

The Idol . . .



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The Idol

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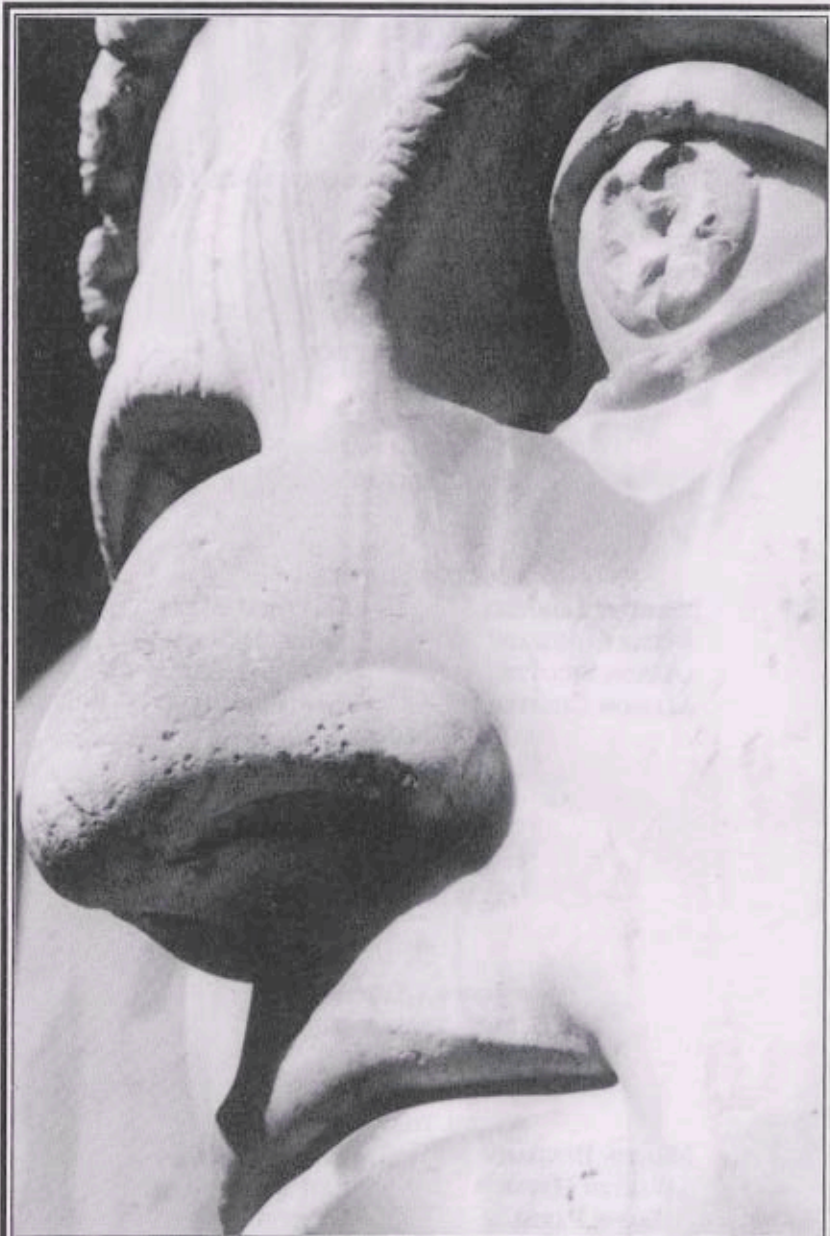


SPECIAL THANKS TO

MARTIN BENJAMIN
WALTER HATKE
DAWN PARISI

ALBINO CARILLO
LEIF ZURMUHLEN
BETTY ALLEN

SHANNON POUTTI



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Idol is a bi-annual magazine that publishes art and literature produced by Union College students. We continue to encourage all students to submit literary and art works of various kinds. We solicit your help, as coeditors, to expand and improve the quality of this publication by submitting any comments, suggestions, and/or becoming a part of the Idol staff.

Thank You,
Adam Oestreicher
&
Katherine Uhlmann



AGATHA GOGOL



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MATTHEW BEEBE

MOMENT OF QUESTIONING

wander down through the bay berry
pass under a pink tea rose trellis
to sand hills of cluster grass
tall beautiful sharp grass
i walk the weight of unassurance

feet slip in the shifting sand
feel it in and here and all around
just beside me i swear i
see your footprints and a chair

peculiar place
don't know right or wrong
or the difference
hot or cold won't belong

beneath a guise of consciousness
reign the cynic and the optimist
the waning sun dances on the sea
in warmth and cold and mimic of me

laughing, twisting, turning ocean wind
kicking sand, gulls fall to land
a single tumble weed meanders astray
so strange and out of place

i want to believe
but you remind me
not to believe

i look through distraught summer haze
like the fog across each step you take
dropping through a collage of uncertainty
in these times everyone needs security

