The INDIAN RIVER REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF
PROSE, POETRY, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

The INDIAN RIVER REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF
PROSE, POETRY, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Issue 1
2012

INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

ENGLISH, COMMUNICATIONS, AND MODERN LANGUAGES

Kashgar China by David Hernquist

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors of *The Indian River Review* would like to thank those who helped us create this first issue of the journal. Walter Hines, who is an Assistant Professor in Indian River State College's Digital Media Department, is responsible for designing the journal. We were extremely lucky to have Walt agree to help us make the journal so visually interesting and are awed by his talent. Our department chair, Dr. Sarah Mallonee, was one of the first to encourage our efforts, and she has continued to help us navigate through the administrative requirements involved in such a large project. Dr. Henri-Sue Bynum was an early and powerful inspiration for the journal, and we thank her for her guidance and feedback. Our department's Assistant Dean, Dr. Bruce Fraser, was an advocate and constant source of support as was Dr. Anthony Iacono, Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Native Shadows (cover photo) by Jacob Oet

IRSC

INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

ENGLISH, COMMUNICATIONS, AND MODERN LANGUAGES

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *The Indian River Review*! The germ of an idea that was dropped into fecund soil years ago has finally propagated, put down spidery roots, sprouted like a green–leaved seedling above the brackish surface. We hope that like the red mangroves that shape our namesake river *The Indian River Review* will serve as fertile habitat for the literary and photographic arts of the Treasure Coast and help protect against the erosion of the cultural and artistic stratum that makes any place a rich one to live. Although our roots are local—the editors are all Indian River State College faculty—our scope tends outward beyond the region: we received submissions from Eastern Europe and China, as well as from across the United States. The theme of the issue is Time and Place, and these poems and stories and essays are testament to the power of the particular: *this* gravestone or Agave bottle or Chicago street-corner, *that* instant when the breath is held, the phone call that changes everything. In short, we have been enriched by the endeavor; we hope you are too.

Short Fiction Editor: **Hank Raulerson**
Poetry Editor: **Allison Riddles**
Creative Non-Fiction Editor: **Danny Hoey**
Criticism/Book Reviews Editor: **Tammy Powley**
Creative Director: **Walt Hines**
Graphic Design: **Kristin Staats**

CONTENTS

Guggenheim Annika by Terri McCord

POETRY

SHORT FICTION

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

CRITICISM

Poetry

Driftwood Memory by Stephen Mead

ARC

Richard Downing

the arc of the red
mangrove root bisects nothing
but seashore and sea

EARLY CHILL

Ruth Bavetta

Late afternoon
she sits under the leafless aspens
looking past the railing
of the deck and the scaling
grey trunk of the maple,
over the rotted benches
around the old fire pit,
over the tops of the willows
by the meadow
that became a golf course,
past the patch of fairway
she's forgotten is not a meadow,
to the pines,
and the mountains beyond.
She hears the last of the geese,
leaving, cleaving the sky.

MEMORIAL DAY

(for Ruth Virginia Snowden "Nana")
2009

Andrés Amitai Wilson

"This too will pass."
-King Solomon

On this day of jade,
we drive her Lincoln to the crypts.
Memorial Day,
the yam of May that
nurses my every sun.

Even in rain, gossamer
guards Memory—
fists clenched
like a bloody fighter who
Just won't
go
down.

The stories they might tell,
these shells,
if animated but another minute.

**

Now, only the old white couples come,
pairs of withered flowers, their
petal faces are creased rainbows,
stems she waters
with a smile.

We two,
  are the sole exception—

Spaded like aces,
she's just as sharp—
tells me to pry open the jealous
jaws
of earth…
tells me to break open
the pain of browning blossoms,
of broken crosses…

tells me to plant a whisper of
geraniums,
a hum of chrysanthemums,
a wink of white rose.

Then, she kneels to stroke the
stone that bears
her name.

"How are you today," she asks,
flicking bifocals from
beaded forehead.

We spade through silt seas
planting suns, as one
day I will do
alone.

STARGAZING WITH MY SISTER

Karie Friedman

If the starry sky made a sound,
it might be the high steady chirr
of insects on an August night,
a shimmering medium in which we float,
my sister and I, leaning back
in our lawn chairs and looking up.
We have turned off the house lights
and speak low,
blending our voices with the cricket
continuo. Sometimes a shooting star
streaks by, on which I wish
every time—peace.

Out through the Milky Way, flashes
from Earth—oil fires, air strikes—carry
late news to beings elsewhere.
If it reaches them, if they can peer
back to its source, Look, they'll say,
someone was there.

Inside on the kitchen counter
stand jars of cucumber pickles
my sister and I packed, with garlic
and heads of dill. A faint light
gleams on their rounded shoulders, starlight
from galaxies where cucumbers
and crickets are unknown.
Perhaps the inhabitants of Andromeda
or the Virgo Cluster have something similar
that they find delicious.
Or did, at least, when their light
set out towards us.

TERRIBLE STRUGGLES

Kenneth Pobo

A July morning.

A plum-colored hibiscus
by the shed--how could I forget
planting him there?
Like forgetting a friend's name.
Two huge blooms,
two reasons to tip the hat

I'm not wearing. Finches do
arabesques, dart to seize
coneflower petals.
We have feeders, but they snag
and devour. Time to go

inside and get ready for work.
While I wither in a meeting,
the garden will face
terrible struggles—a root

sliding just past a pebble.

NAIVE

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee

I have no wish to retrace
my steps, to hear the knocking
of fishing caiques
against the tiny dock. Within me,
the past comes and goes
like tides, the predictable present
ebbing in an innocent
calm. No need to see the shepherd
anymore or hear the sheep bells
and the bleatings of the flock
as they traverse the village streets
in search of grazing land. I do not wish
to meet the aged man with the staff,
who once greeted me. He, traveling onward
through the village. I, away.
His, a daily path.
Mine, an escape from paths.
Our eyes betrayed us
with solitary moments
each of us held like keepsakes,
while the breeze carried both day and night,
the fragrance of olive and pine.
That sky pinned by stars
as though it could fall.

MORNING SOUVENIR

Louisa Howerow

A shrine's prayer bell with its long tassel
marks the photo's center where two men
kneel, torsos pressed so low to the ground,

only their backs and feet are visible.
On their right, a cluster of three,
perhaps monks, looking, not quite looking

at the woman with the camera, the father
on her left who faces the Shrine,
its worshippers. The mother stands apart,

in the shadow of a parasol, the whole of her
fixed on her daughter who's stepped back
to frame the morning between branches

of a bare plum tree and pine:
the sky, the Shrine's fenced entrance,
subjects un-posed, save for her mother.

photograph, Milly (Amelia) Harris, Kyoto, November 13, 1897

IN MEMORIAM

C.S. Fuqua

The girl writes the words
and then wads the paper.
A desiccated autumn wind
hurls leaves against the window.
The girl is heavy-eyed.
On a clean sheet,
she writes the words again.
She recalls the woman's e-mails
to lift your spirits,
the bizarre bursts of laughter,
wild drumming on the steering wheel,
pledge of love to two young dogs,
and disdain for a family
who attended every function
the woman could dream up,
from dinners to yard sales
to walks along the banks of a fouled stream,
forever leading to wistful talk of existence beyond.

The girl sighs, erases the words.
She pictures the woman's hand,
the pistol.
She closes her eyes against the image,
hears leaves shattering against the glass.

DOPPLER

Rafael Miguel Montes

Sixty seconds before the homily,
one sees the pout.
The slow distorted face,
reddening after interrupted sleep.
She's 2 or 3,
light enough to carry but a few weeks
from becoming burden.
One needs to shift weight
from foot to foot
to keep her aloft.
Bounce her now and again
to keep the mouth pressed shut.
But one can still see the beginning of the wail.
She will Doppler past us when mother
paces the chapel.
I will try to focus on the priest.
Tamp out the noise.
But all I can ask myself is why a mother
would ever purchase such black gingham.
Twist such furious curls.

THE SUMMIT

M.J. Iuppa

Rising and falling, our footsteps
against the path– the wind, forgetting
why it's here, scatters leaves
in its search for purpose.

We watch the lake's open page, undulating
beneath October's silver light, trailing
sentences of geese– pictographs
we fail to decipher.

We're heading west to Devil's Nose,
to a summit where you tell me everything
without prodding– which amuses me–
silence opens an aperture– light

cascades into the space between us–
no longer isolated by sycamores, or
fallen leaves, the wind pushes us,
shoulder to shoulder

to become an extension of this
exercise, this climb to a point that
overlooks certain danger, the hour
between close and far.

I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO BRAZIL

Laurel Benjamin

The terrain pocked, close up
a mysterious illness among a circle of young trees
what are their names
    extinct
    indigenous
    modern
    industrial
spires of umbrella tree tops
form a canopy from the wind.
Between sky and the little shoes below
your daughters in their white confirmation dresses grow.

An old woman kneels before we enter
what can we course with no interior hallways
but leaves, closing the door just the same
where can we find her, close to the sea—
here, among the neighborhood of
gutter, sidewalk
cans heaping over
spilling
banged-out windows
boys rattling on about their friend put away
pigeons scatter to the revivalist church across the street

whitewashed wood slats, barred windows
red cross on its door
the distance between the corner crack house
only a block long.

Pigeons belong to no one
yet they are a community
birds in brown grass among warehouse wreckage
corrugated aluminum
stucco split to reveal guts
the curly springs of a mattress
off to the side
wooden shoes
what we find
so close to home.

Short Fiction

New York City Dogs by Terri McCord

JUNE OF THE GUILLOTINE

Louis E. Bourgeois

Mother dropped me off at Scott's at 6:00 in the morning and told me to go knock on the door and June, Scott's mother, would let me in to sleep. My mother called the night before to ask if I could stay the day while she was at work. She drove off in a rush to get there, in her little white Maverick, the year they came out with the double vented hood; I was too embarrassed to knock on June's door so early in the morning. The night before I had dreams of flying over this neighborhood where I used to live before my parents were divorced and as I hovered over Scott's house, June and Scott were slaughtering turtles on the bank of the bayou that ran right behind the neighborhood, Bayou Bonfouca. At one time it was said to be the most polluted body of water in America. I had seen my mother beaten too many times to feel safe this close to our old house where my father now lived alone. Besides, I had already grown quite attached to our house in the countryside of Lacombe where we lived in a small village amongst thousands of acres of pine trees grown exclusively for the paper mill company in Bogalusa.

