

*The Bayou Review*  
*Fall 1996 | Spring 1997*



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The Bayou Review is a literary and artistic journal published by the University of Houston - Downtown

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Dr. Sergio Rizzo

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Dr. Sergio Rizzo

I would also like to express sincere thanks to the Dateline staff for their assistance above and beyond the call of duty.

My work is dedicated to my husband & soul mate  
Benjamin Andrew Kressman IV  
My life would be incomplete without you...

Monica E. Kressman  
Editor

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\* Award recipients



## The Christmas Baby

by Gilbert E. Brillon

Thirteen days before Christmas Day 1992, I became a father for the first time. Ethan Paul came into the world kicking and screaming just like every other baby, but he wasn't like every other baby. The morning after Ethan's birth we were visited in the hospital room by a pediatrician who told us very bluntly that our beautiful new baby had Down Syndrome.

When I heard those words, I felt a physical sensation like I was kicked in the stomach. I had the immediate realization that I had been robbed of my future starting second baseman and eagle scout. I sat there numb and listened as the doctor explained that Ethan was mentally retarded. The doctor attempted to console me by telling me that children with Downs are "wonderful" and "loving." I didn't want to hear it.

The days that followed Ethan's birth were filled with sorrow, self-pity, and pondering what great responsibilities and disappointments lay ahead. I went about the uncomfortable duty of telling family and friends the tragedy that had befallen us, and prepared half-heartedly for the approaching Christmas holiday.

Usually, Rosalie and I spend holidays traveling between her family in the predominantly Hispanic east end and my family in Suburban Spring. Before Ethan's birth we decided we wouldn't make that trip to avoid exposing a newborn baby to the elements, instead anyone who wanted to stop by our house on Christmas Eve would be welcome. After Ethan's birth, I wasn't sure how I felt about Christmas. It was strange,

but I went through times when I wanted to be left alone with my grief, and times when I craved sometime to talk to. I had learned so much about Down Syndrome that when I did speak I probably bored people to death.

Several days prior to Christmas Eve both families decided to abandon their traditions, and join in a single celebration at our house. To my surprise, more than just the immediate families showed up. Our house was full of aunts and uncles, first, second, and third cousins, and seldom-seen black sheep who rarely attended family functions.

Cooperation abounded as both families brought covered dishes, and crowded into our kitchen to prepare the meal. Even one of my nieces, a wild child named Wendy, wanted to help. Wendy seldom enters a kitchen unless she is headed for the back door. Although she destroyed several potatoes while attempting to mash them with a blender borrowed from a neighbor, no one cared. Holiday trimmings were not the important part of this Christmas. We squeezed together around a dining table lengthened with two card tables and surrounded by an odd assortment of chairs. We enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner and made a very large mess. After dinner, the men did the manly thing and watched football in the den as the women cleaned the kitchen.

Best of all, the families actually spoke to each other. They would never intentionally avoid conversation before, but cultural barriers made it awkward. The barriers were overcome as a common thread named Ethan drew them together. The grandmothers showed Ethan off to anyone who was not yet fortunate enough to have met him, and he was admired by all. Rosalie and I were praised and congratulated on the

birth of our son, and no one ever mentioned anything wrong. If Down Syndrome was discussed, it was Rosalie or me that brought it up. The message was spoken in two languages, but everyone understood.

Nothing was wrong or shameful about Ethan, and he would be accepted and loved one hundred percent by everyone. Ethan would never want for anything physical or emotional as a member of these diverse families. I think it was the purest example of the Christmas spirit I have ever experienced.

After we said goodnight and Merry Christmas to the last guest, we left a happy but exhausted Ethan sleeping with my mother; and, as is our custom, we went to midnight Mass. As I sat in the candlelit church preparing to celebrate the birth two thousand years ago of one special child, I understood I had much to be thankful for in Ethan's birth. I was blessed with a beautiful, healthy, "perfect" baby who happened to have an extra twenty-first chromosome. I understood Ethan came to teach us acceptance, patience, and unconditional love. In the few days since his birth, he had united two families. I knew the future held great things for him. I knelt in prayer and thanked God for my two families and the gift of my special son.



## Mother Asleep

by Antonio Soria, Jr.

*Mother, I fell in love again last night when I  
saw your eyes and the sleeping clothes you  
wore,*

*Remembering all the things you did for me,  
I caressed your face and scratched every  
elder pore.*

*You know, Mother,*

*I've always thought of God as a poet,  
each one of us are his different poems.*

*He touched the highest inspiration  
when he made you,  
of the sweetness and softness of the  
woman's tone.*

*Compared to you,*

*I was the poem that came out worthless,  
with feelings that no one would recite,  
while I was dull and self-descending,  
your smiles and your gestures  
always seem so bright.*

*The boy dressed up by the mother,  
still so saddening to this day,  
years and years of patient molding,  
were wasted in this piece of mother's clay.*

*But you mother, oh you're beautiful,  
a swan photographer's would catch,  
God also had his garden flowers, you being  
the favorite of all his patch,*

*Lie, lie to sleep, my sweet old lady,  
forget that you saw me drop these tears,  
cover yourself, cover yourself from the cold,  
from the shadows of your room,  
your son now disappears.*

## RED

*by Marshandria Smith*

Red as crimson  
earth, fire and flood.

Red as the moon  
deep shadow of blood.

Now found in a rose,  
this deep red hue.  
Sweet as the wind,  
that blows me to you.



## To Be - Ser

*by Irma Methard*

May your life  
bring you love,  
Abundance, joy:  
Amor Abundancia, Alegria,  
May you become.

In Macrocosm,  
This random universe  
is not.

Just like the tree  
reaching out, growing  
from the acorn  
or mustard seed,  
who doesn't question grace  
but simply is.

## Mexico

by *Vittorio Bonomi*

I look at the world through gold prison bars.  
Mexico lies beyond this reach  
in voices and psalms that blend into wayward  
messages of departing trains,  
in empty stations,  
as the organgrinders mix with history and the  
holy,  
in a flash of life cheated  
by Cortez and God.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Fluorescent Plastic Stars

by *Justin McLendon*

Somewhere along the way  
those glow in the dark fluorescent adhesive  
stars  
lost a little of their charm for me  
pin pricks hold fascination  
and bent spoons and losing valuables  
and sweet sugar cubes within me.

\*\*\*\*\*

## For Zachary

by *A. K. Morton*

I want to say,  
I miss you.  
I long to touch, to hold,  
to kiss you.  
But time has grown,  
and so have you,  
Ten years have passed,  
we're still not through.

I ache for you,  
I dream of you.  
No day or night  
goes by,  
without thoughts of you.  
Please....  
come home.

## state.ment of union

by Justin McLendon

As I am...

a word is never a weapon in hand,  
forked intention (men in unison)  
the con flag nation spreading into control.  
The power res(is)ts in tongues  
of the minds that we never see  
a knot a nation that can't say what they can  
because arsenic the pit of (s)peach.  
And we did it before, we the people...  
we never knew is our excuse for last time  
when we burned all the Jews  
burn it all to ash in bar-b-griquet america  
and our republic.an ideal above the heat  
and our democrat.it choice in the flame  
our money makes them as.best.os we offer  
we offer them the carrot  
and we stand with the bit  
in the rut of the road  
stockstill jackass gets beaten  
again.

## HAIKU

by Natalie Martinez

Schizophrenia  
I think therefore I am not  
Who I am today.

## Hate

by Cavita Sharma

I hate you

I hate you with a passionate, burning fire  
Deeper than the depths of the universe,

My hate for you grows  
An image of your beastly figure  
flashes through my mind,  
And all the anger builds in my soul,  
overflowing with disgust.

I hate you.

My eyes are fiery from the hate  
You fill my every thought. I see you in my  
dreams.

I feel you in my heart.

You clutter my life with hate.  
I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.

The mere word "hate" alone  
cannot describe the hate I have for you,  
how much I hate, how I hate you,  
or even why I hate you.

