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# Brushing

Art & Literary Journal



The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

**Brushing**  
**The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition**  
*Welcome*

ROLLINS COLLEGE  
ART AND LITERARY JOURNAL  
VOLUME XXXV, 2007

# *Special Thanks*

## **Advisors**

*Dr. Alan Nordstrom*, for your unquestionable support, tremendous enthusiasm and your ability to imbue a rag-tag group of Political Science, Economics, Bio-Chemistry, Sustainable Development, French, Anthropology, a couple of English majors, maybe a Philosophy major, an Art Minor, a few brave Holt students and at least one “Undeclared” Freshman with an appreciation for not only this journal, but of the strengths within our own selves, we thank you.

*Dr. Ryan Musgrave*, for your love of us, this journal and a capacity for clear thought through, shall we say, “confusing” times, thank you.

## **Sponsors and Our Friends Forever (SFF)**

*Director of the Rollins Olin Library, J.X Miller (Jonathan)*, for your trust in us, passion for what we do, love for what this journal does, tremendous patience and perseverance, but even more for your extraordinary friendship, we thank you.

*Darlyn Finch*, for being a tremendous example for us, for being a good friend, and for being one of us, we thank you with our heart of hearts. No melting wax here.

*Dr. Gail Sinclair*, for your continued support, but most of all for feeding our dreams with thoughts of fancy...and ensuring those dreams can carry over to reality, we thank you, indeed.



*Dean Donna Lee, the young Fox Funds committee, and the “fabulous” people of Chase Hall*, for daring to even reconsider some chance for us with our overhead and helping to ensure this publication can one day celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, thank you.

*The Hamilton Holt School*, for understanding that creative passion is not limited to any age group and certainly not to just a bunch of undergrads, thank you.

*The English and Creative Writing Departments, Dr. Twila Papay and Dr. Connie May Fowler*, thank you for your never-ending support of this publication and for letting a few run-on sentences and inappropriate common uses slide this one time.

*Our wonderful Art Department*, pages 34-59 are for you. Enjoy and thank you. You have much reason to be proud.

*Maryann and CJ of the Baker’s Press*, only you two could know how to put up with us and make it seem as if we’re doing business between a few good friends, so that the world of deadlines and costly estimates vanishes like disappearing ink. For that we thank you.

*But most importantly . . . Our parents, loved ones and best friends*, for not minding that we spent too much time emailing prospective submitters, stressing over page formats, and spending our breaks pouring over other people’s poetry instead of doing our own homework or calling you on the weekends—well, at least not minding enough to stop us—thank you with our deepest love.

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# STAFF

(2006-2007)

*Thank you*

## **Editor-in-Chief**

Fay O. Pappas

## **Faculty Advisors**

Dr. Alan Nordstrom

Dr. Ryan Musgrave

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## **Associate Poetry Editors**

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Jeannette Hernando

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**Web Design**

Aimee Cervenka

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Ana Stroup

Clayton Ferrara

**Lead Fiction Editor**

Rob Hoffman

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**Lead Nonfiction/Experimental Editor**

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**Associate Nonfiction Editors**

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Jeannette Hernando

# A Note from the Editor

(2006-2007)

FOR THE RECORD, I am not an English student. I take French. A creative writing course has never graced my transcripts, but if you would like a sampling of the various Political Science and Economics classes this college has to offer, I'm sure the Records Office has by now my registration forms pressed and bound for your viewing pleasure. But I am still a writer.

If I have a story to tell, it would not be about a dutiful and creative student who worked herself up the ranks from freshman submitter to Associate Editor and then to Lead Editor. This is not the tale of an individual who then, only after coming to the end of her heroine's trek, is chosen by her peers to be their Editor-in-Chief as the clouds clear and white doves flutter above Mills Lawn. No, this is a greater story.

When this class year began, there was no Editor-in-Chief and no editors of any variety. All this journal had were two anxious Advisors, an empty submission box and a few creative dust-bunnies in the bin. But by the end of the first semester a complete staff was on board, submissions were coming in and of course, I had somehow found my way at the helm of this old, but sturdy establishment.

Perhaps that's just how it goes. Come a new year, there will be a new staff, new submitters and a new publication by the end of it. Then it begins all over again. Had this simply been the story, I wouldn't have bothered to mention it. But it wasn't. I am writing to you now with a higher purpose: to tell the story of a journal that on its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of uninterrupted publication was almost never published.

I got this job because no one else wanted it. It was early fall of last year and as I walked back from the cafeteria, spinach sandwich wrap in hand, a senior, a girl whom I had befriended the previous year, stopped me in my tracks.

She, the editor from two years prior, was hesitant to get involved in something so deep with her plate already full, and last year's editor had graduated. Perhaps she had heard of my other college exploits and figured

I could handle the job or she really was stopping every past submitter she could recognize. Maybe, knowing me as she did, she simply trusted me or true desperation had blinded her for that second to the fact that I was a nineteen-year-old sophomore, a “non-English” major, and the only involvement I had previously with Brushing was as a short story submitter in my Freshman year. I hadn’t even won “Best Fiction.”

“O.K...how about this?” I say to her. “If you can’t find anyone, I’ll fill in as ‘interim’ Editor-in-Chief, but only after next week ends.”

That afternoon talk outside of the cafeteria was eight months ago. I never left. Maybe it was obvious. Maybe I already knew, but I just wouldn’t admit it to myself that I could never leave until the job I had set out to do was done. But there was no way I could have known just what that job would be.

We were walking, Jessica Drew, the Brushing Secretary and I, later that fall from the Fox Funds Committee meeting, part of the college’s new arrangement to keep tighter purse strings on organizational budgets as far as any of us could see. It was suppose to be a better system for the entire institution and all organizations.

They had just rejected our funding request in whole and we were now \$6500 in the hole. Why? Because of a “glitch.” The Fox Funding system was designed to apply to college organizations that might be best characterized as “clubs.” The maximum possible the committee could allow for any one activity be it an Out Door club’s trip to Alaska or our one-time publishing fee is \$5000. However, \$5000 for just one activity when there is only a set amount of cash that is meant to spread across all clubs and for every event held we were told is unrealistic. But Brushing is not a “club” at all. We are a professional journal, the sole Art & Literary Journal of this institution. This is the only place where a student, a professor, any member of the Rollins family can express themselves without the formality of five paragraphs per page, strict parenthetical documentation and restricted feeling, if any at all. This is the only thing, the only true medium we have to tell the world our stories and not feel our insignificance bear down on us stronger than any economics course load. I make light of it, yes, but this is the truth: Rollins needs Brushing more than it has ever understood and more than it has ever appreciated.

I do not blame my friends and fellow students on the Fox Funds committee. They knew and so did I that Brushing just didn't fit in with the rest, but it wouldn't be until the next semester until anyone could give us a straight answer why.

By the time I found myself sinking into the big blue couches that greet the weary traveler upon her discover of Chase Hall, Jess had already sent her "emergency" letters detailing our funding crisis and soliciting funds from all of the Department Heads of the College. She had already reached the new Director of the Olin Library, Jonathan Xavier Miller. The letter campaign was a great idea of hers, hands down and one that was potentially lifesaving. Now, already the spring semester after that fateful fall, I could no longer live with my optimism, no matter how sure I said I was that the funding was going to come one way or another.

Sitting beside my advisors, the Library Director and the Directors of the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, this is what I was told:

The Holt School and the Arts & Sciences were not as integrated as they are now and Brushing, being a publication that recruits both A&S and Holt editors to be on its staff, found itself in the cross-fire. At the time, our publication fee was being paid for somehow from the general tuition fees of the Arts & Sciences students, yet Brushing not only had Holt students on staff, but was widely distributed and enjoyed a strong submission response from the graduate school. It had the status that WPRK, our college radio and the Sandspur, our newspaper have never lost. But five years ago, this all came to an end. From what I understand, the "straw that broke the camel's back" in one of the OSIL Director's own words, was the discovery that for whatever reason, Brushing, the Art & Literary Journal of all of Rollins College had only been distributed through the Holt School.

So, to regain control of the journal, a decision was made on the Arts & Sciences campus that the best way to do so was to make it more accountable for its funding. Brushing was stripped of the standing it enjoyed and forced to submit funding requests annually to SAFAC, the old monetary allotment system for the A&S campus. Suddenly, it found itself competing for funds just like any club.

SAFAC, for all its worth, was still relatively lax or at least lax enough to allow Brushing to have its one-time fee request granted for the past few years. However, this all changed with the abolishment of



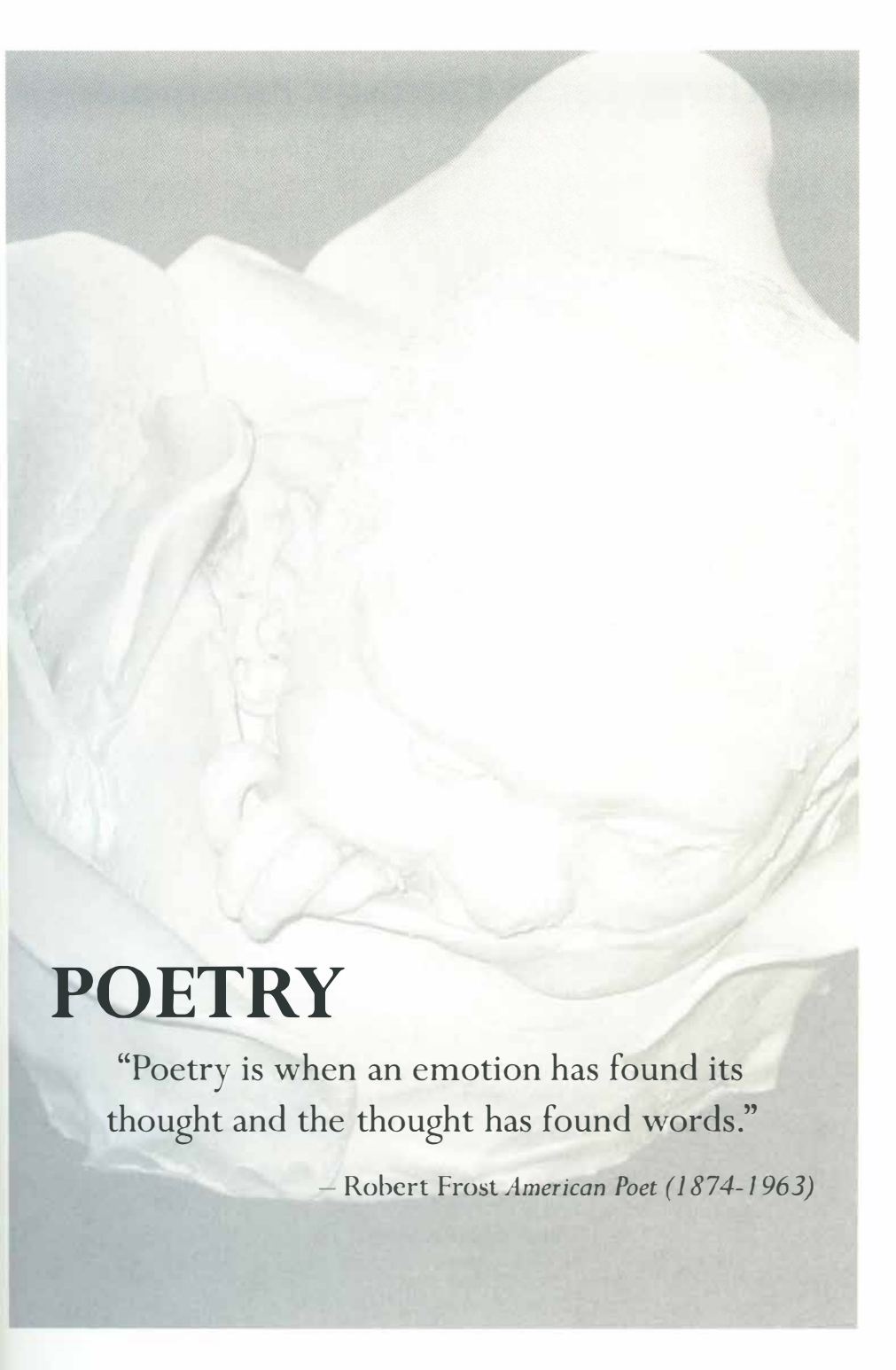
within you a feeling that what is told here could not have been told anywhere else, then join our efforts in saving Brushing. The method you choose, I leave up to you. But what I ask of you more than anything else is that you remember us and know that we are how others will remember you.

Thank you,

Fay O. Pappas

Editor-in-Chief of the Brushing Art & Literary Journal

'06-'07



# POETRY

“Poetry is when an emotion has found its  
thought and the thought has found words.”

— Robert Frost *American Poet (1874-1963)*

# The Secret to Cutting a Pineapple

Sandra Chavez Johnson

*First you cut the top off and save it to plant*

I have a secret

I've been smelling things

Things that aren't there

At first I thought it was a tumor

But no

It's my memory

*Then you cut the bottom off*

I will be sitting, having a pleasant conversation and suddenly I will think

It smells like my first crush

Or it smells like the living room of my closest childhood pal

*Skin the sides*

That's not the only thing, I confess

I will be doing mundane tasks

and smile unknowingly because it reminds me of an old friend

*Down the middle*

It used to be that

Juniper provoked thoughts of Dad

Lily of the Valley made me think of my sister

Roses reminded me of Mom

It has become so much more

*In half and quarters*

Audrey is in my medicine cabinet

Angela is on my bookshelf

Laurie is in my closet

Deb is in the kitchen

and Pam is making coffee

*Cut the core*

Thoughts brought on by cantaloupe make me sick  
Mango brings me home

*Chop*

And pineapple  
Pineapple always makes me think of you

## **Birth Poems (1)**

Sandra Chavez Johnson

they said it'd hurt  
that I'd  
scream  
swear  
shit  
and spit  
but they never said it was a miracle

# He Fell...

Sandra Chavez Johnson

fell  
he fell  
like rotten fruit  
falls  
festering  
crawling with maggots  
soft brown mush  
he fell  
that once noble  
intelligent man  
I looked up to  
fell  
as I grew aware of faults  
of failures  
he fell  
as his harsh words  
fell  
on my heart  
he fell  
as he bolted and locked the doors  
to the outside  
to my future  
past  
he fell  
at times I think he took me with him



# **My Other Life**

Sandra Chavez Johnson

I imagine myself in Greenwich Village  
drinking coffee in little-known cafés  
commenting on the world from my notebook view  
unshaven pits  
Birkenstocks  
thrift store finds  
but I figured it out too late  
The baby giggles at daddy playing peek-a-boo  
and I imagine myself confident enough  
to have stayed single

# **Boxes**

Sandra Chavez Johnson

Everything has to fit inside - it's the rule  
I didn't make it up so don't ask why  
Every shape and size  
Just so that they all line up  
Like grids in my excel *headsheets*  
Add and subtract  
Sum  
Multiply  
Divide  
You can't do that without the boxes  
So many boxes that I trap *myself* inside

# Depressional

Jess Drew

Scraps of yellow faith and shards of comfortable grey confusion

Quilt tangled wrists and ankles kneeling in prayer.

We dream that life is just and that our inner gods are not virgins either

So that they might forgive

As we paint inviolate goose feathers with stem-less, pitted cherries

And suck all rose from the cheeks of newborns.

The fruit is fruitless but we eat it anyway because it manifests in  
multicolored strands

And the complexity feels soft on our skin.

Plaid and printed mosaic of tears and lava of every shade:

Make me smile with my brain.

Witness now our tongues dropping faster than our hearts,

And lies rolling us away to the other side of the bed;

Black hearts, blue emotions, red lipstick, flavored latex, and polka-dotted  
confidence

Stain the coverlet under which we act

And I am addicted to the mess and mockery it makes.

# Soggy at Nineteen

Jess Drew

Lying here on the disgusting carpet that I feel so guilty insulting  
because it is so drenched with potent memory and soaked with sweaty  
childhood,

I feel tied around my neck the same string of sad chords that  
two years prior slid out of me like a funeral procession  
with my hymen attached.

I was mostly the same back then, but with more honey in my tea.  
Right now, a cup of chamomile is spilled,  
cold and bitter, all over the desk above,  
Dripping and seeping into my toenails

Alone, I feel the loss of my childhood, my innocence,  
in my restless, rug-burned calves the same way a clock feels in its own  
extremities  
the loss of minutes to “the greater good” that is time’s inevitable passage.  
(Who can fault me for using quotation marks to latently suggest that *the  
greater* does not always necessarily remain faithful to *the good*?)

