EDITORS' NOTES

Nat Horowitz: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Homer Bass: "I'm not sure of much of anything these days. Maybe that's why I talk so much."
-From Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
   By Robert Pirsig

Jenny Lynch: "I feel a lot more like I do now then I did when I came in here."
-David Lynch
Jason Rubinstein: "He has a love of life, and a sense that the world is mad."
- From Scaramouche
By Sabatini

Anita Mage: "It often troubles me to think how others dare to live where stealth is possible."

Peter Steadman: "I have to go back to my room to pick up the pieces of my life."
- Max Jones

Deb Bennett: "I am the poet of the body and I am the poet of the soul."
- Walt Whitman

John Hiemstra: "...Schools and colleges and thousands of Creative Writing workshops frequently fail to make any distinction between the activities they promote and art itself. The manipulation of materials and the relief experienced through articulation, though both are factors in the making of works of art, are only factors and not the thing itself; it is misleading to let students suppose they are doing art when in fact they are only taking steps toward doing so..."
- Denise Levertov

John Grieve: "Logic and sermons never convince."
- Walt Whitman

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CHRISTMAS

1. It snows, the first time in November.
The streetlights, bright since noon. Walking,
dry leaves still circle slowly about him;
he blows on his hands.

2. He dreams of pews,
of old hands moving
face to stomach, breast
to breast. Wreathes
and rows of candle flame.
Not knowing the words
of hymns, walking
down the dim aisle, too small
to eat the bread
or drink the wine. Too small
to know the cross. He carried
his candle away
in both hands, and blew it out
so it would not burn him.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Henrietta Epstein is Writer in Residence at IAA. She is the author of The Necessary Pearl and chairman of The Poetry Resource Center of Michigan. She has been overheard uttering brilliant quotes in the diningroom.

Susan Lamb: "Advance twice, set to partners. Change lobsters, & retire in the same order"
-Lewis Carroll

Carla Burns: "The duce take Wheelbarrow, Wife + all."
-Mother Goose

Rebecca Young: "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so."
-John Berryman

Caitlin Krier: "The world is round and green, kind of bumpy, like this avocado."
-Christopher Columbus

Wendelin Scott: "Mystic fish?"

Chris Wick: "My real dad is God."
-Nat Horowitz

Max Jones: "It's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies."
-From On The Road
By Jack Kerouac

Molly Malloy: "Contributor's quote?"

Chrystya Johnson: "The secret of life is pep-o-mint life savers (great flavor for less than ten calories.)"
-The Life Saver Company

Robin Abramson: "Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana."
Henrietta Epstein

FROM THE SHORE: TORONTO

All afternoon I've watched the gulls
off the breakwater at Lake Ontario.
No one here seems to like them,
how they scavenge,
hover like icons
against a metal sky.

But I am here from another country
and I like their garrulousness,
their joyful noise
and the way they hang in the air
flying and not flying.

3.
He dreams of sliding
on ice, of the simple sleep
of childhood, of waking into
a winter afternoon, dark,
asking if it is morning.
He dreams of not dreaming

and walks alone
with the hardness of stars.
He inhales the wind
of Michigan November:
pine trees without lights,
the clarity of snow, white
and unbroken.
Rebecca Young

GAMES

Party at Lori's: stumbling and drunk,
we laugh at ourselves, laugh
when her car hits the mailbox.
In the kitchen, we make a tight circle,
jumping for punchlines, laughing
until we feel relief.

Kelly and I wrestle on the floor.
He grabs my ass, and I know
what this game's about.
I hit hard. He mocks me.
I pull away from his grasp.

I walk to your corner of the room.
We talk after two weeks' silence.
Words sound different
although they are the same,
still your words.
I look through your eyes at myself,
see a face blurred by alcohol.
I am only a shape, a body unclothed.
But it is your spilled monologue
that begs something greater than pity.

I join the jampile on the bed.
Arms, faces, breasts, legs
squeeze into one body.
One more person on top,
and my breathing stops—
there is no air to scream.
I pound with fists on nearby bodies,
but I am weak from their weight,
and drowned by loud voices.
When the fun is over
the bodies return to the kitchen,
leaving me alone.

Carla Byrnes

SOMETIMES WHEN WRITING

I must stop,
black words suspended in my pen.

There is no justice in poetry
that I would prefer to the purity
of thought, dancing: so graceful
it could never scuff the page.
I lie bruised on the bed, thinking in the clearness of dark, remembering these games.
When my breathing is normal
I hear your movement outside, and open the door for you.
Caitlin Krier

THIS IS THE SEASON OF METAL

Things are not always connected.

And sometimes in the night, strangers take my hand and run.
My arm separates from my frozen body and stretches thin.
Numb fingertips cannot feel the vibration of fingerprint ridges sliding deeper into grooves of unknown palms.

Later, a pressure swells behind my eyes. I want to reach in and squeeze, release wetness, but my hands cannot find the place.

Deb Bennett

FROM THOSE WHO DON'T SLEEPWALK

To Edward Hirsch

Jealousy does lurk in those who are unable to make the journey.
Maybe we lack trust in dark hallways, in stairways, or in open windows. We fall asleep in our bodies and remain there. Our hearts fall into restless dreams. And sometimes we wake up hungry.
John Crieve

SLEEPING IN A POND

Row out to the middle of the pond.
Throw down
the anchor.
Strip bare to the moonlight.
Ease over the side,
into the silky water,
pushing the lilies aside.
Find the rope and pull yourself
down, watching the reflection
of the moon on the still surface.

When the light rays get weaker,
notice the cold
creeping up your legs,
wrist,
chest,
face.

