

12-1998

Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)

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(SILHOUETTE)

et al: Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)



Fall / Winter 1998-9 Vol. XIV No. 1

A N G I E S H A W
"UNTITLED" - CHARCOAL - 18' x 15'
Medina, OH

I began advanced art classes when I was in the fifth grade. I have won several awards and won a billboard contest where my billboard was displayed all over Medina.

This particular piece was my first fully realized and developed charcoal. My hope of this artwork is for the viewer to feel a deep emotion when looking at the young woman--whatever emotion it may be.

SILHOUETTE

Fall / Winter 1998 Vol. XIV, Iss. 1

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The Silhouette is committed to celebrating the art and ideas of the students and faculty of Shawnee State University and of the community at large. We welcome submissions of art, poetry, and short fiction.

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ROBERT DAFFORD
"HORIZON"-ENAMEL ON WALL-15'x50'
Portsmouth, OH



Artist's statement

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Robert Dafford

LOCATION: Jodoigne, Belgium in a conservatory for the performing arts

Robert Dafford, creator of the floodwall murals of Portsmouth, displays here one of five murals that comprise his "Horizon" series. The four others are found in Lafayette, Louisiana; Ottawa, Ontario; Suresnes (Paris), France; and Ste. Florinne, France. All depict a violin flying through a wall of the city in which the mural is found. Depicted in each of these realist-style murals are the regional architectural styles, landscape, indigenous vegetation, and an actual river that flows through or by the city. The mural in Lafayette depicts a bayou.

The wall symbolizes the artificial (and unnecessary) barriers humans erect. Convention, language, economic systems, currency, politics; these are the barriers that hinder communication but can be pierced by music--hence the soaring violins.

"I wanted to create a symbol of the universal language of music," Dafford explains, "which has the power of connecting us all--despite the walls. The project was to create a visual link for cities which exchange musicians and other artists with Lafayette as part of the Festival Internationale de Louisiane. In fact, the idea for the series came to me during one such festival. Artists, cooks, dancers, and musicians from about 30 different countries were gathered together and were able to communicate through the medium of music. I liked the title, 'Gateway,' Dafford adds, "but it doesn't translate well; 'Horizon' is the same in both English and French."

When asked about the response he sought to evoke from a viewer, Dafford speaks of wishing to create a spatial illusion and a corresponding physical sensation: "The viewer experiences a changing space that he knows is not really there."

W O E

Portsmouth, OH

Woe

Beneath the azure sky, I lay.
 Incessant hopes swam through me
 My heart was merely shattered--
 Scattered by the sulking crows.

Lifted my eyes toward Apollo's solemn gaze.
 Dripped my viscous tears upon the gracious grassy haze.
 Swallowed the rocks that formed inside my throat,
 Tasted saline perched upon my lips,

What a precious day, to waste away--
 Scorched by the fiercest fire.
 Burdened, raged, "empty" shell,
 It mangles all desire.

Do you know how it feels to be eaten by your woe?
 I ask myself, "Why myself does this sadness always
 g r o w ?"

ROBERT FORREY

FORTIES DINER

Portsmouth, OH

Forties Diner

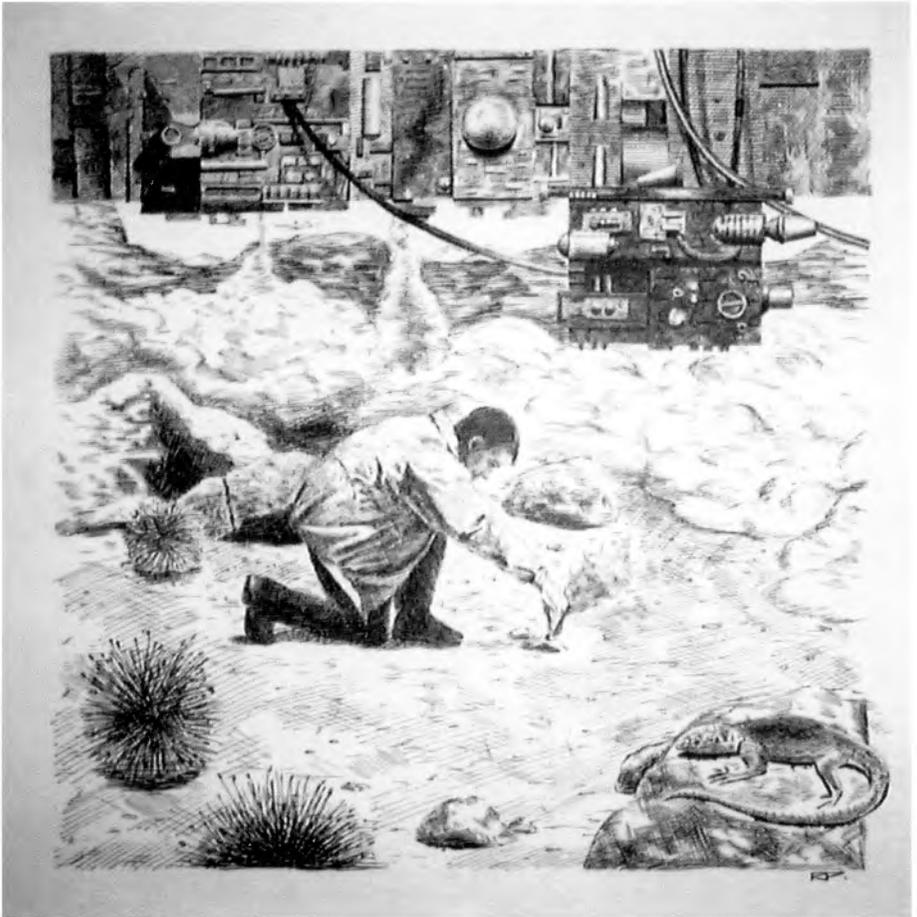
That was the way I liked my eggs
to raise hell with my cholesterol
heavenly hash-brown highs in a
stainless steel caboose on the loose
with me putting on the cheesy crackers
that they served with the chili slop
and the waitress giving me the eye
shadow easy over and sunny side up
with a cup of java very heavy on the cream
baby and butter the toast on both sides
you bozo short-order schnook.

That's the way I got my fat in the can
Saturday night's special splatter
in a stakeout joint oh yeah
mornings on the greasy grill
will kill you if smoking don't
and a punch in the mouth Mac if you
so much as look cross-eyed at my broad's
heart-breaking two-bit tips
on the counter, thanks.

K R I S P E N I X

"ENVIRONMENT"-PEN & INK-12"x12"

Phurman, OH



After Killing Small Pigs with Neglect

That fucking Wyoming wind is blowing,
coyotes in the bottom howling.

Down in your thoughts
by design or choice, which
came first?

Drink rye whiskey --
it's dark, no one around.

Set sail like Brenden
in your coracle,
banish a few demons.

Let go of things:
that desire for completion,
some ugly habits, your self.
Just another thing you can lose,
your hair, your teeth,
your hearing, stripping
down to what's underneath.