But, all of this hate doesn't hurt you,  
the way it hurts me.

I hate you.

Even when you are dead and gone,  
this hate for you will live bright and strong.  
You seep into my darkest corners, you control  
my every thought.

Every hour through and through,  
I carry this burning hate, only for you.  
No one understands me, or why I hate you  
the way I do.

I truly hate you.



## Conditioned

by Tim Notzon

Why  
is it that my heart no longer feels  
Sorrow, Pain or  
Remorse.  
Has the past rendered me deaf to  
my own Emotions? Or have I  
simply become  
Calloused,  
my soul worn smooth as a rock by  
the violent waters of  
existence.



## Except for You

by Peggy Head

I can do whatever I want to.  
Whenever I want to.  
I can see whomever I want to  
Wherever I want to,  
Except for you.  
I'll be forever without you.  
I'll have whatever I want,  
Except for you.

I follow whatever rules made by me.  
Whenever they help me  
Manage whoever will let me  
Wherever people are with me,  
Except for you.  
I'll be forever without you.  
I'll have my own way with everyone.  
Except for you.

I've ruined whatever was between us  
Whenever I made us  
Choose whoever was right of us.  
Wherever I go, it will still be us,  
Except for you.  
I'll be forever without you.  
I'll have whatever I need  
Except for you.

## SECRET

*by Tasha Campos*

I saw you sling that loud pink bundle onto  
the cold concrete ground.

You swelled with a yellow tint and all your  
sickness introduced itself to the white  
roses, bruising their virgin petals with  
impure waste.

Doubled-over in defeat, eyes moistened and  
clinched, refraining a heated cry, you  
crumble.

Falling, face first onto your own demise.  
You panic as you slowly glide, fearing those  
green marbles that will soon enough greet  
you from that fluffy pink bodyguard.

In your minds-eye, you hope that you will  
not deviate from the target, and when you  
wished that, you dug your dirty fingernails  
into your palms.

I saw the blood and the jilted look that  
manifested itself through your burdened  
eyes, but worst of all, I heard your stoned  
heart mutter its last secret.

Your glass dream shattered and cut deep  
into your side.

Lying so pale and blue with clear splinters, I  
heard the final battle cry and your dirty  
secret die.

## HAUNTING SILENCE

*- A Pantoum*

*by Catherine Woods*

I cannot stand the sound of silence  
It haunts my every move  
I'll never forget that moment  
The moment of your last breath

It haunts my every move  
the moment I signed the page  
The moment of your last breath  
My moment of rage

The moment I signed the page  
they removed all the tubes  
My moment of rage  
for there was nothing I could do

They removed all the tubes  
I stood silently by  
there was nothing I could do  
I refused to cry

I stood silently by  
I'll never forget that moment  
I refuse to cry  
I cannot stand the sound of silence

## Among Us, the Poor

by Antonio Soria, Jr.

Ya no llores madrecita, ya no llores,  
the lack of presidents is just one of our tortures,  
humiliation finds nothing wrong  
in eating Ramen noodles everyday,  
you're trying your best to feed these young vultures.

Pick your head up,  
stop pulling out your hair so nervously,  
giving yourself away to the highs looking down,  
this is just another hard moment in time,  
nothing worth burying yourself under that frown.

Who cares how much money  
we owe on the house bill,  
or if tomorrow's lighting will be no more,  
only you can place yourself  
in the department of vegetables,  
battling in the parade of the foodstamp doors.  
Tomorrow, just pray that life will be different,  
if the bread and water escape again,  
what new is there to expect.

If things get worse,  
we will steal the riches of this pyramid,  
add luxury to Miss Hopelessness  
when she comes to collect.

Forget those paid needles claiming their credit,  
threatening us with incarceration because of wrong decisions by your son,  
legal actions don't bring forth any black capes,  
they condemn you in money,  
act as supremacies when they know you got none.

Got to go mother,  
the forest ranger is here to take me back to the park, on the basis of warrants,  
something about a clean sweep plan.

Don't you worry, I'll be out in a couple of days, crying next to you, here in the misery of this  
sovereignty's hands.

## **My Ventana (My Window)**

*by Tasha Campos*

A help wanted board hangs empty on the cracking brick walls. Three stair-step children run in front of me, screaming and cursing in Spanish monotonous. Two with no shirt and one with no shoes. The fans spin and spin in beautiful blue swirls, like an angry sky. They match the murals of the kids from Mexico; those poor, dirty children that can't even eat.

I stand and reflect on the old dark-haired woman with her mountain of clothing and her drunken husband. She carries the mountain on her crooked back, like a stubborn mule. The old husband staggers alongside of his wife struggling to open the glass doors for his escape into the cool air. She pushes him aside in a fit of annoyance and forces the heavy glass doors open.

As I search the room for something new to watch, I feel a rain pour from my body, the machines are too hot today. The children run by me once more, but this time as a band, one with two cans and the other two with clapping hands. They sing in cracking voices "De Colores," the only song they know. The fat-lipped kids begin to giggle because they are happy. The new juke box blares "Oye Como Va" and all the young abuelas (grandmothers) begin to dance with their new boyfriends in the heat of the lavanderia (washateria). I watch with a grin of amusement for their newfound contentment.

As I stand folding my freshly cleaned clothes, I begin to drift into the colors of my new dress; I drift into my hopes of a better me. I hang my new dress and stop my hopeless thinking of having more, of being more. I begin to breathe heavily as I notice that Jose is looking at me and my form. I try to look beautiful like the white woman of the boulevard, but it is hard because I am so small and so different from them. I begin to feel a strange heat slinking down my leg. I lift my flowered yellow dress, the one papa bought, only to discover a bloody mess, my death. I begin to moan for myself, in tears. Jose laughs at me out of ignorance, and the children gallop around me pointing their fingers and doing the dance of the dead.

I fall to my knees, as carnage would, ready to be eaten. The abuelas begin to encircle me with a wall of security. Their soft hands console me, and they explain my insanity. The abuelas tell me that my blood is not that of death, it is that of birth; birth into womanhood.

# Momentary

by *Tim Notzon*

The distance seemed endless,  
vast,  
Made up solely of blue water  
and sky.

My mind soared through the  
dark space of time, amidst  
Silver flashes of reality  
and desire,  
And as I stood there, surrounded  
by the essence of your soul,  
I heard my heart break.



*art by Andy Trevathan*

## Life's Colors

*by Peggy Head*

Green. Green your parasol rests  
On your shoulder protecting your delicate skin from the sun.  
Green water, green light, green reflections of trees.  
Green is the color of hope  
Or envy.

Blue. Blue, the sky reflects on still water that ripples as your blue boat glides.  
Blue boat, blue shadows, blue reflections of sky.  
Blue is the color of glad  
or sad.

Yellow. Yellow leaves floating  
On the water,  
and yellow light reflects on your billowy skirt.  
Yellow is the color of sunshine  
or fear.

Red. Red and pink flowers  
On your ample jacket and hat compliment your lips  
and cheeks.  
Red is the color of love  
or hate.

Colors. Colors, that once were just oil paints,  
On canvas, becomes a lovely lady  
lively with emotions.  
Colors artists combine to define life  
or black.

## The Escape

by Aaron Neathery

In all my years as an analyst, I have never come across a case as interesting, and as unnerving, as that of young Edwin Whitechapel.

I was a close friend of the Whitechapel's, one of the wealthier families in Margate, and was as surprised as any when I learned of Edwin's descent into insanity. Indeed, mere months ago, he had been a bright talented, eager boy having just graduated from Greybridge College, ready to take a position in his father's lucrative shipping firm.

