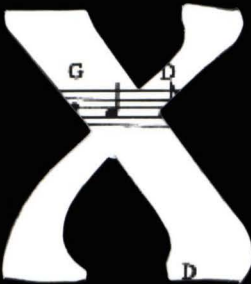
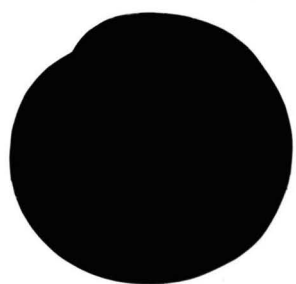


Fall 2008

Tufts' Black Literary & Visual Arts Magazine



A Student Publication



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Musical staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: Bsus2, G, D, Bsus2.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: G, D, G/B, A, Bm7, G, D.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: Bsus2, G, D.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: Bsus2, G, D, G/B, A. Includes first and second endings: 1 D, 2 D.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: G, D, G, D, G.

Musical staff 6: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: D, G/B, A, D, G/B, A, D.

Musical staff 7: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: Bsus2, G, D, Bsus2, G, D.

Musical staff 8: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: G/B, A, D, Bsus2, G.

Musical staff 9: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: D, Bsus2, G, D, G/B, A. Includes first ending: 1 D.

Musical staff 10: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: D, G/B, A, D, G/B, A. Includes second ending: 2.

Musical staff 11: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time signature. Chords: D, G/D, D, G/D, D, G/D, D. Includes first and second endings: 1 G/D, D; 2.

-Editor's Note-

Coming upon our 25-year anniversary, it goes without saying that there has been a lot going on in the country and at Tufts. We, as Jumbos, have seen a lot of going on, starting with the Points system being taken away, to The Roof and other buildings being made anew. We felt this change in our pockets (and stomachs), but so has the rest of the country, given the US's recent descent into recession. Yet we (the hungry as well as the fed) were still able to celebrate with Obama and Mrs. Clinton running for "the" place on the ballot, to Obama succeeding and becoming the President-elect. I had to sit back one day and really think about all that is going on, and how time can never be stopped. How it is up to us as a people to decide if we will have progression or regression; I don't know, but it seems that America has chosen progress. Now I am not going to use Onyx as my personal soapbox, but I will say this: It's about time!!! True Obama making it this far does not mark an ending for my generation, it's a step forward; but I know my grandmothers can die happy knowing that all of their work and the work of my earlier ancestors has finally come to light for those within the African Diaspora. We are not done people, but it seems that time is on our side—and we need to take advantage of it.

True, the class of 2012 will never know Tufts as I have known it, just the same my children will never know this country the way I have come to know it. And I say "Great!!!" Langston Hughes' poem "I, too, Sing American" comes to mind; we are becoming stronger and are no longer forced to the background and shamed—our kitchen time is over. I can now begin to see this reason and need for the Change that Obama says we can have. It seems that I am not the only one that feels it, because the poets have shown the same thought process through their writings that are in this fall issue. The board and I saw this theme of keeping the rhythm, keeping up with time, keeping change in mind. I feel the first poem sums it up moving on to the last picture. There is a very smooth rhythm that goes through this semester's magazine, I feel like you will feel it as you read through.

As I said earlier there has been a lot of change, especially with Onyx. Leila has handed the torch down to me, and finally decided to rest and relax her senior year. We love her and appreciate all she has done for this organization...even if we do give her a hard time! I feel honored in the faith that she has in me; I have respected her since my freshman year when she took me under as one of her "Favs" through working with her in Onyx. So it touches me to know that the respect is mutual. It is great to follow such a long line of successful editors, and to be able to add my own little touch to Onyx (I will try and finish that thought in next semester's celebration issue for the 25th). Also, I love my board, they have been very understanding and helpful during this time of transition and I want to thank them as well. Well, I will sign off on that emotional note...

