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Fall 1983

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Connecticut College

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# THE GALLERY



\$ 1.00

Fall '83

## THE GALLERY - -

Connecticut College Art and Literary Journal

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The Gallery is published twice yearly to display the work of the students and faculty of Connecticut College. We would like to thank the college community for their continued enthusiasm and support.

This issue of The Gallery is dedicated with love and admiration to William M. Meredith.

— The Editors



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*Cover Design* by R. Lee Arthur







Lee

— R. Lee Arthur

## Currents

there is no one to tell me when the ocean will begin

— Adrienne Rich  
"Diving Into the Wreck"

Words flow between us  
like the ebb and flow of ocean waves,  
subtly shifting tiny pieces of shell and sand.  
A large wave crashes  
disrupting the steady rhythm  
and you storm from the room.

I wait a few moments  
allowing the water to adjust to the turbulence  
then follow you upstairs.  
I sit apart  
avoiding your gaze  
as you avoid mine.  
We pretend to ignore the other's presence  
as we exhale angry smoke from our lungs.

I rise and follow a line towards the door  
sensing the insensibility of sitting in this morass of tension  
but am pulled back --  
*the undertow* --  
to your side.  
How familiar we are with each other's anger  
Our soft sighs --  
*wind across the sand* --  
is enough communication.

Our bodies know the other's hands  
like a rock knows the stream of water  
that has washed over it for years,  
the rock never as smooth as it will eventually be.

Wordlessly,  
with an intensity that originates no longer from anger,  
but from need,  
we reconstitute the flow between us,  
impetuously subsiding and surging.

Then,  
like the inevitable calm after the storm,  
we settle into another steady  
though less frenzied pattern.  
Unresolved yet peaceful  
like the sand dunes that never know their final shape.  
Sleep --  
*a great tidal wave of warmth and quiet* --  
surrounds us,  
washes over and through us,  
claims us as part of the sea.

— Monica B. Pearl



## Friendship Cove

Roosters crack the soft Bequia dawn  
Mixing with the other morning sounds  
Till they blend with the din of the village.  
The road to friendship cove winds up through the hills  
Children walking goats there laugh and beg to have  
a picture taken

The pebbled trail smoothes to beach  
Coconuts bob in the rush of waves  
We splash along the foamy edge  
Hair flecked with sunshine  
Toes digging deep into the sand  
Flies swarm the dead goat whose neck was broken  
but we race past  
to find the conch shells piled besides the boats  
He hands me one  
Knobby and knuckled and whispering of the sea.

We scuttle up the ridge  
Past the yard where the white woman was drying corn  
Past the darting mud crabs beneath the wall  
To look out at the sea.

## Abuelita

When the gulls ride away from the crash of foamy waves  
Soaring inland against a cottony sky  
And a cold snap settles into the grey hills  
"There's sure to be snow," my grandmother will say.

Sure enough down it comes  
Sifting through the trees  
Stirring the branches like a gentle wind.

And from her window she watches it fall  
Smoothing a troubled age  
Bringing memories of a rosy youth.

"There is a silence that comes with the snow," she tells me,  
A hush that fills all dusted in silver  
Contented to find sleep in winter's soft voice.

— Renée Mercado



## Untitled

Maples hover over my yard like clouds,  
Cumulus billows olive-grey beneath the spotlight  
Moon. Paper shapes pasted against the ceiling  
Sky, cartoon clowns performing lewd acts,  
Fulfill animal drives. A pair of smiling bears  
Engage in intercourse in the back corner  
Overhead. They smile because they are  
Overweight and clumsy and because they are  
In love. Stepping back in my chair I am  
Advised that they are only trees washed of  
Color and dimension and I am in my yard.

Empty director-chair props sit idly against  
The railing separating me from the picture  
Beyond its reach. The smiling bears are out there  
Going at it for me. On my stage countless  
Sets and angles of approach emerge through  
The steady hiccough of concentration diverted,  
Observe the infinite possibilities revolving  
Before my eyes. I create my own world  
And am propman to myself. I set the stage  
With an eye to self-fulfilling prophecy.

— Peter Gross



— Kent Matricardi



Swallow stepped out of the lobby of the "Palm Leaf Motel." His head was groggy from the long afternoon in his room, and his limbs were stiff and uncooperative. A warm breeze gently buffeted his blond hair and caressed his face. The breeze soothed him, as it always did, and the orange rays of the setting sun began to work their way into his creaking body. Swallow massaged his face with his right hand and felt the faint beginnings of a beard. He did not need to shave often and had not done so for two weeks. To his left, he noticed a dark-haired girl wearing a bikini top and white shorts. The girl was attempting to strike a seductive pose. When she caught Swallow looking, she pointed at her crotch and thrust her hand at him with all five fingers extended. Swallow smiled and gave her the finger. He stepped off the curb and walked towards the parking lot. The girl was laughing behind him.

The laughter died away as Swallow rounded the corner of the motel and entered the lot. He looked at the assorted cars and speculated as to their ownership. There were no BMWs or Mercedes, only big, ugly American cars owned by average people on an average two week vacation. The thought that they had come to waste their hard-earned time at a sleazy dump like the "Palm Leaf" sickened him. He pictured them: tanned, healthy, happy, imagining themselves as part of what was good and beautiful in their worlds. Swallow snorted. He spotted his car in the corner of the lot, under the dim yellow lamp.

Swallow's car stuck out dramatically from the rest of the cars. The unmistakable glint of thirty-seven coats of custom car paint could never be mistaken for the cheap shit they used at "Maaco." Swallow eyed his car carefully as he drew nearer to it, searching for any signs of scratches or dents. "Damn Floridians are the worst drivers in America," he muttered out loud. He ran his hand gingerly over the surface of the roof, the smoothness of the metal exciting him. Even after three years and one hundred thousand miles, his car still excited him as much as the first day he bought it from that woman back East.

Reconditioning the Porsche to showroom condition had taken Swallow about a year. The shrink had called it a metallic extension of his genitalia. His father had called it a pathetic grasp at his identity through a materialistic object. His mother liked it. Swallow liked his mother.

