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The Mockingbird

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mockingbird



credits

Judges

Anne Tyler judged this year's fiction category. She is the author of fourteen novels, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Breathing Lessons* and, most recently, *A Patchwork Planet*. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

Mark Jarman served as this year's poetry judge. His latest collection of poetry, *Questions for Ecclesiastes*, won the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize for 1998 and was a finalist for the 1997 National Book Critics Circle Award. He is co-editor of *Rebel Angels: 25 Poets of the New Formalism* and co-author of *The Reaper Essays*. His book of essays, *The Secret Poetry*, is forthcoming from Story Line Press, as is his next collection of poetry, *Unholy Sonnets*. He teaches at Vanderbilt University.

Jo Carson, a writer and performer from Johnson City, Tennessee, served as our non-fiction judge. She has published plays, short stories, books for children, essays, poems and other work, and won a series of national awards for plays. Her play, *Daytrips*, which won the Kesseler Award for best new American play in 1989, is being produced by the Barter Theatre for its 1999 season.

Editor

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Art Director

Jon Fuller

Non-Fiction Preliminary Judge

Barbara Stanley

Fiction Preliminary Judge

Scott Wiborne

Poetry Preliminary Judges

Tonya Elswick

Mitzi Ann Stiltner

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Graphics/Cover/Layout

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Jonathan Swift

And others...

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Department of English

Mr. Ralph Slatton

Department of Art and Design

Mr. M. Wayne Dyer

Graphic Design Workshop

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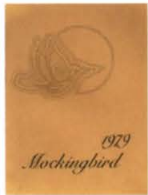
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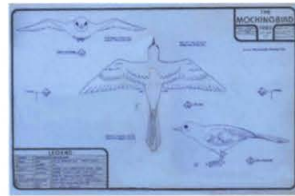


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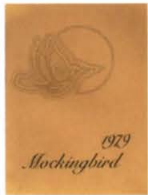
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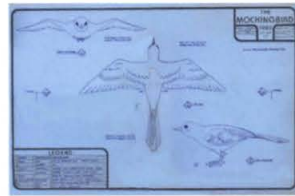


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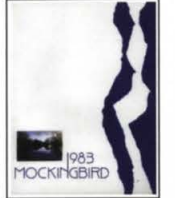
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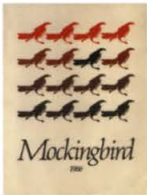
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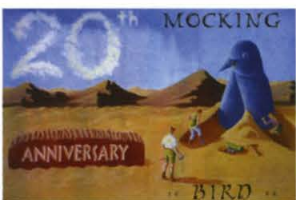
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 archive vox ad hoc

 continue

My roots are showing

Long curling dark hair
Whipped about wildly
In the wind
Blasting through
The open window

Driving slightly too fast
Down a narrow country road

Past early century farmhouses
Worn tin roofs
Patchy peeling paint
Once crisp
Worn to greys

2

1ST PLACE POETRY > ROOTS > SOPHIA MARTIN

whipped about wildly

long curling dark hair

Barefoot children
Howling in the yards
Abandoned play
Whoopie hide
Tag of all kinds
Fishing in the branch
Tree swing made out of
Old jute rope
And Daddy's flat tire

Behind the ancient
Plank smokehouse
Milk cow
Silently contemplates life
While chewing grass and clover

Piglets root near the old sow
While chickens bicker
Over leftover slop

Neat little garden
Pole beans
Staked tomatoes
Hill potatoes
Corn Beans Okra Squash
Cucumbers for pickles
Mama wields the hoe
Graceful with decades of practice
While Daddy plows

blasting through

in the wind

3

Haul in the bounty
Can
Freeze
Dry

Fresh summer picnics
Sudden and unplanned
Taste so good
On Grandma's old quilt
Spread under the maple

What's poor about that?

I see you lookin' at my roots
Those roots that show so clearly

But it's good to have roots

The captain had removed the fasten seat belts sign. We were now free to move about the cabin. I looked at my watch. 11:46 a.m. I wondered should I not leave time alone, or should I turn the hands to the six-hours-ahead-London-time. Instead, I turned my sister's necklace around my index finger, thinking of her long white hands stirring the silver string concoction. She would never know it was missing. She had stopped wearing it ages ago. And if she figured it out I would be forgiven by the time I came home.

I was crossing that hazy Atlantic Ocean where time and space are irrelevant -- the in between world of airplanes. Only a restful sleep was essential. I knew every prevention and cure for jet lag. I also knew that I would not be sleeping on this flight unless I took some cough syrup. I didn't have a cough, just a horrible case of insomnia. I always kept an abundant supply of drowsy cold and cough medicines on hand. I felt disconnected from life. And I remember feeling something strange, something not so known to me. A slight sense of trepidation moved through me as the plane floated through the open space between water and air. I felt a strange small thumping in my head. It was not long before I realized it was my heart beating out a slow, loud rhythm. I just needed to sleep.

I searched through the carry on bag that I always stow beneath the chair in front of me. My hand reached into the jumbled darkness of books, film, camera, and bypassed the orange that I purchased at the airport cafe this morning. I finally felt the stickiness that could only be the salvation of cold medicine. The orange flavor was my favorite. It reminded me of the medicine that my mother used to spoon into my sick little girl mouth. The woman in the seat next to me did not even look up from her book, as I would have. She was reading the

4

remember feeling

remember

1ST PLACE FICTION > TRAVEL LIGHTLY > LYDIA COPELAND

latest Roddy Doyle novel. That would keep the conversation minimal, I remember thinking. I gulped the syrup down the red lane, as my father would say. She turned the page with a bejeweled hand. I turned to my window.

My dark eyes searched the ocean below looking for movement, but nothing at that elevation moved. My hair was much longer at that time and the tight brown curls kept falling in my face. I pulled the ponytail holder from around my wrist and formed my hair into a sleek little bun. The stasis of the ocean was irritating. I knew it was moving down there. I knew there were waves and foam. There were sea creatures slithering through the blue beneath the paragon surface. It was like trying to see the stars through clouds. Just when I thought that I had detected something, it vanished into the slow ocean. My complacency came only through imagination. I thought for awhile that I was hovering about the gleaming rippled back of some gargantuan being. At any moment the plane could needle-nose down and pierce its infinite skin. I felt Lilliputian all of a sudden.

This was not the first time that I had made the trek to England. I had been to London on holiday with my father a few years earlier. I enjoyed traveling with him. We rarely saw each other when he worked, which was all the time. Holidays were nice quality time for us. Sometimes Mom went with us if she could break away from her classes, but my sister Elsa had not been on a trip with us in years.

Over the past six months I had been on two short excursions to the Lake Districts for fieldwork. That small piece of Northern England contained so much of my happiness. It seemed to transcend time and space, leaving me locked away in some ancient year. It was even more inviting in that it was mere miles from Scotland.

I was supposedly receiving my Ph.D. within the year. However, my dissertation was dragging on without signs of concluding. I had been writing about the botanical life in Northern England with particular focus on a certain type of gorse. It sounded quite dull to most people, but I could and did spend days rummaging through the shriveled yellow petals and trespassing into the knotwork world of branches. My hands and legs were ornamented with little white thorn prints. They were my war wounds. Yet, I enjoyed spending hours tangled in those spiny branches, carefully inspecting the delicate leaves. I loved going to bed with their sweet scent in my hair. Gorse appears to be a quite sturdy plant, but it has a rather ephemeral disposition. Entire fields of them have been known to perish during severe winters; and if taken from their natural environment, they rarely live longer than a few days even in a greenhouse.



i

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The first time I saw gorse I was in the car with my parents; Elsa, who was only ten at the time, was in the back seat with me. We were traveling through the English countryside. I must have been eleven. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before -- a whole field of overwhelming gold. I made father pull the car over and the four of us wandered out into that yellow world. I took a snippet from one of the plants and I still have it stashed away in a scrapbook somewhere. Maybe that was when I knew that I wanted to study botany. It was something that I would keep coming back to over the years. I loved the long hours of solitude when I could examine a life other than my own.

I did not have to go to England for such research. I could most likely find exactly what I needed in any Manhattan library. However, I thought that the field experience was important. My father often helped me to purchase plane tickets by transferring his sky miles. He had been all over the world. In fact, he was in India at this time working on a travel piece for one of the newer, trendier New York magazines. He did freelance writing mostly, but he was rather well known in the literary circles of the city.

This time I would be staying in Grasmere for about six months, which is all the time the British would allow me to stay without marrying one of them. I was traveling in faith, tarrying far from home. Yet, at the same time, I felt I was going home. Six months would fly by once I began examining the lush countryside again. However, I felt soul tremors in my seat above the world. It was that same feeling that I have while listening to Monteverdi. It was eerie like a streetlight going out at the exact same moment that I walked under it or a dark cloud passing singularly through a clear sky. My sister's light face would not leave my mind; her dark eyes and sandy brown curls were there when I closed my eyes. I couldn't get rid of her no matter how much distance I

6

it was so beautiful

1ST PLACE FICTION > TRAVEL LIGHTLY > LYDIA COPELAND > CONTINUED

put between us. And there was this shaking piece of unknown life in the guise of quiet country. It made me all the more certain of my uncertainties.

One thing I was sure of was the divinity of London's slick black-eel streets and the holy mists that wrapped around the buildings like seaweed washed into the city. I could not neglect those things of the man made world. I did love London. There were times when I would crave it. England was the ideal balance between delicacy and grandeur, country and city, land and sea. It was all that I would ask for in an afterlife.

I had not been back to England in months. When I had returned home my spontaneity tiptoed right out the door. And Elsa, plump with child, pushed her way into its place. It was freezing the night she crept into my cluttered Long Island apartment. It was always freezing, but on this particular night, no one in Ronkonkamine had electricity. My sister had the rude habit of arriving unannounced. There had been many times of near heart attacks upon discovering another presence in my living room. One morning I spilled hot coffee all over my foot when the cup came crashing down from my frightened hand. Half the time I was lucky if she knocked. It was partly my fault. I did give her a spare key. Elsa was my only sister. I did love the girl. I just wished she would take care of herself. Well, that and keep a job. She was only twenty-two, old enough not to steal money from mom's purse, old enough to have some sense of responsibility. However, the girl had never escaped from the child's world of puppets. She still thought humanity moved purely to entertain her or to torment her, as the case may be. She had no concept of individual realities. So, when mom finally kicked her out it became my problem to keep her life comfortable. I was not hesitant to side with mom. Elsa had committed a sin against our mother. It involved a pawned Grecian vase that my father had given her for their twentieth anniversary. It was really all that mom had of him since he was never home. That was how Elsa came to live with me. I knew one day she would spend the night and never leave.

Apparently, mom's solution was only temporary. The phone rang for Elsa to come back at all hours. But, she wanted to stay put, and I could not kick her out. I still felt sorry for her. She did some horrible things, but she seemed quite depressed. Her lack of soul was eerily sad. There was not a father for her child. She refused to say who he was. I just assumed that she did not know.

My days were longer then, marked by the translations and meditations of mother and child. Elsa moved into my bed and I moved to the couch. She was, after all, the one who needed the comfort of deep sleep, with that child in her belly. On weekends I worked on my research. I could not even escape the Long Island railroad on my days off. I made the hour trip into the city each morning for research or work. Somehow, my graduate assistant work made ends meet. I guess it helped that my apartment was a mere step above a cardboard box. I would not have dreamed of asking my parents for help. Although it was offered to me and I sometimes took it, especially when they helped to pay for my research travel, it all balanced out somehow. I was the good child because I never asked for help. I wanted to be as self-sufficient as possible. It was different with Elsa. She begged until she had to steal from them.

"Coffee or tea? Excuse me, dear . . . coffee . . ." I sat up sharply from my thoughts when I realized that the flight attendant had been speaking to me.

"Oh, um neither thanks. I'm hoping to sleep through most of the flight."

She smiled and moved on. The bejeweled lady next to me was already snoozing. Her head had fallen to her chest and her book rested on her lap at the beginning of chapter ten. When did that happen, I had wondered. I was gone for hours easily when it came to that oblivion thing. I smiled at her brittle old-lady hair. It was dyed red, but not the same red it used to be I was sure. I turned back to my window, but something averted my attention back to the sleeping woman. Around her neck hung a long red cord at the end of which was an antiquated locket. It was of quite an astonishing size. Its silver knot work had the look of a more handmade distant time. I wondered how I had not noticed it before. Perhaps the Roddy Doyle had been hiding it. I was curious now. I just wanted to know who or what was in there. It was probably aesthetically empty. But it did not seem like a sort of decorative purposeless piece of jewelry. It



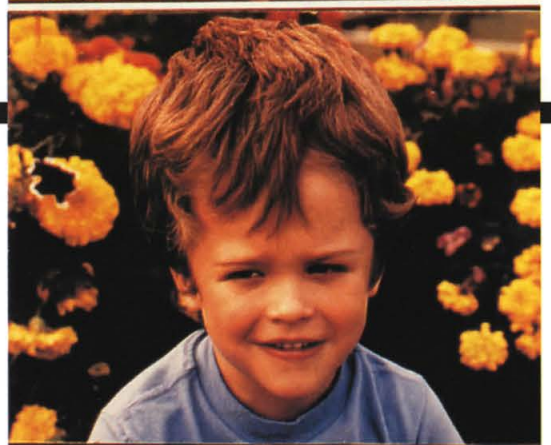
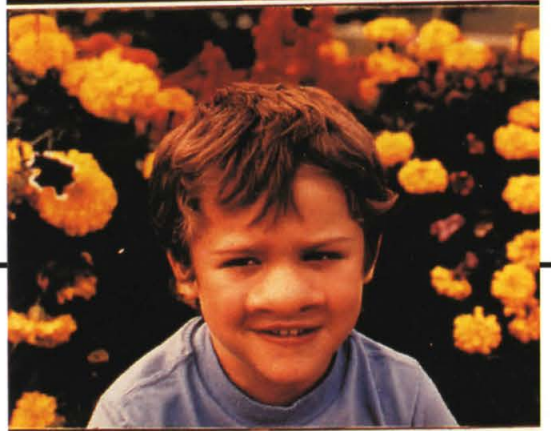
it seemed to have an elegant power

looked more like a miniature shrine. I wanted to look, just a peek, to see what could be so sacred to someone else. And it was so beautiful. It seemed to have an elegant power that pulled at my fingers. Before I knew it my hand was reaching for it. I had to stop myself from grabbing it. I came out of my hypnosis and sat back in my seat.

