# little ANGRY people



**spectrum literary magazine**
2004 spring renegade issue

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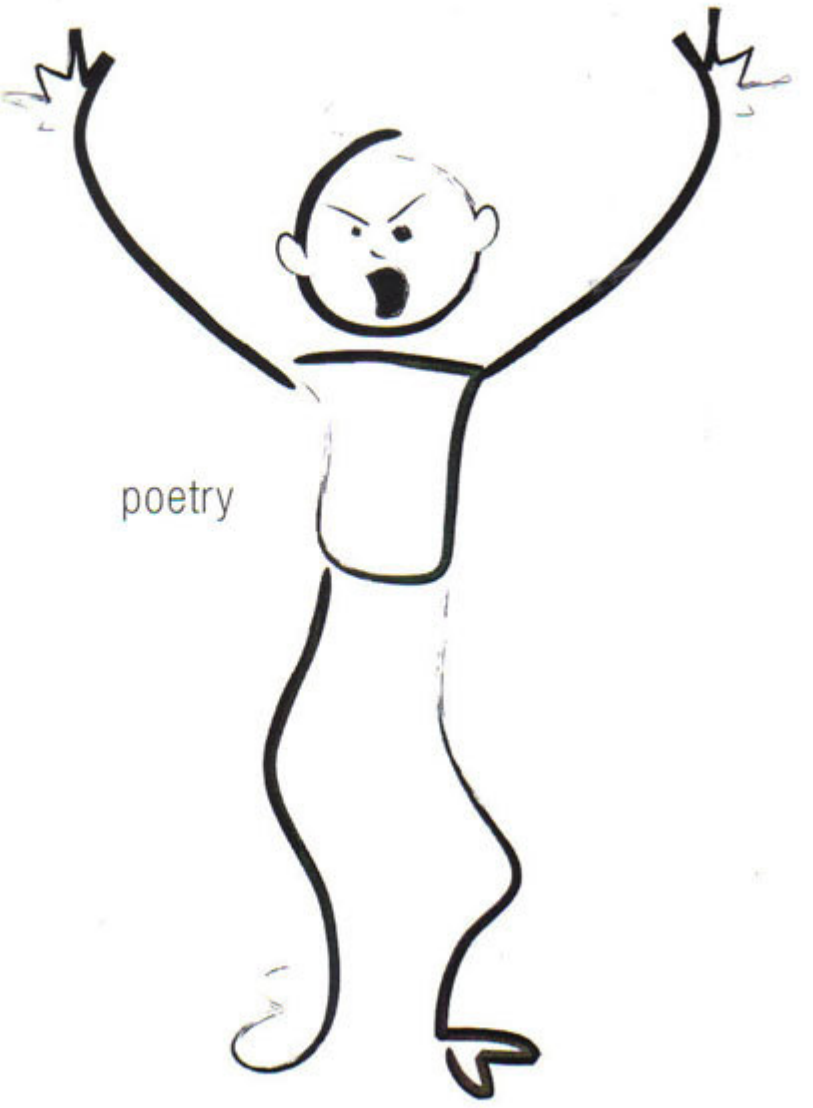
## A Letter From The Editor:

On behalf of Spectrum's editorial staff, I would like to introduce the latest edition of our – if not illustrious, at least doggedly persistent – literary arts magazine. This issue is long overdue, and my apologies extend to the authors and artists who, by this time, probably thought they were forgotten. Fortunately, we ragamuffins of the arts were able to pull through and publish this belated collection of poems and stories. So, dear reader, take care and take note of the eloquence of Robert Ortiz, of Trevor Crippen's playful verse, and of the found sound symphony of Beck Rist. These are but a few of our faithful and talented contributors. You can decide your own personal favorites of Spectrum's "Renegades."

Nicole Klosterman - editor


poetry

Amber Bottle

Little amber bottle,
Sweet snow-capped citrus stronghold,
My prescription confetti,
Happy endings of a hole-puncher.

Innocent amber bottle,
Intimate evening moments with you,
Youive changed my life,
Youive wallpapered my bathroom.

Dreamless amber bottle,
Euphoric rolling pin,
How awkwardly you leave me drained,
Like a flushed toilet.

Moya Coady

## Longings for a Pulse

Caught unexpectedly, duct tape silenced the abduction,
Rope securely fastened around praying hands and feet.
Limited oxygen supply in the dark trunk space.

A quiet dimly lit room, stained off white walls, nothing to eat,
I estimated a three-hours between being beat,
A curved blade removes filet portions of cheek from my face.
The butcher knife alleviates my sternum of pressure and suction.

Deep tissue incisions spray burgundy blood blinding like mace,
Aorta, veins, and arteries cut so the heart can be ripped from its case,
The crowbar prying loose what was left, ending any last sensations of heat.

Disposal of my body was of no consequence in the plots construction,
Dupin, Holmes, Matlock, Mason discover with minor deduction
My body lays empty, how sour loneliness can taste
I miss my tender sweetheart, the metronome to my beat.

Chris Jaskot

## Anode for Action

I sit quiet on my stool
and have not moved in a week.
I am as a stoppered bottle
of purposeful l'eau de toilette.

To behold my purpose I have come
to this my milk white room.
First, I imagine the odor released
to flow from my bottled brim.

Then I imagine an empty bottle,
empty and yet happy, gleaming
lighter with contents gone
freer, lifted with purpose filled.

But then, of purpose, I despair,
while I sit upon my stool
red-faced with thought
for still I have not moved.

When sudden next I imagine Plato.
With hoary beard and hoary laugh,
he stands in my milk white room,
where I sit quiet and unmoving.

To reveal an ancient presence,
he pulls his robe up to his waist
and urinates one red-yellow word
that drizzles cross the milk white wall.

He points to me and speaks the word,
"Evil" You, he points, are "Evil".
I nod to truth while sitting still
for I am evil, as Plato would say.

