

HOBART PARK



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Volume XI, Spring 1990

Editor's Note

Hobart Park exists with the intention of representing the creative expression of the Davidson College student body. We have made selections relative to the submissions that were received, which include a variety of forms. We were pleased by the strong response this year and encourage people to submit next year. We appreciate the dedicated time and energy which our staff has put forth, and we hope that the college community may look forward to the continuation of this and other outlets for creative expression.

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The things that we can safely hold as sacred

are quiet things, hidden in the back
 pockets of old men walking hatless
 in the rain
 and they are soft things, like children
 who are hungry

These things smell of darkness over lakes
 while the swimmer hums, a mother's breast,
 a sister's shirt

These things feel of God

And of something lost

For they are small things, wings of doves,
 and the touch of the tongue on the belly
 after love.

Jennifer Bean

Impressed

I proudly mount my skateboard
peering at Becky's blondness
at the bottom of the hill.

I want to impress her.
I want her faded-jean eyes tight on me
her palm against mine, passing
notes, neatly folded, hearts on the inside
our fifth-grade class saying our names together.

So I plunge
silver asphalt shining beneath me, sliding
past mailbox after mailbox, fuzzy blackness
blurred driveway after blurred driveway.

I am Speed Racer, I am Silver Surfer
she will love me
I will hold the water fountain knob while she drinks
and at lunch while I sip her milk
she will nibble my cookies.

But my knees are shaking.
I stand on a two-by-four rocking
over rapids, me with nowhere to go
but faster, only wanting to stop.

I dive at a lawn, fall short, slide
jeans, knees, knuckles, ripping
I am up, walking, a mummy
wobbling towards home.

And on my living-room couch I feel
my mother's hand dabbing my sores,
carefully applying Band-Aids, pitying my blood
giving me milk and cookies and kisses enough.

Robbie McKay

age in the manger

as i sit you are across from me,
fingers pressing lightly
to your temples
the smooth-scented porcelain
that would be cool
against my own exhausted skin

and the least miracle
is not contained in those temples
but that you still dance
coltish, membranous and
steaming from the womb

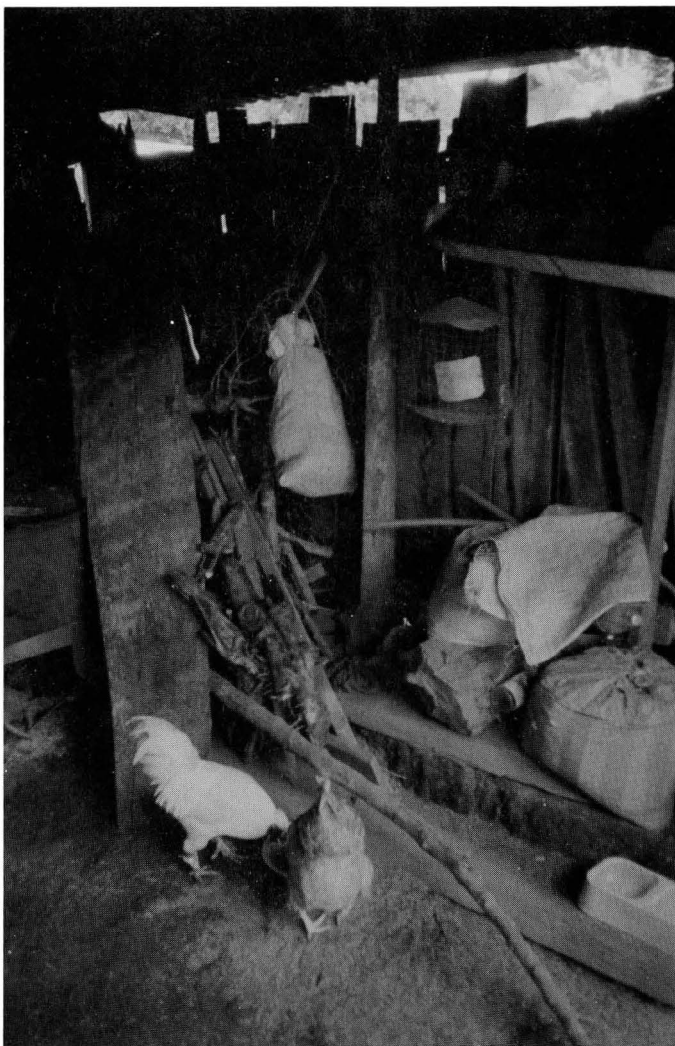
while i've the dull mare's glance
of after long pain

Peter Tavernise

Treasures

She stood, one foot
on the wooden stool
bouncing
up and down
to boost her up
amid swirls
of lace fringed by age
and fabric that
has lost its luster
but is softer now
She teetered, tiptoe
stretching
like a kitten
after a minnow
to place the porcelain
back on the dusty mantle

Lise Nelson



Untitled

by Meredith Gooding

The Last Gun-Fight

Julian Kirtley

The West was full of fast guns, but none could rival the proficiency of Bronco Billy the Boomerang. Billy was hired gun, who didn't care which side of the law he fought on, as long as there was a substantial pay-check in it for him.

On a warm August day, Billy rode into a small mining town, just north of the Mexico border, in California. Billy never needed to advertise, his reputation preceded him everywhere he went. As he rode through the streets of this small town, he saw the locals pointing, gaping, and whispering to each-other. Good. By the time he got to the saloon everyone would know; Bronco Billy the Boomerang was in town.

"The Spotted Dog" was a fairly large saloon for such a small town. Billy took his horse back to the stall. Billy's horse was named "Butt", due to a bet that Billy had lost a few years back. He kept hoping that the damn thing would die soon, so he could get another one, and name it "Death".

Billy strolled into the saloon and ordered a double whiskey. He drank it slowly, hoping he would be approached about a job. He was majorly strapped for cash, and didn't fancy the idea of having to pull a bank job. Just as he was about to give up hope, a fat, unshaven cowboy approached him. Good, looked like a job.

"You Bronco Billy?" inquired the man.

"Yeah," said Billy, tossing the remainder of his whiskey down into his gut.

"I know a man wants to hire you." The man handed Billy an envelope. "This here's his address. He wants to see you tonight." Billy opened the envelope. It contained an address, and three crisp one-hundred dollar bills.

That night, Billy rode Butt out to the edge of town. He had paid for a room above the saloon, and had had a few drinks with the money he had received. Billy arrived at one of the largest houses he had ever seen. He walked up to the front door, found it locked, took out his gun, and fired three bullets through the lock, after which he entered.

Billy found himself in a dark foyer. To his right was a lit room. Billy entered. There, in a huge red velvet chair, was the oldest man that Billy had ever seen. Judging by the deep lines in his face, the man must have been at least 90 years old.

"All you had to do was knock," said the man.

"I ain't in the habit a knockin' mister," said Billy.

"Sit," said the man. Billy did. "I want you to kill somebody," said the man.

