

829 Brian Court, Garner, IL 60031-3155,
USA, Northern Hemisphere, Planet Earth,
Solar System, Milky Way Galaxy, the Universe

first edition
printed in the United States of America

Freedom & Strength Press
You can't be free or strong until you can speak up



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SIDE A/SIDE B

ISBN# 1-891470-35-3

\$24.52

book, chapbooks, 2 Compact Discs

scars *suoppeajjgnd*

down in the dirt
**children
churches
& daddies**

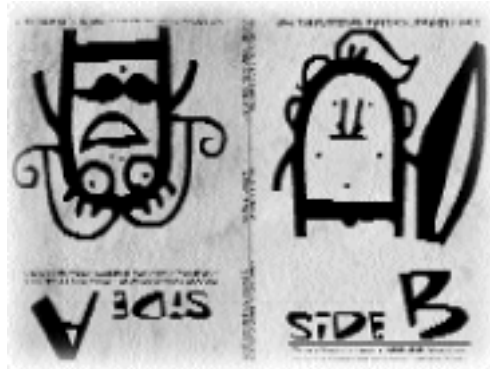
*the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented
literary and art magazine*

ISSN 1068-5154

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CLIMAX

PIERRE ROUSTAN

The rise--
It builds in me,
My body shaking hard
At the high cliff's edge; I leap off
Screaming.

UNCERTAIN JUSTICE

MARY B. CHOW

Four endless years
Weary of torment and shame
At the end of endurance;
Reluctant courage to make the call
Mommy made me define “rape”
Through my tears

I was afraid of authority figures
Cooly professional
Required to give statement
All my carefully guarded secrets
Now exposed to strangers
Forced to endure
Humiliation of a physical exam

My father’s arraignment before judge and
Female district attorney
I hoped she’d understand my pain
Aghast at the system’s denial
Of protection
She badgered and accused me
Of leading him on, “asking for it”
Made Daddy’s crime my fault

When it was over
Undertain justice
His sentence: 3 months
County jail
My sentence: life
Haunted by the memories

RUE

KELLEY J. WHITE

I wanted to watch someone grow old
someone who remembered me beautiful
someone who would find me so now

I thought I would learn so much,
no, I thought I would be accepted
if time let me, maybe, love well

DISTANCE

JACK DYLAN

a new cold enters the window
I lie naked in bed
wishing the wind will pick up
the things I have left on and around the floor
will transform, transcend, the laws of gravity

as I look for reassurance in my companion
next to me, i find that her hair is all mixed
up with the sheets, and not in the way
that used to be so endearing

her drool is sprayed on the pillow
and her arms are tangled in a web
I see this, and know that I too
must look hideous in her eyes.

I wonder how much longer this will go.

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

BURTON R. HOFFMANN

When one grows older,
Does he remember more?
Do the young ever think about the past?
Or are they too much involved with the present?
Or wish it was the future?
Thinking about the future
Can be alarming
to those of us past our prime.

BEN, I HAVE NOT DREAMED

KARYNA MCGLYNN

Ben, I have not dreamed
of your dead mother's old blue Chevy.

Ben, I have not dreamed
I am crawling across that cracked vinyl to you.

I have not dreamed of the Aqua-Net air,
the cold cream air-conditioning. Ben,

I have not dreamed
we are going to pick ripe figs today,

have not dreamed I am feeling
the tiny rivers of juice
down my arm when we split them.

Ben, I have not dreamed:
the cigar smoke,
the gold bond smoke,
the stuck window.

I have not dreamed that I will jump out for beans
and fill my pockets,
that they will 'snap'
like green bones in our fingers.

I have not dreamed I am watching Mud-Dauber nests
while you polish saddles, have not dreamed

the blood of your swift knife inside the cold fish,
have not dreamed

of your red Vizsla dying at your boots, Ben,

I have not dreamed you are sending me letters
that I am not answering, Ben,

have not dreamed of the lines that crease your eyelids
and the liver-spots,

have not dreamed of this house
cinching you in like a yellowing corset.

Ben, I have not dreamed of age
sifting the boulders from your voice
and leaving sand.

Ben, I have not dreamed that I am outliving you,
have not dreamed that I am only a little girl,
or of the weeds in the onion rows.

Ben, I have not dreamed of the rotting Fig
dropping fruit at my feet,

have not dreamed the dreamless nights,
crossing drunk waters
to your hot Louisiana bed.

Ben, I have not dreamed the memory
of your leather arms and white shirts entwining,
snapping at my wheels and heels
as I come for you in fever.

