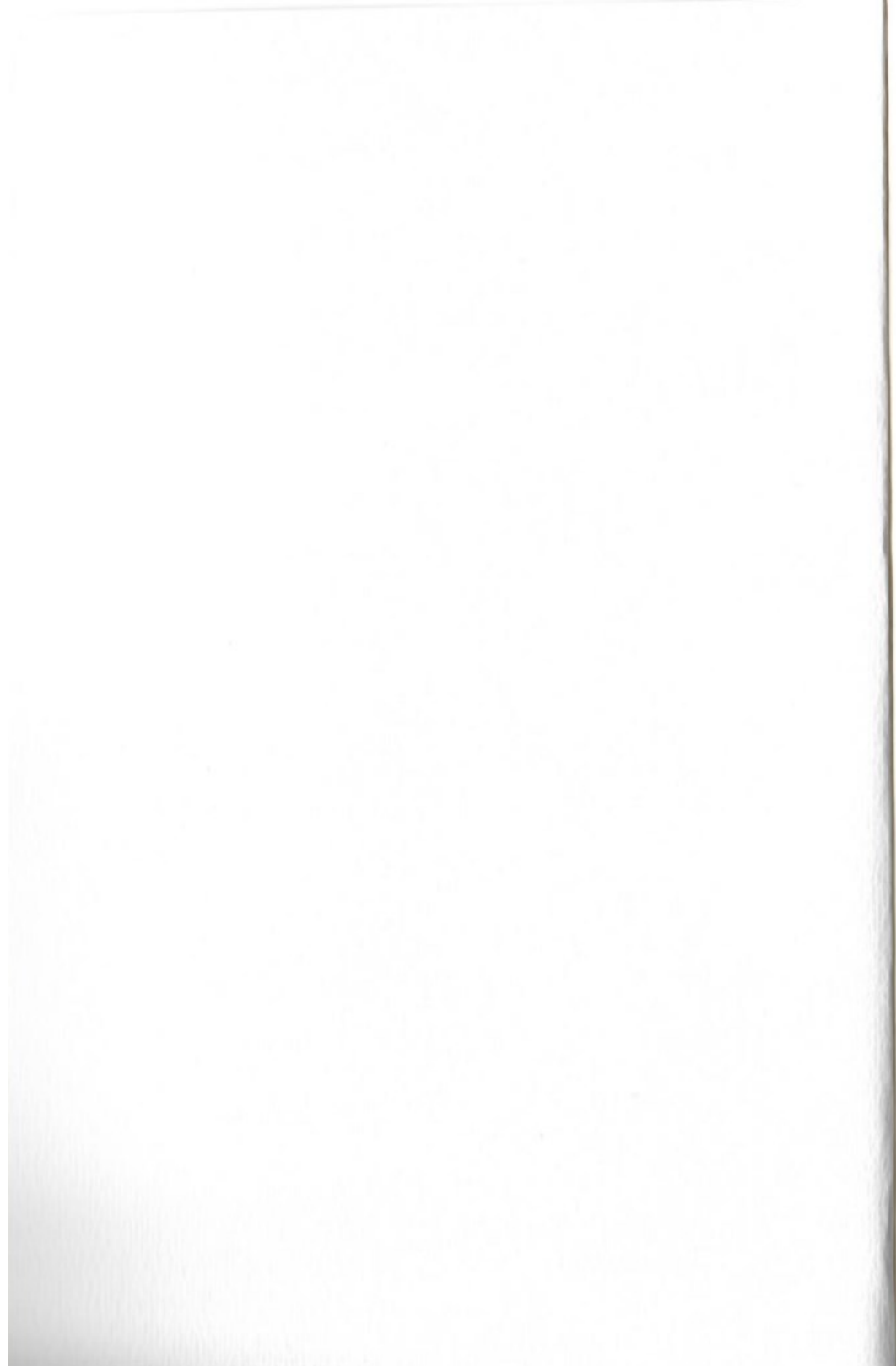


The Trinity Review

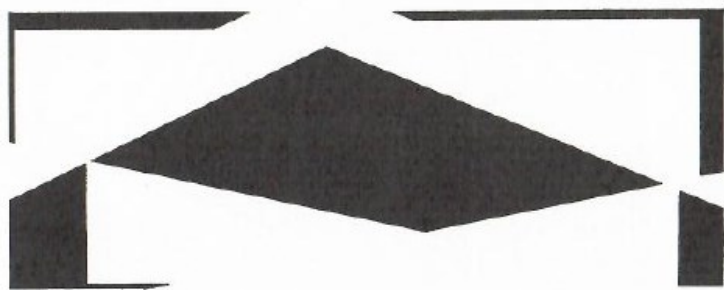
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The Trinity Review
Volume 106 Number 2
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Bruce Boswell

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Special thanks to the Joint Board of Stewards, and to Coach House Printing! Thanks also to the season of Spring, for finally showing its face and providing the necessary motivation for finishing this edition of the Review!



Sam Burgener

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sun in sheets
sharpened mirror-edged
she and sunglasses
browning blinded speckled
in the sight of settling
dust
sighing on the lens
softly
exhaust
barrelling cry of gathering thunder
metallic clatter of the
bouncing yellow bus
far on the snaking road
rusted tawny heat
screeching silence of the empty
amber
dwarfed landscape
yellowing tattered scrub leaves
shrill shrieks of insects
musty
withered
smell of the rainless month

and she,
slowing heated breath
tasting salt
off her tautened glowing
scorched skin
no sky
no trees
only sunglasses and gently
slowly drifting dust

Sarah Wilson

Her favourite album was a forty-five but he played
it at thirty-three.

He spilled a glass of her favourite wine down the
front of her favourite blouse.

O child of the nineties with no real needs
beware the cool gesture, the chance remark,
the easy flick of the lighter.

He sent her a rose but the petals fell off.
He sent her a letter but the stamp fell off.

O urban apartment dweller
beware five in the morning and a desire for
communication.

He offered her a ring, she offered him a nosegay.
He offered her a chance, she offered him a smile.

O serious-minded prodigal orphan
beware the dream with no price tag,
the alluring weight of the word 'impossible'.

Don't trust the hangman.
Don't play poker with the blues-man.
Something's got to give in this take-take world.

She called him up at work, he'd slipped out of the office.
She called him up at home, he'd stepped out of the window.

O nihilist romantics
beware the assumption of simple meanings
beware the actual event.

