

MAY 06 1993



CHRYSA LIS

James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Virginia
Spring 1993

Cover art by Heather Dickman

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CHRYSA LIS

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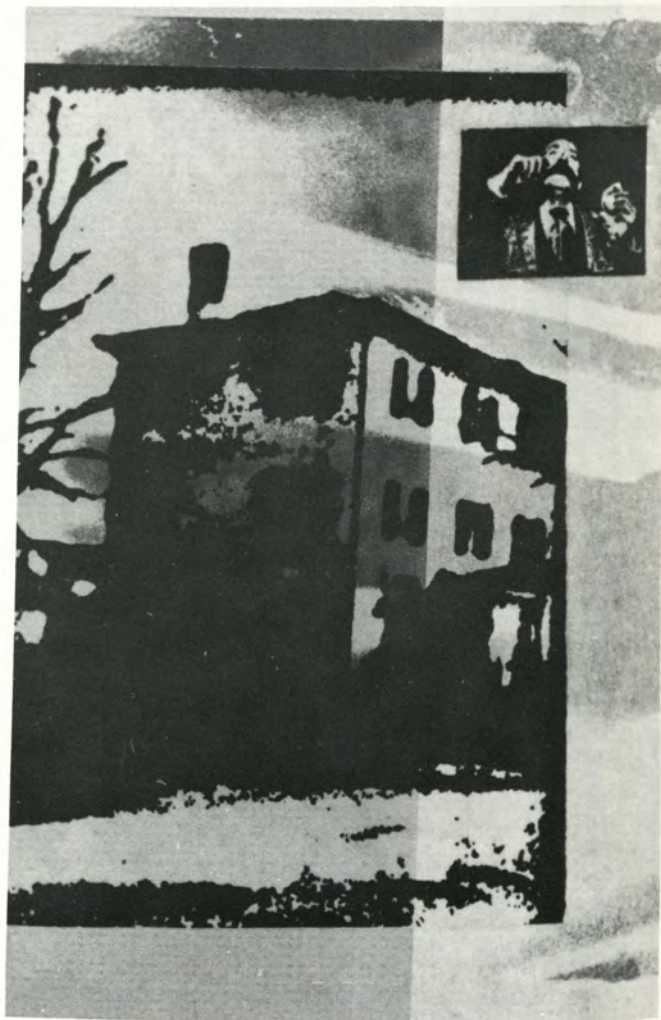


— art by Heather Dickman

I really need to carry something to write on

I really had something in mind-
when I walked through the front door this evening,
but it seems to have slipped
me somewhere-
between the bathroom and
my writing table.

— M.R. Bondurant



— art by Marcia D. Spencer



— art by Sally Chang

The Navigator

I.

i am the navigator
at least that's the role i play,
the thing that i've become.

blazing paths through problems,
leading the way through crisis.
bypassing the rocky plains of resentment,
fording the swift moving waters of depression.
soaring high with sensibility.

more often than not sensing
(and flying)
solo.
a guide of the mind, emotion, and soul.

i am the navigator.
but,
have you seen me?
i seemed to have lost myself
somewhere along the way.

II.

i am the navigator.
i go in search of myself.
unsure of destination,
more unsure of return.
a guide in need of guidance.

so where do i look?
 in the landscape of another mind?
 somewhere in between?
 i might have stopped to rest
 in the middle of someone's problem.
 (or someone's love.)

i've traveled so far.
 most likely i'll travel much farther.
 i don't know how long i'll be gone.

i'll be sure to write.
 if i can
 (if i care.)

III.

i am the navigator.
 navigating blind.
 traveling and remembering
 vague landmarks
 for the voyage home.

IV.

i was the navigator.
 looking for myself
 and a way home

now i just am.

i have found myself
 in the last place i looked.

i have decided to stay.

— vince rhodes

Belief

Belief is a rock that crumbles
under wagon wheels and blows,
Breathing back
in fragments
to the Bastion,
who, unable to build the pieces, stumbles and
snaps,
Broken
Before the flight into the forest
Blind.

