

Fall 1999

## Apocalypse - 1999

David Matthews

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# Apocalypse 7





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# Apocalypse 7

A Publication of Apocalypse  
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## Submissions Guidelines

**Apocalypse** (formerly **American Goat**) is now soliciting manuscripts for its biannual publication. We are interested in poetry, short fiction, and some non-fiction (nothing academic). All genres will be considered, as it is our intention to publish a wide variety of literary styles.

Submissions should be typed, or at the very least legible. Please clearly identify the title and the author. Please include your name and some contact information (preferably snail mail or email address), and a SASE or SAS-postcard if possible to facilitate our reply.

**Please do not send originals, as manuscripts will not be returned.**

We also accept art submissions, for use inside the book and on the cover. Black and white photos or drawings are preferred, but color photos can be submitted (but will be printed in black and white). Please nothing larger than 11x14 in size.

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or call: (773) 583-4050 x 3804

or email: [Apocalypse\\_NEIU@yahoo.com](mailto:Apocalypse_NEIU@yahoo.com)

or slide submissions under the door of room E-035 (beneath the bookstore)



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Apocalypse is a publication of  
Apocalypse Literary Arts Coalition and  
Northeastern Illinois University



### Generic Love Poem

Blather blather *hyperbole* blather  
Blather blather true  
Blather blather *superlative* blather  
Blather Love and You

*Michael Pendragon*

### Dinner at "The Red Lobster"

The lobster was for the party at the next table.  
The waiter, like some modern Ganymede,  
set the ambrosial arthropods  
before three demi-goddesses bedecked  
with plastic flowers in hair shellacked  
and shining as Athena's helm;  
while I, still sitting at the table  
decorously draped in snowy napery,  
napping almost over the white grenache  
I'd quickly quaffed to wash  
down my lenten meal of frugal fish,  
beheld the worthy matrons, gorgeously coifed,  
(oblivious to me as a shade  
returned to Earth from some  
silent intangible Elysium)  
laughing like harpies in shrill soprano tones  
while growing tipsy tipling trendy cocktails  
mixed of rum and sweet exotic juices  
served in tall fantastic glasses, as  
they wielded bright steel tools in dangerously  
dainty fingers, nails stained redder than  
the innocent blood of sacrificial lambs,  
and cracked the shells,  
pulled off the legs and claws  
of the crustaceans  
(daintily dipping each demembered piece  
into a sauce of butter melted o'er  
a clean blue flame like a refiner's fire, then  
incarnadined with powdered paprika)  
and pitilessly consumed the hapless creatures



like Orpheus, torn  
limb from limb by hand  
by blood-mad Maenads  
and helplessly devoured.

*Robert F. Tredray*

### Yaqui Indian Village

If the interpreter was correct and  
no telling with local Mexican dialects,  
the Yaqui women of an unmapped village  
never glimpsed a blonde and redhead.  
So it came as no shock that Nikki Bell's  
towhead veil, without bleach or Clairol,  
and brighter than the blistering sun,  
attracted a gold rush en masse to her.

The women jerked her head and yanked  
her hair a hundred different directions,  
with the same hands that weaved baskets  
and shawls a thousand times before.  
Nikki, an ex-prom queen not long removed,  
reminded many of a reincarnated goddess  
from the days of Cortez and Pizzaro.  
And she? Aside from fears as a harem wife  
of the gregarious jefe and palpitating  
pit-a-pat arrhythmia, she allowed their  
microscopic forays into her roots.  
And us? There would be no lawsuits as  
might be interpreted in our native land.

*Mike Catalano*



## Ephriat

That town, on the Mo Eu-Banks Miller  
of the Columbia, Central Wash. State.

Was a fine small town. With a Rent-a-Cop  
on Tues.-Sat. eves prowling in his pure-

bred Lincoln— never think for a minute  
twas a town car, a cop car. Stopped

an average of 3 unsuspecting motorists  
a night, 20 \$ a pop, 1959.

More'nd cover his car, his-Self, went,  
rent, wages+rages of 40 bucks...

Lived bachelor's quarters, upstairs.  
Rented room, towns' one + Oly bar.

Figgered Town Hall'd keep him on in  
perpetuity as long as the intake

was greater than the outflow...

The only time the perps could appear  
in town court was Mon. Afts. 3-4

no exceptions he said: "If it's incon-  
venient, only thing I could suggest

is to plead guilty on this here form,

make the check out to Ephriat Town

Court, and mail them in this handy-dandy

business reply envelope... (How many

towns'd pay yer postage? —Mighty nice  
of 'em, I'd say...) Well, good day..."

When they built Rocky Beach Dam there 4  
miles downstream from Ephriat: Well,

its shore was gonna flood'em out...

Lots of jobs clearing out houses telephone  
poles general stores willow stoves

sagebrush traffic lights: "Ah, we don't want  
none-a-that crap floatin downstream —

jammin the dam turbines..."

Ephriaters sayin where we all gonna go?

Army Corps of Engineers present some BS  
village relocation project, same kind  
they use 6 yrs. later — Vietnam.

Ennaways, Rent-a-Cop, he's still down  
there, immersed in that cold Canadian  
down flow, out-go, snow-go water,

100 feet below:



below the water-  
skiers, the in-  
board outboards,

the Mercs and  
the Johnsons.

Tryin to stop'em —  
trying to swoop up  
on 'em unawares

in his brand-new '59 Lincoln

cause sumbuddy forgot to tell him that

his speed-trap  
was all washed-  
up...

*R. Kimm*

## On the Latest Theory of the Moon's Origins

So, you were once part of the earth, too.  
And just like me, each year your orbit  
sages a little lower,  
comes closer to the body  
that cast you off.

You keep disappearing,  
but return at intervals,  
like the oldest child of a bad family.  
I see tonight you're going away again.  
But you'll be back. It's written  
all over your face.  
You with your love-sick eyes  
looking and looking for what you  
can't find,  
not here, not now.

Do you think, as I once did,  
that death is a resolution?  
It isn't. Death resolves nothing.  
It's just an ending.

So, good luck, me sometime friend,  
companion, little sister.  
I wish you well. I hope  
someday you come into your own,  
learn how to shine by your own lights,  
stop living  
in someone else's shadow.

*Richard Broderick*



## The Lunatic

*Randi Davis*

I used to live in a world of white. Staring at my white-socked feet, I walked on white linoleum floors. Sometimes I even ran into the hard, white-painted walls. Three times a day, if the white clock read either seven, noon, or five thirty, I ate off of white plastic plates with matching forks and spoons. On special occasions we may even have some ice-cream (vanilla, of course). Everything was always washed down with- you guessed it- lots of milk. Mostly for fun we sat on the white furniture and did nothing. There was always the newspapers lying around that we could read. Parts that may upset some of the people that lived there with me were neatly snipped out. However, I didn't care what went on in those zebra-like pages. The news they contained was as dull and colorless as the paper it was on. Most of the people that I lived with didn't care, though. They would just sit there, drool hanging from chins, and look at the ink-smearred pictures. I

would continue to patiently wait for the white clock to turn 12 o'clock noon. Then I could begin to see life in color.

(That stupid nurse Lucy once called my show a "stupid soap opera." What did that hag know? She was just the third-floor bedpan dumper. She could walk around in her crisp whites and be happy, but I needed my color.)

The clock's hands both pointed at the 12, so I clicked the TV on. John's beautiful face is the first thing that I see on the screen. John Black, the most caring person in Salem- rich, but not conceited. I've been watching him on here since I was just a teen. To explain everything that that poor man had went through over the years would have been impossible. He had been tricked into thinking he was someone else, turned into priest, and then quit the priesthood. The man behind it all was Mr. Stefano DiMera. See, Stefano always wanted the woman who loved John, Marlena Evans. Stefano used every trick to keep her and John apart. He kidnapped her many times over the years, but John always saved her. It seemed that Marlena always needed to be saved.

Back to that days show. John was on the pier, looking seriously out at the water. A shadow approached him from behind and he spun around. The look of surprise left his face and turned to anger; the person he was facing was Stefano. Talking in his Transylvanian accent, Stefano said, "So, we've found each other once again, John. What a convenient situation." Stefano preceded to pull a long, black knife out of his coat. "I've put up with you for the last time. You've interfered in my plans too much over the years. I can spare your life no longer. Marlena is to be mine!" I almost had a heart attack when the sinister man made his next move. Stefano suddenly came at John and sunk the long, silver knife into his chest. John gasped and said, "You'll never have Marlena, you bastard. Never!".



Then he laid still on the wooden dock. The weirdest thing happened next. John lifted his head and looked right at me. He said, "Avenge my death, Tracy- get revenge for me." This scared me. Then I realized that my eyes were closed, and when I opened them a commercial was playing on the TV. Suddenly I understood something; my favorite character had been killed. He had talked to me and told me what to do.

I was in deep thought at dinner on how I was going to pull my task off. That stupid idiot David was sitting at a table nearby singing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" in a spit-covered voice while eating Salisbury steak. I was on edge anyway, and his annoying stunts didn't help me much. I casually threw my bowl of mashed potatoes at him, and he shut up. To make myself look innocent, I picked up a newspaper and began looking at the drab pages. Then something caught my eye— an ad reading "Meet Your Favorite Days of Our Lives Villain". It read on to say that Joseph Mascolo, better known as Stefano DiMera, would be greeting fans and signing autographs at the Tacoma mall tomorrow morning from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Tacoma was less than 20 miles from the... well, from the place that I lived. I looked at the front of the paper. The date was 3-25-04, so that would make tomorrow March twenty-sixth. I knew that Bitch Lucy, LPN, would be working the next day. I had a lot of planning to do in my white-sheeted bed that night.

When I opened my eyes on the twenty-sixth, I gazed at my dull colorless room. My tiny clock said that it was time for the morning meal. I slipped my furry white slippers on and shuffled down the bleak hallway. When I seated myself, I made sure that David the Drooling Idiot was close at hand. Bedpan Dumper Lucy brought everyone at our table their bowls of rice cereal, milk, and orange

juice. I ate a piece of toast and my cereal, but left my drinks. Patiently, I was saving them. As if on cue, David began singing the Oscar Meyer wiener song in a screeching voice - and my plan was going into effect. With orange juice in one hand and milk in the other, I stomped over to the singing idiot. I said, "Shut your mouth, you damn moron!" The twenty-seven year old imbecile replied, "I don't have to; you're not the boss of me!" Everything had worked so perfectly because I knew that Bitch Lucy was watching the whole thing; I splashed the orange juice in David's eyes. As he was crying from the citric sting, I dumped my milk over his head. Fat Lucy waddled over to me and said, "Tracy, I think that you need some calming down! I have the perfect thing to get the job done." She grabbed my arm, digging her junky fake nails in, and pulled me to my room. Nurse Fatty McGee then said, "Sit still and be quiet and this'll be easier for you." She had her back to me as she filled the syringe with sedative- dumb move on her part. I quickly grabbed the tiny desk lamp and smashed it across the back of her skull. The fat bitch landed with a meaty thump. Since I didn't have much weight behind the blow, only 113 lbs. or so, I had to hurry; she may wake up soon. I took the filled syringe of sedative, slammed it into her humongous thigh, and depressed the top. Ol' Lucy was fall of the liquid meant for me! I took off her white nurses coat and put it on, along with her shoes. Then bit by bit, I lugged her fatness onto my bed and under my covers. I checked myself in the small mirror. Jangling the Cow's keys, I casually left my room to do my business.

