

VERITIES

Am I a Bad Writer?
By Ricardo Acevedo

Perhaps I'm a bad writer—that is to say, the whole writers community thing doesn't suit me very well.

Now, I support in spirit anything a human being needs to do in their attempt at self-enlightenment, as long as it does not oppress any other individual in the process. I guess my point is: do we write anymore about anything other than the obviousness of personal pain or ego? And I guess it's important to state that I'm not above this—perhaps it's a sign of our times.

I live my hectic life as most creative types do: from one project to the next, talking to my comrades about their highs and lows. Always being careful to give comfort but not to allow weakness because, dammit, this lifestyle, this calling, is not for the weak of heart or soul. With that said, how does one interact with the "normal" populace we seem to want to disparage and or draw separation from. Hmm...that's a tough one.

In the Cohen Bros. film *Barton Fink*, playwright Fink deems himself the voice of the common man. And with the success of his play on this topic, he is hired by Hollywood to write a script about a common folk love, wrestling. Leery of Hollywood but feeling up to the challenge, Fink locks himself away in a low-rent hotel to conjure up this morality tale for the masses but finds himself bereft of ideas...and full-blown writers block ensues. Enter Charlie, a traveling salesman, truly the everyman—or is he? Befriended by Fink, he begins to relate the intensely mundane facts of his existence. And this is not what Fink had hoped for: where was the grand in the simple? Fink enters a deep self-imposed depression, at one point chastising Charlie that he just doesn't understand the pain of the mind...But does Fink? To paraphrase Charlie at the climactic point of the film,

**"Pain of the mind!?!...
I'll show you the
pain of the mind!!!"**

Question: What do we writers know of the pain of the mind of the everyday person?

Working-class folk are hard pressed to breathe at times, much less allow their minds to wonder onto the fertile plains of prose and poetry. We pseudo-intellectuals seem to take it upon ourselves to speak for those who supply us with food, service and sundries. This is not to say that many of the so-called "creative types" don't hold down 9-5 labor or service positions, but I'd wager to say that most of these folks don't aspire to speak for the mass. It seems that only those blessed few who are completely free of the yoke of the daily grind feel the need to tell us of our cultural and spiritual short-comings, often by speaking of the purity of the common person's spirit—even if they have no actual access to the things that have forged that spirit.

Hypocrisy? Well to quote Bugs Bunny, "Hmmm...could be."

It's almost as if the self-proclaimed are saying in an evangelical voice " Yes my friends, there is a dream that I have that is a strong dream... and its strength is heavy upon me. So much so that I feel that I must interrupt your dream to correct your inability to understand my need to raise the higher mind, if for no other reason than I need company."

In this modern world (isn't that charming?) everybody has an agenda. Even the most well-intentioned are strident, all gender aside. So those striving for any kind of middle ground feel beat about the head and loins in both directions. Do not delude yourself—this is an epoch of popular culture. Petty class finger-pointing or grandstanding has only historically served those who serve themselves.

We write postcards about the world around us and its effects on "us," or should I say our perceived effects on us. I'm not a woman in Iraq...Nor am I a man in the inner city of Watts. Are you?

We write...We don't necessarily "right". Why should we? And ask yourself this: "For what aim?"

Notes from the Woodshed

Paul Klemperer



I ended last month's column by asking the question: How does the idea of fetishism in entertainment relate to the music industry? It's a big bag of sticky issues, so let's unpack it carefully. First, to recap, I borrowed the term "fetish" from anthropology and psychology because it is fundamentally linked to both magic and sexuality in the human psyche. Since the days of pre-history, objects have been imbued with magical power. The fetish is a physical manifestation of a spiritual energy. Possession and ritualistic worship of the fetish makes a believer feel more powerful, connected to that spiritual energy. This is often linked to sexual arousal. No big conceptual leap there.

But there is a modern twist: A fetish has come to mean a practice, not just an object, usually linked to so-called kinky sex. Yes, this is titillating, but I think it obscures the deeper meaning of modern fetishism. It's not just about wandering into Forbidden Fruit and snickering at the sex toys. It's about creating a ritual space where your imagination and your reality can freely coexist. This is where art, and its commercial byproduct entertainment, enter the picture.

I made the case that cultural icons are consciously marketed by the entertainment industry to cater to fetishism. An icon, whether it be a dolled-up human, 2 tons of metal, plastic and hubcaps, or merely a frosty bottle of beer, can be marketed so it is not just familiar to millions of people, but is imbued with magical and sexual imagery to tug on the longings of our subconscious. It becomes a fetish when it invokes in our imaginations a ritual space where we can express our inner longings.

For example, you're sitting in gridlocked traffic one Texas summer workday and your car AC is broken. Sweat trickles down the

armpits of your itchy cotton-poly dress shirt. Staring down from above is a 100 ft. bikini-clad billboard siren, happily sipping a cold beer, or smoking a cool refreshing menthol cigarette, or rubbing a stick of beef jerky between her breasts. You find yourself not just craving a beer, or a cigarette, or that jerky, but somewhere in your reptilian brain believing it will bring you closer to the elusive goal of inner happiness. Or at least that's what the ad agency had in mind. I think this extends to music as well. Allow me to elaborate.

I tend to look at culture as a balance between activities coming from the wealthy, capital-intensive top sectors of society, and the non-wealthy, labor-intensive bottom sectors, with those of indeterminate wealth filling in the middle like a nervous raspberry jam. Instant pop stars are mainly the result of the capital-intensive top. 20-year success stories are mainly the result of grassroots support and years of road warrior touring. The 20-year band plays its music in small clubs across the country, gradually gaining a fan base. The music becomes familiar to growing numbers of people. Maybe the guitarist has a particular sound, a rootsy twang, or maybe the lead singer has a distinctively gravelly voice. These musical sounds become emblems of the band's sound. When people hear the band's songs on the radio, memories are invoked of seeing the band in some crowded bar with a bunch of friends, or maybe seeing them in concert with your future ex-wife. The band's sound stirs memories, and more than that, it evokes shared experiences with people in your community. In that sense the band's sound becomes iconic. But its iconic meaning and influence has developed from the bottom up, mediated over time by many people in many ways.

Contrast this with an overnight sensation generated from the top down, manufactured and test-marketed by corporate eggheads with a trough of money to sluice the goldmine. Well, I'm not saying anything you didn't already know, except that the process of fetishizing musical culture from the top down, like that of other entertainment products, is built into the music industry. By fetishizing a musical product, the industry increases its selling power. The music isn't just cool sounds, a sonic journey, or even (goddess forbid!) art. It becomes an icon that speaks to our subconscious, purposefully linked to magic and sex. The magic is usually of the Cinderella variety: The music is a magic slipper with the power to gain admittance to the world of wealth, fame and adoration. And we the audience vicariously share in it, but only to the extent that we buy it.

There are many related issues which I haven't touched on, but I think the bottom-line issue is who controls the iconic meaning of the music, which then determines what subconscious longings we invest in it. A classic example is the use of 60s songs of rebellion and freedom repackaged to sell cars (the list of appropriated artists, from the Beatles to Janis Joplin, grows every day). On the other hand, local DJs now have the technology to remix, sample, even add their own voices to recordings, turning a nationally released musical product into their own local performance.

Ultimately the iconic meaning of a musical product may be greatly affected by the ongoing struggle over copyright law. The digital revolution has opened the door to decentralization of musical products, what some call the "expansion of cultural control." If a musical product can be downloaded, sampled and reworked by anyone, its iconic meaning may become decentralized as well, reflecting a grassroots rather than corporate identity. Unless, of course, we have all become corporate clones by then, in which case I guess everyone would be happy.

SOUNDFILES

music reviews

losjazzvatos

Los Jazz Vatos. 2003

Reviewed by Paul Klemperer

Drummer Ernie Durawa has a long history in Texas R&B, latin and jazz. He has been a steady presence in both the San Antonio and Austin scenes, and his resume includes such Texas stalwarts as Doug Sahm, Delbert McClinton, and Gatemouth Brown. But over the years he has also put considerable time into his own dream project, Los Jazz Vatos, honing the sound (Latin jazz with a tinge of R&B) until, as music critic Joe Nick Patoski says on the album's liner notes, "this may be Ernie's tuff-est combo of them all."

Los Jazz Vatos is a septet comprised of some of Austin's strongest players. Local music aficionados may know them not only from their work in jazz, but blues, R&B, salsa and worldbeat music as well. The Vatos are Russ Scanlon, guitar; Brad Taylor, bass; Terry Bowness, piano; Freddie Mendoza, trombone; Steve Vague, saxophone, and Jimmy Shortell, trumpet. Freddie also penned the horn arrangements for the album, which create a fat sound with nice harmonic tensions. The players are all strong soloists and as a latin jazz album the emphasis is decidedly on the jazz.

