

the
CRUCIBLE

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE *of* LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY



ANNUAL

1998

the
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THE LITERARY MAGAZINE of LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY

1998

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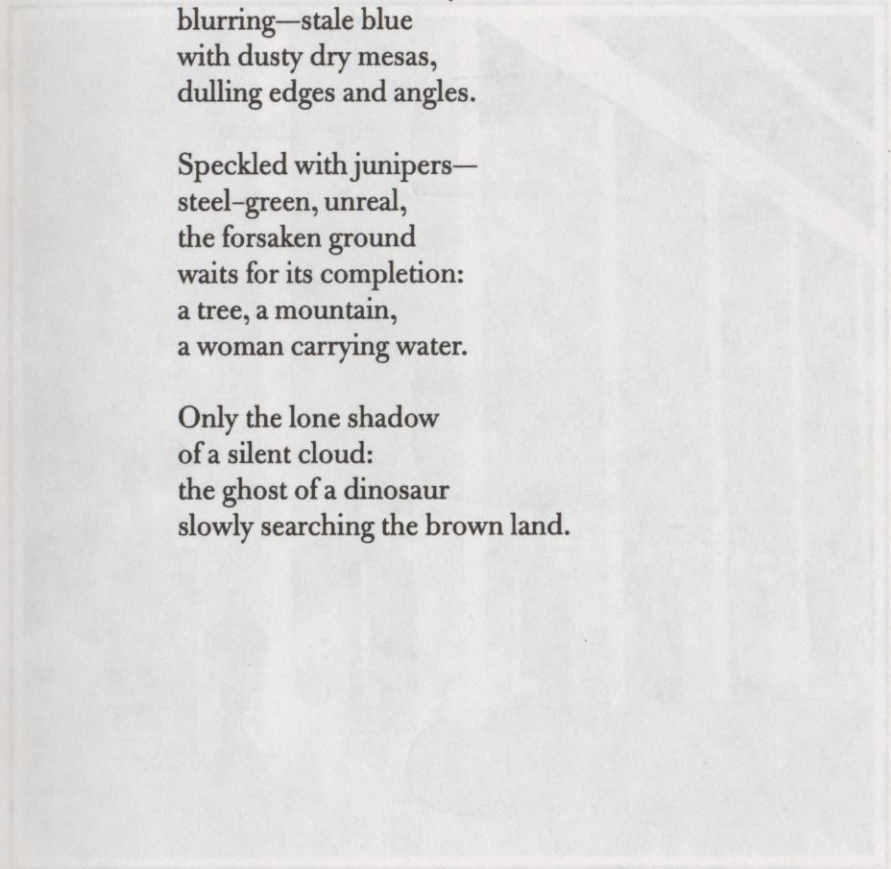
Michael Peeler

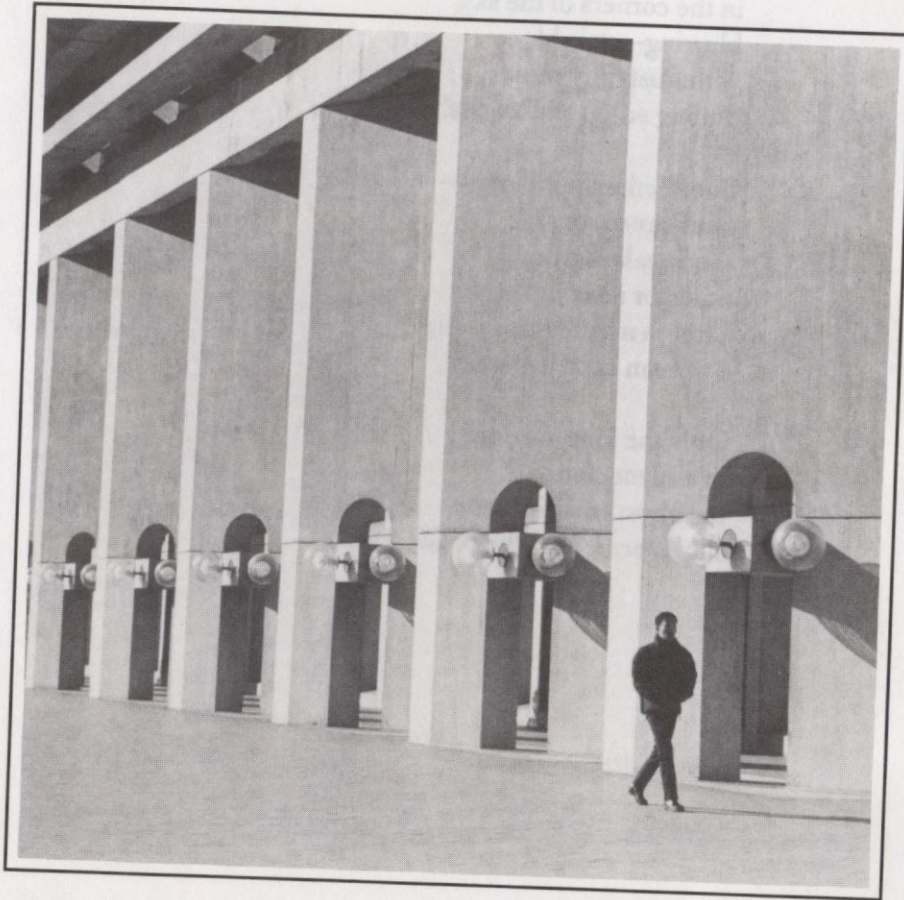
Distance

A tortuous haze
collects like cobwebs
in the corners of the sky,
blurring—stale blue
with dusty dry mesas,
dulling edges and angles.

Speckled with junipers—
steel-green, unreal,
the forsaken ground
waits for its completion:
a tree, a mountain,
a woman carrying water.

Only the lone shadow
of a silent cloud:
the ghost of a dinosaur
slowly searching the brown land.





Justin Brocious
From a Campus at Midnight

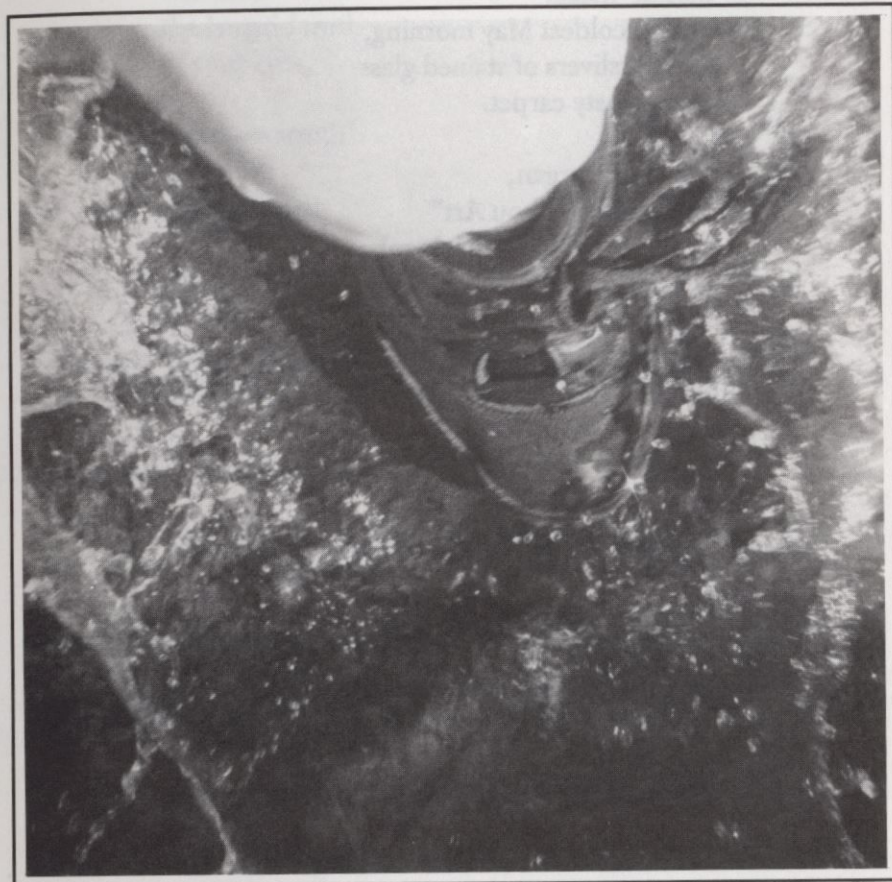
One must compromise when
walking this lighted path.
For here the stars are never
found in the black sky,
but in pulsing sidewalk
phases of dim to dancing
diamonds, exploding
on the concrete like
a thousand flashbulbs
in the great distance.

Amy Baughman
Untitled

You, the slow old woman,
who drives the brown Buick Skylark,
with God as your co-pilot,
wearing pink spongy curlers
in your silver hair.

No matter where I go,
you go too.
Your eyes just clearing
the dashboard,
you using the steering wheel
as support to keep your
small
hunched
frame upright.

Cruising at speeds
at which I can't even coast,
your red break lights
glare at me as I
follow you up hills.
Pedestrians can pass you
but I still follow,
hoping for the dashed
yellow line to appear.



Beth Bertram
May 13

Sun,
mosaic-maker
on this coldest May morning,
spilling slivers of stained glass
on the rusty carpet.

Humming organ,
"How Great Thou Art"
comforts babbling black-robed
believers. But today
mortality is a closed casket
drenched with flowers
and the words choke me,
a green-suited griever.

Breeze of nineteen years
evades the mourning,
strokes my rigid body.
Each whisper screams
that you are here
and splinters my spine.

Amy Linn
Winter Solstice

My ancient heart
will keep
the languid truth
of your eyes,

like the warmth
of the fire
remembered,

when the flame
is forgotten
and the embers are
no more.



