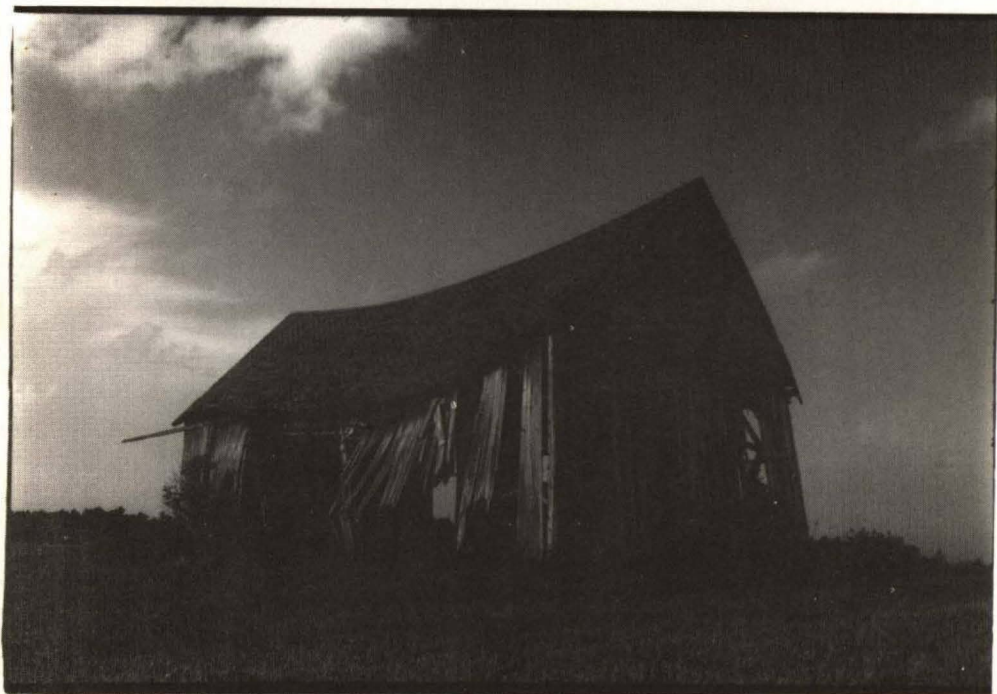


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he Roaring Muse

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The *Roaring* Muse *Bill Braddock*
Literary magazine

Winter 1997-98

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Going Lightly

Jon Thorson

The freckled evening
walking into my dreams now,
I lay in my bed
naked,
listening to the rain
as it shrouds the sirens screaming.

The sun-bathers are gone now
the streets are sloppy
with the curious showers
of fetal snow.

The years I wasted,
along the shore of distant seas,
tunnel beyond my senses
like worms beneath ponderous pines.

- you -

Jennifer Ann Todd

it wasn't the stones reflecting
under the water
it wasn't the rain either
seething violet rage against the salmon sky
I guess it was you
somewhere in the air, breathing blue distance

The Refugees

Linda LeGarde Grover

To the dirging of "The Way We Were"
 sung by some sweet girl nobody knows
 six pallbearers
 two in sweatshirts with washed-away logos,
 three in second-hand dress shirts
 one in a borrowed sportcoat
 carry above a crooked lockstep mince
 the wood coffin out the side door.
 Inside, our beloved mother, grandma and aunt
 has left
 has arrived, megis shell on a black string
 wound over her hard brown fingers.

Six pallbearers worn as their boot heels
 ground to an unassuming humility
 by the rounds of looking for work
 and sometimes finding it
 wear their bodies, a single suit of clothes
 fraying fast, and thin at the knees.
 Innocent faces first tanned by outside labor
 then suncreases filled by grime and hard living,
 search then escape what they've found
 spending numb night after night on a stool at Mr. D's
 thinking, maybe after a couple more
 I'll ask that blonde or her friend to dance
 no, guess I'll just go home, after all.

This is what really happened to the other Indians,
 not the spiritual beauties you watch on made-for-TV movies,
 running in clean, freshly ironed loincloths
 through a pristine forest full of friendly animals
 with an important message for the Chief
 and his daughter, the Princess,
 the ones who dazzle you today
 with their mystical ways
 ("oh wow these people are just so close to nature,
 so spiritual," I've heard you say)

that you can buy at a pow-wow stand
along with some traditional turquoise and silver
jewelry so you can be an Indian, too.

No, we're the other Indians,
the ones who did our time in boarding school,
learned to take a beating,
never quite mastered English
learned the work ethic
and learned what it meant for us,
and chose to survive in spite of it.
Off the reservation, we're refugees,
displaced persons sometimes scorned by our own people.
Our daughters married white men, and
learned to take a beating
never quite mastered Anglo housekeeping
lived the work ethic
and grew old early,
slender girls whose bodies tired and whose

blue-eyed children went to public school
and learned to take a beating
or sometimes give one
and never quite mastered schoolwork,
leaving when they turned sixteen,
having learned the work ethic
so they too could live hard
and grow old early.

And today we're at another funeral
and since it's at a bargain rate
we have to hustle outside once our hour is done.
We're grateful it's warm and sunny
and that there's room on the sidewalk
for cousins to meet and talk.
The corpse, beloved mother, aunt and grandma
waits for a ride to the cemetery
now that she's arrived west,
megis shell in a black cord
wound over her hard brown fingers.

The fifth of October

Jennifer Ann Todd

your warm face melts into these
October winds.

In this big saffron sky the leaves blow like pollen,
their sweet ripe scent falling on yours.

I have been through this before --

So many autumns have colored me, thinking
you will come back like a leaf,
brilliant with golden, or perhaps,
young and green.

