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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

WESTVIEW

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W E S T V I E W

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Editor ..... James Silver
Managing Editor ..... Kevin Collins
Publications Manager ..... Joel Kendall
Nonfiction Editor ..... Joyce Stoffers
Assistant Editor ..... John Bradshaw
Electronic Submissions Editor ..... Helen Maxson

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2. Submitted artwork should be suitable for black and white reproduction. Work should be no larger than 8.5" x 14". However, photographs or slides of larger works may be submitted.

3. Include a brief biographical sketch for our contributors' notes.

4. Submissions and correspondence may be sent to:
James Silver
Editor, *Westview*
100 Campus Drive
Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Weatherford, OK 73096

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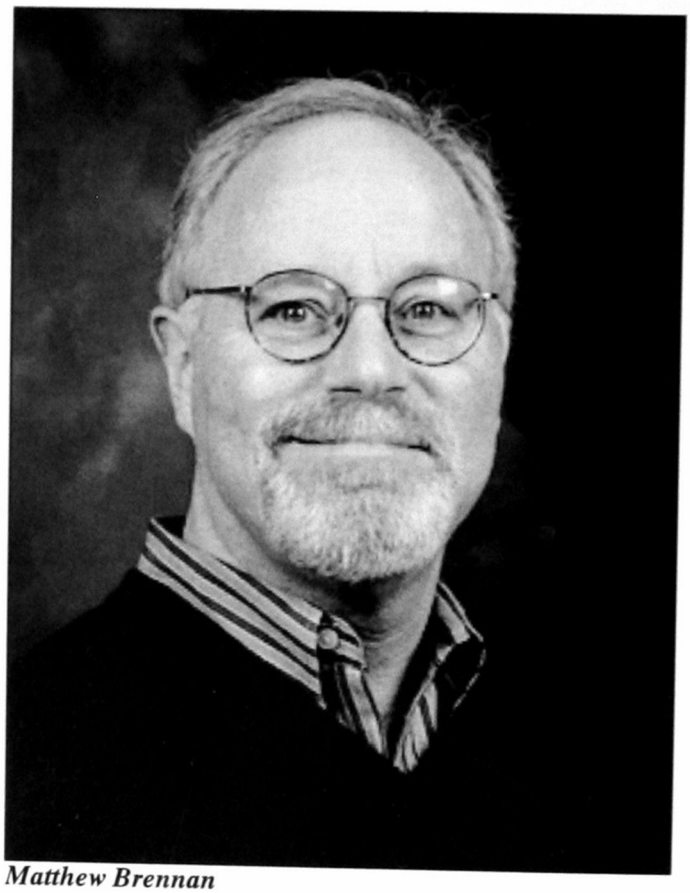
Interview with Matthew Brennan

by Kevin Collins

The visiting writer for the 2008 Westview *Writers' Festival is Matthew Brennan, a professor of English who teaches literature and creative writing at Indiana State University. The author of three substantial scholarly books on the poetry of other writers, Brennan demonstrates the quality that, as much as any other, separates true poets from hacks: an awareness that poetry is an ancient and ongoing tradition, much more than merely his own voice and vision. Brennan's work on the poetic tradition (he is an expert on the Romantic poetry of Britain and America) has not kept him from pursuing his own vision: the fourth and fifth collections in book form of his own poetry are being published in 2008:* The House with the Mansard Roof *and* The Sea-Crossing of Saint Brendan. *In addition, he has published 168 poems and 42 scholarly articles in important anthologies and literary journals.* Westview *is honored by his decision to trust his work to us as well.*

In anticipation of his visit for the Writers' Festival, we spoke to Dr. Brennan about the romantic and the mundane aspects of writing and publishing poetry.



Matthew Brennan

Westview: Even if *poets* are a diverse class of people, there must be a set of characteristics that distinguishes them from *non-poets*. What are some of those characteristics, and why are they important?

Brennan: Not all poets are the same, but they all are drawn to a love of language, to the exercise of the imagination, and to a belief that there are noncommercial ways of being that matter significantly. I suppose this could be said of many others, non-poets such as clergy, teachers, librarians, folk musicians. But poets also feel the need to live through writing, and at least since Wordsworth, their topics have come most often from the stuff of daily existence, which, to them, teems with meaning. What others never notice or remember can become the subject of a poem for a poet.

Westview: Tell us about the time in your life when you came to recognize some of those characteristics in yourself.

Brennan: After reading *Catcher in the Rye* at 15, I knew I was called to Literature, to put it romantically. For a while, I dreamed of being a novelist and wrote a few pedestrian short stories along the way. At 16 I started my first "novel" but abandoned it after about 10 meandering pages when I realized I had no idea what I was doing and turned the notebook into a journal. I suppose

this was the turning point when I began to do things that poets do, even though I didn't yet write poems, which I felt were a kind of code I couldn't crack. But writing in the journal made life more real: Virginia Woolf once said that she didn't feel she had really lived an experience until she wrote about it.

As a college freshman I learned to read poems from Paul Diehl and started trying to write them. He taught me how form and matter can be inextricable and how technique turns words into art. He taught me about poetic rhythm and meter. So I learned to love the language and form of poetry, not just the expression of feelings or ideas that can be paraphrased in prose.

Like many who came of age in the late sixties and early seventies, I knew the road to suburban conformity was not for me; now of course I realize many who work in the business world and struggle with its compromises do so heroically for the sake of their families, and the same could be said of my parents (my dad was an insurance executive who read novels, my mom a computer programmer who did oil paintings). While writing my dissertation, I faced the reality of needing to make a living through a stint as a full-time editor of training manuals for the securities industry. But my sensibility was set by then, and often I worked on poems at my desk during the lunch hour. I learned to take solace from Yeats's "The Fascination of What's Difficult"—a poem about suppressing the poetic sensibility during the day in order to pay the bills, and then letting it bolt loose late in the night.

I'll add that I wrote my first "real" poem in January 1977 at my parents' kitchen table. I was just back from a term in London where I learned how to see light; the poem, "Winter Light," came spontaneously and fluidly, and it led to some surreal metaphors and expressive landscape images that enabled me, for the first time, to say one thing in terms of another, to cite Frost's definition of a poem. The poet Gregory Orr picked it as a ten-dollar honorable mention winner in the annual college contest, and with that I felt something like validation. I was hooked.

Westview: What is the state of the market for poetry in 2008 (including both readers interested in new poetry and journals/publishers interested in disseminating new poetry)?

Brennan: The market for readers has maybe never been better. There seem to be more small presses all the time, and it's easier to find out about them thanks to the Internet, Amazon.com, and large-circulation magazines such as *Poets & Writers* and *Rain Taxi* that bulge with ads for new books. It may be a less auspicious situation for the publishers, who have always had a difficult time turning a profit on books of poetry. Aside from commercial publishers such as Harcourt, most poetry publishers such as Graywolf have given up on hardbound editions. Other publishers have turned to print-on-demand, such as Word Press. It's still the case that most books of poems are sold through poetry readings. The market for poetry pretty much coincides with the college campus. Yet efforts by Robert Pinsky, Dana Gioia, Billy Collins, and Bill Moyers, among others, have helped greatly to bring poetry to the general reader.

But in 2004, when I served on an NEA panel that awarded grants to magazines and small publishers, I came away depressed by the dire straits some of these presses face, and most of them successfully print just a couple volumes a year and find their niches by specializing in publishing writers of a particular slant, gender, or ethnicity. So while the market might be in good shape for readers, it's still a struggle for many presses. Some good ones have folded, such as Zoo Press. Commercial presses more and more resist not only poetry but also literary fiction. One member of the NEA panel worked as an editor at a big New York firm, and he left a meeting several times to take phone calls: it was the day after the Democratic

convention, and publishers were scrambling to sign Barack Obama. They all hunt for the blockbuster that will keep the ledger's ink black; no book of poems will do that.

Westview: Some publication opportunities for new poets involve compromise: vanity presses, reader's fees, publishers who insist on a particular political outlook, etc. Apart from the dictates of the individual conscience, are there ways for a young poet to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable compromises?

Brennan: Even though many great writers have gotten their starts by paying the printer for their early books—Hawthorne, Simms, Auden come to mind—a young poet looking to break into print should never shell out cash to make it happen. Some contests provide a year's subscription in return for an entry fee, so these journals give you something, but as there are hundreds of journals that will read your work for nothing; why not try these first? In fact, a good place to start is local and school magazines, which actually find readers you will know. But soon young poets will want to submit to more competitive, professional venues that can showcase their work. I'd recommend multiple-submitting your best poems to journals that allow it (and keeping strict tabs on the submissions). For ultimately, poets learn that if you can't publish your best work in good places, it's better not to publish. You don't want your well-tended work surrounded by trash.

Publishing a first book virtually requires entering one of the many contests sponsored by university and small presses, and these always ask for twenty or twenty-five dollars, normally with no offer of a consolation prize such as a copy of the winning book. Finding a sympathetic small press that accepts unsolicited manuscripts is preferable, I think, but as I said, these presses tend to be financially unstable, publish only a very few poets a year, and in fact often publish poets already linked to them in some way.

It's hard for poets to stay patient—most are like Keats, who apologized in his preface for his early book *Endymion* but of course rushed it into print nevertheless. There comes a time, however, when giving in to a vanity publisher such as iUniverse may well make good sense, especially if all other avenues have been exhausted and if most of the book's poems have previously appeared in solid magazines. A better move might be starting your own small press with some like-minded writers. Putting a book behind you and into at least some readers' hands could free you to move on, I would think. There's just no easy answer, and luck plays a huge role in the process.

Westview: Who are the canonical poets who have most affected your life and your work? How? Why?

Wordsworth leaps to mind. While a student in England, I walked in the landscapes of his poetry and found an affinity for his poems that use landscape to symbolize the psyche. I also was drawn to his "spots of time," passages that revive memories and explore their incorporation into the present consciousness. Wordsworth became the subject of my dissertation, which grew into my first critical book and clinched my tenure, so Wordsworth, whom I still teach, affects my life in multiple ways. I discovered Keats as a college freshman, and was greatly moved by his life as told in Aileen Ward's bio and increasingly by his poetic craftsmanship and his bravery in facing human suffering. Yeats also has been an influence. Among contemporary poets who appear to have secured spots in the canon, I would point to Timothy Steele, who handles ordinary subjects in traditional form with admirable clarity. Also, W. D. Snodgrass, whose "Heart's Needle" sequence brilliantly presents autobiographical narratives in inventive form but also conversational syntax; its use of objective correlatives to express emotions

and to avoid cheap sentimentality is instructive. Among free-verse practitioners, Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, Robert Bly, and Ted Kooser have all made their mark on me too. More recently, Seamus Heaney has become a strong favorite.

Westview: Tell about the ways that teachers or mentors have affected your development as a poet.

