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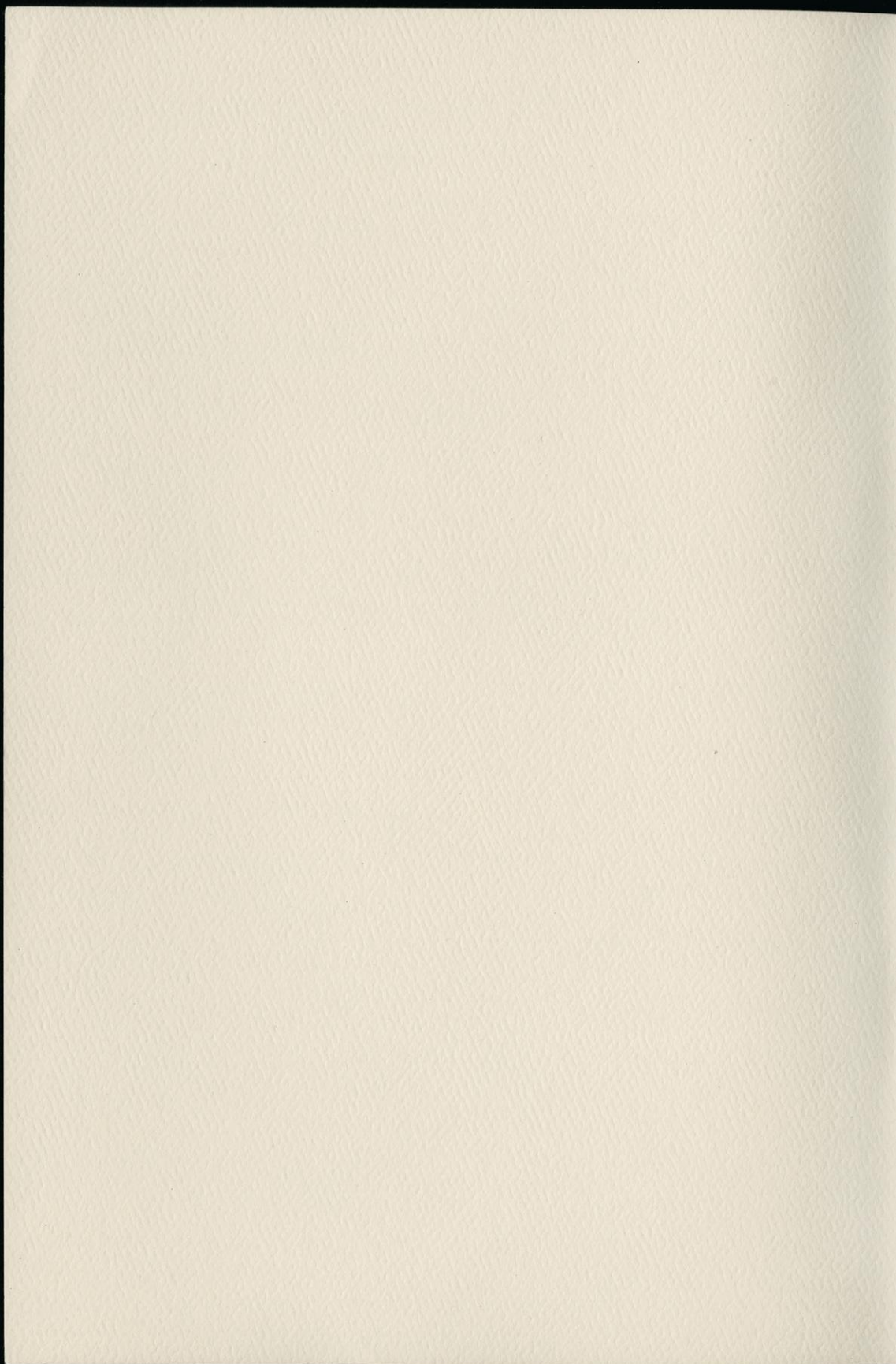
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The Windy Hill Review





The Windy Hill Review

18th Edition

1996

University of Wisconsin Center -
Waukesha County

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Cover: Photographed by Shadd W. Gehrke at the UWC-Waukesha
Field Station

Contributors: Christine Leonard Abresch

Austin Bacchus

Elizabeth Bartram

Laura Borst

Crystal Cunningham

Nanula Demos

David Dodson

Daniel J. Eisenman

Megan Ford

Gloria Forthun

Susan Guffey

Nicole Hanewall

Amy Harrison

Mary D. Hayes

Mary J. Henderson

Mike Hoffmann

James Kaczmarek

Tracy M. Kubiayk

Linda Lirios

Karen Madden

Jenny Prebil

Margaret Rozga

Brian Schroeter

Amber Schwaab

Laurel Starkey

Jen Stubbs

Polly Voss

Jessica Wegner

Sue Ellen Williams

Editors: Tracy M. Kubiayk

Sean McEown

Associate Editors: Mary Hayes

Mary Henderson

Mike Hoffman

Terry Kaminski

Linda Lirios

Charity Lyman

Jen Stubbs

Lori Wallace

Faculty Advisor/Mentor:

Margaret Rozga

Desktop Publisher:

Tracy M. Kubiayk

Printing Coordinator: Lynn Paque

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Dedicated to
Associate Dean Philip Zweifel,
Faculty Advisor for 17 editions
of The *Windy Hill Review*.
He has provided vision and direction
to bring a medium for the
creative expressions of the student writers
at the University of Wisconsin Center- Waukesha.

Poetry Fever

I want to write you so much poetry
that you sleep with your eyes open,
tossing in your bed, trying to stay
awake long enough to fall asleep
reading my words.

I want to write you so many poems
that your hands tremble when they
are not holding a page of them, your
eyes dart nervously across the rows
of letters, searching for a strong
enough dose to calm you.

I want to write you so many
thoughts, feelings, emotions,
desires, hopes, dreams, each one of
them a poem of a million lines, and
yet each time I write you a poem, I
lose my flimsy hold on logic and
sanity, and each time my poem is
done,

I am the one who lies sleepless,
quivering with withdrawal, wishing
for just one more fix to ease the
pain, and knowing all along that not
even my own drugs will help me, but
willing to trade my soul away in
words in return for something to
stop the pain,

Not wanting to admit that the pain
is caused by the words that should
cure it.