"Well, I charge 500 for that, mister, not 300." The old man extended a wrinkled, shaking hand towards Billy, with an envelope in it. Billy opened the envelope, and found it to contain 20 unmarked 50 dollar bills with non sequential serial numbers. "You must want me to off one tough 'ombrey, mister," said Billy, counting the money.

"I do" said the old man.

"Who?" asked Billy.

The old man smiled, "Me!"

Billy chuckled. This job was gonna be pretty easy. He pulled out his gun and pointed it at the old man's head. "Not here," said the old man casually.

"Where then?" said Billy, annoyed.

"Tommorrow, at high noon, in the town's main street. We're gonna have an old fashioned gun-fight!"

Billy began to giggle.

"Think you can out-draw me?" asked the man.

"Yeah, I think so," said Billy, smiling broadly.

"No man ever has." said the old man. Billy began to feel ill. He got up, walked out of the old man's house, and rode back to the saloon.

That night, Billy's sleep was haunted by strange and terrible dreams. Billy found himself on a beach, looking out to sea. Suddenly, the waves exploded in front of him. Out of the ocean leapt a huge blue whale. The whale grabbed Billy, and dragged him screaming down into the ocean. Just before Billy drowned in the dark, gloomy water, Billy heard the whales whispering a warning in his ear.

"Watch the clock, Billy. Watch the clock, Billy."

Billy awoke in a cold sweat. "Mommy!" he shouted, wishing he hadn't shot her. Billy looked at the clock, it was almost twelve. Quickly, he got dressed, put on his dirty boots, dirty hat, and favorite gun "Merl". He then stumbled down to the street, doing his best to ignore his pounding headache.

The street was empty, which was unusual, since everyone in town had probably heard about the gun-fight. It was only a block away to the town's main street, so Billy walked, instead of riding Butt.

There, standing in the middle of the town's main square, was the old man, dressed in an immaculate white suit with a silver star on the lapel.

"I used to be Marshall" said the old man.

"That's nice." said Billy, wishing they could get on with it. The two men stood facing each-other, waiting to draw and fire. The clock struck twelve. Billy drew, aimed, and fired before the sound of the first chime died. He realized that he had struck the man right between the eyes.

The old man stiffened, and silently fell flat on his back. He had never even reached for his gun. Billy blew the smoke away from Merl's nozzle. "Well, that's that," he said to nobody.

Billy turned and walked back to the saloon for drink, but there was no one there. A thick layer of dust covered everything. Billy began to panic. He ran back out into the street. There where the old man had once lay dead, there was only dust. A tumbleweed rolled through the square. Billy sank to his knees and clutched his aching head. The pain kept increasing. Billy rolled over on his back and looked up at the rapidly darkening sky. A big storm was rolling in.

Findings (a poem for my father)

Finding the apartment was no trouble
three miles of highway brought me
to the clustered row
sprung up like mushrooms after rain
I called before I came, I knew
which narrow stairs to climb
which numbered room
but I was not prepared to find
you there, home
a half-empty room half familiar:
pine chest, wooden desk, mismatched
knickknacks of long-collected love uprooted
spaced filled by long yellow light
of early autumn afternoon

Many autumns past light
turned backyard trees gold
there you showed me where to find
muscadines, rattle thin dry stems
to drop heavy-ripe grapes to ground
musky-sharp sweetness in gold-
flecked skins, the purple
fallen from leafless branches
was your doing
little, finding fossils
salt-spitting conch shells
shark's teeth, clay pipes buried
arrowheads I never saw
somewhere you lost

Driving down the interstate exit signs slip by
early turning trees blur dry, or green
tears held all afternoon fall
I'm leaving you now, to wait
for the tide, seine the creeks
to find the scattered fragments
of self washed in with driftwood
the piece you left with me I keep
wrapped carefully in cotton boxed
beside river rocks and white quartz
now and then I hold it to the light
run my thumb along its roughness

Margaret Ward

On the Edge

I tried to create an image of you
Diving
At night
With the stars high shining
And the moon lit and generous.

But I remembered
You do not like
The water
Full of snaking seaweed,
Fleshy fighting fish.

And then I remembered
That you love
The moors—
Broad clean spaces
At the world's end.
You like to feel the flowers, full and promising—
Study the mysteries of sombre purples.
The wind blows your
Hair from your face,
Eyes squinting in the glare of pastures,
Your lips turned down,
Your thoughts submerged.

So now I have an image of you
In your ragged brown overcoat
Standing on the moors of Yorkshire
Looking beyond the shores of Earth.

And an image of me
Deep in the teal sea
Streaming past reefs and angel fish—
Going deeper, deeper, deeper.
My lungs full
And my heart pumping
Not blood,
But water.

Sarah Canadine Bayne

Was it so long ago
when I first found Truelove?
Nestled (like Jonah) in
the belly of a whale.
He and I, content in
our cloister, secure in
our seclusion, we lounged
in that sculpture which held
us gently like two eggs
in an Easter basket.
The smoothed stone head and tail
curved over us and helped
us to forget the pain
impending of rebirth.

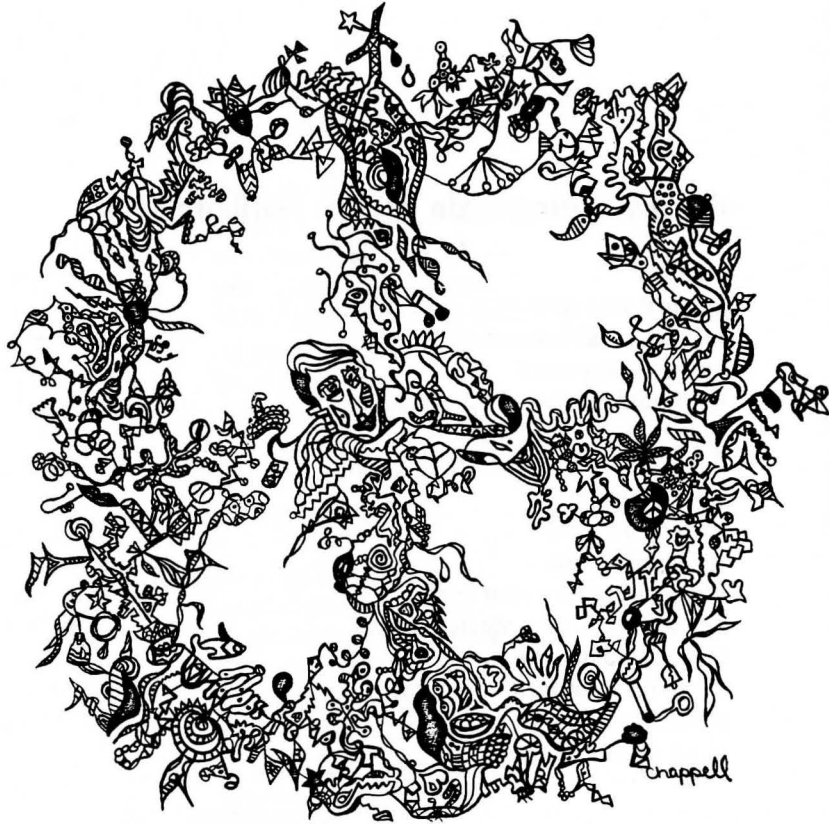
So often I am now
nestled (like Jonah), so
sheltered from the outside.
Safe (for now) from being
shattered, because it is
outside where the terror
in truth lies. However,
now knowing the outside
I pull it in.