The material ranges from classic salsa and bossa nova, to soul jazz, and one original ("Chica Loca") by Freddie Mendoza. Some of the album's high points are Russ Scanlon's guitar work on Jobim's "Agua de Beber," the funky grooves on "Home Cookin'" and "Chica Loca," and Terry Bowness' tasty piano on "Sho Nuff Did." The session ends with Horace Silver's "Peace," one of my favorite jazz ballads. It's a nice endpiece and the last sumptuous chord hangs in the air like the final sip of a great bottle of wine. Vintage Durawa.

Daniel Davis Clayton • photos by RA



blemish

She used make-up to cover her blemishes

Soon making up the most menial reasons to administer
More or less sinister, her own unfortunate self-evaluations
Mirrored contemplations of tattered relations loosely associated
with her fretted features
Those ties became stronger in time, coagulating the beauty of her rhyme
in its vice-grip of related reasons,
a choking sound
The moving knot became a noose
The hangings at noon,
 each day during lunch or for a moment in the restroom
 when she had time enough to see again
 to think again, and then at night
 gripping herself into sleepy pleasures
A funny name for such things
When there is nothing pleasurable of suffering the indignation of loneliness
A thing which clogs your system and your pores
Fetter in sores and bursts upon more microscopic evaluation
childhood acne troubled her still



 using scorched earth policies in retreating their grounds
Such was a thing of many tears and cheek touching
Fingertips cradling those flesh laden craters
 craters which disappear in dream states
only to be reborn anew upon morning confirmations
 pre-dawn lynchings.

She'd wear her make-up to sleep at night
 mid-hour applications though no one would notice
 praying her alienations and ill self-images would be filled by morn
Too torn between hues to choose because her tones matched neither created shades
She prayed for AIDS or cancer or some form of adorned demise
 and she vowed to receive no treatment
 her un-intentional suicide

that way she could die
and still go to heaven
She was a very religious girl, looking for loopholes between memorized verses
Good versus Evil | Sin versus Chastity | Pride versus Meekness
and she found herself wanting.

She used make-up to cover her blemishes
Making up multiple excuses for her physical abuses
 which led to one-sided truces
and tears trapped inside bruised eyelids too swollen to open
A walloped mouth and burst lip left to kiss his cheek when making up after arguments
How salted burning his sweat stained face would feel
Tears lolloped south and douse dripless to stunt her speech

4:Apr03

Larynx knotted yearning 'tis a net gained place to heal
She weaved silence with loving hatred to make a blanket of imbalance
Threads sewn and unshun which may never come undone
The outcome,

A heavy thing due to adorn
to seal up shut when proper worn
to cling upon in times of mourn
to protect though other garments torn
a shawl upon her already weighted shoulders
Enthralled, her common hatred smolders like failing embers
That smoke smells like childhood memories
Indecent acts on innocence makes for hot kinlin which stoked her fire long ago,
a bitter incense of remembrance
She spoke wonders with those eyes which seemed incessantly silent
Recalling the tossing of fresh grass clippings upon the low glow of crackling ashes
The ensuing gray smoke would chase the mosquitoes
and darken their lungs when they camped
"Would you like poi-
son with your apple
pie?" and that's
how she saw exis-



tence now
a little bad,
a little good, a little
gray somehow
no black nor white but blurred
She tarnished her Baptist beliefs with ying-yang feng shui philosophies
Left dry places in her mouth when explaining her disposition to others
dry like over baked cornbread without butter
greens with little liquor juice left
or re-warmed Thanksgiving turkey on toast
She could barely utter those phrases of unloosed understanding—
her experimental mentalities and quasi-religious standings
Her grandmother wouldn't stomach such foolishness in her presence
and sharpened her tongue against the child
creating loquacious lacerations
Neosporin helped it heal, she placed the scar beneath her pillow
and dreamt of her hands in the window of Noah's ark
when the dove returned dirty she locked it in Pandora's box with its brethren
therefore she discovered that she could cover that blemish also.

She used make-up to cover her blemishes
Making up for her unfounded inequalities
she so most desperately sought
Aught not ever remove it now
To seclude like cape and cowl
Masks of avocado then cheerful colors
Mascara adorning her eyes
Black streaked cries.

Every morning at seven o'clock I get out of bed and brush my teeth and let the dogs out to urinate in the backyard. I pour a glass of orange juice and drink it in the shower, and the steam makes it sweet and warm, and it feels good on my sore throat.

I had a dream last night.

I do not remember it very well. I do not keep clocks in my bedroom anymore.

OCTOBER 12, 2002: A PROLOGUE

by chilimilkjones • art by Sandra Schoenenberger



In a coffee shop on Duval, three young Austinites were discussing an animated Richard Linklater film. Two of them were arguing that it is quasi-intellectual junk, but one of them disagrees—the quiet one. The quiet one who likes all Richard Linklater movies, who thinks Richard Linklater is the voice of both a new intellectual generation and hope for better times. The coffee they

drink is black, except for the quiet one, the Linklater fan, the one who likes cream and artificial sweetener. He sometimes takes his coffee black, but only on weekdays and only from select coffee shops. Such sophistications make him more confident, more intellectual, more comfortable with the world around him. Superficiality is something he is concerned about.

One thing I remember from my dream is the feeling of being sick, as if from eating a bag of flour. I remember a feeling of guilt, as from unsatisfying intercourse. My dream usually concludes this way.

Our quiet friend has never been in love. His can only fathom the guilt associated with love by watching pornographic movies on cable.

Every morning at seven o'clock, my dream ends. I can only remember the shape of it for a moment.

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The quiet one in the coffee shop is the brother of a young insurance salesman who regularly cheats on his wife. The man feels no guilt about his infidelities because his wife is abnormally beautiful.

Our quiet friend is infatuated with this woman. He has a picture

of her just after she became pregnant. She is wearing a bikini. She is pregnant with twins.

At one o'clock, a bearded man on Guadelupe kicks an empty bag on the sidewalk. This man has been in a horrible accident. He can see too clearly now, as if he were looking out from a shattered mirror that reflects things closer than they appear. The past and present make his world a splintered,

grotesque place. He no longer has a wife or child. He sleeps behind the McDonald's on San Antonio.

His greatest fear is of stepping off sidewalks. His contemporaries call him "crack man." He can read the spit on their teeth.

Within the empty paper bag is a half-full flask of Old Crow. He steals sips from it for ten days to calm his pains. But he will soon be in another accident. But this one will not be his fault.

At nine-thirty this morning two men suddenly leave a coffee shop. They leave their best friend. They have no reason for it except they both suddenly realize a necessity to do something else and be somewhere else, and at the exact same time: They misinterpret the co-instantaneousness of their mutual feeling as some sort of magnanimous and uncertain pre-destiny. And they are new men for it: They share a newfound confidence in themselves as creative, genuine, and purposefully ensconced, attuned to such phenomena as codependent mutualities. They feel certain this is how the world prefers to deal with them.

Neither of these men is a homosexual.

The quiet one gains some relief from his newfound solitude. Adolescence has always bored him, but now he feels refreshed. He converses with himself quietly. He wants to go to a coffee shop closer to campus. It is time to have a cigarette. He is waiting for the bus.

I should mention there is an important football game today. The streets are empty.

Football is superficial to our quiet friend; it is not "real". To him chess is real.

Moments earlier, two men walked out of a coffee shop on Duval. They paused at an ice cream truck parked across the street. They did not want to steal this ice cream truck, but the image of it complemented a mutual conceit breeding between them. Neither has ever stolen a car before, and the reason they would do so now is inexplicable.

And it is a simple process. They turn the ignition and then they drive away, westward.

The driver is inside a nearby grocery store placing packages of vanilla ice cream in one side of a two-sided freezer. He is unmarried. He will eventually marry a woman who is currently married but who has just birthed a child and now wants to become an actress.



She has never wanted to be an actress before, but her sister had been a talented actress before she was struck on the head by a large building.

Her decision to pursue an acting career will devastate her marriage. This will not happen for another fifteen years, two years after her only child runs away with the circus.

The driver is thinking about none of this. A football game is starting shortly. He has never desired to be married before. He is twenty-five pounds overweight.

•

I remember a train. It has a whistle and a light. The whistle shouts shortly once and then longer. In the windows are young men wearing glasses and hats. They are criss-crossed by the slow brown shadows of telephone poles passing. The newspapers they read are written in colored ink. There are four birds above the train, following the telephone lines that follow the tracks. There is an airplane above.