In the village, everyone treated me like a little aristocrat because I was the most handsome child in the village and the smartest. I thought it was wrong of my mother to drop me off in the city like this and to show up on Scott's doorstep like some kind of beggar, and June always made me feel slightly unwanted in her presence. Perhaps she was jealous because I was better looking than Scott was at this age. There was also something in June's wide and dark eyes that seemed to suggest she had suffered a lot of ambiguous pain in her life and there would be no one else who mattered but herself and Scott. I don't know. Her hair too was slightly intimidating as it resembled the kind of hairdos you might find at a Brazilian Mardi Gras, large and dark hair where she stored all kind of secrets a normal kid of average intelligence could never hope to understand.

Instead of knocking on the door, I sneaked across the backyard and crawled under the chain link fence and hid in Scott's friend Eric's playhouse. The inside of the playhouse creeped me out because there was a clock on the wall that had different poses of Captain Kangaroo for each hour of the day; I was slightly frightened by children's television shows and now this Captain Kangaroo clock was staring me right in the face as I reclined on the floor trying desperately to fall back asleep. I didn't want to be here at all but back home in the village where everything was warm and safe and made sense

and where the television reception was so bad we hardly watched television at all, I wouldn't have to worry about weird kids' shows with strange names like Captain Kangaroo or the one that I found to be particularly spooky, New Zoo Review. That was the show with the talking hippos and owls, all of them twelve feet in length and so forth. At that age, I had the sense that shows like these were designed on purpose to rob me of my near saintly child's mind, even though other children my age didn't seem to have these kinds of thoughts at all. I was not fooled by television and hardly liked it at all. I was not fooled by anything really. I certainly wasn't fooled by June, whose secret hatred of me was vast and wide, probably because I once placed first in a baby contest out of seven hundred boys and girls, and Scott hadn't placed at all. Winning the prize resulted in a radio interview aired all over South Louisiana when I was two years old, and June never forgave me for that.

I did fall asleep on the floor of the playhouse with the Captain Kangaroo clock on the wall—I dreamt in Technicolor that Jesus Christ Superstar stood on the shore of a river and clapped his hands and two pigeons burst forth from his very flesh and blood and disappeared into a silver light that we sometimes call the sun.

HOUDINI

Lois Marie Harrod

As we turned from East Bennett onto Main Street, we saw a group of sweaty cowboys lounging around what looked like a dirty square of tarp, and then, there he was, standing on it, a kid, wiry, filthy, maybe eighteen.

"Tie me up," he was crowing, "I'll escape in sixty seconds." I liked his face, one of those haunted faces I liked to paint, dark eyes, broad forehead, a greasy lock of hair falling forward. He had set up a sign too on the sidewalk: Big John's Circus, Today.

So that's what it was about. Houdini was drumming up a crowd with a come-on act. What Big John's Circus must have instead of a parade. Of course, Teddy wanted to watch. My husband Ed bent to explain how it worked.

"See, what this Houdini does is make himself as big as he can. Flexes all his muscles. Tenses them while they tie him up."

"Then after he is tied up," Ed continued, "he relaxes and there is enough room to ease out."

"I could do that," said Teddy, flexing his six-year old biceps.

"Oh, yeah?" I said.

Three old cowboys were chortling. "Sixty seconds, huh? Free circus tickets, huh, if you can't escape. Okay, boy. Let's see you do it." The lankiest looked at me and grinned, "You tourists?"

"No, not exactly. Husband grew up here."

"You the flat-land tourist?"

"Yes, I guess I am."

"Well, you're in for a real lasso treat," said Lanky.

We had walked downtown Buffalo to get my father-in-law's mail as we did most mornings of our vacation visits. My mother-in-law Etta was, I thought, certifiably bonkers. She didn't want the mail delivered to the house because she was afraid if people knew her address, they might show up on her doorstep and do her in. "The people who need to know where I live, know where I live. For everyone else it's PO Box 686." My father-in-law had arthritis, so if we didn't go, he'd have to lumber up from his Easy Boy and drive the four blocks downtown. The walk would have been good for him, but it was our way of escaping Etta, who liked me about as much as I liked her. Ed always said she never liked him at all.

"Oh, we'll tie you up. We'll tie you up good. Real good."

"Can he get out?" asked Teddy.

"Well, we'll see," said Ed. He raised his eyebrows at me.

The biggest beer-gut cowboy already had the boy on his side, arms pulled back, his ankles tied to his wrists. We were at the edge of the tarp, and I could see the kid was flexing his muscles, what there were of them in his stringy body. He seemed both repulsive and pathetic in his gritty black pants and oily white dress shirt. Dirt edged the creases of his eyelids and neck, and the tendons on his neck stood out like reeds. Lanky started to help Beer-gut pull the ropes tight.

"A skinny lil calf if I ever seen one," said the most wrinkled of the three. The boy seemed to sense he had gotten himself into a place he wouldn't be able to get out of. His face was turning crimson as he tried to keep his muscles flexed against their strength. Wrinkly braced a cowboy boot against the small of the boy's back and pulled.

"I sure wouldn't want to be roped by these guys," Ed whispered to me. "That kid must be a tourist too."

Beer-gut snickered at their cinch. "Let's see you get out of that."

The boy began to squirm and heave, and the cowboys called to passers-by.

"Hey, Jed, come see this here city slicker undo our knots."

"Goddam, Pete. Look at that calf shake." The boy had been straining so hard that now he was trembling. When he relaxed, there was no room, anyone could see, to inch his way out. Those three cowboys had him trussed up like a chicken, and the crowd kept getting larger. There were six or seven old geezers standing around now. The boy's face grew redder and redder. Beer-gut gave a little prod to Houdini's hip bone. "Come on. Wriggle for us."

"Let's go, Ed. I can't stand this," I said. It was beginning to seem obscene.

"We can't go," said Teddy. "He has to escape. He can do it."

"Let's go, "I said again.

"It's okay," said Ed. "They're just cowboys having their fun. He asked for it. It's part of the show."

So it's okay, I thought. Part of this Western culture I didn't quite understand. Part of Ed I didn't quite understand. This sort of acceptance of bad boy behavior or maybe just the knowledge that as a Western male, he couldn't intervene. Still, I wanted to leave.

But I didn't. It was as if I couldn't. The three of us seemed tied there just as we were tied to traveling west every summer. Usually by car. We thought Teddy should see his grandparents, who rarely came east to Down East as Mainers called our part of Maine. We thought we should visit our parents. After all, they were our parents, and they didn't seem to be able to visit us.

In all my parents had come to Maine twice in our ten years of marriage. My father, an associate minister at a big church in Toledo, didn't seem to get much vacation time—though I suspect he had as much as the others, four

Sundays, a whole month. He always gave his Sundays away to the other pastors–the one with five children, the one who took the youth group on bicycle tours across rural Ohio, the who had a dying father in Germany, the one who was having difficulty because his wife was divorcing him, the one who lost his voice, the one in chemo. Not that there were that many ministers, just that they had a long list of troubles which my father, who didn't say no or couldn't say no, was asked to allay. And maybe he wasn't even asked. Maybe he just offered. Then, of course, there was supply preaching too—churches who had no minister and he would often take these on during his own "vacation." God's puppet, I sometimes called him. If I hadn't had my wedding in his church, he probably wouldn't have been there. Someone would have gotten sick and he would have had to visit.

Once when we had spent a year abroad exchange teaching in England, we flew home, not to Maine, but to Detroit, so that we could see grandparents first. My mother had been so upset when we had left the country. We thought they'd want to see Teddy, their first grandchild, who was a toddler, 18 months old. We had visited them just before we left so they hadn't seen him in ten months.

By the time we reached Detroit, we had all been up for 27 hours straight—having missed our flight at La Guardia and not being able to get one until Sunday morning. Ed and I took turns slouching in an airport chair while the other chased Teddy, who always refused to sleep in new surroundings. We called when we arrived as we had told them we would. Would my mother drive up to Detroit to get us?

Well, she had never driven there alone, and more importantly, it was Sunday, she had to go to church.

Would my father ask someone else to step in to read a sermon? No, there was no one to take his place. They were all tied up.

So it was almost three pm Sunday afternoon when they finally appeared at the airport. Not much in the way of apologies. No sorry we couldn't come sooners. We weren't supposed to be angry. We had chosen the wrong day to fly. Obligations went one way. Up. For me, it was next to impossible to argue with parents who were always so sure of their moral obligations.

And if God held the strings in Toledo, my mother-in-law Etta's cats tangled them up in Wyoming.

Ed's parents had spent their married life in Buffalo, Wyoming, which to an Easterner like me seemed farther away than Europe. Ed's parents hadn't traveled East for our wedding not because God had kept them in Buffalo, but because my mother-in-law was scared of the cities she watched on cable TV—the riots, the flames, the gunfire, the pollution, the gangs, the car crashes, the mafia. With her asthma she would not be able to breathe, she

said. Illness has its only loony moral system, at least it seemed to for us. So we were puppets on her strings—though we thought that being jerked about was our duty, as I guess most puppets do. We wanted our children to have grandmas and grandpas in their lives. It seemed right that grandchildren know their grandparents, and if they couldn't find the way to visit us, well, then we would just have to visit them. I suppose we were just resigned. Maybe we just wanted to be loved.

But sometimes when we did arrive in Buffalo, after three ten-hour days of driving and only one grandparent, Grandpa Jim, happy to see us, I felt more than a little angry. Grandma Etta was just worried that her cats might escape. Little Dusty who supposedly looked like a hairball might sneak out of the house when we opened the door. Bob, the bob-tailed cat who hopped like a rabbit, had a nervous stomach, which according to Grandma Etta, was all tied up in knots as soon as he heard our voices. And Mo became so invisible upon our arrival that even Grandma Etta couldn't find him.

The problem was the cats were always escaping.

Etta worried about them so much that she kept them locked in her bedroom where she moved their kitty litter and their food dishes. I sometimes told my husband Ed that I didn't think the cats actually existed. "I mean, hon, have we ever seen them?"

Of course, we did see them once or twice. We did see Bob once the first time Ed brought me to Buffalo. He was less shy before Teddy arrived and actually appeared to chase Christmas wrappings, his back-end flopping this way and that as he tried to get tread on the wood floor.

We had just had a cat incident before we escaped the house.

"Did you open the door?" said Etta.

"I just stuck my head out to see how hot it was," I said.

"Bob got out," she said. "I can't find him anywhere."

"Cats don't really go very far even if they get out," I said. "They know where they get their chicken liver. I'll go out and look." It's how I had learned to talk to her.

"He must have got out."

We had spent thirty minutes looking for him. He was under the covers in her bed in the bedroom where she had locked him.

