

saw  palm
florida literature and art



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Winter 2008 Volume 2

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Theo Wujcik	<i>Skydivers</i>
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A Note from the Editor

When the first issue of *Saw Palm: florida literature and art* was published in 2007, it appeared entirely online, at a now-forgotten web address hosted by the University of South Florida. In the seven years since its inception, the journal has grown considerably. No longer does the faculty have to pound the pavement, beg, and call in favors for submissions. Today there are enough submissions coming from all over the state, country, and the world to keep our graduate student editors busy all semester. The journal is also no longer exclusively online—every spring a handsome full-color print edition is released—and the website has moved from the old address to sawpalm.org. During this period of growth and transition, it seems volumes one and two were forgotten, left to idle somewhere on a USF server, and they never made the move to the new website. It took a few years, but these inaugural editions have finally been updated and re-released in the format of the current print editions. We hope you enjoy this early volume of *Saw Palm*, which laid the foundation for today's thriving journal.

Mike Rusó
Managing Editor
May 2013

Why I Fish

Carol Frost

Something elemental's caught in the net—nothing I thought
before I was alone and faithful to blood mire and tide pull—:
Fish don't fear in the last breath the grandeur of death:
In their silence deeps of waves where they belong:
no land or skies:: so I no longer feel the sky
watching me: The atmosphere fumed while the fish rose
in splashes: evening I looked at myself in blood and mire
and grasped myself—gilled, marked with
gold scales: righted and wronged.

As Sturgeon

Carol Frost

Pigs, kings, and paupers have eaten the caviars, when on the end of a line
tied to a strong tree you jostled, were hauled, cut head to anus,
membranes and sac parted, length of your beauty spilling mineral beige.
By banks of red-bay, palmetto, black tupelo
where colossals—full-plated and creased—once
thunder-drummed, down to tannic currents, you still swim night
threshing, days gold moiling,
time husbanding you and gravid you rise
by tail stroke and tail stroke on your belly
expelling the salt liquors and little, little eggs,
pearl-strung on wet cob hair,
cumbered water wake creaming
first slime reeling round and round once and ever
sundered from shark lochnessed:
body formed in wild water wondered dark
beauty-
in-body body dogged.

Otter

Michael Hettich

When I am an otter amid the mangrove roots
I remember the moon-snail, the indigo snake
coiled in palmetto; I remember cypress bones,

slow tide, while pelicans circle and splash into
Florida Bay. I dive down into the tannin-water

and my head looks like a man
swimming toward the darker shade,
the denser mangrove forest, where I seem to disappear.

In the evenings I love to wander through the city
along the stylish busy streets, window shopping, blending in.

Opus

Megan A. Hoak

the potter may be
a source of debate

but i am
doubtless
the clay

solid and real
earthy and tangible

nevermind my maker's hands

and though i was pressed
and forced
through his heat

to assume my current shape

my figure is flawless
all slopes and curves

perfect in its frailty.

so if I'm at the banquet
or left outside

I'll still be full
and whole

and whether
I was made to hold
water or wine

is really
beside the point.

Pregnant in the Everglades

heather hughes

If you lay yourself down
in the soil of my home
you would find it sharp,
full of the teeth of ancient
tiger sharks and the memories
of the bones of tiny sea creatures.

At noon nothing moves. I am
like the wading birds,
half-settled, half-hidden in the
emptied landscape.
Gators don't blink in this
heat, don't groan across the grasses
to one another—burying
their guttural internal rumbling
in the glare.

Here I could bake
in my own shell, grow
heron-stilts and balance,
could be pulled apart
by the emission and absorption
of soils. Waiting out the dry season.

Waiting for the tearing pain of instinct, for
the inevitable jaws. Until
you sink back to palm
fronds and blackened pines,
until the river digests all the words
I will never say to you.

Thin Walls

Allison Eir Jenks

The moon falls into its watery black grave,
and the failed novelist auctions off his pen to no one.
Acorns lash against the roof
as if the trees are rolling dice.
The neighbor moans love's graffiti onto white walls:
A stranger's hands that feel right
much too fast for it to be safe. Their shrieking rises
to the surface to eat from your fingers.
The whole house rattles, and my chair.
Every cat in the neighborhood is in heat.
My lover's laziness dabbles like a poor man's time.
With clean, clean hands, he brews terrible coffee.
With his irreparable gaze upon me, he says
he begins to love every woman he makes love to.
Don't pity me if I never leave.

Betrayal

Allison Eir Jenks

Can we admit we've already begun living
like cowards at gunpoint, like two myths
who'd rather sleep than fight? In our world

fog is air trying to escape the earth,
fog is air too expensive to breathe.
But I know too well the weight of your bones in the dark

when you think I've caught a beautiful woman in your lap;
the religion you love yourself with—lost in the rosaries
on the dresser in a bowl of keys that open no doors.

Betrayal is coming. Your bootprints leave gray-faced
ladies on the steps. Any place you dress up for,
I am not allowed.

Eventually anything you love becomes cumbersome,
unless you haven't touched it. Isn't that why we look out
the windows for schoolgirls laughing in the rain,

why we claim the moon is God's eye?
If the moon was ours, we'd litter on it,
and drill holes through it. If you were God,

I'd be a whore with an gargantuan tongue.
If you were a puppet,
I'd leave your spine like an unswept floor.

If you were a soldier, I'd shrink your uniform.
If you were a lifeguard, I'd drown you.
If you were a thief, I'd steal your hipbones.

Betray me. I'm prepared as the icicles hanging
from the sky's railroad. And when I fall,
some innocent thing will slice open.

But we're not finished yet. I'd kiss her
behind my back too. I'd lie to her for a compliment.
Haven't we already fed the animal we raised

without knowing it, held the unnamed stone
the sea spit up, and witnessed the statue of Mary
bleed and cry? Superstition is all around us.

Can't your hear the tree frogs humping in the streets,
and the crickets panting in the Spanish Moss telling us
that someday our vision will be too perfect to run them over?

The Elegy You'll Never Write

Allison Eir Jenks

1.

If only your cancer moon's remission
was an hour late, God's crystal ball
would have been less lethargic,
the rooftop hooligans
would've exhausted their heckling.
You'd have held me in the grass,
and listened to the delirious pond-frogs
argue like drunk fisherman,
but you pushed me to the ground
next to my imaginary lover,
then covered the windows with paper.
And I woke in a stranger's bed
without a ceiling or a priest or an address.
I woke the woman I wanted to be
drunk as a gypsy
with a jukebox for an alarm clock,
a debilitated god on my back,
a gaudy purse and women friends
who will never marry again. We dance
until something breaks,
a chair or a virgin's silly heart.
Then we leap away like lady fish.
Our fine silver scales,
our terminal mouths
prohibit us from inhaling your pity.

2.

