

CURARE

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Rageorama by J.D. RAGE

.....A Column for the No Future



Hey! CURARE #7! Wow, I never thought we would make it. But here it is, thanks to the generous help of Venom God Huggy Bear Ferris and Venom Angels will inman and bruce weber. We got some cupids too, Carolyn Peyser, Thaddeus Rutkowski and Mike Halchin. Our undying forked tongue kisses, slitherings, rattlings and ecstatic skin sheddings are forever theirs! Has anyone noticed that the Poetry Calendar has stolen our angel designation for those who donate to their cause? Only they have added Archangel to the list. But we have a GOD here, so there! And, remember you are not really an angel unless you are a VENOM ANGEL! And hey we have enough brain power to go around -- if the Poetry Calendar wants to use any more of our sneaky ideas - feel free. At least we know they read CURARE. And what a magazine it is. We hope this will not be the last one, but budget and time crunches are draining us of all our poison...send your transfusions in NOW! As everyone knows, we publish all our friends (because we don't see them in print enough) and a number of unknown or lesser known poets, writers and artists, including major and minor minorities and women! Yay! And you will also see these people included in our parties as featured performers...hey if we don't spend all our time hiding under rocks...why should they? You don't like my continued obsessive use of the word hey? so hey hey hey hey hey...hey? Our featured artist this issue is Rafael AKA Chaz Rodriguez. He has contributed our back cover and the five gorgeous paintings (which have been reproduced in black and white) that appear in the centerfold area. Guess what? I LOVE our artists and writers and can never say enough about them.

So what have I been up to and what outrageous events and injustices am I railing against at this time? What do you think? I have been getting tattooed by the incredible Anil Gupta. This is a show I plan to take on the road and win prizes with. He has recreated a vision that I had while under hypnosis, of the three wild horses that comprise my soul. I was only slightly saddened that the first two sessions didn't hurt. The third one, during which a quite solid black horse was inscribed on my lower left back, more than compensated. And I have been getting pierced. You can guess where, but I'll give you a little hint...long walks and jaunts on my exercise bike have become massively pleasurable! Piercing doesn't really hurt either...if you can stand the feeling of a 2x4 being shoved through your brain for approximately 2 seconds, you'll love it. Oh yeah, riding in a golf cart is a delight as well. RAGE in a golf cart you say? Stranger things have happened.

Somehow, I have suddenly without warning, stopped being a prude and have jumped in the sexual fray with a vengeance that only I could muster! I have purchased a nice black and purple whip. Don't worry, I haven't drawn blood..yet. Did you know that I look like a drag queen? Every time I go out for a walk, I am informed of this by some overly observant deviant male who is either standing, leaning or usually slumping in a doorway. Of course drag queens are very beautiful people, so I guess I am too! I must give the impression of being a man trying to be a woman because I am a woman trying to be man trying to be a woman who doesn't know what the fuck is going on. Arrrgghhhhhh!! By the way, have you ever watched someone stick a long needle through the head of a man's penis? It's a trip.

And I have found out that yes, I am only a good pool player when I'm drunk. Since I can't drink anymore, I probably should hang up my cue stick. I am having a tournament with someone where I have lost about 27 games in a row. Of course, once he scratched on his eight ball shot, so technically I won that one. Was I humiliated when he beat me playing one-handed? Nah! My trifocals always remain a good excuse! Now, this doesn't make me much of an opponent, but I have other good points. Where is that evil laughter coming from?

I want to thank Mike Halchin (who has a new chapbook on Venom Press - *The Meatiest Corpse in Town*) for publishing my first non self-published chapbook, *Crucified*. It's out now on Mike's press, Undulating Bedsheets Publications, and you can get a copy for three bucks by sending for it to UBP, PO Box 25760, LA, CA 90025.

So what is this band RAGE that stole my name? Huh? Why did they do that? The only good thing about this is that now there are guys on the internet who have my name tattooed across his shoulders. R A G E in Olde English lettering. That I believe is an appropriate tribute. So what if he meant the band, everything goes back to the source, and the source is RAGE. Luv and hisses, JD.



Poison Pen - by Jan Schmidt

For an independent magazine with no resources, we at Curare try to make each issue as representative and beautiful as are its very special contributors. And this issue is no exception--from the art work of Rafael "Chaz" Rodriguez to the poetry of Kamara, from writing by university professors to those who guard their universities, from high schoolers who've never held a job to grandparents already blessedly retired, from gay to straight, to anything in between. Our overriding principal is that some Great Spirit is present in all of it, no less the silly than the sublime. In fact, where would the sublime be without the silly? Where would life be without death waiting in the wings?

In this column I've often written about friends who've died--a hazard of living, I guess. This time I had a brush with mortality myself. In October, I discovered a strange misshapen mole-thing on my back that was black and scabby as if it had been cut. I didn't remember hurting myself--or that I'd ever had a mole there. My dad died of lung cancer, my mother had had breast cancer. Wasn't I at risk? Though I felt like I was over-reacting, I trundled off to the doctor who sent me to see a specialist.

He said, "It's either a mole or cancer. I'll take it out and have it biopsied. Either way, it'll be gone. Don't worry about it at all." He stuck a huge needle in me, cut a dime size hole in my back, covered it with gauze, and told me to wash it with peroxide three times a day for three minutes for three weeks, and he hurried off to his next patient. I, too, had to run off before I got a chance to absorb any of this. The next thing I knew, I was sitting in a sound booth at a recording session for my job while a pianist added the score to silent film footage. In the hush of the studio, the doctor's words echoed softly: "Don't worry." Right. I got the jitters and dropped my pen. The sound engineer frowned at me.

That night Arthur was afraid. In the first five years we lived together his mother, his father, his brother and a nephew, all died. He cleaned my wound like I was the English Patient, suffering from fatal lesions and on the brink of death.

Three weeks later, still rushing around for my job, I dropped into the same clinic for a gynecology check-up. While waiting, I decided to ask the dermatologist if he'd gotten the biopsy results yet. I figured the doctor would send a nurse to say it was a mole, but when the lady in the white pantsuit came, she led me to an examination room.

In the chilled cubical I stared at the cold medieval-looking medical instruments. I began to stiffen. The doctor entered, shut the door, and looked me directly in the eyes. He stated matter-of-factly, "It was cancer." He paused, eagerly searching for my reaction. I had none. "But don't worry it is not the spreadable kind, it's not melanoma, so just forget about it. I took it all out. That's it." And he left.

I got the rest of my insides checked out and I left, too. Just a touch of cancer. I wasn't facing death, not even an operation or chemotherapy. A simple non-threatening brand. Now you see it, now you don't. Still he'd said that word. As planned, I met Arthur to buy a winter coat, intending to go as high as a hundred dollars. I mentioned what the doctor said. Arthur's already pained look became one of fear. I got more calm. I felt nothing. No big deal. No big thing. No big C.

I tried on a few coats in my price range. Then I saw the one: brown leather with wool lining and a huge hood, something the wind and cold couldn't penetrate. I slipped it on. Perfect. I checked the ticket. \$400. I didn't even blink. To some people that is a tremendous amount, for others it's cheap. For me, it was unheard of. With complete aplomb, I flipped out my credit card and bought my heavy, leather dream coat.

I walked away with The Thing in a big plastic bag. This wasn't me. I didn't spend money like that. I stopped in the middle of the street. I must be upset. For those of us who've spent a lifetime divorced from our feelings this is how we learn about what's going on inside of us. We act weird. I walked home slowly—vulnerable and mortal.

And I felt special. I, too, could need help. Could die. Could be forgotten. Could be remembered. I was wrapped in specialness: I'd had a cancer scare.

That night the special feeling faded. I was left with nothing but a heightened sense of my own mortality and a big credit card bill. What had I done? I could use that money for so many other things. I'd be paying on it forever. I should take the coat back.

I fell asleep. Hours later, I woke up. 8676. I shook Arthur awake. "I dreamt a number. 8676. We have to play that number. What number did I say?"

"8676."

The next day he played it. All day I wondered which one of my crew in the Great Beyond had sent me numbers? My dad? Derrick who'd been shot in the head? Michael who I'd known since grade school? Chandler who I'd known since college? Brooke whose baby had died of AIDS just a few short years before she did? Dean who took his own life? My young therapist, Donna, who died soon after giving up her practice?

We checked the paper—nothing even remotely connected to my numbers came out. I forgot about it.

Two days later, Arthur came back with the morning paper. He showed me the number for the day before. 8667. If we'd have kept playing and boxed it, we would have won something. I was still excited, I'd never even come close to winning before. And disappointed—I'd been given a number by the dream people and I hadn't played it.

A huge grin swept across Arthur's face. He pulled some money out of his right pants pocket. Pulled more out of the left jeans pocket. Pulled some more out of his breast pocket. Piles and piles of money. He'd played the number and they had paid him in small bills. I counted it out in green stacks of twenties, tens, fives and ones. \$400.

Exactly the cost of the coat—my magic coat. I felt really special. I'd had a message from those who passed to the other side. Not a heavy message. Not a morsel of eternal truth. Just a number and \$400. Life is as capricious as the lottery, so is death. No one escapes. But it can't be all that had if we get to come back in people's dreams whispering lottery numbers. All is sublime and silly. No one's unique, but we all are special. Welcome to issue number seven of Curare.

A decorative header featuring the title "Rantin' & Ravin'" in a bold, serif font. The title is surrounded by several musical notes of varying sizes and orientations, some above and some below the text, creating a rhythmic and artistic feel.

Rantin' & Ravin'

Susan Sherman

techno.seduction: future art?

Someone (no, I *don't* remember who it was) once wrote that the difference between seduction and courtship is duration. If it is, in fact, time that makes the difference, how much time is needed? An hour, a year, a decade? Or maybe meaning lies not only in duration of *action* in this particular case, but in motivation, in intent. That what is *intended* is something that will last, for however long. That what is intended is not just temporary pleasure, a momentary game of cat and mouse, of conquest and control.

In which case *techno.seduction* might actually be the most appropriate title for the show that closed on February 15th at Cooper Union. Over thirty artists contributed work which ranged from (my favorites) a CD of women's history starting with Marlene Dietrich and Josephine Baker, to a musical staircase with a different tone for each step (I spent several minutes running up and down trying in vain to play a tune more complex than *Mary Had A Little Lamb*), to a sculpture of a vacationing Barbie and Ken on a rotisserie skewer revolving leisurely over a bar-b-q pit filled with sand, to a huge wheel of computer paper painted like a landscape which slowly unraveled as it was digitized and run through a printer.

The work was uniformly well done and uniformly engrossing. It was political, intelligent, fascinating. And fun.

It was also strangely flat.

I came away from my first visit anxious to return. I even arranged a field trip for students from a senior seminar I'm teaching at Parsons School of Design on the "technological revolution." We'd been talking a lot about subjects like interactivity and hyperlinks on the Internet and their application to art and design. When invited to give their comments on the show (before they heard mine), they uniformly agreed that even with all the exhibit's considerable ingenuity, and charm, there was something cold about it. In general, the art didn't move them, didn't touch them in that deep place works of art often can.

Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media* writes of television as a cool medium, a medium in which too much overt intensity is perceived negatively. He predicted years before his election that given the popularity of television a president like Ronald Reagan was inevitable. An actor without talent, speaking words without truth—a Teflon president.

I personally don't agree with much of McLuhan. I don't think "the medium is the message," as he contends, although it certainly can change the way the message is perceived. I don't think that print is necessarily linear and electronic media is necessarily, by virtue of the way it's biologically perceived, non-linear.

Anyone who really understands poetry can see it is as "non-verbal" as painting. And if television has brought about a global community, it's not exactly the step toward utopia McLuhan envisioned.

But when it comes to a television audience's reaction, he is right on the mark.

I can't help thinking about my trip to the Yucatan peninsula barely two months before—hour upon hour soaking up the warm Caribbean sea, the days long, the air so thick you could almost see its presence, the extended horizon clearly showing the curve of the globe.

A sensuality built on sun and tide. A sensuality beyond the temporal. A courtship of water and sand. The way a poem can open up and draw you into it, by rhythm, texture, as if the words had weight, as if you could touch, taste, smell them. The way a poem can burn as you speak it, hear it spoken.

But in all fairness, maybe it is just too early to judge. Some poems, after all, are as "cool" as the rows of machines lining *techno-seduction's* walls. And the sea also can be cold and harsh.

Perhaps, after all, only time *will* tell.

Maria Olds

My Mother always said

"You Never Miss What You Never Had" & "Your Wants Won't Kill You"

That's right my mother always said you never miss what you never had & your wants won't kill you.....That's not true. I miss having a childhood and wanting one almost killed me.

My mother always said you never miss what you never had; I miss having a wife 2 point 3 kids the house with the white picket fence. It almost killed me wanting to live like that.

My mother always said you never miss what you never had. I missed being happy and feeling good. I just wanted to feel better, it almost cost me my life, becoming addicted to drugs.

My mother always said you never miss what you never had; I missed a loving family, wanting one caused me to become a alcoholic.

My mother always said you never miss what you never had & your wants won't kill you. That's not true.....I missed having a loving family who was always there for each other, growing up falling in love and then I missed having an understanding relationship where two people fell in love, moved in together, had no major expectations from each other, just love, respect and genuine concern for one another, gratitude for the life they were sharing together. Wanting that kind of life turned my life into a living hell, going through childhood into adulthood, receiving one form of pain for another, believing that was what I had and wanted damn near killed me when the dream ended and I woke up, just to find that my life was the same.....

My mother always said you never miss what you never had & your wants won't kill you. That's not true.....Or is it.....

To Dream the Impossible Dream

To dream the impossible dream, first one must be asleep. I did say to dream the impossible dream, not live the impossible dream.....In my dream state I am in charge of ALL.....I am in charge of me, my life. I have the dream of my choice, and I am happy, I go to work each and every day with a smile on my face. I enjoy my job, I get along with my co-workers, we are like a family. I come home to my lovely apartment, cook dinner for my beautiful girlfriend who I will soon be married to. Our relationship is one of pure harmony and so full of love, the respect and commitment of our love for each other is the envy of all our friends and family. The bond we share together is so strong nothing and I mean nothing, can tear us apart. My family is the best, they are so supportive of each other, the holidays we spend together are great. We have a good time with each other and truly enjoy each others company.

As I said to Dream the Impossible Dream.....DO I HAVE TO WAKE UP.....

The Things In Life One Must Put Up With

Work -- The job, other people's opinions, their control issues and just their attitudes are enough.

Relationships -- Personal, co-workers, friends and family opinions, control issues and attitudes. Are all a pain in ass, and I mean a pain in the ass.