An old man approaching his ugly American car looked at Swallow strangely. "What are you looking at, old man," Swallow yelled across the lot. The old man appeared frightened and hurried to his car then drove away. A billowing cloud of dirt remained. Swallow felt badly about yelling at the old man. He couldn't stand the thought of upsetting others for no reason.

"Goddamned destructive behaviour's what got you in trouble in the first place." he heard his father say. Swallow felt sick to his stomach. "Shut up dad," he said out loud. A stray dog wandered into the lot and stopped to look at Swallow. "Dog, I wasn't talking to you," Swallow said, "Go back and sniff your shit or whatever you spend your time doing." The dog walked away. "Swallow," he said to himself, "You gotta stop being so offensive to everybody."



He opened the car door and eased his six-foot-four-inch frame into the driver's seat. This was not easy for Swallow as the stiffness of his body had not completely subsided. He started the car and heard the characteristic whoosh of the turbo and felt the gentle rumblings of the power exhaust. Swallow thought the oil pressure seemed a little low. "Gotta get that checked out," he said. He backed the car out of the lot and headed for the freeway.

At seven-thirty in the evening, the rush hour traffic was just about over. Swallow pressed down hard on the accelerator and waited for the burst of speed that would take him to over two and one-half times the speed limit. He watched the speedometer eagerly as the needle climbed past one hundred miles-per-hour. Both windows were open and the roar of the rushing wind was deafening. The needle continued to climb: one ten, one twenty, Swallow felt the loneliness begin to creep back into him. "Go away, damn you!" he shouted above the roar. Images of the preceding day flashed into his mind. He saw himself curled pathetically on his bed, paralyzed with fear. "I'm not afraid," Swallow whispered. The accelerator was flat against the floorboards. One twenty, one thirty. The cars he passed appeared to be unmoving. Swallow wondered what an accident at one hundred and thirty miles-per-hour would be like. There would be nothing left of the car, much less of him; debris scattered for miles around.

"Damn car's going to get you in more trouble than you can handle," he heard his father say. Swallow veered into the center lane at one hundred and forty and bore down on a small blue compact.

"You're right dad," he whispered to himself. Swallow thought about the person in the blue compact. Man or woman, soon the rescue crews would be scraping them off the street. He imagined the grief-stricken spouse at the morgue trying to identify the charred remains of what was once a dearly beloved.

"Dearly beloved," he heard the religious voice say, "We are gathered here today to mourn the unnatural passing of Jack Smith; loving husband and devoted father who was killed in a tragic car accident just yesterday. Was Jack at fault? No. This particular crime was committed by a horrible young man of twenty known only as Swallow. What was this criminal like, you might ask. He was a loner, a college dropout, and a quitter. As his father once said, 'That damn kid will never amount to anything because he's got about as much motivation as a piece of shit floating in the toilet.'" Swallow imagined the speaker clasping his hands, lowering his head and continuing in a much lower voice. And now, friends, I ask you to join in a silent prayer of heavenly praise for dear Jack and eternal damnation for the young scum called Swallow.

Swallow started to giggle. The giggling soon erupted into uncontrollable laughter. He eased on the brakes and veered back into the left lane. As he drove past the blue compact, Swallow waved gleefully at the startled figure of an immense black woman. "Yo Jack!" he shouted. He burst into fresh laughter. Exit 42 was two miles ahead and Swallow thought this would be a good place to get off.



He started to slow down about half a mile from the exit and left the highway at a legal speed. The exit sign read "Ft. Lauderdale/points east and west." He decided to go west. Swallow looked at the clock on the dashboard. It was eight-thirty. Driving west took Swallow away from the main part of Ft. Lauderdale and into the not-so-nice residential section. The particular road he chose to take was bordered on each side by run-down porno shops and theatres. The street was deserted except for a few beat-up old prostitutes. Swallow rolled down his window and slowed the car. "Whatcha gimme for a quarter?" he yelled across the street to a particularly old looking whore.

"Fuck off!" she yelled back. Swallow didn't hear her. He was angry at himself for bothering the whore.

"What am I doing here?" he said to the dashboard. He drove on, worried about his state of mind. He thought back to the first year of college. Everything had been too easy. No one had forced him to do anything he didn't want to do. He hadn't minded the classes, he just hadn't seen any purpose for them. What he had seen were people who didn't know why they were at college either. "Fuck all of you!" he shouted at the dashboard. The sound of his own voice startled him and he realized that he was about to run a red light. The car came to a screeching halt amidst the smoke of burnt rubber. Swallow was shaken and continued on at a reduced speed. He drove about aimlessly, pursuing one road after another, constantly on the lookout for a potential stopping place.

"Centerfold Girls." Swallow caught a glimpse of the huge neon sign out of the corner of his eye. He turned the car around and drove by the club again. It was small, but what interested him was the location. The club was isolated in the middle of a field. For at least three hundred yards on every side there was nothing but grass. He wondered if the old strippers were brought out to pasture in the vast expanse of green that surrounded the strip joint. Once again, Swallow drove past the club but this time he looked harder at the sign. "Centerfold Girls," "The Most Beautiful Girls in Florida," "Topless," "XXX." He smiled. "Why not?" he said. Swallow turned back around and drove into the parking lot. He imagined walking in and seeing masses of fat old men smoking cigarettes and leering at the strippers. All of them would be wearing business suits and trying desperately to impress the boss with a big night out. The girls were probably beat-up old bags like the kind he had seen in New York; third-rate prostitutes who had been so battered and saturated with drugs that their brains no longer functioned at any normal level.

Swallow imagined himself walking in the door and seeing two hundred heads turn towards him. There would be dead silence. The towering golden boy has returned. He would rescue one of the hags from the tyrant owner and deliver her into freedom. She would be eternally grateful and work to support him as he basked in the glow of her praises. Swallow was smiling broadly as he reached the door of the joint. "I have arrived," he said, and opened the door.



The first thing he noticed was the considerable lack of dirty old men. Even though it was a Tuesday night, Swallow felt slightly depressed that his fantasy had not been realized. "Three bucks please," he heard a voice from the shadows say. A hand appeared.

"Oh yeah, sorry," Swallow said. He placed three singles into the hand.

"Thank you," the voice said. Swallow thought it had a cold.