Don't mind the minnows
if they tickle you.

When you get to the bottom,
curl up,
pull a warm silt blanket
over yourself.

Drift off to sleep.

Wendelin Scott

THIS, I KNOW
TO MY UNBORN CHILD

Come child, by the sea,
call the seals with your laughter,
and they will follow you.
Swim in these russet and emerald tide pools.
I will lick the salt from your skin,
and you will be clean.

Under the sea wall there are sleeping birds;
don't wake them, for they are a strange breed,
the mothers have a power in their throats,
to spit their vomit upon you.
Forgive them, for they too protect their young.

In this little valley,
cows have fallen and died,
unable to pull their hulking bodies out of the sand.
Crawl through the bones,
find one that frightens you.

Climb up on the cliff the islanders have named Ship Rock,
watch the tide come in, surround you.
It is certain death to leave;
for six hours listen to the sea.

There will always be a home to return to
where you will be fed and held.
Forget that and beg the rabbits to take you in,
in a voice you must fashion from fields and stone.

Child, this is what I know,
and what water I possess flows to you now;
it is clean.
Drink.
LISTENING TO STRING

1

At the end of the road,
I stood quietly,
feeling the wind kick up
into my face.
How it churned,
and then quickly settled again.

More than once,
I thought of stepping in front
of those two yellow lights, how
I would whisper your name,
just before my face met hard
with the windshield,
steam resting there at my mouth
only for a moment.

2

A lost swallow
flew into our glass doors this morning.
The blood at its head
crusted over grey feathers.
I wrapped a piece of string
around its neck,
pulled tight,
until I heard the snap of small bone;
like a wishbone left too long
on the window sill,
it was dry.
Asher-Kiddishanu bahamitz valitav,
vitzee vahnu, lehadleek naer,
Shel Hanukah.

After she placed the Shammos back on the Menorah, she sat down. The Menorah looked small against the lighted Christmas tree. "As insignificant as my feelings seem, compared to everyone else's at this time of year," she thought. She shivered and pulled tight on the shawl her Grandma Ruth had given her with the Menorah. Her grandmother had said, "These are for nights when you are alone and cold—they'll warm you physically, but more than that, they'll warm your heart. I want you to have them because I love you." Sarah had not understood then what was so important about the Menorah and the shawl. But tonight they seemed important. The shawl and Menorah had been her Grandma Ruth's during World War II. She and her family had hidden the Menorah among other odds and ends in the basement of their home in Germany.

Sarah looked around, aware that she no longer felt chilled but aware also that the candles had begun to burn down. Warm in her shawl, she felt herself smiling, and she remembered the first time her friends had come over and watched the lighting of the candles.

"Gosh, Sarah, you mean Santa Claus visits your house eight days in a row?"
"You must run out of milk and cookies awfully fast if you leave them out every night."

Sarah had tried hard to explain Hanukah to them, but they did not understand. Now as she looked up, the candles were more than halfway gone. Sarah looked again at the reflection of the tree in the window. All its lights were shining through the glass and making reflections on the snow. "It is pretty, I have to admit," she sighed. She closed her eyes and thought of Hanukah last year at home. Her father had said, "We should give thanks for being so lucky to be with our loved ones at this time, and we must hope that all people who are alone are well and happy."

Sarah mused, "I never thought I'd be one of the lone ones." The reflection of the candles in the window showed that most of them had burned out. Only one held onto the last bit of flame, and it reflected her eyes in the window. Sarah's eyes felt suddenly moist as the flame died out, and a wisp of smoke from the Menorah candle swept around and into the Christmas tree. And now,
as my yard darkens,
I look again and again
at the mouth of the trail.
I want to go again to the road,
brace my feet
hard on the pavement,
and imagine you somewhere
pulling tight at string,
listening for the snap of bone,
the kicking up,
and the settling down
of wind.
As the digits turned to 12:31 a.m., Sarah rolled over in bed, rubbed the sleep from her eyes and began to climb down from the top bunk. She tried to find the bottom bunk but instead found her roommate's leg.

"Ouch! Sarah, where are you going?" her roommate, Beth, asked.

"Shhh, go back to sleep; I'll be right back." Sarah walked over to her desk and took down the Menorah from the top shelf.

"Sarah, no you can't! You know that at the meeting last week the housemother said we can't light matches or candles. This wooden dorm is a firetrap."

Wrapped in the shawl her grandmother had given her and carrying her Menorah, Sarah walked out the door. The rules weren't enforced too tightly. Besides, she followed most of them, and some things are more important than fire-code rules. This was her special holiday, and no one could stop her from celebrating it. Not even Beth's voice echoing down the long corridor, "Sarah, please come back..."

As she got to the door leading downstairs, she stopped. "It squeaks, so I'd better be careful." She pushed it open quickly to avoid prolonging the moans of the hinges, held the Menorah close to her chest, and walked carefully down the stairs.

As she entered the lobby, Sarah looked up for a moment in awe at the twenty-five foot mass of evergreen standing in the corner. The cream-colored walls showed the reflections of the green, red, orange, and blue lights from the tree. Sarah set the Menorah down on the window ledge and reached for the box in her shoulder bag. It read, "Imported from Israel." From the box she took a candle for each of eight nights. The ninth candle, the Shammos, would light the other candles. After she'd placed the candles in the Menorah, one by one, she glanced around the lobby to see if anyone had heard her and come out.

It was quiet and deserted as it should be in the middle of the night, so Sarah struck a match and lit the Shammos. Then she began to light the other candles, saying quietly the prayer.

