The Bayou Review
The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight into the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality
The Bayou Review
Literary and Arts Magazine

Table of Contents

POETRY

Running In The Puddles
By Stan O'Neal 1

The Dwarf
By Michael Dressman 5

Bus Ride
Joseph R. Williams 6

Saturday Night at Club Alacrán
By Tomás Vallejos 12

Suburban Saturdays
By Lorenzo Thomas © 13

Flowers
By Glenmary Russell Fauro 16

The Bayou's Review
By Jim T. Middleton 17

A Frame For Death
By Don D. Elgin 18

Fiction

Koo Koo Ka Choo
By Ian Edward Dix © 2

The Quest
By Manny Mitra 9

I'm sorry Joey
By Dean Nielsen 14

John, Marsha and Junior
By Bob Breen 32

Non-fiction

American Dream
By Sharon Coleman 24
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Dedicated to the memory
of
Charlotte Anders
Running In The Puddles

By the time winter comes,
all dreams will be ashes.

Forehead pressed to the window pane,
staring through the glass from
an ironcast frame bed
as a slow moving blanket of grey,
cast a shadow on the late of day.
Sounds of children splashing
beside the house, running
in puddles left by yesterday's rain.
I played in rain when I was young,
wading through it barefoot.
Tomorrows's sun will dry it up,
even the drops inside the window glass.
Only their faint streak stains will last,
by the time winter has passed.

Stan O'Neal
Koo Koo Ka Choo

The bums had started the usual fire in the alley that night. It should have been just another night of drinking and remembering, one of sparkling blue stars and icy crust at the corners of the mouth and sweet, purple Mad Dog around the fire. But there came that night three people from off the street, three strangers like wise men from the land of silken girls and sherbet. Each came walking up the alley, on cue, as if making cameo appearances on stage in some high school play.

The man with the fur collar came first, puffing a long cigarette from a long cigarette holder and swishing his way along the alley to the amazement of the bums. The bums said nothing, but looked at their leader, Big Ed, who had a square, Irish head and big ears and had once been King of the hobos.

Big Ed became suspicious. He wanted to question the stranger when another person approached from the alley. A lady in a red raincoat, with short blonde bangs sticking out of a fur hat, stepped cautiously around the debris in the alley and came forward with a spry step.

“Hi there,” she said cheerily to the group. The man in the fur collar rolled his eyes up to heaven, and the bums stood gawking.

“Let’s see now, what was it?” the young lady asked. She furrowed her brow in concentration and rolled her eyes up, like she was trying to see into her brain for the answer.

“Oh yes, I remember.”

“Beaver,” she said very seriously, “died in Vietnam.” The lady paused and looked around at blank stares.

“Er, I mean Jerry Mathes,” she corrected herself, “the person who played Beaver, died in Vietnam.” She said nothing more, but stood with a vapid smile and looked from face to face.

The bums were now visibly agitated, but Terks smiled a sad smile. Good ol’ Beav. The others were offended by these sudden intrusions. Each bum was wary of the weird charade, as if the whole event were orchestrated by some sinister and unseen hand. Was it some kind of put on for the amusement of polite society? Did the center no longer hold? Was some revelation at hand?

“Is this some kinda joke?” Lester asked sincerely in a Midwestern drawl, not waiting for a revelation. His mouth had hung in a dull gape as he tried to assess the strangers. Two folks from polite society appearing at a hobo camp, talking about menthol cigarettes and Beaver Cleaver beat the hell out of any fireside story he’d ever heard.

The strangers said nothing and Big Ed again felt compelled to take charge. The members group had shifted around instinctively, so that the bums stood on one side of the fire and the strangers on the other. There was an unspoken movement to protect tenitory. Big Ed spoke up.

“Lookeehere,” Ed said with a serious frown, “I don’t know where you folks are from but.”

“Just a minute! Just a minute!” a voice yelled from the alley.

An elderly man of sixty in a blue blazer and turtleneck emerged from the darkness, waving his arms at the group.

“I think all will be understood when you hear the news that I have to impart,” the man said in a tone implying dire consequences. He had a voice like a TV anchorman.

“Gentlemen,” the man said in a conspiratorial whisper, casting his eyes from face to face, “consider this: Walt Disney is frozen in suspended animation, waiting for the day they find a cure.”

The bums now all moved behind Big Ed and looked around him with nervous faces, like the Pawnee waiting for the shaman to explain the white devil’s bangstick. The ambassador of polite society stood with his arms crossed and waited in a what-do-you-think-of-me-now stance. The man in the fur collar puffed from his long cigarette holder and fidgeted like a ferret.

The blonde woman was trying to give each and every person a cheerful smile. Lester thought they were escapees from a home and Terks thought it was the apocalypse. Old Peter the Preacher at the mission had been threatening it for years. Mongo Jim was convinced that it was vintage 1968 Orange Sunshine returned for a fabled flashback, and that his mind would
play surrealistic, little B movies for the next twelve hours. Big Ed stood stock still and stared straight at the fire. He was flashing like Nostradamus in mid-quatrain.

