

# INSCAPE



2005

# **INSCAPE**

## **2005**

**A LITERARY MAGAZINE**

**PASADENA CITY COLLEGE**  
**PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**

# Inscape 2005

## A Literary Magazine

Volume 60  
formerly *Pipes of Pan*,  
Volumes 1-29

Editors  
Ku'uipo Aki-Siler  
Joshua Aldrete  
Tyler Byrne  
Scherrie Lemon  
Tina Vaden  
David Yenoki

Pasadena City College students serve as *Inscape* editor each fall. The editors review submissions during the first 10 weeks of the semester; the magazine is then published the following spring. All PCC students—full or part-time, regardless of major or field of interest—are invited to submit their creative writing and art to *Inscape*. Submission guidelines and information regarding *Inscape* editorial positions are available in the English Division office in C245.

Cover art: Joshua Aldrete

Faculty advisor: Christopher McCabe

Copyright 2005 by INSCAPE, English Division,  
Pasadena City College, Pasadena, California.  
All rights revert to author upon publication.

## Table of Contents

<b>Poet of the Year:</b> Shihan . . . . .	4
<b>Short Stories</b>	
William Daniels ~ <i>Silver Snakes</i> ~ LITERARY PRIZE . . . . .	7
Ku'uipo Aki-Siler ~ <i>Closing Time</i> . . . . .	14
Jerry Chuang ~ <i>Records</i> . . . . .	17
<b>Poetry</b>	
Mary Lau Valle ~ <i>I Am My Father's Daughter</i> ~ LITERARY PRIZE . .	23
~ <i>Abuela Maclovio</i> . . . . .	25
~ <i>Antonia</i> . . . . .	26
~ <i>Lau Man Choy</i> . . . . .	27
~ <i>Lydia</i> . . . . .	28
Michael Ayala ~ <i>Pantoum for a Girl from High School</i> . . . . .	29
Edward Chong ~ <i>Brown Sugar</i> . . . . .	31
Cheryl Foreman ~ <i>A Scene</i> . . . . .	32
Christian Locatell ~ <i>Writer's Block</i> . . . . .	33
Simon Webster ~ <i>Pop Art</i> . . . . .	34
Carl White ~ <i>Decision</i> . . . . .	35
<b>What Drives LA? A Portfolio</b>	
Ernest Gonzalez ~ <i>Defining Los Angeles</i> [essay] . . . . .	38
Eva Brune ~ <i>Riding in Cars with Strangers</i> [short story] . . . . .	41
Carl White ~ <i>My Station</i> [poem] . . . . .	44
Carlos Lemus ~ <i>Good Looking Out?</i> [essay] . . . . .	45
Katy Didier ~ <i>Hollywood and Vines</i> [poem] . . . . .	51
Jamie Weber ~ <i>Document</i> [essay] . . . . .	52
<b>Essays</b>	
R. Marie Jennings ~ <i>Fears</i> ~ LITERARY PRIZE . . . . .	56
Megan Bentzel ~ <i>Inside the Snakepit</i> . . . . .	58
William Daniels ~ <i>Picking Fruit</i> . . . . .	61
Priane Lane ~ <i>Steve's Not Home</i> . . . . .	65
Angela McNamee ~ <i>What Did You Call Me?</i> . . . . .	67
Erin Nicole Mellinger ~ <i>Didn't Your Mother Teach You Anything?</i> . . .	70
<b>Contributors</b> . . . . .	73
<b>Acknowledgments</b> . . . . .	79

## POET OF THE YEAR: Shihan

Shihan began his writing career in 1989 when he received a full scholarship to the Williston North Hampton School in Massachusetts for creative writing. He is a member of the 2004 National Poetry Slam Championship Team, he has been featured in all four seasons of Russell Simmons presents Def Poetry, and he also serves as Talent Coordinator for the show. He has even performed at Pasadena City College during a Cipher, presented by the school's Black Student Alliance club. Shihan co-hosts Da Poetry Lounge, the nation's largest open mic, in Hollywood and he is currently touring as a cast member in the Def Poetry Jam 3.0 Tour in the U.S. and abroad.

For more information about Shihan, visit him on the web at:  
[www.shihanthepoet.com](http://www.shihanthepoet.com)

### Wings by Shihan

I've presented my past to my present future just to prove that I've lived for something. She should have tasted the truth on the tip of my tongue when we kissed but the saliva we swapped she spit right back in my face. Our problems are almost big enough to be something small but we like to make mountains that waste away out of mole hills that amount to nothing while the irreparable water damage done by our combined tears erodes the vast landscapes that should have been our future.

Tell me why (why) must we always cry (cry) before we talk things out I swear I never realized how hard I strive to do less— this big man loves to take baby steps.

And I know I could be something but I wish I knew I should be something but my apathetic aspirations leave my dreams unattended, so now they slide further back into my subconscious and I have all the answers to the 'whys' you ask but I don't wish to tell you right now.

And sometimes I laugh at the stubbornness I possess, but I don't smile though I used to. In fact my smile is always upside down so I

walk on my hands and since most don't pay attention to the devils in my details to them my smile seems right side up. And my, my feet are walking on air so to them my optimistic outlook seems ever so present, but no one knows the pain my hands have seen. See, my mother tells me I have a gift when it comes to this writing stuff.

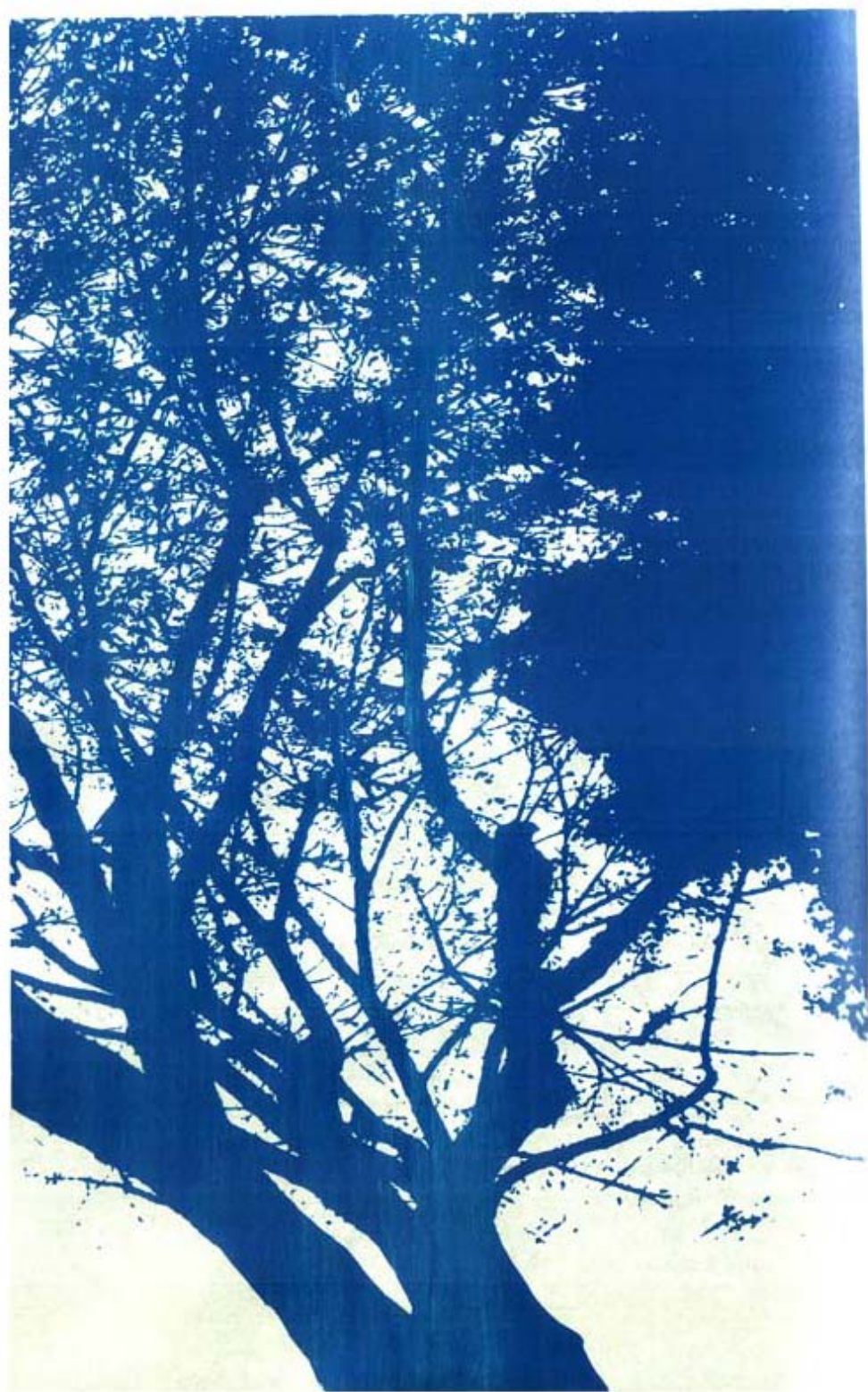
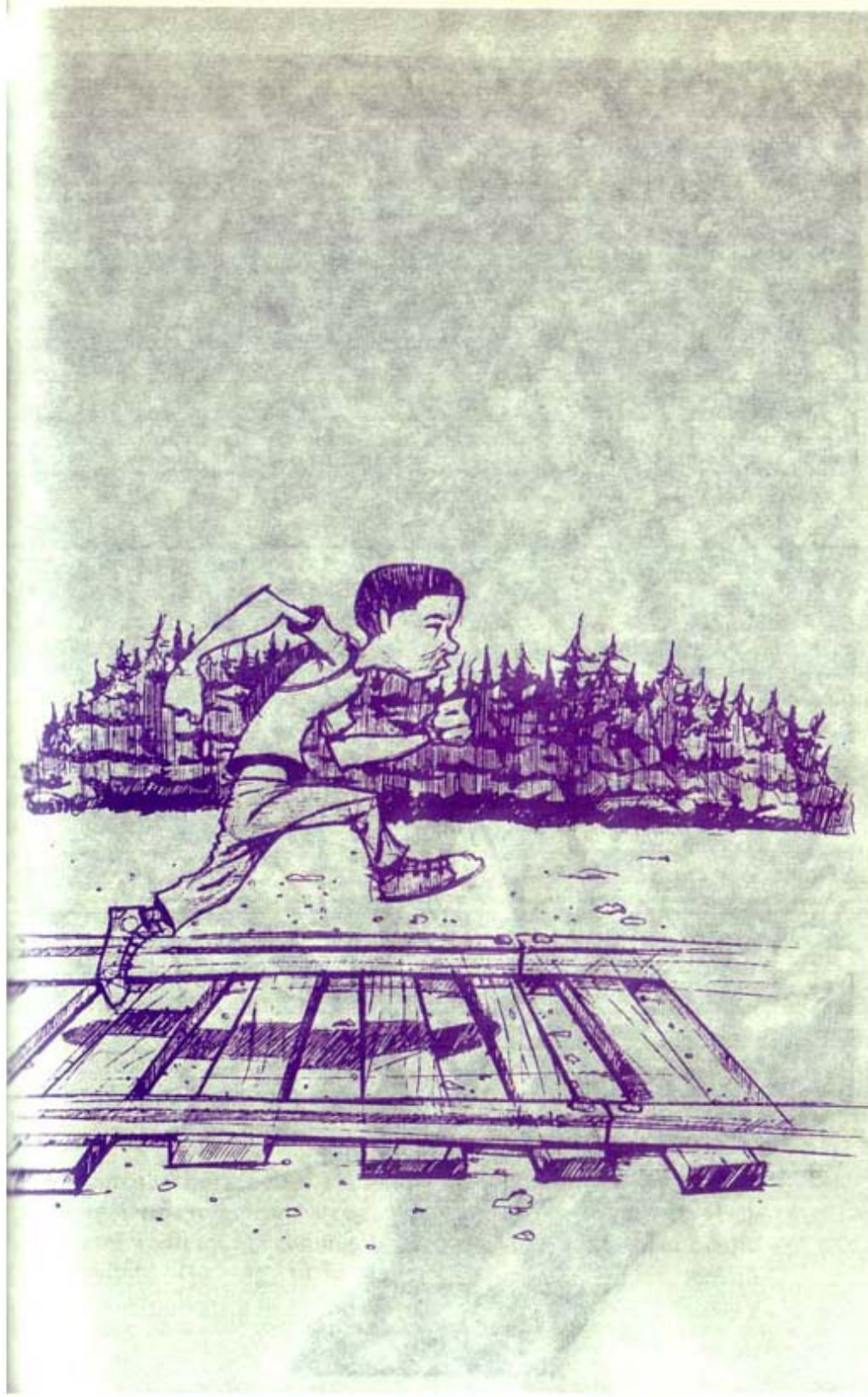
I'm left handed so I guess I write words with the wrong hand sending the right message to the wrong people and I swear I will talk myself to death if I don't find salvation or at least two good ears that will hear my problems. And I have this fear that I'll die in my sleep and I'll live in my dreams and I'll have nothing left to fall back on so I will land on them hoping they'll break my fall. Instead I store their eyes, but I just leave them there with my heart, my pride, my promises and anything else I've left broken.

Forgive me Lord, but I came to the realization early in life that I didn't need religion to make me feel any worse about myself. Don't get me wrong I am thankful, I'm thankful for being blessed with a father whose conscience was comfortable with violence and a mother who decided to spread her wings and fly herself into the armed forces before her first and only child could turn six.

And I am lost, and I am searching for guidance, and I do pray. I pray that my kids will be more confident in who they are and not what they have than I was and I pray for a new heart with understanding, cause my heart does not wear a watch and has no concept of time and my recovery time is based on understanding but I still don't understand.

And I pray that you fill these generation gaps with more understanding cause I see these young generations who'd rather be disssing pyramids while praising projects and I tell them I would sacrifice the I in me to get the slave out of you but they don't hear me and I'm running out of time but I live in a time obsessed with living in other times so no one really knows what time it is.

Now my shoulder blades are starting to poke out the backs of my t-shirts, it looks a lot like I'm growing wings but really I'm struggling to carry the weight of these words, and way too much, my words weigh too much so I hope I've said enough for you and if I have, well how much better would this poem be if I got mad right now and how



much more would this poem affect you if I got sad right now and started to cry?  
 Or better yet would you still cry if I borrowed your eyes?  
 Would you still dream if no one inspired you?  
 (would you?)  
 I ask you these questions, because I love you.  
 I love You.

## SHORT STORIES

### WILLIAM DANIELS

*Literary Prize Winner • Short Story*

#### Silver Snakes

I got my report card back today. It was bad. So bad I got retained. So bad I ran away. It was during recess, right after Ms. Whitely's class. Ms. Whitley, my third grade teacher. I got her for homeroom, too. I don't like Ms. Whitely 'cause she smell funny, smoking them cigarettes all the time. I can smell her breath when she lean over me, marking up my paper, telling me "i before e except after c." She thinks I'm stupid. Just like the rest. Ms. Whitely sent a note home to my momma with my last report card. I got three F's, 2 D's, and a C. My momma read it. She called me stupid and started shaking me hard. She yanked the ironing cord out of the wall and started beating me with it. I blacked out when all the blood came.

All I remember momma saying was, if I didn't do better next time she'd kill me. Kill me dead. Deader than a doorknob. I was scared. Real scared. 'Cause I know she meant all of what she said. I snuck out the front gate, past where old man Gibbs was sitting. He was leaning back on the fence, with his little stop sign in his hand, asleep. I walked right past him. I could hear him snoring. I could even hear the snot rattling in his throat.

