge multi-thonged whip--it had inch-wide strands and was dyed black. She stood about six feet away and cracked it. Again, she barely brushed my skin.

I asked if I could try, and she gave me a tiny whip, the kind you would use as decoration for a key ring. I swung it like a spastic and caught her with the flat of the lash.

"Ouch," she said. "I don't like that."

Since then, I've spent many hours in the woodshed, practicing. Usually I hit pillows.

But when I have a live target, I know what to do. I stand like a fencer and flash my lash like an epee. I make circles, X's and figure eights. I start from the back and work to the front, covering the skin surface evenly.

Nipples are always a challenge, as are navels and foot soles. No matter how large, they are relatively small, so it is hard not to swing too far and spill over.

Neatness is everything. In the face of sloppiness, I will not whip. I might spank, paddle or tan, but whipping is out of the question. When things are in disarray, I'd rather work on upholstery.

**Thaddeus Rutkowski**

## Reservoir Snakes by J.D. Rage

The moon was hanging up there  
and it was fuller than usual over  
all the suburban nightmares  
and industrial decay  
while  
young men played guitar  
on stage in their birthday  
suits  
and why not it was 120 degrees  
outside  
near the lake  
yes, they still have lakes  
and trees  
although many trees now have  
little signs nailed into  
their bark giving their  
common name  
nobody speaks Latin much anymore  
and the trees don't seem to mind

you gotta watch yourself  
in these spots of illusion  
you'll see that solitude will not happen  
when you accidentally step into  
the bicycle path  
to admire a patch of nature  
and understand that these simple  
machines are  
quite capable of taking you out  
I once shared a room  
at St. Vincent's Hospital  
with an Oriental  
woman who made the mistake  
of crossing  
a busy street in Chinatown  
she was run down by a savage bicycle biker  
All I heard of her was this  
feeble sucking sound on the  
respirator  
and all I saw of her was the  
faint impression her features made  
on the body bag  
as the gurney was wheeled out  
at dawn  
this country bicycle  
whizzed by me with more  
abandon than a NYC garbage truck  
so naturally and it stung me with  
a violent whipping of an  
artificially induced tempest  
being out in the wilderness there,  
I thought it was a dragonfly  
at first

The country is full of hills  
and everything I want to see is  
always on top of the biggest one  
I climbed up through all kinds of  
grass and mud to reach two  
monolithic water towers  
to view their massive structures  
rising from the mountain top  
and to read the message  
scraped into the green slime  
on their otherwise pale sheer walls:  
Life Sucks  
that is what I climbed for

that is what I hiked up here  
to see: Life Sucks  
my own adopted philosophy  
Life Sucks and then  
It Sucks Some More  
the wisdom of the water tower

In my opinion there may be something  
to be said for  
widening the roads  
sacrificing a few more trees  
so that two cars  
can pass each other going around  
the lake  
in the dusk without streetlights  
because its not always a  
full moon and cars are here to stay  
not really much more exciting  
a machine than a bicycle  
and if I had been hiking around  
that lake when two cars were trying  
to pass each other on the road  
I would be taking a dip with the snakes

small black jumping snakes leap  
into the reservoir at my  
approach and float below  
to look at me  
in my black clothes and chains  
on the day  
of the full moon  
all of us surrounded by green things  
and water  
we are the same they tell me  
with their glinting eyes  
I didn't take their picture  
but I got some shots of old gravestones

standing guard over dead Vets of  
the Civil War  
and one of the chef in his shack  
behind the shabby diner  
only a shadow seen through a screen door  
in the photograph but  
after I snapped the shutter  
he rushed out to look at me  
like the reservoir snakes  
but he probably thought  
the Department of Health was getting  
smart and sending a punk rocker  
in zippered combat boots  
and covered with tattoos  
fourteen, though he didn't know how many,  
which could have caused him to reconsider  
whether  
his government regulatory agency  
would go so far as  
sending a female punker to take  
pictures of him  
to get the goods on his greasy  
cooking out behind the diner  
in a weathered old shack  
that wasn't even  
fit for rats  
what he really thought,  
I don't know, but he sure  
looked angry



The tree  
came at the end  
after I saw the stone griffin  
and the broken-down truck  
with its abstractly  
shattered windshield

The tree was  
hidden from the road  
and near the site of a  
bloody battle where a big  
bird, possibly a hawk,  
lost all its feathers  
I couldn't find the body  
though I tried and  
I think its soul was in the tree

The tree  
itself was gnarled  
with age and parasitic vines  
long dead had merged into its  
trunk in twisted ropes

the wind came up and  
rustled through the leaves  
above  
a circle appeared on the ground  
I shaded my eyes  
and shook my hair  
remembering another time  
in this field  
it was raining then  
I was much older than now  
older than the reservoir  
I was part of the lush and leafy  
strangulation of the vines  
I had no face to speak of  
but I could still see the lightning  
strike

I would have liked to sit  
right down at the trunk  
of that crazy tree  
and stay forever  
frozen into a lifelike statue  
my skin turning to ashes  
and my bones to dust  
but the tree reminded me  
why repeat the past  
into infinity  
when the shining path  
is waiting?

