the red wheelbarrow
"IT'S ONE THING FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION TO COMMENT ON THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN OUR SCHOOLS. IT'S ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY FOR YOU TO STAND UP AND CALL MR. GALBRAITH A YO-YO."
Editors' Notes

Gretchen Billmaier:
"Give it to your husband or your minister to pass on to God. And when God finds a minute, I'm sure he'll explain this doghouse of mine in a way that even you can understand."
Kurt Vonnegut
from *Cat's Cradle*

David Dewey:
It's not just a job. It's an adventure.

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
glazed with rain water
beside the white chickens.

William Carlos Williams
Rashid Miller: Those that know me are few; those that abuse me are honored. Therefore the sage wears rough clothing and holds the jewel in his heart.

-Lao Tsu

Carrie Brown: "Gee, Bob, why so tense?"

Mr. Coffee commercial

Hilary Hafner: "...I swear if it weren't for the red letters lighting the glass, I wouldn't know the dummies inside from the dummies out here, since our bodies, too, are plastic.

-Edward Hirsch

Tom Sudinsky: "Girl, I wuz over to her house and the roaches wuz everywhere."


Rebecca Kopp: If all the world and love were young, and both in every shepherd's tongue, these pretty pleasures might me move to share thy cup overflowed with love.

"The Nymph's Reply"

George Hart: "uh, yeah"

Annaliese de Boer: Zo als het klokje thuis tikt, tikt het nergens

Curt Rideout: "After virtue has slept, she will rise more rested." -Nietzsche

Deirdre Kovac: "That makes you where you are when I am far away." -Russell Edson
Rashid Miller

The Buddha

I bought the Buddha from a smoke-filled shop of antiques, by the Harbour.

It was new then, fresh off the boat from China and the Yellow River man looked sideways as I layed down $15, he said, "You take him free," and I left, my Buddha in a box.

There he stayed through the summer. Jeff, a friend scolded me after killing a patch of wild flowers, said "you've killed the Buddha" and I thought of my Buddha, meditating in a box.

Now Jeff's gone to India, he tells me I'll find my Buddha in the mountains, in the shrill pitch of an Indian Sheni reed.

I've taken the Buddha from his box. He sits on my shelf, earth face of clay unchanged, wrinkled with half-closed eyes he meditates.

And now, the leaves falling dead in the wind seem like the beginning not the end.
Rashid Miller

The murmurs of passing cars
like smoke in the wind, burning matches
and clove cigarettes. Pictures of
people far away, two dimensional faces,
my wallet falling open at my feet.

I dreamt my dreams
were invaded by passing lights,
towns with names I'll never hear, faces
I'll never see. Pressed into the prairie
five generations in self-imposed exile,
children sitting on hard wood floors.
Eaton's catalog sprawled out in the wind
of an open back door.
Slipping into the cold

running to see the voyageur colonial ride
the yellow spaces on the road,
between the snow drift fences.
The brief growl of a passing engine,
a warm hand pressed to the cold window
leaving those few faces, being pulled
to the south, on their grey umbilical
cord. Long asphalt highways, stretched
out in the cold. Thin ice over the sound
of engines leaving black rubber marks,
digging themselves deeper and deeper
into a snow bank.

Ojarum sparking, illuminates the closed eyes
of my neighbors expression.
And I'm thinking of the faces,
of kicking ice rocks on the road,
pushing themselves back, miles across prairie.
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Deirdre Kovac

The Pale Beach

We were nowhere in particular, just walking beside the water. About women, Divine said, "I only knew one. I was her friend but she wasn't mine. She was mine though, that is I had her. There was nothing more I could have known." She ran ahead, barefoot into the ocean. Back before me, her white shirt was wet in the open dark. She wanted me to notice her body and laughed, "I smell like salt."

Her fingers chose a circle in the sand and we lay down. She smoked three German cigarettes, taking each one comfortably from my inside pocket. Their light shortened the distance of our sight. She had weighted her hollow form into the sand and stared down at the imprint later, "Does the tide rise higher than this?"