Be like the rain, only you can stop yourself; and know you can never understand the beginning until you reach the end,

Domonique "Dom" Johnson

Editor of Onyx 08-09

Bosede A. Opetubo | Assistant Editor
Ashley J. Calhoun | Arts Editor
Courtney Payne | Assistant Arts Editor
Chartise Clark | Layout Editor

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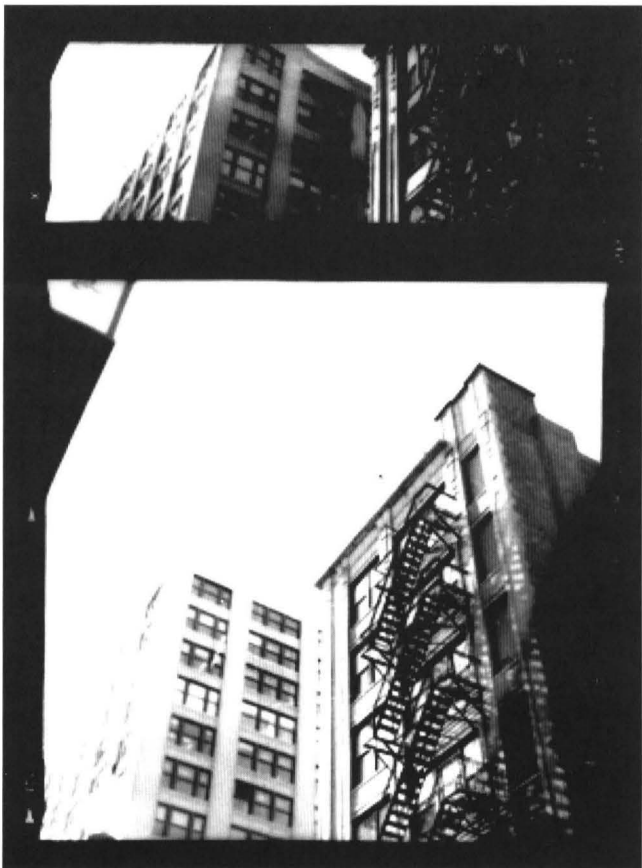
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Six

At times like this, I find that misguided,
misdirected misinterpretations find these miscellaneous consequences.
Once I was blinded, then eyes widened
and I was still blindsided by circumstances
and situations where calculations were instrumental
to the composition of a symphony but silly me miscalculated
and orchestrated a cacophonous compilation,
while hesitation did little against the basis for breaking the metronome,
breaking the monotone 4:4—kind of bored 2 stepping on the 4,
I'm looking for a 7 or a 6, another prospect.
In foresight a project developed. Something like say Tony Rich,
only my version of lonely sick ended with some bony bitch, phony tits,
only this means nothing but when you notice this
just know its this foolish kid trying to cope with this, toting risks,
dug a ditch and let it sit, poking sticks until it slowly ticks
and slowly ticks so slow these ticks...What time is it?
I find that this, misguided misdirected mindlessness
measures his 4 beat measures against a 6.
But that is foresight, for right now we can rearrange the composition
to prevent the orchestration of a compromising position,
just compromise an imposition of your calculations
on my infatuation with the maturation of my infatuation for its own sake.
Take and break or at least place a lease on that metronome.
I cannot own anything that damn monotone.
And don't envy her—don't blame her,
the fault falls first on the 4 on the floor of this misnomer
that minds to measure a 4 beat measure against a 6.

-P.Smurf, 3Esq.-



Untitled
-Anjali Nirmalin-



ShoeMates

Black high top Supras with gold leather wings
and blue open-toed heels met back to back at Starbucks one day

They kissed and clicked and said, "Hi.
Nice to meet you."

The sneakers bought my pumps and pink painted toes a latte
and we sipped and talked shop

while our feet flirted underneath the table

They walked with mine down Malcolm X Blvd,
stepping around puddles and fake Louis speedys

and hopped with me over steel grates
even though I was the only one in stilettos.