I put my hand to the chain around my own neck and felt a kind of happiness to have stolen something from my unreachable sister, even if she no longer wore it.

Life was already arranged for me six hours away. I had a minimalist sort of room in Anna McKenzie's Bed and Breakfast. It was centrally located in the utilitarian sort of village, caught between the lake and the fields. I had stayed in the same room each time I visited, but never for more than a couple of weeks. Anna always made sure that my favorite corner room was available for me. There was nothing wonderful about it; aside from the view of the gorse fields (a constant reminder of my reason for travel), it had the same simple space as the rest of the rooms. A full size bed. A nightstand with a lamp, no alarm clock. A bureau with six small drawers. Bathroom down the hall. I was just a little superstitious. So I slept in the same bed each time. It made the room that much more mine. I kept thinking how nice it would be to actually have a bed again.

Now Elsa, who did not pay the rent, who ate all of my food, who was no doubt stealing from me as well, would have my place all to herself. With no one to keep her company maybe she would go back to mom. I just left her there. I told her to pay the rent if she was going to stay and I left for England two days later. She just looked at me. She never even tried to argue any more, but I remember thinking that I saw her lip quivering. She might have cried later that night. She went to bed early without saying a word to me. She did not feel like my sister anymore. She seemed more like a body whose spirit had left a long time ago. High school was the last time we had actually talked. It was just the two of us then, separate from our parents. We laughed all the way through those days. When I graduated Elsa found a life that was separate from even me. A few years later a baby was on the way and I left during her seventh month. I kept telling myself that I did not feel bad. I had done absolutely nothing wrong. Even mom agreed it was wise for me to continue my research in England. She and father would keep everything going. My apartment would still be there when I got back, with or without Elsa.



i

8



“Just pack lightly dear, and worry about nothing else,” mom had told me. But Elsa was not around when I left for the airport. And I worried about her. Mom rolled her eyes. “Surprise, surprise,” someone said. I was not going to feel bad. I just needed out.

My cold medicine started to kick in and my drowsy eyes fell back into that ocean beneath me. My hands rested on the brushed cotton of my peignoirish dress. I loved traveling in the comfort of long dresses. It was a lazy kind of beauty. The fabric felt cool and I imagined my hands sinking into it as if it were the ocean and I was to pluck something from it. If it were skin I could reach into that dusky animal and pull myself into his heart. I could not decide what the ocean was to me, but the sleepier I became the more it seemed I was gazing into infinity and becoming more and more infinite myself.

Palestinians were philosophizing in the aisle across from me. They were not speaking English, but I knew well the sound of theoretical discussion, the elaborate hand gestures, the serious tone, the crescendo of point-proven-voices. Elsa and I grew up in a household of philosophical conversations. My mother used to make tea for her and father’s colleagues. We grew accustomed to the lush blend of humanities professors, poets, and musicians. When we were younger we used to pull mom’s classical history books down from their dusty shelves in the living room. We used to think of Homer and Pythagoras as gods or something. Mom was so proud. She told all of her professorial friends about us. She was all the more encouraging when she started purchasing felt-tipped pens and little journals for our notetaking. But for us the only importance rested in the collection of bizarre Greek names, for our future children. And, of course, there was

maybe I never left the earth.

9

1ST PLACE FICTION > TRAVEL LIGHTLY > LYDIA COPELAND > CONTINUED

a running contest to see who could find the most graphic or sexual myths. We felt so professional with our important black books.

Elsa was more competitive than I. She had to win at everything, but she probably never realized that I was never competing against her. I always let her win at basketball. But when it came to poker the competition was real. Poker was serious from the time mom taught us how to play. There were countless nights when we did not even go to bed. There was always another hand to play. We would gather from the kitchen, all the food needed to survive the long hours, knowing that we would still fall into conversation after the first few hours and put the game away. Poker soon became code for counsel. I knew whenever Elsa broke up with a boy that we would be laughing about him later that night while we downed cookies and potato chips. I missed those games. Elsa never cared to play a hand anymore, but I left a deck of Bicycle cards on the living room table just in case.

I twisted her necklace around my fingers again. Its silver links spat glints of light onto the seat in front of me. Sunlight halfheartedly shone through my window. My fingers moved over the tiny silver bird that dangled from its delicacy. I think that Elsa had forgotten all about it. She used to wear it all the time, but when I had borrowed it I had found it on the bathroom floor behind the toilet. I do not think I ever asked her where she got it. I always loved that necklace on my sister. It illuminated Elsa when she used to wear it, but I don’t think it did much for me, even though the two of us looked nearly identical. We both inherited our father’s dark curls and our mother’s olive skin, but Elsa had eyes darker and wider than mine. Some people say she looks older than me. I think she has certainly seen more of the sadder pieces of life.

My head leaned against the window. I still could not fall asleep somehow. The ocean was still below, although clouds covered most of it. I could occasionally trace its blue through the atmosphere. Maybe I was only looking into the sky all that time. Maybe I never left the earth.

I glance back to my sleeping friend, whose face was now turned toward me. The sunlight rested dangerously across her closed lids. I shut the blind to the outside world and the darkness came over her face. And with her eyes closed the woman smiled at me. As soon as I was wanting her to wake up, the captain came over the intercom and told us all to fasten our seat belts. We were going to be experiencing slight turbulence. My lady sat up and composed herself while tightening her already buckled seat belt. I smiled belatedly.

"That's a beautiful necklace," I had to say.

"Oh, thank you." She spoke with a London accent. "I like yours, as well. It looks very dear to you."

"It's my sister's actually. I'm only borrowing it. I don't think it's very dear to anyone, just one of those things that's been around the house forever."

"Well, it's lovely." She picked up the book from her lap.

Before she began reading again I asked her if her locket had a picture inside. Oh yes, she told me. It held the picture of her first granddaughter. She opened the shining chamber and revealed to me the image of a newborn girl. I thought of Elsa instantly and the baby growing inside of her. I thought of how much we resembled each other, and realized that I would look just like her if I ever carried a child.

"My sister's going to have a baby," I told the woman. It was strange how proud I sounded.

"Oh, how lucky. You'll be an aunt, then. Your family must be anxious."

"Yes," I said. "We're on needles and pins. I guess I am pretty lucky, but the baby will be four months old when I get back."

10

1ST PLACE FICTION > TRAVEL LIGHTLY > LYDIA COPELAND > CONTINUED

the ocean was gone.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" she asked.

"A girl."

"Well, then you'll have a nice surprise when you go back home."

I smiled again. She began reading chapter ten. My eyes went back to the ocean, but the shade was down. I was not finished with it. I wanted to crawl down and swim deep into its motion. It held me together in its frozen blue.

I looked to the woman, hating to bother her again.

"Do you mind if I open the blind? I want to see the ocean."

"Not at all love."

I turned my whole body away from the passengers and squeezed as much of my self as I could into the small space between my seat and the window. However, when I opened the blind the ocean was gone. It had disappeared beneath the billowy sky. We must have been cruising at a higher altitude now. I scanned the illuminated cracks of cloud, but could not even faintly see through. It was a strange feeling to be a part of the sky and to be gazing into it at the same time. Too much for me, I thought, and I leaned into my seat and closed my eyes for sleep.

ocean

■ ■ ■ (gears)



are a visual metaphor for the rules upon which language is based.



the protocols by which we compose and decode a message.

(you are the cipher)



continue>

missing the dead

Nicholas Jimenez

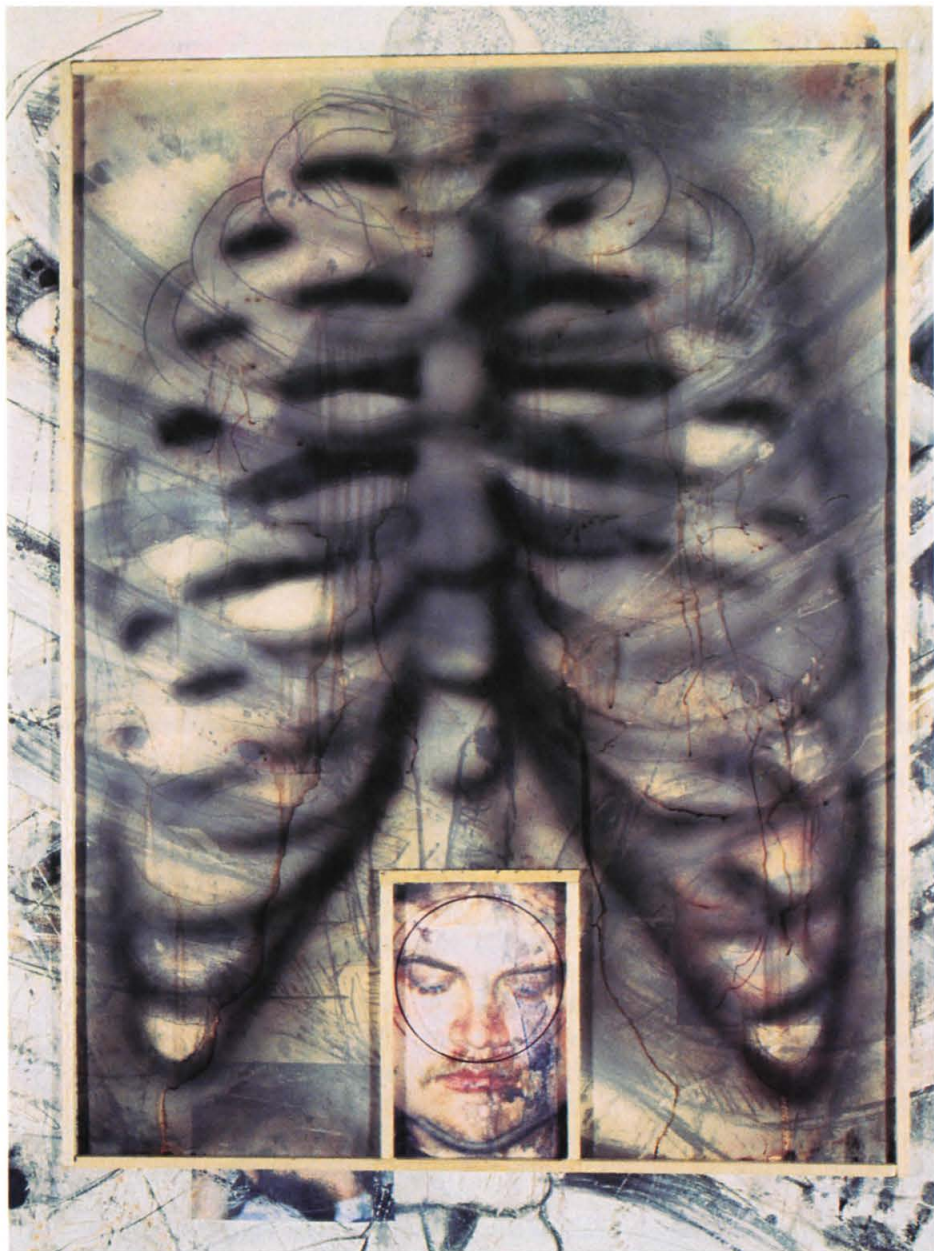
Woke last night crushed and threadbare
with my teeth chattering and knees drawn up
Called your name and heard it ring and
reverberate down the empty halls
Crouched on the floor naked
felt the cold texture of the wooden slats beneath me
Crept along the walls whispering your name
thought I heard your answering sigh from below
Took the stairs down to the door
Stepped into the dank and musty smell
of a room closed too long
Boxes and trunks hold your memory there
I lay down among you
Your lace and smell dispersed my fears
I slept with you again dead as you are
The sun came and left me alone

I know
I must be
mad
for you

12

2ND PLACE POETRY>MISSING THE DEAD>NICHOLAS JIMENEZ

mad for you



2ND PLACE DRAWING>UNTITLED>DRAWING>22.25"x29.75">JOHN HILTON

1986 space shuttle

Phillip J. Guerrieri II

The 1986 Space Shuttle flight was truly an event that changed many lives, including my own. Sometimes when special events occur, I always remember where I was and what I was doing. For instance, when the first astronauts landed on the moon, I can remember almost every detail on that warm summer night of July. My best friend, Philip Hallmark, was showing me the wart on his knee. Silhouetted by the television glow, we watched with excitement as the Apollo first landed on the moon. I was truly inspired by that event, as were millions of other hopeful human beings. Almost twenty years later, the Space Shuttle prepared to take astronauts and, for the first time, citizens, including a schoolteacher, into space.

The Space Shuttle finally launched after repeated delays. Again, millions of people watched with hopeful anticipation. Catastrophically, the Shuttle exploded over the Atlantic Ocean off the South Carolina coast. I felt sad for the woman schoolteacher and her family. I also felt sadness for the astronauts and everyone else who was stricken by this event. I felt much different than I did as a child with the Apollo triumph. I believe this event affected many people that I was unaware of, and many that I was yet to meet.

A few months later, in the fall of 1986, I was working in Washington D.C. distributing food, blankets, and medical care to D.C.'s homeless population. As I was keeping an eye out for "stragglers" or shy individuals who might need extra help, I noticed a man peering out from behind a tree. He was short and stout, wearing a long, woolen coat and a small brim hat. I wondered why he was staring at me. As soon as I saw him, he started to approach me. Walking slowly with a big pair of winter boots, his round cheerful face came closer to me. Above broad shoulders, his frosted beard and hair reflected that he was entering into the winter season of his life.

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the shuttle exploded over the atlantic

1ST PLACE NON-FICTION > 1986 SPACE SHUTTLE > PHILIP J. GUERRIERI II

Looking me straight in the eyes, he walked up to me. Speaking in a Latino accent, he said, "I am John Kiplani and I don't belong here." I replied with my name and asked him if he would like some food or a blanket. He graciously declined the offer and continued on with his focus. John said, "I have been watching you take care of the homeless people and I need to trust someone. I need to tell someone what has happened to me." He proceeded to tell me an amazing story.

