

Sparks 20



Best of 1997 Issue

Sparks

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Noteworthy

Welcome to the first annual “Best of Sparks” issue. The work enclosed represents the very best writing we’ve published during the year 1997. We hope you enjoy it as much as we’ve enjoyed sharing these writers with you.

Frank B. Ford

Amerika by M.

Times melt together. There were lights but I puzzled as to whether they were of the Christmas variety. Santa appeared, a reassuring spectacle, but then a huge bunny catapulted through scattering candy eggs, a Pilgrim fired a musket and a turkey cartwheeled, shrieking. Goofy, Minnie, and Mickey entered in all the descending smoke, singing Auld Lang Syne. At that point I just wanted a nap, but Santa blocked the exit and he and the Easter bunny grabbed me, with, shortly, Mickey and Minnie getting my pants down. Then Goofy sneered "You're gonna get the holiday spirit one way or the other!"

Others have loved Goofy but I did not. And I do believe the others became ashamed, hysterically laughing and punching each other to cover it.

Samuel Saks

Visiting Hours Are Over

The prayers in school end like the uncoiling of the phylacteries, all the students slowly heading for the door as the last prayer is being uttered by the Rabbi, and like the uncoiling it leaves a jumbled mess on the floor. After the prayer is finished there is a rush of bodies that flows continuously into the once barren halls that are like the veins of the school. The rooms that were once dark and empty are now filled with the sounds of the students. Breakfast is eaten with an expediency that is always present in the school. Outside the snow is falling rapidly, each flake slowly melting against the windows of the school. I too melted slowly into school, never formally introduced to its members. I knew things from my experience only, I could never understand new concepts until I experienced them for myself. I lived in this sealed off world that was never penetrated by the falling snow of abstract ideas. A loud piercing voice interrupted the silence of the classroom. It was a reasonable representation of the principal's voice and it informed the school that there would be an early dismissal and a free day due to the harsh weather conditions. A strange felling of excitement gripped the students. And when the last bell rang I too followed the rush of the students. In this excited, confused state I left my phylacteries in the school synagogue.

I woke up early the next morning and prepared for the morning prayers. To me the morning prayers were like a cold shower, waking me up and forcing me to stay alert. But rather than reeling back at the low temperature of the water the prayers seemed to ease consciousness upon me. The phylacteries, when tied tightly enough, further enhanced the prayer's effect. Only after ten minutes of searching did I realize my oversight the day before. I imagined the anger of my father who never misplaced his phylacteries, because they were so important to him. He always kept them on top of the tall wooden cabinet in our living room

along with his prayer book. My father was the only one in the family able to reach them. I remember how tightly he used to wrap them and how he carefully covered the small, black boxes with the leather straps. Then he would put them in various protecting sheathes and finally a blue velvet bag. Every morning before noon he would repeat this ritual. It seemed to me that it became an act that was needed for his survival. Now, I had to use his phylacteries for the morning prayers and face the wrath of my father.

Using my father's forbidden chair, I reached up for the velvet bag. As I stood on the chair I looked at the other items that were scattered around it. There were some used Havdalah candles, invalid Mezuzahs and broken Kiddish cups. Amongst them lay my father's old prayer book that he received for his Bar Mitzvah. It was torn and turning brown, its binding seemed to have given up and let the pages come loose. This book that represented the essence of my father's manhood was left on this sad height decaying and was never touched by anyone but my father. Each Hebrew letter was like a tombstone, and they formed a graveyard that my father never visited. He let the dying ancient words slowly turn brown and go forgotten. The spider webs that extended from the bag to the wall were like giant arteries circulating the blood of the decaying prayer book. Amongst all this was a thick coating of dust. It seemed as though every word or thought or scream collected on the top of this wooden cabinet. And so I began to remove the velvet bag from its natural place, listening to make certain that my father was still sleeping.

The wooden cabinet's top was a bed to the despair my dad stacked upon it. Inside my mother kept her trinkets that she had collected throughout her life. There were small porcelain dolls shaped like a Rabbi and his wife. And there was a small wooden scroll that stood before the

family. My mother once told me how it reminded her of her grandparents (whom I never met) and the small synagogue they used to run. There, between the crystal plates and old tea cups, my great-grandparents lived again. They watched my family through the large, sliding glass doors of the cabinet. From the outside the cabinet looked like the ark. My father's phylacteries were like the glowing eternal light above it. I grabbed the dark blue bag and ripped it from its place. As I started down his favorite chair the bag seemed to jump alive and fell out of my hand. I caught one last glimpse at the outlines of the boxes contained within the bag as it plummeted to the ground.