Ben, I have not dreamed
of looking down at my sticky hands
and waiting for your heart to turn over again
like an old blue Chevy.

RETROGRESSIVE DISCREPANCY

MICHAEL J. MENGES

The bleak prison-grayed walls of the
Bustation which have watched with
Cataracted Eyes the silent whimpers of
Old grey-haired infants still
Breast feeding from their (wine) bottles, now are
Pierced by a toccling man-child,
Waddling and searching, calling
“Mother” to emptiness and me, with a
High voice rolling like a fisherman’s
Net on the seas of steel-gray, unlike
My voice as I in crowded body-ful
Spacelessness ask a woman to dance
To the staccato that almost renders me a mute.
And she completes my falling heartbeat with
“No, thank you,” and my voice also
Tosses off a cliff with view-paralyzed
Muscle-tightening as the voice on the phone
Says “There is no one here by that name,”
Or the police station or garbage dump phone
Reply above the lie to my piece of hurriedly scribbled paper
By someone I had wanted something from, and
Someone had decided in the dungeons or towers of her will
To start me out with a bull-shot Magna Carta.
The clock waits a half minute for the upturned eyes upon head turned
Space, like my eyes on my desk waiting for the phone to ring ten times
Before I clock the onerous non-eternal warped ring-off,
Then the door marked “Women” opens, and two pairs of arms hug,
And he smiles, unlike my frown of clenched fist emotion paralysis
After a half hour of waiting for her of the no-show, and I can
(Can’t really), but in to vague clarity of recall,
feel the hugging in the staccato drumbeat closeness
Amid crowded bodies holding someone--her before she disappeared
going to “Introduce” (bull-shot my feelings) her “friends”
(Did they exist? Who knows in what time or space)
When she “found” them, and I have not

Found the flesh touching flesh as he
(The frozen anxious, now melted to relied) has grasped
Without streaking off a big bankroll or
Matching stylish clothes with a button unbuttoned
To shamelessly expose his hairy chest.
“Will you tell me an exciting story, Mom?”
“Wait,” he breathlessly explodes, then
Bounces to the “Men” door, “I must go tinkle,”
Unworried of his expletive and of effect of
The hidden “No, no,” of the other; and he
Skip-runs to where Mother sits alone,
Waiting only for him and no one else,
Not like the inquisitive girl who set my
Motor and non-salacious daydreams churning,
Who left with the tall, richly dressed
Stop-start-at-nite-time talker
Who pounced on my bar stool (like an eagle on a rabbit)
Vacated by my extricated undigested dinner’s demands,
To also (take all) escape from me.
She tells him about dragons and knights,
(How many have seen the dragon in my armor?)
Alone, with no kibitzers or voices from the
Pick-up-and-ball Peanut Gallery.
“Finish it,” she says, smiling, approving
And with no watchful choosing of
Words, like Scrabble grabbing,
He speeds it to his smiling “ever after,”
With no hint of “I better get away
From that person fast” in her eyes.
He leans against her arm and sleeps
With arms untwined and that
“Will I be kicked out in the morning” thought,
Perception, worry foresight that mars a fleshly
Orgiastic night that comes too seldom and far between,
Is absent from their faces, and he will know
This ongoing love for a while, I hope,
As I do not know it yet,
And I stagger to the john to puke
And bathe my tears in Seagram’s Seven.

AMBUSH

MARK GRAHAM

Bent like the souls of terror,
You're crawling like a monkey in the trees
Wrapped up in the breeze.

Taking it here
Taking it there.
All for one
But I don't care.

Model-Skorpion VZ 61
Experimentation
With a sub-machine gun.
"You'll never take me!"
You cry.
But in the ambush you die.

I've got the weather
And I've got the feathers,
But now I'm the monkey
Painted like a green man.

Taking it here
Taking it there.
All for one,
Screaming
"Never never never!"

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SIMON PERCHIK

Cross-hairs, the slow calibrating turn
--it even has a silencer
and in a dark room you wash the dead

--you keep records the way a coroner
will recognize the angle, lean down to admire
the arrangement and timing --at the exact minute

still kissing, smelling from scented chemicals
--with just a bath that has nothing to do
with how stars fall back these two

know what sunlight can do if its aim is hushed
held still for Spring, for a man and a woman
as if they couldn't sign something fast enough.

THAT BUZZ

MOLLY B. MURPHY

I know
you can down a 6-pack
while I sip just one
only half way,
nursin' it back to health
while yer runnin' races
with the next case.