Spraying X's

Lance Molis

Spraying shadows on the wall,
generation x in the pupil of the soul,
the baby-boomer's fruit and passion,
the headache in the morning meant the party was over and it
was time to get married,
the product of a tattooed womb that advertised to all the moody,
mad, muddy, concert freaks, here in lies love child,
the emaciated mass of bored babes wired into a hard-drive world
of fast food, fast sex, fast love, fast knowledge, fast childhood, and faster still the
racing pulse of the resurgence
of their parent's drug culture raves, the electric acid,
alternative rock watching, techno-juiced poster children for
abortion, and non-abortion, bell-bottoms are back is the victory
cry as they wheel another mind into the flashing van
with backwards spelling on the hood parked in the gutter outside
the disco-tech, D.O.A. will be scratched into the annals of
another night where the pasty, heroine sheiks walk in their
habits of ingested chemical gods, pulp and pump, more juice,
more beat, bring back more bass in the cannon hid in the trunk
to make the car shocks rock like a jagged surfaced road is

coasting below the tires, wires connecting all the worlds in
a net of relationships that never clasp hands and say in physical
arousal the tastes of their discourses, rising to reach for
truth and landing in the sea of super-jacked commercials in
high volumed, screaming pitches pouring into the limbic pulse
from all fifty-seven channels at one moment across a country
that is worshipping the glowing tube of boobs, buy brand x to
live a full life, it slices, and dices, and mixes drinks, and
gets you a girl, and is a girl, and improves job performance,
and grows hair in all unwanted places, and is a job, and cures
depression, and breaks boredom, and mows your lawn, and watches
your dog, and does school work with practically zero answers
missed, and it gives you a life, and becomes your life, Christ, clear away the ground
for another flashing construct of pure,
naked capitalistic enterprise, a new temple to worship with
fellow believers all marching in the man-sized maze of commerce
and compromises, buying their souls into shopping heaven with
plastic keys to the ringing gates of register appreciation,
and come back soon, through the smoggy streets of riotous rebels
running into electric appliance stores where they fill their
arms in the name of a convicted martyr, he suffered for our
sins, sing him praises on high for the stuff that we don't have
to buy, cherries rolling in the wake of violent waters that
hate the protection they administer upon the unwitting, civilian
offenders, and above them sleep the muted heads of the hills,
stony as Rushmore in their words that ramble like this poem,
but say even less, it that's possible, and in sleepy colonies
of suburban commandos, at rest in these barracks of business men,
the American dreamers are unconscious before a sit-com
that they see more often than their families, and watching their
thin, androgynous babes slumber they comment to each other on
how simple it would be to be a child again, not knowing that
the nightmares imagined in a child's mind are not close to the
reality of the gutted structures of the wall artist, gang-lore
pimpers that wait every day for recess on the playground.

"13A"

Eric A. Chamberlin

13A waits in her wheelchair
To go home.
Her white hair is matted into knots
Only a sharp pair of clippers could untangle.
With each patch of hair removed,
Another patch of her waning dignity follows.

Her colorless world is a blurred approximation
Of starched white shapes
Running toward another number, another beep,
Another unbearable chore.
They seem to be human enough, but none stop
To put an arm of comfort around 13A.
None stop to take her home.
She hasn't been home in years
Turning quickly into hours
Of bleached memories:
Breakfast tables, warm blankets
And the deep deep secrets of motherhood.
And the Mozart,
The Mozart she only half-learned
So she could unwind
After everyone had gone to sleep.
Who might be tending her garden or
Keeping the neighbors informed
Or straightening the pictures on the wall?

Over and over,
She watches her family grow new families
In picture frames on the wall of her mind.
She cares for them still because no one
Can do it like 13A,
Over and over again.
She needs the warm blanket
Of Home and Family like air.
13A waits in her wheelchair
To go home.



Sara Gerard

Dead Barn Haiku

Mike Lenz

old Christ of America's
farm. i don't know you
now, in dust and wire and rot.

• • •

rusty nails. square. break
them off with my thumb. stains my
hands with antique time.

• • •

glowing cracks of walls
and ceiling. sunlit ropes of
dust reach to heaven.

• • •

the slope and curve of your spine.
the sway in your crouch.
when did you get so lazy?

• • •

when i am two hundred years old
and the sun has bleached my bones
i too will be reluctant to go

• • •

wind in the weather
vain. still twisting and screeching
out in deaf ghost words

bob has come
to college to drink
he has 6000 drinks left
before receiving
his bachelors degree
in alcohol w/a minor
in mushrooms
& emphasis on mtv
from the university of
massive drinking a
beautiful little rat
maze in minnesota

bob has got it all
planned out
500 kamekazis
500 long island teas
300 tequila poppers
200 hurricanes &
4000 beers & he can
do it in 3 years
if he can drink non
stop & get his throat
to open up a little wider

his folks
at the vfw in pine city
are behind him all the way
cuz hes planning a career
in business administration
drinking but'll probably
end up drinking
for the county like his dad

bobs a mountainman budman
grows an inch & drops an
i.q. point w/every
swallow by graduation
he'll be 79 feet tall
w/the mental capacity
of a mud-pickled loafer
floating in the sewer

Two all-beef patties, special sauce

Honore Lehtinen

"I love ya, lady," Jerry told her, leaning forward eagerly in the booth.

In his eyes, she read a complex of emotions, but none was love. She took a sip of her milkshake, her fingers spread protectively over the top of the cup.

"I suppose that doesn't mean anything to you. Well?" he persisted.

She sat silent. How she wanted to think of the ultimate witticism, the irrefutably logical and blindingly insightful punchline that would shut him up once and for all, would put the reality of the situation squarely in front of him so he could no longer dodge it. Instead, once again, she was so disgusted that she could not speak. How he could swallow this ridiculous statement let alone try to feed it to her was beyond her comprehension. What was worse, though, was that he fully expected her to swallow it.

It was a tactic, she knew, just another barrel-bottom-scraping tactic he was using in their petty little war.

"I guess you don't love *me*, then," he said, staring at her. "Hmm?"

It was an invitation to a duel. She knew how it would turn out. After enough provocation, she would react. She would flare up, raise her voice. He would ask her if he had upset her. She would get defensive. He would zero in on this weakness. He reminded her of a shark: going for blood, attacking the soft spots, but only after having circled a safe distance away, trying to determine if the prey would fight back.

