From the Editor...

Fishing is a favorite activity of mine. On some outings, the angler is rewarded immediately and frequently. On others, the angler may be frustrated, casting away fervently for the rise that never comes. For either result, the effort must first be attempted for the desired success to be possible. For me, even if few fall for my presentation, the activity itself is the reward.

Creativity is in many ways the same. Some days are a constant, pulsing flow, unstoppable and uninterrupted. Other days the artist must work hard to place ink to canvas or page; distractions are frequent, creativity is sporadic. The journey from the empty page or canvas to a finished piece of work is the reward, the satisfaction of accomplishing a goal.

Success in fishing and creativity require a blend of acquired skills, knowledgeable choices and sometimes pure dumb luck. The right blend can make memories that will last forever and art and literature that will forever last.

At Arapahoe Community College these skills are cultivated at the Art and Design Center, by the English Department, and Writers Studio. The instructors are encouraging and the students bring a wide range of talent in diverse areas. These departments supply the components of a successful Art and Literature magazine.

Those components must then be assembled. I am proud to say that the student staff of Progenitor, with a spirit of cooperation and commitment, hard work and many long hours, has exceeded all expectations. Each has provided a variety of talents to make this magazine possible. For an Editor, these dedicated few could not have made this effort a more rewarding experience.

Of the Art and Literature submitted for the 2007 issue of Progenitor, the staff has culled the hundreds of choices to these; the few that the staff feels best represent a wide range of thought and artistic styles. We have selected them to reflect the talent of the students, staff and artists at Arapahoe Community College and the surrounding community.

I encourage the pursuit of your creative goals. With each project your skills grow, your knowledge builds. Continue casting away in the hope of fulfilling your wishes.

Jeff Jones
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Thom Sorensen was born February 10, 1942 at St. Luke’s Hospital in Denver. He received an accounting scholarship at the University of Denver, and later received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor in Accounting. Thom taught at Peru State College in Nebraska, and later returned to DU as an instructor. Eventually, Thom accepted a full time faculty position at Arapahoe Community College, where he taught for 34 years. He was identified by his peers as ACC’s outstanding faculty member in the 1985-'86 academic year. Thom retired from ACC in May, 2005.

Shortly after retiring, Thom received a letter from Roland Ryan, a long-time colleague of Thom’s who had also recently retired from ACC. Roland writes: “On this day in the ACC Library there should be a bronze statue of Thom Sorensen honoring you as one of the all-time great instructors at ACC…I always held you to be one of the very best instructors at ACC in the long history of the college.”

Thom met his beloved wife, Lin, in 1968 on a blind date arranged by a student at a DU hockey game. According to Lin, Thom’s most romantic demonstration was his gift of “A Red, Red Rose,” a poem by Robert Burns, which he copied onto beautiful parchment. Lin had it framed, and it has been hanging in their home ever since. They were married in 1970 and in 1973, Thom and Lin moved into their new home in Littleton, where they enjoyed raising three German Shepherds. Thom and Lin also shared many treasured memories at their mountain property near Bailey, and enjoyed vacationing in Oregon and Washington.

Thom always expressed a great love of music. He played his first music gig in the 9th grade and maintained professional contact with Hal Rarick, his 6th grade music teacher, in his big band combo until the last year of his
life. Thom had mastered many instruments including the alto sax, tenor sax, electric and string bass, tuba, valve trombone, accordion, and piano. Although many people knew that Thom played recently in brass bands and combos that featured a big band style, most people probably did not know that Thom played stand-up bass in a rockabilly band, performed in an accordion trio with his brother Jim (Thom jokingly referred to the accordion alternatively as the Belly Baldwin or the Stomach Steinway), and a polka band with a regular gig at the Little Bear in Evergreen. Thom always took great pride in being a self-taught musician.

Thom was a well-loved teacher with an unquenchable appetite for learning and he constantly promoted the value of lifelong education. Thom always provided stimulating conversation, and his stories often benefited from his dry, subtle humor. Thom had the gift of being able to converse about almost any topic that one might mention. Thom’s students were often enthralled by his lectures which he packed full of both accurate information and his unique humor. One of Thom’s classic lines from his ‘sensation and perception’ lectures was: “If anyone here believes in telekinesis, raise my hand!”

Thom had great friends, colleagues and a professional life filled with meaning, and Thom has been sorely missed by all of his friends. Thom would not want us to mourn his death but to celebrate his life. Everyone who knew and loved Thom will always keep a little bit of his spirit alive with them.

There is something that anyone who had the privilege of knowing Thom has shared. We are all beneficiaries of Thom’s inspiration and wisdom, and we have been inspired by Thom to inspire others. We have been given the legacy of Thom’s dream. He has entrusted us to carry on his passionate love of life. It has been said that a man is judged by the legacy that he leaves behind and by those lives that have changed as a result of knowing him. Thom dedicated his life to teaching and motivating all those who were ready and willing to learn. Thom achieved major milestones in his life, but we must recognize that his dreams never died. They will live on in each and every one of us.
In 1981, the year I began seventh grade, I still hadn’t kissed a boy, which I chalked up to late blooming. I couldn’t do anything about Mother Nature’s schedule, but I could try to become a normal person anyway, just in case a boy in close proximity lay unconscious long enough for me to revive him with some detail about myself. I’d noticed that by the time the leaves had begun to fall, every one of my peers had surveyed the musical landscape as well as a thirteen year old could, and had announced his devotion to one rock group or another by way of T-shirts and Trapper Keeper cover art. I decided that it was time for me, too, to choose my favorite band, thus declaring to everyone at Clear Lake Junior High School who I was. The pressure was unbearable.

Thanks to my orthodontist, the sheet metal industry was booming; in fact, I still fear that Michael Moore, in an on-camera interview, will trick me into admitting that the removal of my braces in 1985 was single-mouthedly responsible for the economic decline of most, if not all, of Pennsylvania’s steel towns. (Bruce Springsteen would then perform a benefit concert.) I’d taken band instead of wood shop as my elective; my gym teacher gave me my only “B” that year, and I’d say he was being kind. I was seldom in trouble, and actually found myself on the fringes of popularity the day Brenda, one of the A-list girls, told me, “Sit next to me at the assembly today. You make me laugh.”

Still, instead of making a play to lunch with her and the jock-and-cheerleader set afterwards, I walked the block and a half down the street, my lunch pass and house key in pocket, to eat in front of the TV with my dad. Without fail, we met everyday for lunch to eat chicken sandwiches from Burger King while we watched Richard Simmons’ exercise show. What kind of music belonged to a girl like that?

Charged with such a task today, I might just lie down and die clutching a Barry Manilow album, but I really believed that knowledge is power. So one day at lunch I said, “I want this magazine, Dad,” and I handed him the subscription card from a Circus magazine.

Before he agreed, he asked, “Another one?” wondering what was wrong with the magazines that already came to me in the mail every month.

At the time, I hadn’t begun to read publications about music; I subscribed to Tiger Beat, which arguably covered music, but in a way that was suspect; reports seemed preoccupied with celebrities’ astrological signs and their favorite summertime recipes. I couldn’t take Tiger Beat seriously; it regularly endorsed Leif Garrett and Shaun Cassidy for Christ’s sake. But Circus contained advertisements for Zildjian cymbals, Gibson Les Paul guitars and other things I knew I would never want or need to buy. It was a buffet of news on albums, tours and musicians, and with it I had at my command a reliable word from the trenches. I could have picked my favorite band by closing my eyes, turning to a page and pointing, but I was too cautious for that. Wasting my dad’s money on an album that embarrassed me with its lyrics was all I needed. Every time my friend Katie elbowed me, urging me to dance along with her, singing, If you want my body/and you think I’m sexy/come on honey let me know in front of her full-length mirror, I wanted to crawl into her hamster’s cage.

Like good makeup, the right rock group could camouflage my flaws, if I

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**Just a Small Town Girl**

*Jody Reale*
didn’t go too far. An assortment of music written and performed by men ten years older, who I had never met—and would never meet—could save me; their button on my jean jacket a talisman that would protect me from harm, or worse, complete anonymity. I knew I couldn’t pull off something as serious as choosing a band with an umlaut in its name. That eliminated bands like Hüsker Dü, which was too European anyway, even during the ‘80s delirious wake me up before you go-go era that transformed new wave music into one long Mentos commercial; an orgy of big white teeth and day-glow spandex. Motor-head, Queensrÿche and Blue Oyster Cult were for the older kids with darker tastes in everything, and it was clear that only the girls who inherited first row tickets to puberty followed Mötley Crüe: a collection of bad boys with hairdos that I would imitate well into my freshman year of college. Please pass the Aqua Net.

