

The Bayou Review



*Walt Whitman
Sept: '87*

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THE BAYOU REVIEW



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Table of Contents

POETRY

Some Days By Cathy Stern	Page 1
Early, Friday Morning By Mario Quiñones	Page 2
Marlene By Tomas Vallejos	Page 5
Machines of Other Men By Ian Edward Dix	Page 9
Malediction Apostles By Felix Sanchez	Page 11
No Reply By Kevin Camer	Page 12
The Muddled Race By Santos Sosa Ocañas	Page 13
A Child of Mine By Vickie Black-Lewis	Page 21
Bergenfield, N.J., 1987 By Santos Sosa Ocañas	Page 23
Lessons From the Rain By Sallirona Renee Jeffries	Page 24
East Texas Autumn: Deer Hunting Season By Stan O'Neal	Page 25

*The only excuse a man has for writing is to write himself--
to reveal to others the kind of world reflected
in his individual mirror.*

REMY DE GOURMONT, *Preface to Le Livre des masques*

Late Summer Afternoon in the Country By Cathy Stern	Page 26
Necromantic Link By Santos Sosa Ocañas	Page 29
Lost By Vickie Kehrer	Page 30
Night Corneth By B.G. Davis	Page 30
Fragments By Colleen Swartz	Page 31
Red Rover By Merrilee Cunningham	Page 32
Another Untitled By Joseph R. Williams	Page 35

FICTION

The High Cost of Living By George Silverstein	Page 3
Home Sweet Home By Dean Nielsen	Page 6
Dare Devil By Jim Middleton	Page 14
Don,t Get Me Wrong Son... By Kevin Garner	Page 16
Night Again By Lamar Morris	Page 18
Deathbed By Joe Martin	Page 22
Aftermath By Dean Nielsen	Page 33

ILLUSTRATIONS

Tim Schneider	Page X
S. L. Spence	Page 19
S.L. Spence	Page 20
Tim Schneider	Page 27
S. L. Spence	Page 28

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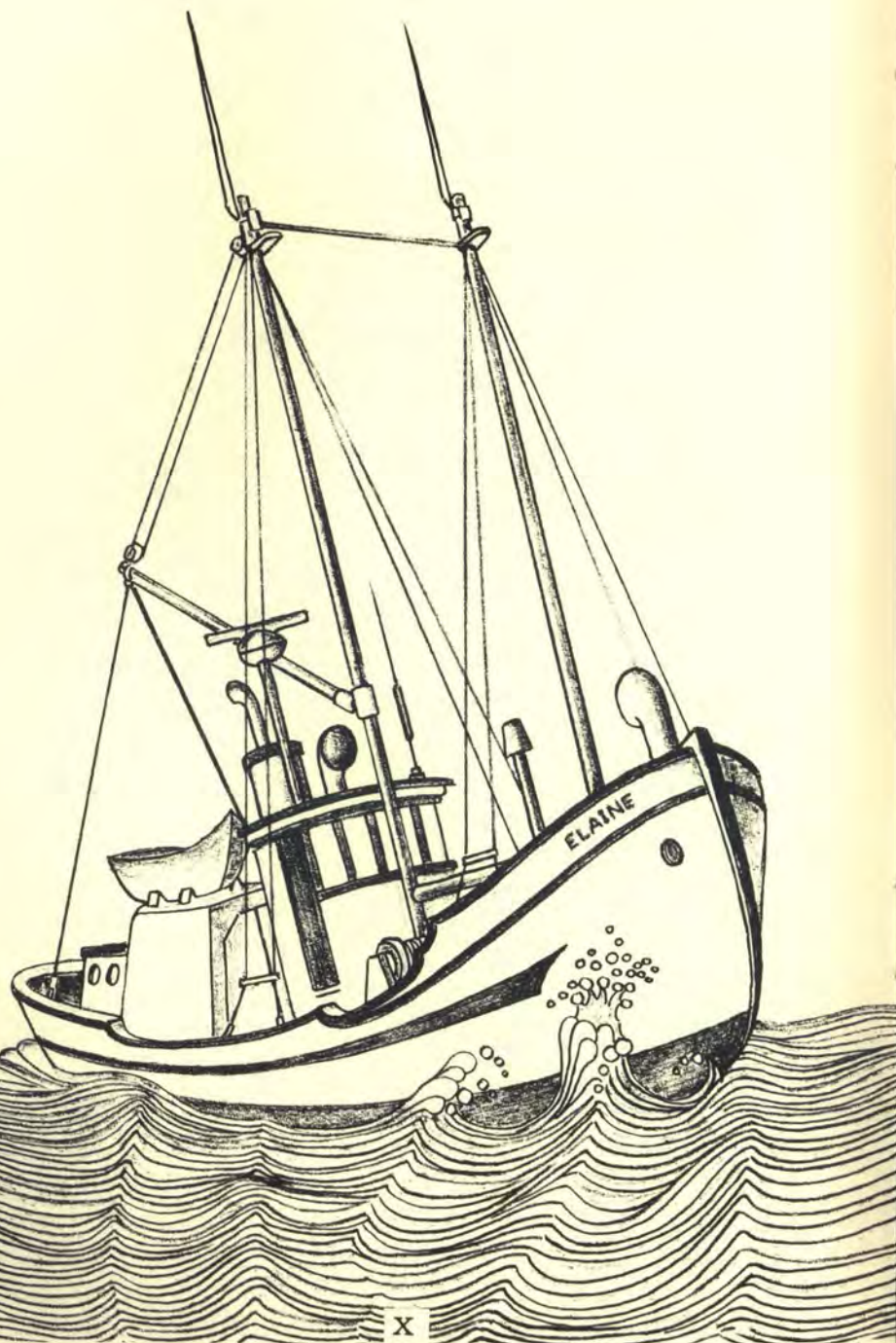
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FACULTY ADVISORS

Dr. Dan Jones
Catherine Stern

Dedicated

to Dr. Dan Jones



SOME DAYS

Some days I wonder how we've stuck it out

so long, those days when stupid little things—
like what you really said, just now, about
when you'd be back: I thought your mutterings

meant "later" and locked the door. Then, whack, whack,
an angry knock, you shouting, "What the hell
is going on here? I said I'd be right back!"
The perils of language. We each try to spell

it out: what I thought you meant, and what you
know you really meant, what I did, and why,
and what you did, and which of us should do
the apologizing, on and on. We try.