How would this latest confrontation/conversation turn out? Would she walk away in anger, listening to his laughter? Would she become cold and stare him down? Would he accuse her of only being after his money? Would he accuse her of sleeping with every guy in town? Would he ask her for a date? None of it ever made sense, but she had long ago stopped trying to figure him out. She only wanted to protect herself.

"Jerry," she finally found words and hoped he'd listen. "I agreed to meet with you to discuss the child support arrangements, not to fight."

Damn, she thought. Wrong word!

"I'm not fighting," he smiled at her. "Are you?"

"You know what I mean."

She was furious with herself. Why couldn't she have chosen a neutral term? Why did she have to say *fight*? Why did he always bring out the worst in her? How many conversations had been twisted in just this way, with Jerry picking up on tiny cues of hostility and playing with them, playing with her? Had his real purpose in meeting with her ever been to discuss their child's well-being?

Would it always be to attack her? Yet she told herself she wanted to keep things on an even keel between them for the sake of their child, and so she continued to see him, when she felt she could handle it.

"No, I guess I don't know what you mean," Jerry said. He was on comfortable footing now. He regarded her less defiantly and more confidently.

She felt sick, but she wasn't going to show it. She forced herself to take bites of her meal. *How wonderful, how utterly American*, she thought, *to eat at McDonald's with your ex-spouse. Making memories with Ronald the clown*, she thought. She could feel the greasy meal congealing as it slid down her unwilling esophagus.

Another night with an upset stomach, thanks to this jerk.

"Well, what do you mean?" Jerry had placed both forearms on the table and was leaning back in his seat. Against the bright plastic colors of the booth, his dirty red plaid jacket and black knit hat made him look sinister. Or was it the predatory gleam in his small blue-ice eyes?

She put down her hamburger slowly. She looked down at this all-American product of a raped rainforest, stared at the skinny brown hamburger with its wimpy shreds of lettuce in its limp pale bun nested in its ecologically-correct cardboard box. She felt like that hamburger. She felt like a bland, over-rated, lower-middle-class, self parodying, hypocritical chunk of fast food pimped by a clown with a nuked hairdo.

She wanted to tell Jerry that she hadn't wanted to make love to him when they were married because his attitude made her sick to her stomach. She wanted to tell him that he was like a black hole of negativity and pessimism that had drained her slowly of her energy and enthusiasm. She wanted to tell him that she would have stayed married to him if he had shown her even a tenth of the love and respect that he said he had for her. She wanted to tell him that yes, she had loved him, and yes, she was only human, and she just hadn't been able to take any more of him, and if he would stop being so blind and bitter he would know how much better she and their child were doing since the divorce. But she couldn't.

"You know what I mean," she repeated.

"No, I don't. I really don't. Do you? Do you know what you mean?" his tone was edged with triumph. He thought he had her.

She sighed. She stared at the hamburger. He had long ago finished his and was nibbling at his remaining fries, dipping the soggy tendrils into horseradish sauce.

"Don't be coy," she said.

"I'm not being coy. But I sure as hell think you are."

"No, I'm n-"

"What are you, then? Who are you, lady? Do you know who you are?" His

words flew out like bullets. "I think you have a multiple personality. I really do. You don't know what you want. You don't know what you mean."

She knew what he was thinking - that she had been wounded. His bullets were not intended to finish her off. He liked his coffee black, his fries greasy, his prey bloody but alive. Suddenly the absurdity of it all hit her like a plexus punch, a half-ton gut bomb. Here she sat at a MacDonald's quote-unquote-restaurant with her ex-husband who'd accused her of money-gouging and whoring but said he loved her and who said he wanted to talk about child support but really wanted to vent his bitterness and rage on her. Eating a burger at Mac&Don's with a shark.

Around them sat toddlers with mega-cups of Coke and ketchup-smeared lips, flinging french fries; pale, gangly, moody adolescents sending coded messages and pheromones to one another; women wearing shapeless sweatshirts in godawful colors and heart appliqués. She wanted to bathe the toddlers' faces, shake the teens by their shoulders and make them swear they'd never fall in love, and convince the women to exchange their lumpy uniforms of conformity for the camouflaged regalia of rebellion.

Instead, she vomited. Partly digested burger and pungent gobs of acidified vanilla shake landed on the table. She heaved. She coughed. She shook her head. Her lips quivered; her eyes stung and smarted and dropped tears in the mess.