Hugh Thomas



The Hyatt Fountain

Soomie Ahn

The Moving Sidewalk

It was what we first saw at Heathrow
(shaking off the dust from the old Nairobi airport
with its broken trolleys and archaic age
the dust, more red earth, trodden and run against
by zebra and gazelle-grazed from above)
This walkway like a long black rubber tongue
where you didn't have to walk, but moved on and on

My mother piled the luggage on a trolley
where no old porters came to help or beg
so she couldn't see how we climbed with glee
on the railings, and walked backwards and still moved on
towards the British Customs who would take our Kenyan
passports and make us nationals of the Modern World

That was fifteen years ago when I was seven
Before I'd had my first bruised taste of prejudice
Or started writing poems against the noise of high school dances
Before I started looking at the walkway differently
As what your family does when you can't go on
Like electric backs they bend and pull

And put you on so you don't have to walk
but move on through the dark time journey
crawling but not still, dead but breathing, moving on
because they charge it with their longing love
this walkway keeping you from death or poverty
or even the dark dreams that mushroom up your throat
Moving on—

Sasha Menezes



Baltimore Inner Harbour

Soomie Ahn

Bent Mirrors

Life mirrors reality
Reality is in the Mind
Minds bend fact
Fact is stranger than fiction
Fiction is sanctioned lies
Lies are a part of life.

Sarah Jardine

Licorice Church

Just down the street from the church where Natalia and her parents went each Sunday was a corner store open seven days a week. If Natalia behaved herself through the entire service then she was allowed to run to the corner store as fast as she could, and buy herself some nice fresh black licorice. Many years later, she still had memories of waiting for her parents to catch up while the combination of the candy and the still-lingering sermon created strange tastes in her mouth.

When her parents phone her now, long distance, they often ask if she still attends church regularly. She lies, and says no.

Alex Wiebe



Anxiety

Diane Kalen

The Silent Prophet Receives a Sign

I have known for weeks now that you would send a sign, but still, the power of the moment come at last, to know you can hear my voice in your distant place of figs and barley. . . today I found my little sparrow, my broken remnant of sky, lying dead at the mouth of my cave when I came out to bathe. Oh perfection of silence and stillness, that tiny creature curled tight as a fist, wrapped around itself like a snail, like a car's resting engine. It was so small, had so little flesh on it, that it hardly raised a smell at all, but I bent lovingly over its corpse and inhaled the slight, sweet stench of its putrefaction. I have spent the last three days and nights in my cave, painting, praying, and clipping my toenails, and I do not know how long the bird had lain there before I found it.

But I have drunk the blood of the sea, danced with the ghosts of trees and hovels, seen the mating rituals of angry salmon, and I know that this is the bird of my sky, the shadow of my windowed mind, the mirror of your distance, the tiny creature that spoke out of the sky to me with wings and swoops, the creature that spoke of your time and motion, the places where you were still within me and the places you had left forever. Surely this is the bird that led me to your footprint at the bottom of the ocean, that carried to me the scrap of cloud with what seemed to be your thumbprint on it—though that has not been verified for certain; I haven't heard from the lab boys yet, as they say, but I am sure in my weeping joints, sure as I am of the identity of this tiny creature. It is your messenger, the corner of your departed soul, a tiny thread pulled from the hem of your windy garment, and in the perfection of its death, its final stasis, I see the perfect stillness of our love, the two of us frozen in love that will never change, but continue forever, perfect as this dead bird.

The boys who live around me dream of romance, of wooing and serenading, but they have never been touched by other hands. I have taught them the sounds to all the songs of you, but they will not practice, the words die in their throats; they cannot utter them, just as the desert that once cried unto me now falls silent at my approach, and the sands will not sing to my feet. I have lost my diary of ashes, the records of all those first precious days, I have drunk honey from flower petals and still seen nothing, and every day the world draws away from me, pulled by the empty gravity of your departure. I know it is you, that bit by bit you are

stealing the world from around me.

But the bird, the happy sign, his death cries to me that you steal the world only to bring it back when you return dripping with the wonders of travel, reeking of far places, body drenched in glistening rivulets of time and distance, memories running from the cup of your navel like overflowing water, just as the water ran from your breasts and thighs when you first rose from the river into new sunlight. And I will lie naked in my clearing, transfixed by the arrow of your return, and you will smear me with the sweet detritus of all you have seen and heard, all you have drunk and eaten; out of your pores will drip perfect, liquid jewels of locale.

I think that somehow, in the night, the worms came upon your sign. Before hiding beneath the mask of sleep, I wrapped him in the womb of my two hands, but in the night his stillness overpowered my grip and he escaped. When I found him this morning one of his eyes had been eaten out, his plumage was sparse and scratchy, and one wing had all but disappeared. Yet still he lies in perfection, he has not changed at all, for my mind knows intimately the truth of his form, knows he is a word fallen from your lips, the promise that you are returning. This bird that flew from the wilderness of your heart to the chains of my hands and died there is the precursor of your promised return, when you will come to me over the water, through the basking walruses, past the elephants and snakes, your arms full of all the memories I have lost, all the languages I have forgotten, all the sights stolen from my eyes, and you will lay them at my feet like a freshly precise map of my vague, distant life. This bird's still heart sings the aching song of hope to the promise of your return.

I should bustle about like an eager housewife, or househusband, clean the trees and fix the holes in the ground, but I know that you will not notice; I remember your love for the perfect disarray that surrounded us in our afternoons of gentle dying. I can recall how you would blend your body with the mess that was all around us, become a branch, a leaf, a small pulsing sparrow of the air, how the pool of light at your throat held the shimmer of distant worlds we had never seen, worlds that held our dreams, like planets, in orbit around them. Until your dreams came loose from the black sky and spiralled downwards, inwards, and crashed into those distant worlds like a bird crashing to earth, and you left to get those dreams, left me hanging alone in the sky of this place that I can no longer depart from, not even in my dreams of time and space.

I have been fasting and taking heaven for the past several days now, I

am not sure exactly how long, and I have seen many great things. All the oceans of the world have turned back upon themselves, the whales have joined the birds in the sky, and the sharks have joined the other creatures on the walls of my cave. Mountains have become pits that sink to the centre of the earth, and all the birds fly upside down. But of my sparrow, there is little left except a tight, smeared skeleton and a few wisps of flesh and feather.

And through the gaps between his fine ribs I see your message more clearly than ever. This decay was necessary in order to reveal your true message, for his bones map the path of your return, the structures of hope, trails and highways that carry you back to my silent clearing where the bees hover, watching and waiting. His frail bones come apart as I pick him up, the route you must follow disintegrates in my hands, or so it seems. But your sign is a sign of layers upon layers, mirrors within mirrors that lead me ever deeper into the framework of emptiness. I throw the bones at the tree like dice, and each time they land in a new pattern, a new arrangement of footprints that will carry you back. I am predicting your path, or trying to create it for you, I am not sure which, but the flies try out each map of bones for me, cleaning the excess flesh as they go, and each time fly away, leaving their disapproval buzzing in the air. I have drowned you, or stranded you on some desert island, or led you into the clutches of a volcano. Sometimes the bones lie all together in a heap, no map at all, and on those days I know that you have left the country of memory altogether, and I must await your return, wait for your spirit to infuse the bones once again with the wisdom of distance.