He walked into the main lounge and stood for a moment as his eyes adjusted to the darkness. To his right was a semi-circular bar that bordered the wall. The barmaid was rather heavy but not unattractive. She wasn't topless. Her mascara glittered, even under the sparse lighting, and made her look cheap. She winked at Swallow and he smiled back. He felt that his smile looked contrived but the barmaid appeared not to notice. She smiled and turned, whispering something to a dark shadow in the background. At the front of the room was a small, brightly-lit stage, with a passageway on either side to ease the entry and exit of the strippers. The stage was empty. To his left, Swallow noticed a number of tables, perhaps ten, arranged in no particular order. He saw only one customer sitting at a table. The man appeared to be about thirty, with a dark red beard and a plaid workshirt. Swallow thought that the man's eyes appeared glazed but he was not sure. He finished surveying the room and sat down at the bar, facing the stage. The barmaid walked over to him. He asked for a Bud. She nodded and drew a beer out of the cooler, placing it on the counter beside a frosted glass. He placed a dollar on the counter where it remained, untouched. Swallow glanced down and noticed a small placecard. It read: "Employees are not allowed to solicit from customers. If you wish to buy a drink for an employee, please summon the barmaid." Swallow was steadily becoming disappointed with the strip joint. "Where are the fat old men," he wondered.

Swallow saw a female shadow walking towards him from the corner of the room. Once in the light, he saw that she was wearing only a bikini bottom, made out of satin and laced with glitter. She sat down next to Swallow.

"Hi, my name is Patty, what's yours?" she said. Swallow thought she was about his age. Her bleached blonde hair looked grossly unnatural. He guessed that she was wearing a wig. Her face was done up in a style similar to the barmaid's but the cheap effect was even more glaring. Her lips were painted dark red and her face was covered with so much make-up that she resembled a mannequin.

"I'm Swallow," he said.

"What kind of a name is that?" Patty licked her lips and ran her tongue slowly along her teeth.

"What kind of a name is Patty?" he said. Swallow thought that her seductive act needed a rest.



She leaned towards Swallow so that her face was almost touching his. He guessed she was drunk. "It's my name," she said. Her breath smelled like champagne and her hair like talcum powder. Swallow thought the quick-witted conversation had reached an end. "Would you like to buy me some champagne?" Patty asked. Her breast touched his shoulder.

"How about a 'Shirley Temple?'" Swallow asked. "I hear that you get a miniature umbrella with each order." Patty sat upright looking a little bit confused. Then she smiled.

"You're funny," she said. Swallow winced and beckoned the barmaid.

"Give her a beer," he said. The barmaid stared at him briefly.

"Okay big spender, just don't blow it all in one place," she said. She winked at Swallow and walked away. Patty sipped her beer slowly, almost distastefully.

"Whatcha doing around these parts?" she asked.

Swallow looked at her. "I'm a roving murderous sex maniac on the run from the police and I figured this was as good a place as any to hang out." The innocent look disappeared from her face and was replaced with a look of anger.

"Listen funny guy, I got two little ones at home I'm trying to feed and I got a landlord crawling down my throat. The last thing I need is to hear your boring crap". Swallow decided that he liked this girl after all.

"Sorry," he said.

"Fine," she said, "Now tell me something about your life."

"Well there's really not a whole lot to tell," Swallow said.

"Oh come on! I've probably heard it a thousand times before anyway." Patty said.

"I grew up in China," he began, "My father was the American ambassador and . . ." Swallow felt a red blush invading his face.

"And what?" Patty said.

"Forget it. Just don't talk to me anymore. O.K.?" He was angry at himself for lying and wished that she would leave. She looked at him strangely.

"O.K." Patty said. She stood up. "Thanks for the beer. I gotta go get ready for my act anyway. I'll see you later, right?"

"Yeah, sure," Swallow said. He watched her walk across the room. She smiled at a new customer and he reached out to grab her ass.



"Naughty boy," she said while wagging her finger at him, "You can look all you want, but don't touch." The man smiled sheepishly and turned back to his drink.

"Gimme another Bud," Swallow said to the barmaid. She took another beer out of the cooler and placed it on the counter. She gave him a very cold look.

Swallow took a sip of his beer and looked over at the stage. The first girl had appeared; an oriental wearing a black negligee. She was busy picking the first number off the jukebox. When it started, she began to dance; awkwardly at first but gradually warming up to the music. She slowly peeled off the negligee and continued dancing wearing only a pair of black high heels and a black string around her waist. Swallow thought she looked ridiculous. The girl stepped off the stage and walked up to the man with the red beard. She started to dance in front of him. The man watched her for a few seconds then slipped a bill into her G-string. The girl brushed his face with her hand and walked to the next customer. Swallow guessed the bill had been a five. When it was his turn he saw that it was only a one. The girl smiled at him and began to dance. Swallow looked up at her. "No thanks." The girl frowned and walked away.

This ritual continued for the other three girls. Each time the girls tried to dance for him Swallow declined. He didn't feel aroused at all. When Patty's turn came to dance Swallow paid a little more attention. He thought she danced more awkwardly than the other girls, as if she was self-conscious or embarrassed about herself. Swallow admired her body but did not feel attracted to her in any way. When she approached him for a tip, he let her dance for him, then he slipped a five dollar bill into her string. She kissed him on the cheek and walked back to the dressing room without a word.

Swallow asked the barmaid for the time. It was almost eleven. Since he had come in, the club had filled up substantially. Almost all the tables were taken and only half of the seats at the bar remained empty. Swallow guessed there were about thirty-five people altogether. He looked across the bar and saw two kids about his own age trying to pick up one of the strippers. It was the oriental. There was an empty bottle of champagne on the counter and the barmaid was just opening up a fresh one. One of the other strippers walked by him and he asked her how much a bottle of champagne cost.

"Seventy-five dollars," she said.

Swallow wondered where the kids were from. He looked over again and saw them both pawing the girl. "Let's go check out my van," one of them said. The girl just laughed and poured herself more champagne. Swallow thought she was laughing because the kid's words had come out in a drunken slur and had actually sounded like, "Lesh go sheck oush my van." Swallow felt slightly amused. Then the kid fell off the stool. Swallow couldn't help himself and started laughing. The girl began to laugh and when her head turned Swallow caught her eye. She smiled at him, a big knowing smile which he returned. He felt good knowing that they were thinking the same thing.