Austin Bacchus

FLY

SHE SPREAD HER WINGS TO FLY--
TO SOAR
IN HER MIND SHE COULD FEEL--
EVEN TASTE
THE WIND, THE WARMTH, THE WEIGHTLESSNESS--
THE FREEDOM.
BUT THE SPIDER HAD WOVEN THE WEB WELL--
ALMOST INVISIBLE
LOOSE ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE ILLUSION--
THE IDEA
THAT SHE COULD FLY AWAY--
TO FLEE
UNTIL SHE TRIED SHE NEVER KNEW--
COULD NOT IMAGINE
THAT SHE WAS ANCHORED TO THE GROUND--
TIED DOWN.

Gloria Forthun

Silent Screams

I carried my light 'til end of day,
to extinguish too early is weak,
so I smiled, I whispered
to make them secure
I am only a woman
quite meek.

I did this for years, a lifetime it seemed
grew tired, callous and cold
quite the game of submission
let them ponder their loss
I am only a woman,
now bold.

Laura Borst

Childhood Revisited

Ever so quickly that familiar panic returns
Even though it's been many years
I feel the heat and firmness of your body behind me,
My panic asks why, what does he want?
But I already know...

I feel his hand beneath my shirt
Traveling to my breasts; pinching, squeezing.
My mind is reeling, confused and terrified.

Then his hand travels downward to my forbidden zone,
And as soon as he reaches it, I am gone.
I am no longer present, I no longer feel or see.

Time passes and I find myself backed tightly against the wall,
Murmuring "no", hoping to become one with the wall.
As I find the strength to run, I look at him in time to see,
He's pulling up his zipper, covering his maleness.
And I am left to wonder what has happened in my absence...

Megan Ford

Wedded Bliss

They talk with the shy pride
of newly-weds. They do not “get”

Sylvia’s dark disdain
of grease on the breakfast plate.

Their own poetry suggests
the pearls of rare orchids,
obediently spawning a cure for God
in fawn-eyed babes, rosebud mouths agape.

They do not resist
the four a.m. tryst,
nor wild plums for dessert.
Do not mind
the stained fake bamboo
plant in the loo
where he misses his mark too often.

They discuss these things
while folding clothes,

oblongs into squares,

only to fade without a trace
among the socks.

Laurel Starkey

Home

can't wait to get home, now,
to the quiet comfort i have found.
since you have moved out,
i am safe and sound.

Linda Lirios

The End

I walk over to a rock and sit down.
I wish there was nothing I could say to you.
Water drips from a place unknown.
Wind whispers through the leaves.
And I sit and share my time with you.
I look up and see a haze rolling over the blue meadows in your eyes.
I am searching for something, anything to say.
Words stumble out of my mouth like drunken people at bar time.
And almost as coherently I am falling all over myself.
I hear the words but they don't make any sense.
As you stare at me in disbelief, I know it's not what you want to hear.
We speak in different tongues.
Our words are never clear and you don't want to understand.

Elizabeth Bartram

You Can Bend Over Backwards

You were not particularly graceful as a young child
Needing three or four sessions of gymnastics lessons
Before you could even turn a cartwheel.

Though you knew, and your teacher told you,
“You need to keep your legs straight as your arms,
All like the spokes of a wheel,” still you wanted
To drop your legs in protectively toward yourself.

For several years you gave up trying at all,
Years when I was too busy with other children, a job,
The house, your dad, my husband. But older,
You signed yourself up for lessons and practiced
And practiced cartwheels, round-offs, walk-overs,
I don't know the terms for all you do, my
Own maneuvers being only figures of speech.

This summer on the San Diego Beach I looked in time
To catch a glimpse of you bent over backwards,
I marvelled at your ability, though most women learn.
I saw your image reflected in the water, a full circle,
Circling me back to my point: This skill you may
Have to call forth often in your life, and that's
All right as long as the one who calls it forth is you.

Margaret Rozga

Ode to John Lennon

He died on the sidewalk
in a lost city,
 rainbows staining his eyes
on a famous street
so tainted with ennui
it took his breath away. His strength left him
like a mad current.

A wilderness of stars
spread before him
like the end of the world,

though he did not live
to endure it.

Laurel Starkey

napkin poem #29

look- i have made myself hairless for you:
armpits. upper lip. bikini line.
ankles shins calves knees thighs--
a sleek white puppet.

like a snake i shed for you
layers of my skin.
(the snake can do this by sheer force of will.
my exfoliating creme burns & smells of almond).

i cover for you the smells of
my breath my sweat my sex.
rinses perfumes powders:
synthetic & sweet.

i bind my breasts (because they say
a man likes what can be held in the hand).
i pluck & shape my eyebrows.
i lament over the width of my hips.

the other girl i see you with
has the hips of a junior high boy.
she has taken to dieting for you.
see her willow frame drooping on a nordic track.

she comments offhandedly that my ankles are thick.
(oh no!- she didn't mean it how it sounded!
really, she's always wanted thicker ankles,
always has to wear two pairs of socks).

she once told me 'sisterhood is powerful',
once sisters, now two clean-shaven
synthetically sweet smelling sleek white puppets,
siamese cats in mid-hiss.

with pink lipstick sabres & lee press-on claws
we fight and beg for table scraps of your affection.
don't pretend you don't know the game. you hear it,
pastel purrs from her at each of my tiny defeats.

i am sick of this feline fascism you govern.
i have tired of your political puppetry.
i reclaim from your regime the full of my breast,
the curve of my hip, the smells of my sex.

so let the hair sprout where it pleases,
pack away the blue eyeliner forever.
no, this is not surrender.
this is a conscientious objection.

jen stubbs

napkin poem #31

no i say there is too much inside already
for me to let you in. overflowing with something
not as cliché as sorrow but twice as heavy
and i feel nothing

except when your hands are in my hair & you are
running your fingers over my scars
divining our future by the small raised flaws,
wounds still aching & bleeding
against your fingertips.

