



# CURARE

*Spring/Summer 1995*

ISSN 1077-1255

*Number 5*

**\$3.00**





# C U R A R E



## Rage-o-rama - a column for the no future by J.D. Rage

There are things I want to remember now -- just when I find I no longer have a memory. Is this an example of nature's perfection? Most memories are painful really, I mean who ever remembers the nice stuff without a massive dredging operation? So nature staves off the pain by eroding the capacity to remember, thus allowing us to float off the planet in a never never land cloud of happiness? Pooh! What am I getting myself into here! But I want to remember Steve Brown, so I have two photographs of him clipped on my computer. I wasn't a close friend of his, but he treated me like I was anyway. His death is a major loss. I want to remember my two dead fish. Eight-year-old Madison died first and I took him up to Connecticut and slid his frozen body into a creek at a reservoir near Hartford. Then mysteriously, Iggy, who was a few years younger, also died, very unexpectedly. I took Iggy up to Conn. also and released her remains into the same creek. It just didn't seem right to put them in a garbage can after the many years of pleasure they gave me. I already find I am much less relaxed since I don't have any lovely red Oscars lulling my mind with their amazing tank swimming and splashing displays. If people start acting weird and begin to jump a lot and bang their heads on the lids of their tanks in the Hartford area, we will know that Madison & Iggy's creek does feed into their water supply.

CURARE #5 is being released May 27, 1995. The winter sickness ratio was so high this year that no one had the strength to put out an issue. I myself was placed on antibiotics five times between Christmas and Easter. Also we were dealt a harsh blow in April by some grant people who rejected CURARE. They didn't use the word REJECT, but let's face it most of us in the mag ARE rejects, (well, at least most of the editors), and as such are used to rejection, which is why we keep our day jobs, which will once again, be paying for this issue, instead of buying any new leathers or chains (or tattoos).

Venom Press visited the Buttonwood Tree in Middletown, Connecticut, to read poetry at the invitation of Ken DiMaggio. Yours truly rented a silver Mazda and drove Jan Schmidt, David Huberman and Larry Jones from the City to the show and back. We weren't crazy about the venue which was a little too sedate for our tastes, (it was hard to get these guys to crack a smile), but we adequately defended the honor of NY poets, we including Ken DiMaggio, who whenever anyone asks him where he comes from, lies and says New York. I've heard him do it. The best thing was breakfast at the Miss Washington Diner in New Britain. A photo of the Venom Poets in front of this diner is included in this issue. I took the photo and can be seen doing so in a reflection in the diner window, should you care to inspect it. Just don't want to go unnoticed do we, J.D.?

The editors would like to thank Mike Halchin of Undulating Bedsheets & Driver's Side Airbag for the great stuff he has been saying about CURARE, Jan & I in his publications. We luckily have got a poem from him into this issue. The Press has been getting loads of orders, submissions and free stuff from the wild bunch that read his 'zine. Thanks again to Larry Jones and Cafe Nico, where many of you may be reading this column, at this moment, at the season's closing party and CURARE #5 Publication Party. Larry's memorandum to his roommate is gladly included in these pages. All help is appreciated, maybe not graciously, but at least gratefully.

I recently spent three days in pre-season Provincetown, still a madhouse on the weekends anyway, though wonderful during the week. The receptionist at the Provinceland Visitor Center (from which I embarked on a grueling 7.2 mile test of endurance {hike}) told me upon viewing my credit card that she knows someone with my real name. No, my credit card is not made out to J.D. Rage. That person with the same name as me is a doctor and lives in P-town. I thought to myself, where did I go wrong? It's not that I mind living in a squalid tenement on a street where the bars evict their patrons at 4:00 AM in horrible condition to dance and scream and die under my window, or that I am upset about my stressful (lousy) job, or is it? I'm glad I have two names, I wouldn't want things to get any more confusing. But if this doctor has two names and a lot of tattoos, we could be in trouble. So if you see me, and I don't seem quite the same, beware, I might not be me, I might be a medical professional from Cape Cod on the slum. But if you do some clever detecting and decide the person you thought was me isn't me, give me a call so I can go and take her place for awhile on the Cape. I could certainly use a long rest. The last time I tried something like that, I wrote to Andy Warhol and asked him if he and I could trade places. I would take over his duties as Andy at the Factory, and he would be a rebellious student at a Catholic college for women. I still can't figure out why I got no reply, but where would I be now, if he had! Enjoy & LUV J.D.





## Poison Pen - by Jan Schmidt

The amount of death going around, this column is developing into an obituary page. I've attended more wakes and memorial services in the last few years than I have weddings and christenings in my whole life. My boyfriend can't go to any more funerals because in the nearly seven years we've been together he's lost his dad, his mom, his brother, his nephew, and has another brother with AIDS. This isn't counting his many friends who've passed to whatever is on the other side.

As 1995 began, I was still reeling from Dean Snider's death. The second week of the new year, I heard about two deaths by OD, a young boy who jumped six flights at A&S, and, *Curare's* neighbor and long time friend, independent filmmaker, Steve Brown died on January 11, 1995.

Steve Brown was that rare person who would always get the absurdity in any situation, the one, in fact, you'd revel in telling, to see his scandalized face and hear him gush, "what a horror." It was a kick, even when leveled at me: "Jan, you're a horror, you're a nightmare."

Steve's friends, including me, took turns staying with him as the disease progressed till he couldn't get out of bed or eat at all. Writing this on paper, horror surrounds me again. I can't even believe that these words pertain to a person who was so alive, with no symptoms whatsoever, in November.

While sick, Steve's hands shook uncontrollably. I'd slip my smaller hand in his and the trembling would change to a tight grip. Unable to talk, I'd sit there with him just feeling his warmth. I am honored to have had the chance to be near him.

Steve shot music videos, including ones for Subpop and early Nirvana. Among the flowers at the wake one huge basket arrived from Courtney Love. At the memorial service held at a friend's loft, people told Steve stories - his anarchist tendencies, his quickness to anger if his principals were threatened, his fights for what he thought was the right way to film a scene. Many people got up to say they were cinematographers and that Steve taught them to use the camera and to use it in a unique artistic way. They said that he never hoarded his information but shared it with anyone who asked. One person told how in one shoot, he yelled, "Take the camera off the tripod." Everyone was appalled, "You can't do that." He did it anyway, and when the rushes came back, they all saw what he was talking about.

After Steve Brown died, I decided to go to California to see John Iversen another old friend with AIDS. He's been infusing drugs for AIDS related illnesses for almost four years, but, he's doing great, T-cell and weight up. It's a lot of work, all the doctoring: infusing and taking 80 pills a day. Plus, as he started ACT-UP East Bay and the Needle Exchange in Berkeley, he's injecting his spare time with community organizing.

He seems to have a curse on him, lately. Among the odd unfortunate circumstances, he bumped into a Mercedes Benz as we were unparking in front of the place where we'd just purchased our morning cappuccinos. The Mercedes husband and wife team ran out and nabbed us. They absolutely *had* to call the police and insurance company even though John offered to give them his credit card. He even tried begging them. Then in a moment of true desperation, he tried telling them the truth: he didn't have insurance.



The woman asked incredulously, "Why don't you have insurance?"

They didn't even flinch when in a fit of exasperation, John stood in the middle of the street screaming, "Because I have AIDS and I live on \$600.00 a month SSI and I can't afford insurance." They shrunk back into the coffee house to wait for the police, unable to see beyond their absolute right to have the popped grill on their Mercedes paid for by the perpetrator of this evil.

If it had been any other car, the damage would have been nothing. But for this John will end up owing thousands. In California they take your license away when you get caught without insurance. He has to buy it for the DMV hearing in the hopes of getting a restricted license, since he is handicapped. He maintained a pretty good mood throughout the two hour wait for the police, after all it wasn't like a bad car accident or catching a lethal infection.

In the afternoon, we went to the movies. I used to get this incredible sense of naughty stolen freedom, ducking into a theater on a sunny middle of the day - the "I'm not at work or school" feeling. Not anymore. Now it has a terror linked to it: an afternoon with a person who doesn't work because he has a terrible disease.

We saw "Higher Learning." I'd read criticism of John Singleton, the director, for being didactic. Personally, I have never found a little learning in the course of entertainment or art to be all that hideous a thang. Behind us were two teenage couples that we only heard; we never saw their faces. They talked and laughed during the movie, which often increases my enjoyment, depending on the film. When one of the characters on screen appeared to be having a gay experience, they reacted with nervous laughter and big sighs of "oh my god," and "how could she," "that's gross."

Near the end of the film, just after some foreshadowing of trouble, a gay couple appeared on screen. The kids behind us gasped as it became clear that the pair were doomed to get beaten up for their gayness. The kids didn't make jokes about them anymore. I witnessed the movie actually opening the minds of these four high schoolers - actually teaching tolerance. That's some mean feat for a work of art. (And I thought that John Singleton's portrayal of the angry white supremacists was shockingly sympathetic.)

Two days before I came back from California, my boyfriend called to say that our friend and downstairs neighbor Arturo Lopez died that day, March 21, 1995. Arturo was a dancer, choreographer, active member of our building meetings, a tease and a charmer. I cried.

The rest of my vacation, was pretty good. I saw a few old friends. We talked about who had gone berserk, who had been incarcerated and who had died. Also, who made it to "60 Minutes" for living interesting valuable lives, who was selling scripts to Hollywood, and who was becoming happy. That last person was me, in spite of the pain.

When I'd been back in New York for a week, John Iversen called. He said, "The curse continues. I had all my money stolen out of my locker at the Y." Another week passed and he called again to say, "The curse persists. I fell on the steps in the rain and broke my ankle." He'll continue his political organizing from his couch. Anyone who knows how to remove this curse, please write us here at Venom.

Sid Branch, Arthur Rivers and I went to Arturo Lopez's memorial service on April 24, 1995. It was the exact day three years ago that my therapist, Donna Jacobs, died, also from AIDS. Of the many sad and funny stories people told at the theater where the festivities were held, Todd, his lover, told about the time, some six or seven years ago when they were walking back home in the evening in the new light snow of winter. At an intersection, Todd saw what he thought was a drunken bum and continued across the street. Then he noticed that Arturo wasn't next to him anymore. Then he saw blood flowing in the snow. He went back to where Arturo was talking softly to the man on the ground who had been mugged. Someone was calling 911. Todd said that Arturo stayed next to the man, holding his hand, comforting him. The man died there, with Arturo gently easing his way off this earth. Todd said that, though Arturo could be a royal pain and general tyrant, he was caring and helpful to anyone who came into his path. He was that way to me. I miss him.

Now for the writing section of my column.

I want to change my name. Besides hating its harsh, Germanic sound, only Northern-European-types can pronounce it. I need something to bring out my Irish roots. How's Jan



Condon Devitt Kelly, after my great great grandmother? Or Jan Kelly Devitt? Or Jan Condon Devitt? Or Kelly Jan Devitt?

Or is this all too narcissistic? Who gives a fuck?

If you all have any ideas or stories about changing your name, please write to me.

That's my writing advice for this column, I need some advice. So tell me about your name change experience and how to remove a curse.

Susan Sherman suggests I go by Jan McSchmidt -- so don't any of you try that.







Kerouac's Rucksack, Lowell, MA Photo by J.D. Rage





## RANTIN' & RAVIN'

Susan Sherman

### MIND-BENDING GENDER-BENDING TECHNO-GHETTO ELECTRIC DREAMS

The millennium approaches, and along with it, the cyberpunk-outlaw-rebel-hacker-hip-genius-blackleather-postmodern-cowboy-spaceranger-spaceraider freak. Reality is virtual. Poetry is performance. In the cyberspace community we can assume any name we please, any gender, age, history. Fiction becomes real; reality, fiction. Riding on a space ship, cruising the electronic-wire hum, we catapult, at the speed of light, straight--or not so straight--into the... past?

Nostalgia. "Such is the stuff dreams are made of." I suppose one should be careful not to be overly critical. After all, the Renaissance came on the heels of, was inspired by, a nostalgia for classical Greece and Rome. But then so was fascism, and we still suffer from the Renaissance legacy *via* the Romans of valuing eloquence above all else. Combine that with our national obsession with sports and you wind up judging everything by the number of points scored over the opposition. Votes, footballbasketballbaseballicehockey scores, jury trials and body counts.

They all boil down to the same thing.

Don't get me wrong. When it comes to nostalgia, I am as guilty as, or guiltier than, most. Although I have resolved that, even as I work on completing my chronicle of the Sixties (with a little bit of the Fifties and Seventies tacked on either end like one of those party favors with the little tabs you pull out and the whole thing pops), I will bravely face the future and if I don't really believe, at least I will pretend, I have one.

Nostalgia has its moments, after all. Particularly when looking back on lost love. It's the part you can keep for yourself, inviolate, that no one can take away. Nostalgia makes life a little more bearable. Unless it becomes mixed-up with reality, replaces memory, destroys history, is used to put other people down. This is the way it was before... How much better it was than...

Except it never really *was* that way before.

