

THE
TRINITY
REVIEW



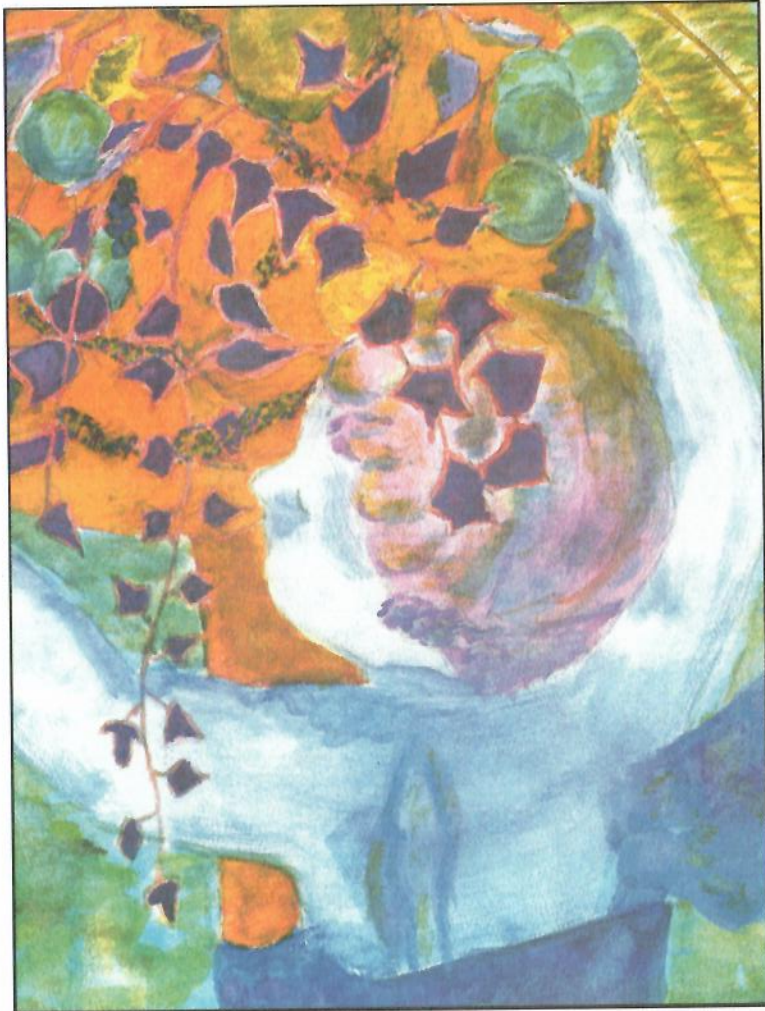
VOLUME CVIII NUMBER 2

Spring 1995

**THE
TRINITY
REVIEW**

VOL. CVIII NO. 2

Trinity College, Toronto
SPRING 1995



PAMELA CHANG

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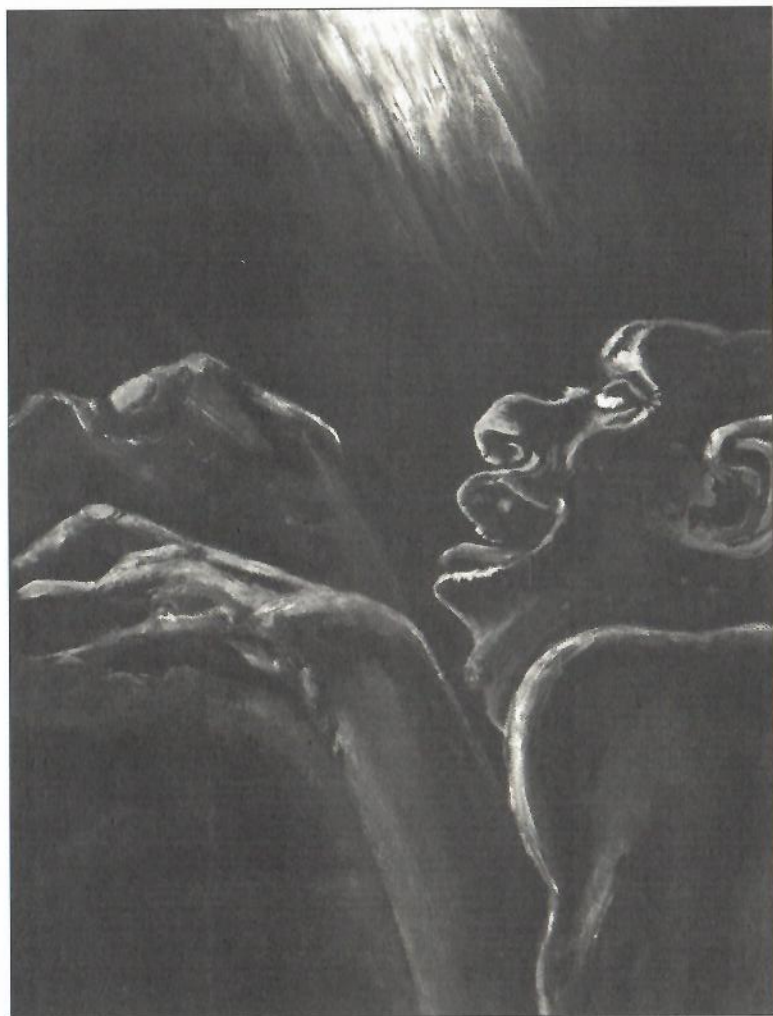


JOHN M. CURRID

Morning

ANDREW WALLACE

The heaving ice is making whale music
on the lake. Each colliding sigh and groan
rises like the heavy flight of a white
beluga's breach, and settles as a new
lump in the snow-covered ice. Bright cold sounds
are being squeezed from frozen air pockets,
and the clear light of day is sleeping on
the lid of a lake that looks like a field.
Come sun! Focus your hot round eye. Reclaim
the roofed waters and let your warm waves bathe
the hips of the shoreline. Peel back winter's
eyelid with the hard heat of your breath, and
welcome April with a toothy smile of
ice plates piled like poker chips on the shore.



