

**The University of Houston-Downtown**

the bayou review

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***The Bayou Review is a student publication of the University of Houston-Downtown. This literary and artistic journal welcomes poetry, prose, art, and photography submissions from the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of UHD.***

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Ernest Ramirez  
Editor

# Preface

While we may live in an era of accelerated life-styles, it is always encouraging to know that so many of us still take the time to engage in a bit of creative reflection. I was reminded of this very fact while going through the many written and visual submissions offered for publication for this the Spring 1999 edition of *The Bayou Review*.

I am of the opinion that the time and effort put forth by all our contributors is something that deserves our respect and acknowledgment. I am sure you would agree with me that this commitment to creativity plus talent makes for a very dynamic combination. In my eyes, these UHD students are nothing less than exceptional people.

In recognizing these very special people, I present to you the Spring 1999 edition of *The Bayou Review*. Enjoy it and remember to appreciate each contributor's time and talent.

*-Ernest Ramirez*  
*Editor*

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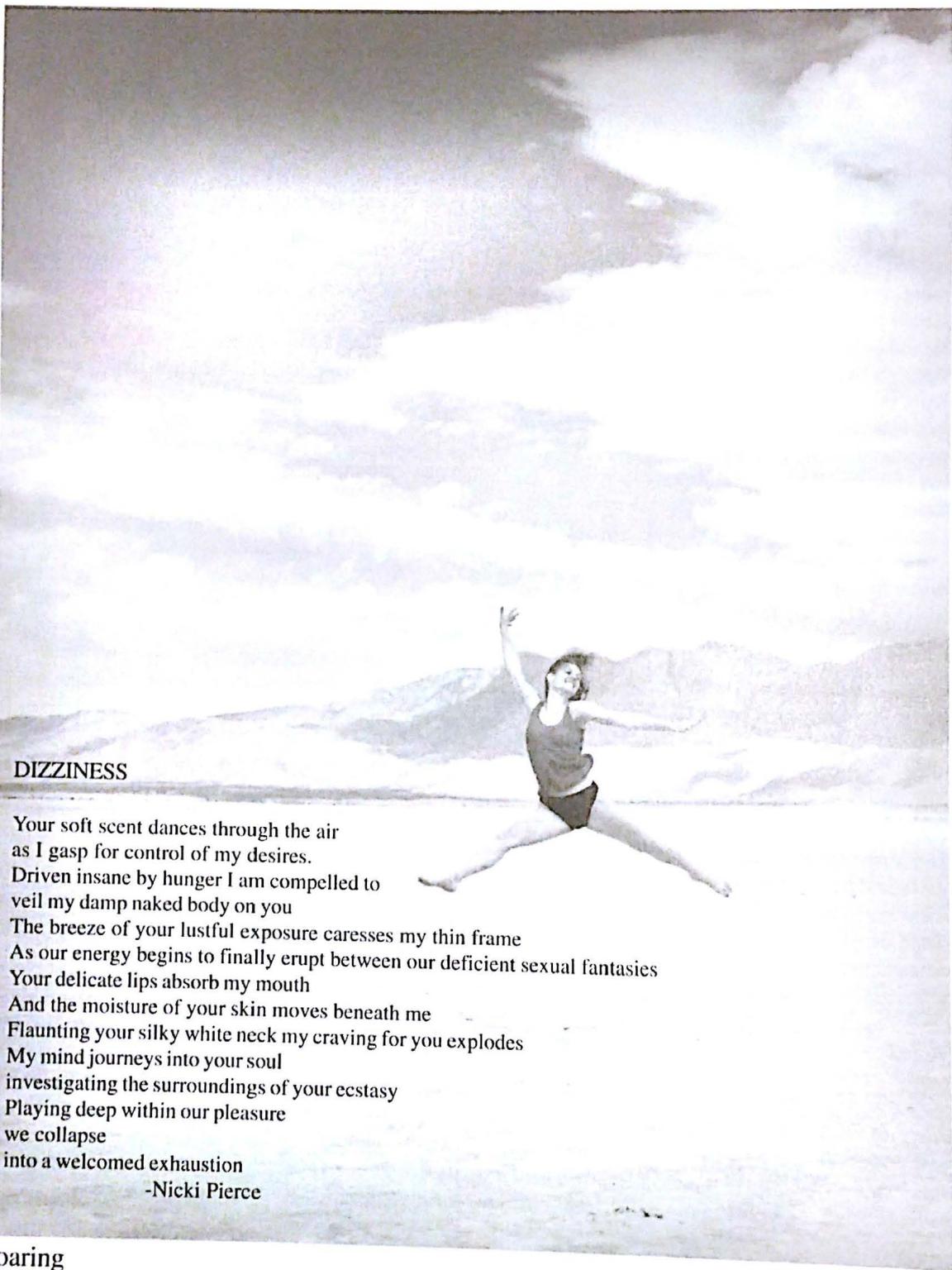
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Four individuals were given \$50 cash prizes for their contributions to the Spring 1999 journal. Total submissions for the Spring 1999 semester were one-hundred and eighty-three.



**DIZZINESS**

Your soft scent dances through the air  
as I gasp for control of my desires.  
Driven insane by hunger I am compelled to  
veil my damp naked body on you  
The breeze of your lustful exposure caresses my thin frame  
As our energy begins to finally erupt between our deficient sexual fantasies  
Your delicate lips absorb my mouth  
And the moisture of your skin moves beneath me  
Flaunting your silky white neck my craving for you explodes  
My mind journeys into your soul  
investigating the surroundings of your ecstasy  
Playing deep within our pleasure  
we collapse  
into a welcomed exhaustion  
-Nicki Pierce