Trisha Barnes, an established mouth breather with glassy eyes, had just been caught cutting class and smoking what was undoubtedly oregano in a car belonging to her high school boyfriend when I pointed to her T-shirt and asked, “Weren’t you, like, two, when Led Zeppelin last toured the States?” It was the closest I had ever come to picking a fight, but why anyone would embrace a band that was no longer a band was beyond me. The stoners, a collection of grimy boys and tomboyish girls who smelled like Spencer Gifts and choked every time they had to solve for x at the board, loved Zeppelin unconditionally. I guess they were kids who were hoping against hope that certain people, their parents for example, would reunite. At the same time, they seemed to have asked for a second helping of child-parent angst at the dinner table of relationships, and I didn’t want any of that rubbing off on me.

There was the day that I ruled out solo artists; I’d noticed that most of them either sang Christian rock or appealed to the aloof kids with strong opinions about things like poetry, and I was already spending too much time alone in my room playing the flute for my cat. Then one day after school, with my bedroom door closed to indicate the seriousness of my work even though neither one of my parents would be home from work for a few hours, I opened my latest Circus. Mid-magazine, I found a short but fawning article entitled Journey summer tour: Climate controlled but still hot!

Sure, I knew the Escape album; up the street Missy Munoz’s older sister played it while they sulked in their basement all last summer instead of jumping on the trampoline in their backyard. Missy and I smuggled it in a beach bag to my house; we admired the jacket cover art from what must have been an hour. In imagery that one might refer to as “trippy,” a space ship resembling a beetle with wings burst forth from the center of a sphere, the shards from the blast flinging the planet’s crust into the dark. The word “ESCAPE” was printed in blocky text; the “A” in “Escape” represented by the number 4 and the second “E” represented by the number 3, as if the word were appearing in a digital display. I held the album close to my face and read the artist’s signature, “Kelly and Mouse.” We shrugged. What followed was the first song, side A, “Don’t Stop Believing,” a song that begins with a brooding piano and bass line that takes its time and haunts you with all those sharps in the lower register. And then
CALL WAITING

Elizabeth Blacklurn
color acrylic
10 5/16" x 5 11/16"
before you can get your roller skates out on the rink, it breaks into full-tilt rock with Steve Perry’s voice going up and up over the moon. The album’s lyrics were imaginative, poetic, and kept their sexually explicit references and violence right down to zero; “Don’t Stop Believing” told the story of just a small town girl/living in a lonely world/ and a city boy/born and raised in south Detroit. For reasons that still aren’t all that clear to me, they both took a midnight train going anywhere. I learned every word on that album down to the last note, and sang them every night of my life. I knew I had my band, and it had me until the bitter end.

These were the seminal days of crippling obsession with lead singer Steve Perry, in particular, the city by the Bay, and the two mysterious visual artists under the moniker “Kelly and Mouse.” They were good days; instead of scolding me for spending too much time in my room when I should have been playing the flute for whatever family friend happened to be drinking copious amounts of booze in the living room, my mom said, “You sure are enjoying your new stereo.” Damn right I was.

Despite the due diligence I had performed on the music of the day by the way of one magazine subscription, the launch of a strange new cable network called MTV and reports from my older cousin Kim, my experiences with modern music were completely undirected. The consequences of living in a home where the parents were consumed with the fear that their second daughter could turn out like their first were that I was isolated from anyone who could have told me anything about sex, drugs or rock and roll. I have no hard feelings, no resentments, and no regrets. I know that my taste in music, past and present, is utterly, patently, painfully embarrassing. I am somewhat ashamed, yes, but I have no plans to change. Things were good just the way they were; simple and safe and as innocent as things during junior high should be, but usually aren’t.

**Luke, I am your father, now let’s rock!**

In eighth grade social studies, I sat behind a girl named Desiree. Much bigger and taller than the rest of us, she was the closest I could come to having a grown-up for a friend. She had too many mean older brothers who were blind-drunk with their love of the martial arts, and whenever she spoke about being adopted into her Dutch family, which was often, I never knew what to say. Her hair was ruby-red, and she cut it herself into the feathered style I admired so. I looked into her closet and saw some of her shirts hanging inside out on wire hangers, a forbidden item in our house.

“I’m not allowed to do my own laundry,” I said, after she began making chit chat about detergent of choice. I was smitten with Desiree in that way that only a girl can want desperately to be like someone she knows she doesn’t really want to be like.

At least once a week, Desiree wore a concert T-shirt, the softball jersey kind with the blue three-quarter length sleeves from Van Halen’s “Fair Warning” tour. While I was trying like hell to finish my homework before the third period bell, David Lee Roth mocked me and my sensibilities from the back of Desiree’s jersey. Like a modern day, overly sexy
Darth Vader with hair, he invited me to join the dark side. *Luke, I am your father; now let’s rock!* He would want me to fold down my middle and ring finger, extend my thumb, index and pinky fingers in a gesture that the people who were maybe a little too into God said could turn anyone into Satan’s servant. I was afraid to like the grown men of Van Halen I saw posed in boyish ways and printed on cotton, as if buying the record meant having to invite them to move in with us.

“They’re supposed to scare you. Jesus, that’s the point,” Desiree explained, moving a pack of cigarettes from the hiding place in her room to her crocheted purse. But the fact was, I didn’t want to be scared, or angry, or sad. I wanted to be happy most of the time, a quality that, as I would learn later from girls in high school, made me less “deep.” I wanted to grow up, avoiding any brushes with suicide or chemical dependency, and move someplace like the Bay Area, where it was foggy and mysterious, and where the streets crawled day and night with people who wrote songs about *streetlight people/living just to find emotion. Hiding/somewhere in the niiiight.*

Desiree teased me for insisting on patronizing the Journey video game when we visited the arcade together; we both knew it sucked, but one of us kept plunking in her quarters, refusing to admit it. Despite my enthusiasm and the subsequent back-purchase of virtually every album leading up to the newest one, Desiree and I were the best of friends. She knew when not to tease me, and that, above all, was what made her an adult in a teenager suit. She listened when I complained that the luckier girls were enjoying the fashion and freedom that only a tube top can provide during the summer months while I was going through Hell. Her top, in fact, was held up with actual breasts, you see, whereas mine was held up with at least one of my hands at any given time. Having to put down my copy of *Hello God? It’s Me, Margaret* every 10 seconds to adjust my clothing was making me cranky. Desiree could have told me to ditch the Journey pin that was weighing things down and put on a shirt, but she only said, in so many words, that this too shall pass.

She could have commented that I would go far on the SWAT team; she could have said to me, “When ridding a compound of its religious fanatics, you could bring the music for the loudspeakers that ultimately convinces them all to commit suicide.” But she tolerated Journey’s 1980 release, *Departure*, for an entire summer of sunbathing in my driveway.

“Come on,” I argued with her one day, although she never argued back, “you have to admit that the musicianship is there; the lyrics totally rule.”

Desiree said plainly that it kind of had to be that way; all unexplainable fixations on Steve Perry considered, the members of Journey were neither the best dressed nor the best-looking dudes in rock and roll. And after I had pointed out certain anatomical details thanks to the extremely tight white pants that the men sported on their album cover, Desiree had to be the one to explain to me that they weren’t all necessarily Jewish, either.

For the moment we were jobless, we were virgins and we had no responsibilities. We had too much baby oil and not enough SPF and nobody cared. And for a while, Desiree was my window through
Good with the Bad

Cyd Coon
black and white photograph
11 7/8" x 11 5/8"
which I had watched girls acting their age, plus a few years. I wasn’t missing much.

When we returned to school the following fall, my heart full of hope, a funny thing happened: nothing. Although I had spent a week lightheaded from smelling the markers I used to trace album cover designs onto the grocery bags I’d folded and cut into textbook covers, they were not as conversation-worthy as I had hoped.

I stood at my locker between classes each day, the door open wide to expose the Journey posters taped there, knowing that it didn’t matter. I could wear my pin studded jean jacket until I fainted from heat exhaustion. No one would notice. They did, however, notice that I’d become Desiree’s friend, and in the process, acceptable by association. I couldn’t believe my good fortune.

Once in high school, I never missed the dog days of junior high. But I did miss Desiree after our junior year, when emerging identities and boys and cars wedged themselves between us. The last time I saw her, I asked if she still cut her own hair. She did. And she had also started cutting her own skin. She’d used a safety pin to carve out the word “John,” the name of her boyfriend, deep into the soft underside of her forearm. I didn’t know what to say.

What I will say now is that the rest of the world has never been as forgiving as Desiree had been, about anything, especially about the things that should always be forgiven, like one’s taste in music. And when I think about how my musical preference cost me a date or two as an adult, I think of her and wonder what the hell the world is coming to.

Things were especially bleak during the ’90s grunge revolution, during which time I learned that the one way, maybe the only way, that real adulthood is different from adolescence is that nobody cares who your friends are. If I was going to continue my Journey adoration, I was going to have to do so in the closet. I entered and hunkered down right after a date with a handsome young man named Mike.