John Kiplani said he was from Colombia, South America, and that he was a fisherman. Fishing with his twenty-four year old son was his love and his life. They were fishing off the coast of South Carolina the day the Space Shuttle was launched. John said he saw fire falling from the sky. He and his son scrambled onto the deck of the boat, not knowing what was happening. One of the large, fiery objects fell through the boat, sinking it and killing John's twenty-four year old son. He said he saw a woman's torso floating in the water with all the exploded debris. John said he was rescued and that the next day the local newspaper printed what had happened to him.

Next, some official looking men drove John to Washington, D.C. There they told him that Congress was trying to decide who was at fault for the Space Shuttle disaster, the company that built the O-rings or NASA. And, that when they did decide, they would "compensate" John for his boat and his son's death. He said he had a lawyer, but that he was left homeless on the streets of D.C. until Congress decided who was at fault. Speaking with his foreign accent, John then said, "All I need from you is to trust you, so that I don't have to be here going through all of this alone." We talked for a while longer and then I handed John a blanket as he headed off for the night.

I have heard many stories working with people on the streets. John Kiplani's story was almost unbelievable. But, the next day, John returned with a leather briefcase, containing evidence supporting his story. There were newspaper clippings from the South Carolina coastal town. There were legal documents proving his involvement with congressional hearings pertaining to this compensation for his boat and his son's life. I couldn't believe that this government had left an innocent bystander hanging in limbo, in a strange country, in a strange city, suffering the loss of his son left houseless to exist on the streets of the nation's capitol while Congress deliberated.

In the months to come, John Kiplani and I shared many moments together. John would tell me of his culture and of his travels around the world on his boat with his son. He gestured at times that I was helping to

compensate for his sudden loss with my simple companionship. He told me that he wanted to take me on journeys with him when he got his settlement and got his boat. John always told me that when he got his money, he was going to head straight back to Columbia. John still had family in Columbia. Also, John told me that no amount of money could ever compensate for his son's death. But, he appreciated my time with him. You see, I was twenty-four years old at the time. The same age as John's son. Our meeting was an event that changed my life.

While working in D.C., I would often visit my family back in Texas. John would tell me that if he was ever gone when I returned from my visit that meant that he had gotten his money and he had gone back to Columbia. He also said that he would return someday to take me on exciting, seafaring journeys with him. One day when I returned from visiting my family, John Kiplani was gone from the D.C. streets. I knew he had gotten his settlement and caught a fast wind home.

Events are simple events. What makes them special is our personal interaction and involvement with the event that imprints a memory. My meeting and interaction with John Kiplani imprinted the Space Shuttle flight into my memory. John Kiplani helped me to learn to always be "open" to someone's story, no matter how bizarre it may sound. I learned this from the amazing story of John Kiplani. I hope I helped to buffer some of John's sudden loss of his son. I hope to see John Kiplani again. Our meeting was a special event that I will never forget. Who would ever imagine that a fragment of modern man's space exploration would fall from the sky, through a boat, killing the son of a simple South American fisherman off the coast of the Americas in 1986? Who has ever heard this father's story? Who has ever heard of John Kiplani? I have.

events are simple events.



our meeting was an event that changed my life.



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Dear Alan,

Old Mule is still sitting up near the new barn,
as a monument to you,
where it has been rusting for the past six years.
Like most of the ornamental yard trucks in Flag Pond,
about the only thing it's good for now is drying beans and
providing shade for wild blackberry bushes growing through the
floorboard.

A gray Chevy-symbolic of the late seventies
with "America Love it or Leave it!" across the tail-gate.

The Angus cow's skull that you tied
to the radiator is still there.

A katydid's rattle echoes in heated mirrors across my face
like the rattle of that God-forsaken cow's skull.



like a desert hero riding a half devil horse

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3RD PLACE POETRY>DEAR ALAN>MARIA RICE

I was down at Miss White's greenhouse pretending to ride her
blue glass elephant in the middle of her cactuses when you
wrecked Old Mule.

You remember, one of those life size crystal Marble menageries
that elderly women like to decorate their yard with.

At the emergency room you were still cussing clots of blood
that slithered down your
Holy blue jeans.

Grinding fire on the mountain,
you stayed with that ol' crow-bar of a truck
to the bottom of the ridge
like a desert hero riding a half devil horse
off the Sierra Madre

With a handful of mane you hauled yourself out
stubborn, loyal, and bleeding purple.

I remember riding Old Mule
to the drumming of a graveled muffler.

Up and down above Mason men's retirement Cadillacs,
I remember the pheasant's tail you kept tied to the blinder
Oily and Sandy.

Up and down on Pizza Hut checked seats that stuck to my sweaty
legs like hay and pine rosin.

Your no window truck let our brassy, untamed curls ride in the
wind — blowing into our mouths like old corn silks.

Mischievous curls
pronouncing those All-American blue eyes of yours.

Football player and road runner
you taught me how to chase after Ice-Cream Trucks.
Someday Alan,
you and I will own our own Ice-Cream Truck.

You were the white sheep—
the favorite child that everyone asked about at family reunions.
“Have you heard from Alan lately?
I heard he moved out west and married a Squaw.”
Because you used to tease and say that you would
just to break the monotony of hanging tobacco.

3RD PLACE POETRY>DEAR ALAN>MARIA RICE>CONTINUED

you were the white sheep

18

Falling asleep to Western novels,
you had dreams about the west
and stared to ream away from the overprotective mountains
that smothered you with allergies.
You had visions of eagles, tumbleweeds, and Nebraska goldenrods.
You glided away from this Cow-Pie Town
away from milk weeds, chiggers, rattlers,
and the “Blue Tick Brothers.”
You always carried a Red Buck knife
and a wallet of “walk around” money
with a worn leather deer on its side.
A round place was embedded on the back pocket of all your blue
jeans where you hid the Skoal Bandit.
They wouldn't let you chew in the service so you chewed matches
instead — a habit you picked up from watching “The Good, the
Bad, and the Ugly.”

I remember the smell of antique bottles
that you collected in the field,
Budweiser and freshly dug ginseng drying in one of Grandma's
tin pie pans on the dirty dashboard.
Moon-pies even tasted sweeter —
warmed up on the hood of your pickup truck.

Your Sears-Roebuck flannel shirts and cut off camouflage pants
are still in Momma's cedar chest waiting.
When I was six you introduced me to Simon and Garfunkel
in your light brown corduroy sport coat with the dark elbow

patch and the wooden buttons.
You traded all that for Navy blues, quarter inch hair cuts
and golden buttons.
How did you ever get in if you lied about knowing how to swim?

You were the hunter
wearing moccasins and making barefoot snowmen.
Grandma planted her chickens in a pair of your worn-out boots
and placed them right beside her prize winning begonias.

A rock with your own religion
in our own pick-up truck,
I find myself asking how a goldstone geographer like you
ended up on a ship called Davidson on the Pacific?

falling asleep to Western novels,

and stared away from the overprotective mountains

you had dreams about the west

19

Your grip — your handshake — A Man's gift
Firm — not weak like a preacher's after a bad sermon.
Your handshake wasn't long and sweaty like a politician's either
it was Genuine Leather.

Riding in Old Mule
pumping the breaks and changing the gears
with a wrenching "Shit!"
as only you could say it.
Steering those metal reins
laughing and cussing death in your six horse power engine, yelling-
"Whoa there Mule! Whoa there Mule!"
And the cow's skull tied to the radiator — rattling — rattling.
Now my eyes are full and churning with salt water
And I can hear you sarcastically saying,
"I ain't ever gonna leave you Daddy."

The last memory I have of you is one that haunts me daily.
You were chiseled wisely in your uniform
looking twenty — three forever.
Your scarred cheek from the wreck with Old Mule
turned a foxglove purple in the Evergreen Cemetery.
My Indian painted warrior too proud for stitches.

I know you won't get this letter,
But please

Brother Alan Navigator,
please
just keep on driving.

teachers: How they motivate and how they devastate

Charles York

White. I remember white. Everything was white. The man's coat, the walls, the floor, all white. If it wasn't white, it was stainless steel in a word, sterile. A testing facility for the gifted in the middle of, well, I'm not sure. Memories are choppy but I remember white.

"I know he borders on genius Carol. Sometimes I am not sure if it is the border on this side or the other side of genius, however." There was a sense of amazement in the doctor's eyes as she scanned the pages of the test results. "I am thoroughly convinced," he continued, "that this boy would learn even if we left him alone in a dark room."

Only four, I was not yet sure what all of this meant, but I remember the doctor's words and I remember white. In the car, my mother praised me for being cooperative with the doctor's through all the tests.

I had already been reading for a year by this time, and addition and subtraction were coming along well. By age five, it was hard to drag me away from books. While the other children learned to color in the lines, my kindergarten teacher brought timed math tests in from other grades. Each time I reached 100 problems in the allotted fifteen minutes, the questions got harder. Before moving on to first grade, I had mastered division of two digit numbers by one digit numbers in my head and was reading smoothly at a fourth grade reading level. First and second grade was much of the same. The school system to this point was structured well to accommodate the different developmental patterns of the individual student. First, second, and third grades were combined and taught on an individualized level.

I began to notice the other children looking at me funny as I would sit with my reading tutor. She made routine trips to the high school library to indulge my craving for something new and exciting to read. The girl next to me was promoted to Dr. Seuss at about the time I was finishing *Gulliver's Travels*. Nothing was ever said, but the gap widened all through second grade until that fateful trip to the library.

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2ND PLACE NON-FICTION>TEACHERS: HOW THEY MOTIVATE AND HOW THEY DEVASTATE>CHARLES YORK

thus,
mes,

truth

gentle reader, I have given the faithful history of my travels for sixteen years and above seven months; wherein I have not been so studious of ornament as truth.

Each day I would pass by Mr. McCurry's classroom down the central hall of the elementary school. "Mr. 'McCool' McCurry's 3rd grade class" the sign above his door read, but the door was always closed. That is until today. In the doorway was a young boy carrying a book and a tall man with jet-black hair. "I'll see you tomorrow Mr. McCurry," the boy said, preparing to leave. "See ya later alligator. Stay cool," the teacher answered, giving the boy a high five as he departed.

It wasn't that I disliked my teachers or the special reading and math tutoring I was getting, I loved to learn, but there before me was the missing element. I wanted what that other boy had. I wanted to be accepted as being cool, not as a freak as I would hear some of my classmates whisper as I would walk by.

My mother was startled at my request. "Why would you want to change classes next year?" she queried. "Your class is the best in the school and you've come through two out of three years there and are doing very well. They were talking about letting you skip 4th and 5th grades and going over to the middle school if you continue to work this way next year."

"I don't want to skip any grades. I want to be in a normal class and Mr. McCurry seems like a cool teacher." The arrangements were made and, after summer was over, I would enter into Mr. McCurry's 3rd grade class.

I remember kindergarten. I remember first and second grade though the two years kind of flow together in my mind. I guess because I wasn't really sure at what point first grade ended and second grade began. The teachers were the same and the room was the same. It was as if we just got out for a couple of months to enjoy baseball season and then picked up where we left off. My next memories of school were 5th grade. I know I had Mr. McCurry for 3rd grade because my mother told me in great detail that I had. All that I know of fourth grade is I nearly failed. In 5th grade, I had another wonderful teacher, Mrs. Spooore, who worked with me by myself at every opportunity. My fondest memory was a trip to the grocery store. She had arranged to come to my house on a Saturday and take me into town to go grocery shopping. We came to the store with a long

shopping list. My task was to decide which item was the best buy and to keep track of how much the total was to be. "12 ounces of green beans for 59 cents or 16 ounces for 72 cents?"

"Get the 16 ounces; it is only 4.5 cents per ounce. 72 cents added to the total will give us \$5.89 so far," I would answer her. She would punch some numbers into her calculator to keep track of how I was doing but I had a surprise for her at the check out. When we arrived at the checkout after two hours of this exercise in comparison shopping, Mrs. Spore explained to the cashier what we had been doing and asked me to tell the cashier how much the bill would come to before taxes. "\$42.56 before coupons, \$35.41 after subtracting \$7.15 with your coupons and \$35.83 after taxes," I told them. My teacher, with her mouth hanging open drew out a pen and jotted down the numbers.

"35.83 on the nose!" the cashier exclaimed. "How did you know that?"

"She had \$10.48 in non-food items after subtracting the coupons for those items and at 4% sales tax, that would be 42 cents tax. Michigan doesn't tax foods," I replied matter of factly.

"I just don't understand it!" my mother said. "I know he knows the material, you know he knows the material, and even he knows he knows the material, but his grades continue to show little more than 70% in every subject." Tears welled up in her eyes. Mrs. Spore just shrugged.

I passed through school year by year, but the joy had gone. Where was the boy who at age six read a sixteen volume children's encyclopedia from cover to cover to quench his thirst for knowledge? It was 7th grade when I realized what was happening. Numbers flashed in my head that I hadn't given conscious thought to previously. The test I was taking was 50 questions long with 2-bonus question worth 5 points apiece. "If I get one bonus question right, I need to miss 15 questions for a 75. A good solid C. Average. Not too high, not too low." What could this mean? What was the significance? I began to take a closer look at my test results and grades over the previous years and noticed a definite pattern. I had been getting by. I wasn't failing but I wasn't showing great potential either. Slowly, I began to override

my principle design was to inform

I could perhaps like others have astonished you with strange improbable tales, but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact in the simplest manner and style...

=



not to amuse you.

design

this unconscious effort to make myself invisible in the academic arena. Through the following year I began to show some effort but found myself bored.

My mother sat me down the summer following my 8th grade year as a last ditch effort to unlock the dormant abilities of my intelligence. She had made arrangements for me to attend Roper High School near Detroit. "It is a school for the gifted, and they will be better equipped to challenge your mind than the public schools, but it is your decision," she said.

