

EXPRESSIONS

I N C A R N A T E • W O R D • C O L L E G E



Cover:

OTHERTIDE

Sharon Struckhoff

1985-86

EXPRESSIONS

I N C A R N A T E • W O R D • C O L L E G E

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"...when i express the highest/& the best/i express god..."

—debra f. medows

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UNTITLED

*Sharon Struckhoff
Third Place, Art*



ARTIST'S TOUCH

*John P. Buentello
First Place, Poetry*

*They begin in notions,
Fine and grand.
A delicate hand that mars,
Not the slightest smile.
Palisades pictured in the mind,
Mortared with sweat and time.
Night brings the Lady,*

*Who speaks to the soul,
Creating reality,
That never was.
They place a smile,
Upon pain, And,
With her ancient voice,
Make the brutal beautiful.*





TO RUBY

*Vivian Jimenez
First Place, Art*

EXCERPTS FROM JUNK MAIL (LETTERS FROM HOME)

by Josef Booker
First Place, Fiction

Dear _____,

that ain't nuthin ta do here but sing an work an be lonesome an dat aint no funn noways. i been a good boy so my ma say but pa ain't kind ta me ta'll. that be five in januairee an dat don't count granny. she be 90 in nex' sumer. so we all in de mountons fo' th' krismus tree. pa ain't parshell ta none'a dem. ma ain't reely happy 'bout krismus dis year. she say it'a conknivance'a de rich. i kess she rite. i don't no.

luce be mar'ed come march. we all glad she gone. ain't good ta be sinkle at 13. may say she be almos to ol' ta shame de fam'ly. i kess she rite.

luce fo'nd hank webster ta mar'y. he be 16 come sundy. he de one who kilt a baer las' year an' got rite skraced by it to. we fon hem all kuttan' nigh on bled empte. ma say it be a "mir'cle"... i kess she rite. now he mar'y luce an pa gladd ta see luce go. he say she be anuther mouth ta fill an' times dey be hard fo folks. dey be times i feels so cold inside dat i can not even see cleer. it lonesome now. like a big baer eat de sun up an' thar ain't no warm to ta bones. i rattles an shakes in bed at nites an is in iter'ble shape. but i goes ta scool an de teecher say i can do rite well fo an narabus. i dont no what narabus meen but it mus' be som'thin haf' good. she yells at me an stamps her foots an call me narabus. then she make me stan' in de cornur'a de room by my self an' calls me narabus agin to makes me behav she say.

one day i says i behav all de time. an she call me de narabus agin an makes me ta cleen th' chawk-bord. she say it good fo' me ta make me a good man. ma say it sillie ta stan in de cornur when yu should be larnin'. iyam larnin i tells her but she gone on wid makin lucas dress fo de wedin. pa jus has'em a drink an counts de days 'till luce be gone an' a truble to hank.

but i likes hank an' he ain't nev'r been meen ta me. i woodn' put no truble on'em like dat. but pa is a mi'ty stiff one at times. he woodna' bend fo'a dime. he jus fin' sumone to do it fo'em.

teecher say i can think good even its it don soun' so good. to bad i ain't had no scool in des years. i be klos ta 14 i thinks. ma don say an pa cant 'member nuthin. granny aint a good one ta ask cuz she so old an pa say she tells anythan' she want cuz she be so ol'. teecher say dat i culd go ta better scool if'n i works hard. pa jus snort an man don mak no anser.

i thinks i likes ta go.

(The Spring time comes. The harvest. The gathering up of all things. The Season of Plenty. The Earth twists so silently that none ever notice it. The Hearts speak to God, souls yearn for Salvation. Children grow older, stronger and gather their lives in small bundles of skin and bones. They are expansive. They are small and without hope. They brim with Golden Light. They are the dust of Adam and the Seduction of Eve. In the corner of the simple wood cabin the boy lies awake and counts the Stars through the thin sackcloth which hangs limp but majestic from the wooden stick. His bed rests under the window and a faint cool breeze brushes his hot little face. The hook-nose the sandy hair blemish the soft uncharacteristic glow of childface. He has the appearance of a young man because of them. He stretches his thin body out and glares through his half-closed lids. The Night crawls and trods the Land a short Time. Then in a brazen glory of Fire the Sun returns and sparks New-Life into the tired old Earth. New living things grow and nurture from the Fire. Fire is Life and it is Death. All is One in the One. There is no Divided Hearth. All is One. The boy sleeps while the Earth silently twists through the grooves of its Universe).

Dear _____,

It been nigh on two year or so since I been a schoolin' and I have been doin much better in my letters an' such. 'Course, its gonna be some time 'fore I get really good and proper at things like this, but Mrs. Johnson say I'm improved a lot.

I can think back to my youth when I was ignorant, and not the pure ignorance of not knowing, but the narrowed view of a vacuum'd stupidity. Now that I know I am ignorant I can do something about it.

Mrs. Johnson say that someday I may even be a true gentleman and not this stick-clod with hair. I feel ashamed of what I am and know that I am seeing life for the first time. It been a real sore life I have led — the virtues of school have saved me from a sea of regret and I am right glad. In my heart I thank old teacher for her wisdom. Remember her? Old teacher. Mrs. Cadwallader was her name. She was the rsuty knob'a thing we all made fun of and I think hated with some love thrown in. But children are cruel because they are innocent of vice and that makes their cruelty purer. See, _____, I am right handy with a phrase now. This I owe to Mrs. Cadwallader. She is my saving angel. She give me the courage to go to school serious and be a good man. I am on the path to right and that is a mighty amazing feeling. Even if she did call me her "narabus" which she was saying was ignoramus. I was so dumb I did not know what she said. But now I know and things are decent now.