Unless we wanted to take his van, which was stuffed with exercise equipment that he repaired for a living, Mike suggested we take my car. Scrunched into the passenger seat of my tiny Toyota, he pulled from the stereo the six-year-old cassette tape my high school boyfriend had taped for me. On it, his scrawl said “Journey: Raised on Radio.”

“Oh my God,” he said, waving the tape around so that I couldn’t snatch it back, “With all the great new music out right now, you’re listening to Journey?” I didn’t tell him that it could have been worse. I briefly considered choosing Billy Squire, who was defeated only by the “no solo artists” technicality. “So who else do you listen to,” he asked, adding, “for real?”

I remembered that one of my friends, plaid shirt-deep in the Seattle grunge scene and other good genres, had recently told me about a European recording artists on the cutting edge known only as Bjork. But I fumbled everything, a common occurrence when I’m lying, and said, “Bjorn mostly—I mean Borg.” I started sweating, imagining a man in a head- and wristbands standing in front of a microphone. “I mean Bjork. Do you like her?”

“Yeah, she’s got quite a serve.”

It was a hard lesson Mike taught me, but he did me a favor. He showed me that at some point during any casual
date, a girl has to tell the truth about herself. Several years later, I met Alex, a man who didn’t flinch when I revealed everything: the cellulite, the acne scars, the pictures of myself eating a giant turkey leg at a Renaissance Fair. And the music: a collection not even an aerobics instructor could love.

Several years into our marriage, in fact, Alex surprised me on my 36th birthday with *The Essential Journey*, a two-disc set featuring all my favorites. “All your Journey vinyl is still in the garage,” he said. “No doubt ruined by the ski boots that have been sitting on top of the box since we moved in.” He thought I should have something that I could at least listen to once in a while. He didn’t know I’d already bought *Trial by Fire* as a gift to myself days before.

1996’s *Trial by Fire* was the last gasp of the same members who, 20 years earlier, brought us the *Escape* album. Playing track 3, *When you Love a Woman*, is the one thing I can do while driving to calm the baby down when she’s screaming as if our last errand is to the black market, where we will sell one of her kidneys. Even though the group photo looks like the “before” shot of a Hair Club for Men ad, and the last track is a tragically misguided attempt at reggae, I love the album for what it is: four artists’ last ditch effort at putting their successes aside, if only for a moment, and their arthritic fingers and fading voices forward to eke out one last performance together. After the album’s debut, but before the tour, Steve Perry quit the band for good.

It’s hard to believe that the last gasp surfaced so long ago. Thanks to modern technology, though, the past has never been closer. Just as a friend of mine likes to say, “It’s noon somewhere,” while ordering a cocktail with breakfast, one can find 1996 wherever there’s a computer and an Internet connection. What I didn’t know until recently is that there is a rabid cadre of Journey fans who have taken refuge in the ether of ones and zeroes, their futuristic beetle ships smashing through the planet’s crust and flinging their appreciation all over cyberspace. They’ve been conducting and publishing interviews all this time with the remaining band members who tour and record to this day, as well as the now-reclusive Steve Perry. They’ve put videos and live interviews from decades ago only as far away as a mouse-click. And when I found it, I couldn’t help but download a Japanese television interview with Steve Perry, guitarist Neal Schon and keyboardist Jonathan Cain, taped at the *Raised on Radio* album release part at the Hard Rock Cafe in Tokyo. In 1986, when *Raised on Radio* made its debut, I’m sure I would have watched the same interview spellbound, but today, I am reminded of how much I hate to be embarrassed for other people.

*A collection not even an aerobics instructor could love.*

The interview took place in what appeared to be the restaurant’s storage room. Against the wall, behind the three men, were boxes of restaurant supplies, canned goods and dishes. Cain is confident and polite, and he applies his media training like a pro, despite a hairdo that looks like he’d opened a mail bomb from MacGuyver made out of Vaseline and...
a Rave home permanent. Schon clowns his way through most of the interview, looking and sounding intoxicated. He is interrupted several times by Perry, who is probably also drunk, but trying desperately to sound profound despite sharing a two-shot with a giant can of tuna. He's nursing what appears to be a glass of Chardonnay—and a merciless case of short man's Syndrome that forces him to eventually address someone as "Wheezy."

All past and present embarrassments aside, I remain unwavering in my devotion. And if I had been inclined during my childhood, I could have used it to define the adult I would become: serial monogamist, dog person, homeowner, wife and mother. I'm not rested enough to exercise the fickle tastes that plague those who are forever chasing the next new-new thing anyway. Today's righteous band sucks tomorrow; today's MP3 is tomorrow's 8-track; I learned the hard way, vis-à-vis Atari, that trends are harsh mistresses.

There's a blinking crystal in the palm of children of the '80s, and it reminds everyone of us that were born on the cusp of modernity that stamped on every little pleasure we invent, is an expiration date. Still, I can't turn my back on the band that witnessed my safe passage from middle school to high school, to college and beyond. I can't talk trash about the soundtrack behind locker combinations, fumbled kisses, underage drinking and learning to drive my Camero in the snow. Listening to Journey takes me back to my bedroom in the basement, where it was too warm and dry in the winter from the furnace in the next room and the quietest place in the house during NFL season. The music is a comfort and a joy to me, and in the house of my adulthood, where one is likely to find a dog every 200 square feet, it's something that doesn't require a lot of space. So I rebel, if quietly. I still listen and I probably always will.

When I know ahead of time that someone is going to ride with me in broad daylight, I usually hide my musical stash, but this was an on-the-spot situation, and I hadn't prepared my car. I was giving my friend David a ride when he fingered the evidence, right there in plain view, practically waving at us from its slot under the stereo.

"You own a Journey CD?" he asked, shaking his head. "I've never even heard of this one," he said, picking up the case and turning it over. "Is it new or something?"

"Not really," was all I said. "I think an intervention is in order."

He could have ribbed me silly after that, and I would have taken my lumps, too, eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, but that was the end of it. Then I remembered that David makes no pretense that he's in the know about anything. "I don't even know what Botox is," he admitted once. But in the absence of damning evidence, I simply answer questions about what I listen to with, "The radio," which I know represents about one percent of the music that's out there. It's okay. Buying new music is like plucking gray hairs or weeding the garden. There is no shortage; there will always be more. Might as well wait.
Like a gigantic whale
his skin pours over
porcelain as my father
sits on the toilet seat

a newspaper lies open
on a lap
of fleshy thighs
one whose body
will soon die

wrinkled shorts
fold in layers
below knees

cover slippers
cover toes

on calves
curly dark hair
smothers

to the core
all pores longing
as the child
looks in the door
Lost in Time

Cameron Blazek
black and white photograph
24” x 18”
Balancing Rock

Marsha Wooley

oil on canvas

96” x 60”
I did not open
the blanket
of soft flannel,
your skin so tender
it might tear.
I whispered your name
into the rose of your ear.
Having no breath,
you remained blue.

Later, in the garden,
I opened the ceramic
of your only home,
watched you fly.
Wind pulled
the particulars of you,
setting sun lit you up,
ashes sparkled
like a shining net.

Humming bird soul,
quick and darting,
in your flight,
what do you choose?

To paint the blush of wild peonies,
their silk, your morning comfort.
Spin in dance toward purple iris,
green fluted stems rocking the wind.
Swim the tendrilled roots of water lilies,
their open tongues, your first prayer.

The clamor of poppies,
your birthday balloons,
Slender cupped tulips,
the chalice of your communion,
Slivers of chrysanthemum,
your Fourth of July.

Flecks of your bone rest on my feet.
I take you home.
"The present life on earth is like the flight of a single sparrow."
Venerable Bede

Newton, in the interval of time it takes
to have a thrown apple reach the ground,
peels back the layers of this cosmic onion called Earth.

Show me the universe beneath. Focus on patterns of time
between us, the overlay of human presence.

I do not need our hand, only breadth of view,
sureness of foot, infinity in all directions.

We must hurry. In the background, I hear Einstein
curving and warping moments and space,
deleting the separation between the bedside
of my past dead dying father
and my distanced aging mother.
(But Albert gets ahead of me. Or, he watches as I get ahead of myself.)

Trying to give memory form, he sculpts forgotten space-times.
Light, his trusty aegis, travels ahead. I trudge behind, burdened,
dragging heavy slivers of the past, detritus at the edge of sight.

Isaac, provide asylum in predictability, comfort in certainty.
No randomness, dark matter trying to crush the center.

When it must come, I demand death steal in quietly.
Lay its hand gently. Lead me through the dark hole

where others tell of unseen crumpled dimensions,
lying so low they are unnamed.
Twilight Dance

Charla Gee
quilt, hand dyed and printed cotton, wool batting and decorative threads
52" x 65"
Coyote Singer sang under the moonlit skies of the Prairie Grasslands. His serenades reached each animal of the Plains lying curled in warm dens, guiding them deeper into dreaming time. Weary from the fall harvesting, his songs filled their slumber with promises of spring rains and playtime with their children.

