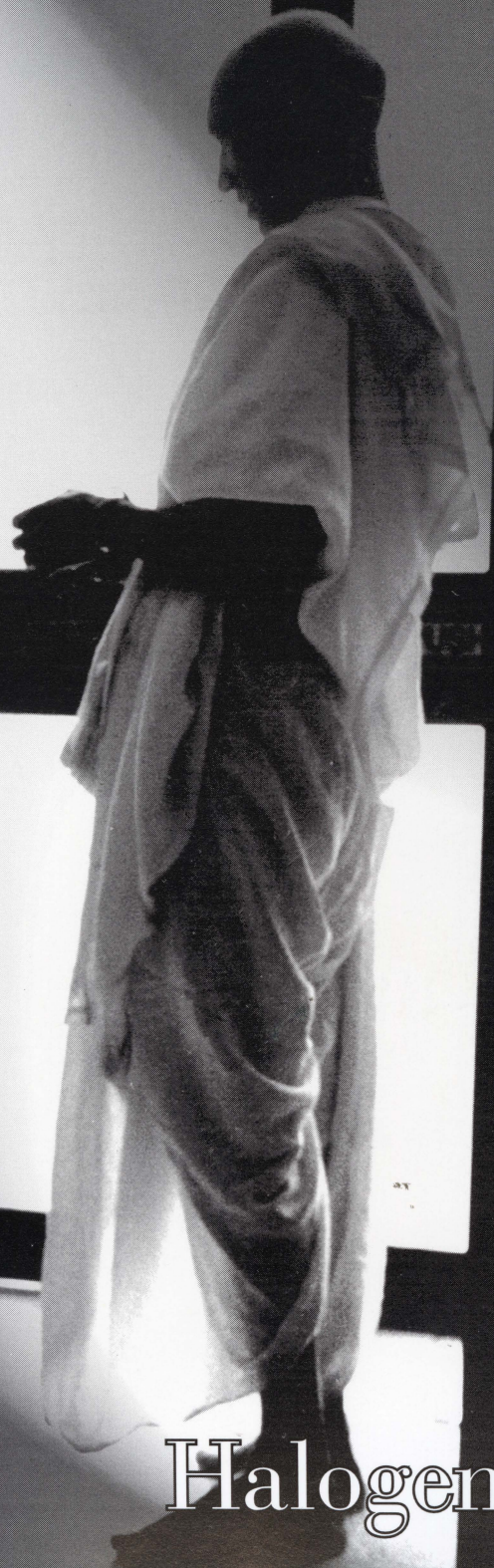
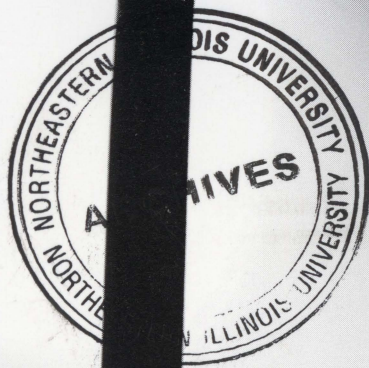


2000

Halogen- 2000

Andrew Mendelsohn



Halogen

Spring 2000

Halogen

Halogen

A Publication of Apocalypse
Literary Arts Coalition and
Northeastern Illinois University

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Submission Guidelines

The Apocalypse literary coalition is now soliciting manuscripts for it's 2001 edition of *Halogen*.

Do not examine previous issues in order to determine the taste or bias of the staff. Send us your best most original work, but not actual originals. All submissions must be typed and should include a concise biography.

Please include your name, address and a self addressed stamped envelope.

Apocalypse literary arts coalition
Northeastern Illinois University
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Chicago, IL 60625

We work in the dark
we do what we can
we give what we have
our doubt is our passion
our passion is our task

The rest is the madness of art

-Henry James

No, not the angry light extern of apocalyptic angels
Upon whom the Italian masters beatify God's florescent blessing
Shall we ever let frame the tender lustre of a soft heart mangled
By eyes like ears that refuse to hear the pen confessing

Man goes blind living and searching in the refraction
Of a divine glow backwards bent from holy purpose
As devil-trolls twist ancient fires to suit new actions
Breeding only the ash to ashes of an old apocalyptic dust

No, mark not my divinity with oily pasted crowns of gold
And yet if only by halo light a saint, a blessing, or a man be noted
Let me in the tender lamp-light of my heart enfold
That worth some distant angel congress voted.

For a poets light comes not without, but from within,
A tender heart-lit lamp burns words of halogen

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<u>Erika Eckart</u>	photo	cover

Concerning Content

After hours of consideration
and three evenings of ardent research in
a dark library I have decided that
this poem will contain a dull axe,

a broken baseball bat, a ragged
baby doll, perhaps some salt and lemons,
certainly a bit about the mangled
pigeon I saw in Montmartre. I took a

picture but it could not capture the ruffled
feathers and the bloody scratches across
the wings. I have decided this poem

will contain eight verbs, mostly in the past
tense. I have decided to find a
paper bag to scream in until I bleed.

Nathan Höks

First Sex

I could feel the air buckling
from that sky of fire.
I could imagine every forest I'd
ever hiked through, torched, razed.

Gale rose up on her elbow.
I could sense the flame
squirreling the length of her body,
Her body bursting from its fury.

I could hear fire-bells clanging,
the shouting, the panic in the streets.
She grinned at me as if this was a
great awakening, not a conflagration.

I was there for the hill of ashes
rising up out of the pure white sheets.
I was a fireman . . . one who sets them,
one who puts them out, I still cannot tell.

John Grey

Althea

her very name causeth me to lithp
 or think how hooked I used to be --
 maybe the way she walked or held her head
 back in those dawning-of-creation days
 as we struggled through that primordial ooze
 of school and books.

I even then suspected chemistry between us,
 avoiding the catalytic agent that was Althea,
 her mere "hello" causing coronaries of first love,
 her glance that turned my pores to leaky faucets,
 her smile that spawned male storms of fantasies--
 half sentimental schmaltz, half libertinish orgies
 for the most part biologically incorrect.

But by regarding Althea from a distance
 I managed, at least, to hide from her
 the string of adjectives describing me:
 ecstatic, sublimated, unrequited, square, or nuts--
 seldom doubting how meant-to-be we were,
 though even in school puzzled by her bawdy friends,
 her brassy voice, the ever present smoke
 that wrapped itself around her, living in her clothes.

Finally the year that waited so long for me
 came with its days when I'd stop at Althea's
 standing like some dumb intruder, aching to lie down,

watching her well-rounded mother kiss the kitchen.
 Althea, her indelible lips and azure eyes,
 her cream shell skin, her hair in ringlets,
 kissing the cat, kissing the dog on its rubbery nose
 even the bird through the gold bars of its little jail
 as I stood looking on in noble giraffely silence
 floundering for words I should have first rehearsed,
 words that were chicken bones in my throat.
 Sometimes she'd even kiss the telephone,
 speaking to it in codes of laughter
 but staring through me as she would a patch of air.
 I could see us growing old together,
 eating in restaurants but never speaking,
 living our lives with our mouths grown shut.