Time has passed. To say more would be foolish, as heaven and hell are one now and my eyes are filled by the single bone of the sign that has not decayed to dust; my ears hear only the sound of it as I turn it in my hands. It alone remains to tell me that the power of our love, and the hope of your return, lie in the fact that our love can change as the corpse of this sparrow has changed, that our love is not frozen or static, but constantly altering its form like the shadows that follow me even when there is no sun, like the darkness that peels itself from the far side of the tree to take my hand and lead me to the edge of where the water was. I feel the emptiness lap against my toes, and know that healing is only another word I cannot understand. But you will come to me across open deserts in endless forms, in the innumerable guises of our love, in countless signs that tell me my waiting will be rewarded; you will send me your winged heart, your marching

kidneys, your teeth in perfect rows, you will send yourself to me piece by piece, parts of you blowing in from all directions just as the last bone remaining from your sign turns to dust in my hands and leaves them at the sound of the wind's greeting.

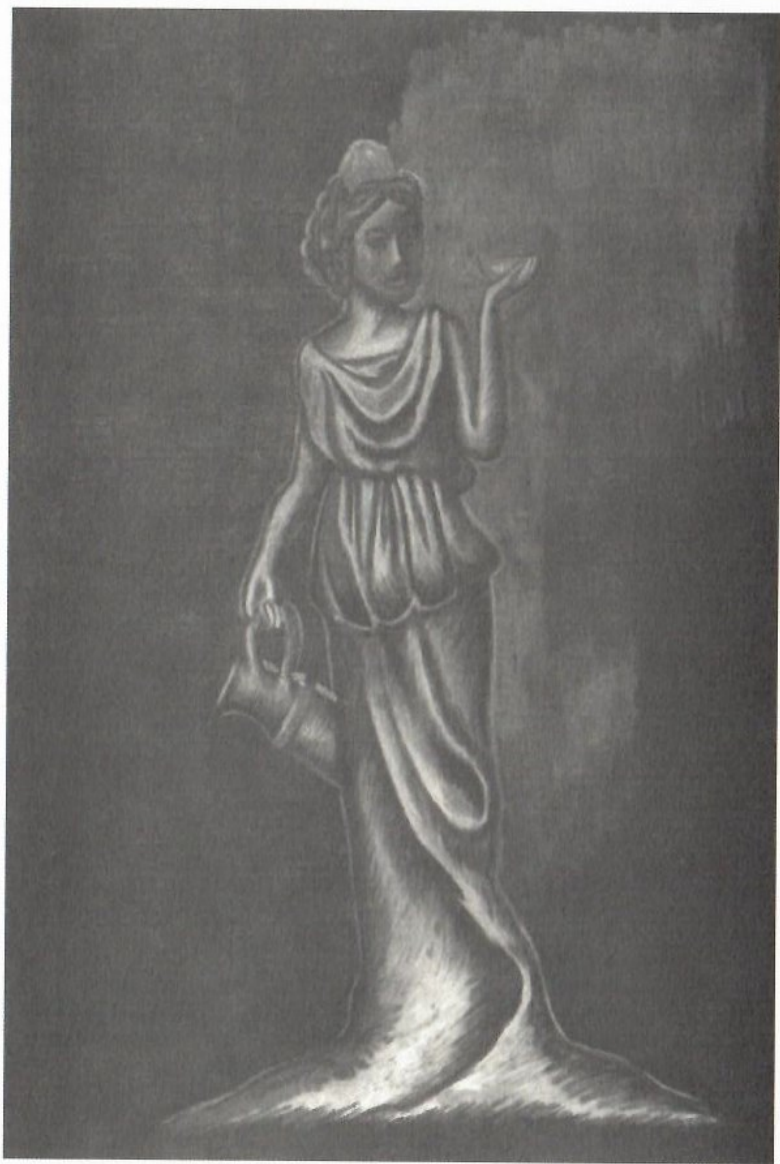
I wait here cross-legged, on the verge of the world; I eat our shifting love from the air, and my eyes wait to devour the signs you will send as shuddering promises of your gradual return.

Brooke Clark



Saba

Bruce Boswell



Louise Fahy

The Returning

For eighty thousand billion years it had been awake. Now, it was sleeping, and life for the others became much less dangerous. They were again free to leap about, gathering flowers and old stones, constructing out of them long paths that stretched for hundreds of miles. If you were to follow any of these paths you might find yourself at the edge of a brook; and if you looked carefully into the water you might make out flowers weighted down with old stones on the bottom, marking out a loop in the path. If you liked, you could step into the brook, follow the loop, and come out travelling on the same path in the opposite direction. They never did this, however, since the paths were only for tourists like yourself. And certainly you are a tourist: what really gives you away is your habit of sitting down and making oil paintings out of every pretty scene that you see. If it ever awoke again, you'd probably try to make a painting out of it instead of fleeing, and wind up perishing in a viscous pool of ambers and forest greens. Eighty thousand billion years have passed without any of them producing a single picture of their own.

It's certainly dead; when you consult your bones, however, you find a trembling, as if its spectre still lay sluggishly across the land. This is a paradox that you only ever manage to overcome by single-handedly re-inventing the camera and taking snapshots of everything you see. The inhabitants take to this invention, appreciating its immediacy, its clarity, and soon put aside their dice and cards.

It never did awake again, but naturally there was a new entity that took its place. When it ripped its way out of the ground, most took a quick photograph and escaped by regaining the fortifications. The tourists fled immediately and have never returned. Presumably you are one of those, and may be interested to hear another detail. Of the inhabitants, only one of them was actually killed in the terrible event that caused the obliteration of the flowered stoney paths. The unfortunate soul was crushed while attempting to make an oil painting out of the second entity; and while the others are happy that the casualties were not higher, there is within them all the sense of a definite though inexpressible loss.

Alex Wiebe

Time Drips

Time drips from the stars
like fresh dew bringing
life to those who hang
fragile baskets
to capture the beauty
of its love.

Space fills every cavern
of my body and I
feel its pressure, as
if my body will dissipate
and drip from the stars
into gentle baskets.

Mystery pulls me into your eyes and
I wake to find the sun blinding
and the sky wet ocean smelling
new and blue beyond all
vision.

Other stranger places pull me
to your side and we walk together
in the infinity, now
apart and never to be seen.
My hand will leave a fleeting shadow,
scarring sunshine like a blistering
burn that runs and mars the gentle
surface, constantly reminding
one of another
gone.
Like the sun,
now disappeared.