No one saw me leave, which is a good thing. I don't know if I could have pulled off an imitation of her wheezy, boar-like voice. Anyway, it felt weird to be behind the wheel of a car. I hadn't even ridden in a car for



a couple of years. However, when I started the engine, it all came back to me. I backed perfectly out of the parking lot and was on my merry way.

Driving on the highway gave me a sense of power and freedom- something that I hadn't had for quite some time. Now that I was alone, I began to think about what I was doing and why I was doing it. See, John told me. His eyes had said, "I am your favorite character, Tracy. You can't let Stefano kill me. It wasn't supposed to happen that way. Get him for me!" Don't you understand? I loved John Black so much, and Stefano Dimera killed him. John, I would have went after him, even if you hadn't told me to!

As my thoughts wandered on, I faintly heard the radio playing in the car. A news bulletin interrupted my thoughts. "A woman has escaped from the sanitarium this morning. She was put in the care of this facility six years ago for extreme violent tendencies. If you see a 5'2" brown-haired woman, please contact the Arrington police station. She is approximately 113 lbs. and is suspected of driving a 1999 silver Ford Escort." I snapped the radio off. Who wants to hear the stupid news, anyway? It, like the bland newspaper, never has a thing to do with people like us. Besides, its buzz was interrupting my thoughts.

Suddenly, the mall was up ahead. A banner outside read, "Welcome Joseph Mascolo from NBC's Days of Our Lives". My job was half-way completed; I was there. Now what? I parked in the packed mall's lot and turned off the car. Now what? I glanced into the misaligned rear-view, but all I saw was the car's trunk. Wait. Where there is a trunk, there is a spare tire. Where there is a spare tire... there's a tire iron. In my mind I saw John Black smile. I popped the trunk and got out of the car.

## City Grill

Where the wanderers go,  
happy I know in their seventh  
cup of coffee, following the trail.  
The hours unspool, coffee's cold,  
o glorious poem of breakfast, buffalo,  
cataracts, aches & pains, comrades, gone,  
gone to soldiers, the waitress says,  
too many roomers checking in  
& out, wagon trains,  
the land of dreamers, the land  
enduring, of course, The Lord  
in the saddle, watching  
over each table.

*Errol Miller*



## Planting

I dug a hole  
threw in a box  
descended  
pulled down dirt and rocks  
certain I would not be found  
buried in the unhallowed ground.

I took a breath  
prepared to die  
nestled  
where I'd always lie  
a thousand rocks upon my chest  
ensuring my eternal rest.

The earth grew still  
the box, the same  
awareness  
no one else to blame  
I alone had built my tomb  
and knew that death was coming soon.

An odor rose  
assailed my nose,  
did that come from me?  
The stench of cigarettes and booze  
for all eternity.

Why did I wait?  
Was it too late  
to free myself from here?

I gave a shove  
but up above  
were rocks and dirt and fear.

No! I cried.  
I hadn't died  
but had I been forsaken?  
I'd lost friends  
time and again  
weary of being taken.

I clawed my way out of the box  
despite the crushing of the rocks  
but didn't know the way to go  
and so I floundered there below  
until the sun broke through the earth.  
I climbed for all that I was worth.

Through rocks of fear, and loss, and pain  
I fought though every muscle strained  
until exhausted on a heap  
I in the sunlight fell asleep.

Laz'rus risen from the dead  
a thought, on waking, in my head  
but wasn't strictly speaking true  
from a certain point of view.

Buried in the ground a seed  
regardless why I did the deed  
I was like a seed of corn who  
buried, died, was then reborn.

*Gayl J. Johnson*



### One Battle, One Lie

(for a manchild disguised as a woman shot twice,  
but not killed, as he tried to run from war)

A monster under the bed is no longer scary.  
It is cold outside, a white shroud  
falls from thick clouds, and they are shooting.  
We hide in the closet planning methods of escape  
and I who am too big, the right age, perhaps,  
cover my head with a wig. On the radio  
we hear they will not shoot women or children.  
My mother's dress reaches easily below my knees.  
I open the door, wind brands a tattoo in my throat,  
and I scramble three meters through snow,  
feel a sudden chill, a subtraction of body warmth,  
a shroud of black and learn too late  
adults are the very best liars.

*Michael H. Brownstein*

### Metaphoric Link

As he slid her from the velvet restraints, he sighed.  
She was more beautiful than he could have imagined;  
what a beautiful face that sparkled back at his gaze.  
Reaching for her golden body, he trembled.  
He must touch her, feel her against his skin. As his  
hand slid its way down her curved back, a warm  
feeling filled his body;

She was the one, the only one that would ever do.

If he wasn't completely sure of her, he wouldn't go  
through with the act. Yet now he was totally  
convinced of her delicate flawlessness.

She would look so beautiful on his lover's finger.

*Randi Davis*



### Before Harvest

The farmer is dead.  
His cloud of hair,  
sky inspired as the  
thoughts it encased,  
became fire, and  
his worked-down body  
is scattered like seeds  
over the ground that grew him,  
while the elements mourn  
their mutual labors going  
untasted back into the earth.  
Strawberries are ripening  
in the patch hundreds of  
unharvested hearts grow  
crimson, shrivel, let go  
their hold, then redden  
the soil as the blood  
of soldiers on some  
foreign battlefield.

*Maureen Flannery*

### Black Hills Odyssey

*Robert F. Tredray*

The Boy Scout troop went to the Black Hills, and on Crazy Horse Mountain we heard the words of the warrior:  
"My lands are where my dead lie buried."

I lay on the ground and the dead whispered to me: "Your ancestors took the land from us; do not take it from your children. Learn to know the land the Creator has made for His pleasure and your nurture."

"Pitch your tents among the bison; follow the flight of the eagle; make friends with the wild burro."

"Ride the Sacred Dog and let him carry you across the grassy plains and over the rolling hills and between the barren stony pinnacles that rise towering to the sky, until you become one with him, and with the land."



I woke, and heard the snorting of the great buffalo like the snoring of fitfully sleeping giants who might at any moment awaken and shake the heart of the land; I breathed in the pungent aroma of the dew on their shaggy coats and the wet warmth of their steamy breath, and I looked on them not with fear, but with awe.

I crawled into caverns deep underground and in the dark and silence felt the slow steady breathing of Grand mother Earth.

I followed a dusty trail deep into the badlands, the heat of the sun like a fiery furnace beating down from Grandfather Sky until the sweat ran into my eyes and into my mouth and down my sides; and I struggled up a tall mountain, climbing from crag to crag and leaping from rock to rock like a mountain goat until my legs ached and my breath came in searing gasps and I stood at last on a high place and looked out over the vast rolling plain, green with prairie grasses and bright with flowers for which I knew no names, to the mountains towering purple on the edge of the world; and like the God on the sixth day I saw that it was all very good.

I beheld the bones of ancient beasts whose kind no longer walk the world.

I mused on the massive monuments man has made from the mountains, and the delicate tools, sharp as scalpels, he has shaped from stones.

I looked up into the night and saw stars in the countless myriads filling the depths of the sky like roe of the gravid moon, while the voice of an elder telling their ancient names sounded like a sacred song in praise of the Creator.

I stirred the coals of the campfire and brought them to life, glowing like a blacksmith's forge, pulsing with heat and light.

Out of the fire Grandfather Bear spoke to me: "Reach deep inside yourself and find hidden there, like the fire in these coals, the strength you need to overcome all obstacles and live your life."

I pursued proud pronghorns dashing across the plains, listened to the little prairie dogs barking to one another in their town, watched chipmunks chasing each other from tree to tree, and stroked the short coats of burros eating apples from the hands of children.

I ate fish caught fresh from the flowing stream and corn picked fresh from the fertile fields, gifts of Grand mother Earth to the children of the Creator, and felt the strength flow into both my body and my soul.

And slowly, very slowly, almost without being aware of it at first, I began to learn the ancient wisdom of those whose bones lie hidden in the hills: *mitakuye oyasin*. (We are all related.)



### The Historian

He must have milked every octogenarian  
for his Masters thesis on Old Monterey.  
And he could recite names, dates, and  
places where I was convinced he knew  
every stone in the city. But when  
he left academia for work, museums  
and historical societies excluded him  
as if he were some noisome parasite. Was  
it he never pierced their self-contained  
colony while tracing Serra or Fremont?  
Or his youth a deterrent to stodginess?  
At any rate, he sold vacuum cleaners  
door-to-door, and though I didn't need  
one, I would have gladly bought one  
to hear all his mismatched mantras and  
commiserate with his shipwrecked eyes.

*Mike Catalano*

### Timeless Passage

My father bartered, sold me for a goat  
to an old village man whose family name  
rested in his grizzled loins. A girl came first  
when I was fourteen, then two daughters more  
before the fourth, a male, my son.  
My oldest took the wheel as I, and spun  
goat hair, settled, brooding well. The sad  
girls is as sand but my last daughter  
whose eyes blazed from birth, balked. She fled our  
land.  
My hands have worked at the wheel all my life.  
How can I remove them and know my hands.

I laid my last flowers on my lost child's grave,  
left her guarded by her father's stone  
which I washed with rose water. Husband who  
became gentle, uncle, father to me, then  
child again. My son, girded by his father's  
name, brought me in his cart to an airplane,  
begged me, with is children weeping, stay.  
That day I could not look back, my village  
blinds me, the crimson silence of mornings  
and shawls dark in mourning pull me.  
One look, only one look, no. No, I go.

My daughter bought a house, how? I don't know.  
Singing, I close the door and turn on bright  
faucets, stand naked and unravel my braid  
which unfolds the length of my life. My hands  
open to receive clear water, flowing freely



through my fingers. My grandchildren play  
with plastic toys, live in noise, easily  
throw food away while I bend in my garden  
each season til harvest. The children are puzzled  
as I send clothes, shoes and chocolate candy  
to their cousins a thousand years away.

*Helen Ann Berg*

### Plains Resurrection

That autumn just made a body  
Want to live forever what with  
All that color just frothin'  
Up out of the holler like  
The skimmin's on a kettle  
Of plum butter and the  
Green of the wild willows  
Embroidered along the creek.

Oh, the goin's on and the  
Doin's that did take place!  
Don't ever think our school marm,  
Miss Rachel, would just stand  
Up in her mama's parlor in her  
Great grandmama's weddin' veil  
To be wed to Harlan just like  
Every other county girl since  
Folks been livin' on these plains.

Not our Miss Rachel! She made her dotin' papa  
Bring her in the wagon with all the  
Spokes wound with cedar branches  
And bright ribbon, and while her  
Brother Caleb played the guitar  
(No common organ for Miss Rachel!)

Her papa hander her down that little  
Foot bridge among the happy folks, all glisten-eyed.