She stepped closer and said, "I would touch you but we are almost expecting it." So she loosely folded her clothes near the forest and decided to swim. We weren't out very far when Divine stopped. "The water is nearer to the trees now." She went under once more before I took her home.
It was beautiful. The tank was long and smooth and glittered in the dim light. He walked up and caressed it. The box which contained the computer and support systems was on the end of the tank. He set the support systems and left the computer to its own discretion. The computer could be programmed for various sensations, but Charlie Redman preferred it just to probe his subconscious and give him what he really wanted. He didn't know what he wanted, but the womb soon would.

As he undressed, he watched the lights of the support system glow and listened to the hum it produced. If there was somebody watching the womb while he was in it, the lights and humming would tell them he was alive. Nobody ever watched Charlie Redman's womb, so it didn't matter.

He climbed into the tank and felt the water gently lick his body. The thoughts of his wife and his job evaporated as he shut the porthole. The computer was already taking over.

The womb was confused. Why would Charlie want this? The womb knew these thoughts were subconscious, but why? There was nothing the womb could do. It had to give Charlie what he wanted. The womb felt the nearest thing to sorrow it could when the lights went off and the humming stopped.

Margaret Mullins

Back to the Barn on the Bottom of Youker Hill

Sun through slits hits my eyes: how often in dreams sun streams between these barn boards suspending dust. Pouches in straw pile hint of animals. Vacant stable shadows a horse collar, broken window glass, a child's hiding place. Dust smells of wood and straw. The rope still swings from the beam Bryan walked. Weighted it sways and wisps wood softer than memory: rain on the rust roof.

we pull in late headlamps
catching slivers of rain we get the trailers
in the barn I'm nine I want to sleep in straw
mom frowns no but at last in my dreams
she and Aunt Millie dream of flames whisper combustion
in morning: straw now pricks me suddenly deep water nears me
trailers move from orange
roof barn to orchard where we smell
planks to pile our food like vagrants
wandering in old fields, in barns to bed in straw

I've come back. This barn lives without me, others' memories thick as dust in air: horses I've never seen. I swing:
fingers hold rope, threads fray, add to barn dust absorbed by shadows, particulate in slanting rays. In dusk dust whispers out between the beams, combusts:
orange flames raining.

Margaret Mullins
I. When she wakes, 
this woman puts tea bags in a copper kettle and dresses as the water darkens.

A wind moves the drapes back and forth, and she looks out the window at an empty street, pulls her shawl tighter as the last maple leaves fall from the trees.

She begins to dust the coffee table, then sits in her rocking chair, listening to the traffic outside. She listens to the sink, which has been dripping for years. To the clock, ticking into afternoon. In this room she can almost hear the sun move over grey buildings.

The empty air is heavy with things long gone: Of summer walks into parks. Of years of breakfasts with her children who talked until no steam rose from her coffee. Of endless doctors and failing eyesight and asking nurses "Can you please talk louder?"

He walked past her into the kitchen and shut off the T.V. She glared at him through the facial pack she was wearing and turned it back on, a little bit louder than before.

He took his hat and coat off and threw them on a chair.

"Hang those up."

He ignored her and started towards the basement door.

"You're going to that goddamned womb again. You love it more than me."

"Yes, dear," tonelessly.

"You're going to spend the whole weekend down there, aren't you?"

"Yes, dear. He opened the door and stepped on the first stair.

"I'm going to leave you if you go down there." She had said that before. "Don't go down there Charlie Redman. If you do--" He started to shut the door.
"Listen to me--"

Her last words were dampened as he closed the door. He was halfway down the stairs as something shattered on the door. He entered the room in which the womb was and locked the door. He turned on the light and turned around to behold the womb.
The womb worked on your subconscious. Its computer would tap into it and then run it. Whatever you subconsciously needed, the womb would give you. It could make you feel the sun of the Bahamas or the touch of a soft woman. Redman didn't care what he saw, felt, smelled, heard, or tasted in the womb. Whatever it was the womb knew he needed it; and in the womb, he got it.

He knew you weren't supposed to spend more than 24 hours in the womb, but he didn't care. Lately everything was so messed up he would be in the womb from 6:00 Friday until 6:00 Monday morning. His wife hated him for it. He didn't care. It made him miss business meetings and appointments. He didn't care.

The clock said 4:23. The day ended at 5:00, but it had been such a bad week Redman felt he deserved to go home early. He crushed the cigarette that was burning his fingers into the ash tray, put on his hat and coat, and prepared himself to exit through the tunnel of ink-ridden mosquitoes. He hated that room, the noise, the secretaries. Everything in the room was a torture. He slunk his hands into his pockets and went.

