



Onyx Magazine

25th Anniversary

* Cover Art - "Fearless" by Ashley Calhoun

* * Board's Page - "Marakech - Chicks" by Meena Bolourchi



Editor's Note

If my calculations serve me right, this would be the 50th editor's note to come out of Onyx...50 being divisible by 25, which is a prime number—thus making this issue special! No I am not a math lover, it was hard enough to get me to actually do the homework for the class, but I do want to show the importance of this organization. It is one of the older ones left at Tufts University—nothing compared to LCS, but still a big deal when standing up against the other Black organizations on this campus. This organization has seen some highs and lows, and it is time to bring it back to its greatness. While looking at some of the art that has been submitted over the past years, it makes me wonder: where have we gone wrong?

Is it the students here? Do they no longer have a passion for poetic expression? Can they no longer find the time? Do they not want to share their work? Has Tufts finally sucked all the artistic life out of its students? What is it?

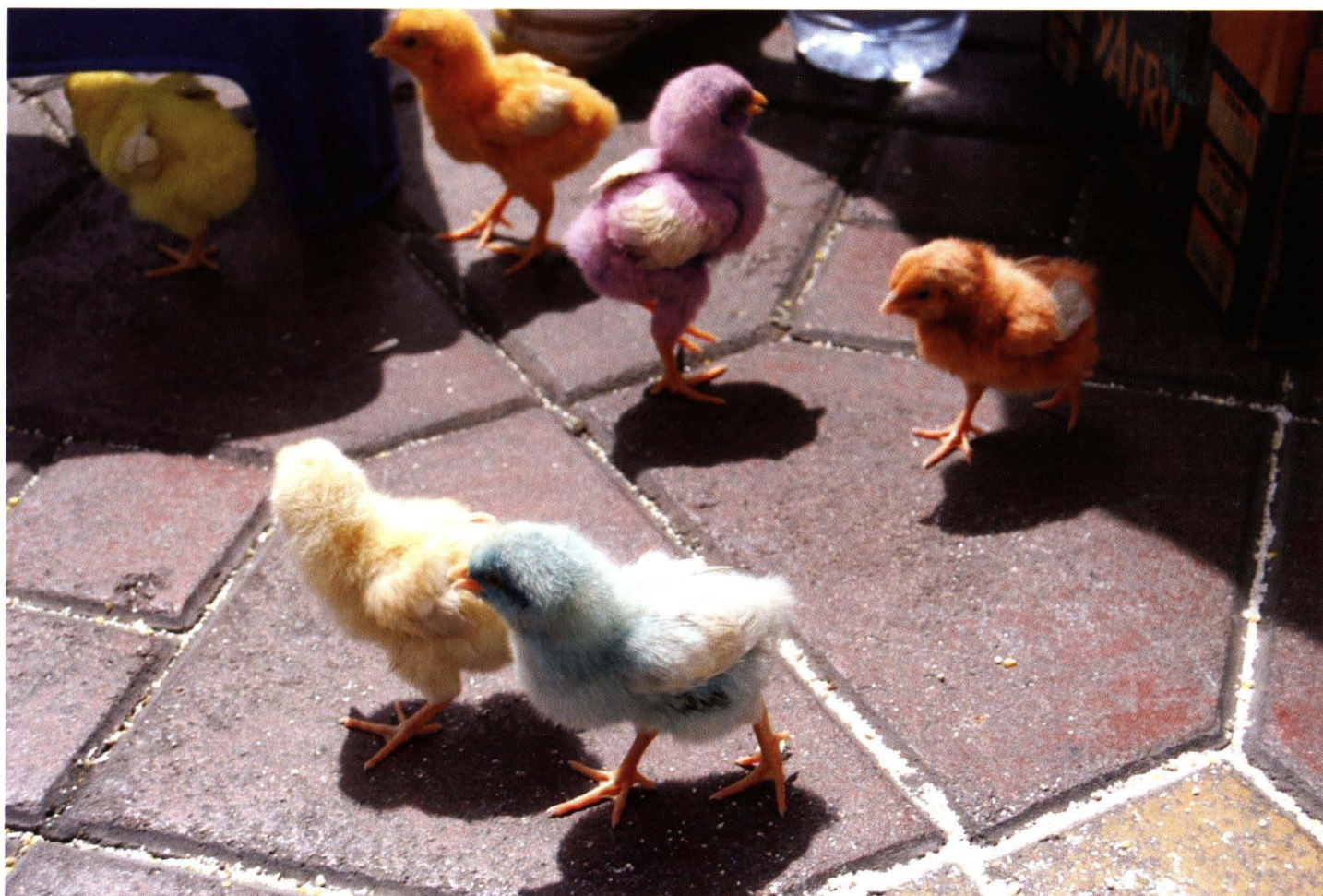
I would love to say that the Black population of Tufts no longer has a need to air out their artistic abilities... but we all know as long as there is a Tufts University there will always be complaining from the people of color on this campus (let's not play ourselves)! Onyx has always been a place for people to come together and voice their pains and joys and to share laughter or a knowing head nod. That CANNOT change—where else are we going to do this? I'm sorry but we do not live in this ideal "color blind" society that so many think we do...everyone needs their own—something to run to that understands them as unfiltered and all natural. So I am DONE asking questions, students of Tufts—I am sending out challenges now (since that seems like the only way to get our over-achieving selves to do anything): Come together and give us, and our future Jumbos of Color, an outlet for their voices to be heard.

As editor of Onyx I do take some responsibility on the fall of the organization, but I have fixed that on my end. Next year, there will be at least two OpenMics a semester as well as other events put on by the organization—we are going to regain our presence back on this campus on way or another. But my board's work can only go so far—STUDENTS START SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENT GROUPS!!!! We all talk about the wackness of our school but no one wants to come out and have fun either...we do this for you all—ACT LIKE YOU NOTICE!

This is a big year of celebration for our community—Capen turns 40 and Onyx turns 25...big milestones for the both of us. We plan to have some nice things with these "birthdays" but we need to know you all will be there in support—so stop asking what Tufts can do for you, for a little while. Because it is evident that Tufts makes it possible for a lot to happen—so ask what can you do to keep the little that we have.

Be like the rain,

Dom



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Untitled

*She was motivated by the art
He was motivated by the game
But when they both motivated each other, so much of their life would change
She loved to argue
He loved to make her laugh
Though they met on short notice their love was bound to last
Only 5 days, must have been love at first sight
But to maintain that love would take a long hard fight
Trials and Tribulations create by distance
As they tried to keep their love, using their heart as an assistance
But she needed passion
He needed her to be there
So their love drifted like a feather in thin air
Another girl stole his heart
Which drew them apart
Hearts were broken, tears were shed
Both their hearts continuous bled, thinking that their love was bond to be dead
A future together they couldn't see
But it will defiantly happen, if it was meant to be
October 12, 2003
The wounds that were opened healed gradually*

*Their eyes met, their fires were set,
A broken heart between the two you could never detect,
the love that they had was something they could never forget*

*Like old friends is how they would speak
Demonstrating that their love had never lost a beat,
talking as if they saw each other just last week.*

*As the night rolled on, their love turned into passion
Causing them to gain mental and emotional satisfaction
Is it meant to be?
We will see
I just know together they are both happy*

B.K.