During the next four hours, Swallow watched the same succession of girls repeat their routines. Every time Patty came around he slipped a dollar into her G-string. Each time she would kiss him on the cheek, then walk away without a word.

When the girls had at last finished for the night, Swallow remained at his barstool. Part of the reason he remained was due to the twelve beers he had consumed over the course of the evening. He also wanted to see Patty just one more time. In his drunken stupor he pictured her walking over to him and whispering in his ear to come home with her that night. It had been a long time since he had been with a girl and the beer had made him feel slightly aroused. When she finally did appear it was approaching four o'clock. Swallow was ready to call her over but he thought that she was moving in his direction anyway. He tried to sit up as straight as possible in an effort to prove his sobriety. His head was buzzing. Swallow knew that Patty wanted him because he was so irresistibly cute. He was silently pleased with himself; things were finally going his way.

Patty sat down next to Swallow and ordered a glass of champagne. When it arrived she sipped it but did not speak. She didn't even look at Swallow. He stared at the counter. A big grin covered his face. He knew what was coming next and he looked forward to her words with growing anticipation. The buzzing had reached his stomach. His stomach buzzed and buzzed and he felt that his head would burst any second.

"I really hate Tuesday nights," Patty said. Swallow looked up from the counter. His eyes were blurred from too much beer and he had trouble focusing on Patty's face. He wanted to reach out and touch her but he couldn't.

"I . . . I . . ." he began. Patty turned towards Swallow and looked directly at him. Even through his drunken haze he could see that her eyes were cold and hard.

"You what." Patty said.

"I think you did a really good job tonight, I mean, you've got a lot of style," Swallow said. He knew his words were coming out in a drunken slur but he didn't care.

"What would you know about style?" Patty said. Her voice had an edge to it and Swallow wondered why she was annoyed. He thought it was something he had said. He turned away from her and looked back down at the counter. He was starting to notice the cracks in the woodgrain.

"I'd like to . . ." His voice trailed off and the rest of the words were lost in a jumble of drunken confusion.

"Oh, Jesus. Not again." Patty whispered. She shook her head slightly, then finished the rest of her champagne. "Look," she began, "I know how you feel but you're not the only one. Every guy that comes in here wants the same thing and I tell each one the same thing. I'm tired and drunk and all I want to do is go home and go to bed. Alone."

Swallow didn't say anything. He felt his mind and body fill with enormous weight. He was being dragged down. "Yeah. Right," he said.

Patty got up from the bar and walked to the door. "Goodnight Janey," she said to the barmaid.

"You were real good tonight," Janey said.

"Yeah, sure," Patty said.

Swallow looked up in time to see the door swing shut. He thought of spending another night at the motel and he began to feel sick.

"Time to go, buddy," the barmaid said.

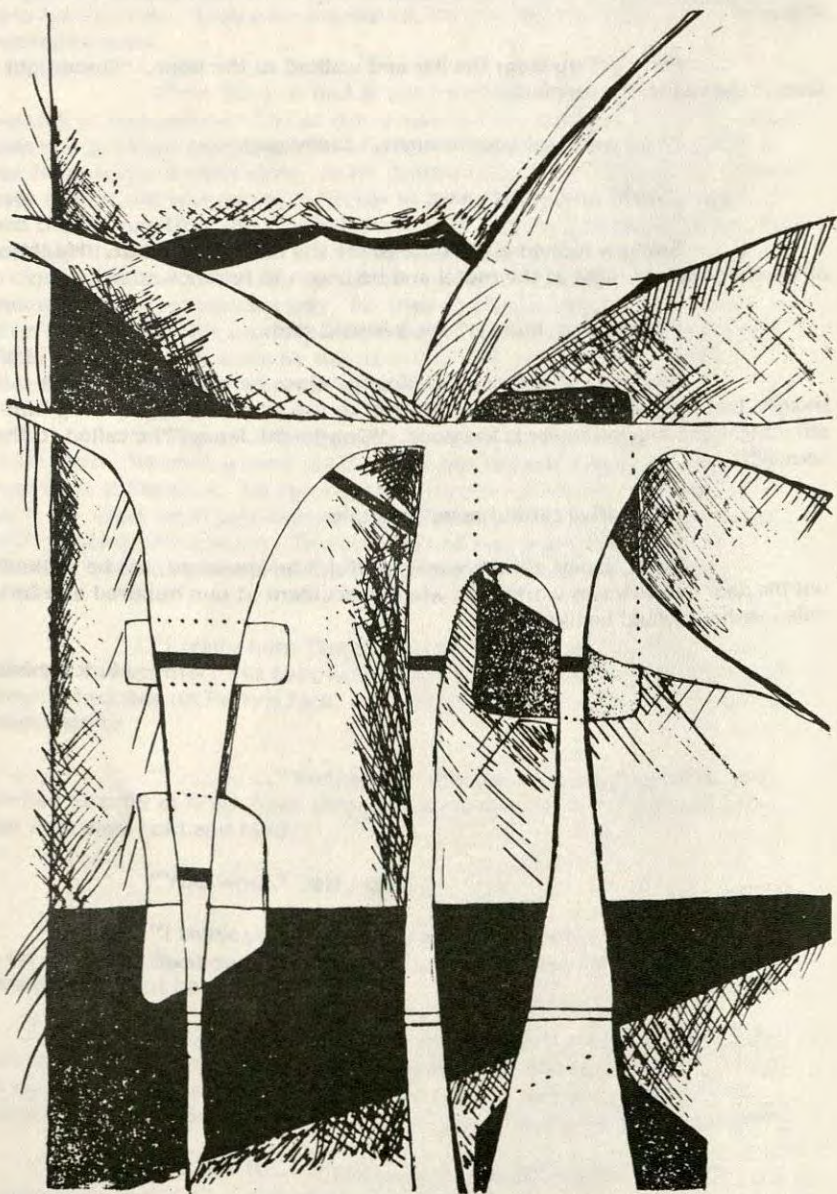
Swallow got off his stool slowly. Once he was on his feet he thought that his knees would buckle. He had to use all his energy to keep himself upright and moving towards the door. "Goodnight Janey." he called to the barmaid.

"You drive careful now," she said.