The future has already broken its neck.
I never rest. Dwarfs sleep on my couch
with miserable eyes. I tell them:
Though he is a coward,
my lover is still my lover,
an exhausted landlord with screws
holding up his head. O Jimmy,
blubber-headed buck from Biloxi.
Chameleon. Fraud. King Mackerel.
You will abandon your entire school
soon enough. Who knows you better?
Your chicken skins and shrunken jackets,
your bloated belly and gravedigger's liquor,
your love for hogging and gun show hosts,
your knuckle-dick records and Mississippi stutter.
Your blood is 90 proof, single barrel grease.
Do you think you've left me in peace,
naked on the church pew, no longer
punished by your strange heart?

3.

Don't follow me. Don't mess up my hair.
The whole world is a mile away
and not enough branches litter the streets.
Not enough men drain the flooded gutters.
The canyons fill up like a coward's throat.
The planes do not fly low enough to shut you up.
Wear something that lets the world know you belong to me.
Stop smoking. Dry the plates. We will be on time.
I love you, but I don't want to be here.
Pride feels sorry for us. I'm sorry too.
So sorry. I always have been. Always will be.

Every man is too tolerant to love, too thin
to hold, too beautiful to know me better than you.
Because you may not have
known me at all, I will not die soon enough
with a stale cock in my mouth,
the one your pride chose for me.
I feed the terrible
children and the dogs with my bare breast.
But I will never please you.

4.

I'm no longer your god-mother, your fishing lure, your pawn, your orphan Hybrid, your headless Myrtle, the creek too dumb to spit out garbage, your perennial, the nurse who cut your umbilical cord, your chef, your bus stop, your therapist, your junk-drawer, a hole to fill with infertile gas.

I am your madness, your unpolished silverware, evil's lack of love, your erection, the broken down car that fixes itself over night, the unfertilized seed, the Hardy Hibiscus, the Moonflower, your Snapdragon lullaby, your lie without a truth, your prayer, your unmade bed, your regret.

I am the end of the world, your second birth, the past future, January's Janus, Hodini's witch child (Alfábrega i valeriana, menta i ruda), the last king of queens, the Angler Fish, from where did I evolve? Your holiday, your mess, your Artemis. No matter how awkwardly the moon rests in my eyes, I can always see you.

5.

Are we moving on? If we are
I know the woman for you.
What else is there for her to do
but remember where you left your shoes?
She has dead bird's hair, and like you,
cares what everyone thinks. She's falls asleep.
The party stopples over her. No one asks her name.
She's poor but pays your bills with her husband's cash.
How you hate the rich, but write poems for them,
How you hate the rich, but dress up for them
in brass gasoline and washable suits.

I won't follow you when you drive her home.
Quiet women scare me.
She's so sweet she'll make you sick.
So masturbate all over her.
You're too ill to be sorry,
too defiant, and she is too mute
to ask why everyone you touch goes mad.

6.

I am no longer superstitious,
but I am not mad Jimmy.
Even though God is brushing my hair in the dark,
I cut my hair myself. I lie. I drink
until someone else's future.
My body is a church. The sinners pour in.
One of them will have the guts to love me
without a clock in his eye, a decent man
who knows the Ladyfish crumbles at his lips,
who shaves the hair on his neck
because he thinks it reminds me of you.

7.

So many open mouths to console me.
And your voice so far from me now
that tonight could be the first night
you pretend to sleep with a lit cigarette,
the first night I kiss your impotent limb,
or the next when you sleep on the bus stop
outside my door. Tonight if we meet
for the first time I will tell you:
If this is what you meant by peace,
I'd rather die in an argument.
If this is what you meant by peace,
how ungrateful was I?

8.

How badly did I translate
from the brash woman I am
to the nervous woman you made love to?
In what language would I be enough?
I am too young to die, too loved by you still
for any other body to wake me.
So, politely kill me, then rush off
to no where. Who will help you?
Don't look at me with your faithless eyes
unless you can love me
when I have nothing to give you.
Your doubts will rest with me
beneath the earth.
The stars are the devil's work.
Anything that outlives us
is not beautiful anymore.

Paint a Monkey For a Friend

Richard Siken

Paint a monkey for a friend and make the sky a fuzzy red. Monkey has eyes like wedding rings. Watch over him, monkey. Bobby has skin the color of glue, his hair sloppy. He drives the car, he has a discovery. Most aren't that lucky. There's a lot to be said for the right brown jacket and slumming through the basement of the museum, those marble heads like candies. Bobby likes his art serious and I can't paint like that. I've sent chocolates, made proclamations. I've stolen things and driven across the countryside. There are many kinds of love, yes. There are many kinds. Bobby of muscle, Bobby of varnish, Bobby of twilight, Bobby of caramel. I would paint him in olive and gold, give him a piano and a room to drag it through, smoke rings and French onion soup but I'm not painting his picture, I'm painting him a monkey for a wall in the set of rooms he paces through. Sometimes your inner life is a sheet of black glass and a small white pill. Bobby of wanting and Bobby of getting, Bobby of sleeping and Bobby of waking. There's a man in the monkey's head in the original. I painted it from a picture of a monkey suit. There was a parade. It might have been raining. I am not a serious artist, but I feel things, like kindness, occasionally, and I worry about you. There will be a time in the future when the picture is on the wall and the light will be fading and the blocks of light from the windows will slide across the monkey and it will look like he's in jail, back in a cage, but it passes Bobby, and you are not trapped, you are not alone, because I have painted a monkey, for the fabulous hall outside your room, and he will watch over you and remind you that someone liked you enough to paint you a monkey, Bobby. Even when your skull feels like a toilet bowl, even when the blocks of light are gone, even when the light is gone, Bobby, and you can't see the monkey, there will still be a painting of a monkey in the hallway, smiling in the dark. Monkey of darkness, monkey of witness, monkey of kindness, monkey of love. There are many kinds of love, Bobby, and this is one of them.

There is a Man in the Monkey's Head

Richard Siken

There's a man in the monkey's head in the original. I painted it from a picture of a monkey suit. There was a parade. It might have been raining. The more I enlarged the mouth, the more the dude went blurry. He looks French, or drunk, which is hard to paint, has few legible features except for a little mustache. So, instead of what was there—which I ignored the first time—I painted in the likeness of the actor Enrique Murciano, who plays a cop on TV on Thursdays. In all actuality, the face looks more like Matthew Fox, who plays a doctor on TV on Wednesdays. Or, if you insist, it doesn't look like a dude at all. It looks glued-in, not-round, like one of those drama masks, Comedy and Tragedy, a forgery, which he might as well be. An example, a lesson. A mask inside a costume. And which mask is which? Which one is man at his best? His worst? How do you talk about the inside—your inside, anyone's—how do you say it in words, let alone in painting, which is flat? How do you find the center, internal world, which might only be an algorithm, a set of procedures, inclinations? What if my innermost me is just a buncha math? Run Program. Notice craving (arrow) vocalize hunger (arrow) procure cake (arrow) ingest. Why is cake my favorite? Because personality. Because software. Because there's an invention in my head that I call myself and he's in jail, locked in a cage of monkey teeth. Television, Actor, Monkey Suit, Painting. It's not that you can't put a frame around everything, it's that there's frames around everything already always. It's masks, all the way down. And notice the monkey's teeth. They're different now. A continuity problem, if it was a cop show. Faulty memory, if I was testifying on a cop show. But it's not a cop show, it's a house inside a house, a painting, double vessel, two different versions of the same lie, a test of the elasticity of the social construct. Once you recognize your source code, can you read it? Once you read it can you change it? Can you mess with the Chain of Command? Can you dot dot dot questionmark.

