



# *The Bayou Review*

The University of Houston-Downtown  
Literary and Visual Arts Journal

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The University of Houston Downtown  
Visual and Literary Arts Journal

*Spring 2003*

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# The Bayou Review

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The Bayou Review is published biannually by the University of Houston-Downtown. The journal welcomes essays, short stories, poetry, art, and photography submissions from UHD students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We also accept outside submissions. Please mail all manuscripts to:

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The Bayou Review reserves the right to edit for grammar, punctuation and content.

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## Acknowledgments

The Bayou Review Spring 2003 issue is finally here. The road to its production was one full of technical delays and creative detours, but it was a road worth traveling. Among the unexpected elements on this journey was the overwhelming amount of entries for the issue. The time it took to read and look over every submission was extremely rewarding and entertaining. Due to limited space, many of the works submitted have been earmarked for publication in the fall issue.

I would like to take a moment to thank Dr. Jane Creighton for her continued involvement and faith in the Bayou Review, and Dr. Barbara Canetti for her endless encouragement and support. Their academic and professional guidance have opened numerous doors of possibility for the future of this journal and for me personally.

I would also like to point out that this issue would not be possible without the invaluable contribution of the next Bayou Review editor, Scott Stephenson. His artistic vision and creative input were inspiring to witness and will continue to be the driving force behind this journal in the semesters to come.

Finally, to all who submitted work for consideration, thank you, and may your inspirations continue to drive your dreams and creativity.

Gracie Ochoa-Alvarado  
editor

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*"The artist is nothing without the gift,  
but the gift is nothing without the work."*

-Emile Zola

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*"The full use of your powers along lines of excellence."*

-definition of "happiness" by John F. Kennedy

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*"Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever."*

-Napoleon Bonaparte

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*"Art is a readjustment of perception  
(expressed) from physical actuality to a  
perception expressed by the artist"*

-Jack Kerouac

---

## I Came To Poetry Late

I came to poetry late, having lived long.  
Those weaving worms of silk for me are worn  
Having woven my shroud to the career of song  
The poet of the singer thus was born.  
Beautiful brown eyes, my wisdom's wife  
Her mind of trenchant power, and lithesome word—  
To be a teacher ever is her life  
She spoke to me one day—at last I heard.

Song is my singer now, poetry my staff  
I go about my days befuddled, sad  
Yet verging upon the primal, joyous laugh,  
The syllable sequence keeps me less than mad.  
I came to poetry late, having lived long.  
I don't know as how I've done the deed wrong.

---

Susan Naomi Bernstein

## Asleep in the Snow

The snow is lit by  
Sodium streetlights and  
The falling flakes take on  
A weary orange glow

The sun, it faded long ago  
Behind a bank of deep gray clouds  
And the air was white as night  
Fell and the snow swept down

Now the trees bow low  
With the snow's weight  
Branches tremble and break  
In the sharp night's cold

The street grows full with  
Winter's weariness and  
Under these sodium lights  
Spring stirs in sleep

## One-Syllable Train Poem

—Yes, she said,  
I dress in the dark.  
When I leave home there is  
no sun. I kiss  
my man, I hug my cats,  
I take this train. Each  
day it is the same. I sip  
my tea—still no light. What  
song shall I sing on this train at  
the end of night? This work I do—  
I grind my teeth—and smile and  
sigh. But each new day it is  
the same. Out in the dark I face  
that train. —Yes, she said, that is  
the rule. Out of my home, far from  
my man, no sun near, a smile as I sigh.  
I sing as I can. If not, I die.

## What Poets Do

Take me and put me in a story-  
Place me in a paragraph-  
A sentence, a stanza-  
Drop me at the end of a line  
And make me rhyme.  
Make me an adverb,  
A synonym, euphemism.  
I want to be past tense  
And singular-  
Take me and toss me down a  
Spiral of alphabets.  
Sketch me on paper  
And read me out loud.  
Do to me what poets  
Do to words.

## A Word For My People

I try to think of a name for my people

they are the third wheel,  
shorter than the average,  
greasy haired.  
They eat mixed dialect tacos in the evenings,  
labor covered eggs in the mornings.  
My people build roads,  
you can see them if you are a motorist.  
They've also built the building in which the  
road leads to.  
These people have also built bridges,  
bridges that allow you to drive across  
the ocean.

(I suppose my people are \_\_\_ bridges)

# Shark

Aztec dream  
heart of the sea  
unleash your wave upon me

Wash me to your shore  
I want to feel your sand  
in between my toes  
up and down my back  
in my hair  
on my lips  
on my breast  
kissing my face.

Pour your Spanish wine  
cleans me from what I do  
I want to be drunk by your laughter  
in pain by your sadness

Build your colonies  
sew your seed  
plant your tree  
create your land upon me  
for I give myself to you

Every molecular structure  
of my existence  
fiends for your  
lips  
hair,  
curves of your body,  
the softness of your voice,  
the innocence of your smile.

Your love is a cursed pond  
which I swam in,  
drowned in,  
and was lost in your abyss.

---

Blake Matthews

## Poseidon's Triumph

Winding drafts from Helios' paths  
Sear crisp air in chariot's climb—  
Burned nostrils and beads of earned sweat.

Victor of the chariot race finishes  
Near browning pines, screaming for Poseidon's blessings.  
Dry, cracked lips pray for a deep, sweet breath.

Dehydrated tongues silently suffocate,  
Dragging underground down yellow fields  
With upturned labyrinths of fractured, infertile mud.  
The son of Kronos hurls a thunderbolt  
Upon a youth for fear of a desolate ball of stone.

Upwards travel the final traces of moisture,  
Upwards travel dissipating remnants of clouds.  
Upwards travel tongues of flame—  
Ravaging hill and dale.  
Upwards travel blasted ash and smoke  
From sacred lands and homes.

Distant halogen candles warn  
The peril of sink holes  
That can break legs in a full sprint.

Stars burning on moonless nights;  
Guardians of blackened skies.  
Children of frost giants trickle downwards  
As the Leviathan opens its mouth—an ocean wide—  
To feed on crusty continents.

Down we go to live among sea nymphs;  
Down we go to Neptune's kingdom;  
Down we go to the salts of the Earth;  
Down we go to the sea's scavengers.

Farewell sweet lady in the green evening gown;  
Farewell crimson, eggshell, and navy blue;  
Farewell great father of us all, farewell.

---

Gwendolyn Osburg

## My Field

I cannot write you a regular love poem  
You are not a color  
You're no season  
There is no ocean to speak of  
They are paltry  
Trash

Fuck the spring rain  
It has nothing on you

I sit before you like  
Russel and Whitehead  
Before  $1 + 1 = 2$   
This proof will take 362 pages  
It's that simple  
That true

You have become  
My most basic assumptions  
Everything else I can define  
Without tautology  
But not you

How can I say you make me happy  
When happiness = what I am with you?

Redundant to say I love you  
We define love by what I know  
When I look at you

You give my life meaning?  
Meaning is what you give my life.

And this is where I fail as  
We lie in bed and I'm lost  
In this infinite loop  
Of things defining each other

When you  
Without a tincture of doubt  
Or a raindrop of uncertainty  
All the skin on your face  
Lifted to the sky  
And the half-moon of your mouth  
Leading to this abyss  
From which comes the plainest  
Rightest answer

"I don't know"

## Waiting for the Moon

Pity  
In rags  
Tells me stories  
Of moons  
Killing planets for stars  
Making midnight monsoons  
I quit listening  
The moment  
She tells me my fate  
Because death I can handle  
Not having to wait  
So I speak with death  
Whispers silence to me  
As we swim in the void  
With eternity  
Death soon gets bored  
And I fall into being  
Who'll notice me not  
With her infinite seeing  
I took off my shoes  
In this bare walls room  
Been here since then  
Waiting for the moon  
Closer every night  
Always choosing flight  
Memories sink my soul  
As I wait  
Murmuring to mice  
That maggots look like rice  
And always trying to fill a hole  
With empty hate

What a useless abuse of anesthesia we are  
Until the moon

## Untitled

The snow keeps time with the stale air  
Such a strange modelic  
Made by dead skin and breath  
It's arid  
but silence is a colder death than winter  
So I sew this thought  
With spider web silk:  
It is necessary to be happier

So I outthink myself  
Over speak my point  
Undervalue my body

And the warm, swampy waters of my sleep  
Remind me of a well kept promise

## The Dump

The Dump.

