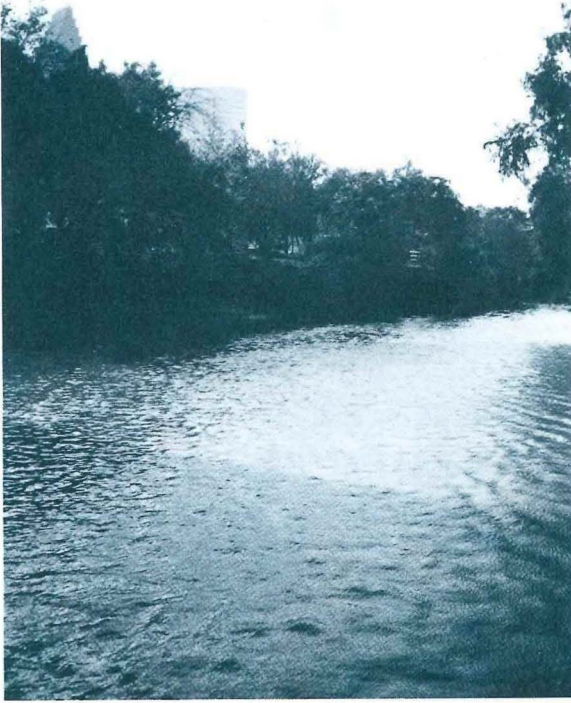


The Bayou Review

Fall 1995



The Bayou Review

The University of Houston-Downtown's
Literary/Artistic Journal

Fall 1995

The University of Houston-Downtown
One Main Street
Houston, Tx 77002

*“The manifestation of every person
and the world in which we live is
the
minimum requirement of our
existence, its major purpose and its
only hope.”*

-Leo Buscaglia

Personhood-The Art of Being Fully Human

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The Bayou Review is the University of Houston-Downtown's literary/artistic journal published biannually. *The Bayou Review* is a collection of poetry, prose, artwork, and photography submitted by students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Submissions are judged by students and faculty. *The Bayou Review* reserves the right to edit for grammar, punctuation, and content when deemed necessary.

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Creativity is an inherent quality in all human beings. This journal is a representation of the creativity, imagination, and life experience of students, faculty, and staff at the University of Houston-Downtown. By submitting their work, they have chosen, directly or indirectly, to share a small portion of themselves because they believe that the highs and lows of human experience are universal to us all

Jon Pulcini
Editor

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**In Memory
of
Fabian Worsham
and
Mike Brown**

Dr. Fabian Worsham (In Her Own Words)

I draw from my experiences as a creative writer whether I am teaching the fundamentals of English or Studies in Poetry. Students are empowered by the democratic methods of workshop technique and discover themselves to be among the creators of a multi-cultural literary heritage.

A primary goal of my teaching is to lead each student in the discovery of his or her own voice--more a matter of encouragement and facilitation than of imparting information. I strongly believe that a key role of the teacher is to serve as a bridge between information in textbooks and the student's own experience. Through their writing, students are able to identify and articulate their beliefs; thus, educators play a key role in developing the conscience of succeeding generations.

As Editorial Advisor to the Bayou Review, I also do a great deal of teaching. I participate in the editorial process more or less, depending on the preference of the student editor.

Through my own creative activities, through service, and through teaching, I seek to liberate and empower the individual voice. Our students, with their varied backgrounds, their tragedies, their odysseys, their aspirations, have a multitude of stories to tell. They speak for a new generation of Americans whose diverse voices have the potential to enrich, delight, surprise, inform, and educate us. What a loss it would be if their voices were not heard. I hope that, under my guidance, they will take their pens in hand.

Dr. Fabian Worsham, an associate professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown since 1988, is the author of many books of poetry including *The Green Kangaroo*, *Aunt Erma's Country Kitchen & Bordello*, *Vulture Woman*, and *the Harlot's Child*. She was also an advisor to *the Bayou Review* and a well-loved English professor. She died on December 16, 1994. She will be greatly missed.



Revival

for my grandmother

Still young,

She lay in a bed of blood

blood from her womb

Neighbors carried her
on a makeshift stretcher
through the red sand streets
of Lumber City

holding branches to block out the sun,
her grey face dappled in the shadows almost
as dark as her eyes

They laid her on the floor of a Southern
railway car and pushed the door shut.

Shrivelled source,
still you breed us

for we are born of
the rhythm of that ride
the smell of warm blood
in a boxcar--

we inherit the strength
of each reeling black hour,

the times you felt you lay
inside your own rancid womb

between fragments of
revival songs you
hummed to make sure

you were still alive
and that this ride would end

When the train reached Atlanta the
door

slid open and sweet light poured in like
honey

You would live to tell your children
not to be afraid of death
or boxcars

for there is always
doors that will open
and even in the darkest places
your own voice will come back
to you

Fabian Worsham

(from *the Harlot's Child* -a poem
selected by her family and friends)

Baggage

I wish I could tell you that the anger would not surface
from Past and Present hurts,
or that Pain from Deep Wounds no longer existed.
I wish that I could say "It's forgotten - gone away",
and spare you the wrath of my frightened heart.

If only you'd remember the promises you make,
then the Rage and Scorn would be directed
not at who you are today or will be tomorrow,
but the one we both need to believe is gone
and the Prior Deeds of Wrong not repeated.

