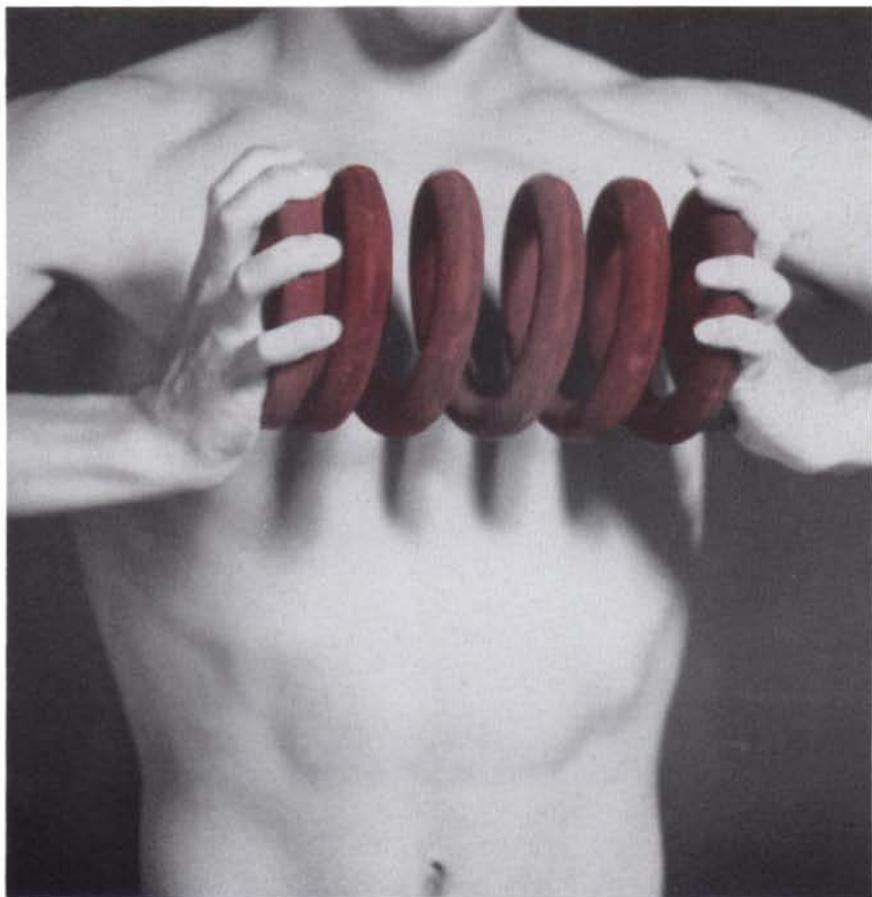
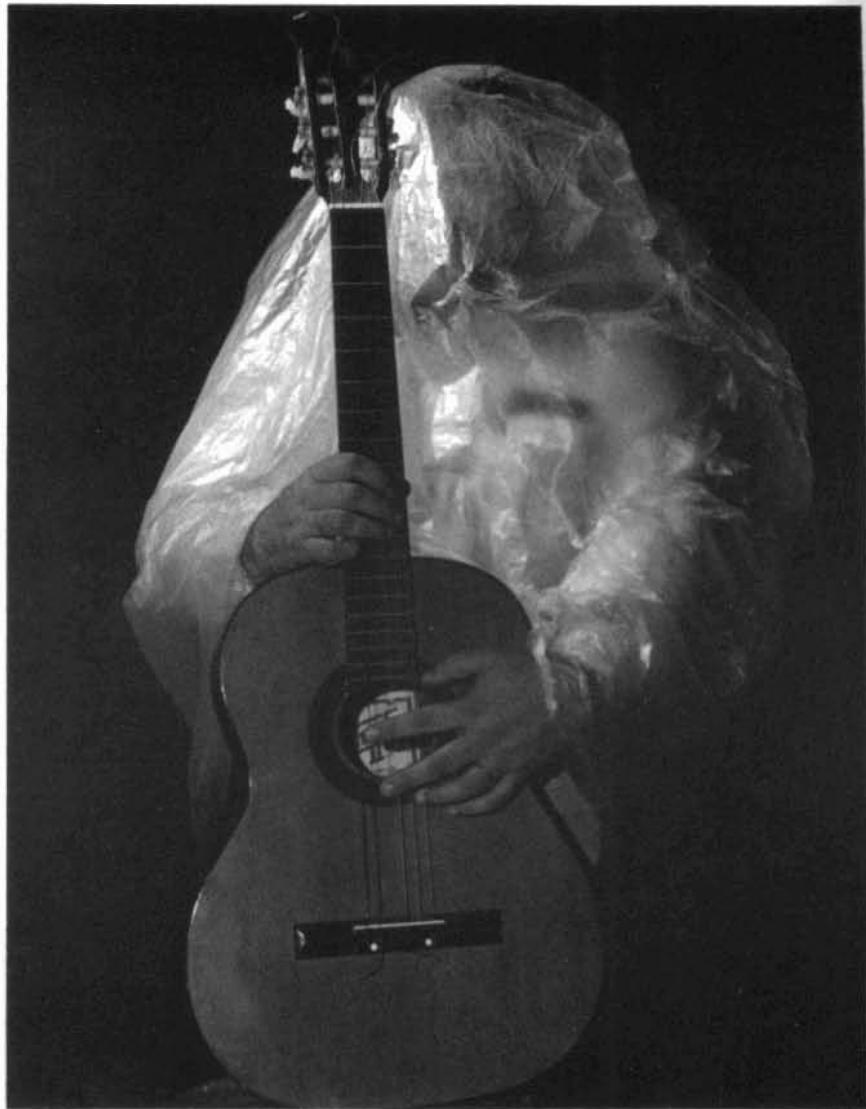


# Great Lake Review

## Spring



1989



*Dee Does Picasso*

Dee Marie



# WEDDING

**Spring 1989**

**Michele Clyne**

"Okay guys, . . . EXCUSE ME!"

**Marie Beshures**

"Maybe I should do more work on this."

**Marty Steinberg**

"Well okay, maybe, no, okay, maybe, okay, I guess so."

**Chris R. Motto**

"Of course I meant to insult you."

**Mary Kraus**

"Huh? Oh, are you speaking to me?"

**George Liveris**

"NO!!! Can it. Or yes with some serious thought."

**Lisa Malo**

"I'll get off this chair when I'm tired of it."

**Dot Hoffman**

"Well, if that's the way you feel . . ."

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### Ceremony

four seasons with this artwork  
this artwork uncovered for work only  
for work only was unsheathed from the black cloth  
the black cloth I picked from the pile

everybody spends four seasons  
four seasons on their best work  
their best work covered from everyone  
from everyone their work in wood

everybody brings their best  
their best out to everybody's gathering  
everybody's gathering is the fire  
the fire burns on everybody's work

never uncovered besides to me  
to me no one else would uncover their work  
their covered work feeds the flame  
flaming cloth images only fire

— Martin Steinberg

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Spring '89

Volume XXVIII

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**Butterfly iris —**

Waywise quivers  
melt with precision.  
Yellow-brown barleygrass,  
bearded spikeletes  
sway sweet  
in the sun's orange.

Butterfly Iris  
mellow in morning.  
Rougen silk  
sipping sassafras tea.  
Curls wrestle wind;  
watching yellow mane  
dancing in  
sunglaze.

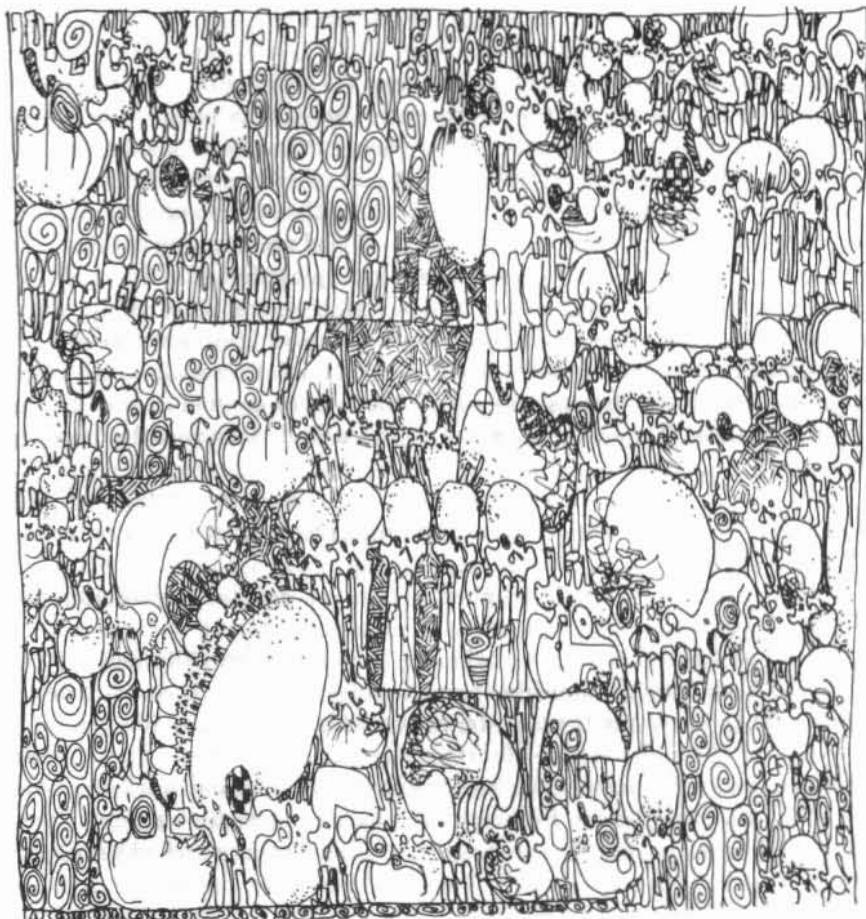
Bingbuffer postman  
scuffles down  
roadside.  
Messages brought from  
overseas houses.

Suckling seedlings  
waiting for jetsreams.  
Fluttering upwards  
opening up letters.  
Faces sensing the  
warm air breezes.

— Tina Ambrosio



Chris R. Motto



*The Sun Shines on Downtown Streets*

Erik Zajacekowsk

### Tapestry

by Kara McPherson

My mother has been invaded by an alien. That's exactly how she put it. I didn't understand at first, or maybe I just didn't want to understand. It's not the kind of thing that any normal (well, all right, maybe not-so-normal, but what is normal?) 19-year-old girl wants to understand.

I don't find anything humorous about this situation at all. But Mom, well, I guess she does. I mean just look at all this alien business. She called me into her room the other night and sat me down on the bed.

"Sookie, dear," she whispered. She always whispers when speaking of matters of the utmost importance to her, "I have to tell you something that's very hard for me. I need you to be strong and help me through this."