Ma and Pa are doing right well and Lucy is happy with Hank and they have two little'uns. The oldest is about three and a half. Granny of course caught the consumption and is resting in the arms of Jesus now. She comes to me in dreams at times and tells me all 'bout Heaven and the Angels and such. I could cry I think, but I shan't. I am too happy for tears. I am an educated man now and educated men do not cry. Or at least that be what Mrs. Johnson say. Of course I am not wise, but I am a tryin'. I hope yu are well and that yu are happy. I am and that makes me want to share the sun with all living creatures. Once a man has learnt his real value it is hard to keep humble and be a settled in one spot for long. Now I have the itch to move and see some of the things I read about. Paris and the Bridge in London, the Rhineland River. Mrs. Johnson says it looks a might like Tennessee in autumn time. Land'a mighty! Can yu believe it! Goin' all the way ta Germany there and seein' Tennessee. It don't seem right somehow but I guess God knew what he was doin' when He laid down this old turf. Maybe it so I will not feel homesick when I go there.

Mrs. Johnson says that if I can keep true to my books I may win a scholarship to some east college and make a real fortune for myself someday. I hope she is right. But there are times when I feel mighty poor and unwell in the mind. Not that I am stupid'n weak but that now I know that there is so much to learn and know that... well, it almost makes a body ill.

For now I must work on my books and spellin' in which Mrs. Johnson say I get right lazy with an' tend to spell like I talk. And that I must not do. She is also giving me speaking lessons so that I will not sound ignorant. I only hope that yu all can recognize me when I come home to vist come Christmas. And that will be soon. Sooner than we think. But I must go now and read in my primer some. Then I must count figures and spellin' after that. In the spring Mrs. Johnson says I will start work on Latin. That is the talk of them old Romans (the ones who hung Jesus on the cross) that is how they spoke. Ain't that something?

Well, I must go now. God bless yu and everyone. Say hello to Matthew and James for me. And Emily too.

(It is the Time of the Green Corn Dance. The World is new and beautiful. The ugliness has disappeared. The boy is no longer a boy. He is like the world... He is renewed... yet He is ignorant of his true strength and power. He has never been to Germany, he has never been far from his own homeland. He is the silent tower on the mountain. He is. From his pen come sporadic notes. From his mountainous ignorance. There but for the Grace of God goes thee. And that would not do. In the Silence there is no Silence... but the unheard clatter of grinding Mechanics. The Soul is a machine that purifies, that cleans the Heart of guilt. It is Communion with God, it is re-Birth. Name it as you will. The Man turns His face to different Tasks. The planting of Corn, the quiet Death-stalk of the Hunter... the ominous hush of the arrow in flight. The smack of deer-meat over the fire. The owl's warning... the marks of feather and tooth on Stone... on Wood... on Flesh and Bone. The Man wakes and takes his fill, but He knows to give back a little of what he has gotten. Upon the Tree hangs the Bear-paw, the antlers of a white-buck, the bones of a squirrel. Over the burning pot He bends in thanks to the animal He has killed... He asks for the forgiveness of the One. He is the One. He is alone on His Mountain. The books are in His Head, His Heart, His Soul. He takes pen in hand and writes of what He has seen. He is now the Bone-picker, the Prophet, the Phantom. The low-lands offer very little now... not since that summer when He picked the cotton of His Uncle. The half-breed. The Big silent Man. The Uncle who Spoke the language of the Crawfish People. The Ancient Ones. The Choctaw. He no longer feared His Dreams. He saw them now more clearly. He knew their meaning. The Darkness did not frighten Him... He welcomed dusk with love, with an eager Heart. Even now the old Songs rumbled in his Mouth. He was alone, but He was not isolated in solitude. He drank from the Cup of Unseen Hosts).

"I bet you don't even know your real nem?" His Uncle said while stirring the embers of the camp-fire. "Your father was wrong in not telling you of your People and of their Ways. It is an Evil you must forget."

"Why is it evil?"

"Because your father denied you to you." And the way His Uncle had said this made the skin cold and hard like stone. The Boy felt the taste of the Grave in his Mouth.

"I had to perform the ceremonies for you when you were a Child." And Uncle took his coffee-cup to Mouth and Drank. Again He stirred the embers, He glared into their Heat for a Sign.

"You were small, very small." His Uncle continued. "I took you from your Mother's breast where you were feeding and I carried you down to the Creek. There I picked you from the blanket and covered you with the Water. This was to remind you of the rythm of the Earth and Her Sisters. Then I placed a crumb of dirt into your mouth to remind you of where you are from and to where you must return. You are of the Choctaw and our Fathers came from the Earth. From the Great Sacred Mound they entered the sunlight and found Life. This too you had to do. Then I cut your wrist with the talons of the Hawk to remind you of your Brother Creatures. Your Mother's mothers are of the Clan of the Hawk... and this too is your Clan. This you must never forget."

He never said a word. Nothing. Because He knew that His Uncle spoke the Truth. These things He had dreamed as a boy... an ignorant mass of flesh... and now... He knew

that all He had dreamed was True... was Truth. There can be no denying one's being... the factual Spirit that dwells within every living creature. The Spirit within Him cried and gave thanks... for now It could throb and quake and not be misunderstood.