Riding in the Back of a Pickup Truck

T. Stores

Saturdays, me and Jim—little brother seven years dead today,
heart stopped dead—rode rattling on the metal bed in the
back of the pick-up, backs to the cab and Dad, who drove

like a madman, from suburb to Green Acres—Florida flat-land
with a garden patch, ten cows, two untamed ponies, and a
Brahma bull, a spring and a rusty pump behind the shack.

Huddled shoulder to Jim's shoulder, hurtling along highway
in early morning black, then a maze of dirt roads, I sucked in
that queer feeling of falling ahead backward, looking back,

watching the world rush away. On this anniversary of death,
Hurricane Isadore—gift of a mythic goddess who wore the
horns of a cow—drove east through morning, out to sea, a
scent

of Florida in the last streaks of rain, even on Black Mountain,
land-locked and far north, Fall sucked in again like a warm
breath—the way a father can hold his heart—and all

was silent but that sucking of wind, as if past the cab of a
pickup truck. I leaned back on granite face, facing east, re-
membering Jim, a queer memorial. Storm clouds rushed

away down the valley, and it was as if I rode the mountain's
hard bed, hurtling ahead backward, holding on against the
fall. Tonight I am awake late, and he is still dead,

and I am watching the sky alone. The others, driven in by the
cold and black, lower their tones. Owls hoof-hoof; cows in the
distance moan. I hear them inside, wondering at this queer

daughter's queer father's queer cold-shouldering, his other
child—Jim, still shoulder to shoulder with me, our backs
against the cab where Dad drives—seven years dead today.
How can a father

stop his heart? In this silence, the meteor showers cele-
stial dust and debris, light streaks from the heart of Leo. I am
still growing old. My back aches against the cold and hard,
hurtling

on this world ahead. I huddle into my overcoat and hold on,
widening my eyes to look back, watching the stars rush away.
I suck in, falling ahead looking back and up

into the night sky. I won't fall into the black.
Children never fall from the pickup truck.

Bottle Blonde

Terri Witek

Mrs. Smith—the young one, at the other end
of an alley opening like a telescope
down the length of our block—would “rinse”
(another word I liked) her entire hair
then lay out on a beige chaise lounge
in shorts and a polka-dotted halter. Landlocked,
except on late afternoons when the roofers’ trucks
rumbled back to their dimly lit garages
and the neighborhood shook as if seen through water.
They carried in what they had carried out:
the Riedy brothers, tar paper rolls, a low crop
of shingles brushed with glitter. Enough
to tap out a little cover for Mrs. Smith,
who overhead wanted only summer.

Water Organ

Terri Witek

Who hasn't thrilled, fellow citizens,
among towns that worship singing trees
or jellyfish wobbling like Victorian glass doorknobs?
Now a white jawbone of hotels gleams
where the bottle factory once rounded long hours.
Three men haul a little shark up the beach to their cooler.
He's wall-eyed and struggling
(won't someone pull ocean back over his head?)
but already sugared with sand.
A shopkeeper strings shells into earrings he'll hang
so they can whisper into tourists' ears.
There's no such commerce among bottle dwellers:
we sleep in, though day brings a coin-sized porthole
and we dream dolphins lifting from waves
will make us into waves too.
Maybe our bottles will call to other bottles
and we'll all break open with love for each other.
Simple ballast is what we pray for—
one opening blundering into another
until water and air tremble like curtains,
towns become fishnets of towns,
and the stones lining our pockets would really break
things up if we could only get ourselves together.
But there's no furnace here, no television.
Soon we'll come up for air,
shake into a sea of sails until,
like the caravels of Columbus or Pedro Cabral
in breezier years, we'll go anywhere.

Hurricane Shade

Terri Witek

Nothing holds in this wind
(says an hour to its lightest thought).

If the bottom drops out
(says the bottle) I'll house your candle.

Right Whale Palinode

Terri Witek

They don't love us as we love them.
But tracked from beleaguered shorelines,
flashes of rolling flank and fin
conceive of the world continuing.

How we loved, when young and breeding
within quickening hills of pleasure,
to think the horizon so needed us
we could outride its salt will and measure.

Your Mother's Ashes

Terri Witek

for John Pearson

I.

The first was shaken from a plane over Michigan.
Two lie burrowed under her name.
The fourth box could be hiding a phone
or a watch—you hoist it glumly
then send it down the beach to low waves.
The wind drops. Lavabo.
Your mother doesn't clutch at our eyes or hair.
Nor does a phone shrill with where she's got to
or how long she'll stay there, though the nothing we say
gluts sweetly, for a moment, as if with summer.

II.

Today's beach is all ash.
We walk gingerly, not wanting to hurt further
a woman who hadn't smoked in months.
Saved receipts are mixed up in this too,
and your size in wool sweaters.
Will we be allergic to more news? Go rabid?
We stop at mile marker six or seven.
Your mother, at least according to the gulls,
thinks it's a scream that something not even
once your father keeps jumping her bones.

A Prelude To The Magic City

Horacio Sierra

She knew this would be the last time she saw the ocean. Her wide-brimmed hat shielded her pale, freckled face from the harshest rays of the afternoon sun. Through her coke-bottle eyeglasses, she observed the always-changing character of her beloved city with a meditative calm. The newspaper galley in which she used to discuss women's liberation seemed quaint in the face of the fleshy spectacle that whirled around her. Seated on the sand-peppered bench on Ocean Drive, she could catch only a glimmer of the welcoming ocean above the undulating sand dunes and rainbow umbrellas that cluttered the horizon. The public shower's chlorinated streams ricocheted off a toned young man's orange sandals and onto her parched arms. The cool drops served as relief from the industrial heat emanating from the exhaust pipes of the cars that slowly cruised the polyglot sounds of South Beach. The passengers of these cars hoped to see and be seen amidst the throng of lusty men and women that strolled the café table-ridden sidewalks.

She attempted to stifle the throaty laugh that flew out of her dry lips when a dreadlocked teenager with multiple facial piercings approached her and asked if she was interested in signing a petition to help save the Everglades. She politely waved her hand at the girl as if to imply that she had no time for such a thing and stood up to leave.

108. I'm older than this city. Brazilian Bikinis they call them. Magazines named after "hot" streets. Dancehalls that once purred the Charleston now thump with electronic . . . well, thumps. And then her. "Save the Everglades." Perfect. If only she knew. Magic. I'll never leave this place.

Claudio ushered her into his compact car and she took one last look over her shoulder and caught the faintest glimpse of a foamy wave crashing onto the shoreline. In the distance she

could see a cruise ship exiting the bay and entering the Caribbean. She could never understand why such iridescent coastal waters could be considered the cold, dark blue currents of the Atlantic Ocean. They are more suitably categorized as the most northern outlier of the warm, teal blue streams of the Caribbean Sea she would write home when she first moved to the sleepy town on the bay.