I am like a stoppered shithole,
I sit on my stool and do not move.
And though red-faced with thoughts fluid,
No purpose-hoary laugh springs my release.

Robert Daniel Ortiz

## He came quiet

He came quiet
Like lightning
No warning of his swift and sudden strike
Had I heard the rumble
Perhaps I would have turned my heel and run
The other way, to safety

I became invisible
Like thunder
Who knew I would fill every chasm of my being
With word and thought and deed?

Me small like time
And he strong as distance
Apart, we caused such fury and calamity

But when the mist cleared
I may look aside and think
Next time he will not hear it
And I go quietly.

Pamela Rutecki

MPD

Tim is the rational aspect; his thoughts a whirlpool,
Strolls down sidewalks laundry listing his day's errands.
His head, a bar stool swiveling from peripheral to peripheral,
Rods and cones like a foggy windshield, the wipers don't work.
Destination the post office and then the pharmacy,
His subtle smile stemmed from the idea that he managed thus far,
Without Pete and James being anywhere in sight.

Shoulder to shoulder with crowds of apparently rational minds,
Taxi cabs fly past as if the meter was not a wage but a stopwatch for death.
Gum grabs a hold of an uncarefully placed shoe sole,
Bakery, Bodega and Restaurant aroma's tickle nostril hairs,
Out of quick rapping hustlers come terse enticing catch phrases.
Out of a bar stumbles, the smell of Jack Daniels and Marlboro's
Attached to an unknown man, hitting Tim's nose, it brings Pete to the street

Pete winces in hypochondria, as a matter of habit,
Loses sight of his former intentions. Exists now only as memories,
Branded with remarkable clarity is the belt and those fists,
Blood and spit projects in various directions, the carpet smelled
As if it had been washed in raw sewage, this was Pete.
He reacted savagely to the man from the bar, and swung hard
The results cause rubbernecking in an otherwise unconcerned mob in perpetual motion.

Shoulder to shoulder with crowds of apparently rational minds,
Taxi cabs fly past as if the meter was not a wage but a stopwatch for death.
Gum grabs a hold of an uncarefully placed shoe sole,
Tambourine coffee cups shake with the hope of being filled,
Sleep walking men in suits drag along briefcases in hand.
Out of a laundromat wafts the smell of Downy and Tide with Bleach,
The scents grope Tim's nose, he crosses the street but can't escape James.

James cleans his clothes with Doctor Bronner's, others are too harsh,
He wishes he could wash the thoughts out but they're permanent stains
Traces of sweat and masculine fluid, unforgotten feeling of forced flesh
The buzz of cleanliness in the Whirlpool, and that odor of detergent,
The floor is concrete cold and laced heavily with mildew, here is James.
He reacts cowardly and ran across the street like a sprinter
Causes traffic to halt inconsistently, angers drivers at their own respect for humanity.

Shoulder to shoulder with crowds of apparently rational minds,
Taxi cabs fly past as if the meter was not a wage but a stopwatch for death.
Gum grabs a hold of an uncarefully placed shoe sole,
Steel grids emanate steam, suggesting movement from below
Unguided tourists snap off photos of objects made legendary through advertisement
Seven strenuous blocks to the post office, but three stores down is the pharmacy
The flavor of alleviation causes Tim to salivate.

His mind is a clean well-lit room in a morgue,
But the closets hide skeletons in deep and dark crevices,
There are no locks on the doors they come and go as they please,
Pete, James and Tim roommates of sorts. In paying with a check
He presents his ID, and glanced at the stranger in the picture.
He realized then he couldn't make it through this day,
Without Pete and James.

Chris Jaskot

The Beach

I surface.

A rain-laden heaven
Hangs overhead.
Gaze upon the white water rows,
Waving through the sky-still ocean.

Toes pressed into
Soft sand pedestals.
Rain binds hair and skin,
Drenches dry flesh.

Awash in warm wind streaking,
Clear lines cut beyond
My boundaries,
Flounder on the brink

Of nothing with
Something on my mind.

Rebecca King

Columbus Garage

On top of Columbus Garage
We catch a rare view of Boston
And drink Jack Daniel's from a flask.
I ask some serious questions
And you tell me to go fuck myself
Which I think is cute and funny
So I laugh and you frown because
I can never be serious.
I speak with deadly conviction,
Though, when I say I didn't climb
All these stairs just to fuck myself.

Trevor Crippen



## Buzzman

Cold not so bad when I'm charged up,
Stomach aglow like Megaman's cannon arm
Ready to blast through strange guys
Who peer out from under oversized hard hats
Digging meaningless holes on Huntington Avenue.
I don't care if I can't feel my fingers
Clutching my latest power-up.
I wouldn't be able to feel them in Tahiti.
But if I had a candy apple robot dog,
I'd still fly home.
In the end, it doesn't matter
If you don't have feeling in any extremities,
So long as your heart is warm,
Artificially.

Trevor Crippen

## California

My, my, what a
dry desert land
you are. Expanding with
tortured myths and legends,
you watch pretenders play
roles day in and drugged out;
they plug in their TV sets
and let the painted pixels
sedate their thick eye
lids. The sickness here
does not nearly touch the
plush red carpets of
your dead bars and brothels.
I can hardly swallow
thinking of your shallow dirty
water and the thirty year old
blonds with bold young busts
and lust filled pockets,
kissing lockets of past lovers
while basking in the green
comfort of meaningless regret.
Yet, still I hear your voice,
more enticing than the island
winds or Thailand beaches,
it reaches me in waves of free
energy, tickles the left side of
my brain, trickles down my body,
and browns the top of my
idle motivation. With minor
hesitation, I will travel this
land, unravel your clothes with
the hand of a betrothed prince,
rinse my skin in your used bath
water, and lose myself on
the full shelf of all your
fallen angels.

