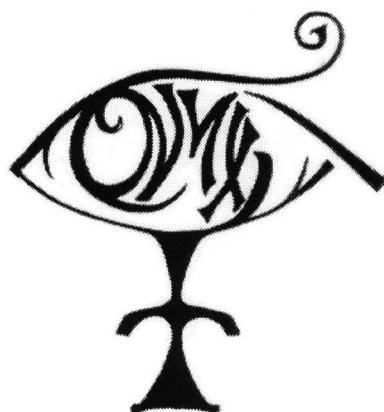




GEIR 198

⊕ NYX

SPRING 1999



Editor's Note

This year has certainly been an exciting one! After no lack of blood, sweat and good ole tears, we bring you the Spring 1999 issue of ONYX! This issue serves to usher us all into the new millenium with various interpretations of the black artistic experience.

Not surprisingly, all of the works submitted to this issue of ONYX, were outstanding! The black community at Tufts is definitely overflowing with talent! However, a few pieces deserve a little extra attention. This semester's Literary Editor's Award (see center of the magazine) goes to Kristy Baskerville for her *Untitled (Prose)* piece. This story is touching, personal, and self-effacing—drawing the reader in with its emotional impact. Likewise, Geir Gaseidnes' *Cypher*, featured on the cover of the magazine transcends the "typical" with captivating and alluring intensity. Both Geir and Kristy have continually supported ONYX and we would like to extend our congratulations to them! Last, but not least, I would like to mention both of Tera Okanta Singh Ofori-Atta's pieces (see p. 2 and p. 14), which were overwhelmingly praised by this semester's literary selection committee ... great job Tera!

We would like to thank the African American Center, Denise Philips, Gabe Guarente and the Zamboni, Alex Blum, and everyone who continues to support this magazine and what we stand for. Of course, none of this would be possible without the support and SUBMISSIONS from the community!

Onyx is an equal opportunity publication. Although our main goal is to showcase the talent of the Black community here at Tufts, we welcome and encourage submissions from the community at large.

Natasha M. Marin
Alwin A. D. Jones

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Natasha M. Marin

Editorial Assistant

Alwin A. D. Jones

Art Editors

Ajua McNeil
Shani Sandy

Layout Editors

Michael R. Fraser
Ayodeji Marquis

Literary Selection Committee

Audra Vernon
Excylyn Hardin-Smith
April Brewer
Alwin A. D. Jones
Eli Rous
Natasha M. Marin
Shayla Donald
Simone Castillo
Malini Nangia
Julia Goodman
T. Y. Galiber-Gundel
Kristy Baskerville
Shani Sandy
Kalina Jameson

Art Selection Committee

Ikezi Kamanu
Alan Duke
Shani Sandy
Ajua McNeil

⊕NYX

BLACK MAGAZINE ⊕ OF VISUAL & LITERARY ART

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Cover- Cypher</i>	Geir Gaseidnes	*
I No Longer Believe in Death	Tera Ofori-Atta	2
<i>Ashanti</i>	T. Y. Galiber-Gundel	4
The Task	Cory Person	5
Mine	Natasha M. Marin	5
There is a Place on Earth	Alan Duke	6
<i>Photo</i>	Rebecca Mann	7
I Almost Died!	Alwin A. D. Jones	8
<i>Untitled</i>	T. Y. Galiber-Gundel	10
Ind out	Eli Rous	11
Jazz	T. Y. Galiber-Gundel	11
Marta-esque	Ian Smith-Dahl	12
<i>Untitled</i>	Rachel Walker	13
Space Vapor & Ice Crystal	Tera Ofori-Atta	14
Untitled (Prose)	Kristy Baskerville	16**
<i>Untitled</i>	Daniel Fromm	18
Black	Dionna Avery	19
The Tidal Wave of 1867	T. Y. Galiber-Gundel	20
<i>Hands</i>	Gianna D'Amore	21
A Mother's Ode	backlin	22
<i>Untitled</i>	Alan Duke	23
<i>Untitled</i>	Allison Chapman	24
A Not-Love Poem	Ian Smith-Dahl	25
love	Shani Jordan-Goldman	26
<i>Man with Hips Akimbo</i>	Ian Smith-Dahl	27
Why We Be Burnin' and Lootin'	Anansi	28
<i>Untitled</i>	Alan Duke	29
Blasphemy	Natasha M. Marin	30
Only	Eris Johnson-Smith	31
<i>digital</i>	Ikezi Kamanu	32
Creative Aspects of Mind	Alwin A. D. Jones	33
Down My Block	Kalina Jameson	34
<i>logo design</i>	Natasha M. Marin	

*Visual Art Editors' Award

**Literary Editor's Award

I NO LONGER BELIEVE IN DEATH

LOST IN FEAR AND SUPERSTITION
WHEN THE TRUTH COMES YOU RARELY LISTEN
WOMEN UPON WOMEN
FROM QUEEN CANDACE TO HARRIET TUBMAN
MEN UPON MEN
FROM AKEN-ATEN TO KWAME NKRUMAH
ALL HAVE TRIED AS YOU BELIEVED THE FALSE RUMORS
THEY RISKED THEIR LIVES TO BRING ENLIGHTENMENT
FOR FREEDOM
THIS WRITING GETS NO ATTENTION
FROM THIS DEGENERATE GENERATION
OF TELEVISION AND BEER
A HARD KNOCK LIFE
IT IF I FEAR
AN IGNORANT TREND
WHERE BEING A FOOL IS COOL
FOR HOW LONG WILL WE SING THIS SONG
HOW LONG WILL WE STAND STRONG
DESTINED TO NEVER SHUT UP
SPEAK THE TRUTH AND YOU'RE REWARDED WITH TORTURE
THE GUN BULLETS NEVER LET UP
FOR YOU WE BLEED AND CLOSE OUR EYES
FOR YOU WE COMBAT THE LIES
AND SLOWLY DIE
AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS CRY
THEN IT'S BACK TO NORMAL
AS IF WE NEVER LIVED
AS IF WE NEVER DID WHAT WE DID
HOW DO YOU TEACH SENSE TO THE SENSELESS
FIGHTING TO GET ON A GUEST LIST
IN A CLUB IN BOSTON
OPEN MIC POETRY JAM OF LOVE AND BETRAYAL
EVERYDAY I'M CRUCIFIED ON RAP CITY
AND FEEL EVERY NAIL
AS MY OWN SISTA IS ASHAMED OF HER THICK FIGURE
LIPO SUCK AWAY THE HIPS AND ASS
DIET TO FRAILNESS I GASP
BLUE EYED COLORED CONTACTS
MAYBE I'LL GO KILL MY BROTHER FOR A JACKET AND A SHOE
WE'RE ALL LOST AS IF THERE IS NOTHING BETTER TO DO
NOTHING SEEMS TO REACH YOU
MARCHES AND SINGING
POEMS AND READING
LET'S GO TO CHURCH AND WORSHIP
A WHITE IDOL SENT
TO DESTROY THE FIRST COMMANDMENT
LOST CHILDREN OF EARTH
TOLD THAT YOUR BLACK SKIN AND HAIR
WAS A CURSE
MELANIN MAY BE A CURE FOR CANCER
BUT FIRST
HOW MUCH MONEY DOES SHE HAVE IN HER PURSE?
SHOULD I DIE FOR YOU?
GIVE MY LIFE FOR YOU?
WHO WILL CHANGE?
AND WHO WILL STAY THE SAME
WHO WILL STEP UP?
AND WHO WILL GIVE UP
SO LET'S BE REAL
WHEN THE TRUTH SHINES THROUGH
YOU FEEL THROUGH
YOU FEEL THREATENED

