

poems
fiction
essays
reviews

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*Bruce Taylor***Sunday Morning**

Nobody goes to church much anymore,
though no one does much of anything else
so it's quiet, or as quiet as it gets;

usually there's a saw or somebody's mower,
a drill or a hammer hating another
repair we will have to live with

and the rare home run from the ballpark
and the pulse and trailing whisper
of the sprinklers when it's dry

and old deaf Winslow's blind
old cocker spaniel winds itself up
short around the clothes pole again

and the soft -- almost apologetic --
screen door's screech and slam,
the trash can's guilty clatter after dark.

Next Door, Spring

The kid's two this year
and in a neon-pink snow parka
for although it is April
it's April in Wisconsin.

Her snow pants are maroon
and large enough for three
so she squats when she sits,
it would be too easy to say,
like some surprising flower
amongst dry mulch and piles
of last November's leaves.

But her grandmother does
plant her in the saffroned lawn,
and go inside a moment.
Someone is always watching here
from a stoop next door or through
a window from across the alley.

And when she comes back,
pointing at a robin shivering

on a frozen clothesline,
and when she says “Spring,”
to the child blooming before her,
she’s right of course.

Even in here, behind the grimy
storm-windows, even the inside plants
hunched in corners and clinging to
their few handfuls of dirt,
stir as if remembering.

Wednesday, The Hole

Isn’t often you see a hole dug
as deep as this one up here so
when the county came to dig it
most of the old men came around
sometime during the day to watch.

So there were usually four
or five guys standing around
watching three guys standing around
watching one guy dig, and the boss
came by twice to check, and the Power
& Light guys stopped by too.

And the kids on their trikes,
painted red white & blue,
were warned “don’t get too close”
but did and it was all too much
for Happy, Ray’s penned-up
husky pup, who’s learned to ignore
the tomcat’s strut or another
fat rabbit fattening upon
clover in the patchy lawn.

Lunchtime, the crew took their pails
to the shady side of the truck
and someone brought ice-tea
and Ray smuggled them a beer each.
Then it was back to work so
a different guy dug and Ray took
the Buick to the Super-A
for popscicles and more beer.

Saturday: Mt. Idle

We're really a peninsula here,
more mole-hill than mountain,
the steep, littered banks
plunge on one side to the pond
the paper-mill makes,
on the other to the river
below the dam where they say
the water begins to go bad.

Sometimes a couple of locals
bored with summer half over,
occasionally, an out of state RV
gets lost, heading somewhere else,

and finally, the papergirl
-- if no news is good news,
the best little paper in the world --
wheels on rusty spokes around,
and even later, the mailman
passed the pink plaster swans'
predictable burden of plastic flowers,
with his hounds, with his heavy
bag of sighs easing at route's end.

Another Year, The Birds

All summer long there was always
a caw, a complaint or call.
And later in the fall,
as the breathy clouds
when the wind's westerly move
endlessly away from you,
whole flocks of finch appeared
to forage in the weeds
that struggle and go to seed where
the driveway fractures and drifts,
as the continents themselves,
we are told, fracture and drift.

And in winter at 30 below,
your breath escaped you,
a white cloud across
that big morning star
like one singular and rare
chrome wind chime's note,
then a door far off slams so
another does then a dog barks
then another then the pickups,

cars and vans in sequence startle
the heavily feathered sparrows
flocking bare lilacs along
four geometric blocks
of perfectly shoveled snow.

(Continued with stanza break)

And then the same swallows come
back to nest in the same
inverted flower-pot painted
whatever color's handy
and nailed to a shingle
blown off the roof,
and then the trees take on
their burden again and again
we are left with almost nothing
but Spring and happiness,
the conditional joys.

Mario Susko

A Stray Dog Song

I went for a walk and barked at a dog.
He laughed at me with his tail.
I put my hand behind and wagged it.
The dog craned his neck; the owner pulled
the leash and off they went while I stood
alone in the mute night baring my teeth.
And then a dog came flying over the fence.
“This was yours, I believe,” a voice said
in French. I looked at the limp body
at my bare feet and ran. Turning the corner
I saw an eyeless girl in white with a leash
in her hand. “You never tell it like it is.”
I, however, kept repeating to myself, You have
to wake up. Find some excuse. The bathroom.
But the red dot twinkled on the hall wall.
And I would go on all fours, my dog taking it
as an invitation to play. Indeed, that was
the thing to do to fool death, to clown around.
The girl put the velvet leash round my neck

and said, "I will help you get out of here."
Her toothless smile was the French lieutenant's
at the frozen airport, who didn't want to know
anything about dogdom suffering. I asked her,
"With no place to go to, can one be an exile?"
She sits on the sandbags, the white disk
of her left eye beginning to rotate, red.
"Everything all right?" a voice comes out of
the dark. "Yes, officer; just taking a walk."
"Someone reported a stray dog around. Seen it?"
I shake my head, my hand reaching for my throat.
The girl dangles the leash in her bony hand.
"You are a clown," she says. "Crawling, red dots,
the lieutenant wanting some cash to fortify
his sense of power, all this is natural, and
you couldn't fool anybody. But the world needs
something to laugh at. Go now. You've been spared."

The Form and the Content of Living

every delusion has its substantive variable.

- that of a goose, guarding in its nest

at the pond three perfectly normal golf balls.

which makes the counter supposition possible.

- that of dogs, behaving as if every bone buried

in that cemeterial land I left was theirs.

And yet even if I could have the golf balls

hatch in these pages and then fly off south

that for the actual goose would change nothing.

For two days later there was no trace of them.

I heard the course keeper say the whole thing

was a set-up designed by the local tv station.

So the bones will be dug out in the end to feed

the historical memory. the dogs will be corrupted

by virtually real substances. and I'll write

with inked quills surmising they'll intimate

the fowl must have felt it all had been just a show.

Going Bad

what should I have presumed -
replenishing my refrigerator with books
when other perishable things were gone -
that their substance could be preserved
from being corrupted by time and fortune

- As a child I cracked an egg once
and in the vibrating yellow dome
there was this brownish dot
sending out filaments like red threads
that webbed my mother's eyes
when father stopped coming home -
She would only say, we don't have a box
so nothing keeps fresh for long -

But I knew she wasn't telling me the truth,
never stopped believing his seed had festered
in her, my words were not to be my deliverance

- And forty years later when the power
was cut we cooked and fried everything
on the old cylindrical stove in the cellar,

staring at words, the worms that never felt
anything, twist and cringe on sacrificial pages

- For three days we feasted unwarily,
disinherited Romans oblivious to fires
and dead bodies' stench beyond the walls

- Then there was nothing left to go bad
except us, our locution failing to move
the flies that sensed one rotted from inside -

Those Marmalade On Dark Bread Days

There it was, the twice-told tale
of killing as a way of living,
A boy with a trembling flashlight
descending once more into the basement
to see if the mousetrap his father set
held a shriveled grey hulk
with undying grin for a bite taken
and yet forever there to be eaten

All those grainy faces of dead heroes
in the past stuffed primers,

imposing heads of speakers at podiums,
flags flapping in the newsreels, white
butterfly wings he held tightly
with his twiggy fingers, a brass pin
for a dozen caught, as he stood guard
over the collective's cabbage patch

There was always some undesirable
element to be eradicated, always
some father to be emulated, a future
brighter and new, as if it could be
anything else but new, to be strived for
in those marmalade on dark bread days
when daughters of party members bloomed
under the silk blouses from some Ponte Rosso

Was it then after all those above
the waist virgins had been loved to death
secretly, teachers with rulers gone coarse
singing songs of brotherhood and unity,
birds insects and rodents exterminated
to secure classless harvests that I found
myself in the cellar with a piece of my liver
jiggling on someone's knife like marmalade:

A question to which the answer has
 already been given is but a ploy, perhaps
 an inviting literary maneuver, though,
 I might add, often a historical need, since
 that allows us to have the appearance of
 progression through repetition, which is what
 life invariably is: I'm alive as the redundancy
 of the boy, he, as the furthering of the dead me:

**there is., and there are., and CUT - EVERYONE KNOWS
 WHAT THIS IS ABOUT**

there's a blade / cutting across
 the bark / a thin jagged line a pen might
 make / crossing out the whole sequence /

there are rays boring through the dust
 and / the leafy flesh / the blade wiped
 off / the tip of the pen catching a mote /

there's grass falling flat / reddened
 / slowly straightening up again / languid /
 a shiny leathered palm damming a gasp

/ there's paint regurgitated / on the canvas
/ shadows extending their jellyfish hands /
the resinous sun dropping below the retina /

there's a motion in the mind /
the ribs becoming encrusted branches /
shooting into the air / gone memoryless /

and the words / on the page / that do not move
/ nerval ants strung / on the stem /
the eyes glued to the sky / that do not blink

SHELL SHOCK

I sleep surrounded by plastic flowers.
I am in the center of a funeral parlor.
The room is empty and air-conditioned.
My lungs burn. I want to get up and out.
My dead mother is there in the rose garden.
She's knitting me a sweater. It's summer.
I take out my pocket mirror and breathe in it.
The reflection of the exit sign does not blur.
It keeps blazing wormlike in the violet darkness.

I realize the mirror is a square glass window.
Then a drawn scraggly face fogs my view.
His lips are moving and I make out Where to.
What a fool I think. The cemetery. Where else.
The face vanishes. My mouth is full of dry plaster.

I feel hands grip my wrists and ankles.
I am being carried out. My head is bobbing.
I see the world upside down. The stripped walls rock.
I swallow my own blood. I smell sweat and roses.
I am put in a car. I sit like a wax doll.
My hands on my knees are ashen white. No retouches.
Mother catches up with me on my old bike.
She's waving the sweater in her left hand.
I'm cold. My lungs burn. The car is faster.
She is falling behind.

I'm back in her arms.

My blue and purple legs bounce flabbily.
She's trying to reach the shelter in the ground.
She knows she has to pass the guard at the entrance.
She knows she has to raise her hand in heil.

Mother is crying silently. My sweater is full of holes.

I inhale dirt and mud that cover her flower dress.
 I look into her eyes. Glistening light flashes there.
 I see the same drawn face appear in the glass square.
 The voice comes from a distance. Sprinkling breath.
 Don't move. We'll get you there. Lower your head.
 I watch a fly land on my twitching forefinger.
 It circles itself. Tickles my skin. I'm awake. HaHa.

I see my mother there in the garden. She sits on a bench.
 I can even see a sign Wet Paint hanging on the frame.
 And I hear her needles clicking. She's knitting a sweater.

SHELL SHOCK (unretouched)

sleeping. sleep. plastic flowers. around. me
 in the center of a funeral parlor. i am
 the empty air conditioned room this is.
 lungs burn. want to get up and out. mother
 is there. dead out. in the rose garden.
 knits me a sweater. summer time.
 take out pocket mirror. breathe in it.
 the exit sign reflected. doesn't blur.
 blazes wormlike. in. the violet darkness
 the mirror. mirror is. a square glass wind

ow. a face. there is. drawn. fogs my view
scraggly. its lips move. i make out where
to. where to. a fool. cemetery. where else
where vanishes. my mouth. full of dry plaster.
hands grip. my wrists my ankles. i
'm carried out. my head bobbing. and
the world is. upside down stripped walls
. rock swallow my blood. i smell. sweat.
roses. put in. a car. i sit. sit a wax
doll my hands. on my knees. ashen white. not
re touched mother. catches up with me. my
old bike. she 's waving. the sweater. it
'S. in her her left hand. cold. i am. lungs
burn. car races. she 's smalllleeer. behind.
back. in her arms. my purple legs. blue. bounce.
pain. flabby. she 's tryiiing to reach
shelter. in the ground. she knows she has
to pass the guard. entrance. she knows. hand
goes up. must. heilheil. mother cries. cries
silently. my sweater. full of holes. inhaling
dirt. mud. cover her flower dress. look
iiing into her eyes. glisten ing light. there
flashes. drawn face. again. here. in the glass

square. the voice. from dis stance. sprinkling
breath. donnn't mooove. we '11 get you there.
loweeer your head. a fly there's. lands on
-my twitch ing forefinger. circles. itself. tick
lles, my skin. awake. i 'm. a.wake. iii am.
and. there's mother. there. in the garden. sits
on aaa 'bench. see. the sign wet pain ttt.
hangs on the frame. i hear her needles click
clickclick. she's there. she. is. knits a sweat eer.

Tom Harmon

Some Nights In Bed

I remember
crescent-moon scars
on black-nailed hands
holding books he read
while I fell asleep

and the stories, scented
with motor oil from the garage
where he worked, as sharply
as his thick deep voice
trailing off. Yet,

some nights
I struggle to see his smile.
It was so long ago
and I was very young.

In Albany and Prague

She took wing
to a country of castles
advancing the clock to tomorrow
in her flight to capture yesterday.

He ascended attic stairs
to drag down a mattress
and cartons of yesterday-relics
for tomorrow's trash.

He piled them curb-side
as she skipped cobblestones
a quarter-world away
shooting spires and turrets
with Kodachrome.

195 Full Moons Later

December's full moon darted behind clouds
in a heavenly hide-and-seek game.

Just like it did the year we moved in together
and watched

from a window of the Willett Street flat
and it seemed
the universe stood still
and we were the only ones alive:
you, me and a hyperactive moon
jumping from white bushes
to throw building shadows
at Washington Park
and disappear again
in the celestial underbrush above;
and I held you
and said
I'd love you forever
as sure as there's a moon
as boldly as it leaps
as gently as it slips into hiding.