Then I ran over across the street, past Kearney funeral home, over where they buried Pa Pa. I didn't know where I was going. All I knew was I could never go home—At least not alive.

\*\*\*

I kept running down the street, then through a patch of golden grass, until I come to the silver snakes and the candy canes. That's what I liked to call them. Sometimes I dream about them. I like

---

*I walk on the silver  
snakes every day...*

---

watching them candy canes go up and down, “ring-a-ling-ga-ling.” One time, I licked one of them, just to see if it was sweet, even though I knew it wasn’t. I got a splinter in my tongue.

I ran up under the candy canes, up the hill, all the way to the top where the silver snakes was. I walk on the silver snakes every day when I come home from school. I try to balance walking on them like them men be doing in the circus. One time, I almost walked all the way home without falling off, and then Bubba started chasing me, throwing gravel rocks. That’s how I got this scar on my head. Right up here. He can never catch me, though. Because I’m too fast. I win field day every year. Nobody can catch me in the fifty-yard dash. Not Chucky, not Jimmy, not Kenny, not Bubba, not nobody...

Sometimes, at night, when I hear my momma crying back in her room, I sneak out my window and go up to the silver snakes. I don’t like to hear my momma cry. It makes me cry. She been crying a lot since we lost Pa Pa’s house. We stay in rainbow park now. That’s where the people who ain’t got nothing live. I only like it ‘cause it’s close to the silver snakes. At night, I like walking on the silver snakes. That’s when they still. It’s almost like they sleeping. But not really. Like me sometimes.

When I come up here, I feel good. It’s cool up here. I can always hear the frogs and the crickets fighting. Sometimes I lay down in between them silver snakes and look up to stars and heaven, where Pa Pa is. Pa Pa used to work on the railroad when he was young. I even saw the pictures. He wasn’t bald-headed then and he still had teeth. Real white teeth. I miss him. I miss him a whole lot.

I remember when he died. I remember how little he got and how his eyes was always yellow and his skin could tear easy, like tissue paper. I tried to be real careful when I cleaned him off. He was my Pa Pa no matter how small he got. When he died, my brain stopped working. Almost like somebody took a knife and cut it out, but it was still in my head—somewhere. After that, my math teacher said I was slow. Slow learning disability; whatever that means. I guess she never seen me run at field day. Sometimes, after school, I race the train down the silver snakes. I can’t beat it yet. But someday. Someday, when I’m a big boy, I’m gonna. And when I do, I hope they give me one of the nice looking red, white, and blue ribbons. Or a shiny new

medallion. I like medallions, but we almost never get those. And when I win, I’m gonna take that medal and go to where Pa Pa lay buried and I’m gonna give it to him. He gonna be so proud of me. Real proud. Too bad we don’t get flowers on field day.

\*\*\*

I stopped and smelled the air. It was chinaberry season. You could smell the blossoms everywhere. That smell was so sweet, almost like honey, but not really. I could smell it all day long and not get tired. But when I kept on walking, I smelled something else. It was rank. Real rank. So rank I just held my nose. When I got up close, I couldn’t tell what it was. It could’ve been a cat, but it was more like a possum. Possums look like big old rats.

One time, me and Pa Pa went driving at night. That’s when I see my first one. I still can remember his eyes. Sneaky old eyes. I watched them turn red. Real red when the lights hit them. We kept on going, right on past him.

That day, I started to get tired. I sat down on the silver snakes, looking down on the telephone wires and Coca-Cola Lake. I can see real far from up here. I can

---

*They only sizzle like  
that when a train coming.*

---

see past the lake to the orange groves. They just go on and on. Green trees everywhere looking like braided hair. If I look real hard, I can see our house. Our old house. I know it’s our old house ‘cause it look like the sun, with pink rings out in front. I can even see my school bus going under the bridge. It’s a Blue Bird. School must be out.

Sometimes I wish I could blow it up and kill everybody on it. All except for Cindy, but especially Bubba. I hate Bubba, but Cindy...she my girlfriend.

\*\*\*

When the bus passed, I was looking for Cindy. Just when the snakes started to hiss and sizzle. Sizzling like bacon. They only sizzle like that when a train coming. I looked down the tracks but I didn’t see nothing. Nothing but haze. I started walking real fast though,

‘cause I knew it be coming soon. I ran to the side of the hill and looked over the edge. Jimmy jumped off right here one time and broke his leg. I remember seeing his bone sticking out. He couldn’t play the whole summer. He just sat up in the house watching the stories with his momma. They say his momma a “whorehopper,” but I ain’t never seen her do it. I didn’t want to break my legs ‘cause I would miss field day. And right then, the silver snakes started shaking hard and fast like they was mad. Like my momma bed when Mr. Charlie comes over. That’s when I knew the train was close. Real close.

I saw it come around the corner. It was coming fast. Faster than any other time. I could always outrun the grey, slow ones but this one—this one was fast with red and blue lines all along the side. Like the kind that killed Mojo, with his drunk self. So I ran. I didn’t even look back. I just ran in between the silver snakes. All the way past Leroy store. Momma say that’s where all the drunks hang out. Dope addicts, too. And that if I didn’t get my lesson, that’s where I was gonna end up. Right there with all them “wine-o’s” and “wine heads” and “whoremongers.” I like dope addicts, though. Better than wine-o’s. Wine-o’s want to hug you and breathe they stankin’ breath all in your face. But drug addicts, they make you laugh. They be jumping all around like they got jumping beans in they pants. And they face be twitching. They make me laugh. Especially with the girl ones. I like them the most.

\*\*\*

When I got to halfway home, I saw Leland and Rerun. They was sitting on the barrel out front of Leroy store. They was drinking beer. They started waving they hands and laughing. The barrel where all the big boys sit and tell jokes and throw oranges at the cars passing by. Someday, when I big, I’m gonna sit on the barrel and do what I want to. Just like they do.

One time, when Mr. Charlie came over to see my momma, I snuck out of the house and went up to the barrel where Leland and Rerun was sitting. They was sitting there smoking a funny looking cigarette and they eyes was all red. And they was coughing and passing it around. They thought it was real funny. I started laughing too, ‘cause they was laughing—as long as they wasn’t laughing at me.

They gave me one of them cigarettes and I smoked it just like them. It burnt up my lip. Leland and Rerun laughed. Then they gave me some beer. They patted me on the head like Pa Pa used to. I felt like a big boy then. Then they told me to take off my clothes to go swimming. I didn’t want to go swimming. Especially not with them. They might drown me. Then, they made me drink some more beer. I nearly drank the whole bottle. That’s when I blacked out. I don’t remember much after that. Later on, I woke up and wasn’t nobody there. Just me. And my clothes was gone. I found them underneath the barrel. They was still wet from the beer. Just then, I ran up to the top of the hill where the silver snakes was. Then, I threw up.

When I held my head up, I could see the train coming. I ran as fast as I could. It wasn’t gonna catch me like it did Mojo, with his drunk self. ‘Cause I’m too fast. I got to the bridge. It was still too high to jump off though. People at the bottom, near the underpass stopped they cars. They got out, staring up to where I was. They started waving they hands like Rerun and Leland. I kept on running. When I got halfway across the bridge, it started shaking. It was shaking bad. Real bad. But I kept running. Running until my breath was all gone. Running until I was sucking dry wind.

---

*I didn’t even feel like crying. Not even once.*

---

A lot more people started coming over to the barrel, where Rerun and them was. They was waving they arms all wild, flapping like Ms. Pie’s yard chickens. I didn’t pay them no mind, though. I knew they was gonna tell my momma. I knew they all thought I was stupid. And I knew that my momma, when she got a hold of me, was gonna kill me dead. Dead as a door knob.

That’s when I knew the only person who could help me was Pa Pa. One time, when I was little, a boy down the street named Chucky chased me home from school. I ran all the way, not stopping even once. Not once. But when I got home, Pa Pa was standing there in the front yard, underneath the big chinaberry tree, watering his elephant ears and penny winkers, when he saw me turn the corner. Chucky was fast too, but he wasn’t faster than me. When I run past Pa Pa, he grabbed me by the back of my shirt and he lifted me up in the air. He

brought his face up next to mine and he say, "A man don't run from nothing and nobody." I was scared. His face was all twisted and tight and I could smell the Gordon's Gin on his lips. "Fight like a man I say and stand your ground," he say. I was scared. I knew he was serious and me being scared didn't matter nare-re-dime. Chucky was bigger than me but Pa Pa was even bigger. With bigger hands. The same hands he used on the railroad. The same hands he used to kill a man one time.

The last time I tried to fight Chucky back, he bloodied my lip and gave me a black eye. By then, I was crying but Pa Pa didn't care. He say, "A man ain't supposed to cry." I didn't want to cry. I just couldn't help it. He said ifen I didn't beat Chucky's ass, he was gonna beat mine. I believed him, too. He only hit me with them hands once. I didn't want to make it twice. That day, I beat Chucky's ass. I beat his ass like never before and nobody since. I chased him down the street calling his mammy nasty names. Yeah, I beat his ass. Real good!

\*\*\*

The train was coming closer now. I kept on running. As fast as my legs could go. At first I didn't know what to do. Whether to stand my ground and fight like a man or turn and run—like I always did. But this time something was different. I didn't even feel like crying. Not even once. My chest stuck out and I balled up my fist up real tight. I clenched my teeth. And this time I wasn't gonna run. I knew Pa Pa was standing behind me. I could feel him. Even though I couldn't see him. Like his eyes was sending sunrays through my back. Pa Pa had eyes like that. Eyes that could see through anything and anybody. That's what momma used to say.

I stopped running then. I just stopped. I sucked in some more wind and I turned around. Real slow like. By now, I could hear everybody from the side, yelling. Yelling out my name. Yelling for me to come down. But I pretended like they wasn't even there. Like how they do me when they pick teams for football. I looked straight ahead—right to where the train was coming from. Right when it passed them silver snakes. So I just stood there, staring, waiting. I could hear the train whistle cut through the air all quick like. The train was getting closer. People was trying to climb the hill stepping

on glass and sandal spurs. But they kept slipping and falling back to the ground. Even the police couldn't climb it. They shoes just sank in the soft sand and gravel rocks.

Then, I could see the train turning the bend in the tracks. Down by my old school, past Kearney Funeral Home, past where Old Man Gibbs was sleeping. With his mouth wide open. It was coming fast. Real fast. And the closer it got, more people stuck the head out of the windows, people I knew. People I didn't like. They was all laughing, waving they hats and hands out the train windows. It was probably Mr. Charlie, Rerun and Leland, Bubba, Chucky, Jimmy and all the rest. I bet Ms. Whitely on there, too—I could tell from all the smoke puffing out the top. And I bet it was Mr. Charlie who was driving. Probably blowing the horn and laughing real hard. I knew everybody on the train was calling me stupid, but that didn't make me no never mind, 'cause I ain't stupid and I ain't running.

I started calling them the same names they called me all the time. Stupid ass, old dog breath, slow learning SLD, black dog fool, nappy head, high water, monkey brains, dumbo, baby New Year, ugly ass, mother fucker, cheese eater. Then—I wasn't scared no more.

\*\*\*

The train was getting closer now. Real close. I didn't move because I was going to sleep. Sleep belong side Pa Pa, and Mojo, and all them other people. Mr. Charlie was tooting the horn real loud, now. I shot him all them other people a bird. I grabbed my dingaling, like the big boys do. And I stared them down. Just then, the silver snakes stopped hissing, and shaking. Then, they started squealing like a pig. Then it got still, with no sound or nothing—except for the crickets and the frogs fighting. Then the crows started screaming and cawing. And the dogs started moaning. And I could hear my momma crying. But this time it wasn't gonna make me cry.

By now the train was so close I could see the numbers 111869 on the front. I could smell the tar drippings, the dead possums and cats. I could even smell the smoke. When it got close enough, I could even see Mr. Charlie. I could even see the white part of his eyes as they turned red. Real red...

## KU'UIPO AKI-SILER

## Closing Time

My memories are vague about that night. He seemed so harmless to my mortal eyes; naiveté is for the warm-blooded. He appeared to be a drifter, a vagabond, looking for a handout: thirsty, hungry, tired. He had nothing in the way of belongings save the clothing on his back, which were, if closer inspection had been made, stitched of fine threads and immaculate.

At first my heart leapt, mistaking him for my husband, long since gone, missing in the war. Back then there was no phone call, no letter. They either returned home or they did not. Mine did not.

So there I was, making my nightly attempt at closing the tavern doors. The left one was forever swelling up with the rain and stubbornly refused to fall into place.

"May I offer some assistance?" he asked. His voice traversed the air as if with purpose. Yet it had weight to it, like it was a being unto itself.

"No, thank you," I grunted as I slammed the door. "I can manage."

Then as I whipped the door back for another go, he appeared in the opening.

"Madame."

"Sir," I interrupted. (Irritability had long since proven to be an easy deterrent). "It is closing time."

"Madame," he repeated. "I have traveled a long way. Please."

He then brought out a blue velvet sack from his coat, which was cinched by a gold rope with tassels. The bag jingled.

I knew the sound, a melody akin to the finest operetta. Never being one to refuse a sack of gold coin, I stepped back and made way for the stranger.

I was a bit alarmed when he just stood there in the darkened doorway, like an apparition, a shadow. After pleading to be let in the way he had, his hesitation spiked my curiosity. I guess I had expected him to be already well versed in the navigation of open doorways. Finally,

I raised a lamp to him and in the light noticed for the first time that his facial features were, by no other word, perfect; so perfect, in fact, that...they seemed to be cut from smooth, river stone.

Still, there he stood, rolling up on his toes, as if a thoroughbred penned in behind some unseen starting gate.

"Well, come in then," I urged.

And so he did.

I motioned for him to take a seat at the bar. He motioned for me to lead the way. I nodded politely and moved briskly to the bar where I was struck with the oddest sensation that someone was next to me, but as I turned around he was behind me, seated on a stool. I shook it off and thought no more of it. Then I brought out my finest ale, made from barley of last season's harvest. It was a particularly plentiful year; my husband had been so proud of this bounty. But all the stranger did was stare at the carafe, as if it were filled with mud. (Although I do admit,

---

*But all the stranger did  
was stare at the carafe...*

---

some of my better customers referred to it as mud, but that was more due to the color than the texture.) Suddenly he looked up at me with sad eyes. I felt pitied. But why would he pity me? I had said nothing of my husband and we had only just met.

"Wine," he said simply, glancing toward a closed door behind me. "You have it?" His voiced seemed to reverberate across the room. It was almost visible in the air.

"For that, I must go the cellar. I shan't be long."

"The Cellar" amounted to no more than a room down the hall. Referring to it as such transformed my wine into heavenly nectar, but of which I myself was not so impressed, being already let in on the joke.

As I trudged down the hallway, heavy on my feet and tired from the day, the lamp swinging in my upheld hand, I felt another wave of apprehension. Who was this man? Was he here to rob me? Murder me? Or worse? These were many of the questions I asked myself periodically since my husband had departed.



Upon reaching “the cellar” door, I felt a breeze of sorts: more of a patch of cold air than a breeze. The lamplight flickered. I turned around to look behind me and he was right there, smiling. His teeth shone in the light. They were almost canine. I felt as if to scream, but I did not. Then I did not want to scream. He slid one hand behind my bodice and pulled me to him. His eyes were dark and bottomless. I followed an unspoken promise into them; of what, I was not sure.

“Come with me,” he whispered.

Then all went dark.

