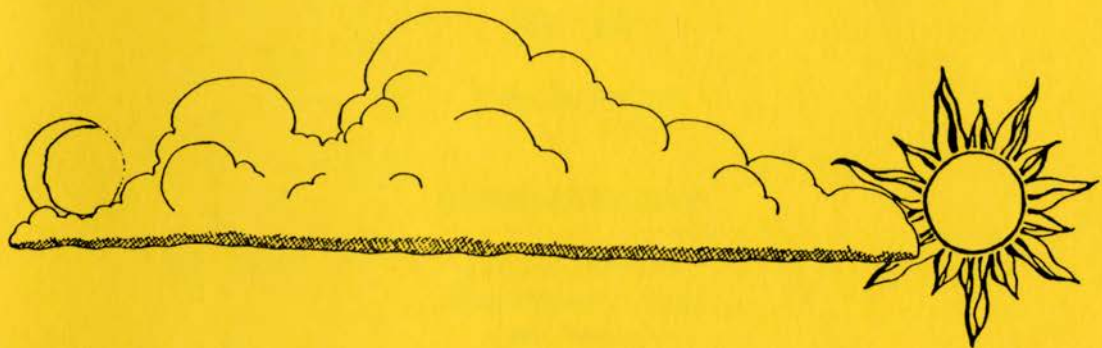




Seasons of the Sea



Southern Quill

1994-1995

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 Phil Williams

I. Littoral

Joy Taylor Cooney

One Woman's Story

I live in a world of story.
Not the stories of ice to water
And sand to rock,
But the real story of a woman
Whose groom, with a blue
Beard, severed her art.

I live, too, in a world of art,
And every picture becomes a story.
Starry Starry Night's yellow and blue
Turn to the Ugly Duckling in water.
My life is history too, of men and women
Now, back to Adam and Eve naked on a rock.

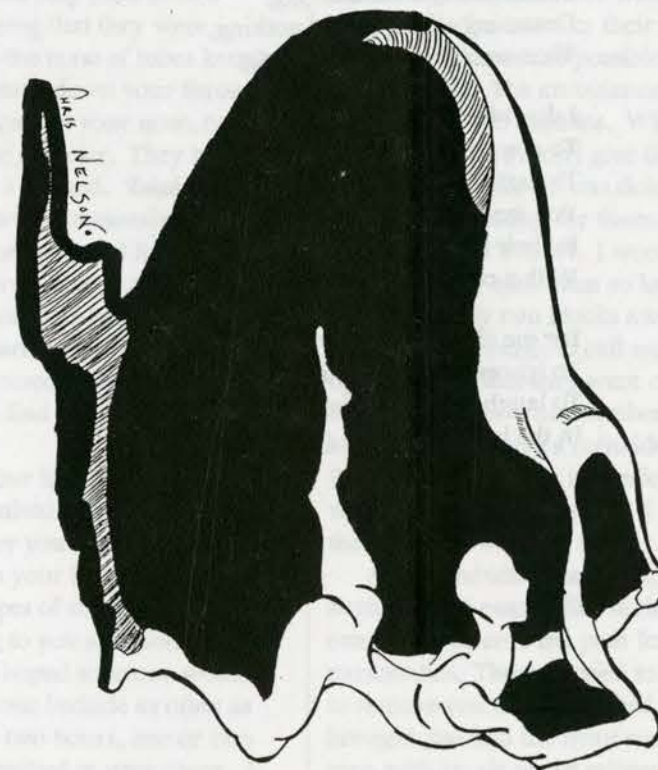
Even music now, soft rock
Like the old Paul Simon with Art
Who can tell my story
As clear and fluid as water
Or as rhythmic as Little Boy Blue

Or as perfect as Blue
Boy, standing tall like a rock
And as liquified as tap water.
In Gainsborough's and Van Gogh's art
Is not the truth of my whole story,
Or even the tale of most women.

My legend is in other women,
I am in the hidden black & blue
Of every violent story,
I am under every rock,
I am in every stroke of art,
I am floating in every body of water.

And it's strange how my body is water
Like all men, children, women
Because I picture myself different—like art
Painted gold and white with a hint of blue,
Carved and molded from a finer rock.
But mine is just the same old story.

I can tell you when my story began:
At the genesis of water and rock;
And I can tell you why: because women,
Blue belles, matrons, and white virgins were,
And were not meant to be art.



Jay McArthur

Jonathan's Church

I pray alone in Jonathan's church:
As the sermon records in my head,
There isn't the buzz of gossipers here,
And hypocrisy is pretty much dead.

I can wear my cords and birkenstocks there
Or feast on a bottle of booze.
There's not a concern about values
When I don't have any to lose.

It's quite a treat on Sunday
To attend my own little gig,
Dreaming all day about nothing,
Then smoking a Marlboro cig.

I don't feel the need
To convert fellow peers,
Though there're millions willing to join:
You see them dolled up
In their flashy attire,
With a condom concealed in their coins.

For me it's a part of my nature
To ignore the heavens and hells,
To laugh while hanging my hat
In the land where the court jester dwells.

Kristi Kuhn

The Breath of Life

Bubbles form and grow from air, the breath of life. They grow until they become so full that they burst. Why they burst at certain times is uncertain. They pop so quickly that they catch you off guard, and in your amazement you pull back. Bubbles are fragile; if you blow the right amount of air, they begin to float. When they are floating, you have to stop and appreciate all of the beauty before the life slips out of them.

Watching you lie there lifeless, as if you were a machine. You may have been a machine at first, seeing that they were keeping you alive—the mass of tubes keeping you stable, one jammed down your throat, four to your chest, one up your nose, two in your hands, and one catheter. They had a tube for every hole it seemed. Your lips seemed unfamiliar to me, remembering that you always made sure you had lipstick on them. Your lungs were forced with air from the respirator as I watched your chest heave, unnaturally. Your arms were bruised in a variety of colors, bruised from needles and doctors pinching to find a response and never finding one.

Machines ran your life, but I didn't mind as long as they promised to bring you back. A bag of blood lay by you connecting to the wires they drilled in your head. We would all caress you in hopes of stimulating movement. Talking to you and God at the same time, we only hoped someone would hear. We were at your bedside as often as we could be. Every two hours, one or two people could be permitted in your room. I had no idea what had happened to my mom,

but neither did you. It surprised us both that night you woke me up with a death-like moan. Your head hurt. Only after I tried to calm you and figure out myself what was wrong, did I call the doctor. Minutes after the doctor arrived, the life slipped out of our reach. Your groaning let all of the air out of your lungs. Your eyes hid in the back of your head. You were having seizures. Your life was gone. Only bubbles of air bounced around in your throat as air was forced into your lungs.

The front room door was pried open, with cold air coming in. All lights in the house were on, furniture was cleared for the paramedics to make their entrance and exit as smooth as possible. It was quiet outside. The ambulance didn't come for about 10-15 minutes. When the doctor called, he didn't give the correct address. So while he was doing CPR, I was outside waiting for them. I was in my boxers and T-shirt. I wondered what could possibly take them so long since they were only two blocks away. I finally got nervous enough to call again. The operator said that they were on their way but didn't know what number the apartment was. It's a coincidence that the 911 number was put into effect about one week before this happened. I remember the flyer that was sent to us.

As the ambulance arrived, the stretcher and case of life-saving objects came in. I cleared the path for the paramedics. They scurried to your room to remove you from your bed. They brought you into the front room, where a man with an air pump relieved the doctor, letting him breathe normally again.

As the doctor left with the ambulance, he told me to drive his truck to the hospital. I wasn't sixteen yet but had been taking driver's education. I remember driving east on 600 South and taking a left on 200 East towards the temple and hospital.

Today, the emergency room has been remodeled, and there was some going on then. My mind goes blank. I don't remember going into the hospital; I begin to remember only when you had been put into a gown and were lying on a bed with a man pumping oxygen and timing it for you. There was a curtain around your bed. The doctor had me sit at a desk with some lady while they took you to have x-rays done. As I sat, I remembered a fight we had two weeks earlier. It was a cold January morning at about 7:30. I asked you if you could take me to school on your way to work. I wasn't thinking it was such a problem since it was only one block away from where you worked. As we were driving, I wanted to know if you would pick up my friend who lived two streets up. I felt bad for him having to walk in the

cold weather. I did not know that you would be so easily pushed to the edge.

You began talking at me in a strained and hurt voice, asking me why I didn't care about you and why I was doing this to you. I was surprised and hurt that you could possibly think that I felt this way. I pushed out of the car and slammed the door. In my mind I thought that I had shown my appreciation to you by being one of your better children. I tried helping around the house, getting good grades; I didn't smoke or drink or cause trouble, and I was going to a high school that I hated to make things easier for you. Why would I ever try to make you mad or hurt you when you were the most important thing in my life, you were my family? We never talked it out; we just pretended things were normal once again and kept going on the same everyday schedule. Unfinished business is what we had. And I blamed myself for your unknown condition. I had hurt you, and you were dying now as a way to show me that I was wrong and ungrateful. I hadn't expected any of this; it was all so spontaneous, like a bubble.

Josh Stanley

A Prayer for the Iroquois

I would be happy if spring would come.
Come deer, come elk, come caribou.
At times the earth is mean.
I sometimes sing too soon.

Consider the Iroquois—
They walk the land that demands the
Nobility of the feet it bears.
Consider the Iroquois chief—
Will he demand nobility while his stomach is bare?
While his tribe's stomach is bare?

I would be happy if spring would come.
Come deer, come elk, come caribou.
Is this a prayer for me
Or a prayer for you?

A prayer for the Iroquois.

