

DO SOMETHING
EKPHRASIS @ LIFT TRUCKS

EDITED BY PAMELA HART

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Acknowledgements

Do something, do something to that, and then do something to that.
Jasper Johns

BELOW

After Scott Yeager

By Kate Knapp Johnson

What would you think
if I took a brush of silvers
and mild blue, if I began

at the bottom of the right corner
while you stood there watching
the light; still as a gold-snake

climbing, the sun rises behind us, stunning
the striated cliffs
orange. We're below

with darkness. What if
sun and shadow, warmth and chill,
prove to be the same and if, just then,

a pony stepped forward,
out of sage-brown tips of the brush, snorting,
half-dancing her way towards us
from the glade of being found.

NO MOMENT WILL EVER BE LIKE THIS ONE

After James Litaker

By Deborah Batterman

Ouch! says the girl, to herself. If she complains, her mother will only pull harder, hurting her more. It's the nature of the comb, her mother will say. Something to be endured. Just for once she wishes her mother would let her go to school with her hair loose. A classroom is no place for unruly hair, her mother will say.

Already nine and hungering to be nineteen says the mother, to herself. She runs her fingers through strands of her daughter's hair, a soft tangle that reminds her of nothing so much as the swift passage of time. The more impatient her daughter seems, the more the mother is inclined to slow down, teach her a lesson about beauty, the kind that comes with precision, the rhythmic comb and weave, comb and weave of a perfect braid. Now she stops, just to savor the moment. To the girl this feels like punishment, maybe even torture, a braid that gets longer with each twist. To the mother it is a kind of release, a morning ritual that gets her through the day, each and every one the same, with its hopes for her daughter, maybe a teacher or a secretary or a beautician; anything but standing behind the counter of delicatessen, dishing out macaroni salad or ladling soup into a container, slapping slices of turkey or ham onto bread slathered with mayonnaise or mustard, sometimes both. She feels like a surgeon, cutting through the bread. There is nothing so unnatural as making sandwiches through a filter of latex.

She picks up the pace again, comb and weave, comb and weave. Pictures her daughter at nineteen, braids gone, hair cascading to her shoulders.

IT FIGURES

After A.R. Penck

By Phil Demise Smith

a line of communication
gets down on its knees
to re-assemble the fire

underneath it all
it resembles the mythology
of enlightenment
and the crawl space of prayer

the skin and bones of warfare
animate the marching
band of dancing warriors

sticks and stones notate
the instrumentality of music
as the black backdrop rotates
and illuminates the animated
attack on the forefront of the exit

the all American color scheme
denotes bass cliffs of symmetry
a strategy that mirrors and jumps off
the contra-dictions of speech
haphazard is the order of the day

substance is disconnected from definition
boundaries play hide and seek
in a war of words

a jungle of primal screams
is unheard of in the mind's eye

the world is at war with itself
the bones live off their own
borrowed time

the end is in sight

ASCENSCION

After Gerard Haggerty

By Ann Leary

If I wake up early, after some heavy drinking, as I did that morning, I often enjoy a wonderful tipsy hilarity that I have learned to relish while it lasts, because it's always followed by the sharp dagger plunge of a hangover that will rip away at my gut and saw at my brain and fray my nerves to within a hair's breadth of the snapping point. I was still in that loose-limbed half-life - not quite drunk, not quite sober - while climbing the cellar stairs and I recalled, with some astonished amusement, the events of the night before. I had poured myself a mug of wine (I used a mug, so that if the kids came home they might think it was coffee) and turned on the TV to discover that one of my favorite movies was on. It was Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. I really couldn't have been terribly drunk because I remember the airplane sequence - the duster plane that tried to run down Cary Grant. I remembered the movie ending. I did.

I think I had only gone down cellar once, maybe twice, to refill my mug, but that was all. I keep my wine in the cellar now. I keep track of the empties there. The movie ended and I knew that the kids would be home soon and that I might appear a little tipsy. I should have gone to bed. But that was a particularly delicious wine that I had opened and it seemed a shame to not finish the bottle. It's never as good when it's been uncorked overnight. So I made my way downstairs and was about to refill my mug, when I heard footsteps above me.

"Mom?"

Emily was home with a friend, and while I knew I wasn't drunk, I also knew I wasn't as sober as I should have been, just four months out of rehab. So I settled down in the blackness next to a box filled with old toys and I drank the wine from the bottle. It was warm down there next to the boiler, very warm, so I removed a few layers.

I could hear the girls talking. I remembered, that next morning, while dragging myself up the stairs by the handrail, that I had found it very exciting to hear their conversation without them knowing I was beneath their feet. It was thrilling. I felt like a spy or a ghost or a witch and I recalled giggling wickedly into my hand at the things they were saying - giggling wickedly into one hand, while exploring the contents of the toy box with the other. My fingers crawled over the smooth head of a doll, a nubby-coated stuffed animal, the cool metal lines of a toy airplane. The airplane's wheels, rubber and round, still spun when you pushed them, still landed in a ticklish glide in the runway of my belly. I could remember the rolling strokes of the wheels. I could. I remembered that, so honestly, how drunk could I have been?

Molly the terrier awoke me, licking my face and whining. It was pitch black, I couldn't see a thing and only knew it was Molly because of the feel of her rough coat beneath my fingers. I guess I thought I was in bed and started to doze off again but was awakened by the sensation of something tiny crawling across my hand. I sat up and knew, by the roughness of the ground beneath me, and the damp smell, and the knock of the furnace, that I was on the floor of the cellar. There was a crack of light in the air. A thin, white crack of light from the slightly opened door at the top of the stairs. I stood and staggered toward it, stepping on a doll's head and then a toy airplane, which sliced me, sliced me nice, in the soft of my foot, in the sole.

HAIKU OF BUTTERFLIES
After Hunt Slonem

By Diana Gitesha Hernandez

Third Eye Opening
Fluttering off Gold
Pink and Blackened butterflies

REVERSE METAMORPHOSIS

After Hunt Slonem

By Martha Handler

I am experiencing a metamorphosis...in reverse.

My parents provided me with strong roots and wings, which enabled me to soar to dazzling heights. I was “daddy’s little girl,” the captain of my middle school cheerleading squad, the valedictorian of my high school and a Rhodes Scholar from Princeton. I flitted around believing I could change the world; that nothing and no one could stop me.

But then I met you. And by the time I realized my wings had been clipped and that I was falling out of the sky at a staggering velocity, it was too late to change course. For a time, I wondered why my body had betrayed me. Weren’t those butterflies in my stomach, that breathtaking release of endorphins, and that undeniable pounding of my heart, proof that I was in love? That you were “the one”?

How could I have known that the symptoms associated with “falling” in love are the exact same as those involved in our fight-or-flight reaction? That my body wasn’t telling me to stay -- but to flee? That the butterfly effect would describe the chaos in my life. I had strong roots and wings and years of higher education, and still I did not know this simple truth.

And the simple truths I did learn have not held up. Very bad things can happen to good people. Help is not always just around the corner. And what you see is often not what you get. Everyone believed you were my soul mate; smart, handsome and an amazing wit. “He will provide for you and protect you,” my dad promised.

Bewitched by your charms, none of us could see the darkness that pervaded your heart and soul. Nor could we imagine your increasingly insatiable need to overpower me, to isolate me, to degrade me, to hurt me, to make me beg for my life and the lives of everyone around me, every day of my life.

For their safety, my lips remain sealed. They believe my never-ending lies and excuses because, as it turns out, I’m cunning enough to be quite convincing when it’s a matter of life and death. It’s not how I imagined I’d be using my brains but then again, none of what I endure could I have ever imagined for myself. You fooled us and now I am fooling them. It is a vicious cycle.

The only thing I know for certain is that today’s abuse will be worse than yesterdays. My confidence, my stamina, my self-preservation, my will to succeed, or even live for that matter, have eroded to the point that I no longer recognize myself. Even you have noticed these changes. You wonder why I’ve stopped fighting back. Why I’ve become numb to your threats and attacks.

Once a magnificent butterfly, you've reduced me to a tiny chrysalis encased in an increasingly hard shell, blowing in the wind, out on a limb. Now I only pray for it to be over; for my reverse metamorphosis to complete itself.