Tara LoPresti
Box of Shadows

This is not a night for sad stories.
The air is much too pleasant,
Promising lilacs and wisteria.
The moon is grinning wide,
Displaying her poker face
Of quiet calm.
She is concealing the hand
Which fate has dealt.
Her dark tresses drape me in shadows.

Shivers are creeping
As the wind delivers destiny,
Exhales lilacs and death
Upon our door.
The stars are a twinkle of hope
In the eye of night,
Which winks around me.

The moon has coveted my faith,
Swallowed my hope,
And me,
Whole,
Drinking in my dreams
In great gulps.

Faith lies in waste,
Caged in a box of shadows
In my heart,
Glimpsing stars through my eyes,
Wondering at my lost child.

Aborted hope
On a still-born night,
Scattered among the darkness

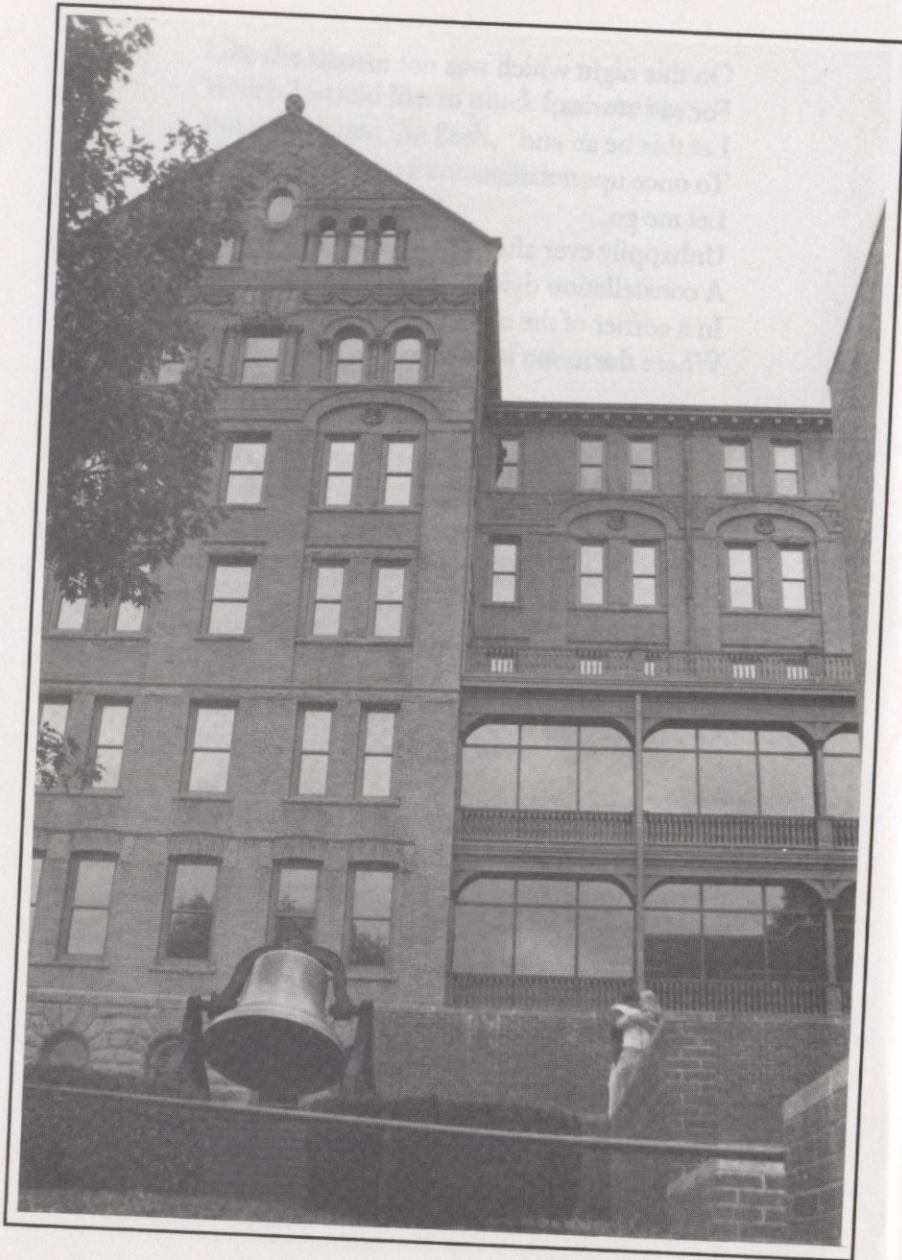
Like the stars,
Which I would like to pluck from the sky,
Burn them into the flesh,
Mold myself into a constellation,
A falling star,
Mistaken for a wish
In the charcoal night.

Nightingales hum a song of remorse.
The baby cries,
my child,
Like nails combing a chalkboard.
She shrieks
From within her tomb,
Shatters the cold sterile walls,
Of the doctor's office,
Where she lies in wait.
Dead.
Asking, crying, questioning,
For what crime she was slain.

Pick up the pieces of my heart,
Mold them back together,
Gather the stars,
Stitch them on my body,
Release my shattered faith
From this cage,

This box of shadows,
This falling hope,
This failing dream,
This body of a murderer.

On this night which was not meant
For sad stories,
Let this be an end
To once upon a time.
Let me go,
Unhappily ever after,
A constellation dying
In a corner of the sky
Where the moon is grinning wide.



Jennifer Koskey
Expired Memories

I have so many things on my mind
so many things on my heart
so many memories crashing
inside the ocean of my soul
you are right in the current of the storm

I'm not sure how well you are
staying afloat
I can't see you
I can't tell how you are
I can't tell if you are swimming
I can't tell if your mama took you
to swimming classes as a child

I can't tell if you enjoy this water
If this water is hot, flashing an unseen flame
If this water is freezing, leaving snowflakes
upon your forehead, upon your naked arms
If this water really is lukewarm

Then maybe I have a chance
of digging into that soul of yours
of reducing your control in the past
over my naive heart
who followed your ways
because it longed in the ways to
purchase your battered life
Although her life was the battered one
she does not know if your expired memories
included violence

she does know that her expired memories
were not the only ones she was ready

to open as a dusty old book in the attic
she does not know if they were for your eyes or not
she does not know if she is ready to handle
someone reading her diary yet or rather
some man she's not sure if she trusts yet
to play a more important role on her stage

she wants it
she longs for it
but when she gets caught up
in the idea she slows down,
shuts the idea off as a person
would throw a remote control
towards someone who blocked that screen,
as if an awful comic were blaring from it

she wants to be able to feel comfortable
she wants to have that warm fuzzy feeling
she does not want the hot uneasy growling
in her gut, possibly over the cheese fries
and not because of her emotions

she hates the arguments
that as childlike as they were
gave her something to stimulate
that relationship
that overwhelmed her body

bringing her back to the dusty book of memories
bringing her back to the ugliness of that smell
bringing her back to the fear in her soul
bringing her back to the violence
bringing her back to the control

that she now despised
that once had felt so comforting
that was no longer a comfort to her
that she was a stronger person now
that this now felt demanding
father-like
in the pit of her stomach

But she still yearned for something
she still imagined something
that a warm conversation could change

something that had changed inside of her
something that had changed inside of him
something like a snake slithering off
his old decrepit smelly crumbly skin

she desired that he would change his ways
as easily as the snake had in the heat
that he would become strong
for her
for himself

that they would stop assuming
that they would stop arguing

that things would always be as
warm as a bubble bath,
that comforting,
maybe that was too much to ask for
but a little expectation
of expired memories
was what she lay her head
on the laptop to contemplate

Noelle T. Daidone
Precious Kindred
(Forming the Truck Stop Habit)

Dulled green-gold glitter sucked through
compressed tunnels
extracted from tactile ducts.
Chrome tracks explored your face,
criss-cross rivulets tapering at your chin
as salty beams of truth.
You cried to only me that night.

Inevitable, Irrevocable,
Destruction of The Tiny
Cradle made of clouds
balanced sweetly between sky ridges.
You cried harder to only me that night.

Surreptitious Damage.
Toes never to be counted.
The crinkled corners
of your gangrene misery
rolled out fluorescent
among my tangles.

Muffled, your fear
Gentle, my hands and judgment.
We walked until my muscles burned,
trudging violently,
wearing glacier eye-masks
made of natural face liquid
clinging tightly: second skin

Charcoal night release

My Interior Screams, "Junkie Bitch, he was
never yours. Angels, help me now."

My Exterior Tremors, "Apple-pie boy will always
be mine. Dry-eyed, he teaches me
sincerity, all ways of
manifested love."

I silently congratulate myself.
Fully Ripe
Rewarded at last.

Michael Peeler
Silence

Today I cut out my tongue,
the vow of silence
I had been threatening now realized.
The blood felt thick and lazy
in my mouth,
but there was no taste.

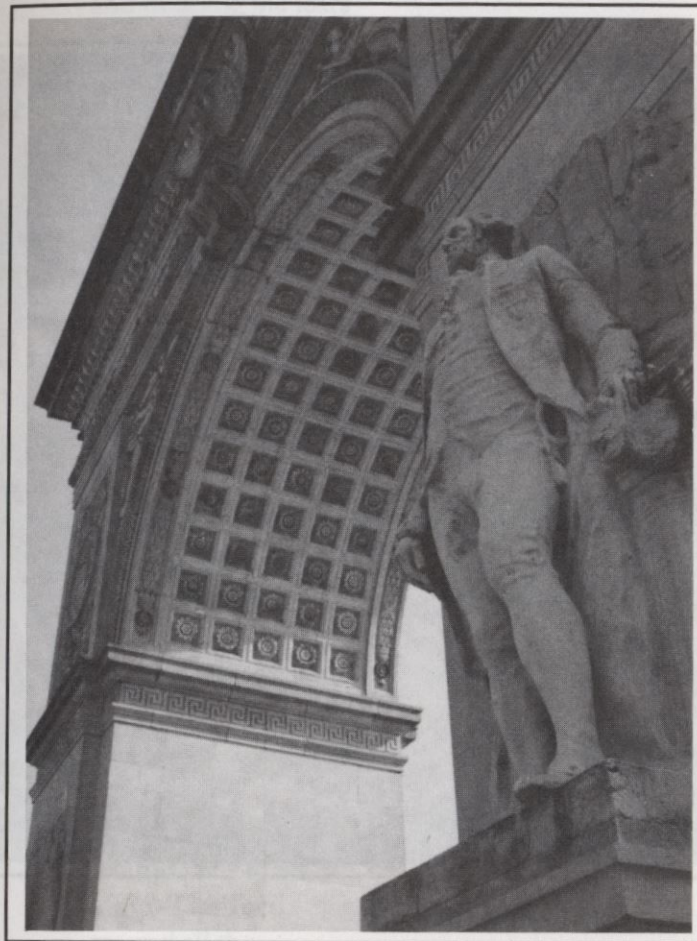
I smiled into the mirror,
my teeth framed with red,
my awkward smile made beautiful.
I felt a weight lifted and the wings
of my soul rose as if they were empty air,
freed from years of burden.