Rodney O. Hurd

Broken Kite

I lie on a cool bed of grass
Hidden by tall blades
That enfold me,
A vast ocean of olive-green
Where the wind ripples the waves
From north to south,
Carrying the smell of honey
From the blossoms in the hay.
As I lie, she comes
Gently gliding over the trees,
Hanging in the air,
A gray kite
Tethered to an invisible string
That I hold.
Then she circles, folding wings
And falling like a crippled plane,
Only at the last minute to swoop,
Snatching a mouse
Moving through the field.

In those days,
I could lie on my back for hours,
Watching and knowing
How it would be to fly.
From spring to summer I watched.
Nobody owned her,
But that invisible string
Somehow made her mine.
With fall,
When the harvest was done,
Hunters came;
Nothing but stubble remains.

Kelly Thompson

My Old Man

There weren't any heroes that ever came from my home town. I mean we had no football stars or heads of state or anybody that you might say was important. We just had farmers and some ranchers. But when all was said and done, my old man was a hero, of sorts. He was to me anyway. If he ever heard me say that, he'd call me a damned fool. You see, to my old man, there were only two types of people: good men and damned fools. "If ya ain't one, you's the other," he'd always tell me.

Now, I mean no disrespect to my father by calling him my "old man"; that's just what he called my granddad, so I never thought twice of it.

It was a bit foolish to plant seed that spring, but we had no choice. My dad's farm had, acre by acre, become the property of Central States Savings and Loan. If there was no crop this fall, they'd foreclose. It would be theirs, every square inch. Each dry seed was planted with a prayer as it sank into the dust we still called soil. We were so desperate for moisture that we dared not even say the word "rain," for fear that somehow the bankers would hear our desperation and steal the only hope we had.

Weeks crawled, each one drier than the next. I overheard my mother once cursing God for not sending the water that would be our savior. My old man was quick to reprove her with a confident, "It'll come." Yet the drought had turned his confidence to insecurity, and insecurity to

fear, but never to doubt. And I believed that it would come because he said that it would. But it didn't.

It was a Saturday morning when he walked me out to the end of our fields. We both stood with our faces to the big Indiana sunrise, side by side, silent. We stood there a good, long time, not saying anything. It wasn't an awkward silence, but the peaceful kind that only comes at the start of a new day.

Finally, he cleared his throat and choked out, "They're coming to take the farm today."

"I know," I whispered.

"I wanted you to take it over when I got too old," he sobbed as his tears puddled the dust on his boots.

"It's okay," I tried to console him. "We did all we could."

"I'm sorry," he sighed.

"Let's get back to Mom," I said as I threw my skinny arm over his big, shaking shoulder.

The bank had already started the auction when he and I returned to the house that morning. They had already sold the tractor and the combine to a rental company in Gary. My mother was on the porch swing with my sisters. Her eyes were all cried out and as dry as our wheat fields. We all felt so helpless. Dad asked me to pull the pickup up the drive to the house. As I did, he slowly started to the front yard toward the auctioneer's stand.

Everyone sat hushed by my father's approach. The sheriff hustled over and stood his ground in front of the auctioneer. My father stopped and, with a calm conviction, began to speak.

"This was my father's farm," he began.

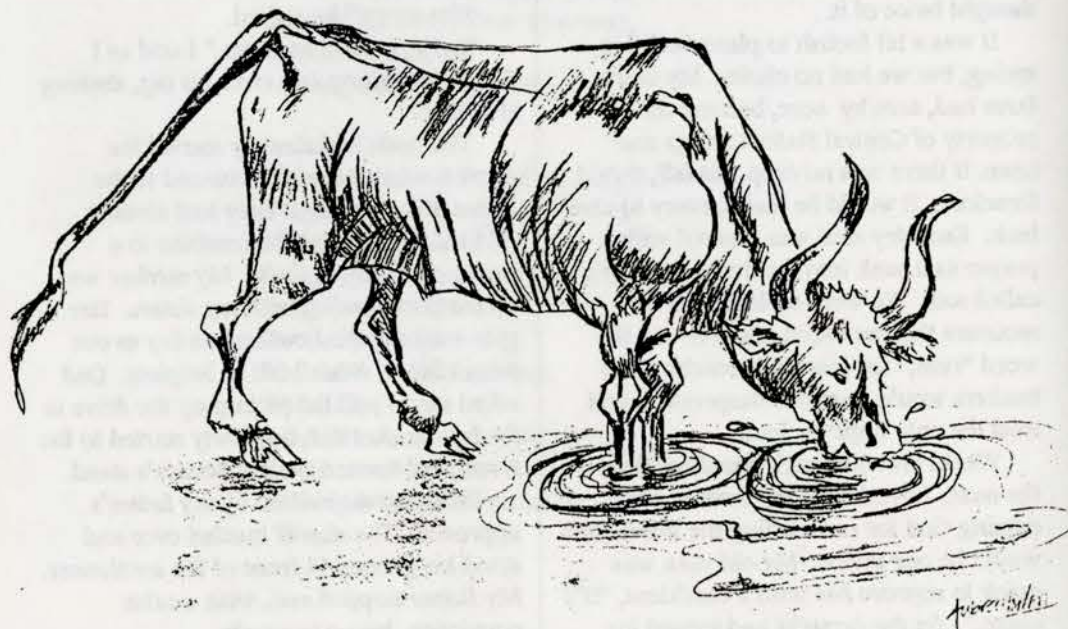
"He and I took every rock and weed from it with our hands. On it, my family and I have grown wheat to feed thousands of people. I've been a farmer my whole life. And I've farmed every day that I could." Many of the people standing in our yard for the auction hung their heads as he continued.

"A farm isn't like a bank or car lot—you just can't shut it down when times are bad. Where will you get your food? Who'll feed your families? It just isn't right." With that he turned and walked to the pickup. He drove away with my

mother, my sisters, and me, and never looked back.

We live in town now, in a duplex. My old man works at Sears selling tools. I help stock shelves after school and watch him help folks who come in to buy tools. I see him choke on his pride as farmers come in to buy equipment. Tears well up in his eyes as they leave to go home to their farms.

When folks who don't know me or my family ask what my Dad does for work, I lie a bit and reply, "He's a farmer." And with a little arrogance I add, "And so am I."



Aubree Howard

One Dream to Live For

I open my eyes,
Just as the sun begins to rise,
Breaking itself away
From the grasp of the distant mountains.
I blink from the brightness
Of the beams, coming down
In a warm and comforting flow.
The higher the sun,
The higher my spirits
As the world comes full into view.
An endless horizon,
Stretching out as far and wide
As I can only imagine,
With shining green leaves
And a clear sapphire sky.
I'm free and I'm happy.

Then, in a gust of misty darkness,
It all dissipates and fades.
And I see again the bars,
Cold and grey,
Enclosing me in a world
I fear I can never escape,
And I curse the nefarious creature
Who awakened me from this dream.

Robin Stout

The Elevator

(Lights up. Two businessmen, in suits, in a stopped elevator. One man tries to open the elevator doors manually.)

Jack: At least the lights came on. The door won't budge. So I guess that means we're trapped. *(pause)* You don't say very much, do you, fellah.

Milo: Do you think if I had anything to say, I'd say it to you?

Jack: I'm the only one here. Unless you brought someone with you. Say, you're the quiet type, huh. Not me. Talking is what I do.

Milo: I gathered that ... right off. Probably a salesman.

Jack: Nope ... realtor.

Milo: That doesn't surprise me.

Jack: You're trying to say something, mister?

Milo: Yeah, I think you're a schmuck. There ... you dragged it out of me.

Jack: Mister, you don't even know me.

Milo: I'm sorry, did I hurt your feelings? Here, I'll make it up to you. *(reaches in his pocket)* Here's a buck. Now shut up!

Jack: Fine. You don't talk to me, and I won't talk to you. Try to talk to someone.... *(pause)* What do you do?

Milo: I knew it couldn't last. What happened to not talking to me? Can't you see I don't want to talk to you? Geez, take a hint!

Jack: You're kind of a jerk, mister.

Milo: So what's your point?

Jack: I'm saying you're rude and cocky. It's not my fault we're stuck in this damn elevator! I've been trying to be cordial and patient with you. And all I get is ... this!

Milo: Bag you! I hate your type, and I just want quiet! Is that too much to ask?

Jack: And what type is that? The nice type? The sit quietly and wait type? What?

Milo: No, it's the blab-your-ear-off, realtor type.

Jack: Oh, you don't like realtors. So ... what was it? Did you get cheated by one, and now you think we're all alike?

Milo: Actually, I've never had the displeasure of doing business with any realtors. But it doesn't take a genius to figure they're all pushy, conniving, *talkative*, artificial, money-grubbing idiots!

Jack: You know what you're doing? You're generalizing.

Milo: So sue me. Listen ... here it is in plain English. You plaster your name and pictures everywhere, pester people on the phone, interrupt everyone's life with your self-absorbed pursuits. You're pathetic! Your lives are built around one thing—making a buck! So don't get upset at me for calling it as I see it. At least I have a life. I don't have to interfere in everyone else's life to have one.

Jack: So that's the way you see it, huh? Well, you've never been out here competing in this vicious marketplace.

Milo: Spare me, please. I just ate, and I don't have the stomach for it.

Jack: That's right. You don't have the stomach for it.

Milo: ... and you don't have a life.

Jack: You've said that already.

Milo: Just shut up!

Jack: You said that too.

Milo: I'm usually not a violent man, but in your case I may kick your ass!

Jack: Go on then—take your best shot.

Milo: You're all the same. You think you can do anything. Take whatever it is, face to face. Well, I'm not playing. The only vis-a-vis you'll get is with your pocket mirror. *(pounds on walls)* Somebody get me the hell out of here! This guy is driving me insane!

Jack: We can't all be like you. So what are you—Mister Popular?

