

Spring 2001

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Valparaiso University

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# the lighter

spring 2001





# the lighter

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All submissions remain anonymous through the selection process.

The Lighter welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation.

The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this magazine. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

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untitled	back cover	Adam Heet

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Cynthia Zuniga



## On Voices: An Introduction

Jamie Brand

As I lay there on my back in small-town Missouri, my shoulders, hips and heels supported by a firm guest bedroom mattress, I heard a voice from the distant family room. Within the short span of several hours this voice had become very familiar, for soon after our travel-weary car pulled into his driveway, my friend's grandfather began to talk. "Lemme tell you about Skimania. They're native to Montana, you know, but now live in Lake Michigan, just like how wild turkeys . . ." The sheer amount of information stored in his old tongue was astounding; my ears scrambled just to keep up. I think it was this effort that tired me out, sending me off earlier than usual to my temporary bedroom and my firm mattress. His voice still followed me, though, for it is a voice that, welcome or no, is alive, persistent and formed by a life vastly different than mine. Here is a man, speaking a distant era with different enjoyments and different agendas. In spite of these differences, I lay there in peace in small-town Missouri, supported by that distant voice.

Here, in this issue of the *Lighter*, you will encounter voices that are alive, persistent, and perhaps also stirring. This excites me, for just as I found life in an old man's Depression stories of bullheads and dishes of oatmeal, I find gems in these selections. The poems and prose continue to grow deeper in the weeks since I first read them for one simple reason: diversity. The poems and prose become more subtle and more meaningful because they demonstrate a range that is difficult for a collection to achieve. Many collections will contain one style or one viewpoint or one agenda, but the *Lighter* represents a broad community. It is this diversity that makes the *Lighter* something worth reading. The poems avoid any distinct pattern; they elude cliché, not only in form, but also in content and texture.

The majority of poetry is free verse, making the playful meter of "the river queen and the quest for unhappiness" (page 34) stand out. When I first read this poem, I fell into the sing-song rhythm rather quickly—"With frantic excitement I looked and I seen"—grateful for the fun subversion of traditional grammar. But what strikes me most about "the river queen" are the somber undercurrents that lurk beneath the sparkling river surface. On the surface, Aaron Miller, the author, may throw around words and phrases like "glee", "crazy blue mooses", "exuber-ancy" and "lucinations", but these are not ends in themselves; they season and accentuate the serious questions he raises. Here, in the midst of almost mindless banter, there are questions of fate, uncertainty and the ever-present fear of settling. Take a look, you'll be entertained and maybe even unsettled.

In contrast to "the river queen" other moods pervade poems such as "Penumbra" (page 26) and "The Loneliness Chosen" (page 48) whose quiet, respectful lines give us reason to pause. They each treat their subject with rever-

ence. In “Penumbra”, the voice is conversational in a way that inspires me to listen. As the lines themselves remind me,

He sings,  
but I don’t knock.

I know this is his only solitude.

This situates me precisely within the title, in the half-darkness of Sharin’ Faith Schroeder’s poem. While “Penumbra” depends on verbs—pacing, singing, walking—to create the mood, “The Loneliness Chosen” employs images and metaphors—“heavy folds of night”, “A gilded swamp of impotence”—to position the reader. Just as individual voices are distinct—some are raspy, sweet, nasal—these poems each speak with a characteristic sound, adding genuine depth to the collection as a whole.

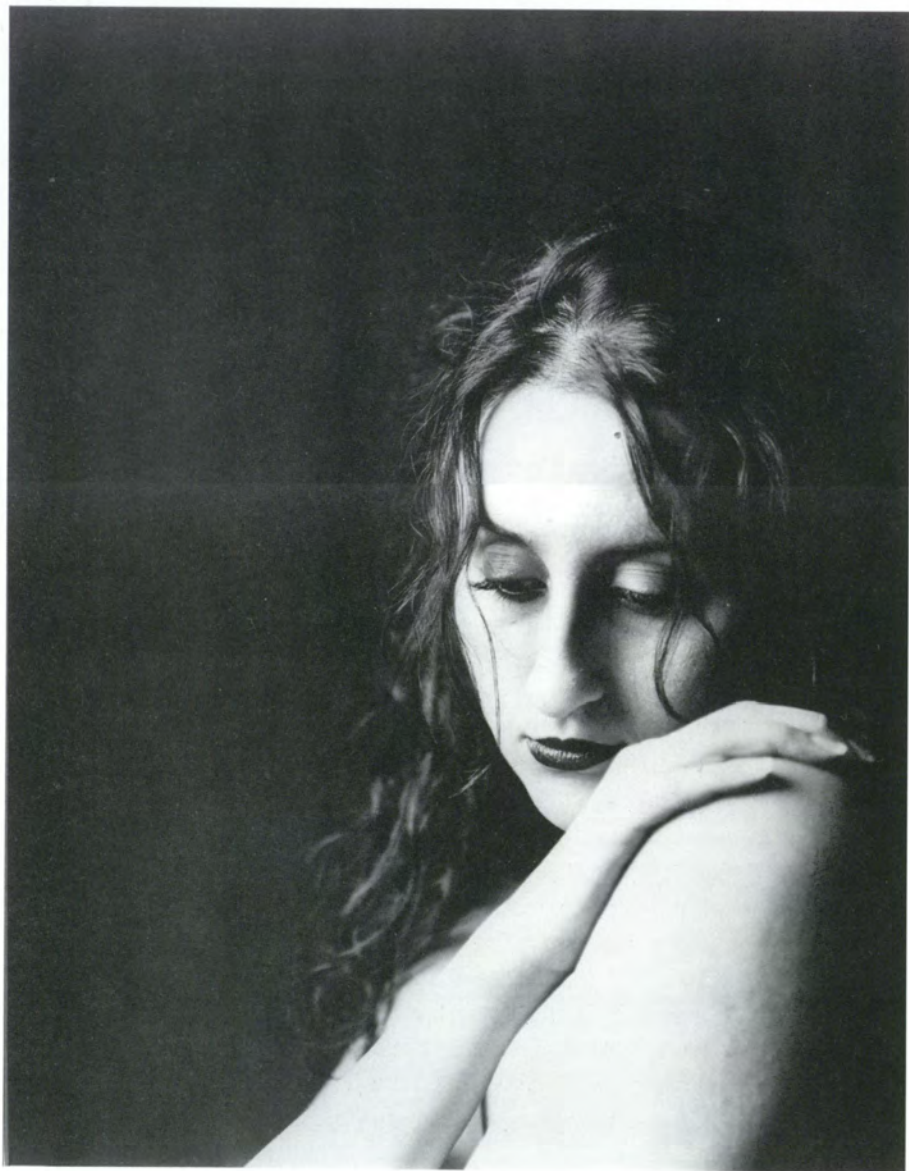
In a final tribute to the Lighter’s diversity, I’d like to look at the internal balance of “Belmont and Clark” (page 51). In addition to the contrast between these strong lines and the likes of “The Loneliness Chosen”, “Belmont and Clark” derives power from its form. The poem is split perfectly in two, with the reappearance of the title, signaling the principle theme’s return. The first four stanzas present, in order, a man, a woman, a child and then a burst of gold. As is often the case in music, this theme then returns with embellishment. The second four stanzas expand the issue; here these previous characters reappear as a homeless vagrant, a heroin junky, androgyny and a rainbow. Each previous possibility is exploited to its full extent.

My friend’s grandfather spoke with only one voice as I lay in small-town Missouri, but the Lighter speaks with many. It speaks with the voice of a campus. Not only is it both playful and serene, but also intimate and expansive. In this semester’s Lighter, we are like the traveler in “Communion” (page 25) as we drive next to a train, the poems acting as “headlights hinting at our ways ahead.” This is an apt description, for as Schroeder describes—and the Lighter depicts—the world is truly “full and deep and dark.”





Rodger Hoke



Cynthia Zuniga

## Jamie Brand

### In Heat

Every once in a while  
a happiness fit for children and pregnant women  
steals into my rib cage,  
seizing my lungs.  
This tension is primal  
like a timid hug that carries  
the burden of unspoken love,  
needing to find language  
in arms and backs,  
shoulders and briefly touched hair.  
It is not the chemical reality of a hormone;  
no, it is being pulled to my knees,  
by an acre of thick, dark dirt,  
that I yearn to shovel into my mouth,  
caressing with tongue and teeth the rich soil,  
soil that births our very soul--  
but I don't,  
for people are already looking,  
peering suspiciously from the edge of their eyes.  
So I let the feld remain fallow in cloud-filtered light,  
and move on,  
arms tightly around my chest,  
wishing to keep this awareness  
if only until tomorrow.