"I've got it," Ed whispered finally, and snapped his fingers. The revelation was at hand. Ed fixed his sights upon the old man.

"I've got it," Big Ed again whispered, a little louder as he walked around the periphery of the fire, stalking the man like a cat. The old man shrunk back a little in surprise.

Ed crept to him slowly as everyone felt the tide turning. He stood above the polite society and leaned his hairy face right down into it and let loose the cannon:

"I buried Paul," Big Ed whispered. His face contorted to a cruel, hideous smile.

Old man slumped, with the pained look of having been found out. There was silence for a moment. The man in the fur collar winced and tried to look dignified, and turned slowly with the blonde lady shuffling towards the alley. The bums cheered.

"Yeah! Yeah! He buried Paul!" Lester yelled, pointing to Big Ed, not understanding but caught up in the power of the incantation. "He buried Paul!"

"Number Nine! Number Nine!" Mongo Jim now chimed in, raining more verbal arrows on the retreating intruders. "I am the Egg Man! I'M VERY BORED!"

Polite society disappeared down the alley and the elation of routing the enemy sent hobo spirits soaring. They sang and yelled and drank long and loudly into the night.

Ian Edward Dix

---

Don't make fun of him, dear
He's a millionaire,
Used to be a cheerleader,
Now sells toys-
By the thousands.
Alias
Christmas elf
One of the Diminutive Seven
One of his own wares.

Don't be cruel, dear.
Midgets have their own lives, too.
Accepts your credit card
With pudgy-fingered hands
Stuck to short-shanked
Twisty-looking arms.
Peddler of
Wooden creativity
Games, puzzles, macrame
Madame Alexander dolls.
Ride your hobby with craft
To the market place.

Don't stare, dear.
There but for the grace...

Purveyor to neat-limbed children
Of the remembering hordes
Who watched him cavort
Gnome with megaphone
Urging the big line on.
Now the line
Is plaster horses
H-O trains, model autos
Fuzzy puppets, monsters.

While his son, 2'11" by 16 years,
Heaves stones at passing cars
That stop, heave pity, and move on.

You can't get angry at a dwarf, dear.

Michael Dressman
Bus Ride

I too wish to have your despair
Leg twisted and bent
You take time in forwarding any motion
But the old lady across in chair # 1
Thinks much and about nothing in the present
We are off Main and one street over,
Thank God you've a seat for the journey
'cause I wouldn't be able to stand your sight
Looking past me slumped and leaning
Days after this your shadow will
Haunt my insides furiously

Still, you've your mind
and given with your hands
You still do things right
Like paying bills, eating soup,
and being a Man
Yet, the woman dressed in black skin
Skulls you over with eyes bashing
your deformaties
(actually her insecurities)
She's long lank legged
With boughs of nylon netted
She gets off

the bus
And your eyes follow her home
She moves faster
Your foot clubbed and ready
to kick her

A hundred and some odd years have passed
since we can whitely master
But you the semi-rebel
Trying to feel those feelings
you miss
You gain and endure

I write you out here

It isn't here
I reread after-thought like birth and fourteen beers
And a pass out on the way
And find myself—
And find myself—
I try—I try
No, not me there
With my mind twisted and bent

After days of hobbling
does your shoe still fit?
The mirror still taunts me
to know what you did

Joseph R. Williams
The Quest

Kernan Gullixon stood in front of the dusty mirror in his dimly lit bedroom. He scratched his unimpressive, slightly concave chest. It was void of both muscle and hair. He yawned and ran his left hand through his unnatural curled and kinky hair. It was normally straight and limp. With his measly goatee and sparse moustache, the permanent made him resemble an anemic lion. He looked around the room for his clothes that he had laid out the previous night. The sound of a cast skillet hitting the linoleum kitchen floor startled him.

"Grandad?" Kernan asked too quietly, for the old man had the hearing of a firehouse dalmation.

"Who the hang left the— another metal object fell "Lord a mercy!"
Kernan scampered into the kitchen, still shirtless, "Grandad, let me fix breakfast."

The old man replied, never hearing his grandson, "Put some clothes on, this ain't no strip and tease joint!"

"Grandad, let me fix breakfast."

"Of course I'm fixin breakfast. Whatta ya think I'm choppin wood?"
Kernan took his grandfather by the shoulder and elbow and steered him to the table.

Kernan stood over the gas stove as he did every morning.

"Kernan, don't cook them bacons too long cause they get hard and caught in my teeth."

The old man spread out the morning paper all over the table. He stared down at the sports section. Kernan screamed as hot bacon grease attacked his torso. The grandfather never looked up as he said to himself "I told you to put some clothes on."

During breakfast, Kernan watched "The Today Show" while his grandfather snorted his disbelief at the newspaper. Kernan suspected that the old man never read the paper because he would snort his disbelief during the broadcast news. Kernan's grandfather began his daily stomach-churning hacking and coughing. After the old man had cleared his throat and sinus passages, he grabbed Kernan by the arm.

"Whatcha doin today boy?"

"Goin to work and after that I've gotta take Heather to the doctor's."