"O.K. Janey, I'll drive real careful," he answered. As he walked out the door Swallow was wondering what an accident at one hundred and forty miles-per-hour would be like.

— Mark Newman





— Deborah Jacobs

## Untitled I

Back pressed close to the brick  
She braces her feet against the subway grating.  
Tiny feet, red with cold  
That lie sleeping in unmatched sneakers.  
They are good shoes for walking and waiting.

Warmth from the passing train pleases her,  
sudden air billowing her skirt  
she looks like Marilyn Monroe.  
Only her dress is not white, or clean  
or even her own.

Her eyes smile as always  
But that may be the phantom of her mind.  
The image she talks to  
passes the days with  
though she is always alone.

One withered hand presses deep in her pocket  
Fingering the tattered seam.  
Bent elbow cradles one of many packages,  
movable closets of possessions,  
banks of dreams.

## Untitled II

She sips her drink slowly.  
Too slowly to mistake this for her first.  
She trembles as the ice cubes collide in gentle rhythm.

She lights another cigarette.  
It hangs limply from cracked and painted lips.  
Ashes scatter to the lapel of her aging robe.

Brandied nights of solitude.

She is startled by her shadow  
As dawn creates an unfamiliar largeness.  
She stands in twilight, exposed and alone.

She stares at the morning  
Hands stiff from the cold which chilled the glass.  
She draws the shade and backs away.

— Ilisa Sohmer



## The Poet's Escape

It is a mendacious shape,  
A shadow of their desires,  
That leads the dreamers out tonight.

They follow like drunken gypsies  
And dance on moonbeams  
Athwart the sober sleeping pedagogue

Who preaches laborious achievements  
Of exercise and patience.  
Free from his solemn deprecation

They fly to poetic vistas  
Past Space, past tense of Time,  
Riding the train of their idol's robe.

They curse their life  
Of mendicancy to the muses  
Of hunger, wine, and opium,

As now they're whisked  
Effortlessly into otherworld sensations.  
They feed on celestial piquancy

As they dance about the open rooms  
With masquerading strangers,  
Changing partners at every turn.

And then their horror  
As they search for eyes behind the masks  
And recognize each ever-hoped-for self.

Who, who will prophesy?  
Cries the shadow they think is real.  
Who will read the augury you've danced tonight?

Crib-grown and crippled they now crawl  
Across the ballroom floor,  
And one says to the simulacrum of his dream,

We are bumpkins all,  
Shearing the wool from our fat illusions  
For our women to weave  
Into honest selves we can wear.

## Beyond Her

She treads, she treads  
On dead leaves  
And stirs the pungent rot  
With careless foot.  
Black-cloaked men drizzle by,  
Faceless to the faceless  
Wind that blows her along.  
Eyes blinded by streaming hair  
Search for a lonely plot  
To bow and raise praying hands  
To God -- her forsaken hope.  
Silent, silently she kneels  
To kiss the dewy ground.  
Deep deep down  
She cannot praise  
Or plea or be.  
The light shines or dims  
Beyond her, way beyond her.  
Here, here comes the inky muse  
(A basilisk in disguise)  
To read her thoughts and will  
Letter by letter --  
He relieves her then flies  
Without a blessing  
Promising to return one day  
As a posthumous poem.  
She groans from some unknown depths  
A groan that words cannot express  
And a tear, precious as a pearl  
Swells from the desert in the well  
Of living water  
And she drinks it  
Gratefully.

— Catherine A. Sponagle



Maybe I should come back here  
 then and now go see other spots  
 comes stay when I know I'll  
 be here. hm.

Tired. headache from cold  
 mess. beautiful college town.



on train from Cambridge to London

Jan 3

Paul + John

4 + 3

I

## Throw-up

a baby on the plane  
upset his mother's luncheon tray  
after  
Dad upset Baby's lunch  
bouncing Baby up and down

## Ode to a 12th C. Japanese Lady

You leave today.  
I forfeited a farewell  
to come to this house,  
full of fleas.  
I am being bitten.

You said it was typical but  
I wanted to ask about the ghosts  
in Japanese houses,  
why women return to their mates  
for one final morning.

Now I find  
the empty space beside me  
is gray.  
I cannot toss into it.  
It wants  
to be filled with breathing.

— H. Hastings Windle



## A Decade Apart

The demise of the Ides  
sends a mourning pair to  
the sea. We watch as terns  
dive and rise dripping fish:  
one sunward slowly peaks,  
freefalls, checks his path wide  
wingspan almost skimming  
surface, suddenly stopped  
by once Virgin air quick  
cooled on its northward climb.

Now it's purple July  
you decide while weaving  
wildflowers round plaid  
shoestrings. Royalty sings  
an emerald cloak when  
pretending to be Greek  
and strides over sand fleas  
'till fat private ladies  
with babies storm the beach.  
That's when Caesar leaves his

wreath in the water glass,  
displaced in his own Rome  
or this morning's Athens.  
Another lies, shades drawn,  
wearing colors not like  
the waters that cover  
skewed walls. Sleeping beneath,  
some river falls from a  
window and Greece recedes  
into the witnessed dawn.

for M. E. M.

Once unbelieving in moons' full  
Twice-tried talk draws evening tides  
As brine as fishy river-flesh:  
How bitter's the pull my earth confides.

But river's mist will dissipate  
And dawning gulls my sun reveals  
Will circles never cease? Take heart:  
November bares, my fiery bank heals.

—Susan Horwitz

## Being Somebody

Tark kept her wrists raw so that when she finally did it, the skin would be less resistant, the pain more common. She thought, there are stages of suicide. I am in the preparatory stage. In the dark, she would rise and wander absently to the window, staging her accident. Against the rough, broken metal, her falling wrist caught itself like the wing of a bird broken on a thorn bush or barbed wire fence. Sometimes, it would catch so deep, the blood would run wet and hot for a long time. She always waited for it to stop before getting back into bed, thinking, if it doesn't, it will not be too soon. In the morning, later, her arm was often swollen to the elbow, the red slash in her wrist frozen beneath a fragile crust. Around and around and around the gauze would whirl while Tark stared in the mirror opposite the window, her face sometimes wrinkled, sometimes smooth. Big said she was a master of disguise. Big said she always looked different. Big was right. She didn't know why more people didn't notice. When she was younger, she would complain to her mother there was no bone structure in her face and that was why she could never depend on looking the same. But that was wrong. Her cheeks were hard and high and sometimes she would catch sight of the S that shadows drew on the curves of her face. Something from inside kept coming out and changing her. Tark was neither beautiful nor ugly. She was not even plain. She was the master of disguise. She was in love with Big.