Some days it's easier to think long love
is really more in spite of than because of.

Cathy Stern

Early, Friday Morning

In a blind man's sight
Your eyes peer
Into the dark
Of my mind,
I'm afraid to look
At you—
Hear the questions
You now ask,
And so
With detached retinas,
Using
Neither rods
Nor cones,
Eyelids
Clenched
Like a clam in
A sea-otter's Hands,
My soul searches
The crevice of your
Wrinkled brows,
Seen in the
Sound of drops
Falling
from a
Peach
That
Flourishes in the dark,
Whispering— once
Whimpered cries
Growing louder,
Your Self
Becoming clearer
In the eyes
Of the blind man
Afraid to scatter
Like seeds
In the eyes
Of his
Chère amie.

Mario Quiñones, Jr.

The High Cost of Living

Lines at the First Atlantic Bank stretched from the tellers' counter to the back wall with little movement. Customers glanced impatiently at their watches and watched the tellers go through their routines with *sotto voce* lip movements. New York callousness prevented a young pregnant blonde from finding a place in line. Women smiled briefly as the lines crept gradually forward.

A man in a khaki trenchcoat burst into the bank, pushed through the lines, and climbed onto a manager's desk. Pulling an automatic rifle from under his coat, he fired a burst at the ceiling. The guard reached for his pistol.

"Don't try it!" the man ordered, jumping down by the pregnant woman and sticking the gun into her back. The woman shrieked and froze. "Drop your gun belt to the floor!" he ordered the guard.

"Please don't hurt me!" the woman screamed. "My baby!" The guard opened his belt and let it slide to the floor with his pistol.

The robber kept the gun against the woman's body. "All of you - stand right where you are!" The woman pulled away. "You stay right here!" He jabbed the gun further into her back.

"Please! Please!" she wrenched hysterically.

"You guys!" he screamed at the tellers, "put your 100's, 50's and 20's into the two money bags! Tie them together on the counter."

The tellers began loading the bags.

"Hurry up!" he grasped the woman's arm with his free hand.

"Don't! You're twisting my arm!"

"Cruel!" another woman shouted.

Men clenched their fists but remained frozen as the gunman swung the rifle toward them while tightening his grasp on the expectant mother. He shifted his eyes back and forth between the customers and the tellers, trying to watch everyone. "Load those bags! I have bills to pay too!"

The guard's hand reached down toward his pistol.

"Touch that," the intruder pushed the sobbing woman against the counter, "and it's goodbye mama!" He pressed the barrel into her head. "She'll lose more than her baby!" he laughed.

A teller tied the two bulging money bags together on the counter.

"You!" the robber commanded the woman, pressing the gun harder against her head. "Get in the van outside!"

"No!" a man screamed. "Leave her alone!"

The frantic mother collapsed to her knees. "No! No!"

The gunman raised the rifle threateningly to the customers, grabbed the woman by her hair and pulled her up.

"You're hurting me!" she cried in pain.

"Walk!" he ordered. he clutched the money bags and pushed her toward the door and the van. The crowd watched him force her

into the vehicle. The guard reached down for his pistol and raced to the street as the engine roared and the van screeched around the corner.

The gunman's foot held the accelerator to the floor as they sped through the streets. The rifle rested on his lap pointed at the woman. She pushed it sideways.

"Put it away till next time, Big Shot!"

"Next time!" he objected, glancing down at the money bags.

"There's probably fifty grand in there!"

"I know!" she said. "But the way prices are rising, Junior'll be born into poverty! And next time, put more feeling into it. Watch how they do it on T.V.!"

"Next time!" he complained. "Next time! Damned inflation!"

George Silverstien

*If you have money, it doth not stay,
But this way and that it wastes amain:
What does it profit you, anyway?
Ill-gotten good is nobody's gain.
Francois Villon*

MARLENE

In sandía season
The dry spiced August air
Of Colorado chile days
Mellows into evenings of cool comfort
Refreshments of dripping melon
To slake adolescent thirst.

¡Melón!
Mounds of fruit in open truckbeds
Hauled in from the Arkansas Valley
With delicate golden flesh
And pink juices seeping
Odorous sirens, waving in the dusk
To distended nostrils
Of poor boys on southside barrio streets

After they raid
The boys huddle near the arroyo
Against cops and scolding elders
In the glowing twilight
Cloyed with the ripeness of wet pulp.

And later
After dusk glides into consummate night
The older girls will come
To the boys on the edge.
Then one— Marlene—
With dark eyes and glowing bronze skin
Will come to the shyest boy
- the one who holds back -
And confirm him
With the pink innocence of a kiss.
In that moment
He is one with the night.

Tomás Vallejos

Home Sweet Home

The house was enveloped with multi-leveled sounds coming from all corners of the house. These sounds had numerous levels of volume ranging from loud to ear-splitting shrills. If a stranger had walked into the house he would certainly think there were anywhere from 25 to 40 rip-roaring rompers unleashing themselves from the city pound. Yet this was not the case at all. In fact, these fantastic fracas and clanging commotions were actually coming from one middle aged father, a middle aged mother, a 19-year-old college student, a 14-year-old daughter, an 11-year-old video freak, a young wedded couple, and last but not most certainly not least a 4-year-old tot with a siren in his throat.