Somehow they convinced me to do laundry another day
and mine followed hers to the Zebra Room on Lenox

Our fingers may have mingled while we stood in line at the box
but our feet—her glittering kicks and

my 4 1/2 inch don't-fuck-with-me-shoes—played it cool

I can't speak for the Supras but my heels bounced and my toes tapped
through the whole damn show

And though we stayed silent after, during the short sidewalk stroll

The shoes clattered and chattered and
prattled on and on to the sound of jazz

still ringing in our ears

And I'll never forget, at the foot of my stoop

Our shoes got real familiar

Your toe met my heel and my heel met your toe

our legs merged

our bellies touched

your hand stroked my cheek

our noses nuzzled

our lips, and our tongues

parted and caressed each other's again and again

My feet were killing me—until this moment

while my heels stood patiently as our long good-bye became a,

"Maybe I could make you that latte I owe you"

And soon the winged Supras and leather heels

slumbered beside each other

in the doorway

-Bosede A. Opetubo-

Closure

I need to get rid of the hope
that you are confused.

I need to remind myself,
You
are never confused.

But it's a rude awakening.

I sleep better at night
with my thoughts
tucked in on paper,
and my heart washed bare.

Tumble
Dry
Low

In the shirt
you gave me,
and without
the boxers
you took back.

And you,
I gave you the honor
of the final move.

And you,
you snatched my queen
and ran away.

-Kara Takasaki-



The Sighing Song

with no purpose, on the streets that I roam, as at home
I feel worthless, I remember back in '95, like it was just the other night
I never knew the color white; I never knew America...nor the Dream,
the dream that keep on selling her, I seen and been on welfare too,
seen a Christmas turning blue, who is Santa? What do all his helpers do?
I never knew that "never knew" was bolder than the letter 2
Succeeding Thompson's W, excused us as illiterate, but I deem the
dream illegible
I seen the test in better view, prepared a few notes and I'm not so sure
how to pick the kids I tell em to, seldom viewed
social mobility, feudalism, nobility dualism with the promise opportunity,
They fabricate the lies, fabricate the ties
If the shackles and the cuffs end up lacking not enough
Then they replicate the fines, if you dedicate you're fine
If you stumble off the track, know that solace you can find
It's the Lord, it's your Father who can regulate the line
I see them trapped, in a tract called societal decline
So I'm apt to give back and emancipate they minds
But I can't, if I can't even graduate on time

-P. Smurf, 3esq.-

Hope for the Sky



-Lolly Berger-

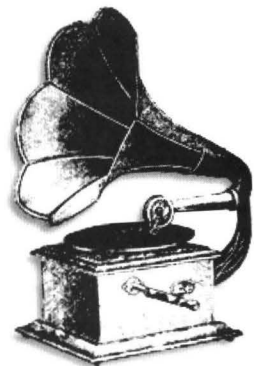
The Cancer

I purse my lips around the tip
and drag the chaos in until it
burns away inside my chest
and stain my lips with sweet unrest.

I sip the air around me now
and let the torrent build,
and drag the chaos down again
until it feels like sin.

I let the rage inside me swell
then spill into the wind
in disbelief-I found solace
in such a dirty medicine.

-Nadia Nibbs-



Demoness Poetry

Flawed under my skin, her sense for sin
Dead in the beginning.
Patiently waiting so sick of evading
This beasts which rots within me
It Rots within me

So ironic that faces of angels can torment
Maintaining defined perfection
The things that she said left this seed in my head
Left me feeling like this had to be...

Divine intervention was the one
To open my eyes to the brightest of suns
And make me believe this beautiful deceit
She made me believe in everything

Now I'd have to kill just to sow what I've been reaped

-Rob Scarpato-

I Count Their Tears; I Count Their Sighs

I count their tears; I count their sighs
Their babies slip through my fingers and die for Nothing
They melt with the dry ground that grows no food
I cry out for justice, I scream out for change
But Silence greets me and I am alone
Silence greets me because I accept Silence
Now I wade through the blood
The blood on my hands
The blood on my mind
Their blood that drowns me; chokes me;
Their blood that calls me
Their blood that is my own

And yet Nothing prevails
Nothing succeeds; Nothing flourishes
Sprouting and spreading its disease all around
It touches me and it touches you
I consume Nothing, I embrace Nothing
And Nothing rapes me, leaving me pregnant with its offsprings
Offsprings that I should have thrown overboard into the sea,
But I keep them inside the ship and take them to the new land