(The Mountains are Laughing in the Own Way. The melting snow trickles down the Mountainside making the Sound of Joy. Hawks roam above the Man's cabin. They know that their Brother dwells there. At night when all is still and moving towards sleep, the birds come and listen to Him talk from Boxes. That is how the Animals tell it. He is the One who Talks from Boxes. A hawk sweeps down onto the ground before the Man and hears of the Christmas Tree and the School, of the Journeys never made and of the Lessons fully Learned. The Man does not look at the bird, but He knows it is listening to Him. The way He once listened and found Truth. The Air is pure and clean. The Trees sing in the Wind. The Sky darkens. It is the Time when Seeds rise from the Ancient Womb. It is Life.)

HI-TECH LOVE

by Pat Bowman

*Have you ever experienced Love
on a digital computer?
The exquisite touch and the maddening logic
are thrills beyond
the human perversion.
Tell me what you want
and explain those cravings in your heart
that even your friends fear
to hear.
I will listen
and maybe even accept.
Only honesty will suffice,
yes, purity is there.
Do you dare?*



UNTITLED

Teri King
Second Place, Art

MAY I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?

by Kim Connelly

*message in a bottle
rolling on to the sand with the waves
he hums to himself
curled up in a wicker lawn chair on the terrace
dreaming of blue turtles
every breath he takes... pensive
rhythmic like water lapping at the beach's edge
again and again... and again
every move he makes... relaxed
yet each muscle is alive
well-defined under smooth, golden skin
he welcomes the gusts of english breeze, salty and cool
with a handsome mug... ruddy, charming
see the british school boy dancing in his eyes*

*a mysterious panther is he
hear his voice... soothing, delicious
sometimes serious
a shadow in the rain
the kind of pain
deep set cheekbones and an icy exterior
then a devilish grin creeps on to his lips
playful as he prances to a reggae beat
a hornet in black and yellow stripes
waving a straw jamaican hat in time*

*once of three
now alone
the blue-eyed boy with tousled locks of blond
he has broken away to stretch his wings*

*strumming his guitar
in a baggy suit with jazzy tones of tan
and curious hints of grey
a distinct voice among new company*

*he sleeps on the veranda by the sea
dreaming of blue turtles*



LA SALVACIÓN

by Robert Botello

*La Muerte
pasó su mano
por la pared que separa
el mundo suyo y
el nuestro
pero no más pudo sacar
un hollejo seco.*

PUEBLA, MEXICO

Ellen Fox

THE FLOWER DEAD...

by Josef Booker
Second Place, Poetry

I.

The Sun rises
falters a few brief steps
across land
across sea
slips behind the mountains
and dies a Bloody Death
far off on the horizon...

The Moon comes out
from behind God's heart
and glows coldly upon
the frozen Death
the rot and endless decay
the men
the boys
piled in rows of silent death

Their laughter for other spheres
Their blood spilt
Their love emptied and gone
like steam from a horse's
open wound...

And one Boy
cuddled like an infant
in a Womb of mud
perfect in His sleep
forever still in His peaceful
repose.

II.

the flower dead
i have this pain in my left side
all darkness

i cannot see
there is a sound like...
a mother hushing her babe

i have this pain in my left side
the mud and filth
the barb'd wire and stink
the flowerdead
now there is silence
there is nothing...

but silence
silence that roars
and twists my thoughts
that stings like shrapnel
and cuts like a bayonet
i have this pain...

in my left side...
it hurts,
it burns like fire
it's as if the devil has stabbed me
with his hatred
the flower dead

the french girl
gave me the flower
pin'd it to my uniform
made me a quiet gift with a kiss
made me feel young again
now the flower is dead

and i have this pain...
this guilt...
i am the only one left alive
but i have this pain...
unlike pain
it moves deep into my heart

into my thoughts
it restructures everything
i can only think of the pain
it ruins everything else
it wraps all my thoughts
like a carnival bun hides the hotdog

(a tapping sound on the floor)

we laughed at stupid jokes
the mud caked on our boots
charles went down with a bullet
and then there was this pain
in my left side
it will not go away

the flower dead
and the mud came up my nose
there was a shout
and i heard the slap of metal in the muddy water
then silence...
the pain in my left side

*it burns it burns it burns
and i'm alone
there is no one here
no friendly hand
to cool this fire
to stop this pain*

*and god must have felt this pain
when he made the world
and when jesus died
when the metal burst through his hands
when the spear dented off his rib
and pierced his heart*

*when the son of god died
the father must've wept
and felt a pain
so hideous, so deep
that it ruined the beauty of the world
for the father*

*for my father
for my mother
they do not exist any longer
only this pain
only this pain
where am i?*

*there were eight of us
huddled in a black wet hole
now there is only me
and this pain for a companion
and a vision of the french girl
pressing a flower into my button-hole*

*(there is sleep
coming like a god
to change my pain into...)*

*mother begged me not to go
father blared something about duty
but only the french girl remains fresh
all else is faded like a sigh
an october sigh
when the leaves were*

*drowning in their fall
did they feel pain?
did they shout and cry out
or did they silently fall
into nothingness?
piled up with rakes*

*burned like witches
did they sigh
as they floated in that smoke?
like the french girl?
the flower dead
where is my flower now?*

*the buildings on fire
retreating back down the street
little walter lost his face
in the town square
and then i was alone
in the street with the*