With her linen hat firmly ensconced over her frosty, cotton ball hair she embraced the heat-tinged breeze that hit her face while they drove over the crystalline waters of Biscayne Bay and onto the mainland. A pine green sign announced their entrance into Miami's city limits.

She remembered the large wave of discontent that spread throughout her adopted home of Coconut Grove, Dade County's bohemian enclave, when it was annexed by the leviathan city of Miami in 1925. It was quite a different story today. While numerous floats at the annual King Mango Strut Parade claimed to be keeping the nut in Coconut Grove, countless neighborhoods, unincorporated areas, and other cities clamored to attach themselves to the Miami image. People who weren't even eligible to vote for the mayor of the city bragged to outsiders that they lived in Miami. The postal service satisfied the region's urbane desires by delivering mail marked with Miami addresses to the millions who lived in technically nameless areas of urban, suburban, and exurban sprawl.

As they drove down I-95, which linked South Florida, a state in its own right, to exotically quaint Maine, and merged onto South Dixie Highway, she thought about the tourists.

Their idea of Miami is beaches, palm trees, mojitos, and non-stop partying. Their impression of the city is the art deco skyline of Miami Beach and its hedonistic citizens.

She smiled to herself as they glided down the black section of Coconut Grove on Grand Avenue. Despite being a native Northerner she quickly grew accustomed to and cherished Miami's relative lack of seasons. Cool winters came and went

faster than the time it took for a new housing development to be approved by an environmentally ignorant zoning board. “Freezing” was an adjective often used in January and February when the temperatures reached the 50s at night.

No wonder people are so strange down here. Yes, this lack of seasonal changes must have something to do with it.

They turned a corner and entered a street flanked by imposing McMansions fortified with thick tropical shrubbery. These familial kingdoms were guarded by limestone lions and Mediterranean-colored walls ready to serve as a rococo bulwark against some imminent Viking invasion.

The days become meaningless without a proper fall, winter, spring, and summer. That must be it. There’s no reflection. There is no moment to worry that school might be cancelled because of a snow storm, that the roads may be impassable, that the grocery store will run out of food, that the crops will be ruined. That’s what happened back there. Back when. In Minnesota. In Massachusetts. Not home. There.

The car’s tires crunched their way over the mixture of sandy gravel and glinting marble chips that led to her home.

Then again, there are the hurricanes.

She remembered the storm of ‘26 that nearly destroyed her house while it was still being constructed. The city was devastated. It had rebuilt itself though. It boomed again. Yes, it boomed. Unbelievably so.

That’s why they named it the Magic City. It just picked itself up and went roaring again, louder than ever.

She gave Claudio a kiss on the cheek and slowly opened the door to get out of a Miami rarity and tragedy: an un-air conditioned car.

The city’s population, downtown, economy, glamour, excitement, and culture boomed unlike any other Southern town. Because it never really was a Southern town. You go so far South that your North again.

At first we were a bunch of snow birds and Negroes. Then

the Revolución sent hundreds of thousands of Cubans into exile. A supposedly temporary exile.

After all, they were the wealthy, the educated, and the white land owners. Things didn't change. The so-called Revolución had won. More arrived. The city became international. Soon others came. Not only for political reasons, but for economic ones as well. To remake themselves. From Haiti. From Venezuela. From post-Soviet Eastern Europe.

She breathed in deeply as she shoved open the stubborn, wooden front door with a hand-sized square plate of stained emerald glass in its center.

I just kissed him goodbye without a second thought.

She glanced at a fading black and white photograph of her and her extended family—laced up and ready to attend a Victorian party that would never be thrown again.

Almost 100 years since that afternoon. Almost.

I kissed him. Imagine what Charlotte would have said.

That was Claudio's Cuban charm. His family didn't come in the '60s like the wealthy expats. His family believed in the Revolución. They were disillusioned. He was a Marielito. Not a criminal. Just "a gay," as he told her in his best English back in '81 when she hired him to be her personal assistant. She loved his quiet sensibilities and she told him so. His manners. His love for life. His hazel eyes and chestnut hair. His insistence on giving kisses on both cheeks. A Cuban custom. A Spanish custom. A European custom.

Yes, we've always been too cosmopolitan here for the rest of the South.

Too cosmopolitan without the fame and expectations of New York. Too worldly without the planning and architecture of Haussman's Paris. Too tropical for cotton. Too hot for oranges. Too liberal for ties with Tallahassee. Too unorganized for parades. Too busy to form a cohesive community. Too conservative for real protests. Too ridiculous to be honored for anything. Too good to leave.

She eased herself into a rocking chair that Claudio carved for her. He told her it was crafted to resemble the chairs that the Havana elite would lounge in when they escaped to their large, countryside sugar plantations in pre-Revolutionary Cuba.

She stretched out her hand for a remote and managed to turn on the stereo system after some frustrating fiddling with her knobby fingers. The Green Hill Orchestra. Although her prized Depression-era Gramophone spun its last record a decade ago sometime in the early '90s, Claudio had been able to find her a handful of CDs that replicated the gritty scratches of a spinning vinyl record for her favorite songs.

She reclined in the rocking chair and closed her eyes. The soothing sound of shimmering palm fronds tilting in the wind lulled her to sleep as the evocative trumpets coaxed forward memories of her early adventures in Miami.

The Forty-Mile Commute: A Primer

Jeffrey Tucker

I am a restless, a peerless, a man who follows few—laws or paths or grammars, for none of the above I claim—except State Road A1A, my course and career; and the bank holding my beach house mortgage, the drummer to whom I march, when I march, which often isn't, because, by march, I mean obey, and I don't march much of anything, except that which affects my credit rating. I do, however, steal: trees, palm trees, bigger is best, and—for that alone—I write rules, by me, for me, enabling my bank account to fill nigh unto squealing. Thus:

Rule #1

When fleeing empty-handed, blame anyone. Notice a car nearby—color? model? occupant?—and call the police. Be proactive! It works as long as minutiae abound. Behold last night, while fleeing from fuzz, interrupted in the very act, no less: “No, sir—” and here I put down the cell phone “—didn't you see the other truck, the red one, the one with all the people in the back and the loud muffler—” I had some of the license plate numbers “—they went over a bump, nearly fell out, nearly hit me, sprayed dirt all over my car!” The police left to find the truck (which had cut me off earlier—touché), left me to try a different nursery, made the evening feel like Christmas Eve, all that raw possibility.

Rule #2

Remember: Scatter salt-over-shoulder and dirt-over-hood, thereby helping excuse self from traps of fate and fuzz.

Rule #3

Drive fast. Being forty miles of seashore from Palm Beach—the beach house—to Pompano Beach and its palm nurseries, I

drive State Road A1A like a skinning knife, the coastal highway dividing golf course and seawater clean and quick, thirty raw minutes flat. Yes, like a razor: The fuzz undetects me until I am long since drawn past, loading a tree, readying round two.

