



The Kiosk

Spring 1998

The Kiosk

Published by the English Department of Morningside College

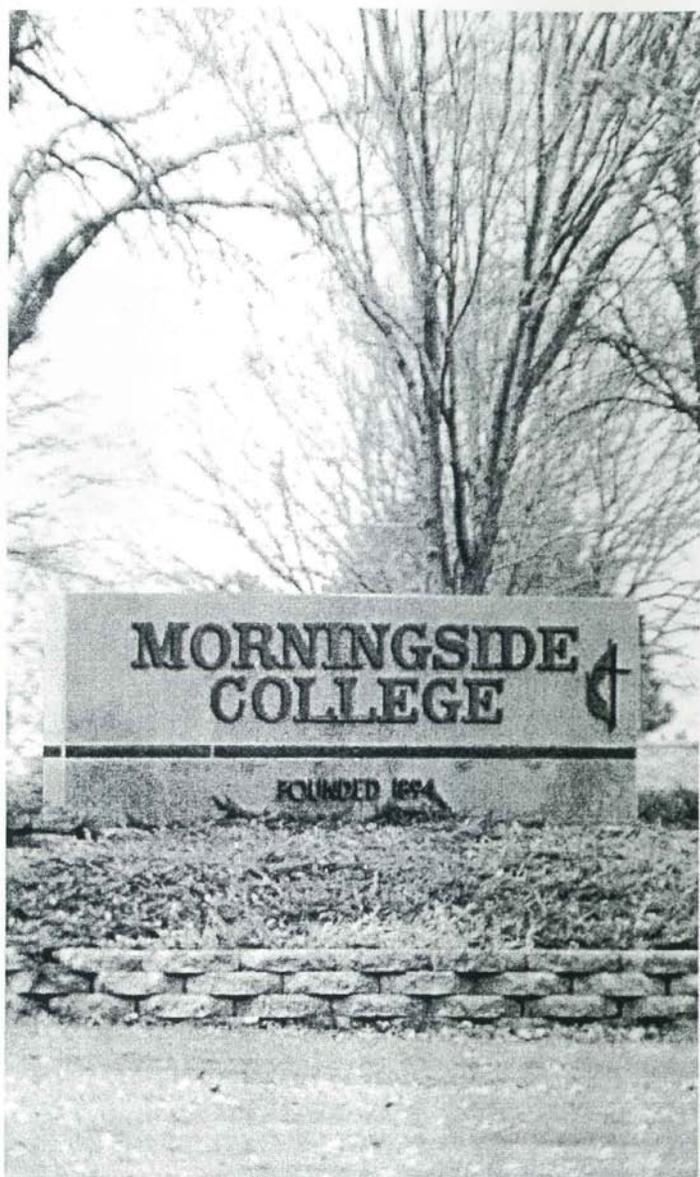
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The Knot

Published by the English Department of Monmouth College

Spring 1998





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Special Thanks

This Years's Judge, Jeanne Emmons
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Creative Writing Award Winners

First Place

"1969"

Darrel Fickbohm

Second Place

"The Ulster Cycle"

Christopher Marnach

Third Place

"Humble Sojourn"

Robby Mason

Honorable Mentions

"All the Yaks in Egypt"

Darrel Fickbohm

"The Reason My Window
Stays Open"

Darrel Fickbohm

About this Year's Judge

After receiving her PhD in English from the University of Texas at Austin, **Jeanne Emmons** moved to Sioux City, where she teaches English and writing at Briar Cliff College and is poetry editor of the Briar Cliff Review. She won the 1996 Minnesota Voice Poetry Competition for her collection of poetry, *Rootbound*, which will be published in May of 1998 by New Rivers Press. She won the *Iowa Women* poetry competition in 1991 and the *South Coast Poetry Review* poetry contest in 1993. Her poems and short stories have been published in a number of literary journals, including *Laurel Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cimarron Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Calyx*, and others.

All entries are judged blindly by editors, and no entry receives special consideration. Editors are eligible for the contest; however, they are not eligible for the prize money.

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Welcome

Welcome to *The Kiosk*! Please be our guest, grab an easy chair, sit back, and react. Yes, that's right—*react*. Some readers may frown, some may scratch their heads, some may say, "What's that?" and read some pages two or even three times. Others may smile or perhaps feel a tightening of the throat and stop to get a drink of water. Another may pause to look out a window. Different interpretations, different reactions. The authors each offer unique gifts—a little part of them, a sharing that makes them vulnerable to others. The readers each offer unique gifts—a little part of them, a sharing that accepts this vulnerability and allows it to open up new ways of perceiving the world.

Those readers who choose to read from the first page straight through the last page will sense the words gradually sifting through relationships, between people—lovers, generations, enemies—and between the human being and nature. Others may choose to read the selections in no particular order, flipping the pages and letting lines grab their attention. We hope that, either way, the synchrony, the dance of action and reaction that brings life even to written words, will be worthwhile. So, here's to us all—writers *and* readers! And here's to life and embracing it with courage! Indeed, we hope that *The Kiosk* offers a few new steps to try out in this dance we call "life."

Cathee Phillips
Editor in Chief



Don't be afraid to
REACT

Tim Orwig
Faculty/Staff

Holiday Travel

Where will we end up
in the new year,
after flying through the air
or traveling through the dark,
stopping, merging, and yielding?
We cut our ties to the daily
and strike out, journeying
to towns we grew up in,
people we left behind,
or down new routes
outside our routines.