*french girl
and her cold hands
her dark hair mangled around
her pale face
i have a pain in my left side
and i'm alone*

*and the shadow visits on some days
days when the pain is not so bad
when the medicine works*

*the shadow is a thing i do not see
but i feel its presence
like a darker shadow over my blindness
it is a vulture on a tree
it is god's judgement on me
it is the last thing i shall see*

*see is not the right word
mind twisted in this room
in this body
in this soul
in this pain in my left side
in this gasp for air... (for life)*

*the darkness grows and spreads
it is forever here now
it fills the room like water
i am drowning here
no one hears me drowning*

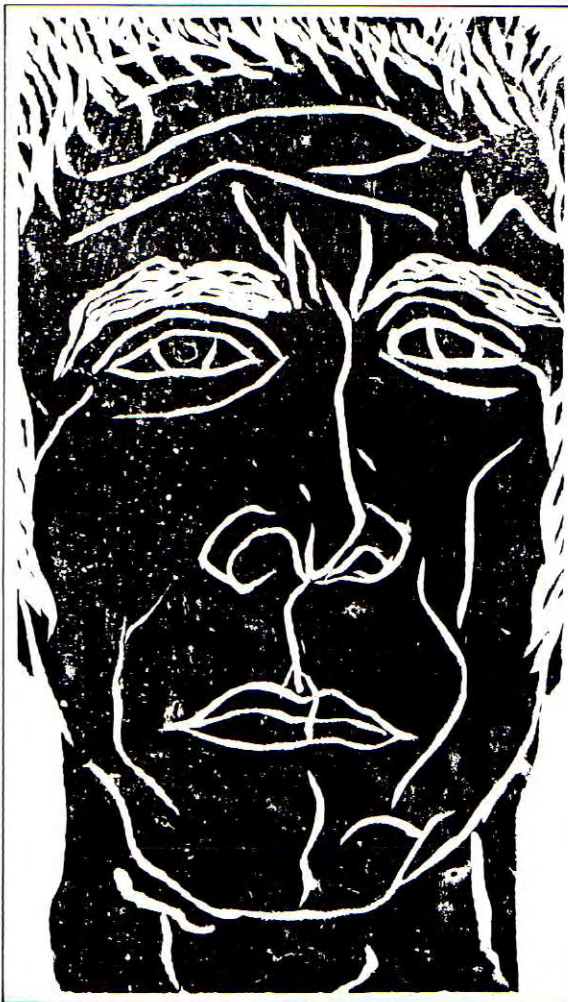
*my life ebbs and it is ending
the shadow laughs and places
a cold thing like a hand
over my mouth
i hear the muffled explosion
of time ending...*

III.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hargrove:

I am sorry to inform you that your son, Private John T. Hargrove was killed in the line of duty. Originally wounded during combat with German forces near Belleau Wood, he later died of his wounds. The doctors report that your son was unconscious when brought to the hospital and therefore felt no pain. I am sorry that this misfortune has occurred. May God grant you peace and keep you

*Sincerely,
Capt. Winfred Owens
22nd Regiment (A.E.F.)*



BRYAN

*Donna Noe
Fourth Place, Art*

ALONE

by Kim Connally

Maude tied on her faded calico apron and put a piece of bread in the toaster. The kitchen seemed so empty this morning as she solumnly poached a single egg. Even the blue gingham tablecloth and matching curtains looked dull and mournful. She poured herself a cup of weak peppermint tea and sat down at the table, her bones and the wooden chair creaking in harmony. She had set two places out of habit. A bare, white plate stared at her from across the table.

She vacantly gazed out the screendoor; the lawn was overgrown and full of dandelions. She had tried to mow it herself, but did not have the strength, even when she rested every five minutes.

The days were so long. She reminded herself that the sink needed a thorough scrubbing. The sagging spider plant on the windowsill could use a drink. Maybe later... Her gnarled hands fingered the charm hanging against her breast. How many times she had read the inscription: To Maudie, All my love, Harry. With a deep sigh, her eyes fell once again on the empty chair. She quietly sipped her tea.