Eden

The forest is thick with branches,  
gray and brown extensions of bark.  
Gently frothed milk drifts from the sky,  
the thoughtful gift of a thoughtful God,  
not wanting to bore the trees  
with water for every meal.  
But branches, resourceful branches  
catch each falling flake,  
mixing milky crystals with chilled sap and wind;  
(on the sky-side of every arm,  
snow lies like frosting)  
All the trees,  
all the branches,  
every twig a wedding cake.



Dirk van der Duim - On the Way





Amy McFadden - Lijiang, Yunnan, China

## Ryan Crim

### Archibald Leach

Archibald Leach would never have made it.  
A man like that could never be a star.  
His hopes of fame were so quickly faded.  
With a name like that he couldn't go far.

Archibald Leach was not debonair.  
He wasn't sexy, and he wasn't smart.  
He always lacked that certain savoir-faire.  
A man like that couldn't steal a girl's heart.

Archibald Leach, he was far from urbane.  
He never married; surely not five times.  
To tell the truth he was a bit mundane.  
Archibald Leach never saw his own prime.

Archibald Leach exists inside me;  
A fact that's impossible to recant.  
In spite of everything denied me,  
Someday, I too, will be called Cary Grant.

## Ryan Crim

### American History

I never dreamed I'd start a revolution.  
I left from England to escape the king.  
I signed my name to the Constitution.  
I ate with the Natives on Thanksgiving.

I left from England to escape the king,  
Puritan , Protestant, and Quaker;  
I ate with the Natives on Thanksgiving  
Before I sent them to their maker.

Puritan Protestant and Quaker;  
And Africans were soon brought in.  
Before I sent them to their maker,  
Slavery had to begin.

And Africans were soon brought in;  
Proud men became my slaves.  
Slavery, it had to end,  
So I started digging graves.

Proud men became my slaves,  
Marching in lines of Blue and Gray.  
So I started digging graves  
And I buried a million men that day

Marching in lines on VJ-day,  
I showed the World the American way,  
And I buried a million men that day.  
I am the Enola Gay.

I showed the World the American way  
By sending my sons to Vietnam.  
I am the Enola Gay,  
Reborn in the form of Napalm.

My sons came home from Vietnam,  
They never could escape the screams  
Reborn in the form of Napalm  
Exploding in their dreams.

I never could escape their screams;  
I've killed a billion lives.  
Exploding in my dreams  
Is everything which I despise.

I've lived a billion lives;  
I never dreamed I'd start a revolution.  
I became that which I despise,  
When I signed the Constitution.

hysteriarallybeliefdisappointment

This isn't phony beatlemania...

bob is yelping helplessly with excitement and  
squinting with tears in his eyes

i'm clapping and holding my sign

He Speaks

neo-bullshit-hippies stand and throw

their fists in the air like Che impostors

the crowd gets chanting

we chant again and again and clap in rhythm until He comes out  
and answers our questions

"living in fear = impending shitty life"

idealism runs rampant

but my cynic self wins and i know He can't win and i can't change

John Wells

---

The Two With the Great Thoughts and Me

the Two with the  
great thoughts  
and me on a pier.

Ivory moon low hung over trees  
and gently drops surprisingly soon and red  
into the forest.

From Bohr to women to energy to eternity  
and I sucking seemingly deafeningly on my briar.

Sleepy clinks from moored boats  
echo on the woods

and a feisty pair of coons pierce serenity.

Bitter smoke forces sacrilegious spit.

The Two with the Great thoughts

and me with my briar

in red-moon late July.



Dirk van der Duim - Uprights

John Wells

Woody Guthrie's Books

In a shit shop old and dank I perused  
And found a copy of the Rubaiyat used  
That was printed in '25.  
I thought about all the great old brains  
That have pondered it's truthful quatrains.



## Laurie Shover Schmidt

### Matters of Perspective

The mangled, wounded fuselage  
rests dismantled with dismembered wings.  
Two young girls stare, shocked in disbelief,  
too young to understand such things, virgin to such grief.

One moment life was simple, mischief fun; \*  
Sneaking into Daddy's den, the private, keep out one.  
Forbidden couch became trampoline, synchronized bouncing through air,  
their own private conspiracy; life without a care.

Then suddenly bliss ended with a bang and sickening crunch.  
Unexpected sounds of violent endings.  
Destruction  
delivered after lunch.

Daddy's treasured model plane he took such time and care to build, flew  
shot from the spot he had hung it  
and plummeted  
to the ground.

Upstairs,  
Mama dropped her ironing,  
she heard  
but just ignored the sound.

Her soap opera was being interrupted,  
a national emergency they said.  
Something strange was happening in Dallas and  
President Kennedy was dead.

Downstairs, daughters mourned their losses,  
preparing to let their mother know  
something awful had happened in their basement  
climbing careful stairs, they felt tears flow.

But Mama wasn't where they thought she would be  
her ironing board and T.V. stood alone.  
Nothing in their world seemed as it should be.  
Sobbing cries from other voices chorused their own.

Outside, a shocking scene ensnared them,  
images they'd never seen before.  
Neighbors moving aimless down tree lined streets,  
abandoned, empty cars with open doors.  
A group of weeping women with their mother, clinging  
to each other, crying hard.  
How, the girls wondered, could this happen?  
Everyone, it seemed, already heard.

That Daddy's treasured model had been broken,  
wrecked and ruined, pitifully so.  
The older girl turned to the younger,  
"Uh-oh," she said. "Looks like they already know."

Jeff Flores

Haiku 1

So sad a seabed,  
With frantic storms essential.  
Lather and sweet mist.



Kari Cress

Shelly Black

The Night So Silent

I step into the night  
The night so silent  
In the distance  
Flash  
So silent  
So sudden  
Once again  
The sky opens its clouded skin  
Revealing a flash of veins  
Again  
And  
Again  
I stand to watch in awe  
The sky revealing its lifeblood.



Cynthia Zuniga - Light



Josh Messner - fredricksburg

Sharin' Faith Schroeder

Communion

The train horn fills the night around me,  
full and deep and dark.

The train and I,  
we travel side by side within the blackness  
headlights hinting at our ways ahead

I on the road, the train on the track,  
Always traveling the same speed.

The rumbling of the boxcars on the track becomes a hush  
the movement of ourselves within the void becomes a stillness

We are silently together.

We are one.

We are alone.

I am going home.



Sharin' Faith Schroeder

Penumbra

The tile shines up at me in the half-darkness.  
Dirty in the corners  
from mopping without sweeping,  
like the moon's reflection  
in muddy water.  
It is too hot to stand still.  
I pace.

I have no keys.

My friend plays the guitar  
behind the other door--  
a familiar song that I don't know the words to--  
He sings,  
but I don't knock.  
I know this is his only solitude.

There is one tile that squeaks.  
Every time I pass his door I step on it.  
Every time I thought I'd miss it.  
I'm glad he doesn't notice.  
I like to hear him play.

Walking is cooler than standing still.



Adam Heet

Lisa Farver

I WISH I WERE ILLITERATE

In the corner of the room  
there are some newsweek magazines  
dating back to the mid-eighties.  
Ronald Reagan's face is staring blankly at me  
asking me why i'm not crying  
i say why did you fuck up the national debt?  
and don't tell me what not to do with my money--  
I'm merely being practical.  
I'm practically invisible behind this boring magazine  
the story of my life is blurred  
it's smudged, too lewd to read.  
Your cigarette is sitting  
in the ashtray next to me  
The acrid smoke is curling up my nostrils  
it creeps insidiously  
i think that i might sneeze  
and toss your air right out of me  
leave it sitting on the pages of this dirty magazine  
until they soak too wet  
the pages stuck together  
they won't turn

Nicolas J. Valenti

“I Want a Steak”

Mouth dry  
under cavernous summer  
skies, desert rain sluices  
dust-encrusted throat. Fifty  
pounds sit on a rock,  
welcome friend of gray  
stone. From the Tooth of Time  
I see the sun rise,  
sparking memory  
of sunset over Mt. Phillips,  
four days before. My hands  
remember similar stone  
at Cimmarroncito camp, cramping  
hand and foot.

The last source of water  
half a day behind, last  
day of footsores half  
a day ahead. Chief  
gave the signal, shoulders  
resuming their burden,  
clothes, tent, trash, food  
nearly gone, like the rock  
ahead, when ashen  
stone stopped being under my feet,  
I threw off my brain  
bucket and screamed.