I count their tears; I count their sighs
Their babies slip through my fingers and die for Nothing
They melt with the dry ground that grows no food
They cry out for justice, they cry out for change
I look with salt in my eyes and I give them Silence
I give them Silence to eat
Silence to live
Silence to read
Silence to grow
Silence to build
I give them Silence
I force Silence down their throats

I kill them with Silence
I kill them with Nothing

I count their tears, I count their sighs
Their babies slip through my fingers and die for Nothing
They melt with the dry ground that grows no food
And I melt with Nothing and Silence that grows no food

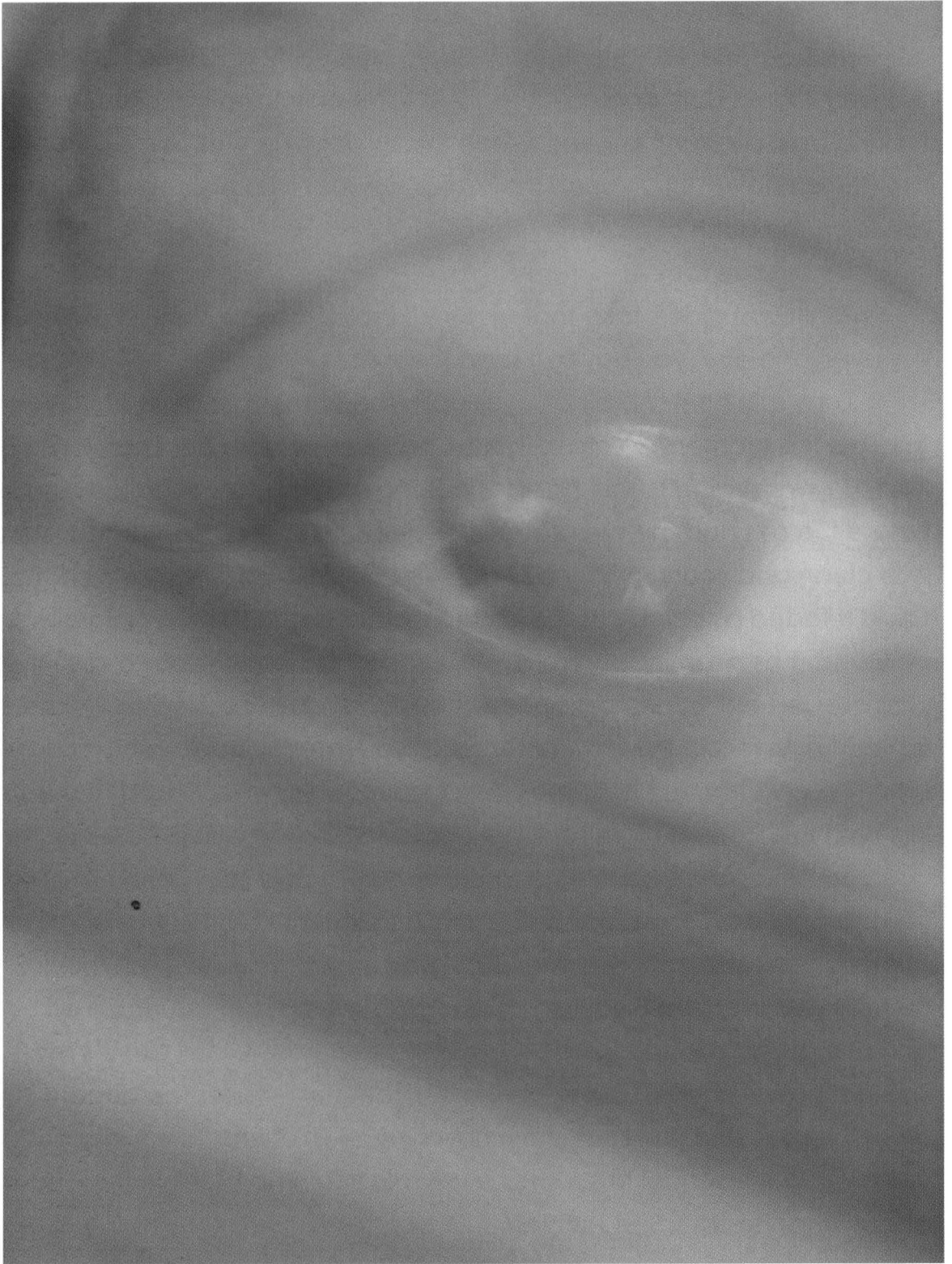
-Carla Severe-



Slave Castle

They brought these Kings to their castles
From Niger to Burkina Faso, shackled and lassoed,
It's funny that the slave thing never really saw an ending
For example, black fingers wrapping around bars,
And black niggas rapping about cars, current state of shambles,
Ghetto fabulous glorification and other masturbatory rambles,
It's a stretch but it's really the same thing,
Different variation on this slave thing,
or even calling them black niggas but that's a different conversation.
The root of this conversation stems from persistent observation,
Some deliberate deliberation on Garvey's expectation
A golden opportunity with a light ivory finish
And other trite wiry wishes...this on my mother's Christmas wishlist

-P. Smurf, 3esq.-



-Bosede A. Opetubo-

Liquid Sunset

Wet cement left over from the rain, slick, shiny and wet. I say I like the way it looks dark and night. Night, it's the only thing like night in this fucking day, daylight. I haven't seen the sunset over wet cement in five years. I haven't truly seen the sunset just that little photograph Larry tapes on the back of his vest.

He said he took it!

"Shit, you didn't take that picture," I said, "You're stuck in this hole like everyone else, you haven't seen the sunset."

Larry rolls his deep black eyes up in the corner of his lids as if trying to relive the moment, to grasp it. Now he's somewhere out in an open field. He was driving to visit his sister in Reno and the sunset called him. Before the pills and the sweet steel needles and before he jumped. Larry was clean and young with the world in his grasp, but he messed that up. Click! It faded as quickly as the image surfaced on the shiny Polaroid. He keeps it as a reminder, a reminder of what he lost. It's burning softly.