So I resented this, always being accused of letting the cat escape or letting Teddy let the cat escape. And yet there was this belief that families are important. This belief that we should be kind. It was what we owed them somehow.

Sometimes I wondered. Sometimes I thought maybe we should have just taken ourselves and Teddy elsewhere for vacation. We seemed to descend on our families like a plague. Etta always said that she had no idea what to cook

for us, so when we came to visit, Ed and I had to go to the store and buy food and cook for everyone. Etta's idea of food was bologna on white bread.

But remembering Houdini now, I wasn't thinking I had to buy something for lunch before we walked back. I was mesmerized by that kid on the tarp, and it was beginning to be clear that he was not going to escape. The old cowboy had gotten out a watch and was counting down in Western drawl, 28, 27, 26 . . . . The boy squirmed and grunted, but the ropes were not loosening. I thought his wrists were beginning to grow raw.

"Let's go Ed, please let's go. We don't have to watch this."

"It's okay," said Ed. "That's what westerners are like. You know that. They'll let him go."

"I don't like it," I said, but not loudly.

Besides Teddy just couldn't leave. "You can do it," he kept shouting at the poor kid.

"You're doing that again?" our neighbors used to say when we told them our summer plans. "Driving all the way to Wyoming again. Why don't they come here? Why don't you fly?"

Basically, because they wouldn't and we couldn't afford it. We were playing the dutiful children to the oh so appreciative parents, Midwest and West.

"He's not going to get out of it, is he?" said Teddy.

"Doesn't look like it," said Ed.

"Is he gonna give everybody tickets?"

"I don't think so," said Ed. "It was a come-on. He's just advertising the circus."

"Will he have to give tickets to those guys who tied him up?"

"Probably."

"Hey, buddy, you can have another minute," said Beer-gut.

"Yeah, take your time," smirked Lanky. "We'll give you as long as you want. Nothing better that watching a roped-up city slicker trying to get free."

The boy struggled. He twisted and grunted. By now his hands had turned blue. Finally he began pleading, "Please, please, untie me."

But they continued taunting him. I started to walk away. "Stay if you want. I can't watch this."

"We can't leave," howled Teddy. "We can't leave until he's free."

I suddenly heard myself yelling, "Untie him for God's sake. You've had your fun."

"Guess we have to untie him for this here tourist lady," said Beer-gut.

"Yep," said Wrinkly, "Guess we do."



And they did. It was that easy to get away. Why didn't I say something earlier? Why didn't Ed?

The boy stood shakily and dug into his pocket for the free tickets. Three of them. All dirty.

"Give em to that tourist lady," said Beer-gut. "She's the one that needs them." And he pushed the three soiled tickets into my hand.

PROTRUDING FLOWERS

Jasmon Drain

Chicago is a tough place to learn about yourself.

It's filled with big cars driven by big adults who drink vodka, and the rats in most alleys fall a close second place in size to those in the subways of New York, which are sometimes tallied as normal consumers or a small segment of their general population. But, Chicago is my home.

There's an intricate bus system my mother taught me to ride before I could speak proper English and we're known for hot dogs and pizza that don't seem to – in my opinion – be any different than those of Memphis or Indianapolis.

Mother was one of those women that didn't teach many lessons, scold, spank (too often), or discuss. She simply said things in the fewest words possible, sometimes not even enough to form a complete sentence. And she read lots of books, a habit which I eventually picked up.

We lived on the south side of the city, deep in a neighborhood called West Englewood that looked nothing like the place in California. Our block was named Marshfield and there were more vacant lots than houses; big, long, emptied cars with missing windows and interior seats muddied so terribly you'd never believe anyone sat in them. Almost-empty bottles with small trickles of liquor were scattered frivolously like ornaments on a tree, and the sounds of children's voices were always present. Even late at night. To my mother, none of these things mattered. Not even a little. She lived her life in this remote manner after she and my father split; only few were privy to her voice and even fewer heard her speak more than five words at a time. She'd say stuff like "wash the windows" or "mop the floor" or "eat your dinner." Eat your dinner was normally written down on some scrap sheet of paper during the week because Mother worked late. Don't get me wrong, though, she was by no means bitter or spiteful. She just had the charisma of color-safe bleach. And spent most of her time trying to raise two men.

I had a key to our two-story house at the age of ten. But my cousin, who was a year older than me, lived with us as well because his mom wanted him to go to better schools. I never thought those were in my neighborhood. His being around was like having a phony big brother.

On weekends in the summer, when Mother was home, she took my cousin and me to the beach. We'd pack salami sandwiches with almost moldy wheat bread, and drink those small juices that came twenty to a pack.

Those were some good times. The three of us rode the 142 Lake Shore Drive bus, which took two other buses to connect to from our block. The whole trip extended over an hour. I knew all this in detail because Mother took the time to explain various routes and turns and certain buses and streets they crossed when we'd ride.

The Lake Shore Drive number 142 bus in Chicago had to be the best ride ever. I'd recommend it to any tourist, because it corners the coast of the city from the south side to Downtown, giving you clear views of the lake, the Sears Tower, the John Hancock Building and McCormick place, which last time I saw it, looked like a silver space shuttle. Things like those really piqued my interest.

I wanted to be an architect when I grew up.

Mother said in one of her short sentences that I would have been good at that. I could draw elaborate pictures of anything: scenery, people, cars, buses, etc. And of course, buildings. Unfortunately, her preemptive powers of prediction didn't stop me from simply becoming what she despised. So, I'd stare at those tall buildings on the 142 ride, even the Standard Oil Building, which has some stupid twenty-ninth century name now, dreaming of having one named after me because I'd drawn it out that way. Cousin didn't really find interest in the structuring of buildings. All he thought about was getting to the beach.

It was easy to see the beach's dirty brown sand from the bus. When we got off, we had to walk across a bridge, which was suspended over Lake Shore Drive and shaped like an upside down letter 'U' or a rainbow. Ironically, the name of the beach was "Rainbow." There was nothing about this beach that resembled prime and pretty colors. As I said, the sand was dirty brown, which actually matched the Lake Michigan water, and filled with just as many almost empty bottles of liquor as my neighborhood. Most times we went to the higher end of the shore – where few people were – and set up a blanket. That was Cousin's job.

He was taller and bigger than me then; looking as though he began lifting weights at the age of eight. His head was rounded and he hardly ever grew any hair. Standing up and fluffing the blanket made him look really cool. Like he was a child prodigy lifeguard or something. Mother would pull one sandwich for each of us, handing them without saying a word. She'd then take one of the juices from the pack, use the straw to poke a hole in its top, and sip away. She always smiled at that moment. Mother was a really pretty woman back then. She had darker brown skin, a clear black woman's version of skin, with good cheekbones that protruded from her face like flowers in soil. There usually was a four-hundred page book in the other hand and she'd leisurely lower her sunglasses over her eyes like blinds for a window,

spending most of the time lying on her back and reading.

Cousin and I were left to our own devices. We took quick bites of our salty salami sandwiches, which were seasoned extra with the crunchiness of small particles of sand. Things like that don't bother you when you're only ten years old. And Cousin always finished his before me. He'd race to the water, stomping his feet heavily. By the time water had come up to his waist, he was diving in. He could swim. Swim swim. I couldn't. I wanted to learn to make buildings out of sand anyway, not castles, or anything childish; real buildings.

On that particular day the beach was more crowded than usual, even in the area we went to on the high end of the shore. There were quite a few families beginning to spread their blankets or bath towels on that murky brown sand. There was a dark girl, who looked to be around my age, and another lighter girl with her, chasing one another back and forth from the water to where their family was. I eyed them steadily. The two dipped, splashed, and giggled each time they went into the water. Even then, at ten years old, I remember thinking how attractive girls looked with wet hair. A black person's hair curls when it's been in water, and right then, those two girls began resembling both versions of Michael Jackson.

The buildings I was constructing from sand had lost their interest and I got in line, running back and forth chasing them under the burning sun of a Chicago summer, twenty-five feet from Mother's long legs and flowery face, directly to the right of my cousin who thought he was Aquaman. The giggles of the girls grew louder and I began to chase harder. I reached out to touch them when I got close – not in any private area, maybe I would have – but it all ended rather quickly. On the fourth trip back from the water, a hand snatched my leg, right by the ankle, sending me face down. As I chewed the sand – minus salami, so it didn't taste as well – I looked up and saw another boy. He was as big as Cousin, maybe a little taller, with blackened skin like mine. The boy had a lot of hair on his head, twisted in these small loose braids, and it didn't look so good wet. Before I could stand and brush myself off he was hovering over me. His voice sounded as though he had a Mack Truck for tonsils, it was so deep. I told him I wasn't chasing her and I didn't mean nothing by it and I was going to just head over and go swimming with my cousin and there would be no problem and that everything was cool. But this was Chicago, and I don't think the black boy rules allow you to do that. I took two steps back. Another one of my mother's three word statements was: Don't ever fight.

She was always telling me what to do, trying to control me. I hated it. "Don't ever fight," she kept repeating when we went to school. But this time

I wasn't going to listen. I wasn't trying to listen. I was tired of hearing her fragmented sentences. By the time I balled my fist to make the first decision I could, Cousin had run and stood next to me. He told the boy he was nothing and he'd whip him for me and that the boy should pick on someone his own size. I didn't need his help. But they ended up arguing loudly and him pushing me to the side and the boy's mom came over where we were and started yelling too with a clear plastic bottle of vodka in her hand and then my mother came and hollered some. She spoke in clear sentences that time and all I did was stand to the side.

Although no one fought (the police broke the whole thing up) Mother still had a long lecture with Cousin and me when we got home about fighting. (She held the long brown extension cord for the television in her hand and said, Don't you do it.) And my cousin never told her that the whole thing was my fault.

Chicago was a tough place.

On Saturdays, Mother was usually home. She'd wake early in the morning, even earlier than Cousin and me who darted from the bed to watch cartoons. She made eggs I hardly ate and read books the entire day. We usually received our allowance on Saturday. Two dollars for me, three for my cousin. Why he got three dollars instead of my two I didn't understand. In my opinion, being a year older shouldn't have brought those kinds of rewards. He and Mother always seemed a bit closer than I desired. Their skin was a similar color; it ran in our family, skipping ironically over me: brown like the sand at Rainbow Beach. But I was my mother's son, the only child coming out of her body after some seventeen hours of un-drugged labor. He had nothing on me at all.

So I'd take my allowance, not listening to Mother's short sentences or my cousin's appreciation of the money. She was my mother; I was owed this. We usually went to the store on those Saturdays, two and three dollars crumbled in our hands like candy we were hiding, going to buy candy we would have to hide.

Don't buy too much, Mother said before we left.