After all what is the cyberpunk but a 1970's retreat with mirrorshades sitting in front of a computer screen. Like the image of a proto-cowboy, hunched over a video game, all decked out in a ten-gallon hat, lasso, Smith & Wesson, spurs. Or a soldier clone, complete with battle gear. Except the latter image is real. We saw it during the Iraq incursion. Reality becoming fantasy. Fantasy, real.

And while I'm on the subject of nostalgia, how about the one about how terrific it is to drive back and forth over the highways and byways of our great land. "Screw your way, through the USA, America's the greatest land..." I tried it once with two friends and a dog. It was the month after I graduated college and was thrown out of my home. All except the screwing part. As three young women we were more likely to *be* screwed, if not beaten up or killed. Not in our tough urban ghetto, but on the great sprawling stretch we seemed to drive along endlessly that hot summer from LA to New York. The great plains, a huge flat circle, like one of those shapes you see in mystical books with lightning in one part, sun in another, alternating with long thin shadows falling from sky to ground that someone later explained to me was rain.

In one town, in the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere, our stalled car was surrounded by a gang of teenagers complete with drawn knives. We were saved finally by chance by the local sheriff who drove up wearing, I swear, a six-pointed tin-star-badge, and bantering with "the guys," like it was one big joke, suggested they let "us girls" alone.

Then there was our well thought out plan of sleeping in the day through the heat--no air conditioned car then--and traveling at night, except it was too hot to sleep in the day and I wound up throwing up from the heat in a dirty motel bathroom (which advertised itself as AIR



CONDITIONED in huge letters on a neon billboard). We were informed when we checked out: Sorry, but the AC just didn't happen to be working that day.

Finally, exhausted, we picked up two young sailors on the last leg of our beat odyssey, somewhere in the vicinity of Chicago, to help us drive, only to be stopped by the highway patrol for speeding. Checking their ID, the cops discovered they were AWOL. It took two solid hours and a lot of ingenuity to talk our way out of that one.

What fun.

I'm also getting a little tired of all the books and articles and stories and speeches and films about the glories of the good old days of the pre-Stonewall, pre-women's movement gay bars complete with butch and femme couples who really knew what being gay was about. The authentic times before feminist ideas intruded on the scene and robbed men of their masculinity and, I guess, women too. I can remember walking into more than one of those bars, I think there was one around 14th street called Cookies or something like that, with red velvet curtains and the obligatory Mafia bouncer who collected the cover and made sure the right "girls" (again) came in. It reminded me of nothing so much as my cousin's wedding. The floor populated with couples slowly revolving around and around in circles until I thought my head would spin off. Or the other bar on Seventh Avenue. Which wasn't so much into roles but made me feel over-the-hill at twenty-one.

Which is not to put anybody down because I happened to feel out of place, but *now is not then*, and please don't add that performance *is* reality, S&M is *the grooviest* (any other kind of sex is just plain vanilla) and old-time roles and mutual torture are really revolution in disguise.

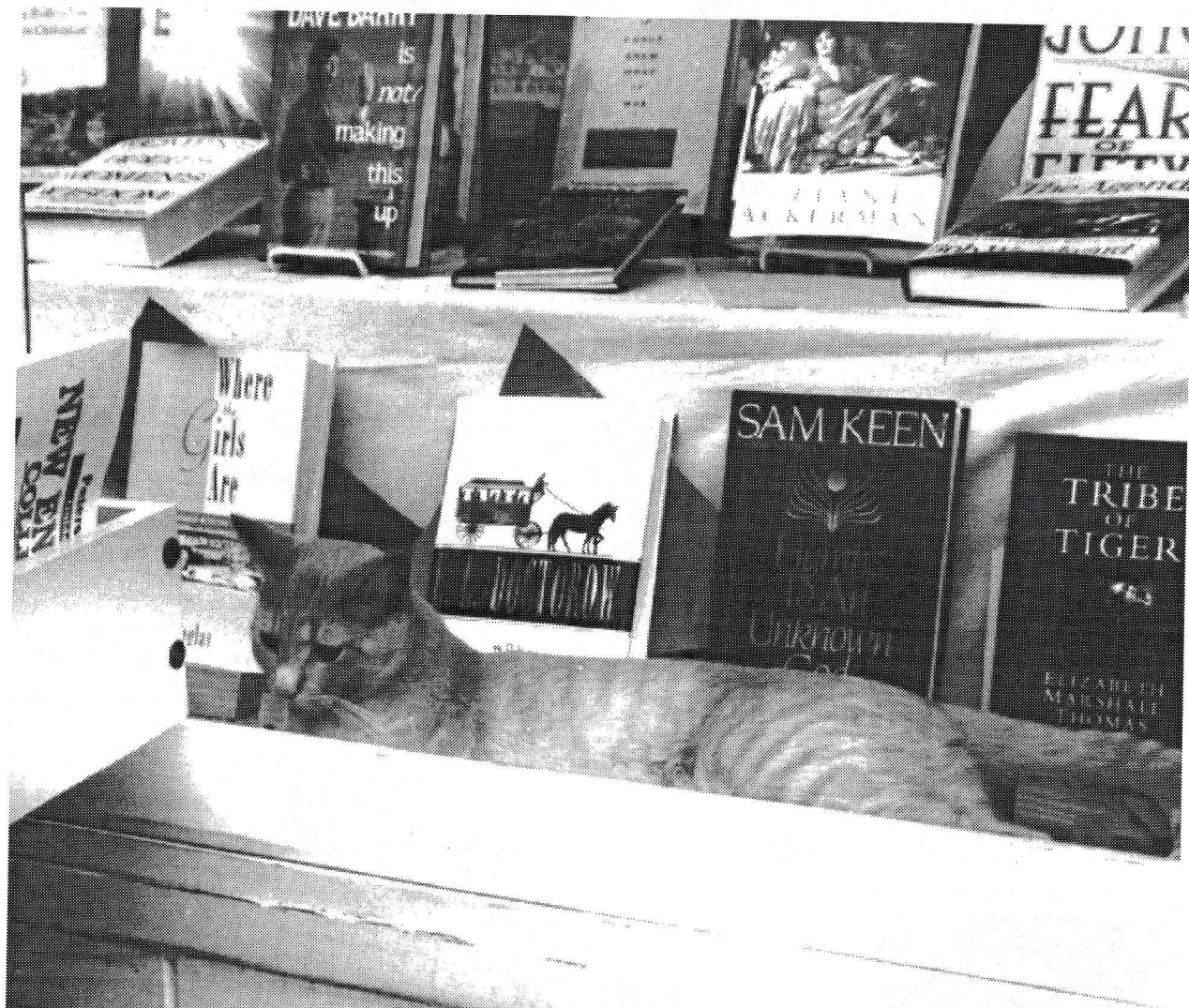
The Zohar says, "Woe to the person who mistakes the vestments of the law for the law itself." Within the last ten days, I have heard two separate people, one 65, one 18, say exactly the same thing--that they feel hopeless. I tried to persuade them they were mistaken, but I must admit I can understand why, if we are born again and again, it is necessary for us to forget our former lives. History is hard to bear.

So it comes upon us. The age of the cyber-beat, the high-tech 50's, nose rings and computer chips, inter-planetary capitalism. I prefer still to remain the optimist. It seems if I've learned anything, it's that if we can't pull it together ourselves, "they'll" finally figure out a way to make us just mad enough that we'll fight in spite of ourselves, if only to survive. It's happened more than once. They'll overstep themselves again, the Newts, and Helms, and Doles. And hopefully we'll remember once again how to learn from the past, not just worship it.



Susan, Summer 1961  
Crossing the Country w/dog & friend

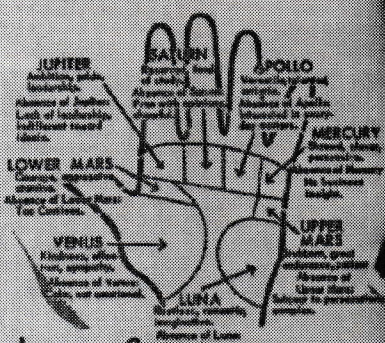
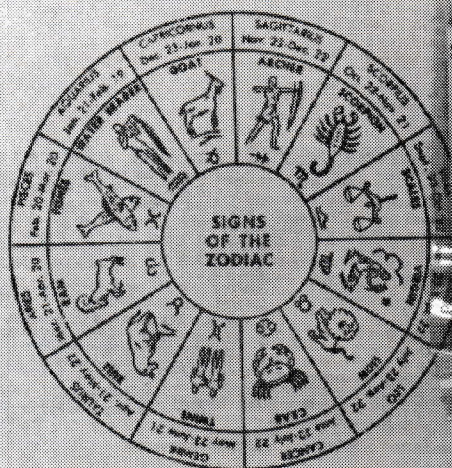




An Afternoon in North Hampton, MA Photo by J.D. Rage



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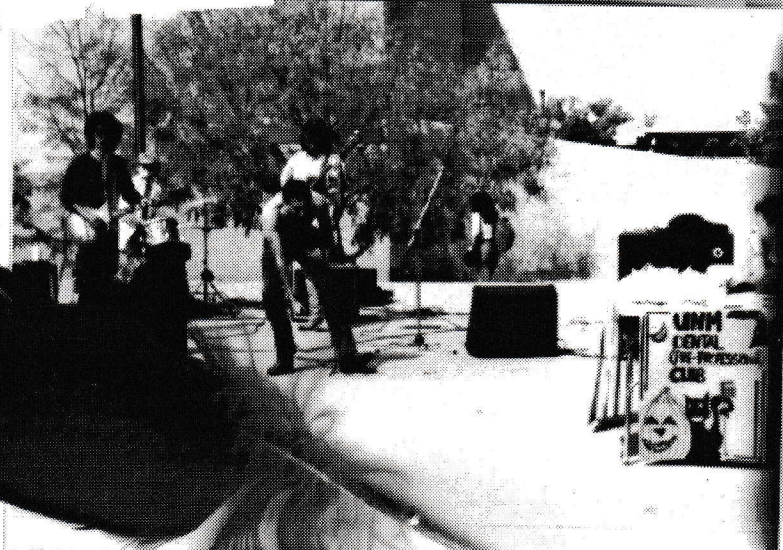
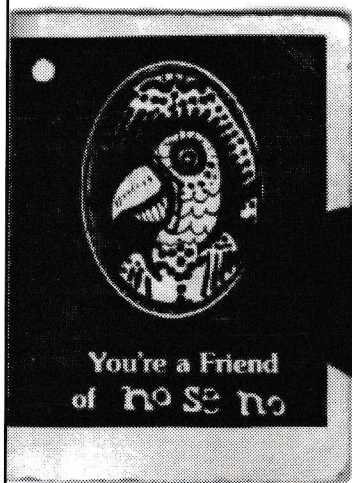
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## Paul Pines

### THE DEATH OF TED BERRIGAN

He died on Independence Day  
1983  
of a heart attack  
carrying too much weight  
and cigarette ashes  
in his beard.

At the memorial in St. Mark's  
Sanders likened him to Blackburn  
O'Hara and Millay  
while Padgett couldn't find words  
to describe his friend  
of 24 years...

After Hollo expressed surprise  
Ted beat him to the grave  
everyone paraded outside  
behind Schneeman's  
votive painting of the poet  
naked in a chair  
which moved

a wino  
to leap from

the Ottendorfer  
Library  
steps  
screaming:

*"Praise Him!  
Praise the Lord!"*

### METEOROLOGY -after Philip Gaston

The weatherman  
is born  
not made  
a kid rushing out  
to catch the first snowflake  
a tiny seismograph  
registering  
every change of light.

In the same way  
I have always  
been a writer--

which is why I am  
applying to  
a Nelson Algren Award

and declaring  
according to your rules  
that I am in  
financial need:

if you require  
further proof I can  
send you snapshots  
of my shoes.



**Joseph Schmidt**

The oak across the street is bare  
I see the grackles gather there  
Black like hooded hangmen high  
They brood against the darkened sky.



**Charlene Cambridge**

*ONCE A YOUNG GIRL TOLD ME  
SHE DREAMED OF HER LOVER AND I  
UNDER A POMME ARRAC TREE  
HOLDING HANDS, NAKED  
LIKE ADAM AND EVE*

*THAT NIGHT I DREAMED OF YOU  
AS A CASTRATED CHRIST  
CRUCIFIED FOR YOUR LIES*

*IN THE DAYS OF THE PLAGUE  
I DREAM OF YOU  
BEING CHASED  
ACROSS A MUDDY RIVER  
BY ALBINO FROGS*

*HOW I SMILED  
AT YOUR WITTY REMARKS  
ABOUT THIRD WORLD SENSIBILITIES  
KNOWING THAT I WOULD SOON BE FREE*

*DREAM SEQUENCE #45  
INCUYANT (5/17/94)*



**Jennifer Blowdryer**

Eric

Everybody wants to help you, everybody has, female prison  
wardens neurotic babes gay know it alls heavyset outlaws and me.  
Take it like you do, sugar, be a monument of all our best,  
we're sorry there's no roof or walls available on a permanent  
basis, that would be outdoing ourselves.