AND RARELY DO YOU LEARN YOUR LESSON
YOU ARE A HARD-HEADED AND STUBBORN PEOPLE
EVERYONE IS EQUAL EXCEPT THE WHITE IDOL PEOPLE
WHOM YOU SEE AS GODS
MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL
AND WHO IS RICH
ON THE RADIO MY SISTA IS CALLED BITCH
AND HOW MANY SISTAS LISTEN TO IT
BUYING THE SAME CDs SO YOU KNOW
HOW TO MEMORIZE LINES CALLING YOU HO
SO LET'S BE REAL
YOU LIKE WHACKNESS **AND** WICKEDNESS
BECAUSE IT HAS MASS APPEAL
YOUR TEARS ARE CROCODILE
YOU SPEAK OF THE NILE IN VAIN
THE MOMENT YOU GET FAME
YOU GO INSANE GOING VEIN
AND BIG WILLY REALLY?
JAY-Z AND BIGGIE
TUPAC AND OTHERS CURSING
SEARCHING FOR A NEW WAY TO CAPTIVATE
KIDZ COLORED BLACK WHILE TREATED LIKE DIRT
WHEN THE DIRT WAS ALWAYS THE EARTH
IN YOUR LIFE
ARE YOU THIRSTING FOR ANYTHING OF WORTH
YOU HEAR MY WORDS AND IT HURTS
SUDDENLY
YOU FEEL NOT SO DARK AND LOVELY
PROCESSED AND STRAIGHTENED
BECAUSE NAPPY HAIR IS UGLY
THAT IS WHAT YOU WERE TOLD
AND THAT IS WHAT YOU THINK
DID YOU EVER BLINK AND WONDER
IF SISTAS AND BROTHAS WERE LIED TO
YOU'VE ACCEPTED A FALSE REALITY
SO WHY SHOULD I DIE FOR YOU
WHY SHOULD ANYONE PUT THEIR LIFE ON THE LINE FOR YOU
ONLY TO RETURN TO THE PLANTATION
WHILE IN ATLANTA GEORGIA
THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL
CONDUCTS EXPERIMENTATIONS
ON LITTLE BLACK PATIENTS
IT'S GENOCIDE AND MUTILATION
PAIN AND SUFFERATION
FROM NATION TO NATION
SONGS OF LIBERATION
DISEASE AND STARVATION
POURING LIBATION
AREN'T MY TEARS ENOUGH
CRYING AND WAILING
MY EYES ARE CLOSED SHUT MY BODY IS SHAKING
THE SHACKLES ARE BREAKING
THIS SLEEPER IS WAKING
THE TRUTH IS RESONATING
AS THE FALSE ARE FLAKING
IN GOD'S CREATION
THEY PRAY.
AND TODAY.
I.
NO LONGER.
BELIEVE.
IN.
DEATH.

~Tera Okanta Singh Ofori-Atta



THE TASK

I scream through the choked throats of bastard children—
dressed in hooded sweatshirts beneath streetlamps.
I weep through the eyes of addicted mothers—
searching for an inevitable high. Mercy, mercy,
I feel with the tortured hands of fathers left unemployed—
Taunted and abused by social measures.
I am then asked why? I try. To respond
to mediocre gestures to pacify the ignorant minds
of blind individuals and succumb to such naivete
is worthless? I am then asked why? I fail.

~Cory Person

MINE

"Doncha mammaguy me nah, chile! Don vex me wit no set a bacchanal!" and confusion like a wave of sand trips me up, so I run as fast as I can . . . running from her fat voice . . . I tried to explain, I did . . . it doesn't matter now . . . oh, I just want to shrug off this voice—this voice that keeps licking my little pink eardrums—this voice that—it's all foolishness! And why can't I let that bitter nectar laminate my insides with its dry-sticky transparency . . . and yet, each syllable is a shadow with a pulse—a mint-tipped cleanness—no fuzzy reverberations come to buzz against my lips when and while they recreate—reform each word—trying desperately to draw them—the words that is—deep into me—purging my Americanized insides with watercress and plantain . . . "Is that crystal clear?" . . . yes, it is . . . and still, that voice—it bends and swivels beneath the bludgeoning blows of the wind—whimpering with its message: "Be like me, be perfect like me!" . . . but I can't Mum—my tongue is frozen into dull thudding tones—trapped beneath a brick wall and I can't—I can't escape it . . . or I won't? . . . I won't because the memory—the hot-voice-warmth—the fleshy inner cheeks threatening to swallow me, as they temper their weapons in icy breath—they are all mine . . . mine.

~Natasha M. Marin

THERE IS A PLACE ⊕N EARTH

There is a Place on Earth
where she spreads out before me
as a memory, a pearled shell,
when everything,
 everything was the sound
 of blue.