She knew where we were going. Cousin and I lied consistently, told her we were going to play in the vacant lot on the corner, full of so many broken bottles and empty packs of cigarettes littering its floor like confetti. Of course we were not going there. Then we said we'd race one another back and forth up our block continuously. Marshfield Street had concrete with cracks and pot holes where spots of mud and dirt made it look like a motocross course. But Cousin beat me every single time and I hated it. We were not going there either. This particular Saturday though, Mother followed us to the door. Our house had a large front room/living room with orangey yellow furniture that

was from my grandmother's house. We were not to sit anywhere near it. There were two doors to enter our home. The first door was to the right of three sets of windows – which I had to clean on weekends – and connected to a small hallway. On that door was some of the weakest wood you'd ever see; if you closed it with even the smallest amount of force, it sounded as though it may come off the hinges, everything including the knob, into your hands. Mother stood in the hallway with us, her palms evenly spread on our shoulders. She massaged my cousin as we talked. It didn't bother me. He'd almost gotten a whipping just the week previous; maybe she was trying to make up for that.

"Bring me something back," she said. Her voice was tired, like reading exhausted the muscles in your voice rather than your brain. Cousin and I both looked up at her like we didn't know what she could have been speaking of. "I know where you're going," she continued. "I want you to bring me something back." She opened her palm, which ironically contained three crumbled dollars as well. After hearing her list of items to purchase, we walked away without looking back. "Don't buy much candy!" she yelled from the door. Her voice was so weak we barely heard.

Every Saturday morning was when I'd analyze my neighborhood; when playing in lots, running up and down the street or just sitting on the porch with the weakened wood like our first front door. But walking gives you a different take on a city like Chicago. You are able to see things happen in slow motion. Sometimes there'd be fights between men flooded with voices arguing for more. I thought they looked cool. I saw drug sales, and a couple of times during the day, I watched compensated sex in alleys.

We walked to the store on that Saturday at about 1pm. Everyone in the neighborhood was definitely awake by then. Other kids, some I knew and some not, had stolen our game of race up and down the street through obstacles, some were in the lots dodging the broken bottles, others just standing around at corners practicing what they'd do the rest of their lives: stand at corners.

That would not be me. I was going to be an architect and build skyscrapers right in the neighborhood.

There were two liquor stores directly on each side of the busy cross street and a Laundromat we went to on Thursdays after Mother came from work. We were told to never go inside any store that sold liquor, so we had to walk two and a half blocks west where the other corner store was. Most houses on the busy streets had shiny silver fences and short porches with only three or four stairs. I remember glancing at the gloss and admiring it. I thought then that a building made in a shiny color like silver would have been something spectacular. It could reflect the sun, especially in our Chicago neighborhood,

and give the whole place some life. Most everything else located on or around Paulina or Hermitage streets had lost its color. Grass was never green and remained in spots and blotches like men losing hair; trees didn't blow and leaves were at a premium. The houses, although surrounded by those pretty fences, were run down and dryly painted. But I really didn't know I was paying attention to all this stuff until I was much older. And as we came to store, the only thing on my ten-year-old mind was getting some junk food.

The building with the store was two stories of beige brown brick, with a set of dirty windows on the second floor I wanted no part of. There was a screen door with pieces of mesh torn away and another glass door I remember being taped and boarded because it had been broken many times in robbery attempts.

Everything in the store was protected in dense plastic, like the rooms in prisons during visitation. Patrons had to place their orders through an even thicker version of this plastic, having four terribly cut holes in it so sound could pass through. Your mouth would almost have to press completely up against its surface for them to hear your order.

Cousin walked in first because he was strong enough to push the door and he had Mother's money. He left his money at home that time; I think he only had a quarter from the week previous that he held on to. Said he was saving the three dollars for a rainy day. I thought that was stupid, because even then I knew my mother would give us more money the next week.

Cousin stepped in right before me and ordered Mother's stuff. He talked so much I thought he'd run clean out of breath. She wanted chips with hot sauce, various candies, and bottles of soda pop costing almost an entire dollar each. But the woman standing behind the counter didn't make a move to grab things he asked for once he handed her the money.

"Honey, you don't have enough," the woman said. She had the thinnest lips I'd ever seen on a black woman. "You need another seventy-five cents," she finished. Cousin turned around to me, low eyed, almost teary, and extended his hand. I looked at him as though I'd fill his palm with spit.

"You gotta' give me a dollar," he said.

"I ain't giving you nothing."

There were a couple of other people standing behind us. We were holding up the line, so, I prepared my mouth to order.

"It's for your mother's stuff," he said. "Just give me a dollar, everything'll be cool."

I pushed him to the side easily. He was the one always hugging her anyway. Cousin took the bag of items for Mother, minus what she could not afford because of her miscalculation, and stood outside.

I bought three bags of chips at twenty-five cents each, two thirty-five

cent juice jugs which were really worth twenty-five as well, three packs of Now and Later candy and two more boxes of sugar sweetened baked beans. A nickel left. I gave it as a tip to the woman behind the counter because she was pretty. And I was generous.

After stepping outside I immediately dug into my bag and began pouring things into my mouth. I politely offered the few baked beans left in the box to Cousin. He didn't even look at me to decline. We began trotting back to my house: me, glancing at the scenery of the neighborhood and enjoying my bag of goodies; Cousin, face forward and slightly frowning. His feet stomped against the battered concrete so hard I thought he may have been responsible for some of its damage. We'd planned to take a short-cut through the alley. The moment we turned the corner, four other boys jumped in front of us. They were older, just a bit older, and one leaned on an iron crowbar in his left hand as though it was a cane. He was light-skinned, with a rounder stomach than most boys at such at a young age, and began tapping the tool from one side of his leg to the other. The shorter boy, who was just a bit taller than I, did the talking. He asked for my bag, then changed his mind and snatched it, pushed me, poured the bag of chips I'd opened on the concrete, pushed me again, which at that point had me backed against the brick of the wall. These were the same boys that were standing behind us at the store. And in Chicago, no matter how little money you may have standing in the candy store, grocery store, currency exchange, or some big bank on the broadest downtown street, you ALWAYS pay attention to who's on each side of you. Definitely to who is behind you. Being so focused on placing and order and dodging giving my cousin money for mother….

…..That's when I heard it. The other boy's fist smashed against my cousin's face so fast the sound was the only thing letting me know it happened. Cousin didn't move. He simply handed the bag of items for Mother to them. They didn't run from us. They walked, not taking a glance back.

He and I stood there staring at one another. That was the first time I remembered hating Chicago, its harsh wind that had to be dealt with even in summer, its stale and stinky alleys, broken buildings and broke people.

We walked slowly to my house and Cousin explained everything to Mother. She looked at me, cheekbones protruding with fluffed flowers as usual, and said every bad word she could about how I didn't spend the money to get her stuff. In my mind, I thought we'd lost everything anyway, what did it matter?

That was the beginning of the whippings my mother would give me. Over the years they grew worse and worse; I continued to do more and more. I'd make small decisions on my own: wearing certain colors I knew

attracted negative attention, traveling on buses she taught me so I wouldn't get lost but using the knowledge to visit girls, getting a couple of them pregnant, fighting in school and cussing teachers; doing everything she told me I couldn't. Each time I got the opportunity to fight I did so. No one would tell me what I couldn't do anymore.

By the age of seventeen I was standing under orange streetlights with green poles that looked like sherbet when the moon reflected, palms holding something different than dollars or sand, and watching women with little clothing and less morals. Mother whipped and whipped and whipped over the years trying to keep me away from those things, from Chicago.

But I don't get to visit Chicago now anyway. At nineteen, on a Saturday in summer, I was arrested. I was charged as an accomplice in an attempted murder case concerning a drug deal I knew little about. Just hanging with some guys riding in a car. The judge gave me seven years because I had no priors on record.

My cousin still lives with Mother and takes care of her. And Chicago is still my home as well. It's *my* home with *my* mother, and the West Englewood neighborhood that taught me who I am.

Creative Non-Fiction

My Vegetable Love by Eileen Murphy

A TOAST TO SIR SANDY

Dallas Woodburn

"The world is a fine place and worth fighting for and I hate very much to leave it."

– Ernest Hemingway

You don't know who I am, Sandy, but lately my thoughts have been filled with you. My brother is the one who told me. You knew him—Greg—he's friends with Michael and Mark and Joe. He goes to the Merry Men shows every week. He loves the Merry Men. He even brought me along to a show once, when I was visiting him at USC for the weekend. At first, I was skeptical.

"What's the Merry Men?" I asked.

"An Improv comedy troupe," he said. "All students. They're really funny."

"Yeah?"

"And they all wear tights," Greg continued. "They're, like, Shakespeare-themed. Old English."

As an English major this intrigued me. So we went, that Thursday night in late January, and Greg was right. The Merry Men were funny. Especially you.

"Sir Sandy of Roberts!" Mark announced. Everyone in the troupe refers to each other that way, as though last names are birthplaces. I remember the way you bounded onstage. Your dark floppy hair. Your genuine, contagious smile.

Maybe this is just a result of what's happened since—maybe I'm looking back through a tilted perspective—but in my memory, when you came onstage the audience erupted in cheers. Louder for you than for anyone else.

After the show, Greg introduced me to some of his friends in the troupe, Mark, Michael, and Joe. But you were across the room, talking to someone else, so I didn't meet you. It was nearly midnight. Greg yawned. We said goodbye and descended the stairs, and walked into the star-winking night back to his apartment. The next morning after a breakfast of bagels and peanut butter I hugged my brother goodbye and drove the two hours from L.A. back home to Ventura, where I was living with my parents and applying to grad school programs for the fall. And the days strummed along and I weathered the daily dramas and I never thought about you or Mark or Michael or Joe or any of the Merry Men, except in brief flashes when I talked to Greg on the phone and he mentioned your shows.

Then came February 27th. Now it seems you're never far from my thoughts.

A USC student was killed and another injured on Saturday after their car collided head on with another vehicle in Kern County.

Sandy Roberts, a sophomore majoring in cinema-television production, was killed after the car he was riding in passed a truck, lost control and veered into oncoming traffic on Highway 46. Roberts died after being transported to Kern Medical Center.

I can't stop thinking about the accident. Actually, not the accident itself—I try not to let myself imagine that—but rather the last few moments before. I imagine you were listening to music as you drove. What song was playing? Was it the radio or a CD? Were you singing along? Was she? Were you smiling?

These things feel important.

I think about Nicole, too. When I think about her, my heart feels swollen and blistered and in danger of escaping out my throat.

Oh, Sandy.