Baruch atah adonai
Elohenu melech ha-olam,
Anita Mage

FOR GENE

Do you remember that fall day down at the Potomac when we were both children? We walked along the banks, through pine and cedar. The water was low that day, trees grew out of the water their trunks exposed. Through the sharp breeze, November sunlight warmed our faces. The river carried branches downstream, limbs swirling in the current. You put your arm around me and showed me a hawk above us, finding the wind.

He could fly above the forest ground blanketed with leaves. The soft undergrowth pulled my child's steps down. Through leaves, my hands searched the moist earth, full of night rain, but you walked ahead, sure of your steps through the forest.

I know somewhere in the woods in a certain place, a small clearing where trees form a ring about the forest ground, I will find you sitting there exploring the earth under your hands.

Max Jones

FACES

"What does the night hold for us?" he asked above the noise. "What do we hold for the night?" might have been more appropriate, but I looked at him questioningly anyway. If only you could have seen him, sitting behind the wheel of a '74 Volkswagen Bug, hanging on the steering wheel in time with the music. Sam was five years older than me but we were still good friends. We had met at the beach two summers ago. He was trying to pick up my girlfriend. He succeeded, and I vowed never to forgive him for that. I did, of course, in a matter of a few days and we'd been friends ever since.

I smiled and chucked a cassette tape case into the back seat, turning around to make sure that it didn't fall through the hole in the floor.

This was going to be one of those weekends to remember. Heading down-state and east to check on some friends at college, driving in and out of the boring farm country and on to that city, that promised to be so wild. Right now we were in the midst of this farm country. Fenced-in fields whipped by along with a few signs. Neither one of us spoke for awhile.

I always sort of tune myself out when riding in a car. I can't really help it, I just do. I always think of great things that I want to write down but never do. Ideas for poems come to mind often but I'm not much of a poet.

The tape that was in the cassette deck ended and Sam punched the eject button with his index finger, breaking my train of thought which, by now, wasn't going anywhere in particular. "How about listening to the 'Boomtown Rats'?" he asked digging into the King Edward cigar box full of tapes. "Nah. How about the 'Buzzcocks'?" I offered.

He put in the 'Boomtown Rats' tape anyway. That was o.k., I guess. It was his car. I just sat back again and looked out the windshield at the car ahead of us, wondering why he'd even bothered to ask me in the first place.

The little Volkswagen sucked up the highway and we passed a blue Lincoln, crammed with middle-aged men, obviously on their way to a big "Football Weekend." They wore funny hats and had a "GO STATE GO" sticker on the rear bumper.

It began to rain and Sam flicked on the windshield wipers. I
watched them swing in and out of time with the music. Another
green sign told us that we had 72 more miles to go.

We passed a familiar car full of some of our friends who were
making the trip also. Waving at them, we blew by and I stretched
my arms above my head to make myself up a little.

"Lots of excitement is just waiting for us," Sam said. "And the
girls, man, the girls...It promises to be one hell of a
weekend!"

I smiled and pulled myself up in my seat.

We stopped at a Mobil station to get some gas and a bag of
O'Grady's Au Gratin potato chips. I got out to pump the gas and
Sam went inside to pay. My legs felt sort of strange. It seemed
as if it had been almost an eternity since I'd stood up. My feet
felt unusually light and I swayed from side to side, stretching
my back.

A yellow Volvo station wagon with Illinois plates pulled up
next to me and two girls got out. They were both pretty
good-looking. One was blonde and had on a red sweater. The
other was a little shorter, had dark hair and was wearing a blue
sweater.

"We've got to get there by 11:00. That's the time that I told
them," said the blonde.

"We'll never get there unless you..." but by this time I
couldn't hear them anymore. They had walked right past me without
much as a glimpse in my direction.

I turned and watched them go into the station, guessing that
they had just stopped to get a map or something.

The digital meter on the pump hit $10.00 and I put the gas cap
back on.

I noticed, with slight envy, that Sam was talking to the two
girls inside, and I saw him offer them some of the O'Gradys. They
declined, but waved to him as they left the building.

I decided to say something to them as they walked back to
their car, but I couldn't put the words in order in my head fast
enough and once again, they passed me without looking.

Sam came out of the station and as they were leaving, I asked
him what he'd said.

"I just told them that they oughtta go to this party tonight. I
gave them directions and everything."

"They were pretty good looking, huh?" I said, half asking, half
stating.

"Yeah," Sam agreed. "But I'm not sure if they'll go...I dunno,
Peter Steadman

I think that I have lived all my days without waking up.

And at night, while the clock clicks
its numbers in the dark
I lie awake in sleep, hot
with that burning day in Nicaragua,
on a grease-blackened ship,
fire spitting from mouths of cannons
that explode my brother out of existence.

Then the alarm,
my eyelids fall from dark to dark
and I step into the burden of clothes
and into the day in the saved blackness of the night.

I flow through conversations
with my ears muffled by grey;
the words around me snap their fingers
in my face to try to wake me up.

Then the sun falls
and my eyelids rise from dark
to dark and my mind travels back to my brother,
asleep under the blanket
of fathoms-deep water
his eyes staring up at the sun.


I really did wonder if these girls would show up at this party. Or would they just become a few more forgotten faces to add to the rest that I'd already seen today?

We got back on the highway and followed them. By now my neck was really starting to hurt from looking out the window, and it was all beginning to look the same.

We stayed behind the Volvo for awhile until they approached an exit and slowed down. "Please, don't turn on the blinkers," I thought to myself, but they did. I watched them turn off the highway and disappear into the dusky, purple horizon as we passed by.