I know I have lost my virginity to the clock and to the floor as well,  
the way I lost it to the wrong men,  
and my losses seem to leave me tangled somewhere in between  
with a big, blank “Property of” sticker on my back; a prostitute, but more  
like an orphan.  
This mood tides in and out daily in predictable forms of lazy, reluctant tears  
that I have grown accustomed to shedding onto this rug that knows far too  
much for an inanimate object  
Every loss and rejection and regret now piles on top of me, training me with  
its weight, and hosing me with my own tears

# Salem's Poem, Joseph's Poem

Jess Drew

Gentle fantasies of pink piggies with curly-cue tails  
Romances with snails named Escargot  
Seem a clear conscience away from some kind of release  
Lullaby me back to those lost joys of error-proof alphabet soup and flying dragons  
That reside in the hesitation of my thoughts, more real than the alphabet and more  
true than Charles Darwin  
You try to see how the scar of a tear-streak stains my skin like the late-night gashes on  
my back  
That my hand makes as it claws its way past the rapid eye movements  
I think I almost love you for your concern.  
But try as you may, you could never see those scrapes I shield as I stare at the ceiling  
That render themselves near invisible  
Ashamed to claim an identity, unable to find something other than my skin to cling to  
Just the emblems of my hands fighting dreams harder than my mind fights nightmares  
They leave me just insecure enough to believe I need a lullaby  
So sing to me about bunnies and fairies and the color yellow, my love  
And tell me  
Do you think that if the snail ever finds his magic sled under the sea, he might run  
away with me to outer space?

## the view from my bed

Christopher Garlock

I make the slightest movement of my head and I can see the street through the crack in  
my blinds. It is only a small view but enough; through some trees I there is a middle  
part of a road. I like to watch the cars go by in the two second allotment as they  
drive towards somewhere or from someplace, or maybe some do not have either  
point set yet. Beginnings are fun and it is always good to start, and ends have the feel  
of accomplishment, but middles contain the infinite intrigue: the possibilities, the  
happenings, the uncertainties. And seeing that, I enjoy my two seconds.

# A Phantom for Rollins

Corey Rebecca Gregory

Down by the mucky muddy shore  
Where the cypress stretch tall and thin towards the sky  
The breeze swiftly passing and the water gently lapping  
Here is where I found my love

An inner calm

My center

Down by the mucky muddy shore  
Where the green-gray moss crawls all over  
The grass always in season and the little white flowers grow sweetly in the  
shade

Here is where I left my love

An inner void

My demise

Down by the mucky muddy shore  
Where the cypress still stand and the moss still creeps  
The breeze keeps coming and grass grows tall  
The water moves on and even still flowers peak from the ground  
Here I stay stuck in the mud and muck

My soul lingers

Twisted in the trees and moss

My hope like the breeze, ever passing, like a wave still  
lapping

My love it grows like the grass, like the little  
white flowers

Here is where I lost my love

Here is where his ship left me

Here on the shores of Lake Virginia

Here the world goes on around me.

And I wait for my tar to return to me

Here I would wait an eternity

I wait while the world goes on without me.



# Unbendable

Corey Rebecca Gregory

I am the only red rose in a garden of white  
The only silver fish in this pond of gold  
I am the only cherry tree in your apple orchard  
Look away and don't acknowledge me  
Be afraid and don't come near  
Do what you need, but don't remember one thing:  
You won't change me.  
Laugh as you might  
Look the other way  
Because I am eccentric...go on and punish me  
I am different so it may be  
It's fine if you can't love me for me  
But I won't swim the other direction  
I will not change my ways  
In the end you will see  
You should have just accepted me  
Had the other trees whispered to me  
Think of the sweet fruit we could have shared  
Had the other fish swam with me I might have shared my scales  
How beautiful our pond could have been  
And had the other roses swayed in my direction  
Well I would have shared the rich soul that gave me this vibrant color  
We could have made a bed of diversity and brilliance  
Perhaps they will see, long after I'm gone  
Just how wonderful things could have been.  
I am worthy and I have much wealth to share  
Those who toss me aside should one day despair  
I hold the wisdom of an outsider... I know what it is to love myself for who  
I am and All I ever wanted was to love you too

# Grimalkin

Ted Greenberg

Now go and place the wrap around the old, gray, grimalkin.

Yes, use the tattered shawl, upon which old Maud lies.

Just look at her and see her form; the poor dear's grown so thin.

'Twas time for her to go — she is naught but bones and skin.

A time for every season, aye, all breathes and then all dies.

Now, go, and place the wrap around the old, gray, grimalkin.

The window paint is worn there, where eves we'd watch her twin.

Recall how plump she was when young, and too, how loud her cries.

Just look at her and see her form; the poor dear's grown so thin.

When, as a kit, she'd chase the leaves that swept in on the wind,

We both would laugh; now gone's the cheer; this feeling I despise.

Now go and place the wrap around the old, gray, grimalkin.

No longer squirrels, nor jays brought in;

No more the purrs and sighs.

Just look at her and see her form; the poor dear's grown so thin.

A fine, fine puss old Maud has been,

The light's gone from her eyes.

Now go and place the wrap around the old, gray, grimalkin.

Just look at her and see her form; the poor dear's grown so thin.

# Beautiful day

Ted Greenberg

it's a beautiful day  
for a picnic:  
clear blue sky  
mod temp  
cool breeze

and I'm so hungry  
I could eat a horse  
an elephant  
almost  
anything

except not that  
not chopped liver  
not with or  
without the onion  
sorry

no way  
it's just not  
going  
to  
happen  
I can't

I would rather  
die.

# Slowly Fading Away

Bonnie Cheng

Unaccepted in this middle kingdom,  
Rejected by a world below;  
Only a strand of hope bars that entrance.  
Yearned to reach the sky above  
But the higher I strived, the further away I landed,  
Forever imprisoned by an outcast's pain.

Eager to whiff away soothly, sailing across the white fluffs  
But heavy chains delivered my mind's suffocation  
And Spirit held the missing key to freedom.  
Overcome & shadowed by darkness,  
Drowned in the sea of sorrows;  
The sun is almost set, the night is yet to come.

Your vision is not mistaken  
But you blindly view a mere reflection.  
You see to see,  
But you could not see  
That the one before your very eyes  
Was slowly, very slowly fading away...

# Connect

April Urban

Until our shadows intersect  
We will have nothing  
Except the negative space  
Between our arms.

Nothing strong enough  
Can cut through  
Our constructed shells  
Until they are hollow  
Thin air inside.

Slanted reflections  
Only revealed  
We grasp as they  
Escape our hands like water.

Look at me straight  
Erase the negative space  
Fill up the shell  
With light which blinds all else.

# Accusing Clock

Kasandra Holmes

I'll give you the time  
If the clock agrees.  
The hand, however, undoubtedly mocks me.  
It echoes the cries of an Accusing Morning

I watch it pass by me with a grimace,  
arrowed finger pointed confidently.  
It's nagging sidekick strides alongside slowly  
annoying unmercifully  
like a tick.

How does it know of those three Agonizing Moments  
of Passionate Mistakes?

We rock to the ticks and tocks  
Of our Old Father's Clock,  
configuring the figures  
to lock in the fleeting seconds.

In it's absence we cringe at the thought of the Infinite-  
the definably finite, gaping hole  
that is our reflection.

In awe of this tiny manmade God,  
I synchronize my mind to its liking  
But the numbers only seep the sorrow or  
Two...three...four hours of regret.

What is Time,  
If not the sole reminder that we are but  
An endless stream of numbers that  
Die and multiply,  
Die and multiply.

# Advice

Donna Gibson

Set a steady  
pace  
yourself.  
Everyone's a  
winner takes all.  
Better late than  
never be late.  
Know  
your enemy  
is yourself.  
Ask someone you  
trust  
your instincts.  
Don't settle  
for less  
is more  
than you bargained for.  
Make haste  
makes  
waste nothing  
ventured nothing  
gained.  
Stay in the game  
is afoot  
in front of the other  
side of the fence.  
Be willing to  
make mistakes  
and learn  
everything you can  
do it  
right the first time.

You're either in or  
you're out  
of luck  
has nothing to do  
with it  
takes time  
is of the essence  
of life.  
Take a risk  
nothing  
you can't  
live without  
experiencing  
love makes  
the world a better  
way to do  
what you gotta do  
better than  
the competition  
is stiff  
upper lip.  
Seize the  
night is young.



provoked it but that everyone  
falls laughing, exhausted, into  
the soggy, churned up earth.  
The cool earth hugs me as I lean  
back against her, pulling me closer,  
enveloping, hiding, protecting  
me from the domineering sun.

When the rain stops laughing with us,  
and the wind gets weary, and one friend  
after another is called in to shower before  
supper, I make my way home,  
a clay-brown child  
with clay-brown clothes,  
smiling sheepishly  
at all the clean people.

## 4 Elements: Wind, Water, Earth and Child

Donna Gibson

In the foothills of the Andes  
rain comes roaring down the pass,  
and strikes an eager chord in the  
child-size heart that hesitates  
long enough to glance down  
at my clothing. And off I go,  
running barefoot into the sheets  
of rain promising to make mud for me.

I stand under the corner of the roof  
and water surges down my back  
then hits the top of my head, sending  
millions of droplets out in every  
direction from my blissful face.

I chase the friend that tagged me,  
following her to the sound of giggles  
and shouts, to the latest mud pit.

This time it's a dirt pile,  
once intended for construction.

Here no bold ambition toils,  
just children hard at play, tromping  
the indulgent soil that gives  
with little pressure to its surface.

No matter how funny it gets  
I mustn't have my mouth open  
when the mud starts to fly.  
In the end, it doesn't matter who

# The Middle of You

J. Charlotte Jarrett

This is the time when I want you the most.  
I don't want the beginning,  
The butterflies swallowed and the  
First thrill at the electric propinquity of skin on skin;  
I just want you.

To be in the middle of you,  
Of us, like a good book you can't put down;  
To cook you something simple for dinner,  
Something my grandmother used to make,  
To sit afterwards beside you while you read  
Or tell me about your day,  
Something you thought about at the post office.

And then to lie entwined in bed,  
My head finding your chest through a maze of white sheets,  
Just to hold and be held,  
To know and be known,  
To be and have been  
In the middle of you.

# Discovering Dirt (for Jake)

Gene Moore

On the march—  
Napoleon,  
With his finest Calvary  
Divisions along the right flank  
As plastic, green tanks  
From the U.S Army's  
3<sup>rd</sup> Armor Division  
Advance in the center—  
General Stonewall Jackson  
Gallops up the left flank  
With his Calvary  
At full strength.

On the defense—  
Caesar,  
With his Legions,  
Spears and shields  
In fixed positions,  
Disperses in defensive squares  
Across the great, white plateau;  
Just beyond the crest,  
Preparing to repel  
The enemy ascent.

More grander armies  
Have never been fielded  
As this epic struggle  
Is about to unfold  
On a mid-Saturday morning;

While—  
Norman,  
The Bassett hound,  
Asleep, half buried  
In the sand box,  
May arise at any moment,  
Forcing hasty retreats  
And a probable early withdraw  
From a young boy's—  
Discovery of dirt.

# Market Price (for Lynn)

Gene Moore

At the old Fish Lake canal  
Where it crosses Neptune Road  
Draining into Lake Tohopekiliga  
During high water—  
There they sit,  
Under scarves and straw hats,  
Five black women  
One upside down,  
Five-gallon plastic buckets  
And milk crates,  
Cane-pole fishing,  
Each with four or five poles,  
Alongside bibles and worn,  
Plastic, butter tubs  
Used for their dinners,  
Half-loaves of white bread,  
Dough-ball bait,  
An old Cadillac  
Parked along the shoulder,  
Windows down, bald tires,  
Until the late afternoon;  
Catches of small bream, shell-crackers;  
Stump-knockers, and blue gill—  
Then evening meals,  
Two pieces of fried fish,  
Greens, macaroni and cheese,  
Slice of white bread;  
\$2.00-3.00 dollars—  
Market price.

# Sex and Incest

## Fire Eyes

In this room of vice and mice,  
I lye my head counting lice,

This room cold and clear with thoughts and fears,  
Here she comes closing the door wanting more,  
Here is she is lying beside me.

I'm smiling while crying always dying within this shell

Lying here in pain with grains of lice while the mice run free,  
It's clear to me,  
Vice, lice and mice is where I live.

●nce I was free and now it's clear,  
Stay clear and let me go I want no more,  
It's better with lice and mice without the vice.

## **Distant Shores**

Katie Beougher

Land's end.  
The sea defines, eats away,  
Thoughtless distance  
Until land lives again.  
Parted by the bulk,  
Only my imagination crosses easily.

## **Haiku #1 (True Nature Series)**

Craig Smith

All of the Sudden  
The Leaf parts from the Great Tree.  
True Nature this day.

## **The Young Iroquois...**

Craig Smith

The Young Iroquois  
Trek through the forest,  
Leaving not a trace.



# Love

Fay O. Pappas

It is trying to squeeze water out of a dry rag.

Nothing to give

Nothing to get.

Like two spent swimmers a better poet than I once wrote.

Dying to live

They drown one another.

Too bad, I think, that Sherry-Lynn has no one to talk to.

People need love,

each and everyone.

But there is only so much to go around

And everyone must eat

Off the same plate.

Just a single scrap

And a whole pack of dogs.

A wide desert

And a half-full canteen

for everyone.

Too bad, Sherry-Lynn.

You don't even have

Enough metaphors.

# Méditation

R. Matilde Mésavage

Le pinceau hésite au-dessus  
Du papier de riz  
Le pose avec assurance et  
Trace deux courtes lignes parallèles  
De gauche à droite  
De gauche à droite...  
Les joint par le milieu  
D'une petite barre  
Qui ensuite vive vers la gauche  
Reprend à l'intersection  
Et vive à nouveau vers la droite...  
Le Paradis.

天堂



## Meditation (in translation)

R. Matilde Mésavage

The brush hesitates above  
The rice paper  
Alights with skill and  
Traces two short parallel lines  
Left to right  
Left to right...  
Joins them in the middle  
With a stroke  
Which then veers to the left  
Returns to the intersection  
And veers to the right.  
Paradise.

# Unoriginal Piece of What We All Go Through

Tamara Berger

Sitting there staring at the wall,  
I wonder when its bricks will decide to fall,  
Will the cement that binds them together decide to give weigh?  
These are question that I face in my life every day.

Will my future be as promising as viewing a sunrise,  
With endless possibilities before my very eyes?  
Will I have the ability to juggle,  
Or will my life be an eternal struggle?

Will I be one who finds comfort in unity?  
Or will that void be filled with uncertainty?  
Will I recognize when I have found love?  
Will it be as embracing as a force from above?

I am standing on the edge of self-discovery,  
contemplating my life to be,  
exercising all of the possibilities,  
hoping for a destiny lacking animosities.

## Haiku #2 (True Nature Series)

Craig Smith

Raindrops on the spring  
See the circles ebb then fade  
The manatee breathes.

# The thundering dragon (for Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi):

Clayton Louis Ferrara

*A Winner of the Brushing Writing Marathon (14 hrs continuous)*

China,  
great leviathan in my mind  
you weigh on me like a brick.

China, you are a beautiful rock-  
tall and craggy like a great wooden ship smashed upon mountains to the  
east.

Marooned. You went your own way,  
and in your wake the rest of the continents followed smashing.  
China, how you tore the world from itself to stretch across  
this great and wide sea.  
China, you are a tower in all regards.

But there in your shores I found you-  
In the smoggy, gruff sky and in my muddy shoes covered in earth. I first,  
saw a glimpse of the bricks that you were.  
The bricks that lay across the very universe.  
I saw the warm old face of your nature smiling back through tired, grey  
men in rural towns with rotten teeth and clear eyes full of pride and  
sorrow.  
I saw the churning of your empire in the wheels and cogs of ox carts,  
and in the sea of bicycles and wooden wheel barrels tended by workers.

Workers, every where your Workers, dusty  
-the eternal muscle of man,  
always chest high in a ditch, dirty,  
worryin bout' mouths to feed and getting all his pay,  
and getting back his town and getting back himself and getting back his  
back...

China, I see your ghosts.

I see the green you once were under all this smog and trash.

I see the earth unplowed by titanic machines pouring black iron gas.

I see the animals flash-framed in life before your one-billion-man-city was clear-cut.

I see the hunger

I see the generations of men and women whose skulls could pile higher than the very sky,

who have died to make you monstrous.

I see the waves crashing on your constellations of fishing boats that drag billions of creatures to the air, to breath nevermore.

I see the waters of the putrid Yangtze, flow into a muddy ditch beneath a tomb of plastic bags and rotting fish and dead birds.

I see your markets, drenched in life!