## JERRY CHUANG

### Records

Kurt Milan woke up at his desk. He rubbed his dizzy eyes and looked at the clock. It was 6:06 a.m. That’s good, he thought. He had just had two hours of quality sleep, and then he tapped his PDA and cancelled the standby mode. Colorful images emerged on the screen. Before selecting an icon titled “History,” he closed his eyes and recited answers for the history exam that he would take later that day.

“George Washington was born on March 24, 1798. America declared its independence in 1803. Abraham Lincoln led the U.S. throughout World War II before he was assassinated . . .”

Kurt recited the thirty answers, knowing some of them were bound to be false. Afterward, he clicked the history icon; a list of dates and names appeared in a small window. He checked it against the answers he had recited. As expected, he had remembered some of them wrong as he read out loud the right answers.

---

*His fingers moved  
around the PDA.*

---

“George W. Bush won the majority of the popular and electoral vote in the 2000 U.S. presidential election. He also launched a successful one week war against Iraq in 2001, without U.N. authorization...”

“Hurry, darling, you’ll be late for work,” Mrs. Milan spoke to her husband, who was relaxed, drinking coffee and reading newspapers.

“Don’t worry, dear,” Mr. Milan said and looked at his PDA. “It is still early.”

Mrs. Milan checked her PDA and apologized to her husband, and then she turned to Kurt.

“Hurry, Kurt,” she said, looking at her PDA. “Or you won’t catch the bus.”

“Relax, Mom,” Kurt said and then drank his orange juice. “The bus will not arrive for at least thirty minutes. I just checked the schedule.”

Mrs. Milan tapped her PDA and shouted back. "Well, check again!"

Kurt did, and to his surprise he found that the bus would arrive in less than two minutes.

"Shit," he cursed, grabbed his toast, and ran for the entrance.

"What happened?" a girl asked Kurt as he crashed down on the bench. "You almost missed the bus."

"The same thing," Kurt said and he checked his PDA for her name: Linda. He sighed. "Linda, bad memory. You just can't trust it. It forgets everything faster than a book," he said and looked at his PDA.

His fingers moved around the PDA. A window popped up, and he again checked the answers to the history exam. As usual his memory failed him, and he read aloud the correct answers.

"The World Data Bank was established in 2059. In 2068 the memory disorder known as Artley's disease was discovered..."

Kurt suddenly put down the PDA and sighed. "Sometimes I wonder why we even bother going to school. We won't remember anything anyway. We could live just fine as long as we have this."

Kurt tapped his PDA with confidence. It had the feature to record and to send everything its owner did to the World Data Bank, which kept records of a massive amount of information ready to be viewed at any computerized terminal. If the users knew the right question to ask, the Bank would send the answer confirming whether the user's memory had failed or not.

"Then the teachers would be out of jobs," Linda said, smiled and turned on her PDA to check her boyfriend's name: Brian. "Besides, Brian, if we don't use our brain as often as we do now, we might even forget how to use the computer, and then that would be the end of everything."

Stunned that she called him "Brian," the boy tapped his PDA to check his name. He thought he was Kurt Milan, or at least his memory told him so. However, the computer record said otherwise. On the screen the personal information below his image listed his name as Brian Milan. Apparently his memory was far worse than he thought. Not only could it not remember historical facts, it could not remember his name. Annoyed by his inability to ascertain his own

identity, Brian knocked his head for his incompetent memory, childishly hoping to strike his name—Brian Milan—deep into his brain. As he did so, the computer piloted bus decelerated and came to a smooth stop to admit a new passenger. A bent, thin figure carrying a heavy-looking bag boarded the bus and walked to a vacant seat at the end of the walkway.

"Here comes Mr. Nerd," Brian said, looking down the aisle. A bent, thin figure carrying a heavy-looking bag boarded the bus and walked to a vacant seat at the end of the walkway.

"Don't say that. He will hear you," Linda said.

"So? He is a nerd, so I call him a nerd. What is wrong with that? If he will quit spreading that conspiracy theory of his, I will take back my words."

"Sometimes I wish you could be a little nicer to others," Linda said and looked pitifully at the boy Brian had called a nerd. "He has a name, you know," she added and looked at her PDA. "His name is Keith, Keith O'Brien."

---

*...his memory was far worse than he thought.*

---

"So? Even if I call him by his name, I doubt anyone would know who that is."

An advertising window popped up on Brian's PDA. Brian read the screen.

"Look, Linda." There was a gleam in his eye as he showed the advertisement to her. "There is a new soda shop around school, and they are having a promotion. Would you like to go there after school?"

Linda fingered and looked at her PDA and then gave him a disappointing answer.

"Sorry, I have a dentist appointment."

Brian said nothing. He looked at his PDA and started reciting the answers again.

"Oh my God!"

"What the hell? How could I miss that one?"

"Oh, thank God I got that right."

"Damn, I thought I picked the right answer."

"My mom is gonna kill me."

The exam was over, and the results published. Curse, lament, relief, and other emotions echoed throughout the school. Passing some miserable schoolmates in the corridor, Brian came upon Linda.

"Hi," he said and looked at his PDA. "Linda. How did you do on the test?"

"Miserable. What about you?"

"Surprised." He shook his head. "I thought I got twenty of the answers wrong, but it turned out I got them right. Memory is really a tricky thing. When you think it fails you, it turns out all right; when you think it is good, it turns out bad . . . Hey, are you alright?"

Brian looked at Linda with concern. A glum expression loomed on her face. A thought came across his mind.

"Did that nerd bother you?" Brian spoke loudly. "Did he harass you with his bullshit?"

"No, no, nothing." Linda shook her head and waved her hands. "I am fine. It is just.... I guess I am too distressed by the exam."

"Are you sure? Listen, if that nerd really bothered you, just tell me and I will make sure he never comes around..."

"I am fine." Linda took a deep breath. "And don't do anything to him. He has done nothing to me."

"Sorry. I guess I overreacted," Brian apologized while a disturbance erupted at the other end of the corridor. A bent, thin student was arguing fiercely with an innocent looking new teacher.

"That's not right! I have proof!"

"What is that nerd up to now?" Brian looked at Keith with annoyance, while Linda looked with an uneasy expression at the arguing student.

"Listen, young man, if you don't calm down I will..."

"I have the proof!" Keith waved a piece of paper with some writing on it. "Look! These are the answers, the right answers to the exam, I copied down before the quiz, but they don't match the answers we got afterward! Don't you realize what this means? We have been deceived by the machines! There is nothing wrong with our memory; it is the machines that are wrong!"

"Young man, I know that you must feel bad about your grade, and we all know how memory can play tricks on us, so..."

"There is nothing wrong with my memory!" Keith shouted. "I can prove it to you. She saw me write down the answers before the test."

He pointed at the other end of the corridor. The spectators followed his finger and looked at Linda, who recoiled when she became the center of attention.

"She can prove it for me. Tell them what you saw. I asked you to see me write down the answers, and you said I wrote down exactly what we saw on the PDA. Now tell them the truth."

"Lay off, nerd," Brian said, standing before Linda while some students whistled or wooed. "Leave her alone."

---

*A bent, thin student  
was arguing fiercely...*

---

"No, you leave her alone, you ignorant buffoon. This is a matter about the future freedom of the human race, if..."

Brian jumped on Keith. His fists rained down on Keith and turned his face into a bloody mess. The teacher called campus guards to separate the entangled pair as the students looked on with awe.

After being chastened by the principal, Brian and Keith were told to go home. Keith was severely warned by the principal never to spread his conspiracy theory again and was sent home under a guard's watchful eyes. But Brian received no special treatment since the principal considered his response justified. When he left the office, he found the anxious Linda waiting for him.

"Are you alright?" Linda asked him.

"You should say that to the nerd." Brian wiped his hands and looked at her with a wounded expression. "But why? Why didn't you tell me about what that nerd had done?"

Linda blushed and turned her face from his eyes. "I don't want you to worry, and I don't want you to hurt him," she said.

"It makes no difference now. Just promise me that if he ever comes to you again that you tell me immediately. Okay? And there is one more thing." Brian looked at her seriously. "Is he telling the truth? Did you see him write down the *answers*?"

"Well," Linda said. She clasped her hands tight and scratched her palms. "I am not sure. I think I remember that he asked me to watch

him write down something, but I am not sure if I saw him write down what he said he wrote. I don't know; my memory is fuzzy."

"Never mind that," Brian said and cleared his throat. "Say, I asked you to some soda earlier, didn't I? And I don't think you gave me an answer. Would you like to go now?"

"Let me see." Linda checked her PDA and smiled. "Yeah, let's go, Kurt."

Again the boy was stunned. Had his memory failed him again? He remembered a few moments ago that he was called "Brian" by the principal; however, he also had a vague recollection that someone had called him by the name "Kurt," too, although he could not remember exactly who did so, or where or when. Everything was fuzzy and uncertain. He understood how Linda felt when he questioned her moments ago.

As the boy walked with Linda to the store, the anxiety within him grew and it irritated him, and he reflexively checked his PDA, keyed several buttons, and looked at the picture on the screen. On it was a picture of him and below it was the name "Kurt Milan" and his personal information. Reassured by this proof of his identity and the unreliability of his memory, Kurt shook his head and started reciting his name—Kurt Milan—quietly with the hope that he could remember it correctly without resorting to a computer record. It is really awful, he thought, not being able to know, for certain, who you are.

---

*Had his memory  
failed him again?*

---

## POETRY

### MARY LAU VALLE

*Literary Prize Winner • Poetry*

#### I Am My Father's Daughter

A row of Chinese markets  
along Sunset and First Street.  
He baptized me into his world  
when he walked me through their doors.  
Each week we received communion,  
dried salty plums  
given to us by local merchants with round faces,  
gold capped teeth, sad eyes,  
as we whispered our ancestors' names  
Lau Sit Va,  
Lau Man Tak,  
Lau Sit Ing.  
With basket in hand  
we walked up and down narrow rows,  
looking at pictures on cans,  
salty beans,  
boiled ginkgo nuts,



Photography: Ku'uipo Aki-Siler



powdery almond gruel in bright green boxes,  
 perfumed jasmine teas stuffed in bamboo baskets.  
 I look longingly at the sweet fermented rice cakes  
 appearing mysteriously on our dining room table  
 sitting next to bright-pink boxes filled  
 with dim sum, shu mai, and cha sui pao;  
 small, white, round flour cakes filled with sweet black beans,  
 always red gladiola with long green stems,  
 and the handwritten note  
 I would tuck under my pillow  
 “wishing me a wonderful birthday”  
 written in father’s hand  
 Chinese characters resembling dragon faces with long tails.  
 Then the meal would begin  
 with the sound of my father sharpening his cleaver,  
 his brown hand holding the worn handle.  
 The sound of the blade going back and forth  
 between the teeth of a chipped porcelain bowl  
 carving carrots in the shape of flowers—  
 they later appeared in the soup.  
 Children sat at the dining room table  
 waiting nervously, playing with white plastic chopsticks  
 as I served rice with both hands.  
 They did not know hours before  
 my Cantonese cooking lessons had begun;  
 salty, sour, and sweet,  
 steamed and fried.  
 Vegetables cooked lightly  
 still green and crisp  
 as Dad bit into them.  
 Our steaming pot cradled  
 catfish swimming in sesame oil  
 and salty eggs.  
 Now I ask strangers sitting behind cash registers  
 in Chinese markets,  
 where I might find that brown spicy sauce  
 or scour the aisles for jasmine tea trying to remember

the name of the tea with chrysanthemum petals that brought  
 good luck.  
 Pick-up “lee see” red and golden envelopes  
 stuffed with silver dollars,  
 given to us as children on Chinese New Years.  
 Trying to remember who I am  
 I call my father’s sister,  
 half-pleading,  
 for stories about their life in China  
 or a recipe.  
 “One does not come to the temple without a wish,” she  
 scolds,  
 nor would she dare remember the war,  
 or the boat she sailed on escaping through the Pearl River,  
 feel the widow’s sting of having just buried a husband.  
 I choose to remember the taste of salty plum on my  
 tongue,  
 shop for red gladiola,  
 see my father’s face in the full moon  
 shining through my kitchen window.

## Abuela Maclovía

Grandma, you sit like a queen in this jungle,  
 In this heat that makes a grown man weep.  
 You choose dirt roads, thatched roofs, and an iguana for a pet.  
  
 Your gifts to us were salted, dried goat cheese, cinnamon,  
 Ground corn and dried Nayarit shrimp.  
 Your garden held mango and papaya orchards.  
  
 We gathered sticks and twigs to start the fire that morning;  
 And sat in the backyard drinking hot cinnamon-coffee while  
 The lizards basked in the dry, hot sun.

## Antonia

As a young girl  
you stand at your mother's side  
in the Tecuala marketplace  
walk with your sister Sara,  
hand in hand around the kiosk.  
As if in a dream  
you awake in the morning  
on the South China sea  
on the Manchurian steamer.

Your suitcases,  
a stack of Chinese boxes  
follow you  
like the cross around your neck,  
the rosary in your purse.  
In 1923  
from the rickshaw you see  
a majestic house with tiles,  
cobalt blue  
its own well  
poems written on each stair step leading up  
to your bedroom, where the balcony  
overlooks the Pearl River  
see the reflection of your husband  
in a mirror.  
Who returns like an absentee landlord,  
every two years.  
You dress in a silk cheongsam  
wear jade rings  
speak in sign language to your in-laws  
who call you white-witch in the marketplace.  
In your patio  
after each birth  
white sheets sail in the air,  
flags your mestizo children  
wave in the saffron-colored sun.

The next day after morning mist evaporates  
you rest on your balcony  
drinking rice wine,  
roll cigarettes,  
singing Mexican ballads in your mind.  
As smoke from your lips  
floats in the sky up to the hooded crane  
flying above your house  
it stains the trailing edges of its long wispy wings.

## Lau Man Choy

After many years  
Lau Man Choy returns,  
is arrested,  
awaits payment of the ransom money once,  
twice, from his son in Mexico  
it comes too late.  
In the dawn  
Consuelo steers a sampan,  
fishes her father out  
with the tip of a bamboo stick.  
Lau Man Choy you have become the golden carp  
swimming in Antonia's pond.  
She stands in a circle of cranes,  
holds a tortoise in her mouth  
a nightly vigil to protect her king.  
As the carp swallows the lotus seed  
his soul turns into a crane,  
patriarch of the feathered tribe,  
and flies away to be remembered for 1,000 years.  
In his ancestral hall, his statue  
made of copper,  
stands poised upon the altar.

## Lydia

Lydia,  
your legs gone,  
you remain a prisoner in your bed.  
They say you startle in your sleep,  
scream, raise your arms high above your head.  
Cry softly.  
I see you young,  
soft like a rose,  
Cleopatra eyes painted blue.  
Yours was a quest for books,  
friends you conversed with  
on lonely nights when Charlie rode the highways,  
North and South.  
Stocking warehouses with hams, cans, and other things.  
Your spirit would be up,  
on a prescription you dared follow.  
Sipping slowly, slipping into make believe,  
everything fine,  
your mind gone  
they say,  
sipping slowly.  
Now you are cut in half,  
your second leg gone,  
lying on the laboratory counter  
next in line,  
to be burned in the furnace.  
Smoke and ashes spread in the skies,  
over houses, gardens,  
over streets  
where you once walked.  
You, half-buried now,  
half-seen,  
half-heard,  
your body slowly leaving you  
and we send you to God piece by piece.

## MICHAEL AYALA

### Pantoum for a girl from High School

Angel, dry the sadness from your eyes,  
Leave the streets you're forced to roam  
Wipe the seed from between your thighs,  
What happened to your life and home?