"Is that yo gal friend?" his grandfather asked playfully.

"No, only one of my scores of concubines," he said sarcastically.

"The doctor's?"

"Uh-huh" Kernan said as he tried to regain his concentration on Jane Pauley.

The old man's face took on a serious look as he told his grandson, "If that gal's carryin your child yor gonna hafta marry her. Kernan looked at the old man in both a stunned state and in disbelief. The closest he had come to sleeping with Heather was when he had to pick her up after a party. She
sat in a drunken stupor in his car, opened the glove compartment and violently vomitted into it. After which, she promptly passed out. While Kernan recalled that horrifying evening his grandfather said, “I’m serious too, boy.”

Kernan parked his car and went into his place of employment. He hated working for “Grundman’s Office Supply.” His co-workers took great delight in constantly tormenting him. Once he tried to retaliate by placing a bucket of water on the door of the stockroom. Unfortunately the bucket remained rather full and struck the cleaning lady on the head. It took five stitches to close up her wound. Kernan averted a lawsuit only because the woman was an illegal alien. However, she would swear in her native tongue whenever she was near Kernan.

As Kernan pushed through the streaked glass doors, the store manager perked to attention like a cheetah on the Serengeti Plain; she eyed Kernan as if he were an ailing antelope.

“Good morning.”

“Do you work today, Gullixon?”

“No, I’m going to loot the stockroom. I’ll be back to ravish you.” Kernan muttered as he walked back to the time clock. The manager stood up and yelled “I’ll be back there to count everything!”

The rest of the day was rather uneventful. One customer complained that the prices were too high and asked Kernan to do something about it. Kernan unwisely told her the reason for the high prices was that ten percent of the profits go to Satanic activities in the nation’s capitol. The manager, overhearing his explanation of the pricing policy, grabbed a cigarette lighter from another employee and threatened to burn Kernan’s hair off.

The ride to the doctor’s office consisted of Kernan quizzing Heather about her illness, while she turned up the radio. As Kernan guided his neglected 1975 Toyota Corolla into a parking stall, pedestrians stared at them because of the undecipherable music blaring from the cheap speakers. Kernan hopped out of the car and raced to the passenger side where he was hit in the chest with the door.

An obviously annoyed Heather briskly walked towards the doctor’s office, with Kernan on her heels like a chihuahua.

Heather returned from the examination room with a scowl on her face. Kernan, in a sincere but melodramatic show of concern, lunged to support her. Heather, in total surprise, reacted by kneeling him squarely in the groin. Kernan was doubled over in icy pain when Heather finally realized what was happening.

“Don’t your ever do that again! You scared me!”

“Sorry” Kernan wheezed.

It wasn’t until they were three blocks from the doctor’s office that Kernan regained enough of his breath to speak in sentences.

“What’d the doctor say?”

“He didn’t say anything.” Heather replied listlessly as she stared out the window.

“Well, do you need to take any medication?”

A mumbled expletive was the answer.

“Is it serious?”

“Look it’s not TB like I thought, it’s just a stupid cold, okay!”

“That’s great! I was worried it was serious. Grandad’ll—”

“You haven’t been telling him you’re dating me, have you?”

“No, of course not,” Kernan said in a hurt tone.

Kernan had loved Heather for six years and believed that fate included their wedded bliss. Heather believed that Kernan was a pigeon and deserved to be used. She quelled any hint of guilt by reminding herself that he practically begged to be used. Kernan quelled any sense of defeat by reminding himself of his eventual marriage to Heather. He smiled to himself and she shot him a glance of contempt.

Kernan’s grandfather sat in his favorite chair, an orange plaid rocker with worn out armrests. He was watching a game show and second-guessing the contestants when Kernan walked in. As usual the old man was lounging around in his underwear. Kernan sighed and asked him to put some clothes on.

“What!”

“Put some clothes on, Grandad!”

“Why? This is still my house! Besides, I’m comfortable!”

Each evening they would have the same argument. It always ended with Kernan storming into his room, leaving the old man in his chair, still clad in only his underwear. Kernan was determined to win today.

“What if someone comes over?”

“Like who?”

“Oh I don’t—”

“You expectin somebody?”

“Well—”

“Ain’t nobody comin over.”

Kernan blurted out “Heather might come over!” He wished the words hadn’t even formed in his mind.

“That right?”

Kernan gave a non-committal grunt as he went to his bedroom to watch television.

After about an hour Kernan got up to make supper. As he entered the living room he saw his grandfather still sitting in his chair. Only now he was wearing his very best suit, shirt and tie. As he looked at the old man the quest for Heather began to grow insignificant. Kernan’s throat felt uncomfortable as he walked towards his grandfather.

“Since you’re all dressed up, let’s go out to eat.”

As they walked out to the car, Kernan stiffly put his arm around the old man, looked the other way and whispered “I love you grandad.”

Manuel Mitra
Saturday Night at Club Alacran

Harder than the cue stick
He holds against the floor,
Tighter than his fist
Around the slick wood,
Emilio grinds his teeth,
Flexes his jaw against what he cannot change.

