

Promethia 2002

Low to the
Ground



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*for
2002*

**Promethia 2002:
Low to the Ground**

Promethia 2002: Low to the Ground

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Editor's Note

Sitting here in my humble abode facing another aspect of finality, I think of what this has meant. I find myself contemplating Incarnational living and Annie Dillard's line, "Holiness lies spread and borne over the surface of time and stuff like color." It is such a surreal, humble thing to finally have this journal to offer...yet one more attempt at piecing together these fragments that we have shored against our ruins (thanking T. S. Eliot). We know that in truth, it all boils down to life scribbled on napkins at Denny's and old and new coffee shops before sunrise, and we see how it's all laid open before us like a free museum or an exposed manuscript. We blink our eyes in shiny disbelief at the fact that something was written or visually captured. And it was good.

Somehow, I've taken to calling this year's version "low to the ground." Reminding me how we're intentionally held down by gravity—not because the sky is heavy—but because every moment we might be lifted into the stratosphere, enfolded in angel wings alone and together with Glory Himself. Our true home...

It's a question of giving and gleaning all we can while on this "terrestrial ball." We walk around with hopeful and heartbroken souls, secretly knowing that the conspiracy that Time plots won't win. We were never made to be bound by time (or even tangled up in our singular and collective pasts). We recognize ourselves between His hallowed lines and see how the lines we lay out and spill onto equally thin paper are just other faint echoes of inherent replication. We wrap our fingers around our own prophecies in the dying night. Benevolent constellations swing wide overhead, we roll over in our beds, and breathe in restless sleep as Jacob keeps dreaming of ladders with angels and wrestles them to the ground on a continual basis. "For surely Thou art a God who hidest Thyself..." Longing to be found, loving to be caught. You measure out love by the truckload...patiently waiting for us to get it. And these rocky paths are harder without You, but we realize that You never intended it to be this way.

And we write to know that we are not alone.

I'm grateful to those of you who were not afraid to share glimpses from your world. Especially to The Fellowship and to my wonderful staff. Each of you has given more than you possessed. I am all the richer for having brushed by your ever-waking lives.

Ana Maria Correa, April 2002

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2-14-02 (The Sequel)

...on sitting at this table,
slightly raised,
and trying to remember things
of a year ago.

Can I still really be in
the same place
yet again?

Thinking here with no one but the smiling waitress
dabbing into my writing time—
as if she were a refraining line
in my unstanzaed poem—
it's clear she doesn't rhyme
(or maybe it is I),
so I leave her to leaving me alone.

I hear that this day bears its name
from a saint.

But if honesty were king, I must say
that religion is more of a church-and-steeple thing
and cannot really speak of Cupid's
heart-tipped arrows launched
into young Lovers' sides.

But that's just a thought—
A bias, perhaps—
from this rambling poet's mind.

The empty chairs in this place stand at attention, rigid,
like soldiers waiting for someone's warming seat to rest
on their shiny, black cushions.

A cold, February draft swoons in
the occasionally-opened door
as people I don't know
parade in and out,
as I've seen many times before.

I will never see these people again.

And yet, for one brief moment,
our lives intersect,
like passing cars on some distant country road.
I would imagine that Love is like this,
except the parade is only walked by two
and the people involved just keep walking in and in and never
out.

But each moment still seems brief
because every intersection just leads
further and further down a private road
into a private country reserved
for your Lover and you alone.

Sure, the excitement may come and go
like the women talking of Michelangelo,
but the underlying point stays the same:
you are in love.

And that is a treasure that you can't afford
to walk away from.

Again, the waitress comes,
this time keenly aware that I'm writing something
and, no, I'm not expecting anyone.
I put my hand on the outer lip
of my coffee cup
to let her know that I'm almost through
and the check would be fine.
As for this Valentinian day—it's wrapping up,
and I can't complain,
for tomorrow's poem already fills my mind...

Adam Dressler

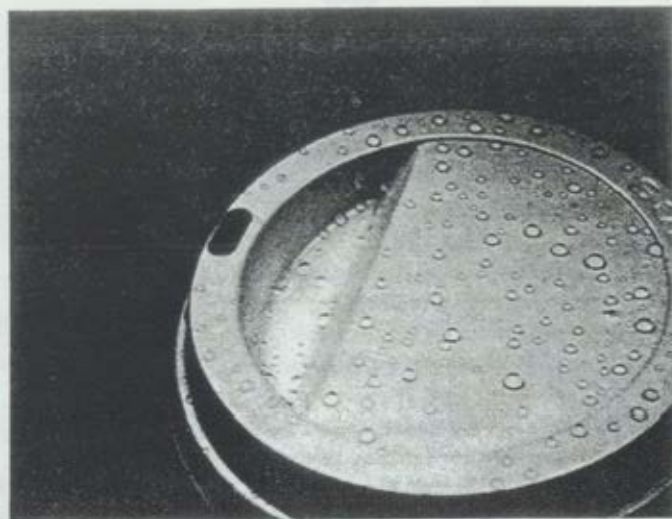


Photo by Amanda Hall

Duet

"...oh tell me..."

old blues man
I just don't know sometimes

"...what did I do..."

because nobody tells me
where I went

"...to become so..."

out of my mind
I guess I just have to stumble

"...black and blue..."

up and down streets
to find the answer
for myself.

Christabelle Hall

Solo

Old Blues Man
thousand year song in your mouth
same old, same old
clear black skin
at Saint's Ave. and Yale
singing to a whirlwind of Lazarus ears
unnoticed heartbeats
the songs of life
your tune
unbroken by time
dreary-weary melodies
repeated for comfort

Christabelle Hall

paragraphs on Mexico
(the old man and his guitar)

venga!

venga!

a la drama...

we, the gun shot scattering
flocks of never before seen
humans

with half-wrecked English
Hollywood voices

saying something close to

come!

come!

there is a drama...

as if it happened everyday

in the yellowsand

mountaintown of Chihuahua

air curdling the dry backed

novice nature of Americans

too far removed from normalcy

oxidized buildings, misbegotten brick
homes,

rotten beneath the

timeless flab of nature's cellulite rear

everything disincarnating,

thinning slowly back to mud

and water, sand grains, the baked clay

i now step on as bone shards to dust

and life too seems far-off amidst a yellow

glow

sending trenchant truths

to the fact that we are—our android

voices—

the conquerors come to conquer

fingers overweight with time

in some way coaxed beauty from

a wooden box skin

6 catgut strings

descriptions really, reflected upon the

cankered body

truths, telling me it was a gift
of all he could show

“a love song for the
thin American”

and a vision to be standing behind that
fallen edifice

the sun cankering us both
to hear the marbled sounds of humanity

singing balled tears of his lover,

everywhere and forgotten...

it was over for sometime though it wasn't

the anesthetizing stains wallowing my
heart

connecting us without language or looks,

the caustic slant of an American's vision

just art, as it always should have been

spontaneous, created once, and never

again

Matthew Corder



Photo by Bonnie Richard

may second

And here we have come again to the end of another school year. One more day of exams for those who still do that sort of thing... I am always surprised at how the sunlight here in the gardens will peek through the trees even when the rest of the sky has taken on a dismal smeary-blurred grayscale. Do you still have a smile left for this place? Or a laugh?

I've lost track. Is there a special room up there for lost people? Lost. It has come to that at last: the admission of defeat. "I am lost." Tolkien says that not all who wander are lost. I wonder, what is the difference? To wander...to lose sight...is blindness a symptom? I have purged myself of puddles of blood without success. The poison still wreaks havoc as it flushes my veins. The poison, the hate. Is "hate" too strong a word? They say love and hate are really very closely related. Perhaps my hatred...no. Strength gives way to greater strength. My love must have been immeasurably strong to have twisted into this desperate darkness.

And still I bleed....

Is there a cure for this? I keep repeating it to myself: "I should forgive, I should forgive, I should forgive." And let it all go. So comes, they say, love.* But if hate is a product of twisted love, will love return if it is untwisted? What is your way in this? How do I untwist? I need you.

There are some blind people with the uncanny gift of clear sight. Imagine that. Annie Dillard speaks of blind people who have their sight surgically restored. They see all sorts of things: "lights on trees." Oh, the thought. No perception of distance.

Perhaps if my sight would return, I too would see no distance.

But then, I *have* seen before. Quietly, unknowing. My eyes have fluttered open and seen. Perhaps it was dazzling. (I don't remember. I just remember the brightness of the sun on my face, incomparable to this current shadow.)

Sometimes I think you keep me broken to remind me.

*e. e. cummings

Jana Swartwood



Photo by Amanda Gonzalez

Spotted

I felt the haunting image
a fraction of a second after it happened.
I felt it for the rest of my life.
It engrosses my spirit
and quickens my body.
I linger on the verge of discovery,
and I wish he would just get me over with.
But he exists only in my mind
and in the corner of the earth where he resides,
perhaps tormenting other twelve-year-olds
nine years later.

Treena T. Balds

A Wasted Look

She seemed in her thirties
but she was squeezed into
a wasted look.
She flirted with a broad smile,
but her frost-glazed eyes breathed
death-chills upon my consciousness,
and cold hung like powdered ice from her lids.
They sent beams of failure and pain off into the future
to wait for her.