Spring 2007

Secret Need

*Eyes meet,
Distance souls cross to be with each other.
A pale hand reaches out,
Wanting to caress, linger, assure.
Goosebumps rise on ebony flesh,
Full lips part as slightly as
Mind and body work in synchronization,
Pulsating with abandoned desire.
A call in the distance interrupts,
Causing the hand to begin its descent,
Moving away from its succulent treat,
Pulling back into the tight-knit shell.
Feet move as they drift apart.
Sea blue eyes seek out copper brown,
An awkward smile caresses lips,
They walk in opposite directions.*

Orla Thompson

Spring 2007

Ebony on Ebony

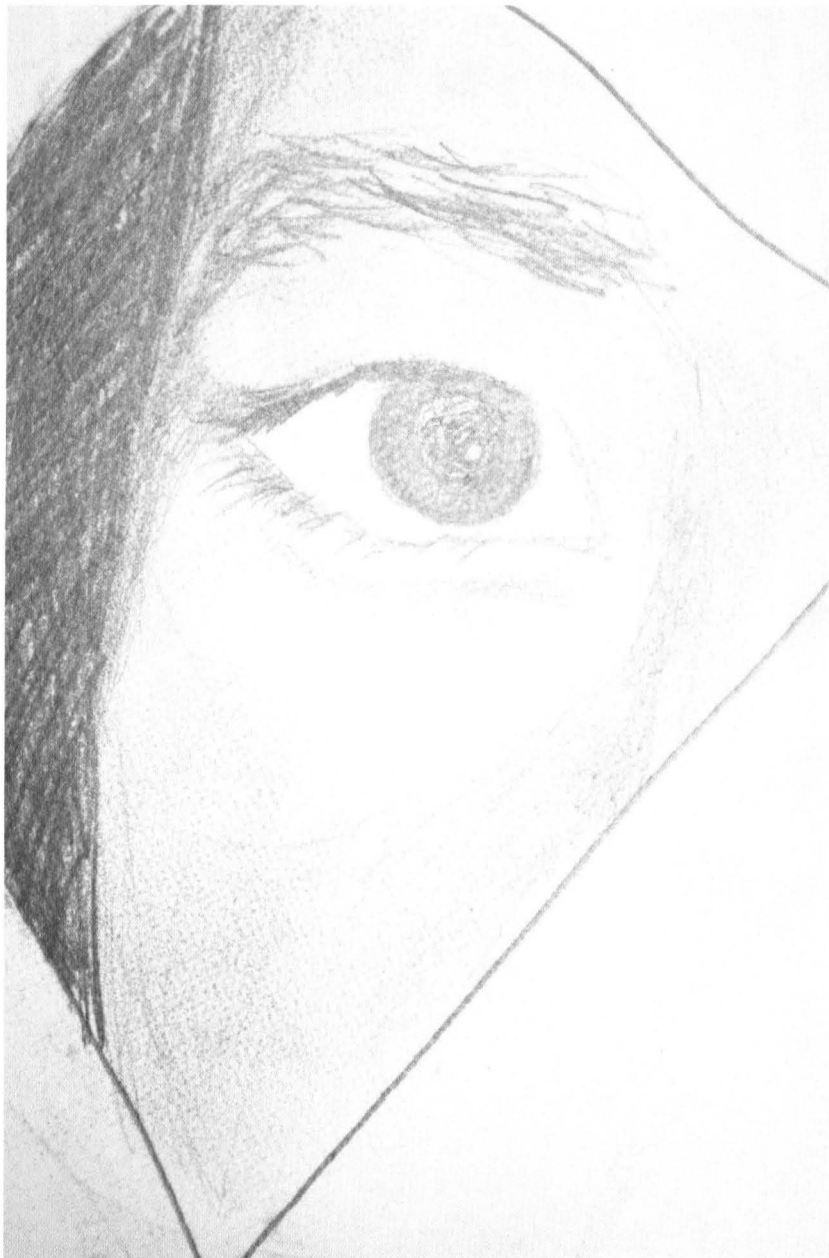
*Tingle me
with tiny midnight tiptoes into your field of ivory dreams
leading the way with a delicate
arching hand,
ebony on ebony.
Sliding down and up,
the keys brush against each other tenderly,
bodies pressing,
in a painfully sweet whisper.
The spotlight ricocheting off the sweaty brow,
and the fabric of your suit smiling in wrinkles,
makes me want to climb up on that black top
and sing you a little ditty,
outstretched in an engine red dress
with straps falling around rounded shoulders.
Pull me in all directions with your lingering notes,
pressing ebony on ivory on ebony again.
Make me sweat
steaming drops of jazz
rolling off my brow
and at the end of the set,
dash with me -
through the back door,
into the champagne chilled night air,
and make love to me,
ebony on ebony.*

Lauren Allen

1996

*you are like a flower, each petal more beautiful than the next
but picking you from your garden would remove you from your natural beauty and essence
so I leave you be, knowing that without you I am nothing and with you, you are in a different world
subject to my galaxy of black holes and shooting stars lost without a home or a base- a natural place
lost like me
with all the friends in the world, but forever lonely
with everything I could ever need, but forever wanting
missing something, but needing nothing
struggling to see that what I need is right in front of me, in my own garden
but I would rather watch you blossom, than see you wilt before my eyes
one day my tears will subside, but I will know these tears helped a flower rise*

Elliott McIntosh





Jenelle Waltrous

Transitions

*I sit in a field scattered with black bones brittle.
Rusty metal residue of the cutlasses they did yield.
Hot black rope wrapped in strangling loops.
Abandoned shackles once possessed by working flesh.
Then tainted by dead skin, burnt skin.
Black skin, My skin.*

*I sit suckling as I did when I was young
The succulent juice of mango fruit.
My cutlass is once again sharp.
Only now it chops bamboo shoot.
Like my ancestors I too felt the heat of the sun.
Only now the heat does not turn to flames.
Should the work not get done.*

*I sit on the stoop staring into the street night.
No bright stars just black stars.
Black stars that once flickered
Like the beating of my heart.
Only now they hide from gunshots
In the smog of city dark.
Like my seeking ancestors
I travelled to an end.
No cutlass!
No shackles!
But yet still no star.*

Kwame Millar

1996

Constructs

*Construction of culture through
images of the imagined
the delusional leads to the
construction of a new race
unrecognizable to those who have
escaped.*

*From the inside, blinded by the
lights
they perform, shuck, jive, and
prostate.*

*Over-sexualized, exoticized, de-
Humanized,
Packaged, sorted, and commercialized,
Each encore cements the fate of
the new face
on this once noble race.*

Elaina Mercedes Mends

Fall 2005

To Nikki

*One of these days we won't be
Sitting around talking about the revolution.
I'll be rolling off your stomach while we
Share trees and talk about the days when we
Marched on DC lawns and across flag-lined
Streets, demanding that the revolution be now, demanding
That hip-pop return to Kwalied roots and Brooklyn streets-
FUCK MTV, demanding that the bitches and hos return to
Fine ladies and Ma'ams, to Mrs. and not side-dishes,
Requiring that you not be exploited, running around helping
The bossman degrade your fine black woman and elating
Over blonde, Asian, spicy, her no sucky sucky because your black
Ho does that days have ended*

*I won't be expecting that you wake up in the hills, not the spills of a no
End life where you are confined to chasing a pro-athlete,
Rapper, professional pimp, HIV life, writing rhymes for Bob and Bill to
Universal-ize and Arista-cate, because you will have risen above,
And be uplifting our sons and daughters.*

*One of thee days, you'll be rubbing my back talking about when we went
To war with objectification, exploitation, niggeration, all the -ations,
Because we woke the fuck up and said enough was enough, because you
Need no bling, no things, and I can leave my friend and my sexuality
At the door and we could just sit and be- you my strong black man, and I your strong black woman.*

Kristen J. Hooper

Spring 2003

Green

Forget red, white, and blue, the real American flag is green...

green as the bills you hand over to the cashier at the mall

as your forefathers smile up at you in aproval

While other peoples around the world are green with envy

craving a system that will provide them with a

loss of culture,

loss of identity,

loss of way of life,

and an insatiable desire for more green...

It makes cents... no check that it makes dollars... that greed and green differ only by the last letter—

better accumulate that green, cuz money don't grow on trees

which are chopped down so that the natural green of forests

can be replaced with the artificial green of cash money...

it's funny—

how in this society the only thing we like fat besides Santa Claus is out pockets...

fat Santa... fat pockets... fat Santa... fat pockets... equals

Christmas... where people snatch up merchandise like they were on Supermarket Sweep

and tell themselves they are celebrating the 'holiday spirit' because

"giving is better than receiving" and

spending money is "good for the economy"

Working-class families and single mothers

spend their paychecks buying overpriced CDs

of Lil Wayne and Lil Kim

for their own little Wayne and little Kim

and little Bobby and little Maria and little do they know that

the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer...