Through crabbed eyes
He watches Tony strut
Into the light above the green felt.
Three stripes, one solid and one black ball.
Cool and cocky,
Tony chalks the tip,
Poiises in sharkskin
For the kill.
One quick jab,
The hard crack,
And the last solid eases in.

Taken.
Stung.
Emilio slumps beneath the final indignity
Of Tony’s knowing grin.
The tip points to the side pocket.
A sure bank shot
And it’s over.

Tony cocks his head, orders a round,
Slicks his hair back.
Emilio’s lids tighten.
A whole week’s pay
And no way to explain
To his family back home.

He stalks into the night,
Feels the hard iron against his hip,
Curls into the shadows,
Cocked and waiting
To make his last sting.

Suburban Saturdays

Given choices, standing in the street
And shouting
Even for a worthy cause
The way we used to do
When we were young
Even for nothing
Is not choice.

The world has changed.
Homely estrangements
In the presence of one’s children
Is more fun
Less public and, embarrassing to say, less private
Even.

You’re weeping through
“The Way We Were” on cable
They are saying “Huh?”
I don’t like Barbara Steisand anyway
Her nose is funny

They have no time for you
No words and infinitely less concern.
They vanish after dark
Just like you taught them at 3
But now it hurts.
All parents reach this point, a cliff.
Maturity is what we like to call it

The world has change
Manners your elders strapped you into
Somehow have come unravelled in your hands
You watch the loose ends
Flap away like thoughtless tongues
Dances, movies, parties
Imputent and bold, and beautiful
And realize, that given choices
Had you known,
It really wouldn’t have turned out this way

Lorenzo Thomas
I'm sorry Joey...

The piece feels so good in my hand. Maybe I should pull the trigger and coat the walls with all kinds of goodies. Who would care? Surely no one. My heart is beating ferociously. My hands are shaking. Good lord! the walls of my chest can't take the deep thumping much longer. I know no one loves me. Why would everyone yell at me if I was loved? Who wants to live if no one loves 'em?

My parents think I'm rotten. "You're such a bitch sometimes!" my mother screams. "You look like a whore, you like looking like that? Get out of my sight, you make me sick!" belts my father. I often wonder why they ever made love to have me. So maybe I am rotten. Maybe I am tramp. That's no excuse to create me, then treat me like that. If I do it, they sure won't have anyone to yell at then, will they? It is scary though, the gun feels so good, yet it frightens me. A friend of mine did this, and I saw what a mess it made. No one loved her either, except me. Sometimes I go to my room and cry into my pillow thinking about her while my parents' screaming rings in my ears in the near distance. I want to see her so bad. She could make everything better. If I do it, she might be there waiting for me with her arms open to love and accept me.

I hate how people treat each other. Especially people who don't fit in. I never fit in. "Where'd ya get your clothes, Sandy, the nearest five and dime?" taunt the rich girls with tight blue jeans and low cut blouses. I often hear the guys call me slutty just because I won't put out. I never understood that. The girls who really whore themselves around the school are always called "nice" and "pretty" and "mature." It's just not worth it. But I have to calm down or I might miss and tum myself into a vegetable. Wouldn't that be cute? Sandy the vegetable. Couldn't even kill herself right.

I feel so tired. All my teachers tell me I have potential, but that I need to grow up. That's a good one. They're not there when my father comes in my bedroom at night and lays on top of me, whispering in my ear, with alcohol steaming from his parched lips, "Don't tell your mother Sandy, you tell her and you know what will happen." I should do it to him. But I love him too much. There has to be something I am doing wrong for him to treat me that way. I guess he's better than some daddies. Who knows, I've never really known any other daddies. I hate my teachers telling me I need to grow up. Maybe if I sit down for a minute I'll be able to steady myself a bit, and stop sweating so much.

I miss my little brother. Joey. That's his name. Sometimes he comes into my bedroom and pats me on my back with his tiny hands while I'm crying in my pillow. He stops my trembling. Sometimes I grab him and hug him with as much force as I'm able. He calls me Sanny. Has a little trouble getting his d's out. I still love him. Maybe if I ran away and took him with me things would get better. Would it be selfish if I left him like this? Maybe I'll wait.

But then there's Jack to face. He broke up with me when I got mad at him because he told the whole track team he made it with me in his van. I thought he loved me. Honestly I did. He's so big and bad now that he's dumped me for Carol. All I can do is clench my fists and grind my teeth when Carol and her friends come up to me and say, "Couldn't handle it, huh Sandy?" I must look like a real recluse walking down the halls. All I can do is lower my head as all the popular guys and girls look at me and then snicker and make jokes behind my back. Is that how people should treat each other.? Damn it! Why not just end it all right now? They sure couldn't laugh at me then, could they?

But then I look at the gun and think, "Sandy, this is exactly what you're running away from, it represents everything you hate." And I must admit, it is a cruel looking thing. So cold and uncaring. There is no compassion whatsoever in it. Even my father has more compassion that it has. Not much, though. I swear I'll do it next time, but I just can't do it tonight. Maybe I'll wait one more day, just one more day. One more day to face Jack and Carol and the taunting from my teachers. One more night lying awake at night wondering if that beast will come in my room. I'm sorry Joey, it's just not worth it...