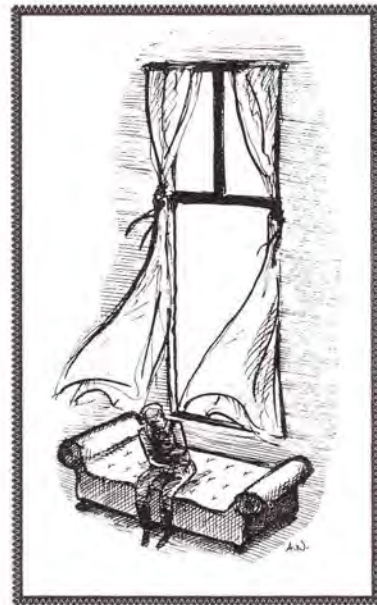
I had received word from Edwin's father that the boy had been having delusions or hallucinations for a number of days and had stopped sleeping whatsoever. He refused sedatives, drank only coffee and other caffeinated drinks, and sat for hours in the hall staring intensely at their grandfather clock. Believing they might be able to personally manage the situation; thereby, avoiding a public scandal, Edwin's parents interrogated him in the hopes that they could force him to recognize his own madness. Edwin was only too anxious to offer explanations for his behavior, but these rationalizations seemed incoherent. Finally out of desperation, he was sent to me.

Nervous and trembling, Edwin took a seat on the couch in my office and gazed forlornly out of the open window at the mid-day traffic on the boulevard. For the longest time, he spoke not a word, glaring out at the wagons and automobiles and, before long, the trembling subsided and a strangely wistful smile appeared on his face.

"I'm not insane." he murmured. "This is real. This is here. This is now."

"What do you mean, Edwin?" I asked.

"I'm really here." he said as he slowly turned to face me. "I'm really here and I want everyone to know it!" Edwin swiveled about and began to holler out the window at



the passerby. "I'm Edwin Whitechapel! I'm really here! I'm the real Edwin Whitechapel."

Hoping to prevent a disturbance, I got up and closed the window. Edwin looked at me with a pained expression. "I'm not insane." he insisted again.

"I'm certain that you're not." I soothed. "I would like very much if you would tell me what has happened. There is no need to yell."

The young man seemed to catch his breath and began to speak, becoming calmer and more reserved as he did so. He was, he explained, a fugitive; a fugitive from what he called the "Great War." I asked if he perhaps meant the Boer War. I knew it

had ended when Edwin was a boy of nine. Edwin stubbornly shook his head at my ignorance and began to describe in fantastic detail this "Great War" of "ironclads" of "Gattling guns" and "mustard gas." And trenches. Edwin lingered in his description of the trenches that troops would dig and hide in for months only to come storming out over the tops to be shot down (it seemed a damned silly way to fight a war to me). Edwin claimed that, a short while ago, he was actually in one of these trenches, that he was a soldier for His Majesty's Royal Army in the war against the "Hun," and that he was soon going to "go over the top" to die.

"I prayed and prayed that God wouldn't let me go over the top." he said. "I knew...we all knew what was waiting for us over the top. Death was there, waiting patiently. And in four days, he would have us! It's a horrible thing to know when you are going to die. My time was three o'clock, Tuesday, April 19."

He shuddered and again looked out of the window. "I had been having dreams of Margate for months. I had the same dream for nights on end. At first, these dreams were just like any other, fanciful and unmemorable. But they grew in vividness and intensity until I swear they were virtually indistinguishable from life itself. Finally, after one night of unusually dreamless sleep, I found myself here."

"You mean to say you were no longer in the trench?"

"I tell you, I was not even in the same world!" Edwin beamed proudly. "It was as if the War and the last four years of my life were the dream and I had awoken into this new reality. My life was as if I had

never been away. And, although I remembered nothing of this life, I even convinced myself that I was suffering from some form of amnesia. At that time, I didn't suspect..."

"What didn't you suspect, Edwin?"

"My first clue came when I came across my private diaries. I have always kept diaries. Believing myself to have amnesia, I presumed that reading my old diaries might jog my injured memory. Instead, I drew a blank at every turn. There was absolutely nothing familiar about any of it. But in the last few pages I came across curious passages describing strange, disturbing dreams. Not fully understanding the meaning of this, I dismissed it and filled out the day's page with a brief recount of my strange adventure including as much detail as possible. That day...it was Saturday...I explored the town, amazed. I discovered with delight that the Great War had never happened, and it seemed as though the whole world were instilled with a distinct, indescribable calm. Rejoicing at the prospect of living my life to its fullest, I praised God for his mercy and spent the greater part of the evening in a pub where, I must confess, I became quite drunk." Edwin's expression glazed over. "I...I think I must have ...passed out in the pub..." His voice trailed off leaving only the loud ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece.

After a moment, Edwin angrily broke the silence. "You can imagine my horror when I awoke with the sounds of shells bursting in my ears! A quick look about confirmed that I was back in the trench, strapped to my cot! Alarmed and confused, I demanded to know why. My fellow



soldiers confirmed that, upon waking the previous morning, I had seemingly gone mad! I was told I had even attempted to escape by climbing out of the trench!

It had taken four men to wrestle me down from the ladder. But the big push being only three days away, it had been decided to keep me sedated and bound instead of going through the trouble of having me shipped back. After much coaxing, I persuaded my senior officer to undo the straps. That day I was placed under careful observation.

Hoping to find clues as to what had happened to me, I rummaged about for my serviceman's journal. However, understandably, there was no entry for the previous day. It was then that I began to realize what was happening to me. Don't you see? I was trading places with another Edwin Whitechapel, an Edwin Whitechapel from a world that never suffered the Great War! He had stolen my life from me! I wanted it back!"

Suddenly, Edwin jumped to his feet. Shocked by the abrupt movement, I cringed...poor form for a professional analyst, I must admit. Edwin began to restlessly pace the room.

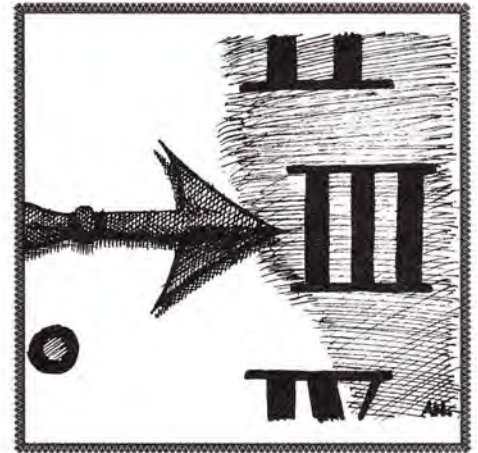
"But...but if it happened once," he stammered, "it could happen again, right?"

I stared, unable to respond.

"Well, I knew it could! The exchange took place during sleep. That night I decided to take no chances. I took a sedative and went to bed early, and do you know what?"

"What?" asked I.

Edwin laughed and seated himself upon the couch. "It happened! I was here! I awoke and I was here! Nonetheless, my joy was short-lived.



It dawned upon me that my existence here was only momentary unless something was done. This thought became even more urgent when I opened my diary and read the previous day's entry. It was a *death threat!*"

"A death threat?" I asked, looking up from my notes. "From whom?"

"My other self! The other Edwin knew, too! He knew what I was planning! If we were to exchange places again, he wrote, he would do anything in his power to return! I was horrified to think that there was another version of myself out there, equally cunning and trying to get back. But I had the upper hand! It was now Monday and tomorrow was the big push. If I could only stay awake past three o'clock Tuesday, my other self would be dead and I would be *here...permanently!*"

Edwin looked exhausted as he spoke, he had slowly eased himself into a reclining position. "So I drank coffee.. I remained awake all night and into the next day, not even as much as resting my eyes for an instant. I refused to give my other self a chance to return. Then, finally, three o'clock came."

"And what happened?"

"Nothing. I had almost expected to feel some of the pain of my counterpart as he was forced to charge out over the top into enemy fire. Instead, I felt quite the opposite. I was elated! His having to take my place now seemed justified.

After all, was it fair that I must give my life up for a war I could hardly grasp? There had been no justice for me so let there be none for him, I thought. And no I had triumphed and was free to live my life in the new utopian paradise!"