Rule #4

Think big, when it comes to stealing palms, for Palm Beach real estate appreciates while not appreciating its denizens, requires ever—larger!—trees to feed its landscaping needs, and its boarders need ever—larger!—coffers to abide mortgages. As I said to girlfriend Sylvia: “Look, it’s risky, sure. But all these mansions going up need palm trees, and every nursery is back-ordered six months. We gotta pay for our house somehow, since you’re not working. A Canary Island Date Palm is good for \$20,000—if I land of couple of those, we’re good for a couple of months, and I’ll go back to sales.”

Rule #5

Plug leaks. What Sylvia desires, I desire, desiring the potential snitch’s placation. When says Sylvia, “I like this, here on the beach,” I keep the house. When Sylvia cries, “Fur!” I coat her. Once, after fighting: “Well, we’d better stay in the house. If you don’t treat me right, I’ll call the police.” And I went, and stole more trees, paid the mortgage, and Sylvia never made the call—but she may, and, really, after all, I do love her.

Rule #6

Avoid the opposite sex for a month before beginning thievery, and stay single throughout the—hopefully short-lived—career. Alas, my regret: Sylvia, with her ash-blonde hair, her lithe legs like the slender trunks of Queen Anne Palms blowing in the Palm Beach breeze, Sylvia: at first my support, now my flat tire—her demands! The risk of exposure! But, again, I do love her.

Rule #7

Remember the old: the acceptable job, the ulcer-free stomach, the sedan or coupe or convertible or anything but a pickup truck with a power lift for large pots, for stealing trees seduces with its easy money, the adrenaline. But, ah, those days before, memories which make me exhale like the seashore breeze that aerates the house every noon—Ah!—memories of days when every night didn't bring a forty-mile catapult south, a forty-mile caffeine ride north.

Rule #8

Make a rulebook: Instances emerge in my life when everything screams—tires against pavement, sirens behind my truck, the nursery owners as I peel away, Sylvia. When voices and cars and all sound tends to shrieking, this rulebook—silent, plain—keeps me. Even if its words fade away, atrophy, lose themselves in my overloaded brain—no worries. The rulebook, its structure, remains, speaks to me of control, or, rather, its possibility amidst the noise; I vise onto that.

And off I go again, looking for the Canary Island Date Palm, my ticket out, the lure that keeps me in, the jewel of Sylvia's eye, all such baggage loaded onto that one tropical stalk, and I tell myself that forty miles isn't that long, though I don't believe it, because the road doesn't lie.

Artist Profile: Theo Wujcik

Scott Sleeter

Theo Wujcik began his art career in 1958, with his entrance to The Art School of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, Michigan. In 1967 he took a leave of absence from teaching at his alma mater to attend the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, attaining the status of Master Printer. He returned to teaching in Detroit until 1970, when he accepted the position of Shop Manager at Graphicstudio, a research-based atelier on the campus of the University of South Florida. He resigned from his post in 1972 to teach full time in the university's Fine Arts Department, a position he held until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 2003.

Theo Wujcik's work is held in:

- Museum of Modern Art: New York City, NY
- Whitney Museum of American Art: New York City, NY
- Brooklyn Museum: Brooklyn, NY
- L.A. County Museum of Art: Los Angeles, California
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: San Francisco, CA
- Detroit Institute of Art: Detroit, Michigan
- The Art Institute of Chicago: Chicago, Illinois
- Boston Public Library: Boston, Massachusetts
- Yale University Art Gallery: New Haven, Connecticut
- The Library of Congress: Washington, D.C.
- Numerous private collections

Wujcik has been taking in cultural information since the days he acted as a visual reporter for his gang of hooligan comrades in his native Detroit. He would produce portraits and tongue-in-cheek illustrations of his gang's exploits. These were juxtaposed with his obsessive preoccupation of sketching war, death, carnage, and graphic battle exploits—this was the dawn of post-war America. Wujcik, back then as now, played the role of cultural shaman: an individual with the unflinching eye of an artist, conjuring magic and mystery, seeing beyond the matrix of reality to gain knowledge and insight to better serve the greater community.

Whether the vision is narrow and personal, as depicted in the work “Brassy Girl,” or broad and timely, as the response to 9/11 in “Skydivers,” Wujcik manages to cut a swath through the spectrum of personal experience, giving the viewer a road map to the internalization of the period in which they live. Wujcik's dialogue of personal experience continues to coalesce within the spirit of unique artistic vision. Beacons and post holes, random dribbles of paint, a weathered door, hurricanes, and explosive cultural events: all a lightning rod for the artist.

—Scott Sleeter, 2 Dec. 2007



Brassy Girl



China Connection



Direct Hit

Scraps of a Road Trip

Roxanne Halpine

The way I remember it, Mom had me out of bed at five a.m. and Pam picked us up at six. Pam's six-year-old daughter, Kobi, was asleep in the backseat, so I didn't get a chance to meet her before we were well out of Pennsylvania. Pam's other daughter, Nicki, had already flown down to Florida with her grandparents to prepare for her ice skating competition; she and her partner had a good chance of winning the National Novice Pairs Championship. Pam, a friend of my mom's from college, had been planning to drive herself and Kobi to Florida to save money, so she invited Mom and me to go too. Overall it seemed like a pretty good deal: We were getting a cheap trip to Florida, where we'd stay in the condo Pam's parents had rented, and Pam got driving relief and adult company on the road. Mom and I were happy to be tagging along; we were just sorry that my dad had to stay home for work and miss all the fun.

The trip had a bonus for me: an extra week off from school in January, after everyone else was back in class after the holidays. School was okay: I got 100s on all my spelling tests, and I was proud of the A I'd gotten for my social studies report on Grover Cleveland. The problem was the other kids. Bookish, shy, and awkward, I had a few girlfriends at school, but most of the kids in my 7th grade class either ignored me or made fun of me. Middle school is hard on every kid, but it got so I even hated my name because some idiot was always warbling it across the playground in a bad imitation of Sting or telling me I didn't have to put on the red light. The worst was when Carl, the popular eighth-grade boy I had a crush on, starting doing it too. An only child, I always got along better with Mom and Dad than with other kids; most of my friends were the children of my parents' friends, and I only saw them a couple times a

month. Getting away from school for a week was a huge, magnificent event, even if I did have to sit through a two-day car trip with a crazy six-year-old.

Kobi was a scrawny little thing, but as small as she was there was barely room in the backseat for me with her and all of her toys, and she was always talking or singing—or whining. To keep her busy on the drive, Pam had given her the project of making a scrapbook of the trip. Armed with green, hole-punched printer paper and a glue stick, Kobi hunted for “scraps” for her scrapbook everywhere we went. I decided I would make a scrapbook too, only instead of featuring random pictures liberally showered with glitter, mine would show the actual things we did each day.

Our first big stop on the road was South of the Border in South Carolina, a Mexican-themed rest stop on I-95. Kobi and I counted the South of the Border billboards, which we started seeing over a hundred miles before we got there. Each sign prominently displayed Pedro, the sombrero-wearing cartoon spokesman. When we finally arrived, I had to have my picture taken with at least three of the dozens of huge Pedro statues in their brightly colored sombreros. Kobi and I begged to stay at South of the Border’s hotel, but, because we’d gotten on the road so early, we still had hours of daylight left for driving, so we had to be content with lots of brochures to cut for scraps.