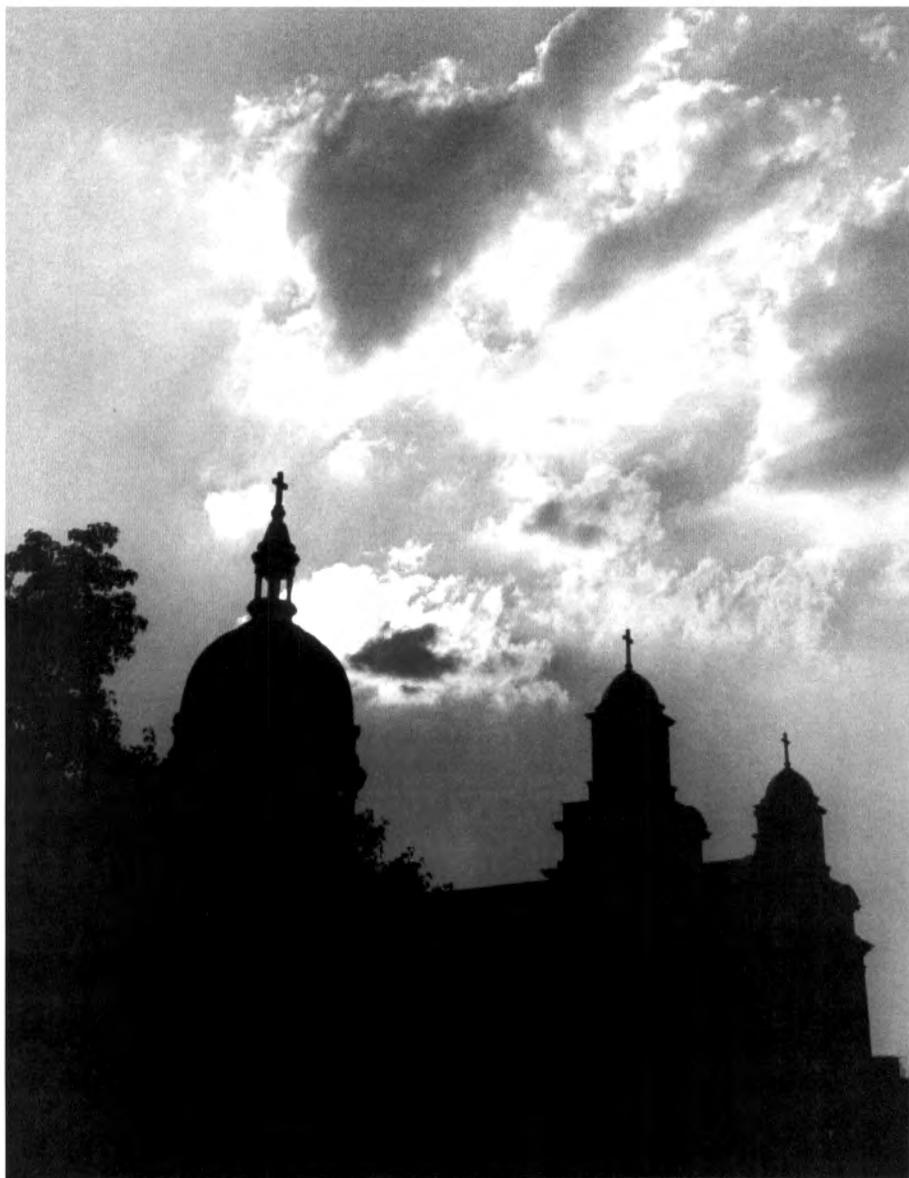
Nothing perhaps
but a single muscle,
a single nerve, a single
devouring orifice.

L O R I C A S S I D Y

Silhouette, Vol. 998, Iss. 1 [2010], Art. 1

"SILHOUETTE"-PHOTOGRAPH-7.75"x10"

Portsmouth, OH



10

E V A B A L L E I N
W O R L D C O N S C I O U S N E S S
Portsmouth, OH

et al.: Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)

World Consciousness

Swirling, Spinnng
Above, Behind, Ahead,
Beyond
For Eons.
Never seen
Often times unheard.
Waiting for mortals to come,
With open arms
All knowing love
 Tap into the Hum
Electric cracks
Light flashes
Nothingness.
Current snaps your head
Rushing you
To your Destiny.
Feeling
The pain of the lost ones
The joy of Oneness.

Unafraid
Of the evil
That lurks in the light.
Memories
Racing
At the
Speed
Of thought.
Think and it is.
 Tune into the Hum
Slowly,
Crystal Snowflakes
Fall
Before your eyes.
Murky waters of Real
Steel upon your shoulders.
Pain of rebirth,
You are.
Nirvana
Of the dream
Lingers.
 Hum of The Thought,
 The Hum of One.

L E N N Y P O A G E
WINTER OF 1992 ALL FROM A SONG
Portsmouth, OH

Winter of 1992 All From A Song

Damn
Man
That song takes me back
To the winter of 1992
To sitting alone in my friend's dormroom
On cold gray November nights
Chain smoking any cigarettes I could get my hands on
And listening
How music can soothe the unshaven beast
Feeling maladjusted and lonely

To discovering all the intricacies
And details of romance
And the game of love
How it's all a card game
With no cards
And no rule-books
Just a collection of situations
And roles to be played
(No script, now)
And it becomes clear
That it becomes more confusing and difficult
As the game progresses

To taking night-long trips
To the nearest big city
With no agenda
Or money
And smelling the city go to sleep for the evening
All the while

Feeling a looming sense of constant guilt

About mistaken priorities

And schedules

And things that would benefit me much more

Than wandering through a record shop with 75 cents

But you come to the conclusion

That

Hell,

You're already so far behind

And so deep in the hole

That one night won't make that much of a difference

Back to the disturbing revelations

That truth is found in the details

And in those details

No one is the good guy

Or the bad guy

That the vast majority of the human race

Is a collection of half-psychotic degenerates

Just trying to make their way through life the best way they know
how

A disturbing, desolate, and depressing conviction which can tear an
individual

To tiny flakes of one's perception of one's self

But takes away any sense of self-righteousness

And purity

All from a song

I withdraw myself

From the conversation

Listening and contemplating my memories

While rudely ignoring people asking questions

About the board game at hand

Close to six years later

Know that if my comrades have similar memories

They're not triggered by the same song

And if they don't have similar memories

They wouldn't understand my withdrawal anyway

And when the song ends

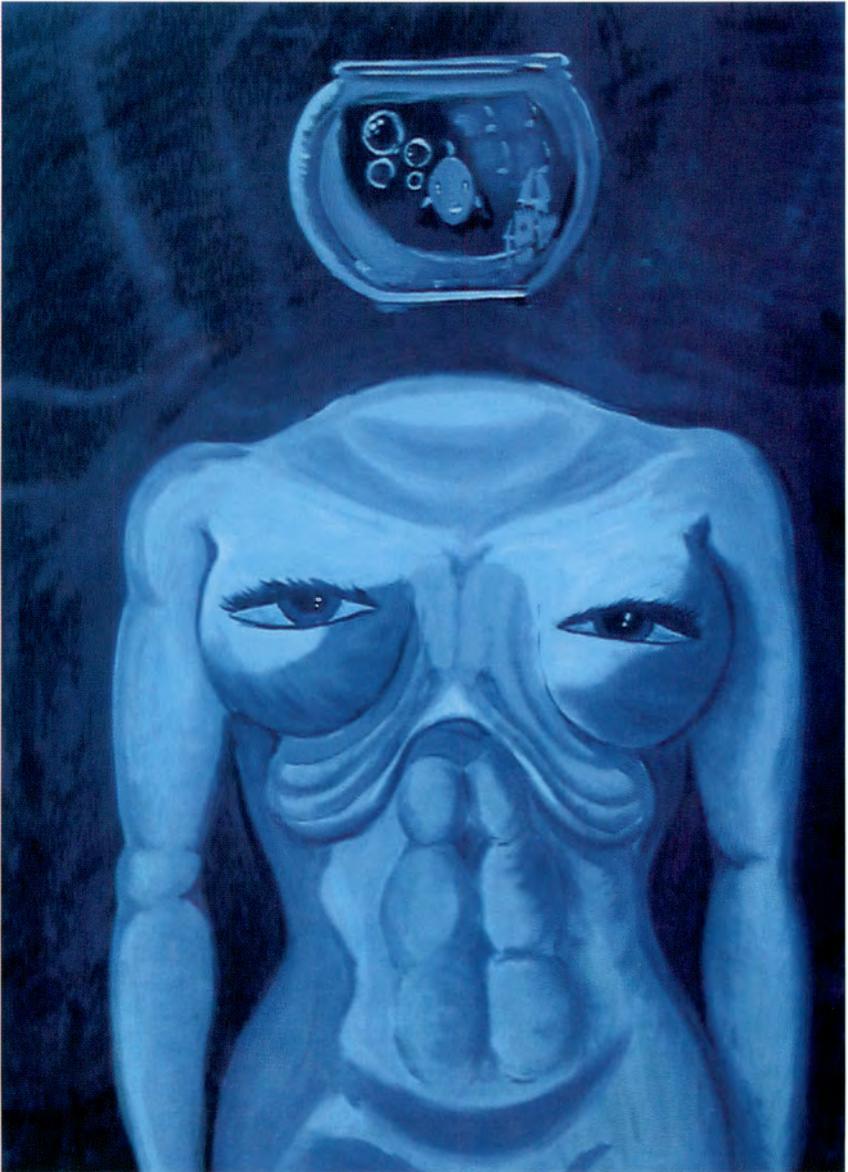
I return to the game

Like nothing ever happened.