Yeah, I did, he says as he walks off, limping his bad leg drags a bit. But the night masks the day, and makes you forget about what you'd clearly see. In the day he'd look like a wounded animal, weakly retreating from the fight. At night he simply looks like a man with a bad leg.

Sometimes we have time to chew the fat and Larry, with his psycho-analytic, blog-posting self, says he's smart. I bet he was one of those geniuses, the ones they put away for just thinking shit. When he talks you listen, then you go home, mind racing and bouncing off of nothing. You comfort yourself with a lie and deny it. I tell him it's my "detecting shit coming out of your ass" radar that makes me negate everything he says. But I just know how it really is, at least the lack of sleep when the school bus rushes by leaves you time to think. Think hard about what he says. Soft burning.

The day seems like a Technicolor dreamland when you work here. I want to leave this place and, return to my Technicolor dreamland full of my beloved wet cement with suns that set close enough to reach. Hot burning. I used to taste the sunlight filter into my room while I slept. It was hot and light, salty, made me crave the sweet and cool sunset. The colors of the setting sun were water, and I could not drink. I moaned and mourned for it, I dreamt of sweet kisses from illuminated lovers, and was tempted with blessings from smiles of full houses. Yet, I remain in the dark, my eyes closed to the callings of day. Larry helped me put up dark curtains and blinds in my house so I could sleep better, "You'll sleep like a dog with these."

This morning I can taste the morning rain. It's hot and damp; I like to take deep breaths of rain, it dampens me, prepares for night. I awake to that fucking monotone beep, that syncopated rhythm every day, every night. I dress silently in the dark; it's my new hobby. My eyes adjust, and I feel uninhibited. Red blinks do not fill the living room, so no one called. I used to call.

Brockett's is what us night-workers call a deep hellhole. I hate to return, yet it's what I know. I started after I quit college; felt I needed to become something, level off with the common man. Sweat and bleed, work with my hands, and be something more than a mere desk clerk. Night was intriguing and elusive and it called me stronger than the sunset. Now I build rotators for solar panels. They shimmer opaquely in this artificial light. Wonder how they look in sunsets; probably, at first a fiery orange, at last a regal purple. Everyone here is half-asleep, half-alive, nothing of what they wanted to be at all.