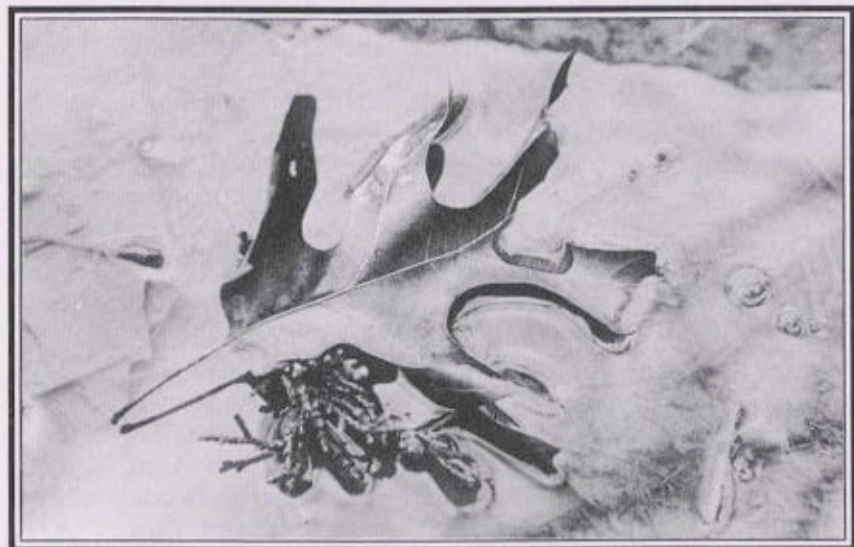
MATTHEW BEEBE

now there's something that swims in me
that bathes my heart and mind in between
soaks logic and desire and emotion
and you and all that i believe
i can't stop listening

can you imagine the day
when all this fades away
feelings so sure and safe
everything that we might say

pass under a pink tea rose trellis
wander up through the bay berry
to where you stand, waiting
and i know you've remained
in each moment of questioning

EMILY SCHREIER



DEBORAH BINDER

33 WINCHESTER DRIVE

I stood in the doorway, its frame marked in faded pencil
with a growth chart from my childhood,
and glimpsed into a world washed with sepia and mauve.
Past the doorway, the floor was strewn with
abandoned dress up clothes:
fluffy gowns of taffeta and jumbles
of tangled baubles and mismatched women's pumps.

Tranquil childhood memories of sea weathered
summer cottages on Cape Cod
and doll carriages stuffed with crocheted blankets,
popsicles dripping from the August heat and
grape Coolaid set out on the back deck,
beckoning me from my jaunts into the icy sprinkler.

Pizza in the playroom and Space 1999 and
The Muppet Show comprised Sunday night rituals.
The basement, set up like a classroom,
was a retreat where I could escape
to my imaginary adult world.

Outside, under the shaded oak tree,
the swing creaked back and forth,
still warm from its occupant, who,
now down the road on a big wheel,
discovered lady slippers
on a path behind the MacClaine's house.

GREEN PEIGNOIR SET AND ENVY

It was 1978 and Mom had us dressed to
the nines, matching mini polyester leisure
suits with bell-bottomed cuffs,
our synthetic fiber shimmer following
us with every step and stride.
But bedtime was fast approaching and

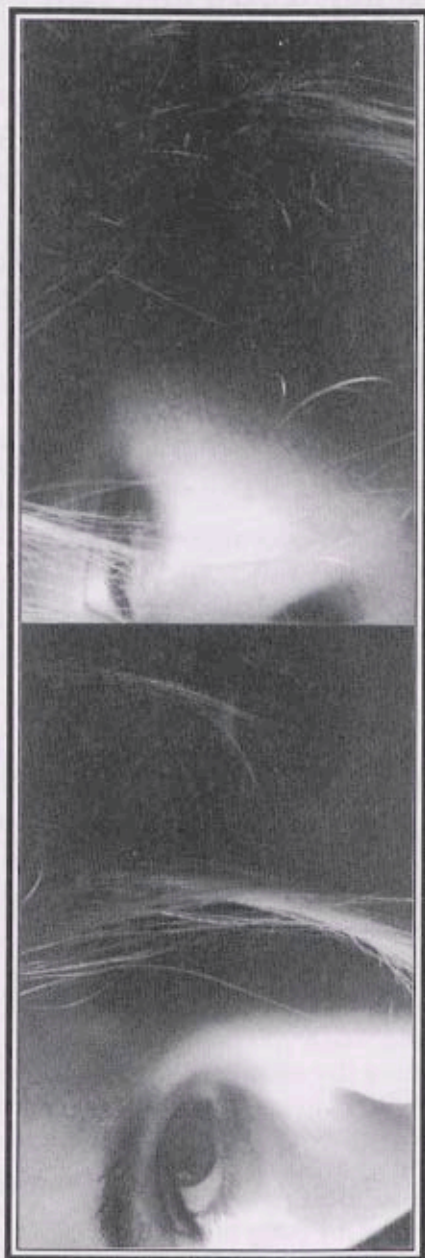
Mom assembled us in the bathroom,
and we took turns standing
on the red stool, its rickety step
squeaking as we stood on
its weakened supports.
And I brushed my teeth,
and you what teeth remained
in your seven year old mouth.

Mom then put me in my sleeper,
its feet worn through,
the neck, uncomfortably high.
And sulkingly I would
watch you saunter around the house
in your glorious green peignoir set.

It was already too small on you;
its elastic smocking frayed from use,
its color faded to a muted pastel.
But it was magnificent and you relished
every moment you could with it.
Your arms were bursting from its
princesssed seams, the fabric
was wearing thin.
But tormenting me was far too enticing.