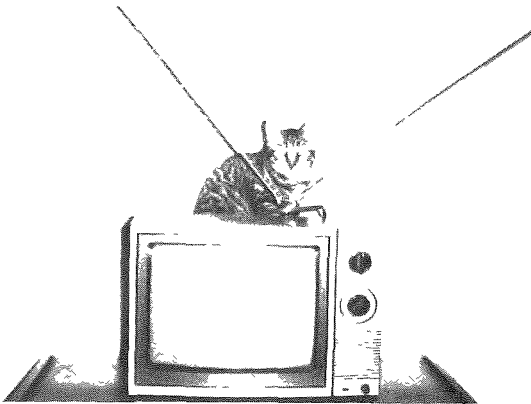
I wish that I could promise an Even Temper,
a constant mood to be expected,
but Time and Practice alone will bring these things.
As so new to my Soul each day is relived the Shame,
till then you must be Patient,
ever strong in your belief in all that has changed.
For if you waver, you become the object of the Rage.
Then there is no difference, there are no Changes,
and History will repeat itself again

Loren Lancaster

Finicky (A Haiku Poem)

Regally aloof,
Drawing near on your own terms,
Catch your own rat, cat!

Johnnie Miller



Death Do Them Part

The wind blew in the dark of the night,
there you see her face grow into fright.
As they commit her poor lovers doom,
she stands there in shadowed gloom

Her lover is dead - death do them part,
and now she has a broken heart
As the tears roll down her face,
her dead lover she does embrace

She swore to get them anyway she could,
she swore to get them, she knew she would.
Late that night they were to celebrate
this poor woman's lover's fate

She posed as a maid and served them wine,
she said to herself, fate's destiny is mine!
She laughed as they fell one by one,
her sweet lover's revenge was done.

Virginia Elizondo

Beyond

On the wings of a life filled with love,
All souls fly to heaven
As all memories fly to the heart
Holding fast the connection between heaven and earth,
Such is the fiber that heart strings are made of,
And occasionally we feel their pull

Loren Lancaster

Senseless

Dark day, dark night.

Where is my sight?

No wind, no flight

Why can't I rise?

Cold skin, cold soul

Have I died?

Maria Fernandez



Mike Brown Was Here

In the 31 years of my life, I have come across a lot of friends, met a lot of people, and seen a lot of faces. Many-I have forgotten their names and lost touch, but some I have met along the way will always remain a big part of my life. One of those people is Mike Brown.

Mike and I shared a friendship, a few classes, and a common bond with our writing. Not only was he a dear friend, but someone I turned to often for encouragement and advice in my endeavors. We shared our most current works, offered gentle criticism when needed, and carved out a nice friendship along the way.

Like most school friends, we also shared a competitive spirit and most recently submitted our work for *the Bayou Review*. Mike's writing was a no-holds-barred attitude, a take-it-or-leave-it kind of style, while mine was more emotionally-based, more like a girl, he would say, softer and reader-friendly. While trying to decide whether or not to submit, and if so, what to submit, he "bet" me that my writing would get in and his would not. "They take stuff like yours," he said, "I'm just doing it even though I know they probably won't take it." So, knowing that there was a chance that neither of us would make the cut, I took the bet, and we submitted our work on the last day.

A great ending to this story is that we would both get in and share in celebration, but that would not be true. I would do anything to change the ending of my story, but sadly, Mike Brown passed away unexpectedly in October. However, much to my heartfelt gladness, his work was chosen for *the Bayou Review*, though mine was not. It was bittersweet. Mike unfortunately would never know of this victory. The happiness I felt at his work getting accepted was tinged with a sadness that touched the very depths of my heart. There would be no good-humored gloating, no congratulations, and no desk-pounding "Aha!" My dearest friend, someone who felt about writing like I did, was gone and I would never again know someone like him.

For the days that followed, I heard his voice in the busy hallways, saw him pass by as I sat in class, and heard his footsteps rounding the corner on the 4th floor. My heart hurt at the loss of my friend, the pain his family and fiancé' must be feeling, and the fact that no one would know the potential talent he possessed. I wanted everyone to know the Mike Brown I knew - the funny, creative, passionate person who lived everyday to the fullest.

Mike and I talked one day about our futures after graduation and what we wanted to do with our writing. I commented that I would probably continue to write in my journal, even if no one ever read my work. Mike said he wanted to continue to write, and maybe publish a book or write a screenplay. "I just want to write what I want to write," he said, "So when I'm gone, people can say 'Mike Brown was here'." I looked up at my friend in his khaki shorts and trademark baseball cap and knew that someday his wish would come true.

Thanks Mike, for being my friend. I will never forget you, and now everyone will know that you were here.

Adriana Simsen

A Do Over

Aaaaaagh !”

The three hundred pound man stuffed into the one hundred pound suit was putting it mildly. A chorus of defeated groans and miscellaneous obscenities supported the fat man's poignant assessment of the current situation. Cole Masterson felt like delivering a comment of his own, but stopped himself because he really wasn't as upset as his fellow passengers. Unlike the others, he assumed, he had no specific place he had to be in any specific amount of time, so he could not find any validation for being angry. For the others however, being stuck in an elevator somewhere between the 7th and the 8th floors of the Silas T Conover Medical Building on a Friday afternoon was cause enough for a little venting of frustration. Cole kept thinking how this was something that people only found funny if it happened in a sit-com. This was real life and nobody was laughing now.

