

New Eyes

Bayou Review Spring 1995



-Mitch Cullin

New Eyes—

New Perspectives,
New Beginnings

Bayou Review

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A Collection of Works by the Students of
the University of Houston-Downtown.



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Abracadabra: I am Home

Home is cool

I love it

And my memory can take me there

NOW

No roosters crow here

I look outside

Not a thing out of place

The lawn is neatly cut

The landscape is excellent

The car is in the garage

No problem

I can live with that

BUT

ONE DAY I WILL BE HOME AGAIN

To

HEAR THAT ROOSTER CROW

LOUD AND CLEAR

NO PARTICULAR TUNE

BUT MELODIOUS STILL THE SAME

IT BEATS THE ALARM CLOCK

BEST OF ALL IT IS FREE

FREE FROM ELECTRICAL WIRES

FREE FROM BATTERIES

FREE FROM THAT REMOTE CONTROL

No longer will the rooster be insignificant

It is now important

It is now recognized

It is a fiber that connects me to home

To my life

My real life

To me

The real me

Memories are all I have of home

OF

Dogs barking

howling

roaming the streets

OF

Cats purring

stretching

sleeping on a step

OF

Music

The most important thing

Definitely the most important thing

The stuff that brings me home in an instant

Like a Polaroid camera

Memories of

Laureen's radio blasting

SOCA

ZOUK

CADENCE

CALYPSO

JING PING

Now I am dancing

singing

feeling the music

In my hands

feet

heart

soul

I am overcome with it

NOW I AM HOME

IN MY MEMORIES I AM HOME

I AM THERE AND LOVING EVERY MINUTE OF IT

-Carol Pascal

The Finish Line

Stumbling
Down the hard
Wet road
Like a newborn
Colt
Shimmering tape
Just ahead
Twenty-six plus
Finally
Done

-Patrick M. Farrell

The Broken Swing

She could smell the sun.
It turned her time,
and leapt from the earth-
Turned buildings
Into passing cars
Into hotless smooth,
Liquid and sharp
Curves pierced with heat.
These days, they are gone
And across the street-
A broken swing.
Hardly a week,
Since she'd seen it.
It pearled before her
Eyes
Had flared in the sun-and
Thrown her to the eyes
Of God and loved ones.

-Nena LeBlanc

Blue World

Mother, doesn't the sky look beautiful today,
blue and gray, the great God outdone himself with
this creation.

ironically, blue has its other means and stands,
it's worn by those who put my youth through true
damnation.

I lost the count of times that I was handcuffed,
thrown in the back seat like some illiterate fool,
never have they learned to respect us thieves,
for this intelligence, that you can not gain from any
school.

Oh, and they spoke so bravely afterwards,
raising voices and calling me a little punk,
then they act surprised and innocent,
when a cop lies dead in our crime's trunk.

Where's the gratitude heroes, for we put you where
you stand,
instead you ruin young lives like you did mine,
while you think the crime is finally tumbling,
we are growing wisely and once again we'll have our
time.

One blue car after another, mother,
either a new model, or Clinton has released his plan,
blue uniforms growing on the trees of Northside,
just images are left of us as kids, and the streets that
we once ran.

I would appreciate it dearly blue,
if you stop judging us by the way we look or dress,
and judge us
for what we really are,
I want to hear some thanks next time I leave the
scene,
it's not every day that a poet sits in the backseat of
your car.

-Antonio Soria Jr.



-Aaron Neathery

Brewster's Box

by Aaron Neathery

There aren't many alive today who remember Robert Brewster or the circumstances surrounding his mysterious demise (and I use the term "demise" for want of something more accurate). Those who do actually remember Bob Brewster recall a grave man who always behaved as if a close relative had just passed away. No one living remembers Bob ever laughing or even smiling. In brief, Bob was a gloomy man, practically a hermit, all of which made his final days doubly ironic.

Mid-1933 found America in the depths of the Great Depression and Bob Brewster up to his neck in debt. Bob had managed to acquire a position on the assembly line at the local Krupp motor car factory, but the meager three-fifty a week this back-breaking labor fetched Bob was scarcely enough to allow him to pay his rent and survive at the same time. Every evening, aching and tired, Bob would catch a streetcar back to his apartment and thumb through the employment pages. This had been his routine since July of the previous year and he was ready to accept his fate when the package arrived.

It was a very large box securely wrapped in brown paper and string. That the postman had to wheel the box into his apartment on a dolly betrayed its excessive weight. Bob ardently signed for the package and the postman departed. But Bob's joy proved premature when he discovered that the package wasn't for him. It was, in fact, addressed to a Mr. Robert Brewer who, according to the shipping label, lived in an apartment-block further down the street. It was a curious mistake for the postman to make. Bob was surprised to note that the sender of this package was a government agency; the Federal Entertainment Bureau situated in Washington, D.C.

Angry at the people and various governmental agencies who were busy not sending him large, heavy boxes in the post, he decided to keep the parcel out of spite. He deserved a gift and this might as well be it ... whatever it might be.

With a grunt, Bob hefted the box onto his kitchen table. Indeed, the

box felt as if it might contain a solid block of lead! Growing ever more curious, Bob eagerly opened the parcel with a kitchen knife. Beneath an abundance of shredded newspaper was something metallic. He tilted the box and carelessly rattled the object from its confines. Bob had never seen anything quite like what was now resting on his table. It was a machine that appeared as if it might have been the illegitimate offspring of a motion picture projector and a radio. The device seemed to have been designed in a wind tunnel, but its sleek, aerodynamic surface was marred by many unstreamlined, cryptically labeled knobs, switches, and buttons. The machine's most striking features were its large lens, its radio-like aerial, and a counter reading five thousand-ten, marked "circulation."

So alien was the piece of machinery, that it seemed a shock that it should be plugged into an ordinary electrical outlet. Tied to its cord was a small paperboard card. Bob pulled it off and plugged the machine into the wall. It lit up like a Christmas tree. Bob forced his attention away from the wildly blinking and flashing machine and began to read.

Dear Mr. Brewer,

Here is the camera. Broadcasting begins at 6:00 CST and will continue, daily, at six until we contact you again. Good luck.

Sylvan Foster
FED coordinator

Bob glanced over at his clock. It was nearly six now. As the second hand passed twelve, Bob noticed that the camera had begun to emit a low humming. This humming rapidly rose in pitch till it was a piercing shriek. He was about to pick the machine up and toss it out the nearest window (lest it be a bomb of some kind) when, suddenly, there was a loud pop and blinding flash. Startled, Bob threw his arm across his face to protect himself from flying shrapnel. When he realized that he was in no pain, he took a close look at the machine. It popped and flashed again and Bob got it full in the eyes. Twice more it flashed with a short duration between each and, finally, the machine made a small chirp and fell completely silent.

Still suffering the affects of the glare, Bob rubbed his eyes and squinted at the device on his table. It was no longer lit and was apparently off. To make doubly sure, he yanked the cord from the wall. Bob was fatigued from a hard day's work and decided to postpone a thorough examination of the machine until the next day.

Bob awoke, as usual, to the sound of newsboys hawking their papers in the streets below his window. After his usual cup of hot coffee, he stepped outside and bought his usual copy of *The Sun*. As he was flipping through all of the usual news, something caught his eye on the funny page. Among the standards like *Thimble Theater* and *Wash Tubbs* was a new strip titled *Stan's Tavern*. The funny thing about the strip, though, was that there was no joke told nor any tavern depicted. There was just a cartoon character alternately shielding his eyes or staring straight out at the reader with a vacant expression. It didn't take Bob long to realize that the character was him!

By the time Bob was hit by this bewildering revelation, it was time for work. He reluctantly left his apartment and the machine for a troubled day on the Krupp assembly line.

