

VERBAL EQUINOX

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER JOURNAL

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"Studies on how the right and left sides of the brain function have shown that...people think in images, not words."

—Barbara Ganim

excerpts from

DEETER ROAD *by Susannah Rojo* FIRST PLACE ESSAY WINNER

There were at least sixty barrels of one-cent candy at Baldingers. How do you decide? What did we get last time?

Jennifer always went for the poleons. There was no monkey business there. She only had to decide between yellow, pink, orange or green. Alison and I however, would eyeball the two-cent toys against the far wall. Is it better to get one toy and twenty-two candies or just twenty-five candies? There were tiny miniature scissors, dolls, rings, necklaces, all types of trinkets and treasures.

Sometimes we would try and put an extra candy or two in the bag in hopes that Mr. and Mrs. Baldinger's eyesight was going.

We would check up on Mama once in a while to see how she was getting along with the imported cheeses and other delicacies. Usually we would get a piece of licorice root to chew before we left. We would chew on it and suck on it until all that was left was a mass of strands. Usually after we had arrived at the farm and had eaten all of our candy, we would go to the

car and search for our frayed licorice stick. It wasn't much—but it wasn't "a piece of fruit" which is what Mama always suggested when we said we wanted something to eat. "How about a piece of fruit?" she would say to us as our faces fell and we grumbled out of the kitchen.

We would then pile back into the car; after leaving Baldingers, and Mama would open up the cheeses and get out some of the "good cracker." She would use Pops' pocket knife and slice off bits for us and then pass it back on top of a cracker. My favorite, and Pops' was always smoked cheese. She would usually buy that and some Gouda with caraway seeds in it. She'd pour Pop a cup of steaming hot coffee from the old green thermos and we'd be off, once again, for the farm.

I've not been back to the farm since then, but I go there often in my thoughts. I can hear the long grass under the car which needs to be cut. I can see the leaf imprints stained upon the roof of the old cave house. It is time to go back.

SUNDY SPEAKS...

Comments from the coordinator

Time to Go

Pack a bag and go, quickly
before a blush touches
the root line or rain gutter.
In the rise and shine of morning
leave without a
note on the counter
without a pie in the refrigerator.

Leave quietly, dream
down Interstate 15
when dew prisms the strands of grass
gone wild and high.
Where, if they exist at all, the sharpened
trees, pine and aspen,
will breathe about great silence
like mine shaft doors flung open
to gape at a baby sky or warnings in the
language of horse and rider
after peppered rattlers vanish
like missing children on milk cartons.

If the boom town ghost exists at all,
It will be born again
where the church house rises clean
out of the red dust of bricks
slapped onto a concrete foundation.
It will shine, dean as pansies
ringing the east wall
growing tenacious in the shade,
dean as the windows lick—and promised
with back issue newspapers—and linoleum
buffed in broad glossy circles.
Clean. Uke my desire which climbed up
step by step from the cellar coal room heat
and blasted out the wall for a quick exit.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Selected 1997 Writing Center contest winners
- Judges' comments
- Propeller-nose

"To separate art from life is to separate body from soul. A true artist lives and breathes—he gathers the essence from the physical and spiritual existence around him, cycles it through his mind and body, his blood and soul, and releases it—expressed in his own way."

—Andrew G. Christensen

SOME THOUGHTS...

WHILE READING FICTION AND POETRY FROM WSU

This was an impressive collection, in that all the poems used the language so well. I've never judged such a "literate" group of poems! You are all winners.

- Affection in poetry is a big ne>no. It brands you as a beginner. Besides no capitals and/or no punctuation. this includes using those pretty fonts your computer can put out. centering all the lines. using those "poetic" words. etc.

- Notice the techniques used by "the Big Guys," the well-known published poets. For the most part, they write from the left margin. and poems are centered on the page. with the title neatly just above the body of the poem. It's simple and it works.

- Try to guide your poem "off the page." Go beyond description of a scene or situation. Make it say something.

- A poem is not finished until it has a title. Discover the great secret that a good title can enhance. set up. clinch a poem. Show that you respect your work enough to give it the best title you can find. Also polish it well (that's rewrite!). Above all, keep writing!



Rosalyn Ostler, poetry judge

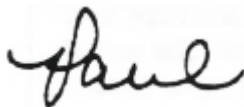
Fresh ideas—There were plenty in this group of stories. Any "new spin" you can add to a character, plot, etc. contributes to the sparkle of a piece.

I think writing is an art and a craft. You can't teach it. but it can be learned. The only way to learn it is through doing it. Every writer gets better as he or she writes. The art in writing comes from the passion of the writer. The craftsmanship comes from doing it time after time after time. The two feed one another—Passion keeps you writing. success in the process increases your passion.

Reading good writers. with the question "how does the writer do this?" occurring to you every time you are pleased or surprised or satisfied (or your breath is taken away!) helps improve writing.

Reading like a writer and writing like a reader (with audience in mind) is valuable.

Short story is a difficult challenge for most writers. Because of limits of length. every word must earn its place. Every word must sparkle. Cut out everything that doesn't. Adjectives have less "shine" than verbs.



Paul Pitts, short story judge

AND FROM THE PEANUT GALLERY...

words from the wise

So anyway, there we were. wondering what to do with all our spare time when **Verbal Equinox** season rolled around. *How much work could it be?* we thought. Reading all of the winning entries from the 1997 Writing Center Writing Contest would probably be a lot of fun. That it was, but it was certainly a lot more work than you. the humble reader; can imagine.