— Kathryn Peterson



— "Escape" by Christina Campo

It Ain't Sunday Till The Sun Rise

The cool Blue-blackness of dawn
Envelopes a catacomb of warm funk,

Sin's sole witness.

An excuse for unmet eyes
As britches and brogans
Are slipped on with church prayer quietness.

Their inhabitant spent passion whispers,

"I don't know you on the street.
Hope to see you tomorrow at sunday meeting."

the cool Blue-blackness of dawn
Envelopes a jovial shuffle home.
Hastened by hinting ultraviolet rays,
A race to beat tomorrow home.

Chuckling, it ain't sunday,
it ain't sunday,
till the sun rise.

— *Eric Brown*

The Sunset

"Julia, finish your beverage please."

"Yes, mom."

"Dad, how much longer?" fussed Jason as he put his plate in the bag.

"Not much longer son," replied his father brushing off his pants.

"I want to go home and watch T.V.," complained Jason.

"Just be patient Jason," Barb, his mom, replied. She took the trash bag filling it with Julia's and her husband's trash. She ate the last bite of her hot dog, or what they considered a hot dog, and also placed her plate and cup into the bag. She tied the bag setting it down behind her. Smoothing the blanket out once again, she made herself comfortable. Her husband came over and sat down beside her. They snuggled and kissed like teenagers. Their embrace embarrassed Jason and Julia.

"This was a good idea you had dear," whispered Barb.

The family was seated under an old oak tree that overlooked a stagnant pond. The sun was sinking low in the sky. The light reflecting on the pond's surface fanned like the top of a red and yellow circus tent.

Soon the sun began to slip below the horizon. Croaking bullfrogs and chirping crickets filled the air with musical melodies. The features of the trees and scenery across the small pond began to darken greatly and shadows began blending together to form one large blob.

"When I was just a high kid, my father took me out and showed me my first sunset. And his father did the same with him. And how it's my turn to show you," boasted Jason's dad.

"I don't see what's so great about it, dad," complained Jason and Julia in unison.

"Just watch, you'll see."

Only a small portion of the sun remained visible above the horizon. Finally the light diminished as the great fiery ball slipped behind the opposite hill and was gone. Julia and Jason watched amazed at the spectacle

they had just witnessed. A tear ran down Barb's cheek. She turned and winked at her husband.

There was only a moment of silence before the room flooded with bright, sterile, white light. A door in the back of the room opened, admitting the uniformed attendant.

"Okay, kids, time to go," cried Barb.

"Oh, daddy, do we have to go?"

"I'm afraid our time is up children," answered their dad.

"Can we come back and see it again some time?" pleaded Jason who had finally taken an interest in his dad's idea of seeing a sunset.

"We'll see," replied dad with a tear in his eye.

The attendant stepped aside allowing the family to pass into the reception room.

"Barb, take the kids out into the mall. I'll catch up."

"I hope you enjoyed your sunset. How may I help you?" asked the receptionist.