Brennan: First, a confession: I never took a creative-writing workshop. Paul Diehl, my intro to poetry teacher, read some of his poems with a German prof who had just gotten a poem published, and this experience deeply impressed my freshman mind. Mike Cavanagh, who taught the British survey and thus introduced me to all kinds of poems and techniques I'd try out in early efforts, stopped me one day on the sidewalk to pass along that another prof had been reminded of Eliot by a poem I'd submitted to the annual contest. I lost, but the remark encouraged me. In grad school I learned a great deal about poetry from G. T. Wright, a great scholar who himself published poems in *The New Yorker* and *Sewanee Review*. He was the model I wanted to emulate. I took his courses on Yeats and on Form in Contemporary Poetry. But my best mentors were fellow students—writers such as Dex Westrum, Mick Cochrane, Michael Kleine, Alan Altimont, Dave Garrison. We'd meet at each others' houses to read new work and sometimes trade poems for a response. But camaraderie was what mattered. Having a writers' group outside of school kept the writing a pure source of pleasure and kept us in touch with an audience.

Westview: What about ways that non-poets influenced your development as a poet?

Brennan: My late mom was a painter and her creativity and commitment to art made my wanting to be a poet a natural ambition. And from her I saw firsthand the process of how art gets made, that some false starts get tossed aside or painted over, that other works attain a grace beyond the reach of art. I have four of her paintings hanging in my house. In her I also witnessed the struggle to create art while working in a world completely alien to art. I have to nod as well to my older brother who majored in English as an undergrad and influenced me to follow a literary bent. He was a hard critic of my work, but I respected his opinions and felt validated that he took my writing seriously.

Westview: To what extent can the craft of poetry be taught?

Brennan: To a great extent. Poets need to find teachers who will show them how to read as writers. Reading professional models is essential to learning technique and how poems are made, as is learning to revise; students in workshops can be led to see problems in their poems and ways to overcome them through technique. The craft isn't learned overnight, but it can be learned. I think teaching craft in creative writing workshops helps me as a poet, reinforcing what I have already learned and sometimes leading me to learn new aspects of technique. Regularly reading new poets, as well as revisiting the old ones, helps the learning of craft become life-long.

Westview: What aspects of poetry writing cannot be taught?

Brennan: I don't think you can teach imagination. You can't teach a poet how to come up with a great idea for a poem or how to construct brilliant metaphors. You can expose apprentice poets to displays of imagination and examples of vivid figurative language and perhaps have them practice making metaphors, but I have never been big on exercises. There are things vital to making a poem that happen in creation and cannot be explained. It's like trying to teach a would-be saint to have visions.

Westview: There are some self-evident *disadvantages* to trying to pursue poetic visions while simultaneously trying to fill the roles of teacher, scholar, husband, baseball fan, competitive drinker, etc. What are the *advantages* that such distractions might offer to a poet?

Brennan: Well, the advantages of life's various distractions are that they sometimes provide the experiences that spark poems and also keep you in touch with your potential audience. And if you couldn't find ways other than writing to occupy your mind you'd go crazy. Writing is solipsistic enough without becoming a sentence of solitary confinement. The roles of teacher and scholar have the advantages of being closely related to poetry-writing and can complement it. When the muse refuses to cooperate, these related distractions can still feed the intellect and imagination and keep you in touch with language, even if they don't provide the same exhilaration poetic visions serve up.

Westview: Tell about *The Sea-Crossing of Saint Brendan?* What is it about the historical/apocryphal events that drew your attention sufficiently to inspire a book-length poem?

Brennan: The fantastic idea that a group of monks in a boat made of hides made it to North America centuries before Columbus captivates me. I've been on the Atlantic a couple times (off the coast of New England) and the sublime experience the ocean provides stirs my romantic impulses. Reading Tim Severin's book about recreating the voyage in 1976 inspired me too.

Westview: The form of the *Saint Brendan* poem is notable and unusual. What is the relationship between the form and the content of that poem?

Brennan: Though the Latin original is in prose, the events it narrates occurred in the 7th century, a time when accentual, alliterative poetry was being written in Ireland and would soon be used by the *Beowulf* poet for his medieval epic. Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* of course approximates the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, and I decided to employ a similar form as a way to impressionistically imply the movement of Brendan's voyage. So every half-line consists of two stressed syllables, and every pair of half-lines employs some form of alliteration or assonance to bind the halves together.

❊❊❊

First Kiss

by Matthew Brennan

We'd hidden from the nuns behind a wooded lot
and let our lips slip into place, lubricious
pulped tongues about to touch: I felt a rush

of pleasure piqued by sin. It felt as though
we'd stolen into our neighbor's cellar
and pried into his stash of cobwebbed boxes—

postcards in French, pin-up girls, parts of guns—
while upstairs lumbering above us, he made
the floorboards sway, like treetops about to fall.

Excerpts from *The Sea-Crossing of Saint Brendan*

by Matthew Brennan

Editor's Note: *"Building the Board and Setting Sail" and "Back on the Water" are excerpts from Matthew Brennan's epic poem,* The Sea-Crossing of St. Brendan, *published as a book this year by Birch Brook Press. The passages are intended to be read left to right, the first line beginning in the left-hand column, the second line in the right-hand column. The structure reflects a variety of intentions, such as replicating the predictable rhythmic tossing of a small craft at sea.* *(See the interview with Brennan, pages 4-8.)*

Building the Boat and Setting Sail

by Matthew Brennan

Using few tools
we contrived a vessel

ribbed and limbed
with timber from oaks

and fleshed with oxhides
tanned by tree bark.

We smeared the skin
with tallow and beeswax.

The mast in the middle—
a flax-covered cross—

was solid as stone.
We stowed a larder

to persist forty nights,

plus the supplies

to rebuild the boat.

All day we waited

for the tide to turn.

Morning had tainted

a high sky

with white clouds

and a circle of sunlight

suffusing the mist

Finally at sunset

before darkness fell

we rowed from the creek

right into the swells

The light behind us,

like a heavenly halo,

silhouetted our cells

and the band of brothers

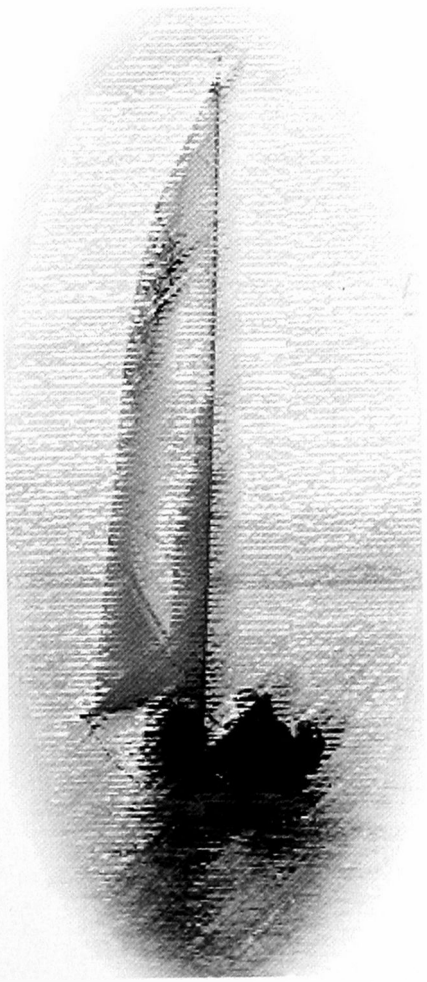


Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

who waved good-bye.

We begged God's blessing

and the sails grew full

of the Holy Spirit;

our hand-made home

heaved with the wind.

steering westward

toward the summer solstice.

Our canvas glinted

with a golden glory.

while Mount Brandon slowly

sank out of sight

and salt spray

like holy water

baptized our souls

so we felt re-born.

VI. Back on the Water

by Matthew Brennan

Then the curragh was carried
in the crook of the ocean

and was supplied by our monks
for many moons.

For before we'd embarked
to our abbot appeared

a youth with yeast bread
and yards of water.

When these goods were gone
and our guts were empty,

a brother named Finnbar,
born of fishermen,

could uncoil a rope
and catch schools of cod

from the deepest fathoms.
If Finnbar were busy,

I learned to lure
puffins and fulmars

onto gunwale and mast
and then grip their necks

and snap them like stems
When our fluids were finished,

we'd upraise our goblets
and gather the raindrops

The abbot determined
our turns at the helm.

On nights when the surface
of the sea was seamless,

I stared at the stars
salting the sky

till my blood was suspended
and my eye put to sleep

so magnificent nature
entered my soul.

And every week
the weather unraveled.

In darkness and fog
the curragh would cartwheel

faster than fulmars
can soar through the clouds;

we'd swerve through the murk
like daemons, not monks.

One night on my watch,
the weather turned wicked.

The boat entered a vortex
of violence and swirling,

blackness all round
and foam in our faces:

The force sucked us inward
while waterfalls flogged

the crossbar and mast,
whipping the canvas

like the back of beast.
Saltwater boulders

tumbled around us
as we took hold in terror.

The Past

by Matthew Brennan

To make it live, as Vermeer tried
for Arnolfini, approximates
how memory works, the texture of
the way things were. But what once flared—

a spot of time, vividly fixed
in the mind's permanent collection—
always fades, like the sun's rays
reflected from a pewter plate.

Take *Lake Calhoun,* a photograph,
1980: it shows a mist
obscuring the sun one fall morning
in Minnesota, but the print

itself is dim, and even though
the sunrise happened, something's lost
to the outer eye—so only feeling
for the fleeting light survives.

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

Thieves

by Ron Savage

Nicholas began running toward the man who had left the shadow of the oak tree near the old woman and her small brown dog. The dog was sniffing the grass along the edge of the brick path. The woman said, Don't be fussy, Bunny. And she jiggled Bunny's silver leash. The man had thick arms and a blue short-sleeve shirt, and he moved behind the old woman and to her left. He grabbed the shoulder strap of her tan leather handbag. The woman dropped the silver leash and held her purse with both hands. Bunny barked, circled the man, and snapped at his legs. Nicholas understood thieves. His father used to tell him, You come from a family of thieves. Nicholas knew what thieves liked and what they didn't like. Thieves liked to finish their jobs and go home. They did not like complications. They liked to take a long hot shower and have a beer or a whiskey and watch television. Thieves were no different from anyone else. Nicholas was still running toward the thief and the old woman. The woman wore a gray silk shawl and a rust colored-pants suit, something tailored. She had a frail look, but her voice sounded strong. Nicholas thought she was good at keeping her fear to herself. You better stay away from Bunny! she said to the man. Her voice became louder and she said, Help, I need help! Help me! The trees in Maymont Park were black in the twilight, and the sky had started going orange and pink. Beyond the trees was the evening traffic. Downtown Richmond smelled of fast food restaurants and exhaust fumes. The man with the thick arms grasped the old woman's throat for leverage. As he pulled the tan leather bag from her hands, its contents scattered in the shadow beside the oak tree. By that time Nicholas was there and had hooked his arm around the man's neck.