The smells of love, and adventure, are not absent from the ambiance of your corpse.

The silk road has come here to rest tonight nestled in the streets.

China I see your modesty, China I see the decadence of your stiff upper lip.

China I see your bloated fat body, as plump and red as Mao.

I see your pride China, and your sufferings burdened by the masses,

I can still see the blood in the streets from Kahn,

in a wooden hut drink tea,

while I think of how loudly China will succeed or how softly it will fail.

China-

your sorrow is different, and for so many reasons this is so.

What will become of you when there is no earth left upon which to grow?

Where is the dragon hidden in the walls of Xuankong Si?

Where is the greatness of the ancient world?

Where are your arrows and bows?

Where are your fireworks and temples in the snow?

Where are your Buddhist monks upon the highest peaks,

While in Shanghai I trudge through trash filled streets?

China, where is your alchemy and mysticism?

Where is the hope in the faces of your old women?

Where is the money in your thieves?

Where is the consideration to clean the mystical lions-  
guarding the gates of Gugong, in Beijing of bird shit.  
Where is the thunder of Mongol horsemen stampeding through your  
countryside?  
Where is the point in time you went astray?  
China, I have seen your shores, and your blossoming cities bathed  
in the blood of the east to paint on the glisten of the west.  
China! How big must the body of the behemoth be?  
China, you are a titan.

# My Father's Pen (*For Daddy*)

Fay O. Pappas

"Have you seen my pen?" my father asked.

I hadn't.

"Oh here it is," he said and picked up the pen

That had been sleeping next to the misplaced flashlight,

Too groggy to sign his name for him and

Dotting droplets of blue ink above straight lines.

So back my father went to writing the bills,

Just him and his sleepy pen,

The one he had to shake and doodle with

Before metallic blue could once again stain

The plain white paper of a dull life.

For the record, that pen had had a very rough night:

Stayed up late, near midnight,

Inking the last dots on my "i"s and crossing my "t"s

And gazing into a thousand dreams

Without eyes being closed once—

All while putting up with my poetry.

Then, of all things, I left it on my desk,

A lifetime's journey back to

The gold-paint splattered can on my father's desk

My brother once tried to pass off as artwork at a school auction.

The one that my parents were forced to buy.

Somehow, in the course of the night,

My father's pen had found its way back.

Exhausted, it lay at the first spot it touched

The moment it felt lacquered wood and junk mail

Under its worn rubber grip.

There it was, besides a little red flashlight  
That was just sitting there, lonely,  
Thinking about how it could ever get back  
To its loving spare batteries and neighborly canned soups  
In the pantry closet.



# Business as Usual

Kristen Stone

Today I called an ambulance  
At the homeless shelter where I work  
And even though I was wearing ugly khaki pants  
And that garish green shirt  
The youngest EMT hit on me

As he took the pulse of the resident  
Who was going into premature labor  
Sweaty and cursing in Spanish.

I never knew I could attract men  
With my newfound working class competence  
While we're both going about business as usual.

Is this how grownups and realists do it?  
Overlooking an unattractive uniform  
Rough hands or a cheap haircut  
To shrug and say yeah, maybe  
I could be content with this.

# To My Love

Joseph Ribas

Intensely curled semi-straight hair frames  
tender creamy white skin; sweet and rich.

Passion of “do you love me?” and “yes I do” —  
emanate from slate stone eyes reflecting salty blue sunrise

where nothing can hid from  
cautiously inspecting photos

feeling: pure, golden and silvered  
for quality, not just show,

Beauty: ripe and gentle  
sloping and curving with

the pink liquorish lips  
hide gleaming guillotine teeth

strong and dangerous  
powerful and ferocious.

Mermaid: part woman  
equal parts sea and sail

not controlled by the wind,  
but the wind so contracted

mystically, adorn with jewels  
not seen by mortal eyes

for you my love harnesses  
golden silver seahorses into Corona lime moonlight.

# Inward Tide

Joseph Ribas

I am feeling pushed again  
beyond the world in which I live  
there is no garden of Zen  
I'm, feeling pushed, beyond what I can give

proud as I am of the tremendous feats  
I wish for more and begin to weep  
time and tide wait for no man  
I wait, alone, for it to creep

It comes slowly, and softly up the shore  
soon I will breathe no more!  
I'm my own prisoner; arms bound neatly with rope  
as I lie intently upon the shore

Pushed I am, Right to the edge of this beautiful shore  
a sight I wish to see no more  
slowly the tide comes in today  
while on the dark sandy ground I lay

no more Pressure, not any more  
I remind myself, as the tide washes up a little more  
and covers my closed mouth...  
and covers my eyes...

It is too late to decide that the pressures,  
Were, perhaps, alright...

The background of the page is a soft, painterly illustration in a muted, monochromatic palette. It depicts a still life scene with a large, shallow bowl or mortar in the upper left, containing a dark, rounded object. To the right and slightly below the bowl is a white, draped fabric or cloth. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century modernist art, with soft edges and a focus on form and light.

# ART

“Art is a lie that makes us realize truth.”

— Pablo Picasso



## **Chandelier**

Hannah Walsh



**Horse**  
Andrew Cohen





# The Elephant

Nicole Fiedler



# The Building

Nicole Fiedler





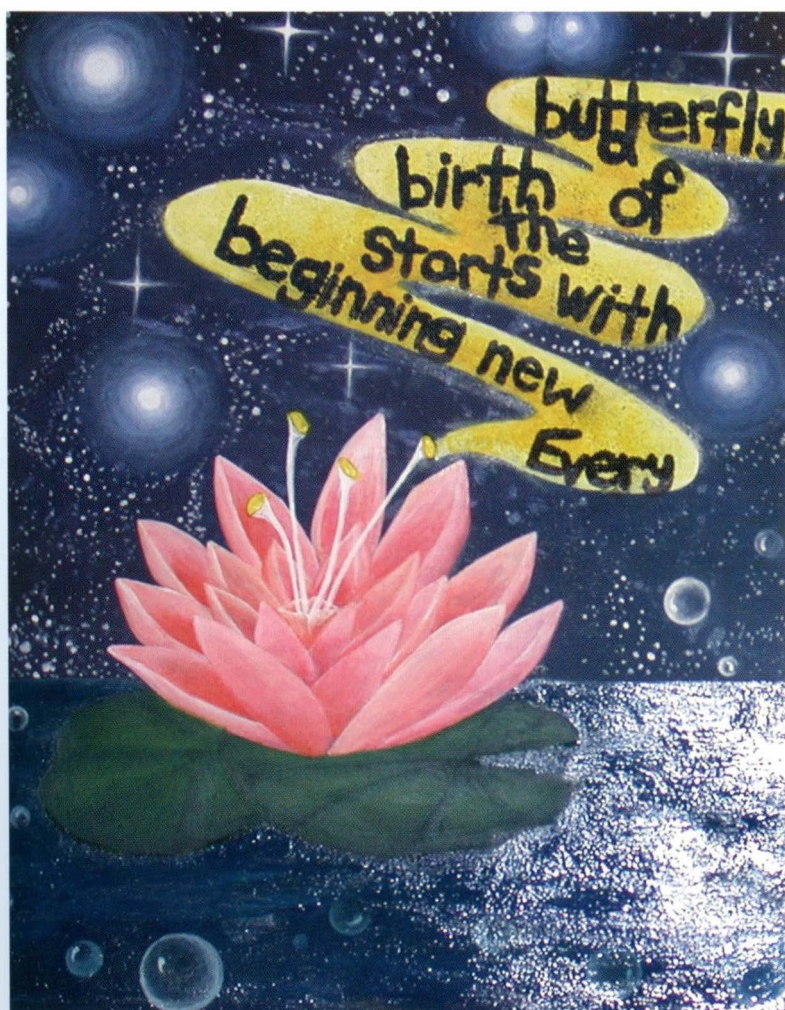
## After Church

Gene Moore



## **Bird Photo**

Hannah Walsh



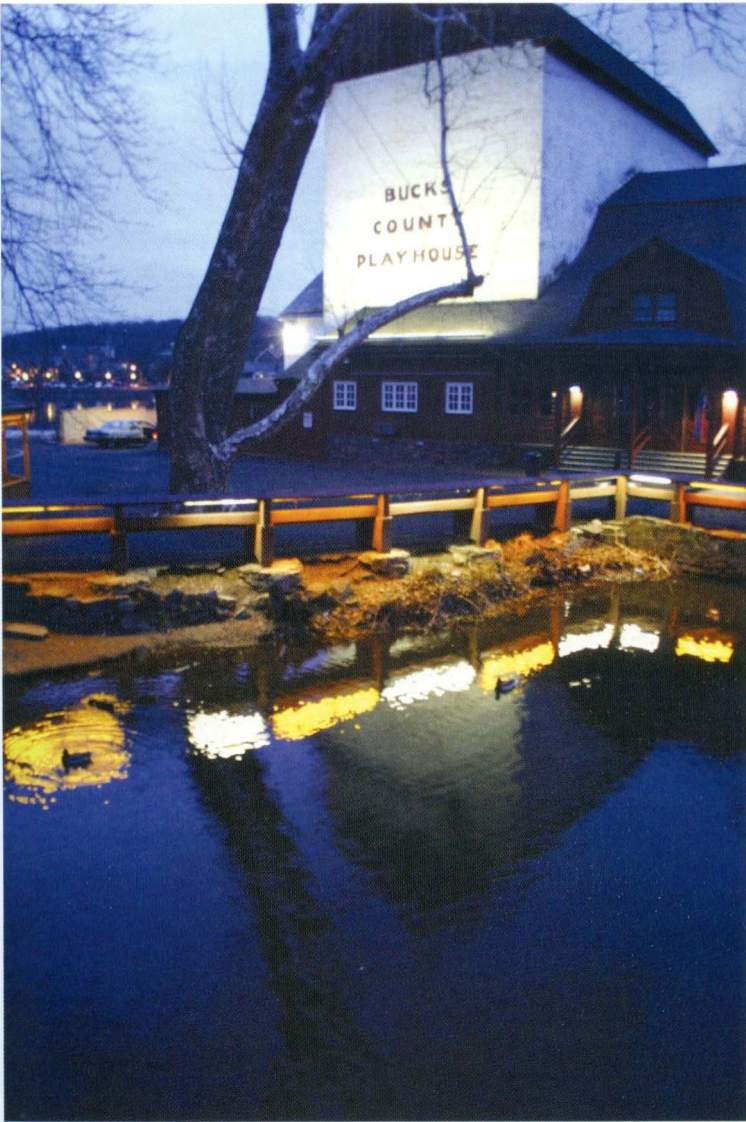
**Every new beginning starts  
with the birth of a butterfly**