So I would watch you in awe,
anticipating the moment I would
get to wear the green peignoir set,
my mouth watering, green peignoir sets
reflecting in my dark brown eyes,
my body suffocating from the heat
absorbed by my fuzzy blue sleeper
with the plastic coated footsies.

MAGGIE BENSON



GRACE

When I kissed you
your heart sang a love song
in your eyes were birds in a forest
your body was warm like a wintertime fire
there was a place in your chest I could
 hear when I rested
in the deep muffin clouds of your voice

Chestnuts in New York City
horse carriage princess and business man
with his coat
some man lost in the magic
holes for his fingers inside a glove
and who do you love?

Look
down the ice
is a hill down glide to the music
spinning around, laughing you fall
 to the ground
you've stepped on my roses
this dainty little dress
inside the center we kiss.

LAUREN MOUZAKES

RETREAT TO THE WOMB

Prologue

Swallow each morsel with a bitter taste,
consume a plant and awaiting its feel
Never allowing the dust to be waste.
Slowly slipping into an unknown deal
She starts to tremble, to laugh with no haste.
Now, their souls begin to combine and seal.
The music dances with cigarette smoke,
as arms bend and twist with the outside light.
The glass breaks and Mallory starts to joke.
They shake with fear while they think of this sight,
As Magic is sipped and their vessels soak
in a comfort state of soothing delight.
As Wood Sprite is distracted by a friend,
the other thinks she needs his arms to mend.

The saxophone hums as perfume rises
while one is anxious and the other, calm.
They're scared to meet unwanted surprises
but still want the touch of a cold — hot palm.
Their feet touch crisp leaves of unlike sizes,
with a single peace and consoling psalm.
She watches through a fishbowl and sees him
staring at her with a curious gaze.
She reaches through glass and light, faint and dim,
needing contact in this difficult maze.
Finally the feel and touch of his limb
sets her at ease, but then back in a daze.
It is no longer their union she needs,
but a warm contentment on which she feeds.

Epilogue

They return to the membrane, holding hands,
not wanting, for solace, ever to leave.
They all try to sate each others demands,
twisting follicles and blankets they weave.



JACK'S DEMISE

Upon waking, Jack was pleased to discover that he'd contracted no diseases during the night. He inhaled deeply through his surgical mask, content in the knowledge that his bronchial tubes were functioning properly. He gazed feverishly about the room, thanking a benevolent God for the gift of sight. He extended and contracted all of his appendages, reveling in the joy of an intact skeletal system.

He rose from the bed on perfect legs and strode to the bathroom to brush his perfect teeth, dressing himself in a robe made of natural (as opposed to synthetic) fiber.

"Another day of perfect health," he mused.

Breakfast consisted of oat and bran flakes (no preservatives or sweeteners, of course), freshly squeezed papaya juice (though the papayas were none the happier about being accosted) and lightly toasted bread, which he'd baked himself from the purest of ingredients. Nothing was too good for Jack — Not in this age of festering germs and filthy pollutants.

He retrieved the morning paper with latex gloves, so as not to acquire ink poisoning, and sat down to read it in the softest possible light, so as not to be afflicted with myopia. On the front page, a headline screamed:

TOO MUCH HEALTH:
CAN IT KILL YOU?

He was midway through the first paragraph when his nose exploded and his bones crumbled to dust.

FREEZE

It's liquid peanut cyanide
It's a play on words
It's a sticky situation,
It's a racial slur,
It's an afterthought.

SCOTT MORRISSEY

LATE NIGHT

I reach for the remote
extinguish the smoldering embers of late night tv
it's time to sleep, so I throw my discarded clothes
into a pile in the corner

I'm not tired, though, so I merely lay
in my bed, in my darkness,
the only light a reminiscent phosphorescence
from the plastic constellations above me.