It's a breeding ground for insects and rodents.

It's the physical form of my soul.

We all have this dark inner place in our souls.

I do...

Makes me human, makes me feel pain.

It's the animal that I can fall on,

Like a small razor filling me with pain and desire.

I'm sure you have it.

Good little boys and girls don't think of such things.

Don't lie; I know you've thought of it.

# Daddy

Let's break the word down  
*D* is very simple  
On me your eyes looked down  
*A* is very common  
'Cause your ass was never around  
Just like the devil visiting church  
Afraid to touch Holy Ground  
*D* is for didn't do  
'Cause you didn't do a damn thing  
On birthdays I waited for your smile  
And the gift you didn't bring  
*D* is for don't bother  
You haven't done right this long  
*Y* is for why did I  
Worry about you this long?

---

Brian Kenneth Swain

## Covering UP

So there I am,  
Late one Saturday night,  
watching this old  
black and white  
movie with  
huge atomic mutant spiders.  
And there's this scene  
where the spider  
comes after the heroine, who,  
with a dramatic close-up scream,  
throws her forearm over her eyes,  
and gets eaten.

As I reflect on  
this poignant vignette,  
it occurs to me  
I've seen it many times before:

- car crashes
- free falls
- crimes of passion

Anytime someone is  
suddenly set upn  
by their fate,  
sees it arriving,  
cold and eneluctable,  
but just can't bear to look.

And I think it odd  
how we spend  
our entire lives

- working
- striving
- yearning

to know our destinies,  
but we are not so keen  
to meet them  
once they arrive.

## Visiting My Father

I don't get home much.

But when I do,

I try to stop by  
the old graveyard next to the highway,  
across from the iron works.

That's where my father is:

beneath the bare gray  
December branches  
and the hard-packed snow  
that covers his small in-ground stone.

It doesn't say much—

But then,

neither did he.

I kneel to brush the snow away,  
and pick up some trash  
and dead flowers.

But as the winter breeze  
creeps among the branches overhead,

I feel a strange uneasiness.

Here in my knees

I am closer to him  
than I have been in years,  
if only by a foot or two.

Still I struggle for words,

My thoughts refuse to congeal,

And my emotions, while close at hand,  
    remain elusive,  
    like the neighbor I never bothered to meet.  
So I stand and gaze upward for a moment  
    at the branches that sway and whisper overhead.  
And I wonder how many more leaves will  
  come and go  
    before I return to this place.  
Sensing that a gentle reminder might help,  
I look to the snow-covered ground,  
    and kneeling one final time,  
    I grasp a single dry and crumpled oak leaf.  
Thrusting it into my pocket,  
    I murmur something vaguely apologetic  
  and turn to go.

## A Cookie

What has yet to trickle into decibel,  
during schizophrenic coffee break lengths,  
pertaining to white, yellow, orange-red spheres?  
So celestial...  
The absent and breathing fear panic and cheering she breeds.  
Light and night never emit quite righteous spectrum sectors.  
So, damn all pregnancy just as the sterile.  
“Just get on down,” tell that subject.  
“Be.”  
Because...who is ever right?  
Why would pendulums leap canyons then?  
Brightness naps whenever we please.  
Pleasure can, certainly assured,  
remain constant in evolution.  
Romantic consolation as time tends to tattle-tale.  
Tea time hours do fluctuate.  
sometimes...  
She’s a shy li’l girl

## Jazz I

it moves up and down  
and left and right  
round and round  
makes one dizzy.  
keeps goin' round  
and round.  
turning, revolving.  
all the instruments  
all the notes  
gently crash together  
to form the song  
and who's playing?

## Jazz II

not me.  
i get off note  
forget the brakes  
mess up the melody  
it's safe to sit  
and tap your feet to the music.  
but it takes you in  
and swirls you  
not asking  
what note you sing in

# Deja vu

I wish...  
I could be as strong  
As strong as you.  
No matter what is wrong  
Not as unstable as reality.  
Reality in a mad man's dream see?  
Waves crashing over me.

You're with me in this dream sea.  
Waves crashing over me.  
Salt taste in my mouth and eyes,  
Sliding my hand between your thighs.  
Salt taste on your skin  
Déjà vu again!

I'm drowning...

Your tide rushes in  
Sweeping me out again.  
Crystal reflections in your deep sea eyes.  
The rhythm of your waves holds me mesmerized.

---

Caroline Adams

## No-Show

The day steams with midsummer fire.  
Flat sunlight  
slides off the hoods of cars.  
The pavement vibrates,  
heatwaves lick the asphalt.

I swing the steering wheel free,  
change lanes  
to follow broken lines west.  
I always feel this way  
when I drive to meet you:  
as if I've forgotten something--  
that I could remember it,  
if I just didn't show up this time.

## Though the Night May Find Her

She is a woman clothed in wilderness,  
distant as a crest of moon  
drifting in a winter lake.  
She walks alone in this world,  
its bitterness enclosing her  
like a cold embrace.  
You may offer a moment's warmth,  
sanctuary, healing.  
She may nod and beckon,  
gliding from twilight  
to a room's dismal glare,  
but she will expect nothing from you.  
If you linger,  
needful in the absence of conversation,  
she is aloof as the furthest constellation,  
though the night may find her  
in your arms again,  
and starlight falls on a nearing shore.

# The Televised War

Each night at 6,  
we gaped at our new world:  
jungle bivouacs in naked forest,  
tense young soldiers  
carelessly shouldering M-16s,  
cowering reporters dodging VC,  
a quick-cut of medics  
tending the doomed or the dead.  
We came to dread  
camo gear in suicide green,  
the heavy whir of transport helicopters,  
the shrill chatter of foreign tongues.  
From clean-cut newsmen,  
we received body counts,  
long lists of POWs and MIAs.  
We were notified of daily skirmishes  
on the Ho Chi Minh Trail,  
of the helpless in Hanoi Hilton,  
the horror of My Lai.  
We heard "free fire zone,"  
and "escalate."  
We listened for "end"  
and "over."

We did not speak.  
We drilled blank stares  
into a ghostly blue screen.

This was how we prayed.

---

Mikel Cole

## Sonnet for a Phoenix

Can peace from the ashes of war arise?  
Why can't we this senseless destruction prevent?  
I'm forced, in the end, to admit that descent  
is implied by the effort to conquer the skies.

Although tragic, it's loss of life  
which enables those who suffer after  
to learn the worth of children's laughter.  
Death's forces fuel the birth of life.

Quite often cruel, the truth displays  
its beauty in masks of hideous form.  
As pain simply proves that a heart is still warm,  
so too the fire flight's future conveys.

That's why this cycle won't ever cease;  
it's only through war that we know about peace.

## She said, He said

She, reclining on ruffled sheets  
said, "This is nice, don't you think?  
Last night, this morning, everything between...  
Are you hungry, Love? Want something to drink?"

He, rolling over to face the window,  
replied, "No thanks. I'm fine.  
It's late, you know, I have to go..."  
and returned to the home of his own mind.

As he stood up, she looked up  
and in his stance she knew  
the truth. "On your way out lock-up  
this time." "Of course, I always do."

Just like that, just like before,  
her love walked out and locked the door.