But here it is (finally!), and we're actually wondering what to do with our spare time once again.

As readers will find, this year's **Verbal Equinox** supercedes all previous editions in content and design, both of which are fresh and different, kind of like a kumquat.

The editors would like to thank everyone who entered the 1997 Writing Center Writing Contest. Weber State University definitely has more than its fair share of talented writers.

Thanks also to the 1997 Writing Center Writing Contest judges Sherrie Johnson, Rosalyn Ostler, Paul Pitts and Paul Rawlins for their time. "Speaking of time. thanks to us (Usa and Kelly) for doing a terrific job!

And a special thanks goes out to Sundry Watanabe, whose presence at the Writing Center will never be replaced. though her position may be filled.

The editors would like readers to be sure and look for Some of the notable pieces in this year's **Verbal Equinox**, including Crystal Lewis' poem "The Shores of your Hands," Andrew Christensen's the Ultimate Battle of Propeller-nose," and Kate Tanner's "Daylight in the Swamps." We encourage readers to read these selections from this year's **Verbal Equinox** as well as all the others, as we have already had the opportunity to do, and will be doing again soon...

the editors

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DAYLIGHT IN THE SWAMPS

by Kate Tanner

THIRD PLACE SHORT SHORT STORY

It was early morning. I could faintly hear the grind of my grandpa Wayne's snoring as it echoed down through the heating vent. I pushed the covers down and looked up at the ceiling where the vent was located. I could see him. I could smell him. He was the most mysterious person I had ever met. I loved being his grand-daughter ...his **favorite**, mind you, grand-daughter.

Wayne and my grandma Millie were married when he was fifteen and she was sixteen. There are five kids in their family all together; my mom was the first. Somewhere along the line Wayne lost a few marbles-but gained a lot of wisdom (he wouldn't want me to call it that but there aren't many words to describe his philosophies).

I can still remember when I was seven. Just Wayne and I had gone fishing early in the morning. "Daylight in the swamps," as he called it. He had to start fishing early because that's when the fish bite-or so he told me-and so I believed. I was too small to cross any of the brooks. so I'd climb up on his back and he would wade across with me choking my arms around his throat. I would worry and clench his neck during the first couple of times across. but after getting used to crossing and realizing I was safe, I would let the edges of my sandals dangle in the rapid water and my toes could feel the cold. Sometimes I would pretend he was rescuing me from a sunken ship. I think maybe some of the admiration I have built up towards my grandpa comes from the hero I see through my imagination.

We would sit on the fallen tree branches. I would drink a soda and he a beer. On one fishing excursion. I remember seeing his silver dollar money clip.

"Wow! Is that a real silver dollar? Aren't they worth a lot?" I was fascinated with the value of money.

"I got this from my dad before he died. My sister Josey got one too but

she had it melted down into the damned ugliest pair earrings I have ever seen." Right then I decided that I would never be nice to Josey. But I don't think I ever met her:

I remembered Wayne's dad being mentioned once or twice. but I never saw any pictures and I never heard any stories. All I knew of him was that he and Wayne's mom had divorced when Wayne was twenty. and now he was dead. I'd thought about not having a dad a few times before. usually after my dad had punished me. but I never could imagine what life would be like without dad.

"Grandpa. how old are you?"

"How old do I look, Vanna?"

"You look old. Like a grandpa should look. I guess...around. um, eighty?" He laughed into his beer and began to choke up a little of the foam.

"Listen here, Vanna," He called me Vanna because every time I visited him we would watch Wheel of Fortune at 10:30 a.m. and he would tell everyone how much I looked like Vanna White. "I'm fifty-eight years old. There is no way in hell you'll see me alive at eighty." He took a swig of beer before looking at my confused expression. "Don't worry. Everyone will be glad to see me go. Right now I'm happy. You know why? I can fish, and drink, and cook . . . and carry my favorite grand daughter across the brook without the currents getting the best of me. If I turn eighty-even seventy-five I won't be able to do those things. I don't think life is worth stringing along if all you have are memories of better times:

I guess I could understand what he was saying (to the best ability a six year old can understand her grandpa telling her about his death, or the mere concept of death in general).

"Okay, Wayne. Then, when you do die, would you promise to let me have your silver dollar?" And he did.

My grandpa Wayne is now sixty-nine. A lot has changed since our little talk by the river. People are liv-

ing longer and there is more to a seventy year olds life than game shows and rest homes. I haven't told Wayne that yet but someday I hope to, when we're out in the water. Someday when he's seventy-five. For some reason though. I think he'll be just as stubborn then as always. Right now he's just as vibrant and caulkey as he was ten years ago I am reminded of that every time he steps out of the bathroom after getting ready for the day. He still wears the same aftershave he has since I can remember. I don't know the name of it, but I could smell it a million miles away. If someone is wearing it I never fail to

see **DAYLIGHT** page 11

THE SHORES OF YOUR HANDS

by Crystal Lewis

FIRST HONORABLE MENTION POETRY

Cool round conches
Grace the shores
Of your hands
Where alabaster half-moons
Rise
From the pulsing marble
Of your flesh.
Fingers, legs
Of a pearl spider,
Curl
And come to rest
Tip

by

tip

As a pianist caresses
A fragile scale.
Tendons fan to anchor
The symmetry
Of an alluvial web.
Surprising, soft seafoam
Murmurs in your palms,
And slips into the
Eternal oceans
Of your wrists.