Martha Roberts

Morphintown

Morphintown awoke promptly at one, as the sun rose over the city with slow dignity.

A solitary chime roused me from bed. I released a rat from its nearby cage, in order to catch the beetle across the room. I was glad for the existence of the rats, since without them the beetles would have no doubt completely overrun Morphintown by now. And we all knew, personally, what it was like to be overrun by beetles. Most people were taught the sensation at an early age, and I was no exception. We each had an individual distaste at the prospect of an unhealthy Morphintown.

The city lay heavily on the landscape like a coiled snake on a soft mattress; at least, that's what I'd been told. Few people had ever left, and why bother? They always returned, all telling the same tale of outward desolation. That which was not Morphintown was formless, irregular, like an infinite hourglass doomed never to be turned over but rather left to slowly decay.

The city struck two, and accordingly I found myself on the way to work. On the subway Niykta shared a cubicle with me; she had done so for some time now. We were, I like to think, an 'item'. As was customary, we re-engaged the conversation of the previous evening.

"Solved that anomaly yet?" she asked cheerily.

My head shook. "Not yet, no. It's a tough one to get your mind around."

Niykta slackened the leash of her vulture, so that it could devour the rat scurrying in the corner. "Marvellous things to have," she confided, "I mean, otherwise, the rats—"

"Yes, indeed," I eloquated.

Niykta restrained the vulture and adjusted her seating position. "Hey, listen. You know I'm sorry that I couldn't attend that whatsisthingamebob with you yesterday."

My nod indicated I had such knowledge.

Through the window of the subway, you could see—if you squinted through the gaps between the periodically arranged, fully shadowed buildings—glimpses of the landscape beyond. It flashed at the corner of your eye like a buried thought in your mind, crying to be expressed, perhaps in poetry. I put it aside, for now, to listen to Niykta.

"I'll make it up to you," she assured me. I managed a smile and a vague compliment before the city struck three.

The excitement began just as the last echoes of the chiming of five had been swallowed up by imperturbable concrete. I was working as usual, standing at my desk across from Partik. He had never been the most contented worker, but what he said at that moment induced in me a terrible fright.

"I'm going out," Partik whispered to me.

I felt myself become perfectly still.

"Want to come?" he asked.

Somehow, speech came out of me. "How?"

Partik produced a device from his neck pocket. "Teleport."

A pause manifested itself. "Where?"

"Out."

A longer silence. In my computer screen was reflected an image from the street outside; I could just make out a lion engrossed in murdering a stray vulture. This was a common sight, and yet it infused me with a growing strength; Partik's plan would transform me into the superior lion that would vanquish unconditionally the lowly beast of Morphintown. The city that encircled me would then be left behind for whatever lay beyond it, even if that proved to be nothing, for my hidden poetry would fashion for me great castles out of the very air, painted by gentle sunlight and given shelter by sympathetic clouds. There would be an outer wall, a giant circle built from the corpses of vultures; and when I felt the distant reverberation of Morphintown striking the hour, I would deliberately cease all action for a short while. Nothing would be dependent on Morphintown time.

"Time to break the routine," Partik said, "here, hang onto this." He placed in my hand a small metal object attached to a cord. It looked something like a watch. "You sure you're okay about leaving?" he asked.

"I'm okay."

He winked and there was a blinding flash. I saw—

People were shaking me, and my heartbeat seemed terribly loud. Its striking battered against me and caused even the thick air about me to shake. After seven dull and wrenching blows it ceased, and only then did I realize that my own heart was in fact barely operational at all: my blood

had been pulsing to the rhythm of Morphintown. I was lying on the floor of my workplace, and the people crowded about me were fellow workers. Partik was not to be seen. Somehow I got to my feet.

"I'm okay," I told them. It was true that I was regaining my strength, as if being slowly rejuvenated by an external battery. I walked over to Partik's desk, where the floor was slightly scorched and the computer screen blackened and cracked. Some people stood near in wonder.

"Where?" I asked, pointing at where Partik should have been standing. It was suggested that he had gone.

"How?" I asked, though I knew perfectly well. I knew both how and where, and yet the questions seemed necessary ones to ask.

Before we left work, some repairmen came by to fix Partik's station and restore the symmetry of the workplace. I wished more and more that I had gone with him, and cursed ever more vehemently whatever bad luck, or electrical malfunction, had left me behind.

It was ten and I was on my way home. Niykta sat with me.

"I heard about the excitement today," she said.

"Yes, it was a very odd thing."

"Will he be found? Where'd he go?"

"Hard to tell. It's sort of an anomaly..."

She smiled and adjusted her seating position. "Well, tell me if you ever figure it out."

I glanced out the window and cleared my throat. "I'll be at a memorial for Partik at eleven. You could come with me—"

"Sorry, can't."

Later, back in my room, I thought of lions. They were indeed fine beasts, splendid examples of the symmetry of the world. I was glad they had been spared, when those sorts of decisions had been made.

Of course the lions would have overrun the city by now were it not for the beetles giving them disease. I checked the rat cage, descended into bed, and prepared myself.

The sun set with slow dignity; and at precisely twelve, sleep fell over Morphintown.

Alex Wiebe

Ash Tuesday

It is 3 o'clock afterschool and I
sit in the kitchen
red wicker chair. Feet kicking, echoes of
hot angry-wifed shouts; neighbour's
slammed doors hollow in
the simmering June afternoon hush
I wait for Bubby on the stairs
puffing on the winding steel
 round round and round
her breathless cheeks burning. Two red dots
like mother's dust dolls
 china cheeks creasing
 on grandmother's papery face
Bubby's stout Santa Claus skirts
and rustling paper bags on the splattered
fussing
floor
bringing me dry powdered kisses
 sweet grape juice
 popsicles.

Sarah Wilson



Fiddler on the Roof

Judd Palmer

Nativity

Sometimes on Sunday we would go to church. Not every Sunday, like Caroline and her family, because my father would say that only religious fanatics make children stand for two and a half hours each week and listen to things they do not yet understand. And my father would also say that religious fanatics are the cause of half this world's problems and he refused to bring up his children to be troublemakers. So we would only go once in a while. The church at which we worshipped was not ordinary; it was a cathedral. It was old and cavernous, with neat rows of smooth, beeswax-yellow pews separated by a long, rich red carpeted aisle. A giant sparkling chandelier (more fit for a castle than a church, I always thought) illuminated the altar, and high above everything rose the ceiling, gently curved and painted with angels and trumpets in a starry blue sky. The walls were also painted; worried men and women in flowing robes, and burnt-yellow deserts, dark rivers, and countless other angels adorned them, and everywhere shone the blue blue heavens. These were all interspersed with long, narrow windows. You could not see out of the windows very well, because they always seemed foggy and grimy, but I think that was the point. The cathedral was a dimly-lit place of internal reflection. But I was always too busy looking at the pictures to do much meditating. They were soft, quiet pictures, not the kind that made you want to laugh and point and argue about their intrinsic artistic qualities, but the kind that made you feel warm and still inside, inside the still and warm air of the church.