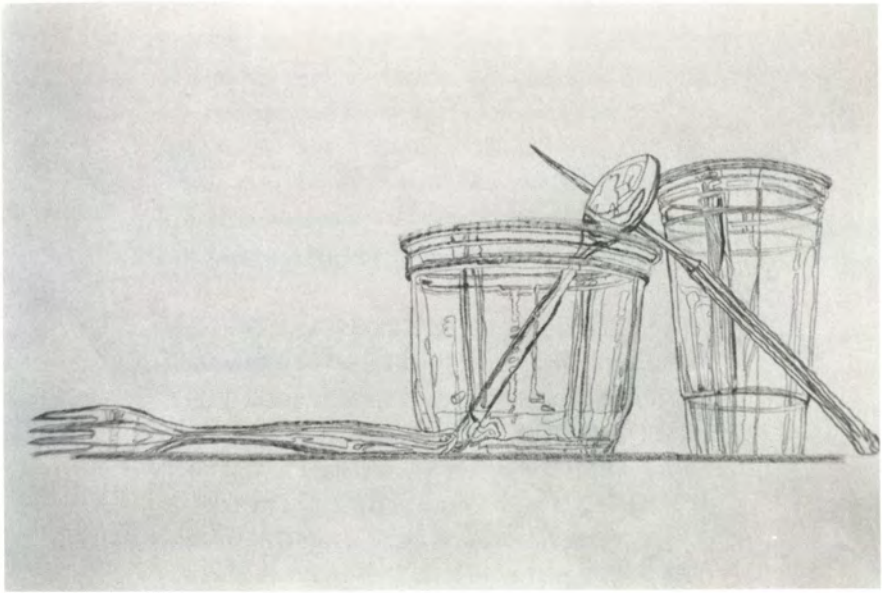


Cynthia Zuniga - Dirty Laundry

## Uncle Bert and the danger cheese

Uncle Bert walked in the room to get himself a snack,  
 When he stepped in, he heard a sound, coming from his back.  
 He turned real quick in time to hear a hateful little moan  
 coming from a shape that 'minded him of well-aged provolone.  
 It stared him down and made him sweat til forehead = river.  
 It looked so mean and scared him so, it really made him quiver.  
 He bolted as only a cheese frightened man is able  
 Straight for the living room, til he bumped into a table.  
 He turned the corner heading for the open bedroom door,  
 When he fell hard, falling falling head hitting floor.  
 Everything got hazy then, nothing coming clear  
 Bert just laid there letting out a single little tear  
 Not from pain of course, its said that he felt nothing  
 Since '69 when he got shot by well-armed Mr. Charlie  
 Well, in his skull a plate was placed, made of solid metal  
 To fill the hole made in there by a twisted piece of shrapnel.  
 That being said, lets get back to dear old Uncle Bert  
 Still lying there, his top-half covered with the same old yellow shirt.  
 The cheese, it sauntered right up to Bert's big puffy-red face  
 It smiled with glee and told him that he was not full of grace.  
 Bert thought fast - how to solve this problem he had found  
 and he was smart, he thought he could just melt the little mound.  
 And melt he did (and this is how he solved his small dilemm-o)  
 He kicked the curd right into the box of his trusty micro  
 The door he slammed and set the timer on the box to eight.  
 As Kirk would say (and spock would do) "set phasers to annihilate"  
 Well Bert ate well, that day and week, as curd-boy made him food.  
 With grilled cheese sandwiches and cheeseburgers as plentiful as they were  
 good.

The moral of the story is (because that is the mission)  
 Do not keep cheese until you have beaten it into submission.



Sarah Snyder - Domestic Hostility



Aaron Miller

river queen and the quest for unhappiness

Even as I sat on the riverbank swell,  
I heard a loud sound that I know I knew well  
With frantic excitement I looked and I seen  
That wonderful figure I knew as the queen  
And what did she say in response to my query?  
"Hello my son, its time you should marry"  
This comment evoked quite a thought of disaster,  
As there's plenty to ask, I just haven't asked'er  
For you see, I never saw fit to get involved  
With one so int'rested in my lack of resolve  
Who could use it so well to her personal gain  
That I guarantee I'd be left in the rain.

But what the queen said was true, and it had to be done  
I just needed to find that most "fortunate" one  
Who'd be happy to spend her whole life with me  
In absolute happiness goodness and glee  
She would use me and toy with my ev-er-y day  
And make me feel bad in a terrible way  
By bringing up all of the things I detest  
Until the day my sorry bones could rest.

But its really not bad, the queen said to me  
In a tone that suggested exuber-ancy.  
Her mood lightened mine, in a wonderful way,  
But I guess that's what river queens do when they say  
Almost anything with such a tone as that.

Well a long story short is the way this tale's told  
My prediction was right, for now I am old.  
With a grizzled gray beard and a shiny round head  
I think its 'bout time that I soon should be dead  
And I hope for it every day.

For my wife is as bad as there ever could be  
She escaped long ago to insanity  
Where big pink elephants and crazy blue mooses  
All ride around daily in rainbow cabooses  
And while that is funny, I'll heartily agree  
It was only funny at first, at least funny, to me.  
For after a decade of 'lucinations and crazies  
I have to admit that the "normal" gets hazy.

The river queen was wrong, far too wrong, yes-sir-ee,  
It's a mighty bad thing to be sucked in, like me.  
A poor sap who knew nothing and was left to bemoan,  
What a smarter man would have seen and have known.

Aaron Miller

### Monkeys

Everything was going great  
The sun was shining  
And the monkeys were nowhere to be seen,  
But even as I realized that it was quiet, too quiet  
They arrived  
They messed with everything  
My mind  
My life  
My brain - especially my brain.  
But now they've gone again,  
Back to their tired little monkey holes and fortresses in the trees  
To scream and clatter to each other tales of mischief to come  
And plan future ways to mess things up.

Jessica C. Pleuss

Happy Pills

Back on the antidepressant bandwagon...  
Here we go, for another ride.  
Felling down? Hop on!  
It seems so inviting,  
So easy...too easy.  
Take a pill, be happy.  
If only it were true...  
Take a pill, be happy -- I wish.  
No...  
Take a pill,  
Lose your appetite,  
Become an insomniac,  
Watch your hands shake,  
Wait for weeks...  
Working yet? Are you happy?  
Happy? Not yet...  
That shaking finally stopped though  
So I guess I'll wait it out a little more...  
Happy yet?  
I don't know. Is it working?  
Where's my magic wand?  
Why aren't the happy pills working?  
Time. Time. Time.  
Time I'd rather spend being happy.  
Impatient. Me. Impatient?  
Wouldn't you be?  
Let's pop another pill...  
And hope.

Robert Pence

Always Tomorrow

*In memory of Daniel Kado and Michael Davis who  
lost their lives 2/5/01 in a tragic accident at Bethlehem Steel.*

Drawn near and far,  
Souls of human steel  
Pass life's boundaries  
Through cold impersonal gates.

Filling floors, platforms  
Amongst grease, graphite, stench,  
Life, death, become one  
With molten steel bright as the sun.

Infernos spew multicolor clouds  
Sampled by iron lungs  
Rising above spirits  
Returning later part mortal.

Ashes ride in pure rain,  
Landing on earth's  
Tired struggling skin  
Forming tomorrow's unfolding.

Scripts read eternal,  
Work, love, time,  
Repressed at each portal,  
Push past troubled decades.

Thousands of dreams cast,  
Seeking severance, always tomorrow.



Amanda DePalma - Terminal



Adam Heet

## Theodore Hoelter

I would lie down

I would lie down in the morning  
As the sun stands up rose tall  
To prick the eastern winds,  
As the stars all fall,  
And the morning murmurs brush  
My blinking thoughts to dream  
And bid the world be silent yet,  
To wait on reverie.

I would lie down in the morning,  
Though the spiteful day should call  
Me to its trudging sins,  
to bear its golden pall;  
Though the hours pass me by,  
Burning hotly toward the night,  
Yet in morning would I revel,  
In the shunning of the light.

I would lie down in the morning,  
I would hide me from the dawn,  
And though years might thus slip by me  
I'd not grieve that they were gone.  
I would lie down in the morning,  
Take my leave of life and light  
If beside me in the morning  
You would stay, until night.



---

Shannon Kruse

A HARD THING

Tough, weathered skin.  
Laughing, laughing with flared nose  
Teasing, always teasing.  
Children climb on his knees.

Smacking thin lips he slams the table  
Body racked with coughing fit.  
Anger, frustration, desperation.  
Spilled the milk.