& when your hand drops down
pulls my hair into my eyes touches lightly
the soft of my eyelashes surfs over my nose
circles the birthmark above my mouth
separates my lips

then that something that is not sorrow
pushes like clay to the sides of my stomach
& a place for you opens up
hot & wet like a womb.

jen stubbs

MOUNTAIN BIKE SESTINA

There's nothing I like better than to ride
my bike. I ride up mountains. I ride down stairs.
I can ride all day and never seem to tire.
Sometimes people laugh at my strange bike clothes.
But if I couldn't ride I don't know what I'd be.
So I'll just keep pedaling, pedaling all the way.

Though sometimes I can't find my way
home, I don't care. I'll just have to ride
a little bit more. Everyone knows I'll be
home soon. Sue may give me an evil stare,
but no more than that. Some folks say clothes
make the man. But clothes tire

in comparison to my bike. From the tires
to the saddle, my bike is A-1 all the way.
Nothing can even come close.
What else can you ride
up a mountain or down courthouse stairs?
I can ride in solitude, I can be

riding in a race, I can be
anywhere, as long as my tires
are spinning I'll be starry-
eyed. Not knowing what will come my way
is the best reason to ride,
that and I get to wear skin-tight clothes.

For some, winter means the seasons come to a close,
but that's how I want to be.
The weather has no effect on when I ride
my fat-tire bike. Those fat tires
will lead me down the way
less traveled, past the funny stares

from those uninformed. They stare
at me in my funny winter clothes
hoping I'm on my way
to the nut house to be
committed. Sometime I tire
of the stares, but I'll always ride.

So when you see me come up the stairs, with my bike behind me, my clothes muddy, my face looking tired,
you'll know I've found my way home from yet another ride.

Daniel J. Eisenman

mousetrap

Fresh ideas chew holes in walls.

The man peers too deeply into
these holes and gets lost
when he sees something or someone new
on the other side.

He wants to kill the rodent that breaks down walls
inside himself.

He turns to traps, poisons, and violence
to escape...
from himself.

He lies awake waiting for the mouse to
come out and eat his poison, Obsessed
As he eats his own poisonous hate...

Dying in his own little hole--
a void mind.

Mike Hoffmann

LEARNING TO SIGN

Expressive movements
of the hands
dance meaning to those
who cannot
hear.

Curious learners,
timid at first,
plunge in eagerly,
practice,
repeat.

Unfamiliar movements
make the fingers ache,
sign words in error
never
said aloud

Laughing in surprise
at translations.
Try again,
transmit the
intended.

Beautiful movement!
What does it mean?
Come on, brain,
don't fail now.

Ah, sweet recognition
delights both parties.
Gestures and meaning
become one.

We communicate.

Mary D. Hayes

THE MIRROR IMAGE

A VACANT LOOK
THAT'S WHAT MOST SAW
HIS EYES FIXED ON A MEANINGLESS OBJECT
DOES HE HAVE HIS OWN WORLD?
A WORLD TO ESCAPE
A WORLD TO THINK
A WORLD TO ENJOY
HE SITS MOTIONLESS
I SIT MOTIONLESS
WE GLANCE AND STARE
WHY MUST YOU LOOK AT ME?
I SHAKE THE IMAGE
FALLING TO THE GROUND
IT BREAKS INTO MORE OF THE SAME
IGNORANCE TELLS ME TO PICK IT UP
CUTTING MYSELF I START TO BLEED
I LOOK AT MY CUT
HE LOOKS AT THE CUT
BLOOD TRICKLES DOWN MY SKIN
LEAVING A SMALL POOL
THERE IN THE POOL IS THE IMAGE
WHEN WILL THIS REFLECTION NOT BE A FEAR?
WHEN WILL IT DISAPPEAR?

Brian Schroeter

It Is Time

I know you remember
that night as vividly as I do.
Five years ago in this house,
together lost in the simple, detailed world
we smiled, exploring the purple
cockroaches on that porch.
Together our reversed brains dug
into each other, subconsciously mining
love.

I'm sure you remember
the skulls eat the dust
in this carpet and that carpet.
Deja Vu--everything moved
except time.

I know you remember
reading each other's mind
through the echoes of Revolution
Number Nine and laughter.
You and I saw the same--
We were the same.

But will you remember
our life? You were my diamond
shining trust. My mind trek abided,
we were still one

Three years after you failed
and I failed
that last, damn test, I was still
with you, embracing memories,
not knowing the love is gone
in you.

I know you remember
this house. Do you remember
us? I stop my pretending!
I realize we are two
pieces of coal now.

I hope you remember
what will never be the same.
I wind my mind,
but I will never forget.

Nanula Demos

ONE RURAL CROWNING

That November night
I was a queen
and you a king.
You played the royal
jukebox, and your ceaseless
arms held me while you sang in my ear.

My boots knocked
on the wood floor
to follow you
to your ruby pick-up
that cold night
filled with country music,
a billion stars,
and a Neon Moon.

You were warm-
like the whiskey-
you flowed through my blood,
and your kisses-
your kisses still dance in my mind.

All night I was your queen
and you my king,
and we ruled the stars,
the moon, the breeze.
Your gentle touch,
I still feel.
Your soft whisper,
I still hear.

That November night
you reminded me-
And when the stars disappeared
I said goodbye
to my grand country man
until spring.

Tracy M. Kubiayk

I Love You

Yo quiero escribirte un poema en un lenguaje extranjero que tú no conoces bien, que no es tu lenguaje nativo, un poema que tú debes batallar para entender, uno que te confunda mientras te sientas, poema en una mano, diccionario en la otra y si todo lo que tú puedes descifrar es el título, esas tres palabras son los únicos sonidos que yo quiero que tú entiendes para siempre...

Yo Te Amo

I want to write you a poem in a foreign language that you don't really know, that is not your native language, a poem that you must struggle to understand, one that confuses you while you sit, poem in one and, dictionary in the other, and if all that you can figure out of that jumble of alien words is the title, those three words are the only sounds that I want you to understand forever...