THE IMAGE *by Debbie Wertz*

SECOND PLACE SHORT STORY

Stephanie stared at her reflection in the full length tri-fold mirror. She pivoted on one foot, glancing at all angles, making sure that there were no flaws in her appearance. The black silk dress clung seductively to her slender torso, no enough to be shocking, but enough to be striking. The dress was perfect for this occasion.

"Mama would have liked this choice," Stephanie thought. "She always said you could never go wrong with black: She smiled at her reflection, no the kind of smile that reached her eyes, but that kind of come-on smile; the *one* that men liked so well, never showing teeth, just a slight lift to the right side of her mouth.

Her smile faded as she reached to push back a renegade curt that had

escaped from her French braid to dangle freely along the length of her cheek. She stood transfixed, hand midair; and mind wandering to Ned.

Ned was different from the others. He wouldn't allow her to play the game her WJY. The game of romance was one of power and control, and Stephanie always had to be the winner. But with Ned, Stephanie couldn't maintain the restraint that she was used to having.

"I can't lose the upper hand. I won't," Stephanie said. "If I lose my power; then *she wins*: The words had no sooner entered her mind when, to Stephanie's horror, the image in the mirror began to change.

"No, no again!" She squinted her eyes, clenched her fists, and hoped that the apparition would be gone when she was willing to look again. Once she mustered enough courage to open her eyes, the image was even more hideous than the countless others that she had seen since her teenage years.

She slid her hands down her torso and could feel the narrow curves, but the mirror displayed bulging hips and midriff, and the dress that had once hung so appealingly spread outward like a huge umbrella. Her gaze slowly raised until it reached the place where her diamond pendant should have been, but instead of laying above the gentle curve of her breasts, the necklace was lost beneath the rolls of flesh that hung beneath her reflection's jaw line.

The image smiled, drawing Stephanie closer; inviting her to enter the glass and become one with the bloated monster. Stephanie stretched her trembling hand and moved toward the mirror. Just as she sensed the coolness of the glass. A bell rang, causing the repulsive reflection to disappear. Shaken, she turned toward the door, taking one last glance at the mirror before she turned the knob.

MORNING CAME

by Todd Denman

NOTABLE POEM

Morning came and we spidered
swinging;

Space and Time hid in cheap grass,
low

And we Forgottens drove the
pendulum.

Our hands of sweating milk
searched

The links of the cold-forged chains,

Brooking the blue between us;

We laughed;

Like sunshine we laughed.

Sunshine!

Sunshine!

BY SLEEPY CANDLES

by Mary Rosa Moraga Barrow

FIRST PLACE POETRY WINNER

the tree
disguised as shadow
does not peek at the window
wind pushes it to the corner
a thread of moon
tangles the branches

dawn looks
for an invisible key
to enter
the house

in a rose smelling corner
a picture nestles the fist grandson
and virgin books
are heavy with poems

by sleepy candles
on a rocking chair
stuffed with insomnia
i hear the door open
and you come in
to steal from me
even
silence

WELL SEASONED

By Todd Denman

NOTABLE POEM

The chairlift hums along
smooth
as a coat's black zipper

Avalanche prevention
booms
through the snowy silence

Below
my seasoned
board
religiously reads terrain

but doesn't need to
she already
knows
the way

Us two;
bonded together
Have Eaten Epic Days
For Lunch

THE CHRISTMAS LIE

by Les Wade

THIRD PLACE ESSAY

I love Christmas. I love the crowded malls filled with Christmas music. the jammed streets where cars search fruitlessly for somewhere. anywhere to park. I love to watch people with loaded plastic bags from Sears, Mervins, or Nordstroms wander almost aimlessly from store to store to find just one last bargain. I love to walk through the Christmas Village and see elf houses and workshops surrounded by light poles and pines decorated with colored blinking lights. Usually, I carry some extra change in case someone asks for a dollar for a cup of coffee to keep him warm. In the mall or the village. I often stop and watch the little tykes stand in line for just a chance to share their secret wishes with that white-haired gent with the long stringy beard.

"Oh. Santa," they say. "Please bring me Barbie, or a truck, or train," or a video game."

As I watch the kids walk away with a stripped candy cane clutched tightly in a little paw. I think about the big lie all little kids believe-the lie of Santa.

I remember the year when I turned five. Santa sat on his big red throne in the basement of the old Penny's on the corner of Twenty-fifth and Washington. After standing in line for what seemed like hours. it was finally my turn. Santa hugged and pulled me close.

I whispered in his ear; "I want a train: I always asked for a train. My dad would often take me to the depot so I could watch the trains pull in and out; hear the whistles; watch the wheels. wave at the engineers and conductor. "I want a train." I repeated to Santa. "Please don't forget. I've been good."

I stood by Santa's side as my older sister shared her secrets. We posed together on his lap as the photogra-

pher saved that memory forever.

I recently opened an old photo a bum and remembered that night. I'd worn my blue plastic coat with holes I'd chewed in the sleeves around the cuffs. That black and white photo didn't show the color; but I still remember that chewed blue coat. My fingers looked sticky and gooey from the peppermint candy cane clutched in my fist. I looked at Santa in that old photo and wondered why a man with smiling eyes would lie?