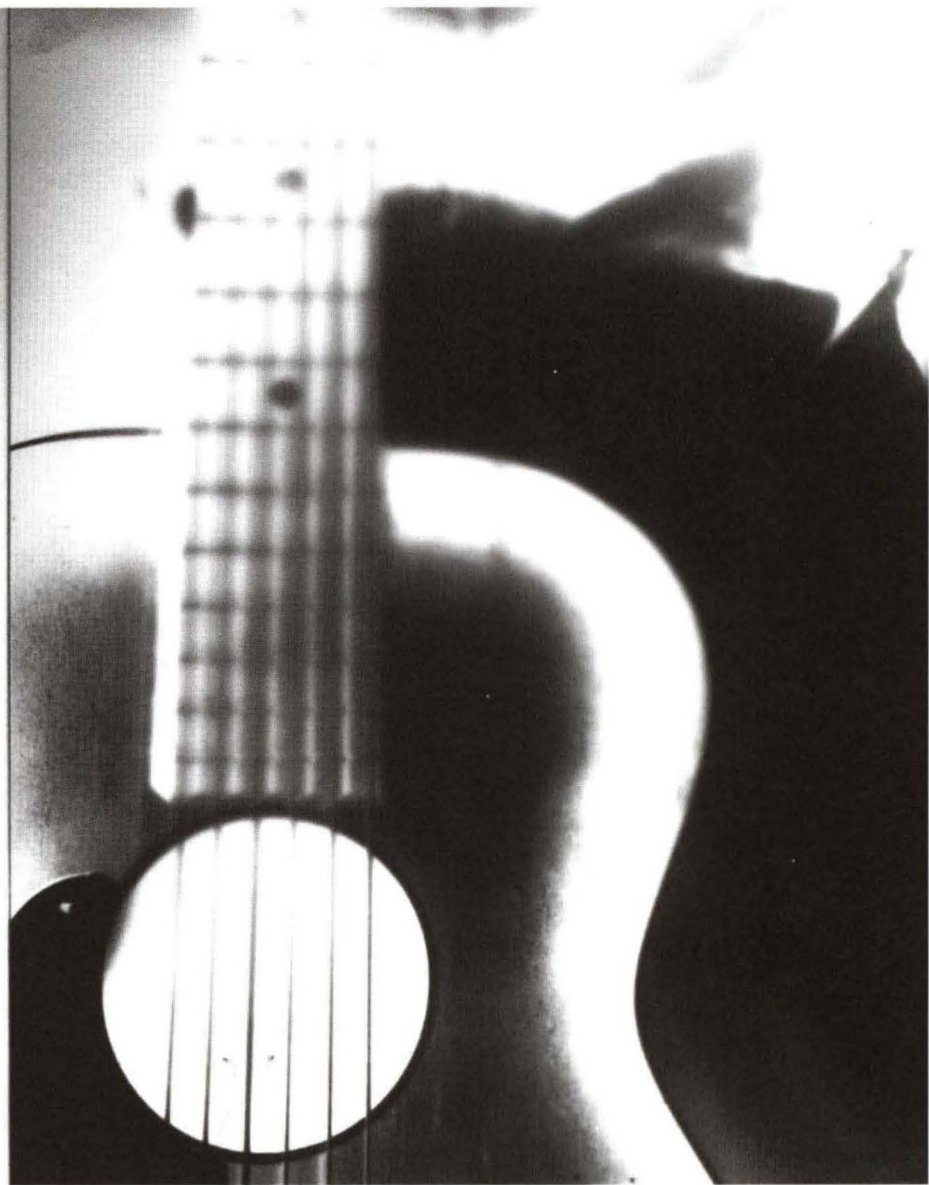
The place was quiet for two seconds. Then, a girl with beautiful long red hair said "Eeeee-you!" and someone else giggled and two little boys laughed and punched each other. People shuffled in their seats. She heard a woman say "poor thing."

She stood up, gasping for breath. Jerry had also stood up. His upper lip was curled, his lips were pulled down at the corners. He looked at her, backing up. "You sick?" he asked, stopping finally at a safe distance, six feet away from her.

Without answering, she pulled a clean tissue from a pocket and wiped off her mouth. One of the innumerable little teen girls who worked there appeared with paper towels and she took them, quickly wiping the offense out of sight. It had been minor, after all.

"Well, I guess we're done here," Jerry mumbled. He had replaced his look of disgust with one of relief now that the mess was cleaned up. She knew he was ready to make a joke of it and get a laugh from the others.

"You make me sick," was all she said, looking at her blurred reflection in the wet table surface.



Chris Myers

It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This

Vincent D. O'Connor

Somehow his car
finds its way home.
Tonight
will disappear again.
his mind no longer able to grasp
what his unfocused eyes see.

I hear the fumbling of the keys,
the low, slurred curses
of impotence
until he finally
conquers
the door.

Staggering past my room,
he doesn't notice
the harsh street light
exposing
my tear-streaked face.
Unable to find the bedroom light,
he settles
to the floor,
a pile of dirty laundry in the doorway,
leaving me
untucked
and
unkissed
again.



Aimee Trombore

Pearl

Kim Sisto Robinson

I had heard that she was beaten as a child, but her poetry never revealed this. Perhaps that's why she wrote. To escape her childhood and the face of a jealous mother.

Her roots called upon her often and she wrote about her farm in Ely, Minnesota voraciously. She could still hear the wheat swishing and rippling like golden waves. Smells of horse, hay and manure tickled her nose even now as she drove past farm land in Duluth. "I love the smell of manure," she would purr inhaling deeply. "Have you ever known anybody who just loves the smell of shit!" Then she would laugh and her shoulders shook up and down like Bozo the clown.

Sometimes I found myself staring at her and I understood how a mother could be jealous. How anybody could. Yellow hair fluffed against her high cheek bones like cotton candy. "It's thicker than a palomino's tail," she would say. She fixed it like Marilyn Monroe. Not the young star, but how Marilyn styled it when she got older. Her eyes were like deep puddles of powdery blue eye shadow. Clear, but you didn't know what she was thinking. But what I remember the most was her fragrance. She smelled like a cat that had been out all night. Dust, wind and pine seeped through her pores as if she had rubbed up against all of them.

Men liked her. Tongues hung out as she walked by and their eyes bulged from their sockets like cat fish. She wasn't what you would call a thin woman, but she swung her hips in just the right way. I hated how those testosterone pigs gaped at her. "She's my grandma!" a voice inside me would scream, but who would listen to a fourteen year old anyhow.

A little yellow haired girl had followed her around like a shadow. Reminding her, tapping her shoulder pad, sometimes stepping on the back of her high heeled shoe. She lived within her like a heart that could be seen woven and pulsating through her poetry and paintings. Perennial roots rose from every part of her being like branches. Some with fruit, some not.

She painted with oils, creating shades of chocolate squirrels, choke cherry wine and lavender old testament robes. Every painting had a small farm house off in the distance, peeling and outstretching its arms as if pleading...Come home! She never did, except in her own mind.

"Read me some of your poetry, Pearl," I would say. Instantly I would hear her rustling through yellowed papers that were folded and crinkled together as if they had been making love. Then she would come to where I was sitting and

snuggle next to me and reveal stories from her youth. The little yellow haired girl had told the stories. Making large movements with her hands, giggling, lifting her eyebrows with surprise and delight. I listened and became rich.