"See, I told you," Sam said in a know-it-all tone of voice. I sort of nodded as if to agree with him, but it still bothered me. It didn't bother Sam, though. Sam couldn't have cared less.

"They looked like real air-heads anyway. There'll be plenty more girls when we get there," he said. This made me feel a little better.

I looked out the windshield at the girl on the BLACK VELVET billboard until we passed it and another took its place. I scanned the rest of the signs along the way, looking for more faces to forget.
TO FATHER: HALF CLOSED EYES

Alone in the dark living room,
I wait for you
to come home.

The television screen flashes,
but my eyelids
drift down.
I bob my head
and lift them again.

I have silenced
the people on the screen.
And watch their expressions,
my eyes half closed,
I imagine their voices
rise and fall.

Near silent footsteps
tell me you are home.
I know you won't find your key,
so I open the door.
You stand straight,
your head balancing
on your shoulders.
You try to speak
but your breath is stained
with scotch,
Your words a few stray sounds.

SILENCE

When I was six,
I hid behind the refrigerator.
I listened to you shriek
that you'd take me
and we'd go to grandma's.

Dad threw the bottle at your head.
Glass shattered on the cupboard.
Then he threw divorce at you.

The house went silent.
I stole back to my bed,
stared the whole night at still shadow.
Your hand finds my shoulder
and jaunts it back
and forth.
Testing me,
you steady yourself.
My small frame rocks,
My head swinging away
and back towards you.
Your face is a ghost,
as the darkness hides
behind every surface
waiting to crawl back
after every flash.
You filled steaming squash with butter, brown sugar, lifted to my mouth.

Leaves churn, lifting always lifting.
I try to catch them, stretching my arms toward the circle.

I stumble in darkness
reach for warmth
in a small tree,
press my face against wet bark.

I scan charblack sky,
searching for your blacker eyes.
I reach up into darkness
trace the outline of your face.
Robin Abramson

TRACINGS

This autumn night
I follow moist paths
through the wood.
With each step
leaves and mud cling
to my bare feet, the Earth
echoing wet silence.

Muted twilight
defines the blackness
of trees, I find your
faint outline among their shadows.

Wind catches old sounds,
llits them to my ear.
I hear the soft risings
and fallings of your voice.

Leaves burn.
I pull their scent
deep into my lungs.

There are leaves in my hair,
leaves in my clothing.

Each fall we raked them into piles,
gave ourselves to their softness,
falling again and again.

The knife slid so easily
into the pumpkin.
We scooped orange meat,
handfuls of seeds;
laughed as we threw them to the air.

Molly Malloy

MEETING MICHELANGELO IN MY SLEEP

He grinds
metal upon grindstone
sparks flying until the silver dust clears,
hours later.
Trapped in the marble
I wait for my savior,
looking for clues in
the white dark.
Sweat trickles down his brow.
He angles the chisel,
shaping my cheekbone.
Grasping my hand
he pulls me from the stone.
My body arches,
chilled by the death in the rock.
Chrystya Johnson

SEAWEED

Our arms and legs tangle
like seaweed on the morning beach
where green water covers shells,
touches starfish, cool sand.
A spray of my hair floats across your chest.

We are naked,
an ocean of each other.
And curved as a shell,
your body wraps around me.

This rhythm of our bodies
is smooth as water.
We swim, like fish
finally surfacing
to breathe new air.

Jody Langham

BLACK LIGHT

Jesus stands over your hash pipe.
I push a pile of dust around his statue
and someone leaves to find more beer.

I don't remember walking home
or who told me to return to your room.

Where did you find the black light?
The white suit?
I hear your roommate breathing behind the door
and I look at my shoes
when I tell you to drop the gun.

I sent the spent shell
to your psychiatrist. He came
stuffed in his wool, to your funeral.
I can't forget the ashes
smeared on your roommate's lap
or the scent the preacher wore.
The rays from Jesus' window
cast rubies on the floor.
TO MY BROTHER

At first, when there was no pain,
you swung your arm around from the elbow, laughed,
and said "Hey, look at this"
to your friends who stood around the jump.
Gradually pain cut in,
and blood stretched your skin tight,
puffing your arm up with grey
as if some fungus had crept beneath the skin
and was growing there, like yeast rising in bread.
You could no longer cry
the rims of your eyes were red
like the eye sockets of bass
after I cut off their heads
and thumbed out their shallow eyes.

In the hospital I felt
I should be doing something,
helping you somehow.
But the bored nurse had done everything,
and I was left gaping at your growing arm,
with white smell and white sound
pushing everything else away.
It was raining. I came in wet and almost sick.

Earlier, in town, I had asked where there was an inexpensive place to sleep. A storeowner sent me there. "The old lady is sick," he warned. "She has a bad hip."

When I came to the door, I saw the old lady sitting by a fire in her kitchen. She was waiting for me.

She is sitting with her brother watching television. Hunched in their chairs, arms crossed, they are watching a beauty pageant under a portrait of Jesus. The set is small, the reception bad. An old stove sits in the corner; above it hangs an iron pan, some plates on a rack. Blue paint peels from the walls.

Later she tells me she has an arthritic hip, she's had one operation already. It's gotten bad again, she has to sit still all day. It's all right, though; her brother makes the beds, and she's fine as long as someone talks to her occasionally.

She tells me that she won't go for another operation because she's looking for a ticket to heaven.

Why, after a year, have I remembered her again? There are so many others. Her sunken eyes, the way she sat, her brother's yellow shirt, these stay with me.