Leave the streets you've worked and roamed.  
Your parents once thought you the world,  
But now they've locked their tattered home,  
You're no longer daddy's girl.

Your parents once thought you the world,  
Addiction brought obliteration,  
How could daddy's baby girl,  
Trade fifteen for penetration?

Addiction brought obliteration,  
Now old friends just look away,  
"She trades drugs for penetration."  
In your regards is all they say.

Those old friends just look away,  
But they're the ones who laid your path.  
In your regards they always say,  
"Fucked up whore," they point and laugh,  
But will they laugh when their time's through?

They're on their way to ruin too,  
Destructive habits will take them down.  
And when their time is finally through,  
In dark and cold they'll roam the town.

Their destruction brought you down,  
It's not your fault, so dry your eyes,  
In dark and cold you roam the town,  
With your next meal between your thighs.  
But when they're your neighbors, they will starve.



Photography: Ku'uipo Aki-Siler

## EDWARD CHONG

### Brown Sugar

Chocolate brown sugar  
Melting down my spine—  
Time stops in this delicious process,  
Success is achieved when a smile comes!  
Delectable sums of knowledge don't compare,  
Simply being aware of this tasty  
Rarity in abundance in reality  
Makes it that much more enticing!  
Brown sugar—Maple—Carmel slicing  
Each pore in my tongue!—  
I am young singing songs and dancing!—  
Fancy meeting you here sugar  
Brewer of mystic aphrodisiac,  
Cause of euphoric attacks!—  
There is no lack when you're inside me  
Oozing down my dendrite tree!  
Overriding all emotions  
Releasing liquid potions  
Brown sugar inside of me!

## CHERYL FOREMAN

## A Scene

In a jungle-setting,  
Sits a monkey eating  
His breakfast of oranges.  
Tall green trees are the  
Background, a grassy shrub in front,  
And in the middle sits the monkey  
Eating his breakfast of oranges.  
White flowers add a gentle  
Touch, that stands out from the green.  
And in the hue of the  
Greens and orange, and white  
Sits a monkey eating his  
Breakfast of oranges.

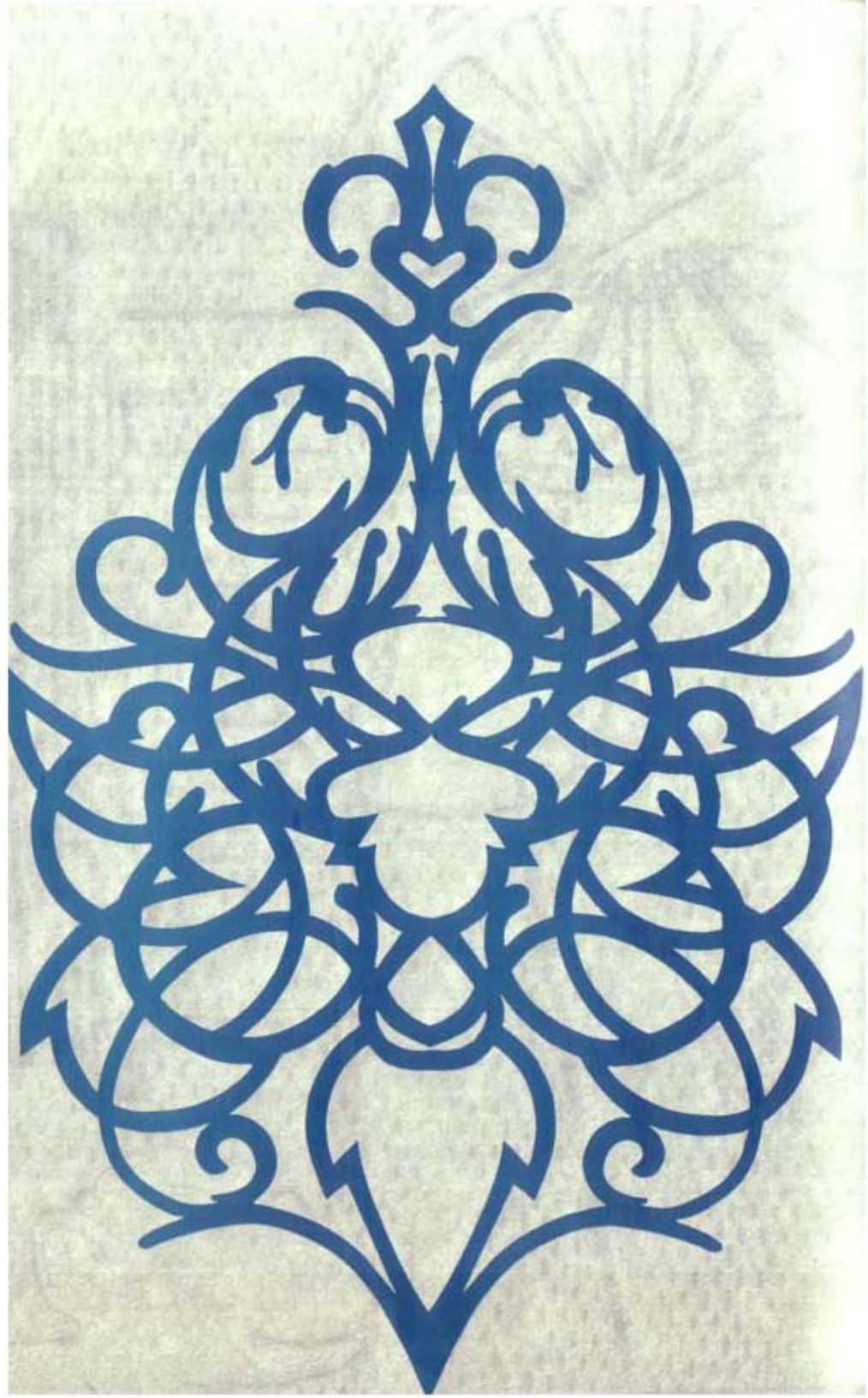
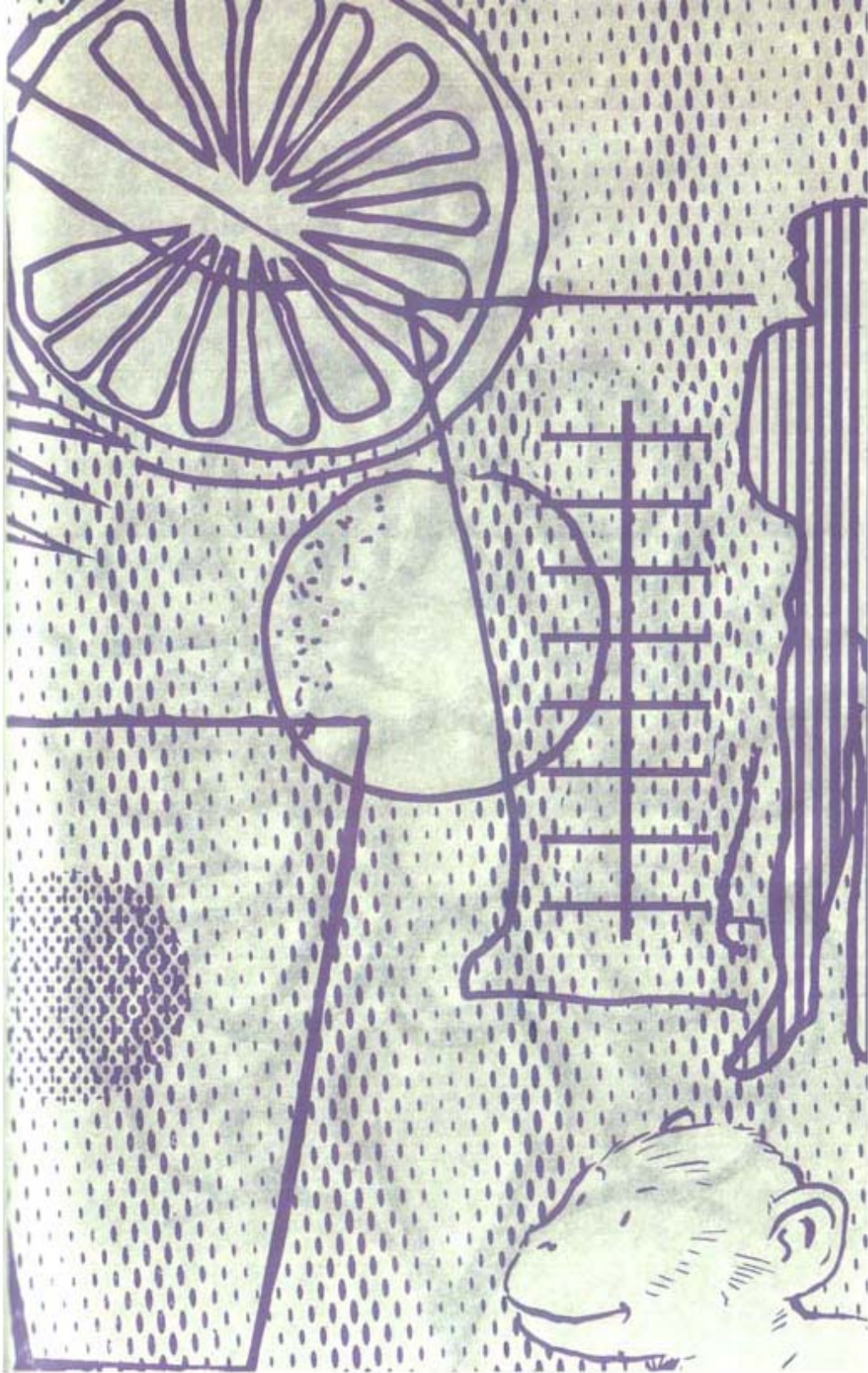
## CHRISTIAN LOCATELL

## Writer's Block

I want to write a poem.  
But at this point in time  
the only thing that fills my mind  
is the contemplation of nothing.

I think it's amazing.  
that there are so many talented people  
who can compose so many profound pieces in which  
things that are considered usual and uninteresting  
become fantastic and novel,  
because they are magnified by the writer  
and they are seen as they truly are.

Yet, at this moment,  
the only thing I can think of to write  
is the fact that I can't think of anything to write.



## SIMON WEBSTER

## Pop Art

I think of America  
 I think of money  
 I think of souls  
 I think of the end  
 I think of hippies  
 I think of Campbell soup  
 I think of war  
 I think of colors  
 I think of the capital, Washington  
 I think of lonely scraps of metal rusting in the rain  
 I think of Bob Dylan  
 I think of good and bad surprises  
 I think of Dreams  
 I think of enclosed rooms while people stencil with spray paint  
 I think of sun  
 I think of love  
 I think of peace  
 I think of a winking of an eye to another eye  
 I think of what's in style  
 I think of what's out of style  
 I think of laughing  
 I think of the freedom we have  
 I think of the potential power a brush has  
 I think of advertisements  
 I think of the yellow reflection of the moon  
 I think of Andy and Marilyn  
 I think of the different shades of color the same people see  
 I think of nothing  
 I think of maybe  
 I think of when  
 I think of why not  
 I think of repetition

## CARL WHITE

## Decision

A desperate woman  
 Walks into her bedroom  
 To change.  
 There is a suit of light green  
 and lavender silk  
 laid out on the bed  
 since early that morning  
 and she is struck by  
 How it appears,  
 Lying flat against  
 The bedclothes,  
 Its shape like the outline  
 Of a woman who  
 Conquered by lassitude  
 laid down to sleep  
 and faded into dreams,  
 Leaving her clothes behind.

After dressing, she fishes  
 some rings from the  
 tangle of her jewelry box,  
 A cheap, black, lacquer thing  
 She's never liked,  
 A gift from her husband  
 from one of the many business trips  
 he pretends he hates taking,  
 bought in a panic  
 At the last minute  
 In the duty-free station  
 Of some nameless airport,  
 Only after he'd loaded up  
 On scotch and cigarettes  
 For his idiot golfing cronies.

These men all look  
alike to her now.  
They wear pinstriped suits  
paired with white shirts  
buttoned tightly over  
beer bellies straining  
to make their escape,  
similar whiskey-slack  
expressions on their married  
middle-aged faces.  
They disgust her,  
These jowly  
adulterers  
With their fake laughter  
And hearty back-slapping,  
Their fat stinking cigars  
That send smoke toward  
The ceiling to hang  
blue-grey above their heads,  
an acrid layer of disappointment.

She drifts downstairs,  
and sits by the dining-room table,  
Laying her hands on its  
freshly waxed surface.  
She thinks about the  
Man she has married,  
The perpetual hurt,  
The slurred insults,  
The insincere apologies  
That fall from his mouth  
Like twigs and dead leaves.  
Those times she had  
To curb a white-hot  
Urge to rake her nails across  
His face as he spoke,  
To draw blood,  
To leave her mark on him.

She slides her wedding band  
A little past the knuckle  
Exposing the phantom ring  
that lies beneath,  
A pale circle on  
her tanned finger,  
removing it when her husband  
walks into the room.  
Standing, she hands it to him,  
A single bullet.  
“I no longer want this,”  
she says, before plucking  
her car keys from  
a hook on the wall,  
and calmly walking out the door.

## WHAT DRIVES L.A.?

ERNEST GONZALEZ

### Defining Los Angeles [essay]



It is close to six in the morning. The weather is crisp. The night is slowly giving way to the inevitable, almost imperceptible, transition from blackness, to the faint beginnings of daylight. It is dawn. A new day will soon be born.

The traffic is light and I see occasional dark objects with headlights approaching and passing me by, going in the opposite direction, conducted by faceless, anonymous drivers who I assume are going to work, as I am. I wind my way through the side streets that lead to the parking lot where I ritualistically turn into the driveway, put my electronic key in the slot, and proceed through the gate to my parking stall to which, by this time, I am sure, my car has become accustomed.

My walk to work consists of a three block stretch. As I approach Wilshire Boulevard, I am confronted by the old Bullocks Wilshire building, that beautiful historical structure which is now part of Southwestern Law School. Several decades ago this department store was probably the highest of the chic, with a tea room that was patronized by rich, well-dressed ladies, arriving in chauffeur-driven cars. Bullocks Wilshire was a pillar of expensive fashion attire, catering to the rich, the upper crust, the Hollywood stars. No longer. That era has passed. The neighborhood has declined, the ambience has deteriorated, and the people are different. One senses the element of poverty and struggle just below the surface and around the corner. Perhaps

that is the catalyst, as I walk, for my reminiscing and my musings about a time gone by.

As I press west, I see the many ill-kept store fronts juxtaposed along the dirty sidewalk with newspapers and other discarded pieces of paper lying undisturbed, by the lack of concern and ambivalence of the daily foot traffic. The signs are in English, Spanish, and Korean, but mostly Korean.

As I approach Vermont Avenue I begin to see them. They stand like sentinels, shoulders shrugged a bit and staring to their left, down the street, waiting for the bus to appear with the lighted marquee that will confirm their destination.

I continue and gain proximity; I look up and notice the faces. It is the faces that tell so much. The first one may be Mexican. The lady standing back a bit reminds me of the Paleolithic statue—The Venus of Willendorf—round, short, motionless. I imagine that she has Mayan features. (She must be Guatemalan.) The third one looks to me to be of dubious origin. An Asian lady is walking toward the group. I conclude that her outfit came straight from the Goodwill Thrift Shop, including the hat. They all look like low income individuals, preoccupied with survival.