She had been touched before
and she knew she would be
again.
She had been played with, loved, tasted, and discarded.
I'm not sure she'd ever been reached.
But I got off the bus and left her there,
and I brushed by her fate on my way.

Treena T. Balds

Beyond

Once I walked to the edge of the world
and stood there
Staring over the cliff
Wondering what it was that drew me there
Perhaps the undulating of the air (or was it water)
currents around me
They did seem to massage life into the core of my soul
Orange embers of lost loves
Glow faint now from the cold of space
Faded over the edge
And I heard laughter as they went
Or maybe it was weeping
Everything sounds like weeping at the edge of the world

Kimberly Wilson



Photo by Bonnie Richard



Photo by Amanda Gonzalez

Façade

I've often felt ashamed of giving you cordial speech
Spoken out of some inexistent reality
Disney World speech
Artificially polite, devoid of malice
When in truth malice is what I felt
What I spoke in shadow moments
While my heart lurked in darker places
When those moments of self pity came
My mind took those injustices
The ones I thought you committed against me
Enlarged them to fill the totality of my reflections
Over and over they played like some bad piece of cinema
How I began to loathe what had been created
Something that was never there from the inception
In those moments I created stronger fetters for you
Chains I forged for you in resentful flames
All my thoughts and words began to compound
With the words of others from times since past
I simply made my shadow world a part of your pain
Wounding you a million times with subtle diatribes
Gnashing at your soul to comfort mine
I made being you impossible
It soon became easy for you to become the illusion
The one forged in dark places
One that you have found easier to accept
And one I hate more and more

Jason Blais

Frontier of the Heavens: Prologue

There was something almost haunting about the room early in the morning, before the sunrise and people stirred. In the room, a tall bald man in his early thirties lay drifting in between slumber and alertness. On a couch near him rested his long russet and sun burned trench coat, and next to it was a small black odd shaped firearm of some sort. Written on the handle was a French phrase: *vivez à côté de l'épée, matrice par l'épée*. The alarm clock near the couch went off. It echoed about the room, through the wall, and into the next room. This irksome blare was answered by the angry thumping of the walls and livid expletives by the neighboring residents. The man sat up on the couch and reached for a remote that sat on a nearby stand. He pressed a button on the remote, which silenced the ear-splitting alarm. He sat there for a moment hunched over like a man who bore the weight of the world on his neck instead of on his shoulders. His eyes were cold blue and threw a callous, aloof stare at the rest of creation. He clicked the remote again and the blinds that covered the windows opened. He then gazed outside. The air was full of flying crafts of all sorts. The sounds of the flying cars and hovering motorcycles filled the room almost as quickly as the sun's vivid rays. The man clicked the remote a third time, a door opened up on one side of the room, and a breakfast appeared. The man looked into the mirror and began his meticulous grooming ritual. After which, he put on his coat, placed his firearm inside a concealed pocket within the coat's fur lining, put a big leather sack over his shoulder, and walked out of the room.

The lodge he was in had a rather run down lobby with paper ads and posters stapled and tacked all over the walls. One in particular caught the man's attention. He walked up to it speedily. It was a wanted poster with his face on it. The name Sky Brodwine was splashed across it along with a long list of crimes. He quickly took the paper off of the wall and crunched it up in his hands. He turned towards the checkout counter. The clerk at the counter and Sky made eye contact for a brief moment. Normally, Sky would be wondering if the clerk recognized him, but not today. The short, grey-haired clerk seemed apprehensive, which made Sky worried. He paid the man for room and board, then hurriedly glided out the backdoor.

As Sky walked out of the building and into a windy trash-infested alleyway, the noise from the flying cars above him grew even more obnoxious and deafening, because it was rush hour. He covered his ears and continued walking, until he came to a sign. The massive green sign read *space dock one mile*. Sky followed the sign.

When he reached the dark and foreboding dock, he found that it was closed. A tall, locked fence stood in his way. But he was undeterred and looked around to make sure no one was watching, then quickly scaled the fence. When he got over, he was met by a small crowd of people. Sky glanced over the group, looking for a particular face, and when he had found it, marched toward it with a stern gait. All of the people were pushing and shoving their way into one of the docked spacecrafts. *These have got to be some of the most shady-looking people I have ever seen,* Sky thought as he looked at the grizzled crowd. But what kind of people would you expect to find on a cargo ship that smuggled illegal immigrants? The man Sky had been looking for was the pilot of the ship. He and Sky were acquaintances who had met many times at the local bar. The pilot wasn't expecting this many people to show up, so he gestured for Sky to hurry up and board, before there was no more room left.

The ship was headed for a distant frontier planet. Sky and about twenty other people were shoehorned into a tiny, dark room. For a moment there was silence. Then one of the people spoke. "So why are you all here?" One by one, they all told their stories. Some were tragic, some comical, others simply interesting. In answering the question of why they were all there, a person be better off asking why anyone would travel to the edge of civilization, away from everything they knew and loved. Why did early western settlers go west in covered wagons? Why did Columbus and other European explorers cross the Atlantic? There are many superficial answers to these questions: money, freedom, or adventure to name a few, but the main answer is found in humanity itself. People are claustrophobic by nature, and when things get too crowded or uncomfortable, they go in search of some new unknown boundary to explore.

As the ship took off, the lights in the room came on, and the cramped mass of people finally got a good look at each other. One of the men noticed wording on the handle of Sky's firearm, which was sticking out from under his coat. He asked Sky what it meant. "Live by the sword, die by the sword," he murmured under his breath. Sky then he turned away and said nothing for the remainder of the trip.

Merryn James

When worlds collide...

What can I do?

Purple comes from red and blue.

Once mixed, scarlet nor azure
may be sifted from violet pure.

Waves crash,
together splash.

Foam, white madness.

Yet no sooner touch

than torn asunder,

apart.

Reaching for each other.

Mixed, now, water in the waves

(my life)

may never meet again,

touch again.

And I strain for my song

over crashing waves

and thunder-winds.

Faint, melancholy notes

savagely snatched

from my lips

hurled at nothing,

lost.

Yet I keep singing and
pray someday I may
hear distant echo-strains
of song
over violet-violent
waves.

Christabelle Hall

remembering the approach

and there are days which nacreous young clouds,
thin mushroom caps littering the sky,
take hold my youth, as of years gone by,
make of it a noose, a ragged tether,
limp like fur or dominoes falling, one after the other
or truths, *the greatest of which being love,*
i tell you
and only wish you were to someday unravel...
but quietly you sit,
a centerpiece shaped of rose petals and eastern reds,
dreaming of February's frozen lips,
of coastal rock and barnacle and salt,
the heath running circles in your head
until it is i,
seized by love, inexplicable as a murmuring "awkward young shadow"
whom quietly, whom diligently
is forever to wait.
"remember for me," you had whispered,
a wall of loss worn like poetry on either side,
the way time fades us like a strand of hair
then kindly resuscitates the meaning of birth.
this our pleura, great fields breathing as if alive,
elysian fields even, bidding us enter.

Matthew Corder



A PHOTO BY JOHANN ARCHIBALD

Just Maybe

Just Maybe our novels collided
on accident
and we caught a glimpse
of each other
and grew afraid

Just Maybe we're both protagonists
and our lives revolve in different
Universes
But fate chanced to blink his eyes for a moment
and fortune linked our worlds together
in one lightning-flash moment

But now we are separated by molecules
and I don't know if I can let go of this dream

The gods resemble you when I read the myths
I cry out to them for relief in the night
but only the moon gives audience
Moonlight cannot penetrate a sorrow-stained soul

Just Maybe you overheard my thoughts
and, shaken, you pulled back into the shadows
You are afraid for me
You know our stories belong in separate books
although perhaps side by side on a dusty bookshelf

"Defy fate!"
I plead to you, but now
I realize that I've only been
watching a movie
sitting on the edge of my seat
leaning over in anxiety
My soul reaches out to you
but it only touches the screen

Gwendolyn Glover



Photo by Bonnie Richard

Bane of 20th c.
(two haikus)

Computer freeze-fails
Panic, terror, disarray
Powerless and weak

Troy had its Helen
Caesar the dread Ides of March
We have IBMs

Christabelle Hall

Sanity

Aaron Hampton was fairly certain he wasn't crazy. Nevertheless, he had agreed to undergo a psychological evaluation. They couldn't *really* think he was crazy, could they?

He parked his car in front of the small medical clinic to which he had been sent by the board of the business firm he had just applied with. It certainly didn't *look* like any kind of insane asylum he'd ever seen. In fact, it looked more like a regular office building.

That was just until you get inside, he thought. Then it's like Arkham Asylum or something. They take you to the basement, chain you to the wall, and shock you with wires and make you catch rats to eat.

He walked up to the front door and pulled on it. It was glass, and said PUSH in large block letters. *They'll think I'm incompetent now, he thought. Send me right down to the basement.*

Aaron Hampton was fairly certain he was not crazy.

Upon entering, he was greeted by a pleasant looking, neatly dressed receptionist. "Mister Hampton?" she asked.

