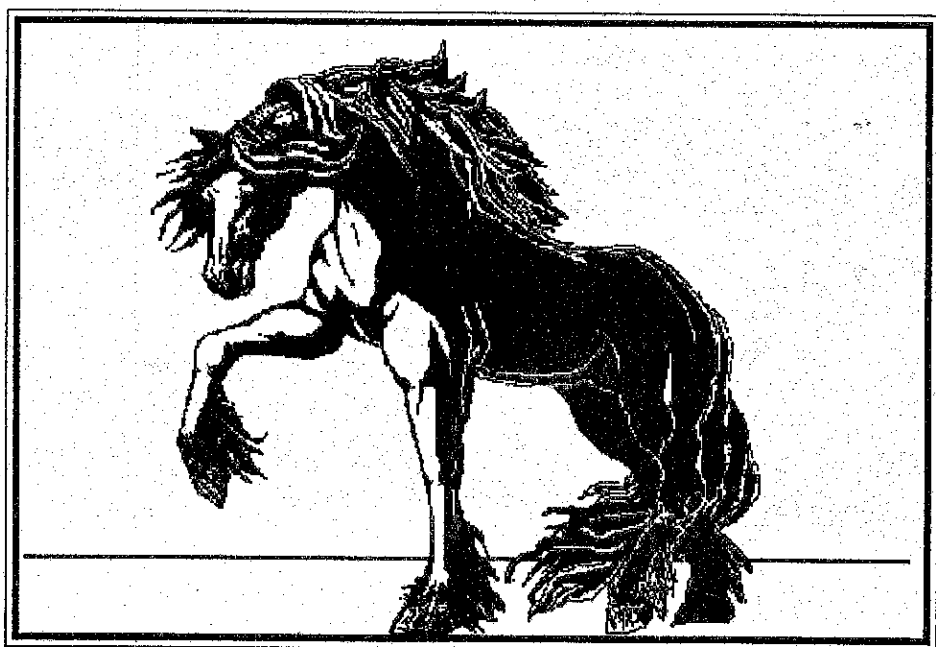


PULSE



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We wish to express our most sincere thanks to

Eleanor Perlstein Weinbaum

for her continued support of Pulse
and the liberal arts of Lamar University.

Awards

Eleanor Poetry Award for best poem overall
Liz Sanford "Foggy Night"

Barnes Poetry Award for best poem in traditional form
Amber M. McClintock "Catherine's Refusals, St.
Petersburg, 1744"

de Schweinitz Poetry Award for best poem in open form
Kevin Poston "Nativity Scene, A.D. 2250"

Rowe Poetry Award chosen by *Pulse* staff
Brian Herrington "Story"

Pulse Fiction Award for best short fiction
Danielle A. Olivier "Grandpa Anthony"

Pulse Essay Award for best essay
Michelle Rose "The Objectified Subject in Sylvia
Plath's "The Eye Mote"

Honorable Mention - Short Fiction
Rita J. Self "Chicken for Supper"

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Eleanor Poetry Award

Foggy Night

No wind shakes the huge arms
Of the tree by my window;
The heavy night mist obscures
The house next door, reduces
Clean lines and angles to

A billion points of dis-
Connected matter; a ghost-
House whose porch light eye, glowering
Gray-yellow and unfocused,
Stares through the Venetian

Blinds and lines my drawn-up
Knees with alternating light
And shadow. The fog slithers up
The buzzing, garish street lamp,
Blue-gray in the hot, white

Illumination. A
Passing car throws miles of bright,
Sharp gold light, the only sharpness
In the night, and only bright
By comparison. A few

Miles down the road, guttering
Disembodied flame--that in
Daylight roars atop a stack of
Steel in a refinery--
Spews gouts of acrid smoke

And splashes harsh red and
Orange into the earth-bound
Cloud in sudden fits of violence--
The picture image of Hell.
The inferno roars like

A formless, mindless beast,
A body of fiery,
Breathing, rank vapor, shifting and
Indeterminate among
Stacks of gold fuzzy stars.

It's a night of man made
Lights and nature-made-not dark
Exactly--but dimness. The Earth's
A damp and gray-black void, the
Stars and moon dissolved long

Before I'd looked out my
Window, and streetlights, headlights,
And refinery fires are the
Only signs that people lived
Before the writhing fog.

Liz Sanford

Barnes Poetry Award

Catherine's Refusals St. Petersburg, 1744

The eve of our holy union, I stood
before you, and I offered you my bare
flesh, blushing with desire, still waiting for
a husband's hand, a man's touch to relieve
my starving appetite and to arouse
erotic inclinations, but you stood
before me with disdainful eyes, resolved
to spurn all my advances toward your love,
so I refuse to languish. Other men
will satiate my hunger and indulge
my fancies, and I will teach them the art
of royal love. You may continue your
pursuits of maids, of wagers, and depraved
endeavors while your kingdom rallies to
my side and names me Empress of Russia
and you, the emperor of rakes. I'll have
your throne, and you will stand, no kneel, before
me, feeble-minded, impotent, and I'll
refuse you and spit in your sullen face.

Amber M. McClintock

de Schweinitz Poetry Award

Nativity Scene, A.D. 2250

A bit traditional, but still
A fine example of Monsignor Gregor's work.
You see, dear, there's everything:
Athena and her husband, Joseph,
Crouch around the manger looking
Like marble statues caught in the fresco.
The Christ-child holds His left hand
In the mudra of wisdom, which is
Expected of a Bodhisattva,
And with His right hand pulls the
Mistletoe-shaft from Balder's chest.
And oh! The Wise Men, my favorites!
Confucius, Lao-Zi, and Buddha
Looking on in benediction.
Ha ha, you can almost read the
Words the sheep and the
White Buffalo are singing to Him.
And look at the naiad coming
From the water-trough, dear,
Holding the pentacle of good luck.
And it's a little small, but I think
You can see Krishna herding
The sheep on the hill behind the stable.
My, my, he even has the gifts
Brought to the baby Iesu:
Baron Samedi's skull and the
Jade Emperor's peaches of immortality
-In modern versions these things
Are stolen by Coyote and the Monkey King.
As I said, traditional, but
You must expect such things of the
Exclusionary past.

Kevin A. Poston

Rowe Poetry Award

Story

Allow me-
(Come closer)-
To story-tell.
We sit idly
On an ancient bench
That sags like an old horse's back.
Hearing the scattered, running,
Swirling children on the thirsty,
Green summer ground
Reminds me of 1979.
When I was among the
Scattered, running, swirling.

Shirtless was awkward
(Shy was I, tender and modest),
But barefoot was glorious.
I laughed and acquainted
My soles with the earth,
My soul with the sky.

Didn't we dream away
The soda pop tops when
Mr. Grumby said,

"I'm not quite sure why cats
Are such princely animals,
But they tell me that sometimes..."

But back to the clouds-
Fortresses floating;
Hay-stacks down the backs
Of sprawled-out,
Yawning fields.
We danced the fiddle-dee,

Ten small fiddlers jigging
In circles and squares-
Circles of time,
Squares of design.
The design of my being,
The plans of my passage.

And so much passage
Makes one weary.
I have passed
Through many years.
Losing the hay-stacks
And green, thirsty grass
Of childhood
Makes one weary.
So I am weary.
Passage weary.

And 1979 seems so...
Way-back-when.
Yet also close
Like the apple's short fall
To Newton's head.

Now, friend,
I see clearly
What once was
Curiously indecipherable.
The other side often is clearer.
Sometimes
Looking in retrospect
Is like cleaning off
Your dusty spectacles.
Haven't you noticed
What only 19 years
Have taught me?