FRIZ

By Tom Christopher

A short bald man, the spitting image of Elmer Fudd, came to my mother's window when she worked as a bank teller and my father was laid up in the hospital in the valley. The man would wait patiently no matter how long the line. And he was full of stories about life in the crazy world of cartoon. Janet, always a good listener, enjoyed the tales of Bugs and Elmer and all the other characters that are now part of American cartoon history. One day Friz Freling walked into the bank and presented my mother with a framed drawing of his latest character – named 'Bugs.' The drawing was inscribed *Yours 'til I tire of carrots.*

"Watch," Freling said, "I'm going to be famous someday."

CASH MONEY/SMASH THE STATE

After Doug McQueen

By Geoffrey Nutter

Did you ever wake up wearing
the head of an animal?
You were not born in a white gown,
you did not wake fully human,
you were not wearing sackcloth
cut from silk sacks, golden ashes, the great
purple hairstreak was not unwrapped
from a lacquer box. And like them
you arise, with your animal head,
or better yet, your strange incongruous
regular head, ready to spread badinage
through el barrio of Natchez,
just one more of the bashful, hurt,
wobbly-eyed and gently sacrilegious.
So arise, get up, be still, the chrysalis
you crawl into each night, and crawl
out of each morning, resplendent, transformed,
bejeweled, transfigured, mortified, broken,
robed with tribalism, multi-colored plumes
and epilepsy, spiders, green rays
music and dollar signs, afire and still
caught in the ritual bloodletting
of the night's edifice of terror and brilliance,
pinnacled like ziggurats and icebergs.
You're a salivating eye, you're burning
in the cash-money bonfire of dirty
money, henceforth diamonds are pouring
from your tusks you're burning
in water-bug money your antennae
feeling the rippling dollar signs
are just a beaded quill-stabbed Siddhartha
so pry the mantis in its helmet
from the flower lick
the lilac water-bug Yes you should
wake up in a cheap equinoctial Dixieland
nightmare bonfire where you can crush
these dice of power with your fingertips
brother, smash the state, brother,

pulverize diamonds, eat your own tongue
swallow your precious skulls of money
My salt-encrusted brain is soaked
in brine, is lifting from the kelp
is useless, it's funny, I'll eat
my own brain, my father's brain, say,
is that giant caterpillar fucking an ice cream truck?

Beware growing bored with the old order
in times of trial, brother, Om.
Adhere. The policy, the prolix trebuchet that hurls
the fresh fruits of beheadings at your feet
Om arise, peel the bills from off
that dirty green wad for the blue and silver
scratch off lotto tickets and the Chivas Regal
in the small poison fangs of their floral
arrangement, your majesty, good friends,
see the pinnacles smoking in the sunset?

King Jaguar Lily of the famed Toltec
sunken city, who arose
in sacrificial blue Oaxacan dawn O
spread the wheatstalks on the interlocking
white stones and the ritual sperm
of the pseudo-necrocelebration
your embroidered cloaks, jewels, plumes,
your puma-headed crocodile head-gear
your narco-deco mansions two-tone
smoking velvet pinnacles and belladonna
don't worry you'll survive I'll survive
brother, arise, transformed, exquisite
and bad so feed me to the Venus flytraps
like Anasazis eating aliens the mob rules
and flattened squad cars conflagrations sunflowers
bestial underwater savings and loan
the dice are blind, brother,
so heap the chrysalis with burning cash
friend, infidel, carnivorous plants,
machines, monarch butterflies.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS ONLY A JOKE

By Anthony Haden-Guest

One of the specific pleasures of some 19th century paintings –by August Egg, for instance, and by poor mad Richard Dadd - is puzzling out just what is happening here? And what happens next? No! Surely not *that*?

Mike Cockrill's work has always thrummed with such possibilities. This piece is a picture window as much as a picture and it draws you into a scene that, as with the car-ride at the beginning of *The Shining*, is the more unsettling for the lush greenery, the sunny sky - it must be a country club, surely? – which make it a perfect spot for a prank killing. Or will it perhaps be two? The mind races ahead of itself here.

Those who are familiar with Cockrill's work will also be familiar with his protagonists: Clowns and young – not little, young – girls. These are treacherous territory for both fictioneers and pictorialisers but only weak artists allow themselves to be hamstrung by good taste and Cockrill strides on through the undergrowth, cheerily whistling *Thank Heaven for Little Girls* and *Bring on the Clowns*.

Clowns, like harlequins, pierrots and pierettes and the entire human menageries of the traveling circus, were figures of pagan poetry in Venetian masques, in paintings by Antoine Watteau and the fin de siècle of Aubrey Beardsley. They were dragged into Modern Times by Picasso, Fellini and Jean-Louis Barrault, somewhat sentimentalized by Chaplin, drowned in pools of unearned emotion by Bernard Buffet and – with a respite provided by the Beatles with *Fool on the Hill* - have descended into the huge netherworld of kitsch, as providers of the grating laugh tracks in too many B movies with fairground scenes to keep track of. These last are the clowns who populate Mike Cockrill's world with one interesting difference. His clowns may be alien, not-quite-human, but they are not scary. They are victims.

That the young girls inhabit a different reality from the clowns is made clear by the way they are pictured in that they occupy the same space but are of a different order of being. As in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, they are human, the clowns are cartoons. Does this make the clearly murderous intentions of these young girls more tolerable? Less? There is no double entendre in the way the girls are depicted, not a smidgen of flirtiness, the reverse indeed, but the situation induces a frisson. And that is what makes the painting.

The 19th century fiction of the same period as the story paintings I mention above is filled with yarns in which the young get into exotic and extreme situations from *Alice* to *Struwwelpeter* and E. Nesbit but the characters remain just that, young. We, willy-nilly, inhabit a highly charged landscape these days. Hello, Balthus! Mike Cockrill's setting is, yes, idyllic. But these young girls ... Well, they were never in Kansas, I think.

BIRTHDAY INKLING
After Dainty Dotty

By Wendy Burden

It was the week before my husband's birthday and I was at a loss over what to get him. My choices were fairly limitless, not because we were exorbitantly rich, but because we weren't in the habit of denying ourselves. Hell, it was the nineties.

Left up to the birthday boy choosing a gift would have been an elementary exercise. Twice a year, as he'd done for the six that I'd known him, Tiger hinted lavishly at his standing list of desideratum. But a Pitts S2-A stunt plane seemed a little celebratory for hitting forty-seven, and in the end I opted for something more personal.

N.B. *Personal* is also code for *inexpensive*, but don't get me wrong. I may not have had the sixty grand for the plane but I wasn't being cheap here; no one in the history of the universe ever loved a man as thoroughly as I loved my husband. And I was going to prove it by getting a tattoo.

When Tiger and I were courting (a vintage term I use more from a sense of nostalgia than reality since it hardly applied to the shenanigans of two randy middle aged divorcees), we used to hook up once a month at destinations easily accessed from our respective coasts. Five months into the adventure, evergreen commitment was sealed—in a thatched cottage in Hawaii, when Tiger arrived for our assignation with an hours-old, prison-blue profile of my hallowed and beloved English bull terrier's head on his bicep. He might as well have slid the Hope diamond onto my ring finger.

So how cute and clever a birthday present would it be to have the *body* of my dog tattooed on *my* arm?

Even though I was now living in Portland, and Oregon has some of the strictest laws in the country governing the health and welfare of people silly enough to let total strangers inject ink under their skin, I went to Seattle. It seemed so much more atmospheric.

On a mid-August morning I trolled the tattoo shops near Pikes Place Market. In contrast to the bright sunshine they were gratifyingly Goth, with barred windows and velvet-hung doorways. When I finally got the nerve to enter one I had to wait for ten minutes before anyone noticed me. There were several brightly lit, curtained-off niches from which emanated electromagnetic sounds, and I caught glimpses of Technicolor buttocks and arms and shoulders and backs.

Eventually a beringed and grommeted man appeared and asked what I wanted. His earlobes had holes in them so large they brushed his jutting collarbones. I told the guy I wanted a tattoo. He said he certainly hoped so because otherwise what would I be doing here. I explained how I wanted a one-inch rendition of the back half of my bull terrier, placed exactly so, on my upper left arm.