#### **Pleasure by J.D. Rage**

I wrote this about the  
time when nothing  
happened  
the only things that ever  
did occur were all inside  
my head

I was never happy  
until I knew all the food  
was gone  
no matter how much there was  
it had to be finished

the refrigerator had  
to be  
bare  
like the cupboards  
in the fairy tale  
and when the food was gone  
I'd get so hungry  
that hunger was coming up  
from a bottomless pit  
and the less money I had the  
more I had to spend it  
on a nonessential  
with only five dollars to my name  
I spend it on a 45 by  
the Cramps  
called Human Fly  
spend until there was nothing  
and it was nothing  
and nothing ever happened  
except inside my  
head  
adrenaline explosions  
where  
my brain seemed to be pacing back  
and forth on top of itself  
all over an impossible  
make-believe  
dream  
dreams of pleasant things  
that could never happen  
because its called  
anhedonia  
the inability to experience  
pleasure  
or let's get real  
to even sit still in one spot  
for a second  
without going TOTALLY NUTS  
with a feeling of worms  
crawling in every little vein  
wrapping themselves around  
my last nerve  
what is it about your family  
that won't let them give up  
that won't let them see  
the nose on their fucking  
face  
that you are a hopeless case  
and Mom keeps saying  
stuff like "Baby, you just  
gotta find a man  
smarter than yourself"  
even though nobody ever  
quite is  
and if he was  
you'd probably be forced  
to slit his  
throat  
they would never believe  
either how many times  
you used to WISH  
that they would die  
that instead of coming home  
they were dead on the highway  
and you'd never have  
to listen to anyone  
again

just walk off into the  
sun  
with a thousand rattlesnakes  
slithering behind you  
across the desert  
until you reached  
that big fat moth-eaten wolf  
with his yellow teeth  
looking you straight  
in the eye  
the one who's been  
howling in your head  
so loud and so long  
that it always  
really seemed  
like something  
was about to  
like something might  
happen  
even though  
it never  
did



Photo by Ken DiMaggio









Photo by: Arthur Rivers



**Chantay Jones**  
© 1993

The lobotomy was not a success!  
Did you hear me?  
I said the lobotomy was not a success!  
Yeah, sure, the doctor holding the offending glob of tissue,  
muscle, blood and other brain matter denies that this is so.  
But she lies!

The memories, feelings and fears were supposed to be removed with the frontal lobe.  
HAH!  
Then how can I remember that I am afraid that this doctor is a quack?  
Is this not enough evidence?  
You say you need more . . .  
Okay!

Then what about the abortion that I shouldn't remember her giving to me;  
only six months before the birth of my son.  
Is this a delusion created in the portion of my mind that I no longer have?

You say you think that I am paranoid?  
You may be right, after all I was diagnosed psychotic. But the lobotomy has cured  
me.

So again - I assert, the lobotomy was NOT a success.

You may choose to discredit this; to that I say You are mad.  
You cannot have it both ways  
I cannot be paranoid and cured  
I must now ask you . . . Was the lobotomy a success?

I can no longer remember, but when I gave it to you . . .

I sure did feel successful.

## THE BEGINNING: STORY OF THE STARS

Mama was smoke. Daddy wasn't anywhere.

These were her first memories.

Later, when a new Daddy and more people exploded color into her picture, she would sit with them, her head on her mother's lap, inhaling the smoke they passed around as their communion, the glow of the joint illuminating their faces, and she saw that her mother was the most scarlet. Red equals danger! Red equals run! But she couldn't. She saw the red in the corners of her own eyes, and she pulled at them, twisted them up to the bone of her eyebrow to slide the pus out, the white infection. But this was later, when she could climb up onto the sink by herself, and look into the mirror, look into her eyes. She felt the smooth cold ridge of the porcelain through her panties, smelled the scent of her stepfather's hairs painting the hollow pool in the sink below her. He hid out from the two of them here, the bathroom door closed, for hours.

When they first moved in, to their apartment in Hollywood, her mother had woken her in the middle of the night, had carried her into the new bathroom. In the hallway still lay the paintbrushes and can of paint where she'd been touching over the trim. "I wanted you to see this before I painted it," her mother whispered, as she stroked her little girl's fuzzy blonderness. "Look!" she gasped, "Look, Gwendolyn!" and she turned out the lights and held her child up to the ceiling. Gwendolyn looked up, and there were stars, shiny clumsy stars, splotched all above her head. Her mother sighed, tilting a little as she held her child skyward, "Isn't it magical," she breathed. Gwendolyn looked harder. The stars scared her. They didn't move, and they didn't sparkle or wink as they did outside when it was night. These stayed still, as if dead, fixed on this one flat surface, three inches from her nose. Her mother finally lowered her, the child's bare feet touching the cold tile. "I'll paint over them tomorrow, I guess," her mother said. She sat down on the toilet seat, and pulled Gwendolyn to sit on her lap. They were still in darkness, with the only light above them in the eerie stars. Here, her mother began to tell her the story of the stars.