Yes, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer...

cuz as the TV tells poor and working-class inner-city minorities

to spend the little money that they have and "help the economy,"

the rich are storing millions and billions and trillions

in banks and stocks and bonds

while poor minority youth got no future to bank on cuz no one will take stock in their potential

—word is bond

*And it don't take a private eye to see
that if you double, -oh, -seven salaries of the seven richest Americans
you come up with a figure greater than the combined GDP of almost 100 countries*

*Maybe our country should be the one called "Greenland"
with green rivers of green money flowin' from one rich white corporation to another
as rich white politicians count of Alan Greenspan
to steer the economy along the green trails of their interests
Yet for those on the outside lookin' in there 'Ain't No Sunshine' like Al Green*

*Every time I start watchin' BET or MTV (owned by the same company) I start to see—
So many diamonds...
It got me thinkin' the video must have been shot in Iceland
They say always obey the Golden Rule,
but who needs gold when we got cold, hard, greenbacks at our disposal.
becoming the global
currency, currently, and urgency gets placed
not on the question 'how much u learnin','
just 'how much u earnin'*

*So Holla Holla...
If you worship the almighty Dolla Dolla
If money is the savior that u Folla, Folla,
C'mon sing it wit me and Holla—
It's Murdah—
how Murder Inc pays mad green to those who talk about "hos and clothes and bank rolls"
And kick wack rhymes
About bustin' gats so much you'd think it was the national pastime
It's Murdah—
how little kids got no one else to follow,
So they look up to these fake gangstas as role models
And It's Murdah—
how we get taught to love money like a brother
And end up breakin' and forsaken' each other
So we can follow the "American Dream"
Stackin' that cream.. and gettin' that green*

AfroDZak (Pete Shungu)

Spring 2003



Walk of Shame

It is seven fifty-three. The morning after the dance. Here am I, hottest of hot messes, walking up the cold president's lawn in my Goodwill flats. I sound like Yoda. My glasses are missing and I squint down the route, trying not to slip on ice. Trying to see myself: hair unpinned, eye shadow smudged and purple, fingers frozen to a black clutch. My necklace hanging in tangled copper pearls around my neck, and breath hanging tangled it in the air.

How the people feel, I think, to look out their warm West Hall windows this morning and see me, scuttling across campus bleary-eyed and shivering. I imagine them looking at me. They are waking up now to the impartial light of a winter morning, to the white anonymous snow, and they feel good and warm and slow, perhaps in sock feet, perhaps in t-shirts and sweats. They move casually to the window and look out at the little flustered brown form on the quad. The brown dress and the taupe tights and the little brown shoes underneath move quickly, and those in the windows are still slow, wrapped in the warm liqueurs of a decent rest, smiling a little to themselves now, feeling clever. They make a note to tell their friends about a classic one they witnessed this morning. They are smiling to themselves, now, smirking a little even, which is all right. They appreciate their cleverness, their warmth, their restraint the previous night. They thank themselves. I allow them to condescend. I smile, too.

And I check my phone and think, well, what else will I say when they ask me, if they ask me? I look used and hung over. I thought about it. "Oh no," I would say, in my ripped-up voice, when the quizzical eyebrow was raised. "I often take brisk semi-formal walks, early in the morning. It clears my head. And it makes me feel fancy."

And enjoying this little private joke with myself, I move on, across the quad, across the windows of people watching me and feeling better, and smile to myself, at the other private joke, which is that this isn't me at all, the me they think this is. The joke is I'm one of those proud window judges, I am a smirker and finger-wagger, too, getting my due. I smile my private smile and stumble to the door. Last night my roommate did my makeup. I didn't know how. I slept for three hours in a friend's warm bed. I drank only water and tea.

Chase Gregory

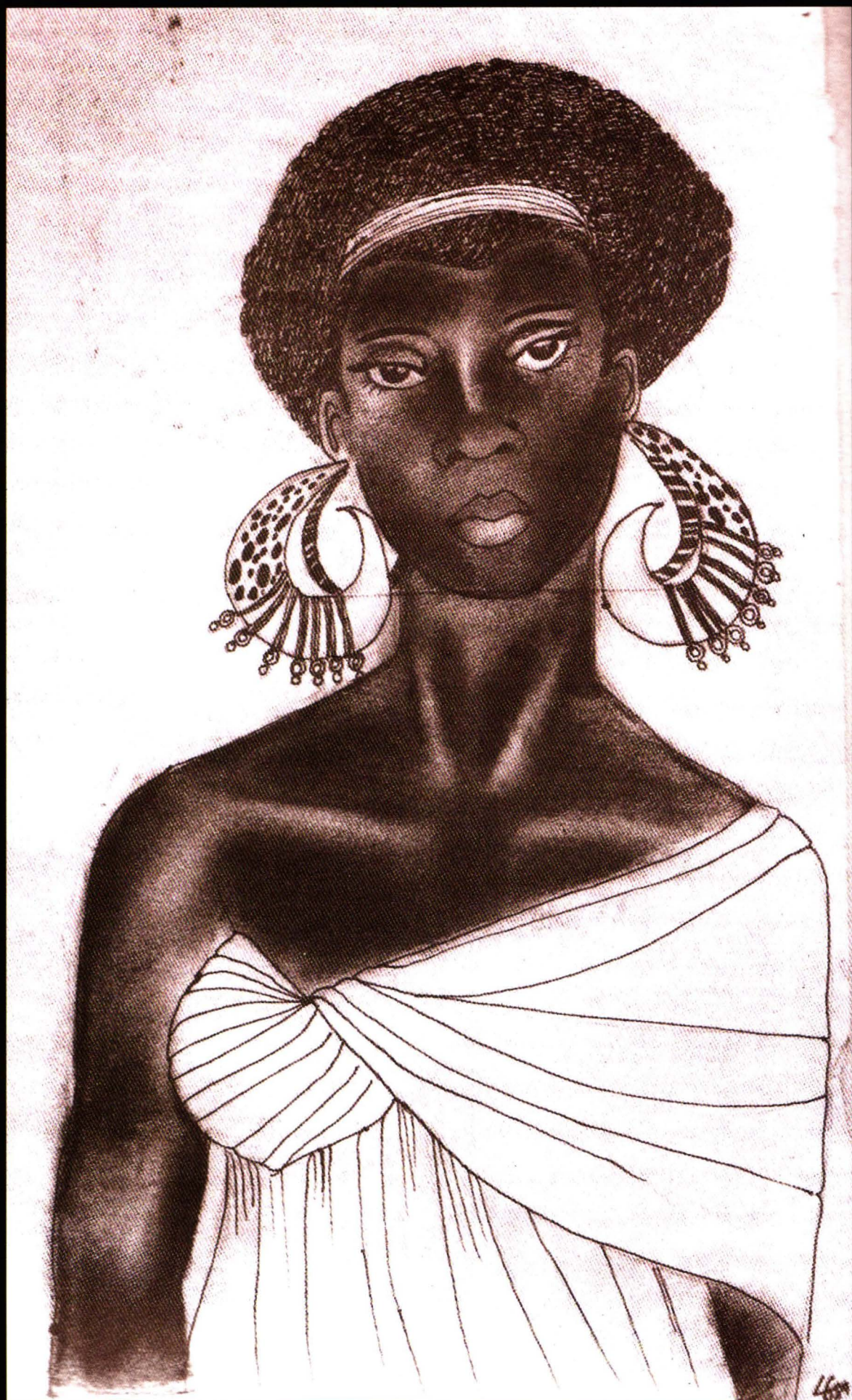
The light of morning dew

*We as women long to believe,
To be captive and yet free.
To allow love to infect us
Running through blood,
Changing our type,
Making us ripe.
Yet somehow we become rotten
As he takes all we have gotten,
And keeps it for himself,
He walks away
And we are left here.
So here we stay.
In this cold I try to breathe,
But find no air
Because you were my atmosphere.
Stripped, and bear,
I lie there.*

*I wish the mind could control the heart,
And tear all the feelings
We don't want, apart.
You see in this relationship with you,
The only color I knew was blue.
I got used to your darkness
So I had forgotten light.
Poisoned with lust
I thought I knew love
Hindsight clearer than future,
Lesson learned, scars earned
I am healing my burns.*

*With you I'm thru
And it feels so sweet, like morning dew.*

Brianna Atkinson





Reflections

*Don't you recognize me, I'm your sister child
Though our times for entering this world are different
You and I are of the same blood and of the same flesh
I was thinking of you when you wasn't even thought of*

*I tried to pave a smooth way for you through the bumpiest of times
I opened up big shops for you ignoring the smallest minds*

*You still don't recognize me? Look at you and look at me
We two are alike. In your hands see my labour, in your eyes see my pain
In your womb feel my sacrifice and in your body feel my shame*

*All this and you still turn away from me, you dare to feel
Embarassed by the sight of my kinky hair, broad hips, wide smile,
And full lips. You say I am ugly and not fit to view-that you
Are a better, a better woman and perhaps they should
look towards you.*

*Have you forgotten who you are
Have you forgotten whence you came
Your are the only bright spot in an era otherwise marked with shame*

*Rejoice, for I am your sister child, you should love me as I've loved you
And be proud for we have accomplished so much,
Those things no person can undo.*

Jamila M. Moore

Fall 1999



Real Love

The memories play in my head like a broken record. Sometimes it's of him loving me in his own special way, or it's of us being silly...but the most frequent is him wrapping his arms all around me totally taking over my body and kissing my neck and back continuously; telling me how much he misses me and asking that I never leave him like that again. This one memory is all I have before it all went down hill...before the truth came out and broke my world into the uncountable pieces of broken good china.