Last night a full moon played
while you slept.

*Vasilis Afxentiou***A Catch For Marizza**

An aged fisherman had been the first to see the treasure trove. Fishermen had been the first to explore the island's ragged coast thoroughly. The seasoned anglers, with a week's supply of edibles consisting of olives, goat's cheese, dried figs, crusty bread and fresh water, could sail between alcoves while still daylight. Long ago the island's mayor had sent a fleet of them to search out the rumoured treasure.

It was a bad day to set sail. Andreas was risking it anyway, for Marizza.

"It's the only way," he said rubbing his hands to warm them. "It's my duty to help."

He looked out to the sea. He extended an arm and brushed gently the hull of his vessel, almost as one would caress an old devoted dog. He did not answer the many questions in his head. Instead he squeezed his lips together, and tried to remain cool. What he saw was highly dangerous.

Behind the guise of calm, Andreas Karras was uneasy. For the first time, the thought echoed in his brain, he had planned in fact to raid the sacred trove. Daylight was in the asking, though it was well after dawn. Sea and sky glared at each other with dark, wet and windy bursts. Clouds grazed black, restless waters, then convoluted into ominous resolutions of the Apocalypse.

Andreas prodded his eyes away. He took a last look around him. Only a fool would plunge into that, he thought. Abandoned, secured but empty boats, pulled far away from the swelling white froth, lay on the grey gust-swept beach.

Ares was among them. A little more than a skiff. Boasted an extra yard and a half over the rest, and a deeper wedge-shaped belly. The bottom of its floor had been covered across with thick planks from walnut wood to make for sound footing. He felt proud of the old sloop. No fewer than thirty years had passed since his father—a stern turbulent man—crafted the little ship with his own two hands, before even Andreas had taken his first breath of life.

Those days, even though the devil bar his way, his father would row out, net or angle his catch, and row back to sell the fruit of the sea.

“I don’t approve of cowards,” he had said then. “To be prudent, yes. The ancients teach moderation, it applies to virtue as well. Steal but don’t get caught.” Andreas, troubled, tugged at his chin searching for propriety in this answer. Today, the little ship of his had a modern engine. It was called a motor-boat, no longer a row-boat. Two years at trade school in Saloniki taught Andreas enough to adeptly remove the engine from an abandoned and rusting Opel, refurbish it, and provide his formerly lumbering boat with new spirit and surety. It took him out and brought him back soundly and swiftly as the tide. Here, he was in his element. His boat was practically an extension of himself. Sitting at the prow, Andreas felt the power at his back. At several instances he wanted to accuse his father; condemn him savagely for all he was about to do. The old man had left them only with the bills from the taverna. But instead he only nodded at and stroked the craft.

He slowly drew his hand away and fondled his ear. “Our only problem,” he said, looking at and addressing the vessel as though it was a true companion, “is that all involved in previous conspiracies never returned.” Half of them had been discovered, in the sea, fish-eaten. “To join the lot will be easy, little mate.” His voice was level with the groaning, squeaking boats. He wore the lanky, sinewy look of a monk in fast, but Andrea’s eyes held no dreamy vision. They were clear and bright. For nearly all his life Andreas maintained

his body, wit, and reason at peak. “Why Marizza?” he finally whispered. “I will not be goaded by fear alone. Other than virtue and valour there is the middle road. There is common sense, my father.”

It numbed and provoked him that his father could—years after his death—pull this snare of dominance upon him from the past.

“I am your father. You will honour and heed me.”

“You can’t be,” Andreas said out loud. The timbre of his own cry shocked him. “My father is dead.”

“I am alive,” the call said. “Alive as you are. I will be alive as long as you are, and more, my son, because now I cannot die.”

Andreas blotted the perspiration from his chilled face. “You are only a voice inside me.”

“I’m you.”

“Nothing of the kind, my father.”

“What is believable and what is not, be not so assured. Truths can kill as sure as lies, as the fish-eaten corpses know.”

“You are an illusion.”

“All the more. An illusion is not there to undergo death. You must work with illusions, dear boy, to cheat Charon from this impending death.”

Andreas rubbed his stinging eyes. The vapors from the rotting cannabis sprouts that grew near the wet shore from the bird droppings made his nostril itch just then. The vapors were infiltrating the austere logic, the stern discipline of a sanity and judgement, he had been bequeathed from the think-

ers of this land. But the drift of the narcotic was sweet and comforting, the very warm blanket of solace, and such hope. He felt no longer alone. “You may be me, my father. But not above me.”

“I am the delusion of your hope. Without me death is not a chimera. It is certain, inescapable, final. You need me to bridle the terror reality loosens. To skirt the panic death floods. And do what you must: Steal from gods.”

“How can you claim to be me when you are not at all like me,” Andreas said quickly and with a low voice. “You are gone. I must fear death above life. Fear is a godly tool. It makes mortals go beyond themselves—into Olympian terrain. I will marry old prudence with mortal fear, father. I need not shame us both today.”

“Ah, Andreas!” Marizza had said. “I will come with you to the Cabeirei.”

“You’ve been spying on me,” he had said two Sundays ago after church, the smile on his face waning.

Marizza was the school teacher for the island, and she was also Andreas’s sister. She was the more studious one in the family. He knew well the craft of boats, how to build them, care for them, he had the talent of fishing as his father did and could outfish any other in the seaside village. But Marizza, poor Marizza, wanted to marry Kosta, the mayor’s younger son, and that was above their level. The mayor asked a fortune for a dowery. And Marizza, she had this affliction. She could not see his smile diminish. “The past week you had restless nights,” she said putting the heavy glasses on. “You spoke of many things in your sleep.”

Marizza’s sight was very bad. So bad, that she had to wear glasses with very thick and specially made lenses. Some of the more misbehaved children

smirked and snickered at her fat eyes and, he heard them, called her fish-eyes. The lenses could not show her otherwise than an oggling, puffed-eyed creature. Although without them, Andreas thought, the few times he had seen her, that she was quite pretty, even attractive with a lost sort of gaze that made you want to come closer and take her hand and guide her.

He believed it would have been preferable for his sister if the children had slapped her. Greater than anything she distressed to be ridiculed about her bad vision. He could not recount how her expression marred when they said this (normally she achieved to make a tenet of self-composure), but that time her look revealed regret sorrow misgiving and other discouraging sensitivities that he could not truly name. Her eyes started blinking, and to him she obscurely uttered, “The Mayor’s son considers himself above all. But he can’t understand. He has never understood.”

Nevertheless, she had always worn the glasses. She was as good as blind not having them on. The searching eyes behind the glasses and the sensibility and knowledge she carried were what attracted Kosta. No one in the village equaled her in these two things. And all respected her for that.

To this day Andreas did not doubt that he might have skirted the danger, if he had had the wisdom to see his sister’s deepset loneliness, and love for her brother. How is it, he asked himself at a later time, that we have a nearly inexhaustible incompetence to enlighten ourselves, to snub fact staring us in the eye and blazon it fantasy? He pretended to himself that the children and Kosta were his sister’s perpetual anxieties, the ones she regard greater than all else. Or rather, he thought they were the unique ones.

Andreas now sized up the white caps bopping not too distantly from where he stood. It will be a bouncy ride, he concluded. Nobody will be out there to see him or interfere. So it was as well. His own sensations and ideas were not shared by many of the islanders. Despite his discipline in the sea he too

made blunders. He was entering the reality of alien grounds. So much proper it would have been to appreciate a simple folk he had lived closer to almost all his life. He thought he knew them. He lived as an islander, and he thought that his own appreciation of the islander life must not be any different. They grasped splendour and grace as he did. Beauty too. Decidedly when fishing over the billows they loved, the smell of salty wash in the cool air, the Aegean sky, the jumping of the bluefish, and all around, the silver-white gulls careening in the wind crying and singing to each other secrets and tragedies they have seen. Doubtlessly, his islanders embraced life fervently, moreso than polished mankind, lived more fully humane, animate, timely. There were moments in the sea, or on the shores by the clean bubbly surf, when Andreas sensed life as it should be: innocent, uncomplicated and alone with the Universe. How sardonic, he thought, that he had to execute such severe an errand, that he had to intimidate dead gods—but gods still—to fight rushing waves to find and test his challenge to ancient ways that never quite eclipsed in all that was wild, feral and untamed of the world. How distant, how trivial the dare seemed. What was divine insight polished by man's retellings next to the boundless, vast, magic charm of the world that once was? He uncovered within himself an intense determination to continue living as wholly as he could. He seized delight in most deeds he fulfilled, in erecting a sail and in watching stars fall ripping the night sky open white; found wisdom in mending nets and splendor in soothing, remedying, temporarily, a woman's unhealing wound; delight even he found in gathering he giant tree behind the house.

“But why not start with an easier plan,” Marizza said later that Sunday. “More fishing, for example? More dependable, and less than half the risk. Easier on yourself, and me, too—if that's the right word.”

Marizza had certainly done her homework, Andreas thought. But that, of course, was why she was the teacher, and not he.

“There’s very little to gain—when you allow for the extra danger and the long term problems.” Andreas listened as though he had an economist across from him, analysing and preparing a study on logistics. “Instead of the Cabeirei treasure, we can use the abandoned salmon facilities up river. Further upstream, there is the reputed gold flakes that are released from the peak of Mt. Feggari...”

Logical, thought Andreas; but he was sure that it would come to nothing. The Mayor was the lord of the island; he would not be interested in lesser venture.

“Besides,” Marizza continued, “the treasure is not ours. It belongs to another. It is a divine, a major scandal. It’s more than two thousand years since it was placed aside, but we still do not know for what purpose—and the Great Cabeirei is as big a mystery as ever. That’s why I want to come too. All this makes it difficult for just one mortal to handle. There is the other also. I know the archaic incantations that placate gods.”

He put a strong back into it and the bulky vessel shifted over the laid slip-logs towards the incoming breakers. He checked it at the brink of the water, checked the tightness of the propeller and ran his weathered fingers over the cotter pin that held it to the shaft. Satisfied, he put a grunting shoulder to the stern and the boat cleaved the pounding sea. Next he dragged the logs away from the surf then scooted and jumped in the boat. He undid the tie-rope and pushed an oar against the sandy sea-bottom. The concrete jetty to his right still kept the full force of the swells from reaching him. Soon enough he’d leave even this harborage asunder. He could not remember the last time he had seen Marizza be so relieved—and so tired—at the end of a discussion. He had had a brutal, throbbing toothache, but his intentions for this morning had been staunchly decided upon that Sunday. No wine in the taverna with the others in the evening, no meat but vegetables and fruit, not even a

woman before he got back from his charge. He meant to be strong and to be prepared enough to contest gods.

“No, Marizza.” His voice had a finality that he himself did not know what to make of it. Determined he heaved at the crank. The engine jumped to a roaring start. He looked over his shoulder just in case, but the beach remained deserted. The southeast wind would blow the noise and nose of the boat into the open sea and not to the village behind.

*

Out in the open waters, he turned his head every so often to get his bearing. What had been the shore and the concrete jetty a short while ago, now melded into a single coastline maybe two kilometers into the distance. At this point he turned east. The wind howled by him while the boat pitched and rolled with the new course.

Half hour went by. Andeeas now ventured a turn directly into the wind. The boat lifted and splashed down, lifted again and plummeted onto an oncoming wave. He dripped and shivered. More spray and sea came over the edge of the labouring craft, but it pushed stubbornly through the jagged waters.

He had made progress. He estimated an eighth of the island's perimetry had been circumnavigated. He saw the raw beaches to his right that were strewn with dark gray pebbles and water-honed bolders. This was the marker. Soon he would see the narrow drip of the Fall. Below, lay his destination. After that there was only the journey back. The weather will not help, he considered. He had to be quick.

The currents drove him back. The wind pushed too, as though to keep him from reaching Hanging Fall. The year had so many calm days to choose from,

but in calm days the sea filled with fishing boats, even here were the waters ran deep and wild. This was a part of the island that was least fertile. The wind and the salt and the pumace from long gone volcanoes had turned it to barren and empty wasteland. The islanders called it “Moon”. It did not differ much from the baren and silver mistress of the sky. Vacant of life and a mystery to man, Stavro reflected, the very same mystery to the denizens of powerful rituals long passed.

Yet, this niche of the world had not completely let go. Did not altogether abandon the hold on the arcane in history. Here the Cabeirei once reigned, and by way of the Cabeirei Olympia was made pregnant. From this island issued forth the turn of an epoch. Its significance was lost to most and to time, but Andreas somehow knew that the Great Queen and mother to Alexander was not an ungrateful Queen. This island had been rewarded by her. The reward was sacred; he knew this too. And he knew where it lay.

The clouds now turned the day into twilight. They pressed on the sea, and sea and sky looked as one. The wind gave way to a drift. A thick black-grey mist covered the watery spans. It poured into the boat from all sides and snaked every which way. The stuff became indistinguishable from all that was arround it. No land was visible now. No sea. Andreas could hardly make out his feet which where planted on the boat’s floor. The mist trailed and whirled, convoluted up his legs and drifted off like torn webs and shorn lamb wool taken by the breeze’s passing.

With the absence of the wind, the waters only rocked, did not pounce on him. But nothing was visible beyond the boat’s stern, and that even disappeared at times. He leaned over, choked the motor to a stop, and flipped a switch. A tiny red and green light flicked on. For some reason he felt better, because the turn of silence and the thickening of vapors had stirred in him what the passing of eons stilled. The two little sparks of light, one to his left

and the other to his right kept him in the present; reminded him that all else was his imagination—and old yarns.