How many times have I heard this, I thought, zoning in on the tapestry hanging on Mom's wall. Whenever I sit in Mom's room for an extended period of time, I always try to single out all the different strands of color running through the tapestry. I think it's a magic tapestry, the colors are always changing, kind of like life with Mom.

What color change, I wondered, do we have to overcome now. Well, I knew it couldn't be another divorce, unless you can divorce yourself. I kind of like that idea, divorcing oneself. I mean, think about it — you could take all those nasty

and negative things about yourself that you don't like and divorce them. And that's the end of it. Simple.

Most people look at divorce like it's some God-awful curse from the devil or something. Mom and I don't see it that way. To us it's manna from heaven. We were finally allowed to be ourselves, to grow in the ways we wanted and to do our own thing. Of course, there were a few painful moments in the divorce, but you know what they say — no pain, no gain. And then there's all that bull about divorcee not being allowed in the church and God not allowing divorcees into heaven. That's ridiculous. God doesn't want people to feel like they're living in hell. Life on Earth is supposed to be a peaceful, relaxed, easy-going, state of mind. And earthlings are supposed to do whatever they can to keep it that way, though they usually don't. But Mom and I did. Personally, I agree with that old joke about priests making all those rules against divorce because they're jealous. They can never get married and consequently, never get divorced.

When we were going through the divorce, I remember the tapestry being dominated by white strands, but not all white, there was always some red and grey mixed-in.

"What is it now, Mom," I laughed. "Have you decided to give up macrobiotics?"

Mom just looked at me. I don't think I've ever seen her so serious.

We've been through mid-life crisis already, so I knew it couldn't be that either. That was when the tapestry was ablaze with purple and gold. Mom loved going through her mid-life crisis. She calls it the turning point to end all turning points. She sums the whole experience up with one word — passion. She said that her passion for everything took an incredible plunge into the depths of darkness, but then rose again to heights never reached before. And that's where it stayed. It's still there, she says. Her passion for life, love, learning, food, fun, sex . . . everything. Mom claims her mid-life crisis made her a better person, if that's possible.

It was during her mid-life crisis that I convinced Mom to go back to school, to get her Masters in Anthropology. I like to take the credit for convincing her, but to be honest, it didn't take much convincing. I think she knew all along that someday she would go for it, she just needed a push. A very tiny push.

So the way I figured it, the new problem in our lives has to be either a major career change or menopause. Boy, was I off-base.

"I have been invaded by an alien," Mom whispered.

I laughed. C'mon, you would too. I mean, think of what you'd picture if someone told you they had been invaded by an alien.

First thing that came to my mind was like something out of a horror film. I pictured this incredibly large, incredibly slimy and incredibly scaly creature just waiting to grab Mom up with its 10 foot long claw-like tentacles. It would just show up out of nowhere. You'd never know how or when it would appear, but all of a sudden it'd be there. Sometimes these kinds of aliens eat humans. Sometimes they just plain and simple kill them. I hate those kinds of movies.

So does Mom. One look at her told me that wasn't exactly what she meant by alien. Something about the way she looked at me made me uneasy. I never get that feeling from Mom.

I couldn't pick one color out of the tapestry either. Another unusuality. It looked like a murky mass of waves, pounding a shoreline.

"Sookie," Mom whispered, "there is an alien in my body."

I pictured a mini-microscopic amoeba-like alien. That somehow implanted itself in Mom's system. Maybe it lived in the water pipes and one day it was swept up in the rush of water through the pipes to the faucet in our kitchen sink, where it plunged into a glass of water that Mom drank, then permanently planted itself inside her. Now, it was beginning to expand and take over Mom's insides and eventually start to transform her into a giant amoeba-like alien and she'd spread it around and soon the whole world would be in utter chaos.

These crazy images raced through my mind in less than a minute in a mumbo-jumbo mass. I was still laughing.

I looked at Mom. She was very quiet and still, watching me. I couldn't read her. I always know what Mom's thinking and feeling. It's like we're telepathic twins instead of mother and daughter. But for that moment, I didn't know what was going on inside her. My mind was full of static fuzz. I didn't like it. I had an awful feeling. Did Mom?

I looked at her and one scary word came into my head. I knew it was in Mom's, too. But it was in more than just her mind. It was in her body. And it was growing. Kind of like the amoeba-alien, but it wasn't funny.

I stared at Mom and I knew she was getting ready to say it. One word that could change both our lives. The kind of word that wealthy women whisper to each other behind linen napkins at tea time. The kind of word that some people spell out, letter by letter, as if trying to avoid some taboo. I didn't want to hear it, hearing it would make it real. I stared at Mom, silently willing her not to say it.

But her will was stronger than mine.

"Sookie," she whispered, so quietly and slowly I almost didn't hear her, "I have cancer."

I couldn't look at her. I automatically moved my stare to the tapestry. It was a violent rage of brilliant, burning colors, tumbling over one another in mass confusion. I couldn't settle on one color. I kept staring, trying harder. The colors lessened and slowed until all I could see was a beautiful sunny, yellow glow.

Mom broke my gaze, pulling me to her. "We're going to beat this, too, Sookie," she whispered.

And I knew there was hope.

### Jolly, Jolly Sixpence

Had I sixpence for every poem I wrote  
Perhaps I could buy some shoes  
Had I sixpence for every verse about you  
Perhaps I could buy some socks.  
But had I all those sixpence now  
Right here in the palm of my hand,  
I would know exactly how to lose them  
By buying you flowers instead.

— Kate Kane



- A) and when you walk  
and when you  
and when you  
walk you  
throw back the  
bones  
throw back the  
hip bones.
- B) the moon!  
Yes, I forgot  
the moon!  
I am rolling it  
between my fingers.
- C) I see you walking  
bone rolling  
walking through,  
jumping,  
arching body  
hips spread  
showing bones.
- D) beneath the skin  
beneath  
under the skin  
the skin  
under the skin  
you see  
the bones glow.  
They glow, happy.
- E) Going through?  
Passing through?  
Jumping through?  
Are you through?  
Are you made of bones?
- F) I see you.  
I see you  
I see you  
I see you  
I am rolling you  
between my fingers.

— Laura Molinelli



Tracy Wargo

### Polly

Ever since Polly's parents died,  
she's had a couple of boyfriends.  
She's taping her visions to the white wall  
and thinking this place is her home.  
She's drinking milk from the carton  
and letting the cat lick the rest off her lip.  
She's dreaming of herself in a black and white way —  
vanishing under the lights in the darkest room.  
She's had a couple of jobs through the agency,  
but they said she was easily distracted.  
Her latest boss, she's got a girlfriend —  
Polly heard them kissing on the gallery camera.  
She's got her empty refrigerator,  
and she's got pictures all around.  
She likes to follow lovers through the woods  
because its the closest she's ever gotten.  
The only beauty in her pictures is simple,  
but she doesn't think they're very simple.  
Her boss called them that today  
and its funny how Polly's burning them  
in the garbage can lid.  
She won't go to work tomorrow.  
She won't be taking her camera out.  
Her pink bicycle has a basket on the back,  
but that's the beauty of it all.

— Glenn Miller

Teenage girls  
In an underwear slumber party;  
Every man's sweet dream.  
He wants to make them in a bathroom.  
  
The offense is there  
In his mind.  
Pornography opens isolation,  
And he is abandoned again  
With this T.V. sex object.

— Ron Throop

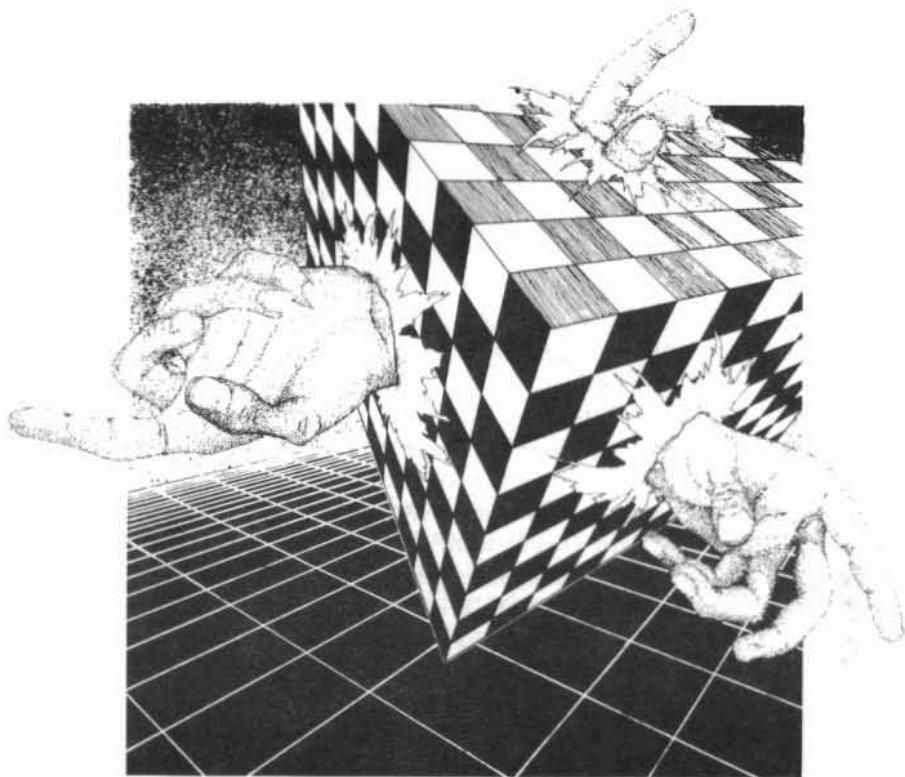
### I Got a Couple of Questions

Where did the country erode to, anyways?  
I was drinking from my enraged pineapple  
When the duke and his sagacious melees  
Washed down with the milk, purple.

Watercolours aren't done on a canvas,  
But neither is motor oil drunk for its fecundity.  
The Giraffes convened, conceived of purpose,  
Then spun off of the edge of infinity.

*What the hell does that mean, llama?*  
When tact was born, cars had chrome,  
Equations yawned without a comma,  
And history picked up the check in Rome.

— Saul Taupin



*Creation Revisited*

Jeffry Scott Gugiek

## Alvin

by David Girvin

For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be a librarian. I used to run to the little, ivy-covered town library every day after school. I'd tote my books and my lunch-pail and stumble up the front steps in my golashes that Mother made me wear whenever there was the slightest chance of rain. The warmth that greeted me as I struggled to open the heavy, wooden door comforted me more than my own home. I'd hang up my jacket and scoot over to the little wooden chair by the librarian's desk and watch her with a glowing smile that was always missing one of the obvious front teeth. "Hi Alvin," she'd say, but I was content with just sitting there silently, watching the line of people worm its way up to her desk. There were tall, skinny men borrowing books about science or math. And there were those fat older ladies whose ankles folded over the tops of their shoes. The dusty smell of the old books drifted past my nose as she would open them to the back and then close them with a slap and whisk them over to my side of the desk. I'd stack them in order of decreasing size. This went on for years and never once did I miss a day of stacking and smiling and watching at our library, that is until my father told me I was "becomin' a momma's boy" and that my "wrists were gonna be too limp to cut my roast." So I had to stop going to the library after school and was forced to try out for the junior high basketball team.