He sang from a hilltop, eyes closed and head thrown back in complete abandonment, offering his remarkable gift to the prairie darkness. Proudly, he reveled in his ability to sing through the night and he believed that all loved his musical abilities.

The migratory tribes, aloft on the wings to Southern regions, stalled overhead and vast formations of geese and swans settled onto the Prairie to listen. He sang, pondering the breadth of his talents. “Why, I can bring the Great White Pelicans from the sky,” he boasted.

Lovely Stork was tired of the long flight. She muttered, “I know the long cold night is coming; that the way South beckons. I need to continue on my way, but I am so weary. The beautiful music summons me down onto the Prairie for the night. I want to rest and listen.” She followed the song, joining the multitude of waterfowl slumbering in the marshlands below.

Settling deep into the cattails, she folded her wings and long legs into a position of listening. Curling her long neck, she lowered her head to her snowy flank and surrendered gratefully to bask in the relaxing music floating on the night air. “I want to listen, and dream, for awhile,” she sighed.

Coyote Singer watched her drifting, silhouetted against the moonlit sky. He noted her weariness. Delighted in his abilities to call her from the skies, and flashing his wide smile, he decided to woo her, to see if he could coax her closer.

He struck his favorite song, offering a taste of the coming springtime, when all the prairie creatures emerged to dance with their children in the refreshing April rains. The rain song reminded Lovely Stork of her parched and dusty feathers. Rising, she stretched her long legs, lifting her beautiful head up to the sky, eyes closed. She danced in her sleep, leaping high and floating down on outstretched wings, graceful and lithe. “Ah, spring rains,” she smiled, preening as she imagined the cool clean droplets washing away the grime of the long journey, quenching her thirst. In her dream, she frolicked with the children, feeling young and free.

Coyote Singer watched her form flickering in the moonlight. Mesmerized by her beauty, he offered a second song, beckoning her to a warm underground den where she could rest. On impulse, he added a longing tune about the long cold night where two lovers might come together, exploring, sharing; hinting at a promise of love.

Startled, Lovely Stork opened her eyes to stare at him. “I have never known such a thirst for a song,” she told him. She unfurled her wings to leave, then paused, compelled to him. In the lingering, she ignored her instinct to leap into the sky. Stepping closer, he sang, pleading with all his heart, “Oh, slender beauty, stay! Preen your lovely feathers in my humble moonlight songs. Say you will stay, forever!”

Intrigued, she nodded, saying, “I am familiar with the clacking noisy world of my stork relations. We speak to each other through the whistling flight feathers. I am new to your Prairie world. Your songs are
Blue

Aileen Gaumond
scratchboard and ink
7 1/2” x 9 1/2”
so exotic and attractive, grounded here by the Earth. Sing more,” she begged, once again folding her wings and long legs.

He commenced, describing his early Prairie life, singing of the trails of a million tiny paws running free over the sand. “Come closer,” he invited, “for the nights are growing colder and we can warm each other through the long cold winter.” Coyote Singer howled on as the evening slipped into the dawn of their newfound love. Moreover, Lovely Stork learned to snuggle, warm and cozy, below the ground in his den.

“Like this,” he teased, kissing her feet.

Soon, winter’s snow barricaded the entrance closed. Lovely Stork ignored the cold, she begged him to sing, exclaiming, “My heart is so happy here. Sing! Coyote Singer, I live only to listen.”

“And I sing best when you are listening!” he exclaimed. “We are two, one a gifted singer and the second, the most precious gift one can offer a singer—an ardent listener. Lovely Stork! Your adoration has brought forth new songs, from a new purpose.”

His music thrilled her. “No, gifted singer, it is I who have a new purpose. I am so cherished!” She spoke tenderly, affirming her expanding heart, merging with his warm closeness.

“I don’t miss the rolling oceans or the schools of fish I have hunted, I seem to be hungry only for now,” she marveled, ignoring the nagging, cramping need to stretch her wings on the clouds overhead. “The long winter is here and my wings are useless; my legs too vulnerable to the biting winds. At last! I can linger. Here is where I belong.”

“I will sing a song of spring time, so hope will help to pass the time,” he offered each day. Never had he felt so committed, so important. “Stay here, protected and warm. I will bring you berries and willow branches, Lovely Stork. I will even find you a fish,” he promised as he burrowed out to go hunt.

The snow deepened. While the den was snug and warm, the walls molded her into a form unlike her own. Miserably cramped, she scolded herself, saying, “He loves me, and is such a good provider. How could I need anything more?”

Eventually, Lovely Stork’s feathers molted, adding a downy softness to their bed. She curled herself up smaller, willing her heart to push aside the need to stretch out or fly. Always safe and warm, his loving songs numbed the pain of her folded wings and legs. Upon his return from the hunt she ate well, nourished by whatever he provided.

Throughout the long winter, they talked much. She told him of other lands, and of the animals different from those around them in the Rockies. “My people visit the Waterfowl Tribes of the North Marshlands,” she murmured. “We fly and follow the ancient paths along the continental rivers. We nest in the South, where the air is warm and the coastlands thick with fish that tickle my toes when I wade, hunting.”

“Like this,” he teased, kissing her feet.

She giggled and continued, “There are so many life forms out there, all involved in the endless circle of life and death. I met a great seabird, an Albatross, who had never once left the air since he fledged. He survived the mighty
ocean storms by winging higher into the clouds. I was trying to fly higher when I flew over your meadow and followed the Canada Geese and Great White Pelicans down for their night's rest."

"You have flown higher and farther than any I have ever known. You have survived many trials," he murmured, caressing her long body lovingly.

"Yes, my parents taught me to find a path through the clouds by studying the angle of the sun as the Earth turns under my wings," she explained. "The way is long and arduous; only the strongest survive to do it every year. I sometimes get so weary, though. That is why I stopped to listen to your sweet songs." She smiled and then said, "I do not have to be so strong any longer."

"Ah, Lovely Stork. You are merely feathers and down. The Great Nation of Storks is strong, full of awesome stamina, among many other talents. I am honored that you stopped to listen," he said. "I love you for being my most precious listener. You fill up my lonely heart."

"Tell me about your people," she asked, curling close as he covered them both with his furry tail.

Coyote Singer spoke, "I am from far traveling hunters. We gather in the forests from all over the plains. My people move swiftly across the land," he explained. "We sing to celebrate many successful hunts, gathering together where the trails converge into abundance."

He continued, "We make songs to practice the stories, to memorize hunting skills. The taste of blood warms the cold winter hearts of the hunters." He licked his lips. "We run hard and cherish the running paths. To be a great hunter is to follow many trails, trusting that we will be nourished completely by the land."

"I fear the Hunters," she quavered, "The Jackrabbits, Mule Deer and Caribou survive by outrunning the Cougars and the Wolves in the North. You are a Hunter. I cannot run, nor can I fly away, so far underground."

He rushed to speak, "Do not ever fear me, Lovely Stork! I love you and will protect and provide for you forever." He sang to comfort her, watching her drift into slumber. He admired her beautiful body and fine silver feathers. "Ah, how different we are, yet so in love," he crooned. "Our long winter togetherness is good. I love you so!"

The blizzard wind howled overhead, stirring her to murmur, "Listen, Coyote Singer, the wind is singing a song of the long cold sleep, chilling the heart and offering death if I try to fly now."

"Hear instead this song of springtime, love. Know that you can stay warm and content," he replied. Softly, he sang to her, reminding her of the green grasslands and the multitude of wildflowers sleeping under the snow.

Springtime was many cold moons away. The long winter chilled each bone. Painful wisdom slowly entered their love nest. She grew discouraged and shriveled into self-doubt. The loveliest of songs no longer lulled her to sleep; she lay awake, staring into the darkness. The warm den felt tight and cramped; the air became stifling.

One day, spring did come, and with it Lovely Stork emerged, delighted to greet the green sprigs poking tenderly up through the crusty snow. "Ah," she sighed. "Oh, at last! Such a relief to be able to stand tall again!"
Unfurling her wings, she giggled happily, humming to herself, “Watch how my long legs dance. Look at how I can leap into the air.” She began to preen and trim her feathers, realigning each one. “I will nibble green grass and never breathe stale air again,” she vowed, inhaling the crisp, cool air.

Coyote Singer watched her dancing in the spring sunshine. “Oh, look how lovely your long neck is unfurled. How tall and powerful your legs. I feel the strong breeze coming off your wings, Love! But, don’t you want to fly?” he asked.