The silence was absolute but for the lapping of water on his oars and the boat's sides. He listened for the splash of the Fall. He rubbed his temples as he looked into the dark pit of where the sea should be. He was turning impatient and ill at ease. Meanwhile, the thickening haze consumed more of the sound, sight, and the residual breeze.

He rowed at right angles to the ripples of the wan current, and hoped that he was moving parallel to the shore he could not see. A splatter next to him started him.

“A fish,” he said and comforted hearing his own voice.

He rowed and softly chanted into the gloom.

Marizza. She will have the richest dowery on the island, maybe the country, he revelled. Why didn't I do it sooner? The troves must be there, buried below the Fall, as his father had told him. The pool at the bottom of the Hanging Fall. I could have soothed her pain. Poor Marizza. I let her grieve and anguish, and all the time I knew. Old Lores of the Cabeirei haunting and protecting .

“Legends and myths, Cabeirei, hah. They have been dead for two thousand years and their enchantments, too.”

He rowed now hushed. His ears pricked for the spattering of the Fall, but he heard only his father's words.

“It is buried,” his father had whispered, short of breath, “beneath the fine sand of the pool’s shallow waters. It killed twenty, already—twenty, drunk with greed and ignoble schemes for its use. The treasure is bewitched, and all fear it now,” he had gasped. “The seeker of it must first pacify the guardian Cabeirei. Cry out his intentions openly and truly. They know. They are charitable, but moreso, ruthless.” His father, with this, had closed his eyes for ever.

“The good Mayor, Mr. Cabeirei,” he cried out. Why not, it’s only lip service, he decided and he wanted to get it off his chest as well, “He wants to have his cake and eat it too. He wants a bride for his son in flesh and blood and in money also. Because heartbroken Marizza is half-blind the old goat prods the soft Kosta to ask for more each time. A pharisee he is—over and over—the glutton Mayor!” he yelled and a rumble sounded in the far distance, or he thought he heard one. His temperance was accosted now; the momentum of indignant anger choked him with its impetus. “Wealth you can lose, but Marizza has knowledge, Mr. Cabeirei, and wisdom that comes from a rich heart. These you cannot lose. Not rob either. Kosta is smart and knows this. And he too knows that behind those thick spectacles hides the most beautiful girl on the island. But he doesn’t want to go against—the old miser! And yet he does not want to forfeit the goodness he found in Marizza.”

He heard the splashing of a fish. And another. The water frothed and boiled now. It splattered around him with coruscating silver leaps. He could no longer push his oars in the crowded waters and drew them in.

“If only I had my nets...I would fill the boat,” he said regretfully.

But nets and treasure together would sink the small skiff. He picked up an oar and smacked down hard on the riotous sea. Again. Again. His arms heaved and smashed over and over. They are hefty, well-fed ones, he surmised from the rich splashes. He feared that the oar would crack and break.

The water seethed and churned. Never had he seen so much fish. Of all places in this baren gulf where the Fall's fresh water emptied.

Arms hurting, he gathered all the fish he killed. There were many. Truly huge bulls. They must have come from the shore near the pool. "So you go there to drink the fresh water and eat fresh-water tid-bits," he spoke as he gathered. It is the place the frogs and salamanders the islanders find in the fish's bellies come from.

The catch was what a good day's work would have yielded, and heavy. All without hooks or nets. Just with a single oar! "Yet, no sign of the fall. Only mists."

Andreas decided now to row to shore. His weary shoulders protested as he pulled on the oars and not use the motor as it would have drowned any sound of the fall.

They would never believe him. He did not believe it. The boat was laden with well fed fish. But he believed his hurting arms. He rowed now with all the strength remaining in his muscles, for the catch was a singularly good portend of greater things to come.

"Fish and treasure, treasure and fish," he repeated over and over as he paddled harder then ever before.

The grinding under the hull startled him Even more so the familiar, but unexpected venue. He rubbed his salt stained eyes. The fog must have thined out while he had been busy at the oars because he could now see the other boats and the neat pile of clip-logs as he had piled them at his outset.

He jumped off, pulled the boat in more, and plopped on the wet sand. He felt utterly worn out and altogether confused.

“Where did I lose my bearing?” he asked squeezing his stinging eyes. “How could I have rowed twelve kilometers in the opposite direction, and not be aware?”

But he could not have done either. He would not be on the beach right now if he did. Because the shore was always to his right. Unless he had circum-navigated the entire island. He shook his head riddled.

He was too spent to try to puzzle it out. No, he didn't believe the Cabeirei had anything to do with it. He only felt sad at Marizza's fate, and disappointed in himself. The mists had all but cleared up and the surf rolled lazily next to him. No matter, he consoled the fish will bring in a good price. He picked one, squated over the water and commenced cleaning it so as Marizza could cook it for their dinner that evening.

“It was not worth the fight, my father. All was invention. Strange fabrications, but fibs, father.”

He sliced through the fish's belly and dumped the innards out.

“True as the twelve Olympians. Ah, my country you are a fountain of myths.” He laughed with the remaining energy he had.

Amid gut and bile strange reflections emminated and cought his eye. He threw water on them with his hand. He washed the entrails again and again. They were bloated and hard. Cutting through with his knife, he blinked twice and rubbed his eyes to clear them. Three—no five small blue stones fell out. They glittered back at him.

“Sapphires!”

He cut open a second fish—two green twinkles blinked back.

“Emeralds!”

Another fish produced six transparent brilliants or diamonds. He couldn't tell.

Another, a few blood-red pistils, rubies...a giant pearl, tiny gold nuggets...

He had cut ten fish and in each there was a quaint-sized treasure. At least twenty more great fish lingered still on the boat's flooring, and already a small fortune filled the palm of his hand.

He rose and was about to cast off to the same spot, when he thought better.

There is not much more I wish to tell of that charmed morning. I had plunged into the cold sea, into the realm of myth and legend, into the ballads and fables underlying the order of the everyday and the commonplace.

The Cabeiri had been charitable to me, more than generous in my time of need. There could have been frogs and salamanders in the fish bellies.

When there is need, I tell myself, I will go back then only. The secret was un-greed. But for now, along with Marizza, let's make Andreas happy and prepare for a grateful and memorable second wedding.

*Michael Salinger***NEON**

A poem is a 1957 Greyhound bus
Front tires balloon push wedged against the curb
Diesel idle vibrating the rear view mirror
So that the images blur
Pneumatically opening the door to individual interpretation
A poem can be a pair of wingtips
Exhausted leather shoes,
Or an angel's feathers
Either image will do (a transit token coin flip)
Sacrificial pawn centered atop scuffed linoleum square
Part of a pattern chess boarding across the floor
Of some Podunk town's art deco terminal
Cruciform-cracked plaster arching overhead
Stationed on the flatland of experience
Bustin' up the sunsank horizon with the blue
Transformational hum of phosphorescent neon
A poem can be the outdated pack of Twizzlers
In the silver pull knobbed candy machine
That you trade your last two quarters for
When you are starving to death

Or a poem can be that stale cup of coffee
On Formica counter at 3am
In front of the only occupied stool
At the end of a chrome and red vinyl mushroom line
When your dreams make you afraid
To close your eyes and go to sleep
A poem might be warp and woof weaved
Inside gray cotton ball puffs
Exhaling from a black tail pipe into sub zero air
As an engine revs in response
To the depression of an accelerator
Lurching away from a Plexiglas shelter
Accordion doors playing a traveling tune
As they fold closed
A poem can smell like burning rubber
When the accumulated slush
That has built up inside the wheel well of your mind
Has solidified into ice

Grasping spinning tire in expanding frigid vice
‘Til you can’t go any further
You just can’t go any further
‘Til you risk your life pulling off to the side
And kick the obstruction to the median
The rest of the world becoming the breeze of
Semi trucks roaring by
Then you pull away
Dissolving into the arterial rush of traffic
Leaving the clump behind
To become a reflection that is closer than it appears
Which will melt with the next thaw
Depositing salt bleached bits of gravel
In an indecipherable
I Ching formation
That confirms you were there

This poem will take you
To
Or away
From home

Michael Salinger

Lake Erie

He couldn't remember when the seasons quit changing in the gradual increments of his boyhood, maybe he just didn't notice anymore, or maybe he was just now noticing that he had never noticed before. He used to think that his father was an idiot when the old man counted from the year he was born in order figure out how old he was. It seemed impossible that anyone would not be able to remember how old they were. Now he did the same thing.

Every spring the leaves just appeared when he wasn't looking despite his resolution to mark their time lapsed unfolding. It was like measuring your chewing so that your mouth wouldn't be stuffed with hot corned beef and sauerkraut when the "ask me about our pie" buttoned waitress lurches out of a blind spot.

"How's the food honey"?

"MMMPH"

As impossible as sneezing with your eyes open.

He'd look up one day and it would be summer.

"MMMPH"

Look up again and it was winter.

"MMMPH"

The minor complaints he had were never worth the indigestion. Spring and fall reduced to the status of a forgotten side of coleslaw.

She wouldn't let him smoke his cheap cigars in her place. In the summer he kept an old wooden and metal folding chair out front on the fire escape - piece of scrap plywood under the legs so they wouldn't slip into the spaces between the metal grated landing. Rubber soles slow motion pumping

against the railing - rocking on the back legs of the chair - blowing smoke rings - inhaling the traffic that shadowed by.

Wintertime he went for rides.

He backed the Packard down the alleyway navigating by keeping the car parallel with the brick wall on the driver's side - plastic back window jack frosted - his head stretched like some turtle looking around a corner so that he could see through the crack of his open door. Right hand on the steering wheel, left clasping the door's handle. The auto bounded over the curb and he slammed the door shut goosed the gas pedal and pointed the convertible toward the park at the lake.

The lot was empty and he tooled right up to the cliff that led down to the beach. The wind was harsh but he put the top down anyway, remaining semi- sheltered behind the door windows, the cold air cut through his hair, rug burning across his scalp, it was something to feel.

Miniature whitecaps breached across the surface of the lake like an infinite school of silver scaled fish jumping randomly - their sheer multitude stretched wide and to the horizon creating the illusion of synchronization. That pretty much summed up the way things were going for him.

He took a deep drag of his cigar, holding the smoke in. Maybe he'd learn to play the horses. Lots a people play the horses. There was something romantic about betting the long shot, anyone could wager the sun would rise the next day, but betting against the occurrence paid way better. A tri-fecta of island sinking volcanoes throwing steam plumes across the Western Hemisphere - glaciers the size of Morocco cartwheeling through the Hudson Bay and an accidental firing of a nuclear warhead would pay millions on a two-dollar ticket.

You can't win if you don't play you can't lose either. But no matter how the bets are parlayed the outcome is breaking even when ya kick it. The oscilloscope wave that measures life experience invariably ends up snapped taut. The wider the modulation, the greater the peaks and valleys, the louder the smack when whip cracked into white line monotone straightness. Some people just go out with a bigger bang that eventually fades away into inaudible echoes, blending into the white noise of the universe. Basic statistics, everything can be averaged out. Nature seeks equilibrium.

There was nobody on the beach, they had stopped raking it months ago so flotsam covered the sand. One of those giant wooden spools that power lines come on bobbed about 50 yards off shore turning slowly like a paddlewheel in search of a boat, directionless, random-like. He didn't make the connection but he did start the car.

Michael Salinger

Babyprints

The girl was making baby's footprints on the passenger side window. She contrived a fist and pressed the pinky side of her right hand against the cool wet glass leaving the impression of a 2-1/2 inch sole stamped, dripping in the condensation, then she took her thumb and added toes. The tracks didn't lead anywhere just a little barefoot motif randomly covering the transparency that separated her from the elements as she rode along in the Packard. It was a trick she had picked up riding the bus to grade school a couple of decades earlier, something she had forgotten 'til that instant. There was no particular reason for her to remember the pastime, just one of those random synapses firings that occur when the mind has gone blank for a moment. The appearance of an old western on the boob tube, already in progress, when the live feed to the baseball game has been killed by some squirrel giving up the ghost in a transformer placed in a Wisconsin soy bean field. The mind won't tolerate dead air, unless you're some kind of Buddhist monk or something, and she had gone to Catholic schools.

"Y'know," she said, speaking to the windshield as much as the driver, " I wish I were in love."

The radio fizzled out right in the middle of a cut from Miles' Bitches Brew as the convertible entered a long tunnel, white noise rustle from the dash mounted speaker cutting to the front of the line on the frequency. Neither of the two reached over to turn down the volume. Pink and aquamarine tiles flashed by on both sides of the art deco catacomb stretching to a vanishing point lazy curved in the distance where the two rows of steel caged light converged into a point. The reflection of the overhead incandescent bulbs scrolled across the hood of the car split into a V shape by the winged nude

ornament, breasts thrust forward piercing the oncoming night air like a film of tracer bullets being played in reverse.

The driver spoke, "Well Toots," he said.

"The way I see it, love is a tourist trap you got to be a little gullible and bored to stop for it. I ain't sayin' stupid, just a little bit naive and lookin' for a diversion to save ya from the bullshit of everyday existence. I mean a lot of people that otherwise have their shit together are out there lookin for it. It's like the Loch Ness monster."

The girl rolled her window down a crack so she could smell the diesel aroma that was spewing from the tailpipe of the Greyhound bus in front of them.