Dean Nielsen
"Do you mind if I go?" he asks.
"Of course not, dear, it is her birthday."
"I'll go early and not spoil our plans."
"I'm sorry but I just can't go with you to see my only sister in the cold ground."

She was born in August; I can't remember the day, although I was there. She was a beautiful blonde child who played hard and picked wild flowers. She was always my dearest friend.

My husband, her widower, goes to faithfully place flowers on her grave. As he leaves, I think it is not she who died but I, my grief buried in assuming her identity. Sometimes I miss myself.

Glenmary Russell Favro

---

The Bayou's Review

"There is a river," the goodbook says, its stream makes a city glad. But a bayou's burdened with flesh and filth from men of a different time. Their lives I watch as my briney broth gathers blood and mud and decline. They built their buildings beside my banks, jingling with money brought in. Mine clotted with cotton and cottonmouth and moaning slaves in a pen.

I remember the sighs of prisoners who died, fading by waters of pain. And memory won't dim of bodies thrown in to struggle while losing life's race. They left em to float like bloated flesh boats. And then put the blame upon me.

I taste the flesh of their world-famous men when spring rain brings Glenwood to me. But Howard's no better than the kid last September whose shanty came in with the flood. They're all just waste from Houston's proud face that I flush to Galveston mud.
A Frame For Death

Thoughts of death grow
Framed by white window panes
Beyond which green-leaved trees
And gray-grown skies contend
Unequally with a careless nature
Whose caprice is matched only by
Its strangely balanced indifference to human life.

Thoughts of death grow out of anger unresolved,
Of Anger set aside and put to use
So that none who see him there can cry
"Beware! Beware his flashing eyes, his floating hair!"
Rather they say, "How remarkable! How busy
He's become. How well he's handling life and death."
And sometimes, caught up in the play,
Pleased that his role has gone so well
That other characters have found new meaning and
Importance in theirs, he'll be caught up too,
Till wind-blown trees and lowering skies
Whisper once again of easeful death.

But it is not that death is easeful.
Rather that it is final.
No one can make demands which he is forced to hear,
Whether from his goodness or his fear.
Neither can he make demands on others
Who, whether for their own reasons or for his, though
Acting freely, still hold him, as he holds himself,
Accountable, responsible, wretchedly responsible
In a world gone mad, in a world where goodness
And reward are disconnected; where bigotry
And mediocrity rule a new-old set of pawns
In a game where their gods still kill them for their sport.

That Mike is dead is true, is a fact which cannot be disputed.
But it is also true that such a fact will never be okady.
And that is why the thoughts of death return.
And that is why the unsafe sex goes on,
Unsafe, of course, for me alone.

But I grow weary now, for unlike Prufrock,
I have heard the mermaids singing, and they have sung to me.
And I am not content. And I do not wish to play a posturing,
prattling Hamlet gone mad, but neither am I
Content merely to decide to eat a peach.
And I grow tired. And I think with only a bit of help
And a slackening of effort I can become the body
Etherized upon the table, branded with the A for Aids
And beyond at last the pain which all the pleasures and
Accomplishments of too-ironic world cannot dispel.

The window panes frame darkness now
And gloom and rain. Perhaps it is a sign
For thoughts of death or for sense of self to grow.
I simply do not know.

Don D. Elgin

If one has no heart, one cannot write
for the masses.

Heinrick Heine
Deluded Counterpoint

He stepped.
I plodded red clay imprints

Towards the tingle-tongue tree.
Downhill, slowing to a stop,

He wanted to give me a dogwood blossom.
Spikes reached out to pinion.

"I love the the colors this time of year."
"Why haven't you written?"

His tight-laced trooping boots
My short loose suede shoes

Cast moldy green sticks aside.
Tangled in a hay grass web.

Deborah A. Rodney
SMALL TALK

Hello, you say.
Hello, I answer.
My name is Jane Doe, you say, but call me Jane. Everyone does.
My name is Fulana de Tal, I answer. (We have just met and I don't know you yet, I say to myself, so how can I be intimate so soon?)
Where do you live? you ask.
Where are you from? I ask.
What do you do? you want to know.
Are you related to the Does who live where you are originally from? I want to know.
Which corporation are you with? you inquire.
Where is your family? I ask.
I don't know my relatives, you say. I have nothing to do with them. I know nothing about them.
I work for a corporation, I answer. It has nothing to do with who I am.
(How lacking in ambition she is! you think to yourself.)
(How tragic that she does not know how she came to be! I say to myself.)
I went to all these prominent universities and have all these wonderful degrees, you boast.
I, too, have an education, I say, but I learned about life from those who came before me and experienced it before I did.
My life revolves around my career. It gives my life meaning, you explain.
My life has meaning because I am part of a family, I explain. My values are gleaned from generations of experience.
I have moved far down the road from my family, you scoff. They are far behind. They have nothing to offer. They are part of a past worthy of being forgotten.
Perhaps I am one step further down the road from the previous generation, I say, but each generation is a step in a long journey down that road.
My friends represent what my interests of the moment are, you say.
My friends? I say. They are those who hold dear what is also dear to me.
How limiting! you exclaim.
It is not trendy, I answer. But it lasts.
Why not do everything there is to do? you ask.
I do not need to do everything there is to do, I say.
Holding on to the past is unhealthy, unmodern and certainly not productive, you say.
The American Dream

A bland gray sky sweeps the heaven above as millions of fine drops of water wait to be unleashed upon the expecting city. Meanwhile, far, far below the threatening clouds, and far below the blanket of soot and smog that covers the city like a nightmare, a small boy sits on a stoop watching life as it really exists outside of the American dream.