I am now alongside the Metro Station on Vermont and Wilshire. There is an open plaza that serves as the entrance to the subterranean train area. Here, during the day, the vendors congregate, selling tamales, churros, CDs, pirated videos, items of clothing, umbrellas, and more. There is a newsstand made of plywood, which is painted in a bright green. Newspapers and magazines are sold—all in Spanish. I could very well be on a corner in Mexico, Central or South America. Across the street and beyond the area becomes very Korean. Sometimes, I ask myself, “What happened? Where am I?”

**New and  
magazines are  
sold—all in Spanish.**

This small section, this corner, this community forms an ecosystem which betrays the fantasy of Los Angeles. The image of affluence and glamour that people have is not reality. The reality is that we live in a plutocratic town of excruciating economic and social disparities. It is a city where three to five percent control eighty percent of the wealth; where we have more millionaires than any other state, yet children go to bed hungry; where homes sell in the millions of dollars, yet people are sleeping in the streets. This is Los Angeles. This is how it must be defined—a third world city.

I continue walking, accompanied by my thoughts. My destination is near. There it is, that office building, so tall it looks like it is trying to kiss the clouds. As I get closer to the entrance I sense that the street is beginning to come alive. I have arrived. The city persists. My day has begun.

EVA BRUNE

### Riding in Cars With Strangers [short story]



Ever since I was five years old or so, I can remember lying in bed listening to the distant hum of the cars as they made their way along the freeway a few blocks away. Even when I married and moved away, the hum called out to me at night. I would wonder: Where are they going? What business could they possibly have at this hour of the night? Are they on an adventure, a vacation or worse? Have they just found out that someone in their family has died and they have to go and bury them? This fascination made its way into my waking thoughts. I often find myself looking around at the people in their cars and wonder who they are and where they are going.

It is no accident that cars have windows all around. This is so that we can see in. Clearly. Armored cars don't have real windows because they don't want us to see what they

are up to in there, but Henry Ford wanted us to look inside, even stare, into the cars around us. The car, therefore, has gone from a simple means of transportation to a

social experiment, a fishbowl, if you will, where one can see others, or themselves reflected back at them. A quick interjection, the voyeur's 'driver' inventory: You have your pickers, your grinners, the singers and the groomers. Then you have the blue collars, white collars and the collars with spit-up on them. There are hot heads, bed heads, roller heads and dead heads. Then you have combinations and transmutations like the hot headed groomer who is blowing a gasket because she got mascara on her forehead and the white collar picker who is completely unaware that his windows are as transparent as mine. Is he looking at me? Hey, I am not the one with my finger in my nose up to the second knuckle!

In Los Angeles we spend an inordinate amount of time in our cars. The average commute is 56 minutes, and that doesn't account for traffic jams or rain. So it is no wonder that, on occasion, my mind

**There are hot heads,  
bed heads, roller heads  
and dead heads.**

wanders a little. It is at those times that just looking in is not enough for me. I find my mind drifting into the back seat of the stranger's car and taking up residence half-way into a journey, an argument, a phone call or a profound silence. White Honda, Monday mid-day, South Pasadena: The driver is a tidy, middle-aged woman with longish hair and youthful cropped bangs. Her eyes are bulging and from where I am in the back seat I can see the veins pulsating in her neck as she barks into her cell phone. "If you had just walked the dog

***His wife is attractive,  
diminutive and clearly  
distraught.***

when I told you to I wouldn't have to have the carpet cleaned no. . . Like I have nothing else to do . . . no I don't want tacos for dinner, we had them just the other day . . . OK, I gotta go I'm in traffic." I wonder if

a little doggy tinkle warranted such a barrage. I think about my own occasional bursts of anger both seen and unseen, and the damage that they inflict on those around me and on the character that I have tried to build, before I move onto my next ride.

Green Mercedes Benz, the big kind, Wednesday mid-afternoon in suburban San Gabriel. The driver is an Asian man, probably Korean, with a broad face that is currently writhing and spewing with anger and dismay. Despite his apparent heart attack, he is well-dressed with wire rimmed glasses and a leather jacket. His wife is attractive, diminutive and clearly distraught. She is shaking her head profusely and crying as her husband snorts and screams and intermittently pounds his fist on the steering wheel and the dash. I quickly translate in my head and come to understand that it is a breaking heart, not a heart attack that this many is suffering from. "How could you go with him, that lousy creep, he doesn't have anything to show for. I knew it all along. He had ruined our marriage and now you must go because I never want to see you again. . . I am taking you to the bus depot, you whore!" He had absolutely no regard for his kids, or me, who were strapped into the back seat without a possible escape. He continued spitting and screaming long after I drifted away. In my rearview I could still see him gesturing, but in my mind I thought about the burden of choice and the pain of having made a wrong decision.

San Gabriel Boulevard, on my way to pick up my daughter, a beige Nissan pick-up pulls up next to my van. Odd, I thought, that such an elderly, obviously married couple, should be driving a pick-up. Aren't they for horse handlers and lesbians? I wonder to myself. "Here, have a candy," the wife says to her husband. He fumbles with the tiny mint and drops it on the seat. In my mind I offer to hand it to him because it has slipped between the seats and landed on the floor back here. The wife lovingly unwraps another mint and places it in his open mouth as her husband stretches his face to still see the light overhead. "Thanks," he mumbles, trying not to lose yet another candy. His wife then turned to the front and zipped up her purse and announced that the light had in fact turned green. I giggle to myself at the notion that women seem to think that only they can tell a green light from a red and as I step on my own accelerator, I think about the depth of attachment that comes when one finally lets go of who they think they need to be and follows the lead of another, in the dance of life. I am beginning to think that voyeurism is not such a bad thing. Aren't we like animals in the sense that we learn through observation and through close interaction with our community? In the modern society, that community has become an elusive place, a mirage for those of us who slog through life on their own. We have tried to find ways to replace the community, such as the Internet, only to be driven farther from one another. So now, more than ever, we rely on watching each other from afar, lest we get caught peeking. We tune into staged reality and squint to try to glean valuable social messages from the absurdity being played out three feet in front of us. Or we look longingly into our neighbors' living room windows in the hopes that we might see a hint of the same madness that is going on in our lives. Or, if you are like me, you imagine yourself riding around in the back seat of strangers' cars yearning to be a part of a conversation or to experience some unhurried human interaction with a stranger who is traveling right alongside you, on the road of life.

## CARL WHITE

## My Station

The train slides into the station  
 On hot, tarnished-silver tracks,  
 And as I step off the platform  
 to walk through the hissing  
 Automatic doors after flicking  
 My last cigarette onto the brand-new  
 Dusty concrete, I find myself  
 Wishing for giant clouds  
 Of steam and a voice shouting  
 "All aboard!" as if I'm in some  
 lovely opening scene from  
 the latest Merchant-Ivory movie,  
 But life's not like that, so I  
 Just take a seat and open my newspaper,  
 frowning at the headlines.



## CARLOS LEMUS

## Good Looking Out? [essay]



On good days, Richard Aguilar gets up before his mom returns from dropping off his younger sister to school. "I don't want to disappoint my mom, ya know," he says. He also acknowledges hating the feeling of having her nag him almost everyday to go to school. All that motherly weight is pressuring him to get the education that she is no longer sure will provide him with better opportunities, but at least it will make him more than the good-for-nothing that he is destined to become if he continues associating with "those friends of his." Richard is a very popular guy at school, mainly among the homeboys. There are, however, a good number of homegirls who greatly miss him when he skips classes to go to the park or to Crazy's house, a place where all of the homies feel free to do whatever they want. His presence is missed because Richard is a drug dealer. "Bombo takes good care of us, you know," informs one of his female classmates. "Good looking out," appreciates a homeboy with an elaborate handshake. Richard is not proud about this. He is reluctant to speak with me, a counselor who is sworn to confidentiality, even after I pledge that his name will be changed to protect his identity. He still refuses, while inadvertently sharing his story, telling me that he has mixed feelings about his popularity. He enjoys it—the respect, the honor. But in a very roundabout way he also achieves to say that all of that is ephemeral, that there will come a day when no one will remember him. Yet, as soon as he says this, indifference overcomes him and he assures me that it doesn't really matter, for he is out to have a good time.

***His presence is missed  
 because Richard is  
 a drug dealer.***

"Back in the day," Richard says, which translates into a couple of years given his sixteen years of life, he was well known, easily identifiable, but not popular. At 13 he stood out for being a class clown with almost six feet of longitude and over 100 pounds of extra weight

that he is currently trying to lose. Football coaches saw a great asset in those 280 adolescent pounds, using them to scare off any adversary's offense; but with a perennial smile covering his congenial round face, people who knew Richard then believed he resembled an oversized teddy bear more than a linebacker. And that was precisely his nickname, Osito [teddy bear], until the pubescent cruelty of his inner circle of friends drove them to call him "Bombo," which literally translates into bass drum but in the parochial Spanish also alludes to the hollowness and big capacity of an object. As Richard childishly derides the moniker that mocks him, his face and demeanor reveal

**After Jose's recovery  
Richard began stealing  
anything that could...**

some of the innocence that people who knew him in elementary school describe. During junior high school, however, Richard and his best friend Muppet

(which is his tagger's name) were every teacher's nightmare. Their heavy-handed pranks, fearless attitude towards social boundaries, and nonchalance about respect made them notorious in the Pasadena Unified School District. It also landed them both in a continuation school where Richard mastered abilities as a petty thief and, later, a drug dealer.

Unlike Muppet, who has moved to another state fleeing probation, Richard has never been caught in the almost four years since his first crime. His only serious encounter with the legal system was a year ago for allegedly activating the fire alarm at school. Apparently Richard could not run fast enough and decided to take the blame for his older brother Jose. His luck may be changing, however. Though there is no solid evidence for his dealing, suspicions abound. That's why he observes great caution in protecting himself and was reluctant to share his story. "This is confidential, right?" he asks me in search of corroboration of privacy before conceding his secrets. "Muppet got greedy. That's why he got caught. I just do it for fun. I need to get my weed, you know. So I get some for me and the homies and hook other fools with the rest."

Getting away with only tickets for personal possession implies hiding the cargo in unreachable places. "They can't search you down there, you know, below the waist. How do you call that shit? The

pelvic area or something like that. So I hide it there, you know, in my balls, where they won't look." He refused to discuss in detail where exactly, and at what level, he places the merchandise, but it appears that his method allows sufficient flexibility to move around comfortably.

His introduction to the world of illicit substances came when Richard was 12. He felt compelled to deal when he could no longer support his habit. His brother Jose was responsible for the rite of initiation, "but that fool quit, you know, so I had to provide on my own." His first illegal drug was marijuana. He had tried alcohol the year before, but he didn't like it. Since then he has experimented with crack, speed, and even aerosols, but marijuana is his drug of daily choice. After Jose's recovery Richard began stealing anything that could be possibly turned into quick and easy cash for his weekly ration—CD's, school supplies, personal stereos. The easiest goods were shoes at the local ROSS store. "You just put them on and walk out the back door. The alarm doesn't even ring," he explained. The realization that he could obtain "stuff" on credit presented him with the opportunity to deal "with a delivery charge" as an added bonus. Currently, anything valuable will serve as collateral. If the "stacks" are not paid within the 24 hour deadline Richard sells the merchandise, which ranges from watches to computers, at a hefty mark-up. He definitely prefers currency, but since he kept Muppet's patrons for stolen goods he does not have to worry about making up the money for further shipments.

Richard is certain that he can make a good living as a dealer, though he respects his father and the value of hard work he taught him. Richard more than anyone knows this as his father severely damaged his back after several years as an underpaid construction worker, but the lavish lifestyle of his provider makes a greater impression than respect or good values. In order to increase his takings, Richard has even introduced speed and other drugs to his supply, but since he smokes too much he is unable to keep his business profitable enough. When he is high he apparently becomes overgenerous and thus has to make a few rounds searching for goods at "a five finger discount" to later sell at a discount higher than sale prices for regular consumers. In a tone that connotes more self-persuasion than an

attempt to convince me, Richard indicates that he won't be doing this for long. "It's too risky, man. And I want to finish high school." He does not seem to understand that his plan to skip classes to take GED courses places him at an even greater disadvantage. "Life is hard, you know. Maybe I'll become an artist. You know that fool Picasso? I can bust out some better pieces than that fool," he attested before showing me a very animated cartoon of a clown he had drawn minutes before. "One fool told me once that I could make a shit load of money making a cartoon like South Park. I don't like that shit. But if I do something it's going to be real. It's going to be G [gangster], you know."

At home Richard is very respectful, his mother observes. He takes out the trash and helps his father with odds and ends. He even admonishes his brother José for dropping out of school. She insists that he is a good child, "if it wasn't for those friends of his." She is right about his politeness. Irrespective of having been expelled from junior high for throwing a chair at a teacher, instructors in the alternative high school he presently attends verify that on an individual basis he is a very mellow and respectful person. "He's got probably something under his sleeve," says the principal. "Many things, for all I care. With all those tickets [for possession]. But we just can't get him. There is a due process, especially for suspicion. And with that innocent face and that sweetheart of a mother I'm sure he gets away with many things."

Barely over four feet tall, it is incredible how much control Mrs. Aguilar has over Richard. It's humorous to see a scene where she reprimands him in front of the immediate congregation of students during lunch. With a crestfallen face Richard mumbles "Vámanos p'allá," or "let's go over there." But she is unyielding. In a very precarious way she hopes that the respect he gives here will extrapolate to all norms in society.

When Richard was taken by his mother to Mexico, he was sure he would kick the habit. He even became sick thinking about the withdrawals he was convinced he would experience. After several mandatory substance abuse classes, Richard can recite symptoms and with-

**Maybe I'll become an  
artist. You know that  
fool Picasso?**

drawal side effects by heart. The only aversive symptoms that materialized, however, were the hallucinations that came after "finding some good weed down there" after a few days. "My mom didn't even know. And those fools even wanted me to be their mule, but that's some heavy shit. I don't want to be carrying shit through the borders, you know. Those perros in the migra are mean. None of that shit. I stayed low." During those six months Richard smoked less, helped care for his grandmother, didn't go to school, and eventually became sick. "That shit was heavy, fool. I was seeing some crazy shit when I was high." Convinced that Mexican marijuana was responsible for some of the ailments he began to experience, Richard sought medical assistance when he returned to the U.S. Given disclosures he made to the doctor, Mrs. Aguilar found out about his addiction. "He told me that he had to tell them [the doctors] so that they could cure him," she said. "He never thought they would tell me because he thought the information was confidential." I then understood Richard's misgivings about speaking with me.

"You know what it was?" he asked me. "It was hypertension, fool, because I'm overweight! And now I have my mother bitching every day. But I wanna quit. And become an artist. You've seen my stuff. Maybe draw a cartoon or something."

I suggested he could draw a political cartoon or a superhero series.

"I've seen some crap like that. Mr. B [a continuation junior high school teacher] showed us a book with a mouse about the hollow-cut," he informed me. Holocaust, I corrected him.

"My bad. Hey fool, was there a Mexican Holocaust? They told me some crazy shit about the revolution down there. Maybe I'll draw

**Mrs. Aguilar found out  
about his addiction.**

some stuff about Zapata and those fools with the masks [in the Zapatista National Liberation Army, a guerilla group currently fighting for indigenous rights in

Mexico]. That stuff is dope. Yeah!"

"Draw anything you want Richard," I told him. "With or without dope, but draw."

Laughing in a childish tenor he replied, "All right, Carlos, but don't trip right now, because I got to go take care of some business. Got



things to do, you know. I'll even bust out a piece for your article. If you have more questions, call me. I know you've been talking to my mom. That's all right. Or I'll call you. I got your number. Hey! You want a digital camera? I got an MP3 player, too. I know you like that stuff. Better than the one you have. No? All right. Good looking out. I'll catch you later."