"The thing's been rumored to exist just about forever, I think some saint back, hell 1500 years ago or so was the first to say he saw the son of a bitch. Made a woodcut of some sea monster bigger 'n a house with horns and a forked tongue smoke out the nostrils the whole shebang, and people been lookin ever since. Not just crackpots, you got your scientist out there with sonar and all kinds of equipment. The shores are lined with people, with telescopes and binoculars, on the weekends they bus the bastards in. I mean, these cats just want to believe that there is something out there, they devote all their spare time to catching a glimpse of a myth. Some folks just ain't got nothing better to do. They're obsessed."

The girl listened, watching the ceramic tiles whiz by freezing sections of them into snapshots by picking a single tile and following its passing with a quick glance. A couple times she noticed some graffiti that she recognized as English but flashed by too fast for her to read.

"There's a couple photographs of the thing floating around, Nessie, they call it Nessie now. Started out as a sea monster, now it's Nessie like it's some kinda big ass pet. And these photographs are so fuzzy; hell they could be a stick or

some kinda watersnake blown up all grainy. But that's all they need, circumstantial evidence, it's enough to keep the saps coming back and dropping cash. There's a whole cottage industry built up around something that hasn't even been proven to exist. Ya got your Nessie fuckin T-shirts, your Nessie post cards, Nessie this and that. Folks makin' a buck off other folk's need to be convinced in something bigger than themselves. And the people that think they saw it? There ain't no way of talkin' them out of it 'cause they're convinced. Hook the assholes up to a lie detector and they'd pass with flying colors. I guess they ain't hurtin' nobody, live and let live I guess."

A gray four door passed by in the right lane, the little Chinese boy in the back seat had his face pressed against glass so that his nostrils flared up like some side show pig-boy, his bottom lip pulled down like a blind on a closed shop door.

"And what the fuck ya gonna do if ya catch it? I mean it ain't like you can put a leash on the son of a bitch. If it does exist it's sure spent a lot of time hiding. I don't think it wants to be found, throw a noose around its long ass neck and it's gonna be pretty pissed. I mean, if it's out there it's a wild animal. People gonna get hurt. Then what, blame it for doing what comes naturally? They'll drag the fucker outa the lake and stick it in a tank so P.T. Barnum can charge ya two bits to look at it. And it'll be in there, all crumpled up and sad looking. No way girlie girl, people aint got no business messin with something like love. They wouldn't know how to treat it if they found it. Christ, look how we boned King Kong."

Buddy Rich was pounding out a drum solo when the auto emerged from the tunnel.

The girl looked over, "Y'know Misha, talking like that ain't no way to get laid."

Chris Vecchio

Georgia O'keefe (haiku)

Succulent flowers,
the orchids beckon me with
moist crisp vulval lips.

In the humid air
brash alien sex organs
sprout from leafy loins.

How I long to kiss
their impudent pedal-lips,
to taste their nectar ...

At Longwood Gardens
families stroll oblivious
to hot house perverts.

Eric Wasserman

Replacement

Reuben could still detect her scent emanating from the sheets, particularly as he pulled them from the bed into his arms and carried the bundle to the washing machine in the garage. After lifting the lid of the machine, he brought the fabric to his face one last time, smothering his nose into the cotton and breathing heavily for traces of Debbie's cheap perfume, then dropped them into the half-load of whites left unfinished from the previous week. He set the cycle and returned to the front room, maneuvering around the five unopened cardboard boxes blocking his way back to the bedroom.

"Ha," he shouted with pride. Sure, some men in his place—mid-fifties and recently divorced—might not have known how to set a wash. But not Reuben. "That's right," he said to himself, "it was me that always did the laundry, not Janey."

He stepped back into the bedroom and scoped the floor for the condom and its wrapper, finally discovering both at the foot of his bed where he placed his slippers every night. Taking an enormous wad of toilet paper from the bathroom, he surrounded the prophylactic and wrapper, then flushed everything down the toilet. He quickly washed his hands, scrubbing furiously with the soap bar, disgusted by the thought of one drop of semen or spermicidal lubrication having touched his skin. As he scrubbed the coarse skin of his hands, the nakedness of the finger on his left hand that had once held his wedding band became apparent. That was the first thing he realized the most after the divorce; all the men he saw each day in passing wearing wedding bands, not giving even a casual thought about it. He knew this because he had shown a similar mentality for over three decades.

Debbie's undeniable cosmetic-like smell still filled the bedroom. She had been the first woman he had been with since Jane, the first sexual experience he had had in well over a year. She was nobody particularly special, just a girl he had been dating from the grocery store down the street; only 25, a check-out girl without even a high school diploma. This did not bother Reuben, though. He knew the relationship was nothing serious, just dinner and a show every so often, somebody to go out and do things with in a city that he was once again becoming familiar to. He was dumbfounded when she removed the condom from her purse the night before after they had been fooling around on the bed; her calling him "Big Daddy" repeatedly during the whole lustful ordeal. Reuben had never used a condom, had never been with another woman in that way other than Jane. He would have to adjust to dating in the '90s.

His son, Zachary, was driving down from Eugene to visit him for the first time at his new place and the bedroom was infested with the secreted scent of recent sex. Zachary was a college student, already receiving job offers, diligently applying himself to multiple internships, giving his father immense pride. Reuben remembered his own college years at UCLA and knew his boy would know exactly what had been going on the night before if he did not fumigate the room.

The windows above the bed opened with a slight creak. Reuben liked that, the way he could open windows in California during March without any worries of a chill. He had been born and raised in Los Angeles, but had lived in Oregon the past 33 years, raising his family, building his business. When Jane asked for the divorce he did not even bother fighting it, not having the energy to do so anymore. He wanted it over as quickly as she did. Neither of them desired one of those prolonged separation periods, for the divorce to be finalized somewhere in the distant future after excruciatingly expensive negotiations. Jane kept the home in Portland and Reuben took his full retire-

ment plan early with no future obligations to his former spouse. Within six months the marriage was dissolved and within another three he had moved back to California. They had not even bothered to initiate a Jewish divorce, being that it had been years since they had attended temple or considered even Yom Kippur as anything more than a holiday on par with Labor Day. By the time their three children had moved out of the home they were even exchanging gifts on Christmas morning, as though they were typical Americans. But neither one of them were going to blame those things for the divorce. They knew better than to substitute those particulars for what had really become unsalvageable.

Reuben had decided that a change was in order. While visiting his older brother, Saul, that last summer, he had impulsively made a bid on a small two bedroom in Santa Monica. "California's never been better," he often said to himself as he sat in isolation every evening to watch a movie rental or maybe the news on the tube, diligently scarfing a microwave dinner. "I should never have left California." That of course changed when he met Debbie at the grocery store, only a few weeks after finally deciding it was well over time that he remove the white-gold wedding band that had decorated his finger for over 35 years.

He predicted that Zachary would not arrive until later that night. There was plenty of time to clean the house, maybe do a little more work on re-arranging the furniture or change the alignment of the vintage art on the walls. Debbie had recently given him a book on Feng Shui to help him in designing his life with the ancient art of placement. According to Debbie's belief, Feng Shui conveyed the theory that life forces flow through all things, that the manipulation of forces through the proper orientation of physical structure could enhance a person's luck, wealth, and even health. Reuben had basically concluded that this was a way of telling people they could improve their lives by rearranging furniture. Had he still been married to Jane, she would

have nailed a mezuzah to the frame of the front door and said, “there, stop worrying, enough of this hippie-skippy California stuff.” He knew Jane would have done that, even if she was far from being the strictly observant Orthodox girl he had met when he was nineteen. She would definitely have never tried to coax him into taking up Yoga, as Debbie was now doing on a daily basis.

Debbie had mentioned several weeks before that the wall separating Reuben’s bedroom and the front room was “blocking the flow of energy” to him while he was sleeping, thus resulting in the nightmares that had been waking him every night. She had earlier mentioned that the moon’s seasonal rotation was possibly off that year, giving a direct justification for Reuben’s high cholesterol count. “Then again,” she had said, “you are a Sagittarius.” It was then that Reuben knew he could never introduce this girl to his children, particularly his daughters, Polly and Adrian, even though Debbie was close in age to both. How would he ever explain Debbie’s decision to move his great-grandmother’s Menorah into the bathroom medicine cabinet, where its “energy” would not be a disruption to the front of the home?

After going on a few casual dates, Reuben was having sexual urges he and Debbie had still not acted upon. In hopes of finally getting her into bed, he had borrowed an ax and sledgehammer from his neighbor and had completely obliterated the wall that separated the bedroom and front room. The remnants of the wall were still in a pile out on the driveway. Scraps of siding and insulation now dangled from the various sections of the ceiling, which itself seemed to have slumped slightly lower than it originally had been when he bought the home. Oh well, Reuben said to himself, welcome back to California. He feared the smell of the previous night’s lustful escapade would drift through that open space into the rest of the house. A father had to keep a certain image for his children. He opened another window near the front door.

The idea of soup seemed delicious at that moment. He went to the tiny kitchen, pushed aside the abdominal exercise machine Debbie had bought for him that was positioned in front of the counter as a tie-rack, and removed a can of instant clam chowder from the cupboard. It was a real rarity that he cooked. Reuben had grown to enjoy eating out, something that had been a fading endeavor in he and Jane's relationship. Debbie could barely prepare toast, so eating out had become almost a necessity. Unlike Jane, who had cooked the same particular dish for its particular night of the week for the entire 35 years of their marriage, Reuben was now enjoying the fine tastes of Chinese, Thai, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, Italian, and other never before tasted cuisine. "None of this fish on Tuesday, chicken on Wednesday nonsense anymore." He now ate what he wanted. But he had still not taken the time to purchase proper items for his new kitchen. Jane had kept everything with the house.

Reuban removed the Swiss Army knife from his slacks and turned out the can opener, carefully jaggig it along the edge of the soup can. "Clam Chowder here I come!" he exclaimed. He would be happy to never see another matza ball so long as he lived. Every Friday night for the past 35 years he had been served the same meal; brisket and matza ball soup, no surprises or alterations to the menu, ever. And they had not even observed the Sabbath for the later half of their marriage.

He dumped the instant soup from the can into the pot and set it on the burner, tossing the leftover tin into the garbage beneath the sink. "None of this recycling nonsense anymore either." But he knew he would be eating out of the pot, since he did not own bowls, let alone kitchen wear.

Christ, he thought, Zachary is coming. How could he possibly host his only son in his new home without owning a set of plates and bowls? It was bad enough that he would have to explain the missing wall between the front

room and his bedroom. “Yes,” he said, “after I eat, I’ll go buy plates and bowls. Time to start treating myself right.” He would take Debbie with him, to insure that he purchased kitchen ware with the proper energy for the home.

The front room, aside from the wall, was actually quite elegant. With the divorce, Reuben had taken all of the antique furniture that his mother had left him and Jane after her death. His new home seemed to display it far more impressively than the large house in Portland, where each piece had been lost to the composite aesthetics of Jane’s eccentric floral decor. Yes, living in California again was not so bad, it even made Reuben’s mother’s furniture shine more than ever. But the boxes in the front room had to go before Zachary arrived.

Reuben bent down and looked at them, five large, cardboard boxes delivered the day before. He wondered what they could possibly contain. From the return addresses he knew Jane had sent them. She had been sending things C.O.D. mail for several months now. Nothing important usually, just little things she would come across that were his. She never included a letter though, never mentioned anything concerning how she was getting along, only the packages with the contents carefully protected in crumpled newspaper. His children had also made a commitment to not discussing their mother during his weekly calls, which often unsettled Reuben.

He had been overwhelmed to find the five boxes on the porch when he arrived home from a pleasant afternoon walk in the sunshine the day before. But he had to wait until it was dark to move them inside, being that they were all excruciatingly hot to touch after sitting in the sun all day. It surprised him that cardboard could retain such heat. Because of his date with Debbie they had remained unopened.

The boxes were numbered in Jane's familiar calligraphy. He opened the first and was ecstatic to find that there was actually a letter at the top. But even more surprising, he realized that the boxes contained his entire record collection he had acquired since in high school. Reuben had brought his stereo system with him to California but had intentionally left his records, thinking that with the fresh start he would begin to rebuild a new record collection. So far, he only had the few Michael Bolton and Gloria Estefan CDs that Debbie had given him with the Feng Shui book and abdominal exercise machine.

He was genuinely touched, certain that this was Jane's way of sweeping the animosity behind them. She knew how important his records had been to him, that over the years he had taken impeccable care of each album. When they had first met at UCLA during a function between their respective Jewish fraternity and sorority, she had been impressed by the fact that he had a record collection and turn table. Until Reuben, Jane had never known anybody her age who owned more than a few 45rpm singles to play on the communal turn table in the back room of her sorority house. But that was 1964. Now everybody, even grade-school children, seemed to own a facility to play music with. Things changed, though.

Reuben put the letter to his side after rubbing his rough fingers over his name, scrolled beautifully across the front of the envelope in Jane's perfected calligraphy. He began removing albums from that first box, amazed by Jane's consideration. Each album seemed to have been placed in perfect order from the cabinets in their Portland home to the shipping boxes, which had always been randomly clumped by artist at best. The Beatles, The Big Bopper, Nat King Cole, John Denver, Neil Diamond, Buddy Holly, The Kingston Trio, The Christi Minstrels, Cole Porter, Kenny Rodgers, the Temptations. She had even paid for the postage herself this time.