Hannah Carmel





**And from its flower it will flourish**  
Hannah Carmel



## Drive and Philly

Andrew Cohen



**Beneath the Surface**  
Elizabeth Hollabaugh





## Family Reunion

Gene Moore



## Florida Reflection

Carolyn Freligh



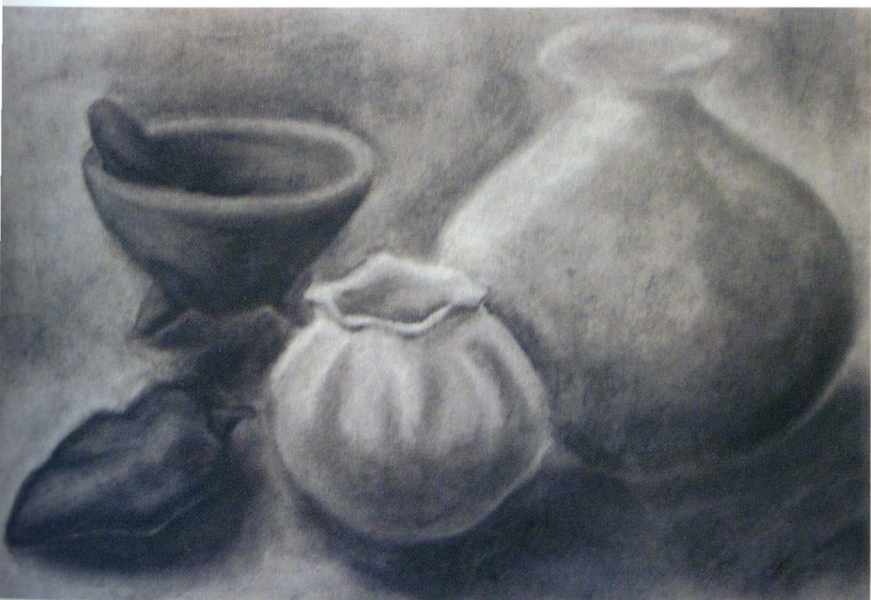


## Heartman at the Well

Joyce Greco



**The End**  
Megan Medina



## **Mexican Charcoal**

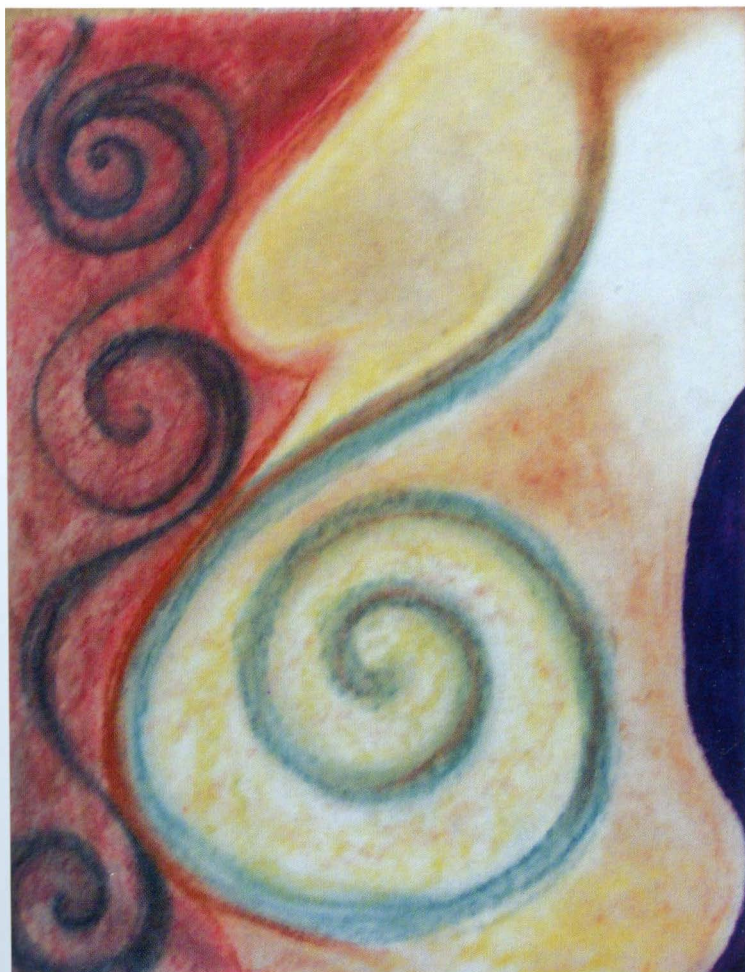
Sandra Chavez Johnson



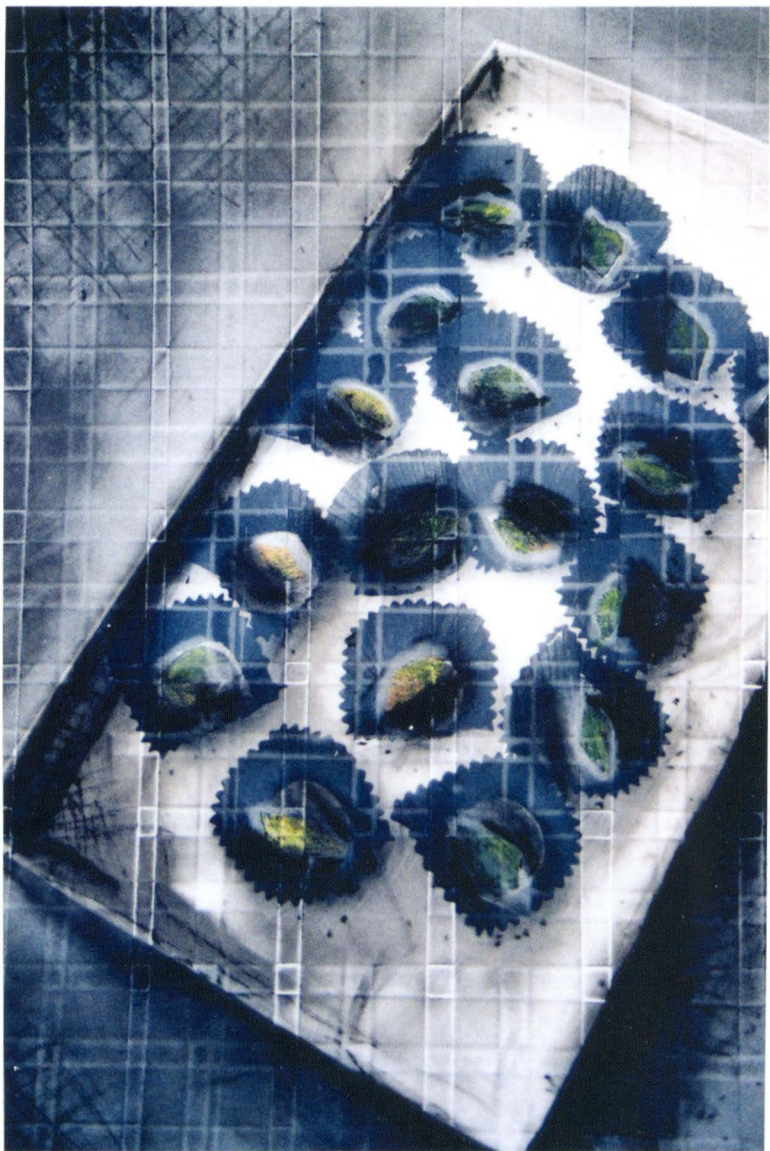


## **Park with Alex**

Andrew Cohen

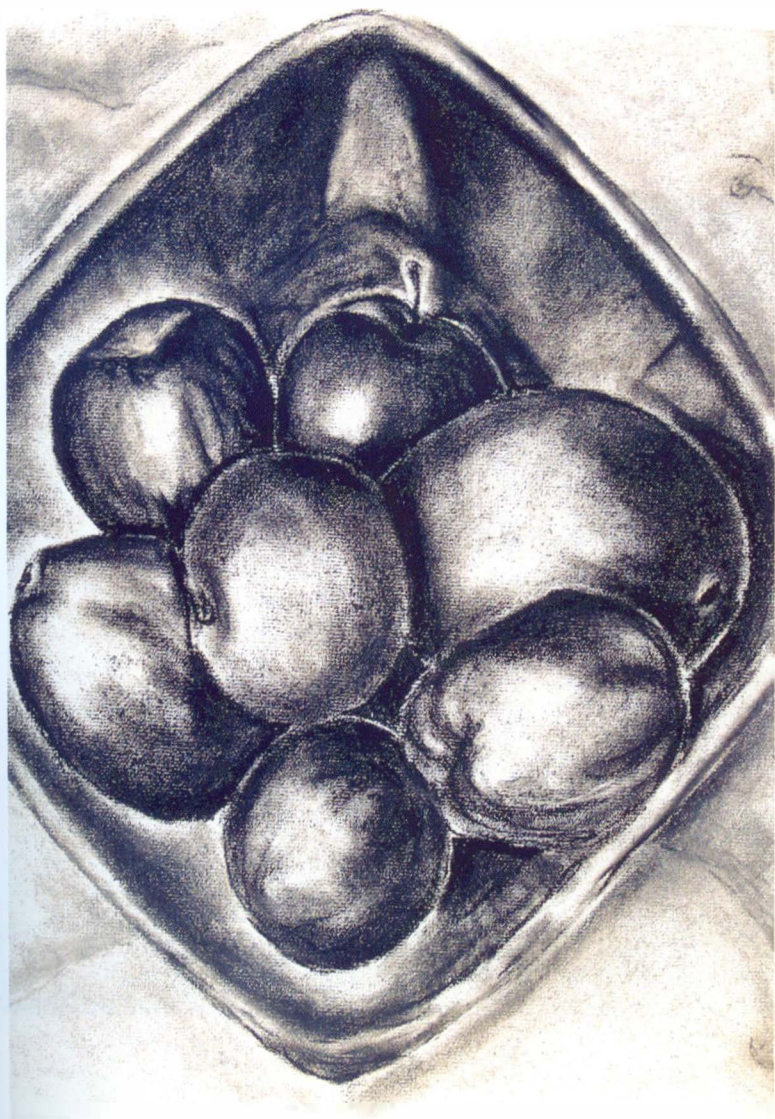


**Pregnancy 1**  
Sandra Chavez Johnson



**Candied Leaves**  
Priyanwada Ekanayake





**Fruit Bowl**  
Priyanwada Ekanayake



## **Sculpture of Frankie**

Leslie M. Figueroa





## **Reflective Charcoal**

Sandra Chavez Johnson



## Sailboat

Andrew Cohen



## Seduction

Ana Stroup



## **Self-Portriat**

Sandra Chavez Johnson





**Still Life**  
Lori Beth Lipkin



Reflections (photograph 2006)  
Ana Stroup



# Experimental

“A theatre, a literature, an artistic expression that does not speak for its own time has no relevance.”

— Dario Fo, *Nobel Laureate of Literature*,

*December 7, 1997*



# Medievalisms

Scott Gordon Chisholm

*(An electronic exchange through an instant messaging program. mobyglitch's computer clock reads 10:36 pm. Time is wrong. Doesn't matter. mobyglitch hasn't reset the clock since whatever happened to make it wrong happened. Still, doesn't matter. Electronic time is always wrong.)*

**mobyglitch:** Are you out there?

**venusinfuzz:** yep

**mobyglitch:** Or are you in there?

**venusinfuzz:** ? pink floyd joke?

**mobyglitch:** Fine, yes, I could use a little pinprick!

**venusinfuzz:** lol

**mobyglitch:** Alright, you sound—and here's where you fill in the blanks—

\* \* \*

**venusinfuzz:** honestly, kinda panicking

**mobyglitch:** Panicking?

**venusinfuzz:** bastardo, i mean u know who, hasn't come through with the & this month and erik's karate lessons ain't cheap

**mobyglitch:** I'm sorry to hear that. Anything I can do?

**venusinfuzz:** yeah, come over here and clean my kitchen

**mobyglitch:** Innuendo, ma'dam?

**venusinfuzz:** if u r lucky

**mobyglitch:** I've got a hand full o' dice, you know!

**venusinfuzz:** yeah, and u r shaking it hard, i bet

**mobyglitch:** Ha! My turn to laugh out loud!

**venusinfuzz:** lol lol lol! ok i can see u need teachin in e-speak

**mobyglitch:** I've gotten myself CODED—can't be helped, sorry.

**venusinfuzz:** ??



**mobyglitch:** CODED—Cursed of a Damned English Degree. And there's no grounded plug capable of dumbing me down. Take that!

**venusinfuzz:** yeah yeah ok, one day we “uncoded” peasants will pull you down from your lofty throne and brainwash that curse right outta u with dose after dose of mind-boggling misspellings and then throw the world into a chaos of sentence-verb disagreements and erect statues of Tom Clancy in front

of public libraries and, oh forget it, i dunno where i'm goin with this

**mobyglitch:** Good, stop the madness!

*(Several seconds, then minutes, pass without venusinfuzz's response.)*

**mobyglitch:** You still there? Where'd you go?

**venusinfuzz:** hang on a sec, brb

**venusinfuzz:** ok, i'm back

**mobyglitch:** What happened?

**venusinfuzz:** erik karate-chopped liz's barbie, and its fine by me, except now i gotta fake it with liz like i'm not secretly happy erik trashed the freaky thing

**mobyglitch:** Barbie dolls still creep you out, huh?

**venusinfuzz:** yep, every time i go to bed i'm hopin mattel keeps they're anatomical absenteeism outta my head

**mobyglitch:** Their, not they're.

**venusinfuzz:** ??

**mobyglitch:** I'm a CODED Bastardo, remember?

**venusinfuzz:** lol, ok, gotta go right now, kids r fightin, maybe brb later 2nite

**mobyglitch:** Alright, and don't forget your kitchen needs cleaning

**venusinfuzz:** rotflol

**mobyglitch:** I've got something I'd like you to read, too.

**venusinfuzz:** send it, seeya

**mobyglitch:** Later.

venusinfuzz's status is now "signed off."

*(Another electronic exchange through an instant messaging program.*

*ayatollahsmokabollah's computer clock reads 3:14. Time is wrong. Doesn't matter. Time doesn't matter in electronic space.)*

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Did you read it yet?

**venusinfuzz:** who r u?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Cast back your mind—I'm the CODED Bastardo, who knows your private hell looks something like a Barbie Graveyard, and I think your kitchen still might need a good cleaning.

**venusinfuzz:** hey u, and why'd u change your name again? makin a stab at godhood?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Godhood?

**venusinfuzz:** had a rabbi uncle and he told me the more names u r known by the closer u get to a false godhood and u become an abomination

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** I never knew you had a rabbi in the family.

**venusinfuzz:** don't let it out much, guess i fear all the bad jackie mason imitations or something, consider yourself lucky  
i told u

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** I do.

**venusinfuzz:** so r u gonna tell me why u changed AGAIN??

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Maybe it's a talisman, a charm, a bit of e-mojo.

**venusinfuzz:** lol, against what?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** I don't know yet—maybe my own computer.

**venusinfuzz:** ??, well, i coulda used a good luck charm the other night

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** What happened? Did the non-CODED Bastardo come over?

**venusinfuzz:** worse, maybe, who knows, i had the barbie dream again, almost like bringing it up brought it back

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Blame karate, not me. So what exactly happens in these dreams again?

**venusinfuzz:** whole world's just populated with barbie dolls, lifesize barbies and kens and skippers everywhere, some are gigantic, tall as skyscrapers, some so huge there are cities inside their hollow bodies, some so tiny they get caught under my nails, and they just stand everywhere, motionless, or lie down, broken and in pieces, and they are all stripped naked and u can't escape the sterile anatomy and the world goes nowhere and the smell of plastic makes u sick and all u can do is scream cuz if you don't u will turn to plastic too

**ayatollahsmokabollah** Oh, the things Freud might say!

**venusinfuzz:** yeah, like where's my coke, i need a hit

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Laugh Out Loud!

**venusinfuzz:** aren't u funny, and like?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** What?

**venusinfuzz:** like what would freud say?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** I don't know, like the phallic and forbidden joys of the homunculi, perhaps?

**venusinfuzz:** lol, and no thank you, and did you study freud or something?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** No I didn't. I'm just making things up, sorry. What I'd say, though, and only if I got a shrink's fee to say it, hint, hint, is something like maybe we're all just playthings for something greater and we can't escape it.

**venusinfuzz:** once again, like?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Once again, did you read it yet?

**venusinfuzz:** um, what did u send it as?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Just ACC, I think.

**venusinfuzz:** not more revealing shots of Korean chicks,  
i hope

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Hey, I told you I've stopped scanning pages from Asian Cult Cinema for my wallpaper—at least as far as you know. Slack you

must cut for me, I beg!

**venusinfuzz:** lol, oh yeah, the arthur c. clark thing

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** HEY, HEY, HEY, what's with the lower cases? And it's Clarke, with an "e" at the end. Please, a little respect!

**venusinfuzz:** oh, forgive the "uncoded" peasant i am, but let me read it and get back to u

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Alright. I think you'll like it if you're still into all the chaos theory stuff.

**venusinfuzz:** uh-oh, am i gonna hafta re-read up on physics and quantum mechanics to get this? it's been a long time

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** Nope, just think of Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis.

**venusinfuzz:** ok, and hey, aren't u worried about pullin a Salman Rushtee or something?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** It's Rushdie, And I think there might be far bigger problems out there than mad fanatics in caves. Anyway, I'll be changng this name soon, too, I think.

**venusinfuzz:** more mojo against your computer? gonna explain it, mystery guy?

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** I knew an Iranian guy in high school who sold grass and this was his "handle." Sorry it's not an original.

**venusinfuzz:** no, not that, the charm against your computer or something/

**ayatollahsmokabollah:** After you read the Clarke. Sorry to cut things short, but I've got things to do. Later.

**venusinfuzz:** seeya

ayatollahsmokabollah's status is now "signed off."

*(Another exchange through an instant messaging program. venusinfuzz's computer clock reads 4:57. venusinfuzz thinks this time is right; it isn't. 4:57 syncs up with venusinfuzz's wristwatch and cell phone clock and clock/radio. Still, doesn't matter. Electronic time is always wrong.)*

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** chip cracked the chip

**venusinfuzz:** oh hey, where you been? what?

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** chip cracked the satellite chip\_\_a gerzillion free channels, if you want em

**venusinfuzz:** oh right, ok

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** i thought you'd freak for this\_\_what's wrong\_\_don't tell me

**venusinfuzz:** yep, the guy you think i'm crazy for bein crazy for

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** i might've known

**venusinfuzz:** can't help it, i like talkin to him

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** he's got real gnat-flatteners for ears\_\_kinda like an elephant's

**venusinfuzz:** lol, and i don't mind

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** ok\_\_so the problem\_\_out with it

**venusinfuzz:** he's not doin IMs anymore, won't answer emails, and his phone's messed up or something

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** cell?

**venusinfuzz:** he doesn't do cell phones

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** there's the piece of the puzzle this guy's missing\_\_luddite\_\_tried goin over there?

**venusinfuzz:** it's the only thing left for me to do, maybe leave a note if he's not there

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** ok\_\_i gotta confess

**venusinfuzz:** ??

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** i saw him the other day

**venusinfuzz:** what? where?

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** at a gas station\_\_filling up

**venusinfuzz:** u talk to him?

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** no\_\_i don't think he even recognized me\_\_he looked weird

**venusinfuzz:** weird?

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** i don't know\_\_\_like he wasn't really there

**venusinfuzz:** what do you mean not really there?

**siliconvalleygrrrl:** just not all there\_\_\_less there\_\_\_i got gooseflesh

venusinfuzz's status is now "signed off,"

*(venusinfuzz keeps her IM up, always looking for any strange names, always hoping for one. venusinfuzz's computer clock reads 9:06 one evening when a barrage of messages pop up from a mrhydra. venusinfuzz is not home at 9:06. And 9:06 looks correct; it is, of course, wrong. Time in electronic space is forever wrong and meaningless.)*

**mrhydra:** i am just a ghost now

**mrhydra:** did u read acc?

**mrhydra:** dial f for frankenstiin

**mrhydra:** did u see it?

**mrhydra:** did u get it?

**mrhydra:** a system of interkonnected telephone networks coming to lyf as one being?

**mrhydra:** the G A I A hypothesis

**mrhydra:** decentrellization

**mrhydra:** telephon networks were decentralized and the internet is decentralizd and the internet is chaos and anarky

**mrhydra:** and frum chaos and anarky we get a singyoolarity we git order from chaos and its happined befor in history

wen antelligence rizes from nuthing its happened in the

B I O S P H E R E

**mrhydra:** and whiy not in the elektronic sfeeer?

**mrhydra:** a global intilligence its artifishul and it's the G A I A hypotheiss told u to think of that

**mrhydra:** G A I A hypoth seys luvlock sayz pushes conditiuns til  
intollerant of hyuman interfeerence and this is haappening  
in globbal artifficial electronick sphere

**mrhydra:** and its hungry and wee r brain cellss

**mrhydra:** it crayvs for

**mrhydra:** sum mor susseptibbl thin uthers

**mrhydra:** thought i cuud trik it with tooo meny names

**mrhydra:** foolish

**mrhydra:** i think i knoow miy C O D E D damn digree it saw maybe i fed  
it sumthing more dam deacent spelling and syntax

**mrhydra:** and maaybe i never told u thiss but maybe thaer iss something in  
me made mee more vullneribile

**mrhydra:** yeers ago had nuklear stress tesst heart dok told me to doo it  
and shot me up in gammma raydiayshun and strappid gadljits and tooobs full  
of blue fluuid to mye arm rann a tredmilll

**mrhydra:** and affter i got off it it seemt like i wus stil runningg forward  
and pirseppshun of things comming tewerd me when sidding still

**mrhydra:** and i feel it now everey tym in frunt of the compuder i feel  
like its drawwing me intu it its alwaiys koming forward and all i heer is  
hard hard buzzzzzzzzing

**mrhydra:** sooootheng buzzing pirhapps warning perhhaps not so bad A L  
W A Y S L O V E D U keep up the bad grammmer just a goast now lee

mrhydra's status is now "..."