Self -- Moods, recovery, feelings and just trying to live a day at a time.

I am told that it begins and ends with me, so tell me where do I get the fuck off. Life is a bitch then you die.

I am told that nothing just happens, there is a reason, Who's?.....it's.....Faith.....God.....You.....Me.....

Who gets to control my faith? YouMe or Them.....

I am told I have total control of my life and what happens to me in it.....

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA What a joke.....

MY JOB, MY FAMILY, MY FRIENDS, YES EVEN MY RELATIONSHIP has more control than me.....Stop this world I WANT TO GET OFF.....NOW RIGHT NOW.....NOT TOMORROW.....NOT NEXT WEEK....NOW.....RIGHT NOW.....

Can I get off.....Can you?



MARCO



MONICA DOOGAN with Eleanor Levine

J.D. Rage

Devotion #14

I am late -- forgot to set
the alarm
probably Monica is dying

Oil delivery is being made
at the bus stop
I breathe five minutes
of fumes
I will go to
another funeral today
if I can't avoid it

we've had two sets of three
I hope the string of deaths
is over
but somehow
I think not

it is cold again
more like winter than spring
and windy
the sun is not capable
of warming anything up
today

will inman

a Call to Those Who Suffer Scorn

The Sacred Egg of Paradox

the ones who suffer scorn can learn compassion:
instead of revenge, we can help bring healing.
those who are hurt, we can help restore.
those who are captive, we can help release.
so, we restore ourselves;
so, we liberate ourselves.

yet,
no full self-restoring while others suffer:
no true freedom while one other remains caught.

hunger hurts. contempt breeds humiliation.
indignity stings. being unable to fulfill self --
is being held captive. power over by few or by many --
barbwires freedom. we who see
can help make free.

meantime, **free self**
inward: make room for infinite reaching **out**
by experiencing reach **in**.

nirvana is never
a wallow pit. the tongue of god
pacifies only fools.

we are humans first.
we grow by relationship. the tribe overflows
in each of us. creation is a two-way reach.
the sacred Knower awakens in us one at a time:
we know the Knower knows by us.

stretch scorn to waking
learn to nourish by hunger
fathom freedom behind bars
never waste imposed pain: make it work
refuse to be martyrs: cherish joy
this paradox is a sacred egg
even in the shell, learn to fly
i reach to you with this promise of myself
i cannot receive you by being less than i am
reach to me, you reach to all
reach to all, you reach to me

we are divisible only by One

will inman

flaying

we live inside our faces. some of them
live inside us. our places of being also
live inside us. our identities are fragile:
things change so fast, others' perceptions
shift from acceptance to suspicion. stun groups,
whether gang or police, can knock down our
door at any moment, on purpose or by error. with
or without warrant, they can kill or tie
or handcuff us facedown on the floor. in less
than a minute, we're nobody..or only a body:
our faces melt from us like tallow on a hot day.
we're left with doubt as to who we ever were.
our place may still be legally ours. its
substance may be mostly intact, but
the violation has stripped away its essence, it's
all there but no longer says who we are. what
we were no longer exists. our heart may beat,
but our blood stammers an alien pulse.

how
to regain sanity and sense. how to shed trauma
from inside us like peeling away someone else's
foul-smelling skin. now

will we strip down,
once we've started, to somebody real, or will we,
scotch tape by slip of tape, put back together
that complex of middle-class self we were
for so many decades. that's the way
of counselors and therapists
and has nothing to do with who we
really could be, growing more than fresh skin,
new set of nerves, new face, restoring, not habitual
falseness to cope, to survive, but a self
who, staying vulnerable, can live with fear
and still not call sky a liar for shining blue

and must it always take trauma to start us
digging through the caliche of being somebody else
down to living earth of who we **are**

Larry Jones

partners in crime

-- for Herbert, Zane, others...

(a song)

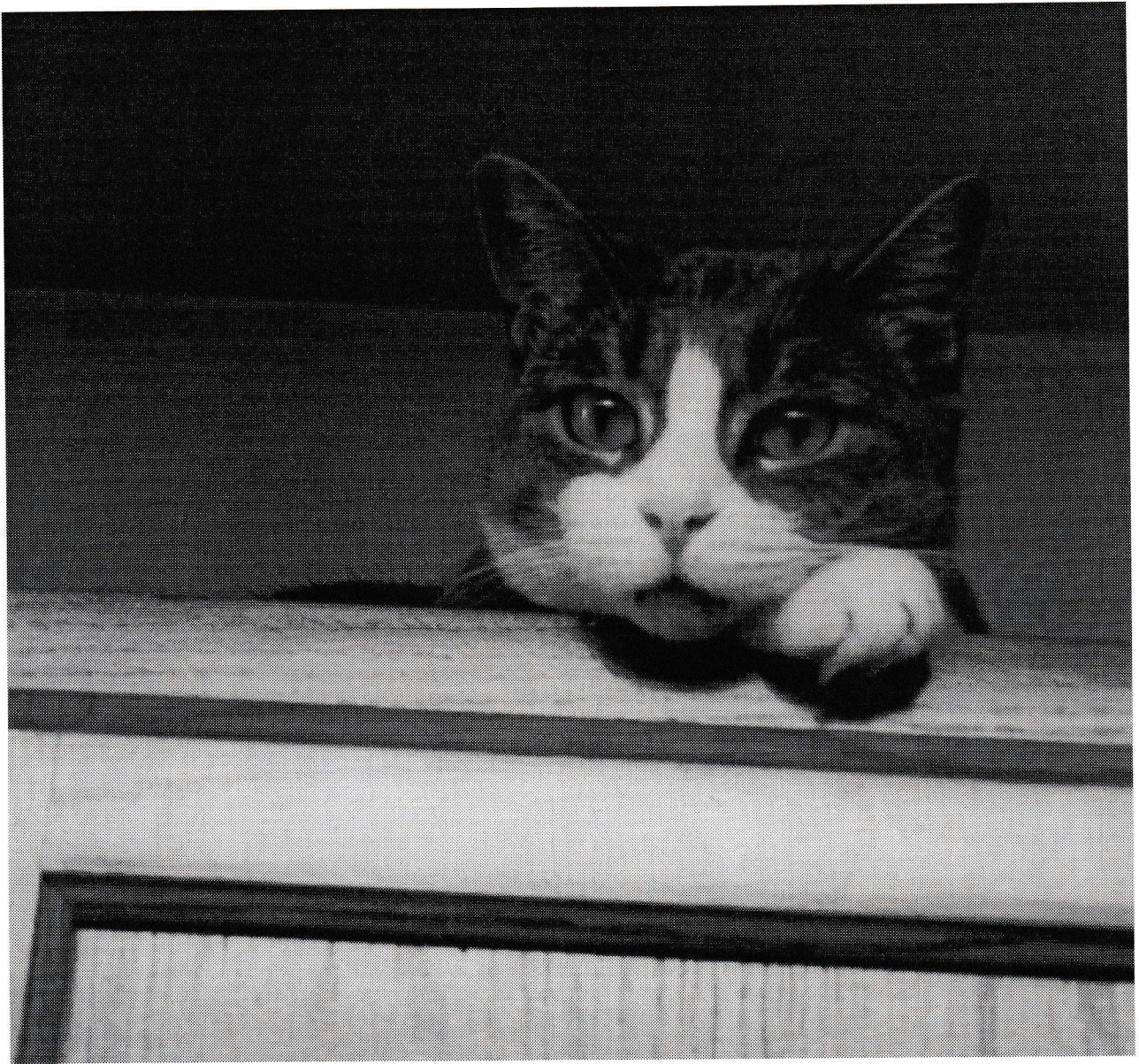
partners in crime, partners in time
parting in time, parting in rhyme
time to have been within the sublime

partners to waste, partners of taste
partners in haste, partners so chaste
partners in public so well placed
socially inappropriate people make
the best lovers, yes, candy, cake-
walk the Hispanic petboy, take the snake

eight feet of the golden boa wound
around the shirtless shoulders bound
for Coney boardwalk, coiled and found

authentic, exotic and so wholly sound
a proposition as would now surround
this circumference of love, this mound





R. Nikolas Macioci

WINTER KITCHEN

Salt and pepper habits in place, frozen
white windows smudged with February soot,
Aunt Liz secures Sunday dinner
from unconscious rhythms of routine.
At the fifty-year-old gas stove she rattles
a lid onto a pot of boiling potatoes
and lowers the flame to a stub.
From her hands, silverware clatters all wrong
atop place mats; paper towels unwind for napkins,
and when she turns from shadow to face me,
I see her wither past old bones sewn
together by cold strings of mid-afternoon
light. With needlepoint precision she threads
her way across the kitchen to embroider
dinner upon the table,
aproned frailty coming apart
before me while I wait for food.

Mary Winters

They Always

make you feel guilty.

Including the cat, who goes after
human food like a fur-clad rocket.
A lightning bolt in stripes
when the fridge is open.
Dancing around on the stove begging
as if I didn't keep her bowl full
day and night.

My son sends me on a guilt trip:

"She'd *love* beef stew," he sighs.
I am a criminal denying a kitten
a full and authentic eating experience.
The cat lover next door rubs it in:
"Felines are s-o-o-o-o lovely --
always giving more than they get."

At the dinner table, she's climbing my leg.

Refusing a starving animal --
that's what it looks like through the window.
I'll be getting a call from the ASPCA.
They're yelling and sobbing and screaming
I'm going to jail.
Worse to mistreat an animal than a kid.
"A cat isn't stained by Original Sin,"
my spouse reproaches me.

Richard T. Henry, Jr.

The Conversation

Richie 44 years old, Afro-American security guard
Claus 53 years old, German autobody repairman
Willy 38 years old, Peruvian owner of autobody shop where Claus works
Doc Irish, 50 years old. Worked once many many years ago
One gallon Georgi vodka on the table and one cassette recorder under the table soon
to be joined by some of us.

Doc: So, what's new guys?
Willy: Richie broke up with Josie.
Doc: No wonder we're drinking in his place this week. Better than that
 fuckin dirty autobody shop.
Willy: Fuck you, Doc.
Claus: Look at Richie. He still looks stunned.
Willy: Yeah, like he just came back from the war. All that fighting and all of a
 sudden . . . peace.
Richie: Fuck you, Willy.
Willy: She was a pain in the ass and you know it. I never liked her. I don't
 know how you did. You never took shit from no one but she had you
 around her little finger.
Claus: Maybe because she was stacked.
Doc: Pass the bottle, please.
Richie: Fuck you guys. Here's the bottle, Doc. Knock yourself out.
Doc: You need more than a gallon.
Richie: How was your holiday?
Doc: Okay. I was at my sister's.
Claus: I stayed in playing cards with Larry.
Willy: I went to Maryland to visit my sister. How was yours, bachelor?
Richie: You ain't gonna believe this but I spent it at an office party.
Doc: Yeah? At the Library?
Richie: (laughing) No. My friend Cha-Cha's office. She's a dispatcher at an
 escort service in mid-town.
Willy: No shit.
Claus: Get the fuck out a here.
Doc: Details, my boy. Details. Didn't wait too long after the break-up me boy.
Richie: Wait and I'll tell you all about it. Pass the vodka!

David Huberman

Some People Just Talk And Talk

Hello, Hello, Hi. uh....well... I'm in a band, yeah, the Death Rappers. You've probably heard of us. No? Well, we're the best speed metal rap band in the world!. We'll at the Garden in August. Yeah, well, I just didn't want you to think I was the Average Caller, you know?

What I want, no -- what I need, is well, I like to get dominated -- I mean I want to be owned, totally controlled. My fantasy is to be mauled by a woman who really turns into a tiger or a black panther. Yeah, like in the movie, Cat People, or like Grace Jones who turns into that she-devil in that flick Vamp. I want to be clawed right at the point of orgasm. I want my flesh to peel away just when I come. I want to be like an orange or tangerine and I want you to flay my skin in strips. I want you to be totally animalistic, you know, I want you to rip away pieces of my flesh and then I want you to fry it like bacon and then eat it in front of me. You have to be dressed in black rubber and leather. I want to smell your sweat mingled with the odor of leather. I want you to hurt me, do you understand that? And when you hurt me, so I'm screaming and drops of blood are falling on the floor, I want you to smile real decadently with your thin cruel lips, and don't forget to use the word 'grovel'. What a beautiful S & M word grovel is. I want to grovel under your feet. I want you to stomp those black sharp stiletto high heeled shoes into my crotch, I want you to tease me first, then I want you to hurt me. I mean really grind me under your heel like I was a cockroach. Did you get all that?

Yeah, and you know what else, I want you to tie me up, bind me very tight, 'til I'm totally helpless and then with your severe evil lips, with your sick death sadist smile, I want you with your red claws to show me the surgical tools and slowly, ever so slowly, skin me alive, and then, when I'm completely deformed into a gooey human blob, I want you to add lots of salt and laugh so that I die in slow blissful agony with your cackle echoing into me while I enter the state of death.

Oh yeah, if you're interested, I can get you backstage passes for all three nights at the Garden, Death Rappers, baby, that's what I'm about. Anything for you sweets.

Bye, Bye, Mistress

Joanne Pagano

Farewell to my shadow
(excerpt from *The Man at the Beach*)

and all you can see is a flicker of light coming closer, the street and his body are swallowed in the dark and the rain. The street sounds and the battering rain are a chorus for his breathing and for his feet clashing on the sidewalk. The closer he gets, the faster he runs, and his breathing accelerates from desperate to out of control and you can see the light is coming from him, it's a silver medal he's wearing and it's pounding against his chest, shiny as a coal miner's beam. Mingled in this convulsive breathing you can hear him whisper, but you can barely make it out, breaths become syllables: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners, and he rounds the corner, and he's flying past the old ladies on the church stairs who've come to make their novenas, and who huddle, gesturing as he breaks through the door, and then he's inside. And you see what he sees. Space: cavernous, dreary, poorly lit; walls: damp and peeling. You hear what he hears: his wet feet slapping the stone floor, the hollow church interior playing the chant of water dripping on stone, the pelt of rain on the wind, forcing the vestibule door open as the deacon steps airlessly down the aisle with the empty bucket, water hitting the bottom of the bucket in a steady patter, close to Her, where he stands in the puddle dripping off his leather jacket. He looks up at Her and it doesn't matter what went down, he doesn't care what kind of procession is lining up outside, because she gazes into his eyes with such tenderness and forgiveness that all at once he remembers sucking his mother's breast as a tiny baby. She's all blue and gold, and when her open hands move upward, cracking the hundred year old plaster, Her robe effervesces like alka-seltzer, it's colors vaporize, blue seeping into the darkest corners of the church, gold choking the incense till it shatters the ceiling, letting beams of light sift through a shower of dust falling on the Virgin's naked body. So he turns his head away and closes his eyes, dazzled by the robe's embroidery filtering up to heaven, shooting down threads through cerulean mist, comforting the old ladies, who hobble out of the church like scared chickens. And on the street, auroras of thread surround truck drivers loading produce onto carts, surround mailmen and mail, surround postal workers in cubicles, and correspondents in their homes, and it binds the hands of the vegetarian letter bombers and the butchers. Nurses bending over to wipe the foreheads of the terminally ill are surprised by the hairs on their arms and legs standing up, suddenly laminated in gold, making their white stockings run; over-qualified immigrant lab workers in poorly fit uniforms and burly garbagemen carrying hospital waste frighten each with incandescent halos. And blue smoke snakes under his feet, he's floating on blue, he can see into every window, and the window panes are streaked with gold thread, and the people in the house are his family, crying gold tears like the saints on the backs of funeral cards. And he looks down into the street and he sees them wheeling a coffin; his gaze is a plumbline to his own eyelids stitched shut, his body stitched down in gold silk thread. And when they sing, the letters of the Ave Maria rise up from their mouths, embroidered on the sky.

