



Harbinger 1991c



H A R B I N G E R '91

Stephens' Magazine of Creative Arts



Harbinger 1991

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Equilibrium

Copernicus did it. Lit the match.
Burned the fishing wire
That held it in place.

Spun the Earth off its center.
Out of the silence,
One man screamed,
Looked up at the setting
Sun, holding his head,
Fell to his knees.
Splinters of light shot
Themselves into his ears
With flaming fingers ripping
The tender inner skin,
Equilibrium, vibrating like the
Ears of a turtle crossing the
Interstate highway, and with
The same end.

Lightmare

We were wrong. The light no longer
Mates. It flies like bats toward the
Stars to feed, tease, twist like
Ribbons and soar into an endless black
Night leaving only the echoes of its
Searing laughter and the darkest evening.

Janey's Dream

Mother pours vodka into just the right glasses.
She serves it before she serves them.
It is much lighter than they are.
The taste is more acceptable.

I can't let her know
I have touched the carpet
Weaving under my chair with
My toe and would like to
Dig a hole there but my
Nail is just not strong enough.

I sleep on words like
Christian and Father but
I won't touch myself or Him
Or do other bad things. I
Won't look for stars or
Moon or serpent shadow under
My bed. I will close my eyes
And dream of black-faced dolls
In white dresses laughing at
The circus, touching their hair.

In the intensifying moonlight

 He holds a single flower, sharp—
cool and white.

 My leather
fingers reach slowly and grasp
 the tough green stem.

Perhaps the moon saw all
this, as it began another
 trek across its hollow,
aching night fresco, moving
 sideways, not even a slow
 vertical slant, as if to catch
 another glimpse. Its horizontal
 shift startled the ground,
 lighting the dark places where
it was not soon expected, making
the trees give up those secrets
carefully hidden by the normal
path of the moon.

There was a
 tree, crisp black in the night,
attempting to shelter
the moon from wrath, the anger
 of the skies and the eye-spitting
despise of the ground. After all
 this noise and disgust, we
looked full at each other's face.
The moon smiled slowly.
 I blinked painfully,

his features blurred and distant. Somehow,
 and somehow it was despite
our sameness, a tea-cup-comradery grew.

It is still early, he has not yet risen
as I walk my horse, carefully
watching my path, unmarked and unlighted.
The moon has covered
itself in a pile of leaves
that are rotting with moisture
and sleeps with the sweet
scent of decay around its face.
With my rusted and battered letter opener
I enter a garden and trim
away one white poppy.

He expects kindness, if not
 servitude, from those around him.
Others bow to his schedule.
 His duties
seem to deny responsibility.

I have left my horse
in the meadow below, in the moonlight
as if caught
 by a camera flash
and ventured into the upper
 reaches of the hillside.
When I am high enough, I give
my flower

to the messenger wind
that takes my gift to the kind
idiot moon above.

He rises to see the delivery of this
token and becomes
terrified and horrible, but I
smile carefully and wave, trying
to reassure. I will not break
away so terribly.

I see a leaf fall to the ground
before I roll over and close.

A genetic south wind: Ask the Philosopher

I am cloned quietly
and taken as little as possible.
You took me for dead
in the clear waiting room
atmosphere of my palm,
my pulse flickered quick,
then echoed the silence
between us.
In the reflection
of the clock, I saw
you bury me as the lub-dub
throb of our friendship
quieted itself to peonies.

Oracle

Listening to the law of probability,
I hear a noise and
think I know it.
I am confident that
I can't be wrong.

If ever I am right
there will be some prophetic victory.
Perhaps the moon will wax
full for me.

Finally, that certain,
I open the door to greet it. My gall
evident, I am pushing prophesy.

But the corridor is empty,
clear of it, as I am clear of it.

And so my door is shut
and my gift tossed.
I am no Oracle, and it,
no human guided, ring-nosed,
by my riddled curse.

Philosophy before the invention of the microscope: Disbelief is a cold, stone statue

And there he is again,
that god-like fellow.
If in doubt, create a god

and put Him in charge.
Create yourself in His image
and imply that He has the ability

to reach beyond Himself
and yourself
and herself

to create things that are
like and unlike Himself,
but mostly yourself.

Let him teach and tell,
keep his power by never
revealing the answers.

He must be tall and wild.
Laying down laws and rules
in the most fantastic ways.

Structured, planned in his
own work. Bizarre and hard
to follow in his moods.

There's a real egotism in god-creation, but
there is always a way out, a way to forfeit
any such argument by simply not believing.

2090 — A Year to Remember

The day dawns clear and bright. I walk along the main street of my town. There is little noise—only the sound of the mass transit buses interrupt my thoughts. As I wander, I am constantly astonished by the beauty of the trees. It has not been too long since there were not many trees. I only vaguely remember such times, as I was only a few years old. The sky is a neon blue—electrifying, mystifying, almost hypnotic. I think back to my grandmother's diary—

October 22, 1999: More rain today; school was canceled as usual. Today the smell wasn't so bad. We probably could have gone out, but it was not worth the health risk of walking. I remember days without acid rain. Now we have no clean rain. Something must be done.

December 25, 2004: We had a day without any health risks today. It was so nice to be able to walk to school! Things have gotten a lot better in the last year, though . . .

May 4, 2054: The last cars were gone today. Water is still rationed, but it is estimated that it will not be very long before we will have enough clean water not to have to worry about it . . . There are very few days now that we can't go out—

I don't remember cars. Cars disappeared before I was born. We have museums, but from what I hear,

the replicas are not very good. We only have buses and some subways now.

In my history class we are studying about forests. I have been to one. The only forests that are left are those that the Government is protecting. There are some in Utah, and some in Washington, and even one or two in Idaho, but those are all. I sometimes wonder what people did or why they would want to destroy forests.

In these times, we have learned to be a part of nature. We are conservative, only using what we need. We have learned to make livings from Mother Nature without destroying her. It isn't so hard—it really confuses me that it was so difficult for people in the 20th century. Water isn't even rationed, the way it was then. We only use what is absolutely necessary and have discovered that simple things, such as turning off the water when we brush our teeth, and turning off light switches when we leave a room save us SO much energy. They have become part of our daily habits.

From what I understand, even the laws were different then. Now it is illegal to waste things. Some people put up a fight when these laws were passed, but the government recognized that SOMEONE had to do SOMETHING. I have heard about this acid

rain—I guess it wasn't very nice. I don't know much about it, but I do know that it came from air pollutants (which we don't have any more). I am told that one of the chief pollutants was transportation. I wonder why—the buses nowadays do not contain anything that could harm our atmosphere.

We do have some remnants left from their days though—we have to keep covered when we go outside, because Nature has not built up enough ozone to protect us. Personally, I think it's good because I hear that people back then spent HOURS doing their hair. I don't have to worry about it.

Mother Nature treats us kindly. We have learned not to misuse or waste her, and she in return doesn't punish us for what our grandparents and great-grandparents did. Maybe now we are finally learning to really, truly love.



Carolyn McHale



Carolyn McHale



Laura Labieniec-Pintel



Leslie McKean

The Fallen One of Mexico

They stole your name
Malintzin, Malinche, Dona Marina.
They call you Eve—
that is how you are explained, exorcised.
Eve, evil woman, vital woman.
Vital to those men who came to
dinner uninvited.

As Joseph forgave his brothers
for putting him in the pit—
selling him into slavery,
you forgave your mother for
replacing you with her son—
selling you to the Xicalango
who sold you to the Tabascans.

Your people cannot seem to
forgive you. They blame you
for Montezuma's fall and
renounce you as the world renounces
sin. They blame you for the
child you birthed with Cortes
and bow to the Virgin instead.

You passed from tribe to tribe,
person to person, name to name.
But you should have killed
yourself before submitting to
Cortes' caresses. You should have
cut out your tongue before interpreting
for the Spanish invaders.

What you know that none
who hold you up as another
woman who couldn't resist the
apple know is that the will to
live is strong.
It sleeps quietly in our bones
and roars to life when jostled.

What you know that none
who think Cortes asked your
permission before becoming your beau
know is that one must make
herself useful, indispensable
or she will be tossed out with
the rest of the day's refuse.

So what if you fell in love with
the conqueror, bore his child.
So what if your tongue fluttered
over your lips with a sound like
a bee's and sweet language poured
from your throat like honey.
You are not La Chingada.

You are the woman who
grew from the child sold to
the Indians by a mother who
wanted a son. You are the
woman who helped Cortes
communicate with his conquered
and became the fallen one of Mexico.

Nanny

I stand tall and strong.
My pear-bottom hips ringed with
knives diving into the
fuschia of my skirt, surfacing
menacingly like shark fins. My
feet are sturdy as wooden planks,
the black of my ankles broken only
by the circle of many white men's
smiles.

My town is for women and children.
I frighten the men away.
They snort at my powers, but
I whisper their secrets to them
and they don't say anymore.
When I walk into the jungle
the plants chant to me, they sing
to me of freedom.