My answer came quickly. Which would be worse? To be gifted in an average school or average in a gifted school? No, I wouldn't attend Roper High School. I can learn anywhere, but to enroll in such a school at that point in my life would be committing social suicide. I was working hard to fit into a cruel society that was just now learning to accept me. Was I to join the clique of the ultra-intelligent, nose in the books without the slightest idea how to relate to anyone who could not at a moments whim compose a dissertation on the theory of relativity or mold a molecular model of hydrogen peroxide from slightly chewed gum and an eraser? Perish the thought! If I was going to survive in this world, I must adapt and overcome rather than withdraw myself into a stack of books.

High school came and went without incident. My overall GPA was a 3.2. I had stopped holding back on my tests and rarely scored less than 95% but rebelled stubbornly in the area of homework. Why should I do homework anyway? It was nothing but an exercise in repetition for those who learn at a slower pace than I. If I prove I know the material when the test is given, is this not enough?

I took the ACT test in the fall semester of my senior year and created a stir among local colleges. I was told I made a perfect score in math and a near perfect score in science, lacking only the knowledge missed by having no chemistry courses in high school. I turned down three scholarships offered me and went to take the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) required to enter the military. The test was going well were it not for one section. We were asked to open our booklets and copy answers from the book to the answer sheet as fast as we could. There were not



HONORABLE MENTION>MY KINGDOM FOR A LITTLE PAIN>INTAGLIO>8"x10">KEVIN STEPHENSON

questions, merely letters. They give you a 'C'; you mark 'C' for example. This should be easy I thought. However, when I opened the booklet, I noticed the pages had all been ripped out. Some were upside down, some backwards and all were out of order. I first aligned the papers properly and then began. The timer blared as I was down to the last five questions and I was ordered to stop.

The proctor informed me that I would be contacted with the results in a couple of days and asked to come down to discuss my career possibilities based on my score. A week went by, then two. It wasn't until the fourth week following the exam that a nervous recruiter contacted me. He apologized that he had taken so long to phone me but there was some controversy over my test results and an investigation was conducted. The FBI found no apparent wrongdoing and the investigation was concluded when results of my ACT had been obtained. It seems I missed only five questions on a 6-hour battery of tests and all of these were questions not answered on the speed and accuracy battery. "On a more positive note," he laughed, "you have been cleared by this investigation for a top secret security clearance before you are even enlisted!"

It was not until this time, as I was awaiting orders to ship out to boot camp that I discovered the cause of my aversion to school. My mother decided it was time for me to know why I was unable to recall 3rd or 4th grades. Mr. McCurry had been a new teacher, taught through college that he must teach to the middle of the class. The slow learners, well, they would always be that way and the bright students would fend for themselves. Combined with what my mother was about to tell me, my one memory of 3rd grade was about to make more sense.

I remember sitting in the back of the class and watching Jeff Sander struggling to sound out some of the simplest words in our 3rd grade reading book which each child was required to read a small portion of to the class each day.

2ND PLACE NON-FICTION > TEACHERS: HOW THEY MOTIVATE AND HOW THEY DEVASTATE > CHARLES YORK > CONTINUED

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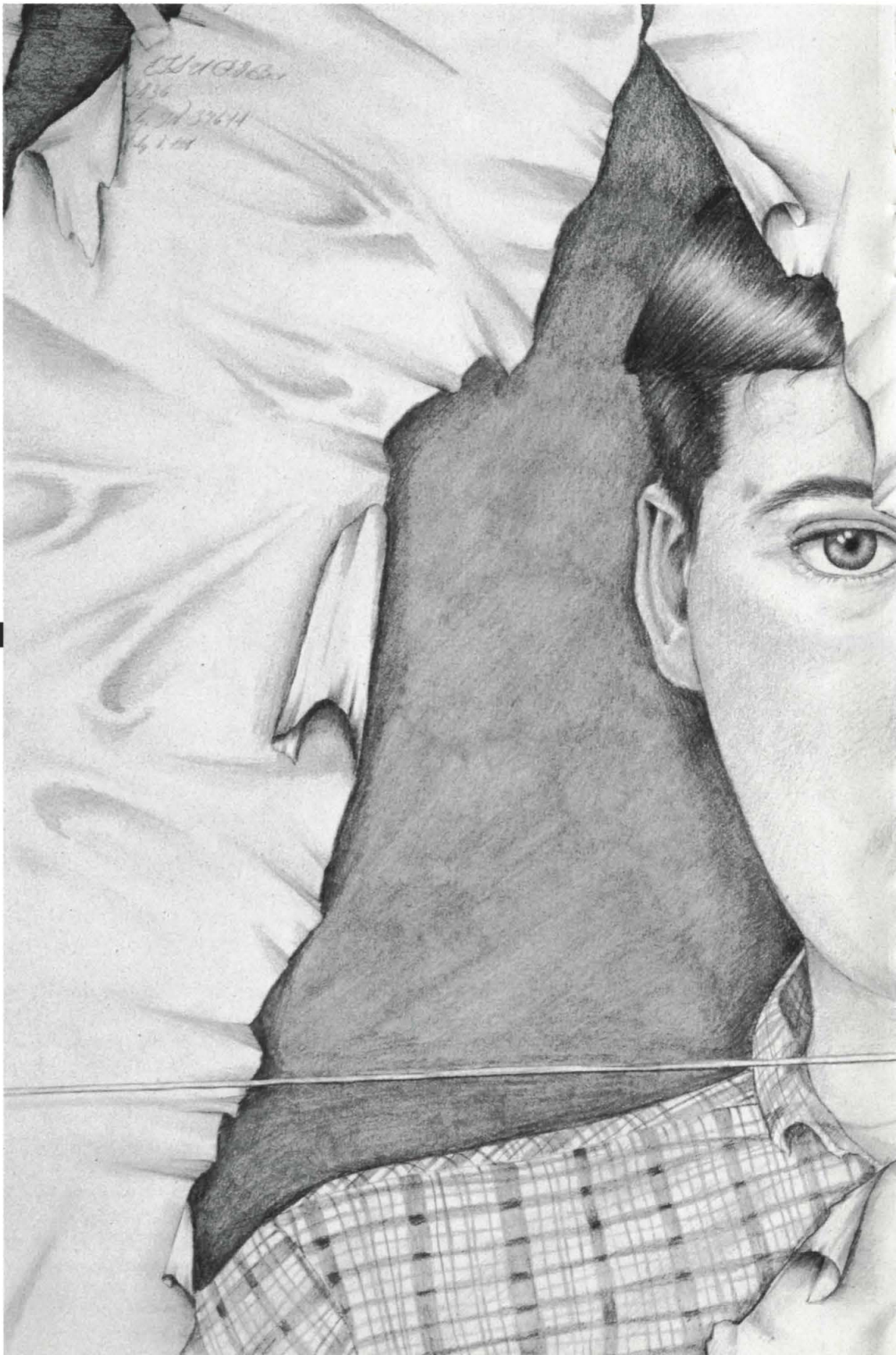
a remote corner of my subconscious

Jeff was always having more difficulty than anyone and had been diagnosed with a severe learning disability and mild brain damage from trauma suffered at an early age. I watched in horror as Mr. McCurry walked over and tore the book from Jeff's hands, closed it and slammed it to the desk. "You will NEVER learn to read anything this hard!" he bellowed. "Go back and grab a Dick and Jane book and sit in the corner." With this, he placed a large pink dunce cap on Jeff's head and sent him crying to the back of the room. I felt Jeff's pain and remember wishing I could go back with him and help him to read. I don't remember any other details of that year or the next. It is all tightly locked into a remote corner of my subconscious but I have yet to discover the key.

My mother relayed to me that the ridicule and abuse suffered by Jeff was also aimed towards myself. I would ask a question about a passage we would be reading and the teacher would not know how to answer. Angered by what he felt was a deliberate attempt to make him look foolish in front of his students, I would be ridiculed by him and he persuaded the other students that I was a freak -- a tag that remained with me for many years to come. During a parent- teacher conference, he told my parents and me that he hated me because I made him look stupid. It was at that point that I decided that being smart and trying to learn was bad and made people hate you. I was told that I entered a deep depression and often spoke of my wish to die.

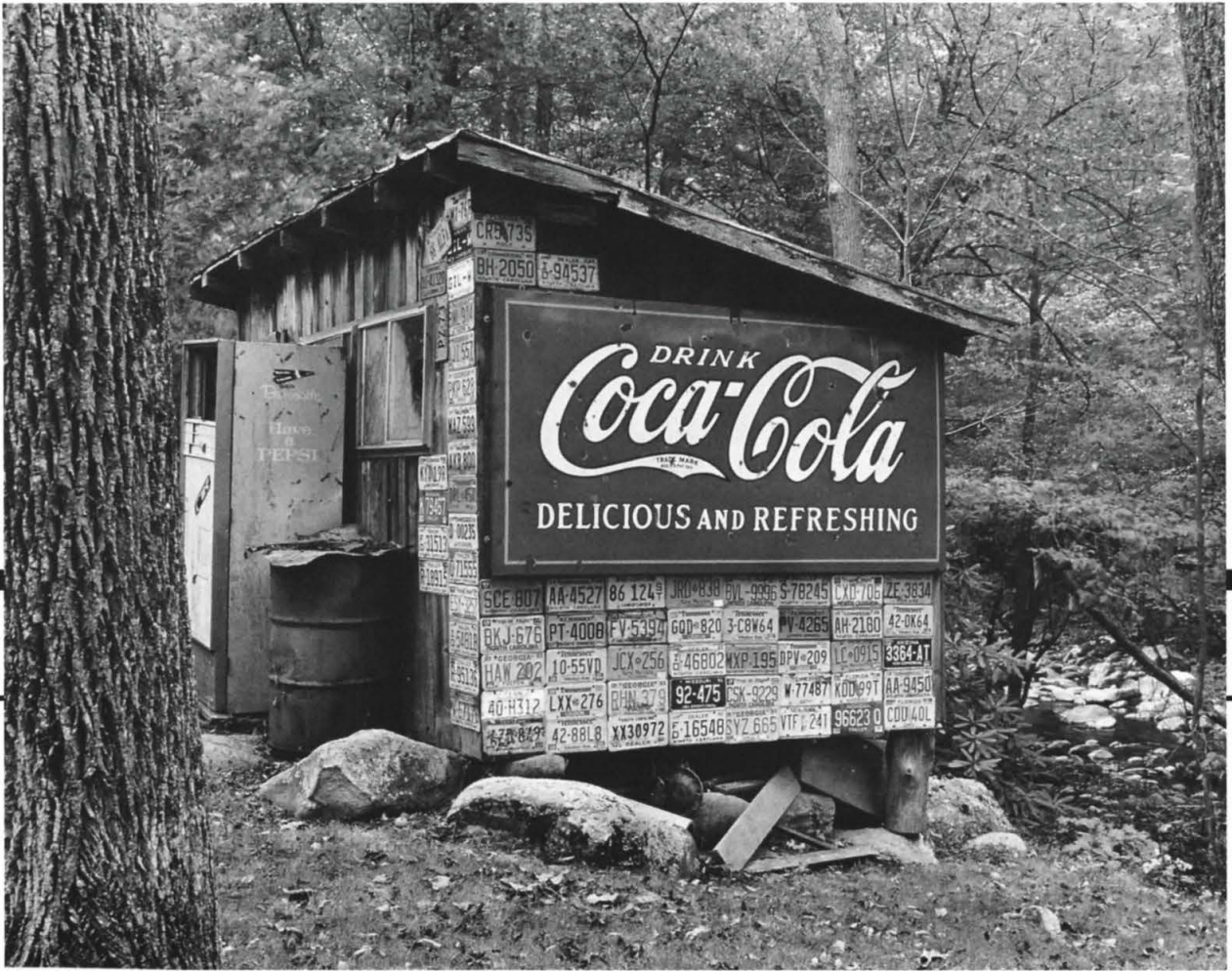
I now live with the regrets of a lifetime wasted, potential squandered and dreams squelched. I am not quite sure if this accounts for my near obsession with maintaining a 4.0 in college. Who am I trying to prove something to? Myself? Mr. McCurry? I am not quite certain. Somehow I feel as though I have proven the statement made long ago by a nameless man in a white coat. I *had* been placed in a dark room filled with hatred and lack of acceptance and had somehow learned despite it all. Somehow I absorbed and maintained the knowledge in front of me that I had tried to ignore. Now, I come to put back into motion what was once a well-oiled learning machine. My only hope is that I can put behind me the pain of a young boy ridiculed that gripped me for so long, and move forward with a renewed passion for learning.

a remote corner of my subconscious





HONORABLE MENTION>UNTITLED>DRAWING>23.625"x18">HOWARD DALE



i

26

scattering traditions

Pam Tabor

When I was 18, I didn't leave home.
Ambition seemed like a big city notion.
Better to stay planted,
let my roots grow and take hold.
"It's safer here," my Mother would say.
Any place outside her world, our home,
was filled with danger and shadows.

Small towns breed small minds,
yet progress occurs despite all
the struggling to resist.
It unfolds a little slower under
this big old Southern sun.
It blossoms anyway despite the
lack of interest or care.