Austin Bacchus

**poem to the girl who asked me
if i thought i was born bisexual**

i watch you eyes on me. i am foreign word in your mouth.
you want to know **why** so badly. sit & listen.
i will tell you why it isn't important.
but be patient. these are not the answers you want.

i open my stories to you & you bring me
your theories from your church-going parents,
scientists, midmorning talk-show hosts
& 700 club reruns. no, i say, these will not do:

do not think of sexuality as biologically determined
like freckles, or as a latent predisposition
nurtured by the environment like cancer.
mine is not an aberration that must be unlearned.

it is none of these things. i am not half queer
from my mother's side & there is no radiation therapy
for my lesbian tendencies. my desire is a petulant child.
it will not unlearn.

jen stubbs

Diver's Delight

"It is our moral destiny, I suppose, to prey upon the ghastly subaqueous life of our fellow men."

- D.H. Lawrence, "Lady Chatterly's Lover."

With shark-like mentalities,
we look upon scandal as the tastiest of delicacies.
And like fish of a cold and murky sea,
we feed on the weakened, feed greedily.
Diving upon the bloated corpse, we feast as fast as we can --
this, this eternal hunger, is the sunken nature of man.

Sue Ellen Williams

throne
royal, public
planning, predicting, ruling
politics, strategies, positions, actions
shitting, pissing, puking
private, banal
throne

Mike Hoffmann

Phantasmagoria

It's raining.

A man's past sins grip onto him.

Ghosts in his past grasp onto his pain.

Aghast, this man ran in a thin mist

on a path going to a ship.

On this ship's mast is a --saint?

Phantoms grinning at him,

Stars shining on him,

His ship is a start on a short trip.

It's hot. No rain. An oasis?

On this oasis is a goat.

Oh no, it's Satan!

This isn't a stop, it's a start!

This is not an apparition, nor a photograph.

This is an imagination.

This is...Phantasmagoria.

David Dodson

Found: Notice

Once again you have returned
to us without indicating a reason.
Unless we know the reason,
we cannot determine how to
avoid the problem in the future.

Damaged or defective?

If so we apologize.

We still need to know this information. If you have moved or will be out of town, be sure to let us know in advance so that we can suspend you.

Returning is an inconvenience and expense both of us do not need.

Remember, the best way to avoid is to return by the date specified.

Polly Voss

< Wonder Tenting >

I've wandered thru the Hortense
of the army in my head;
the civil warriors that wrenched
the jist to words I've said.
What twist to meaning they do give
arises their tense bed;
these demon shades whose escapades
take place inside my head,
who scatter thoughts asunder
giving meanings I might dread;
who splatter thoughts they plunder,
crashing thunder in my head;
who are my synapse crewmen
who reside inside my head.

James Kaczmarek

The Secret

You know what this means, don't you?

yes

You can't tell anyone.

i know

Even if they say they won't get mad.

uh huh

This is just our little secret.

okay

I'm the only one you can talk to.

i know

What will you tell them?

went to the park

What else?

got ice cream

What else?

nothing

Good girl. Come here.

okay

Only I can make you feel special, right?

uh huh

Now, who's the best baby-sitter?

you are, Bobby

Crystal Cunningham

To See

If beauty is in the eye
of the beholder-
where are those eyes?
If you are looking into mine,
Do you see beauty?
Is it within-
Or can't you see it?
Many ignore me-
Some pretend I don't exist.
But those who see,
me for me,
will always understand.
And for those who don't
sending me away
miss me
Who I am.
I ask if you see
Like the blind man does,
Or do you see
like the fool.
Everyone is a fool
At one time or another.
Is this your time
to be?

Jessica Wegner

The Fat Older Woman's Lament

Being a fat, older woman has opened my eyes
to callous opinions that produce sadness and pain.
It's unfair to be maligned for one's age, sex or size.

I used to revile wrinkled women, but now I realize
that loss of youth is regarded as an ugly stain.
Being a fat, older woman has opened my eyes.

Before I went to work, I was prone to despise
"bitchy" feminists yelling for equal gain.
It's unfair to be maligned for one's age, sex or size.

And when I was slender, I was often quick to surmise
that fat people are lazy and deserve much disdain.
Being a fat, older woman has opened my eyes.

So be warned about the twists of fate before you criticize,
for life's ironies may one day bring you to complain:
"Being a fat, older woman has opened my eyes."
It's unfair to be maligned for one's age, gender or size."

Sue Ellen Williams

Benediction

One day,
a woman awoke
and found that
many passages of sunlight
had yellowed the wallpaper.
And, as she rubbed her eyes
in the bright sun
shining through the glass,
she noticed the patterns of dust
lying around her.
“I have been sleeping very long,” she yawned,
and the freeloading mice scrambled in fear
at the sound of her powerful voice.
She gazed through
the dirty glass
at the beautiful world.
And, washing the dust from her face,
her voice boomed again, and again,
and a funny little sound arose
from the bottom of her heart.
A liquid sound. Her laughter.
And the mice ran away.
The beautiful world beckoned. And the liquid sound
floated behind her as she sunk her feet into the velvet grass.

Mary J. Henderson

Clouds

The clouds were a circus
That shady afternoon
From my seat in the grass
I watched as
Giant elephants paraded
Across the sky,
Fluffy bears did a dance,
Clowns did somersaults
And the sky
was filled with cotton candy.

Suddenly, a big black panther
Broke loose.
I could hear the
Rumble of its stomach,
And the crack of the trainer's whip.
At once the "big top" was filled with light.

I headed for home.
I could feel
The beast's giant drops
Of saliva on the back of my neck.
I ducked inside,
And I didn't look back.

Crystal Cunningham

Sestina To My Sister

Do you remember how we used to laugh?
Surrounded by our friends we would play
for hours under the hot summer sun.
Every day we would learn a new song
as we ran through the tall waving grass
to reach Grampa Sam's sheltered lake.

We would have spent our entire summer in that lake
if Grampa let us. Oh, how he used to make us laugh!
What great stories he told as we lay in the soft green grass.
He could always be counted on to play
our silly games or help make up a new song.
And every night he would sigh with the setting of the sun.

