

MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts

*Among our literary scenes,
Saddest this sight to me.
The graves of little magazines
That died to make verse free.*

--Keith Preston

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Table of Contents

1 Song of the Psalter.....	Jennifer Huber
2 Ode to Air Supply.....	Alice Chapman
3 Head Over Heels.....	Sarah Gardner
5 A change in water pressure.....	Rebecca Richards
7 Here She Feels Peace.....	Alice Chapman
9 "you may leave everything".....	Matthew Gordon
12 "The big black dog is loose again".....	Christina Smith
14 Sublimation.....	Sarah Gardner
15 Karma Can.....	Maya Lagu
16 To My Hero.....	Nick Reading
18 The Rookie.....	Jennifer Huber
22 Shades.....	Rebecca Richards
24 The Flying Trapeze Artist.....	Alice Chapman
25 Acquiescence.....	Christina Smith
27 Stranded.....	Aaron Black
28 The Stale Indiana Winter.....	Rebecca Richards
30 Robbery.....	Dave Hoffman
32 Tapestry.....	Michelle Addison
34 Anatomy.....	Sarah Gardner
36 Editors' Choice	The Triumph of Hades.....Jennifer Huber

1998 English Department

Creative Writing Contest Winners

40 Lunch Break.....	Nick Reading
53 Dancing in the Darkness.....	Kate Sillanpa
58 Beginnings.....	Cat Bohannon

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Thomas Burton

Song of the Psalter

When Orpheus strikes the lyre
the black treble clef begins to move
weaving mystical enchantment
around each half note, sixteenth, triplet,
embracing each for a split second
before going back to the world.

Tender strains of sweet harmonics develop and swell
dripping off quarter notes like hot tears of the Furies.
Crescendos and ritardandos dare to follow
D chords and diminished fifths,
creating false overtones before fading,
like echoes back into the earth.

Notes assume shapeless forms
Swirling, fighting for space, sound
spilling over unresolved chords,
staccato rhythms beating out a relentless pulse like spirits
from Tartarus
pressing forward, rising to the surface
only to evaporate, forcing a return to darkness.

Jennifer Huber

Ode to Air Supply

Oh precious cassette, Greatest Hits of the Greatest break-up
band, I want to caress you, feel you, kiss you,
before I pop you in the machine.

Secretly pressing play,
I lie spread eagle on the floor,
and sing until I cry.

Oh, Air Supply, how you understand me,
how you justify my self-pitying,
un-bathed sweatsuit afternoons,
your wisdom is unmatched by Eliot:

*Don't say the morning's come,
don't say the morning's come so soo-oooh-oon
Must we end this way
when so much here is hard to lo-oooh-ose?*

Prufrock would not dare.

You, gods of early 80s soft rock,
icons of post-traumatic wallowing syndrome,
purveyors of synthesized sap,

you make it all o.k.

*They are the words to say,
the only words I can believe.*

Alice Chapman

Head Over Heels

I have to love you, you know
As you honestly labor to understand
The significance of Abner Snopes tracking shit
Into the mansion of Major de Spain.
I watch your empty well-meaning breath projected into
empty air,
Building dialogues around stereotypes and the triumph and
nobility
Of a man who refuses to wipe his shoe.
It means so much to you
To sift through an unsightly occurrence
And find a code of honor at the core.
Your heart is good.

But let me tell you: my mother's second husband
Was Abner Snopes, base, hulking, and dull
And when he tracked shit into the house,
He had no thought about asserting his class
In the domain of another.
He had no thought at all, only ignorant disregard
And shit on his shoe, shit on his shoe,
And my mother to scrub it.

Here I sit then, the daughter of a weeping mother,
The step-daughter of a salt of the earth man,
A scholarship student in a private university,
And I love you for your intentions
And kiss your ivory innocence.

Sarah Gardner



William Green

A change in water pressure

The bathroom smells like you, boy.
Whenever the hot water runs
the steam finds the scent of you, left
in the cracks of grouting, the
indentation of the shower drain,
nice and clogged with my soapy hair.
I tried to scour the residue you leave,
a slimy trail,
you leave.

I shut my eyes
with electric water dripping off my nose,
only to
see you wrapped in green towel, early mornings
rubbing iridescent powder all over your skin,
ignorant to the white droppings
on my carpeting.

My shower completed,
I stand in front of the crisp mirror, that is
too blunt to lie to me,
studying my soggy features-
becoming entranced with my own eyes.
My limp hair
clinging to my collar bone.
I pull out a brush with big
nobby fingers, and violently,
try to get the damaged hairs on my head
to fall.

Soon
the shower head will fill with
rusty water deposits, too long
in the stainless steel.
I will pour into the tub
refreshingly cool water and
quarts of greasy bath oils. But
I won't sit long.
Hopefully,

the green towel will hang over the heater,
with warmth
and a new detergent smell.

Rebecca Richards

Here She Feels Peace

He leaves her feeling peaceful, laughing
at her feet, eating cheddar cheese and sipping
green tea. Here, there is sweetness.

She needs no reassurance. Even the rain
speaks gently on the roof. Deeper into the pillows,
she sinks her dreamy head. Seemingly

free at last, she sees her face, more
beautiful than before, in the mirror
that is the sheets where he and she sleep.

People can be like magic. Can be
stars, lights that redeem, bring her near
to gleaming divine perfect heat. Here.