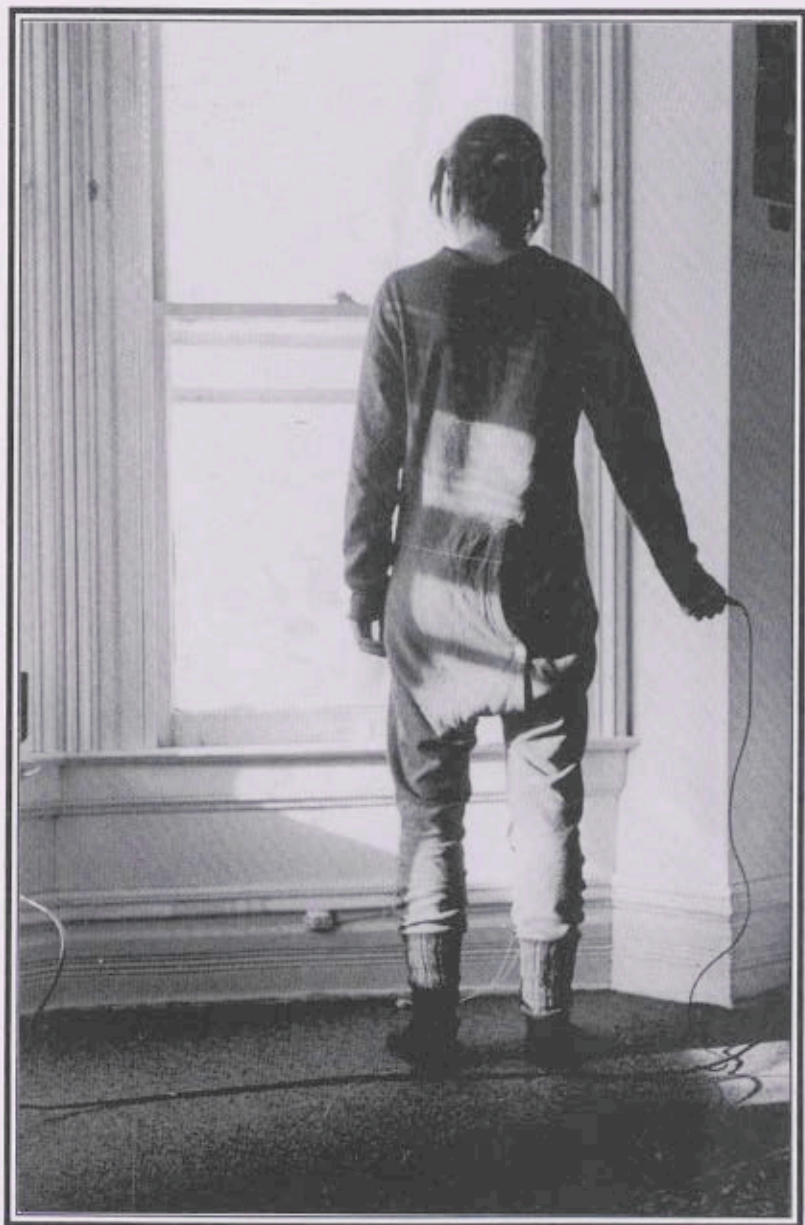
Wishing I could fall asleep
so I wouldn't have to think
cause there's so many things to think about
and for some reason, I only think about them at
night.

The music doesn't help;
I listen, searching for something to take my mind away
but I know nothing will
keep me from becoming miserable —
something always does.

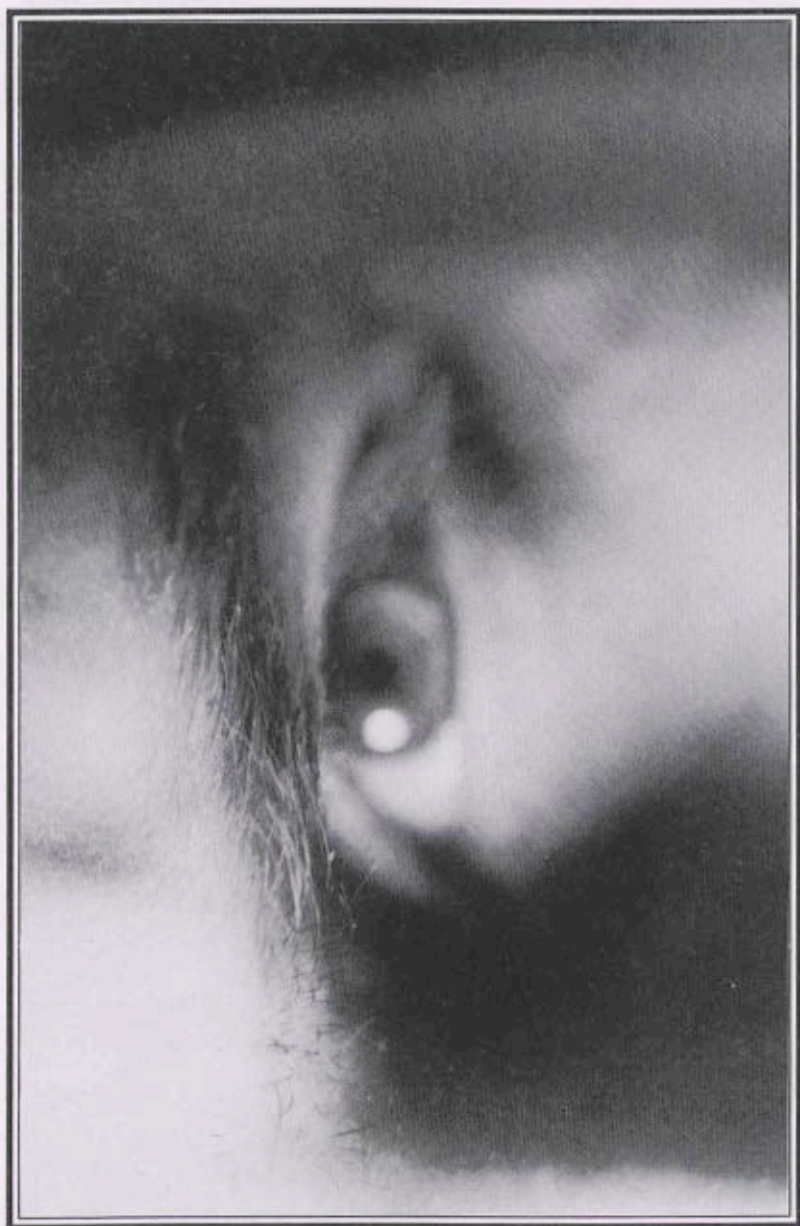
Life's not a shambles —
far from it, but
still I can't sleep, the damn music
seems to be getting louder and louder and
so I turn it off
and concentrate on the darkness
sobriety of the mind
hoping the night will lull my insurgent body
to merely forget for a while
while I sleep

Concentrating on sleep
causes me to wake, though I remain prone
to try something else to cause erasure of hopes, fears, memories
til the next day.