When I look at my picture of her crusty, red house, I feel her put another stick on the fire. Can you see the ocean through the hard rain?
It was raining.
I came in wet and almost sick.

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"The old lady is sick," he warned. "She has a bad hip."

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SUSAN LAMB

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to your friends who stood around the jump.
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and was growing there, like yeast rising in bread.
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and I was left gaping at your growing arm,
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pushing everything else away.
Chrystya Johnson

SEAWEED

Our arms and legs tangle
like seaweed on the morning beach
where green water covers shells,
touches starfish, cool sand.
A spray of my hair floats across your chest.

We are naked,
an ocean of each other.
And curved as a shell,
your body wraps around me.

This rhythm of our bodies
is smooth as water.
We swim, like fish
finally surfacing
to breathe new air.

Jody Langham

BLACK LIGHT

Jesus stands over your hash pipe.
I push a pile of dust around his statue
and someone leaves to find more beer.

I don't remember walking home
or who told me to return to your room.

Where did you find the black light?
The white suit?
I hear your roommate breathing behind the door
and I look at my shoes
when I tell you to drop the gun.

I sent the spent shell
to your psychiatrist. He came
stuffed in his wool, to your funeral.
I can't forget the ashes
smear on your roommate's lap
or the scent the preacher wore.
The rays from Jesus' window
cast rubies on the floor.
ROBIN ABRAMSON

TRACINGS

This autumn night
I follow moist paths
through the wood.
With each step
leaves and mud cling
to my bare feet, the Earth
echoing wet silence.

Muted twilight
defines the blackness
of trees, I find your
faint outline among their shadows.

Wind catches old sounds,
lifts them to my ear.
I hear the soft risings
and fallings of your voice.

Leaves burn.
I pull their scent
deep into my lungs.

There are leaves in my hair,
leaves in my clothing.

Each fall we raked them into piles,
gave ourselves to their softness,
falling again and again.

The knife slid so easily
into the pumpkin.
We scooped orange meat,
handfuls of seeds;
laughed as we threw them to the air.

MOLLY MALLOY

MEETING MICHELANGELO IN MY SLEEP

He grinds
metal upon grindstone
sparks flying until the silver dust clears,
hours later.
Trapped in the marble
I wait for my savior,
looking for clues in
the white dark.
Sweat trickles down his brow.
He angles the chisel,
shaping my cheekbone.
Grasping my hand
he pulls me from the stone.
My body arches,
chilled by the death in the rock.
You filled steaming squash with butter, brown sugar, lifted to my mouth.

Leaves churn, lifting always lifting.
I try to catch them, stretching my arms toward the circle.

I stumble in darkness reach for warmth
in a small tree, press my face against wet bark.

I scan charblack sky, searching for your blacker eyes.
I reach up into darkness trace the outline of your face.
Your hand finds my shoulder
and jaunts it back
and forth.
Testing me,
you steady yourself.
My small frame rocks,
My head swinging away
and back towards you.
Your face is a ghost,
as the darkness hides
behind every surface
waiting to crawl back
after every flash.
Chris Wick

TO FATHER: HALF CLOSED EYES

Alone in the dark living room,  
I wait for you  
to come home.

The television screen flashes,  
but my eyelids  
drift down.  
I bob my head  
and lift them again.

I have silenced  
the people on the screen.  
And watch their expressions,  
my eyes half closed,  
I imagine their voices  
rise and fall.

Near silent footsteps  
tell me you are home.  
I know you won't find your key,  
so I open the door.  
You stand straight,  
your head balancing  
on your shoulders. 
You try to speak  
but your breath is stained  
with scotch,  
Your words a few stray sounds.

Jason Rubinstein

SILENCE

When I was six,  
I hid behind the refrigerator.  
I listened to you shriek  
that you'd take me  
and we'd go to grandma's.  

Dad threw the bottle at your head,  
Glass shattered on the cupboard.  
Then he threw divorce at you.

The house went silent.  
I stole back to my bed,  
stared the whole night at still shadow.
I think that I have lived all my days without waking up.

And at night, while the clock clicks its numbers in the dark
I lie awake in sleep, hot
with that burning day in Nicaragua,
on a grease-blackened ship,
fire spitting from mouths of cannons that explode my brother out of existence.

Then the alarm,
my eyelids fall from dark to dark
and I step into the burden of clothes
and into the day in the saved blackness of the night.

I flow through conversations
with my ears muffled by grey;
the words around me snap their fingers
in my face to try to wake me up.

Then the sun falls
and my eyelids rise from dark
to dark and my mind travels back to my brother,
asleep under the blanket of fathoms-deep water
his eyes staring up at the sun.

I really did wonder if these girls would show up at this party. Or would they just become a few more forgotten faces to add to the rest that I'd already seen today?

We got back on the highway and followed them. By now my neck was really starting to hurt from looking out the window, and it was all beginning to look the same.

We stayed behind the Volvo for awhile until they approached an exit and slowed down. "Please, don't turn on the blinkers," I thought to myself, but they did. I watched them turn off the highway and disappear into the dusky, purple horizon as we passed by.

"See, I told you," Sam said in a know-it-all tone of voice. I sort of nodded as if to agree with him, but it still bothered me. It didn't bother Sam, though. Sam couldn't have cared less.

"They looked like real air-heads anyway. There'll be plenty more girls when we get there," he said. This made me feel a little better.

I looked out the windshield at the girl on the BLACK VELVET billboard until we passed it and another took its place. I scanned the rest of the signs along the way, looking for more faces to forget.
watched them swing in and out of time with the music. Another
green sign told us that we had 72 more miles to go.