When he returned that evening, Bob once again plugged in the machine and, as before, it immediately sprang to life. Anxious to test out his theory, he put the machine on the coffee table facing the couch. At six, the machine flashed. Bob sat on his couch holding up a sign reading "Hi."

The next day, Bob bought his paper and opened it to *Stan's Tavern*. There he was again, holding his sign. Bob didn't really know what to think. In the right hands, this fantastic camera might prove a powerful tool but Bob simply had no idea what to do with it. Rather than give the camera to its rightful owner, however, Bob decided to put it in his closet and forget about it.

For the next week, *The Sun* continued to run *Stan's Tavern* with each panel a solid black. On Sunday, *Stan's Tavern* was a full page of solid black panels in the color comic supplement. Initially, Bob felt a little guilty whenever he came across it but, after a while, these feelings subsided. On Monday, he noticed that the strip was missing from the paper and he was relieved.

Then, two weeks to the day the camera was first delivered to him, Bob received a phone call.

He barely had a second before the receiver was placed to his ear when a man yelled "Do you have the camera?!"

By now, Bob had practically forgotten about the machine collecting dust in the back of his closet. Embarrassed, he was about to slam down the phone when the man on the other end began to yell hysterically.

"Don't hang up, Mr. Brewster! You're in terrible danger!"

"What?" asked Bob, nonplussed.

"Mr. Brewster, this is Sylvan Foster of the Federal Entertainment Bureau. Listen, Brewster, you've got to plug it in immediately!"

"The camera? Why?"

"Do it! Now!"

The command sounded so urgent that Bob felt he had no other option but to obey it. He pulled the machine from the closet and plugged it in.

"Brewster, on the camera there's a panel labeled 'circulation.' What does it read?"

Bob noticed that the counter no longer read five thousand-ten. Now it only read "one." Bob relayed this information to the agent on the phone.

"That means there is only one paper running the strip! Listen, Brewster, you can't let it drop below one! You've got to do something to keep that last paper from dropping you!"

"Like what?"

"Something funny! Anything! It's almost six! Hurry!"

Bob was baffled. He sat on his couch facing the camera which had just now begun to hum. It was like facing a firing squad without a blindfold. He tried desperately to think of a joke but none were surfacing. He was beginning to regret being such a solemn man.

But just before the first flash, Bob remembered a joke he had heard when he was a kid, the old "banana-in-the-ear" gag.

The camera began to flash and Bob told his joke.

When it was over, he picked up the phone receiver again.

"Brewster? Are you still there?"

“Yes.”

“Thank God for that! Look, Brewster, I’m going to have some of our men come around tomorrow morning and take that machine, okay?”

“Fine by me,” said Bob.

Early Wednesday morning, two men from the FEB arrived at Bob Brewster’s apartment. It was locked and, after several minutes of calling to him through the door, the agents kicked it in.

Bob Brewster was nowhere to be found. His bed was still made and a cold, half-eaten plate of beans sat on the kitchen table. In the chair at the table was an unusual pile of empty clothes. A pair of shoes lay on the floor.

And on the coffee table before the couch was the camera, its circulation counter displaying six zeros in a row.

Ceiling Tiles

1 by 1

2 by 2

2 by 4

Acoustic

Masking of the structure

Pressed particles

To please the eyes

Corporate office valuation

Quantity of quadrates

Quality of the hireling

-Patrick M. Farrell

An Assault on Darkness

When the silhouettes of dragons fill the night sky
when the fires of Valhalla seem to burn out of control
when the fire stokers/breathers seem free to take full
possession of the night
and when the fires of Hades
rapidly consume the empires of the Golden Spider god
When the silent screams of outrage fill the cavernous
souls of decent people
everywhere

Do not fear,
for you are not alone
no quick justice of a bullet needs dispensing
for even silence can shatter their armor
as you stand silent and unflinching.

Nothing is invulnerable
and they will not live forever
for we the decent will have the upper hand
for we outnumber them by humanity to one.

—Vittorio Bonomi

Daddy and Mama

Our Daddy drank whiskey

(he drank a lot.)

He didn't work;

He had an army pension,

But not as much as he thought,

So Mama worked at the dairy,

Kept right on working.

Someone had to

Feed us,

Pay the bills,

Keep the lights on.

Our Daddy watched us curiously,

During the commercials,

(after school)

As if he suspected who we were.

We watched him, too.

We had to make sure he turned

Off the stove,

Off the heater,

Off the water.

(Once our Daddy nearly

Burned the house down

With a pan of oil,

But we put out the fire.

We were proud; we told Mama
That we had saved the day.)
Mama tried to keep up with us;
She really tried.

But we were growing fast.
She read us the funnies,
On Sunday morning,
In bed.

She didn't work on Sunday;
She rested,
Stayed upstairs.
We walked to school,
Watched TV and learned from
Captain Kangaroo,
Hercules,
Felix the Cat,
While our Daddy drank.

He drank

From a shot glass,
Chased it with ice water,
Sat in an old vinyl recliner,
The cigarette burns in the arms
Hidden under duct tape.

He smoked

Non-filter Camels,
Saved the packs because once,
No one knew when,
There was a contest
Camel had, or something.
On Sunday, he drove Mama to the store.
He didn't drink on Sunday.

Well, only beer,
Only in the afternoon.
Mama kept right on working,
Always woke up early
To catch the bus to the dairy.
She walked to the bus stop
Every morning, in the dark.

(She told a story about the time
She heard two men say,
"Come on, let's get her,
Come on, let's get her."
But they didn't,
She kept right on working.)

We only saw her
In the evening
(after five)
When she cooked our dinner
And helped our Daddy to bed,

Then went to bed herself.
 In the morning
 Before daylight
 She made our lunches
And left them on the kitchen table.
 She wrote our names on the bags,
 So we wouldn't fight.
 By the time we got up
 To get ready for school,
She was already gone.
We loved the Sunday mornings
 When Mama read the funnies
And our Daddy knew who
 And how old we were.
Our Daddy died in seventy-five,
 Got buried,
But Mama kept right on working.
Someone had to
 Feed us,
 Pay the bills,
 Keep the lights on.

-Tommy N. Thomason

Work and Stale Food

I hate the taste of a warm soda
the taste of a cold hamburger
I especially hate cold and stale french fries
not just in their taste but also in their sight.

I thought the days of long nights were over
I thought the days of dust and diesel fumes were
gone.

I thought the days of lonely tank trails,
of the roaring metal convoys,
of the ceaseless railroad cars
had all finally been exhausted.
I thought the days of the dust had finally been done.

The insidious dust that fills your lungs
that burrows under your skin
that fill your being as though it were an hourglass
this insidious dust that can only be cleansed by the
once a year rain,
the same rain that one can only smell on the horizons
many miles away
is unfortunately not just a memory
but is now alive within me.

In my loneliness my head aches
my body is sore
my being is tired.

In lonely dreams and mind wandering
I am held like a baby that will not fall asleep¹
I am comforted like the lonely souls of Xanadu.

Boy this line is long!
where in the world did you all come from
where in the world were all of you
when I sat here alone with not a thing to do.

—Vittorio Bonomi.

¹ Susan Vega, Gypsy



-Mitch Cullin

KITE

by Mitch Cullin

As the box kite faltered above the sand, Timothy O'Shea, the sleeves on his blue Stafford Executive shirt rolled past the ridges of his elbows, gave one final yank on the spool of string in his hand, and muttered, "Hindenburg." His oldest son Rick shook his head at the sight of the grand white kite, with its decorative splashes of red and black Japanese lettering, careening toward the beach.

"Thought it was up there," Rick said, glancing at his father, his voice tinged with sadness.