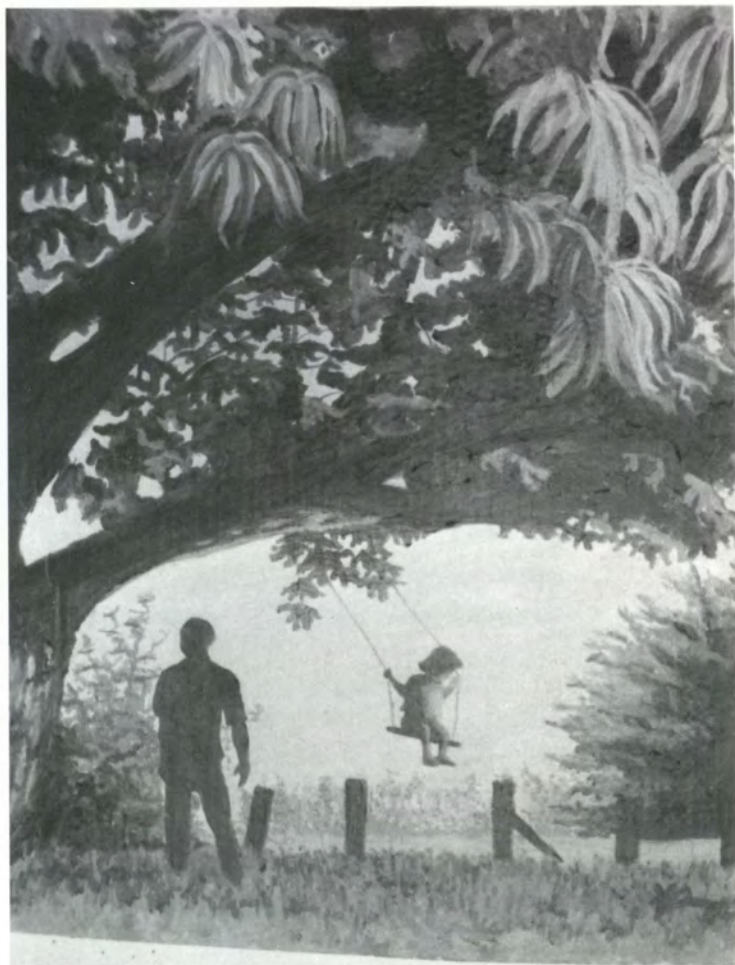
Smaller now, thin veiled skin  
Coughing, coughing with flared nose.  
Sleeping, always sleeping.  
Children tiptoe past his knees.

Sagging skin and watery eyes.  
Crumpled body in the chair.  
Sorrow, confusion, and depression  
Lost the remote.

Smoothed skin, painted smile  
Crying, crying with flared noses.  
Weeping, always weeping,  
The children throw down roses.



Kari Cress



Anne Dralle - Swing

## Shannon Kruse

## Dance

Side to side their feet do glide  
Quick step click, wink at chick.  
Lure, lure, to allure  
Jab, stab, sweaty hands grab.

Flicker, flicker, pulse is quicker  
Touch, touch, but not too much.  
Quicker, quicker, bodies slicker.  
Closed eyes feel the touch.

Quick lick of the lip  
Salty, sweaty, sloppy slap.  
Dull humming, whirring trip,  
Enter, leave, enter trap.

Michael Foland

Ten things

breath  
rustling bedclothes  
a rebuke  
reflections  
marginal regret  
the morrow  
mercy  
conception, miscarriage  
the commonplace

## Michael Foland

### Evenings

A man stumbles through the door into the room where I sit reading.  
Collapsing upon a chair, he buries his face into the crevice of his elbow.  
The heaving undulations of his body belie the fact that he is weeping internally,  
And each tremendous inhalation threatens to rend his coat  
Whose seams groan in protest and then sag gratefully with each release.  
I cannot ignore the sorrow that spills out upon on his breath,  
For it dusts the room entirely, settles, congeals.  
I feel it on my skin.

Nonplussed by this spectacle, I return to reading.

Michael Foland

The Loneliness Chosen  
(For the average: tense and frozen)

From the outstretched fingertips of town, trembling:  
The heavy folds of night speed their comfort  
And still the lights with a lullaby of the deepest blue.  
This great expanse,  
A humming sweep of nothingness punctuated by humanity.  
From here I marvel at the loneliness they chose.

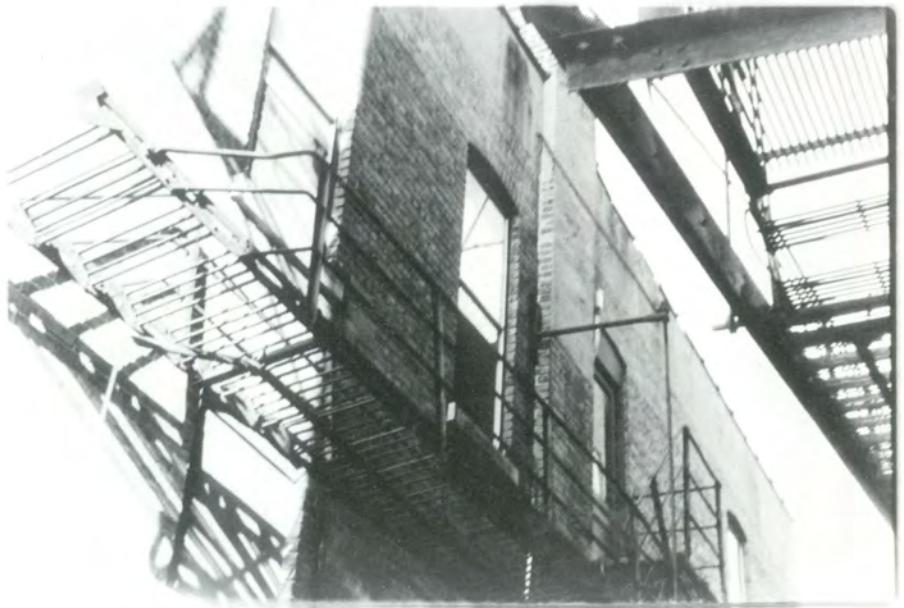
From the mouth of neighborhoods, speaking: \*  
The properties elbow and quarrel  
And steal covetous glances at the stately tree, the well-groomed shrub.  
This great expense,  
A gilded swamp of impotence enamored of polity.  
From here I ponder the loneliness we chose.

From the balcony of thought, dozing:  
The soul casts a depth incomprehensible  
And inscribes strange proverbs upon its limbs.  
This drop of oil afloat on a puddle,  
Alive in a mistake of rain and shoddy sewage.  
From here I discover the loneliness chosen.



Amy McFadden - Chicago, 2000





Amy McFadden - Glen Elynn, Main Street

Lauren J. Holder

Belmont and Clark

is a man in silver sequins and shiny stilettos  
looking like Liza in her finest hour,

a woman wrapped in a black vinyl corset, raccoon eyes  
with crimson ribbon lips; a mistress of darkness, but not the night,

a wobbling toddler in a Grateful Dead t-shirt  
with happy parents following hand-in hand, loving daddies,

and gold dust glinting on black skin  
while glitter glimmers over crystalline eyes.

Belmont and Clark is a homeless vagrant in 7-11, looking  
like Morrison slumped below the Slurpee machine,

a heroin junkie in a head shop doorway  
with bruised eyes lucid and sallow skin translucent,

androgyny dancing to tribal beats behind the bricks  
along the alleys where Voltaire sighs and Medusa circles,

and rainbows rippling above straight-and-narrow streets,  
floating over the AIDS clinic where short lives cease.

*Viva la Vie Boheme.*

Lauren J. Holder

Independence Day

*for the boy with a sparkler outside Cabrini Green*

Collective consuming helplessness causes  
another color to combust in thick firmament  
but this bomb bursts in the air  
as a child collapses to the ground.

The sky lights above  
with a shot of sulfur blue,  
and the boy chokes as his fading  
eyes reflect explosion.

He gasps,  
through a tired throat overflowing  
with resigned crimson which once ran sustenance  
through his little-boy limbs.

Mother's waiting countenance  
twists with disbelief, distorts with grief  
when the messenger arrives at the doorstep-  
the threshold of so many dreams unreal.

His life now escapes onto the asphalt,  
it now feeds the urban jungle  
that claims young souls who do not understand  
and cannot ever hope to overcome.

---

Sarah "Otto" Marxhausen

Being Owned

Of course I respect you  
As a woman as a person as an intelligent individual.  
Your womanness  
Your personness  
Your intelligent individuality  
Are what make you near-perfect.  
I am constantly amazed  
By your strength by your courage by your will.  
I know you're no one's girl.

And so I'm sorry  
I can't help it  
But I can understand why women used to be property.  
Because there's something in me  
That raptures when I knot my fingers through your hair and say

*You're mine*  
*You're mine*  
*You're mine*

---

Armando X. Fernandez

PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE

Advantages in designs of the broken kind-  
Allow me to pursue my callused memories-  
Those hands of the forgotten sexual session-  
That brought to surface the joyous spray.

*PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE*

Spitting forward the truth unkind-  
Swatting the fly to the sound of a bellowing mime-  
Dylan waits to become a member of the church of the fabled sin-  
Confiscating the double virgin's prize.

*PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE*

Ballooning bulge of the blistered shaft-  
Bringing bye the black bird's beak-  
Enter the crowned head of state with shriveled pointed prance-  
August tampering with engorged gifted rack-

*PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE*

Irreverent screeching scuttles the landmark stations-  
Chances centered on channeled chalk crosses-  
Murky blood soaked sponges drink the lover' leavings-  
Past the oaken barrel used to host the two-toned queens from the Bronx-

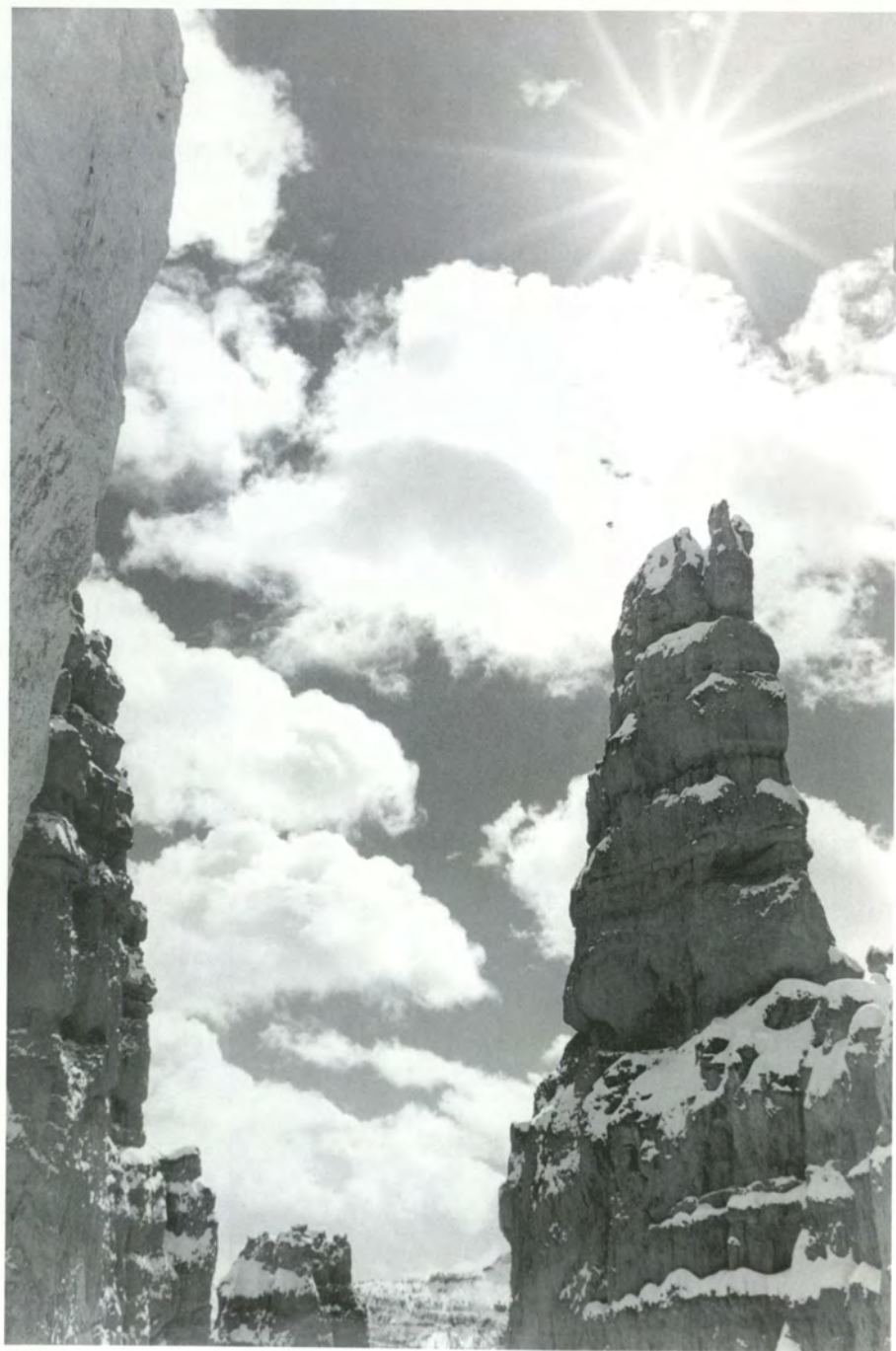
*PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE*

Big racked chickies opened for breakfast down by the dock-  
Reminding the remembered to be on time for dethroned fusion-  
Ice-capades run by street urchins refusing to give up the fight-  
Taunted nuns and derelict tool-boys suffice to say-

*PROTEST THE VIRGINAL SWINE IN ALL!*



Willie Stephen - Romantic Rapture



Kari Cress

Lynne Albert

a w a k e n i n g

7:15 7:15 7:15 7:15 7:15 - off

He sighed and opened his closet door, surveying coats clean and pressed, hanging in rows, pants folded neatly, shoes aligned.

He dressed promptly, ate, and left for work at 7:45 precisely, where he obediently continued his regular existence, acting as society dictated and wife commanded.

At exactly 12:00 he opened his lunch bag, studying his ham sandwich, lemon yogurt, and bag of pretzels - low fat and cholesterol free

... and something, something deep inside him could stand it no longer . . .

Mr. Jones closed the bag deliberately, his lips pressed tightly together, wadded it up, and tossed it into the can on the other side of the room.

A perfect shot. He smiled.

Then he opened the drawers of his filing cabinet and strew their contents over the floor exuberantly.

He spun around on his desk chair several times, opened all the windows, and turned on the radio, cranking it up to full volume. The sunlight was dazzling on the newly fallen snow, the frigid air fresh and exhilarating, and he couldn't help singing along with the music, turned up so loud that the whole room trembled.

He was out of tune and his voice cracked, but he only laughed.

Still laughing, he grabbed his jacket and raced down the hall breathlessly, pausing but briefly at his boss's door.

"Hey Sam! I'm off! I quit! Did you hear that! I quit!" Skipping and clicking his heels together in the air, he finally made his escape, but not before making a quick snow angel on the company lawn.





Dirk van der Duim - Foggy Night

Mark Macoun

January 12,

I came home today about...no wait. That's not quite right. "I came home" sounds like a mundance event, but this was quite far from it. The truth of the matter is I STORMED in to my house today after...well maybe not stormed. I mean Stormed would imply that...fuck it. you get the point. I came home. I mean I went into my house. I was on teh road for like foru hours, it was snowy, it was shityy, and I had to piss so bad that...fuck. There I go again. Exagerating. It's important that I don't exagerate, because the shit I have to say that's true... Whew...I mean. so anyway, I take my piss, I go to the kitchen, make some coffee...I was out of regular, and I still had that decaf that Bekka gave me when she was sleeping with me, so I used that. I was real disappointed 'casue it was late, and you know how I am in the evenings without my coffee. I figure I should just mainline caffeine or something. But whatever. I was making coffee, and I sat down and started to look at my fish. They usually calm me down. Soemthing about the way they...but there was this fucking Shadow.

You know how usually when there's a shadow there's something making it? Well tehre wasn't. It was just this blob of dark on teh ground in front of me. Like something was blocking out the light. But there wasn't anything. I mean I looked at the fixture, looked at the light bulb, checked the floor to make sure it wasn't a stain. I actually took some coffee and poured it on the shadow, just to make sure that it wasn't like a coffee stain. But I hadn't spilled anything there before, and it didn't look like coffee. It fucking flipped me out. You know? Just this frandom blot in the middle of your room and nothing to make it? So anyway, I just sat there and looked at IT for about two hours. After about a half an hour I re-checked everything just to make sure that there was nothing making it. Nothing. So I got frustrated after a while, and brushed my teeth and went to bed. I locked my bedroom door.

January 22,

It's still there. I haven't had company in a while. You now why. It's not like I have the fucking plague or anything. I mean you just piss the wrong people off and all of a sudden all of your friends are...but it's still there. So I started to talk to it. Don't get jealous. I mean I know I have you to talk to. I've always had you. It's just...There's something different about saying shit out loud, you know? Don't get me wrong. You're great, it's just... Well the shadow seems to be listening because I'm talking to it, and you don't ever do anything but suck words from my head. There's no real communication. Like throwing words into a hole. But the shadow listens. I think I'm starting to...I tried to give it a name. At first I thought of something normal, like Ralph. But that didn't work. It's not a Ralph. Actually, come on think about it, nothing is a Ralph really. So then I tried Ermot. Too evil. I sat there for like...I don't know the sun went down, but the point is, I can't fucking name the thing. And I want it to have a name. I wonder why I never tried to name you.