The white women sit
in the house doing needlepoint
and dressing fancy, but I live
out here on the mountain and I
carry my knife as easily as I
carry a baby. I'm not scared—

I have stood in the bush
at night with the stars.
I'm clever as a jackal.

I watch them take the others
and poke steel through their
ribs or chain them up and burn
them like trash. I've seen
them split women in two easy
as pulling apart the wishbone
on a turkey—only they don't
make a wish because when they
pull it's already come true.

Someday I may swing from a
string in the wind. But they
have to find me first and when
I walk into the jungle it wraps
its green legs around me and
buries itself inside me so I
can chant with the leaves and
sing with the bushes. We
sing the song of freedom.

Imoinda

Who were you Imoinda?
Were you delicate as they
say, or were you African, a
woman with breasts like
bread loaves, hips like shelves?
It could be that you were strong,
muscly and firm. Perhaps there was
no daintiness about you—your fingers
thick as nightsticks, your arms
strong as oak trees, skin
shiny and black as onyx. Did
you resent the nightshade veil they
brought you because you wanted Oroonoko
or did you just want to be asked?

And when the Old King tried to
show you the magic in his wand
were you just a little curious?
Did you taunt him with the scent
of your flesh because you knew you
could? So that when Oroonoko
came to you your legs were already
shaking in the breeze
of first sex blowing
between them. And after you tasted
him with your body, savored him with

your hands—you knew that body
love was invented just for you. But
the Old King smelled the pleasure on

your thighs and sent you away as a
slave. Oroonoko stayed behind—
crying stones over your death
and refusing to rise. But when you,
Imoinda, arrived in Surinam, the bustle
and beauty settled on your skin
like dew on grass. True you longed to
taste a man again—but the smell of
pollen in the air sang to your bones
a song of freedom. You were alone—
no family, no man, no king.
And your cells danced a jig under
your skin that tingled like the
first drops of a spring rain.

The white men in their
cardboard shirts came to
admire you like a statue—worship
you like an idol. You wanted nothing
to do with them and they said you were
pure. But the sun and loneliness
had become your lovers, screamed through

your veins so that touching yourself was enough. Then Oroonoko came and the part of him that lived in your knees cried out to be joined to his body again. Soon all your joints called in unison—begging you to bend yourself around him and through him.

And you did. And your joints quit crying and the white men comforted themselves by saying you'd been waiting for the noble slave who now brushed his hair against the backs of your legs. He came to live with you in your private space and the singing of the world around you disappeared beneath his cavernous voice and icy whistle. Soon your joints cried again—another more urgent plea. Part of him now lived in the hollow cave where the sound of the jungle had always echoed loudest. And you wept for the loss of those echoes.

Oroonoko didn't want part of himself to spring from your hips into the white man's chains. He spoke to you as your master then, and told you you must follow. Into the jungle with a shiny pearl growing in your belly. They caught you there and brought you back.

Still the pearl inside you grew larger and more precious. Oroonoko was restless and came to you with a plan. If he could not keep that pearl to himself, he could make sure the white man didn't

get it. Into the jungle you would go and he would dig out your stone with a knife, shatter it against a tree or hide it under the leaves and you would lie there a hollow shell pouring your warmth onto the ground. Then he would take the knife and carve a space in his belly where the sounds of the jungle could echo clearly. You agreed because the sound of the jungle hadn't vibrated your bones in a long time. And when you got into the tangled bush

he kissed you with his silent lips and hollowed you out once more. But he couldn't let the sounds of the jungle into his belly, he couldn't carve your name on his gut.

So the white men found him
lying next to you as the
wind waltzed through your womb,
holding you tight and alone
in its sensual embrace.

A Woman's Dilemma

A Rubens woman, I lounge
on the couch skin folding
upon itself over and over
like the steel in a Japanese
sword. I deny my womanhood,
my bellyness. I will be boy-
thin, stick-like. I will ignore
the animal hidden beneath that
pale flesh. It tears at me like
cat claws, dog bites, shark teeth—
then hibernates. Will it one
day rise up inside me, swell
forth growling? Will it rip my
belly open like a mole burrowing
its way out of the earth, burst
forth from the comforting hollow of
my flesh to bare its teeth at
the world?

The Fragrance of Woman

Full of sixth grade grown-up tendencies I demanded a razor from my mother. She, fearful that I would become a Lillith, a scarlet woman, refused. Until I told her my armpits were starting to smell like fritos, like salty sardines. That night I sat in the soap gray water of my bathtub and mowed the three hairs I had grown on that hidden skin.

The hairless art of Botticelli flashed across the screen of my freshman humanities course and I thought Venus beautiful standing in her seashell like a bath pearl in the soap dish. In the West women wax and shave and shock to escape encroaching hairs. But the woman, the reclining woman in the Modigliani painting, is unashamed of the blackness sprouting by her breast. And her salt scent.

A woman's armpit has its own perfume they say. I raise my arms above my head—at their base the dark tangle of a sea siren's hair. And I am sexy. My scent is the scent of whales mating without sound, starfish grasping the coral reefs. He will kiss me there—and he will kiss the other seaweed tangles that float untended on my skin.

It is that smell that I have tasted on his lips and chin after he's kissed me where I most want to be kissed. It is not for pleasure that I touch the rubbery pink between my legs. It is for the scent of corn tortillas flattened in a brown woman's hands. Like the lonely landlord in the basement laundry, I would sniff the crotch of my satin underpants. And the sweaty sweet scent of skin

would remind me that I am spinning
through life—a top—remind me that
the blood of Eve and the Salem
witches rushes through me,
remind me that all the
cut-glass bottles cannot keep
the fragrance of woman from
seeping out through my pores.

Loverule

Take a week off school to spend with him in New York to cover up the fact that you're not taking him home for Thanksgiving.

While you're walking together in the City search for sky. All you see are buildings. You think about how many rooms are in all those buildings and about how many people are in all those rooms. More people than anyone could possibly know. It boggles your mind. Someone told you once that when people are on the subway here they don't think of all the other people around them as human because no one can comprehend having that many thinking, breathing creatures so close to them. Really? Wonder why so many people stay in such cramped areas when there's all that space out West?

Ask: "Why do people stay in the city with all these other people they don't even know and don't even like?" He will tell you "New York is a place where people live."

Meditate on that until you see his point.

Through the Village cling to his arm. Study the ground. There are discarded Coke cans and scraps of dirty paper in the gutter. The entire block reeks of urine.

He told you how to stay out of trouble on the street: don't talk to anybody, and don't catch anyone's eye. Do this. He stops, drops your hand.

"You're looking at guys asses when they walk by." Look up. The only person in your path is an enormous black woman ranting to no one in particular.

Don't know what to say. Wonder if you were looking at guy's asses. Start walking. Look at guy's asses to see if it feels familiar. It doesn't. Deny looking. You are not a sexual being out of his bedroom; you had forgotten for a minute. Try to cling to his jacket again. He'll stiffen. Tell him that you don't notice asses because they're not important to you; you're not an ass-woman.

"That doesn't matter," he says. He knows about these things. The point is that you were looking at other men. Say emphatically "You are the one I love." Up the stakes: "You are the only one I want to look at." Wonder if it sounds as stupid as you feel. He

pulls you into a doorway and kisses you quickly as if his mother is about to walk around the corner. He lets you wrap your arm through his again. Categorize the crud in the gutter all the way down the street and into the subway station. Your hand on his arm guides you. He's your seeing eye-dog.

Shuffle by the edge of the platform while waiting for the red line. Step on the yellow stripes at the edge and ponder the validity of the sign which claims the tracks will electrocute all flesh on contact. Consider committing a spontaneous sacrifice to the New York City Transit System's metal snake that lives under the city. If you jump you wouldn't even make the front page of *Times*. And your parents made you promise to die after them. Besides, he'll think you killed yourself for him.

Two large black men pass by you close enough to smell street in their hair. One says, so that you can hear it and Nick can't, "Yo foxy mama, I wish I had me a slice of that." Scuttle the five feet back to Nick and tell him your horror story.

All he says is: "Maybe you shouldn't wear such low-cut things out of the apartment." Tug at your V-necked T-shirt willing it to transform into a turtleneck, a sweater, a suit of armor.

Think: "Maybe I should jump before he poisons my oatmeal." Decide against it again. He doesn't cook.

Mush all of the fairy tales you can remember into a clump of hormonal ideals and unexplainable actions. Extract a personal philosophy that explains you being in New York City. Conclude that there is a larger force at work. You don't know exactly how, but you're together for a reason.

It's fate.

Back at the flat, (you call it a flat because your parents would worry about you spending time with someone who lives in a tenement) peep at him over your book and try to figure out if he's really reading or if he's just acting like he's reading because you told him you needed to read for awhile. You didn't expect him to plop down on the futon next to you with *Crime and Punishment*. Until now, for you, reading had been a solitary experience. Now you do everything with Nick. Except he always shuts the door when he's in the bathroom.