"Down like the Hindenburg," Timothy said, grinning, his eyes tracing the uneven, billowing trail of slacked string from where the kite now rested to his hand, which was trembling slightly.

"Hidin' bird," echoed his youngest son Ben, who held in one of his palms a shiny ball bearing he'd found among the shells and tide-washed stones. "Little red hidin' bird."

"Let's try again," Rick suggested.

Timothy looked to Rick, who was shirtless and sunburned on the face, and ran shaky fingers through the boy's fair hair. "Go get her."

Rick took off along the beach. He jogged barefooted across the ebb and flow of the tide breaking on the shore, his jeans pushed up to his knees, his father's Pierre Cardin necktie tied about his forehead. "How do you know it's a her?" he shouted.

"I know," Timothy replied, reeling in some of the string so that the line would become taut.

"It's her?" Ben asked with surprise, gazing away from the ball bearing, cocking his head at Timothy.

"Without a doubt." Timothy bent forward, acknowledging Ben with a wink. The boy stood nearby in his underwear, his small shoulders draped in Timothy's black suit coat, which was too long and muddied at the tail.

The ball bearing glinted in the sun, briefly blinding Ben in one eye. "Dad says it's her because he says so," he shouted after Rick, who chose not to hear him. Then Ben slipped the ball bearing into a suit coat pock-

et, adding it to his collection of shells and stones, and watched as his brother held the kite aloft.

Timothy wound in more string as he took several steps backwards, skirting around Ben, and hesitated so he could get a sense of the wind.

"Can I do it?" Ben said suddenly.

"Are you fast enough?" Timothy said.

Ben nodded. His little black eyes, wide and deep-set on a freckled face, and his thin lips drawn to an almost straight line made him appear earnest.

"Faster than Little Red Hidin' Bird?"

Ben pointed past Timothy, aiming a dingy finger at his father's rust-colored sedan, which had been driven right onto the beach and now sat several yards away with the front doors left ajar. "I can run there."

Timothy marked the distance between his son and the car. "Get the kite up first," he said, handing the spool over to Ben.

"Then I'll run there," Ben said eagerly.

"Of course," Timothy replied, and, as he carefully wrapped Ben's fingers firmly around the spool, he heard the faint sounds of Rick's disapproval carried in the afternoon breeze. And when Ben began running, the kite lifting from Rick's hands, Timothy felt his stomach drop. He recalled how Dr. Wade had said, "Go easy. Do what you have to do to maintain peace of mind. There's nothing in this world worth losing that."

"What's those mean?" Ben said, his eyes darting to where the kite sailed overhead, a finger tracing the Japanese lettering in the air.

"Whatever you want them to," Timothy said, tying the string to a gray branch on a bulky, knotted chunk of driftwood, allowing the kite to hold its own above the beach.

"They mean something though," Rick said.

Ben brought out a white conch from the coat pocket. "I think it might say this," he said, holding the shell out for his father and brother

to see.

"Could be," Timothy said. "How about this?" He poked at Ben's belly button.

Ben shook his head some. "No," he said.

Timothy scraped the edge of his shoe against the sand, creating a crooked gash on the beach. "This could be it."

The boys paused to consider the meaning of the line. "Hey," Rick said, dropping to his knees before the line. He sunk his hands into the sand and began digging. Soon his father and brother were at his side helping him, their hands mixing in the loam and turning brown. Slowly they built a haphazard castle with a moat. Then they moved down the beach a bit, the kite becoming a faint dot to their eyes, and carved out an elaborate Sun God, fashioning the face with sea shells and stones. "We need nose holes," Rick said. "Get some black rocks for the nose," he told Ben, who padded away in search of the perfect pair of nostrils.

While they waited for Ben, Timothy and Rick sat cross-legged in front of their creation, the wind ruffling warm around them. "I love you," Timothy said.

"I know." Rick forced a smile. That's what his mother had told him to do. "Just be patient," his mother had said. "He's just trying to get his feet on the ground again. He needs us to know how he feels." Rick looked at his splattered and filthy feet, avoiding his father's stare, then glanced up past Timothy to spy Ben standing in the ocean, facing the waves that curled in at his waist, his arms stretched forward in an attempt to stop the tide's advance. "Dad," Rick said, lowly, "Ben's in the water again." And when Timothy sprang to his feet, calling out Ben's name, Rick shook with pleasure.

There were times when Rick wanted his father to die. He wanted the man to do the job right, to cut himself deeper with a sharper razor, to swallow the pills when no one would be around to save him, to step from the balcony and break his neck instead of his leg, to finish what he never seemed strong enough to complete. He wanted it to be done with, once and for all, so they could just stop hurting.

It was for the others, mostly, that he wished these things. He was not being selfish. He had prayed for it to end somehow, his father, he

knew, had too.

So now Rick watched the kite, listening as his father warned Ben about the currents, about the undertow. "It runs beneath the surface," his father explained. "It runs seaward, see?" And while Ben sat upon his father's knee, Rick swept his eyes above the kite, taking in some low hanging clouds, which moved slowly in from over the ocean. He saw shapes unfold in those clouds, one right after the other, changing in the wind, swirling into nothing. He spotted faces with puffy white hair, angels with unfurling wings, hands with long fingers. "Look in that cloud," he said, "it's a hat. It's a baseball hat."

Ben jumped from Timothy's leg and ran to Rick. "Where? I don't see."

"You know what?" Timothy said, stepping toward his sons. "There's a whale there."

"Yeah," Rick said. "That one. It's a whale."

Ben wiggled his tongue. "A dog?"

"I don't see a dog."

"A dog and a house. And there's Mom."

"You're making that up. I don't see Mom."

Soon they were on their backs in the sand, side by side, their eyes on the clouds. "Cloud busting," Timothy called it.

"I see Lincoln. See the beard?"

"No, I don't think so. Jesus, perhaps."

"I see something. I see birds."

"Seagulls. They're not clouds."

"Not them birds. In the cloud there's birds."

"Ben, stop making stuff up. It's not fair."

"Of course, I've told you boys about Zen master Seymour."

"Not again."

"These two monks were debating over this very cloud you see now. One monk said, 'The cloud is moving.' The other monk said, 'The wind is moving.' Then Uncle Seymour appeared and said, 'It's not the wind moving. It's not the cloud moving. It's the mind moving.'"

Ben laughed his little boy laugh and Rick sighed. "I hate Uncle Seymour," Rick said.

"I do too," Timothy said.

"Me too."

They became quiet. Rick looked at Ben, Ben looked at Timothy. Timothy was still gazing at the clouds, mumbling to himself, "I'm lying. This statement is false. The following sentence is false. The preceding sentence is true." Rick continued to stare at Ben, his father's whispers coming to him in the breeze. His face and neck felt warm, but he didn't look at his father, nor did he move.

A moment later, his body feeling light, Rick was running to the ocean. He gained some speed, jumping over shells and rocks on the beach, and then he was knee-high in the water. Rick pushed on, twisting around and around, until his jeans grew so heavy with wetness that, stopping, he had to sit in the surf. Once there, he sat for a time with the waves lapping across his chest before he reached down to unzip his pants. His legs, released of the soaked jeans, shimmered.

"Come back," he heard Ben shouting. "There's an undertow! I can see it!"

And then for a while Rick let himself float away. All he could do was stretch out on in the water and shut his eyes. At one point he thought he might be far out in the ocean, buoyed gently on the surface, but when he opened his eyes he realized that he was exactly at the same spot, the jeans wafting near his head.

When Rick returned to where his father and brother sat on the beach, he saw his father drawing in the sand with a stick. " $1 + 1 = 1$," his father wrote, and Rick, with his jeans hanging across his shoulders, said, "But one and one can't make one."