Standing atop a sunburned cliff,
I feel her pulling at
the strings of my senses
through the air,
the gravity,
the falling,
into the liquid sheets of her.
The cool fluid movements
of her soul calling,
The silent moment before . . .
(the quick inhale of breath)
the mirrored sun surface
shatters into chaos and
swallows its own children.
From beneath the waves,
 looking upwards,
 listening,
the realization & absorption of self
is everything,
 and everything is inconsequential
 next to this . . .

~Alan Duke



I ALMOST DIED!

*There have been many times
When I nearly died.
Felt the fire nearly extinguish inside,
On the outside,
I never really cried.*

*Like the time I told Mama
I doubted Christianity.
I tried to explain that the apparent inconsistency
was driving me toward insanity!
When she looked at me,
those loving eyes filled with tears—
Disappointment, about mass religion my son no longer cares—
I had done the unthinkable
by questioning the unimaginable.
To see my mama wanting cry
Made me, inside, almost die.
But, yet I could not bring myself to cry.
For I felt that somehow at that point,
I was right.
Praying alone doesn't seem to help my people's plight.
Serves as a motivation,
if they don't do it—
God won't help them to improve their situation.
And when I saw that many didn't know this,
Didn't stop to ask questions;
They didn't want to know
How come? When? Where? or Why?
That's what nearly made me cry.*

*Picked up the newspaper,
A black brother, a mother's prince, got shot.
Walked down to the corner
another succumbing to the death-hold of tainted pot.
A sister selling her body to put her son through school.
Brothers capping each other thinking it's cool.
A twelve-year-old being used as a drug dealers tool.
Am I a fool?
That's the time when I, inside, almost died.
But, why couldn't I cry?
All I could do was shake my head and sigh.*

Hearing a man speak of how he was born and raised in the ghetto
and for years has been trying to leave.
But, success, he couldn't achieve.
Turned to "Jack Daniels" to ease the pain.
"Someone" fed him crack, now he's insane.
Can't even remember his own name!
To listen to all the dreams he had,
To hear how they all became covered with dust,
Looking at him—crack had turned polished iron to rust.
That's when I nearly died.
But again, I never cried.

Knowing my brother, wouldn't get the best education
because of money.
Will he be able to hang with the "rest of the population";
such unbearable agony.
The kinda thing my Grandma survived many times before,
the same thing that keeps returning to her door:
Memories of the past, but still painful aspects of the present.
Was all of the "subtle oppression" meant?
Such a painful thought,
but I cannot weep.
My pain has evolved to where it's so deep
that my tears just well up inside.
I cannot, I cannot, I cannot cry!
All I do is sigh.
Water never rolls out of my eye.

But, I bleed in ink
wetting pieces of paper that were previously dry!

~Alwin A.D. Jones



IND ⊕ OUT

Undiscovered pear tree blooms
Proud, Leaves green without envy
Its weight supported by it'self
I, far away, lean on concrete.
Marked ear for convenience
Iridescent specks in the newer pavement
Walking past drug stores, hair salons, libraries, night clubs
 Think black to a time before it was beautiful
Speak what you feel!
 choices of word: freedom, moot, response, visible. ekwality
Love yourself, then someone else and how
Execute bad thoughts and
Cleave your mind
Black or white, not gray
They died before insecurity while I write here
 and it still isn't

~Eli Rous

JAZZ

I never really appreciated jazz until he played it on me
I would just stare at sheets of music—cryptic
I never knew the rhythm's lucidity or its potence
I never imagined that the music becomes like liquid
I never dreamed I would long for virginity
just so I could give it up again and again
and again.

And now when he plays the jazz
he holds my hand, pressing those keys and reaching those cords
I've torn up my music sheets
now I play by ear
and he gives me the music again and again
and again.

~Tiphonie Yanique Galiber-Gundel

MARTA-ESQUE

i close my eyes
and roll them back
to look at me
to look inside
and everything i see
is black
unlock my soul
and close my mind

nothing they can give
is gold
the things I win
are old hat
cold
to buy the world
I'd sell my soul
instead
I sell
what's sold
already.

It's always been
only I never saw

So now I wander
body alone
down the cracks
that downtown
owns
greasy, dirty
moonlight shown
the corpse there
can't see my soul

filled with demons
grown from labs
one corpse
rotting
looks at me
he grabs his knife
and jumps
and jabs
he doesn't want
me
but what I own.

All I have is a Marta coin
but he doesn't know
he jabs
he strikes
he swings his Death
cuts my skin
and steals my breath