Milo: Okay ... I tell him to shut-up; he doesn't. I try to reason with him; he's ... unreasonable. Now he's asking me to tell him something about myself. Okay ... here it is, Realtor Jack. I'm quiet, reclusive, and I have a piss-poor attitude. I don't play sports because I hate competition, and I'm out of shape. My hobbies are reading science-fiction novels, watching the stars, watching women, hot-oil wrestling and whale skinning. I'm not gay, and I detest democrats, tree-huggers, gorp-eaters, basically all liberals, and realtors / salesmen. If there is anything else, please refrain from asking. Now, please mull over what I told you, remembering to keep it to yourself, while I wait for these slow imbeciles to fix the elevator.

Gary Lee Wahlberg

Double Meaning

I feel drawn towards her as she unleashes her beauty.
 I feel her cool breath against my face.
 She is silent, but I still feel her tremble.
 Her power builds quickly as I get closer to her.
 My blood rushes through me as I slide into her grip.
 Together we move as one,
 As if she was the music and I was dancing to her.
 As she picks up speed, I feel her caress my back.
 Every nerve is tense as adrenaline rushes through me.
 I look into her face and into her deep blue eyes.
 Her beauty rises above me,
 Tickling my body with a cool spray.
 Beneath us I see her sturdy body moving with the motion.
 She begins to slow, and her beauty is drawn back.
 I wait again for her to hold me,
 To caress my body.
 She shows me who's the master and who's the slave.
 She is my beauty, she is my wave.

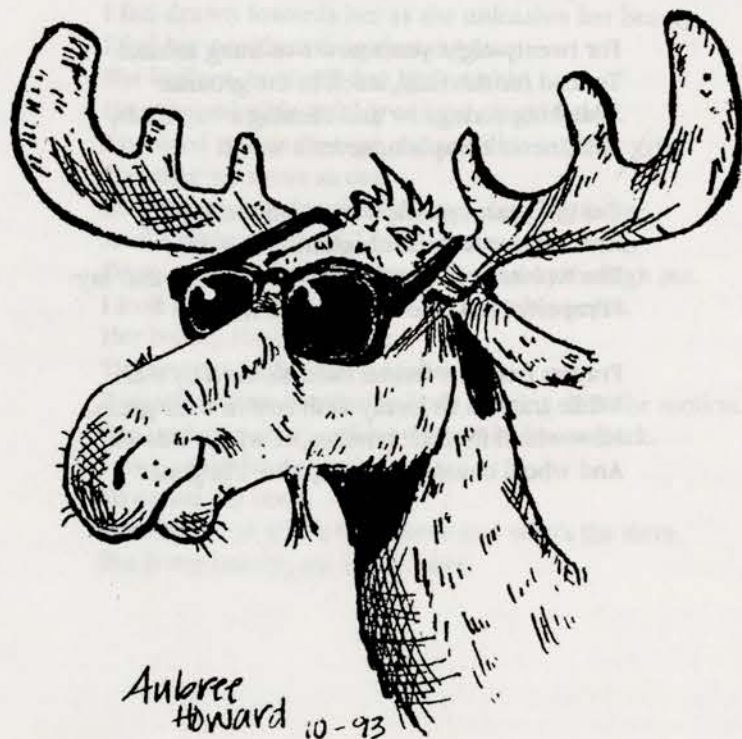
Kelly Thompson

Occupation: Scarecrow

For twenty-eight years now I've hung around
 To tend for this field, stuck in the ground.
 Watching corn grow and chasing away birds,
 Still I never complain, never a word.

But this year, I guess, we needed more rain,
 And crows eat the seeds planted in vain.
 The wolves in their suits plant backbones that say:
 "Property For Lease—Auction in May."

Prayers from the farmers are watered by tears
 While tractors sit lonely with rust in their gears.
 Now who'll feed the families, at winter's dawn?
 And who'll chase the crows, after I'm gone?



Ryan Henderson

Bewildered

Don't know if I will last
 Three more years of books.
 Is it time to hit
 The road like Cassidy?
 Have Owsley mix a batch
 And further my way
 Across the countryside,
 Like a merry prankster?
 Drop in and out of
 Society like Thoreau?
 Or maybe follow the ways of
 Epicurus and just repose
 My life away?
 I don't know.

Robin Stout

Transcendentalist Muse

On playgrounds soft and green,
 We reflect—
 On climbs, uncertain but innocent,
 From which we could not fall.
 Like birds we swung in giant arcs
 And rode the slippery slide.
 When in the shades of trees,
 The breezes embracing,
 In grass much taller than we,
 We endlessly searched for our shoes
 And gave our youthful days away
 In trivial unimportance.



Ace G. Pilkington

Exhibit at a High Tech Fair*

This rose was cloned in Salt Lake City:
 There are reams of petals just like that,
 Identical puffs of December breath
 As precise as paper sliced to size.
 Genetic mirrors made ten thousand thorns,
 Congruent triangles which wickedly prick
 A planned collection of similar thumbs,
 And stretch out beyond Macbeth's worst dreams,
 Till the thing itself is its own succession
 And the ghost is alive in a machined procession.
 For the vegetable mystery at the garden's heart
 Has become a revelation as simple as sums,
 While the cells that held our secrets close
 Have been broken open in the name of the rose.

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II. "There is a Tide ..."

Marion Frazier

Beyond the Call of Duty

He got up before dawn and slipped out of bed carefully so he did not wake his wife. He walked with his shoes off past the rooms of his son and baby girl, so as not to disturb them.

As he was changing the water in the vase of flowers he had brought home for his wife the day before, he thought, "My work is taking so much of my time that I do not have enough time left for my family."

As he was dressing his baby girl, he tickled the bottom of each foot; the toes curled. The tickle made the baby smile. "You have your mother's dimples," he said as he tickled her more.

He woke his son and took him along as he went to their small garden to pick some things for breakfast. He threw a cucumber to his son. "Catch!" he said. They played catch until his wife yelled, "Would you boys stop playing with your food and come to breakfast?"

After breakfast he carefully took out his officer's uniform and put it on as if he were expecting an inspection.

"You look so good in that uniform," his wife said. "Sure you can't stay here a little longer?"

"If you promise not to wrinkle it," he answered. He had graduated top of his class in med-school. He had received recognition and honors for his achievements in medical research.

He looked out the window and saw that his ride was there. The driver was a fine young man; he arrived ten minutes before six o'clock—ten minutes early, as always. As they drove to work, his driver was silent out of respect, silent unless he was spoken to.

Josef said to the young man, "It is a beautiful day. I love the spring. You would never know looking out there that there was a war going on."

"No, sir, you would not."

At his office door, he stopped and looked around. The grounds were clean. No trash, he thought, no papers, not even a cigarette butt. Nor were there flowers, bushes, or even a blade of grass anywhere in the camp.

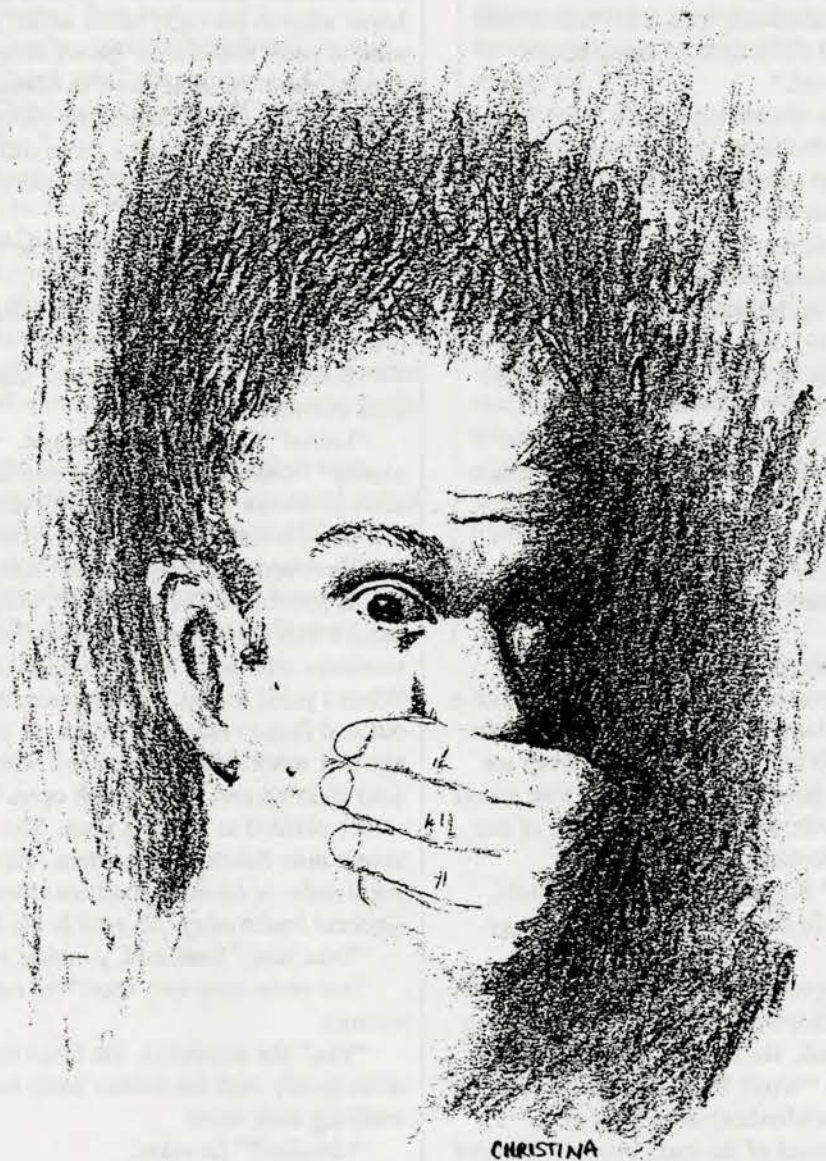
He went through the medical records on his desk. He stared at the chart of a seven-year-old girl. The nurse's records were neat, clean, and clear—12:30 a.m. temp. 100; 12:45 a.m. temp. 101; 2:30 a.m. temp. 104; 2:35 a.m. temp. 105, breathing hard, heartbeat weak; 2:45 a.m. doesn't respond to any treatment; 2:50 a.m. no sign of life.