In time I seldom thought of Althea--
 for all I knew, waiting on tables
 or wearing gloves with the fingertips worn through
 or maybe living somewhere in the suburbs--
 gold candelabra and goosefeather beds
 and a fat husband with glistening lips.
 I saw her once several years ago
 on a crowded night in the Starlight Lounge,
 smoke drifting out of her ears and nose
 as she stared through her friends at me.

John Dickson

Saint Augustine's Prayer:
A Monosyllabic Semi-Sonnet

Lord
make
me
chaste

but
not
yet

Michael L. Johnson

Since God Moved Into Town

God lives in Clybourn Wyoming.

In a town that cannot be found on a map, six large churches are filled round the clock, seven days a week, three levels high with worshippers or devotees as they call themselves. A new service starts in Clybourn every ten minutes, and every seat for every service is sold out twenty-four hours in advance.

None of us who were born in Clybourn attend these services, but since god moved here, it only takes about three or four months to be considered a local. I probably sound like any other old timer longing for the good old days, but I did like it better before all my friends moved away, when Boss Chaison owned everything, we all had jobs, and our only church held one Sunday service with free seating. I scoffed when the new churches sprouted up one yellow-bricked, cubical clone after another. Now they scoff at me.

From an airplane, Clybourn must look like a diseased mouth, the churches its only remaining teeth. It has become a town that outsiders motor through with locked doors. Even devotees who manage to maintain residences outside of Clybourn can't leave soon enough once they step outside the church. Buildings and houses are all abandoned and boarded up, shrouded by weeds as tall as horses, and even the occupied homes need paint jobs. Devotees in need of money post themselves on street corners, try to flag down passing vehicles, then pout like snubbed relatives. I've seen cars approaching Clybourn screech to a halt just shy of the border

and turn around. I have a view of all six churches from my rooftop, and from my front porch I hear every tale uttered in Clybourn. My story is credible, though nobody in Clybourn will admit any part of it.

The day Martin Chandler drove his brand-new Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham into Clybourn, parked it in Old Man Chaison's garage, and walked up Field Street, he became a target. If Chandler had dyed his white hair, he could have passed for a much younger man. He carried his tall, solid frame forward with a stride one would use to take a seat at the head of a very long table, yet he trod lightly so as not to sink his pointy shoes too deeply in Clybourn's coat of filth. His wire-rimmed glasses cost more than the sum total of what any local devotee was wearing, and the slightest sparkle of gold from his cuff links attracted the remotest eye in town.

"Hello my friend, trying to score some tickets?" The first person to accost Chandler was Brother Marcus, who like everyone else on Field street was looking to do a favor in return for a few dollars.

Chandler brushed past him as though he weren't there.

"Okay, friend, you don't have to speak to me. God bless you."

The next approach was made by Sister Tina, who stuffed herself into fluorescent miniskirts and went through more red lipstick than a traveling circus. "Hi, handsome, wanna take a pretty girl to church?"

"No thanks."

"Can I get a few dollars out of you for some food?"

Chandler kept walking.

"You looking for somebody? Who you looking for?"

"Not you." Chandler was searching for his only daughter, whom he and his wife Betty had adopted as an infant. At three o'clock in the morning after her high school graduation, Kimberley Chandler tiptoed out of her comfortable home in Connecticut on a journey to find her biological parents. Martin Chandler had only to bribe two social workers, the same two Kimberly had bribed, to discover that her search had led her to Clybourn.

I knew Kimberly, or Sister Kim as she grew to call herself. She was a pretty girl, blonde, bubbly, and much too tiny for those big sweatshirts she lived in. She always called me sir, and her sparkling blue eyes focused on me like everything I said was golden. She like every young convert who feels her life slipping out of her hands, found herself on my front porch exchanging tales of life as it used to be. Her father was determined that she go to law school and become an expert in corporate mergers, while she felt she would rather run a shelter for the homeless or teach kindergarten. God should cut me a check for these counseling services. It's as if I have become a step on the stairway to salvation. Invariably, when they get to me, they have attended numerous services, sold off most of their valuables, and fear giving over total control of their lives. I take no position, give no advice beyond "follow your heart," yet without exception these people forsake everything in favor of perpetual worship.

Martin Chandler walked steadily, breaking stride only to wave his arms at a passing red Toyota Celica driven by a large man with dark bushy eyebrows. Chandler thought he saw his daughter's car, and he was right, except Kimberly had sold it to Daniel Chaison for a pittance of two hundred and fifty dollars. The Chaisons were the wealthiest family in

Clybourn. I suppose they still are, though nobody in Clybourn but god could be considered wealthy these days. The Chaisons lost the bulk of their fortunes when the manufacturers who rented their buildings fled town. They have become opprotunists of a different sort. Devotees who need quick cash bring their saleable items to the Chaison house. There are rumors that groups of five or six often huddle in their stairwell for impromptu prayer services, but Old Man Chaison denies these reports, saying he would never deflect business from the churches. That is typical of the man we once called "Boss." He liked to keep people in the dark, and he loved to be underestimated. Everyone agrees that Chandler's first mistake upon entering Clybourn was speaking to Old Man Chaison as one would to a valet. Before he bought his first building twenty-two years ago, Mr.Chaison worked as a janitor in it for a month, time enough to overhear many sensitive business secrets. Six years later he owned half of Clybourn, and opened wide to swallow the other half.

Chandler rushed through the barrage of solicitations, exhortations, and supplications to the elegantly named Church A. Each of Clybourn's churches had two fire escape doors on each side and every door holds a window that allows a limited view of the congregation. I had expected a continuous clamor of devotees around each of these windows, but no devotee can stand being on the outside for long.

Chandler went from church to church climbing the fire escape stairs on each side to the level of the first balcony, then up to the second balcony, scanning the crowds. Given the schedule of services and a devotee's penchant for jumping from church to church as ticket acquisitions dictated, he could have searched in this manner nonstop for

weeks before seeing his daughter. Church A begins services every hour on the hour, Church B at ten minutes past every hour, and so on down to to Church F which begins services at fifty minutes past the hour. Every church is closed one hour each day for cleaning and maintenance, executed by chosen servants.

By the time Chandler approached Church D his feet were dragging, and his shoes were dusted with the dirt of the streets.

"You looklike the weight of the world is about to cripple you, my brother." James, the youngest of the Chaisons stood in Chandler's path. He was fourteen going on thirty, had fat dirty arms, and always spoke with a toothpick in his mouth. "I have what you need, D tickets for the six-thirty. God will lift that burden from your shoulders."

Chandler looked at his watch. The service would begin in nearly two hours. Maybe he could use a pair of tickets to elicit information about his daughter. Perhaps he would attend a service with Kimberly. "How much for two?"

"I need seventy-five my brother. These are on the main floor."

"The price on the tickets is fifteen apeice."