Yeah. That would be a great ending.

Sound As Medicine (Sound Medicine)

If we cannot all agree about what constitutes music: its variety, volume, and vortices, there seems to be an almost impassioned agreement about the deep-seated annoyance of fingernails on chalkboard. Some sounds just rip straight through to our neuro-core. They strike a chord-- or in this case a cord. Our spinal cord.

When was the last time a sound assaulted your nervous system? What kind of sound was it? Organized? Random? Rhythmic? Electronic? Was it someone's voice?

Remember, if you will, the impact this sound had on your body. Did you turn away? Hunch your shoulders? Cover your ears? Did minute shock waves shoot along your spine?

How did this auditory assault affect your frame of mind? Did it ignite your fuse, or shorten it? How did that vibration roll through you out into the emotional landscape of your community?

When was the last time you lost electricity at your house? Did you note a kind of sigh of relief in the household? In the walls? Release from the buzz, the hum of our technology?

We humans have greatly complicated our landscape, sending and receiving all kinds of waves: radio, micro, and the like. It is just another form of clutter, and our airways are full of it.

There are light waves outside our visible spectrum -- ultraviolet and infrared most notable, just beyond our range. So it is with sound: the frequencies above and below our hearing range. Some of us may dabble outside the accepted limits but it is likely that there are realms of sound, of vibration that could be heard by humans if only our physical apparatus would allow. If we consider that there may be infinite magnitudes then we dwell within a very narrow band, indeed. Even so, were sound more visible we would, no doubt, be horrified by the tangled morass of vibrational spaghetti we breathe in and slog through every day.

Vibrations surround us. Collectively we tend to agree that reality, whatever else it may be, is a system of vibrations through which we move and which move through us. We are all transmitters. We are all receivers.

Most of us tolerate disruptive sounds, or we recoil and seek shelter. In either case there is an impact on us; we sustain a blow. The consequences compound over time and they lodge in us: physically, emotionally, spiritually. Sound, of course, is not the only detriment to our well-being, but it is sufficiently pervasive, invasive, and evasive to have a powerful unseen effect. Unseen, until it begins to manifest in myriad ways, combining and compounding other injurious impacts.

We pretend to be more durable than we really are. We pretend to be impervious. What does that gain us? We start young, too.

Our children endure the clatter of the school lunchroom, the jarring insistence of bells that schedule their day, the insipid beeps and burbles of computers, the violence of sharp tones and harsh admonitions from adults who have been through the same clanking machinery. Systematically, though unconsciously, we desensitize our children, ourselves. We are more sensitive than is socially acceptable. We persist in the heroic stance, men and women alike, afraid to reveal our gentle nature, our common vulnerability. How does desensitizing benefit our society? On the contrary, we should be nurturing and nourishing our sensitivity, our awareness: honing it, expanding it as our spiritual base.

As an educator and as a Reiki practitioner, part of the responsibility I assume is to help myself and others find a safe place in which to explore our shared vulnerability. Fortunately, that safe place is within us and, therefore, it's portable. If we are feeling safe in the world then the choices we make will be compassion based, not fear driven.

Sound is essential for locating, exploring, and developing the safe place from which to experience reality. The safe place from which to express ourselves.

In an effort to work from that place I have, over the years, developed two workshops based on sound. In each case our structure is a circle. Socially this shape helps us explore the uniqueness of the individual and how that uniqueness contributes to the richness of the whole community.

"Windchime Visions" -- Participants sit in the circle, on the floor if comfortable. We preface the sound experience with some explanation since their eyes will be closed and we want everybody to feel safe enough to luxuriate in the sound.

They are asked to watch their inner screen and follow whatever visions may arise, much as they would watch a movie. Not everyone sees major movie productions when they close their

eyes. Simply put, the idea here is to observe whatever presents itself and too do so with attentive detachment. Later in the workshop they will be basing a drawing, a piece of writing, or both, on their experience.

The facilitator walks slowly, consciously, around the outside perimeter of the circle and the windchimes play. These are not "just any" windchimes but a particular brand which is finely calibrated and produces exquisite, alluring aftertones which can lead the mind and spirit too faraway interior places. Even if they never repeat the exercise they will have a visceral understanding of how to access their imaginations.

"Sound Weavings" -- Again we sit in a circle, in part this time to replicate the edge of a glass, which carries and can amplify sound vibrations with a touch of a finger. We begin by investigating the variety of sounds outside our usual, safe range. Then we "om." Often initially with self-conscious giggling. Once beyond this, new worlds can unfold before us. We feel the sound both emanate from us and undulate through us. While at first this can be unnerving, it provides a profound opportunity for vibrational healing. The experience can both enunciate our fears, our sorrow, our unexpressed joy, and it can release them. Not that this poignant level is always reached, or necessary, but it is possible. For the "Sound Weavings" workshop, however, om-ing is only a delicious preparatory step, an attunement for the individual and for the community of voices. The idea is to dive deep to the well-spring and to draw from it as we resurface. We are seeking our own voice, which was systematically buried alive, suffocating under the weight, of status-quo socialization. We can be socialized without being crushed. To be healthy we have to locate and express that voice, that sound at the center of our being. Sometimes we need to howl but we don't know how to get to that howl in ourselves -- we're afraid of it -- and we can't get a clear pathway to let it out. The sound we need to release isn't always a howl either. It can be a tiny sound, a whimper, or a gossamer sigh. And let's not forget joyful expression. That is as suppressed in our culture as are any of our darker sounds.

This is not as grandiose as it may seem. It's just overlooked or suppressed in conventional education and conventional medicine.

What comes of these exercises is a spontaneous composition of sound, of music, of vocal percussion. Participants take turns as "conductor," shaping the components, structuring the individual's sounds. By audiotaping the progressing results we get to make conscious, collectively determined adjustments to our "sound weaving."

There have been students from this workshop who have been willing to perform, to invent a spontaneous vocal composition for an audience. Even with the practiced sense of safety it takes courage and focus. The sense of safety is what we need in order to trust that our wings will open when we leap off the cliff -- speaking spiritually here, you understand. Taking chances that are critical to our expanding emotional and spiritual awareness.

Never is that opportunity more available than in a Reiki therapy session, with Reiki and sound combined. Each practitioner has her or his own medicine bag. I often combine herbs, breathing, guided visualization, inner travel, facial & cranial soothing. And sound. Reiki itself is energy and therefore vibratory in nature. Sound can be another expression of healing vibration. The difference here being that Reiki is defined as universal energy, while the sounds used in a treatment may be quite specifically suited to that individual at that moment. Reiki is a healing system which facilitates "the release of that which no longer serves us." Internalized clutter. Sound can assist in gently breaking up the emotional ice jams that have already begun to shift and melt. Again, I use the finely tuned windchimes and my own voice to assist a vibrational change within the room or within the body.

For those of us who have made it our life-work to explore the nuances of being and the pathways toward whole healing, sound is not only a necessary ally, it is the very stuff of which we're made. The vibrational weft and warp of this grand tapestry we call Reality.

Author's Post Script:

We chose Dionondehowa as our name, in part, to pay homage verbally -- with sound -- to those who preceded us on this land. Each time any of us utters the syllables, the vibrations Di-on-on-de-ho-wa (even taking into account phonetic distance on the original sounds) we are acknowledging the spirit on the land. We are offering medicine for healing the imperialism, the subjugation, the intended genocide of the people who were here when the settlers came.

Kewulay Kamara

A Song to Samba

Come!

Na dat you know?

Na dat you know?

Na dat you know?

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

Na dat you know

You nor know nating

Na dat you know

You nor know nating

Na dat you know

You nor know nating

You cam na

town

Pam you ship

dem

With you guns

dem

And you chains

dem

Ka you lie

dem

En you sick

dem

For tief people

dem

En dem gold

dem

En dem fish

dem

En dem wood

dem

En dem beef

dem

Na dat you know?

Na dat you know?

Na dat you know?

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

Humiliation

Na dat you know

Degradation

Na dat you know

Segregation

Na dat you know

Condemnation

Na dat you know

Confiscation

Na dat you know

Extrication

Na dat you know

Damnation

Na dat you know

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

Deception

Na dat you know

confusion

Na dat you know

obfuscation

Na dat you know

mystification

Na dat you know

abrogation

Na dat you know

subjugation

Na dat you know

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

You nor know nating!

I am

the winds that blow
the seasons that change
the birds that Fly

the Flowers that invite
the bees that suck
the nectar in the flower

the night that fades
the old that begets
the young that becomes

Life

Kewulay Kamara

Longing

long ago, you called to me
atop the mountain of Love

when I climbed, You called me
from the bottom of the sea

when I dove, called to me
in flames across the sky

the farther You call
the nearer your voice

the louder You call
the softer your voice

with every step
my longing grows

when fatigue peers
smooth words
from desert's night
more caressing
more intimate
more present
blow into my ears

as generous
as your sacrifice
as abundant
your presence
as assuring
as You are
as certain
as You are

yet I cannot
Can not
get enough

oh how hungry
how selfish
how frightened
how insecure
i am

will You stop
calling?
giving?
assuring?
caressing?
soothing?
protecting?
leading?
loving?

how can i stop
longing

Paul Pines

LECTIO DIVINA

Clement Greenberg found Miro

"...composed of two elements, one ludicrous,
the other fearful."

(a miasma,
grotto-esque)

A vision
emerging from Renaissance
grottoes

into the work of Valesquez
and Goya,

that haunt Picasso
even in his rage of bulls
and centaurs

something subversive
in certain painters
through the early decades of
our century

that will mushroom
later
as Hiroshima

EL SUENO DE RAZON

Reason sleeps in the virtual
caves of
cyberspace

where
the sun is rolled
like dung
up a mountainside by
a man

beheaded
and restored

again and
again
without
consequence

Paul Pines

THE RIG VEDA

conceives of creation from
the unconditioned ground-
of mind-before-thought

I too had this idea
in 1953
at the age of twelve on the corner
of Flatbush and Empire
Boulevard
at the gated entrance
to Ebbets Field
a week after The Giants
won the pennant

and knew it wasn't mine

WHAT IS THE FACE OF TIME
IN REPOSE

like Vishnu
asleep on
a coiled serpent
floating in a milky sea

I forget what I know
all that I have done or read
vanishes

each night
in the pit of forgetfulness

I raise a monument
to Buddha
and Osiris

a stupa of
dreams
inside of which
everything
lost is
found...
and dance
on its burning tip

Iris N. Schwartz

STILL SMOKING

I thrust
my nose in the pillow
to smell his cigarettes.

I snap
a strand of black
hair: it is his
near his cigarettes.

I had never
abided smokers before:
The exception
I made I don't
regret.

Smoke rings
he blew
like our love:
he left.

We were matchless.
I feel
bereft: no more
pillows to smell
for his breath.

Oh, the passion!
I pray
for his death--
by his one true
Love, cigarettes.

Charlene Cambridge

HAPPINESS JOY FREEDOM

*I FIND MYSELF DANCING WHILE SITTING IN MY CHAIR
IMAGES OF MOTHER FLASH RANDOMLY IN BLACK AND WHITE
MOTHER SMILING AT THE SEASIDE
MOTHER FROWNING IN CONCENTRATION
PULLING SEA URCHIN SPINES WITH EYEBROW TWEEZER
MOTHER DRIFTING ABOVE THE UNDERTOW
WHILE I CRY HELPLESSLY ON THE SAND
MOTHER PULLED IN BY A FISHING BOAT
HER SUIT DISARRAYED TO EXPOSE ONE SAGGING BREAST
MOTHER SMILING AT THE SEASIDE
SAYING TO FATHER
MAKE SURE THE GIRLS LEARN HOW TO FLOAT*

Michael Hoerman

wrestling around

we rubbed against each other with hard-ons
we shared a syringe instead of fucking
we were inmates in a county jail
I was a horny teenager
serving a one year sentence
he was a twisted junky
no one would make his bail
now he's dead of AIDS and I'm still alive
I think about him sometimes
at N.A. meetings or in the shower