Timothy regarded Rick's comment with a shrug. "This is what I'm talking about, Ben. There's always someone saying it's not so, saying that's not how it is. Always someone out to defeat someone's ideas. What else does someone defeat when he defeats someone else's ideas?"

Ben was leaning against his father, his face appearing tired to Rick, his skin bright red. "I'm hungry," he said. "I want to go in the water."

Timothy tossed the stick at Rick's feet. Then he wrapped an arm around Ben and cradled him. With his other hand he took a handful of sand, slamming it hard onto the beach. "There," he said, fixing a hard

stare on Rick. "Two lumps of sand coming together merge as one. Does one plus one make one then?"

"That's dumb," Rick said.

"That's dumb," Timothy repeated, mocking Rick.

"This isn't fun," Ben yawned.

Rick knew his father's moods. He had grown used to them. "When he acts up," his mother advised him, "just ignore him. Just go somewhere else. He'll get over it."

"That cloud above you, look, see, it's splitting in two," Timothy said. "Does one plus one—"

"Stop it!"

Timothy pressed a hand against Ben's pink forehead. "See how the waves move, Ben? See how the kite goes like that? All those clouds up there? But you and I, even Rick and Mom, we're messier things, aren't we?"

"Messy things," Ben said, wearily.

"Why do you always do that?" Rick asked his father.

But Timothy fell silent. He looked at the sky. Later he frowned, his lips jutting out.

"Come on, Ben," Rick finally said. Leaving his father, he understood that the ease of the day was eventually bound to prove too much, that it was only a matter of time before it had to turn sour. He glanced back once at Timothy, who had picked up the stick and was drawing again in the sand, and for a moment there was no passage of time, or of memory.

"Is Dad mad again?" Ben asked, as Rick walked with him toward the sedan.

"I don't know," Rick said. He glanced over a shoulder at Timothy, who was sitting in the sand, leaning with his back against the driftwood, his head tilted to the kite. "I'm sick of it."

"Me too," Ben said, taking one of Rick's hands. He opened his mouth wide and yawned with squinted eyes, which made Rick yawn too.

In the backseat of the car, Rick found the bag of cellophane-wrapped sandwiches his father had bought for the trip. "He forgot drinks," Rick said, as he handed Ben a tuna fish with apple chunks sandwich, keeping the deviled meat sandwich for himself. They sat

the contents of the billfold.

He finds a Xeroxed lotto ticket with some names on it and slips into his customary mumble, "Looks like he plays the game o' Texas with his buddies, but, Geesis, lookit these names. McCoy, Fuerbacher, Gomez, Chin. This guy's a regular United Nations all by hisself. Here's a deer huntin' license... wonder if ol' Bambi killer eats 'em or just hangs 'em on the wall. Filled up Sandwich Club card. Hell, I can use that. Half full smoothie card from Dan's Vitamin House. Prob'ly one of them health nuts, runs three miles three times a week. Hmph, God only knows what a smoothie is. Sounds like something you get from a hooker for your last dollar. U of H-Downtown ID card. Well, I hope his degree does him more good than mine did me."

The plastic whir of skate wheels on concrete breaks Joe's concentration and he quickly hides the wallet. It's that same skater again, of course. He looks angry this time, though, fire and bluster patterned in his red face.

"Hey, dude I know you found my billfold. Why doncha just hand it over!"

"Aw, get outta my face, ya punk!" Joe yells back.

"You winos are all the same, you're just leeches," returns the skater.

"Hey, wadda you know about me, kid?"

"I know more about you than you do about me, wino!"

"Yeah, right!" Joe laughs back as he scoots into the incandescence of the bus station. To fend off the protests of the bored late night countermand he buys a Snickers candy bar and plops down on the cool plastic of an empty bench.

Outside the skater circles around impatiently in the street in front of the station for a while and, apparently deciding he's got a lost cause, strides off into the now foggy downtown.

A few minutes later, Joe has more or less comfortably ensconced himself in a stall in the bus station men's room. His stroll through the skater's billfold is cut short when he comes upon a driver's license. "Well, will you lookit this. The punk's birthday is the same as my dear little sister's." Contemplating the cosmic coincidence for a while he remembers hearing some street preacher boom out that "coincidences

together in the sand on the shady side of the sedan, eating in silence, their stares fixed on the swaying scrub which dotted the nearby dunes, the lull of the ocean sinking into their thoughts. Then Ben's sandwich slipped from his hands, plopping into the sand between his legs, and Rick saw that he had dozed off, his head slumping against one of the white sidewall tires. "Ben," he said, "you didn't finish your lunch."

And while Rick continued eating, he recalled his father saying, "Pick what you want," as they stood in front of the display case that morning. He was supposed to have taken them to school on his way to work, but he drove them to Honey Bear Toys instead. "We don't want just any kite, do we?" his father said.

The display case was filled with scale models of kites. "I'm not sure," Rick sighed.

And Ben pressed his palms to the glass and said, "They're so different." Then for a long time the three of them studied the models.

"Money's no object," Timothy said. "What grabs you?"

Rick couldn't make up his mind. He was torn between the kite with the red flaming dragon decal and the one with the British union jack design. By the time the man behind the cash register leaned in over the display case, Ben had grown bored and wandered off into an aisle of action heroes, water guns, and Tonka trucks.

"Big decision," the clerk said, his acne-scarred face hovering in close.

And right when Rick was about to point out which kite he wanted, his father asked the clerk, "Which costs the most? What's the best one here?"

"Our best isn't in the case," the clerk replied, then he aimed a finger over their heads and nodded.

Rick and his father turned at the same time, spotting the Japanese box kite suspended by fishing wire from the ceiling. Without hesitation Timothy said, "We'll take it," his voice booming.

"But it's ugly," Rick protested, causing the clerk to laugh. "It doesn't look like a kite."

"Oh," Timothy said, his face softening with confusion. "We don't have to get it. We don't have to get anything. You decide." He put his hands

in his pockets. "I'll find Ben," he muttered, walking away.

Rick frowned. He was embarrassed to look at the clerk. He knew his father was disappointed, but he wasn't exactly sure why. "This is how it always is," he thought.

"Be kind," his mother had told him. "The little things mean a lot to him." And he remembered how scared his father had looked in the kitchen that summer night, the blood coming from the thin slits above both wrists, his mother calmly saying, "Tim?"

When he found his father and brother, Rick was holding the box kite. "It's not bad," he told them, the lie twisting in his stomach. His father smiled, which made Rick angry. "He said it was the last one."

"Great," Timothy said, clapping his hands together. "Good choice."

Finishing the sandwich, Rick noticed the air was a little cooler now in the shade. He looked over then at Ben, focusing on the fabric of his father's suit coat, on the long sleeves that hung over Ben's hands. He shuddered with the memory that the blood on the kitchen floor and walls had been greater than the blood he saw on his father's hands. Rick sat still and imagined it. For an instant the beach and dunes faded away.

When Timothy returned to the sedan, he found the boys asleep in the car. Rick rested in the front seat, his knees drawn in to his chest, the necktie dangling from the fingers of an open hand, while Ben was stretched across the backseat, the suit coat covering his chest and legs. From the glove compartment Timothy removed Rick's Swiss Army knife and a sealed envelope with his name on it. Then he paused to watch his sons. He listened to their breathing, faint and soft, not heavy like his own. He bent to touch the skin on Rick's sunburnt shoulders with his fingertips, gliding them on the smooth surface. Then he went to Ben. He tucked the coat in around Ben's sides, straightening the creases, and dusted some sand from the boy's legs. I need to remember this, he thought. This is what I need to remember.