We passed a familiar car full of some of our friends who were
making the trip also. Waving at them, we blew by and I stretched
my arms above my head to wake myself up a little.

"Lots of excitement is just waiting for us," Sam said. "And the
girls, man, the girls!...It promises to be one hell of a
weekend!"

I smiled and pulled myself up in my seat.

He stopped at a Mobil station to get some gas and a bag of
O'Grady's Au Gratin potato chips. I got out to pump the gas and
Sam went inside to pay. My legs felt sort of strange. It seemed
as if it had been almost an eternity since I'd stood up. My feet
felt unusually light and I swayed from side to side, stretching
my back.

A yellow Volvo station wagon with Illinois plates pulled up
next to me and two girls got out. They were both pretty
good-looking. One was blonde and had on a red sweater. The
other was a little shorter, had dark hair and was wearing a blue
sweater.

"We've got to get there by 11:00. That's the time that I told
them," said the blonde.

"We'll never get there unless you..." but by this time I
couldn't hear them anymore. They had walked right past me without
much as a glimpse in my direction.

I turned and watched them go into the station, guessing that
they had just stopped to get a map or something.

The digital meter on the pump hit $10.00 and I put the gas cap
back on.

I noticed, with slight envy, that Sam was talking to the two
girls inside, and I saw him offer them some of the O'Gradys. They
declined, but waved to him as they left the building.

I decided to say something to them as they walked back to
their car, but I couldn't put the words in order in my head fast
enough and once again, they passed me without looking.

Sam came out of the station and as they were leaving, I asked
him what he'd said.

"I just told them that they oughtta go to this party tonight. I
gave them directions and everything."

"They were pretty good looking, huh?" I said, half asking, half
stating.

"Yeah," Sam agreed. "But I'm not sure if they'll go...I dunno,

Nat Horowitz

HALLOWEEN 1984: STONED AMONG THE GRAVESTONES

I went out running Halloween night and
found myself in the cemetery and a Braumeister in my hand
sitting with some friends by a fire they built
drinking like drunks for a while but then carloads
of people started showing up in rusty Dusters and old Furies
full of weed and other drugs to eat like Halloween candy.

Someone threw a radio into the bonfire
where it screamed out the music loud.
So we reared up and went mad
roaring tripping hopping like priests dancing like war
stomping in a pagan circle around it until
something melted through;
it got very quiet and whispered POP.

I went away and ran awhile
on dirt roads I couldn't see,
felt the gravel underfoot
passed lots of stones that meant
lots of dead people.
I found the family plot and flopped down
said hi to everybody
stared awhile
and poured my beer into the ground to drink later on.
From my pocket I drew my black magic marker and
scrawled on the stone:
Nat was here
and will be again.

Nat Horowitz
Anita Mage

FOR GENE

Do you remember that fall day
down at the Potomac
when we were both children?
We walked along the banks,
through pine and cedar.
The water was low that day,
trees grew out of the water
their trunks exposed.
Through the sharp breeze, November
sunlight warmed our faces.
The river carried branches downstream,
limbs swirling in the current.
You put your arm around me
and showed me a hawk above us,
finding the wind.
He could fly above the forest ground
blanketed with leaves.
The soft undergrowth pulled
my child's steps down.
Through leaves, my hands searched
the moist earth, full of night rain,
but you walked ahead, sure of your steps
through the forest.

I know somewhere in the woods
in a certain place,
a small clearing
where trees form a ring about the forest ground,
I will find you sitting there
exploring the earth under your hands.

Max Jones

FACES

"What does the night hold for us?" he asked above the noise.
"What do we hold for the night?" might have been more
appropriate, but I looked at him questioninglly anyway. If only
you could have seen him, sitting behind the wheel of a '74
Volkswagen Bug, hanging on the steering wheel in time with the
music. Sam was five years older than me but we were still good
friends. We had met at the beach two summers ago. He was trying
to pick up my girlfriend. He succeeded, and I vowed never to
forgive him for that. I did, of course, in a matter of a few days
and we'd been friends ever since.

I smiled and chucked a cassette tape case into the back seat,
turning around to make sure that it didn't fall through the hole
in the floor.
This was going to be one of those weekends to remember.
Heading down-state and east to check on some friends at college,
driving in and out of the boring farm country and on to that
city, that promised to be so wild. Right now we were in the midst
of this farm country. Fenced-in fields whipped by along with a
few signs. Neither one of us spoke for awhile.

I always sort of tune myself out when riding in a car. I can't
really help it, I just do. I always think of great things that I
want to write down but never do. Ideas for poems come to mind
often but I'm not much of a poet.

The tape that was in the cassette deck ended and Sam punched
the eject button with his index finger, breaking my train of
thought which, by now, wasn't going anywhere in particular.
"How about listening to the 'Boomtown Rats'?" he asked digging
into the King Edward cigar box full of tapes.
"Nah. How about the 'Buzzcocks'?" I offered.
He put in the 'Boomtown Rats' tape anyway. That was o.k., I
guess. It was his car. I just sat back again and looked out the
windshield at the car ahead of us, wondering why he'd even
bothered to ask me in the first place.

The little Volkswagen sucked up the highway and we passed a
blue Lincoln, crammed with middle-aged men, obviously on their
way to a big Football Weekend. They wore funny hats and had a
"GO STATE GO" sticker on the rear bumper.

It began to rain and Sam flicked on the windshield wipers. I
As the digits turned to 12:31 a.m., Sarah rolled over in bed, rubbed the sleep from her eyes and began to climb down from the top bunk. She tried to find the bottom bunk but instead found her roommate's leg.