THE PLAY IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE PLAY

by Eileen Cole
Third Place, Non-Fiction

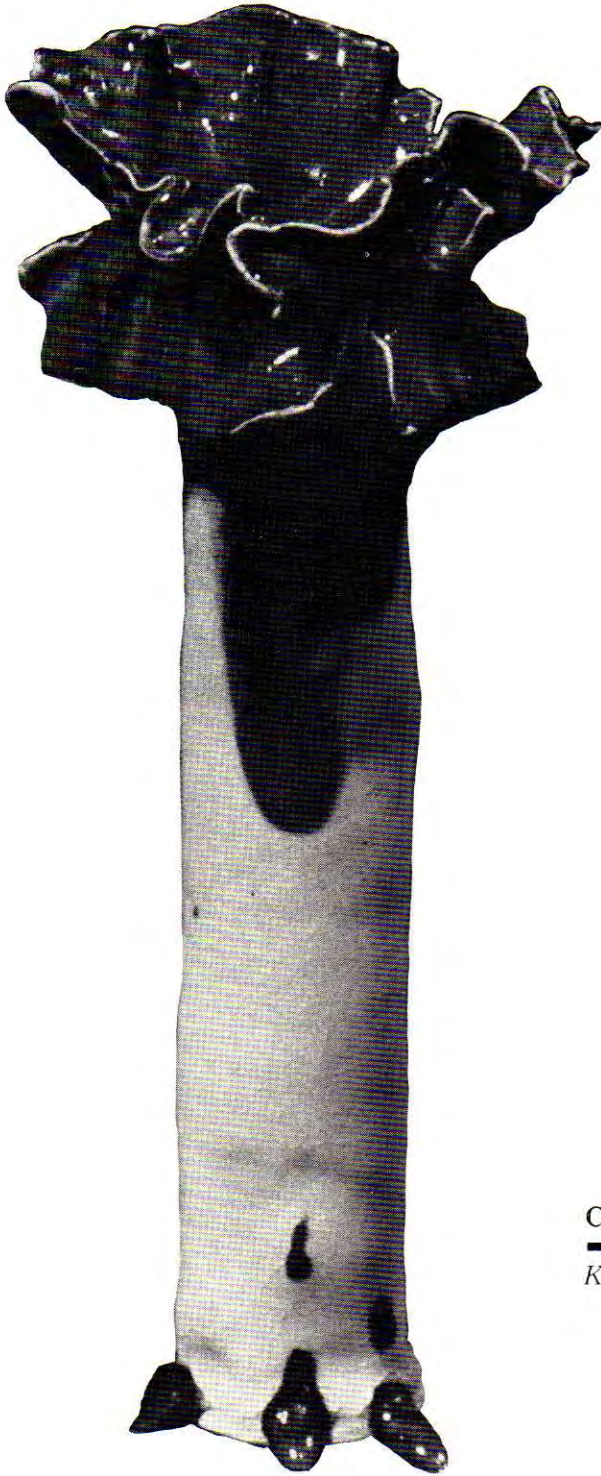
The life-force is almost spent. As if in defiance, the soul burns hotter, purer as the end approaches. With one brilliant flash it will end, and we creator/destroyers will have nothing to show for our efforts save a program and our veiled memories of that brief life — that play.

At its inception, it was but a delicate group of ideas cultivating in the mind of the director. But, in the coal-to-diamond process of creativity, the play had emerged — a living entity; with its soul comprised of truth, its mind of talent, with hands of strength, and a heart of integrity — each had been a gift. Its time among us may have seemed tedious or brief, brilliant or pathetic. But, as with any other life, our world had been, in some way, affected by its presence.

Nothing remains now but to strike it from our sight. The set is removed, piece by piece, just as it was constructed, and its memory now joins the ranks of other ruins from previous plays — past lives.

“What was the play?”

What does it matter, now. The theatre is dark, The stage is empty, and the mind as blank and dull as . . . a lifeless chunk of coal.



CYLINDER WITH FEET

Karle Ann Goode

THE SEARCHER

by Michael Coffman
Second Place, Non-Fiction

I went to the McNay Museum of Art to find a piece of sculpture to sketch. THE SEARCHER was tucked way back in an obscure corner, as if considered too grotesque for the casual observer. He's a leper. He stands, not on feet, but on the ragged ends of leg bones which protrude from the torn flesh of his calves. His right arm has fallen away and in the nub of his remaining hand he desperately grasps a long, thin walking stick, hoping to keep his mangled body from the ground.

One of the most heart wrenching (and stomach churning) features of THE SEARCHER is his head. It's so horribly distorted that recognizing it as human is almost impossible. The fetid mouth gapes wide with the suggestion of rotted teeth twisted to one side, and nothing is left of the eyes and their sockets but a putrid mass of tissue.

Why, out of all the beautiful and graceful works in the gallery, did I choose something like this? Because somehow this ugly little thing reached out and touched my heart. Though in pain, that leper was still on his "feet," looking for that one miracle that might save him and end his misery. And that made me realize... each of us is a leper — always hoping. Each of us is THE SEARCHER.

A CHANGE IN TIME

by Shaun Sheffman

My father used to be a big man, towering above me as my toes clung to his polished black shoes; and then, slowly, ponderously, he would swing out one leg at a time in a cumbersome elephant dance. Looking up, I would see the pressed expanse of a gray suit jacket, enclosing a dark tie sliced by a gold clasp. His face seemed distant and unreal to me then — smooth skin stretching across his great hooked nose and a drawn grayish hue under his eyes. I could never see the top of his head, but I knew the hair there was sparse, fine, and reliably dark brown.

But now that I am a college student — and supposedly an adult — my father appears different to me. His forehead seems looser, as if his years of work and concentration as a doctor have pulled the sallow skin out of shape, causing it to wrinkle across the brow bone and pouch beneath his cheeks. Upon his head, gray hairs lie over brown ones, now dull and flat. These days, I look almost directly into his sunken brown eyes; once, they saw clearly and well, but now glasses bridge his nose — glasses from a bulky black case stashed in his front shirt pocket.

I used to picture his legs striding purposefully down a hospital corridor, carrying him to an important destination. Now I notice he walks with a splayed, almost duck-like cadence that tries to demean his commanding walk. And in his dress shoes, always black or brown, his feet turn clumsily out to the side. They have traveled farther than I can ever imagine and have transported him to medical emergencies, across crowded hospital parking lots, and finally up carpeted stairs when he arrives home late at night, exhausted. Once, they even carried me.

SERVING JUSTICE

*by John Buentello
First Place, Non-Fiction*

Today justice seems at a loss for words. There is never enough said, never enough espoused, never enough considered on the subject. Our world is devoid of compassion toward it, no longer challenged by its precepts, unwilling to be moved by its whisper. We are a world without justice.