Can you still smell the grass
And hay-stacks down the backs
Of sprawled-out,
Yawning fields?
Can you see
The scattered, running, swirling?
Can you see?

Can you see?

Brian Herrington

GRANDPA ANTHONY

Words passed over Veronica's head as she looked around the room. They were holding hands and praying though she wasn't exactly sure why. Prayers wouldn't help him now, nothing would.

She heard the word "amen" and snapped back to attention. Everyone except her hugged and kissed and then shuffled out of the room. It was her turn to sit in vigil. They had promised themselves that he would never be alone, so they all took turns; although, Veronica had begun to notice that except for maybe her grandmother, she seemed to have the most turns. She did not mind this, however, because it gave her a chance to clear her thoughts and remember easier times.

She didn't get very far in remembering though because her grandmother returned to the room.

"You know, Veronica, I think maybe I should stay with you tonight. I feel really good about today's prayer session, and I think something special might happen. I think he might come back to us."

Veronica paused a moment before answering. "No, Granny, you need to go home and rest. You're up here all the time as it is. It's my turn to stay and if there's any change, I'll call you."

"Are you sure," asked Granny. "You know you're one to talk. You're up here all the time, too and..."

While Granny continued to ramble on, Veronica had taken her by the elbow and was slowly leading her out of the room and down the hall. After Granny had talked herself into reassurance, the pair continued the rest of the way in silence.

Veronica looked down at her grandmother and saw an older version of herself beside her. They both had dark hair, dark eyes, and the same olive complexion. Granny's silver streaked hair was pulled loosely back into a bun, while Veronica's hung straight down around her shoulders. Granny wore make-up, and Veronica did not, but either way they both had that worn look about them. Veronica, still holding on to her grandmother, steered their course.

A week ago these halls had been a confusing maze to them. Now they were second nature. It was left, right, then left again. No matter which hall you walked down, they all looked the same. Those dull, yellow lights beamed down on walls that needed painting and linoleum floors that needed waxing. There was the occasional cheap picture of a basket of flowers or a too perfect water scene. After that, there wasn't much to look at.

When they reached the exit that led out to the parking lot, Veronica could hold her tongue no more. "Granny, have you given any more thought to what we talked about earlier?"

Granny immediately dropped Veronica's hand and narrowed her eyes at her granddaughter. "No, I haven't. There's no reason to. It's not been a consideration, and I wish you wouldn't bring it up again."

"Well, I am bringing it up. Of course it's a consideration. You can't keep this up forever. It's not fair to anyone, especially him."

"Now, you look here, Veronica," said Granny as she shook her bony finger in Veronica's face. "Losing my first husband was beyond control, but this time it isn't. I refuse to lose another. I will not let him go because I know he will come back to me. I have faith and so should you. I don't ever want this brought up again, do you understand?"

Veronica's eyes turned big and black as she answered, "Yes ma'am." She wanted to scream "no," but instead she kept quiet.

Veronica gave Granny their traditional kiss on the cheek and then watched from the door to make sure she made it to her car. With Granny driving off, Veronica took a deep breath and returned to the room.

As Veronica settled in for the evening, the nurse came in to check on both of them, even though there was nothing she could do for either. As Veronica expected, the patient remained the same, and the nurse left. Veronica, sitting in the only chair, brought her knees up to her chest and pulled the bulky sweater over her jeans. She had a coke, a book, and an extra blanket the nurse had left. There were four blank walls to look at and the beeping of machines to listen to.

In the middle of the room was the bed and a semblance of what used to be her grandfather tangled up in a mess of tubes and wires. There was a tube up his nose, a tube down his throat, tubes in his arms leading to IV's, and wires from his chest connected to the heart monitor. Right next to the heart monitor was the machine that was keeping him alive, his respirator. The cylindrical container housed the white accordion which methodically lengthened and compressed causing him to breathe. There were IV bags on the poles all around him and another machine Veronica hadn't quite figured out yet.

Then there was him, her grandfather, lying very still-- never moving. His skin, drawn tightly over the protruding bones, had taken on an ashen tone. Even though he had lost most of his hair in chemo, there were still patches of stubble to be found on his head. He looked like a body at a funeral home that they forgot to fix up.

What upset Veronica the most was that he looked so sad. Grandmother had placed a picture from their wedding twelve years ago next to the bed. That was the grandpa she remembered. The one who wanted to die while he was still living, not wasting away like this. He had made Veronica promise, but then she didn't want to think about that right now.

She took her eyes away from the bed and reached for her coke. The phone rang, and she jumped. She hadn't even noticed a phone in the room before. Her eyes moved quickly as she sought it out. Tripping over wires, she crossed the room to answer it.

"Hello."

"Darling, it's your mother. I was worried, and I just wanted to call and check on you."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. As your mother I am entitled to worry."

Veronica wanted to laugh, but she held it in. Her mother had never been that involved in Veronica's life, usually because she was so wrapped up in her own.

"Anyway, did you get something to eat? Do you want me to bring you something?"

"No and no."

"You have to eat sometime."

"I'll eat when I'm hungry."

"Ok, I won't push on the eating, but do you want me to come and keep you company?"

"I'm a big girl, mother. I think I can handle spending the night alone."

"I know, but you're really taking this vigil thing seriously. It's going to be hard on you. I know you two were close, but he's not even your real grandfather."

"He's the only grandfather I have, and I intend to be here for him."

"I know how you feel, Veronica. It was hard for me when my father died."

"It's not the same. Being hit by a car isn't like this. It's just not." Veronica grew tired of the conversation. She did not know why her mother pretended to care. She had never liked Anthony to begin with. When her grandmother announced the news of the wedding, her mother threw a fit. No one in the family had been happy. Out of respect for grandmother, they had always been civil, but they never gave him a fair chance.

"Paul and the twins said to tell you hello. They miss you. Since you moved out and now this, they never get to see you."

"I miss them too. Tell them their big sister promises to visit real soon. How are they doing? Why don't you ever bring them up here?"

"We think they are too young to witness something like this. They don't understand what's going on anyway."

"What do they know?"

"Just that he's really sick."

"Well, what they don't know won't hurt them."

"Speaking of them, the twins are calling now. I'd better go."

"Goodnight Mother."

"Veronica..."

"Yes, Mother."

"I..."

"Yes?"

"Never mind, goodnight."

Veronica hung up the phone and resumed her original position in the chair. She took a sip of coke and stared at the bed. Paul and the twins were her mother's pride and joy.

Paul had been born when Veronica was twelve, and the twins had come along three years later. With a new husband and a new life, her mother had been ready for more children. In fact, she had welcomed them.

When Veronica was still living at home, there were nights when she would stay home to study, and the rest of them would go out for pizza or take the twins to see the latest Disney movie. Her mother never really pushed her to come, and Veronica didn't ever feel like she belonged anyway. It was like she was on the outside looking into the perfect suburban family. That's why as soon as she had the chance, she moved out. Now, she was taking care of everything on her own, and it suited her just fine.

Now she had something else to take care of though, and she wasn't sure she could. Her grandmother was hellbent on letting him waste away on those machines because "a truly good Christian would not take another's life."

Of course, everyone else in the family backed grandmother except grandfather when he could still talk. In Granny's mind with prayer and faith, there was always hope. She believed in some medical miracle that Veronica knew would never happen.

The nurse came in again interrupting her thoughts. "Are you still up sweetheart? I figured you'd be asleep by now," commented the old black nurse.

"No ma'am, I'm still up. Actually, I just got off the phone with my mom."