Nicholas had been very rich and very poor; now he was very poor again and missed being rich. A skinny blond-haired woman at the table with him said, Worrying isn't good for you, Nicholas. Her lips were dark red and small. Gold hoop earrings showed just below her hairline. That night, she'd had on the black dress Nicholas liked. Christina was thirty-two, his age. Her mother used to get Nicholas work. The mother retired last year and the daughter took over the business. The daughter graduated Sarah Lawrence in 1996. Christina was smarter, prettier, and got Nicholas more work than the mother. I can guarantee a hundred and fifty thousand for a half hour of your time, Christina said. Will that stop those worries, Nicholas? She was looking past him toward the bar with the bottles on the mirrored shelves. Nicholas had taken her to Paul's on Cary Street for martinis and business. He decided to dress for the meeting, his navy blue gabardine, a red silk tie. Nicholas was big in the shoulders, but his hands were slender like a boy's hands, and he did not think his hands matched his body. Paul's Bar smelled of tobacco smoke, cologne, and perfume. Brokerage types from most of the local houses came here to drink and brag about the day. They called happy hour The Power Hour. You let me know tomorrow, Christina said and lighted a black cigarette with a gold tip from the pack on the table next to her sunglasses. You think about it, she said. Nicholas stole jewelry for Christina, who charged a forty percent finder's fee. She knew where to go for the good pieces. Buyers talked to her and argued prices with her, and that was fine with Nicholas. Thank God for you, Christina, he liked to tell her. He minded the people more than he minded the stealing.

Nicholas had let the thief with the thick arms go. Neither of us want complicated lives. Nicholas whispered this to him. The man had crossed the field under an orange and dark-purple sky. A half moon was faint in the twilight. The man disappeared first into the shadows then into the woods on the opposite side of Maymont Park.

Things about the old woman had stayed with Nicholas. Dime-sized bruises were on her pale neck. The stink of urine and heavy gardenia perfume soured the air. Her breathing was like that of a runner right after a race. The small dog lay by her feet whimpering and looking up at her. Nicholas retrieved the tan leather bag from the shadow of the oak tree. His back was to the old woman while he gathered the items into the bag. Nicholas had kept her red wallet. Nothing is free, he thought. Every service has its price. What would have happened to her if I had not come along? The woman held the tan leather bag to her chest with both hands. Her gray silk shawl was wrapped about thin shoulders. Her fingers did not quit trembling. The woman's eyes got to him. Her eyes were large and dark and showed her fear and her new relief. Up close the woman did not look that old. Nicholas guessed early or middle fifties. She had silver-brown hair clipped just below the ear. Her face was narrow and flushed. Lines creased the corners of her eyes and mouth. Nicholas also saw the fear go from the woman's eyes. The fear changed to another feeling, a softer, more open feeling. No one had ever looked at Nicholas that way. The woman reached her hand toward his face. Her fingernails were manicured and painted with pearl polish. She touched her palm to his cheek. Her palm was damp and cool against his skin.

Christina was sitting at the edge of the unmade bed with her skinny legs crossed at the knee and a large bath towel wrapped about her body and tucked above her breasts. A black cigarette with a gold tip balanced on the rim of an ashtray by her bare foot. She was rubbing a second towel over her wet hair. Christina stopped and took a drag off the cigarette then began drying her hair again. You could probably have talked me into spending the night, she said. I could shower in the morning like a normal person. Nicholas had shifted to his right side to watch her. His upper arms were big and his chest was smooth. Ten minutes earlier, he had put on the pants to his navy blue gabardine suit. Nicholas did not like being naked for very long. His bedroom smelled of lime bath soap, sex, and cigarette smoke. The walls had been lacquered gray, and the furniture was mahogany with chrome trim. It wouldn't kill you to talk to me, Christina said. She was drying her hair with the towel and didn't look at Nicholas. Freckles spotted her back. The bones of her spine were like a miniature mountain range. What do you want me to say? Nicholas asked. Christina quit drying her hair and looked over her shoulder at Nicholas. You could tell me what a great time you had tonight, she said, taking another quick inhale off her cigarette and blowing out the smoke in a thin line. She said, You could tell me what a terrific person I am and how we should try spending a whole night together. How about that? Nicholas looked down at his small hands, a boy's hands. He thought about the old woman touching his face. He could feel her cool fingers on his cheek. I am no good at this, he said.

Your mother stole everything. His father told him that after school. Nicholas was eleven then. In those days his father also had big shoulders but short bony legs and hair that was a dull wheat color. The woman didn't leave us a pot to piss in, his father said. You should at least leave a person a pot to piss in. Is that asking too much? Criminals have a pot to piss in. Serial killers. Nicholas looked into the empty living room. His mother had taken the furniture and left only the dents in the brown wall-to-wall carpet. She also left the still life once hidden by the chairs and the sofa. One palm-sized blue metal truck. Pennies and dimes, a quarter. A breath mint. Popcorn kernels. Two miniature Civil War soldiers. Dust had shaped itself into the bottom shadows of their stolen furniture. The television was gone and the walls were empty. Squares and rectangles a shade lighter than the walls had replaced the pictures. How am I going to watch my TV programs? Why did she steal our television? Nicholas wondered. His father was

looking out the living-room window with his hands in the pockets of his green coveralls. Why do women do anything? his father asked.

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

What do you mean you don't want to see me anymore? Christina said this while standing by the bedroom door with her hand ready at the doorknob. She had on the same skinny cocktail dress she'd worn earlier to Paul's. Her short blond hair was combed back and still damp from her shower. It's three-thirty in the morning, Christina said. No sane person knows what they want at three-thirty in the morning, Nicholas. Three-thirty in the morning is for cold sweats and crazy people. The bedroom stank of cigarette smoke and the perfume Christina had sprayed in the air and fanned toward her face. A small lamp on the mahogany nightstand beside the bed lit the room. Shadows blocked the corners and stretched over the gray lacquered walls like dark islands. Nicholas wanted to stop having sex with Christina. He'd told her this five minutes earlier but did not know how to elaborate on it. His father would have said that paying for sex was better than listening to a woman tell you what to say and do. Are we still in business together? Christina said. She was not looking at him. She knelt to rub her finger on the tip of her black high heel. Nicholas was lying in bed with one hand behind his head and the other hand on his bare chest. His long legs were crossed at the ankles. A gabardine pant cuff had inched up to show a white calf. Nicholas had not thought about the business part with Christina. He would need money soon but did not know if he wanted to steal again. And if he did steal again, he did not know what he wanted to steal or if he wanted someone telling him what to steal. You are a very good thief, Christina said, standing and brushing out the front of her dress with a flat sweep of her hand. Mother and I have always enjoyed working with you, she said. I hope we can keep that arrangement. Nicholas was thinking about the red wallet he had stolen from the old woman. Each time Nicholas pictured the wallet, he felt the old woman's cool hand on

his cheek. He could see the woman's eyes. No one had ever looked at him that way.

Nicholas was across the street from Maymont Park by 6:50 PM. He had been driving to the same location for close to a month. He knew the old woman's schedule. Across the street was a brick walkway that curved around two ponds and through a wide field interrupted by oak and pine. Gold twilight outlined the tops of the trees, the Richmond skyline. Tall lamps along the curving brick path illuminated the park with spotlights. Nicholas lowered the window to breathe in the pine and the cut summer grass. The woman's red wallet lay on the seat next to him like a quiet passenger. The name in the wallet was Helen Tarnoff. Helen. Dear Helen, he thought. Helen with the cool hands. Sweet Helen with those eyes. There were two hundred and thirteen dollars, seventy-two cents, and three credit cards in Helen's wallet. Nicholas had not spent her money or used her credit cards. He had examined things. Each night before going to bed, Nicholas would look at her driver's license, her Richmond library card, her dry cleaning ticket for a silk blouse, her dentist appointment card, her voter registration card. He liked to count and recount her money. Nicholas had memorized her social security number. He often recited that number as he drifted to sleep.

Helen Tarnoff lived a block from Maymont Park on Georgia Avenue. Thick maples shadowed Helen's street. The gray sidewalks were narrow and uneven and had bits of grass in the cracks. Magnolia trees, boxwood, and dark-green ivy grew everywhere. This was an older neighborhood. Early nineteen-fifties, Nicholas thought. One- and two-story brick homes, small Cape Cods, older apartment buildings, Helen's street was a step back in time. What Nicholas noticed was how good he felt when he walked down Helen's street. The day's stress left his shoulders. A smile came to him whether he wanted it or not.

Sometimes Nicholas waited in his car for Helen to leave her apartment building. She would look this way and that as she walked. Overhead trees speckled her with sunshine and shade. He also waited for her to return. Nicholas knew Monday was Helen's volunteer morning at the Maymont Senior Center. Tuesday and Friday afternoons were for food shopping at Mr. Kim's, the grocery store on the corner. Wednesday morning Helen's daughter dropped off her little boy, and Helen would babysit until five. Or maybe Helen and the young woman were not related. Nicholas did not know. But thinking about Helen that way pleased him. The boy was small and frail like Helen and had her narrow face. The mother always carried the boy to the front door of Helen's brown brick apartment. Helen would then kiss the mother and the boy and carry the boy inside the building. Nicholas imagined being that boy. He imagined his head snug on Helen's shoulder and Helen carrying him inside her apartment. He imagined the rooms scented with baking chicken and yeast rolls.

He stole from me, too. His mother said this twelve years earlier. Nicholas had been driving down Broad Street at night with snow blowing over the dark road like low, fluttering silk. Snow cut through the long white lights of the street lamps. His mother had called Nicholas on the new cell phone his father had given him for his twentieth birthday. Nicholas lived on his own now. The phone was supposed to allow the father to reach the son but Nicholas never picked up. His mother said she wanted to wish him a happy birthday and she was at a very lovely upscale bar and never mind where. And, yes, okay, an individual had bought her a highball. So what? she told him. Having a highball is not the end of the world as we know it, she told him. Her words were pressed together and unclear. Nicholas had the cell phone wedged between his ear and his shoulder. A slice of pizza in a paper napkin was balanced on his lap, and the car smelled of anchovies. He rubbed his fogged breath from the windshield with the cuff of his

sweatshirt. The rubber wipers were iced, snow was collecting on the glass, and it had become difficult to see the road. Nicholas asked how she had gotten his cell number. People owe me, his mother said. Don't think I am the only thief in this family, Nicholas. Your father is no saint. He is not an individual who honors his marriage vows. The man stole my trust. Do you hear what I am saying to you? Your father is a man who steals your trust. Nicholas rubbed the windshield harder, but the fog on the glass kept reappearing. He thought the fog and the snow might wrap around him until there was nothing to see. Why didn't you take me? he had asked. Nicholas could not hear his own question. Far off on his mother's end of the phone, there was music and people talking. You were older, his mother said. You didn't need me all that much. A woman with an older child doesn't have a chance, she said. You ought to know that. Don't you know that, Nicholas? You're a smart boy.