The people who came before them, her mother said, had originally painted the bathroom this way. So that when they tripped, they could see themselves in the whole universe, part of everything, connected to the stars. Just as we all did, once upon a time, her mother said. And she laughed, a deep, scratchy laugh. Gwendolyn liked that word, justas, but she could barely keep her eyes open. Her head leaned back into her mother's throat, where she could hear her mother speak through the movements of her skin. When she woke up, her mother was lifting her, and setting her feet back down on the hard cold floor. Gwendolyn mumbled. "I know, baby," her mother said, "but we have to. The stars look bad in the daytime. Just ugly blobs of paint which don't go with the rest. I've painted it all up to here -- see?" And she turned on the light. It was harsh and Gwendolyn put her fists up to her eyes. "I saved this part til last, so you could see it." And saying this, she took Gwendolyn's hand and led her out of the bathroom, and down the hallway to the mattress lying on the floor. "Go back to sleep, baby, and when you wake up, it will all be done." Her mother used the same voice she used when she told Gwendolyn to go to sleep on Christmas Eve. In the morning Santa Claus would have come, and the tree would be covered with red and gold and green presents, each sprinkled with silver snow, and each tagged with a reindeer card.

It was a fairy tale she wanted them to believe forever.



**Excerpt from, This Time, No Witnesses  
short story, by Jan Schmidt  
© 1993**

Five nights later, Willfull is still standing in that same doorway, faithfully waiting for Betty. When he shuffles his feet, he thinks of the guys in prison. All of them spent their time planning revenge. It was the sweetest sport. Better than beatin your stick. Planning, goin over and over how it was gonna feel, how this time they won't get caught.

The prison was divided into groups, the Aryan Maniacs, the Black Separatists, and the druggies. The addicts were the only racially mixed group. Everyone knew you couldn't trust them, while they had an understanding beyond trust, beyond color. Willfull's group was four guys: himself, a white crack-head ladies' man, in his early thirties; Terrel, an old-time Harlem junkie, big, black and stoned, nobody messed with him; Big John, a crazy-ass six-foot-seven white dope fiend, nearly forty who thinks he's John Gotti; and Crazy Mike, five-foot-six, a Puerto Rican crack-head about twenty-four with a short-guy's complex. Willfull can see himself clearly, pushing up on the bar bells. Next to him was Crazy Mike rhythmically lifting the arm weights up and down, up and down. Big John and Terrel stood there doin nothing. Everyday, Big John would say, "I'm goin back to that restaurant, I'm gonna stuff my .45 in that Greek's ugly red face and say, 'Remember me? Remember me?'"

Willfull and Crazy Mike always laugh. Willfull said, "Right. You were so fuckin high, you went in the diner for breakfast, changed your mind, put your gun in his face and walked out and hailed a fuckin cab. What makes you think you're gonna get away with it this time? The man calls the cops, you're still out there with your arm in the air, wavin for a cab. What you gonna do this time, hire a car service?"

Crazy Mike laughed, "Yeah, maybe a big black limo?"

Both Willfull and Big John turned on Crazy Mike. "What are you laughing at? You'd be out there tryin to take a bus."

"You see him, man," Big John adds. "Standin at the bus stop, the cops come, he's like, 'damn man, how'd you know it's me?'"

Crazy Mike looked up at them, all a foot taller than him. He tried to look tough but only succeeded in appearing hang-jowled and nervous. "Why you guys always doggin me?"

"We gotta, man, it's our nature," Terrel tells him.

"You know what I'm gonna do?" Crazy Mike said.

"Yes, we know," Willfull answered, "you're gonna kill the guy who turned you in. What was it, a couple of joints?"

"No. It was ten jumbos. He turned me in for nothin. I'm gonna catch him one night, slice his throat, take his money, then I'll turn his pockets inside out, make it look like a robbery."

"Bet the police officers will be seriously confused by that one," Big John said.

While they're still laughing, Terrel got a far-away look in his already far-away eyes, and said, "Fire. That's the answer. You burn the sucker down." Terrel was high as usual; he was always able to cop. Willfull never figured out how he got the money, but since he, Willfull, wasn't using drugs in prison, he didn't try very hard to find out.

Willfull and Big John slapped five. "Here he goes again with that fire shit. Man, you'd think he just discovered it."

"Yeah, cave man shit. Runnin around Harlem with a fuckin flame, torchin everything in sight. Terrel, you're crazier than a bed bug."

"No, I'm gonna torch those mothers who set me up. They'll know it's me, that's the most important thing, they know it's me."

Willfull let out his dry, humorless, prison laugh. "They'll know it's you all right, the whole city'll know it's you. Where there's fire, there's Terrel. Fire get you hot? Women get me hot. The first thing I do when I get out of here, I'm gettin me a woman. I'm gonna stick my dick in her mouth. She'll try to look away, I'll gonna slap her hard across the face, whhap, whapp, look at me when you do that, look at me."

"Hot? That's what's gettin me down. It's so fuckin hot in here," Crazy Mike said.

Willfull turned to him, "Hot? Hot? Hot was when you were livin in garbage cans. What are you complainin about? You never had it so good."

Willfull didn't talk about what he was going to do. He thought if he talked about it, it would become less real. If he talked about it, maybe he wouldn't do it. Or maybe someone would snitch. But the whole time in the joint, he went over and over it. He figured he'd kill Betty, then run up to Forty-Second Street and make sure the prostitute would remember him.