Edwin paused and I thought for a moment that he had fallen asleep. He clearly caught himself drifting, for his eyes bolted open in panic. "And then came the most horrible realization of all." he said, loudly.

"What was that, Edwin?"

"Can't you see? Don't you understand?"

"I'm sorry to say that I can't." I replied.

I watched as Edwin slowly rose to his feet, glaring at me menacingly.

"If I and my other self traded places when we slept," he seethed, "what happens when I sleep and my other self is dead?"

Edwin was advancing on me. The blackness in his eyes seemed deeper than ever. I arose from my chair and began to back away.

"*Do I trade places with a corpse?*" he shrieked.

After having said this much, Edwin became uncontrollable, screaming grotesquely and grabbing at me. Fortunately, my office assistant and I were able to subdue him until the proper authorities arrived to take the poor man away.

Today, I am uncertain as to the fate of young Edwin Whitechapel.

His family had him committed and I have been unable to trace his whereabouts or discover whether or not he has been cured or his terrifying delusions. And although his story was clearly the product of a disturbed and disordered mind, his trembling, bedeviled voice still persists in my mind, torturing my nights and echoing in my waking hours.

## Looking Up from a Floor Aquarium

*by Tasha Campos*

Millions of baby bubbles popping in my ears,  
Shriveled skin and muffled sounds  
are all that is felt within,  
Shedding tears only makes it harder to breathe  
in my room with a view.  
Sweet hollow kisses are given freely above me,  
All I dare to feel is my own heart pump  
a scared and lonely life  
through my dry and withered veins.  
The wine dyes my body a deep burgundy,  
While the one and only grapes of wrath  
float in sets around my heavy frame,  
My wine and grapes are not what they seem,  
It is the work of the jealous loveless fairy.  
The wine untrue is the blood from you,  
And the grapes just remainders  
of your large and caring heart.  
Dressed as my fate and destiny,  
She approaches,  
And I lay and wonder if death like me  
just longs to be free,  
To run and hide and cower at time.

## Still Trying

*by Vittorio Bonomi*

Tried afternoons  
slowed by Jefferson Airplane songs that have never been sang.

The sky smoothes in monotonous tones.  
Sounds smothered by humidity.  
Words that once bound,  
now sheer life,  
leaving a bitter taste in one's dry mouth.

Brave little soldiers do not cry.  
Emotionless we stay when the flames burn our retinas and our eyes,  
Emotionless we stay when the fire melts the flesh  
from our hand,  
brave little soldiers do not cry.  
Brave little soldiers from cradle to grave.

What does it matter,  
don't we live this life for fun?

# BLEED

*by Vivian G. Kalinov*

Shall I bleed for you  
Can you make me sing  
Shall I dance on golden rainbows  
Will you don the golden ring  
Shall my tolerance to the altar flow  
Make a silent offering

Will you bleed for me  
Can I make it sing  
Shall we suffer pleasure, or  
Pleasure suffering  
In order for our song to sing

Shall we play a happy chord, or  
In turn a hue of crystalline blue  
The kind that cleanses the soul from deceit  
Neptunian dolphin-like  
Mysterious-yet true

Rhapsodies mellow tranquil and still  
The oceans of love that well and refill  
On foot in the water  
Palm in the ground  
Ear in the vastness  
Sight sensing our sound  
Rain upon us the miracle is found

Drenched in our sorrows  
Tempering pain  
Loving all freely  
On various planes  
Some truly in virtue  
Others falsely in vain

Sharing our love freely  
Love bleeds to nourish  
Fostering growth  
In beauty remains  
A silent oath  
Whose vow  
In anonymity  
Sustains

## "Sitting Here"

by Stephanie M. McNeal

*My future goals are to write screenplays & scripts for  
TV shows - as well as act in movies & television!*

*Stephanie M. McNeal*

Sitting here waiting,  
in the mist of the spring rain  
barefooted thought flows  
through a symphony of words  
swimming to the shores of my realities  
The light breeze sways the rain towards my feet  
and clears the air as the clouds retreat  
away from the sun.

Sitting here writing  
between thoughts of you  
I fight with dignity  
the emptiness left behind  
and words from my mind  
I'm not worried, pay close attention  
I'm free, as I must mention  
to forget our existence together and our future apart.

Sitting here writing  
between sad words and sad songs  
too depressing to think about  
continuing my poetic flow  
through the mists of butterfly doubts  
and the nervousness of having both  
mixed up emotions rages me to deep intoxication  
of my distorted reality.



*photo by: Maria Panis*

## Negro en Blanco /Black on White

*by Irma Methard*

This is a passion  
that began with contrasts  
your skin against my skin,  
our different scents.

Fueled by curiosity  
still socially unacceptable  
what else was there?  
Only a woman and a man,  
mistrust and jealousies began.

Oh black Apollo  
beneath  
your obsidian skin  
a superficial cover,  
stalks  
the nazi soul  
of my white lover.

## Words of the White Man

*by Eric Jernigan*

They came over the mountain of the rising sun  
shooting bison just for fun  
they kill our braves  
rape our squaws  
they call it justice  
they call it law.

My brother hung by an angry white man  
for hunting on what he called his land  
they got him drunk  
they hung him high  
they it a truth  
they call it a right

They cut the land into little pieces  
and buy and sell it as they do people  
white shaman he preach love  
he carry too much baggage  
he say he are like god  
he say we are savage

white man push west, say move on, gotta go  
chief Sitting Bull say no  
the paint's prepared  
the drums are beating  
why I'm not scared  
why is my heart beating

as long as the tall grass grows  
and the river flows  
these are words of the white man  
remember them  
kill them where they stand  
these are the words of the white man  
remember then  
kill them where they stand



## Walking in the Rain

by Marshandria Liletta Smith

*I spent my time walking in the rain, trying to make everything all right...*

So many nights, I spent thinking about you  
So many night, I spent wondering what to do  
So I went walking in the rain  
Until I figured out my next move.

Too many times, I know I didn't even care  
Too many times, I did the generous thing just because I was there.  
Up on a ledge one night, I thought I was floating in the air  
I swear.

That night I fell, harder than I thought I could  
But you know it did me some good.

That night I went walking in the rain  
I looked at myself, at all the hurt and pain  
Figured out, that I could change my life  
And get away from the strife.

Now those times were, oh, so long ago  
It was a hard road back, paved with blood  
I know, I felt every stone.

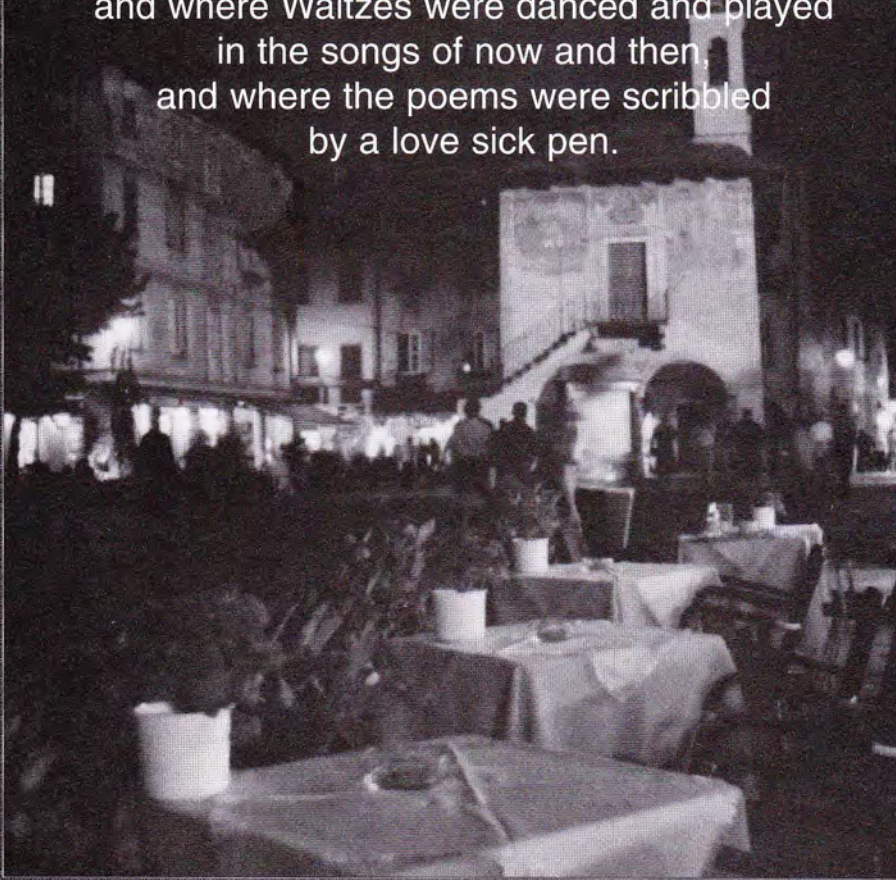
Now you can find me walking in the rain  
Only remembering all of my life's pain  
It doesn't hurt anymore  
I felt it before.  
I settled the score  
And I'd do it again.