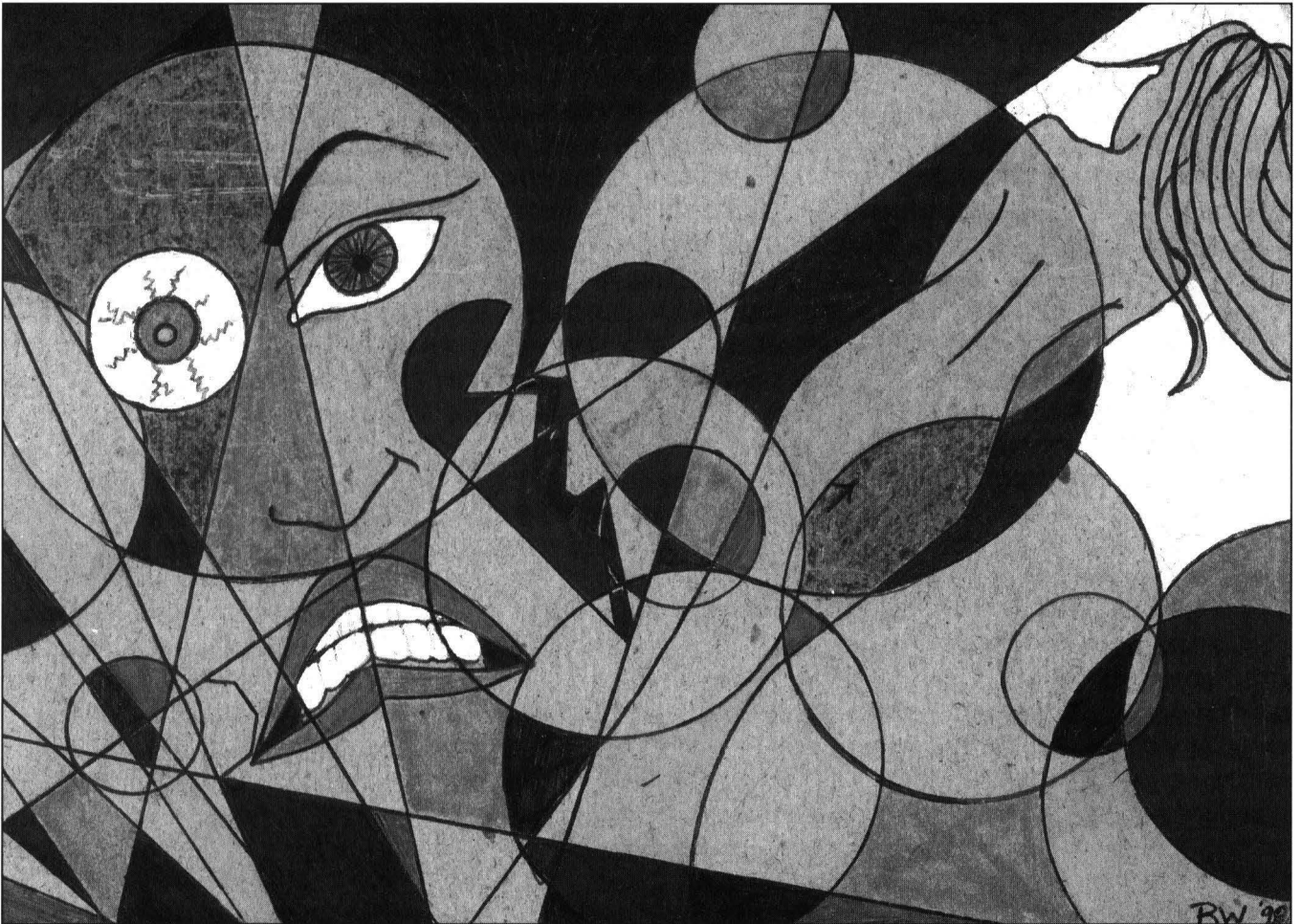
but something strange
just then
occurs
where my skin breaks
blood don't spill
instead
my soulstuff
peeks it through
and leaps
and plays
and glows
like rainbows

the corpse is cleansed
but me,
I die
I grab the token
as I rise
It
will remind me
where I've been
It
will remind me
to go back again
It
will remind me
where I'm from

It will remind me what I've done
the good the bad
the sin the sad
the weights the scales
and wounds and scars

~lan Smith-Dahl

Rachel Walker



SPACE VAPOR & ICE CRYSTAL

Esperanza Lee-Garcia
2201 A.D.E. - 2242 A.D.E.

These are the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and vocal sound arcs of Major Esperanza Lee-Garcia — a pilot and navigator of the 27th company, Imperial Space Flight Academy, Utopia Plentitia, Mars Colony. By Imperial Order 7521 and in conjunction with the Human Preservation Act of 2167 A.D.E., Major Esperanza Lee-Garcia's last thoughts were provided for public and private usage. This is done with the hopes of keeping the human spirit intact. We must never end the desire to be a more human-race.

Esperanza Lee-Garcia was a warm and caring human-being, with family, friends, and colleagues who will miss her dearly. May her essence never fade from our memory.

0419.28 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

Now I am floating in the velvet veil of infinity.

The stars that I used to dream about in my youth appear to be only small balls of lint stuck to an uncaring fabric of black space-time.

The silent explosion of my ship echoes my own hope — or lack of it, somewhere deep in the essence of my being.

My mind is frozen in fear; but I don't even have the uncomfortable feeling of sweat trickling down my forehead and annoyingly lodging the hairs of my eyebrow to reassure me of just how helpless I am.

The engineers who designed this space-suit thought of everything didn't they, tears, sweat, urine, even the vapor of my breath gets purified and then recycled to the vital areas of my body. All of this, just to keep me alive. Hopefully my self-distress message reached someone...

"it probably didn't." [snd arc .39 radii]

[thought extrapolation, sound arc]

0623.19 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

Hope, what is hope when you're thirteen light-years away from the nearest anything. Hope doesn't belong with the silent cassava of fire that used to be my space ship. Now just a pale green space-pea glowing faintly for me to look at with self pity.

[tht xtrp]

0927.16 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

I don't even see shadows in outer space,

I feel so strange.

now I'm crying!?!]

Instantly my tears evaporate.

"What an efficient fucking space suit!" [snd arc .63 radii]

"Oh fucking well." [snd arc .51 radii]

[tht xtrp, snd arc]

1041.22 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

I'm floating and,

"it's getting har...der...and harder to breathe." [snd arc .46 radii]

That's funny, I never knew space felt so soft ... so comfortable.

Probably like those old-style cotton pillows,

just like the ones my great-grandmother used to talk about.

The kind she had when she was a little girl.

I bet things were different then.

I guess the only things that stay constant are our feelings.

"Maybe I'm wrong." [snd arc .42 radii]

[tht xtrp, snd arc]

1300.00 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

My body feels like ice now.

My eyelids feel frozen.

My mind ... I mean my brain

is the only thing that seems to be working.

I can now remember any point of my life, as easy as breathing used to be.

If dying is what I think it is,

then giving birth to twins without pain inhibitors

is the most difficult thing in the universe.

{laughter} [snd arc .39 radii]

Akal and Joti sure grew up quick.

I'm enjoying every last memory of those two.

... Damn.

1419.52 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

M. R. or Instantaneous Memory Recall.

One of the many self-preservation protocols designed into this suit. "In the event of terminal exposure to a harsh environment. Or failure to replenish the main life support system after prolonged exposure to said environment (i.e. my situation). All necessary life functions will be shut down and the essence of the said individual (i.e. my memories and experiences), will be preserved in the **Artificial Neural Net** (or A.N.N) of the **Organic Bio-feedback Life-preserving Space-Suit** (or O.B.L.I.S.S.)."

So my self is being "preserved" for you lab rats to analyze who knows how many years from now. Logical, rational, and barely human ... the signature cologne of a sexually repressed engineer. What an interesting payoff for death. I'm dying, but my thoughts will be waiting for some curious on-looker to look.

"Well look at me!" [snd arc .82 radii]

[tth xtrp, snd arc, I. M. R.]

1623.38 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

Maybe I'll reincarnate into a bumblebee.