Once I asked him why the setting sun
made him sigh. With a wistful smile he stared across the lake
and recited the words of an old love song
that Gramma used to like. Then with a sad little laugh
he turned away. Do you think he was remembering how they
used to play
by the lake and spend the summer hiding in the high grass?

Later he told us stories of how she walked through the
cool, dew-wet grass
every morning at dawn as if she were waiting for the sun
to bring her another bright summer day. She would watch
the animals play
in the meadow or frolic like children at the edge of the lake.
He told us that sometimes if he was quiet, he could still
hear her laughter
as she raised her voice to sing her happy little song.

He said he would never forget the words to that song,
as sweet and soothing as the rustling of sun-dried grass.
He taught it to us to bring back the laughter
he and Gramma shared. Under that hot August sun
we sang her song as we swam in the lake
or shouted it across the meadow as Grampa watched us play.

That was the last summer we saw Grampa's happy smile as we played.
Now we are the ones who hear voices raised in song
as we gaze out over the tranquil stillness of the lake.
I wonder if they are hiding nearby in the tall, dry grass,
whispering to us of their love. I felt a sigh on the
wind at sun-
set last night. It was as soft and sweet as Gramma's laugh.

Do you remember how we used to play in the tall grass
and sing our song under the summer sun
near the lake, where we first heard grampa laugh?

Susan Guffey

Existentialist Pantoum

He gave up his life
in trying to find the meaning
of his existence.

After he began

trying to find the meaning
of his life,
he began
the questioning

of his life.

He grew weary of
the questioning.

He began to tire. After

he grew weary of
his existence,
and began to tire,
he have up his life.

Mike Hoffmann

This poem is dedicated to my mom, who owned and operated
(and named) a farm from the late 1950's until 1974.

Sunkist Fields

The farm was down a dead-end road,
past the decaying cemetery.
Long forgotten, it barely stood
in a state of disrepair.

Past the decaying cemetery,
where memories lay, forgotten.
In a state of disrepair,
weeds choking what little life remained.

Where memories lay, forgotten--
abandoned over time.
Weeds choking what little life remained,
only small signs left of its former beauty.

Abandoned over time,
long forgotten, it barely stood,
only small signs left of its former beauty,
the farm down a dead-end road.

Amy Harrison

EAGLE SIGHT

I SAW THE WORLD FROM EAGLE HEIGHT
IN THE DAWN OF SUN'S SWEET LIGHT.
I BROKE DOWN AND WEPT WITH SHAME
AND WISHED THAT MAN HAD NEVER CAME.

THE SCARS OF MINES, OF EARTH THAT'S NUDE,
LIKE MALIGNANT CANCERS THAT EXUDE
INFECTIONS INTO WATER AND GROUND
AND POISONS EVERY LIVING THING AROUND.

FORESTS, THAT ONCE STOOD PROUD AND TALL,
ARE HALF FORESTS NOW OR NONE AT ALL,
TREES, THAT HAVE LIVED LONGER THAN YOU OR I,
ARE JUST COMMODITIES THAT HAVE TO DIE.

OUR BLOOD, THE NURTURING RIVERS OF LIFE,
ARE CHOKED, CLOGGED AND RIDDLED WITH STRIFE.
NO PURE CLEAR WATER FLOWS ANYMORE
THE FINNED ONES DIE BY THE SCORE.

BUT BRAND NEW HOUSES STAND SIDE BY SIDE,
AND FARMERS STILL USE TOO MUCH KILLERCIDE.
WE RAVAGE THE PLACES WHERE THE EAGLES ONCE FLEW
CLAIMING "IF WE DON'T DO IT, SOMEONE ELSE WILL."

I SAW THE EARTH FROM EAGLE HEIGHT
IN THE DAWN OF SUN'S SWEET LIGHT.
I BROKE DOWN AND WEPT WITH SHAME
AND WISHED THAT MAN HAD NEVER CAME.

Gloria Forthun

DIAMANTE

employer
powerful, dominant
frightening, ordering, directing
dictator, leader, follower, subject
working, struggling, cowering
subordinate, weak
employee
subordinate, weak
cowering, struggling, working
subject, follower, leader, rebel
striking, struggling, fighting
strong, insubordinate
unemployed

Karen Madden

The Unexpected

It begins with the weight. My heart beats wildly and I can't lift myself. "Ah, what a mistake I've made," I think slowly. I stare all around-- tuning out everything but what is directly ahead of my eyes, struggling to remember the sentence before, and rambling. People are loud, the pixels of the T.V. screen flicker and glare independently, my hand weighs too much for my arm to lift.

Feeling panic, I strain to stand, breaking the ties binding me down. I walk to the kitchen to run water for my dry mouth. I run the water and get a cup. The water is running. I watch. The water keeps running. I splash. The water still running, I stare.

Mike laughs from the other room, pulling me back to reality. I turn off the water, forgetting to drink, and walk back to the buzzing room. I don't recall why, but I now have a piece of ice in my hand. It feels smoother, wetter, surprisingly warmer. Everything stands out, one at a time. I'm heavy again. We all step outside, into the cold. Things snap into place. It ends with a shiver.

Nicole Hanewall

Sonnet

In greasy masses the pots and pans poise,
Foul with the odors of dinners passed by,
Ready to tumble at the slightest noise.
I approach with caution and fearful eye,
Dare to begin to sort out the muddle
And scour away fares that long have been fixed
In each crease, crevice, furrow, and puddle.
I scrub until my own blood has been mixed
In the scathing water and biting suds.
I must drain the basin time and again
As it becomes murky with dreadful muds
Which wallow down later to clog my drain.
But, hurray, now the crockery does gleam!
And I stand to admire my kitchen, so clean.

Amber Schwaab

Words on the Page

Gut-wrenching bellows
Desire for light
Breathless
Ambiguities
self-exposure
Naked, unmasked, mortal
Visions of perfection
Tastes of the Gods
Eternal tainted mirror
A caricature
Clipped wings of an angel
Passions flame
Bloody revulsion
An aftertaste sweetly savored
on the tongue
Courageous disclosure
Vital flames
A moment of madness
Stimulating vertigo
Sensation, Intoxicating
Intense orgasmic
Release
Take it in,
The words.