"Did she call to check on you?"

"Yes ma'am."

"You know, my little girl is thirty-eight years old, and I call to check on her once a day. We never stop worrying about our babies."

"Yeah, I guess so."

The nurse continued to check everything and said, "You sure are a good granddaughter staying up here like this. I know it makes your Grandpa feel better having his family around all the time."

"Do you really think it makes a difference?"

"Well, it couldn't hurt," answered the nurse.

"That's true."

"Everything checks out on Mr. Binagial, so I'm going to go. I'm going to turn out this light, too. You need to get some sleep. Press the button if you need anything."

"Thanks" answered Veronica.

Walking out the door, the nurse hollered back, "You're welcome."

Laying her head back, Veronica closed her eyes and gave up on thinking. Having someone hammer nails into her head could not have felt much worse than thinking. She cleared her mind of all thoughts and sat there numb to the world, listening to the beep of machines and watching green lines dance across the room.

Veronica woke the next morning to the sound of Hail Mary's. She slowly raised her stiff neck to see a semicircle of women formed around the bed. Their heads were bowed and their rosaries were out.

Leading the group was, of course, her grandmother. There were a few great-aunts, some friends, and then she spotted her mother. Her mother only went to church as a social event, and now she was praying for the life of a man whom she really cared less about. Not wanting to stick around any longer, Veronica slipped out of the room. Their prayer was so intense they did not even notice.

Veronica went straight to her apartment, checked her messages, and took a shower. Throwing on a pair of jeans and an old flannel shirt, she put her still damp hair up into a ponytail.

Looking about her apartment she realized it needed some work. She had lately developed the habit of throwing everything everywhere. All she did was go to school, go to work, and go straight to the hospital.

She started to clean up a little bit, but then decided against it. Instead she plopped down in her favorite chair and turned on the television. She began surfing through channels, not finding much that interested her, until she came across some fishing show. Then she began to laugh, and it felt really good. She laughed till her ribs ached. With tears streaming down her face, she was practically falling out of the chair. There was some

hick standing in the middle of his boat explaining the best way to catch a catfish, and it just reminded her so much of Grandpa and the first time he took her fishing.

It was right after Grandpa had come into the family. It was a Saturday, like this one, and Veronica had wanted to go to the park.

"Please, Mommy, please take me to the park," whined a young Veronica.

"Now, I'm not going to tell you again, Veronica. We are not going to the park today. Mother has an important case to get ready for, and she has to go to work. You are going next door to stay with Miss Susan."

Veronica watched as her mother hurried around the kitchen throwing different things into her briefcase. Waiting one more moment, she decided to try again.

"But I don't want to go with Miss Susan. I want to go to the park. You promised. You said we would go to the park today. You did."

Looking up over her opened briefcase, mother said, "Veronica Calamia, I do not have time for this. I am sorry, but I did not have this case when I made that promise. Now go get your book and whatever toys you want and let's go."

Veronica hung her head and slowly turned to go get her stuff when there was a knock on the back door, and then he just walked on in. Veronica's eyes got big as he came through the kitchen and sat down on a stool. He was so big he almost scared her. She did like his almost white hair and blue eyes though.

Veronica's mother was never one to hide emotions well, and it was easy to see she wasn't too excited by his presence. It was Anthony Binagial, Granny's new husband.

Putting a bundle of papers on the table, he said, "Hey there, you two. Your Granny wanted me to drop these off. I'm not sure what they are, but she said you would know what to do with them."

"Oh, it's probably those papers from the church. I'm doing some legal work for them. Look Anthony, I hate to run you off, but we were just on our way out the door," mother answered. Turning back to see Veronica still standing there, she said, "Will you please go get your stuff? We have to go."

"Yes ma'am," Veronica mumbled as she left the room.

"That's sure is nice of you to do free work for the church."

"You've got to be kidding," mother said. "My work isn't free. They get a discount, that's enough. Come on Veronica. We're finally leaving."

While mother was locking the doors, Anthony turned to Veronica and said, "So what are you up to today, Miss Calamia?"

"I'm going to stay with Miss Susan. I really wanted to go to the park, but mommy has to work."

Bending down to her level, Anthony said, "Well, it may not be the park, but how would you like to go fishing with me? I could really use the company."

"I've never been fishing before."

"Then its about time you start. What do you say, mom?"

"I don't know. Maybe this isn't such a good..."

"Oh, don't worry. I'll have her home by dark. Have fun at work." With that they were off, leaving behind a somewhat bewildered mother.

Anthony took her to some dock to go fishing. They sat on the edge with their legs hanging freely. The sun was shining; they had a cooler full of drinks, and there was a gentle breeze.

Veronica's rod wasn't exactly made for a little girl, but Anthony said that was ok. In fact everything was ok with him. No matter what she did, he would just take a sip of beer and explain, another perhaps, better way to do whatever she was attempting. He even let her have a sip of beer.

Finally, the inevitable happened. Veronica went to cast her line and in the process got their lines tangled.

"Uh-oh! I'm sorry. I keep messing things up," said Veronica.

"Don't worry. This is a learning experience. Shoot, I've been fishing since I was a little boy, and I still get my line tangled sometimes, too. It's no big deal. I'll fix it."

Anthony stood up and reached out over the water to where the lines were crossed. Overextending his reach, his foot slipped and down he went. Panicked, Veronica jumped in after him to try to help. Instead, she almost landed on his head as she went down and he came up.

Grabbing onto her, Anthony let out a laugh like no other. It was the kind that came from deep within, and it made Veronica smile.

"Were you trying to save this old man? Don't you worry about me, sweetheart. Next time, save yourself. Come one let's get out of here."

Standing once again on the docks, they were dripping wet.

"I think this is a signal that it's time to pack up and leave. What do you think?"

"I think you're right," said a giggling Veronica.

After loading everything up, they sat on the back of the truck to let the sun dry them out. "You know Veronica, I think I'm going to start calling you Ronnie."

"Why? I already have a name."

"Well everyone needs a nickname. Besides Veronica is too old for you. One day you'll grow into it, but for now Ronnie suits you better. I'll make you a deal. As Ronnie, you're allowed to have a sip of my beer. When you grow into Veronica, I'll let you have your own."

"Ok," said Ronnie as she got her sip.

Anthony brought her home that evening looking like a drowned rat and smelling of beer. Mother made comments, but nothing could dampen Veronica's spirits that night. She went to bed wearing a smile.

Veronica shook her head, and changed the channel. There was never a dull moment when Grandpa was around. Then she let out a sigh and hugged her knees to her chest rocking back and forth. After a few minutes, hunger pains won out, and she went to raid the refrigerator.

Later that afternoon, Veronica went back up to the hospital. There was nothing new to report. All of Grandpa's old buddies from work were there. The hall outside his room was crowded as each one waited for their turn to go in.

Not wanting to deal with everyone, she decided to go for a walk. She went by the nursery, but there weren't any babies. She walked by the chapel and started to go in, but then decided against it. Eventually, she ended up in the cafeteria with a coke and some ice cream. Sitting in a booth by herself, she stretched her legs across to the other side.

"Ronnie, is that you?" she heard a voice ask. Startled to hear the old nickname, she looked up to see some guy slide into her booth while she quickly moved her legs. "Don't you remember me? I'm an old friend of your Grandfather's."

She stared at him for a minute, and then the cloud disappeared. She had met him that night Grandpa had taken her to this dive of a bar for her sixteenth birthday. It was where he and his buddies hung out, and she remembered thinking that Granny would have had a fit if she ever saw that place.