Nicholas was still in his car across the street from Maymont Park. The red wallet lay beside him on the passenger's side. His car had green-and-white plaid seats, and the backrests were worn through to a gray spongy material. The plastic seams on the seat where the red wallet lay had begun to unravel. Laundry was piled in the back. There were three pairs of chinos for the dry cleaners. There were jeans and underwear and balled-up tube socks for the laundromat. Wrappers from fast food restaurants lay dismissed and forgotten on the car floor. The car had an odor of burgers, dirty socks, and fries.

Across the street a small dog barked. Nicholas looked at his watch as if the barking dog were his alarm. Seven on the money, he thought. Helen had her routines. The small brown dog was trying to run into Maymont Park but could not escape the leash. Its paws were scraping at the sidewalk and not getting anywhere. Quit it, Bunny! the woman said. She had on mint-green slacks. Her beautiful silver shawl was draped about a blouse with a frilly collar. You quit that and behave yourself! she said to Bunny. A street lamp and a bright moon surrounded Helen and her dog in yellow and white light. Helen kept stopping to shake Bunny's silver leash. She put a finger on her lips to shush the dog's barking. Helen and Bunny were walking next to the street instead of along the usual brick path inside the park. Cars and buses passed between Nicholas and Helen and the dog. The woman stopped and cupped a hand to her eyebrow. She looked into the moonlit park at the shadows near the oak and pine trees. The night had that city mix of exhaust fumes and fast food restaurants, pine, and summer grass. Nicholas stretched his arm out the car window, waved the red wallet, and honked the horn. He called to Helen and saw her back stiffen. She turned to Nicholas with her hand still cupped at her brow. You better stay away from me! Helen's voice was shrill against the evening traffic. Do you hear me? she said. You better stay away! Helen did not give Nicholas the time to talk to her. I'm the guy who helped you, he could have said. I'm not your thief. I am not that man. Helen had already picked up Bunny with both hands. She was holding the small dog to her chest and walking fast. Then she started to run.

Nicholas did not understand Helen. He looked nothing like the thief who had tried to steal her handbag. Now Nicholas needed a new plan. He would leave the red wallet in Helen's apartment. What else can I do? he thought. Nicholas knew all the best times. Monday morning Helen volunteered at the Maymont Senior Center. Tuesday and Friday afternoons she did her food shopping at Mr. Kim's, the grocery store on the corner. Nicholas had imagined her living room having burgundy curtains and a Persian rug. He imagined family photographs on a piano or along a bookshelf or mantel. Nicholas even imagined Helen might be waiting in the apartment to touch his cheek with her cool hand. He wanted to see the fear go from her eyes. He wanted the fear to change into a softer feeling.

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Prologue

Part One

by James Silver

Imagine a tangl'd African forest,
hid' from Humanity's sisters and brothers,
left four centuries unblemished
by shrill tones of "Heathen!"
guttering forth from mouths so pure,
soaked in fire and cleansed with blood—
and there we'll set the stage.

Branches, loaded thickly with all manner
of rich greenery, sprawl skyward and high
from a breathing, vibrant base,
reaching for sun and air;
they mangle, by sheer force of number,
what little of the wide expanse
they could share, by grasping thievishly
for breath and heat, contracting
and thrusting out again
even in the stillest breeze,
while throbbing roots squirm searchingly
in the oozey soil beneath, stretching
and straining to quench their thirst for darkness.

The subtle mazes that compose this jungle—
twisting, indecisive streams, trees and plants
So alive they seem to shift their ground at will—
Protect it also from fame and the despoiling
acts of conquest, War, and dissimilation.
For any traveler who ever has
Found a way into the jungle's
Most secret retreats
Has never found the same
Or any other way out—
But has lived, died, and vanished
In the shade of these obscure bowers.

Fragile buds in gentle rain
close up their lips and draw themselves within
to endure the sprinkling of mist
upon their soft stalks and dewy heads;
only when the sun shines again,
unchecked amidst the radiant discord
of the forest, do the first vulnerable
buds awaken and rise up,
splaying their petals to let sunlight
dance upon velvet, thus revealing
the earth's richest array
of dazzling shades and hues, which,
sensed together with ripe odors
issuing forth, produce within the mind
effects like calm intoxication.

Colors measure infinity as they sway,
one way, and another, with undulating ease—
dark and earthy green to purples, reds, and violets
follow each other's graces with the smoothness
and unfocused periphery of a dream, for which
the hostess, this all-enduring, ever breathing
forest of life and all that is of Nature
which we may desire to call hope, provides
the sweets and enticements for them all.

Still Life

by Todd Possehl

Fruit in time ripens
then rots.

We become conscious
for a moment

then nothing.

In that short transom
of opportunity

we eat from a garden
thick with thorns

then the fruit
is no more.

Comet

by Todd Possehl

If military science knocks it off
course with an atomic blast,

we can resume our earthly struggle—
our petty competitions.

But going together on impact
wouldn't be the worst scenario.

Give us 72 hours and you'd see
the best, I trust, in humankind—

just enough time to forgive, express
the deepest affections, and prepare a final

feast in acceptance of heaven's
furtive and perplexing grace—

to never see loved ones
slip away, again, in cold medicinal rooms—

to never watch your baby grow
out of the nest and into darkness

like Lucifer's twin—
like a falling star.

If it brought this life, then
how appropriate to stop this life

and start again.

Alejandra Dreams

by Maria Fire

—In semi-arid country outside San Miguel, Mexico, 6,600 feet above sea level

The *Gringa* is too tall, is too thin, flaps
her hands, picks up my clay fish, clicks it
with her fingernails, is laughing, puts
my sea monster to her lips, is thinking
to buy, perhaps, to sit him on the table
where she takes her meals in *Estados Unidos*;
or, is for a friend, my fish a present, to teach
wisdom of water to creatures stuck on land.

She is pointing at me. I look down
at rows of beings I make from respect
of clay hardened in mesquite fires. Grandfather
says bowls come later for me, a girl
with fifteen years. Am still hearing more from
clay, in making of creatures and creatures.

This *Gringa* is all white-haired and smells,
is sweetness strange, crawls in my nose.
How much for my fish the guide asks.
Thinking to show the fine strong fins and body
bent for swimming. She is saying *yes* to my
50 pesos. Is possible—should have asked more.

Now *Gringa* is wanting picture of me
with monster fish. I press him to my belly,
look in the eyes burnt green
with no smiling. Is taking my fish
into her hands and wanting my hand
to squeeze, so okay, this thing last,
and is gone with fish wrapped in newspaper,
my fish to her home. Is possible she lives
in a big house with wood floors
and windows in walls painted blue like water
I've never seen—for a fish I dreamed.

Gardening Song

by Holly Day

The wind blows through me, cold,
leaves and dead branches crackling impatiently
wanting to go, just fall to the ground
end this charade we sardonically call "Life"

I grow a little lighter every day, hair and skin
dried blossoms and dead leaves
snag and cling to objects around the house
my body slowly cut down by erosion, age

Time passes by so unintrusively, easy to remember
thinking you'll always be green, always be whole
and one day you wake up, your leaves withered and brown, the
bedsheets covered with white hair,
dry earth.

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

The Picture in the Black Bag

by Arthur Hondros

It was the kind of gorgeous day, bursting with spring, that makes you feel so immortal you could start smoking. So I bummed a cigarette from a bus driver near the park and lit up. Inhaling the nicotine along with the warm, grassy smells and odors from crepe myrtle blooms, I regretted giving in to the habit. Then I decided to enjoy it, since there was a contract out on me.

The more people the better, if I had to risk going out. I was just across the street from the White House, so at least there were security people around and trolls on rooftops. Here in the park, there was a demonstration for Tibet gearing up. I was supposed to meet somebody. I sat on a bench and blew smoke rings that looked like targets. A family of tourists stopped to ask me where Lafayette Park was.

"You're in it," I told them.

How can I describe my line of work? A generation or two earlier, I might've used scissors and glue to paste Lee Harvey Oswald's head onto a photo of a body that wasn't his. Or painting in those extra Soviet guys Stalin wanted in his pictures. There isn't really a name for it. Not a polite one, anyway. But it's what I've come to in life's blindsiding path.

Washington, DC is an expensive place for an artist to try to live. Or anyone, for that matter. Artistic expression is about as welcome here as an elevator fart at the Environmental Protection Agency. Sure, we have the National Gallery and all, federally subsidized. But mostly tourists go there. It makes things look good, which is the majority of people's jobs in this city. That or making things look bad.

Who can blame them? Not me. And if I feel this way, it's a good question to ask why I don't move away. I'd thought about it, but every time I was ready, I'd be taken in again by the seduction of lucrative work. A weak spot for me, I suppose.

Obviously, my work gave me this death sentence. Only partially my fault, but I'll take all the blame. That's what I'd tell Orion if he ever showed up.

Orion was acting as liaison between me and my presently-disgruntled clients. I doubt that's his real name, but he spoke pretty straight and was my only chance. He was a headhunter; he found work for people with specific talents. The liaison work he did as a favor to me, either because he liked me or he didn't know many image retouchers. He confirmed to me that my life was in danger. Anonymous death threats had already arrived both on my answering machine and in the mailbox of my apartment.

Here in Lafayette Park, some of the protesters were dressed like Elvis impersonators with buzz cuts. The King had his capes, and these were robes, but there was a resemblance just the same. There was still no sign of Orion, and I'd have been nervous if not for the cigarette. I wondered what kind of persuasion it'd take to borrow some protest duds, to blend in until he showed.

Then he was there, standing beside the bench. His tie was loosened for the spring heat, shirt sleeves rolled up. One talent of his was appearing out of nowhere, like some shaman or mystic. Orion was around 65, but he was not about to let anyone walk over him. He always wore oversized black eyeshades, the kind for post-op cataract patients. I assumed it was a disguise, but maybe he'd had a lot of cataracts.

"Why such a loud place, Didge?" he said, using the shortened version of my nickname, Digital Dave.

"It's open. Crowded. The White House is right there. I feel somewhat safe."

Shrugging, Orion waved a hand at nothing. His hands were huge and weathered like oars. He could've crossed the Potomac River in no time with those things. "You're outside," he said. "That's enough. It doesn't happen on the street in

this town."

"So how would you know?" I said.

"I just know. Look, I'm not sure why we're talking. As far as taking work without my referral, you don't do it. It's my duty to prevent conflicts of interest."

"I know."

"Conflicts of special interest groups" would've filled out the phrase better. Something Orion had told me was never to piss off Big Oil, Big Tobacco, and Big Medicine. Especially the last one, since they had all the prescriptions. I'd crossed the line with some of them on a few occassions, at least one of which Orion knew about.

"Didge, you've become a prostitute who walks both sides of the street." He said it with more tenderness than disdain, as if he were an old madam himself.

My problem, besides selling out long ago, was that I loved my work. Putting apples with oranges, even tossing in a key lime if it helps the client's cause. Juxtaposition is everything in a photograph. It invigorates me, reassures me of my place in the random universe. Many artists are fueled by political or social causes, and they put it into their work. I, however, am the most unpolitical, cause-ignorant artist you'd meet. In most any art community, this alone is cause for a death warrant. Though it wasn't artists who underwrote mine.