While he's in the bathroom slip into the kitchen and stuff as many fig newtons into your mouth as you can. You've gotten good at this, you can make an entire row disappear between the door locking and the flush. This is a safe diversion because he does not like fig newtons and you bought them with your last dollar bills. They are your fig newtons. Make them part of you.

Spread the Times on the wood floor and feel a bit Bohemian. Check the movies. Ask him how long it

would take to walk Uptown. He tells you that's too far. You seem to remember something about taxis running all night in good old NYC but you don't mention it. Ask him sweetly if he's in a bad mood. "What do you mean?" he says. (His specialty.) "Nothing. I was just wondering." Kiss him to prove it. He points out the St. Mark's theatre is just a few blocks south. There's a Japanese movie playing. "The Seven Samuri." The dirty dozen, or the seven horse men, of Sinbad of the seven seas (or something) was based on it. It's cross-cultural art. It's also boring, but not so long as the two of you are together.

In the middle of the night awaken to sobs.

Ask: What's wrong baby? He will clutch you to him like a blanket. "I dreamed you were gone again," and some nose blowing are all he offers in explanation.

Answer: I'm here, I promised I'd be here, I am.

As he shakes and waters you drift back to sleep.

In the morning ask him to take you to a museum to make up for the time you're missing from Humanities class. Go to the Modern. Let him lead you outside to the statue garden. Remain standing when he sits on a step next to Picasso's bronze goat. He tells you you are resisting his love. That he doesn't "feel you with me." He pulls you on to his lap. His dark eyes leak on your roommate's purple sweater. Concentrate on the goat's butt.

He unloads what he has brought with him. "You mean everything to me, you are the other half of my soul." You didn't realize that each person didn't get an entire soul at birth. Review everything you read for Philosophy/Religion class last semester: tortured souls, lost souls, saved souls . . . no half souls. His "true match." None of that in the logic books either.

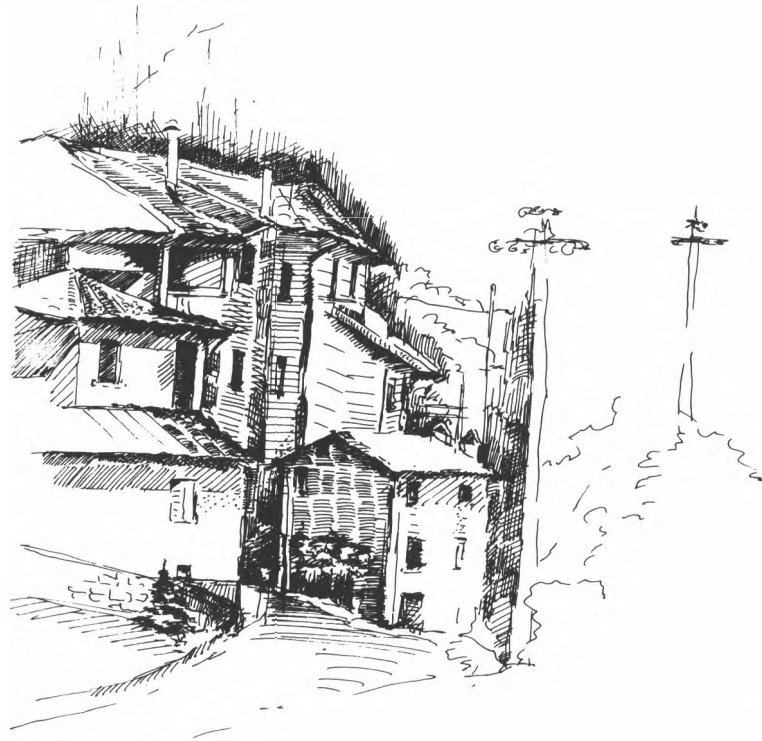
Van Gogh, Monet, Miro, Picasso . . . and more through the glass doors not thirty feet from you. Tell him that you're uncomfortable in "the city." You haven't adjusted just yet.

"I just need time." It has nothing to do with him. He doesn't like the sound of that. He lightly cries into your chest. You stare at the carved hair around the goat's ass. He tells you:

"I love you. I'm mad about you."

"I love you," comes out of your mouth automatically, you couldn't have stopped it if you tried, like a belch.

He will rub his face into your shoulder, then let you up and follow you inside. Three docents have been watching you, they giggle spastically and turn away when you catch their eyes. You picture the way the two of you must have looked like sitting in the art garden. Him in his leather jacket with you on his lap. Him crying into your borrowed shoulder. You laugh with them, quietly, inside: between your breast bones.



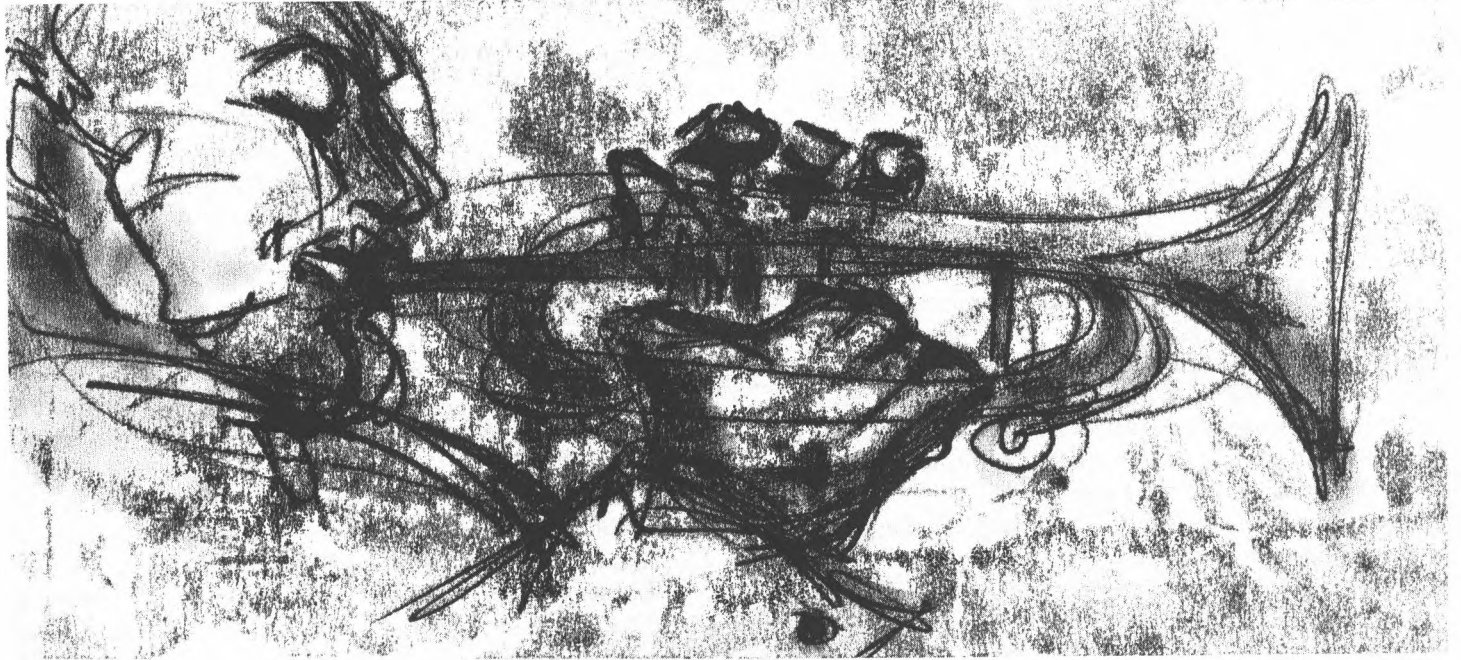
Cortina, Italy 90'



View 90°



Laura Labieniec-Pintel



A Wandering Medea

If I had reached the end, I would have stopped. God! I would have loved to stop. But it was not over. Saying so would be false. Inevitably, there would come more. And if I had denied it, you would have jealously attacked my disregard—come back to haunt me. So I continued. I stayed true to you. It was only everyone else I betrayed.

* * *

I approached the door. It meant nothing to me, nothing like what it should have. But I couldn't face that, and so I ignored it. I had no goals, no plans. Whatever wanted to happen would happen. That I could not capture a concrete existence did not surprise. What surprised me was that I wanted one. A world more solid than words.

I approached the door like I approach the choice of a word: I incanted carefully, but I opened recklessly, chose extreme. All words are mere translation. All doors are only closed openings. They do not contain the meaning attributed to them: they contain the meanings I contain. Every door of them leads at least one other place.

I opened the door, and I met you, inevitable. You said, "Words carry terrible importance." I said, "I have witnessed the death of my words. Neither poets nor poetries are kind." You said, "Don't let your thoughts take the place of your eyes."

I said, "A world more solid than words beckons me. I have succumbed; I have drowned in words. I have disappeared through that most unsolid door of my creating. I don't have the strength to breach what I have said.