That little breeze that's always



There lifted up her veil and  
It caught on a willow branch, and my Jason,  
Who'd love her since they 'us  
Little 'uns but lost Harlan, freed  
That filmy stuff that held her fast  
With such a smile as would  
Tear a body's heart.

And when she stepped across the foot bridge,  
She seemed wafted against the sky,  
A sky too bright for just  
Plain shinin'. The cottonwoods  
Sang a song too joyous for just  
Plain singin'. And the whole world  
Caught on its own heart there in our holler  
When Miss Rachel and Harlan wed.

And, oh, what a wonderful  
Fiddlin' and pickin' for the  
Dancin' on the hard ground  
In the clearin'! And they  
Built supper fires, for who would  
Miss a moment of a day bewitched  
With its own blessedness and which  
Dared and ordinary twilight to say it done?

Oh, and that was just one happy thing,  
One lovely thing, that autumn's  
Eyes beheld in our holler.  
And the season tarried there  
Where our plains birthed a little beauty.  
The season tarried, spreading that beauty  
Before us like the bounty at an all-day  
Singin' and dinner on the ground.

"This'll be the last warm day,"  
We cautioned into late October, and  
Yet there was one more - a  
Special golden Sunday - a day for  
Big Nathan's savin' and baptizin', and  
The creek warmed and the water moved,  
And the good Lord's own mercy  
Cured Nathan's arthritis in the bargain!

And then the snow came, curly, sassy,  
Downy, duck-feathered flakes,  
Hangin' in a body's eyelashes,  
Like she was a girl again, and  
Bringin' pink to cheeks pallored  
These many years, so she had no  
More sense 'n to think she just might  
Barrel stave the hills one more time!

And then the creek froze, and such  
A commotion over skates in  
The attic and skates at the store!  
And wore-out shoes for no skates a'tall!  
And Big Nathan broke his leg  
A'skatin' and laughed and said he  
Wasn't sorry. For didn't the Lord  
Cure his arthritis in a fit of joy?

And there was a winter roasin',  
Hog killin' time, and pinon nuts and  
Hard, little plains apples for  
Little boys' pockets. And wagons  
Squeaked against the singin' of  
The hay rides, and the younguns quilted



Themselves together for no need but their own,  
For the snow was a lovin' thing.

And we Thanksgivinged and Christmased  
Through a blessed time of old things  
Dear because of passin' and  
The new thing that Miss Rachel  
Folded 'neath her Christmas shawl,  
The groom-gifted shawl and  
The groom-gifted new thing,  
Too sweet yet for the speakin'.

And then New Year's Day the wind tore  
Out the north corner of the world.  
It was as dark as night at four o'clock.  
The women went to the attic for quilts,  
And the men and boys tried  
To get in the stock before  
It was too late and cow chips  
To keep fires against the long night.

And Caleb and Jason was lost in the New Year's  
Night, and not found till thaw,  
A'tryin' to fetch Calebs guitar  
They'd left in the brush arbor shelter in the  
Holler. They turned wrong into the wind  
And it flung them in the creek,  
Right through the ice, it did. And the water  
Froze over their young warmth, a cold grave.

And then we heard it late in the frozen night,  
Like bullets tearin' holes in flesh.  
And we shivered after each report, knowin'  
Another would soon shatter our souls,

As ice embraced the willows' grace  
And shrouded the cottonwoods  
With death's own weight until  
Their sunder rent the night of terror.

And the cold took in after Big Nathan's  
Broke leg, and no warmin' pan of coals  
Nor heated stone would call out again  
The Lord's own mercy. And the rupe  
Got in his lungs and he perished a shoutin',  
"Glory! Glory!", over the agony of the trees.  
Big Nathan, soldier, wagon master, Indian fighter.  
Big Nathan, pioneer, plainsman. My own dearest  
Nathan.

And Miss Rachel's baby commenced a birthin'  
Long before its time, and Harlan was  
A'feared to leave to get the doctor,  
And the little unformed thing  
Never drawed breath against the sound  
Of the cannonin' trees. And the pain and the  
Blue-blank bein' turned Miss Rachel's  
Beauty to madness.

And the men tried to reach each  
Family with fuel and water.  
But for some it was too late.  
Some died of the sickness; some  
Froze, but most just terrored of the  
Death in the holler. And blood  
Thickened, and hearts stopped, and  
Despair stilled our whitened plains.

We didn't think we'd see the sun



On Groundhog Day; but there it was,  
Weak as water and unspirited.  
And so it was again the next day,  
As if against its will and with  
No real intent of any business.  
But habit moved in it, and the motion  
Of our own habit warmed and strengthened us.

And our prairie grass tinted timid green,  
And so we took up church and school again.  
But we was so few. So many dead, and  
Often shabby wagons rollin' eastward, plains-  
beaten.

And then we had at last to look upon  
Our holler. The trees was broke off  
Like splintered kindlin' and throwed  
Into the creek. Some only jagged stumps.

There weren't no heart for Sunrise Service  
And Easter egg hunt, but we'd always had them.  
Harlan led Rachel, weak and tremblin', gropin',  
Across the foot bridge, the bridge she'd trod  
A bride less'n a year ago. And she turned her  
Head slowly, her eyes knowin' this rock shape  
And that sandy bank for its memory. And she held  
tight  
To the railin', Harlan's arm close and steady.

At last her eyes filled with tears of reason,  
And it came over us just as plain as the Holy Ghost  
And natural as the cricket busy  
Declarin' the only mornin' he knew about.  
For every wounded willow was  
Sendin' up switch sprouts and the

Cottonwood showed swollen life along  
The mangled, twisted, and reachin' arms.

Oh, some of the willows was dead, like Nathan,  
And would never trail their shade into  
The creek again. Some of the cottonwoods  
Was barked too deep, like Caleb and Jason,  
For one more singin' leaf. But life was stirred  
And warmed in our holler, and we stood quiet,  
Too marveled to speak as resurrection proclaimed  
Its certainty across our plains again.

*Mary Elizabeth Kisner*



## Oedipus

Unholy union with Jocasta,  
Antigone abused,  
offend the Gods.  
But that's only half the story.  
Remember the Mapplethorpe photos,  
you know the ones,  
his face covered in leather,  
crouching naked against  
a New York skyline?  
And then there was the night  
he and Foucault  
deconstructed a bottle of cheap wine  
over the head of a San Francisco muscle boy-  
public relations nightmare.  
The official story (Death in Colonus)  
was a tale dreamed up by Creon,  
to cover untidiness in the royal family.  
But I saw him those last days-  
drugs, needles, unprotected sex,  
and when he died,  
Andy Warhol cast his death mask.

*Frank Varela*

## Supposition

I dreamed  
of Jung's green gold  
and stoic compainions from  
the history of a small town,  
imperishable archetypes  
they all had imaginary numbers  
in my dream, performing mini-parts,  
as if controlled, and my heart leaped  
from its secret hiding place  
and opened a door to the past  
and transposed the savage  
beast of time to nothing.  
God I had so much confidence,  
like the novel I was writing demanded it,  
the season rather singular and very very dark,  
dissipating even as I held it, these  
pretty ghosts from the 50's, run-down  
here in the future, what would I say, I  
told them the journey was vivid and colorful,  
I told them I loved them, I wanted  
to tell them more before they  
abandoned me, clinging to the notion  
that among the fallen temples of yesterday  
there may still be a few  
rudiments of civilization  
and ol' companions of mine who  
are waiting for my return.

*Errol Miller*



## Peace Soup

*Kathleen Sanchez*

James woke up, dragged himself to the nearest armchair and tried to pinpoint the exact location of his pain. It was as if a rolling pin were moving slowly over his skull, pressing agony into every crevice. The rumbling up and down made him shudder and shake. His stomach joined in the rhythm with convulsions of its own. He swiveled to face the window, where flashing, neon lights from the pawn shop kept time, relentlessly marching to join the ranks of his needles of pain.

Such spasms were not new to him and had often been his only companion on Sunday mornings, like a shadow in a lightless world. He had experimented with all lands of remedies, concoctions that he had heard of from nameless drinking buddies down at Tony's Bar. The cure that seemed to work the best was to start by dropping two

raw eggs into the blender, the only appliance he had removed from his home when Nancy wasn't looking. He would then check the expiration date on the quart of milk, a carryover from the past, when dates mattered. As he added the milk, the eggs swirled around, yellow eyes searching for a way out of the tower of plastic. Now with blurred vision, he added just enough steak sauce to dye the mixture to a smooth, soothing tan sauce. With two hands, he poured some into a clean jelly jar. He guzzled it for the desired effect, put down the jar and swayed to the wash-room. After he vomited, he was able to take four coated aspirins. When the little white hosts carried his misery to heaven, he looked up and said, "Praise be to God." His Sunday morning services were over. "Amen."

He was supposed to pick up his kids at 10:00 A.M. "Who gets up so early on Sundays, anyway?" His estranged wife was always getting mad because he would show up late. "Can't a guy enjoy himself after working hard all week?" He had recently begun speaking aloud in his three room apartment. It was an unwritten journal, with sentence fragments hanging on shattered windows of dreams, questions swaying on overhead, uncovered bulbs of uncommitted light, ellipses dotting tear-stained pillows.

In an attempt to wash away the remains of the gnawing aches, James lingered under the stream of almost hot water. He dressed, still with deliberately careful maneuvers.

He had moved his few belongings into the fourth floor walk-up apartment just five months earlier when his separation had become legal. He never wanted to move out and leave his boys or his wife. He had given up smoking his cigars in the house, but that wasn't enough. Nancy and the marriage counselor wanted to see more progress from him. She insisted that he leave, but she did help him



collect a kitchen table and chairs. She also let him take the spent sofa with mismatched cushions collected throughout fourteen years of marriage.

If he left now, he would not be late, and he would not be victim to Nancy's wrath. But he didn't want the boys to see the butts in the ashtrays and the empty bottles. As he straightened up the place, he thought of how much they had grown. Since he moved out they seemed to look more like their mother. Their round curly hair was now straight and angular, determined not to be uncontrollable. Their wide innocent eyes had narrowed to a mature, ice-blue focus.

He drove across town and saw 10:32 on the analog clock of the streaked dashboard. Nancy was waiting in the doorway with her hands on her hips. He wasn't surprised to see her outside, despite the chilly, dreary morning. It appeared to him that she did not need the energy or warmth of the sun to empower her. He often wished that he had her strength, her sense of knowing what to do and how to do it. The clouds were placed above him, with the purpose of obscuring the light and clarity, keeping him from heat and discovery.

He was still about six yards away when she started in. "They expect to spend the whole day with their father, you know. Although I don't know what for. You never did anything with them when you were here." She walked over to the stairs and called up, "Daniel, Stevie, your father is here." James was amazed that she could look so good, even at this hour. She said she wasn't going to start seeing any one else, but he visualized her waiting for the boys to leave and then stepping out herself, with another grieving father, perhaps. She walked back to the door. "They are taking their backpacks with them. I know you are going to blame me for not making them do their homework yester-

day, but we were busy. See how nicely they raked the leaves and cleaned the windows?"