“Oh yes, but I won’t do it right now,” she declined. “Sing to me; tell me about this world that is awakening.” She thrust her long lovely neck into the taller shadows of the spruce tree to hide her daring eyes, scanning the blue sky and clouds overhead.

Coyote Singer thought, I see how wistfully she watches the clouds through the spruce brambles. What a pity that she does not fly today. I need to think about this as I hunt for us both.

As he trotted off down the hunting trail, he recited what he knew. “I love this Lovely Stork. She loves me, I know this, too. I am truly a great singer to have called her from the clouds to be my love.” He trotted along a trail, picking up the scent of a vole nibbling green sprigs. Pouncing, he gulped the gift, satisfying his hunger.

He found the few remaining rose hips and gathered them, saying, “She loves the tangy berries of the wild roses. I am such a good provider!” He paused to drink at the edge of a melting snow bank. In the heat of the morning sunshine, the droplets tinkled into an ice cold puddle. The tinkling tune called to him. He listened to the words of wisdom tumbling from the snow’s transformation. “Foolish Coyote, she is grounded, tethered to the earth, unable to fly out of her love for you!”

“No! I take the best care of her! She needs me. What if she gets hurt on the long hard stork way? What if her great wings are unable to carry her above danger?” he argued. Then, Coyote Singer practiced a little tune, “Stay here. Be with me. I will hunt and keep us safe and warm, for I will love you forever.”

“How long do you think she can live crumpled up in your den? She is not a prairie creature, but belongs in the sky!” The incessant song wriggled into his ears, “She is not made for the underground, unless you want her to die.”

Coyote Singer’s heart shrank with shame; he recognized the truth in the music of the melting snow. The long winter with him had changed her; the molting, the way she lay staring at the darkness. She had lost her will to fly high as Lovely Stork. He threw back his head and howled in pain, “Where is the exotic soaring Lovely Stork I met last fall? Lately, she is smaller, darker; resembling a Prairie Sparrow or more like a Little Brown Bat! Oh, what have I done?” Coyote Singer moaned. Whirling and dropping the rose hip bramble, he raced back to the den.

She greeted him, “See, the sunshine feels too good!” Then seeing his worried face she asked, “Coyote Singer, what is wrong?”

With tears in his voice, he spoke, “I will sing you the most difficult song I have ever created. Here is your Song of Freedom! You must go, my love! I have learned much from our winter together. You belong in the skies with your people.
Fly away because you can. Look inside yourself and see what you are. You say you do not want to fly because of our love. But that kind of love tethers you to the ground forever. You are strong! Go! While you are still yourself and not forever crippled or changed into a cave dwelling creature instead of my most Lovely Stork!"

*Coyote Singer threw back his head, and howled...*

“But Coyote Singer, my love, I cannot leave you. I want to stay. I can undo the longings. I have only to listen to your amazing songs to embrace the grounding of our love,” she countered earnestly.

“Ah Lovely Stork, dearest, our time together is over. I cannot go with you, nor can you stay with me another season. I believe we fell in love with the next lesson we had to learn. See, I felt powerful when I charmed you from the clouds. I basked in your admiration of my singing; selfishly wanting you to love me. But, this season of our love has taught me that I must want what is best for you, not just for me. You cannot live for long as a crippled, underground creature.”

He drew in a deep breath, and spoke clearly, “Go now. Tell all you meet that one selfish Coyote Singer found great wisdom. Tell them that true love brings greater truths.”

“But what of my heart? Does it not matter to you that I am committed forever? I have sacrificed all of my stork ways to stay here with you!” she insisted. “I love your songs, I love being under-ground together with you. Please don’t make me leave.”

He tenderly touched her face, “Dear Lovely Stork, tell your broken heart that I love you enough to insist on your freedom. Lift your spirit now. Trust your wonderful wings,” he spoke gently. “Lovely Stork, trust what you know you are, and go, for that is what is good. You must never go underground again out of love for another. I will think about our love for a long time!” With that, Coyote Singer threw back his head and howled out of his shameful grief, from a humbled and expanded heart.

Lovely Stork sobbed, nodding. “I know what you sing is all true. Our time together is over. Life underground is not good for my wings. I have been so confused! In my love for you, I lost my will to fly.” She stood there trembling, admitting, “I do long to fly!”

Watching her stand, accepting the truth, his heart brought forth the most beautiful song he ever sung. This one flowed from unselfish, transforming love. “Remember what we shared together! I will never forget you. Our time together has changed us both. I will spend many years treasuring the gift of the long cold winter underground. Thank you. You will always be my Lovely Stork!”

On his new song of love, she felt her wilted stork heart unfurl. Leaping high into the fresh air, she drifted, soaring above the awakening spruce and aspen groves. The power of his song energized and lifted her above the winter’s den of commitments and crippling self-sacrifice. Relaxing into the breath streaming high above the Prairie land, she circled, straining to hear the last notes of the pure sweet music pouring from his heart.
Her tears splashed onto Coyote Singer, falling to the trail beneath his paws. From across the canyon, another song drifted on the breeze. Listening closely, she understood their song. “Why, it’s his coyote family calling all of the hunters to the celebration in the forest. He belongs with them, not taking care of me anymore. Farewell, my warm Coyote Singer,” she whispered as she surrendered to the winds bearing North.

A single silvery feather drifted down to caress his cheek. For the first time since the fall, Coyote Singer was alone. He sat silently in the waning sunshine, pondering the spring growth of a brave, expanding heart. He rested there all day, until the shadows lengthened. Then he turned and trotted off to join the gathering in the forest, headed to where the hunting trails converged into abundance.
Buddha's Delight

Stephanie Auld
black and white photograph
8" x 10"
I enjoy dumpster diving.
It mortifies my friends
when I rescue plastic from the trash.
Doesn’t it belong there! they cry.

I mortify my friends
into purchasing entire wardrobes.
She doesn’t belong here! they cry
and throw their principles away.

They purchase entire wardrobes of Lunchables.
PVC, baby: dioxin just waiting to melt.
They throw their principles into methane
mining; dumpster diving on a gaseous scale!

PVC, baby. It makes me melt—
into grass slime, crusty diapers, the heart from—
oh, never mind! Dive in with me; get gassed!
Let’s find that worn shoe and the old woman who lived in it.

Diapers, giblets, drywall, fencewood—all rotting
into the melting pot of used-up American dreams.
Just toss it—but, please, let’s keep the old woman.
How we miss our elders, who knew how
to reuse. America’s latest melting pot
repels the young, who inhabit our bodies, recycled.
How we miss our elders, who knew better.
What a pity they raised us to waste!

For the young, who inhabit our bodies, recycled,
I rescue plastic from trash.
Raised to waste. I am recovering my cast-offs.
And still I enjoy dumpster diving.
The speckled apple, minus its
bent brown stem,
recalls the
scent of cloves, a familiar
fall fragrance

squashed between
two oranges in the
full fruit basket, it reflects
sunlight from the window,
the plump apple
awaits

someone to pick it up,
bite down,
carve out gaps
release its
honesweet taste
Sean Connery in Plaid

Wendy Rossiter
graphite pencil
12" x 15"
Some people seem to think I have a short attention span. Not my family and friends, though. They know I have a short attention span. When I was a kid, back in the dark ages, the term Attention Deficit Disorder didn’t exist yet. Instead, my parents were handed labels such as “Minimal Brain Dysfunction,” “Mild Brain Damage,” and “Autism with Extreme Hyperactivity,” along with the old standby diagnoses of “Just Plain Stupid” and “Lazy.”

However, as medical science improved, researchers discovered kids that exhibit symptoms such as hyperactivity, impulsivity and poor organizational skills actually have no structural abnormalities and often possess superior intellect, despite their poorly organized cognitive function. This intellect is often a carefully guarded secret, only known to the child with Attention Deficit Disorder, although some children do not hesitate to express their superiority. These children are known as “Teenagers.”

What’s more, researchers discovered that children who possessed such traits usually had parents who exhibited similar difficulties, often doing poorly in school or earning early expulsion for discipline problems despite obvious intellectual superiority. Parents of these children also tended to be low-income, mainly due to work-related problems such as forgetting when they were supposed to go to work and what they were supposed to do once they got there. Children whose parents did not have these symptoms were usually adopted.

Researchers and adoptive parents of these children had believed that trauma of being separated from their birth mothers was the source of their child’s problems before discovering other children with similar symptoms in biological siblings of the adopted children. In reality, the biological mother simply forgot the baby when she left the hospital after giving birth and the authorities assumed she meant to relinquish her baby. I hate it when that happens.