The commotion had all started in the living room where the family comfortably sat watching a movie rented from the local grocery store. As the movie progressed, the young couple was seen cuddling on the plush, azure carpet in front of the large colored monitor. The college student and the father were entranced in a chess game. The mother was curled in a ball on the pillowy sofa, immersed with J.R.'s sleazy charm. The daughter was on the phone gibbering gossip with a friend from school. The 11-year-old was happily building a variety of trucks, cars, etc., with Milton Bradley's legos. The 4-year-old... Oh no, what was the 4-year-old doing? He was with the 11-year-old playing with the legos, only he was not playing with them, he was grabbing them from the 11-year-old's hands. Suddenly, the 11-year-old regressed to the age of 4. Utter chaos broke out in the lego corner. The scene turned maddening. The larger 4-year-old purposely used his body size to block the scattered legos from the smaller 4-year-old. While the larger 4-year-old temporarily had the smaller one blocked out, our smaller 4-year-old had not yet begun to cause misery beyond belief (never believe that a 4-year-old is not cunning). On the other side of the living room sat a handsomely built diesel truck on a polished oak table. Beside the truck, there are beautifully framed family portraits, exotic wooden figures of different wildlife, and one large hour-glass shaped lamp. The 4-year-old saw the chance of a lifetime. He ran to the diesel truck (freshly constructed by the 11-year-old) picked it up, and smashed it brutally onto the wooden table. Bits of lego flew freely in hundreds of different directions, while the family portraits fell face down on the table, and the exotic wooden animals jumped to life onto the hallway floor. The expression on the face of the 11-year-old is spellbound. His prized creation had just been smashed to oblivion. Zillions of ideas on how to strangle the little whelp raced through his mind; yet, only one word was screamed from his quivering lips: MommmM! At

this piercing scream, the 4-year-old realizes that he had to cover himself to avoid punishment. He quickly screamed "Ididn'tdoanythingmommyhe wouldn'tletmeplay!"

Before her name was screamed out in an ear piercing tenor, the mother had gradually been turning the television volume up so she could hear. The volume became so loud that one could hear every dried drop of saliva stick to the roofs of the lovers mouths as they kissed passionately. Since the volume could be turned no higher, the mother leaped from the sofa towards the now psychotic children. The 4-year-old automatically knew that his pleas were useless. As the mother reached the 4-year-old, he dashed towards the kitchen with amazing speed. But, the 11-year-old was not going to be denied his revenge. In an insane attempt he leaped passed the oncoming enraged mother, and smacked the foot of the 4-year-old, causing him to crash into the large television cabinet. This made things worse for the 11-year-old when the mother approached him. The delicate and petite mother had now turned into a raging cat preying upon a helpless mouse. She gave the 11-year-old two sweeping smacks on his bare shoulders. Next, the raging cat turned to the smaller victim who was now crying uncontrollably; nevertheless, in a bewildering attempt he got up and ran to avoid the the stalker for one moment longer.

During these events the college student and the father were still entranced with the chess game, although they had begun to shift about in their chairs as if something uncomfortable had seeped into their underwear. The adolescent screamed "shut up" a few times at the 11-year-old, but then enclosed herself in the backroom closet and continued her worthless conversation on the telephone. The young husband had attempted to stay out of everything and let the mother handle it. But, being the oldest brother, he finally sprang into action as the 4-year-old had made his second escape from the mother. The loudness of the television, the screaming of the 11-year-old, and the insane crying of the 4-year-old was just more than this man could handle. With quick and effortless moves he pranced upon the 4-year-old like an enraged predator, grabbing him by the ankles and nearest arm. In less than two seconds the 4-year-old had been carried to his room, hoisted into the air, and thrown onto his bed.

The maddening cries now erupted into such volume that the father left the chess board. The fun-filled events were about to come to a screaming halt. The father's voice boomed through the home like thunder. The college student now began to study the newest moves of his opponent. The daughter ended her phone conversation. The raging cat had now become an innocent kitten, crawling back on the couch to listen to further instruction from the "true leader" of the home. The predator backed away towards his comforting wife, who had remained respectfully quiet. And, the screaming and the crying

of the 11-year-old and 4-year-old, turned to quiet sobs and sniffing noses. After the father's instructions were given, the television's volume was turned down to a peaceful and homey level. The young couple snuggled together on a large pillow in front of the screen. The chess match had continued; the daughter was on the phone again. Mother fixed herself a diet coke and became content once more with her program. The 11-year-old began to rebuild his demolished truck. And the 4-year-old...Oh no! what's the 4-year-old doing...

Dean Nielsen

Machines of Other Men

I can only speak with their machines
to speak with other men.
I send the news from Aix to Ghent
by punching in the pattern of
the dual-tone multi-frequencies
which start the switches singing,
each to each. I hear the distant clicks
and know they do not sing for me,
but to a man's machine positioned
at the other end.

I can only wait for beeps and cues
to speak with other men,
a human voice has waked me by
translation from magnetic tape,
I do not drown, but listen to the
soft inflections, multiplexed on
miles of wires, waiting from my
change of current by vibration
of the air around my mouth, the
crude distinctions of my sound.

I cannot speak with other men--
I speak with their machines.
I listen to the greetings, the
expressed regret for having
a machine to translate and refine
my meaning, strip it down and
weed out all expressions in excess,
groom to a precision my 30 second
message, edit down the humanness
to a machine-standard acceptance.

I'll dare disturb the universe
and hang up the receiver, first.

Ian Edward Dix



Malediction Apostles

These isles of language banquets
conceal countless obscene riddles.
Subway stations of enlightenment
always nourish the rebel urge.
Apprentice bound
by pupil passion,
I listen to
Malediction Apostles
lead the discourse
in obscured murmurs.
Cerebrum suburbs
find concise climax
in solemn secrets, then
Monuments composed of curiosity
become
SETTLED STONE
ON VIRGIN THOUGHT
Felix Sanchez

No Reply

They react to each other
As two opponents in mortal combat,
Acutely aware of the slightest twitch
Invoked by any nuance of musculature
From the body of either one.