After my poetry reading she would take me into her library that was the color of butterscotch and chocolate or at least that's what I had thought then. It smelled of ballet slippers, mildew and history and was so small that we were like two twisted, sweaty mummies. Nothing mattered as long as we were together with Frost and Dickinson inside that old musty room.

"You know," she once mused. "Our lives are like flowers." I wrinkled up my nose and had two large question marks inside each eye. "Think of a tightly closed rose," she continued. "She absolutely will not open until she is ready. Suddenly, her petals begin opening one by one exposing themselves; and finally we can observe her vivid color. Her breasts fall out and she is not ashamed. Her hair tumbles down like Rapunzel, but nobody climbs up except herself. For the first time she can taste the dew and the sun presses against her flesh like a lover. But sometimes it rains so hard that she feels as if her roots will rise above the soil and explode into a million pieces, but they don't." She twirled her hair as she spoke creating little gold ringlets just the size of her slender finger. Then she glanced over to see if I was still listening. I was. Her face was dead serious while she finished her thoughts. "Well, the sun lifts her head like the eye of God and she continues blooming. But you know she can't bloom forever. Her petals will eventually turn brown and one by one will fall as silently as they opened. That's us," she concluded. She looked over at me waiting for a response. I had none. I didn't get the analogy, but I nodded as if I did.

"Hello!" I called from the hallway. I would hear her large feet stomping from wherever she was, welcoming me with a huge coral smile. Ginger, cloves and yeast danced in the air, wrapping around my nose like tiny delicious snakes. It wasn't even Thanksgiving!

"Come, come, come," she demanded. "Sit, sit, sit." I did. We would talk about who was writing what, have you read that poem, Ariel, what thoughts do you have about the Canadian writer, Atwood. Between our great dialogues we would chew molasses cookies and home made buttered bread. What could be better than this I had thought. To eat. To laugh. To consume words. To be with her.

Now she sits staring out a window like some sentinel. The sun penetrates through her skin, but she doesn't feel its warmth. I read poetry to her. Words she once swished in her mouth like good wine, but now transparent clouds bury her eyes like hollow graves. She is lost inside herself and won't come out.

A single rose stares from the corner of the room. It isn't breathing and I can't tell which color it once was. The petals have fallen silently one by one upon a crocheted table cloth...as if they are finally going home.

POPPLES

Louis Jenkins

In places where there are fewer trees people refer to them as aspen and they are highly prized. Up here we call them popples, not highest quality for lumber or firewood, they grow everywhere. Wherever there's an opening the popples move in, any abandoned clearing, any yard left unattended is soon overrun. The proletarian popple, growing, optimistic, got the kids all working, got lots of grand-kids on the way. Popples are excitable, quivering all over at the first hint of a breeze, always full of talk, talk of going away and talk of putting down roots, but it's best not to listen too closely to what trees have to say.

Popples are lovely in the fall when the leaves are yellow or green spotted with gold or flecked with red or in winter with a new moon caught in the bare branches. In spring rain intensifies the delicate grey-green skin and the black patches, twig sockets, loops and whirls, eyeholes and genitalia.

I wouldn't mind having a view like this when I come to the bottom of the long slide into old age and senility: a grove of popples, carefully cropped and framed to exclude the junked Chevy pickup just to the right.



"Split rock"

Tim Gow

Unsatisfied

Chris Godsey

"Look me in the eye
then tell me
that I'm satisfied"

The Replacements

A single bead of sweat dropped from his armpit and trickled down his right side. The glossy cover of a *National Geographic* magazine, which featured a series of greenish photographs in an article about raising the Titanic, stuck to his sweaty left palm. The magazine's pages squeaked as he flipped them with the moist fingertips of his right hand.

As he leaned forward, elbows on knees, the back of his dingy, hounds tooth sport coat audibly stretched, and the too-short sleeves of the coat and a denim shirt peeled back, exposing his forearms and leaving his wrists naked. The back and the frayed, soiled collar of the shirt were damp, and the wool coat smelled musty. Once, on a 90 degree day, a thin stripe of gooey, green park bench paint had stuck to the seat of his wrinkled khaki chinos. His fastidious father, a religious user of shoe trees and Kiwi brand polish, would never have worn such scuffed and dented loafers.

The alternate version of the outfit featured a white, button-down cotton shirt, yellow around the neck and cuffs. He had worn the suit in its various forms to six weddings, two funerals, two previous job interviews, and a ceremony at which seven recent college graduates were commissioned as officers in the United States Air Force.

"The world is not always fair," his mother had told him over the phone just before he quit his job as an advertising copywriter. "It's not odd for small businesses to offer comp hours instead of cash for overtime. Just bite your tongue. Instead of complaining, work twice as hard, and see what happens. It's all about paying dues. You'll have your day in the sun."

Two months later, giddy with newfound freedom and a sense of possibility, he called his mother to tell her he was unemployed.

"You may have to learn the hard way that it's easier to look for a job when you have a job. You should have been more patient."

"I know Mom, but I just couldn't stay there. I hated it. I couldn't see a point to what I was doing."

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know what I'll do Mom, but I'd rather be unemployed and happy than work somewhere I hate and be secure."

"Have you forgotten how long it took you to find the job you just quit?"

"Well, no. I don't know. There's gotta be something. I'm gonna start taking around applications tomorrow. I'm gonna see about getting in school for the fall."

"How would you pay for school? And have you also forgotten that you hated school when you were there?"

"I don't know, Mom."

"Let me know what you find out. Your Dad and I can't afford to help you so you better get to it."

So he had immediately gotten to it, shoving a pile of laundry off his bed and taking a two hour nap. He woke up, considered going out, and then watched TV until, 2:00 A.M. The next day he got up at 11 A.M., took a long bike ride in the sun, bought a paper, skimmed the job listings, did the crossword, got tired, and took a nap.

...