Across the street from where he sits, he notices a condemned lot with an abandoned building placed somewhere in the middle, which sits there like an old, thrown out shoe. The lot is infested with little Black and Spanish boys and girls, frolicking about the twisted rubble and unrecognizable garbage which totally engulfs the path. Abandoned car shells sit like ravaged carcasses while little boys play frantically inside them. Despite the grotesque background of abandoned buildings and cars which smell of depression, the street rings with the joy of happy kids tantalizing one another's spirits, while a little Spanish girl with dirt on her face sits on a rusty trash can bleeding from the knee, crying her eyes out.

The city air is filled with the sound of screaming kids, the hum of cars and the beeps of their horns, roaring trucks and their squeaking brakes, and rumbling trains shaking the ground and yet somewhere in the background, like a dim star in a clear Texas sky, one can make out the crash of glass being shattered, followed by an alarm ringing in a deafening tone. In minutes, all of the different sounds which plague the air are drowned out by the crying shrieks of police sirens driving to wherever the scene is. And just as fast as the sirens rise to their crescendo, screaming kids, roaring trucks, and cars slowly begin to re-emerge until things are back to normal, the sirens no longer heard or remembered.

Down the street a little boy is kicking a ball; his clothes are dirty and his shoes are tattered as he runs smiling. On the corner, just across the street, the neighborhood drunks and bums clash over a half bottle of wine. In front of a worn-out looking grocery store, fat haggard-looking old ladies with especially fat ankles haul shopping carts with a walk that rings of a history of drudgery or just simple "Don't mind me, I'm just plain old tired." Another with glasses shouts from a third floor window at a little girl playing jump rope in the street. As the small boy tries to listen to the grown-up conversations, he is instantly struck with a precise "Get your behind away from here!" which is momentarily heard around the block. The little girl responds in a typically juvenile fashion: "Mama, there's no where else to play." And Mama comes back with a prompt "I don't care. Get out of the street or come upstairs." Now what choice does any real trooper have? When Mama calls, you come running. With that, the little girl bends down, picks up her jump-rope, and proceeds towards the building as her peers jeer her. She walks with a frown as the tears begin to swell in her eyes.

The steps where the small boy sits are full of crevices and distorted indentations. They reek with the smell of urine, alcohol, and trash, yet shine as the only presentable place to sit. Above him, pigeons sit bickering on the gutter, dropping their obscenities on the fire escape below him. Behind him, in the mouth of the doorway, grown, out-of-work men and women, drug addicts and derelicts loiter about. They curse and play cards though they seem to be having a good time. A young fellow leaves the building listening to the music being blasted from the large radio on his shoulder. As he walks briskly from the stoop and disappears down the street, he seems to notice no one.

The kids are still playing in the lot across the street and the little girl sits crying on the trash can. Blood no longer runs from her knee. The little boys have disappeared with their balls, while the bums on the corner continue their bickering. And high above the clotheslines which span the block, and high above the blanket of soot and smog which covers the city, the threatening clouds begin to unleash their threat. As the first drops hit the asphalt, the small boy leaves the stoop which he has occupied to return from where he came.

Sharon Holder-Coleman
Someone Like You

Just sitting here wondering about you,  
Hard as it is not to, I write to you

These lines of elusive words  
Which once Donne and Keats pursued,  
For Beauty, Truth and God  
and someone like you.

And though we do not touch or speak,  
Your lips I kiss with mind's eye,

Waking those aphonie tones which once stood in disarray,  
Ones that Brahams and Bach construed,  
To circumvent— their loneliness  
for someone like you.

Santos Sosa Ocañas
Places and Changes

I must have been eleven, that summer I was shipped off to Aunt Dora's. The mill had shut down and Daddy had gone to Arizona looking for work. Mama moved in with Aunt Sally and got a job making hats at the milliners in town. And I was put on the train to China Spring.

Aunt Dora had a neighbor pick me up from the station. He put my valise in the back of the buckboard and sang to the mules as he drove. When I was deposited at the house, Aunt Dora traded him three freshly washed shirts and half a dozen eggs.

I was allowed a cot on the day porch and an apple crate for my belongings: one dress, two or three cotton undershirts and a pair of coveralls. "Christ Knocking at the Door" hung over the head of the bed and my cigar box of treasures nested under the mattress at the foot.