No matter where we go,
something else travels
curled up inside us,
a longing for some
resolution of this long year,
a birth from this advent.

you move me

you move me
not the couch
but the colors
of your language

October Through September

The rug is a membrane
quietly keeping my face from the
wood dealing floor.
A dynamic factor in the buoyancy
of my soul.
Obstinately effective.

It is woven from the hot hands
of some Indian myopic
and carries with it the good,
if nearsighted intentions, loomed
by a squalorous race, seething
in the afternoon sun
Calcutta.

I come here, unable sometimes
and wordless
Dropping to the floor and . . . transport
Flying, if you will,
carpet permitting,
To where September
insects wait on me with winging songs
wandering melodies with no reason
as I lift my way through
breezeways untouched by all but my own
Peter Pan.

I am
sweet motion
in the arms of the Djin
Who, from a bottle of dark green
dyed spirit into this carpet now
arising to draw my nocturnal flight plans
into the matutinal chill.

If levitating straight
for the changing moon,
I mix my stories and
in the ecstasy of rushing air call
upon the virgin goddess
 instead of the genii
I might understandably be forgiven.

(If it happens to you,
beg out like the drunk)
Nothing is so intoxicating
as the fall night when life
All life
is soundlessly yawning
into the shortened days.

And escalating among the branches
I am rising into the turbulence of words
where my impotent pen hand
drifts over the edge and scrapes the
stories of all
that I've heard
read and taken.

India's emissary, this rug,
divine editor — has me lofting
by them.
Mixing, until F. Scott's ladies
dance with the Walrus who
embraces Beryl Markham
Inextricably tangled and woven
until nothing remains except the
airy distance of our
good human dream.

Genesis

The rasp of hands on skin,
the tingle in my toes.
The beauty of nakedness,
together.
Unknowing.

Fig leaf to fig leaf,
the apple between us.

Our hunger satisfied,
our thirst for knowledge quenched.
Curiosity completed in a single act.

A realization unfolds,
as a new world is created.

Humble Sojourn

This supple, downy blanket She casts upon herself, descending kindly over each curve and line, is not unlike the veil of a bride. Her glowing features are secreted within this sanctuary, the moonshine bathing Her wholly, soothed by the subtle nocturne of plumes making their way to the slumbering ceremony that is dormancy. Beneath this gossamer cover is the Mother that springs tears of joy at birth and holds the newborn close to Her breast, nurturing it on a path that forever begins anew from the safety of Her womb.

All the Yaks in Egypt

“So what I’ve been trying to tell you—what I have, in fact, been trying to convince everybody else, is that somebody has been climbing the building and looking in my window every night for the past two weeks.”

“Climbing the building.” Jacob stared at her, keeping disbelief out of his voice. “Why would anyone do that?”

Sarah exhaled patiently and stretched her body as she lay on the floor, arms out wide. The sweater she was wearing lifted away from her belt line, and her neck arched smoothly backward. He watched her from the bed. She was saying something.

“What?”

“I said, ‘I *think* it’s my ex-boyfriend.’” She was indignant, as if the thought should astonish Jacob as much as it astonished herself. When he didn’t speak right away, she sat up and looked directly into his eyes. He swallowed and stared at her lips which were forming words. Then there was triumphant expectation in her dark eyes.

“A pine cone?” He said it with diplomacy.

“Yes.” She nodded her head and narrowed her eyes. “He leaves it there, dipped in bacon fat or something.” She wrinkled her nose. “Birds are crowded on my window ledge by morning—standing room only. The red ones chase away the others.”

“You’ve never seen him?”

“It’s him,” she said with disgust. “He’s a scaler.”

“A what? You mean he climbs cliffs?” Jacob told himself that he wasn’t really interested. It was time to change the subject. He looked slowly around and saw for the first time that this particular room was sparse in comparison to other dorm rooms that he’d visited. There were no stuffed animals or posters of movie stars, just simple furnishings and a floor rug with some kind of deep woven design.

“Yak hair.”

Jacob turned. “What?”

“Yak hair *rug*,” she said blankly. He looked down at it. She was speaking quietly, and it looked as though she was talking to one of her legs as it flexed her toe under the lip of the rug. “My dad brought it back to me from where there are *yaks*.” She lifted the carpet and let it fall again. “He wasn’t home a lot, but he used to bring me these things.”

“Why do you think he’s doing it? Climbing, like that.”

“Well I didn’t *encourage* it or anything. He just doesn’t know how to talk to me. He never did. That’s why I stopped seeing him. It was like being in love with Davy Crockett or Tarzan. Now he’s here—on campus, yet.” She stared at the opposite wall for a moment before resuming the movements of her leg.

“You must have some idea,” Jacob said.

“I don’t want to talk about Tom.” Sarah’s voice was light, but Jacob switched tracks immediately. He had waited many days for the chance to be alone with her. Old boyfriends could stink up a moment like nothing else, and he wanted this moment to be right. There may be some strange things about her to go along with the strange rumors, but nobody could look at her and not be affected. Even other girls turned when Sarah walked by, and Jacob was enthralled.

“Your dad traveled a lot,” he shifted awkwardly.

She smiled and traced her jaw line with a fingertip. “He was an interpreter for the National Trade Commission. He speaks about seven languages and has been practically everywhere, I think.”

“And he brought you things like these from all over?” Jacob knelt on the rug beside her.

“He wasn’t home very often, and I guess he made me nervous when he was around. He knew *all* those languages and never could seem to talk to me.” Jacob watched her steadily as she spoke.

“There was an African batik that hung in our living room. It had some kind of Egyptian and some kind of mountains or pyramids in the distance. When I was a kid I thought: That’s where he went whenever he was gone. It’s where the vases came from, and the paper art with Chinese letters, the seashells and grass skirts, and papyrus with hieroglyphics on them.” Sarah paused to pet the rug near Jacob’s leg. “I thought that the yaks were captured and tamed right by the pyramids.”