"I sprained it," she told odd stares. When the blood loosened and surfaced wet through the gauze, she told them she caught it in a car door. Sometimes she'd tell the same person different things at different times. She tested them. She would laugh at their hesitation. Paul, the small boy who wore long bangs into his eyes did not say anything the second time. He sat next to her in History of Modern Germany and watched her take notes with her clean wrist. After class, he swiped his black bangs away from green eyes and looked into hers. He reached for her swollen wrist and squeezed it until Tark let out a small, "oh". The hair fell back into his eyes then and he walked from her. Tark had cried a little after that. Paul did not sit next to her in History of Modern Germany anymore. She laughed to herself at nights while she waited. Counting her breaths, the beats that throbbed against her mattress, she felt devious power over them.

When Big, who was, so she called him that, when Big was in her room, she remembered that he was black. Otherwise, she did not remember because things were so colorful beyond her white square room. Everyone seemed different someplace else. She seemed very small and thin near him, but she wasn't when she was at home with her small mother and cat, who was also small for a cat. The cat was named Peggy, for Peggy Lipton of the Mod Squad. She'd named it a long time ago, when she was about eight and wore tie-dyed shirts and fringed bell-bottoms to school. She did it to spite her mother who had named her Tark, a cat's name. Her mother told her again and again it sounded nice, that's why, so she stopped asking. Maybe that was all there was to it. No crisp-boned lover from some foreign place. No jumble of letters concealing some special word. On a sheet of yellow legal paper, she'd written once: Trak. Kart. Ratk. Artk. There was nothing in that either. No mystery. A simple sound. Her mother had heard somewhere in her head.



Tark studied Anthropology some of the time. She liked the creamy finish of bones after they'd long been let loose. Bones were more beautiful than anything. The skin was too mottled and stretchable. The eyes, too slimy deep inside. The bones were crisp inside and out. White, turning, delicate, like sea-shells. Tark saw her grandmother naked once, when she was 12. The ribs were defined, slender bows that spiraled to ugly breasts. The ribs were gentle, turning stairs. When her grandmother bent down to pull at her hose, Tark saw the snake spine from behind, the tree of perfect coils climbing up her back. I want to see it from the inside out, Tark had thought at 12. Now, she studied Anthropology, and those pages and pages of old old skeleton photographs in the big, hard-backed books piled beneath her bed and on the bottom, tallest shelf of her bookcase. Those pages had smudged, curled corners and torn matchbook covers for book marks and Tark knew that if she threw one to the floor, there was no doubt, one of those pages would stare toward the ceiling when the book opened. Sometimes, Tark experimented with this and she found it was true.

Big did not agree with Tark about bones. He did not like the posters of Georgia O'Keefe bones on her walls. She would catch his long neck swaying his oval head back and forth when he looked at one of them. "What?" Tark would ask. Big would just nod. Sometimes, Big would have sex with her when she didn't mind. She would lie still on the bed and stretch open for him and wait below while he slid deeper and deeper. Once, he lit a candle and played music, but it didn't help, she would still wait for him to finish. He felt sorry afterwards and asked less frequently, but Big did not like any other girl and it was hard for him. "I don't mind," Tark would say, but really, there was always pain. So Big would sit quietly on her chair in her room below the yellow light while Tark, cross-legged on the floor, braided and unbraided her yellow hair.

Tark did not tell her mother much about Big because her mother did not ask much. Her mother wrote romance novels on the kitchen table at home. Tark did not call until after 7, after the news and when her mother had stopped writing for the day. Her mother would tell Tark about her latest heroine. Jessica was black-haired and blue-eyed. She lived on an island off the coast of Maine. She was just 22. Jake was a photojournalist for National Geographic.

"Can you do that?" Tark had asked.

"What?" Her mother was annoyed.

"Mention the name of a real magazine?"

silence. "Why not? It's good advertisement. Why not?" There was

"Finish, Mom, what happens next?"

"Oh, nothing. Why did you call?"

Tark would tell her mother about her day and then say, "See you soon." Her mother would say, "Yes dear, work hard," every single time. Tark did not miss her mother, but she knew her mother looked forward to her weekly calls, so she called and heard the latest happenings in the lives of Jessica and Rachel and Blanche.



"Why not Tark?" once, she had asked.

"Tark is not the name of a heroine," her mother had said.

Tark did not want her name in romance books anyway. But it was strange that it was her mother who had thought of it, who had born her, who loved her secretly. Tark did not know if she loved her mother, but she tried. She knew she loved Big.

When Big slept with her, he would keep her from the window. She would squirm silently beneath him. He pretended to sleep, but she could feel the muscles in his shoulders tensing as she wriggled her arms free. He would never let her escape. Once, he whispered to her. He told her he had a cat, once. A little white cat that he'd never named. Some crazy boy down the street had hammered nails through the cat's paws into a wooden plank that was put over a man-hole. The cat screamed like a human being for a long time and then it stopped. His eyes stared fuzzy. Big was too young to help his cat. It wouldn't have been cool since the kid who'd done it was older and tough. Big could hear the neighborhood kids laughing from his window. He could see them in a circle, whirling sticks around his cat. One night, when he was mad enough, he went out to the place where his cat was. All he found were bloody pieces of cat paw nailed to the wood. Big remembered that he found his cat in an alley underneath a cardboard box a few days later, but his cat didn't run because it was dead and staring. Big told Tark he'd wished he'd named the cat and he would have named it Priscilla because he always thought the name was pretty. Big said he put the cat in a garbage can and put the cardboard over it. Then Big said, "Don't" and gently stroked the broken skin on her wrist for a long while. Big never said anything about her wrist.