We stopped that night in Walterboro, South Carolina, and checked into a hotel. Kobi and I were already in our nightgowns when I found a bug between the sheets and Mom found one on the telephone. Outside our room, people on their way out of the hotel bar staggered, drunk and loud, around the parking lot, picking fights. Mom and Pam bundled us back into the car, nightgowns and all. We only had to go another ten minutes or so up the highway before we found a better hotel. The next morning we had breakfast at a Waffle House, which was exciting enough that I pasted the napkin in my scrapbook, and then got back on the road, making it to Orlando around lunchtime.

Eleven-year-old Nicki turned out to be short and slim like her little sister. Although she looked skinny, Nicki had to be athletic to succeed at figure skating, and you could tell if you looked closely that even though her legs were slender, they were strong and muscular, too. I'd never thought of figure skating as a sport, but Nicki was definitely an athlete. For years, she'd gotten up hours before dawn to get her training time in before school. She was dedicated to skating, but she was also bubbly, fun, and sweet. I liked her right away.

Nicki had been staying with Grandmom and Grandpop, Pam's parents, who had rented a two-bedroom condo for all of us for the week. Nicki and I shared a double bed, and Pam and my mom had a single bed each. Kobi claimed the room's walk-in closet as her own little bedroom, spreading out her sleeping bag on the floor. This proved an excellent arrangement when Kobi shut the door and played inside for hours, but was less ideal when someone needed clothes she'd hung up and Kobi insisted on hearing the right password before she'd let anyone into "her" room.

Grandpop decided he wanted to go to a theme park called Gatorland, and to convince us he hid Gatorland brochures everywhere: in the kitchen cabinets, in our luggage, between the couch cushions, in our pants pockets. Grandmom was sweet, but it was Grandpop that Mom and I got attached to over the next week. My own Poppy, my mom's dad, had passed away the previous summer, and we both missed him. It was nice to have a grandpop around, even if he wasn't ours to keep. Grandpop's excitement about Gatorland caught on until we kids became his partners in crime, lobbying for a day with the amazing alligators. The moms finally relented and Gatorland was scheduled for Monday.

Grandpop made sure everyone was out of bed early, and we arrived at the park just as they opened the gates.

The entrance to Gatorland is a huge, bright blue alligator head, and you have to walk between the pointy teeth (which

were taller than Kobi) to enter the mouth and the park. Alligators were everywhere inside: more than two thousand gators lounged in the manmade lagoons or shaded themselves under trees on the banks. We got to see the largest gator they had, a fourteen-foot-long monster. But Gatorland didn't just specialize in alligators—they also had crocodiles, flamingoes, monkeys, and a snake pit to boot.

Grandpop wouldn't be satisfied until we'd done everything Gatorland had to offer, so we saw the Gator Jumparoo show (where the gators leap fifteen feet into the air to take food from their trainers' hands), rode the little train around the park, went on a swamp walk, even wandered along the alligator breeding areas (where the gators weren't doing anything interesting that I could tell). And our day couldn't possibly be complete without catching a Gator Wrestlin' Show. I remember thinking the gator wrestler was pretty cute in his glasses and khakis. After the show, the gator wrestler straightened his safari hat over his sandy hair, and, even though I was nervous, I waited in line to meet him, and Mom took our picture in front of the gator wrestling pit. Then Grandpop walked us over to the smokehouse for lunch and insisted on buying gator nuggets for everyone. They tasted like chicken, but that didn't matter to Grandpop. He got a bowl of gator chowder; he enjoyed it so much that Mom got a few cans of it too, to take home for my dad.

That night I worked on my scrapbook. Gatorland got a full page of coverage, front and back. I cut out pictures from brochures, mostly of gators but also of other animals we'd seen, and stuck them in alongside clips of the word "gator." I glued in one impressive picture of an alligator with mouth wide open, then pasted the word "exciting" between his jaws. On the back of the page went my Gatorland park map, so I'd remember the day forever.

I sat in the bleachers with Mom and Nicki's family to watch her skate in the championship competition the next day.

She looked so small and graceful in her skating costume, and her thirteen-year-old partner Paul looked tall and handsome and very strong as he lifted Nicki effortlessly and tossed her in the air. They skated their program without any mistakes, executing the jumps and turns flawlessly, and we all cheered and tossed roses out onto the ice, then rushed backstage to be with Nicki when the scores were announced. We all thought Nicki and Paul had skated better than any of the other kids, and the judges agreed, awarding them first place. As Nicki and Paul celebrated with their families, I hung back, not wanting to intrude, but Nicki spotted me and gave me a big hug. Paul was making the rounds of the group as well, and when I told him congratulations he gave me a furtive hug too. A hug! From a boy! Clearly it was the best day ever.

That night we all got dressed up to go to Medieval Times, a dinner theatre with knights and jousting. Our seats were in the blue section, so we had to root for the blue knight in the tournament. This was not a problem, as the blue knight was very handsome and singled out Nicki from his entire cheering section for a kiss on the hand. Unfortunately, he died early in the battle, but we soon realized that the mysterious black knight in a thick helmet was our good blue knight in disguise! Nicki and Kobi and I all went home that night feeling like princesses.

As I pasted clippings from the Medieval Times brochure into my scrapbook that night, I thought about the trip so far. I'd never been on vacation with such a big group before. As an only child, I mostly traveled just with my parents. Even at home, I didn't have friends among the neighborhood kids and usually spent my time playing by myself or reading a book, but, here in Florida, I felt like I had sisters and a whole extended family with me. It felt strange to realize that I'd only known Nicki's family for less than a week, but already they all seemed to like having me around. I fell asleep hoping that we'd see each other again soon, even after the trip was over.

At Epcot Center a few days later. Pam, Nicki, Kobi, and Grandmom had gone to ride the Matterhorn, while Mom and I elected to sit with Grandpop in the biergarten in the German pavilion. Grandpop brought pretzels, beers, and a lemonade for me over to our table in the sunshine, then he lit his pipe. Puffing thoughtfully, he said to my mom, “Diane, this is the life: I’m sitting in a biergarten, eating a pretzel, having a beer, and listening to an oompah band with a beautiful woman.” My mom always described Grandpop as a charming old gentleman after that.

That night, because Nicki had competed in the novice championships, we were able to get tickets to see the adult pairs ice dance competition. Nicki was thrilled to see all her heroes out on the ice, but soon she got another surprise: Nancy Kerrigan and her mother sat down in the seats in front of us! Even though she was in the middle of eating a hot dog, Nancy managed to be gracious and gave Nicki an autograph. I didn’t ask for one because I’d never heard of her, which was pretty stupid considering she was headed for the Olympics a month later.

The next time Nicki and I got a quiet minute alone, I asked her what she thought about her partner, Paul. Figure skaters looked so romantic out on the ice, and as partners they spent a lot of time together. Nicki just laughed. “Paul? He’s a big dork. You like him way more than I do,” she said, nudging me.