Dave Roskos

Poem For Whats-His-Name

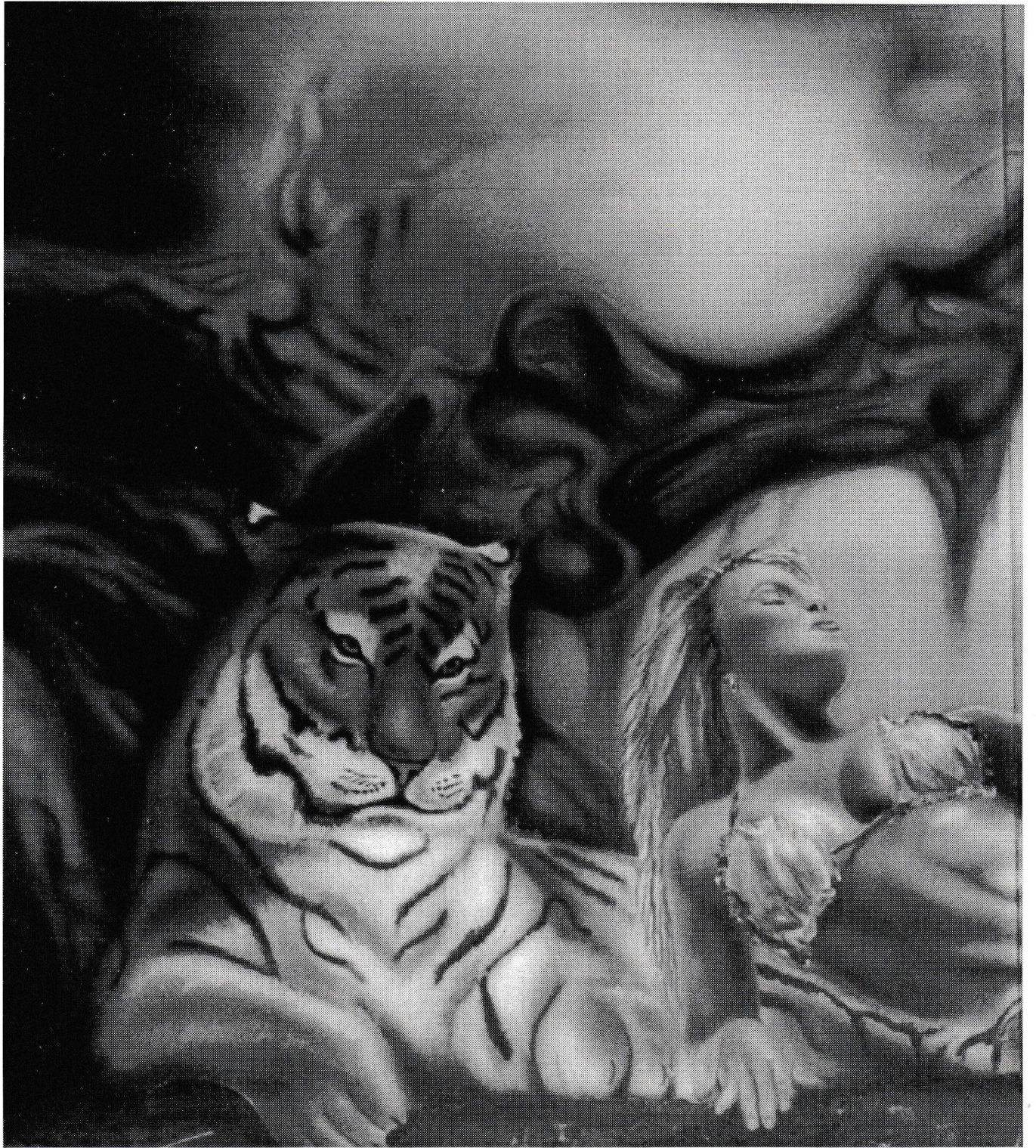
This guy I useta
shoot up with
had a box of alcohol
swabs, each individually
enclosed in its own
little paper packet,
just like the dope,
& whenever anyone
in the room got off
he'd rip one open
with his teeth
& say "here"
& we would
swab our respective
needle marks like
we were at the
doctor's office

how's that for respectability?
health-conscious junkies.
this guy was actually
very healthy; exercised,
ate right, held a job,
had a car and a place
to live.
one of the most responsible
junkies I have ever known,
& he does not
have a name.











IN THE EVENING...WHEN THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT...THE HARSH METAL CLANK OF THE DEADBOLT ASSURES ME THAT I AM DONE WITH THAT REALITY FOR A WHILE. TOMORROW IT RETURNS AGAIN. AWAKEN BY THE PHONE BELLS SCREAMING IN THE SILENCE..AND PUSHED BACK UNDER MY DOOR BY THE STRONG ARMS OF THE CLOCK..

BUT, FOR NOW..I AM ALONE.

I SIT FOR A WHILE...KEEPING ONE SOFT LIGHT BESIDE ME AND LET THE DARKNESS EMBRACE MY DOMAIN.

IN THE EVENING...WHEN SLEEP WONT COME..WHEN THE MIND RUNS FREE...WHEN I FEEL STRONG ENOUGH...OR BRAVE ENOUGH....OR SADISTICALLY FOOLISH ENOUGH...I PLAY THE GAME.

I SHED MY SHIRT AND MY SKIN..WANTING NOTHING TO SHIELD ME FROM THE COLD AND THE PAIN. I SIT AND STARE DEEPLY INTO THE EMOTIONAL MIRROR..NO LONGER FRIGHTENED BY THE GROTESQUE IMAGE RETURNING MY GAZE.

HE TOO SHALL SHARE IN MY GAME. HE HAS PLAYED THIS GAME BEFORE....AT TIMES ON MY SIDE...AT TIMES ON HIS OWN.

I SHIFT MY NECK TO EASE THE TENSION...BREATHE DEEPLY FOR AWHILE...AND STARE AT THE MIRROR...
"WHO AM I?"

I AM A RIDDLE...AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM...A PUZZLE.

I AM MORE THAN THE SUM OF MY PARTS BUT LESS THAN ALL OF MY PARTS. I HAVE TRIED TO UNTWIST THE WORDS...FIND THE CLUE..DISCERN THE CRYPTIC MESSAGE.

THERE IS NO ANSWER AND NO RESOLVE.

I DONT KNOW "ALL OF MY PARTS" AND CANNOT FIND THEM. SCANT REMEMBRANCES OF FACES AND PLACES...MISSING FACTS.. NOTES ABOUT ME ON PAGES OF CALENDARS CARELESSLY TOSSED TO MAKE ROOM FOR BLANK SPACES

PARTS REPRESSED FOR SO LONG

NO-ONE ALIVE NOW TO FILL IN THE DETAILS..AS THEY LEFT..THEY TOOK PIECES OF ME TO THEIR GRAVES.

I REMAIN A RIDDLE.....

I AM THE THIRD BORN PIGLET.

THE FIRST TWO EMERGED WITH TINY BALLS AND A PENIS.

THEY HOPED I WOULD HAVE A VAGINA AND A HAPPY DISPOSITION...THAT I WOULD GROW UP TO HAVE FRECKLES AND BOUNCE ON DADDYS KNEE...AND SPROUT TITS..AND BLEED FOR THEM TO SHOW I WAS A WOMAN...AND GO TO COLLEGE AND MARRY A DOCTOR AND MAKE THEM REAL PROUD OF NUMBER THREE.

THE DOCTOR SAID "BALLS AND A PENIS." "YOU SURE YOU WANT TO KEEP THIS ONE?"

THE DOCTOR SLAPPED MY ASS HARD TO SHOW HIS FRUSTRATION. I...HANGING BY MY HEELS...TOOK MY FIRST GASP OF AIR..BUT STIFLED MY CRY...LISTENING FOR SOME REPLY TO COME.

"I GUESS IT WILL HAVE TO DO," SOMEONE SIGHED.

THE THIRD PIGLET WAS AN "IT"

TWO YEARS LATER NUMBER TWO DIED AND I MOVED UP TO FILL

THE NUMBER TWO SPOT...NOT PASSING GO AND NOT COLLECTING TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS. THEY SILENTLY RESENTED ME BEING IN HIS CHAIR. SO DID I!!

PIGLET FOUR GAVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT...ARRIVING COMPLETE WITH A VAGINA AND NO SIGN OF DORMANT TESTICLES.

THEY HAD A GIRL TO LOVE AND HOLD CLOSE. A GIRL TO DRESS UP IN BONNETS AND SCARFS AND PARADE UP AND DOWN THE BLOCK. "LOOK HOW CUTE, EVERYONE. SHE'S OUR PRIDE AND JOY."

A GIRL TO BUY TRAINING BRAS, CRINOLINS..MAKE-UP FOR...BOXES OF DOLLS AND A BIKE OF HER OWN.

THE THIRD LITTLE PIGLET GOT LOVE AND ATTENTION...
...THIS LITTLE PIGLET GOT NONE.

I AM DIRT ROADS AND WAX LIPS...AND NICKLE TRAINS AND TROLLEYS.

I AM WEATHERED OLD RELATIVES..WHO SPOKE TO ME IN TONGUES I NEVER UNDERSTOOD. IT WAS OKAY. THEY PINCHED MY CHEEKS ALOT....AND I KNEW THEY LIKED ME.

I AM BERRIES GROWING WILD IN THOSE EMPTY SPACES NOW BURIED WITH BRICK AND STUCCO.

I AM FACELESS MEN SETTING BOWLING PINS...AND THE JINGLE OF THE MILKMAN'S BOTTLES AT SIX AM.

I AM THE SMELL OF TAR AS THEY FILLED IN THE DIRT ROAD FROM MY HOUSE TO ALAN'S HOUSE...MAKING IT NEAT AND TRIM...AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME, GIVING US THE STUPID IDEA THAT THIS IS MY SIDE OF THE STREET AND THAT IS YOURS. "NO, YOU STAY ON YOUR SIDE. I DON'T WANT TO PLAY WITH YOU TODAY."

I AM CHINO PANTS...AND BLACK JACK GUM...AND FRONT DOOR LEFT UNBOLTED.

I AM THE DOG TAGS THEY GAVE US THE FIRST YEARS OF SCHOOL. ...48...49...MAYBE 50. i am hiding under my desk. ITS AN AIR RAID DRILL. WE HAVE THEM MORE OFTEN THAN FIRE DRILLS.. BUT DON'T KNOW WHY.

I AM HAND ME DOWN SWEATERS...MY BROTHERS OLD SCHWINN...AND STOOPBALL ON SATURDAY MORNING.

I AM TORMENTED BY CREATURES THAT LURK IN THE DARK. ONLY I SEE THEM...AND DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY.

HERE ARE NO NIGHT-LIGHTS IN A HOUSE WHERE I AM REMINDED DAILY THAT "GROWN BOYS DON'T NEED NIGHT-LIGHTS."

I AM NOT A GROWN BOY. I'M A KID WITH NO PUBIC HAIR AND NO BACKBONE. WHAT I DON'T NEED IS SHADOWS.

I SLEEP WITH MY HEAD TURNED TOWARDS ANY HINT OF LIGHT COMING THROUGH THE WINDOWS...FACING AWAY FROM ANY DARK SPOT AND ANY VISITOR.

I AM A BED WETTER WHO IS CHASTISED EVERY MORNING. I DON'T CARE. I AM NOT GETTING OUT OF BED IN THE DARK
"GROWN BOYS DON'T PEE IN BED!"

THEY JUST NEVER GOT IT.

I AM RUNNING TOWARDS MY HOME IN PANIC...AS FAST AS MY SHORT SIX OR SEVEN OR EIGHT YEAR OLD LEGS CAN MOVE ME... RUNNING FROM THE BUS STOP, ACROSS THE VACANT LOT THAT STARTED AT OUR HOUSE AND ENDED AT THE CORNER...ALLOWING ME CLEAR VIEW FROM THE BUS TO MY BACK YARD...AND MY DOG.

HE WAS HANGING ON HIS LEASH OVER THE FENCE...JUST SHORT OF TOUCHING DOWN.

HE WAS DEAD.
I LOOK NOW FOR AN EMOTIONAL MEMORY TO ENHANCE THE VISUAL.
THERE IS NONE.
THAT PART IS DEAD AS WELL.

I AM A CAMERA WITH A BROKEN SHUTTER. MY LENS IS
SCRATCHED...ABUSED WITH AGE.
I VAINLY TRY TO CAPTURE THE INCREDIBLE THINGS I SEE..
BUT THE PRINTS COME BACK DISTORTED.
I FIND MYSELF HAVING TO EXPLAIN EACH ONE.

I AM EIGHT YEARS OLD...SENT TO FETCH MY BROTHER WHEN
MY DISTANT, BUT CHERISHED, COUSIN LOST HIS BATTLE WITH POLIO.
"GO GET YOUR BROTHER"...SHE SAID.. "BUT DONT CROSS KINGS
HIGHWAY."

I PEDDLED AS FAST AS I COULD AND SAT ON MY
SCHWINN..YELLING ACROSS THE SIX LANE ROAD AS HARD AS I
COULD.. "ARNIE!!! COME HOME!! COME HOME!! SONNY DIED"
MY VOICE WAS ONLY FOUR LANES WIDE AND HE COULD NOT HEAR
ME.

I POUNDED MY FISTS INTO MY THIGHS IN FRUSTRATION...BUT
THE VOLUME STAYED THE SAME. HE MUST HAVE SENSED MY FUTILITY
AND CROSSED OVER TO GET THE MESSAGE.

I AM AN ADULT...STILL WITH A FOUR LANE VOICE AND THE
FRUSTRATIONS OF NOT GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS...NOT BEING
HEARD.

I AM THE DISTURBING MEMORY OF COLD CLAMMY HANDS SHAKING
MY SMALL NAKED SHOULDERS..."WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!!!"

I RUBBED THE SLEEP FROM MY EYES WITH THE BACK OF MY HANDS
AND PULLED UP MY PILLOW...ONLY TO FIND MY TOOTH STILL THERE
AND THE DREAM OF A GLISTENING QUARTER TO START MY DAY...WAS
ONLY A DREAM AFTER ALL.

THE WEATHER SEEMED TO CHANGE THAT DAY....AND THE MEMORY
OF EVERY HAPPY SNOWMAN I HAD EVER BUILT SEEMED TO SLOWLY
START MELTING AWAY.

I AM THE LIPSTICK MOTHER PUT ON ME FOR MY PART IN THIRD
GRADE PLAY.

I AM UNCOUNTED FINGERS POINTING AT ME ON THE UTICA
TROLLEY...AND THE SLAPS IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD.

I AM THE UNFOUND PLACE TO HIDE MYSELF TIL SCHOOL WAS
OPEN.

I AM THE TASTE OF BLOOD IN MY MOUTH AS I TRY TO WIPE AND
BITE THE BRIGHT RED GLOSS FROM MY LIPS.

I AM THE EMBARRASSMENT OF LINES FORGOTTEN AND NOISES
FROM THE ASSEMBLY.

I AM THE EMPTY SEAT SAVED FOR MY
MOTHER...UN-USED...UNATTENDED.

I AM EMPTY AS WELL.

I AM SITTING ON A COUNTER STOOL...AT SOME HASH HOUSE OFF
THE MAIN ROAD IN GEORGIA. I SWING MY FEET BACK AND
FORTH...BACK AND FORTH...AS KIDS DO WHEN THEY ARE BORED.

IT SEEMS THAT WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOREVER.

I'M HUNGRY. WE ARE ALL HUNGRY. OTHERS ARE BEING
SERVED..BUT WE STILL HAVE NO MENUS...NO WATER..AND NO-ONE
SEEMING TO CARE.

MY MOM TRIES TO GET MY FATHER TO TAKE US AWAY FROM HERE
...BUT HE IS STUBBORN...OR GUTSY...OR JUST PLAIN STUPID.
"DIDNT YOU READ THE SIGN?"..SOMEONE MUTTERS..
"YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE."
WE LEAVE. WE LEAVE.
OUTSIDE THE DOOR IS A HAND PAINTED SIGN..
"NO JEWS. NO DOGS. NO NIGGERS!!"
I AM OLD ENOUGH TO READ THE SIGN...AND YOUNG ENOUGH NOT
TO UNDERSTAND.
WE CRAWL BACK INTO THE FADED 49 DODGE AND HEAD BACK TO
THE MAIN ROAD.
THEY HAD LOST THE APPETITE FOR ANYTHING NOW.
"MAYBE LATER. MAYBE LATER."