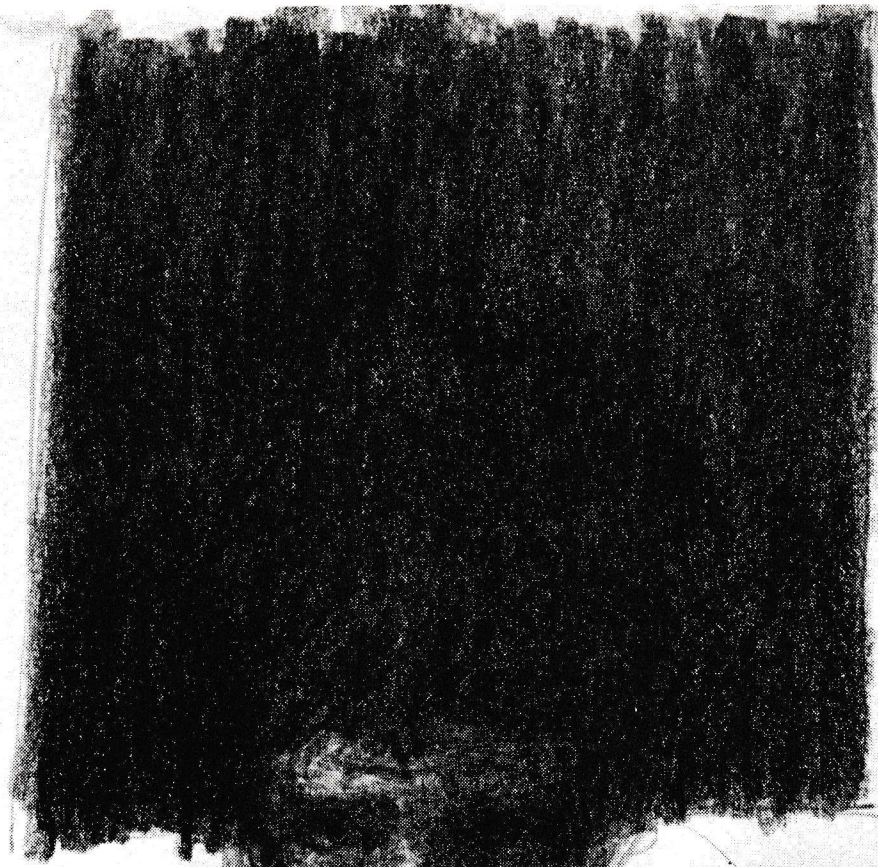
That's why he wore his gloves each night he stood here, so he wouldn't leave any finger prints. It was all her fault that he'd gotten so mad, when he was living with her, she never let him forget that it was her apartment and her money. Like he should be guilty or something. If she hadn't done that, it would have been so great. They could have gone on forever, her going to work and taking care of him. They both liked shopping for clothes for him. Why couldn't she understand? He couldn't love an old woman like her. He was thirty-four. She had to be almost fifty. He took care of her needs, he entertained her, knocked boots with her, joined her for dinner a couple times a week. Why can't women ever be satisfied?











Yaniv



**Sid Branch**

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**"everafter"**

my face was distorted  
I tried to tell her of my love. I held emotion.  
She waited.  
I walked after a thought. Then sat down.  
The thought went away.  
She stood by me and touched me softly.  
Emotions want to get out.  
I asked her to sit down too. We looked at each other.

The next day I was rational. Explanations were easy.  
She understood my anguish. We subdued emotion.

The next day then we met and talked and hugged  
and kissed and talked and listened to music together.  
No one mentioned emotion.

Today life has reason.  
I am out of coffee so I drink tea. I think of her.  
I go out for lunch hour.  
There is fog and a warm mist. I think of her.  
We have a date tomorrow.  
I have a double au lait for lunch and  
read a comix magazine.  
Emotion is happy.

**Excerpt from Chapter Six of White Trash Debutante  
by Jennifer Blowdryer**

When I met Ginger in the late '70's, her magazine, Punk Globe, was on newspaper style paper, and written with an old manual typewriter. There were two pages of gossip which was always amazingly positive, considering how vicious Ginger actually was:

"Let's hope the best for our should be mayor JELLO BIAFRA it is his month this month... Thanks ANNEX for the interview!!! IVEY you are GREAT!!! SALLY MUTANT looking for a better one??? I hear that LADY LARUE & MR. A have found fame and fortune in N.Y.C.!!! TIMMY SPENCE are you excited??"

This all looked like Ginger was the friendliest person in the world unless you happened to know that IVEY was a waitress at a place where Ginger could sometimes scam free food and drink, or that LADY LARUE & MR. A were an aging stripper/entertainer and her lackey who later claimed that Ginger drove them out of San Francisco by relentless harassment.

A harassment campaign always started with the person being funny in some way, preferably living in a world of delusion. Lady Larue had a teenage daughter, so when she got on open mike night at the Palace and performed songs like "I'm a female cat in heat looking for that Tomcat Meat", her daughter sat up front with a T-shirt on saying "Mom's the Greatest!"