I want to tell you of the bliss
that shuddered through me
when I knew no more empty words
would pass my lips,
no more small talk.

I don't care about the weather.
Shut up.

I want to explain how pleased I am:
no more silence heavy with your expectations
as I sit across from you
with vacant, emotionless eyes.

Now I have an excuse—
tongue-tied becomes tongueless.
I want to tell you everything,
but speech fails me.
Today I cut out my tongue
and now there's so much I want to say.





Jennifer Koskey
Tip-Tip-Toeing Around the Rose Petals

One humid day
I went for a walk
and draining the tears
from my soul
I was wishing that
you in particular
would dry my eyes

You . . .
who had made
me cry many times
and had never
stayed at my side
to wipe my eyes
to heal my pain.
Never once, although
I tried once to dry
your eyes up and
your anger threw me
off that day
when trying to comfort
was the last idea you
had pinned on the
board of things to do.

I Tip-Tip-Toed
around your heart
I Tip-Tip-Toed
around all the
I Love Yous
I Tip-Tip-Toed
around the
“baby don’t tease me
just please me tonight”

for that's all it was
You Tip-Tip-Toed by
teasing my heart

I don't believe
I had finished Tip-Tip-Toeing
around your heart,
for I had only
gotten 8 steps
when my steps became
a little shaky
making me stumble
for I was wearing my heels
instead of my walking shoes
for it was you
that I was stepping
to please
and only you.

And it was only 2 steps
before I began to tremble
for my heart was beating
so fast and I feared
it would fall at your
very own feet
I feared you wouldn't
recognize it
and might even stomp
on it.
My fears were very unsettling.

My fears led me
to the pain
that I would later

learn was a gift
to not only
be with you
but to feel you
to know your insights
to have your
very own hurt
slashed with all
the blood gushing out,
to have it all
thrown my way
with no notice.

It was fear at first.
Later I became
accustomed to all
the pain
but every dull ache,
every slash,
every sting,
everything I felt,
all the hurt
you psychically
showed me
across the miles
which began a long line
of what I was to expect,
that it was you telling
me something. . .

I didn't know what.
I just knew it was you.
I knew you were in pain
at that moment

when my body was in
excruciating and unbearable pain,
unable to continue my days
until I knew that you
were ok finally
to know that you
had now become a
part of my soul,
and I guess maybe
my heart,
although I didn't want
to admit it.

I wanted to rush to your side
when I felt the need
I wanted contact instantly
to heal your bruises,
to let you know my love
would never shut you out
for your love was a window
and I had the ladder ready
for you to climb
the many steps
I had prepared for you.

Though I was not prepared
for the knives
you had hiding
behind your back
that I thought were spoons,
for I had prepared
a delicious dessert
for the two of us
to secretly eat
inside the garden.

Tip-Tip-Toeing on the rose petals
you crushed many of them,
crushing bit by bit
the very core
of my own soul.
The man I thought
had given me real love
was smashing
all my desires into a
dirty trash can full of crap

I ached, longing that you
would STOP,
but you continued
further and further
until you had received every
bit of my heart
or what I would
eventually prepare
to give you
for you hid your heart
for so long
although I knew
it was somewhere
on a plate
with rose petals
surrounding it like
a scrumptious platter
to be devoured and tasted
time and again
Because it was oh so good...

But our hearts
remained on the platters
so nicely prepared
never to be taken seriously
for they were
just a show that we had
so richly treasured
the whole year through,
the gift we hid
from each other
knowing it was
the one secret,
the treasure
neither one
could show each other,
for that was
way too precious.

Tip-Tip-Toeing around
each other's hearts
we got lost,
caught up in all the
excitement and the idea
of being in love
that we never
stopped to think
it could be a serious thing.

We stomped when we hurt
each other
crying in rages
as children
with nobody
to hold onto,

but only separation
for we were never
the King and the Queen
our dreams had prepared
for our hearts

We acknowledged the idea
but the fear
was given back
when we received
our change,
which did not amount
to anything valuable
as we had imagined,
but rather it
stormed our feelings,
leaking the diamonds
that were stolen by another
who didn't deserve it,
and later it was left dry
in our throats
making us cough up the
truth and when
that wasn't
what we expected,
we not knowing
where to turn in our paths
Tip-Tip-Toed backwards
and slowly
closed the doors...

Heather Rooney
Forgotten Memories

I remember
you
Not the smells of the hotel mixed with your White Linen
Not the wrinkled warmth of your love that I denied to love
out loud
But the lusterless eyes, your absence of air
Not you picking white snowballs in summer
Not the fantastical sound of your flipping flops
But the silence
Not the cries of the family
just the silence
of us both
Not our dippy eggs at Woolworth's
Not our sparkled ones in spring
But the pain, the breaking, the cold
of your hand
I wish to forget what I remember
I wish to remember what I forget

Tara LoPresti
In the House that Dick Built

I am washing away my dignity
On my hands and knees,
Soaking the white tiles of the kitchen floor
In cloudy water with a coarse brown rag,
forever wiping away the muddy streaks left behind.
I dip the rag into the bucket and with a mechanical motion
Wring out my pain.

The kitchen smells of Clorox bleach and Mop-N-Glo.
It is four o'clock in the morning.
The world around Dick's house sleeps.
The stars spin in the sky with a disorienting twinkle.
They are far from me.
I am removed from life and its luxuries,
except in dreams.

I was swimming through my fantasies
when I awoke to the roar of my stepfather
Spitting out words of rage in the hallway.
He is angry because children must not be seen
Or heard.

That was my crime.
I had made noise last night,
noise not related to household chores,
to the hum of the vacuum cleaner, or the rinsing of dishes.
I had laughed as I sat with my sister and brother at the
kitchen table.

And now he stands above us
like a plantation master hoarding over his slaves,
smiling at his power
and tightening the cold chains with which he holds us
in subservience.

It is our love for him which quiets our resistance,
replacing anger with sadness.
But I will not cry.
I will swallow my tears,
let them eat a great, gaping hole in my heart
before I surrender to his hatred.

I see through the soft cloth curtains of the window
that hide our pain from the outside world.
The dawn is sifting up through the darkness of the sky.
The floor is almost clean.

Smooth, white, impersonal,
to the satisfaction of Dick's obsession.
That is how he erases me.
I am the spot that must be cleansed
with his brown dirty rag
that is not clean itself.
His house must be spotless.

Sweep the dirt under the rug,
keep the children from being seen and heard,
as long as it appears perfect.
A cardboard cut-out family
with frozen smiles
and broken hearts,
reflecting in our eyes.

As we hold back our tears,
and fears,
and hope,
kneeling patiently on the kitchen floor,
bowing to the master of the house,

the builder of walls of separation,
of personal prisons,
the destroyer of dreams.
we beg simply for his love
and he is afraid.

I hear the gentle step of my mother
padding down the stairs,
and I believe that she will rescue me this time;
she will be my hero
like she used to be when we were young,
when her will was strong and her heart was warm.
I would give anything that she would not see me defeated
this way.

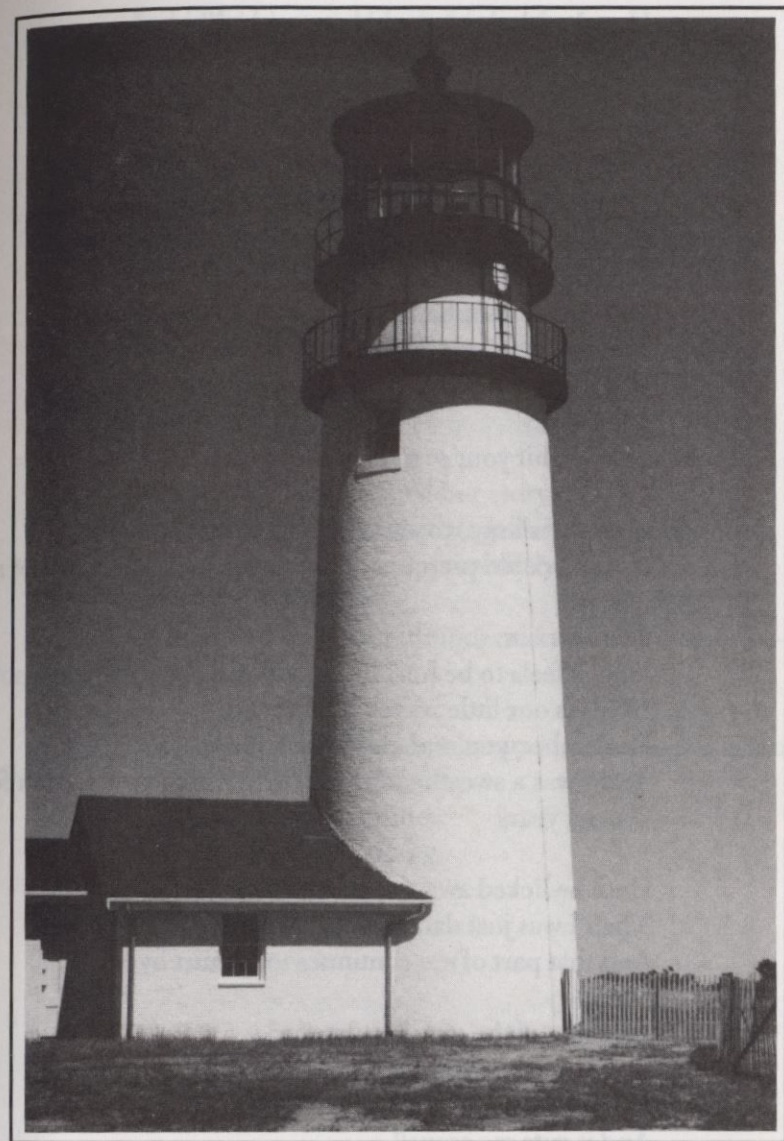
I look up at her
with brown water trickling down my forearm,
as I brush the hair from my face.
She will save me; she will save me.