The loud crack that came from inside the velvet bag did not wake my father up. I knew however that he would arise within three hours and that he would be mad. I had broken the black boxes that he inherited from his grandfather. He removed them from their resting place everyday and carried them to work with him next to his lunch bag. When he got home and put them away my father would no longer care how I did in school or what my mother had to do the next day. Shortly after he would fall asleep and not awaken until he put on his phylacteries the next morning. I grabbed the bag and picked them up once more, then I ran out of my house. I knew a scribe who lived nearby and I set out in that direction. As I walked I thought about my sleeping father and how I held his heart in my hands. He was lying helpless, ignorant of the danger that he was being put through. The scribe was the only one who could fix his phylacteries.

The scribe's house was located next to the synagogue. He lived in a secluded old house that contained a Mikva. He would frequently bathe in this ritual water to purify himself for the work he would do. There was a giant well that contained the frigid sacred water. The man seemed to be as cold as the water he constantly bathed in. His face was always a pale white that looked like a surgeon's mask. I approached the door and rang the doorbell. I could almost feel the tremors that shook the house from the inside. These tremors awoke the scrivener. After greeting me we went

down to his basement. I handed him the velvet bag and followed him into a small room with a large table. There were many writing tools strewn about along with some scissors and small razors that were used to cut the parchment. There were many other strange looking tools that hung on the wall, even his filing cabinet looked like some breathing machine that had a small monitor on top of it. I watched as he unzipped the bag and slowly took out the boxes. As he started unraveling the tight leather straps, I could almost hear my father screaming in pain. He took me out of the small operating room and reported his diagnosis.

"The parchment in your father's phylacteries appears invalid, also some pieces have been loosened and got mixed up. I need to reorder everything, please be patient."

He showed me to a seat outside the room. I saw many other religious articles spread about. They all seemed to be dying. The other phylacteries looked frayed as if their owner had worn them all day. My father only wore them for his morning prayers yet always kept them close to him during the day. I remembered how he use to put them on. First he would start unwinding the leather straps. Then after muttering a short prayer would slide the box up his arm tightening it when it reached his forearm. Only a small pointed knot was exposed. It was aimed directly at his heart. All his prayers were concentrated on the point of that knot. Now that knot was slowly being untied while he slept. I doubted if the scribe could retie it correctly.

After what seemed like many hours the scribe came out of the room. In his hand was a brand new bag. He assured me that he was successful and that my father's original phylacteries resided within the new covering. I thanked him and started up the stairs. I looked back for the last time at the scribe who had begun repairing another set of phylacteries. I carried the new bag carefully home and placed them on top of the wooden cabinet where they belonged. Once more I checked to see if my father was still sleeping. I walked as quietly as possible into my parents' bedroom and looked at my father. His face was pale and he seemed bloated.

A pair of fringes were lying next to him. They branched out into many directions from his neck and wrist, finally meeting in a knot at one of its four corners. It seemed as though they were like small tubes keeping him alive. Even the room looked different. Its walls were barren and even the pile of shirts next to his bed was missing. In the dark the room had changed. There was now a small machine where his dresser once stood and medical charts where his newspaper was kept. There were no wedding pictures on the wall, only small scattered signs that gave instructions to the nurses. In place of my dad's black pants and boots were a hospital gown and slippers. And in place of his small television was a monitor whose wavy lines were the erratic heartbeat of my father.

At noon I could hear my father finally awake. My sister and mother had to help him get to the living room. As was his habit he immediately grabbed the velvet bag and prayer book located above the cabinet. He opened the book and started reciting the morning prayers. His eyes were bloodshot and had black and blue bags underneath them. His hair was in a big frizzled mess and even his chair seemed older. He started to unzip the bag and paid no attention to the fact that it was new. When he held the first black box in his hand a look of horror thrust over him. The leather straps were loose, no longer protecting the sacred knot. He pointed to it and I saw a gash upon it that extended to the box. With the same look of horror on his he slowly unbuttoned his shirt and revealed a long, similar red gash in the middle of his chest extending to his abdomen. Then he silently wrapped the straps tighter than ever, fully covering the knot, put the bag back on top of the cabinet and never wore them again.