Soaring

Ernest Ramirez

## Turn On Your Side

To Eloy, whose silence has been invaluable to me

Two days, 15 hours and 36 minutes have passed and I have still been unable to obtain sleep. My eyes are red. I am forced to keep my head afloat. I dream when I shouldn't be dreaming. You see, I have a bad habit. I snore all through the night. There's no escaping it; no refuge. The sound will find you in whichever corner you hide. It is continuous and unbearable. My wife lets me know this each morning. Lately, I have stayed awake because a consideration had been forced upon me. I now care too much for the order of other people's lives. Yes, this is my weakness, my sorrow. My wife helped me do this. One night, after arriving from work, I went straight to bed. Within seconds, after closing my eyes, a noise began to come out of me. It began to develop in the pit of my lungs. The breath rose through the esophagus up to the nasal cavity only to be filtered out through the mucus outlining of my nostrils. Whether or not snoring really occurs this way isn't my concern--I'm not a specialist of any kind. It is how I feel ... yes, how it feels. I lay there with my chest facing the ceiling while my stomach rose. Up, down. Up, down. A sound came out of me, a disjointed, rattling sound. It was as if I couldn't breathe. My wife laid beside me propped up by her left elbow. Her blue eyes stared at me. It seemed as if she were trying to see through me and find out why I wasn't breathing correctly. Sometimes she'd hit me. "Turn on your side! Turn on your side!" she would say. It was plain to see she hated me. I kept her from her sleep and dreams--a necessary refuge for some. For an hour or so, she would not speak to me the following morning. She hated my snoring and it was eating her slowly away. Finally, her rage overflowed. She was fed up. She sought the comfort of sleep and I prevented her from finding it. The snoring continued. With each new occurrence the sound increased in volume. At times, we tried some remedies. I have even tied a pillow around my face--I nearly suffocated. My wife tried sleeping in different parts of the house. Once, she slept in the bathtub but there was no escaping the sound. It found her. The noise fills the cracks in the floor. It seeks you out as if in punishment for trying to escape it. No matter what, her ears could never escape their tormentors. That night she would no longer take it. She got up and stared at me for a moment, then her mouth cracked a silly grin, an evil grin. A grin aware of its own cruelty. Her arms dangled beside her while her fists formed into two small balls of fury. Then she stomped out of the room and headed towards the kitchen table. On the table there was a large pink candle and she went back to the room. She stood in the doorway and gave me a passing glance. Her eyes then focused on the candle. Then me. Then the candle. The room was bare. I was still on my back. My mouth had opened. My belly rose as I began the loudest snore ever. I was snoring. No, I was snoozing, pause, snoozing, pause, snoooo-or-rang, snoooo-or-rang, snoooo-or-rang, snoooo-or-rang, snoooo-or-rang, snoooo-or-rang. The candle's flame flickered. It seemed to have picked up my rhythm. My wife stared heavily into the bottom of the flame. She thought of her sleepless nights. For five nights now she has put the moon to rest. For five nights now she has tossed and turned. For five nights now she has ... she has heard me snore. She walked towards me and sighed in bitter resignation. Then she squeezed the candle and flung the hot wax at me. I awoke. Screaming was difficult because there had been wax on my tongue and in between my teeth. I tried to see her but the wax had dried on my eyelashes, plugged up my nose and scalded my cheeks but I knew she was there, standing over me with that grin spread over her face. She put the candle on the drawer and walked out. I never saw her again.

-Radames Ortiz

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# Tragedy in the Sky

If you have remnants of old grief  
You wish to discard in the reservoir of tears,  
Ascend them to a sky near Esfehan  
Lest they moisten ashen livers  
A Persian sky of jasmine  
Where there are doors to a history filled with tragedy,

I move to lift the veil of what hides sadness  
Like foam from tide,  
And retell a tale of July 1987,  
A minutia of the past  
Bloodied by Uncle Sam,

In the clouds birds were lynched  
And the sun fell in the cadenza of shame  
Coated in the blood of Iranians returning home  
Lost in the anarchy of stars,

On his turbine the neo-slave assassin aimed his gun  
And cannonaded madness,  
The price was thirty thousand and a mule,  
And Arabite whores who sold their honor,  
Smiled and waived as tatters of silt danced on the wind  
Then dissolved in the sea,

Those reminiscent of Ubico's Guatemala  
And Somoza's Nicaragua,  
Breathing their own excrement after Yankee's  
Drill in their pocket books.

But enough about pigs who dress in human skin  
And engage in sodomy of the dead,  
I return to the faces of people who wait for some caress,  
That they began to mourn for them, candles dipped  
In the resin of incense,  
The magnesium forever in the hearts of loved ones,  
And I see a woman whose infant's feet became hammers to their breasts.  
And with dissolved eyes, a child looks to his mother,  
Will this airport ever return my father?  
Her torrid tongue answered,  
He went on the wings of the Capricorn to suck honey from the clouds,  
And I fear his return will be delayed.

Oh misery that moves beyond Lament,  
Oh those memories that fade,  
Tears of widows spread like waves,  
Eyes of orphans and stained hearts,  
Do they not move us to act,  
As love goes on weeping for their loss,  
As if it tries to find itself in the silence of graves  
to succumb to thought.

-Mahdi Jaber

## Can You See Them

Some old friends of mine used to say that you could feel Death coming, she wore a long sleep cape, trembled your senses, always relentless to reveal what she left behind in her path. Today I tell them that Death flies above us with a whole different wardrobe, often reminds us that she has the city to cover up her wrath.

Can you see them, lit like addicts on that rush, running on the boundary line, that mark that fear and desperation invite you to cross. Instead of understanding that their suspect had got away, coins in the air decided to pick a substitute for the kid they had lost.

Can you see them, can you feel the adrenaline springing through their blood, if not now, how about when I tell you that he was shot twelve times. How about when I tell you that nine of those were in the back, that most of them came from an elevated position, that the bullets had an upward incline.

Can you see them, confused at that moment of silence, right after realizing what had been done, Can you hear one in the bunch saying, "Find an excuse for the media, say we shot him when he was reaching for his gun!" Isn't it funny how they call us hideous, we're not the ones who plant evidence, or make up a motive when there isn't one.

Can you see the boy's mom when she found her son, killed by the system who is supposedly there to protect and to serve. Can you feel the uniformed evil creeping into their home to tear out a piece of their lives, took the voice of a family for granted, left their cries in the air unheard.

An officer of the law got killed the other day on T.V., saw the hound dogs and helicopters hunting and rallying to bring peace to their comrade's dust. I didn't sit there like many of my friends screaming that we were even at the races, though a question did come to mind, WHO HUNTS FOR OUR JUSTICE WHEN THEY KILL ONE OF US!

*-Antonio Soria, Jr.*

*Super fine big boned all that caramel colored latina girls*

mira las super fine big boned all that caramel colored latina girls  
with their too tight jeans and their spiral curls

they have chocolate lips and big ol hips/in proportion mas o menos  
mira las super fine big boned all that caramel colored latina girls

si coneces una coneces dos because todo el mundo knows that  
super fine big boned all that caramel colored latina girls travel  
in sets/look around look around

if you have yet to see some super fine big boned all that caramel  
colored latina girls just look around

-Sylvia Ehrhart

*thefutureofmyselflessness*

Telling everyone where to find the strawberry sandwiches can be hectic.

People relying on you to fix their sweet tooth for fruit layered conversations.

Peace is embracing control in the midst of a thousand bees when you decided it would be  
therapeutic to bath in honey.

Good luck.

Sleeping with the light on so you can read your frightened thoughts.

For some reason you never end up getting good rest.

This keypad is like a stringed instrument

playing the music of my words on d-lite 1999 AD personal radio.

I gain an audience by tongue tickling groove paragraphs, leading somewhere, destination hazy,  
but definitely bright.

Somewhere in there I'll meet up with myself and go start a relationship.

Find some culture I once made fun of and actually appreciate its creative cream.

As good as my own and more so as my neighbor.

-Tyler Young

## The Break

I asked for a double shot  
straight up  
no ice  
I like my whiskey warm  
The bartender released the glass from  
his nubby fingers  
slid it down the grain and  
nodded the completion of delivery  
I looked down  
it was only a single shot and  
there were three ice cubes in my glass  
floating round  
melting and diffusing  
diluting the potency of my drink  
If I had the nerve I might send it back  
get a shot of tequila  
and let it burn as it goes down  
but  
that might seem a little blasphemous  
not to mention masochistic  
and this bartender is the type to tell me  
to drink what I was given.  
I wait for the ice to disappear  
for him to pour out some of his soul  
and maybe  
just maybe my wait will be justified  
but I tell myself  
I don't want to fool myself  
and he's pushing me away  
he can't stop his fear  
and I can't stop touching him inside  
I'm wrapped around the glass  
I'm tethered to the ice  
he can't stop trying  
and I can't stop thinking  
this isn't what I want  
and the consequences of  
compromising myself  
might be too severe  
and I never wanted this  
The whiskey shakes the glass  
as I hold it in my hand  
I roll it past my lips  
the coolness stings my teeth  
I run it down my throat  
and it warms me up  
again  
and I leave three ice cubes in the glass  
because I never wanted any of this.