All I could do was run, run long and run far with tears in eye all the way. I left California. I lost the only man I would ever love...what else was a girl to do!? Everywhere I went I could hear his poured out explanations of his true feelings. All I saw was my confused tear soaked face. I had to get rid of the familiar to move on—I don't care if you agree or not, it's done. So now I'm here, working and hoping that he will never find me, but praying that he is looking for me...I haven't let it go. He was like my special little habit—got me through my day, every day. I had this really bad itch that needed to be scratched but it never would be again—or at least I thought.

Hope is a powerful thing, if you actually believe in it. Come to find out he was looking for me, so much so he found me—go figure. So where did that leave me in the options category: go off and tell him how he made me feel when he turned his back on me or run and cry in his arms and tell him how much I miss him in my world? The latter. Hey, don't judge me—I told you I missed him. What else was I to do? That damn itch was getting annoying, and he knew how to calm my nerves. Well he did his job and did it well! But now I'm back at square one: how do you tell the one you love that he can no longer have your love anymore, because it could possibly belong to another? Now that the background work is done, on to the actual story...

So like I said, He found me working in this little town outside of Chicago and he wanted another chance. I wasn't stupid. I knew what he wanted, and hell I wanted the same thing. There was always this feeling that it wasn't right for us to give it another go round...like it was too early; but I was so happy to have him back, I ignored it. Love can make you do right, make you do wrong...and I was messed up! Tome went on and we made our way smooth. We both worked and chilled and enjoyed our lives together. He even popped the question. Then I met the other Him. There wasn't supposed to be "another," but I guess that's what makes this a triangle story...you need all three players.

Since I don't kiss and tell, I will call the first one Love and the other Real. So Real transferred to my office a few months before and was brought on to my team. He was really a strong minded person but had the experience to back it up—I loved it and worked it for the benefit of the team. We ended up becoming close and a friendship was born, but there was something between us that we were doing a very poor job of trying to hide... if we were even trying. All along Love was at home thinking everything was great, which it was, but not as smooth as he might have assumed. I started spending more time away with work and so did Real, Love never questioned it—Lord knows he should have. Then we had a business trip and that was my downfall. I realized that listening to your first mind was the best advice anyone can give; yet the hardest anyone could take.

After a successful meeting with then new client and a great dinner on Real, with drinks of course, we headed back to the hotel. I was able to tell him many stories because we were in my hometown. I really let him in and he knew it, so I decided I might as well show him the rest of the way. I took him to my hiding spot. It was the best-kept secret of Oakland, and all mine. Since I had brought him this far, I had to finish it. He went and jumped right in. Talk lead to comfort, comfort lead to intimacy, intimacy lead to touching. He had my body feeling like it used to with Love but more Real. It was like we had connected on every other level...I knew ecstasy. I didn't think once about Love until I was back on a plane to Chicago. That was when I knew it was time to let Love go and see what life could bring with Real. But how could I do it?

When I got back, I lead life as normal, except for the occasional dates/get-a-way with Real. We started car-pooling, and working together on smaller projects, having lunch together, and spending all of our 40 hours together. I even got a lot of extra overtime because of him. Not once did Love say anything, and I knew he could sense a difference. No matter how badly I needed money I had never put work before Love, yet I was putting in 20 extra hours a week of overtime. He never questioned it; he just let it go on. Maybe he felt he had no right to question me after the mess he put me through, a guilty feeling per se. But when your woman gives up her favorite nighttime play for daytime work, questions need to be asked!

Love stayed quiet, I grew more distant, Real was just patient. He knew the story and was not trying to push me to end my history with Love, but he was not trying to let me go either. I knew what I had to do, but could not find the words for it. A letter

wouldn't do Real justice, talking would keep Love around, and dipping without either would make me a punk on so many levels—I ran once and didn't plan on doing it again. Then the funniest thing happened: I got pregnant. Before you judge me, you don't know my life—so don't start assuming anything. I knew who the father was. I got my answers looking at that little blue strip...it all became so clear. I knew what I had to do.

I packed my stuff and left. I came back home and started working, had my baby and lived life like I should have this whole time. I couldn't tell either one I was leaving, so yes I did take the punk way out...but it had to be done—I didn't want to cause more pain than was necessary. So how do you tell the one you love that he can no longer have your love? You write it in a letter, and hope for the best. Love got the first one and Real may still be waiting for his. The letter had no return address. I couldn't have them in my life. Because neither one of them were strong enough do right...so I was for the four of us.

My Truth is 5 now, and she is smart as me and her father put together and just as good looking; I love her so much, she is the best. But I can't help but be filled with sorrow when I look into her eyes. They are the same as her father's. I have always felt that her birth let me know which one I should have stayed with, but I also always say if it is meant to be it shall—no matter how long or how far...it will be. I even got a note a few days ago that had me thinking maybe He had already found me; He used to leave little messages for me in the most random places. I just shook it off, maybe someone had left it on my desk by accident.

Domonique Johnson

holiday

Not now my love, no politics or schoolwork, or questions about race today.

Today, all I want to think about is how you-make-me-feel so good when you touch me in that way. Today I want to laugh with you, and look at you with both eyes concentrated on the way your lips bend, and how your grin erupts volcanoes in me.

Today I want to be your best thing, and give you parts of me you haven't seen in weeks. I want to feel mountains lifted off my back with your kiss, and your touch on the small of my neck. Today I want to have you my love completely and fully, embodied in this thing called lovemaking. You said tomorrow yesterday, and tomorrow is today, and I can't wait because baby, I've got needs and well-you know I am for the cause, but can't today be a holiday? We can call it, Coretta Scott King Day, or Betty Shabazz Day, or Partner of the Revolution Day.

Just for today can you not be black man, just my man, and I not black woman, just your woman. And can we not worry about Mumia or Reparations or the state of the black nation, and not constantly question our social situations, can we be like others. Today my love-can we just be lovers?

Jamila M. Moore

Fall 2002



*...and you want a title?
King me my Queen, yes but I'll be damned if another calls me jester.
Besta realize you can't get the besta both worlds.
Title? What a deed to the house?
Think I'd hand you the keys and be out?
Are you serious? Delirious, clinging to the frivolous,
Riding a single bus route...why you need to single us out?
...and you want a title?
I deny you!
Fuck what she know and he know, it's what we know!
I deny you...
Like I won't attach one to this poem. Relationship greener than phloem
Tagging the photo synthesizer and suddenly it loses all respect
Aspects of the checks that paid our connects
I want to preserve what made us connect
And you want a title.*

Carl Onubogu

Platonic

*But I say she's just a friend
But I say she's just a friend
Though I pray we transcend,
We still remain platonic.*

*I awoke and watched the sunrise
The experience pleasantly weird
It seems to describe us perfectly
A warm sun and frosty earth*

*I mentally reset to her image often
And recall our exchanges of wit,
Here and there she claims me player
But I'm a female enthusiast*

*It's said these things take a while,
I only get 200 minutes of daytime,
And she speed-reads my actions
While I struggle through phonics.*

*Expressing my self by song
I lick lullabies in her lobes,
Optimisms holding me unbowed
Serenading this fortress of solitude*

*Daily I sing to her on cold hills
These ignored lyrics and melodies
Sail to Love's Bermuda triangle
Thus with her I then troll silently:*

*Her perfume vapor-rubs the pain
From my Freudian slips
Caught red-lipped
My mugshot is some makeshift smile*

*She tells me to up my game
But no one informed me I was playing,
Lost in my musings I may have missed
Cupid's eclipse of a closed heart.*

*Dang...
Hope To See You Tomorrow, Love*

Brent Patterson

Fall 2002

All I'll Really Remember

*Amongst cattle at the parlor
after mealtime Tabasco*

*Coltrane at IRIDIUM was backwoods enough
for this wanton brother to score some lilacs.*

*I'm reminded now by that bee
fluttering still by your wine flute.*

*Her skirt matched the tablecloth.
The cloudy hips of a delta.*

*We wondered aloud
who had seen life best:*

*That skillful bastard from Bakersfield,
his childlike laugh.*

*That time the native flower
Cheerfully kneeled over.*

*I never told you, I saw
through the veil during the sandstorm.*

*Saw it all, babe.
That day we sweat so hard,*

*the lamp and the wastebasket in pieces,
the whole holy world so precariously close*

*to spontaneously deliquescing,
that the harbinger of Fall boomed tensile*

*in our late-summer narcissism.
Percolating memories backwards through those plush backwoods.*

*As hedonistic and savant
as a kitten with a jack hammer,*

and all I really remember of that bathtub of Virginia night.