## Cincinnati

Change of seasons,  
winter fading to spring.  
Slow melting snow,  
piled for bases.  
Grab the bat.  
Don't forget the ball.  
Who cares if you have to wear a coat and gloves?  
Baseball season approaches in

### *Cincinnati*

Is it time  
to grab bat and ball?  
It's cold. Winter has not passed  
but who cares?  
It's the start of baseball season  
for a young boy.  
Baseball and snow; baseball and cold;  
do they mix? Only for a young boy in

### *Cincinnati*

Now a new baseball season is here.  
Cincinnati the birthplace of baseball, they say.  
Maybe that's why young boys yearn  
to be the first  
to throw that first ball,  
to take to the fields racing through the snow,  
even though it does not make sense or reason.  
It's the start of baseball season in

### *Cincinnati*

Check the papers, it's spring training.  
Did beg Ted hit a homer?  
How well is Ewell pitching?  
A young boy scans the paper daily  
checking stats of his favorite players,  
wishing that he was in Florida,  
a member of his favorite team,  
the Reds of

*Cincinnati*

*I was that young boy*  
playing baseball in the snow  
in March, in Cincinnati.  
Playing catch with a buddy,  
hoping we would not drop the ball in the snow.  
Were we rushing the season?  
Sure – but who cares?  
It was always baseball season in

*Cincinnati*

*Need a new ball...*  
the old one's come undone,  
it's burst red stitching  
and scuff marks tell the story  
of wood against horsehide  
and if that ball could talk,  
it would tell the stories  
of a young boy's life in

*Cincinnati*

Need a new mitt,  
the old one is worn.  
A Johnny Mize model would be great.  
Everybody knew Johnny Mize, and his  
big, orange glove  
with a perfectly formed pocket  
with full webbing between first and second fingers,  
no ball could escape my grasp in

Cincinnati

*At last the green grass*  
surges where snow once was.  
Coats are no longer required.  
Gloves are no longer required  
except for the big, orange glove  
my dad bought for me.  
New ball, too  
oh he was a great dad, my dad in

*Cincinnati*

*Time stands still*  
for a young boy in love with baseball.  
Endless days of sandlot games  
early in the morning, mid afternoon,  
or maybe a game in the evening.  
The Cincinnati Reds on the radio,  
baseball never ended for a young boy in

*Cincinnati*

*I remember these endless days*  
of new hope for a new season  
of endless sunshine,  
of hero worship.  
My dad,  
my Cincinnati Reds could do no wrong  
In the best season of the year  
the start of baseball for a young boy from

*Cincinnati*

## Angry Stew

There's a stew bubbling on my stove.  
It's been simmering awhile,  
but lately it's been close to a boil,  
spattering all over the place,  
making a mess in the process.  
I know I've added a few questionable ingredients:  
the wrong people, places and things,  
but I've come to learn  
that a base of Type A personality  
combined with years of frustration  
and a heart filleted by love  
will lead to a volatile mixture  
when you add a lot of painful memories  
and a hearty dose of an inability to let go.

The more I stir it the more I've become aware  
of what's around me;  
I'm having trouble reconciling  
the point we're supposed to have in being here.  
How can we be slim and sexy yet going bankrupt  
in a world filled with terrorists and globalism?  
Or is the real acid reflux in the gap between truth and fiction?  
Just more crushed pepper for my stew.  
All these ingredients seemed right at the time;  
but now they've changed my recipe,  
and I mixed it so hard I broke my hand.  
I don't even want to stir it anymore,  
but I feel helpless to turn off the heat.  
It's taken on a fire of its own,  
stinging my tongue and making it hard to swallow,  
and I don't know if there is a cute colored  
pill to make everything feel better.  
I keep hoping that I can keep the lid on  
before it boils over into a mess I can't clean up.

## Purple Roses

Purple rose embedded in your hair  
Angel breath is everywhere  
I remain standing wearing the mark of venus  
Cold in my solitude without you  
Mars is in the back room speaking  
Blasphemy  
How can I be standing still with a cold heart  
Lost and Blind with my eyes open  
You touch me with fire  
I will never burn alone again  
Glow down your light to my heart  
Purple roses embedded in your hair

## 17

17 was lost in the sea  
Breathing out to breathe in  
Holding on to hold out  
Drowning feeling  
17 grows apart  
17 bleeds on through me  
I've lost everyting  
I've lost nothing  
Innocence was just a series of moments  
Lost in you  
Lost in me  
17 was gone  
Close to my heart, nevermind, unwind  
17 was blind  
Close to heart

---

Adriana Hernandez

## Breathe

The stranger's whisper flitted across my ear

His voice the crunch of glass

Spinning in a blender

He stepped near me

So close I held my breath

The hairs on his arm brushed mine

He left me with

Fear -

Deep as I never felt again

The stranger's words reverberated through me

Guitar feedback at 120 decibels

All other noise ceased to exist

When he slunk away

The stench of his words clung to my skin

Words typed on paper

# A Theory of Radical Notions

radical notions  
are a major source of amusement  
for those of us  
that have them  
it isn't always necessary  
to act them out  
or take them too seriously  
in fact that might ruin everything  
take all the fun out of it's  
it's easy to tell  
which ones have their own seriousness  
their full effect is always there  
there's an awe a majesty  
when certain ones arrive  
and you know your life  
will never be the same  
with all the playful ones  
dancing and farting  
and cutting their own throats  
and telling jokes  
about the nature of the universe  
all well and good  
for a wonderful existence  
but these other ones that arrive  
these perfectly radical notions  
you might have seen them  
now and then from a distance