HONORABLE MENTION > SCATTERING TRADITIONS > PAM TABOR

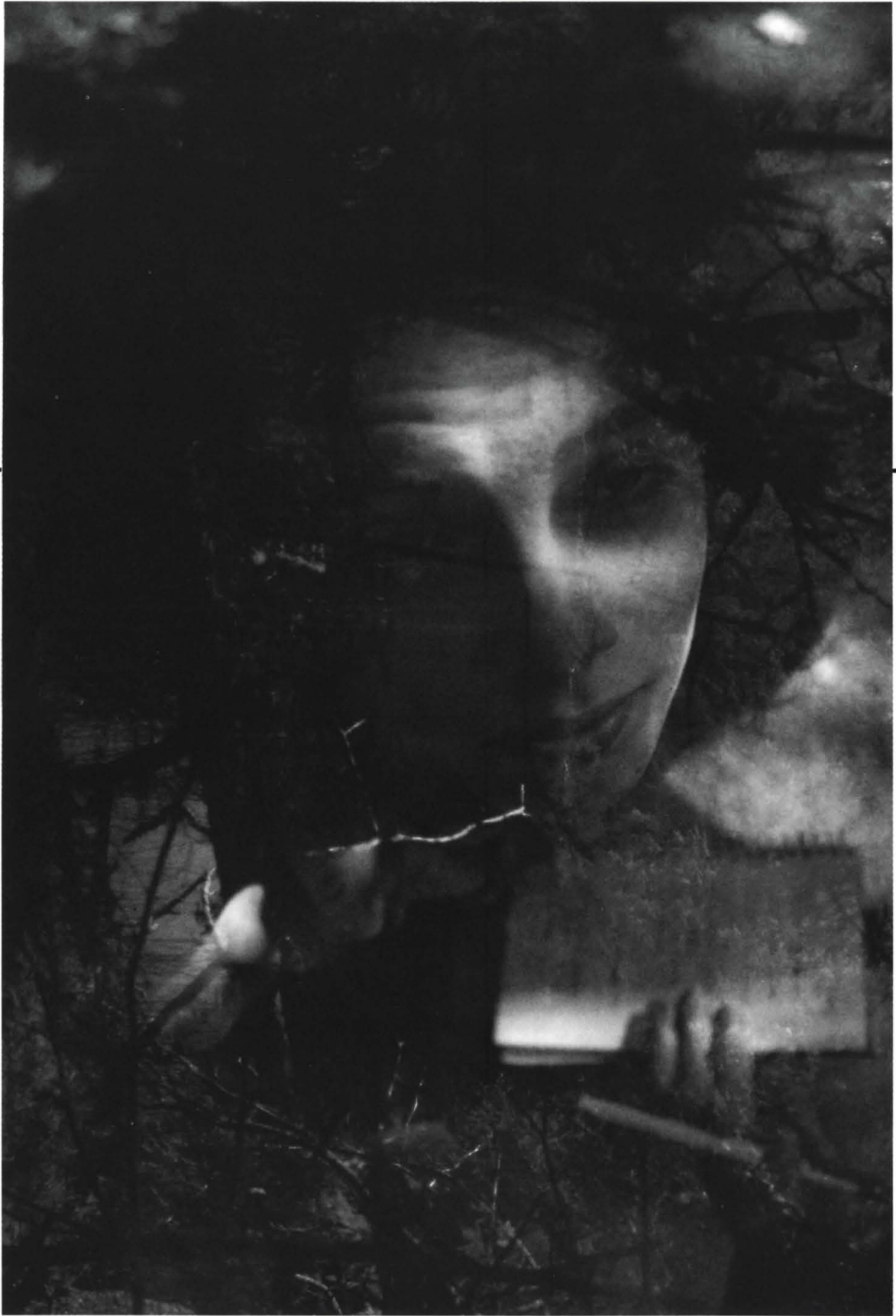
it blossoms anyway despite the lack of interest or care.

27

Outsiders feed progress.
Its every whim is diligently
tended to by caretakers who
forsake family and home for
careers in big shiny buildings
surrounded by the cacophony
of strangers seeking to better themselves.
They are the ones who left,
"got out" as we say,
moving on, scattering their traditions
all over the country.

It's too quiet here in this valley.
Some nights you can hear
the slow decay of dreams and livelihood.
But if you dig a little deeper,
you can find those roots
still holding fast to heritage and home.
Firm footholds creating a foundation
for generations to come.

"Don't ever forget where you came from."
my Father advises.
Wise words for a foolish world.



RUNNER-UP>UNTITLED>PHOTOGRAPHY>6.5"x9.5">ERIC VAUGHN

Nat raced out of the house before her mother could begin her after-school mothering. She didn't look back, although her mother probably hadn't even discovered Nat was gone yet. She ran fast, making a beeline toward the cow field that sprawled, two streets away, behind the last row of houses in the subdivision. It was her personal playground.

Suddenly, there it was a piece of country land which yawned and stretched out in its comfortable bed on the outskirts of town. She grinned at the familiar hillocks and at the primal pleasure of the late-summer sun warming her chestnut hair. Nat quickly slipped under the barbed-wire fence with the grace of long practice and went skipping off in the waist-high grass, adroitly hopping over and around the puddles of cow poop that lay hidden like occasional land mines. She made a mental note that the cows had gathered on the far side of the field, near the farmer's feeders, and planned to stay away from that end. Instead, she headed toward the wooded back area, where numerous sinkholes formed dark, mysterious underworlds. She wound her way to the sinkhole she frequented the most a large, barren scoop out of the earth ringed with tall trees which happened to be hung with vines. Nat found her traditional swinging-vine (the one nearly worn smooth from her squeezing hands holding on for dear life) and spent the next 45 minutes swinging herself far out over the abyss of the sinkhole, whooping and watching her shadow fall away from her down to the leafy bottom below. She pretended she was flying that she was a big beautiful black crow. Then she decided that she was a she-monkey, living in the trees and rescuing all the other forest creatures in trouble. After that, she was Spider Man; then she was a spy; then she was a panther in a rain forest.

foot rock

2ND PLACE FICTION > EULOGY > EMILY SIKORA KATT

grandfather pine

29

Nat suddenly realized she was thirsty, and left the vine swinging on its own while she went down to the creek for a drink. Technically, she knew she shouldn't drink the water (the cows walked through the downstream side and who knew what had happened to the water before it got here?), but it looked so clear and felt so pure and cool as it flowed smoothly out of the small stone cavern that she couldn't resist, especially when she was this thirsty. Ready to spit it out at the first taste of badness, she cupped her hands and cautiously drank, feeling wonderfully wild, like a doe or an Indian maiden stopping for a drink at the stream but constantly on the alert for danger. As she drank, she looked beneath the shimmering surface of the water and saw two crawdads lumbering around on the sandy creek floor. She watched them, delighted, as they bumped into each other, threatened each other, and went their separate, lumbering ways. Nat loved this place, loved the sun, and loved life. In a fit of sheer happiness, she splashed handfuls of cool water up into the air, laughing loudly as it pattered back down upon her a split moment later. She threw more handfuls up into the air, over her own head, onto the rocks facing her, across to the bushes and grasses that grew among the boulders.

Nat had been coming to this field ever since she had discovered it at the puny age of seven. Now she was a very sophisticated ten years old, double-digits, already in the fifth grade and ready to graduate to middle school. At seven, she was only newly independent, and had rather expected a neighbor to lean out the window and yell at her, "Hey, kid! Get out of that field! You don't belong there! I'm calling the owner right now! I'm calling the police!" That had never happened, so she was a much more confident ten-year-old, right at home trespassing on someone else's property and feeling very much like it belonged to her. She spent so much time here that she felt very possessive about it, to the extent that she rarely brought a friend with her, wanting to keep the field for herself. Nat drew little maps of the field every now and then, when she changed her mind about where in the field she thought her house should be when she grew up or when she discovered some other feature she wanted to nickname, like Moonrock Plain or Groundhog Station. Later, in high school, Nat unearthed those maps and felt the familiar heartache of love for where she felt was her spiritual home. She could still remember all the names she had given to everything Foot Rock and Crawdad Creek and Grandfather Pine. Every day, driving on the way to school, she passed the field and pressed her face against the car window, sighing happily at the peace it gave her simply to look at it. Of course, she no longer spent the whole of every afternoon out in the field like she did as a young child did; now she had homework and friends and soccer team. But the memories she already had and continued to make were treasures to her, dearly held close to her heart.

In the winter of her thirteenth year there was a massive blizzard; it was the biggest anyone there had seen in two decades. Snow poured out of the sky in seemingly endless abundance on Wednesday night and, when Nat awoke the next morning, it was snowing just as diligently. School was, naturally, canceled. Nat was free to play in the four-and five-foot drifts of snow. Her father and brother immediately set to shoveling the driveway and making a snow fort respectively. Her mother preferred

to stay indoors and make homemade cookies and hot chocolate. A feeling of well being spread all through Nat; she decided she wanted to see what her field looked like in this winter wonderland. When she started off down the driveway, her father warned, "Don't go far, Natalie! You could get lost in all this snow!" She lied and told him she was just going over one street to her friend's house to sled.

Soon she faced the challenge of the barbed-wire fence surrounding the field. The snow made it impossible to slip under, but she didn't know if she could climb over it with all her awkward snow gear on. She ended up digging out the snow underneath the fence and entering her traditional way. A vast, undisturbed plain of white greeted her as far as she could see. It was daunting, and exciting all at the same time. Civilization was just at her heels she could still hear children giggling as they made a snowman across the street but looking straight ahead was like looking into a New World. With difficulty, she trudged through the waist-high snow toward what she thought was the center of the field. The further away she got from her entrance point, the more isolated and pioneer like she felt. Nat also felt more and more exhausted; walking through such deep snow was wearing out her energy reserves. However, the intense beauty of her surroundings made it worthwhile. The featureless plain of white that had greeted her gave way to an icy forest of snow-white evergreen trees, bent over and groaning from the weight of the snow that was still falling heavily on them. Icicles shivered from the naked branches of the deciduous trees. Nat could hear muffled silence all around her disturbed only occasionally by the faint cracking of a distant branch giving way under the snow. It was magnificent and absolutely enchanting to be totally alone in such blinding glory.

Then the wind abruptly picked up, driving the falling snow into her face, and Nat suddenly felt cold. She struggled to turn around and head back, with the freezing wind behind her seeming to push her along. With the increased wind, the snow was thick in the air, cutting her visibility down to almost nothing. She doggedly plodded on plunging one foot after the other into the deep layer of snow, wishing she hadn't taken a detour to see what Crawdad Creek looked like in the blizzard. Retracing her steps would have been much easier than forging a new path through the drifts. She slowly passed the creek, which she could only barely make out as a dark ribbon neatly winding through the white below her. Nat kept going, realizing she was going slower and slower than before. After a time, she stopped, unable to see her entrance point anywhere in front of her, unable to recognize anything around her. Nat lay down, panting and exhausted, sweating heavily inside her winter coat. The bed of snow embraced her; she looked up into the flake-filled sky and imagined herself being buried beneath a snow blanket, and resting peacefully. She truly thought she could die here, happily, and be found in the spring melt. It was poetic, she thought, and closed her eyes, concentrating on feeling the flakes gently kiss her face and melt. One after another they touched her face. Her breathing slowed.

Nat might have even fallen asleep for a time; she wasn't sure. But she got up refreshed and found that the wind had died down. She could see her previous trail through the snow winding off in the distance to her entrance point, which she could now barely make out on the horizon. She fought to get over to the broken-down path in the snow, no longer feeling so alone, and wondered at the feeling that she had somehow made peace with the field, become one with it.

The following spring drew Nat back to the field, as she would now be drawn back at least once a season to visit it. This was the last spring the cows occupied the field, keeping the grass relatively short in patches as they grazed their way through it. She entered the field as usual, and noticed that the cows were gathered in the middle of the open plain. Nat thought in the back of her mind that this was unusual for them since they generally spread out when not vying for space at the feeders. Although their size was intimidating and she suspected that a bull had been put in with them, she approached their congregation, curious as to what could make them cluster around so. As she got nearer to them, the cows closest to her shied away, leaving a gap in their circle for her to enter. Once she was close enough to almost touch the creatures on either side of her, she noticed that there was a cow down on the ground, lying motionless on its side. Letting out a small noise of distress, she circled around to examine the cow's head. Its eyes were glazed over, unblinking, and its large bluish tongue protruded limply from the side of its mouth. A small puddle of drying



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HONORABLE MENTION>EEK, I SAW A MOUSE!>PHOTOGRAPHY>5"x7">KARA ROBERTS

blood lay on the rock it had cracked its head open on. Nat felt like crying, and looked at the animals forming a rough circle around her. The look on their faces was far from blank; she knew that her own face mirrored their look of mourning. For the first time, she got a really good look at the pink “earrings” dangling on either side of their faces. Large black numbers were printed on them and suddenly she understood, with a great sigh of grief, that these animals were only here to die at the hands of her kind. Nat found she couldn't look any of them in the eye, especially the cows with spindle-legged calves hovering trustingly underneath them. Even the youngest baby had the pink earrings. Nat moved slowly out of their circle, crying silently for all their deaths. That night and every night afterwards she pushed her dinner plate away, refusing to eat the meatloaf, the steak, and the hamburger.

After the cows were long gone and the fences merely a formality, in the autumn of her sixteenth year, Nat brought her high school sweetheart to the field, to share with him the place that meant the most to her. He loved it; they spent an idyllic day rediscovering it together picnicking near Crawdad Creek, swinging on the vine. Later, when the sun was settling into a red glory of a sunset, Nat gleefully tossed away her virginity as they lay together under towering pine trees, sweetly making love on a soft bed of pine needles. They lay there for hours afterward, quietly kissing and dozing, until a crystal-clear night blossomed over them, and a myriad of stars winked at them through the pine boughs. Together they

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the fog settling in the crevices

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christened that exact place The Safe Spot; that night Nat felt as if she'd grasped the meaning of life simple, joyful, and close to the earth.

Even after she graduated high school and started college, Nat still made a pilgrimage into her field every season to savor the feeling of coming home that each visit brought. She didn't have to travel far to get to it; she was one of the few her age content to live in the same city she had been born in. Everyday, in fact, Nat drove out of her way en route to class to pass by the field and thereby witnessed some of the most spectacular misty mountain sunrises diffusing gold over the familiar hills of the land. Her land, her mind whispered, though she knew it wasn't so. It felt like it was her land; she felt as if her heart were inextricably bound together with the essence of the field, each to the other. Every ripe full moon rising over the dark fringes of the wooded back section of the land, every twilight shining eerie blue over the fog settling in the crevices between the hills made her somehow resonate with a beauty which touched her innermost self.