Tonight I thought of you before I drifted off to sleep, and tears leaked out of my eyes. Then I thought of Nicole and I couldn't fall asleep. She is living out my worst nightmare.

Maybe you had the radio turned down low because you were talking and you wanted to be able to hear each other without shouting. What were you talking about? Plans for the weekend? The film you'd both recently worked on that's headed to a film festival in Berlin? Maybe you were telling a story, Sandy—a funny story. I can picture Nicole looking over at you, laughing, thinking how much she loves you. Maybe you reached over and rested your hand on her leg, secure and safe, because you could see the love in her eyes. Maybe you leaned over and kissed her, gently, on the cheek.

Nicole Deane, who was driving the car and is a sophomore majoring in cinema-television production, was airlifted to KMC, and is in stable condition.

Deane was driving east on the highway near Annette Street at about 7:30 p.m. when she crashed into a westbound vehicle going 55 or 60 mph, according to police. Deane was trying to steer the car back into the eastbound lanes after passing the truck, but she lost control, police said.

To be honest, even before you died, this morbid paranoia has lurked in

the back of my mind. It especially emerges around goodbyes. I think, *what if this is the last time I see this person? What if these are the last words I say to him? The last time I see her smile?*

"I love you!" I'll call from the doorway to my dad, my mom, my brother, as they walk across the front lawn to the car, even just to drive away on a short errand—a trip to the store, to the Post Office. Even on a sunny afternoon. "One more hug," I'll say to my best friend when we get up to leave from our coffee date. I'll close my eyes, memorize the moment, the smell of her hair, this person who has been a part of my life since seventh grade and feels as integral to my existence as my own breath. Yet, at any moment, she could be ripped away from me forever. It's the truth. Morbid, yes. Paranoid, perhaps. But if this is our final goodbye, I want it to be a good one.

The cruel thing is that so many people drift unhappily through life, only half-there. You, Sandy, were not only of these people. You were someone who really *lived*, deeply and fully and joyfully.

For you to have died seems such a horrible mistake.

Roberts came to USC from the University School of Nova Southeastern University, a private high school in Florida, to study cinema. After spending his childhood creating sets out of construction paper and Scotch tape and making videos for various groups in high school, he decided he wanted to edit film.

Although Roberts was accepted to many top film schools, including New York University, his father, Scott Roberts, said he fell in love with USC.

Even though I didn't really know you, Sandy, the world seems paler with you gone. In line at the Post Office, two ladies in front of me complain about the cloudy weather, parking meters, the increased traffic caused by the roadway construction down the street. I want to shake them. I want to chide them, do you hear yourselves? Do you realize how beautiful this life is?

I want to ask them, how can you carry on as if these things are important, when the reality is that you could die at any moment and lose everything, all of it, the gray clouds and the traffic and the Post Office and your name?

Sandy, I always knew on a certain level that I am going to die at some point, and that it could be tomorrow or tonight or this afternoon or two seconds from now. But, before February 27th, I didn't fully believe it.

Now I can't un-believe it. I can't stop imagining your final moments, as

if by doing so I can go back in time and slide one of those moments in a different direction and thus prevent it all. As if I can turn February 27th back into just an ordinary Saturday, and the next time I visit Greg at USC and go to a Merry Men show they'll announce, "Sir Sandy of Roberts!" and you'll leap onstage and everyone will cheer the same amount for you as they cheer for everyone else, because the whole thing won't be filtered through tragedy in my memory.

Roberts was a member of Child's Play, a nationally known children's improv troupe based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and performed with The Merry Men, an 11-member improv group at USC, since last spring.

"He was always funny," said Joe DeSoto, director of The Merry Men. "If he was doing great, it was funny and you were laughing with him, and if he wasn't, you still were, if only because he was laughing too."

The night you died was a great night for me. The day before I had received an acceptance phone call from an MFA program, and I was ecstatic with renewed hope about my writing and the future in general. The night of February 27th was the USC Associates Anniversary Gala in downtown Los Angeles. During my undergraduate years at USC I had received a generous scholarship from the Associates, so I was invited to give a short thank-you speech at the black-tie celebration. The guy I'd been seeing was, by then, completely out of the picture, so my brother agreed to be my plus-one. I drove down that afternoon and picked him up from his apartment. The Gala was held at a hotel near Staples Center. My brother helped me navigate the intricate web of Los Angeles one-way streets.

We were the youngest people there by fifteen years, but even that did not daunt my jubilation. I had bought new shoes for the occasion. I had straightened my hair. I wore my red Prom dress and it still fit and I felt very pretty and grown up. Throughout the night when people asked me what I was doing with my life I had something to tell them: I had been accepted to start graduate school in the fall. After months of uncertainty and instability, I finally was able to face the world with proud eyes and concrete plans. I felt wonderful. Life seemed limitless.

Those who knew Roberts said they couldn't think of him without thinking of Nicole Deane, his girlfriend, whom he dated for more than a year.

"When people think about Sandy, Nicole is synonymous with that and it's vice versa. You think of Nicole, you think of Sandy," Longawa said.

"Sandy changed her," said Natasha Deane, Nicole's mother. "Their relationship was as close as the joining of two people into one. She was in him and he was in her."

I have also never met Nicole, but I can't stop clicking through her Facebook photos. She has blonde hair, clear skin, a beautiful smile. The type of girl I would normally envy. If we had been friends, I know I would have been jealous of her, Sandy—jealous of the two of you, for being so happy and in love. It's what I wanted in college. It's what I am still searching for.

There are countless photos of you together. Hugging each other at Disneyland. Sleeping on the couch. Dancing at a party. A candid shot—you are talking; she is gazing at you, smiling, enraptured.

Your parents have set up a memorial website in which Nicole is not mentioned at all, as if she was never a part of your life. *The most important aspect of Sandy's life was his family,* the website states. *His brother Zack and he were an entertainment team to behold, having a deep and abiding mutual love and respect that transcended all bounds. His parents, Mimi and Scott, were his confidants and advisors.*

According to news reports, Nicole has been moved out of the ICU and is in stable condition. According to her Facebook, she is "shattered."

Friendship was important to Roberts, who formed a group of close-knit friends from the beginning of his time at USC.

"Sandy could also have this completely serious side, not where he wasn't happy but where he would stop joking, and that's really when you could see how passionate he was about the things he did in his life," said Evan Moore, a sophomore majoring in theatre. "One thing he never joked about was friendship."

"As funny as he was he also had the capability to be there when you need it," said Katie Longawa, a sophomore majoring in critical studies who met Roberts the first week of freshman year.

Two weeks after February 27th, they held a Merry Men show for you. Did you watch it? Did you see the room so packed with students that not everyone could fit inside, so some people stood in the doorway and out in the hall, listening?

I wasn't there. I would have gone if I had known, but I only heard about it afterwards, from Greg. That night he changed his Facebook status to read: "Today was my most loving and inspirational USC experience." The next morning, I called him to find out what had happened. I don't know what I was expecting, but certainly not what he told me.

"One of the Merry Men died in a car crash. It was a memorial show to him."

"Wait… someone died? When? Who?"

"A couple weeks ago," Greg said.

"Who died?"

"Sandy."

And that's how I found out.

A few minutes after we hung up, my phone beeped. A text message from Greg: *It was a room full of so much love, and just brought home to me the intertwined and powerful balance of sorrow and laughter, where everyone was sad for his passing but so happy too in celebrating Sandy's life.*

I wonder if you were going to drive that day, but Nicole offered to drive instead. Maybe she could see you were tired from a long week of midterms. Or maybe you had driven the last time, so now it was her turn. Or maybe you didn't have a car, so she always drove.

I can picture you flopping into the passenger seat, buckling your seat belt. Maybe you're tired, so you close your eyes. Maybe Nicole decides on her own to pass the slow-moving truck. But for some reason, I don't think that's how it was. I picture the two of you, blasting Vampire Weekend, your hand resting on her blue-jeaned thigh, and your car approaches a truck on this stretch of two-lane highway, and this truck is going forty-five tops, and the two of you sigh and groan (even though you're not in a hurry to get anywhere, it's just a beautiful Saturday night on the outskirts of Los Angeles and you want to drive freely with the windows down on the open highway) and Nicole says, "Should I pass this guy?" and you say, "Yeah, sure, why not?"

On February 27th, I had an easy drive from Ventura to L.A. and arrived at Greg's apartment sooner than expected. I sat in my car parked on 30th Street, waiting for Greg and his friends to get home from their track meet.

Around 7:30, I was struck with an overwhelming sense of panic, fear, loss.

My thoughts immediately leapt to Greg. Please, God, I prayed. Please bring him home safe.

Five minutes later, his roommate's car pulled into the driveway and my brother climbed out. Relief crashed over me. I got out of my car and hurried over to him. I hugged him a little longer, a little tighter, than usual. Then the current of our lives swept us up again, and we broke apart and headed inside to get ready for whatever came next.

ABSENT FATHER, CONFUSED SON

Jesse Duthrie

The ash on her cigarette is long; she hasn't taken a drag since she first lit it. "We need to talk about Dad." The jovial ranting ends and for the first time this night, and for the first time in three years, my sister, Michelle, says something that evokes an explicit response. She tells me Dad's really sick; he's got fibromyalgia, arthritis, and heart problems. He's a mess, and they don't know how long he's got. She looks me in the eyes as she tells me this, not smiling.

"Why the hell should I go see him? He left when I was two years old. I don't even have a single memory of him. I don't give a shit about him." I turn away from her glare, and looking out into the street at nothing in particular, I take a drag off the Marlboro Light. I haven't seen my father in 14 years. He left when I was two years old, and I had sworn to myself I would never see him again.

A couple of weeks pass between that night and the day I finally decide to meet my father. I'm in school trying to focus, but all I can think about is the possibility of getting to confront him. During my first period calculus class, I think about hitting him square in the jaw. During lunch, I think about kicking him in the groin and wailing on him while he's down. By the end of the school day, I'm trying to figure out the best attack to break his knees. I laugh at all the possibilities. People watching me must have thought I was going crazy.

The novelty of imaginary fighting wears off. All I'm left with is the constant thought of seeing my father. At night, I sometimes cry thinking about my childhood; I think about all I missed as a kid.

Each year my Boy Scout troop took a trip to Yagoog Lake in Rhode Island. All the boys brought their fathers along. We explored the woods in father-son pairs: digging up worms for fishing, identifying birds sitting in trees, swimming in the lake. It sounds like every kid's dream: camping with his father. Fearing embarrassment by the other kids for staying home, I had to join up with Pat Lang and his father as we toured the woods together. Mr. Lang once showed us a great stream to go trout fishing. But when we both came back with fish, it was Pat who he hugged. He tried to hide his favoritism, but how could he? It was his son, his boy. He was proud

of us, but his fatherly instincts couldn't help pour emotion over his son's accomplishments. I got a pat on the back and a, "Good job, Jesse."