\*\*\*\*

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**Chantay Jones**

Fuck Shit MotherFuck SHIT  
AHHHH AHHHH AHHHH  
OOOOOH  
I Feel Better

Maniacal Laughter

Chantay Jones



## Matt Lewis

10/27/94

Lawrence Jones:

This is written notification that I, Matt Lewis, intend to leave Cafe Nico no later than February 1st 1995. Of course, if I am not able to move by then, I will let you know at least one month in advance.

I thank you for giving me the chance to live in such a historic place and for the most part it has been terrific. I do worry about you, however. Moving me out is quite an amusing solution to your problem. Wasn't it you who said that we are all replaceable? In a sense we are. I would be nothing but proud if you were to replace me with a go-go boy. I refer to this human pick and choose, move-in move-out, erase and create as Larry's Game. This is a big project for you, Larry. Let me know when it is completed. I am expecting the Renaissance.

So be thankful in knowing that soon, very soon, you will be able to enjoy the halls of Cafe Nico without Marilyn, without Elvis, without Nico. Just faded memories. And may they haunt you until you come to terms with them.

Thank You, Matt Lewis

P.S. When does Larry leave? Is that the last chapter?

\*\*\*\*\*

## Larry Jones

November 3, 1994

TO: Matthew

FROM: Larry

RE: Motherfucker (Premature Elegy for Gail Lewis)

---

You've made your bed or, rather, hers, and now you can lie in it or, rather, to yourself about it. She is desperate within/without her ostensible life in the theater because she is a big queen without that great a life expectancy on or off the stage. Stage a stalker call. Somebody had to do it; you don't do blonde anymore. Get her off your stage before you lie beside her in the grave you and she have already dug for yourselves all too well.

And don't you dare presume to preach to me vis-à-vis your mother's parables. If you should continue to, I promise you it will have been I, even at this late date, who will be back in her face for having let you get so obviously out of hand so early on. Who will ultimately have brought her greater grief, your brother Brad back in jail on some drug charge or you in bed with a man in a dress?

You are angry with your mother because, blameless though as she is and I am, she is leaving you as you are leaving us, so extremely prematurely. And like some thirteen year-old Tori Spelling, you are rebelling, but because it's not convenient for Mom to be around to take such or much exception to your recent misbehaviors, you are rebelling against me. Fucking with my head, presuming to write poems to me.

You are, perhaps too appropriately vis-à-vis your artistic limitations and perverse proclivities, I would and do remind you, dating a semi-professional dragqueen. Do you look at her, in drag, in bed, and see Mom, you motherfucker... how dare you insult her and me this way. And by the way, "These heavens were to have been yours" might as easily and simply have read "Go to hell." I am out of hot air. Our balloon is crashing.

Honeysuckle those filthy reemshots, motherfucker. Eat shit, those drama/dragqueens playing to their West Street johns, and die. "The Year of the Dragqueen" indeed. What about the last five years, the next? Fuck the dragqueens. Fuck you, Marilyn, Mary Ann, whomsoever's next.... Fuck your mother, you motherfucker. Fuck her up the ass, she'll only ask for more. Fuck her long and hard. Fuck her to death. Fuck her forever.

/lj



## Steve Fried

### TWO DEATHS

Alex was sitting around the St. Mark's Free Clinic waiting to get something for the clap when some psycho pulled a knife. Alex jumped on him and some other people wrestled the knife away and they made Alex Administrative Director. He used to come to my loft in the flower district and tell me about people. Once he came and said, I have to see some people, and I want to call you at eight o'clock. What for? I said. So they'll know I'm calling somebody, that somebody knows where I am. Where'll you be? I said. It doesn't matter, he told me. But what if you don't call? I said. Then it won't matter, he explained, getting annoyed. He called. You okay? I said. Yeah, of course, he said and hung up. The next time he came he borrowed twenty, dropped names of Native Americans in and out of A.I.M.: Crow Dog, Peltier, Sacajaweah, LaNada Means. A lot of the people are very pushy, he said. Who has more of a right? As he was leaving, he said, There's something I want to show you. He took a .45 out of the pocket of his army jacket. It was blue steel, the butt wrapped in electrical tape. There are some heavy people involved, he said. I have to be careful. Two weeks later Vito told me he'd got his brains blown out from behind in a car parked by the side of Route 17 outside Syracuse.

Jimmy started on congas, then taught himself to play the trap set right-handed. That wasn't enough so he switched it all around and made himself learn left-handed. They had a trio, Joe Falcone on bass and Steve Robbins piano. It sounded like peaking on acid for hours. There was jazz all over. You could go to a little shit bar on the corner of Hudson and Dominick and sit in with Coltrane. Roland Kirk walked around a jam-packed Vanguard blind swinging three horns playing a different melody on each and didn't knock the ice cubes together in a single glass. Jimmy lived on 11th between B and C, the second worst block in the East Village. Some gang had tried to bomb the Diggers' store and there were white guys with rifles on their shoulders marching on E. 10th St. George Demmerle, an insane cop who called himself Prince Crazy, was dropping acid with Sam Melville, setting him up to get murdered by Rockefeller at Attica, and teaching everybody around how and why to build bombs. Street dealers would pick you up on each corner and give you a menu of their wares without repetition that lasted a paranoid walk of the whole block, then hand you off to the next dealer at the next corner. Bill Mackenzie was giving away books free and teaching Hopi magic to anyone who'd listen at the Forum bookstore on Avenue A. Jimmy was far enough into cocaine that we were snorting out of a sandwich baggie with a pair of rolled-up hundreds. You're nervous, he told me. I know just what you need. He took two rapiers off the top of a metal closet. Come on, fence with me. We crossed blades a couple times and he showed me thrust and parry. Try it, he said, try to kill me. Don't worry. The points were like needles. I kept swinging and sticking mine at him and every time his point would stop right in front of my face or chest. Feel better? he said after we did it for a while. Yeah, I said. I did. As I was leaving he gestured me to wait. He threw a curtain aside on some low shelves and took out a .45, holding it sideways on his palm. It was chrome with checkered black plastic grips and smelled of WD-40. Some of the people I see, he told me, I have to protect myself. You take care now. He walked me off his block. I went to Syracuse for a while. When I got back Robbins told me they'd hog-tied him on a Chinatown roof, shot him eight times in the face and thrown him off six stories.



## **Bantu**

### **INDEPENDENCE**

Independence! In 1776 damn ain't they slick?

Independence! In 1776 you ran from dogs, from men with guns, why were you running?  
possible to be free?

Independence! In 1776 you were strange fruit swinging from a tree. Your wife screaming, your  
children crying while the man tells your wife that you swing because of reckless eye balling.

### **HOLD IT**

Their Webster dictionary defines INDEPENDENCE as:

FREE FROM THE AUTHORITY CONTROL OR INFLUENCE OF OTHERS.

SELF GOVERNING. CAUSALLY UNCONNECTED. SELF SUPPORTING, NOT  
DEPENDENT ON OTHERS. NOT SUBORDINATE.

Independence! In 1776 you were being horse whipped why was that? oh, yeah, Independence!  
1776, can that SHIT. It wasn't until 1865 that they decided to write that jive ass  
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION. Let's look at it one word at a time and you be the judge  
of their jive. EMANCIPATION is:

THE SETTING FREE OR BEING SET FREE. FREEDOM FROM POLITICAL,  
INTELLECTUAL OR SOCIAL RESTRAINTS OFFENSIVE TO REASON OR JUSTICE.  
and PROCLAMATION is:

TO PROCLAIM AN ANNOUNCEMENT. TO PUBLICLY OR OFFICIALLY  
ANNOUNCE.

In 1865 after you built their cities, and roads. Picked their cotton, tobacco, and sugar cane.  
Took care of their children while yours was being sold, kept house washed clothes, cooked food  
and worked from can't see to can't see, can't see in the morning to can't see at night, from the  
womb to the tomb you worked. Now in 1865 they say it's time. Time to set you free.  
Yeah, but in 1993 we're free to live in the poorest neighborhoods.



Free to work for \$4.25 an hour, because you were free to go to unequal schools.

Free to pay for college, then free to work in McDonalds or Burger King.

Free to get drunk on the weekends because you worked hard, but your paycheck shows that your labor was damn near free.

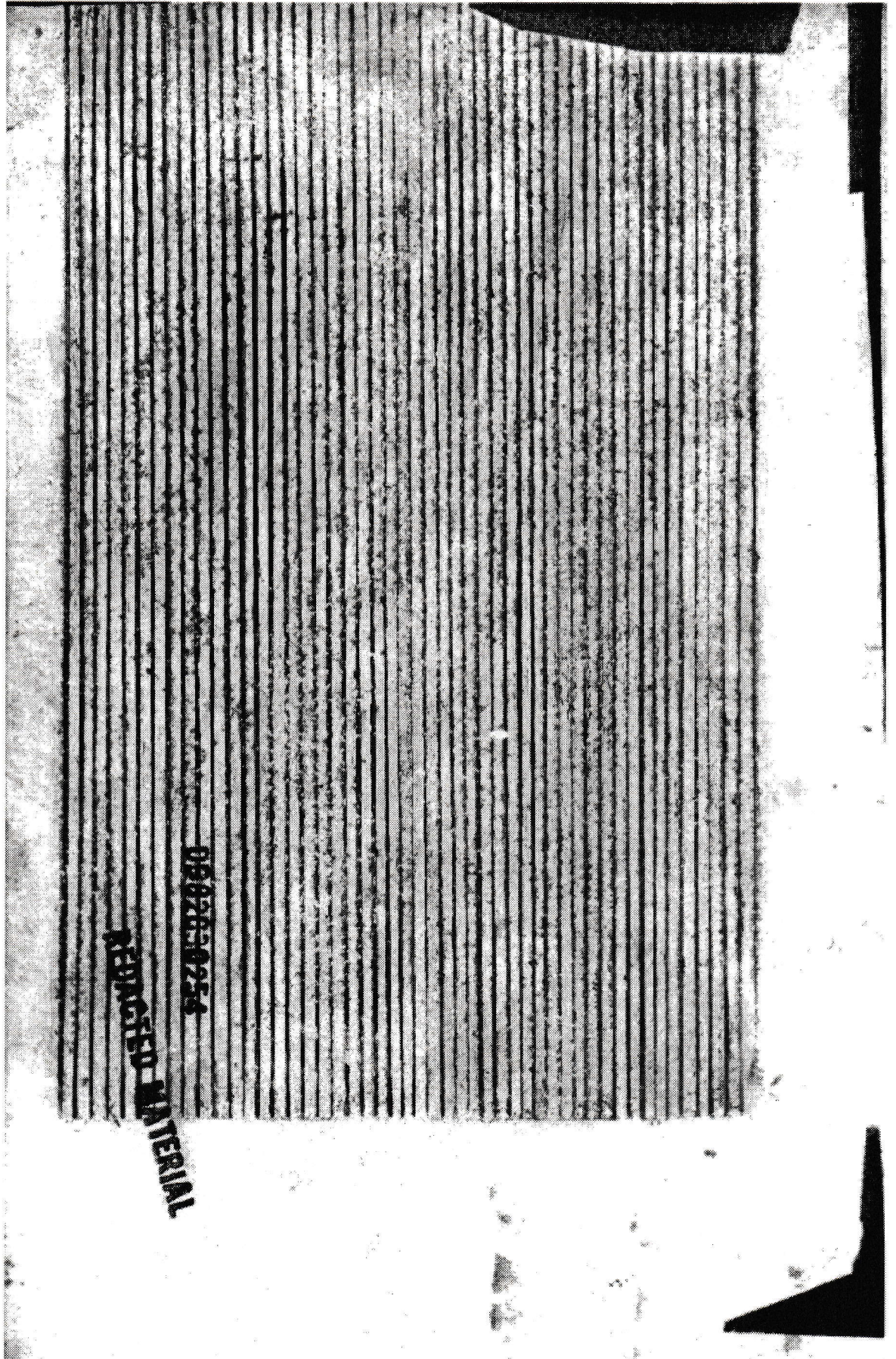
Free to get shot in the back because the man says he saw something shiny in your hand.

Black people say they free and run to the store to buy firecrackers. Children playing with matches, celebrating freedom/independence. Now I'm no whiz but in 1776 we were strange fruit, and in 1993 my sisters and brothers are making noise for a country that 89 years after 1776 decided to make them free. Free your mind and your ass will follow, so I've been told. 1865 or 1993 Black people ain't nobody free yet. Here in America, land of the free, home of the SLAVE.

4July1993

c1986 BANTU

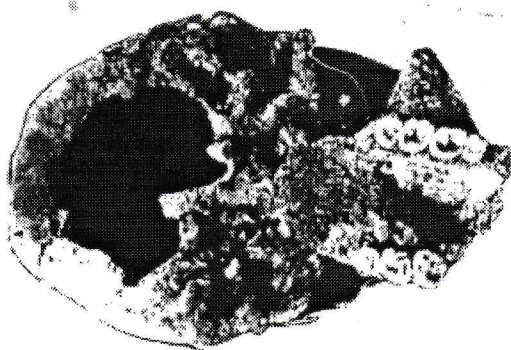




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REDACTED MATERIAL





# IT'S TIME FOR PIE!



flood

scopophilia (sko-pe-fil-ee) (Gr. skopein to view + philein to love)

personality traits which are characterized by a tendency to view a person or thing as an object of love or affection.