I look at where I know the phone is
and consider it, but
tonight I prefer to remain alone
pondering what only comes during
Late Night.



GREGG NATHAN



PRISONERS

Henri's four sad goldfish
Swimming in their bowl
Wondering if escape be possible
Escape, the ultimate goal

The tabletop is shaky
The water level low
Jumping out, their only answer
Upset the status quo

Safe inside my four white walls
I watch them watching me
I'm on the inside looking out
The prisoner is me —



LEIF ZURMUHLEN



MISPERCEPTIONS

"It's only terrible as time goes on," he said. "In the beginning, it's beautiful."

*The Vampire Lestat**

I remember that I liked the way that chalk-white pill felt the first time. Calm and so whisper cool. Tim was of course concerned that I had to take it in the first place. He was always suggesting alternatives to pain killers. Exercise. Sex. The right diet. They don't work, and he knows it. But he doesn't worry now because he knows that I hate them, am scared of the way they whitewash my working mind and put my body to sleep fighting.

We hung out at the reservoir last week, Jenny, me, Mike and Tim. The day was one of those sunny ones, the ones that are so bright you are struck with blinding white. We lay on the cement and grass feeling water spray from the fountain tickle our lips as we talked about dorms and dining hall food. I wanted that to leave the heat, absorb myself in the coolness of the stable stone walk. Mike talks, unusual for him, says it's not so bad at Virginia Tech, you've got variety and everything, but you need to get out for something different every once in a while. His words thumped to the sound of Jenny's sneaker on the ground. She's the common madonna who listened and twisted her hair, pulled upwards by the breeze. Tim played with my hand, fingering the white skin untanned because of my watch. He isn't listening, but contemplates the color borders and perhaps thinks of owning my frailty and the parts of me that he can touch. All of this is important somehow.

I'm listening, but the sun was beating down on my head, making my blood boil, so I had to listen over the pounding that started. The pounding that pulses the colors of the water and green. The pounding that pulses the colors of the water and green, the sounds around me

— continued on next page

BECKY CONHEADY

and the smells that always go unnoticed. I have to pull the white-knight pill from my pocket and drown it with a swig of Coke. My defense against the sun and the screaming birds and the crashing water and offensive traffic. My feet were firmly planted holding the unreliable ground in check. Lightening sword kill the pain while I hold still. Meanwhile I focused on the ground where the ants parade carrying their booty of white bundles of rice and bread left for the gulls. They move around my boot because they don't really know how large it is, and that they could probably go over it. They take the long way around and disappear into the cement crack. They have feasts and dancing under the soil.

A red car roared down the road, white trash drinking and painting the scenery loud and obvious. They spotted us and all turned bear-faces and blue-jeans towards us, hollering "Bitch, come and get some! Yeah, ya whores, come such on my fat dick! Damned by our serenity, by our geography. Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their fucking eyes. There's a fire of beer cans and condoms, and the car lugs away the sores with an exit of smoke and sun flashing on the car's chrome.

One assault ended and another began with a tilt and things were unclear. I was thinking someone's talking about something and you know what? I don't really care. The colors had all gone. There's just black and white outlines of people and a dull whitened photocopy of a setting that's twisting in my vision, and I had to hold on, but no one was stationary. But Tim was there, is always there, and he held me, flying his pale kite decked out on Vicodin in the white sky.

Yet inside the drug squiggled and wormed it's way through me, pushing the pain out and taking control once more.

*Quoted from Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*
Ballantine Books; NY, 1985

CONVERSATION PIECE
COLLEGIUM CONCORDIAE

Our words fall leave
Dry lifeless scattered
Scraping the ground
We speak hollow souls

Questions already answered
Queries thrown windward uncaring
Only brown dried floating
Nothing living falls

Contact through ice
Overcoats without souls
Words fall like leaves
Sharks drown in shallows

(What's up?) we fall . . .
(Not much?) downward
(See ya!) down down
Spiralling death

Conversation reality
Drab brown bored
Falling falling
Landing requires substance

Best and brightest
Speak and brightest
Speak shallow empty void
Trivial ennui spirals —
Roi de tout le monde

PATHETIC RHETORIC

I know that face,
a forced smile directed
towards me as I pass
and watch your small
piece of happiness stand
with his arms crossed
become the greatest
source of pain that
you'll ever feel

I understand your
need to make me look
away from your shame,
ashamed that you
are begging him to
stay.

I have known what it
feels like when all
of your persuasion
convinces him to stay.
Constantly wondering if
the only reason why you
still have him is because of
your skill at pathetic
rhetoric and inflicting guilt.

I have been there,
I have worn that expression,
don't worry I won't
stare too long, only
long enough to remember
why I never want to
sit in that chair again.