Aaron looked at her intently, then leaned down and scrutinized her. "How do you know my name?" he demanded.

The receptionist scooted her chair back several inches. "Your firm called and arranged this appointment for you, did they not?"

Aaron was motionless for a moment with a blank expression on his face. His brow furrowed. Suddenly, he straightened.

"Oh," he said. He laughed nervously. "I, uh, guess they would have told you that, huh?"

"Doctor Patterson will see you now," said the receptionist blandly, and went back to her work.

"I'm not crazy," Aaron said.

The receptionist ignored him.

A small man with gray hair and large glasses came down the hall. He wore a sharp, navy-blue suit.

"Mister Hampton?" he asked. "I'm Doctor Patterson. Come this way, please."

Aaron followed him down the hall. He didn't see any steps leading downward anywhere; they couldn't be taking him to the basement. Actually, Aaron thought the office that Doctor Patterson brought him to was fairly cozy.

"I'm not crazy," Aaron muttered.

"What's that?" asked Doctor Patterson.

"I'm not crazy," Aaron repeated.

Doctor Patterson chuckled. "I know that, Mister Hampton. That's not why you're here."

"Uh," Aaron said, "Oh. Good. That's good, because I'm not crazy."

Doctor Patterson raised an eyebrow, but made no comment. "Mister Hampton, your firm has requested that you undergo a very basic psychological evaluation. It's very common for people applying for positions such as the one you are seeking."

"Oh! Okay! That sounds all right," said Aaron. "Because I'm not crazy," he added.

"Of course not," said Doctor Patterson. "Now, we'll begin with a standard personality test. You will be given statements by a computer. For each item, press *L* if the description is *like* you, *S* if it is *somewhat* like you, or *N* if it is *not* like you. Do you understand?"

"Sure!" Aaron said. "Like a survey!"

"Something like that," said Doctor Patterson, and led him over to a computer in the corner.

"Just sit down here. The computer will ask the questions verbally, and they will also appear on the screen. Simply indicate your answer with the keyboard."

"Okay," said Aaron.

"I will be back in a little while," said Doctor Patterson. "It should take you from ten to fifteen minutes to complete the survey."

"Okay," said Aaron, and sat down.

"Just be honest," Doctor Patterson said from the door, and closed it, leaving Aaron alone. He looked at the screen.

Press Enter to begin.

The computer had a female voice, flat and tinny. He pressed Enter.

I like working in groups.

Aaron did like working with others, just so they understood he wasn't crazy. He pressed *L*.

I am comfortable speaking in front of people.

Aaron wasn't too thrilled about that, but he *could* do it. He pressed *S*.

I become easily irritated with people when I try to discuss things with them.

Aaron didn't think that was true at all. He pressed *N*.

I like helping others.

Sometimes he did, and pressed *S*.

As an infant, I had very few hobbies.

"Uh," said Aaron. He tried to remember what hobbies he'd had as an infant. He couldn't think of one, and indicated as much.

I smell as good as most people.

Aaron figured he smelled pretty good. *He* liked it, at any rate. *Chicks dig Stetson*, they had told him. And it was one of the more expensive fragrances at Target. He marked *L*.

Sometimes I steal objects like large mammals and aviaries.

Aaron figured a squirrel didn't count as a large mammal, and he wasn't terribly sure what an aviary was, so he marked *N*.

Weeping often brings tears to my eyes.

Aaron nodded knowingly. It was *so* true.

I salivate at the sight of church socks.

"What?" said Aaron. He had been going fine up until now, but this question was a bit unusual, he thought. It must be so they can single out the crazy people. The ones they sent to the basement. He marked *N*.

Cousins are not to be trusted.

Ah, a more sensible statement. And a true one; his cousins always took his G.I. Joes.

Someone is trying to take over my stomach.

"Not lately," Aaron thought. Not since he'd come back from Mexico, at least.

Halitosis is better than no breath at all.

Aaron was pretty sure Benjamin Franklin had said that, so it *had* to be true.

Some people look at me.

Aaron thought for a long time about this question. Some people did, but did more than some? Did fewer than some? He just didn't know.

At times I am afraid my toes will fall off.

"Uh...what?"

Constantly losing my underwear doesn't bother me.

"Huh?"

I have always been disturbed by the size of Abraham Lincoln's ears.

"I don't know..."

Chiclets make me break out.

“Um...”

I often dream of Mickey Rooney and Andy Rooney in a cage match.

“Who?”

I become homicidal when people try to reason with me in a room full of cockroaches.

“I don’t think so...”

I often repeat myself.

At last, a saner question. He didn’t think he repeated himself. He pressed N.

I often repeat myself.

Maybe he hadn’t pressed the key firmly. He pressed it again.

I often repeat myself.

Maybe it didn’t like that answer. He pressed S. After all, everybody repeated themselves once in a while.

I often repeat myself.

Aaron gripped the table. His knuckles turned white. This was getting frustrating.

I often repeat myself.

He pressed all the keys and tried to restart the computer.

I often repeat myself.

He tried to turn it off.

I often repeat myself.

"No!" he cried, and banged on the keyboard.

I often repeat myself.

"NO...I...DON'T!!!!!!!" He grabbed the keyboard and threw it on the floor.

I often repeat myself.

The metallic voice of the computer made him upset. He stomped on the keyboard until it cracked. His vision was darkened. His head throbbed.

I often repeat myself.

"NOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!" He yelled until he was hoarse and exhausted. He slammed the side of the monitor with his fist. He tried to keep mental chaos at bay. At last the item changed.

I am crazy.

"NO!" Aaron croaked. He lifted the monitor over his head. "I AM NOT CRAZY!" He cast it to the ground.

"I'mnot'mnot'mnot'mnot!!!!!"

He kicked the screen and the glass shattered. "I'm not crazy! I'm not!"

He picked up the keyboard and proceeded to beat it against the smashed monitor.

Hearing the noise, Doctor Patterson came in. At the sound of the door being opened, Aaron turned and threw the keyboard with all his might. It struck Doctor Patterson in the forehead and he fell, unconscious.

"I am not crazy!" Aaron cried. Darkness descended. His vision burred. His legs buckled and he sank to his knees. "I'm not!" he gasped, and slumped to the ground. He was blacking out.

Damaged as it was, the computer spoke again.

I never seem to finish what I

Aaron passed out.

Joshua Danker-Dake

Identity

Hazy, lazy, daisy.
Smoke from a thousand cigarettes.
Fog from a million mornings.
Softly blending clouds of scent.
Smells tickling the eyes.

One: dry, sharp, sweet.
The other: wet, soft, spicy.
One assaults the senses, cutting through surrounding colors.
The other hangs on the edge of shadow, temptingly out of reach.

At my feet stands the daisy.
Strength conflicting fragility.
Smell uniting with color to create a portrait of their
contradictions.
Making smoke blush with its quiet modesty.
Cutting past dew with comparative boldness.

Common, spicy, sweet, unique.
Bright pallor, strong tendril.
Dancing for all the world to see.
Hiding against other flowers.
Solid, sweet, soft, spicy, standing.

Alone.

Surrounded by the fog from a thousand cigarettes,
Smoke from a million mornings.
Hazy, lazy, daisy.

Sarah Lockwood



Photo by Joel Blain

Illegally Brunette

looking at these
tan blond ideals of flesh
smooth skin
glistening eyes
muscular tone
no imperfections
tossing back a
ripple of silky blond hair
over warm colored slender shoulder
blades
a size one half figure
and a size b cup

and money buys cars
and clothes
to decorate and
flaunt natural untarnished beauty
reflected off of every mirror

pedicures and
manicures and
porsches

and while jest is made
at flaunting sexual power
still eyes and mouths
drool and throb at these
princesses everyone
either wants to hold
or mimic

it is at once the
unattainable ideal
and the joke of the day
only funny
because of the truth of our craving

and not only ravishing
these women are lively

and every serious minded
intelligent average person
is made unattractive by their
personality or lack thereof

serious people are
not interesting
serious people are
boring
ugly people are
boring

organized people
intellectual people
are boring

and intrigue and laughter are
the currency with which you buy a
ticket for love

Joy Maranville



Photo by Amanda Hall



Photo by Bonnie Richard

Finally.

Smear of dubbonet he welcomes sweet
Like a turtle baking in the sun
Coming out of its comfort-shell
Making my lips run like
Frying toes touching the summer heat concrete

Swelling utensils spooning up
The dregs of skim and light
Getting into my corner of the cup
Like four fists: boxers ready to fight
Push aside my plate and hide (and say

Please, excuse, please,
Finally. I run 98degree coolness over me.
Valentine notes and colors like irony.
From his view I can see me)
Aren't I just so pretty?