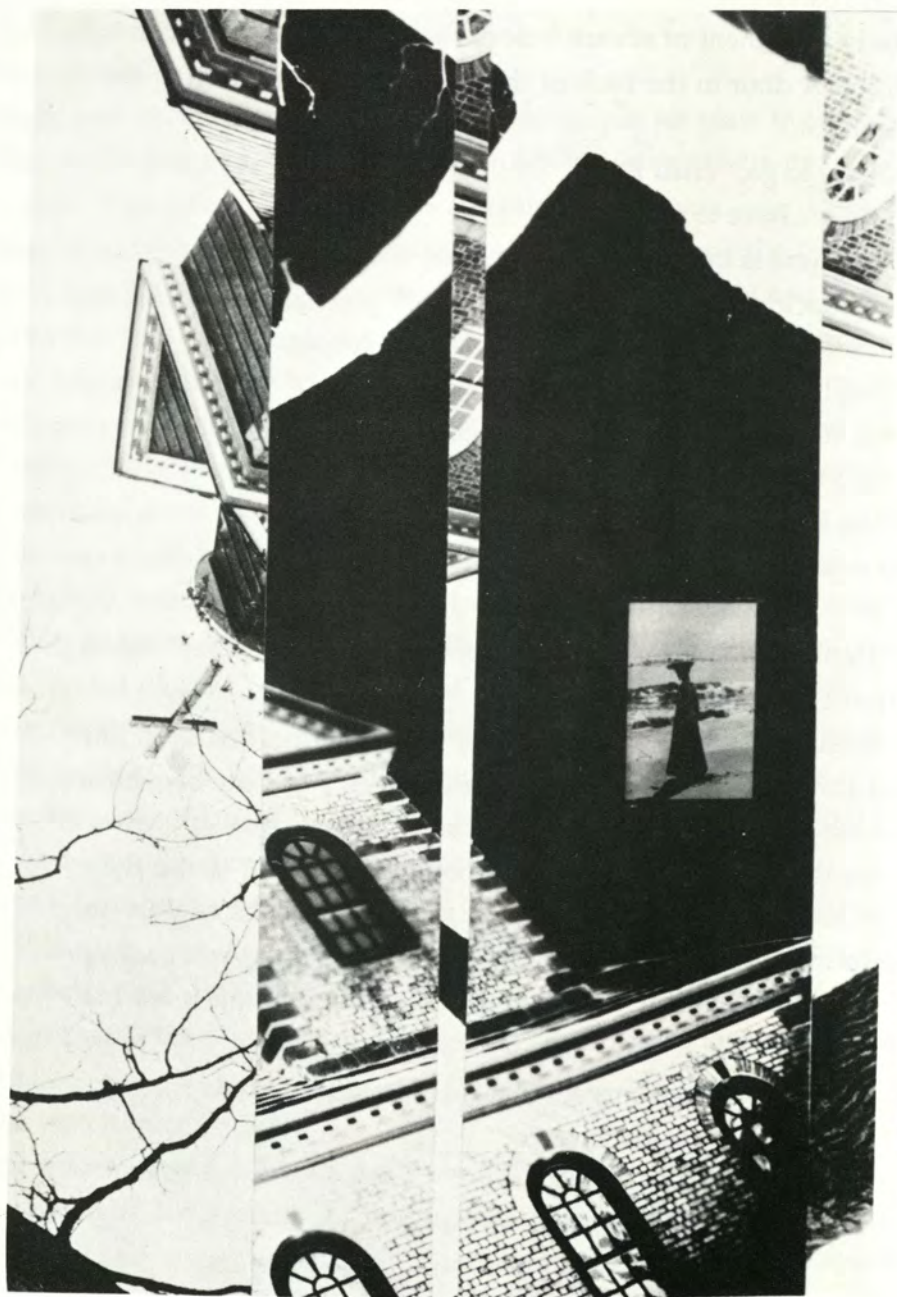
"I was just thinking about making an appointment for another viewing. It was magnificent as usual."

The receptionist opened a large green book with date marked in it. She rapidly flipped through the pages looking for an open slot. "Sunsets have become one of our most popular attractions since a second sun appeared in our galaxy. Since they don't occur anymore, people now want to see them. Just think, once long ago, sunsets were taken for granted," she ramble on.

Finally she found a vacant date. "Would you like the complete package including a meal and a blanket?" she inquired. "We're running it for half-price now."

"Splendid, but can we have burgers instead?" he questioned.

"Certainly! Will that be cash or charge?"



— art by Marcia D. Spencer

yes and i

guess (they say)
the eyes are
a window
to . . .
yes and
the clouds
are drifting slowly
through your listless skies

today

let's get
some sleep, ok?

— *Kevin Barents*

Without breath

without breath
sheets of silence
balance
between us.

A cold strand of wet hair
slides slowly
across your closed eyes—
a line of black

ink

dripping
in

curvature
on a pallid canvas.

Like a subterfuge
eluding a chalky wall,
your sleeping profile
advances

then swerves by,
drowning

in the volatile shadows
of a silvery, whispering light.

— *Angie Lee*

Circles

A gray spray of rain causes her ashy-blond hair,
to fall in ringlets over her shoulders,
while the damp earth swallows water in rusty puddles.

The mourners quietly, gently -
step around the shiny mirrors,
and engulf her tiny frame in their embrace.