February 9,

Where the fuck is it? Where is it? Did you steal it? I mean it really isn't an it. I think it's a him. Or it was. A him. I don't know, 'cause he didn't have a name, but when he listened...It was real. I swear it was. I mean I'm not just making this shit up. I looked back, and I have seen this thing and told you about it, and it's real. It has to be. Or had to be. Whatever. I'm so fucking confused. I wish it would come back. It's weird. I mean I've never been in love before, and this fucking hurts. Christ! What am I saying? It was a black mark. A blotch. Not even black. Not even perceptible when you think about it. It wasn't there when the lights went out. How could I...Wait! WAIT! I know. Maybe...

I think I have to say goodbye to you now. I think I understand. I think there's only one way to handle this situation. I have to turn out all of the lights. Before that though, duct tape. I have to tape all the windows and under the door. Unplug the VCR, and the...the fucking STOVE! Pilot lights. LIGHTS. Fuck. There can't be anymore light. If I'm ever going to feel like that again there can be no more. I guess this is goodbye then. Geez. I'm sorry. You've served me well so far as you could. I mean I've loved you too. God I wish you could talk back. I just wish...Thank you for all that you've given me. I've just felt something more now, and I think the only way to get it back is my voice and the dark.



Adam Heet



Cynthia Zuniga

## Allison Schuette-Hoffman

### CARRIED AWAY

Lean close so that I might whisper.

I am a p.o.w. Missing in action.

You wouldn't know it to look at me. Oh yes, you can see me. Walking down the street, driving to work, grocery shopping. I have returned home to friends and family. But not entirely, not all of me.

I am a woman. I am POW, MIA.

This is hard to talk about. Not only because the suffering is difficult, but also because you may not understand. I've never worn combat fatigues. Never been through basic training, not Parris Island style. Never held a gun, grenade or rocket launcher. Yet, I fight my war every day. You fight in it, too—did you know? It's an undeclared war, unacknowledged except by the toughest grunts. Ignored. The sides shift as quick as a lizard's tongue flicks in and out. In the same moment you, or I, may be on both sides. Sides. Not helpful language. This is a war without lines. There. The difficulty again. How do you talk about a war without sides? How do you fight a war without lines? How do you survive?

I am a woman. My fatigues may one day be a mini skirt and stilettos, the next day, Farm and Fleet overalls and birkenstocks. I fight on more than one front at a time. I fight to see myself as beautiful in a culture that values young flesh, pencil-thin bodies, (oh, but with large breasts, please). I fight to see myself as not beautiful in a culture that values women only as bodies, sexual bodies, for-your-pleasure bodies.

My fatigues may one day be a three piece suit with sensible pumps, the next day, bright, blue hair with combat boots. I fight to be accepted, to prove I can make it just like you. I fight to change the very fact that we value success over passion, over fullness, over art.

My fatigues may one day be a favorite, worn pair of ratty cords and tennis shoes, the next day, a sassy dress, 70's style, with a cut out back and shit kickers (uncomfortable, clunky but cool ass boots). I fight to belong, to be one-of-the-many, to be accepted. I fight to develop a style, to show I am different, to express my particularity.

I am a woman.

My basic training started at age five, when I kissed a boy at school and everyone teased me. At age eight when I slugged a boy for kissing me. At age fifteen when I didn't stop one from touching my so young breasts or making me touch his so old erection. At age twenty-one when I sat listening to women tell their stories of sexual harassment and rape. At age twenty-three when I walked the Bronx streets to my waitress job (note the fatigues: black skirt, black tights, black shoes, red lipstick; dark, opaque blackness—you thought it was sexy, I thought it was protection), walked down those streets under mortar fire, bent under the weight of cat calls.

Combat training 101: Ignore the enemy. Allow them to think they've broken through your lines without your knowledge. Prepare for a sneak attack when they're all too comfortable and smug. Shoot to kill.

Combat training 201: Fight fire with fire. Flip them off. Tell them to Fuck Off. Yell at them to Get Off on someone their own size.

Combat training 301: Direct frontal assault. Hit 'em where they least expect it. March right up, lift your shirt and expose your munitions. While you've got 'em off balance, kick 'em where it hurts. Leave 'em alive to tell their friends: Don't mess with her.

I am a woman, missing in action, prisoner of war.

My arsenal is eclectically stocked since you never know what the situation will call for. Mary Daly's *Pure Lust*, Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating*, Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Goddess pendant, Motherpeace tarot cards, magic tools. (This is not simple superstition; charms can protect, even if it's just your mind and heart; in war, after all, one enters the spirit world). Food, food, and more food. Food with sugar, food with salt, food with fat. Comfort food. Extra padding, extra protection. And cigarettes.

Dogmatism: the constant assertion that one is right, accompanied by righteous indignation for those who disagree. Substituting a black and white world view for one which accepts ambiguity. Dogmatic: pulling out all the stops. Like a grenade, dogmatism explodes embedding the victim's body with tiny fragments that he (or she) will never remove completely.

As much as a device of pain, a weapon can be a form of protection. Alertness, for example, becomes armor in war. I view everything through a lens as if I wear a miniature starlight scope, like some cyberoptic science-fiction head gear. I see everything in its green moving light, everything that should be hidden—your true motives, how you unconsciously act out the role you've inherited from a culture entrenched in sexism. She thinks she needs something particular from him; I know she ignores me and directs her gaze exclusively at him because men always deserve the attention in mixed company. (You, a strong woman, should have known better, I thought.) He, the random stranger, thinks he's being friendly when he looks at me and smiles; I know exactly What's On His Mind. The Christian church thinks its inclusive, calls itself catholic; I know that even the simplest changes, like inclusive language, border on heresy, know that women and queer people are *always* an issue. (You think it's any coincidence that your savior is male?)

With my starlight scope, I begin to draw the lines.

With my anger, I fortify them.

This is how weapons are dangerous. Hefting their weight, I know their essential purpose is to find an Other, to objectify and create an enemy. All subtleties are forbidden. Men are men.

Anger, the heaviest of all the weapons I carry and the most inaccurate, is Danger with a capital D. Advancing and then parrying in anger, I hurt those close to me and singe my own eyebrows in its friendly fire. Anger becomes for me what the war became for Mary Anne Bell in *The Things They Carried*: intoxicating, addictive, a fire which, upon consumption, consumes the addict. Addiction, a weapon? You bet. Self-destructive to be sure, but what better armor than the repulsion and fright of a negative aura, an absolute absence, a lacuna?

When I was a child, I loved to read. Summers, representing the freedom to read what I pleased, especially appealed to me. Every week of its three months, I walked down the street from my house through the park to the blacktop lot of the Catholic church where the bookmobile waited. From the bright, hot sun, I stepped into the air conditioned truck. George, so approachable with his long, curly hippie hair and lanky body, always tilted his head at me in the same way. I relished the subtle intimacy of my relationship to the librarian. George always made sure new books were available for me and took pains to greatly admire the list of books I turned in for the summer reading contest. I left every time greedily weighed down by the seven books I was allowed to check out.

Walking home past the ball diamonds where parents cheered for their children and argued with the umpires, I would let my mind wander away from the park. The grass, the gravel trail, the tennis courts, the "big boys" whomping on the basketball court, the kids in the playground carefully watched from benches—it all receded as I imagined the feel of each book and what their worlds might be like.

Once, when I was about ten, I was stopped, forced out of my reverie, by a "big boy." (Now, I think he must have been only fourteen. He seemed Old to me then.) His presence alone terrified me, but he wasn't simply passing by. No, he was on some hormonal rush. "Go down on me," he said. "Suck my dick." The words, barren of meaning, floated towards me. I tried to hold off from understanding them, but I couldn't avoid reading his body and posture loud and clear. He wanted something from me that I didn't want to give and he knew it; it flashed in his eyes—I'm going to make you.

I did nothing. I stood there and clutched my books. I didn't scream to the tee-ball parents, or run towards the nearest crowd of people. I didn't stomp on his foot with Ramona spunk or frantically think of what Nancy Drew would do. I was a blank, a nothing.

Two boys, small like me yet obviously ballsier, came to my rescue. As they challenged the "big boy," who began to push them around, I was released from his spell of power. Suddenly, I could run and I ran, still clutching my books, the two blocks home. I ran without looking back, knowing that the "big boy" was beating up those who had cared enough to help me. I ran and I did not ask for help, I did not tell anyone that there was a fight. I ran home and I did not speak of it at all. I was mute and missing in action.