I AM THE HAUNTED IMAGE OF MY FIRST BROKEN NOSE...THE
HORRIBLE, EXPLOSIVE PAIN...THE PROFUSION OF BLOOD...AND MY
MOTHERS BITCHING AT ANOTHER DOCTOR BILL.
DR SELDEN WAS ACROSS THE STREET AND DOWN THE BLOCK.
A SHORT TRIP FOR ANYONE...BUT SHE DIDNT GO.
I RETURNED STUNNED...TAPED ..AND BLOODY.
SHE AWAITED ON THE PORCH...GREETING ME WITH WORDS OF
COMPASSION..."YOU WEREN'T UGLY ENOUGH? NOW, GO TO YOUR
ROOM!"
IN TIME...THE NOSE HEALED...THE SWELLING RECEDED...THE
BLACK AND BLUE EYES BECAME A MEMORY.
THERE WERE SCARS FROM HER WORDS I STILL CARRY TODAY.

I AM KUKLA, FRAN, AND OLLIE....MY FIRST TASTE OF PIZZA..
AND THE EMBARRASSED EXCITEMENT OF SEEING MY FIRST NAKED
LADY.
SHE WAS A HOPI DANCER AND SHE CHANGED IN THE WINGS AS I
OPERATED THE CURTAIN FOR ASSEMBLY DAY. A FEW YEARS
LATER...SHE WAS THE FIRST WOMAN I EVER FANTASY FUCKED...MY
FIRST ORGASM...MY FIRST EJACULATE...MY FIRST REALIZATION THAT
I HAD NO IDEA OF WHAT YOU DO OR HOW YOU DO IT TO A WOMAN...
OR WITH A WOMAN.

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT CUMING WOULD FEEL LIKE. IT WAS VERY,
VERY NICE. I WIPED MYSELF WITH A SOCK ON THE FLOOR AND
THREW IT BACK UNDER THE BED TO AVOID DETECTION.

I WAS THE THIEF WHO STOLE CONDOMS FROM MY FATHERS DRAWER
...THINKING THE TIGHTNESS OF TROJANS WOULD FEEL MORE LIKE A
WOMAN.

THEY MADE FUNNY NOISES...LIKE A PLASTIC SLINKY...WHEN I
FOUND A SAFE PLACE TO PLAY WITH MYSELF.
I WONDER IF THEY EVER HEARD IT.

I AM A HUNGRY FIFTEEN...DRIFTING INTO BOHEMIAN CLUBS OF
THE FIFTIES...FEASTING ON OLD BLACK MEN WITH
BERETS...GLYCERINE AND ROSE WATER... "BAD, MOTHERFUCKER
BLUES"...DARK GLASSES TO HIDE THE HIGH.

I AM LATE NIGHT RADIO...JEAN SHEPPARD...SYMPHONY
SID..RACE MUSIC...VAGUE PHILOSOPHY... "JOCKO AND HIS ROCKET
SHIP SHOW."

I AM "KING PLEASURE" BLACK AND AS SMOOTH AS "SARAH."

I AM THE BLACK AND WHITE WORLD OF FIFTY-NINE AND MY
BLACK AND WHITE HIGH SCHOOL YEAR BOOK.
PAGE THIRTY-SEVEN...LEFT COLUMN...FOURTH DOWN.

I AM THE ONE WITH THE JACKASS SMILE AND THE BRYLCREME HAIR.

THERE ARE FEW WORDS TO THE RIGHT TO SAY WHO I WAS AND WHAT I DID FOR "DEAR OLD TILDEN HIGH."

SOMEWHERE IT LISTS "AMBITIONS" MINE SAYS "STAGE MANAGER".

IN SOME ABSTRACT WAY...IT SEEMS I'VE MADE IT.

I AM SIXTEEN...FIGHTING SLEEP OFF..ALONE ON A BUS.
OFF TO WORK AT THE BAKERY..SIX DAYS A WEEK.

I CANNOT REST. MY HEART POUNDS WITH ANTICIPATION AND FEAR.

EACH DAY WE STOP AT FLATBUSH..ABOUT HALF WAY TO MY CORD
PULLING "STOP THE BUS RING"..AND MOST DAYS WARREN WADDLES
ON.

I FEAR THE UNKNOWN...AND I FEAR WARREN.

HE IS A FLAMING FAGGOT...SHORT...CHUBBY....LONG BLONDE
HAIR PULLED BACK LIKE WINGS. HE WEARS A TUX..EVERY TIME
THAT I SEE HIM. IT MAKES HIM LOOK MUCH LIKE A PENGUIN.

I'VE NEVER MET A GAY MAN BEFORE...THAT I KNEW OF...
AND I, VIRGIN SELF ABUSER...NON PROM
GOER...PURE...UNTAINTED..UNEXPOSED...

I PRETENDED TO SLEEP.

WARREN NOTICED ME...HOW COULD HE MISS. IT WAS JUST ME
AND HIM AND THE BUS DRIVER WHO LETS WARREN RAMBLE ON AND ON
ABOUT THE KIND OF NIGHT HE HAD. OH YES...I FORGOT TO
MENTION...WARREN WAS A BARMAID IN A STRAIGHT IRISH BAR. GO
FIGURE.

ANYWAY...WARREN WOULD TALK AND TALK AND FLUTTER HIS HAND
ABOUT LIKE A MAESTRO TO ACCENTUATE HIS WORDS.

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE FUCK HE WAS JABBERING ABOUT.
GROWN UP REFERENCES WERE STILL FOREIGN TO ME.

AT ANY RATE...ONE DARK MORNING WARREN WADDLES HIS LITTLE
PENGUIN ASS OVER TO ME AND SITS DOWN DIRECTLY NEXT TO
ME...WORKING HIS BUTT INTO THE SEAT LIKE A NESTING BIRD.

"I KNOW YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING...BUT ITS O.K. I JUST
WANTED TO SHARE SOMETHING WITH YOU.

I'M THE KIND OF GUY MY FATHER ALWAYS WARNED ME ABOUT-
....BUT I JUST CANT GET RID OF MYSELF."

SOMEHOW...I UNDERSTOOD....AND SOMEHOW I GOT OFF THE BUS
AT FOUR AM...MY EYES WIDER OPENED..MY MIND SLIGHTLY
CHANGED.

I AM BLIND DATES THAT ENDED IN SOFT SMILES AND
HANDSHAKES. THE TWO AM EMPTY HALLS SEEM OVERLY QUIET AND THE
WALK TO THE ELEVATOR IS ENDLESS.

SHE OPENS HER DOOR AND WAITS FOR MY CAR TO
ARRIVE...COOING HER PARTING WORDS... "CALL ME SOME TIME."

IN THE SILENCE OF THE COLD TILE WALLS I VAGUELY HEAR HER
ECHO. "DONT BOTHER!! DONT BOTHER! DONT BOTHER...."

THE ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSES AND I DESCEND. I AM NOT
ALONE. BESIDE ME ARE TWO OTHER MEN WITH QUIET BLANK FACES.

PERHAPS THERE WERE OTHER ECHOES IN OTHER HALLWAYS
TONIGHT.

I AM A MAN/BOY IN FATIGUES..PLUNGING A BAYONETTE THROUGH THE DUMMY AND YELLING "KILL!! KILL!!!"

I SMILE TO MYSELF THINKING.. "YEAH, RIGHT. LIKE I AM REALLY GOING TO GO SOMEWHERE AND STICK THIS IN SOMEONE."

I AM THE FRIGHTENING REALIZATION THAT SOME OF THE MAN/BOYS BEHIND ME REALLY MEAN IT.

I AM THE EIGHT DIGITS ON MY CHEST WHICH TELL THEM ALL THEY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ME. I AM THE QUESTION MARK I HAVE INKED IN AT THE END OF THE NUMBERS.

THEY DONT THINK ITS FUNNY.

NEITHER DO I.

I HEAR A TAPPING NOISE AND LOOK UP TO SEE MY SKINLESS IMAGE IN MY MIRROR...LIPLESS MOUTH MOVING SLOWLY.. "ENOUGH. I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS GAME FOR NOW. I AM TIRED. CAN WE STOP FOR TONIGHT?"

I TURN MY HEAD AWAY....NOT WANTING THE JOURNEY TO END..KNOWING THAT MY REFLECTION EXISTS EVEN WHEN I PAY IT NO MIND.

NOT TIME YET TO TURN OFF THE MIND. I TURN DOWN MY OWN VOLUME AND PRETEND NOT TO HEAR THE KNOCKING.

I AM A BUSINESS SUIT...FILLED FOR EIGHT YEARS WITH AMBITION...AND POWER..AND CORPORATE LUNCHES.

A BUSINESS SUIT WORN LIKE SHINING ARMOR...A TITLED GENTLEMEN...A LEADER.

A BUSINESS SUIT WITH A GOLDEN WATCH AND CHAIN..THAT COUNTED OFF THE HOURS AND DAYS...AND A SMALL COMPASS IN MY VEST THAT POINTED IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.

I AM A HUSBAND NOT KNOWING HOW TO BE A HUSBAND...LACKING NOTES AND GUIDELINES TO HELP ME FIND THE WAY. SHE HAD NO CLUE EITHER.

WITHOUT THE SCRIPT...HOW COULD I PLAY THE ROLE?

I AM A PUPPET ON UNSEEN STRINGS...WITH AS MANY FACES AS NEEDED FOR MY AUDIENCE TONIGHT.

I AM A SMILING FACE WEARING COSTUMES OF THE FINEST SILK..LAUGHING AN OPEN MOUTHED PUPPETS SMILE. MY ARMS SWING WILDLY TO ACCENTUATE THE LAUGH. IF YOU LISTEN CLOSELY YOU MIGHT HEAR THEM BANG AGAINST MY WOODEN CHEST AND WOODEN HEART.

I AM A SAD FACED CLOWN IN PUPPET RAGS..PULLING A DIRTY HANKY FROM MY POCKET TO WIPE THE TEARS AWAY. MY PUPPET FACE IS WET.

MY HANDS ARE MADE OF OAK. SADLY...MY FINGERS CANNOT BEND...CANNOT REACH INTO MY POCKET AND TAKE THE SCISSORS.. CANNOT ALLOW ME TO CUT MY OWN STRINGS AND FREE MYSELF AND BE RID OF THIS ALL.

MY MASTER STANDS BEHIND ME...BLACK HOOD...BLACK GLOVES...HE HIDES IN THE SHADOWS.

I BOW TO THE AUDIENCE...EXIT STAGE LEFT.

STILL CONTROLLED...STILL CONNECTED..BY UNSEEN STRINGS.

I AM THE NOISE INSIDE MY HEAD THAT NEVER RESTS. A CHIRPING NOISE??? A RINGING NOISE..A NOISE LIKE WET FINGERS ON WINE GLASS EDGES.

A NOISE THAT HAS CREEPED INTO MY LIFE...LIKE AN UNWANTED GUEST WITHOUT AN INVITE...STAYING WELL BEYOND ITS POINT OF WELCOME.

A NOISE THAT HAS TAKEN SOUNDS FROM ME AND WORDS FROM ME. "I CANT HEAR YOU." GUSHES FROM MY MOUTH AUTOMATICALLY.

I HATE THAT I CAN HEAR MYSELF ASK...BUT NOT THE RESPONSE.

I FIND MYSELF ANSWERING QUESTIONS NEVER ASKED...AND WITHDRAW FROM THE CONVERSATION TO AVOID IT ALL.

I HAVE TAUGHT MYSELF TO LIP READ..AND IT WORKS AT TIMES.. BUT WHEN THE CANDLES ARE BLOWN OUT, AND MY LOVER WHISPERS SOFTLY TO ME..I SWALLOW THE ANGER...AND PULL HER TO ME.. AND GENTLY REMIND HER...
"I CANT HEAR YOU."

I AM THE UNRESOLVED SADNESS OF "GOOD BYS" NEVER SPOKEN TO PEOPLE WHO MATTERED..SENSING THAT IT MIGHT HAVE MADE THEIR PASSING SOMEWHAT EASIER.

THEY HAVE GONE...TAKING WITH THEM LITTLE PIECES OF ME. I CARRY IN MY KNAPSACK THEIR SMILES...THEIR WISDOM..AND THE FAINT SCENT OF LILACS.

I AM STANDING ALONE AT MY PARENTS GRAVES...FEELING NOTHING BUT THE BITTER WINDS OF OCTOBER BLOWING MY THOUGHTS AWAY.... "I'M HERE. WHATS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN NOW?"

MY SWEET UNCLE JOE LIES JUST TO THE LEFT.

THE WINDS BLOW MY THOUGHTS PAST HIM AND OFF THROUGH THE SMALL PINES.

I START MY CAR AND CRUNCH DOWN THE GRAVEL ROAD...LEAVING THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS BEHIND.

I AM THE COURT JESTER WHO WORE THE "NOTHING CAN HURT ME SMILE." THE COSTUME WAS ILL FITTING..BUT I WORE IT JUST THE SAME. AFTER ALL...THEY WERE THERE TO BE ENTERTAINED. I WAS VULGAR AND PROFANE...SAYING THE THINGS THEY WISHED THEY COULD SAY.

THEY CAME TO BE AMUSED....SHARING MY WINE, MY DRUGS, MY FANTASIES.

THEY WOULD BEG "MORE JOKES. TELL US MORE JOKES. WE NEED TO LAUGH MORE TONIGHT."

THE JESTER OBLIGED THEM...FILLING HOURS WITH LEWDNESS AND ANECDOTES THAT BROUGHT TEARS OF JOY.

"MORE WINE, PLEASE. MORE DRUGS. PLEASE...MORE FUNNY STORIES."

MY MIND AND MY TONGUE BOTH SLURRED ...I MEANDERED..SPITTING OUT CONCEPTS AND THOUGHTS AND ABSTRACTIONS. "HEY..IF YOU CUT THE WING OFF EVERY PIGEON...WOULDNT THEY ALL BE HOMING PIGEONS?"

STRANGE THOUGHTS JUST ROSE FROM MY THROAT... "SHIT. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A COLOR THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE."

RANDOM CONCEPTS THAT I REFUSE TO STIFLE.

I COULD HEAR THEM MUMBLE TO EACH OTHER AS THEY LEFT JUST BEFORE DAWN...THEIR WORDS ECHOING UP THE STAIRWAY...