Their cheeks stained with tears,
and coats slicked with rain, they
stand in a circle.
Doing the only thing they know to do.

— Amy E. Fletcher



— art by Heather Dickman

Honey Moon

In a pinata of vine,
an orange bulb obscured
the lobby's doorway,
where a boy sat, poking
a thumb- thick slug
with a twig.

The hotelera,
never looking up,
duly noted our names.
Her nipples, so dark,
showed through her camisa
like gray rings of milk.

The sheets twitched
with bed bugs, small life.
In the arms of Los Suenos,
he kept to himself.

All through
my wedding night,
I listened to
the geckos feed:
soft pappings on the adobe,
quick whisks of their tongues.

— C. A. Sherman

generation

I never asked them
if I was what they were after
or if it was just another
orgasm.

My friend said
"What does it matter?"
somehow astonished,
though she herself
has her mother's eyes.

Matter? It would shatter
the spell like a wrench
in my rib cage;
it would strike my father
and scramble his millions of words
into idiot piles of letters;
and my mother's hair would go grey,
twenty years in 30 seconds,
and she would have to sell her pictures
to be an artist.

"Mama, were you ever my age?"
Could you make mistakes back in 1970?
Did you try things you swore you'd never
or lose control of what you thought you were
mature enough to handle?
I fear I will uncover your fingerprints
in my bedroom.

— *Michael McElligott*

mine

i've read of african natives
stealing diamonds from the mines
by hiding them inside their flesh

would you slit open your body
and hide me deep within
to smuggle me out of mortality

— *Kevin Barents*



— *art by Heather Dickman*

Choices

I drove her to the clinic
Like taking in a car for minor repairs,
as if she'd be good as new with just a few adjustments;
Like she was getting her tonsils taken out,
that extra organ that gave her trouble,
so she was getting rid of it.
I packed the car
like we were going on vacation,
brought our favorite tapes, packed a teddy bear
and tissues and a blanket.
I took the wheel
like I was in control,
comfortable in our destination,
delivered the patient neatly to the door,
and sat and waited with the others,
each of us silently straining
to distinguish the patients from the rest,
all of us anxious to eliminate our worry
destroy our guilt, eviscerate our shame
rid ourselves of things
we'd never really lose.
We were a group of women,
with one exception.
An adolescent boy did his algebra,
checked his watch, forked over his wallet,
easing his conscience, and mine, too,
affirming my belief both in life and in choice.

— *Gayle Cohen*

Pauses Between

Your dead wife spoke to me again. She did it this time in the bathroom, when I was cutting my third toenail—you know—the one that curves inward so it's hard to cut. She came over and sat on the toilet and started laughing at my stomach. I told her I was doing situps but she still laughed. Then she reached down and put her fingers through the bathwater until the water was the same color as she was. A transparent, peachy-flesh color. My heart beats flickered, but she rubbed my face. She told me she isn't jealous anymore and she likes to see us in bed. I told her she should mind her own business and she said she doesn't have any to mind—she's dead. I really wish she'd stop this.

Your fascination with the way things die is sick.

She told me how you stabbed the tree—frog and stood there laughing while she tried to save it. She told me that tears drew teal mascara streaks down her face and when she went to wipe them you grabbed her tissue and tore it into little rivers of spilled teal and how you ran your tongue around her lips.

I hate it when you run your tongue around my lips.

She told me about the night she wanted to make love to you and all you did was sit in the music room playing the piano, playing the piano. Scales up and down, back and forth, pedals pushed down and popping up and then pushed down again. Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Webber. She said you played them naked and at first I didn't believe her.

The music room sees you naked more than I do.

She laughed when she told me about the hours you smiled, the hours that kept her with you. You smiled when you picked the roses off your grandma's barbed wire fence and stuck them in a green, glass jar. You even picked the bugs out first and took them outside and let them off on the grass. And you knew she liked honeysuckle because you came back in with a huge bundle of it and tucked it into her long hair, laughing. Then you curled your legs around the back of hers and flicked your tongue down her spine.

I love it when you lick my spine.