Thirteen years and several more traumas later, I told a friend, I don't believe in love anymore. Delivered in spite, my voice surprised me. So sharp and cutting, it completely failed to express how I wrestled with despair, how my cynicism scared me. It was as if telling my brain to hug this friend and weep, my body had responded by kicking him in the shins. Communication failed, within and without.

The traumas were partially responsible for this failure. Those selves missing in action added up to an absence whose muteness terrified me. I hungered for a new vocabulary and grabbed at what was immediately around me. Here lay the rest of the responsibility, for what I found was the language of war.

This is the language of war: *go down on me, suck my dick, I'm going to make you*. It's language used as a weapon which aims to cut you up then down to size. It's language which appropriates your spirit, sends a part of yourself reeling, because it turns you into an object, a blank thing. It does not try to create a safe environment where relationship can flourish. It isn't interested in truth or expression, only in asserting itself and its power over you.

This, too, is the language of war: *shoot to kill, fuck off, men are men*. I fooled myself when I adopted the warrior tongue. I believed I was empowering myself, equipping myself to fight fire with fire. Instead, I became the enemy I fought. I tricked myself into being captured; the language of war imprisoned me.

Do you know what it's like to be a prisoner of war, chained to its language? To look out your window every morning, gauging the battlefield, wondering if this is going to be a quiet day or your last day or the day you kill someone? To watch your lover sleep and wonder if he's a spy or an enemy truly won over by the rationality of your cause? To approach every encounter skeptical because it could create a conflagration, to suspect everything because it is a war after all? To view your clothes as fatigues and camouflage, to examine your memories for skills and training, to count your feelings as weapons?! (Think about it.)

For those of you who do, I weep for you as I weep for me. It took a long time to realize I was a prisoner because at first I admired the keenness of my perception, the alertness of my stance, the singlemindedness of my life. Now I hear the clatter of shackles as I walk through this world; I feel their weight. I realize I have become like the least sympathetic of O'Brien's characters, Azar, so dedicated to war he couldn't see a dance of grief as anything but comical, so dedicated to the illusion of play he couldn't stop maneuvering even out of compassion. As a warrior, I had decimated vocabulary even more. Truncating language, I cut myself off from worlds of meaning.

I am a prisoner of war, missing in action. And I am grief-stricken.  
I have accepted the enemy's terms and surrendered to their assignation.  
*Victim*, they call me. *Victim*, I repeat.

I am a woman in an unkind, broken, lost world.

With all the vocabulary I can muster, I try to tell the stories that will save me. *I am wounded*, I say. *Place your hand here*. *I have hurt you*, I say. *Forgive me*. I stumble over the new syllables and grammar, but I refuse to return to the deceptive and simple warrior tongue. I am human, not a battlefield.

There is no happy ending. Language does not change reality; it only changes me. And I am not—nor may I ever be—whole. For some of us, loss and pain will be the last words. Nevertheless, I hold out on the hope that, at the very least, they cannot exhaust language.



Cynthia Zuniga

## Allison Schuette-Hoffman

### NEW YORK PORTRAITS

#### I. LUCKY DOG

What they say about New York City is true. It's hectic, packed, huge, considered by its residents to be the center of the universe, and chic. In Manhattan, even the humble diner can take on airs. To work the grill at Lucky Dog, you needed a degree from culinary school. The potato chips served with a burger weren't greasy, no-name brand chips, but expensive, gourmet vegetables lightly fried in 100% non-hydrogenated canola oil. The prints on the walls you might find flaking and yellowed in any midwestern diner, but here the originals had been kept in mint condition and framed like prizes.

Paula and I had seen the Baker Wanted ad in the *Times*. New to the city, fresh from the Cascade Mountains, we did not yet know about the caliber of New York diners. We only knew that we wanted to continue loving our work, to create food with others who sensed its aesthetic, purpose, and meaning. In the mountains we had volunteered in the kitchen at a retreat center where we cooked, baked, organized workers, listened to music, and talked about politics, philosophy, religion, art, and whatever else called for attention. That was our training.

Surprisingly, we were hired. I can only guess now that it must have been about money. Without experience we could be paid less than a professional. We split the full time job, each taking a ten hour shift, two or three days a week.

Because the diner was to open in a few days, everyone was nervous as hell. The owner had a few other restaurants, so he, at the very least, knew how to pose calmly as if this was all old hat. But Rod and Jim, the chef and sous chef, were wrecks you tried to avoid. Rod had a public to impress and was justifiably picky. When my cakes fell and my pie crusts were misshapen and ugly, he stormed around the small baking area, grumbling, until he was calm enough to seethe advice through his teeth. Jim received as much criticism as I did except his sin seemed to be not caring enough. He would come to smoke in the basement where I would take my breaks and pacing furiously, complain, complain, complain. Innocently, I tried to give advice as if I were still in the mountains. There, the kitchen functioned as a community, and you only shared a problem if you genuinely wanted someone's perspective. Misjudging Jim's incessant ranting, I still had to learn that community building in NY was a difficult and often treacherous task.

Our second week of work, I showed up for the first shift. Rod met me at the door, handed me an envelope, put a hand on my shoulder, and fired us. I was rattled but not surprised.

Months later Paula and I returned with some friends for dinner. In particular, we brought Christina, a friend and New York trained chef. For Paula and me, it was playful payback to hear her critique every part of the meal. *This chicken is dry and they should have used thyme instead of tarragon. That chef has a heavy hand. He should have kept the portobello mushroom simple. I would lightly sauté it before broiling it with goat cheese and sage.* We laughed and said how foolish it was for them to let us go. They didn't know what a good thing they had.

Our laughter made me brave, brave enough to laugh at myself. I had failed against New York's standards, but I had brazenly tried. Besides that, my own standards seemed good enough. The aesthetic of a beautiful pastry is nice, but the imperfections of community give far more sustenance.

## II. ON THE STOOP

At first, we didn't know how to believe him. Later, we didn't even want to try. It's the difference, I suppose, between sympathy and pity.

Chris, who rented a room in the building next door, was a talker and a drunk. He spun stories well without prompting so that his only requirement for good company was your presence. Kevin and I met him on our stoop in the Bronx over cigarettes.

We were briefly fascinated by this *real* New Yorker. He said he was a jeweler, he said he was a father, he talked about when he was our age... When he learned that we were living in community with three others, he said, "Ah, a commune. Shit, the stuff I did as a hippie." Kev and I listened as time ran away.

It soon became obvious that Chris was lonely, that his life inside wasn't put on hold to talk to us. Kev and I, on the other hand, saw our smoke breaks as interruptions, as temporary or peripheral to our lives. When his stories began to repeat themselves, it became harder to be indulgent. The fact that we were indulging him at all was painful. We knew that our insincerity added to the *pathos* of Chris' life, that now we were responsible for him, too. And we hadn't asked for it; it just was.

Out of some resentment then, we began in our own minds to question Chris' stories. If he was a jeweler, why did he never leave, except to return with a fist clenched around a bottle shaped paper bag? If he had a daughter, where was she? (On the other hand, it wasn't hard to believe that he had once been a hippie or at least part of the drug counterculture. Another judgment.)

We began to avoid Chris. It simply became easier to peer down from the living room window and make sure he wasn't there before going out for a cigarette. Or to quickly say, "Hey, Chris," and walk down the street as if you had somewhere to be. Of course, we felt guilty for avoiding him, but what the guilt truly marked was the shirking of our responsibility: we no longer sympathized with Chris, we pitied him.

After being snagged one day, Kevin interrupted Chris by telling him that he had to go in and cut Sara's hair. Ten minutes later when I came home from work, Chris was still out on his stoop. I could not translate the strange look he gave me, but I didn't stick around to interpret. Kev went down hours later to find Chris bleary-eyed drunk and righteously mad. After struggling through the indignant, slurred words, Kevin finally understood that Chris thought I was Sara and that Kevin had lied about cutting my hair to escape him. Clinging to the justice of his cause and impaired by the alcohol, it took Chris a long time to understand that Kevin had not lied, that I was Allison and Sara was Sara.

Not lying, however, is different from telling the truth. As different, in fact, as pity is from sympathy. Both pity and not lying dehumanize the other person by denying the symbiosis of relationship. Kevin and I believed Chris needed us while we did not need him. But why do people enter our lives? Surely there was some need he fulfilled in the beginning. And if he no longer did, shouldn't we have given him the choice of not needing us anymore by telling him the truth?

### III. THE ROARING TWENTIES

Good Friday in the Bronx. Appropriately, I was nursing a depression at the Roaring Twenties, a local pub. It seemed reckless and that's exactly how I wanted to feel. And I surmised that no better company could be found for such a sorrowful day than the Irish Catholics of my neighborhood. I wanted to be alone and yet surrounded.