Laura Borst

< Comet >

Saw her again; and we smiled, and
“Hi’ed”; she like some bright
flashing comet, crossing the orbit
of this staid old planet; and if
she gets close enough, we briefly
kiss; but then she shoots off in
space again, and up to now, we
never really crashed into each
other; never crashed.

James Kaczmarek

LOOKING

Always looking for answers.
What is the purpose of life?
For now, life is a mystery.
After death we will know.

What is the purpose of life?
How was life created?
After death we will know.
All the questions will be answered.

How was life created?
How can something come out of nothing?
All the questions will be answered.
Will we marvel at the revelation?

How can something come out of nothing?
For now, life is a mystery.
Will we marvel at the revelation?
Always looking for answers.

Jenny Prebil

A Denny's Cook

I know when I lost my mind
It happened one night at work
People there are so unkind
The customers there are jerks

It happened one night at work
They pushed me way too far
The customers there are jerks
Special orders are their pars

They push me way too far
A BLT no lettuce
Special orders are their pars
And those orders DO upset us

A BLT no lettuce
An order of toast...UNTOASTED
And those orders DO upset us
Roast beef they want unroasted

I know when I lost my mind
An order of toast...UNTOASTED
Roast beef they want unroasted
People there are so unkind

Karen Madden

Moving

Moving made me ruthless. Fourteen years in this house, raised three children here. Don't be emotional. Throw it out. Burn it. Sell it? But first I have to sort through it all. Good thing. Found great-grandmother's birth, marriage and death certificates. Important stuff.

The photos touch me most. Hit me hard. Was Cori really that tiny? Could Gabe have been that sweet? So innocent? I look at the smiles, the intensity in those tiny faces. So soft, so pure. I sigh.

Remember that trip to Utah? See, the boys have on their Star Wars shirts. There's Sasa and Aunt Annie, smiling and alive. The holidays are here. Every one of them. Examine the faces, the expressions. What was going through their minds? Did they know how much they meant to me?

Enough, enough. Don't be so morose. Get busy. Must get through these boxes. But there's that Christmas card Luke made for me. Was he three or four? And the baby clothes they all wore. I won't be giving these away. My mother's recipe box. I cradle it in my hands. What a hard life she had. Lying in a nursing home the last 15 years. But I remember her baking bread. Is this the recipe she used?

What are these papers? Oh, I remember. Eighth grade. We studied conservation. My report on strip farming. Not great, but not too bad. And my diary. Started when I was 12. I wrote in it every night. Still do. As I read, I once again discover that 12-year-old who was me. She's been gone for so long, it seems.

On and on it goes. Bits and pieces of my life, of lives of those I love. Then the tears begin. I am worn out. I can't make any more decisions today.

But then I see a small glass jar, and wearily I peek inside. At first a little shocked, then delighted, and then I start to laugh.

I run to show my son and we laugh together. "You always were a little weird," I say. With a smile he tosses the jar back to me. That jar with two dead chameleons inside it.

I carefully pack it in the box marked "Things to Save."

Christine Leonard Abresch

MUTE

VISION A WORLD WITH SILENT THOUGHTS
A WORLD WHERE MOUTHS MOVE BUT SOUND DOESN'T
SILENT FIGURES WANDER LOST
HOLDING ON TO THOUGHT WITHOUT CHANCE
TO BREAK THROUGH THIS SILENT BARRIER
CONFUSION IS SPILLED ALL OVER STREETS
AS FACES SEARCH FOR A FAMILIAR IMAGE
THE SONG ON THE RADIO PLAYS NO MORE
THE IMAGE ON THE T.V. SCREEN FADES
INK FROM A NEWSPAPER SMEARS
AGONY FILLS EVERY DIMENSION OF THE SOUL
THE EARTH SPIRIT HAS PERISHED
THE HELL I HAVE FEARED FOR SO LONG
HAS BECOME A REALITY
MY WORLD HAS LOST ALL SENSE OF COMMUNICATION
WE ARE MUTE

BRIAN SCHROEFER

Villanelle

Have you ever seen a sunset so red?
Ask yourself: In the coming of night
Is the world still seen through the eyes of the dead?

The sky turns crimson like burning lead,
and the hills in the distance fade from sight.
Have you ever seen a sunset so red?

At times like these thoughts leap to your head.
Do you ask yourself, in the absence of light,
Is the world still seen through the eyes of the dead?

I've followed my demons wherever they led,
and they ask, as my memories take flight,
Have you ever seen a sunset so red?

I fear to ask the couple just wed,
The pure virgin bride dressed all in white,
Is the world still seen through the eyes of the dead?

Questions unanswered in books often read,
and yet people still ask at the coming of night:
Have you ever seen a sunset so red?
Is the world still seen through the eyes of the dead?

Susan Guffey

MUSIC OF THE HEART

I love to dance the tango in the night;
the rhythm flowing through me is divine.
my partner hold me close to him, so tight,
the pattern calling out to us, "You're mine!"

We step, our bodies glide across the floor--
a one a two-and-three rings through my ears.
I feel the rhythm from my very core,
relax and follow as my partner steers.

The dance is almost through, our time is done.
We've shared emotions locked inside all day,
had time together spent in so much fun,
a different way to spend one night in May.

The music in my heart is still so loud--
I hum and dance and sing upon its cloud.

Amy Harrison

THE COMING-HOME-TIME

After 18 hours, the baby came out looking smooshed. Etta the midwife suctioned its mouth and nose and laid it on Jolene's breast. We were aunts now, Suzette, Flossie and I. Mama was a granny. Suzette cleared her throat first. "What is it, Etta? Boy or girl?"

"Why, a girl, you ninny." Etta examined the cord, and discreetly checked on the afterbirth.

Jolene laughed tearily, claiming didn't the baby look just like B. W.? With those big ears? "I still want to name her Billie."

"Well, that's the perfect name for this sweet baby girl," Etta replied a little too loudly, as if expecting an argument from the rest of us. Our eyes darted like guilty birds--we weren't all that close to Jolene.

"Billy Walter is surely whooping it up in heaven, now." Mama honked into her hanky.