James chose not to look at his sparkling windows and his neat lawn, preferring to look at his rust-covered Chevy that no one could take from him. Nancy walked to the car with him and continued. "They still need their basketball shoes, you know. Make sure they eat something. Get them home by 8:00. They should be home early on a school night." Then she said softly, "Did you, by any chance get that second job yet?"

James held his tongue and filed away his true comments. His only response was, "Of course, I'll feed them."

The boys walked to the car with their heads down. "Hi, men," Dad said. Daniel, at thirteen, was too old to hug his father in public. He got in the front seat without a word and looked away from everyone. Stevie, at eight, took his brother's lead and got in the back seat silently. He did sneak a look at his father, though. James drove out of the driveway and onto Sunny Day Lane, where each tall tree stood proudly guarding the solid homes and each driveway lead to old money and a good family name.

Daniel turned on the radio and turned up the volume until the dashboard vibrated. Dad reached over, turned it down, and asked his sons, "How's school? Anything interesting happen lately?"

Stevie started, "My teacher got two new hamsters. They're both boys."

"They must be fags like you," Daniel said. He once again reached over and blasted the music.

James clenched the steering wheel, feeling his pulse race and his heart pound with the beat of the heavy metal band. He took a deep breath before he turned the knob to lower the noise, and directed his question to Stevie. "What



are the hamsters' names?"

Daniel's smirk came before his response. "Beavis and Butt-head." He turned his giggle to the window, not wanting to share it.

"No, they ain't," said Stevie defensively. "They're Jack and Jill. You don't know nothing."

"Anything," corrected James.

"Whose side are you on, anyway?" asked Stevie.

When Daniel regained control of his snickering, he stretched over to adjust the volume. James gently placed his thumb and two fingers around his son's wrist and said softly, "No, son." Daniel moved as close to his side of the seat as possible and sank down low. He fingered the zipper on his jacket with swift, jerky movements.

When they crossed the intersection of Main and Central they saw more brick and less trees, more rubbish and less flowers. The clouds were darker on this side of town, giving the sun little chance of investing its photosynthesis in the green of the neighborhood. Little grew and little changed. Roots did not grow deeply, but stayed near the surface, where they could be moved quickly, quietly in the night. Seeds were scattered randomly, carried by unsafe, indiscriminate winds, producing wildflowers, not in neat garden rows, not behind white picket fences. Sprouts snuck up out of sidewalk cracks in front of abandoned buildings and second hand stores, full of unwanted items. Any buds that dared to blossom were trampled on and ordered back into the cracks, never to be retrieved.

Stevie then remembered, "Mom said you were buying us shoes today. So why are you going home?"

"We'll go later, after you do your homework."

"You can't make me do my homework. You don't live with us anymore," Daniel claimed.

James opened his mouth to respond, but then

remembered the counselor's advice on dealing with teens. "Take a deep breath and count to ten before reacting to their venom. They're really only harmless rattlesnakes."

He squeezed his car between a push cart that had lost its wheel and a pick-up truck filled with rusted out pieces of housewives' dreams. They saw the liquor store that was the greeting light of his home. Everyone was always welcome; no one was sent away for having bad habits.

They began to lumber up the four flights of stairs. The once blue-green carpet was threadbare in the places where underfed children and underpaid workers had climbed to their sanctuaries of love and peace, arguments and despair; a place where there was too little heat and too many roaches.

James offered to carry their backpacks. Stevie handed his to his dad, but took it back when he saw his big brother carrying his own, climbing the stairs, three at a time. "No thanks, Dad."

Once inside, Daniel dropped his backpack on the floor of the living room, and plopped down on the sofa. He ordered Stevie to turn on the television.

James went to his bedroom and closed the door. The only source of light was from a slit between the rose-colored, heavy duty curtains. This ray guided him to a spot on his unmade bed where he sat down. He placed his hands, palms down, under his thighs. His weight and warmth were usually enough to calm the afternoon shakes and give him the strength to go on. He remained this way, rocking back and forth, with his eyes closed, and recited the Lord's Prayer seven times, "forgive us our trespasses." Then, to avoid thinking about the cold Miller behind the quart of milk in the refrigerator, he stood up, turned on the light, and opened the top drawer of his dresser. He took



out an envelope that was close to losing its flap. The glue had long ago turned stiff and stubborn. He counted the money inside, each morning and each evening. He always knew the exact amount; he even remembered the days that he had added the fives and singles. One hundred eleven dollars was not enough to buy two pairs of brand-name shoes.

Out of each paycheck he gave Nancy twenty-five percent for the kids, even though she earned more than he did. Plus, with one bimonthly check he paid half of the mortgage; with the other check he paid the \$675 rent. He saved at least eight dollars in the envelope every Friday.

Four years ago he had decided to stay on in the mailroom of the electronics company that had been bought out by the Disney Corporation. He preferred this to going through the trouble of compiling a resume. Nancy was helping him, but each entry was a new source of irritation. She wanted precision and she wanted to make him look good. He was willing to settle for just the facts that he could remember.

He put the envelope back behind the apartment lease and the photo in which Nancy and the boys were posing at Stevie's kindergarten graduation. Stevie looked proud of his navy blue suit and bow tie and Daniel was shaking his hand. Dad opened the door and walked out.

"Daniel wants to know why you don't yell at us anymore," said Stevie.

"Shut up, stupid. I didn't say that."

Stevie sank lower into his end of the sofa and stared down at his worn-out shoes.

"Do you guys want to do you homework first or help me cook?" Dad moved to the refrigerator and took out the vegetables. He placed potatoes and onions in the center of a rectangle of carrots and celery so they wouldn't roll

off, knowing that they would all turn into a tender soup. "I sure could use some help, guys."

Stevie looked across at his big brother and waited for his reply. Daniel sighed and finally said, "All right, come on." The younger brother grinned from ear to ear and skipped to the kitchen, where Dad handed them each a knife and let them choose their vegetables. They worked in silence for some minutes, dropping potato and carrot peels on pages of newspaper on the table.

Daniel finally asked, "When did you learn to cook?"

"Oh, I used to cook a long time ago."

"Why didn't you ever cook for us?"

"I did, but I guess my cooking wasn't good enough, or I was too messy, or I bought the wrong stuff, or something. I just stopped."

"I think you cook good."

After James was satisfied that the soup was bubbling and the vegetables and chunks of meat were bumping gently, randomly into each other, he brought the backpacks into the kitchen and set them on the table. He watched as they took out books, notebooks, pens, and pencils. He went to the cabinet, took out several spices, and sprinkled them into the pot, watching the powders ease between green and white, brown and orange, coloring the saving soup.

He was surprised to hear Daniel ask, "Can you help me with this stupid math?"

"Sure. Show it to me." James sat down next to him and explained how to determine the value of  $X$  in simple equations. Then he thought:  $X$  equals 4,  $X$  equals -6,  $X$  equals the missing factor in the solutions of life, not simple enough to solve with paper and pencil, always searching for the value of  $X$ , sometimes substituting  $Y$  or  $Z$ , never



balancing on both sides, never really being equal.

"How come you know so much math stuff. Dad?" asked Stevie.

"I was an accountant, before they changed my company around, always dealing with numbers and large amounts of money."

"I think you're smart, anyway."

Daniel finished his last problem, stopped writing, and put down his pencil. He asked, "Why don't you be an accountant at another company? Maybe then Morn would let you come back." He looked down at the equations and their simple solutions.

Stevie added, "I hope you could come back. I didn't like raking all of those leaves."

"I'm working on it. That doesn't mean I can come back just yet. You'll understand some day. Come on, finish up."

James walked to his very dark bedroom, closed the door, and sat down on his bed. He placed his hands, palms down, under his thighs. He rocked back and forth with his eyes closed and recited the Lord's Prayer seven times, feeling his fingers counting under himself, "as we forgive those who trespass against us."

When James walked back into the kitchen, Stevie was putting his schoolwork into his super hero backpack. Daniel was stirring the soup. He looked up and smiled.

They ate and cleaned the kitchen. Daniel asked if he could take some soup home for later. At 7:15 P.M. James said, "I lost track of time; the stores are closed now and you won't be able to buy shoes tonight."

"That's okay," responded Stevie. Daniel nodded, but said nothing. They gathered their belongings and walked solemnly down the stairs that were full of the smells of pepper, garlic, and curry of Sunday meats.

Daniel allowed his brother to sit in the middle of the front seat so he could put the container of still warm soup on the floor away from the accelerator. He turned on an oldies station. The warmth of the soup seemed to flow through James' veins as he squeezed in the front seat next to his boys. They arrived home and sat in the car facing forward, until the song ended, and listened to another one. Then, "Come on, boys. You have school tomorrow"

Nancy came over to the car and said, "I missed you guys." James couldn't tell if she was looking at him or only at the boys. They all walked to the house and James stopped a few feet from the front door.

"Dad made you some soup, Morn." Daniel lifted the bag containing a plastic bowl.

She smiled first at Daniel, then at James. "How sweet."

The boys bugged their dad and raced up the stairs. James walked to his car, sat down, and put the keys in the ignition. From living on the other side of town he picked up the habit of never leaving keys in the car. He wasn't surprised to see Nancy still standing in the door, watching him. Her arms were crossed in front of her, and her head was leaning against the frame of the sturdy door. She didn't seem to need the warmth of their home or the nourishment of their soup just yet. He repeated his resolutions out loud, maybe even loud enough for Nancy to hear. "I'm not gonna drink any more. I'm gonna get a better job. I'm gonna pick the kids up on time, maybe twice a week. For real this time."

After a few minutes went by he was able to let go of the steering wheel, take out his handkerchief, and blow his nose. Then he drove off to his apartment where he could talk aloud to nobody.



## For Jack

They say you're dying. I can see it in  
your neck, where once the firm strong muscles  
stood,  
but now hang loose and empty folds of skin  
above the vessels pulsing with life's blood.

Your girlfriend says you're dying. She can see  
it in the hair, once thick upon your head,  
now burnt away by chemotherapy  
while you lay weak and helpless on a bed.

The doctor says you're dying. We can see  
it in your step, now hesitant and slow.  
not long since springy with agility.  
You are still young; where did your vigor go?

They say you're dying. But I cannot see  
it in your eyes, alight with jollity.

*Robert F. Tredray*

## Unwanted Inheritance

While very young  
I'd watch my dad and uncles  
with their J&B  
and nasty cigars  
playing cards

Uncle Tony never seemed to shut up  
Uncle Nicky just grunted  
Cousin Carmie  
his right hand  
missing two fingers  
could shuffle and deal  
those pasteboards  
with the skill of a Vegas croupier

Dark skin, twinkling eyes large and brown  
colossal hands fanning  
colorful pictures of kings and queens  
laughing and fouling the air  
with their stories  
and strangling cigars

What could that be  
coming out of their ears?

Dark and wispy  
black and sinister  
like two furry menacing spiders  
lurking inside their ears



waiting to pounce  
on small curious children

Before I got in bed that night  
I prayed so hard  
Lord, you can give me  
a hairy chest,  
or legs, or arms, or knuckles,  
but please  
I fear  
I may get stuck  
with Tarantulas in my ears

*John Rossi*

### Accident on Bourbon: 7/25/93

Bourbon street is busy, crowded  
for off-season, with the serious  
replacing the merely curious here  
near twilight. The baby stroller  
had careened off a wet, slippery  
curb and the child, just a year,  
toppled head first onto the asphalt  
of Bourbon. "Well, the baby didn't  
even cry," says an expert witness.  
Others testify the very same  
and the little one, androgynous  
still, hasn't uttered a sound.