Each year Santa would first appear in the Christmas parade on Washington Boulevard. He'd be sitting in a sleigh on a red decorated float or sometimes he'd be setting in the back of a convertible. After that first appearance. Santa would show up all over town. Out shopping with my mother on brisk December evenings and chilly Saturday mornings. I'd see all the Santas. Some would be ringing a bell while standing by a Salvation Army kettle. big and red, suspended from a tripod with a chain; other Santas would be in the park in the Christmas Village, or in the toy department at Sears, or even passing out peppermint ice-cream cones at Farr's Ice Cream. Each and every time I saw a Santa I wanted to stand in line and ask for a train. I wanted to make sure he remembered me. My mother would usually remind me that since I had a ready asked Santa. I didn't need to bother him again. Occasionally. I go with my dad to Sears and he'd a ways let me go ask Santa. And, I kept waiting for my train.

Years passed before I finally learned the truth. Mrs. Cottle, my fourth-grade teacher, told on Santa. One day in class, just before Christmas, she just said, "You know, there really isn't a Santa Clause. Santa is really just your parents."

Never had I felt such pain or felt such betrayal. I wanted to yell. "No. No. No. That can't be true" But somehow. I knew she told the truth. but still, deep inside. I really wanted to cry. With just a few words she'd killed forever the man I loved.

Santa died that day. Never again would I sit on a Santa's lap, or accept candy from an elf. I never wondered again how Santa moved so quickly from his throne in Penny's basement out to the street corner where he'd stand, ringing a bell by a large red pot.

I opened a box on Christmas morning that year, forth grade, when I was nine, that tag shouted, "To Leslie. from Santa." Yes! Finally, I had my train, finally my train, my train. I looked again at the tag. "From Santa." What a lie.

I looked from the tag to the old black and white TV where I had helped Mom set up a Nativity scene. with Mary and Joseph. shepherds and wise men. cattle and sheep. I looked at the plastic blinking Santa in the front-room window. I looked back to the Nativity and the Baby Jesus who lay so quietly in a wooden manger and wondered if Baby Jesus was also just a lie.

ANOTHER HURDLE

by Crystal Benis

SECOND PLACE POETRY

Grandpa straddled the fence
Like it was a Clydesdale,
Too big to dismount.
The heel of his loafer
Glanced the uppermost plank
But, bourbon-burdened,
Lurched down again.
The sprinkler system tsk-tsked
Its disapproval and
Spat at his back.
His neck bent as
Droplets rolled from
The brim of his hat and
Spattered on the backs
Of his liver-spotted hands.

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THE ULTIMATE BATTLE OF PROPELLER—NOSE

by Andrew Christensen

SECOND PLACE ESSAY

I was introduced to Propeller-nose three years ago by my four-year old nephew. Joseph. Joe had just recently incorporated Propeller-nose into his surreal saga as the greatest epic hero to ever set foot in his enchanting, imaginary world. As the name implies, Propeller-nose was a man, an *extraordinary* man, with a propeller for a nose. He was the apparition of good, he never failed to overcome the various powers of evil. A new superpower was added to the seemingly infinite repertoire with each new Propeller-nose tale.

Joe drew pictures of Propeller-nose for each member in the family, and even made several incredibly de-

tailed board-games centered around the adventures of Propeller-nose, complete with fantastic game-pieces and "magic dice." We were often fortunate enough to witness an array of "magic tricks" that Joe had learned from Propeller-nose. Joe would dress up in flashy and extremely improvised costumes on numerous occasions (and of course on Halloween), and would run around the neighborhood playing—experimenting, discovering, and philosophizing (which children actually do have a great knack for). When he would return, he would have a new story, complex and exciting, of Propeller-nose's adventures.

One year ago, I beheld a disturbing sight—a crumpled-up picture of Propeller-nose in the garbage can. Upon further inquiry, I found out that Joe had abandoned his original epic saga shortly after he started attending kindergarten. His classmates made fun of Propeller-nose, and his teacher didn't want him to draw such "silly pictures." Propeller-nose's heroic, two-year dynasty had come to an end.

Joe was a Mighty Morphin Power Ranger for Halloween that year, just like all the other kids. He began watching their cartoons on TV and reading their comic books. He now drew, no—*colored* pictures that his teacher handed out in school. Pictures with those thick, black lines which imprison crayons with no chance of parole. Sadly, we no longer receive original pictures, board games, magic tricks, or stories from Joe.

I tell this story to illustrate what happens to a child when they enter into the established institutions of our society, which govern their lives for many, if not the rest, of their years. The institutions that tragically separate art from life. The institutions that value conformity over creativity. Education, business, the media, politics, family, society—foundations that could be the great-

est instruments of expanding human expressiveness, all work to induce conformism.

And if conformism wasn't enough, when creativity does break through the dull, gray surface, its fruits are sold into the bondage of entertainment. So much of our art ends up in cages to be viewed as freakish yet delightful works, like animals in a zoo. People become readers instead of writers, connoisseurs instead of chefs. Spectators instead of dancers or athletes. Listeners instead of musicians. Critics instead of film makers. Collectors instead of painters or sculptors. The list goes on to expose some form of observer-rather-than-creator in every possible walk of life.