She was skinny, with short bleached hair and a collection of large blonde wigs, silicone tits, and a very stripper variety of attire. She was an odd combination of being tough-as-nails, and behaving very refined. Mr. A was her husband and servant. He looked like a beast with a big bushy hairdo and street fighter face, and before one of their gigs with her LADY LARUE BAND, Mr. A might have to run up and down the stairs with trunks full of various lingerie and wigs as Lady Larue changed her mind over and over.

She'd always say "Darling, you must come over for cocktails sometime!" but "Cocktails" often meant an open and possibly flat can of Bud. This could send Ginger and me into gales of laughter, the best part of these human playthings was that a Lady Larue could always be counted on to repeat her punchlines. Ginger told her there was a lot of gossip and speculation about her age and background, so a proud Lady Larue coined the phrase "People are Talking!", and even had it printed on a flyer for one of her shows.

Once Larue was so down that she and Mr. A were living at the Salvation Army but, to Ginger's glee, she was still inviting people over for Cocktails. Lady Larue told Ginger stories about one of her past jobs, as an attendant in a mental institution, and how she had to physically attack the inmates. Ginger's favorite quote for awhile was "Yeah, that guy ain't never going to have kids again." This was part of an anecdote in which Larue kicked one of the inmates in the balls. I think Ginger pictured Lady Larue in that mental institution in her fuck me stripper shoes and a huge blonde wig, castrating the criminally insane.

Lady Larue and Mr. A sat in the back of the Mabuhay on these two highback straw chairs, and when someone very famous came in, like Todd Rundgren, we'd run up and tell Lady Larue that they wanted her autograph. She lived in such a fantasy world that she would beam and sign one of her "People are Talking" flyers with a flourish.

Her gigs consisted of a series of hired musicians playing bland rock while Mr. A played his V shaped guitar, sometimes with his teeth, and Lady Larue gyrated around, wearing a wig. At the end of every set she ripped off her wig, dramatically revealing a closely cropped bleach job. The gigs were highlighted events on only our calendars. I felt sort of bad when, after I wildly cheered them on to do an encore in the nearly empty club, Lady Larue turned to Mr. A offstage and said "Did you hear that! They really like us!!"

I hadn't done that much cocaine then, but now I think that's what she was on. Lady Larue also privately turned dominatrix tricks. This kind of hustling, where you just verbally and physically abuse someone with more money than yourself, is really the safest, and she certainly had the wardrobe for it.

Ginger must have loved Lady Larue in some small way. How could you not love somebody that diverted so much of your attention from yourself, but with her human jokes she could never stop herself. Lady Larue very gradually came to realize that she did not have a true friend in Ginger, as the taunts became more repetitive and aggressive until everyone but Ginger was bored to death of the joke.



So "I hear that LADY LARUE & MR. A have found fame and fortune in N.Y.C.!" was a little odd, in retrospect. One of the two supposedly inherited family money after all their struggling, thus having the last laugh. Lady Larue and her daughter were in DETAILS a couple of years ago as "Mother and Daughter, Fetish Ball, Limelight."

Punk Globe also had a PUNK OF THE MONTH and a RUNNER UP PUNK OF THE MONTH. This could be anyone from a local musician to Ginger's favorite Soap Opera star. One such Runner Up was TAMMY NEW WAVE, a cashier at Thrift Town who gave us free clothing. Tammy turned into a fun subject for relentless harassment. I'm ashamed to say that I got hours of glee from Tammy's life, along with Ginger.

Tammy, who grew up in a trailer in a town called Santa Maria, seemed quite low key. At 19 she got pregnant from the Alhambra Water man, and had an abortion. I always loved that, the Alhambra Water man. Wherever she worked, she immediately began to practice flagrantly dishonest behavior. Even after she was fired from Thrift Town they caught her out front with sacks full of stolen merchandise, trying to hail a cab.

Next, she got a job at a boutique called Red Peppers, where she stole what I calculated as \$20,000 worth of merchandise in just two months. Wherever Tammy worked became a fun field trip as Ginger and I trotted down there to make off with free goods. One time she married an Arab for a fee, and became something like Tammy Abud, much to my delight. She was too lazy to grant him a divorce when he really did fall in love with somebody, and it was the only case I had ever heard of where the American half of a citizenship marriage screwed the foreigner over out of sheer inertia.

Once Tammy started being a Call Girl, and Ginger listened sympathetically to her tales. She was sore and diseased from too many tricks, fucked a dentist in his patient chair, and spent all her money on blue cowboy boots. I breathlessly listened to it all on a party line, trying hard not to give away my presence by snickering.

This was all quite mean, and although I was never as extreme as Ginger, I did participate. I was clever, and always knew that when I came up with a new twist, it sent Ginger into fits of joy. When Tammy mentioned she was thinking of starting an escort service called Escorts Of The 80's, I made fabric "Escorts of the '80's" armbands that we gave out at shows, asking everyone from Navy guys to cocktail waitresses if they wanted to be escorts. Supposedly just a week after poor Tammy had gotten the germ of an idea, the police were asking about this new criminal organization.

Victims always ended up as "Poor Tammy" and "Poor Lady Larue", as a capper. Sometimes I spent the night in Ginger's mad, cluttered, apartment, and we lay on different beds and picked a person, telling and retelling our favorite stories, pushing each other into hysteria. Then at the end, Ginger either muttered a satisfied "Poor Bob", before snuggling off to sleep, or wound up for the next target. I liked our insult orgies, even though I was faint hearted about torturing anyone in person.