The service was an ordeal. I could see why my father thought church was no place for those with limited attention spans, for each service was at least two hours long, sometimes even three. I would sit, stand, kneel, stand, kneel, sit, stand stand stand . . . barely thinking about God and churchly things, concentrating more on the weariness of my repentant legs and feet. I would begin each service with a firm resolve to think only about what the priest was saying, to clear my mind of all but God. But this vow would always melt away, like the wax on the holy candles. I would look at the priest in his pretty gold-spangled purple robes, at the pictures on the walls, at the people around me. My mother and sisters always looked so pious, never checking their watches or impatiently shifting their weight from foot to foot, as I always seemed to be doing. My father was never with us. He always stood with the men and older boys, including my brother

Michael, on the other side of the church aisle. I never knew why this division existed, it just seemed to be the way things were done. The other side of the church looked very serious and devout, the men lined up in sombre dark rows, intent, intense. My father would always leave after the reading of the Creed, and he and some other men would go to Druxy's Deli for coffee and politics while they waited for the service to end. I sometimes secretly wished I could go with them, but of course I never did.

"What is wrong with you today?" Mama asked, exasperated. "It's beautiful outside, and here you are, moping around again. Go outside and do something, but don't go too far because I'll need your help later."

I was snuggled into the couch in the living room, reading a Nancy Drew mystery. Nancy was trapped in the root cellar of an old abandoned farm house, and neither Bess nor George knew. I didn't care if the weak April sun was shining outside, warming the tulips and hyacinths, and I didn't care if Mama needed my help to make varenyky (what non-Ukrainian people insist on calling perogies). Actually, I didn't even care whether Nancy escaped or not, because I had read that book before and I knew she would. I really did not care about anything at all.

"Why can't Lesia or Mary help?" I grumbled, pulling myself off the sofa. The book fell to the floor, but I didn't bother to pick it up. "Why do I have to?"

"Because Mary has homework and Lesia has piano lessons. When you get to high school you'll have other things to do too." Mama pushed a limp strand of hair off her forehead, and wiped her hands on her apron. She was wearing one of her shapeless cotton housedresses and Dr. Scholl's clogs, and I could see the veins in her legs, twisting like knobbly bluegreen snakes. She was much older than any of my friends' mothers, and I was sometimes embarrassed and wished she was younger. Mama was always too tired to do anything, and we never went camping like Bobby's family did, or canoeing or anything like that. She was always cooking, chatting and laughing with Lesia and Mary, tending her garden, making preserves, sewing, scolding me.

"I'll be in the backyard," I mumbled, dragging myself towards the back door.

"Put that book away first. And while you're in your room put on a sweater. And don't sit on the pavement, you'll catch a bum cold."

I turned back and picked up the book, scowling. On my way to my

room, I heard my mother sigh, and tread heavily back to the kitchen in her Dr. Scholl's clogs.

The sun was shining brightly and the birds were chirping merrily among the tender green buds of the trees in the backyard. I sat down at the picnic table with my pencil crayons and a pad of newsprint, ready to capture the world in the twenty-four colours of my Laurentiens. Those pencil crayons were my pride and joy, because most of my classmates were still smudging along with Crayolas, or a few had the twelve-pack of Laurentiens, but nobody had the beautiful, plastic-encased, deluxe pencil crayon set that I did. Mama and Papa bought them for me at Dollar Forty-Four Day at Woolco, because they knew how much I liked to draw. Even Michael thought they were neat.

I pulled out the #11 Chestnut Brown, and thoughtfully began to sketch a tree.

"Hey, Alex!"

I turned around to see Bobby standing on the edge of the patio near the rose bushes. He and his sister Gwen lived in a big white house around the corner from my street, but we could see each other's backyards. Our neighbours knew that we were friends, and they always let us traipse through their backyards to get to each other's. That way, we didn't have to go all the way around on the sidewalk. My father even built a little bench near the Bradleys' back fence so that we could climb over easily, and we would, almost every day. I liked Bobby. He was a small, tough, sandy-haired boy, just a month older than me, and we always played together because there weren't many children our age in the neighbourhood. Gwen was beautiful and older, and she was friends with Lesia and Mary; she came over a lot when Michael and his friends from the hockey team were home.

"Whatcha doing?" Bobby asked, coming over to the picnic table.

"I'm drawing, dummy. Can'tcha tell?" Wielding my pencil crayons I felt superior.

"I know." Bobby sat down and picked up the #22 Sky Magenta. "What a gross colour! Uggghh!"

"Hey! Don't touch!" I snatched the pencil out of his grubby hands and lovingly put it back in the plastic pouch. "What do you want?"

"We got a new swing! My dad climbed one of those humungous trees in the yard and he hung a rope and an old tire from one of the branches!" Bobby's blue eyes sparkled with excitement. "It's cool! You can twist the

rope and then spin like crazy, or you can swing really high! Do you wanna come over and try it?"

"I can't. I have to help my mother."

"Aaawww, c'mon Alex. Just come over and see it for a sec. Then you can go home again. Pleeeeeeeease?"

"We-e-e-ell... I don't know... maybe just for a bit... okay." I tucked my pencil crayons away in the case, and put them under the overturned pad of newsprint on the table. Then I stood up, yelling "I'll race ya!" and began to sprint towards the bench at the fence.