He then came across the only Seekers album he had ever bought, which contained “I’ll Never Find Another You,” his and Jane’s song while dating in college. He pulled the record from the jacket and removed it from its protective liner sheet, holding the vinyl gently in his hands by the edges. Something did not feel right, though. With a careful inspection, he noticed that the vinyl was no longer flat as he had bought it in 1964 and had kept to mint perfection for so many years, but was now curved and wavy.

“No!” Reuben shouted. He began pulling albums randomly from the box, one after another, frantically removing them from their jackets. Every single record was warped, as though a hair dryer had been held to each one individually. “No, that bitch, that goddamn bitch!” He tore open two other boxes, removed a few more random albums, but it was the same discovery. His collection was ruined. He then remembered how the boxes had been sitting on the porch in the sun all day before he arrived home from his walk, and then even longer till he took them inside the night before. “Fuck California,” he shouted, “I hate California, I hate it here!”

He dropped to the hardwood of the front room, album jackets and warped records scattered around him and his mother’s antique furniture. He then ran his hands through his thinning hair.

To his side was that letter, still sealed in the envelope with his name written in Jane’s beautiful calligraphy across the front. He tore it open. It was handwritten, also in calligraphy.

Dearest Reuben,

It’s been ages since we last spoke. I wanted to write sooner, but waited till I felt I was ready. I wish things had been different between us these past few years, particularly the last. It seems horrible that two people who have shared so much of each other’s lives no longer speak. I hope that will change with time. We have three beautiful children between us, something that will

always give us a special connection. It would be so nice for the two of us to be able to be pleasant and friendly with each other, especially now that Polly will soon give us our first grandchild. I'm sure you are as excited as I am. We should talk soon, maybe even come up with a gift for the baby to be given from both of us, as grandparents. Here are your records. A few nights ago I pulled several out to listen to and thought of those good times we used to have listening to albums in your fraternity house during college; laughing and talking all night. I want you to have them, knowing they mean so much to you. I am sending them because I will be moving soon. Yes, I have sold the home and plan to move to Seattle by June. I have met a wonderful man—James. He is a widower and has a five year old daughter, Kelly. I think you would like Kelly, she is very much like Adrian was at that age. James is sixteen years my junior, but we have lots in common, the most important that we love each other and plan to be married in August. I tell you these things now not for spite, but because we have been such good friends for an important part of each other's lives. Even when arguing, we always spoke honestly and never kept secrets. I would like that to be the way things still are, as "special friends." I sincerely hope you will come to my wedding in August. I have put the past behind me and it would mean so much to have you there, with the other important people throughout my life. It is James' second marriage as well, so we plan on only having a small reception with a judge to perform the ceremony. It would also make the children so much more comfortable if you could do this, as a sign of what you always told them growing up, that "things evolve, they never decay." I am very excited. I have not been a mother to a five year old for a long time. This is certainly going to be an adventure. Enjoy the records, Reuben. From everything the children say of your weekly phone calls, it sounds as though you have made a wonderful new start with a beautiful new home for yourself.

With the best of friendship,

Your Janey

Reuben set the letter on top of the box and sat motionless. Looking down, that Seekers album was still sitting beside him, still warped beyond recovery. Taking the record, he walked to the entertainment center beside his mother's antique hutch, and placed the vinyl on the turntable. He set the needle carefully onto the edge of the record and sat down on the love seat that had once been in the front room of the house Jane was now selling. The song began,

first clean, then warped and static-laced, then clear, going back and forth between clarity and warped heat-distortion. For some reason though, the chorus of the song, his and Jane's song from the time they were nineteen, seemed to play perfectly each time the record turned between the warped sections of the vinyl. I'll never find another you... Reuban dropped his face into his hands and began to cry. He could not remember the last time he cried. Perhaps it was when his mother had died, eleven years before. Even then, he had hidden himself in the bathroom of his and Jane's bedroom so that the children would not see him. A father must keep a certain image for his children. As the tears flowed from his eyes, puddling in his palms, he thought of sitting in his fraternity house at UCLA with Jane, listening to that same record. I'll never find another you... It had been their song since the night they were sitting with a bottle of cheap wine Reuban had an older fraternity brother buy for them, listening to it only an hour after purchasing it at the record store a few blocks off campus that they both liked to frequent because the owners would let the kids listen to the albums before buying them. Reuban missed that, the way store owners were back then, the way people trusted each other in those days, the way he and Jane would neck in those listening booths only after they had been dating for almost a year. But he knew now that, for the first time since leaving each other over a year ago, he missed his Janey. He remembered the night they were drinking wine to that album, how he had not even kissed her yet, but after several glasses was able to lift her off his bedside and dance her around his room, slowly maneuvering back and forth to avoid the text books and dirty laundry blanketing the floor, until he mustered enough courage to finally press his trembling lips against hers. Yes, he missed that, would bleed to possess it once again.

As he sat on the couch, the tears collecting in his palms began to slide in streams down his forearms. Only one year and Jane was getting married to another man. Reuban could not comprehend it. He had been Jane's first and only sexual partner. The thought of another man touching her infuriated

him. The thought of another man sharing her life was too much to bear, especially when all he had now for companionship was Debbie, which he knew was temporary.

Glancing to the opposite end of the couch, he noticed the Feng Shui manual. He threw it across the room, then buried his face back into his hands.

The Seekers album was still playing, drifting back and forth between warped heat-distortion and the clear singing chorus of I'll never find another you...

The front door opened. Reuben looked up and there was his son, Zachary. He had not heard the car pull into the driveway, nor expected him to arrive until that evening. He buried his face back into his hands and began to cry uncontrollably. He couldn't believe it, he was crying in the presence of his only son.

"Dad," exclaimed Zachary, "what's going on?"

Reuben controlled himself and looked once again to his son, who was now removing the needle from the warped record. Reuben then looked about the room, noticing the scattered records around the boxes and the dismantled wall between the bedroom and the room they were in, knowing the debris from the wall was piled out on the driveway, the aroma of the clam chowder emanating from the kitchen, the taste of Debbie's skin still resonating upon his tongue.

"Dad, are you..."

"I'm sorry," said Reuben, burying his face back into his sticky palms. That was the only thing he could manage to say, over and over again. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

“Dad,” said Zachary, kicking aside albums, making his way to the couch to comfort his father, “it’s alright, dad. What’s going on, though?”

Reuben did not respond, he simply turned away from Zachary, attempting to conceal his moist eyes and swelling face. Faintly, he could hear the rushing of water. It couldn’t be the soup, he thought, the boiling wouldn’t make that type of sound.

“Just sit here, Dad,” said Zachary, touching his father’s shoulder affectionately, “I’ll be right back.” He then stood and walked to the hallway. “Shit, Dad! I think your toilet’s overflowing.” He opened the door to the bathroom and quickly stepped back as the water attempted to pour over his high-top sneakers. “Shit,” Zachary said again. “Dad, where’s your plunger, I’m gonna clean this up for you...” He stepped farther back from the hall as the water continued to flow from the bathroom. Zachary then looked down, startled. Floating over the hardwood of the hallway was the wrapper from the condom Reuben had flushed down the toilet earlier.

*Alan Kaufman***Why I Love Her**
(Excerpt from: The Lower Haight)

Because the crooked curve of her teeth framed by a pout
and in her broad avocado-colored dress
and in her fern green happy sweater of British hearths, of stone chairs
of white upraised knees of beds of broth
Because in her lamps and lights of breath
and in the lean gleam of earring's hoops
and in the stews she stirs and sniffs, then wrinkles her sweet nose
impatiently
and in her smudged knuckles — (how I know
this; she smells of powdered face) I ask her across silence
that I intend to fill with my life, I ask her eastern looks
to live with me, and she does, in a fingertip, a boot
or a tall glass of steaming peppermint, then leaves
for a hundred years while I close down sad in yellow curtains
spilled and broken to milk bottles of the decades of my birth

turned to mold at Keith Haring tables
patterned with quarky squiggles, after the Theory of Everything

And in the fresh met glance of a passing freak
and in the wet-stoned camouflage of lips
and in the curious tilt of a hand as it stares
with wild eyes at its palm I see the other Lower Haight
and two are born, one grinning, the other
biting, a disposition swinging from shy disappointment to cruel scorn
and in the leather elbows of her skulls and bones
rubbed up against black tights (and in the brief preview
of white teeth, returned like a head beneath
a cover, for the world's ingratitude, and for the flat line
formed by pressed lips bloomed into a bored rose
and for the amber drink peeking from a lap
with wisps of foam plastered to the glass like clouds
in a drab, half-drunk sky
and for the talk, the endless talk, of the endless boyfriends at her
side
talking forever of themselves who make of her a lie
as dazzling as death

“What Did You Do In The War, Daddy?”

She may want someday to know:

‘What did you do in the war, daddy?’

‘Just war, my dear, just war’

Just as Hitler marched into France
right through the door

I hung men in public squares
shot behind their ears for spying
survived as an unforeseen
act of nature

I rode a white wooden horse
with flaring nostrils
and a blue saddle

Because I was ashamed of the Spring
of my nakedness
and could not cry

The ground shook from my artillery

An occasional gunshot

broke the silence

of my border



Michael Moreth, moreth@ix.netcom.com

Sonia Pressman Fuentes

HUD Goes to the Moscow Trade Show

In January 1986, I moved to Washington, DC, to begin work as an attorney in the Legislation and Regulations section of the General Counsel's Office at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I thought I'd have an affinity for housing since both my father and brother had been in the real estate business. But my work at HUD turned out to be a far cry from the real estate business. My job involved drafting legislation to correct or revise HUD's many programs or create new ones. In the main, it was boring and tedious work. Thus, I was delighted when HUD approved my application for the Legis Fellows program in 1988. Under this program, selected government employees, while remaining on the payroll of their agencies, work on Capitol Hill to acquire first-hand knowledge of the legislative process.

In mid-1988 I went to work for Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco. That August, on behalf of the Congresswoman, I attended a hearing conducted by Congressman Tom Lantos, a Democrat from California and Chairman of the Employment and Housing Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations. The purpose of the hearing was to examine HUD's participation in Stroyindustriya '87, an international trade and construction exhibit held in Moscow from May 25 to June 5, 1987.

HUD's programs are normally associated with efforts to improve housing conditions in the United States. The agency's goal, as set forth in the Housing Act of 1949, is to enable all Americans to have "a decent home and a suitable living environment." The testimony at the hearing revealed how far HUD had strayed from that mission during the stewardship of HUD's Secretary Samuel R. Pierce, Jr. The title of the report issued by the Committee after the

hearing was: “HUD Goes to the Moscow Trade Show: Misguided, Mismanaged, and Misspent.” HUD’s actions constituted an egregious and hilarious example of Federal government bungling and the unfortunate wasting of taxpayers’ dollars. The story does not deserve to be buried in the transcript of the hearing or the report issued by the Committee thereafter 1. I shall, therefore, take this opportunity to share it with you.

It started in 1974 when President Nixon signed an agreement with the USSR designed to foster cooperation between the two countries in the area of housing and other construction. HUD was the executive agency responsible for implementing the agreement. After several years of inactivity, President Reagan directed HUD to revitalize its cooperative programs under this agreement. The upshot was that in 1985 HUD Secretary Pierce appointed Dr. June Q. Koch, HUD’s Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research, as coordinator of US activity. The primary focus was to be United States participation in Stroyindustriya ’87. Both HUD and June Koch came to this endeavor as neophytes: it was HUD’s first effort at participating in an international trade exhibit relating to the housing and construction field (Transcript 63); June Koch had no experience in organizing a trade show or with respect to the Soviet Union.

Ordinarily, the spending of funds for commercial trade promotion activities is a job performed by the Department of Commerce. That department, left to its own devices, would not have taken part in Stroyindustriya ’87. The General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of the Congress, told the subcommittee, “Commerce wouldn’t have touched the construction exhibit with a 10-foot pole” (Report 5, Transcript 10).

Commerce, which had since 1986 completed three trade shows in Russia, alerted HUD to the potential difficulties with HUD’s participation in this exhibit. Trade with the Soviet Union, even at its peak in 1979, constituted

only one percent of total US trade. Furthermore, doing business with the Soviet Union posed many problems for US companies. The main one was the Soviet shortage of hard currency. As testified by Ernst-Theodore Arndt, who represented manufacturers who contracted with the Federal government:

“It was quite clear to me that wholesale selling furniture to the Russians would be a utopian undertaking as the Soviets have no hard currency in payment therefor” (Transcript 36).

Historically, the Soviets preferred to pay in products rather than money. The Commerce Department told HUD it was concerned that American companies not be misled about the availability of hard currency for Soviet purchases.

Commerce also expressed concern about HUD’s ability to recruit enough firms to support the exhibit space the Soviets required US firms to rent. This would drive the costs to exhibitors up to a level most companies would find prohibitive.

Finally, Commerce questioned the market potential for building materials and construction technology in the Soviet Union. Building construction by its very nature is a domestic activity, and it is not a high-technology activity. Commerce assumed that if and when the Soviet Union decided to focus on housing, it would do so on its own. Housing was thus not an arena where the US had great trade promotion prospects (Transcript 9).

Commerce was not the only agency that had doubts about the endeavor. A 1986 memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to HUD stated (Report 10, Transcript 9):

“[We] have concerns whether it is the most effective utilization of HUD’s Assistant Secretary for Policy and Research, who is charged with analyzing

the issue of housing for the poor in the United States, to mount an extensive effort for promotion of United States sales of building materials and construction technology in the Soviet market.”