Then I saw someone else walking in the rain  
Trying to forget all of her life's pain  
She's just like I was, another follower of the band  
I smile and hold out my hand.

## **Piazza Duomo**

*by Vittorio Bonomi*

Do you see the roses  
where the mist was broken by the sun,  
on the streets of old Milan,  
and where Waltzes were danced and played  
in the songs of now and then,  
and where the poems were scribbled  
by a love sick pen.



*photo by Vittorio Bonomi*

## **Prisoner of the Pen**

*by Yolanda-Marie Bridges*

Words bubbling up inside  
churning, turning  
can't stop the tide  
whirling around me  
seizing my thoughts  
my feelings  
are captured  
everything's caught.

The words knock around  
demanding release  
with pen in hand,  
I seek my peace.

Writing, writing  
scribbling fast,  
catch the words  
flowing past.

Writing, writing  
must be free,  
the pen holds  
me captive,  
the words  
write  
me.

# The Painted Lady

by Stefanie Bush

Walking through the front door of Grandma's house my mind is deluded with memories. I am very careful not to touch the jalapenos that are growing just within my reach! I remember one time I touched the enormous green end of a jalapeno and my mouth burned for hours. Also, I watch the cactus pot very carefully. Wow! How it can bite! Entering Grandma's house, I can smell Grandpa's cigarette and see him sitting in his chair, with month-old newspapers scattered around his feet. The television is so loud, and the birds are trying to be even louder as they wrestle about trying to escape. Around the corner comes Grandma from the bedroom, holding her long, soft, pale arms out as wide as she can reach to greet her only granddaughter. She is so beautiful. I feel the warm smile creeping up on my lips as I run to jump into her arms. As I hold her, I place my head on her shoulder, my nose snuggling up to her neck. Somehow my small body fits just so tightly into Grandma's. She would carry me around the house twirling my hair through her fingers like a thread through a needle. Her short blonde hair always whispered to my nose causing me to giggle and wipe the funny joke on Grandma's sweater. She was tall, too. While in her arms I could see everything! Even the top of Grandpa's head was in my reach. I remember her extravagant assortment of costume jewelry; one piece she never went without was a huge emerald green butterfly ring that seemed to soar around her finger. The butterfly looked so real and alive, almost magical. At my dance practice, it was always "our practice, our dance recital, or our costume." It was never mine - that's how Grandma was! At the dance studio, Grandma would sit and watch me dance just as I would watch the butterfly dance on her finger. The only difference between me and the butterfly is that I dropped my baton and stumbled over my two feet, but the butterfly was always graceful and never let go of Grandma's finger.

## Flying Gems

Now, four years later, I walk through Grandma's door. This time the door is much bigger and very heavy. Daddy has to help me open it. There is a huge red and white sign on the door that says something only grown-ups can read. I walk through the door and Grandma is lying all alone in a bed and everybody is looking at her. Don't they know it's not nice to stare at someone as they try to sleep? I look up to Grandma wondering why she does not get up to greet me as she always does. I see tubes and machines all around her; they are all beeping so loudly. Each one has a place that it runs to in my Grandma's body. The beeps have red lights that dance as they sing to the hum of the machines. She is very pale and weak. I can tell she is scared and lonely by the way her eyebrows twitch together. I walk over to Grandma to hold her hand. Surely the butterfly looks the same, I think, as I hold her long lifeless finger up to see. But, it is not there! I'm sure it has flown away and will return soon, for Grandma does not go anywhere without the butterfly ring dancing on her finger. Grandma is trying to tell me something now, maybe

where the butterfly went, but I can't understand her. Her voice is so faint - less than a whisper. Her hair is longer now and falls around her face. It is very dry and straw like. Perhaps if I touch it, it would break in half. It does not tell jokes and make me laugh anymore. There are no more dance classes and Grandpa has quit smoking.

### **Fluttery Flights**

Now, I run to Grandpa's house who now lives across the street. Mom and Dad must take care of him since Grandma is no longer here anymore. Mom says, "She went to meet her father in heaven." I like Grandpa living across the street because I can now skate in two driveways. Today is my birthday and Grandpa has a present for me. I burst through his door and demand to see my present. Grandpa slowly raises up out of his chair. He pulls up his britches, because I can see his underwear peaking out just over the seam, and Grandma would not like his holey socks. He pushes his glasses back up on his nose and reaches into his pocket. I just knew I was going to get a dollar to fix the flat my bike had. Grandpa slowly pulled his hand out of his pocket and looked into my eager eyes that were about to pop out of my head. He held his tight fist in front of my face as he slowly opened it up one finger at a time. One knuckle even popped because he was going so slowly. There was the beautiful butterfly ring - it had returned! It was the same ring that once soared around Grandma's finger. It was the same magical butterfly that flew away when Grandma died. I looked at Grandpa in amazement and he had one tear in the corner of his left eye. He said, "She loved you very much and would have wanted you to have it." Then he picked me up in his arms and held me like Grandma used to. Plopping down into his big brown easy chair he told me about the butterfly. I listened eagerly as he held me in his lap. When Grandpa found out he had to go away to fight in the war, Grandma cried for weeks. "It seems just like yesterday your grandmother and I were standing in the train station, both of us had tears streaming down our faces as we said our good-byes. Each of us knew it could be the last time to hold each other," he said. He then pulled the ring from his pocket, just as he did when he gave the ring to me, and placed it on Grandma's finger to remind her of the journey he was on. " Butterflies always return; they just migrate for a year or two" he explained to her. He explained to me that the Painted Lady was a butterfly that migrates the furthest of all butterflies. They go as far away as Africa and Asia, yet they always find their home. He too would go to far away places, but would eventually return home. "Grandma believed the Butterfly was always with us during our times apart," he said. Whenever she felt lonely she often toiled with the butterfly, and I could swear that when I too was feeling lonely I would look up into the sky and see a beautiful emerald green butterfly fluttering just above my head. I know how you must miss her, so I want you to take good care of the butterfly, for it will take you on a journey if you let it."

### **The Champion Migrator**

Today, as I look back I feel a warm chill come over me as I remember how close Grandma was to me, while I had that ring. I remember carefully placing it under my pillow each night in hopes of dreaming of her, which I did quite often. But, now the ring soars around someone else's finger; hopefully it dances for them as it did for me. It seems like

yesterday when mom picked me up early from school. I knew something was wrong because I always rode the bus home. She said, "Someone came into the house and took some of our things." I was not to be afraid though, because I was safe and that's what mattered. Running through the door of my big red brick house, I was careful not to trip on pieces of glass or the door that was now laying on the floor. I dashed to my room to capture the butterfly ring. I was greeted with disappointment and tears. The butterfly ring had once again flown away. For many years I waited for the butterfly ring to return and tried to understand what I did that made it fly away, just as Grandma did. I still drive by the big red brick house to wonder about the butterfly and life. I wonder who wears the ring and if they too have magical dreams of a beautiful grandmother and her granddaughter. I sometimes think the butterfly flew away to be with the Painted Lady, since it travels on the farthest journey. It sees many different lands, watches many dances, and creates dreams for many people. I like to believe that the butterfly did not fly away very far though, but only returned to its rightful owner in hopes that I, too, will see the beautiful, magical, butterfly again.