Which brought me to a question I had for Orion. I trusted his answers, though he would end up wrong about two things today. "Who do you think wants me dead? The Democrats or the Republicans?"

"The Dems probably want it, but they don't know the right people. It's the GOP's sanction. You turned against them first, didn't you?"

"They didn't pay me."

"They underpaid you. It was a miscommunication."

"Can you tell somebody the hit is a miscommunication?" I asked, though I knew he probably couldn't. Orion was not quite a mobster and not quite a lobbyist. Somewhere between those.

"Is that why you did a piece for the other side?" he said. "You know how bad that is for you? If not for your health, at least for your career."

"Career?" I almost laughed. I'd finished the cigarette and wished for another. "Visual misinformation? That's a career?"

"You've lived well on it, while paying rent and sending monthly child support payments to Ohio." When he saw me, which wasn't often, Orion would make a point of saying something else he'd learned about me. Intimidation tactics—his way of keeping me in line—which hadn't worked. But my actions hadn't been in defiance of Orion. It wasn't greed, either. Just a love of my work, and a chance to get even with people who had shortchanged me.

Some of the Republicans had tried to get a bill passed for oil drilling in Alaska's Ingluck Island. During such congressional battles, visual aids are often used for persuasion. Sometimes slide photographs provide the visuals. In this case, the opposition was shown a picture of a caribou nuzzling the Alaska Pipeline, to show how little environmental impact the oil business had there.

The photo was flawless. I had married two images into one. Who's to say those beasts aren't actually sweet on oil hardware? But the Republicans didn't have all year to wait for a real picture. So they had someone call Orion, who called me.

I didn't think it made a strong case, but they were paying for my talent, not my opinion. However, I wasn't paid in full. What I got was more of a kill fee after their bill was defeated.

Later they wanted a blessing for offshore rigs near San Diego, close to the Mexican border. They didn't call me. Through a fluke, I met a Democratic operator and wound up doing a piece for the other side. Thirty years earlier, a tanker had spilled near Baja California. The only recorded images were of the ship itself. Not much impact there. They gave me a photo from a deceased naturalist's collection—a group of pelicans clustered on the beach. I scanned it and covered those birds with the most

convincing petroleum shampoo you'd ever seen.

Putting a scanned image back onto a slide transparency was always the tricky part, but that was my secret. I needed anything I could get for a renewed lease on life.

Somehow the press had gotten wind of things. A reporter from the *Post* had left me a voice mail, which was closely followed by the death threats.

Orion hadn't sat on the bench and wasn't going to, apparently. That way we looked like strangers talking about the protesters. He glanced at me through his shields of black oblivion, saying, "You take it for granted, Didge. You can do your job without having to fit in here. You're a shadow service. You don't need a suit and tie, dry cleaners, all that bullshit. I bet you don't own a pair of wingtips."

"What's that have to do with keeping an agreement, with paying somebody what's owed them?" I asked. "Are we talkin' appearances or principles?"

"Look, you coulda kept making pictures look pretty for the nonprofit foundation world. You left principles behind with that. You know what you got into."

Partly true. But I'd been a casualty when the big nonprofit I'd worked for streamlined into the shark-like specter of capitalism. So I became something of a capitalist too, after being severed. I could've searched for something else legit, but I was too weak.

I was ashamed, and I was tired of how this meeting was going. "You're right about everything," I said. "It's my doing. Not to waste any more of your time, I'll just ask: can you help me or not?"

"Didge," he said, indicating the robed activists who looked a long way from singing "Love Me Tender" but not far from "Jailhouse Rock." "You know why Tibet hasn't been freed? Why these people are always shouting?"

"Why?"

"There's no oil under it. Otherwise there'd be negotiations, or troops, or something to change that. But a bunch of Buddhists in a high, rocky place? We won't give a shit."

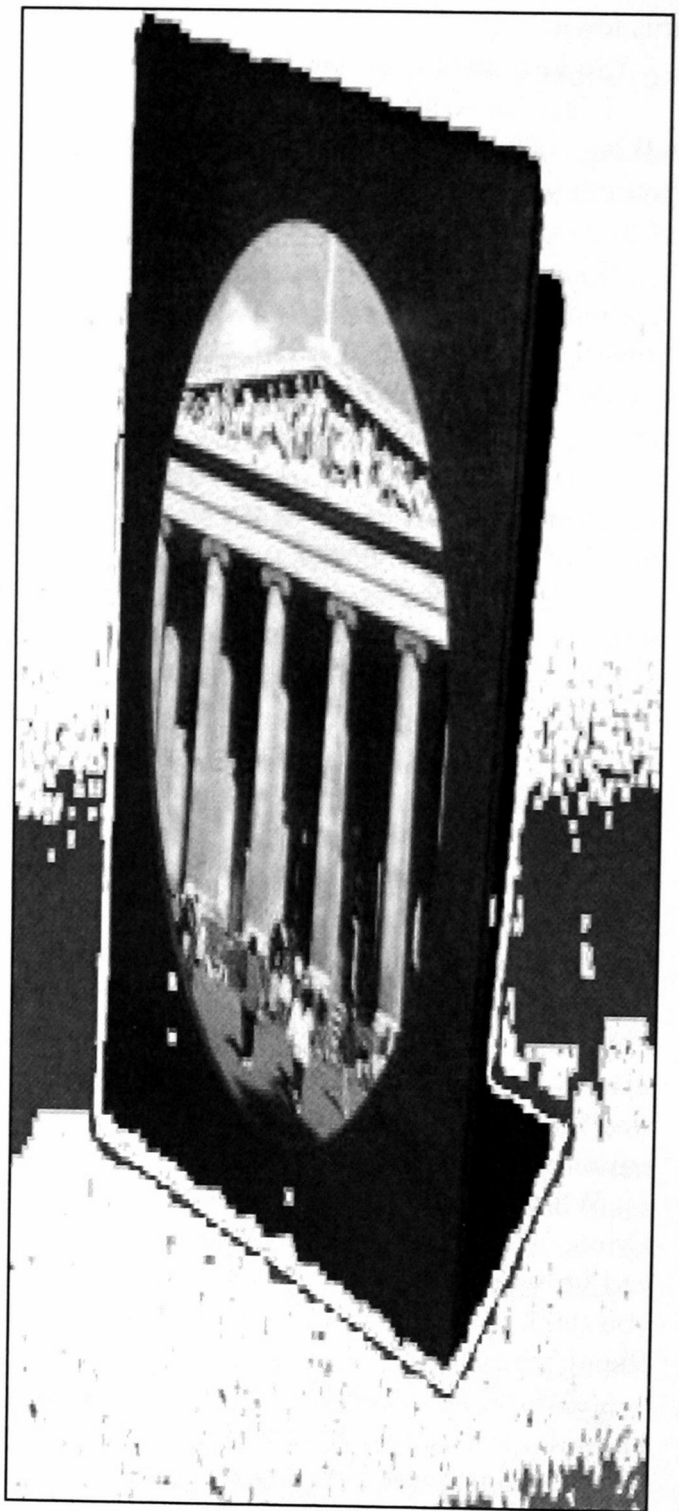

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

I tried to interpret this, but the possibilities were

too wide. "And for me that means...?"

"You'd improve your chances of freedom if you just get out. Never show your face around DC again. And use another name, grow a beard. But don't try to stay."

I resigned myself to this consideration. My wanting to stay was about more than prosperity. Convenience was a big player too. Though it wasn't worth my life, I'd have to abandon all the digital equipment at home. The scanner, computers, the conversion gear for the slide format. Way too much gear to break down and carry when skipping town. It was damned expensive stuff to replace and recalibrate. Not as big a bullet to bite as the alternative, but I had to face it.

There was also the question of where to go. Not Ohio, at least not the parts they'd look for me. I'd have a job someplace touching up family portraits in the corner of some massive discount store. Or tweaking spot visuals for websites at a sweatshop's pace.

"Orion, what if I just hid somewhere 'til this thing blew over? They can't stay this angry. I've done a lot for them."

The old man looked at the ground, shaking his head. He knew all the work I'd done. Besides the oil-loving caribou, I'd helped his people with other causes. There was the image of the child exposing himself in front of a debatable piece of public artwork, which helped them in slaying some humanities funding. There was the satellite image of a Middle East town with missiles that were actually in Nevada. This had won the White House a bombing campaign. I'd done some good pieces, and none of them were exposed as fakes. Not a mask line or a color anomaly to be found in any of them. Besides payment, I always got compliments. From Orion, that is. It was more of a don't-ask-don't-tell policy with the lawmakers themselves.

This was the center of the free world, a place too powerful to ask for forgiveness. But I wanted it anyway. A long shot, like some of their crazy bills.

Orion said, "It's beyond my abilities, the fix you're in. You screwed up, kid, though I admire your guts. You made yourself the centerpiece of an underground Civil War between the lawmakers. This may be a Southern town, but you're in big danger."

"This isn't a Southern town. Not with all these statues of Union generals."

"So don't stay," Orion said. "Are you hungry? I am."

"Not really." The last few days I'd had the stomach only for pretzels or chips.

"You can snack on something, can't you? I could use something from one of these vendors. It'll be my goodbye treat to you, Didge. I'm sorry, but you gotta take a new path." He started walking toward the street. "C'mon. I'll even pay your ticket to whatever destination."

I got up and followed. I still didn't want to leave and hoped to buy some plead time during the snack. The sidewalks of tourist Washington were adorned with silver vending carts, tended by happy Ethiopians or Middle Easterners selling hot dogs, sodas, and candy bars. We found one on the edge of Lafayette Park, past the protesters. I convinced myself that the people with cameras were there to shoot pictures and nothing else.

Tourists in wide shorts holding popsicles moved out of our way at the snack cart. I said, "You sure there's nobody you can talk to?"

"Didge, I may be an old man, but I still have to work, you know?" To the vendor he said, "Two dogs, all the way."

Relish wasn't my thing, and I scraped most of it off before taking a bite. Orion didn't seem to mind.

"Damn," he said through his food. "I was so hungry, this tastes like a steak." We strolled toward the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the park, which was closed to vehicle traffic but not to pedestrians and in-line skaters. I thought of antique photos—daguerreotypes—of the White House,

the bare patches of its lawn filled in with painted grass of a crafty retoucher. There by the iron fence, guards kept a stoic eye on a vagrant black woman who shouted her version of a commercial jingle: "Gimme a break, gimme a break, gimme that goddamn Kit-Kat bar!"

I finished the hot dog rather fast, hungrier than I'd realized. I belched, feeling a bit closer to normal life, and said, "So that's it? No more propaganda work for me, period?"

"You know it isn't my call," Orion said. "I'll be lucky to find another photo doctor like you." He'd almost finished his dog when he stopped chewing, his mouth turning a slight frown.

"What?" I said. "Any ideas? What if you made deliveries and told them I was a different person?"

"Urk," he said in a strange whisper.

"Say what?"

Orion's knees buckled, and as he went down he clutched his throat with one giant hand and my arm with the other. I squatted down, or, rather, was pulled down. "Urnrrk," he wheezed.