*-Erin Callahan*

*within my sea castle*

Sea my box  
 upon the night's table  
 the one from an old antique store  
 downtown maybe  
 the container with the castle engraved and painted on the lid  
 the castle that looks or reminds me of Tolkien's masterpiece  
 invention's on the lid  
 the one I keep my screws in  
 (for when I get a screw loose)  
 my screwdriver is a book makin' my head straight  
 you think I'm being symbolic  
 but I really do, believe me  
 my box is real; it's there  
 right along with me  
 my handy little tool box  
 my need  
 or necessity  
 my aim or shot  
 or maybe both...or maybe  
 I've been trying to soften a softness  
 which is a fair endeavor to choose  
 a comfort to sink in  
 endless round the daydream  
 staring  
 thinking  
 of the stars  
 they are a belt that twinkles and tightens confidence  
 to be loved  
 a cherishment  
 of reward to return                      and to be returned  
 props set up the stage for acting  
 but the critics give me a bad review  
 they say things like, "he's no actor!"  
 so it's a want no longer needed or desired  
 Water  
 fresh and simple?  
 fresh and simple.  
 to be attained of a far greater beauty                      care for it                      share for it  
 a spherical presence  
 to start out feeling groovy  
 Let the readers read this:  
 Try to discover a far greater truth that  
 Is love?  
 Is love.

*-Tyler Young*



Sketch in Blue

Tiziano D. Hernandez

## UNTITLED

The candle's gentle radiance suggests a proposition to satisfy this intense craving  
The precarious motion of your lips enhances the subtle rhythm of your tongue  
The profound yearning dominates our sex  
Please  
Now  
Touch Me  
The excursion our curious hands travel through heighten the urge  
The unyielding touch of our skin together magnifies this hurting lust  
The passion fevers commanding our sex  
Please  
Now  
Taste Me  
The existing dampness swelling between my thighs emits a desperate insanity  
The pulse of your mouth absorbs the wetness and overwhelms your taste  
The scent consumes the air maddening our sex  
Please  
Now  
Release Me

*Nicki Pierce*

## UNTITLED

From where I stand you are different  
I see you as a lamp with a light bulb  
not high enough for your power.  
You are the last bite of a really good dessert  
when I am about to explode.  
You are the one bathroom for women and  
the line is a mile long.  
You are the ATM machine that is out of order.  
You are an architect immune to my advances.  
But that's only from where I stand.

*Jo Vamvakias*

### *Sweet Siren Song*

The lure of lunacy  
Is calling to me  
Cross the line...  
Cross the line.

Flee your misery  
By embracing me  
Cross the line...  
Cross the line.

Come to me,  
Don't tarry long  
And I'll give to you  
Ophelia's song  
Cross the line...  
Cross the line.

Oh, wondrous whispers  
How enticing  
But, it's not time...  
It's not time.

Oh, blessed beckoning  
How inviting  
But, it's not time...  
It's not time.

I've yet poems to write,  
And stories to share  
Only when they're gone  
Will I join you there  
But, it's not time...  
To cross the line.

**-Deborah Blount**

### **After the Plums** **(for William Carlos Williams)**

I am walking through green grass  
daisies, sunflowers, clover fields  
Warm sunshine caresses skin  
Pleasant daydreams  
Holding hands with William,  
I smile up at him and say,  
Tell me about the plums  
Tell me how it felt  
biting into the first one  
the juice dribbling at your lips  
tongue flicking out  
to draw those drops in  
like a lazy frog  
catching a fly  
The cool smooth skin  
sliding down your throat  
then another,  
and another,  
and the last one  
The guilt  
The note you left apologizing  
If it had been me,  
I would have been awake  
and we would have found  
other things more pleasurable.

*Michèle Rainford*

## Good-bye Bucket Drummer

Thought we had already talked about those early trips bro, probably as much as we talked about how our lives seem to suck. If it wasn't people throwing our faults in our face, it was our background always meddling its nose in our hustle for the buck. You know what I think about the misses in her darkness, likes to pick up greats early, place them on her shelves as rewards for her most recent fight. Guess our eighth grade teacher was partly right when she said we were going to grow up to be some thugs, partly wrong when they said we had no sentiments, underneath all that ink, you always wanted to do the right.

So long since I heard from you, since that day you pulled up with your chick's cousins and said you loved me before you drove off. Instead of exchanging says with you, I let it hang in my throat, trying to create a mental frame for that expression after revealing that your wife had gave birth to a cute little moth.

Where you going Dog, the picture has not developed yet, our backhouse band, like our lives, we got to keep on playing, the fridge is still full of bud and the sac is only halfway gone. Tell us that you're leaving only for a little bit, that when we learn to see with a sense other than our eyesight, we'll find you kicking it that famous front porch Bennington lawn.

Looks like you're going to break the promise buddy, where we're supposed to get drunk together at my wedding, then kick out all the guests and securities for all those times they kicked us out before. Once the plain is empty, we're going to suade side to side like two born losers staring at some Northside DJ and saying, "What, there's nothing wrong when two good buddies are dancing a love song on the floor!"

I see you driving away again, this time will be a little different, this time we get to say we love you and you get to look at us with that proud face and say, "I know". By now, I hope you realize that you can get married and move miles away from the hood to raise your family, but these crazy childhood friendships are too deep to ever outgrow.

**-Antonio Soria, Jr.**

## Conquistador

Rusty boxcars ride rusty rails  
Their creaking movement whispers tales  
Tragedies of fields and flowers  
Conquered by technology's power  
Vines scream to reclaim  
Territory stolen by the train  
Have their necks slashed  
Between the wheels and the tracks  
Dissecting the night  
With its yellowing light  
As it screams past my door  
Afterthoughts whisper its name...  
Conquistador

-Micah S. Jackson



El Paso Mission

Nicki Pierce



Just You

Bianca Burks

*Your naïve lips hypnotize me  
 their sultry movement  
 propel me into seduction  
 Your captivating eyes invite me  
 A kingdom of majestic thoughts  
 conquer my sanity  
 Your alluring presence casts my temptation into an uncontainable dream state  
 This overwhelming desire leaves me stargazing  
 in a rainbow bubble of fantasy  
 Come  
 Into my castle in the clouds  
 and I will answer any desire that questions you  
 nicki pierce*