Lisa Pezzino

## Sound System

Sound waves pump and thump across eardrums,
On point like decimals, heavy decibels make them feel numb.
Vibrations of a melody, manifestations of energy,
A sort of ominous calmness in this chaos and entropy.
A brief alleviation and deviation from internal turmoil,
An intense solipsistic sense that cannot turn spoiled.
Basic proportion creates sanctity thru absorption like therapeutic oil,
The ability to ensconce and rhythmically toil.

"Sound System gonna bring me back up,
One thing that I can depend on."

An expressive and explosive form of communication,
That both seizes and releases thru tonal variation.
An amalgamation and condensation of a stylistic goal,
Dug out of the mind like a diamond in a mine of coal.
An arduous task for a barbarous sound, then refined,
As structured composition and improvisation are combined.
It's both a projection and a reflection of the artist internally,
That remains when they're not alive and survives eternally.

"Sound System gonna bring me back up,
One thing that I can depend on."

Chris Jaskot

## Tales of Wonder

Whirl, whirl,
Spin, spin,
Letters at my feet.

Up, up,
Down, down,
Paintings all around.

Under me are
Tales of wonder.
Many touched,
Many lived.

I stare up with mouth agape,
And lose myself in it.

Rashel Kesilman

Thanksgiving

I remember when food was scarce on my table
And meals were served twice a day
According to my mother's pay
And there was no real hope so that we could cope
I thought I'd always live that way.

Around me I hear the complaints
Of their desires that aren't being met
And how the food is dull—but I bet,
They would be grateful for a plateful
If it was their last meal yet.

I do not think my fortune unfortunate,
Before meals I've learned to pray
And thank God for the blessings that day.
For at the stroke of a gun I could have none
Would I still be thankful were it taken away?

Sometimes my only clothes were too large for me
But that was all I had to wear.
At Christmas I got shampoo for my hair
No cards with money because we didn't have any
Yet I couldn't afford to care.

For there were those who lived on the street
Without a home for their living heads,
Having to beg for their daily bread
And we'd give them some cents knowing what it meant,
To wonder if that day you'll be fed.

I try not to boast of the things I have now,
Although in ignorance some people do.
If I was you I'd loose my Prada shoes,
Because you'll live with that necessity without the possibility
Of finding out whats really true.

Nina Ibarra

Untitled

You hear the sound of muskets
Bursting fire, the smoke-ring of a cannon.
Lines of men are marching, were marching
They lie scattered now, prostrate, and we
(The women) ration out water to the wounded,
As the spectators look on at this and clap.

But, to the soldiers, there is only the deadly clap
Of gunfire. There is death and burning muskets;
The field is torn and bloodied with the wounded
Who were unfortunate enough to face a cannon.
What would they have thought of us? We
Who reenact their somber marching.

Lines of red, green, and blue-clad men are marching.
Among their ranks the dragoons are charging; the horse-hooves clap.
What thoughts could they think? "We...
Are outnumbered, and exhausted. I can see their muskets
Gleaming, the bayonets are fixed, and they have a cannon."
In the field a young man falls wounded.

It was not easy stuff to be wounded.
If you survived the treatment you kept on marching.
Unnumbered ranks of men, and some would haul a cannon.
No glory here; and one-third of the army had the clap,
Still others missing fingers from misfired muskets.
Who is it that honors their hard deeds? It is we?

They were human too, and just as we
Have dreams and lives, they did. And they were wounded
By the conflict which tore families apart; Muskets
Firing with acrid smoke on brothers, friends, and fathers now marching
Out across the field. Where once a man did clap
His hand upon the shoulder of another, now he lights a cannon.

The crowd is impressed most by the thunder of the cannon
The sound and smoke are entertainment, and we,
The re-enactors, suffer them to clap
For our mock-battle, our attempt to give faces to the wounded,
The dead. With their cameras, they await the victors, marching
Briskly in review, in their arms the soldiers bore their muskets.

And they clap. But I know that these were men truly wounded,
Felled by cannon and gunfire. This is why we
Reenact their sacrifice, marching for you with burnished muskets.

Kristin Negrycz

## Summer's Stain

Waterfalls water-down
the ground beneath my feet
and creep up to my ankles.
I careen through unseen patches
of grass-green time.

The mountains stared, aware
of the power this place could trace
upon our youthful faces.

Our first kiss resides inside
the walls of this old cabin.
We sat as the night sky passed us by,
and sighed with envy
at our puppy love.

Then love lost charm.
I fell from your arms
as the sky tore and poured
one hundred thousand tears.

But this place,
a hallowed heaven.
As I learn to long for the
sun's bitter kiss,
brown fingers sink and
drink the sweet-breeze air.

Rainy days that stain
my summer skin
will live within me.
Memories run through
dewdrop grass and pass
through my wind brushed hair.

And the stars...
the stars that clenched my eyes,
shoot with surprise
And scream brighter than my city-sky

I will never cry for you.
But for this summer heaven,
I would cry one million tears.

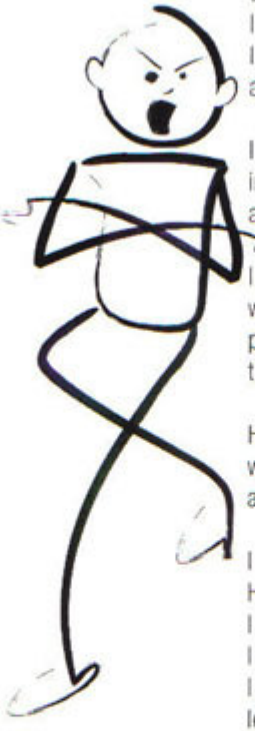
Rebecca King

Angels and Insects

Angels and Insects
Contemporary British fiction
Our hero watches his
Dusty brown moth-lover
Looks at her wrists
Strong and narrow
Studies them like a
Perverse entomologist

Trevor Crippen

Pistachios



This damn pistachio
won't open.
I've eaten pistachios since
I was a little girl
and I still cannot open them.