I blushed. “Well... it’s not like he’s a blue knight or anything!” I replied. It was Nicki’s turn to blush.

We spent the last full day of the trip at Disney World, where Kobi was both delighted and terrified by the Haunted Mansion. Afterwards no one could convince her that she didn’t really have a ghost attached to her. Grandpop bought a Goofy hat, the kind where Goofy’s snout forms the brim of the cap and his long earflaps fall down to cover your ears. The sight of Grandpop’s dignified face and neatly trimmed beard under such a silly hat made us laugh. We had dinner in a restaurant near

the Hall of Presidents, where I taught Nicki and Kobi how to dangle spoons off their noses. Nicki was so good at it we dared her to walk around the whole restaurant that way, which she did while our moms hid their faces and pretended they didn't know us. Nicki made it almost all the way back to our table before the spoon fell off.

After a long day in the park, we decided to take the Disney World ferry, instead of the shuttle bus, from the park back to the parking lot. I was glad I'd bought a new Orlando sweat-shirt, since it was chilly on the ferry at night. I stood at the railing, looking out over the misty water, and the wind blew my hair into tangles. It was the last night of our trip—we'd start the long drive back up north tomorrow morning. I thought about how much fun we'd had, how I'd made a new friend in Nicki. I had thought I'd known something about everything, but Nicki was a part of this figure skating world I knew nothing about. She was really good at skating.

What was I good at? Reading books? As I looked out over the water, I resolved that I would become an interesting person when I grew up. I would know something about everything, and I would travel all over the world. People would want to be around me, and men would think I was fascinating, and no one would sing my name at me, ever. The ferry docked, we found the car and drove back to the condo, and then the only resolution I was making was that I would never, ever, ever get another perm as long as I lived no matter what my mother said, as I tried to work my hairbrush through the mass of hopelessly windblown snarls.

Fiction Review: Stephen King's "The Gingerbread Girl"

Alicia Thompson

The Gingerbread Girl
by Stephen King
Esquire, July 2007
Vol. 148, No. 1, pgs. 87-110

Run, run as fast as you can . . . Since the death of her infant daughter, Emily has taken up running. Not jogging—running. Emily pounds the pavement like she's Maniac Magee, with all the heroic self-destructiveness of a track star about to fight in one of World War I's most tragic battles.

When Emily leaves her husband, Henry—presumably for actually saying things like the running is a classic psychological response to the pain—she finds sanctuary in Vermillion Key, Florida. No, it's not a real place, although it feels like it should be. Partially that's because King perfectly encapsulates the abandoned paradise feel that permeates so many Floridian islands, but it's also because King can't help but drop a novel's worth of brand names and references in this twenty-page story. American Express enjoys a brief commercial break ("American Express was the prize, because with it she could get traveler's checks"), while *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* doesn't fare quite as well ("a book she had tried and rejected . . . He has the reading tastes of a Dorset gray.") Why not boost the tourist trade in a small Floridian island while you're at it?

Not that *The Gingerbread Girl* is any sort of advertisement for Florida living. When the first seasonal resident moves in, the drawbridge operator makes sure to warn Emily: "Jim Pickering's not a nice man . . . if he were to ask you to go cruising with him, I would definitely say no." This may seem extraneous, given that the same drawbridge operator has just in-

formed Emily that Pickering only comes to the Vermillion Key to give his dubious “nieces” a tour of the place and a cruise up the coast before Pickering heads back to Chicago. Have no fear—the story’s in King’s capable (if unsubtle) hands.

Particularly unsubtle is Pickering, as he leaves this year’s “niece” dead in the trunk of his car, her bloody hair a red flag. Emily snaps out of the lethargic daze that has caused her to spurn newspapers, television, or human contact just in time to investigate the dead girl, and receives a blow to the head for her trouble, courtesy of Pickering. King takes care to remind us that this is no movie, but it can’t help but feel like King’s watched one too many comic-book adaptations as Pickering and Emily sling one-liners at each other. Prompted by Pickering’s menacing “Stop running away and hold still!” demand, Emily even pauses to give the homicidal lunatic the middle finger.

The story ends, predictably, with a stand-off between Pickering and Emily. But it’s not the stale plot that feels out of place here—indeed, King manages to pack a powder keg worth of action in such a small word count, and the writing is King’s usual blend of shocking gore and sneaky lyricism.

Instead, it’s the little things. Emily and Henry are the kind of responsible couple who invest money for their daughter’s college fund from the very beginning of their marriage (four years of trying and nine months of gestation doesn’t allow for much wiggle room, after all, in a six-year union), but Emily is young enough that she apparently eschewed the Olsen twins for Clint Eastwood and Arnold Schwarzenegger. The two by four that King wields throughout the entire story is Emily’s love for running . . . and yet, when she’s racing against time and her health and, oh yeah, a madman wielding scissors, she does the unthinkable. She stops.

One wishes that Stephen King had stopped, as well, before he allowed the grisly action in the story to run away with the real point. At the heart of “The Gingerbread Girl” is a woman

aching with grief, unable to face her broken marriage or the memory of her dead daughter. The more compelling story lies, not with a woman truly fighting for her life, but rather with a woman fighting to truly live. It's a fine distinction, and one that King alludes to in poignant imagery drizzled throughout the story like evening rain in Florida. If only King had focused less on the psycho and more on the psyche, perhaps "The Gingerbread Girl" would feel more like an introspective cross-country race, and less like a hasty sprint.

Poetry Review: Meredith Walters's

All You Have To Do Is Ask

Josef Benson

All You Have To Do Is Ask

by Meredith Walters

Anhinga Press, 2007

55 pages, ISBN: 9780938078975

Meredith Walters's first book of poems, *All You Have to Do Is Ask*, has convinced me that what I've been taught is dead wrong. There is no difference between poetry and prose writing. For, certainly, the evidence is between the covers, just after the parrot and before the blurbs. Of the three blurbs, only one mentions any sort of music, and that is Shapiro's, in which he lists "musical" right after "exquisite" and just before "full of emotion." These are manhole-cover words that don't mean anything unless you get knocked out by one.

Meredith Walters's poems are flirty if not musical, churlish if not exquisite, and downright catty if not full of emotion. Take "Love Note to a Young Soldier," where the speaker of the poem notices "Second Lieutenant Rodriguez" and wonders, "Who would it kill for you to loosen up a bit?" and "Would you mind if I told you we were closer to the moon than the clouds?" These are school-girl notions, something Holden Caulfield might wonder on his bus trip back from the shrink. But these are poems, aren't they? The speaker never does accost the soldier, only derides him in reverie and, finally, telepathically lets him know that if he were to take off his pin and get loaded and maybe talk to the speaker, "no one will know [his] name." This is one of the better poems, but it reads like the beginning of a short story rather than a poem.