“And I want it in that cheap do-it-yourself kinda blue you see on convicts.”

“No head?” he said, rather sarcastically, I thought.

“No. Only the body.” I showed him a photograph I had taken of Tiger’s arm when he was asleep, explaining that it was a birthday present to show my undying love and devotion.

“It’s my version of the eternity ring. A *you complete me* kind of thing.”

Silence.

“You know, like Jerry Maguire.”

With a clattering of his eyebrow rings, Grommet Man told me I was wasting his time wanting something so microscopic you’d need the Hubble telescope to see it. He slunk back to his cubicle and twitched the curtain emphatically closed behind him.

The same scenario played itself out over the course of the day; what I wanted was universally shot down as puny and artistically inconsequential. I was despondent. I mean, whatever happened to individuality? Since when did everyone have to have flaming skulls with pythons snaking out the orbits, or hyper-realistic wolves tearing their way out of corporeal entrapment?

In the movie version this is where Dainty Dotty would have come blazing in—all six hundred pounds of her. *Give the Lady what she wants!* she’d have hollered, brandishing a brace of fully loaded hypos, straining commando belts full of ink cups criss-crossed over her massive bosom. Dotty would have had me in and out of her circus tattoo booth in no time, mission accomplished, no questions asked.

But Dotty was now tattooing in the Great Beyond.

I met up with a friend at a Capital Hill coffee shop patronized by disturbingly attractive lesbians. Over lattes we discussed my options. My tattoo-less friend wanted me to keep shopping.

“I don’t know,” I sighed. “Maybe I should just get him the stupid Baum & Mercier chronograph he wants so much. It won’t take me as long to pay off as a stunt plane.”

I suspect it was vicariously driven, but there was no way my friend was going to let me leave Seattle without inking my dermis. After another round she propelled me out the door with caffeine-fuelled determination, saying there was a place she’d heard of close by.

Lucky Devil (“*Bright and Bold, Guaranteed to Hold*”) appeared to be no better or worse than the other tattoo shops I’d visited. Autoclaves: check. Visible supply of latex gloves: check. Green industrial strength disinfectant soap: check. The place seemed clean enough. Plus, a scary looking guy encased in leather had just had a no show on his dance card. When I explained for the tenth time what I wanted he didn’t ridicule me, he just declared it too small to look like anything.

“What about the guy’s name?” he said. I shook my head and turned to leave, but my friend blocked the exit. “You are so not leaving without a tattoo,” she hissed.

So I sat in the chair and rolled up my sleeve. Bless his inky heart, my tattoo artist may have looked like a biker on meth, but he graciously suffered my nervous queries: *Are you sure those needles don’t have the AIDS virus? Are those single use*

ink cups? Those are medical grade gloves, right? Until I said, “Wait—you’re going to use computer graphics and a stencil to do this, aren’t you?” The needle hovered mid-buzz over my arm. He looked up, and in a dry ice, neo Nazi voice he spat, “Tattoo. *ARTIST.*”

With only a wad of Juicy Fruit to clamp down on, I steeled myself for the agony of battlefield amputation—only it barely hurt. And I *wanted* it to hurt, because in the most Neolithic gesture imaginable I was mutilating my body for my man.

Later that night I had dinner with friends at a trendy bistro in Seattle. I wore a tank top and used every opportunity to flash my tender new tattoo to the world—I was beside myself-thrilled with my beautifully calligraphic, if enflamed and throbbing, *Tiger*. But then an elegant older woman entered the restaurant, and all eyes turned to her. Across her bare, marble shoulders was a startlingly beautiful, black and red tribal tattoo. My little four-incher throbbed in humbled admiration.

The following evening we celebrated my husband’s birthday with friends at a restaurant. Tiger and I were the first to arrive, and while we were having drinks I showed him his present. He literally fell off his bar stool with pleasure.

That same year, Tiger died in an airplane crash.

Incomprehensible heartbreak.

He lives spiritually in my heart, physically in a martini shaker on the mantel (some of him, anyway), and permanently in blue-black ink on my arm.

ACROBATICS

After Christian Lemesle

By Tom Christopher

Run rage run run run
Charging Cubist bull
Black soulless eyes
Stumbling on your thick
Clumsy legs
Like a armless acrobat

Your cubist rage
Slicing my canvas
But here I perch
On top my hill
At last out
Of your grasp

Fly fly free
Free
Free
Free

I KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT YOU, ROCKWELL KENT

By James Balestrieri

Once upon a time I would have——
I imagine I am expected to now.

Play “Find the Irony,” that is.
Nothing to it: buff Beowulf

——Aryan Anglo-Saxon——takes on the dragon.
Delicious. Done. Titters from

beyond the lectern, beyond the grave. They’ll take it from there.
But I hear Whitman’s line running through Carl Sandburg,

a line of poets revered, reviled, parodied
for their muscular twang, American plainsong.

I know too much about you, Rockwell Kent.

Rich Westchester patrician Rockwell
Kent. You lived down the road from

where I live in Tarrytown. The woman who sold
me my house lives in your house now——

Art to real estate. There’s your real irony!
Kent, wealthy Kent,

you could not fathom the fact of the poor, the why of them, why no one
did anything, you devoted yourself to the woodcut, the jagged dark deco spaces

in the states you pulled glistening with black ink,
Ahab and white whale, workers of the world, mothers, Job,

yes, you printed books in your house down the road,
you believed these were people’s arts, designs for freedom.

I know too much about you, Rockwell Kent.

Blacklisted Kent, Rockwell Kent,
Norman Rockwell used to get

your letters in Bronxville
while you got his in Tarrytown.

Did you find them damp with HUAC steam when
you met for coffee?

Unkind crack. Left-wing McCarthyist crack. Look again.
Dragon, Beowulf, Beowulf, Dragon,

points of gray, an instant from graying out,
like the illusion of points of view, of real debate in politics.

Over coffee, you and Rockwell, it was rotten dealers' checks that didn't come,
and the brush you use to get just that softness.

I know too much about you, Rockwell Kent.

Blacklisted Kent, lover of the frozen North and South,
painter of the barren sublime, you came to rest at last in your

Adirondack Asgard where the standard bio finds you
as the armored hero against the terrors of the dragon.

Blacklisted Kent, most of your finest paintings hang in the Hermitage, in Moscow.
How far, I wonder, from John Reed's tomb?

I know too much about you, Rockwell Kent.

A father now, I've lost my taste for irony.
Seven, lover of dragons, is my son. He would root for this one.

He would hope the dragon charred that armored dolt
like a marshmallow dropped in a campfire.

He already sees himself at times as the dragon
and me as the guy with the sword and shield,

keeping him at bay,
keeping him from the wild bestiary flying

inside his imagination.
He thinks he knows me, my dragon loving son.

I think I'll head home now.
I think I'll print this out,

give it to my boy to color.
I think I'll roar

a vorpal roar at my son
and help him take it and learn

to shake the world with it,
and set a sky's worth of heroes on fire.

I know too much about you, Rockwell Kent,

to do any less.

LOOKING FOR NORMAN
After Gerard Haggerty

By Bob McGee

My father, a New York fireman beginning in '39, took a leave from his job and became a bombardier in a B-17. Thirty-six missions over Germany. Lost his navigator, Normie, standing over his shoulder, on their sixth mission. Dad was turning around to talk with him, and flak came through the window. It missed Dad. It hit Normie. Dad carried him home in his arms. Not that I knew Dad before, but I don't believe he was ever entirely the same person after that. How could he be? How could you be?

Forty years later, around the time I was moving from Brooklyn to San Francisco in 1984, accidentally on the anniversary of D-Day as it turned out, I went to meet Dad's pilot, Albert Petska, toughest man he ever knew, at his home in Salem, Oregon. Dad had always talked about Albert as I was growing up, conversations I remember over Dad buttering bread at the dinner table. He said Albert saved all of their lives many times.

I met Albert first at his country club. We ordered scotch. He called my father on the phone. Said, "McGee, your son has an inquiring mind, and I want to know which stories I can tell him."