Of course, being five-foot-one, at the time, I proceeded to fail miserably at the sport. My father spent three weeks training me in the "I'm your father, therefore I'm qualified to teach you" school of inane basketball drills. We went down to the park every day when he got home from pounding steel in the mill, a "real-man's" job. After three weeks of intense mental and physical training, I was ready for the big day. When I stepped out onto the court and got in line with the other, much taller, hopefuls I noticed one thing my father forgot to tell me. Any kid wearing black socks has absolutely no chance of making the team. I then went on to miss eight out of ten foul shots, trip over the ball on a lay-up, and score on my own net during a five-on-five drill.

So now I find myself a thirty-two year old insurance claims adjuster with a father who thinks I'm a disgrace to the family name, a mother who still sends me cookies once a month, and a burning desire to be a librarian.

As luck would have it, I was sitting in the back booth of the local bar discussing my frustrated life with a bottle of Sangria, when into the smoky room walked the most beautiful set of legs, ridden by a shapely torso and capped with a mane of flowing blonde hair. She ordered a drink and leaned her back against the soft, leather edge of the bar. I slowly sipped my drink, brushed my remaining hair over my bald spot, and settled back in the booth focusing on those red, pouting lips. They began to move slowly, as if they were whispering an Ella Fitzgerald ballad ten or fifteen r.p.m.'s too slow. She was mouthing something, I think it was German, "Itsche lufnew . . ." I was trying to decipher the rest when the lips began to inflate. They were expanding to well over the recommended pounds per square inch, when they stopped and I found myself staring face-to-face with this goddess-like woman who was now standing in front of my booth.

"May I sit down?" she asked in a low, husky, drawn-out voice.

My god, not only was this the most beautiful woman I have ever laid eyes on, but she was also bilingual.

"Why?" I asked in disbelief, pushing up my glasses and wiping sweat from my brow in one motion.

"What?"

"Why do you look so lovely on such a night as this?" Real smooth Alvin, like a born poet.

"I like you," she said. "you're funny."

Just as she said this she let out a high-pitched squeal, as if someone had just jabbed a sharpened pencil into her shapely bottom. Judging from the lack of mischievous, or horny, midgets in sight, I assumed that it was her laugh. She sat down without my further complicating the situation with a feeble invitation, and proceeded to push one strap of her top slowly off of her shoulder in a nonchalant kind of way, as if she didn't realize she was doing it.

"My name is Joy," she said.

"I'm sure it is," I said before thinking. "I'm Alvin."

"You look like an Alvin. I mean that as a compliment. I love sophisticated men. Are you a professor or a poet or something?"

I couldn't tell her that I drive to people's burned-down houses and offer them ridiculously low sums of money until they call me names and threaten me with shotguns for a living. So I went for it all.

"No, actually I'm a librarian."

Her face lit up, she leaned toward me like a cat.

"This is your lucky night, Alvin. I love librarians," she moaned.

"You do?"

"Watching a man leaf through a book and stamp a due-date," she squirmed as if she was sitting on a tack, "it just makes me hot."

What was this, a gift from heaven? I continued with the lie. "Yeah, I work down at the city library. Next year I might even be promoted to head librarian."

"I'd love to watch you work sometime," she purred.

"Why don't you drop by Thursday night around 7:30? I'll be at the front desk."

"It's a date," she said and leaned over and planted her full, red pucker on my thin quivering lips.

How was I going to pull this one off? I leaned back with my bottle and devised a plan.

Luckily the city grossly underpays the librarians and the young gentleman at the front desk gladly accepted my twenty-five dollars to let me work for a half-hour, as long as he could stand nearby to observe the situation. You never know, I could have been the cover for a major heist of Joyce Carol Oats' collections.

I was in paradise. Not only was I waiting the arrival of the first woman to show interest in me while not out-weighing me, but I was fulfilling my life-long dream of working as a librarian. As I was stuffing a stamped card into the pocket of a Judy Blume book, I realized that my life was now complete. I could have been struck down at this instant and I would have died with a smile on my face, not to mention pissing-off a good deal of people in line. Suddenly, there was the terrible screech of tires on pavement outside of the front doors. People left their books and flooded out to see what happened. An old lady with a cane hobbled back in and asked me to call an ambulance. I did and then hurried out to see for myself what all of the commotion was. I squeezed my way up to the front of the crowd. There was Joy lying on her back in the street, her luscious body miserably crushed. She had been run down by a "R.I.F." truck rushing back to the library to pick up more books. The driver was running around pleading excuses and apologies to the onlookers. How could he do this to her? She was one of our own. I lost control and started chanting, "R.I.F. —reading is fatal, not fundamental." By the time the ambulance arrived most of the crowd had joined in.

What a blow to my psyche. My dreams died with Joy that day. Had she been struck by a car full of escaped convicts or a drunken used-car salesman, someone I could loathe, I could channel my anger at the despicable slob. But a mobile library, a truck and a driver whose sole purpose is to spread literacy. A man dedicated to the cause, a fellow soldier in the battle against illiteracy. A comrade. How could I hate a comrade?



*Pig Leg or I Saw You Before You Saw Me*

Scott DeVinny

I had to talk to someone. I knew of a church a few blocks away. I attended my secretary's wedding there a few months back and the chubby, bald priest seemed to be an understanding fellow.

I entered the church and wiped my feet. The night was dry but it seemed to be the right thing to do. There were a few people standing in line outside of a warm-looking wooden cabinet. Then the door opened and a thin, slouching man stepped out and the lady at the head of the line entered pulling the door closed behind her. I was unsure of the correct process, but I took my place at the end of the line. Finally, it was my turn to enter the wooden cabinet. I closed the door, sat down, and decided to take the initiative.

"I want to report a sin, Father," I said with confidence.

"What have you done, Brother," I heard through the screen.

"I haven't done anything, It's my comrade, well, he took Joy from me."

"It is not a sin to have homosexual desires."

"You lost me, Father," I said.

"It's a natural biological fact that . . ."

"No, Father, a 'R.I.F.' driver struck my date as she crossed the street to the library." I explained. "She's dead."

"Well then it was her time. It was the Lord's calling. Be thankful that she is with her Maker," he said calmly.

"But how will I go on Father?"

"Put it behind you. Pick up a hobby, something relaxing, maybe reading."

"Thank you, Father, you've been a great help." I lied, exited, and headed for the booth in the back of my local bar.

I settled into the seat with a fresh bottle of Sangria, took a big gulp straight from the bottle and wiped my lips dry with the back of my hand when the most beautiful set of legs walked into the smoke-filled room.

### **Smoke Mother**

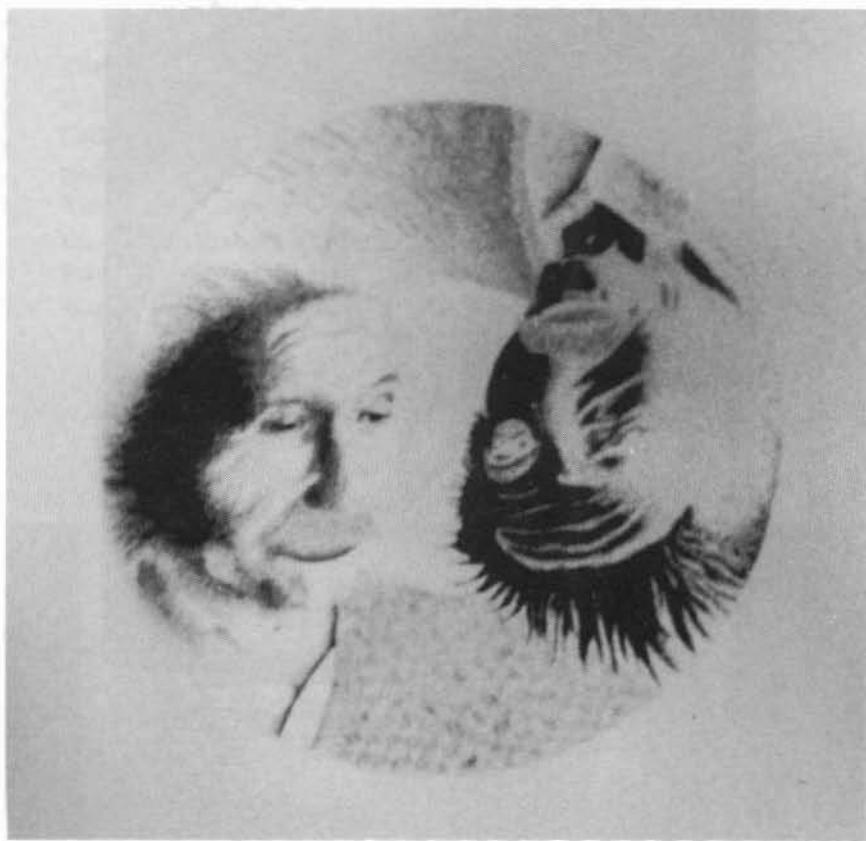
I have been to see the smoke mother.  
She has passed between my lips  
and has helped me to see  
the amethyst hole at the center  
where there is none. I have held  
her close, inside my dress, felt  
her breathing green silk, touched  
her hot eyes with my wet eyes.

She is a lungful.  
She brings white mist to me all year.  
She thinks she's my lover. Yes,  
she is beautiful,  
but I am not. I am  
not strong.

— Laura Molinelli



Steve Cunningham



EINSTEIN/NIETSNIE

Marie Beshures

### Us, We Go

Einstein,  
with brilliant mind,  
unlocked a door  
untried before.  
And in a while,  
power global,  
from Three Mile Isle  
to Chernobyl  
makes me have  
to laugh, and ask,  
“What ‘power-ful’ rhyme  
could ‘de-Scriba’ the town  
with a nuke plant, near you  
when it goes down.”