"Ouch!, Sarah, where are you going?" her roommate, Beth, asked.

"Shhh, go back to sleep; I'll be right back." Sarah walked over to her desk and took down the Menorah from the top shelf.

"Sarah, no you can't! You know that at the meeting last week the housemother said we can't light matches or candles. This wooden dorm is a firetrap."

Wrapped in the shawl her grandmother had given her and carrying her Menorah, Sarah walked out the door. The rules weren't enforced too tightly. Besides, she followed most of them, and some things are more important than fire-code rules. This was her special holiday, and no one could stop her from celebrating it. Not even Beth's voice echoing down the long corridor, "Sarah, please come back..."

As she got to the door leading downstairs, she stopped. "It squeaks, so I'd better be careful." She pushed it open quickly to avoid prolonging the moans of the hinges, held the Menorah close to her chest, and walked carefully down the stairs.

As she entered the lobby, Sarah looked up for a moment in awe at the twenty-five foot mass of evergreen standing in the corner. The cream-colored walls showed the reflections of the green, red, orange, and blue lights from the tree. Sarah set the Menorah down on the window ledge and reached for the box in her shoulder bag. It read, "Imported from Israel." From the box she took a candle for each of eight nights. The ninth candle, the Shammos, would light the other candles. After she'd placed the candles in the Menorah, one by one, she glanced around the lobby to see if anyone had heard her and come out.

It was quiet and deserted as it should be in the middle of the night, so Sarah struck a match and lit the Shammos. Then she began to light the other candles, saying quietly the prayer.

Baruch atah adonai
Elohenu melech ha-olam,
Asher-Kiddishanu bahamitz valitav,
vitzee vahnu, lehadleek naer,
Shel Hanukah.

After she placed the Shammos back on the Menorah, she sat down. The Menorah looked small against the lighted Christmas tree. "As insignificant as my feelings seem, compared to everyone else's at this time of year," she thought. She shivered and pulled tight on the shawl her Grandma Ruth had given her with the Menorah. Her grandmother had said, "These are for nights when you are alone and cold—they'll warm you physically, but more than that, they'll warm your heart. I want you to have them because I love you." Sarah had not understood then what was so important about the Menorah and the shawl. But tonight they seemed important. The shawl and Menorah had been her Grandma Ruth's during World War II. She and her family had hidden the Menorah among other odds and ends in the basement of their home in Germany.

Sarah looked around, aware that she no longer felt chilled but aware also that the candles had begun to burn down. Warm in her shawl, she felt herself smiling, and she remembered the first time her friends had come over and watched the lighting of the candles.

"Gosh, Sarah, you mean Santa Claus visits your house eight days in a row?"
"You must run out of milk and cookies awfully fast if you leave them out every night."

Sarah had tried hard to explain Hanukah to them, but they did not understand. Now as she looked up, the candles were more than halfway gone. Sarah looked again at the reflection of the tree in the window. All its lights were shining through the glass and making reflections on the snow. "It is pretty, I have to admit," she sighed. She closed her eyes and thought of Hanukah last year at home. Her father had said, "We should give thanks for being so lucky to be with our loved ones at this time, and we must hope that all people who are alone are well and happy."

Sarah mused, "I never thought I'd be one of the lone ones."

And now, as my yard darkens,
I look again and again
at the mouth of the trail.
I want to go again to the road,
brace my feet
hard on the pavement,
and imagine you somewhere
pulling tight at string,
listening for the snap of bone,
the kicking up,
and the settling down
of wind.

The reflection of the candles in the window showed that most of them had burned out. Only one held onto the last bit of flame, and it reflected her eyes in the window. Sarah's eyes felt suddenly moist as the flame died out, and a wisp of smoke from the Menorah candle swept around and into the Christmas tree.
At the end of the road,
I stood quietly,
feeling the wind kick up
into my face.
How it churned,
and then quickly settled again.

More than once,
I thought of stepping in front
of those two yellow lights, how
I would whisper your name,
just before my face met hard
with the windshield,
steam resting there at my mouth
only for a moment.

A lost swallow
flew into our glass doors this morning.
The blood at its head
crusted over grey feathers.
I wrapped a piece of string
around its neck,
pulled tight,
until I heard the snap of small bone;
like a wishbone left too long
on the window sill,
it was dry.
John Grieve

SLEEPING IN A POND

Row out to the middle of the pond.
Throw down
the anchor.
Strip bare to the moonlight.
Ease over the side,
into the silky water,
pushing the lilies aside.
Find the rope and pull yourself
down, watching the reflection
of the moon on the still surface.

When the light rays get weaker,
notice the cold
creeping up your legs,
waist,
chest,
face.

Don't mind the minnows
if they tickle you.

When you get to the bottom,
curl up,
pull a warm silt blanket
over yourself.

Drift off to sleep.

Wendelin Scott

THIS, I KNOW
TO MY UNBORN CHILD

Come child, by the sea,
call the seals with your laughter,
and they will follow you.
Swim in these russet and emerald tide pools.
I will lick the salt from your skin,
and you will be clean.

Under the sea wall there are sleeping birds;
don't wake them, for they are a strange breed,
the mothers have a power in their throats,
to spit their vomit upon you.
Forgive them, for they too protect their young.

In this little valley,
cows have fallen and died,
unable to pull their hulking bodies out of the sand.
Crawl through the bones,
find one that frightens you.

Climb up on the cliff the islanders have named Ship Rock,
watch the tide come in, surround you.
It is certain death to leave;
for six hours listen to the sea.