Their minds are whirring, clicking,
Synapses imploding, assimilating,
Nerves flailing at their restraints.
Adrenalin flowing, arteries jumping,
Action needed, yet no reply.

Defenses crumbling, glands pumping,
Sweat forming across their brows,
They question insights, dismissals, rejections,
Variant thoughts of missed chances, dejection,
Yet still they give no reply.

Time is beckoning, as is its wont.
The opponents know the moment has come.
Courage must be summoned and used.
A twitch of an eye, the knit of the brow,
And he asks "Can I call you tonight?"

Kevin Garner

The Muddled Race

"Ma, what's in the tube?"
"What race ma?"
"Hey ma, am I real?"
Aren't I bio-made, patented
and registered in the U.S.A.
Gee ma, can it be,
I'm not true genetically?

"A race son."
"I don't know son."

Hey ma, there's a bulletin,
aren't you listening, ma?
They say a cow is not a cow,
but adulterated DNA.
Ma! from now on
I'll skip the steak and eggs
and the buttered toast.
No ma, I'll take my coffee black
with carrots on the side.
Yes ma, I'll skip the nutra too.

Gee ma, why are you crying?"

(The race has started. Tech is slicing Ethics in the final lap
as judges eye the market and bettors say their prayers while the
jockeys make their stealthy moves.)

"Ma, can Ethics make a comeback
or is it just too late?
Gee ma, I'm scared
cause I just bet all my sanity
on this muddled race.

Ma, let's cut off the tube
and see if we can feel.
Hey ma— -am I real?
Is humanity next to lose
if Tech takes this race?
I'm scared ma.
Ma, where's pa?"

"I don't know son."

Santos Sosa Ocañas

Dare Devil

Chaos—best described the conference. The researcher remembered its beginning: formal politeness, pompous welcoming speeches by presidents, directors, and doctors (everyone seemed to be a doctor, and not one an M.D.). What had happened in the last two days? If a delegation wasn't walking out, they threatened departure, damnation, or both—the representatives of mainline religions withdrew yesterday. Only one unifying feature remained: everyone hated the researcher.

His discovery produced this disorder. It was his discovery though he was but a lowly technician. He had daringly looked into a section of sky his esteemed superiors "knew" would be fruitless. He had deviled the director of research to analyze, amplify, and enhance that disturbing different aberration which he alone refused to define as static. So his name was hyphenated to the signal, and hyphenated to hatred, he feared.

He had been proud to operate the sophisticated, and super expensive megafrequency scanner for the very purpose of finding—what he had found—life on another world. He now thought he had been hired to find nothing—that was clearly what most of this investigation committee intensely wished he had discovered. How could he have been so naive? Visions of accolades, honorary doctorates and a place in history had revolved in his mind when analysis of his signal confirmed its alien origin. Now he'd be lucky to escape execution.

The reactions of priests, preachers, ministers and shaman had been violent, but anticipated. Once the scientific facts were established beyond reasonable dispute (reasonable—could that word be applied to his species?), the theologians went insane. One group of psychologists immediately attacked their brothers vehemently advocating shock treatment for the first group of psychologists and the theologians. Both groups agreed the researcher was beyond therapy. Real surprises came from so-called "hard sciences."

At least physicists could be counted in the reasonable column. "Count" was an unfortunate word choice. They fell into immediate, esoteric, mathematical arguments and never got back to the question. Chemists, biologists and planetologists seemed interested at first, but soon recognized their "pet" theories—especially the one about insufficient energy for life in the signal's part of the galaxy—would perish if this unlettered, audacious usurper prevailed. In time, most of the scientists agreed with the theologians: how dare this obscure group, especially the discoverer himself, attempt to rewrite established "truths?"

The military was ecstatic, in the beginning, for it saw new weapon systems financed to deal with the "menace from space." When they learned the signal originated 20,000 to 50,000 years ago (astronomers argued loudly over the exact distance and had to be

gaveled into silence) and posed no threat to cash in on, they lost interest in the whole proceeding.

The bottom line, after the first hour, was never in doubt: "Translate the meaning, if any, of the alleged signal and report back to the committee." was the official decree. "The Search for other life on other worlds" project was cancelled—money was needed for more important matters. Like military spending. The researcher's job was to eliminate the positions of his co-workers.

His eight pairs of terminal appendages, a human would have called them roots instead of legs, moved him out of the chamber and into the multicolored light of a thousand suns. Accusations of "impudence" and "a devil" echoed behind him as science and religion alike rejected and despised him.

The light from the diverse suns nourished his body, which absorbed energy directly. Never had their light seemed purer. Each star dared to shine with full strength in spite of competing, often brighter, luminaries. Bold differences among their colors and sizes encouraged the "devil" to dare. He continued his work.

Five Hundred Years Later, for his kind were long lived, he stood in regolith of his native world—dying. Special nutrients and medicines flowed constantly, and vainly, through tubes into the soil where his extremities absorbed them.

His honors had come. Religion had adapted long before his erudite fellow scientists saw the futility of denying the truth. He was honored as a saint, angel, and minor deity by several new theologies. Each interpreted his discovery as their revelation. Finally, of course, science had bowed, and his honorary doctorates had been awarded—and filed away, for honors unearned are unappreciated. Volumes had extolled his genius. Three epic poems heralded his courage, perseverance, and his discovery's social impact. One praised him. One cursed him. And the other was too obscure to ascertain its meaning.

None of these things concerned him now. Much of the message from that still unidentified world near the edge of his galaxy had been decoded. Still only one word in twenty was known. Images of the distant, possibly dead world (for the decoded parts showed the world toyed with self-destruction), faded from his dying mind—all but one. It remained till the end: An unbelievable face with a top for reflection while light enunciated its final, enigmatic pronouncement.