To separate art from life is to separate body from soul. A true artist lives and breathes—he gathers the essence from the physical and spiritual existence around him, cycles it through his mind and body, his blood and soul, and releases it—expressed it in his own unique way. Our society sees him as a "specialist" who was meant for this field, and his expression as a showpiece, an anomaly, something set apart from life.

This dichotomy is not so in tribal societies. For them, art is not the realm of specialists, of a select few who possess some coveted artistic license, but for all people. Their aesthetics lay in involvement, rather than detachment. Art is their way of life and, in turn, their life is an art. Everyone thinks, acts, and lives everyday with an outlook of spontaneity, constantly creating, constantly striving for beauty and expression. They do not separate process from product. In their art, the process of creation is valued as much or more as the tangible results. There is an old Sanskrit word, *Lila*, which means divine play. It is the play of creation and destruction. It is the play of God. *Lila* is an uninhibited mystical experience with the

APRICOT STONES

by Mary Rosa Moraga Barrow

THIRD PLACE POETRY

in our mom-made aprons
pockets pregnant
close to home
my sister and i
walk paths
creating our own
treasure maps

under a willow's shade
mimicking ancestral women
rock in hand
we hit each stone
until it gives us
a false almond
brown peel cream body
sweet
sometimes
bitter

far from home
my sister and i
still walk paths
creating our own maps

life offers us gifts
sweet
sometimes
bitter

forces of life and death in which the individual experiences spiritual discovery and expression. *Lila* is the soul of art, which is the evidence of life in tribal societies.

Most tribal societies have an ideology that the entire world, universe, and all things spiritual and physical, including themselves, are connected. They possess a cosmic confidence in the whole scheme of existence, which enables them to play with the inherent opposites and conflicts in life. Art, then, becomes the creative medium to integrate all the particles of existence, make sense of them, and show that people, as individuals and a society, are truly *alive*.

A case in point is the Xavante, a hunting and gathering group located in the rain forests of central Brazil. Ritual and ceremony are a large part of Xavante life. In one particular ritual, the young men gather outside the chiefs hut every night to sing and dance. They work their way through the entire darkened village, singing and dancing their fellow citizens to sleep, bringing them the reassuring feeling of community and harmony. The importance of song in Xavante society is its symbolic evidence of the harmony in life for which they strive.

David Maybury-Lewis, an anthropologist who studied the Xavante, says "when Xavante want to praise a community ... they say, 'there is a lot of singing.' They mean by this that people get together; ceremonies are performed ... and the young men are alert, wakeful, and in good voice during the night" (147). On the flip side, when they wish to condemn a society, they say that it is "sleepy," a "community without much spirit and, of course, without much singing during the night" (148).

When I look at our society, I don't see much harmony. I don't see much art. However, I realize that Western traditions haven't always been this way when I look at pictures of classical architecture, and ornamentation in general. In his book, *Free Play* Stephen Nachmanovitch says this on the subject:

In the field of fine arts, we still make beautiful things; but most everyday objects around us—roads, bridges, furniture, utensils that used to also involve art and craftsmanship—seem to be built in the easiest and cheapest way. I am convinced that this difference is related to our much speedier and more trivial view of time, and our equation of time with money (149-150).

Maybe this is true. Maybe Ben Franklin is to blame ("time is money-"). Maybe if we live in a semi-timeless place, we strive for a sense of aesthetics—we build beautiful, ornamented palaces; and if we operate within fiscal years, we lose sight of beauty and build efficient, affordable, ugly subdivisions and shopping malls.

Our value of art is constantly challenged when it comes into compromise with the almighty dollar. Here is where we can plainly see what is "expendable" to our culture. Budget cuts always find their mark in the arts. Apparently art, in our wrongfully specialized sense, is not as important to us as sports, science, math etc. I couldn't disagree more. I believe art is a fundamental part of sports, a part of science, a part of life.

Our young children play freely and create with *lila*. It is only when they are acculturated into the monotonous American status-quo that they lose their lively and bright expressive spirit. The sad truth is, we live in a "sleepy" society. If we are ever going to achieve harmony, we need to see and make art as what it truly is. We need to see it as our tribal brothers and sister do—as Life itself. We must cast off the oppressive definitions and categorizations, release art from the galleries, concert halls, theaters, and introduce it back into the domain of every individual.

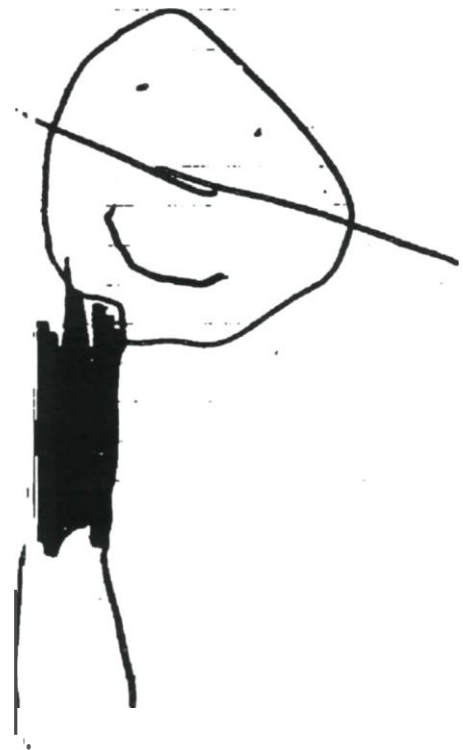
Somewhere out there, Propeller-nose is eagerly waiting, alongside millions of other manifestations of individual creativity—waiting for their time to be rediscovered, appreciated, and resurrected. One day, Joe's life will see the second

coming of Propeller-nose, in which he will rise again to grapple with all the forces of the cosmos, created order in chaos, and claim this order in the name of Joseph—the living ruler and creator of his existence.