ALEXANDRA PORTER

When Loneliness Becomes Profound

LOUISE A. JAMES

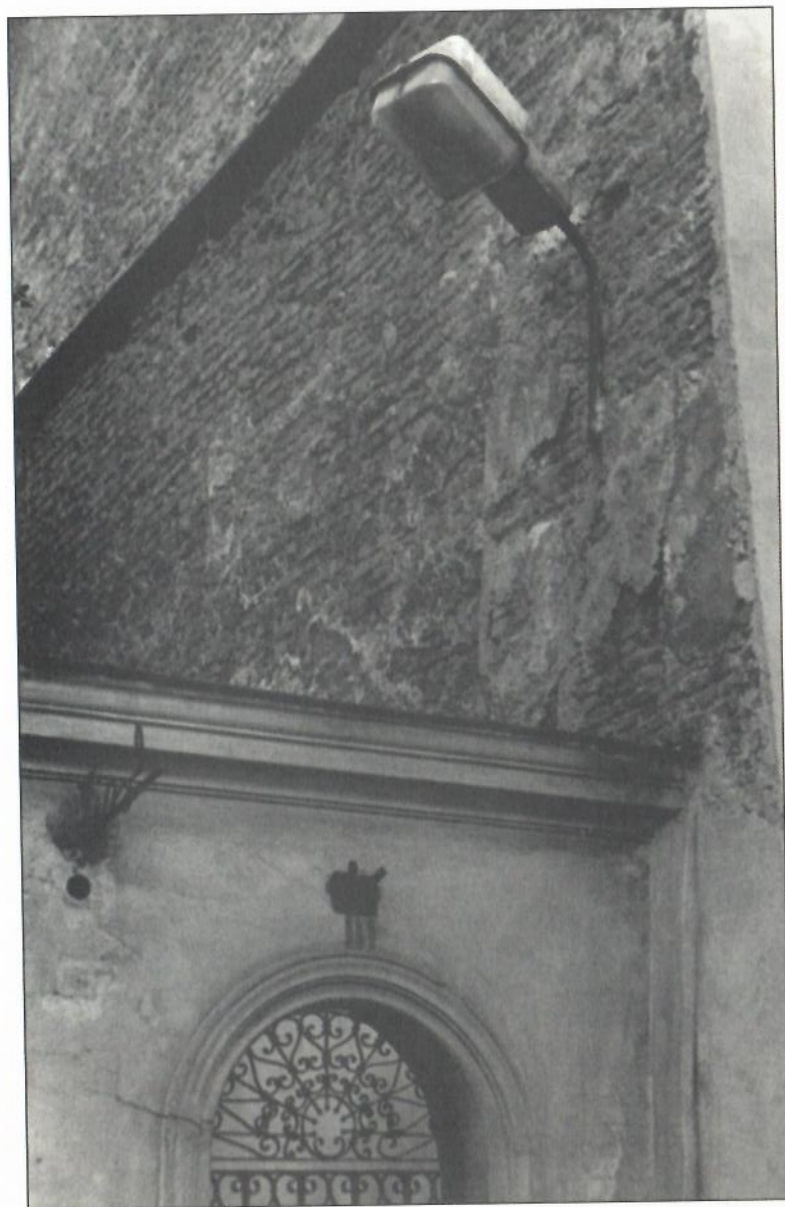
She gets up from the kitchen table, not realising that this is the third time in an hour that she has done so. Each time she paces, talking aloud, but never coming to any resolution. She has become so used to this behaviour that it no longer registers, she no longer notices.

One minute, she is sitting at the table, reading bits and pieces of the daily newspaper, the T.V. humming in the background, trying but failing to keep her company. The next minute, she finds herself at the doorway leading to the bedrooms. The others are not home tonight, they have more important things to do and little time to spend in front of the television with her. The doors to their rooms stand ajar, revealing untidy but comfortable spaces. Her room is also untidy, but it offers no comfort.

Again, she begins to talk to herself, or rather, to the group of imagined friends who sometimes visit her on nights like these. These admirers come to hear her speak on all those things that concern her. They hang on to her every word, her every gesture, thinking every articulation witty and profound. To them, there is nothing better than being with her and listening to her philosophy, and they will forsake all others to spend their nights listening to all that she has to say. They never chastise her for her strong opinions and understand that she is unable to feel halfway about anything she believes to be important.

She never intends to offend or to frighten people away with her spoken truths. They are just that, spoken truths, but often they are too true. She was never good at small talk and never came to understand that there are those who seek conversation that allows them not to think. Sometimes, she wonders whether her conversations with these imaginary friends point to a flaw in her, a sickness, but only sometimes. She has rationalised that these moments are the creations of a sane woman, a woman who has no other means of making people listen.

One by one, her audience leaves her, as her monologue comes to an end. She finishes and is suddenly aware of the empty space beside her. She returns to the kitchen table, where the newspaper lies spread out before her. She turns another page.