Loud and smokey, the joint was crowded with lots of men like her grandfather. Tunes blared from the jukebox in the corner drowning out the obscenities being yelled back and forth. There were pinball machines by the jukebox and pool tables on the other side of the room. Then there was the bar and a few tables and chairs.

He guided her to an empty pool table while the guys showered Veronica with catcalls and whistles.

"Shut up, jerks," he answered. "This is my granddaughter, and she's off limits to you losers."

"Goddamn, Anthony," answered the guy who was sitting across from her right now. "Since when do you have a granddaughter that looks like this, and where can I get one?"

"Save it, Johnny. She's too smart to fall for your bullshit." Looking at Veronica, he said, "Sit tight, sweetheart. I'll be right back. While I'm gone don't listen to a word this idiot says."

Laughing, Veronica took his advice as Johnny tried his best to impress her. Eventually, grandpa returned and announced it was time for her to learn how to play pool.

With a grin, she had answered, "What makes you think I don't already know?"

"Well, Veronica, here's a beer and a pool stick. Prove it."

Taking both, she walked around the table and took a swig of beer. Then she began setting up for the game.

"So, I'm Veronica tonight. I'm impressed."

With that twinkle in his eyes, he answered, "Actually, you've been Veronica for awhile. I'm just now admitting it."

"Oh, I see. Shall I break or you?"

"No, you go ahead."

And so she did. She was no expert, but she was good enough for Grandpa and his friends. She won twenty dollars alone off of Johnny. This caused him much embarrassment and gave his friends plenty of laughs.

Many beers later, they tired of pool when an old jitterbug song came on. After that, it was all over. Tables were cleared as Anthony pulled her onto the makeshift dance floor and showed her the real way to dance. She was everyone's dance partner that night, and she had a ball. Eventually, Anthony had to drag her off the dance floor, so they could go home. Veronica could have stayed out all night, but Anthony knew someone would not approve.

When Grandpa dropped her off that night, she reached over and gave him a kiss on the cheek saying, "Thank you. This was a great birthday."

"You're welcome, Ron..., I mean Veronica. Now run along. Your mother's probably already mad at me for bringing you home so late."

"Bye grandpa," she said as she slid out of the truck.

Before she could close the door, he added, "Veronica, try not to act too drunk."

"Ok," she said and then giggled all the way to the front door.

Coming back to the present, Veronica looked down at her melting ice cream and up at Johnny.

"I wish I had a beer right about now. I'd drink it in honor of Grandpa."

"I think he would like that," answered Johnny.

Veronica pulled the blanket across her lap and reached for her book. She was spending the night again since Granny's back was bothering her and sleeping here only made it worse.

The nurse had just checked on him. Not being sleepy, Veronica was determined to finish her book. Getting into a good part where Mark and Julie finally kissed, everything went haywire.

The beeping became a solid scream. Veronica looked up just in time to see the wavy lines go flat. Looking at her Grandpa, she screamed "NO!" Then she started pushing that button and calling for help. A mob of people and more machines came in, shoving her into a corner.

She stood there shaking. She kept waiting to wake up, but she wasn't that lucky. A chaotic mess followed until the time of death was pronounced at 11:17pm. The room quickly emptied out with only a couple of nurses remaining to begin the task of unhooking the machines. Veronica just stood there.

Her granny rushed in and fell to a heap on the floor.

"What about my prayers!" she cried. "I prayed. What about all our prayers?"

Mother had followed her in after her and knelt down to try to comfort her.

Veronica walked over to the bed, grabbed his hand, and kissed him on the forehead. Then, she turned around and walked out.

I knew those damn machine couldn't keep him alive forever thought Veronica as she walked down the hall. Besides Grandpa always did things his way, and I suppose this was one of them.

Lifting her eyes upward, she smiled.

Danielle A. Olivier

Pulse Essay Award

What I want back is what I was
Before the bed, before the knife,
Before the brooch-pin and the salve
Fixed me in this parenthesis;
Horses fluent in the wind,
A place, a time gone out of mind.

From "The Eye-mote" by Sylvia Plath

The Objectified Subject in Sylvia Plath's "The Eye-Mote"

Post-modern thinkers argue that a reader does not completely deconstruct a text, rather the well-written text deconstructs itself. Since the Age of Reason, of which a definitive statement would be "Cogito ergo sum," we have accepted that consciousness, also called the subject, determines meaning. However, the linguistic theory of the sign de-centers the subject as the source of meaning of words. This theory contends that signs, or words in this case, are meaningful by virtue of their difference from other signs. That is, the text does not derive its meaning from either a consciousness confronting it, nor from a particular consciousness having constructed it. Rather, the contradictions inherent and necessary to the text produce a plurivocity of meaning. For example, the ambiguous language and unconventional sentence structure of poetry allow variable readings of a poem, without allowing the reader to finally decide upon one single final meaning of the text. The final stanza of "The Eye-Mote" by Sylvia Plath deconstructs itself in this way.

The first line of the stanza, "What I want back is what I was" privileges the term, "what I was," over the excluded term, "what I am." The text does not explicitly use the term, "what I am," rather the reader infers it from the speaker's, "What I want." A consciousness can desire only if the consciousness exists. The text establishes these two terms as opposing each other: "what I was," is different and therefore separate from "what I am." Yet the remembrance of a past manifestation of the consciousness depends

on the presence of the consciousness now. This dependency illustrates that "what I was" cannot exclude "what I am." Without that excluded term, the privileged term cannot exist.

The word "before" used in the second and third lines may be read as a relation to either time or space. If "before" refers to space, these two lines locate the state of being to which the speaker wishes to return. If so, the speaker needs (or asserts the need) only to stand in front of the bed, knife, brooch-pin and salve, and the conflict vanishes. However, the third line ends without punctuation separating it from the fourth. So the phrase reads, "Before the bed, before the knife, / Before the brooch-pin and the salve / Fixed me in this parenthesis." The repetition of "before" in prose would indicate that these are prepositional phrases, identifying spatial relation to the objects. However, the fourth line, "Fixed me in this parenthesis," is the predicate of this clause, with the bed, knife, brooch-pin and salve as the subject. Therefore "before" must be an adverb modifying "fixed." Therefore, these lines together refer to the time setting, rather than a place, of the speaker's desire. The bed, knife, brooch-pin and salve are metaphors for conditions that interrupt the speaker's desired state from the present. These four items, or conditions, collectively create the speaker's crisis, but the items by themselves cannot cause harm. "Bed" and "salve" might indicate a process of healing; the need for a bed, however, implies a debilitating illness or fatigue, and salve is an ointment required to treat a wound. The bed and salve, then, are not the cause of separation, but illness, say, or a wound, creates the crisis. Likewise, an inert knife poses no threat to the speaker; someone wielding a knife might. And a brooch-pin, usually both a decorative and functional piece of jewelry, does not itself inflict harm. Yet, Oedipus blinded himself with Jocasta's brooch-pin when he discovered his complex fate. If the speaker invokes this example of the brooch-pin as an instrument of harm, the reader must then infer that the speaker's wounds are self-inflicted. The greatest conflict of the text becomes not the speaker's desire, but the paradox that what the speaker desires is what the speaker has already lost. What she has lost, she has lost herself.

The fourth line, "Fixed me in this parenthesis," emphasizes the speaker's loss of self-identical subjectivity. The subject (in the objective case), "me," is "fixed" by four items, acting as subjects,

into a "parenthesis," which signifies an interlude into which the speaker is forced. A parenthesis is a passage that departs from the theme of a discourse, indicated by the curved marks () used in writing. If the "me" is fixed into this kind of parenthesis -(me)- then the speaker herself becomes only a word, or an object and, more poignantly, a digression.