Meredith Boone

that EVE thing again (for the Marlboro Man)

i wonder
if i crept into your room
took your hair between my hands
pulled at your roots
if it would break
or
if it would stretch like sinews
wrap around me
encircle my body
yet keep coming
hair pouring from your head
cataracts of tobacco-stained strings
that i could not stop
the snake returned and hissing
thwarting all my attempts
to eat from your tree

Susan Peppers



Untitled

by Chappell Wescoat

Humoring James

Randy Lewis

Alex had gone off on another “what if”. This time he was considering the possibility of a head-on collision involving an American car and a British one. Since one had the steering wheel on the left and the other on the right, if they smacked each other squarely, the respective drivers would fly through their respective windshields and their respective craniums would meet in a massive, fatal head-butt. A head-on collision within a head-on collision, if you will. . .

Suddenly Alex was startled out of his violent daydream by the strident voice of Mrs. Purbore, the trigonometry teacher: “Aaaaalex!”

At that point I put the story down on the coffee table and got up to get the door. I knew before I got there that it was James — mom had invited him over for dinner. James was my next door neighbor and the author of the short story I’d just been reading. His story won second place in our school’s short story contest, so it got printed in “Winged Words”, our literary magazine. My English teacher happens to be the “Winged Words” advisor and she was handing out extra credit points to anyone who bought the magazine, so I bought a copy.

“Hey James, how’s it going?” I said. “You know, I just started reading your story. It’s pretty good so far.”

“Oh — Well, thanks.” James smiled and grabbed a thin, black braid of hair, transferring it from in front of his face to its keeping place behind his ear.

“This guy Alex in the story reminds me a lot of you,” I said as we walked back into the house, leaving the screen door to slam by itself. “Is it supposed to be autobiographical at all?”

“Yeah, there might be a little of that in there,” he said. We sat down on the couch and he retrieved the magazine from the coffee table where I’d left it opened face down to his story. As he began flipping through it I thought to myself, “of course it’s autobiographical. If anyone has weird, violent fantasies during class, it’s James. In fact, he probably wrote the story as a way to sort of advance or advertise his nonconformity. Subconsciously, I’m sure he thinks, ‘people will read about this weird character Alex and connect him with me.’”

“Where’s Caroline?” James said without looking up. Caroline’s my mom’s name.

“She’s upstairs somewhere — I’ll go yell at her.” I got up and walked to the double doors which separated the family room from the foyer type place that our staircase empties into. I opened one of these doors, stuck my head through, and hollered, “Mom — James is here!”

Sometimes I don’t think my mom realizes just how different James and I are — I mean, we’re two very different people. I’m normal, he’s not. She

knows he's weird — that you can tell by just looking at him. But I don't think she quite grasps the extent of his weirdness. If she did I doubt she would do things like invite him over for dinner. She thinks it's cute that he's kind of different, and she likes to sort of humor him sometimes by being nice to him, but it seems almost patronizing to me. Oh well.

It's not that I don't like James — I like him fine. It's just that, well, as I say, we're different. See, we used to be best friends when we were little. We were both born in the houses we live in now and we used to play in our backyards everyday — usually with the hose in the summertime. Our favorite game was to turn on the hose and then kink it back on itself a few inches from the nozzle. When you let go the water would surge out like crazy for a few seconds, then gradually die back down to normal. I don't know why we thought that was so fun, but we did. Maybe it was because our dads hated it so much when we did that to the hose.

Sometime between middle school and high school, though, James started moving out into left field. You know, hanging out more and more with that “alternative crowd”, buying clothes at the flea market, and listening to a lot of music and all that. I remember one Monday when we were both freshmen. I hadn't seen James in school that day and I figured he hadn't gotten back from Georgia yet. One of his friends with a car had gone down to Athens for the weekend and invited James along. I think it was a big party weekend and the guy with the car knew some people who went to school there or something. Anyway, Athens is about four or five hours from here, so I thought they probably just hadn't made it back in time for class. But then that evening after dinner James came over to our house. When I opened the front door I was stunned — James was totally bald.

“What in the hell happened to you,” I whispered so my parents in the family room wouldn't hear. He just smiled.

“Well, I thought I wanted to bleach my hair, but I really didn't know what I was doing. I just filled a sink up with water, poured in a bunch of bleach, and stuck my head in. When I pulled my head back out all my hair was still in the sink — it fell out!”

“You wanted to bleach your hair?” I paused for a second. “Jesus, man, I can't believe you're laughing about it. Now I know why you stayed home from school today.” He explained that he missed school not because of his lack of hair, but because they didn't get back until late that afternoon. “Oh, well,” I said, “you'd better come on in and show my parents.” We turned and walked past the stairs and through the swinging double doors into the family room where my parents were watching “Jeopardy!”. “Look what James has gone and done,” I announced. My mom was able to hide her astonishment pretty well, but not dad. He'd been lying all the way back in the Lay-Z-Boy recliner. When James walked into the room, he pulled the lever on the side of the chair and sat up with a “doinggggg”! Once upright, he just kind

of stared until mom said, “Pray, James, what possessed you?”

“Well, I felt I was in need of a change. Baldness wasn't really what I had in mind — I was trying to bleach it — but under the circumstances, I think it'll do nicely.”

“And how do you plan to wear it?” My mother asked. Like you could “wear” a bald head the same way you wore a hairstyle. “What I mean is, will you get a hat or anything?” She was just making conversation to ease the tension my dad generated by just sitting there, staring.

“Yeah, suppose I could get some hats. . . hey, come, to think of it, I could get some wigs, too! Y'know, this could be alot of fun, actually.”

Then my father got up and went upstairs. Kind of an awkward moment. My mom did her best to smooth things out — “Well,” she said as she stood up, “I guess we'll let you guys watch some T.V. now. Goodnight, James.” Then she followed my dad upstairs.

I didn't hang out with James at school as much after that. I mean, I really hated being seen with him — I'm sure you can understand that. Especially when he wore one of his wigs. He really did buy some wigs, you know. They were pretty funny, I must admit — most of them were made in the seventies and some were obviously for women — but I just couldn't really hang out with him when he was wearing them.

Anyway, James' hair had all grown back now. In fact it had gone from being nonexistent to being pretty long. He had a handful of really long strands in the front done up in a thin braid that nearly reached the pages of my “Winged Words” magazine as he glanced through it.