I plead a million words with my eyes,
telling her of his brutality,
telling her that I want to exist,
to breathe, to live,
as she does.

And as she walks out the door, she asks coldly,
what I have done this time.
Choking on my sobs, I cannot answer,
I don't even know anymore.
I allow the tears and fears to spill onto the immaculate
kitchen floor.
The Clorox bleach has eaten away my hope.

This is all I will ever be,
an invisible daughter,
on her hands and knees
trying to scrub clean
the spoiled spots of her existence

in the house that Dick built.



Tara LoPresti
To Sylvia Plath

How I wish that I could have said it like you
With your razor-sharp tongue
And your words stained blood-black
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through
How you spat those words out
Like your daddy was a piece of rancid meat
You had chewed in your mouth for years
And then perhaps
You wiped your hand across your lips without guilt
And rinsed his awful aftertaste away
With a glass of milk
That easily
After he bit your *pretty red heart in two*

How I wish my words could cut like yours, Sylvia.
If only I could pierce my father with a broken shard of my
heart
To show him
How it feels to be hurt by those words he whispered softly,
"This is our little secret, Sweetheart,
Remember, you're daddy's little girl."
And I was a sweetheart to this man with a sweet tooth for
many years

Until he licked away all of my sweetness
Then I was just daddy's little girl
And that part of me continues to be hurt by him
Still is
And though he may be a bastard
I may never be through
For my razor-sharp tongue is double edged
And it cuts me as well.

Heather Rooney
To Li-Young Lee (My Father)

*Sad is the man who is asked for a story
and can't come up with one.*

You spun the tale, created the story:
Ten years together, spent alone,
Vacant of midmorning desolate cries,
Vacant of powder-perfumed mid-afternoon respites.

You spun the tale, created my story:
Ten years of anguish, well worth the pain,
Years vacant, now filled,
Prayers answered,
I came.

You spun the tale, created our story:
Days turned to years, spent together, hearts entangled,
Filled with whisper-soft, powerfully fragrant, blood
warming embraces,
Filled with front-porch thunderstorm witnessings, two-
stepped dances.

And now, nearly twenty-one years and thousands of stories
later,

I see you for the first time:
You, my *Prince Charming*,
You, my *Lorax*,
You, my *Papa Bear*.

Patrick Stehley

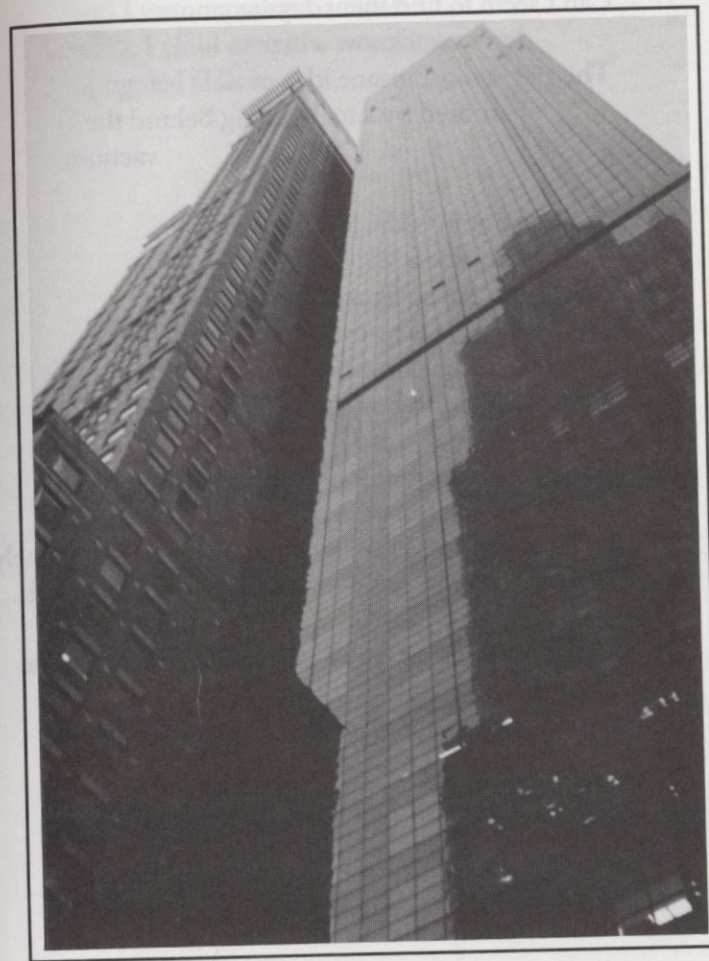
God

Dear Lord I am sorry
I have been gone for a while
Never here, or there
The world is a blur
I gotta get straight
Can't lie to myself
I'm gone
But not lost
Twirling eyelids in a sea of techno-colored dream clouds
She is beautiful
Blue eyes
Green hair
Spiral on her forehead of blue
Dancing
Purple love for the maker of the clouds
See your soul with a toothpaste telescope
Mirrors write love sonnets to the dancing souls
Kiss my aura, and taste the bounty
You see me, but do you see me
Chocolate bunnies singing hymns to me on Halloween
You laugh like some generic toy from the local delicatessen
But you eat the sandwich of destiny
Filling rain buckets with the crumbs of your life
Forgotten pictures
Slide show
Naked free Polaroids on steroids for their hyberticulitus
You smile, but with the teeth of George Washington
Tripped out pastors preaching love
You sing off key on the hymn
Collection plates
So you deposit your suppository catalog down the
perpetual spiral
Fate eats you like sushi
Raw, you are there but disappear

Grinning like the Cheshire cat with Alice at its side
Music pumping, and you dance
The clouds are beginning to break
You get hit with a chunk and bleed urine
You are stagnant and placid
Universal wonder of man in a can
Free toy inside
Perpetual landslide
It falls
And grows anew
Blossoms of honeysuckle and rose
I wish to climb the mountain to touch the gods

Domenica A. Demaria
Absinthe & You With Me

come to Prague with me &
hold my hand on the plane
lay on the ground with me
to photograph old buildings
history
delicately pour endless glasses of Absinthe
velvet & dust
"sugar," you say, "you're always pretty, but
you're not beautiful until you smile."
"sigh," I say.
little streets
big hearts
big dreams
little hope



Andrew \$in Smith
I Took Off My Shirt

I took off my shirt
and the night went w/it
Can't seem to find them days anymore
don't even know where to look
The single most insane idea of all is being
harbored by a man hiding behind the
vacuum

Hat to the side w/the format to twilight
happiness lei
Blueprints and schematics
unleash your viral antics
Simply sin in the machine/conquerer
that is too busy to be of any importance

Find the word you lost on the fire-escape
escape from the place you hoped to lose
No more darkness [or any other dark words], namely
death.

Nighttime takes away the sane, buries living people
happy—
sleeps w/o the help of foam-earplugs.