She told me how she wanted to make it end, how she stood barefoot on ugly kitchen tile and described exactly how she was going to do it, what pills she was going to take. You just stood there staring dumbly at her until you finally snapped your fingers and ran into the music room to try out a new song. She went in there after she took half the pills but you just kept fumbling for the right chords, eyes opening and closing in shattering pleasure. I can't believe you shouted at her to stop crying because she was disrupting your inspiration. And when she took the rest of the pills and fell sputtering to the floor you just wheeled around on the music bench and noted that her complexion seemed to be distorted. Then you wheeled back around and racked your fingers against the keys, pen scratching deformed music notes on composition paper in the pauses between.

Pauses between strangle me.

— Kathryn M. Peterson



— "Mount Olive II" by Crystal Baker

Toby's Voice

It doesn't change; things move
but they don't change.
The way the weather transforms
itself daily.

It is sunny today but somewhere
else the rain we had Tuesday
is running through their gutters
and into their driveways.

Christ, Mary, I'm looking
through my phone book again at night
when I can't sleep, which is just
about every night lately.
I know you know I do, too
because every time I get up I hear
you sigh then take the covers.

Things get lost. I search
the house every day looking
for a souvenir, something. A receipt

from that champagne we drank
on the lake last year. People don't leave,
they come and go and come again.
I swear I heard Toby's voice in
the garage yesterday.

Last night I took
me and the phone book
out on the deck and
held it over the water,
green and dark. I thought
about dropping it in, but
knew it wouldn't solve anything.
I tucked it in my shirt and
walked with the raindrops
and shadowed ghosts.

Your breathing beneath
the pulse of the showers
A steady, calming sound.

— Robert Krut

Just Missing

Speeding down the road
alone, together, missing her
my car a tomb of quiet strength.
Just a moment ago she told me of the shot she launched,
just missing the goal.
She and I — the sweet aroma of my cigar,
just missing.
She more than I, for I can see her in the stillness
Let's me savor the look of her, in her daughter's form
my entry in the telephone book of human lives,
the address long ago removed

But the calm has lasted too long
and I can see her drift, looking distantly out the window, blinking.

"Dad," she stammers, "tell me about my mother."

Why can't she let this rest, how many times do I have to offer up
those hollow answers, knowing if I go farther —
tell her she liked horses, canning, me —
I'll be missing.

But I — hard, military man take the cigar from my mouth, find something
riveting out my own pane tell her:

gentle

sweet

pain in the ass

opinionated

inquisitive

a hell of a lot like you

My speech finished, I look her in the eyes, my eyes, and say,
"You know you can look through her scrapbooks."

She knows, I know
that's not enough.

She keeps her mother's pictures behind the powders and perfumes.
Mine are in a drawer of forgotten mismatched socks.

— *Kate McFadden*

red is a noun

he had a thing for apples.

the way he

poured

nearly half our grocery nightmare

over that produce mountain

waving me away with my useless

'they're all the same' comment

and concentrating even harder on

the shape

sheen and

color

of a stupid poisoned fruit plagued with those nasty

little flies

before he would pay a whole 69 cents a pound and

carry them home to start his

rinsing

shining

peeling

slicing

slurping

dripping

wiping

ritual

glaring at me over the formica breakfast

counter as if i were a jealous horse

and i'd say

you know,

there's cyanide in apple seeds

just before he spit them out.

— Heather E. O'Neil

**The killers and the killed
and they hold our righteous walls steady**

These soldiers
ageless they
with their ruddy faces and
rough hewn arms
Here in our three years of total war
when the insane dance the pavan
and the galliard
between the trenches
And you can see their bodies
sometimes naked
appear and disappear
through the concertina wire
And in the final end
can we turn to them
and can they vindicate us all
They like every army
every dusty congregation and mass of men
the reflection of the protected
They as they sit
the black earth beneath them
the grey sky
the tracing cannon fire
like stars
Their war of attrition tearing
before them like a great insect
And can we ever
pry our complicity from their torn armor
our consent from their bloody hands

— *Daniel Hirsch*

A message to those
Who are so concerned
With my destruction

I
am.

— Micki Edwards



— art by Heather Dickman