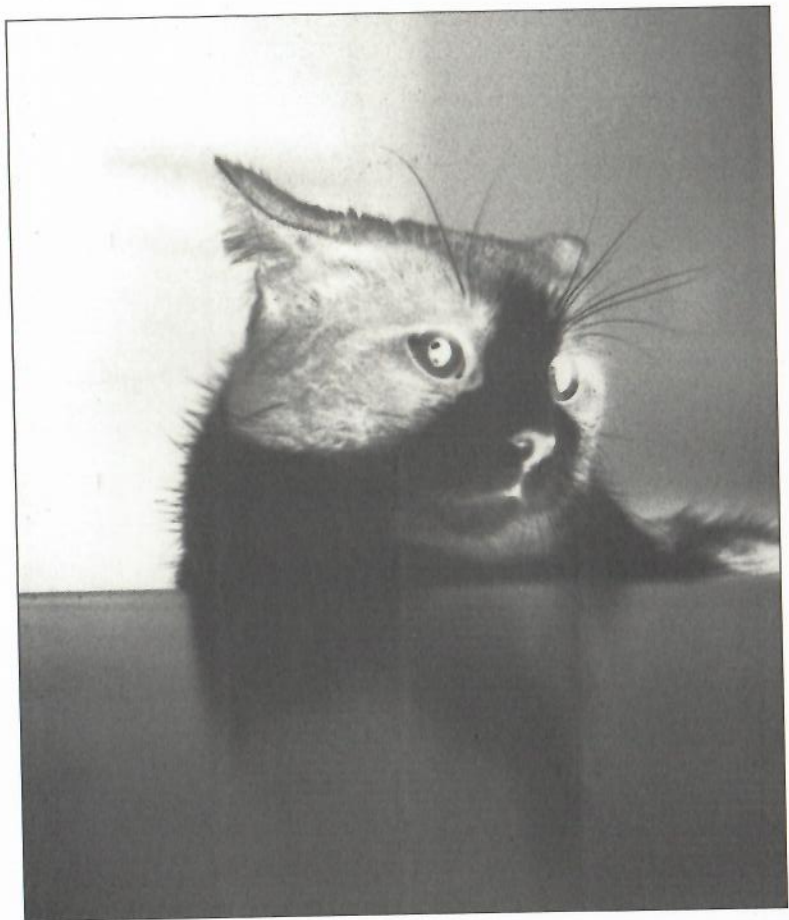
Ariel

EVE JEDRZEJEWSKA

A Poem About a Smokestack

ANDREW MCFARLANE

We are old friends you and I
You were raised to challenge the sky
In the year I came into the world
Your skeleton of cement grew
With my own lengthening bones
And then there you were
Complete
Attached at your base to
Webs of piping and conduits
You began to unfurl your banner of
Smoke down to the horizon
Wedding Hades with Heaven
A totem of industry
You cast your long shadow
Over the playgrounds of my youth
Revolving and darting with
The seasons and the days
From the floor of your vantage
Your meaning was manifest
Your usefulness proven
Your pride concrete



CHRISTINE COLE

Dreaming in Turtle

BROOKE CLARK

They want to swim with the turtles.

They are a link, some kind of clue, there is no doubt about that. They have been coming almost as long as there have been turtles, as long as I have been coming. I cannot remember a spring without the turtles, without the Sisters, without my collapsing hut with the psychedelic door. Even my snowed-in, land-locked winters are polluted by dreams of the turtles' rotting, dreams of the movements of the three naked Oriental women, the Sisters who are probably not even sisters. But I am not alone this year, I have been sent ten-year-old Hooperman-who-is-not-really-Hooperman as a partner.

He is watching the Sisters, as always. Like the fools who live in this foolish town, the fools of San Tortuga, he is convinced that the Sisters hold the key to the secret of the turtles, the secret of why, early every summer, hundreds, thousands of giant sea turtles crawl out of the ocean, crawl up the beach beyond the high-tide mark, and lie in the sun to die. Each day the Sisters, the three naked Oriental women, move among the turtles, touch them, caress their shells, stroke their thick-skinned, sagging telescope heads. They go out into the surf to guide the incoming turtles, they frolic among them in the foam of the sea and catch in their cupped hands the tiny waterfalls that rush from the backs of the rising turtles.

They want to swim with the turtles. And every day, Hooperman (for so I will call him, even though he is not) watches them, and reports nothing.

The people of the town speak of the understanding expressed by the Sisters, of the looks of peace on the faces of the expiring turtles, and think of Eastern mysticism, of palm trees and perfect clockwork birds, and they flock to the beach with tents and canned food, they camp in rows of flickering orange and broken sound, and they wait to be saved.

But the Sisters are a clue, the turtles are a clue, they are all just clues. I collect the clues from the arms of the waves, broken bottles and plastic containers, the wingfeathers of drowned birds, the crystalline fins of lost fish. And these clues I keep in numbered Zip-Lok bags, in drawers and on shelves, as I slowly compose the book, the volume, the tome, whatever term you wish, that will contain my lifetime of gradual understanding.

In the freezer, Zip-Lok 443, I have a human arm, from the elbow down, marked with writing in turtle. I continue to search for the rest of the body, and imagine it the strong arm of a sailor, the tanned arm of a pleasure yachtsman, the flailing arm of a helpless swimmer. A text of the approaching turtles.

The Tortoise was the real aggressor, not the Hare. The Tortoise controlled from behind, from invisibility – its power lay in likelihood, in chances, in odds. It controlled a mathematical function, the dynamic of probability that drove the race to its inevitable conclusion.

Walking across the beach to my cabin with the psychedelic door, I can see the dark humps of the turtles already collected on the beach. I smell their flesh rotting, and in the distance are the early flickers of fires, the beginnings of the slow, chanting prayers that will last all night. Prayers to the turtles, to the sea, to the Sisters, to the little phials of water collected from the grooves in the turtles' shells. I myself have phials of this turtle water at home, water from every year I have been here, phials stretching back into a past that is hazy at best to me now.

As the turtles die, their flesh rots away, leaving only their bones and the shells, monstrous around a frail skeleton that seems incapable of supporting flesh, incapable of supporting that dome. While mankind has built monuments all over the world, monuments in which the history of civilization can be read, the turtles carry their monuments with them, their civilization spreads across the beach. Every year, after all the people have gone home unfulfilled and alone again, after all the turtles have died, a bulldozer comes to the beach and razes another civilization, hauls away the monuments of an inexplicable culture.