The first thing he heard when he opened the door was the TV. It was always on, always too loud, and almost as annoying as his wife. Almost.

"Is that you Charlie Redman?" The voice cut through his brain.

"Yes"

"You left work early." She appeared in the kitchen doorway. "You're going to get chewed out for that."

"It seems I already am," he muttered.

"What?" she said pulling the top of her housecoat closed.

"Nothing."

II. The woman sits in an afghan, frozen in the blue light of the television. She sleeps through the news, then another movie, until only the test pattern remains.

She rises then, shuts off the TV, and goes to the window. The dark glass burns her fingertips and for just a moment the woman is dizzy, clutching at the blistered window frame. She leans against the wall to steady herself.

She remembers her dream: Standing in a large green field, with a wind softly blowing. There is nothing for miles but the birds making slow circles overhead.

The woman walks to her bedroom, pulls cold bedcovers back, and thinks about the birds, her eyes making slow circles of the dark ceiling, her heartbeat the rhythm of beating wings.
To Käthe Kollwitz
(After the etching, March of the Weavers)

In Nineteen Forty-Three you ran
with what you could carry,
leaving behind a Berlin lit by its own burning buildings.

You marched like the weavers
who did not talk as they walked,
who had only the clothes they were wearing.
The only sound was the wind
and the crunch of boots on dry soil.

You looked at every child
for the light that shone in your son's eyes
when he marched off in full uniform to Russian snow.

Etched into your hands is ink,
black as those nights you wandered back
to your son lying broken in the frozen fields of Russia.
Sometimes in dreams you stumble through forests of girders
where weak voices cry
"Käthe, Käthe, Käthe,"
voices that die to the new sound of morning.

Later, in a small house in Moritzburg
you spread fresh ink onto cold copper plates,
place heavy paper over them onto the pressbed.
In that house you reach out
to turn the presswheel with stiff hands, wanting
to silence the marching
that in your heart would not stop.

"But nothing Redman," bellowed Olson, a fat,
oily man. He had been Redman's boss for ten years
and Redman was still amazed he hadn't died from being so fat and smoking so much. "I don't know why I gave you this position. Ten years ago you had promise. You were going up. Now you put in your lousy eight hours and go home and rot. You've got to give this company 100%, Redman. If you ever come close to ruining an account again you're finished."

"Look, Mr. Olson," Redman felt an unusual surge of confidence, "My wife was --"

"I don't care what your excuse is, Redman," the confidence was gone, "Does your wife pay your bills?"

Redman opened his mouth to answer.

"No," Olson answered for him, "but she will if you don't shape up." With that Olson turned away from Redman's desk spraying cigar ash into the air. He slammed the door hard enough to put a shudder through the glass.

Charlie Redman slid down into his chair, pushed the work from his desk, and lit a cigarette. He watched the smoke lazily dance into the air and thought about his job, his boss, his wife. He looked at the clock, 4:17. The seconds ticked by with dreamy hesitation. He looked at the calendar—it was Friday. He thought about how much he hated his job, his boss, his wife. He thought how he wanted to spend his whole weekend in the womb.

The womb knew how to treat him. The womb knew everything he needed. He would just slide into the tank and let the life support systems take over his body. The computer would take over his mind.
The long river of fluorescent panels that ran down the middle of the ceiling produced a sickly, white glow over the room. Everything seemed to radiate with a pale white halo.

The room itself was long and narrow, like a tunnel. Two rows of desks ran against either wall the full length of the room. Behind each desk sat a secretary working at a typewriter. The tip-tap, tip-tap of the typewriters filled the room with a mosquito buzz. The buzz was a constant, never ending part of the room. Each secretary's hands moved to a perfect, unheard beat. Never breaking, never stopping.

The secretaries themselves sat with papier mache stiffness and frailty behind their machines. Only their hands moved and even they had a stiff action. They didn't look up or take their eyes off their work. Even when someone passed to reach the office at the end of the room, they still focused on their typing.

The office in the back of the room had a large, pebbled glass door with a name on it. Through the door a deep, fat voice was in competition with the typewriters.

"Redman, you almost blew the Cornel account. How can you be so stupid? That account was cut and dried, but when you missed that meeting with him, he was going to drop us. If I hadn't saved your butt, he would've left us."