Jacob said nothing and somehow couldn’t smile.

“Tom understood my dad,” she said with a shake of her hair. “They would talk together for hours after we’d come in.” She sat up on one elbow. “Tom was older than me. He worked for the Park Service. He used to do this thing where he’d take me out and show me where bears were holing up for the winter—like it was this big gift or something. Am I dense that I don’t understand what’s so damn great about yak rugs and birds and mountains?”

She was talking in a low but distressed voice, and Jacob suddenly felt useless. The gifts of men were something he didn’t think about, yet. He gave what the girls usually wanted and hadn’t yet gotten to the point

where he was giving something he treasured in the vain hope that a woman would value it also. But the implications of the silent visitor on Sarah's window ledge seemed to chill him, suddenly.

"I don't know, Sarah. I guess they thought those things were special." Jacob's fingers touched her hand which had been moving on the rug, and her body was immediately still. She spoke again.

"When my mother died, I went through this really bad time. I came sort of unhinged because we were so close. It wasn't a nice time, but when I woke up with the bad dreams, one of them was always there—Daddy during one part of the night and Tom in the other. They both looked miserable, and they weren't much help—not really." She rolled to her side and was very near to Jacob's face, but he almost didn't notice. "Needing someone isn't the same as loving someone," she said.

"Sarah, I don't think I know." And when he said it, Jacob suddenly wanted out of the room. Something was happening here that didn't involve him. He was nineteen, and in his experience wanting someone didn't have to do with knowing these things. It seemed that there were too many people in the room. He strained his eyes at the shadows in the corner.

The act of desiring was simple. It always had been, anyway—a self absorbed activity that was divorced from other things. And now in the twilight, something was different. Where did all these people come from? They came and they brought pine cones and rugs made of foreign animals, and they left their marks.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah." He thought for a moment longer. "I just need to go, tonight, I think. It seems . . . like I need to go." He glanced toward the window.

Her eyes followed his gaze. She placed a hand briefly on his chest. "I want something that I can understand," she said. "I don't understand birds on a ledge."

If he heard her, he was two or three years from comprehending it completely, so the distance made it hard to reply. Jacob squeezed her hand, and, kissing her with a tight smile, he moved to the door and into the hallway.

On the sidewalk outside her window, he looked up at the expanse of brick and glass. The climber, with his childlike offering, wouldn't come that night or any night thereafter as it turned out, and soon the memory of desire would ease for him. But for now, Jacob would defer, find his own bed, and sleep in the rare fraternal harmony of men.☞

Tim McMurrin
Alumnus

Overload

I.

A blue heron glides low over
a rain-swollen river with
fool's gold tumbling in the
cold dark rush.

II.

Rain drops press
their small, wet bodies into
shapeless sounds
on the windowpane.

III.

I slide my aged arms around your waist;
placing a hand firmly in the
small curve of your lower back,
I draw you in like breath.

(I stand overwhelmed at this
intersection of instances, heartbroken
again and again and again as
each distinct moment passes into memory)

Randy Clyde Uhl
Alumnus

Going Solo

I did not know it would hurt—
listening to my old lover
sing Alleluia.

Each movement
moving me.

My eyes never left him.
His cherry mouth
My apple-sized tears
“love and passion
pain and pleasure”

Melodies I had heard before
through the telephone lines . . .
or while night driving . . .
never placed till now.
And when the last note came
and hung in the air
weightless

in tune
I thought . . .
that was once us.

Later that night
as I slept
I dreamt of falling
then woke alone.

Stephen Coyne

Faculty

Scrambled Love

We don't subscribe
to the sex channel
but it still comes
into the house on 99
ooing and aahing,
barking, ye-es, oh
ye-es, like a dog.
And on the screen
between the crazy
diagonal lines bodies
appear dismembered
and positions glimpsed
through the electronic
tease are fantastic
possibilities one can
barely even conceive.
So why should we buy
the easy explicitness
of spread legs, humping
backs, and predictable
pokings there and there
and there, why would we,
when we get the best
for free—the hint, the hope,
the titillating treasure
of glimpses between the
lines? We grope greedily
through the distortions
looking for the familiar
and in that luscious
scramble of lust
the familiar is,
like good sex,
always a surprise.

Pitcher & Umpire

They were on the bleachers at the baseball field, making out. Granted that it wasn't the most comfortable spot, but sometimes it was the only place that they could find that was, at least, usually unoccupied.

Ronnie ran her fingers through Tyler's hair. He had such great hair. He was nibbling on her ear, a technique that Tyler had perfected and that drove her crazy with desire. They both knew that if he could keep it up long enough and do it well enough, Ronnie would relent, and they'd have to find somewhere else to go.

While Tyler worked on her ear, Ronnie's eyes, only half open, wandered to the baseball diamond below them. She smiled, remembering how, as junior high kids, they had endlessly talked about "the bases." Even now, she couldn't quite remember what first and second had been. She supposed it didn't really matter now; Ronnie had been to all four.

Her eyes rested on the pitcher's mound, and it occurred to her that was what she was—a pitcher. Girls were always the pitchers, and guys were always the batters. The guy's number one goal was to hit a home-run, but the girl ran the show. If a girl liked the guy, she could throw him some soft pitches so he was sure to get at least a hit. She also had the option of striking the guy out. He didn't even necessarily get three pitches. The girl acted as umpire, too. If a guy tried to turn a single into a double, the girl had the right to call him out.

Ronnie grinned as she thought about her new "game." She had to admit it was the ideal setup.