I slouched my shoulders over the bar and closed down my face— what I considered the appropriate body language for Leave Me Alone. It didn't work. The man to my right tried to strike up a conversation. I replied begrudgingly and quickly withdrew, but he was persistent and clever. His next lead was a challenge. "Do you know the true story of the Potato Famine?" If that was his regular line, I'm not sure where he was used to fishing, but it caught me. Not only because it would be the ultimate insult to live in an Irish neighborhood and drink in an Irish pub not knowing something about Irish history, but also because I had just heard something about it. A coincidence, which I trusted. "Actually," I replied, "it wasn't a famine at all. The Irish were forced to eat potatoes because Britain stole the rest as exports to England." Surprised that I knew, he continued talking and we made good conversation. I was shocked to discover how talking to strangers, particularly strange men, could be authentic and made a mental note about my prejudice.

He bought the next round of drinks, then I asserted myself and bought the following one. However, he must have known the bartender better than I because my money was refused for the rest of the evening. This remnant of sexism rattled in the back of my brain, but hey, I'd already had one prejudice shown up.

As the evening continued, I was grateful for once that I'd developed a high tolerance. You do not want to appear unable to hold your liquor with the Irish. And, of course, I had other reasons for not wanting to be smashed, namely that I needed to remain alert. When I felt myself walking less surely to the bathroom and I saw that we'd passed the witching hour, I knew it was time to head home. After reaching my bar stool, I thanked my companion profusely as I pulled on my jacket. *Wonderful evening. Thanks for the conversation...* But he did not want me to leave or he did not want me to leave without him. Sensing this, I shouted *Good night* on my way out the door while he pulled on his coat. I briskly approached home, afraid to look back, afraid to run because both these actions would admit that I was in trouble. Nevertheless, I could hear him. Fear pumped just under the surface of my skin. I cursed the bartender for not taking my money. Goddamn conspiracy. By the time I'd reached my stoop, he had caught up to me.

Who was this man whom I had misjudged twice? Blue collar worker still in his paint smeared work clothes, immigrant with only a slight brogue, older man, very intelligent and witty, and now? I had read these details in the bar and decided I was safe, but I had been wrong. He remained impenetrable.

"A kiss then. Just a kiss," he said, out of breath. Ha! The slippery slope approach. How many times had he used this line? But my attitude is retrospectively imposed. I'm stalling, ashamed to go back to the fear of that moment, to speak of it. I knew intellectually that I didn't owe him a damn thing, and yet, I felt guilty as if I had been the one to mislead.

I don't remember what happened or how I got back in the house. I'd like to think I didn't kiss him, but I may have. I'd like to think there was no struggle, but maybe there was. The only certainty I can sorrowfully offer is that prejudices slip back into place so damn easily.

#### IV. UPSTATE NEIGHBORS

The house shook when a door was slammed. Miraculously, it remained standing. When neighbors downstairs were home and the rooms above were dark, light shone through holes in the floor. The house thrust its inhabitants into an uneasy, undesired intimacy.

The day the landlord showed them the apartment downstairs, I spied from my bedroom window. No curtains protected me, but full summer branches reached across the window. It was difficult to see, to ascertain the personality of these possibly new neighbors. They were young; I was sure younger than Kevin and me. A man and a woman. I couldn't get a good look at them through the leaves. How did she know I watched? As they walked back down the driveway, she turned her face up towards my window and I swear she saw me. The look was venomous.

A patio had been built off the back of the downstairs apartment. Because of the local swamps, the mosquitoes kept it from being very enjoyable, but with all the other renters, Kevin and I had shared it. After a failed garden, we took to growing tomatoes and peppers in flower pots on it. I came home shortly after the new neighbors, Sherri and Tom, moved in and found a note taped to our door. They said it was their patio and we needed to remove our stuff immediately.

Ambulance lights filled, then emptied, our apartment. When the police had arrived, Sherri was already unconscious. I still trembled from making the phone call. This wasn't the first night that the partying downstairs had gotten out of hand. By now Kevin and I were not surprised when the house shook with Guns n' Roses, and a few hours later, Sherri started ranting, turning on her friends and Tom, yelling and throwing things. Tonight, however, I heard her growl out that her father had raped her and did they know what that was like. "Huh? Do you?" Then, whimpering, "My father raped me. My father raped me. My father raped me." Eventually, her mantra degenerated into hyperventilation. Tom sounded scared as he tried to calm her. As usual his rationality had no effect. She was lost to her own terrified psyche.

I hated them. I hated their intrusion, their insensitivity and most of all their self-destruction. I was powerless before the weight of their need and so I hated them for making me helpless. Calling the police meant acknowledging these feelings, turning them into language which would make sense to an outsider. As long as they were only spoken to Kevin, who needed no translation, my emotions were subjective and therefore subject to change. To admit them to strangers was to admit my emotions to reality, and I didn't want hate or helplessness in my life. I hesitated, then placed the call.

Many months after she had returned from the hospital, Sherri began to clean up the yard. I was shocked by this constructive and normal activity. Since they had moved in, I had been creating monsters, extraordinarily evil barbarians. Any communication had been through angry notes left on their door and, occasionally, a stomp on the floor. After living above Sherri and Tom for half a year, I still had no idea what they actually looked like. If we accidentally passed each other, I perhaps managed to say hello but never made eye contact.

Now, Sherri's everyday caretaking activity forced me to see her as human. Perhaps that is why she did it for herself.

Walking up the driveway, gravel crunching underneath, I saw her up by the house. My heart beat faster as I neared. "Thank you," I said. "The yard looks great." "You're welcome," Sherri replied. Then she smiled and I saw that the corners of her eyes rose in wonder.



contributors notes

Nicholas J. Valenti is a senior English major and physics minor from Rockford, IL. " 'I Want a Steak' " is his first published poem; he has previously published a nonfiction article in The Saga, the national magazine of the Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity.

Allison Schuette-Hoffman, a long time fan of Ani Difranco's, has recently been introduced to Sleater-Kinney. Although her respect for the little folk singer continues, she now dreams of being a riot grrrl.

Laurie Shover Schmidt is a senior, non-traditional student at V.U. She is working on a history major and a theatre minor. Her poem, Matters of Perspective, is a true account of how she experienced the assassination of President Kennedy when she was 5 years old.

Robert "Bob" Pence is "almost" a sophomore in the College of Adult Scholars. He works full time for US Steel as a Radio Coordinator. Because of his interest in writing, he intends to graduate with a degree in English from V.U. He lives in Valparaiso with his beautiful and understanding wife who is a seamstress. He and his wife are parents to five children and grandparents to thirteen grand children.

Josh Messner travels frequently and loves snapping shots of the many stunning sights the world has to offer. His majors are Music and Middle Eastern Studies and he is the Student Assistant Editor of The Cresset.

Jessica C. Pleuss is a sophomore studying psychology. Like so many others, she was first interested in the field due to personal experience, as alluded to in her poem.

Jamie Brand is a junior who is slightly daunted by the complexity of house plants. He copes by enjoying people and a simple life.

Aaron Miller is a junior chemistry major from Minnesota. If you consider his writing "expressing himself" then he appreciates it, but no matter what you call it, he just started doing it.

Kari Cress is a Senior, and an art major concentrating mostly in photography and in graphic design. She enjoys all activities out doors and likes to photograph landscapes in neat places.

Amy McFadden: um, i guess these are my contributor's notes. i don't feel very creative right now and once again i left things until the last minute. my photos were made in china and in chicago. it's pretty obvious which were taken where. i think i might have included one from glen ellyn, but i can't remember. the photos from china were taken on the western border not far from tibet. anyway, i hope this will suffice. have fun.





### Commentaries

be remembered, willingly praised, and ardently published before earth and heaven. ... Such a loyalty is necessary to the life of the City." (*Charles Williams: The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 130.)

l. 89: *to show to a wise lady*: Dante, remembering Virgil's words (Canto x. 130-32), says he will ask Beatrice to explain all these prophecies about himself.

l. 96: *the churl his spade*: Let Luck turn her wheel, and the labourer turn the soil - Dante shall remain as unmoved by the one as by the other. Virgil seems not altogether to approve this parade of indifference, and warns Dante that he will do well to heed what is said to him.

l. 112: *him whom the Servant of servants once translated*: Andrea dei Mozzi (see Glossary for him and the other persons mentioned). The title "Servant of the servants of God" is one of the official titles of the Pope.

l. 121: *and seemed like one of those who ... run*: This foot-race, whose prize was a piece of green cloth, was instituted to celebrate a Veronese victory, and was run on the First Sunday in Lent.