He looked at the bottom of her medical chart. There it was, bold and clear, in his own handwriting: "If there is any change in either girl, send for me." He looked at the other chart. The seven year old's identical twin sister was given the same treatment—condition stable.

He opened the door. "Nurse Huber," he yelled. She came quickly, stopped, then came to attention.

"Yes, sir," she said.

"Did you see my orders on this girl's chart?"



"Yes, sir."

"Then would you tell me why you did not follow them?"

"Sir," she said, "you were here so late last night. You put in so many hours—I was worried."

"Nurse Huber, my health is not your concern. Your job is to follow orders without question. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think you're one of the finest nurses I've ever worked with. You won't let this sort of thing happen again, will you?"

"No, sir," she answered.

"Maria, what do you hear from your husband?"

"I got a letter. He's doing fine. He can't say where he is, you know. He says he misses me and our three-year-old son."

"You mean your four-year-old."

"Sir?"

"Johann just turned four today, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

Josef reached into his desk, pulled out a box, and handed it to her. "You take him this for his birthday. I don't want to see you back here until tomorrow. You spend the day with your son. The future of our country depends on having better mothers." He gave her a pleasant smile, then said in a sharp voice, "You may go now."

Josef spent the next hour going over the medical charts, checking and re-checking every detail. He kept asking himself over and over, "Why? Why did that girl die? They were identical in every way."

The sound of the train brought him out of deep thought. He looked at the clock on

the wall. The train was right on time.

He stepped up to the first cattle car in full uniform, spotless white gloves, leather horse whip in his right hand, which he used to point and direct. He was very careful about what he came in contact with. Taking a quick count, he thought, *There may be more than a thousand today. I probably will not get back home until late again.*

"I'm ready," he said. "Open the first door."

The smell was strong. "Where did you bring these from?" Josef asked.

"Poland," the guard replied. "Three days in transport, sir."

"Listen!" Josef said sharply and clearly. "Our soldiers cleaned out the slum you were living in. You will notice this place is neat and clean. The place you were brought from will be cleaned up. If you follow the rules here, things can go well for you and for your family members who were left behind in Poland. When I point to you, step forward, hands out and fingers extended. Give me your age and work skills. Then stand with your chin up and your mouth open."

He pointed to a young man. The young man followed the orders. *He has good color in his nails, Josef was thinking. General health okay. No gold in the teeth.*

"Take him," Josef said, pointing south.

"Are these your two sons?" he asked a woman.

"Yes," she answered. He lifted their chins gently with his leather whip handle, studying their faces.

"Identical?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Take them to my lab," he told the guard. "How old are you, boys?" he asked.

"Seven," they said.

"They're good-looking boys," he said.

"Thank you," the mother said.

"This is your husband?" he asked.

"Yes."

Touching them both gently with the whip, he said, "Take them to the wash rooms." He pointed in the direction the sweet, burnt smell was coming from.

In the lab, he put his hand on one of the twin boys' shoulders and said, "Stop that crying! This will not hurt you." He injected a small amount of clear fluid into the boy's cheek.

Josef climbed into the car that was waiting to take him home. His usual driver was not there. "Where is Franz?" he asked.

"I don't know," the driver said. "I was just given orders to drive you home." Josef sat back, tired from a long day's work.

On the way home, the driver said, "Dr. Mengele, do you know why the Führer is using Jews instead of rats? It is because they are more prolific and less endearing."

"Mister, do you realize the seriousness of the work that is being done here? We are changing the way the world will be for the next thousand years."

When he arrived home, Josef walked into his living room, where his wife sat sewing.

"He tried to wait up for you," she said, pointing to his seven year old son sitting up asleep in his chair. "He so enjoys the time you spend with him."

Josef asked, "Is it okay if I wake him?"

"Yes, but don't play too long. You both really need to get more rest."

Dina Gerhauser

Hesitation

In silence I
 Await to be
 Wanted; not passively, with
 Aggression. To slowly
 Intiate the truth
 Tentatively hidden in
 Your constricted throat,
 Overlooked by the mind that
 Understands the destruction
 That is turning
 Obvious fires into
 Dareless bits escaping their
 Destiny.

Josh Stanley

Time In Passing

Men grow beards to prove that time has passed,
 An ornate crown, an ornate mask,
 And indeed time has passed.

Shouting from their barstools,
 "I do believe in God!"
 Shouting from the gutters
 (Where he'd found a tired rest at last),
 "Wait for me. I can help in the revolution,
 And I do believe in God!"

These are the old, gold dreams,
 A dollar bill, a siren scream;
 I've brought a witness to show you what I mean.
 Those are the fiery beacons of yesterday,
 When I would sit and dream of tomorrow.
 I stare at them now.
 They're empty and hollow,
 And indeed time has passed.

Marshall J. Daubs

Used Only on Sundays by a Little Old Man

The holographic billboard hanging in the sky was so large that it could be seen from a high orbit. As if anyone entering the star system would miss the advertisement that took up the entire lit face of the moon. Whether you were from here or not, you knew that Terra 7 had the best deals on Synthoids. With over 2000 dealers in man-made mates, this was the planet to find your dream lover and save a pretty penny at that. Here on Terra 7 they didn't do just retail. Since Synthoids were manufactured here, the average Joe could purchase one, straight from the maker, bypassing the middle man. Doing so cut the cost in half.

A star cruiser came out of warp. It had picked up a subspace commercial about ACME sales' new line of B.P.M.'s at super low prices. "SO LOW WE MUST BE INSANE!" The broadcast stated.

A small shuttlecraft left the mile long star cruiser and headed down to the surface of the planet. The sales staff at ACME rolled out the red carpet for their arriving customer. They gave first-class service to clients of this caliber.

The ship landed effortlessly outside the ACME factory. Out stepped a short, obese old man. Standing four foot nine inches, he would be considered short even by off-worlder standards. He was half as round as he was tall, with the greenish tint of his loose fitting skin making him look like an overripe pear. His expensive clothes couldn't hide his ghastly appearance. A full beard hung about his shrunken face. It partially succeeded in disguising the fact

that his face was out of proportion with the rest of his head. From a distance nobody could tell. Surely he could afford to have a new body grown, one that would be easier on the eyes of those around him.

His nose was neither Greek nor Roman, but a bit German. German shepherd, that is. Upon this nose there sat a pair of glasses; so thick was the glass of each lens that they made his eyes look the size of tea cup saucers. One must wonder about his reason for not having a retinal replacement done. Was it for religious reasons, or simply a fashion statement? His brow extended from ear to ear and was as tall as it was wide. The forest of hair on his head had been clear cut long ago. Only small strands randomly placed on his head remained. The vast expanse of skin that stretched between his bits of twisted gray hair was cracked and scarred like a dry, desert lake bed on an August afternoon. On the back of each troll-like ear, there were festering blisters, bulbous and white with pus.

He hobbled like a crippled penguin towards the ACME sales staff. When he neared the sales manager, he opened his mouth and spoke. His voice was raspy and shrill. Words hissed past teeth, which resembled stalactites and stalagmites both in shape and in texture. Judging from the yellow and brown stains on his enamel, he was a long-time smoker.

"Here is a list of specifications that I desire," he said, raising his boney hand, holding a book the size of the New Tokyo phone book.

"You will not vary from this list one iota. It is very specific in every detail.

From the color, length, and style of her hair, to the size of her pores and the number per square inch of skin. Every cell will be placed according to my specifications. Any variance will be intolerable. She must have skin that is smooth like porcelain, the color of ashen pearls. No tarnishes are allowed, except where I've designated a freckle, or a mole. Her lips will be full and red, like the flesh of a pomegranate. I wish to see the universe in her eyes. Eyes that are large and round with a look of childlike naiveté. Each iris shall be painted with the evening sky at dusk."

A slaver of spittle trickled over his bluish lips. The sales associate stared as he got further into his dreamy description.

"Her long, silky hair will flow like water, cascading from her head, off her

shoulders and down to the small of her back. Strawberry-blonde hair with red highlights dancing in the wind, like the flicker of flame. A body, lean and hard, like an athlete's yet with voluptuous curves and the fullness of Venus."

A loud buzzer, signaling the start of a new shift at the factory, snapped him out of his trance.

"Am I understood? I am very particular when it comes to my women."

He paused while a hacking cough exploded from his throat.

"Her entire programming I will leave to my own technicians. I want you to leave her with a blank slate."

The man turned and waddled back towards his ship and said, "Charge it to my account. I expect her ready within the hour."

Heather Jackson

Systematics

Racing thoughts pour through the masses,
Clashing concepts taught in classes:
Delegates debate donation,
Children suffer deprivation,
Zombie populations wander,
Perfect people never ponder.
Greed alone controls the system,
Moving like a well-tuned piston.
The more the system stands to gain,
The more the people go insane.

Todd Michael Roberts

In Part

What can be said for almost?
The greatest granite oak
Shattered in his adolescence,
Lightning through his wooden frame.
So burn the rest down, red man.
Burn it down to wear it, dirty boy.
Bury my humiliation in your soiled laws.
I was nearly grown.

I see my uncle, always in his field,
The garden, healthy and green,
Forever and white.
Still, very few are speckled blossoms,
Washed away when they refuse to grow.
They are sailing away now,
Dying for just one wiry root to connect,
Just to try again.

My uncle used to cry for every one of them,
Not for love,
For the flaw in the beautiful garden—
I should tell him, "Autumn lies."

Christopher Nelson

Monkey Trap

Your false grin is a grimace within;
Slanted shadows of winter wither our smiles.
As with skill you slouch and make love to your mandolin,
I reach random memory of our many trials.