Thank you to my family for a life time of memories,  
a heart full of love, and a future full of promise.  
May the Painted Lady take you on a journey you too,  
will never forget.

Stefanie Bush



*photo by: Monica Kressman*

## Intimacy

by Peter Steen Lunde

Who hears the Cawwww, Cawwww?  
A sea gull's crackled cry  
Cuts blue air clean through  
Like a shard-scythe splitting green seagrass.  
Feathered trumpet far at sea  
Blaring to be heard above the frothy waves.  
Who hears?  
Small children, a boy, a girl,  
Naked, alone, in a room's quiet stillness,  
Dust in the air suspended,  
Trace and drift curious fingers over glowing skin.  
Tingling, fascinating, pushing, exploring.  
They surely are on fire.  
Their hearts alive when touching so innocently,  
So alone.  
Young bodily charged expectation  
Unknowing of the coming fall  
Into lavish darkness  
That will bear the pain and cry of a newborn self.  
Who hears?  
Bound to the towering mast,  
Ulysses twists against the howls and blasts of wind  
And shrieks against his bonds,  
While the Harpies sing to lull and lure his quest.  
Lust is their intended seduction,  
When alone, so alone, is his painful reduction.  
Who hears his yearning then?  
Ah, intimacy is  
But linens and lace  
To all with the plainest or prettiest face  
Whose embrace  
Is an act to stir up a sound  
That ends with a ping.  
Just a trifling thing.  
But the secret place remembered, endured,  
A word, touch,  
What is felt too much,  
Is the secret place most remembered and shared.  
Quite ensnared.  
A sea gull glides.  
Cawwww. Cawwww.  
A flashing gill  
Catches the fisher's hungry eye.  
A folded mass of white and gray feathers  
Plunges into the sea.  
The writhing, swirling,  
Flowing, bubbling,  
Outrageously intimate  
Foaming sea.

## Muse

by Peter Steen Lunde

Waits for dust to form,  
Waits just so around the dug pit's edge.  
Waits also for the child.  
Waits for small fingers to  
Close around a stuck-out thumb  
And tug like minnows nibbling  
The hook's last worm.

Imagined smile and  
Eyes alight and twinkling  
As beacons sparkling  
From a cell swimming  
In the symmetry of  
Creative connection,  
Hitchhiker waits for the child  
To kiss with the light.

Patient, waiting hands  
Brush dust slowly across  
Ground swell to wall the pit.  
It's important to get it right.  
Brush and pat and  
Shape it just so.  
Forefinger traces  
Patterns, timeless in the dust.  
Hand scoops a deeper hollow  
Meant to pocket eternity's  
Unfathomable mysteries.

A heart emerges  
Brimming with beating, unstoppable thirst.  
An image glows and thrives,  
But dies.  
All lies?

Until the child arrives unannounced,  
Unattended.  
Touch.  
Tug. Then,  
Light crashes and  
Smashes into the fooled face  
And kisses  
And kisses  
All over again.

## The Question

by Marshandria Liletta Smith

*I wonder what it would be like if I wasn't here...*

Would dogs still bark?

Fish still swim?

Birds still fly by people playing in the park?

Would there still be Hope?

Love and Salvation?

Or would the world still be filled with such degradation?

A few sinners?

Fewer saints?

Or maybe just a guy who paints...

houses for a living.

Would we give up giving,

even at Christmas time?

Would life go on?

Am I Queen or Pawn..

in some universal chess game.

Not on the list,

would my soul be missed?

Or would my family be the same?

*The question is*

Is one soul worth the price of admission?

Can it conquer in the realm of sedition?

Change the future of the world from dark submission...

and lift it to the palace of the sky?



*I wrote this poem as an introductory speech for the panel entitled, "Women & Disabilities," during Women's Month at UHD. The panel consisted of 3 women with different diseases & their daughters (ages 15-24 years). These thoughts seem to exemplify aspects that 6 of us have at some point in our lives. Hopefully, this poem will give a voice to those not traditionally represented in poetry.*

*Cheryl L. Wright*

## **Mothers to Daughters to Mothers**

by Cheryl L. Wright

I am the Mother-

I have it all: a great job, a college education, a  
beautiful daughter, and a chronic illness.

What if I can't work in a few years?

Who am I kidding? What if I can't work this afternoon?

What if I can't lift my arms to comb my hair?

What if I can't feed, bathe, or dress myself?

What if someone else has to drive me to get a loaf of  
bread or some milk?

I'm lucky I have people that want to help-

But they don't understand.

I am a strong, independent woman who wants to do these  
things for myself.

Most people wish for a big house, a fancy car, and lots  
of money.

My wish list looks different ---

I want to see my daughter graduate

I want to see her have a happy relationship

I want to see her children grow up and

I want to apologize that her childhood sometimes seems like  
a blur.

I am the Daughter-

I have it all: a nice home, nice clothes, lots of friends,  
and a mother with a chronic illness.

I am so lucky that I don't have the abuse in my home that  
some friends talk about.

But they don't understand.

Trauma comes in many forms.

They don't know how hard it is to see other kids and their  
mothers playing in the park

When my mother can barely sit up.

They don't know how I worry when my mother is five minutes  
late to pick me up from school

Because I think she may be in the hospital again.

They don't know that I am afraid to sleep at night because  
my mother may not survive until the morning.

Most girls my age want a date for the weekend or to go  
shopping at the mall.

My wish list looks different ----

I want to have fun without feeling guilty

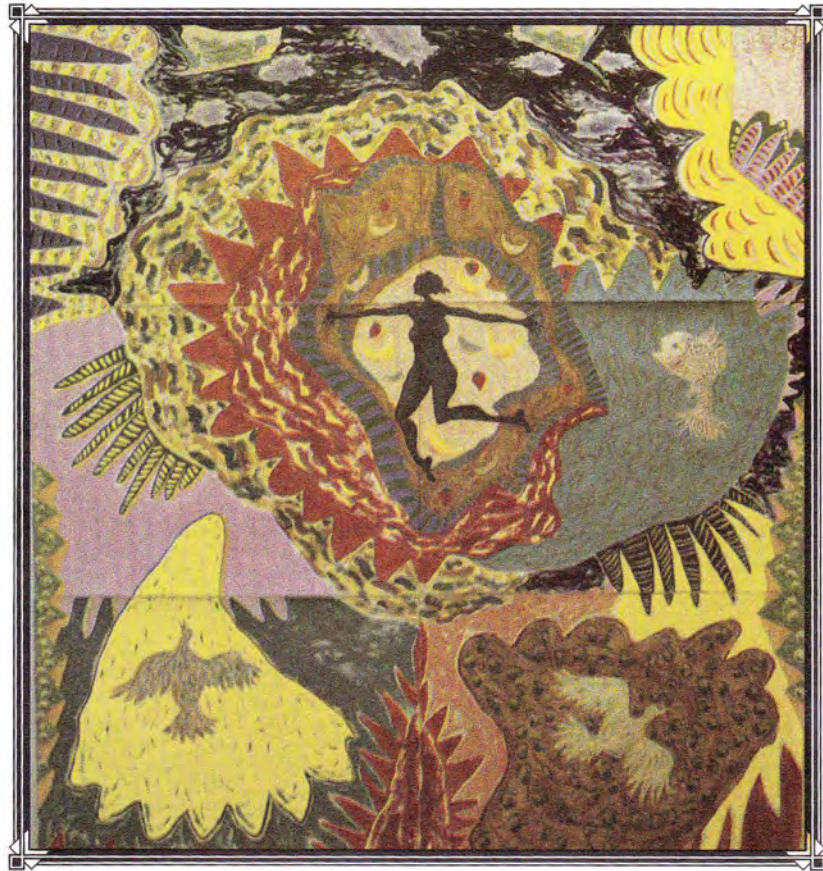
I want the future to extend beyond this afternoon

I want to spend time with my family and

I want to be a kid.