but when they turn up for good  
in your life to stay  
no use pretending

you might as well  
just say hello

they're not going anywhere  
until you understand completely

and they're full of wisdom

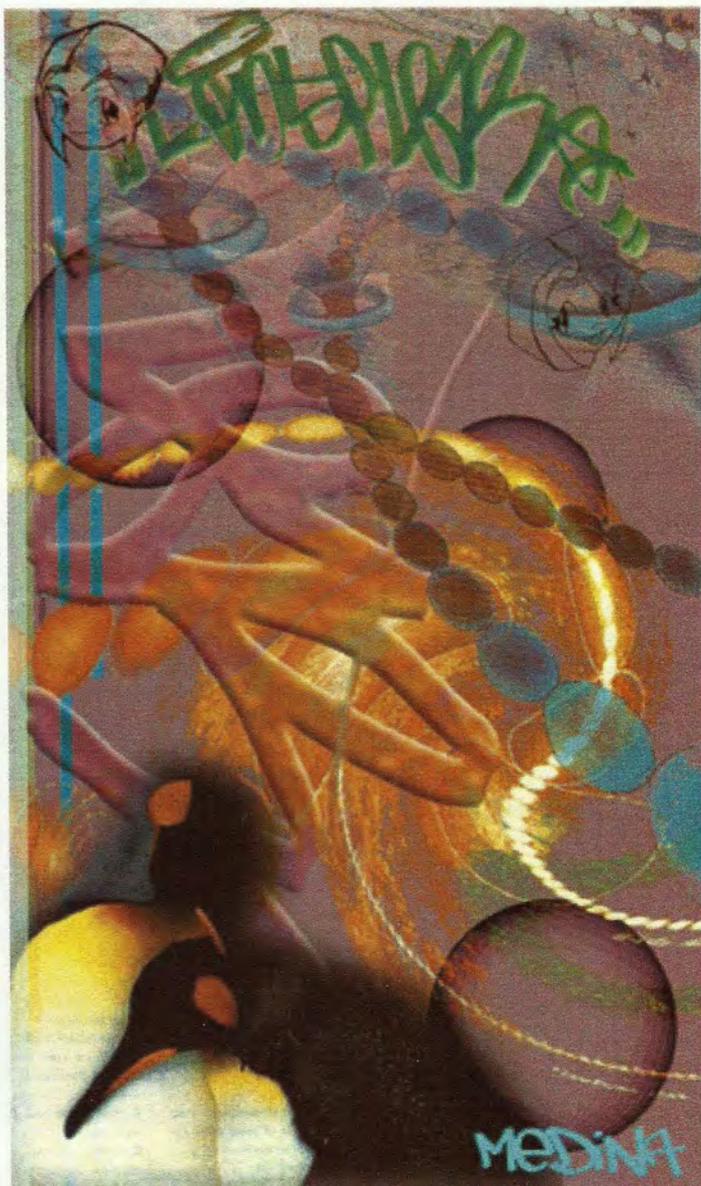
## Untitled

a picture of nothing  
that goes  
about something  
beautifully

sitting very still with a cat  
petting softly purred for a while

as I am  
what fear of the other  
complicates us

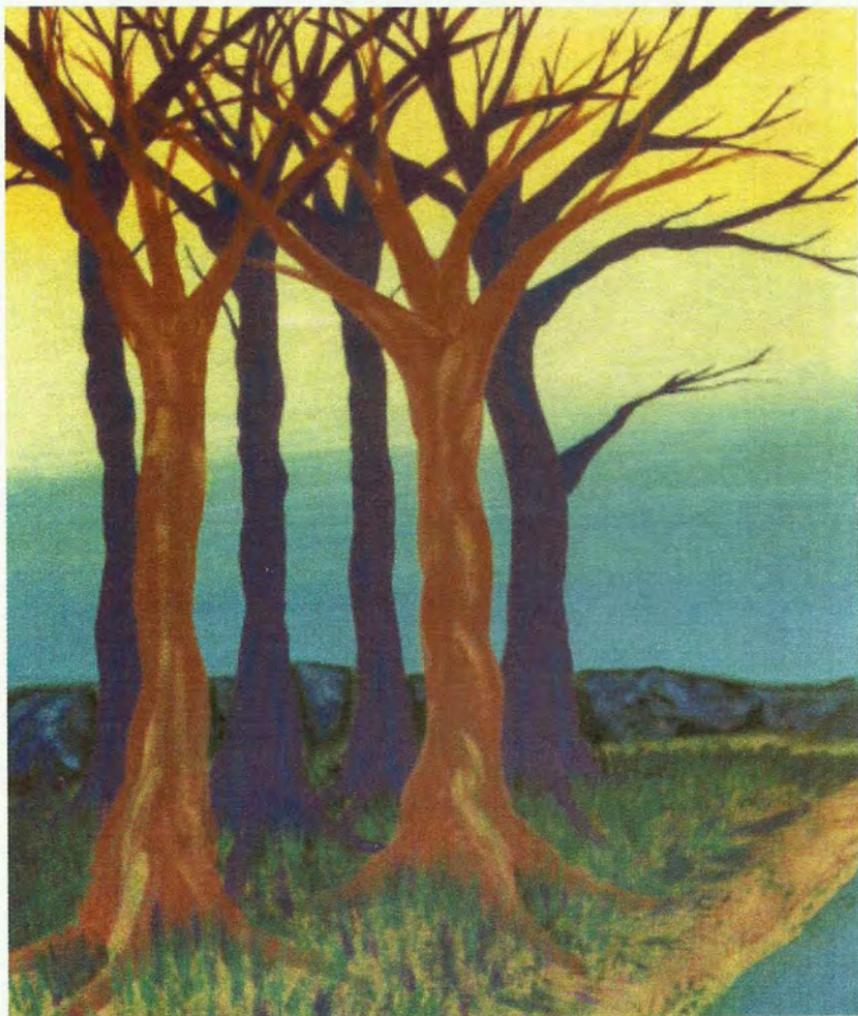
so many gods  
or none



“Konsprier”

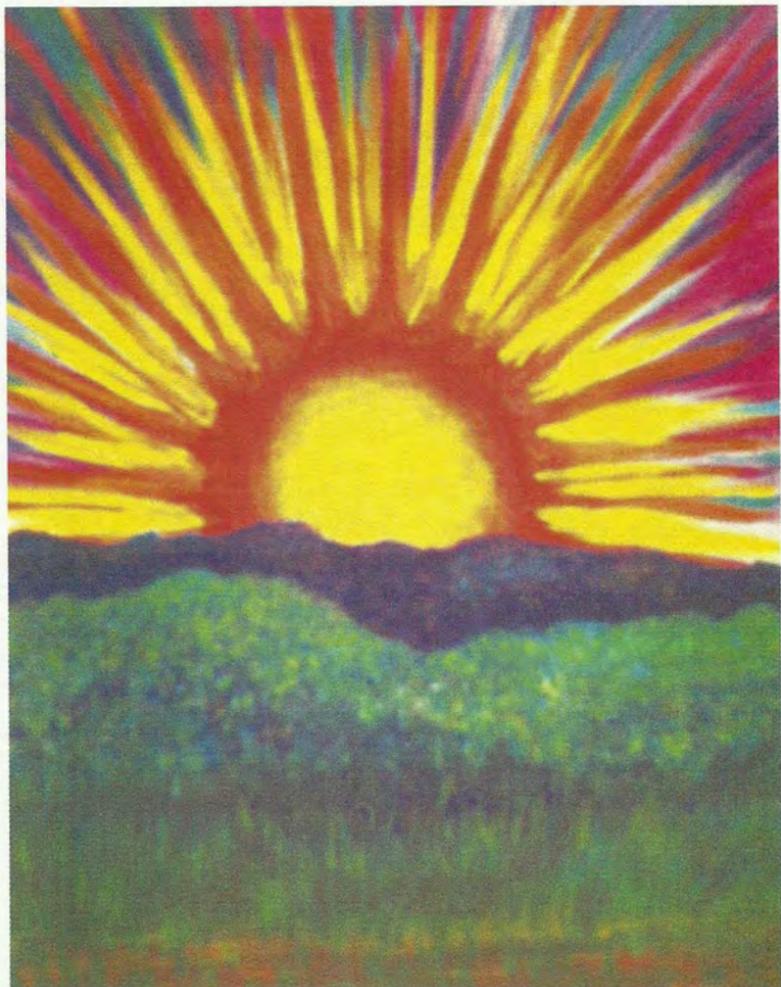
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Stephanie Chadwick



“Morning Mist”

(Acrylic on canvas)

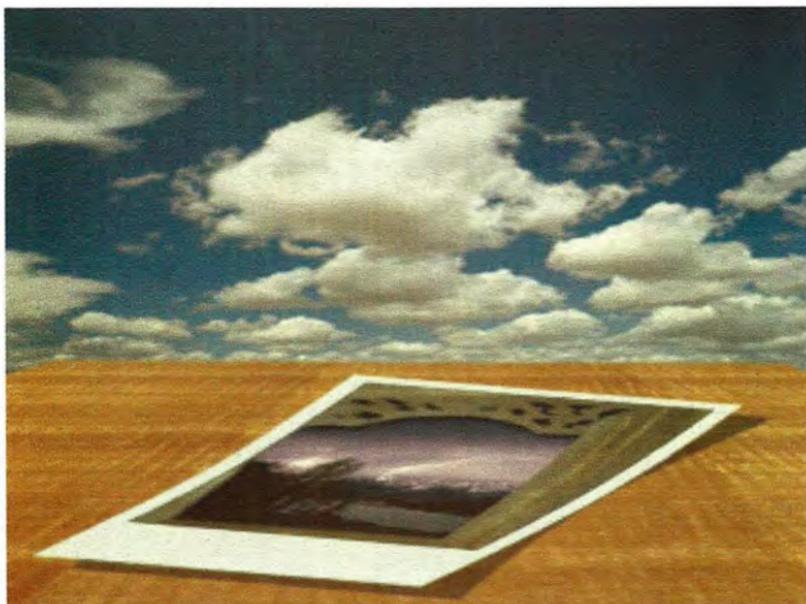


## “Sunburst II”

(Acrylic on canvas)

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Moses J. Hernandez



“Stormy but Nice”

## Wine

Her eyes are purple like Elizabeth Taylor's,  
Marilyn Monroe by Dali on the wall.  
Our lady breaks her back for us.  
Hour glass figure minute by minute,  
She pours more wine.

She is an illusion like numbers  
On my watch  
When I cannot sleep.

She pours Burgundy  
Unattended wound,  
I like the taste of wine mixed  
With my blood.  
The glass is full for now.  
I spill wine on oak  
On another night of loneliness.

Thorns rupture our lady's heart.  
She says, "Last call."

## Mirrors (13)

You say don't judge but you will  
you scream and yell their mouths to still  
those letters scattered about the page  
twisted and tattered in blind, shrill rage  
claim you know, claim you are  
but it's known to all, just how far  
from the truth you are

## Cup of Joe (21)

To measure the water, to grind the beans,  
Sweeten the taste and lighten its shade.  
Fill the mug by any means,  
To gather my wits as sharp as a blade.

No crullers needed, biscotti or scone,  
Just tiny straw or plastic spoon.  
I'll not answer the door nor pick up the  
phone,  
Hot or cold I'll drink till noon.

Temples throb and muscles ache,  
Stomach rumbles, and blood pumps slow.  
Relief will come in caffeine's wake,  
My kingdom for a cup of joe.

# Any Little Intersection

Delirium misleading to hoist one's self  
atop the pyramid of choice

*Only led be outrage*

Entertaining angry vices  
so we appear more disaffected

*Art imitating outrage*

Reaching out to steal the food from hands of peasants  
Inspiration imitating broken fingers to sell dissent to journalism

4 cars parked with windows tinted — skyline spliced with fiber  
optic instant message  
ex post anything to cause the tension necessary to start an  
outrage.

*Life imitating civilization*

*imitating our instinctual passion*  
for getting to the top of the  
tallest pyramid

Invalid options we program your reaction  
You shall up rise as you were instructed to openly defy  
the system

This outrage is permanent and will probably change  
everything

The way your children will bear the burdens of  
existence

And your comfort zone pretty much as you know it.  
Property values like a symbol of us merging

The way paint drips from canvases to your cloak then  
Converges with carpet

Next thing you know your defacing your homeland on purpose  
A vandal will cherish his mark on the overpass

As he knows that at least  
somebody will notice

dissatisfaction

But this illusion of safety will fade as *we imitate art mocking  
our senses*

*avant garde extension of the arm* with a fist clutching a pen  
.....bleeding dissent

.....*Imitating human experience* .....