All efforts at deciphering it had failed. What was its message: a blessing, a curse, a prayer, a call for help, a final pronouncement? It was different-- its swelling volume and emotional coloring set it apart from the rest of the signal. Its defiant tone had inspired his perseverance. The researcher wondered—and died. On the wall, his recording machine still played that last message again and again:

"Marvin Zindler"

Don't Get Me Wrong, Son...

"Now tell me, son, just what is all this stuff you're spouting off about? Here you are, charging into my peace and quiet, acting like the world is on fire! Those wild eyes flashing, waving your arms and dashing about, talking so fast I can only understand every third word. Just what is it you are trying to tell me? That you know the way? You think God has just been waiting for you and those others to claim to be born again so He can welcome you back? What are you saying, son? Welcome you back to where? Where do you think you came from? Think about it, son. Think about what you're saying to me here. You ever look at the other religions? You think yours' is the only one? There are a lot of them, son, and those people feel as strongly about their's as you do about yours. How do you explain that? Oh yes, son, there are a lot of gods out there, and some of them are not as eager to have you back as you say yours is after you have left them. What about those people, son, what's going to happen to them? Are you going to go save them like you said you want to save me? That is what you said, son, isn't it? You know how I can be saved? Think about what you say, son.

Think about those poor lost souls out there, like you said you were before your rebirth, who feel as strongly about their God as you do about yours. You did say yours was the only one, didn't you? What about those people, son, do they think the same as you? You look funny, son, like you lost some of your wind. Thinking about something? Let me give you something else to think about. Where are you now? Is this where you've always been? Right here on this earth, dealing with people like you and me? Dealing with them as long ago, as far back as you can remember? Then think about this. This just might be the only place you'll ever know. There might not be any other place. You might just live and die here and never know anything else. Do you think you might have misunderstood some of the things you've heard and read? Are you sure you understand exactly what it all means? Look at the big picture, son, look at how it all fits together. Think about what you have to deal with here. You aren't dealing with God and an ideal, you are dealing with reality. It is going to slap you in the face, son, and then it will chew you up and spit you out. You can deal with it, son, if you just look at the big picture. Think about what you read, what is it trying to tell you? Take your religion. It tells you how to live, doesn't it. Doesn't it also tell you that if everyone lived like that, that everyone would get along just fine? Read about some other

religions. They'll all be variations on that same theme. Those books are fine for finding out about morals, for, after all, that is what they're talking about. What are you going to do when you meet people without morals? You think they are going to tell you that they don't have any? Not on your life, son, and then there you will be, holding your morals in your hand, as that might be all you have left.

Now don't get me wrong, son, I'm not telling you to go out and run wild. I'm only telling you that you better learn to live in this world, with these people you see here. This is what you have to deal with, this is your heaven and hell all wrapped up into one. You can be as good as you want to be, no one will ever fault you for that. I just don't want you to think everyone else is going to be good. There are givers and takers in this world, son, and you have to learn how to spot them. That's dealing with reality, son, that's living in the real world. Take your time, son, but not too much. The world is moving on, son, and it won't wait for you. You have time to learn, but not too much time. The world is moving on, son, and you are getting older. Be cautious, listen well, and try to look at the big picture. Didn't I tell you about that, son, about the big picture? Why are you looking that way? If you don't know what the big picture is, son, I'll tell you. It's the givers and takers, son, and that's all it is. You can't have one without the other. It's the takers who have no morals, son, who care about none other than themselves. A lot of them have read your religion, son, and they know what you want to do. They also know you won't expect them to hurt you, son, but they will. They will turn your faith back at you, son, and make you question all you know. They'll drain you, son, of all that you have: your time, your money, and your faith. Then they'll toss you out when you can't give anymore. A lot of the time they don't even

know your name. Look at that Jim Bakker, the so-called televangelist. What did he do? Showed he had no morals, didn't he? Did you hear what his salary was? Where did he get all that money? I'll tell you, son, he took it! He just took it from all those givers out there who thought he was one of them. See how the takers hide themselves as givers? Do you see what I'm trying to tell you, son? Go on home and think about it, son, you look kind of pale. Give me back my peace and quiet. We old men need time to think too."

The young boy, with a faltering step, walked to the door, and, glancing back with a look of awe and confusion in his face, left.

Kevin Garner

NIGHT AGAIN

The red numerals glow in the dark like evil, infrared eyes staring into me from the little table next to my bed. They are devilish reminders of my torment. The actual time that these numbers represent is not important—only that it is somewhere between midnight and the time at which the alarm bell will ring. I have been asleep for a few hours, but now lie restlessly in the darkness. Most people dread the moment when bell sounds, signaling the end of sleep. That supposedly obnoxious ringing means the end of my nightly sentence in isolation, and I look forward to it for what seems to be an eternity.

The giant bed in which I lie swallows me up like a tiny shell on a beach. Although I am engulfed in the monotony of the darkness, my eyes have adjusted enough to make out the vague images throughout the room, like a gallery of abstracts all done in grey, black, and brown. There is no bolt on the door, no bars on the windows, but I am here in this prison until daylight sets me free.

A ceiling fan hangs motionlessly in the middle of a grey expanse like a spread-eagled skydiver held in suspended animation—no rip cord to pull, no escape. His domelight helmet bowed towards the ground, he never reaches the end. I too am suspended in entrapment, held there in bed by the determination to find sleep, but tortured by the fact that it will not come.

"Wonder Woman" dances on a glass in the red glow to my left, adding another "human" element to my cell. The glass is half full of water. Or is it half empty? I entertain myself with that question for a while. I come to the conclusion that it does not matter. Each time I check them, the red numbers do not seem to progress. I am frozen in time, encased in a dark, quiet paperweight into which no real animation can intrude.

A light in the hall leaks under my bedroom door casting slight shawdows in front of me. My robe, which hangs on the closet door, stretches lifelessly downward like a man hanged from an invisible rope. I force my eyes shut to focus on more evil images in purple and black on the back of my eyelids—shapes endlessly fading into more shapes.