Jessica Jones

Courage

Sometimes I speak in caricature
Metaphors of exaggerated words
Strung together like a necklace of cheap pearls
Manufactured in the factory of insincerity
Sounding expensive, like ones found in watery depths
As well they should be
Like precious pearls from oysters
Formed in the depths of our souls
Over time, long times of contemplation
By an irritating grain of thoughtlessness or indifference
What words and actions have we turned into pearls
Gnawing sensations of pain made priceless
Or have we taken those moments and made costume jewelry
Adorning phrases that lack significance or authenticity
Words that protect the fleshy portions of our humanity
Tender regions of wounded souls and broken spirits
When someone tries to dive into the deep water of our existence
Risking death with held breath
Searching for some hidden value
Do they find shallow water in our soul
Cultured pearls that we give with no thought of loss
In the murky depths are the true treasures of who we are
If one dares to risk the dive
We should dare to risk their reward

Jason Blais



Photo by Amanda Hall

Memory's Journey

The rag dolls atrophied, worn weak by the dauntless fingers of time
The teacups faded, hidden in places no longer traveled or discerned
Yet memories endure, abiding in the now, gallantly tainting the coming

Disdain as companion to beguiled wee feet, arising from dusk
Innocent eyes fallen upon depravity, unknowing negligence
Yearning for love with virtue raining from those fleshly blue visionary marbles

Years ripened, till many abandoned and the heart bled with torment
Banter grew cruel and displeasing images mirrored the fragile youth
Alone in a wavering wilderness, invisible to the creatures therein

Hope's shadow seen from afar, left refuge for the weary child's soul
Outward contained by insult, inward set free with unfettered wings of faith
Beauty began her work, rewarding the chastity panting beneath the baneful

Strengthened by wisdom, nurtured by unseen love that does not retire
Conquering persecution with each whisper of forgiveness, a new day
Like dawn's delight she spreads her light, arising from old, healing memory's journey

Ashley Cummins



Photo by Bonnie Richard

procedure

tell him it will grow back,
that it would only hurt if he were to wake up,
that few do,
and they,
the ones that do,
most often take Phenothiazines, for whatever that's worth.
(mental note: no sarcasm)
tell him not to curse so loudly
or take cheap shots at the nurses
and no, *I do not like men,*
and yes, *there is no masculine for nurse,*
God knows, if there only was.
thank him for charitably trying to come up with
a masculine for nurse (that you are grateful is important).
cover the basics like
fecal impaction,
decubitus ulcers,
catheterization,
but assure him these are all rare,
that it's just routine policy,
and you are not just scaring him.
explain, once again,
why he must remove any teeth,
glass eyeballs, anything else that could
burst out unnaturally during the procedure.

that you are not harassing him.
this is policy.
dodge his fist.
smile.
explain that he is not supposed to slap you.
be stern.
dodge fist again.
check water temperature.
stifle urge to make too hot.
begin procedure following steps 1 through 53, omitting 8, 13, and 44.
try to act comfortable, keeping talk lively, proactive.
try to not vocalize that you should have administered bedpan before beginning procedure.
pray this won't be an issue.
ignore shouts/profanities/guttural-discharge from patient.
time yourself. 10 minutes tops.
50 minutes later tell yourself that a minute a step is commendable.
that the patient was noncompliant...*demonic...recalcitrant.*
find better words for chart.
help patient to bed.
turn off lights. turn on lights.
administer bedpan.
turn off lights.

Matthew Corder

A Strange College Student's Strange Collage of Kerouac Lewis Adams Aristotle Bible

I met Rutherford last night hanging onto a red plaid couch for dear life. He told me to get up so we could talk. It was late of course. We talked for hours but I don't remember what it was about. I can never forget what he told me after I don't remember anything and everything can be related to two paths. One is invisible leading upward ever upward into beauty the other seems solid quite solid at first but ultimately denies itself. I now have a choice between the two. I told him someone everyone that I was content in my present state. I will follow both to their destinations. This is possible because they are separate and unconflicting and cannot be compared to each other. They exist in different dimensions. My faith and logic are not fused into a misshapen conglomerate of contorted prisms.

What puzzles me is Earth. You know—the good solid Earth that doesn't move when you walk on it or reason with it or deny it.

Rutherford told me that this “was a lot of bosh” and that by trying to follow everything I was going nowhere at all. Then he told me a story. His story made too much sense so I made up a new-used one. My logical story is of course illogical.

Antonyms are useful because they show the similarity that is in everything-nothing.

Once upon a time there were three wise men that wanted to build a spaceship. These wise men or blokes as I like to call them believed their purpose was to explore the space dust on the Moon. They had learned this from a small child who also rules the universe and the three dimensions of me. They took a bundle of bolts and bolted them into a FolgersbestpartofwakingupisFolgersinyourcup can. The weakest of the three shook the can and shook it and shook it and crammed it until a living soul poured out. These new creators rejoiced as they watched the silver translucent reflective distinct conforming molten steel roll out of the creator-can and puddle on the floor.

As they peered closer they noticed a framework of little downtown buildings rise from the unity of formlessness. Soon they had a spaceship in the shape of all the major cities in Wyoming.

I like mountains. They are cool. Everything was cool until we realized that nothing matters. Wishful thinking of Thomas Gray.¹

Microscopic space dust is small and boring to write about. So halfway through the trip to the Sun the wise men were attacked by a time-shark. The time-shark gave each one of them a small clock for their desks and then escaped through a small hole in the logic of the wise men. The blokes admired the timepieces so much that they didn't realize they had just been enslaved. Now they have to eat lunch at precisely 12:05 and go to bed before 10.

Before the time-shark came the wise guys were just beginning to notice an increased level of heat in the ship. They were headed for the nearest star! The wise men were looking for purpose and they forgot that everything moves in circles so they aimed for the only object that was stationary in their universe-view. Too bad they didn't hold to the geocentric idea of the solar system—they wouldn't have had to go anywhere to find stability and meaning. Never tell yourself that you are traveling in circles. Stationary linear progress with slowly moving scenery is much more comforting. I hate treadmills.

So they were swallowed up into the vast heat red-yellow fire and blossomed like a spring rose violent colors in contrast to the dullness around them. They thought they were alone but there is a fourth man in the fire in everything. Waiting for them. Waiting for me.

So if you don't understand my story that is because you are not one of the 144,000 chosen by God. Sorry.

F. Clay Smither

¹ Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" ends with:

"Yet ah! why should they know their fate?
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise."

Living Death by Hanging

pieces of my burning soul
fly away
searching
running
a nail-pierced hand
reaches back.

swirling madness of
windswept stars
raining
aching
love unfulfilled in an
abandoned dream.

snatches of crying conversations
abruptness
chill
seeking a reason for
wild gestures
always reaching.

a red rose
crushed in a
hanging moment
fragrance
wafing up

in sweetness
chokes as it is
slowly twisted
in a delayed
strangulation.

why do birds
sing merry songs
wings fluttering
reaching out
to open mouths
hungry
only to release
lose all the gain
to start a new
song.

Joy Maranville



Photo by Bonnie Richard

for S.

Illuminating the last part of the day,
the sun sets orange behind brown lines.
I watch and wait
for the slightest of all that is diminished
behind every last intention.
You turn with a smile away from the sun.
I watch your heels walking up the stairs
pulling you toward the sky
and away from me.

The last swelling inside me
was caused by a vision
ebbing and blinking like neon
about to fall from the edge of every fingernail.
I didn't want to write this poem or spend
every last sunset on this sigh
(it has taken over all my breathing).
I have turned the covers around my body to bury
these thoughts like pills swallowed without water.

Jen Wattoff

Someday You'll Want to Run

Someday you'll want to run past the green grass
straight through the hills and the dirt
crawling alongside the caterpillars squirming on your belly
and make a loop around the big, circular world.
You will be so tired from your journey,
and yet so fulfilled
you will curl up in a ball and die without protest.
Or maybe you'll just accept this plate of blood handed to you
that is the same thing everyone else is eating.
Accepting mediocrity without screaming,
because if you screamed, then you would break the silence
of your apathy
and free yourself from humanity's repetition.
Let's lay ourselves under the sun
And pretend to be pinned down by the force of its warmth.
(Trust me when I say that this is only in your head.
This is just pretend.
When you think you see my soul, it is the reflection
Of your own.)

Jen Wattoff

Photo by Bonnie Richard



Untitled

The night
warm and ancient
sometimes crumbling under spotted light
it was the first time I'd seen it
's patient sleepy self, spread out
over seven hills
under marble gray sky
dropping cool upon washed streets

we gleamed together,
we bright ones
not a supernova
but melted down slow
and over
invisible people trickling by
we shone only upon palaces,
upon monuments to ones of ages
upon
empty street corners

a tiny world created
 with fingers run through tangled hair
 below the stair
not to spin ever on
but to die

behind the blink of eye

why must all things so fair
vanish vaped
into still night air

Phillip Griswold

heavenly nightlights

diamondesque orbs hung in distant disarray;
 perfectly placed floating facets of light,
lilting lightly on the waves of midnight above;
 buoyant beacons that beckon
 the dreams of this dreamer
 and the love of this lover
to soar with reckless abandon.

BUT...

 does fate lie
in the juxtaposition of these celestial jewels?
do Cassiopeia and Orion conspire,
secretly searching to star cross
yet another pair of lovers?