It's 10:00pm when I arrive there. I only work seven hours, and they pay a little better at night. The lights of the building cut the night, hurting my eyes, too bright. I adjust and my eyes refocus slowly. Heavy metal churns and screeches, sparks flutter like moths, manned by us dressed in biohazard- like suits. These suits make us look like we're working for some Manhattan Project. That's what I believe, but I won't tell Larry that, he'll probably take it as a sign.

Slow soft subtly burning tears, burning tears. Break time, Larry and me are up on the roof, we can see the small lights of the town. The lights weave in and out of each other, like staring into a neon web.

"Can't believe that I work here still. One of these days, when I make enough cash, I'm gonna get out. Gonna move to Wyoming, live in a small cabin, go fishing, and grow all my own shit", Larry says, using his hands to emphasize his speech. The air is heavy because of the afternoon rain, and his eyes did not seem to adjust to the night. He stumbles a bit while he walks but he does not let his leg get the best of him.

"Larry, I don't know if I can stay at this job. It's making me forget and wonder about what's out there." I say as I sit down on the damp cement.

"You know, I used to wonder about what it's like in the day, but we're fine here," Larry says, "If you quit this job, I don't know if I can handle it. We're best buds." He laughs a bit.

"I used to be messed-up, so messed up I jumped before. Now I don't think it was such a bad idea." said Larry, a glare from the street-light reflected in his eyes. His eyes zoom in and out of the web.

"Larry, come on, you're too much. Why do you think that, I thought all of that was done and over now." I said, surprised by this unexpected comment.

I smelled the whiskey on his breath. Damn Larry! Thought you were sober, what happened to all those AA meetings. You can't drink on the job, one of the worst things you can do, especially here. Here you already see things messed up: the night messes up your mind, the hours are crazy, the sparks and heavy metal blind your eyes weigh you down, whiskey doesn't help. Whiskey is not your sunset, it'll never be.

"Sure, man, you look a little weird," I say, getting up, "And stay away from that damn ledge!" I gotta tell the supervisor, Larry might hurt himself. As I walk to the intercom, Larry is in the corner of my eye. He walks closer to the ledge as if in a trance. His steps sound like marching as the bits of broken wet pavement kick up under his feet. The city looks like a web, he walks in a trance, and is enraptured with the lights.

"Hey Larry!" I yell, "What are you doing!"

He does not answer and inches closer and closer, his bad leg as sure as ever, no limping. The night makes Larry seem illuminated, with his bright-neon biohazard suit. Overhead I see it, soft burn soft and slow, Larry's picture of the sunset taped to the back of his vest. It begins to fall, that full rusty old bin. I knew it that they kept it up there. Larry, Larry don't walk over there! Stop Larry, stop walking! I run fast, the heavy bin, it falls, I run fast, faster. Push Larry, I push him, good, he's not over the ledge. The sunset is shiny, I see the violet, see the pink clouds, orange is bright, the blue is deep and engulfs the sky. The liquid falls, oily and oozy, soft burning slow burning I blink sunset tears, they fall slowly onto the pavement. Hot burn, stings like sharp cuts, I blink, I blink, I sunset on wet cement. I rub my eyes, I cry out, scream till my throat is hoarse. Claw and gasp for the air, for the night. I bite my lip so hard the blood trickles, metal taste. Help, help me damn it! Damn it Larry! God! My eyes. I blink to dark, to night.

No more sunsets on wet pavement, the photograph on Larry's jacket dissolved as quickly as my yearning sight. Now just night, the calm and familiar night, no need for the blinds or curtains. The only comfort is the taste of salty sunlight, the cool sunset, waiting and calling, and nothing to quench my thirst.