"Yes, sir, but I -- "

---

David J. Dewey
Welcome to Rainbow Point Hotel

I wonder what the old man would have thought about the computerized front desk and the video-phone linkup with all the hotel rooms. He always said he disliked technology, but when he got his first color T.V. I remember how excited he was. It was used, I bought it for $20, but still he thanked me over and over for such a "simply divine" gift.

My first memories of the old man go back to when the big hotel was still called Sugarbird. I was still living with my parents on our sailboat then, and when I finished my correspondence courses for the day, I'd go and see him. He was always at the front desk eating an orange under the ceiling fan. "Mighty hot one today!" he would greet. He always said that, even the time the governor stayed at the hotel he only added, "sir". He probably said that because it always is a "hot one" on Water Isle. The weather in the Virgin Islands is never arctic to say the least.

He seemed to be deprived in some way because he and I became instant friends. I wonder about that, I mean there were lots of old people on the island but I was the only kid. There were some older boys, but they were always going out to get drunk or something. Anyway, he and I did a lot of things together.

I remember the long walks he and I would take along the roads and garden paths on the well-kept property of the hotel. Since the hotel was built on a hill, the buildings were much taller on the front than on the back. Stairways went along the sloping sides leading from different levels of rooms and even, on some, to patios or bars on the top that looked out over the manmade cliff of the building and down to the ocean splashing beneath.
On top of one of these buildings was the swimming pool. Underneath the pool there had once been luxury rooms, but because of a construction fault they had been abandoned.

"Don't try to go in there, it's unsafe." I studied the old man's face. He wasn't too old then, just a few wrinkles on his forehead, and some graying at his temples.

"I won't." But, of course, I did. The next free chance I got I pried a board loose and snuck into a young boy's dream; a 2 story, 12 room clubhouse. Soon I had it filled with all my treasures, books, and a flashlight. I would go there on a boring Sunday afternoon and read my comics or update my shell collection.

Once I almost got caught in there. I was reading Robinson Crusoe when I heard voices outside the boarded door and a crowbar opening it up. I jumped into a closet and closed the door.

The men who came in commented on the ceiling that was caving in in places. When they saw my stuff in a corner, one said, "Some kid's been in here." He walked to the closet and leaned on the door.

"And the whole hotel's like this?" asked the other.

"It will be soon if we don't fix it."

"Well, let's look at the main building," said the other, walking away.

"All right."

After this I wanted to ask the old man what the men were talking about, but I couldn't let him know I was in the pool rooms.
One day I heard some people talking at the beach. They said that the hotel was going to be closed for reconstruction. Even at my age I knew how rumors started on small islands. Still I wondered. I ran back to the lobby of the hotel to ask the old man if this was true, but he wasn't there. I went all over looking for him, but he wasn't anywhere.

I decided to go to the rooms and think. As I walked into my favorite room, there was the old man reading a comic book. He looked up. I didn't have to ask him about the hotel. The lost look in his eyes told me it was true.

I remember that look so well. For years the old man had been the main receptionist, travel advisor, and simply, answer man for hotel guests. If anyone needed any information they could just go see him at the front desk, eating his orange. But no more, the old man had lost his job and the only place he had ever loved. He was deeply hurt, and I could see it in his eyes, surrounded by more and more wrinkles.

They closed the hotel on the last day of my eighth grade. I remember the big padlocks they put on the doors. I helped the old man carry his things to his house.

Even after the hotel closed he still lived on the island. He used to sit out on his porch and look out on the closed hotel for hours at a time. "It's not so bad being retired, y'know." But I knew he was lying.

The day they started tearing down the hotel the old man fell sick. I raced to his house as soon as I finished rescuing my belongings from certain doom in the pool rooms. He looked bad. Not only did he look tired, but he had lost a lot of weight and his hair was almost white.
I visited him every day, gave him tea, and the freshly squeezed orange juice he always insisted on. I'd sit and read to him and listen as he talked about the grand old days when he was receptionist at the hotel.

The most important day in my life was a week before I left for the high school academy up in the states. I was up at the old man's house and he and I sat on the porch looking down at what was happening at the hotel. He had insisted, though he could barely move, that I help him into his patio chair. We sat quietly and observed as the workmen knocked down the last room of the hotel, the lobby. That was the last thing the old man ever saw.