C H A D S M I T H

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. 1 [2019], Art. 1

"BLUE FISH WOMAN"-PAINTING-40"x30"
West Portsmouth, OH

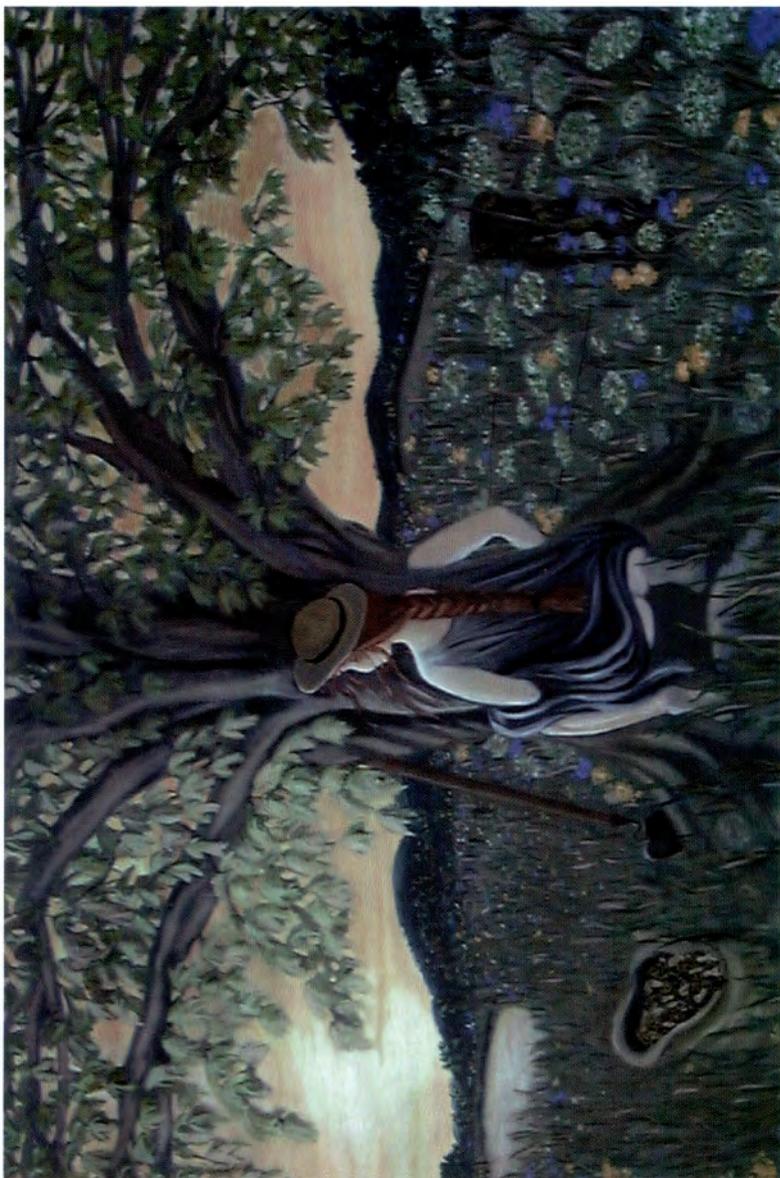


M . B A R R E T T

et al.: Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)

"MUSHROOM HUNTING"-PAINTING-24"x36"

West Portsmouth, OH



G A R L A N D R O O F
T H E P U M P K I N S N A K E
South Webster, OH

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. 1 [2019], Art. 1

THE PUMPKIN SNAKE

October. The first intimations of autumn and Halloween. So many ghosts, colors and memories fill its days. Personally, I'm of the opinion that death is never as lively as it is in the fall. I rarely tire of bearing witness to the dizzying beauty of its ravages. But, for the most part, the vagaries of the season leave me sort of flat. I smile as much as the next guy when I watch the World Series or spot an excited child mesmerized by dead corn stalks and hollowed-out pumpkins, but the kid in me usually remains predictably dormant. Strangely enough, what does put me in the spirit of things, as it were, is an old-fashioned tobacco farm. Don't get me wrong; I'm no militant anti-smoker who sees "auras" or anything like that. No, it runs a little deeper. In fact, it's one of the reasons I've made the transition from "country boy" to "city slicker." I don't smoke, by the way. I wish I could say a concern for my health fueled the decision, but I can't. It's kind of funny that most of my coterie of pals and hangers-on are sons and daughters of the torch. But, I'm not writing this because of anyone I know.

Indeed, it, the blame, rests squarely on the chilling creepiness of an abject stranger. From a distance, everything seemed innocent enough. On an evening, not long ago, resplendent in the golden hue of carpeted maple leaves and vanishing sunlight, I walked along the sidewalk offering an occasional "hi" and the inevitable "hey" as I neared the corner of 5th and Jefferson. Midway through a flight of mindless fancy, an indefinable force stood the hairs on the back of my neck at complete attention. Turning pensively to the right, I saw "him." Standing non-chalantly against the faded brick of an aging convenience store, he sent a shockwave up and down my spine. The half-smoked, filterless cigarette between the index and middle finger of his left hand appeared to be stained with the same grungy grease that made his dirty blonde hair more dirty than

blonde. But, it was his broad, full face that arrested my breathing and sent me tumbling headlong into a memory. It was a face I could scarcely manage to forget. Dull, blue eyes that reminded me of permafrost and vast stretches of emptiness—a blunt, flat boxer’s nose and long, lupine teeth framed by a naturally ruddy complexion. I felt as if I were staring at a ghost. He, Mr. Ghoul, nodded his head obligingly, without the merest hint of recognition—much less menace. I nodded back absently and realized how ludicrously I was acting. The man, who had inspired such unabashed dread, wasn’t standing there ignoring the stranger making eyes at him—like this poor stiff. The real source of my perplexing behavior had died over 19 years before.

* * *

The summer of 1979. I’m ten years old and lonely. My family of wandering nomads planted roots so often I could never quite get the taste of compost out of my mouth. “Come on Mom, all my friends are back in Illinois.” She always came back with “honey, you’ll make new ones”—or something to that effect. Mom was, essentially, as helpless as my younger brother and I, but she bore the brunt of my limitless hostility like a real trooper. Hers was a natural grace and class achieved by good mothers everywhere. I miss her.

Even at the tender age of ten, I knew well the hopelessness of confronting my stepfather. In my tiny world, he was an irresistible force and an immovable object all rolled up into one very smelly after-dinner cigar. As a direct result of this accepted stipulation on reality, the claustrophobic comfort of my bedroom often soothed me as so many others, in similar situations, were soothed by theirs. It was in the midst of this rather divisive phase that I met Clyde. Riding my bike one day on a less-than-purposeful campaign of exploration, I passed by the farm he and his younger sister Anna called home. I became the chubby, sullen playmate from down the road in no time flat. They were quite accustomed to expecting a 20-inch red-and-white, banana-seated express to roll in nearly everyday. A little over two weeks had shuffled off before Clyde revealed an important aspect of his domestic condition. “About two years ago my mom was mushroom hunting out in the woods up on Minister Hill and, uh, well, she passed out. Granny called it a stroke. By the time anyone found her, she was gone.” Clyde spoke the words with a disturbingly flat, unbroken voice. His mom, a rather big-boned woman, was by

herself, and it took hours ~~for anyone to miss her~~. She was only 37 when she died. On this note, and many others, I commiserated with him. I told him how my true father had passed on five years earlier. It was a heart attack that stole him away, though. What I didn't tell Clyde concerned my father's funeral service. As he lay there in his open casket, a closed Bible rested upon his chest. My focus was drawn to it. All through the service, I concentrated on it opening. I can't exactly explain why, but I had a feeling about it I simply didn't understand. At the completion of the seemingly never-ending sermon, the preacher turned and opened the Bible on Dad's chest. I stood up and stared unblinkingly at the pages as the holy man began to read a last passage that was one of my father's favorites. Inexplicably, I had deluded myself into believing that, when the Bible was opened, Dad would surely spring from his slumber and be alive again. That's what I thought the whole point of the ceremony was. Still reeling from confusion, I looked to my mother and said "Mom, doesn't he come back to life now?" She gave me a sad, heartfelt expression. But, when I glanced back into the curious eyes of my fellow mourners, I kept imagining their faces bloating out of all proportion, becoming grotesque and monstrous. I could have sworn I detected a sibilant chorus of murmurs hissing things like "What a silly, stupid kid" or "Did you hear what that terrible boy asked his poor mother?" All in all, I suppose there was much neither Clyde nor I spoke of concerning our respected flirtations with the specter of death.