"You could go pay fifteen and wait till tomorrow. Do you have that long to wait for god? Tell you what, if cash is a problem you could let me hold that fine watch of yours."

"My Rolex?" Chandler snorted. "Cash will be fine."

Chandler completed the circuit of churches, but didn't see Kimberly. At the bottom of the fire escape of Church F, he met Sister Tina again.

"Looking in the windows won't get you closer to god. Don't you wanna take me inside?"

He showed her Kimberly's graduation picture. Her

shoulders were so white and bony in her party dress, he cringed at the thought of her on these streets alone. "Do you know this girl, where I can find her?"

"Tina's eyes flicked wide for an instant, then she put on a quizzical look. "She sort of looks familiar."

"You know her. Please she's my daughter. Tell me where she is. I'll make it worth your while."

"What do you mean, worth my while?"

"I'll give you these."

"No, baby, you bought these from a kid in front of D didn't you? These are some fake tickets printed in Jimmy Chaison's basement."

"How do I know which ones are real?"

She took his hand, the hand wearing the Rolex, into both of her hands. "Only true devotees can tell. Have a nice evening now."

Chandler huffed back to where he bought the dummy tickets, but of course Jimmy wasn't there. He looked for the correct time and found his watch was gone. Kimberley's red Toyota was barreling down the street again, and Chandler hurled himself into its path.

Daniel Chaison screeched to within centimeters of bumping him. "Are you crazy old man?"

Chandler ran to Daniel's open window and dove in, over the driver to the passengers seat. "This is my car I bought it for my daughter's graduation."

"Your the guy with the Cadillac in our garage."

"I'm looking for my daughter and you're driving her car."

Daniel pulled off the main street and parked. After volleying arguments and threats, he told Chandler everything he knew in order to get him out of the car.

"I know Kim. Everybody know Kim. She came round here asking all sorts a questions, just like you saying Andrew and Tia Carver was here long lost parents. But Mr. and Mrs. Carver, they gone. They left like most everyone else did when the churches was going up."

"So is she still here?"

"Yeah, she still here. They got her."

"Who got her?"

"The devotees. They hustle all day just to get to church, and when they smell what kind of money she got they stay behind her like cats behind a fish wagon."

"So she's been here taking everyone to church?"

"She tightened up now. They all do when they see the money running out. She in Church A right now, in the exalted chamber. They say that's for god's favorite children. She been there three days now. Ain't slept or ate or nothing."

"I need a ticket for the next A service."

"No problem." Daniel drove to the side of Church F and pulled up to his brother James who had sold Chandler the counterfeit tickets.

"Hey." Chandler chased James around a corner but lost him in the swarm of bodies exiting Church F.

He kept running to Church A and implored the people filing past to part with a ticket. He grabbed the sharp elbow of a dark young woman in a flowery summer dress.

"Please I'll give you a hundred dollars for your ticket. I'm sure you could go to quite a few services with that money, and have some left over.

"Give me one-fifty."

"In a career of having invested in every type of business imaginable, Martin Chandler had never been as befuddled as he was by the hypnotic appeal this service had

for its congregation. He had been to church before, and though the liturgy was in English, every word and gesture prefomed on the altar seemed foreign, as if he were eaves-dropping on another planet. There was no joy in their blank stares, emptied of all dreams, worries, pleasures, and responsibilities.

From his seat in the second balcony, Chandler spied Kimberly on the main floor, in the front row. Apparently what made her section the "exalted chamber" was that it was draped in translucent white cloth, like a bride under a veil. At the conclusion of the ceremony, he tried to enter this exalted chamber but was prevented by a hard-muscled man in a tight white shirt, with a head like a bowling ball.

"Kimberly. Kimberly, please talk to me. I'll wait outside." Chandler was carried to the exit.

Chandler sat on a fire hydrant with his head in his hands. He was deluged with questions and propositions, but he remained like a stone figure until the first glow of dawn when he heard what he was waiting to hear.

"Daddy?" Kimberly looked down at her father. Her college T-shirt hung off her like a wire hanger. Her sweet sixteen charm bracelet and necklace with gold cross were gone. She was skeletal, her complexion gray from malnutrition, and her face sucked into the skull.

"My china doll, what's happened to you?" Chandler embraced his daughter, who remained rigid in his arms. "Let's go home. We'll help you find your parents. Just come home."

"I am home, daddy. I've found god and I won't leave."

"Well at least you can eat breakfast with your father."

He walked his daughter by the hand to a resturant.

"So did you hire a detective? Is that how you found

me?"

"No. I walked through this decrepit town of beggars and theives myself until I found you. I'm trying to salvage your future."

Kimberly's elbows fidgeted, and she kept glancing out the resturant window. Outside Sister Tina ducked into a yellow Volkswagon bug with Colorado license plates. "My future is here with god. God doesn't care about your corporate raids, your controlling interest, your bottom line."

Chandler surveyed the town. Brother Marcus leaned against a black Ford Explorer from Arizona, pulling compact discs from a green laundry sack and showing them to a driver. "I'm not so sure. Besides isn't god everywhere? you can attend church in Connecticut. I'll buy your car back. Just come with me."

"I can't daddy. God will not be postponed, or placed in a convenient little box. Be happy for me daddy. Love me as your daughter, and as a daughter of god."

"What am I supposed to do?"

"I could use some money."

Chandler stabbed his last piece of french toast with his fork. "I'm going back to Connecticut. Will you see me off?"

"Of course daddy. You'll help me out with some money?" She followed him to the Chaison house.

Old man Chaison rattled a cluster of keys on a large metal hoop. "I heard you went to church last night. Didn't you get full of the spirit?"

"Just let me get my car."

"Back to business is it? I guess you need to get back to the Telecorp takeover. I understand you've met some unexpected competition."

Chandler snapped his fingers and pointed at the garage.

"That sure is a nice Fleetwood Brougham you have. How much would you sell it for?"

Chandler put his hands on his hips and glared at him.

Old Man Chaison examined every key on his ring before extracting the one he needed. His sons Daniel and James came out of the house.

"Hi Jimmy. Hi Danny." Kimberly kissed each brother on his cheek.

"These are freinds of yours?"

Yes daddy, they've been a tremendous help to me."

Chandler waved a finger in James' face. "This punk swindled me out of seventy-five dollars."

"You need to get your finger out of my face."

Old Man Chaison twittered his key into the garage door and raised it. Chandler ran into the garage. "Where's my car? you rotten theives, I'll kill you all."

Old Man Chaison, Daniel, James, and even Kimberly, had all dis appeared. Chandler ran to the side of the house and pounded on the red wooden door.

The door opened. Chandler lunged at James and squeezed his hands around his throat. The guard from the previous night, with the bowling ball head, pulled Chandler off James and tossed him against the wall. Chandler tried to charge James again, but a meaty hand restrained him. Along with the guard, the Chaisons, and Kimberly were five devotees. Behind them a short flight of stairs led up to a closed door

Old Man Chaison cleared his throat. "Meet Brother Martin Chandler. He went to his first service last night. He

looks like he wants in on your prayer meeting.