Just then my mom came down from upstairs. She was wearing one of her sweatsuits — a white crewneck with aquamarine pants. She wore nothing but sweatsuits around the house since my dad died. She had three or four different ones now. James greeted her with, “Hey, excellent sweatsuit!”

“Oh, thank you, James. And I like your vest. You know, not everyone can wear a vest like that.”

“Damn right”, I thought and chuckled to myself. His vest was pretty loud. The front was made from a fuzzy sort of paisley fabric that had a lot of pink and purple in it, among other colors. He wore this over a finely woven black button down shirt with the top button fastened, according to trendy European standards. Other than that his outfit was pretty tame for James: tattered jeans and a pair of those black workboots that the skinheads always wear in magazine pictures.

“Oh, I'm glad you like it,” he said in response to mom's compliment. “I made it just the other night out of this fuzzy stuff I found somewhere.”

“Well, it looks nice.”

That was mom's problem. She really tried a little too hard to be nice to James, to accept him. Sometimes I think maybe that's why James is the way he is. He knows that people feel a little uncomfortable around him and

then go out of their way to accommodate him. And maybe it's because we're next door neighbors that she feels obligated to keep paying attention to him, I don't know. But anyway, she was always doing stuff like inviting him over for dinner tonight.

Case in point: it was mom's idea for me and James to double date to the Senior prom. She went with us to the mall when we rented our tuxedos, too. She said she had some stuff to do out at the mall, but I think she just wanted to be there when we picked out our tuxes.

Of course James had to opt for something unusual. We walked into the formal wear shop and — well, I think it was the first time he'd ever been to rent a tux, because when the lady asked him if he was looking for anything in particular, he said, "Do you have anything from the Victorian period?" Me and my mom caught each others' eye and smiled to ourselves. The lady said he'd have to go to a costume shop for something like that, so he was forced to settle for a regular tux. But he fixed that as soon as we got home. He took this big, velvet picture of Elvis' head that he got at some garage sale and sewed it on the back of his coat. Mom thought that was pretty funny. In fact, she even made some joke about us both going in matching "Elvis the Pelvis" tuxedos. I should have taken her up on it — that would have surprised the hell out of her. She positively couldn't stand to see me go to the prom wearing something like that.

The prom itself went pretty well — we had a great time. James' girlfriend was surprisingly normal. Or at least she acted that way.

"Hey James, are you still going out with that girl you took to the prom?"

"Stace? No, we're not really happening anymore." He glanced down at the magazine in his hands, "I used her for a character in my story, though, so it's kind of a good thing we're not still going out. You should never write stories about people you have to talk to every day."

"Oh, James — your story," My mom broke in, "I read it this afternoon. It's wonderful! And congratulations on winning the contest. You should really be proud of that."

"Well, I didn't really win, I got second place."

"Sure; you **won** second place. And I think that's quite an accomplishment."

There she went again. Sometimes I wondered if he knew she wasn't being completely sincere with him. I doubt it. And it could be sort of amusing to watch the two of them talk. "While you two are on the subject of great creative works, you should take James up to see the painting."

"Oh, of course. Would you like to see it, James?" They were walking out of the room as she explained how she'd always wanted to buy a painting. "But Carl was never very big on the idea," she said as they were climbing the stairs. "But then, after he died, I thought maybe I should go ahead and get one. So a few weeks ago Marshall and I went. . ."

At that point they went into her bedroom and I couldn't hear them anymore,

but she was telling him how we went to Charlotte to buy the painting. There's a painter near Charlotte named Arthur Curtis who my mom had always liked. He's pretty famous now and a few galleries in Charlotte have a lot of his stuff. It's really a bummer that she didn't get one of his paintings a long time ago when dad was still alive, because he wasn't very well known then and we wouldn't have had to pay near as much. But anyway, we went to Charlotte a few weeks ago and she picked one out and got it.

I guess you would call it abstract. Imagine about five torn-edged strips of construction paper, each a different color of beige, stacked on top of each other so that each one overlapped the one it covered by about two inches: That's what it looked like. It was pretty big: about a foot and a half by two feet. Mom had it hanging over her bed. Before we bought it I made the lady in the gallery explain to me what it was all about. She told me when it was painted and by who and then described it using a lot of big art terms — I still remember a few of them.

I sat on the couch for a few minutes till I guess I got curious about what they were talking about up there. I yelled, "Hey, exactly what's going on up there!?" but I wasn't sure if they heard me. So I got up, walked to the foot of the stairs, and started climbing the carpeted steps. But when I got about halfway up, I heard their voices from mom's open room and stopped to listen.

"Yeah, I can see that," James was saying. "Also in some ways it reminds me of cloudbanks stretching out into a horizon. But if it's that, I wonder what the significance is of him using such unhealthy looking colors?" The lady in the gallery hadn't mentioned anything remotely close to that interpretation, so I was a little surprised to hear mom's excited response. "Oh, that's neat! I hadn't thought about it that way. Perhaps with those colors he wanted to emphasize just what a . . ."

I laughed to myself and started up the second half of the stairs. Mom was humoring James again.

21st Birthday

Seven
Is the number of the beast.

For a full third of my life
I've pinned minutely down
The extant atoms of my formation.

"Formation". as though complete.
and I feel a little sick,
Sick in my stomach
at the thought of it, this retrospective status.

Nausea clenched,
As a man has morning sickness,
That internal external reminder of impending childbirth,
That John the Baptist,
Precursing birthing pains,

and leading my hand to rest, just to rest,
On the comfort of a wire hanger, deathly cool,
Like ephemeral relief.

Judd Owen

To Sara Carlson, for Her Children

a darkened city,
We walked the ribboned asphalt
by ourselves
until we reached the carnival

lights drenched
us, and we sat to watch the child,
wrapped in platinum
tights, gripped by her age, nine

years of waiting
as we watched her climb the ladder
to a wisp of
steel, stretched across blackness for daring

her, blond darling
of near falls and open-mouthed slips
to nets below
the big-top blackness of the absent

"spotters" you said
"is there no one to catch her?"
"no" i whispered
"it is better to tightrope alone"

as with me, i
have tumbled alone, tripped and fallen
without even nets,
no gauze to restrain the dust-hard crash

of youth, i love
this one, who walks with only hopes
for safety and no men to
catch her; faith restrains

with something beyond
reason, i tell you that spotters keep safe
what we keep
alive, only emotions win battles

with gravity, you show
me i mumble again, staring blankly;
the child hangs
Above, no men dressed in black
to grab for her silver.