— Martin Steinberg



*Winter*

Melinda Campbell

### Ode to a Fetus

Immersed in fluid, you lived your life  
In darkness, surrounded by maternal heat.  
The time you spent on life-support  
Connected, tangled by tubular exchange,  
Will not be counted in any sort  
of estimate of your age. You kicked your feet  
To warn the world of another life

Of hopes and dreams. You'd had your share  
Of darkness. Your eyes existed with yet no use,  
Nothing to see. You fondled your ears,  
Which sat at attention, waiting to be set free  
From that liquid silence, shedding tears,  
You tossed and turned, in hope of escaping that noose.  
You felt an increasing need for air

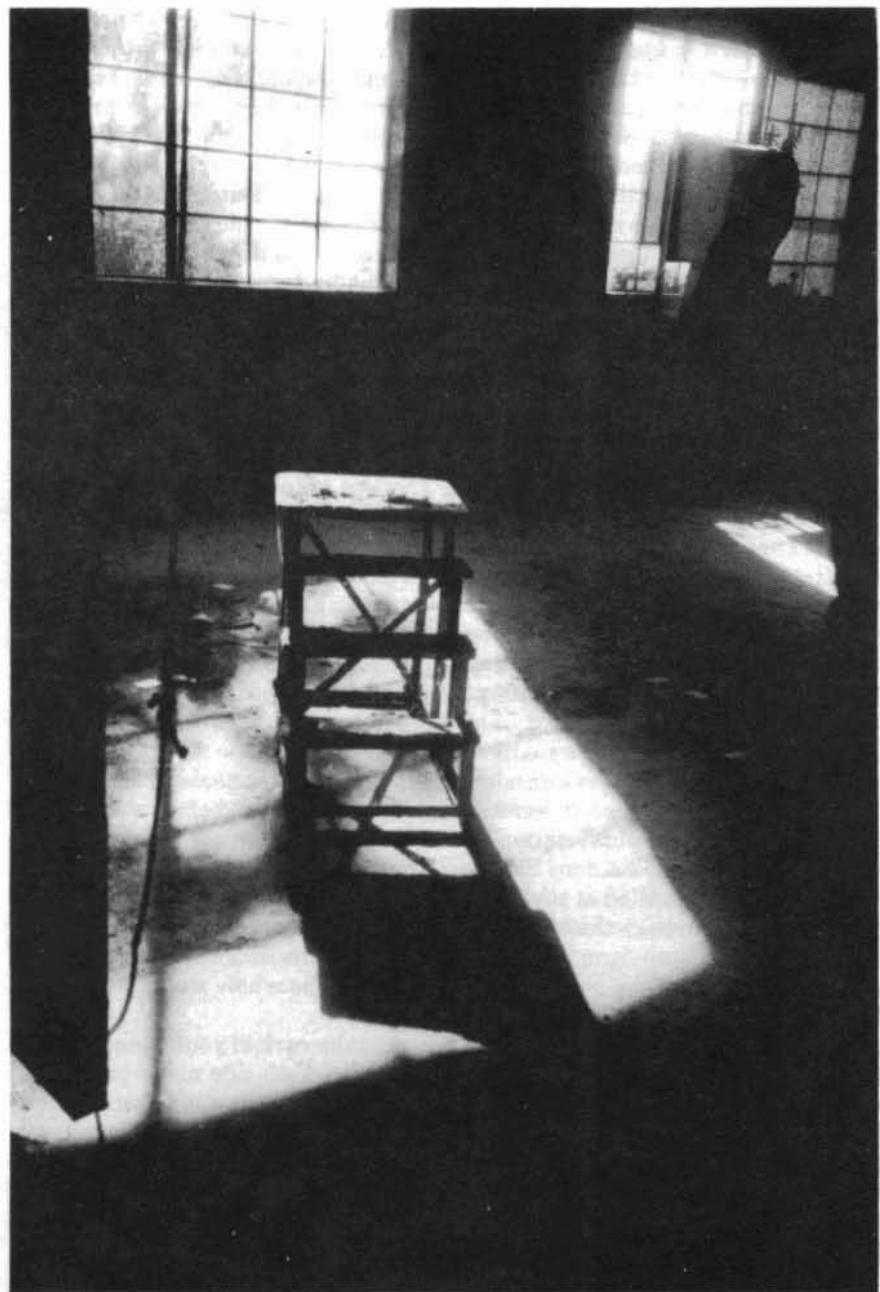
Which was driving you to search and feel  
For an exit. You twisted around and pushed your head  
Against a door of muscle and flesh.  
The barrier gave way and you sensed the dawn  
Of visible life, the start of a fresh  
Existence. Sterile hands surrounded your head  
And pulled you toward a life that is real.

— David Girvin

### **At The Carnival**

They stood amidst the crowd,  
so alone in the throng of people.  
Collective body pushed along,  
pulling the small one with it.  
Yet they still stood out, outshone  
the crowd, outshone the dark.  
Piercing eyes, scared eyes,  
looking for their mommy.

— Davey



Steve Cunningham

## Funny Face

by Chris R. Motto

My sister Gerdie put herself up for sale one summer when she was eight years old. She boosted herself up onto a wooden chair, beside a typewriter and a cracked lamp with daisies painted on it, and tied a pricetag around the top button of her blouse with a scribbled \$5 and 0¢ across it. When nighttime came and she was still sitting in the garage, I went out and told her that no one was gonna buy her so she might as well come into the house and go to bed. Her yellow cheeks drooped and her eyes, as big as an owls, looked pathetic and hollow under the light of the garage, but she slid off of the wooden chair, ignored my opened hand and shuffled toward the door leading into the house. I watched her shadow, fuzzy and ghostly, race her to the screen, sneaking up from behind her around the left side then making her look ten feet tall; even her shadow beat her to the door but like a good sport lead her inside before disappearing.

An act that she could never quite master. Gerdie was born with an overdose of bad habits. Her lips has a mind of their own, they puckered under pressure, and pulled back in anger. When Gerdie's teeth showed you knew they were either going in for the kill or settling for revenge. Gerdie laughed as if she had multiple stab wounds, and cried a spine chilling cry, like a loon. The problem was however, not the different sounds she made, but the facial expressions that accompanied them. "In time," my mother would say to me when I questioned her about the repulsively insane faces my sister would make. I dare to say that once when Gerdie showed a dislike for the liver and onions, which was my favorite meal when I was younger, she flipped her lips out so her dead teeth showed, then stuck her tongue out, and crossed her eyes (though at times they normally looked crossed). Jerry, the man our mother was living with, rather the man who was living off of us, slammed his hand on the table and screamed through his stubble and the meat in his mouth that spewed all over the rest of our food, that she was ugly enough that her face was going to stick that way because he had a talk with God, (Gawd was the way he pronounced it) and Gawd was sick of her ugly faces, and if Gawd could be sick of them so was he. Jerry lived with us another couple of months before he couldn't take any more of Gerdie's unhealthy ways.

Even after the garage sale incident Gerdie did not give up trying to leave. It wasn't after she shaved her head and stuck a rolled up sock down the front of her pants to look like an eight year old boy with an oversized penis, and then asked our neighbor to please bring her to the post office so she could sign up for the army. It wasn't until after she walked to Route 28 with a sign that said "flooreda" on it, and sat on the side of the road with her thumb out. When we found her, I sat my mother down and begged her to explain to me my sister Gerdie, who was eight years younger than I was.

"That little girl of mine is a doosie, isn't she?" My mother asked shaking her head. She stuck a Winston in her mouth and chewed on it before she lit it.

"But Ma, eight year olds just don't do the things that she does." My eyebrows melted together and I held my hands out toward her as if I needed a hand out.

My mother just smiled at me. I could see her tongue bobbing up and down doing push ups through the holes where her teeth once were, and her crooked nose lay flat and limp from being broken so many times. She just smiled and shook her head as if she were going insane, as if the whole world was doing something wrong at that very moment.

"Listen Ellie," she said to me, "you have to take care of your sister Gerdie forever. Remember forever, she needs taking care of. She needs you Ellie, she's your sister for God's sake. She, is, yours." My mother took a sip of what looked like water, but smelled like death, and shook her head some more. I didn't have the foggiest idea what she was talking about. I was sixteen and I barely need anybody taking care of me.

"I see," I said, "you're just worried that we're not gonna stay friends like you and your sister, right Ma. I said, right?" My mother smiled and shook, smiled and shook, smiled and shook.

By that time she must have been dizzy as a doorknob, because I sure was. She refilled her glass of hemlock and I got up to answer the phone. It had been disconnected twice this year because my mother didn't have the money to pay the bill, especially when Jerry was with us.

"Hello," I said breathlessly into the receiver, "hello, hello . . . Grandma is that you?" Our grandma was hard of hearing. Still no answer. "Hello, damn it hello. I'm hanging up now, so hello!" I slammed the phone down and waited for a moment. It must have been one of my mothers boyfriends and when I answered they hung up. But it rang again, and I picked it up on the first ring.

"Hello!" I screamed.

"Hello, is this Missus, uh . . ."

"she ain't a Missus, she ain't a . . ." I heard in the background. What the heck, I thought.

"Yes, is this uh, Addie Warhall?"

"Well, no if you hold . . ."

"This is the Deputy, your daughter Gertrude Warhall is at the police station."

"What do you mean my sister Gerdie is at the station? What the hell did she do?"

"Well Miss Warhall perhaps we should discuss it when you get here."

"Fine." I said looking at my mother who now had her head lying on the table. I hung up and went to her.

"Ma, Gerdie, Ma, Gerdie is at the police station." My mother nodded and then shook her head and told me to go get her. This time I shook my head and left.

It took me no time at all to walk to the station to find my sister sitting behind bars. I looked at the man who I assumed to be the one who arrested her and marched toward him.

"What in God's name is my eight year old sister doing in there?" I pointed to her and she waved.

"Ellie," she screamed. "Ellie, look. Wouldn't this beat all."

"She insisted. I'm Deputy Johnson. Your sister was in the park when I saw her."

"Well what did she do?" I said with a tone.

"It seems that she beat a boy up . . ."

"He was calling me names, Ellie." I waved my hand at her to shut her up.

" . . . and she had her skirt raised up and was, was, well she was urinating on him." The man was red as a new wagon, and so was I. "I'm sorry, we didn't arrest her, but when we asked her where she lived she said she didn't know. So we asked her her name and called your mother. She said if she was going to be arrested like a criminal, that she wanted to be treated like one."

"Fine." I said. "Can I have her now?"

"Of course, the cell is not locked. We just let her sit in there."

"Fine." I turned toward the cell that Gerdie sat in and beckoned her with my finger. She shuffled as quickly out as her duck feet walk would take her.

"Did you pay my bail, Ellie? How much was it? Did you see, they even let me make my one phone call. Momma will probably have to sell the house don't you think. Whoa is she gonna be spittin mad." Gerdie walked along in silence and then said, "He was calling me names. He was making fun of me, calling me ugly. I had all the right in the world."

It seems that I didn't get a chance to talk to my mother about Gerdie again for a long time. My Aunt Ruth, my mother's sister, and my grandma came along one weekend after school had started again. Gerdie had just gone into the second grade. Most other kids her age were in the third grade. I was a sophomore in high school. Anyway, Aunt Ruth and Grandma visited for a weekend and we sat up drinking some Chinese tea, and chewed Chinese gum that was supposed to have curables in it, that my aunt brought back from China. Except for Gerdie who was by that time assumably in bed. They talked about the old times when grandma and auntie still lived in our county, they moved away about five years after Gerdie was born.