*(mrhydra's status is left blank. venusinfuzz bangs on his door for much of the nine  
o'clock hour. mrhydra doesn't hear her fists against his door over the hard hard and  
soothing buzzing. venusinfuzz leaves a pleading note taped to his front door, a note  
she doesn't secure enough through her tears. It blows away upon the first worthy  
gust before a thunderstorm during the small hours.)*

*(venusinfuzz gets home and sees what mrhydra has sent. She again deals through tears and confusion. She doesn't look at the computer clock; she doesn't see its time no longer syncs up with her wristwatch or cell phone clock or clock/radio. She drifts to sleep hours later, during the thunderstorm, dimly hoping she won't dream of Barbie dolls, but knowing she will.)*

*(mobyglitch/ayatollahsmokabollah/mrhydra disappears completely. He disappears into a place where time doesn't matter. Soon enough, everyone disappears into a place where time doesn't matter.)*



# The Internal Conversion of Me to You

Hope Kramek

*Why hello there my one true love. I would first like to say that the wind sways your luxurious golden angel hair ever so gently across your blueberry diamond eyes. It is a blonde crown fit for only the most worthy of royalty. Oh and how the cold flushes your cheeks cherry red and so scrumptiously delicious. I dream that you are returning from your kingdom of crystal ice, fresh from the crisp kiss of snow. I know better than fantasy though. You have just come from your favorite class of biology. How odd you prefer such a class so; what a quaint coincidence it is, for I have just come up with a mad thirst for knowledge on the subject of the science of the life on Earth. This desire for life science knowledge has always been in me, but seeing that it is your favorite class, it surfaced its self in the ocean of my perpetually contemplating mind.*

*I know the taxonomy of the human ancestry, does that intrigue you to want to conversationally converse with me? Possibly, are you more interested with the enticing promise of some tantalizing Italian food as well? I have observed you are very fond of la bella vita. Maybe we could start out with a taste of white wine; a bite of antipasto; all lit by the flame of a single candle. Or is it that you would just prefer pizza a smooth, Bud*

*Light, and the brilliant glow of the television screen gallantly displaying costumed men dancing in a field of green to the song of the audience under the direction of a pig skin?*

A slight cross breed between a school girl's giggle and a bronchitis coughishness snort-to-cover-it-up combination of air and sound escapes the gateway of my plastered smile as he approaches. I pray he did not notice. Please do not let him notice. How awkward it could be if he would, not that my talent in the art of the exchanging of words happens to be any more delightful then a ghastly bodily function.

"Hey Christian!"

Too loud! Too excited! Too desperate!

"I mean, you know, hey Chris."

Much better, might I go as far as to say smooth of a sort, especially with the additional slight tilt of the head.

A short reply; he speaks meaningless what sounds like a collection of low pitched chatter and chops question with an upper pitch at the end to indicate a question to me. I decipher the message from the lips of the angel, I come to the conclusion that he is indeed asking me what I am up to at the current moment out of courtesy. He most likely does not have a care in the world about that, and knows full well I am just in the waiting line for the great doors of my learning experience to open and suck whatever life I once had and condense it in a paper on the subject of glowing colobinae nasalizes, better known as monkeys.

Think! Think of something to say so that he will know that you too are able to function at a higher level than hello and smile Elmo. Oh and the comment must be funny

as well. Specifically, intellectually funny, and not quite hilarious, that's too much. I am going for that cute chuckle upper bicuspid only smile. Simply a comedial statement of smart wit; aw, yes, yes that will do finely.

"Oh well, nothing much, as of right now that is."

Damn it Lee! That is exactly what Elmo has the potential to say! No wit whatsoever; not a trace, an atom, a proton of a feeling of cerebral satire! You are a wooden board of an ugly doll child without a proper level of thought.

Confidence! Have confidence. Remember the affirmations: 'If you want to get a sure crop with a big yield, sow wild oats.' What the hell does that mean? Come to think of it, that was off of a fortune cookie from the Chinese take-out last night, and doesn't make much sense, even when paired with the classic 'in bed' phrasal suffix. Beat the mustard seeds of your brain to vocal coordination to say something else! Quickly!

"How are you?"

*I had a dream last night, you were in it. Your face was brightened so*

*elegantly by the white light of the full moon; nicely accentuating your modelesque check bones and the manly strength of your chin. Your bright eyes flashed as you spoke sweet nothings to me of which I should ponder as remarkable statements of confiding your inner-most thoughts in your one true love. You were shooting for the twinkling stars in those deep thoughts soaring above. I was there too. We were camping beside the great blue ocean, covered in the deep black of the eternal night, and perpetually waiting for the glowing red rise of the sun.*

His reply does not continue the conversation.

Good thing I am an exciting, amusingly brilliant person with much to offer to a meaningful discussion of life's impending questions. For example, I ponder daily why we, as a human race with mind, body, and soul, are here, what is our purpose, and such considerations of the liking.

"Biology sounds like a fun class, I was thinking about taking next year, I'm you know, it's really interesting to me, like taxonomies and stuff."

I really should read more. I should have a greater base of knowledge in the study of life subject so as to be a first-rate comprehensible chatterist to him. Note to self: buy a subscription to ScienceToday, possibly actually read it, as well as observe and study the pictures, maybe apply a bit of the scientific method. That sounds impressive. PS to self, stop using "like" and "you know", you are way more creative than to depend upon washed up words and phrases of no particular significance anyway.

"So anyway, how was your weekend?"

*Did you miss me? I did not see you for a few days, did you notice my absence? I thought of your laugh a little. Sometimes, I like to think that you smile for me, a wishful dream I suppose, as you seem to have the same gaze of those oceanic baby blues paired with the gleaming white straights encased between lusciously thin lips for everyone.*

I reply in a blank stare with a double lashed blink.

Wait, wait. Shake it off. What was that he said about his weekend?

Think slick. Remember your gellin'. Just continue the conversation. An awkward silence of impending decision is an obvious warning that you are slow, trying too hard or day dreaming in your own sunshine world of him.

"Oh! How exciting! Yes, I rather enjoy, um, adventures of that sort myself."

*How boring of a weekend could you have had to have not drawn my undivided attention! Don't you realize how much better your weekend would have been if you had spent time with me, a movie or dinner or dancing or all, anything you want, just imagine as I do...Why do you never ask about my weekend?*

"So did you read the article de teara yet?"

Yes! A sly smile! Euphoria! OK, I am over it.

*I wonder, sometimes, do you actually think I am interesting? Why don't you want to get to know me? I am an emotional and intellectual puzzle, doesn't that intrigue you? I know how you like complicated fun so.*

"Yeah, me too. I read about half of it, I am currently residing in the middle of the mediocrity of the speech of democracy."

Score two; Team Me.

*Of course you think it's funny, I am funny. You could laugh all the time with me, think of how grand that would be. We could be happy, in theory of course. Maybe if you would only let me get to know you, I could make a more accurate prediction of the future of our relationship potential.*

*I hope you understood my joke last week, that is, that it was in fact a joke. You probably think I am not exactly what one would call smurt, but on the contrary, I am quite clever. I must admit that I jumped the gun on that joke though. I just had to say it.*

*It rarely matters to me if time is on my side, and that certainly was not of an opportune moment to present my uncanny ability of comical edge.*

*Hello? Do you even see me? Wait! Wait one moment, please sir, I beg of you, a single moment in your life, waste it upon my tortured love struck soul. I swear I am much more interesting than the painted doll face you speak temporarily to.*

"SO I GUESS I WILL SEE YOU IN CLASS, MAYBE I CAN BORROW YOUR PENCIL SO THEN WE CAN GO OUT TO LUNCH!"

Whoa, Nelly! Far too much! EMOTIONAL overload.

What a fool I am. What would he see in me? I am far less exciting than a hundred question multiply guess exam on the topic of American State bird representatives. He is into biology though. I am almost sure birds may fall under that type of umbrella science.

A nod of approval! Of acknowledgement! By heaven, there is a God; I just want to say I never doubted you. I always thought he liked me. Why does he look at her so? I am much better looking than her. I mean, if there was, this is only theoretical now, I would never even think to judge people like this, but if there was such a thing as an opinion poll taken at our school on pleasing physical presentations, I would come in, realistically, 40<sup>th</sup>. She would be 45<sup>th</sup>. I smell of vanilla and spice and everything nice and somewhat taste of sweet mint. She smells like cheese. Not rotten cheese though so she comes in 45<sup>th</sup>. Maybe it is the scent of cheddar or American cheese. It is not all together entirely unpleasant, but it is still worthy of five ranks lower than myself.

Oh great, here comes Daniel, why can't Christian feel the longing for me that Daniel does. Maybe that's why I am so interested in the latter. Oh Christian.

"Why lookie here who might this be? If it isn't Dan the man himself! How do you suppose little old me could be blessed by such a presence as of yours?"

Why am I so great to D the M, and matter so little to Christian? Christian is the fabulous holiday of Christmas, a time so merry, so beautiful, everyone adores him. I shall secretly call him Christmas. Daniel, is, well Labor Day, less than that; a backyard barbeque on the LD. He does not qualify for a full holiday; however cute he is. He still gets to be a tiny level of worriless celebratory enjoyment.

He laughs while I ponder over muddled fifth grade girl dreams.

"Oh, well of course I did the reading for class silly, I always do."

So light, so good am I. Am I?

"What did you think of it? I thought it was alright, I prefer creativity to logic."

I wonder what Christmas talks to the other girls of, parties, movies, books, class, maybe the truth in life and how to find it.

"You actually liked what I had to say last class? I felt like I was just a babbling brook of mental mush spewing from the broken leak that is my mouth."

Oh the shake of the angel hair. He is looking at me, is he? Is he waving? Why would he wave at me? Oh, that wasn't for me, was it? It was for another one of his many "just friends" women.

"Oh I went to the beach this weekend. Yeah the waves were decent, I did pretty good, stood up, dropped in a few, and I still need a lot of practice though. I'm not quite sure I duck-dive right. You know?"

He was defiantly looking at me. His eyes met mine; they were introduced, held a blink of a conversation, then shyly parted ways. If only they had exchanged phone numbers or e-mail addresses, something more than a glance.

"Oh that's so cool! I can't believe you like the ocean like I do, enough to be a dork and dream about it. Sometimes I just feel like swimming out as far as I can possibly go, and hoping a boat will come and pick me up, but not quite minding if one never passes me by."

Maybe we could go on a cruise together, just Christmas and I! We could swim, frolic, dive, and explore all day, and then dance all night! We could go to exotic countries, how we would bond together in the experience of foreignism. I am thinking, East Caribbean possibly.

"Yeah, I really like Italy; they play the best soccer ever, and their food, muy bella. You know of any good restaurants?"

Maybe I could take Christmas out to dinner, my treat, how could he refuse? Would that be too much?

“Ooooo! Of course I will come! Who on Earth would refuse a pasta dinner of that elegance? Not I, says this girl. I must come.”

How come Christmas never asks me to practice the art of eating with him? Sometimes I wonder if I perceive people in their correct manner, the slight signs, do I notice of others what I want them to notice of me? If I cannot, how could I possibly expect them to do the same?

“Ok. Eight sounds good. Oh, look at that it’s time for class. See you around Daniel?”

Thank god Daniel’s not in my class, oh but Christmas is.

*Oh hello my love, shall we meet again? It is a certainty.*



# FICTION

“It requires more than mere genius to  
be an author.”

-Jean de la Bruyère (1645-1696) *French Satirist*



# Two Girls

\*Carol Hemingway

*Rollins Alumna & Youngest Sister of Ernest Hemmingway*

*(Republication from The Flamingo Vol. I 1931)*

They sat on the third floor fire escape of the dormitory and let their legs hang over the edge. Lou, slim-shouldered, hunched over her cigarette, and Glen leaned on one elbow and swung first one leg and then the other with a slow rhythm. With large shallow eyes she watched Lou. "The way you smoke is killing," she said. "You're pretending to inhale. Don't just hold the smoke in your mouth; draw some in and then let it out slowly."

Lou still stared at the lake, puffed with a violent intake of breath, and started coughing. Glen didn't laugh.

"I don't care if I do look silly. Inhaling is bad for you, anyway."

"Listen. How do you ever expect to enjoy smoking if you don't do it properly? You're always talking about enjoying life. You're a funny one. I'm not trying to kill you."

"Lou obediently tried again."

"I do want to enjoy things," she said. "I want to enjoy everything in the whole world. I've been enjoying the lake." She looked out over the water.

"This morning there was a faint mist on it like the delicate film left by a breath on a mirror. This afternoon I loved it. The steady sun made it look warm as a silent friendly companion. Last night it was—"

"Gosh, don't start raving about the lake last night. I was out canoeing with that beast. There was just too damn much of your lake last night. I didn't think I'd ever get home." Glen lay back, pulled her knees up, and braced her heels against the edge of the platform.

"But, Glen, didn't you notice last night how the lake seemed to leer. It was repulsive as a cesspool. The stars were cool and disinterested,

and there was a languid, insulting-sort-of-breeze. I guess I just imagined a lot of things, sitting here by myself. I felt so very much alone."

"You sweet kid. But for hell sake don't get pensive. I'm not in the mood for pensiveness. Lighting another cigarette, she said "I wish I had a horse down here. I'd like to take him out in a gallop down all the long straight roads I could find."

She stood up, looked down at Lou, and then far past her. There was a silence.

"Listen," she started with decision. I've heard people say there's something funny between us. It's not good to have stories like that going around." She looked down at Lou. "Because there isn't anything, is there?"

Lou looked up at her quickly and then continued to gaze at the water. She flickered her cigarette away.

"I wish you could see where the falling stars land," she said, looking at the bright tip glowing on the ground. "I'm so tired. I don't think I'll be able to sleep. I'm going to stay here. You can go if you want to." She was still watching the ground. She quivered slightly.

"It's funny the way you can't get away from yourself in the dark," she went on. "It's much easier to hide in the light. In the dark real fears take advantage."

"Look out. You'll be quoting in a minute."

There was a violent convulsion of Lou's body. Glen grabbed her around the waist.

"Say, you came near falling off," Glen said.

"I'm a little dizzy, I guess." She relaxed in Glen's strong circle of arms.

"Poor little kid," said Glen. "I'll carry you in to bed."

# Carry Anne

Ted Greenberg

She was a collector of people's habits, the little things that made them special – special good, and special bad. You could see she was always watching, cataloguing, documenting the bits and pieces that, put together, became the puzzles who were her friends and acquaintances.

It's not that Carry was aloof; far from it – her best friend, Shelby, described her at the wake as “someone who really cared, who I could count on, no matter what.” Shel went on at length about the fun they'd had together, “specially at places like the State Fair, when we met those two big boys trying to each outdo th' other at the “Test Your Strength” booth. Roland and Ronald – honest, that was they names – had been bangin' and poundin' with that big hammer, tryin' to ring the bell up top. They both was poppin' out muscles all over, like maybe they were on stee-roids, or had done time inside somewheres. When I said they was prob'ly gay, Carry swore different. Mind now, she'd never seen these two before, it was just this sense she had, this way with folks, how she could tell what was what about them. Well, we mostly had a grand time with those boys; they had a nice ride, a Bonneville, real clean, and they took us back to they hotel by way of the package store and made us a right nice party. But when Roland – or was it Ronald? – had had a few drinks, he started tryin' to show th' other boy how tough he was by pushin' me around. That's when Carry took out her little chrome-plate .32 and waved it in both they faces. They eyes got all big, and they was all “sorry this” and “sorry that.” But Carry just said never-you-mind, and picked up the half-bottle of Jim Beam and the keys to that big, old car, and we walked outta there like we was checkin' out at the Super-K. Yeah, that's how Carry was – she loved her friends, but you didn't cross her.”

Old Doc Mason, the preacher, he was starin' and starin' at Shelby while she was talkin' 'bout her friend; and you couldn't really tell if it was 'cause of what Shel was sayin' or 'cause she was wearin' those tight-tight leopard stretch pants that didn't seem quite right for such a proper

occasion, but would certainly have brought a smile to Carry Anne's face. Well, Doc pulled his eyes away from the black and gold pattern and what it mostly covered, and went slowly up to the microphone. As Shel was getting down off the platform, she did a little mis-step in her matching leopard spike heels and sort of half-fell, half-leaned her substantial cleavage up against the old man. To his credit, he kept both himself and her upright, and kept his eyes locked on hers – not once did he stare down at the artifacts she had on display, though that was probably 'cause his wife of thirty-two years, the Right Reverend Mrs. Carolina Mason, was comfortably overflowing a padded metal folding chair a scant dozen feet behind him. When the brief altercation was through, Shelby took the few steps she needed to pass the stone-faced old woman, broke into a broad grin, and took a seat just two rows behind.

"All ya'll know why we're here: to say good-bye to Carry Anne Baylor. She was a sweet young lady, a member of our community and this church, and she will be missed."

Shelby's smile faded; tears welled up in her eyes.