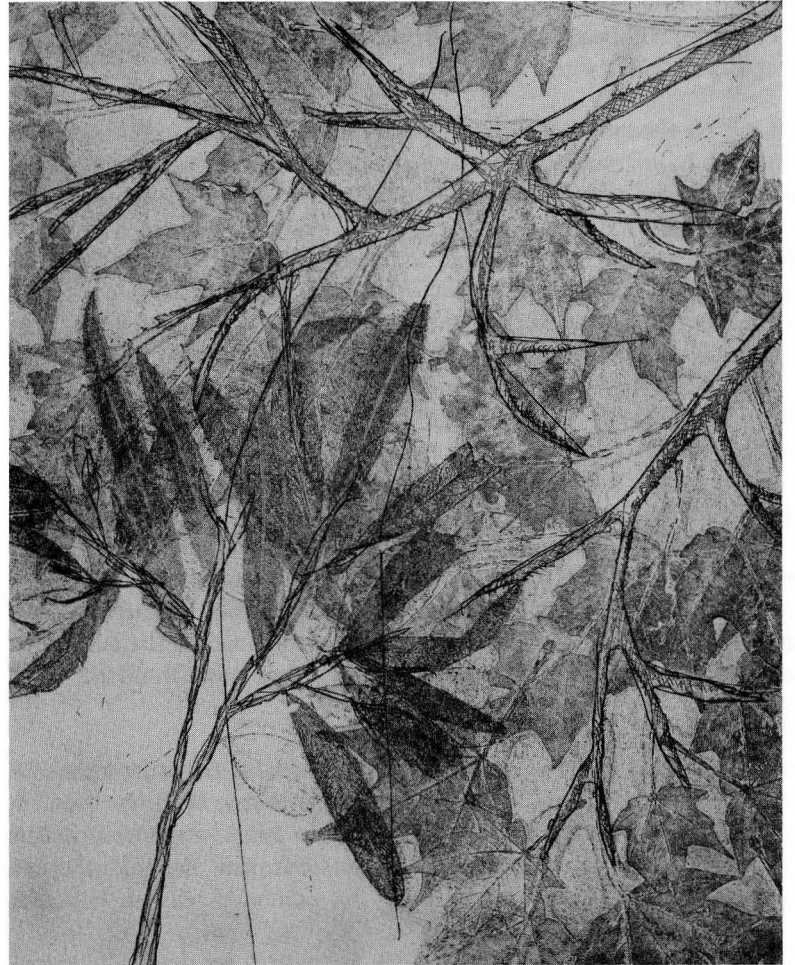
Andrew Peery

How long the night took falling
As the ecstatic ice tapped a message
On the darkened window
I do not know.
But in the stately hours,
I moved in bed and heard
The energies of winter bristle, bind, and grow.

And knew, and knew, that somehow
Underneath the frozen soil
The bird's egg shivered,
Gave and cracked along
The wingspread of the unstrong
Chick. A dove unfolded from
The white thin skin of winter's earth.
And in the moment after broke into song.

And sang into the dawn.

Douglas Gibson



P. Shannon Mullen

Untitled

Minnesota Song

[I]

Curiosity leads to action.

Peeling birch bark and finally feeling woolly fleece scratches on the arm. Asphalt becomes dirt, and ice caresses the cold quiet earth leading to a second home.

Heartbeats are the only familiar sounds in this forest, a forest transformed by hatchet, saw, and plane into structures girded by sinews, dreams, and love. Hands built a home.

Nostrils drink odors of buttered bread and cedar pulp, while eyes survey real landscapes. Ears hear the barks of two four-legged friends, and the soporific coos of a sky-eyed child.

As cold whistles freeze lungs, and algid water ices toes, one unintentional glance to the horizon reveals a woman in a black robe crawling onto the surface of a frozen lake -SHRIK-SHRIK- the soft ice shifts under her trembling body.

Blankets of light undulate in the Northern night silencing the conversations of two eager minds and filling their naive eyes with images unimagined. The eyes blink and the cold, haggard woman on the lake moves closer. Shafts of respiratory mist shoot from her frozen nostrils and fear boosts pulses.

A small girl runs to the woman, right to the edge of the wilderness. The child takes the woman into her arms and begins to cry. With her eyes, the child follows the woman's tracks into the ebony forest, and for an instant the girl wants to be the woman — she wants the pain, the cold, the age, the love, and the wilderness.

Elsewhere curiosity confuses.

(II)

A frontier opens.

Keeping her hopeful eyes on the woods, the child leads the woman home to a fire. Fire and life are equivalent, coupled miracles. Both frighten the girl — As the fire brightens, so do the eyes of the black robed stranger.

A red fleece robe eventually replaces the wet, black rag that cradled fragile, determined shoulders. The woman gives the girl her black robe. The little girl like to wear black.

Staring at the woman, the small child wonders what wilderness is — Who is this woman? Water condenses on the window of the child's home, and smoke irritates her eyes.

Almost intuitively the woman, now warm, speaks of someone in her past— a child whose mind panted wildly like the North Woods wolf, and soared hawk-like over the dynamic landscapes of human experience. A child with no fear of the wild.

The little girl listens as she gazes out of the frosted window into the hole through which this elderly storyteller emerged. Confused and intrigued by the dark woods, the hole appears to the girl as a Manneristic gateway into the wilderness beyond, a mouth waiting to swallow her up into the viscera of the North.

The woman sleeps and the girl begins to miss her voice, she longs for company — for genuine company. She only wants someone to touch, someone to trust, someone to notice her honest smile. An unnoticed smile wonders helplessly like a lost infant animal who, having been lost by its mother, is unable to find itself a place in its hostile environment.

Elsewhere frontiers expand.

[III]

Frontiers become boundaries.

The woman dies and the child grows up wearing black always. She enters the boreal forest. She settles mental territories as vast as the Yukon and as rich as unspoiled America.

Some of the lands are exhausting, others are relaxing; some frustrate, others encourage; some freeze, others warm; some are trustworthy, some deceiving — but all temper and strengthen.

The territories most hospitable are the ones most frequented. Routine becomes necessity and a comforting structure. Boredom and especially curiosity activate the young woman and she grows weary of the self-constructed confines of her mind.

Boundaries trouble and home becomes mystery. Urges to defend settled territories overwhelm and challenge intruding thoughts. Battlescars and rifts riddle her fragile and once majestic mental environment. She thinks of the child in the robed woman's story.

No fear of the wild; movement and change rejuvenate and empower the human spirit. She wraps the tattered black cloak left by the woman of the woods around her stiff shoulders and laces boots about her feet. Boundaries only exist if they are enforced, Right? She travels.

So many boundaries subdivide the human mind. So many categories — love, hate, girl, boy, child, elder, black, white, theologian, atheist — Who makes boundaries? Where are they? Maybe if I walk far enough — Maybe if I climb high enough Maybe if I take one more step?

Elsewhere boundaries make war.

[IV]

Boundaries shatter.

Walk, walk, walk, she thinks — If I take one more step. Canyons of the mind intimidate — dream illusions scare. She breathes between the densest emotion vines.

Fog and wet heat lie dormant in this new land. Cold, crystal thought reign supreme — the purest image of direction and purpose. Weary feet and cold hands touch new land.

New land is often old land occupied by fresh attitudes. Once more, territories fill the mind with unclaimed and unexplored challenge. A smile, an *honest* smile, comes to the woman's face.

The boundaries, the rifts, the canyons — all crossed. The woman knows mental unity and muted solitude.