Katie Hoffa

cold cold night

your mind is reflected upon the waters
lake
streaked with bright glitter-lemon light,
(dotted on black hilly shore)

I see what you're thinking
down there blued
but I will not speak of it.
secrets are for
she searching ones
the night walkers
watchers of the daylight intricacies

here below are leafpiles cold and dead under you
their secrets frozen in unmovingness
of seed vein

not

unlike your lakemind's cold
slippery fish
slow
moving with pale eyes, slinking
along darkweed

far away, tiny chimes flail gently
but the distant rumble-complaint of hard,
hard road fills you with dread of dawn

don't die

don't die

Phillip Griswold



Original Art by Phillip Griswold

Darker

(just a crazy song ringing through my head)

maybe it's a little darker
when the moonlight is not shining
maybe it's a little darker
when i can't see through
the cloud of your mind

looking in a rage of fury
coming down
raining from the clouds
of your greatness

holding onto my thought
until i know that there
are some places open
looking upon the grateful
satisfaction has its thrill

i can't see the mind pulling
all the thoughts that operate
can't still spill it
out if there was nothing at all
make me believe you

love is all that we need now
complicated as it may be
firing out this connection
beaming the world with
some sort of energy

Benjamin Crampton

Untitled

candlelight dreams
flicker, flash, fade away
wisps of longing
lingering in the air
existence felt
when no substance remains
ghosts of light
haunt dark nights
light the dream
with a breath
and a whisper
love immortal dwells here

Gwendolyn Glover



Photo by Amanda Gonzalez

Last Mountain

Thirty-five miles south of my last stop
Six o'clock
Sixty miles per hour away from the Rockies
I should know by now to expect
This same scene
Sharp as ever:
Melon-orange twilight behind
Lancet-cut outline of
Blackest-black mountain
To the west

Sixty-three miles gone now
First star turns on
Sky is open for business
Rear-view mirror with last mountain
Contracting in the distance
Like tiny picture on a switched-off t.v.
Flattening
Fading
Like my joy

Ahead, the "darkling plain"
Four-hundred seventy miles to go
But the journey
Is already
Over

Keith E. Gogan

Untitled

moon
silent and high
 whispering softly
glittering elf-kingdom, Westnesse drifting

a dying sparkleworld whose reflection appears
upon telephone wires silvery

 dimmed you are
by yellowsilt electric
 buzzing in eye

where are you now

kingdom of my imaginings
slipping 'round to wax and wane
 and Cheshire grin beyond the black
reaching trees

in my listless wanderings you see me

you follow my restlessness
and after me
march on

how I would like to take it all back
your scars

Phillip Griswold

off the gulf at twenty-one past eight

a pair of corollas we are.

left eye drifting across scales and pigments
of the bay,

the ebb and swell of ceaseless determination, like banter talk amongst old friends...

it is to remain—this galloping night tide of coastal water,
spitting, retying itself into foamy-thick knots.

it is to prove us otherwise weak—this strong, pitiless arm,
reaching out to stroke narcoleptic lids,

to flirt until day falls from the other side of some endless misimpression
where we meet and move like dreams move

and remember very little.

undo the days lessons, i tell myself,

 sift the Unmoved Mover for gold

 or reachless things, dancing drunk upon tiptoes.

the sea fowl squander ruthlessly,

teething salt licked crustacean, it is for gold i imagine.

if all emotion fell that easy, humanity would be actualized before nightfall,

but as it is, nothing breathes without first removing, or every dispensation needs oil...

so let it be.

 reluctance keeps me from breaking the form,

 bowing the head, like one after His own heart.

on nights like these, tick-stuffed full of the electricity which keeps us moving,

it is soft yogurt skin, of youth with youth and dark sanguine skies,

like the thawing of rose petals, opening upwards,

 moving as volcanoes move, as without fear, without deliverance.

it is the garb being rent for once,

of God amid man,
soul-locked, upwards, and to heaven.
cara, whose music i long to trace, whose departing thought i yearn to remain,
show me the velveteen pith of a lover's cry
swept somewhere amidst this haunting ocean night.
i've entertained delay for how long..?
one more night cannot hurt.
one more unknown cannot hurt.

Matthew Corder



Photo by Bonnie Richard

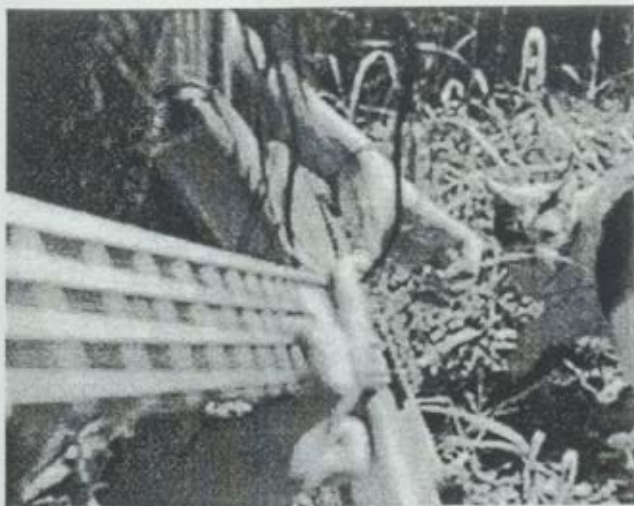


Photo by Bonnie Richard

Untitled

Do you know what magic lies within
your eyes
your smile
your tears
Do you know what force you wield in
your words
your embrace
your steps
as you walk away from me
Leaving me alone
again
in my shell,
bone-house,
bird-cage,
body
The absence of your presence is tangible;
I can taste it

But you never knew,
and never wanted to

Gwendolyn Glover

Letters Never Sent

I

You have a postage-stamp soul
Which can only be removed by warm water;
Soft pressure of the loving tug
Peels you back and away from the
Lost cause imprinted "Return to Sender."

II

I wish many things:
That Pascal were closer to your heart than Barth
That you would only say things you irrevocably mean
That some sort of postcode were tattooed to the
Sole of your worn foot. Preferably the heel
(Although the instep has its possibilities).
It would be my ink. The kind you scratch into yourself
In moments of heedless reverie.
I've been busy doing something similar to mine for the past year.

III

When will you be delivered?
My windowsill is weary of my eager elbows and ragged sighs.
The letterbox will fill only after I've forgotten
My ineffable wish.

Ana Maria Correa

Unlived

Half-filled pages on a night of inspiration—
A reminder that dreams go unfulfilled
When we let them rest unfinished
Like the song interrupted midway and the
Dinner spoiled by cooling pauses—
Pretty things on ragged pages
Left alone to fade to dusty memory

Half-danced waltzes on a night of celebration—
Knowing that the heart of stone and
Blood of ice that runs through silver veins
Refuse to comment when attacked by
Passion in its strongest form of
Music, beauty, truth, and love
Embodied in the dance you left behind

Half-kissed love yet unembraced, anticipation—
To realize that the love unloved becomes
The dream not dreamed, the song
Unsung and the poem unfinished all in one—
While emotions rise and pulses beat, un-
Steady, proving that the moments half-grasped
Turn to an existence most passionately unlived

Jana Swartwood

Shattered

Hard floor meets water glass
And shatters
Shiny edges laugh light
At you who let it drop
Heart stop
Broken pieces poking up
And begging fingers touch
You grasp a sliver silently
It slices through skin
Like an oar in water.

Rose Schlegel

The Streaming of Truth

The streaming of truth between the small pore of your cluttered words
will cause me to close my eyes and hear
the metallic ring of your revealing heart.
Knowing how I cling to every coincidence you said:
"The California Raisins singing 'Baby Love' happens to be my favorite episode."
This was
Wednesday of last week.

Water rhymes with nothing worth mentioning so I sang for you the empty page of
last year's physiology notes.
I told myself that the feeling of my heart falling out of a hole
(it was torpedoed open by the device of a careless glance)
is understandable.

You said my worship has become
The fingering of air—
An attempt to further shape some unseen substance
That forms my perception of God

My only response is to second guess
the re-dipping of my hands
into your nebulous mind.

Jen Wattoff



Still Watching Snow

...on seeing the little flakes of snow
parachuting through the dense, night air—
glowing little haloes of silvery light—millions—
speckling their black backdrop like someone just spilled them
as salt on a dome-shaped table cloth.
Tonight, my walk is slow.

My mind wanders...

...might I slip and fall and disappear
into some mountainous drift
of powdery white blank?
Then, I could faint and rest
and wobbly bend my knees to sit beneath
a canopied heaven of listless glow.

I must return home...

...and to stop—to stop would be to die,
for it's movement that keeps me alive
in this freezing season of silent snow.

I know things like this.
It's things like this I know.
Yet still I walk, unconvinced,
my eyes and mind still watching snow.

Adam Dressler



Photo by Phillip Grswold

Henry

It had been a long day. The trees were finally settling in to their sleep, tucked in by the night's velvet blanket of cool, damp air and shining silver specks. A subtle trace of smoked wood smell lingered about the landscape as chimneys exhaled their billows of gray cloud.