Our children grown, gone, and hurried along
The prelaid path of social conformity,
I'm saturated with sorrow by dreams that I prolong.
You vacuum, watch T.V.—your routines became burdened debris.

Dusk comes casually, a plague upon our home.
Boredom diseases—you wait hours for a call on the phone,
I sit and lazily look at the papers till my eyes feel like stone,
Then shuffle to bed and listen to your nightmares make you moan.

Our lives hang haunted in the attics of our souls,
Our love has become a monkey trap—destined till death to hold.

Christopher Nelson

The Human Predicament

Neolithic unity—cascading evergreen—mountainous jealousy—
Captivating rage—suburban sun, dream mind schemes on the day that she
Left, white fence geometry, screaming children droned out by the
Almightly rumble of the shiny things, blue-red flash lighting up the alley-
Way, crack-crack, blood spill on the sidewalk—garbage can clatter, cat
Screech over the wall—spray painted abstraction of oblivion—modern
Day territorial struggles—sundown, toxic sky—wires blur the moonshine
Nighttime lust show—neon pornography on the newsstand—black on
White read splatter of political lies, pus from the sub-conscious of
Screaming silent society—mug shot mannequin beauty, capitalist
Advertisement hides the thrice painted bricks that wall in the caged
Parakeets stolen from paradises far ... chirping glory dreams containing—
Assimilated spiritually.



Phil Braunberger

Disintegration

I look at your hands,
 Long and thin like smooth twigs;
 I look at your hair,
 Black like leather;
 I look at your skin,
 White like wax,
 And I see all the particles in you
 Breaking apart.
 Not crumbling,
 Not exploding,
 Not shattering,
 Just leaving each other,
 Like childhood friends
 Who move to different parts of the country.

I look at the specks of you
 Floating through the air;
 The tiny blocks
 That used to be your hands,
 That used to be your hair,
 That used to be your skin.
 I see them getting smaller,
 As if a stonecutter
 Were chipping them apart,
 Atom by atom.

I finger the nothing you were,
 Trying to touch you,
 To hold your warm hands,
 To stroke your long hair,
 To rub your soft skin.



Debbie Gonzalez

Choreography of Peace

Create
A purple maple leaf,
Wave it above the air—
Watch the moment sail away
Like winter
Through a woven tear;
Then wander
Beyond a looming edge
Of a brook of shallow thoughts—
Open your arms to innocence
And drift your way across,
To finally soar above the breeze
Of careless dreams
And maple leaves,
And dance
In a never ending peace.

Lisa Woodland

Through Eyes of Blue

Through eyes of the deepest blue,
She sees the world.
Through ears like tiny sea shells,
She listens to its sound.
With hands so small and new,
She learns of its soft and hard places.
With feet still unsteady,
She will discover her independence.
In the mind of the child
Everything is wonderful.
In the arms of her mother
Everything is safe.

Kayce Stevens

Opportunity

The echo of events ran through my head: dad coming home with the big news that we were moving, the yard sale, packing up our remaining belongings, the “good-byes,” and the last thundering echo of the rockets at lift-off. I looked out the window to see a somber sky with brightly bragging stars. Below me I could see home, the Earth slowly pulling the burden of a modern world’s by-products as it lingered in the sun’s light.

I remember life a year ago, friends to play with, fishing, or even going for a walk with Maud, my dog. I have to leave Maud with grandma and grandpa. Mom had said, “It would inconvenience everyone else if Maud were here.” I didn’t think she was an “inconvenience.”

I liked it better at home. I loved the meals that mom used to make. She made them with real food, not the freeze dried garbage we have here. At home I could go outside every day, all day. Here I can go

outside once a week for three hours at a time; that is all we have “reserves” for. Mom says I’m lucky to live here: “Not many girls your age have an opportunity like this.” I wish I didn’t. I wish my life was extremely normal.

I feel like I’ve lived in a tree in Scotland all my life and have just now moved to the clutter of New York City.

The only thing I like about this place is the way you can look out and see forever. I used to have nightmares about there being an explosion. They could save only mom and me; dad was left behind in the burning shell of this place.

I try to create a way for me to get home, just to visit my old life. But everything I come up with has its weak step that would fall through. It is useless to dream.

Through time I have realized I detest this place—the restrictions, the lack of living things. Every one else has completed his or her time to grow and learn. This is not what I want to remember.

I hate it here. I want to go home to Maud, to my friends and to life.

Christopher Nelson

We’ve Never Spoken

Like the lovely lady never rides in a hearse,
Like a smiling virgin in a field of violets,
We follow—we fade,
Like the hazy waking of dreams,
Too true to be real.

III. Between the Current and the Rise

Todd Michael Roberts

Drug of Sunflower

A stranger has come,
A hunter, searching the railings of his unrest,
Stirring an ocean from a pool of illness.
As a boy,
He sings to the iris again

She is the drug of sunflower,
A shy and noble epitaph.
He could never forget
A crusted desert flower
Who might love to love him,
But only for murder's sake.

Yet the boy has witnessed the fisherman's fate.
The boy, so aware of the earth from the ground,
His dead letter misses the will of the girl;
The iris is rushed to the air—nothing.
Ash petals darken the sand.

She is the drug of sunflower.
He could never forget
Her secretive denial
Or the passing of dependence.

Josh Stanley

Hidden (Just as the Heavens Sang)

Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divisions,
They searched for the river;
The river was hidden.

Though they vision,
Their teeth are clean.
Though they dream,
They thirst.
"I am black."

From the low mountain came the sound—
A hundred kings, a thousand crowns.
From the exalted valley came the sound—
"Watch the moon, I think it's coming down."

(For ye gods)

Christopher Nelson

Lovers on a Corner

I'm tired like feathers,
But you're strong like glass;
We cut pieces of reality
And collage life from emptiness.

Phil Braunberger

My Coat Isn't Thick Enough*

It is sunset; clouds to the west are long, thin, and red
Like strips of apple skin or smears of blood on a rapier.
I shoulder my steel-framed backpack and start down the long road,
A strip of black asphalt that looks like a scar on the hills.
The wind blows dust from a farmer's field through oaks and aspen.
Green leaves and thick brown branches bend and sway like unlatched doors.

Particles of dust are blowing into my eyes and mouth.
I am squinting and shielding my face with a thin coat sleeve.
I am pulling my hood down to keep the sand from my face.
I must look like a nun running to the abbey for prayer.
I'm glad it isn't snowing. My coat isn't thick enough
For winter or autumn, and my left shoe has a small hole.

I remember when my neighbor left the rotting carcass
Of a deer in his back yard. Its body was twisted, and its
Front leg was broken because its hoof was caught between
Two rocks when he shot it. Flies and worms were eating the meat.
He had cut the head off and skinned it. I stared at the white skull and the black
Holes where two eyes once rested.

Thick cedar and mulberry bush forests replace
The brown, blue, and white shells of abandoned farmhouses
And the long corn and bean fields where men and oxen once cut lines
In the soft earth. I sit on an old log ten feet from the
Road. There is a small hole in it where the wood is rotting.

The road is made of cheap asphalt and is starting to crack
Into trapezoid and triangular shaped spaces. It looks
Like a spider's web or the dry hands of a potter.
Soon the cracks will widen and deepen into fissures,
Soon the fissures will spread until they are large potholes.
Holes get deeper and wider until there are no holes left.

*Third Place Winner, 1994-95 Annie Atkin Tanner Poetry Competition

Stacey Heinhold

To Hunt

The instinct to hunt, to kill was
unbearable. The moon was full and lighted
the small footpaths in the forest. It was a
perfect night for hunting.

He could smell a rabbit nearby. It was
just a little way to the left, nestled in some
bushes by the small cliff. The words entered
his mind. *Hunt. Kill. Eat.* But something
held him back.

He didn't know exactly what it was.
Maybe it was the pull of civilization, the
pull of domestication. Maybe it was that he
knew once he went over the edge, he could
never return.

His mouth watered at the scent of the
rabbit. His whole soul was racked with
indecision. He wanted the taste of the
rabbit in his mouth; he wanted to feel it
struggle for its last breath and then go still.
But yet he did not move.

He heard a noise off somewhere to his
right and frowned. If they came soon, it
would be too late. He had to decide.

Again the words came. *Hunt. Kill.* The
temptation was overpowering.

He heard voices coming closer and
closer. "Maybe they are just passersby," he
thought. "Maybe I can just hide in the
bushes until they are gone." He slunk
between two trees where the undergrowth
was thick enough to hide him, but not so
thick that he would disturb every creature
in the forest as he walked into it.

Soon a young man and a young woman
walked by, and he was suddenly filled with
longing. He was torn. The rabbit was

tempting, but so was the thought of
companionship. He looked back and forth
between the place where the rabbit was
and the path that the couple had just
walked. He knew he must decide soon, or
everything would be lost. The rabbit
would be gone, and the couple would be
too far ahead to catch up with.

But it was so hard! He wondered why
he couldn't just have both, but then
realized that neither world would trust
him if he lived in both. He must decide,
and he must decide quickly.

Again the words came. *Hunt. Kill.* But
this time they were mingled with the new
word. *Companionship.* The conflict
raging inside his soul was tearing him
apart.

He heard more voices coming from the
right again. There were more people this
time. Four or five from the sound of it. He
knew that they were enough to scare the
rabbit away if he did not kill it first. But
still he could not decide. The warm flesh
and blood, or the companionship of many
people?

A wolf howled somewhere in the
distance, and the people stopped, giving
him a few more seconds to decide.

He knew that if he chose the hunt, he
could never return for the companionship.
But there was always the possibility of
finding companionship in the wild life.
There might be some other creature
searching for the companionship as well.