Solitude is a state of mind.

The woman struggles not to erect a boundary around her solitude. How to be alone with no boundaries —

How to preserve individuality without isolating oneself — The woman stops walking and thinks — she looks about her at the wilderness and breathes.

She breathes deeply — breaths in all around her — How wonderful just to breathe. Walking again she sees a flat, smooth wonderfully blue, frozen lake. She does not realize how exhausted and trammled she appears. Crawling onto the lake, her knees make a SHRIK-SHRIK sound. She slips almost into unconsciousness —

One cold tear hits her hand and she sees a small child standing before her crying.

Elsewhere tears shatter boundaries.

M. Bain Butcher

Stickball World Series

We'd play for hours
Throwing this scuffed rubber ball,
Once orange, to a kid with his ma's broomstick.
He'd send it soaring high up in the air.
A curb and a johnny pump marked the foul lines
And a sewer plate, tar spot and manhole cover
Were as real to us as the bases at Shea.
It was the World Series every day —
Kids called out their heroes' names pretending
To be them. No more than six guys
On a side, it seemed like there were hundreds of us.
Guinea, Mick, Polack or Nigger —
You were just a player
Until your mother called you in to dinner.
The few hours after school never seemed
Long enough, but you scampered off to your house —
Like every other house on the block, yet different —
And the game would continue the next day
From where it left off.

I go back to my block now, and all the kids
Are grown up: in college or working, dead or in jail.
Yet I know if I saw one of my teammates today,
I could still crack a smile for those spring afternoons.

The block is quiet at the moment, our pothole third base
Has been filled, but stop on a sunny day in my neighborhood,
Listen really carefully, and you may hear
The nearby roar of the crowd from a stickball World Series.

B.D.K.

Lent.

Having staggered through the forest for forty days
and forty nights

Jesus must have felt
his thin body shake,
dry rags
blistering
in the sun
his charred face
seeking something solid
in the hidden hands
of ferns.

Perhaps he stumbled on a rock
crystal with a golden core
or maybe just a four leaf clover
cutting through the moss.

Then again, maybe
his eyes glazed
from the dull bark and the empty streams
maybe he turned back
through the leaves and the lichen
humming soft a lullaby
to ease the tightness
in his throat.

Just a man, crying
coming out of the woods, sweaty hair
matted in thick bunches, bruised knuckles
swinging closer and closer to the edge
of a graveyard

where this cold stone
of a dead child
soaks my rotting jeans.

hallelujah.

Jennifer Bean



Elizah Gowin

Sisters

lesson number one

woman is the creator (my
darling) but
the biblewriters (love)
wrote about fatherthecreator.
paradox.

(my love) all gods were
goddesses back then
but now we have
godthefather (creator
of all mankind) who
sent his only son through
a virgin
to be slaughtered by the romans
(they say).

so now, (my baby)
men (not we) are the source
and women (us) their utensils
for more men.
we (must) create more creators
for godthefather.

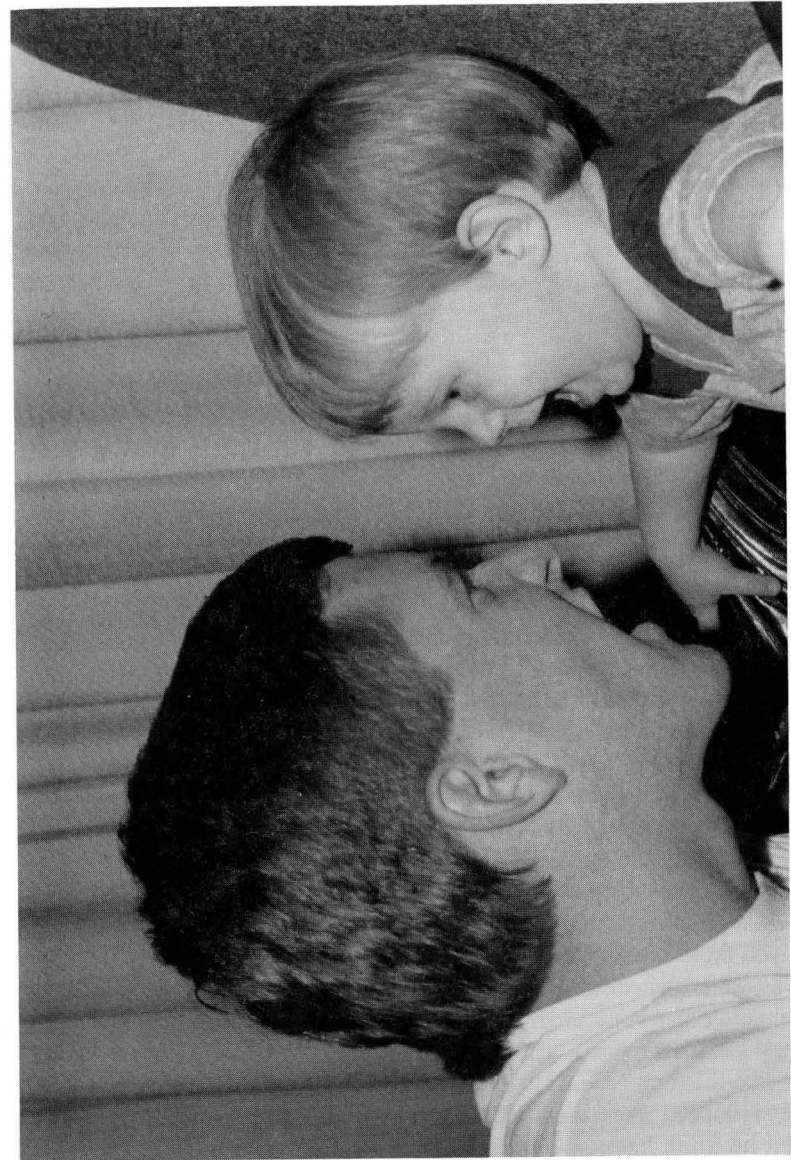
but darling (my daughter) baby
remember the goddesses
you must
(become).

Sarah Caradine Bayne

Picasso
was
right
when he loved people geometric — a
straight line fits easier than a
curve
but
while
your curve fits my curve — your
cheek fits my shoulder, your thigh
fits
my lower

back, it's
as if doing
a jigsaw — when you get it right it
sticks together, all the colors match,
it's satisfying and every piece is
comfortable
with its
neighbor

Sara Carlson



Ed Matthews

Kin

Possessions

Suzanne Craymer

I stood in the kitchen drying dishes and peeked into the den. Something looked weird. The grandfather wasn't on the sunken-in couch as usual. He sat in my brown chair facing the T.V. instead. I could see the top of his head and the little hairs curling off it over the ripped back of the leather chair. My daddy used to tell me stories in that chair when I was a little girl. The chair had shiny holes in the armrests where my elbow once bumped against his. The grandfather shifted in my comfy chair and picked up the remote control.