"I have felt a traitor among my own words. They no longer define my territory. They only define where I am not. I have witnessed the closing of too many doors."

You said, "You do not know. You do not know what you contain. You do not know what your words contain. Do not deny your words." You turned, all-knowing, and I followed. You stopped me. You said, "I am not here to entertain you." You went out the door. I tried to follow. It was locked.

But you were still with me. I could hear your breathing. I could hear your heartbeat better than you could, better than my own. It was your thoughts that roared around me.

You said, "Do you think you have anything to say?
Do you tire of the limitations of words? Your words
are worlds."

I said, "Words fail to resolve. My doors are closing.
I want to stop them."

You said, "No, you don't. You want them to stop."

* * *

I had given you the words to kill me with; I spoke
for you and steadied your aim. You wanted the im-
possible of me. You wanted me to agree.

I could have let you hear your own words. I had
learned your rhyme. But I chose my own, then I chose
not to let it live for you. I chose not to write for you,
but for me. I murdered your words of my creating.

So I May Prophecy! (Just In Case I Am Dying)

Because I can believe this leads to death.

my world reaches towards me from the edges.
My running breath foolishly racing the slow-fisted
squeeze of my heart.
My heart,
this white noise of a heart
shouted out
by the fevered traffic of my closing.

I Hear the Rooster Crow at 9:15am

Walking what's left of the sidewalk,
the clothes dryer houses. The people
smelling of nothing but TV.
I walk past stairs leading
to houseless yards, houseless fences.
Synthetic shoes
and sidewalks weary.
This town has outgrown
walking.

Into the back alley,
the overgrown path.
I see the shed with its
crown of trumpet vine,
the spiral staircase leading
to the high back door.
See the tire-yoked tree.
Yielding to a wasp.

Not Extant

Sometimes you turn the light on
when I've turned it off. Maybe
a common little crime can teach me
that you are here. I was
in a closed room
with curtains of a vertical stripe,
knowing this is where you come from:
you leave hooks and eyes behind.
I have turned many things into a face,
but you are not turned.

Mosquito Porch

There's not much you can do

Except listen

And Wonder

Why the moon is so full,

 even bulging

 in its round blue socket.

It asks who gives and who receives

The wishes that lie

Way down deep, under the fat, swarming

 bed of the sea.

You can hear voices, promises

Being kept, and you can imagine the

 raising of tightly clasped hands

 on nights like this.

“A Melting”

Bubbling goldfish in the bowl
blow away
radio
too loud
on the wrong station

Large red writing shows
through onion
skin paper
Go fish away.
Wind swims through a window
blows away flames
atop
candles,

Silences her hand
scratching symbols on thin paper.
And here, Cubism.
Fish
blow away.

A Parting Gift

Someone is leaving us
to live in England and
marry a thirty-eight
year-old man with a
black leather briefcase.

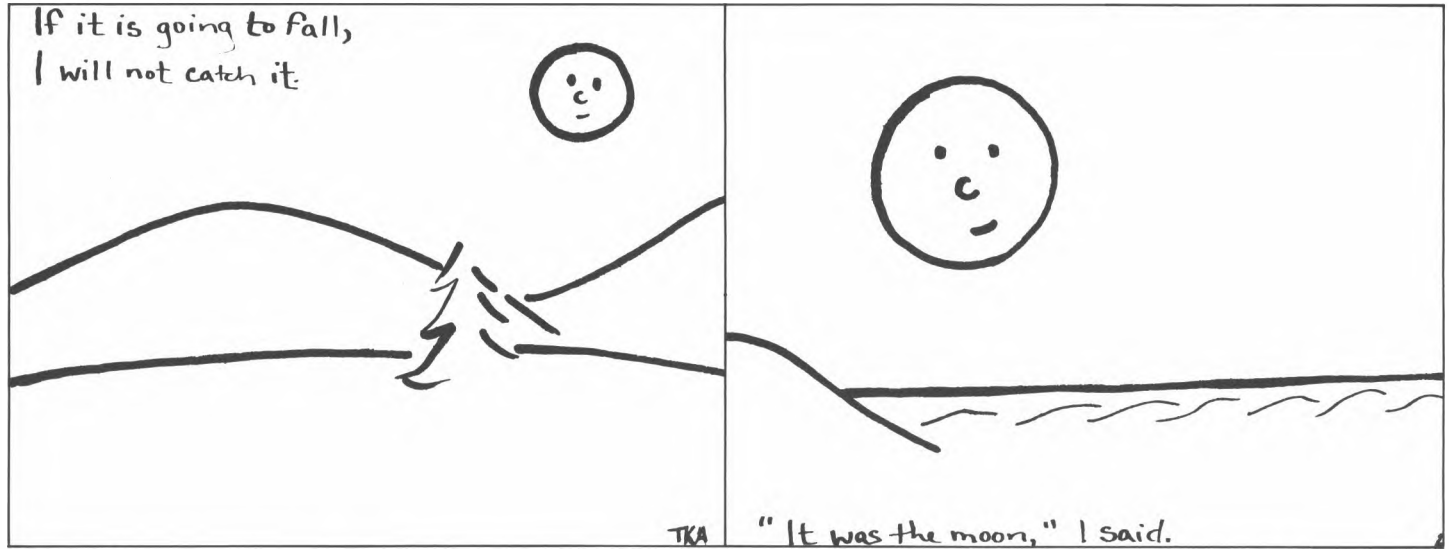
How sharp and colorful
she will become! No
more patches of foxfire
in the corners; she has
begun already, even
before she leaves. She
is here so far, but there
at this moment.

Her mother once stood
slumped over the chili,
a cigarette in the same
hand that stirred.
Later, we were offered
pumpkin bread and coffee.

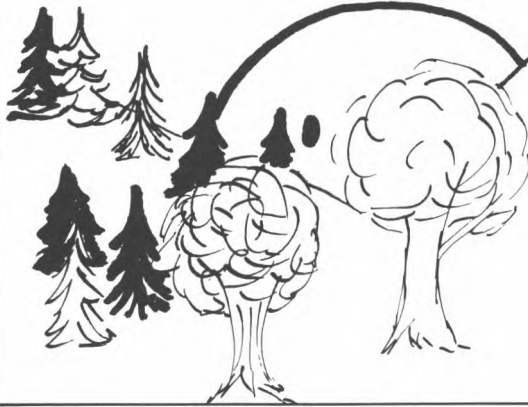
Some cold notion in me
has sprouted marigolds
and has woven them into
a web of clarity.
Something will soon spring
to dance in the air for
a moment or two and
then drowned in its own safety net.

She is leaving us, and
she doesn't even have
to learn a new language
or dance a different
dance. I must remember
to give her marigolds
before she goes.