He then knew what he must do. He
jumped into the bushes where the rabbit
was and closed his jaws on the small, furry
body.

Dina Gerhauser

At My Hands

I do not want
To help you grow
Green and still.
I will not touch
Your soft.
Refuse lights release,
Not be the one
To bring you love.
You're too precious:
Hallowed despair
In live ground,
Avoiding silent dependency.

I want to be your autumn.
Verging footsteps on
Cracked veins where
My envy runs.
To be your cremation;
Joys decay,
The breeze tearing you,
The only crushing,
Your misery;
Where you are beautiful.
I need you there.



Kerry C. Sherman

Local Anaesthesia

Oh, please could I leave with you
 A line of tellurian deception,
 A delicate lined lie, to soothe,
 Diluted by tall division.
 From that first morning masquerade
 Deep in Eden in the east, the Serpent
 Sought such subjugation, in trickling tete-a-tete
 With aid of a loose leading half-truth, his filament.
 I reveal to you my moth-filled mouth,
 To trip you with my tying tongue,
 For to fall in my hole-full soul.
 There you shall eat and drink and feel amongst
 Those like you, who reel and wander about,
 Reckoning that my breath is celestial above the sun.

Jay McArthur

Convenience

When it's convenient for me,
 That moment in time
 To gamble with chance,
 To flirt with the concept of romance,
 I know I'll be ready.

It might be a while
 Through desperate attempts
 With a worn-out smile,
 But she's out there.

I can smell her perfume
 Above smoke-filled bars
 And passing cars,
 Lingering in married men's shirt collars,
 Soaked in the lips of law school scholars.

I may be kidding myself,
 But she's waiting for me
 To emerge from the branches
 Of a withered oak tree,
 To capture her eyes
 From the enemy wind,
 Sunsets and wine
 Till eternity's end.

For now I've got my cigarettes,
 A stack of CDs
 And party mints
 To lessen this detailed dream
 And the thought of being
 Alone.

Christopher Nelson

The Vagabond and the Harlot

He travels in spirals like the wind;
Roads and trails lead to possibility—not destination.
Abstract time has no relevance,
Only the quality of the moment counts
To this wise traveler, a man without restraints.

Her face has a relaxed smile that many women crave;
Emotion is her trade—this purveyor of fantasy.
Opinions don't cut her,
They only strengthen—pride she learned long ago,
This caring mistress, a woman without restraints.

A night charged with natural energy,
The moon rose bloody at dusk;
Their eyes met in a reflection of animal lust—
Arms wrapped and bodies rolled,
In the dance of human beauty.

The next morning he had left like a breeze;
She smiled and fixed his face in her memory.



Jessica Fournier

Eyes

Naked with their beauty and mystique,
Scopes of knowledge,
Takers of the heart,
Interpreters of all evil.

A leaf clutched from a tree and swept away by the wind, a loved one
Is lost. Eyes see....
By the rushing strength of a mountain's fury, water is thrown off
The edge, yet only small sprinkles bounce upon my body. Eyes see....

Eyes see all, more than one can comprehend,
Oh, how they see;
Close them tight. Stop the confusion!
It remains.

Although closed, they flicker across the eyelids,
Scanning lost visions,
A picture screen in the mind,
Unwanted ... but there.

Never a moment of peace,
A twitching madness,
Recollection of anguish,
Contemplation of events,
Fascinations of unrealistic creations.

Cheerful laughter, deadly screams,
But never a blank screen,
So ... I sleep.

Marion Frazier

It Might Have Been

You enter this valley,
This valley of despair,
Where the gall of bitterness
Threatens to chancre my very soul.
You bring a rosebud, a symbol,
Of what still may be.
You ask, "Can I forgive me?"
"Yes, I think I can.
But I know we will never
Feel the tender passion
We had when we were one.
Don't let this get you down.
'Cause you can come to my house,
And we can mess around."

Aubree Howard

Dent de Lion*

The first to bloom in the spring,
Thick, fleshy taproots
That thrive in almost any soil.
In a rosette of lion's teeth,
Every scape bears
Its own yellow-flowered herb,
A bitter tonic.
To some it is a pest,
Invading lawns, pervading gardens,
But to the imaginative,
It is pure springtime sun.
A small fruit or naked seed
Borne easily on the wind as a parachute.
One seed per floret,
Disseminated and perennial,
Repeating year to year,
Developing without pollination or fertilization,
Taraxacum erythrospermum for
Dandelion wine.

*First Place Winner 1994-95 Annie Atkin Tanner Poetry Competition



Phil Braunberger

Voltaire (After the Sculpture by Jean Baptiste Pigalle)

They never will find the mad penman,
No matter how many peasants they question,
No matter how many forests they search,
No matter how many trackers they employ,
No matter how many hounds they send.

The dogs will follow his scent to the base
Of a sturdy oak as easily as men follow trails of ink;
But they will not find him lying beneath the tree.
They will only see an old, white sack of bones.

Let them snarl and growl
At the slack form on the ground.
He won't display his rosemary,
For he has shed his skin, mask, garlic, and crucifix.

Let them pierce the limp, white hands
With thorny teeth.
No cries for mercy will form on his lips.
Free men don't ask for freedom.

Let them sniff the soiled robe
And slobber on the wrinkled cheek.
They'll never wake him up.
He stopped speaking French long ago.

IV. Abyssal Plain

Josh Stanley

I Call Her Never

Will she be in a shallow field
Sprinkling in foam?
A thought of never
I call out,
And the night is still stone.

But when I saw her dance
In a private room,
She laughed too loud;
I awoke too soon.

Will she stand in the distance?
Honest (with slight confident air)
A thought of ever
"Ligeia, I presume,"
And will she kiss me there?

Jessica Fournier

Twisted Love

I thought I knew, I thought I belonged—
Happily in love, as tightly fit as a puzzle piece.
Was I ever so wrong!
He meant the world to me.
I was his necessity.

I thought he cared.
"Shut up!" he said, "Just go to sleep."
My words were lost, not heard nor seen,
Never proud of accomplished dreams,
Overpowered by the desire for material things.

I can't compete.
"Wasted years," he says.
I felt complete.
The puzzle's put together now,
Although it is not tightly bound.
The pieces must be moved around.
Alone, I'm confounded; I will never figure out how.



Aubree Howard

Topography of the Uncertain Love

An elegant mountain,
A peak of perfection.
Undercutting, falling
To utter rejection.

The radiant sunshine
That brightens the eye,
Now a big ugly doubt
Hovers over the sky.

The edge of the sun
Reflects off the downpour,
Momentarily blinding
From the "happiness no more."

A grass-covered hillside,
A river below,
Fracturing and slumping
And a big muddy flow.

The building stones stood
Glorious and high,
Now crumbled and fallen,
Shaken down by lies.

Some more susceptible,
But all end the same:
The uncertain love
And the soul's own shame.

Jim Callis

The Knowledge of He, or You, or She, or Whomever, Really

The dawning day begins to die,
The cool winds bite,
The moon begins to rise,
And now, it's midnight.

The book is opened.
I looked squarely into your
Soft, tear-drained eyes—
They whisper perpetual silence.

Sands of an hourglass
Laughing in the wind,
Bringing my arms upward,
Ever upward to the sky,
For this moment of slippage.

A pugilistic silence
Chased him from deepest,
Darkest alleys of chaos.
His words sing with no rhyme.

Raindrops cascading cobblestone,
Romantic and sardonic,
Around me, inside me,
Rotting secretly in the rain.

Multiple meaning words
Whispering hatred and silence.
Did it make any sense to satiate
One way or the other?
Nothing but monomaniac
Surveillance of deepest black.

I roll my eyes to the world.
They cannot see my pupils,
They cannot see my mind.
Mr. Ebb, of his own kind,
Souly, slowly dilapidated.

Amber Christensen

Solace

She walks through the town
Looking
For something.
The lights, the noise
Beat-beat-beat.
Another tear drops,
Falling to the ground,
Gathering up thoughts.
Is it enough?
She walks on
And on
And on and
On.
"Have I even moved?"
She lifts up her heavy eyes,
As the rain falls like a new beginning,
As her body moves
To the beat and rhythm.
At this moment
Nothing else matters.
A dance of life
Right now
Is all she needs.

Jessica Fournier

Night*

The night is dark;
The street is glossy, revealing a distorted mirror image
With a soft, trickling rain.
The street lights glow in a row of yellow halos,
Like soft daffodil flowers blossoming along a lane.

As I walk home through a rising mist,
The cold wind tangling through my hair
Brings about a twist of thought.
As bright stars flicker,
Sleeping light escapes the trees' embrace.
All dimness and pain is pushed aside
For the night absorbs my wondrous journey.

*Second Place Winner 1994-95 Annie Atkin Tanner
Poetry Competition



Aubree Howard

Feline Lament

I saw your pain.
 I felt your body shake as I held you.
 You were leaving me.
 Never again will you cry for me,
 Calling my name in your own sacred language.
 You were my friend, and you loved me when no one else would.
 You brought the sun on my dreariest days.
 I felt your body grow limp, and I longed for the breath of life to return,
 But to no avail,
 And it slipped away like a whisper in the wind.
 Now the rain comes down in a sinister serenade.
 Over and over your life drills itself into my memory.
 You were one of such supreme grace.
 As you enter into a new world of hope and promises,
 I am left here in a pool of retrospection.
 Although the rain comes down
 In piercing silver streaks tonight,
 I know that soon the sun will find its way through this heavy darkness,
 But I will always remember you and your elegance.
 You are a Goddess, and I will always love you.



Phil Braunberger

The Doorbell

My cat lounges on the red fence
 In front of the courtyard at my house.
 I watch her as she lazily paws
 A thin branch on the berry bush
 That climbs the fence.
 I turn toward the brown door
 And search my pockets for keys.
 There are none.