"You're sitting in my chair." He didn't do anything. I spoke a little louder because he had problems hearing. "I said you're sitting in my chair." I slammed the plates on the coffee table and walked up near the T.V. to see him.

"What is that infernal noise?"

"It's time for me to watch Jeopardy. . . .In my chair."

"I am the oldest person in the house." He made a blubbering sound. Spit dribbled onto his lip. "I don't need my son's spoiled child harrassing me about a silly game show, even if she is my only grandchild."

"I'm not a child," but he ignored me.

"And the chair is totally out of the question. I used to sit in this chair before you were born. You were a beautiful baby." He smiled "At this age, I need a comfortable chair."

"You didn't need my chair last night," I said softly through my teeth. "And besides, there's plenty of other chairs around here."

"Not like this one." He turned the volume up on the T.V. with the remote control. I flopped back on the couch and munched a piece of long hair. Who did he think he was anyway? God? He had no right to sit in my chair. The only people allowed in my chair were my dad and me. Daddy died a long time ago so now I just sat in my chair. My dad used to catch me into his lap and call me "funny-face." The grandfather never did anything like that. He always called me "young lady," or "Tracey-Anne" like I had done something wrong. He never said anything about my princess drawings and

wouldn't hold my hand when we said grace. He said it was full of germs. My mom told me not to worry if the grandfather was grouchy sometimes. She said it wasn't my fault.

The grandfather was twisted around in the chair looking at me. His little eyes glowed with the T.V.'s blue light like evil aliens. "See this, look at this."

"What?"

He rolled back his sleeve and shook his arm at me. Flappy knobs of softened skin dripped from the bone. "This is a vein," he said, "See how close to death I am. It could pop at any moment and I'd be in the grave. Here I am so close to death. You won't even let me enjoy a comfortable chair in peace."

"That's not true. You're lying."

"I do not lie, young lady. I could die at any moment. It's sad." I looked at him and tried to imagine him dead. "You'd be all alone in this chair and realize how nasty and selfish you've been. Trust me," he said. He turned back to the T.V. and switched the channel to news. "Now you understand."

"I do not understand," I swung my feet to the floor, "it's not even your house," I ran to the hallway that led to my bedroom. I shouted so loud that my throat hurt, "You keep taking other people's things." I slammed the door with a loud crack, but I still heard him. "They're more mine than yours," he said.

I lay on my bed and looked up at the white ceiling. This had been my room forever. Daddy had painted it purple and hung pictures of the three little pigs on the wall. I wasn't a kid anymore, but they stayed there anyway since I only had them and a tiny picture of the family. We all squinted in the bright sun. Daddy's face looked gold and mom half-hid hers in his shoulderr. The grandfather wasn't in that picture. I first met him at Daddy's funeral. I couldn't remember where I saw his face when he walked into our house last night. He told my mom to bring in his stuff from the taxi. I sat on the steps with arms around the posts. Mom's nose wrinkled up like it did when she was mad at me. She whispered, "That's your grandfather, your father's father." A banging grew against the door of my room. "Tracey, it's your mother. Are you in there?" She came in right away and sat on the bed. She never sat on the bed. "What do you mean by upsetting your grandfather," she said, "You know he's ill."

"He was sitting in my chair. It's my chair." I tried to keep my eyes on the ceiling.

"So loan it to him for a few days."

"Why? He never gave me anything." From the corner of my eye, I saw her hands, soft and dry in her lap. My eyes went back to the ceiling and couldn't let go. "Your grandfather's tough to get along with," she said, "because he expects alot and sometimes you have to give in."

"I won't," but she kept on.

"When you were born your daddy refused to sacrifice his own family by giving in all the time so we moved away.

Your grandfather's always blamed daddy for deserting him, but there wasn't anything else for him to do. It's hard for people sometimes."

"I don't care."

She shook her head back and forth slowly. A piece of hair lay against her neck. "Just let him sit in the chair if he wants to, Tracey, for just a few weeks. He needs it because he's ill."

"No. He's sitting there because he doesn't like me." Mom cleared her throat. "Your grandfather likes you. He's trying to find a place to belong."

"That place is already taken," I said. Cold tickling fingers ran along my arms, but they were cold with anger. I wanted to tell mom that the grandfather could find another place. He could go someplace else and leave us alone. But then I remembered seeing the lumps along his arm and could think of nothing to say. Mom sat silent on the bed, then covered my hand with her own. "Remember he's an old man," she said and left the room.

On Tuesday I had soccer after school so Mom picked me up at four and we rode home together. We didn't talk in the car 'cause I was too busy thinking about grandfather. He sat in my chair all the time, even eating breakfast in the family room. He told me that my chair wasn't right for him, but it was getting better. At nights I couldn't sleep. I'd walk around in my jammies, or just stand by the couch and stare at the grandfather. His hands on the remote control looked like a blind and wrinkled fish. He never let anybody else have the remote. Mom stopped to collect the mail when we pulled in the driveway. I got out of the car to get some crackers in the kitchen. On my way to the kitchen I went through the den and stopped. My feet froze. Toes iced together, Knees locked in place.

A huge, ugly orange thing stood where my chair used to be. It was the color of moldy carrots with giant flat armrests and a stiff back. A label stitched in the middle of the back said "The Postrapedic Surgeon." My chair was totally gone into empty space. This new thing took over. It sat in front of the T.V. and looked like forever. The grandfather had won. My hand made a fist and brought it down on empty air. It did it over and over again. I watched my fist hammer and crash at the air. Then the grandfather turned his orange chair. It screeched. Now he faced me. He looked worried. I stopped and looked at him. Oprah Winfrey was on and he had his hand on the remote control. His round lower lip hung down against his chin.

"What did you do with my chair?" I said. My voice hung alone and strange in his air.

"I exchanged it for this one, there was an ad on T.V."

"It was none of your business." I inched closer to the huge chair.

"That's no way to speak to your grandfather, young lady. I don't see why

you are getting so excited about a single piece of furniture. I didn't think it would bother you." I touched the prickly side of the armrest with my knuckles. He didn't notice. I remembered the old leather, and my daddy reading **Curious George** when I cuddled in his lap. Our chair held us around together. The grandfather's chair felt hot. It wasn't supposed to be there. I drew back my arm, far away and hit its side. My other arm slapped it. I cried out loud. "Go away, Go away." The grandfather made a jerking noise. He reached and grabbed me. I felt his hand hot boiling on my wrist. It burned and I twisted my hand. He held and held. He said, "Tracey, Tracey, Tracey," very soft. He kept saying my name over and over again. I felt everything rush away. I leaned over the chair's hard armrest. The remote control fell off the armrest and banged against my foot. Oprah flicked off. The whole world flicked off. Only now my room, my school, mom weren't here. They were far away with the stars and the moon. Coming home and finding Daddy in our chair was gone and gone. Everything was and if I looked down I would be standing on the black sky. I looked at grandfather. His face shone golden like Daddy's in the picture. Tears dripped down his cheeks. My grandfather spoke from far away. "You have his eyes."