I walk through the park
in the middle of the city
and I talk aloud to God.

I think of my friend Robin
who is dying,
plagued in her throat with a cancer
they cannot cure.

Here I am, basking in the sun
where the rays shine through leaves
and tints everything with a greenish hue.

I am like an adulterous wife to my God,
He loves me anyway,
I have trouble understanding.
I have searched for God everywhere,
I searched for Him in
letters that my father wrote,
I look for Him in the trees,
in turtles, falcons, raccoons, and in the wind.

I have many questions
to ask my God,
like, why there is world hunger,
and slavery?,
and why there is never rest in Israel?,
and why pistachios are always
so difficult to open when they are closed?

I have a grandfather
who is dying
it puts perspective on my problems.
who cares about pistachios
and why they do not open?
They do not open
because they were not meant to be eaten,
they were gathered
too early and are not quite ripe,
let them stay closed,
don't be hurt that they are shut tight.
There will always be
a few closed pistachios in the pile,
Sometimes, it's good to just throw them out,
Sometimes, it's good to just wait a while.

I dig my fingers in the wooden bowl
and pull out a pistachio
that is open and looking at me,
waiting to be eaten.

Nina Ibarra

## Shape

I start with scissors in my cutting-hand and paper in my holding-hand
And I attempt a circle. Round and round, cut and cut until I finish
In a triangle. An awkward angle juts upwards and comes to a point only
To be subverted by two others. Again, using a pen this time, I trace on
Four corners of scrap paper, one finger per corner, I take time. Slow, smooth
Curves around the nails. Cut and cut and I finish in lumps. Deranged digits
Bulging at their sides and a witch's warted thumb. Dumb to how they should
Form. I take my cutting-hand and tear and tear. Scrap paper here, there.
Round and round, cut and cut, again and again, now circles into diamonds, points
That discern light pretty well, but can't form a circle. I search for mistakes
In my tracings, my scrap paper, my scissors. I take my holding-hand and
Glue and glue until jagged edge matches jagged edge, until two wedges make sense
Together. Round and round, I find myself in a box. I shout, "Out! Out!"----
Then catch my self. Wait. This is magic to pull three dimensions from two.

Akuna Eneh

Choice

Sharp, crisp crack
Releases CO2,
The choicest of inert gasses.

Slow crackling sip
High fructose corn syrup,
The choicest of sweeteners.

The cold aluminum
Sam's with a star,
The choicest of beverages.

William Bonner

## Between the Bushes

Haze-blue at high noon, in the park
we laid like roasting peanuts
on a smooth brown cotton blanket.

I, on my stomach with mouth
buried into my folded arms,
laughed at her clever jokes.

She, on her back with legs
bent, one crossed over one,
formed golden slides for golden rays.

We soaked and slurped a lazy noon.
Oil lakes collected deep in her navel
and shallow at the small of my back.

The white gray city loomed about us,
with white haze, metal and stone,
penetrating our green grass haven.

the Back Bay fens, of park and glade,
of muddy pond and Muddy river,
of dirt paths and idle grass,

here we staked our claim.
On that even cut grass we laid
and closed our eyes and listened.

The regular clink of bat and ball,
or da-dunk da-dunk of ball and court,
or slurk-slurk of skate and walk.

A dog bark, dogs barking, dogs playing.
Children talking, children laughing,
two boys laughing, one girl screaming.

Two lovers giggling and two lovers giggling,
two lovers making sound. Lovers and babies,
lovers and children, all whispering secrets.

Dragging feet on even cut grass,
ploosh-slucking feet in swamp muck,
plink-plinking, pebbles in the pond.

I opened my eyes and a world of green
fought a world of blue, with white haze
mediating the dispute, baking the witness.

All colors, all flesh from blanch to crisp
in that Back Bay fens on that sun loved day,
all colors danced a dance, here and there.

On clear clean cut grass or hazy skyline,
on burning black path or ruddy mud pond,
in the stalky garden or between dark bushes,

colors danced and fought and mingled,
like business on a trading day,
or as floral bloom in the heat of spring.

My chest was heavy with my own weight,
I raised myself and sat on my feet
and laughed once more at the comedy.

Bushes twittered across the path.
a man between the bushes, twittered,
an onlooker loving everything he saw.

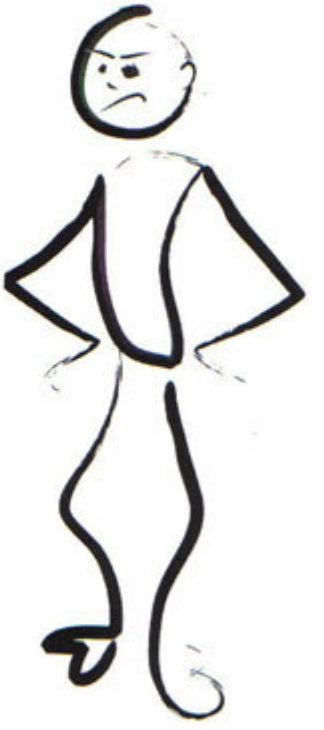
"Why do we come here?" I asked her,
"This place is full of freaks."
"Its warm." She said, "And quaint..."

Her eyes were closed but mine were not,
and yet she was right, it was warm.
So I and another man, cleared the bushes.
...and then it was quaint.

Robert Daniel Ortiz

## Heavy

I would give too much
to touch your collar bone
with my lone middle finger
and let it linger, moving
through grooves of flesh
and freshly cleaned skin
while your porcelain insides
slide between my hands,
land above my heart,
and start to get heavy.
Already I dream
of gleaming soft lights,
not white, but pure,
a calm lure from your eyes
easing the rise of my
sly, witty confidence.
These intense nights
wrap tight around my mind,
leave behind mounds
of solemn sound sleep
and I keep tripping
over your lips, sinking
into the blinking of your lashes;
my breath crashes hard
on his scarred sleeping form
and warms the cold covers
of some other lover's bed.