Alice Chapman

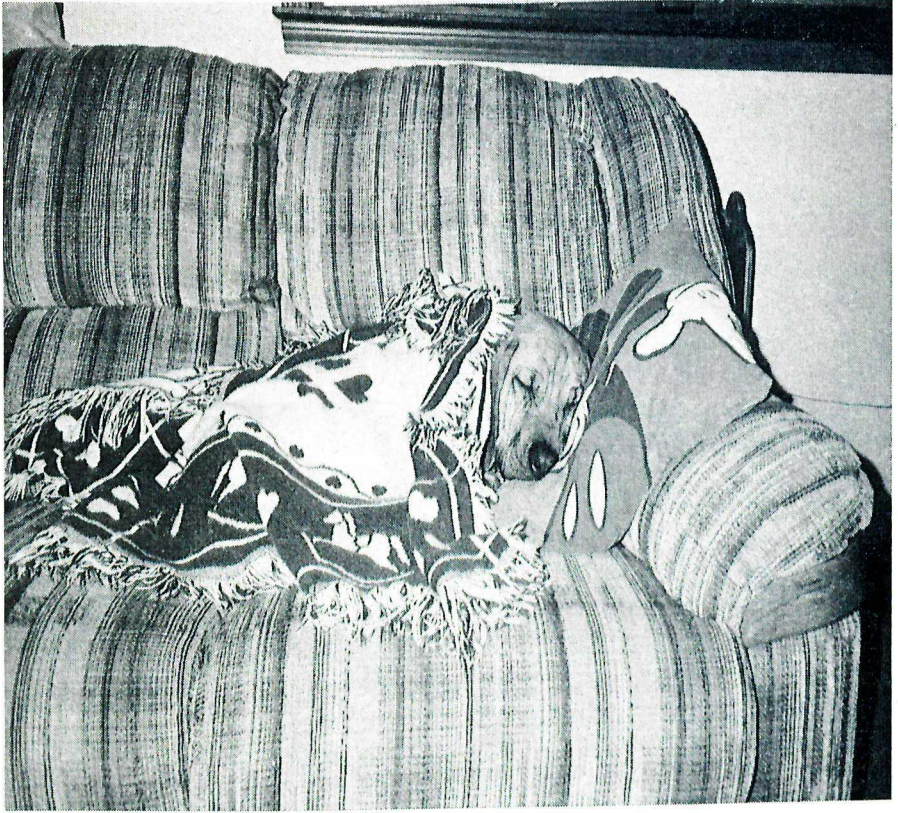


William Green

you may leave everything
you may take a souvenir of it
you may bronze it, bury it, or break it
you may melt it down with the others
you may rewrite your salespitch for the next customer
you may fly across the red land, a saleswoman for sale
you may wreak redundant revenge on the taker of
 innocence
you may dance, dance with white fire flying from your
 form in curvaceous vortexes
you may absorb the pointed torches of the sun with your
 salutation
you may oscillate with the transient minions, all groping for
 a piece of your heaven
you may perplex persons innumerable as your body-hewn
 sparkler designs in air paint the face of God
you may invite the essence of another into your own; new
 wine in your belly
you may harvest the gold from their baskets, creating your
 own golden idol
you may raise the family of Norse legend and beautiful
 Greek infamy
you may scatter your memories of one into a thousand
 indeterminable fragments
you may writhe to well-known anthems of lust and late-
 night dedications
you may have the best sundae you've ever had in your life
you may make elaborate plans and leave them to evaporate
 in someone's heart
you may light a candle on the porcelain floor
you may make someone cry out with the joy of being born

you may cry as you confront the impossible, the glorious
you may inspire someone to be crucified happily, night
 after night after night
you may melt the levers of someone's fail-safe device
you may sleep in someone's arms as your breath nourishes
 flowers in the severed garden
you may leave hastily as your child opens the floodgates of
 his tear-filled firmament
you may be worshipped by the masses, immortalized in my
 hidden mountain shrine
you may shine on.
you may sing me to sleep.

Matthew Gordon



William Green

The big black dog is loose again.
He's running around the neighbor's house
trying to catch his tail.

He scares the squirrel who
hurries to the top
of the maple tree.

He is trying to get to Heaven.

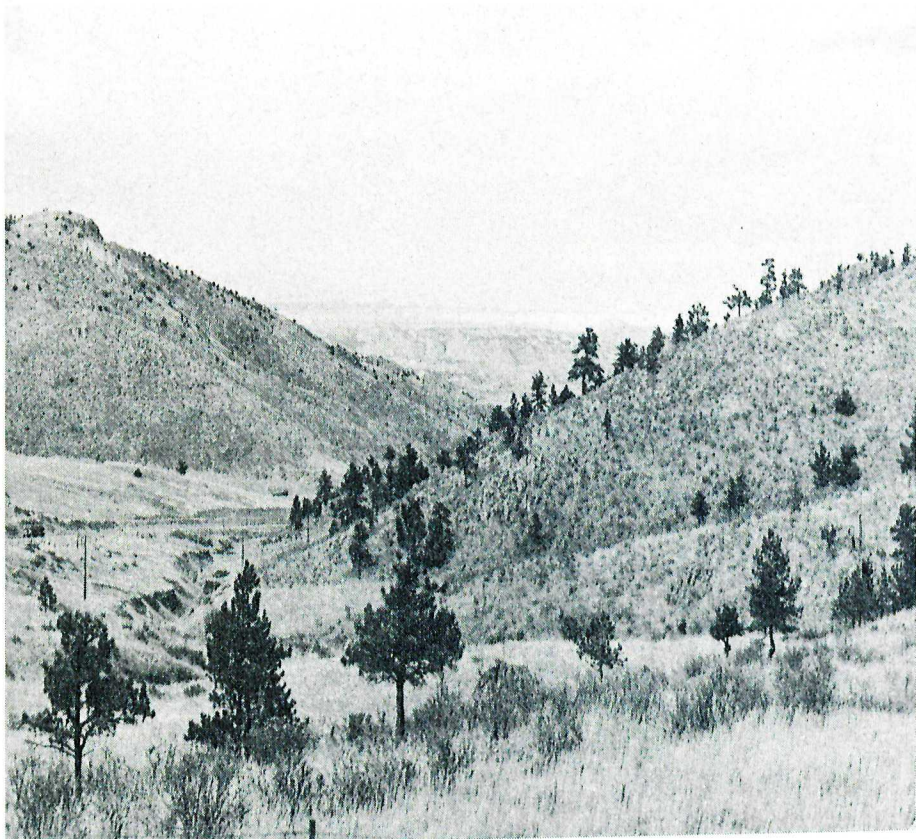
The yellow kite has him beat.
It is higher--and
closer than he'll ever be

For a short time.
But the breeze will die.
And the kite will fall.

So will the squirrel.

He'll chase his tail
around the neighbor's house.
And lap the slow, black dog.

Christina Smith



William Green

Sublimation

You have to laugh -

Dickinson,
Her life standing as a loaded gun,
Never dies.

But I have.

I have and have and oh,
Have I! and probably-
will-
again-

And they tell me
That explains everything.

Sarah Gardner

Karma Can

"Oh, go ahead. admit it. You're totally completely mad dog nervous in the biggest way right now.

Looking at me."

He smiled coolly.

"Maaaybe baaaby,
but things are this way
for a reason."

Three blocks away a cat
made a screaming sound
so real

they thought it was human
and three floors up god and love and soul
were having a little discussion.

Near as she could figure
which wasn't very far
she got this one right.

Like a bad reaction
to a beautiful cause.

He set his anger free
on her, thinking
she could save him,
a shallow stricken adagio.

Soulman paced on the balcony
until finally, a thought passed him by.

"Angel," he said in his queer sneering smile,
"think I will have that drink
after all."

Maya Lagu

To My Hero

"Dave Brubek, the swinginest!"

True words for our mentor Jack

Rhymes with back - track

Kerouac.

His words go, man, go.

Like a man with no end

his secrets he'll lend

And the words go, man, go -

Right, Left, To and Fro

Back to his Write which is Right,

and on and on and on till the heavy coolness

weighs heavy on battling eyes,

and the tape runs out and your voice still echoes.

sitting, watching, waiting -

Tell you what -

Take a rest Brother, allow us to show you some of our steps

Right and Left and Write which is right, but Left -

A lesson from a friend -

Fun with ink

paper

words

and a muse.

Nick Reading



William Green

The Rookie

At the intersection of 700 west and 200 north, turn left, but don't hit the cows. The neighbors three houses down always let their livestock run free, but just honk at them a few times. Wait, slow down. See the brick house on the left? Turn into the long drive. We just resurfaced it last year, so the big potholes at the entrance are gone. Directly in front of you is the old house. I know it's hard to believe, but that two car garage once was home. You're lucky that you have such a wonderful day to be up here. Deep blue sky, the smell of freshly mown grass in the air, and the tiny little crystal drops of dew still suspended on every blade of grass you see.