This was no disgrace
really, as there was that time
when just keepin' this side
of the line was survivin'
in its own special way
'n I never did see you "drunk"
however strange that may sound
to those
who would only be too glad
to judge.

I know too
it must be killin' you
watchin' me
savor this one
while you are sober
for more than one reason.

You know, I never really knew you
sober, before this;
you always had one
in yer hand
while its partners
waited anxiously in the fridge
for your lovin hand.

I think I need this one
to deal with all the more of you
that has come true to me
since your sobriety;
you know I love you so much more
than before, while I am so afraid
of losing you, at the same time
I need to realize
there is so much new to you too,
not only me:

As you, with unblinded eyes,
may be seeing me
for the first time this week;
I only hope you love that new me
as much as I love the new you!

Yet in some reality
we are as we have always been
and always will be.

A PRAYER

REED ROLES

I pass from light
into shadow
and wrestle
the dark
alone.

The sun
has now gone
and the moon
whispers
ler sleepy
drug.

But I won't sleep.
Somewhere in the night
he is there,
with the throat of god —
full of animal grace.

I lean on this vision
as if in need of a doctor.
I gather this prayer
into balls of light.

EIGHTH DECADE SISTER

ROBERT THIMMESH

A bewildered sister stands
at the end of independence road,
evicted from her private quarters,
for not loving her landlord as her
daughter does, to a refuge at
her sister's place, a place with the
usual territorial markers---
bric-a-brac emitting the
odor of possession.

She resents the love that decides
her meals, resents the destiny to
which she cannot say yes and the
future which embraces all of us.

Dependence. An ugly head rises to
capture her spirit from the plain of
free soaring hawks. Her valley of
memory listens to words she long
ago spoke---It is for your own good; you
will thank me later.

Now she knows, like her children
then, the relentless truth that has
pursued forever. It still hurts.
Her tears flow.

UNTITLED

JACK DYLAN

I never possessed humanity
nor did I think I did
All I thought I really had was
a cheap suit
a few cigarettes
and a drink
to carry me through the night
these things would offer nothing
and i offered nothing in return.
What could I offer the night?,
the black, dark, night,
the night that I knew nothing of
except for the fact that
2 and a half seconds meant a lot there.

My old memories
they came back to me
and not in the way that old memories usually do.
They came back with her gesture
they came back with her hand on my shoulder
they came back with her perfect lips
smiling at me
telling me that she loved me

And then I was lost
I didn't know how to react
I didn't know what to do
I didn't know what was the appropriate thing to do
and I didn't really care
So I took Jane in my arms
and I hugged her
her hair- smelling of cigarette smoke
her hair, deep and black and thick
her hair, the jungle to lose myself in as I had before
to lose myself in with symphony music playing
years ago
in the outdoor symphony
with me- no idea where to go from there
and with her-
right there holding my hand
having no idea where to go herself

But now things are different
now we are all grown up
now, we have responsibilities
and people to account to and
God knows what else.

But in that hair,
in that smell of that hair,
in that hint of that hair,
there was something else lingering under the surface
and we were both trying to figure out what it was.

THE NEIGHBORS

SUSAN OSTERMAN

the neighbors are dressed in leopardskin
they are partying
fucking
laughing
married happily dieting
working
enjoying life
the neighbors
look thru their blinds
blinded by joy
only gossip to me
the neighbors
are crying in their
beer
their happy marriages
half rotten
the core black
but i dont see this
i see the plump red apple
the parties the marriages the diets
hunky-dory plans
the neighbors
are fucking the right cock/cunt
the neighbors
are addressing themselves to reality
as i sit and weave threads of fiction
to drape threadbare reality
the neighbors
may not write poetry
but still they survive
fucking marrying dieting

THE SEAHORSES
AT PORTOBELLO

JAMES NORCLIFFE

you can see that the octopus
has had very bad tidings
it is a fevered anemone
in a jetstream of petals
folding and unfolding
in a gulping rhythm
of grey and worried pink

with more equanimity
the seahorses hold up
their translucent chests
their mouths puckered
in a grandmother's kiss
bloodlessly proud
and quaintly vertical
they rock against the odds

they are the nodding uncles
of rectitude with their wobbly
gait and monitory shake
and their fern-frond tails roll
and unroll with slow deliberation

their world is a cylinder
of golden sand and starfish
of yellow weed swaying
in a stream of platitudes
in a never-ending bubble
after bubble of good advice