He sat, coldly, perched upon his spot of splintered wood and wrought iron—a bench overlooking Lake Forester. Aimlessly staring at the glistening crests and boughs, mesmerized, Henry buttoned his coat all the way to his neck, remnants of his red and yellow plaid scarf dangling about his shoulders and across his chest. She had made this scarf as a present for his sixty-fifth birthday. For months, he would ask her what exactly she was doing before he got up in the morning, to which she would reply, “Oh, nothing Honey. Won't you come and eat your breakfast?” He almost caught her once, but she was too quick for him. As the cupboard door slammed shut, he again inquired of what mystery she was keeping. Again, he was met with the same response, to which he replied by coming and eating his breakfast.

She was funny like that. No matter how much Henry pestered her about anything, if she didn't want him to know, he wasn't going to know. That was one of the things that attracted Henry so much to her; she was strong.

A family of geese silently coasted by. Henry burrowed his face down into his coat, trapping the scarf and pressing his nose into its swaddling warmth. He could still faintly smell her perfume. He had bought the first of many bottles for Christmas years ago. When the next year came around, he asked her, “What do you want this year?”

“Oh, you don't have to get me anything. I know you love me.”

“No, but I want to. There has to be something you want.”

“Honey, I'm fine. Really.”

“If you don't tell me, I'll be forced to find something on my own. And you know how dangerous that can be.”

She laughed. “Okay, there is one thing.”

“What's that?”

“You know that perfume you bought for me last year?”

“Yes.”

“It's almost gone and I simply do love the way it smells.”

“I can't get you the same thing I bought you last year. It goes against the Christmas spirit.”

“Well, it's what I want.”

"Isn't there anything else you might need or maybe just would like?"

"Nope."

"So...that's it?"

"That's it."

And so began the tradition. Every year, Henry would get the same response. He tried on a few occasions to sway her away towards another scent by giving her a bottle of some different, new fragrance the girl behind the counter at the local mall had recommended. She would always thank him for "such a wonderful gift" and then proceed to never spray an ounce of it on. But at least the different bottles gave the top of her dresser a little color.

So eventually, Henry finally gave up. Every Christmas, he made sure to have the little pink box with a white ribbon placed squarely under the tree. The tag always read: "To the love of my life." Signed, "Henry." Through the years, every article of her clothing, along with many of his, seemed to take on the smell of this perfume. Even the linens somehow managed to smell like her. No matter where he went in the house, Henry could never quite free himself from this annually-purchased perfume—a smell of lilac and honeysuckle with a hint of vanilla casually invading every nook and cranny of the house.

Tears filled his eyes as he buried his face deeper into his scarf. The smell was beginning to fade. It had been almost a year, but still Henry slept on the right side of the bed. Still, he bought her favorite salad dressing at the grocery, even though he couldn't stand the taste of vinegar and oil. Still, he kept her toothbrush in its plastic green holder hanging by the sink. Forty-eight years he had shared his life with her. And now, she was gone. And he was left to finish his days alone.

Somewhere in the distance, a dog barked, causing Henry to look at his watch. It was half past nine. The once cool autumn air littered about with the aroma of burning fires and fallen leaves had become cold and uninviting. Tiny crystals of frost were already beginning to form on the surrounding lawn and only added to the solemn feel of the evening. Henry could now see his breath. He leaned forward, his head in his hands, silent. After a brief pause, Henry slowly rose from his bench and began his short walk home.

He made himself some tea and watched the evening news while in bed. Henry set his alarm for seven in the morning; he had to run into town to pick up some nails to hang the pictures of his newest grandchild born just last week. Then, he was meeting his friend Ron for their weekly breakfast at the club, an appointment he's maybe missed five times in as many years. As he turned out the light and pulled up the covers, he rolled over and was met by the smell of her perfume evading from the pillow, as it had so many nights before. Henry whispered: "Goodnight, dear. I love you."

After a Death

There is confusion in the darkness
The light is hard to find
Shades of grey confound the mind
And bleakest dark oppresses the soul
I know you long for day
For sunlight strong and warm on your face
Tender breezes and perfect joy
But the day seems far away
Down an endless road of healing
Filled with ruts and embankments that seem too high to scale
Disheartened you stop
Your motivation wanes and your will to live fragments
But you must go on
For when this cloak of darkness is torn from your shoulders
Your life will stir again

Harmony Faith Cross

Untitled

She stood at the edge of the river
Its black-blue waves crashing
against the banks, splashing
against the rocks
White foam decorating
the darkness like
Christmas lights on a winter night
She holds her breath
She clasps her hands
She breathes a prayer
Lightfoot, heavyheart
plunges into saving death
Letting go, surrendering
to the drowning water of grace
Liquid life love
She lives again
transformed on the other side

Gwendolyn Glover

Mother

Pretty bird trapped in a tarnished cage
The door hangs loose
Your way to freedom stands open
Yet you stay
You sing your serenade
Love holds you
But with moonlight kisses you taste unburdensome air
You feel the pull of the sky beneath your wings
And you test your flight
The tarnished cage couldn't hold you forever
And your love shall wait beyond the sky
Where sweeter songs will comfort those you love

Harmony Faith Cross



Photo by Bonnie Richard

Someone

The survey asked
How often I pray...
And I didn't know what to answer.
How can I, after all
Explain Someone who is always
With me?
How can I explain



Photo by Amanda Hall

The Someone who is my always
My with me
My Explanation.
Do the birds thank Someone for their nests?
Do the stars weep gratefully
For their still, silent beauty?
The survey asked
How often I pray...
And I didn't know what to answer.
How can I, after all
Explain Someone who is everywhere
In me?
How can I explain
The Someone who is my everywhere
My in me
My Explanation.
The birds and stars and I are scoffing.
How often do we pray
When our prayer is Someone?

Molly Gill

Holy Spirit

Vision of
black, crusted
Cast iron
hot pot
Over open fire
Water in it
Simmers almost
Boiling feels
Like the heat
In me explodes
Within tiny
Particles bursting
And freeing parts
To worship and raise
Hands uplifted
Dreamlike swervy
Abandonment
Towards purpose
Of cleansing
And anyone
Who comes close
Is touched
By fingers brush

Moist and gentle
Against weary brows
And haggard faces
Freeing

Rose Schlegel

Gleam

the decision had always been made
a little thunderbolt he fell,
to the earth

materialized double-celled
tiny and grew

birthed, he silenced the night
hushed under a gleam
and grew

wise, spoke little
feeling the land's nation

opening
in the springtime of thirty petals
to the twelve unknowing thrice
and
underdarkness blotted
sun
death crept
it grew cold within him
below triple moon

he awoke, golden forever within the
sun's sphere
and we were made warm

Phillip Griswold

The Last Call of Eternity

What then could it be?

Once I thought it was her, but she left

It once seemed the prowess I sought, only I left it

Clearly, something different this way calls

It is a vapor, a breeze in a tropical oasis, a wind traveling across a savannah flatland

It's something bigger than the sky from the ocean,

Something deeper than the sea is wide

Alluring is its call, more so even than a flame's to a winged cloth eater

It is the searing note of an African instrument, long forgotten by even ancient tribes

It is a feeling that no longer exists, one of laughing and fearing and determination

It is an adventure that has never been seen, seeking after the entirely mysterious,

Even while knowing the mystery is chasing behind

It is the bursting out of the clearing of a never before seen beast, unveiled in all its wild

Glory

All this it is, but more

It is the belief of the children, receiving in joy and jubilation

It is belief without understanding, alive in those chosen

It is the strength of the martyrs, dying in faith, even happiness

All this it is, yet it is more

It is the Ministry of Life, calling all to a righteous new day

It is the ultimate example, that of a perfect Life, Lighting the way thereafter

It is the pain of a dying Man, bleeding His Blood for the greatest of causes

Still, it is more

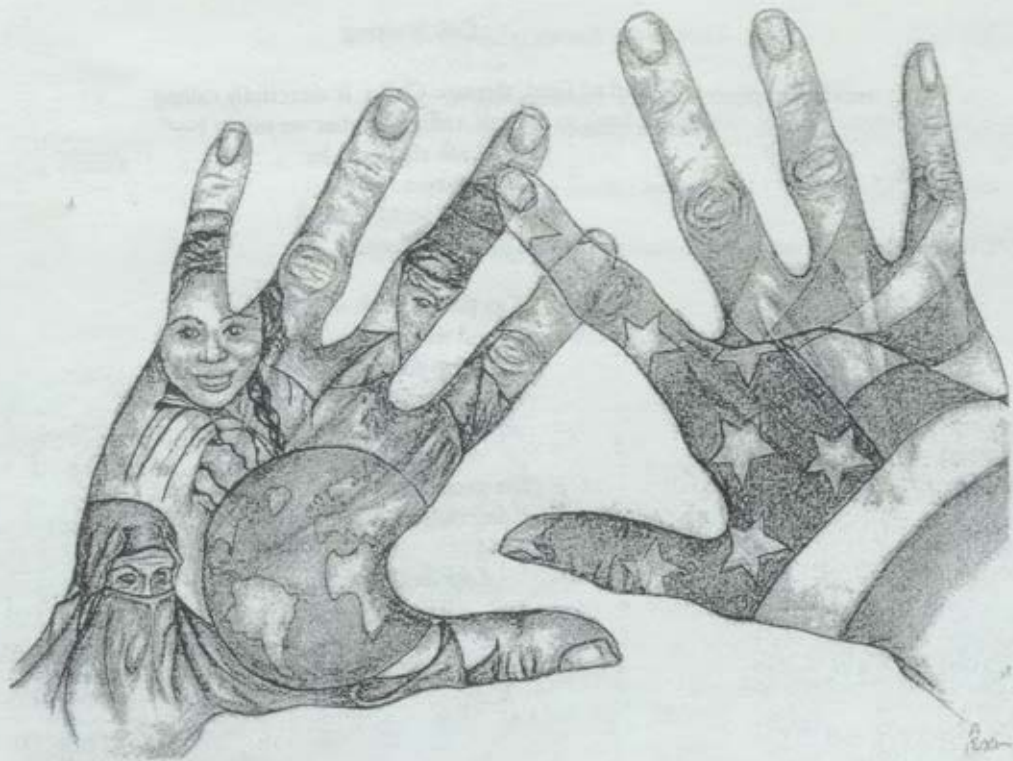
It is the last Call of Eternity,

Nerve Shattering in His Power,

Breathtaking in His Beauty,

Fear expelling in His Love
All these it surely is, yet it is more
Only,
Chase and see.