Cole casually looked around the elevator, there were six people other than himself, and his survey first brought him to the big man. It was obvious starting place because the man's girth alone demanded more real estate than the others. It was reasonably cool in the elevator, but he began to sweat just looking at the man. To no one's applause, the big man took off his coat and had rings under his arms the size of trashcan lids. He kept sopping his gigantic melon with a tie that might have had value at one time, it needed to be wrung out about eight sops ago. On that same tie was evidence of the monster's lunch, Cole was pretty sure it was from the meatball sandwich division. He was breathing as if he was on a respirator already and each time he did everyone else got a taste of that meatball sandwich. Next was a pregnant woman with a tow-headed boy leaning up against her. Cole had no idea what tow-headed meant but was sure they had his kid in mind when they coined it. Their presence here was obvious, but another thought entered his mind, he was sure it had occurred to the others as well. Before he could inquire, the couple next to her did, and everyone let out a collected breath as

she informed all present that she was not due for another 2 months. The couple that had asked about the baby looked like they came right out of a beer commercial. Cole guessed that their names were Todd and Heather, but after meeting them he found out they were a Rich and Daphne, and that was close enough. Cole was on a hot streak because he was correct in their reason for being here, they were at the hospital for blood tests. It was obvious that if they were not already married, they would be shortly. They had the look and smell of envious love. They were around his own age, and he felt that he already knew everything about them. They probably met at a gym, or a club, or maybe even an apartment pool party. They were athletic, well groomed, and had that thick, retail frosting smeared all over them. To Cole, they seemed to be those last two pieces that complete the puzzle which is then glued, framed, and mounted on your wall so everyone can see what a castle in Scotland looks like.

The last occupant of this non-moving closet was the least noticeable. She was much quieter in appearance as well as voice. To his knowledge, she hadn't spoken a word to anyone yet. This was going to be much tougher than the others. He couldn't see her face and this intensified his little time killing exercise. He began with what he could see. She was about 5 ft 5" in her Nike Street Hikers. She was encased in a pair of faded Levis that began with the number five (this rendition was from the baggy genre), she wore a crimson button-down shirt which had a tail that went past her knees. Adorning her head was a hat which was a cross between a painter's hat and a baseball cap. It was crimson like the shirt, and she had it pulled down over her eyes. Her hair was dark brown, and she had it in a pony tail that she stuck through the back of the cap. For a reason he couldn't fathom, Cole found this trick with the hair attractive. Everything on her was large, loose, and concealing, and that in itself was an enticing mystery. For the briefest moment, Cole thought she glanced at him sideways (just a flicker, so he wasn't sure). All his secrecy began to form cracks in the dam holding back Lake Adrenaline. He went for it.

"Hi, I'm Cole, Cole Masterson "

In the next instant, he could only think of two things one, there was such a thing as a tractor beam because he was caught in one now, and two, whatever the big man had must be contagious because now he was sweating

"Hello My name is Bond, James Bond "

A usually sharp guy, it took a few extra seconds and a throaty struggle for him to catch the cleverness Cole had never been to the Museum of Fine Arts to see the works basically because he had never been interested At this moment however, he felt exactly what art buffs must feel when they immerse themselves in their work Her face was nothing less than angelic olive skin, high cheekbones, and a slightly-crooked smile protecting teeth of ivory were all parts of this total package capped off by prest-green emeralds mounted in puma-shaped sockets He still had enough control over his senses to realize that he was borderline *spaz*, and he had to now grip the reigns of the runaway stagecoach that was roaring through his guts

He threw him a line

"I'm sorry I always wanted to say that and you gave me the perfect opening I'm actually Sabrina Parker and so far it's nice to meet you "

At this point Cole was fighting the cat for possession of his tongue With one last hard pull he had it

"What do you make of our situation ?"

"Do you mean our situation, or everyone in the elevator's situation ?"

Wow!, thought Cole

"Do we have a situation ?"

"We can have whatever we want What do we make of our situation ?"

"In terms of our situation, I won't be able to assess that until I get out of this box and see my cardiologist In terms of all of our situations, I have not given it much thought "

"Me neither Actually I've been trying to figure out what everyone in the elevator is here for "

Holy cow!, Cole was amazed

"That's exactly what I've been doing, and I believe I've reduced everyone's but yours "

She gazed at him for a second as if she was weighing the

direction of the moment as well as the situation itself Her lips curled upward, and she said

“I am here for your basic, boring girlie checkup What about you?”

It was his turn to hesitate, but the decision was made when she first looked into his eyes

“You don’t even have to guess?”

“No, I thought you were delivering a pizza ” She was a pistol

“I’ve got D V T ,and I’m here to get my pro-time ”

“And that would be ?”