The day she passed by the field and saw the big neon-orange sign in front of it started like every other day. Nat was driving to class, smiling at the first sight of her field aglow in the morning light, when her eye was drawn to the huge wooden monstrosity. The sign was an announcement for an auction on the entire parcel of land. Nat had anticipated this -every other piece of available farmland in the area had long ago been snatched up and developed. But she had secretly hoped that it would skip her field, leaving it mercifully untouched, like the angel of Passover. No such luck, obviously. The sign stated -no screamed -the naked statistics of the field; 50 acres plus or minus, so much road frontage, access to city water, blah blah blah. Nat couldn't bear to see her idea of paradise broken down into a couple of numbers to be thrown around like . . . sides of beef. Her innards were twisting around, heaving. The sign offered the date and time, but Nat couldn't bring herself to even absorb the information. She already knew she wouldn't be there. She was in love with the land, but who gave a shit about that? She didn't have the cash; all she would be able to do would be to helplessly watch her field get carved up by greedy sons-of-bitches. Nat felt sick. Every part of her was screaming, sinking, telling her to do something about it for gods sakes but the harsh realities slapped her in the face and told her to get a grip on herself. There was no loan she could get. She had no collateral. No credit. No job. Nothing. Even if she could get a loan, she couldn't afford the payments, or even a down payment. She didn't have savings. The crushing weight of grief and frustration threatened to tear her apart. In tears, she drove away, aware of the angry looks and honks she was getting from the cars lined up behind her and not particularly caring. She felt worse now than she did when her grandfather had died, so she felt perfectly entitled to mourning.

The auction date came and went. The little stakes with pink ribbons tied around them that had been placed to mark off the parcels began to lean in the ground, and with time finally fell over, stripped of their ribbons. Nat did not know who owned the land now (actually she'd never really known in the first place) but in reality nothing had changed. After her next couple of traditional seasonal visits happened normally and uneventfully, she actually began to relax about the



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1ST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY>BALL/KATO>PHOTOGRAPHY>10.25"x10.25">LISA JONES

whole situation. She consciously began to fool herself into believing that maybe whoever bought the land had bought it for its beauty, never intending to ruin it, and maybe only wanted to put more cows on it in the near future or something. But, as more time passed with the land lying unused and the fences deteriorating, Nat felt a growing unease a budding suspicion that whoever now owned the field was biding his or her time until the optimal moment to cash in. Not knowing was killing her; it was one thing to have a date and time on the sale of the field, and quite another to have no idea what morning the field was going to be transformed into a featureless plain of red mud. She did her best to spend as much time as she could out in it; but like a woman visiting her dying mother in the hospital, Nat found she almost couldn't even enjoy the moments she spent, knowing it was all going to be gone soon. She wanted to cry every time she thought about its possible fates. She wanted it to be the least painful transformation possible -- a park would be the best she could hope for -- but she couldn't fool herself for very long into thinking that her field would end up even partially intact.

Nat was fresh out of college when the bulldozers appeared in the field. She hadn't driven by the field in a few days because she had been out looking for a job. The first thing she saw when she drove by on Saturday morning was red raw scrapes dotting the landscape of her precious field. The sinking feeling in her gut hit rock bottom and churned around with a new emotion-cold rage. She pulled her car to the side of the road to calm her shaking arms. Her knuckles were gripping the steering wheel in white fury; her elbows were flexed, ready to punch something or someone. How could they rape this land like this? Who gave them the right? Part of her was afraid of this reaction in her because it knew that if she had a rifle right now, she would be spending the night in jail. But that was the same part of her that kept reminding

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she sabotaged the heavy machinery

2ND PLACE FICTION > EULOGY > EMILY SIKORA KATT > CONTINUED

one by one



her that it wasn't her land, she didn't and hadn't had any means of getting the land, and whoever owned the land did what they pleased with it. The rest of Nat didn't want to hear any of that crap. Someone was performing impromptu surgery on her soul. Someone was going to pay.

Under cover of night, she slipped into the field, familiar with every curve of the land, the old cow-trails leading her to her destination. The bulk of the bulldozer squatted over its claimed piece of ground, reflecting dull light off its marred flanks. Nat approached the enemy, the stink of diesel fuel and oily work crews hanging heavily around it. She slung her sack from her back and quickly grabbed a package from inside it. She opened one end, formed a spout with the flaps, pried off the dozer's fuel cap, and listened gleefully as the pound of sugar slid from the bag into the depths of the gas tank with a hissing whisper. One by one she sabotaged the heavy machinery and then, as a finale, she took the final canister from her bag and emptied its contents onto the foreman's outbuilding. Nat stood back as she lit the match and flicked it onto the gas-soaked trailer, delighting as the flames engulfed it immediately. She could vividly see herself, dancing and singing with the vicious triumph of revenge as the fire leaped up with a roar. She laughed bitterly to herself every time this daydream sequence played itself out in her head as she powerlessly watched her land be daily gouged. Nat felt she couldn't say anything, do anything, to save her field despite the violence that simmered in the back of her mind.

Nat had already begun to dread driving by—what was the point? She was witnessing the painful stripping of a defenseless land; it was hurting her immeasurably to see every familiar outcropping ripped from the ground, every characteristic feature torn away. But then came the morning where she slammed on her brakes at the first sight of her field, pulling her car over abruptly to the side of the road, almost into the roadside ditch. Grandfather Pine was down! The filthy yellow bulldozer was near the tree's now-exposed massive root system, seeming to grin with malice. The beautiful, stately pine tree that had towered benevolently over all her childish play was now abruptly dead, unceremoniously executed in the face of "progress." A low moan that formed into the word "Nooooo..." escaped her lips and she closed her eyes quickly against the sudden onrush of tears. This act signified the beginning of the end of the land that she knew. The sale of the field, the marking-off, the bulldozing of soil and removal of rocks were all just building up to this; they had given her more sinking dread and anticipatory anguish than actual loss. The final phase was here —the ruthless evisceration.

The work crew wasn't there yet; Nat realized it was now or never for any kind of goodbye, any kind of closure for her. She turned the car off and slammed the door, racing across the street and into the waist-high grass of the field she loved. She didn't stop running until she reached the giant, now-horizontal tree, even though she nearly twisted her ankles several times in the pocked surface of the ground. Lovingly, she reached out her fingers to caress the pine's long, soft needles, already starting to go limp from a lack of water. Nat didn't even mind the sticky sap that clung to her fingers when she patted the familiar rough bark of the huge trunk. She then walked down to the painfully naked root clump jutting out of the ground which had anchored it for so long. Her heart ached for the tree; she ran her hands along the many root fingers which stuck out here and there, searching for water to sustain its life. Nat placed a goodbye kiss on her pine-relined fingers and delivered it to the dying tree's root skin. Then she moved on to her other haunts in the field, crying freely now.

Nothing but hastily sawn-off stumps rimming a mostly-filled-in sinkhole greeted her as she approached where her swinging vine used to reside. She didn't even have a carcass to say goodbye to in this instance. Nat softly cursed under her breath. She wiped the bulk of her tears away and laid her palms on the stump of the tree that used to support her swinging-vine. She whispered her goodbye and moved on.

For some reason, they were filling in the sinkhole where Crawdad Creek flowed, which struck Nat as the stupidest possible thing they could do. As she dangled her fingers in the cool stream of water, she realized she would never see the creek again; they were permanently destroying this too, though Crawdad Creek was the one feature of the field she thought would definitely survive. The anger rose up again—it was such a senseless waste of beauty, of nature. Nat brought a cupped handful of water to her lips for one last, symbolic drink and ended up baptizing her entire face in it, mingling the water with her tears.

isolated

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The liquid soothed her face, comforting her, calming her. Nat's eyes drank in the surrounding rocks, the bushes, and the grass tufts; they would soon be buried. She remembered seeing a long black snake sun itself on one of those rocks when she was twelve—she had been so surprised, she'd nearly screamed. She remembered spending several days over the years simply watching the herd come to drink, watching the large animals suck down the water after spending hot hours in the full sun. All those memories...now just memories. She would, from this day forward, never be able to enjoy the field again, just for "old times sake." Nat blew a kiss to the creek and walked west.

One last stop to say goodbye. She reached it and tenderly caressed the ground, as if she could somehow still see the outlines of their bodies in the carpet of pine needles. The Safe Spot was still untouched by the construction. Nat knew that wouldn't last. It was such a pretty, idyllic spot—her eyes misted over anew with the thought that she would never see it again. Biting her lower lip, she rolled over onto her back and gazed up into the trees for the last time, wondering if it would have been kinder in the long run for the field to have been developed when she was seven, before she'd had a chance to get so attached to it. Nat concentrated on her breathing, on the sound of the breeze and the swaying of the branches above her. She communed. She silently said goodbye, letting her most deeply wrenched tears hit the ground and convey her message of grief. In the tears she had packed her love, her respect, her sorrow, and her wild wish for a last-minute miracle, one that she knew would never come. Her heart poured itself out in her sobbing and, when she had thoroughly exhausted herself, she picked herself up and walked slowly toward her parked car.

On the way she thought about the nature of greed; it must be powerful indeed for people to be so constantly driven to bite the hand that feeds them, destroy that which supports them. It occurred to her that everyone worked, in essence, exchanging lifetime for money. By selling out anything that was worth money, they were buying time, buying life for themselves. No wonder everyone was out for money. The great money-for-life exchange warranted a horrible sort of cannibalism, leading people to feel that they could not succeed without sucking another person's or another thing's life-time away. Her field's life was being sucked dry, to be lapped up by anyone who would pay the magic money to occupy it. And she was just an innocent bystander, looking on in horror.

Just as she reached her car, parked on a lonely uphill stretch of road, she looked back, knowing her heart would always bleed for this place, realizing she could never really say goodbye. This had only put a flimsy bandage over her grief. Out her car window, she caught a glimpse of her parent's old house, mostly hidden by the backstretch of trees, and wondered bitterly how many children had cried when their foundation was laid. Nat hollowly wiped her eyes and sped away.



one jasper evening

Mary Montgomery

Late in the jasper evening with moon bells on her toes, Mirabelle decided to stop eating. It had been months of decadent table settings, fine wines and cakes all laden with that good friend of hers, that black morning bird that sang songs of discontent all through her ears. She had strong longing for something between solitude and hibernation. She wasn't in the mood for friendship, although she craved it badly sometimes. Too many people in her life right now to get anything of any importance done. Perhaps she was being ungrateful by now finding herself in a position she no longer wished to be in. She always seems to figure it out when it's just that much of too late.

She never contemplates suicide. Only change. Her mind is often elsewhere, off on some dream she wishes to fabricate into this reality. And the energy is there, if only scattered like fairy dust throughout her veins. She had ADADD in the latest fashion of pop-psychology terms for someone who is constantly distracted. Like a magpie in a silver shop. She is chained by something that no one can see and therefore her own giftedness eludes her.

On winter days and holidays she desires the impossible lift from the thing that is weighing her down. She's been accused of many things in her lifetime, like not working up to her potential, living in her own little world, thinking too much, and of all things, of being lazy! And innocently enough she has listened to these people who supposedly care about her without regard for her dreams. But something inside of her keeps her coming back to those dreams that refuse to die out. And now she can feel the energy, like millions of tiny electrons on fire, swarming around in her veins. Sometimes it is boiling and splashing out



I remember that summer

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3RD PLACE FICTION > ONE JASPER EVENING > MARY MONTGOMERY

of control like tomato sauce on high and other times it is low and cool and intense like dry ice. Once in a while it surfaces and the rest of the world catches a glimpse of what's inside, but as quickly as it surfaces, it retreats into the unknown again.

This ball of light illuminates her empty shell so that it is full of life. Take this away and she will surely perish. It's no longer about the obvious. It's about the hidden, the quiet, the tiniest things in the world that no one takes the time to see. And it's about time she moved on to the grass, into the woods to seek solitude and shelter from the plastic. Seldom wanderings and trouble almost always found a way into the insight. Tonight is not the right time for hoarding all of this preciousness under your plum velvet hat. Visiting all of the rich, luscious places in your heart in private could be seen as selfish but she didn't care. To her no one could be trusted with her most secret desires. It was not because they were fragile but because they were too important to let fall into the hands of someone less than worthy of such idealistic insight. So, she had no audience.

All that was well and good enough for the time being because she needed the solitude. For a time now she has been interested in how other people's energies affect her and she wasn't sure that the energy in her life now was in her best interest. Often she felt like other people were using her energy and that she was getting little if anything in return. But from this thought forward things became increasingly complicated. It was a risk she had to take. Simple solitude. Not a hard thing to come by really unless you were Mirabelle, the easily distracted and often dual personality of introvert/extrovert. After much coffee and contemplation she would find the acoustics in the elevator perfect for verbal rantings in the key of E. Presently she was contemplating lunch.

The problem with her seeking solitude would start with the ring of the phone and then progress into a lunch date over coffee or chess and ice cream. Exhausted, she feels she owes everyone her company as if she were crepefilling spread too thin. She wishes she had no phone, at least for today. And she hopes this lasts for a while. And it's not as if she's all that much excitement, it's just that somehow people feed off her energy until she is completely drained. Her ideas seem to spur their ideas until little bits and pieces of her drift away and she is left empty, hanging over a cliff about to fall into this great expanse of nothingness. She just needs to be alone. And it's not that she minds others benefiting from her knowledge or her energy, it's just a desire to gather some energy for herself for a change.

So, off to Hermit Land she goes, wallowing in it most attractively. She's packed total introversion in a suitcase and named it Jasper, just for fun. One can't go around being all serious all the time, or vice-versa for that matter. Now she's realizing that just last week things were going in circles of stagnation and at the height of the cycle came an unforeseen break in the monotony by way of travel. She wishes to be tangled up in the imagery of the new for a while. She feels that if only she could break free from what binds her she could reach some new height of existence. She struggles with her existence. Questions are the weights

of the mind. Destiny, purpose, life and death. These words are small and easy to pronounce, part of every human's world, yet in a thousand different ways they all weigh the same.

Soft pillows of eyelids and eyelashes close slowly over tired eyes still puffy before the morning's coffee. She is no longer interested in companionship; she flip-flops like a catfish on a hook, wanting freedom but not able to set itself free. And through this, she realizes more weights are tied to the chain. There are none that understand the inner workings of this mind, none that can elaborate past the given, common, human ground. This she knows and accepts. The thoughts that used to run through her mind of the chance of two souls existing in the same ethereal plane long before birth surface less often now. Besides, it's not time for tea yet and she's hungry for something that wasn't cooked by her. The letters are all in a row now, and they are all salmon and lime green puffs of fluff-ball cotton waiting to be pounced on, sinking into the depths of the soft mind like sleepy children down for a nap. Mirabelle sits by the window thinking that it's a pity that thinking can't be seen physically, as productive. So people just think one is lazy and shallow if you're pretty at all. She begins to soliloquize: "money is scarce now and caffeine is a cheap drug. To jog my memory of the old, I use liquor. Anyway, it's not the 20's anymore. None of it's the same. Occasionally it looks the same but that is an illusion created by oneself. So, better keep an eye on that retirement fund and big brother at the same time before we go down the chute into the fascist police state we long to become. I fear America like a foreigner. I suspect that there is a war on the poor people of this country and that we don't really help others but help to keep them down and indebted to us to suit our own purposes. I remember that summer we pretended to be grown-ups, drinking gin and lemonade and playing cards.