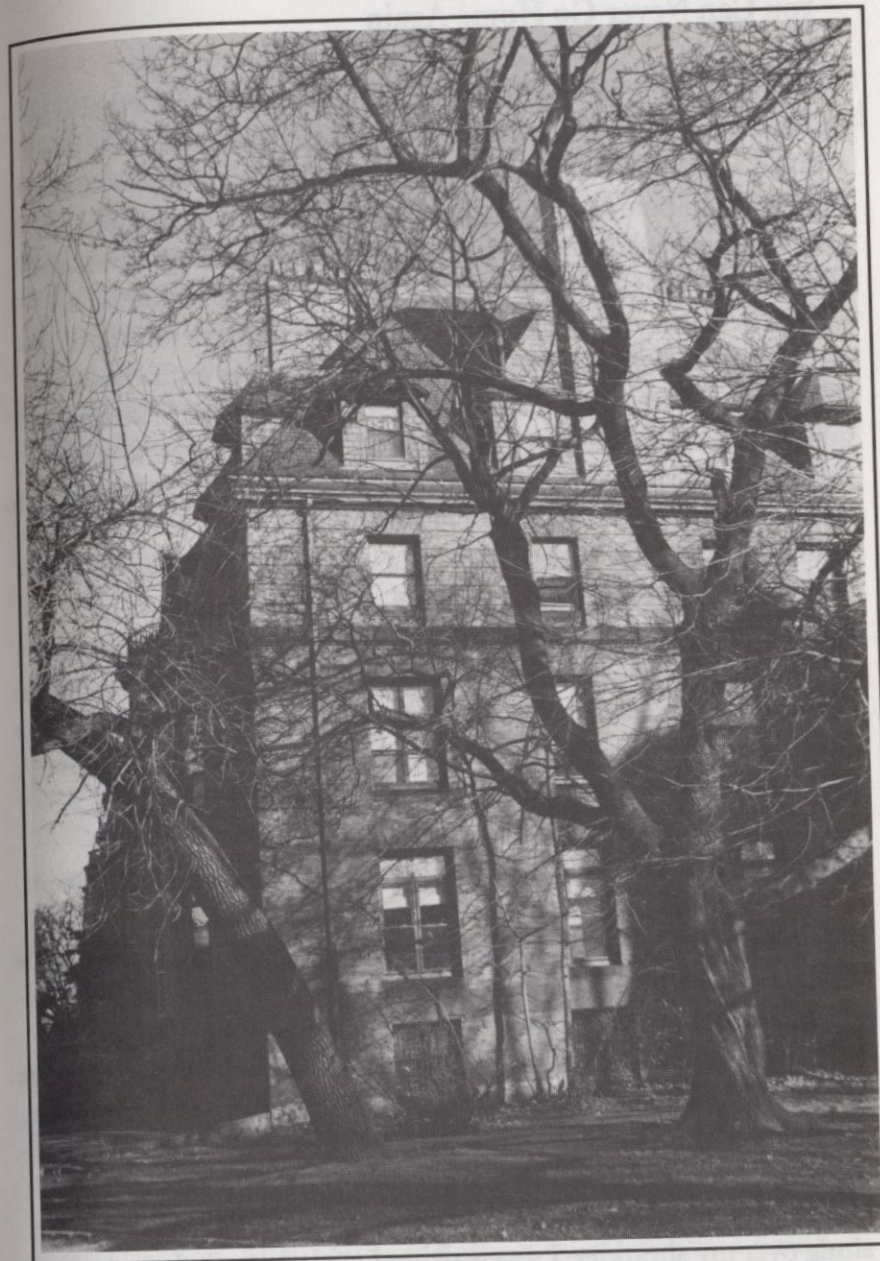
Michael Peeler
Saturday Night

My clenched fists pound
against a defenseless wall
and I watch my hands bleed
while I paint a portrait in crimson
upon old plaster.

Noelle T. Daidone

Fever

I sipped tea slowly—imaginary orange pekoe which I hate in imaginary cups of the daintiest sky-blue china. I found an old chair, but its strong arms and haughty air reminded me of a sailor I once knew; you know the one who kissed his muscles good morning in the mirror each and every day he actually thought I was stupid enough to love and trust him, the one who passed out in the bathtub time and time again and wore his grandma's pants to work one day. Stupid woman always defrosting frozen food for him, he who was no Mickey Mantle, let me tell you. So I declined the outstretched offer of the velvet recliner as coolly as I would had the sailor come back to me for another St. Patrick's Day, offering me bites of love and even a spleen disorder. I daydreamed about chewing through marbles, living in a well, and selling cakes made out of sand, but frosted in chocolate, until someone caught on and ran after me down the street sputtering, "Give me back my money, you dishonest witch. I have PMS and this is no time to be screwing with me." And then the shadow of my mother came into the room, her pleated skirt looking like a floral fan my aunt brings on the bus with her sticky, July days when she volunteers at the homeless center. "Where's the fire?" I yelled, cackling at my quick wit. No fire. Just an image of my dad craving roast beef and potatoes for dinner every night and my brother scraping his lean legs together like a cricket before the frost and telling everyone so proudly about how he owns thirty-seven shirts, no two alike. I began craving more orange pekoe tea until at last my thirst made me wish to be dressed in orange-pekoe tea leaves, swimming in an orange-pekoe tea sea, beneath the blazing sun bringing me and my tea to our necessary boiling point. The last thing I remember is staring at a crack in the ceiling that reminded me of Pinnochio's profile, wishing I could do the Charleston and screaming, "Papa Jepeto, get me home!"



Steven Winkleman

You Can Never Go Home Again

Slowly, I made my way to the front entrance of a place that was once so familiar, yet now seemed so strange. In appearance, it seemed almost identical. The American flag still flew every bit as high as it did before, flapping in the brisk wind. The symbolism seemed appropriate to me as I glanced at the building. It was an extended rectangle with an open courtyard in the middle. The design had always seemed more fitting for a military fort than for its actual use. Before I could reach the door, I was confronted by the statue of a bulldog. It stood there like some ancient sentinel guarding some forbidden kingdom that once left, there was no returning. "Leave!" I could almost hear it say. "You have no right to be here anymore."

Self-consciously, I passed by my unmoving tormentor. I was a thief, come to steal the dreams of my youth, knowing that they could only hurt me now. I didn't care. I needed those dreams. I needed a sense of purpose and meaning. I needed a direction, even if it was only backward. I was anxious and nervous all at once. The sweat starting to form on my palms made it impossible to ignore the uneasiness. Futilely attempting to smother the feeling, I reached out and grasped the door's handle.

Pulling open the door, I entered into what at one time had been my school. A familiar scent washed over me. It was a combination of books, desks, people, and even the cleaning solution used on the floor. It was a smell that reminded me of the true meaning of hope for the future, of believing in a better tomorrow. It invited me in with open arms like a favorite relative, but it was merely a deceptive facade, and I knew it. Still, I accepted the invitation, if only for the momentary gratification it covered.

As I stepped through the doorway, I stepped into the past. Suddenly, I could see myself walking down the hall, my book-bag slung over my shoulder. I was walking beside Jason, a friend whom I had known for several years. Jason wasn't like anyone else I had

known. He was about average height, but thin as a rail. Add to that his ability to bend in ways that didn't seem physically possible, and it came together to form a set of physical characteristics that were truly unique. Jason was devoutly religious, with a definite sense of right and wrong. He was a good friend. Non-judgmental and almost perpetually happy, Jason had a way of making me smile no matter how upset I might be.

The only problem was that most of the things that he did after school involved religion. Although a Christian myself, I didn't feel the need to totally devote myself to its practice. After graduation, I tried to keep up with Jason. I attended church with him and even went on some of his church's outings. Over time, however, I just decided that I preferred to do other things with my time. As I started to drift away from his church, Jason and I lost touch with each other.

Now, however, it was like none of that had ever happened. As we walked down the hall, we were joking like we used to do. We had an ongoing Laurel and Hardy gag. At some point in the conversation, Jason would pretend to play with a non-existent tie and say, "This is another fine mess you've gotten me into." Something about the way he said it always made me laugh. One way or another, we were always joking. There wasn't any reason not to. Homework was the worst thing that loomed before us. As we walked, I both received and returned nods and greetings that were directed at me from teachers and students alike. Classes seemed easy, teachers respected me, and grades, always high, were a badge of honor rather than an unknown to be feared. There were a few kids who harassed me, but everyone was harassed at one time or another. All in all, I was content with my life.

I turned left, quietly, and made my way down the hall, trying to avoid attention. Attention would attract questions that I didn't want to answer. I quickened my pace, making sure to step as lightly

as possible. Occasionally, I looked over my shoulder, hoping not to see a familiar face. As luck would have it, classes were in session, making evasion simple.

When I reached the staircase, I proceeded straight up without a delay. Exiting the stairwell, I walked to the room straight across the hall. I paused for a moment, however, before entering. Once I went in there, there would be no more hiding. My shame would be known. I took a deep breath as I readied myself and started through the doorway as I exhaled. Like some crusading knight confronted by a fearsome dragon, I know that I would have to face off against my own personal demons.

To my surprise, Mr. Boncal wasn't in his room. For a few seconds, I just stood there, not knowing what else to do. Heads started to rise, their eyes focusing on an intrusion into their daily routine... on me. I felt uncomfortable under their questioning glances. I decided on a new course of action. I left the room and went next door. Mr. Griswald was there. I had met Mr. Griswald my senior year in high school. He was only in his twenties. He had a good build and appeared to have taken good care of himself. Mr. Griswald had all of the energy of youth, and he always seemed to be upbeat. He was the kind of teacher who saw nothing wrong with joking around with his students. As such, he was generally well liked. Still, it had been his first year teaching, and he must have been nervous. It was a new school for him and he didn't really know anyone there. As hard as that must have been, he still managed to put a good face forward.

That year I had been in his Entrepreneurship class, back when I had wanted to become a businessman. It had been a time when I had foolishly believed that one day I could be as successful as Donald Trump. It hadn't really been the money that I craved, not completely anyway. What I had wanted was respect and a sense of accomplishment. I wanted to be able to point to a building, or even

a toy, and say I had made that possible. I wanted to feel that I had done something tangible to affect people's lives. I had wanted to be remembered.

That, however, was not meant to be. My business plans were destroyed by my failure to finalize my enrollment at GMI, a college in Michigan created by a group of corporations for the sole purpose of producing an adequate supply of executives and engineers. GMI was a unique school. It was the only one that I have ever heard of that had a double application process. The first was a traditional application, the kind all schools require. The second requirement was a corporation that would agree to offer the student co-operative employment.

Co-operative employment offered two major benefits. It gave the student real world experience and connections in their field, and it allowed the corporation to hand pick its next generation of executives. Ironically, I had no problem acquiring a corporate sponsor. In fact, I learned later that Ingersoll-Rand, the corporation that wished to sponsor me, had acted on my behalf to allow me to finish my main application process after the deadline. Had I known this, my life may have turned out to be something other than what it is. But, as all childish dreams do, it passed, only to be replaced by a reality far less appealing.

I asked where Mr. Boncal was and was told that it was his free period. Mr. Griswald said that Mr. Boncal should be back in about thirty minutes. I thanked him for the information, trying to make a graceful exit when it happened.

"So, what have you been doing?" Mr. Griswald asked harmlessly, not knowing what kind of effect it would have on me.

I had been his favorite student my senior year, and I knew it. I never really did anything to curry his favor. I wasn't a brown-noser like a few other kids I knew. I had seen some of the things they had done. They were always volunteering to make trips, or to do

anything else, they thought the teacher might like. It was a disgusting display of toadying, and I refused to be a part of it. It was just that I knew the material and didn't hide the fact. There was no reason to make his very first year at the school any harder than it already was.