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Nachmanovitch, Stephen. *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in life and the Arts*. New York: Putnam, 1990.



JOE

One of the many visual representations of PROPELLER-NOSE. Original artwork by JOE.

THE CONVERSATION *by Les Wade*

SECOND PLACE SHORT STORY

One day as he stood in line at Phillips 66 to pay five dollars for regular un- leaded, she tapped his shoulder. He turned and looked, astonished to see her smiling face. With a half-hearted smile he asked, "How's married life?"

"It's OK."

"And graduate school?"

"I'm finished with my Masters," she said. "Which reminds me, why didn't you call?"

With a disappointed gaze she looked at him as they walked out to her car. "Why didn't you call? Didn't you get my Thank You card? I asked you to call. I needed your help with my the- sis," she said, "a thirty page paper."

"You didn't leave your number in your note, and I don't even know your married name," he said. "What was I supposed to do, call your mother? You know she hates me."

"My number is in the book, the same old number," she said, "and under my name, my old name."

"I didn't even know you were in the book. The last time we talked you had moved back home."

"I needed you help," she said. "Why didn't you call?"

He turned and looked into her green eyes. "Because, my love, there was really nothing I wanted to say."

She stared at him, as if not believing what she thought she heard, then looked down toward her feet.

He reached over grasped her shoulders, her arms, her waist, pulled her close, kissed her lips, in his mind. Instead, he rubbed his right hand on her stomach, patted her tummy. She didn't seem to mind. "Baby?" he asked.

"No," she smiled. "Call me."

"No."

"Then write me," she said. "I'll be moving next month to Ohio for my Ph.D."

"With your husband?"

"Yes."

"Do you have your new address?" he said.

"I don't. Just send it to my parents; they'll forward it."

"You know they won't."

"Just don't put your name on the outside, dummy, they won't open it."

"Don't call me dummy. I teach college, you know."

"Yes. I know. That's why I need your help."

I love you. blue eyes spoke.

I know. green eyes answered.

Silently, they stood leaning on her car, not facing each other, but occasionally turning their heads and smiling, frowning.

He wanted so badly to hug her, and kiss her, and make love to her, and leave her, and forget her.

Finally, she climbed in her car and closed the door.

He motioned; she rolled down her window and reached out her hand. He grasped it, squeezed it, fondled it, kissed, in his mind. Instead, he held on, not wanting to let go.

"Write me," she called as she drove off.

Over a year has passed since their conversation. Once years ago she said, "You don't love me. You're obsessed with me."

Perhaps, he thought as he dropped a letter in the mailbox.

excerpt from

HERE THAYRE BE DRAGONNES OR A POET'S TALE (WITH REGARDS TO CHAUCER)

by Adam Chaney

FIRST PLACE SHORT STORY WINNER

[with regards to Chaucer]

The beggar told him of a dragonne's cave in the hills. When Simon asked how the beggar had heard of such a place, he was answered with "there are those as can speak to the wind, boy, and those as can benefit by listening to it."

Simon did not doubt him for one breath but lit out directly for the place. All night he went, not bothering to sleep for he walked in one of own stories now and must act the part. He climbed rock faces and wove in and out of canyons' depths trying to find a crag that would lead him to a great wyrms lair. Many times his heart left him and he began to turn back,

but Judas' words would ring in his ears anew: "There are no such things as dragonnes!" His resolve would reassert itself.

After what seemed a week of wandering on the world's rooftops, his body stopped him to sleep. He dreamed the earth moved, the sky stood still, and dragonnes flew through the air. When he awoke, the earth had moved and the sky had stood still and there before him was the crag: the entrance to the dragonne's lair. Summoning up the arcane lore from his poet's takes, he entered the gaping maw.

The cavern was dark and deep and lovely in its earthly feel. A dim light

illuminated the broadening passage, but he could not tell from whence it came. He held close to the wall and trod as if on eggshells. *Dragonnes can hear the slightest sounds*, he reminded himself. Inch by inch, step by step, breath by breath and foot by foot, the glowing tunnel crept by him.

And the light vanished! He turned frantically to flee the tunnel, but a great shape caught him in its darkness and drew him along with it. Down the corridor he flew, it flew. The walls sped by flurry-fleet. He knew not which way was up or down but simply prayed that he would again see the light of day.

see DRAGONNES page 11

SCARLET *by Dennisa Whisler*

FIRST PLACE SHORT SHORT STORY WINNER

I stare out my window into dead November trees. The sky is a drab gray; it matches the roofs of the houses down the hill. Some of the clouds hide the sun. I guess he's tired of retiring majestically. The screen fences me in; the water stained glass bars me from escape, but even if I could go, why would I want to? I want to leave, though. I want to go

"Hey, um, Chad, I read that poem you gave me, and" Mandy nervously twisted the ends of her red hair.

"What did you think of it?" My heart was racing. I felt sick, but a good kind of sick. Like right before you go on a roller coaster.

"Well, I didn't quite get it. I mean."