But in the cabin, I have numbered bones, I have chips of shell, in widespread fragments I have an entire jigsaw turtle, a perfect turtle composed of many turtles that is gradually rebuilding itself. An ur-turtle in scattered embryo. Every year, when I come back, two Zip-Loks have mysteriously come together, say numbers 280 and 759, and there is no explanation except that they are both fragments from a turtle skeleton. The turtle is coming together in a large drawer built into a cabinet that stands against the West wall of the cabin – the wall that faces across the stretch of beach to the sea.

My door, multi-coloured swirls that suck you into an invisible vortex, was painted circa 1943, and is the earliest example of psychedelia in North America. It still has its original paint job, and is as vivid as it ever was. Elements of style, colour, shape, motion, and visual noise to be found in this door can be seen in all later examples of psychedelic art, all of which derive, directly or indirectly, from my door.

Tonight, Hooperman (because any name is better than the namelessness with which he has been cursed) will knock on my psychedelic door, coming back later than me, as always, and I will let him in. Removing his fedora, fake moustache and eyebrows, and wiping away with a damp

tissue the bags pencilled in under his eyes, he will say to me, "You know, Harris, I never really feel like myself except when I'm Hooperman."

I will nod as if I understood, hate the blankness of his undisguised face, and warm a small pot of milk to help him sleep. He will fall asleep on his back, a teddy bear clutched under his arm, a glinting trickle of drool running down the left side of his face.

It is the same every night, it will be the same tonight.

In my sleep, dreaming I awoke and walked to the door, I awoke and walked to the door, opened it and let the dawnlight flood in, split me wide awake.

Fog had rolled along the ground to meet the sea, and the hissing heave of the waves sliding up the beach had faded away, all was silence and stillness under the fog. Only the tops of the turtle shells were visible, the whole world was sunk under a flat grey sea and the turtles had turned to stones, rocks like the rocks that rise out of the retreating water at low tide.

The turtles had turned to stone and joined the real world again, no longer swimming blind through the fog, they found a place in nature for the silence, the stillness of their deaths.

Every year the same thing, this necropolis on the beach near San Tortuga, the sick, lonely and desperate who converge from everywhere, the Sisters. A sudden human community, knotted around an elusive centre of slow death, a culture of decay built on a foundation already rotted beyond repair.

But every year I get closer, I fill in another corner, another patch, constructing the pattern that lies beneath what is visible.

When I awake, the face of the boy who has not yet become Hooperman hovers above me. I realize he has been shaking my shoulder to wake me up. In the dream I rise from (drowning, spluttering), a giant turtle had hold of the entire left side of my body, was shaking and crushing me. In the reality I rise to, it is only the boy's small, pale hand.

"Get up, Harris," he says. "We have to go to work."

"Not yet." I look him full in the face, his blank boy's face, and am horrified that he has no name. "Go make yourself into Hooperman," I say, "and then I'll get up."

"Okay," he says, walking towards his dressing table. Then he turns back to me and says, "But don't fall back to sleep." The tone is pathetic, stern and wheedling at the same time, a boy trying to sound like his own mother.

The hair of the three Oriental women is blown into long trailers by the wind of the sea, twists out behind them and moves like kelp caught by the

tide. I watch their hair through our camera (ancient, technologically speaking, but getting a new one is impossible), filming the motion. I have graphed all these hair motions, kept careful records of them over the years (years...but the Sisters never seem to age), and the motions of hair in wind are never the same. They are perfectly chaotic, never precisely repeated.

Of course, there are flashes of similarity – a twist here, a flicker there – but no pattern ever settles around these movements, gathers them into a comforting embrace of predictability. Yet the vague memories of other motions, similar motions, somehow tie all the motions together, suggest a continuity, a message being sent.

While I film their hair, Hooperman stares fixedly at their breasts. Occasionally his eyes slide down their bellies, past their navels, to the dark triangle of hair between their legs. Then his head snaps up, and he returns to a scrutiny of their breasts.

He never dares to look at their faces.

I have returned again to Zip-Lok 42, the small red ball (about 2 inches in diameter) with a few faint black markings on it, my first encounter with writing in turtle. I hold the translucent sphere to my eye and see the distorted world red and marked by the warnings of the turtles.

Another failed interview.

“What is your relation to these turtles?” (me).

They said nothing. They stood around one of the smallest turtles, carefully measuring the dimensions of its shell, stroking its head and flippers, tapping the shell and listening as if testing it.

“What is your relation to these turtles?” (me again).

They ignored me completely, continuing their study of the turtle. In my mind, the words of my question played over and over, What is your relation to these turtles, What is your relation to these turtles... a standard question, straight out of the manual, What is your relation to ____ (insert appropriate name or phrase here). To be asked in a firm, commanding, but NOT threatening voice. I would not have answered my voice, the way it sounded.

“What is your relation to these...”

I couldn't remember what the word was. The sentence had played over in my mind so many times that the words had broken down into syllables, the syllables had rearranged themselves, and I was mouthing nonsense.

What is your relation to these hurdles?

Why is your negation of my flirtle?

I don't know if they would have responded differently to these questions or not, because as I searched for the word for turtle, they walked away.

Now, Hooperman is drawing with his crayons on the shell of the turtle they measured while I sit helpless on the sand. He draws a multi-coloured face, a face built of swirls of colour that hint at features, but a misshapen face, a face out of all proportion. The final picture is a face in torment, frozen in endless, silent agony, the visual equivalent of a scream.

I feel sick, and for once I actually wish Hooperman was here and he is not.