It Was the Moon

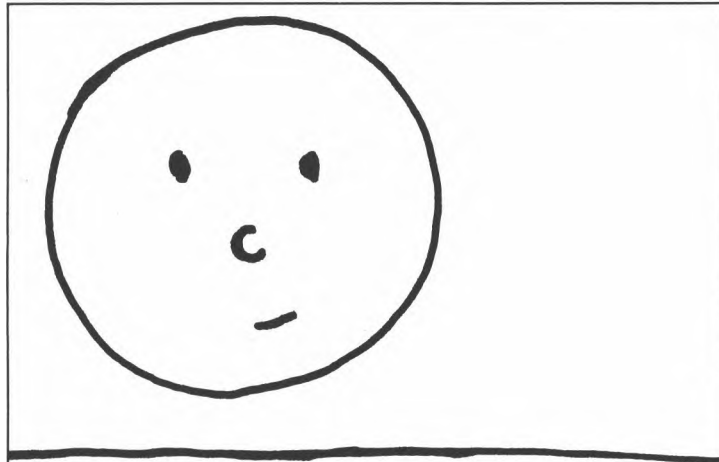


Staring over trees,

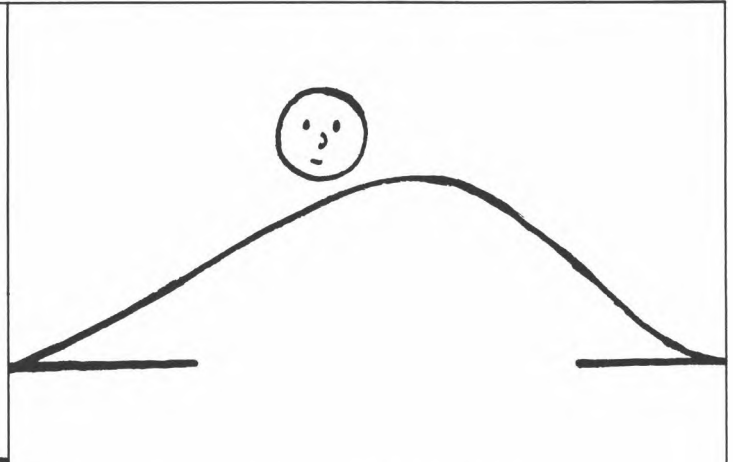


3 It fell, hands and knees to the ground. 4

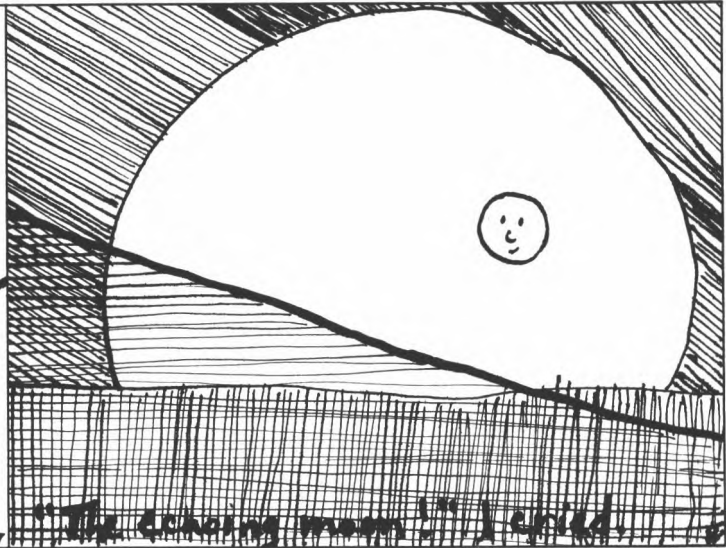
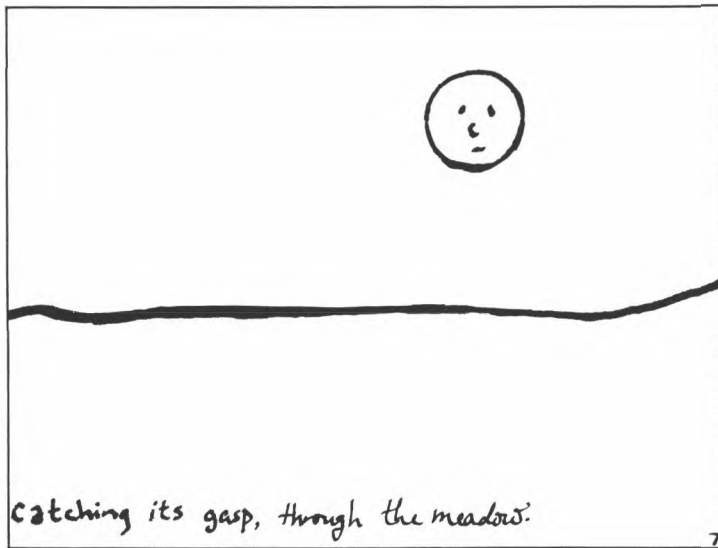


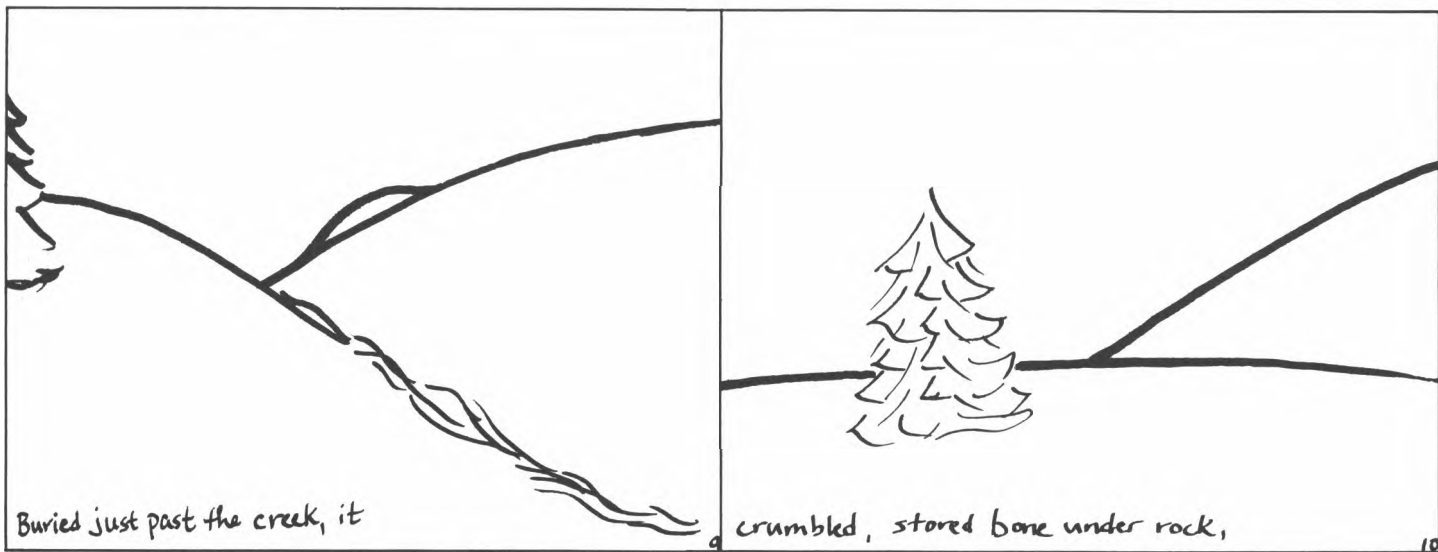


"If it weren't for the moon," I sighed.



5 Running over the hill, it breathed,



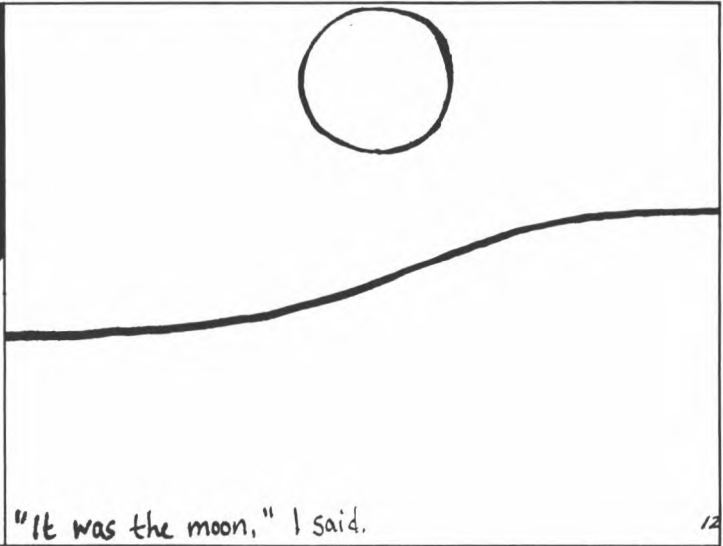


Buried just past the creek, it

crumbled, stored bone under rock,



in the quiet.



"It was the moon," I said.

12

Striped Socks

Striped socks? Ugly, base, smug tube socks sitting in dress shoes and looking out of a trouser leg. There's something enticing about that. Suddenly I'm addicted to this person, but then I wish I wouldn't have looked his way. His legs bother me: their stick-ness and drawn-on hairs. I think I'm jealous of his thinasarail self, but not envious because he looks so flexible. He reminds me of those plastic bendable people I always broke. I can see the outline of his chin through his beard hair; it's a thin chin. I guess he's about middle age because he's starting to bald and has that molting look. He keeps shifting around in his seat very uncomfortably, even though he has the most comfortable in the house. Maybe I should get him a lab stool? I wonder if he ever had a mother.

He is somehow related to me. He looks a freak, but that has nothing to do with me. I know I'm staring but . . . Watch him rise - HA! - he pushes out and bobs his head and is unstable for a second. Should I run and hold him up? I'm too late; some woman comes and says something to him. That's his wife. I would say they were lovers if they were beautiful.

They look my way and I do the shifty-eyed trick. I wonder if they know about my infatuation? Can he see so well through those glasses—right into my brain? Can she dissect me and understand every

thought? Can they tell my future and my past and the next time I'll fall in love? If they know, what do they think about that? . . . But what do I care; they are ugly, and therefore wrong.

Somehow I can't control my curious eyes. His wife is ropeish. Stringy arms and stringy legs all twisted together with a knot at the top. I guess she has hair, but it's so disrespectful my mind rejects it; I'm too moral.

They are smart, DNA splitting smart. But I don't want to be near them—I'm glad I'm not next to them. . . . I wonder what they're saying Even the people around them look uncomfortable, so I'm justified in not going over there. Maybe they smell funny, or are contagious. I'm going to avoid them.

I see Uncle Harry and Aunt Edna over there, and here comes oldfriendofthefamily Patricia. Mom's birthday seems to be rolling along just nice. She's all smiley and effervescent, I wouldn't trade all the geniuses in the world . . . Genuises? I wouldn't trade all the money in the world for that smile.