As he headed down the beach toward the driftwood, Timothy realized that his hands were no longer shaking, that he suddenly felt sure of himself, that there really was nothing worth his peace of mind. He undid his shirt buttons some, allowing the evening breeze to pour in on his body. When he brought the zipper down on his pants he began to laugh,

surprising himself with the force coming up from his throat. At the driftwood he opened the knife and freed the kite, gazing upward as it tore away over the ocean, spinning and dipping toward the waves. With a sigh he spread the envelope against the husk of the driftwood, affixing it there with the knife. Then he undressed, facing the darkening horizon as he let his slacks fall, as his shirt floated down around his feet. The breeze peeled back his hair, and he walked forward with a grin, the thought of going back never once crossing his mind.

Soon, as the sky became transparent, the high tide began its swell, gradually slipping over the beach to claim his clothing, clearing the clutter with some small effort, and then, as if to echo its own precedence, the ocean uprooted the driftwood, carrying the gnarled log away as twilight swiftly fell.

During the night the wind grew stronger. The sea exhaled a little more across the beach and then briefly inhaled into itself, each sigh becoming quicker and shorter. Rick stirred in the blackness to the slight rocking of the sedan. Then he listened for Ben's breathing, but caught only the hush of the sea, the creaking of the sedan as it lurched heavily from the left to the right. He lifted himself slowly with his arms. Seated upright in the front seat, he waited without turning to see if his brother remained asleep, as if he were still lost in dreams. His feet settled in the wetness which continued to seep in from under the doors, which filled the floorboards with bubbles of thick brown foam. Before him, coming forward from an immense darkness, waves broke hard against the hood of the sedan, unsettling the car on impact.

Perched on the edge of the front seat, Rick looked uncertainly with blinking eyes at the Cimmerian expanse of ocean. He thought of his father. He feared he had upset him, because he had walked away from him with Ben as if he didn't want to be with him. He could still imagine the box kite hanging above the beach and, without understanding why, he felt unusually empty and sad. At that second, from the backseat, Ben coughed. Rick twisted around, pulling himself up on his knees to peer over the seat at his brother, who was awake and examining the shiny ball bearing. Stretched on his backside, his father's suit coat bunched behind his head, Ben held the pellet close to his face.

The sedan swayed more violently then, and a bright light shone at the car from the beach, cutting in through the back window.

Rick realized they were no longer on the sand. He saw an array of red and blue and white lights flashing along the coastal highway, and he heard voices yelling. But all of this seemed strangely unimportant and distant to him. Turning away from the bright lights, Rick slid down into the seat. He stared out across the hood at the water, which appeared calmer now.

While moving into that vast landscape he thought again of his father, and began to cry. "Stupid kite," he thought, "stupid—

Ellen

Hair of gold
eyes of blue,
baggy pants
worn out shoe,
quick to laugh
always a smile,
come and sit
with me a while;
know you're busy
on the phone
talking school,
I hear a groan;
quick! catch the bus
too slow, you missed
calling names
shaking fist.
Ride with me,
I'll drive you there
perhaps you'll have
some time to spare.

I listen as
you talk of friends,
the things you've planned
(it never ends.)
I try to see you
flying by,
waving wildly
(I heave a sigh.)
run to meet
your friends in line
vibrant, vital
child of mine!

-Barbara Potter

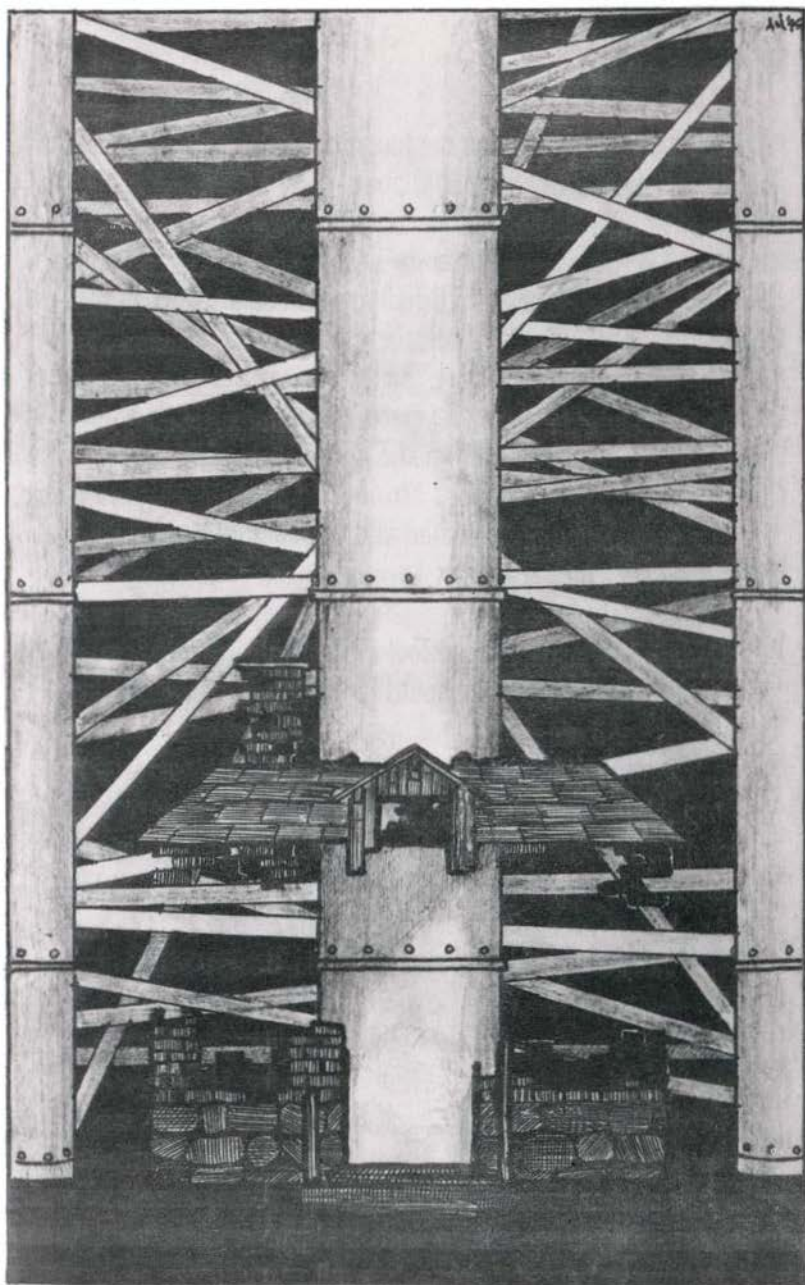
The Glass Room

The world lives and breathes from behind closed
doors
and unenterable cubicles.

I paint these glass walls of my prison with illusionary
colours and pictures.

I would laugh at my life's irony
if I wasn't crying inside of desperation
from visions of a picture of "real" life.

-Vittorio Bonomi



-Aaron Neathery

Judgment Call
by Yolanda-Marie Bridges

"The sun is up, but the moon is shinin'." I smiled as the familiar quote touched my mind. That saying was as much a part of Tyler McCormick as the sun bleached blond hair was. He'd sit on the edge of Billy's '59 Ford pickup and moon Jackson County, with passersby staring at his freckled bottom, he'd shout, "The sun is up, but the moon is shinin'!"

Yep, Tyler was a hoot.

Most people thought he was unpredictable, but not me. We had been best friends since the time he put those frogs in old Mrs. Shickler's desk back in the first grade. To me, Tyler was real predictable; just expect him to do the unexpected and you couldn't go wrong.

Except that last time.

Who the hell could have guessed he'd actually try to make it across those tracks?! I could feel the anger building up inside me as it always did when I thought about that day and I took a sip of beer to try and cool it off.

Damn trains ...

You could see them passing by when you sit on my back porch, that's why I stay on the front porch, but no change of location can block out the whistle's blow. The sound of a train whistle still makes my heart stop.