While you're here, I want to show you something. Go past the garage, and head to the southeast corner of the property. This is the orchard. I know there are only seven trees now, but never mind. It's the tree in the corner that's the important one. I'm sure you can tell its purpose by now. That V formed by the branches is the most perfect place to sit. Off to your left is a low-hanging branch. It should have some pretty good apples on it. Don't worry about washing it off; Grandpa never used insecticides. This tree used to be home base many years ago. If you were touching the tree, then no one could throw apples at you, but as soon as you left its protective haven, it was no man's land. You'd be surprised at how long the run back to the house really is. Sometimes when we'd come visit, there would be nights that I just couldn't sleep. I'd sneak out of the house, which wasn't hard to do, and go for walks through the orchard. Somehow I always ended up at this tree, sitting in the V, staring at the harvest moon, and watching the red-eye flights on their way to the Chicago airport. It was the most peaceful thing in the world

to sit in this tree. You can't imagine the way I felt, listening to the crickets sing their evening ritual, feeling the humid breeze blow through the orchard, and trying to preserve every last detail of the night in my mind to turn to for solace in the midst of winter.

If you have a few extra minutes, I really would like to show you just one more thing. Something else very special to me: a childhood retreat. Please, come this way. I hope you have on good walking shoes because the terrain gets pretty rough. This area used to be part of the property, but it was sold a few years ago to the neighbors who now grow soy beans on it. I think there are about 4 acres altogether back here, and the creek of course. I absolutely love the way that the willow tree hangs over the creek. You can use the wooden brige to your right, but watch your footing. We never did much at the creek because the snakes like this area more than we did. Anyway, let's head toward the back field. The corn is really high, so stick to the outer edge. You can't see the house from here, but look for the two giant pine trees that frame the driveway in case you ever get lost. Okay, stop here.

What I really want to show you is in the woods over there. You can't see it, but the entrance and the trail is beside that big oak tree. This was the most beautiful place to visit in the fall. The trees each had dozens of colors and shades, and the crunch of leaves underfoot mixed with the cool fall air was marvelous. The best part of being back here, though, was the mystery. My best friend and I would come back here and explore the area. We were never really sure if this was part of Grandpa's property, but I'm pretty sure that someone else owned part of it. Whoever the other owner was had written "No trespassing" on wooden signs

and nailed them to several trees. There's one on the maple to your left. Isn't that the most creepy looking thing? I love the way that red paint drips down the sign like blood.

Anyway, here it is. In my wildest dreams, I never would have imagined that a lake like this existed back here. Imagine my surprise when my friend and I found it back here one day. We couldn't get all the way around it, because the whole west side is nothing but briars and thorns. The east side used to have a huge pile of scraps: things like old tires, doors of refrigerators, rusty box springs from beds, and discarded bottles and trash. One time we almost ran back to the house because we thought that someone had actually been living there. This was not the kind of area that you would want to be caught in alone. This was our hideout, our retreat, our "secret ground." We didn't care if someone else had legal claims to it. We never bothered anything; we were just nosey and bored. And speaking of boredom, I'm sorry to have kept you so long. I'm sure you have other things that you need to move on to. It's just that this whole thing is really kind of hard, and you have been more than kind. Be careful on that trail. Some of the tree roots stick out of the ground pretty far. We learned quickly that you don't wear sandals back here.

Well, we're almost back to the house. I think you've gotten everything taken care of inside, but feel free to take some fresh veggies out of the garden if you'd like. I have plenty at home, or at least enough to last me through the winter. I certainly miss them when the snow flies. Anyway, I guess that's it. Come around to the front. Go ahead and stick the "For Sale" sign by the pine tree. Thanks again for your help.

Jennifer Huber



Thomas Burton

Shades

There's this
shade of blue-
not a pure
blue,
but a shade,

of blue.

That's not green- cause green is too
crazyfresh to be called
blue. It can't take any green 'cause
Green is too vibrant, like a field of long fingered
grass, glowing for Nature's enjoyment.
Green is the treefrogjusthangin'onthecovers
of National Geographic, the one with the red beady eyes
and
the shining smooth skin.
It's independent
independent.

so it's still this
shade
of blue-
not yellow-ish,
GOD NO! It's too bold to be
the embarrassed pool swirling clockwise against the
white porcelain. A realshadybluemother won't lean
on yellow's crutch.

Not a yellow-belly, and too deep
to be a flighty canary.
If it were yellow it would be too translucent
and everyone could grab onto the meaning.
So it's just a
shade,
of blue.
My sky, baby, my sky.
That grabs the eye
and sinks your imagination.
into its
color fascination.

Rebecca Richards

The Flying Trapeze Artist

Mistaking myself for a famous high flying trapeze artist, I climb the ladder to the top of the circus tent. A short man of muscular build named Lars tosses me the trapeze from the other platform. Leaping forward, I catch the metal bar first with my hands and then, in a swift and graceful motion, I somersault into the air and catch the trapeze with my knees. Swinging back and forth while upside down, the blood begins to rush to my head and I notice that Lars has very good hair. Meanwhile, the sparkle from a sequin on my bustier has caught the eye of a white Siberian tiger, causing him to break free from his cage. No one else appears to be panicked, as it seems that the inbred animal has set his sights particularly on my designer bustier. Damn it, why did I love Madonna so much as a child? Lars, a busy man with many places to be (or so I've heard), has descended the ladder, and below me I see that he is trading beauty secrets with the bearded lady. They run their fingers through each other's hair and gesticulate dramatically. The ringmaster and the fortune teller are placing bets with the audience about which limb the tiger might go for first. And a man in the front row hopes to God that the battery in his camcorder holds up. "This could be the big winner," he shouts.

I just gotta hold on. Just gotta hold on.

Alice Chapman

Acquiescence

For six days now I've sat in front of the TV
a couch--a living and breathing
piece of furniture.
I'm beginning to smell.
Bits of popcorn have
collected in my creases.
I stare at the screen--
it promises that in two weeks
I can make my cushions turn to
hard, solid mass.
But I like being
fluffy. It's comfortable.

Seven days ago I sat in church,
the pew firm and
painful to my rolling
flesh. The minister spoke of excessive
sin.
I asked God
What's wrong with being a couch?
A couch is a couch--He said.
Yes--And I am that I am.

Christina Smith



William Green

Stranded

I need to change my skin
Not the color, that doesn't matter,
But I need to shrug off
This old vessel
I could fill it with a
Message and sail it out
For others to find
I could stand tall again
And stare down the storm
I need to rip off my skin

Aaron Black

The Stale Indiana Winter

Clarity falls with the thermometer.
There was an eight-car-pileup
on I-70 after light flurries with no accumulation.
The participants were all driving thrity miles
under the speed limit.

I opened a window
to let the morning air welcome me awake,
but my fingers became caked with that
chalkboard-esque film of
road salt and winter's breath.

yes- winter is
beautiful.

The streetlights that usually have
some angelic glow to welcome the early risers
on their morning lover's stroll,
are having their brilliance being
absorbed into a gray abyss.

Today's jog down the trail
was about as colorful as a
sparrow.