"Ain't nobody perfect, and I been knowing all ya'll for a long time, so I don' wanna hear no sass 'bout what Sister Shelby was just sharin' – her an' Carry are ... uhh... sorry, I mean were, well, both young, and for any of us who ain't so young no more, well, we can remember what it was like growin' up in a small town and bein' bored and all. Ever' one of ya'll sowed your wild oats" He looked straight at his stiff-looking wife on the front row; she met his gaze for a moment, then the granite cracked, and the old woman blushed, and she stared down at the worn wooden floor boards.

Doc Mason continued, "And didn't none of you, not one, have the hand dealt you that the Lord A'mighty give to that little girl."

The old man paused, and wiped his face. There was some uncomfortable shuffling and creaking of folding chairs. Bandanas and handkerchiefs started to appear.

"It's bad enough to lose both your parents when you're little. Ain't none of you had to deal with nothin' like that, much less the way it

happened, with the Feds, and that crazy man Koresh, and all. And you know Carry's dear friend Shelby helped her get through all that, and both them girls graduated and got their diplomas from Clifton High School, which is more than some of your children done, in spite of you bein' there to push and prod them into doin' right."

The reverend poured some water into an old glass and took a swallow. He looked around at the congregation and visitors; the old building was as full as it got at Christmas time. Shelby let out a little whimper and dabbed at her eyes, making a mess of her makeup. Carolina Mason turned her bulk and looked around at the girl, then motioned for the young woman to come up and sit with her. With a scraping of metal chair legs on the scratched boards, Shelby did so; the old woman hugged her neck and settled her into the next seat.

"Now, that's a lot better." Doc grinned at the two. "Shelby, you know you been like part of our family since you were a squirt. A little teenage wildness can't break family apart forever, and Carry would be right sorry if you two hadn't a made up. Now, let's get back to sayin' good-bye to our beautiful foster daughter."

"I don't need to go over the details of Carry's death; we're all knowin' 'bout drinkin' and drivin'. And that dumb boy is terrible sorry he messed up, and his family's even more sorry, 'cause he's not gonna be earnin' no livin' in that county jail. Now you all need to step up to the plate and help them folks out – that woman and her kids didn't do anything to hurt Carry or us, and it's our Christian duty to provide for them that needs. And you know, Carry woulda wanted it that way, too. That's just how she was; she noticed ever'thing about ever'one, and she loved 'em all, even those times when she was bein' all stubborn and contrary."

The old man looked down at his bride of thirty-two years. "Ain't that right, mama?"

Carolina stared up at the old man. "Of course it is, you old fool. Nobody ever said nothin' 'gainst that beautiful child, least not me."

"Well, then that's settled. Lord, we give our little girl back to you, who she come from. We thank you for the joy she give us for this time we've had her. You know we'll miss Carry Anne somethin' terrible,

but we know she's up there in heaven with you. So you take good care of her and we'll see her soon enough, when you're sure we're done down here. Amen."

A scattering of "amens" was heard from the flock.

"Alright, folks, we'll be meetin' out back, under the spreadin' oak like our usual church suppers. All ya'll are welcome. Come share the bounty."

# Desperate for Destiny

Steven Kahana

Hilda had reached the breaking point in her relationship with her daughter, who seemed like a total stranger to her.

"I told you before! If you're going to stay under my roof you'll live by my rules!"

"I don't care what he paid for it. I just want it out of my possession!" She wondered if she sounded reliable.

"Well... a ring like this probably sells for somewhere in the mid five figures. Are you sure you don't want to think about this a little more? I would love to have this stone, but there's no way I can give you anywhere near its true value."

"Look, Sir, if I cared about the money I would have taken half of everything that asshole owns, Capiche?" That sounded good, she thought.

"O.K., O.K."

The broker turned his back to her and started rummaging through the piles of worthless shit that had been accumulating for decades. The stuff filled numerous metal shelves that were rusting in the dank atmosphere of Stu's Pawn Shop. The place was nearly dark. One light bulb hung on a chain over the counter, and three fluorescent tubes in the acoustical ceiling let off a monotone buzz that flickered on and off, on and off. The two stools at the counter looked like they belonged in a pool hall, and she could smell the stale-beer odor that permeated the torn cushions. She was getting dope-sick. She needed to get high. Her mind was racing, and she was afraid the broker would become suspicious. She was afraid he'd wonder why she was pawning such a nice piece of jewelry.

It was a gorgeous California Afternoon; Jack rolled down the driver's side window of his '74 Gremlin. He loved this car. It wasn't new,



but he felt as if it had always been his. When purchasing the vehicle from the tiny dealership on Sunset, he was told that the color was Mellow Yellow, apparently a rare color scheme. It just seemed like a light orange to him, and he knew Jill would love it. Cruising, Jack would think of the previous owners. Did a man, a woman, or a couple own the automobile? Were the owners young or old? Why did the car get sold? Was someone trying to upgrade, or was it sold in distress? As much as he wondered, he was happy to have crossed paths with the car. Jack thought it was destiny. It was his first car—it was *their* first car. After high school, Jack and Jill's lives had moved into high gear. They moved from Oklahoma to California in search of a new life and to start a family. Jack had convinced his girlfriend that life in Oklahoma City was too mundane for the expecting pair. They realized that Los Angeles would be full of opportunity. The couple had been living in Jill's grandma's garage, and they were anxious to get out on their own. Neither Jill's nor Jack's family knew she was pregnant, so they packed the few belongings they had and hopped on a train heading west.

"Mom, I'm freakin' nineteen years old. You don't have to treat me like a baby."

"Here it is, finally." Stu turned around and faced the girl again, a jeweler's loop resting on his right eye.

"Let's take a better look. Yes, aha, very nice. I haven't seen a diamond with such clarity since the one from that crazy lady from up in the hills decided she needed cash to prepare for the aliens who intended to take her to some far-away galaxy. Man, was that hag fucked in the brain. She came into my store with this urgency you would expect to see in a passenger on the sinking Titanic. Her ring was in a red Tiffany box as well. I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but you must be desperate to want to part with such a beautiful rock."

She wanted to tell him to shut up and give her the money. Why did he tell her about the crazy lady? She wondered if he thought that she wasn't so sane herself.

"Well Stu? That's your name, right? If you don't want the fucking ring, there are a hundred more corrupt wannabe jewelers just like you lining Sunset. You should be on your fucking knees, begging for the opportunity to rip me off!"

She didn't mean to go off on a rant, but her nerves were at a breaking point and she was beginning to feel nauseous.

"Look ma'am, you're right, I apologize. At times my mouth gets the best of me. I can give you thirty-five-hundred, that's all the cash I have in the store right now."

"Hurry up before I change my mind!" She was already visualizing the spoon, the lighter, and the liquids heating up.

Jack had been working at Disneyland since they moved to Los Angeles seven months ago. His official title was Parade Control. He basically made sure no one was in the path of oncoming floats during the two night shows. Passing out Mickey Mouse stickers to children filled the rest of his time at the park. Jack loved seeing the excitement in the children's eyes as they entered the park. They seemed so innocent, and he saw the potential they all held in their grasp. He sometimes thought that one of these kids would end up with his Mellow Yellow Gremlin. That idea always brought a smile to his face.

"Jack?"

"Yes, Hun?"

"Will you go and pick up some more vitamins?"

"I'm leaving now." Jack looked on the kitchen counter for his keys. They lived in a small guest apartment behind Gene Demsey's house. Their rent would make many in that zip code jealous: \$800 a month and that included utilities. Gene had served in Vietnam with Jack's father.

Before the couple left Oklahoma, Jack was told to contact Gene as soon as they got to Los Angeles. Jack didn't know what his father had set up for him, but he knew that Gene had struck it rich in the dot com boom. Jack couldn't forget how the two soldiers would re-hash battles in late night, drunken exchanges over the phone.

"Do you remember when that gook family came running into camp? I almost shot that little boy. There was something about that conical straw hat that made me hesitate. Maybe it was lack of sleep, or maybe it was that knapsack full of weed that I had just thrown into the campfire? Either way, something in me didn't want to pull the trigger. Turns out they were from the South, but that never stopped us before. You never really got to see the faces. Just aim for those silly hats and shoot. I looked into that little boy's eyes as he reached for his mother's hand. I saw the desperation."

Jack didn't understand war, and he definitely didn't understand desperation. He had always been well cared for, and although his family never got rich through the stock market, he never had to worry about the necessities of life.

"Are you still here?"

"Looking for my keys, hun."

"I saw the keys on top of the microwave. Make sure they have 5,000 IU's of A and 600 micrograms of Folic Acid and at least 25 milligrams..."

"The one in the blue and red container?" He had to get out of the house quick. Jill was getting very edgy this past week. He left without waiting for the reply. As he climbed into the Gremlin he could still hear Jill ranting about the ingredients. He had bought these vitamins several times, he knew exactly what she wanted, but that didn't stop her from reminding him—just in case he might have forgotten.

"If you acted like an adult I would treat you like one! I don't even feel safe inside my own home." Hilda hadn't gotten over the decision to deadbolt her bedroom door. "I can't even leave my pocketbook unattended

without counting and recounting my money. Do you know what it feels like to not trust someone you love?"

She contemplated her mother's outburst. At that moment she felt like she was all alone in the world, and she definitely didn't trust herself—let alone love herself; despite this, she knew exactly what her mother was feeling. She never thought it would get like this. Her life was so out of control; it felt like she was just along for the ride. She had lost all self-respect shortly after the needles. She had nothing else to lose. Her only goal was to constantly feed the beast within; it was always hungry.

It was getting dark outside and Sunset Blvd turned into a zoo at night. Jack often wondered where these people hid during the day. The bums, druggies, prostitutes, drag queens, winos and weirdoes proliferated when the street lamps lit up. The orange glow tinted everything on the street; its color was Mellow Yellowish. The shady nightlife solicited cars, and the sidewalks were full of drunks clumsily meandering alongside the busy traffic. Gene's home was located on a quiet street in Beverly Hills, not far from the chaos of West Hollywood. Jack turned onto Sunset Blvd and headed west. The Walgreen's pharmacy was a block past the dealership where he found his Gremlin. He liked the excitement of West Sunset Blvd, and he never knew what to expect on the concrete pathways that paralleled the street. He pulled next to an old Buick in the drugstore's parking lot. There was a man waiting inside the car. The windows were down and it looked like he was soaking wet with sweat. His eyes matched the dark red leather of the bench seat he was sitting on. Jack leaned over and locked the passenger door, even though the man stared at him as he did it. There wasn't anything in the car that was worth stealing, but that didn't prevent Jack from securing his vehicle.

The portly man disappeared in the maze of metal behind him. The girl turned toward the entrance, noticing the dust that had settled on the second hand merchandise, which was arranged in no particular order,

dotting the walls and floor of the dimly-lit establishment. She gathered that nothing had been moved for months—maybe even years. Layers upon layers of grayish-black soot hid the corners and crevices of the objects scattered throughout the store, and it was hard to determine where one item started and another ended. She heard a loud noise from behind and turned to look for the vertically-challenged pawnshop owner. She could see the faint reflection of fluorescent light sparkle on his balding head. He was still waddling through the labyrinth of antiques that separated the back of the store and the single glass display case where she sat. The case housed a plethora of cheap gold charms: five Italian horns, twenty-five or thirty different crosses, a single Star of David, two Lakers' basketballs, a Raiders' logo; as she scanned the felt-lined pad which the gold rested on, she wondered what desperate stories each piece hid. She was sure that many of the sales were made in the horrible fashion of her own, with the thought of getting high clouding reality.

"And here you go ma'am, it's been a pleasure doing business with you."

"Likewise." She couldn't leave fast enough. She made her way to the car waiting outside. She started to sense a cold sweat coming on, and she could hear the needle suck the juices through the cotton ball as it turned a brownish color with the impurities left behind; she could feel the needle hit her vein and numb the pain in her heart. She opened the door to the '82 Buick Regal that her boyfriend had left running and sat down on the still red leather seats.

Jack walked through the automated sliding glass doors and entered the cool climate of the drugstore. The bright fluorescent lights above made him think of the white light seen just before death. He squinted as his eyes adjusted to the brightness. He made his way down aisle two. The neonatal vitamins were on the bottom shelf just before the prescription drop-off. He knelt down on the cold floor and looked for the familiar label. He saw the price, but couldn't see a bottle. He bent his head down and looked

back into the shelving. There was a bottle half-way back to the wall. He stretched out and grabbed the bottle. As soon as he felt the bottle in his palms, something hit his ankle and he heard it hit the floor next to him.

“What the fuck!” The young girl was flustered.

“Sorry, miss.” The girl had dropped what she was holding. Jack read the box: BD Micro-Fine Needles – 1cc. Jack looked right into the girl’s eyes, and they traded glances. She looked as if she was missing something. He felt sorry for her, yet he didn’t know why. Jack turned his attention to the box she dropped. The girl quickly got up and grabbed the dropped item. As the girl walked away a short man in a white coat walked up to Jack.

“I’m sorry about that sir.”

“Don’t be; it was my fault.”

“Well then, let’s blame Schwarzenegger and his damn SB Eleven Fifty Nine.”

“S.B. What?”

“The governor just OK’d the bill, which requires the legal sale of needles without a prescription, in an attempt to curve the spread of diseases between I.V. drug users.

If you had only heard the desperation in her voice when she asked for the needles. So much potential –wasted.

Anyway, is there anything I can help you with?”

“No thank you, Sir.”

“Have a nice night.”

“I hate you mom!” The tall lanky girl slammed the door shut and made her way to the car waiting in the driveway. Her mother watched through the kitchen sink window as her only child left the residence. Hilda was coming to terms with her daughter’s imminent future. Every time her daughter left, her maternal instinct feared for the life of its only creation. Each time, Hilda prayed that the next encounter wouldn’t be at the morgue. Hilda tried recalling the days when her own golden blonde hair would shine with such radiance on a sunny California day.

# The Unfortunate Marilyn Monroe...

\*Samantha Marsh

*Winner of the Brushing Writing Marathon (14 hrs. continuous)*

The unfortunate Marilyn Monroe stood at the kitchen sink, thoroughly washing a head of lettuce. At least, it was what she appeared to be doing. Marilyn had forgotten the lettuce entirely by now, and instead stared out the window into a vague darkness. The confused emptiness of an opaque window was well-reflected in her grey eyes as she slowly and rhythmically tore the lettuce into scraps, waiting. The white noise of the rushing water and the darkness in front of her seemed to fill her whole being, suspending thought and feeling. She was lost. Her long white fingers, nails chewed down to the quick, stilled finally when two muted misshapen headlights rolled across the window. Dropping the lettuce on the cutting board to her left, she shut off the water and wiped her pruned hands on a towel from her shoulder.

Quick determined steps took her to the breakfast table near the door, where she switched on the radio. The sound of soft opera smoothed some of the tight lines on Marilyn's forehead, and she let out a long breath that shrunk her whole profile. Her eyes darted about the room like small fish, but she detected nothing out of place. A door slammed in the front hall, she jumped, one hand flying up to her long thin face. It was a beautiful face, but in a hard, angular way. Whatever softness that had been there had long since leached out. The press of her thin lips and the dullness of her grey eyes disguised her beauty, made her newly acquired name a joke to her husband's friends. Her hand caressed her cheek slowly, her nerves now in check as heavy boot steps approached the kitchen doorway.

"Mari, I'm home, where the hell are you?" Lights switched on in the hallway. "The whole damn house is dark Mari, what are you doing?" James Monroe paused, filling the doorframe. He was a large man, not



picking skin out of his nail beds. All he heard was the opera music, soft and low. "That chicken smells like it's burning, are you paying attention to it?"

"Yes."

James' head snapped up, his eyes narrowing, lips pursed. "I don't know if I like that tone, Marilyn. I was just asking a question. Besides, you know how spacey you are. Remember how your father warned me about you at our wedding?" He chuckled, a low unpleasant noise. Marilyn paused in wiping the counter, turning around.

"James, my father was an awful man who belittled me at every opportunity. I don't appreciate you doing the same thing." She tried to stay relaxed, leaning back against the counter.

"Aww, come on. Do we really have to do this again?" James slammed a fist on the table.

"Well, I don't know. You're the one who never listens to a word I say." She tried to keep her face perfectly still, but she could already feel the burning sensation in her nose. She hated crying. It made her feel weak.

"Of course I listen to you, but I can't help it if everything I say to you is wrong. I can't do this anymore. I can't have a conversation with you without you crying or yelling at me."

"That's because you don't respect me!" The first of the tears began to fall.

"See, now with the yelling. I have a tough day at work, I come home a little tense, but all you can think about is you." Slamming the chair back into the wall, James stood, almost looming in front of her.