38 melancholy loves the color of the darkest night...

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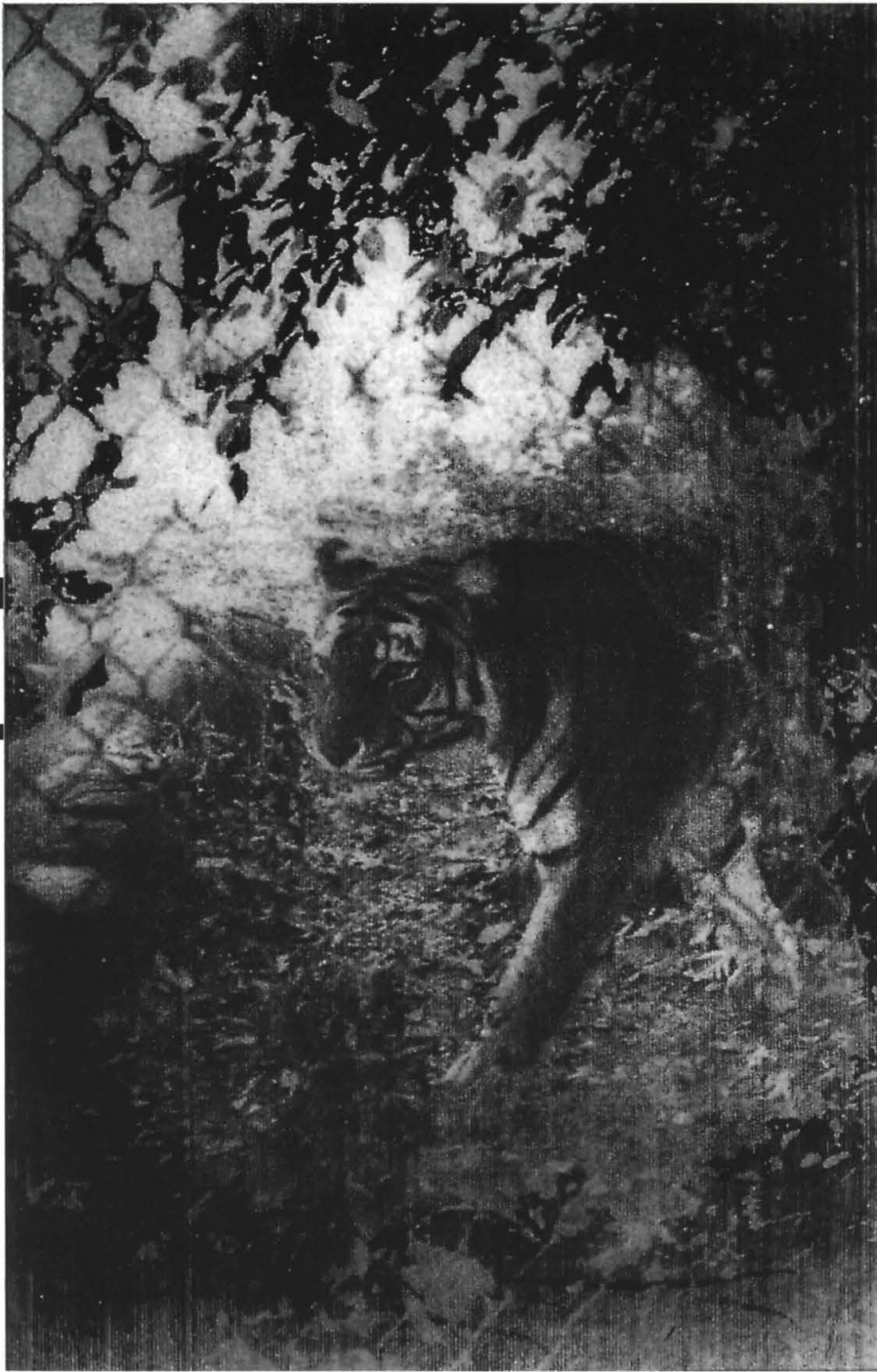
How innocently we embraced adulthood when it was no threat to us. I was old once, and then I was young. It's like playing dice; you never know what will turn up next, but that's for you to figure out on your own time for I have forfeited enough information already."

And with that she climbed back into the black velvet cape and plum hat that alluded to the mystery that enshrouded her. As a child she challenged life with reckless abandonment. Her quest has always been life even if the rest of the world seemed to stifle it and control it. They pull your wings off and leave you to crawl to work and then home again for a drink, but then that has always been the complaint of the creative mind. "If they speed things up any more we'll all look like Vienna sausages with mustard and syrup in a blender." Mirabelle speaks to the sky.

There's always an exchange too. The task is to find out what you're willing to trade. There's always tea and incense that smells like clean laundry, both purchased in a far-off land that is raped of its resources for elitist enjoyment. She's spent this Jasper evening now simmering black bean chili by black candlelight drinking tea and scotch left over from an old friend. Smoking borrowed cigarettes. From one jaded romantic soul to another we cross the threshold of pain across the candle wax melting from black to green. She's holding her glass to her lips and sipping even sips of liquid that will eventually turn her keen mind to mush. For now, it eases her frustrations with the world. But then, that has always been the vice of the creative mind.

Melancholy loves the color of the darkest night, absence of the moon. Royal colors of purple, emerald, blue and burgundy flanked by iron gates in delicious pattern. This is the imagery of medieval melancholy. Whispered voices in ghostly tones resonate and reverberate through hollow corridors. She becomes afraid of eating because the mood will change. Darkness will dissipate when the void is filled with substance. Right now the chains and the weight of it all is a comforting type of restlessness. Screams run through her entire being but can't be let out and the heat from this confined energy is escaping through the pores of her body. This type of feeling used to bring on broken glass, now only the thought of it occurs. She will show this to no one because she saves so little for herself and she wishes to not be harnessed by expectations from another human being. She sleeps.

She bleeds. Barefoot and pregnant she's not, thank God. Addicted to coffee, she is. The coffee is old and burnt now in the pot where it's been since eight o'clock but she drinks it anyway. Hardly anything ever bothers her like that. "You'd think we could get a decent radio station around this place." She's waiting for her relief. A little reality of her situation leaks in through the door. "We'll have to patch that up later." She says, without much thought to the actual door she was referring to. She's living on pretzels, burnt coffee and stale cake, but she wanted to stop eating yesterday. "Soon enough



the world will surely open up somewhere for me, when I can't drink water anymore, all I can drink is black. Six years old? I'm trying to remember now. Deja vu happened for the first time when? Where was I living? Yes, everything is a little bit of a blur. I remember the dreams about texture; well, they weren't about texture, they were of texture. I mean, that was the language of the dream. It was in texture. Like rough and smooth, but made of something that I've never seen before and it changed as I dreamed. Oh the place was our old house, with my room in the attic. Yes, I live in an attic now, all slanted ceilings or you could say they were the walls I guess. Whatever suits you. No, I miss high ceilings and air. It's like there's no air up there and what air is up there doesn't circulate even with the help of three fans. Yes, you wanted to know about my childhood?"

Her pictures in first grade were all black sometimes, but her parents were in some kind of social denial. They've always been in some kind of denial concerning life. She can't imagine not searching for the truth in everything, but that's why it's her job and not a vocation chosen by her parents. Psychology doesn't have all of the answers either. She's been delving into her own mind for a long time. Long enough to start to know things that others haven't figured out yet. She still wants all of the information she can gather from every source she can find. And she's not really afraid of going crazy or anything looking for the truth. So far her uneducated observations are as follows:

40 the day drifted on by

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No. One: There are an infinite number of truths that are spoken differently according to what "tribe" you ascribe to. This accounts for many of the conflicts that arise with people who think that their way is the right way.

Q: Why does anyone have to be right? And furthermore, knowing what we know about human nature how could one thing be right for every one in the first place?

No. Two: There is no ultimate truth really.

Q: So, does that mean I'm out of a job?

Just redefined. Her job is about life. The sometimes painful, sometimes joyful existence some of us partake of. The particulars being housed in the suitcase marked Jasper, it becomes an invaluable companion for the traveler about to take up with the biscuit makers. There's no train to take and no walking today. The biscuit makers await her arrival. She is exhausted and needs another change of scenery, but not with company. All of the cafes and coffee shops have gone under and there's no place to lose yourself in this town. No visual stimuli to speak of unless you are a mountain climber and she hasn't done that type of thing in a very long time. Also there is no gas in the car and no money today either. No bike riding. Contemplating pawning. But what? Hmm.

The day drifted on to some ridiculous proportion not marked by time. And somebody had eaten all of the cream puffs anyway. The keyboard of the piano was uncomfortable on her lap, but she could still make beautiful music. Somehow she was running her words together into songs. Illness had struck and it wasn't hers. "Oh holy one who needs no help in this world, no sympathy from anyone." Sarcastically she pounds out another measure. We have the Cinderella Complex on our hands now. In the company of the bear and the pawn there is no real-life communication, only bridges to be gapped. She is not important enough to be given any responsibility so she never asks for any. Besides, it suits her. She only wants to make the music. This is her job. Meanwhile there is talk leaking from the other room, of weddings in October, and flowers and dresses and cake. "Cake, everything is about cake." She imagines how it would feel to be getting married. She imagines feelings of security basked in the light of normalcy. She wouldn't last a week. It's not for fear of commitment; she's been committed quite a lot. It's the fear of drudgery. She threw the instruction book she received at birth away a long time ago. "Oh, the beauty of it all. The words. Pasty and stiff meringue when one thinks of white, satin and tulle."

Now there's a yellow crow who just flew in from the holy land complaining about something unimportant. The soon-to-be bride has left a quarter hour ago and the topic has changed but is equally as mundane. Fuss, fuss, fuss about. Shout, shout, shout around. They dance in and out of conversation now. Blonde and red, he'd never admit that he misses her still. If he could he would turn the whole world blonde. She admits it when she misses him now. She supposes she's the



i

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HONORABLE MENTION>LEFT BARRIERS>SILIGRAPHY>24"x18">JENNIFER ANDERSON

better of the two for it. Besides, all she ever was to him was a dress form anyway. In this day and age all accessories are plastic. She picks up the Jasper suitcase and runs everyone out of the office with her auspicious laughter. Alone at last she opens it. "There now, everything is in order. We've gotten a little bit of a late start today." She lifts the creature up to her face so close it could bite her. She needs glasses and sets it back down where she can keep an eye on it. It makes her nervous to let it out of her sight. Report: Today she has eaten very little. Raspberries for breakfast and black coffee as usual. Gazpacho for lunch with seven crackers. Nothing in between the lines but black coffee. Always black. The weights are about normal. Nothing extra looming overhead and if anything the weights are a little lighter today as long as she doesn't think about devotion she should be alright.

Security: Freedom from danger or risk, freedom from care, anxiety or doubt, protection. Balance: Equal distribution of weight. Considering all aspects. Harmoniously integrated whole. "The day I lost my blanket, or it could have been taken away from me because I had grown too old to carry it by someone else's standards, I still believed in God. The grass was green in our yard even though life had become kind of sad and hard. I thought He was this person-thing floating somewhere above my head on a cloud. I asked him for a new blanket and somehow my wish was granted. He became the Genie and I became the Princess. The blanket was laid perfectly spread out in the yard as if awaiting a picnic. It bore

she had a curious relationship with birds

3RD PLACE FICTION > ONE JASPER EVENING > MARY MONTGOMERY > CONTINUED

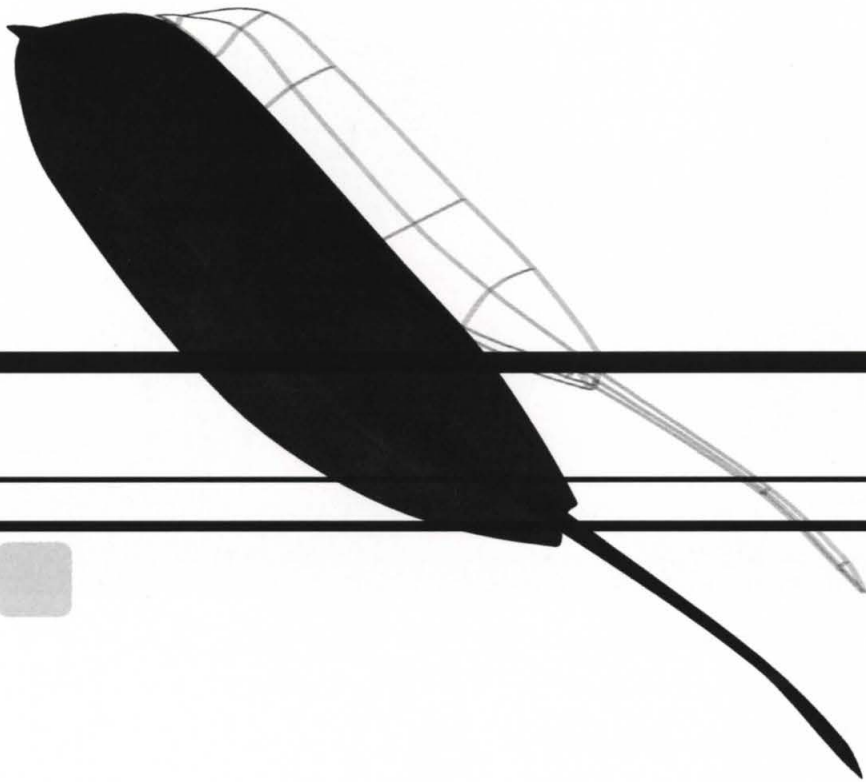
satin silky around the edges with two tulips in satin of the same sort sewn in the corners diagonally apart. After careful consideration I picked it up wondering if some other child would be missing it or if God had really answered by call. Luckily, I was not separated from this blankie. The only other blankie I can remember was an old army blanket of my Father's. It was a dark yellow ochre color with the good kind of satin silky, not the nylon stuff and it was huge. I can remember lying in the kitchen floor wrapped up like a luna moth in a cocoon while I explained to my Mother why I couldn't eat bacon. I was allergic to it. I was sure the doctor had agreed with me on that one. He was also the one that told me that I had to eat peanut shells because they were good for me (I just liked the salt, I hated bacon).