My thoughts are becoming torpid-
they complacently wander through
injustice, and love and what I had for dinner-
And what Nature provided so vibrantly
streams together, like those runny
"Paint with water" coloring books that
I did at grandma's.

Then, in my haste, I would
hold them precariously until it became a picture,
swirling with dead grays and brown,
water running down my wrist.

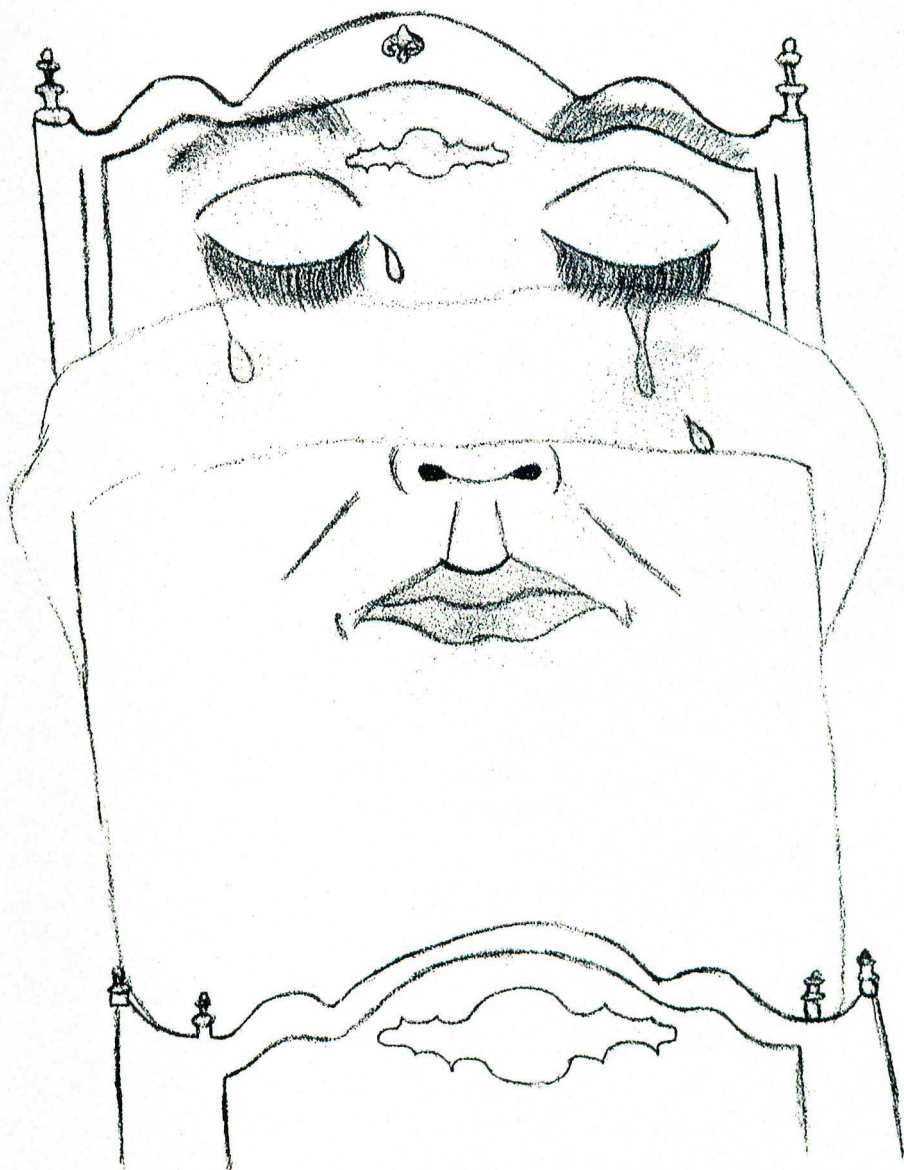
I end up at home.
with the chill of a cold front,
sitting on my spine.
Whistling in my ear
that it is a long time until the sun comes home too.

Rebecca Richards

Robbery

We sit, and we wait.
Gathered around him, our treasure.
A sorry sight! Tarnished treasure.
No polish can return his lustre.
We wait for death to come,
And take from us.
Blindly we hope for the robbery.
Talking about something else,
We distract each other
From the bandit
Who comes to plunder
Our beloved treasure
And we are happy to be robbed.

Dave Hoffman



Cynthia Garrett

Tapestry

Passing
Turning
Weaving
Hope
A Tapestry
Woven with
Emotions
Feelings
And Love
Delicate Hands
Recording Life
With Precious
Laces and Thread
Each pattern,
Unique,
Priceless,
And beautiful

So much so
That only few are welcomed
Or invited to see
How sad, how exciting,
How troublesome,
Yet desirable
But it is not for you to own
Instead, a gift of the ages
So those that view may grow,
Be inspired,
Appreciate,
And understand.
A legacy to the future,
A tapestry of life
Which you create
Beautiful and Unique

Michelle Addison

Anatomy

When pondering questions of efficiency, I am always drawn to the idea of vestigial organs. Your body is full of them, you know. Mine too--organs which served a purpose once but through the course of time have ceased to function in any discernible way. Now they simply take up space inside your organic goo, serving as little more than references in the argument for evolution. Your appendix, for example, or your tailbone. Possibly your stomach.

It's not vestigial, really, but as an organ, the stomach is greatly misunderstood. To look at you, you'd think your stomach is inside, but your body envisions you as a doughnut of sorts, with your stomach being the hole in the middle. And then there's always the Middle Ages, when they thought love was housed in the stomach. Can you believe it? The stomach! Now we attribute it to the heart, but not the heart really. The place we touch when talking of love is actually three centimeters to the left of the heart and at least fourteen above the stomach, somewhere wedged between the breast and collar bones. By that line, over the last six centuries love has migrated through the human anatomy over a tenth of a meter at an angle of approximately twenty-one degrees.

So, when reflecting on the feasibility of loving you forever, I often wonder if I shouldn't pay a little more attention to your left shoulder.

Sarah Gardner



Hunter Rose

Editors' Choice

Triumph of Hades

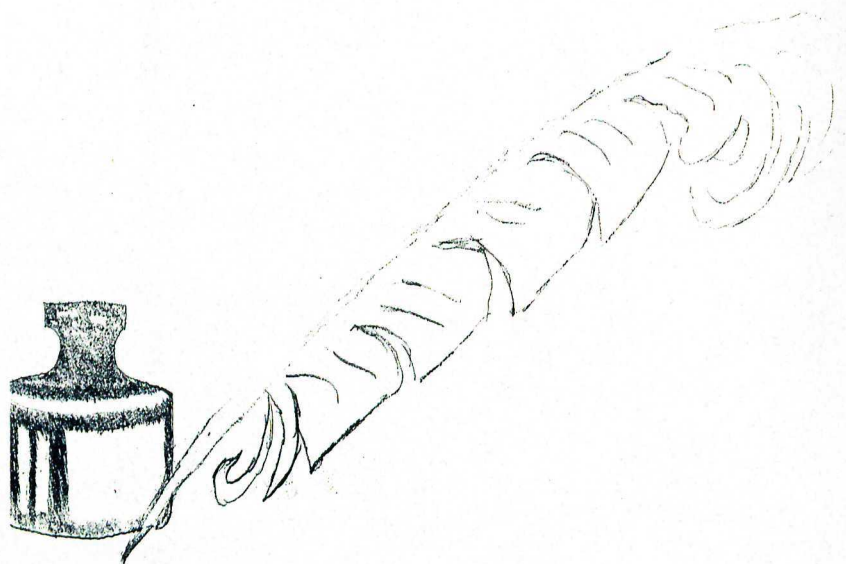
Perched silently, black talons gripping
the rough bark of an unsteady branch. A slight ruffle,
rearranges silk feathers, soaked with darkness.
Eyes dart, surveying the territory
watching over
freshly tilled fields covered with
moonlight shadows.
Breezes weave through branches
muted wisps of songs
murmuring secrets and promises
sliding through the night.
Darkness begins to seep and melt
the sliver of moon,
stealing the pale light away
forcing it to seek refuge underground.