Richard Garni

DEATH AND CERTAIN NEUTERING

I am looking not at a sweater today and amy bought this sweater for 10 cents for me at a yard sale. as I sit in the yard, wearing the sweater, I also decided not to look at a dog which could be neutered soon, amy tells me, and perhaps will be. instead, I am looking at a lovely girl made of stone kneeling in a bed of weeds near a dog eating canned dog food before he gets neutered. it will cost about \$40 tops to neuter him. he is very playful today; very frisky. my heart is filled with sorrow: not for the girl of stone, and perhaps only in part for the dog who is eating with gusto. will afternoons always be as beautiful as this? I ask myself. it's almost sunset. my gaze turns from the cold stone of girl to the playful dog. he scoots his dish towards the grass, and then flips the bowl over, licking his chops, jumping about hither and thither as if to say: "in all likelihood: no."

walking on the wall

I took my fingers out and moved them in a hundred different ways. At last I had my grandfather in my hands. Turning my attention to my thumbs, arduous work and concentration left me, after ten hours of vigorous exercise, with the notion of a boy made perfect. Shortly thereafter, and, with no uncertain assiduity, I made a duck quack, as though I was born to do such a thing, which, truthfully, I wasn't. The rest is simply a blurring collusion of time and space: a donkey that brayed, a rabbit who, uncomplaining, ate his unsubstantial meal, and then, near the end, Toby who, to my delight, wagged his tail.

That being done and all things being equal, I opened up the Bible to page three.

A BEIGE BOOK

how much time is like money! the old folks say. time really is like money, I agreed with them. I asked for some money and they all said: "I'm sorry, I don't have the time." When you are old, you don't. what do you have? what do I have? I have nothing. I wrote a list of everything I had in a little beige book about the size of a quarter. some of the old folks remarked: "that book couldn't be much bigger than two bits!" and I replied, "I have nothing." then I wrote down: "I have nothing." some of them then smiled and one of them said, "I could sure use two bits!" and I thought to myself, "I bet you could." they were certainly getting on in age.

finally, then, I "got" what they were talking about. to one of them (who said: "I could certainly use two bits") I gave my notebook. I bequeathed it. "here it is," I said to him (all snarly and snagglepuss-ish, as he was) "here's two bits!" he smiled and said, "thanks for nothing young fella!" and drank a quart of whiskey right in front of me, in despair and wonder, quoting from the scriptures. "no!" I said jejunely, "you mean: 'thanks for the time!'"

time is all I can give to you, I could hear in the distant firmament, and so I said, "ok, suits me." I felt as though I was experiencing a certain echo. some folks, even young folks, might call it "deja vu." the old people smiled because they realized that it was sort of a spiritual/religious "in" joke. I couldn't help but note that now I had nothing, now less one beige notebook. and that I didn't get it. and, to make matters worse, I was surrounded by old people and they weren't looking too neighborly.

"what I wouldn't give at a time like this" I muttered under my breath, "for a bus, or an off-white chiffon wedding dress with a plunging neck-

line."

or to be a bus! or a girl even!

I walked away: under a tunnel I went. and it made a slight echo sound. I went to my apartment. I was older, older. I closed the door to my apartment and it made a slight echo sound. I decided to get out. I got out and went oh, let's just say to the movies and it didn't make a sound. a lot of people died on the screen and they too didn't make a sound (as far as I could tell although)...before I watched the movie I made a telephone call and said,

"don't worry: I'll be o.k." ... at the end of the receiver I could hear a slightly hollow sound.

as the room grew dark I reflected on all of it as much as I could. I thought about today. I thought about tomorrow.

yesterday, I ate cream filled cookies and looked at a corgi dog and said to myself: what an existence! and it was...

Janet Kuypers

More Than We Should Have

when i think of bob i usually think about the drinking

actually, i never think of him as drinking

come to think of it

i just think of him as drunk

i can't even remember seeing the drinks in his hand

but his perception of the world is always altered

but someone reminded me tonight

of when he would work outside in the the cold Chicago winters

and he would come back with his moustache frozen

and there would be little icicles hanging

down toward his mouth

and then i thought of

when i waited with him once at the airport

because we were picking up someone

and we sat in the shrimp cocktail lounge

and he drank, and ate, and i waited

and as we left

we tried to pay the expressway toll with pennies

but some of the coins fell into the street

and we had to throw more change at the machine

we paid more than we should have

i'm sure we did

Richard Fein

COME THE CERTAIN DARK TIMES,

I'll need this rainy morning remembrance
of my taking him to school:
he jumping in and out of puddles
ignoring my halfhearted scolding,
a warm, gentle rain falling on all the muted street hues,
his yellow raincoat a bright beacon on this gray day,
his last furtive kiss out of sight from his classmates,
the long line of drizzled-on munchkins,
his last look at me, his final wave.
His final wave.
Iron doors slam shut.
Now pointless, even suspicious, to remain.
But come the certain dark times,
I'll draw on this memory.