The attraction promotes the bizarre  
scene of suspended concern as  
some hawkers and dancers, jazzers  
and vendors all measure the welt  
which has made another forehead  
on the tiny, ashen face. Trickle  
of blood almost dried. Almost returned.  
"Children shouldn't be found here in  
the Quarter," asserts a girl drinking  
in her teens. Everyone so wants  
the child to cry, even the whitefaced  
mime and torchsinger who was interrupted.

Someone has called an ambulance, sirens  
and flashes approach. The uniform  
holds the limpness, then the eyes open  
on strangers and a weak cry issues



to the relief of Bourbon Street.  
 "What should we do?" asks the couple  
 who are young themselves, from just across  
 the lake, a bayou family. But now  
 this spectacle is over and, without  
 the threat of death, interest disperses.  
 "Hospital? We got no insurance," they  
 whisper, as the crowd seeps into Bourbon.

*F.J. Schaak*

### Slow Learner

Long before such a day could dawn,  
 The mirror reflected dreams  
 Stirred by subtle moon angles  
 Hinting someone would bring love.  
 And dent my solitude.  
 I was comfortable without expectation of caresses  
 But his kisses warmed me in my dream.  
 Awake I could not find his face.

After summer storms of too much lightning,  
 Too strong wind,  
 My self-containment pleased me.  
 I felt no need for his anonymous presence.

When dreams threatened my hard won solitude.  
 I could not seek,  
 Would not hasten, or encourage  
 The promises of the dream.  
 But ruled: Love, come in morning calm.  
 Wake to the deep snow silence.  
 When a velvet saxophone replaces drum rolls,  
 Then perhaps my fearful heart  
 Will play charades again.

But then,  
 Oh then!  
 Not that way at all.  
 His first step sends snow—  
 A field full of moonlit snow—  
 Cascading up, whirling into stars,



Our kisses create our own lightning  
That sends us past storms.  
We romp through noon's heat,  
Launch from moonbeams,  
Laugh at thunder.  
Damn!  
Will I never learn?

*Candy Hamilton*

### **Runs The Proverb**

Beyond Memphis and Vicksburg  
the Delta is in a state of flux,  
a primary proving-ground for the fiction  
of Eudora Welty, a place where  
people keep their mirrors  
on their dressers  
and still rock on the front porch  
of a hot and heavy century  
approaching twilight.

Starting from scratch.  
And now is all we have.  
Alabama roots and Louisiana roots  
and excursions to the mountains  
and the seashore. You know  
what I mean, despite  
the loss.

And the story tells itself.  
Even exotic settings have their problems.  
Let us praise the imagery  
of this time, this place, let us  
find someone satisfied with the cracks  
and crevices of the bluffs around Vicksburg,  
the blue banks of the Mississippi  
close to Memphis.

*Errol Miller*



## Red Childhood

*B. Z. Niditch*

I went up to the pacifist camp. M. had me sign my name.  
I went swimming in the big rivers in New Hampshire.

When I got back from camp after Labor Day my father told  
me he lost his job. It was during the McCarthy era.

M. had testified against me and my father. My father tried  
to commit suicide when his boss said,

"No, Sam, I know you are good at what you do, but  
I will lose out if I keep you."

I was in the ninth grade. It was a cold day in September in  
Manhattan. As I crossed the street I noticed M. I felt she  
had betrayed me. She pretended she was a leftist, but she  
worked for the authorities. That was her job, an informer.

My father was a reformer, not a revolutionary, and even if  
he had socialist views, they were idealist.

M. the informer saw me staring at her in her business suit.  
She despised me; I could tell. I could tell her my father  
tried to end his life because of her, but she had got her cut  
and paycheck every week. Moreover, she was patriotic in  
the eyes of her country.

Still, I was a brave kid. I walked over to M. and said,  
"You are a rat, you ratted on me at Camp Kinderland."

"You little zero. We are waging war against Reds like you.  
Look at the New York Daily News. Or do you read  
Pravda, you little pinko?"

"I saw you Thursday at our house looking at which papers  
we read."

"Yes, and I took a snapshot of the progressive Daily  
Worker hidden in The New York Times."

"You sneak."

"You are the sneaks, giving away our atom bomb to the  
Reds."

"But I'm only eleven."

"That's how you start. I know what your peace camp  
really was about, a spying network."

I walk to school. I cannot study, but force myself to.



"We have to go into the shelter today, children."

I refuse. I'm like my old man. I quote the first amendment. I am taken to the principal's office for the rat hand.

I come home. I hear McCarthy's voice on the radio. My father is taken away. Smith Act.

I am beaten up on the street. My father is in the paper. I tell the teacher, "My father fought for Republican Spain."

I am dismissed. My father speaks to the committee. He takes his fifth. Amendment.

Every day people call and hang up on us. They call me names. My mother takes me to another city. She is constantly interrogated.

Our books are searched, even recordings of Ella Fitzgerald, Paul Robeson, Billie Holiday.

There is a dinner in support of my father. I wear my first suit. I speak for my father. There is applause.

My father is permanently sent away. I feel real terror from strangers and the worst fear is no one will believe me.

My mother tells me my father was beaten by guards in prison and the prisoners were afraid to speak out.

A Catholic girl asks me to go to St. Joseph's. I walk away. She cannot understand me. She calls me a godless Red.

I feel alone. An agent near my house says to me the only party you'll ever be invited to is a Party party, and laughs like a hyena at me. He is fat and homely.

The principal of the school refuses to promote me, even though I got an A in math, Science, and History. He says I made historical mistakes. It's the principle of the thing.

I play soccer and basketball. I get a flu and polio shot. I am human, though few people in the small town will talk to me.

My mother and I run back to New York City. I am walking downtown, being followed by a plainclothes cop, the same one who tormented us before.

I am sweating, but I keep to myself. I walk by a labor dispute. Maybe he thinks I'm the organizer. He photographs me. I want to break his camera.

He thinks he is a patriot. I give him the finger. He says, "You little troublemaker." I call him a strike breaker.

He follows me home in a police cruiser. I am out of breath. I run faster.

The car speeds ahead. He misses a stoplight. He looked punch drunk and he goes into another car. I hide behind a brownstone. The plainclothesman is dead. I can sleep tonight, but I won't tell my mother. Someday I'll tell my father, but he won't ever be home.



### LaSalle Street Lounge Reflection

"I'll have a small cup of minestrone,  
oh, and a Manhattan straight up, no cherry."  
Sweet maraschinos abuse the booze.  
The waitress braces the ruby filled glass,  
so, no spills this time for the pale lady  
who waits. The liquid dances near her lips  
watched wide-eyed by both, until her first sips.  
Her Chanel rouge blooms on her high cheek bones  
while her St. John sighs as her elbow tips.  
Ah, yes, the best secretary, she manages alone  
the office and the staff. So devoted, so discreet,  
she ensures his comfort in the executive suite.  
For years she's waited, secreted her life.  
And still chooses perfect presents for her man's  
wife.

*Helen Ann Berg*

### The Messenger

There he is again, on the same corner,  
standing erect, moving his arms like a  
sculpture of air that blows winds from east to west,  
stopping a traffic of shadows that goes by  
and telling them You and You! It is your time.  
I stop my walk and stare at him.  
He talks to a young boy, eleven maybe,  
shaking his long finger, like a father who tells his  
kid not to do something.  
He asks him to look into his eyes and  
the boy crosses a path, disappearing.  
I approach him with my angry face.  
I try to beat him up, but I tire.  
He does not move nor speak to me.  
After a few minutes, he asks me to listen:  
he hums my grandmother's favorite song.  
I listen and images begin to appear before me:  
she touches her heart, and a sunset behind her,  
fades.  
I walk until I ran into a public phone and  
dial the number. I hear the voice of Guatemala,  
the oldest country I love,  
calling me to come home and see  
the pale blue sky that will give peace to my grief.

*Emilio del Valle*



## Exfoliation

OK, so let's think about this.  
 In just such a city there are about  
 twenty thousand homeless, (and who  
 knows how many more, housed but  
 barely hangin' in there, hangin' out)  
 each of them sloughing off particles  
 of skin at an alarming rate, especially  
 in winter when icy winds tend to dry.  
 They are sprinkled like spice into  
 this urban stew. Parts of old vagrants  
 are deposited near park benches.  
 Every seven years whole hobos  
 have floated off out around train tracks.  
 This is worse than our cars putting  
 out exhaust or our tires leaving rubber  
 beside the roads. Imagine all those  
 molecules of DNA cork screwing  
 into the air we breathe like seeds  
 floating about looking for earth to sprout in.  
 We are all taking in their need like  
 homeopathic doses of disaster  
 potentized by dilution again and again  
 in solutions of plenty. How has this  
 prepared us for what is to come?  
 When age winks back at us from the glass,  
 things we like to think set us apart  
     like the car in working order,  
     the children we have raised,  
     the impressive portfolio,  
     things and people we're sure we know,

pay check's regularity,  
 important appointments recorded in our log,  
 the clarity of our own thinking,  
 all these certainties seem ephemeral  
 as smog. Its then we can take comfort  
 in having been prepared for the inevitable  
 stripping away by this daily dose  
 of the flaked off skin of the homeless.

*Maureen Flannery*



### **This Lascivious Form**

You are writing a poem:  
It is a poem about lust.

It aches with the longing for its next  
Line, swells with anticipation for what sweetest  
comes

Around the next corner. This poem  
Wants to read a book to put itself to sleep,

Hoping to wake in the brilliant morning,  
But all the books by Rumi have been stolen from  
the Library.

This poem thrives on dreams, like the wet dream  
best,  
But will settle for a kiss and the promise of a one-  
legged night.

This poem wants to eat the page, to penetrate the  
paper,  
Leave white stains on the mattress of your con-  
sciousness.

This poem has friends, strong friends, sexy friends,  
Fearful and beautiful friends.

This poem has its eye on a television show,  
Has the memory of prior seductions:

This poem recalls humid summer nights in Perris  
With hot wax dripping the walls, her full lips, tight  
eyes and kinky hair.

This poem remembers thinner winters when it  
dreamt  
If found an angel crying in the doorway of a dark  
apartment.

This poem rises to 101 degree nights outdoors  
With a woman's laugh wrapped around its hips.

This poem awoke sweating in bed and anxious-  
armed,  
Collapsed as the sun rose, in wet sheets and mania-  
cal twitching

Of eyes in the surprised light of dawn, caught  
With its pants on the floor. But the night before  
that

It was a man a dog  
Lifting its face in silence toward a moon.

***Robert Roden***



## Your Servant, Sir

"Your Servant, Sir, still weary-"  
Emily Dickinson

Last night the moon fell  
and I couldn't find it, I played like  
I was asleep in the poverty-house of childhood  
where barking dogs aroused me from my dream  
of finer lace and city things,  
Someone  
had promised me Paradise at church last Sunday  
and I wanted a piece of the action down  
the gravel road aways...