I went away to school that year but would come back for the summers. I kept track of the hotel. They had it fully rebuilt by my senior year using the same plans with a few modifications. The rooms were equipped with T.V.'s, stereos, and video-phones; and the front desk was computerized.

I moved away from the islands and started my own life. I went away to college and settled down with my new family.

We come back to the islands; and sometimes, like now, I come back to the hotel alone to remember. I walk along the paths and gardens. I stop in places and think about the old times. I remember them vividly, and the scent of the orange I have picked brings back many more memories. The pool rooms are closed down and labelled unsafe again, and just around my temples my hair is beginning to gray.

Hilary Hafner

From Her Daughter

I watch the thin black lines etched into the copper wind chime that a salty sea patinaed turquois and indigo blue, and I think of the woman with sagebrush hair.

She comes to me on sheets flapping over water to sooth me, now only in dreams.

I sing to bring back her topaz eyes, the rolling hills of her body again, draped over a llano in a third world.

A guide in a dream told me of a day I would roll from purple water refreshed and alive, and she would be lifted out ten years older.
I. I think about how wet leaves weigh much more in the fall, as I breathe the smell of pine needles between loads of laundry, dirty socks mixed with towels and jeans. I am waiting for them to dry.

II. Hands smelling of blue powdered detergent, I say softly I want home, the wheatfields, the salty ocean and the fragrant whitesheets that hang on frayed clotheslines and blow in the waves of the summer I hid myself in as a child.

III. Folding towels, I remember clearly, the chlorine world, the blue water that kept me alive and floating above air, and became me, raced with me, the shouts I could not hear. The ribbons I touch.

In my sleep, I whisper, the magic is home, the strength, the strength elbows high and arms pulling when I dance arms barely reaching the beat, my eyes move with the lake, outside the windows where I belong.
Carrie Brown

FACES, CONTAINED

"A distance cannot be negative...in the end the volume will remain the same."
-Geometry teacher

You sit in the musty smelling basement
and smile at the pages
of old year books
in the dark.

The faces dance.
Prom dresses come alive again
1956 looks so far
away you shiver, remembering your
daughter wearing your sweater
left over from college

the moths haven't
even touched it.

The message on the torn page
seems to read, in faded India ink
will you hold me again
now, if ever? Remember me? Remember me, remember me
simply, in a closed book.
Boxed.

"Cokes were colder, sweeter then,
But your daughter wonders out loud
why you order no ice. Already being
cold enough you fold the paper napkin
in your hands one last time.

Picking up the glass
(without a straw)
and wondering why you've
always had trouble
searching for the "right words"
so as not to dilute the meaning
with melted ice
floating on the surface
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"Well, let's look at the main building," said the other, walking away.

"All right."

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Rebecca Susan Kopp

Passage Through the Mint

Our boots are pale with lime that covered
The path of flowers we trampled.

Sitting nestled in the deep green cloves of mint,
Our bodies mold themselves into the cold lake shore
I gather the mint and you talk to me
About Green Peace.

The sound of your voice is low,
Quiet pauses break the rhythm, matching the pattern
Of the silken leaves as they fall,
One by one, into my lap.

I think of the tea this mint will make
After it is dried and crushed into fine pieces
And the miles it will cross to warm the throat
Of a loved one so far away. Days will come

When lilac and jasmine are in bloom,
But I will not forget this passage through the mint.
The long river of fluorescent panels that ran down the middle of the ceiling produced a sickly, white glow over the room. Everything seemed to radiate with a pale white halo.

The room itself was long and narrow, like a tunnel. Two rows of desks ran against either wall the full length of the room. Behind each desk sat a secretary working at a typewriter. The tip-tap, tip-tap of the typewriters filled the room with a mosquito buzz. The buzz was a constant, never ending part of the room. Each secretary's hands moved to a perfect, unheard beat. Never breaking, never stopping.

The secretaries themselves sat with papier mache stiffness and frailty behind their machines. Only their hands moved and even they had a stiff action. They didn't look up or take their eyes off their work. Even when someone passed to reach the office at the end of the room, they still focused on their typing.

The office in the back of the room had a large, pebbled glass door with a name on it. Through the door a deep, fat voice was in competition with the typewriters.