We are both survivors-

We have it all: an extremely close relationship, an  
everlasting bond, and the threat that it could all  
end tomorrow.



## "Island of Love"

*acrylics with paint stick on paper*

*by Prof. Floyd Newsum, Jr.*

“Doubt whom you will, but never yourself.”

-Christine Bovie



*Transco Tower*  
*photo by Monica Kressman*

“To dream of the person you would like to be is to waste the person you are.”

-UNKNOWN

## Are You Hungry?

*by Kenneth Pomares*

I'm hungry, but I want a meal, the main course.  
Why do you keep giving me these appetizers, don't you want a meal too?  
It is good to have a few appetizers,  
but not so much that it will make you not want the main course.  
Soon, all you will want to do is just eat small portions of this and that, and  
before you know it,  
you have lost your appetite for a meal.  
Then one day you find yourself sick, sick of eating junk,  
because you forgot what a meal taste like..

And now you want to change your diet?

So, from this you've learn how to take your time when eating, not always  
eating what is offered,  
but deciding if you want to partake in it or not.  
Because now you want a meal,  
No more junk, nor more of this or that,  
but a nice fulfilling meal.  
One that you're prepared to partake in, but not so full of appetizer to  
finish.  
One with all the major food groups,  
One that gives you all the nutrition you need to make it through the day.  
One so good that once you finish, it won't give you heartburn,  
But heart ache because you can't believe it is all gone.  
However, it just appears to be gone, for this meal will last a Lifetime.  
Now I know your hungry, but are you ready to eat?

# Core

*by Peter Steen Lunde*

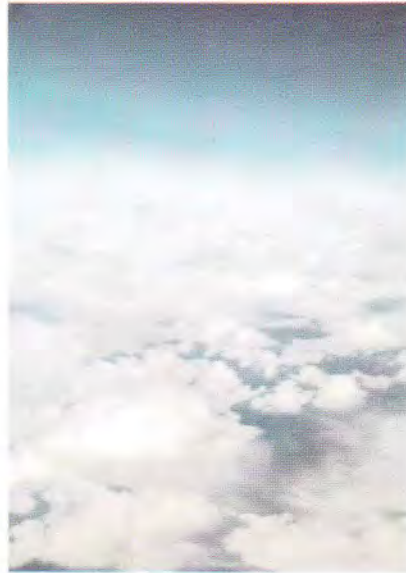
It has always been there,  
Waiting for you.  
In private moments, when cradled gently  
In the cup of your hands  
It has stared at your silent eyes  
With expectancy.  
As light clicking of late night crickets  
Echoes throughout the hollows of  
Barren trees,  
As a moon glides slowly  
Across blackish, starlit, cloudless skies,  
It is there, always,  
Waiting for you.

You cannot see what it is,  
But you know it is there.  
Flows through you and  
From you.  
Flows and falls over the slip-edge of  
earth,  
Into the ether of universe  
And back again, into you.  
Only for you and through you.  
Formless, timeless essence,  
Poised for introspection  
Before your mind's closed design,  
Gently presents itself to an  
Unwilling, mysterious,  
Hopelessly fickle  
Human heart.

Early morning rain drops  
Startle the skin;  
Splash and patter  
Against drowsing  
Palms and fingers.  
Suddenly,  
Out of a reverie,  
Out of a shrouded light,  
Up from a sliding, sensuous dream  
And into a flower field of vision,  
It arrives.

A glow and push of being  
Begins to run and charge  
Throughout the core:  
Streaming passion,  
Excited discovery,  
Timeless patience,  
Wondrous compassion.  
It swirls between your legs  
Up and around your body  
In a mad race to funnel your arms  
Upward in reverent praise.

Are you ready for it?  
Are you there for it?  
It is ready now,  
Waiting,  
For you,  
Always.



Suspended in Heaven  
by Sophia Hinga

## **The Gift of Life** *by Sophia Wanjiku Hinga*

We are all worthy of existence.  
Presented with comprehensive trials,  
Forced to deliver our minds, and set free our strengths.  
Dreams are meant to be used,  
and yet escalated.  
Dwelling deep within a precious Eden;  
a mystical land  
that we call 'here and now' ...  
.....life.

## Counting Steps

by Tommy N. Thomason

I loved him.  
I must have - I walked happily away  
From pep-rallys and After School  
With people my own age  
To talk to him.

I hurried  
From the hallways and lockers  
To the Ice Cream Store-I knew  
He would be there chattering  
With the Ice Cream Lady.

He was old  
Long white hair-lizard skin  
A carefully carved scar  
Down the middle of his chest:  
"Heart attack," he said.

He counted his steps  
Thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty,  
Then stopped to rest. The doctor  
Made him count and rest, count and rest  
So he could live.

He told me  
Things I didn't get, like:  
"Life is a hallway of doors  
Locked from the other side;  
You have the keys."

He never  
Asked me if I understood, just  
Would I remember? I always  
Said I would, but I  
Didn't know what he meant.

Late in March  
The Ice Cream Lady looked at me  
In the empty shop. I knew.  
She gave me a note.  
"Remember," it said.

## Jungle

by Tommy N. Thomason

And you know it's true.  
We do  
Live in a jungle ourselves,  
Sometimes.

You know you could be attacked.  
By a large, carnivorous lizard  
With tatoood tears  
And his hat on backwards.

Or more likely, be hypnotized  
By a snake in an Italian suit  
With a lizard-skin briefcase  
And papers for you to sign.

You could take a wrong turn  
And find yourself lost  
Among the ruins at the border  
Of a decaying civilization

Where mothers stare,  
hollow-eyed, forsaken,  
Children beg for food  
And everything is for sale.

And you could,  
In your haste to leave that place,  
Wander into the deadly space  
Between two warring tribes.







*photo by Monica Kressman*

# Medicine Show

*by Tommy N. Thomason*

I wish I could have seen the medicine show  
You would have been in-that is if you lived  
Back then, when they had medicine shows.

I would have stood in the crowd (sort of quiet,  
Near the back) and listened while you preached,  
Promised, predicted, swore, sang, and sold.

I would love to see the crowd drink you up  
Like a good shot of whiskey-they would,  
Of course, later chase you out of town.

After the intoxicating mixture of words,  
Smiles, promises, prayers, and potions  
Faded, leaving behind barren souls

Who didn't know how empty they were  
Until you came talking, swearing, singing  
Then leaving like you were never there.

# Ritual

*by Colleen Kelly*

The moon reflects too bright tonight  
and takes no care to sculpt my dreams  
She hurls me into madness  
She throws me on the wheel

The rain suggests an ecstasy  
and claims me to confer  
She sucks me in -- a shiver  
I suck the blood bone dry

Passion bathes with softest, sweetest  
violence, sweet violence  
A killing song, a howling rage  
a strangle on my brain

# Dead ashes

by Yolanda Marie Bridges

i walk across the cold wood floor  
headed for our bedroom door  
i stop  
did i hear a sigh  
no alone i stand denied

bed sheets rustle and tangle up  
clearing my mind is proving tough  
what's she doing  
does she care  
should i call  
is her love still there

the clock on the dresser says 12:08  
my heart beats faster  
its getting late  
pick up the phone  
why won't it ring

smoke circles my head towards the distant things  
i was so mad  
our biggest fight  
i left the house  
in outraged flight  
my hand reaches out  
maybe i'll call  
but its past 2am  
she'll be dead to all

i hug my pillow  
and seek relief  
past 3am  
i'm filled with grief  
the light through the window catches my ring  
please come home... i'll do anything

morning's coming just over the hill  
night is fleeing  
but i lay awake still  
another cigarette  
i watch the smoke rise  
my loneliness will not subside  
i wonder, maybe, should i have called  
then in the dish dead ashes fall

## Real-Life Horror Stories version 1

*by Andy Trevathan*

I started UH-D in the Spring of 1988. All I had wanted, initially, was a way out. A chance to become successful. I needed to make a living to support myself, and to eventually win back the custody of my child, Zachary. I loved school. It had always been a dream of mine to attend a university, an institute of higher learning. I had been forced to quit high school; to turn my full attention to work, and then to raising my son. Life as a wife and mom was nice; boring, but nice. It was an enlightening experience to watch a helpless baby develop into a child with a personality all his own. Eventually, life was not so dull.