The sun is shining brightly midday when I pull into my father's driveway and reluctantly open my door. It takes me three or four minutes to build up the courage to pull the handle. I step out to see a small, brown A-frame house that's distinctively lower-middle class: brown chipped paint, arching rails on a small porch, clouded windows. An old man rushes out the front door. He's overweight and smoking a cigarette. A glimpse at his face is a mirror of my own, but puffy and wrinkled. We lock eyes, and he smiles a set of horribly misaligned yellow teeth. I can't remember what face I made. I am trying to figure out if I should punch him in his fat face or kick him in his groin.

He doesn't give me a minute to make up my mind. As I walk up to him, he extends his arms and pulls me into a bear hug that knocks the wind out of me. He begins to cry. I have no words.

"Jesse. My son. I love you so much," he says, still gripping to me tightly.

"Hi Dad." It's the only thing I could think of. I don't know what I'm supposed to say at a moment like this. I lightly return his tight embrace. I can hear him sniffle as he lets the tears run down his cheek. My emotion has no definition; it's a mix of melancholic, subliminal rage.

He refuses to let go, instead tightening his grip. I pat him on the back, and finally he loosens his grip to take a look at my face. He's smiling his ugly smile, chins lining up in rows. He's got a beard like mine but graying. His inflated stomach hangs over his belt.

I think to myself: "Is this the father I want?"

He leads me in the front door. The living room has low ceilings, and the tight quarters are clouded with cigarette smoke. It smells like a tobacco factory. I sit at the wooden table in his cramped living room, and he asks if I'd like some coffee. I think vodka would be better, but I keep this to myself.

We sit and talk for over an hour. He talks about his divorce from my mother, the messy divorce courts, how he was given no opportunity for visitation rights, and life on the road when he hitchhiked from Connecticut to Montana. He's rambling on about how much he's missed me, and I can't

keep track of how many times he's thrown around words like "love," "sorry," "forgiveness." He keeps tearing up but doesn't want me to see this, so he gets up to pour another cup of coffee or light a cigarette. I sit quietly at the table, arms crossed, not absorbing what he's saying.

He begins to talk about his health. He gives me the long list of his problems: fibromyalgia, arthritis, insomnia, bi-polar, insomniac. The list goes on. It's pretty bad, just as bad as Michelle described it. I ask if he's dying. He tells me he's worried about his health. But then he says something that I didn't expect, something that counteracts Michelle's plea: he's not dying.

"I'm like a cat, Jesse. I've got nine lives," he says proudly, as if a great wave of relief should spread through me.

"Michelle says you're really sick. She said you don't have a lot of time." No relief is gained, only confusion. Why did Michelle send me here? She told me he was dying. She told me he might not be around, and I would regret not seeing him.

"No. Well, not definitely."

"So you're gonna be okay?"

"I don't know, Jesse. I know I'm not going anywhere soon. I can tell you that much. With you back in my life and Michelle, I have a good outlook on things. It's like God's telling me I need to stick around for my kids." Michelle lied to me. She suckered me into this just to satisfy my father's desire to see his kids.

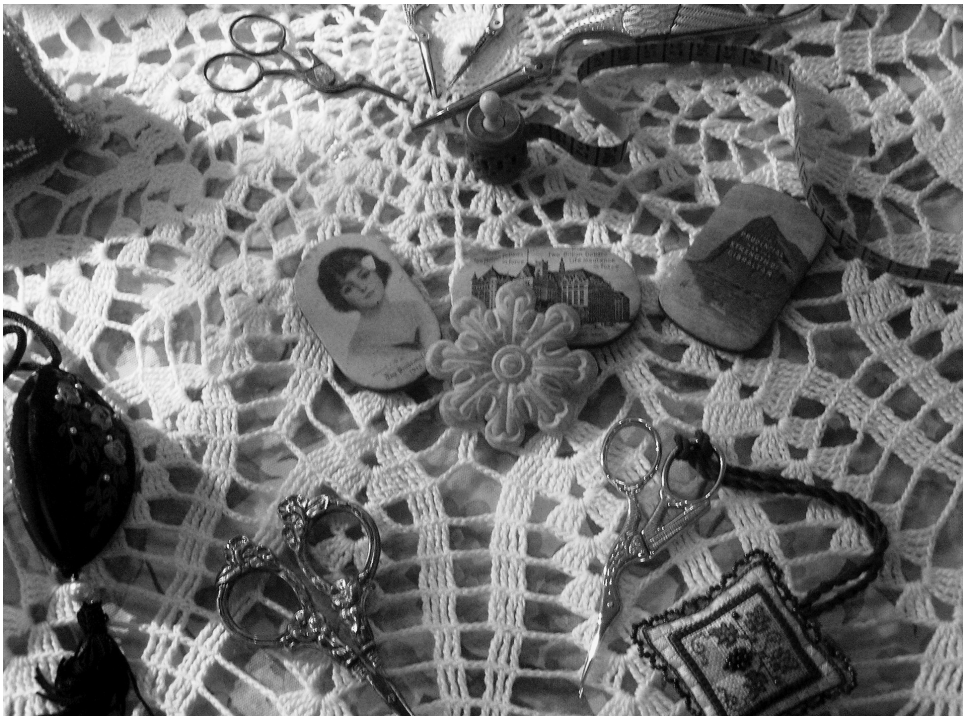
Silence. I'm utterly dismayed. I should tell him that I'm there to see him before he goes, to make peace with him before he dies. His death would mean the same as his life to me. He wasn't with me before, and he won't be with me after. We have both been lied to by Michelle: me thinking I would make amends with my father, him thinking that he was getting his son back.

He tries to tell me stories, but I don't listen. All he says is a sales pitch: it's an offer to sell himself as a father I'd be interested in having through courageous acts of manhood or personal trials that will give me a newfound respect for him. He talks about hunting black bears, hitchhiking across state lines, sleeping with gorgeous women. He even has the nerve to talk about how he'd like to go camping with me. In his mind, he's thinking that, if he

sells himself the right way, I will take the bait and let him be my father again.

I tap my foot on the wood floors and chain smoke in rapid succession. He eventually stops talking; the sales pitch has come to an end. I don't stay much longer. I don't hug him on the way out. Driving home, I cry intensely. This man means nothing to me. I don't want to mean anything to him, either.

Criticism



Just Lovely by Stephen Mead

JANIE CRAWFORD:
FROM OBJECT TO SUBJECT IN THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD

Maureen Goldstein

In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie Crawford undergoes a psychological transformation from a young girl who is objectified by her background and her relationships to an adult who finally achieves subjectivity through various challenges she encounters and choices she makes. Based on Jessica Benjamin's theory of object relations in *The Bonds of Love* and various other theories of literary criticism, this study presents the psychological process Janie experiences over the course of twenty years. Her journey is also examined as a parallel to Hurston's own challenges both personally and professionally in her path toward acceptance and recognition. Both women are analyzed in the context of their social environment, as well as their personal development which shaped their identity and their quest toward autonomy.

As we first hear Janie's narration to Pheoby recounting her youth, she uses a tree as a metaphor to describe the contrasts in her life: "Dawn and Doom was in the branches" (*Their Eyes* 8). She never saw her parents and was raised by her grandmother. According to Jessica Benjamin's theory, Janie's background provided many obstacles toward autonomy. Benjamin combines feminist theory and psychoanalytic theory in order to provide a better understanding of individuation and subjectivity through object relations. In *The Bonds of Love*, Benjamin examines women's readiness to accept a submissive role and traces this acquiescence to their psychological development from infancy and shows how culture encodes men to be agents and women to be passive. She extends this dynamic of domination and submission to include political and sociological influences, as well as psychological development. Her main focus of psychic development is based on theories that shift from the Oedipal to pre-Oedipal stages and from father to mother. Benjamin illustrates how domination emanates from the relationship between self and other and that domination and submission are a consequence of the "breakdown of necessary tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition that allows the self and other to meet as sovereign equals" (12).

Benjamin's concept of mutual recognition, which begins in infancy, produces two subjects. This intersubjectivity enables a subject to develop within and through the association with other subjects. For a child to achieve subjectivity, intersubjectivity must exist between two parents which would extend to the child. Consequently, Janie's path toward subjectivity through her

familial relationships was obstructed because she never knew her parents, and her grandmother became her single caregiver.

Initially, when her early years are spent with a white family, Janie does not realize her own ethnicity until she is six years old, and she sees herself in a photo. This identity confusion would create feelings of detachment and powerlessness in comprehending her genealogy. Michel Foucault in *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* sees the achievement of power through the practices of everyday life and determines culture through social constructionism (Fraser 17). From this perspective, Janie does not belong in the white family (as seen in the taunting of the white children regarding the notoriety of her father), nor does she have any connection to her own ethnicity which Foucault in *History of Sexuality* sees as an inability to verify her own ancestry that results in objectivity (Fraser 24-5).

When her grandmother realizes this overall effect on Janie, she moves them to their own home, providing Janie with some sense of security. Her view of the world is extremely romantic as she wonders at the beauty of nature:

> It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the backyard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How/ Why? This singing she heard had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. (*Their Eyes* 10)

From Hurston's mellifluous diction, we see how Janie has created a beautiful world from her surroundings that paints a serene vision in contrast to her former, dubious identity. She extends these perceptions to all around her including Johnny Taylor: "In her former blindness she had known him as shiftless Johnny Taylor, tall and lean. That was before the golden dust of pollen had beglamored his rags and her eyes" (12). Here, Janie is idealizing him. Benjamin's theory conceives idealization as objectification, apparent in Janie's perception.

Her idyllic world erupts at sixteen when Nanny presents a more suitable marriage prospect as she is aging and fears Janie's choices if she were deceased, so she suggests Logan Killicks. To Janie, "The Vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree" (*Their Eyes* 14) is her marked reaction. This was not ameliorated by Nanny's comment regarding African-American male-female relationships: "So de white man throw down de load and tell de

nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see" (14). Janie's imploring to delay marriage is refused, and she is forced into marriage, which reiterates Foucault's previous assessment of power and powerlessness as she is subject to the social constraints of race, class, and gender in the South during this era. No choices exist for her.