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and other symptoms: disturbing sensations; dimness of vision; paralytic spasms; convulsions; retention of urine; vasomotor disturbances; levitating hallucinations; catalepsy.

scopophobia (sko-po-fob-ee-shi) (Gr. skopein to view + phobos to be frightened by)

SO  
MISERABLE ONE  
WHAT REASON IS THERE  
FOR PRIDE

## love stone





**Ken DiMaggio**

**EPIPHANY UPON SEEING A WOMAN SLEEPING.**

You were tired and did not feel like  
going but the new drug the doctor had  
you on had you no matter where you  
went not feel like staying but just the  
same stay as best you can with my thick  
red tartan plaid that I will gently  
lay over your body stay here on my  
bed and for as long as you  
need until you can rise from it  
gently stay even though you can't  
stay with yourself and with the dia-  
betes and drugs that make you a  
stranger to you but on my bed and  
under a thick red blanket of  
plaid you will at least be able to  
stay in a room that will give warmth and  
welcome and so  
yes  
for as long as you want

for as long as you need

to leave the diabetes and drugs

instead of yourself from your-  
self

even though I cannot per-  
sonally understand I can indenti-  
fy

a ghost     where there should be  
a life  
a life

that haunts like the unrequited dead

But now you don't have to     because  
here let me put my pillow under  
your head     here     let my blanket warm  
your body up

here

let me take a last look at  
you before I close the door

where

I take pause



looking at the woman my  
friend

trying

without the diabetes the drugs

and maybe sleep with the self she has  
not known for many years

And take as much time as you need to  
do so

here on my soft warm bed

where my pause now goes to

hovering for a moment then

gently unfolding

like a soft warm caress

because like you I too

even though I lack your re-  
pressed but haunting ex-addictions your  
nightmares that pull you from you

can know what it is to not sleep when I  
should be asleep to not live when I should  
be alive

but now can I

as my pause wraps you  
against the unsure

like

the palm of a cool hand

pressing softly  
against an unknown but still raging night-  
mare

and for as long as it seemed you needed because

You were tired

and did not feel like go-  
ing



And the new drug the doctor had put you  
on  
had you no matter where you  
went

not feel like  
staying

And so I put you to bed

under a red tartan of plaid  
a soft pillow under your head

and a pause that breathed a  
heart I did not know I had in-  
side of me as I looked at you from the  
door

You were a woman who for the first  
time in a long time was now  
sleeping

And I was a long sleepless  
man

who was now sleeping with you

\*

## Susan Sherman

### *Excerpt from memoir Amerika's Child*

History has a human face. Just as there are certain smells, pictures, words that evoke the memory of a particular era or locale, there are individuals who do the same. While it is true that every decade is populated with people important to you, there are always two or three who define the period and your place in it, who bring it to life.

For me, Berkeley, 1958, those two people were Diane Wakoski and LaMonte Young.

On the cover of the Winter 1960 *Occident*, the University of California literary magazine edited that year by Diane, is a portrait she took of LaMonte sitting on--or, it might appear to the casual viewer, in--a rock. The photo, a snapshot really, is blurred from being enlarged and in it LaMonte appears folded like a strange nesting bird or a brooding condor, an image not of the Fifties or early Sixties but timeless, ageless, defined by wind and tide and rock rather than by social convention. LaMonte's face is clean shaven, his features seem to sink into his face in much the same way as he sinks into the boulders. His lips thin, determined, he looks carved from stone himself, but not hard, inhuman. To the contrary, his hunched form makes the rocks take on a softer, living aspect, as if they had grown up purposely to support him. It is only when you look closely at his face you realize how young he is. His clothes, tight black velvet pants and pointed shoes--covered in this photo by a baggy jacket--are outlandish for the period. Although slight in build, he is wiry; there is nothing fragile about him. LaMonte carries his childhood as a street-smart kid as a tangible presence, neatly, with the subtle, almost whimsical air of a pirate, yet with a hidden toughness. You could easily imagine a switchblade concealed neatly beneath his almost Shakespearean garb.

Because of LaMonte our apartment was filled with music, but not of a kind familiar to me. With the exception of Bartok's Violin Concerto which I had loved even as a typical 50's high school student, with its odd twists and turns which opened the conventional world into something strange and mysterious, I had never heard anything resembling the John Cage or Karlheinz Stockhausen that filled our ears and doorways.

I performed in three of LaMonte's concerts that I remember: An opera he composed that inaugurated the new Berkeley multi-million dollar auditorium in which I fried eggs in an electric frying pan my parents had sent me while our musician friend Phyllis Jones rocked a bunch of celery softly crooning a lullaby--all amid a cacophony that had the audience roaring its disappreciation. We repeated his opera at Stanford University with the same result. At UCLA we performed a piece by John Cage which consisted of coordinating a stack of instructional cards with a stop-watch to signal when to turn a radio on and off--theoretically mixing artistic intent with chance. Within sixty seconds, I was totally lost. Looking around frantically at the other performers, I had a suspicion they were too. So I kept flipping my cards, glancing at my watch, turning my radio on and off, now completely at random, but with the air of someone who was assiduously following instructions.

In retrospect I'm not sure it much mattered.

I think if there was one thing that attracted me to LaMonte and Diane most, it was that quality of serious play, of studied imagination. Perhaps everyone has a favorite fantasy, one that is brought over from childhood, constructed of bits and pieces of storybooks and dream, a place where the real world of conflict and confusion, harsh recrimination from behind closed doors, financial worries, the sounds and catastrophe of the adult world can be closed out. The imagined world is not free from danger, but it is a danger that somehow always comes out right in the end, when after many trials you prove yourself up to the appointed task, the world of the imagination ironically more rational than the mundane world of everyday life and school and friends who never quite understand where you are, hidden as you are, deep inside yourself.

Diane defined the word "poet" to me. Because of her inordinate talent and prodigious output, she was acknowledged as the opinionated matriarch of the late Fifties Berkeley/San Francisco poetry scene even at her young age. How I envied her certainty, her conviction, every statement delivered as an ultimatum, words clenched tight around ideas, daring anyone to pull them away. She often spoke and wrote of herself with an anger and self-deprecation balanced simultaneously with sly humor and an enormous egotism that negated her words at the same time she spoke them.



There was a quality of age about Diane as if somehow she was born with a secret knowledge of the interior workings of the orange groves she called her home. She never spoke about those beginnings except in her poems--the absent father, the shadow of a mother who was never mentioned, never described--her father always standing as a metaphor of loss, an ideal to be reached for, as I reached toward her, as we follow our illusions (delusions?) until we finally, lucky or unlucky, become what we were always striving to be.

Don't expect to find "truth" here, "objectivity"--that delinquent twentieth century fable. Older now by more than thirty years, I can only try for the moment to erase more recent memories to construct a pristine view of those first confrontations. How amazing it is that people can live in such close proximity to each other, in the most intimate circumstances, with husbands, wives, children, parents, lovers, friends, sometimes for years and describe themselves and each other as if they lived on different planets, were from different species. The other always defined by the possessive "my," underlined, negating any real communication--*my* husband, *my* wife, *my* lover, *my* mother, father, sister, brother, even *my* friend.

Is it the fear of loss of affection, of presence that plugs our mouths and ears? Or is it that we each are compelled to confront some particular existence for whatever reason, fate, pathology, and like the artists we, all of us, are born, take our brush to the nearest willing canvas, painting it over with our own needs, expectations, fear, while at the same time we reciprocate by allowing ourselves to, in our turn, become canvas and bowing to another's need become decorated ourselves with her or his palette.

And what colorful creatures we become! Racing through our lives dripping bright or tarnished colors, splattering paint here and there over every surface we encounter, living or inert, seldom knowing from one minute to the next who we are, where we are headed.

But maybe I'm mistaken after all. Maybe these are the comments of the woman I am and not that young girl who through innocence (read: lack of experience, therefore expectation) saw quite clearly the people who surrounded her, with the necessary assistance of a naiveté that could accept and love wholeheartedly without question or hope of recompense. Who could truly embrace what *is*, with all its attendant confusion and pain.

## Sid Branch

LEAVE ME ALONE -----

Only a few days left to the deadline.

I say, "I'm not a poet anymore, what's the point."

They say, "Just give us some old stuff, that's fine."

And today, oh revelry, I've got a choice, of course.

I choose not to do anything, say anything, like I used to.

Don't get high, choose life and make every moment count.

So, I smoke tobacco. Choosing another drive to death.

A friend asks, why? You're too old for peer pressure,

You have a choice today. Oh yea, in the 90's, we cry.

I usually chose the other road, fight and never die.

Now I am compliant and fill the rooms with smoke.

Yet, will the smoke bring the fire. Flame of ideals.

Maybe I'll theoretically burn out, again, I surrender.

This too shall pass however, I don't like the smell...

Of death, of clinging halos worn by sainted ghouls.

But, I relish that old feel, the old taste of resin.

On my lips there is not life, not love, just nicotine.

An ashtray of memories, a lifetime of butts...

I inhale to forget that once I felt love, an anxious past.

Ahh, the last paper, I roll a perfect Drum, lick it smooth.

Roll, roll, rolling and this drummer becomes a messenger.

We all roll by, say good-bye, some earlier, some later.

Nothing stays the same and I knew, I knew that already.

Even my passion for sidewalks, a neighborhood of filth

Changes to a stench of new life, proper death in vogue.

Preparation of memorials, easily done now and frequent.

Toughen my heart I provide to love and not memorize.

How you look walking - with someone new and pretty.

How I look walking - with my spectator shoes and coat.

Details are for the living, blurred memory for the dead.

When my eyes sharpen again I will love without pity.

I still won't drink - to your health but breath life

Into my sagging thighs that will not run toward you

Rather away - to the next willing participant of lust.

I toss the collected butts, I crush the empty pack.

Decision time before my bath of scented witch oils.

A grand gesture of belief in attraction through magic.

Will I continue; choose an odor of pungent fresh kill

Or, succumb to repeated revelation of stagnant poetics.

This day my joy was renewed at the sight of a dead cat.

No one cared in the bright sunlight, sitting or playing

Other games might intrigue and sometimes the past is.

I want my sanity at whatever cost, just what I can pay

To assure that I can continue these ravaging choices -

To clamor the beast within that refuses to stay beaten.

My feet want to take me further than my head will allow.

My fear is not with precious time, just my next creation.

To own my self construction, a devilish revival and more.

Critical mass can't stop conjecture coming thru the floor.

Words have my strength; I sing no more pain, nor blues.



## J.D. Rage

### KISS MY ASS

J. D. "Kiss My Ass" Rage  
That is my new name  
I send it out to all those who don't measure up  
I dedicate it to all the ones I wanted to love  
but who couldn't accept my intensity

to the wimps!! here's to you!!!

I dedicate it to the world at large  
and all those in the world who think I am too large

I am Large and I would like to get Larger  
I am Larger than Life  
most people can't even deal with life  
so why should I expect them to deal with  
**LARGER** than **LIFE**  
butt **KISS MY ASS** anyway

Of course I would have liked to say  
**SUCK MY DICK**  
because that is so much more confusing  
especially to those of you who have always  
pegged me for poor excuse for a drag queen anyway  
but the phrase **SUCK MY DICK** has been taken  
was already used by another aging dried up  
old cunt (Tallulah Bankhead) who could have  
passed for a drag queen too  
who probably died alone croaking away  
in her hopelessly comedic masculine voice  
so I will just say **KISS MY ASS**

In the Indian Restaurant, Prince of India  
which up until last week  
was one of my favorite places

(funny how the **HATE** just seethes and bubbles  
through the depression  
**FUNNY ISN'T IT**  
how a favorite place can become a dive  
a dump a favorite person can become a  
useless waste of life as the clouds roll in  
to shake you like a ravenous tornado  
that wants to suck you up right out of your  
little red rent-a-car to heaven or somewhere  
else that needs your energy  
just when you decided you might want  
to stick around awhile  
but all that has changed now hasn't it  
so **KISS MY ASS**)

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted,  
in the Indian Restaurant  
I watch the street which happens to have  
an abundant supply of full trash cans - silver ones lined  
with black Hefty bags and overflowing  
I get a little sick thinking about my Indian food  
as I watch them come one after another to  
root through those inviting garbage cans

a small polyester woman opens a pizza box she has  
found in there  
it is sadly empty  
a ratlike man rummages through and finally goes  
away empty-pawed  
I want to get up when the next woman  
makes her rounds  
to go out and tell her the cans have been picked clean  
to save her from some disappointment  
but I see I was wrong again as she holds up  
a clean plastic one liter deposit bottle to inspect  
in a midnight street lamp

Ambulances pull up on First Avenue  
outside the Indian Restaurant window (that used  
to be one of my favorite places)  
there are twelve squad cars going the wrong way  
and two ambulances  
dozens of uniformed officers  
a big crowd springs up out of the sidewalk  
somebody is dying or thinking about dying  
outside the window of the Indian restaurant  
outside the Prince of India  
and I am inside eating Alou Shag  
just when I wanted to be riding away in a wailing  
emergency vehicle again  
to go to a hospital where I will be taken care of  
where I can be confident about my temperature  
where I can languish  
somebody else is getting that ride and I am  
doomed to continue this horrendous eternal struggle  
where no one ever comes to change the sheets

Oh yes it's time for that new tattoo  
time to cover up the inside pain with the outside pain  
time to carve some skeletal leering monstrosity  
into my skin to distract attention from  
the real leering monstrosity within

and they will only see the outside  
and they will use me as their pet freak  
not because I am a cool and wonderful pet freak covered with pain



but because they will be seen with a pet freak  
and that will make people think that they are a freak  
that they are a rebel that they are different  
that they may know something important  
when in fact they are not and they do not

I dedicate my new name to the pet freak owners of the world!