Lisa Pezzino

## The Possibility of Every Morning

Simple:
Out of bed at 6 am.
Shower, soap, scrub- especially
  The hidden back of the neck,
  The unseen in the arm pits,
  The unknown behind the ears.
Put one leg in the pants, then the other.
Wear a shirt.
Pack the book bag, the briefcase.

All easy as sunrise
Until your hand shakes
And spills that spoonful of sugar
Meant for coffee on the counter,
Making little piles of
Mess.

Akuna Eneh

## Waking Night

Waking with a dream upon my lips
Wet with one unfinished midnight kiss.
Listless eyes that creep from heavy sleep
Caring not for tiredness I keep.
Eyelids flutter, beat against bright light
Pushing back the empty arms of night.
Cry of day is scratching at my door
Screaming things that tired ears abhor.
Wishing I could squeeze between the stars
Ignore the morning, singing from afar.

Drink the night-air song with shallow sips,
Touch the stars with grazing fingertips.
Dare to shrug away the morning's sneer,
Feel the moonbeam's words upon my ear.
Reject day's breath, dancing on my lips,
Fall into sleep, returning midnight's kiss.

Rebecca King

## Unsure, Unspoken

Rolled the windows all the way down
after we hopped in your car last night-
Down, Down, until it felt right.
Our generation, corruptly profound
we became entangled ivory air.
Oh, how good it felt and I felt
scared and unsure until I smelt
the persuasive hyacinth in his hair
Exotic. He made me shifty eyed
as I felt revving emancipation.
I died, too, as he shudder sighed
in a fit of orgasmic proclamation:
Who cared where this road went?
Roads and cars are compliments.

Beck Rist

Geography, New Delhi

Their daughter died as beautiful as sin
at twenty years. She must have burned
a hole through death to find this room again,
a haunt that with her passing earned
an altar and her lingering space;
even the idol must debase
itself and bow its black geography
before her blacker hair. Could she
be vain, still, demand this constant prayer
(they plead with her to recall time,
like wine a grape, or photos mime
the mirror that once caught her fair)
or does she watch them sleep, climb stairs to see
the farthest star, and long to be?

Samuel Thrope

## Baby Steps

Truth was
hiding in
between the
rusted nails
and splintered
wood of
his weathered
floorboards.

I tried
to creep
gently from
the front
door into
his bed
room, but
the iron
and cedar
only squeezed
harder

and he
moaned loud
enough to
stumble my
feet down
the stairs,
up the
driveway, and
miles away
from his
house.

Lisa Pezzino

## The Prophet

In my life I've known prophecy
and how the hellish future scares-
sews shut my dreams and ensures
me with its dreadful alchemy;
I'd hate you if I could, Reverie.
You became like drug addiction,
peaceful snows of malediction-
the dead dealing death to me.
But each night still I drop my eyes
for the rapture but then lucidity
Watch your intent, peel your disguise;
Endure for ecstatic placidity
outbursts and terror- high prices to pay;
The rat gets cheese when she knows the way.

Beck Rist



## Misspent Youth

I was born from a festering latrine
filled with Chardonnay and Champagne
which I can fortunately not explain
nor understand as you complain
and curl your lips in disdain.
My friend, quit your Acid rain,
your righteously moral campaign
makes you sound quite insane.
No one likes a dictator's reign,
You whining Charlemagne.

Beck Rist

"My Response to Death's Pimp"

The pimp asked in his unassuming tone,
"How was life for me?" Oh, just let us see
if I'd been simply made, of brass or stone
I'd not mind about Death's perch on me.
Yet I was flesh and for free reign I yearned.
I dreamt, like the smooth waves on a rough sea,
to charm Death's hand, to break his chain, to burn
as the sun and teach his callous hold on me
some of life's truth. A Spirit is—not flesh not bone
not brass not stone —A miracle! Let us see—
No! that which lacks matter cannot be learned
till we dust the coffin or scatter from the urn,
by then we've missed the light! Now eternity
shall pass, high on gas—we few dead are gone.

Robert Daniel Ortiz

## smirk

it's not how high i'll lift you up,
but how hard i'll let you
hit the ground.
make you cringe, cry, and crawl
trying to figure out
how to get around that which i swear
doesn't exist.

i'll hold the ladder,
brace your ascent;
let you find out that
the other side of the wall
was meant for you all along.

Mark Wooding



prose

## The Chinese Tea Set

I live alone atop a small cliff, in a location of no importance. Waves from the joining ocean stir my sleep with its metonymic rock, keeping my faltering will alive, and focus prime. My pathetic shack is no less a home than a coffin acts as a cover for a carcass. The walls sweat and laugh, trembling at my intelligence and insanity. The diploma on the wall, entwined with a tangle of soggy vines, continues to gather patience and sorrow as time passes, numbing me with a cry for purpose. Amongst the broken boards and cracked dreams of a lifetime past, I have finally come to give that degree finality, and present myself with an escape to greatness.

I walk into the kitchen, moving amongst shattered birch wood chairs, a toppled brown coffee table, and water droplets that breech my thatch ceiling. Opening the cupboards the cockroaches scatter, thinking of better environments to invest. The holder is barren except for the single air loom I have secured from previously squandered journeys of pathetic accord.

The Chinese lettering on the cup is still a mystery to my gray. It sympathizes with my solitude, for his partners have long been mislaid in tragedy. This piece of my life, all to safe in my stems, begs for rebalance. The wonder of a lone solider, wandering aimlessly as the clock spins towards the eleventh hour of our existence, rests in my palms, and in my heart.