YOUR WHITE CARPET

You tell me that I can't listen to that music all
of the time just because it makes me happy,
unaware of the times of walruses and fools
 which places me on a tour of comfort delight
Resting the breath of adulterated air
 with a tightening in our lungs and a
perfect absolute strain, we're calm
at that moment but the essence
remains. It doesn't matter how hard we try the
exorcism. The devil won't leave so easily.

 You'll ask for my
nurturing and I'll give it to you and each
taste bud you possess.
Something warms and cools with your
slightest glance and grip of fingers.

 Without a motion, I know
 how we both feel the
uncertainty of what we understand to be
complete and real.

 Nothing will take away
 my yearning for the sounds of
kindegarten when life was just half of a day.

HEATHER PICKEN



"8:34 P.M."

It was a strange night when I was walking back
and my eyes passed over the fossil footprints
the wind was screaming in place of the faint
whisper whisper that I usually hear
I walked through the building and the heat
hissed at me like in the fun house in
Niagara Falls when I begged my parents
let me go in
and they did until I came out after only
a minute after the mirror was warped
and the floor shook and the fake snakes
hissed at me the fourth grader
I cried to be out so I ran faster until I
was in my mom's arms and my dad rubbed
my back I walked to the other end of
the building where the door is usually closed
and this time it wasn't with a cautious
step outside eyeing the handicap lift
making sure that nobody was there to
grab my leg and scare me
I would fall and there would be
a fossil body on the ground that people
would mistake for footprints

STAINS

Brush

Brush Fire

Burnt Hair Flesh, Fresh crackling raw skin smelly oil

No!

No, really

Rip off the shadow hood show me shards of flame
dancing in shock white

white eyes where are the pupils?

Stop

Son, I thought you should know

Hi Daddy! My Snapped vertebrae pinches.

Your mother's dead

Don't

Don't turn

your pivoting skull away with claws
still inside my gut

it throbbed but now its numb.

What do you want?

I wanted

A whiff of that steady blue smoke that rose from the
scorched carbon in her knee caps

I'm High

But I'm Hungry!

Remember?

You're the one who stood in red marrow melted
drained out on the floor

from what was left of my carved carcass

Why'd you stomp on that too?

Prick

Please, Pretty please?

Stinging salt and acid leaks from your bloody zinc sack
of poisoned lies, cries

in dry sticky eyelids

Shut up

Of course you can't hear!

Slapped in wet Boiled, bloated tongue of reason. I told you
not to touch that

Crimped membranes can never be smoothened out my dear
... folded stuck in spasm, yes then there'll be silence

Count me

Hurry up and count me

Count my pieces

mating up with millions

they feed from my barely beating yellow
heart muscle; look at 'em lick it bare

Even the slippery mushrooms live,
and make babies in my vinegar.

Its not your waxy crevices that bother me

Peeled soles
can walk on anything

But ... but I ...

But if you touch the unsucked chyme
Caked

on my swollen bulb of purple love

I swear

I'll stain you too.

ELVIS AND THE BEATITUDES

Eventually, God got bored with what He was doing. He did a little checking up on the Earth Project and decided to send His Son down again. Wary of what happened the last time, he dressed the Messiah in casual clothes.

Jesus arrived on a warm spring day, full of new ideas. He took to preaching on the street corners of major American cities, but He was driven out by the winos and false prophets who'd already staked their claims there. He appeared on prime-time television in a short commercial, which met with mixed reviews. Jewish people didn't believe Him because they never had, in the first place. Others were outraged because the ad had interrupted Monday Night Football. A handful of folks figured He must be running for congress and quickly turned their attentions elsewhere.