They keep telling me that being alone is different from loneliness

They keep telling me it is important to make friends, to participate

They keep telling me that something wonderful is  
right  
around the corner

They are usually mental health workers

so I tell them semantics is semantics and reality is reality

and I tell them Bob Dylan already said "I got a million friends"

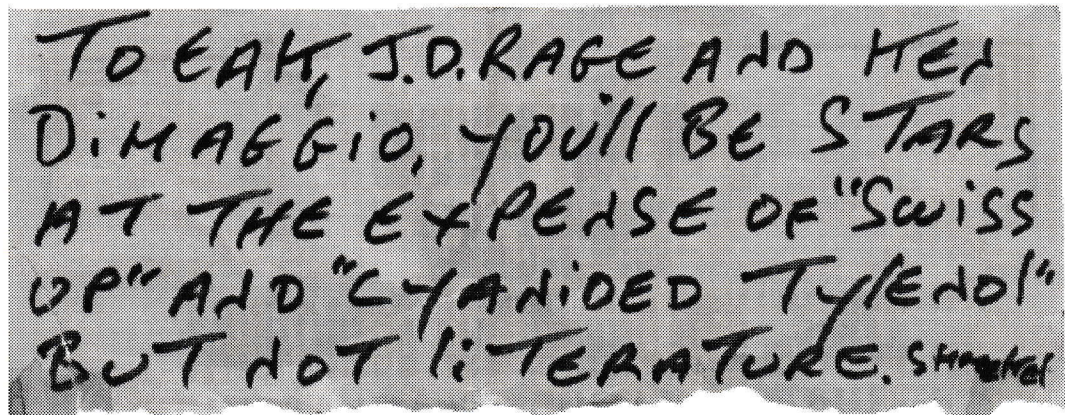
and I tell them my line is "I been around a million corners"  
and on the other side of that corner was only another corner  
at the end of the next block

They tell me you are out of touch with reality  
and I tell them I may just be the only person in the world  
who sees the real reality

and then I tell THEM: **KISS MY ASS**  
or if you prefer: **SUCK MY DICK**

In either case,

**YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY!!!!**



TO EAT, J.D. RAGE AND HEA  
DIMAGGIO, YOU'LL BE STARS  
AT THE EXPENSE OF "SWISS  
UP" AND "CYANIDED TYLENOL"  
BUT NOT LITERATURE. *Shirley*

## Andrea Lambert

### THEY WANT TO KNOW

Six running over the grass heap same as if they were soldiers, six now seven of them chasing me with grubby pudge-fingered hands; seven mud-smeared and I'm at the head with blood on my hands and feathers flying back behind us. There's a clamp on the sky like an iron helmet, it's trapping us hard with the gray wind and the smell of rain coming on. We found it behind the dumpster, Emily and I, this foul-winged cold thing with the sad beak of mourning on it, like a morning cold-bite after you lose your sweater. Now it's goose-prickles down my arms as I run faster than any of the others, faster than the clouds racing down or the cars, faster than my own muddy feet down the field to the schoolyard. When we found it, Emily wanted to tell the teacher, but I said "No, we don't need her to fix it, we'll do it." Her frilled ankle socks drooped with a last smatter of blood. Gross.

But the others with their ratty jackets and fat red cheeks, they know I have a secret and like all the other times they know they must get it out of me: Matthew the bastard who pulls my hair at recess, Eric with tricks in his fingers to untie all shoestrings ever made, Melissa who shut me up in a chair cage once and said she'd staple my fingers if I tried to escape. But now I have escaped, in a way, with my bee-stung shoes flailing down the hill, I know something they don't and have in my clenched hand something they can't understand.

But where, now, to run? The bird is like a banner, I hold it up out of their grabby hands and holler raw for the mother doctor savior something to come take it. No one does. But I know it will live if I do the spell just right. Just right. I throw the loose feather-heap up at the largest raincloud, up where a slight shaft of sun is coming through, and I yell something fierce without words.

It flies. For a split moment it flies over all of us sweat-smeared and staring, Matthew too shocked to tackle me, the teachers even glancing upwards. I swear forever allegiance to the one true thing and the power and the glory that is this tiny life turned warm and twitching again, again, until...

The bird makes a slow arch over the monkey bars, its glide petering out, and then crashes gasping shame against the sidewall of the lunchroom.

The kids jump me hard, then, scabbed knees hard onto my sides, hands scrabbling as if they think I've stolen the secret and eaten it. We go down in a tangle of lice and sweat pants, and I forget the bird's blood in my own smashed fists.

I had trouble, after that, with believing.



Late in the year 1852, the 'Revue Geneve' stated, that the Department of Justice and Police were authorized by the Federal Council to incur the charge of photographing the portraits of those persons who broke the laws by mendicancy. The verbal descriptions which had heretofore been relied on, were found to be insufficient; the features of the beggars begged discription.

-Edward Bradley  
writing under the name  
Cuthbert Bede in  
'Photographic Pleasures' 1855

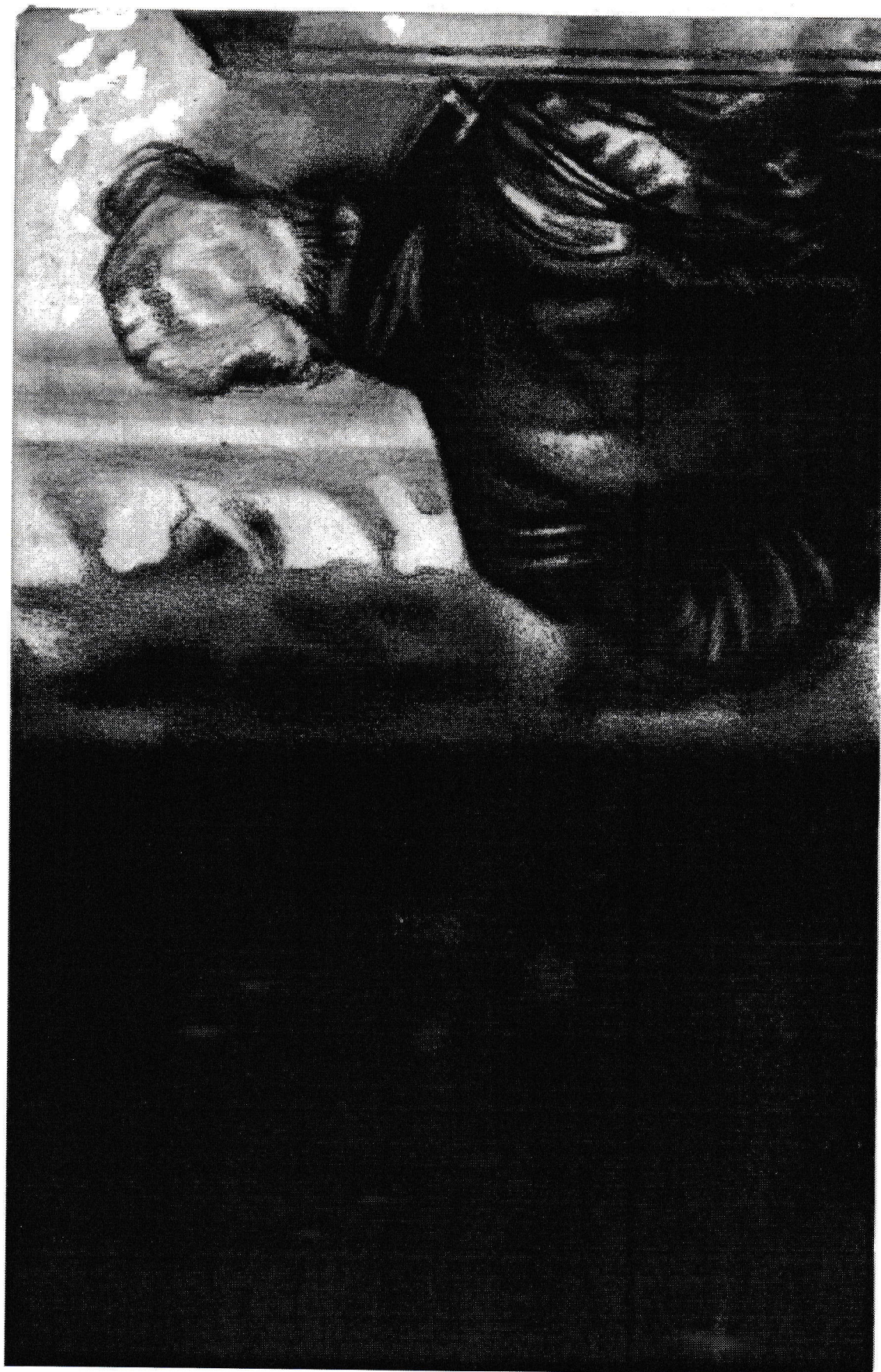


An anti-abortion protester using an instant camera to photograph police in West Hartford, Conn. After 260 Saturday others were arrested refusing to disclose their names, the 231 Women's Center and She remained in custody at the Yesterday Summit.

Capitalism has the power to immediately and continually turn into a drug the poison that is thrown in its face and then to enjoy it.

-B. Brecht







## will inman

### to walk those winds

when grey clouds sounded skybodies restless,  
when hard winds across wide field-stretches  
through shuddering brown racks of trees  
screamed to him of tornadoes in Texas and Oklahoma, he  
set out to walk those winds. earth under his feet  
moved with him in windrhythms, grey skybodies  
leaned down and jostled him, ruffled his shirt,  
dragged at him, chill but intimate. this March  
pretended no affection, yet he took those rough embraces  
for passing strokes from invisible lovers. he did not  
have to see faces in clouds to know those restless  
gropings brothered him, churning love down fury.

now

miles moved through his gut relentless with his  
footpace, how he took wind into him in a fierce  
footstitch and armweave, how wind danced land miles  
into his sinews, stoking his bones steep with roaring  
distances, how his feet stroked earth drum, how its  
beat strove with his skyful heart, earth air sky  
came plunge and stretch and lift, together they rivered  
down him, through him, he rose beyond, arms kin-swaying  
with trees, swinging and cracking down wrung branches, he  
strode as flood strides, flowing, god's spiral tongue  
lapped bitter at his hollows, hungered down him  
scorched with christian lies, he bent his head hurting,  
wind drank bruises in his eyes, his nostrils tore  
that raging flesh of air, his ears sucked Marchsound  
into ache of chestbone, how god came naked, turbid  
with bodies, sky driven, earth thirsting, how he  
walked that wind, rivered that flesh of air, made love  
his furies and the furies of god, raw down wind.

18-19 January 1994

Tucson

[Outside Durham, North Carolina, between Duke  
and Chapel Hill, 1942.]