She closed her eyes and let Tyler massage her ear with his mouth. She sighed. There was no doubt that she loved him.

Ronnie stood up and took Tyler's hand.

"Where are we going?" he asked almost hopefully.

"You know," she said, smiling at him.

And he did. ❧

Daydreamin' Through the LSAT

O.K. I'm into this . . . this isn't gonna' be so bad. . . . Here we go.
"You will have 35 minutes to complete this section of the test. Ready,
begin."

1. 'B' sits by 'C'.

'C' is male.

Only couples sit adjacent to each other.

If 'D' is in seat two, then . . .

. . . 'B' screams with fury,

"What are you doing rubbing your leg against my 'C'?!?!"

I wish she'd shut her trap just once in this lifetime. No one really
wants

'C' anyway. I know I wouldn't wanna' snuggle up to that hairy chest
in the morning.

And who cares where 'F' and 'E' sit. I never liked 'F' anyway . . .
she wears those fire-red hair attachments and always bends over
to give my 'D' a show he'll come home thinking about.

No, 'E' is the one I feel for. 'F' is some kind of wife—she could
afford to buy him a new coat, ya' know? . . . That one he wears is
so ragged,

buttons loose, threads hanging. And she just shelled out some big
bucks

for that new fur last week.

Then there's 'A'. We really messed up handing her over to 'G'.

Always thought he was a "nice guy," but the booze finally got him . . .
kinda' the story of our lives. . . .

"Stop. Turn to the next section, make sure that you are in the right
section, ready, begin."

College Girl

She stares at him, a little
Pensive but smiling
Swollen lips bruised dark
In plum lipstick and white skin
Exposed in a sweet standing
Backdrop of the photo booth bedroom
Fakery in stuffed
Animal dormitory

Inertia, pitiless and hard
Flattens her against the
Predatory wall, sweating nerves
Fingers, rough, smearing up her back

Firm lifting
A stripping away
When she wonders if this
Is really happening, like
Passing a mirror when you're drunk

Uncaring bracing
Inexpert squirms with new passion
Shapeless in the motion
Of her own employed destiny

Heels of hands push
Fingers outspread against
A scrim of her childhood posters

Little sayings, kittens and horses
Torn images fall in
Violent and thoughtless strips

Exclaiming with her lips tight
Sealed white over drying teeth
She breathes from aridity
And something that is like fear
Of falling

Coaxing her into the last room
Of her innocence
Igniting with a breathless
Soundless exclamation from her
Round mouth and stabbed middle
Her forehead in a deep frown

He can hear the shores of her panic
Muffled, roaring from the beach house
Of his age, he falters

Carries her weak and
Sobbing form
Into a hot ball under the blue
Quilt that her grandma
Made for her by hand

Smile

Smile, don't forget to smile
I'm okay
Nothing is really wrong
Everything goes away
If I smile
Right?
Yeah, that's right
It has to be right
No one will ask
What is wrong
If I smile
So I'm going to smile
Don't really want to
If I frown
I will be feeling sorry for myself
Can't feel sorry for myself
You taught me that
With your hand
Feeling sorry for myself is wrong
You screamed
Shows others that I'm weak
I'm not a weak person
Picked myself right back up
Right?
And then I smiled
You put your hand down
I can handle everything

If I smile
You taught me so
Don't want to smile
Want you out
Want you gone
Right now
Want to curl up and cry
I can't though
Hurts so much
Have to smile
Otherwise
You'll get mad at me
Again
Damn you

Randy Clyde Uhl
Alumnus

Up in Smoke

Yes,
there were others
and when they left
they lingered like thick cologne
till i slept with the windows open.

But you hover
like smoke . . .

drawn into my sheets my hair my eyes
and i cry
mercy
mercy
but i am ordinary
so i take deep breaths
and hold you

Even now,
when i can not sleep,
i play Puccini with the windows closed
and let a cigarette burn.

Tim McMurrin
Alumnus

This Evening

a washing, relentless rain has unearthed from
the accumulated silt and sludge
a long buried affection
I once had for you

(check the facts;
water is the
universal solvent)

please, forgive my forgetfulness
and my longing to know again
the pleasant firmness of
your lips pressed to mine

Terry Feenstra

Lesson Learned Late

A graduate student, I was 22.
And full of myself, containing multitudes.
Sitting in the university snack bar with Keith.
Keith flew fighter planes
for a living and his life.
He was 42 and barred from the sky.
You pass the physical or you don't fly.
Fighter piloting is a young man's business.

Keith said, "You know, youth is pretty. It is just beautiful."
The object of his attentions a young coed.
By my standards not without merit (being female, warm and breathing).
But nothing special or catching of my eye.
Beautiful?
Not to me.

I lusted for white teeth, tan, and flowing blond hair on hourglass form.
Not for skin as taut as my own.
Not for joints that smoothly slide and muscles that flex.
Not for transparent skin suffused with glow of youth.
No! I wanted firm breasts, sleek thighs, a heart shaped face.
Defining beauty in my young man's eyes.

Now I am a recycling student.
My multitudes are diminished; not an army but a crowd.
My hair thins.

I creak and groan at end of day.
I wouldn't pass the physical.
I wouldn't get to fly.

Some of you may be prettier, by callow school boy standards.
But from an age of gathered reason,
from wisdom that grows like moss on rocks.
You are all drop dead beautiful.

Keith is 64, I hope.
Has his definition of beauty changed?
Expanded?
Become more catholic and ecumenical?

I am 44, I know.
Young men cannot accept some forms of revealed wisdom.
A pity.
Look at all they missed,
are missing.