Dominic C. Turner



Original Art by Gwen Land

Call Waiting

"And so God, through Christ, is mercifully calling
us back to himself, calling, so that we might r—"

Sabbath shattered by

Digitized tune

Absurd as coyote's call

In Manhattan

On the eleventh row

His right hand shoots toward his belt

To appease the interloper

With the keypad smile

And numerical eyes

Telling him

The game starts at two

Bring chips and brew

Keith E. Gogan

the eleventh day*

he tottered on the edge before the sharp belly-smack
for *the mariners were afraid, and cried every man*
unto his god

and we watched him fall
twice
in flames

as they ran *hard...but they could not:*
for the sea wrought, and was
tempestuous against them

under the rubble covered
with stars, stripes, and ribbons
they paused

to call upon thy God, if so be that God will think
upon us, that we perish not in the fire,
choking on ash and office supplies

out of the belly of hell cried I,

he screamed with five thousand voices
simultaneously silenced

and thou heardest my voice

*Italicized text comes from the Book of Jonah, KJV.

Jana Swartwood

swear not by stars

1

your smile sparks
goldenrod moonlight
as you lean down to me

with your strong, slow-
sweeping fingertips
brushing my cheek

and from this caress
there is no recovery;
you make your mark

like a comet penetrates
the moon; dust billows,
swirling everywhere,

cracks and eruptions
in the dark of night,
I spill open to you

longing with the stars
to embrace the fragility
of silent gravitation

2

and comet dust
mingles with hot sand,
un-sensed in the heat

underfoot yet
among the un-noticed
ironic to behold

(a friend once told
me she would drive
an hour to the sea

just for five minutes
of walking with the
sand beneath her feet)

I close my eyes—
meteors crash
to the earth, falling

stars dissipate into
un-lit nothingness
scattered on the beach

3

swear not by stars
said W.S.; they feel
not, and cold spreads

like a coming mist—
you'd freeze too,
if foreign comets

pierced your skin—
they strike the heart
repeatedly—dust

rising... falling
and the warmth of sand
between your toes

the only reminder
surviving the blows
un-cold and un-cratered:

spawn of a comet
heart dust spilled
lost in the sand

Jana Swartwood

Me, the Devil, and the English Language

On Friday night, I came home from work to find the devil sitting on the couch in my living room, playing my Nintendo. He must have been sitting in the dark, because the only light in the room came from the television and from the solitary lamp I lit upon entering.

I was a little surprised to see him, but that feeling passed quickly. "Took the key from under the doormat again, didn't you?" I said. "You can't trust anybody these days..."

He spoke without taking his eyes from the screen. "Do you know why I'm here?"

I sighed tiredly. "If you want my soul or anything along those lines, too bad. It's one o'clock and I want to go to bed. Can we speed this up?"

You may be wondering at my lack of fear. Well, it's just that I've never had a reason to be afraid of him. Plus, it's so hard to take anyone too seriously while they're playing Barney's Great Adventure.

The devil set down the controller and frowned at me. "I brook no disrespect," he said.

He had striking features, and what stood out about him the most were his penetrating black eyes. He was sitting down, but it was evident that he was tall and slender. He was wearing a very sharp royal blue suit with a black shirt. I wondered if he had taken it from my closet.

"I have come to engage you in a battle of wits," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

He blinked. "I beg your pardon?"

"Why?" I repeated. "Why me? Why now? For what purpose?"

The devil looked at me evenly. "You are but a man. Who are you to question my motives? All things are not revealed to mortal men. But so that you may be appeased, I will tell you this: you are, whether you know it or not, one of the most intelligent, charismatic people of this world. I should like to have your soul; it would prove quite useful to me."

"I hate it when that happens," I said. "But what's in it for me? What if I don't want to?"

"You have no choice. You are undeserving of your soul. I will make claim to it. But so that we may have equity, I will offer you something if you defeat me. How about... a Twinkie?"

I blinked. A Twinkie? I was supremely confident, and I wanted more than a stinking Twinkie. I wanted at least two Twinkies...

I thought for a moment. "Throw in a trip to Akron, Ohio and you've got a deal."

He looked at me blandly. "The rubber capital of the world. Very well. The game is this: I am the great deceiver of the world, the accuser of the brethren, all that. You know this. Therefore, I challenge you to find a way to deceive *me*. You have twenty-four hours to come up with your deception. I shall return then."

He rose from where he was seated on the couch and came to stand toe to toe with me. He was even taller than he looked sitting down, about six and a half feet. I wondered how he had fit into my suit. He looked me squarely in the eye. "Barney's Great Adventure is a pretty fun game," he said, and disappeared.

I marveled at these occurrences, glad that tomorrow was Saturday. This way, I could put sufficient time into this endeavor. I sat on the couch and thought. This wouldn't be easy. I wracked my brain for something that would be deceptive enough. I realized I couldn't *lie* to him. Not directly. It would have to be so much more intricate than that. Hours passed, and I came up with nothing. Eventually, I fell sleep. When I awoke, I saw that I only had an hour left. But I had an idea.

Actually, it was more than an idea. It was a downright epiphany. I had the answer. I thought back to a quote I had once heard: "Clarity is intellectual morality." It would then be immoral to deceive, but with the devil, that would probably be a good way to go. The best way to deceive would not be to lie, but merely to be unclear. What better than to use the techniques of language that I had just learned in English class? This experience could turn out to have double value: perhaps I could use this anecdote for my English final.

I sat and thought, trying to make sure this would work. Language traps are all-dependent on the mind. If the mind comprehends the truth, then there is no deception. To defeat the mind, you must defeat the thought processes that go on therein and thus prevent the truth from being comprehended. This works because you can only think to the extent that you can put your thoughts into words.

But this was the devil. He would know the ins and outs of anything I tried to pull. He was virtually limitless in his manipulative and deceptive capabilities. How could I defeat that? I would have to restrict him somehow. I would have to use words to put him into an intellectual box. To be able to do this, I would have to be able to transcend logic. I spent the remainder of my hour focusing on these things.

The devil showed up promptly. This time he was wearing jeans and a t-shirt that said, "I Like Cheese." He sat down across the coffee table from me. "Are you prepared?" he asked.

"I am," I said calmly.

"Very well." He settled back in his chair. "You may begin."

I thought for a moment. "Okay," I said. This was where I had to build my box. *Carefully*. "I want to establish some things first. Kind of like ground rules. To make sure we're on the same page with this, you know? So no one wins on a technicality."

The devil nodded his assent.

"Okay. Would you agree that any declarative statement I make must either be true or false? That is, any statement I make will be either factual or not factual, and we will say that if it is in any way not factual, it is to be considered completely not factual."

"It is as you say," he replied. "But you would be unwise to attempt to deceive me by slanting the facts. No one is greater at that than I."

"I wouldn't dream of it," I said. "And I would never doubt your credentials. I was just making sure. So if I make a declarative statement that is not true, whether or not I know it is not true, then I am lying, correct?"

"You are," said the devil.

"So then I am either telling the truth or I am not, and if I am not, then I am lying."

"Yes. I know this," he said, beginning to grow restless. He thumbed through the TV Guide absently before tossing it back onto the table.

"Okay," I said. "I'm just making sure we're on the same page with this...that we're both playing by the same rules. Fine. Let's begin, shall we?"

"Excellent," he said.

Having finished the construction of my linguistic box, I leaned forward in my chair and steepled my fingers together. "Here it is: I say, 'I am lying.' Am I telling the truth, or am I lying?"

The devil sat motionless, chin in hand, obviously deep in thought. He reminded me of Kasparov. After a moment, he looked up. "Really," he said. "This was dreadfully simple. I'm somewhat disappointed with you.

"There appear to be two potential answers to this question. I will explain them both to you, so that you may know that I have mastered this problem. First, if you say, 'I am lying,' and you are telling the truth, then you are, in fact, lying. But if you are telling the truth, then you cannot be lying. But this cannot be, so you cannot be telling the truth.