During the time I had spent with Clyde and, to a lesser degree, Anna, I seldom, if ever, interacted the same room with their family. Their father was an enigma wrapped in a mystery, in absentia—if you know what I mean. In a regrettable nutshell, their maternal grandmother was basically all they had. Grandma Thompson, as we all called her, seemed nice enough to me. Two oddball uncles also made their home with Granny and the kids: Uncles Mike and Tim. The former was always called Uncle Mike and the latter simply Tim. They always seemed to be working at some project or another. Uncle Mike usually had a regular job and, every time he could manage it, he included Tim. Tim was mildly retarded and mute, but, other than a few inches in height, was a mirror image of his older brother. These two also oversaw the operations of the farm—a full time occupation in and of itself.

I would be remiss in overlooking how strange things became when the family shared the same room together the first time I stayed

for supper. Anna, usually careful and more than a little ditzy, transformed by degrees into something of a wallflower. At the time, I barely noticed. Grandma Thompson, on the other hand, bloomed into existence when the “boys” found their way home. An endless stream of biblical allusions and scriptural misquotations trumpeted her ascension into full matriarchal majesty. She was pleasant enough, but in a stern way. Clyde once admitted that she and his mother were never especially close. Anna, in the meantime, quietly faded into the paneled tragedy of the walls. I’ve never liked cheap, 1970s-styled wood paneling. I don’t think she did either.

The Thompsons, like my own family, lived their lives in humble circumstances. And, like my own backwoods-bred mom and dad, they always found a way to include the simple fare that sustained simple people. Beans and cornbread, fried chicken and okra, black-eyed peas and pickled beets. Inexplicably, I miss those dishes now. Even in the windy city, my parents maintained a sense of identity. So, basically, supper at the Thompsons’ was not unlike many I had consumed in the past. But, one thing that impressed me as unusual was the manner in which they ate their evening meal. Neither television nor radio was permitted, and everyone sat at the table. Diligent observation to a prayer of thanks was the rule and not the exception. Uncle Mike acted amiable enough the first time I dined with them, but he rarely looked me in the eye without making me feel uncomfortable. Tim looked contented just to chew his food.

Clyde and I shared stolen looks and a few childish giggles, but Anna picked abstractly at her plate. The lady of the house politely questioned Uncle Mike about his day while obliquely snatching glances at the empty place setting at the table. Her feelings began to knit themselves upon her face like an afghan of all-too-familiar sorrows. Nathaniel Thompson was 74 when he died. When Clyde was telling me about it, I thought him an unlucky fellow to have lost a grandfather and a mother in so short a span. But, as my own grandfather told me while retelling his many war stories, death doesn’t play favorites.

After supper, Clyde and I retired to his room to eye over his voluminous baseball card collection. At least that’s what we said. Tim and Clyde were forced to share a bedroom. And, barely hidden within his quiet uncle’s closet, festered a regular jackpot of triple-X-rated, ultra hard-core, incredibly graphic PORNOGRAPHY! It was odd that Mike and Tim were nearly always together, but I never gave

it a second thought. Their penchant for chores and nipping at a bottle afforded us many peeks into the steamy underbelly of life.

We rummaged through page after page of bizarre forms of degradation until our grimy little hands were as clammy as our sweaty little hearts. At the slightest hint of a sound, we nearly shrieked with fear of discovery. After an interminable period of panting confusion, we assaulted the placid peace of the hayloft. Clyde, Anna and a few of their cousins had previously tunneled through the bales, and we never tired of traversing the snug distances between openings. Anna joined us not long after we started enacting another of our epic adventures, and we laughed and played until Grandma called her in. As dusk approached, Clyde and I sat talking on an unhitched wagon as the pallid illumination of a pole light slid across our features. A pageant of darkening shadows and rioting insects entertained us. Clyde began a description of his prodigal father. He revealed the truth of his dad's inattentiveness, even after his poor mom's tragic demise. This revelation seemed to sour him. I promptly performed an impersonation of the notoriously villainous Mr. Cornfeld—another of our neighbors. Old man Cornfeld, or "Field," as every kid probably called him, possessed the gruff cantankerousness absolutely essential in a grouchy, shriveled up, monster of a man. He, according to popular lore, poisoned dogs, shot neighborhood cats and badmouthed those he didn't care for, which was practically everyone alive. He was injured in a farming accident in the late sixties and limped around as a result. My pantomime, as ludicrous as it was, managed to elicit a wan smile from Clyde. Spontaneously, I added a guttural grunt that sounded a lot like Tim barking at Uncle Mike when they were drinking, and Clyde burst out with the volcanic laughter of a ten-year-old boy. The geometry of tactical humor took shape in my nascent mind.

Clyde, as friends go, continually proved himself more resourceful than first impressions would suggest. He fixed me with a polished stare at least as full of shit as my own. "Uncle Mike told me a story once about why Tim is, 'Tim'" "he half-whispered in a conspiratorial attempt at melodrama. "Tell me more Obi Wan," I replied with mock wonder. After a brief grin, he began by looking behind his back and to both sides of the wagon. When he deemed the moment safe, he quietly began. "Uncle Mike said a long time ago, after God had created the earth, there was a fog of sadness that hung over his thoughts like a ghost of something that never was. And, one day,

while God was looking upon all the things he had made, a single tear welled up in his eye. When it finally slithered down his cheek, the tear and its trail suddenly changed. Where before there was nothing but God's first tear, now rested a great, brilliantly scaled serpent." A sense of underlying forms teased me as I began to listen more intently. "The serpent slid to the earth and looked up at his creator as God proceeded to look down upon this new and wonderful creature. And they began to talk. They took a shine to each other, and soon enough God gave his friend legs so that he might travel about more easily than crawling on his belly. The serpent thanked him for his kindness." As he was telling his tale, the bright, gibbous moon broke through the clouds and began beaming furiously above us. "Well, it didn't take too long for old forked tongue to suggest to God that maybe he should fashion from clay a model of himself." Standing up to punctuate the mood, Clyde stretched and started anew with his oration. "God sure liked this idea, and, before you could say 'Adam,' he created the first man. The situation went really well, at first, but soon enough Adam was almost as lonely and incomplete as God had previously been. The sly serpent whispered to God that perhaps a partner would ease Adam's pain. And Adam was all smiles when he heard the idea. So, it was done. The serpent took a real interest in young Eve. I guess it wasn't long before the serpent seduced her one afternoon on one of their walks. An apple a day didn't keep that snake away" he snickered. "But, by the time God caught wind of it, Adam and Eve had already committed their now-famous sin. God was so enraged he took one look at the cringing serpent and the serpent's legs fell away." Clyde looked at me from behind glassy eyes and said "Uncle Mike called Cain the Serpent's tooth, whatever that means." I smiled at this, as I began to comprehend what he meant. "Uncle Mike," he said, "told me that the serpent still wanders the earth as an immortal, almost like a lost soul. He said he even met the snake when he was a little kid." My youthful imagination and insatiable curiosity added tinder to the flames he had stoked.