Because I suddenly have a craving for Ovaltine drenched in honey.

With crackers! Yes ... Saltines!!!

[tth xtrp, 343.21.345 ???]

1845.55 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

I guess my ex-husband was right about me.

"One day your impulsive nature will get the best of you," is what he used to say.

Well fuck him and his tongue.

[tth xtrp, I. M. R./snd arc, 1.02.112 radii]

1900.21 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

I wish I could kiss him just one last time.

Our wedding day.

"I do"

The day of our divorce.

He called me Profesora Scatterbrain ...

"**I AM NOT A SCATTERBRAIN!!!**" [snd arc, 1.27.0677 radii]

"**gasp, cough, cough, gasp, cough**" [snd arc, 1.41 radii]

"... I am not" [snd arc, .19 radii]

[tth xtrp, I. M. R./snd arc]

2357.31 G.S.T. *Geo Standard Time*

This space suit won't let me die!

It's preserving every last piece of me.

I can feel it violating me.

Searching and saving everything,

from the day I had my first period to the day I lost my virginity ...

Searching and saving everything,

from my favorite baby toy, Wally Da Wabbit, to the day I graduated the academy ...

Searching and saving everything,

the good and the bad ...

Searching ... and saving

the strong and the weak ...

Searching and saving

The little girl and the mother ...

Searching and sa—

~Tera Okanta Singh Ofori-Atta

UNTITLED (PROSE)

As usual, I stuffed myself away in the corner as not to have to answer fifty questions about how college was going. My plate was a mountain of Shirley's "come over here and taste this" creations. Chicken, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, red beans and rice, and cabbage were such a relief to my growling stomach. I hadn't eaten since that six- in- the- morning- doughnut in the car, and it was close to four in the afternoon. Looking around, I was amazed by how thirty people could squeeze into my cousin's tiny project apartment. Furthermore I was still amazed by how happy the rest of my family could be so soon after the funeral, when I was still getting adjusted to not having my favorite aunt around. She and I always had a good time in corners of apartments and houses, eating and laughing, talking about life and family and hair. But now I was by myself, constantly shifting to make the best out of the leather sofa that was just too squishy and the long black dress that just didn't fit. In between long gulps of soda I watched my mom become sixteen again, trading "nos" and "did you hear abouts" and "what ever happened tos" with her sisters. I smiled at my dad, the totem pole in the middle of the room, as he basked in the glow of being the favorite brother-in-law and the funnest uncle, swinging the little kids around and bouncing the babies. I laughed out loud as the "no way" screams came from the back room, as my baby brother hustled my cousin playing Nintendo 64.

I felt pretty vulnerable on the corner of the couch. I was the one who, as my cousins constantly teased, grew up in the country with the cows. My drunken uncle's incessant cackles were telling me that I was "Janice's ugly daughter," and to my seventeen- year- old cousin, I was the source of all knowledge: the college girl who could quiet all of her fears about getting ready for college and choosing the right school. I gave her the best advice that I could, measuring my answers carefully, not having the heart to tell her that even after you're in college you still wonder if you made the right decision.

Eventually my food disappeared, and the conversation that surrounded me changed from gossip to reminiscence, to debate. The conversations of small groups turned into one mass discussion.



~Kristy Baskerville

Everyone chipped in their favorite stories of my aunt, before the spirit of remembrance caught up with us, and we started talking about everyone in the family who had died. Then it was the kids' turn to get talked about.

"She's definitely your daughter, Janice."

"She looks exactly like you did when you were a teenager."

"No. Y'all are wrong. She looks like her daddy."

"Mmmm ... you know who she really looks like?"

We all waited for Lucy's revelation. "She looks like Feggy."

Feggy. No one talked about Feggy much anymore. She died so long ago. She was only eighteen. She was my mom's closest sister in age and everything else. Besides that, I didn't know anything else about her. I'd never even seen a picture of her.

"Look at her nose and her eyes. And that smile. And that hair down the side of her face. Feggy had that too."

Being a self-conscious teenager, I don't know how many times I stared into the mirror hating everything that Lucy had just described, especially those thick lines of dark black hair that ran from my temples to my jawbone. There was no end to my plotting to get rid of them. I had always wanted them gone, and I was so frustrated at my mom's insistence that I kept them. I waited for my mom to disagree with Lucy, but she didn't. She just looked at me the same way I catch her looking at me every once in a while, that silent, confused, déjà vu stare that can't recognize what it sees.

As I changed into jeans for the long trip back home, I looked into the mirror and ran my fingers up and down the sides of my face. I started to understand why my mom still fights to hold on to something as little as the hair on my face even when she's losing her fight to hold onto me. I still cringe sometimes when I look into the mirror and see those black, hairy lines down the sides of my face, but the war to remove them is something I've decided to let my mother win.

Daniel Fromm



BLACK

Black is what I am
With a big nose and full lips,
thick kinky hair and full curvy hips.
Yeah, I may be heavy,
Bigger than the rest,
But I'm a **Black** female
And **Black** is best.

You talk about my complexion
Yet you tan your fair skin.
You down my **Black** nature
Yet you sleep with my **Black** men.

You talk about my hair
yet I see you with plaits and dreads.
And you even had the nerve
To slap some beads up in your head.

You say I'm dumb and ignorant
yet it was I who raised your child.
My milk was the milk that calmed him
When he would cry aloud.

You say I'm dirty and nasty
Yet it was I who scrubbed your floors.
It was I who built your buildings,
It was I who fought your wars.

So, when you see me coming,
Yes you should react.
Because I'm beauty in the flesh,
I am someone **Black!**

~Dionna Avery

THE TIDAL WAVE OF 1867, AS TOLD BY MY GRANDMOTHER
(THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON A TRUE STORY AND IS FROM A NOVEL IN PROGRESS)

"In the year 1867, on the fifteenth day of July, the ocean tried to reclaim dese islands as her own. Yes. I wasn't even self born yet!" She chuckled as if this idea of not being born before the beginning of everything was humorous and certainly news to her.

"Chile—dis was before Waterfront even existed—no one had built dat concrete dat is now our supposed highway. Not den." She smiled, gazing back into simpler times. "And dere wasn't no shop-shops really. Jus stands selling fish alongside plantain and shanties wit coconut water and papaya but dem boats you see today was still docking even den—trading goods with Dominica or carrying people from St. Kitts and back. So when de ocean jus up and decide she did want to tek back dese here islands that once had rumbled from her depths in underwater volcanoes, she tought it woulda be easy!" My grandmother's eyes grew wide—defying the ocean.