His color didn't look good. "Hey!" I yelled. I heard running feet nearby, and jingling metal.

"It might be a heart attack," I said to the guards. One of them was on a radio. There'd be paramedics handy with the protests nearby. Well, he could've picked a worse place.

I opened his collar, pulling his tie further down. Orion fought for breath, and I realized he was trying to talk to me. Because I'm selfish, I hoped to hear his response to my last question. But I didn't get that. He pointed one arm in the general direction we'd walked from and said in a hoarse voice, "Son... Sonovabitch... Gave me the wrong... one..."

I let go of him and stood up. Others attended him now. I just stared. Someone removed the eyeshades from his face. It would be the first time I saw his eyes. But I didn't. He either kept his face turned or squinted his eyes shut while clucking those awful guttural noises. Even in his death throes, Orion the headhunter wouldn't look me in the eye.

I thought of how the vendor hadn't been Ethiopian or Lebanese; he was an old white guy. A healthy-looking old white guy, too, not beaten down. It was easier to picture him in fly-fishing gear than in an apron slinging dogs and nachos. Well, he'd gotten his left and his right mixed up.

The in-line skaters yielded to an ambulance that cruised into the sealed block of Pennsylvania Avenue. Someone asked me what the victim's name was. I didn't have an answer. Orion's pockets were searched. They brought a gurney and an oxygen mask, but I knew he was past that.

Seeing that scene was what I needed. Even a faked photo of me with my throat cut wouldn't have had the impact of watching Orion squeak out his last breath, pink and purple like some native blanket. I had believed my life was in danger, but that was all. Like a more intense awareness of traffic while riding a motorcycle. I mean, it was DC, not Sicily.

Still, it had happened on the street. That was the first wrong thing Orion had said that day—that hits didn't happen on the street here. The other thing was him saying I didn't have a pair of wingtips. I did. Only I had to leave them at home with everything else. My clothes, furniture, equipment—I ditched it all. Even the family albums, full of photos I'd never alter. *Hasta la vista*, digital equipment. I hope whoever found you used you for good causes.

To his credit, though, Orion was on the mark about a continual Civil War under that big white dome. Public knowledge or not, it had casualties besides the ones on battlefields overseas.

Later that afternoon at Union Station, I bought a whole pack of my own cigarettes before getting on the train. Call it elation, an epiphany, or plain old foolishness, but I wanted to see what would get me first: the tobacco or the random rules of the universe.

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Saint Who?

by David Vancil

Wichita Falls, Texas

He warns pond turtles away from the ducklings
in the nearby pond with an old .22,
himself living on wild rice and mushrooms
and scraps of meat he gets at the market.
Magnanimously, he cooks for us in the kitchen
of an abandoned farmhouse on a stove
with butane left to burn. Life is good.
He's got running water and a transistor radio.
At night, he watches the glowing moon.

Behind the barn, he's shown us the righteous weed
he's been tending, which stands as tall and green
as fresh corn, just like that shit from Asia.
And we laughed as he did when banty hens roosted
on his outstretched arms, adorning him like Saint Francis.
He has plans. After the harvest, he'll move on to
the next farm. Or someplace. He's got it made.
He touches us for a few bucks before we leave.
"I'll invite you back if I haven't died or been caught,"
he states. "If you're smart, don't come in the dark."

Old Town

by C. Prudence Arceneaux

Vern swears that he is four-eighths Zuni
but doesn't think he can prove it.
Jabbing his arm with a screwdriver he lets
dull red drops fall, telling you they make
the sounds of running horses or mating frogs.
He has done this before, draw a crowd, murmuring
in Hopi and Navajo, stepping up to a wide-eyed
to explain what he asks Kokopelli for is
rain-rain that will fall thick and heavy like his blood
to nourish this cold grey ground he stands on.
The neon sign behind him buzzes
The Sheepherders Cafe as he prances
back and forth under the shop window,
collects the coins thrown at his face,
even as they pebble to the ground.
Thanking one and all, he tightens the rope
belt around his waist and pulls his three-
wheeled cart across the bubbled blacktop
moving always on his way to Old Town.

Mending Fence

by Christian Knoeller

When his dairy finally failed—
silo dismantled, herd sold off—
the farmer bred horses instead.

Summers they'd graze aimlessly
while he walked property lines
shovel over shoulder, clippers

on his hip. Sometimes an oak
blows over and it's a whole
day's work to drive new posts.

Any scrap of iron could fortify
his corral: an ornate gate
adorned with forged acorns,

the last plow broken down.
By the barn he built a fence
meant to withstand anything:

the colt that kicked
the neighbor's kid witless
or the mare that bore it all.

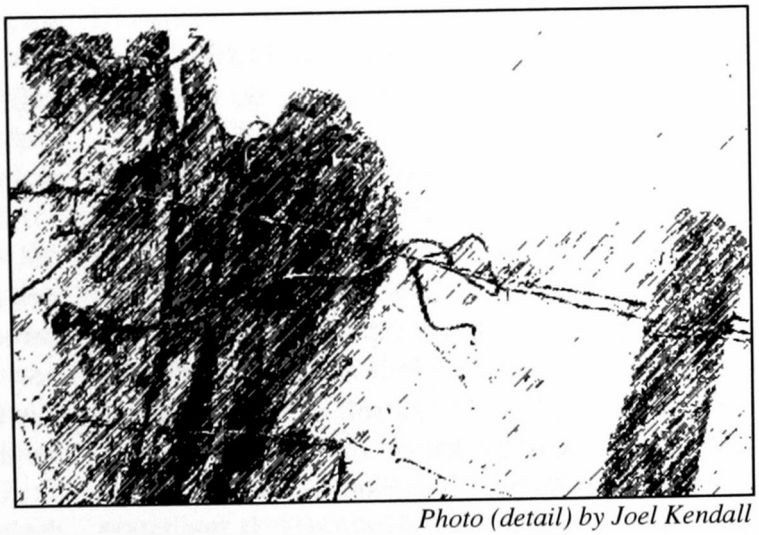

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

Elegance

by Vivian Lawry

Jeannie's fingertips brush the fat roll of wallpaper, tracing a stripe of tiny oak leaves, the silvery velvet raised ever-so-slightly above the mint-green background. Her mom says, "It feels *elegant.*"

They've never had wallpaper before. The walls in the other house were mint green, too, but they were just painted. Daddy made this second house better. It has a bathroom instead of an outhouse, and all three bedrooms have doors, not just curtains, to separate them from the rest of the house. The kitchen of this house is smaller, but Jeannie's mom wanted it that way. She said, "I ate in the kitchen all my life, and I don't want to do that no more."

The left side of the house has the living room, separated from the dining room by a big open arch, and then the walk-in kitchen. Mom and Daddy are papering only the dining room. Jeannie says, "It would look nicer if the living room and the dining room was the same. Why don't ya do the living room, too?"

Daddy scowls and says nothing. Mom says, "The dining room is enough for now." She turns back to the table where Jeannie is dipping her fingers into the tray of wallpaper paste.

"Keep your fingers outta there. Don't eat that nasty stuff. And don't get it all over your dress, neither." She picks up the roll of wallpaper and cuts off the band that keeps it rolled.

Jeannie licks her fingers and wonders what the fuss is about. It doesn't taste nasty. It just tastes like paste.

Daddy dumps the brushes and scissors onto the newspaper-covered table. "Okay, Hon. Let's get a move on. If we don't get started, we'll never get finished." The cigarette clamped in the corner of his mouth bobs as he speaks. Jeannie watches, wondering whether the ash will drop before he taps it off. Daddy's never hung wallpaper before, but he can do anything. She'd heard him say, "How hard can it be, if you just measure real careful? Measure twice, cut once, that's my rule."

But fitting paper smoothly over the arches into the living room and kitchen and closely around the door and window turns out to be tricky. Daddy says, "Watch what you're doin'!"

Mom says, "I'm doin' the best I can. Quit ridin' me!"

Jeannie's little sister Weezie gets up from her nap, Mom has to feed them, and what with one thing and another, the day wears on. Sometimes the paste dries out before Mom and Daddy get the strips of wallpaper straight. They take the limp strips down and start over. When they get to the first corner, the wall ends before the paper does. Cutting and matching seems a waste of time and wallpaper, so they wrap it around the corner, fitting the wallpaper into the angle as tightly as they can. The paper makes a smooth concave path from ceiling to floor. At the other corners, they cut the paper. But in the end, none of the corners is quite right.

Still, when the job is done, Mom looks around the room and smiles. She goes next door and invites her folks to come look. Jeannie's grandparents, her six youngest aunts and uncles, and one cousin now live there, in the first house Daddy built. The two uncles aren't interested, but the aunts run their hands over the walls and say it looks super.

The next day Mom mops the oak floor under the buffet. Jeannie has practiced writing her name there, has scratched "Jean" into the shelf across the bottom with a #10 nail, the crooked letters yellow against the dark wood. Mom screams, "Jean Ann Barker, you come in here right this minute!"

When Jeannie comes, her mother seems to be vibrating, her hands clenched at her sides. "Did you do this?" her mother yells, pointing a shaking finger.

Jeannie thinks it's a pretty stupid question. It's her name, after all, and Weezie hasn't even learned

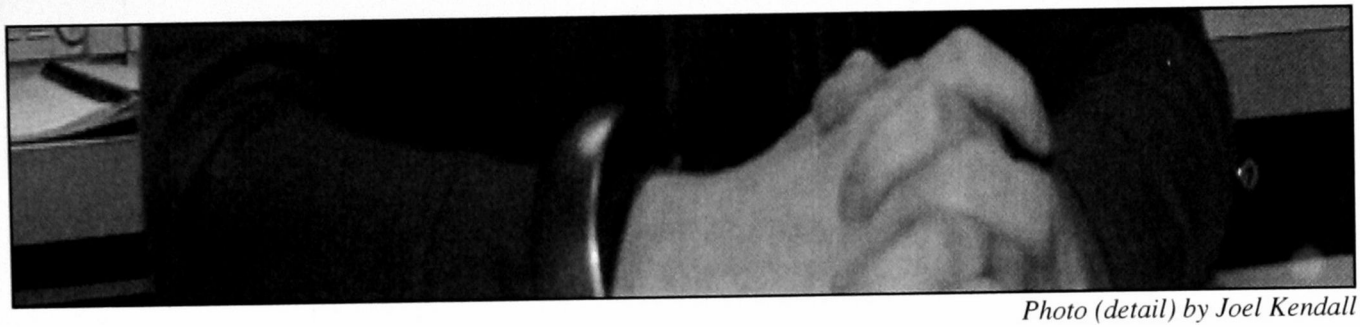

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

her letters yet. She looks up at her mother, eyes wide, and says nothing. "Just you wait till your father gets home, young lady! You'll be sorry you ever learned to write!" She whirls into the kitchen and bangs open the cupboard under the sink. "Here," she says, thrusting a bottle of furniture polish and a rag at Jeannie. "You get down there and fix it."