"You may go in," the heavy, pasty receptionist said in a patronizing tone. A crusty layer of orangish makeup stopped abruptly at her jaw-line, and her penciled eyebrows were permanently arched. She looked like a greasy, sinister clown.

She also looked like his fifth grade teacher, a cloying, matronly woman who had once, in a teacher's lounge diatribe loud enough for passing students to hear, referred to her class as "morons," "little bastards," and "the reason I smoke these goddamned cancer sticks."

"Thank you," he said, then returned the magazine to its metal holder on the wall and pulled his cuffs down to his wrists.

...

His most dubious day at the advertising job had begun at 9:15, 45 minutes after he was supposed to be at his desk. He had watched MTV, documentaries, and infomercials until 3:00 AM, and at 7:30 AM, he turned off his digital alarm clock, threw it on the floor, and went back to sleep. He woke up again at 8:20, sprang out of bed, took a shower, got dressed, worked up a sweat finding his keys and left. At the bottom of the three flights of stairs which lead to the outside door of his apartment building, he had to run back up and grab a folder which contained background information about a client he was meeting with that day.

By the time he gassed up his car and grabbed an orange juice and some Little Debbie snack cakes for breakfast, it was 8:50. Rush hour traffic was exacer-

bated by a downtown fire that squeezed four lanes into one, so he was lucky to screech into the company parking lot by 9:10. He sprinted to his desk, only to sprint back outside to retrieve the client background information which he hadn't read and now didn't have time to read because it was 9:15 and his appointment was at 9:30. Only when he sat down with his clients, the owners of a fast food chain, did he notice the orange juice on his tie and the front of his pants. He did not notice the chocolate in the corner of his mouth. The advertising plan, designed to sell a new line of gourmet hot dogs featured by the clients' restaurant, which was located in a mall kiosk, was rife with typos, and pages two and three of the hand-out were out of order.

Two important phone messages that he forgot to relay, a lengthy computer document that wasn't saved and had to be retyped, and reprimands for reading the newspaper and watching the clock, rounded out the day. Most of the next morning was spent in his boss's office: "...want to have faith in you...obvious potential...creative and intelligent...wonder where your mind is...forgetful...come in late...question your dedication...seem unmotivated...anything to say for yourself?"

He had mumbled something without making eye contact and returned to his desk, where he stared at his computer screen and said nothing for the rest of the day.

...

"Come on in," said the Marketing Director in a breathy voice. Her office was depressing and small, with bare walls and plain, metal filing cabinets and chairs. "Please have a seat."

Her graying hair unsuccessfully emulated a style favored by woman she aged by 25 years, and the gray suit she wore was simply outdated. Before he sat, they shook hands, and because the top button of her cream-colored blouse was undone, he could see the fraying elastic in the left strap of her pink bra and an inch or two of saggy cleavage. She remained seated, looking upward, with a sad pale smile and unsure eyes, while shaking hands.

"Were you able to find us alright?" she asked as he sat in one of two chairs facing her metal, wood-grain desk.

"No problem," he said.

"Good. Normally I'd like to chat with you a bit before we begin, just to get to know you a little bit, but I'm running on kind of a tight schedule today, so I'll cut to the chase, if you don't mind."

"Okay."

"I've been able to go over your resume and your writing samples, and based

on that material I can say you're definitely qualified as a Marketing Associate at Nature's Way," she said. "Are you familiar with our products?"

"Yes," he lied. "That's why I applied for the job." His knowledge of the company's eclectic, chintzy line of mostly hemp-clothing, all natural beauty products, astrology and self-help books, compact discs featuring the sounds of nature, incenses, and massage oils was based strictly on what he had learned while leafing through the most recent Nature's Way catalog, which said the products were "designed to break down the walls between human beings and the earth, and reintroduce us to the part of our souls we so easily lose, yet need so much to retain."

"What I'd like to talk to you a bit about, however, are your plans for the future and where Nature's Way might fit in those plans."

"Okay"

"Here at Nature's Way, we think of ourselves as a family, not a business," the Marketing Director said. "And just like any family, we believe in the philosophy of all for one and one for all. What would you bring to our family that we might not already have?"

"Well," he began, sitting erect, hands folded in his lap, eyes locked on the Marketing Director's, "I believe that variety is the spice of life, and that every good family has its share of variety. With a commitment to variety comes versatility, and I believe my personality, talents, and varied interests make me a quite versatile person. Taking on one more versatile, enthusiastic, hard-working person would only increase your company's variety and, in turn, your versatility."

"I see," she said. "Here in the marketing department of Nature's Way, we often do deadline work. How would you feel if you were asked to come in early or stay late, with the possibility of no monetary compensation for overtime? How would you feel if we asked you to take work home, with the understanding that it would be completed on your own time?"

Some people see overtime as a hassle," he said, slouching, leaning on his right elbow. He eyes a brown scrap of lettuce in the middle of her desk. "I see it as a chance to prove my dedication to whoever I'm working for. If it takes a few extra hours to get the job done, then so be it. Families don't succeed by packing up and taking a break a five o'clock. They succeed by plugging away until the job is done and the challenge is met." The sole of his left foot rested on the upturned arch of his right one.

"I see," she said. "Tell me, where do you see yourself five years down the road? Where do you see yourself in ten years?"

"I guess I'd like to be working my way toward a management position in a company that will allow me to use the best use of my people skills. Another five years after that, I'd like to be a manager or department head of the same company."

I'm ready to dive into the business world head first, because I know that to win the race, all I have to do is start swimming." He looked at his feet and at the front of the Marketing Director's desk. "I also know that my hard work will make better swimmers of those around me." He closed his eyes and scratched his nose.

The Marketing Director sat forward in her chair, laid her arms on the desk, interlaced her fingers, and smiled. Her front two teeth were yellow, and there were coffee-colored stains in the gaps between them all. "There's just one more question, then," she said. "When can you start?"

He turned his attention from a stain on the thigh of his pants and looked toward the Marketing Director without focusing.

"As soon as possible."