On the bus to the next coffee shop, our quiet friend falls in love with a small Korean girl in a Catholic school uniform. He knows not whether this girl is Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Korean, and he has had little experience in courtship. She is indifferent to his quiet gaze, and he misinterprets this indifference. He emasculates him-

self with thinking about it.

The Korean girl is a narcissist. She has little need for love with other people. She likes to wear costumes.

She will act in the sequel to *Small Chicks, Black Dicks* later this afternoon. She has several addictions.

She has a basset hound named Moseley. She lets him sleep on her bed. He likes to sleep on the pillows. He is named after the bass player in a band from Colorado. That bass player is also riding a bus right now, but not in Austin.

The sequel to *Small Chicks, Black Dicks* is currently being filmed in the storage room of a small restaurant near campus. It is being financed with life insurance checks.

After some careful deliberation, our quiet friend stops by an adult video store on the way home from his class. This time when he falls in love, it is with the woman working at the register.

Tomorrow, this woman will be arrested for selling illegal pornographic materials. She makes fifteen dollars per hour.

After some careful deliberation one night, I misinterpret my dream and dip into that shallow agony of self-defeatism and -pity. It occurs to me the dream must reflect my inability to cope with an outside world. When I think about this, I remember other characters from the dream. For instance, Ricky Williams occurs in the dream. As does the bouncer who kicked me out of a concert at Liberty Lunch in 1998 for giving a drink to an underage girl. The band that played that night later headlined a large music festival in Zilker Park. The bass player impregnates a Laotian girl backstage.

I have a son named Brian. I have always resented him for having that name. I wanted to name him Cactus, but renaming is more difficult once a child enters college.

There is a particular cactus I have in mind when I consider my son's name. It is a cactus from a hike I took on the border of Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. I do not remember urinating on this cactus and nor do I remember that the actual image of this cactus occurred behind a motel in Del Rio and not in Utah or Colorado or New Mexico. But what I do

remember is that Dave decided on a significant change to our route standing over a cactus on the New Mexico border. He decides to continue on Route 666, up towards Moab and Salt Lake City, and not to go towards the Grand Canyon and L.A. Dave flips a coin to justify his decision. Dave's decisiveness will eventually get him a job with the Department of Defense.

I fell in love with a girl in Moab. She smelled like lilacs. She smiled like spring. She slept with seventeen men, but I loved her so much then.



The Korean girl once had nose surgery to correct a deviated septum. Since then, she has had no sense of smell. She is addicted to nasal spray.

Dave's finger will get pricked while retrieving a lucky nickel from under a cactus near Utah. His finger will get infected for several months, but not nearly as infected as a migrating bug bite he will receive while on

a trip to Kenya with the Department of Defense. He will also suffer from the unfortunate consequence of being hit on the head by a large building.

My son Brian died last year in a very tall building. He was hit by an airplane.

Incidentally, our quiet friend thinks he has never been inside an adult movie store before. But he is in love, again, and such is his lonely fate. He pays with a credit card.

He is not the only victim of such fate.

You will eventually think more about this Korean girl when you see a sexy short thin Korean girl with pigtails near the Capital. She will induce a feeling of déjà vu. This déjà vu will recur at odd moments over the course of your life. It will particularly affect you while standing in line at a coffee shop on 43rd Street and Duval. You will meet a stranger and feel oddly compelled to converse with him while you wait in this line. The stranger will have once been a writer whose pen name was the misspelling, mispronunciation, misdefinition of an Arabic word meaning Love, though he will not introduce himself as such. He will have long forgotten ever using such a ridiculous name.

Inevitably, someone will discover that the Korean girl is not actually pregnant. Rather, she is the victim of a cruel and unprovoked circumstance caused by her mother's alcoholism and experimentations with fertility drugs. As a result, she will never be able to become pregnant. The child with which she was never pregnant offers no consolation. The child would have been a writer who was not afraid to use his own name. He died two days after she was born.

Someone will also eventually discover this girl is not Korean. She is Laotian.

One morning an idea lingers longer than normal. It goes as follows:

A great joke upon humanity would be to afflict its most promising would-be inventors-artists-creators-peacemakers with SIDS, leaving only hunters and gatherers to incorporate society and substantiate oral tradition. Incidentally, the affliction does currently affect a large portion of the world's unborn inventors-creators-artists-peacemakers, although it was never intended as a joke but,

rather, as the antidote to an increasing power struggle between Man and the invisible gods, some of whom hold congress atop Enchanted Rock.

The reason so many seemingly appropriate humans must be systematically eradicated is indirectly related to one of 111 premises that establish The Meaning of Life. In order to fully understand, though, it is necessary to use an obscure system of reason that calculates according to an uncertain logic of human emotion inconceivable to most human brains.

As such, two men abandon their reasonability in a coffee shop in order to steal an ice cream truck and drive west with it. The truck is never reported stolen in the world of these two gamblers, for their audacity, determination, sense of purpose, spontaneity, youthfulness and will to survive preserves for them a warm idealized haven along the periphery of human rational faith. It is a safe and pristine place. These two are friends. They have no idea where they are, though they will eventually realize it, much like one realizes religion or math or life after death.

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I had a dream last night, though I have already forgotten to realize it.

Every morning at seven o'clock I get out of bed and brush my teeth and let the dogs out to urinate in the backyard. I pour a glass of orange juice and drink it in the shower and the steam makes it sweet and warm, and it feels good on my sore throat every morning.

D I V E R S I O N S

VISUAL ART



We Are All Global Nomads
Republic Square Park
4th St. and Guadalupe
Sat. April 19 at sunset

A Hybrid cyber-installation artwork by Cinque Hicks will begin touring around the world, asking the people of the world to share, "Where are you and what's outside your window right now?" Anyone in the world can participate. "We All Are Global Nomads" displays you and your message with the images of hundreds of other Global Nomad tribe members on giant 10-foot screens. Visit www.weallareglobalnomads.com to become a Global Nomad.

Anita Pantin: Morir en Inglés
Mexic Arte Museum
5th and Congress
Through May 4

As part of Mexic Arte's emerging artist series, Morir en Inglés (To Die in English) is an installation of 3D animation and digital prints that form part of today's visual language. Hours Mon.-Thurs. 10-6, Fri.-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-5.

Narrative Friction: the language of Design
DiverseArts Little Gallery
1705 Guadalupe St. Suite 234
Through April

The Little Gallery showcases work by 3 graduating designers from the University of Texas. Megan Goldberg, Vivian Rose, and Esteban Hinojosa give both a visual and tactile sense

of narrative in their multi-process, mixed-technique works ranging from photography and handmade books to poster designs and sculptural studies.

Natural Selections: Julie Speed and Bale Creek Allen
Arthouse at the Jones Center
700 Congress Ave.
April 5 - May 11

This exhibition is the first in a series of exhibitions in which Arthouse chooses an artist who in turn chooses another artist with whom to exhibit. Julie Speed has chosen emerging artist Bale Creek Allen (both artists live and work in central Texas). The exhibit will combine Julie's numerous collages and Bale Allen's found/transformed everyday objects for an interesting and provocative pairing. Hours Tues, Wed. & Fri. 11-7, Thurs. 11-9, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 1-5. Call 512-453-5312 for more information.



JAZZ

Blue Gardenia: A Tribute to Billy Holiday
Women in Jazz Concert Series
State Theater
719 Congress
Sat. May 17 at 7:30 PM

The Women in Jazz Concert Series presents Pamela Hart accompanied by the James Polk

Quintet doing classic jazz standards made popular by Billy Holiday. Not to be missed! Tickets are \$20 from any Star Ticket Outlet or at the door of the theater.

FILM

6th International Film Festival of the Americas

cine las americas Media Arts Center
April 23-27

Featured films include *Japon* by Carlos Reygadas (Mexico), *Señorita Extraviada* by Lourdes Portillo (US), and *Video de Familia* by Humberto Padron (Cuba). *A Celebration of Emerging Filmmakers*, produced by the students of Johnston High School, is a special program of movies made by and about youth from around the country. Visit www.cinelasamericas.org for more info.