I see him walking away towards the parking lot where I usually leave my car unlocked. I do not worry about my car or my possessions in it, but I am deeply troubled about Richard's future. As someone trained in the social sciences, I hope to possess the powers to remove all the variables in this experiment of life that make him the successful study in deviant behavior instead of the successful youth he is capable of becoming. But in my few years of experience I know that it takes more than that and more than telling his story. I am glad, however, that he still has hope in himself and his abilities as an artist.

KATY DIDIER

## Hollywood and Vines



The day is heralded by the scent of 8:30am.  
 The dormant rosemary  
 Adhered to my car the night before,  
 Twisted and growing torrents of leaves and vine.  
 Metal and vine together.  
 Wedded.  
 Efficiency of space requires me to weld the two, one.  
 And in a snap of voluptuousness,  
 A double shot of time, I tear conjoined twins apart.  
 I make salad every time I pull out of the driveway.  
 Plastic purple flowers leap from their stern parents,  
 Trying to hitch a ride on my bumper.  
 Drawn like Van Gogh's geisha  
 To the throb of the city.

Transient greens step back and force fledglings into the foreground.  
 Purple rosemary flowers splatter against that wall as my car makes  
 a turn.

A purple building just off the freeway,  
 From Deco half-artists  
 Looking to translate foreign nature into something comprehensible.  
 In a purple placemat against Hollywood and Vine,  
 Wooden wires entwine with my bumper and plate.  
 Wedded.  
 Transmuted into primer and paint,  
 The frightened electric world is attacked by nature,  
 Even if it is just from the bumper of my beat-up car.

## JAMIE WEBER

## Document [essay]



When I was in my mid-teens, Jennifer and I would drive around looking for decay to photograph. We looked for abandoned buildings and neglected neighborhoods, which were left unappreciated by most, but loved by us. Jennifer was 18 and had started taking pictures in high school and I tagged along, a fifteen year-old taking advantage of her sister's car and drivers' license to wander around the city with her, exploring.

Pasadena has always been thought of as a city of beautiful houses on tree-lined streets, but the area around Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena's oldest commercial district, had been in a state of neglect for as long as I, or anyone I knew, could remember. After World War II, a posh, new Bullock's department store was built on South Lake Avenue in Pasadena and after that a whole new shopping district blossomed there, leaving Colorado Boulevard to languish. The only time people seemed to pay attention to Old Town was on New Year's Day for the Rose parade, but I suppose the tourists never noticed the beautiful, empty buildings behind the bustling crowds during the parade.

In the mid-eighties, Old Town Pasadena was still an almost deserted neighborhood of abandoned buildings and storefronts. The homeless who didn't live in the park down the street slept in the doorways of the empty shops or inside the empty buildings they could break into. The businesses around there were a combination of pawn shops, adult bookstores, and bars, with a few retailers waiting for gentrification.

We'd been walking down an alley north of Colorado Boulevard, taking pictures of a crumbling staircase in the back of an abandoned building. A large poster of a man's face was propped into one of the top floor windows. It felt as if he watched us as we pulled away the boards at the back to crawl into the burned-out building next door. I considered what Jennifer had said earlier about falling through the building's floor. If she fell through it, I was going to be the one who

had to walk down Colorado Boulevard looking for help. A shy, fifteen year-old girl with a shaved head and combat boots, I would calmly explain that my sister had fallen through the floor of an empty building while taking photographs of graffiti and trash. I figured nothing would happen and we'd leave together in one piece, but I considered the scenario as it would appear to an outsider as I kept following her across the room, trying to walk softly as if that would make me lighter and less likely to fall through the floor.

While Jennifer took pictures through dirty store windows, we talked and I collected little bits of broken glass and observed the things left in abandoned buildings: a room full of partially disemboweled TV's, groups of odd crutches hanging on a wall, a brown Christmas tree left on a butcher shop floor, posters advertising physical immortality or conspiracies by the Vatican, three-wheeled shopping carts filled

***I figured nothing would happen and we'd leave together in one piece...***

with newspapers, backless office chairs, empty rum bottles and broken records. There was a certain beauty in all the forsaken objects, all the decayed furniture and broken things, the peeling paint on the walls, and the broken windows that let you peek into buildings that were locked up tight. There were questions too. What had this place been before? What happened to an entire neighborhood to make whole streets of buildings stand empty?

Driving south on the old Arroyo Seco freeway with Jennifer in her 1969 Chevy Malibu we slid along its narrow curves as we drove through Highland Park, its hills covered in yellow mustard flowers. After crossing the bridge, which lifted us up toward the rocky wall-like hills of Elysian Park, and passing the little hillside houses of Chavez Ravine, we got off the freeway at Hill Street and drove toward Little Tokyo to take pictures of the empty warehouses and loading docks.

Jennifer's Malibu was cavernous and black inside. The long, slanting windshield and side windows made it dark and claustrophobic. In my mind, the radio was always playing X or Joy Division, something that makes me think of the timeless monotony of the freeway game, "Which freeway interchange do you like best?" I decide on the four-

level where the Harbor and Hollywood freeways intersect going into downtown, but Jennifer thinks not. "It's so over; everyone says that. The best one's definitely East L.A." I agree with her, but stipulate that East L.A.'s only the east interchange when you approach it from the 10 freeway westbound so you can get that Disneyland Autopia feeling when you drive under the bridge with all the ivy drapping off of it.

Today, Jennifer and I still drive around taking pictures. We talk and listen to music as we drive from place to place, Jennifer slamming on the brakes which sends me flying into the window until the seat belt chokes me back, or I drive while she gives out last minute directions which carry us, tires screaming, round a corner to look at a laundromat with wonderful signage or a 1950s Googie-style liquor store. We don't spend as much time taking pictures as we once did, but we still make special pilgrimages every Christmas to Toys 'R' Us to document the decline of American civilization as revealed by gargantuan heaps of plastic figures. A nativity scene with a racially mixed holy family

***...the records always  
playing X or Joy Division...***

and Frosty for a wise man or window displays of every kind of twinkle light with a picture of the Pope in the center. Our mission is to find tacky but

beautiful decorations; the self-consciously tasteful decorations of the middle class send us running. There's nothing interesting about white lights and green boughs.

I realized on a recent trip to the cactus garden at the Huntington Library in San Marino that all these years I wasn't just tagging along while Jennifer took pictures. With her I experience the world in a way I never do from in my normal day-to-day existence. Time moves slower as we examine the minute details of everyday things. The only difference between Jennifer and me is how she fixes her observations on film while I commit mine to memory where they are transformed by time, becoming more personal and subjective through the years.

I had been standing next to Jennifer, holding her yellow plastic market bag filled with all her cameras, while she carefully lifted the black paper off the lens of her pinhole camera and started counting slowly. She was photographing a lunar landscape of enormous barrel

cacti, which stood high and round along a low bed of sand. They would look severe and dark against a slightly blurry frame in the photo created by the pinhole camera. I stood watching quietly so as not to distract her, listening to a group of elderly ladies standing behind us who were talking in Chinese. I thought how the pianist Glenn Gould would listen to the sounds around him while eating breakfast in his favorite diner and how, mixed together, the sounds became music to him. I listened while the ladies' voices mixed with the voices of the people walking by. The rhythms merged and fell apart, occasionally someone laughed. Jennifer placed the black paper over the pinhole lens and started to crank the film forward.

## R. MARIE JENNINGS

Literary Prize Winner • Essay

### Fears

At work last week a janitor pointed out an abandoned backpack to me. Just in case it was a bomb. We are supposed to be afraid of terrorism because museums are good targets. But he was the first person I knew to actually believe that if someone was going to attack Los Angeles, they would start with an obscure science museum. During awards season no less. I've tried to be a good citizen and to be afraid of the things my country wants me to, but it just hasn't stuck. When I opened the bag all it held was a half-eaten lunch and an unsigned field trip permission form. Americans just don't have much to pick from for our fears.

My best friend's husband is afraid of cats. Seriously. My cat is afraid of thunderstorms, although he is fourteen inches tall and can't be at much risk of lighting. Since my brother has started flying to Central

---

*Americans just don't  
have much to pick  
from for our fears.*

---

America a lot, he has become afraid of bugs. Apparently he's read too many signs in hotels warning tourists about local poisonous insects. Judging from the advice my other brother sends

me, he's afraid all women who live alone in a big city are murdered eventually. Which is stretching logic even if I wasn't a big, strapping farm girl. When I get a flat tire at night in a bad neighborhood, I'm already clutching a tire iron and angry about the anti-theft lug nuts have been stolen?

I have an ex-boyfriend who is afraid of clowns. One of my friends gave up on my teaching him how to make balloon animals. He was just too scared that they would pop. However, he juggles clubs that are much heavier, faster and more likely to hurt if they hit his face. My mother won't drive when she visits me. I drive her everywhere

because she is frightened by the traffic. Los Angeles has become just that bit more dangerous now that I've started driving in it and Indiana that much safer with me gone.

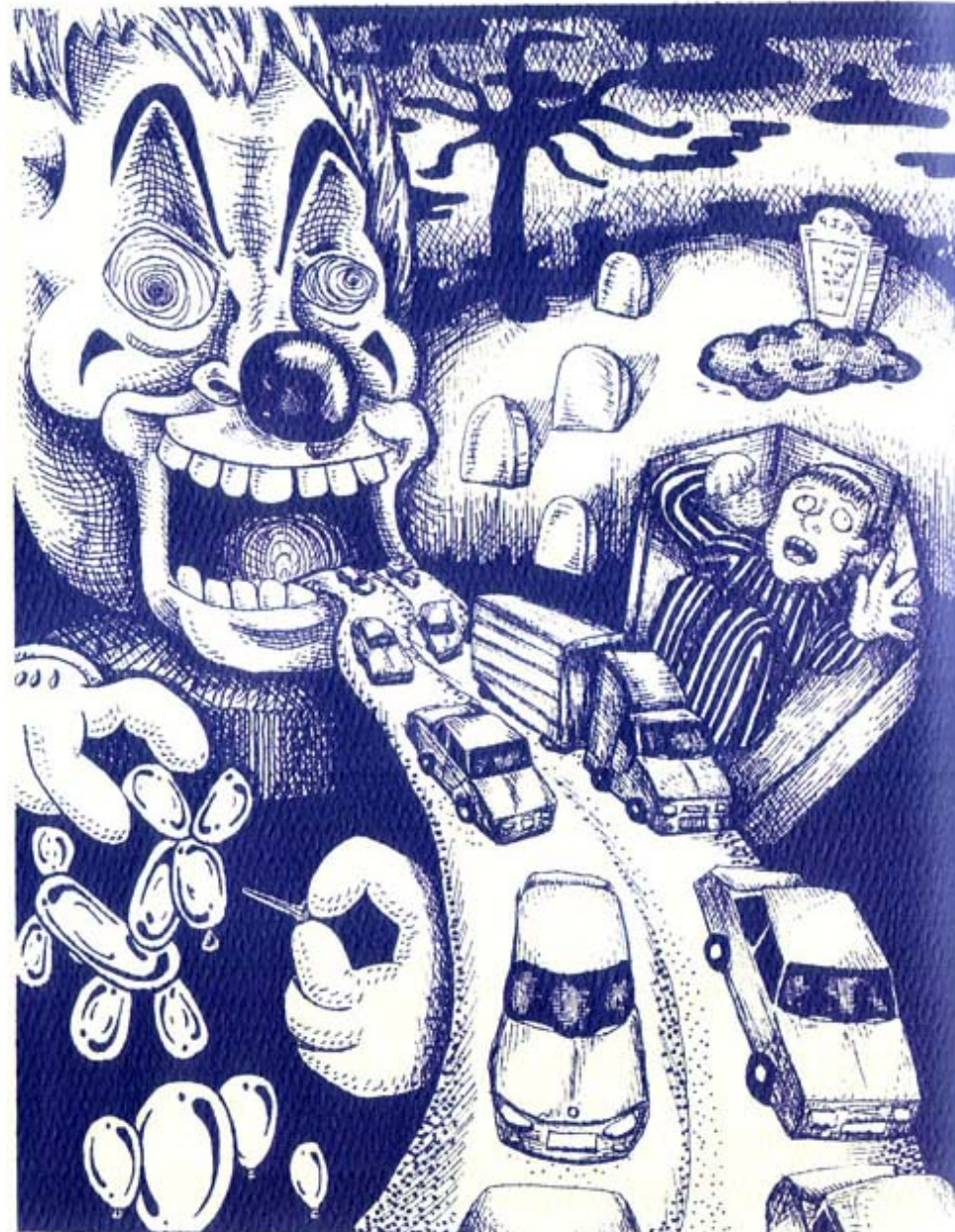
---

*I have an ex-boyfriend  
who is afraid of clowns.*

---

My nephew became worried about being buried alive when he started reading Edgar Allen Poe. I suggested getting an organ donor

card would eliminate that possibility. When I was little a monster lived under my bed, but now I have a futon. I have a friend that can't watch some movies because she's afraid of vampires. I can't watch *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Wizard of Oz* because I'm terrified of Oompa-loompas and Munchkins. If the terrorists have colorfully dressed dancing midgets, I'll be in trouble.



## MEGAN BENTZEL

## Inside the Snakepit

Over the past three years there has been a rising interest in personal magazines, or “per-zines,” within the zinester community. Per-zines range from conversational and journal-like, to more formal and detailed memoir-style, to comics, and everything in between.

One of the most popular titles is Ben Davies’s *Snake Pit*, a series of three paneled comics drawn daily to present the events of that day. The success lies in the balance between the author’s self-disclosure, so that the readers feel that they relate to him, and enough self-awareness to know that he is part of something greater than himself. Although the comic is Davies’s account of his own life, at no point does it feel like he is at the center of his world.

The first time I met Ben in a small, all-ages rock club in Anaheim, California, it was as if Charlie Brown had sprung to life. “That has to be him,” I said to my beau. “He’s got the same hair in his comic.” Formed over the years by reading *Snake Pit*, my image of Ben as average height and small build didn’t quite match the real Ben. He’s easily six feet tall with broad shoulders that on anyone else may have been imposing. Ben wears a reverse beard which covers only his neck and chin while his face remains clean-shaven. His hair, which initially caught my attention, was dyed deep black and cut short with the exception of one Devil’s Lock at the peak of his hairline that dropped in front of his eyes whenever he would bashfully lower his head. There was no denying the honesty with which he drew himself.

Meeting Ben for the first time was rather strange. In most instances for interviews I feel closer to the subject than they do to me. It’s natural. I’ve done my research while they, in most cases, know very little about me. With Ben it went deeper than that. Reading about his life, through heartache, boredom, happiness, and the entire gamut of his emotions, made me feel as though he was a close friend from the

---

...it was as if Charlie Brown  
had sprung to life.

---

start, which made it impossible for him to become anything other than that.

Ben, known by many as “Ben Snakepit,” began drawing *Snake Pit* in 2000 after discovering that one of his favorite personal comics at the time, *Jim’s Journal*, was fictitious. Ben took the concept of *Jim’s*

---

*The comic has allowed  
Ben a new, therapeutic  
perspective...*

---

*Journal*, a daily three to four paneled strip, and used his own life as fodder. His will-power over the first year wasn’t as strong as he had hoped, and he would try to catch up by drawing several days long after they had passed. For New

Year’s 2001, Ben decided to be resolute and not go more than two days without recording them in his thick, black sketchbook. Three years later he has remained faithful to that resolution. Every day for over 1,095 days, Ben’s life has been simplified into a three panel comic.