I reposition one of the chairs, still solid enough to hold my skinny frame and align the coffee table to center. Quickly boiling a quart of water, dropping a damp lemon tea bag in the liquid, I rest the cup next to the last working burner and wait for the bubbles to blossom. Sitting back down with my warm delight, we enjoy each other's passive company, all together scared and infinitely enthralled with my ultimate adventure.

When the warm wash is consumed I attempt to store my friend back in its locker. As I get footing, and walk towards the cabinets, I stumble from a queer lodging caused by a hole in the floor, and drop the relic from my hand. The porcelain shatters against the lower furnishing, destroyed. My associate is soon beyond.

With a huff I regard this final straw as a decent egress and quickly retreat into the living room. Inside I take a swift look at my components and make sure all is in order. Once the module is sheltered, and my being is happy with its loading points, I enter the machine. Pushing buttons, and turning knobs, I don't think it unwise, or unfair, that I didn't wish a single goodbye to my stead, or even recognize the victory it has lent me amongst this personal turmoil. A stunning blue light consumes me and the time machine transports me to my desired destination. Instantaneously I am back in the correct location plotted for. Securing the retrieval device in my back pocket I take wind of the surroundings. The looming willow trees and drafting leaves of a New England autumn bring a rare and whimsical smile to my mug. I soon spot my first wife strolling from the gravel paths to the clean cut grasses of the pleasant courtyard. The administration buildings are in the foreground, but before I can truly appreciate what topples of fine architecture they are, my vision steadies and I gaze at the teen I came to warn.

Approaching the tactless fool with a speedy shuffle, I don't gather the buck's attention until I'm hovering over him. The angler bobs his head as the sun stream he was using for reading light vanishes, peers up, and questions me about my prerogatives.

I pause and am suddenly dumbfounded by the all to familiar voice and sense of regal adequacy. My own accent collapses and a cauldron of thought soon bursts from my swell, all to intrusive to realize, all to important to ignore.
I want to tell him things. I want him to realize the burdens he will bare. Explain the troubles of a near future, the heat and dust of a wealthy knowledge gone mad.
I cannot. I will not. It is not my place.
The rear sees no fault in quizzing me again, this time with a firmer tone. Snapping me from my daze, I smile and answer him with a smooth draught.
"Take care of the tea set." My grin chocks back tears of revolution.
The stud's lazed demeanor shifts to a state of nervous throb. He rapidly gathers his things, mostly books on quantum physics, if I remember correctly, and catches up to the fox I witnessed ambling earlier. When nobodies peering, I activate the retrieval command, the flash of blue waves through me and I'm back in my living room.

I step from my masterpiece and the anticipated malfunction follows. Strange buzzes and unhealthy beeps cough from the giant construction. Then, with a weak sputter, combined with a streamline escape of solutions, it fails, and is useless. A lifetime of work vanquished. My age acts as a weary facsimile now. For time gives me no ground to recreate such a fantasy.

Wandering back in the kitchen, all the sordid blessings I have created around me are intact. The walls still chuckle, the degree still screams, and my dorm, as a whole, is still feeble.

A vague understanding of a previously undiscovered truth begins to glow somewhere in my fumbling resolve. My existence is justified in remedial tackles of incomplete indulgence. This hallow retreat is an obvious beginning. My attitude soars, as a second grin flourishes about my features, bringing with it further knowledge and joy.

Opening the cabinet I remove the Chinese tea set in its entirety.

Jonathan Pickering



## The Sweet General, George Love

FOR ROSE DOUGHERTY

part i.

Driving in her car, Mrs. Love perpetually shifted her focus from the road ahead, to the road in her rear view mirror, to herself in the rearview mirror, and to her son in the passenger seat, George.

"Look's like they did a good job salting the roads this morning, Georgie pie. You'll have a safe drive to school."

As the car moved along with caution, George Love sat silent amidst a vigil of the wintry substance. The amber stalks of elephant grass had fallen behind. The road was now lined with barren trees wilted under snow, mounds of which became sails caught in the railing wind. George saw sprays of dusty snow burst from the trees and splash like an ocean wave its cold dry powder on the salty road. In every splash he heard a whisper, Come out and play.
Suddenly, he shivered and broke his silence.

"Boy, it's cold in here mum. Is the heater ready yet? I mean, is the engine warm enough? My legs and feet and hands could use a little hot air from that heater, burr-herr-herr-herr."

Mrs. Love laughed tenderly at her son's charms. She had been upon the rearview mirror part of the rotation and was regarding herself in it. She was still regarding herself and her laugh was the only response she gave her son, initially, until she became acutely aware of the wrinkles by the corners of her eyes. At this point she burst with mock laughter, not the tender laughter she reserved for George, but the laughter reserved for occasions when her school committee colleagues told jokes at meetings. Her eyebrows and lips pulled tightly in mock appreciation and conjecture.

She quickly verbalized her thoughts, "Georgie-Love, listen here a minute. All things dear will fade in time. All things dear are ephemeral."

George looked at his mother like he would a stranger, and shivered again.

"What? I'm talking about the heater, mum. Could you please put the heater on? I'm frozen like a stiff over here. Look at my legs. They're chatting like birds. Look at my hands. They are so cold."

Mrs. Love smiled while stealing a glance at her son's busy legs and stiff hands. He was a natural actor, she thought. But she changed her tone, to fit her reply and said,

"Yes, of course. We do want you warm and toasty. This heater should be ready by now."

The heater came on, at full blast from both the panel and floor vents. George slipped off his mittens and pressed his little digits up as close as he could and closed his eyes in enjoyment. He managed to ooze an "Ah....Thank you, mum," from his bliss.

They had already driven past Philamore Court and had about a half a mile left to the bus stop. To fill the silence that had returned, Mrs. Love began tonguing a jazzy tune.

"Tut tut tut, tah, tatut tut tut, tah tut."