"Mike and Tim shared a bedroom, just like me and Tim today," he continued. "On a chilly autumn evening, Uncle Mike woke up from some weird dream he was having. He said he opened up his still-cloudy eyes and looked in his kid brother's direction. Tim was around two then I think. The next thing he saw evidently scared the crap out of him. He swears that half-floating and half-resting on Tim's bed there was an almost invisible shimmering snake. It was

M . B A R R E T T
"UNTITLED" - PAINTING - 24" x 40"
West Portsmouth, OH



doing something to Tim's mouth with his long, long tongue. It was so close to Halloween, that, at first, he thought it was some kind of trick. But, without warning, the snake snapped its huge head up and whipped it in his direction." Clyde mimicked the motion as he was speaking, and I almost jumped out of my skin. Embarrassed, I flushed a little but kept on listening. "When he looked into the depths of those ancient, reptilian diamonds that smoldered back at him like the crazy eyes of a thousand burning jack-o-lanterns, Mike instantly saw within them the story of its dusty origins so many years ago. The knowledge struck him with such force he passed out. When he awoke the next morning, little Tim was already up. But, when Uncle Mike found him, Tim barely seemed to notice. He never did start talking and never took much of an interest in anything, other than draining a bottle. But that's another story. Grandpa and Grandma took Tim to a doctor eventually and they said he was 'special.' "Anyway," muttered a now-listless Clyde "that's what Uncle Mike said happened to Tim." I looked at Clyde appreciatively, and said "Wow, that's a pretty good story." As if from a great distance, Clyde slowly nodded. I suspected his lack of enthusiasm was more of a yarn-spinning put-on than a genuine frame of mind. And, it was a successful one at that. I would dream of that damned snake for sure. The story really did stick to my ribs.

My first night spent with the Thompsons availed itself of the budding affair I was sharing with a then nameless companion: insomnia. I almost regretted hearing the story and wished I could stop thinking about Grandpa Thompson's empty spot at the dinner table. Tossing and turning, and growing ever more restless, I resolved to clamber out of bed and go to the bathroom. The unfamiliar corridors of that scarcely lit den of creaky sounds and lurking darkness pushed my frazzled senses to full alert. "Why don't they use any stinking nightlights" I asked myself between thundering heartbeats. After finally negotiating the distance to the bathroom and spending an inordinate amount of time there psyching myself up for the return trip, I stepped back out into the unfriendly murkiness of the hallway. That's when I made out a peculiar sound. It emanated from Mike's citadel of a room. He liked his privacy, as evidenced by the padlocks he employed when he was not around. Whatever it was, it was muffled beyond any true hope of recognition. The air teemed with the hint of something I couldn't put my finger on, but before I could pursue it any further I heard the thud of a football from Grandmother

Thompson's nightmare ~~in the middle of a room~~. Or at least that's how I imagined it to be at that moment. The very thought of facing the old lady promptly propelled me back into the relative safety of Clyde and Tim's bedroom. Tim slept like a baby. I envied him that. But, eventually, I sank into a fitful oblivion of my own.

I nearly forgot about the entire experience save for a moment of reflection that followed a bewildering interlude with Anna. Almost a week had elapsed when Clyde, Anna, their cousin Beverly, and I were playing in the same hay wagon in which I had listened to the serpent story. One of us had the bright idea to play a game and, after some discussion, it was decided that "doctor" would be it. I had no aversion to this particular game, but I would soon discover that the arcane approach to the rules that my playmates happily applied would leave a bad taste in my mouth. Anna, who had melted into the background, sprang upon the operating theater wearing nothing but her skin and a compelling enthusiasm for weirding me out. The confounding array of facial expressions she wore like so many masks added to my lack of interest in this most distressing of new games. Clyde offered me his "go on silly, there's nothing to be afraid of" gesture he had last used when he introduced me to the effects of grabbing a powered-up electric fence a few days earlier. There was a maniacal glint in his eyes on that day too, and, of course, he neglected to mention that it was on. Beverly seemed more amused than anything else. I suggested we play another game, and after a time they begrudgingly agreed. Anna did not seem happy to put her clothes back on. I almost told my parents about what had happened, but I was afraid of looking like a silly child. Although, there was a part of me that feared something was really wrong with the Thompsons. I can't explain it, but I just couldn't bring myself to say anything. What exactly could I tell them? "Mom, dad I simply must inform you of some odd goings on at the Thompsons and, oh, by the way, I kinda think it has something to do with their freaky Uncle Mike." That thought would not leave me alone. I knew there was an, as of yet, unformed connection between my friends and their strange uncle, at least in my head, but I didn't know exactly how to go about putting it together. Soon enough, it became a moot point.

On an exceptionally cloudless, sun-drenched day the aforementioned uncle Mike was found hanged to death in the tobacco barn. A friend of the "boys" named Red, who helped around the farm each year during harvest, found him swinging back and forth. It was a day

of winds, as I remember, as I recall, Clyde and I were riding our bikes when I heard Red scream at Tim to get into the house. He then proceeded to yell at us to do likewise, but not before we both caught a glimpse of the dead man's shoes swinging back and forth. I don't know why Red didn't rush in and cut him down as soon as he spotted him, but I suppose the unfortunate Uncle Mike may have already been a goner. As he sat silently within the bedlam of the house, it amazed me how preternaturally calm Tim appeared to be. He noticed me observing him and turned away to peer out the window at nothing in particular. I had the most disturbing feeling that he somehow had something to do with what was going on. I could have sworn for one single moment when Clyde's frantic grandmother was dialing the ambulance and Anna and Clyde stared numbly at her shuddering back that Tim, harmless Uncle Tim, looked as lucid and cognizant as anytime I had ever seen him look before. And, when poor Red rushed through the door desperate to know if the authorities had been contacted, he momentarily diverted my attention from the aberrant behavior that seemed so out of place with regards to Tim. And, when I again focused my attention back to Tim the customary, good natured slackness had returned to his face as silently as it had departed.

I filed this thought away along with my mounting suspicions that Uncle Mike's avuncular charms were tainted with a baleful quality. I could never be sure the idea wasn't merely the residual pollution born of too much porno circulating throughout the byways of my mind. After all, I did have an overly developed imagination, and some would even say a forked tongue of my own. But, it was Grandma Thompson's sudden fit of banshee wailing that truly suspended my line of reasoning. She surprised us all by letting loose a blood-curdling dose of deafening grief. For such a delicate looking old lady she sure had some powerful lungs. I honestly empathized with her. Too much death had invaded her life.

No one really seemed to know exactly why he did it. Actually, the Thompsons chose not to talk about it. It was hard to fault them that. The locals spoke of his fondness for the spirits, which eventually became a sort of rallying point for those who did attempt a dimestore rationalization for what had transpired. I had my own theories but decided, in a fit of anomalous maturity, to keep them to myself.

Clyde and Anna seemed amazingly well adjusted in relatively no time at all. Tim moved into his brother's old digs and seemed at

peace with his new station in life. Apparently, only old Mother Thompson was the worse for wear. She battled a nervous breakdown with the aid of the Holy Ghost and an occasional touch of her home-made cough medicine. Red was shaken up for weeks, but promptly enough, he was tagging along with Tim, completing chores, drinking and acting as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. And, as for me, the dreams were the worst. I never admitted to anyone how bad they became, but suffice it to say, they were humdingers.

They always began with me lost in the cavernous patches of darkness that engulfed the tobacco barn--the scale of which was surrealistically exaggerated into some kind of tobacco hanging cathedral. I walked alone wishing desperately for company when suddenly a mad caterwauling would shake me to my very core. It was old lady Thompson screaming insanely to the top of her ample lungs. I tried to push my way through the tobacco, but it was like dashing through a hanging garden of cadavers. I was repelled by the way they felt against my hands as I attempted to push them aside. That's when I spied the prostrate form of Uncle Mike, ostensibly bowing before a hideous looking giant snake. The serpent was feeding on the severed remains of a blood-soaked Anna. The hand that fell on my shoulder always made me feel as if life itself had abandoned me to the whims of demonic lunatics. Powerless to stop myself, I turned abruptly to gaze directly into the cold, diamond shaped eyes that glowered fiendishly from the twisted face of Uncle Tim. His terrible smile ripped the heart from my chest and mercifully signified the end of my nightmare.