"HE'S OUT OF HIS FUCKING MIND."

PERHAPS THEY WERE RIGHT.

I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR...PUSHED THE CORNERS OF MY MOUTH UP WITH THE FINGERS...AND SAID TO MY REFLECTION
"WHAT THE FUCK. NOTHING CAN HURT ME NOW."

I AM THE PINK PLASTIC CASE THAT FALLS CARELESSLY TO THE
TILED BATHROOM FLOOR AND SPLITS OPEN LIKE A DEAD MOLLUSK.
THE PALE WHITE DIAPHRAGM ROLLS ACROSS THE FLOOR. IT IS WET.
IT IS NOT MY WETNESS BUT THAT OF THE NEW LOVER SHE HAS
BROUGHT HOME...ISSUING ME A FOUR DAY NOTICE TO ABANDON
SHIP.

SHE HAS BEEN UPSTAIRS WITH HIM WHILE I DWELL IN THE
BASEMENT...AS AGREED...UNTIL MY NEW SHELTER IS READY.
I AM THE BUCKLING OF KNEES...AND THE NOISE WITHIN THAT
SOUNDS LIKE A BARE FOOT SHATTERING A CHRISTMAS DECORATION
LEFT CARELESSLY ON THE FLOOR.

SHE OFFERS LIES AND PRETENSE...BUT, NO LONGER OFFERS A
HUG.

I AM BEYOND PAIN...BEYOND FEELING.
I AM SHATTERED AS WELL.
I AM TOO MANY PRETTY NAMES AND TOO MANY PRETTY FACES.
TOO MANY WET MOUTHS...WET PUSSIES...WET PROMISES.
TOO MANY COLD PILLOWS AND EMPTY CHAIRS.
TOO MANY DEFINITIONS FOR THE WORD "FOREVER."
SHIT...I THOUGHT I HAD LEARNED THEM ALL.

I AM FRAGILE...AND HATE ALL THE TIME WASTED PRETENDING
NOT TO BE.

I AM A STOREHOUSE OF MEMORIES TRAPPED SOMEWHERE UNDER
THE RUBBLE OF A BUILDING LONG SINCE CAVED IN UPON ITSELF.
THE WALLS BUILT BY MY OWN HAND AND MY OWN MIND...YEARS AND
TEARS AGO..HAVE FALLEN IN ON ME...AND...AT TIMES...THERE IS
NO LIGHT SHINING THROUGH SMALL CREVICES TO LEAD ME OUT TO
SAFETY.

I DONT REMEMBER BEING FOUR YEARS OLD...OR MY SEVENTH
BIRTHDAY PARTY. I CANT DIG UP MEMORIES OF MY FIRST BIKE..
MY FIRST KISS...MY FIRST ANY-FUCKING-THING FROM MY
CHILDHOOD.

I CANT REMEMBER EVER HEARING THE WORDS "GOOD. YOU DID
GOOD. WE'RE VERY PROUD OF YOU."

BURIED. ITS ALL BURIED.
I CANT EVEN DIG MYSELF OUT.

I AM AN EMOTIONAL TOMBSTONE WITH MOVABLE WORDS AND
INTER-CHANGEABLE LETTERS.

I AM JECKLE....I AM HYDE
I AM MANY DIFFERENT "ME'S" INSIDE.

I AM A COMPOSITE OF CLEAR MEMORIES AND BLANK SPACES.

I AM COLD AND I AM TIRED OF THE SEARCH....TIRED OF
"THE GAME".

ENOUGH FOR THIS DAY.

ENOUGH.

ADVENTURE ON CLINTON STREET

I was just dropping by. My intentions were good. I wanted to pick up a chapbook, a broadside, or the latest Curare from J.D.

As soon as I walked through the door, I heard a squawk. It was the voice of a green parrot, I believe. This bird, however, was not saying hello. It had detected me, recollected me, and (seemingly) rejected me.

I did not have time to look for the white cockatoo or the silver piranha, which I had encountered before. I did not have time to tour the new apartment, though I did notice its unusual, sunken floor. I just had time to get in and get out--without a pecking.

I looked into the guard bird's eye. It was circular, saurian, inhuman. It stared me down.

"Do you feed this bird crackers?" I asked.

Then I remembered the scene in The Lord of the Rings where Frodo and Sam run into the force field between the bird statues and use their magic vial to pass through. I needed a talisman, a token, a totem. Fortunately, I had the keys to ABC No Rio. On the key ring was a travel souvenir, a Maui sex tiki.

I held up the carving, with its genital jewel, and let it swing in front of the door bird's beak. The effect was hypnotic, on me at least. I became less nervous, happier. Things became airier.

I didn't take flight, and neither did the bird, but I was no longer alarmed by the sound of J.D.'s doorbell.

Jennifer Blowdryer

I sleep with a rusty knife
and a grey pelt with
a clip across the face
my fingers wrap around that knife so
easily.
Sheathe it, get rid of it
they suggest
what about a tattoo
of a knife with a flower
so it looks like something that used to
be evil,
but is nice now

Jill Rapaport

Vanilla and Chlorine

Two sisters as beautiful as the dawn played outside on the sidewalk in front of their colonial-style tract house.

Their names were Vanilla and Chlorine. They had been born in a golden kingdom and brought here as babies.

Along came a girl in their third-grade class. Her name was Ammonia. They looked up without greeting her.

Ammonia was tall and gangly, with sallow skin. Nobody liked her much, although nobody had any reason to dislike her. People simply avoided her. She asked if she could play with the two beautiful sisters.

They looked at each other without expression. One of them lifted her shoulders. The other looked down at the chalk marks they had been etching into the concrete, preparatory to hopscotch.

Ammonia stood on the sidewalk, fidgeting. She grew more uncomfortable as minutes passed during which she began to fear the sisters not only would not let her play with them but might perhaps not even speak to her.

"Did you gals really come from Platonina?" asked Ammonia, changing her tack slightly and reasoning that if they wouldn't let her play with them, at least maybe she'd leave with the answer to a question she was eager to know the answer to.

Chlorine looked blankly at her sister. Vanilla looked down. Ammonia had used the word "gals." Clearly, she was from the wrong side of the tracks, from a family that didn't even have sense enough not to use outdated language. Not only had she used the word "gals," she had mispronounced and in fact totally botched the mention of the town they were from, Platitunitis.

Chlorine stood up. Then, half an instant later, Vanilla got up, too.

"Excuse us," said Chlorine, "but we have to go inside now." It was the first time either of the sisters had opened her mouth.

"We do have to go," said Vanilla, as if the point had not been made sufficiently clearly by her sister.

"Yup," murmured Chlorine.

Ammonia stood where she was, wondering what she was going to do next. She felt a bit silly, standing there after having the door to playing virtually slammed, hard, in her face. She spent a moment wondering what it was about her that was so dreadfully unappealing, but she quickly dropped that line of thought, because, after all, she did not find herself unappealing. Then again, she reminded herself, it was not with herself that she was asking to play.

The two sisters toddled off in a sober gait, evidently slightly embarrassed at having been forced to be rude. They had been brought up to display the exemplary manners that went with their position in life, the continuation of the goodness and light of their parents and their grandparents and on back. It wasn't their fault that unpopular children insisted on asking for the impossible. They had reputations, after all, to maintain, did the two beautiful sisters.

And Ammonia simply turned around and walked back toward her own house, deciding that a good game of blocks would take her mind off the rejection she had just suffered.

Kayo Edwards

LAST YEAR

Where did it start how did it start, oh yeah money, power nah it was greed the root of all evil. Started in the dark streets the night life in the shadows around the time when all the bad guys come out where the corners is fludded with urban merchants and dopephenes lost and don't even know it. Some how I got caught in the middle. First it was about money, how could I be blamed I didn't even know wrong from right. It happened so often it's like you don't even think about, a customer comes you hand em the bag he hands you the money. It's almost like it was legal like I was selling candy or something.

I guess I was seeing to much money that and at least ten dimes of hydro a day [weed] not to mention the absolute. Thats where I went wrong, scarface once said first you get the money after you get the money you get the power. Yeah I got the money but I didn't deserve the power, I didn't know how to handle it. I was moving up now in the under world. The drugs had already fried my brain not to mention the cuntas [girls] throwing themselves at me, I wish I knew then what they was really after "money" to bad I didn't see that then. Well anyway school yeah school I used to love going where else could you find so many cuntas [girls] in the same place. It's a miracle I even passed being that I would go to school twice a week and leave at lunch.

You know what they say what goes up must come down I never thought it would happen to me not me I was to smart for that. But when those handcuffs clicked and TNT was pushing me in the back of the patty wagon I kind of changed my mind.

Where's friends when you need them, the same niggas that I was making rich the big Willie niggas you know the same guys who swore I was thier little brother and fed me dreams about making me rich. Yeah those are the same guys that was making over two G's a day and didn't even come up with \$1500 for my bail. some friends huh but in the streets there ain't no friends only friendly faces who talk soft but don't dare turn your back cause those friendly faces fade as quick as they blade pierces you back.

Young domb and full of cum wasn't even out for a day and allready back out on the streets. It wasn't the money so much it was the excitement the rush of getting away from the cops and the power of having all the phenes waiting for me cause I had something they needed.

Failure to notice details that's what always gets you knocked. And that's what happened but this time it wasn't just a slap on the wrist, the judge must of had a hard on for me because it seemed as if he enjoyed hitin me wit a 1 to 3.

Six months later and it feels as if i've been in this place for years. maybe it was gods will because now i look at things differently be fore nothing seemed to matter, nothing to live never for a moment thinking about tomorrow just what was in clear sight. I'm even enjoying school and i want to be a doctor i guess it was for the best, you know what they say some people just have to learn the hard way. And i did LAST YEAR. Kayo Edwards -- Age 16

Chantay Jones

Do I Belong

In search of identity I chose to escape
Because what I felt I could not relate
I thought what I am is really unique
I had the personality of a genuine freak
I was alone in a world where no one understood
I developed a lifestyle beneath a hood
Beneath this hood there was only me
which is the loneliest feeling there ever could be
I was alone in this world, when I couldn't get out
In search of a new world I began to scout
I wanted a place where I could fit in
I needed something to call a friend
I had to escape the voices in my mind
some mood altering substance is what I needed to find
I found, embraced it, took it to heart
The road to destruction this is where it starts...
for a long time drugs got me through
then came the day the volcano blew
My morals, my ethics, my value corrupted
I hated the image the mirror confronted
I was ugly, gruesome -- as evil as sin
I was unable to be even my own friend
I knew that it was time for me to reach out
to find out what this madness was all about
I am going to get through my biggest fear
I want to see if I really belong here
Before my eyes my life begins to unfold
this is the greatest experience I've yet to behold
This new feeling I have I love and will cherish
The past is a dark spot, merely a blemish

Diane Spodarek

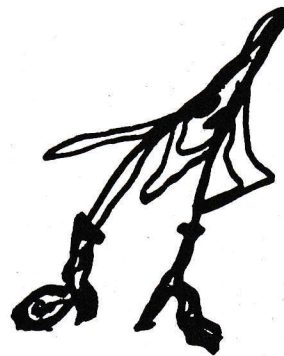
Train Birth

I was born in motion
the train rocking and surging
metal against metal
I popped out on a double seat in a town
called Puce
which is French for 'flea'
fifteen miles east of Windsor, Ontario.
Canada

Water blood afterbirth
and my mother's tears
mixed with clapping and cheering
and a champagne toast
some fell on me

and at birth
I was already moving
and drinking.

It was New Year's Eve
at the end of a
decade.



David Thorin

BIRTH!

LENORA WENT INTO LABOR AS I SAT ON THE FRONT STEPS DRINKING WINE.
I RUSHED HER TO THE MATERNITY WARD IN A TAXI. I HAD TO CALL HER PARENTS
AND TELL THEM TO COME DOWN TO THE HOSPITAL. THEY TOOK A BUS AND
WALKED ACROSS THE PARKING LOT WHERE THEY WERE STRUCK BY A SPEEDING
AMBULANCE, THEIR BODIES DRAGGED, CRUSHED AND BLOODIED.....
THE DOCTOR SUGGESTED NOT TO TELL LANORA UNTIL SHE DELIVERED.

THE NURSE BROUGHT THE BABY, A SON, OUT TO ME TO HOLD. I WAS
SO NERVOUS I DROPPED HIM. "HIS FIRST INJURY" I THOUGHT AS I SPOTTED A
TRICKLE OF BLOOD ON HIS FOREHEAD FROM WHICH A WIRE PORTRUDED.....