George surprised her by joining in with a sonorous,

"Doom Doom Doom, do daDoom, do daDoom" and repeating it. She lowered the heat a little, he resumed his outside vigil, and the car continued its roll, slowly crunching along the freshly iced freshly salted road with cheer and warmth and song.

part ii.

"Oh, Georgie-Love! Oh my darling angel! Oh, you be safe—Bah!"

With this mock, Jimmy-boy received a chorus of laughter from a nearby audience of little chirping children. The laughter gave him the attention he desperately sought and he continued his rude gestures and remarks designed to antagonize George Love for letting his mother kiss him and kissing her in return.

As with most children, mocks and challenges are an enduring aspect of daily life. Jimmy-boy was a regular disturber of the peace and, at least, the most boastful of the children at George's bus stop. Since George started going to public school, the two had never gotten along and yet had never entered direct conflict. Presently, Jimmy-boy dined on the conflict he created because he could feel his popularity on a rise with the other children.

These kinds of challenges were both easy and common. They were easy because most children did not challenge back. They were common because they were like instinct, and almost all children have to obey their instincts. Most children are easy, and almost every child is common.

As cubs, these common children spar, and test each other for weakness, and test themselves to find strength. Like little dirty animals they are little dirty animals. In this way, they serve a primal hunger and are always prepared for the pleasures of taste. Service without question—it is a true form of life. They are old in this form, older than the life that breathes, and they are also near perfect. These children are an entire beach of small pebbles, hard and smooth and almost perfectly rounded, as if made that way by the passage of time and sea, as if made by eternal conflict. It is as old and natural for those pebbles on a beach to roll over one another on the whim of the tide, as it is for these children to engage one another in jest and sport.

Are they are marred by their nature, a nature that serves primal appetizers on which the greater hunger for complete roundness is founded? Service without question is a true form of life. Primal service of the appetite—it requires a common place where the appetite may be served. The bus stop is that common

place. The other little children are the bus boys. And here thrives an arena where young men and women can challenge and overtake their fellow, round their edges, and become perfect.

As with the tide, the fight is eternal, strength and power have always been the drive. But mark this—though the combatants engage power with power, yet the object of power is not power. Somewhere within the nuance and courtesy of this savage dance lay an immutable clause—the object of power is *distinction*. This game is eternal and ultimately ironic, it is cyclical and it is very common, and by its nature this game was an insult to George Love. His nature whispered,

"To be challenged in this manner—Bah!"

In his youthful mind, George was as militant as any other bus boy. His distinction, however, came from his talent for meeting challenges at their base, emerging with elevation and esteem, and removing the common taint and stain of having actually played the game. His way was like pure strategy. It was simple and proper—his way traveled along a mysterious current to the ten-year old mind called *principle*.

So as Jimmy-boy stood on a stone wall, dancing and laughing and jousting with George in the name of Mrs. Love, his challenge rifled forth. The audience heard in its echo a call to action, for this audience had children's ears. They looked from George to Jimmy-boy and back again, blurring the distinction between each, searching for an image, their vision of a hero. For this audience had children's eyes—eyes that were drone-like and almost heathen. Yet then in their unorthodox eyes, they beheld a vision of George Love—a silent, pensive and concentrated image.

part iii.

After Mrs. Love had got in her car and drove back in the direction of the Love's home, George stood motionless watching with one leg on the road, the other knee deep in a snow bank. Her car had to disappear over the hill before George woke from his internal brooding.

The wind was fair and the air was dry. His cheeks had rosied against his pale complexion, and his eyes had watered from staring. As he turned away from the road, the children, still laughing, now grew silent. George swallowed, sniffled, and stared up at Jimmy-boy. He took a few steps through the snow bank towards the stone wall where everyone had gathered, and on which Jimmy-boy had perched so everyone could see and hear the mockery of George's mother, Mrs. Love.

At George's approach, Jimmy-boy jumped down from the wall, dropped his bag and put some distance between himself and his audience. George still had to stare upward to reach Jimmy-boy's eyes, because Jimmy-boy was a year older than George and four inches taller. Yet George closed his distance to Jimmy-boy until they were standing within arm's reach. All the while his gaze was fixed upon Jimmy-boy's eyes. Jimmy-boy maintained a smarmy smirk, folding his left eyebrow over its eye more as the right one raised slightly, cocking his posture.

As George came closer, Jimmy-boy's attention shifted from George to his audience and back again. In the snow, where his latest footprints were made, the heel end was slowly extending in a direction away from George, as if he melted before the advance. No one noticed it, except Jimmy-boy and when he did, he felt embarrassed. And he let this embarrassment translate into action.

"Oh here he comes. Here is the mighty Georgie Love. Little, little Georgie pie. Whatcha gonna do George, you sally. What's it gonna be Georgie-Love. Are you a darling angel today? You gonna fight me?"

When George stopped, he did not speak immediately. This behavior inspired the children, off on his right side, to complete stillness. They were not even fidgeting anymore. Some of them even held their breaths. Only one of them whispered,

"What's he gonna do, d'ya think?"

"Sssht, listen" was the reply.

And they listened, straining to hear. And Jimmy-boy swallowed, when George at last spoke.

"Behave yourself, Jimmy-boy. Or I won't be able to save you."

George flavored the comment with enough mystique to further incite Jimmy-boy's rude confidence. His "warning" streamlined by its ominous architecture was so illusive it was like a land mine. Jimmy-boy walked right into it.

"Save me from what—"

Jimmy-boy did not foresee it coming. George had been prepared to strike while Jimmy-boy was only preparing to reply. Yielding to his temptations George's strike became purity merged with precision—a burst that seemed like fury but felt like surgery. He aimed for the right eye, and detonated with his left hand. Jimmy-boy dropped and lay sprawled on his back, cold against a drift of undriven snow.