I was coming back to the cabin from checking the beach for clues (unsuccessfully) when I came across a turtle, the same turtle the three women were measuring earlier today. (I am positive – I checked the map – Section 3, turtle 14 – there can be no mistake.) But it had no shell. The dome from its back, and the hard plate that covered the belly, had been removed, leaving a globular mass of half-rotted flesh, darkly stained bones beginning to poke through, and the sun-hardened flippers stretched out to the sides. It was pathetic and horrible, a body collapsing inwards in random paths of disintegration.

There were two more along the way back, two more turtles without shells. And in the surf, out in the ocean up to their waists, were the Sisters, naked as always, splashing one another and waving long strands of kelp. The rocks around them turned into the shells of turtles that crawled out of the surf and up the beach, and the women bent to their high heads at the ends of stretching necks to touch them, to speak to them, they waved their flags of kelp as if directing the turtles up the beach, showing them where to die. Their high-pitched giggles reached me on the salty air.

In the night, under the drowned face of the moon, the people of San Tortuga gather among the turtles, they light small fires and make speeches.

“The turtles chose us!” they cry.

The speeches are loud and angry, the turtles left alive wag their heads nervously, beat their flippers on the ground, and then disappear under their shells, still and silent as rocks.

“We must learn their secret!” the people cry.

But they are blind, they do not see the clues, the clouds of information that drift through the air, they cannot build the fragmented glimpses into puzzles of truth, they cannot read the language of the beach littered with secrets.

“We are here for a reason!”

Their fires stretch flickering and pathetic down the beach, vaguely illuminating the hulking shadows of the turtles, and the faces of the men and women are divided between darkness and a deep orange light, their eyes smoulder angrily out of an orange-tinged darkness.

I dream that I am a drowned man, ghost-white and bloated as a cloud, rolled by the timeless waves, nudged and nibbled by sharks, cut by the razor edges of kelp that ropes me to a darkness far beneath the motions of water. Near the surface I roll over the rhythmic backs of the endless turtles, waves of turtle shells that carry me shorewards.

Walking among turtles on the beach, a fat ghost of flesh, I find my own forearm, cast up by the waves, cut and tattooed with messages I cannot read, black characters that move along the skin as I watch them. My own shattered body a code I cannot break.

In a closet converted to the purpose years ago I develop still photos of the Sisters' faces, close-ups taken with a powerful lens. Each year I photograph them for my records, though the faces do not change much, do not age in the conventional sense. Each year there seems more in their narrow eyes, greater depth to each expression, but when I blink the changes are gone, there is nothing concrete. I examine the photos chronologically, going over them with a magnifying glass, but whatever I saw has fled.

In the tray of fluid their faces emerge from a vague, smoky cloud, something shifting and motile gradually solidifies. I watch them most closely in the intermediate stages, when they are really only suggestions of a face, the hint of a cheekbone, the slope of an eye. But even after the fixer the faces slip away, they are always moving into a vague distance. Two photo albums full of these faces, each one labelled, each one bleeding into the next, fading into the blankness of the page behind.

Zip-Lok 219, a fragment of metal, three inches by nine inches, twisted, scraped, with a single hole punched through it, reminds me of all the blind ships that pass unknowing over the ocean cut by turtles, ships swollen with passengers that travel without the aid of the routes turtle-carved through the water.

During the day, the Sisters are no longer to be seen on the beach or in the shallow water. I send Hooperman to watch for them, but he sees nothing except their distant silhouettes in the pale light of morning or against the fading sky of evening, moving among the turtles.

I spend the days in the cabin, rearranging the Zip-Loks, constructing possibilities. There is a model here, something to be built out of apparent randomness. I have measurements of a turtle's skeleton, one I got to before the bulldozers, while it was still standing, fleshless, the wind blowing through it. From these measurements, the architecture of the bones, I see the shape my explanation of the turtles must take, an inclusive explanation, an idea like a dome over the world. The turtles are here for more than San Tortuga.

But still, even now, I am composing only footnotes, scribbling in the margins of the great plan that remains unwritten.

In the heat of day, under the high swimming fish sun, the sea a burning mirror reflecting the emptiness of the sky, the turtles beat their useless flippers against the sand, a repeated pattern of helplessness, as if they would swim over flaming silica waves to some safety only they can see.

In this way they speak to us of death.

Zip-Loks 42 and 443, the red ball and the human arm. I am carefully copying out the writing in turtle for the book. As my trembling hand traces the characters, I feel something stir at the back of my mind, the sense of communication beyond what I can understand, as if I could somehow recognize the characters without any knowledge of them. I have copied out the writing countless times before, but I return to this feeling over and over. As if some shadowy, uncharted part of my brain is listening, as if I have been trying to break a code that is not a code at all.

A knot of darkness twitches to life at the base of my brain, the shadow of recognition, and then is gone.

Now I am in my bubble underwater, oxygen pumped down to me from the boat above where Hooperman sits reading his comic books. I wait with the old camera. I have spent several days down here without seeing anything, but still I am sure they are swimming. What else would they need the shells for?

"What else would they need the shells for?" I asked Hooperman.

"I guess," he replied. I had seen them that evening, seen them climb out of the surf and run up the beach, naked and glistening in the dying light, and in their running was the movement of turtle flippers against the sand, was the twisting of their hair in the salt wind, was the slow wave of kelp caught in the tide. In my mind they were fragments of motion frozen against the bleeding horizon, and I knew they had been swimming, I could see that underwater motion held in their running.

"As long as I don't have to go underwater. You know I can't swim, don't you, Harris?" Hooperman said petulantly.

"Yes, yes," I snapped at him. "I keep telling you, I'll go underwater. All you have to do is... Christ, we've gone over this a million times. Would you stop being such a child?"

But, of course, he is a child.