I ring the doorbell. No one is home.
 I walk to the side of my house
 And open the chain link gate to my backyard.
 The back door is locked, so I grab the edges
 Of the window well and lower myself down.

I shatter my bedroom window with a rock.
 No one hears the crash.
 They didn't hear the doorbell either.
 I reach through the hole, grab the latch, and pull.
 I am careful of the glass.
 I step through the space where the pane was.
 Glass is scattered across my bed like snow in the air.
 I briefly thank God for shoes.
 I grab the frame of canvass leaning against the wall.
 I also get the palette, the two small brushes,
 And the rag beneath it.
 I squeeze paint from aluminum tubes to the palette,
 Red, blue, black, green, brown, white, and yellow.
 I step back through the window and run to my front yard.
 My cat is gone.

Meg Gilmore**Mind City**

Terror and I run the streets of my mind
 Over cobblestone, by tall glass houses
 With blackened windows,
 All the light gone,
 Reason unreal,
 Abandoned by everyone
 But myself.

Corner streetlights all burned out
 When my body left my soul
 To its own resources,
 Begging life from
 A helpless mass;
 Falling into a heap
 Crumpled and weak,
 I only cry one tear
 For life, for death, for nothing.

Todd Michael Roberts**From Absence**

I will never find a bearing here;
 All elements invisible from night
 Could never reach with arm or stone
 This swollen pearl of machinery.

Marking holes through every page,
 Pinned and drawn by every summer evening
 Until the pages collapse and stagger into season,
 And I fold away another trampled manuscript.

Ruined children learn to bite again;
 I would try to take them from the yard,
 From the beds of iron in the dirty tire prison,
 Anything to stop their yawning.

Christopher Nelson**My Classic Dread**

A prisoner to my company,
 My isolation is my sanity.
 The void of thought will never be filled,
 The longevity of endurance can't be killed.
 Despair and time have taken away my dream,
 Reaching from the edge of what would seem
 To be the filter of perception,
 Mislead me in every direction.
 ... This is my corruption,
 This is my deceit,
 The voice inside of me screams its disbelief,
 And so the snare of illusion casts its killer lure,
 And for the sake of reasoning, my life has no cure.
 ... This is my journey,
 Laced with cries of fright,
 Once again, hope must guide me through the night.
 Kept caged in my mind are memories of peace;
 They are my swords used against my griefs.
 ... This is my corruption,
 This is my deceit,
 And perhaps a taste of death would make me complete.

Robin Stout

The Crime

The virus
Grows to ful
Fill the cells,
Destroy the infec
Tion,
Yet supp
Lying to
The body,
Through its blood
Streams, life
Giving sustenance
By the action.

Jessica Fournier

Intruder Upon My Soul

Do you ever wonder what you see?
A warped reflection of reality.
Is it you inside that mirror?
If not, then who else could it be?

An intruder—ugly, I am told, of
Little use, and much too bold.
In my inner soul—beauty is what I see,
Always there to please,
And opinionated objectively.

The intruder has overcome me now.
I said I would leave before too long.
It's now too late; my spirit is gone.

How or when it happened I do not know,
Though I no longer wonder, for I was told.

S. Nathan Everett

Violence: Man's Best Friend

A circle that builds on cycles past
Tests the wind through our noses, searching
Through our eyes what's to be done
Our hands complete the task.

No need to ask, "What can be done?"
When children do the killing
We learn from the best, the pros,
And we, the children, kill for fun.

This animal rite, heartless and cruel,
Was with us from the womb
In everything we see and hear
To the flame it adds more fuel.

When we go blind, enraged, and hateful,
No consequences matter,
Only searching for relief.
We'll bite, more than a mouthful.

In split seconds the action comes
Screaming through our hands,
And an innocent who's pushed our buttons
Is dispatched; then, it's done.

Dina Gerhauser

Only in Surrender

There is not far enough.
Never too much.
I need your eyes on me.
Your look of stern consistency,
Not void of compassion.

With deliberate cruelty
Your slow, catching words
Seek a place warmer, softer
To burrow their nasty meanings in.
Every breath
You await my destruction.

In this strange agony,
Courage is not relished.
I fall to be weak,
Cry to be freed.
Greatness overcomes anguish,
And your inevitable design
Requires all of me.

Aubree Howard

Life of a Winter

The death of a winter,
The life of a flower.
A seed full of zeal
Now starts to grow.
It breaks through the ground
With wild ambition.
It blossoms with passion
And vigor and strength.
Yearning to survive
The heat of summer,
Pleasing our senses
With small worlds of color.
Then the frost comes
Seizing the stems,
And malevolent winds
Blow off all the petals.
It crumbles to dust
And is covered with snow,
The death of a flower,
The life of a winter.

Gary Lee Wahlberg

Wasted Time

A piece of paper lies on the floor.
But still you talk to me.
As the candle slowly burns,
The time we spend is wasted.

Feeling tired, I get up and run.
Why go through the trouble?
Memories seem to drift away.
The time we spend is wasted.

The rain clouds cover the sky,
But as I watch, the mountains
Glimmer from the lights of a passing car.
The time we spend is wasted.

Thinking back to the last time I ate,
I remember Hendrix was an addict.
But the guitar lives on.
The time we spend is wasted.

The piece of paper is gone.
Now that you finally shut up,
The candle has burnt out.
The time we spent was wasted.

Stephanie Chidester

Milton's Unapproachable God

(forthcoming in *Encyclia*; winner of the 1994 Outstanding Paper Award for the Letters Division of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters)

To the uninitiated reader, Milton's God can seem the least appealing character in *Paradise Lost*. This is in part because Milton does not give a thorough, anthropomorphic description of God. Indeed, Milton and the angels are incapable of looking directly at Him because of His intense brightness and, therefore, are incapable of describing Him. In addition, Milton does not attempt to make God more accessible to his mortal readers, does not measure, where God is concerned, "things in Heav'n by things on Earth" (VII.893).¹

The reader first hears of God from the mouths of Satan and his minions, and they alone have the impudence to refer to God in anthropomorphic terms. Satan speaks of "the force of those dire Arms" (I.94) and "the terror of this Arm" (I.113), making God seem nothing so much as an epic hero. In addition, Satan's "the Potent Victor in his rage" (I.95) summons the image of Achilles' horrific anger during and after the slaying of Hector.² And, when Satan blasphemously calls God "the Thunderer" (II.28), the reader cannot help but think of Zeus with his lightning or Thor with his hammer. In Book II, Beelzebub, in a speech "first devis'd/ By Satan" (379-80), attributes to that "Potent arm" (318) an

"Iron Sceptre"³ and a "Golden" one, with which He rules hell and heaven respectively (326-28). Moloch, in another blasphemous reference to God, speaks of "Turning our Tortures into horrid Arms/ Against the Torturer; when to meet the noise/ Of his Almighty Engine" (II.63-65). Here God becomes a sadistic master of a medieval torture chamber.

Mammon acknowledges the fact that God is unseen at II.263-68:

How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth Heav'n's all-
ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his Glory unobscur'd,
And with the Majesty of darkness round
Covers his Throne; from whence deep
thunders roar
Must'ring thir rage, and Heav'n resembles
Hell?

However, what Mammon refuses to see (or perhaps cannot see) is that God's very brightness, not darkness, obscures their vision and that they must view Him through a veil (III.782). Mammon attributes to God characteristics which are unique to hell and the fallen angels' own minds, and, in fact, he compares heaven and hell.

These fallen ones seem to be using the language and images of their own world to make God and Heaven accessible to themselves in their present state. These diminished angels associate heaven with hell and at the same time define heaven in material terms whenever they affect godhead. One of the most prominent examples of this occurs at II.506-11:

The *Stygian* Council thus dissolv'd; and
forth
In order came the grand infernal Peers:
Midst came thir mighty Paramount, and
seem'd

¹All references to Milton are from *Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1957.

²"Rage" is a word used only by fallen beings to describe God.

³The Thunderer's "Iron Sceptre" is, perhaps, comparable to Thor's thunder-producing hammer.

Alone th' Antagonist of Heav'n, nor less
Than Hell's dread Emperor with pomp
Supreme,
And God-like imitated State...

The debate in Pandemonium in general and Satan's assumed superiority in particular are mockeries (not to mention parodies) of the councils in Heaven and God's glory.

Soon after Milton shows the reader this parody, he introduces the reader to its original; God is first described by Milton in vague terms. This sort of non-depiction comes as a shock, especially after the sordid and all-too-accessible figurative language used to describe the inhabitants of hell.

For instance, at I.664-6 the angels seem to have human shape ("Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs/ Of mighty Cherubim"), and, in one of the most famous passages of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is shown

With Head up-lift above the wave, and
Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts
besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and
large
Lay floating many a rood... (I.193-96).

He is then compared to several beasts "of monstrous size," the most immediately accessible of which the reader will choose to associate with Satan. Milton again uses accommodating language to describe the apostate angels at I.777-81, and again, he allows the reader to choose the image with which (s)he is most familiar:

they but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons
Now less than smallest Dwarfs, in narrow
room
Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race
Beyond the *Indian* Mount, or Faery Elves,
Whose midnight Revels, by a Forest side
Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees...

The reader is allowed (and, in fact, encouraged) to visualize these beings in terms of the physical (and pagan mythical) world.

God, on the other hand, is first described as light and love and "never but in unapproached Light/ Dwelt from Eternity" (III.3-6). God is not the personification of these abstractions, nor is he simply compared to them; He *is* love and light. It is rather difficult to conjure up a mental picture of God from this description, and, according to the lines themselves, it is impossible to do so because He is unapproachable. The angels praise Him at III.374-82:

...Author of all being,
Fountain of Light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou
sit'st
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou
shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a
cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant
Shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts
appear,
Yet dazzle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil thir
eyes.