Dad loved English hospitality and lived with a family while stationed there, the Keffords in Royston. I met Mom Kefford in '75, when she was 90, when I went over on a trip. Anyway, Dad always told a story about how, when stationed out of Bassingbourne, he and Albert were out late one night, had a lot to drink, and had missed the last train between Baldock and Royston. There was a locomotive on the track; Albert told Dad to hop on, and stole the train.

It occurred to me that if you were being sent over targets where they were shooting at you in the morning, it might not be so bad to get thrown in the brig. It may have occurred to them as well, but they got back to Royston without incident.

Albert showed me a nice revolver when we got back to his and Margo's house. I asked him if I could roll tape. He was fine with it. I asked him about the locomotive. "It was your old man that stole the locomotive," he said. I knew it couldn't be. Dad didn't like to drive.

Finally, I asked about Normie, Norman Lovingfoss. He was from South Dakota. Albert said, "I went out to see his mother after the war, went out to South Dakota. She just couldn't believe Norman was dead. Couldn't believe Norman was dead."

When I looked at the Haggerty, I thought of Dad. And Albert. And Normie, and his mother.

Postscript

Albert died a few years later. He'd had a stroke in the interim. At a point when I spoke to Margo, just to inquire about how she was doing, she asked me if I still had the tape. I told her of course, and that I would send her a copy. A few months went by. I called. She said she had been meaning to, to thank me, but I sensed it was something hard for her to talk about. "Albert had a stroke two years before he died," she said, "and he never spoke after that. I can't tell you how nice it was to hear his voice again."

In 2000, I went to the American Air Museum in Duxford. Expecting to see plenty of names on a memorial someplace, I was quite unprepared: 30,000 American airmen died defending Britain; all their names were etched. Of course, I found Normie.

Six years later, Dad gone by then, I found my way on a cloudy, shrouded, cold day going by a South Dakota veterans' cemetery on the way to Rushmore. I knew nothing of Normie's final resting place, and as I went, fulfilling a promise to myself to see every state in the Lower 48, I knew that even with this done, yet another trip is someday in the offing: a mission through the ochre shades of imagined memory, standing before another piece of granite, remembering the love of mother who couldn't believe he was gone, knowing he had his hand on my Dad's shoulder.

STRATA

After Stanford Kay

By Marilyn Johnson

We have to scrub everything when we close the beach house for the season, or the ants will strap it to their backs and walk off. They take juice glasses, place mats. One year the endtable, coffee-ringed, rum-stained. The books are hopeless, pages like napkins-- cocoa butter, red sauce, barbecue. I tried vacuuming, I tried sealing the books in plastic tubs with bungee cords. The only thing that works is the dishwasher. Load 'em up. Sani-wash. Air dry an hour or two, then pile the books flat. Yes, they lose something. Words, the occasional whole line, wash away, punctuation like black antennae running down the drain. A certain sense goes missing.... But the books are still here when we come back in spring, and the sun looks so pretty on the stacks.

10 BUTTERFLIES

After Hunt Slonem

By Diana Gitesha Hernandez

Rake in gold from earth

Brain spun from cocoon
No road maps needed here

Stop, glazed wings
Relax or spin,
Make for a carefree gin,
Of this wow elated mesh of now

Free in the still point
Press a spell sublime
Made of flower, honey and of vine
On trembling toes
They go, ascend these petulant ballerinas
And flutter all about so quietly one hardly knows

A garden story's woe of caterpillar's stolen bliss
From carcass to evolving effervescent goddesses
Groomed for the sky
Rose petal luminescence
Take to this ephemeral flight

And with them
Come I,
As one imbued in radiance

Of sadness, madness, gladness and sweet wry;
The elixir of the common human brood.
From larvae humble undertones

Graceful how these winged beauties now attempt to fly

Ascend to brilliant heights
Sputters off a golden painted sky
Ten pink and blackened butterflies

HELLO BIRDY

After Robert Motherwell

By Nick Flynn

a sign in a window / *free bird with each cage*
black letters burnt through

a white board

paint a little bird / paint its hungry cell
paint a tunnel scraped out with a spoon

paint the bird as she sings / paint each bar in
her cage

worthless the song that she sings

her body is black / her blood it is black
black beak black cage black song / wait—

shut up. listen—

riddle upon riddle, well well well / a sign
in a window / *free birdy nice cage*

hello birdy, hello wings, hello black
eye pressed to the bars / each

word a black tunnel / the bird flits behind
peck peck peck

the dirt carried out in her beak

SIAMO IN ATTESTA
After Librado Romero

By Randy Kennedy

The purest existential condition of the journalist is one of waiting. Sitting, leaning, looking, notebook in hand, camera within reach, for the expected thing to happen, for the momentous figure in question finally to arrive. Usually the waiting is done in courthouse hallways or police stations, on frigid street corners, in dirty company cars or windowless office anterooms, but this time we were lucky. We were waiting in one of those rare cities in the world that feels as if it has been designed solely for the purpose of waiting. I have no memory of why we ended up there that afternoon. Was there an artist we were supposed to meet? Or an opening we were supposed to attend? A water taxi we were supposed to catch? We had been lost, badly, as usual, and we emerged from a narrow winding passageway into one of those sun-blasted wide-open spaces in Venice whose beauty is almost shocking, the Campo dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo. We sat down at a outdoor table and ordered some bread and salami and a carafe of wine (it's impossible to write about most aspects of waiting in Italy without making it sound like a weak imitation of Hemingway.) As Lee had during the whole trip, whenever we came to rest for more than ten minutes, he pulled out the dog-eared paperback copy of Robert Henri's "The Art Spirit" that he carried with him in his camera bag. He opened it to the first right-hand page on which he had not yet drawn, page 47, and took out a pen and cranked his chair toward the lowering sun and began to sketch the campo. To the north, in the distance, stood Verrocchio's conquering equestrian bronze, a monument to the Venetian warlord Bartolomeo Colleoni (Colleoni left money in his will for this immortalization but had wanted it to be installed in a place of honor in the Piazza St. Marco, not back here, off the beaten path, where it looks as if it's trotting toward the lagoon.) Lee started with the horse and then the rider, his armored left leg extended gracefully out into the stirrup, a leg that Lee drew dangling down over a sentence in the paperback that began, "Every movement in nature ..." I took out my old Canonet rangefinder and played the photographer, taking a couple of pictures as he sat there with his glasses on the end of his nose, passing the time by taking notes the way artists take notes, by drawing, by thinking in visual form (as Milton Glaser has described it). I was always looking over his shoulder during the trip to see what he had decided to put in the book, whose pages begin and end near home, in Fort Tryon Park in Washington Heights, and in between meander from Venice to New Haven to Hell's Kitchen to London, where a woman in a polka-dotted skirt stares into a Turner study at the Tate. As you look at her you are acutely aware, as you are in so much great drawing, of the scene not drawn, the scene of Lee looking at the

woman as she looks at the Turner. I kept haranguing him to cut a few pages from the book and give them to me, but he wouldn't. He wanted to keep it intact, as a document, the document I hold now in my hands as I write this, looking at the picture he has taped in, the one I took of him in Venice, beginning the drawing that is finished on the facing page, the drawing I watched him make that afternoon.

RAT FINK

By Tom Christopher

Rat Fink was the anti-Christ to Mickey Mouse. He was smelly. Multiple lies circled his oversize head. And those bulging eyes always googling some babe (before that word became a verb). Where Mickey was cute, Rat Fink was fat, toenails unclipped and curling, with ill-formed needle sharp teeth. He stood for and did absolutely nothing at all. If he ever had any thoughts – and in retrospect we're grateful we never heard his voice – he did not speak. In fact he didn't move. The way I remember Rat Fink is that classic pose – he's standing with his hands behind his back, the long hideous tail wrapped around his hideous beautiful form. As a youngster, I, along with thousands of others just like me in the greater LA area, loved everything about him.

AND WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH LIVING IN
MANHATTAN

After Saul Steinberg

By Ben Cheever

When I was a child, the words “New Yorker” represented the magazine, but also a man or woman. He or she was a snob, a highly sexualized stranger, dressed to the nines, smoke pouring out the nose and mouth – a creature I feared, but could not – or would not – disdain.