Jeannie crawls under the buffet and puts polish on the shelf. The cloth picks up some dust, but the letters still look raw and bright. Jeannie sucks her fingers, leaving a smear of brown furniture polish on her cheek. She doesn't dare come out until she's fixed the scratches, but she doesn't know how. The stupid polish isn't doing anything. A single tear traces a path on her cheek, drips off her chin. She leans against the wall and brushes her fingers across the wallpaper, feeling the raised velvet leaves, leaving a little smudge of brown near the baseboard. She reaches behind the leg of the buffet, tracing the curve of the wallpaper in the corner. Her finger pokes through the paper with a quiet "pop." Fascinated, Jeannie makes another "pop," vaguely aware that she is being bad, but unable to stop. Soon the entire corner, from the floor up as high as she can reach, is a zigzag of broken mint-green wallpaper. When her mom says supper is ready, Jeannie crawls out from under the buffet. Mom doesn't seem so mad now, even though "Jean" still scars the buffet shelf. Jeannie is careful not to look at the corner.

A week passes. Jeannie's mom spends the morning trying to get the grease stains out of Daddy's work pants, dusting her collection of salt and pepper shakers on the whatnot shelf, mopping mud off the kitchen floor. Jeannie tears her dress, and the sewing machine is broken. The new coon hound gets loose and pulls down the clothesline, dragging Daddy's work pants into a mud puddle so that her mom has to wash them again. She tells Jeannie to take the throw rugs out onto the front porch and shake them.

"Why do I have to shake the rugs?" Jeannie whines.

Mom turns on her, fists on hips. "Because we ain't livin' in the hills. This ain't Aunt Genna's house, with dirt floors and chickens runnin' across the table." She sounds so mad that Jeannie wonders what she's done wrong. "I can't do everything myself. So quit your complainin' and do what I tell you."

Daddy is always saying that being poor is no excuse for being dirty—soap doesn't cost that much. Mom is always trying to live up to that. Jeannie knows it wouldn't do any good to argue. She takes the rugs to the front porch and snaps them in the hot summer breeze, turning her face aside and scrunching her eyes shut against the dust.

When Jeannie comes back, four hooked throw rugs rolled in her arms, her mom is staring at the jagged tear in the wallpaper. Jeannie stops, heart pounding, and think, "She's gonna switch me for sure." Her mom looks at the corner for a long time, and then she looks at Jeannie. Jeannie has never seen her look like that—face all twisted—like she has an awful pain somewhere. Her mom sinks into a chair by the table. She puts her head down on her arms and cries—loud, gulping sobs that shake her shoulders. Jeannie just stands there, wishing she'd only got a switching.

❊❊❊

Field Mouse

by Don Thackrey

Before the sickles lurched the maimed field mouse.
My mowing cost his life and half his house—
But still, like feigning bird, he tried to lead
The killing blades away from child and spouse.

My business was with wheat and getting seed.
I'm not the kind of man who has a need
To pity animals that I must kill
On farms. That would be irony indeed.

I swear the horses stopped of their own will
To make me watch. Oh, I remember still,
The mouse leaped feebly, looked at me, and died.
I clucked. The horses strained ahead, uphill.

I don't know why this small brave mouse, soft-eyed,
Put me in mind of worldwide fratricide.

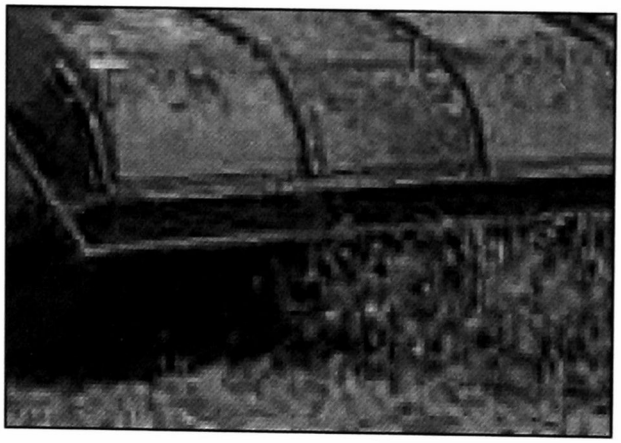

Photo by Joel Kendall

Adam

by Michael Skau

Split knuckles, thorn-torn calves, and nose broken
by a trick of the plow, soles bruised and palms calloused,
a back so wrenched and muscle-sprung it just
barely bends to the work demanded by sin,
sun-headaches, gagging thirst that cracks choking
coughs of bitter vile phlegm which looks like rust,
sprains, pains we can't express—body flaws must
and can be borne by mounds of bone, flesh, skin.

That we could stand. But, Lord, to lose the plush
of ripe gardens, of sensual youth, of real
words precise—to not live naked and unawed
by time, the steady onward pity rush
of days and years and age. To make us feel
a sense of loss was the greatest crime of God.

(Who) Art in Heaven

by Meredith Davies Hadaway

The projectionist who starts the movie, then reads the paper
in his booth, doesn't care who gets the girl

in the end. He lingers over a late supper.
Chases peas around his plate

with stained utensils. Because
time has someplace to go

the final reel, untended, ticks away
in blind orbit. To father children,

you must be willing to be forgotten.

Plant a Weeping Cherry

by Laura Wine Paster

Plant a weeping cherry near
the place where I rejoin the earth.
Grant this final guardian
to abide close beside me,
to mark the moment when
my life meets my death.
Let its stark, dark branches
flare out uncovered into
the low winter sky, as I,
living, reached out for love
and connection. Let its
glorious froth of flowers
welcome each spring as my
bones become soil, as my
heart feeds the roots of what
will grow there. Let it bear
fruit as I, living, bore
my children and my poems:
some coming into fullness,
some perished in the bud,
some whose sweetness is touched
with a tinge of bitterness.
And bless this tree with a
long, rich autumn of leaves
slowly turning, slowly
dropping, one by one, where I
lie, unknowing, unseeing,
at last at one with all.

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

Wing Feathers Are Not Like Neck Feathers

by Laura Wine Paster

for flight you need
a certain weight
a certain shape
you need stiffness
you need oil
to keep the rain
from penetrating

for flight you need
something to lift your
muscles
or an updraft
or infusion of spirit

for flight you need
to dream yourself
slicing
through the wind

for flight you need
to hurl yourself
into emptiness
despite your
shivering heart

for flight you need
to want the sky
more fiercely
than you want
your cradling nest

Listening to Boggy Creek

by Barbara Adams

In the afternoon we go out to the pasture,
wandering to the creek
in a haphazard line
as crooked as the muddy water
that calls us out.
The dog is old now,
careful in her gait and deaf.
She does not hear the call
of red-tailed hawks or mourning doves,
no turtle splash, or cottonwood chimes.
But with twitching nostrils
she ponders echoes
spun out during the wooly night
and follows furtive clues to
secrets I will never gather.
The whisper of coyotes padding light as smoke
over grassy banks into the long chase,
the scream of bone and fur as jackrabbits sprint
for bramble cover—
the heavy cross of survival
or the small dying.

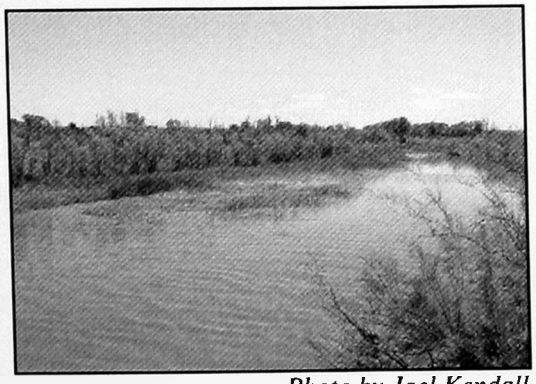

Photo by Joel Kendall

Moses in the Bulrushes

by Kim Bridgford

Inside a little basket, down he sailed,
A mother's boat of love and desperate wishes,
And there was Moses, caught within the bulrushes.

How many mothers, knowing death was ruled,
Chose methods such as this, and hoped for good,
A baby on church steps, like wrapped-up food,
Or tangled in the garbage with a note,
Or in despair would slit their baby's throat?

And as happens in the best of literature,
The nursemaid that was chosen was his mother,
And through initial loss he found his nature.
When other mothers leave, and it goes wrong,
Have pity for the faith within their song.
They took this way because they saw no other.

This is No Place for Moths or Men

by Shari O'Brien

Home from the oncologist, my husband lies,
trying not to retch, knees to chest,
upon the couch. I sit beside him, holding the puke pan,
staring vacantly at the television screen.

Mortar fire has turned a swimming hole in Lebanon
into a watery tomb for tots.
A man who rends his hair
shouts to the camera crew
but my little girl, she was no terrorist!
His eyes plead with me, half a world away.
I want to ease his pain, but we are snared
in the same plastic lantern, our scorched wings
in unison flapping in frantic futile fury.

Perspectives

by Daniel Schwarz

Achievements of Others
Recognition pricks
self-doubting humans, spreading
jealousy's green rash.

Folly
He once thought his life
could have the splendor of a
Raphael cartoon.

Pantomine
We best know ourselves
in silences, deft gestures—
and are known by them.

Fractured Expectations
Fabric: faded hopes—
once taut threads of woven plans
now unravelling

Baby Steps

by Sam Lackey

They get us into human life,
And back,
And finally, even out.

At first they spill, irregular,
Like toys across the floor,
Just barely taking us
Along the waves of shimmering air
And into someone's arms.

But soon they're changing everything.
We see the world, up front!
Not just along the ceiling
With faces floating by.
Or in the wake that stretches out
As mother navigates the furniture
And grocery aisles.

No! Now we meet the coffee table
Eye to eye. My God, we have a point of view!
And we must find our way
Between '"untouchables."
But not for long.
They're all put up that night
In celebration of
Our long awaited entry in
"The race."

But baby steps are quickly left behind
For those more measured.
Ones that we shall need,
To stay between the lines.
And then, at last,
Long strides and glorious leaps
To catch, or to escape, the times.

Still, there are places off the road,
In darkness,
Where amidst the shards of broken glass
And twisted metal of a dream
That broke apart on impact
With a heart,
We try to stand and get away.

But then, an ancient voice begins,
"You just don't get it, Child.
See, this is quicksand here. Stand up to run
And you will only sink. Feel that. You're driving
Yourself down, right now.
Learn to be still.
Get low.
Stretch out, half in, half out, you'll last a good long time.
You'll hardly feel the glass if you are still.
You'll see most things by looking up. See there.
Along the highway's edge."

And yet, in silence, when the moon has set,
A light comes racing through the underbrush.
You have been missed.
A hand comes through.
Last link to solid ground?
Who knows?
But, there's no mistaking the familiar words,
"Just baby steps. That's all. I'm halfway
In the swamp myself. Just baby steps, and we
Can ease our ankles free.
Just baby steps.
And soon, you'll be with me."