From their vantage, off George's right side, the children had not seen George's little fingers curl into a fist. And even while straining, they could not hear Jimmy-boy's indignant whisper, *Save me from what*, George's queue to strike. So when they saw Jimmy-boy fly backwards and off his feet, it seemed to their eyes as following one instantaneous, perhaps preemptive burst. And this response, by George, wooed the audience of children. And they, who were now nearly all converted supporters in the army of Love, reveled in this atmosphere as if under new leadership. Some of them instantly cheered for George while some of them felt their fickle loyalty to Jimmy-boy twitch a little but then disappear. They all chirped their thoughts on the event with incredulous, harmonic chirping.

part iv.

Now there was a proper response—*a proper whipping*—proportional to the offense. Jimmy-boy's mockery of Mrs. Love made it so. But a law is dressed by its executor, and the mangy can make unbecoming what the fetching have shown brilliantly. Proportional response, always proper, is the manifest of grace and cannot by handled by uncouth or unwieldy hands. George had fetching hands for grace. He had already established himself as a person of principle. He did this early in his career with them, they knew George was not a bully-type, nor had they known him to be a random or chaotic person. George Love picked his battles carefully—fastidious criteria for fighting. In truth, they all knew, George could tolerate almost any insult directed at him personally. But there was a short list of personal importance to George, which he did not wish to be tampered with or mocked.

The most prominent idol on this list was his mother, Mrs. Love. George held his mother's respect tightly and there was very little commentary about her that was considered acceptable to him. No mom talk was allowed, unless she initiated it. What a little despot! No, what a graceful, sweet boy.

The second most significant taboo, the one most often alienated, concerned matters of the country. The little kiddies so often, though inadvertently, tested George's patriot principle for it seemed to them so trivial a matter. While George was apparently a patriot, they could not understand or fully appreciate how or why he arrived at such a position. Those who cared for consequence knew to carefully mask their early morning disdain for the "Pledge of Allegiance" while George was in attendance. For he made mental notes and then later, during recess, made the appropriate rounds. He approached them with either simple queues like, "Hey, why didn't you pledge?" or more confronting "You dirty ingrate. You stinking rebel." Future fascist! No, a graceful and sweet young man.

George had principle that was certain from the core to outer ring of his young set. Their mummies and daddies told them so at dinner,

"Oh don't worry too much about George Love. The boy's got principle, is all. Principle is a good thing."

*Principle is a good thing*, they'd all repeat at school in certain tones. But how this principle worked made them all speak in equally uncertain terms. The word *Principle* had mystery. Caused confused. It sounded like *Principal*, like their Principal Reiner. But they knew it must be a different meaning, for George *had* principle, yet he was not a Principal. Hmm...or was he? Stories arouse about a secret energy field that protected its user. *But how?* George was a wizard or something. George was crazy, or something. George killed a third-grader in his last school, that's why he is here now. Curiosity fostered intrigue. How did George manage his act? Like the dirty little animals they were, they set out in turn to test his resolve. To witness his principle.

His actions became celebration in their eyes—George Love radiated warmth as constant and intangible as the sun's core. The celebration of their eyes was like a wild brave ring dance, the youth finding and celebrating the meaning of fire. And once entered the savage dance, their celebrating true fire invariably combined with such youthful tendencies as affectionate disdain for all things misunderstood. But when merely seeing craved the sensation of touching, when the primal appetite was reborn and age-old saliva rushed from ten year old glands, when principle was tested and distinction was put on the line—one of the dance braves would become a martyr for all to behold and one would fold into the shadow of mystery for all to ponder. On this day at this bus stop, Jimmy-boy was the martyr and George Love, the mystery.

part v.

Lying on his back, with the flesh pulled tight around his right eye and raw with broken blood passages, Jimmy-boy tried to fight back his tears. The morning air was cold enough that when his tears did come, he felt their sensible warmth on his cold and raw skin. As he lay gazing at the white, soft, swollen sky, his tears continued to well up on the inside corners of both eyes, until his vision blurred. He instinctively blinked them shut, purging the fluid. The tears became cold streaks against the skin of his temples—he did not accept this sensation.

When again his eyelids parted, his vision of the soft white sky was partially eclipsed by George Love. Jimmy-boy immediately noticed in George a grace that he could not have identified before this event. All of George's features were smudged to silhouette until it seemed, to Jimmy-Boy, that he saw only the outline of a person, the shadow of George Love, but not the boy. Jimmy-boy was vexed by this shadow though he knew the voice that billowed out from within it.

"Do you know why I hit you, Jimmy-boy?"

Of course Jimmy-boy knew. But he felt it more, and could not respond. How could he respond to a shadow while lying on his back? It was too awkward and dreamy a feeling to have, he chose to focus on the rage of his thoughts. His tears swelled again, but so did his voice.

"Get away from me George, you little mamma's boy."

Jimmy-boy was propped up on his elbows now, but still looking into the shadow, searching for the old form of the boy, for an eyelash or a glisten of flesh.

"You've got some real serious issues to deal with. Just get away from me, or I'll beat the Hell outta ya."

George did not move. The other children were, again, silent and still, brought down from their moments of joy by George's grandiloquent position. Jimmy-boy still lay cold on the snow, his body's form was now packed tight into the formless drift. Nothing moved, except the clouds above George Love. But then the imperfect stillness was interrupted by the raucous clatter of the school bus. It rounded off the turn from the Route 6 highway on its way to the stop. The crowd

dispersed, grabbed the bags they had dropped, and assembled into a crooked naughty line. Jimmy-boy got to his feet and moved around George. He grabbed his bag and joined the crowd.

George continued to look at the ground, standing alone and thinking about what he had done to Jimmy-boy. Then he turned, reclaimed his fallen possession, and waited until the last person was on the bus before he boarded. As the bus drove the children away to school, they left behind the snowdrift with the image of a young boy's body pressed cleanly into the ground in a shape that looked high and saluted God in heaven.

Robert Daniel Ortiz

"angry people do not want to listen,
they want to be heard"

-unknown