Undaunted, HUD, in the words of the Committee (Report 5), “plunged headlong” into preparations for the exhibit. June Koch “launched a crusade to send the largest ever United States delegation to a Soviet trade show (Report 5).”

HUD approached businesses nationwide to participate in the trade exhibit. Despite Commerce’s statement that building construction was not a high priority purchase item for the Soviet Union, HUD identified a list of priorities that included wooden window frames, skylight bubbles, and equipment to rehabilitate bathrooms and kitchens. Although Dr. Koch asserted that only those items in which the Soviets had a serious interest would be exhibited, no firm was turned down.

The GAO investigation revealed that many of the businessmen who were asked by HUD to participate were not advised until they reached Moscow of the hard currency problem and of the fact that their most likely options for doing business were bartering or joint venture agreements. Had they been so advised, it is likely that many of them would not have chosen to participate. Many of these firms were small and didn’t have the resources necessary to sustain the negotiations required in a joint venture agreement.

Even though they did not receive information on the hard currency problem, many businessmen, including the leading furniture manufacturers, initially declined to participate in the trade show. They believed that the risks and costs were too high. Gediz Soyer of Sterling Manufactured Homes cited the high cost of shipping a mobile home to Moscow; another furniture manufacturer believed the rental space was overpriced. Arndt testified that some of the furniture manufacturers also refused to participate because “the Russians

are engaged in Afghanistan, killing 1 million out of 6 million people, that they are putting doctors and scientists in nut houses. ‘We don’t want to have anything to do with the Russians. We don’t want to make our furniture available to them,’ was their reaction.” (Transcript 37).” Arndt testified that Dr. Koch was “quite elated that at least one company [Bassett Furniture Industries] took an interest after she had struck out with all major companies who had been approached by HUD at the 11th hour . . . “ (Transcript 36).

As time ran out, HUD and its contractors began to subsidize and put pressure on companies to take part. For the businessman who believed the rental space was overpriced, HUD reduced the price. After arm-twisting by Arndt, seven manufacturers, including Bassett, hastily assembled a sixty-piece furniture exhibit, which was airlifted to Moscow by HUD at

“...I should have brought over a load of upright brooms. Women were bent over cleaning the exhibition hall with hearth brooms. I could have sold out an entire load of push brooms...”

HUD expense (Transcript 45). To get the participation of Gediz Soyer, HUD offered to ship the mobile home itself. When Soyer still demurred, Koch approached his brother, who was also with Sterling, and insisted it was their patriotic duty to take part. The brothers, both born in Turkey, felt that their loyalty to the United States was being impugned and agreed to participate. HUD shipped the mobile home to Moscow at a cost of over \$38,000. In addition, HUD paid about \$90,000 for the rental of exhibit space; about \$72,000 for the transportation of some companies’ materials and products; and about \$30,000 for travel and per diem expenses for technical experts

representing certain companies. In contrast, the Commerce Department does not pay any expenses of participating companies when it conducts trade promotion activities (Transcript 20).

A common theme of HUD's sales pitch was the assurance that the products exhibited would be sold. Many participants received the impression that if they could just scrape together the funds to attend the show, they would have huge sales. As Arndt testified, "All exhibitors proceeded on the assurance that the furniture would be sold prior to the completion of Stroyindustriya '87" (Transcript 37). There was no discussion of what would happen to unsold goods.

By the time Stroyindustriya '87 opened, the Commerce Department was so concerned that it transmitted to its staff in Moscow the unusual instruction not to sign any bills on behalf of HUD.

About 110 US companies sent representatives to the exhibit. Of the twenty-four countries that took part, only the United States had its own pavilion.

Stroyindustriya '87 was well attended: 175,000 visitors came. HUD did not provide a security briefing for the Americans involved with the exhibit; nor did it give exhibitors advance warning of important visitors or set different times for trade visitors and the general public. Instead, HUD told the exhibitors: "Don't ask for names, don't ask for business cards, don't ask what kind of business they are in and don't ask where people are from," as such questions would embarrass the Soviets (Report 8).

Many participants complained that HUD and its contractors were more interested in helping them get tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet than in finding buyers. Many of the participants found that their products were totally unsuited to the Soviet market. One company representative stated:

“They’re [the Russians] not in the 20th century. They’re looking for grassroots technology . . . I should have brought over a load of upright brooms. Women were bent over cleaning the exhibition hall with hearth brooms. I could have sold out an entire load of push brooms” (Report 6).

The overwhelming majority of the 175,000 visitors were not potential buyers but just Russians looking for entertainment. HUD’s promotional efforts for the fair were a failure. Secretary Pierce returned home with all thirty-seven English-language press kits he had prepared for news conferences.

One exhibitor described the visitors as “swarming like locusts” over his exhibit and removing anything not firmly held down. He labeled the fair “a toy operation” and added that “everyone knew this was going to be a flop. (Report 8, Transcript 1).” He said, “If you did that in the private sector, I’d sue the guy.” In a masterpiece of understatement, Geoffrey Knauth, Arndt’s assistant and interpreter, wrote of the exhibit, “The business end had a bit of a ‘no-win’ feel to it (Transcript 50).” Carl Hahn, the most senior exhibit manager at the Commerce Department, who had had twenty-two years’ experience in trade promotion, described HUD officials and contractors as having “no idea what they were doing” and called the exhibit “the worst show I ever worked on (Report 9, Transcript 62).” He stated that when alerted to potential problems, Koch allegedly responded, “I don’t want to hear anything negative” (Report 9). When told that the mobile home would not fit inside the American pavilion, Dr. Koch allegedly instructed him to bring in the Soviet Air Force to take the roof off the pavilion so the home could be lowered inside. The beams of the pavilion made this operation impossible.

In Hahn’s view, Koch’s inexperience and ineptitude led to a great waste of taxpayers’ money. He cited the example of the model American house on display at the show. It was initially located upstairs when Koch arbitrarily ordered it to be moved downstairs at an additional cost of \$2,000. Hahn also

criticized Koch for failing to seek competitive bids for the work involved in setting up the exhibition. According to him, the resulting work was overpriced and of poor quality. He described the show as a “waste of money” (Report 9).

After the fair, some companies had to give their display goods away out of necessity. They had not found buyers and in many cases the shipping costs would have exceeded the original cost of the product. Arndt arranged for the unsold furniture to be taken to the US Embassy. It was his understanding that the Embassy would make the pieces available for an appropriate consideration to the Soviet Ministry of Wood-Working Technology. A month after the exhibit closed, Arndt wrote to the American Ambassador in Russia about this. Almost eight months later, the Ambassador responded, stating that the Embassy accepted the furniture because it was the staff’s understanding that it was a gift to the Embassy. He offered to return the furniture to the United States upon receipt of a letter of credit guaranteeing payment of packing and shipping costs; he also requested reimbursement for the cost of shipping the furniture from the exhibit site to the Embassy’s warehouse and for the cost of storing the furniture for eight months (Transcript 39).

When Arndt sought Secretary Pierce’s assistance in retrieving the furniture, he was sent a \$6,000 bill for rental space at the pavilion (Report 8). At the time of the Committee’s report (September 1988), the furniture was still in Moscow.

Two Soviet ministries expressed interest in buying the mobile home, but these offers never materialized. The hapless Mr. Soyer stayed on in Moscow, desperately seeking a buyer for the mobile home that had been reduced in price to \$15,000. When the Soviet authorities directed him to remove it from the trade show site, since his visa was expiring, Soyer had no alternative but to donate it to the Ministry of Tourism. Other firms in similar dilemmas

gave their products to a local monastery. Arndt testified that with regard to the disposition of the furniture exhibited:

“Mr. Pierce seems to have pursued the policy of an ostrich and we feel that we [the participants] were left in the lurch” (Report 5, Transcript 38).

Peter Hale, the Director of the Office of Western Europe of the Commerce Department, when asked for his opinion on whether this was a “well-prepared, well thought-out, carefully executed exhibit” responded, “No. I would have to answer no” (Report 5).

According to GAO, between 1984 and 1987, HUD spent approximately \$3 million implementing the US-USSR agreement. Of this amount, \$1.6 million was spent on commercial trade promotion activities, including *Stroyindustriya* '87. Some of these expenditures were for entertainment. This included \$25,000 for a reception in the Soviet Union.

Of the \$1.6 million spent on commercial trade promotion, about \$1.3 million, including entertainment expenses, was charged by HUD to its research and technology account. Research and technology funds are intended for HUD to conduct in-house and contract policy studies, economic analyses, research and demonstration projects, and program evaluations. The report stated:

“Instead of using research and technology funds to develop desperately needed responses to the life-threatening problems of lead-based paint, asbestos, and radon, HUD used these very funds to hawk furniture, computers, and paintbrushes to the Soviets” (11).

GAO estimated that HUD spent about twenty-one staff-years implementing the US-USSR agreement. Five-and-a-half of those staff-years were devoted to commercial trade promotion work.

What did this money and time produce? According to a GAO survey of participating companies, only eight of the seventy-nine firms that responded transacted any business at the exhibit. Of these eight, only two transacted

“Instead of using research and technology funds to develop desperately needed responses to the life-threatening problems of lead-based paint, asbestos, and radon, HUD used these very funds to hawk furniture, computers, and paintbrushes to the Soviets”

business of more than \$1 million; two did business between \$25,000 and \$100,000; and four did \$25,000 or less. At the time of the August 1988 hearing, forty-five companies were still trying to get some business. Most of the firms did not anticipate signing any kind of contract with the Soviets as a result of their participation in the trade show. In contrast, the sixty companies that participated in Inprodtorgmash '86, an international food processing equipment show organized by the Department of Commerce in Moscow, did over \$22 million worth of business; and Neftegaz '87, an oil and gas trade exhibit

organized by Commerce in Moscow, resulted in signed contracts totalling \$20 million, with another \$20 million in negotiation. Stroydormash, a third show organized by Commerce in the Soviet Union, involved heavy construction and roadbuilding equipment. Since it was held in the spring of 1988, total results were not yet available by the August 1988 hearing; nonetheless, participants had already had about \$2 million in sales and another \$8 million was in negotiation (Transcript 61).

While it was not established at the hearing or thereafter that HUD engaged in criminal activity in connection with its participation in Stroyindustriya '87, GAO concluded that HUD did not have the authority to spend the \$1.6 million it spent on the show and, therefore, violated the Anti-deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. 1301). As stated to the subcommittee by John Luke, Associate Director of the Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division of GAO, HUD's trade promotion activities did not further its statutory mission but were designed to enhance business opportunities of U.S. companies (Report 11).

The Senior Attorney in GAO's Office of the General Counsel testified at the hearing that GAO did not find any evidence that HUD's violation of the Anti-deficiency Act was knowing and willful. Had there been such evidence, criminal penalties for the officials involved, including a \$5,000 fine or imprisonment for up to two years or both, would have been appropriate. Absent such evidence, the responsibility for imposing the administrative penalties provided by the Act, which included suspension from duty without pay or removal from office, lay with the violator's superiors and the head of the agency. In the case of a violation, the agency head is also required to report all pertinent facts and a statement of the action taken to the President and the Congress (Transcript 10 and 11).

Secretary Pierce, while disagreeing with GAO's opinion that HUD's activities violated the Anti-deficiency Act, reported the violation of that Act to the President and the Congress. No disciplinary action was taken against Koch, who had already left HUD. Instead, on January 25, 1988, after the hearing and the issuance of the Committee's Report on HUD's mismanagement of the US participation in the Moscow Trade Fair, for which Koch was responsible, HUD appointed her as a consultant to advise it on commercial activities under the US-USSR agreement.

It appears that neither the President nor Congress took any action with regard to HUD's report that its activities violated the Anti-Deficiency Act.

Postscript.

On September 23, 1987, June Koch notified Secretary Pierce that she was resigning from HUD effective October 30, 1987. Two days after her resignation, she became president and treasurer and one of the two stockholders of a consulting firm called Construction, Marketing & Trading, Inc. Its purpose was to represent companies seeking to do business in the Soviet Union. Three months later, HUD appointed her a consultant to advise it on commercial activities under the US-USSR agreement. She was initially appointed for a six-month period, which was subsequently extended twice until January 20, 1989.

In 1989, the Employment and Housing Subcommittee held another hearing and issued a report involving June Koch and HUD 2. The hearing was prompted by complaints of participants in Stroyindustriya '87 that Koch tried to solicit them as clients for her consulting firm immediately after she left HUD.

GAO and the Committee found that Koch used her access to HUD officials to secure unfair benefits for herself and her clients; that Koch's post-employment activities appeared to have violated the Ethics in Government Act and, therefore, should be referred to the Department of Justice for further investigation; and that HUD did not adequately control and monitor Koch's activities to ensure that her work as a consultant did not result in a conflict of interest. It appears that the Justice Department took no action on this referral. Thus ended HUD's involvement in Stroyindustriya '87.

Notes

¹.United States, “Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Participation in the Moscow Trade Show,” Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations, 100th Cong., 2nd sess. (Aug. 3, 1998); United States, Report of the House Committee on Government Operations, “HUD Goes to the Moscow Trade Show: Misguided, Mismanaged, and Misspent,” H.R. 100-1052, 100th Cong., 2nd sess. (Oct. 4, 1988). Where the report and the transcript differ, the author has used her judgment in relying on one or the other.

².United States, “Trading on Position and Conflict of Interest by Former HUD Official,” Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations, 101st Cong., 1st sess. (Apr. 26, 1989); United States, Report of the House Committee on Government Operations, “Trading on Position and Conflict of Interest by Former HUD Assistant Secretary June Koch,” H.R.101-372, 101st Cong., 1st sess. (Nov. 17, 1988).