Like when the piano tuner came and fixed things  
and the Doctor came and only prayed for Granny.  
That clammy interior life being held  
back by an Association  
of youth and lack, Papa was a central figure,  
of course, the world in his hands he sat  
in the corner and shook his head  
and packed his pipe  
and went off to bed in "his room,"  
that delicate pathos with the soul of the South  
fermenting within me, apples drying on tin roofs,  
and fireflies buzzing Tara,  
that social gap of our ol' Studebaker  
and then Papa traded it for  
a funeral director's Packard, they  
just sat on the front porch and rocked  
while dust swirled up from the Spring Creek Road,

they were part of Southside fiction and didn't know  
it,  
dead men from Albany and Birmingham,  
dead men canning fig preserves,  
dead men butchering hogs,  
but God I loved their sweat and compromise  
and moral breakdown, the Iceman drowning in  
an incidental vat of freezing water  
as Papa gradually put his writing aside and worked  
the swing shift at the Steel Mills 'till  
it killed him, these derelict memories,  
one poem is not enough, they  
squirt their ink  
into my future and I  
toss and turn and try to manufacture  
something similar to life:  
the literatures of one's own war  
is always sacred and holy.  
There is no shame in  
admitting it.

*Errol Miller*



# ANDERSON V ANDERSON

Gayl J. Johnson

## CAST

Brian Anderson	defendant
Faith Anderson	victim
Slocum	defense attorney
Parsons	prosecution
Marcus Solomon	judge
Daniels	witness
Flushing	witness
Bailiff	bailiff
Police Officer	
Court Reporter	
men and women shouting off stage	

## SCENE ONE

*Stage is pitch black and silent.*

Bailiff: All rise.

*The lights come on so fast that Brian, the defendant flinches, momentarily shielding his eyes while no one else notices or reacts to the lights. We are in a Chicago courtroom in 1972. As the audience faces the stage, the bench is on the left and is elevated so that it is ten feet higher than the normal sized tables used by the prosecution and the defense teams. Adding to the surreal setting is the Jury. Although we see the jury box, there are no people in it. Instead, there is a mural with surrealistically painted busts of the twelve jurors.*

Bailiff: Hear ye. Hear ye. This court is now in session. The Honorable Judge Marcus Solomon presiding.

*Gruff- looking older man in black judicial robes enters and take his seat behind the bench. He gavel once.*

Judge: Be seated. Gentlemen, before we resume the cross examination of this witness, I want to remind you that the outburst we experienced yesterday will not be tolerated in my court room. Hopefully, you were all able to relax last night and cooler heads will prevail this morning. Mr. Daniels, please return to the stand.

*Daniels moves from behind the prosecutor and takes the witness stand.*



Judge: Mr. Daniels, you are still under oath. Counselor, your witness

*Slocum rises and walks toward the witness.*

Slocum: Mr. Daniels, yesterday you testified in this court that the defendant was drunk on the night in Question. Is that correct?

Daniels: Yes, sir.

Slocum: Had the victim also been drinking?

Daniels: Yes sir. *Wipes his palms on his jeans.*

Slocum: How much had Miss Anderson been drinking?

Daniels: I don't...

Parsons: Objection. Irrelevant.

Judge: Overruled. Mr. Daniels, you will answer the question.

*Brian squirms in his seat, leans back, silently sighs at the ceiling and sits upright again.*

Daniels: I don't know sir. We were all drinking that night.

Slocum: You were all drinking that night?

Daniels: Yes sir. We were.

Slocum: What were you doing when Mr. Anderson and Miss Anderson left the party?

Daniels: I was, [*to the judge*] do I have to answer that, sir?

Judge: Answer it.

Daniels: I was smoking a joint.

Slocum: Let me clarify. You were smoking marijuana.

Daniels: Yes.

Slocum: And drinking.

Parsons: Objection. Asked and answered.

Judge: I'll allow that.

Slocum: You were all drinking and smoking marijuana.

Daniels: Yes.

Slocum: How much alcohol had you consumed that night?

Daniels: A case of Old Style.

Slocum: A case of beer.



Daniels: Yes sir.

Slocum: If you had that much beer and pot in your system, can you be absolutely sure of what you saw on the night in question?

Daniels: I remember.

Slocum: Have you ever drunk so much that you couldn't remember what you did the night before until someone else told you?

Daniels: Well, yeah. Once or twice.

Slocum: So you've had blackouts.

Daniels: Hey. I'm no alcoholic. Ask anybody.

Slocum: How did you get home that night?

Daniels: I'm not sure.

Slocum: Not sure? How can you be sure that what you've given as testimony in this case is the truth? [To the judge], I have no further questions for this witness.

Judge: [To Parsons] Redirect?

Parsons: Mr. Daniels, is there any doubt in your mind that the defendant and the victim left together?

Daniels: None. I saw them leave together at about twelve. I swear it.

Parsons: No further questions.

Judge: [to Daniels] You may step down.

*Daniels steps down and exits.*

Judge: Mr. Parsons, call your next witness.

Parsons: I call Miss Faith Anderson.

*A nineteen year old woman, petite, long curly black hair pulled into a barrette at the back of her neck, demurely dressed, rises and makes her way to the stand while looking down.*

*COURTROOM IS SILENT. The entire scene is played as if the mute button had been pushed. All action and speech continues without sound. She is sworn in and begins her testimony. Parsons questions her with great sympathy.*

*Brian rises and walks to the front of the stage. He rings his hands and in long strides paces back and forth from one side of the stage to the other. He stops center stage.*

Brian: Oh God. I can't listen to this. [He covers his ears and cowers]. I couldn't have, but...

*Photographs enlarged to poster size are shown to illustrate her facial bruises and the marks on her neck.*

Brian: Oh my God. I couldn't have done that. I've never done anything that bad. Did I? How could I? No. I



couldn't have. *[Through clenched teeth he spits]* The guy that did that deserves to die. *[He returns to his seat, leans his elbows on the table and hides his face in his hands.]*

SOUND RETURNS TO THE COURTROOM.

Faith: *[sobbing]* I just couldn't. I wanted it to be so special. Not like that. *[Collapses into tears.]*

Judge: Miss Anderson, can you continue or do you need a recess?

*Slowly she sits back up, raises a trembling hand to wipe her tear soaked face.*

Faith: *[a bit more composed]* No. I just want to get it over with, your honor.

*The Bailiff brings her a glass of water and a box of tissues. She chokes down a little water, wipes her face again, and holds a tissue in her lap.*

Faith: It was supposed to be beautiful. *[She rubs her hands down her lap as though trying to push off a large weight.]*

Parsons: *[His hands behind his back, he leans toward her.]* Miss Anderson, we know how difficult this is. Please take your time and tell us exactly what happened.

*She pulls her skirt hem down to cover her knees, takes a staggered breath and erects herself in the chair. Her face is twisted in the agony of reliving the event.*

Faith: At the party, we danced and kissed. A lot. When he kissed my neck, he stole my breath away. I wanted. I was. I never. But he made me feel so. *[She stops and looks at her lap in shame.]*

Parsons: You were, excuse me, a virgin?

Faith: Yes. But I thought *[her lips quiver and she looks at the ceiling,]* I thought he was the one.

Parsons: *[Touches the stand and she flinches.]* I'm sorry. *[He backs away two steps.]* What happened next?

Faith: Well. We. Brian asked me if I wanted to and I said I did too. *[She looks down at her lap, draws a deep breath and looks up again.]* We left the party and drove on his motorcycle to a motel.

Parsons: At the motel, did you go in with Brian to register?

Faith: No sir. I waited outside. He came out with the key and we went to the room. *[She rocks in the seat with her fists clenched into her thighs.]*

Parsons: Please go on.

Faith: *[Again looking at the ceiling, stops rocking, looks back at the prosecutor and continues.]* He unlocked the door and turned on the light. It was pretty gross in there. All kind of yellowish and scuzzy looking. *[She sips the water.]* He closed the door and we started kissing again. That was when Brian took my hand and led me to the bed.



Parsons: By "took your hand" do you mean that he forcibly dragged you?

Faith: Well, no sir. I was just moving slow because I was nervous. Anyhow, when we got on the bed, I started thinking about how many people used this bed for the same thing. It just felt weird and dirty. I never did it before and I wanted it to be different, not like this.

Parsons: At some point did Mr. Anderson become violent?

Faith: Yes sir

Parsons: When did that happen?

Faith: He was trying to touch me under my clothes and I kept trying to push his hand away. He started by saying "Come on, Baby, I want you." Then he said, "You stupid whore. I just wasted \$20.00 on this room and now you got the balls to tell me no?" *[She starts shaking, and tears are flowing down her face but she refuses to give in to the sobbing. She keeps her face forward and wipes the tears from her face. Her voice sounds almost mechanical as she works to keep her composure.]* He shoved his hand between my legs and ripped at my pants. *[She swallows hard.]* I can still feel the spit on my face.

Parsons: Then what happened?

Faith: He punched me in the face, right here, *[she indicates her left jaw]* and I passed out.

Parsons: Did it end there?

Faith: *[Takes a deep breath and exhales quickly.]*  
No sir. The next thing I knew *[composure slipping, she begins to sob as she finishes the sentence]* there was something over my head. I couldn't breathe and he was, was between my legs.

Parsons: *[Turns to the jury looking for their reactions.]* Miss Anderson, I only have a few more questions for you.

Judge: *[Interrupting the questioning because Faith is sobbing, rocking and bugging herself for strength.]* Do you need a recess?

Faith: *[looks at him and back at the prosecutor.]*  
Are we almost done?

Parsons: Yes.

Faith: I just want to finish. *[She tries to erect herself in the chair and her fists are on her thighs again.]*

Parsons: There was something over your head. *[She nods.]* How can you be certain it was the defendant who raped you?

Faith: It was his shirt.

Parsons: For the record, I am going to ask you what you were wearing when you went to the party.

Faith: My blue bell-bottoms and a peasant shirt.



Parsons: When you went to this party, was it with the intention of a rendezvous with the defendant?

Faith: No sir. I liked him and I wouldn't 'uv minded going out with him, but I didn't want this to happen.

Parsons: Your Honor, I have no further questions.

Judge: We will take a break for lunch until one thirty. *[Looking at the jury]* Please remember that you are not to discuss this case amongst yourselves or with anyone else.

Bailiff: All rise.

*Lights go down.*

## SCENE TWO

*Lights come back up, but the jury sits in darkness. Again, the stage is silent. The prosecutors are in deep conversation at their table. Brian and Slocum walk to the front and center stage.*

Slocum: I don't mind telling you that I am a little worried right now. The jury seems to be very sympathetic to her story. I've got my work cut out for me in the cross.

Brian: *[Takes Slocum's arm.]* Look. I dono what happened ta her, but it was bad. Don't jump on 'er. She's a nice girl. Something happened, but it wasn't me. It couldna

been.

Slocum: What are you asking? *[Crosses his arms.]* If you tie my hands, I won't be able to do anything for you.

Brian: *[Looks at him with concern.]* Look, I believe she was raped. The guy that did this should hang by his balls.