Rolling onto my stomach, I bury my face in a pillow. I am trying to force my thoughts into reality—a report due, letters to write, a girl I have not seen in a while. But these thoughts do not lull me into sleep. They only make me more painfully aware of how badly I wish to be asleep.

The glow behind "Wonder Woman" still offers no solace from the monotony. My inner reflections are no longer a conversation in my head. The room is so quiet I am talking aloud to my own figure sitting at the end of the bed. The things we are discussing do not

make sense—like a different language. He—I am gone now, tired beyond words. Muscles twitch. I yawn. I rub my eyes and scalp.

I have no idea what time the red glow is showing. I finally doze off, so I will never know the secret to beating my endless stints in solitary confinement. I dread the thought of putting my head on the pillow tomorrow night.

Lamar Morris





A Child of Mine

"I lend you for a little time, a Child of Mine, "
He said,

"For you to love while he lives and mourn when he
is dead.

It may be six or seven years, or twenty -two or three,
but will you, till I call him back, take care
of him for me?

He'll bring his charms to gladden you, and shall his
stay be brief, you'll have his lovely memories
as solace for your grief.

I cannot promise He will stay, since all from
earth return, but there are lessons taught down
there I want this child to learn.

I've looked the world over in my search for
teachers true and from the throngs that crowd
life's lanes, I have selected You.

Now will you give him all your love, nor think the
labor vain, nor hate me when I come to call,
to take him back again."

.

For all the joy thy Child brought, we knew
the risk of grief we ran.

We sheltered him with tenderness, we loved him
while we could: and for the happiness we knew
will ever grateful stay.

The angels called for him much sooner than we
planned, and I heard them say
"Dear Lord, Thy Will Be Done"

We braved the bitter grief that came,
and try to understand.

Vickie Black-Lewis

Deathbed

As the lonely blanket slowly slipped across the sky, making room for the awakening new day, he felt that it would be a good day to stay on his bed. The day tried to awaken, tried to push back the heavy, sulking clouds, but the powerful grip of the northern tundra had reached down to embrace his domain.

The penetrating cold, that only a Texas blue norther brings, gnawed irritatingly at his bones. To force the glowing heat of his blood through his body he uncoiled and stretchingly rose from his bed. He glanced at the green blanket of live oaks that canopied his bed, and tested the air. Dimly, he reached back for the few memories he could retain, and thought of his birth place, not far from where he made his bed now.

Familiar scents wafted lazily on the harsh, grey morning air and reassured of his safety, he slipped ghostlike through the brush, on one of his time worn trails. He stopped to polish his wide, heavy beamed rack on his favorite rub, and checked one of his many scrapes. A message had been left that aroused the fall madness in his blood. The yearly madness of nature's need to plant the seeds of life focused the fibers of his existence on the trail left by his visitor.

He plunged recklessly through the blackbush and mesquite and sensed that he was closing in on his future mate. His tongue lolled and his labored breathing caused his ribs to heave violently, but he kept his nose to the hot, musky trail.

Naggingly, a shocking, terrifying alarm of fear penetrated through the fog that had blinded his senses. He sensed and smelled the horrifying presence of MAN, and he wheeled around to retreat.

Before he heard the eruption from the high powered rifle, the sledgehammer blow crushed him to the cold, unfeeling ground.

Life retreated to a pinpoint of light and he thought of his bed...safe...under...the ...canopy...of...

Joe Martin

Bergenfield , N.J. 1987

How certain towns come to be named
seems to be of no importance.
Some are named after famous men
or tired settlers. You, Bergenfield, N.J. ,
however you came to be named,
have now come inside
my home and moved my heart.

The race for top ratings
by local T.V. stations has flashed
across my screen
your four youths who, posthumously
had their lasting dream materialized,
to have their smiling faces
seen on our T.V.s.

Once again questions rambled
through our homes. Why did they do it?
Were they on drugs? Maybe something apathetic
was said like, Gee, those kids were dumb.
Suicide, isn't it dumb?

Are Coke and Calvin Klein the real thing? Is Michael Jackson the one to be, secluded and all alone? Are Jimmy Bakker and Richard Nixon sorry for their sins? Are seeking beauty, truth, and Andy Warhol's fifteen minute celluloid dream all the same? Are Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Elvis Presley sitting pretty on sacred altars or are they just dusty bodies withering in quiet winds?

Just what does it all mean?

How can we help you Bergenfield?
How shall we stop your fragile youth
from being drafted into
these sixty-seconds wars
financed by Greed and L us T?

Santos Sosa Ocañas

Lessons From the Rain

Dangerous folly, this falling in love.
Rain falls steadily from above
And lands in puddly, silent cries
Mimicking the tear-drained eyes.
Occasional flashes of lightning reveal
The dim, gray sky whose only zeal
Lies not in comfort, only pain
While lovers cry and watch the rain.

The thunder sounds and stirs my heart
and moves me with a determined start.
"I want to live, to feel again!"
But silence remains my only friend.
I now realize I'm all alone.
These silly fears are all outgrown.
Alone, I hope and dream in vain
Alone, I contemplate the rain.

But they don't see what I've been through,
How much I've suffered, due to you.
And sacrifice is just a word
Whose meaning seems a touch absurd.
Life gets easier, day by day.
Lovers cast in mortal play.
I'll carry on despite the pain--
I'm taking lessons from the rain.

Saffrona Renee Jeffries

East Texas Autumn: Deer Hunting Season

The bouncing, rattling '65 Chevy truck
interrupts the autumn silence.
Projecting out its rusting tan body,
twin fingers of light
cut through the dark and cold
of an East Texas night.

Intuitively, the truck follows
the parallel tire ruts
gouged into the pine needle- matted mud.
Abruptly the engine dies
under a towering oak tree.
The hooting of an owl fills the void.