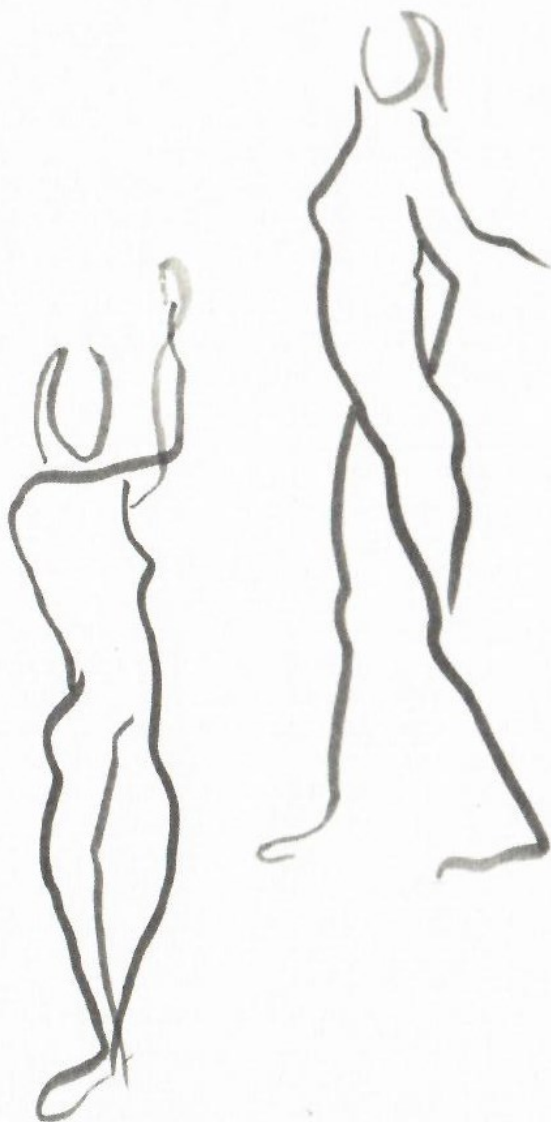
I beat Bobby, of course. I beat everyone in races then, and everyone knew that I was fast. Running was something that I loved almost as much as drawing, and I raced whenever I could. I loved feeling the rhythmic pounding of my feet, the dull ache in my legs, the burning in my lungs, the wind tossing my hair. I was no longer a girl, but a powerful horse, all muscles and sinews. It was the same with drawing; I ceased being the artist and became the picture.

Suspended from a giant oak in the Bradleys' backyard, Bobby's swing was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It consisted of an old black tire hung from a long, thick, cabled rope, and it looked strong enough to carry several swingers at the same time. The end of the rope disappeared in the lush, dark green foliage high above our heads. That whole corner of the yard was thick with tall oaks, maples and lindens, and although none was close enough to threaten anyone on the swing, they cast a cool and gloriously gloomy shade on it. I thought that it looked wonderful, like something from an old book, set in the country.

"Wanna try?" Bobby held the rope, waiting for my response, proud of his one-of-a-kind swing.

I bit my lip and eyed the tire, wanting desperately to swing. Something flashed in the corner of my eye, and I glanced quickly towards my backyard. The figure of my mother was there in the garden, partially obscured by the forsythia and rose bushes. She waved her arms in the air, calling me home. I instantly turned back to the swing and grinned. "Okay!"

After dinner, I went up to my room, hoping to finish my Nancy Drew. I liked my room, even though it was really small and had mismatched odds-and-ends furnishings, unlike my friend Caroline's, which was lovely and white with a canopied bed. The pale blue walls were almost covered with "wallpaper" that Michael and I made from my drawings;



Marcela Saitua

books spilled off the hopelessly inadequate bookcase; wrinkled and well-loved stuffed animals cluttered the bed. Mine, all mine. It had been Mary's room until I was born, after which she had moved in with Lesia. It had probably never been as nice when it was her's.

My pencil crayons and newsprint were lying on my desk. I did not bring them into the house; I forgot them outside. A queer lump rose in my throat when I saw them, but I swallowed quickly and pushed them out of my mind. I lay down on my rug and opened the book. Nancy was still in the root-cellar (I used to wonder what exactly a root-cellar was anyway. Did we have one? Was that where Dorothy's family hid in *The Wizard of Oz?*), but I did not read much farther before I heard a knock at my door.

"Hi Alex, it's me." Lesia poked her head around my door. "Can I come in?"

"Sure," I shrugged, not taking my eyes off the page.

"What's Nancy doing now? Ned?" she chuckled. "Sorry. Couldn't resist." She sat down on the edge of my bed, folding her long legs under her. Willowy, graceful, Lesia was the sweet and soft one of the family. She was in grade eleven then, but she was not a serious student like Michael or Mary, preferring to dream her way through classes. She would only become really focused at the piano. Everyone expected her to become a world famous pianist, ever since she finished grade ten Conservatory when she was only nine. I thought Lesia was wonderful.

"What did you think of the Bradleys' new swing? Neat, eh?" she asked.

"Yeah, it's alright."

"Did you have fun, playing on it?"

"Uh-huh."

"Listen," she leaned towards me, and gently took the book from my hands. "Why didn't you come when Mama called you to help with the varenyky? You know they are a lot of work. She's pretty tired now, and pretty upset."

"I didn't see her."

"Oh, Alex," Lesia sighed. "Mama said that you did."

"So what?" I cried, unable to contain the peculiar prickly feeling which rose again inside me. "Why do I always have to help? Why can't I do what I want, like you and Michael and Mary? Sometimes . . . sometimes I think that I'm adopted . . . that they got me only to make me work . . . and to yell at me!"

"Alex, you goof, you know that's not true! God, what an imagination!"

I choked down a sob in reply.

"Mama and Papa love you very much and you know it. It's just that . . . well, they're not really young any more, and we all have to do things around the house. Varenky are no big deal. Who do you think vacuums and scrubs toilets? I do. Mows the lawn? Michael. Weeds? Plants? Mary." Lesia placed my novel on the bedspread and crouched down on the floor beside me. "Mama says that she doesn't know what to do with you any more. You're so stubborn and temperamental. I know it must be hard being the baby, but . . ."

"I am NOT a baby!" I yelled, and recoiled from her touch. Suddenly I hated her, I hated my whole family with a bitter and violent loathing. "Go away."

Lesia stood up, and brushed off her clothes. "Good night, Alexandra." I was alone once more, but I could not read.

It was a going-to-church Sunday.

We were driving along the QEW on the way to downtown Toronto, having just passed High Park. I was sitting in the front of the car in my usual spot, between Mama and Papa. I hated sitting here, always impinged upon by the London Fog-clad elbows of my father (who would be driving, of course), and squashed and stifled by the tailored girth and sickeningly sweet perfume of my mother. Also, I missed out on the pokings and whisperings that I knew were taking place on the back seat.

When my mother opened her shiny black purse to pass Michael his little white envelope for collection, I looked up, opening my eyes very wide, and said, "Could I please have one too?"

"What for?" Mama asked, looking at me suspiciously. "You always drop in quarters without an envelope. And besides, I don't give you the quarters until just before they begin collection, because you always lose them."

"Today I am going to stand on the other side of the church, with Papa and Michael."

"I beg your pardon?" Mama asked, incredulously, her voice rising slightly. "Why?"

"I am tired of standing where we always stand. And I want to see what God looks like from the other side."

"I don't think it's a very good idea," Papa said, his eyes on the highway. "What will everyone else think? You better stay with your mother. It will

look like something is wrong with the family.”

“No it won’t. I won’t do anything. I just . . . I only want to be with you and Michael.”

I heard my mother give a little cough.

“Alex, you little twerp, what’s the big deal?” Mary broke in, unwanted. “Why do you always have to be such a pain?”