"Redman, you almost blew the Cornel account. How can you be so stupid? That account was cut and dried, but when you missed that meeting with him, he was going to drop us. If I hadn't saved your butt, he would've left us."

"Yes, sir, but I -- "

David J. Dewey
Welcome to Rainbow Point Hotel

I wonder what the old man would have thought about the computerized front desk and the video-phone linkup with all the hotel rooms. He always said he disliked technology, but when he got his first color T.V. I remember how excited he was. It was used, I bought it for $20, but still he thanked me over and over for such a "simply divine" gift.

My first memories of the old man go back to when the big hotel was still called Sugarbird. I was still living with my parents on our sailboat then, and when I finished my correspondence courses for the day, I'd go and see him. He was always at the front desk eating an orange under the ceiling fan. "Mighty hot one today!" he would greet. He always said that, even the time the governor stayed at the hotel he only added, "sir". He probably said that because it always is a "hot one" on Water Isle. The weather in the Virgin Islands is never arctic to say the least.

He seemed to be deprived in some way because he and I became instant friends. I wonder about that, I mean there were lots of old people on the island but I was the only kid. There were some older boys, but they were always going out to get drunk or something. Anyway, he and I did a lot of things together.

I remember the long walks he and I would take along the roads and garden paths on the well-kept property of the hotel. Since the hotel was built on a hill, the buildings were much taller on the front than on the back. Stairways went along the sloping sides leading from different levels of rooms and even, on some, to patios or bars on the top that looked out over the manmade cliff of the building and down to the ocean splashing beneath.
Curt Rideout

To Käthe Kollwitz
(After the etching, March of the Weavers)

I. In nineteen Forty-Three you ran
with what you could carry,
leaving behind a Berlin lit by its own burning buildings.

You marched like the weavers
who did not talk as they walked,
who had only the clothes they were wearing.
The only sound was the wind
and the crunch of boots on dry soil.

You looked at every child
for the light that shone in your son's eyes
when he marched off in full uniform to Russian snow.

II. Etched into your hands is ink,
black as those nights you wandered back
to your son lying broken in the frozen fields of Russia.
Sometimes in dreams you stumble through forests of girders
where weak voices cry
"Käthe, Käthe, Käthe,"
voices that die to the new sound of morning.

Later, in a small house in Moritzburg
you spread fresh ink onto cold copper plates,
place heavy paper over them onto the pressbed.
In that house you reach out
to turn the presswheel with stiff hands, wanting
to silence the marching
that in your heart would not stop.

"But nothing Redman," bellowed Olson, a fat,
oily man. He had been Redman's boss for ten years
and Redman was still amazed he hadn't died from being
so fat and smoking so much. "I don't know why I
gave you this position. Ten years ago you had promise.
You were going up. Now you put in your lousy eight
hours and go home and rot. You've got to give this
company 100%, Redman. If you ever come close to ruining
an account again you're finished."

"Look, Mr. Olson," Redman felt an unusual surge of
confidence, "My wife was -- "

"I don't care what your excuse is, Redman," the
confidence was gone, "Does your wife pay your bills?"

Redman opened his mouth to answer.

"No," Olson answered for him, "but she will if
you don't shape up." With that Olson turned away from
Redman's desk spraying cigar ash into the air. He
slammed the door hard enough to put a shudder through
the glass.

Charlie Redman slid down into his chair, pushed
the work from his desk, and lit a cigarette. He watched
the smoke lazily dance into the air and thought about
his job, his boss, his wife. He looked at the clock,
4:17. The seconds ticked by with dreamy hesitation.
He looked at the calendar—it was Friday. He thought
about how much he hated his job, his boss, his wife.
He thought how he wanted to spend his whole weekend
in the womb.

The womb knew how to treat him. The womb knew
everything he needed. He would just slide into the
tank and let the life support systems take over his
body. The computer would take over his mind.
The womb worked on your subconscious. Its computer would tap into it and then run it. Whatever you subconsciously needed, the womb would give you. It could make you feel the sun of the Bahamas or the touch of a soft woman. Redman didn't care what he saw, felt, smelled, heard, or tasted in the womb. Whatever it was the womb knew he needed it; and in the womb, he got it.

He knew you weren't supposed to spend more than 24 hours in the womb, but he didn't care. Lately everything was so messed up he would be in the womb from 6:00 Friday until 6:00 Monday morning. His wife hated him for it. He didn't care. It made him miss business meetings and appointments. He didn't care.