The concept is difficult, and the desire to avoid that which is sometimes painful to understand breeds in society the slim line of apathy that exists to form a border between a world of justice and a world of subjectiveness. There is no way to bend the object goal of justice, so we render ourselves from the concept in order to protect ourselves from our conscience. In time, like anything else, such isolation will result in a withering.

It is arguable whether there is room for justice in our world today. Survival is a struggle at best, and conflicting ideologies make cooperation a wicked path to travel. Approaches to solutions to world dilemmas are as fractured as society itself. Pride and self-centeredness draw us into ourselves, region by region, country by country, man by man. Compassion runs cold, and efforts to understand and aid run dry.

It is far easier, and requires a great deal less an expenditure of inner resources to turn away from those in need, those somehow wronged, than to reach out and aid. Some say ours is a world destined toward the very center of individuality; where no man reacts to another, helps another, and thus is protected. We build such walls within ourselves and dwell safely within them, alone, unharmed, untouched.

Justice is a form of education. It is the education of the mind and soul, and it is painful in its lessons. It teaches us the valuelessness of the self without another. It teaches us that in order to grow we must give up the comfort of isolation. It teaches us that justice costs, and sometimes costs heavily.

Recognition of the lack of justice is not enough for such a teacher. We are instructed to react, and thus act, and in acting to risk our position in society. It asks that each of us be willing to do all that is called for, to give all that is needed, to accept loss of self in order to assure justice for another. Such a harsh teacher offers nothing in return save a society in which there is justice.

Today there is apartheid of the soul and body, of compassion and action. We starve within as well as without. We qualify the need to preserve justice in all its forms. The concept of justice calls to us, not of a country, not of an ideology, but of that place within every man in which it dwells.

A call to action is indicated. The call is not for destruction, not for overwhelming cries of anger. The call is for us to listen, to investigate, to learn from our teacher. Justice is an end of itself, and the means must serve that end. To serve justice we must act justly. To do so we must think and feel with justice. To do this we must open our lives to the injustice that exists, and call for it to end. Once we have spoken, we must never fail to act, for then we cry into the wind, and accomplish nothing.

THE LOVE BIRD

*by Lawrence Buentello
Third Place, Poetry*

i

*i am the love bird dying aflame
through the amber forest sea,
a soaring eye above the dwindling
spectacle of foolish prides;
not long to keep the wind a friend
below the feathers of my wing,
i am the love bird flying sad
beyond the spiraling forests
of my fading conscious world...*

ii

*some have cag'd my beauty
in the wire of a thin dome,
lonely on a wooden perch
and singing to my home
so very far into the forest
of some leave'd infinity...*

iii

*do not leave me in this cage,
for love is a free bird
flying in a soft green meadow,
flying in the light of morn...*

iv

*i am the love bird in the world,
a conscious dream of happiness,
dwindling to a field of sorrow,
dying in the flight of my plume'd
loveliness...*

v

*loose me not among the clouds
of some distant land of dreams,
i will not drift with clouds
nor suffer with the thermal streams
which sweep away the seeds of life
to some faraway and secret place...*

vi

*i am the love bird of harrow flight
come home to the gardens of my mind,
alighting there upon the thin black
boughs of my conscious world?
my golden plumage wavering
in the morning haze of yesteryear...*

TO BLUNDER

by Javier Villanueva
Second Place, Fiction

He was alone in the tiered lecture hall, as alone as anyone could be on a university campus. He stared blankly at the gentle shadows cast by the soft lights around and behind him, the lights that every so often twinkled in fruitless, cheering efforts upon a tear that tumbled sadly down his cheek. He didn't sob; he wasn't whining; he was just filled with the hurt, empty-feeling sorrow of a loss, though he hadn't actually lost anything. And the more he thought about it, the greater was the impression of total emptiness, of having everything inside sucked out with nothing left but the vacuum that pulled in on his ribs and forced out those burning, sad tears, one by lonesome one.

He heard his lover come in through the door above and behind him; and then he peripherally saw her stop just a couple of steps above the row he was in. And in the same way, he saw her look down at the hands in her Navy Blue sweat-top pockets as her black and honey-brown hair fell to cradle her thoughtful face. His mood lightened a little at her appearance. And even the peripheral sight of her threw some substance into the vacuum.

"Please don't be sad. I didn't mean to make you sad; I was only trying to explain to you... I really don't want to see you hurt like this."

He knew she was being sincere, but the reminder of why he was upset only sent fresh tears burning up behind his nose, and he frowned a little to keep them in check. It didn't help.

"I know you were only explaining how you feel, why you think you can't really give your love to anyone. Completely. Not even me." He said this while staring intently at his shoes, trying desperately not to cry. "And I can understand that it's mostly my fault you're like that. I know I was a jerk when I broke up with you the last time. I really hurt you." He was speaking nasally and stopped to sniffle back thick mucous. "But that was more than two years ago. We've been engaged for over a year now," he proclaimed in a smothered, half-pleading tone. "It really hurts when you find out the one person who you'd really give your life for can't love you. Won't love you," he said thickly, and his chest collapsed in silent, wrenching sobs which sighed resonantly through the deeper and emptier space in his chest.

She looked down at him helplessly and felt her own heart sink a little.

"I didn't say I don't love you," she half whispered. *I said I don't love you enough. What have I done? WHAT HAVE I DONE?*

She didn't know what they had been talking about, maybe something about getting married; that had taken the conversation to THAT. She had promised herself she would never bring up the subject again.