“Awwww, c’mon, lay off.” Michael, my saviour. “Who cares? Let her . . . it’s no big deal.” He tapped my shoulder. “You can stand with me, Al, but I have to warn you. You may be disappointed, ‘cos it’s nothing special.”

“I don’t care if it is or isn’t. I just want to try.”

My father glanced over at my mother. Then he turned back to the road and said, “I guess there’s no harm in one Sunday. It’s not like we go that often.” My mother bit her lip.

I smiled, flushed with pride at my victory, and settled back in my seat, willing the silent and subdued drive to pass more quickly.

Upon entering the cathedral, I solemnly crossed myself as I always did, and then turned to follow Michael. He strode confidently across the smooth grey marble floor towards the crimson carpet lining the aisle between the pews and the wall. The opposite wall.

We filed into the pew and settled down for the service. I felt so small, surrounded by tall men and boys, but I also felt safe and protected, tucked into my pew. As the priest began Mass, I heard a “here we go again” from my father. I quickly smiled up at him, and then turned back to the service, intent on piety. I was sure that on this side of the church, away from my mother and sisters, I would be able to concentrate, meditate, repent. God would be proud of me.

The first part of the service passed rather quickly. I avoided looking at Mama and my sisters, I had seen them in church a thousand times before, and I did not care to see how delicate and ladylike they all were. I listened to the choir, soaring and swelling at times, and then suddenly gentle and soothing. And then before I knew it, it was time for collection. Papa nudged me, and dropped two shiny quarters into my palm. I glanced around quick as lightning, stuck the coins in my eye sockets and squinted, and then turned to Michael. He laughed quietly and ruffled my hair. I dropped the coins in the basket, and happily passed it on to Papa.

In the name of the Father . . .

The painting at the front of the church caught my eye. I had never

noticed it before, standing on the other side. It was a sublime depiction of the Nativity, replete with angels, shepherds and barnyard creatures of all shapes and sizes. In the centre of the picture, a gentle, mild Virgin lovingly cradled the tiny, soft Baby Jesus in her arms, and they were enveloped in their own warm ethereal aura. The whole scene radiated peace, love, and hope, and high above this joyous manger, the star of Bethlehem blazed in golden glory and cut a shimmering path through the rich royal sky.

... the Son ...

I experienced a remarkable feeling at that moment. The tranquillity emanating from the painting passed right through me, like water through an empty sieve. I did not feel all warm and still inside, but rather a little hollow and bewildered, confused, cheated.

... and the Holy Spirit ...

I tore my eyes from the painting, seeking something else on which to focus. I peered hungrily around the church, something frantic gripping at my insides, my eyes coming to rest on the people on the opposite side of the aisle. They stood, kneeled, sat in unison, forming a lovely chorus in coloured raincoats. Reds, greens, lavenders, ecrus, navys. There was my mother, in dusty blue, with a smart feathered hat to match.

... Amen.

Mama looked very tall in her shiny black Sunday shoes. I watched, fascinated, as her red lips repeated the prayers, as the feathers in her hat bobbed gently as she crossed herself. I imagined her extraordinary perfume wafting through the spicy sweet air of the church. The queer lump once again lodged itself in my throat, and I felt my eyelids stinging. I suddenly loved Mama. She looked so soft and neat and proper—so different from how she looked at home in her clogs and cotton housedresses, tired and cross with laundry and ironing and cooking and loving. Not old at all, but like a real mother. Like my mother. I stared hard at the other women in the church, fiercely wondering what they were like when they were at home.

Michael bent down towards me. "Al!" he whispered. "You okay?"

I nodded, but tears burned my eyes. I felt hot and scratchy in my Sunday raincoat, my shoes felt too small, my hairband too tight. What was I doing here? I suddenly felt disoriented, lost, far from Mama. The red aisle which sliced the congregation in two was suddenly an abyss, an ever-widening chasm. Not caring what everyone else thought, not caring about Michael or Papa, or even God, I started pushing people aside left and right, and

struggled towards the aisle and the other side of the church.

“Mama!” I cried, choked with sobs. I buried my face in her dusty blue raincoat, feeling her weathered and trusting hands in hair, on my shoulders. I vowed to be better, much better, but the pledge had scarcely formed before I knew that my resolve would once again melt and drip like the wax on the holy candles—flowing down to the thickened and tempered base, rooted in the burnished brass holders inside my cathedral.

Tania Denesiuk

Ink

The office block was the largest ever built, and the first to be visible from a satellite photograph. It stood out like an indelible stain on the Earth’s surface, in the shape of the official logo of Pennman Incorporated.

I met Pennman once.

There was a rumour that some months ago, a disgruntled aide had flung himself off the roof and still had not landed, thanks to the crosswinds. Some workers like to amuse themselves during coffeekbreaks by attempting to spot this mythical being.

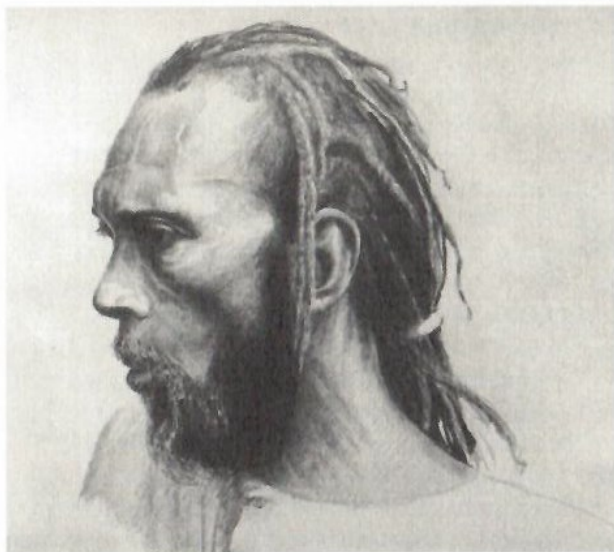
In case there was any truth to it, I now recommend that people not jump from anywhere higher than the 40th floor, just to make sure that they land.

Alex Wiebe

Skeleton of the Ark

his strides
gallop swallowing
late tonight
lost giant, black fields at his knees
brittle stalks of cotton and corn
unopened gates
running drunken eyes
frenetic; shadowed
swift hills of hesitant duskwashed trees
in the humming singsong of breathless dark
throbbing
flattened by his muddy midnight
 soft shoe
dully thudding
tumbling curtains softly creased
murky folding
his steps echoed by the hollow
 thunder splashes
shattered glass and spilling crystal
slim bottleneck clutched
in his bleeding
 jagged pagan
palm
slave heels gashing screaming animal leaps
into the soft sodden moss
Earthen shoulders hunched and smooth
sudden chaotic blinded white eyes
fleeing
far far behind
the sullen angry night

Sarah Wilson



Oku Onuora

Bruce Boswell

Lullaby

The night's shawl is a shroud,
A bed, a nest, a pool of honey
In which I soak and float.
The wind licks my hair, strips
The colour to reveal the silver strands,
Moon-kissed.