Tark knew she loved Big. He was the only boy she really knew. There was her mother and her friend Kristi and there was Big. Tark had one brother who was much older and married to an oriental woman. He did not write to her. Sometimes, he'd send pictures of her almond-eyed nephew and carefully concealed money. There were no words. Tark preferred pictures. The boy, named Peter, had her round nose. She taped the pictures over her desk in neat rows. There were six since September. Six pictures of Peter who was younger than 10, she guessed. Does he know about me? she wondered. Aunt Tark.

Tark often looked around her white square room and wondered how it should look when she finally did it. The dolls should be placed just so, on the bed, lying perfectly, one beside the other. Porcelain smiles, blue glass eyes positioned so they will see. Maybe they will blink when I scream, she thought. No, I won't scream. A knife in the belly would make me scream. Not emptying through the veins. A yellow light on. The turning table of the stereo and the scratching repetition of the needle, on. A shrinking cigarette swirling careless smoke from the top of the tin she used as an ashtray. Everything still moving. An imperceptible change in the turning shadows of the room. Her death would mean one less sound in the night.



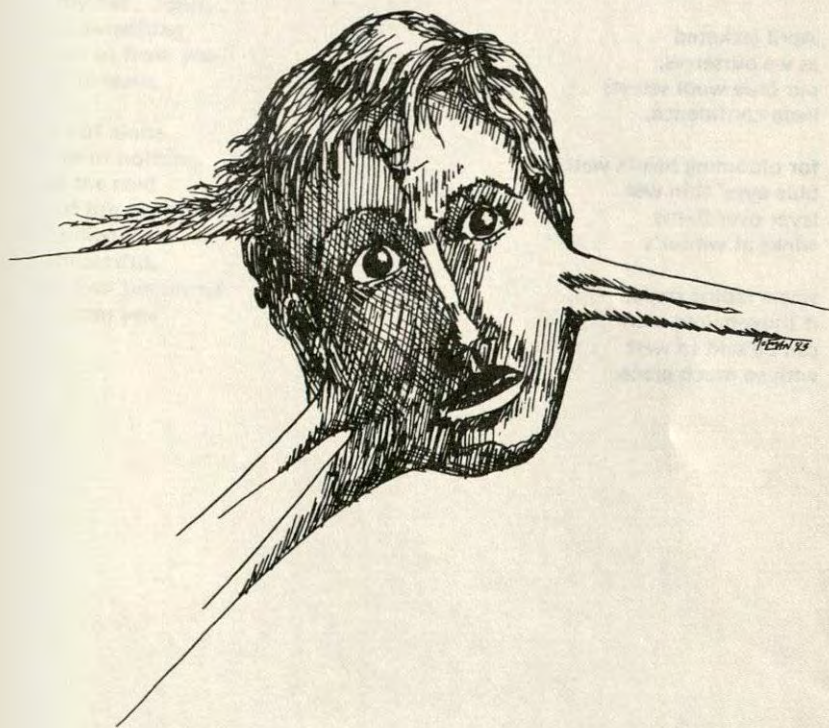
Big went away for the weekend. She did not see him much during the week. He read books in the library. He read Camus and sometimes he read Dickens. He didn't talk about his books. Tark read and laughed at the funny way people told her things in books. She knew they were not for her, specifically, but they were messages and, unless there was a mystery, she did not like messages. She decided all were single words finally. Live. Die. Good. Bad. Love. Hate. Yes. No. Tark. Big. When Big went away Tark thought she might do it. On Saturday, she sat for a long time in the green cushioned library chair he read in. She saw the green baseball field below the window nearby. The lilac bushes making corridors between the classroom buildings. The sky that rushed into water near the edge of her sight. She sat in his chair and wanted the pain of him inside her at that moment. She squeezed the raw wrist and felt, instead, another pain. On the white wall near the window, she saw the tiny blue letters spelling Benny. Why did Benny write his name here? she wondered. She heard music through the window that didn't open. Big was home for the weekend. With his mother, Sal, and with his brother, Bill. He was home in DC with other black people. She knew he probably talked a lot more at home. About other things. Big had other things to talk about at home. Tark didn't have anything different to say at home.

Tark left the library when the sun was low and orange. Big had said sunsets happen quick in the city. Because of the buildings. He watched the sunsets at school so he could think about them when he was at home and the white sun was dipping below the lowest building and disappearing, stretching, instead, shadows through the narrow streets and alleys that pretended night. It is already night for Big, she thought. Tark walked through woods towards her dormitory. There was a heavy, wet, Spring smell that reminded her of vomit and she remembered three years ago and the spasms of green vomit spilling over the sides of the toilet and the endless flow of urine wetting her jeans and the loud sound like heavy wind deafening her. The sound of her panicked brain, her frenzied blood, her hopeful creaking bones. On the cold tile, the wet cheek of her face, the broken right wrist spilling steamy blood. Not then. Not then. Her body had fought back. She had cleaned the floor and the toilet of her sloppy dead parts. No one had seen. She was waging, plotting war against her body. In the woods, she vomited again to the memory in her brain. There was no Big then. She stared down at the dense pine needle bed that soaked up the bile as though it were rain water. Tark spat the taste from her mouth.

In her room, she smoked cigarettes and watched the ashes flying off the tip into the breeze from the open window. She thought how it would be to disperse like that. Pieces of you flying in the wind. Once, in a bus, she sat the whole ride next to an old woman who muttered only one word, "beautiful". Her hand was crooked around Tark's elbow. The woman held her tight and said beautiful. Tark turned on the tv that Big had given her for the weekend. She didn't tune it. It rained white and black sparks on its square face. She turned the radio on and heard Led Zepplin sing about Heaven. She turned the yellow light on. Pictures of Peter sharpened. Wedges of shadow angled out from the loosely held squares. Suicide could always be postponed, Tark thought. She could live a long life before she did it. Then, say at 60, catch her body unawares. Maybe then there would have been more.

More pictures for more walls. Brown-skinned babies with her nose. Cats with names. Tark decided she would begin a new stage in her suicide. She would let her wrist heal. Tark closed the window and slept with the yellow light and the tv and the radio. She lay in bed and thought about meeting Big's family. Tomorrow, she would pick lilacs and put them in water.