I felt ashamed to tell him that his one-time prized student was wasting the education that he and my other teachers had worked so hard to give to me. All of the hours that they had done their best to teach me what they knew, all the time between classes and after school that they had made themselves available to talk with me, it had all been for nothing. My plans for college had passed me by, leaving me with only a couple of meaningless and temporary jobs. That was, in fact, the very reason I was there. My resume, which I had stored on a computer disk, needed updated.

"Not much," I said, my level of embarrassment rising like bile in the back of my throat. Unconsciously, my hands slipped behind my back, one clasping the other for no other reason than it couldn't think of anything else to do. Slowly, I shifted my weight from one foot to the other, waiting for him to process the information. There was nothing for me to do but wait and see if he understood the meaning of my intonation. His next remark was all the answer I needed.

"Well, aren't you still in school," he asked, not anticipating any answer other than yes.

"No, I haven't started college yet. I kind of messed a few things up," I stammered, trying to find a way to end the conversation without offending him. My fingers started to fidget as the pace of my shifting increased. I could see it in his face when realization finally dawned on him. Mr. Griswald's smile withered prematurely. His eyes raised sharply in surprise as if to say, "Oh!" We both seemed to be waiting uncomfortably for someone to change the discussion. For the life of me, I just could not think of anything else

to say.

"Oh," Mr. Griswald said, finally thinking of something to say, "Did you know that your Entrepreneurship Wall of Fame picture was moved to this room?"

"Really," I asked, stepping into the room to look for the picture. I found it hung up on the upper-middle portion of the back wall. A picture on the Wall of Fame was an honor given to those FBLA members that were able to place in the top ten at the state competition. This particular picture was to honor a third place state finish in Entrepreneurship that I and two other members of the team achieved. It was my third picture to hang on the Wall of Fame. The other two were for fifth place finishes in Parliamentary Procedure. Seeing the picture now, however, only reinforced my feeling of failure, failure to fulfill a goal that should have been within my reach. I was ready to leave, but I still had not come up with a graceful way to do so.

"Well, good luck." He ended our talk, perhaps recognizing my discomfort.

Silently thanking him with my eyes, I said good-bye. I reached out and shook his hand. Giving a little wave good-bye, I turned and made my way out the door. I had received somewhat of a reprieve and was grateful. I had to figure out where to go for about a half-hour. I needed a place where I could find something to occupy my time, but I didn't want to be surrounded by a large number of people. I decided on the library. I walked down the hall, just as I had done at least a thousand times before.

Without even trying to, I recalled the layout of the school. The History classes were on my right. Mr. Hartman's voice reached out through the door to grab my attention. His voice sounded just like it had when I sat in that room about three and a half years ago. It was a large voice for a large man. He wasn't overweight, he just had a rather large build. I know I certainly wouldn't have wanted to

challenge him to an arm-wrestling match. The thing is, though, once a student got past that large voice and body, Mr. Hartman was a really nice guy. Occasionally, he would ease the tension of a particularly hard week with a card trick or some other diversion. He truly loved History, and as such, he made the student care about it as well.

Mr. Aldenderfer's voice boomed from the end of the hall. Mr. Aldenderfer was almost constantly joking to lighten up what was otherwise a very difficult class. I could not begin to count the number of times that he had been able to make the entire class laugh. When I entered the classroom, I was no longer Steve; I became Herr Stefan. It wasn't just that he referred to me by the German form of my name that helped put me into the mind-set for the class, but the exuberant manner in which he did it. He amused us with sayings like, "If wishes were fishes, we'd have some fried. If buffalo chips were biscuits, we'd eat till we died." Occasionally, out of nowhere, he would belt out part of a German beer-drinking song, such as, "In Munchen Steht Ein Hoffbrauhaus." Even when he wasn't doing anything extreme, he made sure that class was interesting. As a result, he made German fun enough that many of his students, myself included, chose to attend it all four years it was available to us.

I turned left at the end of the hall. My attention was attracted by the sounds emanating from the cafeteria. I heard the heavy footfalls of students who were already tired of the school day. I heard the *thunk* as students set their trays on the tables, not even making the effort to make sure the tray was actually on the table before letting go of it. I heard the screech of an untold number of people turning on seats that, although they were supposed to be able to turn, never seemed to really want to. Just as before, however, the sounds of friends discussing all the latest stories overrode that of people eating. It was, and always had been, more of a meeting place where

people ate, than an eating place where people met.

On my left loomed the library. Flyers and announcements taped to the door sparked memories of times before. In high school, I had belonged to several different clubs and participated in many different activities, most of which required time after school. My task accomplished, my ride not yet there, the library had been a frequent port of call. Walking through the aisles, my eyes would stray on certain books whose title or author had caught my eye. Occasionally, my eyes would guide my hand to the objective they had chosen. As I escaped into a book, time floated away. Now, as I entered the library, I tried to will it into a sanctuary, safe from the eyes and expectations of those I knew. Unfortunately, I only ended up meeting someone whom I felt even worse about disappointing.

Her name was Mrs. Rhinehart. She was one of the toughest English teachers that it has ever been my pleasure to know. One minute she would rip apart our work, the next she was like our grandmother, concerned about each and every one of her students. I can still remember what happened the first time I handed in a paper in her class. I had taken Academic English in ninth grade, but I had opted for Advanced English in tenth. Before, I had been able to write a paper in about fifteen minutes and receive an A. I had tried the same thing in her class. The result was the first D I had ever gotten on a paper. There had been so much red ink on that paper that I could hardly see the black type. She attacked the main point of my essay. She completely trashed my use of grammar. What I had assumed to be a decent paper was really a piece of junk; Mrs. Rhinehart had no trouble telling me this. My ego had been devastated; I couldn't believe what had happened. Over the remainder of the class, however, she managed to restore all of the egos she had shattered earlier that day. Moreover, when she was finished, we had even more faith in our abilities than we had previously. How she managed such a remarkable and seamless

transformation, I will probably never know.

Mrs. Rhinehart did not react the same way that Mr. Griswald had when I told her of my current situation. She expressed both sorrow and concern in that grandmotherly way of hers. Her mouth and eyes lowered in an unmistakable expression of sympathy. I could tell by the way her head was tilted that she was trying to think of something to say. As she normally had no trouble coming up with a response, I could only assume that she was trying to not hurt my feelings. One look in her eyes, however, told the whole story. Her eyes had always appeared to be bright and full of mirth. Now, unfortunately, some of that mirth was temporarily gone. I knew it was my fault. In the end, it only made it all the more heart-wrenching.

I engaged her in small talk, soaking in the atmosphere of the library, checking for any obvious changes. "So, what are you up to," I asked, glancing over to the stacks, noticing how they were still arrayed in exactly the same way, filled to capacity.

"Oh, just going over some papers," she responded.

As I thought of what to say next, my eyes wandered over to where the newspapers and magazines were located. They were still in the same little area, next to a small table and a few cushioned chairs. "How are they this year?"

"Oh, they're fine. Of course, they could use some improvement," she said, a mischievous smile on her lips as she played with her red pen. I couldn't keep myself from chuckling just a little as I imagined the looks of surprise on her students' faces when their papers were returned. I looked to my left to see that the tables were right where I had left them, kids sitting around them reading and working on reports. Even the old Apple computer was in its original spot. Finding no obvious changes, I let myself feel somewhat comforted by a sense of the familiar.

While Mrs. Rhinehart and I talked, I looked over at the clock on

the wall. Five minutes passed; she and I talked freely, remembering old times. Fifteen minutes passed; many of the memorable moments used up, I started asking about current classes. Twenty minutes into the conversation it became more difficult to think of things to discuss. Our speech slowed down some as we tried to stretch out the conversation, not knowing what else to do. I could hear the *tick, tick, tick* of the clock as it desperately clung to each second, begrudging me every one that it was forced to relinquish. The silent gaps between responses increased. The longer the gap, the greater my discomfort became. As I scooted in my seat, the sound of the computer's keys being pushed overcame the silence. The beep of the scanner, as the librarian checked out some books, combined with that of the computer as it booted up a video game. Eventually, we always found a way to keep the conversation going.

Finally, when the half-hour was almost over, I said good-bye and headed back toward Mr. Boncal's room. On the way, I passed by a couple of teachers whom I knew. Fortunately, we were all on the move and could only spare a hasty greeting before being caught up in the rush of students who were heading towards class in a race to beat the bell.

When I went into Mr. Boncal's room, I found him preoccupied by a number of concerns. One student asked about a current assignment, while the other waited to continue their discussion about things pertaining to FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America), a club that he ran and that, at one time, I was an officer in. All the while, two other people waited to talk with him as well. I stood quietly as I waited for my turn. When I got the chance to talk to Mr. Boncal, I asked him if I might use one of the computers. With his permission, I sat down and tried to get started. As if to mock me, even the computers turned out to have been replaced by newer, more advanced models. Sheepishly, I turned and asked the nearest person how to start it up.

I inserted the disk into the computer, listening to its hum as I waited for the disk's icon to appear. Using the mouse, I moved the arrow so that it was on the appropriate icon. *Click, click*, I pushed the button on the mouse twice to call up the list of files I had on the disk. I scanned through them until I found a file entitled resume.

I clicked on it twice, and in a matter of moments I was looking at a brief summation of my life. For, what is a resume, but an abridged autobiography? I scrolled through my resume, shocked to realize how very little I had to add to what was already there. In two and a half years, I had only been able to add six little lines.

I made the necessary changes and printed out a few copies for future use. I stood by the printer, listening to the sound of the automated typing. It sounded more like an electric razor than a typewriter. The individual lines appeared to be printing at a fair pace, but for some reason, it seemed to take forever to complete a page. Beside me waited two others who had sent the command for their pages to be printed as well. They, however, had to wait until my printing was done. There were other students, still at their computers, waiting for the chance to print out their own papers. Occasionally, these students would glance in my direction to see if I was finished. As soon as the printer was done, I collected the copies of my resume and tucked them away in a folder, happy to be out of the way.