Lost by Candlelight

Honore Lehtinen

A man is the color of crystal;
A woman, the color of fire.
So like bright spirits, they dazzle -
So clear the flames, the desire.
Reflected in smoke, his heart pulses.
Hers leaps, sparks of fireworks enchant.
Lost magic he finds deep within him -
Old knowledge she cannot recant -
How ancient these rites and this ritual.
By firelight, old eyes see afar -
Wise eyes - in a crystal reflecting
The firelight, the moonglow, the stars.
She walks wrapped in smoke-silvered silence.
She touches - all will falls to fire -
He follows. How brilliant - the flames on the crystal -
consuming, enchanting, entire.

I knew you when there was order
among animals and stones,
plants and clans; I knew your
fingertips of an infant flesh, a silken flesh,
untouched by lines of wind and lives.

I knew you when people spoke
in grunts, handsigns and
measured lengths of silence.

When the thin bark of white birch trees
could set a splintered bone,
and recipes calling for young spring roots,
for stalks ground into fine medicines
were stored in minds, and teaching
was only a reminder, to remember
what is inside.

I recognized from across the grass steppes,
sounding singly above the group chant,
your tone, your thanks, I listened to it, I paid attention
to you as we paid homage
to the length of sun reign and summer swung full
no longer resisting beginnings.

I danced with the women
at high noon
at these first human festivals-
I danced in blurs of naked limbs,
of arms still covered in that early down.

We danced in circles of Winter's stored energy,
building pyramids of emotion
on this day we excited and applauded,
in a heat that made the crabs bury themselves
in cool sands near to water-
I danced and I watched you
dance, I danced with you, with you
in an ancient day.

Mother

Tera Welbourn

Inside
this sphere of fixed stars
that is woman,
the circles are ripe
and empty.

When three spirits
have chosen your body
as earth
as entrance,
you can be patient
and breathless
all at once
all alone.

Then
woman, you are garden.
You press backside to moon
and she recognizes
fullness.
You pay attention
to birds, houseplants long neglected
feed on fresh black soil.
You are your own secret.
You eat tomatoes, still warm and beating,
and hum in low animal tones.

For once,
as you peer
neck crooked over shoulder
into mirror-
You do not notice
the stubble
the scars
the ripple of thigh

the varying shades and pathways
of vein.

For once,
you see
the golden outline
of your frame,
the dance of god
on your palms and shoulders.

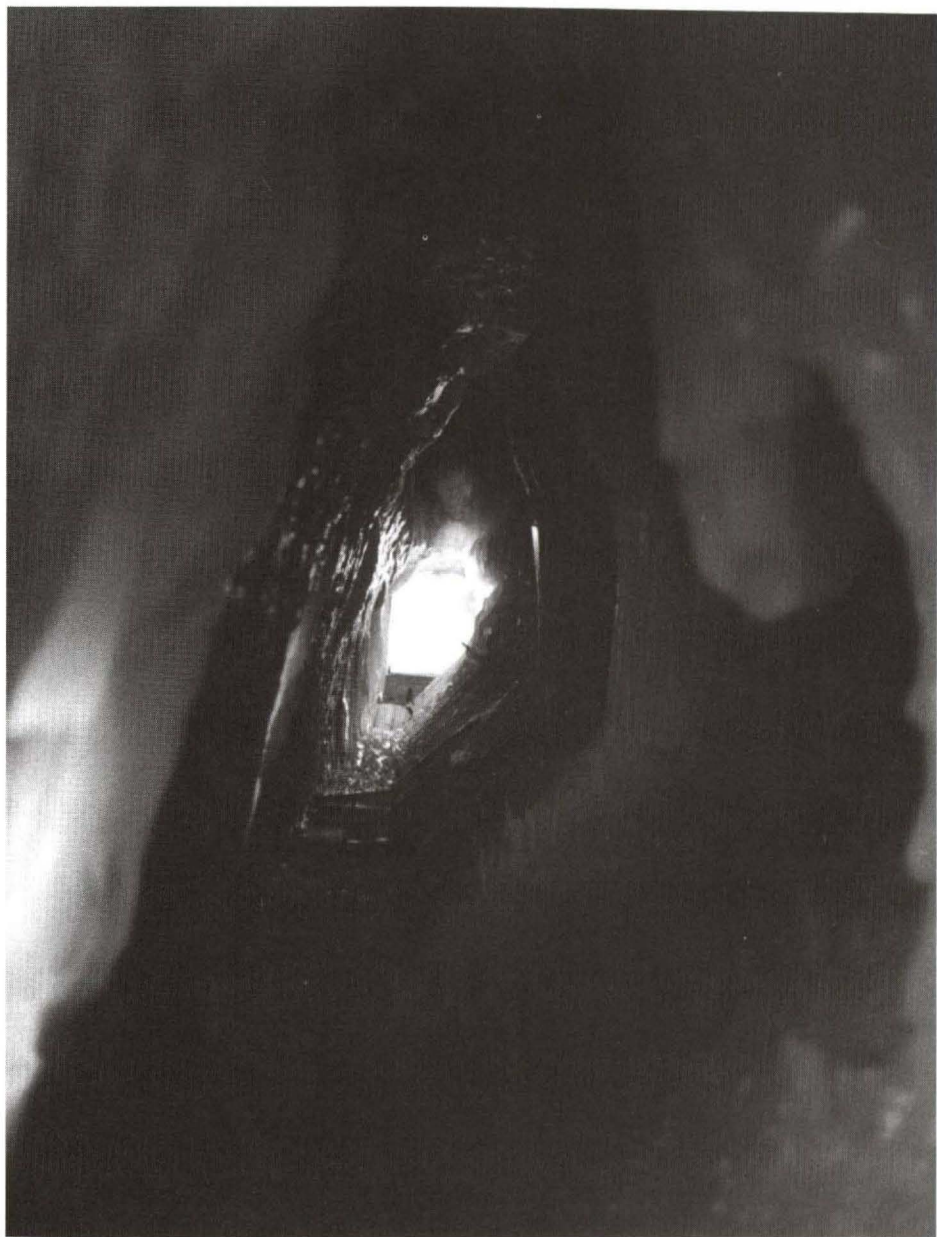
You have to blink,
blink many times
and wonder, wonder
when it was
that you became
so beautiful.