Thus, Janie enters the marriage as an object, and their relationship perpetuates this status when Logan treats her as a field-hand and does not appreciate her domestic qualities. He tells her she is "spoiled rotten" (*Their Eyes* 26) and that she acts as if she were white (30). Her "first dream of marriage was dead, so she was a woman" (25). She feels lonely and disillusioned. Her final realization of her present life emerges when Logan plans to purchase another mule so that she could work with him in the field. Consequently, when Joe (Jody) Starkes appears, her dreams return as he implies she is above her current lifestyle, and she decides to leave Logan: "The morning road air was like a new dress. That made her feel the apron tied around her waist. She untied it and flung it on a low bush beside the road and walked on, picking flowers and making a bouquet" (32). She believes life with Joe would fulfill her romantic notions of marriage.

However, Janie becomes what we would currently call a trophy wife. She is well-received by the town of Eatonville but is not allowed to speak publically and is relegated to remain in the domestic sphere while Jody enjoys the focus of mayor. He builds an elaborate mansion that emphasizes his superiority over the town, immersing himself in politics and aggrandizing his status. Again, Janie feels lonely.

Jody continually excludes her from anything that does not deal with her domestic responsibilities or selling in the store, which Janie strongly dislikes and causes many arguments between them as he often belittles women's ability to think. She refuses submission and begins to find her voice, which results in Jody physically abusing her, destroying her image of him (*Their Eyes* 71-2). This behavior drives a permanent disconnect between them as the "spirit of the marriage left the bedroom"(71). Janie's constant attempt toward articulating her thoughts gradually results in suppression by Jody, and eventually, what self-esteem she possesses is affected: "She was a rut in the road. Plenty of life beneath the surface but it was kept beaten down by the wheels" (76). She resorts again to her romantic dreaming to dispel the numbness she feels about her life until his illness develops wrathful interchanges between the two, and he moves out of their bedroom (76-80). His general mistrust for her devastates Janie, and she feels alienated during his last days although she tries to reason with him and feels pity for him as he dies (87).

To show respect for Jody, she arranges an elaborate funeral: "Janie starched and ironed her face and came set in the funeral behind her veil. It was like stone and steel" (*Their Eyes* 88). After the funeral the question arises as to what happened in her life: "She had found a jewel down inside herself and she had wanted to walk where people could see her and gleam it around" (90). She was continuously disappointed in relationships because she had been unable to express her thoughts and was not recognized for her "self." According to Benjamin, subjectivity is not possible in this situation.

At this juncture, Janie's life is mired in dullness until young Tea Cake appears who challenges her to a game of checkers, which leaves her "glowing inside….Somebody wanted her to play" (*Their Eyes* 96). She is impressed with his offering to teach her since Joe had always diminished her intelligence and criticized her yearning for playfulness. She feels as if she had always known Tea Cake and is so comfortable with him when he invites her to go fishing at midnight and a Sunday school picnic for which she is labeled as a scandalous widow by the town (96-108). Her romantic notions return when she thinks of him, and we see again in Hurston's dulcet diction: "He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom-a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps…. He was a glance from God" (106). Her experience causes her to question his motives considering the difference in their ages and to wonder if he is more interested in her money as are the other men in town. She gives him latitude, which demonstrates a mature understanding of her world, a first step toward autonomy. He convinces her of his sincerity, and despite criticism and some doubts on her part, they marry. Janie declares she is finished leading her grandmother's conception of life, which almost destroyed her emotionally and psychologically. With Tea Cake, she learns a new concept-communication (115).

Immediately after their marriage, her doubts emerge again as he disappears along with her money, and she recalls another widow from Eatonville deceived by a younger man and left penniless and broken. When he returns and explains his experiences and that he excluded her because she is above those people and does not belong there, she convinces him that she wants to be with him wherever and with whomever he associates. Here, Janie exhibits the ability to make significant choices in her life and be accepted and recognized by Tea cake for who she is and for what she wants. When she agrees to go to "the muck" with him, it is evident that she is accepting him and his lifestyle which pleases both of them. Her response of "her soul crawled out from its hiding place" (*Their Eyes* 128) indicates her total commitment to Tea Cake and this relationship of mutual recognition. She has finally achieved a relationship of intersubjectivity although she has violated all of the social

mores of her peers by marrying a much younger, unsettled man to go live in an area well beneath her economic level. By defying all of her grandmother's caveats and social expectations, her self-esteem and sense of well-being are at their zenith on her journey toward autonomy.

However, this relationship is painfully tested as Tea Cake becomes violent and irrational from the rabid dog bite he receives while saving Janie during the hurricane. When she realizes her safety and life are threatened by this man she no longer recognizes in his delirium, she must shoot him to save herself. In her trial, it is interesting to note that many in the Everglade community wanted to testify against her. She is criticized by her neighbors who basically declare that Tea Cake was too good for her and who believe as soon as he becomes ill she shoots him. After her acquittal, he is buried away from the critics in West Palm Beach with his guitar. Janie again defies her neighbors' approval.

Her final progression toward subjectivity is manifested when she returns to Eatonville in overalls and walks silently past the townspeople: "She had come back from the sodden and the bloated; the sudden dead, their eyes wide open in judgment" (*Their Eyes* 1). She ignores the observers who make comments about her attire, her questionable relationship with Tea Cake, and her impoliteness as she continues toward the house she had shared with Jody. When her friend, Phoeby, brings her dinner and listens to Janie's narration of her life, she encourages Janie to tell her story to the town to deter their judgment of her. Janie disagrees and explains her position:

> talkin' don't amount tuh uh hill uh beans when yuh can't do nothin'else. And listenin' Tu dat kind uh talk is jus' lak openin' yo' mouth and lettin' de moonshine down yo' throat. It s a known fact, Phoeby, you got tuh *go* there to *know* there.... Two things everybody's got tu do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves. (192)

Our final glimpse of Janie is in her bedroom where she finds comfort and finally inner peace alone. Her journey toward subjectivity and autonomy is complete. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. proclaims Hurston's literary success at portraying psychological growth is accomplished as the "novel shifts from third to a blend of first and third person known as 'free indirect discourse,' signifying this awareness of self in Janie" (197). She had clearly found her voice, subtly depicted by Hurston's melodious prose and her ability to weave a cohesive undulating plot.

In contrast to Janie's milieu, Zora Neale Hurston came from a comfortable background; her Father was primarily a preacher, and she enjoyed a relatively stable life. In her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*, she described herself as a free spirit encouraged by her mother's advice to "jump at de sun" (13). She played with boys and had no interest in the social expectation of being

involved with dolls (26-30). Even at an early age, she devoured books and won awards and recognition for her interest in reading (35-40). However, with the death of her mother, her world was shattered.

She recounts her observance of her mother's dying moments:

> As I crowded in, they lifted up the bed and turned it around so that Mama's eyes would face east. I thought that she looked to me as the head of the bed reversed. Her mouth was slightly open, but her breathing took up so much of her strength that she could not talk. But she looked at me, or so I felt to speak for her. She depended on me for a voice. (65)

But as the reality of the situation manifested itself, Hurston expressed a new vision of her world:

> The Master-Maker in His making has made Old Death. Made him with big, soft feet and square toes. Made him with a face that reflects the fact of all things, but neither changes itself, nor is mirrored anywhere. Made the body of death out of infinite: hunger. Made a weapon of his hand to satisfy his needs. This was the morning of the day of the beginning of things. (65)

Her family life would never be the same as her father remarried a disagreeable woman who abused the children. On a visit home from boarding school, Hurston confronts her step-mother which escalates into violence: "The primeval in me leaped to life….If I died, let me die with my hands soaked in her blood" (76). Obviously, this situation changed the dynamic within the family and affected Hurston's self-esteem and her feelings of familial acceptance and recognition that she had previously experienced when her mother was alive. She felt isolated and an outsider with no recognition.

After some years at school, her father was unable to pay the tuition, and she was invited to move north to live with her brother where she had a myriad of jobs including domestic work (*Webster*). Here, she joined the Gilbert and Sullivan theatrical troupe as a wardrobe girl, which afforded her traveling the South. This experience made her realize the opportunities that existed and the importance of an education (*Kansas* 1).

Hurston enrolled in prep school and then Howard University in Washington, D. C. She submitted publications to magazines where she won prizes and was then admired as one of the new prominent writers in the Harlem Renaissance. All of this approbation aided her in obtaining a scholarship for Barnard College where she worked with Franz Boas, a noted anthropologist. Her varied interests and studies were presented in the works about Eatonville while she was living the exotic life of an artist in New York City (*Kansas* 1). Her interest in anthropology was supported by a research fellowship to study the African-American folklore of the South and later by a Guggenheim fellowship to examine the religious practices of Haiti and Jamaica

(*Africa* 2). Later, in Haiti Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937, which contains many examples of folk speech dialect and tales (*Kansas* 2).

While she continued to publish in an array of genres, she was finding it difficult to obtain financial support, mainly because of the economy but also because she did not have the critical support of her peers (*Notable Biographies* 2). *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was criticized as unrealistic, and many questioned the existence of an African-American town such as Eatonville and claimed that this novel was nothing more than a love story. Noteworthy participants in the Harlem Renaissance, such as Richard Wright, deemed her plots as entertainment and lacking in social consciousness. He believed her depiction was almost farcical of African-Americans in the South and did not depict the real hardships they encountered. He believed the novel "carries no theme, no message, no thought" (Washington x), but rather it was an exploitation and unique examples of African-American life that appealed to white audiences. This critique is superficial since underlying Hurston's melodic prose lay the economic and social limitations of her characters in their daily lives. Their physical and psychological struggles were evident in Nanny's terse description of relationships and Janie's insightful comments throughout the novel about life and love. But politics was not the focus of this novel and in Hurston's own words she aimed at composing a Black novel and "'not a treatise on sociology"' (Gates 200), albeit the character of Janie does question the repression of her beliefs and desires for a better lifestyle within the existing social realities.

Like Janie in her world, Hurston was independent of the focus of many of the Harlem Renaissance participants, and for this fact, not for any lack of her literary skills, she was not accepted. Consequently, she continued with her own vision and publications and remained true to her beliefs, her self-conception, and her voice despite the later years of her life being clouded by financial and health problems resulting in her name and works becoming obscure. After her death, she was buried in an unmarked grave in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Fortunately, Hurston's work and name were resurrected by Alice Walker who took an ardent interest in her life and writings. She found and marked Hurston's grave in 1973 ("About Zora" 3). She also published "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" in *Ms. Magazine* in 1975 (Gates 196-200). Subsequently, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was included in a session titled "Traditions and Their Transformations in Afro-American Letters" at the MLA convention in 1979, legitimizing her place in American literature (Washington xiii). In 1997 Hurston's unpublished plays were discovered in the Copyright Deposit Drama Collection and are now housed in the Library's Manuscript, Music, and Rare

Book and Special Collections divisions entitled *The Zora Neale Hurston Plays at the Library of Congress* (*American Memory* 1). And so, in reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, we can see not only Janie's attainment of subjectivity, but Hurston's as well, in her single-minded literary goal accomplished in the attainment of the female voice despite social limitations.