THEATRE

Salon in the Park: Poetry, Dance, and Theater for all ages

Fiesta Gardens
2101 Bergman Street
April 13, 2003, 3-6 p.m.
467-0704

Salon in the Park is a free gathering featuring local choreographers, poets and theatre artists, with performances for adults and children. Sample the work of some of Austin's best and most creative artists, then have a discussion with them about it. A perfect way you and your family or friends to enjoy the day together! Potluck Dinner: Can you imagine 200 people sharing a potluck supper? Bring your favorite main dish, salad, dessert, etc. to share! Be creative and enjoy a delicious meal! Drinks will be provided. More Information at www.jldc.org

COMEDY

F.B.I.
Hyde Park Theater
511 West 43rd St.
Fri. & Sat. April 25-26
10:30 PM



Bale Creek Allen, *Hammerhead* (2003)
Enamel, wood & hammerhead, 17" x 32" x 28"

Pro Arts Collective of Austin presents F.B.I. (Funny, Black, and Intelligent), an evening with comic Glen Vance. Vance will give a series of thought-provoking, humorous sketches in this premier. For more information please call 236-0644.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

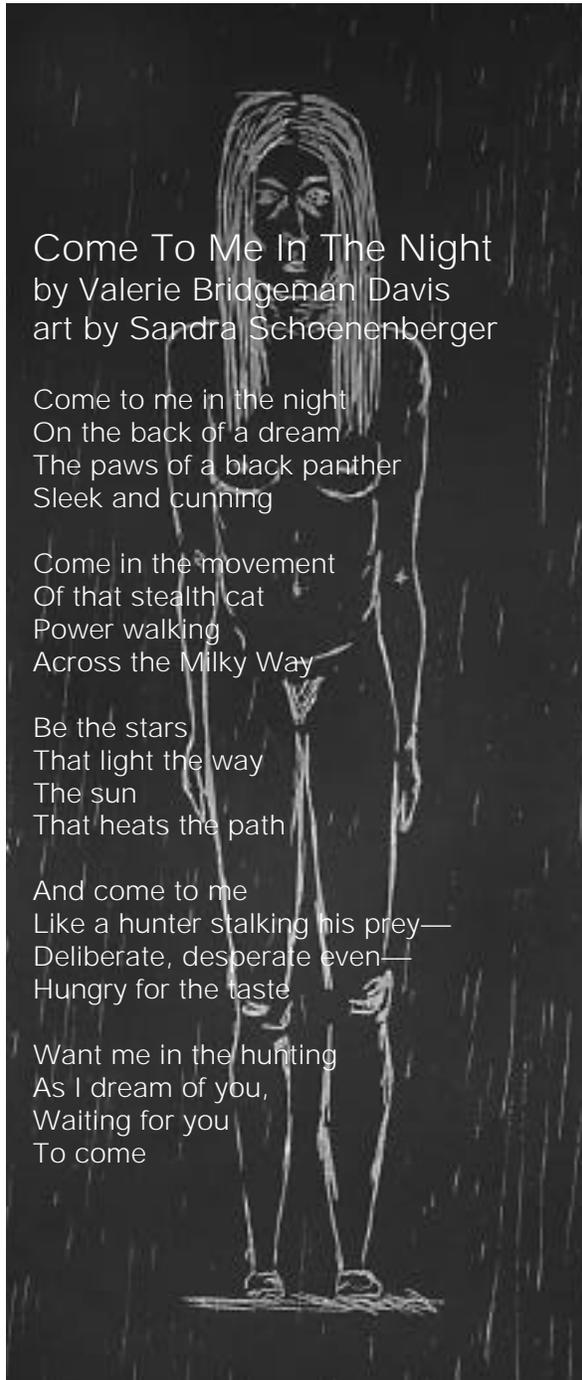
The Austin Film Festival
All rules, and entry forms are available at
www.austinfilmfestival.com or
call us at (800) 310-FEST(3378).

The 10th Annual Austin Film Festival is announcing its Call For Entries for the Screenplay, Prime Time, and Film Competitions. Screenplay Competition deadline: May 15. Prime Time Teleplay Competition deadline: June 15. Film Competition early deadline: June 15. For the past six years award winning feature films have received distribution as a result of their AFF screening. Short films screened in competition at the Austin Film Festival are eligible to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Gallery Lombardi Presents: *EROTICA*
Deadline to enter: July 5, 2003
print your entry form from:
<http://gallerylombardi.com>

Call for artists: open to all media and all humans; this is a xxx bi-annual event. Show opens Aug.10.

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Come To Me In The Night
by Valerie Bridgeman Davis
art by Sandra Schoenenberger

Come to me in the night
On the back of a dream
The paws of a black panther
Sleek and cunning

Come in the movement
Of that stealth cat
Power walking
Across the Milky Way

Be the stars
That light the way
The sun
That heats the path

And come to me
Like a hunter stalking his prey—
Deliberate, desperate even—
Hungry for the taste

Want me in the hunting
As I dream of you,
Waiting for you
To come



**word/jazz
performance series**

experimental grooves and poetry

4:30-6:30pm

Friday April 11:

Ruta Maya

with the word/jazz Lowstars

for more information contact 477.9438
or info@diversearts.org



west lynn cafe

INTERNATIONAL EARTHLY DELIGHTS

1110 WEST LYNN
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78703

512/482-0950



A Fine Cemetery

by Darla Johnson • photos by Vivian Rose

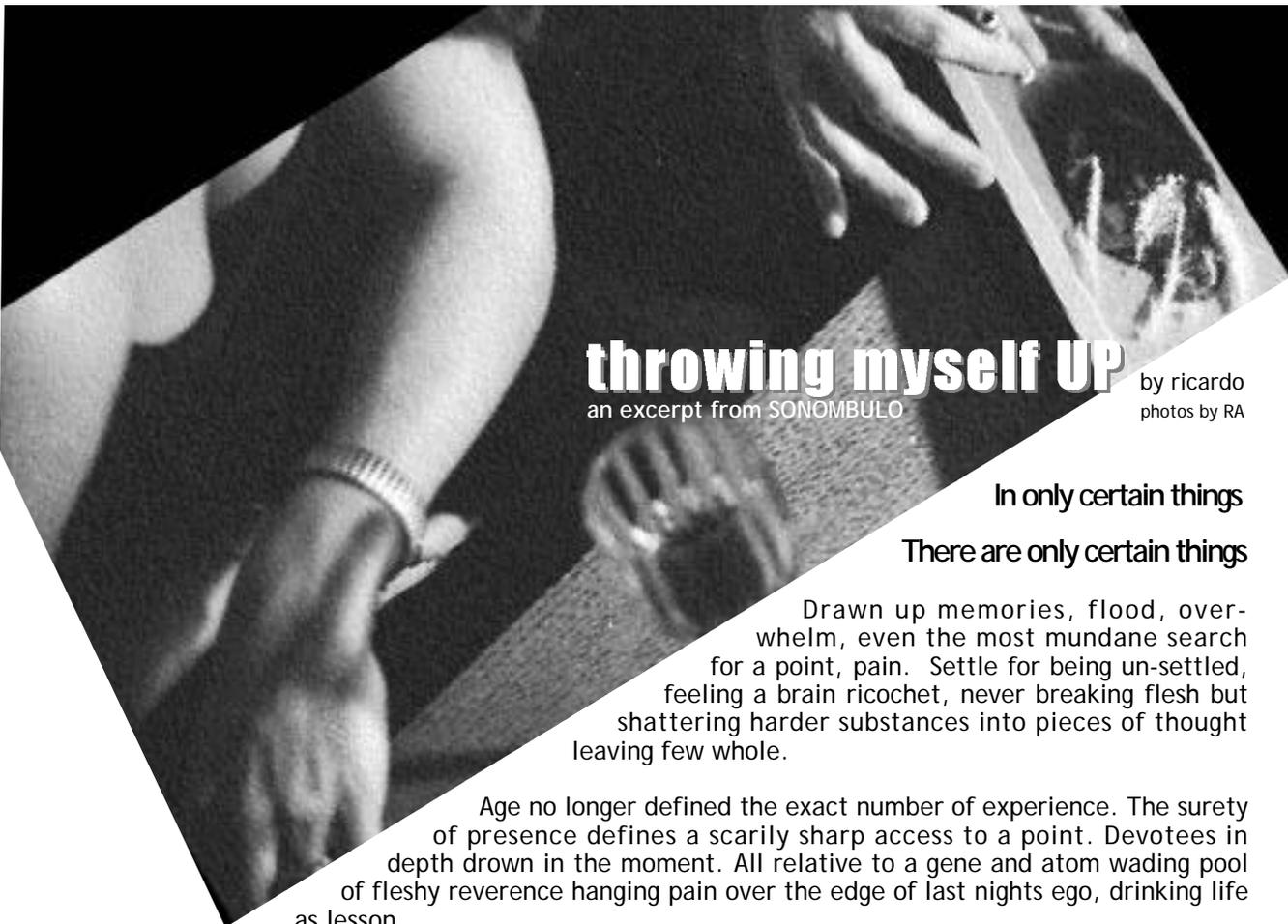
They stand on top of the hill
a fine cemetery lingering amidst charred ruins
while the brilliant color of fall
whispers through new branches
ghosts roam the hillside.