The Magazine was also awesome in some way, although this seemed foolish at the time. David Palumbo might hit me. Did hit me. What could a magazine do to me? Certainly it wasn’t the sort of object that could be safely flushed down the toilet, but the magazine could be buried easily enough, or put out with the rubbish to burn.

And yet I knew from the way my parents acted that although inert, and apparently defenseless, this stack of slick paper had significance. The adult reaction I sensed as a dog might pick up on his master’s joy or sorrow – probably had to do with the fortunes of the stories my father submitted, and with his judgment as to that institution’s ultimate status and integrity.

This could be what is now politely called a “recovered memory” but I seem to have been made uneasy by the very sight of what was then a humor weekly. And yet I was also intrigued. The magazine represented the adult world, a place from which I was excluded. The text was tiny, illustrations few. Even the cartoons were obscure, which seemed a dirty trick. I didn’t enjoy being excluded. I hadn’t read Wordsworth yet and didn’t know that I was trailing clouds of glory from God who was my home.

Oddly the covers of The New Yorker were sometimes perfectly comprehensible even to a boy of six or five. Saul Steinberg drew 90 covers and placed 1,200 drawings in that magazine.

In March of 1954, for instance, there was a Steinberg portrait of a father cat and three kittens on the cover. I would have been five years old at the time. I am certain about this because of the Internet. The Internet is useful when you’re having recovered memories. The cat and kittens seem to be posing for a family portrait. They are line drawings, as is the pedestal that stands beside them. On top of the pedestal sits a vase with flowers in it. The flowers are in color.

The message was not as obvious as is Steinberg’s spectacular “1948 drawing” in which an artist seems to be actively drawing himself. Nor is it as well known as “View of the World from 9th Avenue.” This picture has been on posters, potholders, T-shirts and even place mats. It’s as well known as the Emanuel Leutze oil of Washington crossing the Delaware. In fact, it’s probably better known, solipsism having replaced nationalism as our culture’s signature trait.

In the Saul Steinberg picture, in case you've forgotten, or are reassured by a repetition of the familiar, the Manhattan streets loom large, while across the Hudson, there's a narrow brown strip of something called New Jersey, then a great desert with some place names, Chicago, Texas, Utah and Kansas city among them. Then the across the Pacific, you can read China, Japan and Russia.

But back to the cats. Despite the seriousness of the picture—and those are some grim and self-important cats – I felt included. I won't pretend to be any more certain of the picture's meaning than I am of the meaning of the picture here. This picture has a canon. I like canons. It's going off. I like that. I recognize the Statue of Liberty, and the pyramid with an eye, which is engraved on the dollar bill.

I don't understand, but I am amused. Same with the cats. Are the cut flowers more vital than the family? I'm not sure. Wasn't sure at five either. I do recall, or think I recall the sense that I had been let in on a secret, the sense that the picture, although drawn by an adult and for adults, was as available to a five-year-old. I too could be mystified.

I had knocked and Saul Steinberg had opened the door. I know now, or think I know, if I can trust the web, that Saul Steinberg was born in Romania in 1914. By 1940 his drawings were appearing in Life Magazine and in Harper's Bazaar. In 1941 anti-Jewish racial laws in Fascist Italy forced him to flee that country. In Santo Domingo in 1942, while awaiting a US visa he began to publish in The New Yorker.

That magazine sponsored his entry into the United States, according to Wikipedia, although Wikipedia can't be entirely trusted when it comes to The New Yorker. In that magazine's own Wikipedia entry for instance, the anonymous editors are credited with the publication of a number of great short story writers, including my father, Nabokov, and Richard Yates. Whereas I have it on good authority that that magazine spent much more time rejecting Yates than publishing him. He sent them every story he wrote. All were rejected. The New Yorker didn't publish a Richard Yates story until after that unfortunate man's death. Which doesn't make the Wikipedia entry false, but it is misleading.

Richard Yates had knocked many times and had been told that he was not a New Yorker writer. Not a New Yorker at all, I suppose. I'm not certain I ever met an actual new Yorker, either, although a lazy therapist, might think that that man and woman I dreaded were the people the magazine was written for. They may also have been my own beloved mother and father.

I still read The New Yorker with alternating admiration and dread. But I'll always be thankful to Saul Steinberg. Forced to leave Italy, he'd opened up another country to me. And—I suppose—too many other girls and boys of my age. Having been excluded by others, he made drawings that did not exclude. For the first time ever, I was allowed into the adult gallery. I've been there often since, jostling among the others, fascinated and bewildered by art, and sentimental for the childhood we were all so desperate to escape.

POETRY

After FA-Q

By Pat Hanlon

I hate poetry
and poets too.

THE MAN

After Leroy Neiman

By Tom Christopher

Takes a bold swagger to bluff
your way past Vincent,
the maitre d' at Sardi's.
Good luck. And he knows damn well
that's not your mug lampooned on the wall.

Armed with leather-covered, oversized
menus, he's got the look
that twinkles and charms
or drills a hole right
through you like fresh Drano.

Ah to be safely tucked in,
sitting at the leather and oak bar
sipping a manly beverage – Manhattan
or the Rat Pack's favorite,
Jack Daniels on the rocks.

But not you.
You won't make it.
You're better off facing
William "The Refrigerator" Perry
than Vincent on a bad night.

OVERWITH

After Toby Rosser

By B. K. Fischer

A study in overlap: sepia and cornflower blue, tremor and tumor, woman englobed. She's got her head in a bubble, or it's a cyst, encapsulated,

on its way to invasive. Over the whole field of living, the bubbles rise—a milky cluster released when she sustained her exhale through a straw,

or the suds that rose from her tub, warped by the breeze, distorting a scene from Parisian toile—two country gentlemen and a maid. A study in sepia:

imaging studies show the tumor overlaps the artery, penetrates its wall. The surgeon, sorry, extends his hand, and she sees the tremor before

he puts his hand back in his pocket. A tumor has its own blood supply, he says. What good would it do to prolong the end? The tumor is white,

rising to recruit the flesh, to tether itself. It starts as a fluid-filled sac, a membrane akin to the latex of a balloon, then the space fills in, hardens

like poured concrete as it overlaps the flesh. The surgeon says, this close to the artery we can't chip away. A study in toile: as though a single pin

could pop them all, starting with the one around her pretty head—aloof, pre-occupied, daydreaming of a drawing room with a Louis Quatorze armoire,

her portly spouse shedding his sweaty jacket while her lover looks on, a fraudulent mortgage tucked in his pocket. She shudders. Might as well

get it overwith. One interior bubbles up to cover another, the body's viscous humors clotting its openings, the items of the living counted up,

then easily occluded: a tri-corner hat, a whiggish braid, a tell-tale sword in a sheath. A surgeon whose hand shakes at the suggestion of the erotic.

She offers herself to him, to his tremulous hands. The image overlaps, the tumor recurs, over the woodgrain, over the entablature, in coffee stain

and hammered copper, in the urge, in the impulse to get it overwith
in the French countryside, to sully herself, though *overwith* is American—

Robert f-ing Frost said *overwith*, then slit the sow's throat. That whiff
of the erotic. Disease and the moisture of the boudoir. Over it all, black

blots of dye—coal-black dots—begin to metastasize, to float to the corners
where they settle and take root. She tells herself: Get over it. Get with it.

Wobbled spheres: overlapped, overlaid, overlooked, overwrought, over-
drawn, withdrawn, withstood, withheld. Not bubbles, growths, rising

inside her while she waited in the pasture for him to settle himself between
her legs, while he leaned over the living, all that living going on, wept ink.

REGINALD AND VICKI
After Reginald Marsh

By Mike Cockrill

When I was an art student I drew the same female life model that Reginald Marsh had drawn a decade before I was born. Her name was Vicki. She had beautiful skin, fine features and well-defined curves and forms any artist would love to find in the female figure. I don't think I ever spoke to her. I was a shy first year student and she was very quiet. She brought her lunch in a plastic container and ate it with chopsticks while sitting on the edge of her platform in a vivid Japanese kimono. She wore her hair in a French bun and looked so classic and timeless that it was easy to imagine Degas drawing her too. I drew her body, but she remained a total mystery to me.