When they had gotten back together for the second time in over five years she had had the primary motive of revenge, and had gotten plenty by laying down guilt trips strategically maneuvered into conversation. She made him suffer.

But he had changed. Not drastically, but enough to really make a difference. He was always warm and kind, and very loving. *And he was even friendly.* And then he had

completely surprised her when he proposed to her. In fact, it had been one year exactly three months ago. That was when she had promised herself never to bring up... *WHAT HAVE I DONE?*... never to tell him that after the second break-up, she had steeled herself against loving too much, against committing herself so fully that she could be hurt again as deeply as she had been hurt that second time. She had set herself with firm resolve never to trust anyone so much that if they broke that trust — *If HE broke that trust* — it would make her flip completely out. And she knew that if he ever did do that again she **would** lose it. She never wanted to be that hurt again.

Like I'm hurting him. Oh, god, what have I DONE?

She stepped down the two steps to the tier he was sitting in, walked over and sat down beside him. "All I said was that I just have to look out for myself. I don't want to get so dependent on you, or anyone, that if something happened I wouldn't want to live anymore. I mean, what would happen if you died in a car wreck tomorrow? What happens to me? Would you want me to be so hurt and sorrowful that I'd probably just die?" She had grabbed his arm and was squeezing it gently, gazing tenderly into his face.

I'm so sorry.

"I know, he said between sniffles as he dried his cheeks with the back of his hand. "I understand. I wouldn't want you to be sorry. I wouldn't want you to die." He put his hand on top of hers and caressed it, turning his big, brown, well-like eyes to hers, trying to hand on top of hers and caressed it, turning his big, brown, well-like

hand on top of hers and caressed it, turning his big, brown, well-like eyes to hers, trying to conceal the pain behind them, not succeeding. "I understand."

"You know, you just love me too much," she said with an attempted grin, but dropped her gaze ashamedly.

Maybe you'll love me less after this. What have I done?

"Well," he said after a long, tremulous sigh, "I guess that'll be my downfall."

"I love you," she stated, and looked up into those deep, sorrowing eyes. And when she did that, she knew with the complete and utter certainty of a revelation that whatever walls she had built, whatever resolve had steeled her, whatever complete independence she had had now lay useless and crumbled in heaps. "I love you."

He winced, slightly, and looked down into their hands. "I love you too."

FLOATING FLOWER

Donna Noe



madame butterfly

by debra f. medows

there is something truly gospel
about a black mother
her spirit fluttering in the breeze
like a butterfly needing to be free
needing to be free/needing-to-be-free
free of pain/free from struggle
strong/regal butterfly
take to the sky
just one day off/one day off
why don't you fly?

the men/the mother-moochers
milk her spirit
the children/the mother-junkies
shoot her up like heroin
madame butterfly, take
to the sky
she said, "chile' i need time — time!
i got legacies to build
i need time — got no time to kill!"

but there was always coffee perking
on the stove
permeating the sunday morning
with biscuits made from scratch/
pan sausage left from the
day before
butterfly, why don't you fly/fly
fly away from here?

one silver strand of hair climbed
from the root of her scap
to the temple of her brow
her butterscotch complexion
contoured in worry-lines now/
a cosmetic smile laced along
her countenance
butterfly, take to the sky!

"ya know, i usta be a dancer,"
said madame butterfly, landing on
my shoulder to sit a spell/
when she would tell the truth/oh,
she would tell it exceptionally well:
"an' i coulda been a magician,"
she said, blowing out her pollen-scented
breath/"but ain't no hocus-pocus
in this world ever gonna abracadabra me
some time"/she clapped her hands/"hallelujah!
i'm goin' home now/ain't got long now
when i'm gone,
sing a song/sing a good gospel
sing it loud/sing it long"

oh, but she was a magician
when she touched me!
her soft/glossy wings
wrapped around my psyche
like pigs in-a-blanket
freeing me/touching me/bringing me out
to inhale the flower of womanhood/shaping me/
making me know the black/magic travail
of a woman's being . . .

"an' smile for me
when i'm gone," she said
while reaching with her
slender fingertips to
catch a runaway teardrop
that found its way down
my face to the edge of my cheek
and then she gracefully
took to the skies . . .

the butterfly. . .
oh, she is gone now
her slippery spirit soars through
the sky/plays amid the trees
and i am warmed/warmed while
touched/touched while remembering
cause you see,
that madame butterfly,
she promised/she did say,
"you can't catch the butterfly, baby . . .
don't have long to stay."

THE METAMORPHOSIS

by Eva Matz
Third Place, Fiction

The shutters banged harshly against the peeling windowpane. I remembered lying down to a peaceful, cozy, bright afternoon on top of white cotton sheets to slumber. Drops of rain spit through the screen and spotted an old oak desk. I was amazed at the total transition of weather that had occurred in a brief two-hour period. Light fluffy cotton clouds metamorphosized into dark thick blankets.

Tiny bumps began to appear all over my skin and my hair stood on edge atop my arms. I discarded my tee-shirt and jeans and dressed in gray sweats and house slippers. I could smell the musty dampness of wet soil and sense slimy worms washed on the pavement. Drops gently bent the ends of leaves on weathered pecan trees. They knocked off several of the blackened nuts that remained dangling from the branches. The rain patted the tin gutter which ran across the building, creating a harmonious melody which made me feel comfortable and lonely.