I CREPT AWAY
I SLID INTO PARADISE
A MECCA FOR BETTER OR WORSE

NURSES ON ROLLER SKATES CASCADED THROUGH THE MAZE OF AMBULANCES
IN THE PARKING LOT.
I WENT TO CONSULT A GYPSY FORTUNE TELLER ONLY TO DISCOVER A MESSAGE
ON THE DOOR..... "BACK IN TWO WEEKS"

I WENT LOOKING FOR HEALTHY WHOLE WHEAT DOUGHNUTS
THE SIGN SAID THIRTY CENTS APIECE
THE COUNTER MAN CHARGED ME A DOLLAR FOR TWO
I COMPLAINED
HE SAID NOT TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE SIGN
I SAID I WOULD IGNORE IT IF IT SPOKE TO ME AGAIN

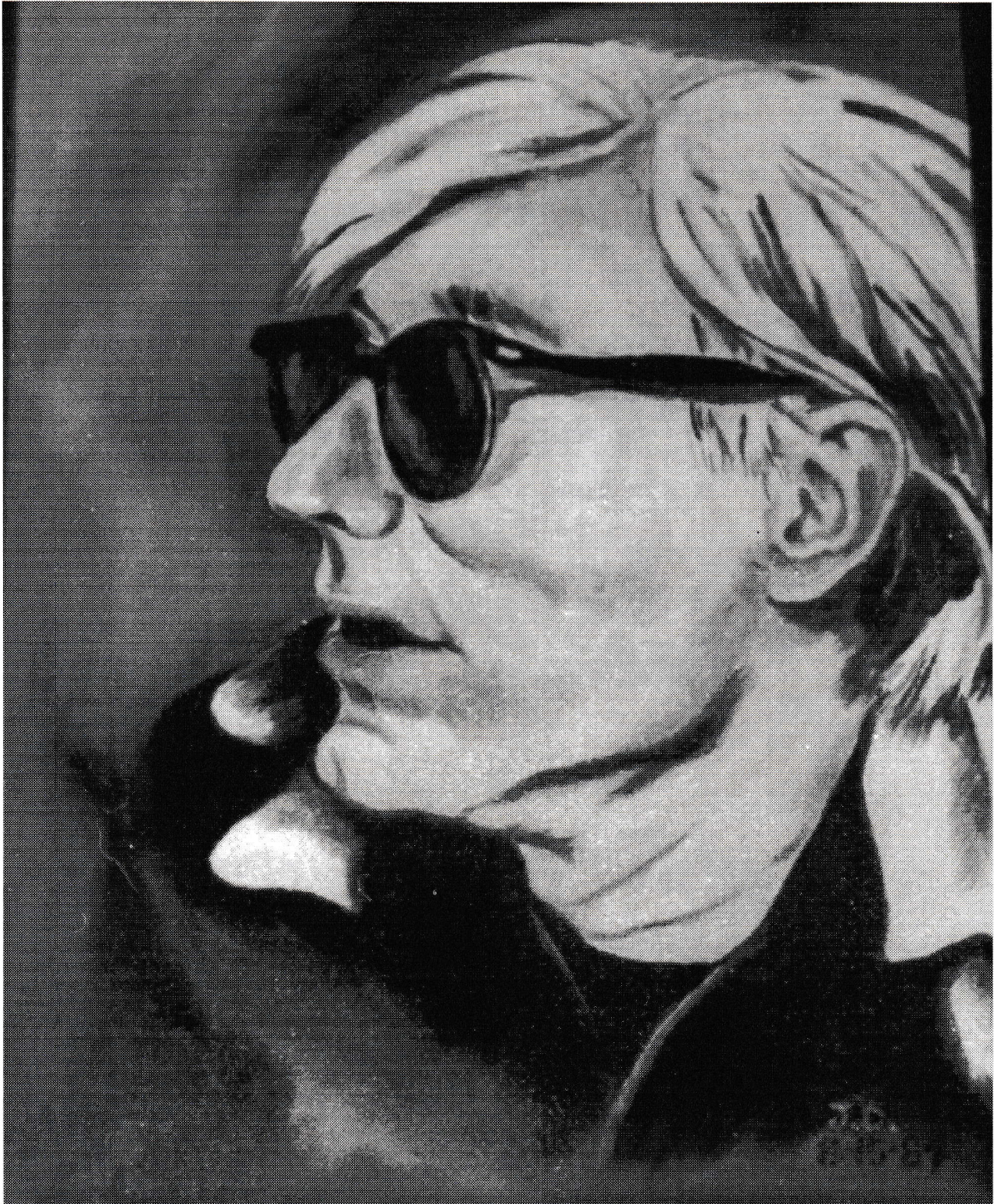
SUDDENLY, I WAS HOPELESSLY HAPPY ABOUT BEING ABLE TO COUGH AND SPIT !
I HAD FITS IN DEPARTMENT STORES
IN THE SHOE SECTION I WOULD SPEW SAPPY MOUNTAINS OF SLIMEY PHLEGM UPON
TENDER HUSH PUPPIES
ON HAND RAILS I WOULD RELEASE A MOUTHFUL WATCH TO SEE IF IT COULD
SLIDE TO THE PREVIOUS FLOOR
I APPLIED FOR SALESMAN POSITIONS IN THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT
I FINALLY GOT A JOB IN DRABLEY'S, IN THE WOMENS LINGERIE SECTION
"WE HAVE NO DRESSING ROOM MISS, BUT I COULD GIVE YOU THE KEYS TO THE
BOYS ROOM IF YOU LIKE"
DURING LUNCH BREAK I TOOK A RAILROAD RIDE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
STATE

I FOUND A PARK
I WALKED NUDE IN THE BUSH WHERE I MET AN ANGEL PLAYING TENNIS WITH A
COP WHILE A ZEBRA SUBLIMINALLY ADVERTISING LUCKY CHARMS TO ASPIRING
POLITICIANS CONCOCTED A SCHEME TO OVERTHROW A NATION OF PARADING
COOKOO CLOCKS BY REMOVING THE BIRD AND SELLING ITS REMAINS TO THE
NEAREST FAST FOOD ENTERPRISE

I RAN AWAY TO THE FARMLAND WHERE I ENCOUNTERED THE GYPSY FORTUNE
TELLER ON VACATION
SHE TOLD ME GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL AND LOVE YOUR WOMAN
GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL AND LOVE YOUR SON

TO LARRY JONES
AND
PUT YOUR HANDS UP
COME ON DOWN, RE-
MOVE THE CRUTCH
FROM YOUR NOSE
AND THE ANAL POGO
STICK, AND PREPARE
TO BE SCRUTINIZED
OFFICIAL SUMMONS.

THE SCENE ALL WANT TO
OBSERVE, PAUL SHIFF
AND GETT
AT RUN OVER BY A TRUCK
WITH THEIR DICKS IN
EACH OTHER'S MOUTH.



JUST WORKING ON MY DEATHLY PALLOR

I know if you taste my blood
you'll swear an angel just puked
in your soup
but in between the phosphates, sandwiches
and carousel of pies
I love the depths of something
that is beyond yr soul

I want to yank your spine out
from behind in one swift slap
like a dead snake against a kitchen floor
wrap it around my neck
nerves and all so I can display
your vast roulette wheel of discolored selves
to my yard-sale friends
and I thot you went with her for show
i guess you really do care about her
one of them said
from his little red wagon

why thank you sheepherder i said and smiled
she gurgled and flopped, death rattle in her hand
and she snuffed out the candle of my throat
with the very spine
that was once inside her

Gillan Arcoleo

the wake

walking through the silence of the night
looking for a face that looks familiar
seeing people walk by not knowing who they are
not seeing someone I know but they all look at me
am I known here I don't know these people
but they see and know me
they speak to me but why
who are they
why do they know me
have I been here before I don't think so
am I awake is this a dream
why do all these people know me
people are crying people are starving
life is great for some not for others
do I know you if so how
why talk to me why fade from my sight
are you there anymore please where did you go
I look no one is there anymore where am I now
I am somewhere else this place is different
no one knows me here yet they all stare
what is it about me
that they all stare
then I realize I am walking on air
there is nothing below me nothing above
I look only at what is there
the people they are walking also on the air
I now go to touch one of them
when I get to the person I reach out
then I wake up and look around
I see the floor I see my room
but then I see a picture of the person
I did know him
I knew all of them
they were the ghosts of all I had known before

Eve Packer

what is love (1)

billy i say,

we are at Playpen, girls parading
plumed & feathered birds of
paradise, billy slamming tokens
right & left fistfuls
of peppermints, friday rush hour,
hi-5's, kisses from dancers to
frequent customers, in this semi-
naked arena billy i say what is love
& he puts it on the mike:

being one w/the one
you desire, you cld come in on
yr hands & knees, i'd throw
my arms arnd you, give you a
big kiss & hug, say thats
my baby, other people
wldn't understand
but i do

love, what is love i say to dillon
cop on the corner: like
parent w/a kid, like the
church says come hell or high
water

love what is love i say to candy the TV
he has just chased, the one w/
the terrible face job awful jaw stubble (i guess
this is her corner), what is
love: caring for me, knowing what i
do, this is my job she says
desperation leaking from
running mascara, caring
not abt what i do,
but for who i am

love i say what is love to rumanian
taxi driver: what makes me the greatest
fighter in the world, what is love i say
to my friend nancy: wet underpants,
what is love i say to bob
first warm day of spring looking up
coffee cup in hand he says:
constant sunlight

love i say what is love at night to
my man on the phone &
he says:

everything

Roy M. Lucianna

THE WATER, THE TUB, OR ME

I pulled the drain suddenly
but the water did not want to leave
It just stayed.
It had been in the tub for so long,
IT DID NOT WANT TO LEAVE.
Stunned, perhaps, at its release, it refused gravity --
sought its own level.
Stubbornly affirming its own ice potential.

Or was it the tub?
That tub had held that water for so long,
it did not want to let it go.
Bathtubs know how to keep and hold.
IT DID NOT WANT IT TO LEAVE.

Or was it me, the one who replaces
just the right amount of water in a tub,
whose body was simply an outline to be hugged
by the hot seeking water . . . ,
who was contained by the tub . . . ,
who had been in the bath for *such* a long time?

Meditating now in the dry air,
moist air within me,
Meditating on dry land,
like a mountain to my floorboards,
Miraculously, as if from the sorrowful eyes
of a painted stone Virgin,
tears overflowed and penetrated the salty deck
below me.

UNDER THE SURFACE

under the surface
my skin boils
like the mouth
of a ripe volcano
under the surface
my dreams
get caught
in the burning toaster
under the surface
i'm shaking
like a washing machine
kicked too many times
at the laundromat
under the surface
i'm hopeless
i'm helpless
i'm hemorrhaging
under the surface
i can't eat
can't sleep
can't defend myself
from fistfights
raging in my subconscious
can't jar you loose
from that vision of me
planted on that car hood
under the surface
my blisters open
and
moles stick out their tongue
under the surface
everything is still
everything is motionless
everything is waiting
under the surface reality is cooking me some pure heroin
under the surface my dog sally resents me
under the surface the train leaves me crying at the station
under the surface
i'm an alien
i'm soft and breakable
i embarrass easily
i jump in my open grave
i've died long ago
under the surface
i'm mature as a hand rolled
leaf of Cuban tobacco
relaxed as a recently pressed
pair of trousers
calm as an undertaker

Bob Hart

A LOT OF WORK

Huh? Is that a knife?

You've made a gauzy dress for it. How pretty!

A mile long skirt for a mile long knife.

It requires

I suppose

a lot of work to keep it gleaming

By the time you've

shined down to the handle

the point part is as dull as dust

against a rainy day.

And when at last you

reach that with your patient elbow grease

and made it brilliant as

the Chrysler Building spire

the bottom's grown grim as asphalt.

Sometimes

at half mile up

a wind blows that gauzy

cloth into your face

wrapping your features like milk

and you look like a video cartoon person

susceptible to ghostly motion.

As

in eyeswaddled confusion

you and your spilling polish

fall in a minor storm of

the drapery's tall

whipping who knows

what identity

has been sweating without stopping

between the climbing

razory edges

under the skirt.

Sheryl H. Simler

if i weren't a poet
the muse would scoff me
the gates of heaven might seal their doors
my friends would turn the nearest corner

if i weren't a poet
i wouldn't sense God in the curl
of each child's fingers
could not dance a tango
amidst the face of evil
nor breeze through a 9-5'er
with my head up in the clouds

it's not the rhyme or reason
that keeps me well grounded
not the weekly paycheck or annual vacation
for me it's the subtle aura of the intermittent muse
that comes to hover on a summer day
it's the ups and downs of the roller coaster ride
the cotton candy that sticks to your teeth

if i weren't a poet
my dreams would turn to jelly

Tom Baer

Saintly Man

In 1960,
in a corner
of the kitchen
in my grandparents'
house on Halifax
Avenue in Oak Hill,
Florida, each day
my Uncle Matt would
eat a slice of whole
wheat bread with a
bit of butter and
drink a glass of milk.
He ate little more day
long, would eat no
creature out of the
river (the Indian,
the Intracoastal)
would harm no creature
anywhere...anywhere....

John Iversen

**Call Me
(for Sean)**

A blind date at the Union City Radisson
Arranged by phone by a stranger
Our eyes met, smiled, said, "Yes!"
Comrades in jeans and T-shirts
We were naked within five minutes and
Touched for the next five hours

We read each others bodies/minds completely
Fulfilling our wants and expectations
Like lovers of years
Long silences, but snippets of conversation about
Dennis Miller, La Femme Nikita, acupuncture,
Your tattoo of a Chinese woodcut symbolizing longevity
Spoke of a deep commonality

We noticed imperfections and scars
Yet chose to accentuate the overwhelming positive pull
You come here monthly for business
You might as well mix it with pleasure
You have my number
Call me

Paul Skiff

the divine love that flows through me blesses and increases
all that i give and receive say the helicopter blades out
speed-swollen sky --sack of millet plumps down skimmed from
same law of ineffectiveness that cooks in front of the
dead. :simple addition to the seesaw;the governmental body
made of twelve-year-olds has bulk-loaded key of blood-scent
through lock's chamber whose tumblers do not confess
deficiency to prehistory in child's mind where beginning
sings to the end. -:toppling,here pleasure of asking a
question blurts across boundary in the picture that will
hook up pain to submission,loudly rev-up shadowless,
forensically framed figures early on a cold morning, and
rely like all subtraction on a story in the background,say,
the original violation that allowed death into the world;
-we have no patience while we get to our purpose, to
consider purpose is overabundant and pounds the head of
every tack holding together the small room where human
history takes its place next to your wish not to be who you
are. -:but the choice of eternity no longer is kept in
a house, having attempted expensiveness and hiring
look-alikes,its vicious boredom is blurred upon vaster
surfaces between print on the newspaper where over 654
rock'n'roll bands are advertised.- the spirit of the moment
is a fart whose authorship is denied and murdered by its
fans, supreme,majestic youths..-so what kind of hearts are
used by the men who live in the vacant lot on the corner to
administer tests of blamelessness by their mere
sight-.stories are not answers to questions: :a single
child's sock washed down street by storm has simplified the
world but still the intellect of a fly will restrict you
until you start to count how many times today the world's
reality will express godlessness;each day only an anecdote
of sick light and missed inspiration. .even in the effort to
bring it to an end my identity is not required to convert to
what is permitted in embarrassment from the lack of
truth:-:laughter rolls in front of all deficient powers as
though they were young,pink penises, tricky priests.:the
graceful lie is beautiful enough to have rich boyfriends all
over the world:the lie's satisfaction depends now on
reliability of distance contained by tamed terror resident
in choice emulated on every other street where there is a
girl pretty enough to have a boyfriend with a car.-
-speedometer's pornography consists in climb and
deceleration illuminating violence of hostility on a kiss
while the engine unconditionally obeys, its celebratory
torture answers the slammed door with minor installments of
self-conscious emotion.,episodic removals:the date,the
wrinkle around an eye,the extermination of one ton of dogs,
we deny the purification. .i also am hypnotized and cleansed
by the campfires on Avenue B that enter my eyes to burn me,
mapping my fixity with more ardor,but i cannot prove the
purification. .: only emotion protected from doubt by its
invisibility-a professional thinker-for-everyone has xeroxed
deep emotion and sent it off to be chewed on by a satellite,
a satellite stationary over the zone of these dead
marriages so again Dan Rather has shot me in my leg while i

sleep;-as from all people who would control me into problem discussions by capturing me over my own dinner i withdraw into spooky retreat where the mind dodges to reconnoiter blind-spots while arguments gather up and clomp around --

.the face made from electricity and gasoline is more real than the face that gets old,drops, and is best suited to expressing sour tastes or anger at botched bank transactions.- don't slap my chest hey,i understand those mean excursions,-the contempt for how easy it is to be social. .,but something will get us all alone, make us look at the floor while our brains are tutored and swept.that is why i contain nothing,i will not provide experience of distance,i do not live in the world of agreements,my veins and arteries have become what they are.so whatever you want out of me you will have to phone it in and leave it on the machine.:-below where we toil,starve and fear are freedoms no one knows,hard as candybars in a freezer.,-how much love can really be produced by a people that demand enslavement,who live with a false need to toil and be aggressive:what is that need to win that needs to win a laugh:what is it that shifts inside your name to what you are, a higher form of mistake::-in the trees monkeys shout and clap for,again, Gilligan has lost himself into the next week.,but he will let you know exactly where he can be found -thousands of cartoon dogs are tying you up to their creators with your own smile-;with a high priority on being meek and merits of dumbness the harmless fool wins all love and affection,and probably invented the stairway.we should all reflect upon that as we go to our jobs of swatting flies and covering our desiccated appendages with filthy sacks, tongues pasted to mouths.- -the world's capacity for explanation is not what matters,we always look at the life that is short from the outside or from above.it is always the idea that subdues and pornographizes the image- :as we become less and less like eachother we become blind and unfamiliar until what the world was made of is itself nonexistent:the sack of millet gets small as it drops,the sack of millet gets big as it comes down. the sack of millet has worms in it. :-that is what the loose colors that will not stand still in your eye are saying,life is trying to refuse the fact that it made itself- .