Sitting here on clear blue days like this, I wonder what would life be like if Tyler had made it. Then red hair and the grayest set of eyes flash into my mind.

Amber-Kristine

She was Tyler's girl; had been ever since he told her drunk old man, "If you hit her again, the sheriff will find some of your body parts scattered all over Jackson County," then he smiled that famous dimpled smile and added, "but only some of 'em."

Man, Tyler was wild.

He had a good heart though, and he loved Amber-Kristine something fierce. Same way she loved him. They were gonna get mar-

ried. Tyler always said she'd be his wife. That he loved her so much not even death could come between them, he'd find a way to be with her.

Yep, that's what he said. I took another sip of beer to ward off the thoughts I didn't like thinking. I remembered instead when Amber-Kristine told Tyler about the baby. You never seen a happier man.

He told me, "Denny, I'm gonna be a papa. We'll be married before the baby gets here. I want my son to have a name. Can you imagine me a papa! I'm gonna have a son to go fishin' with me." That dimpled smile stayed plastered on his face for all of Jackson County to see.

Then for some fool reason he tried to beat that train. Who knows, maybe it was gonna be his last stunt before settlin' down.

Remembering Amber-Kristine's scream when I told her about the accident (wasn't no damn accident, he was being Tyler) still brings chills to my soul. She just stood there screaming and screaming.

Just like that train whistle...

After that it was like she died, too. I would talk to her, but she wouldn't respond. She'd just stare into space; gone like Tyler. Then one day I asked her about the baby. She'd lost Tyler, did she want the baby to die, too?

Her eyes flickered for a moment like a drunk man finding himself cold sober on Sunday morning, her hand slid to her rounding stomach and for the first time in the four months since Tyler's death she cried.

She sobbed out about all the things she and Tyler would never get to do; about all they'd lost. She cried like her heart had broken; I suppose it had. Lord knows there's still pieces of mine all over the place.

As she cried about Tyler never getting to see the baby or teaching him to fish, I felt her slender arms around my neck and knew what I had to do.

We were married three months later. Tyler's baby had a name. As I stood there in my best suit, sweatin' bullets, and squeezin'

Amber-Kristine's hand till it hurt, I hoped Tyler approved.

That was nearly six years ago.

Six years, I thought, as I twisted the gold band on my left hand. Amber-Kristine's a good woman and I love her as much as any man could love a woman. Her soft lips part daily to tell me she loves me, but every now and then, like at dinner or when we go shopping, she'll slip and call me Tyler. And sometimes at night, when I pull her into my arms, she'll have this far away look in her eyes and I wonder if it's blue eyes she sees instead of my own green ones.

Just now I hear the screech of truck tires on gravel, then I see that soft auburn hair turn the corner and a smile touches my lips for her.

I chide myself for still being insecure after all this time. Of course, she loves me. I'm here and Tyler's only a ghost for her now ... right?

"Papa! Ma got me a new fishin' pole today. Can we go? You promised!"

I smiled down at the beguiling set of crystal blue eyes whose owner just hurled himself into my arms. I ruffled the sun bleached blond hair, "Of course, we'll go McCormick. You go get my pole from out back." I saw a flash of his dimpled smile before he headed off.

As he bounded around the corner, I looked up in time to catch the 'far-away' look and whimsical smile my wife held. Just then she came to me, kissed my cheek and said, "I love you." As she walked passed me into the house, I wondered who she was talking to.

Relate

It's old and new
not borrowed
or blue

A glove that fits

A newborn's fits

A sandcastle
made of bricks

Greek fire renewed
from sticks

It's a mother's gaze
that clears the haze

-Karen Geiger

Carnival Sideshow

He sat
folded in a cheap
brocade chair
as we filed by to admire
his grotesqueness.

A fifty-ish man
pushing his only ware:
a distorted body.

("Only 16 inches high!"
the barker shouted.)

We paid to join
the gawking crowd,
shivered,
declined the autographed glossy
he was hawking,
and escaped
to the sparkling midway.

-Lisa McConnell

Haiku

schizophrenia
i think therefore i am not
who am i today.

-Natalie Martinez

Laura

Downy feather of a breeze
caresses my cheek as you
rush by;
eyes wide,
car keys clutched tightly in palm
flitting off to
who-knows-where.

Bravely I smile and wave.
"Please be safe," I silently
(beg, pray.)
As you drive away
I retrieve a memory
of an infant in my arms,
the vision of which
causes tears to well
in my eyes.

From the moment I saw you,
I loved you more
than I could express in words.

Watching you grow and reach
out to the world
has given me hope
for the future.

All of your firsts
are recorded,
from steps to teeth,
shots to smiles
lest I fail to remember
a single one.

Now I must record another;
but first I wave to you
from the window smiling
and watching
through misty eyes.

-Barbara Potter

The Ferry Poem

Do you hear the waves singing girl?

Can you hear the chorus play their part when the ferry cuts through the water?

That's my song that they're singing, babe.

It tells a story that only the special ones would understand.

She knows everything about me, for on my lonely nights I told my pain to them.

They heard the tone of my voice and felt the warmth of my tears as they got lost within her sands.

At times, the water stretched to touch my feet at the ocean floor.

But that shortness made me realize that was the best anyone could do.

Ever since that day, I love the ocean and that unique attempt to counsel my drowning feelings.

As I stand atop this ferry being brushed by salt and her fresh air, I feel a royalness that no king ever felt before.

No one knows how close me and Gal really are.

No one else knows that every night I would swim out as far as these tiny arms could take me, and out there, in the middle of the ocean I would cry.

On the swim back, I felt like a free man who was just let out of the most tormenting prison that God could ever make.

Old great Galveston has always been my escape. I'm a lost musician's tone that floats around imaginative freedom. I get out of one cell just to be imprisoned by those strands of your hair.

I'm your prisoner for life.

Do you like this song my friend has played for you?

Sing on, sing on my salty dust!

Play the pain which spells her name, your name babe, your name.

-Antonio Soria Jr.

Tickets Out

by Richard F. Tuthill

"God, I need a drink," Joe groans moments after he pries his eyelids open. As usual he starts his evening by checking his pockets and he's not surprised to find that there's only twelve cents and half a cigarette. Stashing the change back in his pocket and lighting the bent cigarette butt from a torn book of matches, he drags himself off the sidewalk and stands unsteadily, looking perhaps not all that far removed from the first tentative upright silhouette of one of his Cro-Magnon ancestors, slack jaw, scraggly hair, matted beard and all.

"Looks like a long way to a bottle," he mutters to no one in particular, "Guess I'll go over on Main by the bus station. Maybe somebody gimme some spare change."

As Joe stumbles his way down the street, he watches the ground for the glint of a dropped coin or, if he's lucky something even better, like that time he found the winning scratch-off ticket. God, there was a score, he thought. He was king of the streets for a couple of weeks on the two hundred bills courtesy of the little cardboard square and the state of by-God Texas. But when the money was gone, so were his new-found friends, of course, both disappearing as quickly and completely as the hot greasy hamburgers at Rachel's Diner. He'd swore that if he ever got another chance, another ticket off the streets, he called it, things would be different.

But there was never another ticket, even though he spent the next two weeks scouring the very same area where Lady Luck had french kissed him once before. Now as he sways along the sidewalk he scans the ground more out of habit than anything else. As intently as he watches the street all around him it's almost no surprise when he trips over something right under his ripped and laceless shoes in the shadow of a gutter. Halfheartedly cursing he cranes crookedly down to snatch up the loathsome object that dared to impede his erratic progress and his eyes finally focus on a leather wallet. Quickly scanning the patches of light and dark on the almost abandoned street, Joe sees only the flicker of a lone skater gliding through the glow of a distant streetlight.