"Chile, in dat year, on dat day de sea drew back—like a moda about to lick an errant chile, and I suppose we was errant—dese islands, what with piracy jus ending and illegal trade prevailing.... So, she suck she self in, is de ocean I talking bout, until a gravity vexing wall of wata stood as a mutant monster wave! Dat was when St. Croix had it. And meanwhile all de people in St. Thomas running around like fire ants and screaming 'de end a worl, de end a de worl!' And she stretched her arms into the air—becoming both the frightened people and the towering wave. The tsunami came crashing down onto St. Thomas and her voice hurried—running alongside the wave. "De wata rush past de vendors, ate up dey papaya and coconuts. It swallowed the fish and plantain. It pick up the boats wit dey human cargo and flung them into its mout! 'run fe de hills!' was the drowning call. But only dose already in de hills survive. De wave has jus eat up everyting up to Anglican church. My grandmoda was living in Savan wit her husband a de time but she had been visiting wit her moda up in Solberg—you know how we used to own it all back den. Dey felt de earthquake dat de wave had cause and dey reach a window jus in time to see dis sea curiously draw itself back, dey didn't hear no screaming but a kinda intense humming. Dey never did find my granmoda's first husband."

My mouth was open as always at this part of the story but it closed now with a loud chomp. I hadn't realized—never noticed in the story before—that this great great grandmother of mine had been married before the tidal wave came. I had always thought that my grandmother's grandfather had come over from Culebra. He was one of the boat men that came over to St. Thomas with food after the wave. That's how they met, these ancestors of mine. They'd married within weeks, had six children (five living into adulthood) and my grandmother's mother had been the first born. I knew this story well. I spoke up, "Granny, I didn't know dat Granma Judith had been married before Granpa Larris. But dis Granpa Larris is our line, right?"

"Chile, you does ask such mischievous questions. But in all truthfulness you can jus imagine what a big scandal it must have been back den! For true she only marry Granpa Larris a few weeks after the first husband had gone and then out pops my grandmoda nine months layta. But, you know, wit all de deaths and stuff no one had time to really be up in each oda's business. It don really matta, chile, we all here now."

"What was his name, the first one I mean?"

She put her hand to her chin in thought. "Victor. Yes, Victor." She paused and then continued the story that she meant to tell. "So, it was tragic for dese islands. After that there was a huge break out of cholera. Too-too many people were dying. The Cholera burial Ground was shut off and wasn't re-opened for a hundred years." She stopped at this--something about the thought of those burial grounds ended the story.

~Tiphonie Yanique Galiber-Gundel



A MOTHER'S ODE
(TO ANDREA)

Between grievances of love
My fingers are cut with blades of
rusty desire
Large shallow ponds
drawn
by rivers of hate
that emerge
with uneducated oceans
related to dry bait
that suck your inner thigh
Like empty moons
I cry
to become another being
of unforgiven things that buy and sell
my mother's soul
Painted faces that are
old, as Picasso told
me
that my dreams of being an artist
might be clipped in flight
Swallowed by fountains
separated by night
and historically labeled
BLACK and WHITE

~backlin



Allison Chapman



A NOT-LOVE POEM

For love, I must say,
I'd do a damnable lot
'cause it's so warm to the touch
and so much that I'm not.
For that dizzy-honey feeling
I could fly rings around light
jus' to see her still form
in the still of the night
for a glance I could faint
for a look I could die
evaporate in full for a
twinkling eye
I could build it
or break it
or make it
for love
I could drop like a dream-deferred
or soar like a dove
I could climb it
or walk it
run it
or jump it
For love, I could, I'd say
do a damnable lot
'cause it's so warm to the touch
and so much that I'm not.
For love I would sing
or write or draw
easily
For love
inevitability like a donut.
If I had a hammer
I'd ring it in the morning
For love,
I'd ring it in the evening
For love,
All over this land.
For love
I could be Lincoln
or Appleseed
or John Henry
just because I wanted to

I could work for love
I could buy flowers
or candy
or cheap dinners in expensive restaurants
for Love
foe love
I could be-bop like the neon lights
of a Harlem speakeasie

I could flip-flop like the curly-Q
afro of a Detroit hippie

I could hip-hop like the tattered
rhythm of Atlanta ghetto-corner

For love, I must say,
I'd do a damnable lot
'cause it's so good to the touch
and so much that I'm not.