James W. Wiley III

Fall 2005

A Trip to the Bathroom

*Not wanting to
Play bare-chested
Dorm stripper
I peel back layers of cloth
In my drawer;
I choose a shirt like rolling dice.*

*I slide my toes
Through the archly strap
Of my flip-flops,
A firewall between
My fleshy soles and the greenery
Growing on tiled floors.*

*While my mouth fills with foam
I admire the "ban nike"
Tee-shirt that I am wearing.
The one with pictures of sweatshop
Furnaces filled with hell fire.*

*As I make my way
to the door
I look down to see
The nike checkmarks.
The lopsided grins
Engraved in my flip-flops.*

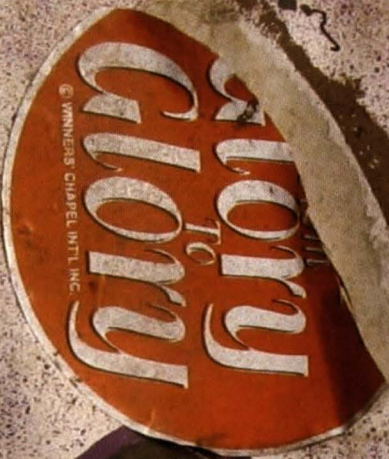
*I pass students in the hallway:
I wonder if they can see the cardboard sign
I am carrying. The one with big block letters
Petitioning for animal rights.
I wonder if they can see the fur coat I am wearing.*

*It feels as if I'm walking on the
Leathery palms of children.*

Chinua Thelwell

Fall 2002

THE FUTURE OF AFRICA
IS IN YOUR HANDS



Propaganda

*Truth is I don't know what truth is. The lie in my view is more than a nuisance.
I am doled out knowledge in specs; and my specs are useless,
they got more contacts than water got uses.*

*Scribbling on my loose leaf, my visions of a jewel thief—us laying by a Jew's knees,
both praying to Mary, while we dressed our wounds in the finest bourbons—
were raped like a virgin by my concern with just ice
over justice. Just like children they train me to trust this,
In God we trust, but what lies behind the curtains?
I will never know for certain what put a hurting on this country
but I am certain it's for nothing, Not for nothing, guess there's something,
CEOs in HaliBurton left the meeting stuntin' on economics and marginal cost curve
and I guess the Holocaust could've been stopped if action was just served
on a more productive frontier and affordable costs.
Sudan is cooking like an oven, millions by the dozens, burning like Babylon
But it's whose loss? And I envision a prayer, Amazing Grace—
but who's lost and destined to be found? FOX babbles on and the fox battles on
in the desert while Kim got the bombs. My TV buys me child's play to rattle on:
turning every channel on Amazing Race, ratings fell on its face
but Big Brother kept its eyes on me, and that's America's Top Model;
too old to breast feed so the next best BET is to placate me with these cars and popped bottles.*

*In Iraq a woman cries in Arabic: "why God?" If I knew it all, I'd only know the half of it, stumbling
through the iPod: Dead Prez begins to move me in sentiment:
resenting petty settlements, plotting moving on the president,
I don't believe Bob Marley died of cancer
30 years ago I would've been a panther
They killed Huey cuz they knew he had the answer
The views that you see on the news is all propaganda
I heard once "...more freedom in the slammer if you keep your mind free of slander and libel," America
is idle.*

*I based all my truths on grandpa's Bible, but grandpa has to die soon
Grandpa's entitled to rest like his eyes' glued, fought for his right to...
fought for my rights too, the right to vote and I only exercise it on American Idol.
Is it news or the media? The news and the media were feeding my delirium,
when I failed to vie for truth's criteria. Politicians became magicians:
hypnotizing my submission, smoke and mirrors bent and bound my vision
of mobilization and movement so I remain frozen in position.
I found I couldn't move when I was posed this inquisition:
"When there is pollution where I'm fishing so my children end up hungry
and their stomachs cannot stand it, is it not strange the decision,
flying missions out to Pluto, to discover if it's a rock or a planet?"*

Carl Onubogu



Revelation

*I've spent 19 years with the light off
Tripping over my shadow and
Watching my back.
I've felt my way out clumsily,
Stumbling and stumbling again.
Laughing obligatorily to fill the darkness.
HEY! I call you.
I'm not waving but drowning, reaching for
The switch before anyone notices me
Noticing the dark.*

*Weighing opposing struggles... trying to be
better?
Or perhaps
Trying to conform...
My own half-baked ideals contradict
and fight each other in a
Ridiculous civil war inside my head
And the only certainty I know is that I want
To be.
Not to be a personality.
I want what I see
And all I see around me are people living
Unapologetically
But I don't know how, not yet*

*I stammer apology
For my geography
For my blackness
For my whiteness
For my goodness
For my badness*

*But look now
You've got to see this one...
I'm flipping that switch on
(Finally?)
I'll be.
Better than you could ever feign
And I'll be whatever
Whomever
However I see fit
No apologies*

Anonymous

Fall 1999

Aint gonna let nobody

*Aint gonna let nobody
turn me round.*

I wake,

I stand.

My ability to walk,

Is my ability to speak.

*Aint gonna let nobody
turn me round.*

*A black pea in a bowl of rice,
that chocolate chip that somehow
wound up in your scoop of vanilla,
I stand out.*

*So if I'm there so will be my voice,
Aint gonna let nobody
turn me round.*

Walking in crowds,

a sea of shades,

we hold hands so no color fades.

Aint gonnah let nobody turn us round.

obama obama obama.

my heart never so filled,

my mind never so enriched,

you lift my soul up with you,

when u raise your hand,

saying yes we can.