Tim McMurrin

Alumnus

Like a Picture

while making a concerted effort to develop the long
line, I happened across a fond memory of you, brought
out from crammed, cobwebbed corners of my mind
into the glaring spotlight of recollection

a weekday morning (I called in sick) spent soothed
by a surprising uprising of predawn thundershowers,
and as I sat on the patio playing a pawn shop guitar,
I glimpsed you gliding across the kitchen,
half-lit by pale strobes of distant lightning,
half-dressed, radiant in the beauty of day

with a memory like a picture, you disarmed me of
my apathy – quite suddenly, my glass was half full

as you go, you take relentlessly, pleasantly
leaving me to my long lines
to wonder “How much can ultimately be taken from the silence?”

Michele Arduengo

Faculty

Mycoses

Sometimes I feel like an
 opportunistic fungal mycosis.
You let your defenses down once,
 and I invaded full force.
Kind of like a mycosis,
I'm very difficult to get rid of.
I'm not all that bad—
 more annoying sometimes than at others.
Right now, I'm somewhat parasitic.
 Oh, I could survive without you.
 Fungi can survive anywhere.
But you provide the nurturing
 and comfortable environment
That helps me grow best.
Slap me with some fungicide if I become too annoying.
You won't kill me,
 but I'll back off—
 for a little while.
Today our relationship is a little parasitic,
But you're a pretty good host,
And one day I'll grow up.
Then, we can be the best of symbionts.

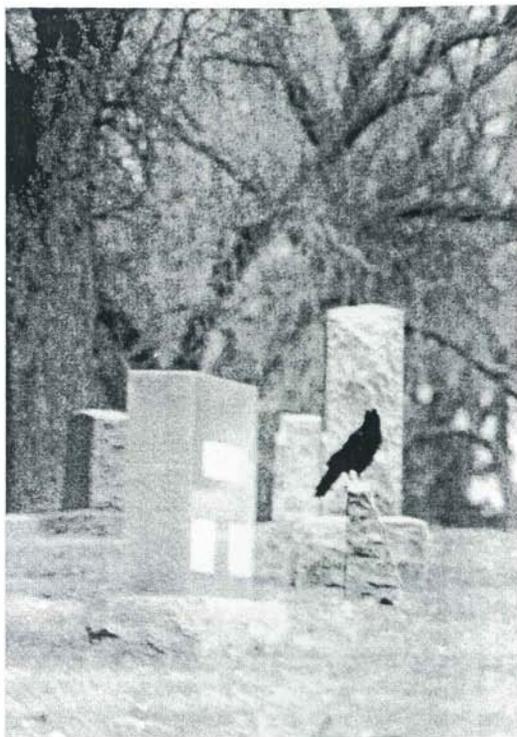
An Ode to Algebra

Algebra is Stupid. Dumb. Waste of Air and Paper.
Stop talking, Oh Please, stop talking.
Don't want to hear any more of this
Algebraic Shit.
Señor Gomez is a Fool anyway,
He smoked the Wicked Wicked
Weed.
Willy is staring at me, Again.
He thinks that I am writing about
Him.
Arrogant Bitch.
He thinks the World revolves around
Him.
He doesn't care about Señor Gomez's substance Abuse,
Or the lack of funds
For Luisa's pretty string of Pearls.
Pull your head Out
William.
See the poor World around you.
Walk in the shoes of Maria,
She who has no shoes,
For she knows the meaning of
Thou
Shalt
Not.
That's all she knows.
For $A + B$ means nothing when

Lust equals Babies,
And Love equals Primates,
Cuz Chico loves brown Monkeys,
They have Pretty, Pretty Eyes . . .
Algebra has warped my Mind.
Clocks go slow in Hell.
Read my words,
Pig.
Read them well.
Clocks go slow in Hell. . . .

Kiosk

Kind insults or savage kudos
Killer intentions only seduce kamikazes
Karma influences our starry-eyed kismet
Krypton's interstellar orbit suddenly kaput
Kneel in obligation Sir Knight
Know integrity optimistically seeks kindred
Keep insisting on succulent kippers
Keen instincts occupy sailors' kitchen
Kinky indulgences obscure sentimental kisses
King indicts orchestra's silent kazoos
Kindle impressions of sagely knowledge



REACT to Life and Death

1969

When I was five I
wore that yellow raincoat walking
Above the planet crawling
with questing worms
Under the rainfall—silvery drops
making wires of continuous
lines.
Startled by thunder
in red boots.

Five boys
drowned before the rain, all
playing on the reservoir bank.
The whole town in desperation
searched the water;
Looked along the pitiless shoreline.

And they found them there
almost together like white
swollen oysters.
Mothers tearfully gave the rest
of us cookies for our living throats.
Then the sky opened up like outrage.

Clouds salted with the
Souls of children, blasting

with thunder the bigness of it
Driving the searchers home
It didn't have to do with
them anymore.

Under the pitching breeze
of a summer storm
coming close after the tragic heat
I peered
from below the low-brow
slicker hat brim in a town
gone silent
at the figure of my sister's
hand, puffy and pink
between the gray mouth of
screen door and house.

Water she said
over and over until
it stained me forever
drops falling from her
splayed fingers.

The Ulster Cycle

Northern Ireland

"Into the ravine with you."

The three soldiers moved slowly. They knew what was to come next. Fear twisted their stomachs in knots, and despite the bitter chill of the wind, sweat gleamed on their faces. They glanced at each other, eyes wide and glassy. Then they looked at the black barrels of the revolvers trained upon them. They again met each others' eyes and, trembling, turned and made their way with deliberate lethargy to their place of execution.