There will always be a home to return to
where you will be fed and held.
Forget that and beg the rabbits to take you in,
in a voice you must fashion from fields and stone.

Child, this is what I know,
and what water I possess flows to you now;
it is clean.
Drink.
Caitlin Krier

THIS IS THE SEASON OF METAL

Things are not always connected.

And sometimes in the night,
strangers take my hand and run.
My arm separates
from my frozen body and stretches thin.
Numb fingertips
cannot feel
the vibration of fingerprint ridges
sliding deeper
into grooves of unknown palms.

Later,
a pressure swells behind my eyes.
I want to reach in and squeeze,
release wetness,
but my hands cannot find the place.

Deb Bennett

FROM THOSE WHO DON'T SLEEPWALK

To Edward Hirsch

Jealousy does lurk
in those who
are unable to make
the journey.
Maybe we lack trust
in dark hallways,
in stairways,
or in open windows.
We fall asleep
in our bodies
and remain there.
Our hearts fall
into restless dreams.
And sometimes
we wake up
hungry.
I lie bruised on the bed,
thinking in the clearness of dark,
remembering these games.
When my breathing is normal
I hear your movement outside,
and open the door for you.
Rebecca Young

GAMES

Party at Lori's: stumbling and drunk, we laugh at ourselves, laugh when her car hits the mailbox. In the kitchen, we make a tight circle, jumping for punchlines, laughing until we feel relief.

Kelly and I wrestle on the floor. He grabs my ass, and I know what this game's about. I hit hard. He mocks me. I pull away from his grasp.

I walk to your corner of the room. We talk after two weeks' silence. Words sound different although they are the same, still your words. I look through your eyes at myself, see a face blurred by alcohol. I am only a shape, a body unclothed, but it is your spilled monologue that begs something greater than pity.

I join the jampile on the bed. Arms, faces, breasts, legs squeeze into one body. One more person on top, and my breathing stops—there is no air to scream. I pound with fists on nearby bodies, but I am weak from their weight, and drowned by loud voices. When the fun is over the bodies return to the kitchen, leaving me alone.

Carla Byrnes

SOMETIMES WHEN WRITING

I must stop, black words suspended in my pen. There is no justice in poetry that I would prefer to the purity of thought, dancing: so graceful it could never scuff the page.
Henrietta Epstein

FROM THE SHORE: TORONTO

All afternoon I've watched the gulls
off the breakwater at Lake Ontario.
No one here seems to like them,
how they scavenge,
hover like icons
against a metal sky.

But I am here from another country
and I like their garrulousness,
their joyful noise
and the way they hang in the air
flying and not flying.

3.
He dreams of sliding
on ice, of the simple sleep
of childhood, of waking into
a winter afternoon, dark,
asking if it is morning.
He dreams of not dreaming
and walks alone
with the hardness of stars.
He inhales the wind
of Michigan November:
pine trees without lights,
the clarity of snow, white
and unbroken.
John Hiemstra

CHRISTMAS

1. It snows, the first
time in November.
The streetlights, bright
since noon. Walking,
dry leaves still circle
slowly about him;
he blows on his hands.

2. He dreams of pews,
of old hands moving
face to stomach, breast
to breast. Wreathes
and rows of candle flame.
Not knowing the words
of hymns, walking
down the dim aisle, too small
to eat the bread
or drink the wine. Too small
to know the cross. He carried
his candle away
in both hands, and blew it out
so it would not burn him.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Henrietta Epstein is Writer in Residence at IAA. She is the
author of The Necessary Pearl and chairman of The Poetry
Resource Center of Michigan. She has been overheard uttering
brilliant quotes in the diningroom.

Susan Lamb: "Advance twice, set to partners. Change lobsters, &
retire in the same order"
   -Lewis Caroll

Carla Burns: "The duce take
   Wheelbarrow, Wife + all."
   -Mother Goose

Rebecca Young: "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so."
   -John Berryman

Caitlin Krier: "The world is round and green, kind of bumpy, like
   this avocado."
   -Christopher Columbus

Wendelin Scott: "Mystic fish?"

Chris Wick: "My real dad is God."
   -Nat Horowitz

Max Jones: "It's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's
good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath
the skies."
   -From On The Road
   By Jack Kerouac

Molly Malloy: "Contributor's quote?"

Chrystya Johnson: "The secret of life is pep-o-mint life savers
(great flavor for less than ten calories.)"
   -The Life Saver Company

Robin Abramson: "Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a
banana."
Jason Rubinstein: "He has a love of life, and a sense that the world is mad.”  
-From Scaramouche  
By Sabatini

Anita Mage: "It often troubles me to think how others dare to live where stealth is possible."

Peter Steadman: "I have to go back to my room to pick up the pieces of my life."

Deb Bennett: "I am the poet of the body and I am the poet of the soul."

John Hiemstra: "...Schools and colleges and thousands of Creative Writing workshops frequently fail to make any distinction between the activities they promote and art itself. The manipulation of materials and the relief experienced through articulation, though both are factors in the making of works of art, are only factors and not the thing itself; it is misleading to let students suppose they are doing art when in fact they are only taking steps toward doing so...”

Denise Levertov

John Grieve: "Logic and sermons never convince."

Walt Whitman

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EDITORS' NOTES

Nat Horowitz: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Homer Bass: "I'm not sure of much of anything these days. Maybe that's why I talk so much."

-From Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
By Robert Pirsig

Jenny Lynch: "I feel a lot more like I do now then I did when I came in here."

-David Lynch
THE RED WHEELBARROW

January 1985

Homer Bass
Jenny Lynch
Nat Horowitz

Editors
WHEELBARROW