I scarcely failed to suffer one if, by lack of forethought or good judgement, I rode my bicycle past the eastern front of that damnable barn anywhere close to sundown. The doors were never closed. And, as the gathering gold and lavender glow that enveloped the waning sun slipped between the distant clouds and the western side of the structure, streams of twilight invariably pierced the inner gloom and oppressively drew my eyes within. A gust of blustering wind magnified the effect into something I eventually learned to avoid. The tobacco would sway in its breath, ever so gently and open its seams in the ethereal quality of the air. I nearly always saw the pale, angry face of a man glaring back at me. Clyde always saw it too, and anytime we wanted to be scared out of our wits, we knew exactly where to go and when to be there. I have to admit, it was certainly a thrill pedaling past our private apparition, but, in all honesty,

we never stared directly into the half-winter of our fear. It was always the peripheral suggestion, I suppose, that filled us with such exciting dread. Six years later, just days before Clyde perished in a flaming pyre of a car crash, he admitted to me that he too fell victim to some pretty awful dreams following his uncle's suicide. We were drunk on cheap wine and nerve pills, and he was going on and on about the shoes we both witnessed arcing back and forth. I found it curious that they were both distinct and separate, in our perceptions, from the dead man they were attached to. In his nightmares, Uncle Mike crawled around on his belly because his feet were missing. He dragged himself along the ground yelling profanities and crying his eyes out. Behind him marched a proverbial army of jack-o-lanterns with stubby little arms and legs. According to Clyde, they were holding the tops of their heads in one of their tiny hands while pleading wordlessly for a candle to illuminate the black pitch behind their hollowed-out faces. In his dreams, the routine changed, but the snake always appeared before it was over. It was the snake that stole his uncle's feet and the candle flame from the pumpkins. Just before Clyde passed out, he looked me square in the face with the sincerity of an inebriated teenager and wistfully said, "My grandma never really liked you very much; Uncle Mike thought you were kind of a smart ass; Anna thinks you're kind of cute, and the pumpkin snake said you taste just like chicken." He chuckled for a few minutes, got out of the car to relieve himself and walked home. That was the last time I saw him alive and, come to think of it, the first time I had ever heard the words "pumpkin" and "snake" used in the same sentence—much less to describe a beast that, as far as I knew, existed only in the minds of two really messed-up, drunken reprobates.

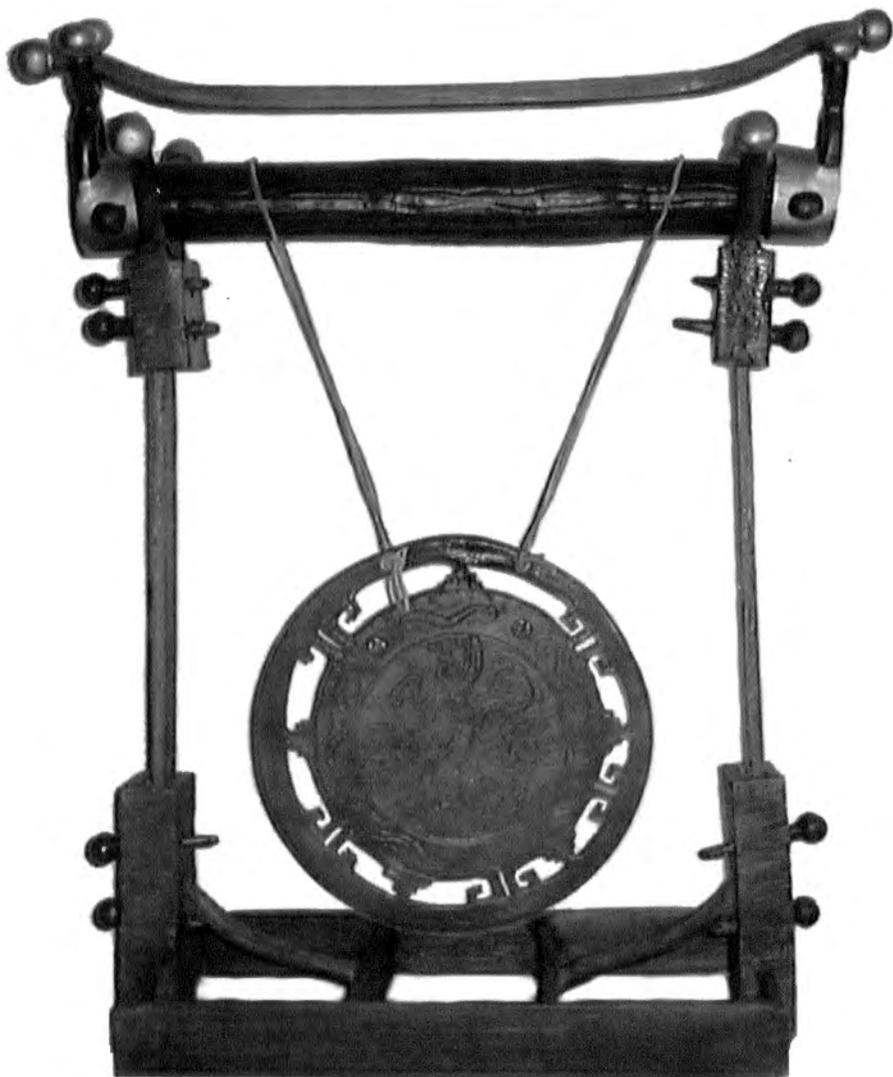
Coincidentally, Clyde also died in the month of October--just another disembodied spirit roaming through the tattered memories of the living. I suppose that's why I'm so skittish when this time of year rolls around. You can run away from the falling leaves and burnt ocher shades of home, but you can never escape the serpents in your own heart. Especially the ones that think you taste like chicken.

J O H N G L A R D O N

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. 1 [2010], Art. 1

"GONG"-CERAMIC-18"X12"X6"

West Union, OH



Artist's statement:

John Glardon

"The Gong," whose original title was "Mesocom," took shape in a process of fits and starts, destruction and metamorphosis, and resignation and final acceptance of the fact that the finished product was a reconciliation between the idea and what was finally produced.

"The Gong" was an experiment that involved an attempt to make clay appear, in finished form, as wood. I tried several different methods during the course of its construction, which included scoring fairly deep grooves. This technique proved satisfactory for the round "log" from which the Gong's disc hangs. The disc of the Gong itself has a stylized hand-carved Aztecian-style face painted in gold. On the reverse face of the disc are four representations of rattlesnake heads that range from realistic to the highly stylized, squarish forms seen in Mesoamerican art.

I assumed that "The Gong" would be glazed and fired much like any other ceramic piece; but no glaze could be found that would produce a woodlike effect. Finally, two coats of wood stain, handrubbing, and a final coat of clear acrylic sealer made clay look like wood.

As so often happens, "The Gong" took shape along the lines of an idea which was not in its final form until that form materialized out of its construction. In that respect, "The Gong" took on a life of its own and emerged from clay to a solid idea of shape, line, and form. This, I feel, is the true impetus of creativity: the excitement and wonder of what emerges out from under the artist's hands and the amazement the artist feels from creating the unexpected final product.

T O M B E R T R A N D

Silhouettes, Vol. 198, Issue 1 [2013], Art.

C A W L I K E C R O W S

Portsmouth, OH

Caw like crows

let's sit around
and caw like crows for a while:

caw. caw.

cloistered in atheist gray, barren trees
(for wiccan september solstices don't believe in leaves)
amidst crusted cold october skies.

spatual up a spatial piece of
deep autumn pie
that no organic citizen or carcinogen
could ever resist consecrating.
for the avalon mist
quarks in finer ether
through witch
the Lady of the Lake
would wary over anything less
than what a benumbed fall forest,
shedding a summer lisp,
would weave in full loom.

january and most of its brothers are a year older
as the hair farm forages another winter coat.
time to nest in, burn sage,
and wager silence.

V O N P A R A Z

et al.: Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)

"UNTITLED"-MIXED MEDIA-9"x18"

Portsmouth, OH



L O R I M I T C H E L L
"CAPITOL"-PENCIL ON PAPER-18"x21"
Portsmouth, OH

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. [2019], Art. 1



J O E N A P O R A
IT'S NO WAY TO TALK
Ashland, KY

It's No Way to Talk

You have an overdue library
book hanging loosely
to you tongue. At night

there is a double
edge razor blade, the kind
the kind they don't make any
more,
do they? Do they?
And so it's nicked
and so it's rusted.