Other children come to the foster care system and eventually get adopted due to what authorities call “persistent parent neglect.” Once, a woman in New York City lost custody of her six-week-old infant when she accidentally left the child on the subway. She remembered the baby just as the subway doors closed and the train started moving, but that was not soon enough, according to the social worker assigned to the case. Evidently, the state of New York frowns on repeated episodes of child abandonment, and this woman had the misfortune of having an unsympathetic social worker. On the news, the despondent mother claimed, “She seemed so understanding, the first four times…”

Researchers coined the term Attention Deficit Disorder, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, to describe the cluster of symptoms that include inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. This disorder is so common that it even has its own abbreviation—ADD or ADHD—depending on whether the recipient of this label is hyperactive or just a space cadet. Apparently, even researchers are prone to this disorder. After all, the syndrome was first described in 1898, but nobody remembered to give it a name until 1980. A physician in France was the first person to describe it. I can’t remember his name, but I wrote it down on a piece of paper that I put somewhere…
Adults with ADD lead interesting lives, filled with excitement and zany adventures. Like the fictitious Forrest Gump, things just sort of happen to them. Many people who end up in prison suffer from this disorder. They aren’t criminally inclined, but in their day-to-day existence they tend to neglect things that need attention, such as parking tickets. Or they act on impulses their unchallenged peers find unacceptable, such as taking that Audi for a three hour test drive. Hey, the ad said, “Come test drive an Audi today.” They didn’t say you had to consider buying one. Besides, how was I supposed to know about the time limit?

My friend Steve is a perfect example of an ordinarily upstanding citizen who ran afoul of the law due to his ADD. He really meant to mow the lawn and move the nonfunctional VW bus out of his yard, but he just kept forgetting. Finally, he was issued a summons from the City of Westminster after he forgot to pay the trash collection service and the garbage began accumulating on his driveway. (Hey, at least he remembered to take the garbage out.) The court date was rescheduled, but Steve forgot when the new court date was. Early one morning, when preparing to go on his paper route, he eased out the door to warm up his car in his boxer shorts. “What the heck,” he thought, “it is dark out and all my neighbors are in bed. I’ll let this car warm up while I’m getting dressed.”

Unfortunately, as soon as he stepped out onto his front porch, he was promptly apprehended by two snickering Westminster police officers. On the way to the station for his booking, he kept thinking, “I am forgetting something,” but he couldn’t quite put his finger on it. Obviously, it wasn’t clothing—the officers had refused to let Steve go inside and get dressed before whisking him off to detention. What was it?

**Hey, the ad said, “Come test drive an Audi today.” They didn’t say you had to consider buying one.**

At ten o’clock the next morning, as he re-entered his house, it hit him—he’d forgotten to tell one of his neighbors to get his children up for school. His sixteen year-old son, sleeping peacefully at his computer, had coated the entire left hand side of the keyboard in drool and had “Shift,” “Enter,” and “Ctrl” tattooed on his right cheek. The ten year-old spontaneously sprang out of bed when she heard her dad open the front door to walk in the house, and was struggling up the stairs in her pink nylon Hello Kitty nightgown, trying to tuck it into a pair of jeans while shouting, “This looks like a shirt, right?” The dog was tap-dancing at the back door, perhaps the happiest family member to see Steve come home.

Not all adults suffering from ADD are doomed to the same fate. My friend Russ managed to keep his autistic son safe for fourteen years without ever losing him. This was no small feat. However, the social worker finally discovered the secret to Russ’ success—the front door needed to be opened with a key from the inside, and Russ had installed an electric fence around the back yard—and liberated poor Tony from his fortress of love and relative safety. Of course, the two foster homes that Tony lived in during the
following three weeks were much safer. The first placement ended when Tony was captured by police wandering down the middle of Lincoln Street in the middle of the morning rush hour. The second placement ended when the utility company had to retrieve Tony from a high tension electric tower for the second time in a week.

Tony’s foster parents didn’t have issues with ADD—they just ran too slow to keep up with him. Finally, his social worker put Tony in a truly safe environment—the psychiatric ward at University Hospital.

Russ managed to spend two years at McMurdo, Antarctica without once wandering out into the sub-zero darkness in his shorts looking for the nearest Starbucks. I’m not sure if this was because he got busy and forgot to go outside (ADD sufferers do have the uncanny ability to hyper focus on activities that are stimulating and challenging), or if his co-inhabitants locked him in to keep him safe. I’d ask him, but he moved to Lawrence, Kansas to help some friends at their bookstore and I don’t know his address. I’m not sure if he forgot to give it to me or if he gave it to me and I lost it. Anyway, the last thing he said was, “Call me.”

Recently, Steve and I got to talking about Russ and I decided to see if Russ had continued his success in avoiding premature death or incarceration. I googled him, but I did not find an address. All I found was the transcript for an article about a bookstore burning down on Channel Six news in Lawrence, Kansas. The article quotes “maintenance worker” Russ saying that the bookstore was built in 1870. According to the transcript, Russ added, “I just rewired the first floor last week.” Hmmm… I wonder how that fire happened…

I discovered the term ADD when I was in college, taking a course titled “The Exceptional Child in the Classroom.” As my teacher explained the disorder, she said, “It is unfortunate because these children are very bright, but they almost never graduate from high school. They either get pregnant and drop out or end up in jail or on drugs.” It occurred to me that the special education teacher who recommended all of those home economics classes and drug prevention training sessions envisioned the same fate for me. No wonder my high school counselor never told me about SATs and steered me away from the Algebra classes and the Spanish department.

Well, now that I know that ADD is my only problem, I can just sit back and enjoy the laughter and entertainment that develops when I do things I wish I hadn’t—like the time I inadvertently programmed my coworker’s phone to speak Chinese, or the time I cut my son’s footprint out of a two thousand dollar income tax refund check, then taped it back together and cashed it anyway. I even think I’ll start taking those herbal memory enhancers—just as soon as I remember where I put them. After all, my attention span isn’t that sho
My fortress is a black Mercedes
A Tax with plastic-covered seats.
“Etfeł izaz,” roll up the windows
now latch the door, unroll last week’s Time.

I’m incubated, saran-wrapped
a foreign flower in a see-through box.

Tap, tap, tap, the sound of flesh on glass.
Ignore it, read my magazine
That red light’s got to change sometime.
I’ll just refuse to turn and look.

Tap, tap on the window glass
No voice, just those thudding raps.

The driver met my eyes in the rear-view mirror
belches a laugh that dares me to look outside.
My sideways glance finds a grin—cleft from nose
to chin like a shattered watermelon fruit.

The boy’s brown eyes askew, his small hand
Reaches out to ask for some baksheesh.
Temptation

D.A. Lianos

A wafting scent of New York bagels,
catching the nostrils of a nearby bum.
A fast action lawsuit over the rights to a movie written by a man who is illiterate and
dyslexic
but gets a huge blast from diet Coke and Melon liquor.
A girl who sells herself like old clothes
in Boston’s garment district.
Musical notes that fly through the mind,
that carry a heavy tone of fast-food strip-mall love.
Blind children off roading in four by four drunk coffee rides to town,
in heavy traffic on Saturday nights.
Running down hill like dizzy summery drunk,
with your head held in a smiling up position.
Mind bent on truth of knowing,
knowing that can only make you human beyond superhuman.
Sipping off the finest wine that draws the blood from your soul and puts it so far into
deep space,
  you hold onto the rings of Saturn so you don’t fall home.
Catching a glint of soft flesh from a hot body that makes your heart beat hard,
like an overdose of heavy speed.
The sound of an engine blowing hell through man-made pipes across Texas open
highways,
as no moon and only stars eat the black night head.
Sky dipped in monster tooth red and falling
  into laps of Wrangler jeans and white tank-topped torsos.
Open city roads read like books of self help,
  life clenched in hands like holy water in a vampire market place.
All just spun on spider webs and options of unguided life,
  acting like giant remote controls to human television
  we sit by and live yesterday to tomorrow.
Treasure Chest

Nancy Garretson
watercolor and gold sequins
6" x 8"
Paula Onofrio

color digital photograph
6" x 9"
Suddenly pale, my mother steals rouge from her mother
And circles roses onto her cheeks
Clockwise on the right
Counter-clockwise on the left
As if her face were buffed by equinoctial winds.
This paleness is unexpected
Expecting.

A tsk escapes her freshly cherried lips as she
Notes the birthmark on her cheek
Twin to the one on her mother’s cheek
And triplet to the one on my cheek
That I will note and tsk in 1974
Suddenly pale, myself unexpectedly
Expecting.

But right now I am a rolling ball of cells
Bowled down her fallopian tubes
And dropped into her womb
Like a cherry dropped into a child’s open palm.
While inside me is only expectation.

Suddenly pale, my daughter steals my rouge
And circles roses onto her cheeks
Clockwise on the right
Counter-clockwise on the left
And tsks to discover the unexpected mark.
He is vanishing before my eyes.
Muscle, tissue, sinew, skin
melting away like a thaw
that knows no hope of spring.
Today, his own hands surprise him —
flesh not of his body,
he cannot remember
what illness caused this pain,
nor whose fingers these are
that have curled and cramped
against his own dry palm.
Circling the room,
he paces without purpose,
this captive who has forgotten
the feel of sun,
the look of sky and moon and star,
who has forgotten the names of days,
afraid of his reflection
when they come to shave him,
the mirror gleaming on his bony skull.