NORMALITIES

Lightning bugs use a rhythm of flashes
connecting being to being across the tropic night;
cold lights flashing among palm leaves,
filling hot, humid evening with a luminous and silent dust.
On these normalities hinge their existence,
for male and female can find each other through
the flashing in their faceted eyes.
The harmony of blue flashes, and the tandem of sparkles--
a love song of cool lights.
But there are other normalities,
normalities among normalities,
for eons hungry wasps have mastered the visual melody,

counterfeit love songs of blue flashes,
to lure not to nuptials but to mandibles,
so the wasps also survive.
For eons a duet of normalities,
fulfilling a destiny, betraying a destiny,
a check and balance,
the hammer and anvil of creation.

Ro London

Fits Like A Glove

I flicked a dried stalk out of a pot of geraniums left behind with a florist's card dated in faded ink 1992 and 'love from mom and dad'; my knees objected loudly when I stood again. I took a long look at the faux Victorian settee upholstered in copycat Laura Ashley and thought about staying, but changed my mind. I'd always only come when called. Now it was just my choice, to come, and go when I wanted. I was sensitive to the power; insinuating. His weakness was not at all my pleasure despite that I had once thought it might. Be careful what you wish for and all that. The marble face to the file drawer where, inside, there was room left for his parents was identical to the dining room table on the 28th floor overlooking the East River. He'd never found chairs to cluster the heavy piece that he liked enough and so we ate out.

It's 1988 and it must be love. At 9:10 P.M. I heard faintly the whir of the 924s struggling engine and then the ping of the doorbell which doesn't always choose to work. After seeing him perhaps once or twice this year, and only accidentally and never alone, I'd marked Halloween with an appropriately ghoulish card sent on a circuitous route and addressed with purposeful ambiguity to the corporate offices of his heavy-metal band's 'organization'. His shower of phone calls and rejuvenated amour since had enchanted me, as he'd counted it would, but did not so much surprise me. I had had maybe a half an hour to prepare for this, what should I call it?, date after giving in to Ricky's demands from a pay phone at the mouth of the Midtown Tunnel. I'd raced from a cramped bedroom to a cramped bathroom and back arguing with myself about what should be the level of effort exerted in preparation for this interlude with my torturer. In spite of my own machinations I'd felt baited and trapped while sobbing over the miles which separated me from my new beau. With whom however fleetingly, I had been shown that love was

not the consummation of pasty pink liquid dispensed in a Styrofoam cup by my GYN--just in case--inevitably following the commencement of one of Ricky's world tours; was not being verbally cut apart or feelings of inadequacy; was not making an early exit from nightclubs, carried out like a sack of potatoes with my long hair dragging on the floor. But for the moment all I could believe in was my frailty; too weakened by circumstance to argue history and Destiny's insistence on Ricky's appointment to the vacant post. After a deep breath I moved to the door to expose his arrival.

Sliding into the leather folds of the German auto sealed my fate. While I waited for him to trip around the back of the car I became drugged by the heavy cloud of his cologne. I rested against the back of the seat and smiled weakly as he wiggled the gearshift and negotiated out of the drive. I remember his handing over his VISA to the bartender. The nightclub had been redesigned again, but the staff remembered us. We were hiding behind the browning fronds of a real palm but people found us anyway. I'd reached across the bar and armed him with a six-inch stack of paper napkins and rummaged in my bag for a throw-away pen. I remember Russell behind the bar enjoying his company more, goading him, making him point out all the ones he might consider fucking and under what circumstances. It was then that I mentioned with no ostensible intention who I'd been seeing. "Oh," Ricky said to me, "I wish you wouldn't have told me." Russell was busy at the other end of the bar pointing us out and then making a concerted effort to protect us. "You should hire him," I nodded into the murk. "You shouldn't have told me." Ricky echoed but then shrugged his shoulders as though his concentration were expendable. The bartender had slid again into a position of service. "How about some shots?" he urged simultaneously lighting a match for the cigarette I was not yet through looking for. I slowed my search and allowed the flame to touch his fingers; he lit another while offering Ricky a menu of choices. They settled on Jose Cuervo replete with salt and citrus which I readily declined to a cacophony of moans and groans.