Black beak opening, this
progeny of Pluto,
breaks the night's solemnity
sending reverberating sounds into the thick dark.
Grasses bend, pressed by the night,
paying homage to the earthly god.
Branches quiver as a taloned foot
moves to the edge while silent wings unfold,
lifting the ominous messenger into the night.

Jennifer Huber



William Green



1998
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
CREATIVE WRITING
CONTEST WINNERS

FICTION

Lunch Break

The Man of the Hour

What happens when the roads of time get crossed? The travelers lost in a twilight zone like world? What becomes of the man who simply isn't in the right place in *his* time? When his existence is tortured by a happiness that rests in the desired reality of another life? And what, exactly, is fate?

In the life of one young man named Toby, these dilemmas offer themselves up for examination. We, as onlookers, are invited in the sweet and sour world Toby lives in, and we meet strangely with strangers, in even stranger places. And we learn, for one man, what, exactly, fate is.

In the office

Toby's watch announced with its electronic bugle the arrival of 11:40 a.m. Time for lunch. He gave his chair a scoot away from his desk. Not far enough though to give his gordo gut room to get out. His desk creaked with the pressure of his girth when he slipped out of his seat.

He grabbed his coat and grabbed his hat and remembered that first day when his Boss, with flushed cheeks that hung over his jawbone and did the shimmy shimmy shake, let him go early. He said one noon, in a twangy and bassy voice that filled the room, "Hey, m'boy, you're free to go. There's a great Italian place down on 14th and Boulevard. Bellomo's, can't be beat!" Toby heard the too-good-to-be-true news, looked at his watch, then looked at the Reall's clock above the Boss's office door, then looked at his Boss. "Go ahead kid, I bet you're

starving, and anyway, our kind's gotta stick together!" He gave a slap with jolly grunto to his bulging belly. Toby almost cracked the mold of his constantly solemn mug then. But his urge to smile vanished, and he lowered his gaze sheepishly, thinking he didn't really mind not seeing his feet.

The Boss winked at Toby and went back into his office, and Toby was out.

Walking

Toby made his wide way through the not as crowded at noon crowd up to 14th. He heard muzak emanating from the Aristocrat when a young man with a Navy pea coat and white scarf hanging out of his pocket opened the front door for his girl, wet flakes melting into her cheeks. Toby caught a measure and a half, he estimated, before the door swung shut, slammed by cold gusts. The measure and a half turned into a sweet slow swinging ditty that Toby remembered from piano lessons, the remaining remnants of ragged incomplete boyhood memories. Now he played it again, in his head, with full orchestration. He once played it for his girl, sitting side by side on the bench, snow cold outside. That was when he still had all his fingers.

He sometimes imagined they all were there again, twiddling, tapping, drumming, dancing- it seemed to him that he knew so much more back then. He had so much more back then. He had himself, knew himself well enough to be alone, and he wasn't so lonely then. Toby frowned and buried his eyebrows in his green eyes as he tried to make an answer pop out of thin air like a rabbit out of a hat and figure out why he was so lonely now. He felt sympathetic to that man who had become himself. He didn't feel sorry for himself, though, he imagined he had a

girl to eat lunch with.

At Bellomo's

Toby sipped his hot chocolate. It had just been brought to him and he was diving with everything he had into the white foam. He loved that.

He put his cup down with a shiver when a piercing breath of airy ice shot through the opened front door. In with it a woman of another time who had platinum hair and herself to share, floated in too. She stood at the entrance in the brief prelude to infinity and spoke to the hostess while scanning the room for something, someone. Smiling, she made the place pretty. The door swung shut, an instant too late, the building shivered.

Toby was taking another dip in sweet dark milk when Gloria spoke.

"Excuse me, Toby?" He looked up wondering who knew his name. "It's Toby, isn't it? The hostess told me. I'm Gloria," she put a delicate hand out. Toby took it and swallowed it up in his grip. He couldn't find anything to say. Gloria did. "Um, apparently, the bar is full and there's a luncheon in the other room and the only other seat left, they said, is this one." Toby glanced around the room and didn't recall the lunch rush that had summoned multitudes and had Bellomo's bursting at the seams. Every seat was filled, every waiter thrilled. Every seat but the one opposite from Toby in his two-person booth and every waiter but the gal standing behind Toby, notepad in hand, pen in ear. "Please," Toby said, "you're more than welcome."

Gloria bubbled up at once. "Thank you, thanks so much," she said in a tone that was reserved for only those moments that called for warmth, sincerity. Toby thought she sang smooth, soft, full of volume and dynamic but always soothing. He loved that.

It reminded him of another song.
I'll build a stairway to paradise,
with a new Step ev'ry day!
I'm going to get there at any price;
Stand aside, I'm on my way!

It was Ira Gweshwin that Gloria sounded like, Toby was sure.

He loved that.

He wished he could reach out and lay his hand on her cheek and twist and stroke silky strands of deep auburn. Instead, he kept his paws resting in front of him, like he revered Gloria as the God-send she had to be, his lunch date. To touch her would transform her beauty into the cold mortal flesh like Toby wore, and he was sure she wasn't mortal. He imagined Gloria would put her hand over his, not covering half of it, and move their fist to the table, her hand on top of his.

When the food was served, they sat and ate, and it had been the first time in a long time that Toby ate lunch with somebody. "Strange," he thought, "a lunch date, just like I would've imagined it." He smiled.

Afterwards, Toby was obliged and paid for Gloria, and they still sat. "Toby," Gloria asked her lunch date, "let me tell you, " she paused, licked her lips, not seductively, but tastefully, like she was savoring the wet remnants of hot chocolate, "that your kindness is only exceeded by your good looks." She smiled with her lips together, making a slit under a thin nose under two sparkling eyes that sang to him and made him believe that through that behind her, within her, in front of him, a radiance waited to be revealed, and Toby imagined he could feel that light--life.

Toby looked into her eyes, intricately divine, and he thought he saw another world. Sparkle floated behind her

crystal windows. The kindest green Toby thought he had ever seen invited him. Toby looked into her eyes and he thought she wanted him - somehow, somewhere.