Patricia is an interesting lady. I've never liked her—I don't think any of us ever have, but she's a neighbor and came with the house. It was written in the fine print. One time Patricia was quizzing me on the college life: friends? grades? boys (with that con-

spiracy look)? and major? I didn't have a major. I told her that and said that I was looking around and that "Yes" I did know I had plenty of time. Then she impregnated me with more of her wisdom. "It's hard to decide when you aren't particularly talented in any one area." I think I smiled and spit on her. Well, that's what I wanted to do. I felt like a Paramecium exposed to too much light.

"GROWL." Sure, Stomach, I'll go check on dinner; impatient little beggar aren't you? I throw a reassuring smile Mom's way and move lady likely into the dining room. Almost everything is ready: the plates and test tube tongs are set, food is reacting in dishes in the middle and . . .

I run back into the main room and look for them. Now they are both sitting down, close together. I'm moving disjointedly, fighting myself to move forward and to stand still. I need to reach them, and I never want to meet them. I pick out a flower pattern on the floor that runs near them and follow it petal by petal. This is actually a pretty carpet: mauveish and greenish with lots of cream and a little brownish. The flowers are exotic looking—long and twisting with tight ends. And soft! Plush, fun carpeting that beard hair could easily get lost in; I wonder what the fibers would look like under a microscope? Would they be too huge to see?

There was a time when I wanted to be a Biologist with the Florals and Faunas and Fairies. I sat in Advanced Bio my senior high school year and **became** a

diatom. It was great stuff. I fell in love with the teacher and algae and my mitochondrion. But I hated the reading assignments. I'd use that Big Brown Bio Book as a car weight—or a cutting board. Actually, I never used it for a cutting board, but I fantasized about it. It was the book that made me change my mind; somebody had to write it. Someone who wrote 20 syllable words in their diary and talked in italics. I didn't want that person to be me. I wanted to be appealing. I never asked why that wasn't appealing, or what being appealing had to do with anything.

This is silly, why am I following the leaves on my own carpet! Here's Aunt Edna, and I haven't even greeted her yet.

"Hello, Aunt Edna. How are you? I'm so glad you could make it today. How are you?" Aunt Edna always makes me think of make-up mailers—the kind with the incontestably happy women on the front. I wonder if there's a logical reason the world thinks her glamorous?

"You look lovely today, that's a wonderful color on you!" She's also a trendy intellectual: she uses the biggest words from the last issue of *Time*, and can talk about bestsellers with restrained enthusiasm.

"Is Uncle Harry here?" Now I'm here and I don't know how to get away. I guess I can always steer her toward a mirror.

"We'll be serving dinner soon; I had better tell the others. Talk to you later, Auntie!"

I think Auntie is emotionally perturbed. If I were a

Freudian Psychologist I'd say it was because she dropped her pacifier when she was six months old, and her mom gave it back to her without washing it off first. I can spout that drivel with the best of 'em. I did consider being a psychiatrist once (not because of Edna). I even wrote it as my "intended major" on a few college interest letters. Then I realized I had too much compassion for the job; I can't even honk at male drivers who nearly kill me. People are organisms too.

"Oh," don't kiss me "fine, Patricia." Except for Patricia. "How are you doing this afternoon? Lovely day isn't it." Please don't tell me about tonight's forecast, or about the latest landscape you've done. "Yes, well, pleasantries and somewhat gracious exit words."

One part of my soul search I spent as an artist. I did the whole thing, from oil paints to "Rudolph Red" lipstick. It was kinda fun for awhile—all that rebellion. Actually the most rebellious thing I did was to dye all my clothes black, but the stuff I read about! I spent a lot of canvases on green things and tiny things, trying to figure them out in paint. I never really got into it, and my first DeKooning made me buy tri-colored clothes again. I like Monet, though, even if his precision was off

There are shoes on my next flower: the brown Uncle Harry kind.

"Enjoying yourself?" Uncle Harry doesn't enjoy anything except being strong. He's a dominating man

with large cells.

"We'll be eating soon, I think." I should be more specific

Finally, I decided I should just go find a man who would take control (like Uncle Harry), and marry him. He'd have to be rich and considerate and stuff, and I'd have to love him and he me, of course. So I went to all the single and non-single hangouts (I was fervent). I even got dates, which was amazing considering my obvious desperation. But every one of them were flawed: Jerry wanted to be a mortician; he withheld that until date #3, Barry couldn't remember my name, and Bimbo was always broke. Once I went out with a chemist and started buying engraved napkins. Then I found out he did his term papers over the phone: "Dial-An-A / Thousands of subjects to choose from!" I realized I was taking the coward's way, too. And now

Now I've seen two scientists, so I followed the flowers. I've reached them, and stand a vine-length from them. I am, proverbially, at a loss for words.

They are both standing now; I think they were sitting before. They smile under their weighted brains. I have never seen any people so beautiful.

Modeling on the Couch

Your fingers kiss the pencil and
Your lip is smudged.
There is dust on your glasses
And I smell crumbled cray-pas
And you sigh too loud
So you the dust flies off
So you must apply more.
Let me see your breast.
You look between sternum
Curl up between bones
Feel the angels with your fingers
Warm the tunnels with your tongue.
I like the skin here.

Abortion

(Let her choose.)
I choose the blue room.
The blue room with Matisse; green leaves
and women.
The blue leather seats hiss
When skinny people sit on them,
And there is a big fish tank at
Six-year-old eye level.
We press our noses to the sprinkled glass
To leave our prints with
All the other bread-and-jelly prints
Other children leave, while we
Listen to the air-pump pearl and
Glug, dropping bubbles in the water.

There is a tv in the left corner of the
Ceiling blasting comics' themes
And the animation mocks our bodies
Sprawled across the blue seats.
We eat Rice Krispie treats
And then guiltily change to granola;
We read Ranger Rick
And then perspicaciously change to Harper's.
I choose the blue room for us, so
We discuss the cars whisking by

And remark that they
Sound like vacuums humming.
It takes me time to realize.
Actually the whirl is not the car,
Or the fishtank, but
Indeed it is the vacuums
And I get the uncomfortable feeling you describe
when you
bend at the waist in a low-cut dress—
Your chest exposed.

I roll up in the chair like a magazine
With my sterile cover deflecting the
Sound of the woman vomiting;
I have never been accused of being a
Murderess before.

Jesus is not the answer to my questions—
He does not explain the fishtank,
Or the magazines,
Or the vacuums;
I want to touch the decision as if it were the
Fish behind the sprinkled glass.
I choose the blue room.
(Let her choose.)

Magnets on a Microwave

Radiate His Love and
East African Drumbeats:
Mother also sitting on my shelf,
Watching me.
There are no new words
Only new combinations.
The worn knobs of the microwave
Look like an alien's face—
Supposedly. But the image is
Not discovery, only process.

Drying roses become an old woman,
A falling poster becomes a pouting child,
Pizza Hut Delivers becomes a math teacher,
Radiate His Love becomes my mother—
She does not believe in aliens,
Only God,
And I understand my microwave better;
I call it alien when I
See it every day.

The Sidestep

I met my friends at seven o'clock for a pre-movie dinner. The restaurant was in the center of town, I had passed it several times in two weeks, yet I had never paid attention to it.

My friends were waiting for me inside the Sidestep. I was surprised how empty it was inside. The atmosphere had a parsimonious comfort to it. Someone had tried hard, but didn't have the skill to make it really comforting. The decorations were of the inexpensive country motif, overstated with dried flowers and baskets hanging on the walls. Domestic neon beer signs were the dominant force between the country flowers.

My friends were from the South and were ecstatic to find chicken fried steak on the menu. They began talking about how they missed Southern cooking. Being from the North and not partial to fried foods, I began looking around.

The bar was tucked into the right corner. It really wasn't what I considered a bar, but it met the needs of the Sidestep customers. It was a counter with four bar stools. Behind the counter was the customary red neon sign proclaiming BAR. The shelves were lined with aging liquor bottles. Hoary fluorescent lights highlighted the dust on the bottles.

The stools were filled with locals beginning to

celebrate the weekend. A man in his early seventies sitting at the end of the bar next to the path leading to the kitchen and the bathrooms caught my attention when he turned around to look outside. His eyes were a clouded blue, showing signs of age, but they had a sparkle of a man who enjoyed life. He had a permanent grin on his face. It was hard to tell if he wanted to be grinning or if his dentures didn't fit him right.

There were two guys next to him each drinking a bottle of Coors. They were in their mid-twenties and already seemed bored with life. Just two buddies out on a Friday night looking for a good time.

The fourth person at the bar was the waitress either on her break or waiting for more customers to arrive. She had dyed blonde hair complete with dark roots. She was smoking a cigarette and talking to the woman bartender about the expenses of life—the cost of rent, of raising a family, the struggles to make car payments and everything in between.

I sat there eavesdropping, amazed and almost envious. Their lives were so simple. Simple because no one was concerned with rushing to a meeting, worrying about whether the fax had been sent and received, or catching the flight to New York to begin negotiations. Simple because the main concern was how to get through the end of the month and stay within the

budget. Simple because even though these people on the bar stools were struggling to make ends met, the struggle was a form of security.