He took a deep breath What he had was not serious, but anything medical that people don’t understand can sometimes frighten them

“Deep Vein Thrombosis I have a blood clot in my left leg I’m on blood thinners and a pro-time checks the clotting of the blood It’s not serious, only embarrassing because it’s primarily common to pregnant women or the elderly I feel like telling you it’s the result of a fight with a great white shark but I don’t know if you brought your golden lasso with you ”

Her crooked mouth cracked into a smile, and she hesitated a moment and had the look of making a decision Cole knew this could be the dealbreaker He mentally closed his eyes, held his breath, and threw the ball towards the end zone

“So what do you do, Cole Masterson?” Touchdown !

“I write comic books ”

“Really ”

“And you, Sabrina Parker ?”

“I own a coffee house ”

“Really ”

“Comic books - that’s kooky ”

Cole decided that he could die right then because his life could not get any better than it was at that point She dug Sinatra movies and everything else associated with the Rat Pack just like him This led to an earnest discussion on anything and everything They didn’t even notice when the elevator began moving or that they had been trapped for close to two hours

The elevator was finally fixed and he hoped Drew and Gavan had waited for him. Drew and Gavan were there. They had dropped him off and then waited the entire time to pick him up so they could all take care of the details for Jim's bachelor party that night. At some point on their way down, Cole threw caution to the wind and asked her out.

"Yes." The magic word was spoken. Cole introduced her to his pals because he wanted to, besides, they would have sweated him down anyway. Even after she chatted with his pals, even after they breathed good-bye, and even after she gave him one last look with those soft, sea eyes, Cole still saw her and still heard her all the way to their digs where the party was being thrown. Any sawbones worth his salt, talking by, would have prescribed nitro right on the spot to slow down his heart rate.

"Way to go, Cole" said Gavan.

"What do you think?"

"Top shelf all the way, buddy, and the best part is that she likes you."

"You think?"

"Hell yeah," piped in Drew, "She was as obvious as you were."

Cole thought, there's nothing like them. I will always cherish that elevator, he thought, even the big man. Cole, Gavan, Drew, and Brent all lived in a big, five-bedroom house in the suburbs. Jim lived there as well, but was moving out after his wedding. They all made good money so they bought the house together, since they were all single, and turned the place into an upper class dorm. Tonight, it would host the bachelor party for Jim. The party was going to be a traditional bachelor party consisting of traditional beer, traditional pornos, the traditional trip to the strip joint, and more traditional beer. There were thirteen of them at the party including Jim, and they were into their third case when Drew brought out the porno tapes, amid a rousing ovation, he popped one in.

Cole was in the kitchen double checking the limo rentals for the trip to the strip joint when Gavan came in with a smile on his face

“Cole, you need to get your ass out here, man ”

“Hang on a sec, dude, I’m on hold ”

“The jiggle-joint can wait, but this can’t, so come on ”

Gavan looked as if his ribs were cracking so Cole followed him into the living room and saw Drew standing in front of the big screen with the same look on his face as Gavan’s. The rest of the guys were booing and pelting Drew with an assortment of choice words and beer cans

“Sit down, Cole ” said Drew

“The guy with the stretch put me on hold ”

“So what. You need to sit down now,” said Gavan as he manhandled Cole into a chair

“Buckle up, Cole, because the ride’s about to start ”

With saying that, Drew stepped away from the screen. With Gavan on one side and Drew on the other, Cole set his eyes on the big screen. It was like looking at one of those 3-D pictures Cole had focused on the screen as if his eyes had stared right through it, then the image became clear. Cole now knew what it would feel like to be duct-taped to a nuclear bomb the moment it explodes. He wasn’t dazed or confused, he wasn’t angry, and he wasn’t sad, he was numb. The result of seeing Sabrina Parker for the second time was not at all what he envisioned he would feel on their first date. Except for her hairstyle, her makeup, and the fact that she was naked, Cole saw that it was her. The box said her name was Tempest Knight, but it was lying. There was no doubt that it was her.

While the rest of the boys watched the movies, Cole and his appointed think tank retired to the deck chairs around the pool to figure out Cole’s next move. When it came to matters of the heart, the harsh but true pros and cons can always be delivered by the ones who care about you the most. Gavan, Drew, Brent, and Jim each gave Cole their turn on what he should do. They all had a laugh when Brent’s reason for calling off the date was because there was no way Cole could take care of business in the sack with a seasoned vet like her. Ultimately, it came down to Cole, and he decided to go through with it.

He was convinced there was more to Sabrina Parker than just Tempest Knight. It was Saturday and the date was for Wednesday, it would be the longest three days he ever spent, thought Cole. He was sure that if Hell had a detox program, then this would be it.

They had agreed to meet at a new little Tex-Mex place in the city. She beat him there and was already seated in a cozy corner booth. As Cole got closer to the table, he thought maybe the floor was made of gum. He briefly thought that maybe there was an earthquake, or just maybe, the gates of Hell had opened up and created a vacuum to suck him down into the bowels of the earth. He could barely move, and stopped just short of the table. Doctors call it fight or flight, and he was flipping the coin right now. Heads.

When his eyes came to rest on her it was like being lifted by a South Sea wind. Nothing but warm air and orchids. She was a living sculpture. This was not Tempest Knight, this was the epiphany he saw in the elevator. He knew right then that any fight to make this work would be worth it. She was smiling, and he was too as he approached the table. He sat down and was riveted to his chair by the tractor beam. She immediately ended the suspense.

"You know "

Damn, she's smart

"Yes "

"And ? "

"And I uh "

"I quit two years ago "

A mind reader too. She's perfect.