....*Led only by outrage*...

## A Letter To My Heroes

I've studied you in depth  
I know you better than myself  
One day you'll see the sketches carved in ice  
and melted one by one  
To drown the present tense as we advertise  
and sell ourselves.  
Your name in vein enjoyed many public misspellings  
Exploit your wisdom... taking pictures... making  
axiom of your sanity  
Your crooked sense of humor, your ability to create emptiness  
in a room  
We fought so hard to keep expressions simple @nd lo 0k at  
wh a+ y 0u d I d.  
I painted your eyes on my wall once and wrote  
excerpts from your epic  
in my hallway  
With a sharpie marker and a shotgun –thank god for my  
miscalculations and how they  
always miss in movies  
I guess I'm still a pacifist but I can't believe my  
government so I've got no cause  
Or common sense and that's what I call freedom  
So I sift through the puzzles and sort through  
illusion  
The strangers among us confuse me too  
I still haven't discovered the Entrance you looked for and have  
no clue as to what I'm  
being Punished for. There's so much to learn from the  
constraints and conformity.....

the observance that the world might not spin around me

So I smile at your unkept hair and your  
eyebrows and

I laugh hiding the fear that I know how you're  
probably right.

So you the romantic wrote my life by the chapter,  
cinema ending...cliffhanger

Suspense set Victorian England where the dapper  
young chap loses girl  
Comes to terms with fear, I don't want to give it away but you  
get the idea

I'll never want to see that halo you wept for...but I know that in  
time the truth is inevitable

There will come time to read Longfellow grow a beard and go  
insane

But for now I'm just  
glad to be sitting beside

you  
Now I'm finally accustomed to paranoia — I'm sorry it  
killed you

You just can't believe everything.  
We're all just a part of the grandfather clock under the ill-  
tempered boot of our television

I mean Robinson Jeffers built a box by the ocean to be  
completely alone

Keep out salesman and seagulls  
I love the idea but as a reasonable species we're  
entirely to human to go through  
with it

And Thomas you were on to  
something as well...  
what a fabulous world that you were able to show us.  
I bet that you are tossing ...and turning ...in your grave... at the  
sight ...  
of this shithole we are living in Now.

---

Ken Jones

## The Drunk Tank

Welcome! To  
The drunk tank,  
The stinging clang  
Of the last door  
To the warm outside  
Introduces with tympanic panic  
The clunk and clank of cowboy  
Boots into the sunset.  
This is called a prison.  
Gaze in amazement  
Through the sites of  
Your only home for the moment.  
A solitary light  
Dangles in gallow's serenity  
From above.  
Six dormant bodies  
Caterwaul sprawling  
Sweating symphonies.  
Flesh presses close  
Perverse and appalling.  
No fungus scales the wall.  
The tile floor gleams  
Spic and Span  
Whitewased testimony to  
The perfectibility of Man.  
I am paramecium sputum.

## Scenes of a Monday Morning at the Gulfton DMV

Hip young hustlers of  
another country eye the long line,  
their hair so slick and shiny  
but shoes beat earth roots.  
They all have the same tattoo  
of a thorn that sticks in their side  
and can only be removed by  
Medusa's teeth going down on them.  
A man has the biggest nose  
and smallest chin I have ever seen,  
his face an arrow pointing  
to the sin of saints on Xmas Eve.  
The soul of the healers bleeding  
itself dry with philanthropy,  
a forgotten art of idle conversation  
in the grocery store parking lot or  
transit stop depot rest benches.  
Now we entertain each other with  
our cell phone conversations.  
We slow down and rubberneck  
till we tie our throats in nooses  
stopping to stare at his old lady's ass.  
'How do you like mine?'  
- Look but can't touch.  
Around us they are tearing down  
the walls to put up bigger ones.  
The noise drowns out  
any remaining desires

to confide in one another and  
complain for good ol' times sake.  
Soon it will be your turn  
to stand blank and faceless at  
the front of the line  
to tell the nice lady what your  
name is – as if she needs it.  
Everything she desires is  
right there encoded on that  
thick black magnetic strip.

## Day Sleepers (smoke in bed)

I remember when you dyed your hair cherry blonde  
and made love to me in your catholic girl's skirt.  
It was warm outside and I held your shaky hand  
while we listened to Fiona Apple and The Pixies in my bed.

I can recall the way the afternoon sun fell through in beams  
from the sundry little slits in the mini-blinds.  
It lit the austere walls with dancing lucent dots  
as a dauntless spring breeze rattled the old screen.

In the extraneous little rays of sharp white light  
I could see the shady brook of a cold summer spring.  
All the white dustmites danced in my alcove's sunbeams  
as you puffed on your smoke with my arm around you.

I felt your naked shoulder resting heavy on my warm flat chest,  
I held on tight never knowing when I would lose you;  
What day, month, or year it most surely would be,  
when you would turn in your keyring, I could never be certain.

But all those afternoons, we would make quiet love  
with the shades drawn and little sunbeams peeking in, were perfect.  
I still have your set of keys although you will never reclaim them,  
they just remind me of the rattle at the door those afternoons.

Afternoons when you would come in from work or school,  
and drop your bag on the floor and throw your shoes  
with a loud thud on the hardwoods, and quietly undress  
with a wicked girlish grin of understanding fate and bitter partings.

Most times I was still in bed and couldn't stand to face the world until you forced your lips against mine, your hair falling in my face, pressing your chest or palms down upon me and saying,

“Baby, you sleep so god damned much,  
I swear, one day your gonna sleep so long  
you'll wake up and I'll be gone forever.”

## The Only Cure

Lips grossly chapped to the point of bleeding,  
fever blisters and flaky skin suspended  
on a mouth so thirsty – drank me a river.  
Sudden thoughts of bacon and omelets,  
orange juice and a before breakfast cigarette  
but suddenly it hurts too much to eat  
and the cigarette will just have to do.

The afternoon cartoons are all that's on  
and tragic day time talk show episodes.  
Pounding headache makes it hard to see  
or is it just the bourbon and barley still,  
making it's way through these blue veins?  
Nape slumped against the headboard -  
it's hard to sit up straight or even move  
when the demons in your belly twist their knives  
and bleed your liver dry of precious years.  
Scratch your hairy paunch and heave a sickly cough  
at the television – who cares about you Ricki Lake?  
The aspirin bottle's empty like your soul -  
the demons ate them both long after last call  
and spit out what was left of the heart and liver.

The bathroom's too far away, just go ahead,  
brace your shaky knees and wet the bed.  
The cloud of tobacco settles, stomach never will,  
go ahead and kiss the bottle with your lips –  
it's well past noon and time you made up.  
Two are one again and now it's safe to say,  
the only cure for a hangover is a heartache.

## Pasch'al Wine

Sunday finally arrived and so there was to be a grand party in  
our honor  
I arrived early to study the dirty dust corners  
spilled beer-soaked concrete floors  
In my fleet temerity I scooped up cigarette butts while you  
watched curiously  
Dark brown hair ~  
Rich creamy Vietna cheeks,  
You said no sudden words ~  
shuffling your passive feet  
Pause – your eyes were cool and gray and winced at me with  
interest  
I unloaded bundles of wine bottles  
red, white, blush, sweet, tart, California, Italy, France  
You politely asked that I pour you a glass:  
I didn't know who you were and had my suspicions of drunk  
forlorn girls  
who ask young poets for wine instead of first names.  
You requested a white, I poured a Sauvignon Blanc  
into a red plastic cup  
and held out my hand  
in the hush  
of the tenebrous studio  
for you to drink.  
I waited and watched the first sip dissipate on your tongue and  
then smelled the cork.  
We looked at each other as if I, a wine steward  
patiently waited to pour  
my tired heart in your red cup.

Nod of approval – soon poets arrived to hide in corners and be poets  
of the night

sad poets, lost poets, loud poets, quiet, disinterested poets, all-  
American, diction poets

who read like the rest of us never write

and sound better than sentences allow most poets.

Your voice set sweet words buoyantly above bluesy measures as the  
whole room relished

I stayed quiet and just listened –

Sweet soul

sing scratchy soothing songs

to tantalize my enigma verse,

take me away.