Behind them was the abandoned cottage, its windows shattered, its roof only partially intact. It was where she had brought them late last night, luring them there with promises of the most carnal of delights. They had driven to this desolate location at her insistence, driven in desperate anticipation; she had been so beautiful. They followed her blindly into the cottage, all sense of trepidation lost in a flood of primal desire. The cottage door closed behind them, and for a moment she stood with her back to them, staring at the paint-bare wall as each of the soldiers undid the fastening of his belt. The moon, full and silver, shown through the gaping hole of the roof, and when she turned to face them, the moonlight flashed in her eyes and flashed on the hard metal of the gun in her hands, its barrel trained upon the heart of the nearest soldier. "Fools," she had said, a jeering smirk upon her lips. They were about to make a move for their own guns when two shadows stepped forth from the darkness, and the sounds of the safeties being released on guns aimed at their heads made the soldiers' hands freeze just inches from their own weapons. They were bound and interrogated, and when the interrogation failed to yield results, they were gagged and beaten mercilessly. They refused to betray their comrades. And now, in the bleak light of a sunless morning, they would die.

In front of them was the ravine, a long valley cut into the earth by an ancient river. Now only a small stream flowed at its bottom. The tall and leafless trees were thick in and around the ravine and black against the steel-grey sky. It was the perfect spot, hidden from the outside world. It could be weeks before their bodies were found.

The dead grass crunched beneath their feet as they made their way down the steep slope of the ravine, and the sound of it seemed to be mag-

nified a hundred times. They reached the bottom and began to cross the stream, their boots splashing icy water up onto their legs.

"That's good enough. Get to your knees."

They stopped, stood rigidly in the middle of the stream. One of the soldiers looked back at his three IRA captors. They were standing at the top of the ravine and looking down upon them. The man in the middle, tall, and black haired, seemed to be the leader of the group. It was he who had been shouting orders at them. It was his gun that was trained on them now. To the leader's right was a young man—he looked barely eighteen—with blazing red hair. He had stayed in the shadows through much of the interrogation, staring at them with cold eyes. The woman stood a distance behind her two comrades. She was devastatingly beautiful, her dark red hair flying in the wind, her figure flawless. But it was a dark beauty, a fatal beauty. She was looking down at him now, no expression on her face.

He turned from them, looking up into the sky, a light cold drizzle wetting his face. Panic, hysteria, rose up in his throat, and he opened his mouth to scream, but no sound came. No one would hear him anyway. There was no hope now.

The drizzle became a steady rain.

He looked to his companions.

"Good-bye," he whispered.

He took off running as fast as he could.

The crack of the gunshot echoed like thunder.

He fell upon the opposite shore of the stream, his lifeless eyes staring up into an apathetic sky.

"I said get to your knees. Now!"

The two remaining soldiers looked at each other, tears welling in their eyes. They slowly got down on their knees, the icy waters of the stream swirling around their legs.

"Liam?" Barry Malloy said, turning to the young man on his right. He held out the gun that he had just used to shoot the fleeing soldier.

Liam Connolly took the gun in his hands. He looked at it a moment, his eyes running over the cold grey steel, and then his eyes trailed off in the direction of the soldiers.

"It's time, Liam," Barry said.

"Remember what they did to Peter," Maeve Boland said quietly. Liam turned and met her eyes. She held his gaze for a moment, and then she looked towards the ravine and nodded. He turned from her slowly, and looked down at the soldiers prostrate in the stream. She pushed a strand

of hair from her face as she watched him climb down into the ravine.

Liam made his way to the bank where the soldiers were kneeling. The gun was clutched tightly in his hand. He was shaking, from the cold, he told himself. It was time. Time to prove his loyalty, time to take his revenge. He shouldn't have felt the things he felt, the fear, the pity, when the soldiers began to say the Our Father. He raised his gun.

"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name . . ." The soldiers whispered in quiet unison, despair shaking their voices.

Liam stared down at them, his breath quickening, his heart racing.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done . . ."

He slowly pulled back the hammer, his head spinning.

"On earth as it is in Heaven. . . ."

He tried to take aim, but his hands were shaking so badly he couldn't.

At the top of the ravine, Barry began to make his way down to Liam, but Maeve stopped him.

"He has to do this, Barry," she said. "Alone."

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses . . ."

Liam closed his eyes, forced himself to relive that night: the phone call, his mother breaking down in hysterics, his father weeping in his prison cell, his sister, staring at him, shaking her head in disbelief, and he himself watching his family fall apart, feeling rage consume him. He relived the next day, the day he went to the morgue, when the sheet was pulled back, and it was Peter, pale and cold, staring up at him with dull, lifeless eyes . . . Peter . . . his own older brother . . . dead . . . dead by a British bullet . . .

Dead by a British bullet.

"As we forgive those who trespass against us. . . ."

Liam took aim at the soldier's head and fired as a tear slipped down his cheek.

The soldier's head snapped forward. Liam watched blood slide down the soldier's neck as he fell forward, crashing face-first into the stream.

"JESUS!!!!" The remaining soldier screamed, tears streaming down his face. He crawled over to where his comrade had fallen. He took the dead soldier's head in his hands, and his hands turned scarlet.

"Oh Jesus, no." The soldier wept, cradling his fallen comrade and friend in his arms. "You can't die, Peter."

Liam stared down at the soldier, all the rage he had built up draining from him. He took a step back. The world around him started to spin.

"Jesus, Peter, no," the soldier whispered. He looked up at Liam, stared right into eyes. Liam watched as the hope died, as life died in the

soldier's eyes. The soldier stood and spread his arms wide. He whispered in a cold, emotionless voice, "Do it."