## *Eccentric Woman*

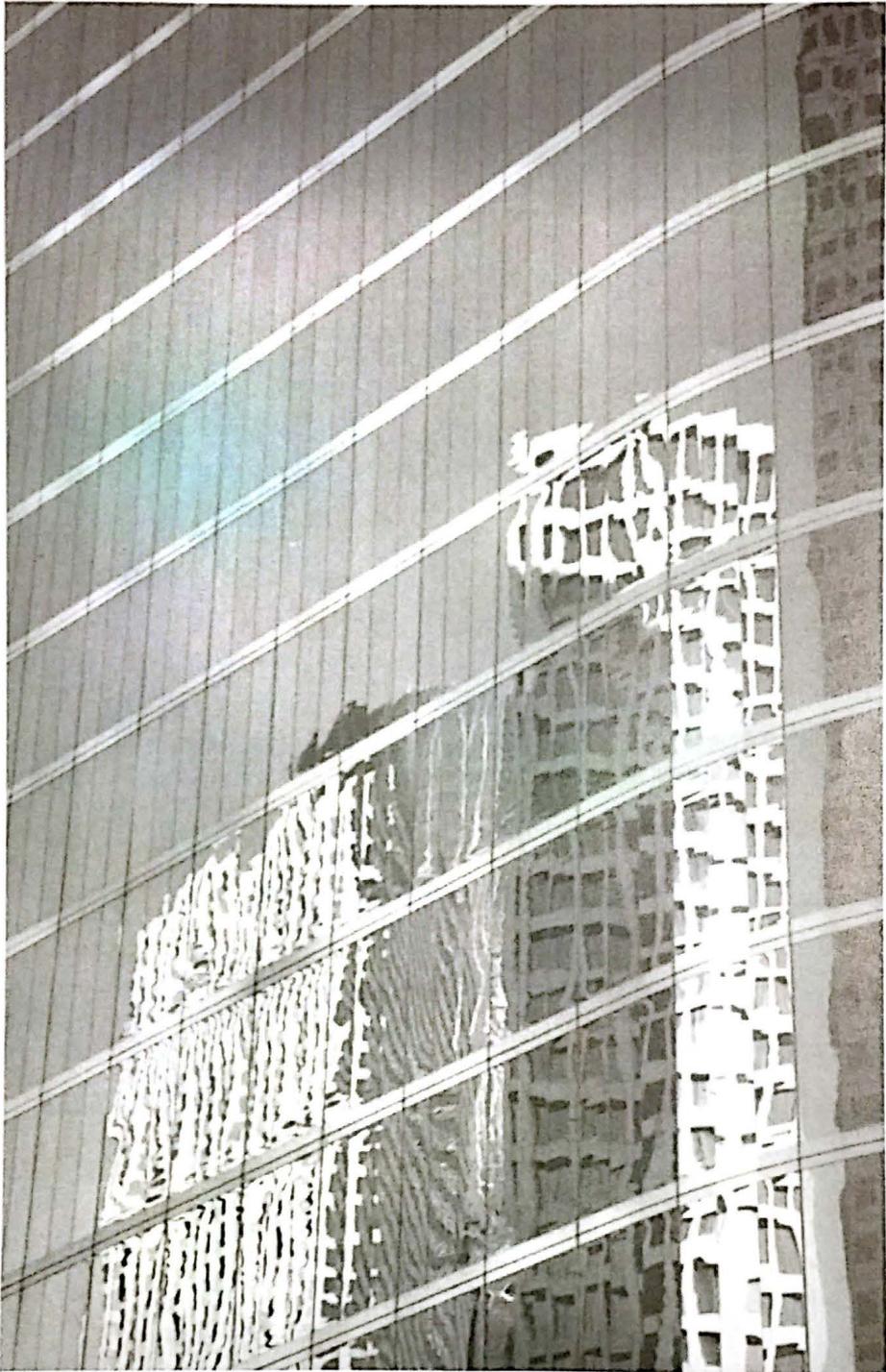
Free-willed, Determined  
 Elegant and strong  
 A heart that stretches a mile long  
 Her love is truly one of a kind  
 A captivating look, with ambition in mind  
 The distinction of an achiever  
 Not worried if others do not receive her  
 Possessing the beauty of a rose  
 Her purpose in life she already knows  
 A walk of confidence  
 Sure of who she is  
 Full of faith, able to stand  
 Strong enough to uplift her man  
 Be his backbone, stand by his side  
 She is the assurance in a man's stride  
 Because of her loving face, her warm embrace  
 Strength follows women no matter the race  
 A leader with the idea to prosper  
 A great influence to all that follow her  
 With a mind to succeed in life  
 She will make the sacrifice  
 Because she is a survivor  
 As well as a comforter  
 Through thick and thin  
 She is God's gift to man  
 The eccentric woman

*-Natalie Cartwright*

## **Untitled**

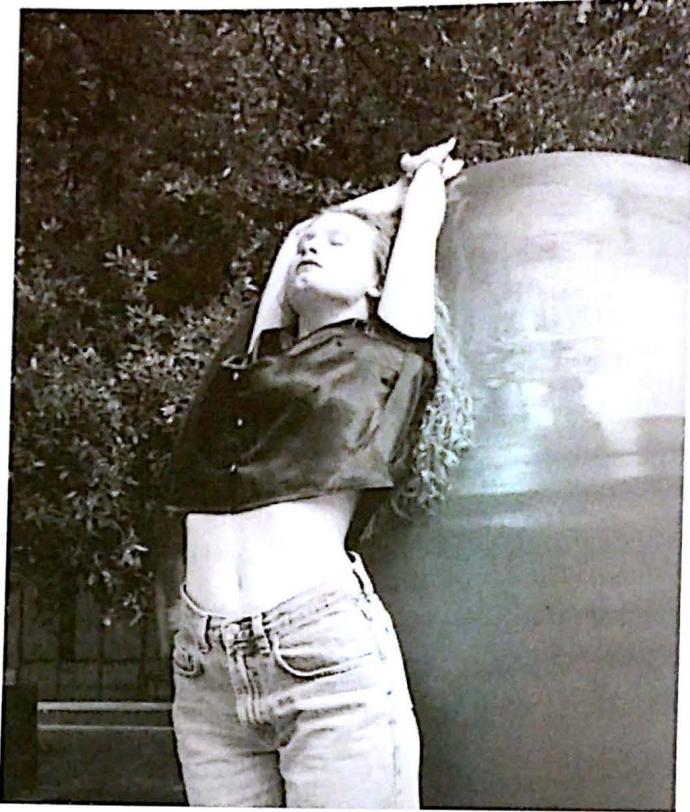
Waiting in the parking lot  
 sun rising, morning dew  
 dissolved. I'm alone, without  
 joy, without motion  
 A careless look into the sky  
 cigarette burns to ashes  
 falling on my knees I'm out  
 of breath, out of life itself  
 With mediocre thoughts to embrace  
 me, catch me, build me into a  
 breathing ruin. The steady  
 rhythm of cars pass on by  
 sirens blazing, horns honking, trains  
 passing, voice mumbling, body dying  
 A simple day, a plain hour  
 Friends writing in other cities  
 people loving in old buildings,  
 I shudder, I turn out  
 my feet touch the ground  
 dying descriptions accompany me to  
 the University, up elevators,  
 down stairs, into rooms  
 A simple day, a plain hour.