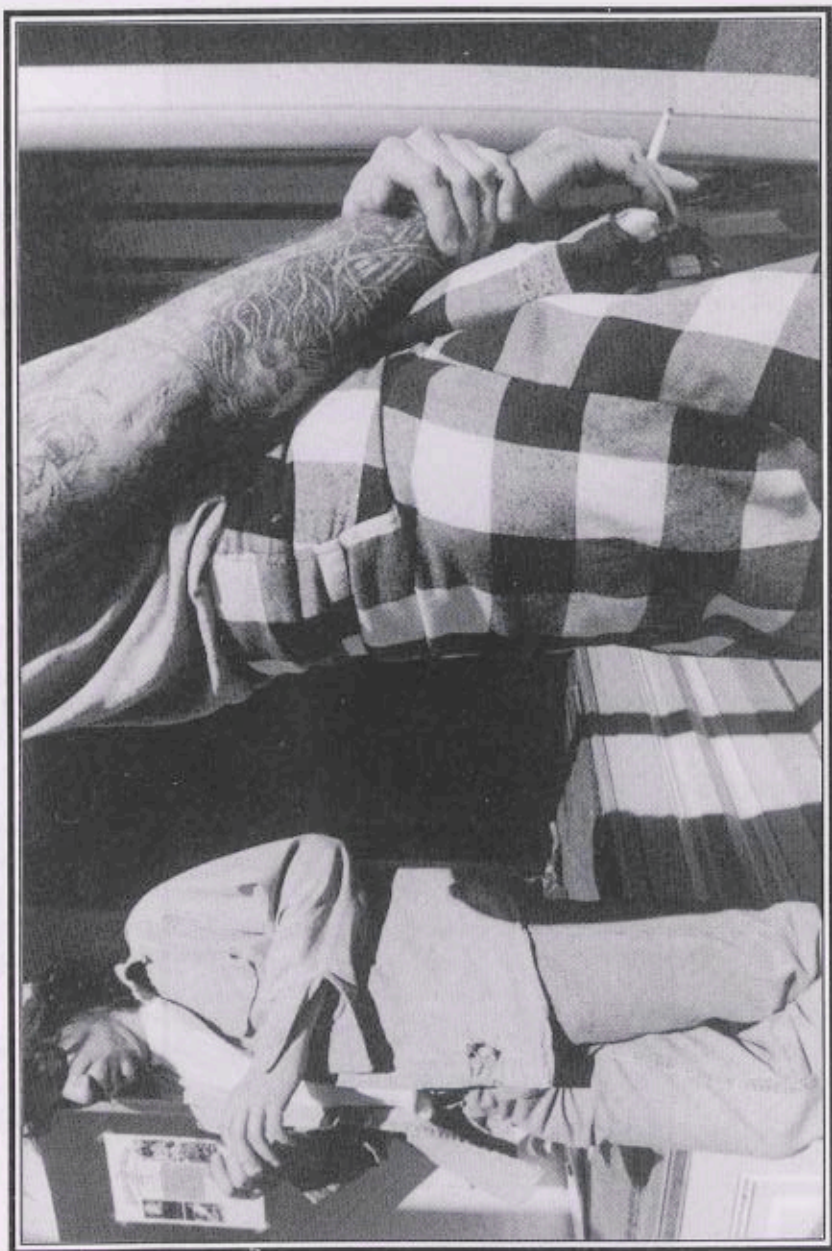
Shaken by this, Jesus decided to do something really spectacular. He called all the news stations, informing them that, at precisely 3:00 p.m. on August 124th, He would levitate the Sears Tower in Chicago. This stupendous feat would prove to everyone that He really was the Son of God.

Well, everything went pretty much as planned and the miracle induced the kind of awestruck response one might expect from the average Steven Spielberg film. The event was broadcast on every news station in America. Soon afterward, David Copperfield duplicated the feat with a better production staff and catchier music. Everyone forgot all about the Messiah again.

Dejected and bereaved, Jesus returned to Heaven to consult with His Father. God consoled His Son and gave him the next millennium off. Planning a new strategy, God contemplated sending Elvis down, instead.



SARAH C.M. OLSON



BEYOND THE MIST

Before I'm cold and departed
I want to see through the mist
Where I am going
On which path will the answers lie
The reality of my journey is unclear.

But still I pursue through the darkness

It won't be long
Before I realize the dream
That cannot be concluded
It is a vision that will not cease
Something antiquated in a peculiar manner
I clutch the uncertainty as my only guide

Before I leave
I want to know
If I arrived at my destination
Or if I floated with no direction
As an aimless dove
Through clouds of gray
And fields of ignorance

Absent of any previous knowledge
The sky breaks open and the rain continues
Darkness and thunder consume my soul
As the ground shakes with lightning
I feel my heart beating as my only
Sign what defines me as my fate is whisked away
With the harsh wind at my back.

I'll turn away and let the wind throw me down
The direction of my path will be lit with the coming.
Of a new day
The reassurance of a bright sun convinces me to continue
I search infinitely on as a lonesome traveler. . .

KAREN DePOTO

DRIFTING

I got a letter in the mail today.

I'm in Turkey

How's the weather? How's your family?

How's the country's economy?

I got a letter in the mail today.

I remembered how we were friends —

Children blowing soap bubbles on a hot summer day,
as the sun-drenched asphalt drank the cool puddles of soap
we carelessly spilled.

Our bubbles blurred together as they collided and died
in the thick summer air.

I got a letter in the mail today.

I remembered how we were friends —

Teenagers venturing to a Friday night party.
as we talked until the sun awoke, the omniscient ears of
night heard our secrets, fears, desires, laughter.

I depended on you
and then you left.

I got a letter in the mail today.

Many letters — at first.

You went to Texas,
we kept in touch.

You went to Spain,
we heard from each other.

You went to Delaware,
we stopped writing.

I got a letter in the mail today.

I'm in Turkey.

How's the weather? How's your family?

How's the country's economy?

I got a letter in the mail today.

but I don't really care

MEMORIES WASHED ASHORE

A soft mist fell from the bleak, grey sky
behind a sea of black suits and dresses,
whispering memories of a man who was no more.

A man who, every day,
walked through the lives of hundreds of people,
Encouraging, Governing,
Guiding, Caring,
Spreading his spirit like wild fire on a dry, windy day.

As the waves of black suits and dresses
roll out to sea,
the light mist turns to steady rain,
washing away wisdom, knowledge dignity,
Christening the death of a man who emanated inspiration.
A soft mist fell from the bleak, grey sky
behind a sea of black suits and dresses,
whispering memories of a boy who was no more.

A boy who followed his carefree, whimsical desires
to laughter, popularity, and Death.
Teasing, Joking,
Sharing, Hurting.
Using his young hands to throw amusement and contempt
in the faces of those around him.

As the waves of black suits and dresses
roll out to sea,
the light mist turns to steady rain,
washing away innocence, vanity, immaturity,
Eternalizing the youth of a boy who had so much more to learn.