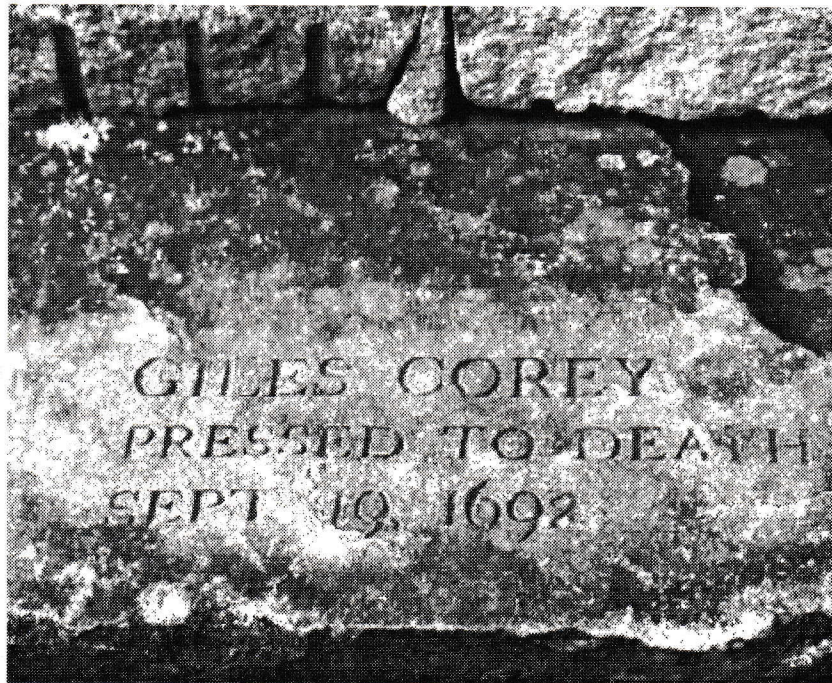
bruce weber

THE BODY

the body is crushed by  
questions  
asking the cost of  
malpractice  
insurance  
the body squeezes  
through life  
with diplomacy  
never  
answering  
directly  
because  
the  
lungs  
stomach  
and  
intestines  
are  
advisors  
to the  
brain  
which passes  
messages to the lips  
and the lips are blue  
with pneumonia  
journalists  
send  
get well cards  
to the mouth  
whose teeth  
ache  
because of  
the  
economy  
and the mouth wants to spit  
at the doctors  
at the dentists  
at the veterinarians  
at the holistic healers  
at the quacks  
selling paint thinner  
as an aids cure  
and the mouth coughs  
spreading tuberculosis  
among the senators  
among the house of representatives  
among the coal miners  
with black lung disease  
among the lifers  
at rahway state prison



the body wants to walk  
the body wants to run  
the body wants to hurdle  
the body wants to win  
but nobody gives the body much of a chance  
because  
because  
because  
the body is bankrupt  
the body is full of bad wiring and mercury  
the body is plugged up with lead and asbestos  
the body is afraid of the diagnosis  
the body is owned by the state  
the body is liable  
the body is helpless  
the body is in denial  
the body has no friends  
the body is a poor loser  
and the doctor  
won't operate  
without a  
down  
payment  
and the body throws up its hands  
and the body kicks through the door  
and the body collapses from exhaustion  
and the body dies wrapped in plastic shopping bags  
at 4 a.m. on 57th and 5th



Witchcraft Trials Memorial Bench, Salem, MA. Photo by J.D. Rage

## Huggy-Bear Ferris

### IMAGES AND DECEPTIONS

"IT SEEMS THAT THE WAR SHOULD BE OVER BY NOW.....  
.....BUT NO-ONE HAS COME TO RELIEVE ME."

HE.....HE IS A VERY OLD MAN IN A WHEELCHAIR. A WORLD WAR ONE VET.  
OLD AND TIRED AND VERY CONFUSED BY HIS REALITIES.

HE.....HE SEES THINGS THAT MAKE NO SENSE AND HE TALKS TO PEOPLE WHO HE IS  
NOT QUITE SURE EVEN EXIST.

HE.....HE SITS IN HIS CHAIR...(WHICH HE DOESNT KNOW HE IS SITTING IN)...AND  
WATCHES SHADOWS PLAYING ACROSS THE FIELDS. BIRDS FLYING THROUGH THE  
AIR...DANCING AND WEAVING ABOVE.

HE...HE CANT BEND HIS ANCIENT NECK TO LOOK UPWARDS. THE SHADOWS REMIND  
HIM OF SOMETHING MORE THAN BIRDS.....BUT HE.....HE CANT QUITE GRASP THE IMAGE.  
INDEED, THEY RESEMBLE SHADOWS OF OLD PLANES IN A DOG-FIGHT. IT IS A HIDDEN  
MEMORY.

THE SETTING IS A GARDEN...A BROAD EXPANSE OF GREEN LAWNS AND TREES AND LITTLE  
STREAMS THAT TRICKLE TO NO-WHERE...WHISPERING. A GARDEN THAT SPREADS OUT FAR  
AND WIDE AND RUNS OFF OVER THE NEXT HILL.

IT IS A HOME FOR OLD VETERANS.

HE.....HE IS PUSHED OUT HERE EVERY DAY...WHEN THE WEATHER PERMITS..AND SEEMS  
TO JUST SIT AND STARE AT THE TREES.

THE PEOPLE WHO BRING HIM OUT HERE...THE ATTENDANTS, BEING BEHIND HIM...THEY  
NEVER GET TO SEE HIS FACE CHANGE WHEN HE SEES THE TREES. IT GOES SLACK AND  
FREEZES. HIS EYES REMAIN FIXED ON THE FOREST.

THEY THINK HIM LOST AND DAYDREAMING.

THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE TREES STIR FEAR AND DANGER IN HIM. SOMEWHERE IN  
HIS FIGHTING HISTORY HIS FRIENDS....CLOSE FRIENDS...WENT INTO JUST SUCH  
A WOODS.....AND NEVER RETURNED.

IT'S THE SAME PATTERN EVERY DAY...BUT, THEY DONT COMPREHEND HIS MUTTERINGS.

HOW COULD THEY?

HIS GRANDDAUGHTER COMES TO VISIT HIM OFTEN.

"SHE MUST BE ELEVEN BY NOW.." HE THINKS.

SHE SITS ON HIS LAP AND HE.....HE TELLS HER BEAUTIFUL STORIES OF FAIRIES  
AND PIXIES AND PRINCES IN ARMOR.

HE.....HE REMEMBERS TALKING TO HER...AND FALLING OFF FOR A SMALL NAP IN  
THE AFTERNOON SUN....ONLY WAKING TO FIND HER GONE.

THERE IS A SMALL STAIN ON HIS PANT LEG WHERE SHE SAT.

"SHE PEED ON ME AGAIN AND HAS RUN OFF IN SHAME" HE MUTTERS.

IT IS HIS OWN URINE...AND THE GRAND-DAUGHTER WHO IS ELEVEN....DIED MANY  
YEARS AGO....OF CANCER...AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-SIX.



HE.....HE HAS TROUBLE COMPREHENDING BEING ON THE BATTLE FIELD EVERY MORNING  
AND THEN BEING IN A STRANGE PLACE FOR MESS.  
THE TWO REALITIES CONFUSE HIM.

HE.....HE IS BEYOND LOGIC.

"THIS CANT BE HAPPENING TO ME!! ITS THE NERVE GAS. I CANT GIVE IN!"

HIS SHIRT IS WET. HE.....HE DROOLS ON HIMSELF AS WELL.

AT ODD TIMES HE THINKS HE HEARS SCREAMING COMING FROM THE WOODS.  
MALE VOICES.  
VOICES THAT HE THINKS HE KNOWS, BUT, HE CANT SORT IT ALL OUT.

SOME DAYS THE FACE IN THE MORNING MIRROR IS NOT HIS. JUST AN OLD...VERY  
TIRED OF LIVING FACE.

HE.....HE IS NOT SURE WHO THE MAN IS....BUT HE SHAVES HIM, ANYWAY, OUT OF  
PITY.

THE COLD RING ON HIS FINGER IS TOO BIG NOW. HE HAS WITHERED.  
SOMETIMES THEY PUT IT BACK ON HIM...REMINDING HIM TO.... "BE CAREFUL."  
HE.....HE DOESNT UNDERSTAND THE RING OR WHAT IT' MEANS.

LITTLE MEMORIES...LIKE TRACER BULLETS IN THE NIGHT...FLASH THROUGH HIS MIND  
CLEAR AND DISTINCT IMAGES THAT HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND.  
IT FRIGHTENS HIM.

HE.....HE HAS LOST THE BATTLE AND CANNOT GET BACK.

HE.....HE PONDERES....WHO IS THE LADY WITH THE GRAY HAIR SITTING ON THE FRONT  
PORCH WITH HIM? THE IMAGE REPEATS OVER AND OVER AGAIN...AND THEN DISAPPEARS.  
WHO IS SHE?  
SHE.....SHE WAS HIS WIFE...AND HE DOESNT KNOW WHAT "WIFE" MEANS.

SOMEWHERE HE REMEMBERS A PARADE...AND HUNDREDS OF DRUMS...MILLIONS OF  
PEOPLE..

.....THE TORN PAPER AND CONFETTI STICKING TO HIS SWEATING FACE AND  
NECK...THE TRAIN RIDE TO NIAGARA...THE PRETTY WOMAN IN THE YELLOW FLOWERED DRESS  
TO MATCH HER HAIR....

AND HE.....HE ISNT SURE IF THEY ARE MEMORIES OR SOMETHINGS HE ONCE HEARD.

THE PRETTY WOMAN IN THE YELLOW DRESS SEEMS TO CREEP INTO HIS MIND EVERY  
NOW AND THEN.....BUT, SHE IS DIFFERENT EACH TIME.  
THAT CONFUSES HIM EVEN MORE.

IN THE TANGLE WITHIN HE TRIES TO SORT IT OUT  
"THEY CALLED ME SGT FOR A WHILE...THEN ALBERT...THEN SGT AGAIN."

"THE WAR MUST BE OVER BY NOW..."

IN THE WINTER...WHEN THE LEAVES HAVE GONE AND THE TREES HAVE TURNED TO BARE  
FRAMEWORKS...WHEN THE WEATHER PERMITS...WHEN THEY CAN DRESS HIM WITHOUT HIM  
SHITTING HIS CLEAN CLOTHES....

IN THE WINTER HE THINKS HE SEES FIGURES SKITTERING BETWEEN THE TREES  
TRUNKS...HIDING FROM THE ENEMY.

HIS EYES WEAK.

HE SEES ONLY MOVEMENT.

HE DARES NOT CALL OUT...NOT KNOWING WHICH SIDE THEY ARE ON.

HE.....HE SITS SILENTLY...STARING AROUND FOR OTHER SENTRIES...OTHER  
GUARDS...BUT, EACH YEAR MORE OF THEM SEEM TO DESERT THEIR POSITIONS....WHILE  
HE AWAITS HIS ORDERS.

IN APRIL THE ENEMY ADVANCED...BRINGING IN HEAVY EQUIPMENT TO FLUSH OUT HIDDEN  
COMRADES.

NONE CAME.

"THE WAR MUST BE OVER BY NOW...."

HIS NECK CRUNCHED AND HURT AS HE LOOKED SKYWARDS.....SOMETHING NOT DONE  
FOR SO LONG.

NO PLANES TODAY...JUST BIRDS AND CLOUDS AND A KITE THAT HAD SNAPPED ITS  
LINE...LOSING TOUCH WITH ITS MASTER.

HE.....HE SMILED AS BEST HE COULD....CLOSED HIS WEARY EYES...AND SURRENDERED.



## Mike Halchin

IF SHOES WERE LIKE BATHTUBS,  
HOW WOULD YOU TELL IF THEY WERE ON RIGHT?

just a little endoscopy the doctor said  
nothing special  
just a five-minute transatlantic affair with cancer  
you'll come back feeling fine  
maybe even refreshed  
i could've had a scooter-pie instead i mumbled  
that's all right you can wait in  
the other room he intoned  
like a town crier

whilst reading magazines  
that were cured like a fine ham  
(tho feeling more like beef jerky)  
i began to examine  
the selected geographic trajectories  
of nausea burned into my memory  
at regular intervals during the week  
with each new job  
pretty soon i won't even be able  
to go outside without my head  
being encased in an aquarium full of vomit  
plus sulfuric acid generated  
from some internal organ of mine  
that didn't know its usage was no longer needed

my hands disinter into  
tentacled curbfeelers flexible wire rakes  
harnessed with one bald eye  
peering over each digital assembly

i scrape at the air  
and blood appears at my feet  
little despairing puddles of red  
greatly missing the body  
from whence it came  
o that orphaned liquid  
how will i take care of you  
support you fix you dinner and such  
wait a minute you're soaked  
in sops of bacteria  
that scummified necklace  
i can't separate you two pesky kids now  
so what do you expect me to do?  
fuck i ain't no scientist  
gotta catch a bus anyway

## Alan Britt

### THE BITTER OLEANDER

We had a bitter oleander,  
but we didn't know it.

Saw it on the surface  
of the tiny algae stream in Plant Park.

Carried it in darkness  
through the dew-covered hours on Davis Island.

Watched it spill suddenly with  
the ignited laughter of our dear friend, Jackie.

Oh yes, we had a bitter oleander,  
but thought it was a bird  
or a gypsy with olive-colored thighs.

Thought we were only being tossed  
on the sharp horns of Albert King's blues guitar.

Tugged at its roots imbedded  
in a sky full of violins.

Cleared the debris of poems from our table  
looking for its falling petals.

One night Paul discovered he had  
a seaweed-shaped blood vessel  
growing in the metallic blue sea.

I guess we carried that bitter oleander  
around with us for years,  
before devouring it one day  
in a random act of maturity.