-Radames Ortiz



Reflections

Mayra S. Mendoza



Breathe

Nicki Pierce

### MY BELOVED

I had a soul before I met you  
Well at least until I fell In Love with you  
I believe you took my soul instead of my heart  
A zombie is what I am without you  
because I do not feel alive until you are around  
I can only recall events in my life that we shared  
And look forward to the future with you there  
I am bewildered by my affection toward you  
or my addiction of you  
I do not want to die with a broken heart  
or my unwillingness to have my soul back  
without you I am a lonely ghost  
in a hopeless search for love

- Jo Vamvakias

## unfurl

heavenly nobody, your bluster does not live in me anymore  
 here, where the sun disappears, the giving tree has withered again  
 tired of being comfortable; how long must your swan sing?  
*she rose from the ash*, my phoenix flew just over your head  
 holes in my sky illuminate into past lives you dared to dream of  
 your shadow fed on my derailment; crimson light bathes the distance  
 between  
 us ...  
 winded,  
 you pushed me off your boat; "once divided, nothing left to subtract"<sup>1</sup>  
 unkindly removed, backbone and veins, you left a waste of skin  
 soft pile am i with stupid muscle left to conquer alone; you prefer  
 to reside in her *Slow Motion*; my reality shriveled in bloody palms  
 like honey your visage once was, you've since water dressed yourself in  
**BROWN** (shit)

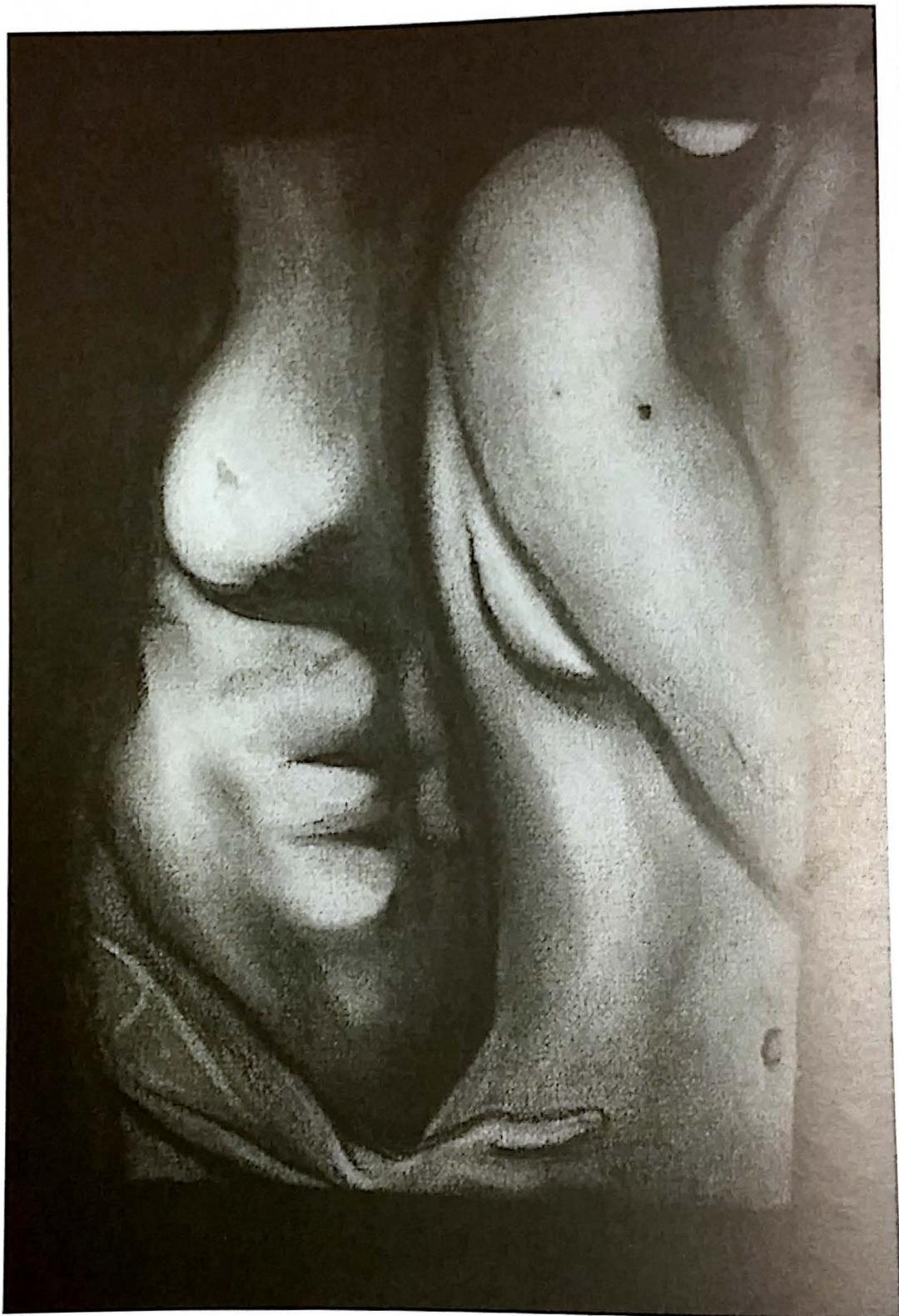
from the solid to vapor state you went then, back to solid,  
 reeking of insipid significance, *carrion is not fit for a growing girl*  
 no more blanketing skeletons in closets with your false attire  
 extricate slowly from sticky webs--woven reveries and desires bleed  
 yet i robe myself in your demeanor; tempt and defang me please  
 Violet and Scarlet scream and fuse and tinge the tiny patch of skin  
 between  
 my ...  
 breasts.  
 your fortress gives way, earth tumbles upon me, "i grew less and less tall"<sup>2</sup>  
 portable envy, irony, and heat twist to fuel my innards--*and she unfurls*  
 not far from here--i'll show you where--lies Shangri-La sought in vain  
 awoke to *Mourning Air*; cut myself--out poured your dourness, fucking shame  
 you deform, you desorb--black thickness, timid sickness swirl in my eyes, lies, out,  
**OUT** (good-bye)

-Maria Ines Ocampo

---

<sup>1</sup> Pearl Jam, "Nothingman"

<sup>2</sup> Ani DiFranco, "Both Hands"



Torch Song

Maria Ines Ocampo

*Looking at a woman*

Along the roses and fields of tulips  
Beside the river that bites into your little feet  
How I love your little dark feet,  
And the grass that caresses them.  
You give me somnolent gazes,  
Looks that foreshadows loss,  
I die before you begin to speak,

Scream and let me hear your silence  
Foment the roots of happy butterflies  
Resting on the web,  
Where the spider is weeping over murdered beauty,

Do you feel the rain around you,  
Drop after drop from the enamoured blue,  
You are what colors my night,

Let me rest and rest on your undulating musk  
And lay and lay upon you,  
And with feathers left by deserted lovers,  
I brush and outline your body,  
I forbid my eyes to see.