Michael Moreth, moreth@ix.netcom.com

*Heather MacLeod***The Open Bone**

michael, come find me in the meadow my distress
waving crimson open bone of secrets
am i an old woman, now? i'm surprized by my age,
imagine my eggs clear and round bubbles of soap
floating in nitroglycerin

in the pasture when my chest ran flat
heaved heavenly like a hoof
of a palomino striking the ground,
i read a princess used the bone of her little finger
for a key, and opened a dark room
freed seven ravens

they moved heavy in the stagnate air
each wing lifted then fallen, obscure as grace

when in torment my clan lets the macleod
flag ripple over fields; no ordinary flag
it was made by faeries with a promise
we strive in battle never lose

the stitching ordinary, the cloth common

no more unusual than a door with a lock and no key

not any more unusual than a woman in a field

open bone of secrets before her

rounded like a stone hollow in the centre

auburn hair waving clear, round bubbles in the air



Michael Moreth, moreth@ix.netcom.com

Bill Monks

BILLKIAS@worldnet.att.net

Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy

Dear Mr. Waygate:

I thought you would like to hear from a grateful customer how your Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy came to my aid.

I noticed recently my Waygate Pentium was running as slow as a snail walking backwards. I had become such a joke among the 486ers I began to shun them. My computer would be classified as new if it weren't a computer. I had paid twenty-three hundred bucks for it in May. I see now that it isn't even listed in Waygate's advertisements. Your cheapest now is twelve hundred and a lot faster and more powerful than mine is. I see your throwing in a printer, which really hurt. The speed of advancing technology is frightening. What you invent today you have to market it within the month, soon I guess you will date them like milk cartons. I finally figured out the right time to buy a computer is in the future.

Luckily, knowing nothing is perfect; I paid extra for your Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy. I wanted to be guaranteed the very best of support.

Seeing "Old Bess" had started to drag, I mean slow, I immediately took advantage of my Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy in order that she might regain her youth. My only concern was how long it would take your repairman to come to my home.

Charley, a technician in North Dakota answered my phone call and I explained the problem.

“Bill, you have a virus that has destroyed a part of your conventional memory.” I quickly denied his accusation, telling him I had always used protection, that my Norton’s Anti-Virus program was constantly on guard. He kept insisting it was a virus. I felt like a nice girl being accused of being the East Coast distributor of a venereal disease.

He spent the first hour giving me tons of instructions and having me push every combination of keys on the board. Charley was about as patient and as persistent as you can get. He finally gave up on the idea of a virus.

“Charley, don’t waste your time just send out the repairman. I got the Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy,” I said.

There was a long pause. Finally, I again heard the voice from North Dakota.

“Bill, do you have a Philips-head screwdriver, tweezers and a needlenose handy? We are going to have to go in.”

I thought only surgeons used that language to one another. What in hell does he mean “we”?

“I want you to take the case off the tower, go in, and move some parts around.”

“Charley, I get nervous when I wind my watch.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

I thought a six-month-old \$2,300 computer is going to have it’s guts switched around by a guy who puts his finger in his ear when he tries to pick his nose.

Taking the tower off was not tough. That’s what I would like to say, but for me it was tough. The second and third hour was spent taking “Old Bess” apart.

“Tower off.”

“Do you see the battery in the corner?”

“I see nothing that looks like a battery.”

“That round disk in the corner.”

Long pause.

“Is it about the size of a nickel?”

“Yea. Do you see that set of...?” (God knows what he said.) “I want you to move the jumper off the second of the third set of...” (?) “About three inches from the nickel.”

“What’s a jumper?”

“That’s what’s connecting them.”

Long pause.

“Charley, I think I see those things.” There was a whole bunch of little things that were about three thousands of an inch wide in sets of three and four. Some of them were connected to each other by these tiny, tiny things he called jumpers.

By now I have my trusty magnifying glass in hand and my arthritic spine is killing me. I go nose to nose with the jumpers.

“Bill, I want you to take the jumper off S3 and S4 and put it on S2 and S3.”

“What do you mean S3 and S4 and S2 and S3? What the hell do you mean there is about a hundred of them?”

“Each one has a number on it.”

“You’re kidding.”

Sure enough. I peruse them with the glass and they are numbered. Talk about a prayer on a head of a pin. I’m talking about parts that I can only see with a magnifying glass. I am in the heartland of the microprocessor.

Now the impossible starts. I have to pull a jumper off and attach it to S2 and S3. To really appreciate my task you have to see a jumper. Look at this one.
(.)

Using the needlenose to get a hold of a jumper is like trying to pick up a grain of sand with the bucket of a steamshovel.

I struggle and struggle. My right thumb, damaged in an accident, is near useless. I keep thinking, if I ever do get this damn thing off, I’m sure in hell going to drop it into that maze of the microscopic, and how would I ever be able to face Charley?

I soon realize moving a jumper requires the hand of a female violinist with the nerves of a person who has been dead a week. I reach into the very depths of my faith and beg God for a steady hand. The jumper is soon submerged in a drop of sweat from my nose. It takes forever and forever, but I do it.

After accomplishing my mission, I re-hook up all the plugs into the back.

During this whole operation the phone line has been open. It has taken so long Charley has had his Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy lunch. I am exhausted, my suspenders are soaked with sweat and my back is killing me.

“Hey, Charley, what did you have for lunch? Sounds pretty good. I’m starving. Okay, Charley, switch on.”

We booted it up for about thirty seconds to a minute.

“Okay, Bill, shut it down. I want you to strip it down again and put the jumper in its original position.”

In the pause that followed you could have built a pyramid and gotten a good start on a second

Finally, Charley spoke up, a real cool guy.

“Bill I’ve got plenty of time, be careful, put the jumper back exactly where you had it. You don’t want to blow the motherboard.”

“Charley, are you sure you have plenty of time?”

“Bill, I’m with you till the job is done. You have the Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy. No problem.”

I had a strange feeling that Charley had a big grin on his face.

“That’s great, Charley. Listen, Charley, moving that jumper took a lot out me. Besides that, I think I was lucky as hell. I’m not as nimble as I used to be. You will have to bear with me, I’m on in years, just hit 92,” I lied. “I’m missing a thumb on my right hand. The other problem is I have to hold my right hand with my left to stop it from shaking. Stay next to that phone, Charley, I’ll be needing your support.”

I then went into my kitchen and had my Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy lunch. There was no need to hurry. Charley had plenty of time. I started the meal off with a Manhattan followed by a well-cooked cheeseburger. I

always noticed that after a second Manhattan there was no need for me to hold my right hand with my left. I almost forgot that Charley was on the phone.

After a leisurely lunch and a glance at the newspaper I picked up the phone again. "Hey, Charley. I had a delicious lunch and now I'm going to get hot on that jumper." I went back to "Old Bess" and replaced the jumper without hearing an explosion. I guess I didn't blow the motherboard, whatever the hell that means.

"Charley, the jumper is back in its original position."

"Bill, push the button."

"Old Bess" came flashing on at top speed.

May I suggest, Mr. Waygate, that you include with your Platinum Premium Service & Support Policy, One packet containing:

1-Philipshead screwdriver,

1-Tweezers,

1-Needlenose,

1-Magnifying glass,

2-Manhattans, very dry.

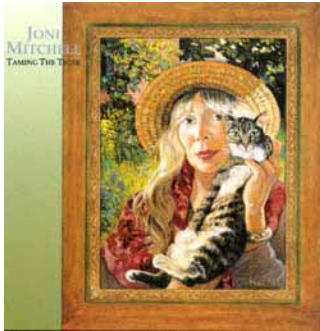
Yours truly

Bill Monks

REVIEWS

Here's a sampling of recent reviews from our website:

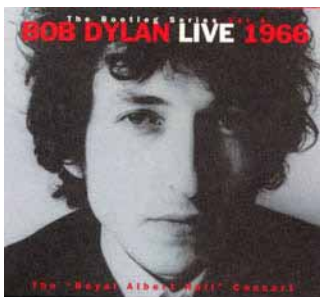
www.keystonenet.com/~jesch/osp/reviews.htm



Joni Mitchell: *Taming the Tiger*

Reprise Records

Joni's doing just fine. She doesn't crank out the albums as often as she used to, but this one has some of the fire and emotional sweep of classic work like *Hejira*. There's some wonderful guitar textures achieved, like a wash in warm surf, and her voice is still in good form. With an artist this gifted, you can hardly go wrong. Like maybe if she had an accidental frontal lobotomy, I might not buy her next album.... Nah, I think I'd buy it anyway.



Bob Dylan: *Bootleg Series, Vol. 4, Live 1966*

Columbia Records, www.bobdylan.com

Own a piece of rock and roll history. Dylan's 1966 Manchester Free Trade Hall concert, misnamed "The Royal Albert Hall Concert" and often bootlegged, was the stuff of legend. Columbia had this pristine concert recording in its vaults all these years. It chronicles that dangerous

period when Dylan was making the transition from acoustic, protest singing balladeer to rock and roll iconoclast. It's a two CD set: CD one is the solo acoustic set -- an absolute dream of a performance that find Dylan at the top of his expressive game. When you get to disc 2, all hell breaks loose, as Dylan, backed by the Band (then known as The Hawks), unleashes a blistering set of searing rock and roll that flies in the faces of many of the fans, who can be heard jeering, heckling, and protesting in the background. At one point, an irate fan shouts "Judas", to which Dylan responds, "I don't believe you. You're a liar..." then turning to the band he says, "play it fucking loud" and they launch into a knockout rendition of Like a Rolling Stone. What can you say but, Wow!



Dada: *Dada*

MCA Records

When's somebody going to wake up and take notice of Dada again? This LA trio has faded into one hit wonder status for their witty single "Dizz Knee Land" on their excellent debut album, *Puzzle*. But all of sudden it's morning, we're at the tail end of the 90's and Dada's up to album number 4, and it's arguably their strongest work yet. Dada's pop smarts are dead-on. Take the soaring chorus and timely message of *Information Undertow*, the infectious hooks in *California Gold*, the aftertaste of Beatles, Beach Boys in the harmonies, the slamming Power Pop of a Cheap Trick -- it's enough to make you sing out loud. Aside from the many

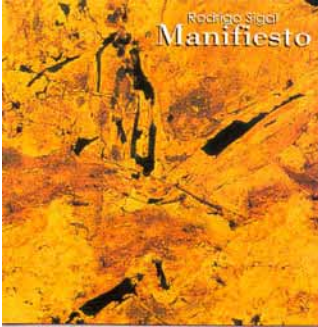
tight romping rock numbers, there's a couple really fine ballads on here, including the lovely and painful "Goodbye." Dada's vocal blend and two part harmonies continue to be candy for my ears. Do yourself a favor. Forget the one hit wonder rap, and check out Dada for yourself. They ooze pop rock song excellence.



Nick Dastardly and the Escape Artists: *Let Go of My Bruised Wing*

Self Released: Parachute Entertainment 703-266-8880, nickdastardly@msn.com

Roots rock from Northern Virginia is the order of the day here. "Nick" and pals owe quite a bit to influences like the Counting Crows and Jakob Dylan of the Wallflowers. They're a good, solid band with muscular bluesy punch and a knack for catchy choruses. The production has that poppy snare sound and groovin' grungy rhythm guitar you hear a lot on the radio these days. Lead vocalist and main songwriter Scott Miller is no Adam Duritz (to be fair, who is?), but he does have a husky, compelling voice and sings his words like he means it. This is a band to keep an eye on. Highlights: How'd You Get to Be Such a Bore, The Sleeping Giant Walks Tonight, Something is Bound to Break, I Am Feeling Almost Cool, Let Go of My Bruised Wing.



Rodrigo Sigal: *Manifesto*

CIEM 006: Sigal@city.ac.uk

This is "on the edge stuff" and I love it. A mesmerizing blend of classical chamber music and avant garde, replete with ambient noise, synths, loops and sampled real life noises. The opening track has an Edgar Varese vibe going with a steely flute and lots of curious strangeness. Track 2 starts with piano themes and then dives into the deep end. There are flashes of melancholic strings and other orchestral timbres amid the collage of sounds. Stereo effects abound, and I dare you to pull on the headphones! Sigal comes from Mexico and the liner notes are in Spanish and English. If you were like me and listened to Revolution No. 9 on the Beatles White Album all the way through, everytime, and actually enjoyed it -- you will surely enjoy this brilliant CD immensely. Very cool. Very moving. Very 20th century.



Alanis Morissette: *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*

Maverick/Reprise

It's pretty dang easy to line up Alanis in the critical crosshairs. The cavalier hoser in me can point to the self indulgence, the hysterical navel-gazing, the canned "alternative-thin-yodelling-canadian-angry-grrlll" vibe. Reading her lyrics is like finding a freshman's spiral notebook

journal -- it makes me wince, like "should I really be reading this self-probing"? It reads less like poetry and more like diary rants.

But something keeps getting in the way, keeps me from pulling the trigger. I happen to appreciate good pop music when it enters my ears. In the same way that Jagged Little Pill molded the alternative sound into letter-perfect pop, *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* will not be denied. Believe me, I tried.

Self-indulgence or not, Morissette's lyrics do take chances. In particular that "notebook" quality, leads to interesting phrasing tricks and meters. For instance, on the first single "Thank U." the novel way she phrases the line "Thank you, disillusionment", makes disillusionment into a ironically soaring moment of epiphany -- a brilliant stroke. This album is filled with details like that, some subtle, some not. Just when you think Alanis is succumbing to her weaknesses, she turns it into gold.

Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie is more rhythmically complex than her debut album -- more polyrhythms, droning guitars and turbulent grooves. There's something almost acidic and trancelike to many of the songs, and her voice adapts well to this musical environment. Make no mistake though; Alanis and producer Glen Ballard have not lost their masterful touch for the pop chorus; Ballard in particular seems to have this instinctual feel for the exact production moves needed to maximize each song's groove potential. They never let the songs get too far away from an irresistably catchy hook. So I give in -- I pull the rifle off my shoulder and place it at my feet, which, by the way, happen to be tapping.



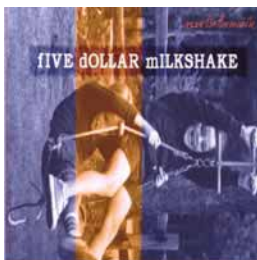
Brer Brian: *Baggidy Ba*

Damn Fine Records: brerbrian@yahoo.com

The Brer Brian Ministry
432 Crocker Hill Road

Binghamton, NY 13904

This is a rather strange musical excursion -- kinda crazy, kinda intriguing, and ultimately very entertaining. This playful album screams "DIY" and is a real hodgepodge of styles. It starts out with several mean and loopy analog synthish, drumloop based tunes, then inexplicably shifts gears into acoustic guitar based (both slide twelve string and strummed six string) aggressive punkfolk. Several allusions sprang in my head -- Captain Beefheart, Zappa, Jethro Tull, Leo Kottke. I like the variety and humor of the songs, and despite the earthiness of the production, Brer Brian demonstrates some real songwriting skill, especially in his vocal melodies. Recommended for the adventurous.



FIVE dOLLAR mILKSHAKE: *apartinthemiddle*

Ice Cream Headache Records
powerderspam@aol.com
www.fivedollarmilkshake.com

Listening to this fine CD, I found myself flashing on Adam Duritz and Counting Crows, particularly the harder edged Recovering the Satellites album. That's not a bad deal, to be thinking of a band like that whilst drinking in this band -- it reflects five dollar

milkshake's roots rock sound -- but so many bands don't take the sound much further than what a jaded critic might chalk up as a pleasant but derivative take on the norm. But as I listened to the CD again and again I found that this Boston-based band has its own identity for sure -- there's wit, humor, even some home-spun heartland countrified emotion. There's also a quirky, punky edge that shouldn't be overlooked. It all comes down ultimately (and as usual) to the songwriting. There's no substitute for good, diverse, solid songwriting, and this band delivers the goods. All this wrapped in appealing but not overly slick DIY production. There's some great sounding hammond organ backing up the core guitar/drums/bass trio of Jaime d'Almedia, Dave Zimmerman, and John Haydon.

Let's cut to the chase. This one's a keeper. Essential rock and roll, especially for those of old enough to be steeped in earthy 70's rock. Keep an eye glued to these up and comers.



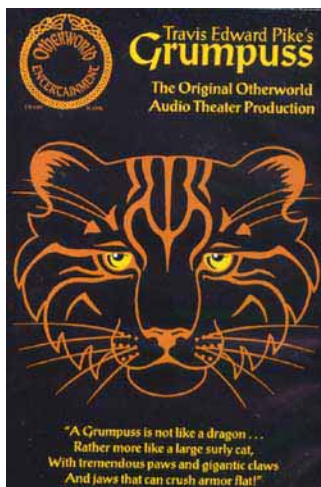
Fitz: *Desperate Me*

Fitz Ya Good Music
1104 Xylon Avenue North
Champlin, MN 55316
fitzyagood@aol.com

Fitz comes on strong from the heartland with a solid set of roots rock and roll, served American style. The band is very much steered by Mark FitzSimmons, who writes and sings the songs. FitzSimmons bears some resemblance to John Hiatt and that Mellencamp Artist previously known as Cougar. The band is gutsy and rock steady, and the harmonies often soar to good

effect. Makes me want to high tail it down the prairie on an empty interstate under the big sky. Fitz is unafraid to stand in the stream of tradition, whether it's in the wake of Buddy Holly or Tom Petty.

I think the album would have worn better shaved by a couple tunes, yet all told this is an able set of well-honed rock tunes that's deserving of mainstream airplay.



Travis Edward Pike: *The Grumpuss*

Otherworld Entertainment,
www.grumpuss.com

Travis Edward Pike's Grumpuss is an enchanting tale of a monster-sized cat and the quest of one knight, Sir Ellery, to subdue it for the sake of salvaging his kingdom.

The entire tale, carved into 4 distinct "acts" (1 hour 38 minutes running time on the video version, 2 cassette tapes worth for the audio only version), is a rhyming epic-style romance in the spirit of the magical stories told by medieval bards before royal courts. And true to the spirit of that medieval inspiration, Pike performs the entire poem from memory! That's right. Nary a cue card in sight.

You would think that a long performance like this would be boring as it slammed up against our short attention spans. Au contraire! I found it refreshing and charming.

The Grumpuss will be a sure fire hit for children. It has the lilting playful rhymes of a Dr. Seuss book (albeit not as zany as Seuss)

that should captivate any youngster. But the story has appeal for adults too, if for nothing else than to get a taste for the kind of entertainment that would have pleased the eyes and ears of courtly types before the days of deep dish tv and Frequency Modulated radio waves. You'll be amazed how anyone could have committed this type of long poem to memory, and yet, there it is before your eyes and ears -- proof that it can be done, and done well. Anyone interested in oral poetry would find much of value in *The Grumpuss*.

Pike provides an expert actor's touch to the various characters in his poem -- infusing them with quirky voices, by turns husky, wheedling, and fluid. It's the kind of narrative poetry that will send your imagination on a sort of magical balloon ride.

reviewed by j. esch

Announcements

Marc Awodey's Poetry Machines

contact rawodey@together.net



Poets, according to Marc Awodey, should be more proactive about distributing their own work and the work of others. This electronic medium is one way, journals etc. are another- but these things do nothing for your own community. A few years ago it seemed like more people were reading Awodey's own poems in foreign places than they were in his native Burlington, Vermont- and many of the fine poets whom he knew

in town were doing fine open readings, but no one had a chance to read their works in print at cafes, or at home.

Marc began publishing little books -- 3"x4" single sided Xerox, folded from one sheet of paper into eight pages- for the cost of a few cents each. Awodey and others began printing each others works and distributing little piles of these guerrilla style.

Soon they had distributed thousands of books all over the world. Whenever anyone took a trip, little piles of books went with them. “I have put them in bibles at sleazy motels, and shot them at bank tellers through pneumatic tubes. They are so cheap to make, that little cost is required and little is asked from the reader,” says Awodey. “But they exist in space rather than Cyber space. They are modest, unlike expensive vanity publishing. And when they are distributed by vending machine—they highlight the absurdity of making art a commodity. The books and machines are a form of anarchistic distribution. We are also saving cigarette machines from landfills. Poetry machines should be somewhere in every city.”

Awodey does not believe in the notion of profiting from “intellectual property” any more than he believes in profiting from selling food or medicine, or shelter. “Ultimately art can never be about money. But I realize that I am an extremist in this regard, and that people actually like to buy things if it is fun for them to do so. Books from the poetry machines cost fifty cents—and the machines are fun to operate, so this pays for the cost of printing the little books. The empty vending machines I get for free—after a few phone calls (yellow pages under “vending machines”) you will find somebody willing to give away obsolete machines, or donate them to a non-profit entity. I have created a non-profit entity— it is not so hard to do.”

Vermont has recently banned the vending of cigarettes by machine, so cigarette machines are relatively ubiquitous. Awodey has five of them, plus two laundry soap box machines, from a recently deceased laundromat.

If you send Marc an SASE (Marc Awodey c/oRhombus Gallery-Theater, 186 college St. mezzanine; Burlington, VT 05401) he will send you little books, and pictures of the machines. They are presently installed at four Burlington locations (including the Fleming museum at the Univ. of Vermont), one Shelburne VT location, and one New Hampshire location. He'll also advise you on making your own poetry machine. And yes- if you make and send him 25 little books, he will put them in a machine, and send you 25 Minimal Press Books.

St. Petersburg Summer Writing Program

contact Mikhail Iossel <iosselm@union.edu>

We at SLS (see below) would like to bring to your attention the following, very interesting and unusual summer writing program in St. Petersburg, Russia: <http://www.osmotec.com/SLS/index.html>

Some of the finest contemporary authors — in one of the world's strangest cities.

Contributors

Vasilis Afxentiou, vafx@hol.gr. Vasilis is an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher who has been teaching English full-time for the last twelve years. Prior to that he worked as a Technical Specifications Writer for seven years and as an Engineer for five years. Vasilis was born in Thessaloniki, Greece and went to university in the United States, where he received a B.Sc. degree. His writing credits include published fiction and non-fiction appearing both in Greece and in the USA. Stateside publications he has written for are Greek Accent, National Herald (Proini), and Crosscurrents. In Greece he's been published in 30-Days, Key Travel News, Greece's Weekly, Athena Magazine and had a weekend travel column in The Athens Star newspaper. Some e-zines that have published his stories are The Domain, Ibn Quirtaiba, Cosmic Visions, ThinkB, Aphelion, Dark Planet, Basket Case, BORNmagazine, Aspiring Writer, ThinkB, Appalachians, Newwords, and Zine in Time.

Tom Harmon, harmont@emi.com. By day Tom directs investigations into allegations of abuse and neglect in New York state programs serving individuals with disabilities. By night and weekend, he reserves time for his loves: wife Sara teenage sons Jesse and Noah, and poetry.

Alan Kaufman, Akpoem@aol.com. Alan's most recent book is *Who Are We? This Spring*, his 996 page anthology and documentation of 'Outsider' poetry from the 1950's to the present day, *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, will be published by Thunder's Mouth Press. His other books include *The New Generation* (Anchor/Doubleday, 1987), *American Cruiser* (Zeitgeist Press, 1990) and *Before I Wake* (Cyborg Productions, 1992) .





Heather MacLeod,

snowrat@sage.ark.com. Heather's most recent work has appeared in NeWest Review, Grain, and Room of One's Own. She lives in British Columbia. Her poetry book, "My Flesh the Sound of Rain," is published by Coteau Books.



Bill Monks,

BILLKIAS@worldnet.att.net. Although he claims he spent 35 years in the Greenwich Village circus, enjoying people, Bill currently resides in Fairview, NJ. A retired banker, he has been writing memoirs and short stories for ten years now, which proves

you're never too old to take up the thrill of writing—Bill is 72 years old with a wife and seven kids. He is also president of the Know It All Society (KIAS).

Sonia Pressman Fuentes, sfuentes@erols.com. Sonia is available for talks on women's rights and memoir-readings. Her memoirs will be available for downloading online this May or June at www.lstbooks.com.



Michael Salinger, mgsal@en.com.

Michael Salinger lives east of Cleveland Ohio. He is a father. He has worked in the same place for over 16 years; people have told him that is quite an accomplishment. He has performed poetry and theater all over the United States. Sometimes people clap. His

workshops have been received well on college campuses. Four time captain of the Cleveland National Poetry Slam Team, he has retired from the competition to focus on fostering a vibrant scene in Cleveland that welcomes out of

town readers, through his producing of the Classic Cleveland Poetry Slam series.

Mario Susko. Mario just won an International Prize for Poetry issued by Nueve Letteres in Italy for his first book in English called *Mothers, Shoes and Other Mortal Songs*. Mario's second book of poems, *Versus Exsul*, published in October of 1998 (Yuganta Press, Stamford, CT) has been characterized by "Library Journal" as the collection of poems "as beautiful and engaging as it is inventive and strong." Mario is a witness and survivor of the war in Bosnia who left the city of Sarajevo in March of 1993 and came to the US. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from SUNY at Stony Brook in 1973, and has lived 14 of his



last 27 years in this country. A three time Fulbright scholar, Dr. Susko taught primarily at the University of Sarajevo; currently he is teaching at Nassau Corn. College on Long Island, NY. He has published 59 books, 17 of which are his volumes of poems. He has edited and translated several anthologies and fiction titles, and translations of major American writers. His poems have been published in, or accepted by, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Parnassus*, *Nassau Review*, *Kiosk*, *Fence*, *Potato Eyes*, *Seneca Review* and *Nuove Lettere* (Italy), among others.



Bruce Taylor, taylorb@uwec.edu. Bruce Taylor's poetry has appeared in such places as *The Chicago Review*, *the Formalist*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Literary Review*, *The Nation*, *The New York Quarterly* and *Poetry*. He has published four books of poetry, including most recently *This Day*, published by Juniper Press, and has won awards and fellowships from the Wisconsin

Arts Board, the NEA, and the Bush Arts Foundation. Check out more info on Bruce at <http://www.uwec.edu/Academic/English/Faculty/Taylor.htm>



Chris Vecchio,

104204.707@compuserve.com. Chris is an electrical engineer, haiku poet and artist living in Philadelphia, PA. Please go to: www.libertynet.org/nexus/7up/index.html and click on the schematic (#7). Chris will have one or two pieces in this show in March and a complete solo show in April.

Eric Wasserman, ewass3@aol.com. Eric's previous fiction has appeared in the Allegheny Review and will be featured online in Monster Press. *Replacement* is included in a collection of short fiction currently being represented by Cambridge Literary Associates for possible book-length publication.