All this bliss, and Toby was not sure what to do. If only she would ask him - anything. To hear her tender voice invite him with a sound that was more of a heralding was what kept Toby's senses impaired. He listened with his whole soul and heart, intensely waiting, and smiling. He forgot what he saw and felt, and tasted only eagerness and patience, so he only knew what he heard. Toby had never heard so much. He heard music that shot out of speakers, and he liked the way it sounded. He heard doors whoosh and slam and clinking glasses and chuckles and boring conversation that made him think he had more to say than anybody. He heard a world that he wasn't conscious of before. He felt like a part of it.

Then he looked some more and thought he was just wishing and dreaming, and he felt silly and even sillier when he couldn't take his eyes away from Gloria's. And sitting there, no words were shared.

Toby couldn't tear his gaze or straighten his grin and he stared and Gloria stared and Toby imagined. What if?

Toby loved that.

At Home

Hearing the clinking of keys and the turn of the lock, Winner's ears perked up, his head following and his eyes opened after he had already pounced off the arm chair's headrest and leaped onto the stool that was to the left of the doorway. Toby opened it and Winner sprang, trusting to be caught. Toby obliged, kicked the door shut with his heel,

tossed his keys and wallet on the stool Winner gave up and gently smooched the wet nose of his pussy and listened to her purr.

Toby slipped his shoes off and went to his chair. He fell backwards and made the chair go creakclickclaprock when he pulled the wooden handle on the side signaling steel rods to jerk into place reclining the chair, Toby, and Winner.

Toby scanned the dark and picked up the remote and pressed on. Electricity surged through the small flat and bowled through empty lanes and exploded into the stereo. The red light faded on and made a projection on Toby's glasses, the red, lining the silver stems and running laps round his lenses. He closed his eyes, pressed the play button and a blue rhapsody of horns sang of Toby's wishes. Familiar notes encircled him and the reunion made Toby want to love.

He listened. He sat in the dark. He loved these times, but only imagined them with people, and lasting into the warm bright morn and further into the heavy coolness of night. He wanted to start a new life and never remember these times, when he wasn't alive. He wanted to be racing over steaming asphalt, blindly into the sun, and trusting he'd arrive in one piece to the city of lights and jive and jazz.

He remembered when he was younger and could play and be happy. Then before another thought crossed his mind, a key was turned in time with horns and pots and Toby forgot and was engulfed by a wish and only knew what he heard.

And he was playing. He was happy.

Smitty

"Hey kid," Smitty peeked through the back door of the back room of The Hall, "Where ya headed? Got a minute?" Toby had worked late at Reall's and had been walking home with his eyes on the ground until now. He was a man shivering, hanging out of an alley door, his shirt convulsing in the wind. He looked up with interest at the man's pool stick that was holding the door open. "Well, ah, what's up?"

"Well, tell ya what, the name's Smitty-call-me-the-man-from-New-York-City and I'll buy your dinner if you can help me out of a jam and give me a partner, play stick, Toby?"

Toby didn't realize Smitty called him by his name until he had walked up to the front doors of The Hall and even then, Toby didn't think anything of it. He actually liked the way Smitty had said it, "Tow-bee" like it actually belonged in the company of a "Smitty-call-me-the-man-from-New-Your-City." Toby appreciated that and didn't give it another thought and opened the front door of The Hall. The front room was dark. The back room was darker. Past the bar and dining room and hostess podium, the pool tables glowed green. Only the light from the jukebox and the lamps hanging above the tables offered a chance to see. At the jukebox Toby saw Smitty. His black slacks blended into the dark and his blacker shoes that had even blacker laces that ran through the seven holes on the opposite sides reflected the lamps and twirling fans that shook and creaked and didn't seem to do much but look cool on Smitty's shoe. He wore a white tank under a white dress shirt that was buttoned half way and hung perfectly on the small man. He had a pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket

that weighed heavy and blue chalk marks on his rolled up sleeve. Smitty motioned for Toby to come back.

The Hall smelled like tobacco and belched beer. It smelled like a hard day's work. It smelled like an easy day's work for a strong stomach. Smoke stung the smoker's eyes when it floated from the cigarette and found nowhere to go, a cloud hanging low.

It all tasted, for most, much the same. Maybe someone would indulge in the salty crunch of a pretzel or the oily snap of a peanut, but mostly, it all tasted the same. For Toby, it tasted like whiskey. Warm, off the rocks, stronger than ever swill that made Toby feel swell. He had thrown back seven in the 90 minutes he had been there. Smitty had succeeded in getting him drunk and loose and showered him in compliments like, after the two cats declined a rematch with Toby and Smitty, he had said, "Toby, I'll be damned if you just don't look like the man with the plan and that's b-baad!" That was the first thing Toby laughed at, and Toby had laughed through the night ever since.

Toby sucked up every drink and every minute and listened to every word that was said and could only hope the next instant he wouldn't go deaf. Smitty watched with sincere understanding and after Toby kept living every second like it was his last, Smitty clued him in.

"Yo, Bro, ya got all night, right?" Toby didn't nod, just grinned. "Yeah, right, so grab a seat and offer your lap and I'm gonna grab a game of 9-Ball - five a piece, can you believe that?" Smitty spoke with his hand to his mouth like it was a secret and snickered and looked back over his shoulder at his next game. "That poor kid, thinks he's for

real! Tell you something more, Tobe, we just might be eating like kings nine balls from now! Betcha like the sound of that!"

Toby agreed and wished him luck and said, "Smitty, how 'bout some coins for the jukebox?" Smitty reached into his pocket and dropped into Toby's palm the change. The silver clinked in his huge hand, his treasured bowl. A new thing Toby then learned, all you had to do, was ask. He stepped to the box and slid the coins on in and made his selection "The A Train." Dancing back to his seat Toby felt a surge, and fell back while the room spun, Toby's mind, faster. Suddenly alive and suddenly a comedian in the merry drunkenness of the moment, Toby shouted to his buddy, "Smitty, if I don't keep movin, all these pretty girls are gonna be groovin - all over me!" He blushed and when Smitty turned to respond, Toby looked comfortable to him.

"Tell you what, kid, you play your cards right and they'll never stop groovin round you!"

Toby figured Smitty knew what he was talking about. "I wonder what my hand is?" Toby thought. He imagined he had four of a kind.

At Home?

When Toby lay his head down to sleep that drunken night, he closed his eyes and he felt the room twirling. When the jazz came on, he closed his eyes and the room stopped spinning and started dancing. Toby started dancing too and dreamt.

Simple, sincere, desired, was the image that overcame him. An image of a man who knows himself well enough to know how to dance with another is what Toby dreamed of. He dreamt he could dance with Gloria. He imagined that his life was a rehearsal, and for one night

he put on the show. He saw the stage. The curtains blue velvet. And then the lights went up. Toby mingled and snapped up drinks before the big show. He saw people smiling and they were all smiling because of him and he thought it must have been Heaven. He felt friends slap him on his back and only his soul would tremor and release into the night and all that Toby saw made him feel happy.