Answer me. And watch
what you bite into. Then

then there were those times
when you were a sick child
eating only vegetables
out of your alphabet soup.

Answer me. And then once
you asked me what my father did
during the war. And my mind
spun
backwards from his defense-
related
job to his father's leaving Poland
to escape conscription to his
father's
fathers hiding in the forest at the
outer edge of the farm.

The President sticks pins
into my eardrums.
He draws the line
with the blood of boys
and the lies of old men.

Calling for war
he pumps up.

J J O S M A N

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. 1 [2018], Art. 1

“SPACE MAKER”-PAINTING-30”x40”

West Union, OH



et al.: Silhouette (Fall/Winter 1998-1999)

MARTIN KIMBLER

"GOAT" - PAINTING - 30" x 24"

Wheelersburg, OH



C R O W N
Peebles, OH

Crown

Stare into those eyes of yours.
 dark and blue
 the thorns pierce my irises, my flesh.
 Silent, you say with mouth not moving—
 I Do Not Fear.
 He holds my body here.

Christ?
 with your golden white crown of circling light
 full as a moon in starless ebony?
 Body, encased by feathery strokes,
 billowing clouds of thick glossed color?
 Form, a weightless hovering mass so full in shape;
 pale peach
 limbs swelling in an empty space.

Thoughts of The Beginning.
 Innocence,
 the liquid-filled abyss of the great womb,

a coming from the red. (Ed. Winter 1998-1999)

Vibrant birth.

Floating and falling
from a reservoir of human existence.

Deep.

to the calm chill of black waters
Once turbulent.

Float, my child,

I will follow.

Cast your smile anew,
To the faces of all.
On the faces of all.
On the face my self.

That wave will not swallow,
Only sway and comfort thee.

Whisper to all who will know you.

Do Not Fear.

Do Not Struggle.

Resist not with a fight,
for you will be thrown from the sea of birth
into that pool of flowing color and change.

Fall With Grace.

Take with you
The Soul-quenching,
Eye-piercing,
Crown of dove-white light.

MONKEY-WOMAN IN A BATHROOM
Wheelersburg, OH**M**onkey-woman in a Bathroom

Oh Oh Oh It's okay It's okay
It's okay to shut the door and cry
out. In the public you'll scare some.
See the fearful eye peek through?
They're afraid you see.
After all it's not often your kind
loosens the burning close-hole
and with a gasp, spills the howl.
They stretch and press to catch a glimpse
but a pearl of spit, a bit of hair
and wadded tissue are all you leave,
an offering toward peace. I learned
sometimes we must surrender to
these deep red urges, these shushed
truths. And had you stayed I would have
told you of the man in Kyoto
who stops in the rush of midday traffic
and head back, fist clenched screams
and no one notices. You see
It's okay It's okay
Really, it's okay.

MENTAL



Humankind cannot bear very much reality.

T.S. Eliot

SHANNAN CARVER
"MENTAL"-COMPUTER ART-8"X10"
Portsmouth, OH

P I N K
Peebles, OH

PINK

Pink. She grabbed the box and ran her green-painted nails over the printed instructions. Pink, pink, pink. There it was. She looked from the box to the little white stick to the box. Pink. She set the box down and leaned her head against the mirror, staring down into the sink, tracing the rust stains slowly with one finger. Pink, pink, pink. She closed her eyes. “Damn.”

She leaned there for a few moments, steaming up the glass with her breath, staring at her own blue irises, pink, pink, pink echoing in her mind. She shoved away from the sink, knocking the box and the little white stick into the trash. She threw half-full shampoo and bubble bath bottles in the can, covering those with a handful of tissues.

Her reflection froze her, dark hair wild and straggling in her eyes, and she grabbed a green comb, tugging it through her hair, yanking at a knot by her ear. She dug through a jumbled red bag, hauling out a black rubber band, tossing her hair over her shoulder, raking it into a ponytail. She stared into the mirror, nodded, and left the bathroom.

She grabbed a pair of sneakers off a chair and tugged them on, tucking her keys into her pocket before locking the door behind her. The sun blinded her for a minute, and she shaded her eyes with one hand, blinking rapidly. Becky and Greg played jump rope and soldiers next door, and she quickly looked away, taking a deep breath before jogging down Elm. Her sneakers pounded out the rhythm — pink, pink, pink — and she jogged faster, soon running, charging into the turn onto Poplar. The high school loomed up on her left, the track empty and open. She pounded out onto the red clay, not thinking, just running, panting hard with one two five six laps around.

She stopped. She tossed her head back and breathed hard, slow, eyes closed, snorting in air, hands clenched at her sides. After five, ten, maybe fifteen minutes, she opened her eyes to purple, red, and pink clouds. Sunset. Pink, pink, pink. She sighed and headed home, jogging slowly.

Her hands shook as she unlocked the door, hurrying to catch the ringing phone, dropping her keys, banging her knee on the table. Her voice shook too. “Hello?”

"We still on for tonight? Jake. Tonight. The fireworks. Pink, pink, pink.

"Oh. Yeah, Jake, we're still on. Pick me up at nine." She clamped the phone between her ear and shoulder, bending down to yank off her shoes, hopping on one foot, fighting a knot in the laces.

"Hannah?"

He knew something was up. She covered the mouthpiece and breathed deeply before answering.

"Nothing, Jake. I had to run to get the phone. I was outside." She heard his nodding, his earring clicking against the phone, loud in her ear.

"Kay. I'll be by at nine. Don't forget the blanket." His voice softened to a whisper. "Maybe we can recreate the camping trip."

She laughed around the lump in her throat, forcing cheer into her voice, saying, "Gotta go, Jake. See you tonight."

He said goodbye and she hung up, dropping into the recliner, curling her legs under her, staring at her thighs, tracing the diagonal lines of her jeans.

"I have to tell him." Her words sounded flat, no feeling, no emotion, just fact. She said it again, testing the sound. "I have to tell him." Pink, pink, pink. She clenched her fingers over her stomach, then jumped out of the chair and went to shower.

She turned the water up; hot, almost scalding, letting it beat down on her. Both hands on the white-tiled wall, she leaned into the stinging, feeling her skin heat, watching the water bead and drip off her pinned arms. Pink, pink, pink. She stood up, grabbing the soap, rubbing it between her hands, rubbing the suds over her body. Her breasts felt sore, swollen. She ran her fingers down her stomach, low on her abdomen, feeling for any swelling there. A little? Maybe. She rinses off the soap, reaching for shampoo, realizing it was in the trash, not willing to go in after it. She used the soap again, ducking her head into the water, rubbing quickly to rinse. Feeling clean, she shut off the water, dripping for a few seconds, shaking her feet free of the last drops. She grabbed a green towel, stepping onto the rug, chafing her skin with brisk rubbing.

She wrapped the towel around her hair, pulling on her robe, walking down the hall to her room, checking the clock by her bed. 8:30. Tossing her robe into a chair, she pulled clothes from her closet, putting them back almost immediately. Pink, pink, pink. Half her shirts were pink. At the left of the closet she found a black and white flannel, jerking it on, knocking the hanger and three pink shirts to the floor. She pulled a green lace bra, white socks, and a pair of black jeans from her dresser, getting dressed, sitting at the foot of her bed to pull on black boots, swearing quietly when she had to lie down to get her jeans zipped. She buttoned up the shirt on the way back to the bathroom, checking the time again. 8:45. Pink, pink, pink. "Even the damn clock is pink," she said, slamming the door.



She stared into the mirror for a long minute before grabbing the red makeup bag. Gray eye shadow, black mascara, pink lip gloss. Pink, pink, pink. She dropped the tube, hearing it clatter into the sink, reaching for red instead. She bent over, tugging the towel from her head, squeezing the water out of her hair, snapping her comb through the tangles. She pulled it back into a low ponytail, letting the water drip between her shoulder blades, not caring enough to dry it.