Someone pointed out the sketches of her that were in a Reginald Marsh book I owned. Vicki's form and persona came through in his drawings despite the fact that Marsh seemed to be channeling every one of his subjects through Michelangelo. I couldn't tell if Reginald Marsh was hopelessly indentured to the Renaissance, or was mastering it. Even so, I always loved his watercolors, and after 30 years he strikes me as an even more unique and original artist than I had realized when I was first studying his work. The skeletal Bowery bums that populate his works, bones draped in rags, ironically inhabit the same sidewalks as voluptuous women – as exultant in their sexuality as his men are weighed down by the dark lattice of the elevated subway looming over them like gallows.

As figure painting has made a return in recent years, it's become abundantly clear just how skilled someone like Reginald Marsh is by comparison. His work is built on the foundation of a lifetime of figure drawing. I don't know where Vicki is today – the eternal artist's model – but I can imagine her taking a break between poses and quietly circling the studio in her kimono, gazing at her naked self on the forest of easels and privately assessing who can bring her form alive on paper and who can't.

REVELING IN

After Auguste Rodin

By Lindsay DiBartholomeo

Reveling in
Beauty
Open palms
Stroke skin, hair

Move! The beat
Drives spins and kicks
Pounding hearts/my heart
Against a bronzed chest

*Sensual eyes
Lock on trapped gazes
I thrive in the power
Confidence*

Soles conjure souls from the ground,
The air
Hips invite spirits to
Thrum frantically in the hum of energy

*Sweat and passion seep from my pores
Limbs twisting
Hips rotate and pivot the heads of the crowd
Throwing money at my feet in gasps and quiet exclamations*

She is Vibrant
Bare, a canvas for the music
All skin, limbs
Dipping, swinging
She beckons without using her eyes

*Bared skin barred from touch
Except the skim
Of skirts
And artful hands*

You want to

Feel how she
Feels in motion

*Skimming currents
I am the driving force behind the
Workings of the universe
Ever flowing*

You are entranced by her enchantments
Lacking magic, merely
Grace, thrown into a chord with Passion
And they harmonize

For some reason,
I imagine she smells of rosehips...

WHAT KIND OF WOMAN BEHAVES THAT WAY

After Mark Hess

By John H. Richardson

1.

What kind of woman behaves that way? These same eyes for decades now, the straightforward nose, the mouth poised between sensuality and responsibility. But when he told her what he saw, after the party, on the drive home, what did he see? Is there truth in a face? Does truth accumulate in the skin? With the seat warmer on, don't forget that. And she went into the bathroom to wash her hands, wash her face, hot water and soap. And in the unguarded moment – but also, to be honest, anticipated - the mirror captures her. That face. Those eyes. Hers.

2.

This is what they see. A woman who cares about children, who contributes time to the local museum, who holds fundraisers for the hospital and reads Anita Brookner by the stack. This is what he saw, with the heat warmer on. Poised and groomed, elegant and unpretentious, mommy by Ralph Lauren. The golden retriever, the cozy fire. And isn't there truth in it? Doesn't the life you live mold to your form? Doesn't it become an invisible skin, the real you?

3.

But she knows that isn't all of it. There's another face beneath her face. On the hot seat, submitting to inspection, she cracked the window to let in a blast of cold. I'm suffocating, she said. I'll turn down the heat, he said. And she said, sucking in the cold air, can't we just skip this part. Why be tedious? That shut him up. She was one step ahead of him, on unfamiliar ground. He would need to get his footing before proceeding. A map, a thermos, a Land Rover and a Sherpa. She knew she could lose him if she kept going, she could leap ahead, she could leave it all behind. It was in her power. And maybe that was enough, just to know she *could*.

THE LADIES

After Katsukawa Shuncho

By Nancy Palmer

Because we are beautiful.
Our gestures graceful, our colors
evocative, clothes revealing, enveloping.
One with the seasons and the skies
and the clear notes of music.
Because we calm, we heal, bring rest.
Our laughter - fluted magic.
Simplicity of manner, complexity of soul.
Better Halves. Gentler Sex.
Sakura, Sakura.
We hide what is not
always understood.
We are private. Organized.
Inside is harmony,
elegance, good.
Don't confuse restraint
with passivity.
Manners matter.
Our choreography
the very antidote to violence.
We're in you despite oceans of time
and oceans.
The heart of the matter.
Look then listen.
We are beautiful
because we are peace.

DESTRUCTION AND ELMO

After Richard Osaka

By Mackey Christopher

Sirens are wailing in the background as a slew of ambulances rushes to the scene. After an eerie silence in a lonely cold night, the crash brings life to Route 22. The light noise of cars passing by is replaced by loud screams of pain. The canary yellow sedan suddenly becomes a maroon mixture as blood pours out of the doorframe and splatters on the windshield. The pristine cars are now jumbles of metal with who know how many poor souls trapped inside. The policeman can do little to help the tragedy. The ambulances are getting closer, though are still all-too distant lights in the dark background.

Suddenly...."ME WANT COOKIE!!"

Tyler, a naïve and drooling two-year-old, drops his matchbox cars as the newest episode of Sesame Street comes on the television. In this installment, Cookie Monster is bothering Elmo about tracking down...well... cookies, while reciting the alphabet. Tyler is bored with making mayhem. Plus, his victims are safe. At least for now.

SAILOR JERRY'S JAM

By William Garvey

Stinkin' drunk again, huh, Jerry?
Helps me hang on.
What's with all the blood?
Stepped on a pop-top, cut my heel
had to cruise on back home.

Heel? Home? Right. There's blood all over your shirt and pants, sailor. Jeez, it's on your hands, even on your face. And the Shore Patrol found you out cold in the alley besides Lilly's.
Why Jerry, why do this shit again and again?

There's a woman to blame.

Yeah, you've told us before.
Got some new ink, I see.
It's a real beauty, a Mexican cutie.
How it got here...
Who is she?

I haven't a clue.

Looks a lot like that new girl, Marguerita.
And she's not going to get any older.
Somebody cut her real bad, Jerry. Real bad.
She was seen late last night down on Water Street with some john, 'bout your height and build.
Had a big patch on his right bicep.
They took her to Memorial, but it was too late. She coded. Got anything to say, Jerry?

... it could be my fault.
And your last. Book 'im, Dano. Murder.

VIEW FROM HELL

The Ghosts of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels
Discuss Ottmar Horl's Gnomes Flipping the Bird

By James P. Othmer

ADOLF HITLER'S GHOST (AHG): Hey, Joe, check out these spunky little green dudes.

JOSEPH GOEBBEL'S GHOST (JBG): They are garden gnomes, Mein Fuhrer.

AHG: Really. It's too bad that they are so little, and of an unnatural, impure color, and not, you know, white or in any way master race potential, because I must say, I like their feisty spirit.

JGG: They are inanimate, Mein Fuhrer.

AHG: Inanimate? Was...was that our doing? Were the gnomes, or for that matter any little or any green person part of...

JGG: No, Mein Fuhrer. Somehow the garden gnomes escaped our scrutiny.

AHG: Good. Because, animate or not, you have to admire the audacious hand salute. Did you know, Joey G., that when we made the whole stiff-armed Heil! the mandatory greeting back in '23, this...this flipping of the bird was the runner up. Hess was a huge fan of the middle finger salute. Makes me wonder if things would have turned out differently if we'd have run with it.

JGG: The thing about these gnomes, Mein Fuhrer, they are works of modern art. Sculpture.

AHG: Art? Did you know, Jo-Go, that I was something of an artist back in the day.

JGG: Yes, you have mentioned this once or twice in the past 88 years, Mein Fuhrer. In fact, your acrylic on canvas "Rotweilers Playing Poker With Jew" hung over my room in the bunker right up until, until I murdered my family and committed suicide. Not to imply that there was any connection between the two, Mein Fuhrer.

AHG: I've always said that in addition to being a master propagandist, Joltin' Joe Goebbels was a man of impeccable taste.

JGG: Thank you. If I may, the artist who created this is the same man who recently created quite the stir when he placed an army of 1,250 tiny gnomes raising their arms in our – your – salute, right in the center the Munich suburb of Straubing.