Security was foreign to me. My main focus was to keep myself busy, to avoid the future. I wait almost in a sick sense of hope for the day when the world I know comes to a crashing halt.

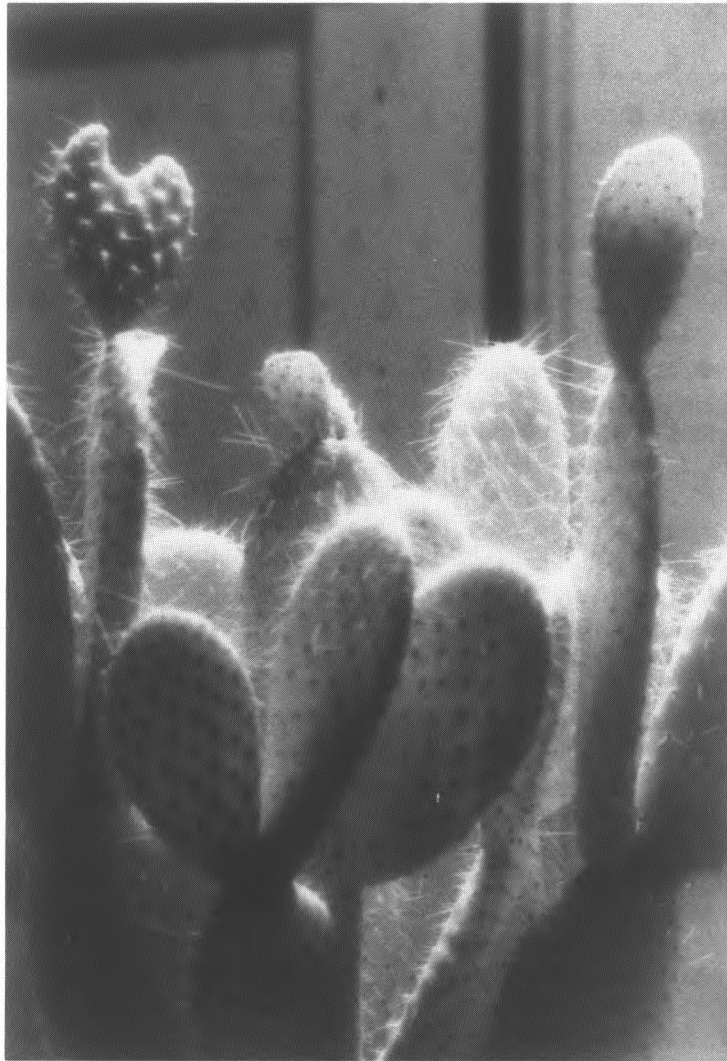
" . . . all I remember hearing is the feel of the deer running into the car . . ." I realized my friends had switched subjects and I wasn't paying attention. I sat there on the vinyl covered metal chair with my elbow resting on the walnut colored formica table, pretending to listen.

My mind was still processing my thoughts. Restaurants are wonderful places to come when I need to touch base with reality. I always seem to lose myself in their atmosphere.

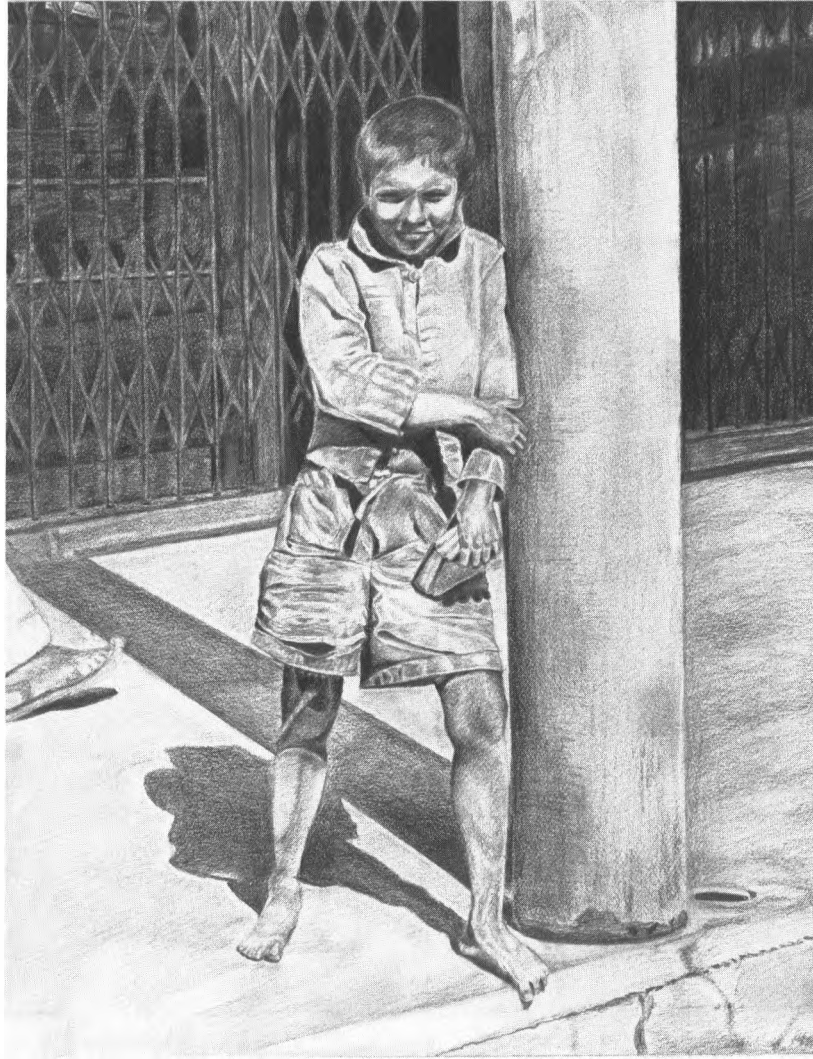
My friends eat out almost every day. I usually join them when my schedule permits. No matter where we eat, their conversations remain the same. My eyes travel to the new faces, the new surroundings.

The phone rang. No one moved or stopped their conversations. The old man finally stood up and answered it. Most people think of eating out as simple as sitting down at a table, ordering, eating, and having some form of conversation. The Sidestep had seen many people passing through. It was advertised as a family restaurant. Tonight, there were no families eating, just locals and tourists.

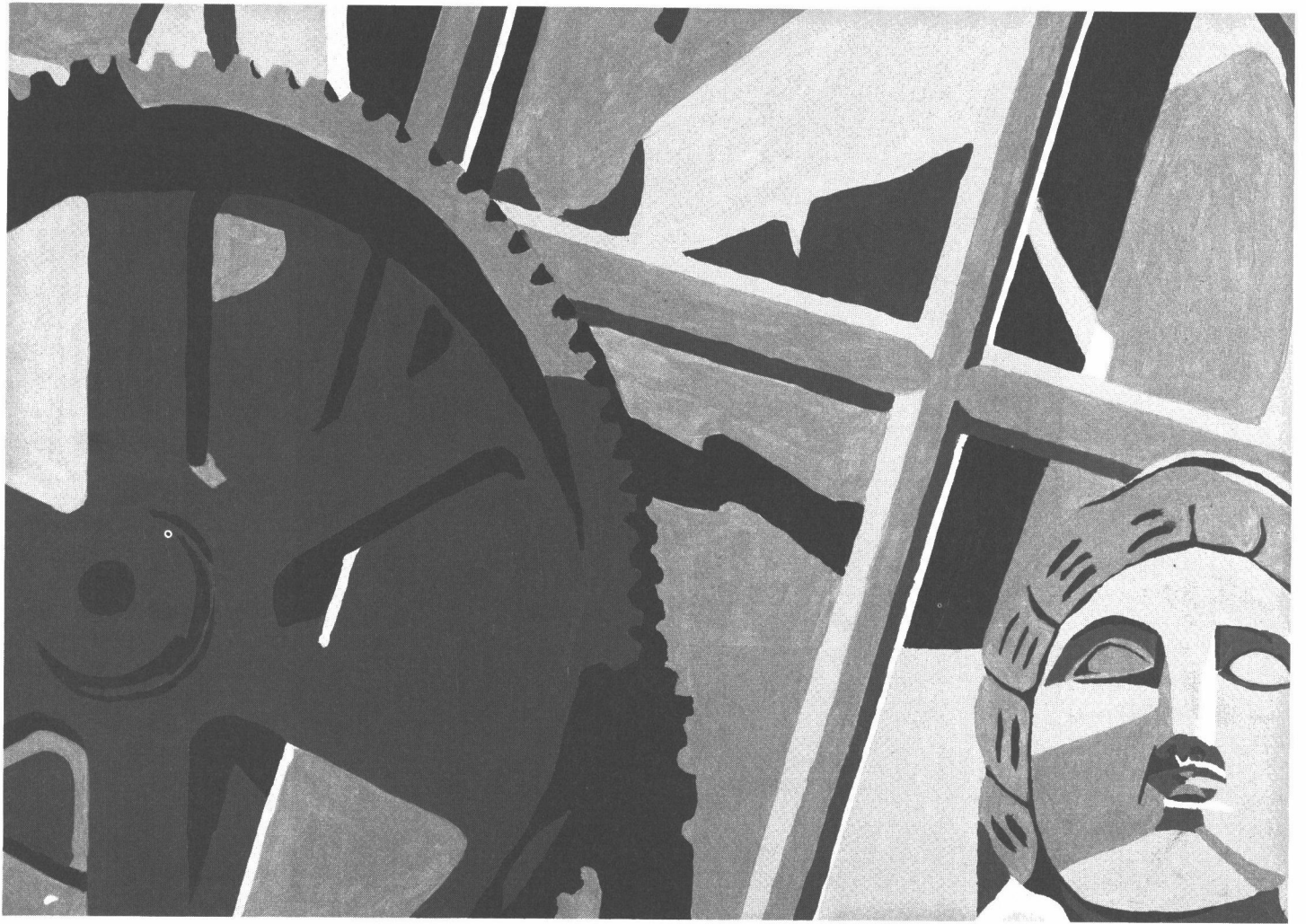
The Sidestep had the habitual feel of a meeting place. There is nothing distinctive about it. This was the only time I have eaten there, yet I have been to this restaurant many times in my life, always under different names, in different cities.