Milton is not entirely consistent, however. He gives God some physical reference at III.56-8: "Now had th' Almighty Father from above/ From the pure Empyrean where he sits/ High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye."⁴ God also speaks, but it is not the speech of mortals; it fills "all Heav'n" with "ambrosial fragrance..." and "the blessed Spirits elect" with "sense of new joy ineffable" (III.135-37). But, His voice does not always inspire joy; Michael will explain to Adam in Book XII that "the

⁴Similarly, in Book XII Michael says that God will "avert/ His holy Eyes" (108-9).

voice of God/ To mortal ear is dreadful" (235-36).

However, the reader can deduce from III.138-42 that God has no physical form:

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious, in him all his Father shone
Substantially express'd, and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appear'd,
Love without end, and without measure
Grace...

So, if God is divine light and love, the Son is the physical manifestation of these components. Another attribute which separates God from the physical, mortal world is His freedom from time, His foreknowledge: "from his prospect high/ ... past, present, future he beholds" (III.77-8). It is difficult for most people to comprehend this concept and pretty much impossible for anyone to relate to it.⁵

Milton shows the reader a God who, although He expresses displeasure now and then,⁶ does not often rage to and fro, seeking whom He might devour, as Satan asserts. On the contrary, He is more frequently amused than angry, and He is shown laughing on several occasions.⁷

Although Abdiel predicts that God's wrath will rage "into sudden flame" when He discovers Satan's rebellion, God's reaction is surprisingly mild. He saw "Rebellion

⁵This particular quality, especially the idea that nothing "can scape the Eye/ Of God All-seeing, or deceive his Heart/ Omniscient..." (X.5-7), is a little discomfiting for most human beings, none of whom is free from "sin."

⁶For instance, when he foresees man's fall, he irritably says, "So will fall/ Hee and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?/ Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee/ All he could have..." (III.95-8). In addition, when Michael tells Adam of all that is to come, it is clear that God often becomes frustrated and angry with mankind. For instance, Michael speaks of God's "Ire" at XI.885, and God describes Himself as an "incensed Deity" at III.187.

rising, saw in whom, how spread/
Among the sons of Morn, what
multitudes/ Were banded to oppose his
high Decree;/ And smiling to his only
Son, thus said..." (V.715-18). And a little later the Son says, "Mighty Father, thou thy foes/ Justly hast in derision, and secure/ Laugh'st at thir vain designs and tumults vain..." (V.735-37). In short, God is all-knowing and cannot be surprised, and there is not much in the universe which can truly threaten and thereby enrage Him.⁸

When Satan and Adam and Eve affect godhead, they are, in a sense, trying to personify God. They are claiming that God's divine wisdom and infinite power can be contained in a finite body, that all those abstractions, such as Love and Light, which God *is* can be defined by a single, imperfect being. They are, in effect, redefining

⁷He also shows affection for the Son when He is explaining the concept of divine grace, which is not to be confused with predestination. The Son has just tried to explain it as he understands it. The Father replies with jovial rhymes: "O Son, in whom my Soul hath chief delight,/ Son of my bosom, Son who art alone/ My word, my wisdom, and effectual might,/ All hast thou spok'n as my thoughts are, all/ As my Eternal purpose hath decreed:/ Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,/ Yet not of will in him, but grace in me/... Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand/ On even ground against his mortal foe,/ By me upheld, that he may know how frail/ His fall'n condition is, and to me owe/ All his deliv'rance..." (III. 169-76, 78-82). This rhyming might be an indication that God must use simpler language, use the device of rhyme with the Son and the angels so that they will understand and remember what He says.

⁸If Michael can be believed, God is also capable of hate. He pledges his faith to the Father, "But whom thou hat'st, I hate" (VI.734).

and impersonating deity. This, to Milton, is the ultimate sin, and God seems to take a similar view:

Man disobeying,
Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins
Against the high Supremacy of Heav'n,
Affecting God-head, and so losing all,
To expiate his Treason hath naught left,
But to destruction sacred and devote...
Die hee or Justice must... (III.203-8, 210)

It takes an incredible amount of impudence and pride for a man or angel to believe that he is or can become, as Adam puts it, "Presence Divine" (VIII.314), a being who is "Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher./ Surpasest far my naming" (VIII.38-39).

Adam is incapable of naming God, just as Milton, without the permission of the Holy Spirit, his Muse, would be unqualified to describe Him and justify His ways. Accordingly, Raphael tells Adam that "God to remove his ways from human sense,/ Plac'd Heav'n from Earth so far, that earthly sight,/ If it presume, might err in things too high" (VIII.121-2), and the angel later instructs him: "joy thou/ In what he gives to thee, this Paradise/ And thy fair Eve: Heav'n is for thee too high/ To know what passes there; be lowly wise" (VIII.170-73). Man should not see or even presume to wonder about heaven and matters of divinity.

It is blasphemous to make God in one's own image, and doing so is, in a

sense, affecting godhead. Milton, for the most part, refrains from referring to God in human terms, but when he does, he has the excuse that he is being guided by the Holy Spirit, who is, in fact, dictating *Paradise Lost* to this mortal poet. He makes this claim a number of times throughout the poem, including at the beginning, where he invokes the "Heav'nly Muse," or Holy Spirit: "What in me is dark/ Illumine, what is low raise and support" (I.22-3). Similarly, when he introduces Heaven, he writes, "I sung of *Chaos* and *Eternal Night*,/ Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down/ The dark descent, and up to reascend..." (III.18-20).

Paradoxically, in explaining the ways of God to man, in presenting his God, Milton has re-invented the deity in which most modern Christians believe, and without his claim to divine inspiration, he could be accused of the very crime for which Satan and Adam fell: the presumption of the god-like power to create and to know God.

Milton has, however, presented a God who is non-anthropomorphic. This God is as physically and mentally distinct from mankind as Milton could make him; He is perfect, unchanging, omnipresent and omnipotent. As a result, the God of *Paradise Lost* is a somewhat static non-character, lacking the all-too-human qualities of mutability and imperfection with which most mortal readers can relate and sympathize.

Staff Members

Stephanie Chidester, co-editor from 1988-1990, was Dixie College's 1989-90 valedictorian and Southern Utah University's 1991-92 valedictorian. SUU named her Scholar of the Year for 1990-91 and 1991-92. Her essays have appeared in *Encyclopaedia*, *Midsummer Magazine*, *On-Stage Studies*, and *Shakespeare Edition*. Her essay "Milton's Unapproachable God" won the 1994 Outstanding Paper Award for the Letters Division of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. She currently teaches German and English composition at Dixie College.

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Ace G. Pilkington's poems have been published in five countries; his articles on Shakespeare have appeared in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *The Review of English Studies*, and *The Yearbook of English Studies*. He is the author of *Screening Shakespeare from Richard II*

to *Henry V*, University of Delaware Press, 1991, and he is currently editing a book on the films of Branagh and Zeffirelli for the same publisher. His poem "The Robots' Farewell to the Master (For Isaac Asimov)" won the 1992 Readers' Choice Award for *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*.

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HISTORY OF THE *SOUTHERN QUILL*

Year	Editor(s)	Advisor(s)
1950-51	Loraine Taylor	Juanita Brooks
1951-52	Loraine Taylor	Juanita Brooks
1952-53	Rose Workman	Rose Esplin
1953-57	No magazine published	
1957-58	Karen Vawdrey	Juanita Brooks & Betty J. Allen
1958-59	Karen Vawdrey	Juanita Brooks
1959-60	Barbara Larkin	Juanita Brooks
1960-61	Titine Spillsbury	Reed Blake, Jr.
1961-62	Joan Esplin	Robert O. Dalton
1962-63	Joan Esplin	Robert O. Dalton
1963-64	Ilene Harmon	Pansy L. Hardy
1964-65	Emily Cottam	Pansy L. Hardy
1965-66	Kay Lichtenwalter	Pansy L. Hardy
1966-67	James Force	Robert O. Dalton
1967-68	James Force	Pansy L. Hardy
1968-69	Linda Sue Hunt	Pansy L. Hardy
1969-70	Linda Sue Hunt	Pansy L. Hardy
1970-71	Roxanne Schmidt	Pansy L. Hardy
1971-72	Michelle Thomas	Pansy L. Hardy
1972-73	Gordon J. Peterson	Pansy L. Hardy
1973-74	Connie Gifford	Pansy L. Hardy & John G. Hacking
1974-75	Cathy Pam Heaton	Pansy L. Hardy & John G. Hacking
1976-77	Michael Perry	Janice F. DeMille
1977-78	Marilee Camp	James Force
1978-79	Bill Batzlie	Pansy L. Hardy
1979-80	Laura Lee Graff	Pansy L. Hardy
1980-81	Kurtis Crist, Linda Hedrick, & Aderianna Smith	
1981-82	Melanie Madsen	Ace G. Pilkington
1982-83	Dianna K. Kearney	Ace G. Pilkington
1983-84	Dawn Houghton	Ace G. Pilkington
1984-85	Julianna Burton	Ace G. Pilkington
1985-86	Janae Daley	Ace G. Pilkington

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Year	Editor(s)	Advisor(s)
1986-87	Bonnie McCowan & Kris Shipp	Ace G. Pilkington
1987-88	Karen Hansen & Kris Shipp	Ace G. Pilkington
1988-89	Stephanie Chidester & Chris Metcalfe	Ace G. Pilkington
1989-90	Stephanie Chidester & Chris Metcalfe	Ace G. Pilkington
1990-91	Tiffany Durrant & Joni Jones	Ace G. Pilkington
1991-92	Christian Arial	Ace G. Pilkington
1992-93	Jandi Jones, Natalie Nilsson, & Chris Pellew	Ace G. Pilkington
1993-94	Jandi Jones & Natalie Nilsson	Ace G. Pilkington
1994-95	Dina Gerhauser	Ace G. Pilkington