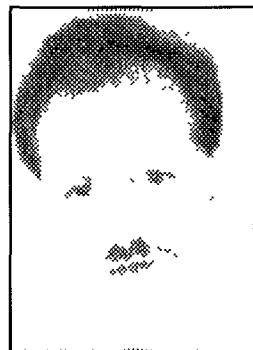
Without any effort and much to his surprise, Cole's heart informed his mouth to say

"Thanks for going out with me, Sabrina "

"Thanks for asking me, Cole "

As he held her hand, he thought of the third grade and the days he played kickball. He remembered that if you kicked the ball out of bounds, you got another chance.

You got a do over



Mike Brown

Half As Bright, Twice As Long

We adorn ourselves with concrete skins,
We look at the world below through fogged glass eyes.

We brag of how our ant hills can reach the skies,
yet what do you see when staring in each others eyes,
and how do you care to interpret the loneliness of our
sighs?

Do we hear the cries and the lament
or do we see it as false intent?
What has happened to our very soul
to precipitate us into this very hole?

“What does life really mean?”
is often heard being said;
to live happy maybe
or is it just the false wish to know what’s in our head?

Vittorio Bonomi

Confusion

A maze of clutter

Puzzle pieces spread throughout

Used debris in artistic patterns,

Disorganized thoughts bandy about

Useless information intertwined

With important diagnostics lessened clout,

With all this confusion it seems time

To find the energy to clean house.

Loren Lancaster

Daddy's At The Bar Again

Where's my old man Pete along El Rio del Alcohol,
where can I find the redness of his eyes,
how many has he drank tonight,
how much has he wasted on that high?
And there he would be, sitting in his corner,
with four butterflies around his net
Bartender, my flight has just passed your grounds,
why don't you serve us a fresh new set?
The angels have pulled him out to the dance floor,
there he slides without a feel,
the old school dances cheek to cheek,
movements that old age could never steal
Close those curtains, you in charge of the Sam Houston stage,
it's after hours to hear his monumental life,
"I used to be a great man, friends" his favorite speech,
where everyone sits quiet and so polite
But tonight we're breaking through the silence,
tearing through a listening, staggering crowd
"Papi, people like us remain kings forever ",
then he hugs me back and says he's proud
The parking lot is empty, just my old man's truck is there
"Time to leave Daddy ", the waitresses have to go home
His arms swing around the ladies as he calls me to him,
looks into my eyes and says, "Hey, why don't you ever write me
one of those poems?"

Antonio Soria, Jr.



To Face Mortality

It was a midsummer afternoon. The sun reflecting off of the concrete doubled the intensity of the afternoon heat. There was no breeze among the sealed and abandoned buildings of downtown. The small trees, unidentifiable to me and planted some time ago by forgotten hands, offered no protection.

Standing next to the van watching the outreach nurse try to convince Jim to go to the AIDS clinic for treatment, I could feel the sweat running down my sides. The smell rising from the urine-stained sidewalk was almost overpowering in the still air. I realized that mixed in that odor, I was smelling human misery and the smell of decaying human flesh not yet dead. Watching the nurse try to convince Jim to go to the AIDS clinic, I found myself observing and comparing him to the person I had met only three months prior.

Jim was a far cry from the frightened and confused person whom I had first contacted at an eight-dollar-a-night bunkhouse. When I first met Jim in the spring, he had recently been unceremoniously and illegally thrown out of his apartment because someone had found out that he had AIDS, and decided to let the leasing office know that the tenants didn't like the fact that he was residing in close proximity to them. Even then, he was hostile and refused every avenue of relief that I suggested. I noticed then, in the spring, that Jim's cuticles on both hands were afflicted with what seemed to be a fungus, and that he had bad skin condition.

Looking at Jim now in midsummer, I saw that both hands were encrusted with the fungal infection. His skin was dry and peeling, his face was gaunt. I could tell he had lost weight, how much weight was impossible to tell because of the filth-encrusted, tattered layers of clothing hanging loosely from his spare frame. His lips were cracked and covered with patches of white mucus from the thrush which made it painful for him to eat or drink anything.

Our eyes met. At that moment, I was reminded of a hunting experience as a youth. I had spotted a large rabbit sitting in front of a fallen tree. The rabbit's natural camouflage almost perfectly blended with the dull brown of the decaying tree. It was statue still, hoping to avoid detection, but I had already seen it. I had carefully drawn a bead on it with my shotgun aiming for a head shot when I saw its eyes. I saw the fear and hopelessness, the acceptance of the inevitability of mortality. I couldn't pull the trigger, I carefully rode the hammer forward with my thumb.

In Jim's eyes I saw dementia, beyond the dementia was fear of the unknown. There was fear of answers to questions that had gone unasked. There was acquiescence to the inevitability of fate. I saw in Jim's eyes recognition of the curse of mortality suffered by all, yet prepared for by only a few.