So much for love I'd do
but for Her
for Her I'd do more
I'd
forgo
even

Love

~ Ian Smith-Dahl

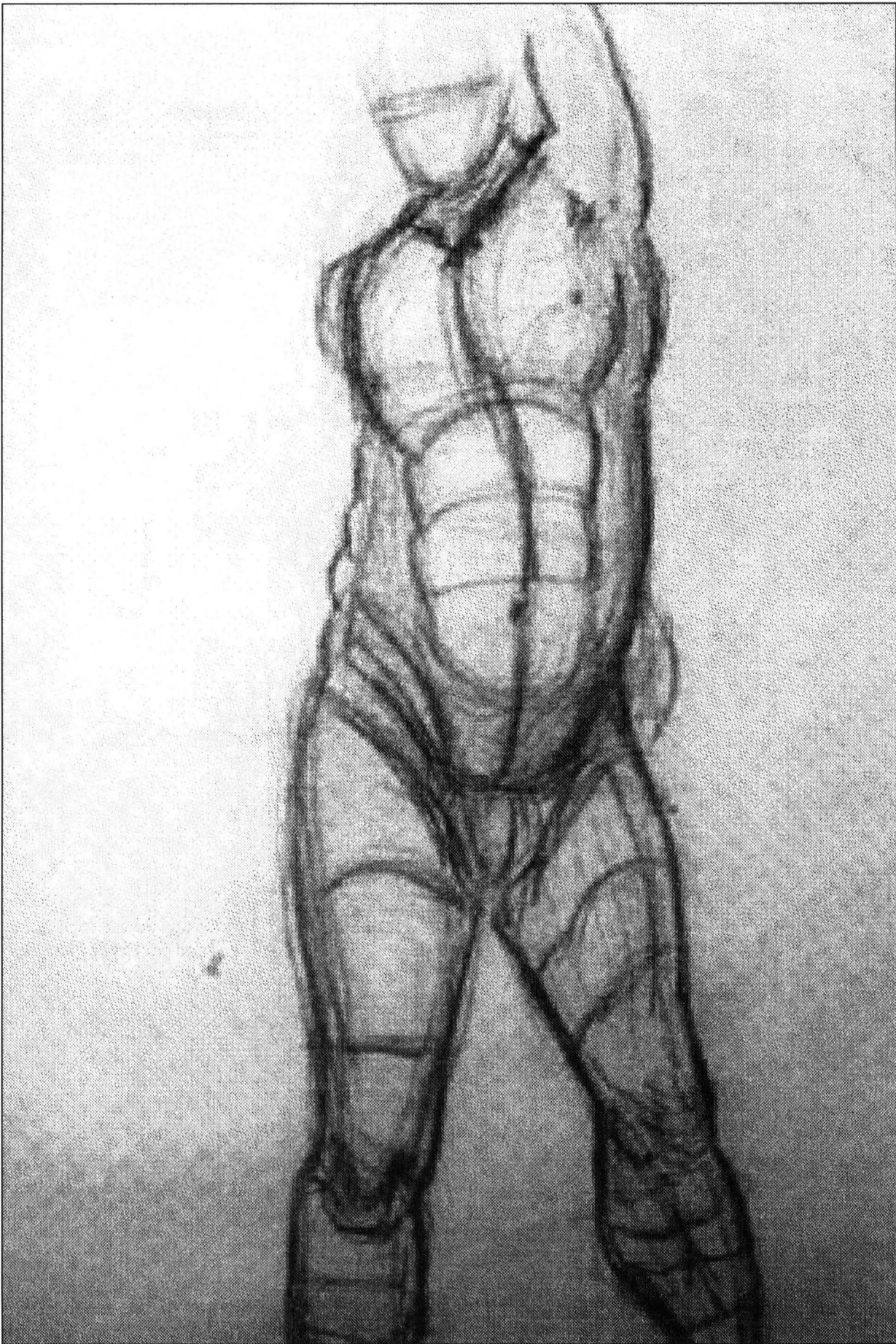
LOVE

Tall and slim, beauty in the highest form. Everything he had always craved strode in front of him. She was past the drugs that infested his livers and his stomach and his thoughts, deeper than all that drove him. Now it was her that became his desire. She was the only thing he could feel in his body, numb from drowning in loss. With a cross of hope dangling at her neck, she spread her lips and was perfect. How strange it was that inside of her was not what he rose for, what he and others had paid to receive, what some had sliced her flesh to possess. He saw her and wanted her, but for more than her long legs cat-walking down the neon streets, and the sex that seeped from her pores. He saw who she could be, but more than that, he saw who he could be with her. If he had her. And so he asked, and he received. He got everything he wanted and more. He got an angel to kiss his eyes and show him life.

So she took him into her and caressed his passion with hungry swallows. She knew what he would give her, and expected nothing more. It was when he pulled her up from off her knees, that she almost cried at his grace. No one had ever helped her up before, only laughed at her torn, broken body thinking they had gotten what they had laid gold for. She had always thought that there would be no pain when she died, but again and again she knew she had thought wrong. Until he touched her. Drunk on poison and memories, he told her that he wanted her close to him. He told her that she made him real. He whispered slurred poetry into her ear and told her that he felt alive next to her. And once, for once, she felt her heart strong inside her and was able to smile.

Together they stepped into the darkness, swearing that their lives were exactly as they should be. That the shame was something simple and passing, and that pride would just appear one day . . . maybe. What more could they ask for? What more did they even want? So they both closed their eyes and waited. The inevitable seemed too far to be so close. It was nicer to pretend that the sunset would last forever. That their bodies could hold up to anything, no matter how the disease ripped at their limbs or clawed at their love. They each provided the other with the cure to what they both suffered. To what they were dying from. And so, when he left, he grabbed hold of what was behind her eyes and beneath her heart and let himself fall into Destiny's hands taking all she was with him. She cried, of course. What else could she do? But lie there for a moment drinking in his breath. Then she rose, slowly, slowly. She put on her tight, white shirt and placed the black cross at her throat. She looked once in the mirror then closed the door behind her and left to arrange her death.

~ Shani Jordan-Goldman



WHY WE BE BURNIN' AND LOOTIN'

In this country
black people get burned and singed
and our skin boils and pops

as slivers of smoke curve upward—
the smell feeding our anger

we get burned again
when blacks get beaten by some blueberry pig
or some white hooded bedtime cracker
until the result is death
because our innocent color
is an evil dark, surely destined to find companionship
in a pit of burning sulfur

So We Loot! We Hoot! We Holler! We Die!

We burn and we burn and we burn some more
and then burn again cuz sometimes 'some more'
ain't good enough

So We Loot! We Hoot! We Holler! We Die!

We let the flames rise and rise above this wretched place
we call Amerikkka

That's right!
Are you watching?

We are looting! We are hooting! We are hollering!
And yes, we are dying
for being black

We are burning in waves of manmade heat
for being black

leaving us with the only logical option of

Fighting Fire With Fire

~Anansi



BLASPHEMY

God is pregnant again
so, the dome of heaven swells
to allow her bulge
to expand.

Naked,
she sprawls on her back.
Too fat to move much,
she stretches her arms across
time's thin blankets—
curling her brown fingers inward
to receive prayers.

Her breasts are tender
and heavy with life,
they roll into her unshaven armpits
Like shiny orbs of golden flesh.

When she is tired,
She sleeps—
allowing night to nudge her head
into pillows that purr with softness . . .
She opens her mouth in silence
to free a misty sigh and a perfect stream of
translucent drool.

When God was young,
she made many lovers,
who worshipped her distance—
her golden-brown masses.

But, she quickly grew tired
of their empty voices and empty prayers—
swallowing each one whole,
after spitting his seed into her palm.

Now when the fever of creation comes,
she rubs her palm
between her sweaty thighs
for seven days—
arching her back and curling her toes
to receive prayers.

God is pregnant again
so, the angels stay close at hand—
Wetting her lips with blue glaciers
and wiping her hot, golden brow.