— Carolyn Egan



— Jon McEwan



With so much grace

In still cool twilight  
trees become dark  
rustling passers by,  
pausing waits for-

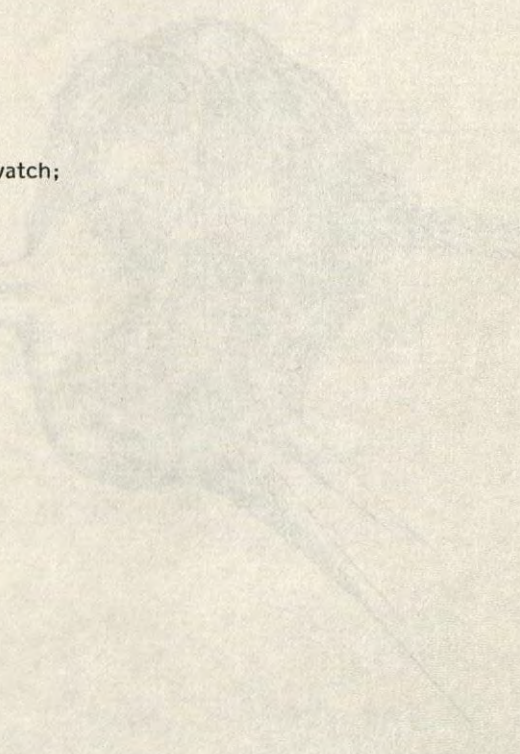
ever over bench-  
time seen by closed  
eye reveries - - such  
romantic scenes!

Wry old men believe  
and cross their legs,  
slow past stone and brick  
strolls continue:

April jacketed  
as we ourselves,  
our blue wool secrets  
keep confidence,

for blooming hearts watch;  
blue eyes' thin wet  
layer over flame  
winks at winter's

single fading smile,  
if snow-haired men  
can be said to wait  
with so much grace.



## Thought Message Vision or, The John Poem

John stays at home  
and sits in the window  
smoking thin white  
cigarettes. He tests  
himself with the tricks  
of gin and sleep,  
misspelled words  
in long unmailed letters

yeah, a letter to me  
like the others  
I've read and left  
in a green envelope  
near my bed. John,  
I want something  
unheard of from you.  
I want to learn

the wit of alone  
the love of nothing,  
to feel the cold  
hand of life on my neck.  
I am rolling back  
to Connecticut,  
rolling over the sound  
I hear from you.



## Moon Man

Talk about the passion  
I've found in his silence --  
Nearly changing colors  
On this wild twilight face.

— eden marriott

four, de school



of m

2

— H. Hastings Windle

## On Human Isolation

I sat and watched,  
sat and listened,  
to the milling crowds . . .  
to the withering flowers.  
There's no excuse to make  
and there is no blame to assign,  
there is only this unfurnished room  
and that.

For,  
I have seen the couples arm-in-arm, paired and obliging, paired  
and yearning, exchanging secret tokens and glances of intricate  
hidden universes, memories of the spring rains and the blossoming  
sunsets, they speak in soft and desperate tongues, saying,  
"I need," "I want," "I love." And the music is at once sad and  
joyous . . . sad and beautiful beyond these imitations.

I have listened to the hum of the city,  
great gray "Om" of the burning and building  
and planning and arranging and coming undone again . . .  
I have read the critiques of this symphony,  
and I have sat on hilltops surveying the sprawling beast  
from a safe  
distance  
and I do not hear a voice I understand.

I HAVE SEEN THE TRAINS PASS AT THE CROSSROADS  
AND HAVE KNOWN THAT I COULD NOT RIDE THEM  
and I saw you across the tracks  
appearing in flashbulb instants,  
your hair blowing across your face  
and then disappearing . . .

I HAVE WATCHED IN THE MIRROR UNTIL THE LIGHT  
OF A NEW NIGHT CANONIZED MY EYES DIVINE  
and I have seen the funeral  
procession pass in the street  
below my open window,  
the sweet music of life drifting  
through white lace curtains,  
and then I disappear too . . .

I HAVE READ THE HISTORIES OF MADMEN AND GREATMEN  
AND NOTHINGMEN AND HAVE REACHED A CONCLUSION;  
A race is a thing to watch.  
And I have stumbled half-drunk  
with wonder through the museums  
of genius and don't remember it  
in the cold light of the  
city morning.



I have singled out faces  
and become hopeful of inclusion.

And I obliged and yearned in the face  
of Solitude . . .

No faces meet my stare, no soft eyes, no great words whisper in my ear.  
I sit and watch,  
sit and listen,  
and speak softly to the empty night.

— George B. Pratt

### Quip

Maybe the problem with man is that his inability to understand himself and  
the world around him makes him a little bit embarrassed to be here.

## Palms

I fear I would fall  
gently weeping upon  
your palms,  
and when your hands  
are softened by my tears  
you too would cry - -  
but only because these hands would be  
no longer the same hands  
that held mine,  
but hands warmed by  
the heart of another love  
whose spirit is grander  
than mine.

## Heart-still

quivering hairs  
awaiting serene white sails  
The man in black pointed to someone  
but it was not my body.

### Heart-still

countless chins bobbed above  
sweet, cool earthen odor  
adorns me.  
A seed sown  
awaiting spring.  
an essence looming,  
but it was not my body.  
brackish, damp darkness  
spirits bloom from wretched blindness  
Heart-still- - deadlock  
beneath.  
and at once soft souls aloft.

— Lisa Mintz



Preface to a single volume  
suicide note.

The slash marks on her wrist  
Were made by a meat slicer.  
So she said  
And most believed  
Her face;  
But me  
I just read the eyes.  
I can't help but think today  
To say, "I'm lost", "Please help"  
Too hard?  
And yet still nicer  
Than the slicer lie  
And then the slipping away.

No one cuts their wrists like that  
By accident or on a machine.  
A deliberate act  
The cut wrist risk  
Of one who is lost  
Or losing  
And feels the draining numbness  
Catch  
Hold on - -

For me real death  
Has been too recently close  
To watch this slipping  
Down and out by choice.

She sits dazed, staring at the bandage  
And I feel the fear, the cold alone,  
That awful night,  
Taken by a force  
Accidental  
The draining numbness  
Caught  
held on - -

Time heals all wounds  
But memory gouges much too deep  
And those we open  
On the brain  
Re-open  
And remain.

— Annie M. Scott



— Debbie Flashman