spring poem, duluth minnesota

Patrick Mckinnon

bad enuf the sun must set once a day
but in duluth ive seen the sun set for 26 days
& i dont mean the sun set then rose then set then rose
everyday for 26 days no i mean the sun
dropped its filament under the table
stooped down to retrieve it &
didnt bloom again for 26 days man
i dont need to tell you
what genus of wretched cretin
comes worming from its hole
to slither up these streets for 26 days of
twilight to darkness to twilight to darkness i
dont need to tell you
of the gaping pupils blackening irises in every eye
of mushrooms blooming on skin
mould on teeth scales on feet
april showers bring may showers bring
june showers bring july showers bring
august showers bring winter again the bleakness
of this wind-scarred heatless gabbro rock
is facial camouflage for these tenacious weeds
wedged into this scandinavian cliff
& if the shadows finally over-fertilize anyones lust
theres that one interstate south
to california to florida to texas
so like some human snow melt duluth waters this country
w/light-deprivation-experiment subjects
the unpollinated who withered w/out chlorophyll
fine fissures of air crazing their pistils they
plunder yr orchards they annex yr gardens
starved for fruit famished for heat



"GOD #1"

Aimee Trombore

OGLALA

Eric A. Chamberlin

Past, sail on the wide plain
Tipi

Chase buffalo across the Little Bighorn
Sheep in the escarpment crags
Looming Oglala past
Sail on schooner
Over tipi-ed ocean
Gone in the smoke of train
And burning buffalo hide
Blankets full of pestilence
Crying for Mother on the plain
Blowing wind.
Sail on.
Tipi.

My soul is with yours
 in gravel dust of this road
 crawling around the inside of a dead barn
 scattered bones of reincarnation, strange and unfamiliar
 --plagued by amnesia
 WHAT NATION WERE YOU??
 what name suited you best before this wild and ragged
 grass became an obstacle
 my feet are nervous here, more ready for the cold certainty
 of broken cement, pitted asphalt and iron gates
 there are remains here that are neither yours nor mine
 rusty surfaces, the tangled edges of cryptic machinery
 half in the ground---half out of the ground
 ancient tattoos of prosperity and misfortune
 and who can tell which was which?
 strange animal that buries his automobiles in the woods
 slow ghost of frame without engine
 torn cushions and broken glass
 a cemetery of moss and rust, earth and rubber
 did capone really rummage these same woods?
 stamping out a path, feverish with a fat and menacing appetite
 crouching deep in America's nest of soul
 where even hoover (also fat with hunger) dared not step with any certainty
 sad friend SOLACE
 my god, is that all we're about---sanctuary
 these woods
 pacifying
 with their own strange currents of
 VIOLENCE
 are there Indians in these woods?
 Ghandi the Indian?
 Pocahontas the Native?
 There are none of India's ashes or bones or blood here
 ---not in these woods
 savages then?
 I hear no foreign footsteps
 my own footpaths tangle in every direction

my echoing footsteps have not fled
 the child's earliest impressions are still flickering in my mind
 my image remains--more brutal than ever--and refusing to fade
 desperate and lonely without a doubt

absolutely savage if we do not know the ghosts we disturb here
 this barn--ancient and stoic with its crooked walls leaking sunlight
 has seen much death, become her roadsign and talisman
 my eyes squint hard in the sun

and still do not recognize their visions

SANCTITY is in everything

it is strangely in that old barn (strange, for who can say what is holy
 so far from our hearts with time)

it is in the streetlamps

naked as they are---noble as (k)night

lonely as scarecrows

it is in the rainwater trenches

(shiny mirrors put for a short while on our ugly asphalt mornings

---reflecting heaven at our feet)

it is in the careful congregation with its family and its mild fire

it is in every woman's handbag

in the specific way she carries her head

in her smile and even

MORESO

in the stern anxiety of her eyes

in the weariness of her soul

(and of my soul)

it is in the dying old mildew chairs that soften our bones

into the first hours of morning

that once softened grandmother or grandfather bones

listening for fate and deliverance on the radio

(WAS IT EVER ANY LESS REAL THAN IT IS NOW?)

it is even there in heaven, with her stars and restless moon

there IS solace in the void

there is also VOID in the void

space is not empty, nor can we ever be full

After the Reunion

Chris Godsey

She is old
almost eighty
and as fields scream south
and we speed north
she lays the novel
in her lap
and disappears
into a
transcendental nap.

The transparent lids
of her eyes
are rice paper brittle
and soft.

She is old
almost eighty
and as states scream south
and we speed north
she lays the present
in her lap
and travels time
in a
sad, delicious nap.

Ann Kerber

I say beauty like the light refracted by prisms
Of cracked glass.

Jenny Martinson

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Poetry, Prose, Photography, and Illustrations are welcomed. All selection is democratic, in a forum based process. Authors remain anonymous until work is chosen. All submissions are property of The Roaring Muse. Material can be returned on request. If possible submit literature or digital images on a Macintosh compatible disk and remember, artwork must be of a scannable size (11" X 14" max.)

Submissions can always be dropped off at the English Dept. office. Or, you can mail you can mail your submissions to:

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Attn: The Roaring Muse
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**Deadline for Submissions will be
Friday, January 9, 1998**

All submitted artwork can be picked up in the English Department office.

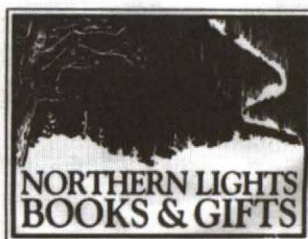
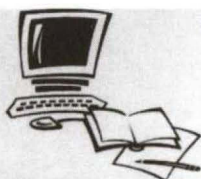
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