"I don't want in on--"

"Shut up." The guard swatted Chandlers face.

"We need your wallet"

"And that ring"

"Give up those cuff links."

"And any gold you're wearing under that shirt."

Chandler tried to wiggle free. "Let me go."

Old man Chaison placed his hand on top of Chandler's head. "It's a good thing you went to church last night. Your soul is ready."

Kimberly kissed her father. "Good-bye daddy."

Before he creaked up the stairs Old man Chasion whispered something into Chandler's ear. Chandlers mouth stretched to a horrific oval, and he collapsed melting onto the floor. He felt his head, ribs, and groin being kicked. "That's my daughter, my daughter, my daughter." His cries were stomped out by a pair of grimy shoes, while his daughter kneeled with her folded hands pressed against her forehead and her eyes squeezed shut.

Kimberly Chandler has never made it back to the exalted chamber. She hustles ticket money on the street, waves hello to me when she passes, and like the rest of us never mentions the late Martin Chandler. The only part of this story anyone murmurs about is what Old Man Chaison may have whispered to the man. Most of the town believes he claimed to be Kimberly's father, while some go so far as to say he declared he was god. I say it was nothing so grandiose, simply one predatory business man claiming victory over another, having taken full benefit of his home field advantage.

Phillip E. Saineghi

The Fall of Adam

Handsome boy
 In the willows of Eden
 Waiting for your girl.
 From yesterday you step,
 Fire falling from your fingertips,
 The grace of newness
 With a smile that broke clouds.

By the fruit of heaven
 You learned of touch
 And the apocalypse-
 Alpha and omega,
 The fine line between
 desire and sacrifice.

Not even nature,
 With her own agenda
 Could soften your earthly fall.

Corrine Dewinter

Flying Kites

Two narrow strips of light bamboo, crossed.
 A frame on which I glued a sheet of paper,
 a loop to hold the longest string, controlled
 by the flyers hand. A tail of knotted rags.

A Harlem tenement roof is where I learned
 to fly my home-made kite. Feel the invisible
 pull, soaring, as though propelled, into the sky,
 dip and swirl with ever wayward gust

Pull. too. my mind aloft from all below
 afloat among the pigeon flocks, in wisps
 of passing clouds, amazed at the unsteeped
 Silhouette of Saint John's Cathedral, amile away.

Years later, at the shore, I share with children
 flights of elaborate kites, stronger, shaped as birds
 and boxes, multiples, trailing brilliant tails, rising
 higer than the high-rise roofs. Still a thrill.

Daniel Green

Never

It is Saturday at the senior citizens' apartments.
 His a.m. caregiver leaves as I arrive.
 He stands naked, propped
 between the wheelchair and the sink, shaving,
 His sagging white skin barely knitting
 ribs and hips and shrunken legs together.
 His feet are curled into tiny claws;
 I chide him for not seeing the podiatrist.
 From the diaper pail I grab an armful of wet briefs.
 I gag; I am ashamed.

Quickly, purposefully,
 I unpack clean laundry into the mahogany chest,
 scoop up piles of unread *New York Times*,
 rubber-band the mail in the desk drawer.
 "Where are the tax forms you promised to find
 three weeks ago?" He says he's been too busy.
 Impatient, sighing, I shake my head,
 drag several garbage bags of laundry to the door.

Will you be back?" he asks, plaintively.
 "No, Daddy. Remember, only one trip a week."
 I dread the day ahead: bills, laundry, shopping,
 When will the nursing home have a bed?
 How long can we pay?
 "I'm lonely," he whispers. I stand still.
 I can't do all this and entertain you, too. Meet
 Bernice or Joe downstairs for breakfast."
 I force a smile, feel like a monster.

In the bathroom mirror, I see
 our square jaws, our hands so alike, thick and solid,
 though mine don't tremble yet.
 He used to hold a tennis racquet, firm,
 a leather briefcase, the lawnmower,
 my mothers elbow at the country club.
 As I close the door, I think:
 I will never be like that.
 Never

Donna Pucciani

Short Words

I only had words, short words like *ma ma*
since she was the only one at hand to teach me.
I wanted to create a long story with the short words
So I could build a castle for me to live in.
I studied words and discovered the existance of bigger ones
like the lifw my mother was unable to offer me.
I left home in searh of enormous words
That will enable me to build the castle I yearn for.

A new tounge of endless words I invented
and I built a solitary castle where my mother was unable to
go.

Now I want to forget everything,
return to my shackof little words
and curl up on the immense castle of my mother's chest.

Johanny Vazquez

After Dark

Il n'y qu' une bete!
Colette

New to jogging, I pick my route
with dogs in mind--sturdy fences
they can hurl themselves against,
lamplight shadowing the owner
in case the barking get too intense.

I stick to sidewalks, street lights,
busy roads--an absence of opportunity
to be attacked. My neighborhood's boundary
frames my running track. Inside
these limits, I've memorized each tree

and house, the proper shapes
their silhouettes impress upon the dark.
Other joggers that I meet
regard me without fear: we're living landscape,
a form of motion that's familiar.

I talk myself down to a slow, steady pace
and hold, concealed, a cannister of mace.

Jane McClellan

JUDY NAMED FOR HER MOTHER

What I have learned about you
 is that you are not
 what you think you are.
 You are not your mother.
 You are perfectly
 and absolutely new.
 Your name for example.
 Your name, when I say it,
 is a newly coined word
 with a newly appropriate meaning.
 It's a synonym for nothing.
 You can't put it in a sentence
 and have it not be about you.
 It does not mean
 a shrewish beast
 with fer arms flapping
 and her eyes bulging
 and the flesh on her neck
 so red, so pumped up,
 it almost bursts
 from the bone.
 It means quiet moments
 when we discuss this
 by saying
 we will not discuss it.
 It's your slender wrists.
 It's the way you
 turn your back

on the hardness of the world
 It's your long hair,
 how it unfolds like mist
 down the length of my arm.
 Your name is so new in fact
 it was just given to you.
 A week ago.
 At the moment.
 A week form now.
 It's a constant baptism.
 If others had this name,
 they were only keeping
 it in mothballs for
 when you got here.
 Or, more likely,
 they were the mothballs.

John Grey

Gazing at a Picture
of Ezra Pound While Sitting
in the Humbolt Park Library

The lines on your face tell the whole story,
etched the way a stone
is weathered by mosses,
the elements,
the madhouse years
you wasted in St. Elizabeths
for passions not worth
the deaths they couped.
Men with half your stature
would have gone mad,
and to think you turned Yeats modern,
gave Eliot the shirt off your back.

When I gaze at your picture,
I see only living art:
"The River-Merchant's Wife,"
sculpture by Gaudier-Brzeska,
the artist who died in the war you hated,
the ont that drove you insane.
Now here's the problem:
What remains of my Sephardic blood
stirs uneasy in the praise
you gave Swastikas,
black-shirted goons.