Lies at a young age for the purpose of manipulation are characteristic of a bright and creative mind. This type of creativity needs guidance and nurturing protection instead of the firm hand and the Protestant work ethic. Somehow she survived and turned out to be just as melodramatic as she was at birth, and just as misunderstood. But then, that has always been the plague of the creative mind. She has ailments, and lots of them every day, or so she's been told. She has lots of remedies for whatever ails others too. She understands ailments like that. She enters the next house of her left. It's a blue house, smallish, three bedrooms. The largest front room doubles as a parlor and an herb shop. The threshold is adorned with dries of many kinds. Carmella is in the back and does not hear her step up but already knows what she wants and is preparing it for her. Mirabelle walks into the front room and sits down on the deep blue velvet couch. Her hand traces the pattern on the couch independently of Mirabelle's own thoughts. Her order is ready. She and Carmella exchange glances but no words. They sit for a moment and one of Carmella's assistants brings some rose hip tea. They review the morning's happenings and discuss tomorrow's possibilities. Carmella's eyes fix on the Jasper suitcase. She nods to Mirabelle at the same time. Carmella is six years younger than Mirabelle; she came here two years ago from out West but never talks about her life before. The only thing that people know about her is that she used to run a bird sanctuary for tropical birds that had been mistreated by their previous owners. She had a curious relationship with birds. It was as though she truly understood their thoughts. Mirabelle has seen some photographs and papers but nothing more than that concerning Carmella. Now Carmella runs the only herb shop in town and lives in the rest of the house alone. There is a large hand carved wooden sculpture in the corner resembling the solar system, but it is actually a clock. It tells the two women that time has passed sufficiently for their visit is nearly over. A gift from Mirabelle. They part and promise to visit again soon.

(leaves)



are a visual metaphor for the dreams of a language.



these entities arise from the organization of symbols or sounds into strings of information.



(dream)



continue>



i

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she chose

Trent Reynolds

She chose to rise quietly
lest he awaken, his drunken stupor disturbed.
Bitter now, though desperate hopeless faults
cuts and bruises, painfully reminiscent.

She chose to pack no wait no need
just a sweater, nothing more.
Money? never even a checking account
doesn't matter she won't go far.



escape

45

HONORABLE MENTION POETRY>SHE CHOSE>TRENT REYNOLDS

She chose her escape outside
cold quiet lonely...yet scary.
Her car surely won't make it
doesn't matter...she won't go far.

She chose the road unfamiliar to her ways
a path with no destination.
A new life no need for that
the road home beckons

Dr. Styron Harris began his career at ETSU as an assistant professor in the English Department in 1971. He became graduate co-ordinator in 1979 and retained that position until 1982. He was acting chair for the 1982-83 school year and became chair in 1989—a position he currently holds. Dr. Harris has been a member of the Tennessee Philological Association since 1971 and has held several offices in that organization, including president. At ETSU he has served on numerous academic committees. Other professional activities include serving as a contributor to the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, *Choice*, and *Abstracts of English Studies*. He is the author of *Charles Kingsley: A Reference Guide* and numerous articles.

Dr. Harris acted as a co-advisor for the *Mockingbird* from 1976-1979 and has been an ardent supporter ever since. As of June 1, Dr. Harris will be stepping down from chair to pursue fulltime teaching. We in the English Department would like to take this moment to wish him well in all further endeavors.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. STYRON HARRIS

46 a university must provide

MB: What drew you to teaching?

SH: Well, in college I got a job tutoring other students and enjoyed the experience with those students. Then I was inspired by two great teachers; one was an historian, and the other was an English Professor. I wanted to be like them as much as possible to see if I could follow their way of life.

MB: What do you like to research?

SH: I like nineteenth-century English novelists Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and the minor novelists of the period. Also, I do bibliographical work for an annual bibliography because I think it's important to preserve scholars' works as well as the primary works they are studying. The highlight of my work this year on the bibliography was sending in an article by a former graduate student in English at ETSU who won the Thomas Wolfe Society Essay Award while he was here. In another year or two, his article will be included in the published bibliography that comes out in book form. For many years to come when people look up Thomas Wolfe scholarship for a particular year they will see his name and work.

MB: Who do you like to read for fun?

SH: Well, I like Dickens, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald and then E.B. White, C.S. Lewis, and I like writers who are not as well known. I'll give you a couple of names—Helen Bevington and Harry Kemelman.

MB: What do they write?

SH: Helen Bevington is a poet and writer who often wrote for the *New Yorker*, *The New York Times Book Review* and other journals. She's very good with her poems, memoirs, and human-interest pieces. Harry Kemelman is a detective storyteller. His detective is Rabbi David Small, who not only solves cases in the little town in Massachusetts where he lives, but he's also going about his duties as a Rabbi in the community, and you learn about the work of his congregation. It's very interesting.

MB: Why do you think a magazine like the *Mockingbird* is important to ETSU?

SH: I think it is essential. As the founder of the magazine Jack Higgs always said, a university must provide students an avenue to express their ideas, their talents, and their imagination. Maybe through the magazine we can get some students started as artists and beyond that, the magazine is always a good reflection on the good work that is done at the university.

MB: Why do you think the magazine is so important to the English Department?

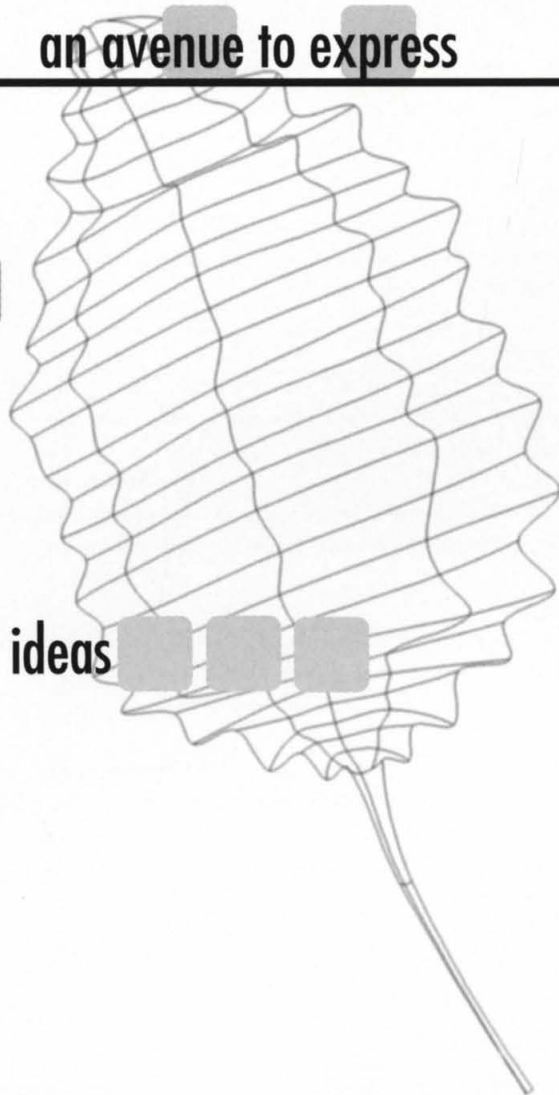
SH: Ours is the written contribution to what is a multiple arts magazine. We reflect our work, our life of the mind that the university fosters through poetry, prose, drama, and fiction. So, the magazine is a good representative of who we are and what we're about.

MB: Finally, what are your plans after stepping down from chair?

SH: I'm going to spend more time in a contemplative mode thinking, reading, and writing in order to rejoin the full-time teaching ranks correctly. I'll miss the satisfactions of being a help to students and faculty whenever I can be, but I won't miss the whirlwinds of the main office.

an avenue to express

ideas





HONORABLE MENTION>A STUDY OF FALLING LEAVES>INTAGLIO>7.125"x9.625">HOWARD DALE

*"Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen
and keep your eyes wide the chance won't come again"*

Bob Dylan

Mockingbird 1999 invites you to celebrate our 25th anniversary with us. We are pleased with this year's product and believe it meets the high standards of quality that we've established over the past twenty five years.

The submissions we received this year were superb and I thank everyone who entered their work. The literary staff and I had a tough job choosing finalists, but I feel this year's winners are a true representation of the talent found at ETSU. I would personally like to thank all of the people who have been involved with helping bring this magazine to print, especially Deanna Bryant, Ruth Tapp, Brad Owens and Dr. Holmes. I would also like to thank my family, and particularly my mother, for their unending support.

I would like to extend thanks to the ETSU Foundation and Friends of the Reece Museum for providing the prize money for the literary and art competitions. I would also like to thank the members of the student Activities Allocation Committee for providing the funds necessary to print Mockingbird 1999. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Styron Harris for his assistance in bringing the magazine to fruition.

Leslie Wright
Editor



1999 Gregorian:

When I began designing this magazine in early January, most of my effort went toward capturing a feeling of the cycle of time. One of the great dualities of nature exists in the opposing forces of creation and destruction, and time is the greatest agent of these forces. I wanted the readers of the Mockingbird to physically perceive the passage of time through the animation and mutability of the major elements in the layout -- the type and image. Naturally, this goal had to function as a second tier to the true function of any graphic design -- the communication of pertinent information.

The integration of these two goals was extremely difficult. The magazine itself became a product of death and rebirth. Team members will recall (with almost no prompting, I suspect) the innumerable times their layout schemes were replaced by something else, their type strings mutated unrecognizably, or their printer proofs returned covered with red circles, arrows and badly scrawled text. Yet it was in this furnace of creative solutions, in this constant iterative process, that the magazine you now hold was born. Like all that exists, it too will inevitably disappear and dissociate, only to live again as something new and bold.

My thanks goes out to the crack Mockingbird team (Patty, Kevin, and Brian), to Larry Carroll at the University Press, and to my father. All of them played instrumental roles in the design of this magazine and in keeping my spirits up even during the real design ordeals.

Jon Fuller
Art Director



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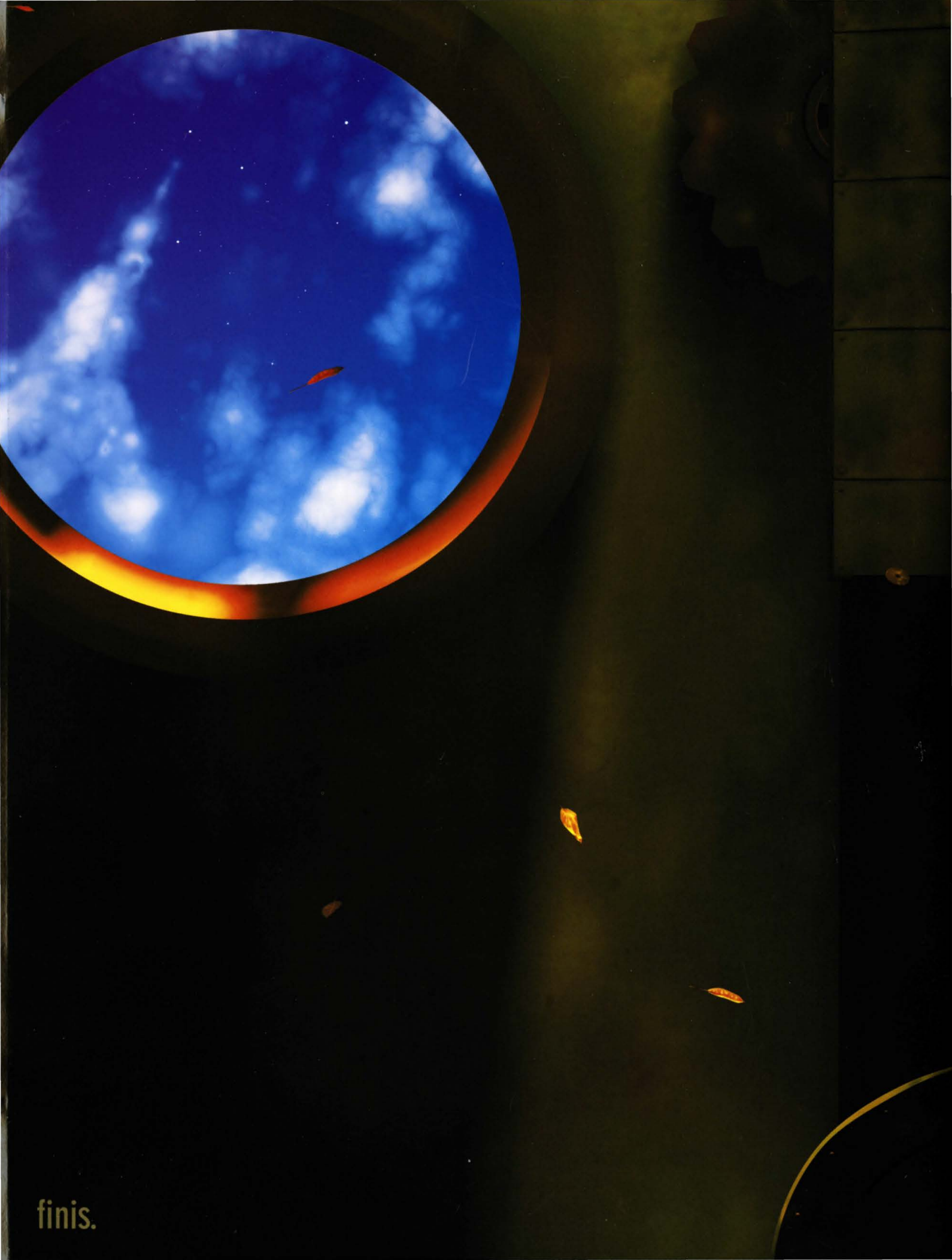


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