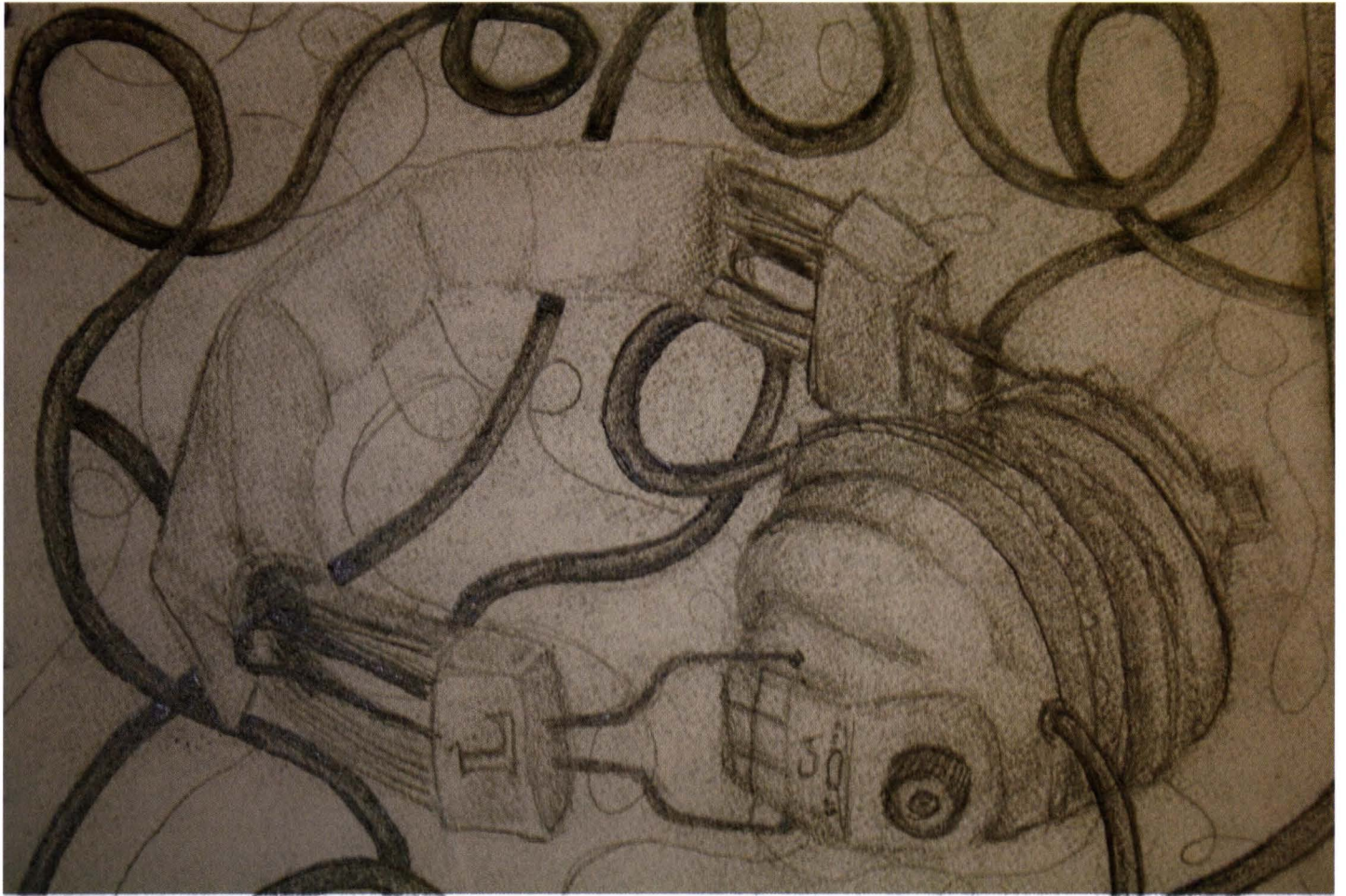
you let no one

turn you round,

Freedomland are you listening?

we're almost there.

Brianna Atkinson



A Poem About Words

*I will learn English.
I will study Shakespeare
I will read the Bible and Cummings poems
I will read Poe and Angelou
The Karma Sutra and Petrarch's sonnets
Shelley and Keats and Eliot
Notes written in class to friends
Graffiti, road signs, dime novels
And the great speeches
Of freedom fighters and politicians and lovers.*

*I will learn every language
Characters in Chinese and Korean
Sanskrit, German, Hindi, French,
Scratch marks, Latin, Swahili,
Binary, music,
Lost languages of lost tribes
Sign language, drumbeats, cave paintings
Deep guttural chants
The language of dance and motion
Color, and sound, and smell
Words that are just tastes
Words made by dogs and apes
Words for trees and rivers and mountains
I will pour over them
I will learn it all.*

*Maybe then I'll be proficient.
I will master every sound
Command assonance and consonance
Each flourish and shape
All the right things to say
So that one day
So perfect will be my articulation
So perfect will be my words
That you will revel in the clarity of my love
The truth of my diction
The resolute, nitpicking correctness of speech.
Keen will be my comments
Cut and cropped my utterances
Trimmed of fat, laid bare
Beautiful, stark, crisp like dew.*

*I will say exactly what I mean
The accuracy with which I map your smile
The competence of my elocution
Will move you, then.*

Chase Gregory

Dreaming About You

How simple it feels to be in love. How complicated I used to think it was.

But now I see your eyes shining with the light I was looking for.

But now it's only you, now it's only you, now it's only...

Fear inside, fear inside...I will wait for it, wait for it if I try.

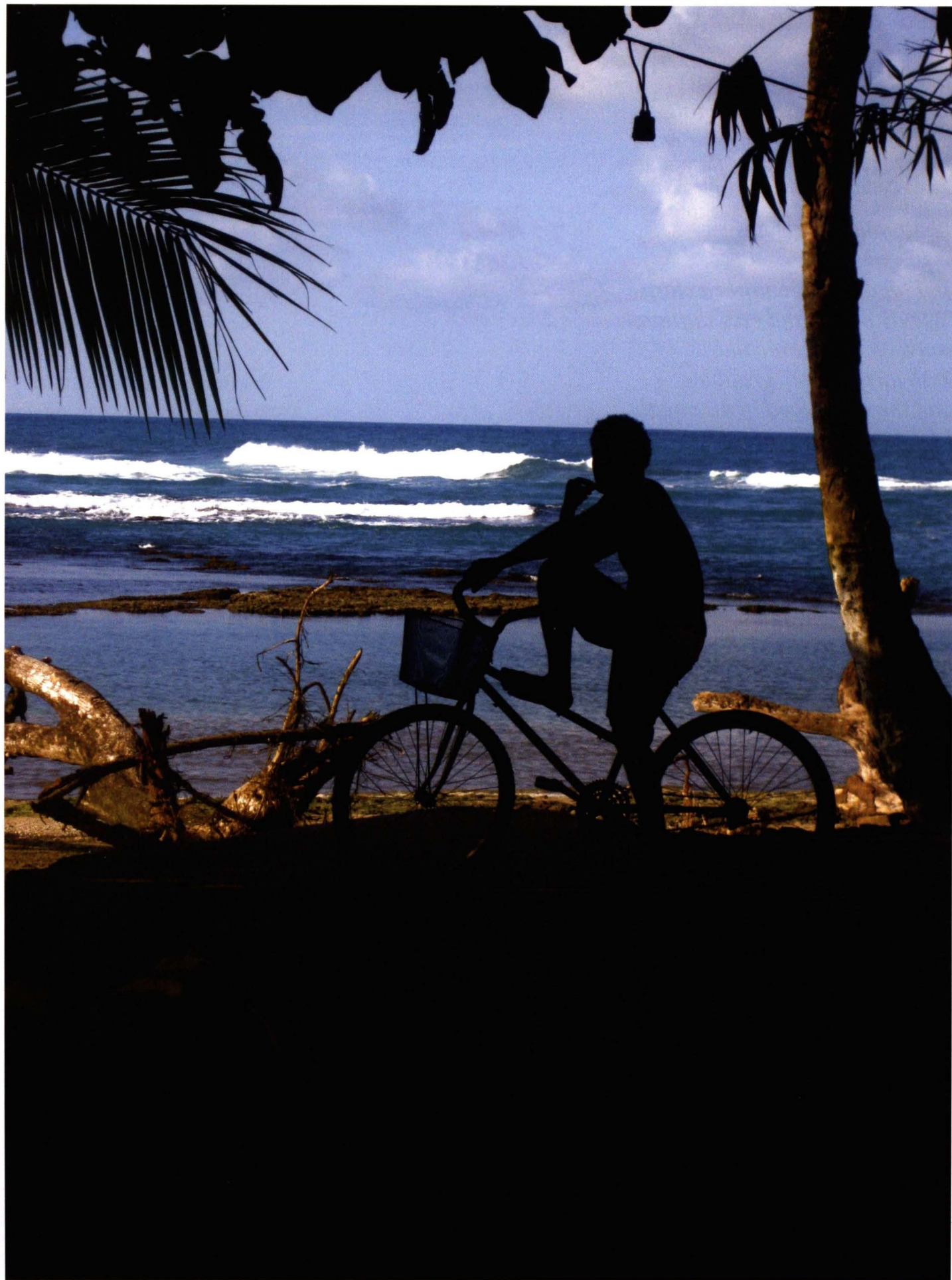
Like a cradle my hand fits right above yours. As a candle finds its flames I feel like I'm at home. I will follow you, I will follow you until the wick is through. You're the light in me, I'm the light in you, but there's no light in...

Fear inside, fear inside...I will wait for it, wait for it, wait for it if I try...

to know there'll never be a day when the world will turn around. To say that I will stay awake in this dream that I have found. To know that all of the mistakes I've made are here and now...dreaming about you.

(Fear inside, fear inside) I will wait for it, wait for it, wait for it if I try...to know there'll never be a day when the world will turn around. To say that I will stay awake in this dream that I have found. To know that all of the mistakes I've made are here and now...dreaming about you.