**will inman**

**compact poem**

when she was conceived, she was very compact.  
her mother and father knew what they'd shared  
but not what they'd started.  
before long, her mother did not appear very compact,  
though of course she was.  
by then her mother and father knew very well  
what they'd started: much impact  
from one so compact.  
after the expected cycle of months, she  
was delivered from her mother. now  
she was whole..and quite compact:  
everything about her was together and sheer  
magic. her growing was swift, she was always  
compact: never too much, never too little, of her.  
she wore dresses and sometimes slacks,  
she went to school, she danced quite well,  
her life was whole..and quite compact.  
her parents died when she was young.  
she was kept compactly by a compact aunt.  
she went two years to a nearby college,  
then was employed by a local factory.  
she operated a machine that compacted old rags  
into paper products.  
the factory compacted till the woman was forty-five,  
then closed its operation and moved to South Korea.  
she lived very compactly on compact compensation  
till that ran out. then she lived very very  
compactly on the streets.  
one night, hustling a dumpster, she crawled inside,  
it was quiet except for furry fellow hustlers,  
she was tired and rested. she slept.  
a waste management truck came along. she,  
along with the rest of the castings,  
was dumped and compacted. she was further compacted  
in a landfill. her death was as compact as her life.  
no one can say for sure what happened to her soul.  
i would like to think that her spirit  
will have more impact than this compact poem.

11 May 1993 Tucson

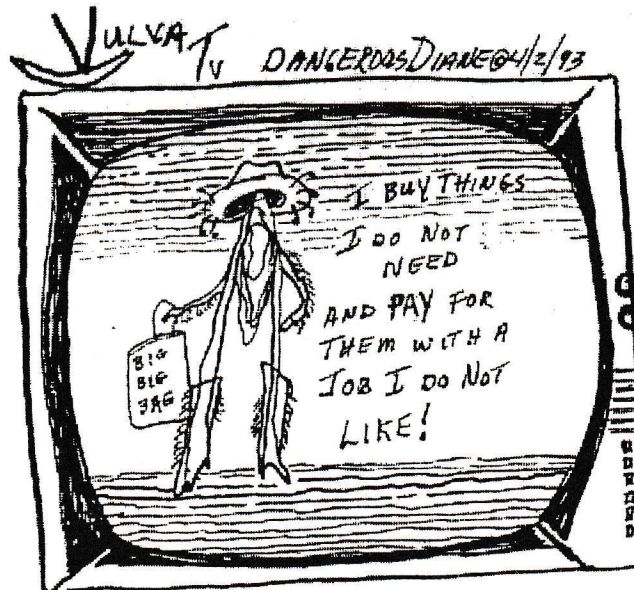


**Dangerous Diane  
Spodarek**

**men/cars**

I like the way men look when they look under their cars.

I like to stand on a corner and watch men sit in their cars, start them up, find out they don't start, get out, look at the car, then go to the hood, open it up, look in, go back to the inside of the car, start it up again; get out again, look under the car, look at the ground, look at the spill on the ground, look all around, sometimes at their companion if they are with someone; if not, look for another man in the vicinity to share this moment, then there are two or three sometimes four men looking under the hood or looking under the car at the ground, sometimes they stare at the spill on the ground together and then they look at each other and they get that look -- I like that look. It's somehow familiar; I can't put my finger on it; I can't really say what it is, but it just gives me a funny feeling watching them, the men, although I don't really think it has anything to do with the fact that I'm from Detroit.



## LIFE; Parts I & II

### I

I'm staying in all night  
I'll finish two poems  
start a third  
I won't go out  
unless there's a good movie  
in black and white  
with blood  
and knives  
long corridors  
thin streaks of light  
everyone smoking  
the women in satin dresses  
with no underwear on underneath  
satin draped pelvises and guns  
snapped into clutch purses  
between lipstick  
hundred dollar bills  
and jeweled cigarette holders  
a lot of mist  
and whispering  
good camera angles  
and doors slamming  
a few faces slapped  
arms twisted  
mistreatment revenged  
the enemy reduced  
by one perfect line  
said in the moment  
a man's elegant hand  
on the wheel of a roadster  
the other out of frame  
snap of a clutch purse  
then I'll go.

### II

Living with roaches can be fun  
we don't own a television  
don't want one  
usually  
sometimes we don't read  
or write  
or have a fight  
or make love or fuck or  
rub on each other  
our kitchen is cozy  
I'm a good cook  
we are never hungry  
for long  
I can make a bare fridge  
vibrate  
call Vipin  
call us to dine  
I have baited  
the beveled glass jar  
with mediocre romano cheese  
we eat it too  
on pasta  
our roaches fall into pear  
long shape  
of jar they climb in and that's that  
I came home  
high on my iliac crest  
and all its attachments  
hovered over Egypt  
into Greece  
the whole thing moved forward  
stabilized for an ultimate release  
or expansion  
just my toes on the rock  
my tailbones twitching  
the sea  
surging  
placed my famous jar  
baited  
and waited  
in four minutes we had four  
I bathed in lavender  
after watching like our cat  
for the fifth  
to eat the cheese  
and fall

c 92 g.a. bonati



**Pipe Dreams**  
by  
**David Huberman**

Not another anti-drug story, you say?