One of the features that makes *Snake Pit* so addictive is the honesty with which Ben presents himself. He makes no excuses or explanations for his actions, other than occasionally writing off his behavior because he is a “dumb ass,” and allows those actions to speak for themselves. At twenty-nine, Ben works as a clerk in an Austin video store. He’s been divorced for several years. He’s covered in tattoos that range from a “chicken of death holding onto the hourglass of time” to a crooked heart and dagger tattoo he gave himself on a night that he’d drunk enough to think it was a good idea. He only owns one pair of pants at a time. Currently the pants are brown Dickies, which puts his lucky brown shirt out of commission so that he won’t look like “a giant turd.” He drinks a lot. He smokes pot even more. He has a sonorous voice that borders on deep, but is one of the most soothing I’ve ever heard. His list of personal heroes range from Woody Guthrie to the Symbionese Liberation Army, and he has a tendency to fall in love easily over girls who wear Converse and have strange haircuts.

The initial reactions to *Snake Pit* surprised Ben. People would read his monthly issue—which he would shrink from the panels in his sketchbook at Kinkos, hand cut and paste the reduced images, copy the half-page sized zine, assemble and staple each issue, and deliver by bicycle to local book, record, and comic stores—and tell him that

they liked it; that it was funny. He recalls that his response would be, “It’s not supposed to be funny, but thanks, I guess.” Ben realized that the monthly supplement wasn’t doing the comic justice because the intricacies that, over time, pull readers into the comic weren’t being given enough time to develop. He now releases quarterlies and anthologies, which cover the entire year.

Cataloging his actions and emotions daily has helped to keep Ben from becoming jaded. “It’s hard enough to romanticize the past when you have a cartoon of yourself hating a club because it’s filled with smoke, or someone dies that you just never liked, or a girl did treat you really badly.” The comic has allowed Ben a new, therapeutic perspective as well. “Something might happen. I might get evicted from my house, fired from my job, dumped by my girlfriend, whatever. At the time it feels like life is horrible and it can’t get any worse. Then I draw it and there’s this little cartoon man and I’m like, ‘What am I worried about? It’s going to be okay.’”

Following Ben into his snake pit, where the pattern of every low is balanced by a high, it appears that he is right. It really is going to be all okay.

## WILLIAM DANIELS

### Picking Fruit

I come from a small town, so small, in fact, that it’s still not listed on most maps and if you blinked on the way through you’d surely miss it. Avon Park sits smack dab in the middle of the Florida Heartland—just south of Orlando (with a population nearing 6,000, but closer to 10,000 if you count cattle, livestock, and other living cash crops). In Avon Park there are few blacks and even fewer opportunities for them to advance beyond the margins of society. The major job opportunities for black men consist most of the following: factory work, migrant farm work, corrections, janitorial, and, for the overly ambitious wanderlust-types, the ever popular semi-truck driving.

My grandfather, or “Papa”, was a migrant worker who picked oranges in and around the Florida Citrus Belt. Throughout his life he had been the recipient of blatant racism—having been passed over, pushed aside, threatened, discriminated against, and stolen from, but he never gave in to bitterness or hatred; instead, it gave him a newfound purpose in life—to make sure that I had more opportunities than he.

---

*...hundreds of thousands  
of sprinklers whose heads  
barely peeped over the  
fresh cut hedges...*

---

Papa would always push me to excel in my academic studies. He knew that the only way for me to achieve something in this life would be by getting a good education. He would always say, “Son, an average white man can grow up to be president, and an average black man, well he’s just average.” In many ways Papa was an average black man, but he was also a great man, both in the way he carried himself and the way he dealt with people.

It was around this time that I was going through a questioning stage in my young adult life. I wanted to be able to relax and sit back and contemplate my life and the path it would eventually lead me

down. Up until then, everyone else had always determined my future—where I would go, what I would study, who I would study with, etc. So in a literal sense I started to rebel. Papa was a very intuitive man and could sense my restlessness, so one particular day he asked me if I wanted to go to work with him. I jumped at the chance to be able to make my own money, to earn my independence, and possibly see some of the world outside of Avon Park's city limits.

I remember being fascinated by the Florida orange groves. They were huge and sprawling, with row after monotonous row of citrus trees. Throughout the lush foliage there were hundreds of thousands of sprinklers whose heads barely peeped over the fresh cut hedges as they saturated the sun-parched grounds. Occasionally, fertilizer trucks would traverse back and forth and up and down the rows, spewing fertilizer to ensure a good crop, and to detour the occasional poacher—usually northern snowbirds—from stopping to grab a handful of sweet Florida nectar.

As we exited the small cramped van, Papa split up the job details. Many of the men already knew their work assignments. Papa would

---

*The more I wiped the sweat, the more came.*

---

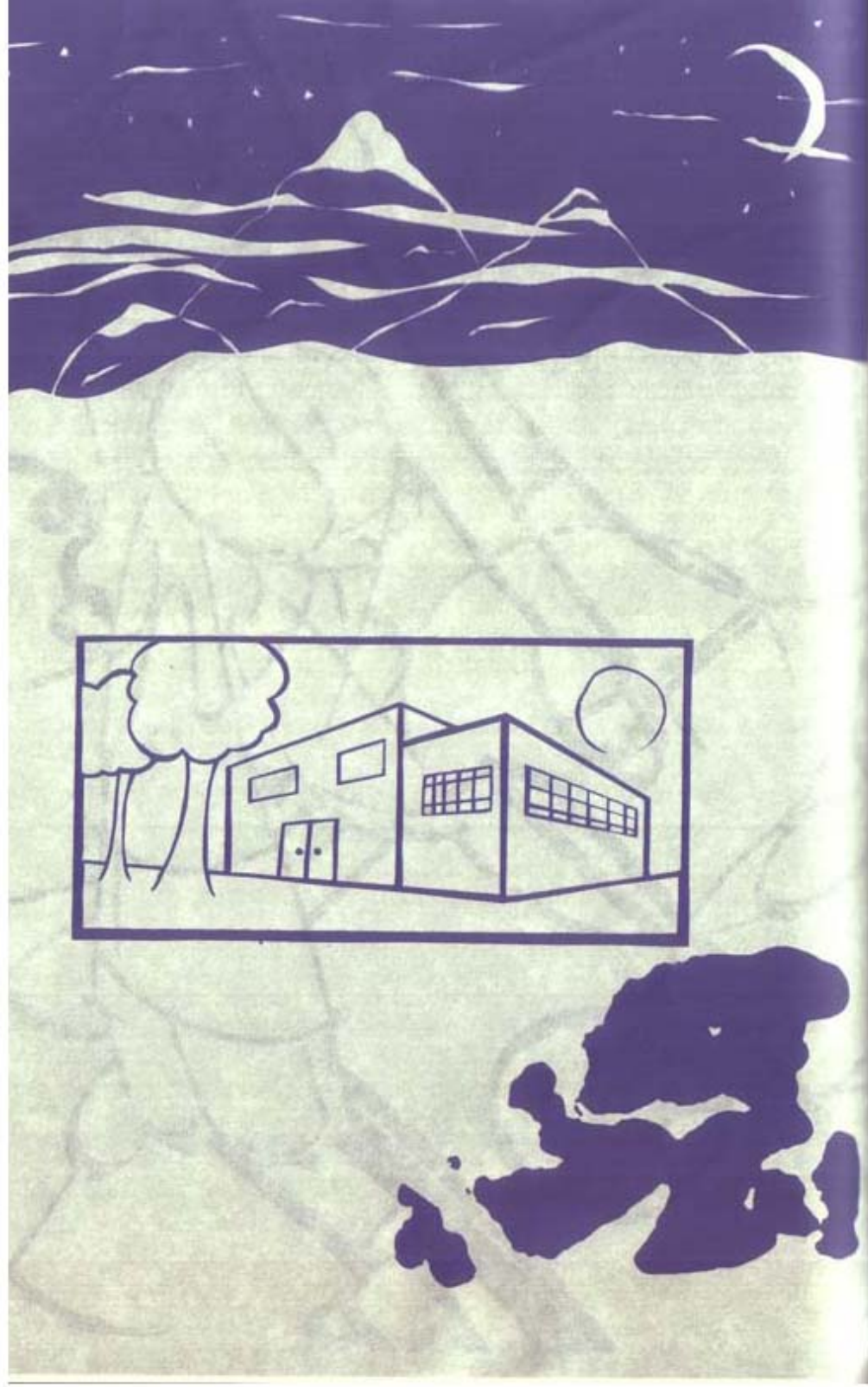
section off the grove and assign two men to each row. They would work from opposite ends and meet in the middle where they would take their lunch breaks. Around

this time, Papa handed me my orange sack. It was the kind of sack that strapped over the shoulder, and then around the waist. I remember it feeling like two clamps stuck on my shoulder and hip. My instructions weren't too complicated: Pick oranges, dump oranges in orange bin, pick more oranges, and dump more oranges. At first I approached my work much like a sprinter not knowing that this job was more like a marathon. The other men worked extremely fast, so I tried to imitate them. I studied their exact movements, now graceful from years and years of experience. It was all very rhythmic and it appeared, on the surface, to be effortless. As I tugged at the stubborn oranges many of the others had already filled three-quarters of their sacks; meanwhile, several overachievers were continuously going up

and down their ladders to dump their fruit sacks, while I struggled to fill my one.

As noon made its approach, the heat became visible, so much that you could almost touch it. Then the sweat from my brow began to slowly trickle down my frown lines, down into the cracks of my sun scorched lips, and I remember the salt tasting especially tart as the hours meandered by. At around 12:30 I began to grow weary. The sack became even heavier and the straps dug into my shoulder and waist, leaving two deep grooves in my skin. The more I wiped the sweat, the more came. When Papa came by to check on me I pretended to be fine. I kept on going, thinking that the time would flitter by more quickly if I didn't pay attention to it, but here it was on my Timex quartz digital reading 12:48 and 53 seconds—only five more hours to go. I remember praying for strength as the rays from the sun started to flicker around the corners of my watery eyes; my tongue grew thick and cottony inside my mouth—even my ears began to singe near the edges. To this day I can still hear that persersum crow cawing, which at the time I mistook for mocking laughter. Time suddenly slowed, so much so I don't remember falling from the ladder; the fruit sack still draped around my waist and shoulder. Luckily for me, a mound of rotten oranges and rotten leaves, turned to mulch, broke my fall. By then, the other men were laughing. Even Papa was tickled by the turn of events.

On that day, failure cloaked itself about me like a worn-out shawl. And, at first, the primal laughter that erupted from the belly of most of the other men only added to my feelings of embarrassment, shame, and low self-worth. But then that same laughter took on a mirth-like quality. Suddenly I realized that they weren't necessarily laughing at me—neither was that darn crow; instead, they were rejoicing for me and for the future they saw for me aside from picking fruit. They knew that I would go on to do something many of them could only dream of doing, this side of heaven. Something welled up inside of me and for an instant I could sense their respect, and their admiration, and, most of all, their support.



That fall I headed off to some foreign college, miles away, where I became the first person in my family to walk down the hallowed halls of academia. I often think back to those men and I wonder whatever became of them. Did they have more children? Did they improve their lot in life? Or did they merely survive, doing the best that they could with what little they had? I'm often reminded of them when I pass the new migrant workers, of this generation. My dwindling hope for a better future is renewed then, knowing that if I could make it out, hopefully one day soon, one of them, or possibly their heirs, could very well do the same.

## PRIANE LANE

### Steve's Not Home

The desert is where many people go to forget. It is a place of isolation and unbearable weather, inhospitable for many, but well suited for those longing for a therapeutic way of life. The desert is a place I have always respected. It is where I found beauty and tranquility in nature, and, generously, it was also the place where I would find my biological father.

I had my first conversation with my father during a free continental breakfast provided by our hotel. It was an "all you can eat" breakfast with chefs that make your own specialized omelet. (I had a cheese omelet with onions, ham, and mushrooms). Our conversation was very fluid, though I remember

him as very anxious and nervous. I remember the look of his eyes, so vulnerable and apologetic. My father was very careful with his words. He started by saying, "I was scared, Priane. We started off

as a poor family and I didn't want to be poor." He stated that he was too young and too unprepared. He could put in only enough effort to make sure that we came out healthy because my mother was anemic.

He took me out around Phoenix to go shopping for clothes and shoes. It was a very dry heat when we walked around the many outdoor shops and outlets. He bought me new shoes and a very thick belt, which I didn't like at first, but soon came to be fond of (and now I wear it every chance I get). He bought me a whole week's wardrobe, which I felt uneasy accepting because he was a stranger to me, yet I felt at home with him. He was the void in my heart, which I kept in the bottom of my left shoe. When I was with him, I felt like crying but I held back in order to show him my indifference towards his absence.

I visited his house, which was enormous, but unusually distant. It looked like something out of a decorator's catalog but more crowded.

---

*...it reflected more of  
himself than the  
whole house.*

---

The odd thing was, there was so much furniture and so many items, yet it felt empty because it didn't complement him at all. Behind all of the confusion of antique furniture, he showed me his home office. It was very different from the other rooms. He said, "This is where I spend most of my time." It was a clean and simple office, and it reflected more of himself than the whole house. He said, "My wife likes buying antiques. That's why there are so many out there."

We talked about his name, and why he changed it. He said, "Primitivo is such an odd name, especially around here. I changed it to Steve so I would blend in with the rest of the people." With those words, I came to realize why his house didn't match him. Why the rooms in his house were so distant and pointless because, at the time, I had forgotten we were in a desert. This was his escape, his air-conditioned sanctuary. The desert was his home now, away from the overwhelming guilt and anguish of his past.

Our day ended with dinner and the most mouth-watering dessert I have ever tasted. We ate like Westerners, complete with baked potatoes, salad, and steak, an "All-American" meal. We talked about the past, without ego or resentment. We talked about my godmother, who had soon become my guardian, and why I refused the gold necklace she wanted to hand down to me before she died. The last course of the meal was a chocolate ice cream volcano cake, with hot fudge as the lava. It was so delicate and divine; it tasted like Beethoven's *Fuer Elise*. I wish I had stolen the recipe.

When we left the restaurant, we saw a jack rabbit in the parking lot. It was such a delight; it gave us a smile before we headed for the car. As we were walking, I noticed the sky. Never in my life have I seen such a marvelous show of light. Lavender, orange, light blue, yellow, and other indescribable colors were merged in flawless harmony. It was a perfect sunset. It felt as if it had been made especially for us, for our moment of peace.

When we drove back to the hotel there was a windstorm, the first I had ever seen. As I watched, thinking about the hostility of this desert environment, my father interrupted, saying, "You know, Priane, in the winter it's a whole different story around here."

## ANGELA McNAMEE

### What Did You Call Me?

When I woke up that morning I never expected a simple walk with my dog for the day, something I'd done a thousand times before, would turn into such an ironic turn of Southern indignation under the liberal California sun.

I'd grown up in the South for 21 years under the stern rule of the Bible belt, where men were men and women were in the kitchen feeding them. I was taught that a strong work ethic and a good man was all you needed to have for a complete and happy life. Throw in some kids along the way and the Promised Land would not be too far behind. Never mind that all my Barbie dolls (strewn about my bedroom) were headless and naked. Kids were mandatory.