The clock said 4:23. The day ended at 5:00, but it had been such a bad week Redman felt he deserved to go home early. He crushed the cigarette that was burning his fingers into the ash tray, put on his hat and coat, and prepared himself to exit through the tunnel of ink-ridden mosquitoes. He hated that room, the noise, the secretaries. Everything in the room was a torture. He sunk his hands into his pockets and went.

The first thing he heard when he opened the door was the TV. It was always on, always too loud, and almost as annoying as his wife. Almost.

"Is that you Charlie Redman?" The voice cut through his brain.

"Yes"

"You left work early." She appeared in the kitchen doorway. "You're going to get chewed out for that."

"It seems I already am," he muttered.

"What?" she said pulling the top of her housecoat closed.

"Nothing."
I.

When she wakes, this woman puts tea bags in a copper kettle and dresses as the water darkens. A wind moves the drapes back and forth, and she looks out the window at an empty street, pulls her shawl tighter as the last maple leaves fall from the trees.

She begins to dust the coffee table, then sits in her rocking chair, listening to the traffic outside. She listens to the sink, which has been dripping for years. To the clock, ticking into afternoon. In this room she can almost hear the sun move over grey buildings.

The empty air is heavy with things long gone: Of summer walks into parks. Of years of breakfasts with her children who talked until no steam rose from her coffee. Of endless doctors and failing eyesight and asking nurses "Can you please talk louder?"

He walked past her into the kitchen and shut off the T.V. She glared at him through the facial back she was wearing and turned it back on, a little bit louder than before.

He took his hat and coat off and threw them on a chair.

"Hang those up."

He ignored her and started towards the basement door.

"You're going to that goddamned womb again. You love it more than me."

"Yes, dear," tonelessly.

"You're going to spend the whole weekend down there, aren't you?"

"Yes, dear." He opened the door and stepped on the first stair.

"I'm going to leave you if you go down there." She had said that before. "Don't go down there Charlie Redman. If you do--" He started to shut the door. "Listen to me--"

Her last words were dampened as he closed the door. He was halfway down the stairs as something shattered on the door. He entered the room in which the womb was and locked the door. He turned on the light and turned around to behold the womb.
It was beautiful. The tank was long and smooth and glittered in the dim light. He walked up and caressed it. The box which contained the computer and support systems was on the end of the tank. He set the support systems and left the computer to its own discretion. The computer could be programmed for various sensations, but Charlie Redman preferred it just to probe his subconscious and give him what he really wanted. He didn't know what he wanted, but the womb soon would.

As he undressed, he watched the lights of the support system glow and listened to the hum it produced. If there was somebody watching the womb while he was in it, the lights and humming would tell them he was alive. Nobody ever watched Charlie Redman's womb, so it didn't matter.

He climbed into the tank and felt the water gently lick his body. The thoughts of his wife and his job evaporated as he shut the porthole. The computer was already taking over.

The womb was confused. Why would Charlie want this? The womb knew these thoughts were subconscious, but why? There was nothing the womb could do. It had to give Charlie what he wanted. The womb felt the nearest thing to sorrow it could when the lights went off and the humming stopped.

Margaret Mullins

Back to the Barn on the Bottom of Youker Hill

Sun through slits hits my eyes: how often in dreams sun streams between these barn boards suspending dust. Pouches in straw pile hint of animals. Vacant stable shadows a horse collar, broken window glass, a child's hiding place. Dust smells of wood and straw. The rope still swings from the beam Bryan walked. Weighted it sways and wisps wood softer than memory: rain on the rust roof.

we pull in late headlamps catching silvers of rain we net the trailers in the barn I'm nine I want to sleep in straw moms from now but straw ascent my dreams she and Aunt Millie dream of flames whisper combustion in morning: straw now poking me suddenly deep water covers me trailers move from orange roof barn to orchard where we will plant to shelter our food like vagrants wandering in old fields, in barns to bed in straw

I've come back. This barn lives without me, others' memories thick as dust in air: horses I've never seen. I swing: fingers hold rope, threads fray, add to barn dust absorbed by shadows, particulate in slanting rays. In dusk dust whispers out between the beams, combusts: orange flames raining.
The Pale Beach

We were nowhere in particular, just walking beside the water. About women, Divine said, "I only knew one. I was her friend but she wasn't mine. She was mine though, that is I had her. There was nothing more I could have known." She ran ahead, barefoot into the ocean. Back before me, her white shirt was wet in the open dark. She wanted me to notice her body and laughed, "I smell like salt."