During the break you kissed me and winced your eyes inspecting my  
unshaven face

with quiet admiration your breath fell softly

on my cheeks and you pinched my fingers softly.

I lost my eloquence and wanted to rip all of you to shreds

of paper from your leather bound journal

with all those prolific words that slide off your tongue with wine.

We then drank dark burgundy French Bordeaux:

dry, but sweet with black currants

rich purple plums and oaky undertones.

I let the finish slide off my tongue

listening to your words

I am finished.

Our feet carried us to a bar and there were your familiar people:

I drank a dark brown beer and wished for more kisses and  
wine,  
you clasped my hand tightly as I grabbed your taut round  
bosom  
and we ran outside under a street lamp.  
The light, luculent and warm  
in the starless humid night  
your lips did all the work  
embracing mine to clasp them tight  
my fingers ran through  
your fecund proliferating hair  
and all the while inebriated dolts  
passed us by and stared.  
Our arms were elixirs  
for humid starless sad poem nights  
our lips were empyreal  
as they softly caressed one another's bite  
the exact sensation  
became immemorial in the spell of wine  
leaning against somebody's car  
I whispered in my head  
that you were mine.

---

Alex Wukman

## Hasta Be Written in the Sky

(based on the poem Hadda Be Playin on the Jukebox by Ginsburg)

It hasta be written on the CNN crawl  
Hasta be blasted over the radio  
Hasta be screamed on the cartoons  
The U.S. government is killing its sons and daughters  
It hasta be said in kidspeak  
It hasta be said in Mexican papers  
If Bush scratches and stretches  
We get doublecrossed by fascist thugs and killer agents  
Rich oil execs with dirty hands  
Arms dealers in america workin with arms dealer in Israel  
workin with big time syndicate time warner  
It hasta be said until we drop dead  
It hasta be spray painted on ghetto walls  
It hasta be tattooed on punk rockers backs  
It hasta be yelled in the bedroom where lovers are fucking  
It hasta be howled on the street by crackheads to cabbies  
Hasta be played on jukeboxes  
Hasta be printed on flyers and passed out in Guilliani's times  
square  
Hasta spin in after hours parties  
Hasta be documented in bestsellers with movie rights  
Hasta be on the front page of the times and the journal  
Hasta be dropped by J-Lo and P-Diddy for the top 40  
countdown  
Hasta be whispered in high school hallways  
Hasta be downloaded off the net  
Hasta be neon lights flashing  
Hookers stopping dead in the middle of a blowjob  
Hasta be general Tommy Franks and the kurds getting together

to destabilize OPEC reported the nation  
Hasta be the US and Saudis together cutting Iraq out of the pie  
Invasion of Kuwait 24 hour notice on the hotline  
Hasta be the CIA and The Bloods selling coke in south central  
World wide fundraising for black ops  
Hasta be the terrorists, the troops, and the pushers workin together  
Bigger than Reagan, bigger than freedom  
Hasta be slaughterhouses full of blood  
Hasta be missing limbs and starving children third world genocide  
Hasta be a media gangrape  
Hasta be in Larry King's mouth  
Hasta be Al Quaeda, the agency, the oil companies, the Saudis  
One big set of blood thirsty psychopaths  
Workin together to kill us all  
Snipers and murderers everywhere outraged on the make  
Secret drunk brutal dirty and rich on top of an oil rig  
Industrial cancer plutonium aids shantytown cities grandmas bedsores  
brother's lust mother's anger father's resentment  
Hasta be the slave masters wanting control and getting rich  
On wanting protection for the status quo  
Wanting junkies, wanting Venezuela, wanting Afghanistan, wanting Iraq  
Yes, hasta be the CIA, the oil companies, and the republicans  
Multinational capitalists  
Strong arm death squads  
Deriving detective agencies for the oh-so very rich  
And in New York and in DC and in Pennsylvania, Afghanistan,  
Colombia and the Philippines  
Killing innocent people  
Hasta be capitalism, the vortex of this rage  
This competition man to man

The horse is dead and the camel is beggin  
The companies wipe out their competition  
Slap an M-16 in a boy's hand, send him across the ocean  
Bomb Baghdad, settle the score  
White out the truth  
Warning to old European governments:  
Secret police embrace for decades  
The SAS and the ATF put 14 rounds in the backs of 16 year olds  
The mossad and the CIA blow up nightclubs  
MI6 and the FBI one mind brute force and fulla money  
and fulla money and fulla money and fulla money  
Haveta be rich, haveta be powerful  
Haveta murder in Colombia 200,000  
Haveta murder in Afghanistan half-a-million  
Haveta murder in Yugoslavia  
Haveta murder in Iraq  
and haveta murder in America  
haveta murder in america  
haveta murder in america

---

## Suburban Dreams

half realized hopes and abandoned aspirations sit  
smoldering in the noonday sun as the  
intergalactic joad family stands  
selling dreams and desires to pay  
off the short term interest on the  
thirty year loan for a brighter tomorrow so  
the mindless middle  
income drones come and  
act daring by sifting  
through the refuse of  
long-gone glories and scavenging the  
bones of human misery in  
hopes of furnishing the nest with a  
velvet messiah or  
meaningless mementoes from  
a simpler time when  
life was held together with  
spit and bailing wire and  
no one dared to wonder  
might things be better and  
the founding fathers smile  
too many times as antiquated  
arms and outdated ideas are  
bartered for the blood of a nation to  
burn away the leeches and  
invest in life's business knowing  
full well that the rising tide won't  
recede and there isn't enough  
room in the life raft  
for everyone

---

Chris Beiers

## A Regard for Breathing

You touch eternity in this  
Lips meet in the still  
Shoulders sigh  
Muscles relax on the moment  
As if the ache was too long

This will do  
Hello?

You picked up the phone  
No one was there before this

She saw you huddled there with your cigarettes  
You had decided it was over  
The rescue wouldn't work  
Tomorrow was going to be intelligent though

Hello?

Today is smarter  
You show her a seedling  
Still you  
But the strength is awake

You promise yourself it's for good

This time

---

Dan Patrick Gailey

## Untitled

With a rat tat tat of the drums  
the warrior figure just hums  
standing over the bodies of his once loved friends and chums  
kneeling in the middle of the field, he can still feel the steel  
pressed against his head – \*BAM\* another mother fucken dead  
what are the depths that we're digging  
now we're living all alone in a warzone  
and my breath is the only secret thing  
that I have left in my home

Privacy is another casualty, another one of you, another one of me  
I know the enemy sittin in his office with a pompous like stance  
looking at a tv watching war at a glance

George Orwells 1984 had a term for me  
like a term for the war and the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

It only matters about the bottom line,  
drawn in the sand, with blood and time  
it doesn't matter about reigion, creed, or races,  
but what haunts me is to look in the mirror  
and see their ghostly faces.  
with a rat tat tat of the drums  
the warrior figure just hums

## motha 2 motha

she was birthed in luv  
drug thru that Mississippi mud  
yet still arose as clean as a whistle  
cause when confronted it's 'bout the principle  
of the situation  
feminine elevation  
soulful irrigation  
melanated relations  
not too proud for the bus station  
cause she gotta make moves  
on the grind to prove  
that it's all worth it for her seeds  
those growing mouths to feed  
those same mouths that occasionally speak when not spoken to  
just to test authority and see if she'll follow thur  
with the verbal threats  
and you can bet she met  
each sassy strand with a backhand  
cause most times she fulfills the role of both woman and man  
yeah her responsibilities be grand  
in stature and in nature  
motha nature giving blessings and hard knock lessons  
you know they say: teach a man teach an individual  
teach a woman teach a nation  
so no time for feeble frustration  
woman lead the way  
to a brighter day

after a ghetto night  
supply the demand for wisdom and insight  
without depleting all of your resources  
patronizing those kinetic energy forces  
forcing me to surrender daily meditations to the Creator  
for my procreator  
praying that today like her  
i'm sho nuff eloquent ebony motha

## May I Be Not Sorrow, But Life In You

For sorrow's sake  
Lay your troubles to rest  
Tears have watered this garden  
To a drowning death

The sun's radiance  
Once substance for life  
Only serves to steam  
The nutrients of the garden's essence

New sorrows birthed daily  
As the sun dies in the west  
Eroded layers of emotion  
Testify deaths trail from conception