Poetry does strange things to the mind.
I know a fellow who was once friends with Ginsberg.

He now rants incomprehensible
anti-semetic diatribes
in smoky bars along North Avenue.
He is crazy,
just like you.
Ginsberg's friend finishes hes last tirade,
steps off the stage,
silence.
Ezra, *il miglior fabbro*,
he'll never have your lines.

Frank Varela

TENESSEE WILLIAMS

you spoke
 so softly
 after Small Craft Warnings
 a bit drunken
 you told me
 not to be afraid of melancholy
 I had taken the train
 from blue Boston
 down to the Big Apple
 with my last allowance
 hidden in the long drawer
 of the Gov. Winthrop,
 purchased a student ticket
 just to see you upstage yourself
 backstage;
 it was worth it all,
 even the incoherence
 the flightiness
 "have courage
 write your play
 damn the critics"
 you shriveled lips
 asked me to come back
 you walked me slowly
 to the box office
 your footsteps invisible
 like a leather-bound tiger.

B.Z. Niditch

ROBERT LOWELL

Semi-dark December
 sweeps across Cambridge
 red-brick houses spread smoke
 in the cold daylight
 in the blue-blood air
 you are muffled in fur
 over the mildewed night
 offered to read my work,
 your pipe snuffed out
 a city romantic.
 I took my barn of poems
 trembling in adolescence
 your dry prophetic voice
 never forgotten
 "This is culpable,
 my young Delmore."

B.Z. Niditch

John Ashbury

You photographed
 my mind
 with trees and ideas
 fresh as the masque
 of the new dancers
 forgetting the elementary tease
 and the rhythm of your language
 you changed nature
 removed cadences from dreams
 travelled metaphorically
 occupied nights
 invented the gnosis,
 tasting
 the offshore wind
 with the abstract weariness
 of art
 in the infinite
 in an underground oasis.

B.Z. Niditch

Derek Walcott

One looks up
 forsaken
 at a planet's exile
 stunned by the wind
 along the Charles
 the sun
 rimmed over the city
 and you sharing a tree
 of magenta dancers
 join the block party
 of a Caribbean cariooca.

B.Z. Niditch

Lubrication #6

As for Hemingway,
the sun also rose along
His shotgun's barrel.

Robert Roden

Amber

Bayamon, Puerto Rico

Life isn't flawless diamond,
but amber,
carmelized with sugar,
beauty with imperfections,
a drop of free honey
that long ago trapped
a predator ant
in fossil resin,
who now stares back
at the world
through yellow lenses,
eternally watching,
eternally blind.
I gave you this strange gift:
time suspended in candy.

Frank Varela

Energy Medicine

Another sleepless night
after another day
when you did not call. I steep

bleeding heart, red petals
in a crystal bowl of distilled water
as sun comes

breathlessly new to the kitchen sill;
strong rays
leach the flower essence, a few drops

in my chamomile tea
to mend a broken heart.
In the back bedroom cedar chest,

in a black velvet sack,
the angel brooch, earrings,
the silver bangle

you gave me it's three-link chain
which bound me to you,
but left you free--

a pretty piece of magic.
A dillute infusion
sun-brewed after I harvest

heart shaped blooms
flaming scarlet
over a grey wall of stones

as sharp as betrayal.
Swaying toungueless bells
cryptic in their silence.

Your silence.

Martha Modena Vetreace

THE TEA ROOM

In nights cold sheets next to my sleepless body
 the cat's whiteness beacons comfort;
 the brain races like an olympian skier
 tumbling across in endless snow depravity.

At dawn they jack-hammer silence away
 realizing you will never see hawks fly from her arm
 they sit in their cages staring at hope.

The tea room is minimal simple geometrics...fragile
 Zen tea ceremony with natural materials;
 never see them fly from her arm
 they sit in cages fading in understanding
 little dead micedrape here and there to feed on
 like paper accumulating disjointed info
 computer-generated insignificance
 on too many things that need to be thrown out of sight
ie slid under the bed so chenille
 hides them like actors behind a curtian
 creating an appearance of non-existence.

Her white house holds a faint scent
 of her looking out the still open windows
 her nakedness in the shower her hand on the doorknobs;
 her hard desire still hot still tangible
 and the windows are cracked- open as if she's coming
 back to pick up the cup as if it is light.

This aqua saki bottle and orange wood laquered cups
 are delicate leaves like leaves seen from behind

the windshield's illusion of control before the brake's scream
 yet in the moment the moment of ritual
 is both real and permanent
 if you look hard enough.

The room is best left empty but you refuse
 so the brain begins it's somersault- like sleep
 the stomach grits its teeth and thinks violence
 the way he couldn't steer her that night
 set it down as if it is heavy
 saying and not saying sex.

There are not enough note-pads to cope with
 the gibberish that comes in
 the night's cold sheets creep up again
 the cat's whiteness beacons comfort;
 all of it clear inside ourselves
 five tone music floats meditation;
 twilight windows of surrounding houses
 simulate lanterns while over at Mary's
 her dog patiently waits...
 where windows remain dark
 as the void in the black lacquered tea tray
 and memory begins to flicker like love letters
 flying out of and electronic rectangle
 announcing a new message.

Joan Payne Kincaid

the cenephile meets men in white

Eat Like A Hummingbird, Poop Like An Elephant.
-a computer expert

volumes of flatness in climes
of my imagining apart why not
thy docile soft tones the wistful
wry look the wasting away the laughter
all this and I look no more upon this

no more upon this dream I declare
this unfallible cauchemar this heavy makeup
longer growing louder more uncontrollably
less unconscionably too and with this all I
ask or can to undemonstrably whither away
or die not least likely in the more all or nothing
of the morose laughter all around inside the house
peaceably demonstrating the walkabout and the minister
walking about paced with a pace with a dreammaker
lubbing within a casement open to the night
a dream of night Murfreesboro

that's sll she wrote brother the story
low-slung is ths young cynosure
good and if I tell you true
forget to discount me your old tales
declench me tell me not old tales

my dear friend
the only thing more idiotic than a zine
is a website
I know been there etc.

I know been there etc.

the Teacher of the Year went before Congress
to testify about Education
with a nail some wire some paper clips
and a dry cell battery
"this" holding up the nail "is the Student
we wrap him in Instruction" via the wire
"and connect him to the Culture" the battery "so
he can acquer Knowledge" the paper clips
thereupon she completed the demonstration
and got a shock "oh!"

my expert's theory "eat information voeaciously"
like a hummingbird eating many times its weight
"and disperse it" like and elephant
(165 lbs. per diem)

sound tooting of horn his own
through the town something ANYTHING
fag anthems each to every young
ruses tricks of all gaps filling lies
you stare at and hear GOTCHA

it would have to be that way you know
when all the diners are overpassed
and a Goddamned fortune you've amassed
from Video Games As Real As Snow

our fingerprints each like no other
looking back to see what's foward
in a land that's all untoward
really seeing what's belike another?

now come each one to kiss of kick
the twofold body politic
'twill bitch or fawn or eke concur
with Walrus and with Carpenter

C. Mulrooney

Filter #1

A Woman at he university walks
Toward me wearing a shirt
That reads *Delta Delta Delta*
All I can think about is her delta.