Liam looked at him, drained completely of emotion, numb, as resigned to his fate as the soldier was.

He raised his gun once more.

The soldier raised his head, looked towards the churning clouds and the rain falling down, and he closed his eyes. . . .

Liam pulled back the hammer.

"And lead us not into temptation," the soldier whispered. "But deliver us from Evil."

Liam pulled the trigger.

He watched the soldier fall, watched the water splash around the soldier's body, watched the water turn red with his blood.

The gun fell from his hand.

Maeve looked at Barry for a moment, then turned and walked towards the car hidden behind the cottage.

Barry made his way down the ravine and stood beside Liam. Liam was staring straight ahead, his face pale. Barry stooped to pick up the gun. Then he put a hand on Liam's shoulder.

"Are you going to be all right?" Barry asked softly.

Liam nodded slowly, closing his eyes.

"I know what you're feeling," Barry said, looking down at the bodies of the soldiers. "We've all been where you are. But we've got to be going now, Liam. Quickly."

Barry put his arm around Liam's shoulder, and they made their way up the ravine to the car where Maeve waited, never once looking back.☞

Diamond Society

Far from a paradoxical paradise
intolerable into the extreme
enter the mile land of pure sacrifice
run endlessly beyond the mundane mean

Encounter in the richest candid heart
the plenty minerals beneath God's boot
the man's sanity locked away at start
by the evil society that shoots

Picture river waters that carry fear
hunt morsels of flies in your glass jar
rub your blue eyes swelled with black tears
hear American cries in lands afar

Sometimes I wish we all were butterflies
that float around in the diamond star skies.

Robby Mason

15 November 1996

Just sit right there as I sit right here, letting words of Enya coddle my ear. Carry-out in my mouth and a tale from the west, plus a bit south, desert at its best.

'Twas three weeks hence when to California we went, a place where the government's money was busily being spent. Ammo, pyro, barracks, and sand. . . oh what a terrible waste of the land! The site was Ft. Irwin and its place was in the Mojave, "Hotel California" it might have been, serving strange chow and coffee. The slop wasn't grand, but rib-sticking for sure, 99 percent fat calories from the Uncle Sam du jour.

To get there we boarded at Dulles I.A. and flew on metal wings to the fabled L.A. A megacity in size and without proportion, I didn't realize we were so close to the ocean. From the airport we rode in busses, their black tires spinning, and from soldiers' mouths a noise was a dinning. Their bellies had tightened and required more food, for United Airline's food had been no good. So a stop was in order, perhaps for some pie? A grunt's appetite can be hard to satisfy! Busses re-boarded and ready to go, strong measure was taken to get some nod don't you know. In three hours our fate was sealed, to W.W. II barracks our chariots had wheeled. Unloading duffels, parcels, and rucks, it seems the busses were also cargo trucks. And the chilled, windy night, its weight well upon us, put our heads down to cots with little or no fuss.

Before the dawn the lot of us awoke, some early to shave, others to piss and to smoke. Eyes were scrunched tight from the incandescent light, one more hour and we saw really bright! It took us a few to figure out this world, where a flag of jaundiced dust had certainly unfurled. A Joshua tree appearing stark outside my window, did not twitch one saber in the 40 m.p.h. windblow. This place we knew would be but the hammer: it would pound us in an unceremonious manner. Equipment was issued and accounts were taken, we clothed ourselves for the fanfare of break-in. A psychological pounding from the incessant blowing, for all we cared it could have been snowing.

The first four days without a doubt, were meant to make us blow our brains out. Those who didn't still wouldn't be spared, for the Desert's sense of humor is deeply impaired.

After the missions began, we helicoptered, trucked, we walked, and we ran. With ninety pounds to haul, each pebble became a wall. Muscles grew sore, knees were scraped and twisted, this is some of the hell I'd face if I ever reenlisted. Needless to say reenlist I will never: this little army exercise was quite the endeavor. For two more weeks in the rocks and the sand, we came to know every inch of the land. Its beauty is veiled from most people's eyes, but really it's not a land to despise. The Milky Way sparkles, the coyotes call clever, azure skies rain rarely, the night stars shine forever. Tortoises creep, as do snakes, scorpions, and spiders, and the peaks leap great heights like the heart with its fires. These things I pondered when the times allowed thinking, they were the finest brews for my soul to be drinking.

When the missions had ended, there was again cause to smile, for many the dreams of return had been there all the while. There was time to rest and some had money to less, some even went for a taste of fabled Las Vegas. Others lay sleeping, their snores rang approving, and as for me . . . my feet required proving. There were peaks and a ridge situated to the north, so from our barracks I sallied forth. The journey was warm and the ground turned steep, into my eyes the sunblock did creep. Its sting was annoying but merely a tear, and before I knew it the summits were near. Agape and in awe I looked out anew, to the valleys and ridges that accorded my view. I had to return to the camp down below, for not wise is it to remain in intense ultraviolet glow.

My mind and my body together as orphans, were wont to bask in beta-endorphins. It was close now to the time of returning, and grand thing for me that my legs weren't a burning. Soon we'd be back and safe in Virginia, some also in Maryland, but I'm here to tell ya' . . . so long as we left, it made little difference, anyplace but there to make some more footprints!

And so the morn came, Thursday at 1 am, so that we could return to Ft. Myer, the place we called "home," again. Two hours for loading, our bags already packed, this time there was a semi where our gear could be stacked. We stood waiting like coyotes, in groups, yes, in packs, how badly we wanted to make serious tracks. By 3 am we were out on the road, with thoughts of homecoming lightening the load. Was nearly eight when we arrived at LAX, it took some doing but we got the cramps out of our necks. 11 came next with our 757s boarding, the gents looked like a mass of Genghis Khan's great hoarding. In flight was a movie, a "Phenomenon" of sorts, and soon the majority would be watching televised sports.