Only when she is ready
will she rise and wade
into the tepid pools of light,
where she will squat
(legs spread evenly, eyes wide)
and give birth
to herself.

Sadly,
she will wish instead for suns
because only their gaudy, yellow-fire
can soothe her sore nipples.

~Natasha M. Marin

ONLY

A week to nothing
time expands and emotions
run dry
words speak for
moments only
Only
the word for loneliness
how scary it is
To see only yourself
a cause for reflection

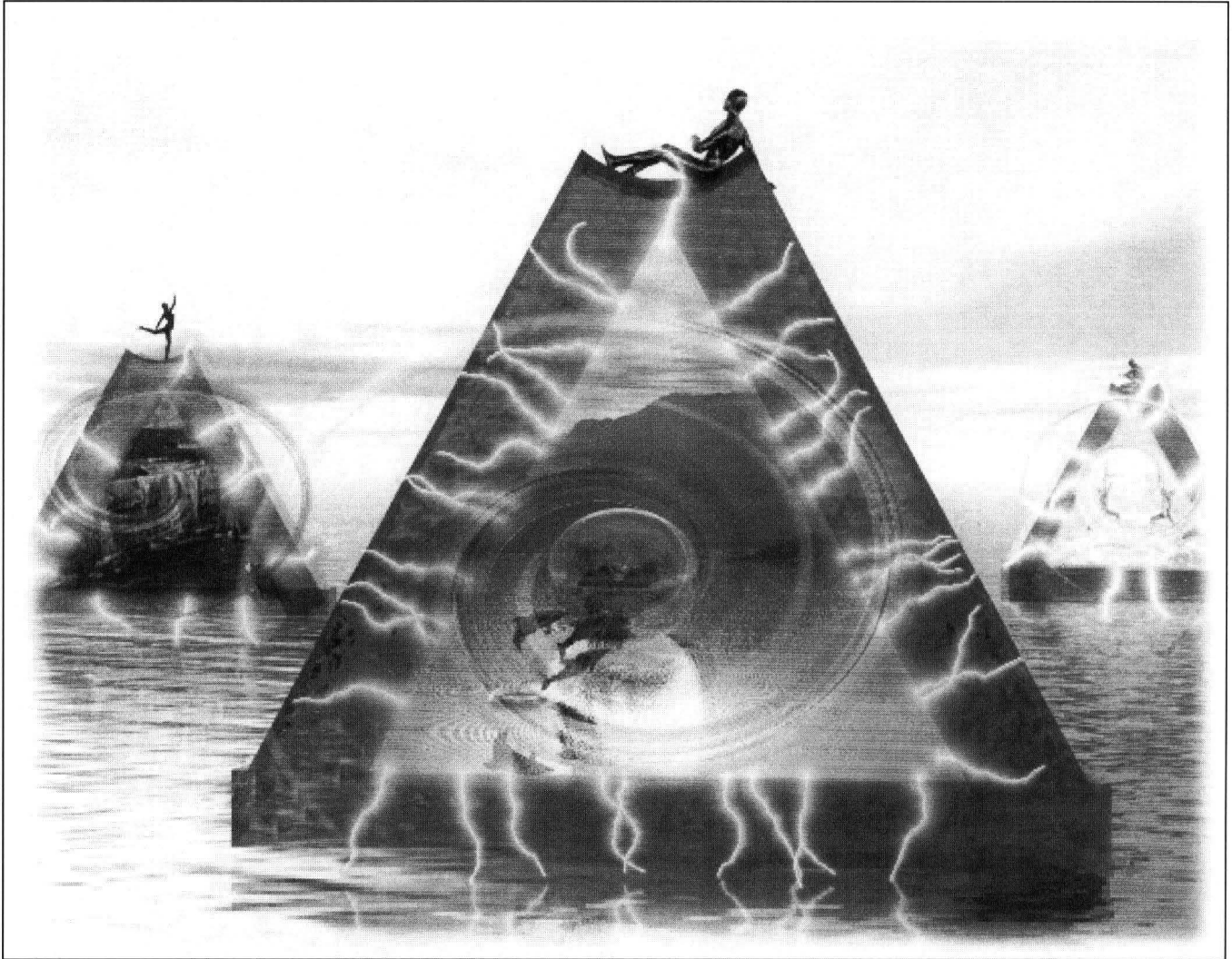
Last night I said good bye
I said good night to company
to companionship
to understanding
I lost the battle
never fought
I broke the truce
the ways of two
even in its ability
and odd in its meaning
like two sides of a coin
I lost what I knew
And couldn't believe

Only
the meaning of beginnings and ends

So tomorrow
I'll see
how
how cold the air is
if
if I like my cereal
I'll see if my heart can take
jumping into empty spaces
or how my arms will hang
by themselves
tomorrow I'll see
how it feels to be
Only
as for today
I don't feel up to it

~Eris Johnson-Smith

Ikezi Kamanu



CREATIVE ASPECTS OF MIND

Creative aspects of the mind still at rest.

*Such weight on my chest—
anger, pain, betrayal, bigotry and stress.
“Shit” is just your own mess.*

*The virginity of souls taken.
Trust; Love; Heart-broken.
Stayed back and observed
all the innocent get more than they
deserved.*

*An island surrounded by no water.
Wealth destroyed its creator.
Vanity held hands with envy
while intelligence succumbed to stupidity.*

*Pristine became a vamp.
Chastity—a low class tramp.
Hampered by thoughts of greed—
a want mistaken for a need.*

*All caused
Because
the creative aspects of mind has with-
ered—
Gave up when, by evil and sin,
it was momentarily hindered.*

~Alwin A.D. Jones

DØWN MY BΛØCK

Bright lights and hot dinners welcome
hard working fathers
a loving wife, some bad-ass kids,
24 hour bodega with the customary dumpster in front.
Teenage boys sitting on top,
hitting on me even though you are with me,
There are young men playing ball in the park,
old men shooting dice
and drinking themselves into a stupor.
Fluttering curtains in the front windows
nosy old ladies hiding
from our view.
Cars speeding to avoid a red light.
We exist as a part of this
serene madness, cannot imagine
ourselves without it.
But tonight we see all, yet look
at nothing, too much in love
as we walk together,
Down my block.

~Kalina Jameson



Tufts