The denial stage is over. Reality has kicked in, but don't fear, life isn't over, it has just begun. One third of you reading this diatribe are probably in Twelve Step programs anyway. The rest of you only drink beer and smoke pot moderately. A few of you still have big drinking problems and might have trouble seeing the words clearly, but alcoholics have staying power with the spoken word, not so for drug addicts. They're too busy copping, getting high, getting busted, going to court, going to rehab or supporting their habit. What about William Burroughs, you say?

There are always exceptions to the rule, sort of like George Burns still smoking five cigars a day at ninety-four years old. It happens, but it's rare. Creative people who become drug addicts are just too busy doing drugs to create, which brings me to my last days of doing drugs. My last run was smoking freebase, an expensive habit. I had taken on a roommate even though my Queens apartment was a small studio and my rent was only \$300.00 a month, including gas and electric. It wasn't about loneliness but about having money for drugs. My new roommate looked a lot like Jackie Mason, but he told me he wasn't exactly a nice Jewish boy. A few years back in Florida, he had done a seven year stretch for man-slaughter. According to him, he killed his girlfriend's brother in self-defense. Her brother was a big macho type of guy. My future roommate caught him beating up his girlfriend, and when he tried to intervene, her brother then started beating on him, until he grabbed a jar-size Buddha statue and hit her brother over the head with it. Even though he didn't mean to really hurt him, it turned out to be a death blow. Later that night, his girlfriend's brother died, and he was charged with second degree murder. His lawyer couldn't prove that it was self-defense or so he told me. The truth is that I just didn't care what went down in the past, as long as it was smooth sailing now. What mattered was that he paid his share of the rent and didn't fuck me around. For a little while, everything worked out. We were both on different schedules and never saw each other during the week. But the weekends were different. We were weekend warriors of the worst kind. At first it was cocaine, women and rock 'n' roll. Then it was cocaine and rock 'n' roll. Finally it was just cocaine. At the time, we were both involved with various different women. Then we started double-dating. We tried to switch partners once and take a shot at swinging, but our women friends didn't go for that type of stuff. Actually, we started to lose our women friends because either they were decent women and weren't into drugs or they were rock 'n' roll club girls who really only wanted our drugs, and of course by then we were such bad users, we wouldn't share our drugs with them, so they would drop us for being too greedy and too abusive.

Finally it came down to just me and him. I would buy the cocaine, as pure as possible, and he would cook it up with baking powder. The scene was pretty sick, especially with my roommate. He would smoke awhile, then take five porn magazines, mostly foot and ankle fetish stuff, run into the bathroom and start taping the walls with pictures of women's feet. All the toes had bright red polish on them. It looked like a foot fetish shrine in there. Then he'd close the door, but I would hear moans and animal cries for the next ten minutes. Then he would come out of the bathroom, light up the pipe and start the whole process over again. Like I said, it was a sick scene. Frankly, freebase never hit me in my erotic zone. I was the type of coke fiend who wouldn't leave his chair. I would have smoked myself all the way into infinity, if possible. I related completely to those cocaine-addicted monkeys the government was experimenting with. Scientists got those monkeys so addicted that they used cocaine until they died. They never chose food or water; they even neglected the call of nature; they only pushed the button in their cage that would give them more cocaine. Like the monkeys, my roommate and me got so bad during one session, we smoked for fifteen hours straight, starting on Saturday around midnight and not stopping until 3:00 Sunday afternoon. We each chipped in a thousand dollars, and after we smoked up all that freebase, desperation entered the situation. First, we scraped the pipe clean of all its residue; then even more desperate, we scraped the plastic tubing right off the pipe, mistaking it for cocaine particles; and of course, we smoked that too. That was how blitzed-out we had become. The whole affair finally ended when the fire department arrived at my apartment on the assumption that we had started an electrical fire. Apparently, during our endless orgy of drug abuse, we had blown a fuse in the whole building when we unplugged the toaster oven to make more room in the kitchen for cooking up freebase. Although they didn't know it, the Fire Department saved our lives by interrupting our insane attempts to poison ourselves by smoking toxic substances. Who knows what else we might have tried to smoke to get us high that damned endless night. My roommate moved on to the greener hills of Chicago, Illinois. A few months later, an official-looking letter arrived from the government. It was from his parole officer. Since he didn't leave a forwarding address and I'm that type of guy, I opened the letter. I found out my roommate didn't kill his ex-girlfriend's macho older brother as he had claimed. No, he had killed his ex-girlfriend's one-year-old baby. That's what the letter said. I showed it to my sister and after she looked it over, she said with total contempt in her voice, "that figures."