I broke eye contact with Jim as his younger brother came down the sidewalk with a six-pack of beer. Terry liked to remain in the background. He was a creature of the shadows, shunning the limelight. Terry was HIV positive, but he had no outward symptoms to speak of. Terry's loyalty to his older brother was touching, whenever we found Jim, Terry would not be far away. Terry sat down with his back against the wall a few feet from Jim and greeted me with a shy, almost embarrassed smile. On the wall, above Terry's head, spray painted in red lettering were these words:

I didn't mean to take up all your sweet time
I'll give it all right back to you some fine day
If I don't see you in this world,
I'll catch you in the next one-

Don't be late

In December, Jim died
Six weeks later, Terry died

Abron Morgan

Stationary Traveler

I live in a bag with walls that constrict
inside the various pockets pictures and mementoes
lovingly kept,
often looked at,
but mere nostalgic reminders
of the "Wind and the Dancer"
of voices once heard,
of earth once imprinted by comfortable old shoes

Even when naked, I carry the weight and the burden
I am suffocated by the angry bitterness
of the baggage handler on duty.

I am torn, ripped, and searched by stampeding cold
hands of automatons,
banged and flung against walls of dark, cavernous rooms
of the lost
baggage claims office of the soul,
and forgotten there by declarations of value

When will I remember that it never matters?

Vittorio Bonomi

Squish It!

Atomic fires char cities and jungles
Radiation corrupts with greenish light.
Everything blames Man and his bungles,
Death nods approval to approaching night.
Roaches though, avoid such pointless demise,
Onwards with breeding and feeding despite
All the dim and chill beneath dusty skies
Crusted ash endless across desolate blight,
High above on smooth, clear heavens they shine.
Roaches fly, wings gloriously outspread,
Untouched by moments of fateful design;
Life surges, keeps them always ahead
Eternally supple roaches survive;
Silent, divine, unbeheld by Doom's eye

Andre Poisot



Salvation

For once in our life, let's mean what we say
Let's rejoice around the campfire,
for the last time, let's all roast those Oscar Mayers
Let's indulge in those hedonistic pleasures to our hearts content
Let's, for once, let loose our true nature without repent
Let's sing the praises of the impending zero hour
Let's save the world once and for all

We squabble,
we argue,
we fight,
we can't even get war right
Let's save this world once and for all
Let's turn loose Shiva, the shatterer of worlds,
not on the perceived enemy, but on ourselves

Let's blow the blue stellar gem into oblivion
off of any stellar map
Let's sterilize and cleanse ourselves in the mushroom flames
Let's rectify all our sins,
Let's show the real goodness of our souls
Let's save the last shred of our humanity,
and let's put an end to all our misery

We live in our mental prisons
We sell our soul for any perceived safety
We lose our identity in the done and the trite
while we stand in stereotypical poses,
holding our chins,
supporting our transitory empty and meaningless intellectual
thoughts

We dress in skin tight riding gear and black bolero hats,
this way poems are more meaningful,
music is crisper,
pictures are more vivid and alive,
art work is more visceral,
cultural events are more ethereal,
and our words are truer

How soon we forget those that live in the reality of insanity,
those red from sunburn,
gray from city dirt,
repulsive to look at,
invisible to see,
whose anonymity is assured,
and who can see more from the back of the bus

Can't you see the joker laughs at you?
Can't you see that you will not understand this?
Can't you see they have achieved what you never will?

Is it numbness of the soul that makes us look away,
or have we finally achieved our long desired conformity,
or have we finally extinguished the pilot light of humanity?

Let's save this world once and for all,
for our future generations,
for the life we hold so dear,
our only path to salvation is 'oh so very clear'

Vittorio Bonomi

Venus As A Boy

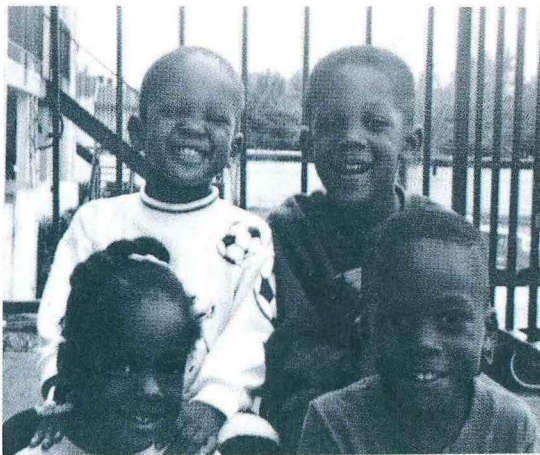
As those big blue eyes
Gazed intensely my way, I
Knew my own fate, I
was Venus as a boy

Sergio Pernas

Judges

When I walk down the hall,
Fear not my dark skin.
If you must fear something,
Fear my knowledge or skilled pen;
Or my educational excellence,
Or my charm and my grace.
Prejudice is ignorance.
Do not fear my race.
Do not fear my people.
If you judge, please judge fair;
Damn you if you don't,
But it is you who shall despair.
Judgment day is coming,
A true judge will judge us all;
When my kingdom will come
As you and yours will fall.

Fredric Hagger



Little Girls In Blue

How many voices have taught us to never sacrifice a crowd to the stereotype?