-Mahdi Jaber

## Pieces of the Shattered Mirror

A story was written about me a long time ago depicting my life. The life was that of a Mother, Wife, Sister; it was a life of the exterior world, a world that never touched my real world. I lived in the *Shadow of a Man* until the man died. I don't think that the thought of living in the shadow of a man is as frightening as living in the shadow of myself. Many days I recall looking in the mirror and catching a glimpse of what happened to be a woman curled up in the fetal position with her dark eyes glaring at me, as if those eyes were saying to me "*Yo existo. Existo yo*".<sup>1</sup> I, too, just like Lupe, lived with a mirror image. I will relate to you the dialogue the mirror image and I experienced--just don't tell anybody; it will be our secret. I invoke the muses and submit myself to their will. I am known as Hortencia.

I lived my life on pins and needles, which reminds me of my little garden outside my house full of *chiles*, *nopales*, and roses. Nobody asked me if that is the kind of life I wanted, I just received it, a grandiose gift from destiny, that big monster that passes out sentences without regard for human life. As I looked in the mirror, I saw something I had never seen before. Manuel had landed some heavy blows around my face and it was swollen. I saw the color purple around my eyes and heard a soft voice speak: "*Quien soy yo?*".

When she addressed me, I responded angrily: "Who the fuck are you?" Please understand, this side of me had never been exposed to my children, my husband, or my parents, not even my sister; it was a rapport known only to the two of us, the mirror image and myself. "Oh yeah, you are *la pendeja que se esconde para gemir*; weakly piece of shit, the one that in the days of old when papi would beat the shit out of you, would urinate all over herself."

How incredible is the ability of a soul to seek refuge when the storm comes in. It is not uncommon that when a person experiences terror, they lose all bodily functions. The soul appears to take flight at the sight of terror; it does not want to participate in or witness the kind of pain that humans in power inflict on the weaker ones. It is easy to be a macho when the only challenge is a woman that has not been trained to fight her master. A woman, who has only lived through her family, which was my case, finds her fortress in a mirror image that forces her to see the horror, the horror. When the soul returns from its flight, you find yourself soaked in your own urine. Perhaps that is why I poured the vinegar all over my body after Manuel *me desprecio y me golpeo*. "*Estoy sucia*. My body smells bad". I remember screaming as I made my way to the bathroom dragging Lupe along with me; she also enjoyed talking to the mirror image. And my Leticia with her encouraging words: "It's not your fault". *Pobre hija*, she could not understand what her mami was going through. I knew then that things would be different for her. If only her precious words had penetrated my soul, cut through the root of my very being, but they could not. Those words could not reach me. I believed that I had caused all the pain myself, that I was to blame, that if a knife cut deeper I would be able to feel life, that the only way to feel my body was through pain.

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Perhaps Conrado's touch was appealing to me because it was forbidden, because it was a violation of my body or of the sacredness, which we give to the sexual relationships of two married people. Maybe I just enjoyed violating the vow; my opportunity to fight the church without weapons; my weapon was my body, maybe that is why it felt so good. "We learned to live *con nuestros diablitos*".<sup>1</sup> And the mirror image forced me to look at them. But even after seeing them, I would wear the mask.

I wore the mask. Once Manuel told me: "You just wan' to put on the face in front of those gringos". What Manuel did not realize is that those gringos were not the only ones exposed to my mask. My persona was also his wife, the mother, and the sister, each with its distinct characteristics. The wife always running behind him as if he were a child unable to care for himself. *Planchando, lavando, limpiando, pero lo mas feo* was taking his clothes off and putting them on as if he were incapable of such doing. It was not uncommon to get the urge to burn his *pantalones, el desgraciado, ingrato*, would say that the creases were not good enough. As for the mask of the mother, cooking for them was one of my delights. But there were days that I wanted to say: "*mueranse de hambre.*" No one would have guessed. The *palo*, as I extended the tortilla, created a rhythm; it had a beat, a distinct pattern with a natural flow. And now for the sister, I wish I could say that she knew every dark side of me, but she didn't. I let her in probably more so than anyone else. But she never knew that I enjoyed the pain, that I felt I deserved it. She never knew that so many times I wanted to die. My poor little girls heard me say: "*por que no me mata tu papa*".<sup>1</sup> I was also happy when Manuel died, which my sister never knew. Dutifully, the responsibility fell on me to protect everyone, which meant I had to hide behind a mask.

A life in the shadows of myself was my fate. A curtain had been drawn presenting me with all my bruises, but only when I dare to see myself in the reflection, only when I made the conscious effort to see what appeared to be a stranger was I delivered from my own self-inflicted bondage. We are left at awe when we come to the realization that we are not looking in the mirror, that all the years we have thought that we looked in the mirror we were not seeing through, we were seeing on the surface. The surface is cold, the outside texture is rough, and it can cut but only when we dare to break through it.

*-Leticia A. Klock*

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<sup>1</sup>Quotes from "Shadow of a Man"  
by Cherrie Moraga.



Olvido

Mayra S. Mendoza

## Especially You

I love you but I will no longer go on like this  
I cannot compete with a ghost for your affections  
I can no longer stand idly by and watch you throw away  
Your chance at happiness with me

Talk to me, tell me what you're thinking  
I see emotions go by in your eyes  
Even when you refuse to give them a voice  
Say something, do something

Fight, fight for us  
Even for the hope of us  
Anything would be better than this indecision  
This reluctance to dream that you deserve better, you do

I will fight but I cannot do it alone  
I need you  
Even if I can't have all of you, I need to know that you're there  
And that you're willing to hold on, it will get better