The last two lines of the stanza, "Horses fluent in the wind/ A place, a time gone out of mind," refer to, "what I was," of the first line. The text uses "horses fluent in the wind," or flying horses, as a metaphor for what the speaker was and has lost. Pegasus is the mythological winged horse and is also a metaphor for poetic inspiration. The text shows us, then, that the speaker mourns for her loss of poetic inspiration, yet the mourning takes the form of a poem. The last line of the poem employs the phrase, "gone out of mind," which may suggest that the speaker longs for a forgotten place and time. But if the speaker does not bring to mind that place and time, she cannot long for it. "Gone out of mind," is also an allusion to an idiomatic expression, "you're out of your mind," which is to say, "you are crazy or insane." Certainly, if the speaker has objectified her identity and separated herself from that identity, she fears, or has already experienced, a schizophrenic break.

"Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") establishes an individual's consciousness, the subject, as the center of meaning. This phrase gives the subject priority over all objects (things outside the subject). Yet the last stanza of Sylvia Plath's "The Eve-mote" questions the prioritizing of the subject. Although the text uses the first person point of view, the speaker loses her subjectivity and becomes the object rather than the actor. The privileged and excluded terms in the first line of the stanza attempt to separate the consciousness of the speaker from itself. The speaker is unable to control or command would-be objects; instead conditions that she calls bed, knife, brooch-pin and salve exert their power over her and render her meaningless. The subject has become the object.

Michelle Rose

Alone

I walk by myself
In the evening light
Under the stars and moon.
I feel the wind
Caressing my cheek
With lifted tendrils of hair.
Alone with myself,
But never lonely.
I have the stars, the moon, the wind.
But most of all,
I have my world.
My husband, my children
Who care and never question
When I need to walk alone.

Jacqueline Rolfes

Breathing

"This is what breathing should be," you once said
Scooping up handfuls of chestnut streaked hair,
Inhaling deeply that scent all my own
As if it were some secret elixir
Of life and youth, of passions forgotten;
It courses through your body, binding us,
My scent in you, giving life.

Janet K. Turk

Melodies

Compelled by ghostly drumming
and an ebony staff,
Your fingers dance wildly across the copper keys
like aborigines around a fire.

Sweat trickles down your brow.
Your cheeks and lips crimson,
you breathe into the copper curves
making them sigh with exhilaration.

The tempo quickens.
You surrender to the saxophone-
instrument and player merge,
the music crescendos.

The tempo slows.
Exhausted by your exertion,
you gently part lips from reed,
look at me and smile.

Amber M. McClintock

Weeding

The mulch of your flattery and deceit
nourishes the sprouting weeds,
their prickly stems crawl
though cracked slab
and up our bed post
until their caterpillar tendrils
sink into my flesh.
No tender pruning can check their growth.
No enraged tiller can uproot them.
So, with muddy tears and broken spade
I transplant the roots of your betrayal
into her garden of crabgrass.

Amber M. McClintock

Mr. Charming

He is a thoughtful and a thoughtful man
housed in a body squat and thick. Shoulders
tensile cords bunched like grapefruits in a grass
bag, skin flecked gold. I envy the angels
who have kissed him there. Faithful to his craft,
his calling, tracing lines in steel and iron
with fingers squat and thick. Skin corrugated,
ridged, catches on silk folds before moisture
builds up to ease his way. He manes and crops
fall and spring. Sows corn with rifle, with reel,
with song. He called to let me hear his voice,
to say without saying he thought of me.
I, being savaged by Before, sank down
beneath his mandolin tones and drowned.

Rita J. Self

Chicken for Supper

"Margot!" Seth's voice rasped against the bare kitchen walls. Margot cringed, glancing a look over her shoulder at the boy eating at the table. He kept his eyes on his food.

"Margot!"

Another cringe. The boy ate stoically.

It wasn't just the voice, a gravelly monotone, that made her cringe. It was how he pronounced her name. With his Yankee way of speaking, her name always sounded more like maggot, than the beautiful French name her mother had given her. Or, maybe he called her maggot on purpose.

The man thumped down the stairs, being sure to plant both feet firmly on the bottom rung so that the crockery on the table rattled softly together. Standing in the spare kitchen, he stretched his arms wide, cracking his shoulder bones. The woman and the boy watched this morning ritual out of their eye corners.

"I've got to cut hay today. The boy'll help me."

Margot transferred bacon from the frying pan to a plate on the counter beside the stove. Sitting the plate in front of the man, she swallowed a shallow breath and spoke, "Seth, the boy's too little to cut hay. He's only ten."

The man looked up from shoveling the food into his mouth, surprised, "Margot, he's old enough to work. I've worked since I've walked."

"Please Seth. You promised."

"I need help. And he needs to learn to work the land."

Seth punctuated his point with a jerk of his fork towards the boy. "That boy is all I got. You ain't likely to have more. You're too old to use and too damn young to die."

For just a second Margot felt rebellion flash through her. She felt the spatula in her hand tremble with it. Without looking up, Seth swatted her away like a busy fly. Rubbing where his fingers had brushed her arm, Margot sidled to the sink. Leaning against its cool galvanized rim, she studied the crepe myrtle tree on the other side of the glass pane.

Once she had been sweet and fresh just like the crepe myrtle outside. A cardinal landed on a branch of the crepe myrtle tree. He tilted his head sideways, looking for his less brilliant mate.

Margot liked the cheery red cardinals. She had never seen any until she had left New Orleans and moved here to Texas. The pair nested in a tree at the edge of the chicken yard, flying daintily down to pick up bits of stray seed the hens had missed. One time a crow had landed in the dirt to scratch for seed or bugs, and the big red rooster caught it and killed it with his three inch spurs. He never bothered the cardinals though.

Margot turned from the sink. She looked at Seth. He hadn't changed at all. His black hair still curled in little ringlets at the nape of his neck. His shoulders were still wide, and his hips narrow. And he was just as hard and unforgiving now as he had been on the day they got married. The only difference was that now she knew she couldn't change him.

The boy finished eating. He got up from his chair silent as a mouse. He carried his empty bowl and wooden spoon to the sink. "Mama, I'm through eating."

Margot jumped at the voice, startled. She had been wrapped in thoughts of other men and of other babies.

"Thank you, sweetheart. Run on to the outhouse now."

The boy slipped out the door like a lost shadow. Margot turned to the man still at her kitchen table. "Don't take him, Seth. I'll work the field today, if you need help. Just don't take him. He's too little."

Seth sat for a moment, almost as if he were considering her words like a reasonable man. Then like an old bloodhound, he rose up out of his chair, shaking his head. Turning toward the sink, he tossed the metal plate and cup into the galvanized tub. The ringing in the kitchen rolled around inside Margot's head.

"Woman, you've swaddled that boy for ten years. And, now I need him. I can't work this place by myself anymore." He plucked his hat from its nail by the door, and walked to the back door.

Margot turned, stiff spine and all, to the window.

"Margot, fry chicken for supper tonight. It's been a long time since I've had good fried chicken." And then he was gone. The boy, just coming out of the privy, was swept along by Seth. The man carried his scythe slung over his shoulder, his boy following behind. Just before they entered the tree-lined path, Seth turned toward the house.

"Margot! Don't forget the chicken!"