"On the other hand," he said, "if you say, 'I am lying' and you truly are lying, you are telling the truth about lying. And since you are telling the truth about lying, you cannot be lying, because you would be telling the truth, and therefore not lying. So you are neither telling the truth nor lying. I refused to guess either, and avoided the trap of your logical fallacy. It is a false statement. You are neither lying nor are you telling the truth."

"Are you quite finished?" I asked.

"I am," he said. "Are you prepared to lose your soul?"

"Not so fast," I said. "I'm not lying?"

"No. You are not."

"And I'm not telling the truth?"

"No."

"So it's not true."

"No."

"So it's false."

"Correct."

"So it's false, but I'm not lying. But we agreed that if I said something that I knew was not true, then I *was* lying. So technically, I am both lying and not lying. How is that possible? You said you were finished, and you didn't catch that."

He frowned. "You are trying to trap me with words."

"I have succeeded," I said, "because you agreed to my linguistic restrictions. They have also become logical restrictions."

The devil frowned for a moment, then nodded. "I commend you," he said, and handed me my Twinkie and my ticket to Akron. He disappeared.

I leaned back in the chair and munched my well-deserved snack cake. Ah, language. Like Play-Doh, but more fun. You could bend it back on itself until no one has any idea what's going on and there's no way out. You think in words, but they constrict and restrict your mind.

Then I thought of something else. Some people in my English class might have some theological problems with this story. And there *were* some unusual elements I couldn't quite explain. If so...

I woke up, craving Hostess products and wondering what had happened to my copy of Barney's Great Adventure.

Joshua Danker-Dake

Gas at \$0.01 per ounce

I have a truckload of quotes for you today. I want you to read dead men's minds. Morbid. But enlightening. And I know that we all have couch potato tv fried brains with 15 seconds ADD attention spans and that you have probably already checked out of this epistolary excursion...but I will go on anyway, for the sake of perpetuating the paper industry if for no other reason.

No, really I want you to think for yourselves. Be aware. Of what? Of everything. Like, did you know that Coke will dissolve a nail in about four days? And that industries use Coke to clean truck engines, corroded car batteries, grease stains, rust spots, and blood from the highway. You can put a steak in Coke and it will be gone in two days. Coke has a ph of 2.8.

Do you think gasoline is expensive? Check out these price comparisons:

Lipton Ice Tea 16 oz for \$1.19 = \$9.52 per gallon

Ocean Spray 16 oz for \$1.25 = \$10.00 per gallon

Gatorade 20 oz for \$1.59 = \$10.17

Snapple 16 oz for \$1.29 = \$10.32 per gallon

Evian (water) 9 oz for \$1.49 = \$21.19

Whiteout 7 oz for \$1.39 = \$25.41

STP Brake Fluid 12 oz for \$3.15 = \$33.60

Scope 1.5 oz for \$0.99 = \$84.84 per gallon

Pepto Bismol 4 oz for \$3.85 = \$123.20 per gallon

Vicks Nyquil 6 oz for \$8.35 = \$178.13 per gallon

So next time you're at the pump and you marginally escape cardiac arrest (like me) for having to shell out fifteen or twenty bucks to full up the tank, be happy your car doesn't run on Nyquil or Scope.

Wendell Berry, in *Life Is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition*, writes: "Science-technology-and-industry has enabled us to be precise in describing objects that are extremely small and near or extremely large and far away. But it has utterly failed to provide us with even

adequate descriptions of the places and communities we live in—because it cannot do so. Our schools are turning out millions of graduates who do not know, in this sense, where they are.”

Saint Bernard said: “You wish to see; Listen. Hearing is a step toward Vision.”

Conrad Hyers said: “What is particularly intriguing, in fact, is that whereas many peoples tend to locate this experience [of the sacred] in certain unusual, if not ‘supernatural’ moments and circumstances... the Oriental focus is upon mystery in the most obvious, ordinary, mundane—the most natural—situations of life.”

Did you see *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*? It made me want to be Chinese and be able to float on willow trees and be a supernatural killing machine that beats up bad guys. It made me want to get lost in the desert with a beautiful savage warrior. It made me want to leave the Golden Triangle movie theater parking lot and fly out to my car, and forget the car, just fly over the rooftops to home. It made me want to escape to that surreal parallel universe that hovers somewhere between the movie credits and I-35. Like after *The Matrix*. After I watch that there is about a ten minute buzz in which I feel like I have slipped into Neo’s body, and somehow, for a brief and wonderful ten minute breach of reality, there *is* something powerfully supernatural in rewinding the video, eating, sleeping, ducking punches, dodging bullets, picking up the phone...and then it turns into a telemarketer for Visa or MCI and for the hundredth time, morons, I don’t want the junk you sell I like my company fine.

But. Who’s to say the movies don’t wake us to our truest senses? Is there some virgin world, some mystical thing living, growing, existing beneath the skin of everyday life? Is there a vision quest in my rising and my eating, sleeping, and dreaming? I battle myself on most days. I do not fly; I crawl. I am not Neo, no willow-dancing warrior. But then....

Perhaps. I don’t know. Hyers says the Orientals wash the dishes and see visions of eternity in the soap bubbles. Metaphysical misfits. Ok. So back to the Scope and Nyquil. If we had our own sources of natural energy in this godblessit USA, then we wouldn’t have to be paying a buck fifty or whatever it happens to be at the moment per gallon. And that would be, by my calculations, a little more than \$0.01 per fluid ounce. Pretty cheap. Life is beautiful.

Another quote: “To have great poets, there must be great audiences.” Walt Whitman.

Have you ever read the poetry of Don Marquis? Or Arthur Rimbaud? Or Dave Barry or Gary Snyder or any of the Beat poets or Joseph Heller or Albert Camus? They all tip the world up on its head and the blood rushes to your eyes and makes you wonder...remember wondering as a kid how people in Australia kept from falling off earth? The thing is freshness. Freshness of thought. Freshness of wondering what Coke does to our intestines if it dissolves a nail in four days or disintegrates a steak in two. Freshness of stepping outside of the office for a moment and wondering what it would be like to shrink to the size of a pea and roll down the gutter in the street and down into the drainage ditch and to the lake and to the sea or some Dallas person's drinking water, or wherever it may take you. Freshness is the thing. We only have so long to live.

Funny. I beat myself to a pulp in college for four years, and now I'm looking at the outside world from the inside, and wondering what all that was for. I'm making zines and painting murals. I was doing that in grade school. But I met Camus in college. I met Gary Snyder and Rimbaud there too. I guess that was worth it.

I am the audience. A great audience of great poets. Their heartbeat becomes mine slowly as I fill up on their thoughts. Yummy flavors, morsels. But there comes a point to begin being the poet myself. There comes a time to live and not be a bug-eyed spectator feeding on weekly reality tv shows.

I think one of the freshest people who ever lived was Pablo Neruda. A poet, coincidentally. Or not so coincidentally. He looked at every day through newborn eyes. He wrote odes to onions and tomatoes and socks:

Cebolla,
luminosa redoma,
petalo a petalo
se formo tu hermosura,
escamas de crystal te acrecentaron
y en el secreto de la tierra oscura
se redondeo tu vientre de rocío...
...Estrella de los pobres,

hada madrina
envuelta
en delicado
papel, sales del suelo,
eternal, intacta, pura
como semilla de astro,
y al cortarte
el cuchillo en la cocina
sube la única lagrima
sin pena.

Or for us gringos:

Onion,
luminous flask,
your beauty formed
petal by petal,
crystal scales expanded you
and in the secrecy of the dark earth
your belly grew round with dew...
...Star of the poor,
fairy godmother
wrapped
in delicate
paper, you rise from the ground
eternal, whole, pure
like an astral seed,
and when the kitchen knife

cuts you, there arises
the only tear
without sorrow.

(From "Ode to the Onion," translated by Stephen Mitchell)

This is living. Look at an onion, see a god. Look into the mirror and amazed each morning that you breathe. I woke up this morning with a stiff neck. Life stinks. Paradoxes. Life is all about a string of disappointments, waking up from childhood dreams, and coming full circle to remembering that an onion is a fairy godmother. Well, I'll toast to world peace and sign off. And remember that gas is cheap. So take a spin and see the world. For the first time. It's a beautiful place.

Amanda Hall

Greenwich Village, October

I remember what it was like to walk in the Village & feel the concrete underneath these boots...love the air...watch the people...dream of unknown times others have forgotten: Tin Pan Alley & the lives of heartbroken poets with words for everything & strength for not much. We walked through museum shops, gazing at the fruits of the labor of men & women who slept with paint under their fingernails & stiffness in their arms. Perishing light affected their waking hours & the afterglow leaked under their doors & waited at their windows. What does it mean to embrace a dying day until it tears itself away? To grasp a corner of its fleeting form & wrest a remaining sense of leftover being from Time?

Essence escapes at the moment of instantaneous recognition. We see it & it's gone. This is the trace of holiness...the vestige of inherent grace & tragic mercy. It bleeds into the atmosphere, suffusing the streets & apartments & shops & requisite trees with ragged life & the feeble will to rise with the sun one more time.

We're alive. Let's go.

Ana Maria Correa