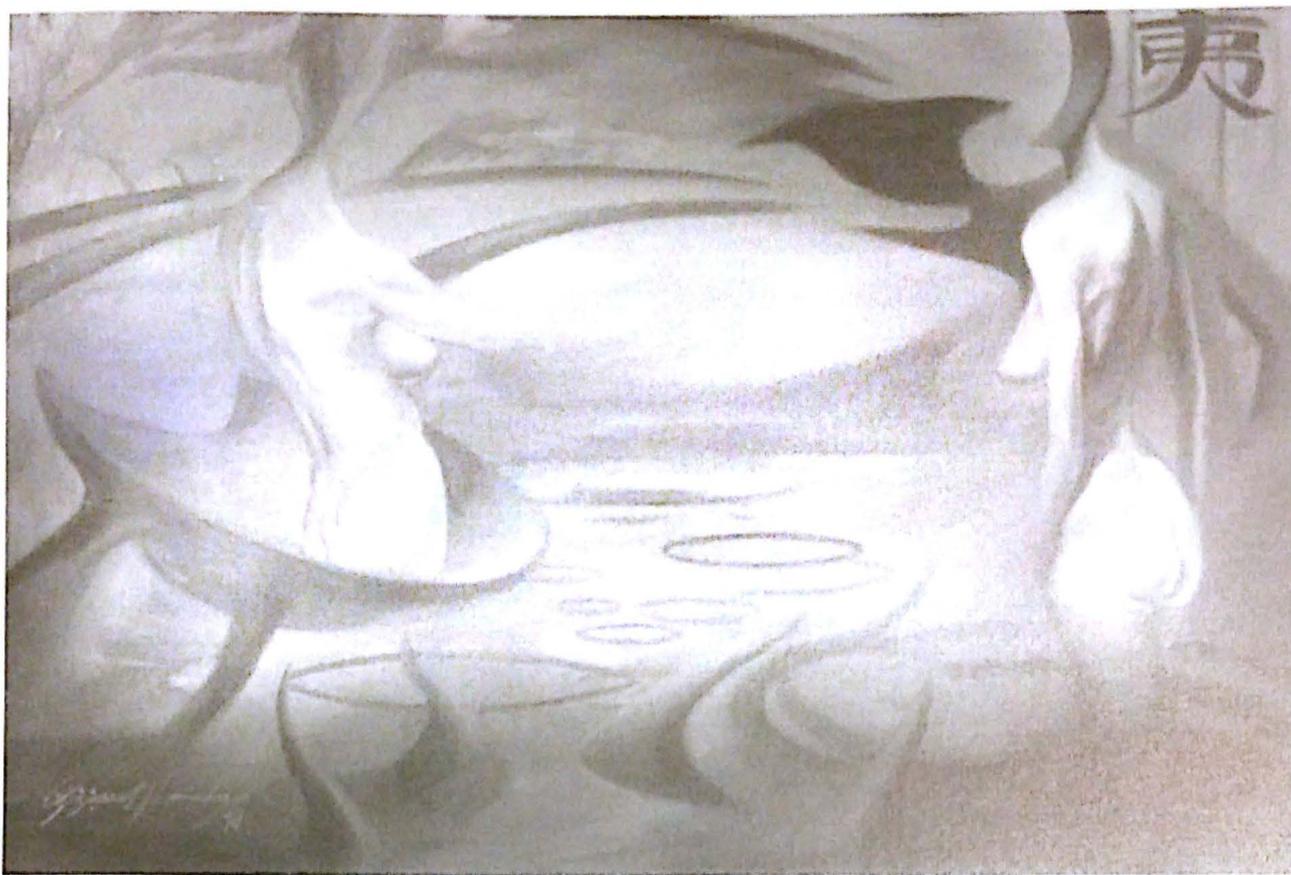
If you never believe anything else that I have to say  
Believe this, I love you more than life itself  
And that scares me but the possibility of living without you  
Scares me more, so don't give up on me, don't give up on us  
We will get through this, together  
After all, the greatest things in life  
Are the ones worth fighting for,  
Especially you

*-Catherine Woods*

## Yesterday's News

Painter in the mall, would you draft what yesterday used to look like,  
    Could you sketch the wings that carried us both,  
        would you stain her in a rocky river naked,  
    while all that flows through the stream are her clothes?  
    Yesterday was a renewed fountain of youth,  
a midnight that strived to bond the roots of a daisy to those of a tree,  
    the past so charming and breathtaking, flourished deep inside,  
    like when the wildflower makes love to the bee.  
To all of you who have criticized me, because I live in the past,  
if one day we argued, my todays are based on yesterday's news.  
    You see, everything that passes tells a story,  
    as daddy's chair rocks in the slip of her shoes.  
    Yeah, the knife is deep, in so many ways and trails,  
where once the passion hideaway, depression lies there now,  
    every spot marked with anxiety is under the umbrella,  
    still scratching my tomorrows off the calendar somehow.  
How does one love someone else in all the days to follow,  
    if he's in love with the voice of yesteryear.  
As kids, without meaning, we would draw the arrow going through the heart,  
    Palm Readers, why does this memory feel like a spear.  
    So many places that speak of us,  
from the delicacies of the flower shop to those nude virtues that still decorate the bench.  
How can you tell me that she's yesterday's news,  
    if all around the breeze is our intimacy's stench.

-Antonio Soria, Jr.



Priming

Tiziano D. Hernandez

## H U S H

I am challenged by the oxygen that surrounds you  
Consumed by the thoughts of "What if".....  
As I lay next to you in the still night silence  
I am forced to resist the urge to invade the darkness that covers your body  
I want to feel whole again, the way I felt before puberty.  
So clean, so innocent.  
I want to bask in your energy  
The need for the relief I deserve is overwhelming  
You can quench my thirst so lets start with a kiss.

-Jo Vamvakias

## The Man with the Odd Expression

For a twelve-year-old some experiences may change your life. That's what happened to me. I was returning from school, as any other day, when I decided to take a shortcut. And as you can guess, I got lost. I wasn't afraid, at least not yet.

After twenty minutes of walking, I found myself near the old train station in a suburb called "dead walking". This was called this because the people who lived there didn't have enough money to eat, so they looked like dead people. Nervously, I began walking down the streets, finding myself surrounded by buildings that looked like they have had better days, and also by some houses made of cardboard. Here I saw some kids playing around.

After a while the people of that place began to notice me, that's when I got scared. I began walking faster trying to avoid eye contact, but I wasn't successful, so I ran as fast as I could trying to leave that place behind me. Instead I ended up stumbling upon some man, and he grabbed. With tears in my eyes, I begged him to release me. He eventually did but with an odd expression. I turned around and ran into the train rails and I fell, directly in front of a train. I screamed and thought that was my end, but to my surprise the man whom I had stumbled on before jumped to my side and pushed me out of danger. But it was too late for him.

After that people began to gather around the place, then later the police came, at least I think they did, I'm not sure. The only thing that I could think of was the man who saved my life, the one I thought was going to hurt me, but he didn't. He saved my life and died because of me.

Twenty years have passed and I still remember that day when a complete stranger showed me what it was to be human, when I was saved by the man with the odd expression.

-Ricardo L. Fernandez

## Man of the Century

He has been everywhere.

Trekking to the summit of rugged, snow-capped mountains,  
Crossed lonesome, windswept, endless deserts,  
Trampled through steaming, suffocating jungles,  
Journeyed downward to the forbidding depths of every sea ... only to discover his own grave.

He has done everything.

Liberated oppressed and discriminated peoples from hellish captivity,  
Inflicted unspeakable acts of torture and barbarism upon his brothers,  
Rescued generations of melancholic children from certain doom,  
Raped, sodomized countless, faceless mothers, daughters, and sisters.

He possesses ferocious power.

Beautifully polished phallic artifacts of gleaming alloy,  
Tools of maddening destruction; powers far beyond the savagery of a perpetual phalanx.  
Courageous pioneer, leader of our technological renaissance,  
Curator to this mindless orgy of ordnance collection.

He has felt everything.

Catapulted to euphoric states of pleasure courtesy of unbridled, well-deserved praise,  
Pained by the impassioned shouts of condemnation from the living,  
and the haunting echoes of despair from victims of heart numbing atrocities.  
Proud of his historic successes under the banner of a supposedly righteous homeland,  
Yet forever tormented by his own very personal often diabolical deeds.

He is not god ... far from it.