Mary LaFrance, After the Widow Burden's Escape

by Robert Cooperman

I never thought
she had the gumption
to fly this gold hell-town.
Not with Sheriff Dennehy
ogling her for his bed-slave,
otherwise called "wife."
Couldn't take his eyes
from her hair: more golden
than the dust hill rats kill for.

The lease at the cottage
Reverend rented for me is up,
lucky judge Samuel fancies me.

Still, if only it was me
Widow's tracker looked at
like Northern Lights spreading
their green satin gowns,
like that night
when Jesus tossed open
the windows of Heaven.

I'd run my fingers
through his breed-black hair,
softer than songbird feathers,
while he kissed me all over.

Instead, I get Judge Sam:
hands slick as skillet grease,
lips a pair of snails
dripping their slime
whenever they crawl over me.

And there's his wife,
who'd take a cleaver to me,
and drag him back home,
tugging on his ear
like a truant schoolboy.

Madam Jezebel LeDoux, After the Widow Burden's Escape

by Robert Cooperman

I could've told Dennehy
what Brutus confided:
spying that half-breed
in the Widow's bedroom.

But Brutus warned,
"Let them be," snarling
the way he told me he'd growled
at one overlord too free
with his bullwhip,
forcing women slaves
to service him, and like it.
He met the man after Emancipation,
snapped his neck like a chicken.

But if I'd told Dennehy—
slick at murdering witnesses
and taking bribes—
we could've made sure
the Widow didn't run.

It burns my liver:
the business I'd've done
with a slack puller legally
poked by a man of God,
even one as flawed
as her husband'd been.

But the barbed wire in Brutus' eyes
was like nothing I'd ever seen,
not even when he beats
white hill rats
who mistreat our girls.

Brutus Hawkins, Bouncer, Speaks of the Widow Burden

by Robert Cooperman

If Jezebel'd insisted
I kidnap the Widow,
we'd've had our first argument.
She mentioned it once;
miners, she declared,
crazy for a preacher's angel.

Much as I admire Jezzy's brains,
and her talent in our four-poster,
I couldn't bear to think
of anyone suffering slavery.
I recalled Libbie
from the slave days,
dragged back after she ran.

I hid behind Mama's skirt,
but a house servant
made me watch;
Libbie's back raw
as a fresh-slaughtered sow,
her shrieks filling the yard
like Satan's church bell.

When Jezzy proposed
we kidnap the Widow,
I put one big hand
over her mouth, real gentle;
then we did what we do best,
no more talk of forcing
whoring, slave ways on anyone.

Sheriff Dennehy Recruits a Posse from Those Drinking in His Saloon

by Robert Cooperman

"Up, you drunken
hill rats, you spawn
of thirst-parlor sluts.
That dirty half-breed
stole off with the Widow Burden,
forced her at knife-point,
the filthy, raping son
of a feeble-minded squaw.

"Up, or I'll shoot
every goddamn man here,
and them I don't plug,
will buck and wing
with a hemp bandanna
round their throats.

"We ride to save
a pure-white angel.
But if I find she ran
of her own accord,
every man gets a turn
with the breed-loving whore.

"Then it's not just a case
of a spun-gold hussy
flying off
with that smudged demon,
but of her husband's murder:
only a matter of time
before I find the proof.

"Up, you pus-suckers.
I count to five,
then I start shooting!"

Francis DeLacey Rides in the Posse After the Widow Burden and William Eagle Feather

by Robert Cooperman

I didn't need Isaac Newton
to figure we'd never find
that half-breed tracker,
even with him hauling Widow Burden.
I was just hoping to nose out
who killed her preacher husband:
that tracker no more a murderer
than Pinhead Jones can string
two words that make sense.

What we mostly did was drink:
boys spinning their saddles
like they were riding mustangs
more snake blooded than twisters.
After a week, I dreamed
of hot baths and spicy whores;
but Sheriff still in a grizzly rage:
the tracker besting him
for a woman skinny as a pick-axe;
no accounting for men's tastes
when they're love-blind.

Speaking of grizzlies,
that bear-ripped wall of thunder,
John Sprockett, was our one
sensible vigilante: announcing
our fool's errand over;
and God help anyone disagreeing
with that short trigger
hell-fiend.

If only Sprockett'll help me
sniff out the real killer.

Recitative: Then Shall Be Brought to Pass

by Anne Babson

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."— 1 Corinthians 15:54

Fortune Cookie sayings for this new day dawning:

Your great-great-great grandfather resurrected stops by to say hello.

Every pony you bet on at the track wins today and tomorrow.

Your least favorite body part is glorified. You look marvelous.

This cookie contains all the money you will ever need. See attached.

Look to your left. The person sitting there loves you.

Look to your right. The person sitting there loves you.

Ask your waiter for another glass of water. He loves you.

You love everyone. You kiss everyone. Everyone kisses you.

You never have any reason to cry or get angry. Lucky numbers: all.

This is the last fortune cookie ever. Beware of absolutely nothing.

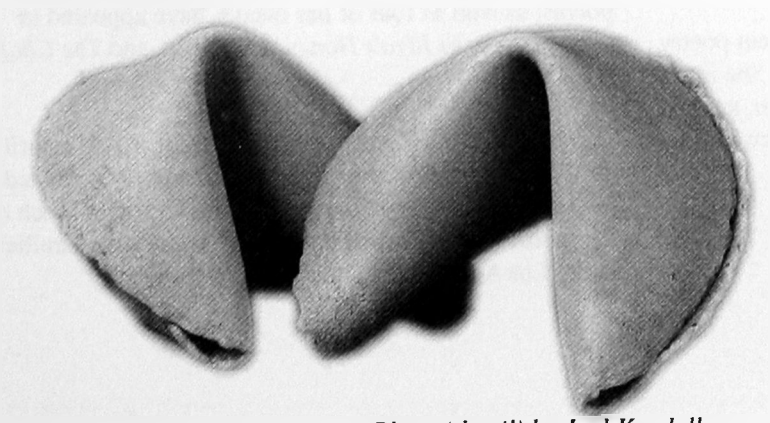

Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

Contributors

Barbara Ann Adams is the winner of the Leigh Holmes Award for creative non-fiction, the Martin Luther King Essay Award, and the John G. Morris Poetry Competition. She is a recent graduate of Cameron University in Lawton, OK and resides in Olustee, OK.

C. Prudence Arceneaux teaches at Austin Community College in Austin, TX. Her work has appeared in such journals as *Limestone, New Texas, Clark Street Review, Hazmat Review*, and *African Voices*.

Anne Babson of New York City is the founding editor of *Vernacular*, an international women's literary journal. She is the curator of literature at the Russian Museum of Contemporary Art, and she produced the libretto for a new opera, *Upbringing*, to be produced by Meridian Arts Ensemble. She is the author four chapbooks and was a Pushcart nominee in 2001 and 2005.

Matthew Brennan is a professor of English at Indiana State University in Terre Haute. He has published four small-press books of poetry including two 2008 releases, *The House with the Mansard Roof* (Backwaters Press) and *The Sea-Crossing of Saint Brendan* (Birch Press). He is the featured writer at the 2008 *Westview* Writers' Festival.

Kim Bridgford is a professor of English at Fairfield University and the editor of *Dogwood* and *Mezzo Cammin*. Her books have been honored with the Donald Justice Prize as well as nominations for the Pulitzer Prize and the Poets' Prize. She was the Connecticut Touring Poet for 2007.

Robert Cooperman's third collection, *The Widow's Burden*, is available from Western Reflections Publishing Company, PO Box 1647, Montrose, CO 81402-1647. His first book, *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was published by the University of Florida Press.

Holly Day of Minneapolis, MN has had recent poetry appear in *Big Scream, Confluence*, and *Phoebe*. She is the author of *Music Theory for Dummies, Shakira*, and *Music Composition for Dummies*. She is a housewife and instructor of journalism.

Maria Fire is an Asheville, NC poet whose work has appeared or is forthcoming in *CQ, Poet Lore, Wisconsin Review, Harpur Plate, Main Street Rag, Main Channel Voices, Phantasmagoria, Phoebe, Porcupine*, and *The Yalobusha Review*.

Meredith Davies Hadaway of Chestertown, MD. Her collection, *Fishing Secrets of the Dead*, was nominated for the 2007 Pushcart Prize. Other works have appeared in *Eclipse, Zone 3, Illuminations*, and the recent anthology, *Here on the Chester*.

Art Hondros of Takoma Park, MD is an artist and writer who works in magazine photo color proofing. His work is forthcoming in *Karamu* and in *Red Wheelbarrow Literary Review*.

Christian Knoeller is an associate professor of English at Purdue University. Her 2000 collection, *Completing the Circle*, was awarded the Millenium Prize, and she produced an earlier chapbook, *Song in Brown Bear Country*. Her recent work appears or is forthcoming in *Journal of New Jersey Poets, Folio, Midwest Quarterly*, and other journals.

Sam Lackey taught English and philosophy at Southwestern Oklahoma State University for thirty years. His poetry has been published in *Nimrod, Pivot*, and a number of other publications.

Vivian Lowry of Ashland, VA is a college teacher and administrator. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Apalachee Review, Chelsea, The Chrysalis Reader, Descant, The Distillery, Lullwater Review, North Dakota Quarterly*, and *Seems*.

Shari O'Brien of Toledo, OH is a lecturer in English, a practicing attorney, and a writer. More than 100 of her poems, as well as four of her essays, have appeared in such journals as *Illya's Honey, 13th Moon*, and *The Chaffin Journal*.

Laura Wine Paster of Walnut Creek, CA is an affiliate of Amherst Writers and Artists. She has contributed to the anthology, *Sisters Singing*, and she has spent much of her career in social work with students and their families in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Todd Possehl is an account representative from St. Charles, IL. His recent credits include *Williard & Maple Review* and *Sierra Nevada Review*. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2005.

Ron Savage worked as a psychologist at Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia before retiring to write full time. Some of his recent and forthcoming publications appear in *Glimmer Train, Shenandoah, G.W. Review, Film Comment*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

Daniel Schwarz is the Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellow at Cornell University. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and several books. His poetry has appeared in *Ithaca Times, Southern Humanities Review, Hawaii Pacific Review*, and other journals.

James Silver teaches courses in writing, literature, and philosophy at SWOSU. He has served as editor of *Westview* since 2004. He has published scholarly work on the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and he has taken a keen interest in Victorian Sensation fiction.

Michael Skau is a professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Carolina Quarterly, Northwest Review, Paintbrush, Kansas Quarterly, Sequoia, Texas Review*, and *Blue Unicorn*.

Don Thackrey's poems reflect his formative years on farms and ranches in the Sandhills of the Nebraska plains many years ago. He is retired from the University of Michigan, where he taught English and served as a research administrator. He has published prose, including *Emily Dickinson's Approach to Poetry*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1954), but only now has begun submitting poetry for publication.

David Vancil heads the Special Collections Department at the Indiana State University library. He has produced a chapbook and a longer book of poems: *The Art School Baby* and *The Homesick Patrol*. His recent work has appeared in *Iodine Poetry Journal* and *Concho River Review*.

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