Slocum: Prevent me from doing my job and someone will hang for it. Most likely, you.

Brian: She's a good girl. *[He looks down at his shoes and back up again.]* I got girls, pal. I'd kill anyone who did this to one of mine. Don't you rape her again. Got it?

Slocum: *[Slowly shakes his head.]* You're nuts. You stand to spend at least five years in prison. Your life with your kids is on the line. You wanna lose them?

Brian: Course not, but I'm not gonna make this uglier than it already is.

*They walk back to their table. The lights over the jury come on.*

Bailiff: *[Comes forward.]* All rise. *[Before the assembled are on their feet, the judge enters and the Bailiff continues.]* Court is back in session.

Judge: *[Takes his seat and gives the gavel one blow signaling all to be seated.]* Mr. Slocum, you may cross.



Slocum: [To Brian] Trust me. [Rises, approaches the witness.] Miss Anderson, how well did you know the defendant before the party?

Faith: I thought I knew him pretty well.

Slocum: Describe the person you knew him to be.

Parsons: Objection. Calls for an expert witness.

Judge: Overruled. This doesn't call for an expert. He asked her experience.

Faith: Can you repeat the question?

Slocum: Certainly. Describe the person you knew Brian to be.

*Unnoticed, Brian begins to write on a pad of legal paper.*

Faith: I liked him. I really did. Some of my friends told me to keep away from him, but he was neat. He's the guy who played air guitar when we listened to records at parties. He made me laugh. But sometimes he'd say something to be funny and it hurt. He flirted a lot. He could've had any of the girls. We all liked him. He was a wild man. You know, the James Dean type.

Slocum: How had he treated you?

Faith: Mostly like his baby sister. Oh, he flirted with me, just like he did with everybody else, but he never asked me out or anything.

Slocum: Did you want to go out with him?

Faith: Uh huh. But he never asked me. When he asked me to dance that night it was the best. I wasn't the kid sister anymore.

Slocum: Was the man that hurt you anything like the man you knew?

Faith: Not with me. Not 'til he hit me at the motel.

Slocum: Could the man you knew commit the crime of rape?

Faith: No.

Slocum: Your head was bound, correct?

Faith: Yes.

Slocum: Then, how can you be so convinced it was my client who raped you?

Faith: It was Bri's shirt. And besides, nobody else knew I was there.

Slocum: Did your assailant say anything?

Faith: No.

Slocum: Then I ask you again, how can you be so sure who it was? [Turning to face the prosecution] I withdraw the question. Your Honor, I have no further



questions.

*Brian turns the pad over so that it is laying face down on the defense table.*

Judge: Mr. Parsons?

Parsons: [Rising, he buttons his suit jacket.] I call Stanley Flushing to the stand.

*Flushing, a man in his early fifties, in a worn leisure suit rises. He has three gold chains around his neck. On one hangs the Italian horn. He walks to the witness stand as Parsons falls in step behind him.*

Bailiff: Place your left hand on the Bible, raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

Flushing: I do.

Bailiff: State your full name and address for the record.

Flushing: Stanley Flushing. 7758 West Harper Way, Chicago.

Judge: You may be seated. Mr. Parsons, proceed.

Parsons: Mr. Flushing, what is your occupation?

Flushing: I'm the night manager of the While-Away Motel in Des Plaines.

Parsons: Did you have occasion to meet the defendant?

Flushing: Yeah.

Parsons: When was that, sir?

Flushing: [Leafing through his notes] On the evening of March 15, 1972.

Parsons: How did you meet him?

Flushing: That night he came into my office to rent a room. You know. One of those four hour nap specials, if you know what I mean.

Parsons: Did you notice if anyone was with him?

Flushing: Some sweet young thing hangin' out by his ride. Hot to trot, to my mind.

Parsons: Is she present in the courtroom?

Flushing: [Fondles his gold neck chain, points to Faith.] That's her all right. She's dressed a whole lot different, all prim and proper, but that's the honey.

Parsons: Do you recall a disturbance that night at the motel?

Flushing: Hell yeah. 'Scuse me Your Honor. She's all screamin' and cryin' rape. A bloody mess. [Giggling under his breath] Guess she got more than she bargained for.



*A uniformed police officer enters the courtroom and beckons to the bailiff who meets him in the back of the courtroom. They whisper amongst themselves and the officer hands the bailiff a paper and stands with his hands behind his back as the bailiff brings the paper to the judge.*

*Flushing squirms as the judge reads the note and glances from the note to the witness and back at the paper.*

Judge: I want to see both counsel in chambers. Mr. Flushing, remain seated.

*The lawyers follow the judge off stage and the bailiff remains in the courtroom and stands beside Flushing. Brian tears the note off the pad and puts it in his pocket. Leaving the courtroom, he bumps into Faith.*

Brian: I'm sorry. *He leaves the courtroom.*

*A scuffle is heard in the hallway and the Bailiff, followed by the cop, runs out to see what is going on. Off stage we hear...*

Bailiff: Stop! Stop or I'll shoot!

*Off stage, women are screaming in terror and other people are shouting. Three shots are fired.*

*The Judge, Parsons, and Slocum run into the courtroom as Bailiff runs back into the room.*

Judge: What the hell was that?

Bailiff: I don't know what got into him! He ran into Judge Barnes' courtroom and overpowered his bailiff. When I got there, Anderson had his gun and was waving it

around. Next thing I knew, it was aimed at me. I had no choice. I had to shoot. [*He leans on the defense table, drained and in shock.*] Your Honor, it was the damndest thing. When he collapsed he said he was an animal. He deserved to die. Marc, he didn't know. I had to shoot. I had to. And it was for nothing.

*The police officer enters with Brian's note in his hand.*

Officer: Who is Faith?

Faith: [*Steps forward and accepts the note.*] They shoot rabid dogs to protect the people. I'm really sorry. For everything.

*The judge, attorneys, bailiff and Faith are standing between the prosecution and defense tables. Slocum wraps a steadying arm around Faith who looks as though she will faint.*

Judge: [*Reassured by the bailiff's slowly straightening up, the judge pats the man's shoulder and looks at the jury and the lawyers. To Flushing he says*] Mr. Flushing, that officer brought the court a warrant for your arrest. The owner of the motel found the pornography and the coffee cups and the cigarette butts that you left in the electrical causeway of the motel. While the case you were brought here for is obviously at an end, I think you owe it to this court to clear things up. More than that, you owe it to Miss Anderson.

Flushing: [*In resignation:*] I saw her. She was all hot to trot. No nice girls come to While-Away. After he left the



office, I went into the causeway. All I wanted to do was watch. He was trying to get her clothes off and she's sayin' "No. I can't." What a bitch. She gets him to cough up for the room and closes her legs. He starts roughin her up. Punched her good, he did and stormed off with the door wide open.

Flushing: She was out cold and there for the takin'. She came there for one thing. What did it matter who gave it to her anyway? That's what she came there for. I found his shirt on the floor and tied it around her head so she couldn't see me. I start goin' at her clothes and the bitch starts wakin up, and yellin like she's all scared. Now she says she didn't want it? What the hell was she there for?

Judge: Officer, take this witness into custody

*Policeman steps forward and grabs Flushing by the back of his neck and not so delicately removes him from the stand. As he cuffs him, the Judge continues.*

Judge: Miss Anderson, you have been through three experiences which no one should have to suffer. To be beaten by a man you care for, to be raped, and then to have to endure the trial. I commend you for your strength of character, for your commitment to seeing the perpetrator brought to justice.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, counsel, what we have seen today is a lesson in human nature. How easily we are fooled into believing the worst about others. How much more tragic when we believe the worst about ourselves. In this case, the defendant was convinced by a preponderance of the evidence that he was guilty. He

convicted and executed himself. It is one thing when others think the worst of us. How tragic when we believe the worst of ourselves.

Case dismissed.

**THE END**



# MID NIGHT

3AM  
 PHONE CONTINUALLY RINGS  
 UNTIL  
 FINALLY I GET UP AND I  
 HEAR MY VOICE ASK  
 HELLO?  
 SPEEDING TO GET THERE BEFORE IT'S TOO  
 LATE  
 NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO THE RED  
 LIGHTS OF LIFE  
 SITTING WITH HIS HEAD ON MY LAP  
 ON THE COLD HARD TILE FLOOR  
 SHAKING THE TWO OF US TOGETHER YET  
 SO COMPLETELY ALONE  
 SCRATCHING HIS PALE GREEN SKIN BE-  
 CAUSE HE COULD NO LONGER DO IT  
 HIMSELF  
 HOPING THAT HE WOULD EAT  
 PRAYING HE WOULD DIGEST  
 BEGGING HIM NEVER TO DO IT AGAIN  
 CRYING WITH HIS HEAD ON MY LAP,  
 SCRATCHING HIS PALE GREEN  
 SKIN, BEGGING HIM NEVER TO USE AGAIN  
 FAST FORWARD AND REPEAT.

*Amy Stauffer*

# Poem to N\_\_\_ F\_\_\_

thought i'd write you  
 a poem since i've not  
 spoken to you for some  
 days now. so how is  
 work and what are you  
 wearing today? i'm sure  
 i'd ask those—but what's  
 really important is the  
 desolate silence of the  
 frigid forest and the cold  
 unfamiliar stare of the  
 animals lost in shadows  
 beneath the half-moon.  
 and don't forget the  
 skinny-armed naked trees  
 reaching to scratch me in  
 the crisp light of paranoia.  
 o you should see me  
 drowsy and mad like a  
 goat in spring, waiting for  
 aything elusive and grand  
 because i know what the  
 frenchman said is true,  
 the moon really is honey  
 dripping off the open mouths  
 of madmen, although that's not  
 exactly correct since i'm sure  
 some women are mad too.  
 but for now close your  
 eyes to the locomotive



automotive night and  
listen to the silence,  
for even now i am  
speaking to you.

*Nathan Hoks*

### A Page of Tanka

Starlings in the town  
Bread pecked at the thrown away  
By lounging young men

Shaking their black speckled heads  
When they pecked at the mustard.

River water fills  
The docks allowing great ships  
From the fearsome sea

To discharge foreign products  
Far eastern wares strange to us.

Red coated soldiers  
Made of lead for boys to play  
Of war that never bleeds

On bloodless fields of battle  
Later returned to boxes.

Now that Spring is here  
And flowers bloom colouring  
Dull Earth of Winter

And still the promise to come  
Of Summer's maturity.



Was it snow I saw  
In Winter's long dark dark days  
Now that Summer's here

Did the frost white bit fingers  
And chill north wind nip our toes.

Fluffy ducklings dash  
Through water reeds chasing flies  
That they will not catch

Their parents proudly watch them  
Safely hidden on the grass banks.

*Richard Reeve*

### Solomon Contemplates His Grandfather

I, Solomon the Wise, have been King in Israel for  
forty years.

I am clothed in the splendor of majesty,  
and princes and prophets come from the end of the  
earth  
to hear my decrees.

My grandfather Jesse was a simple man,  
a farmer and herdsman from Bethlehem,  
the son of a farmer and herdsman,  
the father of farmers and herdsman:  
eight of them, all righteous men,  
four of the soldiers of the King.  
Among them was my father, David,  
a man after the Lord's own heart.