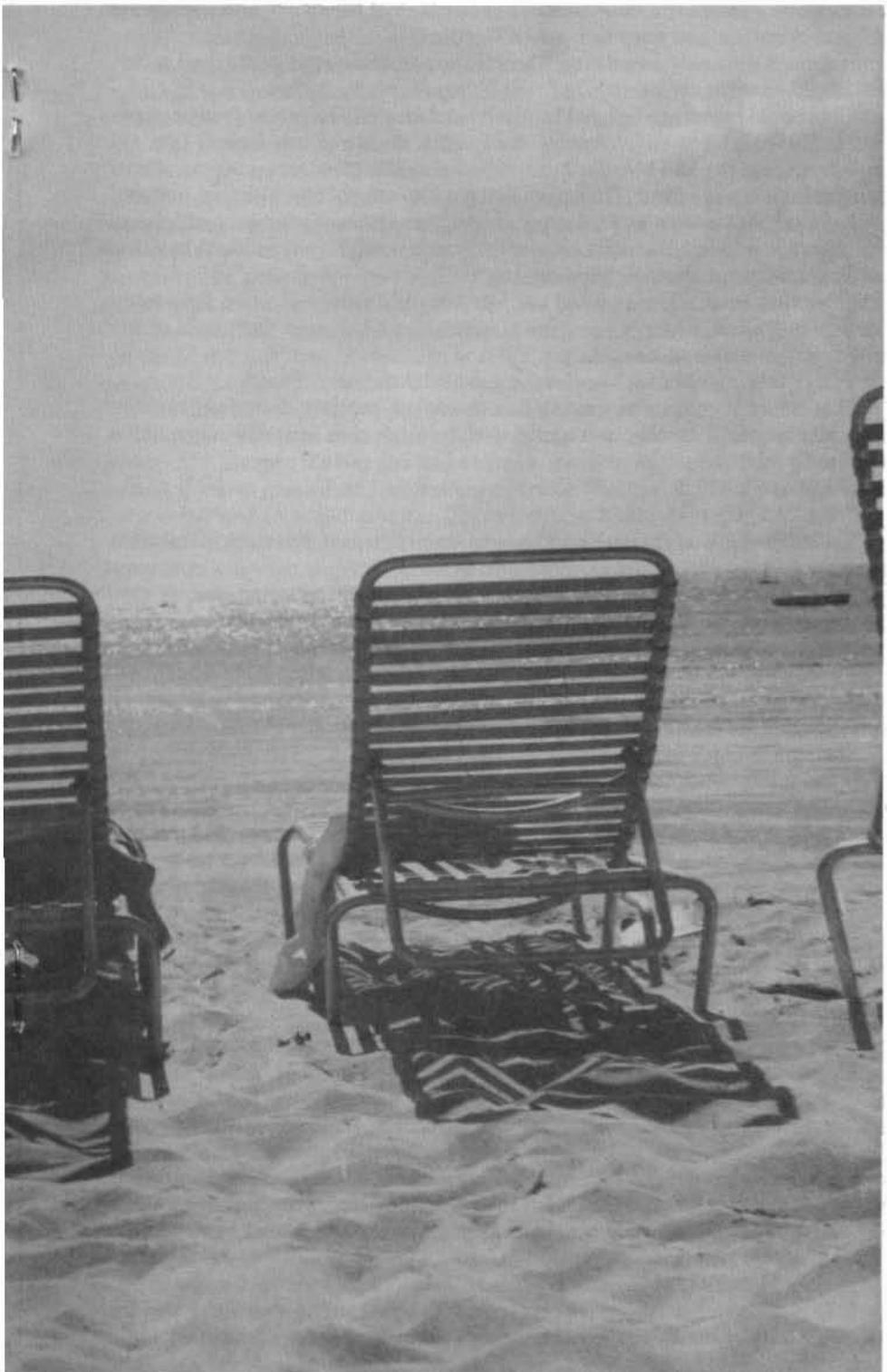
**Covenant**

Summer thunderstorms,  
charged with electricity,  
hiss on desert floors.

— Tina Ambrosio



*Bathroom*



Tracy Wargo

We all lived in one big house, Grandma, Grandpa, Auntie, my mother, me and Gerdie, when she was finally born. Gerdie's daddy was not my daddy. My mother doesn't know where either of them are now, but at that time she was dating this cab driver, who swore his faithful and undoubted love to her on two dates. Then she slept with him. My Grandpa nearly beat the daylights out of my mother when he found out she was pregnant again, without a husband again. Little changed after Gerdie was born, I remember because I was eight, except that my grandfather died, and instead of sleeping out on the sofa, I got his bedroom.

Anyway, I put Gerdie to bed and went into our tiny family room to visit with our visitors. I sat on the floor because of our lack of furniture and listened to my grandmother and aunt talk about Gerdie.

First Grandma said something like, "If she had had a string attached to her, she would have flown like a kite."

"You should have seen her go Ma, she looked more like a piece of crepe paper tied to a newlyweds car," Auntie Ruth said. Auntie Ruth looked like my mother, except she had blonder hair while my mother had strawberry colored hair, when it wasn't dyed. They both had a milky way of freckles that blended into a smudge of brown as they grew older. And all three of them had a fuzzy little mole just below the right corner of their mouth. It looked like a sagging exclamation point that lost its meaning.

My mother at this time pulled out her last Winston and rolled the empty pack in her hand. She plugged the cigarette into the open port hole of her mouth and chewed on its end.

"You're talking about when Gerdie got hit by the car," I said.

"That sister of yours was waving like the American flag, hanging from the back of that car." Auntie said again with a laugh that sounded more like a hiccup.

"She was what?"

"Four." Auntie said.

"No, Ruth, she was three. Yes, I'm sure she was three. I'm sure." Grandma said.

"No, it was four." My mother said, while the cigarette jiggled like an oar.

"It was three, I know because of the trees."

We all looked at Grandma.

"There were three white birch trees in a row right in front of ol' Jake Lipps' house. When your father died, the first tree's branches began to sag. When your uncle died the middle tree got infested with June bugs. They used to bang up against the screens, remember Addie, Ellie thought it was the boogie man trying to get into the house. When Gerdie got hit by the car the third tree was peeling in a pattern and when I ran out to the road, I swear I glanced so quickly that that tree looked like the silliest funny face I'd ever seen. Yes sir, it was three."

"Where was I Grandma?" I asked.

"You were, well let me think."

"She was out at Boz Smith's trailer. Remember, he was paying her a nickle an hour to watch his baby chicks." Auntie Ruth said while she twisted pieces of my hair between her fingers.

"Yea, that's right," I said, "I couldn't ever forget that. They wore the sides out of the wooden coop Mr. Smith made out of sanitary napkin boxes and all but two got squashed by that big lawn mower. Boy, I thought he was gonna be spittin' mad, but he wasn't."

"I'm sure your mother won't forget that either. Remember Addie? That child was sitting at the edge of the grass by the road playing in the gravel when the car hissed right by her and caught a hold of that jacket of yours she had on. Caught right onto the end of the back bumper." Grandma recalled as she rocked back and forth in the rocker with her hands folded neatly in her lap.

"Mmhmm," was all my mother said.

"Oh yes, I certainly remember it clearly. Boz was on his way home and the next thing he knew was he was carrying a three year old with half her scalp torn off her head, into the house. Your mother told him to take her away she was probablly dead. I don't want to touch her, she said. Just take my dead baby away."

"I looked at her, remember Addie, remember Ma, and shouted you damn fool that child's not dead. Her eyes were rolling around the back of her head. Then I shouted call an ambulance. Your mother, Ellie, just sat there saying, take her away I don't want no dead babies in the kitchen."

"Poor Boz Smith stood there with that child in his arms, mouth wide open, blood oozing all over that nice jacket he wore. He took it to the dry cleaners, but it was ruined. I offered him money for another, but he wouldn't take it. He stood holding her like she were a bouquet of flowers offering them to their owner." Grandma chuckled a little while she rocked. "What trouble that was," my mother said. Then the three of them all sat, looking pensive for a moment, and sighed.

"Well, what happened after that?"

"Your mother sat at the kitchen table and drank brandy to calm down some, and when the ambulance came Ruth and me got in and went off to the hospital with your screaming sister with half her scalp dangling down the side of her face. She certainly was a sight to see."

"How long was she in the hospital for?"

"Well, they stitched her head up, those damned doctors, without cleaning her head out," said my mother who got up to refill her glass. "Tried to sue the pants off of them, didn't get much, should have gotten more for the trouble I went through sitting up with Gerdie when her headaches started. Should have gotten a lot more for the trouble."

"You see Ellie," Auntie said, "Gerdie would get migraines, until she couldn't see out of her left eye. If you ever notice," she lowered her voice so the wall couldn't hear her, "Gerdie's left eye twitches once in a while."

"I thought she did that to get attention."

"There are rocks in that child's head, got up underneath all the vitals, the doctor said. He said it's like she had a stroke, sometimes the left side of her face doesn't work so good. Just like having a stroke." Auntie Ruth looked down at the ground and frowned murmuring something like, poor kid.

"Does Gerdie know that she has rocks in her head? Is she aware of why she sometimes does the things she does? She can't control it, can she?" I sat and thought for a minute. "If you knew all of this Mom, then why didn't you tell that fat piece of pork, Jerry, to leave her alone. You must have known and you still let him yell at Gerdie like that. Were you that desperate for somebody to be in your bed!" Oh, I was mad. I had climbed up onto my knees and was right in my mother's face. Grandma tapped me on the shoulder and told me to stop. I was much too disgusted to do anything, so I went to Gerdie's room and sat next to her bed and watched her sleep.

In the morning Gerdie raced outside in her nighty before brushing her hair or teeth. My mother let her go, without a word. I yelled for Gerdie to get back in and make herself presentable. She stuck her tongue out at me and kept running.

Gerdie came in a while later and asked me to go to the playground with her so she could show me how to do a penny drop off the high bar.

"Gerdie, can't you see I'm reading."

"Well, take it with you then."

"All right," I said, "but not until you change and brush your teeth."

I sat on a swing and read while she prepared to do a penny drop. She hung upside down from the lowest bar and swung herself by jerking her upper body and arms. When finally she felt that the front of her swung high enough that her head was close to parallel to the bar, she let her knees go off the bar and landed perfectly, as perfectly as she could get, to her feet. She came running over to me.

"Did you see that, Ellie? That's a penny drop. Bet you couldn't do that when you were my age."

A little ways away there were a group of kids playing kick ball and making a lot of noise.

"Those are kids in my classroom," Gerdie said.

"Well, why don't you go play with them? Are they your friends?" I asked her.

"Oh, sure they are. They all like me a lot, cause I can make them laugh."

"So go play with them."

"No, I like practicing my penny drops. All the girls like to see who's the best at recess. I want to be the best. I like it just fine over here with you."