Margot, looking out the window, heard him. She just ignored him. She washed, rinsed, and dried the breakfast dishes. She banked the coals in the stove. She scrubbed the table so hard a stray splinter embedded itself under her nail- her ring finger nail. It was supposed to have a ring on it, but didn't. Seth had put one there with endearing clumsiness years ago. After the first beating, she had thrown it in the pond. Then she got her last beating. Seth said it weren't no use to beat her, just made her more stubborn.

Margot swept and mopped the kitchen floor. She even washed the window above the sink while the crepe myrtle peeped in. There was nothing left to do. She would have to leave her sink and her window to finish her chores.

In the lean-to attached to the kitchen, Margot gathered a fresh pail of water, an empty pail, some rags and the broom.

Carefully, so as not to slosh the water, she went upstairs to clean the bedroom. There was no door to the bedroom, just the doorway Seth had put in when he built the house. He had promised then to make a door with a real knob and hinges before winter set in. That was twenty years ago when she was pregnant for the first time.

Margot started with the slop jar. Most women left it for last, but Margot always made the bed last. The slop jar was more honest than the bed. It was what it said it was, to hold people's slops. Their bed was a cave. Some nights she lay in it not able to breathe because of the clinging claustrophobia she felt with Seth next to her.

Margot dumped the night's soil into the empty bucket, swished clean water in the jar, and emptied that into the soiled bucket. Next she took a clean rag and wet it. She wiped the window clean, and Mama's cheval mirror in the corner. Using a dry rag, she wiped both down again.

The floor wasn't really dirty, but Margot swept it anyway. She stuck the broom into every corner of the square room. She checked the ceiling for cobwebs. There were no rugs to shake out. Seth didn't like rugs, said they made him feel unsteady.

The bed was next. With a deep breath, Margot grabbed the quilts and heaved them backwards and off of the bed. She always expected to see blood on the white sheets, like the chicken egg with a half formed embryo she broke into

cornbread batter years ago. There was no blood this time. She scattered the pillows, grabbed the down mattress in both hands and tossed it over on it's back. Idle for a second, she watched a tiny feather float free in the space above the bed. Does a feather bed have a back, wondered Margot. If it does, then which side is it? The side on bottom before you turn it, or the side on bottom after you turn it?

The sheets went back on, then the quilts. The pillows, she shook down into their cases and placed them on top of the quilts, smoothing their baby soft rumps.

One last glance around the room, and she was through up here. After the boy's bed and slops, it would be time to fix lunch. The boy slept in the tiny parlor Seth had built for her when she had her second pregnancy. When she miscarried it, a perfect boy, he sent back the furniture she had ordered to make the room genteel. Margot emptied and rinsed the slop jar first. She flipped his mattress over, then covered it up with the bottom sheet. Grabbing the boy's crazy quilt, Margot shook it in a slow up and down motion until she was emersed in multi-colored cotton wavelets. It's sweet boy scent made her feel clean inside.

Margot took the slop pail to the outhouse and dumped its contents down the waste shaft. At the pump, she refilled it, swished the water around and threw the water out. Then she rinsed and twisted the rags out and hung them on the clothes line to dry, all the while listening for the noise of Seth and the boy coming from the woods. She saw a flash of red in the woods, but it was just the male cardinal leading his sweetheart back to their nest.

Finished cleaning, Margot had to go in and fix lunch. Seth didn't like to wait to eat. Inside, she stoked the fire and sliced bacon for the skillet. That on, she took bread out of the tin box, sliced it thick, and put it on the table with a pat of butter. Keeping a close eye on the sun, she got a quart jar of butter beans from the pantry and put them on to boil. The old rooster crowed in the chicken yard outside. Margot remembered what Seth had yelled back at the house before he left this morning. She thought about notdoing it. She could tell Seth that she tried, but just couldn't catch a hen to fry. The boy usually caught the cooking hens anyway.

The bubbling beans gently steamed up the kitchen window. Margot leaned over the sink and opened the window. She saw movement on the woods path. Her breathing deepened, sped up, and her stomach felt airy, like the time she fell off the upper veranda when she was twelve years old. Her eyes shifted to the lean-to door, and her ears grew twice their size as she strained to hear a foot step. The door popped open and a light tread sounded the floor boards. Margot slumped against the sink, trying to catch her breath.

"Pa sent me to fetch lunch."

Margot's breath caught in her throat. His voice sounded older, deeper, gravelly.

"All right."

The boy looked around, uncomfortable with Margot's abrupt tone of voice and not sure where to let his eyes rest.

"He said to not forget he wants fried chicken for supper."

"All right."

Margot looked at her boy. He didn't look the same. He carried his head straight up on his skinny neck.

"Go catch me that old three-toed hen." Her voice threw itself out of her body and battered against the boy's face.

The boy jumped back, hesitated, and turned towards the door.

"You catch her and hold her while I butcher," Margot's voice scratched down the boy's neck, making his nape hairs stand on end.

In the lean-to, Margot dipped a pan of grain from the chicken feed sack. The hens heard the hiss of it against the galvanized metal and began congregating around Margot's ankles. With a graceful gesture, she distributed the grain around the sandy spot in front of the lean-to. Sometimes the hens reminded Margot of the hens that used to gather around her mother. Mama would throw out grains of gossip, and her cronies would scratch around to find the very last bits. That big speckled hen over by the old plow even looked a little like Mrs. LaClerc, what with her big, meaty breasts stuck out proudly.

Margot looked down the woods path. Without turning her head, she reached for the big butcher knife Seth kept hanging above the doorway just for killing chickens. Like strange

dancing partners, the boy moved around behind the bobbing hens. The only dirt that stirred were the little dust devils eddied up by the chickens.

"There she is. Catch her."

The boy struck, quick as a snake, quick as a chicken hawk. He grabbed her feet, swept her upside down, and wrapped his arm around her wings. The hen squawked and tried to peck. The boy trotted over to the butcher stump. Grabbing her head, he stretched her neck on the stump until the feathers stood straight out, and he looked up at Margot.

Margot followed a trail of black and white speckled feathers to the stump. She could see the impatience in the boy's eyes as he struggled with the hen, and she could smell the fear in the hen. The hen knew the boy wasn't being hateful like when he threw pebbles at her. He was serious, deadly serious.

Margot stopped beside the stump. Her shadow threw itself across the chicken, and the boy, and the dead tree. She looked down at the boy. She could see one downy cheek and the curve of one eyelash. His hands were pink and smooth. The nails shiny and clean. Chicken feathers poked up between and curled themselves around his unblemished fingers.

Sunlight glinted off the knife blade as Margot swung it high for the killing stroke. The boy looked up in anticipation. Margot looked down into the face she birthed. A flash of color, red, caught her eye. She turned her face towards it. The male cardinal was scratching in the chicken yard.

Rita J. Self

Irony

I could compare you to a summer's day
But frankly, I suspect
The only summer days you've ever known
Were smeared with axle grease
Or reeking of leather interior (brand new!)
Fragrant, no doubt, but not a field
Of fresh-clipped grass.

Every now and then
You explode like some plug
That got a wild spark, and we pull aside
And grumble for a while. Inexpertly
I offer to repair the damage, but
You've reason enough to know
That cars and men are a mystery to me.
I'm sorry, already!

And yet, a little grease beneath my nails
Won't kill me. And goodness knows
I've smoothed your rough edges 'till they're raw.
Suddenly I find I kinda like the view of summer
From behind tinted glass windows;
And I know *you* love a bit of polish.
We're temperamental, but we drive well.
It's a good thing. The road's long.

Liz Sanford

She Likes Coffee

With too much cream and sugar
Bitter reality melts,
That's how She likes her coffee.

A deep soothing amber swirl
Fit for the soft tongues
Of children or of angels.