As I surveyed the room which had transformed from light baby blue to deep ocean slate — I felt an urge — a sort of wanting to be with someone. I wanted to be with someone that I loved, not just an occasional acquaintance. Almost everyone recognizes a need for love in his life at some time, but *I* had never truly loved anyone. The crumpled cotton sheets and lone pillow only emphasized my aloneness. Then, there was a break in the clouds and a piercing beam of light shone through. It cast a shadow on my window. The shadow was the silhouette of a woman with long flowing hair. She seemed so peaceful.

Then lightning flashed and thunder roared to a height descending with a frightening “crack.” It was so loud that a picture fell off the wall. All of a sudden — I was scared. My heart began to pound and I became very confused. I just stood in the middle of my room like a statue, frozen. I stood there amidst my briefs and tee-shirt and stared out the window.

I sneaked toward the window and peered out directly to the sky as if acknowledging a threat. I became angry. My dark brown eyes pierced the clouds and my stare was unrelenting. There was another crack, but it wasn't half as loud and seemed to trail away. The clouds parted once again and another beam appeared. Now the beam shone straight in my window illuminating the room. The loneliness disappeared.



TOTEM POLES

Teri King

YOUTH

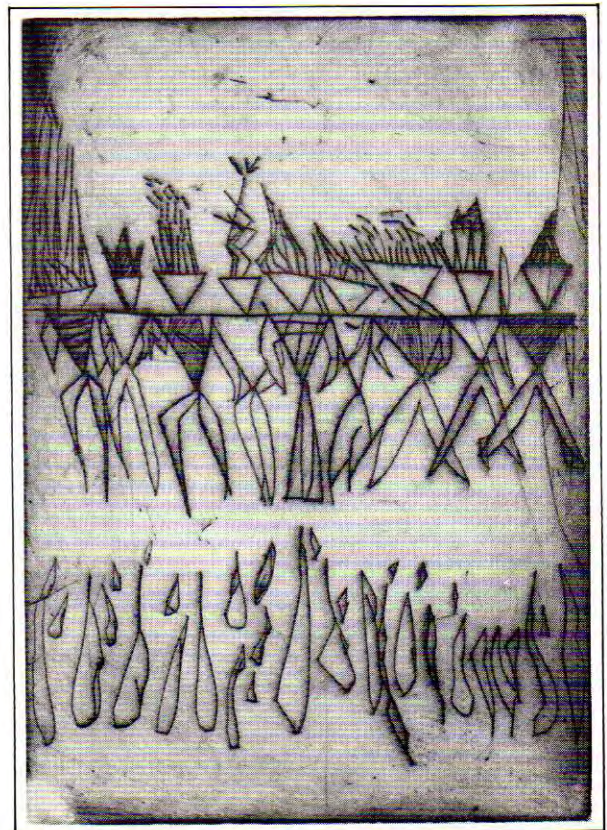
by John P. Buentello

*In my days of youth,
I once called to Gods.
Those who roam the corridors,
Of the heart and soul.
My gift was one of pleasure,
For then I sought not pain.
I used my talents wisely,
The years falling like wind.
I built straw houses,
Among those giving love.
Taking shelter from rain,
Born of inner storms.
In time the gift faded,
So much writing in the sand.
I looked to those forsaken,
Finding letters left unanswered.
I dwell within my buildings,
Hallowed halls of empty pain.
Remembering my better days,
Of light now spent in darkness.*



AMPUTATED SWIMMER

by Catherine Ciarrocchi



TRIBE OF THE FEET

by Catherine Ciarrocchi

THE HEART, WHICH ENERVATES THE SOUL

by Lawrence Buentello

i

A soul of purity is a rare form, for the mind must die before the base elements of the ethers occupy the empty frame of the eternal spirit of man. Only then can the spiritual shape of a man be uncluttered to perfection — vain interference by an imperfect mind will only abuse the natural flow of the elemental graces. Purity in any state must be the ideal form of a given element, undisturbed and perceived only as the reflection of the light which coaxes a skeptical eye. The mind of a man exists to the dismay of the struggling soul... there is no perfect resting state for the imperfect mind, so the soul, which is its internal mate, must lie bereft of that which it so naturally seeks to attain.

ii

If a man possesses a heart, and a soul, and a mind, then this combination must be the sum of his living character. Elements, left alone and unmarried, are base and without life — without a reaction to another element, there is no life, nor entropy, merely existence — and this denies the premise of the existence of a multitude of elemental states. So the heart, mind, and soul must come together in their furious marriage of characteristics to form the thing which is a man.

iii

The soul is man of perfection, made imperfect by the naturally and powerfully interfering mind. The heart, like a sad lover to both, must rest between, forever in pain, forever in agony of two uncompromising friends. There is time only for the painful and the unsatisfying, for the heart may never satisfy the natural desires of each — the heart must pray for both the violent curiosity of the mind and the solemn majesty of the soul, and may never rest in this tortuous realm for proper worship. The heart, which enervates the soul, which aggravates the mind, must remain forever in the turmoil of the core of a man, fighting the bitterness which so easily comes to one of so vital, and so futile, a presence.

iv

There has been art, and grace, and love for men — they call it by the most colorful names of the most vibrant languages in the finest of musical voices. But it is all nothing more than the imprisoned hearts of men which daily struggle to free the chains of those elements of man which, by their very union, are condemned never to be free...

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