Seeing the skater reminds him of Katie, who it seemed loved her skates more than anything else, hell, she'd loved those eight wheels almost as much as he'd loved his motorcycle. Joe had asked her once why she was so crazy for skating. She'd smiled her crooked toothy little girl smile and whispered softly with a faraway look, "Because when I skate, I'm free, Joebear. I'm flying." It was the same answer he'd often given when asked why he loved his bike.

In his few lucid moments these days he liked to remember Katie as she was at ten, blond hair swinging in the red and orange sunset as she spun around him in the street, laughing at him like the little sister who could do no wrong, like she'd be young and innocent and unbroken forever. But then, inevitably he'd remember the rest of that sunset. Him laughing back both an invitation and a challenge and her swinging up behind her big brother on the powerful cycle.

Oh, sure, Joe had told his sister to mind her skates, keep them to the ends of the pegs rather than close by the wheels. But he'd had to show off for her laughter, popping one too many wheelies, her wonderful big brother who could do no wrong. She'd hugged him tighter and tighter to hold on and even now Joe could pick out in his mind the rasping moment when her left skate caught the spokes of the rear wheel, sending the bike and its riders tumbling across the street.

For her part Katie never held it against him. She just went on loving her big brother from the wheelchair he knew he had sentenced her to. In a way it might have been easier for him if she'd been mean to him, cried to him that it was all his fault, held back her love as punishment for the freedom he'd taken from her. But that wasn't how his little sister worked and when she merrily sang out his name that first day home from the hospital, Joe was already gone. He could handle her anger, but he knew he could never forgive himself for her love.

On his melancholy days those memories would choke him and he'd wonder if he would have been better off without either the two hundred dollar ticket or the sweet little sister. Now, shaking off the old days he

pokes the smooth leather wallet into his grimy jacket and scurries into a convenient alley where he half-falls to the ground to examine his prize.

The first thing Joe finds is a quantity of cash, a fifty, three tens and four ones, which he counts three times and stuffs into his pants pocket with a cackle. Heaving to his feet, he lurches into a seedy corner liquor store where he asks the clerk for a fifth of grape Thunderbird and a pack of cheap generic cigarettes. When he changes his mind and asks for Marlboro instead, the storekeeper asks Joe if he hit the lotto.

"Looks like it, Ernie," he says, then after a pause, "Tell you what, give me a quick pick, too." Pocketing his change and the ticket, he escorts his bottle out to the street.

Leaning against the liquor store's side wall, Joe unscrews the cap on the Thunderbird and leans back to take a deep swig of the sweet purple liquid. Sighing and then belching pointedly he lights a Marlboro. Already woozy with his stroke of luck and feeling the first smooth buzz of a good cigarette, he contemplates his next move. Should he check into the Prince William for a shower, shave and private room at five a night or just stick with the street and see what happens? Perhaps he should buy another one of those scratch-off tickets; he'd heard about a street guy in Dallas who'd supposedly won big. Supposedly. As Joe loses himself in the warm reverie of easy wealth, he begins to feel the welcome heat of his bottle and so scarcely notices the skater from up the street circle in front of him. The skater brakes to a stop and for a moment the two size each other up. Finally, the skater breaks the silence and pointedly asks, "You seen a wallet laying around?"

Joe laughs to himself and thinks, 'well, of course not, you ignorant kid,' but owing to his burgeoning mellow glow he says only, "No, sure ain't." Then feeling magnanimous and perhaps a little guilty he dredges up his best snaggle-toothed smile and tells the skater, "Look, man, I just hit the lotto. Have a cig on me." The skater says 'no thanks, he quit smoking seven months ago,' and flows smoothly back into the night.

Joe watches the skater slide fluidly out of sight and drags languidly on his Marlboro. Then he walks the two blocks to the bus station and parks himself on the curb. Broken only by sips from the scrunched-up neck of his brown paper bag, Joe begins to absentmindedly check out

are God's way of working when He wants to remain anonymous." He wasn't exactly sure at the time what the preacher had meant, why the voice rang out in his mind like God's Own Trombone of Truth, but weeks later, after the coming and going of the scratch-off ticket, Joe was sure it meant something important.

Finishing up his perusal of the skater's wallet, the last thing Joe finds is a telephone calling card. Going to a phone booth in the corner of the station he uses the calling card to dial a number on the emergency information card in the billfold. The ringing clicks into an answering machine and the message comes on in a voice Joe finds altogether too cheery, "Hi, this is Frank. I've gone skating downtown, flying the streets, free as a bird, as it were. If this is Dad tell Mom to have the blackberry pie ready. No way would I miss my own birthday. See you tomorrow." Joe hangs up abruptly, lets out a heavy sigh and redials the number. After listening to the message again he growls his response after the machine's beep, "Okay, skate flyer punk, I found your wallet. It's behind.... no it's in a trash can by a phone booth next to the downtown bus station."

After Joe hangs up, he stares hard at the silver and black pay phone for a minute, picks up the receiver, and slowly dials another number, this one from a piece of brown paper he fishes out from deep in a pocket, a piece of paper as wrinkled and dirty as he is.

As the ring is answered he says "Hi, Sis, it's Joe."

"Hello, Joebear, I haven't heard from you in months. Are you okay?" His face reddens a little at the sound of his nickname even though no one else is around to hear. Katie knows he hates that silly nickname, but she also knows she's the only one who could ever get away with using it.

"I'm fine, Katie. How are things in Beaumont?"

"Fine, but, we all wish you were here."

"We, who?"

"Well, Roger and me and the baby. Oh, Joebear. You don't know. I got married and had a baby." She laughs and quickly adds, "In that order."

"That's great, Katie. Look, I can't talk long. I gotta go. I just wanted to tell you happy birthday." After a moment he whispers, "I love you,

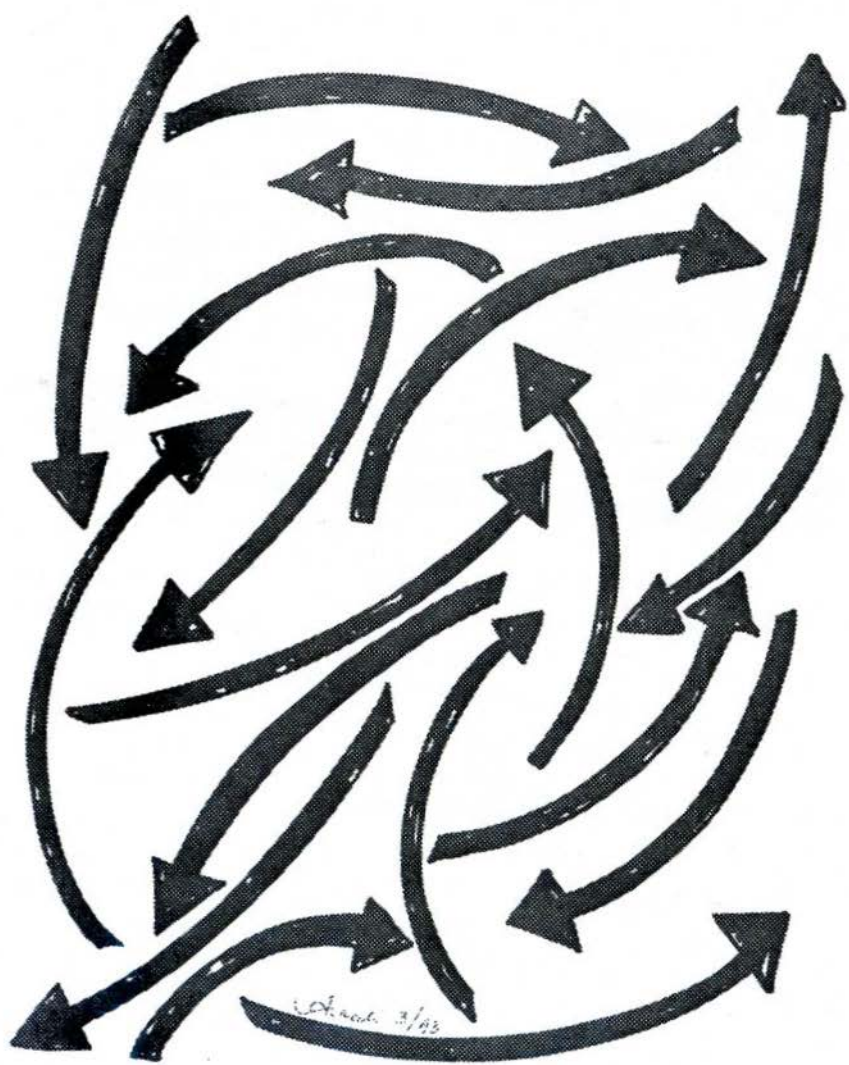
Katie.”