Two silhouetted figures are bent over,
hammering stakes into the soft red clay.
Their heavy breaths cling to the chilly air.
A canvas pyramid slowly rises,
expanding like a balloon.
The owl watches, then resumes his hunt.

Hugging the ridged, pine tree horizon,
a crescent of white-gold
shepherds a hundred- fold
of glittering embers peering
through the dark and cold
of an East Texas night.

A dim flashlight beam traces
a path weaving through the
mist-laced clearing. The footpath
cushions each step, and with each step
damp boots become magnetd
for pine needles and grass.

A whoosh of wings
ruffles the stillness.
The nocturnal hunter eclipses
the jaw of the moon
swooping to his roost--
to feast?

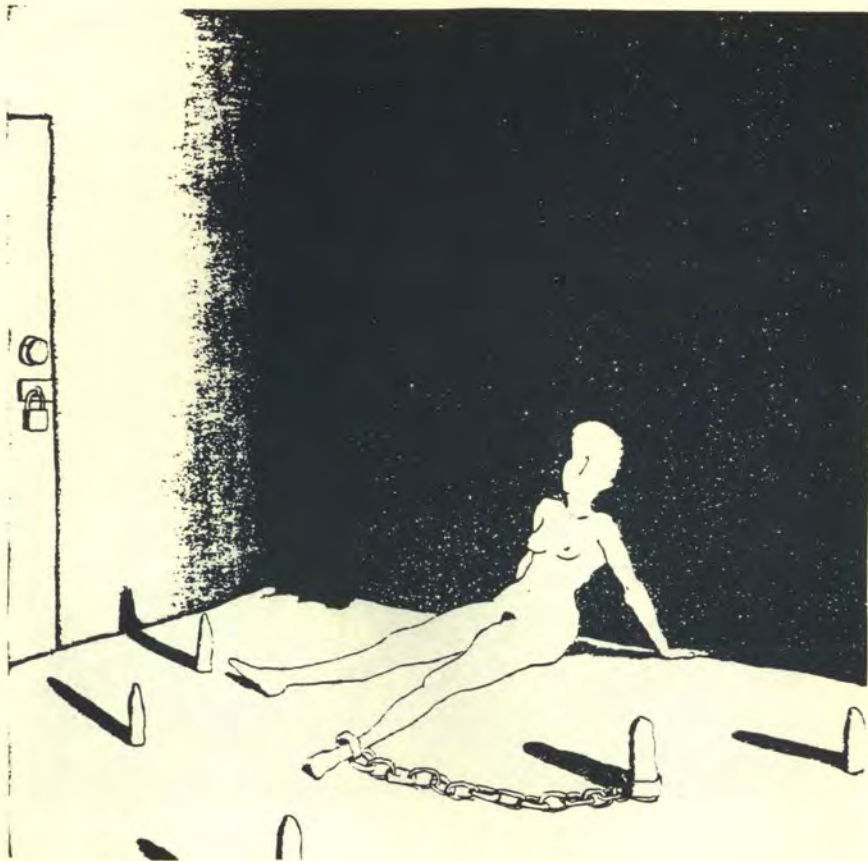
Stan O'neal

Late Summer Afternoon in the Country

Though it's been getting late for some time,
I'm still in my hammock, the sun
just going down behind the small pine
and the thick stand of oaks beyond it.
Dusk comes down quickly here,
in the stillness of so many trees,
pooling and spreading like ground fog.
High above me in the topmost boughs
there's still light on the leaves,
and a small wind is starting,
a quick rush in the upper branches,
the sky going grey behind them.
Now, turning my head,
I can see a pale, sunlit clearing
barely glowing behind dark trees.
And for a moment I believe
if I got up, went over there, and in,
I could keep things the way they are.

Cathy Stern





Necromantic Link

Chained down to a cold presupposition
by necromantic links, her shadow
nears obscurity. She fears the coming tide
will bid her to rise and seek pleasure
that now is lost. Laugh, stare, if you
like, she has no more nakedness to hide.

Freedom, pleasure, plenty, ancient savants
professed she had, but now,
a captive enveloped by infinite darkness
usurping dull pleasures,
this fawn cries.
And in her tears she sees
those inspired savants wrapped
in Proteus' garb, concealing
their own iniquities.

A ripple comes, she gazes outward
and tries to hide.
Her muscles cringe against the urge,
she strains to break the necromantic links,
yet knows
she must succumb and try again.

Santos Sosa Ocañas

Lost

The rain is like a person.
It falls through space
In search of a meaning
Looking for a purpose,
A place to fall
To call its own.
And just at the precise moment
It finds what it has been looking for,
The drop dries up and
Is forever lost.

Vickie Kehrer

NIGHT COMETH

Time passes; night cometh,
And we watch the young vanish,
Like products in a consumer world.
Society is hard and cold,
Forgetting young dreams of life,
Dreams robbed, and never told.

Silently by their sides, we wait,
Not knowing what to say or do,
Just sit there, hold their hands and cry.
The pain is intense, so we are told,
But like all soldiers through time,
They dry their tears, and meet their foe.

It is a time for hopes, for prayers,
For laughs, cries, realities,
And AIDS.

B.G. Davis

Fragments

Fragments
mirror's shattered shards
spinning in my brain
(goodbye like heavy blows)

Phrases
of a ruptured song
sounds of you and me
(cacophony, discord)

Chaos
senseless minutes, days
an hour— or a blur?
(the second hand's free swing)

Loss
a life in disrepair
seeks only to survive
beyond the fragments

Colleen Swartz

Red Rover

I, the universal goddess, the matrix of destiny
Making my appearance once again,
Ask you to come home.
Not to fix and mend, but to live.
You have seen me in a multitude of guises
Sumero-Babylonian, the cosmic female
A red-neck virgin as the morning star
As evening star a harlot from South Georgia
Babe, you have your Southern Cross to bear,
Lady of the night sky, girl friend of Mars.
Why can't I be your first wife and your second?
Then I'll be all your many wives
As if you were a shiek in Araby
with such variety of dancing girls
That who can really remember
"What's her name" from "oh, you know
They're all the same."
You to me will be a Tricksey man.
More than a cross between a shepherd
And a border collie. Come home.
I cross borders in my head
And want you here.
I am the youngest thirty-two year old
You'll ever know.
And you are thirty-three and twenty-two
Only to me.