Her fingers chose a circle in the sand and we lay down. She smoked three German cigarettes, taking each one comfortably from my inside pocket. Their light shortened the distance of our sight. She had weighted her hollow form into the sand and stared down at the imprint later, "Does the tide rise higher than this?"

She stepped closer and said, "I would touch you but we are almost expecting it." So she loosely folded her clothes near the forest and decided to swim. We weren't out very far when Divine stopped. "The water is nearer to the trees now." She went under once more before I took her home.
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"teaking Fresh Snow

The murmurs of passing cars
like smoke in the wind, burning matches
and clove cigarettes. Pictures of
people far away, two dimensional faces,
my wallet falling open at my feet.

I dreamt my dreams
were invaded by passing lights,
towns with names I'll never hear, faces
I'll never see. Pressed into the prairie
tfive generations in self-imposed exile,
children sitting on hard wood floors.
Eatons catalog sprawled out in the wind
of an open back door.
Slipping into the cold

running to see the voyageur colonial ride
the yellow spaces on the road,
between the snow drift fences.
The brief growl of a passing engine,
a warm hand pressed to the cold window
leaving those few faces, being pulled
to the south, on their grey umbilical
cord. Long asphalt highways, stretched
out in the cold. Thin ice over the sound
of engines leaving black rubber marks,
digging themselves deeper and deeper
into a snow bank.

Djarum sparkling, illuminates the closed eyes
of my neighbors expression.
And I'm thinking of the faces,
of kicking ice rocks on the road,
pushing themselves back, miles across prairie.
The Buddha

I bought the Buddha
from a smoke-filled shop
of antiques, by the Harbour.

It was new then, fresh
off the boat from China
and the Yellow River man
looked sideways

as I layed down $15, he said,
"You take him free;"
and I left,
my Buddha in a box.

There he stayed
through the summer.
Jeff, a friend scolded me
after killing a patch of wild flowers,
said "you've killed the Buddha"
and I thought
of my Buddha,
meditating in a box.

Now Jeff's gone
to India, he tells me
I'll find my Buddha
in the mountains, in the shrill pitch
of an Indian Sheni reed.

I've taken the Buddha
from his box. He sits on my shelf,
earth face of clay unchanged,
wrinkled with half-closed eyes
he meditates.

And now, the leaves
falling dead in the wind
seem like the beginning
not the end.
Rashid Miller: Those that know me are few; those that abuse me are honored. Therefore the sage wears rough clothing and holds the jewel in his heart.
-Lao Tsu

Carrie Brown: "Gee, Bob, why so tense?"
-Mr. Coffee commercial

Hilary Hafner: "...I swear if it weren't for the red letters lighting the glass, I wouldn't know the dummies inside from the dummies out here, since our bodies, too, are plastic.
-Edward Hirsch

Tom Sudinsky: "Girl, I wuz over to her house and the roaches wuz everywhere."


Rebecca Kopp: If all the world and love were young, and both in every shepherd's tongue these pretty pleasures might me move to share thy cup o'overflowed with love.
"The Nymph's Reply"

George Hart: "uh, yeah"

Annaliese de Boer: Zo als het klokje thuis tikt, tikt het nergens

Curt Rideout: "After virtue has slept, she will rise more rested."
-Nietzsche

Deirdre Kovac: "That makes you where you are when I am far away." -Russell Edson
Editors' Notes

Gretchen Billmaier:
"Give it to your husband or your minister to pass on to God. And when God finds a minute, I'm sure he'll explain this doghouse of mine in a way that even you can understand."
Kurt Vonnegut
from Cat's Cradle

David Dewey:
It's not just a job. It's an adventure.

The Red Wheelbarrow
so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
 glazed with rain water
 beside the white chickens.

William Carlos Williams
"IT'S ONE THING FOR THE NATIONAL COMMISSION TO COMMENT ON THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN OUR SCHOOLS. IT'S ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY FOR YOU TO STAND UP AND CALL MR. GALBRAITH A YO-YO."
the red wheelbarrow