Jennifer Pomerantz



Aneela Haque



Pam Howell

Reminiscence of *Reminiscences*

"Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." —the first epistle of John

"Our vanguard revolutionaries . . . cannot descend with small doses of daily affection to the level where ordinary men put their love into practice." —Che Guevara in "Socialism and Man"

In *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (by Che Guevara) the author's "love into practice" best embodies the message of the dozen works most affecting my life and thought over the last decade. A good deal of dis-illusionment is necessary for a white North American man from the upper-middle class (reading Che in the late 1980's) to come to this. By the time it reached me, *Reminiscences* was the lived solution to a significant number of intellectual and existential quandaries which I will now re-pose. *It was a rich reward.*

Probably no reader of the book of Exodus is unaffected by the sublime liberation of an entire people under slavery, or reading the Old Testament prophets remains untouched by the zeal for justice there. Neither can one who has been captured by the love and beauty, the humility and nobility of the life of Christ avoid the issue of what it means to love your

neighbor as yourself. This presents a special dilemma for Christianity in the individualist culture of North America. Here, too often, the oppressed neighbor is the object of charity alone. Yet large charity—philanthropy—isn't even given for the poor generally (see the recent book *Charity Begins at Home*). Living in Texas in 1986 I was witness to the loss of over 25,000 homes through foreclosure in Houston alone. The largest charity effort painted 100 houses that year.

'Contemporary Ethical Issues' is a popular course on many U.S. campuses and one I have taught a number of times over the last few years. Yet, as Jonathan Kozol brings out so well in his indictment of U.S. education, *The Night is Dark and I am Far from Home*, what is the point of all this discussion, all this study, if not to effect changes in the larger social structures which keep reproducing these 'Issues'? Anyone teaching these courses or working in charitable organizations or even in political 'reform' movements has felt frustration at the limits encountered there and the virtual absurdity of 'solutions' proposed. I had sensed this as a Case Worker for the Welfare Department in Houston in 1978, but without understanding the larger economic structures and interests which guarantee no real solutions will be effected. Were these the same interests which ac-

counted for the cynicism, the institutional hypocrisy and moral cowardice so prevalent in the unemployment-fearing world of work in this society?

In the front of my copy of Karl Marx's *Capital*, vol. 1, I have written a verse from the New Testament which had puzzled me: "The love of money is the root of all the evils." For the most part, volume 1 proved an exposition of how that thought may be verified in contemporary capitalist culture. (I cannot go through the arguments here. Everyone should read this epoch-making work for themselves.) You may imagine my further surprise to learn, reading R.H. Tawney's classic *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* that Christianity had taught (if not always practiced) that profit-taking (even 1% on investments) was sin—a form of fraud—and that right through Luther's Reformation in the 1500's! I returned to discover that this is the teaching of the Old and New Testaments (a Hebrew word for "interest" is "the bite of a serpent"), that the Law of the Jubilee called for Israel to redistribute the basic means of production in an agricultural society—land—every 50 years, and that the early Christians had lived in a voluntary form of communism!

Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* is a book which has made a number of readers physically ill to read. Until you read U.S. history so well documented from primary sources through the eyes of those who get the short end of it—African and Native American men, all women, workers of every stripe—the brutality and violence of it seem more like

the exception than the rule. It was a necessary disillusionment and one that looses any lingering 'allegiance to the flag'.

The debased view of Hispanic peoples prevalent in North American white culture continues a legacy of prejudice necessary for the destruction of Native America. It is part of the ease with which the U.S. government has marauded through Central America the last 150 years. This was lost on none of us in the Central American antiwar movement. Going through the Museum of the Revolution in Managua four years ago, meeting and being with the Nicaraguans brings one to an opposite conclusion—that it is the Yankees who are lacking.

Che Guevara was an asthmatic doctor from Argentina without any incentive of personal gain who saw without illusion the only genuine solution to the grinding poverty and oppression of the Cuban population—an overthrow of the U.S.-backed capitalist dictatorship. This he dared with 15 other men and a few rifles in conditions for over 2 years which are unimaginable to North Americans "by the conviction that it would be worth dying on a foreign beach for such a pure ideal." The commander in chief of the venture writes of Che that he was "a man of total integrity, a man of supreme sense of honor, of absolute sincerity—a man of stoic and Spartan living habits, a man in whose conduct not one stain can be found." When the revolution had triumphed and he could have stayed on in the new administration, he left for Bolivia with the same purpose which had seen him in

Cuba, Africa, and Viet Nam. He was murdered without trial upon capture in October 1967 by the Bolivian army with the aid of the CIA.

He who had said that for a genuine revolutionary there is only victory or death said "Wherever death may surprise us, it will be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, reach some receptive ear, that another hand stretch out to take up weapons and that other men come forward to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machine guns and new cries of battle and victory." This has happened throughout Latin America in the ensuing 24 years both in the particular national liberation movements and the larger Christian revolutionary socialist movement sweeping the hemisphere (theoretically expressed in Liberation Theology). Of note is the fact that even in the '50's Che was insistent that women be equally involved in the revolutionary movement. While this is no surprise given his life philosophy, it may also, reflect his introduction to revolutionary politics and activism—by a woman friend and activist in Guatemala.



Our Contributors . . .

Tamara Anderson is a B.F.A. Theatre major who writes poetry on days when she didn't really want to sleep anyway. **Tara Kathryn Anderson** is a European Studies major currently planning to study at Cambridge University in the fall. **Kristin Isabel Atwell**, Arizona native and avid river-runner, will graduate in May with a self-initiated degree in English and Women's Studies. **Ashley Elizabeth Cleveland** is a senior English major looking for creative ways to finance Graduate school. Much of her poetry in **Harbinger** was inspired by an excellent poetry course with M M-F. **Lizanne Fehsenfeld** is a senior English major desperately looking for a job that pays. She credits her best summer ever spent at Perry-Mansfield for her story. **Sasha Foster** is a sophomore planning to travel to Australia in the fall to invest in birds and coconut pickers. **Aneela Haque** is a senior from Bangladesh, who gets her inspiration from home. **Pam Howell** is a junior majoring in Art with an emphasis in Graphics. She wants to be a computer animator. **Leslie Suzanne McKean**, photo-artist and African adventurer, will receive a self-initiated degree in Anthropology and Women's Studies in May. She plans someday to live with the Maasi tribe and eat bee larvae. **Carolyn McHale** is studying Graphic Art. She is a senior from Virginia. **Beth Meyer** is a freshman from Jackson, Missouri, currently going through the Searcy House Plan. She's "into" the science/art connection. **Lyndell Moore** is a B.F.A. Theatre major, who is currently suffering from lack of

sleep. **Laura Labieniec-Pintel** recently received her B.F.A. degree from the Learning Unlimited program at Stephens. **Jennifer Pomerantz** is looking forward to graduation in May '92. She hopes someday to contribute something important to the art world. **Desiree Annette Rios** is about to complete her B.F.A. in Photography and Art with a minor in Women's Studies. She is looking to take over the World of photojournalism with her Gemini charm. **Kimberly E. Saunders** is a senior who will be getting a B.F.A. in Visual Arts and a minor in Creative Writing in May, 1991. She is a Scorpio who loves the water. **Dr. Bruce Ballard** is a professor of Philosophy at Stephens College. He has traveled to Europe, the Middle East, and Central America. He is a Christian. He has been an anti-imperialist activist. He is a socialist.

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