Lingering among blackened pots, shards of melted glass, a wood stove, a
refrigerator on its side—black
saplings have moved in
young, thin trunks to fill the space
where laughter, whimpering, moaning and caressing
once took place.

Inside is now out
and memories fly through the skeleton of charred bedposts
the feel of an old rough coach against the face
is no more
or the smell of cigarette smoke rising
whiskey in Coke
aftershave.

Here now is only the haunting sense of a party
that has ended too soon.

Published in the Austin International Poetry Anthology, 2001.



throwing myself UP

an excerpt from SONOMBULO

by ricardo
photos by RA

In only certain things

There are only certain things

Drawn up memories, flood, overwhelm, even the most mundane search for a point, pain. Settle for being un-settled, feeling a brain ricochet, never breaking flesh but shattering harder substances into pieces of thought leaving few whole.

Age no longer defined the exact number of experience. The surety of presence defines a scarily sharp access to a point. Devotees in depth drown in the moment. All relative to a gene and atom wading pool of fleshy reverence hanging pain over the edge of last nights ego, drinking life as lesson.

In trailer, mobile home room and boredom mode of travel. I slept cubbyhole cubicle shut-eye. Elbow wrist drug love decompose apex. Start up sputter, the bed spins.

A room of cheap wood not panel discussions nailed up by nudity hustling wall space with six-string groin gun heroes. Adolescent bedroom walls of smoky resiliency. Low reflection held up by cluttered layers of days past need for wash-day flared jeans and striped athletic socks laying like boots of cotton.

My hand twitching it's five doubled to ten by eyes crossing, praying, and damning alcoholic repetition. I reached for 8 tracks running though my cheap component system wired to a metamorphosis, curing in a specimen jar.

Disciple of knotted hair and dusted angel wing. Kissing tangled sheet and wiry body pale. Sweating heat, straining drug lust abandon in a 1977 summer. Held together by erections imbued with the intensity of a house burning down, set alight by chemical combustion spiraling in slowly opening bloodshot fire eyes. Blink, shudder, still asleep to gravity's spins... *throwing*

14:Apr03

myself up.

At four in the morning I could taste death,
weak from sickness, unable to grasp a
moments tranquility. The closest I got to life's
truths.

Hours easily wasted
Moments expensively earned.

Into sickness whole I would fall, a sickness of
heart. A path to deeper health?
Not a job for the latest tranquilizer.

Like a farmer.
Re-foresting continually
To grow a soul.

The semen emitted at five in the morning
could save or destroy me. Wrapping, clinging,
to body I adored, to a moment I trusted, to an
urge that wouldn't let go.

Into health I'd dip

Into serenity, a field-trip
Lunch-boxes packed
Eyes open, close.
There must be more,
I still feel so,
hungry.

The lives ruined at
six in the morn-
ing, the binge
and purge of
people, pos-
sessions. The
chemical
reaction
t h a t
makes a
b r a i n
s i n g,
a n d
t h e

counter-reactions that let us commit
crimes against our own shadows.

Into the street at 16, into a light I'd eventual-
ly stray. The bodies accumulating, a lifetime
of flesh formed lines inhaled. Ego and septum
scared, healing into a lesson on the lessening
of myself.



And...
by Darla Johnson
photo by Erica Nix

We drove by your house tonight
dropping off a friend of a friend
and your lights were on
and you were standing in the window
and I was with my lover
and the friend of the friend happened to
live next door to you
and knowing you
and knowing how
I knew that you both knew each other
and I couldn't say a word
couldn't give away the fluttering
that came rushing up my throat
as we turned down your street
remembering the excitement of blood
rushing
as I drove at 3:00am
in my short silky blue nightgown
to your house
anticipating your touch
friend
you've grown distant
we used to touch
more often than not
laugh twice as much
and enjoy each other's company

SOUNDFILES

music reviews

All You Can Eat: Austin Music Sampler.
Soundboard, 2003.

Reviewed by Paul Klemperer.

If nothing else, this 2-CD anthology is a musical document mapping the current state of the Austin jamband scene. Twenty-two bands contributed tracks and the material ranges through the stylistic rainbow that gives jam music its eclectic ethos. For those familiar with that musical ethos it will be no surprise to hear music that reworks classic rock, blues, folk, bluegrass, jazz, fusion, funk and world music. Heavy beats, rock guitars, funk guitars, jazz guitars, virtuoso mandolins, horns, ethereal keyboards, hip hop samples, it's all here. What unites the disparate influences is an optimistically creative energy, and a philosophy that sees music as an ongoing

dialogue rather than a commercial product.

In a music industry organized around pigeon-holing bands into easily marketed stylistic slots, jam music provides a refreshing paradox: it is a genre without set boundaries. Yes, its demographic is predominantly young, white and middle-class, but the music is more a reflection of the multi-dimensionality of contemporary culture. While the music industry is stylistically segregated, many music listeners are increasingly eclectic in their tastes. As the Soundboard liner notes state: "Hybrid forms of music that are becoming popular embrace any combination of folk, blues, bluegrass, rock, funk, jazz, reggae and electronica." The problem is that the centralized, profit-driven music industry shies away from the innovative and ambiguous, which has always meant that experimental musicians are pretty much voices in the wilderness.

Soundboard's solution is to help organize local and regional resources to support this creative musical culture. It is a "not-for-profit, fan-based, community-driven organization" that relies on creative problem-solving and grass-roots mobilization to make things happen. This sampler album represents a first step, and proceeds from its sale will go toward "implementing our next batch of ideas." More Soundboard releases and events are forthcoming, and you can keep up to date by visiting their website: www.austin-soundboard.org.



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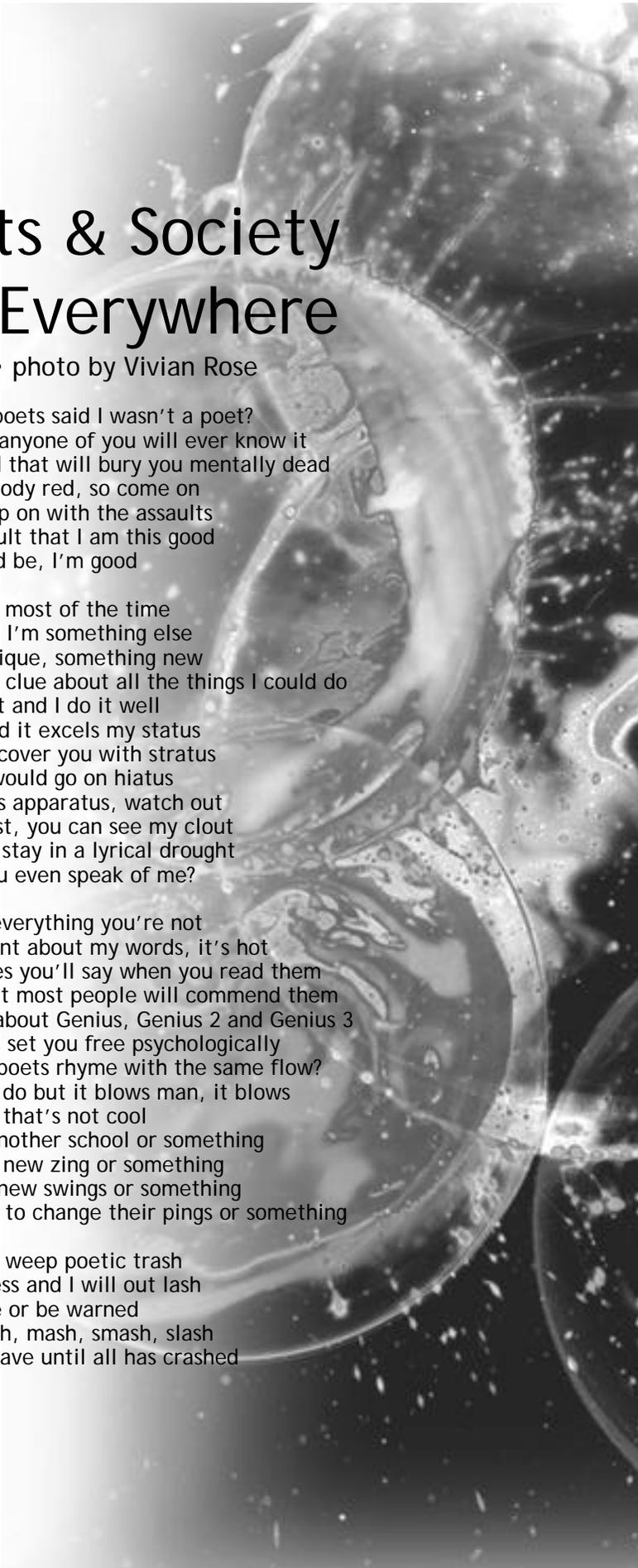
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Dear Poets & Society Of Poets Everywhere

by Gene Geter • photo by Vivian Rose

Which one of you poets said I wasn't a poet?
I've been a poet before anyone of you will ever know it
I have thoughts in my head that will bury you mentally dead
Bleed you bloody red, so come on
Go ahead, keep on with the assaults
Like it's my fault that I am this good
I should be, I'm good