Flossie lost it. "It's supposed to be a boy! Jolene should've had a boy!"

Etta's frizzy head snapped up, her stethoscope swinging around as if in alarm. "Get her out of here."

Flossie bawled nasally as I steered her from Jolene's bedroom. "Do your crying in the creamery," I scolded. "How could you do that to Jolene?"

Flossie's hand deliberately smacked the doorjamb. "Buh-buh-buh B. W.'s name can't be passed on by no girl." Hair sprung out of Flossie's ponytail like antenna wires. Inside of me, a rising keen of rebellion knew she was right.

"Well, you're 13 now, honey, and you know how things are." The creamery (now laundry room) smelled of Etta's birthing towels. A pile of them churned in the washing machine, to which I had added an extra dollop of bleach. I did not know about birth as I did death.

Our strapping tow-headed brother with the laughing eyes had been strolling out of the barn's smoky-grey shadows on a lingering November evening, and the next thing we knew, he was keeled over. The defective heart he'd been born with failed him for the last time. Not a one of us could save B.W., not even his wife, four months along.

Jolene had been a stranger to us then. She still was. We girls didn't say so, of course, but it's how we felt. Jolene was from Kentucky, visiting relatives here in Leed. Boy meets girl, boy marries girl, boy dies, girl has his baby, and Flossie pitches a fit because B. W.--the last O'Doul male of our line--didn't have a son.

I returned to the bedroom. Etta had cut the cord and was wrapping it and a piece of what looked like shriveled calf's liver in clean burlap. "She wants this buried under the crab apple tree where she and B. W. was hitched," Etta whispered, although Jolene was right there and probably heard every word.

The crab apple tree was not much to look at. But it was famous, being the oldest crab apple tree in Leed, Wisconsin. Older than the farm at 165 years. The tree had been the site of untold weddings, christenings, children's tea parties (even a hanging or two). It was a sprawling, venerable entity that snowed pink blizzards in the spring, like this spring.

"Say something special to B. W., Breezy, while you bury it." Jolene spoke up in her long vowels. Saay suumthin spaaaycial to bee dubbleyuh, Bruheezee. She went back to nuzzling the fuzzy new head. Jolene's face was averted, but I knew her eyes were filled. I smiled in my non-challenging lopsided way, took up the burlap with the afterbirth in it, and went outside. I went through the creamery, to check up on Flossie--but she wasn't there.

She was under the tree moping on the Victorian bench that embraced the tree's lower trunk. The bench had just been white-washed by Jolene, during that burst of energy women get when they're about ready to go into labor. Because of her bulk, Jolene had not done a good job--the whitewash was badly streaked. "Is that that thing?" Flossie pointed. She gave a Beethoven leer of disgust.

"Jolene wants me to bury it here. Will you get me the trowel?"

Flossie mournfully twined her hair. "Do you suppose B. W.'s glad it's a girl?"

Why wouldn't he be? You know, I think that baby looks more like you than she does B. W.," I lied.

Flossie almost perked up. "Do you think I could keep her in my room?"

I looked up through the gentle shower of pink blossom at the sun slopping away with lush yearning. The earth tilted towards dusk--I could feel it. Cow bells jangled peacefully. It was right about this time of day that B. W. had been strolling out to the barn, in the coming-home time, whistling, thinking about supper and wife and soon-to-be- child.

Flossie jolted my arm. "Can I? Keep her?"

"Maybe," I said, "when she's older. Get me the trowel."

As soon as Flossie delivered the trowel, and vanished so she wouldn't have to watch (or help), I knelt under the tree, setting the burlap aside. A movement in a downstairs window caught me eye: Jolene, cradling the baby. A ponderous, pear-shaped woman with wheat hair flowing to her waist. She is so child-like herself, a giant, pudgy child. I ducked my head and panned for words: We miss you, B. W. It's almost time to get supper on, and all the cows will be ambling home, and neighbors will be walking in from their fields, slapping the fresh dirt off their pants with their hats, taking that loam smell into the barn. And the sun will drop in its berth and the moon will rise, and you won't be here to see it all. Christ! I miss you, Billy Walter! I try and try to LIKE Jolene, but she ain't YOU. Forgive me, but she ain't. But I'm good to her and treat her as best as I can. It's all I can do right now.

A sigh I had not planned on escaped me as I leaned forward and started digging. "It's a girl, B.W., named after you. Congratulations."

Nothing else really needed to be said.

Laurel A. Starkey

< Sonnet #249: Mastectomy >

Today my wife is missing her left breast,
result of recent mod. mastectomy.
Her mammogram showed trace of dreaded "C"
so thought removal would be for the best.
When went for check-up never would have guessed
that she would soon decide for surgery,
and step one on the road bad biopsy.
We think they got it all. In that we're blessed.

So what would you do if were up to you;
especially if you're woman, and it's yours?
Would you think radical was for the best,
or would you opt for minimum; keep two?
One muse define what's ill when seeking cures.
There's more to life than saving deadly breast.

James Kaczmarek

confession 1995

for m

you told me not to get angry.
you told me it was a long time ago
& is over. & doesn't matter anymore.
but i remember your wild hair & bright eyes
& i know he took something
from the both of us. something
I can't help you get back.

don't walk out the door, i told you,
you can't just run away. it doesn't work.
you can't spend your whole life in the bathroom
bent over in that strange prayer.
you can't vomit away the things he said
or the bruises you hid that have already healed.

you left me wanting revenge.
you left me on my knees with tears in my throat
tasting bitter in my mouth
& worried someone would see me crying
softly in my library sweater & fuzzy gray socks.
you left me wanted to hold you
but holding back.

so the mystery of you is finally solved:
why your hair dulled & grayed in places,
why your eyes are now big brown coffee cups
sunken in your face & spilling over,
always looking down, no longer the fire-hot
brown of cinnamon.

so the mystery of you is finally solved:
why your hair dulled & grayed in places,
why your eyes are now big brown coffee cups
sunken in your face & spilling over,
always looking down, no longer the fire-hot
brown of cinnamon.