A kind man sharp in his tux and manner, tapped Toby on the shoulder and ushered him towards the main floor. Through the pulsing crowd the two men stepped lively, Toby close on the heels, and the man then said, "Here's your chance." The two stopped at a hallway and then there was only Toby. In his dream, he saw the man in the tux turn into a shadow and disappear into the multitudes. He looked down the hallway and saw a door. Plain, naked, closed, Toby thought it was picture perfect, deep brown and sharply formed. The gold handle shining. He took one step and was one step closer to the door when in the next instant he heard a slam and then silence. He felt eyes on him, eager, inviting. Toby saw in front of him, through the fog of what he knew was real, his savior. He saw the keys to success and a bench to ride in on. Toby thought he was in Heaven. He took a deep sigh, clenched and relaxed his fists of magic fingers, and had a seat at the piano.

Out the Office

Toby finished the 69 cent cappuccino that he got on his way to work. He tossed it into the trash can on his way through the mirror doors. He swung one door open and swiveled his other arm carrying his brief case and holding the cappuccino he got the his Boss. His Boss appreciated it.

"Toby, many thanks m'boy, a kind soul is hard to find," his boss leaned close to Toby and said out of the side

of his mouth, "believe me, kid, I've looked!" He looked at Toby serious for an instant and then jerked his hand to his mouth and snickered and Toby chuckled too. His Boss straightened and walked back to his office. He tasted the cappuccino and with foam on his lips said, "mmmm mmmm" and "Toby, you have just made my day. You just holler if there's anything I can do for you." Toby smiled back at his Boss and was waiting for him to break into laughter so Toby could join him, but his Boss only smiled back at him and was sincere. He went into his office taking the lid off the cup and gulping the mocha down.

Toby sat back and thought he had the best Boss around. With that realization, he put his head down and began his day at work. It wasn't until lunch break that he took his fingers from the keyboard and sighed a deep breath. His Boss opened his door as Toby was exhaling.

"So, Toby, where we eating today? Say, you do look good, what'd you do last night?" Toby was used to conversation by now and relished his opportunity.

"Dancin, Boss. I went dancin."

"You don't say kid?"

"Had a time, boy did I have a time. Looked good too, sharp."

"No kiddin? So who was your girl? She looked good too I bet!"

"Oh, shout, Boss, I didn't *really* go. I was just dreaming, you know."

"Wow, kid, you lost me. Did you go or no?"

"Boss, I was just dreaming! Just telling you my dream, what I did last night was dream."

"Oh, I got you, so you didn't *really* go dancin'?"

Toby answered questionably and strangely felt quite a bit quicker than his Boss. The feeling didn't last for long.

"No, I didn't, it was only *imaginary*."

"And that means what?"

"It means --"

"That's right, Toby, it means that last night I was sitting at home too and just dreaming, you know imagined myself sitting with a gorgeous gal, squeezing her tight in a booth made for two. We were down at Sam's, and I imagined us sharing steaming cocoa and a big heaping bowl. We were sharing some of that sweet vanilla ice cream and Sam's sweeter chocolate sauce.

"I imagined that, and so I grabbed my wife and told her we were going for a ride, and I'll tell ya Toby, m'boy, I never imagined anything sweeter."

Toby wasn't sure what to say and his Boss didn't ask him to say a thing. He stepped closer and reached into Toby's front shirt pocket. He took out a pack of Lucky's. Toby didn't quite believe it. He didn't smoke and certainly never had any Lucky's. The Boss slapped them on the palm of his hand and the smack didn't make Toby flinch. He ran the plastic strip round the pack and tore something silver and made a cigarette jump out of the pack. He reached into his pants and snapped a Zippo and he was lit and he tossed the Lucky's to Toby and he caught them in his resting hands.

"Hey, why don't you come with me to lunch? We got plenty and we'd love to have you." Toby's Boss smiled, winked and turned and danced over to his door. His feet made soft heavy thumps on the carpet. He slid up to his door, opened it, and said, "Your call - Toby, you're all aces." He danced through the door, and Toby watched it shut and he didn't hear his Boss anymore.

He heard the roar of gatherings of people. Women and men and boys and girls. He heard a voice that rang like Ira Gershwin's and pool balls being cracked and the scuff of the chalk. He heard ivory being tickled to death and horns

playing for their lives and he heard a voice sweet and close and he heard his name.

His watch announced with its electronic bugle the arrival of 11:40 a.m. Time for lunch.

Nick Reading

NON-FICTION PERSONAL ESSAY

Dancing in the Darkness

When a twenty-two year old Boston Ballet dancer died this past June of heart failure, the nation cried out in shock. The dance world remained silent. The nation linked her death to anorexia nervosa, and they connected her choice to starve her body to the words of her ballet director who said, "she was a little chubby...and the artistic staff asked her to lose five pounds."* The dance world mourned over the loss of Heidi Guenther, but shrugged its shoulders at the accusations that Anna-Marie Holmes was out-of-line to tell an already thin girl to lose weight. In our democracy, people have a hard time understanding that a woman in authority could use her power in this manner and that a girl would actually follow these demands. However, dancers know that the society within the studio does not practice the freedom of the one outside the window. They brush off accusations against Anna-Marie Holmes because they realize "That's just the way things are. If you don't like it, you leave." An article in Dance Magazine notes that the "controversy" of Heidi Guenther's death "cast a shadow over...the ballet world."** It failed to admit that the dance world always has and always will function in shadows. The real shadow fell upon the minds of the public when Heidi revealed to them that the brilliant light the dance world sheds in their eyes is all an illusion.

Dancers do not live by the standards of the

*Ben-Itzak, Paul and Beatrice Gruber. "Dancer's Death at 22 Casts Shadow Over Boston, Ballet World." Dance Magazine September 1997: 26,34.

**Ben-Itzak and Gruber.

"normal" world--as we like to call it--where beauty is prompted by superficial images on paper, screens, and billboards. As a nation, we publicly criticize these ideals because we know that only molded plastic dressed, boxed, and stamped with "Barbie," is perfect. In the "normal" world, a girl who's 5'6" should weigh at least 130 pounds.*

I live in the dance world. Beauty is not an inanimate image to consider from a distance. Beauty is the body of the dancer on your right and on your left...and the girl pirouetting in front of you, the one stretching out in the corner, the one sewing her pointe shoes, the one flying through the studio in nimble leaps. It's not a picture that you and your friends can jeer at saying, "Nobody really looks like that," because in the dance world you are surrounded by *real* people who *really* look like that, and the only way to survive in this Barbie Dream House is to make yourself look like that too. If I weighed 130 pounds, I would be dining on ice cubes, exercising to the beat of Karen Carpenter.

You may think I look fine as a "normal" everyday person, but I know that *you*--the audience--want to see me with narrow hips, a flat bottom, and no belly. Ballets are not about real people. The audience comes to see other-worldly figures--angels, numphs, sylphs, swan princesses. Light, graceful, delicate creatures with fairytale bodies. When you tell a dancer she must be crazy for thinking she's fat just remember that you don't have to look at yourself in a leotard and tights for three to six hours every day and be judged according to that image.