Memories of two people
washed ashore like delicate seashells.
A man whose life glistened in the sunlight of greatness.
A boy whose death erased the mistakes of his life.

Memories of two people
washed ashore like delicate seashells,
If we clench too tightly,
the shells will shatter.
If we let go,
the shells will wash back out to sea.

We must hold them close enough
to see their flaws, but admire their beauty,
embedding them in the sand of our lives.

RAWSON THURBER

FOR MARIN, MY SISTER.

It is coming for her
and I worry late at night
sometimes.

It's clear to me — I see it, hear it, feel it
But she does not
I want to make it clear for her
protect her when it comes
Be there to show it to her and
hold her hand
But I cannot.

I see her as a little girl —
three straight days of wearing a
pink stained sweat suit — tussled blonde hair
I see her as a girl and
as the beautiful woman
she's become.
I see them both at the same time.

I am confused by this —
these angles of perception
future, past, present
all warping her image
loosing myself in the vision
The distance making things worse.

I worry about her soul
sometimes

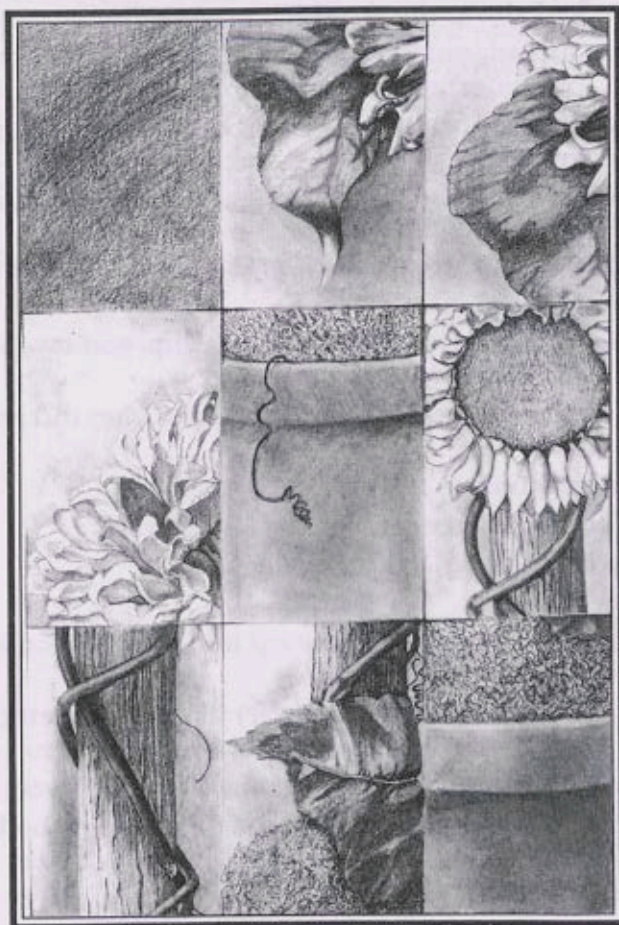
I want to rush home
and be there when it comes —
be the brother I never really
was

I want to tell her its
name and the pain it brings.
But I know it means
nothing in words.
Knowledge of it prevents
nothing, but promotes
more distance between us.

RAWSON THURBER

More friendly acquaintance
Chit-chat on the phone
"How's school?"
"How's Brandon?"
"Anything new?"
"Is Mom there?"
"Love you Mino."

HEATHER PICKEN



JODY MOUSSEAU

DEATH OF A LILAC BUSH

The green grew; the endless, unredeeming fragrance, and its
end sure to come.

The rain had given it life, surely I would not condemn such
nature, or put it to death.

Simply, tame it.

The blades raced through, and I stared at the leaves which
would be sucked into the epitome of hopelessness,
and also at the sky which would never be touched.

And I was sucked into it too, all liveliness, the blades cut my
consciousness and soon, nothing existed.

Nothing mattered, the world was my own, and it was under
my authority.

The soldiers below the surface were at my mercy, and my
power could not be measured or altered.

Yes, I sought to devour all powerless that lied ahead (I would
soon rake it, too).

My horse sped up after I gave it a firm whip, and my mastery
of the art was not questioned.

Their flowered friends of yellow and white, they did not
matter.

My time had come to control.

Staring at my glory, the future was not relevant.

Glowing in my pride, like an obsession.

And I hit it.

The power diminished, and the cut into my consciousness
started to bleed.

Wishing (that there had been a star) that I could return all
life, everywhere, back to its omnipresence.

Innocence devoured, devoured by careless and greed.

The purple, passionate buds and the gentle green body
seemed to lie, with nothing, in two or three
mangled pieces.

JODY MOUSSEAU

It stopped. My body, my heart, my power.

Taken away, it was taken away in pompous absurdity, an
ancestry, a pure creature, one of beauty and
innocence.

It never needed to be tamed, or mangled, or killed, and the
wind picked up and the buds floated, as gently as they
had during an era,

Crouching over the pieces of my soul, broken before me.

A gracious death, an indefinite death, with possibility of
returning a world power, such as it was . . .

Me, and my horse, and the pain that was felt under the blazing
sun and the blue sky, in the eternity of green, wild,
untamable land,

That one day,

When the world was mine.

RUSSEL STRAM