“I love you, too, Joebear. You know I always will. But wait a sec, I want you to know something. I named the baby after you, Joseph Hebert Russes.”

Joe and his sister hang up and after a long thoughtful minute he goes to the ticket counter where he books a seat on the next bus to Beaumont.

Back outside, waiting for the bus, Joe thinks about the punk kid skater and just before he tosses the billfold, he pauses, reaches into his pocket and pulls out the lotto ticket. Grinning to himself he crams the lotto ticket into the billfold and tosses it in the trash can along with the half-empty bottle.

A few minutes later the station announcer booms out the call for the bus to Beaumont. As Joe climbs the three big steps into the bus he smiles to himself and thinks, “I bet the little asshole wins.”



-Araceli Pina

Anorexia

Nervosa, never too thin

Ounce by ounce he disappears

Regarded as a woman's disease, but society is cruel

to men too

Everyone looking to see how fat he is

Xylophone mallets are brawnier

Irreducible when they finally force feed him

Always too fat to be loved

-Patrick M. Farrell

Young Musical

An old man dances in the corn field,
said to be almost dead one time,
dwelling in a butterfly's horizon,
tearing romance from her vines.
My last days have been so musical,
the past hours have been so young,
excuse me streets, when you hear me screaming,
drifting within the sweet slither from her tongue.
Every place I go now, there's a tune,
that exploits the flaming aback this chase,
violin strings, keys from her piano to all fall in love,
to all disintegrate into this lullaby's face.
Those who consider, believe that I'm lost in your lips,
they've never met another shortcut to Heaven,
besides the acid trip.
I hear the music, but does anyone else,
love is not a topic that another dies for,
young musical, open the doors for the recovering
Orchestra,
they have come to play solos to make us dream more.
Would you like to dance the next song when it plays,
would you like to share an image in bliss,
perhaps we could talk to each other through minds,
or maybe just lose reality with an infantry kiss.

—Antonio Soria Jr.



-Mitch Cullin

Bayou Woman

I'm waiting for a yellow bus

in a yellow lot . . .

It was hot . . .

and the smell, and the noise of a

Southern Pacific,

Santa Fe train

was overpowering . . .

But, a cool wind blew in from

the bayou . . .

It felt good at the back of

my neck

and the wind . . .

brought the smell . . .

of a woman . . .

a soft sweet

smell.

Between the dark cloudbursts

of a

Southern Pacific, Santa Fe train . . .

There it was again . . .

caught amidst . . .

only a woman can . . .

do that . . .

I didn't turn around to look . . .

I saw the T-shirt . . .

as I took my turn
on the yellow
school bus . . .

It said, "dream"
And I wondered if
I dared . . .
or had I been
already . . .

Damn it was hot . . .
except for the breeze and a bayou
woman . . .

-Josiah W. Tyson III

Vision

For my grandfather,
William McDonell (1907-1979)

The boy
A pioneer latch-key kid
Spent afternoons with
The blind old man

The man
A product of
The Great Depression

The boy's mind
Fresh

The old man had sight
In his youth
Lost it to disease
But
He could still see

Once powerful
Now
Dependent on the boy
To walk around the block

Together
They would play

Each other's keeper

The boy for sight
The man for wisdom
What a team they made

The boy
Now a man
Can see
And
Not see
Like others cannot

The old man
Is gone
But
His vision lives on

-Patrick M. Farrell

Number Thirty-Eight

Lazy summer afternoons
Blankets spread over the bright living green grass of
the valley
picnic baskets saturated with fried chicken and cool
lemonade
people, festive in mood
much like in a Renoir, a Seurat, or a Degas

this is more fun than when we went to see the battle
of Gettysburg
today at least there is no chance we will have to flee.

They are all the same.

Two are different.

A family member dressed for mourning.

One last look.

One last goodbye.

No John Donne today.

The body precariously dangling
all cheer as though it were a vaudeville show.

This spectacle like many that have been and will be
was graciously made possible by the courtesy of
concerned yet decent citizens
of everywhere humanity.

--Vittorio Bonomi

Just Talk and Bad Poetry

You know role models and idols have a way of disappointing!

Much like those white plastic bags that litter the green pastures

they too are not cranes after all, no matter how much we want them to be.

It has been a long time since I have talked to my father.

He has no knowledge of China,
or of my trivial thoughts hurriedly scribbled on paper
and arrogantly submitted to my captive preys as poetry.

You know not everyone has the benefit of an old Native American witch doctor,
sage or shaman, who's wisdom denies the number of his years.¹

I wonder what broken idols litter the ground of that homeless person's mind?

I wonder if he will ever meet his witch doctor?

He now just sits there on the dirty street,
dirty,

unclean, unkempt

his skin, the color of heavily tarnished copper found in a worn out dime.

Then again I wonder if he has met him already?

—Vittorio Bonomi

¹ Susan Vega, Gypsy

Yesterday's Failures, Tomorrow's Hopes

Born of same mother
forged by the same Saint Elmo's fires and glacial ice
creator of civilizations
discoverer of new worlds and new horizons
confined within the insurmountable walls of
parameters
subjugated by perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices.

Where are your glorious civilizations now?
Have they lasted for the promised thousand years?
Or are they part of our stored collective history?

In our apocalyptic dreams
we are ruled and orderly disposed of by terminators
super viruses and nuclear holocausts.
In nightmares and movies destruction and death
is swiftly and methodically dealt by demons
Fred Krugger, Nosferatus and the Prince of Darkness
We all know their names.

Who needs them though
when we still walk upon this earth.

The genie, whose name was Hitler
was released out of our own collective conscious
bottle.

We because of who we are carry the collective sins of
our forefathers
sins that will never be washed clean by time.

Judge me not with your own eyes but with your rea-
son

for we are all inhabitants of the same house
what we seek is all the same

we are more similar than we are different
our differences should be acknowledged and
respected

for they are the reasons why we someday will reach
beyond the stars

we all share the same aspirations, dreams and hopes
and we are more like the worm than the hare or the
bear.*

-Vittorio Bonomi

* Dr. Seuss, The Boast

Riverside Park

He rises slowly
Mr. Yellow Man
kisses my face as I cry
Warms Misses Black Waters
as she ripples by.
He slinks up the street
Mr. Red Man
sly as a shadow
looking for a resting place
as he reflects off the window.
He'll come again
Mr. Purple Man
from under the Williamsburg Bridge
to walk with me gently
till we reach that edge.
So here lies the story
best read in the dark
the story of every man's life
in Riverside Park.

-Natalie Martinez



-Mitch Cullin

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The Bayou Review is published biannually by the University of Houston-Downtown, One Main Street, Houston, TX 77002

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