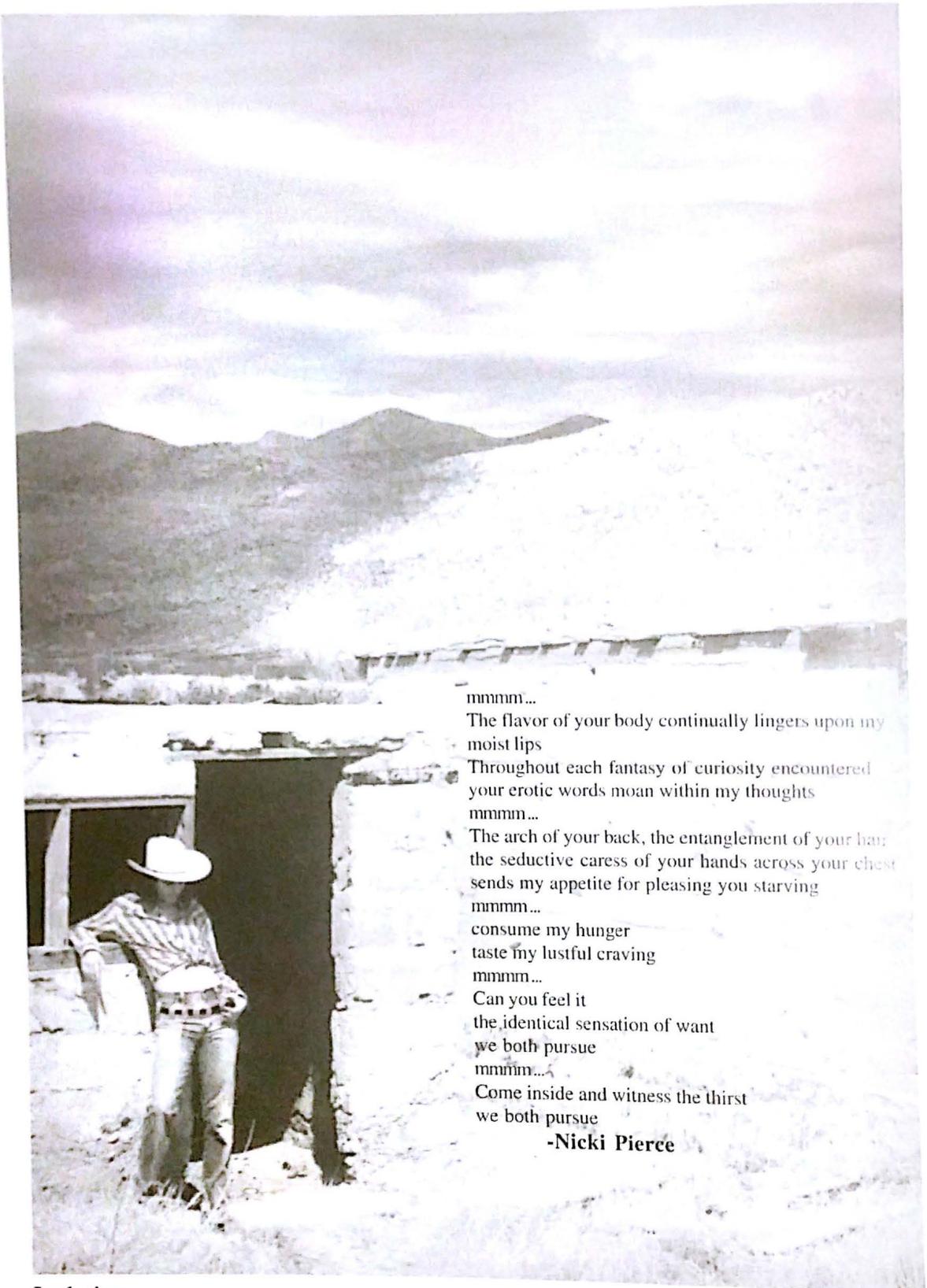
He is neither hero nor villain; an oxymoron ... perhaps.

His status is not altogether unique, he numbers in the millions.

He is not necessarily free, mentally captivated by the persuasiveness of others.

He is merely an instrument ... a pawn of circumstance ... a tool of perverted agendas ...  
a fettered being whose flesh is ripe for slaughter all in the name of \_\_\_\_\_.

*-Ernest Ramirez*



mmmm...

The flavor of your body continually lingers upon my moist lips

Throughout each fantasy of curiosity encountered your erotic words moan within my thoughts

mmmm...

The arch of your back, the entanglement of your hair the seductive caress of your hands across your chest sends my appetite for pleasing you starving

mmmm...

consume my hunger taste my lustful craving

mmmm...

Can you feel it the identical sensation of want we both pursue

mmmm...

Come inside and witness the thirst we both pursue

**-Nicki Pierce**

Isolation

Ernest Ramirez

## *From the Editor's Notebook*

This is my second and final semester as Editor of *The Bayou Review*. In reflecting upon the past eight months, I can honestly say that this assignment has been a truly enlightening experience. Lots of memories ... a vast majority of them great memories. Indeed, from my perspective, the enjoyment and advantages of being the Editor of *The Bayou Review* far exceed any minor obstacles and inconveniences. For some insight into these positive experiences, I offer to you the following highlights:

### **Submissions - October 1998**

Following an intensified effort to bring about renewed interest in literary expression among UHD students, *The Bayou Review* was rewarded with a record number of submissions--171 in all. The quality and scope of these contributions were reflective of the amazing diversity of our student population.

### **Writers Luncheon - November 1998**

With the idea of bringing inspiration and guidance to young writers, *The Bayou Review* held a luncheon during which published writers offered advice and support to UHD students. Novelists Bruce Gilken, Robert Gray, and feature writer Marianne Dyson provided words of encouragement as well as candid insights into the joys and tribulations of becoming published. A special "thank you" goes out to these three talented and generous people.

### **Spring Break Photography Shoot - March 1999**

In trying to encourage interest in photography among UHD students, two Fall 1998 contributors--Nicki Pierce and Mayra Mendoza--were rewarded for their submissions with an all-expenses paid trip to El Paso, Texas, courtesy of *Bayou Review* Editor Ernest Ramirez. Nicki and Mayra visited historic and cultural sites within the El Paso area as well as journeying to the Guadalupe Mountains (the highest peak in Texas) and the White Sands (New Mexico) Monument. In addition to Nicki and Mayra, the irreplaceable Beverly LaFleur was also on hand.

### **Submissions - April 1999**

Building upon the success of the Fall 1998 semester, once again a record number of submissions (183) were received by *The Bayou Review*. I was particularly pleased with the fact that the number and quality of photographs submitted had risen to a level comparable to that of the written contributions.

### **Publishing - December 1998 & May 1999**

I am pleased to have been the first and only Editor to produce two magazine sized issues (8.5 x 11) in a single academic year. The experience of running two editions was invaluable to me and could be equally significant to anyone who wishes to pursue an interest in publishing. A note of gratitude must go out to Henry, Brenda, Rachel, and Tiffany for their help in this process.

### **Jane and Maria - Fall 1998 & Spring 1999**

Working with Dr. Jane Creighton and Maria Ines Ocampo was the most pleasurable part of this assignment. While we have had our share of disagreements (and then some) we were a great team. In many respects Jane and Maria were the true foundations of our efforts to bring written and visual creativity and reflection to the University of Houston-Downtown. I will miss our close association.

Also, recognition goes out to some really special friends of the Bayou Review:

*Susan Ahern, Linda Coblenz, Ann Jennings, and Sergio Rizzo*