Works Cited

"About Zora Neale Hurston." *Biography. Google Book Search*. Web. 7 July 2011.

Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination.* New York: Pantheon, 1988. Print.

Fraser, Nancy. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory.* Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis, 1998. Print.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "Afterword." *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. By Zora Neale Hurston. New York: Perennial Classics, 1998. Print.

"Hurston Biography." *Kansas Heritage. Google Book Search*. Web. 7 July 2011.

Hurston, Zora, Neale. *Dust Tracks on the Road*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010. Print.

--. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Perennial Classics, 1998. Print.

Washington, Mary Helen. "Foreword." *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. By Zora Neale Hurston. Perennial Classics,1998. Print.

"Zora Neale Hurston." *Africa Within /African-American Literature. Google Search Book*. Web. 7 July 2011.

"Zora Neale Hurston." *Notable Biographies. Google Search Book*. Web. 7 July 2011.

"Zora Neale Hurston." *Webster Education. Googl Search Book*. Web. 7 July 2011.

The Zora Neale Hurston Plays at the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress/ American Memory. Google Search Book. Web. 7 July 2011.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ruth Bavetta is a poet, artist and former college art instructor whose work has been shown nationwide. Her poetry has been published in *Nimrod*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Poetry New Zealand* and *North American Review*, among others. A lifelong resident of Southern California, she is a graduate of the University of Southern California, California State University at San Bernardino, and Claremont Graduate School.

Laurel Benjamin, a Bay Area native who lives in Albany, has an MFA from Mills College and teaches English composition, literature, and creative writing at Laney College, in Oakland, California. She is a member of the Bay Area Women's Poetry Salon and the Teance writing group. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in anthologies. She is now working on personal essays and memoir, which appear in her blog at http://thebadgerpress.blogspot.com.

Louis Bourgeois is the editor of *Vox Press* and the author of six books of poetry; in 2008 his memoir, *The Gar Diaries*, was nominated for the National Book Award. He was the first graduate of the University of Mississippi's MFA program in Creative Writing and has won many awards for his work, including a MAC artist grant.

Jesse Duthrie is a 24 year old senior at Central Connecticut State University where he studies English and creative writing. Outside of writing and class, he enjoys snowboarding, basketball, and getting his work printed. He lives in New Britain, Connecticut.

Jasmon Drain is a 2010 Pushcart Prize nominee, was a finalist in the inaugural Terrrain.org fiction contest, and has been published in *The Chariton Review*, *Tidal Basin Review*, *Foliate Oak Literary Journal*, *Ginosko*, *My Story Lives*, *The Quotable*, *Specter Literary*, and *Wilderness House Literary Review*. Jasmon also has short stories forthcoming in *Tertulia* magazine.

Richard Downing has won the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Peace Poetry Award, Writecorner Press's 2010 Editor's Award, and New Delta Review's Matt Clark Prize. He has poems in numerous journals and anthologies, as well as *Four Steps Off the Path*, a YellowJacket Press chapbook. He is a tree hugger, co-founder of Save Our Naturecoast, and holds a PhD in English.

Karie Friedman holds an MFA from New England College and was for many years the Assistant Editor of *Reviews of Modern Physics*. Her poems have appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Barrow Street*, The *Naugatuck River Review*, and *Off the Coast*. A native of Los Angeles, she now lives in rural Maine.

C.S. Fuqua's books include *Alabama Musicians: Musical Heritage from the Heart of Dixie, Trust Walk* (short-story collection), *Big Daddy's Gadgets* (novel), *If I Were...* (poetry collection for children), *The Swing: Poems of Fatherhood* (EPIC selection for Best Poetry Collection 2008), *Divorced Dads*, and *Notes to My Becca*, among others. His work has appeared in publications such as *Main Street Rag*, *Iodine*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Cemetery Dance*, *Bogg*, *Year's Best Horror Stories XIX*, *XX* and *XXI*, *Slipstream*, *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, *The Writer*, and *Honolulu Magazine*. His second collection of short fiction, *Rise Up*, is forthcoming from Mundania Press. For more information, please visit csfuqua.comxa.com.

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee's book, *On the Altar of Greece*, is the winner of the Seventh Annual Gival Press Poetry Award. The collection received a 2007 Eric Hoffer Book Award: Notable for Art Category and was nominated for a Los Angeles Times Book Prize and other awards. Her poetry has appeared in journals internationally. Her website is www.donnajgelagotislee.com.

Maureen Goldstein, Ph.D. has focused her research primarily on gender and multicultural studies. She has expanded her faculty role to include leading Academic Study Abroad Programs, providing students with immersion and experiential learning. As a student, she attended the American College in Paris and can attest to the effectiveness of these programs.

Lois Marie Harrod won the 2012 Tennessee Chapbook Prize (Poems & Plays) with her manuscript *The Only Is*. Her eleventh book *Brief Term*, poems about teaching, was published by Black Buzzard Press (2011), and her chapbook *Cosmogony* won the 2010 Hazel Lipa Chapbook contest (Iowa State University). Her poems have been published online and in print journals including *American Poetry Review*, *Blueline*, *The MacGuffin*, *Salt*, *The Literary Review*, *Verse Daily*, and *Zone 3*. A Geraldine R. Dodge poet and former high school teacher, she teaches Creative Writing at The College of New Jersey. Read her work on www.loismarieharrod.com.

David Hernquist is a teacher, editor, and writer. He is the organizer for The Sit-and-Write Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. His poetry has been published in *Straight Forward*. He is currently reading the collected works of Wallace Stevens to his two-month-old son Henry.

Louisa Howerow's most recent poems appeared in the Canadian journals, *FreeFall* and *Carousel*, and in the Australian, *Rabbit*.

M.J.Iuppa lives on a small farm near the shores of Lake Ontario. Her most recent poems have appeared in *Poetry East*, *The Chariton Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Blueline*, *The Prose Poem Project*, and *The Centrifugal Eye*, among others. Her recent chapbook is *As the Crows Flies* (Foothills Publishing, 2008) and second full length collection, *Within Reach*, (Cherry Grove Collections, 2010). She is Writer-in-Residence and Director of the Visual and Performing Arts Minor program at St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY.

Stephen Mead, a resident of NY, is a published artist, writer and maker of short collage-films. His latest project, a collaboration with Kevin MacLeod, is entitled *Whispers of Arias*, a two volume CD set of narrative poems set to music, http://stephenmeadmusic.weebly.com.

Terri McCord is a poet, painter, and photographer who facilitates workshops, teaches in the schools as an artist-in-residence, and also works as a marketer for non-profits. Her work has appeared in many literary magazines including *Rio Grande Review*, *Seneca Review*, and the *Connecticut Review*.

Rafael Miguel Montes, born in Santiago de Cuba, is a Cultural Studies professor at St. Thomas University and a Cuban-American writer living and working in Miami. His literary work reflects his dual upbringing in the Cuban-American community of Hialeah, Florida, and the academic communities of a number of institutions of higher learning. Twice nominated for a Pushcart award in poetry, his writing has appeared in *The Caribbean Writer*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Conclave: A Journal of Character*, *Magnapoets*, *Criminal Class*, *Prole* (UK), and a number of other academic and literary journals. His poem "Menu" recently won a 2011 UK Poetry Kit Award.

Eileen Murphy is a graduate of Columbia College of Chicago with an M.A. in Fiction Writing/Teaching of Writing. She teaches literature and English full-time at Polk State College in Lakeland, Florida. She previously published photography in the journal Calyx and poetry in literary magazines including *Clare*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Mudfish*, *Louisville Review*, and poetry/memoir/story. She is interested in exploring the connections between photography and poetry.

Jacob Oet lives in Solon, Ohio. Jacob's poetry and images appear in *Palooka Journal*, *Straylight Magazine*, *Moonshot Magazine*, *Petrichor Machine*, and *OVS Magazine* among others. His awards include the 2011 Younkin-Rivera Poetry Prize and the 2011 Ohioana Robert Fox Award. Jacob's first chapbook, *Metamorphosis*, is forthcoming in 2012 from Kattywompus Press. Student by choice, Jacob Oet is never sure which language he speaks. You may spot him in a park, forest, or beach, with planted feet, arms stretched up and shaking in a breeze. But don't let him see you; he likes to sing to strangers. He takes photos of snow and hates winter.

Kenneth Pobo won the 2011 Qarrtsiluni poetry chapbook contest for *Ice And Gaywings*. They published it in November 2011. Forthcoming from Finishing Line Press is a new chapbook of poems called *Saving My Place*.

Andrés Amitai Wilson was named after the famed classical guitarist, Andrés Segovia. An accomplished guitarist himself, he is also currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. His poetry and articles have appeared in the *L Magazine*, *Poetry Magazine Online*, *Ghoti Magazine*, *Artichoke Haircut*, *Bird's Eye Review*, and several other publications. When not conversing with the long dead, he practices yoga, binge drinks espresso, and willfully humiliates himself for the amusement of his elfin daughter. www.andreswilson.com

Dallas Woodburn's short fiction has been nominated multiple times for a Pushcart Prize and the Dzanc Books "Best of the Web" anthology and has appeared in *Monkeybicycle*, *Arcadia Journal*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, and *flashquake*, among others. Her nonfiction has been published in *Writer's Digest*, *The Writer*, *Family Circle*, and *The Los Angeles Times*, and her plays have been produced in Los Angeles, Santa Paula, and Ventura, California. She is pursuing an M.F.A. in fiction writing at Purdue University, where she is also the incoming Fiction Editor of *Sycamore Review*. Visit her on the web at http://dallaswoodburn.blogspot.com.

The Indian River Review is published annually. For submission guidelines and call for papers, authors should refer to the journal's weblog: http://theindianriverreview.wordpress.com

To purchase an issue of *The Indian River Review*, contact or visit the Indian River State College River Shop located at the Main Campus in Fort Pierce, Florida:

877-770-2665
TheRiverShop@irsc.edu
http://www.bookstore.irsc.edu
Indian River State College
3209 Virginia Ave.
Ft. Pierce, FL 34981

INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

ENGLISH, COMMUNICATIONS, AND MODERN LANGUAGES

INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

Indian River State College
3209 Virginia Avenue
Fort Pierce, FL 34981
(772) 462-4772

ISSN # 2166 - 9481
$10.00