The back seat dwelling of this cop car introduces the same rudeness all the time "Wetback gangsters" thrown at me from every direction, weak words that could never pull my calmness out of line Your voice is fading into the movement of your lips as I begin to trace your life back to when mommy dressed you for school The world treated you as nothing, through the years, your body strengthened, but that courage never grew You swore in pain and agony to get them all back, those races or origins that placed you in shame

A seize to the pronunciation of "good cops" was at birth, a uniform, a gun, and a badge with your name

Little girls, carry me to an alley and beat me all that you wish, stand next to me and shout in my ears, release that painful anger with this perfect opportunity, my ankles and wrists are cuffed, it should bring you no fear The parents are clapping because their daughters are dancing, always trying to show the good side of the stage

What hatred does remembering bring behind those thick curtains when a child is trapped within her own cowardly rage?

The sirens are playing a high pitch at the glance, the law is wearing ruffled dresses of blue, perhaps the only difference between us is that my actions are as free as the birds, not hidden under covers of hypocrisy like the system that owns you

Antonio Soria, Jr.

Wildflowers In The Rose Garden

We were the wildflowers,
they were the roses.
We had weeds, they had none
We started out in separate gardens,
then somehow, we were all in one!

The gardener looked across the lot,
shook his head, "What is this I see?
Wildflowers in the roses? Get out! OUT!
Don't mix with these beautiful roses!
You'll ruin the soil where they grow!"

The wildflowers drooped and paled,
as beautiful flowers, they had failed.
Now the roses smirked and laughed,
"We belong in his beloved garden!
You! Get out! GET OUT!"

Now and then, he glanced our way,
but mostly, we had to wait . . . and wait,
for sun . . . for rain
for admiration that never came.
Loving him still, and shading his grave
Our colors paled, our petals fell,
crashing to the earth below.

Wildflowers In The Rose Garden

(cont'd)

Oh, now and then the gardener walked
along the wildflowers edge,
and every time they perked right up,
"Pick me ! Pick me !", they each would beg,
But he always picked the roses.

They had no choice, the wildflowers grew
forsaken for roses, another man's land.
Some are still waiting for the gardener's hand
to pick one of them, maybe this time?
Poor little wildflowers, left again.

The gardener's season is over now,
returned to the soil where wild things grow
The roses all gone, but the wildflowers live on
where the gardener sleeps forever.

"It's gentler now," the wildflowers say
of the gardener's unrequited love,
As his tears rain sweetly upon them,
they grow and at last they know

Anita Hunt



Wasted Energy

How many times in the course of the day
have you sat and wished your life away?
Filled with thoughts of yesteryear
Of all that's bad and all held dear.
To fill the day with "only if's",
playing scenarios like movie clips,
Changing the endings to go your way,
Different conclusions, rewriting the play
Reliving life inside your head,
Having new experiences instead.
Going over your life as if to say,
there should have been a better way
And all your energies spent changing the past
as if you had a new chance at last,
Then to find at the end of the day
that you have wished your day away.
How many times in the course of a year
have you allowed the past to bring a tear?

Loren Lancaster

Call Me "Sister"

Call me "Sister", I don't care
Don't judge my appearance,
My skin's color, or the clothes I wear

Call me "Sister", I don't care
I will stand by your side
Even when others talk and stare

Call me "Sister", I don't care.
I will go to your home,
You're welcome with me no matter where

Call me "Sister", I don't care
Hearts make sisters, not birthright;
I'm your "Sister" because of what we share

To call me "Sister", it's all right coming from you
Since we both believe;
"Sisters" are people with a common point of view

Sharon Hummel

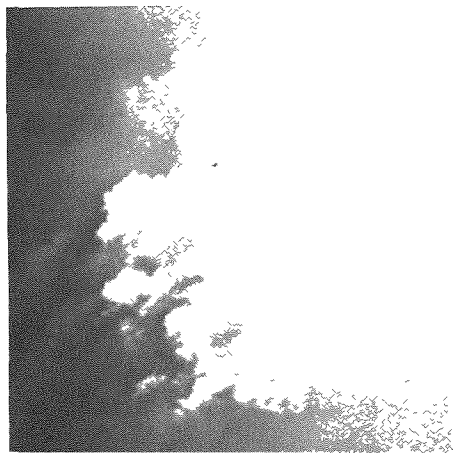
A Storm of Arguments

Temporary respites of my mind,
too few and far between
Like those lost islands of gold and green,
safe havens
from the bitter cold gray waves of the Atlantic storms now left
behind

No one resting on these shores can remember the waves
that like an argument of not so long ago
roared out words
that drowned and tore all life asunder,
Spilling over the decks
like the many words of truth now released in anger
No one on these shores will ever forget the storm

But who cares anymore now that sleep has overtaken all
while the sting of Coca-Cola drowns and soothes the slashed
throats
that have swallowed and exhaled the jagged saltwater breeze

Vittorio Bonomi



A Gallery For Us

Station it somewhere at a Northside corner,
among the taco stands and the ice-cream carritos being pushed,
to be found by the dragging lost talents that no one wishes to
near,
the ones performing dances in any merchant's bush
Graffitied Picassos from butterflies to walls,
displaying all our dreams, portraying who we are,
come to watch your sons and daughters,
in my gallery turned stars
Anyone is welcome who likes to shelter dreams,
to the construction workers who intended to build the railroad
track,
never to see a dime from the government,
yet believed enough to help the poor unpack
No stories of the rags to riches,
just a shove to find the commas in a verse,
it's Saturday night, all the pretty girls are reading,
what took so long to practice and rehearse?
We are all winners tonight for love was never born to be a flop,
his house was created for souls of our kind,
once placed on the bricks you should never look back,
a smile away from the blind
Mrs Ordaz, my kindergarten teacher asked us one day,
'What do you want to be, what do you want to do for the highest
paid salary?',
Who cares about the money when you are driving the train?,
when you are inspiring people's art with the floors of a gallery

Antonio Soria, Jr.