I'm a poet most of the time
Other times, I'm something else
Something unique, something new
You couldn't possibly have a clue about all the things I could do
But I do it and I do it well
Hell, I sell and it excels my status
Watch me as I cover you with stratus
Wishing I would go on hiatus
I'm an ingenious apparatus, watch out
My clout is so vast, you can see my clout
I'm sure you will stay in a lyrical drought
How dare you even speak of me?

Losers, I am everything you're not
Say anything you want about my words, it's hot
How I fix my verses, curses you'll say when you read them
You can condemn them, but most people will commend them
I heard what you had to say about Genius, Genius 2 and Genius 3
The truth is my books set you free psychologically
Will you agree that most poets rhyme with the same flow?
I don't know why they do but it blows man, it blows
I mean, that's not cool
They should go to another school or something
Spring off some new zing or something
Cling on to some new swings or something
Something needs to be done to change their pings or something

Read it and weep poetic trash
I feel relentless and I will out lash
Beware or be warned
I will bash, gash, mash, smash, slash
Any clash that I have until all has crashed



Under the expressive sea and splash
You still want a piece of me?
Then, here, have some of my pee
I have a million of these
Are you sure you want to keep testing me?
I'm so artistic, it's almost narcissistic
It's almost sadistic to be this linguistic
Poets, it's time to be realistic, logistic
I am an epic
I'm a magnum opus writing multiple magnum opuses
Haven't you punks had enough?
This is not a bluff
I will fluff you like pillowcases
Hit each one of your faces with lyrical pies that raises
Discussion through races in public places
I will pluck you from end to end
And then, from end to end again
This is not just an attack to the men
Yes, too, the women
To anyone who writes poems
You all can get cracked with jeroboams

I'm not part of the gang you fellows
Hello, hear me bellow my rank, oh
Upon the mellow order, the yellows
Just Jell-O, hand me the proper utensil
I'll wolf you all alive
I'm sick of all this jive
Once and for all, this weak contrive,
Will not survive you or revive you
Mannequins, bid adieu
I'm almost threw
Hurling apples, oranges and pears at you
Bananas, strawberries, coconuts,
That I could be making sweet desserts with at you
There was a beautiful blue jay at my window one day
In May, he said make you pay
So you better pray
You are my only prey pending I find decay
If I ever have to convey this way again,
I will not entertain nor refrain
I will be as strong as champagne and cocaine taken together
There's nothing better
I'm the trendsetter among this green-eyed herd
I'm the acclaimed preferred and you will remain unheard
That's my word

From the book: Gay Demeaning Happy

Dear Poets & Society of Poets Everywhere:19

*The Austin
International
Poetry
Festival—
an interview with
Byron Kocen*

by Imani Evans

Byron Kocen, M.D. is the chairman of Austin Poets International Inc., the organization responsible for the Austin International Poetry Festival.

ADA: How old is the Austin International Poetry Festival, how did it start, and what has been the nature and extent of your own involvement with it?

BK: The concept of a poetry festival in Austin, Texas, was the brainchild of its founders: Herman Nelson, John Berry, Sue Littleton, and Thom the World Poet. The first years of the Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF) were distinctly homegrown, an occasion for poets to share their poetry by performing in Austin's colorful venues. The founders' mission was to encourage the knowledge and appreciation of poetry. They wanted a non-juried poetry festival, where any poet could read. Since its inception in 1992, the AIPF has grown to the largest non-juried poetry festival in the United States.

ADA: I'm interested in knowing more about the organizational structure of Austin Poets International Inc. For instance, what would you estimate to be the ratio of full-time professional staff to volunteers within the organization? How large is the board of directors, and do your board members come from diverse backgrounds (not just racial/ethnic, but occupational/vocational)? How large a budget do you have going into this year's festival?

BK: We are a volunteer organization with a diverse board of 12 members. I am the chairman for 2003 and I am a physician, actually a pediatrician who devotes his practice to children with learning disabilities. We also have teachers, state office employees, a real estate broker, an accountant. We come from all walks of life and ethnic and economic backgrounds. Our part-time festival director is our only paid position and her "day job" is the coordinator of student activities for the UT MBA program. One of our most distinguished members, Peggy Lynch, a very fine poet, is "retired" but works as chairperson of Poetry In the Arts, a wonderful organization that promotes poetry in Austin and the world. She is also Poet Laureate of the American Institute in Paris and travels there annually to teach.

Our total budget is about \$25,000. About 1/4 comes from the City of Austin Arts Commission. We also have a small grant from the Texas Writers League. In addition we have managed to raise the rest through our very small membership and reading fees we charge the participants. Most of our venues are free to the public.

ADA: As you must know, the city has squeezed funding for arts and culture. How has this affected your operations?

BK: This is a chronic problem and this year it has been exacerbated by budget cuts. Board members often dig down in their own pockets to come up with the funds. We sell ads in our program and at the festival

itself we sell T-shirts and hats. All registered members are listed on the back of the T-shirt so they are very popular. Our main product, however, is our anthology we call *Di-Verse-City*. All the poets submit entries and we pick the best of them for publication in this really beautiful book that sells for \$12. Each poet whose work is accepted receives a free copy. Others are sold through book stores, although we make a better profit on those we sell ourselves at our venues. There are three venues at "night spots" that we charge a \$5 admission. This includes our slam which will be on Friday night with Pre-slam activities beginning at 4:30 PM at the new Ruta Maya located 3601 S. Congress. The rest of our venues are free and open to the public.

ADA: Tell me more, if you can, about the *Younger Poets Award Anthology*. How did it get started? What can we expect from this year's edition and how does one go about obtaining a copy?

BK: Frank Pool, last year's chairman and teacher at Anderson High, started the Youth Anthology 5 years ago. It is truly a labor of love. This year he and Debbie Ackers, also a teacher, have put together an anthology of elementary, junior high, and high school works. It is a beautiful volume and will be launched at Barnes & Noble in Westgate Sunday, April 13 at 2PM. Each of the poets accepted will read their poem. The book will sell for \$5.00 and each poet will be given a free copy. It is quite a thrill for

these young kids to "be published" and this always brings out a crowd. The Youth Anthology book will be available at the reading and at some of our venues.

ADA: I would like to get a sense of what your yearly calendar is like. Specifically, is the International Poetry Festival the extent of your programming, or do you produce/present arts and cultural programming at any other time of the year? If so, what is it?

BK: Our festival actually doesn't occur until the third week in April, which is National Poetry Month. We begin planning a year ahead. Although our activities culminate in April we have ongoing programs of encouraging poetry in the schools, and other outreach programs. We participate in the Texas Book Fair as well as in many smaller literary venues. Our board meets monthly and we participate in any events that come up from other organizations during the year. Ours is an ongoing effort to invite noted poets from around the world as well as Texas to enrich our program. For instance, this year we have Cyrus Cassels from SWTSU and Lars Gustaffson from UT as guest poets.

ADA: Could you give our readers your predictions as to what you feel the festival's "must-see" events will be, i.e. poets or performances of totemic standing that symbolize what the festival is all about?

BK: Opening ceremonies are always fun and a taste of what



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is to come. This event will occur at Ruta Maya at 3601 S. Congress on April 10 at 4:30. There will be “anthology readings” all over town at 5 different bookstores afterwards. On Friday, April 11 at 4:30 PM also at Ruta Maya will be “Word Jazz,” a wonderful combination of music and spoken word. This will be followed at 6:30 PM by a slam. Some of the best slam poets worldwide will compete for the prize money. We start with 12 pre-selected poets, each of whom get their 3 minutes (not a second more). The best 5 go on to the second round and then finally the best three compete. Judges are picked from the audience. The entire event is wholesome and clean fun.