The boy next door was sometimes sweet on me and would let me ride behind him on his pony. Other times, he would grab my bangs and pull me around the yard or fool me into walking into a hidden patch of stinging nettles. But yell as I might, I would not let him see me cry.

We would sneak away in the heat of the day (we were supposed to be taking naps so we didn't get polio), and play on the flat rocks in the creek or try to catch minnows in our socks with crumbs of bread. Or we'd slip through the fence at the corn mill and steal ears to feed that fat, stubborn little pony.

Aunt Minnie ran the store and was Postmistress. When sent on an errand to fetch back baking soda or yeast, you could - sometimes, but not often - slip a piece of hard candy on the bill. But Aunt Minnie would check a few pages back in her account book, if she thought Your sweet tooth had ached too recently.

A man in a truck pulled into town one afternoon. On a vacant lot, he set up poles, hung bed sheets, and unloaded benches. After dark, he charged a nickel to see the talking motion picture show. Now I am rich. I spend my summers in London, Paris or St. Moritz.

Eileen Hatcher
Waking Up

Like fish who sleep, motionless,  
along the ocean floor, spines  
of sea-urchins, poison-barbed,  
just under the soft belly,  
the sea anemone's green  
tentacles, the giant conch's  
open mouth, always waiting  
near the sharp-edged coral reef,  
I sleep, so far under  
weighted water, in fathoms  
of dark light, ringing silence,  
heavier than stone, than fear  
not caught, not free, pushing up  
through seas, tides, currents, waves, I  
rise each day to the surface  
from the bottom of the world.

Cathy Stern
“Granted, we don’t live in the greatest neighborhood, and granted, the Greenblatzes upstairs did get robbed last week; I still don’t think we should buy a gun.” I spit the words out quickly fearing that if I slowed down in mid-sentence my facade of self assuredness and determination would be discredited and I would end up losing yet another argument. Number 4937 since Marsha and I were married three and a half years ago. In these years we have agreed on exactly two things: Diet Coke tastes better than Diet Pepsi, and Emmanuel Lewis should never be allowed to reproduce. That’s it. Everything else we fight about. This latest argument (her wanting to buy a gun for protection) surfaced at breakfast yesterday morning and was still going strong. I was determined to win this one however, I am terrified of all guns and don’t want them anywhere near me. I come from the old “lock your door and cower in the corner” school of home security.

“Why the hell are you so dead set against getting a gun? Don’t you want to protect your family? Don’t I mean that much to you? God, you’re pathetic. What if some knife-wielding maniac broke in here in the middle of the night and tried to rape me? Wouldn’t you want me to be able to protect myself?”

“Only a blind maniac would ever try to rape you and even at that his sense of smell would probably talk him out of it.” I muttered to the carpet.

“What was that? Jesus, you’re a miserable excuse for a man. My first husband wouldn’t have thought twice about buying a gun if he thought his family was in danger.”

“Your first husband? I’m sorry Marsha, but shacking up with a guy for eight months above his parent’s garage isn’t exactly a marriage.”

“Six months of living together constitutes a common law marriage in this state, and that entitles you to half of everything he’s got. Community property, bub.”

“Oh, I guess that’s why you got the frying pan, the nearly dead Oscar fish, and a carton of cigarettes, huh? Oh, and let’s not forget half of his last month’s unemployment check.”

“Well at least he cared about me, dammit.” She was about to force some tears to her eyes, or least try to, when I noticed a slight change in her attack. Coyly she said, “On second thought don’t think about me, think about the practical benefits you can get from owning a gun,” (yeah, I could pistol-whip your sleeping body at night, I thought).

The argument picked up right where we left off when I got home from work that evening. It went well past the ten o’clock news, past Johnny Carson, and well into David Letterman’s time when a precedent was set in our marriage- we hit upon a compromise. She agreed we would not buy a gun and I agreed that when I got home from work the next day we would discuss other forms of personal protection which weren’t as potentially harmful as a gun (especially in the hands of someone like myself).

As I was walking home from the Circle K on the corner where I work, I was very pleased at the new direction my marriage appeared to be taking. Finally, after three and a half years of hell, a glimmer of hope had appeared on the horizon. Often times during a heated exchange with Marsha, when it was her turn to yell, and I had some time to think, I’d wonder why it is that we fight so much. We are never at a loss for a subject to fight about. She taunts me about my weight, and I praise her infallible command of every expletive known to our culture- a vocabulary any longshoreman would be proud of I assure her. She informs me I have an inflated sense of self importance, and I tell her that I called our lawyer today to see if her new home permanent has infringed upon any copyrights currently held by the Brillo company. Back and forth, day in and day out. It would never end I thought.

But as I was walking towards my front door, eating the Hostess Cupcakes I had stolen from work on my way out, I honestly thought we had reached a turning point. Maybe our marriage had finally rounded the bend from The Land of Dissension, and was now on the road to Marital Harmony.

Thoughts of softly chirping doves were singing through my head as I stepped through the door.