AHG: I *knew* that I saw something special in his work!

JGG: There was an outcry, because, as you know, anyone who is caught giving a Nazi salute in modern Germany can be subjected to a three-year jail term.

AHG: They threw 1,250 gnomes in jail?

JGG: No, Mein Fuhrer. The law applies specifically to humans. They wanted to prosecute the artist, Ottmar Horl, for displaying Nazi symbols in public.

AHG: So then, this Herr Horl, he is a hero! A born-again Nazi!

JGG: No, Mein Fuhrer. He is an artist. He claims that the gnomes were merely a provocation. A work of satire.

AHG: Satire? I don't understand.

JGG: It's kind of like irony. Do you remember our discussion about irony after we first got here and during orientation they told us that, among other things, we'd be eating gefilte fish three times a day for the rest of, for eternity?

AHG: Yes. I certainly do. But I still have no idea what irony means. Anyway, I wonder if Horl knows that this was the runner up salute back in the old Reichstag days. I wonder if he's making some kind of statement about that, because I feel as if this art, this sculpture, this small, green, smirking bird-flipping gnome, this how you say *satire*, is talking, you know, exclusively to me.

PABLO PICASSO

By Tom Christopher

I can never look at a Picasso without thinking about the song from the movie *Repo Man*.

Well some people try to pick up girls
And get called assholes
This never happened to Pablo Picasso
He could walk down your street
And girls could not resist his stare and
So Pablo Picasso was never called an asshole.

The song describes how Picasso got away with rudeness, dumping his wives, locking the citadel gates on errant children, and still he was the darling of the art world. What happened to these guys? Can an artist today still take a whiz in a fireplace like Jackson Pollock did in Peggy Guggenheim's living room? The perks of really being famous and talented. Now the transgressor would hit the talk show circuit, weeping and disavowing former friends. He (not often a she) would attend behavioral therapy classes, maybe adopt kids from Africa. The Modern Lovers sang it right in *Repo Man*. It pays to be Picasso.

THE GAME OF LIFE
After Jim Felice

By Nancy A. Ruhling

Don't think twice.
Roll the dice.

Take the chance
You may advance.

Oh, go back to go.
Throw!

One die, two dice.
Going solo, you pay the price.

That's life.
Life is death.
When your number's up, your number's up.

It was the grave that said to Ozymandias:
The paths of glory lead but to roulette table.

Two cubes are better than one.
Think about it.
The hollow holes will get you every time.
They weep with every won.

Slice 'em, dice 'em,
Cut 'em up into clever little bits.
They multiply like rabbits
With snake eyes.

So roll the dice.
Once, twice, thrice
To break the ice.

What have you got to lose?
It's only a game.

THE UNKNOWING HAND: JOHN MICHAELS AND DARREN MURRAY

By Debra Browne

I have a language. My ears work fine and I understand pretty well what people are saying to me. And I can read and write a little. But I don't speak, and my silence kept me in a kind of prison until I was seventeen.

My name is Darren Murray. I was born in Jamaica. My mother moved us to the U.S. to find a better education for me. We ended up in another Jamaica in Queens, New York, where my mother opened a restaurant and kept me close by as much as she could.

Early in my life I had been diagnosed as autistic and in Queens I was sent to a high school for special students.

When John Michaels first came to teach art at my school, he saw me hanging back in a corner of the classroom. There were kids with all kinds of disabilities, but John was most determined to connect with me. He walked right up to me and smiled in my face. I made the same smile at him. He stuck out his tongue so I did that, too.

He did all kinds of crazy moves and I gave them right back to him. John figured out that I was a great echo. Then he had the idea that changed me forever.

John put two big sheets of paper side by side on a table and set a pencil near each one. He opened a book to a picture of a man's head and sat for a while looking at it.

When he picked up his pencil, I did the same. He drew a long curving line on his paper, and in the instant his hand stopped, the pencil in my hand made the same motion on my paper. My attention was fixed on following then mimicking the way John's arm and hand moved his pencil around.

When John stopped drawing, so did I. He pinned up our papers together on a wall and stepped a few feet back, and then studied the papers just like he'd looked at the picture in the book. I could tell he was happy, and that made me happy too.

I had drawn my first portrait without even knowing. It was the opening word of my new language.

Postscript: This true story is based on interviews with John Michaels and existing documentation about his work with Darren Murray, and written as a non-fiction imagining of Darren's experience.

WRAPPED ARMCHAIR PROJECT – CHRISTO

*The quality of love and kindness that we human beings have for
what does not last. Jean-Claude, 1935-2009*

By Alex Cigale

Like you and me it asks to be comforted and touched, held and safely surrounded.
In the lineaments of its history are traces of fear and hope, pleasure and pain, love.
This beast with two arms and four legs has a straight back and also a human face.
An infant in chair years, coddled and cradled, swaddled and cloth-clad, contained.
Shaded gray it appears dangerous but dressed up in chalk or beige it seems kind.
It sports a prizefighter's swagger in the ring, a tightrope walker's indelible focus.
Resigned of any pretension to being a throne, its ambition modest: to stay at rest.

In our ode to the unification of feeling and space, we establish the proper frame.
As in physics so in psychology every action has an opposite and equal reaction.
Do not ask what is it dear monster, enantiomorph, crystal, mirror double, my soul.
No man is an island, each a part of the whole, one element in the distributed self.
Like all life capable of infinite variation a true work of art can never be exhausted.
Biology an extension of the inorganic, that the object may be resurrected as form.
When you and I play we play God and so create a thing that can then create itself.

One time at one of our exhibitions a group arrived by bus and they were all blind.
Taking off their shoes they walked around back and forth barefoot over the fabric.
“We saw your project” they said and left chatting animatedly among themselves.
Let us disturb the space, to ask ourselves to have the pleasure of being surprised.
Try to hear its muffled scream for freedom: there is no art there; it costs to wrap.
Though only an abstraction of empathy this anti-fetish is the highest of all things.
I have taken the risk, it says, let's take the risk together. All interpretation is valid.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

James Balestrieri's first play, *Scissors, Paper, Stone*, was performed in an abandoned brewery in the seaside college town of Aberystwyth, Wales. Since then, several of his short plays have been performed in workshops and festivals at, among other places, Primary Stages and Theater Studios in New York. He is an art dealer and lives with his wife and three children in Westchester County.

Deborah Batterman is the author of *Shoes Hair Nails* (Uccelli Press, 2006). A story from her debut collection was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her stories have appeared in anthologies as well as various print and online journals, and she is now at work on a novel

Debra Browne has curated, installed and juried nearly 150 art exhibitions in a fifteen-year curatorial career. She served as Exhibitions Director for the Ridgefield Guild of Artists from 2001 to 2009. Since 2001 she has been a juror and curatorial reviewer for Radius, the artist-development program run by the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in cooperation with the Ridgefield Guild.

Wendy Burden is a former illustrator, zookeeper, taxidermist, and chef/owner of a French bistro. She is a confirmed New Yorker who, to her constant surprise, lives in Portland, Oregon. Her first book, a memoir entitled *Dead End Gene Pool*, is being published by Gotham in April.

Benjamin Hale Cheever has been a newspaper reporter and an editor at *The Reader's Digest*. He edited *The Letters of John Cheever*. He is the author of four novels: *The Plagiarist*, *The Partisan*, *Famous After Death*, and *The Good Nanny*. He also published two nonfiction books: *Selling Ben Cheever* and *Strides*. Most recently, he collaborated with Tim Grajek on *The First Dog*, which is a children's book. He has taught writing at Bennington College and The New School for Social Research. He has published in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Nation*.

Mackey Christopher is a freshman at Siena College in Loudonville, NY. He is a graduate of John Jay High School.

Tom Christopher, born in Hollywood, CA, is a painter of New York City themes.