“This is the newest model.
I can get it up to 90 in less than a minute, and it runs so smooth,”
he declares, mistaking his own steel-railed bed
for the sports car that he only drove for show one afternoon,
pretending to the ladies it was his.
He cannot remember his favorite color,
why he raged at the untrimmed hedge,
how he took his coffee,
if his wife had ever loved him.
But this dark chocolate ice cream on the tongue,
now this is something.
Sweet and smooth
smooth and sweet,
it stirs a strange awakening.
Two spoonfuls and his throat is closed again.
“Here,” he whispers, pushing the dish to me.
“I’m getting so bad.”
Chin drooping to chest,
he stares at the floor,
seeing ants where none are crawling.
I kiss his one good hand.
“Come on,” I say. “Let’s take a walk.”

In the hall, floor tiles shiny, disinfectant,
metal cart clustered
with plastic cups of applesauce and powdered pills.
“Look there,” he suddenly shouts,
pointing with that one good hand to a flowered window curtain.
“The crocuses, they’re early this year.”

And for an instant then, he smiles.
I will not sit with disheveled hair, myself, unconscious of the ground I tread, Tagore; the burning desire of man wrenches not only your book of poems from my hand.

The dreams I had full flower in the languor of the night fall scattered without save arbor, my faith falters – we live in a world another poet says no poor man ever picked his way out of. Life forces. This part –when I am dragged by my hair–I turn the television off. *a loveless union ends where poems never end.* Bruised, these lips.

Close like a purse. Like a foreign tongue women and children are wrung. On either side of the temple I press mine hands. Your poems are a jeweled comb on these desert sands.

Once the satellite dish goes up, they drink it in. Now. The four corners of the prayer mat are too narrow to live on. The four corners of the world are too wide not to sin on.

*b*ut *t*he *g*ateway to *h*eav*en* *i*s *e*v*erywhere

I will not look for another glowing city to burn. Neither Mecca nor Madurai will burn in the fires of disaster

I will not look for the Nazarene or set my eyes, like oil lamps at the doors of wastelands. There are no kings or lovers In Israel or Palestine of whom to ask justice, a portion equal to two females for one *is too much*

I am either taken out of man or belong in hellfire When god brings me laughter, like a cup of cold Water, I will open my mouth to their utter disgust

Pour your poems out, like a spout. Then clad in black Like oil, these nine parts of desire will come unhinged The river will run nubile. I will run naked and drown

the crescent moon, two or three or four times.
Jack

Courtney Rittle
black and white photograph
6” x 4”
A Last Goodnight

Connie Shoemaker

His fingers numb he fumbled for the hook to latch the bedroom door behind him. “There now she can’t come in to pry when I don’t answer in the morning,” the thought competing with his thudding pulse.

Across the miles of kitchen lay her door ajar a foot to catch the cook-stove warmth. “I should have said goodnight,” she thought while winding tight the noisy brass alarm. “He looked too pale, too white....”

The ritual of sixty years gave strength to hands which seemed to float in front of him. The scarecrow shirt and trousers hanging slack on muscles lax since farming days each button challenging his feinting thoughts.

They had been close once. He was twenty-two and she was flattered by the husky Dane who moved into her Minnesota town. Farm chores and hopes and sharing the same bed had made life warm and full in those first days.

The break between them—when did it begin? After their only child was born? When she refused to sleep in the same room with him? Or was it when he sold the farm and moved six hundred miles to cure her lung disease?

She placed the purple marker in the Book “It’s the way he lives—cigars and beer and bickering. He’s always bickering. That’s why he had the heart attack. And yet he seemed so all alone tonight.”
He left his slippers on because he knew
if he bent down the pain would tear his chest.
Shunning the comfort of the light he pulled
the metal chain and sat, then propped himself
up on the pillows, plucking close the quilt.

“It’s all just part of the routine,” he thought,
“the latch, the clothes, the light, the bed, and death.
She’ll hear and think I’m all right.
Or does she even care? No, not enough
to say a last goodnight.”
Nancy Garretson

watercolor

8” x 10”
they say the water crested fifty feet
side to side, up the canyon walls
in a liquid luge

“It will be a hundred years
before another.”

they tell of shrapnel and explosions,
pounding propane
making fire in the water

“We knew the bridge
would never hold.”

they relive the slicing water,
crashing boulders,
and gasping trees in the undertow

“You just can’t predict mother nature.”

and they talk about the rescue in the night,
their shredded grip
that rock.

Kathleen Palmquist
The Wall of a Thousand Eyes

Rebecca Snow

The first time I see Bertha, she is churning up and down the hall in her wheelchair with startling speed, calling out at the top of her lungs: “The Duelers! The Duelers!” Her thick, snow-white hair, her screeching voice, shock me less than her enormous, wild blue eyes. She streaks past her fellow nursing home patients, sitting quietly along the wall in their wheelchairs with heads bent. The nurse tends a patient as if Bertha performs this sideshow daily. She reaches the end of the hall, stops at the dining room’s double doors, turns around deftly as an athlete, races up again screeching, and no one tries to stop her.

I work the evening shift as an uncertified nurse’s aide. The smell of urine overwhelms the halls. I’m assigned to seven rooms, two female patients in each. Their stiffened bodies tremble with lives that passed away long ago. Yet they breathe, consume food, and expel waste. A few have the will to form their facial features into expressions. A very few speak.

When it’s time to put Bertha to bed, I find her parked in her doorway, her blue eyes steady and calm, looking peacefully out into the hall. I stand before her and bend down so she can look straight into my face.

“Hey there, Bertha, I guess it’s time to go to bed.”

She looks up at my shoulder and smiles. “Why, there’s a little girl on your back.” She points at my stooped back. I stand up and, knowing there’s no girl there, instinctively reach back and grab my ponytail.

“Oh, Bertha, it’s just my ponytail.”

“No, no sweetheart, there’s a little girl on your back. Really.” She shrugs and waves her hand toward her room, beckoning me in as if to show me something. I turn her wheelchair around and wheel her inside. She points at the wall to the right, opposite the foot of the beds. A pattern of faint gold foliage repeats itself across the wallpaper. “Sometimes I see a thousand eyes on that wall, looking at me. But I know they’re not really there.”

I am tying Lucy’s wrists to the bedrail with a pair of her socks. “Lucy, Lucy, be still. It’s okay, I’m not going to hurt you. If you calm down,” I grab at her flailing elbows, “we can get over this much faster.” When I manage to tie a firm knot she screams as if being severely tortured. I am forcing away her dignity. But for all her ability to harm me, she has no strength left to make it to the toilet. Her diaper is full. She cannot stand to be changed after eighty-nine years of living.

“Sometimes I see a thousand eyes on that wall, looking at me. But I know they’re not really there.”

She keeps up her long scream, sending it out the door and down the hallway. She kicks out her legs now that she has no arms. Another nurse’s aide rushes in and helps me tie her ankles to the rail. Lucy

Facing Page: Evidence

Wendy Rossiter graphite pencil 19” x 25 1/8”
clenches her hands together into fists. She sits halfway up and shakes her knotted hands toward the ceiling, stretching the dark blue socks. Her face is radiant and desperate. “God! Let me die! God! God!”

I transfer Bertha out of her wheelchair, lay her into her bed, and pull the covers up to her shoulders. She lies on her back looking up at me with approving eyes.

“Bertha who are the Duelers?” I dare ask her, now that she is lucid.

She answers without hesitating. “They threw my sister overboard, when we came from Germany to America.”

“What? Why did they do that?”

“She died and they had to throw her into the ocean.”

I let out a sympathetic, “Oh, how old were you?”

“She was nine, I was six.”

I put my hand on her white head. “You were so young to see such a horrible thing.” She looks away at the wall and nods.

As I start to leave she calls after me, “What is your name?”

I turn and approach her bed again. “Becky.”

I have to restrain her in her bed and in her wheelchair or she tries to get up herself and falls.

She sits up in bed. “Becky and Bertha,” she sing-songs. “Becky and Bertha,” she repeats, gently, as if she has discovered in the sound of our names something marvelous and real, after many long years of delusions. I smile and wave and turn to go again. I walk past her roommate sleeping in the bed nearest the door. She has been sleeping there since I came to work. The Registered Nurse asked me not to disturb her. “Becky and Bertha,” I hear Bertha singing as I walk down the hall to the next room.

Dina screams about every ten minutes: “I have to go to the toilet! Take me to the toilet!” If I get the chance, I rush down the hall to her room to try and quiet her. It never works.