"Oh, well, what part didn't you understand?" I shifted my books to my left hand. I don't know why, maybe just so I didn't look nervous.

"Um, well, to be specific was that about me?"

I wanted to take her with me. where ever I went she would go too. I wanted a happy sort of ending, but this is November. November is the

bed fro autumn so that she might birth Winter. But Autumn has lost her luster and her golden age is ending. The leaves have fallen, her head is bare. Her joints become stiff as the trees are stripped and the rocks are dulled. Life is vanishing. I wish I could go with it.

I felt I had just thrown up.

"Was I? I mean," I stammered. Damn it.

"No. You ...the poem was fine. I just, God, this is hard." She tossed her scarlet locks over her shoulder. I love it when she does that.

"What? Was I not clear? Here. let me explain it for you." I reached out to take the quivering paper from her hand. She stepped back.

"No. I understand it. I want to keep it. But, I mean, I'm flattered." She searched the floor helplessly for words.

"Good," I tried to smile. *I'm glad she's not watching me.*

"I don't feel the same way. You're a nice person, but I just..." she swiftly swiped her hair behind her ears.

God, you're beautiful. I don't care if you want someone else. as long as you're happy. "I just want us to be the way we were." Not even friends. I kicked my boot in the ground digging for a silly worm. I watched her feet. They were like delicate onyx slippers.

"Then I'll continue to smile at you in Computers and wave at you in the halls and dream about you when I sleep" I whispered. I turned and left. I don't know if she said anything else. I don't want to know if she said anything else. *She has my heart. I don't want it back.*

I threw my books on the floor. My cat growled as he ran out to my door. I slammed it shut and smacked the light switch down. The room went black except for the faint November light that streamed through my window. *I hate November. I wish I could have left with the ghouls and witches. Winter will be a magic time. I flopped on my bed and sighed. I hate November. I started out my window into dead November trees.*

excerpt from

MASON'S WALL *by Les Wade*

THIRD PLACE SHORT SHORT STORY

Steve closed his eyes so he wouldn't see Rick hit. The noisy falls muffled the sound of Rick's scream and the sudden thunk at the bottom.

Steve opened his eyes and saw Rick roll and lay face down in the shallow water at the edge of the pool. Red blood colored the water around his head like cigarette smoke in a closed room.

Steve grabbed a hanging pine branch and pulled himself to the cliff top. he undid his belt and stood up.

Steve stood at the edge of Mason's Wall.

He looked at his pack which leaned against the lone pine at the bottom of the cliff and thought of the first aid kit and survival gear.

He looked at the still silent form in the water.

He looked at his arm and saw the blood drip from the fagged tear where Rick's nails had clawed his flesh.

He looked at the low sun.

He looked down at Rick.

He looked at the center of the pool.

Steve quickly waded the stream, ran a few steps, and jumped.

PIANO *by Crystal Lewis*

SECOND HONORABLE MENTION POETRY

Grave con moto

*The lid lifted in requiem
Like that of an open casket.
Within, a heavenly harp, hammered.*

Andante e Cantabile

*Mellow roundness of notes
Smoothed by the Midas touch
Of the golden pedals.*

Presto e Furioso

*The/me/tro/nom/sli/cing/time/
Like/the/clean/snick/
of/the/gui/llo/tine.*



MORE PROPELLER-NOSE

IMAGE

from page 4

"I hope you don't mind, but . . . Steph, are you all right?" Ned asked.

"Y-yes. I'm fine," Stephanie replied as she pulled herself out of the shock she was in. "I'm ready to go. Can you wait a minute while I get my bag?" As she was speaking Stephanie

found herself staring at Ned. Instead of dressing for a black tie affair; he had dressed in casual slacks and a polo shirt.

"Um, Ned?" I'm confused. I thought we were going out for dinner."

"We can still do that if you want, but I had a better idea. Why don't I fix you dinner here at your place? I've got candles, wine, a white tablecloth, and the perfect dinner music. What do you say?"

Stephanie hesitated. The last thing she needed was a cozy dinner for two at her place. She felt a chill run through her as if her senses were warning her about some type of impending doom. "I've got to end this relationship tonight. I have to get Ned out of my life," she thought. "Maybe dinner here is a good idea. This way there won't be a scene."

Stephanie grabbed Ned's arm and yanked him into the apartment.

"Boy, once you decide, there's no stopping you, is there?"

She shook her head no and pointed to the wall across from the mirror. "The kitchen is through that door over there. While you start dinner, I'll change into something a bit more casual."

Ned grabbed Stephanie's wrist and jerked her back toward him. "No! Stay just the way you are, you're perfect," he said.

"Stephanie flinched and stared at Ned's fingers that were clasped tightly about her wrist. Then shrugging as if his reaction was normal, she gently pried his fingers from around her quickly bruising skin. "You can let go now." Ned withdrew his hand and almost dropped the album he held beneath his arm.

"What are the pictures for?"

"Oh, just some memories I thought you might be interested in. You're always asking me questions about my past, so I thought since we're starting to get so close, I'd share my collection with you."

"Collection?"

"You'll see."

It wasn't long before the couple was laughing as they worked together in the kitchen. Ned set the table, and true to his word, the glimmer of candlelight, the smell of pasta and garlic bread, and the warmth that came her way every time he looked at her, created the perfect atmosphere. She couldn't remember the last time her life had been this peaceful.