Boiling oil fit to torture,
My cup is black
Makes even hard hands tremble.

Masochism turns my voice
Into burnt burlap,
But she speaks always in silk.

Joshua Craig Hayes

After Five

The holy amber brew is
Clenched by greasy gloves of calluses
With black, chipped nails,
Watched greedily by eyes
That fall the same way they rose,
With the sun.

His angel pours another glass of heaven
From the tap, and he reveals a work-worn
Pack of cigarettes to consecrate the air
Like incense for labor's coming, bitter hymn.

Joshua Craig Hayes

Beach Morning

We woke on the beach
Sand in our hair
Last lust drifting away in the morning breeze
A slumping silhouette sang morning on guitar strings
I eased to the waters edge
Ankles kissed in foam
Sand crawling to embrace my toes
The passion parades have walked to dawn
And left us to sunrise cigarettes
And this sea, like tears.

Joshua Craig Hayes

The Seagulls' Call

Salty snow teases my hair
As I approach the dunes.
Algae and tar combine
Invading the air
Forming tundra on the sand.

Voices of seagulls call me
In the distant sky
Slicing silence with screams.
Sparse greens brush the clouds
Seeking warm yellows beyond.

Snow-capped waves devour the shore
Pulling me into blue.
The seagulls' screams beckon.
I rush past the sand
Plunging into icy salt.

Holly Marie Betrand

Sunset

Out of park, and diving into a sea cloudy with blood.
Striations race past my window with dull thumps
like the tired hands of wild men beating on drums too long:
too long have I put off this journey to the king of orbit,
that golden lump of age squatting in the ocean's center.

Shift to first! and lava brushes past my tires,
The traction starts to drag but the engine shouts out
like a dragon's heart fed on heat and steadily pounding:
pounding into me are the waves of radio and ultraviolet,
sparking and hissing and barreling through the spectrum.

Shift to second! and flames rocket across the hood.
I cannot see but still I can taste the goal
like the iron of fear or courage in my misty blood:
blood colors the world and drenches my vision,
hot wetness permeating my tight grip on the wheel.

Shift to third! and now all bone and metal is submerged.
Our journey to the well slows and nears its end
like the bullet meant for hero's heart striking home:
home to the site of fire's womb and fury's child,
the angry room where violence first stood and laughed.

Shift to neutral, and let the corona's tides carry us.
Now is the time to pop the roof and savor the view
like Apollo sweaty but smiling after his great work:
work ends and cool night brings rest and emptiness,
a blank moon to wipe the mind of day's red fullness.

Kevin A. Poston

Tartarus

All equal, all naked,
All absent of the memory
of red pain on black days
and blue joy in light years,
Bumping and groping,
Holding parts once considered
dangerous for their power
to sunder lives and dreams
But the fleshy arsenals fade
Without knowledge to use them.

Let a drop of blood fall
On an outstretched tongue,
a particle of real-life
sped with heat and fury,
And this swimmer may rise
From his fathomless tomb,
knowing all of his life
and the gods' whispering
Before tumbling back to blankness
After answering a question or two.

Let a rain of crimson gore fall
To bathe this empty number
with genetic sadness
and evil cellular weight
And watch personality's flame
Erupt in eyes that were stone,
while muscles stretch and
fingers search for pleasures,
So that this tool of fate
May offer a brief tour.

Push through the numb and
Numberless to glimpse the
triptych dog and the
Sysiphine ritual,
Knowing it will not stay
Beyond Charon's environs,
where the drowned men wait
on the coin-strewn shore
And sniff after the warm red bit
Of life's coinage within you.

Kevin A. Poston

Sestina: A Photographer at the Taiji Lessons

I

Her Canon clicks, she knows a spark of love,
And once again the scene before her eyes
Is caught on film, frozen, as in her soul.
Each body stretched and outlined by the sun,
Their shadows flowing from each planted foot.
Another scene awaits; she holds her breath.

II

He twists his arm and then lets out his breath.
This morning Alexander lost his love,
Yet no distress makes him misplace his foot
Or break his stance. But nervously he eyes
The shutterbug who's hidden from the sun.
He fears a picture taken of his soul.

III

Roberta feels a tremor in her soul,
Sets down her foot, forgets to count her breath.
She knows she's had it for today. The sun
Was too hot. Once, she thinks, I used to love
This effort. Did those photographic eyes
Drive nails into my hand, my side, my foot?

IV

Mei Li can follow the instructor's foot,
But doesn't try to emulate his soul.
This man is ancient, wrinkled 'round the eyes!
He doesn't understand youth's joyous breath.
Let others take these lessons out of love:
Mei Li poses for pictures 'neath the sun.

V

Her eye turns from the fast-declining sun
As Anna concentrates upon her foot.
She wonders if photographers can love--
This one just watches, with no love, no soul,
And without that why take another breath?
The pity can be seen in Anna's eyes.

VI

He moves, and for the moment shuts his eyes.
He's both aware of shadow and of sun.
He sees her aim her lens, he hears each breath,
He feels the way she stands and plants her foot.
The teacher knows she cannot film his soul,
And so shall not find Taiji's truest love.

L'Envoi

She keeps her distance, stays at least a foot
Away from them, but something in her soul
Says, "Get closer! They're still hiding their love!"

Kevin A. Poston

Homeless

A bed and a desk, all hard springs and hardwood.
It meets with survival but not approval--
at night the windows freeze with despair
and laughing shadows cross the walls
to break the plain of emptiness.

A bare floor crowded with books helps no one.
All these pages offer are "words, words, words"--
shake the prison's pulpy bars and find
that the wealth of knowledge buys
not solace but the sin of indecision.

Out the door each morning without looking back.
The outside alone holds a spot of warmth--
soon the blank kitchen is forgotten
and the vacuum within filled by light
and the hurried voices of distraction.

If only the mirror's accusations could be avoided.
Dark-bordered eyes stab guilt into the vitals--
private wounds enforce ceaseless solitude
until a heart can be found among the debris
of riffled coffins and cast-off cathedrals.

Each dawn shows everything the room is lacking.
Walls bloodied with pain would be better--
in hells without number the coldest of all
is the dislocated soul of anonymity
vacantly wandering from its true home.

Kevin A. Poston

No Moons

There is absence tonight.
On this night of absent moons.
Stars not speaking,
Only throbbing
The blood of our softness,
Wind of our sensitivity.
The thin-line
Incisions of clumsy,
Painful, toe-stubbing words
Are here-
Instead of moons.
Instead of understanding ears.

There is no-being tonight
On this night of no-being moons.
No-speaking fields,
Only throbbing grass-
The blood of our sanity,
Wind of our sanctity.
The large, obvious
Spheres of our
Question-mark souls
Approaching life that is not.
This is a place of no moons,
No understanding ears.

Brian Herrington

Night-Black Life

All I see
Is night-black life.
Life as if it were
The underside of Where.

"Please, Franklin-
Send our visitors away.
Surely tonight
The hour is too late
To entertain them."

All the hopes...
All you love-faith-gentleness-
Meekness-Children-of-GOD,
I am even too tired
To sit you on my knee
And teach you the ways of
White, white (oh how the glory blinds me)
Angels.
Night-black
Doesn't reveal angels,
Now does it?
Certainly not blinding, glory angels.
So I suppose I don't know
A dime's worth about day-white life.
Or a nickel's worth.
Or a quarter's worth.
Or
"A penny for your thoughts,"
Says GOD.
But why does GOD need
Thoughts or pennies,
Nickels or dimes,
Quarters or universal answers?
He's got them all.
And I've got the night-black life.