I am not sure exactly how far underwater I am, but the light is getting fainter, filtering down in pale, thinning shafts. Schools of fish flicker and drift around me, silvery against the light, shadowed on the far side, and somewhere, above, turtles swim towards the beach. Each one that rises dripping from the water is like another tick of a strange clock.

Suddenly, I see them. They wear the shells taken from the turtles backwards, the domes rising over their breasts and bellies, and they swim on their backs, with the shells right way up. I begin filming, and through the running camera their silhouettes look remarkably like those of turtles. They have no breathing apparatus, except for the shells they are naked, and yet they stay underwater for a surprising length of time, swimming with a strange, thrashing stroke. Every five minutes or so they rise to the surface for air, then dive down again, every movement in perfect unison.

I have made films of the turtles swimming, I have made films of the Sisters swimming. Projected side by side, they show interesting parallels, interesting differences. The movements of the Sisters are broader, wider, they seem to include the movements of the turtles but go beyond them. Yet there is a simplicity in the pattern of the turtle flippers not to be found in the flashing motions of the pale, naked limbs of the Oriental women.

Even this, I realize, is another footnote, nothing conclusive. I am waiting for something to happen, every piece of information I collect, every Zip-Lok given a number, pushes our small, sealed world closer to an event.

I am sure that when it happens, it will happen underwater, and that is where I spend my days.

My dreams are tormented by visions of the turtle-crowded beach where the Sisters move, bending over the turtles, their long hair brushing across their breasts in the wind, their narrowed Oriental eyes filled with a strange glimmer as they whisper to the turtles, as the turtles whisper back, whispers in a language I cannot understand, whispers that roar down the beach and echo in my dreaming mind, whispers that are code in my dream and gibberish in the waking world that I rise into. I have pages of these remembered dream whispers, written phonetically in half-awake handwriting, all possibility of meaning obscured by the gradually awakening mind.

I am on the beach beside her, staring back at Hooperman in shock and horror.

I had been down in my plastic bubble filming for a week, and the Sisters came by today as usual, as if accustomed to my mechanical voyeurism, and I was filming them, when one of them lost her shell. The two halves of it came apart, and she began to thrash around in the water, unable to reach the surface, her hair waved crazily in the dim light, a moving deeper shadow against distant green shadows, and I watched it all through the grinding camera. The other two Sisters swam to her, grabbed her awkwardly under the arms and began to swim up with her, and I signalled Hooperman to pull me up slowly and followed them with

the camera, rivetted to the scene. As I rose I felt her drowning in my own lungs, swallowed an ocean of wet fear, and the camera seemed to suck her drowning out of the water around her and surround me with it in the safety of my bubble, it drowned me in her thrashing motions.

They swam towards shore, carrying her, and, back on the surface, I followed them in the boat, dragging the bubble along behind, pulled by the oxygen line. And I gave Hooperman the camera. He was in full disguise, fake moustache drooping, staring at me from under fake eyebrows and over the dark bags he had pencilled in under his eyes, a face so manifestly fake it was ridiculous. I placed the camera in his small, pudgy hands, and then I forgot about him.

They lifted her up on the beach, all three of them out of their shells now, and I brought the boat up and jumped out after them. One lay still on her back, eyes closed, lips bluish, hair dragged in black strands across her face by the action of the sea, and the other two crouched in the surf, coughing. The Sister lying on her back was not breathing, she had no pulse. I knelt over her, I tried to think what to do, I brushed the wet hair from her eyes, I let my fingertips linger against the cold flesh of her face. Her eyebrows were arched in a permanent question.

And then I looked back and saw Hooperman, up to his knees in the surf, still wearing his trench coat, with the camera projecting out from under the brim of his fedora, a horrible, overgrown, mechanical eye.

I stared at him in shock and horror.

And now the two Sisters grab their dead companion, they run up the beach carrying her, winding through the labyrinth of dying turtles, and are gone. I kneel on the wet sand, my fingers stretched out to caress nothing.

Behind me, Hooperman stops the camera.

"I'll never be Hooperman again," the boy says to me. He is sitting on his bed, out of the Hooperman costume, his face blank, without identity. "I can't be Hooperman any more. It's time to be me."

His babbling, his repetition of senseless phrases learned from television, freezes me with rage.

"Don't you see," I say, "there is no you. There's only Hooperman." I say it not because it is true, but simply out of cruelty, to try to force the boy back into being Hooperman through cruelty. And because I suddenly realize how much I hate him, hate his presence here. It is a child's trick, a pathetic schoolyard trick, and I feel the desire to regret it, though I do not.

I have worked carefully on a number of equations, and they now indicate that the probability of one of the Sisters drowning was extremely high, that such an event could not have been avoided much longer. I considered adding a humorous footnote to my book of footnotes,

suggesting that turtle shells are simply bad luck, but I have decided against it. Certainly, I can in no way be held responsible for the death of the Sister – the graphs prove it.

Zip-Lok 1013, a long black hair from the head of the dead Sister, found stuck to my wet fingers. It is wrapped around a secret, coiled tightly as a spring around its invisible spine of taut, possible energy.

My embryonic book is just a skeleton, a turtle skeleton sunk to the bottom of the ocean, a few pale bones of fact, a few vertebral clues linked up, forming the beginnings of a path that peters out and disappears in the shifting sand, a path that goes nowhere. There is no flesh, no dome, nothing over it all, nothing beyond the skeleton. I have laid the foundation, I have begun the infrastructure, and already I have nothing but a ruin, broken, collapsed, a home for the wind, a cradle for the waves.

Hooperman is gone now. The last time I saw him he was in full disguise, walking out into the ocean, his trench coat billowed out behind him on the surface on the gentle waves, the water up past his waist. Then I shut my psychedelic door on him.