Alex Cigale's poems have recently appeared in *The Cafe*, *Colorado*, *Global City*, *Green Mountains* and *North American* reviews, *Drunken Boat*, *Hanging Loose*, *McSweeney's*, and *Zoland Poetry*. Other work can be found online at *The Adirondack Review*, *Babel Fruit*, *Big Bridge*, *The Externalist* [PDF], *nthposition*,

The Potomac Journal, *Quarter After Eight*, *The Salt River Review*, and *Synaesthetic*. His translations from the Russian can be found in *Crossing Centuries: the New Generation in Russian Poetry* and in *The Manhattan* and *St. Ann's* reviews. He was born in Chernovtsy, Ukraine and lives in New York City.

Mike Cockrill's paintings closely detail the rich transition from the world of childhood fantasy to adult awareness in a manner that is both playfully innocent and sexually charged. Born in Washington DC in 1953, Cockrill grew up in Mclean, Va. Beginning with his first exhibitions in the East Village and his first solo show at Semaphore Gallery in Soho (1985), he has been a forerunner of the current interest in nostalgic figuration. He is currently represented by Kent Gallery in Chelsea and has exhibited internationally. He works and lives with his wife in daughter in Brooklyn, New York.

Lindsay DiBartholomeo, a senior at Weston High School in Weston, CT, has been writing poetry since she was ten, and hopes to major in creative writing in college. About writing her poem, Lindsay says, "I had a lot of fun because of my dance experience. I played some music and danced around my room to get inside the head of the dancer in the painting, in addition to studying the painting itself."

B. K. Fischer is a poet, critic, and teacher. Her first poetry manuscript, *The Anatomy Archives*, was a finalist for the 2009 National Poetry Series and the 2008 and 2009 *FIELD* Prizes, and she was nominated for Best New Poets 2009. Her poems were published this year in *The Hopkins Review*, *FIELD*, *Literary Mama*, and *Westchester Magazine*, and her work has also appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Boston Review*, *Ekphrasis*, *Southwest Review*, *Western Humanities Review*, and other journals. Her second manuscript, *Mutiny Gallery*, was a finalist for the 2009 ABZ Prize. She is the author of a critical study, *Museum Mediations: Reframing Ekphrasis in Contemporary American Poetry* (Routledge, 2006). She holds an M.F.A. in poetry from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in English and American Literature from New York University. She currently teaches at the Neuberger Museum of Art and the Hudson Valley Writers' Center in Sleepy Hollow, New York, where she lives with her husband and three children.

Nick Flynn has worked as a ship's captain, an electrician, and as a caseworker with homeless adults. His most recent book is *The Ticking is the Bomb*. His previous memoir, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* (Norton, 2004), won the PEN/Martha Albrand Award, was shortlisted for France's Prix Femina, and has been translated into thirteen languages. He is also the author of two books of poetry, *Some Ether* (Graywolf, 2000), and *Blind Huber* (Graywolf, 2002), and a play, *Alice Invents a Little Game* and *Alice Always Wins* (Faber, 2008), for which he received fellowships from, among other organizations, The Guggenheim Foundation and The Library of Congress. His film credits include artistic collaborator and "field poet" on the film *Darwin's Nightmare*, which was nominated for an Academy Award for

best feature documentary in 2006. Each spring he teaches at the University of Houston, and he then spends the rest of the year in Brooklyn (and elsewhere).

William Garvey is a journalist, author and editor who has written for *The New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, *National Public Radio*, *The Discovery Channel*, and *Ridgefield Magazine*. He is an editor with *Aviation Week*, and a pilot. His occasional skin ink is by Bic, broken. He lives in Ridgefield, Conn.

Anthony Haden-Guest is a writer, reporter and cartoonist. He was born in Paris, grew up in London and now lives in London and New York. He won a New York Emmy for writing and narrating a program about the coming of Eurotrash to Manhattan. His most recent books were *True Colours: The Real Life of the Art World* (Grove Atlantic); *The Last Party: Studio 54, Disco and the Culture of the Night* (Morrow) and *The Chronicles of Now, a book of cartoons* (Allworth). He is working on a book about the current art world. *The Last Party* has just been republished and if you buy it you will make him very happy.

Martha Handler resides in South Salem, New York with her husband and four children. After many years working as an environmental consultant and writing technical papers, she has recently turned her attention to creative writing. In 2007 she won the Fiction Journey's annual award for a creative memoir piece and is presently writing a novel, which she hopes to complete in 2010.

Patrick Hanlon is chief executive officer of THINKTOPIA, in Minneapolis, MN, an idea engineering company dedicated to building communities around brands.

Diana Gitesha Hernandez, born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, is a multi-media performance artist, poet and jazz singer, who often weaves her words with music. She has been heard on WBAI, poetry venues throughout the city, as member of Barry Harris Jazz Chorus Ensemble and with her own band, Orgasmic Orchestra. Her work has been published in *Longshot*, *Aloud!*; *Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe Anthology*, *BE Magazine*, and *Sound of Water*, among other publications. She is author of 2 chapbooks: *Slingshot Luv*; *Love Poems From a Nuyorican Princess Dreaming of Rimbaud* and *Raw Lips Melao, a Nuyorican Rhapsody*, and is currently working on a new book of poems along with a CD of her poetry-jazz with pianist, John DiMartino.

Kate Knapp Johnson is the author of three books of poetry, the most recent of which, *Wind, Somewhere, and Shade*, received the Gradiva Award. She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College where she also directs the MFA Program in Poetry. She lives in Somers with her husband and children and has a private practice in psychoanalysis in Westchester County.

Marilyn Johnson's poetry has appeared in *Field*, *Big City Lit*, *Open City*, and *Chance of a Ghost: An Anthology of Ghost Poems*. She is also the author of *This*

Book Is Overdue! How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All, published this year by Harper, and *The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lucky Stiffs, and the Perverse Pleasures of Obituaries* (HarperPerennial).

Randy Kennedy covers the art world for *The New York Times*, where he has been a reporter for 15 years. Before that, he was a staff reporter for *American Lawyer* magazine. He was raised in a small farming town in West Texas and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and their two children.

Ann Lembeck Leary is the author of the memoir, *An Innocent, A Broad* (Morrow, 2004) and the novel, *Outtakes From a Marriage* (Shaye Areheart, 2008). She has also written for television and film. She is currently working on a second novel.

Geoffrey Nutter was born and raised in California. He lives in New York with his wife and children. His books of poetry are *A Summer Evening* and *Water's Leaves & Other Poems*. A third book, *Christopher Sunset*, will appear in April 2010 through Wave Books.

James P. Othmer of Mahopac is the author of the novels *The Futurist* and *Holy Water* (Doubleday, June 2010,) and the non-fiction book *ADLAND: Searching for the Meaning of Life on a Branded Planet*. The first chapter of *The Futurist* appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* and nominated for a National Magazine Award in Fiction. His work has recently appeared in *Esquire*, *Conde Nast Portfolio*, *the Boston Globe*, *the Washington Post* and the Op-ed page of *the New York Times*.

Nancy Doyle Palmer is a Washington DC-based screenwriter and features reporter for *Washingtonian Magazine* and *O, The Oprah magazine*. She has degrees from Boston University, American University and did graduate work at Yale University. She is also a frequent contributor to *The Huffington Post*.

John H. Richardson is a writer at large for *Esquire* magazine, and author of three books: *The Viper's Club*, *In the Little World*, and *My Father the Spy*. His work has been published in many other venues, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic* and *Playboy*. He lives in Katonah, and his daughters graduated from John Jay High School.

Nancy A. Ruhling has written articles on topics that range from art and antiques to real estate for more than 50 publications, including *The New York Times*. She also writes "Astoria Characters," a blog for *The Huffington Post*.

Phil Demise Smith is a self-taught artist, poet and musician. He collects, curates and represents many American and European artists. He is a well-published poet with numerous books and readings as well as a well-exhibited artist both here in the

U.S. and in Europe. He edited and published the small poetry and art magazine, *Gegenschein*, from 1971 until 1995. Since 1999 he has been teaching and creating his own unique art and poetry curriculum called *Expression Art* at P.S. 41 in Greenwich Village.

Pamela Hart is writer in residence at the Katonah Museum of Art. She teaches writing at Long Island University's graduate school of education. Her chapbook, *The End of the Body*, was published in 2006 by Toadlily Press. Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has been published in journals such as *BigCityLit.com*, *Kalliope*, *Lumina* and *The Cortland Review*.