Merrilee A. Cunningham

Aftermath

The snow had begun to fall again. Night closed itself around Jeremy as he covered himself with heavy blankets. The brittle air seeped into Jeremy's clothing, skin, his very bones. His brother Molen lay next to him wrapped in torn rags. The fire slowly died as heavy flakes suffocated it. Jeremy was too tired, too defeated to try and revive the life of the fire. He watched Molen's frail body move ever so slightly with every intake of the unfeeling air. Jeremy put his callused hand on his brother's head and stroked the coarse hair. Their relationship as brothers had been distant in the last years, and now, they only had each other. "Brothers to the end," Jeremy would hear Molen say, a time long ago. There was always a bond between the brother's, an undeniable love, yet sometimes it was tough.

Jeremy leaned against the icy bark of the tall oak tree, and tried to fight the tears back, but a large one broke free and slowly trickled down to his quivering chin. Anne had crept into his memory. Jeremy closed his heavy eyes and drifted...

Anne glided through the meadow, her golden hair bouncing freely about her delicate shoulders. A disease was taking her away, and soon, Jeremy knew a day would come when he would have to kiss her one last time. As Anne ran past him, Jeremy reached out and grasped her in his arms, leaned forward to kiss her... but awoke to heavy flakes caking his lips, putting him into cold reality. Jeremy sat up being careful not to wake Molen.

Anne's golden hair was still distinctly in his mind, yet he had to put the memory aside and keep Molen and himself from freezing. With aching bones and a splinted knee, Jeremy pulled himself up to a standing position and walked tiredly about the camp. He knew Molen was hurt, and as for himself, he was famished, cold and drawn. Death was beside him and his brother, yet Jeremy continued to look it in the eye and resist its temptation. The snow continued and Jeremy heard distant explosions in the enveloping night. He looked over to his brother wishing he were awake. But he knew Molen needed the rest. Jeremy walked back to the tall oak, sat beside his brother and closed his eyes again...

The situation looked impossible. The ground exploded around Jeremy as he looked towards the cruel building where Molen and his wife Carrie were being kept. The building was surrounded with a barbed wire fence and brutal men speaking in a brutal language. Thundering objects crashed into the building, creating large, jagged holes. Jeremy couldn't expose himself yet, for he would surely be torn to bits by flying shrapnel and savage bullets. Suddenly, out of nowhere, came several lightning speed aircraft dropping gas bombs around the

entire area. Jeremy's move had to be made now. He dashed towards the gas enveloped building, dodging the obstacles of damaged flesh, ripped metal, and busted concrete. Inside the dungeon like building, Jeremy heard and saw the mourning for several lifeless victims. He panicked. He had to find his brother. Time had become his newest enemy as large pillars from the ceiling began to tumble down around him, crashing on to the concrete floor. Down a long corridor to his left, Jeremy saw a man holding a fragile, lifeless woman in his arms, cuddling her like an infant. Jeremy's heart sank deep in his chest, for he recognized the man and the woman he was holding. As Jeremy approached his brother, he knelt beside him, looked into his eyes, and said, "Molen, we have to leave." There was nothing left to say. Molen's eyes filled with fresh tears as he grabbed Jeremy and wept hard enough to shake the entire frame of his body. As Jeremy held on to his brother he saw two armed men approaching, pointing violent weapons at them. Jeremy remembered the teachings of his father, the teachings of the power that could be used in times of need. Jeremy released his brother, stood before the two men raising his right hand, and proceeded to speak words that stunned and bewildered the two enemies, knocking them to their knees. Jeremy turned to his brother who was now standing, looking at him with admiration. Jeremy then grabbed the weapons from the helpless guards, as Molen knelt down and called to his bride one last time...

"Carrie," "Carrie, are you there?" Jeremy awoke to his brothers slurred talk. He gently shook his brother's good shoulder and said, "Molen...Molen, Carrie's not here, please look at me, Molen." Molen turned over on his back and weakly opened his eyes. The cut on his head had quit bleeding, but swelling continued. "Jeremy...Jeremy, where's Carrie?" "She's not here, Molen." Tears filled Molen's drawn eyes as he reached out to hold his brother. In weeping stutters Molen said, "Why did they kill her, Jeremy?" "I don't know, brother." Jeremy held his brother in his frail arms and watched the fire quietly die and turn to smoke. "I love you, Molen." "I love you, buddy," said Molen, with a slight smile on his face. "It's tough being brothers, isn't it?" said Jeremy, looking up at the cold black night. Molen closed his weary eyes, continuing to hold on to his older brother. Silence. Jeremy held Molen closer to him, cradling him into his arms, whispering into the night, "brothers to the end, brothers to the end." Jeremy and Molen fell into their final sleep in each others arms as snow began to fall again...

Dean Nielsen

ANOTHER UNTITLED

All those books meant to be written,
Mingle-up and fall away in poetry of dreaming thought.
A few packed deeply/neatly away in a molding cardboard
Box, in the back of my closet, I own a few...
Least, I thought I did, but how can you own something
That's not there

Yet, sometimes I chat 'bout them:

Like that one I started when I was
Drunk, and it was an awfull state
Similar to brackety-brack of my mind
At that time it fell forth on unsuspecting
Keys, to internal makings (of typewriter)
Finally printed bold face black.

all those friends meant to be kept,
Grow-up/out and change names city to state.

Joseph R. Williams

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Staff Photo

Santos Ocañas, Dean Nielsen, Kevin Garner

There are truths which are not for all
men, nor for all times.

Voltaire
(In tribute to Dr. J. Berry)