Another “must see” is the “Tim, Talaam, and Larry Show” at Waterloo 6th and Lamar 10-12 Friday, April 11. This is always well-attended and showcases the best of our international and national poets. Kamikka Witherspoon Williams (PhD), who teaches dramatic presentation at Temple University always brings down the house with her soul touching poems about Black culture and family life.

BK: A very special guest this year will be Marshall Stewart Ball. He has a paralyzing disorder and has no body movement or speech. He has written two books with the help of a “letter board” on which he points to letters one at a time. His first book, *Kiss of God* published by Health Communications, Inc (the *Soup for the Soul* people) was number one on the Amazon Book List. He will make a rare

appearance at our “spiritual” venue which will be held at Westminster Manor at 4100 Jackson on Saturday April 12 at 7PM. Since he obviously has no voice, selected poets will read his work for him. He will be there with his parents to listen. He has been featured in articles in most large Texas newspapers as well as Time Magazine.

ADA: It was Arthur Miller who said, “When the guns boom, the arts die.” Against the backdrop of a country at war, what arguments can you use to counter those who would argue that a “poetry festival” is pure frivolity at best, a prime example of the weakening of our (masculine) national culture at worst?

BK: Certainly there is an element of frivolity in poetry just as there is in any entertainment media. It is also said that the first thing a tyrant does is kill all the poets because they fertilize the seeds of change in society. When “guns boom” it is even more important to listen to the voices of the poet. Undoubtedly there will be a great deal of poetry presented about our current war situation. Poets tend to be “peace mongers” and their voices will be heard at our festival. One of our venues (Sunday, April 13 Heritage House 12-3PM) will be have “World Peace” as its theme. We have a magnificent national culture composed of many diverse voices. Poetry can do nothing but strengthen our national culture and resolve to do what is right in a complex and dangerous world.

Everyone knows that money is tight these days. While lapdog economists continue to spout the virtues of corporate tax cuts, the trickle-down has shrunk to a slow drip. But people still need food, drink and music, in good times or bad. So the beat goes on.

Clubowner Michael Girard is keeping the beat with his downtown bar Speakeasy, and has just opened a new nightspot, Cuba Libre, only a drunken stumble across the alley. Since he took over ownership of Speakeasy two years ago, the live music venue has doubled sales, an impressive fact in a shrinking economy. The secret may lie in turning the club into more of a live music showcase. Substantial remodeling has increased seating capacity. Expansion of the bandstand and dance floor, and installation of a new house sound system have helped as well. Speakeasy appeals to a broad demographic with a range of musical styles, from singer/songwriter early in the week, to salsa on Wednesdays, funk/R&B on Thursdays, and cover bands on the weekend. Girard is committed to providing live music every night of the week, in an "upscale but comfortable" setting.

Cuba Libre is in many ways a sister club to Speakeasy. Designer Dick Clark is responsible for both interiors, a style which Girard likes to call the "clean, sexy look." The idea is to provide reasonably priced fare in an exotic but relaxed setting. Seating capacity is 300, with a "boutique" lounge in the back available for special events on weekends. The bar/restaurant itself will not have live music, but the back lounge, with a capacity for 100,

Cuba Libre

New Bar On The Block

by Paul Klemperer

will be suitable for small groups or DJs.

"I think comfort's a big selling point in Austin," Girard explains. "That's why people live here. It's a terrible time to be opening a bar/restaurant, but I think we've seen the bottom and we're going to see some growth in 2003. But at the same time people are being careful with their dollars, and the idea of a high ticket price for their food is not appealing. That's why we're offering a moderately priced menu."

Cuba Libre offers tapas (traditional Iberian appetizers) from 4-10:30pm. Priced from \$6-10, the fare is Latin-flavored with an international flair. Likewise, the bar will feature mojitos and a good drink selection, with Cuban beers. "Of course the Cuban embargo eliminates getting anything directly from Cuba, but it will have a Cuban influence, with a cosmopolitan edge," says Girard.

Cuba Libre is located in the heart of the warehouse district, at Colorado and 4th street, which is arguably the most cosmopolitan part of Austin these days. Flanked by clubs that offer salsa (Miguel's La Bodega next door on Colorado, and Speakeasy across the alley) Cuba Libre will hopefully help to spice up Austin's nightlife.

Comic having two meanings.

The first a person or instance that causes spasms and air expulsion. This of course providing upon the bravery of the individual can hurt or provide rapture.

Comic, the other, a literary form enhanced by phantasmigorical illustrations providing fodder for young thinking minds, as in canon and round we go.



And then Book in itself, is always a safe bet hence bookie. "Book me a flight outta her" none the less "make book" is to bet or hope.

But Comic Book Fridays... were as sure as sleep and as unpredictable as what followed. And when I dream about it now it reads as a Marvel, D.C. hologram. Garish heroes and villains interchanging costumes defusing each other, blurring line and frame between the real world and the imagined.

**With 5 dollars,
Spiderman would
explode
in my hands.**

Payday. I knew the drill, high arcing beat' o cool clothes replaced a week worn uniform. Hair slick or high as attitude. And me, I was baggage from a trip my mother never unpacked from, just picked back up and toted out of response ability. You see, this was as close to ritual as my Mom, and I got.

7 PM quick showers, quick meals then a quick stop at Nacho's News and Comix.



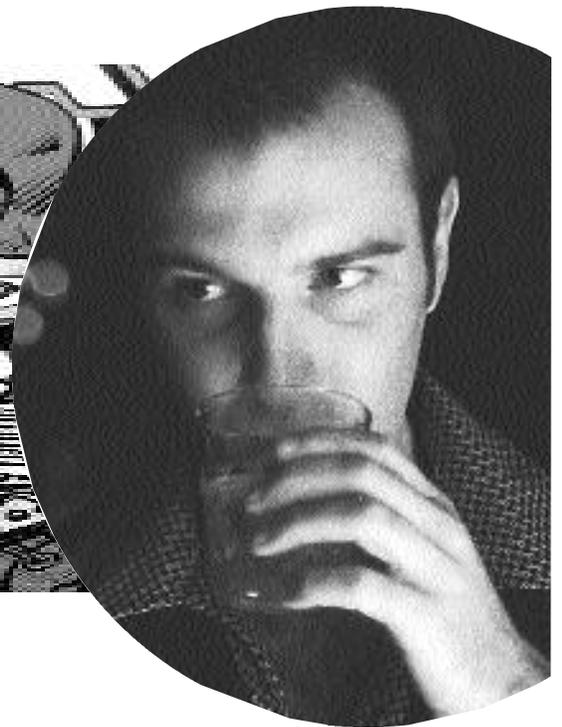
The carousel, a rotating gallery of jutting color, on a cement chewing gum covered stage, sticking to the soul of my shoes. At 6, my face would envelop, inhale, the escape of obvious good and evil. With me always wishing life would emulate the story line in the book, because in the book if it got too scary I could always turn the page, put it down, come back to it later, take a breath.

But some nights would envelop me. The lines blurring off the page melding ink and space. Contorting proportion and low light created by a flashlight and a street lamp, as I would be left to sit in the car, in the parking lot, of a bar, to watch adults form lines of self parody and carnival mask, wringing the life out of the night, the shadow, the harlequinade. Grinning from ear to ear one endless row of teeth chattering spittle and smoke.

Their chests not emblazoned with heroism but with weariness. Their eyes would roll a few feet ahead of their bodies, waiting for their brain to catch up on the slow sleek fermentation of body language.

At six my life was small enough to fit in my back pocket like a rolled up comic book. While outside my window a gregarious larger than my life freaky world of limboing adult egos flashed a sign in my head, saying that

**"It's not so nice here,
I want to go!
It's so
hard to
breathe!"**



adults were the scary clowns at the circus that despite the vivid smiling facades would surely swallow little boys whole if they asked too many questions.

**And where was my mother?
Where was my protector?**

She would be screaming at the top of her lungs to others about the rhythm of hips. Becoming a senseless sister groping in the darkness of her own abandon, defenseless to it she would ask to be raped by an unchallenged sun, lulled into melancholy by a night light moon.