Moving

still i hang suspended, this
(one of many memories) cathedral's ancient stone
warmed, and atmosphere of dusty sun
dancing motes
through st. francis' stained glass eyes
are still

not dead, but dreaming i
and light as sunset scarlet
streams alive and dancing through his auburn hair
each a complement that thinly braided comes
segmented glass (i am the dappled doe
that licks his hand), his benediction falls
like curls upon my upturned face, attentive
squinting

bright, green stained grass kissed his toes
for centuries have stood, new morning dew
each on each, pieces, hand cut light
placed carefully in leaden outline making
whole

shines, the purple breasted birds around his haloed head,
the brown and scratching hairshirt
on his skin, feeling each is each is
peace, pieces of the people we have once, and
past my window, orange shines through bright
my soul, st. francis

(dreaming still and still remember each
certain broken colors, bits of bottle glass that wash
edges smoothed, upon the beach)

Peter Tavernise

Ntzoke Shange

A South African Brother sang your
name to me
some syllables cracked and fizzled
erupted
I see now, miracles do happen
because I knew your name

Darry Strickland

To Change A Name

I've touched Christ's wounds
in the dying sun,
behind the torn sheet
in the temple.

And my name was Thomas.

When I wanted to be Peter,
and I thought of applying
to the government to get
my name changed.
Only, when I took up my pen,
it flowed blue
from my vein—
And there was no air to breathe.

Rachel Starmer



Untitled

P. Shannon Mullen

As evening falls, the evening swells and tunes.

She walks. In her slow path the noises reeve
and twine until they reach her song and keen
in low notes and the subtle rush of leaves.
In the hot night and close silences she roves
and passes; with the soft bow of the breeze
her fingers soothe the straining ones she loves
until each hollow resonates and sees:
someone has outpoured and spread her subtle harmonies

and delicate insistent healing in
the web of empty spaces things must form,
and shaped on the wild, broken strands a thin
arpeggio of basso drops to frame
our tangled lives in silver, make them sane,
and roll them, with the music that she weaves
into her own small ears to know the pain
she knows and heals once more, the restless caves
again, the broken silences where even music grieves

Douglas Gibson

Bad Pome

Inside me exists this barren desert, pervasive
devoid of life, fertility.

But what irony:
scorched desert-
yet so totally
frigid.

I am alive, so they say. But I wonder. . .does this
compendium of blood sweat sperm shit
all turbidly turgidly swelling inside
serve to support their claim?
I think the only proof I have is:
When I cut myself,
I bleed.

I forgot to add Burke, Edmund (1729-1797)
to all that shit about blood sperm and spit.
It is ordained in the eternal constitution
of things, he says, that men of
intemperate minds shall not be free.
But what gave me the idea, I wonder,
that I even want freedom?

And the virtuous machine which Burke foretold
which I seem to want to be-
What proof, what justificaion does it
have, really, for its meager self satisfaction?
Where *does* it get off? I guess
it comes mechanically, in ordered spurts,
if at all.

These questions are choices; these choices require decisions:
I suppose
I'll take the everpresent unnamed option-
and keep writhing in ridiculous neurotic agony. I'll
obey the prompting bells chimes of the machine; but I
will be glad
when I slip trip bleed, and realize that
these well-oiled machinations, are
(what's the right word?)
like, so totally, bogus.

Paul Barringer

Real Estate

"Here we have the Roman Catholic branch.
This one comes with the standard afterlife,
And your own caring God to believe in.
Included in this one, you have the strong
Rock, traditional background. Their saint-per-
Member (S.P.M. for short) is one of
Their strongest points. They are offering
A small penitence if you sign up today."

'And how about that one right over there?'

"A very good choice, sir, I see you have
Taste. That one is open for communion
Every Sunday, every other Wednesday,
And the third Thursday in the month with no
Appointment necessary. (Pamphlet here.)
One of their more resounding benefits
Is their chorus in Dolby stereo."

'And that one there?'

"Sir, we do tend to stay
Away from their kind. They go strictly by the
Book. But one of their attractive features
Is their climate-controlled jacuzzis,
Of course, usable by confirmed members only."

'How about that one with the neon sign?'

"That one is what we call the loan shark deal.
You will have their standard benefits:
A year of television appearances
In the crowd scenes, one free healing (20/20?
You will be perf.), and free tickets to
The amusement park. In return you just need to
Raise over three million dollars, or else, God, the
Father, will take your Earthly house as payment.
If you're just a million short, he'll break your legs."
'And how much can that robed man save me?'

"Oh, him in the corner? We're not quite sure."
Once upon a time we knew, but with all
The paper shuffling and the hostile
Takeovers, we seemed to have forgotten
What deal he could cut for you.
But enough of him and his mysteries!
Let me show you something you can see and believe!
Over here, we have this special feature:
Last rites for your pets. If you act now. . .

Marc Overcash



Judd Owen

Untitled

no news is good news

it really didn't
matter
easy hearts sink freely
and anyways—
cold prickles died with childhood.

the bloody stories of the streets
dripped onto pappy's ears
like sticky sweat, unearned and unwanted.
he spit into the road and pressed me with
the weightlessness of his unconcern.

the radio off, i cornered myself in answer to his
absent guilt — window rattling savagely
against my face, the glass threatened,
shards poked out of the smoothness
and i, streaked red in tears, slumped in grave resign.

Heather Wagner

The Spinners

Speaking of the illness. . .
Someone called it a rite
of passage
On this I choked
Remembering little girls
and half-cut childhoods
Mix in men—
Hell in half the time
it took to get older
Now I spend my days
looking to be young again,
Remembering little girls,
seeing them in strange places
like smiles.
Trying to pull them out
through the eyes
for this is where they hide
Trapped behind blues and greens
And petal-pink lips
so sinful soft
And touched so badly
Come out and play
Oh little girls
We meet at midnight
And leave our souls
and hearts
aside

Dancing, spinning circles
in the moonlight
And we leave our eyes
To let ourselves out
by
We gouge them out
as we do our insides
through our mouths
To let us out of
Mortal cages
Earthly hell-bound
Sleeping senses
of self-sacrificial pleasures
Awaken at the touch
Alive but screaming
Warning
Hiding
Waiting for the just-right
Touch
that spins those years
into moments
And slows the spinning
into the here-now
In my search for
Lost-yearned years
I'll look out for special touches
And hope to find me spun.

Adriana Tavernise

Holes

Somewhere between

“I understand that. . .”
“What?”
“I just don't see. . .”

“I don't think you. . .”
“Look at what I'm saying!”
“What?”

&

“I guess what I mean is. . .”

each of us digs
holes in the other's self
trenches for self-defense

until silence reveals
bare soil, naked roots

and desperately we cover them with our bodies
together, yours over mine, mine over yours
in warmth and wetness, like sun and rain
we find each other's gaps
and fill them

Robbie McKay



Untitled

Ed Matthews