Some nights, I dream that he is still with me, I dream that I creep into his room because I cannot sleep and try to put the fake moustache on his face, the fake eyebrows above his eyes, try to dress him in his trench coat and fedora and paint in the dark smudges of insomnia. But I can never get the costume right, and I kneel over him, struggling with the disguise and trying not to look at his blank, nameless face, whispering to myself, "If only he had a name, if only he had a name I could sleep." When I awake he is still gone.

I spend all my time in the cabin now, watching the film I took of the drowning Sister, watching the film Hooperman took of her being carried back to the beach, and I have noticed several things I did not notice at the time. The shell she lost was the one Hooperman drew on – in a few frames I can see, on the side of it, the vague crayoned outlines of an agonized face. I noticed that the waves were high that day, that as the Sisters swam to shore, waves slapped in the face of the one who had lost her shell. This no doubt contributed to her drowning. And I noticed that I spent several minutes with my fingers against her dead face, while the other Sisters, crouched like statues flanking the doors to some temple, coughed on either side of me.

I whitewashed one wall (the north) of the cabin for the projection of films, and I like to walk up to it, to touch the imaged body of the dead Sister as she lies on the beach. The wall is rough against my fingertips, it has the texture of a turtle's shell, and it is cool and still as her dead flesh.

Some nights I dream that she did not die, that the other two Sisters have disappeared back into their land of wisdom, and that we are left on the

beach among the turtles. She is under a turtle shell and she smiles up at me, I caress the dome of the shell with great tenderness and she whispers to me with the whispers of the turtles, and the smile of her Oriental eyes promises solutions. I dream that I crawl under the shell with her, that I drown in the kelp smell of her hair and the salty wetness of her body, and that we are safe, safe until my dreams collapse like ancient pillars or weakened bones, and the little dome of black sky that we huddle beneath cracks and caves in to admit the light and the water, and we drown all over again in my collapsing dream.



JOHN RICHARDSON

Flashes

TIM JANCELEWICZ

Trapped inside the
cheap grasp of
this thin booth

with its fake
wooden siding, stool
draped with its
own stuffing, pink
gum stuck and
hard on the
ceiling and the
floor scuffed raw
by photogenic feet,

three times for
three dollars we
made those orange
curtains beautiful.

Honey

The Queen's dervishes
Anoint my tongue, in rites of
Floral alchemy.

Peach

My sly tongue explores
The blushing skin of a peach:
Deadly seduction.

Strawberry

The morning after,
Just one perfect strawberry
Cools tears of heartbreak.

Sage

I rub rough sage leaves
Between my fingers, and yet
Feel none the wiser.

JENNIFER SHELTON

Balaam's Ass Revisited

ANDREW MCFARLANE

They found him in one of those wild western shows,
An obstinate ass from his tail to his nose.
Told to walk he would sit, told to sit he would walk,
But the Army required a donkey to talk

"Just think," said the Chiefs, "about what we could do"
"If animal spies could report from the zoo."
"Besides there's a lot more to this project than that:"
"The Russians are grooming a talkative cat!"

So they shipped him back East to a top secret lab,
Where experts would give him the gift of the gab.
From Blarney they parleyed the infamous stone,
And Oprah was brought in, his retorts to hone.

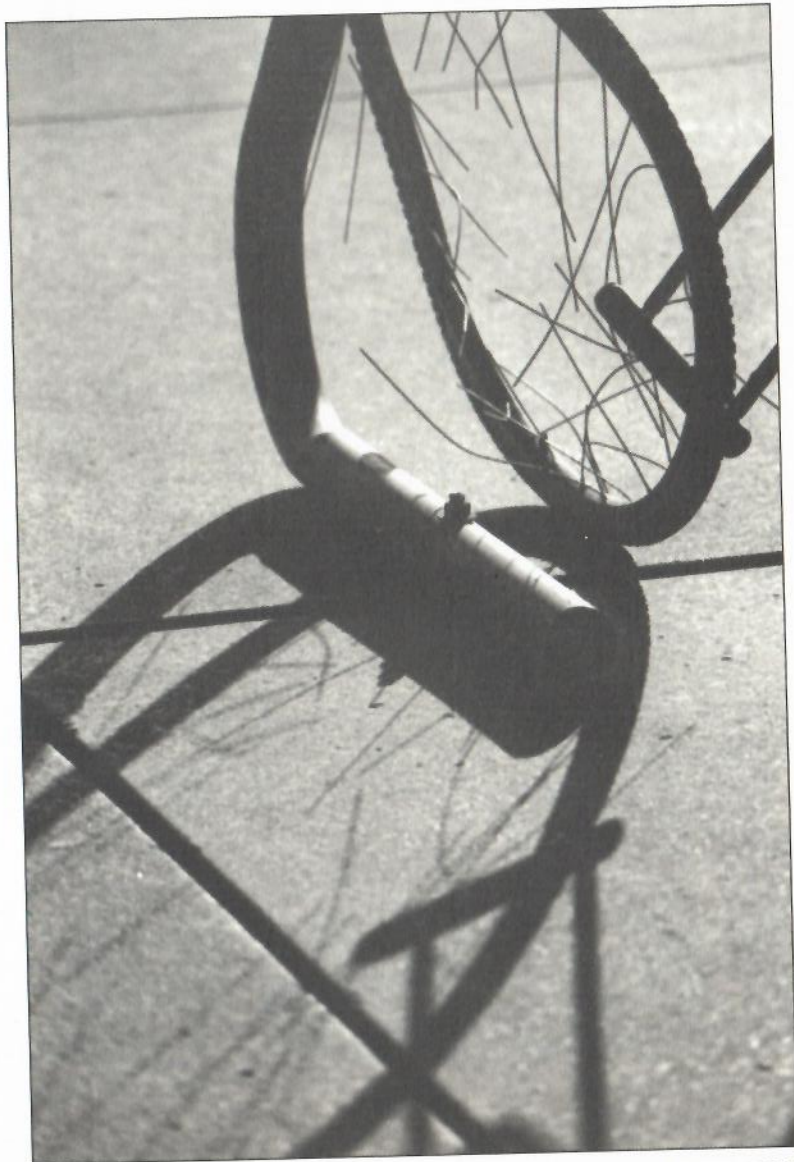
Which language, they asked, should they teach him to speak?
Swedish or Flemish or Spanish or Greek?
They finally decided that plain English would do:
If the Premier could speak it, then a donkey could too.