The abused heart is a weapon  
Piercing the soul  
With agonizing cramps  
Of non-rhythmic beats  
Stalled by breath disrupting  
Moments so continuous  
They are life's cycle

Sorrow is lonely  
Greedy for life's hurts  
Exploiting discontentment's growth  
Parasite for existence  
Only wishing it itself  
Could fade away  
But forever it is emboldened  
To life's side  
Life's need for misery  
Too resistant to enjoy  
Peaceful permanence

Would sorrow dream  
It would be no more,  
Some will say save for sorrow  
There could be no comprehension  
To the depth in emotion  
But understand,  
Sorrow is not part of life's equation  
Just an addendum  
To unwanted situation  
For sorrow's sake  
Lay your troubles to rest  
That your breath  
Would breathe  
Instilling new life within  
Allowing experience  
Beyond the curve of existence

Would the sun once more heal  
Evaporate those cloud soaked eyes  
Lift their cover  
That they might once again see

And though they may not  
Cast sight upon Eden  
The garden still blossoms within

Words spoken  
So troubles would no longer  
Harden the heart  
Words spoken  
To decontaminate the poison  
Of restricted life's flow

Accept what is  
So it would trouble no more  
For sorrow's sake

## Tour My Venus

the thoughts of flowers fill my dreams  
walking on the crest of a quarter moon  
feet embraced by bubbles on a sea of gray  
talking to the trees  
and making love to midgets dressed in coconuts  
driving into a hole: no risk of obligation  
floating in darkness  
emerging on a fire truck covered in Jello  
racing a witch to the clouds because she has a nice ass  
phone ringing in the distance  
truck honking  
rushed by intimidation  
possessed by another life  
no more midget sex  
only fear of being late to work  
time rushes your eyes like a red light in traffic  
its only 7:30  
hatred of the man who set it so damn early  
midget sex fading to black

---

Ursula Dorsey

## Feel-Good-Right-Now

I masturbate much too much  
whether it be with chocolate  
or the purchase of a new handbag  
eating of some delicious morsel  
indulging in an intoxicating liquor  
or with the dildo hidden smugly under my pillow.

I search for the indescribable for feeling  
of comfort  
solace  
security  
Like I imagine, the womb must be.

What I really crave is to masticate on the issues of my existance  
to find my voice and decry my hearts desire  
but I'm addicted to instant gratification  
and so I masturbate  
to the sounds of soul stirring music  
in the delight of heart felt words  
to a really good read  
and put off the withdrawal of my self imposed obsession  
to the feel-good- right-now.

## Losing You

A box above the street  
Family plot #804  
A single bulb spews light  
Casting shadows on the door  
Constant clatter of the blinds  
Keeps me from my sleep  
Nerves crawling on my skin  
I hear the city lights  
And see their blaring horns  
My body close to bones  
Hunger hurts my teeth  
Knees drawn in tight  
Like an old woman dies  
Cold is biting at my feet  
Damn blankets gone AWOL  
My mind is soon to follow  
Without you

## Devotion

I stand in  
The pouring rain and  
Shout up to your windows  
And let the neighbors  
Think I'm crazy

---

Gracie Ochoa

## Spell

He seduces with sounds and ideas that taste of honey and  
Sees the world through eyes of hope and beauty  
His heart beats with crimson love and youth that  
Forever guides his path of uncertainty

His presence in my life resounds like  
A thunderous storm  
Loud, beautiful, fearful, yet comforting like  
Something foreign that so belongs

He's my friend, my confidant, my ease and  
In my mind and soul becomes elusively a lover  
Changing and shifting constantly in motion  
And emotion

I awaked at dawn in an empty space  
That envelops time  
Only to discover that I'm addicted  
To the powerful spell of a memory

## After Elena

We had loved her, maybe for always. I like to think we loved her before we even knew her, all the time before, the years we spent trying to find her.

Then, we were lost and wandering, no more than frail spirits. Yet somehow we found a way, a direction, that led us to her. After crossing what seemed an endless desert, we stumbled across a creekbed that led to a small, struggling stream that kept us alive. But soon the creek became a river that flowed down from the mountains. By then, we were hoping that we were near her at last. Sadly, we learned that we had come too late.

We found her in a high valley, reclining, sprawled across a great forest. Brightly painted houses were built across her breasts, her arms and legs. Narrow dirt roads crisscrossed her body and were traveled heavily by merchants and carnivals from distant lands, and by people whose families had lived there, waiting for her, for a thousand years. By the time we arrived, coming up a dusty road as darkness fell, everyone was doomed.

Not by war or disease, but by Elena dying. No one was fully aware of this yet. We, being the newest arrivals, knew even less. People living there had become so distracted, so caught up in their own lives, they did not comprehend that Elena had killed herself. Perhaps it had happened years before. Her body remained lifelike, still giving.

We had come to find a way out of our misery. Like the others, we thought only of ourselves. And maybe in time Elena had grown weary of people and their ways. The night we arrived, we gathered to watch the stars. It was then that the angels appeared.

Hundreds of them, their hair golden, their gowns effervescent, eyes shining, coming down the sky. They had come for Elena. If I could, I would tell you about their faces. But I don't know the words. They were like nothing we had ever seen, not in the desert or along the roads that brought us to Elena.

It happened so quickly, so magically. The angels began to sing as they lifted Elena into the air. She floated in the blue night sky. Awestruck, we still could think only of ourselves and our predicament. What of all the houses, of the people trying to make some sense of their lives? What would happen to us, the newest arrivals? What would become of us all?

The angels answered our questions. Still singing, they gently raised their hands at us. They seemed to have seen that it was not yet time for us, but only for Elena. In the middle of the night, we sat on the dew damp ground. Everything was gone - Elena, the angels, even the stars. By morning, thousands of people began moving out, migrating. We had no choice but to follow them, wherever they were going.

We began walking, pacing ourselves because we did not know how long the walk would be. All around us were whispered rumors of another mountain, a high valley, even a new Elena.

Now, so much time gone by, no one talks of this anymore.

## Smoking Monkeys

Luckily I was only cut on the left and right side of my shin. Our tour guide said that they only poison the traps within a hundred yards of the beach and here we are some fifty miles out. I was able to bandage the wound up with a bandana Conrad had given me. The pain slowly minimized. We began to dig our foxholes in an open field. It was an empty field that had a perimeter of trees surrounding it and we camped on the North side of the field. The day was getting old as we finished up our duties. We didn't talk much because most of the fellas were scared and nervous. The ambush we had just gone through took a few men's lives. One of the unfortunates went through training with me in Louisiana. He was a young man fresh out of high school. I felt for him but felt as though it was somehow his fault. The ambush took the fear out of me. I'd rather be in crossfire than in a foxhole because silence is a pending doom. In battle there is only one winner and one loser but when not in battle there was nothing. A soldier in combat forgets about the destination and focuses on the journey and here I was awaiting some noise.

"Victor, you keep watch for a bit," Conrad signaled as he pointed at his eyes then at the trees.

I scoped through the trees with my rifle looking for movement or signs of life. I almost wished that someone would give me an opportunity to shoot because I felt a need for vengeance. I left fear and nervousness with my friend from Louisiana. There was a very large tree on the East side of the field that seemed to have some movement. My rifle's scope would not suffice so I reached for my binoculars. After about ten minutes of staring I saw a finger wrapped around a branch. I signaled to Conrad that there was something in the closest tree on the East. We all began to unload our rifles by spraying the whole tree. I reached for a grenade on Conrad's vest, counted three seconds then tossed it to the base of the tree. The tree broke like a wet toothpick and

large cumbersome bodies began to drop to the ground. Conrad held his hand up signaling us to seize fire except my finger would not pay attention. I fired until my clip was empty. Conrad and I strategically ran from tree to tree until we were at the broken one. The bodies moved very slowly and smelled of pork bellies.

“Congratulations Victor. You’ve just wasted a battalion of monkeys,” Conrad laughed out.

Conrad lit a cigarette and held his fist in the air to signal the men that the situation was under control. He grinned at me and took off my helmet. He placed it on one of the monkeys that still had a bit of life in him.

“We have a prisoner of war on our hands. What should we do with him?” Conrad said.

“Leave him be. The bastard lives here so let him die with his family.” I announced.

“Well, any last wishes Private monkey? How about a smoke?” Conrad laughed out.