Lara Jimenez

Mother/Daughter

No hugs. No words. No reason will reach her. Unclenched sobs shatter every breath. Tantrum from above. 10:00 p.m. 10:15.

"I want I want I want."

I have nothing of my being left to give. Noise drains the power from my veins. Through fingertips. Through the roots of my hair. I rip dry skin from the hangnail frays. Behaviorists call this 'displacement activity'. I wish it were. I am immobilized. Now they begin to bleed.

"I want I want I want."

Eddying downward, drowning, I want. There is a salt sea, now, of my own selfish tears.

She thinks I have power over her. Over the world. The power to give her the world, and I tell her 'no'.

Still, she calls whenever the monsters invade her room, and each time, negotiating that darkened hallway, I know I have no power to defeat them.

Radio. I want the comfort of your adult voice. . . only static, jazz, French. Sounds of random anguish to an untrained ear. I have no language left. The only word I have is 'No'.

"I want."

"No."

"It's not fair."

I know. Screaming on and on, bashing my senses. Senseless. I want to have some ordered sounds to share. I am the only one who says 'no'.

Suddenly I see the door. Suddenly, I am quite conscious that I have a door. It opens. How easily it opens. The world buzzes calmly beyond. Softly, I close it behind me. Lights and buzzing in the outside world. Walking, quickly now. He did, before. I am the monster now. The lone dictator in the land of 'no'. I told you before how he left me. Alone, with child. Alone with a child. And still I nurture that ancient grudge. There were no words between us then. We screamed out all the words our breath could share. He walked. Far away. For this one solid moment, I know what envy is. I could keep walking. Change my name. Dye my hair. Fly to the coast. I did it before. Long, long before. Twice, when I was the unruly child. Foggy mountains in a foggy past. Twice, I returned. I don't know why anymore. Who would choose not to live forever on the carnival beach

at Santa Cruz?

I could keep on walking, but I don't. I can't fly away now. Once, I couldn't be grounded. But now I am. Here. Earthbound in my own rebellion.

I am trapped in my anger. Caught up in rage. Conscious of my cage. Boiling over. Steaming up senses. I take an alley, and hope to be accosted. I want to hit someone hard who deserves it. But there is no one. Only this battle of self within self.

A storefront glows: iridescent, fluorescent night-time noise. I purchase my revenge: Coke, cigarettes, pop-tarts. Contraband, extravagant. Maybe I won't brush my teeth.

Tomorrow will be better. She'll rise with rosy smiles and laughing blue-green eyes. I'll buy some oatmeal cookies for her lunch.

Now I am homeward bound. Home bound. Housebound. Wait! How long has it been? Five, ten minutes. Fifteen? The panic seizes hold. Negligence. Abandonment. Police could be there now.

But she is sleeping like an angel. Fallen, finally into dreams.

Pop-tarts are laced with chemical guilt. They leave a gummy paste lump in my mouth. It sinks to the pit of my stomach. I want to brush my teeth. It doesn't taste like I thought it would. Revenge is like that. In silence, I am sorry for being so selfish.

At breakfast she says,

"I hate oatmeal cookies!"

Oatmeal cookies are uncool. I didn't know. I am out of touch. Out to lunch. Out of lunch altogether. I slip sideways outside of myself. Maternal smile glows on inside its empty shell:

"That's okay, honey. You don't have to eat them."

So what's the point? I don't know. I've lost the thread. I don't know how it's supposed to go.

We fill our knapsacks with peanut butter sandwiches, crumpled notes and books. Some have words that reach, and others don't. Packing some hope in brown paper bags, we try to catch the bus for school.

Georgia Wilder

so for the first time
in awhile, I take the gulp
wrenching in my lungs
the fierce gash
of alone, for the first time
you have hovered over my body
my ideas, my youth
advising like a shadow
on fire, the red image
eclipsing the sun
I breathe moon, grass
a fierce rush of freedom
no regrets, no longer wet
for you, for you
how dare you

Sasha Menezes



Marcela Saitua

The Cry of the Forgotten

You are: the firecracker
That refused to pop
On the fourth of July,
Filled with seething gunpowder,
Ashamed of your gross inability
To explode with frightening colours
Into coherent patterns;
The shell of the hermit crab
Who has long since crawled away
And left you to burn on a beach
Of sprawling white sand
Or perhaps be discovered
And pierced, and suspended
From a sparkling chain
That can only imitate
The life you once held;
The pirates' treasure
That has all but crumbled,
Hidden for centuries,
Overflowing with tarnished silver
That has lost all value;
The picture we hang
In our parlour,
But forget to look at,
Slowly dying and collecting dust;
The only unread book on a shelf
Surrounded by comrades
Whose dogeared pages
Are a cruel reminder
Of your vain attempts
To shape words
With any beauty
Or meaning.

Corrina Hodgson

'Luggage' in Ink

Most people do not appreciate the dimensions of a suitcase: its verticality is astounding. That is why they cannot pack.

Joel Sears

Mention of Honour

"So who are we commemorating this week?"

The Official Chronicler gathered his files and rose from his seat at the dinner table. "Ahem. I call to order this gathering of the Immortalizers; officially numbered as meeting number seven thousand six hundred and twenty-eight, in the Year of Our Lord two thousand seven hundred and eighty-five. Tonight, we immortalize a Miss Teri Y. LeQuince, who, along with all others we have remembered in previous weeks, appears only once in the complete Humankind Database Index.

"History has decided that she is only worth the slightest of footnotes, but we like to believe that each of us is worth a proper remembrance. And so, a toast," he raised his glass at this point, and the rest of us did likewise, "to Miss Teri Y. LeQuince!"

"To Teri!" we cheered. After dinner, the Chronicler duly noted the new Immortal in his records, as well as the complete minutes of the meeting. Later on, we left to return to our separate homes and lives, and more than a few of us wondered whether this amusing hobby of ours would ever be mentioned in the Humankind Database Index.

Alex Wiebe

A Drummer

The people sat attentively in the field, as the final sunbeams ricocheted off the silent cymbals. The figure holding them had not moved for years, much less marched. And yet the people watched. A few clambered to their feet.

The Drummer had called them from all walks of life. They had followed wholeheartedly, screaming out the greater truths. Some had never followed, and they remained falsely content. Some had left along the way, and built giant cities.

The rest were here, never even considering abandonment of their crumbling, wooden, wind-up leader. Besides, they didn't want to look stupid in front of the others.

Alex Wiebe