I am wise because I was blessed by the Lord,  
and I have retained his blessing, because I knew  
better  
than to repeat the errors of my father;  
I invented my own errors.

Did I not build the House of the Glory of the Lord,  
which David was not allowed to build?  
I made Jerusalem more splendid than Sumer, the  
city of Gilgamesh;  
but the people offer their sacrifices on the hilltops,  
and do not come to the City of David.  
I wrote advice to my people which they will read  
for millenia



but never heed for more than five minutes.  
I wrote a love-song to my foreign woman  
which they take as a hymn to the King of Kings.  
I have seven hundred wives and three hundred  
concubines,  
every one of them according to the law,  
and what has it profited me?  
My sons are quarreling, even as my brothers and I  
quarreled with each other and with our father.  
But when did the sons of Jesse ever quarrel?

What have I ever done to equal the achievement of  
Jesse,  
whose son found favor in the sight of the Lord?  
O grandfather, grandfather, if you can hear me,  
pray to the Lord for me; for as He lives,  
you were a greater man than I will ever be.

**Robert F. Tredray**

### Arturo Alfonso Schomburg

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg was a black Puerto Rican whose passionate devotion to the history of African-American culture, in general, and the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, in particular, helped to shape the first major research collection in African-American literature, music, and the arts- The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The genesis of this poem began while I was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, some twenty years ago. I wrote this poem from that youthful perspective.

"The Instructor said,

Go home and write  
a page tonight.  
And let that page come out of you-  
Then, it will be true."

Langston Hughes, **Theme for English B**

### For Carolyn Paprocki

I

His hands were massive,  
but strangely that comforts me,  
because it takes big hands,  
and broad shoulders, to build a library,  
which he did, book by book,



with the zeal of a man  
who's traveled the distance  
between the moon and the sun.

II

Still it puzzles me: Schomburg.  
My first thought, New York philanthropist  
in love with Harlem jazz *mulattas*,  
but Don Arturo-mother black, white father-  
left Boricua for the snows  
of a New York exile at the dawn  
of the Harlem Renaissance.

III

Forty years long after his death,  
I sit in the library of this public university  
in search of Schomburg.  
I, too, am Puerto Rican,  
but I'm only twenty-three years old,  
a graduate student with small hands.  
Inside my cubicle Langston, Claude,  
and Zora patiently wait,  
stacked to one corner of my desk,  
on the other side-piles of notecards,  
three pens, one pad, a stick of gum.

IV

My professor wants me to build a thesis,  
to write what is true,  
a theme that binds together the lonely voices  
Schomburg gather up in his strong hands-

stories whose bones clack in unmarked graves;  
memories stained by the grease of Georgia clay.  
His teacher once told him,  
"Blacks have neither history nor culture."  
Hatred is acid, ignorance fog-  
praise the man who loved books.

*Frank Varela*



## Contributor's Notes

This is **Helen Ann Berg**'s first appearance in *Apocalypse*.

**Richard Broderick**'s work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Talking River Review*, and many other journals including *Apocalypse*.

**Michael H. Brownstein** has been widely published throughout the literary presses. Recently his work appeared in *THE CAFE REVIEW*, *WORDWRIGHTS*, and others. His original one man pieces have been performed in various venues throughout Chicago. He was the publisher in *THE PAPER BAG PRESS* and he has won a number of awards for his work including the Ommation Press Best Chapbook and the Triton College International Poetry Award. All together he has published more than three hundred works of poetry in over two hundred literary magazines and over a half dozen chapbooks including *POEMS FROM THE BODY BAG* (Ommation Press), *THE SHOOTING GALLERY* (Samisdat Press), and *THE PRINCIPAL OF THINGS* (Tight Press).

Additionally, he teaches in the inner city of Chicago at the elementary school level, holds educational grant workshops, has begun recording his performance pieces with a grant from the Chicago department of Cultural Affairs and works with a group of students studying authentic African instruments.

**Mike Catalano** is from Montgomery, Alabama and has been published in *Apocalypse* 3 and 5. Currently, he is on a two year sabbatical throughout North America, researching tribal lore, folk tales, and legends. His latest book is *The Sign Language Wedding War*, Closet Wolf Press.

**Randi Davis** is 19 years old. She lives in Kahoka, MO and attends Culver-Stockton college in Canton, MO where she is a sophomore nursing major. Her future plans include marrying her fiancé, Matt, in 2001 and becoming an RN after graduation in 2002. She says, "The story entitled 'The Lunatic' was a combination of my love for Stephen King and my obsession for 'Days of Our Lives.' It was a story that I enjoyed writing a lot. 'Metaphoric Link' was the product of an attempt to creatively describe a diamond engagement ring."

**Emilio del Valle** is a former *Apocalypse* editor who loves to write poetry and fiction. He hopes that his writing "gives something to the mind, useful for life and vividness."

**Maureen Tolman Flannery** has established her poetic ground of being in the various landscapes of her life experience, growing up a rancher's daughter in Wyoming, becoming infatuated with the rich complexity of Mexico, settling in Chicago to raise her family of three sons and a daughter who, along with her husband of twenty eight years, provide much of her raw material. She received her BA and MA degrees in English Literature from Creighton University, and has taught English as a Foreign Language for twenty years. Her poetry has been heard on *Dial-A-Poem*, Chicago and has appeared in *ToWards*, *California Quarterly*, *Buffalo Bones*, *Rambunctious Review*, *Woman's Way*, *National Library of Poetry*, *Poetry Motel*, *Chasm*, *Windhoner*, *Mediphors*, *Catechumenate*, and *Blue Violin*. Poems are also being held for inclusion in six anthologies in search of publishers.



**Candy Hamilton** is a journalist and a poet. She has had poetry published in a wide range of anthologies and literary quarterlies including *Blue Pitcher*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and *Plainswoman*. She has won two national awards for her poetry and published a chapbook, "Wind, History, and Other Friends." She is now working on a second chapbook. Candy has also won three national awards in journalism and recently had a short story accepted for publication. The South Dakota Arts Council endorses her as a writer in residence, and she also has done residencies for the Rushville, Neb. schools; the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyo.; and Pine Ridge School Summer Program. She enjoys reading her work at regional poetry readings. She works in Oglala as a freelance journalist and writer as well as teaching part-time at Oglala Lakota College.

**Nathan Hoks** is currently studying creative writing and languages at Loyola University Chicago. He is editor-in-chief of Loyola's literary journal, *Cadence*.

**Gayl J. Johnson** is a returning adult student at Northeastern Illinois University. She graduated from high school twenty years after dropping out due to dyslexia. In 1997, she graduated with high honors from Harold Washington College in Chicago. Ms. Johnson will receive her bachelor's degrees in English and Non-traditional Studies in December, 1999, and enter NEIU Graduate School in the spring 2000 to complete her studies in Special Education, Learning Disabilities. She has been writing for more than thirty years. Ms. Johnson also serves on the Board of Governors of the 32nd° Masonic Children's Learning Center in LaGrange, Illinois, which provides free treatment to children with dyslexia.

**R. Kimm** completed his Doctorate, in philosophy, at DePaul, in Chicago, from approx. 1971 to 1976. He very much enjoyed the opportunity to teach at DeKalb Community College and S. Chicago State University, plus his T.A.-ship at DePaul where he was a "Phelan Fellow" for two years "running." Always swearing he did not plan on teaching, but rather, on writing; he soon got his wish, in the big but small, mean but good-hearted "average" American city of Syracuse, NY. Essentially ten years of minimum wage jobs, then ten years of good jobs as a "machine tender" as at "just-in-time-ship plant" near the Syracuse Airport. He has published one chapbook, *Goin Nowhere(s) Sunday*, with Bullthistle Press, Jamaica, Vermont in 1997, and approximately 160 poems "otherwise" (It's the "otherwise" that always gets you...)

**Mary Elizabeth Kisner** is a poet and novelist. She is a retired English teacher and retains an intense interest in education. She is an active volunteer with a particular interest in the education and protection of women and children. She is the mother of Jerry Lynn Kirkpatrick, Mary Beth Griffin, and Jonathan Henry Kisner and the proud grandmother of William Kirkpatrick. She lives in the historic family home in Amarillo, Texas.

**Errol Miller** has previously appeared in *Apocalypse*, as well as in *American Poetry Review*, *Rhino*, *Oyez Review*, and more.

**B.Z. Niditch** is a poet, playwright, and teacher. The author of seventeen books of poetry and prose, he is widely published throughout the United States and abroad. A new collection of poetry is due later this year. He resides in Brookline, Massachusetts.



**Michael Pendragon** is the Editor/Publisher of two small press journals, *Penny Dreadful* and *Songs of Innocence*. Nearly 500 of his poems, stories, articles, etc. have appeared in over 150 different publications on four continents. A chapbook of ten of his stories, *Nightscares*, has recently been released by BJM Press in the U.K. Among the many publications his works have appeared in are: *At the Brink of Madness*, *The Catbird Seat*, *Mindmares*, *Enigmatic Tales*, *Nasty Piece of Work*, *Vampire Dan's Story Emporium*, *Gathering Darkness*, *Event Horizon*, *The Pannus Index*, *Unhinged*, *Terror Tales*, *frisson*, *Goddess of the Bay*, *Scared to Death*, *The Dream Zone*, *Edgar: Digested Verse* and *The Visionary Tongue*. He is currently engaged in an ongoing literary duel with Brit author Rhys Hughes on the Masters of Terror website.

**Richard Reeve** has stories, articles, and poems published in England, Spain, Canada, South Africa, Japan, Italy, and the United States. He has lectured at the University of London and tutored in Tangiers and Spain. He now resides in England.

**R. Roden** says, "On the rare occasion when someone has told me that one of my poems meant something to them, it has meant something to me also. The best reading I ever gave was for five minutes to an audience of three. That's 15 minutes. I surround myself with the works of Marc Almond, Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, Li-Young Lee, Allen Ginsberg and Charles Bukowski. I feel that these are the right books."

**John Rossi** is a writer and musician living in Chicago with his wife, their two dogs, and enough power tools to overtake and forcibly rebuild a small country. He has appeared in *The Apocalypse* before, and writes a column entitled *This Man's World* for NEIU's newspaper *The Independent*. He has received an honorable mention award from The Illinois College Press Association, and is a contributing writer for *Outrè* and *Filmfax* magazines. This is his first attempt at writing poetry unless you count restroom walls.

**Kathleen Sanchez** is a Bilingual Elementary School teacher, and an NEIU student. She has three kids and is a lover of language.

**F.J. Schaak** has been previously published in *Blue Mason Review*, *Santa Barbara Review* and *Texas Observer*. He keeps busy with his six kids and is currently teaching creative writing in Austin, Texas.

**Amy Stauffer** is a Chicago native and writer.

**Robert F. Tredray** is a former student at NEIU and former editor of *Apocalypse*. He lives in Chicago with his wife Penelope and his son Richard.

**Frank Varela** has appeared in *Apocalypse 6* and has published one book of his own work. He has also had pieces appear in *The American Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Bilingual Review*, and *Puerto Del Sol*.