now i understand you in a way i never wanted,
your pale hair & gaunt face.
this something that is lost is lost forever,
& we can't get it back. the sweet red-brown inferno
& fire-lion curls-- they are gone. but come.
let me touch where your bruises have faded
& i will show you the purple of my half-healed scars.

we will cry in morning for what we have lost.
we will cry for the pain
& the permanence
of this new understanding.

jen stubbs

Sensational Utopia

Warm Spring breeze wisps through my hair,
I brush loose strands from my eyes
to look out at the sky.
Seeing colors and rainbows
I thank God for my sight,
the pinks, greens and blues,
wild textured hues
all bumpy and soft, clouds and sky
fuzzy and carelessly tossed.
The air sends smells of burning leaves
and long thick branches
stretch out from the trees.
Freshly mown grass, the rain from the night before,
sounds of birds
and children slamming doors.
Obnoxious dogs growl and bark,
lawnmowing old men smell of Bourbon
while kids spin circles in the park.
The kind of day you could live in forever,
forget responsibility and pressure.
Then I could sing and dance,
roll around in the tall green grass,
fly with the butterflies
run with the wind
lie down and relax
letting the day sink in.

Laura Borst

The Interlude

Water rhythms
part
as man, woman, and child
glide
across silk
smooth and quiet.
Softly, Softly paddles
push
through current and reed.
Talking, laughing, pointing child
shrieks
at bird, water, fish, and rock.
paddles
dip and scrape.
Man, woman, and child
glide
swiftly past,
and soon,
they are gone.

Mary J. Henderson

First Snowfall of Winter, 1995

Tonight we looked out the window for a long time, watching the snow fall sharply on the brown grass, covering up the death of fall with the purity of winter. We just watched, feeling and eerie peace on us, and I wanted to take your hand and speak of permanence and eternity.

But I couldn't, for a barrier of telephone poles kept us apart while they kept us connected. So, I just imagined your physical presence, warm and comforting, and watched the silence with you.

And you spoke with a quiet voice, awe-struck, it seemed to me, in wonder at the beauty that could exist in the terrible world you and I call ours. Your words were so simply full of wisdom that I could not even take them in. I let them wash through the wires and run through me, feeling clean and invigorated from the soothing raindrops of your voice.

It was an image you mentioned that brought my feelings that night into focus. "A snow-globe," you said, "it seems like we're inside of a snow-globe and someone is shaking it upside down." I knew you were outdoors in your mind, feeling the shower of wet, white needles falling on your cheeks, looking up through the cloudy glass dome of the sky, your eyes trying hard to pierce the misty

window to heaven, looking. I knew, for the giant fingers holding the globe.

And suddenly I knew your thoughts, also. You wished you could find those giant hands holding your fragile world, really know that they were there. You wanted to reassure yourself that the globe was held by those hands, not simply floating in a void , spinning and spiraling, at any moment about to smash and shatter on the rocks around you.

But you also wanted to grasp those hands, fiercely pry their grip from the globe, stop them from shaking your world, end the turmoil and confusion that sweeps over your life, obliterating the guideposts, sending you reeling, lost, wandering in the blizzard, trying to find shelter and safety. You wanted the globe to be set on its stand, resting calmly and uneventfully on its pedestal, never disturbed, always clear and bright, without any storms swirling in side to obstruct the view.

And I wanted to tell you: don't fight the hands, those giant hands holding you and me, your globe and mine, safely and tenderly, those fingers that shake your world at times, stirring up snowflakes of emotions and feelings that block out the sunlight. For you must realize this -- Your globe is never prettier than when the snow is swirling through you.

Austin Bacchus

(Written at Waukesha Memorial Hospital, 3rd Floor)

They found a mass
in her left breast.

“Nothing to worry about just yet,
nothing--
don’t alert your next of kin,

don’t
tarnish the champagne gold of morning.

Go out and play.
Burst milkweed in the sun,
let it fly

and weep no more.”

Laurel Starkey

Lost Innocence

I now know my age and I can hear the rats rejoicing with their accomplishment of dragging me, kicking and screaming, into adulthood. I'm old and know, remember, can see what youth I had at one time possessed. So quickly it came and went. Letting go and knowing this pure freedom will never again dwell within me is the hardest part. Acceptance and moving forward, resisting the magnificently strong pull it has on me to find it and possess it once again. Oh youth, the intensity of senses, trust. It happened so quickly I wasn't prepared and this new being is quite foreign. The glow has fizzled and my attempts to light the flame once more have been pointless, they have done nothing but push me farther away from what I had thought I was reaching for.

Children of my past know me no more and I recognize them only by name. They remember their Moonbeam, I see her only in the letters I painted years ago on the dead tree near the railroad tracks. She does call to me at times when the sun shines warmly on my face, when Spring breeze blows through my hair, when my toes giggle and dance on the cool, tall, green grass. She cries at night alone and tired, when she wakes in the morning with trouble breathing, staring into the mirror at someone she doesn't recognize, wrinkles and expressionless eyes of a geriatric patient. I wish she'd cry louder, laughed louder, called longer, screamed more often. I might eventually hear her and allow her to come out and play. I might? No, I know I would. She hurt no one, loved all and wouldn't be hurt. She was all that I want to be now. I am all that I wanted to be then.

Laura Borst

Good-bye?

Into a new life
Across the sea
Toward adventure
On bended knee

Despite the worries and the pain
Beyond the sorrows and the strain
Underneath forced smiles
Behind pleading eyes
Accepting disappointment
With some denial

Outside the body all is well
Inside the mind all is hell
Against the emotion
Of memories past
Toward self-destruction
Near the blast

Above the clouds
On the plane
Toward the home land
Where memories remain

Since the return
Among close friends
With joyous heart
After making amends

Within the self
Past the pain
From knowing independence
Much has been gained

Crystal Cunningham

Prayers

Throughout the length of history,
From the beginning and
Beyond, the hopes for Heaven still run
Through the prayers of mankind:

Above the earth, ascending
Along the paths of stars,
Beyond the unreachable vastness, soaring
Past all mortal time.

Under the gaze of angels, and
Among those of equal despair, I stand
Before the seat of judgement, trembling
Until the darkest night,
Beyond hope.

Sue Ellen Williams

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