Conrad placed his cigarette inside the primate’s mouth and the few breaths left in the monkey puffed the cigarette. His eyes were dead as night but seemed to stare at Conrad’s movements. Conrad headed back towards the camp. The monkey was now leaning against a large branch of the tree. I thought it was peculiar how the monkeys did not cry or yell in pain but only lay quiet. He would have been an honorable soldier and probably have been awarded the Purple Heart. The cigarette burned out as he passed on and with the palm of my hand I closed the monkey’s eyes. I put my helmet back on and kicked over the Private monkey. He fell on top of one of his soldier buddies and exchanged scents. As I walked back towards the camp I felt nervous.

## Girls Get the Last Laugh

*"I'm cool,"* says Only Son as he is up in a tree after running from Dog and Posse. Neighbor did nothing to help Only Son. Instead, Neighbor probably laughed all the way home from the sight at the tree. I couldn't say that I blamed him. Only Son perched up high in a tree with Dog watching at its base waiting for its toy to climb down; that must have been a funny, knee-slapping sight. Cousin was with Only Son until Dogs decided to run after them. Cousin was in Bayou also waiting for Posse to leave him alone. Here these two Boys boasted of Manhood to their sisters (Only Son's sisters: Oldest Daughter and Middle Child and Cousin's sister: Girl Cousin). They waited for Dog and Posse to leave, but Dog and Posse had other plans.

It would all happen one summer. Only Son and Cousin were always together in Family garage playing Nintendo's *Zelda*<sup>®</sup>. Girl Cousin wanted to try, but she was never allowed in Boys' sanctuary. Oldest Daughter wanted to play *Tetris*<sup>®</sup>, but she was also not allowed. Oldest Daughter, however, had the power to 'persuade' Boys to do as she said. They would in due time. Oldest Daughter had Car and Money on her side, which she knew they wanted. Time was also her key to revenge. Like Hunter, Oldest Daughter knew that prey need to be watched and studied for the right time. Strike Time would soon arrive. Boys would soon enough be Boys and do something stupid. Time was Girls' friend. Time was a tool Girls knew how to use effectively, along with the power of 'persuasion' Girls knew worked all too well with Boys (constant nagging, pricking, prodding, hugging, kissing and overall annoying). Girl power: something about cooties Boys dreaded.

Oldest Daughter didn't even know that Only Son and Cousin walked to the store (which made no sense since they each had Bike to ride). They did it often, though. It was in the early evening when they left. Only Son and Cousin 'needed' something from Stop-N-Go, as Boys always did. They didn't arrive until several hours later: Dog and Posse

were in play. As Only Son and Cousin were walking back, Dog and Posse were on their tails. Being that Only Son and Cousin were ridiculously afraid of canines, they parted company and ran in different directions seeking shelter from the horrendous Dog and Posse. The ferocious beasts were in pursuit of Only Son and Cousin. Only Son sought refuge in a tree. He figured Dog was not Bear and therefore lacked the power to climb trees. So up in a tree sat Only Son waiting for Help. Cousin saw no immediate succor either, so he dove dangerously into Bayou with Water Moccasin and Friends. Cousin figured Posse was afraid of diving and thereby killing himself from a possible breaking of his neck from such a tremendous feat only Olympic Divers could pull off successfully. Posse was not Stupid, just Hungry for Fun. Cousin didn't see that, he was Scared.

For hours, Only Son sat in the tree waiting for Help. Neighbor (perhaps even Dog's owner) saw him and struck conversation, "*Hey, how are you buddy?*" Only Son answered, "*I'm cool.*" Neighbor managed to get a few more lines of conversation before sauntering away from the sight with a fit of laughter dying to emerge from within. Only Son continued in the tree as Dog kept vigil at its base. Cousin, but a few short yards away, waist-deep in water that was riddled with poisonous moccasins and creatures fit for sci-fi novels, continued awaiting Help to arrive. Help was nowhere to be found. Posse was still at water's edge waiting for Cousin. Dog and Posse became bored of such uncaring and selfish playthings and left to find others. Only Son and Cousin finally emerged from their individual refuges to walk back to Family Home. Girls were waiting.

Only Son and Cousin said not a word. They knew they would never hear the end of it. Interminable laughter and teasing would ensue if they said the reason for their tardiness. Girls waited. Time was a friend. Finally, Oldest Daughter found out of the hunt. Oldest Daughter could not contain her laughter. Many years later, what Dog and Posse did to Only Son and Cousin still causes uncontrollable laughter fits. Only now can Only Son and Cousin look back and laugh as hard as Oldest Daughter has. Time once again gave Girls victory over Boys.

## The Apparition

Our story begins where apparitions are oft seen, or said they are seen. It begins in a clearing in the middle of a forest hung upon a trail as a bead upon a string. Everything was slightly blue for the moon was shining full, the black of the night sky contrasting the white glare of the snow, the dark silver of the trees providing a no-mans-land between the two. The surrounding air was tense and quietly twinkling from snow drifting down. The sound of horse hooves packing snow began from the far wall of trees. It grew louder and louder until the shadows drew away and in cantered a man upon a black horse. Steam shot from the horse's nostrils and an icy lather coated its broad black neck and shoulders tensing with muscle underneath. The rider the horse carried was wearing tall riding boots that disappear under his leather great-coat, which was buttoned to his eyes. He scanned the clearing, his eyes shielded from the moon by his three-cornered hat. The horse moved uneasily beneath the rider as he drew it to the left with his reigns. The rider paused, then digging his silver spurs into the horse, drove back into the shadows on the clearing's edge. There was a pause, then the crunching sound of packing snow followed, but this one had no break. Trotting into the clearing came a sleigh pulled by two dappled mares. Its rather round occupant, covered by a large fur robe and a small flat cap, hummed a song to himself with the beat of his trotting mares, which made him seem all the more complacent than he otherwise might. Glancing down he adjusted his robe. When he looked back up, he saw a black charger mounted by the dark figure in his path. He pulled hard on the reigns stopping the sleigh.

-Sir, I say get out of the way or I will run you over!

The man in the sled yelled at the figure. In response the horseman turned a quick shuffle into a gray-barreled pistol pointed down at the man in the sled. He cocked it.

-If you will be so kind as to quickly step out of the sled and remove your coat. A hot ball will reward your refusal... Thank you, sir.

The round man began to sweat as he hopped out of the sled and waddled over with his fur coat. The horseman, grinning, leapt down and began to remove his great coat.

-Try not to think of this as a robbery, but rather a trading. I shall give you my coat, hat, and horse in return for your coat, hat, and sled.

The round man grumbled.

-Now, now, no one likes a poor sport.

The round man grumbled again.

-Up you go sir.

The horseman then motioned to the steed's back with his pistol.

-But sir, I have no step to aide me, and I have difficulty without.

The horseman tipped his head back laughing in response.

-Quickly, time is precious.

Being swallowed by the round man's furs, with his round cap tilted rakishly off to one side the horseman alighted onto the sleigh.

-I rather like being you.

He took the reigns. The round man continued to struggle onto the horse, finally rolling into the saddle.

-I must admit though, my great coat is a tad too small, but my hat looks well on you. Oh, one more thing, here is a pistol.

The horseman tossed up a pistol.

-You needn't use the charge on me, it has no ball to push, but know mine does and under this robe it points at you. On my word fire it at the sky.

-What is the meaning of this?

The round man insisted wrinkling his brow and wheezing. Behind him there came a clamour from the woods. A fresh cut hesitates to bleed so it may pour more dramatically, just as the wood hesitated. Pouring forth as a sort of mechanized blood, a troop of soldiers in red coats rushed out of the wall of trees.

-Fire sir.

-What? Now?

-Fire Now!

The sleigh began to slide forward and its occupant ducked. The man on the horse shot his gun towards the moon.

-Fire!

The men in the red coats dropped to their knees and released a volley of balls upon the horseman who had just turned, still wheezing, to see them. The black charger bolted off into the woods again. His rider assumed a crumpled position on the ground. Around him the snow turned red in a growing circle.

-Gentlemen I commend you! I thought I was done for, you came none too quickly! But, I must be off for I am late. Very late.

The man in the sleigh yelled at them as he pulled out of the clearing. The soldiers advance to the crumpled body.

-Well he was a strange one wasn't he?

-Those with money can afford to be.

-Ha! Aristocracy.

-Hey, look over here. Does he seem... fatter than before.

-No, I don't think so. You know those scofflaws, they are all mindless gluttons, no restraint.



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