-Aisha Farley-

Twilight

The soft-pressed clouds, so faintly tinged with blue,
That nightly drink the day till twilight's full
And only then are tenderly unfurled,
Tonight lie heavy on horizons new,
Drawn like a warming cloak of sky-down wool
Around the frigid shoulders of the world.
Below, the city; and above, the stars
Up out of sight somewhere are safe, and shine,
Perfect imitations of imperfect scars,
And lives, and loves, and all our little hells,
While (later every night), the deep-throat bells
Ring out; and all the land that hears, is mine.
And the city, spun of earthbound starlight, gleams
Below this hill, much closer than it seems,
All full of rage, defiant, loud, and bright;
But high up here, peace welcomes in the night.

-Lisa Tannenbaum-

Anonymity of Laborers
-Lolly Berger-



Quality Assurance

I'm going
to write you a poem,
so amazing
you will hear it
in your soul.

So deep
and emotionally involved,
it will reverberate
in your heart strings.

And not just any heartstrings,
but the Chordae Tendinae.
(Just FYI)

So there's no mistake,
no misunderstanding,
no surprise
Closure.

Just open
bloody pathways
to the unknown.

-Kara Taksaki-



Jamie's Song

(in memory of jamie hogan, december 1987- june 2007)

did you hear the crash, jamie?
did you see the glass break?
did you know what had hit you?
did you cry out in pain?
just a minute too last, just a mile too fast.
like a season you came, you bloomed, and you passed.

i can't imagine your parents don't cry
when they call out your name and you don't reply.
"oh, jamie, our baby, come back.
just one more dumb joke, just one more laugh."

when i was young, i used to cross my eyes
and my mom told me they'd stay that way.
"habits you choose, well, they follow your cues
and become a part of you."

well, jamie, if that's true,
i guess you made a smile 'til it stuck.
and that's the best way
that i know how to say
how beautiful you were...
how beautiful you are.

i'm through making lists of the things we'd have done
and living this life that's a life minus one.
oh jamie, you haunt every street, every road.
and although you're gone,
we'll have this song
that i'll play for you
'til you sing along.

-Stephie Coplan-

Growing Up

One night there was spaghetti for dinner. You focused intently on the red lumpy tomato sauce splattered haphazardly across the limp linguini. Father is swearing at mommy. As the yelling reached a crescendo, unconsciously you cringed and prepared to duck when the plate and food go flying- SPLAT against the textured off-white plaster wall. It makes it more pleasing to the eye.

Then you're in the car and you're swearing at your mom. She's stuck in the 24 hour traffic that is her life going nowhere to nothing except swearing, like what you're doing. You know it, but you can't stop because it's all His fault. Not God's, HIS. The real His. The one who rules your life from the moment you come into the light, or rather the murky grey black, with his selfish egotistical temper that you hate more than anything else in the world. So of course you have it, and hate yourself inside and out for who you are and what you've become, and you can't admit it cause how could you be like Him?

Sitting in the Mexican Restaurant with the best Guacamole in town, your Mother says, "I wanted you, hahaha, but your Dad said one is enough. He said you were a mistake, hahaha."



He's shaking his head and watching your face, but you know what you look like. Your face is steel iron, and all those things that you've gained from being one full year away from the people who are supposed to love you the most but are children themselves in grown up bodies, so of course there are no tears. Which surprises you. It surprises you so much that even now you can't remember what you said in response to such a blatant statement of what you've always known.

Your brother and his girlfriend, now that's really funny because he's trying to fix the situation politely under the table, like hiding the stain the rip the huge gaping hole that is Your life. It's where you've been pressing the dry sterile materials constantly hoping to avoid the seeping red ooze by absorbing it with as much STUFF as you can, but he doesn't need to do that anymore.

None of them.

Not your dad

Not your brother

Not even the silent observation of the uneasy girlfriend

break through for you.

I've changed.

-Kara Takasaki-

Pensive Moment in Childhood
-Lolly Berger-



The Problem with Color

I dream in White People
and 'wake in Asian.
My mother shudders
at all others,
and you laugh at me
because maybe
its real.

And I
I laugh at Teale,
because she
has her dream Orient,
but she only likes
the lack
thereof.