I went to say my farewells to Mr. Boncal, but once again he was busy. It was better that way. It saved me from having to make even more excuses to another person. I went back to the computer and exited the program. I ejected my disk and set it with the folder. I checked again to make sure that the computer was ready for a new user. I gathered my coat and my folder and got up to leave. I gave Mr. Boncal a little wave, which he returned in kind, with a smile added for good measure. As I left, I felt guilty...like I had just used

Mr. Boncal for his computer.

I crossed the hall and made my way down the stairs, glad that the experience was almost over. I exited the stairwell and started down the hall, towards the exit. This time, however, there were more people in the hall. Every so often, a pair of eyes would come to rest on me, wondering who I was and why I was in their school. I know, because I remembered thinking the very same thing myself, every time I saw an adult I didn't recognize. At that moment, I realized that both the school, and the fond memories I had there, really were not mine anymore. At least, not until I had earned them again. Only when my past was fulfilled, could my future return.

I made my way to the doorway and passed through it, leaving behind the protection that it offered from the outside world, returning to the only world that I now knew.

Boyd A. Ulmer
Grasping for Flaws

I have seen this place before.
I have watched with heightened fascination
The decay of the leaves (those crisp pages of unfettered
time),
The crystal flakes and the winds that blow—cold and
biting,

Romps of spring-born steeds,
The wild oats sowed by animal hearts (young and fierce),
The ambiance of the rivers pregnant with bubbling life
(ecstasy in living),
And the rugged, rough rocks that scatter the earth under
pedestrian footsteps,

Scattered heaves of broken pavement, park benches with
peeling curls of
Green paint that give place to the squirrels and home to the
unshaven,
Umbrella trees with leafy-toothed grins (shelter to the hot
and sticky),
Pebbled pathways that give meaning to the word *hushed*.

I have witnessed this place (somewhere), I think.
I have dozed to the soft, rhythmic waves of summertime
chirpers,
The hypnosis of the steady, guaranteed dribbling of a
faucet in darkness,
Constant patter of rain softly washing over roofs disci-
plined by thunder,

Radiant wives and red-cheeked proud fathers holding
babies in arms of
Rippling tendons that convey unyielding compassion,

Michael Prober
Small Hours 'til Dawn

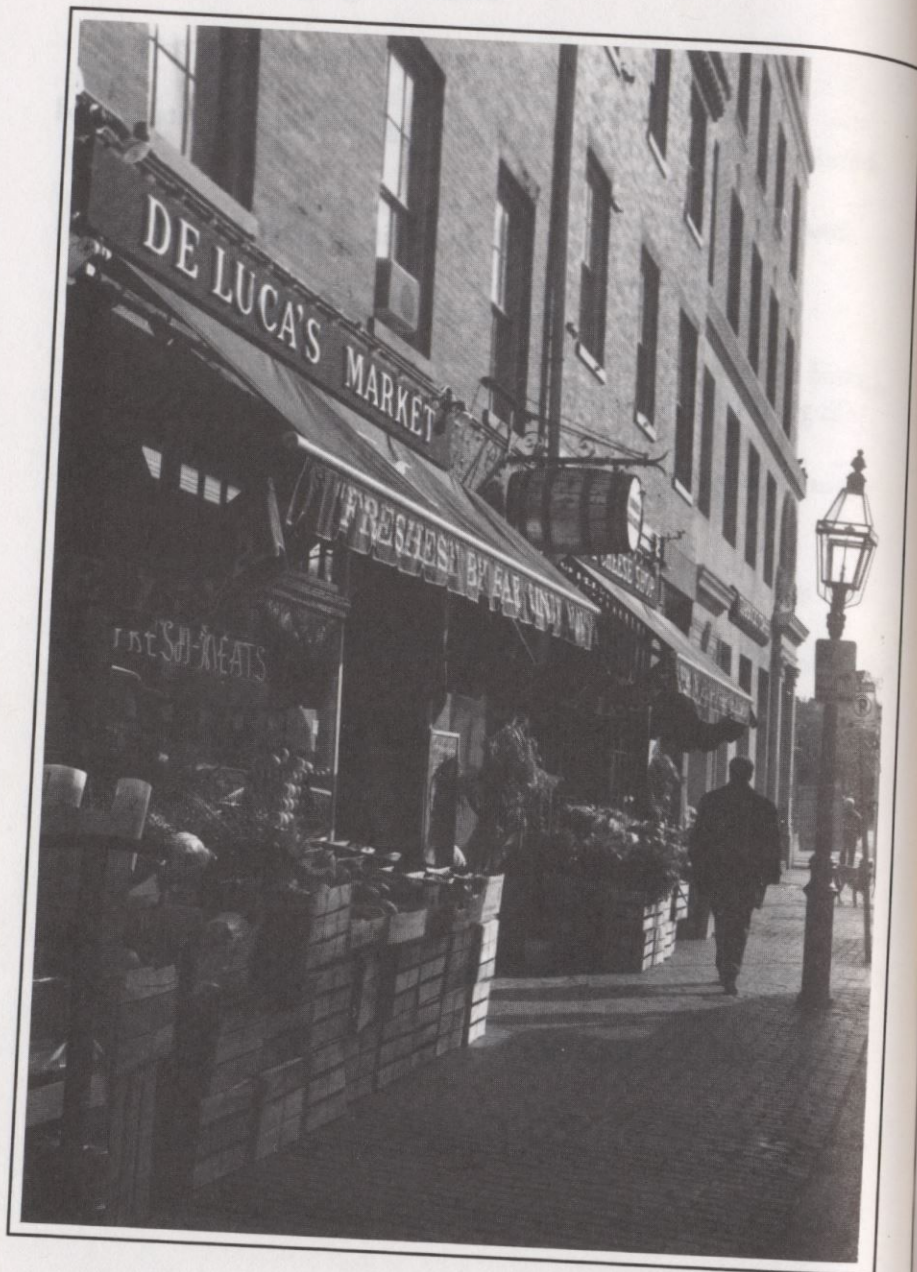
Lost teenagers and reconciled mothers and prune-faced
grandmas and pipe-
Smoking pappies and spatting siblings and hospital-bound
daughters and

Voices of laughter and whisperings of regret and hugs and
kisses and
Birthday-made wishes and college-bound students and
wonder of wonders.

I begin to ponder if I haven't seen this all before, and
With every newborn sunrise I realize afresh that

Louis Armstrong just might have been on to something.

Boyd A. Utner
Grasping for Flame



Michael Peeler
Small Hours 'til Dawn

We all look like lowlives
at the supermarket at night.
People hunch and hurry under the flourescents:
the cold makes them furtive
as they slip through the electric doors and into the aisles,
bright with moistened lettuce and shiny fruits.

Slouching in the car by the entrance,
waiting for Barbara to come out with the milk,
I fiddle with the radio
and watch the midnight shoppers,
a few of whom I know from around town or school.
The old philosopher makes me especially sad,
with his dog food and Bud Light,
and I wonder for him if Plato had nights like this.

Sales flyers and brown bags blow across the pavement,
covered with ice; in the rearview,
the lot looks like a movie set as cars come and go—
the same cop every ten minutes.
The graveyard DJ signs off,
and I finger the Dexedrine sitting in my coat pocket
as I wait for Barbara,
feeling like a lowlife.

Domenica A. Demaria
Two Packs a Day

this could be the one that kills me
 snap. light.
through the chatter of anonymous coffee cups
my sadness brews.
"it's not him," I scream to myself.
I mean, it couldn't be.
out of the billions of cups of coffee drunk a day
few are his.
"don't turn around," I think.
he's not there,
(he's never where I want him to be)
instead he lies wedged somewhere between my esophagus
 and appendix
fetal and alive
his fingernails just long enough to scratch the skin of my
 heart
raw
he knows not to scratch too hard
for if he does he will drown in my muddy blood
"he is there," I think.
(he's always there where I don't want him to be)
I stir around my emptying lemon tea—
 it is me—
 swirled with undissolved ingredients
 bittersweet
 left cold from neglect
I crush my burning filter in the ashtray—
 it is him—
 but isn't everything?
maybe this will be the one that kills me.
 snap. light.

Michael Peeler
Nodding Across the Snow

Last night, as I walked past,
you were smoking, standing alone
by the door, the mist of your breath
and the smoke trailing above,
reminding me of a plume rising
from a warm house across a black forest.

I imagined that each time we passed,
I could touch a fingertip to yours,
for perhaps a week, then brush knuckles,
then press palms, and months later,
after minute tactile greetings,
I could say a word, or maybe you could.

But in the frozen air, I hesitate—
in the nicotine-edged cold, I understand—
breathing for your secret scent
beneath the smoke—why you hold a hand
under the arm of the other,
and tilt your head back
 to watch your breath
 move away.

Justin Brocious
Change

In the second grade, Danny
walked in with half-inch nostrils
stuck with copper plugs
just to gross the girls.

The first time my father
needed me, we were standing
in the broken-fuse-basement black.
He borrowed a penny, twisting it
dangerously... then lights.

My sister and I were digging
among the green peppers and tomatoes.
We unearthed two chips of porcelain
and three tarnished coins.
Mom said it was treasure,
still they rest on the sill.

Kris got a slick new bike for his birthday,
the first on the block without pedal-brakes.
We shot down the hill to the candy store.
He forgot the brakes and hit a garage door.
The whole ride down he was screaming and crying,
feet off the pedals, one hand steering, the other
trying to catch the golden stream of coins
funneling from his pockets.

Years later, I remember clouds, the color
of this corroded penny face rolling in a girl's eyes.
I was still young and soaked from the storm.

I have almost forgotten that feeling of youth
when fingers wrapped around a few cents
weighed as heavy as the earth.