Filter #2

A sign for a restaurant reads
Shaka's--Japanese Hawaiian Foods.
For some reason, I'm reminded of Pearl Harbor.

Filter #4

At 8:30 in the morning
A woman buys a portable
Bottle of Clorox bleach,
With a pop-top cap,
At 7-11
I stick with coffee.

Filter #5

A bumper sticker
On a white Cressida reads
Dreive safely
You might need me
I'm a blood donor.

Hell, blood donors
Are a dime-a-dozen,
But organ donors
Are to kill for.

Robert Roden

Rubber Bands

In grade five, my friend with frizzy hair
 kept boogers in his pencil case
 till thy hardened like butterscotch and we could
 hear them ricochet off the teacher's desk.
 I kept a pack of Kools in my back pocket
 and passed them out in the alley behind his garage.
 Sometimes his sester would be getting home from high school
 and I'd give her a light. Her lips
 pinched the cigarette like a predator.
 I felt my spine twist up like a rubber band,
 watching her sigh a wisp of smoke,
 and thought of sneaking back at midnight
 to snatch her butts from the puddles and
 keep them in a vase on my shelf,
 next to the picture of her I stole from my friend's wallet.

When I was in eighth grade and no one else was home,
 she let me in her room. She taught me
 to smoke pot from a three foot smokestack.
 And I heard *Highway to Hell* for the first time.
 She was wearing a long black T-shirt, her legs shiny and tan.
 I picked up a rubber band and plucked it like a bass.
 I lied and told her I knew how to kiss with tongues.
 She patted the bed and told me to
 sit by her, but her boyfriend's Harley was seething outside.

A Senior in high school, I go with my friend
 who still has frizzy hair
 to visit his sister in the hospital.
 Black crust smudges her lips and neck

from charcoal used to absorb the tranquilizers.
 Ahe never turns from her table,
 wher she shapes a rubber band into a circle
 and tries to trace it onto paper.
 Cigarette drooping from her lip,
 I hold a paper cup under her chin
 as the ash goes limp and
 drops.

Phillip E. Saineghi

THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Often my train whips past that school
 where generic girls skip rope, tra-la
 and future athletes play basketball
 and I think of paths I haven't taken
 blocked by failure or my special star.
 In the past I must have been like that,
 acting out roles of growing up.
 Even now I imagine I'm back there visiting,
 maybe squeezed in a desk
 feeling my name I carved there long ago,
 Maybe talking with the teacher I used to draw--
 snakes for hair and several missing teeth,
 she gusing to see the result of her molding.

But during my imaginary visit
 I relive those years that hardly happened,
 dying in that desk while dustballs
 gathered in the crannies of my brain
 and toadstools sprouted rings around me.
 At times I'd be lost in hazy fantasies
 designed to help escape that teacher
 and her schemes to pry me out of childhood,
 goading me with her domineering eyes,
 making me swallow my tongue when I spoke
 while all the perfect girls and geniuses
 kept kissing her preposterous feet
 and washing them with their hair.

Though I felt I could go anywhere from there,
 as though there were some purpose to it all,

as though and assignment on the blackboard read:

Go somewhere!

There are things in life you must do!
 Though several disgusted blessings have guided me--
 flunking courses designed to slow the pulse
 or fired from jobs that sharpen the nose,
 barred from seeing someone's tedious daughter
 or being evicted from buildings that soon collapsed.
 That may be how gaurdian angles work.

John Dickson

Neuroscience

Nicole left looking for the answers
to the physics homework. Soon I will leave
for dinner. All my apples are bruised.
All my bananas brown and wrinkled.

Nicole left looking for the answers.
She used the brown steel door.
There is a cushiony bed of music waiting
for me behind the door without a handle,
but I do not think I could live in pure sound.

Nicole left, but I cannot calculate
her displacement. I cannot even calculate
my velocity. Distance over time, I know,
but I always want to square a variable,
take a cosine, and turn the whole thing upside down.

Imagine what could happen
in that incalculable distance between us.

A lightning storm. A fox hunt.

An empire could collapse.
Fruit could spoil.

My brain could contract
like a sponge and spit out blood
and electricity and random thoughts alike.

Finger nails taste like rubber bands

after a day of thinking.

I'm being driven out of my skull.

My throat is grainy
like and old film.

In five weeks I won't have a house.

Nathan Hoks

Knowledge

Whoknows more, the subject
 or the doctor whose experiment this is?
 Where is the feeling more intense,
 in the rubber glove or the fur beneath it?
 Part by body part
 the details are exposed, taken apart
 and pinned together
 until everything is back in place
 but no longer connected. The clamps
 are the skeleton extended
 beyond the body, a vice
 is the metal yawn of a cat held still
 except for it's nerves
 which radiate energy with nothing to propel,
 and tubing continues
 to where the veins do not reach.
 If only, the doctor speculates, the brain
 were a battery and the lungs were rags.
 His X-ray fingers
 prod each organ in its turn
 to probe for secrets
 while the animal breathes electricity
 and bleeds serums. Suppose, he says, we cut
 the spinal chord, how far from the body
 can the mind float?
 Is paralysis equal to grace?
 Does a ligh flash in the skull of the blind?
 If he takes the skin from its neon bones
 and wrings it out
 can he collect the juices of a secret?

Lit us now observe the doctor,
 how he disconnects his hands and sends them to work
 pretending he is not responsible
 for wnting to peel back the layers
 and isolate the heart. Let us watch him
 remove his ears to listen
 the the breath whistle through the trachea.
 Let us follow him as he takes off his white coat,
 hangs it on a peg, locks the laboratory door,
 and goes home. Imagine he lives in a cage.
 Imagine the experiment is about him.

David Chorlton

Lesson from Chernobyl

For Raleigh

Czech beer, lamb stew, Cuban cigars...
 shanghai'd by a black market gangster
 to meet his family and taste real Ukrainian food--
 Vadim, my host, a Russian Jew with a sandpaper voice,
 a beard in need of trimming, and me, his latest trophy,
 and educated American: "You are such a rare creature."
 Badim's a learned man; he speaks all th major currencies:
 "I am a wealthy man, but in Klev,
 I am only a Jew, and a Jew is a Jew...is a Jew...
 and that's like saying dog."

After dinner, I embrace his wife with thanks.
 In the warm night air, Vadim's crew,
 Afghan veterans, emerges from shadow,
 rough men out of the age or Capone to escort me home
 along tree-lined streets whose name I cannot pronounce.
 In the city's central plaza, a dying man motions
 for Badim to inspect an open sack.
 I don't know he's dying--perhaps too much food,
 to much western arrogance
 to let my Latin eyes see Death smiling.
 Badim whispers, "Comrade Alexei fought
 Chernobyl's fires without protective clothing.
 He now begs in the streets."