They talked lightly about everything from the Mets to classical music. Ned's eyes kept searching hers out from across the table, and she could feel the excitement and anticipation of what was to come. When Ned took her hand, a thrill of pleasure went through her.

"You know, you're the most perfect woman I've ever met," he said.

Suddenly, Stephanie realized that she had almost succumbed to the moment. She snatched her hand from his and tried to free her mind from his and tried to free her mind from the euphoria that was engulfing her. "I have to stay in control. Come on old girl; get a grip," she thought. "I must have drank too much," but when she checked her wine glass, over half the wine was still there and she was certain that this had been her only one.

"No one is perfect, especially me," she replied.

"Don't say that. Don't ever say that." Ned jumped to his feet, knocking the bottle of wine to the floor. "I said you were perfect and that's the way it is."

"OK, OK. What's wrong with you tonight?"

"Nothing. I just hate it when I pay you a compliment and you have to argue. Can't you just say thank you?"

"I'm sorry, Ned; really, I am. I'll try

see IMAGE page 11

BURDEN OF MEMORY

by David Gail

THIRD HONORABLE MENTION POETRY

The Burden of Memory,
or time,
is the greatest burden of all
reminding us that the path behind
is longer than
the path before.

The Burden of Memory,
of pending fate,
is the tank of air
nearly spent;
the fading of a Holiday Season.

The Burden of Memory,
the crescendo of life,
is the end of a favorite song,
the apex of a happy moment,
the whispering of fine moments
left behind

The Burden of Memory,
the edge of shadow,
is the silence between the howls
of talking wolves,
the moment of doubt before
the light is clicked on.

The Burden of Memory,
of a full life's day,
is the last day of autumn
before winter's night.

IMAGE

from page 10

not to argue with you for the rest of the night." She smiled and looked up at him through her dark lashes.

"All is forgiven." Ned took her by the hand, picked up the glasses of wine, and led her into the front room. Stephanie tried to relax, but warning signs kept flashing into her mind. She had never seen Ned so forceful and demanding, and it was unsettling. She knew the end was close, not just the end of the evening, but the end of the relationship.

Her instinct told her to approach the subject delicately. "I've got to be careful to say just the right thing, because with the mood he in, he's not going to take it well." She lifted her hand to her mouth and was surprised to discover that drool had been accumulating in the corners. As she wiped the wetness away, she wondered why she couldn't feel it on her fingertips.

"Ned? Ned, look. I've really enjoyed our time together, but you know how I feel about relationships. Don't get me wrong. You're the most attractive and exciting man I've ever met, but that's the problem, you see. I can't let myself get involved; I just can't. I don't think we ought to see each other after tonight."

Ned did not blink an eye. He kept staring at the leather-bound album.

"Ned? Did you hear what I said?"

"Never mind that let's look at my album. I think you'll find it interesting."

"Ned, I'm serious about this." Stephanie tried to be firm, but her

words slurred, making her sound comical even to herself.

Ned took his fingertips and turned her face toward his. She squinted, trying to focus on his features. "Look at this," he said. "This will explain everything." Instead of the earlier sharpness in his voice, Ned words were gentle and cajoling.

Once Ned removed his fingers from beneath her chin, she found it hard to keep her head erect. Although she tried to reach for the album, it was only accomplished in her mind. No matter how hard she tried, her hands wouldn't move. Ned, aware of her frustration, placed the album in a position where she could see the contents.

"What do you think of my collection?"

She couldn't focus on individual words, but she knew that the book was filled with newspaper articles instead of pictures. She leaned forward, trying to get a closer look at the faces of the women in the clippings.

"They're beautiful, aren't they? They were perfect just like you."

"I . . . am not . . . perfect." She wasn't sure he had heard her at first because her voice was low and faltering.

I told you not to say that! The others said that."

Barely able to speak, Stephanie whispered. "Nuffin' is perfect on this earth."

"I knew you'd understand, and you're right. Nothing perfect can last for ever in an imperfect world. That is why you're going to join my collection. I can't allow the world to destroy your perfection. Please forgive me." Ned rose from the couch, kissed her tenderly, and placed a white rose

across her useless hands.

As Ned walked through the door and into the night, Stephanie tried to drag herself to the phone. She fell to the floor landing at the foot of the mirror, her legs no longer capable of supporting her; and as she stared at her dying reflection she was amazed to find that she was no longer afraid. A genuine smile crossed her lips. The image was slim, beautiful, and finally, perfect.

DRAGONES

from page 8

Then he was falling, gently floating, drifting in nothingness. He landed with a solid thump in a pile of stones that simply took the breath from his body.

The darkness came to land across the great room and folded its mnemoth wings around its scale-armored body.

Two piercing-bright eyes examined the intruder that had dared come into its lair.

In his fear, Simon loudly laughed as at a dark joke. Dragones can scent well, he remembered.

He saw how carefully he had moved, inch by inch, breath by breath, and how the tunnels small winds had heralded his coming to the Lord of the Keep.

In one bound the great black beast had Simon by the shoulders and was carrying him down the great tunnel.

He was dropped to the ground gently and once again, the dragonne settled on the earth opposite him, his wondrous wings out-stretched and teasing the currents.

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DAYLIGHT

from page 3

mention "Hey, you smell like my grandpa!" and of course they get offended. I love when he visits because the smell lingers in the bathroom for days after he's gone. I went upstairs to make sure it was there.

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