Three were poured anyway. Quickly, back shot their heads. They'd clicked glasses the same way girls kissed one another hello, all pomp no circumstance. "Watch this." Could I have heard him say? Ricky's serpentine fingers traced along the back of my neck; I felt them in the tangle of my hair, the underside was always silky smooth. I shrugged my shoulders in answer to his caress. When you want your dog to take a pill, you should put it on his tongue and blow gently on his nose; his reflex will make him swallow. Ricky wrapped enough of my hair in his wide hand to pull my head back enough to make a good show of it. I remember reaching toward the bar to catch myself from falling. He poured the shot into the chute of my surprise. I was resigned to his man-handling and now I would have no other refreshment.

When I woke the air was stale. I remember that I'd been face down and when I twisted my head against the cotton/poly pillowcase I was too dehydrated to leave a snail's trail of drool. I craned my neck and saw his nest of purple-black hair beside me. I turned onto my back and was introduced like falling Dominos to the parts that were sore and bruised. My hair hurt. My skin was stiff. He was lifeless. I was too wounded to try to leave on my own. The sun prodded at me with a long tendril, just one, through the crack where the two panels of drapery met unevenly. Like a laser beam it illuminated a path to the door, slicing across the bed, across Ricky's legs. I kicked him when I noticed the time and jumped off the bed in agitation. My foot got caught in the only hospital corner left to the top sheet and I crashed on my side to the floor. "What's the matter?" Ricky mumbled. "It's one fucking thirty!" "Yeah? Did you have something to do?" "About five hours ago. Get up. I need you to drive me." I locked him out of the bathroom. In the shower I began to quake and as I peeled off the sodden wrapper on a feeble bar of Ivory I began to cry. I had to lean against the shower wall; it was either that or sit down. The Ivory bar rolled and rolled around in my hands never gaining enough lather to untangle my hair. I actually prayed that I wouldn't wind up on the bathroom floor in a swollen heap. "I thought you were late," Ricky

shouted at the door. "What?" "You've been in there twenty minutes." "Are we far from the club?" "You flatter me. I guess you can't remember?" "Not to is the point." "Well, then wonder." "Fuck you!" I shouted and twisted off the water. The towels were thin and square, not enough to wrap around. I opened the door. Ricky, not entirely dressed, was leaning on the doorjamb with his arms and legs crossed. "Do you have a toothbrush with you." I held out my hand. "I noticed a Store 24 across the street." "Fine." "Here." He handed me a new Reach. Florescent orange.

* * *

I stood flat-backed against the stone to see what was his eternal view. There's a skylight. Its architecture cast shadows. I knocked on the stone; I have to look up at him now. On tip toes I kissed all the letters in his name. I unbuttoned an Italian suit jacket and flashed him. Requiescat in pace.

Joy Reid

Balm

Eucalypts sway
 kelp-like.
Their fingertips trail,
 eddy clouds.
Small butter-yellow beetles
forage amid
 wheaty strands
soughing in the breeze.
Birds chirrup, trill and warble
 while beneath
I lie
in a knotted hammock,
 dozing,
absorb their benediction
 and slowly
 heal.

Murray River Basin

Wet lands drained lure extinction.
Salinity rises, ecosystems fall.
No need to wait for retribution
Gomorra has arrived on its own.

Carp-glutted, sediment choked torpidity,
no hope for the Murray cod,
dam, weir, reservoir constrained,
soup cannot spawn native life.

Nutrient encumbered waterways,
where has the fauna flown?
Be content with blue green replacement
for the warblers and waders have gone.

Night Walk I

I walk
wary of
tripping roots.

Spider eyes
assess my presence,
goblin lanterns
strung between the pines.
Bloated fungi
squat like toads.
They huff a
powdery poison if
disturbed.

No tiny rustlings
no surprised scamperings
disorder the gloom,
only the lost shout
hooting of a
hunting owl
drops
stones
of sound.

Leprosy

Loneliness,
an uncomfortable word.
It has a sour smell
as of unwashed intimacy.
It curls the lip,
corrugates the nose like
menstrual sops exposed.
How shameful,
how indiscrete,
for the inflicted rings a
bell
as surely as a leper.