Somewhere Secluded From Civilization

Dusky light filtered down across the land and an evening breeze went its tepid way throughout. The day's heat stayed despite the setting sun. For biting insects, this was a glorious time, nothing could stop their inevitable desire to seek exhalations that signaled the presence of warm blood. Swatting only excited them, for it added an element of suspense and danger. These elements were particularly intense about one individual. He wildly swung at his diminutive enemy with rancor.

"Damn mosquitoes! Arr! Why do I have guard duty tonight, of all the damn nights? I'll be sucked dry! And for nothing! On purpose, he does this on purpose! That bastard!", Boesf referred to his commander, Master Oth-san.

Master Oth-san was a strict and unrelenting leader. He demanded absolute loyalty and discipline. So, he said, that when they (the enemy) come, the company won't fall apart like a handful of sand thrown to the air, the grains scattering where they might.

"What enemy?", the men asked themselves. Privately of course, for to suggest that there was no enemy was considered treason by Master Oth-san. He had an annoying and almost magical way of knowing everything that was said and thought (so it was whispered). To doubt that there is an enemy is to doubt the reason for the cohesion of this unit, and to doubt there was a war. The state had gone to war and lost many men doing so. These lives meant something, said Master Oth-san, and "I will not have you doubting their sacrifice."

Yes, apparently there was a war raging several thousand miles away, but such a distance tends to suppress any direct evidence. The only evidence the men had was Master Oth-san's weekly announcements as to which cities had been taken or obliterated and various edicts of the Grand Marshal concerning food rations, martial law, and punishable offenses.

Secretly, the men thought that Master Oth-san made these things up, for he had sole access to the only communix that (supposedly) linked them to civilization. The reports were always more or less the same. Names of places were meaningless, for all had been away for so long, and the Grand Marshall embodied the image of a distant, burping mouse, regardless of what the Marshall proclaimed, Master Oth-san's word was law. So, when for no apparent reason Master Oth-san proclaimed that a guard would be set at the pass, despite lack of any guard before, one was set at the pass. The duty fell upon the unlucky shoulders of Boesf, who could only vent his frustration by attempting to kill as many mosquitoes as he could.

Thus, it was that Boesf did not notice the shadowy figures lurking through the pass flitting from bush to bush until they were almost beneath him. When he realized that mosquitoes were not of any real concern at the moment, he dropped down, grabbed his radio, and whispered a frantic warning to the base and a request to pull back.

"No", the answer returned, the voice of Master Oth-san himself. "Hold the pass", "Ah!", thought Boesf, "Of course, the obvious thing to do". He was more afraid of disobeying Master Oth-san than a few shadows.

Boesf hefted his standard issue death stick, got to a kneeling position, and waited for a good shot, only too soon one was presented to him. The muzzle blast briefly lit the pass and the ten, well, nine men creeping through. The next shot was more difficult because the enemy (assuming that was who they were) had crammed themselves behind any minuscule rock or bush available. Tactically, that sort of seclusion could be considered poor, but truth to tell, Boesf held the only good position located behind a rock bush, an indigenous plant that armored itself with rocks as protections against scavengers. Rock bushes disliked growing in passes where the sun was hidden for parts of the day, so the men below had to be content with regular bushes.

Boesf's shots passed easily through two of these bushes to the great dismay of each man behind it. The men below gathered their wits soon enough. A shout issued forth.

"Cease fire! We come by order of the Grand Marshall!

Cease fire damn-it!"

The enemy was notorious for lies and propaganda according to Master Oth-san. Boesf continued his assault.

"Call in! Tell the commander the code name *nostalgia*!

Come on! It couldn't hurt!"

The man down in the pass who made the suggestion was disproved in the next moment by Boesf who offered contradictory proof in the form of a fast, hot projectile which could really hurt. Master Oth-san had given standing orders that anyone using the code *nostalgia* was the enemy. Sub-Master Archon had asked what the acceptable code might be, Master Oth-san gave him a leaden look and said that actually there were no code words that were acceptable. Then why the particular emphasis upon the one called *nostalgia*, queried the Sub-Master. Master Oth-san shrugged and looked away and said that any words from the enemy were offensive, and that was that.

The men below finally began to return fire to some effect. Boesf hunched behind his rock plant and prayed for assistance to hurry. There was no cause to worry. Master Oth-san had ordered an artillery strike into the pass. The shells screamed briefly over Boesf's head and impacted into the far wall of the pass. The result was impressive and Boesf might have considered the blast picturesque with its pretty, orange flames and streamers of molten rock. However, Boesf was too engrossed with his sudden, airy locomotion to make an aesthetic evaluation.

Mosquitoes hovered over Boesf's body. Disgusted with its unacceptable chill, they went on their way.

Untitled

Life swoops down on skin wings
guided by ultra sound
as the things of man suck my blood,
my life,
and leave me dry

Vittorio Bonomi