*Phipps, Wilma J., Virginia L. Cassmeyer, Judith K. Sands, Mary Kay Lehman, ed. Medical-Surgical Nursing: Concepts and Clinical Practice. 5th ed. St. Louis: Mosby, 1995

Take a moment to switch your glasses. Get up from your plush purple seat in the audience and wander through the darkness backstage. The body issue for dancers is not "I gotta start getting ready for bikini season" or "Better be able to fit into that dress I bought a month ago" or "I want to impress the guys at the club." The body *is* dance: fragile crystal elegance. "I have to look like a feather when I jump." "My partner has to be able to lift me easily." "If I lose a couple inches from my thighs my dancing will be worth watching."

Some teachers encourage us with lush words on how dance is from the heart. With sparkling eyes and enthusiastic motions, we hear how the most beautiful dance radiates from within yourself. The audience can only believe you if you believe yourself. Dance by your passion, your conviction, your emotion that flows from deep down inside! The movement can course through your veins, seizing its control, and you abandon your body and mind to its powerful energy. You become the movement. That is dance! The words inspire us and we start the dance once again, but this time with our hearts pounding and minds set free. Feel the movement and dance by the heart! But as we bask in this newfound inspiration, the teacher yells, "Pull in your tummies! No one wants to see what you had for lunch! Tighten your muscles! I want to see you work! Point your toes, your feet look like dead fish!" The heart shatters as the mirrors become reality.

In ballet, image is everything. The body serves as the instrument of dance. You can't always expect them to inspire you with "dance by your passion," but you come to rely on "if you really want to make it as a dancer you must look like this." Don't become discouraged as you try to comprehend the mentality backstage, just believe us when we say we must excuse Anna-Marie Holmes, director of the Boston Ballet, for telling a thin Heidi Guenther to lose a

few pounds. Just know that we should all excuse the directors of the Milwaukee Ballet for making ninety-two pound Marisa Soltis join a weight-loss program. "You don't understand. If I don't lose eight pounds I'll get fired," Marisa pleaded to the program's staff.* Teachers, choreographers, and directors have the power to say such things because they expect perfection from us. "Every mistake you make is a choice," we were scolded in ballet class one day. "You chose to make your mistakes."

Journalist Suzanne Gordon found the life in the dance world so incredible she turned her magazine article assignment into an entire book, Off Balance. In her study of dancers, she came to realize that "ballet training is not only a long and painful discipline of the body, it is a discipline of the spirit as well."** The ballet dancer's beliefs have been constructed by every criticism that echoes in the studio. This is why we must agree with these young dancers, Heidi and Marisa, when they say they are fat. They are swimming in a collage of mirrors, gasping for breath in a life of images. They depend upon the saving hands of those who see them.

Teachers and directors are very generous to help us mold into the textbook images of the perfect dancer. Daily, they make us point our feet harder, jump faster, lift our legs higher, position our arms correctly, and use our bodies "efficiently." We accept each compliment and criticism like a precious pearl, stroking it in respect and polishing it to shine back at them. If we don't take their comments to heart--and to body--they will not bother to look at us anymore. "As far as you're concerned," a teacher

*Leung, Shirley. "Some See Choice: Art vs. Health." The Boston Globe 11 July 1997: B4.

**Gordon, Suzanne. Off Balance: The Real World of Ballet. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983: p. 14.

lectured us in ballet class one afternoon, "the person standing in the front of the room (the teacher) is God." Without their attention our dancing is worthless. "Only when you are noticed do you exist," an anonymous New York City Ballet dancer once explained.*

They feed us with roles in *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*; they sustain us with praising words. They crumble our passion with their apathy, and they crush our selves in disgust. We stand before them, stone-faced. Inside of us a voice cries out for reasoning and helpless sobs proclaim weakness we dare not admit. When we climbed into our first leotards and tights, we climbed onto a never-ending roller coaster. We have come to know the rhythm: the climbs, the sharp turns, and the heart-stopping falls. It's all just part of the ride. At the bottom of the plunges we wonder if we should just jump off and leave it all. But, as this thought turns over and over inside vulnerable minds, we hear the teacher yelling, "It's a matter of do or die. Don't walk out on it!"

I am a 5'6" dancer weighing 120 pounds with hips that are too wide, a waistline that has half an inch too much to pinch, a rib cage that sticks out, a torso that's too short, shoulders that are too narrow, a neck that could be longer, shoulder muscles that are too tense, arms that are too bony, feet that are too flat, toes that are not the same length, ankles that are a little on the thick side, legs that aren't turned-out enough, and a spine that's painfully rebelling against sixteen years of bending, twisting, and contorting. But, for some reason, every time I meet someone in my "normal" life, he or she eventually say to me: "You look like a dancer."

Katie Sillanpa

*Gordon: p. 130

POETRY

Beginnings

I start it, and it's big
so I stop.

Chew at my collar for a while.

I start it, and it's big
so I stop.

Dissecting a pen.
Clicking my nails on a keyboard.

I start it

And the shaking starts in my jaw, and my
teeth won't separate but to chatter, and the
glare off my rings is falshing SOSOSOS
dangerous and drunk and blind so

I stop.

Little at a time, girl.
Little at a time.

You don't have to tell them why
there are scars on your tongue, just
open your mouth.

You don't have to tell them why
the chair is 3 feet from the
full-lenght mirror,

at the foot of your bed,
or the scarf of Chinese silk
crimson and stiff with blood,
little at a time.

They will piece it together.

Just as you are stitched
with the thinnest thread
in the most absurd patterns

or the chain that goes
from one pierced ear to the other,
and has hung you

on that concrete wall
like a picture
in the living room of the rich.

Or is it the silk
wrapped round your wrists and
hooked through your thighs

your knees in the dust, and your
un-blindfolded eyes full on the firing squad,
and the glare off their rifles

keeps you from seeing
if you carry their names
in your silver-strung head.

Little at a time.

That chair's wood is petrified, you should
console it like a girl to her doll

in a plane that's going down.

Stroke it like you would
stroke the red and drooled-on yard
of doll-head.

The silk should be washed, so
find a sink that isn't white
in a room that has no cameras.

Your ankles can be washed
in that same sink, the burns
the same weave as the belt.

The bow should be untied,
it has other uses now, and the belt
can stay where it lies.

I start it, and it's big
so I trust it. I can fit in it.

The firing squad, well
the glare off their rifles
has made them blind.

My rings are flashing
SOSOSOS
into their butchered eyes.

Cat Bohannon

Author Index

Michelle Addison

"Tapestry" 32

Aaron Black

"Stranded" 27

Cat Bohannon

"Beginnings" 58

Alice Chapman

"Ode to Air Supply" 2

"Here She Feels Peace" 7

"The Flying Trapeze Artist" 24

Sarah Gardner

"Anatomy" 34

"Sublimation" 14

"Head Over Heels" 3

Matthew Gordon

"you may leave everything" 9

Dave Hoffman

"Robbery" 30

Jennifer Huber

"Song of the Psalter" 1

"The Rookie" 18

"The Triumph of Hades" 36

Maya Lagu

"Karma Can" 15

Nick Reading

"To My Hero" 16

"Lunch Break" 40

Rebecca Richards

"A change in water pressure" 5

"Shades" 22

"The Stale Indiana Winter" 28

Katie Sillanpa

"Dancing in the Darkness" 53

Christina Smith

"The big black dog is loose again" 12

"Acquiescence" 25