Stephanie Vasquez



12:30

*Then I gave myself to you,
dark and cold fists trembling.
From the back seat of your car
I could read the clock digits*

12:30, you were clumsy.

*You fumbled with my bra clasp.
Sweaty palms and eyes shifting,
you took me like a child
with dirty fingers grabbing
and throwing food in his mouth.
I fell between your hands.
You held me down by my waist
with such un-child like power.*

I was scared and closed my eyes.

*The drive to my house was short.
We passed deer and dead possums
on the side of the highway
man and woman standing close
beneath convenience store lights.
We drove by child's playground
and I cried over nightmares
lost baptisms, and laughter.
If you saw me then, red eyed
and crying, I never knew.
You whispered, "I love you."*

I pretended not to hear.

Rebecca Hayes

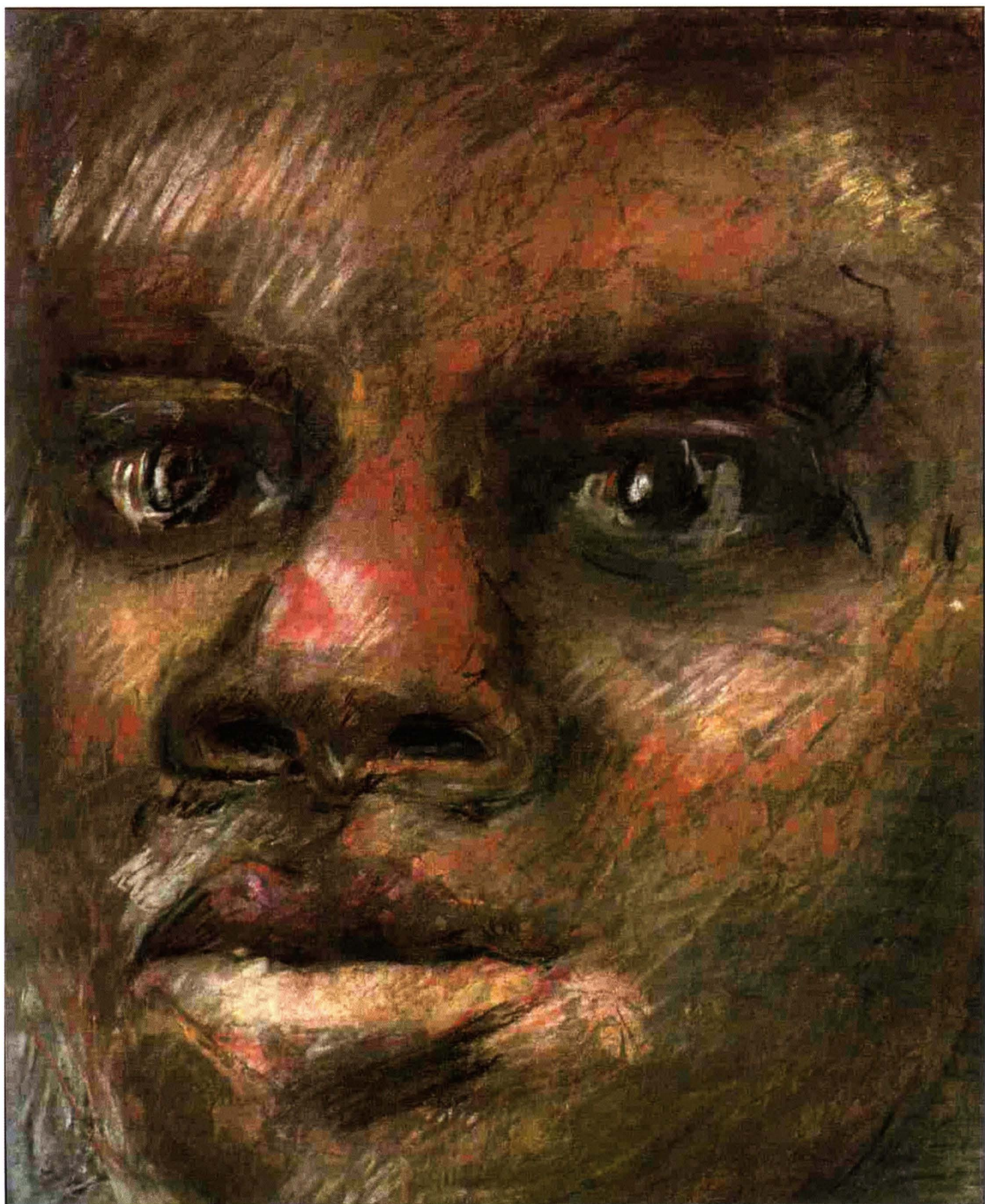
Spring 2003

Insecurity

*I'm insecure
Because I made me that way
My scars
Are deep and everlasting
I look at me
And see disasters
Which I
Feel unable to change
My love for me
Alters
Daily
Constantly I question myself
I want to love myself even more
But (not) surprisingly I come up short
I want to love others
But pain
Creates a wall I can't
Easily destroy
I glance at all the beauties
Of the world
I want
I wish
I hope
I adore
I don't see me
As the person I truly am
I only see what needs to be
Changed
But my hands
Remain
Unable to create the transformation
I so desire
I want
To be secure in me
I need the love to overcome the hate
I need to look deep within me
I need to be secure in me.*

Adisa Bridgewater

1996



Target

*Your eyes penetrate,
as if delving in my soul;
I forget myself*

Definitions

My Fear is

to love:

is to walk blind-folded with opened arms into an open field meandering until you collide with destiny.

to be loved:

is to give in to the weakness you allow no one to see

to be me:

is to believe in who I am and not in the fear of rejecting myself

Chizorom N. Izeogu

Ira Glass

My affair with Ira Glass began in the summer of 2008. He had a wife and a pit bull at the time.

Looking back, I realize I was probably too rash. But I was young. I was seventeen. Seventeen is the best age, in my opinion, although much can be said for four, and much can be said for eight. Ira Glass was forty-nine. Whether or not he thought seventeen was the best age never came up. I have a suspicion he thought it was.

It all began suddenly, one day after my English course. He was sitting in the library and I sat down next to him. I said, "Aren't you Ira Glass?" and he said, "I am," (and I could tell he was telling the truth, because his voice was high and sharp and positively magnetic). I told him very stupidly that I was a big fan and I wanted to be like him when I grew up and got a career. He smiled a big fake smile and started to talk. For a while I just listened. It was strange to hear him without the blur of radio static. I enjoyed it. Occasionally I said something stupid in between, but he must have liked it. He told me a story about his dog, and a story about his wife, and he commented on how crisp and orange the leaves got in the fall and how he positively hated August, because it was always like one big Sunday when you were in grade school. He talked about himself most of all. That's what I liked about him. He talked about his flaws and his good points and stories he covered and people he dealt with and men he liked and women he hated and how he liked sometimes to not listen to the radio at all, because sound got so tiresome sometimes, when you did it for a living, even if it was what you loved. He was an asshole. I loved it.

When he was done talking at me he invited me to coffee. I realize I should have said no. I didn't know Ira Glass from Adam, really – I mean really – but when you're in college, and I was, you don't really know anyone from Adam, you can't even remember Adam's name, so I said yes. I loved his glasses. I told him so. I wear plastic glasses myself, so I love it when boys wear plastic glasses because it reminds me of me. We got coffee. I prefer tea. I said something in very bad French, trying to be pretentious like he was. He laughed and I turned red and didn't speak. But we took more sips of coffee and I pretended I was someone important, and it turned out I was, to Mr. Glass, because he told me so. The steam of the coffee rose up around his face and fogged his glasses and he smiled a lusty, brilliant smile at me across the table. I continued to sip my coffee.

One night we couldn't go to sleep, so we drew up a list of our flaws. Many of ours were the same. Here are some of my flaws: I am very impatient, I eat too much, I consider myself above certain things, I talk about myself a lot, I am dependent on the praise of others, and I get fiercely jealous. He was scared of this last one. I told him it was all right, I would try very hard not be jealous of anyone relating to our affair, because I knew it was transient. I had been taking classes in meditation and had realized the transient nature of everything. I felt very enlightened. That was another one of our flaws.