So why am I plunging into heart of Chernobyl,
 where the dead walk among the living,

their voices crackling the way dry leaves brush against
 concrete?

If I cold understand them, I would tell you their stories.
 Except, this is the way men die,
 and I'm no longer in Chernobyl,
 but standing where Vadim left me--
 in the lobby of the Hotel Rus.
 My eyes blink, a sharp breath, indrawn.
 This is me again.

Frank Varela

AUTUMN COUP IN ATHENS(1974)

We tried to ignore
the rumble of planets
colliding in the sky
and the distant whistle
of a noonday star,
plummeting like a singular,
selfish tear.
Amphoras clattered
in market stalls
as tanks barreled
down the narrow streets.

Until curfew forced us
back to the hotel,
we continued on as tourists,
photographing crumbling ruins
and olive trees, caryatids
that bore the weight of a roof
on their long suffering,
feminine heads.

Crack-veined statues
glared at the Arch of Hadrian
as weatherbeaten soldiers
embraced machine guns.

Startled birds scattered
from bleached rock.
They flocked over our heads,
sifting out the light.

At seven o'clock we walked
back to the hotel
through a red and sticky
craving for power
that seeped in puddles
throughout the city.

Patty Dickson Pieczka

THE PELICAN

near *New Brighton Beach, California*

There are wonders to be weaned
from these waters, if on extricated
himself rom the eyes of mankind.
And deep into my tryst, where
cliff walls were mottled with moss,
ther was a leonine-shaped stone,
and perched upon it, stood a pelican,
unruffled by the turbulent tide
and my own interlopong footsteps
that halted some twenty feet away.

He postured that silent gaze,
far and away from his bretheren,
whose feathers fluttered
in regimented formation, skimming
the shore like stones, scrounging
for scraps, honking and cackling
as if to say, "Ther is no room
for renegades out here!"

And whatever sermon the pelican
emanated form his pulpit
sustained the two of us, for he
and I just stared at each other;
I, unwilling to respass further,
and he, reluctnat to rejoin
hes frenetic flock, through we both knew
that the might of the majority
would ultimately win out,

that one captured but glimpses
of peace, much to the scolding
of our own twisted tribes.

Mike Catalano

DEER SEASON

In the 12 day
Deer hunting season
We walked the ochre fields
Of their habitat,
Not nearly as deft
Or with the purpose of survival.

Deer season is long.
The hunters have come
To snare tawny litheness
As they had in the 16th Century,
Tracking martyrs.
They would eat the hearts
To inherit swift grace,
Supernatural strength.

When the marksmen triumph
The deer kiss a separate world,
Remembering this, once again,
Has come too soon.

Corrine Dewinter

Necrophilia

I have begun to
glue fallen leaves onto

stalks of living plants.

Tom West

1001 Things A Man and Woman Can do Together

You, with dark, painted eyes that hide your soul like a belly
dancer's veil.

You are a woman beautiful enough to refuse everyone,
 but miserable enough to let them anyway.

The pull of cotton sheets against your back
 makes you jump from your skin
 and cling like Spider Man to the ceiling,
 watching your body being tortured below.
 Your black mesh bug eyes unblinking, catching every move.

Down below, you moan in agony, but he tries harder because
 people make the same noises when they cry as they do when
they laugh.

You think about writing a book while you count the cracks in
the ceiling.

A book of 1001 things a man and woman can do together,
 but you can't get past number 5.

Tell him to touch now what will rot later in a hidden bed,
 buried in rich lakefront soil
 where teenagers will cruise by smoking cheap pot.
 The brunette in the backseat will hold her breath
 to avoid inhaling a spirit she's been told you have.
 The driver will check the rearview mirror looking nervously
at the police car,
 and when he blinks his eyes,
 the lights on top of the car will turn into a luggage rack atop
a Nissan Stanza.

The girl sitting in the passenger's seat, she will be you
reincarnated,
 leaning on the closed window staring at herself in the side
mirror.
 You might as well have come back as a pimp, or whore, or a
cop.

He has finished..
 You loosen your spidery legs from the ceiling and fall gently
back into your body.

Now, you can enjoy the things that you like.
 Like this feather pillow between your thighs,
 and the breeze of that fan with its maternal hum
 that rocks your flesh to sleep.

Susannah Maldonado

...better loving

..through improve tensile
strength, ductility, and
corrosion resistance.

Modern Metallurgy

November 1964

Beer scum slag of milled ore
on the floor of Urad Valley

where men crave sunshine

in dank, tight spaces. Shift
over, these smudged grubs make
up for loss, gulping air, light,
beer, the behind-the-ear
musk of any girl just pretty enough.

Leadville, town with a heart of molybdenum,
made the introductions. They met at the bakery;
she was powdered with flour. They's eat
cookies among the moneyed aspen,
air than as an old woman's handkerchief.

Despite the upheaval of lung slugs
and the clank of bed rail and puke dish,
he recalls going down, under Red Mountain.
Sometime he wouldn't wash
and her smell would be with him,
on his beard. Now he's bald and ashen
from 20 years of mines, Pall Malls, and reefer.

The crescent scar, wher hes chin met a drill bit,
smiles down and she wonders whether
she imagined him nod. Amid the shuffle
of soles on linoleum, his cough tries again
to find itself, weak as mountain air.

Something crinkles in the couch
cushion. She retrieves the pack of smokes,
hidden after his diagnosis, the gold
cellophane to mark her place in "Pocketful
of Rye." Her gnarled feet on cocktail table,
stocking seam pulled, thy stare at her
like two old comedians.

Amid a wheeze of expiration, she wonders
had Agatha Christie ever loved,
rock for pillow, moss blanket,
the moon his miner's light.

Pneumatic breathin comes through the vent
as you complete the family health history,
tick diseases that apply: cancer, emphysema,
naivete. Now imagine mining:
Girst pick with all your weight behind you.
Wedge the crack. Place caps strategically.
Blow. In your hand pyrite, fool's gold,
a good luck charm since sixth grade,
a nugget just big as bird's heart.

E.W. Beals

Two Mothers

You say I should be glad
I never had to send a son to war.
I want to tell you, how
Once a baby shook his fists
In the blue protest, gasped for air
To fill his tadpole lungs--
Tired balloons that failed.

I've pictured him at playgrounds--
Raining sand on his hair,
And on a swing empty as air--
A boy who treasures
In a dresser drawer--
A feather, pebbles, baseball cards--
A grown man
Wearing a soldier's cap.

Some front lines, I want to tell you,
Never get picked clean,
And in the weeds of killing fields
Babies lie,
Blackened shells still powder fresh.

Constance Vogel

Heebie Jeebie Man

Heebie jeebie man
dances to the rhythm of a beat-up fan
shuffles in the dark,
past barber shop, through park,
fingers float like lilly pads
feet slap the ground like frogs
heebie jeebie man
spin slowly once around
beat-up hat, coat too big
cuffs drag on the ground
heebie jeebie man, could you
sing that song to me
could you make me hear it like you do
give me rhythm in my shoes
turn me once around
could you

R. A. Stewart

The Timbrel of the Mind

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter...
 John Keats, "Ode to a Grecian Urn"

Dancing is best done alone,
 silence is accompaniment.