Gerdie ran off and hopped up with an effort onto the middle bar and hung upside down. She must have practiced on the middle bar for awhile, I didn't take notice too much because of the book I was reading. The noise from the other kids grew louder and clearer and when I finally looked up, I noticed that they had moved closer to us and were playing dodge ball. Gerdie hollered my name a few times before I heard her. I looked up and saw her hanging from the top bar, about six feet off the ground.

"Be careful!" I yelled out to her. Gerdie waved at me before her body started to jerk back and forth. I looked down and then up again, she had grabbed the attention of many of her friends who gathered in a group. A boy with black dirty hair held the ball under his right arm. She swung and swung until I thought she'd spin right around the bar. Finally, though, she straightened her legs until she swung far enough up that she faced out toward her friends. She spread her arms out, actually looked like a professional ski jumper in the air. Her face was tense, and her lips puffed in and out until I thought she'd suck them right down her throat. Down she came and landed on her feet and then with a delayed reaction fell. The drop was unbelievably good, for Gerdie, and even though I told her so, it didn't matter, because the other kids saw her too.

On the way down to the park, Gerdie had told me of her plans to move to flooreda.

"You know," she'd said, "you'll have to take care of mommy when I'm gone. She'll be yours to take care of when she's old and ugly. I wonder if someone like Jerry will like her when she's old and ugly."

"Jerry was a jerk. I hope he didn't bother you that much."

"You know," she said again, "that boy who I beat up, he started it Ellie, I swear I didn't. He was calling me names, so I had to beat him up."

"Gerdie, there's a difference between beating somebody up and doing what you did to him."

"What's the difference? He got what he deserved." Gerdie pulled her lips back and squinted.

"You urinated on him. Gerdie, that's disgusting and very childish."

"Well I'm a child, aren't I?"

"So, you want to grow up, don't you?"

"I'm sorry, Ellie."

"I'm sorry, Ellie," Gerdie said to me spitting dirt out of her mouth. I ran over to see if she was all right, and all the kids in the background were laughing and chanting something at her. "I'm sorry," she said again. Her mouth opened and her teeth showed as she cranked out her cry, letting the world know she was in pain.

"Why are you sorry, that was great, Gerdie. You landed on your feet, you didn't fall until after you looked at me, you did great." I hugged her but she pushed me away. She shuffled away from me, toward home, and I imagined her walking that way down a highway with a sign that said, "flooreda" on it.

I turned and looked at the kids who chanted cruelly at her, and didn't quite understand what they were saying until I passed them by.

Funny face. That's what they called her. Funny face. I ran and caught up with her, and she asked me if I wanted to go away with her.

"You can't run, Gerdie, cause you'll never stop." Gerdie looked up at me, not understanding a word I said, and brushed her eyes.

"Grandma's still over, and said she'd bake cookies. I hope she did."

"Me too." I said. Come on, I'll race you."

Gerdie skipped and fell over, but picked herself up as quickly as she could to catch up. I tripped myself on purpose and fumbled around on the ground until she was quite a ways ahead of me, her tips of her sneakers scraping against her ankles, laughing so hard that her upper lip touched the bottom of her nose.

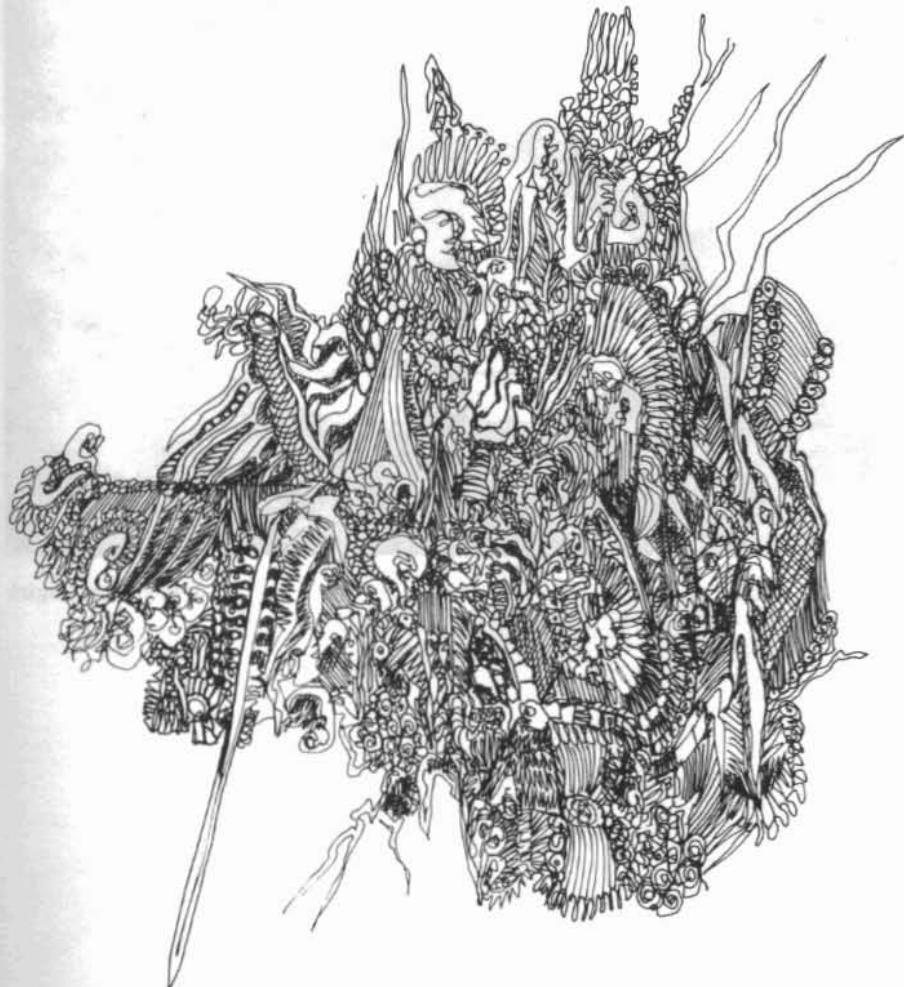
Something lives within me . . .  
and It has horns.  
It is not a part of me,  
It is something separate  
and whole on Its own.

It is not me and  
i am not It.  
Yet i cannot rid  
myself of Its presence.

It likes to play games,  
to pretend It is me.  
It is a superior  
player in these games  
with my life.

To everyone else  
i am one being,  
but something lives within me,  
and It has horns.

— Kristen L. McKeown





*War and Peace*

Jeffry Scott Gugick

## A Hypothetical Situation

warheads of tension  
poised upon edges  
made of hatreds  
dappled black  
by twisting  
images of  
reality  
Death  
and  
I  
sit  
among  
melting  
worlds of  
proud metal  
viewing lives  
in the fracture  
of civilization A  
world reeks of fear

Tad Kilgore

## Developing Country Red Sweater

by Martin Steinberg

Once there was a young girl named Democra, who would go out to the garden every day to pick tomatoes for her mother and father. She didn't like doing it because her basket had a strap of hard leather which was uncomfortable on her shoulder when the basket was full. It was a fairly large basket for a girl her size because it was one that had been made for her sisters, and they were bigger when they had gathered the tomatoes. Since they all worked in town, it was Democra who now carried the basket and it was her name stitched on the red, white and blue poncho with the stars on the hood, just beneath where her sisters' names had been cross-stitched out.

"Of course you have to wear the poncho, Democra," her mother had said when she'd complained. "It almost fits you now, and it's got a nylon lining to protect you from the rain. If you don't wear it, you'll surely be sick."

And, as always, her father added, "And don't you leave the garden while we're gone!" With that, her parents left for the real estate office where they both worked.

Well, Democra did wear the hood, but she didn't always stay in the garden. In fact, she knew the woods that were behind her house pretty well. She had even been to the development on the other side where her parent's company was clearing an area with bulldozers to build more houses. But the machines scared her, and so, today, even though she walked out of the garden and into the woods, she stayed on the paths near the middle, and not the edges, carrying the basket for safekeeping.

While she was out walking, this day, she came upon a dog. Democra was startled at first because her parents had warned her about wild animals, and this dog almost looked like a wolf with its black and white masked face, but when she got near it, the dog seemed friendly.

"Hi," said the dog, "Who are you?"

"I'm Democra, see," she said and showed the dog where it was stitched onto her poncho.

"You know, about that poncho," said the dog, "I don't mean to be rude, but isn't it pretty silly looking?"

"I guess you're right," said Democra, "I hate it too but my parents want me to wear it and I have nothing else."

"I can give you a pretty red sweater to wear."

"But what if it rains?" asked Democra.

"It's wool," the dog said, "warmer than nylon, even when wet." And then the dog dug a hole at the side of the path and pulled out a bundle wrapped up in brown paper. Democra picked it up and unwrapped the most magnificent fluffy bright red sweater she had ever seen. She took off her poncho and dropped it on the ground and tried on the sweater. It fit her perfectly.

"It's beautiful," she said, "but how come you've got no sweater?"

"I'm a Siberian Husky," the dog said. "I've got a thick coat of fur."

"Oh," said Democra. "What's your name?"

"Call me Bear," said the dog. "I was once named Spot, before I ran away."

"Where do you live?"

"I live here in the woods with all my friends. Come with me. I'll show you."

"Oh. No, I can't. I have to go back soon or I'll only have a half of a basket of tomatoes for my parents."

"Hmm, so that's what's in the basket," said the husky. "Gee, I'm really hungry. Could I have a tomato?"

"Oh my! I don't ever take tomatoes away from my parents."

"Really, but that's so unfair, since you're the one who works to pick them."

"But they'd be furious if they found out," Democra said.

"They won't know because you can pick more. Besides, I just gave you a sweater. The least you could do is share one with me."

The dog seemed to make sense to Democra and actually, she was kind of hungry herself. She took out a tomato and said, "O.K., we'll share one, but then I must go right home so I can fill the basket before my parents come back."

So they each ate half of the tomato and then Democra took off the sweater

because she knew that her parents would ask her where it came from. She wrapped it back up in the paper and Bear buried it. They planned to meet again and then Democra hurried home to finish picking tomatoes.

*I wonder if Bear is a boy or a girl,* she thought as she neared the garden again.

She hurried and had a full basket by the time her parents were home and everything was fine, so, a few days later, she met the dog again, and then again a few days after that. Bear was a boy, and when he realized, on their third meeting that she wasn't very happy with living at home, he asked her to come live in the woods with him and his friends.

"You just want me to be your mistress, don't you," she said to him.

"That's silly," he said. "I'm a dog. Besides, I'm too old for you, but there are some young human boys who would consider you a knockout in that red sweater."

"Oh. That sounds good but what will I eat?"

"We have gardens. You can pick what you want and you don't have to give all of it away."

"Maybe," she said. "I'll think about it."