Growing up in the 60s and 70s you would think that the word Nigger was thrown at me like the daily newspaper was thrown at the front door every morning, but surprisingly enough, it was a word foreign to me, as the words spoken on Telemundo and me lying channel surfing in the middle of the night wondering what happened to all those years of high school Spanish. Don't get me wrong, the word was used, of course, but heard more on television or in movies than it was at my schools or at home. It just wasn't spoken to me.

Then I lived in Texas for six years where you would assume the men were even bigger and the women were in bigger kitchens cooking even more food to feed them, but life was pretty much status quo for me there, similar to what I had experienced while living in South Carolina. In fact, I liked it even better. It was a college town, so there was more to do and more places to do them in. Columbia, the capitol of South Carolina, was a college town as well, but, again, Texas...BIGGER!

It was a great experience and I have many fond memories of Austin. After all, it's home of Bevo, the Longhorns, Aqua Fest, and

---

*...it was a word  
foreign to me...*

---

those hard-shelled armadillos. (OK, not the squished ones cooking on the road in the Texas heat that the semis just ran over, but the cute ones you see leading their families across the Texas panhandle in the glitzy Chamber of Commerce ads.)

It was a city overshadowed by the looming clock tower on the UT campus that stir up the memories of Charles Whitman's reign of terror, when he fired down on unsuspecting campus-goers on August 1, 1966, each minute of the clock ticking out his legacy of hate and anger carried by him that day and by the state of Texas over the years. You would think the word Nigger clung to the tongues in that town the way the sound of Whitman's gunfire clung to the rafters on his fateful day. And I'm sure it did; it just wasn't spoken to me.

Believe it or not, it took a move to good ol' sunny, Southern California before hearing the word directed at me for the first time. On that day while walking my dog, and for the first time, piquing my Southern ire, I remember two things. I remember feeling as if this woman (who was hiding behind the comfort of her living room window) had physically struck me after the word was spoken. It was so out of the blue and so out of context to my walking my dog in a grassy area near her apartment. I also remember feeling as if this was

---

*It was so out of the blue  
and so out of context...*

---

the first time I had ever actually heard the word. To the point where I even turned around to see if there was someone else standing behind

me that she could have been referring to, because surely she hadn't spoken it to me.

Standing there feeling my Southern indignation warming like the quilt sewn by my grandmothers from a long time past, I remember thinking that as a child I had only imagined how I would feel having someone call me Nigger to my face and somehow, up to this point, I'd been fortunate enough not to have experienced that. Yet there I stood, in this day and age, having to deal with a word that, up to now, just wasn't spoken to me.

This, however, was the day. After 21 years of living naively under the prejudicial flap of the Confederate flag that hung high over our courthouse over my home, was my awakening to a life that the civil

rights movement was born under, a movement that before this moment I had only realized in movies or television that I was grow-

---

*...this was my maiden  
voyage into the icy, cold  
waters of prejudice...*

---

ing up. A movement that professed whereby doing the right thing, I would be created equal and seen as the same. Well, I was doing the right thing. I was walking my dog where I was told to do so by the manage-

ment of my apartment complex, yet I was no more "her equal" than the dog I was walking.

This movement now stirred in me, on that spot, on that day, caused me to realize that no matter what I was wearing, no matter what breed of dog I was walking and no matter where I lived, (two doors down from her I might add), I was still a Nigger to this woman and that was a moment that I'll never forget because, on that day, it was spoken to me.

Standing there my heart sank like the Titanic on its maiden voyage. Ironically, this was my maiden voyage into the icy, cold waters of prejudice, but unlike my drowning predecessors who perished on the Titanic, there was a life raft for me. I clung to it as if I was fighting for my last breath. Clinging to my dignity, I refused to go down to the depth of anger that I felt reaching for me. I was not going to sink to her level of intolerance and lash out at her. I was not about to give her what she wanted or what she may have expected. I looked back at her through her window, locked eyes with hers and calmly asked, "What did you call me?"

That one sentence was spoken a hell of a lot more stoically than I expected it to be spoken and yet it seemed to give her the verbal slap that she physically deserved. Perhaps it was the thought of her actually having to repeat the word to me that deflated her arrogance, because no sooner than I questioned what was finally spoken to me after all these years, she turned her face away from mine and slowly closed her window.

## ERIN NICOLE MELLINGER

## Didn't Your Mother Teach You Anything?

For nearly three years, I have worked nights as a promotional model for Anheuser-Busch. This is not a part of my life that I generally make known to most people because of the stereotypes that come with the job. People tend to view girls in my line of work as bimbos who live a loose lifestyle and love to party. This might be true in a few cases, but the majority of girls I work with are either focused college students or they have degrees and established careers. The fact is, promoting is a fun, relatively effortless job and it is great extra money.

I understand how people might get the impression that promotional models are easy. Our dresses are skin-tight, low cut, and about the size of a bath mat, and our heels are usually about five inches high. You try walking into a room wearing that and see what kind of stares you get (assuming you're not a guy, because that would just be scary). I knew from the beginning that the job was all about emanating

sex-appeal. The majority of beer drinking clientele are men, and who better to convince a man to drink a certain beer than an attractive girl? Well, imagine being that girl. It's not like you just waltz into the room

---

*...see what kind of  
stares you get...*

---

and you have men swooning over you and lining up to politely ask about the benefits of the beer you're promoting. Don't misunderstand me, there are plenty of guys who are polite and respectful, but there are even more who feel that whistling, howling, barking, swearing, and undressing you with their eyes are surely the best ways to get a girl's attention. Some words of advice to any guy who thinks that's a good approach: IT IS NOT.

I'm not saying that it's a hard job, but if you let your guard down for a second, some guy will walk all over you. They generally assume that you aren't used to using your brain, so they see how far they can push you by this brilliant test. They believe that if they say dirty things to you and you let it pass and just laugh, then you'll probably

just let it pass if they try to touch you. (Silly boys—they're so transparent). That is why you must smack them into place from the beginning. This is where the job gets fun ... challenging, but fun.

Usually when a bunch of guys are sitting together, they feed off each other's jokes and they are more inclined to say inappropriate things to you. They'll say things like, "That's a nice dress, I like how it shows off your tight little body. If I buy a beer, do I get to take you home with me?"

---

*I encountered a particularly  
drunk and slovenly man.*

---

I have found that this type of question is most suitably answered by smiling and saying, "Hmmm ... I don't know. You're so fascinated with my dress that I'm starting to think you want to wear it! Maybe your buddy, here, will go home with you and you can prance around in it for him. I think he's starting to get a little jealous that you're talking to me and not him, anyway." Macho, male chauvinist guys don't like it when you even joke about them being homosexual. When you do this in front of their friends, they get really embarrassed and will either get mad and not talk to you anymore, or they will laugh and give you a little credit because they like your feistiness.

However, not all members of the male gender that act aggressively can be so easily dissuaded. A few weeks ago, I encountered a particularly drunk and slovenly man. He was sitting with about ten other people (men and women), and every time I passed by him his comments and gestures towards me got worse. He started out by telling me that the way men greet women in his country is to "smack them on the ass and say 'get me a beer.'" To which I replied, "That's why I'm glad I don't live in your country." I was working with another girl and when she handed him some Corona pins, he held them up to her breasts and said, "Let's put them here and see if they go POP," indicating that her breasts were so big that they must be implants. We tried not to go near that table anymore, but we had to pass by it to get to the other tables around it whenever we crossed the room. This man was making both of us really uncomfortable and there was nothing fun about my job at that point. Then I got stuck near him because a waitress was blocking me in with some food trays and he did the most



disgusting thing I've experienced in my three years of promoting. He put his face right next to my crotch and started making gyrations with his head while thrusting out his tongue, as if he were performing a sexual act. I felt the blood boiling in my face, and I just took the palm of my hand and shoved his head back and then pushed my way past the waitress.

Looking back on it, I should have had him thrown out, but I didn't. I was deeply bothered by the whole situation, though. I had never met such a horrifyingly lewd and disrespectful person, but what

*I couldn't stand  
to look at him...*

bothered me even more was that the women at the table weren't saying anything. I wanted to go up to the guy and say, "Not only are you an embarrassment to yourself and the people that you're sitting with, but

you're an embarrassment to the mother that raised you." But instead I just thought it. I couldn't stand to look at him again. That perverse man certainly got the better of me that day because nothing I could have said to him would have gotten even for how dirty he made me feel. I guess I thought I was safe with my witty comebacks and sarcastic banter, but he proved me wrong.

I think sometimes that women may make it easy for men to view them sexually. I'll be the first to admit that. But I still don't think that makes it okay to treat them like they aren't human or as if they don't have worth. I just wish more men would remember that somewhere they have a mother, and maybe even a sister. They should really think about how they would feel if somebody talked to the women in their life the way that they talk to some females. I've met so many other guys who are wonderful examples of the male gender, my boyfriend included, and it's a shame that they are sometimes grouped in the same class as the men who act like complete jerks. So in closing, THANK YOU to those of you who can look at a girl no matter what she's wearing—I guess you did learn a thing or two from your mother.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Ku'uipo Aki-Siler** writes fiction, poetry and screenplays. She boogie boards with her two daughters.

**Joshua Aldrete** is an artist, musician, writer, cook, and publisher of numerous 'zines. He likes cats.

**Megan Bentzel** will pursue a degree in Library Science. She works at a local veterinary hospital and *Razorcake*, a punk rock 'zine. Her interests include fighting the man and baking oatmeal cookies.

**Eva Brune** is a returning student and the mother of twin boys and a girl. She earns her living by writing part-time.

**Tyler Byrne** is destined for fame and wealth. He thinks it is funny to write his biographical note in the 3rd person.

**Edward Chong** has been a PCC student sporadically for three years. His focus is on short stories and poetry, and he would like to continue to publish.

**Jerry Chuang** continues to write short stories and plans on becoming a full-time writer.

**William Daniels** is a former resident of Florida, where he was a published poet. Since his time there he has begun experimenting with various other literary genres and has come to PCC with the hopes of molding his writing talents into a viable career.

**Katy Didier** graduated from high school in 2002 and has been involved in the arts all of her life, from painting to writing to dance to making crème brulee. Her travels have taken her to Europe and India.

**Cheryl Foreman** writes about monkeys eating oranges, and though the *Inscape* staff knows little about her they like her poem very much.

**Ernest Gonzalez** was born just east of downtown in Los Angeles, in Boyle Heights. His mother died when he was eight; he later attended John Burroughs Junior High School and Los Angeles High. He has two grown children.

**Carlos Lemus** is a returning student to PCC, who has also attended California State University, Long Beach. He has studied psychology and sociology, and he has worked for several years as a counselor for at-risk youth in a local agency.

**R. Marie Jennings** is originally from the Midwest but has been living in Los Angeles for three years. She has a B.S. in theatre from Ball State University.

**Mary Lau Valle** was raised in a bilingual/bicultural household featuring aspects of Chinese and Mexican culture. In her own words she “always had one foot in Chinatown, one in Olvera Street, and my heart in Hollywood,” and has traveled to Cuba, China, and Mexico. She dedicates her poems to one of her favorite professors, the late Peter Carr

**Priane Lane** was born in Manila, Philippines, in the year of the Rooster. She is currently majoring in Occupational Therapy.

**Scherrie Lemon** is the tenacious vice president of the PCC Black Student Alliance. Her future is in journalism.

**Christian Locatell** has been interested in poetry since he was in middle school. While his only formal training has come from PCC, one of his earlier works was published in the *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans*.

**Angela McNamee** is a single mother of three, who has returned to school with aspirations of becoming a writer. Her work within this magazine is, she says, a reaction to the shock of experiencing prejudice in liberal California after going so long without it in the South.

**Tina Vaden** is a writer, photographer and filmmaker.

**Jamie Weber** is a student of English and World Literature and likes seeing a good film at the American Cinematheque.

**Simon Webster** lives in Pasadena with his multicultural family. He was born in Germany and has lived there, in Kenya, and Connecticut before relocating here. His interest in writing began in the seventh grade, but this is the first time he has shared his work with anyone else.

**Carl White** is a native of Dublin, Ireland, and has lived in Los Angeles since 1993. He describes his motives for writing as “a love of words, the great story telling tradition of Ireland.”

**David Yenoki** is a writer and editor.



## **INSCAPE 2004-2005**

### **Contributing Artists**

In order of appearance of artwork

#### **Cover Design**

Joshua Aldrete

#### **Inside Pages**

Wayne Johnson

Anonymous

Andrew Cox

John Miner

Joanna De Souza

Anonymous

Phil Goldwhite

Joshua Aldrete

Francisco Alvarez

Maritza Dominguez

Steven Robbins

Steven Robbins

Dan Schwartzler

Katherine Tengco & Anonymous

Javier Torres

Errol Villaflor

Ian Malcolm

## Creative Writing & Graphic Communications at PCC

Those interested in producing creative work for *Inscape* publication, are encouraged to enroll in the following English (Eng) and Graphic Communications (GrCom) courses:

### **Eng 5A/B (Creative Writing):**

Creative literary expression with various forms, including short story, poetry and essay.

### **Eng 6 (Short Story Writing):**

Examination of the theory and practice in the writing of short stories.

### **Eng 8 (Writing Poetry):**

Writing of poetry in all forms and the reading of traditional and current work.

### **Eng 9 (Creative Nonfiction):**

Writing and study of literary nonfiction, including reviews, profiles of individuals, and memoirs.

### **GrCom 13 (Basic Screen Printing):**

Color and design for the commercial screen printer, and the printing on a variety of surfaces.

### **Eng 20 (Independent Study):**

Critical review and selection of creative material, design and layout of *Inscape* magazine.

### **GrCom 113 (Intermediate Screen Printing):**

Further study of the process camera and photographic techniques for screen printing.

### **GrCom 120 (Basic Composition and Imaging):**

Typographic composition and computer imaging in the graphic arts industry.

### **GrCom 199 (Intro. to Desktop Publishing):**

Written and visual computer skills used to create and produce original documents.

### **GrCom 220 (Basic Digital Imaging):**

Introduction to desktop computer techniques for the printing and publishing industries.

For additional information about the above courses and other English and Graphic Communications offerings, please consult the PCC Catalogue and Schedule of Classes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Inscape* Magazine students Ku'uipo Aki-Siler, Joshua Aldrete, Tyler Byrne, Scherrie Lemon, Tina Vaden, and David Yenoki wish to thank all of the PCC writers and artists who submitted work for this year's issue. They regret that space limitations did not permit publication for all of the fine work received.

Dean Amy Ulmer, Professor Manuel Perea, and creative writing faculty of the English Division are recognized for their important guidance and encouragement. Professor Kris Pilon and her graphic communications students deserve thanks for their collaboration, especially her students enrolled in Graphic Communications 13 and 113 (Screen Printing).

Additional faculty and staff were also helpful in bringing *Inscape* to press, including Assistant Dean Stephen Johnson of Student Affairs, Professor Brock Klein of Title V, and Dean Janet Levine of External Relations.

English 7 students wish to give special thanks to Mr. Jesus Ruiz of the Publications Office and Professor David Cuatt of Graphic Communication for their thoughtfulness, diligence, and patient instruction. They provided considerable help throughout the publication process.

*Inscape* was published in part with the generous financial support of the PCC Student Services Fund.

INSCAPE

---

# INSCAPE 2005

A LITERARY MAGAZINE



1570 East Colorado Boulevard  
Pasadena, California 91106-2003  
[www.pasadena.edu](http://www.pasadena.edu)

п. д. ј. и. у. р. д. т. а. и. з. в. о. н. и. с. и. в. е. к. с. а.

one copy     \$ THREE  
two copies   \$ FIVE  
five copies   \$ TEN