The End

do not say  
-why, what for-, i

don't think i live  
in the city and

because the city does taste  
like sandpaper it has  
not gotten inside me

.one day the city may  
remove me from itself to  
teevee or a record but

i will deny and  
refuse to sit still  
for the flatness

.because sobriety is  
a form of cooperation  
with government and

driving a car outright  
support, it is easy  
to enter death like an  
experience and  
talk about it. i

rot or vaguely  
gesture since  
to think or digest  
are the only ways  
to confirm my  
interior: one

thing does not  
really stand in  
front of another

-it could be  
personally good for you  
to be dead

© P. Skiff

now values leak from everything.  
so you are violent and depressed.  
you are joyous and enspirited.  
but once everything is empty  
you will be able to make transition easily.  
you will be able to close up things and relations  
to anticipate no longer even needing  
to be able to see them. but  
as long as you remain among us  
i will regard you as though  
you are not leaving just  
becoming less and less bent  
by the gates, rails and ditches  
of this world, of which i am one. i  
will accept that for you i am  
a broken gate, fallen rail, shallow ditch.  
and i will accept that when you have  
to disappear i will be diminished also.  
i am coming with you.  
i am coming too.

-to you lips no longer have a taste so  
can i have your last dream where  
persuasions lie as dirt beneath  
your tongue. there death has swept  
specks of life that say nothing but  
the violence of your killing.

-to you the sun is not bright as used to be so  
can i have the last dream where under moment  
your name is lost your eyes get  
buried like a cock slid from sight up  
death made from the wind in your fist.

-to you a lover's voice does not follow  
far down the hall or turn you in  
its direction so can i have your last  
dream, the one where you never wake  
up while death from its squealing throat  
blows out over six thousand poems.

:bitterness does not wait-blissfullness  
does not hurry, without time there  
is no fear. -are you a stone  
-are you a lose spark -are you  
a raindrop on my eye: you are  
invisible. welcome.  
welcome to the limit on life

© P. Skiff

© P. Skiff  
and Homemade  
20th Century



augur of desire  
penetrate this inflatable wading pool  
of life  
to heave one last flatulent sigh  
as old breath blows out the new hole  
and the water floats over  
the sinking rim  
and runs down into the crushed  
thirsty grass.

grace period.      L.I.R.R to smithtown      july 29, 1992

would you like to see where I burned  
my fingers?  
yes of course you would.  
I used to walk hand in hand with my mother  
like a mother and son  
mother and daughter  
or two women can  
hold hands  
strong  
broad hands  
my palm would get moist  
they say it's moisture steaming  
from your sole that protects your foot walking  
on red hot coals  
not faith  
or set fire to a newspaper  
from the stove for dinner  
table illumination  
flames licking my fingers  
singing didn't hold a candle to that  
didn't feel a thing  
but sad.

grace period.      cafe, nyc      january 29, 1993

#### transsexual valentine's day poem

install a toilet seat  
on your heart  
I have to pee  
and I won't do it  
standing up  
anymore.

grace period.      first street, nyc      february 14, 1993

*my gums are bleeding*  
*onto my shirt*  
 and my younger brother  
 has converted my hairspray  
 can  
 into a flamethrower  
 and is melting  
 my nylon stockings  
 onto my legs  
 stepfather has torn  
 the rings from my ears  
 and is prying  
 the painted nails  
 from my toes  
 the neighbor  
 in his blue bowling shirt  
 is busy  
 plucking out the rest of my eyebrows  
 with a pair of slip joint  
 pliers  
 they crammed the dildo  
 in my throat  
 and taped it up  
 swatting my face  
 with their fists  
 and my mother  
 my poor mother  
 they've made her  
 cut off my hair  
 oh mother  
 they've made you  
 cut off my hair  
 my long hair  
 my long blonde hair  
 mother  
 forgive me.

grace period.    teresa's, brooklyn    august 25, 1992

hash browns  
 colored  
 orange-ish  
 with some mysterious  
 orange  
 powder.  
 potatoes  
 unnaturally  
 cooked looking  
 making  
 the ketchup appear  
 purple.

queer world.

strange  
 food.

grace period.    chelsea restaurant,    nyc september 30,  
 1992

to go

placenta tastes like  
 forgot about this  
 when the water broke  
 less intelligent than an  
 insect  
 used to eat my mother's  
 placenta  
 refrigerator light binge  
 packing second hand  
 material into my  
 stomach  
 my bloodstream  
 basking in the cold  
 warm rays of  
 stainless steel and  
 rotting fruit  
 her flesh tucked up  
 inside  
 soft  
 translucent membrane  
 sucking twisted  
 channels of blood and  
 excrement  
 pumping  
 seething  
 chewing  
 sucking in my mother's  
 walls  
 slow  
 violent  
 mastication  
 kicking  
 her insides eating  
 my way out.

grace period.    bathroom/subway,    nyc march 23, 1993



*I apologize.  
let me tell you about heaven  
where you go  
whenever you die.  
you can see the roots of heaven  
from here  
thin  
transparent roots  
much finer  
than hairs  
clear  
strands  
taught  
vertically or spreading  
onto this.  
if you push or tear  
at the roots of heaven  
some of it may drip from  
the tender severed fibers  
against your skin  
acid/sweet fluid  
heaven tastes like a movie  
you saw as a child  
a second feature you didn't really  
plan to see  
where the characters uncomfortably  
reminded you of yourself.  
you forgot this movie  
and the theater  
and the seat  
and the concessions stand  
it was all trailed by the roots of heaven  
like this.  
and if you sat or laid too long  
they would grow over  
and around through your body  
and open  
mouth.*

**grace period.**

**urchin village, nyc**

**march 12, 1993**

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