EAK

I thought

I thought
of you..
wrote heartbreak stories..
for you..
about you--

Looked for words..
I could not say
felt the itch
to ride a slow train
we slipped
away...

With dreams of daggers
the wish for..
....one flower
on a barren field

Where the last soldier
put to rest..
..his gun--
I prayed for
you!

On a city street,
wanted to touch you
To hold you
in a sad dream

A final waltz
in dying poet eyes
before
....bullets stopped
forever--

After counting
minute hours..
stopped waiting for
the bell
to ring--

Lost the ticket
forgot the address.
Your name
a casual word,
once
I'd've stole the moon!

Once
I offered you a harbor.
A place to rest
from craziness
with no answers

In modern sickness.
In tumbling walls.
With no
particular destination--
No place to
go.....

Susan Sherman

Sestina

*In my dreams I see her call her name
In my night I hold her still*

There was a woman once who was more
to me than words any blending of alphabet
and sound We met at the corners of day
in the space where night crosses light
where shadows fold into darkness
The moments between our meetings
were air Twenty years lie between her
and this poem a length of time
impossible to render

There was a woman once who was more
to me than imagination wonder
the chimeras that embrace the night
More than the chill kiss of wind that tortured
her secret into patterns of light and
breeze A woman who was more to me than
forever the bending of syllable and time

We met on a hilltop in Vermont made love
in the sweetgrass of our desire
These are moments that defy forgetting
These are moments time cannot cure with
detail noise distraction Mornings that bound us
sticky and tight with dew

There was a woman once who was more to
me than flesh We touched to open
and then once again to close
the way a negative is held over wary eyes
to keep the sun from blinding in the madness
of its fire What lay between us was that
strong What joined us was that fierce
Lying in each others arms

Married she had never meant for us to happen
had seen me as diversion a momentary lapse
Now she called me treasure promised
to keep me always cherished
hidden in her private place
but forever is a length of time like any other

One afternoon precisely at the stroke of one
she lapsed into a silence without boundary beginning
middle end The air lay like a tomb around us
She could not look at me touch me say my name
She had never meant it to go so far
It had become too much for her to bear
This woman who meant more to me
than words

Should I be grateful thank whatever gods
or goddesses gifted me this passion this legacy
I cannot relinquish cast aside
Forever is a length of time without forgiveness
After twenty years I search for her no longer
but for that moment between opening and
distance when I held her close
Not yet knowing enough to turn away

Jan Schmidt

excerpt from Chapter Fourteen of
A Little Bit of Flavor

Claire smiled vaguely at the bus driver as he took her return ticket to Penn Station. She settled in her seat and stared out the window as the cement complex of the New Jersey airport whizzed by. The world was still there. Amazing. The muscles in her face relaxed; she never wanted to smile again.

Out on the freeway, the spindly bare trees of winter lined the way for the restless traffic and reminded her of the Midwest--cold, gray, and still. Her mother's white hair appeared in the dirty mounds of snow haphazardly strewn on the frozen ground and--though she'd only left her a half hour ago--she couldn't retrieve any distinct impressions of her face. Claire tried to focus, bring it back, make her have shape and contour, but only the white wavy hair remained and her own reflection in the bus window.

Some twenty years ago, Claire had ridden the bus home in the middle of winter to confess to her folks that she was pregnant. She'd thought that, until she told them about it, the visit would be pleasant—a surprise call from their daughter who'd left the year before. But her mother had immediately asked at the door, "What's wrong?" A look of disgust crossed her face, blame and anger vying for prominence.

"Nothing," Claire said. "Can't I just surprise you?" Then she gathered up hugs from her little brothers to avoid the probing eyes.

Later when she did tell them, panic rose and fell, the edges of the room disappeared. They peered down at her, asked questions. Her dad swore and paced. Her mom looked stern and long-suffering. Claire held her breath tight. They sat around the kitchen table, the mere inches that separated them expanding to an acre of daisy print oilcloth. She gave them a fait accompli: I have a place to stay for room and board till the baby comes. I'm giving it up for adoption. No, you don't have to worry about helping me at all.

After it was over, they'd never mentioned the baby again. Not till today.

The bus squeaked as it stopped. Cars were backed up to enter the lanes that entered the tunnel that would deposit them in New York City. Across from her a teenage boy in gangster clothes and headphones pulled a matching set off his girlfriend's ears and, in a loud voice and exaggerated gestures, sang to her, his brown face angelic in rap gospel sincerity. Claire knew the song and tapped her foot to the beat. The girlfriend laughed, pushed his hand away and reset her earphones. Their friends in the seat in front of them turned around and slapped five with the rapper. His girlfriend laughed with her friend, "He think he can sing. Listen to him. Baby, you can't sing. I don't even know why you try."

A black woman a few seats ahead gave a sucking sound with her teeth and shook her head. A white woman, tisking under her breath turned, her head away,. The girl aimed her narrowing eyes at the white lady.

Here we go, Claire thought.

"Hey lady, you lookin at me? You got a problem? Don't be fuckin lookin at me, understand?" The girl got her attitude on. The woman sat immobile until the girl rolled her eyes, flipped her hand at the woman and went back to insulting and teasing with her friends.

In Les' interview, she'd raved about how the kids were so much ruder than in her day. "They put their hands in each other's faces, palms up, bam, right in your face. If I'd done that my mother would have given me such an ass-whipping. No way I would have tried something like that. They do it to everyone, too. It doesn't matter—to their peers, their parents, their bosses, people on the street." Les demonstrated the moves, her own eyes popping, chin stuck out, hand on hip, haughty in the manner African-Americans had a corner on. Claire would definitely put that in the edited version.

The kids across from her faded into the distance; the darkness outside filled the universe. Suddenly, as though she'd been punched in the stomach, Claire bent forward in her seat, her head on her knees. *Why do you hate me? What did I do to deserve this?* Hot tears pressed and strained at the fleshy wall of bone behind her eyes; her muscles twisted inside her chest cavity and throttled the air before it could escape. Why couldn't she just disappear? She wanted to stab and stab and stab that voice till the voice hurt too bad to talk to her ever again.

The world shrank and expanded many times again before Claire found herself entering her own

kitchen. Iesha and Anthony met her at the door, their faces glowing in the indoor lighting safe from the darkness beyond the windows. Their skin looked richer and darker after being with her very pale mother and she liked her reflection in their faces. Claire nibbled on Iesha's baby cheeks. Claire bent down to take her boots off. Anthony told Iesha, "Claire's home now, it's time to go to bed."

"No, Grandpa, not yet." Iesha lifted her round plump face up to look at him.

"You're not staying up till 2:00 AM. I don't care what your mother does. You're in our house now." He gave her a little shove. Claire threw her coat over the back of the chair and tossed her boots into the video room.

"But Grandpa,"

"Don't start, Iesha. Read my lips, no." Then to Claire he said, "I told her she could wait till tomorrow to take her bath because there's no hot water."

"No hot water?" Claire's heart sank. "Shit, is there heat?"

"Nope, it just went out an hour ago, so it hasn't gotten cold in here yet." Anthony grinned at her. "We went to the Post Office today."

Claire was confused. Why were they so excited about the Post Office?

He said to Iesha, "You see how she is?"

Claire's face lit up. "You took my grant application in? I can't believe you did that for me."

"Oh, don't get all mushy now."

"What about the GED classes, did you call?"

"Why do you have to ruin everything?" He turned away from her, shoulders dropped, sighing.

Claire put her palm up towards his face until he looked at her. "Don't even try it," she said. Anthony grabbed her hand away and laughed.

Iesha said, "You know what we say at school?" She put her hand up to Anthony's face with her palm toward him and turned her face away from him. "Talk to the white side," then she turned the palm away from him, "cause the black don't want to hear it."

Anthony pushed her, "You think you're all it. You all that, with your palm business."

Iesha looked at Claire and held her shoulders up, "Oops, sorry Claire, I didn't mean any offense."

Claire smiled at her. "No offense taken, little pumpkin. Now lets go to bed." Bantering, teasing, playing. No harm. Where's the harm? Not in her family. This was her family now. But she was an adopted kid, an alien.

Claire watched Anthony bent over, saying prayers with Iesha kneeling on the floor by the pulled out couch. She wondered if her own son had kids yet and what it must be like to have a child and a grandchild. Anthony tucked Iesha under the covers. She giggled at something he whispered to her.

J.D. Rage

SEX SONG

The face of Howdy Doody
on the Social Distortion CD
White Light White Heat White Trash
stares up at me from the
black lacquered night table
my lover is on the bed
stuffed animals arrayed around his head
he is face down
and bound
for extreme pleasure
The chain has got a lock and the lock
bears my name
Rage
my name
Rage
my name
RAGE
on the lock that closes the circle
of the chain around my lover's neck
on the bed face down and bound
Howdy Doody stares at me
a black cat sits on the stone wall
green eyed slits are watching me as I swing
in my short short skirt
as I raise the whip
a black cat with long hair and green eyes
is watching me

**Green Light, Red Heat, Black Mass
Red Light, Blue Heat, Green Mass**
is being celebrated here
grrrrrrrrrrrrr
grrrrrrrrrrrrr
I growl with the voice I have borrowed
from the cat who stares at me along with Howdy Doody

The rope is loose, this will never do
you might escape while I am killing you
with my emotions
I am pretty vacant like the song says
and to color myself in with pink flesh
I must reach down beneath the surface
of this room
I must extend down below this plane
dip my hand into the scary nights of childhood
I must dig into the time when women
bled into the earth
to find myself
to dredge it up
and slam it down onto your back

cutting you with lashes
of ecstatic tenderness covering your body
with sweet flowers

so you can lie to me more effectively
about the day and even more about the night

I am the night
blacker than any demon ever conceived to this
edge of the blade
I was consumed whole by a geek
who did not bother with just my head
comatose with my electricity buzzing
all around the circle he found himself
sitting in dead center
together we became an hermaphrodite
it was all in our minds
I was the man half
he the woman
I am night
darker than any deserted sky
come walk into me and become infinite

as you lie before me naked
and I wrapped in my black leather
as I was born in black leather
as I was wrapped in glinting chains
linked together in a repetitive pattern that
I recognized as my own bracelet
hanging around a punker rocker's skinny neck
there are your imperfections
your blemishes that after due consideration
are no greater
are not less than
my own

I have been scarred like the aging tree
scorched by the burning teeth of god
crisscrossing my belly
similar to the slashes of a jagged knife
a many fingered web of stretched skin
are the scars caused by life expanding
within
life life life
life

does not come silently but mushrooms
atomically until bursts forth ripping its way out
putting on a grand display of mucus and blood

life life life
life

does not leave without trailing its train of decay
cutting a wide path which leaves no doubt as to
the direction for those who wish to follow
but will never disclose its mysterious
destination

sex sex sex
where once was silence

sex sex sex
no longer conducted on top of a cold stone
crypt in the graveyard
no longer taking place in the stairwell of
an old storage warehouse
no longer on the kitchen floor
no longer on the kitchen floor
no no no no no
no longer on the bathroom floor of the
neighborhood gin mill
sex sex sex

in the movie theater
you feed me popcorn and I bite your hand
I feed you and you bite my fingers
we bite each other in the movie theater

we are not in the back row
it is dark here because I am night
and I bring its curtain with me everywhere
there is romance in darkness
romance -- there is concealment in darkness
equality and fantastical imaginings
in the shadows we masquerade as anyone

There is a purple whip, rope and silver tape
in the chest which will be wrapped around you
to hold your fragile body for the onslaught
as all bodies are mortal and can slip away
without warning
to hold you here I will chain you to my
nipple ring and we will be each other's favorite dog

If you hear a howling, there is a howling going on
beneath and above you everyone is listening
and they all know what is going on in the middle
while Howdy Doody smiles on the nightstand
and the black cat blinks on the wall

I am stronger than myself when the demon enters
I am wickeder than the eviliest thought when she conquers me
I can do anything you beg me to
I can grant your most difficult request for pain
I can pull it up from my tortured gut
and splash it on you until your skin turns cherry red
something I could never share
something I could not give as a gift to anyone
something so precious to me I could never part with it
since its loss would render me eviscerated
I can give it to you
my pain
you asked me for it and it is yours

my lover is on the bed
stuffed animals arrayed around his head
he is face down
and bound
for extreme pleasure

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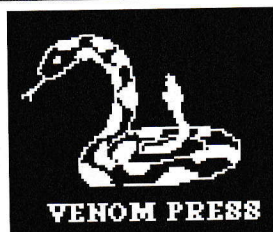
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 Photograph of **MARCO** playing in the **TOMBOYS** facing page 5, Painting of Andy Warhol facing page 39 and photograph "Salem Reflection" facing this page by **J.D. Rage**
 Photograph of **MONICA DOOGAN** and Eleanor Levine facing page 6
 Photographs by **ARTHUR RIVERS** facing pages 10 & 11
 Observations taped to various artifacts by **ORION FEIG** facing page 38

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CURARE - A Multimedia Magazine

Coming Soon And This Time We Really Mean It:

A new chapbook from: **Susan Sherman**





*This document officially confers the
status of GOD of Snakes
on*

Huggy-Bear Ferris





*This document officially confers the
status of VENOM Angel*

on

*will inman
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