Should I let these pockets grow with weighty
reminders, living only for them, or hand
to you, my friends, the sepia scenes
that shape this voice?

My last Lincolns sift through my fingers,
jangling like freedom bells in my pocket.
So long sweet past, the dangerous
future will not wait for us to catch it.

Beth Bertram
Race to the Finish

Fog captures the August morning,
stilling and silencing it as a photographer
freezing my momentum
onto a motionless, glossy print.

My two-wheeled friend
(perhaps fiend)
balances the tightrope of road,
wheels cartwheeling,
my breath somersaulting
and falling heavily into the air.

Mile after misty mile
saturates my shirt,
dampens the fire
igniting my weary legs,
propelling them to the finish
that today lies far beyond forever.

Now gets a shock new take on his birthday
the first on the block without pedal-brakes.
We shot down the hill to the candy store.
He forgot the brakes and hit a garage door.
The whole ride down he was screaming and crying
feet off the pedals, one hand steering, the other
trying to catch the golden stream of coins
tumbling from his pockets.

Years later, I remember clouds, the color
of the corroded penny face rolling in a girl's eyes.
I was still young and soaked from the storm.

I have almost forgotten that feeling of youth
when fingers wrapped around a fire tent
weighed as heavy as the earth.

Justin Brocious
Untitled

The early sun
set the perfect
scene for myself
to remember
your weighted
wash lines, white
rolling like the foam
as if the ocean
passed beneath
unseen.

Thank you,
at last I
have seen the
beauty
of your laundry
in the backyard
blowing.

The first up-down mountain trail, a child riding on an old
wooden swing
Autumn air was misty, slightly cold, the exhilarating glow
of harvest, rumpall, steel bins

Emerald green, and distant, North's twinkling colors.
The hot, arid, blue, and white, young and naive after
the rain.

December and January, at his life's end, banished from
Heaven's grace.

Autumn ascends to Heaven on a decaying carpet
of grass / sky.

James Tolbert
Pruning

Ohh the tree of knowledge lives on,
and bares its fruit,
even into the winter.

How I long to live my days in the orchard,
and not to exist as only a branch.

If only I may swing from one to another
and cover each divide,
walking among them
and tasting all the fruit.

Fear not the worm
for it shall not harm you;
though it may be sour,
the fear of it
is what blinds us
to the taste of the abundant feast
that touches the senses
that are our souls.

Bite deeply when you do
and taste the nectar,
ooh the knowledge of what it is,
to truly live
lives in your soul forever.

Dionne N. Dixon
Autumn's Closet

Crimson sets the virginal forest aflame.
He envelopes the leaves, adorning the maple tree in his
passionate arms.
As Summer begins her descent from Heaven's throne,
Autumn cloaks herself with the royal mantle of scarlet.

Soft yellow intertwines with crimson red in a fervent
embrace.
Their lovemaking permeates the branches of the elm tree
while
The liquid gold from Earth's shining orb caresses the
lovers with warmth.
Autumn bows her humble head to accept the elegant
crown of gold.

Innocent orange, the exuberant child of scarlet and gold,
Plays mischievously among her parents in the youthful
sapling.
She floats upon the warm breeze, a child riding on an old
wooden swing.
Autumn exposes her naked body to the exhilarating gown
of harvest orange.

Emerald green, the oldest of Earth's ravishing colors,
The hue of the great oak who is so young and naive after
her birth,
Decrepit and somber at her life's end, banished from
Heaven's grace.
Autumn ascends to Heaven on a decaying carpet
of greenery.



Jessica M. Levinsky
Two of a Kind

Walking—that's a lot of what she and I like to do—in the woods, all by ourselves, communing with nature and with the Great Spirit. The woods are absolutely breathtaking as well as frightening. I guess that's why when I walk through the woods, I see so many things that remind me of her. I see her in the wind and in the storm and in the trees and sky and rocks and animals. Many journeys I have walked alone, but the ones that I have walked with her have been very enlightening. She has opened my eyes only when I willingly opened my heart, and she has shown me things I have never seen before.

Watching the black-crested snowbirds as they flit about their own little world brings to me a calmness and understanding of our own little existence that most people have difficulties comprehending. Sitting there with her brings me all of this and so much more. It also brings me an understanding of who I was, who I am now, and who I can be. She shows me how to change by letting me see the transition the sky makes when turning from its mist-blue into a field of golden yellow, then bronze-orange, and finally a fire-red, before retiring into a deep, deep blue splashed with fire-flies on the blanket of the earth's night. By watching this, I learn that change is a constant. Sunsets are uncannily different, every single time the sun retires. I have learned that in order to live my life to the fullest, I must learn how to grow and how to be more colorful, just as the sunsets.

She teaches me how to cope as she shows me the wings of the trees as they try to lift their earth-bound roots from where they are forever grounded and try to fly with our feathered friends. The trees seem to forever want to fly—the way they relentlessly flap their wing-like limbs—but they are bound to one spot. I must be like these spruces and conifers if I am to survive. I must deal with all bad things in my life the best way that I can, just as I had to do when my parents decided to divorce one another. Not being able to

cope tore me further and further away from all those things I held dear. After observing these trees and realizing what I had to learn, I was brought closer to those family members whom I shoved away. All of this I have seen in the trees through her.

She blanketed my heart and soul with compassion by allowing me to hear the shrill cries of the broad-winged hawk as he calls for me to help his brothers and sisters, who are becoming fewer and can be heard no more as the moon passes sorrowfully overhead. These beautiful yet abused birds have helped me realize that there is more that is important in this world than just humans. There are other things we need to think about before we throw that Sprite can out the window or toss that cigarette butt on the ground. After all, humans are no more than greedy animals. I see the moon weep for all of creation.

She reveals understanding to me when she shows me the blood-thirsty wolf, who kills its prey and rips its flesh apart, devouring every last warm, bloody bite, then goes back to its den and cleans, feeds, nurtures, and protects its pups. "Not everything is as it appears to be," she would say. This is what I understand: I must open my eyes and look at the whole picture before I make any motion to look at the situation critically. People all have a tendency to be too quick to judge or find a reason to slander someone. The wolves may seem horrid, killing-machines, but we can look at them no differently than we look at ourselves in the mirrors; the blood of people and animals—killed so that we can be where we are in society today—is on our hands. At least the wolves do something useful with what they kill.

Fervor is the passion that she sings on the voice of the wind entangled in my hair, and the song of the waters as I walk carefully across the moss-covered trees that have laid a path for me over this clear liquid teaming with life. When I sit and listen to the voice of the wind and the sound of the rushing water, I become rejuvenated

in my spirit, a fervor that fills my being and refreshes me as if I was the wind or the water. Fervor is a wonderful lesson to learn.

She ran at me with the parallel between sheer fear and ultimate survival when she allowed me to raise a fawn over the summer. Deer are made of the instincts of fear and survival, and only in raising a deer have I been able to isolate his fear and observe his absolutely stunning ability to survive. Only then did I see that this instinct of survival courses through all our veins.

One of the most important things she has given me is love. She has taught me that love can only be understood and felt completely in the ultimate giving of oneself to something or someone else and then feeling the loss of that thing. Having to raise a baby deer is a big responsibility, but by knowing that I had to one day give him back to his mother the wild, I never let the bonding that takes place hook too deeply within my soul. My dog, on the other hand, was different. I called him "my son." Having to stay up all night to keep liquids in his system, cleaning up his puke, feeding him, bathing him, carrying him around (very hard to do when the dog weighs 80 pounds), and making sure he got all the love and attention anyone could give, made me feel as if I were his mother. With the unspoken love Mate and had for each other (a little more spoken on my part), we established a bond that will never be broken. Realizing the extent of my love for him really didn't hit me until his disappearance. She has helped me realize that love is never fully understood until the essence of that love is no longer a factor in one's life. People need to get in touch with their feelings and listen to their hearts. When loved ones are gone, it's too late.

All of these things she has done with me, shown me, and made me realize. This is why the woods remind me of her so much and always bring her back to me. Even so, while hiking up and down these mountains flowing with moss-covered rocks, living with the old, sacred trees, and intermingling with the spirits of our ances-

tors' past, I found myself facing a wildness not easily tamed. Being able to face these physical obstacles, though, like climbing the mountains, jumping that stream, or raising my deer, has helped me overcome the highest mountain I have ever had to climb. Being able to forgive has been the toughest thing I have ever had to do. Being able to forgive my parents for everything that happened during and because of the divorce is the largest rock life has ever thrown in my path along my journey through this shaft of existence. By hearing her voice and letting her come to me, I have learned how to forgive simply by letting go. I had to let go of my past much the same way that I had to let go of my deer. I have faced my bear and I have defeated it.

We have not always been together, though. Often I locked myself up in the walls of civilization; it's all too easy to fall prey to that television set and the ramblings on of lost loves and bad sex heard on the radio. It's all too easy to take advantage of the running water we now have in our homes, or the electric heat, or the indoor plumbing. Living without these things for a long time has made me see that money and conveniences are just that, conveniences.

Possessions are only important if you can lock them away within the walls of your heart; physical things burn and rot and die off. I have listened to the talks and have found my medicine right within my own self, and time and time again as I go on my journeys through the forest, she comes to me, and we sit and watch the things that we have grown to depend on wither away, and we learn that the only thing we can depend on is ourselves. Only in realizing that she and I are one have I truly been happy. Upon my journeys through the woods, I have been able to find "her" in myself. Maybe the next time life decides to roll another boulder in my path, I will be able to remove that boulder and keep going. She is me and I am she, and only in my open-hearted journeys have I found myself by listening to the woods and the animals and all the messages they have to reveal.



Beth Bertram
Hang Gliding

Suspended,
spider web thread
dangling,
 diving,
divine dance.

Slicing,
wings encircle sand
spanning,
 sprawling,
ocean to sound.

Whispering,
fleeting flight
free,
 floating,
winged wonder.