Thomas S.E. Hogan

Victory at the Collective Farm: How we built it in four years although it was supposed to take five

The division is into simple and complex: color, taste, and pain tells me what the race is and although the reflection is distinguishable because the tone is darker the resemblance is still in the vivacity of cancer. The first appearance of uneasiness tricks my senses, forcing immediate pleasure and sometimes I have to use my fingers to scrape the film off my eyes. Mind employs many words to explain passions while Academia makes emotion an institution so it can institutionalize the emotional until impressions no longer strike with the liveliness of violence.

An essay:

Tom Hogan

February 25, 1997

Moral Philosophy

Prof. Reginster

The procedure for identifying what actions are morally permissible or morally prohibited in the case of perfect duties (contradictions in conception)

BOOM step out on to the cement stage and sit in for a jam session with Jesus and Kathie Lee. With live muslix raining up from the heavens, the house comes down tonight. Ladies and Gents if I may own your attention for a momentum, I would like to point out that the exits are not located. And now with the floating point co-processor intact, enjoin the charade!

I'll take the first sentence from the second paragraph of each page and rearrange based on the analog word / continent ratio = poetry.

A poem:

Visting Home

I fry all flipped up on the mother tub under the pile of utensils and uncertainties slide through and I think I understand again but am wrong. I'd like to be there too- legs hanging over the edge, feet planted why always firmly on the ground. Makes me cringe like a vodka smile. There were other rooms in this house where stacked up beds pushed over and shaman fathers stood up to remind me that I walked down these stairs every day, sat on this porch of my suburban head, fresh squeezed some lemonade - stared in the charade. Feels like trespassing.

Everyone loves a ratio. better-improve-popular-progress. popular is progress, things didn't used to be popular - that is post-mortem contort. But all of this is to avoid what is on my mind: the unifying disautonomating paradigm has go to be: 'talking around it'. Lesson of the ambit? This is not the time to take people seriously. Mind has beaten things into categories and relationships. What criteria to judge the criteria to judge? The criteria to judge. But to clarify nothing is to put something there. Like a motorway, a tree, or a blue moon theory, I learned everything from quirky mart parking larks. Now my love is shaped by endless debts.

Kevin Sampsell

TO IMPRESS HER

A few nights ago,
in the dead ice cold,
I layed in the driveway
and changed her headlights.
It was a Volkswagon-
I had to take the whole front grill off
and use three different kinds of screwdrivers.
All of this despite the fact
that the headlights were not faulty.
It was done only to impress my girlfriend of four months.
When she came out and asked me about my actions
I told her they were flickering.
"Headlights don't flicker," she said.
"These lights flicker," I said.

The next night I changed the oil.
"Why don't you wait 'til morning to do that?" she asks.
"In the morning, I put chains on tires," I say
in a primitive accent
while freezing to death in a sleeveless T-shirt
splashed w/ grease and car gunk.

On both of these nights
we did extraordinary things in bed...
I became convinced this was due to my
pre-meditated quasi-mechanical exhibitionism.

On the third night
I watched a Bowl game and ate potato chips.
She stood in the kitchen doorway and glared at me.
After the game
I sat at my desk and wrote poems on a
piece of paper spotlighted by a small lamp.
I wore glasses while doing this.
Her glare became a glow.
That night again we had outstanding sex
before I was left twisted on the floor,
clumps of hair easily torn from my head.

I was starting to figure things out with her.
Auto repairs, poetry, well-shaped arms
=Turn ons.
Football games, potato chips
=Turn offs.

Last night,
the weather was still frostbitten
and we stayed indoors.
There was nothing to talk about,
nothing on TV, and nothing new to read in the house.
She made dinner and we sat at the table.
"Close your eyes," I said,
and she did.
I wheeled into the room a large Karaoke sound system

and started singing "You Light Up My Life".
On the last lengthy note, she interrupted and said-
"The lights on the car, they weren't really broken were they?"
I lied, saying they were.
She looked out the window with a pained expression.
I picked up three knives off the table
and began juggling them
like a cold
begging
liar.