My life was turned upside down when I decided that I would be much better off without an abusive spouse, who constantly tore my self esteem to shreds. He didn't see it that way, and continued to harass and threaten me. He never quite got the concept that I was a human being with thoughts or feelings independent of him. He told me over and over that no one wanted me; I was worthless, incapable of attaining anything beyond his pathetic reach. For a long time, I believed him. I was unworthy (or so I thought.) I continued the cycle of abuse and apologies. I endured the rapes, the decay of my soul, even tried to believe that he would eventually change. When I lay on the floor gasping for breath, my eyes rolling back into my bruised and battered head, I thought this would be my last minute on Earth. For whatever reason, my tormentor relented, and somehow I found the strength to make a dash for the door.

I made it outside, holding my little close and running at full speed. He caught me in the parking lot, and tried to knock me down. When that failed, he went for Zachary. Zach screamed in terror. Our enemy was pulling my baby by the legs so hard, I thought I would be torn in two. The image of a wishbone flashed through my mind. Poor Zachary was shrieking, and I screamed for help; but no one ever wants to get involved. I released Zachary, fearing he would be hurt by this crazed game of tug-of-war. The image of my baby crying for me as his father shouted, I

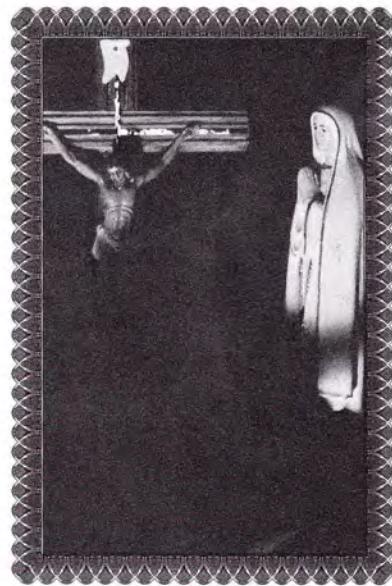
would never see him again if I left, still haunts me even to this day. In retrospect, maybe I should have never released my grip on Zachary. Perhaps, if I had tried harder; but there is always 20/20 hindsight. I walked away, bleeding and soaked to the bone with my cat following me close behind. Even she had not escaped the tyrant's abuse. There was no doubt she was ready to leave as well.

I managed to stay at a friend's house until I was absolutely certain what I had to do. During this time of self-examination, the tormentor was nowhere to be found. His mother lied for him, "Haven't seen him or Zachary." I was too naïve, or too stupid to realize that she was enabling this vicious cycle. After all, she was the one who said after a really brutal incident, "You must have done *something* to upset him." (If memory serves me correct, I think I asked him who had called on the telephone.) The soon-to-be-ex made many promises, bought me gifts, took me out, and generally tried to bribe me back into bondage. Things would be different, he swore. I remained strong; I had heard all of this before. I continued with the divorce. My lawyer assured me, I couldn't lose...

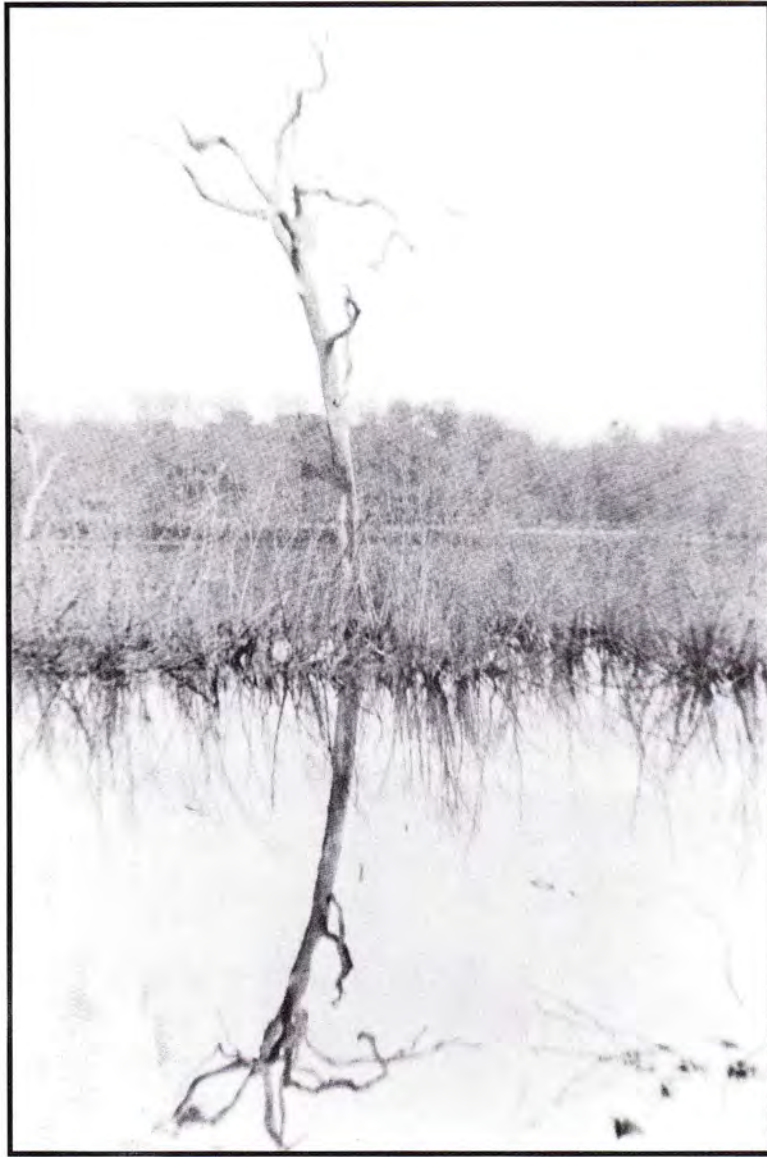
Unfortunately, the justice system that I had so much faith in, dealt a devastating blow. My ex (and his wealthy parents) were given custody of Zachary. I thought I would die. In fact, death seemed much easier than struggling day-to-day with the grief and depression I experienced since losing my son. That night, when I had that gun in my mouth, ready to pull the trigger, I realized no one would be around to tell my son how much I had loved him, and how much I missed him. No one would be there to give him the other side of the story. For that reason alone, I slowly unloaded and put the gun away. Over the next few months, anger saw me through. Without that immutable rage, I probably would have given up, and put the gun back into my mouth. I stayed mad. If I wasn't incensed about something, then I was battling the depression which had plagued me for so long. I hated men, I hated cops, I hated lawyers. Anything associated with the anguish of losing my son, I hated. Anger got me up in the morning, got me to work, and kept me going into the wee hours of the night. I had but one goal, to reclaim my life and my son.



*Maria Panis*



*Maria Panis*



## Reflection

*by Bounprasong Homratsamy*

*To the folks at Bayou Bend: I commend you for your arduous efforts in preserving our wildlife.*





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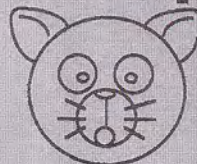
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