My favorite poem of the bunch, "Faux Tough," marks the point where I was seduced by the speaker, if not the book,

and seduction has its price. The poem at first is about some tough Minneapolis youths “running the streets.” The speaker focuses on two “kids,” a boy with tattoos of “black scorpions on his arm” and a girl in whose back pocket the boy sticks his hand. The speaker then goes on to discuss how “Some lovers are so discreet and others you have to jack apart / with a rib spreader.” Then, quickly, she addresses you, or me, or perhaps the universal you of the title. I took it as me, the reader, the one writing this review, the one who fell in love. Walters writes,

My affection inches toward you
like a crab asserting itself, then with a wink, withdraws.
A dance to reveal my desire and anticipation
of your immediate departure. Although, if it's all the same to you
I'd like to stop talking now and show you a series
of Japanese woodcuts. See that delicate line?
That's how I want to make you feel.

I quote this poem at length because it marks the highpoint of *All You Have to do is Ask*.

Shouldn't we be in love with our favorite poets? At least for the hour or so that we are between the covers? I think so. I remember carrying around *Leaves of Grass* in my back pocket, thinking that I'd never seen eyes like that on anyone, man or woman. I was deeply in love. Or the time I read Richard Siken's *Crush* and felt that voice on my neck like a cadence, ordering me to turn the pages at my peril, crushing as it were. Again, I was in love. And when I read “See that delicate line? / That's how I want to make you feel,” smitten. But love, also, has its price.

I began falling out of love on page 34 when I read “What Shall I Take of What I Need.” Walters and I had our first tiff when she used the word “Peruvian” in the first three out of four lines of this poem, and then our first downright fight when she metaphorically linked “hoof clops” with “pennies under a blanket.” There was much miscommunication, always the mark of

a doomed relationship. We fell completely out of love on the next page with “Seaweed Theory.” This poem, filled with sea faring and war jargon, crumbles into a list of different kinds of bones, conjuring the educational jingle, “the ankle bone’s connected to the chin bone, and the chin bone’s connected to the knee bone, etc.”

I longed for the days when we were courting, when I told her she had a fantastic “aura,” and she said she “belong[ed] to nothing.” But there we were, apart. Like all relationships, particularly love affairs, there is that moment when either party, in this case me, realizes what it was in the other person that made us give up the ghost. These are the seeds that cause the desperate phone calls, strange half waves, and also the averted eyes, or the random guffaw. In any event, the title poem is cause for giving it another go, perhaps in the next book, for one can only return so often to the sight of a tremendous jilting. Walters writes,

Someone wants to see you if only to mention
your beautiful skin and how the world could meet you differently
if it were just and pleasant
and wept at the sight of its own cherry blossoms
or enlisted the snow to fall on your umbrella.

This is the kind of love I’m talking about, the kind of relationship I expect to have when I read a book of poetry.

Rick Campbell, the editor at Anhinga Press, once said at a poetry publishing workshop that a unified book of poetry is superior to a book of individually good poems. I see no cohesion in this work. Perhaps Campbell was referring to an ideal that no one quite realized this time around.

So I stand corrected. There is no difference between poetry and prose, other than the casual line break and the few forms still sputtering for breath on the banks of contemporary poetry; this is to be lamented. Why wouldn’t a poet use all the tools available to build her vehicle, to seduce her reader? Music?

Space? There is power in brevity, and narrative lives in prose.
Oh well, I'd date her again. No doubt about it.

Contributors

Carol Frost's latest book, *The Queen's Desertion*, appeared in 2006 from Northwestern University Press.

Roxanne Halpine attended the 2001 Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets and received her M.F.A. from UNC Greensboro. Her work has appeared in *The Greensboro Review*.

Michael Hettich's two most recent books are *Swimmer Dreams* and *Flock and Shadow: New and Selected Poems*, both of which were published in 2005. A chapbook, *Many Loves*, won the 2007 YellowJacket Press contest for Florida poets. His work has appeared in many journals and anthologies, and he has won two Florida Arts Council Fellowships. He lives with his family and teaches at Miami Dade College.

Megan A. Hoak is a native Floridian and a self-proclaimed “rabble rouser.” She received her BA in English—with concentrations in both creative writing and literature—from Florida Southern College in 2007. She currently resides in Lakeland, Florida, where she enjoys writing poetry and stirring up all sorts of trouble.

heather hughes (she prefers lower case h's), a Miami native relocated to Boston, revels in academia and works in the arts. She is the Business and Development Manager for *Quick Fiction*, a short fiction magazine that is developing a writing center in the North Shore area of Massachusetts. She returns to Florida often—the next trip will be to attend the Key West Literary Seminar and poetry workshop on scholarship. Her work is forthcoming in *Grain* and *Prick of the Spindle*.

Allison Eir Jenks has won the Ohio University Press Hollis Summers Poetry Prize. She is the author of *Palace Of Bones*.

Horacio Sierra is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English at the University of Florida. Horacio has written news and features stories for newspapers such as *The Miami Herald*, *The Miami Hurricane*, *The Gainesville Sun*, *The Satellite*, and *Hispanic* magazine. He was born and raised in Dade County, Florida.

Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* won the 2004 Yale Series of Younger Poets prize, a Lambda Literary Award, the Thom Gunn Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His poems have appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Indiana Review*, and *Forklift, Ohio*, as well as in the anthologies *The Best American Poetry 2000* and *Legitimate Dangers*. He is a recipient of a Pushcart Prize, two Arizona Commission on the Arts grants, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

T. (Teresa) Stores is the author of two published novels, *Getting to the Point* and *SideTracks* (Naiad Press, 1995, 1996). Her new novel, *Backslide* (Sinister Wisdom, forthcoming in 2008), explores the fundamentalist Southern Baptist religion, set against the America of 1969-70, through the coming of age and later coming out of a young believer. Current works in progress include a collection of short fiction set in southern Vermont, titled *Frost Heaves*, and a novel for young adults. Stores's fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in *Oregon Literary Review*, *Sinister Wisdom*, *Out Magazine*, *Harrington Gay Men's Fiction Quarterly*, *Blithe House Quarterly*, *Poetry Motel*, *Artistic*

F/X, Bloom, Cicada, Earth's Daughters, Best Lesbian Fiction 2005, Rock & Sling, Blueline, and Kudzu. She has been awarded writing grants by the Vermont Arts Council, Barbara Deming Fund, and the Cardin Fund, and has been a scholar and contributor at the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley and Bread Loaf. A graduate of the MFA program at Emerson College, Stores is an assistant professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at the University of Hartford.

Alicia Thompson currently resides in Riverview, Florida, just one highway exit from the spot where Lobster Boy was killed. Her first novel for young adults, *The Psych Major Syndrome*, will be published by Hyperion Books for Children in spring 2009.

Jeffrey Tucker currently teaches English at Brigham Young University; in addition to *Saw Palm*, he has been published in *Inscape*, and he has a publication forthcoming in *The Sandy River Review*. Jeffrey lives in the Salt Lake City area with his wife.

Terri Witek is the author of *The Shipwreck Dress* (2008), *Carnal World* (2006), and *Fools and Crows* (2003), as well as a book about Robert Lowell's revisions. She holds the Art and Melissa Sullivan Chair in Creative Writing at Stetson University.

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