We had lots of conversations about the terrible things in the world, like terrible people. We enjoyed talking about terrible people. It turned us on. It was a drug. It's nice to talk about terrible people, because you feel so much better about yourself afterwards. Ira didn't need to feel better about himself, because he was quite egotistical anyway, but it was still welcome therapy. It was our kind of alcoholism. We enjoyed getting drunk off potent criticism. "1998," Ira would say, popping open a bottle of crackling disdain, fresh from his cold, secret bodega. "A good year. Can you believe Clinton?" and I would say, "The sleaze," and we would feel much better about ourselves. It was a wonderful way to pass the hours.

Turns out that being mean to mean people is a gateway drug to being mean to regular people. Sometimes it got pretty bad, and we didn't know what we were doing, and Ira and I would be mean to good people, like our family members and the United Nations and my professors at school. It didn't happen often, and we felt bad afterwards and in the mornings woke up and vomited up good things about everybody, and apologies to ourselves. We had terrible hangovers.

One day in late fall, when we had been carrying on the affair for five months, I asked Ira if he would leave his wife and marry me. He looked at me and kissed me on the head and said he already had left his wife. I felt bad for a moment, considering I hadn't known this, and I said "I hope she wasn't too upset," because I usually say stupid things like that, and he said, "No, she was all right," and I believed him, even though he was using the radio voice.

"You're faking," I said, even though I believed him entirely. He nodded. I didn't believe him now. He seemed sad. "Sir," I said, because sometimes I called him that – I called everyone "sir," because it asexualizes the situation and makes people seem in charge, and they like that – "If I ever did anything to make you unhappy, I would undo it in a second." And he smiled at me, and I smiled back.

Ira and I walked a little more along the path we were walking and talking along, and I asked him if he loved me like he loved the radio. He said no. I said good, because I loved words more than I loved him. He sighed and gave me a hug and told me he loved me more than radio, at that very moment, just for a little bit. I kissed him, which meant that I loved him more than words. "Just then, not anytime else, though," I said, and he got it. I asked him about his pit bull. He said, "He's doing alright. He met a good bitch and they're fascinated by each other."

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The best thing about my affair with Ira Glass was the way we drank coffee. The days we were together we would get up at six in the morning and walk down in the cold air past the changing leaves and go to a little coffee shop and order our coffee black. It was forty degrees in the morning and the coffee and the cold air woke us up together and we dipped biscotti into our steaming mugs and chatted about the weather and his job and his friends and all of his problems. I am a good listener. Not listening is not one of my flaws.

He would listen, too, sometimes. I fell in love with his radio ears. It's one thing to have a radio voice, I would tell him, but radio ears is something much more special. Radio ears are magnetic, too, and they attract stories. People just want to talk into them. He told me I had radio ears, too. I told him I'd rather have a good radio voice, because then I could talk and people would listen. Ira said, "That's not so good, always."

Some nights we would lie in bed and talk about nothing. Those nights were positively the quietest nights of my entire experience. I told him that you had to experience silence in order to appreciate sound. He said shut up. I told him silence made him uncomfortable. He said yes, it did, and so do you, and we shouldn't carry on this affair anymore because we are too good for each other and each of us makes the other more like themselves.

I asked him for a bottle opener and he handed it to me. I opened a long thin bottle of sympathy and we took long swigs. The aftertaste was of aging barrel.

Chase Gregory





890

*I try to be smart and contain myself
Stand tall and remain myself
But I cannot take this pain myself
This hurt and loneliness
Depression has taken hold of me
It feels like no one has love for me
My heart weeps, for the pain is too deep
Friend or foe the hurt you bring only I know
Some say nothing hurts more than lost love
But it hurts more when you think there is love when there never was
You think you have friends but in the end no one is there for you
Only you can be there for you
So I have to be here for me, watch my back and by my friend
If I am to win I must be my own best friend*

Elliot McIntosh



Ode to Black Women

(Growing Under Dorothy, Monica, and Tracey)

Black girl, black girl

From the start you were destined for greatness:

From the course hair on your head—

like the cotton we once picked

To the flat feet you walk on—

That can stomp the hell out of a beat

Black girl, black girl

As you matured, your road towards success became more obvious:

With the growth of hips-

set wide and strong to replenish our nation

And the forthcoming of breasts—

there to nourish and raise our Queens and Kings to be strong enough for power,

but wise enough to recognize the All-Powerful

Black girl, black girl

There have been many blockades to your glory, but you were well equipped:

From your luscious lips that hold a powerful tongue—

that can slice one in half or grow one twice their size

To your big beautiful eyes—

that have deepened with each glance,

shooting down with a stare or lifting up with one wink

Black girl, black girl

Your prevailing in life has cased age, and with age comes wisdom:

From the heart that has grown to love and has been mended from ack—

To the soul that has deepened with each step you take in His footprints

and each child you bear—

To the mind that has enough sense to see a need for change

and the will that permitted you to do something about it

Black girl, black girl

My black girl

With the weight of the world on your shoulders

You still have the strength to strut your stuff (on the daily)

You're a mother, sister, friend—and above all you are a WOMAN

Though you are a woman, you are still one of God's children

And with your deep roots in Him no weapon shall prosper!

So go'on Black girl

Embrace your mahogany, caramel, yellow (and every shade in between) skin

Let the world know you are kin to great Queens and beautiful Kings

And your attitude, finger snappin' and neck rollin' is just the broken words of your history

Just keep doin' your thang...not that you would do it any other way

Remnant

The canvas-roof jeep rolled far on the ice in the intersection by the highway headed home. I know it didn't roll once and I know he was dead before it stopped. I know it now and when I was seven when I sat with his son in his room, after the funeral, heavy awkward silence, and waited until his mother's face, pale and heavy in the hazy light appeared in the door and took him away.

I sat alone and I felt I knew what it was to lose a parent, but not in this sense. Not with this permanence; the one I was in my mother's face a decade later when she leaned over to look at me as I stood outside the car with the door open. When I got in she waited a moment in the silence after it slammed shut. My grandmother in the hospital, heart attack ICU. I couldn't listen to anything and as it hit me it was a new feeling, hard and numbing.

Right.

I bit myself as I spoke. I pressed my head against the window and saw nothing. I remembered a voice telling me "Life will give you just enough but never more than you can handle; that's the nature of it."

I wondered if it was a lie.

Anonymous



Eros

*Kill me, man.
Leave me stricken on an acid flame.
The ancient Greeks had it right:
Eros aiming at hearts
Little boy shooting
For years and years*

*We, here, whipped and beaten and pummeled
Fucked and fucked over
Bought and bitten and rolled
Crucified in the name of love
Pierced with arrows
Ripped by wild lions
Targets of his bow*

*And still, stricken, smitten,
Lips ground together,
Hands squeezed until they'd burst
Songs screamed to ancient zodiacs
Brains beaten and battered*

*Beggars and paupers and prostitutes
Paint on our faces,
Aerosol in our hair
Scratching at scalps and along spines
Neuroses in poems and pictures,
Frenetic and desperate verse –*

*Our hair torn and cut
Our bed sheets bleeding
Our thighs grown swollen*

*Making these beautiful crying things
Born covered in wet fluid
Red and raw like all our actions.*

Chase Gregory





For the God of My Spine

*I will not be tired anymore.
I will not look back at
you and him and her
and it with eyes bagged and sore.
You may bite at my heels but,
I am learning to fly:*

*I have learned how to hold my spine
now it carries my weight
I am stiff, I am bone
I bend for no one.*

*I am making me my center, my goal, my opus.
I lust my own body:
I am in love with my own mind.
I am learning.
I am learning.*

*I have decided to owe myself the world.
I have decided to take what I deserve—nothing
will be left.
I have decided to claim eternity
and save myself
for myself.*

The sun rises for me.

*I have found the secret to happiness
on my own fingers and behind my own eyes.
You will know - -
That I am blood, and sweat
and flesh and steel and soul and earth.
I can never die.*

*I do not know how
to shuffle my feet.
I plant them hard ... my foot steps
are left in stone.
They are too big for any one else.
You cannot follow me.*

Do not try.

*I am beyond you.
The world is in me
Is me.*

*I steal stars from the sky
and put them in my eyes.*

*I have realized that when I stretch my arms
I am more than you can see.
More than you can fit into your mouth and
bite a part.*

*And so I have taken the weight of my mothers
And balanced it on my head.
They bleed into me.*

I have won.

*And you
may live on my heels*

Tiphanie Yanique Galiber Gundel

Fall 1999