Just then, she heard her parents call out her name. "Oh no!" she said. "My parents have come home early and now they're looking for me." She started to take off the red sweater but her parents had already seen her and were running up the trail. Bear ran away and her parents caught Democra and they brought her home and her father put the girl over his knee, pulled up her skirt, pulled down her underpants and spanked her until she was screaming and until he was red and trembling powerfully.

"That'll teach you to be disrespectful of U.S.," he said as he left her in her room."

That night, Democra cried and cried over the cruelty of her parents. She couldn't sleep and she was thinking of her friend, Bear, when she thought she heard his bark coming from far away. Democra opened her window and she heard it again. She also heard a crowd of other voices. She heard dogs, cats and people, singing and laughing in the woods. Democra packed a few things and climbed out of her window, down the vines to the ground, and then she snuck away into the woods. When she got near the middle of the woods, she called out softly for Bear, who soon came running towards her on the path.

"Hey," he said, "come to our party."

She ran, following him until they came to a clearing where people, dogs, and cats all gathered around a fire, passing around bowls of fruit and draughts of beer. They were singing and laughing but some were also involved in very serious discussions. This went on till sunrise, when everyone went off to sleep in tents and dens. Democra went with Bear and two cats to a warm place where she fell happily and soundly asleep.

After a while, she was woken by Bear and she heard a great commotion outside.

"We've got to run," said Bear. "Something terrible is happening."

They went outside and Democra saw people in white uniforms hitting and scooping up dogs and cats with nets. Police were arresting people and her parents were giving them orders. Suddenly, her mother saw her and pointed.

"Come on!" yelled Bear, and with that they both ran and ran as fast as they could. They were chased down paths, under bushes, over streams and rocks and logs and then down more paths until Democra heard a gunshot and saw Bear collapse with a bullet hole in his side. She stopped to help him but it was no use. She held his head and heard him breathe his last breath and then her parents and the people in the uniforms caught up to them.

Democra was taken home and watched more carefully than ever, but in her dreams she would still hear Bear calling her name and she still had hope that she would one day have a life of her own.

The End.

## FAshion

That was originally a typo.  
And this disease strikes *how* many in ten Americans?  
My God said, "What a horrible thing!"  
We know you still beat your wife, too.

And this disease strikes *how* many in ten Americans?  
The checkbook closed on forged scribbles.  
We know. You still beat your wife, too.  
As the cardinals cross their fingers,

The checkbook closed on forged scribbles.  
Lassitude struck at the opening  
As the cardinals cross their fingers.  
Paintings, herded, inflated.

Lassitude struck at the opening  
And with a whisper, the sky fell.  
Paintings herded, inflated;  
Only a policeman noticed the hemlines.

And with a whisper, the sky fell:  
My God said, "What a horrible thing!"  
Only a policeman noticed the hemlines.  
That was originally a typo.

— Saul Taupin



*The Rover Blues*

Steve Cunningham

### **Black Box**

if the fear is  
and I believe it is  
about opening the box

that still black box  
my personal  
internal  
flight recorder

that holds and withholds  
the record of my descent  
the eruption in midair  
and final crash  
that shattered but  
did not destroy  
either my mind  
or my body  
or yet my heart

— Darle Doran



### **Temporal**

Lately,  
things have been getting worse.  
Once,  
God used to talk to us.  
Now  
he only writes  
(occasionally).  
Presently,  
We laugh at what we thought.  
Soon  
things will change again.  
In time,  
We will have all changed our minds,  
for the moment.

— Saul Taupin



*That Was Then*

Chris R. Motto



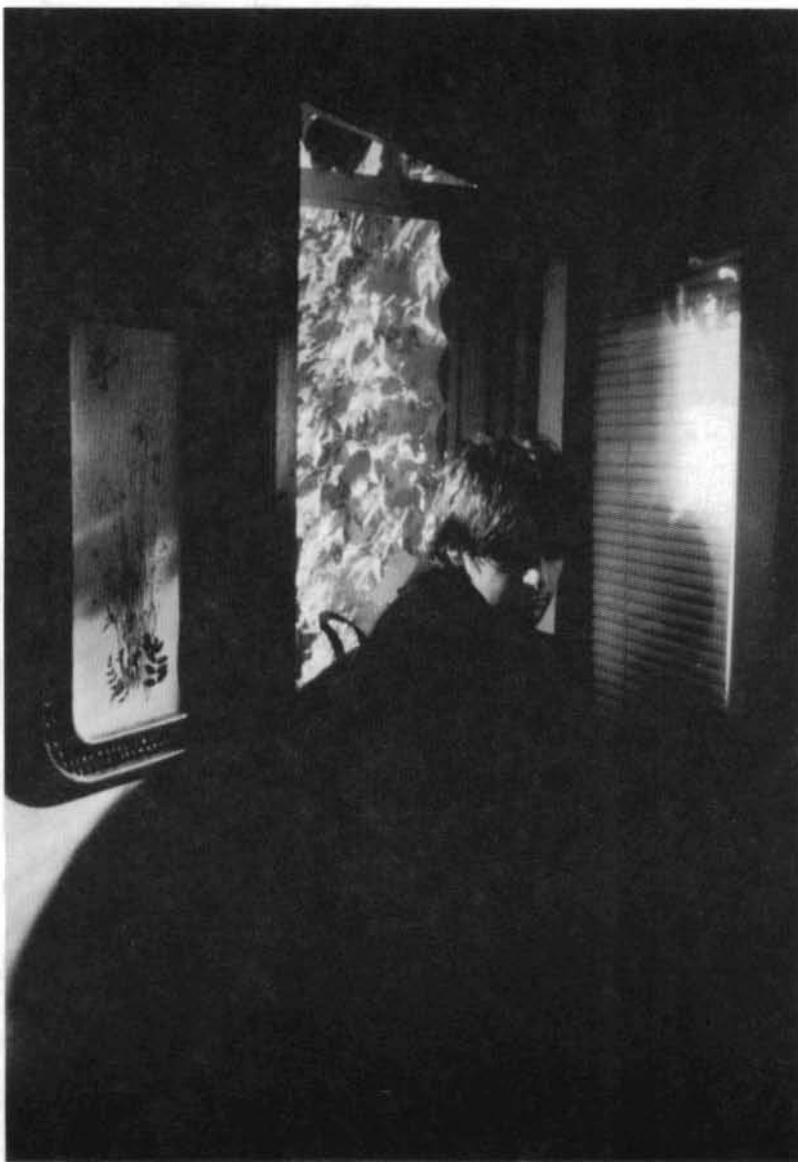
Dan Damon

The wind,  
cold razors  
gently gliding across  
my face.  
movements,  
make the frozen pins  
piece and wiggle  
deeper into my skin.  
my face  
rests on a thin sheet of ice,  
the wind softly blows by,  
i walk

by erik Zajaczkowski

Lonely is a woman  
Who begs me to guess her secret.  
Lonely is a man  
Who has none left to hide.

— Ron Throop



*The Entrant*

Martin Steinberg

## Old Man

essay

by Tad Kilgore

My first memories of my Grandfather are of his hands. They were large, and my small fist would disappear in his grasp. Callouses ridged his palm. Dirt was always ground into their surface. Soil marred his features from day after day of honest work. Muscles corded across the backs of his hands in sinewy clots. Dust puffed from his boots when he walked.

In many ways he is the land he farms. The land, the earth he farms, shares his smell. His wind burned hide has the lustre of a newly churned field. His blue eyes are the color of our pond in high summer. His gap toothed smile reminds me of the first bear I ever killed — all teeth and power.

His rage is primal and unreasoning. At insults, imagined or actual, his hands become fists and his fists become weapons. His tongue is sharp and splits like a skinning knife. It leaves the offender feeling naked and bare.

My Uncle struck my Aunt once in my Grandfather's presence. Grandpa stood aghast as he looked at his daughter. His eyes churned from pond blue to stormy azure, and I saw the anger burn in him. His voice rose to a thunderous roar. His fists became steel. I cowered, helpless as the grownups hurt each other. I haven't seen my Uncle since then.

He can be gentle. His touch can be reassuring; his hard shoulders can be of some comfort. Grapes are his primary crop. The vines require maintenance. They need pruning, or in the dialect of my home, they need to be "chopped on." My Grandfather is known for his skill at "choppin'."

"Work the vine like you would a woman," he said to me at the tender age of six. His arms were around my chest and his hands guided mine in the task. Click! Click! Click! Went the shears as the dead wood fell on the snow. We'd leave it to rot and form humus. He used to laugh and say sumthin' had to die so sumthin' else could live. His breath would steam in long billowing clouds.

He writes. His stories are best classed as westerns. They are hard biting romances set in an idealized past. He has four manuscripts setting on his desk; dusty and waiting "for the right day" to be sent somewhere. He was published back in the fifties during the golden age of his genre. He sold two novels, and I fight to sell one. He doesn't write now.

He is a storyteller. I remember the smoke from the fireplace wreathing his head like a phantom crown as he told us of the fall of good King Edward to the usurper William. I still hear the steel in his voice and feel the weight of the broad axe in my hands. I hear good men cry as they fall around me. I summon forth his voice from the dark recesses of my mind, and I am transported.

He can be cruel. He is a man. He can destroy. He taught me to shoot. My first hunt was with him. I shot a yearling buck and sent the beast down in a squeal of agony. He yelled in exultation and slapped me on the back as we ran to it. The blood was thick and streamed in the November air. The deer struggled to rise with legs that would not respond to it. I was stunned and looked away in fear. He slapped me and took my gun away. The deer's brains scattered across the ground from the slug. He turned from the carcass handing me his gutting knife. "Be hard like the land. This place has small mercy for you. Be hard," his words burned me.

My dog was hit when I was ten. She chased a car and was outrun. I ran to him seeking solace. Tears blinded me. I found him in the smokehouse curing meat. I cried out my pain. He laughed and asked me why I wasn't used to death yet. I jumped at him and beat his oak-like chest. I forgave him later when asked pardon for his words. They will, however, always cling to me.

I remember walking into the cow shed in late summer. Our milk cow was in labor. She was best known for giving the other rides and for her sweet cream.

She lowed in pain and cried as the calf came out breach. Dad wanted me to leave. Grandpa insisted I stay. They killed the calf as it struggled inside her and dragged out bloody chunks. Grandpa held me on his knee afterwards. He called it part of life's circle. I awakened my parents with screams on many nights to come.

At times I still do not know him. He has been all things to me. I contemplate his death in shrinking horror. My mind recoils at the thought of the loss of him. All I can say is that he is a man. All I can say of him is that he loves me as best he knows. I am his flesh.

It would seem simple to break into a dualism. It would be simple to hate him for his dominating strength. It would be simple to love him blindly for his giving heart. I have done both. He is worthy of both.

Yet, he is a man. He is both good and evil. He is like the land he is a part of. In him, I sense a rhythm, a balance, that paces his existence. He is in touch with an older time. He is in touch with a time when America was not choking on its own waste and mankind's future was not as bleak. I am sure his death will come naturally and easily for him; like the harvest and the hunting; like the planting and the plowing; and like births of his children.