-Kara Taksaki-

Fencing

Advance, retreat; retreat, advance.
In the morning air, a crash.
A salute, a kiss upon the cheek. Bon chance.

A sneaker-tread and asphalt dance,
the low contention of the sea.
Advance, retreat; retreat, advance.

Cloth speared upon each forward dash.
A kiss upon each cheek; bon chance.
In the still morning air, a crash.

The low contention of the sea,
the measure of the foil and lance;
Soon you will have forgotten me.

A handshake and a kiss; a chance
to spear the name on a single slash.
In the morning, the rapiers circle and dance.

It may be you'll read this trifling trash,
But it won't have the power to transfix
Your eyes like my clumsiest advance.

Parry the quatre, the circle, the six.
A kiss, a handshake, a wish, a salute.
A flurry of foils all dancing their tricks.

It's a game of high honor, rest and repute.
Assert with the rapier, refute with the lance.
A kiss, a handshake, a flowing salute.

Advance, retreat; retreat, advance.
The blades kiss each other, I kiss your cheek.
Assert with the rapier, refute with the lance!

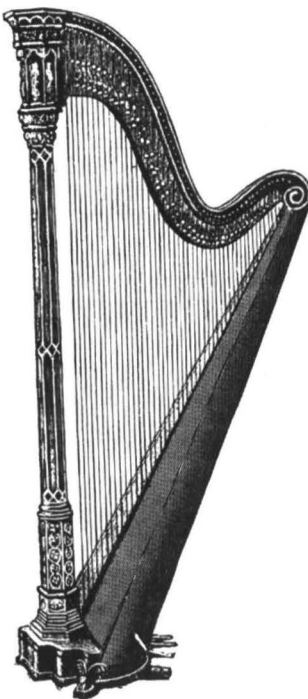
In the morning, the wind makes the aspens creak,
a ploy to distract a steel-stung glance.
The blades kiss each other, you kiss my cheek.

This is fair battle, and fey romance.
The fool is bold, the master meek.
A ploy to distract a steel-stung glance.

The fool is bold, the master meek.
Swift steps and summer whirled around,
Like light-lipped words I learned to speak;

Bon chance. And lunge! Retret; rebound!
Slow towards each other we advance;
Sword-tips slip lightly towards the ground,
For this is not our only dance.

-Lisa Tannenbaum-



Pause Your Draws

Slow down

I'm running to fast

I got my tears in hand

And a foot on the gas

I will have no future

Never dealing with the past

I have to slow down

As long as I have noticed

I have been the one to throw myself in life

Never worrying about it now

Just moving on with strife

This has gotten me far

But now I look back

I see the scares left undealt with

What can I do...

Life is a car with the key

It's gonna go unless stopped

I have to slow down

I have seen this route before

I now how it turns and ends

I know the core of the issues this way

I am forgiving

I am understanding

I am too forgetful

I let the tears go

Lost in the back of my mind

Along with many memories wanted to be lost with time

I jump back in

Again fine print ignored

I have to slow down

Now I see

I have to pause and break

I can't take the pain much longer

I hunger for an easier way

But I fear losing out or missing something

Yet I have to...

So excuse me life for creeping into the slow lane

I have to be careful

The pain ends here

My eyes open now

-Remnant-



-Photo by Naeema Campbell-

Psalms

Pink cotton long johns
rub against my skin—
ankles itching, calves itching, tummy itching—
as I pick at the tight plaits fixed to my scalp
that took an eternity to perfect
Enough faint brown light escapes the plastic covered lamp-
shade
to make out the small words covering the thin paper,
And I read
Searching for you.
Grasping the spine of cracked leather, counting
“Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus” in my mind
Eyes swell with tears,
my mouth quivers
and letters run together on the page
but if I don't read, you can't sleep
and the walls will sob with silence

She smiles and lies back
quietly reciting the words she's read so often
clouds of warmth emerging with each breath
“Listen,” she tells me
and my head rises in adoration
“This is the truth
“And we're all going to need it someday”
Her paper bag palms run across my hair and down my face
and I can see brown sugar dissolving in her eyes

-Bosedede A. Opetubo-