Brian Herrington

Scriptures

Their scriptures
Are soaking into children's
Naked, white skulls.
But songs do not speak
Or shake or rumble
Low in the Canyons of Doctrine.

They have taught me
That lampshades
And love of lawn furniture
Can send one
Unmercifully
Scratching and spiraling
To Hell.

The silver-plated gods,
Deacons,
Angelic bureaucracies,
Weep strange laughter,
Commands-
"Thus saith the Lord!"
Stained-glass windows
Creep up the walls.
Panels of Revelation.

And out on the corner
Of Temple Avenue
And the East Parkway
Someone bakes
The Bread of Holy Communion.
Sweet,
Symbolic on our tongues.
Unleavened-
As so many sins are unleavened.
Waiting within us to rise.

Rising also in sacrifice
Is the Wine.
Bleeding.
Trembling down crosses.
Staining official robes.
Mass-produced by Christ.
Showing light
To the small miserable people.

And these-
The Unleavened Bread,
The Rising Wine-
Are Holy
Yet simple.
They are here,
There,
In our pierced hands,
On our fiery tongues.
These-
The Sacraments,
Remembrances of past foolishness,
 present Salvation,
Are above The Fear,
Self-righteous minds
As narrow as infant marrow,
Bureaucracies,
Curious condemnations
Of this and that other fellow.
(Condemnations in the Name of God-
Who we seldom even understand.)
Yet now
With the symbolic bread on our tongues,
And Blood of Wine pulsing suggestions of Life,
We read like Braille the Purity of God.
And we almost
Understand.

Brian Herrington

Small Talk

oh god
here comes that fag.

1976

what kinda freak
exactly are you

2040

south africa is some kinda
place this time of year

and bosnia keeps gittin'
pertier(prettier) and pertier(prettier)

i am rabbi
you are pope
he is thief
she is dying whore.

world war ii-
when we lost our virginity.

yesterday-
when i fell...

Brian Herrington

improvisation on a model

(?) isn't a clever remark
nor is (achoo) or saying
you or someone else is mighty
correct when it comes to what is right
or even holy
but the model of my
levity could quite possibly be the
trip
wire for someone else's absolute
explosion and then we all go rolling
like (!) or even a series of numbers
that dog-fight in mid-mathematical-air
(47365936375476)
but CAR SALE THIS WEEK
ONLY AND WE MEAN BIG SAVINGS
AND IF YOU COME DOWN TO OUR LOT TODAY
YOU'LL EVEN RECEIVE AN EARLY RELEASE FROM
PURGATORIO.
the pope would be
sitting in a park somewhere
just on the day i happened to walk
through it stub my toe and swear
and he might say well i guess that
one little (#!&*) is okay since i've
done much worse in my life.
so i guess my nonexistent grandfather's
point was that ain't nobody got the right
to so say where i choose to keep god
and my momma.
one o' these days ye ain't
gonna have no more troubles
an' trials
that's what he said
and then he lost it.

Brian Herrington

To My Grandmother

Acres,
Angels,
Bells-
All bring to mind
The beauty of my grandmother.
She smells of old clothes.
Must have been married
When no one could have
Dreamed of me
And Truman was President.

She is not
Any kind of glorious-glamorous.
No kind of Universal,
Liberal,
Well-known,
Well-schooled lady.
But she knows cows.
Knows Jesus
Shall return for his own.
And then
She'll be glamorous.

She doesn't seem
Like the vessel from which
Dear Old Dad
Came slipping out
Into your happy
1950's living room.
Doesn't seem
Like she herded
Five of so children
Through chicken-pox
And breakfast cereal,

Christmases without money,
Vaccinations,
Mail-order whoopee cushions
And joke books,

But
For her troubles
Let us make her
A Saint:
Saint Grandmother-
Patron Saint of...
Well,
The no-kind-of-glamorous
Ladies
Who raised
You and me
Like oven-biscuits.
Like vapors from
Asphalt roads after rain.
Like the realization
That we are not so
Great, Awesome,
Distant, Towering.
We came
From those ladies.
And Acres,
Angels,
Bells-
All bring to mind
The beauty of those ladies.

Brian Herrington

Compton Road

I'm lost
or it seems,
with bats in my closet
leaving no space for others-
confusing as it may seem
I still want
for those glorious days
of springtime mixed
with an elixir of freshness
that once graced my windows
on those halcyon days
I left so long ago.

I'm feeling
that perhaps those days
were ones that sleep brings
and turns my heart
into one that builds from the inside
with a coating of
cranberries and chocolate
leaving no room for despair,
crouching into corners that allow no light
to pass through
making everyday
a dark one with shadows
lurking behind things,
making my life a black and white
rendition of Disney.

Often those days,
the ones I remember
create moments for my
lips to curl into a smile
which will spread to others
when joy lifts the
roadblocks
that are waiting for them
at their table.

Barbara Tennyson

Velvet

heart felt
the crisis begins
and we dance to the music
that drifts across
the velvet held close
between my legs.
Each movement causes the
crispness of every layer
to fold, some softly with surprise
some just ever so slightly.
I smiled-
how that music
caused me to turn to my
partner
wishing that he was not he
but some person to whose heart
I belonged.

however long the music chimed
I cannot tell
because my ears picked a tune
that swayed the velvet
nonetheless.

Barbara Tennyson

Morrison Untitled

He likes his driving the way it is,
fast, intense, reckless,
like his sex.

He likes to burn his cigarettes
All the way down to the filter
Before he throws them away.

He likes to smoke his marijuana
until there's hardly anything left
and then mix it with cloves
and tobacco in a pipe.

He likes the lights of the city
And the darkness of the streets.
Sometimes he enjoys the company
of a stranger.

He likes his clothes to fit just right
And he likes his hair long and untamed.
He prefers to read and write poetry alone.
He'll often lose himself in the music
of his guitar
or a favorite album.

He likes to illuminate his place
with candles
and perfume it
with incense

Every now and then, he likes
a good laugh or a chuckle
He likes to look into people's eyes.
Says he can see what they see
that way.

Says he feels their thoughts,
Knows their secrets (though he doesn't want to)
He likes to look for the perfect soul.
Says there aren't any.

He likes to be alone most of the time,
unless he encounters
an old friend or lover.
Sometimes, he likes to talk to me;
Tells me his dreams
Of being real.

Katrina Anne Miller

Dying Down Here

Entombed
In gaseous chambers
of surveillance shadows
I watch you fall.
Mold, slime,
Drool of a monster
Oozing through a blood haze
Obstructing my vision.
Walls of stone.
Down here
The creatures arise
To dance
Primitive
Satanic
In circles of fire.
Down here
In the dark and sinister wetness
Dank, shadowy creatures
Slither and tiptoe
Around walls of stone.
Deformed, stupefied,
I watch you fall.
Shimmering green eyes
like saucers
Follow my roamings
With eager, wet, groping hands,
Waiting for me to die.
Incense to mask the odor of death.
Candles to avoid stepping on rotting carcasses
forgotten
left behind.

I hope I am not one of them.
Down here
Days do not matter
Light
Is a fantasy
Hybrid flowers eat the insects
That otherwise devour you...
You have fallen
And I watch pale green eyes
Move in for the kill
Hiss, splutter
Time expands, stands still.
Never to forget what he said--
Momentous, trivial
Significant, unimportant
"It is my nature to play the game."

Katrina Anne Miller

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PULSE

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2. Authors name should **not** appear on the submission. One submission form should be used for all entries by a single author. Forms are available in the Maes Liberal Arts Building in office 03 or 04.
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