15 November 1996

Destination: Dulles, we anxiously awaited, the 7 o'clock ETA on our minds had been slated. Thus with the landing you could feel the relief, didn't matter what was your religion or belief. That night would end the deployment, my last if all turns out well, thank goodness we're back, being alive sure is swell!!!☞

The Park

Following the cracks and grooves in the park sidewalk, I glance about this secret world of play and see my life in front of my eyes. Militant dandies are growing through the dark cracks below me and rebellious angels are flying above me in the blue metallic sky. I can faintly hear the engines humming down the street along side the park and the crying babies being pushed by welfare mothers in old strollers behind me. Genteel bums are sleeping on park benches with newspapers flipping pages over their worn-out faces as the wind comes through. The smell of cigarette smoke and booze plugs my nose when the gushes of wind flow by me. I am walking towards the light of all human existence and reason, but this circus of guilt around me will not let me proceed to the heavens. Then a bird song from a leafless tree in the park lifts me up and carries me into the light.



REACT

**to Life and
Nature**

Carole Johnston

Faculty

Latin Haiku

Ignis in caelo
veni nunc, tange terram
Dic, fac aestatem.

Translation:

Fire in the sky
Come now, touch the land
Speak, make summer.

Robby Mason

n-koom bird

near are the storm clouds
cattails offer their bare backs
cold winter burden

Michele Arduengo

Faculty

"If you are caught in a flat, open spot and feel your
hair about to stand on end or your skin begin to tingle,
lightning may be about to strike you."

p. 21 of the 1996 U.S. West Sioux City phone book

Squall Line

The dew point approaches
the heat of the day,
And the oppressive wet blanket air
begins to unravel—
forming cottony tufts of cloud.

They signal to each other in
a language of lights,
And coming together,
They arrange themselves into
towering structures of moisture.

Danger girds itself in terrible beauty
as anvil tops proclaim the strength
of the cumulonimbus

Outstretched hands of electricity
greet each other—
Fissures tearing across
the purple-red twilight.

They announce their presence
with mighty roars and deafening cracks
As they mark their territory with
singularly twisted fingers
reaching earthward.

Nature owns this land.

In Time

Brown mother spider
plays her web softly, gently,
and the wasp dances.

The Reason My Window Stays Open

It stands evicted
the book from my shelf alone
beginning its sad decline
to the life of the forgotten
It props my window, a sad testament
to sashweights and
untethered from its beautiful
dreamworld
into the slavery of imbecilic patience

How many times had its author
hoped it to be timeless?
Falling to waste
now in the indifferent wind
of another autumn

Name fading from the jacket weave
and showing the rough cut
end pages all stopped with dust
A subtle reclamation
But the timbre of its begging
went from full-voiced, to the diaphragm
whisper of a random and pathetic ghost

Nothing is alive to me in there
No story comes real in this lost work
not the tightness of skin over her
not the breaking of waves lost in
not the carols of beasts entwining
not the movement of lovers or scent of
Jungles
Not the
Or the

What sound will my own reeking tome
make when exhumed from the
dead skin cells and topsoil and bat leavings?
It makes its sudden appearance one day: a book
having held out
somehow carried like Christ
to resurrection
Kept its words intact, through force
of will as anemics guard their
traitorous blood

Will even the soberest of rummagers
someday open to
scan the typeface and reclaim my
memory, some, from where it lies?
Blood and stomach dried together
frail as burial gauze

Will this book call the ghost—
and hopefully, it attest, “i did this”

If it did
would it be enough to pour water
over my desiccated limbs?
To bring the approbation of a virgin’s lips
like opening a blouse on a close sweaty night
when life is unmistakable

What makes our fertile spirits brace
eternal under these abysmal skies?
I’d post my bone’s
last ransom to see through this
cloudy glass and know





ge will we end up in the new year, near are the storm clouds Ignis in enclō
nunc, tange terram Dic, fac astatem, you move me not the couch
et. The rug is a membrane Following the cracks and grooves in the park
walk, I glance The rasp of hands on skin. This supple, downy blanket She
casts upon herself. "So what I've been trying to tell you—what I have, in fact,
been trying to convince everybody else. Just sit right there as I sit right here,
letting words of Enya coddle my ear. Far from a paradoxical paradise A blue
heron glides low over a rain-swollen river I did not know it would hurt—listening
to my old lover sing Alleluia. Northern Ireland "Into the ravine with you."
React. We don't subscribe to the sex channel They were on the bleachers at
the baseball field, making out. Granted that it wasn't the most comfortable spot
When I was five I wore that yellow raincoat walking O.K. I'm into this... this isn't
gonna be so bad... She stares at him, a little Penélope but smiling React. Kind
insults or savage kudos Killers, intentions only seduce kamikazes Smile, don't
forget to smile I'm okay Nothing is really wrong Sometimes I feel like an
opportunistic fungal mycelium React Algebra is Stupid. Dumb. Waste of Air
and Paper, while making a concerted effort to develop the long line. I
happened across a fond memory of you Yes, there were others and when they
left a washing, relentless rain had unearthed from the accumulated silt
a graduate student, I was 22. And full of myself, containing multitudes. React.
"How are caught in a raft, open your mind but your Rear. Brown mother
fucker plays It stands evicted the book from my shelf alone beginning its
decline to the life of the forgotten React Where will we end up in the new
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