These soothing mind games halted abruptly however when a very loud, very grating noise interrupted me. My initial thought was that someone had laid down railroad tracks in our bedroom during the day and that the 6:05 appeared to be running on schedule. I quickly dismissed that possibility and began searching for another when suddenly the largest conglomerate of fur and teeth I have ever seen rounded the corner from our bedroom into our living room, and leaped over the genuine imitation naugahyde couch. While there was no possible way I could have drowned out the incredible amount of noise the dog’s lungs and vocal chords were putting out, I do think that my terror-induced shrieking slowed him down and made him think long enough for me to scamper back through the front door to the safety of the outdoors.

I stood dazed, blankly staring at the closed door and listening to this pituitary inflated, horse-like creature, pawing, scratching and barking on the other side. I must have been more affected than I realized, for my eyes were dried out from lack of blinking, and my right leg had become paralyzed, apparently as a result of the quickest, most intense fear I have ever known.

“How do you like Junior?”

The question hung in the air a long time before I recognized that nose
as being the speech of my native tongue, and that further more it was being directed towards me. I turned slowly around, dragging my useless right foot along with me. Marsha was sitting in our car, with the windows down, drinking a Diet Coke.

"So, how do you like Junior?" She asked between sips.

"What the hell is Sasquatch doing in our goddamned apartment?" I bellowed when I had regained enough lung strength for a substantial yell.

"That's Junior, our new home security system." I was informed. "He still seems a bit nervous due to the change in his surroundings. I thought I'd wait out here in the car to give him time to calm down and readjust to his new life."

"Readjust to his new life? What the hell is he, a recently paroled convict?"

"Dammit John, I had to do something. You weren't going to make any move to protect us, so I had to do it myself, as usual."

"Do something?" I screamed. "You call bringing a 1200 pound disciplinary problem with teeth into our apartment doing something?" I asked incredulously.

"Stop it. Look John, let's go out to dinner and I'm sure by the time we get back Junior will have calmed down enough so that he can be properly introduced to Daddy."

"Don't even pretend that I'm that monster's father. The only human being that could ever sire something that evil is your mother, and she's well past her child-bearing years." This jab at Marsha's mother calmed me down a bit, and made me feel a little better. It always does. Marsha's mother is conclusive proof for me that Eva Braun survived the war after all.

When we got back from Denny's I snuck quietly up to our window and peeked in. The apartment was dark and I detected no movement. I was just about to give the "all clear" sign to Marsha when the Great Protector's slobbering snout slammed against the window pane and he began his one-dog chorus of barking, snarling and growling.

"You were right dear, I think he's calmed down. Why don't you go on in and I'll be along in a minute." I called to Marsha as she was climbing back into the car.

We sat in the car drinking coffee (courtesy of my Circle K on the corner). I glanced at my watch sometime later and moaned - 11:15. I figured this was as good a time and a place for a fight as any so I nudged Marsha, who had somehow managed to fall asleep.

"This is ridiculous. We are two mature, reasonable adults and we're being kept out of our apartment by a dog. His I.Q. hovers somewhere around 'plant life' yet he's in there, warm and cozy, and we're out here, freezing our asses off in the car! This is ridiculous!"

"Well then John, why don't you go explain the situation to Junior. Just sit him down and reason with him. Then while they're hosing you off the walls and furniture, I'll be collecting enough insurance money to move away from here and let Junior keep the apartment." With this she turned herself towards the door and prepared for more sleep.

"What the hell are you getting sarcastic about? This whole thing is your fault. You brought that damn dog home. What's your solution? What should we do now?"

"Look, let's just sleep in the car tonight, and we can deal with the dog in the morning." She closed her eyes for the final time, satisfied that the situation was taken care of, at least for the time being. I, on the other hand, was not so satisfied.

"Sleep in the car? That's your solution? Look, I pay the rent for that apartment - not Fido. There is no way in hell that I'm sleeping in this car tonight. Do you hear me Marsha?"

I awoke the next morning to the uncomfortable pain of the door handle digging into my side. Marsha was already up and was busying herself making breakfast - more Hostess cupcakes, and cold, stale coffee from the night before.

"I checked the apartment earlier, Junior is serious about his privacy. By the way, you know your comfortable chair in the corner that you loved so much, well, perhaps we can salvage some of the stuffing and make you a couple of pillows."

I started the car and let it warm up.

"John, what are you doing? Where are we going?" Marsha asked carefully. She appeared wary when I failed to register any sort of reaction about my chair.

"I've thought it over, and you were right. We do need some real protection for ourselves. I think I've figured out a way to get our apartment back too," I said as I backed the car out of the parking space, "There's a gun shop in the mall isn't there?"

Bob Breen
Special thanks to:
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A Hearty Welcome to our new President,
Dr. Manuel Pacheco

The Bayou review welcomes contributions of poetry, fiction, literary criticism, artwork, and photographs from the students, faculty and staff of the University of Houston-Downtown. Contributions should be no longer than 1,200 words, typewritten, and should be submitted with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to The Bayou Review, UH-D Center, 101 Main St., Houston, Texas 77002. We reserve the right to edit copy for grammar, syntax, content and libel.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
Of making many books
there is no end . . .
Ecclesiastes XII, 12