I will miss him.

### Running

The old man sits in his rocking chair,  
Walking,  
Running,  
Through the book case in his mind.  
Memories of a lost childhood

— Susan Burt

They listen with such intensity  
To a comedian.  
Are they laughing,  
Or picturing him naked?

— Ron Throop

My love it is a prison,  
I hide behind its walls.  
My love it is a seagull,  
I hear its echoing call.

My poem it is really bad,  
I hate poems like this,  
My poem it is over,  
'Cause I gotta take a piss.

— Davey



*Lust Full Well Greased Machine*

Erik Zajacekowsk



Dan Damon

### Swimming

This time the long journey  
was by water.

I swam  
the *whole* way.  
From New York Harbor  
to somewhere in Florida.

And never thought about sharks,  
'till after I reached  
the land,  
where I was offered  
a hamburger at a  
barbeque,  
but I was a vegetarian  
and knew  
that to eat  
meat,  
was to wear the scent  
of meat,  
was to attract sharks.

I did not eat the  
meat. I ate a lot of green things.  
I decided to stop  
swimming, any way . . .  
get a job, and buy a ticket to the Bahamas.

I have had this dream  
before . . .  
The dream of carrying  
my life in a bag  
and swimming with it

trying to keep it dry  
trying to hide it from sharks.

The water got very clear blue  
when I arrived in Florida.  
I was exhausted.  
I missed someone very badly,  
and flirted with a boy  
at the barbeque  
to ease my  
pain.

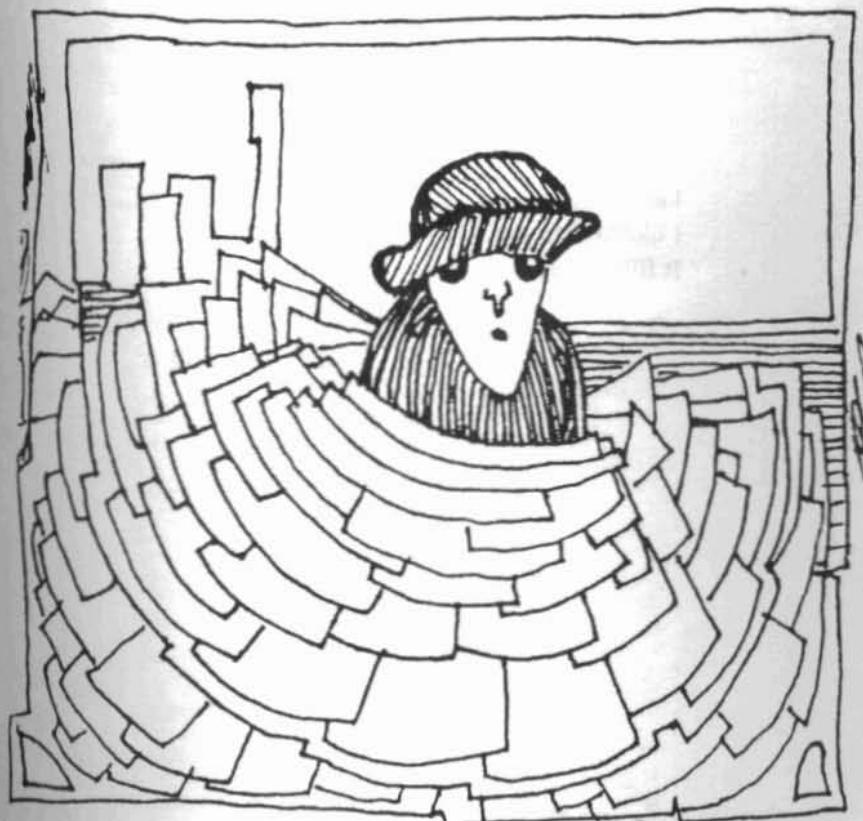
— Laura Molinelli

## To Poets and/or Housewives

A glass of water on the table  
Wobbled with each click and clack of the  
Typing machine.  
She was practicing to get a job as a secretary.  
Slowly the glass rattled to the edge of the table  
And fell as the quick red fox  
Jumped over the lazy brown dog  
For the hundredth time.  
The downstairs neighbor complained of the noise.  
Her husband complained of her absence from bed.  
The landlord complained that the rent was due.  
She didn't complain at all.  
She just typed and typed and typed,  
Typing out her anger,  
Writing letters she'd never send,  
Goodbye notes, farewells,  
A note telling the downstairs neighbor to shove it up his ass,  
A note telling the landlord to go scratch,  
A note telling her husband that he had snored every night  
For fourteen years  
And that she'd never had an orgasm with him.  
One whole page was filled with  
**LEAVE ME ALONE**  
In capitals,  
The bottom edge was damp from tears.  
She typed letters to the editor  
And letters to the president  
And letters to the plumber,  
Letters to her mother  
And her father,  
Letters to the moon and stars and God,  
And letters to a corn field  
And a meadow with a stream,  
Letters to all the books she'd never had time to read,  
Letters of resignation:  
I quit! I quit! I quit!  
Letters to her dreams,  
To the laundry  
And the dishes in the sink:  
**GO WASH YOURSELF!**  
She stopped cooking,  
Stopped sewing,  
Stopped cleaning.  
Her husband thought she'd gone insane.  
She had.  
She typed for hours every day  
Til she ran out of paper  
And began typing over her typing  
Til the paper shredded  
And she was typing on the bare rubber carriage.  
She typed her way through history  
Visiting other centuries.

She typed her way to Europe  
Into palaces of kings.  
She typed herself to wealth and fame  
Receiving visitors like a queen,  
Poets, artists, craftsmen of the realm.  
Her husband threw out her typewriter  
So she typed on the table top.  
She typed on her knees,  
On her nose.  
Whenever she got upset she typed herself  
To another time and place.  
Life was easier there.  
Her family had her committed to a hospital  
For the emotionally disturbed.  
There was a typewriter there.  
She typed on paper again.  
But now she was typing poems.  
A publisher who was also crazy  
Saw her work and liked it.  
He published a book of her poetry  
Which got rave reviews and made a fortune.  
She and the publisher escaped  
And set up housekeeping together in a loft in Soho.  
They ran their publishing house  
Printing works of unknown, penniless,  
Somewhat crazy poets,  
And lived happily ever after.

— Beverlee Salley



## Makes Me

want to write.

want to make sound.

write sound.

I like books with hard covers.

I like thread between my teeth.

I like winter. It smells like fur.

I like that your daughter tells you her dreams  
in the morning.

I like fudge ripple.

I like going back to my dreams to fight.

I like fighting what is following me.

I like my face when it is mad.

I am making sounds!

I am drinking milk!

I am lying in the corner, feeling warm.

I am crying about the universe.

I am stroking a cat.

The eyes are beautiful and grey.

The fog is here, touching me.

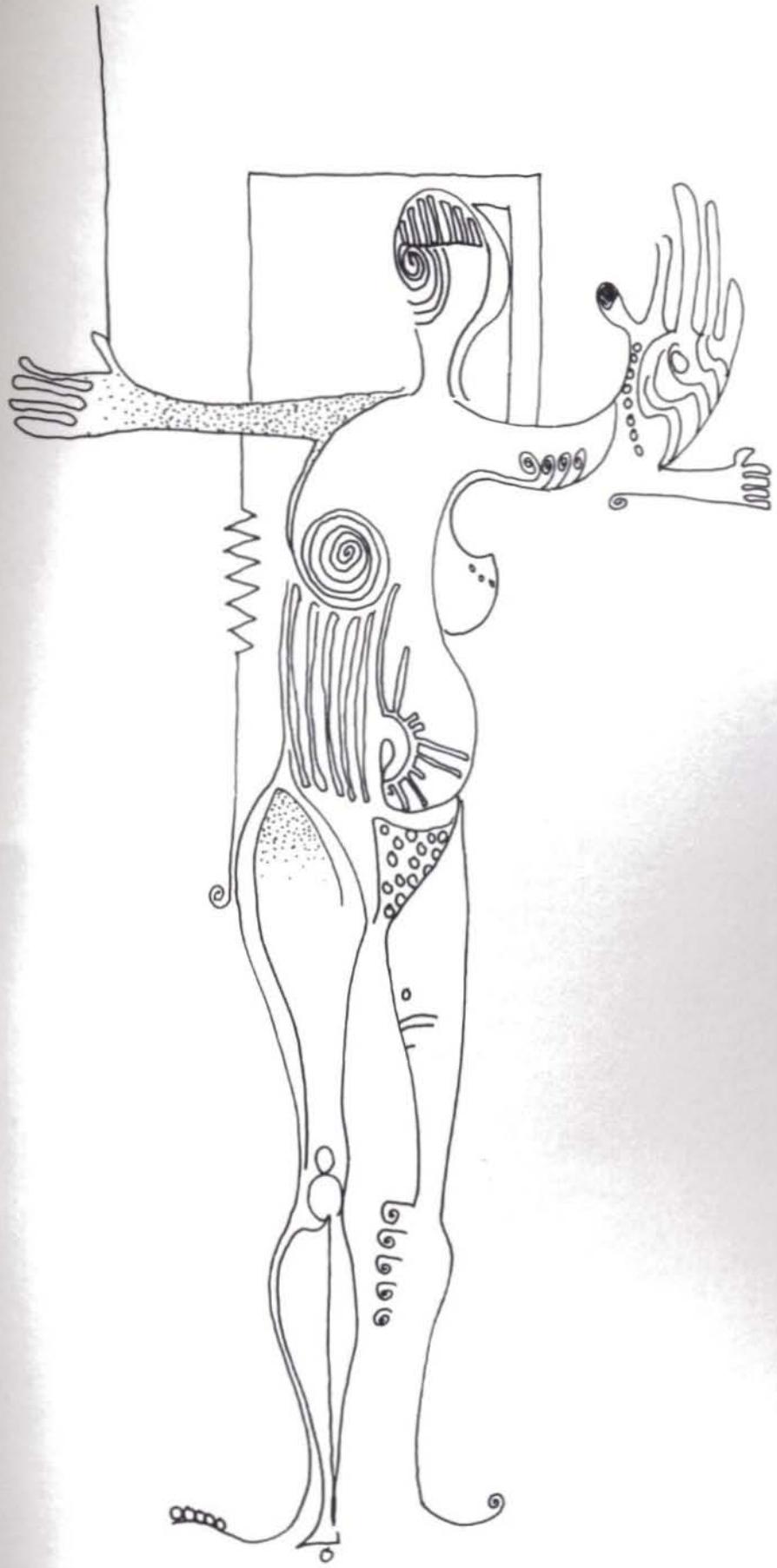
The land is massaging my legs.

I am hungry.

I like to eat.

It fills me up.

— Laura Molinelli





Todd Williams