“Dina, I have a lot of other patients to take to the toilet. You just went fifteen minutes ago.”

“I have to go! Take me to the toilet!”

I pat her shoulder. “Sorry Dina,” and hurry back up the hall.

I’ve learned to wait until Dina is asleep before I remove her dentures. My first night on the job, when she refused to remove them, I gently explained to her that she couldn’t sleep with them. When I decided at length to remove them myself—another duty for the nurse’s aide I guessed—she punched me right in the nose. I have to restrain her in her bed and in her wheelchair or she tries to get up herself and falls. More than once she has worked her way out of the bed restraints. I have tied the long canvas straps snugly underneath her bed and returned later to find her sitting on the edge of the bed trying to gather courage to walk to the toilet. She sees me and reaches a shaking hand out toward me. “The toilet! Take me to the toilet!”

One night I found her sprawled on the floor. She had slowly squirmed her way out of the restraint and finally worked up the guts to walk, falling halfway to the toilet. The next day she had a dark purple bruise covering the left side of her face. It ran down the entire left side of her body.
to her ankle, as if she had lain on her side in a shallow pool of ink.

No wick remains in Laura’s eyes. I have yet to see an expression flicker across her face. But it angers me to find her left in her wheelchair by the day-shift nurse’s aide, two feet in front of the blaring TV. She is staring down and obviously not watching. I hurry to switch it off and put my hand on her shoulder. “How are you doing, Laura?” She continues staring down at the floor without moving.

As the weeks pass and I’m rushing like a machine to change, feed, and transfer fourteen patients, I stop putting my hand on her shoulder. I decide she can’t hear my voice. I stop speaking to her.

One evening as the women sit in their wheelchairs around the dining room tables for dinner, I stand feeding a woman with long silver hair. I suck milky potatoes into a big syringe and expel a little of it into her mouth. Her tongue pushes most of it back out and down her chin. It’s an excruciatingly slow process. I look up and see Bertha three tables across the room. She is shoveling her food with incensed concentration. I set the syringe down and walk over to her. Her arms are caked with potatoes and gravy up to the elbows. Her chest is smothered likewise. She wears a slimy, dripping beard of food.

“Bertha. You can slow down. It’s okay.” She ignores me. Her great blue eyes are wild again and completely focused onto another world.

“Becky and Bertha. Remember Becky and Bertha?” I put my hand on her arm and feel how the tension in her bicep doesn’t change with my touch or voice. She continues to stare into another world, shoveling her food with incensed concentration. I let her go and return to the woman whose tongue is still working to push the food out, out, away from keeping her alive.

I’m transferring Laura from her wheelchair to her bed. She’s the heaviest of all my patients, well over 200 pounds. Usually, I call on the other nurse’s aide to help, but I can’t find her. She must be on a smoking break. She has fourteen of her own patients anyway. I bend my legs for the correct technique I learned in my one week of training. But Laura, dead as she seems, is not an object. She shifts her weight and I strain my back to keep from dropping her. I’m dismissed from work for three weeks of physical therapy.

Allie never leaves the fetal position. Her arms and knees fall a little with gravity in her wheelchair, but they still bend up unnaturally. She never utters a sound and never looks me in the eyes. She tolerates the routine, repeated for so many years, with a vacant look in her eyes that says: “Here we go again. I’ll eventually die someday.”

On Christmas Eve I sing “Away in the Manger” to her as I put her to bed. The look in her eyes changes almost imperceptibly. I lift her from the chair and she feels all bones and tiny, unexpectedly light and hollow. After lifting thirteen solid, heavier patients, her 80 pounds feel as light as an infant.

She exists on the sideline—Allie—with that vacant stare, refusing to watch the long train of days go on and on without changing color or size or cargo and never coming to an end. She waits to disappear, shrinking slowly like ripened fruit in the
sun to something hard, small, eaten from
the inside and almost, finally gone.

It’s the last week of my job before I
leave for my first year of college. I walk
into the dining room at the start of my
shift and see Laura sitting at a table with
two gift-wrapped packages set in front of
her. The day-shift nurse’s aides stand on
either side of her wheelchair. No family
is present, as usual, but someone must
have sent her birthday gifts. I glance at
her face and look back a second time:
tears are running down her cheeks. I am
ashamed. I have treated her for months
like dead weight.

It’s one a.m. and time to roll the ladies
to their other side, one by one, to keep
bedsores at bay. They float, waterlogged,
on the surface of death, their limbs use-
less and heavy.

At age nineteen, daughter of Christian,
fundamentalist parents, I have debated
religion for many lighthearted hours with
my dad. Now, as I roll Allie onto her side,
I question God seriously for the first time:
"Why won’t you let them die?"

I am so young to see such a horrible
thing. The rooms are cramped and warm
for their stiff, sedentary chills. The low
ceilings block out the stars. Whatever is
left of these woman drifts on wave after
wave of narrow yellow beds, each pair
of eyes closed in defiance of ever open-
ing again, each silver head bowed as if to
tell whoever is watching: “Nothing will
ever rouse me again. Not even my own
grandchild (who never comes to visit).”

It’s as if I’m the only one left in the world
who sees them. Not even God bothers to
look. Who am I to lift these burdens from
wheelchair to bed, bed to wheelchair, one
position of death to another?

When I am old and
grey and see the wall
of a thousand eyes, I
will find Bertha’s eyes
there, among all
the others.

But Bertha—sometimes Bertha will
smile in her sleep. Maybe she has heard a
knock at her childhood home’s front door.
She has walked down the hall, opened the
door, and her first love is standing there
with his hands behind his back.

“Which hand?” he grins. Bertha
points to his left arm. He swings forward
a bucket. She peers inside and sees a tiny
frog squatting at the bottom.

“You’re supposed to bring me roses,”
she giggles. “Can I hold him?”

Her wrinkled eyelids wait like cur-
tains on a stage, ready to lift and show
a blue that still startles. Whether she
is six or some other tormented age, or
the gentle lady of 93, she lives, even in
Godforsaken places. I will never see her
slumped in vague defeat. When I am old
and grey and see the wall of a thousand
eyes, I will find Bertha’s eyes there,
among all the others.
Sewing in a Parking Lot

Stephanie Auld
black and white photograph
10" x 8"
Joe the schmoe was a lively fellow,
Obscenely afraid of the color yellow
Always busy with this and that,
In his ragged clothes and tattered hat
A conversationalist one might say,
Discussing politics every day
“Impeach the president!” Joe would shout,
Ranting and raving all about
“I’m a doctor!” Joe would claim,
“Or am I a lawyer? It’s all the same!”
Hysterically pacing back and forth
“That bitch sued me for all I’m worth!”
On his bench, Joe would sit
Scheming, planning with all his wit
“We’ll storm the capital!” Joe declared,
While no one around him even cared
But then one day, just out of the blue,
Along came a bus, yellow, its hue
Shouting and screaming, Joe gave chase,
Running faster than an athlete in an Olympic race
Then quite unexpectedly, to his surprise,
He was hit by a truck, his untimely demise
The women they screamed at the sight of his head
As it lay crushed, under a tire; he was surely dead
The reports on the news had only to say,
“A crazed madman died in an accident today.”
Joe, you schmoe, you lively fellow
Why were you afraid of the color yellow?
A vagrant, a hobo, a vagabond indeed
A mad looney that no one would heed
You’d rant and rave about who knows what
You were as loved as a paper cut
Aileen Gaumond
manipulated photo
7 1/4" x 9 1/4"
In the hospitality of war, we left them their dead
as a gift to remember us by.
Archilochus

When the last descendant of our shadowed
commerce with the underworld slips away,
this is how they will remember us:

round-shouldered overseers of forgotten
lessons, technicians of deceit

who fractured truth into convenient specimens
and shifted time to a vertical plane

who sucked the marrow from Earth’s bones
and mill-wasted antediluvian groves

who choreographed conversations,
extacting civil, which illuminated nothing

who settled up accounts in comforting
darkness on the backs of broken refugees

who erased the past meticulously,
guarded ears pressed to the ground

who never looked twice at a desert’s
veiled bounty.
Submission Guidelines

Progenitor accepts only original material that has not been published elsewhere. Submission limits are up to five poems, three short stories and three essays. All manuscripts must be typed, numbered by page, double-spaced, and each name must be omitted from its manuscript. A separate page was attached to each entry with the submitter’s name, physical address, e-mail address, telephone number; and title of the work(s). Progenitor publishes black and white and color photographs and artwork; artists working in three-dimension materials can submit high quality photos of their work for consideration. Artwork should be mounted and covered to protect it during staff evaluation, the mounting should be easily removable for ease of handling during production. Mailed entries should be sent to: Progenitor Magazine, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Division, Arapahoe Community College, 5900 South Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, CO 80160-9002 by February 13th, 2008. Or you can e-mail to progenitor@arapahoe.edu.

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