Despite herself, she shrunk back a little. "All I want is to be able to have a normal conversation with you without you calling me stupid, or belittling my feelings. This is a marriage, we're supposed to love and support each other. You couldn't care less about me unless I'm cooking you dinner or having sex with you. Jimmy never speaks to me anymore; you've totally turned him on me. But what can you expect? His father thinks his mother is an idiot who doesn't deserve anything, so he does too."

# Hello Dick!

Sandra Chavez Johnson

Imagine the scene; you've prepared dutifully for a sales meeting or job interview or whatever the occasion may be. You're dressed in your best pantsuit, the palms of your hands sweaty as you sit, anxiously awaiting your unknown counterpart. The door opens and in walks a well-dressed, older man in a tailored suit. Your friendly introduction and firm handshake are met with a smug smile and the appalling words "Hi, my name's Richard, but you can call me Dick."

Your smile freezes on your face as a battering of voices in your head vie for your attention. The giggling schoolgirl laughs with her hand over her mouth "He said dick." The arch feminist is saying "How about if I call you A dick." You feel your head tilt and you know this must be a test, but this chapter was definitely not in the lesson plan. They did not teach you this in business school nor did women's studies prepare you for this. There was no class titled "When your boss is a Dick." The initial shock wears off as you sit down; the rest of the meeting is a hazy blur.

The scene described above may sound familiar. Not surprisingly so, as an informal poll of my girlfriends attests, many women have found themselves in a similar awkward position. Discovery of this quasi-universal experience has me wondering what drives these "Richards" to insist that women call them "Dick." These men must know that it's easily as uncomfortable for us to call them Dick, as it is for them to buy us tampons at the drug store. Could this be some sort of sick, testosterone-driven, passive-aggressive experiment in humiliation? Yes! It has to be some sort of perverse demonstration of the male ego that makes these gray-haired men want pretty, young women referring to them as the male genitalia.

That being the case, *I suggest* the next time some Richard smirks and says “You can just call me Dick.” You respond with your own smug smile and in your most cheerful voice say, “Only if you call me Vagina!”



# CREATIVE NONFICTION

“The responsibility of a writer is to excavate the experience of the people who produced him.”

— James Baldwin

# Tarzan

\*Darlyn Finch

*Jack Kerouac House Writer-in-Residence*

*(December 2006-February 2007)*

*Author of Red Wax Rose, Distinguished Poet and Rollins Alumna*

“There’s a monkey sitting on that fence post back there!” my brother Robby shouted. He twisted in his seat, the better to see what only he had spotted out the right rear window of our green Rambler station wagon. We were on one of our meandering Sunday drives down interminable country roads on the outskirts of Jacksonville, Florida in 1968.

I looked up from *Heidi*, the book I was reading in the backseat, beside my brother. *Did he say a monkey?*

“There’s a what?” Daddy asked, turning down the radio. Elvis Presley’s *Return to Sender* faded to a murmur.

“A MONKEY!” Robby insisted.

Mama stuck her bouffant hairdo out of the front passenger seat window, craning to see the fast-fading speck my brother had noticed. With no air conditioning, we all kept our windows rolled down during our Sunday drives in the country. “Well, there’s *something* sitting there,” she said.

Daddy slowed the car and pulled over onto the shoulder. “Probably a buzzard,” he muttered. Still, he threw the car into reverse, and slowly backed up on the overgrown grass, so as not to scare whatever the stooped-over blackish-brown thing was.

“I know a monkey from a buzzard,” Robby whispered. I heard him, but it wouldn’t do to sass our parents out loud.

I believed him. Robby was twelve, four years older than me, and he knew everything. He was old enough that Mama let him play outside when it rained, and he went to junior high school, something I could only

aspire to. I was still walking to third grade at Sherwood Forest Elementary. Watching him climb into the school bus every weekday, his brown buzz-cut bobbing above a plaid shirt and corduroy pants, made me envious. I knew what envy was, because Mama said it was a sin.

As Daddy backed up the car, the thing on the fencepost drew itself up in an attitude of wariness. Daddy stopped a ways away, but close enough that we could see the thing was no buzzard.

"It IS a monkey!" I squealed.

"Shut up!" Robby hissed, punching me on my shoulder. "You'll scare it off!"

"Don't hit your sister!" said Mama.

"Everybody calm down," said Daddy.

Daddy looked around the car. "Hand me that jacket, Dee Dee," he said.

I gave him the beige windbreaker he'd tossed into the back seat at the start of our Sunday drive. I wondered what he was gonna do with it.

Daddy slowly, quietly opened the door to the car.

"Be careful, Robert," Mama said. Mama was a worry-wart.

I turned in my seat, perching on my knees, so I could see out the back side window of the car.

Daddy walked around the back of the Rambler. The monkey grunted, something close to a bark, *uuuumfg*, and jumped from the post to the ground between the fence and the road. Bad move, if he wanted to escape. Daddy threw the jacket over the monkey, and pounced like a linebacker from his favorite football team, the Green Bay Packers. Daddy was a small man, already balding, but you didn't have to be big to tackle a monkey, only fast.

The monkey started squealing. It was a terrible sound, much like a woman in one of my brother's favorite Saturday TV movies, *Frankenstein* or *The Mummy*.

"Hurry home and get the garbage can, Anita!" shouted Daddy.

Mama got out of the car on the passenger side. Her ice-blue eyes were open a mile, and she kept a wide berth between her and Daddy and the wiggling jacket as she rounded the back of the car. "Where you gonna keep that thing?" she asked, not sounding pleased at all.

"He can sleep in my room," Robby said.

"Hush, Son," said Daddy. "I'll build him a cage, if you'll hurry back with that can."

Robby and I scampered out of the back seat to wait with Daddy and the monkey for Mama to return with the garbage can.

Mama drew her mouth into a tight line, but said nothing as she climbed into the Rambler and made a looping U-turn before racing off, faster than I'd ever seen her drive before.

"I hope she remembers the lid," I said.

"I just hope she comes back," said Robby.

Daddy struggled on the side of the road, his khaki pants covered in grass stains, the noisy, wiggling jacket held to his chest like a baby – a very unhappy baby. When Mama returned fifteen minutes later, Daddy threw the bundle, jacket and all, into the garbage can and banged down the lid. Robby helped him load the can, lengthwise, into the long flat bed of the station wagon.

"You'll have to drive, Anita," he said. "And hurry." Mama floored it as the monkey's tin-muffled screeches filled the car.

My brother and I looked at each other, matching brown eyes filled with glee. *We had us a monkey ... and we were gonna keep it!*

When we got to our yellow ranch house in Sherwood Forest, the one in Jacksonville, not the one in *Robin Hood*, Daddy stowed the monkey in our utility room while he and Robby built a cage on our carport. Daddy took the lid off the can and covered the top with chicken wire so the monkey could breathe better. I bounced between the project outside and Mama, inside, giving her frequent updates on their progress. Mama, in her



pedal pushers, mopped and waxed the gray vinyl-tiled kitchen floor, and muttered, using words like “more wild animals” and “rabies,” while Daddy hammered and sawed and strung chicken wire. I knew better than most that it was a bad sign when Mama took to cleaning our already-immaculate house and arguing out loud with herself, but she hadn’t actually gone outside and forbidden Daddy to keep our new pet, so that was a good sign.

Over the years, Daddy had already brought home a snake, a raccoon, and an armadillo from his jaunts in the pine-woods near our house, so it was uncertain whether this new addition would get to stay.

“Watcha gonna name him?” I asked my brother, knowing without asking that since he’d been the one to spot the monkey, he’d get the honor of christening him. He didn’t hesitate.

“Tarzan,” he said with conviction.

I thought hard for a moment about the movies we watched on TV, starring Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O’Sullivan. “The monkey’s name is supposed to be Cheetah,” I offered.

“Nope, it ain’t a chimpanzee,” Robby said, as if that settled that.

I don’t know why I was being contrary; maybe I didn’t like the monkey being named without my input. “Maybe it’s a girl monkey, so we’ll need to name her Jane,” I countered.

Robby clearly hadn’t thought of that. “Daddy?” he asked, not completing his sentence.

Daddy grinned. “I got a real close look at that monkey when I was putting him in the can, and he ain’t no Jane,” he said.

Having lost that battle, I decided to run around our suburban back yard, wearing pink shorts and a matching top, both trimmed in yellow ric-rac, beating on my chest and doing my best Tarzan yell. “Um-gowa,” I ordered my imaginary elephant, pretending I was the cool and elegant Jane, out for a ride through the jungle, smashing small trees and grass huts, sending lions and wide-eyed natives scattering with abandon.

After a while, Mama came out on the carport. *Uh oh*, I thought. *This is when she tells us we can't keep the monkey.* Then I noticed she had an old, folded-up blanket in her arms.

"He stays outside," she said. "The kids will feed and water him, and clean up his messes. The first time I have to fool with him, it's back to the woods with him."

Daddy gave her a wink. Robby grinned, and I jumped up and down like a Mexican jumping bean. I did my best imitation of a chimpanzee, "Oooo-ooo-ooo-oooo," lifting one arm above my head and scratching my ribs with the other, which made them all laugh.

Daddy showed Mama and me all the features of the monkey cage he and Robby had spent the afternoon building. It was tall and wide, framed with 2 x 4's and standing on legs that were almost as tall as me. It had a plywood roof, and the walls and floor were made of chicken wire. Under that floor there was another floor, made of plywood, and Daddy showed us how it could slide out so the monkey's poop could be washed off with the hose. He had built two chicken wire doors that hung on real hinges and had screen-door hook-latches. One was on the front of the cage, and one was on the top, at the left front corner. Inside he'd placed a big branch of driftwood he'd found weeks before on a trip to the beach, so Tarzan could climb. Mama piled the blanket on the floor of half of the cage in a kind of soft nest over the chicken wire, and Robby put in food and water bowls that had belonged to our beagle, Sport, before he died when a car ran over him. Daddy said Sport had chased cars till one caught him.

"What do monkeys eat?" I asked Mama. "Bananas?"

"That sounds like a good guess," she said. "I'll look it up in the Funk and Wagnall's."

While Mama searched the encyclopedia she'd bought one volume a week at the Winn Dixie, Robby and Daddy carried the garbage can out of the utility room, and dumped the monkey into the cage through the door in the top. *Aha*, I thought, *that's why there were two doors.* This confirmed once again that I had the smartest Daddy in the world.

Mama couldn't tell if Tarzan was a capuchin or a rhesus or a squirrel monkey or a spider monkey, but luckily they ate mostly the same things; stuff we had around the house in any case: apples, oranges, bananas, raisins, lettuce, celery, carrots, and nuts.

"And they eat BUGS," Mama read, carrying the book outside and looking pleased for the first time since Daddy had slowed the car down earlier in the day. "Spiders, especially. Reckon we could get him to eat some of those king-sized palmetto bugs?" She and I both shuddered. We shared a hatred of bugs, although when it came to screaming when we saw one, she won the contest, hands down.

"So what kind of monkey is it?" Daddy asked, washing his hands under the water-hose.

Tarzan's dark brown body and nearly-black face, tail, and hands didn't match any of the pictures in the Funk and Wagnall's exactly.

"Might be a spider or squirrel monkey," Mama said, "but I'm betting it's a ka-PEW-shun, from the smell."

At first Tarzan was a little scared of us, running to the far side of the cage, away from whoever approached him. He also liked to crouch under the blanket, stooping there as if nobody could tell that the trembling lump was anything other than a rock or some driftwood. For some reason he got especially worked up when he saw me, screeching and shaking the wire on his cage, as if to scare me away. It usually worked. But Robby spent every minute he could out at the cage, talking to the monkey in a tender croon, and offering bits of food through the wire. At first the monkey ate with a snatch-and-run, but before long he was sitting up like a funny little man, his tail wrapped around his driftwood-tree, reaching through the little wire circles to take the offered tidbits and eating them calmly while his bright brown eyes danced. He smelled rich and gamey, like a wild thing should, but not really unpleasant unless Robby forgot to wash the poop off the plywood under-floor. Mama never let him forget for very long.

Tarzan got more and more tame over time, and soon Daddy put a small dog's collar on him and hooked him up to a long silver leash. Tarzan jumped from our shoulders to the ground and back up again, but was unable to run off due to the leash. Robby became famous at school as the boy who had a pet monkey, almost as famous as the boy down the street who'd lost his arm when he reached into a spinning washing machine and consequently had a silver hook attached to a flesh-colored plastic casing that he used to do all the things a boy's hand could do. A pet monkey wasn't quite as exciting as a hook-hand, but it came close.

Eventually Mama let me play with Tarzan, even helping me dress the monkey in a faded blue doll's dress, although the tail presented something of a problem, pushing up the back of the frock in a way that wasn't modest at all. Robby got mad the first time he saw it in a dress, it being a boy-monkey and all, so after that Mama only let me play like Tarzan was my baby while Robby was busy elsewhere.

People were always stopping by the house when we played with the monkey in the front yard, asking if they could pet or hold him. We usually let them pet, but not hold him, because sometimes Tarzan wanted to latch on and not let go. He'd wrap his arms, legs, and tail around a person, and when they tried to put him down, he'd grunt in that nasty-scary way that sounded for all the world like he was about to bite. He was strong, and it could be frightening. Then we'd have to call Mama or Daddy, who'd lure the monkey away with a piece of fruit and put him in his cage.

When winter approached Jacksonville, Daddy and Robby got to worrying that Tarzan couldn't survive outside in his cage in sub-freezing temperatures. "They're tropical creatures," he wheedled, but Mama made it clear the monkey wasn't coming in the house. A compromise was reached and one Saturday Daddy and Robby moved the cage into the utility room, which was attached to our carport.

Mama brought out another old blanket, and Daddy rigged up his car-repair light to the top of the cage. It was extra-bright, and was usually hooked to the inside of the hood of the car when Daddy worked on it at night in our driveway. "The light bulb will give the monkey some warmth," Daddy explained, "and he can curl up with his blankets. Since the utility room is out of the wind, he'll be fine." Robby's worried expression relaxed a little bit.

We found out there was still plenty to worry about when our family trooped off to Sherwood Forest Baptist Church the next day.

After church we stopped at Morrison's cafeteria for Sunday lunch. I liked walking down the row pointing at things, while the smiling lady in the white coat behind the counter put food on my plate. I especially liked the little bowl of banana pudding, complete with chunks of vanilla wafer. I was nice and full on the ride home, and I had slid down in the backseat of the Rambler, seeing how far I could poke my tummy out, when I heard my Mama gasp.

"What in the world ...?" she said, in a tone that made me sit up and gape at what she was staring at.

"Holy smoke!" said Daddy, as he pulled to a stop in front of our house.

He couldn't pull into his usual spot on our carport, because blocking his way was a huge red hook-and-ladder fire truck. And a second fire engine was parked on our front lawn!

Daddy parked haphazardly on the swale, and we piled out of the car and rushed up to some firemen who were clustered on the side lawn, by our carport.

Blackish water was everywhere, and our utility room door was a splintered wreck where the firemen had used their axes to get inside. Robby took one look at the charred open door of the monkey's cage and cried out, "Where's Tarzan?"

"Is this who you mean?" asked one of the firemen, as the others moved aside to reveal him standing there with Tarzan wrapped around his front like a blanket, holding on with all his strength and a panicky look in his eye.

"We can't get him off," said the fireman, looking half-amused, half-scared.

"He's stuck like glue."

"Every time we try to remove him, he gets real mad!"

"George has got himself a monkey-shirt," laughed one of the others.

Robby walked over and stroked Tarzan on the head and back. "Hey, there, Buddy," he said, in a tender voice. He scratched the monkey between the ears, and Tarzan let go of the fireman and leapt into my brother's arms. The fireman looked relieved. Smokey monkey smelled even worse than regular monkey!

"We got a call from your neighbor that your house was on fire, and someone was trapped in the utility room, screaming," the fireman said. "When we got here, smoke was pouring out the door cracks, and the noise was ungodly. We didn't waste a minute, but broke inside, and found this little guy cowering in one corner of his cage while his blanket blazed away. Looks like he draped it over the light and it caught fire."

"He must have wanted to sleep, and the light bothered him," Daddy said. "He was pretty smart to put the blanket over the light, but pretty dumb at the same time."

Our new neighbor, an old man still in his navy pin-striped church suit, who had moved in the week before, looked both shaken and sheepish. "I thought there was a woman trapped inside," he said. "I heard terrible screams, and smelled smoke. I couldn't open the door; it was locked, and I couldn't see anything but smoke through that little back window."

Daddy went over and shook his hand. "Thank you so much for calling. Looks like you kept the whole house from catching."

"And you saved Tarzan!" I said, slipping my hand into his and squeezing my thanks, even though he was practically a stranger.