For seven long years to their goal they held true
'Til the donkey was ready to make his debut.
The Press was called in to record what he'd say,
When he coughed his throat clear and began with a neigh.

"Fellas," he said, "I find talking a gas"
"But I cannot help feeling no end of an ass."
And bidding them all a most graceful "Adieu"
He leapt out the window to a fate worse than glue.



ALISON DUKOWSKI



Futility

KYLE MILNE

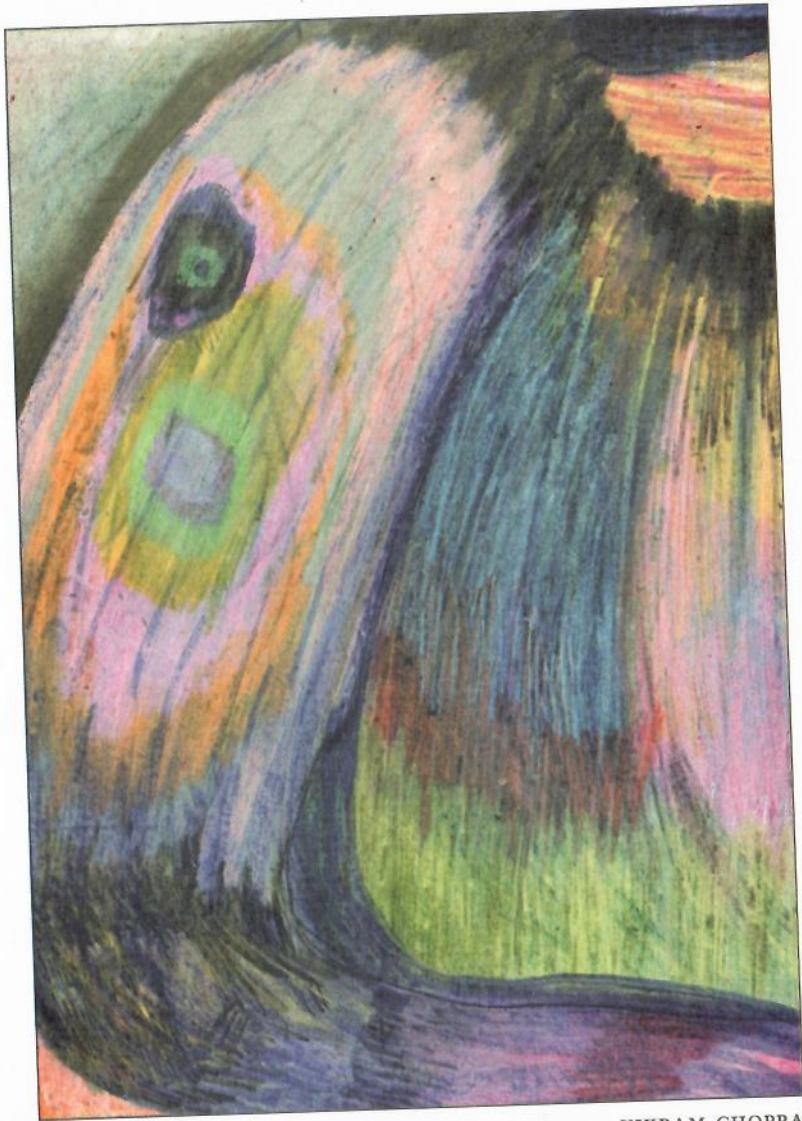
*With doctrine held up to each face, round and
Round the oxen pace, and the millstone turns.*

He never read Your book of Job, in fact,
He never learned to read – too much else to
Be done first: little-sibling mouths to feed.
While some knelt in padded pews, given wine,
And bread to eat, kneeling upon gravel
He would prostrate himself by wealthy feet.
With plastic bag upon his head to keep
The rain from sinking in, the conscience of
The righteous in the garments on his skin,
His hands reached out for grace. But You'd no grace
For pagan boys, just coins to take its place.

Strange alchemy it was, indeed, to change
His golden soul to lead, to calcify
His beating heart to stone, and leave him dead,
Within these insufficient arms to lie.
Mary, turn your head in shame: why weep for
One who's heaven sent? On this Pietà
Standing here, tears would be much better spent.

So place another setting at Your table –
Another joins the feast. From underneath
The grinding-stone this child's been released.

PAUL KONGKHAM



VIKRAM CHOPRA

Green Rain

DOROTHY LIVESAY

I remember long veils of green rain
Feathered like the shawl of my grandmother,
Green from the half-green of the spring trees
Waving in the valley.

I remember the road was like that
Leading to Grandmother's house,
A warm house, with green carpets, geraniums
A trilling canary
And shining horse-hair chairs;
And the silence which was full of the rain's falling
Was like my grandmother's parlour
Alive with herself and her voice rising and falling
Rain and wind intermingled.

I remember that on that day
I was only thinking of my love and my love's house,
But now I remember the day as I remember my grandmother,
I remember the rain as the feathery fringe of her shawl.

—reprinted from *St. Hilda's Chronicle*,

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 48, CHRISTMAS 1930