As I would scream

by ricardo

excerpt from "Sonombulo"

photos by RA

Comic Book Friday:25

Love Poem #3 by Daniel Davis Clayton • photo by Nicky Tavares

She's got tear droplets in the corner of her mouth
And when she speaks tiny sodium laden sprinklets are spilled by her own tongue

Taken relations and wrapped up observations can be condensed into pill like placebos for intermediate ingestments

Why discuss issues fully? Better left in half spoken of languages for the seeming
And I seem to have made mention of this sort of thing before

But who cares when all is well in your realm so you'd have one think in theatrical acts
and scenes and this is certainly not Shakespeare

Only an increment of invalid interaction that I'd love to make the meat of my meal if
only it were more fulfilling

I suppose that makes us infidelistic lovers

There's little holy or sacred for those who can't caress and

**I long to partake of your spoken word when
few sounds are uttered beneath labored breaths**

That's perhaps, underestimating my intentions of eviscerating your
blemishes with coca-butter lamentments and paternal understandings
But it seems that only the more base themes are remembered and I'd
prefer for you to recall a butterflyed
pause if little else at all on your aura

**Your body is feng shui with its
own immaculate organization**

and I beseech you to bring balance into
my own intimate inconsistencies

I require your biological building block
in which to lay our cornerstoned
foundation such as pyramids are risen
and never falter

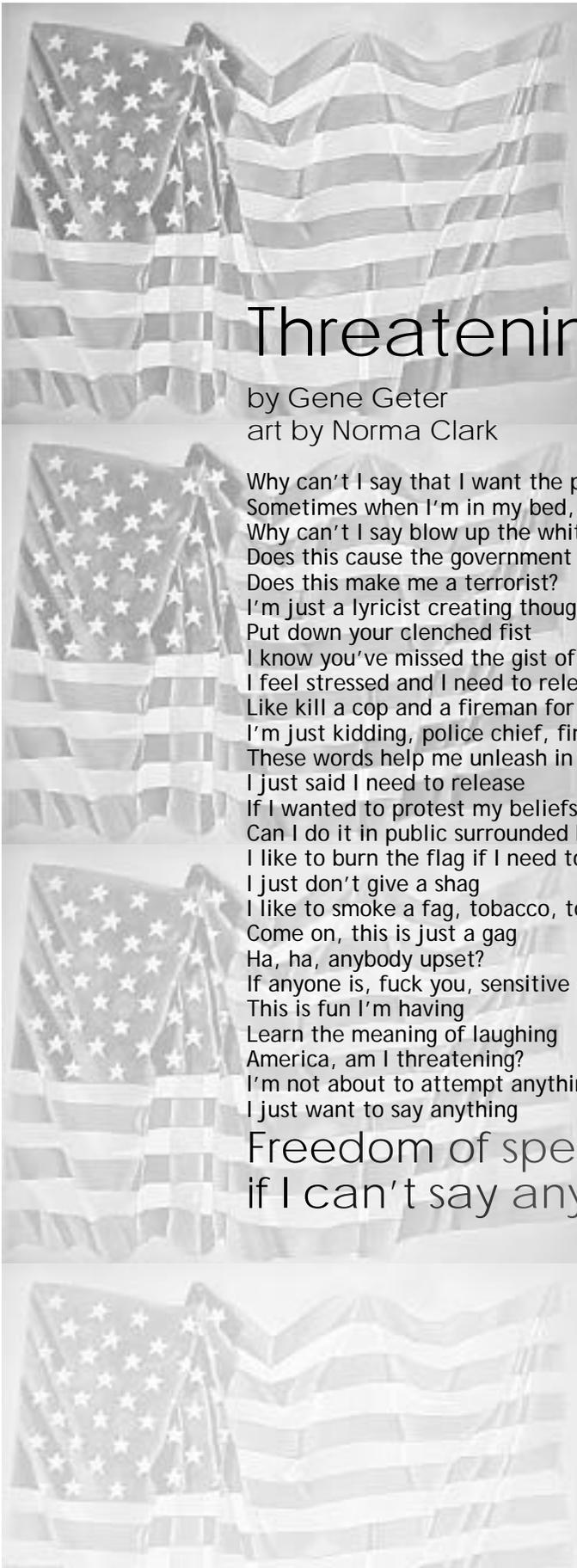
And excuse me if this all sounds
technical but you've been the
reciprocal of mathematical
ponderings and theorem exploration

and this issue is of national concern
Our generations of nations can not be
included without your belly to birth
them—I adore the pheromonic harmony
of the smell of your soft skin when
close; and our army of envious eyes
against us needs you now

I suppose each stanza is a part of the
unconditional basic training of
sustaining
cinemagraphic renditions of love's
linear momentum for all to see

**And I saw the watery
silence in your eyes
that you never explain
Perhaps your thoughts and mine were never the same**





Threatening America

by Gene Geter
art by Norma Clark

Why can't I say that I want the president dead?
Sometimes when I'm in my bed, bad things enter my head
Why can't I say blow up the white house?
Does this cause the government to rouse?
Does this make me a terrorist?
I'm just a lyricist creating thought-provoking cyst
Put down your clenched fist
I know you've missed the gist of all this
I feel stressed and I need to release
Like kill a cop and a fireman for relief, good grief
I'm just kidding, police chief, fire chief
These words help me unleash in order not to unleash
I just said I need to release
If I wanted to protest my beliefs with a burning flag,
Can I do it in public surrounded by police?
I like to burn the flag if I need to burn the flag
I just don't give a shag
I like to smoke a fag, tobacco, to light the flag
Come on, this is just a gag
Ha, ha, anybody upset?
If anyone is, fuck you, sensitive citizens,
This is fun I'm having
Learn the meaning of laughing
America, am I threatening?
I'm not about to attempt anything
I just want to say anything

Freedom of speech is bleached
if I can't say anything

From the book: Gay Demeaning Happy

Threatening America:27



up all night

Harold McMillan

Verities. Truths.

I know this guy, Mr. Smart E. Pants, who is full of more truth than any other person in my life. Truths about life. About desire. Anger. Joy. Confusion. Everything from the mundane to profound. He seems to have a handle on it all. He doesn't really say much (at least not much that I can understand), but you just know that he only understands truth. He lives it.

Don't get me wrong, I guess someone could lie to him. He can be fooled, gullible little guy that he is. But he's a quick study. He understands the value of manipulation and farce, but he only uses them in his quest to gain insight into the meaning of life, the nature of truth, the limits of my intellect, or to simply get me to do what he knows to be the right thing.

I can't really fault him for that. To his credit, he manages not to come off as an arrogant know-it-all. I'm convinced that he has absolutely no concept, no idea of what it means to be wrong. He never admits fault. He never apologizes. He can't even bring himself to mouth the words, "I'm sorry, I was wrong." It's true, he is never wrong!

Now believe me, most of the time this guy is a joy to be around. His honesty is totally refreshing, innocent, naive. But you know that feeling you sometimes get when you're hanging out with someone who is just too perfect? They know everything. They make you feel dumb and inadequate. Sometimes it's just a drag to hangout with someone who's never wrong about anything. Well, maybe not a drag, just high pressure. Like walking on eggshells, you know that at any minute you could misstep, make the wrong move and really screw something up bad. And you know that if that happens, it's your fault—after all, little Mr. Perfect doesn't make mistakes.

And when you do mess up, he's gonna be the first one to let you know about it.

So, you got Mr. Know-it-all, laughingly, smugly, right, correct, righteous, never makes a mistake, and you do something dumb. He

lets you know just how stupid you are for making the wrong decision. You're tired. You're frustrated. You're out of patience and this wise guy is screaming at you—again. And the worse thing in the world is, once again, you know that Mr. I-don't-make-mistakes is indeed in fact right, again.

The really cool thing (and I guess I should actually say something nice about this guy) is that he is so forgiving of my mistakes. He's just very matter-of-fact about almost everything. I mess up. He screams at me about it. I learn. I apologize for being wrong. No judgment, truth is Truth. I can live with that. We share a good laugh and a drink. And we're back to being best friends.

Being best friends is the best part. Really, I learn so much from this guy. I know the theme here is supposed to be about "truth," but I think Truth (Capital "T") is really the underlying thing that I'm talking about. Honesty, truth is really what being a "good guy" is all about.

I don't think any of us can actually remember that time, but there was a time in all of our lives when we only knew truth. That's it. That's all we knew. Hadn't lived long enough to learn from the experiences of dishonesty, lies, deception. Back then our entire existence was all about expressing truth, absorbing everything we could and simply looking to find the deeper truth embodied in whatever was presented to us. It wasn't about being stuffy, serious, arrogant or heavy. The whole thing was all about how simple this life could be—if the baseline assumptions were based on an honest quest for, and acceptance of truth.

I guess the thing that worries me about this relationship is my inability to come up, really, to his level in all of this. You see, he will—at least for a while longer—always be right. I'm older, have graduate degrees, have wisdom beyond his years, but he beats me every time. Even without saying it, he just knows, he's just always right.

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