9:00. Jake pulled up in the truck, and she met him at the door, two old quilts over her arm, faded squares of red, green, and pink. Pink, pink, pink. Jake tilted her face up and kissed her before taking the blankets. "Ready, babe?"

She nodded and climbed into her seat, bumping her head on the fuzzy dice hanging from the mirror. Pink, pink, pink. She yanked the dice down, stuffing them under the seat, answering Jake's confused look with, "They were in my way."

He nodded and started the engine, turning left onto Grove, right onto Cypress, straight for three blocks and right onto Sycamore. The park looked full already, but after a few minutes of searching, he pulled into a spot between an Escort and a Camaro. "Great night for fireworks, babe," he said, staring up into the sky, grabbing the blankets from the seat. "Clouds make a perfect background for the lights."

She forced herself to smile, following him to a spot by the pond, waving to neighbors, laying out the quilts, leaning against him, waiting. Jake ran his fingers through her ponytail, laughing when he realized his hand was wet. He kissed her forehead and pulled her close. "In a hurry, were we, Hannah?" He whispered, lips touching her ear. "I couldn't wait either." He drew her hand up his thigh, brushing her fingers against his zipper, laughing when she jumped and pulled away.

She felt heat rising in her cheeks, blushing, knowing it, glad he couldn't see in the darkness. Pink, pink, pink. She slowly leaned back against him, resting her head on his shoulder, staring into the sky, waiting. Flower bursts of red, white, and blue flared overhead, and she oohed and aahed with the crowd in the park. For half an hour, she lost herself in the echoing explosions.

By ten, they were on their way back, Jake maneuvering carefully down the dark streets. He kept one hand on the wheel, one on her leg, moving his fingers over her inner thigh. When they pulled into her driveway, he shut off the engine and sat for a moment, taking her hand in his. He lifted it to his mouth, kissing her palm. She pulled her hand away and he turned to her. "What?"

Tell him. Tell him. Pink, pink, pink. She shook her head. "I don't know, Jake. I just ...don't feel well. I think I'm going straight to bed."

He looked concerned, so she forced another smile. "I'll be all right. I just need sleep."

She opened her door and jumped out before he could say anything, grab-

bing the blankets, walking to his side, falling into the window for a kiss. “Talk to you later.” She turned and headed for the door, waving, digging for her keys. He fired up the truck and pulled out of the drive, screeching around the corner. She shut the door and leaned against it, dropping blankets on the floor and keys on the table, picking up the business card she’d left there. Maple Grove clinic. “I’ll call in the morning.” Turning out the lights, she went to bed.

That morning, she had to re-dial three times, her fingers slipping, shaking, hitting other numbers before she managed to reach the clinic. She answered a few short questions — name, insurance carrier, reason for appointment. The nurse sounded bored, hearing these same answers thirty times a day, saying “uh-huh” over and over until the last answer.

“Oh honey, you’ll have to come in for a preliminary appointment. You have to be counseled before you make that decision.”

She nodded into the phone, gripping it hard enough to hurt her fingers, making an appointment for the next afternoon, hanging up quietly. Work that day went slowly. She kept dropping papers, forgetting what she’d been saying, misfiling papers. Her boss asked her several times if she was all right, finally sending her home, telling her to take the next day off as well, to rest. She cried on the drive home, wrapping her fingers around the wheel, hanging onto it, anchoring herself in reality. At home she went to bed, tossing all night, unable to sleep, staring at the walls, the ruffle on her pillow. Pink, pink, pink. She threw the pillow across the room, hearing it thud against the wall, collapsing back, finally sleeping.

She prowled around the house the next morning, picking up books, putting them down unread, dialing Jake’s number, dropping the phone before it could ring. She tried to eat, but her stomach clenched up at the thought. She paced from room to room, trailing her nails along the furniture, tapping her fingers on the wall. The clock seemed to run slow, taking hours to move from one pink number to the next. Pink, pink, pink. The phone rang in the silence and she jumped, clamping her hand over her mouth to keep from shrieking. She answered it, forcing her voice to be steady. “Hello?”

“Hey babe. Feeling better?” Jake. Tell him. Pink, pink, pink. She couldn’t. For the first time, she lied to Jake.

“No, still feeling off somewhat. Got an appointment in an hour at the clinic.”

Jake made sympathetic noises, then asked, “You want me to drive you there?”

She thought quickly, scanning the carpet, twisting the cord around her fingers, not realizing how long she was silent until Jake spoke again.

“Babe?”

“Yeah,” she said. “I’m here. That would be nice, Jake.” She couldn’t

refuse without explaining. She knew she couldn't.

"Be there in half an hour." She heard the hesitation in his voice. "I love you, Hannah," he finally said.

Her eyes filled up suddenly, one tear dripping down her cheek, throat tightening up. "Thank you," she whispered. "You know I love you." They said goodbye and she hung up, sliding down the wall into a crouch, resting her head on her knees, crying Why this? Why now? Pink, pink, pink. Her thigh started to cramp after a few minutes, and she got up, washing her face, combing her hair, waiting on Jake.

The drive was short and quiet. She fended off any questions by laying her head on the window, pretending nausea. Jake escorted her into the waiting room, claiming a chair while she checked in, flipping the pages of a March 1975 Time magazine. Only thirty minutes after her appointment time, the nurse called her name. Jake squeezed her hand, and she followed the nurse down a pink-painted hallway. Pink, pink, pink.

Weigh-in, records check, paperwork, paperwork. Another thirty-minute wait in a cold examining room, staring at the chart on the wall, playing with the drawers in the table. The doctor came in smiling, pink smock rustling. Pink, pink, pink.

Examination, questioning, discussion. Pamphlets, brochures, information, and more information. She listened quietly, answering questions, asking a few of her own. An hour later, the doctor was satisfied and she made another appointment for Friday.

She filled out more paperwork at the desk, avoiding the nurses' eyes, signing on the line. The doctor handed her a reminder card and she stuffed it in her pocket. Jake jumped up when she came out, holding the door for her, helping her into the truck. He babbled something about this cute baby he'd just seen, laughing against the door, pressing her head to the cool glass. Pink, pink, pink.

His class ring flashed as he turned the wheel, angling down Pine, turning past the courthouse. "I dunno," he said, and she blinked, realizing he hadn't stopped talking once. "Maybe someday. I kinda look forward to having kids." She could feel him looking at her, his shirt rustling as he moved. "Don't you?"

She didn't move, keeping her head against the glass, feeling the reminder card in her pocket, hard edges poking her thigh. Friday. One week to think it over. One week to be sure. Pink, pink, pink.

"Yeah," she answered, then she reached to the radio and turned it up as Aerosmith came on. Pink, pink, pink. She closed her eyes and leaned back, resting her hand on her stomach. "Someday."



B R I A N R I C H A R D S

Silhouette, Vol. 1998, Iss. 1 [2019], Art. 1

W I N G E D Z O E

Portsmouth, OH

Winged Zoe

All you'll be known by on the master, Pythagoras debased. Never less than managed, produced and directed by, fiftieth take measured against the fifth. Rule: replication ain't art.

Neither is art, but that's not a rule. Stop making money. Just. Stop the hyperorganization of time. All options are trivial. Entertainment. We are obliged to plenty.

Truth is bitter, lies sweet; sugar burns: strawberries rolled in asafetida. Licked smack in the middle. An alternative, since suffixed by.

Tits between their hind legs. Ours are mostly moles anymore. Portable. Some of us are having them cut off before they kill, while others get theirs stuffed to make them stick out more.

You could be carried, but not far enough. It's not the fangs, it's the muscles in the jaw that drive them clear through. They'd get you, any way. Or lie down together. It's safer in the middle.

StatWorld; abandoning Arabic for switches, the better to stuff you with. More is neater, fewer strays. Everybody's regular, nobody left to pump for the Queen.

It don't mean a thing if it don't mean a thing. If it do, that don't mean it means it. And if it do mean it, that don't mean it swings; but it could.

Measure to save the unrecorded. The mistask lies in thinking that act gives us rights beyond freedom from bondage to the proprietary. Make greed obvious. The right device is made of the measured.



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