Venom Poets at the Miss Washington Diner, New Britain, CT Photo by J.D. Rage



# Paul Weinman

WHITE BOY BEER

WHILE FINISHING UP LAST BOTTLE'S  
KNOX, FOR REASON. SHOWS A WHITE  
BOY BOO HIS TRICKLE DAWN IMAGE  
OF ECONOMIC UNCHUCKLE HAVE WORKED  
WE DEMONSTRATING IN THREE 3 DAYS

1st. - snapping at the corners  
of his mouth with his  
blue, flowered napkin

2nd. - rubbing his middle  
finger under the hat.  
Dripping sline of  
plasma

3rd. - pointing at the pecker  
tracks down his pants

IN ABALMMENT, WHITE BOY GETS  
UP AND, BOSS MARCH TWO LAYS

THINKING THAT LATE WITH  
BAM PEOPLE JUST DO NOT  
KNOW THE MODERN WAY OF  
THINKING. WHITE BOY GONE  
TO DIVERS TO KNOW VILINGS.

- a. of howling breasts  
 & hairs at beaches
- b. plumed couches and  
 silken thighs
- c. full lips just about  
 to press wet
- d. long fingers drawn  
 to the eyes

NOT DISCOURAGED BY SLURRED  
VOICES & STUMBLING BOOKS.  
WHITE BOY PLANS ON ADDING  
POLY BOUND & 3D IN ORDER  
TO UPGRADE AMER. ALGOLGIC

10071 28 Aug 64  
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10071 28 Aug 64

# WHITE BOY BEER

WATCHING BEER ADS ON TV  
FOR THE 1ST TIME, WHITE  
BOY IS ASTONISHED TO SEE

1. drinking keeps you young and vibrant
2. people have spent a great relationship under alcohol's wet
3. bear consumption gives one the advantages of the upper middle class
4. sports are played far better & enjoyed more with bear claws by

WHITE BOY SURE TO DETACH  
CARS HOPING TO RESTORE  
EXPECTATIONS FOR AILING

WHITE BOY STUDIES NEED  
AGE AND COMMERCIALS TO  
REACH THE CONCLUSIONS:

- 1st. beer makes breasts bigger/velvety & in your face
- 2nd. laughter & smiles affect everyone
- 3rd. intimate, trusting relationships
- 4th. success, wealth & pursuit of happiness

AFTER DRINKING FOR TWO  
WEEKS, WHITE BOY CHARLIE  
OUT OF THE WENDS TO GO  
HOME & RETURN FINDINGS

ATTACKING A LARGE PILE  
OF SPUDS BACKED IN  
TUNNELS WITH TWO FIRE-  
BOMBING DRINKING MASH-  
MAKES, WHITE BOY ASKS  
TWO OF THE GUYS THAT  
ASKED TO LEAVE HIM:

1. Aren't you ashamed  
of yourself?

LATER, THE POLICE LOOK  
AT UNTERPOLEN WITH A  
CAN OF SPUD, LAUGHING  
OVER KICKING WHITE BOY  
HARD BY WHOREN TV HUNTS



**Larissa Shmailo**

**I WANT MY MOMMY**

---

So I am greatly loved; I remember that now.  
Like a corrosive hole in my soul, grief  
These tears with heartburn in my breast  
Came with claws and tore my love out  
Tore it out of my breast  
Leaving this hole.

And I am greatly loved, but who needs it?  
And there is a God, but so what?  
And I am not alone, but why this fear then?

The jagged edges of the ward  
Too vivid and raw  
Attack my senses:  
    Gargoyle patients dance  
    Like electrified corpses  
Disjointed I feel too much  
And crying, also nothing.

I am queen of the misfits, muse of broken men  
The pitiful outcasts who come like moths to me  
For comfort and despair.  
    They would surely suck me dry and spit me out  
    Still gumming for more, more, more, more, more...  
I want my Mommy, ol' poison tits  
To visit me on the ward,  
To find me in the hall in my hospital slippers,  
To pause a moment with quivering lips  
And then rush her great bulk toward me, crying,  
Dotsya! Zaichik! Solnishko!  
To cradle my head in her large bosom,  
And stroke my hair as I weep,  
Murmuring, Mama's baby  
There's nothing wrong with you..

I want my Mommy.  
She will comfort and feed me  
Keep me safe and sound  
Saying, your father loves you very much  
And we feed the cats  
So why not you?

I am safe at home  
I do well at home  
Nothing's wrong with me  
That my Mommy couldn't fix.  
Tonight I will sit on the sofa  
With my cigarettes and my beer  
And sit and suck and sleep.

## Michael Estabrook

### PARAKEETS

my daughter totals the  
family car (as I predicted  
she would she has  
difficulty fighting with her  
boyfriend and driving at  
the same time) she's  
unhurt thank God but I  
can't come home to  
console her because I'm  
about to go into this  
business dinner meeting  
which I can't miss so I  
drink more than I'm  
accustomed to then sleep  
fitfully in this damn  
cheap hotel room dream  
about 4 parakeets racing  
up a wall



## Diane Spodarek

### "The Hidden Camera"

*She* walks around her room with her husband and child gone, as if a hidden camera documents her every move. Unlike her daughter, who is the same in her room whether *she* is there or not, *she* does not dance and laugh; and unlike her husband who is the same in his room, whether *she* is there or not, *she* does not watch television contentedly, her hand tucked into the waistband like a plug in a socket. No, *she* walks around her room with her husband and child gone as if a hidden camera shot her every move.

*...alone she does not know what to do, without doing it for others;*

*...alone she does not know what to do, without doing it with a purpose;*

*...alone she does not know what to do, without a monitor, without society's mirror, fixed in her mind.*

*She* is alone but prepares a sandwich as if a hidden camera is over her shoulder. *She* toasts the bread, cuts the vegetables and brushes away a piece of hair from her forehead in what *she* thinks, what *she* re-remembers from the monitor, is a seductive gesture. *She* eats her sandwich at a small second-hand table and drinks a glass of beer as if the camera sits in the other chair, documenting her every move.

The camera zooms in on a close-up of her hand picking up the napkin and pans up to her face where she dabs at the brown-deli mustard at the corner of her mouth. *She* lights a cigarette and blows the smoke from a memory of her mirrored-face, practicing it as a teen from a screen image. In a close-up, black and white fashion, she squashes out the cigarette, stands up from her chair and stiffly walks to the toilet, shoulders back, pushing out her breasts knowing the camera is following her, zooming in on her ass.

*She* doesn't close the bathroom door or turn on the light. It doesn't occur to her, but it should, that the camera may be a low-light model as *she* masturbates. Moments later *she* sits in the dark where the camera cannot capture her rapture, so *she* thinks; or her thoughts, so *she* thinks in the dark. *She* lets her mind wander and roam in/out of familiar sights from other masturbatory days, images of love, laughter and slaughter, and says out loud, "People are not lonely. They confuse loneliness with hormones." But *she* dismisses this abrupt thought because it came from within herself, and not from the monitor, fixed in her mind. And then *she* remembers the hidden camera.

*She* comes out of the bathroom into the light, not sure where the camera is hidden, and walks to the television as if there could be four cameras shooting her from every angle. *She* turns on the TV with the remote control as if the camera zoomed in on her hand and then panned up to her thigh, to her waist, her breasts and rested on her face. *She* sits in a large red-velvet chair she found abandoned on Grand Street and pushes all the buttons with the mute intact and imagines her own voice now as the voice-over:

*...she couldn't move, afraid to think, afraid the camera would/could document her thoughts...she was paralyzed because there was no monitor to assist her, to help her think...to help her react. Alone she did not know what to do, without doing it for others...*

As soon as *she* thinks this, *she* is suddenly aware that *she* is thinking of herself in the third person and in the past tense. *She* thinks maybe the camera does know what *she* is thinking like when *she* was a child; *she* thought her father knew her every thought, *she* remembers thinking her father might be god. "Take two," *she* whispers in what she believes is her best Lauren Bacall voice.

*She* imagines the hidden camera documenting her watching TV and after watching multiple three-second rapid violent images brought to her via her 'at home, editing, remote control device' and Proctor & Gamble, General Electric, HBO and MTV, *she* shuts it off with a violent gesture.

*She* jumps up from the red chair, faints, and hits the floor, her legs spread, satin caressing her thigh, her arm outstretched holding the remote in one hand, for the camera. The phone rings. *She* is afraid it is a salesman who will disappoint her. The camera zooms in on the phone and then quickly pans to her face looking at the phone in what *she* believes is her best 'looking at a phone' look. Her pre-recorded voice says, "Leave a message;" in a tone *she* only uses with the school PTA and the camera zooms back to the black rotary phone. *She* hears a click and a dial tone. The camera pans back to her face for her reaction. Her eyes widen, her lips purse together from a memory/a reflection of a twenty-foot close up of Greta Garbo, or maybe it was Joan Crawford or someone playing Joan Crawford; in any case, *she* gives her best black and white puzzled look and raises herself from the floor.

Although *she* has not rented a movie *she* makes organic popcorn. *She* is glad her daughter is not there to express her disappointment at not having butter for the popcorn. *She* smiles to herself shaking the pot, first with her left hand, then with her right, thinking about the best way to eat the popcorn for the hidden camera. *She* sits back on the red velvet chair with a large clear bowl of salted, butter-less popcorn in her lap and eats with one hand, chewing and licking in memory of how her face looks contorted from the time her father thrust a mirror in her face at the dinner table when *she* was ten. *She* wipes her hand on her black Levi's, which only moments before *she* imagined as 1940's black and white silk, and frantically pushes the buttons on the remote.

*She does not know what she should do without doing it for others.*

*She* thinks about masturbating again but has had enough memory/violence for one evening. Suddenly, the cat jumps in her lap and *she* hears the familiar click of a key in the door. 'Shit,' *she* says to the cat; 'Drat,' *she* says to the click in the door. With the spell of the hidden camera broken and gone, *she* is now the hidden camera and watches the back of herself run into the bathroom, open the window and crawl out to the fire escape.



## Jennifer Blowdryer

### One Little Page of Batty Stream of Consciousness

The necrophiliac is trembling in the back of the car, because it's the British police. I make my voice normal, wonder sincerely about the weather, calm her down. I am sometimes little Caesar of the underworld. This guy driving is fine I say, I know through a slim but strong connection, through a brother I've never met. And he is. The police not only go away but direct us to the next place. The driver's got badly mangled hands from the London tube fire, I've already learned, since I met him, to mention the London tube fire like I would mention a jazz semi great I've never heard of either. Say the name, Bill Frisell, pause one two three four beats, and see if there's a nod of recognition. I white cane my way through other people's reactions to the clues and queues of consensus reality. London Tube Fire pause two three four.

At least it's not Ayn Rand, Big Brother two three four at least it's esoteric, thus I comfort myself. Excuse me but I. I feel that. Never made it that far without imagining myself out of the picture. But the one year stands are only a couple of nights now, and there's not that much. He's so so, is what he is, the stupid fuck, I have just said about Geiger. I am borrowing phrases from those who learned English with great difficulty, unable to wrap their lips around AAAAActopus, hAAAAAArold, but probably cruel never the less.

I'm so protected that I'm through, but under the ground I'm alright, a queen even, delusional on a grand and lovely scale, and over the ground I dodge so fast you'll never catch me wanting. Our idiot species is in a count down. The slick mangled driver and I are not so different, you could use your tits more on stage, he says, but I'm not insulted. He just doesn't know what a wide variety of talent I span. These tits do keep me female, but females tremble, write recovery books, obsess, grow round bellies by sitting still. I am built to survive, not to express myself.

Flannery O'Connor nailed it, because if someone's going to steal your fucking wooden leg you'd pray to any God you'd ever heard of. Bottom line is a store with cheaper goods, units, I use these words with the frail confused warriors, goods, units, items, borrowing phrases from the beginnings of trade. Bottom Line is a club with guys who had one hit, with people who rose to the top, music is ok when it's a business, a business, anything you do for free they wrongly call volunteer, accidentally implying an emphatic desire. Was it volunteer, no I'm trapped in this capitalistic model of a web, so inextricably trapped I can only accept the web before I age beyond not recognition but use.

My sister had a convict con man and I stayed in the room acting cheerful and dense until he left. My sister had a tall man I tried to rent her to. Reality mutates when you try to clumsily manipulate it, but I was just using my insane intelligence to try and participate. She wasn't rentable, but he owned her long enough to tie her up. Those grown ups, I thought, swigging my bud, but now I've been tied up a few times myself, mostly by a tall man.

My sister had a methadrine man who ate steak 'ums, cheese steak 'ums that she lovingly prepared in their spare little condo. Protected by Tandy Security, he joked, meant you'd stand there and throw those heavy Radio Shack catalogues at people until they went away. Not a bad joke, he was a good one until he turned into one giant conspiracy theory, dangerous himself. He'll have me killed, sobbed my sister, jaggedly driving down a Hollywood Boulevard, he's had other people killed. I felt petty that my primary and haunting concern had been a large checkered comforter from Macys. I've never had many things as substantial as that comforter, but my sister's fit was grand style, huge, police inspiring.

She got an artistic Japanese who grew up in Berkeley and couldn't leave the firm Buddhist arm of his father's business. Treat her right, I threatened, Don't let him in, I said, as combination queen of the underworld and somebody's uncle. There are things I can participate in, they just conflict with certain doormen. She got a man similar to a cop, a reserve Navy air conditioning salary man, handsome in a beefy way, nice probably, less damaged than us. Soothed and then bored, she left.