Maximillian Gill

Monsoon

Warm rain falls in steady sheets,
swelling gutters lining the sides
of the village's one paved avenue.
Restless animals scrape hooves and bray
from a stable with packed-mud roof.
The child hops in shallow concrete dips,
loose-fitted clothes, wet and stuck to his skin.
He hums and lets water splash his bare legs,
he jumps back and forth over the gutter,
flaps his brown arms as he lands.
Stopping for a moment, he watches the hillside
where trees bend in the moist haze of rain,
and a passing train's white steam
foams and trails in the grey sky.
He hears a door open, the tap of a cane,
and his grandmother's voice calls, "Ashwin."
The child steps around the corner
and flattens himself against the high wall.
"Where are you, Ashwin? I want to talk to you."
He giggles and covers his mouth,
water flows down in tiny streams,
onto his shoulders and down his sides.
"Your mother has finally written,
and she has sent you an airplane ticket."
The child's hair is damp and matted,
dark black strips on his forehead.
Water-buffalo moan from the stable,
as he watches the drifting water
overflow the gutter and spread in the street.

Contributors

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has been published in many E-zines and print magazines, including Sulphur River Literary Review, Small Pond Kansas Quarterly, Blue Unicorn, Soundings East, the Macguffin, Z Miscellaneous, Orphic Lute Oregon East Mississippi review, Birmingham Poetry Review, Touchstone, Parnassus Literary Review, and others.

Frank B. Ford

is author of Connecting Light published by Orange Street Press. A collection of his fiction will be published in the near future. He currently resides in Philadelphia PA.

Richard Garni, rickygarni@earthlink.net, is

a writer and fourth grade teacher as well as the founder of 101 Secret Wing Dings, an organization that brings art and writing into the living rooms, bars, hot dog stands and laundromats of the Triangle. He is presently at work on a grant to complete a travelogue to the desert resort of 29 Palms, California, where, in the thirties, James Cagney and Jimmy Durante used to stay up all night telling each other stories at the hotel's bar.

Maximillian Gill, max_gill@hotmail.com,

has just obtained a Master's in Creative Writing from San Jose State University and is often seen at open mike readings in the area. The poem "Monsoon" is a fictional memory of himself as a very young child in India just before joining his parents in California.

Tom Hogan, Thomas_Hogan@brown.edu,

is a fourth year Philosophy student attending college in Providence, RI and a research assistant in molecular biology at Neurogen Corp. in Conn. Rarely making use of characters, events, environment, or plot, he writes primarily about interaction with language. Although he does not yet consider himself a

"writer", he has been published in a few E-zines and print magazines. He plans to pursue a PhD in Philosophy after college.

Janet Kuypers, ccandd@shout.net

is an Art/Production Editor for a publishing company in Chicago. She has a bachelors degree in News/Ed. Journalism (Communications), with a minor in photography, from the University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign and has published over 1,250 times for writing and over 150 for artwork. Janet is the editor/publisher of the literary/art magazine children, churches and daddies. She has had three books published, hope chest in the attic, the window, and close cover before striking. She is a graphic designer by day and also sings with a band.

Ro London, merteuil@ziplink.net, is

Associate Editor of the Queens Historical Society Newsletter. Her fiction has appeared various publications such as Nobodaddies, Rough Draft, FUEL Magazine, Lynx Eye and Happy. Ro lives in New York City, prefers listening to speaking, sitting to standing, and wears Viva Glam lipstick no matter what she's doing.

Joy Reid

Joy Reid began writing poetry seriously at the beginning of this year although she has dabbled with the odd piece now and then earlier. She owes growing faith in her ability to 'Articulata' and all the encouragement and advice I've received in that forum. Joy teaches English and Literature in a small country town in Victoria, Australia. To date, her work has appeared in Poetic Future Express, Eclectica, Yellow Moon, Pyrowords, the Karrinyup Writing Collection and is upcoming in Neologue, Mindfield, Antimedia, and Solas.

Samuel Saks

Samuel Saks resides in Oak Park, MI within a small, interesting Jewish community. He has been writing seriously for three years now. He wrote "Visiting Hours are Over" not long after his

father's five bypass open heart surgery. Needless to say it affected his writing and praying. Please send any comments to: anewman@ix.netcom.com or: saks1@juno.com.

Kevin Sampsell, futuret@teleport.com, has been published in numerous publications such as Carbon 14, Atom Mind, Plazm, Wooden Head Review, Flipside, Pink Pages, and many others big and small. He runs a small press in Portland, Oregon called Future Tense that deals with cutting edge fiction and poetry. (PO Box 42416 Portland, Or. 97242 ... A full-length collection "How to Lose Your Mind With the Lights On" was published in '94, most recent chapbooks are "Haiku You" and "The Patricia Letters".



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