"When I opened the cage door, he jumped out and latched on," said the fireman. "I thought I was gonna have to have him surgically removed!"

The firemen started rolling up their hose and packing away their gear. We stayed outside to watch, even though it was pretty cold. Mama brought us blankets, and wrapped Robby up with Tarzan tucked inside.

"You're gonna REALLY be famous at school now," Mama said, ruffling my brother's hair. "It's not every boy who has a monkey try to burn his house down."

Tarzan was smart, and one time when Robby didn't shut the hook latch on the front door of his cage tightly, the monkey pushed and pulled and shook the door enough to escape. We didn't know anything was wrong until our neighbor, Mrs. Jenkins, knocked on our door.

I opened it, proud that Mama had begun to let me answer it sometimes.

"Hello," I said.

"Is Anita here?" asked Miz Jenkins, dispensing with formalities.

"Mama!" I hollered. Mama came in from the kitchen, drying her hands on a dish towel, took one look at our neighbor's face and asked, "What's wrong?"

Miz Jenkins looked elegant in a black turtle-neck dress, high heels, and pearls, but also as if she wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry.

"Your monkey is in my house!" she said.

Mama snatched Daddy's crab net from the carport, I grabbed the leash, and we all took off at a run, Miz Jenkins making remarkable progress despite her impractical shoes.

"Lord, Mary, I'm so sorry," said Mama. "How in the world did he get inside?"

Miz Jenkins laughed. "Well, I saw him sitting at the sliding glass door, looking in like a Peeping Tom, and I didn't want him to run into the



road, so I opened the door, thinking I could just pick him up and take him home. But he's as fast as Speedy Gonzalez!" I giggled, picturing the Mexican cartoon mouse from TV.

We arrived at Miz Jenkins pristine brick house, slipped in the front door, and there was Tarzan, sitting on the top of her upholstered cornice board, looking pleased with himself. I chirruped "C'mere Tarzan," and he jumped to the floor near my feet. Mama swooped in with the net, trapping him inside. He immediately began to screech. I laughed and retrieved the monkey from the net, cuddling him as he wrapped around me. I hooked the leash onto his collar.

"Whatever you do, don't let him get loose again," said Mama.

She looked at the dirty, torn, sagging curtains that had moments ago been beautiful snow-white sheers, and I thought I saw tears well up in her eyes. "We'll pay for some new sheers, of course," she offered.

Miz Jenkins winked at Mama. "I've been wanting to replace those old things," she said. "Now I have a good excuse. We'll split the cost."

A piercing shriek came from the direction of the kitchen.

"What now?" Mama asked. The three of us scurried to the kitchen, where Miz Jenkin's copper teapot was whistling away. She turned the gas burner off, and began to shake her head in amazement.

"I can't believe it," she said.

"What?" Mama and I said at the same time.

"I didn't turn that teapot on," said Miz Jenkins.

We all looked at the monkey in my arms.

"Surely not," said Mama.

"No way," I said.

"Well, he *was* alone while I went to fetch you," Miz Jenkins said.

I shook my head at Tarzan, who tucked his head into my armpit. "And he *does* like fire."

On the walk home with Mama and the monkey, it struck me that Tarzan might have gone too far this time.

"Do you think Daddy's gonna take Tarzan back to the woods when we tell him?" I whined. "Robby will be so sad!"

"What Daddy don't know won't hurt him," said Mama. She reached over and scratched Tarzan between his ears, and he wrapped his tail around her wrist. "Let's get this fella home and locked up tight, then you and me are gonna go through the house and hide all the matches."

"And throw out the candles . . ." I said.

"Unplug the stove . . ."

"Get rid of the heater . . ."

"And most of all . . ."

"No lightbulbs!" we said in unison.

# My little black box

\* Fire Eyes

*Winner of the Brushing Writing Marathon (14 hrs Continuous)*

In today's world, all airplanes are equipped with a black box, which serves to inform the Federal Aviation Administration about any incidents that cause the airplane to crash. My first recorder was a Panasonic cassette recorder; I considered it my black box. It not only played back recordings but also allowed me to record my own voice. It was my lifesaver. I enjoyed speaking into it late in the evening in my aunt's bedroom. I did not have much privacy when I spoke into the built-in microphone. As I lay across my aunt's, my voice would carry even though I was whispering. The hanging curtain into the living/dining room area and even into the kitchen was only cloth and did not block my voice from being heard as I whispered into the silver holes of the microphone. I was able to speak about my day, the events of my life, and the sadness. I felt that I had somehow crash-landed into this island of violence and pain. Unable to feel a sense of connection to the people around me, I had only this box as my friend. Expecting to receive an answer to my problems at age 11, I soon realized that I would receive only my own voice as a reply to my situation.

I was painfully aware of my high-pitched voice, which was dissimilar to that of other black males in the ghetto. My soft voice was a reflection of my attitude. In many ways that was why I was speaking into this black box.

I landed in a world different from the one I believed to exist in God's universe. I was very self-conscious about my voice, my being fat, my wearing government-issued black glasses; I only wanted to disappear into the doorframe.

“Speak up!”

My third-grade teacher would shout. The shouting alerted me to my life in my foster home. There were always sounds greater than my ears could process, more than my body could endure from standing in my wet underpants on that gray rotting porch, watching the ice melt. Screaming children being beaten while dying in the pain of obscurity. My screams hid deep within my ears; yet I felt the sensation flowing down into my chest, flowing down into my heart needing to explode, and then the rush of tears- warm and salty-flowing down my brown, soft cheeks that my aunt liked to kiss with her soft, red lipstick lips. Yes, it was this volcano I was afraid of erupting that kept me from screaming no matter how many times I heard others screaming. Even the mothers, the black mothers who would bawl into the night air, hearing that their sons were killed.

Many of my conversations were with my black box in the diminished land of my childhood, it was not only dark in the night, but also in the glaring daylight there were patches of darkness. Sometimes I was unable to speak into the microphone about the events I was witnessing. In my island surrounded by misery, I hoped that it would not be too late for someone to find my tapes before I was executed. What a disaster I was in the middle of the 1960s.

The sounds of gunfire were not limited to what I heard on the screen; real bullets and screams were coming from the streets. A human volcano erupted with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

“Niggers are not going to stand for this!” my foster mother said.

Those words were the beginning of years of horror-filled fear sliding down my bankrupted emotions; my screams did not come out that night. Years after that week of fire, ashes, and black Klansmen, I would wake up sweating, afraid my apartment had been fire bombed. Mobs of blacks gathered and began to terrorize other blacks with the threat of burning

down their homes, while looting and burning white-owned businesses.

“Burn baby burn!” was the group’s war-cry.

This was truly a time when I wanted someone to hear the pleas, I had recorded in my black box and rescue me before the riots took place; it was now in April of 1968. Buildings had been torched and gutted. The smell of still-smoke lasted for months in my memories, along with the surreal image of me hiding in the bathtub, when my foster father used shoe polish to write the words soul brother on a sheet of my notebook paper, as the un-hooded black Klansmen roamed the neighborhood. The bodies were not visible, but the memories of the night and the sounds came to life as I sat in my elementary school class, and in later years in the psychiatrist chair, on anti-depressants, and even withstood the electro-convulsive therapy that fried my brain.

There was no need to record the events of that April and the following months. The world watched as the Nation’s Capital burned. Helicopters circled the skies as the smoke ascended into the clouds. A sea of blue uniforms and men in army fatigues, holding batons higher than I stood, loaded rifles with rubber bullets. I heard someone yell,

“Those bullets hurt!”

The canisters of tear gas exploded sending me along with the other looters in all different directions. Military jeeps hurried past with the radio’s antennas blowing backwards. This live image reminded me of the images in the coke-bottled thick screen of the Zenith television. Men radio for help and then appearing out of the gray sky, the thunderous Huey helicopter descending into the thick elephant grass of Vietnam. This metal angel would save the injured and dying Americans to bring them back to the safety; however, we were not being evacuated, we were being-fired upon by the police and military. The helicopters circled overhead, but no one was evacuated. There in the abyss of hell a few miles from the Lincoln

Memorial sat the stone figure of Lincoln. The night Dr. King was murdered so was the freedom of black Americans; the emancipation proclamation was set ablaze in the heart of America.

I did not record any more events in my black box after the riots; however, I do recall the song by the Fifth Dimension, "The Age of Aquarius." It was a period that darkness covered my soul; my tapes were lost, and the medevac never arrived.

# Contributors

**Elizabeth Hollabaugh** is a Junior at Rollins College majoring in Studio Art. After graduating from Rollins, Elizabeth wishes to earn her Masters in Fine Arts so she can share her passion for art through teaching. She also extends her artistic abilities through wedding cake design.

**Aimee Cervenka** is a freshman in the Honors Program at Rollins College, majoring in biology. She was born in BattleCreek, Michigan where she still enjoys visiting her grandfather every summer. In addition to writing, Aimee enjoys reading and horseback riding.

**Meghan Medina** is a Junior majoring in Studio Art and minoring in Russian. After graduation, she will pursue her Master of Fine Art degree and hopefully live in Chicago or Edinburgh. She plans on having a fun life filled with art and travel.

**Sandra Chavez Johnson** is currently a Junior in the Hamilton Holt School at Rollins College, majoring in Psychology with a minor in Women's Studies. As a Mexican-American woman, writing and drawing are outlets through which she expresses her cultural and emotional reality. In addition to creative expression, Sandra hopes to use her degree in Psychology to research topics relevant to Mexican-American women and in the area of natural child birth.

**Hope Kramek** is a freshly blossoming student in the liberal arts program at Rollins College. She thoroughly enjoys the wonderment of life and is fascinated by the beauty of humanity. Her future plans include living to learn and going where ever the tide may take her.

**Katie Beougher** is a senior Honors student, a History major, and Writing minor. She loves to read, write, and travel, and can only hope and pray she continues to do so as she journeys into the mysterious world outside of school.

**Priyanwada Ekanayake** is a current sophomore in the Honors program with a major in Biology and a minor in Anthropology. In my work I like to explore the dichotomy between light and dark, natural and manmade.

**Kassy Holmes** is a sophomore at Rollins College majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Sustainable Development. This is the first professional publication of her work and she hopes that it will not be the last.



**Chris Garlock** is a sophomore at Rollins College majoring in Economics. He struggles to balance a part-time job and a work-study position with a full load of classes while maintaining a constant appetite for delicious food. Unfortunately, these desires are usually met and squelched at the hands of Fruit Loops and TV dinners which are only trivial condolences on his quest for meals of epic proportions.

**Kristen Stone** is an anthropology major in the honors degree program also pursuing minors in women's studies and creative writing. she has a part-time job at a homeless shelter downtown, which has taught her more than she could ever express in words. kristen enjoys wrk, coffee, and napping when she's not busy using words like hegemony, post-modernism, and discourse. one day, she hopes to be an ethnographer-poet-revolutionary.

**April Urban** is from Orlando, Florida and is a sophomore at Rollins College double-majoring in English and Religious Studies. She loves reading and writing and so feels honored to have her work published in Brushing. She is still unsure of what she wants to do after college, but she hopes to further pursue her studies in either of her majors because she is very passionate about both of them.

**Gene Moore** is senior majoring in English. This is Gene's first professional publication. He enjoys writing fiction, poetry, and screen plays which are inspired by his travels, work, and Florida art collection.

**Dr. Mésavage** has a B. S. in Dance from *The Juilliard School* , an M. A. in French, *Hunter College* and a Ph. D. in French from *Yale University*. Professor Mésavage founded the ballet program in the Department of Theatre and Dance in 1981. She presented three ballets at the Annie Russell Theatre and taught ballet in the Department from 1981 to 1993. Teaching fields: French Philosophical Thought, French Literature and Civilization, Literature and Civilization of Québec, littérature maghrébine, the philosophy and practice of Yoga. Research interests: French literature, Literature of Québec, Literature of the Maghreb. Professor Mésavage has published over 40 articles in *Francographies*, *Le Maghreb Littéraire*, *The French Review*, *Québec Studies*, *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de la Langue Française*, *Québec Français*, *Französisch Heute*, *Bulletin of the Société des Professeurs français en Amérique*, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, *Diderot Studies* and *Orbis Literarum*. Her second year college text book, *En cours de route*, has been used in over 100 colleges and universities. This is her first published poem.

Hoping to somehow make a career in creative writing, **Ted Greenberg** is a senior majoring in English with a minor in Writing. A proud father, Ted is grateful he will earn his bachelor's degree before his bright, outgoing son, Charles, who is majoring in (boring) Business at Mercer University. The race is on towards a Master's degree!

**Corey Gregory** is a senior Spanish major, International Business minor at Rollins College. She is a member of NCM sorority, Phi Eta Sigma and The Order of Omega honor societies and was a member of the LEAD team and she hopes to attain her MBA someday. She would like to thank her parents and family for always believing in her, THANKS SO MUCH!! XOX

**Nikki Fiedler** is a Junior in the Honors Degree program at Rollins College, double majoring in International Relations and Studio Art. Her traveling experiences to over 10 different countries have served as an inspiration and constant motivation for her art work.

**Hannah Walsh** is a 3/2 Accelerated Management Program, Crummer Graduate School of Business student and is completing her third year in her undergraduate studies as a Studio Art major. Hannah's artistic interests include: black and white photography, digital color photography, printmaking, and painting. Besides being an artist, Hannah plays the piano and guitar and hopes to own her own business that will combine both her artistic and business interests.

**Darlyn Finch** wrote "Tarzan" while serving as the Winter 2006-2007 writer-in-residence of the Jack Kerouac House Project. Her first book, *Red Wax Rose*, was a product of that experience, and can be viewed at [shadylanepress.com](http://shadylanepress.com). Darlyn graduated from Rollins with an English major, writing minor, and is pursuing her Masters degree in creative nonfiction from Spalding University.

**Michael J. Robinson:** Pen name *Fire Eyes*. In 1968 I was ten years old, out there as 7<sup>th</sup> street of Washington D.C. was a blaze. I remember before the riots hearing the fire trucks and gritting my teeth together at the piercing sounds, after the riots, I remember the smell of burnt ashes. Ten blocks from the White House 1200 buildings including 900 stores burned down. I remember body bags in the mental wards and could only see flames when the bodies were taken away. My eyes reflected the deaths of black males in Washington, D.C. for my 21 years of life in America.

**Carolyn Freligh** is a senior at Rollins College majoring in Organizational Communication and minoring in Writing. Her first professional publication—a series of haiku—appeared in *Brushing* 2006, and this edition marks her first photographic publication. Carolyn is a fourth generation Floridian currently residing in Winter Park.

**Lori Beth Lipkin** is a graduate with honors from Rollins College undergraduate program Hamilton Holt with a BA in Psychology who has gone on to pursue a master's degree in school counseling also at Rollins, Hamilton Holt. Lori is a writer and an artist, has written for the *Sandspur* and is currently working on a psychological thriller she hopes to send to publishers by the end of her graduate degree as well as two children's books to include her art work.

**Hannah Carmel** is currently a freshman at Rollins College majoring in studio art. Through her my artwork she introduces new ideas involving everyday life in the 21st century. As an artist, Hannah finds inspiration for her artwork in her everyday life, and she tries to capture the world in its beauty.

**Editor-in-Chief, Fay Pappas** is someone whom for the first time in her life, doesn't know what to say except that she can not express her pride in everyone who has made this publication possible from the author of the smallest Haiku to the kind spirit of Ernest Hemmingway's little sis'. Thank you, my loving family and my dearest friends and thank you God. Everything happens for a reason.

**Clayton Ferrara** supposes, currently, that the majority of his thoughts are with his academic schooling (though he is doing his best not to let that distract him too much from his actual education). He is a Junior double Majoring in Biology and Sustainable Development with a Minor in Chemistry. His loves are science and music. He intends on attaining a PhD in Zoology and will continue to write poems on scraps and napkins 24 hours a day.

**Jess Drew** is a sophomore from a small town on the Connecticut shoreline called Westbrook (Not to be confused with Westport!). She is a life-long beach bum who loves music and values meaningful relationships above all things. Thus, it is no surprise that most of her inspiration comes from past relationships and often from music. She loves writing poetry, but is too shy to ever read it out loud!

# Additional Contributors

Bonnie Cheng  
Donna Gibson  
J. Charlotte Jarrett  
Joseph Ribas  
Craig Smith  
Tamara Berger  
Joyce Greco  
Steven Kahana  
Leslie M. Figueroa  
Andrew Cohen  
Ana Stroup  
Scott Chisholm  
Samantha Marsh  
And, of course...  
Carol Hemingway

# Colophon

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Set in Perpetua

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