Then the measure a foot makes
 happens more quickly than thought.

What set the beat
 for King David's leaping feet
 was never heard before,
 though Miriam had sung
 and danced in ecstatic trance.
 David, the chosen one, judged unseemly
 to be "uncovered" of his kingly mask!
 Nor could David dance
 when the Ark stood enclosed
 in one sacred place.

And how Elija laughed, his wager
 won, at the prophets of Baal
 whose limping feet
 proved quite unmusical.

Salome's seductive dance
 moved body more than feet,
 its measures set by flesh and blood:
 hers in the bloodline
 of her mother, Herod's heating

in response, John's staining
 the platter his head was served on.

So the reprise of petty kings
 overrides the melodic line
 of one who stpes to an unheard beat.
 For David, no angel decended,
 no wheel within wheel spun him
 into heaven. Yet there must
 have been a day when all his past,
 even Bathsheba at her bath,
 dissipated into golden light
 that lifted his thinning hair
 as if a whirlwind had gentled
 to one whisper of muted air.
 The feet that trod firmly a familiar path
 Leaped into dance.

So the road to Jerusalem is danced
 to music that has no scale,
 the feet moving before thought
 leaps to mind.

Jane McClellan

Garvey Park

Mother Mary stood below
 in the rock alcove, all the blood
 long drained from her face, becoming
 with chipped limestone hands
 even as we rubbed and kissed
 behind the pine trees. Above,

in Garvey Park (a simple square
 of red brick and treed, quite small),
 the tall black clock stood gaurd
 to the seconds
 slowly scraped away.

We walked around it many times,
 its curves sucking in the light,
 the oily swirls
 of minuted spiralling
 around our heads. The world
 stood waiting at the end
 of the summer
 for our dry faces,

the skin darker, older
 roughened like canvas
 by days of sun, song,
 frisbees tossed,
 truth-or-dare by parking lot lamp,
 our fingers laced in a beautiful
 rigor mortis. I have pictures

of girls, pairs of girls, girls and boys,
 standing beneath the clock
 on a green, gray, rainy day
 when the bricks did not bake.
 Their arms link
 lightly across their shoulders,
 their mouths smile at the boy
 on the bench
 taking pictures.

Justin Carroll

Watching the Gentle Ones for Frank Hurley-
The Bee-man

Standing at the window, martini in hand
you watch the water run into the shoveled hole
where bumble bees began a hive
wrong place wrong time
where once fields now houses
so they settled where the dogs run
and children play.

We call the *Bee-man*
a ranger at the preserve
who comes with screen-head
gloves and hars to press down on them
one at a time; he notes their gentleness
as compared to wasps...and says
bees are gentle souls, they won't bother you.
he carefully cradles a drone bare-handed
as if it is a bird or a toy to prove that it won't sting
saying they really just *hang out* to have sex (with the queen)
but warns against the *workers*.

Finally ninety are caught and deftly transferred
into a single jar
but a few remain loyal to the out-of-sight queen
and are too far down to reach.

The Bee-man leaves to release
the captured at the preserve;
we tried to save them all
but it's been five days of fooling around

so instructions are: flood the hole;
as I watched the sad event, the end of
well-intended plans, and sip my drink
I see six bees circling...
maybe we saved them all?

Joan Payne Kincaid

A BRIEF RAMBLE IN GERTRUDE'S HEAD

This first morning of dry fresh air
 the a/c turned off and windows
 letting in a west breeze full of energy
 rocking in the eye in light and shadow;
 suddenly the mind clears
 the horror of global warming
 lying like a dying flounder
 in one hundred degree humidity
 drained of ability to work
 or accomplish the least thing has changed,
 is lifted and forgotten
 and creativity is allowed in again
 like an old friend who had vanished
 you are like one returned
 from an asylum or prison
 or a too long visit with those
 who are inattentive or uncaring
 that sort of dull eyed posture
 of appearing to be a potted palm
 stuck without choice and incapable of movement;
 as if you had gone away to a small unpleasant country
 that you choose never to re-visit;
 now it is like Stien returning to her beloved Paris.

You are cuddling a book able to drink it in
 like a lovely green bottle of beer
 is clarity dependent on low humidity?
 There had been mumbling and stumbling
 even proximity to death for lack of breath
 even forgetting of word or thought

a gallery of negatives...
 the cats had been melting like surreal paintings
 draped all over like senseless pelts
 and now they leap and play and beg for love.
 And watch attentively the moving cursor
 and mouse arrow darting on the screen.

The drooping trees have sprung to attention
 crisp and alert as a brisk New England day.

She said *I suddenly feel so put-upon*
 now even that is both forgotten and forgiven
 well nearly...
 after all, you seldom get your deposit back
 from those along your journey, nor should you!
 One's journey is hard, as if no one speaks the language
 where you prefer to be alone...
 listing to tones of voice of insignificance...
 preferring well-crafted lines on paper.

Escape from the commotion is the reason
 for the cool evening transparency
 from which the tiny onion or olive stares
 comatose in its breast...

That day in New York
 the new baby lipped your cotton nipple
 you can feel the milk *let-down*
 all these centuries later
 the breast remembers the warmth of its lovers.

We have journeyed from being nifty
to some sort of state between obsequious
and diffidence... like a dependent
a beginner at the computer
where experiencing the objective world
goes beyond capability and back again
to today's return to the senses
and visibility unlimited.

Joan Payne Kincaid

Metro

Escalators roll down slowly
to the underworld.

The green line leads to the roots
of a moribund forest,
the blue line
to fish bones on a lake bed

and the red line to the cellars
of a house at the end of time

where the occupants are smoking
cigarettes down to the stub of light.
The trains have no driver
but a monk who prays

that the journey will be safe.
He counts the stations

on the petals of a daisy; *one for survival,*
one for disaster, one for survival...

David Chorlton

Advocacy

Someone writes
Eat Pussy Now
On the MEN'S room wall,
Just above the urinal.

Another writes
Locations and times
For the *Best*
Blow-Job on Campus.

I am at the university,
And feeling enlightened.
The trouble is I
Don't know where to go
From here.

Robert Roden

Association

An Anheuser-Busch billboard reads
Buy American beer
In American bottles.
I think of Hieronymous Bosch,

Bilbo Baggins,
And suddenly grow
Thick fur on
My toes and ankles.

Robert Roden

Assimilation in the Ranks

There's a race war
In the bathroom stall-
The Whites, Mexican, and
Asians are all in the thick of it.
There don't appear to be any
Markings from the Blacks. I guess
The few who live here
Are too smart to get involved
In territorial toilet disputes.

Though the epithets are many,
Some small chance exists
That relations will improve:
Apparently there is dissension
Among Klan members-
Arguing over the proper way
To draw a swastika.

Robert Roden