I've been pretty busy myself, but the thing with family is they seldom move out of conscious contact. My sister and I have each other's numbers, but never call. I'm afraid I may have to leave them all behind.



## David Huberman

### EXIT SIGN

To me there's nothing more relaxing than entering a dark air-conditioned theatre, clutching a box of high-calorie popcorn swimming in fake butter, finding a seat in the back and mindlessly watching celluloid. It could be Triple-X, Kung-Fu, Westerns, old-time musicals, sci-fi, film noir, Grade B, old, silent, foreign with subtitles, classics, critic's choice, or even homemade. It doesn't matter as long as it takes my attention away from the present reality. If a film goes the distance and takes me to the outer limits of my imagination, the filmmaker has done me justice.

In the Bronx of the golden 1960's, there were the movie palaces. Big, elegant, art deco auditoriums with beautiful high-arched ceilings and huge crystal chandeliers. I remember very distinctly walking over to 161st Street, having lunch in a cafeteria near Yankee Stadium, then going to the Luxor Theatre and seeing "Dr. No" with Sean Connery as James Bond. And if I didn't like what was playing at the Luxor, there was always the Earle or the Kent nearby. I remember seeing "The Professionals" with Burt Lancaster, or playing hookey from school, sneaking off to the Kent with school chum Barry Bernstein, and looking in amazement at "Fantastic Voyage." I can still remember the day an older friend, who used to protect me from neighborhood bullies, announced there was a new movie at the Luxor just as good as the Bond films, but with an Oriental hero who knew karate and Kung-Fu. Bruce Lee had come a long way from playing sidekick Kato in "The Green Hornet" on T.V. to starring in "Enter The Dragon." Bruce Lee had put Kung-Fu films on the American movie-making map. Mr. Schwarzenegger owes Mr. Lee, the way modern American comedians owe Lenny Bruce. Lee, like Bruce, paid the ultimate price for being different and great at the same time. Other great movies that stand out in my mind from those times are "Shaft," "Dirty Harry," "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly," "Superfly," "2001: A Space Odyssey," and the Peter Gunn movie -- especially the last scene, where the beautiful evil woman turns out to be a pre-op transsexual.

Not all of my early Bronx movie memories are good. One time I was sitting alone watching a spaghetti Western called "A Stranger In Town," when an older, husky blond man wearing the stereotypical long raggedy coat sat down next to me. Before I knew it, his knee kept bumping into mine. After awhile, fear crept into me; I ran out of the Kent Theatre, missing the movie. But I got sweet revenge at the Luxor while waiting to see "The Summer of '42." My husky friend with the knee problem was sitting in the last row, and being very aware of his presence, I was standing up in the aisle eating my buttered popcorn and sipping a Coke, deciding where to sit, hoping the big pervert would leave me alone. The theatre was almost empty but for me and him and a few drunks sleeping it off. Two cops entered the theatre, and at first I thought justice would be done, but as it turned out, they were just there to goof off and hang out with the young women working the concession stand. The creep also noticed the cops and slouched down in his seat. With the cops there, I felt safe that the creep wouldn't try any of his sick routines, so I decided to do something daring. I went over to where he was sitting, stood behind him, and spilled my paper cup full of ice and cold soda down his neck! Then I spat right on his head. All he did was slouch down more into his seat. Not a word was spoken. I didn't stick around to watch him clean up. I used the back exit to leave and got depressed after seeing that little red word on the wall as I was returning to the real world. Maybe it symbolized leaving my mother's womb all over again or it could be that I just enjoy fantasy more than reality. I went back the next day to catch the film. Jennifer O'Neil knocked me out with her beauty. I'd like to say that I never saw the pervert again; but unfortunately, that wasn't the case. I ran into him quite a few times, but he always kept his distance.



## II

After seeing my first Triple-X feature on 42nd Street, I knew I had graduated to the next level of movie-going. It was like watching a good anarchistic punk band with orchestrated chaos everywhere. After making sleeze films a daily habit, I found the movies themselves were boring. It was the audience that made them exciting. They believed in group participation. If it was a porno film, you'd hear lots of collective gasps and moans. An action flick brought outrageous outbursts throughout. It came with the territory. Only a few people slumped in their seats like they were dead; maybe some of them were dead, but most were on the nod. The light from the screen cast everyone in a junkie gray glow. Reefer dealers moved through the aisles selling loose joints. Drag queens gave passionate blow jobs to willing johns while taking hits from their crack pipes at intervals. Chicken hawks, young Latin boys and yes, my friend the creep, roamed around the shit-stained piss-flooded bathrooms. The "ho's" and other assorted undesirables hung out in the balcony. One streetwalker who must've been in her fifties wanted to give me a gum job. I declined. Gangs from the Bronx, Brooklyn and uptown hung around the popcorn stand looking for "vics." Unexplainable sporadic violence erupted and then in a flash calmed down. In the middle of all this chaos, the homeless people slept through any disturbance. They continued snoring away, while the porn actors and actresses moaned and groaned, fornicating like wild dogs up on the screen. Some people clearly had drug-induced nightmares, and rocked around in their chairs. One guy hallucinated and screamed out that big yellow birds were pecking at his brain.

I learned that the first rule of 42nd Street movie-going is to sit in the back of the theatre. First of all, you don't want people shooting paper clips or spitballs, or throwing gum or cold drinks on you. But the main reason is safety. In case anything goes wrong, you want to be able to get out of there fast. The danger factor was always half the kick, like a wicked roller coaster ride. There was always that adrenaline rush I'd get when I first entered the theatre, my eyes adjusting to the darkness, deciding where it would be safest to sit.

The last time I attended a Times Square movie was a rainy Saturday afternoon in the spring of 1990. I decided to catch three Kung-Fu flicks. I was falling out from lack of Z's. So there I was, in a totally relaxed state, watching all these Bruce Lee clones doing their imitations, when all of a sudden I was jarred out of my nod. A big, white, redfaced dude with bulging eyeballs screamed out that he was going to "kick some ass." Here came a true maniac. Bald, big and loud, this was a totally crazed lunatic thundering down the aisle like a bull elephant. I sensed a sweet smell in the air, and knew he'd been smoking dust. If he had an Uzi, we were all done for. This could be it. I could see the headlines: "20 PEOPLE SLAUGHTERED IN TIMES SQUARE THEATRE." Everybody just started jumping out of his way. Some queen took off a high heel to defend himself, but the maniac swept him away like a ragdoll. Finally he stopped right in front of the screen, screaming at the top of his lungs at the Bruce Lee clones. Everyone in the theatre sucked in their collective breath. Before anyone could move, the maniac took a Kung-Fu stance and yelled, "AIIIII! I'll get you fucks!!" He attacked the movie screen. There was a terrible ripping sound as he tore right into it. Then a loud sound as the screen came crashing down and the lights went out everywhere. Then someone screamed out, "Let's kill whitey!!" and I, for one, wanted to make sure they got the right whitey. I saw the exit sign and took off like a character in my favorite movie, "The Great Escape." I ran for at least three whole blocks and never looked back. (Ever.)

## *Table of Contents*

Rage-o-rama - a column for the no future by J.D. Rage.....	2
Poison Pen - by Jan Schmidt .....	3
Susan Sherman.....	7
Paul Pines.....	11
Joseph Schmidt.....	12
Charlene Cambridge .....	13
Jennifer Blowdryer.....	14
Chantay Jones .....	14
Matt Lewis .....	15
Larry Jones.....	15
Steve Fried.....	16
Bantu.....	17
Ken DiMaggio .....	21
Susan Sherman.....	24
Sid Branch .....	26
J.D. Rage.....	27
Andrea Lambert.....	30
will inman.....	33
bruce weber .....	34
Huggy-Bear Ferris.....	36
Mike Halchin.....	39
Alan Britt .....	40
Paul Weinman .....	42
Larissa Shmailo.....	43
Michael Estabrook.....	44
Diane Spodarek.....	45
Jennifer Blowdryer.....	47
David Huberman .....	48

**Front Cover Photo** Roadside Political Dilemma by J.D. Rage

**Back Cover Art** market, winter, Jersey city. From Views of Permanence by Paul Skiff

### **Art by Paul Skiff**

Page 19 - Boesky Trial

Page 20 - 'Beautiful' (quasi-sexual) announcements of affirmation

Page 31 - excerpts from repair of the broken sleep

Page 32 - Untitled

### **Photographs by J.D. Rage**

Page 5 - Venom Lion

Page 6 - Kerouac's Rucksack, Lowell, MA

Page 9 - An Afternoon in North Hampton, MA

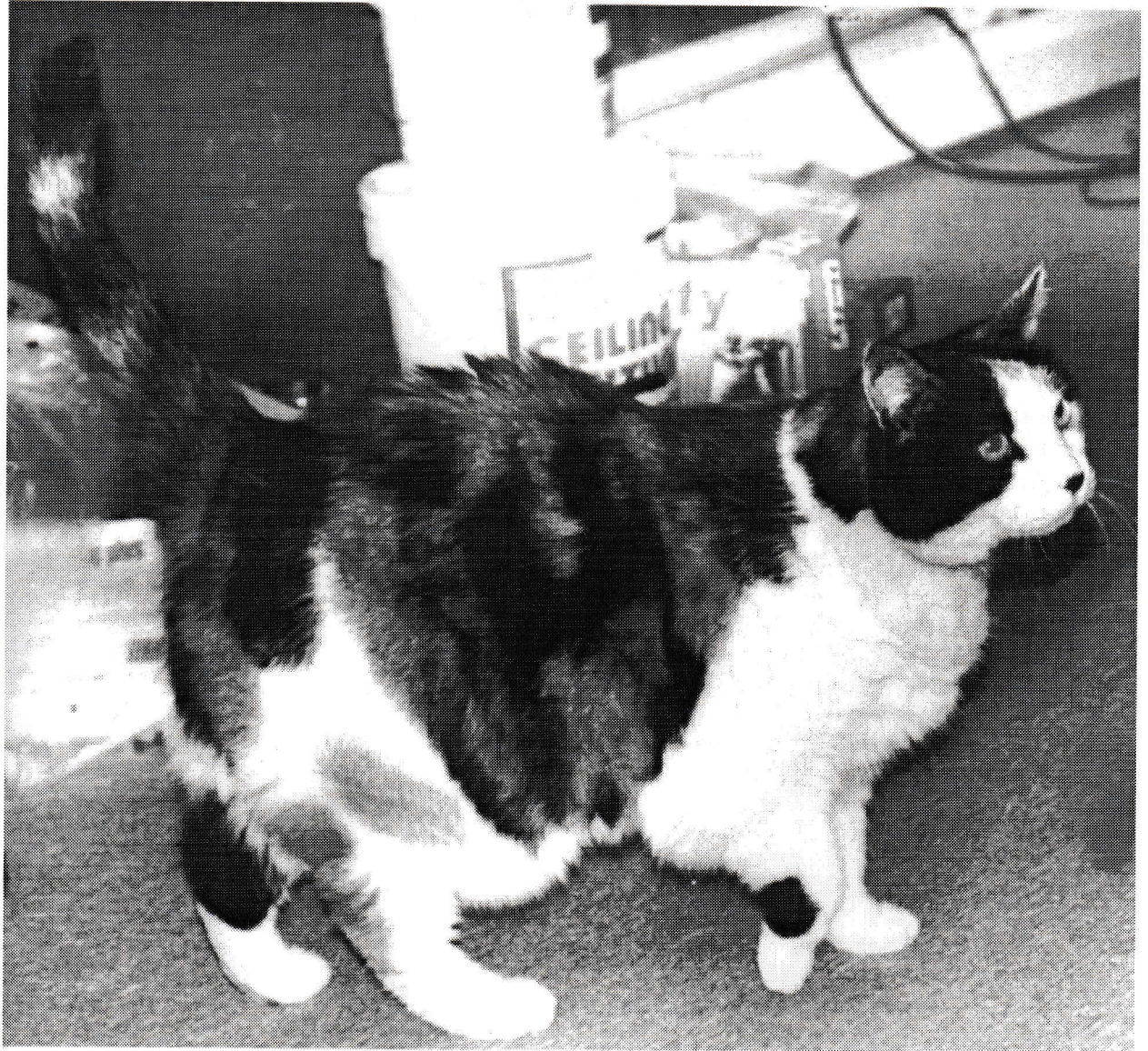
Page 10 - Collage (April 1995)

Page 35 - Witchcraft Trials Memorial Bench, Salem, MA

Page 41 - Venom Poets at the Miss Washington Diner, New Britain, CT

Page 51 - Agatha Christie AKA Cookie Jar

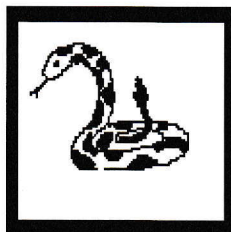




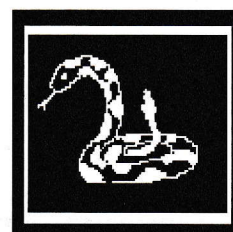
Agatha Christie AKA Cookie Jar Photo by J.D. Rage



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